

THINK  
CLEARLY

# Annual Report 2025

# Quick 2025 Q&A

Was the BMC worth it? 100%

Did you stop crashing? No

Broken bones? Two

Are you okay? Yes

Four months with an infant? Great

Is four kids too many? Nah

Quit the smartphone? Mostly

Writing still? Yes

A book? Slowly

Wear the navy suit? Rarely

Still want to live in NYC? Yes

# A recovered writer

Last year, I identified myself as a “recovering writer,” trying to reconnect with writing. I’ve kept using that title in my newsletters this year, but now that I pause to consider it, I feel like I’ve recovered. The act of writing—and the identity of being a writer—feels as real and natural as ever. I have a corporate job, but my true work is writing. I still write and share publicly, both in my newsletter and internally at work, but this year I’ve also found a lot of joy in writing privately. Not just notes, which I’ve always done, but full fictional stories and other experiments, just for myself. The joy is in the activity of writing, and not just the public display of the output.

As I look back on 2025, a few specific stories called to me. Other things happened—important and meaningful things—but they didn’t demand to be written. For example, I spent a lot of time in our new summer house, both running in the forest and renovating the garden and the house. Maybe someday, when we feel that the renovation is more complete, I will also have a story to tell about all that, but for now, it’s simply a place we go to and an activity I engage in. So instead of trying to squeeze stories out of everything that happened, I wrote the stories that called to me—the stories I wanted to write.

Apply the same logic when you read: pick out the chapters that speak to you and leave the rest.

— Mathias

# First day of parental leave





**On my first day of parental leave I packed Sonja for her early morning nap in the stroller and we went out while it was still dark and snowing. While she slept I kept running laps within distance of the baby monitor.**



The boss and the servant.

# Sonja and Juno



# A tale of two marathons

I ran two marathons in 2025. Both were somewhat spontaneous, each in their own way. I'd like to tell you about both. The story begins on January 2nd. It's the first day of my first-ever fully paid parental leave. With the first three kids I was the sole breadwinner in NYC, and we could not afford for me to take real leave. I took time off around the birth and worked flexible hours as an independent, but I always had to make sure there would be enough cash to pay the next rent. This time it is completely different. Sonja is six months old. She can drink formula and has started exploring solids, so I can take care of her basic needs. Most noticeably, there is zero financial stress this time. We are two adults earning steady incomes, and while I'm on leave, I am still getting my full salary from Ørsted. For the next four months, all I have to think about is how to take care of myself so that I can take care of Sonja. This is day 1. It's 7:30 in the morning, it's dark, and it's snowing heavily outside. Sonja woke up early, got some breakfast, and she is ready for her first nap of the day, so I've packed her up in the stroller, wrapped in a super warm infant sleeping bag. I've put on trail running shoes, a hard shell jacket, and a giant headlamp, and we head out into the darkness.

I don't know what it's going to be like to be on leave. I've spoken to many friends about it, both moms and dads. The experience is mixed. Nobody regretted doing it, but most people also found it challenging and said they were very ready to go back to work. We are used to having our everyday life built around routines. Get up. Get dressed. Drink coffee. Go to work. Come home. Make dinner. Clean up. Watch something or read a book. Go to bed. Repeat. We all have our own variations of course, but whatever they are, we all do a lot of repeating our own routines. When you are on leave with an infant, a lot of that structure falls away because you are not going to work. And on top of that, an infant does not follow routines. Sure, they might have a few days or even a few weeks of relatively routine-like sleeping schedules. But you never know if they wake up earlier or sleep later. And the moment you feel like they have gotten into a routine, they change

it. Suddenly they need only three naps instead of four. They also eat much more frequently and need a lot more cleanup, which you can't always do right after the meal because they have some other need. You need to be both planning the next meals while dealing with whatever is happening right now. You need to look after the baby, but you also need to keep a good grip on yourself. Otherwise, you will crash by noon, and then it's a really long day. Compared to your everyday routine, it's chaos.

So my hypothesis is this: for me, the lack of work-given day-to-day structure is most similar to my experiences of being self-employed. When working for yourself, you need to create and maintain your own daily structure. And if you are doing client work, it can't be too rigid. Sometimes client calls and meetings are at weird hours. And you have to think ahead and do sales and business development work, while ensuring that you deliver on existing commitments. It's certainly not the same as taking care of an infant. But it's the closest experience I have, so that's what I'm leaning on. What I know is that for me it will be critical to take care of myself. Without that, everything else will be miserable. And I know that my chances to take care of my own needs and wants can never be taken for granted. So before my leave started, I've written a short set of guiding principles for myself. One of the principles is to do what I want to do when Sonja sleeps. My priorities are: exercise, rest (if needed), and writing (if possible).

I'm used to doing two hours of exercise (my commute) on the bike every day, which I can't do right now. Hence the trail shoes and headlamp. I walk with sleeping Sonja in the stroller until we get to a tiny little hilltop about 1,5 km from home. I park the stroller, turn on the baby monitor, put it in my pocket, pull up the Strava app on my phone to track, and then I begin. I run in the snow up the path to the top of the hill, back down the steep side, past the stroller, and back up. One loop. Repeat. Another. This marks the beginning of something I would have sworn I would never do: running laps. No scenic route. No 'adventure.' Just laps. Up the hill. Back down. Past the stroller. It's a success. I get to do what I want to do, and Sonja sleeps. I keep going until sunrise. Then my phone battery dies. I end up doing 33 laps and 9,5 km including the walk to and from the hill. Happy and relieved, we come back home. It's already a great first day. The next morning I'm back. This time I run a slightly longer loop (~0,5 km) around a tiny pond next to the hill. The hill loop is just a bit too short, but the pond loop is perfect. Just within range of the baby monitor in case she wakes up. And I notice how I

feel increasingly liberated. There is no route. No plan. I don't need to know in advance how far I will run. I don't need to plan a route or make routing choices along the way. It reduces the activity to the absolute essence: taking the next step (and staying warm in the snow). 16 km. 1 hour and 40 minutes in the cold.

The days went on like this. Sometimes I would do a few more laps during her mid-day nap. Often simply around the block or the empty lot next to our building. I think most people around me found it obsessive. But it really worked for me. Every day started with me having my (mental) battery charged and my body loaded on endorphins. It's just so much harder to get frustrated or feel down when your veins are full of happiness hormones. It was never difficult to get out of the door. In rain, darkness, wind. I just wanted to get out. There was no big plan. Just the principle of taking care of my needs when I could. Some days I would take a nap when Sonja was sleeping, if I really needed it, but here's the challenge: Sonja would often make little noises, a cough, even a little cry, during her naps. Mostly she would fall back asleep on her own, and occasionally I would need to help her, give her the pacifier or rock the stroller gently for a moment. When I was trying to nap, these noises would alert me and send my heart rate racing. Ten minutes later I would be back at resting, and she would make another sound. Instead of getting a nap, I would find myself lying there, heart pumping, trying to relax, really wanting to sleep, but actually just getting more stressed out. If I were out running, this wasn't an issue. I would just hear her, go to the stroller, rock her back to sleep, and resume running.

