



Jason Armstrong

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## RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS MADE BY MARIA SVANE

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Christine Hodges

27 March 2009 12:25

To: Advokatfirmaet Ulla Wulff Hansen

Cc: Maria Svane, Jason Armstrong

**FROM :** Christine Armstrong  
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**COPY:** Maria Svane

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**DATE:** 27 March 2009

### **RE : RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS BY MARIA SVANE**

**during her telephonic conversation with Jason Armstrong on 12 March 2009**

#### **ATTACHED :**

1. Transcript of telephonic conversation between Jason Armstrong and Maria Svane recorded in its entirety on 12 March 2009. The original soundfile of 47.8MB can be made available on request.
2. Emails between Christine Hodges (maiden name of Mrs Armstrong) and Maria Svane Armstrong (as Maria Svane was formerly known) from 2007.
3. Emails between Jason Armstrong and Maria Svane subsequent to the phone call of 12 March 2009.

I will herewith place on record my response to specific allegations made by Maria Svane, with reference to the transcript of the recorded telephonic conversation between her and my husband on Thursday 12 March. Further, I will address some broader issues pertaining to the allegations made against me.

It is my intention to place factual content on record, in order to prevent Ms Svane from further attempts to make derogatory and defamatory remarks about me.

Excerpts from Maria's verbatim transcripts are shown in italics below, and my response thereto comes after.

***First of all I don't know why you chose to bring that woman to my house and to court. You know, if it was to gloat, to make me feel bad, to kick me yet again and make me feel like shit, then you know, you've won. Good luck and good for you.***

***Just remember one thing; what you give out you get back. Remember that.***

I travelled with my husband, Jason, to Denmark to support him through the gruelling court experience.

I accompanied him to return the children to Maria's apartment after their visit with us, simply to assist with the children on the journey. Further, we had all had an extremely enjoyable afternoon together, and the children were loath for it to end, and for us to part.

***First of all in South Africa she really tried to get very close to me.***

I was not well acquainted with either Maria or Jason in South Africa. I knew them by sight, as we had mutual friends.

I first saw them when I attended a wedding in 2000. My friend Phillippa pointed out Jason, but we were not introduced. I felt a strong attraction to Jason, but made no attempt to pursue it in any fashion, as he had a girlfriend, Maria. I did not meet Maria then either.

I later heard they had moved to Denmark and married, and had returned to South Africa a few years later. I did not see either of them for about five years that I recall.

I first met Maria when I encountered her pushing Tatjana in a pram past my house as I was leaving for work one summer's day in 2005. She looked sweaty and uncomfortable. I stopped and introduced myself as a friend of Phillippa, and pointed out my house. I explained I was at work and seldom home in the afternoons, but that my daughter Kayla was there with her care-giver after school, and they were welcome to knock on the door any time for a swim.

I heard from my daughter that Maria and Tatjana had come by several times to visit and swim, but I had no further conversation with Maria.

On 21 October of that year, I included Tatjana amongst the children invited to Kayla's sixth birthday party. Maria arrived, but we did not speak beyond pleasantries. Later during the day, she asked me about an incident that had occurred on a trip up Africa a few months previously. It was an awkward discussion with other guests present, but I spoke about it a little with her. (*I will refer back to this below*)

In turn, Kayla was invited to Tatjana's birthday party in January of 2006. I dropped Kayla off, and

collected her a few hours later. I only exchanged greetings with Maria.

I neither heard nor saw anything of Maria or Jason for the rest of that year, but Kayla and I were invited to a garden party of all their acquaintances in the December of 2006. I was surprised to discover that Maria had had a second child, as I had not been aware that she was pregnant. I spoke to friends I knew, but did not have any conversation with Maria beyond asking about the new baby, Sophia. Jason was separate from Maria the entire party, but I did not think much of that at the time, as I was not aware that they had marital problems.

I next saw Maria in the middle of January 2007. She arrived on my doorstep visibly upset and angry, and wanted to talk. She said her marriage was over. I felt awkward, as I did not know why she had approached me with that news, as I barely knew her. Nonetheless I felt bad for her, and tried to calm her and listened to her story.

