



## Not in the Area

Ma Kyay

At Mya Kwa Nyo in Yangon,  
While we were talking over each other,  
Food got finished  
And the drinks got cold.  
Those were the days  
When we forgot to savor them.

Now  
Those memories have gone  
Beyond belief.  
Now that  
She has been eating  
Tubers and bulbs  
Day in and day out,  
She says she craves for instant noodle  
sometimes.  
Oh little sis,  
My dear little sis,  
An ethnic girl  
With the same heart  
On the same path.

Now  
Just to hear her sound...  
“Gonna call you when I get to somewhere with mobile connectivity in haste,” she says.<sup>1</sup>  
I couldn’t ask  
How she was doing  
Under the rain

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this poem is a reference to the line, “The number you have dialled is not in the service area”. After the military started brutally assaulting and killing peaceful protesters, many pro-democracy activists and others fled to remote liberated areas of the country where there is less mobile network coverage.

Amidst the mountains and the forests  
Of a different kind from Inya<sup>2</sup> rain.  
Little sister with a poor kidney  
With a wound on the leg,  
With pain on the back,  
Without proper medical care,  
Without proper nutrition.

I cannot imagine  
How hard she has been toiling.  
The moment she says  
“I wanna see Mom”  
All of a sudden,  
I was taken aback.  
Just as I was shaking,  
Lost for words,  
“But it ain’t easy to meet her, big sis.”  
What I couldn’t say,  
She spoke it herself.

My sister is that kind of a sister.  
“Big sis, you mustn’t cry,” she says laughingly.  
And the connection dropped.  
How I was ashamed  
Of the tears which flowed  
Of their own accord.

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<sup>2</sup> Inya Lake, the largest lake in Yangon and a popular recreational area, is often the object of great artistic romanticization.