

**F r a n A n n a f o r d**

**Y E S T E R D A Y W H E N I W A S Y O U N G**

**S T A R N B E R G S E R I E S**

**B O O K 8**

**First Published 2024  
Austin Macauley Publishers Ltd®  
1 Canada Square  
Canary Wharf  
London  
E14 5AA**

“Mother, did you have sex with Magdalena yesterday evening?” Sybilla Merting’s mother looked tired and rather haggard, but there was a gleam in her eye, which hadn’t been there when she left for Munich the previous afternoon. Neither Sybilla nor her wife Hannah heard her come in, although they hadn’t slept until long after midnight. They had taken advantage of being alone to have luxurious sex. Hannah donned her strap-on. Both their orgasms had been shattering.

“I’m not going to answer that.” The older woman made herself a mug of strong coffee. “But you did.”

Sybilla blushed. “We...um...were talking about Magdalena’s favoured form, and well...you know. We keep it for special occasions.”

“Isn’t Hannah filming today?”

“Yes, but you know how it is with TV series. A leisurely ten o’clock start today.”

“But she had to leave at seven to get to the studio.”

“No, she didn’t. They are on location on the lake. We are not irresponsible, mother dear. She looked radiantly beautiful and well rested when she got into her car at just before nine.”

“Why are they filming on Lake Starnberg?”

“A scene in a hot tub was written into the script. When someone as beautiful as my wife is the leading figure in a series, they have to capitalise on her amazing sexiness. Otherwise, scenes about a divorce lawyer can be rather dry. Not all divorce lawyers are as attractive as Magdalena von Reichenbach.”

Emmeline Merting blushed and looked at her hands. These days she wore her nails trimmed short. “Where is the hot tub?”

“On Dominique and Sasha’s bedroom balcony.”

“The great executive producer is allowing a film crew into her bedroom?”

“It’s a closed set. Camera, sound, director and two actors. Dominique Thibault saves money wherever she can. Anyway, Sasha is the stills photographer on this episode. I think it was her idea.”

“I thought Sasha was cutting back to look after her daughter.”

“That sounds rather censorious.”

“I didn’t mean it to be. I’m sure they have a nanny.”

“They don’t. As both had rather unemotional parents, they want something different for Lopi. Sasha has her occasional portrait work where she can take the little girl with her to her studio. Her assistant probably has the unenviable task of looking after her and keeping her quiet while Sasha works. Or she takes along Clara Cooper-Nyman to keep her occupied. That is, if Dominique happens to be away. Otherwise, she has only the Charlie Niedermann franchise to photograph. That’s about two months’ work a year.”

“And what do they do for those two months?”

“You are insistent this morning. Why do I get the impression you are trying to deflect from talking about Magdalena? Anyway, if the information is of such burning importance to you, Lopi is of course always with them. She isn’t crawling yet. Sasha’s mother came with them for the filming of Who’s afraid of Francis Bacon. Before Juliette pulled the plug on it, and we all went home, including a reluctant mama Strauss robbed of her two-month granddaughter orgy. Funny how things skip a generation. Having not been tactile with Sasha and her siblings, Mrs. Strauss won’t let go of Lopi. She speaks Japanese to the

little girl, which both Sasha and Dominique approve of and encourage. Once again, a Starnberg set child is growing up multilingual. French, German and Japanese in this case.”

“But now Sasha is working on Hannah’s series. Why?”

“Just the one episode. Dominique insisted. To get her out of the house and onto a film set. The next Charlie has been put back a year as you know.”

“I know. But I don’t know the reason.”

Sybilla sighed. “It’s not what everyone thinks. Not lack of finance. Or lack of interest. There is an enormous fan club, and they are crying out for the next one. The finance is secure. Apparently, Dominique has to turn backers away rather than pursue them. No... Juliette Simon called a halt after the leading man broke his foot on a stunt. Being the superstitious Italian she is, she thinks the gods are telling her something. She decided we are churning the films out too fast, and I’m sure she’s right.

“Unfortunately, *Tea with Paul Klee* didn’t get a single Oscar nomination, although in some ways we all felt it better than the first one. And despite it lacking the glamour of my beloved wife’s participation. *The Jawlensky Trail* got an Oscar for best screenplay. Both Dominique and Juliette had high hopes for at least a nomination for me as best actress or for Mel as best supporting actress. For *Paul Klee*, I mean. But it didn’t happen.”

“Darling, you did win best actress in Cannes.”

“I know. And I’m proud and happy and eternally grateful. But for Juliette and Dominique it’s the Oscars they chase. They want *Who’s afraid of Francis Bacon* to be a long-awaited event.”

