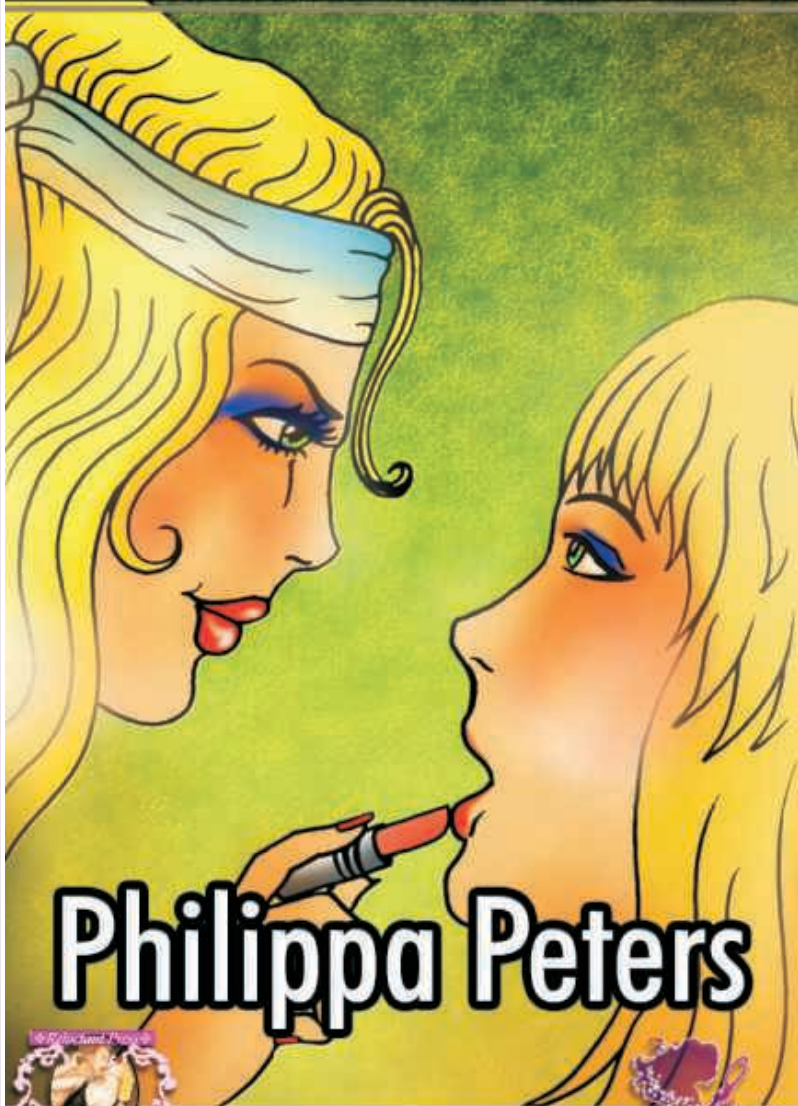


Another Fine Witch



Philippa Peters



An "Adult Tv" Novel



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ANOTHER FINE WITCH

By Philippa Peters

“Kiss me! Kiss me! Kiss me!” one of *Sword’s* riggers was taunting the retreating golden-haired Seafarers whom he was chasing out of the waterside bar. Of course, he had the assistance of ten or so others at his back as he grabbed the nearest Seafarer, dressed in non-sea whites as they all were.

“Uh-oh,” said Robady, the leader of us cadet officers on *King Tatheren’s Sword*. “We’d better break that up before the Watch interferes.” Unlike the bullies chasing the four, slim, white figures along the waterfront, we cadets could see down Front Street. We could see a patrol of the Watch sauntering along towards the Terraire docks. They’d stopped only to

sample something off a cart, part of the inevitable street market that formed when a great ship of the Seafarers was in harbor.

I followed Robady, glad to be behind him as he confronted Cluff, off our ship and leading the pack. "Now stop right there!" called Rob as he marched forward.

