

## Chapter One

During testing times, I never gave much thought to being single. I pondered whether it was better to face challenges alone or with a supportive partner. The answer would reveal itself later in life, but for now, I remained undecided. At this point in my journey, everyone I knew was married, and I often traveled long distances, fulfilling the roles of best man and occasional photographer.

But then, by pure chance (although I believe nothing is truly left to chance), I met L.

I could tell just by looking at her that luck, whether good or bad, would eventually make an appearance. And it did, sooner rather than later. Allow me to digress.

It was a lazy Sunday morning, and I found myself sitting in my favorite restaurant. The distant sound of church bells filled the air, barely registering in my mind. The waitress casually mentioned that my mother frequented this place, but my attention was captivated by the enchanting presence of a red-headed goddess seated across from me, engrossed in the morning paper. Every inch of her exuded an irresistible allure—from her long, slender legs to her luscious lips, captivating eyes, and elegant neck. As she teasingly sipped her drink through a straw, it was clear she knew the effect she had on others.

I watched her intently, eagerly searching for any sign that her eyes would meet mine. The way she bit her lip while flipping through the paper ignited deep desires within me. My plate of fried eggs grew cold, but I couldn't tear my gaze away from her, mesmerized by her allure. And then, it happened. In a fleeting moment, her eyes darted in my direction. I shifted uncomfortably, craving more attention from this

Venus-like figure, whom I playfully named in my mind, the goddess of love, beauty, sex, and everything I yearned for. My heart raced, echoing my excitement. I knew what I had witnessed, and the subtle curl of her lips confirmed that she was aware of my knowledge.

As I eagerly shoveled a forkful of food into my mouth, her intense emerald eyes locked onto mine, her gaze unwavering. With a delicate flick of her fingers, she greeted me, exuding a seductive aura that only the fairer sex possesses. My eyes widened in disbelief, and my jaw froze in place. As I forced myself to swallow the unchewed food, a wave of shame washed over me, causing my face to flush. Her piercing eyes penetrated my soul, whispering untold tales of seduction. In an instant, desire ignited within me. She muttered something inaudible, but my pounding heart drowned out any sound.

Venus directed her pointed finger, adorned with a meticulously manicured nail, towards me, inviting me to join her. Uncertain, I glanced around the small room, then pointed at myself, silently mouthing the question, "Me?"

She nodded enticingly, teasingly rubbing her foot against the leg of a nearby chair. I don't know what compelled me, but an invisible force seemed to pull me towards her.

"Hey," she greeted, introducing herself, her voice resembling the melodic tones of a rainbow, if rainbows could produce music.

"Do you mind if I call you Venus?" I asked, gently shaking her hand, reluctant to let go. The fragrance of her floral perfume, reminiscent of lotus, etched itself into my memory. She giggled and replied, "Sure, call me whatever you like."

Never before had I spent so many hours in a restaurant. We savored our cappuccinos, exchanged stories, and when the afternoon arrived, I indulged in a bottle of exquisite wine accompanied by a platter of delectable finger foods. We ventured outside, spending the afternoon on the patio, our lips aflame with shared kisses and enthralling tales.

Warning signs were scattered everywhere. Deep down, I knew she would poison my very soul, yet her allure was irresistible. From the subtle brush of our hands when pouring her wine to the warmth of her breath against my face, I sensed her lethal nature. She was a black widow, and I found myself trapped in her web. The yearning to make love to her consumed me, even though I knew she would devour me

afterwards. I never imagined that a goddess like her would even consider looking my way. Yet, I was falling for her at an alarming speed, free-falling without a parachute. There was only one way out of this, a descent into my own demise.

No matter how my mind fought against the warnings and her irresistible charm, I knew I couldn't resist her requests. The wine further weakened my resolve, leaving me in a state of autopilot, with Venus as my guide into the unknown. Soon enough, we found ourselves in her lavish duplex apartment, where warning signs were scattered all around, yet I chose to ignore them once again.

With a freshly opened bottle of wine, the soft melodies in the background embraced us as we nestled on her luxurious leather couch. The flickering candlelight infused the air with the delicate scent of jasmine, creating an atmosphere of pure bliss. Leaning in close, Venus planted a tender kiss on my lips, leaving a heavenly taste of cherry balm that lingered for days. We exchanged stories, igniting our lips and moods with passionate kisses that set us ablaze. Occasionally, a mischievous smile would grace her face, as if she could sense the tremor that ran through me with every touch, finding great amusement in it.

