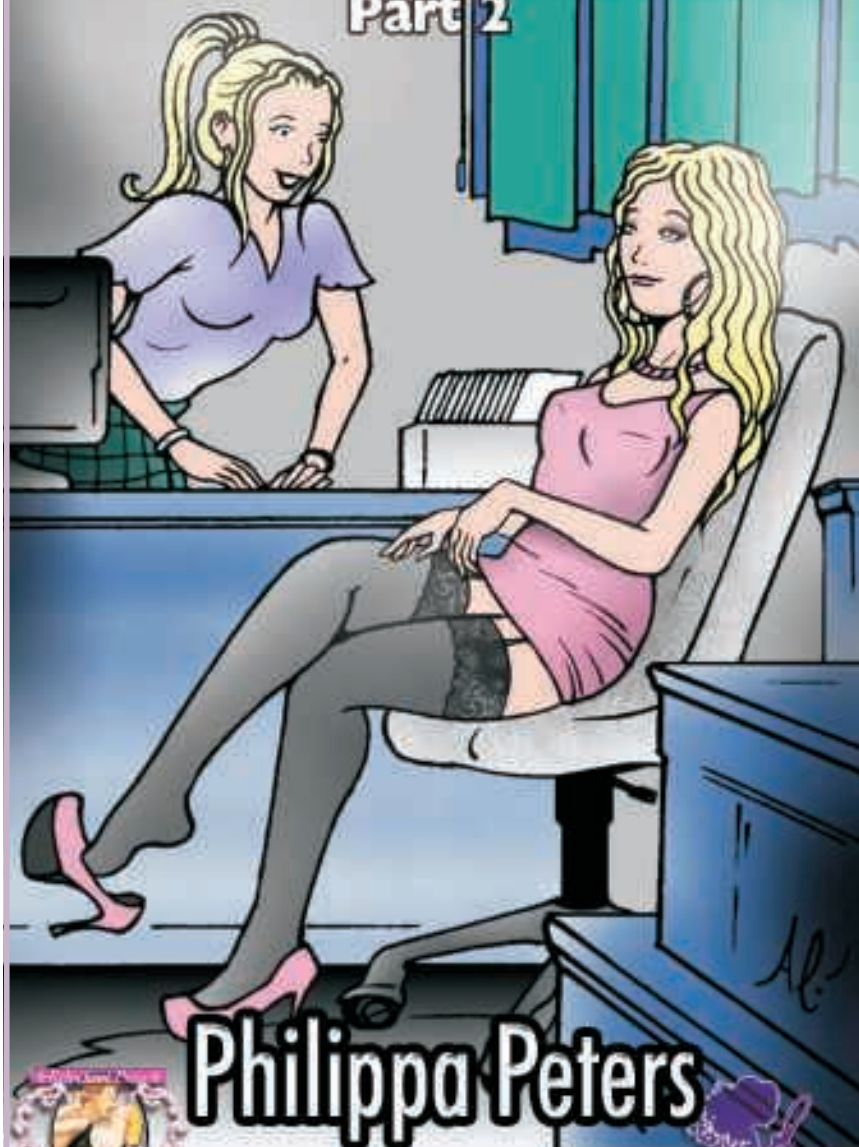


Identity: Noelle Mercier

Part 2



Philippa Peters



An "Adult Tv" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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IDENTITY: NOELLE MERCIER II

by **Philippa Peters**

*****1. Tell me what went on in Paris*****

“Noelle Mercier is more dangerous than we were led to believe,” Section Chief Virginia Shepherd said crisply to the assembled committee. “A year ago, she killed a Section Chief, Jackson, in Paris. Two weeks ago, she was identified as the assassin who killed the Barrouqi brothers, just when they were about to accept a proposal that would assist the peace process in Central Asia.”

Not an eyelid fluttered over the recitation of that ‘fact,’ Virginia noted.

“A week ago,” she went on without a change in cadence, “she returned to Paris. This is a recording of her speaking to Thierry Bouchard, her control when she worked for Jackson.”

