Eddie Priest’s Barbershop & Notary

By Kevin Young

Closed Mondays

is music  is men
off early from work  is waiting
for the chance at the chair
while the eagle claws holes
in your pockets  keeping
time  by the turning
of rusty fans  steel flowers with
cold breezes  is having nothing
better to do  than guess at the years
of hair  matted beneath the soiled caps
of drunks  the pain of running
a fisted comb through stubborn
knots  is the dark dirty low
down blues  the tender heads
of sons fresh from cornrows  all
wonder at losing  half their height
is a mother gathering hair  for good
luck  for a soft wig  is the round
difficulty of ears  the peach
faced boys asking Eddie
to cut in parts and arrows
wanting to have their names read
for just a few days  and among thin
jazz  is the quick brush of a done
head  the black flood around
your feet  grandfathers
stopping their games of ivory
dominoes  just before they reach the bone
yard  is winking widowers announcing
*cut it clean off  I’m through courting
and hair only gets in the way  is the final
spin of the chair  a reflection of
a reflection  that sting of wintergreen
tonic  on the neck of a sleeping snow
haired man  when you realize it is
your turn  you are next


Source: Most Way Home (Zoland Books, 1995)