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The House In Roskilde

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This is the house of blue rooms,
cool walls the color of sky and sea.

A yellow photo album
enfolds spirals of memory:
a white-haired matriarch, one beloved
sister who hanged herself in a cellar,
another the sunny-haired girl whose voices
drove her from a second-story window,
two smiling daughters now grown,
and a holiday flat huddled on a hill
in the south of France.

The house is warm, hold heat
and hope. On the table, three white candles
on silver stems twined with buds
and green ribbons bless the cerulean damask
set with honey, butter, cheese, and tea poured
from a pot the color of soil and twilight.

This is the house of blue rugs,
dusty blue in the parlor,
oriental peacock in the dining room
spread-eagled on brown floorboards,
gray-blue carpet creeping up the stairs.

In winter the lady of the house,
dreading the long Scandinavian nights,
takes morphine for pain, reads books
in three languages, watches the sky darken
thickly, shattering into shards of snow.

Her husbands the schoolmaster,
eyes like gray doves,
takes her tea and toast in bed
then cycles to school to fight
for the union and teach recalcitrant
students the vagaries of English grammar.
In summer she bikes down the lane,  
glossy hair flying in the wind off the fiords  
that float ahead in fronds of mist.  
Spinning down the cobbled coast road  
she passes the village church and the fisheries,  
buys a bag of apples at the market  
under skies of white-hot noon.

Their lives mesh the way canals  
web the city in nets of water and light,  
the terrors of November wind lingering  
into February trances that melt finally  
in the evening sun of June, summer’s  
ubiquitous optimism holding them captive  
in the nightlong cooing of doves  
woven by the beak of the blackbird  
nesting in the ivy, whistling past midnight.