

The collar

by [Devon Miller-Duggan](#) in the [July 5, 2017](#) issue

Stiff as a rifle barrel.

The collar  
could cut the chin  
of any Marine  
not perfectly  
at attention.

Higher than a priest's,  
but blue, darker,  
piped in blood red,  
like Blood Stripes  
a Marine earns.

You focus on the  
collar of the Marine  
straight in front of you—  
still, alive, so rigid  
air around him quivers.  
This stillness,  
rasps the light, the air  
shuddering at attention,  
taking blows  
from half a world away.

You hear someone's  
throat working against itself,  
think it must be your husband  
behind you,  
unstill on your shoulders.

You hear it again,  
Again—in front of you.  
That encased throat gulping.