A few days later, she again arrived at my door, while I had a friend, Birgit, visiting. Maria was again extremely angry and needed to talk, and we both listened to her story, and tried to comfort her as best we could.

I will elaborate on the contents of these two discussions in more detail later.

On her departure from my house the first time she came, I phoned Phillippa for advice, as I was shocked at the revelations made by Maria to me and the vehemence of her anger. I was also perplexed as to why she had approached me. She confirmed details provided by Maria, as Maria had made this public knowledge to their circle of friends, and explained that Maria had in all likelihood approached me as everyone else was “sick of hearing her run Jason down”.

I felt uncomfortable finding myself as Maria's confidante, as I did not consider her a friend, but recognised that she needed someone to talk to, and determined to help as I was able, but remain neutral in the matter.

After her second visit, I phoned Maria once or twice to see if she was OK and we met for coffee about a week after she spoke to me.

We next arranged to meet – at my insistence – at her house with Jason there, as I told her that while I would be as supportive of her as possible, I would not take sides, and preferred Jason also have the opportunity to enter the discussion should he choose, given that I was equally unfamiliar with both of them.

I went to their house for what was an extremely awkward tea, and that was the last time I saw Maria.

I next heard that she had left for Denmark, taking the girls with her, and she sent me a group email to say she had settled in.

I believe I treated Maria with kindness and courtesy, as one acquaintance to another.

I did not try to “get close to her”, as I had little in common with her. Maria alleges I pursued a friendship with her to Machiavellian ends, but this is nonsense.

***She wanted me to come stay there and how could I stay with you etcetera.***

Once Maria had explained the dire state of the marriage on the day she arrived unannounced at my house, I offered Maria a place to stay in my guest house while she sorted herself out. I have made similar offers to other people who have found themselves in bad situations. My intention was to provide her a space in which to calm down and come to some clarity about what she wanted to do.

***She was very, very eager to get me and the girls out of South Africa, you know. All she could***

***ever talk about was how I must get out of the country as soon as possible before you start trying to take the children away from me.***

I was not “eager” to get her out of South Africa. This is a lie. Maria told me she had plans to go back home to Denmark for a few months to see what her options were as she did not like living in South Africa and felt she had not settled here. Further, all their friends were in fact Jason's friends, and she felt she had no one here to support her.

I said that seemed a good idea for her to “centre herself” and become “herself” again as a functioning, capable woman, as she seemed to be exceptionally unbalanced and angry.

It is a lie that I encouraged Maria to take the children in any way.

I became extremely alarmed when Maria - the second time she arrived at my house - told Birgit and I that she was, I quote, “being nice to Jason”, so that he would sign consent for the girls to accompany her, but that he “wouldn't know what hit him” once she got the girls passports and was in Denmark. She said he didn't “know what Danish courts were like”. I was shocked by her calculated deceptiveness, and struggled for days to decide whether I should warn Jason or not. In the end I decided that Maria had spoken in confidence, and I needed to uphold that, whether I agreed with her or not, and hoped that Maria's anger would abate and she would not pursue this route.

On meeting Maria for coffee a week later, she seemed calmer, and went on to discuss an idea she had to research the opening of an Ikea agency in South Africa. I said that would potentially interest me as a business venture, and we could discuss it further when she had more information on her return from Denmark.

I was relieved that Maria seemed to be thinking of ways to create a single life for herself in South Africa, as that indicated to me that she was in a healthier place psychologically, and had intentions to return to South Africa.

It was only when I received her group email from Denmark that I learnt she intended remaining there with the girls.

***She even brought a German friend of hers to .. over who had been through a divorce to give me advice on how to get the children out of South Africa in the best possible way so you wouldn't have a chance of getting them ...all of that, you know. She was very, very eager to get me out of the way very fast, you know. I'm sure she had a big master plan there. But, you know I couldn't of course see it at the time because I was very down and you know, I was... I needed... I needed support and that was what I felt she gave me.***

***Obviously it wasn't for that reason but that is it.***

This is another lie. I did not invite anyone over to counsel Maria.

