

I will relate to you such a tale that any red blooded man in his most erotic fantasies would find it hard to believe. You are, no doubt acquainted with the belief that Islamic suicide-bombers will reap their reward in Paradise as Allah has vowed that there are 72 virgins awaiting them to service their every need. I suppose it is every man's fantasy to have these delights here on earth instead; without having to extinguish his flame of life for it; and at this stage of my life that flame was burning brightly. However, I must say here and now that virgins take no part in this story. This, and I will reveal all, is just such a tale to make you wonder whether it is true or false, and render you green with envy. Firstly, I would like to make you aware of the events that led to this extraordinarily desirable circumstance.

Chrysler Corp. acquired Rootes Group in 1967 where I was working in the Advance Design Office. But by this time the British Motor Industry was already in dire straits with widespread disruptions in the industry, due to weak management and strong unions, with intermittent strikes occurring at the drop of a hat. A well known figure featured was Derek Robinson known as "Red Robbo" a shop steward at British Leyland calling the shots. The whole industry was in turmoil and by 1970 there were major redundancies everywhere. At Chrysler they were asking for volunteers so I obliged but they would not accept my application, I did not know I was that valuable to them, so I resigned anyway and gained employment with Volvo in Gothenburg, Sweden.

My friend and colleague Mike Dodson and I travelled together in his green Hillman Imp from Felixstowe to Gothenburg by Stena line Ferries. Another designer Neville Higgins came in his enhanced Sunbeam Talbot. We were met at the docks by our lead man, an Australian who told us to follow him to our new billet. We were led through the town centre admiring the views as we followed his car.

Eventually we ended our journey at the eastern part of Gothenburg at a maternity hospital. Surely not, to be billeted here. Fortunately, as luck would have it, and lady luck was certainly smiling at us that day, we were informed that we would be billeted at a large apartment block for the Swedish nurses attached to the hospital. The apartments were very similar to student accommodations for Universities. Times are a 'changing, so good to be full of joie de vie and so alive. Oh, to be in the right place at the right time, not forgetting that this was the age of Aquarius, free love, flower power, Mary Quant, miniskirts and hot pants. Mods and Rockers, the decade of youth. The music too was fantastic, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Rod Steward, Elvis Presley, Mungo Jerry- "In the Summer Time", Freda Payne- "Band of Gold", and my favourite Simon & Garfunkel- "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" One of the designers, Tom Thurber had a guitar and played it often in my apartment attracting a few nurses. This too was when the Swedish Government in their wisdom encouraged women in wedlock or unwed to have children and the state would take care and support them in order to boost the population growth.

So from May 1970 until July 1971 I had found my own garden of south west Eden (SW Eden) Sweden. My slice of Paradise itself. I had to pinch myself to make sure

it wasn't a dream. We would hold parties almost every weekend, someone opted to hold one, inviting all and sundry and then another weekend it would be someone else to devise another party. Monika, one of the nurses lived in the apartment opposite mine would frequently come over for coffee, or I would go to hers. Her friend Goldit had her own apartment in the suburbs, and I grew very fond of her. Of course there were many others that we got to know through the course of that year. There was Lizabeth, very beautiful, Nicky, Lisa and others too numerous to recall. They were all kind, thought provoking, charming and enchanting. Certainly there was no lack of feminine company and mostly so uninhibited.

To illustrate this I will tell you a story. It was the Eve of Santa Lucia a very important festival with the Swedes, held on the 14 December. I think it was one of the Americans that held the party. As parties generally go it went on beyond midnight, the buses had stopped running and taxis were unavailable, everyone wanted one as drinking laws are very severe in Sweden. Even if the passenger is drunk the driver gets clobbered for it. There was this young lady at the party who was unable to return home. Being a gentleman and sober to boot I said she could stay with me and she readily agreed. That's another endearing thing about them they are so naive. When we got back to my place I offered her a coffee just to sober her up a bit, she declined, wanting to get in bed immediately. She removed her jumper to expose her nakedness and it was not long before all she had on were her knickers. That is what I mean about being uninhibited!! She climbed into my bed and I followed shortly after. Don't let your imagination run away with itself as nothing happened as I was too inhibited to take advantage of a drunken fair young maid. It was none the less very cosy in bed with her. Now comes the embarrassing part. Early in the morning, very early in fact there came a knocking on my door. Come on girls give me a break, I staggered out of bed, gently removing the arm across my chest and opened the door. There standing before me were Monika, Lizabeth and Ella draped in white shifts with a crown of candles on their heads. They entered the room singing Santa Lucia with a tray of coffee and ginger bread cats a tradition in Sweden. You should have seen their faces when they saw who was in my bed, their eyes nearly popped out of their heads. However being Swedish they took it in their stride and we all sat on the bed eating the ginger bread cats and drinking coffee. I think I must have gained some Brownie points in their eyes. Then it was off to work for me and another Santa Lucia ceremony at the Volvo canteen, but this time with mulled wine with raisins and almonds in the drink, together with those cats and cake. The Santa Lucia maidens were beautiful too. Very romantic and brightened up the dark morning, totally civilised I would say. I must confess that was one of the best years of my life. That is the trouble with growing old. The worse thing about old age is remembering things when you were young. "And yet the menace of the years/ finds and still finds me unafraid/ I am the master of my fate/ I am the captain of my soul". from *Invictus*. Well I have told my tale. Do you think there is any truth in it or is it just a figment of my imagination.