We also did other things together. Baby swimming every week. Lots of diaper changes. Playing on the floor. Infinite meals and snacks and wiping and cleaning after. My other principle was to clean up while she was awake (if I could) and never when she was sleeping, because that was my time. We had also bought a trailer that could attach to my bike so I could go for short bike rides with Sonja in the back. But these all blur a bit. Most days felt quite similar.

One thing surprised me. In my parental leave fantasy, I would be home all day, hanging with Sonja, baking some sourdough bread, and doing slow cooking for dinner. This was often enough the reality. I also imagined that in the afternoon the kids would come home from school and spend time with me and Sonja in the kitchen, eating some of that



North Coast  
Ultra 15K,  
March 15th

warm bread. But this never happened. I could tell them in the morning: "Today you can come home early, and I'm baking." And they would say "Yay!" but then in the end they went to play with their friends instead. Or attended their various sports activities. I remember feeling a little bit disappointed. But in reality, it was such a nice confirmation of the fact that they are now so big and independent and engaged in living their own lives, so even when Dad is at home with warm bread, there's other stuff that is more important.

Now back to the story: It's been about a month now. Day 34 to be exact (yes, I counted each day, just like I counted my breads and my notebooks). I've been running daily except four days (and three of those I went for long bike rides), tracking 52 hours in January. The first weeks were all slow runs, typically around pace 6:00 min/km and heart rate around 130 bpm. I've started noticing that I can also run faster. It's dry today and we are heading to baby swimming (5 km, semi-run with the stroller) and I've put on my lightest shoes (Saucony Kinvara 12). On the way to the pool, Sonja is still sleeping and we pass by a running track, so I decide to do a few laps without the stroller. I run as fast as I possibly can for a full kilometer. Then slow down for a bit and let my body recover. Then I do it again. I have no clue how fast I'm going. I'm still tracking my runs with the Strava app on my phone, which is very inconvenient for checking mid-activity. But when I arrive at the pool I can see that I've beaten my own personal record for 1K: 3:37 minutes. I had no idea I could run that fast. But I'm very excited about it. Even though I've only done all these slow runs in the mud, it's like my legs are suddenly on fire. On the way back from swimming I go by the track once more and I decide to give it another go. When I return home 15K later, I've beaten my 1K record (3:10), my 1 mile (5:42), and my 5K (20:19). The next day I pack Sonja and the stroller in the car, and we drive out to the hill where I sprinted in cycling shoes with a friend last year (that story is in the 2024 Annual Report). It's 49 m of elevation across 220 m with an average grade of 21%. The first 2/3 are uneven stairs and the last 1/3 is steep and rocky hillside. The all-time record is 1:07. Once Sonja is asleep in the stroller I get ready for this uphill sprint. First, I walk up slowly as recon. Back down. Then I run it at 70% to get a sense of how it feels (fucking hard!). I'm ready to give it a shot. 3, 2, 1, GO! I sprint up the stairs, struggling to find a good rhythm. Legs are heavy. Across the little plateau and up the last steep section. Push push push. I did it in 1:13. Six seconds from the best but enough for third place. I'm disappointed. But I'm also not done yet. I came here to try. I take some

time to rest and then decide to give it one more go. Everything burns. As I get to the top I'm coughing my lungs up. At least that's how it feels. 1:09 this time. Enough for second place. Not exactly what I had hoped for, but I'm done for the day.

What blows my mind is how quickly my body seems to recover. I went from running 5–10 km per week to 70–90 km per week when I started parental leave. I ran 25 km on Tuesday with the track sprint both before and after swimming. Then Wednesday another hour and a half, 400 m of elevation and the hilltop sprints. And yet today I'm feeling great. Can I break that 5K record from Tuesday? I decide to go for another speed record attempt. Sonja sleeps and I'm doing laps. Faster and faster. First 5K done in 18:30. I keep going, because the first kilometer probably wasn't as fast as now, and Strava will look at the fastest 5K from the entire run. At around 37 minutes I've already done 10K and my legs are still feeling good so I keep going. After 13,5 km Sonja wakes up. I quickly grab the stroller and begin running with it. I go on the bike lane where the surface is smoother. I quickly map a route in my head where we won't have to cross the street, and only need to make a few right turns, so we can keep the pace up. Six minutes later, after 15 km I am finally ready to stop. I've completely broken my record for 5K, 10K, and 15K all within the same 59 minutes.

I always thought that I would forever be a slow runner, but now I am officially hooked on going fast. I need more fuel on this fire. I buy two new pairs of light and fast running shoes: Adizero Boston 12 and Takumi Sen. And after much deliberation and inner resistance, I also buy a used Garmin Fenix 5X sports watch. I put it on my right wrist. My real watch stays where it is. But I want to be able to track my runs more easily than with my phone, and I want to be able to see how I'm doing along the way. Then the weeks go by.

It's Sunday March 15th and it's race day. For my birthday my siblings gave me a bib for a 15 km trail race called North Coast Ultra. And I'm running...from the parking lot towards the starting line. Overflowing with confidence, my declared goal is to finish in top 5. However, right now I need to make it to the starting line before the race begins. We are late getting here, and as I sprint towards the start area I can hear the speaker on the sound system: "...and we are counting down from 30..." I still can't see the starting line but I know it's down this path and into the forest. "15 seconds!" Now I can see it. "Are you ready? 10, 9,

8..." Almost there. As the speaker gets to "3," I step into the front of the pack of people, "2, 1, GO!" and I run. Two runners pull away in front of me. Another guy passes me and then another. "That's it," I tell myself. I'm in fifth place now so I can't let anymore people in front of me. I glance at my wrist. It's only been a month and I've already upgraded to a newer and smaller Garmin model (Fenix 7S) which tells me the pace is 3:40. Heart rate 180 and going up. I just try to hang on to the two guys in front of me: #3 and #4. Small trails. Lots of hills. Sand. Mud. 25 minutes into this madness I give up and let the pair in front of me get away. There's nobody visible behind me, and I relax a bit and my heart rate drops to around 175. I feel confident. I've got this. I just need to keep this going for another 40 minutes or so. But 20 minutes later I suddenly see them coming from behind. My slipping pace has allowed them to get closer. I push myself back into overdrive. There's no way I will let them catch me now. I keep them at bay, sprinting up hills to try to knock them out. With less than 2 km to go we get to the beach. Sand and stones but no ideal path for running. Every step is effort and my legs feel like concrete. I have no idea how close they are. Finally, we turn away from the beach and it's a sprint to the finish line. I squeeze the last juice and collapse, gasping for air on the forest floor. My fifth place secured in my first trail race. I don't think it was on that day, because most of what I remember was that I couldn't really walk. But it was around that time that some seed of an idea started to grow inside of me. I was beginning to wonder if this might be the time of my life where I would be able to run a marathon. On March 28th, six weeks before the CPH Marathon, I signed up for the 'waiting pool'—a marketplace to buy bibs from people who were selling. I had no idea if I would get lucky, but I began to prepare as if. On April 8 I ran a half-marathon (61 laps around the block) in 1:38, and then the day after I did another half-marathon in 1:30, because I wanted to get a sense of how it might feel to run at such quick pace on tired legs. I ran intervals to push my lactate threshold and increase my speed, and snatched a few of the local Strava segments. Finally, on April 17—three weeks before the race—I was offered a bib and bought it immediately. I had also agreed to take over a bib for Hell In The North, a trail half-marathon with more than 400 m of elevation gain, on April 21. It was 20 days before the marathon, and I was debating if it was too risky to run. I decided to go for it, but without going full throttle, and finished 12th. Then I biked (slowly) from the race to the summer house, about 40 km away.

