Since The Death of Faust

In the yellow distance Gretchen spins and spins, relentless since the death of Faust. We ride a crowded elevator and part on the tenth floor into classrooms we rule the way generals rule modest but unlovable nations. You teach a language no one not native ever learns to speak while I unlimber equations to students for whom calculus triggers crimes against humanity.

Gretchen loves us as little or much as the rest of our species. The thread she spins has so entwined us that if we break it we’ll bleed a green and disgusting liquid from organs we hope not to meet. Our students grunt in their hides and play with cell phones, testing in code no living intellect can break. We see them wither in shades of purple the sunset envies and ripening grapes emulate. They’d rather not learn and Gretchen would rather not spin but the devil had his way and we must honor his demands.
After class we brave the crowd and meet grinning like mannequins. Textbooks anchor us to our professions but Gretchen’s threads hustle like barbed wire in no man’s land, snarling around us as we duck into the coffee shop. We’re shy as ever, language and the language of mathematics parsing us into stark funereal gestures no one but Gretchen expected us to wield against each other in such frankly sculptural ways.