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NUS

‘March into the Warren’

Squint in earnest,
Fancy with mind's eye,
Otherworldly shapes bustling,
In odd fashion.

Spheres tumble, flashing their teeth,
Rods whirl off-kilter,
All while the flagella,
Quiet in a corner,
Placidly draw waves.

This one a seasoned politician,
That, a headstrong soldier.
And over yonder a simple vagrant,
Blessed with lady luck's kiss.

Refugees smudge and smidgen alike,
Crowd and coo,
At mother's pride and heir.
Tiny hands balled into even tinier fists,
Meek soul peeking through fine slits.

Today or tomorrow shall we
Tinkle with the Engineer's design?
Back on cool green, I lay and wonder.
Eyes, trailing bright to Prussian blue,
I ponder,

Could even wisdom whispered in Solomon's ear,
Judge impartial to age-old hunger?
Caesar's wit,
Conquer the elusive nation?

Dream not of an oxpecker's romance,
When you,
Turn blind eye to looming mistletoe,
Blushing from lovers' bliss.

Splitting image,
We too are in part,
The Architect's device.
Don your pristine white,
March, *left, right*, on asphalt grey.

Pssst! Come along little wayfarer,
With your soft pitter patter.
A grueling journey for some await,

Fairway beyond fairway we seek,
Prodigy to his prodigy preach.
Past the labyrinth,
Through the warren,
To Mortem's Creek.
Singing, Chanting,
'Darwin, till the day we meet!'

Notes for the reader:

*Today or tomorrow shall we
Tinkle with the Engineer's design?
Back on soft green, I lay and wonder.
Eyes, trailing bright to Prussian blue,
I ponder,*

If you ask me such a question. I can only lie back on the grass, look up at the sky and wonder, trying to figure out the right answer.

*Could even wisdom whispered in Solomon's ear,
Judge impartial to age-old hunger?
Caesar's wit,
Conquer the elusive nation?*

Who is truly worthy to answer such a question in the first place? Who can and will regulate the greed that may manifest from such technology? Can we even truly understand what we are working with, given the complexity of the microbiota and microbiome?

*Dream not of an oxpecker's romance,
When you,
Turn blind eye to looming mistletoe,
Blushing from lovers' bliss.*

The oxpecker is a type of bird known for its symbolic role in mutualism

A mistletoe, given its rather positive portrayal in holiday culture and thought to be harmless is actually a hemiparasitic plant.

This is a warning not to be too caught up with our ideals and goals, not to be too driven by how we want things to go that we become blinded by our initial successes and ignore the growing dangers, overlooking certain risks.

*Splitting image,
We too are in part,
The Architect's device.
Don your pristine white,
March, left, right, on asphalt grey.*

This is a biblical reference (It's hard to not talk about science without talking God)

We too are part of his creation. If probing, dismantling and reconstructing are what comes natural to us, maybe this is our purpose in his whole scheme of things, just like how natural it is for birds to fly and fish to swim.

If men are created in his image, won't we too inherit his quality of creation? If so, who can really blame us for such an inclination?

Either way 'playing God' has all sorts of ethical issues coming into question, some we don't even know about yet. *March, left, right, on asphalt grey.* The roads are all grey from here on out and yet we can only go forth. Now or later doesn't matter because the journey has already began.

*Fairway beyond fairway we seek,
Prodigy to his prodigy preach.
Past the labyrinth,
Through the warren,
To Mortem's Creek.
Singing, Chanting,
'Darwin, till the day we meet!'*

A fairway is an open path or space, representing breakthroughs and new discoveries. Breakthroughs we crave, given our insatiable need for knowledge and improvement.

Prodigy to his prodigy preach, the passing on of knowledge from one scholar to another, each one brighter than the other.

*Past the labyrinth,
Through the warren,*

Through the whole maze of discoveries, setbacks and challenges. Coming out from one just to jump right into another.

To Mortem's Creek.

Mortem, the Latin word for death.

A life of learning and discoveries all leading to an inevitable end. A universal truth that humbles all. Is anything truly worth accomplishing when we all die anyway?

Singing, Chanting,

'Darwin, till the day we meet!'

Even so, we look forward optimistically, eager to share what we've learned, having dignity and pride in our knowledge and progress. Darwin, the man who pioneered the idea of evolution and natural selection but discussed little of the microbiome's role in all of it would prove to be an interesting conversational partner on this topic when we are six feet under. Some might postulate that his lack of input in this area contributed somewhat to research being stunted here for quite some time. One can't help but wonder what he would say if presented with the information we have today. Kind of like a 'if you could meet anyone, dead or dead (in this case), who would it be?' situation or an 'oh hoho Darwin! Wait till you hear about this!' kind of narrative.

At the end of the day, it is really your own interpretation of the poem that matters. This is just a brief explanation of certain areas that hasn't even scratched the surface of what I intend to portray, but I do hope you will be able to catch the general ideas.