When I think back to the marathon itself, it feels like a distant dream. Most of my memories are about all the preparation that came before. The training and the planning. I can remember that I had set myself



Copenhagen Marathon, May 11th, running in my trail shorts, a tshirt and with a hydration vest amongst runners in leotards and short shorts. I went with what I knew from my practice. But looking at the photos now I do feel that it looks rather odd.

an A-goal, based on what had been seen in my numbers during training. I knew that I could run at pace 4:00 pretty comfortably for a long time. If everything worked out well, and with a little bit of luck, I believed that a goal time of 2:52 would just exactly be within the realm of possible. My B-goal was to finish in 2:59:59. In case something didn't go perfectly, and without any luck, this still felt attainable. My C-goal was to finish the race and complete my first marathon. I had also made a mental strategy. I had divided the race into four quarters of 10,5 km each, and for each quarter I had carefully written a mantra that I could focus on.

For the first quarter my mantra was: "get going." Don't do anything crazy, but also don't worry if you are going a bit too fast. Just ease into it. Feel the race. For the second quarter my mantra was: "stable operations." The time to really focus on getting the pace and heart rate stable, eating, drinking. For the third it was: "remember why you are here." Because this was really the unknown territory. This is when I expected it to get rough, and where there would still be such a long way to go, that it could feel tempting to slow down or give up. This mantra was about holding on to the fact that I didn't join a race just to stop halfway. I joined a race to find out what I can actually do. And for the last quarter my mantra was: "let it go." Not as an invitation to give up, but I just knew that if I was still going strong after 30 km, I would also want to race. The point was to remind me that I am free to do what I want, and if what I want is to race, then I can race from a place of pure freedom (instead of a pre-determined commitment). But also if everything was going sideways, I still wanted to give myself freedom for the last 10K to just do what would be most meaningful in that moment.

Finally, I also had process goals: a fuel and hydration strategy, and a goal of smiling, waving, and enjoying the moment as much as possible. When the gun actually went off, all there was left to do was to move my feet and see what would happen. And I just ran. And ran. And I was smiling. Everyone around me seemed to be closed off in their own bubbles, staring into the distance. Face without expression. I was looking at the spectators, curious if I would see anyone I knew, and just enjoying how my legs were moving so swiftly along. I tried making small talk with some of the other runners, but I got a sense that this wasn't the time for that. But I kept smiling. And I saw my kids cheering for me. My girlfriend. My siblings. Friends. There was music. At the half-way mark the clock said 1:26 and I felt amazing. Now it was into the unknown, and I could hear the soundtrack from Frozen II in my head—Elsa following that strange inner siren voice that compels her to go and seek beyond the safety and comfort of everyone she's ever loved:

“Don’t you know there’s part of me that longs to go / into the unknown.”

And as I am going, and I’m beginning to sense a shift in my legs, and the watch says 26 km, suddenly there’s Jesper. A friend and co-worker and ultra-runner, who has been guiding me in my training and planning and preparation for months. I had no idea he would be here. And he doesn’t just wave as I run past, he runs along with me for a little bit so we can talk. I tell him that I’m starting to feel it. He assures me that I’m looking great. That moment kept me high for kilometers. Not only did he come out to cheer. But he obviously knew exactly where I would have the most benefit from his support, and he made sure to be right there. As I keep going, I begin to see my pace slipping. Not a lot, but a few seconds per km on average. And if I push myself a bit more for a few minutes, I can see that I can gain it back, but I also sense that there’s a risk if I push too much. I’m completely in the unknown territory. I don’t know where the edges are. I don’t know how close I am to my limit. I see runners around me who suddenly stop and grab their leg as the muscle cramps up. I have less than 10K to go and I decide that it’s better to be a bit on the safe side and avoid cramps, even if it means that my pace slips a little bit. I pass the guy who beat me and came in as #4 in the North Coast Ultra 15K. He is struggling. I keep going. The last six km the pain is really growing. Muscles. Feet. Joints. Of all the photos of me from that day, the three photos where I’m not smiling are the ones from the finish line. In those images you can see the pain. I’ve given it my best and cross the finish with an official time of 2:53:55. I stumble onwards until there’s a patch of grass and I collapse on the ground for a while.

I couldn’t run for a while after that, and as my parental leave had come to an end and I was back at work, my training shifted naturally back to the bike and my daily commute. I tried to keep up the running a little bit, but it was so frustrating to see how quickly my speed evaporated. What had felt so easy before was now hard. And what had felt hard but doable before was now utterly impossible. Every run made me feel a bit diminished. The marathon performance felt ever more impressive, but also like a door that had closed behind me. A level of performance I would likely never inhabit again.

I ran a few trails during our summer holiday in Norway, and found a Strava segment up a hillside, with 500 m of elevation gain and ~10% average incline, that seemed possible to snatch. I also snatched another local segment. But mostly my running form just kept deteriorating.

It's 6:30 in the morning on Saturday November 1st. I'm in New York for an extended weekend and I'd had lunch with Sue the day before. My original plan was to go for a long run around the city on Saturday morning, so when Sue told me that she was going for a long run as part of her marathon preparation, I decided it would be even more fun to run with her. We're meeting somewhere on the Williamsburg Bridge. I'm coming from Lower East Side and she's coming from Williamsburg. It's dark and cold. I didn't eat any breakfast, but I stopped by a deli and bought a chocolate bar. Sue is a veteran of more than ten marathons. She has the plan and the route. I'm tagging along. We run south along East River as I eat my chocolate bar, past the South Ferry terminal (where I stop to buy a glazed donut) and around the financial district. Up along the Hudson, all the way up to around West 100th street before we turn around and head back. Pace has been brisk, but good, and now we realize why: for the past 14 km we've had a significant tailwind. Now it gets quite a bit tougher. I'm surprised to feel that my legs are actually feeling stronger. It's like they finally warmed up and found a sort of "infinity gear" where they just go on their own without me having to push myself. We slow down a bit as we go back down and around the Battery Park and head back up the east side. When Sue is done for the day, I feel that my legs are still up for more. I've already done 32 km. If I do another 10 it will be the second marathon of my life. Why not give it a go? I cross the Brooklyn Bridge into Dumbo, go down along Brooklyn Heights and into Cobble Hill where I do a few final blocks, before I stop to find a good bagel place where I can get something to eat. I text my friend Daniel (who lives nearby) for a recommendation and he tells me where to go. Shortly after he shows up to say congrats and we sit down for coffee.

I don't know if I will ever want to run another fast pace marathon in an organized race. I doubt it. But I'm pretty sure that it won't be the last time I run a spontaneous marathon somewhere. And now I can do it at my own pace. I don't need to prove how fast I can do it, because I've already done that and I'm happy with the result.



