Leda to the Neighbor’s Girl
by Bianca Spriggs

He won’t come at all
the way you might expect,
wearing formal dress
blinding you with desire.

You won’t even recognize him
when you’re barefoot
in your garden tending
to the rosemary and he falls
dazzling as glassy quartz
from a low-hanging cloud.

It’ll be a simple thing,
a flurry of feathers appearing
to collapse in your arms.

You won’t even have to think
twice about wrapping
your limbs around his.

Yours, like mine, bleeds.
You think you’ll be able to
save him—and you’ll try.

He’ll descend white-hot at first, sudden,
falling the way accidental taper wax
or an incense ember flares
when it meets your skin.

Before,
I’d never given much
thought to swans or any winged thing
that wasn’t born of paradise.

To me, even a serpent
contains more sentience
behind its eyes, or at least, intent,
when it’s set to strike.

And yet, there will be something
of the god about him,
some small stunning property
leftover from the solar system
even he won’t be able to disguise.
By the end, when he promises
to deliver your young himself
from their golden eggs,
to hang a constellation
especially for the girlchild
who favors him, you won’t care.

You won’t remember
your husband.

You won’t remember
your name.

All you’ll know—or will ever be
content to know is the soft
musk of covert feathers,
the trembling prism light of dusk,
the ever-widening concave,

the trumpet—

the ascent.