Cluff did stop, even though he was holding onto one of the Seafarers by his long, golden hair. "Look who it is," sneered the wide-bodied rigger to the other sailors behind him. "The girlie-boys all stick together, don't they, lads?"

I could see the back of Rob's neck turn red. But the younger Seafarers did look so girlish since they wore their hair so long. Everyone commented upon it and how fastidious the visitors were, from a Many Isles nation if there were such things, about their cleanliness. Their clean, girlish hair smelled like a hoyden's in one of the bordellos, or so I was told. "Cluff, Jerit, Losser," Rob named several of the little pack. "This is an order to all of you!"

Robady didn't have a chance to complete his words as a glass or a bottle, flying through the air, hit him in the face. He went down, blood streaming, his nose broken for sure.

I saw the look of horror on several faces in the front of the mob, as that was what it was becoming. Rob, like me, might have been a cadet, supposedly giving us officer standing, but nobody of our lowly rank pushed for that status. After all, at sea, cadets, even in their last year of indenture, were the lowest of the low on a Baract ship.

"We wanted to tell you the Watch is coming!" I yelled as I knelt beside Rob, trying to staunch the

blood and extract the glass pieces from his face before he clawed at them and made his wounds, and future scars, worse. Behind me, I sensed that my other companions had disappeared.

“See,” laughed Cluff, standing over me. “Doesn’t shave, like the goldhairs. Smoother than any harlot in Merenda’s House, isn’t she? Give me a kiss, darling,” he meant that jeering remark for me, he’d made it on board more than once, “and you can take your girl friend down there ...”

That was when the whistle sounded from way behind me. We heard shouts to stop and stay where we were. Cluff swore at me, loosed the Seafarer’s hair he was still clutching, kicked me in the shoulder and took off, his pack disappearing with him into the crowd. It had really grown outside the four or five taverns that served the immediate appetites of thirsty crewmen off ships in Terraire Harbor.

“Lie still,” I said to Rob as he groaned and thrashed. “There’s glass in your face I have to get out.”

I took out a vial of fessare I’d mixed in the apothecary ‘office’ on *Sword*, that morning, before we cadets had been let off the ship.

“Our witch is making potions again,” Rob had teased me, stroking my hair as if I was a girl, making me squirm as Hiridy had joined in. Now, they’d be glad I’d thought ahead.

The touching of my hair made me tense up, of course, as it always did. But it was common on the ship for new cadets to be teased as if we were girls, I’d found out. And yet, I hadn’t seen any strange liaisons aboard ship. I heard, however, that they ex-

isted in the deviate quarters of Terraire I'd been warned to avoid, as I did.

"Someone's going to need stitching after a first shore leave in a month," I'd said to Rob lightly, knowing his teasing wasn't meant to hurt me but to toughen me for what I'd face whenever we went on a long voyage. For our newest cadet, Mattle, the teasing was far worse as he really was soft-cheeked and 'pretty'.

"And this isn't witchery, Rob," I added as Rob had smiled on our early-in-the-morning shift and shrugged at me. "I wish it was. I wish I could make something that would prevent scars from tightening. No, this is just apothecary work, putting the right ingredients together, from the recipe, getting a clean poultice to carry the potion to the cuts before they go bad."

I'd looked at Mattle, younger than me and on his first sailing. I'd been in his position two months before, watching everything with wide-open, surprised, heavily fringed eyelashes. "You'll be doing it next, apothecary duties, kidsie," I'd told him with a smile. "So stick close to me if we find our men in a fight!" I'd never, however, expected men from our own ship to attack their own officers, well, cadets.

"Thank you," said a soft voice above me as I worked as quickly as I could on Rob's face, begging him to hold still. I looked up in surprise as I smelled sea flowers and sweet soap. Hardly likely a boy would use that. I saw the smooth skin, but all Seafarers had that. The seaman pushed his hair back and tied it behind his ears, twisting a knotted cord around the golden hair. They didn't like hair on their faces and had some salve that made facial hair

all go away, or so I'd heard, probably from Berley, the gossip on *Sword*.