As our bodies intertwined, a current of electricity surged through my veins, igniting a fire within me that I had never experienced before. Each touch, each caress, sent shivers down my spine, leaving my skin tingling with anticipation. The warmth of her touch against my bare skin felt both soothing and intoxicating, like a drug coursing through my system.

Her lips, soft and velvety, danced along my neck, leaving a trail of goosebumps in their wake. The rise and fall of her chest matched the rhythm of our breaths, creating a symphony of desire that echoed through the room. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest, as if it were desperately trying to keep up with the whirlwind of emotions that consumed me.

Her fingers traced delicate patterns across my body, leaving a trail of fire in their wake. With each gentle stroke, I felt my inhibitions fade away, replaced by a desperate hunger for her. The room seemed to spin around us, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, as we surrendered ourselves to the intoxication of our desires.

But amidst the passion and ecstasy, a nagging voice in the back of my mind reminded me of the danger that lurked beneath her enchanting facade. It whispered cautionary tales of those who had fallen victim to her seductive charm, their souls left shattered and broken in her wake. Yet, in that moment, I couldn't bring myself to care. The allure of Venus was too strong, overpowering any rational thought or self-preservation instinct.

In the depths of our passion, I found myself willingly diving into the abyss, surrendering to the inevitable downfall that awaited me. The flames of desire burned brighter with each passing second, consuming any remnants of logic or reason. I was a moth drawn to her flame, willing to sacrifice everything for just a taste of her forbidden fruit.

Little did I realize that succumbing to her enchantment would be my undoing, trapped in a labyrinth of seduction and betrayal. But in that moment, as our bodies entwined and our souls collided, I couldn't resist the pull of her magnetic charm. I was under her spell, and I would willingly succumb to the consequences that awaited me.

## Chapter Two

Venus surpassed every lascivious thought that invaded my depraved mind. I clung to her like a desperate limpet to a solid rock, while the prowling presence of a lion loomed nearby. Possessiveness, an unfamiliar trait, consumed me in her presence. As we strolled through the bustling mall, I unleashed deathly glares upon any man who dared to glance in her direction. And I graciously smiled at those who nodded approvingly at the beauty by my side. She became the guiding torch, illuminating the darkness of my existence. How benevolent the universe seemed, I mused.

Despite the many warning signs that surrounded me, I foolishly disregarded them. I sprinted recklessly into the relationship, blindfolded and unbothered by the inevitable pain that awaited. The adage “all good things must come to an end” held no weight in my heart, not then. The complexity of the web spun by this mastermind was beyond anything I could have imagined, manipulating me like a puppet on strings.

In no time, our bond tightened, becoming as constricting as the sucker I was for codependency. I craved someone to feed off, to stroke my fragile ego. Venus, the perfect accomplice, catered to my needs, stroking not only my ego but also my arrogance and pride.

Every day, as the clock struck five, she would glide into my driveway, clutching a bottle of wine and a captivating book. Her understanding of my vulnerabilities reached depths I could never have comprehended. However, after our intimate encounters, she never stayed the night. In a cunning manner, she played upon my longing to spend a night with her, carefully crafting her grand finale—

the ultimate act in her plan.

“Let’s make plans to escape for a weekend,” Venus would whisper, her voice dripping with seduction, as our bodies pressed against each other, the heat between us palpable.

My breath would catch in quick gasps as she traced a delicate nail over my chest and down my tummy, a shiver of anticipation running through me. “Okay,” I muttered, unable to resist, completely ensnared in her seductive web.

My eyes widened with surprise, and I couldn’t help but flinch when she casually mentioned the name of a coastal town on the West Coast that held special meaning to me.

I shot her a curious gaze, but she dismissed it with a nonchalant shrug and placed a seductive finger over my lips, silencing any questions I had. I could never have imagined how she knew it was my favorite town, but later I uncovered her secret.

“Yes!” I exclaimed, my voice trembling as her finger traced intricate circles around my abdomen, sending electric waves of pleasure through me.

“Great!” she said with a mischievous smile. “It’s settled then.” She gracefully rose from the bed, giving me a teasing glimpse of her exposed rear, a sight that weakened my resolve. As she dressed, she leaned down to plant a soft peck on my brow before slipping away, leaving me consumed by my yearning desires.

