

# The Countess Of Monte Cristo

# 2



# Philippa Peters



An "Adult Tv" Novel



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# THE COUNTESS OF MONTE CRISTO 2

**By Philippa Peters**

——-*Welcome the homecoming queen*——-

The hard-faced older man turned the wad of money over again in his hands and then turned it back. "Let's go over again, lady," he said to me in his New York accent, "what I have to do to earn this money."

"I want my own security, loyal to me," I said sweetly, holding my elbows in very firmly, being as ladylike as possible, "to protect my sister and me. If Marilyn wasn't there in our suite at the Gardiner, holding the fort," I

managed to fake a feminine shiver, and even got my eyes to sparkle a little with unshed tears, “pretending that I’m still there, having a long bath and facial, there’d be men already surrounding me here in your office, Mr Clarke. I’d be carried off and you’d be threatened with so many law suits you’d be tied up forever in court. You’d be glad to see me frogmarched off by the men in Gestapo boots.”

The man my father had called his right arm stared at the woman, me, across the desk from him. My father had told me that Del Clarke’s weak spot was that he wanted to be the knight in shining armor to every woman in distress. The opposition knew it and had played on his emotions with lovely women so often that Del no longer wanted to work with women, not even for a quarter of a million dollars that I had dropped on his desk, as a retainer for him.

“Tell me again who recommended me to you,” asked the pockmarked, older man, pushing the wad of bills away from him as if he had decided not to take me up on my offer.

“The son of an old friend of yours,” I told him coyly, wondering if at any moment he was going to jump up and ask me why his old friend’s son was sitting in his office dolled up like a girl.

Del Clarke’s eyes narrowed. “I have no old friends,” he snarled at me and the wad of bills almost landed between my crossed, nyloned legs as I stopped the banknotes being propelled back across the scarred desk top.

“Patrick O’Brien would be sorry to hear that,” I murmured, feeling the lipstick sliding over my mouth as I watched him for his reaction. He was good but the dart of his eyes at me was enough. “His father, Conor, counted you as his friend, the only honest man in Afghanistan,

when you were his point man there, so he said to Patrick.”

“Patrick O’Brien is dead, my girl,” said the man across the desk from me, his voice clipped. “I went to his funeral with Conor.”

I shook my long, blonde hair and put my finger on my bright red lips.

Del Clarke stared at me, at the woman he thought that I was, mouth agape. “I was there,” he gasped, sitting stiffly at his desk. “Conor saw the body ...”

“A body,” I whispered to him. “While Patrick’s name was being expunged from the world, he was in what you would have called a rendition program, Mr Clarke. You know what they are and how they’re set up. I want you to make sure that my sister and I do not end up in a place like that, not like Hell where Patrick O’Brien ended up, not knowing that his father thought him dead and, then,” I paused, “is reported to have died himself.”

Del Clarke stared at me silently as I opened my femmy purse and took out a wad of bills that equalled the first that I’d set upon the desk. “This is what you would call walking around money,” I said to him. His eyebrows went up before he reverted to the poker face that my father had admired about him so much.

I shivered under the gaze of the man who should have known me. He should have been able to recognize me as Patrick O’Brien, not as Hayley Madonna Russell, as my passport identified me. He had played with me enough when I was a boy. He had taught me the ropes when I was a young man and just about to inherit the business from my father. He had taught me several of the languages that I’d mastered to travel anywhere I wanted in the Middle East.

But he didn't recognize me, of course. How could he with all the female hormones that had been injected into me in Huwara Prison? They'd given me the cleavage and woman's breasts that I had. They'd widened the fleshy parts of my hips and tush and changed my skin totally. I had no hair in places where girls don't have hair. I had long, smooth legs that Del had smiled at as I minced into his office. His gaze had travelled up my nylons and my skirt to my blouse and then to my madeup face.

I think, now, that my nose had been broken deliberately so that the doc could work on me and change the looks of my face. I had a thin, bobbed, slightly upturned woman's nose now, which Raja had always called cute as he kissed it when we were sated from sex and just lying in one another's arms.

