

## 26 April 2021 B+ The Baroness - Hard Core Murder - Paul Kenyon

I found this book in the freecycle and instantly grabbed it because of its 1970s pulp fiction-espionage cover.

This is book 4 of an 8-part series and now that I have read this book, I now must find every book in the series which might take me a while since copies are rare. Either people held on to them or deemed them trash and that's where the copies ended up.

The Baroness series is about Baroness Penelope St. John-Orsini. She can do it all. She's a pilot, she can drive a race car with the best of them. Then there is the international modeling agency she runs and of course she is a spy. It was rare in the 1970s to have a female character who runs the show, likes sex and can kill a man with her bra.

*The secret agent called Coin smiled at herself in the dressing table mirror and picked up one of her deadly weapons.*

*It was a bra. A beige spandex bra with delicate lace panels, size 36C.*

*It made an efficient garrote. You could strangle a man with it or break his neck. You could use it as a sling and smash a man's skull with a hurled stone. Or you could weight the cups, fold it over and turn it into a sap.*

*There were a dozen different ways to kill a man with a bra.*

*The Baroness had used them all.*

More about the bra later.

It was refreshing to have a bad ass girl in a 70s era book. Why should the boys have all the fun?

The naughty parts are really not any naughtier than your average 19<sup>th</sup> century era bodice ripper but with higher rank. Very few Baronesses, mostly Earls and their intended.

The most interesting thing about this book is that while I found it over the top, the characters took their roles very seriously. The dialogue is said in such earnestness that it's very hard not to laugh, not necessarily at the conversations but the implausible events.

So Penny is busy enjoying a tryst with a movie director pal when she receives a text on her watch. Yeah, a text. In 1974. The gadgets in this book are way before their time. Penny gets a text on her watch, sets up video conferences and makes use of satellite tracking. All without having to call tech support to fix some glitch.

Penny being a bad ass spy drops everything and gets her team together. Their mission is to retrieve a single print of a porn film that stars a drugged politician's wife. The politician is a friend to the NSA and Penny works for the NSA through her modeling agency. Ah simpler times, when a politician's career could be ruined by any hint of a scandal involving the porn industry.

The team figures out who in Hollywood is paying a fortune for a screening of the film and execute a raid. Things go wrong and there is a massacre. I lost count how many people died in this attack. The print is still out there but there is a bigger threat. A lunatic porn director named Sully Flick has the

green light for a 1.5-million-dollar crime gang funded movie and he has managed to kidnap some of Penny's team.

Did I mention absurdity earlier?

Penny is one of the team members who is kidnapped by the crazed director who has assembled cast and crew for an epic scene on an abandoned set of a coliseum with real lions. Naturally because Penny was the one behind the raid to retrieve the film print Sully wants to film her death by lion. Why yes Penny is stripped of her clothes for this part.

Since probably nobody reading this review is going to read the book, it's frightfully expensive to buy online, I'll try and explain the ending. Things escalate quickly and instead of an epic historical period porn drama there is just mass murder.

Naked Penny takes on some gladiators without her trusty bra but with her wits and defeats them *and* a very pissed off and hungry lion. The story goes completely off the rails as the coliseum set is filled with a circus full of enraged animals and panicked extras who realized the cameras are still rolling as the animals try to kill them. It's chaos. Penny managed to escape to an office where she finds her clothes and her special bra and panty hose. The panty hose expand into a mini balloon and the bra has a wire that she some hows uses as an antenna to call for help. She uses the balloon panty hose to track down a fleeing Sully and kill him because, you know, he tried to feed her to a lion. Women *hate* that!

With the help of the rest of the team, the bad guys are caught and killed and the print burned in a raging set fire.

All in a day's work. If you set aside that probably 200+ people die in this book and nobody is fazed by the senseless death, this was a fairly entertaining action thriller book.