

from Juked #4
Fall 2006

MIKE YOUNG

A Certain Chapped Place

Barbie leapt into a brawl
with a belligerent couch
and my patient lips
wired to my slick teeth
shackled by sinew & blood
all the way up to my
frumpy panicked caffeine addict
of a brain

who keeps insisting
to see the manager, saying
Michael, she'll tell you again
she prefers handsome men—
but for you, she is making exceptions.

Well, Mister Worrywimp
don't you think I know that?
Isn't it always like this, when the pillow
is vodka curdled
and Saturday lurks in the ticks
of an overlooked red clock.
Tiny right now as a daydream,

it'll be a diner
where we're still a little drunk,
making jokes about honey packets,
or how the coffee tastes
like carrots soaked in dish soap,
where I will wonder two things:

first, if the waitress
with the faded tattoo on her neck
smiles bits of leftover prayers
from a certain chapped place in her heart,
or if I'm imagining things.

And second, if anyone notices —
I bet they don't.

Because after the finishing line,
which is coming out soon,

(just as soon
as we clear out another couple
teenage legionnaires
from the spare bedroom,
after their filthy scant slivers
of a holy spectacle
have shriveled)

after that line, when all is said,
(but mostly done)
I'm not as compassion peppered
as I pretend to be
to get laid.

Look, they're coming out now.
Look, Barbie, you slut:

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he's as ugly as me: a worried wimp.
She's a future waitress with a bloody neck.
Why, they're basically us.

I think our hearts are stopping,
and show no signs of letting up.