"What can I do for you, doll?" the old, white-haired man had asked me when I had sashayed nervously into his office in my tight skirt and top, my breasts as perky as a high schooler's. I'd almost asked the man with the so-familiar voice why he didn't recognize me.

I'd put my money on the table and he'd looked at me quizzically as I said, "I want you to work for me, Mr Clarke. Is a quarter of a million a good retainer?"

By the look of his dusty office in a backwater in Brooklyn, Del Clarke had fallen on tough times since my father had died. There was no pretty girl secretary that he always had. There was no coffee machine. The office was as bare as it could be. If he had paper files, he didn't have many clients at all. The only filing cabinet was open and empty save for his radio and a bottle of scotch.

The two wads of money sat together on his desk but Del didn't reach for them. His eyes were on me, studying me, trying to think where he might have seen me before,

whose daughter I might be. I shivered, hoping he wouldn't start to think whose son I could be.

"I could do a lot of walking with that money," said Del Clarke stiffly, still not reaching for either wad at all. "I could walk with it all the way to Florida."

"Conor O'Brien would turn right over in his grave if you did that," I told him and he stared fiercely at me. I'd had men stare at me before, and more than that. I'd had men measure me for sex, take me off with them and have me in any way that they wanted. And though I might have fought back on occasion, what could I do in the end when I was in the lowest level of Hell where there were no women and so those who wanted to have a woman had to manufacture their own.

I couldn't say any of that to Del Clarke, not then, I thought with a shudder.

"Whom do I have to kill for all this money?" asked Del, his eyes like slits.

"Protect," I murmured to him, keeping the girlish lilt in my voice. I thought, for a terrified moment, that Del had recognized me but he hadn't.

"Can't do it any more," he snapped at me. "Too old."

"Not too old to organize and recruit the men I need," I said to him. I was too tense. I had to relax the legs I had been holding so firmly crossed for so long. No, I wasn't bothered with a pain in my groin. I'd taped myself as I did every day now. So did Marilyn. If the goons that Malcolm Johnson employed had hidden cameras in our bathrooms, I'm sure by now that they were all laughing like crazy at the things we 'sisters' did to try to keep them from seeing what sex we really were.

"I need someone to secure my residence, my phone, my computer and my car," I told him. "I need someone who is the best in his field, someone like Garvey Sutton."

Del had been just sitting there, trying to be a stone, but he couldn't help blinking at me then. He knew he had given himself away. "I know Garvey," he said slowly.

"Garvey would never work for a woman," I said to Del, "not after the thing in Istanbul."

Del's eyebrows were streaking up again. "Conor told Patrick," I said, giving in and uncrossing my legs, watching Del look at them as I crossed them the other way. "Patrick told me."

Del shrugged. "Garvey don't work no more," he said.

"For you, he will," I said with a shiver at Del's almost unconscious parroting of the way Garvey spoke.

"What I want you to do, Mr Clarke, is to find me a new residence, preferably out of town but an easy commute, with new, secure phones, computers, cars, all unbugged, courtesy of Garvey Sutton," I told his frowning face. I brought out what looked like an ordinary credit card and gave it to Del. I had protected it from Johnson's stooges all the way from Monte Carlo, in places I would be embarrassed to tell where I'd hidden it.

"You've got fifty million dollars there," I said to him. Del had the grace to be startled. "Enough for you to recruit and equip the best security force New York has ever seen. Once I have security, I'll transfer another couple of hundred million over to accounts you can tap into to do whatever is needed to make me really secure."

"Another couple of hundred million?" choked Del.

"Enough for a coffee machine and a pretty secretary," I said to him. Del looked at me very sharply then. He'd al-



ways said that they were the two essentials of any business, and I, Patrick, shouldn't forget it.

"I want to talk to you, doll," said Del Clarke abruptly, "about Patrick O'Brien."

"I'm out of time," I said to him, swaying onto my high-heeled feet, my skirt sliding back from my thighs to my knees. "We should talk, yes, of course, but when I'm not being spied upon and when I'm not being hunted as I shall be if I don't scoot back to the Gardiner."

