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## Writing Sample

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Includes "He was called Reverse," "Yellow," "Mahlar," "Thirimingalar," "A Black Crow and A White Crow," "LP and his surroundings," "The Evening News," "On My Birthday," "The Matter of Another World," "A Relational Song," "Greed / Need," "The Conversation of Three," "As the Poem Was a bit Short, I Made the little Long. Don't Care if You Like It or Not" and "I Come to You - Mekong."

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## Min Htet Maung

### He was called Reverse

1.

Reverse thought, talked and did reversely.  
Reverse, my childhood friend, was so nice  
but too argumentative.  
Reverse was a stick-in-the-mud  
who was forced to leave home by his dad so many times.

2.

Reverse never finished high school, never  
did work, never made a living.  
His mother once urged Reverse to go to sea.  
Reverse once went to the country and  
stayed in monk hood for three years.

3.

One day, Reverse took the wrong way and  
reached my house by mistake.  
Reverse, wearing his T-shirt and hat backward,  
said he was going to do some business.

4.

I knew Reverse well.  
Those days, he hung around with Up-Side-  
Down, playing guitar and doping together.  
Due to a fight at a restaurant,  
Reverse was arrested and put in jail.

5.

Reverse spread down his long hair like a woman.  
He wore jeans and studied spoken English.  
He said he studied it coz he hated British colonialism.

6.

Whatever Reverse did never impressed people.  
And Reverse never got impressed with things that impressed people.  
Reverse embraced reverse way of thinking.

7.

Reverse's parents legally claimed in a paper  
that Reverse was no longer their son and heir.  
I heard Reverse got married with an ex-wife of a sailor.

Then I heard again Reverse divorced her.

**8.**

I met Reverse at a downtown teashop.  
He said he didn't want to be successful.  
He was selling betel in a new town.

**9.**

It was at a beer-station when I met Reverse again.  
Reverse was then the front man of the station's band.  
Reverse's parents died and left him a fortune.

**10.**

Reverse came to me driving his Prado.  
He was wearing shorts and a short hair-cut.  
A cell phone in his hand, too.  
Reverse borrowed books in English from me.

**11.**

Reverse became a literary critic called "Mr.Reverse"  
and wrote for magazines.  
Reverse did Abstract Art paintings  
and threw an art exhibit.  
Reverse occasionally appeared at  
diplomatic parties.

**12.**

No one knew what Reverse was doing.  
It was said Reverse rented a room at a  
grand hotel and settled there.  
Reverse was seen hanging around with a blonde model.

**13.**

Reverse never came to me again.  
Reverse's novels became bestsellers in the  
domestic market.  
Reverse even released an album.  
He wrote and sang all songs for it.

**14.**

Reverse directed and produced a film.  
In Reverse's film, Reverse was the only character.  
In Reverse's film, there was no dialogue, either.

**15.**

Reverse was now a well-know and respected man.  
But amid fame, Reverse disappeared out of the blue.

Rumors said Reverse set up an apparel business in France.

**16.**

Reverse wrote a book in English and published it  
In international market.

Reverse named his book “The Art of Reverse Living”.

I heard his book sold well competing Harry Potter books in market.

**17.**

Reverse contacted me via email.

In one of his email letters, he claimed,  
“the world is spinning reversely, buddy”

And he asked me if I was still taking truth to be truth.

**18.**

Reverse founded Reverse Foundation all over the world.

Reverse Institute produced scholars who never graduated.

The International Reverse Awards granted by

Reverse Lovers Society was prestigious like Nobel Prizes.

**19.**

CNN’s Larry King interviewed Reverse.

Larry asked, “What is it that you want to do most now.”

And Reverse replied, “ I want to do nothing more.

What I want to do now is die.”

**20.**

Reverse thought, talked and did reversely.

Reverse, my childhood friend, was so nice  
but too argumentative.

Reverse was a stick-in-the-mud

who was forced to leave home by his dad so many times.

\*

## Yellow

In the street,  
the crowd was in a mess.

Through the crowd,  
she walked along.

She was dressed up  
in peaceful blue.

White flowers  
on the blue background.

And at the centre of each flower,  
there were bright yellow stigmas.

\*

### **Mahlar**

Mahlar,  
You are a beautiful sweet flower  
and you are a delicious roasted fish.

Mahlar,  
You are an educated beaut  
and you are a little-known massage room.

Mahlar,  
You are a building with a history  
and you are a beastly cyclone.

\*

### **Thirimingalar**

There,  
There are porters bearing life  
on their shoulders.  
There are betters betting their lives.  
And there are cabbages and lemons.  
And there are puzzles and quizzes  
coming in a rush in highway trucks.  
And whisky, blondes, flirting  
And the grinning poet  
who came to enjoy the show.  
There is everything there,  
but you don't need to know everything.

