

# ONE AFTERNOON WHEN BARBIE WANTED TO JOIN THE MILITARY

It was a crazy idea, she admits now,  
but camouflage was one costume she still hadn't tried.  
Barbie'd gone mod with Go-go boots during Vietnam.  
Throughout Panama she was busy playing with a Frisbee  
the size of a Coke bottle cap. And while troops  
were fighting in the Gulf,  
she wore a gown inspired by Ivana Trump.  
When Mattel told her, hell no-- she couldn't go,  
Barbie borrowed GI Joe's fatigues,  
safety pinning his pants' big waist  
to better fit her own.

She settled in his olive tank.  
But Barbie thought it was boring.  
"Why don't you try running over something small?"  
coaxed GI Joe, who sat naked behind the leg  
of a human's living room chair.  
Barbie saw imaginary bunnies  
hopping through the shag carpet.  
"I can't," she said.

GI Joe suggested she gun down the enemy  
who was sneaking up behind her.  
Barbie couldn't muster up the rage  
for killing, even if it were only play.  
Maybe if someone tried to take her parking space  
or scratched her red Trans Am.  
Maybe if someone had called her a derogatory name.  
But what had this soldier from the other side done?  
GI Joe, seeing their plan was a mistake,  
asked her to return his clothes,  
making Barbie promise not to tell anyone.  
As she slipped back into her classic baby blue  
one-piece swimsuit, she realized  
this would be her second secret.  
She couldn't tell about the time  
she posed nude for Hustler.  
A young photographer who lived in the house  
dipped her legs in a full bottle of Johnson's Baby Oil,  
then swabbed some more on her torso.  
Barbie lounged on the red satin lining  
of the kid's Sunday jacket. He dimmed  
the lights and lit a candle  
to create a glossy centerfold mood.

"Lick your lips," he kept saying,  
forgetting Barbie didn't have a tongue.  
She couldn't pout. She couldn't even bite  
the maraschino cherry he dangled in front of her mouth.  
Luckily there was no film in his sister's camera,  
so the boy's pictures never came out.  
Luckily GI Joe wasn't in the real Army  
or he said he would risk being court-martialed--  
he wasn't supposed to lend his uniform  
to anyone, especially a girl.  
Just then a human hand deposited Ken from the sky.  
Somewhere along the way he'd lost his sandals.  
"What have you two been up to?" he asked.  
Barbie didn't have the kind of eyes that could shift away  
so she lost herself in the memory of a joke  
made by her favorite comedian Sandra Bernhard  
who said she liked her dates to be androgynous  
because if she were going to be with a man  
she didn't want to have to face that fact.  
Barbie was grateful for Ken's plastic flatfeet  
and plastic flat crotch. No military  
would ever take him, even if there were a draft.  
As GI Joe bullied Ken into a headlock,  
Barbie told the boys to cut it out. She threatened  
that if he kept it up, GI Joe would  
never get that honorable discharge.

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