"I'll walk you and we can talk," said Del gruffly.

"Better I go alone," I said to him. "The people hemming me in can tap into any camera they want. If they see you walking along with me, you'll be under investigation as well. Find a place for me and move into it yourself. You're going to need just as much protection as me for a while."

"This job is quite illegal, isn't it?" said Del as I minced to the door, my tight skirt restricting how I could move and making my tush sway so suggestively. I didn't really want to feel as womanly as I did in such a skirt, or to behave as girlishly as I was, with Del. But sometimes, it just came over me, particularly with snappy guys like Malcolm Johnson and Del Clarke.

"What you will do and what I shall do ..." I said, shaking my long blonde hair, my earrings swirling as well. I took out my scarf to disguise myself a little but I knew how girlish I really looked and no scarf could disguise that. "No."

"Pity," said Del ironically. Well, I wanted to tell him. What I shall be doing won't be illegal but it won't necessarily be the right thing to do, either.

## —-*Success breeds*—-

“And who are these outstandingly beautiful young ladies?” asked Senator John Morse as I kept my arm tight around Marilyn’s so that she couldn’t go off and flirt with the Senator’s aides, not yet any way. It was the Senator I wanted to notice her, not his phalanx of aides.

“I’ll bet he says that to all the girls,” I said, tossing my golden hair back, as Marilyn giggled at me, not the least masculinity in that laugh. There shouldn’t be as I had made her practice and practice her voice until she mastered, well, mistressed, the feminine giggle as I had.

“Miss Hayley and Miss Marilyn Russell,” said the aide, beaming at us, “and they are making fifty thousand dollar donations to the charity, Senator!”

John Morse, silver-haired and distinguished, rose to shake our hands. His hand was strong and hard, ours were feminine and very weak. We’d practiced it as well, being all limp-wristed which had made Marilyn laugh at such a description.

“It would be so much more if the law allowed us,” I said to him, smiling and posing for the photographs, Marilyn a little uneasy but smiling as well, her ash-blond hair swaying just like mine. “But now that I have bought out Howland, Senator, I will make sure that we set up a proper political action committee. I’m sure my new employees will be able to come up with significant numbers of contributions to your re-election. We need men like you in government.”

Senator John Morse staggered at first at what I’d just said, but he recovered with amazing speed. He preened as the cameramen wanted to take more pictures of us, on either side of him. Well, we were definitely worth taking pictures of, Marilyn and I. I don’t think that there were

any prettier women than us at the auction. Well, in one way, they were all prettier than us, the women, as we weren't women at all, of course.

"How kind of you to say so, Miss Russell," murmured the beaming Senator. "A political action committee for me at Howland Tech? Well, well, well, your, your father, I suppose," he asked, trying to grasp what I'd just said to him, "has bought out that pillar of stable employment in my home state? I don't think ..."

"Not my father, Senator," I said sweetly to the politician who'd been meant to be the recipient of the letter I'd reluctantly taken from a man who'd become a named enemy of America. "Me, Senator," I said as Marilyn smiled beautifully, her makeup exquisite as she jiggled, as I had told her to, and the photo ops guys took advantage of her. "I'm the one with the business head. My sister is an actress."

Marilyn sparkled as I described her like that.

"You and your sister are both so beautiful," said the Senator, his tongue hanging out, I would have said, as I put my arm around him as he had his around me. I spelled my name for the enterprising reporter who asked and told him that, yes, my family had made a business acquisition in Senator Morse's state. My sister and I were looking forward to buying a new home there.

"I look forward to further meetings with the lovely Miss Russells," said the senator gallantly as I joined arms with my sister. "I, I must talk to you, um, Hayley, my dear, about your acquisition of Howland Tech."

Of course you do, I said silently, smiling and posing with the distinguished looking senator as girlishly provocative as someone blonde and feminine like me in a dress and long hair can. The deep-cut front, showing off my cleavage left no doubt that I was ready to talk fashion

more than business, as I said sweetly to the man I must call John now.

