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Upon Enlistment

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Upon Enlistment

It took me days to decipher the 3-lettered
addendum to your name at the bottom

of the Happy Halloween note: *Pvt.*
Private, Matt, seventeen. You'll have

to cut soon those long curling red hairs,
not strawberry, not carrot, but some unnamed

in-between vegetable that distinctly shines
of you. That hair will be the first visible slice,

but the way you think, next, will be finely
shredded until you know push-ups, parachutes,

and the drill sergeant's boot heels better
than us. You may have fantasized

some G.I. Joe scene from our West Virginia
days, but if you remember right, the neighbor's

golden retriever, fur blazing like the fire
of your hair, gnawed on those plastic men

until you cried and we bought new ones.
I don't want you to make a mistake of pride

and act out some scene to be better than us.
We need your shine. We need you as you are.

—Trish Klei '97