

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.