

Poetry: “A Beautiful Day to be Buried” by Julia Wendell



The sun was shining violently,
as if on a mission to see beneath the surface of things.
Our cortege wormed its way past row on row

of identical white markers, the grounds immaculately groomed,
(*Not even a single dandelion*, the brother noted),
and visitors searching for Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

As if we were props planted by the cemetery on this Memorial
Day Weekend,
they swiveled heads to watch us pass,
or glanced up from the shoulders of toddlers

their adult arms were both holding back and nudging forward.
We were famous simply because we were sad.

They needn't have been curious.

We were nobody. Not even much pain,
though a few experienced twinges of nostalgia—
that old sad, Arlington tug.

Once at the Columbarium, the lance corporal
climbed a step ladder and slid her box into the open niche
to join her only mate, not into earth's dark but the starkness
of marble. I hoped we might also be able
to climb the ladder, to double check
and see what their version of Eternity looked like.

But no, he quickly took a photo with his cell—
assurance the cremains were who they were supposed to be—
before a drill gun set the one-way screws.

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Photo Credit: Arlington National Cemetery