Trying for the record  
up Herstedhøje



Sónja gets so much love and attention from her older siblings and she loves it so much. "Wanna go for a walk?" said Noah. Sónja went to find her shoes and off they went.



It wasn't all running. We also used the trailer for bike adventures.

Playful eyes



# Light Phone III

I first met Joe Hollier because he had applied to join the 30 Weeks program—a design-based startup incubator in New York City which was funded by Google, developed in collaboration with all the leading design schools in the city, and operated by Hyper Island. I was working as an independent consultant at the time, and Hyper Island was one of my clients. I really wanted to do more work with them, and I had been asked to support the admissions to the program. All the applicants came to NYC from all over the world to participate in the two admission days. They were assigned to different groups and had to work as a small startup and come up with an idea to pitch. The point wasn't the idea itself, but for us to observe them as they collaborated. I was assigned to the group that Joe was in. He stood out. The others were clearly very motivated to show that they were collaborative. That they were listening. That they could take initiative. Willing to share. Willing to compromise. I did not envy them, sitting there, trying to do some sort of meaningful work, ideating, managing the process, and working with people whom they had never met before. All the while, they were being intensely observed by some bald dude who takes lots of notes, knowing that those notes will have a direct impact on their potential admission into this very small and prestigious program. Joe seemed more concerned with his own notebook and trying to make sense of the ideas getting thrown around. My initial assumption was that he was probably too much of an artist and that he would struggle to really lean into the whole business thing. But as the days went on, it was clear that he had something to offer the group: a vision. And please don't get me wrong: the others in that group were all very talented and accomplished. And they all did some pretty cool things both in the program and later. But in this scene, they were the ones who really listened when Joe spoke. And when they evaluated their own effort in the end, they all pointed to Joe's special contribution. Joe had been the first person in that group that I thought perhaps wasn't such a great fit for the program. I couldn't have been more wrong. This was 2014.

In 2024, Joe's company announced their latest product: the Light Phone III, and I pre-ordered it immediately. It was the sexiest tech product I had seen in a long time. They shipped the first batch in early 2025 and I received mine.

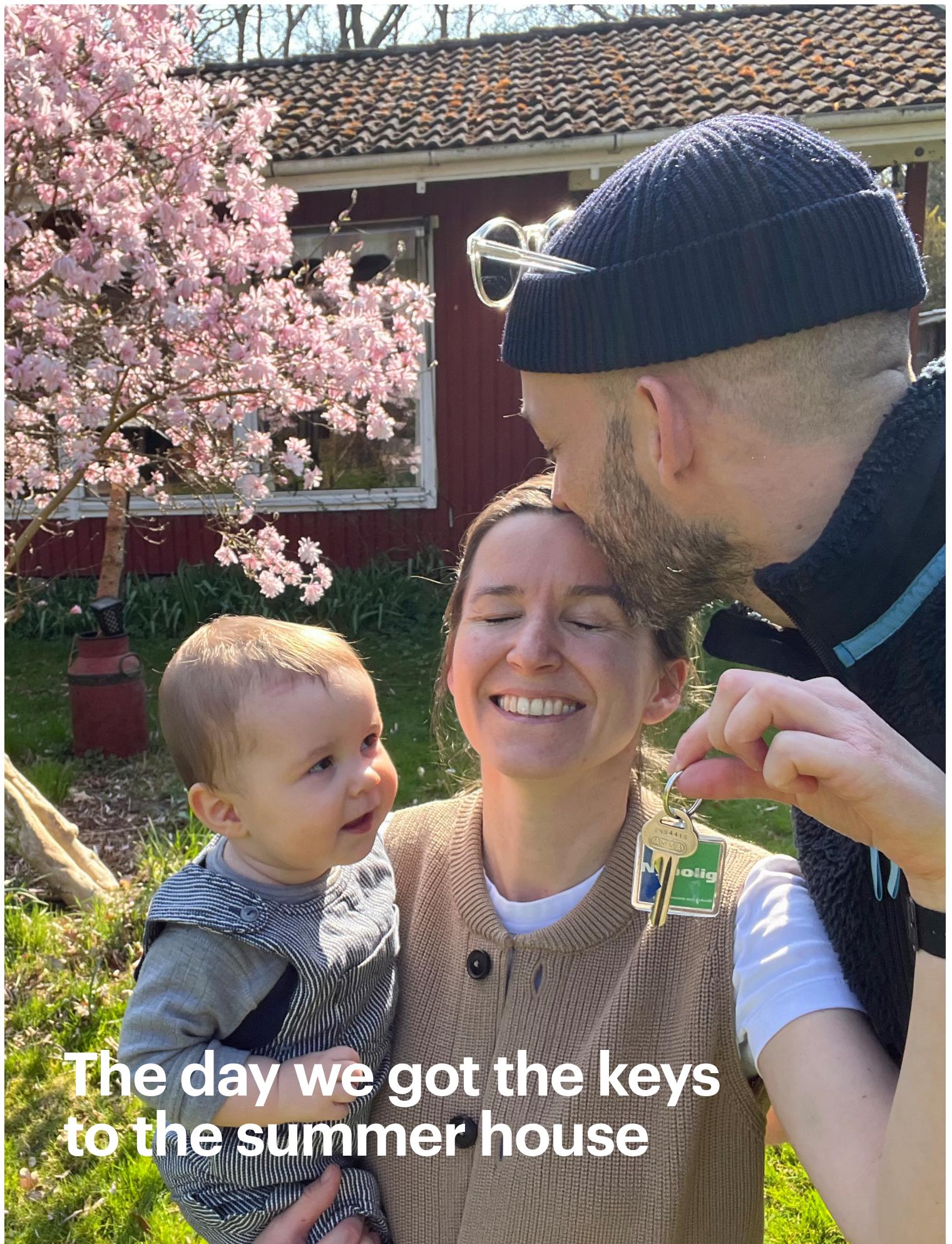
Back in that incubator, Joe had come up with the idea for an ultra-light, super simple phone that you would have as an addition to your smartphone. He was tired of smartphones taking his attention and creativity away. He wanted to be able to escape, but without becoming a disconnected hermit. In the program he met Kai, who had previously designed mobile phones for Motorola, and they decided to team up. Together they launched the first Light Phone: a ruthlessly minimalist credit card-sized phone that had 9 speed dials that you could update via a website. As it turned out, it wasn't just Joe who wanted to escape the attention economy: Joe and Kai sold more than \$1 million of Light Phones on their first Kickstarter and used that proof to raise further capital and start production. I had one of the early phones and it proved that the idea made sense in reality. Going to the playground with my kids was just better when I wasn't constantly reaching for the phone in my pocket. The Light Phone II came out a few years later. Bulkier but still small, with an e-ink screen, contacts, voice memos, text messages. It wasn't nearly as cool or sexy. But it was a lot more reliable than the first one, which would run out of battery or just disconnect. I really made an effort to use it and to leave my smartphone at home as much as I could. It was liberating, and yet, I would drift back to my smartphone eventually. It's hard to say why. It was a bit unreliable, and some people would complain to me that the sound quality was bad when they called me. But I'm not 100% sure why it just was hard to make it stick.

