

Lea Monde

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Rated: *R for Restricted*

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Chapter 2: Lea Monde

We appeared violently in the middle of a field overlooking a city, the time must be several hours behind Minnesota because it was still daylight here. Later afternoon even. I did a mental check on time zones and figured that we were in Europe somewhere. This place was definitely not the Mediterranean given the landscape, not England given the warmth, and not Africa given the tall state of the buildings and that the nearby road signs I could see from here were largely in English. Northern Spain maybe... The presence of the sea told me that we were on the west coast of Europe... so therefore...

"France." I said aloud after looking around. "And lifting a hand I spied in the distance one unmistakable landmark: the Eiffel Tower. "Paris."

"Very good deduction, Susan." Pen clapped his hands once. "Your mind serves you well."

"Paris?!" Fell gasped and yanked her hand from Pen's. "Why the hell did you bring us to this god-awful corner of the world?!"

I turned to Fell and Pen looked up at her as Pen gently released my hand.

"Why the terse prejudice toward human beings of a specific nationality?" Pen asked.

"They're... They're French!" Fell gaped. "What's *not* wrong with them? They Call Americans arrogant! They call *us*, arrogant! That makes them hypocrites! We threw tens of thousands of soldiers against their shores... *twice*... with thousands dying to turn their shores red with blood to give them freedom and they scoff and thumb their noses at us and tell us that we've not done anything for them, that they owe us nothing?! They think that the few ships and military advisors during our War of Independence were worth the trade? A few people to tell Americans how to fight when we were doing so well ourselves anyways... They're stupid arrogant, hypocritical frogs! The only war they ever won unaided was against themselves! Dirty... unwashed... unshaven... stinky..." Fell tightened up and mumbled for several seconds. "Frogs!"

Pen nodded solemnly. "Are you finished?"

"No! I got more!"

"Do you think you might be able to hold it in for a moment, fair lady?" Pen asked.

"Why on earth should I? Take me home now! I feel dirty just standing here."

“Because this is for Susan’s benefit and what benefits her benefits all the world, Fellania. And what benefits all the world benefits you. We are about to have a visitor, and despite how slight he may seem to be... It would be best you keep your tongue about his ancestry quiet. He is American, and admittedly I don’t know his standing, but the French are quite proud of their history and people... just like any American, or English, or Chinese... or so on.”

“If you hadn’t noticed... I’m a werebear.” Fell smirked. “I don’t need to fear anything.”

“And yet you told Susan the day she came into the knowledge of her werecat ancestry that you do fear something... the wolves.”

Fell turned. “How do you know that?”

“I don’t know... it’s a mystery.” He smirked and I blinked at Pen, remembering his temporal sense that allowed him to see snippets into the future... and apparently the past too. “But I’m going to place into you a greater fear than just the wolves, Fellania.”

“What can be worse than wolves?” Fell asked and folded her meaty arms beneath her voluminous breasts. “Besides... I can take several wolves at once... they have to attack in large packs to make me fall.”

Fell was still clenched and was holding herself amidst being stubborn and pouting. It was very uncharacteristic of her. I never knew her to hold prejudice before.

“What are the greatest poisons in the world?” Pen asked as he lifted a hand to gesture toward a small figure climbing the slope... a tiny little man it looked like that was scarcely bigger than Pen was.

“Well, I guess it’s the poison of the Fierce Snake...” Fell began.

“Incorrect. As poisonous as a Fierce Snake’s venom is, a Lycan can still easily survive it. They’d be sick for a short while, a matter of minutes even, but they’d survive. The most poisonous is the blood of the Hind... which is poisonous enough to kill even a dragon. And then second to Hind’s Blood, and it’s unclear as to which of these is worse... there are Dragon Venom, Naga Venom...” Pen eyed Fell and smirked lightly. “And the fabled disease-ridden bite of a Wererat’s Seven Deadly Venoms.”

