

Truth

A few names and fewer faces remained
six years after, though I immediately
recognize the face on the Metro section's
last page. Our petite guidon bearer—
the same boot camp picture (here black
and white), the golden hair just off the collar.
The hair she refused to cut for one whole day;
she appealed: *My recruiter told me I could keep my hair long.*
Petty Officer Riley told her, *Cut it or go home.*

She finally acquiesced the next day, gave in to
the barber's quick scissors, one straight cut,
uniform legal. She complained for days
in her clipped English accent (*I spent years
in London as a child, my father at the embassy*).
I grew tired of the privileged drama,
returned to shining my boots; hair grew back.

The article was short: murdered by her sailor
husband, body hidden in the desert, confessing
after telling everyone she'd gone AWOL.

Her family in Kentucky, a mother and sister,
a whole life in some backwater.
Our lives mixed for eight brief weeks;
had anything in her life been true.