“We didn’t do anything,” I said as I poured some fessare onto the clean poultice from the medical wallet I’d taken to carrying. That was when I noticed the glint of something metallic at the girl’s earlobes and saw how thick her eyelashes, like Mattle’s, were as well.

“You, you’re a witch!” exclaimed the Seafarer girl hovering over me, watching me staunch Rob’s deepest wounds and draw the visible glass from his wounds.

“Hardly,” I laughed, feeling tension grow inside me as I said that. I always tensed up when I talked to a girl; and this one was exotic and quite pretty. “I’m a boy, aren’t I, and boys ...”

“Can’t be witches,” the soft voice finished for me. “So you’re a warlock!”

I laughed at that, as well, as a member of the Watch loomed over us and grabbed the Seafarer girl just as Cluff had grabbed her earlier. He started berating her for being in a Russet bar, causing a disturbance. Didn’t Seafarers know they couldn’t just wander about, anywhere in Terraire? This wasn’t a free port, like Liss Island, or those in Quarrence, the kingdom across the great river from Malesia, was it?

The girl was hauled off to where her friends were standing. Some other bigwig was berating the three white-dressed figures, heads down, trying to look as small as Mattle, or me I think.

Finally, an older Watchman came over to me. “Goldhairs did that?” he asked me as I stitched the now stiffened cuts that seemed to be everywhere, like a lace shawl, on Rob’s face. I think the fessare helped, as did the heronswing I’d used when no one

was looking, putting the powder deep into the wound.

Robady was so proud of his handsome, boyish looks. Waitresses always served him first in the taverns. The girls in the bordellos always smiled at him when they saw him coming. With the way his face was swelling, they wouldn't do it now. I only hoped I'd prevented the worst of the scarring with the attention I'd given him. Yes, he might be the darling of the bordellos again some day as the older men teased and said about him now.

"Not them," I said to the Watch. "Glass came out of the crowd in front of the bars. Might not even have been aimed at us." I didn't think that for a second and, by the sudden tug of the Watch's mouth, I don't think the older man believed me, either.

"You know any of the riggers among that lot?" asked the Watch, his eyes fixed on mine.

What could I say to that? Give him the names of Cluff, Jerit and Losser, and then go back to face my captain and the officer mates, never mind the friends in the upper riggings the sailors would have had? No, I couldn't do that.

"Didn't see anyone I knew," I muttered. The old man looked at me hard and sighed. He looked like an ex-sailor and so probably knew the 'rules' as well as I did.

"I'll be escorting ye back to yer captain," he said, his accent similar to many of the old 'uns I'd heard talking. I must have looked a little alarmed. "Tell him what heroes he has in his crew," the older man went on, unable to keep the sarcastic grin off his face.

Oh, yes, that's where it all began, right there on the docks in the port of Terraire, just two ten-days ago, I thought in a panic. Now I was a captive on a great ship headed who knew were. I sat in Gennee's alcove, curtained in front for privacy, having been questioned and sentenced by a court of officers. The blonde-haired cabin boy, whom I was calling Gennee by then, sat opposite me, giving me an encouraging smile every now and then.

It made my throat go dry as I watched the feminine gestures Gennee made that had made me mistake him for a girl. I watched him take away the cord that had been holding his hair in place. He, 'she', closed his eyes in ecstasy, making chills run through me. Long, golden hair floated down over his shoulders. With the paint on his face and the thin lines of kohl about his eyes, his lashes now so long and vividly black, he looked entirely like a girl with the glint of gold flowers at his ear lobes. He was Gennee, the girl I'd first met on the Terraire docks.

