

The Abba Diaries

Confessions of an ABBAholic

By Arne Overbeek

Thoughts, notes and quotes on ABBA.
The artists, the music, the clothes (and all in between)

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Author's Note

The short story 'The Prologue' is inspired by true events, but it is not a literal recounting of them. The story has been shaped, expanded, and romanticized through my own imagination—an interpretation of how moments might have unfolded rather than a factual record of how they truly did. Names, conversations, and circumstances have been adapted for narrative effect. Any resemblance to actual persons or events beyond the initial inspiration is the product of creative exploration.

*On the short story "The Concert", Although the concert did take place on October 24th 1979 in The Netherlands, this story is pure fiction, and has been shaped, expanded, and romanticized through my own imagination
many thanks go out to Vincent Rijpert en Mark Laarhoven for sharing their memories of the Abba concert in the Netherlands in 1979.*

All notes, quotes, reflections, and statements in 'The ABBA Diaries' are entirely my own, written from my personal perspective as a devoted fan. They are not intended to express political views, promote particular opinions, or persuade anyone in any direction.

Every entry has been crafted with the utmost respect for ABBA as a group and for each of the four members—Agnetha, Björn, Benny, and Anni-Frid (Frida)—as individuals. Nothing within these pages is meant to cause harm or misrepresentation.

This book is simply a heartfelt tribute, born from admiration, curiosity, and the joy their music has given me.

Arne

“I still have faith in you

I see it now

Through all these years, that faith lives on

Somehow”

Björn Ulvaeus / Benny Andersson

The prologue

The pearl of the lake - as the city was called, slowly awakened under a blanket of gray-toned clouds. The lake itself, one of the biggest in Sweden, seemed to agree with the whispers of a 'Loch Ness' like monster roaming somewhere deep in the dark gray waters. The city was quiet and except for the occasional car, and a bus dropping off some early commuters going to work, the streets were empty.

On top of the characteristic entrance of the old train station, situated on the southern bank of the lake, the National Blue and Yellow flag hung quietly in the air. It seemed to be waiting for the first whispers of a cold northern wind that was sure to come. From a speaker somewhere in the building, came the soft tunes of Connie Francis' hit "Everybody is somebody's fool". It brought a smile to the young girl's face. Although Connie's hit was a few years old, to her, it could still compete with the new Beatles' song "All you need is love". While autumn had begun to rule the land, the cold shivers the young girl started to feel couldn't easily be explained by just the weather. Still, she put her hands on the collar of her coat to keep out any wind. A flock of seagulls appeared in the sky screaming as if to welcome the new week. Looking up at the old building that had celebrated its grand opening in the spring of 1865, she heard the puffing of a train nearby. A cold shiver again crawled down her spine.

'Are you ok?'

The older man standing next to her put a warm hand on her back. It felt comfortable and safe. She nodded with a sigh.

'It's a big day'

'You'll be fine.' He answered.

She glanced over her shoulder one more time before entering the station. The city that had been her home for all of her young life, lately, had started to feel small and oppressive. She was ready to spread her wings.

'How long will it take?'

'At least a few hours.' The man looked at his watch. 'We better hurry.'

The inside of the train was warm and humid, and after a while she felt a headache coming on. Just the one thing you could do without, being on a long train journey. She took off her coat and draped it on her knees, then looked down on her green dress with large polka dots and bell-shaped sleeves,

wondering if she had made the right decision standing in front of her wardrobe earlier this morning. She had been confident looking in the mirror, but now she wasn't too sure if her outfit was the right one for the occasion. The dress stopped just above her knees, and she wore long white boots with platform heels. Together with her long blond hair, thick winged eyeliner, and eyelashes of the same fashion, she looked like the typical teenager of the sixties. Eager to conquer the world and make a mark on its future. Still, in her own mind, she felt more like a country girl visiting the big city. *Well, She thought; it will have to do. There's nothing that can be done about it now.* She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and bit her bottom lip.