“Hmm.”

“I can see your accountant mind at work. You’re thinking of the huge mortgage on this house. Don’t worry. Hannah owns half of it now, and I’m getting a handsome payoff from the insurance. You know, the broken foot. Fortunately for us, if not for my co-star, the insurance could not claim it was force majeure and refuse to cough up. A camera in close-up and another in long shot proved without doubt that he was fooling around trying to impress a make-up girl and knocked the table over onto his own foot. It was entirely his fault and Dominique and Juliette weren’t liable either.”

Sybilla made her mother a fresh cup of coffee. “Let’s go outside for a moment. Look, the sun is shining. It will be warm in the gazebo. And...I need to talk to you about something.”

“Darling, you frighten me.”

“I hope not.”

They opened the conservatory door and walked down the rough stone path to the wooden gazebo in the tree-filled garden. The leaves were thick on the ground. It was the middle of October. Sybilla groaned. “You know, Hannah and I raked everything up on Sunday. Look at it again. You can barely move. It is the only time of year when I rather hate my trees.”

“Why don’t you get someone to do it for you? You can both more than afford to. Or so you tell me.”

“I know, but the exercise is good for the waistband. Um...that brings me rather neatly to what I wanted to talk to you about. Um...you see...I am going to use the hiatus to have a baby.”

Emmeline looked at her daughter and her eyes glinted in the late sun. “I’m so happy for you. For both of you. Hannah does want this as well, doesn’t she?”

“Oh yes. You know she won’t have one herself because of the history of

depression in her family, but we both want a child very very much.”

“How are you going to go about it?”

“Mother dear, the same way any lesbian couple goes about it.”

“I know, darling, but what about the donor? Anonymous? Or someone you know?”

“We thought my ex-husband Thomas would be the best idea.”

Sybilla burst out laughing at the look of horror on her mother’s face. “Oh, that was worth it. Sorry for giving you such a shock.”

“I don’t think I will ever forgive you for that.”

Sybilla continued to giggle. “One of the many occasions in my life when I wish I had thought of taking a smartphone shot. We talked about donors for weeks, going through all our list of friends but not really fancying letting anyone into our lives to that extent. It is risky. As you know, the Starnberg set members who have gone down the path all acknowledge the respective father and the children grow up with a papa, albeit an absent one. Only Pia and Leonie chose not to do that and went for anonymous. Two doting grandfathers fill in the gaps in their case.”

“So...how have you chosen the catalogue father?”

“Wait, I didn’t say we are doing that.”

“I thought you did...”

“There is one man desperate to have a child, and with whom we are willing to share.”

“The suspense is killing.”

“You remember Ulrich Kirsch?”

“Very gay actor. Very hunky and beautiful, but I thought you told me as promiscuous as they come. I’m not sure...”

“Ulrich’s life has changed completely. He has been happy with his best boy Andreas since *Jawlensky*. They live near one of the other lakes to the west of Munich and breed oriental shorthair cats in their spare time. For which Kanika is responsible.” The ebony cat lying on the table in front of them purred as she heard her name.

“But he was promiscuous for years.”

“Yes, but don’t worry. He has had every test under the sun and is as clean as a whistle. He has delivered what he has to deliver, which is sitting in my doctor’s deep freeze, and we are waiting for my ovulation, which is soon, very soon.”

“Darling. I couldn’t be happier. And excited.”

“You want to tell Magdalena, don’t you?”

“Hmmm.”

“What about papa?” Sybilla twisted her broad gold wedding ring. The October sun caught it. It shimmered.

“Not yet, I think. Not until it’s certain.”

They lifted their mugs to drink, although both were empty.

“I don’t really understand the situation. He had no problems when I first came out.”

“I don’t know either. A lot changed after his heart attack. He is physically fine, considering how major it was, but he has drifted away from me. At home, he is withdrawn. He only comes alive with your brother and his kids.”

“Does he know about you and Magdalena?”

“No.”

“Why can’t he come down here for a week or so? If the weather holds, we are going into a fabulous golf autumn. He can come out on the course with us.

Take a buggy.”

“I’ll suggest it.”

“He loves watching golf on TV.”

“I’ll talk to him.”

“Shall I?”

“Better not.”

“Are you holding something back?”

Emmeline sighed. “Yes. He is suddenly virulently homophobic.”

“Oh. Are you sure he knows nothing about Magdalena? Maybe it’s not me at all.”

“I don’t see how he can know.”

“He knew you were friends in college. I remember him saying so. Do you talk in your sleep? Murmur her name and whimper?”

