

# ***The Nowhere Land***

***By Phillip Gu***



## Foreword

*He's a real nowhere man  
Sitting 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 generated 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.

*Hyposomnia Hypothesis*

Were I to lose my sleep tonight  
I should prepare the prologue before twelve.  
In those midnight hours, there would be  
a constant beat lurking in the empty darkness.  
To seek a deep slumber is to fall prey of  
those sneaky concepts. When you close your eyes  
they'd flashback and take control, and set the genre  
for you. Now the synopsis is known, and the  
protagonist is myself. And it would start with  
an aerial shot. An endless road extents to the clouds.  
A lonely traveller walking in his  
borderless scene, and suddenly crosses  
the fifth wall. Now I would see he's  
lying under the ocean. An arc shot  
scanning across, some pale light  
pierced through gives  
a tinted color. Now the beats would intervene  
and mix with a background roar. And I would switch to  
a medium shot. A sepia tone, clearly shows  
how much exhausted he is, despite  
the easing roar. And now comes to the climax part,  
a flashing montage, an in-eye shot.  
The blinking light of the streetlamp, will  
be trapped between his lids.  
Are you the shadow of the waxwing slain?

In a speeded slow-motion clip  
the fluff turned into a stampeding hoof. And I would  
stop at this scene, woke up and sweat over the sheet,  
and realize how many hours I spent awake,  
and lie back and continue my film noir cast.

*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.

