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Looking as They Should

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Abstract

On the ferry to the Stockholm Archipelago, Gunilla

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Looking as They Should

by Philip Wexler

On the ferry to the Stockholm Archipelago,
Gunilla, no child herself, told me her husband

was eighty. They'd weathered other marriages
and were newlyweds. He opened the door

before she could turn the key. He was expecting
me. "I'm eighty, you know, can you believe it?"

I didn't have to feign astonishment. He led us
to the patio in back, where he set down on a tray

the frosty bottle of Aquavit and three tumblers.
"You know," he said, pointing a shaky finger

at the sunset, the water, and the closest island,
"When I was young...notice I did not say younger

...I would look out at the water, a different water,
and dream of Swedish girls." We all laughed,

but not in disbelief. He stroked his bushy beard,
a touch of black still on the chin. "It's true,

you know," he added soberly. "And I of Swedish
boys," remarked Gunilla with an impish smile.

"I'm well aware," he said. "Yes, Anders, I know
you are, but I said it for the benefit of our visitor."

"So you did. Now why don't we offer him a seat?"
They insisted I take the solitary chair. They'd grab

two more presently. We toasted to the sunset.
They stood hand in hand looking as they should.