“Sybilla, really.” She sighed. “He might have heard the end of a telephone call.”

“Shit.”

“But I think it’s more the effects of the heart attack. He is depressed.”

“I wish I could help. I was always closer to you, but I had a good relationship with my father.”

“I know, darling. I didn’t want to tell you. I hate the situation. And I’m going to have to go home to Celle at the weekend. I can’t leave him for more than ten days. And anyway, having heard your news, you and Hannah should be alone to conceive your child.”

“Why?”

“Because, my darling daughter, having a lot of loving sex increases the chances you will conceive. And you should be alone and...whimper...if that’s what you do.”

“That’s an old wives’ tale. The loving bit, I mean.”

“Who knows?”

Sybilla’s smart phone pinged. Sasha sent her a photo of Hannah submerged in a steaming hot tub, her beautiful burgundy coloured hair piled on her head, and the curves of her luscious breasts bobbing above the water line. Sybilla groaned as she felt the arousal hit her pants.

Emmeline raised her eyebrows and Sybilla handed her the phone.

“I don’t want to share what is mine. With a million TV viewers slobbering as they watch her.”

“I thought Hannah is the jealous one.”

“I discovered the green-eyed monster after meeting her. I couldn’t have cared less about Thomas. Or anyone before him.”

“You two have it bad.”

“Aren’t you jealous of Magdalena’s past? She fucked four bedposts full of notches.”

“What would be the point? She did, and it’s over. She says nobody meant anything to her, and I believe her. She has more reason to be jealous of me because your father and I have loved each other for years.”

“And you still do?”

“Of course.”

“And your feelings for Magdalena?”

“She was my first love.”

“Let’s go inside and think about what we are going to eat tonight. I must go shopping.”

\*\*\*

"I look like a prune."

"How long were you in the tub?"

"The whole shoot. Getting in and out of the damn thing, then sitting there to play the scene."

"Which is how long?"

"Less than five minutes."

"What was the problem?"

Hannah helped herself to another generous portion of spaghetti with tuna and black olive sugo. "Problems. In the plural. For the first take, I artfully slipped the towel down and wriggled into the steaming tub, only to shriek and jump out. It was scalding hot. The director, a new one who I don't much like, sighed, rolled his eyes and to prove a point put his hand in before having to pull it out sharpish. That was the only good thing to happen. The second time it was too cold, and my partner's teeth began to chatter halfway through the scene as a freezing cold breeze blew off the lake. Then they got the temperature right, but there wasn't enough steam to make it look convincing and sexy, so we waited for hours while they fetched a smoke machine, which then made my tub partner cough. Nonsense of course, because it has no taste or smell to irritate the throat or lungs, but he is a diva. It took fifteen takes, and I kept looking over to see if Juliette was hiding in the bedroom directing the scene in secret. She is the only director I know who goes for so many takes."

"What is the bedroom like?"

"Tasteful. Sleek. A huge bed. I don't know how Dominique finds her little wife in it. Art on the walls. The real stuff. And a lot of Sasha's photos. They are beautiful. Between takes she and I lay on the bed with Lopi. I didn't tell her of our plans, but I enjoyed being with the little girl. She is so gorgeous. Like a doll with just slightly almond shaped eyes. Otherwise, she looks more like Dominique than Sasha."

Emmeline listened to the story, laughing. She gathered up the plates and took them into the kitchen where they heard her stacking the machine. She returned to the dining table.

"Darlings, as I'll only be here for another two days, I'm off to Munich tonight. I'll be back tomorrow morning."

"Please tell Magdalena that I hate her more than ever. This script is the most difficult yet. The legalese is tongue twisting. I'm terrified about tomorrow's scene."

"Bring the script to bed. Let's have an early night. I'll go over lines with you. What time is make-up tomorrow? In Munich I presume."

"At eight. So, I have to leave at seven."

"Can I come with you?"

"Of course, my love. Everyone will be thrilled to see you."

Emmeline closed the front door softly, and they heard her car drive down the road.

"We'll do lines, but first things first. I've been dripping for you ever since Sasha sent that photo."

"Even with my wrinkled skin?"

"It's not and you know it. Don't tease."

"Why do I get the feeling you want to be on top?"

“You know me so well.”

“It suits me just fine. I’m lazy tonight.”

“You did the work last night.”

“It was bliss, darling.”

“For me too. My mother says we must fuck hard to make sure I conceive.  
Can we have that again...when...we do the deed?”

“I won’t feel it’s my child too if we don’t. I fully intend to pound you into  
our deliciously soft mattress.”

\*\*\*