

Chapter 1

That morning, Lex Arenberg - Lotharingen cursed under his breath while he read his newspaper. Large headlines told him that the black widow, as she was called in his circles, had earned forty million euros. This had to do with the IPO of a company of which she owned many shares, thanks to her family. He vividly remembered how the 'slut of the underworld', as she was also called, had introduced herself to that family and had exerted her bad influence on her future husband in order to control him. At the time, Lex and his brotherhood had been able to prevent her from attracting too much influence, but her excesses were of such a nature that they had no limits, and for this, she and her husband and co-founder would one day pay a high price. Still worse, this would have a negative impact on all noble families and brotherhoods in Europe with widespread branches all over the world. Eventually, the situation became intolerable and that is why she was now called 'the black widow'. Lex was not so much bothered by her extravagant antics, but rather by the fact that she had managed to amass such a fortune. He would also like to cash in enormously with a simple deal, but this was not an option for him. The old family capital was tied up. In addition, according to his grandfather's will, no one could ever change that. Lex depended on the small dividend - together still a few tons a year - that he obtained from his shares in companies. These were exclusively zoos, dolphinariums and other locations where wild animals were kept captive for education and entertainment. In the 1950s, all blue blood families gained the insight that the common people no longer

accepted that the nobility hunted the big five in Africa and they exchanged the guns for photo and film cameras. His grandfather had followed the line that had been set out by the Bilderberg Group and had invested all his money in such low-profit companies, where it would stay forever. Lex hated it intensely. When someone knocked on the door, he was startled.

'Come in,' he called.

Like every morning around this time, Elena, the maid, stepped into his office with a silver tray in her hands on which his mail was stacked in order of importance, as far as this was visible from the outside of the envelope. The Romanian girl was dressed in a frivolous style, which Lex liked very much. She was wearing a short black skirt with a white apron in front and a black top with short sleeves and a square deeply cut décolleté, trimmed with white piping. Her white long stockings adorned her beautiful long legs and her black pumps completed the voluptuous picture for Lex. The young and attractive woman smiled faintly at him. As was expected of her, she walked around his broad antique desk and stood to his right, where she placed the tray on the table, but held on to it. In that slightly bent position, she felt his hand slip under her skirt and panties as Lex touched her up, just as he did every day. She contracted her buttocks slightly, which excited him, but not so much that he took further action. Lex rubbed her buttocks extensively and squeezed them. Many women would have cried blue murder, threatened with a lawsuit, and started a MeToo discussion about him, but she did not do any of these things. She was cleverer than that. In comparison to what she had to endure

since childhood, this was of a very innocent level for her. He had her in his power and this was just part of it.

She did not find Lex unattractive for a man of some sixty years of age. Nobody knew his age exactly because he never celebrated his birthday. Despite the morning ritual, she thought he was a charming man with a resemblance to an older Gregory Peck. In addition, he was a very disturbed person and there were stories about his compulsive personality disorders, and their secret was only one of those. It had been going on for two years, and he had never urged her to do more than what he did to her every morning.

In the blink of an eye, she had been taken from Romania and ended up in this castle, which was located south of Antwerp as she found out later. She had woken up in one of the attic rooms and could not remember anything from the previous day. She had no idea who had kidnapped her nor how she had been transported. However, her body was covered in bruises and she had pain in her bum. When she later told this story, it led to much hilarity among the other staff, whom she considered her close and sweet family. Lex had confiscated her passport and she received no salary for her household services. Furthermore, she was not allowed to contact anyone from outside, but this was not much of a problem for her. The world had been very bad for her and she wanted to hide away the pain she felt when she thought of her past. She was well taken care of now, had good food and she enjoyed the relationships with her new family members. Despite the lack of a salary, she received some money thanks to her cleverness, such as from the gardener's son. Lex regularly sent him out to buy cocaine with cash and then there was always something in it for her, because the cocaine was

blended and the son could keep a little business for other users outside the castle. She had once asked him how he blended the cocaine and he had given her the disconcerting answer 'asbestos', after which he laughed loudly, and corrected it to baking powder. She had no expenses, so she saved her money for a time when she might need it. For the time being, she had no desire to flee.

'Your visitor has just arrived,' she said when Lex had stopped his business with her.

'Let him wait in the hunting room,' Lex said, 'and make sure a pot of coffee is ready when I arrive in about fifteen minutes.'

She nodded and bent her knees slightly. Like an experienced model, she held herself completely straight as she walked out of the room and knew that his piercing eyes were pinned to her buttocks. She went down to the basement taking the stairs for the staff that were in the room next to the large wooden staircase in the hall. There she passed the order for coffee to Dione, the butler's wife. In this castle, the butler was always referred to as the Camerlengo, because 'butler' sounded too ordinary. It was a title reserved for church leaders, but Lex did not care about that. According to him, Camerlengo was a better name, which meant that it was not just a butler, but also his personal assistant. In addition, the title had existed in the family since time immemorial. Elena got on very well with Dione and her husband, Charles.

'I'll take care of the coffee,' Dione said, 'because with your little outfit, the visitor will think he ended up in a brothel.'

They both laughed, and in passing, Dione could not resist patting her behind. Elena pretended to have been given a firm blow of the hammer and continued in a feigned crippled walk into the black and

white tiled corridor. So she walked to her room to change clothes for the other activities that were planned for her for the day. Dione was still standing at the beginning of the long corridor where she burst out laughing.