As I have said previously, Birgit was visiting for tea when Maria again arrived, furious.

Birgit had wanted to talk of her divorce, but Maria's arrival ended our discussion. Maria began telling Birgit - a complete stranger to Maria - her story too, and the two then went on an anti-men rage. I removed myself and went to make tea, as I did not share the sentiments being expressed.

Maria then went on to tell us of her intention to deceive Jason and punish him through the courts of Denmark, with myself and Birgit present. Thus there is a witness to what she said, and best Maria be reminded of that.

Maria's notion of a “master plan” is simply ludicrous. I had no designs on her then husband.

At the time I was in a relationship, and hadn't even had a conversation with Jason, beyond the awkward tea we'd all had together, which just served to highlight how beyond salvageable their relationship was.

I met Jason properly in late May 2007, at the request of Phillippa. She'd been concerned about Jason since Maria had left for Denmark with his children a few months before. He missed his children very much, and was deeply depressed. Phillippa was extremely tied up and out of town, and asked that as I lived nearby, would I go visit Jason and see if he was all right.

I phoned him and we met for coffee, and this was the first time I actually spoke to Jason. Maria has on several occasions pretended that Jason and I were already involved while they were married, which is complete nonsense. Jason's son, Jared, was present and witness to the start of our relationship which began in June of 2007.

My time from my last sighting of Maria in January until meeting Jason in May, was spent caring for my daughter who began to fall seriously ill in February and March, with extreme pain in her muscles and joints.

After a trip to the coast for my mother's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, Kayla's health deteriorated rapidly and the doctors suspected juvenile arthritis, and she had markers for leukaemia. Our lives were consumed by rounds of blood tests and hospital wards. By May, she was finally showing some improvement, and was deemed out of danger.

When I met Jason, and we began to spend time together, it was a blessed relief to meet such a kind, compassionate, gentle human being, and I realised that despite the fact that he was leaving for Denmark in July to be near his children, I was in love with him. And he with me.

There simply was no "master plan". I was supportive to Maria as best as I was able, without taking sides with her, or having any ulterior motive in being a friend to her as she claims.

I definitely did not suggest ways for her to take Jason's children from him - these were all her own, and devised very early on.

***And you know, the whole thing about what happened between her and Boris and all of that. You know there are two sides to a story and I heard both of them. And you know, other people have told me other stories which, you know, gives me a very good idea of, you know, what kind of woman that you are with now.***

There are no doubt two sides to every story... Maria should perhaps heed her own words.

The facts remain, however, that Boris, whilst travelling with my daughter and I in Mozambique in 2005, drove recklessly and knocked over a man on his bicycle. He refused to help the man and take him to hospital, and it was left to me to pick the man up off the road, put him in the vehicle, and take him to hospital, all the while enduring Boris's insults. The experience left my daughter and I extremely traumatised, and I don't care for Maria's opinion either way as it is irrelevant. Boris has since apologised for his behaviour but we remain unreconciled.

Maria alludes to "stories" by "other people", all non-specific, but from which she feels she can conclude a presumably negative opinion of my character. She has no "good idea" of anything, truth be told. I no doubt have my detractors, and would gladly address their issues had they the courage to confront me with them. However, I don't pay heed to gossip, and I am outspoken on issues of human rights, feminism and local politics, and a lot of my work in documentary and journalism is issue based. Maria will be hard pressed to make any moral judgement against me stick beyond spiteful gossip, loosely rooted in truth, and I have many people who can vouch for my character. Can she say the same?

***I know that she is bad-mouthing me in South Africa. I know that she is talking badly about me to anyone who wants to listen to her. I don't know the reason for that but I know that she's doing that obviously to put herself in a better light and you know, to make me the baddie, whatever it is.***

***But you know, all of that combined, it really makes it very clear for me that you know, I will not have her or her daughter speak to the girls when you call.***

It seems strange to me that Maria sees herself as an innocent victim here. She is "the baddie". I don't need to bad-mouth her. Her actions have given people a poor opinion of her.