My 'sister' and I went on to join other celebrities at the charity auction, Marilyn acting as if she was in seventh heaven, with all the men smiling and coming on to both of us. We bought many of the items on display, paying top dollars for the privilege, it was for a charity after all. We had our photographs taken with many grinning young men. I knew few of them but my sister knew them all, having become a devotee of celebrity shows in the short time we had been in America.

Of course, there was one man who came out of the crowd and slid his arm under mine whom I had to chat to and flirt with, as Marilyn was doing with the actor who was holding her and fondling her. That's what I would have called what he was doing with his hands. But she was giggling in pleasure, of course.

"Now, what brought you to this charity auction, loading up on goodies this afternoon?" Malcolm Johnson asked me.

I smiled and hugged the man who was supposed, I believed, to be monitoring me and my activities in America. I kissed his cheek, leaving the mark of my lipstick there. He stiffened as he always did when I did something or said something really girlish to him. He knew that I was a man who had been renditioned to Huwara Prison as he'd been the governor at its end.

Malcolm Johnson knew that I'd been made into a woman there and had been entertainment for all the men who had money to pay for my affections as a woman. I acted more femininely than I did with anyone else when I saw Malcolm and the frown on his face. I don't know what I'd really have done if he'd taken me up on one of my offers for a sexual tryst with him.

"It's a charity, Malcolm," I said to him as he hugged me awkwardly, not the way Troy Proctor was clinging to Marilyn, the cameras going off like crazy all around the laughing pair. "Malcolm," I went on, leaning over and kissing each of his cheeks in French style. "So formal, isn't it? I think I'll call you Mal in the future. You know, it suits you. After all, it is the French word for 'evil', isn't it?"

"As pretty and as sassy as ever, Rowena," said the new Mal, using the girl's name that had been hung on me when I was in Huwara Prison, "when here I am bringing you a response to your request of me."

"So you are going to sleep with me tonight after all," I teased the uptight last governor of the hellhole I'd been imprisoned in.

Mal Johnson stiffened again. "You know, Miss Hayley Russell," he said to me, finally using the name that was on the American passport that he'd procured for me. It wasn't the perfect gift as I didn't doubt that it was one of the subtle strategies he was using to keep close tabs on me.

"The French," went on the man, finally squeezing me to him, rocking my skirts against me, "have an appropriate word for a person like you." He wouldn't call me a girl as he knew, no matter how gorgeous I looked, that I wasn't one. "They would call you 'une coquette'."

"Why Mal," I giggled to him, feeling a shudder inside me as I knew he was right. I was a tease, a sexual tease. I had to be. I had to give him the wrong impression to keep him off base as I did what I had to do to my enemies in America. "What a lovely thing to say to a girl like me! You know," I twirled and gave him a flashing smile that a photographer took a photo of right away, causing Mal to frown.

Mal glanced at another photographer who immediately moved in on the one who had flashed us, clearly to

get the picture he'd taken of Mal. Ah, Mal's bodyguards were so easy to spot at times. "I do have hopes for you, Mr Evil," I said coquettishly to Malcolm Johnson. "I really do think that you have a sense of humor beneath that grim, masculine exterior after all."

"I do need to talk to you," said Mal, easing me from the throng of teenaged girls and paparazzi who wanted to talk to Troy Proctor and to take pictures of my sister, the actress.

"You've found Mr Lewis for me," I said. "Did your stooges tell you that I was watching CNN this morning, the announcement from the Pentagon?"

"You saw him?" growled Mal. "And here you are, at a charity auction, with a certain senator who heads up a committee that deals with the affairs conducted by a one-star general whose middle name is Lewis."

I tried not to shiver as Malcolm Johnson said the hated name that I had given him. "Just a massive coincidence all round, isn't it?" I asked my new interrogator who grunted at me.

I looked over at Marilyn and waved to her and she reluctantly said good-bye to Troy Proctor, weaving her way through the crowd of paparazzi towards me. I felt Mal shifting away from me as Marilyn came towards us.