This year I've been using the Light Phone III and now I really feel that it works. It fits my need for a second phone, which allows me to leave my smartphone behind. I will keep the smartphone. For two-factor authentication, for work, for Garmin and Strava, for many things. But I try to keep it at a distance. I try to mostly avoid having it in my pocket. All calls get forwarded from my primary number (in my smartphone) to a secondary number which is in the Light Phone. I keep the Light Phone in my pocket, so if they call me from the school because of something with the kids, I get the calls. And then there are a few people who have the number to my Light Phone, so we can send each other text messages directly on that one. But I don't want all my messages there.

That would defeat the purpose. Messaging people can also be a huge distraction, even if it is a bit less than TikTok. And then there is the real killer feature for me: a truly delightful camera. A camera I enjoy using to capture little moments of everyday life. A camera I use to capture creative ideas. A camera that produces images that I often enjoy looking at afterwards. A camera without lots of settings or distractions. A camera that doesn't do too much post-processing. Most of the photos in this report were shot on Light Phone.

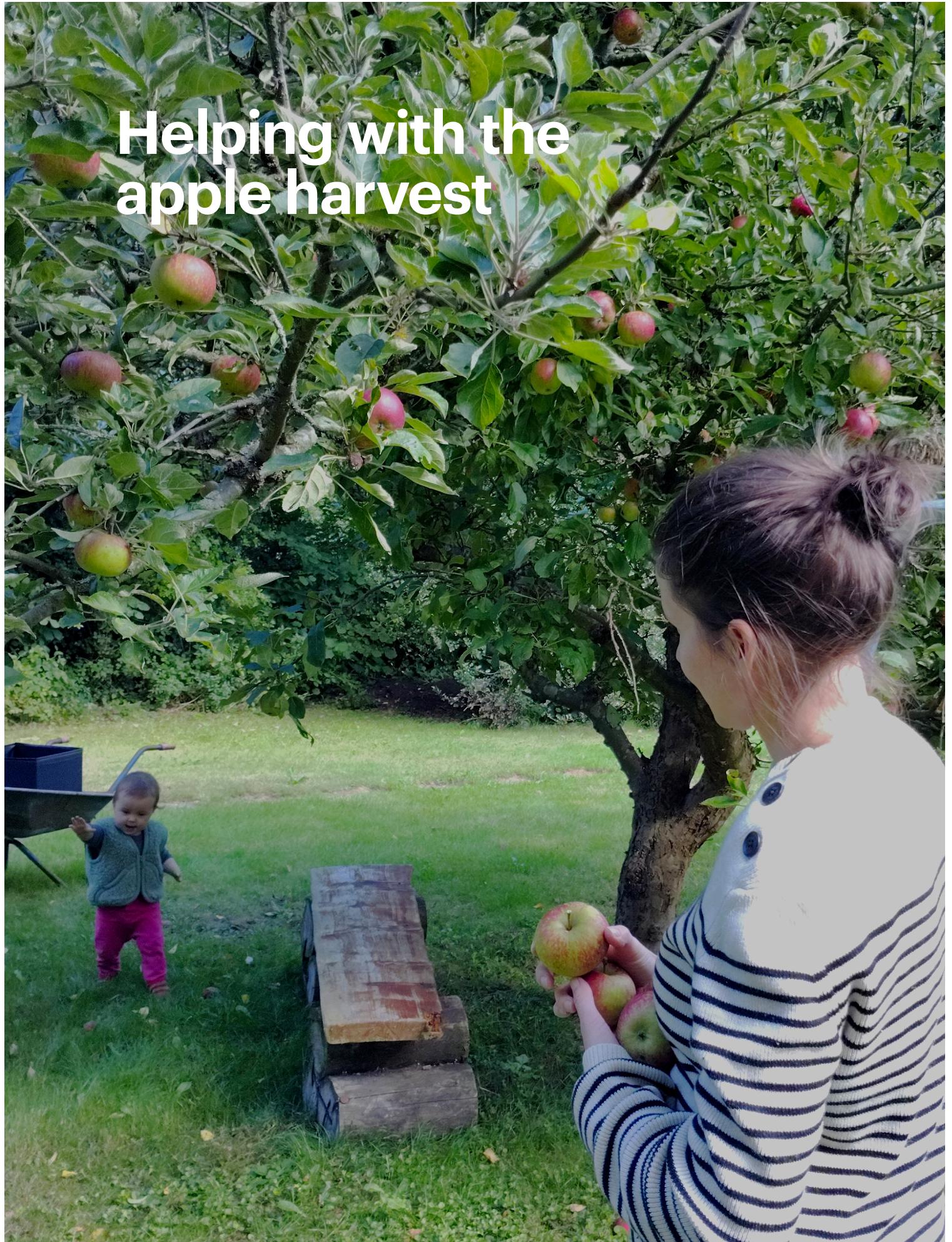
Putting it all together: aesthetically pleasing hardware that feels amazing in my hands; reliable connection and sound quality for calls; an interface that is snappy enough to use for texting with a few key people; and a camera that I love. This is what it took to really help me break free. And there should be a feature on the way to use it for contactless payments as well, which I look forward to, but for now, I can get by with my Garmin watch for payments.

I'm surprised by many things in this experience. I'm surprised by how much I feel the difference. I'm particularly surprised by how immediate it is. I don't need to leave it behind for hours or days before I begin to relax. It's near instant. But with that, the most surprising thing really is that I don't do it even more. Given how amazing it feels and how immediate the benefit is, it's sort of incredible that I still find excuses in my brain to bring the smartphone along, just for that odd chance that I would need it for something. So the journey isn't over. I still use my smartphone more than I want to. I am still thinking of ways to further tweak my setup to optimize for what I want: freedom. Which apps are the biggest time sinks? (Probably Safari, which I've thought about disabling thousands of times, but it is also just so supremely convenient). And are there more contacts I want to share my Light Phone number with and move them over? It will be ongoing. But no matter what, I count it as a real victory this year. The Light Phone III really helps me with the simplest and most effective hack—the idea that Joe started with back in 2014: instead of investing more time in configuring the smartphone to try to make it less distracting, you simply leave the smartphone in a drawer at home.



**The day we got the keys  
to the summer house**

# Helping with the apple harvest





Sonja at the beach near the summer house.

# Fractures

I really didn't want to crash again on my bike. And if I were to crash, I was hoping that I wouldn't break any bones. Sadly, neither wish came true this year. I don't want to dwell much on the accidents, but I do want to recognize each of them in a factual way.

I crashed on my new bike because another bike from a side street with poor visibility turned out right in front of me and I couldn't react in time. I flew forwards over the handlebars and landed on my left shoulder. I was furious at first, but legally speaking it was my fault since the intersection implied "yield to the right." Also, I was going faster than this combined pedestrian and bike path was probably intended for. Torn clothes, a scratched Light Phone III, and a bunch of small fractures to my left collarbone—the same one I broke in early 2024—and a bruised rib.