I shouldn't call Gennee 'him' any longer. I didn't think of her that way any more. 'Her' or 'she', that's who I thought Gennee was. I copied the other cabin boys and kitchen staffs in the feminine names they used for us, servers and cleaners on the great ship. They'd feminized 'Genno', she told me, into 'Gennee'. Gennee loved it. She was even more feminine as she demonstrated to me how I was to tuck my manhood back between my legs and use a pad to hold it firmly in place, in just the same fashion as she'd done hers.

“Come on, Arrathee,” she teased me with the feminization of my name, ‘Arrat’, which I didn’t like to hear at all. “You have to do it. The Bluebands will take you and do this forcibly to you. They won’t be gentle as we girls are to one another. They don’t like doing it, you see, as it’s beneath their manly pride to dress us as women. Undress us now, that’s quite another matter!”

“I, I can’t, Gennee!” I hissed at her, knowing she was teasing me again as she took a pink stick and began to make her lips look as luscious as any real girl’s.

Gennee’s smile made me feel sick down to my toes. I was supposed to be ‘trained’ by her in how to be a Seafarer cabin boy. That’s why I was still alive. I was supposed to be made into a creature just like Gennee. Hirdy and Mattle were somewhere on this ship undergoing the same ‘training’. I shook as I wondered if it was worth this, dressing and being all girlish in mannerisms, just to stay alive.

Gennee was adjusting her slightly padded bra over the ‘pasties’; she’d called them that, which she had glued to her chest. They looked remarkably real under the pink and white flowered bra she wore as any girl would have worn it. I’d have to wear something similar soon, she’d told me.

I’d bathed and washed my hair, sensing the feminine fragrances that rose up to my nostrils from all over me. Gennee had had me soak much longer than her, adding ‘sea flower mist’, as she called it, a perfume, to my neck and body as I struggled to get out of the water and keep her hands off me.

Gennee giggled and danced down the hallway back to our hideaway in an alcove behind thick cur-

tains. Other ‘cabbies’, cabin boys like us, passed us, hurrying to the scented bathwater baths, squeaking in imitation girls’ voices as they prepared themselves for this Celebration we all had to attend.



Had to attend in girls' dresses and makeup, jewelry and high heels, to dance with any of the crew who wanted to dance with us. I almost vomited again as I thought of it. I had vomited, of course, when I realized it was true. I was considered a girl, like Gennee, on this great ship.

Since there were no real women on board the ship, we cabbies would be deluged with men who wanted to dance with us in the place of women. They would call us by girlish names, making them up, if we didn't do that for ourselves, laughed Gennee, she calling me Arrathee all through the makeup session inflicted on me. A blueband stood ready to beat on me in the walkway, as she, Gennee, painted my trembling face, making my eyes as vivid as hers, my cheeks as red as hers, and my face as pale and glowingly soft and womanly as hers.

Gennee shaped my eyebrows. I hated her for that and told her so. She'd concealed what she was doing, the girlie eyebrows I had like hers, arching prettily, as if I was a girl, over my painted eyes. She reached over as I was watching the silk underslip fall down her body, arousing me as I looked at her, so lovely and so feminine, her panties and garter belt and stockings covered by the slip.

Gennee touched my lips with the pink, sticky thing in her hand. "Make as if you are going to kiss me," she said, pursing her lips.

"Gennee, I'm not!" I began furiously. She seized my cheeks and forcibly pursed my lips and slashed the pink guck on them.

Gennee giggled at my distress. "Do this, like me," she said, in her lovely drawl that had become more

girlish through the day as she practiced being a girl, as she wanted to be.

Yes, that was the sickest part of all. If a seaman at sea wanted a woman, what was he to do? Well, that is what cabin boys were recruited for. To take the place of women on the Seafarer great ships that made such long, extensive journeys across the oceans of the world. And though I hadn't been recruited, I'd been kept alive, since I'd been captured, on this great ship, as a 'cabbie'. Many of the men I'd known on *Sword* had been luckier, I thought in pain, as I remembered the fight and the consequences of losing. Their decaying corpses, the men of *Sword*, were still swinging from different spars around the ship.