“The market that doesn’t sleep at night.”  
It doesn’t sleep at night and in the daytime either.  
Taking anti-sleep pills,  
It is getting bigger everyday.  
This is also Yangon in Yangon.  
Will there be more fights  
after these fights end?  
How much is a pound of fights?  
Did the price of fights go up this morning?  
“Hey, man! aren’t you leaving yet?”  
In a mass of funny questions and crows’ calls,  
The trucks arrive like the jumbo jets  
from every direction. So gracious!  
Oh, it’s already 7 o’clock.

\*

### **A Black Crow and A White Crow**

I saw a white crow.  
Not only its feathers,  
but its beak, eyes, legs and  
the whole body were snow white.  
Its conscience must be white too.

I was much surprised to see the bird.  
It was all-beautiful and unique.  
When I saw it,  
it was soaring in the vast sky  
in a sunny day.  
What I saw obsessed me  
like an all-great and grand water-color painting.

Was that bird a white crow in reality?  
Could that be another kind of bird?  
No. I’m sure, dead sure. It was a white crow.  
Coz I am a black crow.

\*

## LP and his surroundings

Bored,  
LP improvised a song and sang it.  
The song transformed to a rap  
and crawled into the speaker of a teashop.  
When someone switched on a blue button by mistake,  
Out of the speaker busted the roses  
like the bullets.

\* \* \*

LP smoked cigarettes in secret.  
He didn't want his pop to know it.  
LP's Platinum necklace was not  
what his pop bought him.  
It was a loving present form.  
LP's girl, Kit Kit.  
His pop didn't warn against LP's love affair.  
But his pop didn't like Kit Kit .  
He said Kit Kit was too sophisticated.  
LP and Kit Kit polished the present age  
behind the backs of their parents.

\* \* \*

LP was not naive  
and not the kind who didn't have hopes.  
LP hoped to get rid of the language signs out of his head.  
He hoped to warn people  
against the trickery of language,  
and hoped to change the thinking  
with new species of language.  
LP didn't forsake the society.  
He was the one who wanted to save it.  
LP's policy was that there was no policy.  
LP picked the stars from the sky  
and scattered them all on the ground  
just to let the children play with them.

\*

### The Evening News

The sharpest sword.  
The sweetest apple.  
The most beautiful poem.

\*

They  
sunk  
in  
the  
ocean  
disappeared  
So many centuries has passed  
and they still can be found.

\*

What are popular today are:  
nuclear,  
G.M. food,  
cyber poetry  
and et cetera.

\*

### On My Birthday

On my birthday, it was drizzling.  
On my birthday, my daughters were doing their exam.  
On my birthday, my wife was busy.

On my birthday, I didn't feel very well.  
On my birthday, what should I have done?  
On my birthday, I remembered my mom.

On my birthday, should I have done something good?  
On my birthday, I wanted to write a memorable poem.  
On my birthday, I'd better forget my birthday.

\*

## The Matter of Another World

Mustn't I create?  
Mustn't I write?  
The dream is packed with  
things yet to be expressed.  
Shadows chasing shadows.  
Shadows becomes older,  
Alluring shadows.

As the quiet music is dancing  
Naturally in the dark,  
Symbols, perception and clichés,  
On the bridge of roses,  
Trains run past one after another.

On to a vertical flat surface,  
He came.  
But it's not sure if the whistling  
is his.  
Leave the window alone!  
Under the blue sky,  
The sea seems to be getting wider.

\*

## A Relational Song

About the world oil crisis —  
When it comes floating in misery  
  
with the burnt smell in the air  
You can talk — who will win the game?  
  
Italy or France or whatever  
Tomorrow the milkman  
  
will come on time — Are you  
watching the poetry move?  
  
Though Zaraqawi is dead — God will  
send us another Zaraqawi

Don't worry, Superman is back!  
Clouds change their colors

Not to fall down at the next corner  
Hold tight — as it's so fast

We have to shoot the forms of the bottles  
with new technique and new sensibility

It's not unusual that it doesn't rain  
It you're not at least 21, you can't

be a candidate for the place of governor  
Don't get it wrong — skip this page fast

Though you should sleep soundly  
It is to save the penguins

in Arctic — What does it mean  
That Chinese art becomes popular in the world?

HIV has lived up to 25 now  
If you don't need it, it is rubbish

Until the black files in the computer hasn't been  
deleted — he will keep testing his missile

Won't he? Now in this quiet night  
You can hear a lizard chirrup

It's you who wants to bestsell  
It's also you who asks for new art

It's you again who gives us the hotlines,  
aren't you? my drunk smart-ass bro!

