

Blonde on Blonde

by Justin Hamm

Happens at a party, this way, past frat boys
perched in branches like idiot hoot owls,
past a painted girl with a plastic
beer cup and bangs like a dark waterfall
who promises a new way to whisper.

Outside, on the porch, the neighbor,
or perhaps some strange antiquated refugee.
Grizzled, goat-faced, hippie guru in flannel,
he sits cross-legged near a turntable,
drops the needle just as you pass,
and you stop, startled by a noise like a man
stretching after so many years in a crouch.

The words, you think, could be stolen
verbatim from your deadbeat old man
as he sleeptalks the afternoon away,
one foot dangling off of the couch,
while the world of the gainfully employed
rotates in necessary cycles around
the tin box house the two of you live in.

Together, noise and words are like
doing a crossword puzzle while
standing in a joyous metallic rainshower,
like having a conversation with some
grander version of the sun.

Dylan, says the hippie, and suddenly you are
unafraid of difficult ideas or the dark.
You have been shaving your pink face
for, what, all of about three weeks now,

and yet, you find yourself suddenly mourning
the end of the long, bloody Trojan War,
the decimation of the age of Enlightenment.

From this point forward it will be difficult
to smell certain flowers or women
without wanting to become an outlaw.
You press your hand to your sunken chest
and curse the cruel passage of time
for stranding you in the one period
in all of this long lie called history
without room for heroism or holiness.

You bow your head and duck inside—
like, but never again exactly like, all
the vanished souls who went before