“Rats?” Fell said suddenly attentive, and... quite fearful.

“Oh... so you do fear something other than the wolves?” Pen brightened and then patted my hip. “True... true Fellania... They are considered the most potent poisonous disease-ridden bite that can actually kill a Lycan. Here’s a fun fact: they coat their daggers with their spit, so when they shank you, you get all that burning poison in you that you can feel in your bones.” Pen stretched as he mused then. “Yup... I survived such a blow. The rats give me such incredible props because of it. And also... there’s one fundamental truth, Fellania. What’s more potent of a fighting force?”

“A werebear with her spectacular singular strength, a werecat with her teeth and claws, even with her expert martial arts... or thirty rats armed with poisonous daggers in a dark alley?”

I blanched and looked toward the figure that was nearly in ear shot.

“That’s a rat?” I asked. “I hate rats!”

Pen nodded. “For you, Susan, I would state that you’d want to show him at least a modicum of respect. Though the rats are small they are quick and nimble thieves and assassins. They are also the most proliferate were-species there is, and one final matter... It was the rat clan that was the precursor to certain variations of Assassin in the world, including the Ninja and even the Hashishim, the Middle Eastern organization in which the word ‘*Assassin*’ came from in the first place.

“As a present member of said organization, they expressed a desire to meet the current holder of the arts of the White Lotus. But one final matter that I should warn you about... though their eyes aren’t very acute in the light, they are quite potent in the dark, and on top of that... their hearing is almost bionic in nature.” And then the newcomer was climbing our hill. “Ah, Master LeBeau, please allow me to ask forgiveness for my colleagues comments earlier.”

“Ah, Master Pen-Pen.” This spry little man said. He was smaller than even I was, and I was pretty short. Sure I grew a little since becoming a Lycan and gaining some of the skills of the White Lotus, but still, this was a very little man. “Worry not; I’m used to having the... wayward evil eye shot in my particular direction.”

“Susan, Fellania... allow me to introduce you to Remy LeBeau.”

Remy bent before me, taking up my hand to kiss the back of it in a grand gesture of European gentlemanliness, but...

“You’re accent... that’s not French is it?” I asked.

“No. I am Creole... French-American as it was. Though I hail from America and live in Louisiana – Paris always holds a certain... *Je ne sais qui*, romance for us – and the Lady Fellania it is a pleasure...” he reached for Fell’s hand to repeat the gesture to her but she pulled her hand immediately from his. “...to meet you. Ah... pity.” He said and stared up at her, getting into a staring contest with her.

“Look little man, I’m not afraid of you. I hate French, and I hate Rats.”

“Ah... so... I am to be the double threat guy then?” he smirked but nonetheless bowed over himself with a grand sweeping flourish. “I will endeavor not to become the triple threat guy.” Fell’s arms tightened in their crossed over position beneath her chest and she harrumphed. “I find myself lacking. Here I am with two beautiful women, and already they hate me.” He sighed. “*Que sera sera?* And I was so hoping on taking you both on a night of Mardi Gras.”

“Why?!” Fell shot at him.

“Why else?” Pen smirked. “So he gets a chance of getting you drunk and looking at your tits for beads.” Pen said and then paused and then looked to Fell and me. “Come to mention it...” He shook his head. “But no. Remy...” And he turned to the Rat beside us. “I have a change to our original bargain.”

Remy had been amidst trying to kiss my hand again before he froze. “Old man... not that I’m being disgraceful...” he said in a warning tone. “But a rat never goes against a deal once made. You understand what you ask?”

And Pen did something that I’d never seen him do before, and from his side he removed a massive satchel and hefted it to make what sounded like heavy coins inside it chink before tossing it onto the ground where it landed with a heavy thud. Remy paused, gave my hand a peck and then scooped the satchel up in the same motion that he dropped my hand.

