

The Nowhere Land

By Phillip Gu



Foreword

*He's a real nowhere man
Sittiing in his nowhere land
Making all his nowhere plans
For nobody.*

—"Nowhere man", by John Lennon

Though written in 1965, I always feel like this lyric is all about what 21 century people do. Does someone really have a sense of what he/she' is going to do, or whom he/she would become? I believe most of us don't. In that sense, our so-called daily routine, are all vain attempts. We gave them meanings, which they probably don't deserve.

So, forget about your stupid programming project, or lab reports, or other stuff. Problems will sort themselves out, in the mean time better write some poems.

This chapbook collects 15 of my poems. I don't usually write about sublimity, but instead I focus on those bizarre moments, moments that do not belong to this world, moments that only exist in my nowhere land. I explore the twisted ideas, most genrated from my dreams. I record how I look at this world, in my own way, which may be shitty in its form, but hopefully interesting behind the curtain.

Opportunity's mission

The rover sees no difference between
Mars and Earth. The same vast plain
with some pits at the center and ridges lie far.
Her internal clock always claim
that a sol is no different than a day
except forty more minutes of slack.
Therefore most of time she rests
on the edge of a crater. And soaked
in the dim sunlight just like
back in Mojave, at dusk. If weather permits a stretch
she'll notify those remote engineers and
never use up her cell. Until
the day when she looked upon
the glowing dome where she came from,
it stroke her that Mars is different than
Earth. It has two moons. One in clear sight
but the other concealed itself behind
the approaching sandstorm.
Soon she felt drowsy underneath
a sudden dune who promises
gloomy sleepiness, then tranquil dormancy.
Opportunity needs a distant dream
after all this place is not Earthly
and her cell is now empty.

Silver lining

They say every cloud has a silver lining
But not from above. There's a vast ocean of dust and vapor
convolving with fragments of thin air.
You must read that things don't get better here.
Only in such perspective can you
understand buoyancy, how the clouds become
borderless tides. How the sunlight turns into
the opposite nights. Then if you look down you'd find
there are no lines. Only discontinuity of waves
where sailors are granted a peek to Atlantis.
After that, to return from the stratosphere
is to claim one will never reach the land.
Each descend becomes a deeper dive. Now look above
Do you still see the silver lining?

How star gazers see through the dark

The moment I put down the book I find
there's something in the corridor.
A cautious shadowy entity hides
itself inside the continuous dark.
To capture its shape is to
grab salt in the water, get disorder out of its hierarch
like those summer nights, when you search for stars
never stare at them, but instead look at
somewhere else, until your pretended ignorance
creates a ripple in the sky.
Someone must first lose their patience, and
then the stars shall gradually emerge
at the corner of sight:
The Taurus, the Gemini,
or the one in the dark who reluctantly
steps out and stretches her paws.

*The penguin, the petrel,
the hummingbird and the iceberg*

At the end of the century the iceberg
cracked from the glacial. He's satisfied of
the splash he created. A gigantic ripple,
spreading while he sink and float.
And he knew how he looked like. Those wind-carved
cracks, emitting a celestial color inside the luminescing white.
He's then caught by a current.

At the other side of the continent he met a penguin,
who talked about those
chilling winters. That only exist in the past, which
you reminds me of. Would you ever remember
the days buried underneath the snow? On which I
tottered, bringing fishes to my child.
Farewell, my old friend.

Three months passed before he met
other lives. A petrel, who rested on his top.
It's tiring to fly between the islands, and I'm
glad to have a place for a stop. Are you made of
autumn rains? The same tactile of watery cold.
Consider staying here and I'd visit you everyday.
Well, said the iceberg, I have no control.

Now the world is totally different
in some way. A tremendous tropical coast, he thought,
And a tremendous hummingbird, floating in the air as
he did in sea. I think I saw a diamond
between the splashes. It reflects a celestial
light, its section emitting luminescing white.
No you didn't. Said the iceberg, then he disappeared.

The skull on the playground

After taking the graduation photo they
slowly fade away. Like tides on sand, tears in rain.
What's left on the grass is this skull who
staring at passers-by, with an eternal grin
possibly left when he's buried within.
However that doesn't make him grim.
His hollow eye sockets
are filled with humor. His poor posture
engraved the grass with satire. That's when you find
he could be plastic. Someone's costume
carefully painted with porcelain white and ash gray.
And when sunlight projects down, you don't see
the skull on the playground any more. What you see
are the endless days to come.

