

## Blood red love

### 4

Vidar tried to focus on the report on his tablet, but his mind refused to cooperate. The car still had her scent floating around.

“She was lovely, sir,” Malcom, his driver, said.

“What?” Vidar asked, pretending not to know what his driver was talking about.

“The young lady you offered a ride to, sir,” Malcom elaborated.

“It’s late and the area around ‘The red lady’ isn’t the safest,” Vidar said.

“I didn’t ask, sir. It’s none of my business. I just drive the car.” Just drive the car, my ass, Vidar thought. Malcom was the best driver on the market and that was the only reason Vidar put up with the man’s need to gossip and put his nose where it didn’t belong. More often than not, in Vidar’s private life. That and the fact Malcom was loyal to a fault. But he had a point. Malcom hadn’t asked, so Vidar didn’t know why he felt a need to defend his decision. Not that it had been a conscious decision to offer the waitress a ride. None of the things that led up to it had been part of his plan for the evening. He had just seen her sitting at the bus stop and had asked Malcom to pull over before he had realised what he had said. He still didn’t know why he had done it. Sure, she had been one of the best waitresses who had served them during the Thursday meetings. She had a natural ability to accept the crude jokes and chauvinism, which seemed to thrive when they all got together. But she also had clear boundaries which she wasn’t afraid to reinforce. He had liked having her in his lap. She felt soft and round in all the right places. He had liked it too much, which had become clear, as Millard had called her over to him. Vidar’s instinct had been to object, to keep her in his lap. That was a clear warning, and he had made sure she had left his lap as soon as possible and then he had made sure she stayed away the rest of the evening. Offering her a ride home was not keeping her away. He took a deep breath and took another hit of her scent. He would ascribe his behaviour during the night to the long time he had been without a woman, or a man, for that. Maybe his body was telling him it was time to indulge in some depraved behaviour. But not with the waitress. All his instincts told him that would end up being a bad idea. Luckily, there were more than enough willing persons in the city.

To Vidar’s eternal irritation, the thoughts of the waitress didn’t go away. No matter what distractions he occupied himself with as the days went by. Not even when Lucas, the head of his IT department, told him there was an issue with their IT system did she completely leave his mind. Lucas did a valiant effort to try to explain to Vidar how he had discovered that something was wrong with their system. But it all was too much IT for Vidar to fully understand.

“Tell me like I’m five fucking years old,” he finally said.

“Okay, Mr Grims. Our IT system is made to send information back and forth across the company. Think of it as those old tubes were you put a message in a capsule and put it into a tube and swish it went to another office,” Lucas started. Vidar was close to roll his eyes, but he had asked for it. “So if I want to send a message in a tube to you. I will gather the info and put it into a capsule. Then I need to mark the capsule with where and to who I want to send it. For our example, let’s say use a printer and print a label and stick to it. Then I send it and it pops up at your end. Right?”

“Right,” Vidar agreed. So long he was able to follow.

“Right. Sometimes I like to send info to myself, that way I know where to look for it when I need it. The other day I sent a capsule to myself. But I noticed it took a little longer than usual. Let’s say the capsule usually takes ten seconds to end up back at my desk. Now it takes fifteen. It’s not much difference, but enough for me to get curious. I was worried that the servers, sorry, not the servers, the pipes, were getting old. Maybe we needed to repair them. So I started to trace messages being sent. And what I found is that about every thousand message gets delayed. I can’t find a common reason why those messages get delayed. They don’t all go through a specific tube, not all messages that go the same way get the delay and so on,” Lucas continued.

“Okay, so do we need new... tubes?” Vidar asked.

“I don’t think so. I think it’s worse than that. I think someone is intercepting capsules. Look inside them and then send them on their way,” Lucas said.

“In five seconds?” Vidar asked.

“Well, no. In reality, it goes much quicker, and is done digitally,” Lucas told him. Vidar nodded.

“Who is responsible?” he asked. He could easily think of at least twenty people or organisations who would be interested in his information. Some would merely be an irritation, others would be a shit storm.

“That’s the thing. I can’t find any evidence of this actually happening. It’s only a small delay and my gut instinct telling me this is the most reasonable explanation. I have tried to find the intrusion, but I just can’t,” the man said. Vidar frowned. If Lucas admitted he didn’t know, things were bad.

“What do you need to find it?”

“I need someone that has a background in hacking, preferably that also has a good understanding of how business systems are built and IT-security,” Lucas said.

“I will find them. In the meantime, continue your investigation,” Vidar told him. Lucas was dismissed and Vidar started to think who he knew that could get him an IT-expert. His phone rang, and he looked at it. “Yes, Adisa, how can I help you?” he asked the other member of the Thursday club.

“Vidar, Nasir and I got talking, and we thought it would be nice to ask Jenni to get us the same waitress tomorrow as we had last week. I have made some calls and everyone agrees. What do you say?” Adisa asked. Fuck, Vidar thought. He would never get rid of her.

“Fine, I’m not really worried about which skirt serves us. I guess she was competent enough,” he said.

“What have crawled up your ass and died?” Adisa asked with a rich laughter.

“Fuck off,” Vidar said, causing another round of laughter.

“You do know what she is?” Adisa asked.

“I know.”

“Then you should understand why we do this.”

“I know, I know. Just take care of it and stop bothering me about it,” Vidar snapped.

“Fine, I’ll let you get on with whatever put you in a foul mood. I’ll call Jennie and make the arrangement. I’ll see you tomorrow. Please be in a better mood,” Adisa told him and hung up. Fine, Vidar thought. He would just spend the night ignoring her like he had done last time.