There was a stirring and sparking of interest at that, probably because everyone in the room was

high enough in clearance to know that Jackson had been assassinated in Paris, his section dispersed as a result.

“Yes, Virginia,” said a man’s voice in French from the audio at Ginny’s desk. Only Ginny, her deputy, Jack Reynolds and possibly Ezra March, poker-faced as always, would have known the voice as that of Thierry Bouchard, an American, despite the name. He’d been Noelle’s last control when she had been known to be working for the agency.

“Have you marked her yet?” murmured a light, feminine, seductive voice, or so Ginny Shepherd thought it.

There was a slight drawing of breath as if the listener was startled by what he’d heard. “She hasn’t seen you yet,” the male voice whispered. Some had to strain to listen. It was hard to tell it was the same man, Thierry, responding to the woman speaking to him as if he recognized who she was.

“Quite a reception when all I came back for was to kill you,” said the light, girlish voice, the amusement in her tone very evident to Ginny but she’d heard the passage a hundred times.

“Anyone with a gun and a cyanide ...” said the man’s voice, picking up in volume as if he heard the words and didn’t believe them.

“Cyanide pill,” interrupted the girl with an infectious giggle. “Yes, I remember. Give my regards to Jackson’s replacement and tell him to go fuck himself.” Several of the listeners in the room with Ginny frowned at that. But the girl was going on. “I don’t need Jackson or him any more. I went over his head.”

“Noelle!” exclaimed Thierry but the cellphone clicked audibly as Noelle cut him off. “Jackson’s dead!” Thierry yelled into the phone, his end of the conversation still being recorded. “Noelle!” he shouted. “Jackson’s dead! Remember? Noelle!”

“Apparently she doesn’t,” Virginia’s voice responded, sounding far away as if she wasn’t behind

Thierry as he yelled into the phone. It was cut off as Virginia Shepherd stopped the computer program that held the recording.

“So, we know she arrived in Paris,” said Virginia, “but the rest of the conversation is something of a mystery. Why, for example, was she sending a message to Jackson’s replacement to go fuck himself? Well, I won’t,” she said with a grim smile. “She’s the one who killed Jackson. We have to take her to account for that. Then there’s this.”

This’ was a second recording, this one a video. Ginny did exactly what the techie had told her to do. Up on the screen came a recording of an American officer approaching the camera.

“The voice identification program says that this voice is the same as the one in the first recording,” said Virginia Shepherd. “So, don’t be fooled, gentlemen, as my agents were. This purported male courier is none other than Noelle Mercier, not the man that you think you are seeing.”

There were gasps from several of those on the committee. “She was placed in a cell as her orders requested. I suppose I should say ‘he’ was placed in loose detention,” Ginny went on in the same controlled tones. “I can show you an hour or two of nothing happening near to the cell in which this courier, identified as Lieutenant Stephen Nixon, was held.

“What I can’t show you is how this was done.”

There were more gasps as the camera panned through what had been left of the supplementary interrogation center in Paris. The alarms were sounding and flashing but the metal portcullis that was supposed to protect the facility was smashed into a metallic desk, bending it, a gap to allow entrance and exit visible beneath it.

The cameraman panned about several rooms, one clearly for interrogation. There was Jack Reynolds, out cold on the tiled floor, another of Ginny’s operatives beside him. Several more men were lying un-

conscious throughout the facility, medics beginning to resuscitate them.

“This is what Lieutenant Nixon, a man with Noelle Mercier’s voice, did to my interrogation squad,” said Ginny, ignoring the men who wanted to ask her questions. “Who you don’t see in these pictures, besides Noelle in her disguise as a man, is Thierry Bouchard, who was the person being questioned extensively in the main interrogation room.

“Yes, both Nixon and Bouchard vanished despite the speed with which the embassy responded to this attack. It’s clear, isn’t it, that Nixon was, is, Noelle Mercier. Jack and I think she’s teasing us with the ID as that’s who her fingerprints identify her as, in Jackson’s group. All his operatives had other identities that their fingerprints lead to. It was standard in his section.”

“So who’s this Stephen Nixon?” asked a frowning Section Chief, his rank equal to Ginny’s.

