

# "Where Was I?"

by Kai Zweibel

She ran and ran and  
ran  
until her lungs sagged, her knees cracked  
the PTIs said she was behind in time and she needed  
to be the best.  
She lifted, then planned, squatted, then planned, filled out papers, and  
planned her diet, her rigorous training,  
her appointments and PFTs.

At 2 AM when she panicked and sobbed that she wouldn't get to go to OCS  
that summer  
she called me and I assured her that  
she would not get into a car accident or catch COVID-19.  
At 2 PM. she called me and cried that maybe they would  
realize she wasn't as good as they thought and disqualify her  
even though she was already booked for a flight to Quantico  
that was leaving the next day.

She asked me for my date of birth, city of birth, proof of citizenship, passport-  
my entire identity needed to be laid bare since I wasn't lucky enough to be born in the  
country more important to her  
than life itself.  
and then ignored me for days when I refused to give her so much  
information during a time uncertainty was more familiar than sunlight.

But she buried my fear in photographs of her new hair styles, boots, military gear  
and I agreed to help her study her new language, jargon, the way she shows respect to  
those  
above her, flashcard after flashcard I quizzed her

and I wrote her handwritten letters that she could read  
when she was thousands of miles away  
covered in muck.

and for just a moment  
as I told her goodbye  
I thought I was OK.