Recently, in her attempts to sever Jason's relationship with his children, she has turned people in South Africa that were previously neutral in the break-up of their marriage, against her. Everyone here knew how close Jason and Tatjana were, and that for Tatjana, he was the primary parent. Maria herself, said this to many people many times.

I do not need to put myself in a "better light". Maria has sent emails to mutual friends, making non-factual claims about me, and my relationship with Jason. These have further served to alienate people who know me against her, whilst others who do not know me have believed her. To date I have taken no action about this, as they are the rantings of an angry woman, and obviously untrue to most recipients. However, should Maria persist with her current line of attack, I will need to take necessary steps to correct this.

It is concerning to me that Maria appears to be using her dislike of me as another weapon in her attack on Jason, and potentially to further impede his access to his children by placing unrealistic conditions on visitation and phone calls. Whether it suits her or not, I am Jason's wife, and we form a larger family group for Tatjana and Sophia; a relationship which works very well and positively for all the children.

My daughter, Kayla, already has an existing relationship with Tatjana, and both girls are excited by the idea of being sisters. I get on very well with both Tatjana and Sophia and while I am not attempting to replace Maria as their mother, I am able to provide a positive, happy, nurturing environment when they are with us.

Maria is attacking my character, yet she has little to actually base it on, even in this telephonic conversation which is focused on her trying to convince my husband that he has married a woman of dubious moral character.

I contend that Maria cannot take any moral high ground given her own actions; and given what she told me the day she arrived on my doorstep in January 2007, in the presence of Birgit, and what I have subsequently been told of her behaviour in their marriage by other parties who witnessed specific events, or were told directly by her of certain events :

- Maria told me how she had repeatedly physically and verbally assaulted Jason during their marriage. I was deeply shocked by this as I stand very strongly against abuse in any form. Subsequently, specific people – who I will not divulge at present, but who are prepared to testify should the need arise - have spoken of specific incidences of violence by Maria, involving physical attacks on Jason, the smashing of property and possessions – a friend confirmed that he had to replace doors kicked in by Maria as late as January 2007 – and verbal attacks in front of Tatjana and his son, Jared.

Maria's inability to control her anger and her temper, leading to violent outbursts, was the primary cause of their marriage to fail. Maria agreed to counselling, but this had only a limited effect, and the marriage was beyond repair.

Maria told me that she, I quote, “regretted ever agreeing to not hit Jason” as she felt she had “lost a part” of herself. She felt that she had lost “her passion”.

- Maria spent years complaining of her marriage to all of Jason's friends, openly admitting her physical attacks on him, and saying how she wanted out of the marriage. Yet she claimed in court that he left her just after she had baby Sophia. In truth, by her own admission to many people here, their marriage had been over for years, and she had asked for the divorce, something she now denies.
- Maria told me that she and Jason had not shared a marital bed for two years. When I asked how then she had had the second child, she told me she had “negotiated it”, as Jason had been unwilling to have a second child with her given the state of their marriage. I later learnt that she had threatened Jason with taking Tatjana away from him, in order to make him have sex with her and father Sophia. Whilst Jason is exceptionally fond of Sophia, this is not the way to have a child.

Maria further spoke of how she nonetheless expected Jason to finance the child, and were he unable to meet the added financial commitment, how she would criminalise him through the Danish courts.

- Maria carefully planned her taking the children to Denmark, deceiving Jason into believing they had an agreement that she would not prevent him sharing the raising of their children in Denmark, in order to get him to agree for her to take the girls out of South Africa. Further, she wrote in an email to her friend that should Jason not sign the papers, she would kidnap the girls. This email is on record. She said similar to Birgit and I, making clear her intentions to punish Jason in the Danish courts where she would have the upper hand.