It was just like Katrina... only this one was more interested in money, I think, than Kat had been. He opened the satchel and looked inside it, and I spied multiple bundles of thousand dollar bill notes mixed with heavy gold coins that were very artistic in nature. I eyed them and then looked at Remy as he eyed Pen. Pen's response was odd.

"Do you trust me?" he asked and that brought Remy up even more. And then Pen held out one of his four hands. "I will deliver this to your people and to your clan."

"What if I want to deliver it to them myself?" Remy asked.

"You will... but indirectly. Trust me on this Remy of the Rats. It's paramount to your survival that I be the one that will eat the crow."

Remy paused for the third time.

"You know... don't cha... what my clan will do to you?"

Pen smirked. "Yes. But despite these ancient, petrified bones of mine, I'll be ok."

Remy nodded slowly, and then placed the satchel back in Pen's hand.

"If you don't..." Remy warned.

"If I don't, then I need not worry about your family coming for me, Remy... because unless you do this, and go all the way with them, and come out the other side... your family's wrath will be the least of our problems." Pen cleared his throat and then looked at the sun briefly. "But before I send you all off without any help, Fellania, I have something for you."

Fell, who'd been scowling at Remy, who merely smirked confidently back at her, shook herself out of that moment and turned to Pen.

"For me?" she blinked.

"Oh yes, I have it here somewhere." And Pen started rummaging around in his robes, pulling out a canister of butane, a rubber chicken, a tennis ball and a box of cracker jacks, dropping them on the ground amidst several other things, most of which were unidentifiable till he threw down a conic rubber thing on the ground all nonchalantly that wobbled rather... erotically.

"Is that what I think it is?" Remy pointed at the last item.

"Yup... that is a bonafide rubber chicken." Pen replied without looking.

Remy nodded. "Uh-huh. Do you... *normally* keep such things on you?" Remy asked and gestured to this last thing that looked characteristically like a butt plug.

"Only such things that have their own special comic effect." Pen smirked and waggled his eyebrows. I couldn't help but chuckle, but then finally Pen produced a strange object that was of the purest white and made out of wood; elaborately carved it looked like, seeming like something that you'd find the elves using from Lord of the Rings. "Here we go. Bare it mind that it's almost as old as I am." And he held it out for Fell who had to stoop to collect it.

This made her unbound breasts fill the front of her shirt as they hung into them, and the motion was not lost on Remy... or Pen. I shot Remy a look.

“What. It’s my nature. And besides, the Master Pendragon here did it too.” Remy shrugged.

“Yeah... but he has my permission to look at my cans.” I shot.

“But he wasn’t looking at your cans, he was looking at hers.” And he jabbed a finger at fell, but Fell was too preoccupied to notice this exchange. She was holding onto the white carved thing with both hands. “W-what is this?” She asked with wonder.

“Like I’ve mentioned before... I’ve watched over your family line for a long, long time.” Fellania. “What you hold is the White Oak... the tree that gave itself over to your first mother to be used as both tool and weapon. It’s very old, and very wise, and has accompanied many of the women of your family line for eons. It was always meant for you to hold.”

And suddenly the ends of the weapon shot out to their sides, a staff fit for Fellania as the wood unraveled and re-wove itself into a thick staff, seeming to grow long and furious to have a grip that befit Fell’s hand perfectly.

“I-it’s alive!” she breathed and coaxed it with one hand, and she gave off a low yelp as her fingertips glowed blue with green motes and the staff shivered before leaves formed on one end. “And there is power in it! Remarkable power!” she breathed, almost erotically.

“I wish she would stroke me like that staff...” Remy smirked but again, Fell didn’t notice it.

“Your first mother would be what some might call a druidess. Shamaness might be another name for her, but she was likewise a very talented warrior – trained by the Monkey King and myself – and a rather spiritual woman... and perhaps the strongest woman I’d ever known.

“Now if only he’d not leave you for duty this time.”

“He... who?” Fell blinked suddenly attentive.

