

Sweden 1958, I-IV

by Walter Bjorkman

Sweden, 1958 pt. I

I milked a cow once, age ten, a year after my Dad died & we spent
the summer on the old family farm in Sweden
they only had seven cows, and had just bought one milking machine
didn't know how to do it
just tried to squeeze on the teats
didn't know I had to grab up on the udder and pull
Unca Ole laughed
Every morning they put one of those stainless steel containers
on the side of the road to be picked up
it was their only real source of income
but I had fresh fish for lunch almost every day
caught from the dark running streams that surrounded
the tiny farm

Sweden, 1958 pt. II

I shot a gun once, age ten, a year after my Dad died & we spent the
summer on the old family farm in Sweden
I probably shot a fake one in Coney Island once before
but this was a real one, a successful distant relative
deigned to come by his poor relative's farm and showed off
a gold-plated revolver
he took me to a shooting range, it took me
all I could do to pull the trigger of a rifle
the recoil landed me on a hay bale on my ass
my ears exploded
I never shot a gun again
and didn't go to Viiet Nam

Sweden, 1958 pt. III

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I smoked my first cigarette, age ten, a year after my Dad died & we spent the summer on the old family farm in Sweden
I tried to smoke one I stole from my Dad's pack of un-filtered Camels
age 7
but didn't know how to light it by sucking in, threw it down the stairs
and got my ass-wupped
I actually smoked it behind a barn, up the road, enticed by the local bad boys
who so dug having kids from America around
I never stopped smoking, won't til I die
Joni Mitchell started playing music so she could buy smokes, age eleven.

Sweden, 1958 pt. IV

I saw my first Rock 'n Roll movie, age ten, a year after my Dad died & we spent the summer on the old family farm in Sweden.

I had heard "Ain't That a Shame" the year before at a neighbor's house, but still mostly listened to "How Much Is That Doggie In The Window" type

besides Unca Ole and Tante Karin, a retarded, for lack of a better word at the time, was cousin Greta, a late teen - she later appeared on the cover of Sweden's equivalent of Life Magazine for succeeding on her own after they died

well, somehow, they allowed her to take me & my just turned 12 year old brother on a bus into the "big town" nearby of maybe 5,000 souls

to see Jailhouse Rock. There were two theaters in the town, both playing the movie, first run there, the first wouldn't let us in - for the

violence, not sex (at the local lake, half the people bathed naked).
We snuck around the corner to the seedier one & they let us in.

Greta swooned & pelvized her hips along with Elvis, I was just blown
away by the music.

When back in Brooklyn, I went to every R & R movie shown, except
those crappy Elvis ones

and gave my soul to the devil's music.

