

LAURO PALOMBA

EASTER SNAPSHOTS OF WASHINGTON

1. AT THE PARK

In the forenoon of the risen Christ
you sought the dead

the stone walled up with names
a generation earlier, lost
you'd last stood there
the emotions then
quarrying hearts
like mallets and wedges

hands manic, hands failing
from black granite
through black lead
onto white paper
they rubbed
a cleansing of a kind
raising penciled letters
to lift the spirit from the name

this day, bird calls clearer than
that war
suffering ebbing with the memory
not one without the other
becoming ancient
rivaling soon the Punic
for fresh remembrance

a father and his copying child
fingertipping the reflective rock
not recognition but to feel
the texture of the etchings

A miniskirted girl
pink striping white, and heels
two-tone dog leashed

scrawny but for an ass
texting for attention

at the memorial's taper
cozy teenagers hand in hand
that's just too sad, she said
untroubled but the mood just spoiled

so you had to read
the note hugging the rose
to a captain unfamiliar
"I wish I'd known you longer
I've missed you all my life
your daughter"

2. AT THE MUSEUM

Under a lambing sun
you lured yourself from pascal light
into a dark museum

a video restored to soundless doings
faceless men
foreign to the camera
scuff through a trench
turn for muted voices
slump from dumbing smoke

before the weaponed arms recoil
 before the boots kick in some dirt
 a dog black-eared but white
 of tiny bulk
 races into the foreground

he wheels confounded
 startled by his disbelief
 halts, searches for fallacy
 as if
 amid many who chose
 and so many chosen
 numb and numbed
 onlookers and actors
 only he
 can't accept the moment
 only a little dog
 has dashed to outrage

3. *AT THE THEATRE*

For Good Friday it was plotted
 by an actor Abe admired
 the derringer's punch line
 timed to laughter when it fired

with malice toward most
 with sympathy for few
 Booth dictated sinful truth
 the only way he knew

dressed to escape, not entertain
 at centre stage with bloody knife
 theatre patrons much perplexed
 why in a comedy such strife

'Sic semper tyrannis'
the tyrant quoted ere he flew
belonging to the ages
he directed it at you

4. *AT THE GALLERY*

Thoughts needing redeeming
in a capital blossoming
with columned blocks of stone
you strolled to art

the Christian canvasses
shameless or implied
their fame dismissed
were daubed with doubtful hope

came one, it too ambiguous
but satisfactory to your search
Watson and the Shark
terror bravery pity fear
crowding the same boat
yawning evil jaws beneath

Watson, his leg and foot the toll
lived on
mangled
you'll survive