My eyes widened in disbelief. Her seductive allure had enticed me, fueling my cravings, before abruptly leaving me consumed by longing. I let out a frustrated grunt and turned onto my front. With the vivid images of her intoxicating beauty etched into my mind, sleep eluded me, playing a cruel game of hide and seek. In my dreams, the sandman took the form of Venus, a seductive enchantress casting a spell over me. And in that moment, I realized that even grown men could succumb to tantalizing fantasies, just like young boys and their innocent wet dreams.

Soon after, on a bright and sunny Friday afternoon, I eagerly loaded our bags into the car. From the meticulous way Venus had packed, it was clear she had something up her sleeve. Yet again, I brushed off the warning signs, oblivious to the underlying intentions. It was our first road trip together, and she radiated joy, effortlessly keeping me

entertained. As we set off, her lighthearted playlist, whimsically titled “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” filled the car with melodic enchantment. The road stretched out before us like a never-ending ribbon, while we joyously sang along to her thoughtfully chosen anthems. Unbeknownst to me at the time, numerous songs subtly whispered the words “wedding” or “marriage.”

As we drove, the excitement mounted, and our eyes widened with awe as we beheld the breathtaking views of the azure Atlantic Ocean stretching out endlessly before us. A surge of exhilaration sent a shiver down my spine, goosebumps dancing upon my arms and neck. Every note of “Let Go” by Paul van Dyk seemed to encapsulate that very moment, transporting me back to that exhilarating thrill. Even now, when the song plays, it brings forth a flood of emotions, vividly capturing the essence of that day. Years later, when I stumbled upon the music video, the lyrics and Venus’s mischievous smile fell into place, weaving a tapestry of memories and realizations. It was a surreal moment, one that happens only once in a lifetime, leaving an indelible mark on my soul.

My empty stomach growled loudly, a hungry symphony echoing through the quaint cottage. As we checked in, I couldn’t help but admire the panoramic views of the ocean stretching out before us. Venus, with her playful nature, dubbed the cottage our “love nest,” igniting anticipation for our first sleepover together. Despite a warning sign that stared me straight in the eye, I chose to ignore it. The bed, adorned with scattered rose petals, emanated romance, while a chilled champagne bottle awaited us in an ice bucket, reminiscent of a honeymoon suite. It made sense when Venus made a phone call, informing someone of our imminent arrival. But the alarm bells in my head remained silenced.

“I have a surprise for you,” Venus whispered, her amber eyes locking onto mine, impossible to resist.

My eyes widened, knees weakening, signaling my agreement. She took my trembling hand and led me to the bathroom, where a steam shower, unlike any I had ever seen, awaited us. As she turned on the faucets, steam billowed, matching the heat coursing through my veins. With her slender fingers, she delicately unbuttoned my shirt, her sweet nothings filling my ears. My heart pounded against my ribcage, akin to a deer fleeing a lioness. Uncontrollable shivers coursed

through my body as desire consumed me. I felt a sense of weakness, almost pathetic, as I willingly surrendered my life, body, and soul into her capable hands.

Before I could fully comprehend the situation, I stood undressed, exposed. Venus giggled theatrically, shedding her own clothes, providing a show that would forever be etched in my memory. With a playful gesture, she stepped into the shower, her backside enticing me to follow. My knees quivered, and I cautiously entered, panting like a racehorse.

I yearned for a love-making experience akin to the movies, fervently praying for it. However, the black widow had different intentions. She lathered me from head to toe, her touch igniting excitement within me. Her hands moved teasingly across my body, as if preparing me for some sort of ritual. Before I could react, she abruptly closed the faucets and stepped out, leaving me wet and confused.

Using a fluffy towel, she dried me off, her actions once again teasing, seductive. It seemed as if she were rewarding my patience for this sleepover, but her true motives soon became apparent. From her suitcase, she produced a perfectly tailored outfit, crisp and neat, designed specifically for me.

My brow furrowed in concern, the creases deepening on my forehead, but before I could voice my opinions, she pulled out a pair of shiny brogues; the leather gleaming under the soft glow of the room's light. It was as if she had planned to counter my questions with a surprise, a calculated move to divert my attention. Yet, the impish smile playing on her lips was there, hinting at hidden motives, the corners of her mouth slightly upturned, mischief dancing in her eyes.

