

On the Third Stanza of a Poem by F. S. Key

DAN ALBERGOTTI

A band got together at the base of the steps,
then did exactly what they swore they'd do—
brought havoc to the doors. After all that talk

of battle, of war, of *taking back their country*,
some leaders had the gall to feign confusion,
surprise when they saw the battering ram.

Later it was someone's job to wash foul shit
off marble walls and floors, to buff the scuffs
of footsteps, to dissipate a stubborn pollution.

Today I saw a porter stare straight ahead
while he held a lobby door open for a gaggle
of children wearing blood-red 2024 hats

herded in by their parents. It was as if he were
welcoming them all home, though he shared
no blood with them. His eyes seemed glazed

like someone nearly hypnotized watching
a chyron's crawl. Did you know, reader,
that children in some parts of this world

are kidnapped, then blinded or maimed
to fetch a few more coins from passersby?
Did you know there's nowhere to hide?

No refuge could save the hireling or slave
is a line from the third stanza of a poem
that you know the first stanza of by heart.

You can almost hear it, can't you? You can
almost sing along, staring straight ahead.
The rhyming phrase is *gloom of the grave*.

