

FOR THE LAST TIME ●

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A father in fatigues is drinking coffee
for the last time folding his napkin,
handing in his tray, knotting his boots,
belching in the barracks
saying *pardon me* for the last time,
slightly blushing the way he blushes
when he hears his wife whisper
their whisper at home.
He stands at attention
wonders for the last time if the shine
on his boots will pass inspection.
In the blue-black sky outside,
dawn drifts like an unhitched dinghy.
His hair will keep growing,
toenails keep growing for
the last time. But this time
he boards a truck, jumps off,
steps into the trees, bends,
touches the dust above an IED
the way he touched his daughter
for the first time, minutes after
she was born, her skin soft as water.