THE MANDALAY GAZETTE 1885; AND I TOLD YOU THERE’S A FIRE

ko ko thett

the mandalay gazette 1885

women continue to gaze west and walk east

men, when soused, croon tom jones’ sex bomb on karaoke,

when sober, tom waits’ better off without a wife

scam and flimflam duel in gory sword fight

tattooed members of the missing pinky gang haunt korean restaurants

privacy remains the biggest issue, even in the outhouse

as amateurish bigwigs go clownish willy-nilly

professional jesters get in-your-face-under-your-belly

more than ever, tv antenna cables are in demand for suicide by hanging

soft-voiced armenian cemetery makes tourists wish for death

fire escape ladders are lethal whenever they collapse

a mort floats in the palace moat, still smoking a havana

researchers identify three types of power-outage stress disorder

type-a who complains all the time

type-b who does nothing about the outage, and

type-c who is above the outage

a gold medallist in badminton and pingpong

doesn’t make you a champion in tennis, claims a sport scientist

locals continue to fear the nearer sword

the poor eat dogs and the rich worship them

in the business quarters, only unwrinkled yens are legal tender

foreign investment law asks investors to outjesus the jesus

thou shall not steal, thou shall not outburmese the burmese

true believers no longer know what comes first in their faith

the mad monk or the flighty boat

the porous border or the birth rate

the whoring media or the pimping state

buddha, dhamma or sangha

father, daughter or holy spirit

buy me, get my country free

i told you there’s a fire

what’s the difference between a temporary

camp and an emergency camp, this is going

to be an in-depth interview, the lighting is not

that good here, could you move a little over

there, the connection is bad, can you speak

louder please, hello, hello, hello, what a bummer,

this has to go online this evening, we’ve gotta

be ahead of them, how many children, how

many adults, how many women, how many

men, the death tally must be accurate, is this one in

any causal relation with communal clashes past, is there

any instigation, did you say you had to flee for life

with all your ancestors and descendents on your shoulders,

members of police and armed forces, rescue and

rehabilitation committees, since the gentlemen in

sunglasses came by helicopters, that line sounds

good, don’t miss it, in south african tradition, damn it,

this keyboard is stuck when i need it most, do you

really long for law and order of the past, can’t they

do anything about rule of law, is that simply the

rage of the dispossessed, this time even the wild cat

fell victim to forest fire, according to the report by

the investigation commission, you can’t speak as a

mob, you can’t speak as an individual, you can’t speak

at all, lootings are common, someone must have thrown

things together, latrine problems, we’d been squatting

here since the middle ages, just when my business was

taking off, this shall be our nation until the earth shatters

into bits, i’ve donated more than 40 lakh, no apartheid

at all in the distribution of rice, cooking oil, potato, salt

and fish paste, look … they are handing out food packets,

why don’t you stay for lunch?

Note: Poems translated from the Burmese by the author