

Worker XL-1T-05R

Like the cans and bottles, bags and boxes
in this huge warehouse, I bear a number
instantly traceable, always answerable
to the role assigned me. Icy, digital orders
from afar determine my purpose and actions:
lift, carry, pack, return, lift carry, pack.
My job is chained to my body, and only
in dreams do I sense my true worth.

I took the wages bait, discounting fair warnings
like those who build in an earthquake zone
and later pay the price. Thus I've become
little more than a faceless unit of production
lost in the soullessness of some
all-embracing force bent on dictating
every aspect of life – Go. Stop. Buy. Sell.
Give. Take. Build. Destroy. reproduce. Kill.

I'm a product keeping other products
in place and on task so that in some lofty
financial heaven, accumulating wealth can
continue to glorify itself. I stay because
I need the job, though I can see a day
when my number won't be needed.
And how long before the directive comes
to replace the mass of human workers
with fleshless legions of mind?

Darrell Petska
Middleton, WI

Out of Work Please Help God Bless

Damn turn lane's backed up --
traffic signal's busted -- all the opening that
panhandler needs to reach our median
and prey on our bad luck! Annoyance
sends all hands to phones,
leaving our wallets untouched.

Time's wasting, and we're fuming
like our tailpipes in frosty air.
Cruising beyond our windows, is he legit?

A cop's come to unknot the jam.
The panhandler's quickened his pace,
probing us with his deep blue eyes --
but the cop's waving us ahead now,
wants us to go, move it! and we do
cuz we're all late to work.

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