“A helicopter pilot killed in Iraq,” said Virginia. “Quite a hero who probably worked on black ops for Jackson.”

“Where’s this Thierry Butcher now?” asked the same questioner.

“We don’t know,” said Virginia. “Not a whisper about him, nor Noelle Mercier. She may have killed him as she said she would. Or she might just have bled him of information he had about us which is why we haven’t caught a sniff of her Chanel perfume anywhere in Europe since she broke her ex-lover out of our welcoming clutches.”

“And she is most dangerous because ...” the same, persistent questioner went on.

“Because she’s killed one of us, a Section Chief, Jackson, a year ago,” snapped Virginia Shepherd. “Maybe she killed more. Another agent died in that screw-up. She killed the Barrouqi brothers. She’s probably killed Thierry Bouchard. She’s not working

for the agency any more. We have to find her and take her out, as we think Jackson went to Paris to do.”

“I don’t know this woman,” cut in a new speaker. “Is it true all files on her are just gone? How can that be? And we were employing her over here after she’d taken out a Station Chief?”

“It seems,” said Ezra Marsh, in his frostiest speaking voice. He’d said to Ginny that he didn’t want to talk at all in the meeting, “that Jackson kept her off the record. We didn’t know that she was working for us in Paris.”

“Didn’t we close Jackson’s section because he’d lost control of his packs of killers?” Browning, the ‘Loyal Opposition’ on the committee, asked. “Wasn’t that approved after Jackson started terminating assets all on his own?”

“Noelle Mercier completed twenty missions in Europe with her control, Thierry Bouchard,” Ezra went on again. “And Jackson was just going to close her down. We don’t exactly have a thousand female assets we can call on when we need a woman, you know. At first, we thought Noelle had been given the mission of terminating Jackson. She came back to the States and was debriefed here. Only very recently have we been able to verify that no one gave an order to terminate Jackson. Noelle has a skill set we could use but, as of now, she’s gone off the reservation.”

“Can’t we terminate her by using the packs we already have?” another frowning questioner wanted to know. “They all have assets as good as she seems to be. Set a wolf to catch a wolf, or its bitch, I suppose it would be in this case.”

Virginia wanted to slap the old, chauvinist warrior. “We could,” she went on, “if only we had a pack here in America.”

“She’s here?” gasped another of the older, snowy-haired fossils. “But you promised us,” he turned to Ezra Marsh who’d sat stonily, “that no asset like her would ever be allowed to set foot over here.”

“We don’t know for absolute certainty that she’s put a high heel on our native soil, Bob,” said Ezra. “But it does seem likely. You heard her say she didn’t need Jackson’s replacement any more because she’d gone over his head.”

“Someone in the agency is working with her?” asked the first, persistent questioner in surprise.

“When we find out who he or she is,” said Ezra Marsh, his cold expression chilling everyone in the room, “we won’t be announcing it. Like the late Thierry Bouchard, he or she is just going to vanish.”

2. Nylons and cacti do not go together

“I’m sorry, lady,” said the Mexican people smuggler, grinning as if he’d done something clever. “I tol’ you. You gotta wear pants out here, even a woman as pretty as you!”

I could have told him I didn’t own a pair of pants. A blonde airhead like I was playing wouldn’t have worn them. She’d have worn the vividly red dress I was wearing, with deep, frontal cleavage, showing off her perky, girlish breasts. She’d have worn too much makeup, heavy about her eyes, and scads of cheap jewelry. She’d have hitched up her dress all of the time to show off her stockings and shapely, tanned legs. Yes, since I’d approached Ramon Suarez in the bar in Sonora, I had been the sexy, girlish Alicia Marques, a woman wronged.

I’d told Ramon I’d married my husband, an American, in El Salvador. He’d left me to go home to see his ailing mother. Of course, I’d found out that the lying, no-good cheat wasn’t known at the American Embassy, he wasn’t a citizen of the US. My marriage certificate was fake and I was on my own.

