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A BILLION HEARTBEATS

*“My husband will die! You must do it now!”*  
– Else-Marie Larsson

On that clear October day in 1958, seventeen-year-old Hakan Elmquist wondered why they were in a frantic rush to reach the Karolinska Hospital. On the way, his father, Dr. Rune Elmquist, quickly stopped at his office to fetch a puck-sized plastic device.

Hakan did not know what the small thing was, but the whole affair must have been urgent, as his father weaved and sped through Stockholm traffic.

Elmquist finally told his son that the strange object was a heart pacemaker. He explained what it was and that an identical device was implanted into a dying man just the day before, but it had failed when the surgeon accidentally fried the delicate electronics with a cauterizer. They were now trying to deliver the only existing spare.