

LEGACY FROM THE RESEARCH LABORATORY

If all my calculations are correct
my horologium will stop late this p.m.
No more nights to haul my entirety up the ladder to inhale dust
on top of tomes, mine the only prints to claim those
heights since my old professor's.
No more mornings to descend the lighted shaft
to probe the mindless obscenity feeding on healthy tissue,
nor afternoons to breed and stalk the seething child-killers in
glass cages—

(Having once arrested such an enemy, I am driven
to manacle others, and now my demon,
As destructive as any virus, has come again with the fuel bill.
Unpaid, he is evicting me, shutting my shop.)
There is not time to isolate the mutant entity
I suspect lies daily on the slide disguised as something simple—
My life's goal—

to expose it to world attack, to create and unlock doors, to stand
on raised portals like a Messiah and run lightning
down the corridors of science. I would deal with the devil
to do it. But the dream diffused in fumes of something else unfathomed,
while my colleagues labeled me "loner", "prima donna", "bastard".

cont.

It will soon be midnight and even the devil is disinterested.

I walk away from my cells, from magnification and atomic rhythms
to culture my notebook in starlight.

What do I know of poetry? Yet the sure minute hand
allows for nothing else. My molecules must restructure
to pass through ancient doors. Now is distilled.

Now is vitro-essence of failure,
despite leaving the fugitive fewer places to hide.

And earth will be no better for an 11th. hour poem.

The centrifuge slows. Too bad my other theories were not
as flawless as this forte for human horology. I regret arguing
so much with God—it closed all the cloudy and crazed crystal siphons.
And my tuneless lyric nears the maudlin maundering of senility
but I am not old. My mind persists on something about a valley.

It is all too bad. Unless—

That one! That wire-drawn pupil who speaks other languages,
who one day challenged the god-smith, and turning close by
in the color of discovery, battle-damaged and open for a moment,
gave me a glimpse of the bright burning edge of a demon I know.

To that damned and holy host, that one pupil,

I leave all I have:

The cold shine of my keys,
and my one poem.