But another American who’d liked me – I wiggled my tush suggestively for Ramon, swishing my skirts,

getting a real female kick out of it myself - had recognized 'Rod' in the few pictures I had of him, and the city in the background. Ramon had had his arm about me then, panting for a woman like me.

"Later," I told him, patting his hand on my thigh away. I showed him Rod, standing in front of his mansion, or suburban house, his house number visible. I could track him down through that, couldn't I? If I could get someone to help me, I'd added coyly.

I doubted Ramon believed my teary, womanish, emotional story. "Ten thousand," he'd laughed at me. His face had been a picture when I put that amount of dollars on the table in front of him.

"Now," I told him, moving close enough to let the Chanel and my perky breasts\ have their usual effect on a mere man like him. "We go across the border now."

"I got arrangements to make," Suarez blurted out. "Come see me next week, Monday; it ain't so busy then."

"I got that deal from Gonzalo," I told him, getting up and preparing to wiggle femininely away from him. His head had jerked when I'd mentioned his chief competition in getting people across the American border illegally. He stopped me, his hand covering the wad of money in front of him.

"I'll give you another ten thousand dollars, American," I purred at the man, "when we get across the border tonight."

"Tomorrow," Ramon Suarez said. "I got things to do tonight!"

I reached over and bent his thumb back. With my other hand I scooped the money back into my purse. "I guess I'll try someone else," I said to him with a girlie smile.

I sashayed towards the door, knowing that more than one man was watching my tush move in the tight skirt I'd chosen to wear.

“Wait, señora,” hissed Ramon, coming up behind me. I could have killed him easily if he’d pulled one of his knives, the stiletto from his boot or the flip-knife from the extra sleeve in his leather jacket.

“Señorita,” I said girlishly, to him with a smile, letting him see how white and even my teeth were. “That’s what the Americans say I am, still.”

Suarez followed me outside before he put his arm about my shoulders to restrain me. I let him. I let him get another whiff of my Chanel perfume. It spoke of riches and money. I could almost sense the ‘coyote’ sniffing around me. I wore mid-size, ‘kitten’ heeled shoes to let him be taller than me. I was a woman, in his eyes, pretty and all alone, which meant I wasn’t too smart.

So I’m sure Ramon reasoned, he didn’t have to get his usual crew involved with him. He’d take my money, and anything else he wanted. It would all be his. He wouldn’t have to share anything, not even me and the love I’d give him, with anyone.

“Let me see the other ten thousand,” Ramon said with his attempt at a charming grin.

I opened my purse. He saw that I had several packs like the first one.

Ramon made one of those exasperated Spanish expressions that are pretty meaningless to me. What does ‘ay caramba’ really mean, anyway? I did understand him when he said, “Lady, don’t show anyone else what you got in that purse or there’ll be a big fight right here, over your dead body.”

“Oh no,” I said, lifting my lacquered, shiny red fingernails to my red, shiny mouth as if I was very frightened. I shook my long hair down my bare back. Ooo, that felt so good, so nice, so womanly.

Ramon smirked. “You’re quite safe, señorita,” he said, stroking my soft skin, probably deciding whether to take me somewhere with him to make love to him. “You’re with me, Ramon Suarez, you know.”

I knew that. I'd already learned that this man was one of the best at finding routes across the American border, routes without any American border patrols sniffing along them. Thus, they were routes on which I wouldn't have to leave a trail of dead bodies behind me. The only problem with the affectionate Ramon Suarez was that he was known to betray his partners and his clients, particularly if he thought they were holding out on the money they were paying him. Oh, and he loved to screw the prettiest girls in any party he took across the border.

"Expensive but good," several of my inquiries had led me to believe. "But make sure you go with him in a large group or he'll rip you off."

But I didn't want to go in a large group that would remember me. I didn't want other refugees telling the US Border Patrol who had slipped over the border with them. No, I needed to cross all by myself.

"I, I have to go tonight," I whispered to Ramon, his hand stroking my tush, fondling the line of my panties. He steered me into the shade at the side of an old ramshackle store, tourist trinkets everywhere in its dusty windows.

