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The Neck In Front Of You

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THE NECK IN FRONT OF YOU

—after Sgt. Jarrell

This is the line for the showers, where men
hold soap cases over their dicks. This is the line
for chow, where men say their Social, the last four,

to a woman at the door. This is the line to the room
of CS tablets on hot plates; where men exit
from the rear door with snot on their lips

and vomit in their mouths. You will know
the back of each head, the moles on necks
and ears, the hairline squared or rounded,

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the shift of shoulders during a march. This is the line
for the rappel tower, where men look at the sky,
then fall. This is the line for the Pit, where men

hold bags of sand above their heads. You will fix
and straighten the collar of the man to your front
after bear-crawls in the grass; the man to your rear

will fix yours. This is the line for the range, where men
stand in holes and shoot mechanical silhouettes of plastic.
This is the line for the phones, where men have two minutes

to call home. This is the line for vaccinations, where a man
so tired walked off with a syringe hanging from his arm
like a string. You will march in the cold before zero-

five-hundred, your breath on the neck in front of you;
from your rear, a man's flash of breath like steam,
like a hum, warm, pushing, forward, forward.