



Hej !

How quickly time goes by. It has been three months since I last updated you on our Swedish Adventure.... As I write this, I realise that I may need to consider purchasing a laptop with a Swedish keyboard next time around..... who would have thought that the language my husband speaks has three additional vowels ( ö, ä, å) all very different in pronunciation (a little tricky, and very unfortunate when you struggle to pronounce *djur* and *sju- animal* and *seven- sju* sounds a little like '*gooh*' and *djur* sounds somewhat like '*juuur*' ).

Jacob and I are still renting our cozy one room studio in the ever- interesting Sodermalm. Our Prince Street home seems like a distant memory, despite us attempting to recreate a 'Mini Prince Street' by flying over with some kilim carpets, our favourite pots, some paintings and other wedding gifts, even an apron..... some may say '*lite konstigt eller hur?*'- a little strange or how?' ... we say that's just us! Jacob's work is going well, and most evenings I get a smiling husband saying how he is not sure he should be paid to have quite this much fun at work:). His work entails him going to exotic destinations (at least that's what I think), such as Warsaw and Oslo amongst others. We celebrated Jacobs birthday in true SA style, by ordering Swedish locally made boerewors, drinking South African wine (@ at Tim and Vanessa, you would have been impressed), and sampling our home- made biltong! Yip, you read correctly, Jacob and my father- in- law have assembled the most incredible little biltong maker- a little taste of home.

From my side, I am loving our second home. Six hours of Swedish lessons daily five days a week- that is a significant amount of Swedish.... I feel that I am moving in the right direction, and it's always fun to listen to Swedish conversations on the underground daily. Reading billboards and newspapers is great practice, and there are fantastic government sponsored learning- aids and online platforms for people with learning disabilities, hearing disabilities, dyslexia, etc, as well as immigrants and newcomers to Sweden. A great one I recently discovered is called *Lät Läs* (Easy Read). This is an online webpage with daily news, read in basic Swedish, with corresponding text. Podcasts are also a great learning tool, and I spend plenty of time repeating strange sentences to myself ( neighbours in apartments across the street who see me must assume they have a crazy person living opposite them ....). Recently, we were having a great discussion ( in Swedish), in class. Each student was asked to discuss the most common surnames in their home country, and the meanings, if any, of them. As I was listening, I was thinking, here I am sitting with - one Pakistani, two Germans, one Australian, one San Fransisco, one Iraqi, two Syrians, a Peruvian, a Brazilian, one other South African, an Irish, an Iranian, Moroccan, one Belgian, one Dutch, two Romanian, one Russian, and an Egyptian- an amazing experience...! Of course, I mentioned *Van Der* ...as the most common Afrikaans surnames- *From The*.... Interestingly, Swedens most typical surnames are those ending in-*dotter* and -*sson*. Historically, one could choose either their traditional surname or they could have chosen their fathers first name, and tagged -*sson* on the ending. The same goes for daughters. They could have chosen their fathers first name, and tagged- *dotter* on the end. This practice is legal and official today, hence Jacob and I could choose *Perkasson* rather than *Felländer*...*Michelle Lorraine Perkasson*.... not so sure about that.....

On Wednesday late afternoon I experienced my first Stockholm Nobel Prize Giving Frenzy: walking home past Stadshuset, with Nobel Prize Laureates and their families and other dignitaries, women in elaborate ballgowns and men in tails, arriving for the annual Nobel Prize Giving and Dinner. This event receives a huge amount of media attention of course, with Swedes recreating the actual dinner

menu at home (normally a secret which is revealed, along with the recipes, on the night of the awards).

So, as Stockholm consists of many little islands all interconnected, Sodermalm being one such island, I like to take a run along the water and around part of the island. It is a beautiful route, with many moms and even dads on parental leave, pushing babies and prams and dogs. The path meanders along the water and in between fur trees and is really lovely, with the occasional wooden jetty and a swim ladder off the jetty. It must have been early October, around 7 degrees, when I was out on my run, and decided to catch my breath on one such jetty. A moment later, two little ladies in their seventies arrived. One of the ladies acknowledged me, took the water temperature with a small thermometer, promptly removed all her clothes, including bra and panties, stood naked on the jetty for a moment, and climbed gracefully, nakedly, into the water for a gentle swim.....apparently not uncommon.... :)

Temperatures are dropping, hovering just above zero, not quite cold enough for snow ( but it is promised for the weekend). It is a very cozy time of year in Sweden, I am realising. We have short days, with the sun setting at the moment just after 1400. Shops and streets are decorated and illuminated with the most ornate Christmas lights I have ever seen, with each apartment outdoing the next. It really is beautiful. Jacob and I have just returned from one of the many Christmas markets, where glugg (mulled wine), peppakakor ( ginger cookies), elk and deer salami, and other such exotic foods are sold. It is dark outside (1500), Silent Night is being played by a travelling street musician, the air is crisp and cold and smells of cloves and cinnamon and mulled wine, and we are talking about the possibility of snow. It really is a lovely experience.

*Och så, Jacob och jag önskar vår familj och vänner som inte är med oss i år, en fantastisk och välsignade och säker jul och nyår.*

And so, Jacob and I wish our family and friends not with us this year, an amazing and blessed and safe Christmas and New Year.

We are in Cape Town for 10 days flying out on New Years Eve. We look forward to catching up with those who we can.

Love

The Felländers in Stockholm