“Nothing!” Pen said quickly grinned. “Now off with you. You need to enter Lea Monde before midnight. I on the other hand have some... pressing matters.” He said with a glance toward Remy before with a soft snap he was gone, leaving us atop the hill.

The sewers of France – for the most part – on top were modern and new... but despite that, they were still sewers, and stank like exactly what they were built to carry: Refuse and run-off. Remy didn’t seem to be bothered by the smell in the slightest as he plodded along behind us, directing us by telling us which direction to go, till eventually we descended so far that we got below the modern sewers of France and into the ancient ones that had lain here at its core since the city was first built..

Once you descended any modern city’s undercity of pipes and tunnels deep enough, you find the stone pipes and sewage systems that were in place when the city was itself were still new. There was actual architecture here as well as a modicum of emergency lighting still just in case someone had to come this deep. This was where the roots of

only the largest of buildings penetrated, and only a few upgrades to the ancient sewer systems could be found, but for the most part the sewers were bare of the refuse they used to carry. The smell of rotten things waned for the smell of old stone and moisture, and when I was no longer focusing on the smell I remarked that our guide was walking behind us, not in front of us... and so I stopped suddenly and looked back at him. Sure enough he looked up at me expectantly... looked up away from something else.

“Remy... you’re our guide, correct?”

“Indeed I am.” He replied with a gentlemanly bow and a sweep of one arm like he was sweeping a hat.

“Then why are you back there and not up there?” I said pointing at him and then in front of us.

Fell paused and turned, and then scowled as she realized what I was getting at, leveling that stare at Remy.

“Well now... the feminine body is an art form, and I’d much rather follow such an art form than lead it about where I can’t see anything I like.”

“I bet you go into the subway with mirrors on your shoes.” Fell scowled.

“No need. I’m a rat after all.” He grinned and strode forward in front of us. “All I need do is turn into a rat and I can look at what brand of underpants women wear.” He chuckled, and Fell lifted her staff to whack him one before I pushed her wrist back down and the staff clicked against the old stone.

It was a short distance from there till we arrived at an old sealed off sewer cap, a huge pressure door that had been locked fast with huge padlocks.

“Ah... padlocks. How quaint.” Remy mentioned and then pulled a couple of things from a waist pocket, hitting a switch on one and a piece of metal jacked out of it. “This should take just a moment.” And he began to pick the lock as Fell and I looked at each other and just smirked at each other, and stepping up to either side of Remy, he paused and looked to our chests invading his peripheral, and he smirked impishly, starting to breath more quickly... till Fell and I simply gripped the locks and with unified jerks we tore the padlocks off their chains.

“We don’t have time for this little man.” Fell said and pulled the chain out of the metal bars of the turn crank, and with one hand turned the rusted-on thing to open the door.

“No... surely we don’t.” Remy smirked and had to be bonked in the head by the pressure door as Fell opened it before he realized to stop staring at her breasts and arm. “No... we are in a hurry apparently.” And he felt her tricep before she glared at him.

“Try not to touch me too much Remy. You may pull back a stump.” One could see that she was annoyed with the situation. That vein in her forehead was throbbing, which usually meant a person was two shakes short of winding up crumbled into a basketball and used as such.

“Ah. Yes... quite.” Remy managed and pulled his hand back. “But it is a pity... a fine lady such as you and your friend near me, I feel like I’m being tempted with original sin here. Two fruits of luscious taste and desire and I’m forbidden to touch let alone taste of them. Pity.”

“Hell will freeze over before I let you taste anything on me.” Fell growled and stepped forward into a darkened space beyond, and I chuckled and rubbed Remy’s head before continuing on past him, not realizing that this put him behind Fell and me again... and of course he lingered back there to take in the ‘view.’

Just then Fell’s staff began to shine and she blinked at it, the peak of it even now wrapping and weaving into a hollow chamber akin to a budding knot of tree growth, in which inside was an orb of light that shone brilliantly to provide us with a light source.