As I reluctantly took the shoes, she peeled her towel off; the fabric sliding off her skin with a whisper, revealing her flawless form, rewarding my curious eyes with her allure on full display. I watched, my breath quickening, hands trembling, as she slipped into black lace lingerie, the delicate fabric teasingly caressing her curves, causing my mouth to turn dry, my throat suddenly parched.

A slap on my backside, a playful tap, was my cue to get dressed, and I sat on the edge of the bed, dressing, while I watched her slip into a velvety miniskirt, the fabric so smooth it seemed to melt against her skin, and a champagne silk blouse, the delicate material shimmering in the light. She left the top button undone, allowing a seductive peek



at her flawless cleavage, accentuated by the delicate lace bra.

I must admit that I did, at the time, think of asking her to marry me. But, I knew not to push my luck. She was one of a kind, delicate like porcelain, and I had to handle her with caution, like a fragile china cup. With excitement coursing through me, I eagerly anticipated parading my girl in front of the well-to-do gentlemen meandering through this lavish coastal town. I applied the aftershave she adored, its refreshing notes mingling with the scent of her lotus perfume that made me yearn to be with her all night. Dressed impeccably, we linked arms and ventured out into the refreshing night, the sound of crashing waves echoing in our ears.

I followed her directions and parked outside a seaside restaurant. Fish netting and empty seashells adorned the outside, the salty scent of the ocean mingling with the faint aroma of freshly cooked seafood, creating an ambiance of coastal charm.

A bold sign with red lettering caught my attention, warning that entry was only permitted with a reservation. Much to my surprise, Venus tightened her grip on my hand, her confident and melodic voice as she shared my surname with the hostess, who promptly led us to our table. Another warning sign I missed, as if our relationship was already bound by the weight of my last name.

At the time, I was too consumed to even entertain any thoughts. As I walked alongside the goddess, I couldn't help but notice the intense stares from the male patrons, their eyes fixated on her. Some of them were left speechless, their jaws dropping as their eyes widened in astonishment, while others couldn't hide their envy, their narrowed eyes revealing their jealousy. And then there were those who shot me an angry stare, their resentment practically radiating off of them. I knew what they were thinking. How did someone as destitute as me end up with someone as remarkable as her? I reveled in the attention we received, the whispers and murmurs floating in the air, and pulled out a chair for Venus to sit before sinking into my seat, a sense of pride and contentment settling within me.

Once again, the table shimmered with vibrant confetti, creating a kaleidoscope of colors, while a bottle of effervescent champagne awaited, emanating a tantalizing aroma. It evoked memories of newlyweds, filling my mind with a rush of emotions. My anticipation heightened, imagining returning to our cozy cottage, consumed by a

fiery, passionate love for my girl.

Simultaneously, curiosity bubbled within me, eager to witness the unfolding of her mysterious plans. Immersing myself in the present moment, I surrendered completely, locking eyes with her alluring, amber gaze. The male patrons, their disbelief palpable, couldn't resist ogling my enchanting goddess, my captivating black widow.

## Chapter Three

Afrikaans people have a fitting word for a hangover: 'babbelas.' I knew what a 'babbelas' felt like, but this was different. The morning light pierced through the curtains, casting a hazy glow on the room. My eyes, heavy and weary, felt like something unseen was pushing them forward, threatening to pop out of their sockets. The sound of my breath echoed in my ears, accompanied by a dull throbbing in my temples.

As I tried to swallow, my throat burned, and my tongue clung to the roof of my mouth, parched and dry. An unpleasant taste lingered, as if I had been licking an ashtray, the remnants of a long-forgotten habit. The scent of tobacco hung in the air, wrapping around me like a persistent fog. The realization hit me like a jolt of electricity, causing my eyes to snap open.

I stared up at the ceiling, desperately searching my foggy mind for any recollection of the previous evening. But memories remained elusive, shrouded in a dark cloud that refused to dissipate.

"Mornin', hubby," Venus murmured, her voice soft and melodic, like a gentle summer breeze. She propped herself up on her elbow, delicately brushing the strands of hair away from my eyes. In the morning light, she looked ethereal, a goddess amidst our tangled sheets. The warmth between our bodies radiated beneath the covers, a reminder of our intimate connection.

"Morning," I replied, my voice groggy and hoarse, desperately needing moisture. And then it hit me, like a sudden bolt of lightning. I sat up abruptly, my eyes widening in shock.