"I do need to know where you went last week when she was covering for you in the bath tub," Mal said to me. "No one saw you go out but there you were, in that pink, flowered headscarf, coming in to the Gardiner."

"Just out for a walk to meet with a lover," I said lightly to him, flicking my hair girlishly back behind my neck. "Your surveillance of me must be getting really sloppy, Mal."

“Our surveillance is state-of-the-art, Miss Russell,” said my minder. “We have to talk some more about Lewis and what it cost me to find out who he was, for you. You owe me more than Senator Morse’s name.”

“Then you’ll have to do another little job for me, Mal,” I said to him sweetly. “I did show you mine but you really didn’t show me yours. I looked at it all by myself.”

Mal grimaced at me but with the circus arriving, he went off, scowling into the crowd. I let myself be greeted by my ‘sister’, Marilyn, who hugged me and minced with me out to the limo waiting for us.

“Oh, that was so wonderful!” my sister enthused. “Troy Proctor! Oh, isn’t he so good-looking! I never thought in my wildest dreams that I’d be kissing and hugging a man like that. Thank you so much, darling Rowena, oops, darling Hayley, for bringing me here today. Are we going to do this again in the future? Oh, it’s so much fun!”

“Of course, we will, darling,” I said to her as we set off back to the Gardiner and the watchful eyes of Malcolm Johnson and his stooges. It was easy to forget that Leanne, I still had to think of her that way, as we had lived and loved together for a long time in the same cell with the Raja. He was the one who had encouraged us to make love together for his amusement.

We still did. Marilyn, there, got her name right, initiated it all the time as I couldn’t allow her to bring strange men into our room, men from the bar downstairs, men from the elevator whom she made eyes at or men from the sidewalk who whistled at us as we swayed femininely into the hotel. Sex settled her down, she said. For me, making love to her was like making love to another woman. She said the same thing about me and made fun of me for being a lesbian, like her.

Of course, that wasn't anatomically possible, for either of us, but seeing us together as I sometimes did with the mirrors that Marilyn strategically placed, it was like watching two very pretty, femininely shaped girls making out together. I suppose I shouldn't be afraid of Mal Johnson seeing me on camera, if he was recording us. We kept a frilly slip or nightie about ourselves when we were penetrating one another. I made a reference or two as well to dildos which, I hoped, would explain a lot of what we were doing. One thing was certain, though, I knew, as I danced through the foyer of the Gardiner with my flirtatious sister, we weren't going to stop what we were doing to one another very soon.

Marilyn knew about the possibility of cameras, of course, and so she had to kiss me and grope me in the elevator as we went up to our suite. It helped me to ease my tension which always seemed to return to me whenever I was in contact with Mal. There was something about him, the way he looked down at me, that made my hackles rise when he was near me. I had to bait him each time he looked at me as if I was something strange and weird, like something the dog had dragged in.

"Why do you flirt with that Johnson guy," asked Marilyn as we wiggled out of our dresses and bras and put on a show for the hidden cameras, if they existed. "Do you do that because you like him?"

"No, the opposite," I said to her, as I wiggled out of my garter belt and stockings, moving against her. I was in just my purple, frilly panties and she still had her black garter belt on. I teased her while we kissed. "You can flirt with him if you like, save him coming on to me all the time."

Marilyn looked a little astonished as she should. Mal didn't really come on to me much in front of her. He was a gentleman or he knew who and what she was.



“No thanks,” she said, pulling a face between kisses and hugs. “He’s really not my type.” We fell on the bed in a tangle of legs which she loved doing with me.

“You have a type?” I asked her and she let out a giggle in the middle of kissing me passionately.

“Oh, I’d take him to bed if he was here now,” Marilyn confessed as I thought of her type of man as one who was living and breathing. “Any man’s better than a woman.”

Despite the fact that she didn’t want a sex change, Marilyn was fixated on making love to men. She referred to herself as a woman or as a girl. Listening to her talk, she seemed to have completely ‘gone over’ into being a woman which was why I’d offered to pay for her trip to Trinidad, Thailand or somewhere else to have sexual reassignment surgery.