"One girl once who, who w-wouldn't do what the officer who selected her, wanted her to do," Gennee began as we bathed. I'd said that I wasn't going to join in the 'Celebration', the way for the crew to let off steam. I was going to hide and, if necessary, go over the side, even though that would kill me.

"She was found and dressed like, like, like one of those girls in the windows of those houses," Gennee muttered.

"Bordellos, prostitutes, whores," I said viciously to her.

Gennee nodded unhappily. "They dressed her like that and, and snipped off ..." Her face was stark white as gentle Gennee tried desperately to let me know how awful my fate would be if I didn't co-operate as all cabin boys did. They were pleased to act as girls for other men. I'd seen and heard it all around me, boys in girlish robes and makeup, preparing to be ravished by other men in the crew. No! I

cried desperately inside myself. I was not going to allow anyone to do that to me!

“Then they hung her in a loose rope,” said Gennee. “We all had to stand watch on the deck, even after she died. They wouldn’t cut her down for a ten-day. She was unrecognizable as human when they let her go. You know, don’t you, what it meant to her to go like that.”

That was when Gennee had begun to cry like a little girl. “Haruva wouldn’t accept a man mutilated as she was into his world,” Gennee whispered about some seafarer god. “She’ll wander the seas as a woman-spirit until one of the goddesses has pity on her and takes her in. We cabbies all gave to Alunis, goddess of the seas, to take her. We think she has, as her shade isn’t seen anywhere on this ship!”

That had made me shudder and think that I might, with the witch’s potion I’d found in the ship’s kitchen stores – I’d secreted it away – I might be able to get through the awful night I faced. That’s why I sat for Gennee and let her apply girl’s makeup to my face. I let her put dangling earrings in my ears and a black fall of hair that had cost her two dresses to acquire for me.

“Oh, you look so pretty, Arrathee!” cooed Gennee as she put a girlie ribbon about my hair and another; with an amulet to a sea goddess I didn’t know, about my neck.

I had to force myself to think of how I’d get through the night, how I’d save myself. I would have to dance as a woman swirling skirts about my legs that Gennee said were pretty. I couldn’t bear to feel the touch of the bindings at my ‘breasts’ or hear and feel the swishing of a woman’s dress about me. But,

I could do nothing about that. I'd have to dress as a woman. I'd have to act and smile as if I enjoyed being a woman. I'd have to smile at men's compliments on my femininity and act in ways that horrified me. If my old sea-mates could have seen me ... Ugh!!

It was so humiliating to have my manhood trussed away and wear a woman's panties over my male parts. I had to put on this dangling garter belt and women's stockings as well, so silky to the touch, so debilitating when they touched me and reminded me what I was doing. I hated the girlish thing that was me, looking back at me from any mirror I saw.

I remembered with a shiver when Hatara had married my younger brother. I had come up the stairs and her door had been open. I'd seen her putting on this funny band around her panties with dangling ends. She'd pulled up the stockings as she sat on the side of the bed. She'd seen me looking, wide-eyed, and asked me if I'd ever seen a woman in her undies, that's what she'd called them, before.

Hatara had stood up and twirled around so that I could see her panties and her bra, which she padded as I watched her, as well. How she'd laughed when I retreated in haste back down the stairs, quite forgetting what I'd gone up for. And now I was dressed in undies just like she'd worn.

I had 'pasties' adhered to my chest. Gennee said real girls used them. After Hatara, I could attest to that. "That's what we call them," Gennee said with a smile. I shrieked in protest as Gennee put a bra around me, adjusting it so that it gripped me 'perfectly', as she said. It seemed to show there was

cleavage there and something womanly in front of me.

