

# **Britt-Marie Was Here**

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Confession: I'm not much of an audio book junkie. In fact, I seldom listen to one unless it is the only copy of a book available, but Joan Walker's funny and poignant rendition of this Scandinavian novel entranced me.

I couldn't wait to get back to the poor, out of the way Swedish town of Borg--football crazy and poor--where most of the inhabitants were racing to sell their homes and leave after the 2008 financial crises. How did a middle-aged wife who had not worked outside the home or travelled anywhere end up in Borg?

Well, first her husband of four decades began an affair with a much younger woman. So Britt-Marie decided to leave him. When she went to the employment agency, there were no jobs, so she returned the next day and cooked for the young lady who worked there a lovely salmon dinner. Britt was nothing if not persistent.

Soon she was driving alone to Borg when she had seldom driven anywhere. Of course, her car suffered a bit of a wreck but luckily in the parking lot at Borg's only car mechanic's place which was also happened to be the post office, pizza place, deli, and several more types of business rolled into one. 'Somebody' owned and ran the place, and Joan Walker's rendering of Somebody's voice was crusty, wise, impatient and forgiving all at once.

Although she had no experience with sports, Britt-Marie finds herself running the small town's Park and Rec Department. But first things first. Did I mention that Britt is compulsive and likes things exceptionally clean? She swears by the window cleaner, Fraxon, which seems as necessary to her life as breath itself.

So after too much idle chit chat with Somebody (at least as far as Britt was concerned) she goes next door and spends the entire night spiffing up the place. Soon the resident rat joins her, and she invites the mousekin to an evening tête-à-tête. They share tea and half a chocolate candy bar. Thoughtfully, Britt-Marie leaves the rat's uneaten portion out for later.

Soon the town's kind policeman falls in love with Britt-Marie, but her husband returns in a fancy car to woo her again. And without a lick of experience she finds herself coach of the town's soccer team, which has always been last in the league, if not a team to be laughed off the field.

The children beg her to coach and she does so with the help of a young friend, Sami, a teen who raises his two younger siblings after their mother's death. They're invited to play in a much bigger town against a much better opponent.

By this time many in town have asked Britt-Marie for her counsel and advice even though her own life plan is incredibly muddled. On the day of the big game, a tragedy occurs and the reader roots for both the rag tag soccer team and for Britt herself that she will make the right life decisions which just have to include staying in Borg. A touching book that will make you laugh at life's absurdities.

Posted by Dory L. on December 19, 2016

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