And what did she think that I was? I asked myself with a shudder. I was the only person she was making love to and so ‘Any man is better than a woman’ referred to me. I didn’t think that I was that bad of a lover. Indeed, she had wonderful orgasms with me, as good as those any woman I’d made love to, many years ago.

### —-*Moving On*—-

It was fantastic to shop with Marilyn as she was just like women who had exasperated me in stores so many times before. She had to try everything on, seek the advice of the salesgirls who attended us, and generally take hours to buy anything. She made me feel as if I was a woman as she turned to me for advice so often. Of course, with the credit cards we both carried, we could have bought anything that we wanted but I didn’t want to spoil Marilyn’s girlish fun.

Besides, her fun meant that Mal's stooges were getting sloppier and sloppier in their surveillance of us girls. When we ducked into the bras and panties section of the huge department store, they were miles away from us when we minced right out of the change rooms, out the nearest exit and into the 'special' cab that Del had waiting for us.

"I thought you girls were never going to come out," said Del from the front seat with a grin as the driver he had hired did some nifty moves through traffic and through an alley and a parking lot. Several guys slapped at the sides of the cab, one apparently taking off with the sign from the top.

"Just changing the numbers and signs," I murmured to a nervous Marilyn, clinging to my hand and looking femininely alarmed.

Del grinned at me. "Your sister's right, an old trick," he assured Marilyn, looking at me too as if he wondered how I knew that. I watched behind us as well but I didn't see anyone following us anyway.

In an underground parking lot, to be on the safe side, Del reassured us again, we switched cars, still inside one with darkened windows. We headed out in the opposite direction to where we went in.

The estate and house Del had purchased for us were just perfect. So were the electronic fences and the men with machine guns, all with permits to carry them, Del proudly told a nervous Marilyn and me.

It was such a relief to use the laptop computer and not have to worry about who was spying with me. "Bets on how long it will take Malcolm Johnson and his cohorts to find me?" I asked Del who then looked at me sharply.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm Johnson?" he asked me. "Hayley, he's one of the good guys." I did feel a tickle go-

ing up and down my spine as Del called me by a woman's name. I should have insisted on a neutral name like Pat. But what a giveaway that would have been.

"Yes," I said to Del and Garvey Sutton, another of my father's 'main men', who'd come silently into the office prepared for me. "But Johnson's bosses aren't. He's following his orders and trying to keep tabs on my sister and me for now. Garvey, this setup is great. How close to the fence do they have to be for you to detect surveillance from outside?"

"Anything directly on any part of the house and estate, I got," said Garvey soberly, staring at me. "And four days, tops. Likely tonight if'n they really works at it."

"I think Del's pickup process is better than that," I said, unconsciously moving my shoulders girlishly and tossing my hair femininely as I chatted in my most lilting tones. "I'd say three days. We don't have to go out for anything for a while."

I'd left my sister in one of the rooms farther along on the upper floor. Marilyn had shrieked when she'd seen it and said that Bloomingdale's had dropped a whole fashion department on us. The ten-room upper floor was mostly for just the two of us, with a room just for ball gowns where I'd left her in ecstasy while I chatted to the men who'd made this possible with the money I'd given them.

"We want to know about Patrick," said Del, not joining in the game of guessing when Mal Johnson would find me. "What happened to him?"

"And I want to know how, how," I had almost said 'my' and that would have given it all away, "how Patrick O'Brien's father died. The Internet isn't showing cause of death, anywhere."

The two men exchanged glances in front of me. "Starved himself to death," Garvey finally grunted. Del gave him a disgusted look..

"What?!" I gasped, the blood draining right out of my face, I'm sure, in the shock I felt at hearing such horrible words.

"What?" Garvey repeated. "So she's going to cry. She's a girl. They're like that."

"Patrick was gone," said Del quickly. "Conor locked himself up in the brownstone the O'Briens lived in. Like what we've done here, it was always one of the most secure houses in all of New York."

"But someone must have seen him," I said, unable to stop the trembling and shock that I felt. Yes, I was going to cry. My father had starved to death! How could that happen in this day and age! Someone should have been able to save him.

