

Lisa Bubert – Two Poems

At The Tomb Of The Unknown

Three men,
still, stiff sentinels,
same but for quirks only a mother could recognize,
such as the shape of an ear, or
the particular curve of a skull,
wait atop a lined hill where
rows of symmetrical white
headstones bear names rendered
unreadable by distance.

We are gathering to watch
the changing of the guard, we civilians.
Men relax in Columbia fishing shirts, khakis,
ball caps for the O's, the Nationals;
women in summer blouses that shimmer
press their palms to the mouths of
children who cannot stop laughing.

Before us, a single white tomb.
Before the tomb, a circle of red roses.
Before the roses, a soldier on a black path.
Before the soldier, us.

The man beside me brings a disposable
camera to his face.
Click whirr whirr.
Click whirr whirr.

Movement ripples through the crowd like a murmur.
One man is exchanged for another.
Orders are issued and accepted;
it is over before we even realize it has begun.

Backdrop

We compare our lengths of stay
like medals on a soldier's coat.
Some of us ten years, some of us ten days.
Some of us born here and we bow.
It's easy enough to get to know
a place that never changes

despite what the old timers say.
Homeless still collect under the highway at rush hour.
Faces on the street are familiar without a handshake.
We all have a predictable sense of style,
shoes and a swagger that give us away.
I can tell by the way you walk
how well you know
the city under your feet.
But that tree lopped to a stump on tenth;
that patch of sidewalk with a paw print that
predates your birth.
The roots pushing up cracked concrete;
the return of the warblers come April;
the noon rain.
They have no care
for the knowledge
you and I
claim.
In the backdrop of this city,
we all learn to fall in line.
I go out for my morning coffee
where at six oh one
the houses will glow by soft light
and by six oh eight
an old woman will always wait
for a bus that will always come today.
Surely I will witness a change.
Until then,
I fade in and out.
Until when
neither of us can be seen,
until someone
else may wonder
whether we were ever
there
at all.

Lisa Bubert is a Texas-born writer living in Nashville, TN. More of her work can be read in *Eunoia Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, and *Gnarled Oak*.