The second crash wasn't on the bike. I was running to the office and on the last 6 km I was speeding up and setting a faster pace. And then my foot hit a small edge on a slightly uneven sidewalk and I completely lost my balance. Due to the speed, I fell on my left knee and elbow and did an awkward somersault. The result: another bruised rib. Bruised ribs are, in many ways, more painful than a fractured collarbone. They make sleeping very difficult because you can't lie on that side, and all movement while lying down is agonizing. Even breathing hurts. The pain comes gradually the first five days and it takes several weeks before it goes away.

My third crash was in a bike race. I was strong enough to ride with the front group, but I didn't have the technical skill to ride in a tight pack with a bit of elbows and pushing. After an hour and a half, I slammed into the ground, this time with a fractured collarbone on the right side, but no bruised ribs, which was a huge relief.

I want to stop crashing. It's not fun. Not for me. Not for my family. I am

committing to being a more considerate cyclist, riding slower and more carefully on bike paths and in traffic. I will stop doing bike races. Maybe in a different life I would have learned the bike handling skills, but not this one. If I want to compete, I can do running races.

However, I accept that there is always a risk. If I didn't run and ride, the long-term health risks would be much more severe. And more than anything, these crashes and the pain have mainly reinforced my sense of appreciation and gratitude.

I am grateful that the collarbone healed quickly both times. After the first fracture, I was back on the bike within a week. The second time, I could use my right arm for everyday purposes and stop taking pain relief after about a week, and was back on the bike after six weeks.

I am grateful that the bike survived with only minimal scratches. I really appreciate that this time I finally got myself a Zwift home trainer, because it has added a whole new dimension to my training. It allows me to do really tough sprint intervals in a safer environment, and I can now ride those long virtual climbs that I would otherwise have to travel for. My favorite is the Zwift version of Mt. Ventoux with 19 km and some 1,500 meters of elevation.

I love riding my bike and running, and through this I am ever more certain that this love is unwavering.

# The color of a collarbone fracture



# Inside view





**My first home trainer**

# Uma is still on the ice



# The verdict

This year I've ridden around 5,000 km on my new BMC Teammachine SLR01. While I struggle to really find the right words to describe how it feels to ride it, beyond the trite bicycle magazine tropes such as "light, responsive, precise, and comfortable," here's what I can say: as a kid and as an adult, I've often dreamt of owning and driving a sports car. That curiosity: how would it feel to be behind the steering wheel of a Porsche or Ferrari? The acceleration. The shifting. The steering. The sound. When I'm on the BMC, those fantasies are gone. I feel like I have something so much better.

Unless I rode it yesterday, I still frequently get surprised by just how delightful it is. It fits me so well, and I take good care of it, but it's also not so precious that I hold back on riding it. I still can't tell with certainty if it is faster than the Storck I had before. Mainly because I don't really care to find out anymore.

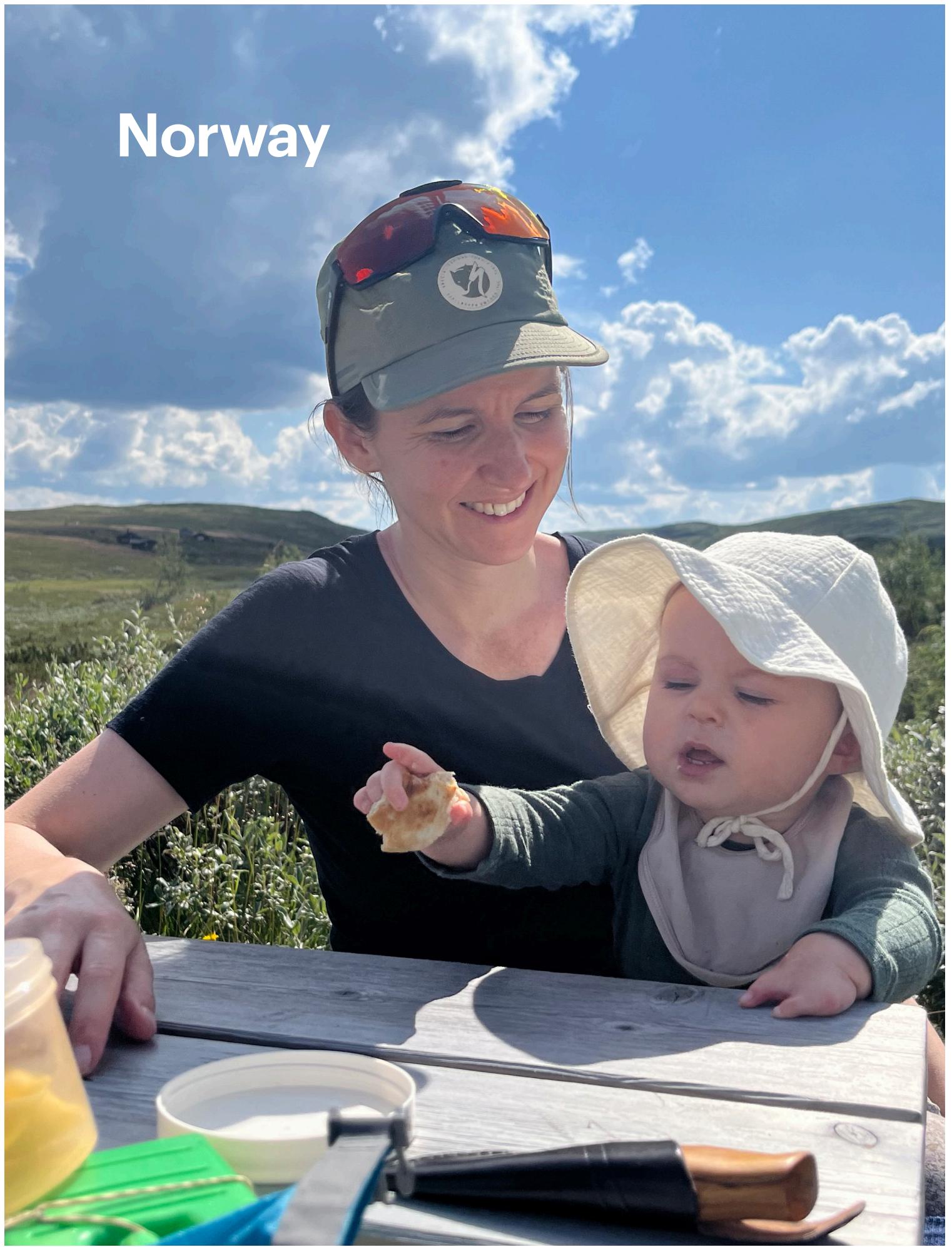


Juno playing her first official soccer match.



