

# Roll Call

by Chris Allen

The surface of the pool ripples—white lines  
roll across chlorine blue. Dust blows  
*Afghan dust kicks, plumes, never settles,*  
*eighty worn, rubber boot-heels clap.*

through the air, crystallizes into water.  
Newborn in my arms, older sister unseen.  
*Unseen dust, more in my uniform than on it.*  
*Another memorial begins:*  
*Roll call!*

Two-year-old kicks aren't hard enough to crack the surface,  
she isn't. I'm standing on the deck. She is still  
underwater. Her eyes bulge for the surface.  
*Private Fernandez?*  
*Here, First Sergeant!*

Please. Please. Just one more bubble.  
*Specialist Brown?*  
*Here, First Sergeant!*

I fling her from the pool to her mother. I'm still  
*Sergeant Anderson?*  
She coughs water onto the deck.

*Sergeant Benjamin Anderson?*  
She folds over her mother. I can't hear their tears

*Sergeant Benjamin T. Anderson?*  
over the tinnitus. I see them heaving,

*Taps.*  
sobbing, breathing, and look down at my son,  
who splashes the water and begs to stay in.

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