

from Juked #7, Spring 2010

SARA BURGE

METAL CONCUBINES

If, during that final embrace at the Greyhound Station,
she promised to wait for my brother, send a letter every day,
spend her nights alone with her colossal pain, I hope he knew
she lied. That like spikes, like the strange language of logic,
truth erupted from her skin. Each loving stroke down her spine
translated a new word until all he wanted
combusted beneath his fingertips.

When I think of her, I feel no bitterness. Like the rest of us,
she had nothing to do in those backwoods but drink and screw.
Our Margaret, half Cherokee with bleached hair,
who married someone else while he did time
in barracks and fatigues. Margaret, a mother when he returned,
her daughter a child he could not call his own.

I loved her too, so I imagine her mourning him.
Her face, in this fantasy, classic in its grief, her body —
the body he held against his own —
buckles under the weight of his ghost. She goes mad
with regret, and since this is make-believe, I create a grave
that she visits, black-veiled and red-lipped. Her faithfulness:
Cherries in the Snow kissing black marble, just above his birthdate,
the world turning beneath a sun setting like a tarted-up whore.

This version comforts with its clichés.
In reality, I suppose, she lies closer to a silent actress,
monochromatic and closed, mercurial as the tanks he climbed into.
Their bellies his consolation during German winters,
icicles in his beard. The bulk of his steel mistresses cupped him
like an egg, cradled him through the tundra of waiting, hummed

that nothing would ever be as true as their armored caves.
Their countenance downturned, pistons pumping steady,
engines rumbling love for only him.