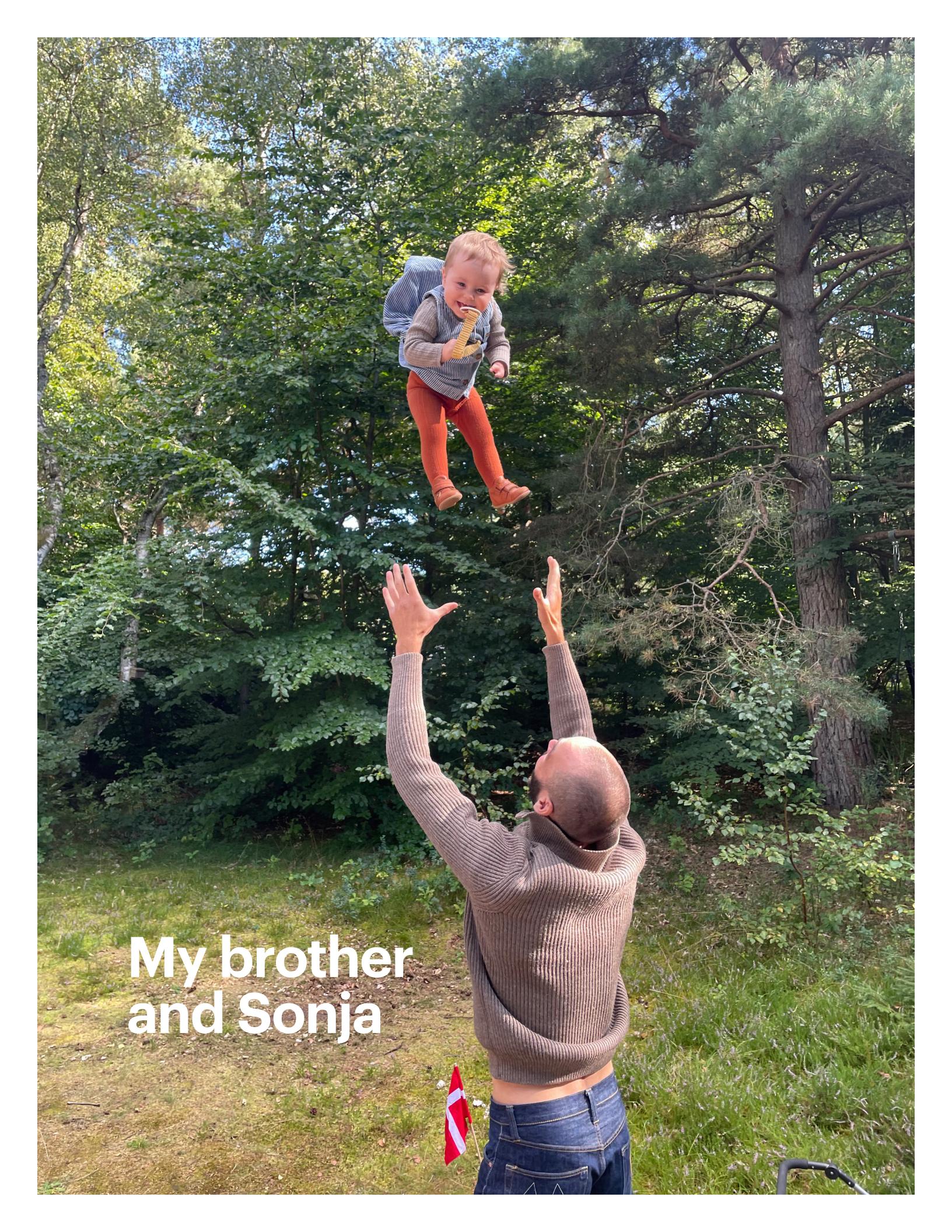
We spent most of our summer holiday in Norway hiking with four kids.

# Norway



# Hiking in Norway





A man in a brown ribbed sweater and blue jeans is standing in a grassy clearing, throwing a baby into the air. The baby is suspended in mid-air, wearing a striped shirt, orange pants, and tan boots. The man's arms are raised, and his head is looking up at the baby. The background is a dense forest of green trees and bushes. In the bottom right corner, a small red and white flag is visible on the grass.

**My brother  
and Sonja**

# Chasing what's interesting

For the past few years, the ChatGPT-driven AI-chatbot hype has felt to me a little bit like the pandemic (without the fatalities, of course): a frustrating disruption that I've been mostly in denial about. I could sometimes forget about it for some time, but it would always come back to me. I tried dabbling a bit. I also tried more forcefully to commit to really explore and experiment. However, as soon as I felt I was beginning to understand just enough to imagine what could be possible, I would hit an unforeseen or inexplicable limit, and I always ended up really disappointed.

I found the systems and the interaction really impressive. Back in 2019, I had made some small experiments with building a neural network-based generative AI program. It was mainly for illustrative purposes, but I had managed to train a small model on a stack of our client proposals, and the model could then output some rather lucid prose in a style that felt like a proposal written by a (drunk) coworker, with lots of typos. It worked well enough to believe that it was possible, and poorly enough that I find the responses of ChatGPT to be mind-blowingly impressive. But I just couldn't find the use-cases that were meaningful to me. I didn't like the writing it produced when I tried to make it imitate my own writing, and I also didn't really want to stop writing. Most of the people around me seemed mostly concerned with finding little convenient time-saving tricks, for example in analyzing and summarizing user research, which I disregarded as boring, and given my series of disappointments and overall low trust in the responses, also frankly to be quite foolish.

In 2014–16, I was flying around the world and delivering Hyper Island Master Class workshops about how to embrace technological change. A decade later, I hadn't even turned forty, and here I was as the grumpy old man. I was just like all those participants from a decade before. Like them, I was skeptical, judgmental, afraid. I knew this wouldn't help, but I just couldn't get properly excited.

When I traveled to NYC in late October, one of my goals was to re-engage in new conversations around AI, and hope that someone, somehow, would help me open up and let go. One of those conversations went a bit like this: “Hey, long time no see. How are you? Me? Good, yeah, busy... so AI?” I don’t think it was me who brought it up, it was just the inevitable topic and we were both hungry to play, somehow sensing a conversation partner with equal hunger, trying to make sense of a new world and willing to share our own pieces in exchange for new perspectives and better questions. We had worked together five years before, and this conversation felt exactly like a continuation of one of our past creative discussions: high energy, fast pace, and yet with intense focus and real listening. It was invigorating. What I remember hit me along the way was that this guy wasn’t chasing some simple convenience. He was not interested in getting an easy but boring result. He was chasing what was interesting, even if it meant putting in lots of extra effort. Instead of trying to get the AI to do his design work, he was trying to get the AI to simulate a panel of critics, where each panelist represented a synthetic version of some of the greatest designers of history. He wanted this panel of virtual legends to discuss and critique his work so that he could make it better. This flip of roles was a big flip for me as well. I began to wonder: what if this can help me write more? Not by writing for me, but by giving me really good prompts that make the words flow out of me? It reminded me of 2019 when I hired an editor to help me write a draft of a book. She would take my existing newsletters as input and then create a structure and specific questions and send them to me. I remember using the time on the subway to write out responses to the questions on my phone and then sending them back. That way I was able to focus much more easily on the question in front of me, and let her manage the overall structure and flow. What if I could do something similar with AI? If AI could make writing, which I enjoy so much, even more enjoyable, then this could really be worthwhile. Also, it would circumvent the whole hallucination problem, because the answers would all be mine. I decided to give it a try. I instructed ChatGPT that it would have to write a portrait for a magazine, based on an interview that it would conduct with me. I gave it my annual reports for background. It seemed to understand the task, and it began asking me questions. It felt really exciting. I wasn’t too concerned about if it could write a good magazine portrait in the end. I wasn’t really counting on it, it was more just a way

to give it some sort of direction for inquiry. What was exciting was that the questions it started asking were questions that I wanted to answer. It made me want to write, and the words started flowing. Tom was around in the apartment around this time and later that night he also remarked that it was the first time he had ever seen me so engaged with my laptop. I couldn't put it down. I wrote extremely long-winded answers. Like any good interview subject, I had no consideration for the job of editing later. I just let it flow. Side stories, anecdotes. Not trying to be coherent. And each time I was done with one question and submitted it, it immediately gave me the next one. None of the usual ChatGPT chit-chat like "wow, that's an interesting answer, thank you for that" and no commenting, even if I ended my answer with a conversational "If that makes sense?" It was just all-business: next question.

