



## An impossible journey made possible

For some young lovers, this might have marked the end. Not so for PK and Lotta. Letters flew between the two. Still sketching tourists, PK started planning the seemingly impossible – an overland journey of 7,000 km to rejoin Lotta in Sweden.

‘Flying was out of the question,’ he says. Eventually, he realized a pushbike might offer him salvation and bought a ladies’ Raleigh – it was half the price of the men’s model. He set off with his passport, a spare pair of trousers, a sleeping bag – and \$80 sewn into his clothes.

The route was tough, through Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, but PK recalls it fondly. He says he became part of a ‘family’ on the hippy trail. ‘We helped each other. We looked after each other,’ he says. He talks of how he helped a German girl, after a car accident in Afghanistan left her badly injured; and of how a Belgian traveller pointed out to him that Sweden was, in fact, a different country from Switzerland!

His talent as an artist attracted attention along the way. He managed to get past the border guards into Pakistan by drawing their portraits. He earned enough money to eat and travel – Lotta says being an artist was a kind of currency for him. ‘He could get very close to people quickly. When you draw them, they trust you.’

PK ditched the old bike and bought a slightly less shaky one. He was getting there, slowly but surely. Were there any doubts at all? ‘On the journey, I had doubts that I would die and wouldn’t be able to fulfil my meeting with Lotta,’ he says. ‘But I knew in the next life I would find her,’ he says. Lotta adds that she had no doubts. ‘It was just a matter of time that you would turn up,’ she says. ‘His journey was a test for us being separated.’

PK’s journey was accelerated when Linnea – the German girl he had helped – sent him a train ticket to Vienna, and again when a gallery owner in the city, impressed with both his story and talent as an artist, handed over the means to the final leg of his journey – tickets to Copenhagen and Gothenburg.

## Together again

About 16 months after their parting as newlyweds, PK and Lotta got together again. It was a moment of intense emotion. PK, overcome with excitement and tiredness, started to cry. Lotta took him for a walk in the local park, where they sat among the flowers, drinking coffee.

‘It was a great step for my parents to embrace our lives together,’ says Lotta. ‘My mother had been initially cautious, but I had my willpower and strong belief that this would work.’

They never seriously considered returning to India to live. But they set up a scholarship for children in PK’s village. Their children, Emilie and Karl Siddhartha – known as Kid Sid – are now 31 and 29. ‘I love that they know that as soon as we met, we wanted to be with each other,’ says Lotta. ‘We will never be separated.’

PK says, ‘Bumping along on my bike, my goal was just to get to Lotta.’