'We're getting close. Just another hour or so, I think.' The man next to her grabbed a handkerchief from the pocket of his coat and firmly started to clean his big dark-framed glasses. She looked at him in adoration, noticing some bits of his hair were starting to colour a silver-gray. A few new lines she hadn't seen before now marked his forehead. Through the years, he had been her support and a shoulder to cry on. Her refuge in time of need. Although she herself felt more and more to be a woman of the world, to her father she would always be the little girl that had sung about two little trolls in the middle of the living room and take a big bow to all that had been willing to listen. He would care for her and handle her affairs as long as he would be able to, and she was happy about it.

She looked out the window and saw the well known Swedish countryside flashing by. Red and yellow coloured forests and the last bits of green grasslands, interspersed with the occasional lake or stream. It made her melancholic, and her thoughts drifted off to years long gone. A little girl struggling to find the right tones on the old, big piano. The euphoria of the moment when she realized she could create her own tunes and then write her own songs. The memory brought a smile to her lips.

A decade later, she would form a trio with her friends and have some local gigs, but it had been the guys that formed a dance band, that opened up a whole new world to her. She loved to be on stage with them and perform. There was a sense of belonging that she had never felt before. Who would have thought that they would allow her to sing her own song. A song she wrote just a year ago and was now the reason for her trip to the capital city. A city she had never been to before.

'A penny for your thoughts?' He looked at her with a hint of worry in his eyes
'It's OK Dad. I was just thinking about the boys'.

'What about them?'

‘I just wish they could have come along.’ She crawled against her father and put her head on his shoulder. ‘I don’t want them to think I don’t appreciate all they’ve done.’ The older man took her hand in his. ‘The studio was clear about it, they wanted you and you alone. The guys know this is a big change for you. I’m sure they will understand.’ She wasn’t so sure. As she understood it, once the band had found out they weren’t part of the deal, they had been reluctant to give the studio her name and phone number. Nevertheless, she had longed all of her life for this moment to have her voice heard, and this was it. The teenage girl slowly dozed off to the rhythm of the train’s wheels hitting the track. Bringing her to a new and exciting, but uncertain future. It was the shrieking sound of brakes being applied, that woke her up again. They had arrived.

Stockholm was built upon numerous islands as well as parts of the Swedish mainland. With its large buildings, Lake view boulevards, avenues, and beautiful green parks, it was considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. The young blue-eyed blonde was awe struck by everything she saw. And it wasn’t before she stood in front of the tall, dark building with big letters on the facade that screamed ‘PHILIPS’ when she realized what she was about to do, and why she was here. Standing in front of the building that housed the Philips Recording Studio.

‘Are you ready?’ Her father squeezed her hand gently. She gave a shivering sigh, then felt her stomach. ‘I don’t feel so good.’

‘OK, just look at me.’ He took her chin in his hand and pointed to his eyes. ‘Now, just take a deep breath.’ She did what her dad told her and let her lungs fill with air, then slowly blew it out again.

‘Feel better?’

She nodded.

‘You will be fantastic. I know it. You can do this’

They entered the building and asked for directions, then descended the stairs that would lead them to the studio areas. They were halfway there when she suddenly stopped. ‘Listen!’

‘What?’ The senior man looked at his daughter with a surprised expression on his face, then he heard the soft melodious sound of violins coming from the wall. The overwhelmed looking teenager had a hand on her mouth. Slowly her eyes started to twinkle and a big bright smile burst through the surface. ‘It’s my song. They’re playing my music.’ The closer they got to the bottom of the stairs, the louder the music got. The few violins were now transformed into an

entire orchestra. She grabbed her father's arm. 'Can you hear it? It's beautiful. How did they make it so... real.' Little did she know, the man responsible for the music arrangements she was hearing would in a few years time astound the world by conducting an orchestra, dressed as Napoleon, and she would be in the middle of it all.

They reached the door that seemed to be the one thing standing between her and the music. She felt her father stiffen for a second and looked up at him. Their eyes crossed, and they knew what the other was thinking. Opening this door would change their lives forever. It was October the 16th, 1967. Her name was Agnetha Fältskog, the first A of ABBA



(A young Agnetha - Contributor: Roger Tillberg / Alamy Stock Photo)