

*Jay Meek*

## **“Trygårre Kan Ingen Vara”**

Who can comprehend the sorrow we find in motels —  
in unmade beds, among moth balls left in drawers,

in glass ash trays where we empty our small change?  
Felled by the desolation of travel, in a strange town,

I watched the footage of a funeral on the local news,  
a child molested, strangled, left in a drainage ditch.

On it, I heard the hymn my grandmother taught me,  
a young woman who sailed alone from Helsingfors

to leave a severe home. When she reached Boston,  
no one met her at the docks, not brother or sponsor,

but a frozen harbor over which the snow came hard.  
In that motel room, I heard my grandmother singing,

the girl's father lying at her casket much as he'd lain  
with her on the floor on Sunday, reading the comics,

while she turned back the bright and colorful pages.  
Outside her white house he lay in his mensuration,

as the great God of suffering measures all children  
with swiftness and rapture. He lay atop the roof,

reaching out, driving the nails home hard and fast.  
Beneath him, his daughter lay as though in waking,

as my grandmother must have lain in her hotel bed  
when she understood her abandonment had come.

Next morning, I left my motel room without grieving,  
and without a good means to measure a father's loss,

unless I pictured a winter road between a cemetery  
and orchard, the branches laden and brittle with ice.

Last century, what men stopped at American farms  
with timely elegies, to arrive too late for the dying,

anonymous artists who painted the dead children?  
I've seen one girl in sleeping gown with hair undone,

and a boy in white trousers standing on the porch  
with his hat in hand as if he were saying farewell,

before he left home under the threatening black sky.  
This time I am the man who arrives late to witness,

and in measured lines sizes words to the desolation  
of a child I never met, and to her murderous lover,

himself no more than a child of the heavenly father,  
in whose city wretchedness is hammered into gold.