Gennee didn't help my nerves or my shame at all as she put more perfume on my chest. It was all I could smell for a while, that I was as fragrant as a girl. I'd had my nails done by Gennee's friend, Evvee, who owed Gennee some favor. She came and painted our nails for us while I squirmed with one of Gennee's feminine robes about me.

With stockings on my legs, an underslip dancing around me, I still had to put on a dress. Gennee couldn't have chosen a more girlie dress than the one she did for me. The crew would have taken it out on her, she cried at me, if she didn't make me pretty! The blueband snarled something at her, he still loitering in the walk, waiting for me to make a break for it, I'm certain.

"You must wear a dancing dress," Gennee said. "We're at sea and the men like to admire us, particularly any new g-, um, cabbies, like you!"

Gennee partly proved it true by wearing a dress as well, similar to the one she dressed me in. My blue and black dress swirled about my legs as it was put over me, making me feel so girlish, I really did. I trembled all over. Gennee had stopped herself using that word to me, but I knew that's what she and the cabbies, and the men, would call her, and me, in time.

That only made the humiliating, femmy feelings inside me even worse. The neckline of the dress plunged to show off the frilly top of my bra and the cleavage Gennee had coaxed from me. Oh, I felt so silly and girlie and ready to throw myself over the side of the ship if only I could. I really did feel so

girlie in the clothing I had to wear as it swished about me. I wanted my pants back!

In the high heels that I had to wear, Gennee insisted, I found myself in the hallway with Gennee and other 'girls', the cabin boys cheerfully calling themselves that. They were almost all blonde, long-haired and wearing makeup, looking like Seafarer girls. We lined up to look at ourselves in the mirrors. I didn't see myself at first, but then realized that I was the only one with dark hair. I stared in stunned amazement at what I looked like.

I was this beautiful girl, just my hair different from the others, with such vivid eyes and such a soft, pink mouth.

"Oh, she's so pretty, Gennee!" squealed a red-haired girl, swishing around and dancing along the passageway in a pink and white dress. "I'm going to dye my hair just like hers for the next Celebration! I'll want my fall back!"

"Only for three dresses, all unsoiled with your lovemaking essence," said Gennee loudly. All the 'girls' around us began to laugh, some of them in male voices, which they quickly squeaked apologies for.

I could barely walk with all the unfamiliar, female things that shaped and swung against me. I'm really a woman, I thought in panic, as Gennee took my hand in her soft one and lined me up with a horde of pretty girls, just like me.

"Now, girls," said Panella, one of the three 'mothers', an older, retired cabin boy responsible for training and supervising us cabbies on how to entertain and please the men who favored us. "This deck is now off limit to you until the sun rises in the

morning. The trysting cabins are entirely yours. Fessee will be on call to assist you. I shall have my own problems with Undercaptain Peveret!” Oh how the girls groaned and cheered at that announcement. “So celebrate, my lovelies! We’ve left Baract lands behind. Next landfall will be in a dozen ten days, in Cunya!”

I panicked at the idea I couldn’t go back to the sleeping area I’d shared with Gennee. She smiled girlishly at me and shook her tinkling earrings before pressing a small, girlish purse into my hand.

“I put your special concoctions in there,” Gennee murmured to me. “If I get Kaddo hanging on to me all through the dancing, I might be coming to you myself for one of your potions. I hope they’re the ones that make you all girlie and man-crazy! I prefer men just a little frisky like Garrin, don’t you? He wants you as well, Arrathee. He thinks you’re the prettiest girl on *Silvery Seas* before he’s even seen you all dressed up! He’ll be first of the men in a trysting cabin with his new love! Don’t look so puzzled, Arrathee! That’s going to be you, woman!”

After the ‘incident’ on the docks, Sea Captain Sottack waited until the Watch officer, the old man identifying himself as an Inspector of the Watch no less, had left before he turned to me. “Tell me it all,” he grunted at me, “every name and action. Inspector Darsh left justice in my hands but, before we sail, you’ll see his inspection team come aboard. They’ll want to see our records before we sail.”