When Jason arrived in Denmark to set up his home for his children, Maria reneged on her agreement with him, and began making it difficult for him to see them.

- Maria has placed on record that Jason's relationship with Tatjana was not so close; that the girls do not miss him, and that he is a kidnap risk. These are all lies, and despite her performance, Maria knows this too. She would not dare say these things in South Africa. Only in Denmark, far removed from the truth, can she get away with this.

Whatever the troubles between Maria and Jason, he has been an exemplary father, and his primary concern is always for his daughters.

There is more to say, but I will refrain myself.

***I believe that she knows that it will not be possible for you to bring her and her daughter to France. It's not just like that to ... er ... maybe, maybe you can bring her because you married her, you can't bring her daughter. I believe she knows that but she wanted you to marry her just so it would be more difficult for you to leave South Africa.***

Jason believed when I met him, and right up till November 2008, that his future lay in Denmark where he could be near his girls, and partake in their lives as an equal parent. I have always known that if we were to be together, I would one day be obliged to leave my home in South Africa. The plans to settle in Denmark were finally shattered when he was denied his right to travel with his daughter to visit their family over Christmas, and then when his custodial rights were removed on the flimsiest of basis... no proof of Maria's accusations was even required.

We have decided instead to live in France, from where Jason can visit his children according to his

access rights, and plans are well in motion to this end.

This assertion by Maria that Kayla would not be able to accompany us, and that I wanted Jason to marry me as some kind of trick to keep him in South Africa is just bizarre.

***Then the third thing I want to say to you is that you know, if you ever want any form of collaboration with me, it is very imperative that you give me a sincere - and it has to be a sincere - face-to-face apology for what you've done. For marrying me, without loving me. For creating a family without living up to that responsibility that that creates. And for not living up to the responsibility of your actions. For crossing my possibility of having a family with the father of my children which is, you know, the only true dream I ever had. I really really need a sincere apology for that.***

***If you cannot give that, I don't know if there's any reason, any way that we can ever collaborate about anything.***

I would contend that after 6 years of a failing and failed marriage, and a further two years apart, Maria is still stuck in the same angry place, still unable to accept any role in the failure of her marriage, and seemingly unable to move forward.

Given that Maria's threats in the conversation are clear – ***Just remember one thing; what you give out you get back. Remember that. / If you cannot give that, I don't know if there's any reason, any way that we can ever collaborate about anything.*** - the consequences of Jason failing to apologise and take all the blame for the breakdown of their marriage will lead clearly to Maria not collaborating and to further punitive measures to impede his relationship with his children, such as not allowing him to phone and speak to them. ... ***it's very disruptive for me in my life, for the children as well, they get very upset that you phone once a week. Doesn't work for me, and it doesn't work for them. So from now on I want you to only phone once a month.***

Maria continues to place her anger at the failure of the marriage before her childrens' love of their father. This is extremely unhealthy and not in the best interests of Tatjana and Sophia.

Given Maria's history of violence, and her inability to manage her anger, it raises concerns as to the environment she is creating for the two girls.

Subsequent to this conversation, Jason wrote to Maria (see attached emails), telling her – once again – that he did love her when he married her, and reiterating for him the reason their marriage failed, namely due to her violent temper. Maria's responses admit her problem regarding her temper, and demonstrate her inability to see anything beyond her own fantasy of having been unloved by Jason.

Her fantasy now includes me in a Machiavellian, femme fatale role. These allegations simply do not fit the facts, and Maria will need to desist with further allegations of this nature.

I place this on record with no prejudice to myself, in the interest of providing a factual account of events. I wish no further engagement with Maria Svane, beyond that necessary for, and directly pertaining to, the interests of Tatjana and Sophia.

I hope that you will advise your client to not pursue this line of attack further.

Yours sincerely,



Christine Armstrong

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**5 attachments**



**maria\_emails.pdf**  
58K



**Maria Transcript.pdf**  
45K



**Maria emails July 2007.odt**  
17K



**Maria email April.odt**  
14K



**Maria email May.odt**  
10K

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