

J.V. BRUMMELS

Yellow Hair Blues

*There are blondes and blondes and it is almost a
joke word nowadays.*

—Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*, 1953

Her dumb dad wears
a gift's discarded ribbon
around his neck like second place.
Her last birthday
in her childhood home
cracks like hammered ice.
What could have been long love
is an empty spot at the table.

Or
in her dangerous downtown building
some intrusion of despair
corners her on the peeling linoleum
among the rusting bathroom pipes.

Or
SWAT gasses
a rural house trailer
and disarms her choking
and cursing ex-husband.

Boys are to blame,
boys who can't for one more day
tell the beautiful lie we all want to hear—
we'll be together forever.
A tough day for blondes.

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The adult weight of her breast
bends, then cracks the hard ribs
over her father's heart.

Or
she promenades
out of the bar
with her new lover,
arms around waists,
hips an easy fit,
night air amniotic.

Or
the portrait of her ex-husband,
done in purples and yellows
that somehow are his flesh,
hangs on a prominent gallery wall.

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Light and air are to blame—

Afternoon sun through antique glass
colors her blue-eyed gaze green.
Past the open collar of her shirt
her clavicle, that delicate
and antique instrument,
lifts her pale skin.

Or
the play of summer breeze
through the green leaves
teases a filigree of hair
like slow yellow smoke.

Or
she stands barefoot on wet gravel
up the hill from black and white cows,
a paperback book open in her hands,
her hair a nugget of honey in the gloom.