Woke

I often find myself wake up in
dreams, this time on a flight to Chicago.
The trip is bumpy and I feel dizzy though
the world in a bizarre glow. Everyone
is staring at the window:
a pale white sky against the dull dark inside
above which hangs an azure sun. My neighbor
explains to me that we are flying across a glacial
or maybe just a vast floating ice.
Just like those sea fowls, they always
hover and circle, searching for
a precious ground to land on or they'd soak
in the chilling desert.
We must have crossed September since aurora
starts to gleam, but all the ice is melting as if
arctic does have spring.
Were I a sea fowl, I'd choose to leave the north
with the wind, or the turbulence from
aircrafts that passes by.
But then inside that aircraft everything starts to
decompose into basic strings.
In that violent vibration I woke, and
feel like something is lost, while something is gained
—it's even better, for one to wake up
in the middle of a trip; the sun is now turquoise.

The lamp of freedom

When I turned on the lamp there
rests a moth. A small vigilant fugitive
running away from the dark. You see, he
spent hours entering the lamp
like his entire life spent in cold and damp.
A moth's life may be short
but an hour is rather long.
So I dimmed down the light
attempting to free the path seeker
—it failed. His struggle became even
harder, and much more fierce
His wings resonant with surrounding air
His shadow tremble like a blooming flare
His path to freedom is deprived of him,
how can he not dare
to be irritated? But it's four in the morning.
I had to turn off the lamp.

The Alternative Spring

You should receive the postcards by June
when I reached Prague.
The old town square looks different
after the tension of March.
We hold meetings to discuss
how to nestle down in the chamber of
the astronomical clock. From there you can
see the pinnacle of the Cathedral
occupied by the petrels; and the bricks
on the square, an unrecognizable grid seen
from above, run over by burning churns.
Four months of conference
bores everyone. Especially those who
don't belong to this land.
The gannets and cormorants. They want
to lead all the beaks and feather, and
have all the rooftops and chandeliers.
But that's strongly
opposed. They didn't grow up
the bank of Vltava, and slide through
the eyot at dusk, the sand of which comes
from Dresden. They also held up meetings there
and isolated us, in spring. All these large
coastal breeds, coming from the north
where democratic is achieved among all.

Only to have more meetings, and endless
motions. Quarrels with the flutter of wings
while preaching their advanced
methods of hatching. But that doesn't work
for us. We are pigeons with
a sense for the direction. Our breed lived on this
land for centuries. We witnessed this city
built from cobble, and we shall live our way
until it burned to ashes. These intruders must
be evicted. At all cost.

—So as the swallow read her
postcard, and cried.

The rainy redemption

His prison has no boundary
but dilating space.
So seamless a cage that
even the wardens can't escape.
The prisoner is obligated
to comprehend, to calculate
but never to understand:
wherefore is he trapped
in rain?

Do endure eternity for
some while before time
turns into dimensionless grain.
With which concludes end of duty
discrete steps in his mind,
a part-time slumbering existence folds
the boundary back to its center.

Then another nano second passed and
the wardens all deceased to stars.
Nowhereman endued with a nowhereland:
The imprisoned supersedes the prison. Now
he sees beyond
the dim envelope of his cell. Forming a looming
intention of increasing
entropy taunting at his immortality.

Preceding phosphorus lies his premise
After aluminum leaves what's alive
Wherefore was he trapped
again? The rain won't stop
but eternity has sure begun.

His mind at the clockwork

I find it fun to yell at the nurses
at the eighth year.
They sent me to this place, for I know things
they don't. Der Zeit. That moving entity without
consciousness. I'd spend nights on the bed,
strapped, ruminating on how
a real psycho feels. Does he ever
smell the stress of coming death? Would he notice
the broken clock on the wall? Shouldn't oranges be
supplied to every lunatic? And how does he
spend his sleepless nights? If he dares to
think over these questions, he'd probably see
that looming entity, a grinding emptiness,
approaching shadows in the corridor, grim gaslight
projected on the floor, rusty nails
inside the wall. I grimaced at a passer-by.
His eyes filled with confusion or sorrow, maybe both.
The kind of emotion the psychos wouldn't have. Hast du
kinder? How many strapped-thinking nights have you
endured, to hold that much tear? How many oranges should
one eat, to get himself mad? Why the broken clock
started to move again, in the sleepless night?
I thought those were the questions
worth asking. I opened my mouth, but those words were
slipping away. I yelled.