Towards the end of the interview, I got a bit frustrated as the questions became more and more like a therapy session. It felt like it was a bit beyond what you would reasonably ask an interviewee, but mostly these prompts weren't so interesting to respond to. I tried asking if the interview would be over soon, wondering if it had just gotten stuck in a loop of asking questions. Tom was pretty sure it would never end the interview and write the article unless I told it to, but in the end it did as it had promised and wrote what I thought was a really terrible magazine portrait. However, with a single round of feedback on the terrible first draft, it produced a rather lovely, and of course extremely flattering, portrait.

The experiment was a huge success. For the first time, I really felt that the AI was doing work for me that was helping me do my work better and more enjoyable. By reversing the roles, I got to focus on the part that I really wanted to do.

Since then I've built a much more organized archive of my past writing. Both the annual reports, the podcasts, and all the old newsletter issues. ChatGPT couldn't listen to the podcasts and it couldn't transcribe them. But it helped me write a simple command line script that installed Whisper on my laptop, and another script that took all the MP3 files in a folder and used Whisper to transcribe each episode. Then ChatGPT could read the raw transcripts, normalize them a bit (remove noise and add some basic punctuation so it's easier to read), and then write short summaries with the main concepts. For the old newsletters that were

written and drawn by hand, I managed to get it to look at the image file and both read the text, describe the drawings, and explain the connection between the text and the drawing.

This process was quite tedious and frustrating at times. Sometimes it would really do a remarkable job of reading an image. Then I would ask it to do the same once again with a batch of five images, and it would make up very plausible-sounding descriptions, but they would still be completely wrong. There seemed to be some built-in limit and instead of warning me when I hit the limit, it would just switch from doing actual analysis to pure guessing. It was only because it was my own material that I knew it well enough to catch these lapses.

I'm sure there could have been a smarter way to do it. But I'm also glad that I spent some time working through this and running up against these issues. Now that the archive is more structured into pure text form including textual descriptions of all the visual content, I can use it actively. I can find and explore old issues and it helps me find less obvious thematic connections across issues written at completely different times. I've also been exploring how it can help me do some of the 'wrapping' around my writing—the lead-in and the framing that helps readers connect with it. I enjoy writing about ideas, but sometimes I struggle to write a short post for LinkedIn that gives people a reason to click the link and read what I wrote. I know that this is important. To understand the audience. What if the AI could help with this too?

As the year wraps up, I'm more excited about generative AI than I've ever been previously. I'm still unsure how to best set it up, and if I should use NotebookLM or Gemini or ChatGPT or some other platform or a combination. I still only have a few simple use-cases for myself. But I've seen and felt how it can be possible to do something that isn't merely convenient but actually interesting in some way. I've seen that it's possible to get the AI to play the role that I don't want to play, so that I can focus on playing the role I love. And I think it could be possible to pick up that book manuscript that Helen and I started in 2019, and continue shaping it into some sort of Think Clearly book, with AI helping me as an editor and organizer, so that I can do the writing.

# New York

Since I left NYC in early 2020, it has been an ongoing struggle for me to recalibrate my identity. NYC had become such an integral part of my sense of self. Who was I really, when I wasn't there? In 2024, I went back to visit for the first time in more than four and a half years, and this year I went back once more. On the surface, this trip was much like last year: an extended weekend mainly to be back in my old neighborhood and visit old friends. But it felt very different. Last year was like a mission. A sort of quest to overcome a ghost that had haunted me. There was a lot of uncertainty; I had no idea what to expect. I also felt I had to go back and 'confront' the neighborhood where we had lived as a family, knowing that it would likely bring up difficult emotions. It turned out amazing. The dragon was slain.

This year it was completely different. I knew more or less exactly what to expect. I made just enough plans in advance but also kept a buffer. I knew I would rather see fewer people and have enough time with each, than to rush around trying to spread myself thin. I knew I would feel right at home. I had no demons to confront. I could focus my energy on the things I cared most about: the conversations with people who inspire me. During the trip I felt free and lucid. I shot a lot of photos, and I enjoyed it. Photos of things I simply wanted to capture. And I could still hear the inner critic judging it and saying, "Those photos are embarrassing. Nobody cares about your bad photos." But I didn't care about the inner critic or anybody else's opinions. These were just photos that I wanted to take. For no other reason. And after coming back I've kept taking photos like that. I've been taking pictures of my bicycles and running shoes. Objects I care about.

What I realize is that these past five years I've been asking the wrong question. I've been asking myself, "Will I ever move back to NYC?" But that assumes that I'm either living in NYC or somewhere else. But whenever I've been back, it feels like I'm still living there. It's like I've never left. And it's not like I feel that I'm split: my body in Copenhagen and my mind always in NYC. Not at all. I feel grounded and present. It just feels like I live in two places and I split my time between them. My commitment is simply to continue going back and forth.

# Looking ahead

When I look ahead into 2026, I don't really have any clear goals, and I don't feel compelled to set any. I'm really happy with where I'm at. I like my job. I love my family. We have a great home. I'm in a really good relationship. I enjoy physical exercise, but I don't feel like I need to achieve new levels of performance. There's also nothing that I'm longing for.

I've tried looking at new gravel bikes, and they look exciting at first with 13-speed 1X drivetrains, deep and wide aero rims, and integrated handlebars, but after a short while I realize that I'm more interested in just riding the bike that I have. I've tried looking at really fancy running kit, and I almost got excited about a new jacket (from SOAR), but in reality I just want to spend more time running in the jacket I have. I've even tried looking at new watches (Submariner no-date, Tudor Pelagos LHD) but the excitement only lasts for an hour or less. I already look ridiculous because I wear my GMT on the left wrist and my Garmin on the right. And I don't really want to swap between watches.

So my plan for 2026 is to save and invest (broad, diversified index funds, nothing fancy). To build a capital buffer without any specific goal or plan. And then simply enjoy what I already have.

**Thank you for being part  
of my life.**



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Robert Jacobsens Vej 26C  
2300 Copenhagen S  
Denmark

[www.thnkclrly.com](http://www.thnkclrly.com)

[m@thnkclrly.com](mailto:m@thnkclrly.com)  
+45 22212355