"We seen him at Patrick's funeral," said Garvey bluntly, staring right through me, daring me to be girlish in front of him. I shuddered even more as I was terrified that he saw the real me, the real Patrick O'Brien, seated at 'her' keyboard, swinging around on her high heels, her dress swishing about her. And he was looking at my cleavage, I thought in distress. Well, why not? I said bitterly to myself. Everybody else was doing it these days.

I drew in a deep breath and my breasts rose accordingly and Garvey's eyes followed the pretty picture of womanhood that I must have presented him with. Yes, I am a woman, I thought to him. Get used to it.

"We knew he took it hard," said Del gruffly, getting up and looking through the window overlooking the estate. There was a lawn and open ground all about the house. No spook could creep up unknown on me here. "But we thought he was just not eating for a while. He

said he was going to take care of his grief. He promised us he'd start eating again now that Patrick was in the ground."

"But he didn't," I said, choking and beginning to cry as I thought about my father, knowing his inflexible will and how he would have made a decision and lived and died with it.

"Don't take long if'n you don't drink," said Garvey grimly. "Took me two days to work round the locks I set for him. That's how we found him. Dehydration and starvation said Doc Travers." I remembered him but I couldn't possibly see him. He was far too acute and another old friend of Dad's. He would definitely have seen right through me to whom I really was.

"Now we've answered your questions," said Del hoarsely, eyes as shiny as mine. "You, young lady, answer ours."

They waited, assessing me, as I had to use a tissue. I knew that I was going to cry. I was going to be all girlie and cry for these men who had been so close to my father. I couldn't tell them the whole truth. I couldn't tell them that they were looking at the real Patrick O'Brien, crossing his nyloned legs in front of them, arranging his skirts with a feminized hand, his bracelet caressing his wrist, his matching earrings in motion at his pierced ears, a motion so familiar to 'her' now that he never noticed how girlie he was any more.

I couldn't tell them the whole truth. I'd have to lie, in places anyway. It was so important, if I was to do what Louis Danton had planned for me to do to get my Countess of Monte Cristo revenge, that I be a woman for a while. They mustn't know that I was a man doing the feminine things. They could know what I planned to do to

the worst betrayer of all of Patrick's enemies, well, in time.

"They swam aboard my yacht in the Gulf," I lied to them and they stared at me, hooked immediately, I think, "an old man, Louis, with Patrick and a man they called the Raja. The captain and his men would have pushed them under the sea with the oars and other things we had on board. The men were so awful, bearded, in rags.

"Patrick called to us in English and begged us to help a fellow American. He said later, that he'd seen us take down the US flag. We did that heading into the Gulf in case we met trouble."

The two men were staring at my face avidly, trying, I'm sure, to read if or how much of the truth I, a mere girl, was telling them. "When was this?" Garvey wanted to know.

They were stunned when I said, "Three weeks ago." I told them all about Hell, the way that I said Patrick related it to me, and how the others confirmed it. I didn't tell them about Lanarka and how Patrick had become a woman. I didn't tell them about my sister, Marilyn. I'd have to tell her to keep her mouth shut as well. That would be easy for her. She'd have hated it if I'd started telling people about us, that we'd once been men.

"He was abused in that place?" asked Del, hardly able to get the words out, his face thunderous.

"Physically, mentally and sexually, I believe," I said to him, shivering as I thought of what my father had been doing while I was being 'taught' how to be a woman to a man like Jofty by Miri and Buna. "I couldn't ask him but I only had to look at his face to see that he'd been tortured there."

I shivered as I wondered how much to tell them. Garvey frowned as Del looked away into the garden

again, his eyes hard. "Patrick was part of a rendition program," I told them the truth about that. "When we got to Monte Carlo, your Malcolm Johnson came after him to take him back and rendition him again to some place in the middle of Asia."

That really stunned them. Garvey hurtled up from his chair and began to pace the small office before finally returning to sit and listen.

