

More than Cells

A tube of bone marrow aspirate.
It looks like blood.
Only this time the sample came through pain.
Holes bored one by one through the hip bone.
Deep and painfully obtained.

Blood comes from the marrow.
The marrow sustains, provides, and heals.
Until it doesn't.
Treason of cellular proportions.
Tiny, subtle danger.

A cancer metastatic by origin
Which mocks the scalpel;
That first line assault so valuable as cancer treatment
Is disarmed by leukemia's tactical advantage.

It usurps the factories,
Controls the distribution centers,
And commandeers the stores.

A spy sifts through tedium,
Looking for clues.
No glamor, no chase.
We crawl and part the blades and ask
"Was this here before? And does it matter?"
A molecular scar,
The kind we accumulate from birth until death?
Or a carefully hidden time bomb,
Camouflaged as a chink in the armor that is life's code?

I shield this precious vial in my hands for a moment
And pray the researcher's prayer:
Let my hands work skillfully and carefully.
Let me find the secrets hidden in this vial.
Let me respect the life that gave in pain and lives in pain.
Speak through me,
For you are more than cells.

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