"Hubby?" I asked, my voice trembling in disbelief.

Venus giggled mischievously, her fingers tracing circles across my chest. "Don't you remember, my husband?"

Her response, a question in return, raised a red flag in my mind. It was a classic technique to mask the truth, one I had seen countless times on crime scene investigation shows. Something was off, and I could feel it. My gaze darted around the room, and there, on the bedside table, lay the source of my pounding headache. A packet of cigarettes, my preferred brand, sat alongside a pack of slims, the type commonly favored by elegant women.

"What happened?" I asked, my voice filled with curiosity and a hint of frustration.

"Hmm," Venus groaned, straddling me and guiding me inside her with purposeful movements. Her breathless words mingled with the rhythmic sounds of our bodies coming together.

"You," she gasped, tapping my nose playfully, "and me," she continued, cupping her breasts and riding me like a wild stallion, "we got married. And then we came back here, and we did what we're doing now, over and over, until you fell asleep."

My desires consumed me, unable to dispute her claims. This wasn't how I had envisioned our marriage. The thought of marrying Venus had crossed my mind briefly, but it was far too soon. Trapped in her snare, I surrendered to the excitement of the moment, waiting for it to be over. As if sensing my disquiet, she intensified her movements, her moans and groans echoing with pleasure.

When she finished, she abruptly got up and sauntered to the bathroom, her hips swaying with each confident step. The enchantment of her beauty faded, leaving me numb. I watched her silhouette through the frosted glass, the warm water cascading over her body. I should have felt fortunate, but I was lost in a haze of confusion.

My gaze fell on our clothes scattered on the floor, and a vague memory flickered. I recalled getting dressed and driving to the seaside restaurant, but everything after was a blur. The sight of my tailored suit jolted me upright.

"Did she plan our supposed wedding?" I blurted out, then bit my tongue, realizing my mistake.

"What did you say?" Venus's voice, muffled by the running water, carried an edge of curiosity.

“Oh, nothing,” I mumbled, brushing it off.

As she closed the bathroom door, I seized the moment. Her handbag sat on the kitchen table. I hurried over and rifled through it, desperate for any clue. I pulled out a sachet of white powder, only to find it was sweetener. Frustration surged, my heart racing. I found a rattling pill container and noted the name.

Filled with panic, I frantically rummaged through the cluttered room, my heart pounding in my chest. Finally, my hands landed on my phone, and I quickly realized it was in airplane mode. With a swift motion, I deactivated it, and the phone emitted a sharp beep, breaking the silence. As I glanced at the screen, a wave of shock washed over me. Messages from my brother, mother, and distant friends flooded the display, all congratulating us on our marriage. My heart raced as I opened the photos attached to the messages. There we were, Venus and I, in a dimly lit bar, proudly displaying our wedding bands. Another photo showed her holding a document, our signatures glistening as if they were a legally binding contract.

A gasp escaped my lips as I realized the implications. My mind screamed, “Wedding ring!” I stared at my finger, and there it was, an extravagant wedding ring flaunting its grandiose design. How had I not noticed it earlier? Confusion clouded my thoughts, making it difficult to comprehend the situation.

Furrowing my brow, I pondered the mystery. I had no memory of sharing these images with anyone. The names on the screen belonged to people I had long lost touch with. It seemed as though someone had randomly shared the images, reaching out to anyone who seemed relevant.

Suddenly, the sound of the toilet flushing jolted me back to reality. Time was running out, urging me to hurry my search. Closing the messages, I quickly typed the name of the medication written on the container into the search bar. As I scrolled through the results, another surprise awaited me. The medication was commonly prescribed for individuals suffering from bipolar mood disorder. I had no understanding of what it meant, but I assumed it had some connection to Venus’s sudden desire to marry me.

Just as I slid the phone back into my pocket, the bathroom door swung open, and Venus emerged. The soft glow of the rising sun filtered through the sheer curtains, casting a sensual sheen on her bare

skin. Her enchanting gaze fixed upon me, conveying her readiness for another round with her newfound husband. I forced a sheepish smile and climbed back into bed, hoping to engage in her seduction.

As she mounted me and writhed with snake-like grace, her moans of pleasure filled the air. Instead of surrendering to the moment, my mind wandered to darker thoughts, anticipating the depths of her capabilities. I knew I would eventually uncover the truth.