"Back in the Indian Ocean," I went on, making all the female gestures I could to convince them that I was a woman. I crossed my legs. I pushed my hair back several times and wiggled as I sat. I began to feel that I was Hayley, in my feminine, stylish dark skirt and pink blouse as I told them what Patrick supposedly had told me.

"He told me too how dangerous this Raja was," I said. "He was the leader of the prison revolt that Louis planned. Both had to get out as they knew, if the renditions ended, people like them would end up being rendered to Bagram or somewhere worse.

"For Patrick, the worst was that he wasn't on any list or register in the prison. Malcolm Johnson was the governor appointed to close the prison and he didn't know, at first, that Patrick was in his prison. There were more inmates on undocumented renditions like Patrick and the rumor was that they were all to be dropped into a well which would be sealed up as the prison was closed. That's why he joined the mad plot to get out."

I told them of the fight for the trucks, which I made sound a lot bloodier. I told them that it was accidental that 'they' got away, more than it was. Then, they came too far east, I said, reaching the coast after fights with patrols in which others were killed. One fight was terrible but the result of all the killing was that there were just the three of them left on a barren stretch of coast.

I shivered in my dress, moving in my stockings as I talked about Patrick as if he wasn't me at all.

"Where is our Patrick now?" asked Del doggedly. "Is he dead?"

"What makes you think ...?" I asked nervously.

"He's not here," snarled Garvey Sutton. "And with the news we've given you about his father, he'd be here asking us how he died, as you are, if he was alive."

I still had visions of my father slowly wasting away and I wasn't there to help him. A great rage flooded through me. If any of my enemies, the Senator, Lewis, or Ted Graham had appeared in front of me, I would have cheerfully revealed who I was as I mowed all three of them down with the Kalashnikov that I had once possessed, if only for a short time.

But the import of what Garvey was saying came to me slowly. "We've hidden Patrick and denied we ever picked him up," I finally told them in my lilting, feminine voice. I should have told them that I was Patrick then. But I didn't. I just didn't want to see the way that they would look at me. No amount of money could have changed the contempt that they would have had for me if I'd revealed that I was a man like they were; because, now, I wasn't like them. I had breasts. I had a feminine waist and tush. I had lovely legs. How many men do you know with lovely legs? I had a cute, thin, feminine nose. I had long, blonde hair, styled like a woman's. I was most beautifully madeup to look like a glamorous woman. I was a woman. That's how I felt at times like this. No, I had to continue on and lie about Patrick.

I could see that they were listening intently and believing everything that I was saying. So I gave them a little truth. "Raja got drunk and hurt Louis in a fight he picked over money. Patrick tried to protect Marilyn and me," I



went on. "We had to call for a doctor in Monte Carlo as Louis was in and out of consciousness. He died the next day. Patrick was hurt pretty badly, too, but, as we reached Monte Carlo, we found the doctor came with Johnson, who was looking for the three of them.

"The captain and I knew Patrick was going to be renditioned again and so we hid him. They took the Raja and Louis's body with them and tried to arrest me."

"So where is Patrick now?" asked Del hoarsely.

"I don't know," I said, tears in my eyes as I remembered the tragedy of Louis while my father had been dead for so long, unmourned by me. I hated my enemies then, most fervently. "On an island, perhaps, guarded by my money, somewhere."

"Don't tell us," said Garvey hoarsely. "As far as we're concerned, Del, he's dead and gone. That's the best way to protect him."

I should have known then that Garvey had read me at last in some indefinable way that I didn't know. But I didn't catch on and went on chattering like a girl as I embellished Patrick's story and the revenge we could help him with.

"I didn't tell Johnson that Patrick had told me his name and his history," I told the two men listening to me, wiping away the tears and mascara tracks that had come when I thought about my father and how he'd died. "I didn't tell him that I'd promised Patrick I'd help with the scheme that Louis laid out for Patrick to revenge himself on his enemies who put him to that place he called Hell, even though one is a powerful senator and another a high-ranking officer."

"You're going to kill an American Senator?" asked Garvey, staring at me, shaking his head in disbelief as if he would have no part of such a mad idea.