"All right," said Suarez, leaning into me, his breath awful enough to gag a maggot. He wanted to kiss me. I let him, knowing that his hands caressing me, around my breasts and tush were checking me for weapons. I didn't have to carry any to deal with a flea like Suarez.

Just so long as Ramon didn't actually put his hands inside my panties and find out what I really had in there. No, he couldn't do that. I couldn't let him. I wiggled against him as if I was enjoying his caresses. Yes, he kissed me again, his tongue trying to insert itself in my mouth. Yes, he did think still that I was a woman.

His pickup truck was behind the bar. I cuddled up to him on the long front seat, torn in several places. That was where I caught my stockings for the first time. Well, I'd buy more feminine clothing in the US, I thought, once we were across the border, actually

getting a little hot as I thought of myself in *Victoria's Secret*, buying new panties and a bikini.

The last ten miles we drove without headlights even though the night was dark. It took us almost an hour to complete that last distance to the border before we abandoned Ramon's truck in what appeared to be a well-worked, fairly well hidden alcove in the side of a hill.

"Now, we got to scramble," said Ramon, taking the time to swirl me about him, to kiss my cheek and fondle me. He almost crushed my breasts to him. "Only take us an hour to get up to the border but a couple more to avoid the patrols they got out these days. They catch you, you know," that was said with hands exploring my skirts, garter belt and panties, "you'll be lucky if they just turn you back this way."

"And then I'd be at the mercy of all the predators out here," I said, batting my false eyelashes, still doing my dizzy blonde impression.

"Yes, predators," said Ramon, liking that word, rolling it around on his tongue.

I covered my hair with a dark scarf, pulling it back enough to leave my ears free.

"You look good enough to eat," said Suarez, lifting me out of the cab and putting me right down beside a saguaro. I backed away and met cactus for the first time.

Yes, my stockings were quite ruined by the time we slipped out of the rough undergrowth after nearly an hour. We came out on a cleared section that ran east and west.

"Thas' the border," murmured Ramon, spinning me into him for another awful kiss. "I get my money and you can walk across."

Did he think that I was a crazy woman? I could smell the tobacco on the wind that came from the north. I was just to sashay blithely across this

cleared space and, whoever was there, could have me?

“You, you’re going to come with me, aren’t you?” I begged him in the little-girlish voice I seemed to have used forever, running my red-painted nails seductively over his chest. “You said ...”

“For all the money in your purse, pretty girl,” Ramon said with a leering smile. “Yeah, this is the payoff time, you little bitch.” The knife came down his sleeve easily to his hand. He flicked it open, grabbing at me, slashing with the knife as if he intended to cut the strap of my purse or duffel bag I’d had to carry all the way. Ramon was no gentleman.

He couldn’t believe it. He knew he’d swung but it seemed he’d missed me completely. Ramon stood there looking stupidly at the knife in his hand as if was the knife’s fault he’d missed. Only when he attempted to slash me on his return did I take his wrist, snap it easily, hearing both the noise of bone breaking and a wild shriek coming from his mouth. I immediately flipped him on his back, cutting off his noise by burying his face in the earth.

“Bitch!” Suarez still screamed at me from the side of his mouth.

“Shush, Ramon,” I whispered to him, my dress about his face, my stockinged leg on his ear. “You don’t want those guys up there to hear you, do you?”

He’d lost his hat in the dark. I could see the whites of Ramon’s eyes as he stared up at me. He moved for the knife in his boot. I drove my shoe, it had the thin tip of a kitten heel, which I’ve always found useful when dressed as a woman, right into his groin.

He tried to scream but nothing came out but a dry sort of gasp. “Good boy, Ramon,” I said to him softly as I picked up my purse and the heavier bag I’d let slip to the ground. “I think you earned this much,” I told him as I dropped ten thousand on him.

I misunderstood how greedy Ramon Suarez was. I thought with his broken hand, his bruised male

equipment, probably torn, and his lost weapons, as far as he knew tossed into the brush, he might have lain back and let nature take its course.

