

THE TRAVELLER'S LAMENT

David Canter

Armed with paperback and duty free
He joins with boarding pass
The gathering, expectant groups,
Who form the waiting mass.

But then the dread announcement
'The flight has been delayed'.
A puzzled question runs around the lounge.
'But the gate has been displayed?'

The spectre of an endless wait
Fogs his sleep-clouded eyes,
Lost in the dull, fluorescent hall
Echoing with children's cries.

The passengers' annoyed distress
That first ran through the room
Fades away to idle chat,
Clouded in waiting gloom.

Along the artificial roads
That see no car or bus
A captain and his assistant walk
Like a surgeon with his nurse.

They work in this sheltered clime
Moving through with distant grace.
Their uniforms a protection
Against the earthbound race.
They have their hidden channels
Which give them secret paths
To move us numbered units
Forever in their grasps.

But lo! The announcement drones to life
The fortunate are called
Bags are grasped, pushed-chairs folded
Selected rows can board.

A woman kneels to find her boarding pass
Spilling the contents of her case,
Rising from her prayerful posture
With a smile upon her face.

A Japanese, blue suited, businessman, all gestures
Asks a passer-by 'where I must get'
His white, surgical face mask, protecting him
Or us, or both, from some hidden threat.

On board the passengers
Settle in for the lengthy trip.
The Australian in her top and shorts
Curls in her seat, a novel in her grip.

Five Chinese students in identical
Blue-grey shirts and grey-blue trousers
Compare notes on what is
The best way to clear their ears.

Just as in a hospital
I am woken up to face the day
To have my late-night breakfast
That drives my broken sleep away.

My journey almost done,
The baggage hall in sight
I blink at the distant sun
Then find the solemn carousel
B4 for SQ22, I am a number still!
Just the customs left to meet and greet
And one more entry form to fill.

David Canter © 2017