

LEAVING ÖSTERMALM

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I'm sitting in my apartment with Calle, he looks like he fell out of a Ralph Lauren catalogue, he's asking if I want to join him at a rave this weekend. Rave? Is there such a thing in Stockholm? I imagine strange people wearing ugly, rustling neon clothes and buffalo shoes. It feels like an eccentric proposal.

My apartment where we sit is on Östermalmsgatan, a street that is almost two kilometres in length, stretching from Lärkstan all the way to Karlaplan. The buildings are mostly five stories high, with elegant, ornamental façades. It is a typical turn-of-the-century Östermalm apartment: high ceilings, white stucco and large windows that are south-facing. My mother decided to decorate it with contemporary chandeliers and oriental carpets. I chose several framed Mario Testino prints for the Stockholm-white walls, and that's about all I have done in this place.

My apartment is no more than five minutes away from that which is, in my opinion, the most beautiful street in Östermalm - Danderydsgatan, it's lined with cosy town houses and the Architecture School, which happens to have the reputation of being the ugliest building in Stockholm!

I feel ambivalent about Calle's idea. I don't really think it's my thing. I won't fit in there.

"Oh, come on," Calle says, "I'll sign you up, and when the weekend is here you can choose if you want to come along or not."

He types in my name and address into his *Macbook Air*.

"Don't worry, you'll love it!" he says, and gives me a pat on the shoulder.

The weekend arrives, and I've made plans with some girlfriends to meet up at Sturehof, a classic restaurant right in the heart of Stureplan. We go there



often. Usually we eat dinner in the large, well-lit dining room, where they serve traditional Swedish dishes with a French touch, or we sit at the top of Obaren, up the stairs from the dining room.

Obaren is relaxed, with dimmed lights and loud music, attracting a younger, stylish clientele. It is good to sit at the small, black table that looks towards the bar. If you feel restless, you can have a go at the Spider-Man pinball machine. Summer tends to be rather busy at Sturehof. The outdoor seating is usually crowded, we sit enjoying glasses of rosé wine and people-watching in the sun.

It's walking distance from my place, so I walk down Engelbrektsgränd then cross through Humlegården diagonally. Humlegården is a large park in central Stockholm, perfect during the day for young families and dog owners, as well as kids hanging out at the skateboard ramp. When I was at high school, we used to come here and play brännboll.

I pass the statue of Carl Linnaeus and then the Royal Library, an imposing, elegant building from the 1800s where I spent many hours before exams, then I get to Stureplan and I'm a minute away from my final destination, Sturehof.

Once inside Sturehof my cell phone rings, it's Calle. I hear his voice telling me to come to his place. My girlfriends are in the midst of a heated discussion whether V or Suite is the best 'VIP-room' at Sturecompagniet, which is three minutes away from here. Here I am with the same people, going to the same places, week in week out - even the after-parties have become routine. I ought to pull myself together. The fact that I have never even bothered to go to Södermalm is a proof that I am totally restricted. I have to go.

Calle's place is crowded with people. But these, his more alternative friends, look nothing like I had imagined ... Where are all the crazy ravers? I feel a stitch of disappointment, but I will still secretly look upon them as freaks anyway, even though really they look no different to my friends.

Calle lights up when he sees me and pours each of us a glass of wine. "Join in!" he says, "this happens only twice a year. If you don't like it, then you'll know. Then at least you tried anyway."

When the pre-ordered large cab with the direction of 'Nacka' arrives, I jump into the back seat with him. The taxi takes us out of the inner city. Turn of