But he didn't. I'd wiggled across the open space into more undergrowth, hitching up my skirt to allow me to slide easily, low to the ground, behind what I'd smelled first, beside a diesel-fueled pickup. By the butts beneath the windows, two men were in it. Nothing moved. There were no red lights from smoking cigarettes to tell me there were men inside the cab but I presumed they were.

"Carney! 'Nesto!" Ramon screamed from out of the darkness well to my right. "She's right behind you!"

Almost immediately, the door of the pickup opened, light poured out and a mustached man with a shotgun jumped out. He turned in my direction but couldn't see me with all the light. But he did fire, right into the bush beside me. I saw him move the angle of his fire towards me..

Ramon's knife, the good stiletto I'd kept, only glinted over the last two or three feet as it took the shotgun wielder in the throat. He went down, not even saying a word. I could hear Ramon screaming, "She's taken 'Nesto down!" I knew that the 'she' must be me. Ooo, I loved it when men called me that.

That was when I heard the slight click behind me. I knew I couldn't outrun whatever gun was trained on me.

"Walk up into the light of the truck, lady," said a man, speaking English with a slight drawl. I hadn't spoken English for so long that I didn't move at first, having to work out what he wanted me to do. I lifted the bag I had with me as well as my purse.

"No, lady," drawled the voice behind me. "They stay on the ground. You walk up into the light or I'll shoot you now."

So I walked up into the light, where an enraged Ramon tried to come running but all he could do was limp hurriedly right at me. The fist on his uninjured

hand was raised to pound on me. Well, I didn't have to stand for that. I grabbed his hand, my Special Training Class 101, I thought, and broke Ramon's other wrist, which really made him howl. I also had him as a shield between me and whoever was out there in the darkness.

"Interesting," drawled Carney, as I supposed the man was called. "So what do I do now, lady? Blast the worthless piece of sh ... sugar in front of you to pieces before I blow your head off as well?"

A gentleman, I thought, what a fine time to meet one, a gentleman with a shotgun in his hands who wasn't going to shoot wildly and give me any kind of chance to change the odds against me. Nice of him, however, to speak so gently to a pretty woman, as he thought that was what he saw.

"You could just blast him," I suggested in English. It sounded so weird coming from my mouth. I was sure I must be speaking it with a French accent. I should as it was the only way I'd spoken it with Thierry, he saying I sounded more like a girl when I did that, than when I tried to speak English as 'Johnny,' the assassin I really was.

"You could take the money I paid him to get me across the border," I went on, hearing myself, Noelle, saying 'zee bord-air' which was a giveaway to any of the people I didn't want to know I was in America that the girl who'd crossed here was me, "and then I could pay you more. I have some other money in my purse. I can get more from any bank with some of the cards I have."

There was a grunt from the darkness of a mound, of rock and trees, I guessed, behind where I'd been crawling. "Mighty interesting," said the voice. It had moved further to my left, cutting off the possibility of me diving behind the front of the pickup. No, I'd be open to a shotgun blast if I did that now. Besides, my petticoats would make such a lovely, swishing noise, he'd know right where the blonde 'girl' was.

It took a while. A whimpering Ramon had to be the one to crawl over using his broken arms to pull the

purse back into the light. “Kill her,” he kept shouting at the man in the dark with a gun trained on me. “Kill the fucking bitch. Can’t you see what she’s done to my wrists? I can’t drive any more!”

“Then I shouldn’t kill her,” said the drawling man, having moved more quietly than I thought possible, further past me. “She might be the one who has to drive you back to Sonora. Maybe she’ll only charge you ten thousand for the trip.”

“How did you know Ramon was bringing me across?” I asked the gunman. He’d asked Ramon to check out the other guy with the knife sticking out of his throat.

“We’ve got our ways,” the man murmured. Probably one of the times Ramon was fiddling with his cellphone. Maybe when Ramon was a ‘gentleman’ and went off to pee in the woods. “Now, lady, this is going to be difficult for you. You gotta tie yourself up.”

“You’re kidding me,” I gasped to him.