\*

### **Greed / Need**

I need a new form  
to store my ideas and new thoughts,

As you need a pair of good new shoes  
to hike in the forest and to climb up the mountains.

\*

**The Conversation of Three**

Me-One : I don't like coffee.  
Just tea.  
Me-Two : I don't like tea,  
but coffee.  
Me-Three: I like both tea and coffee.  
So, I have both.

\* \* \*

Me-One : I don't like tea now.  
So, I am trying coffee.  
Me-Two : I don't like coffee any longer.  
So, now I drink tea.  
Me-Three : Yeah, as for me,  
I don't drink both  
as I don't like them any more.

\* \* \*

Me-One : Hey, now I begin to like  
both coffee and tea.  
Me-Two : Me too.  
Me-Three : Ah, I think I must drink something.  
What should I have,  
coffee or tea?

\*

**As the Poem Was a bit Short,  
I Made the little Long.  
Don't Care if You Like It or Not.**

You  
And I  
Are going  
Somewhere.  
But Where?

\*

**I Come to You - Mekong**

Mekong – I am a poet  
I come to you – for  
I appreciate your natural beauty  
I investigate your inside story  
And I am close with you  
Mekong – You like a human being  
You have a head, body, arms, and legs  
Your height is 4,800 kilometers long  
65 million blood cells flow up and  
down in your body  
Mekong – You put your head above the  
China pillow  
While you lay down on the ground  
So your long hair is enfolding  
The dry tea-leaf smells from Yunnan  
Mekong – you rest your shoulders  
on the mountains of Burma  
that is comfortable for you  
Mekong – your breasts look like  
sticky-rice fields in Laos,  
they are ripe, colored yellow-ochre  
Mekong – you belly is like a Thai girl's belly  
That is not covered between blouse and Jean  
But you decorate it with colorful orchids  
Mekong – your hips look like sculpted sandstones  
from Angkor in Cambodia,  
big, firm, wonderful and gracefully artistic  
Mekong – you place your slim legs  
among the green paddies of the delta in Vietnam  
with best-looking style  
Mekong – you look like a human being  
You have mind, heart and brain  
So you feel, you create and you think  
Mekong – you ferment much work.  
Through three thousand years of civilization in your life  
Mekong – you have create history  
You give a legacy of ancient culture  
You nurtured religion customs  
And you spawned legend and  
traditions for folk-music, song  
these are your milestones and diaries  
from the flowing of your life  
Mekong – you I listened to your timeless  
legends and stories  
Especially, Naga and Praa Kaar

Naga arose from your body  
Also human became Dolphin to float  
Through your body  
These are real or not?  
These are only legends?  
People talk, like and believe these  
stories even now  
I heard, I saw – these are  
very interesting, mysterious,  
supernatural things for me  
Mekong – I glimpsed your soul in your blood  
The ancient temples – Bagan, Vat Phou, Angkor  
Where fading Hindu gave way to Buddhism  
And tongues you scattered from southern India  
Languages for your people to speak and sing and chant  
Mekong – traditional music and folk songs  
are active in your heart  
I appreciated your nice arts  
I feel soft and fresh in my mind  
Also I am happy in your festive nights  
Mekong – I see people’s daily lives are very simple  
In your heart, they live and depend on you  
They are fisherman, farmers and ordinary people  
Like your children, they call “Mother of Waters” so lovely  
Yes – really, truly, you are the very kindest mother of nature  
Mekong – you compose your natural beauty  
with mountains, forests, fields,  
streams, rapids, falls and people’s life  
in your body  
Your body your beauty is without modernity you compose only  
Now, I know –  
The simple is the most wonderful and the most beautiful  
Mekong – you heart and body are so beautiful  
But, I see some wounds on your body  
Blood is blocked in your veins  
Who makes these wounds?  
Who blocks these veins?  
I know-somebody wants to infect you  
with modern techniques  
So that you will become more developed  
Oh, simple Mekong – don’t you believe them  
They will make new clothes for your body  
After that they will send you to the market  
They will drink your blood for their benefits  
They will destroy the beauty of your virgin nature  
There is injustice – There is torture  
There is terrorism

Mekong – I talk to you  
Don't believe them  
Don't try to be a modern beauty if you do  
You will damage your natural beauty  
You will dry out your body  
You will lose your life  
If you die,  
All of your history, culture and your children will die  
Mekong – I don't want to see your funeral  
I want to see you healthy, natural beautiful forever  
So I will save you I will save you  
I will protect you and I will attack for you  
Mekong – I come to you  
I am a poet  
the poet is the one who loves Nature  
more than others.

*Traslated from the Burmese by Maung Day*

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