“I saw those moves you made, lady,” the voice said. “They were done by a special ops commando back in Nam. Showed us how to take prisoners as well. Nesto left some shot cord on the seat. He was playing with it, case we needed it. Pick it up, lady, and wrap it around your wrists, in front of you. That’s it, and you tie it with your teeth.”

I knew the drill. I’d done it in training many times. Just my luck, I thought savagely, to meet the one man on this frontier who recognized my skills and thought, too, that he knew how to nullify them.

Carney was an older man, white-mustached and with level, blue eyes. But his expression was cold. “So I get to tell my daughter some bimbo from Tijuana killed her husband, do I?” he asked, covering me all the time with his shotgun. With one hand, he lassoed me with a rope from the back of the truck. That held me against the truck cabin while the old man set the shotgun carefully across the engine where he could reach it easily. He began to search my purse and my

bag as Ramon went on sniffing, cursing and moaning about what 'the bitch' had done to him.

"Very nice panties," the old man said as he emptied my duffel. "A whore's panties, ain't they? No real woman wears underwear like that. You search this woman, Ramon?"

I stiffened a little as Ramon swore he had.

"I'll do it again," said the man, grinning and moving closer to me. He drew a revolver from his pocket and had it close to my head where I couldn't catch it as he did a thorough search of me. He tore down my swishy skirt and hooked it about my legs so that I couldn't stride away easily; then my panties came down as his hands played with my thighs and garter belt.

"Well, lookee here, Ramon," said the old man. "All the time, you thought you was playing with a hen and you was playing with a rooster." He grinned awfully at me. "A mighty pretty rooster though."

Ramon couldn't constrain himself. "You're a whore! An effing faggy queen!" he screamed at me in Spanish, stumbling over towards me. I almost giggled as I was tempted to ask him to get my gender correct and use one description or the other. "And I was going to fuck your brains out, all night long!"

Ramon aimed a kick at my exposed male parts which was wonderful as he was so unsteady. He bumped into the man who was threatening me with his revolver. I grabbed Ramon's foot with my thighs and kicked upward at him with both my legs, dropping out of line with the gun. At the same time, I used my connected hands like a club and decked Carney, his white mustache becoming bright scarlet as his broken nose poured blood down him, the revolver skittering away into the undergrowth.

They each tried to fight me but I was already out of the rope, not caring about the burn along my arms as I dropped so quickly to the ground. I sawed through the cord that bound me with the knife I'd rolled over and taken from 'Nesto's neck. Carney saw what I was

arming myself with and went scrambling for his fallen shotgun, the revolver lost in the blackness. It did him no good as I slit the skirt about my legs.

What I must have looked like! I was naked from the waist down. My little black slip did conceal the top of my thighs. My manhood, like my dancing garter belt, however, wiggled as I kicked Carney at will with a shapely, girlish leg. He went down again as I trod the shotgun from his hands. He cursed me, calling me a whore, I think.

Carney's voice wasn't too recognizable after I kicked his neck and jaw mercilessly. I used what was left of my shoes on his face, pulverizing his features, before I stomped on his neck and held him down, hearing a gurgling as his body stiffened. By then I had my hands free and control of Ramon's knife.

Ramon saw what I'd done to Carney and pleaded for his life, saying he'd fuck me any way that I wanted it, but I couldn't leave a witness, could I? After all, he'd intended to kill me. Yes, I slit his throat from ear to ear, thinking as I did that it wasn't a very ladylike thing to do. With three bodies to toss into the undergrowth, it was just a matter of cleaning up, and dressing as the lady I was posing as, which really meant putting my lacy, black panties back on. Carney had been really attracted to them. I might have let do me, as long as his hands were tied to something like bedposts.

I should have taped myself properly as I really was acting the part of a 'travesti', as the French call transvestite actors and dancers. I'd been going 'out,' hadn't I, to give a 'performance' as if I was on stage as a woman. It was what Thierry and I used to say about what I was doing whenever I had a job to do as a woman, enticing a man into doing what we wanted him to do.

"What a perfect travesti you are, Noelle," Thierry would say to me, kissing me, caressing my waist and tush, particularly when he saw the body I'd left in some hotel room after a 'perfect' seduction.