“Funny. I wanted light and it lit.” she said and then lifted the staff, and the three of us stopped at the heavy set pair of doors set in the stone here. The stone wasn’t like that of the stone around it. These were huge blocks of stone set at an angle that sloped upward and away from us, and the horizontal door here was beset with symbols that, as I ran my hand over them looked very much like...”

“Egyptian?” Fell blinked, fingering symbols that glowed an eldritch green in the darkness, almost like a warning.

“Atlantean.” I corrected. “I... looked at a sample of it in one of my first mother’s scrolls.

“Do you know what it says?” Fell asked.

I was in the middle of shaking my head when Remy spoke up. “*Beware ye all who enter here.*” He said and we both looked at him and he smirked. “World-wide thief.” He reminded us and smirked before gripping one of the heavy clacker-like door handles and pulled on it.

He tugged and pulled and dug his heels in before Fell tried smugly to open the other door, only to find that it was nearly too strong for even her. Once they’d cracked the door enough, I managed to get myself in the middle and pull the doors open from the middle, only to be rewarded with the most foul-smelling substance I’d ever been met with.

“Ugh! It curls the nose hairs!” Remy scoffed and held his nose, trying to breathe through the stench.

“Must be... really bad...” Fell said, her eyes watering. “If a *rat* can’t stand it.” She managed... but then I felt something, a yearning, pull me, and I stepped forward into the darkness. “Wait... Sue! Damn it...” and she delved in behind me as we entered into the halls of rotten meat, festering feces and stale air.

“Smells like a Demon Hole in here.” Remy gagged.

“A what?” Fell gasped.

“Haven’t you seen Angels and Demons yet? A Demon Hole, a hole that leads to a crypt before they had the common decency to bury the bodies. This is the smell of contained, festering rotting...”

“Blood.” I said and looked onto the ground, where there was a grand splotch of green glowing on the ground that looked unmistakably like blood splatter.

And there was more of it... a lot more of it.

I touched the wall where there was more green glow that shone in its eldritch power, a festering magic that made me sick just being in the same general area as it, and looking about I saw the likes of slaughter that not even slaughter

houses that do it regularly on a day by day matter wouldn't be able to attest to. The violence here had stained the walls so that even the walls had memory of the violence and kept it alive.

"What... on earth... happened here?!" Fell gasped as she stepped forward.

"After the fall of Atlantis," Remy bespoke suddenly, fingering the walls. "There were three principal colonies of their once great empire left after their continent disappeared along with Avalon." Fell and I looked to him as he palmed the walls with his long-fingered hand. "A tragedy that sundered the world and broke Pangea had left only these three colonies. They became the cradles of current civilization in South America, Egypt... and of course here."

"Here... but those freaking frogs..." Fell began and Remy gave a very slow and very warning look toward her.

"They weren't frogs then, now were they? They were Atlanteans. Lea Monde was a religious icon to the remainders... and it was here, in this place, that they fought one of the outbreaks of the demon hordes. The largest ever!"

"Looks like they failed." I said looking about me. Where the hell was the wind coming from down here? It was so cold.

"They were betrayed." Remy replied. "By one of their own."

"How come no one knows about this place then?" Fell asked.

"You've heard the old saying of those who forget history are doomed to repeat it?" we both nodded. "Well... there'd been the thought of those who remember this history are doomed to repeat it, so the Rat Clans were asked to... hide a few things."

"Hide?" Fell asked.

"Locate, steal and often destroy." Remy corrected and stepped a little further down the hall. "Blood magic and demonology are often times forbidden by other mages. You are ostracized for trying to learn it or rediscover its powers. Take one good look around you, ladies. If you'd ever question why that is... this is the proof as to why both those things aren't a good idea."

And just then there was a scream, a blood-curdling scream from behind us, and turning, partially transforming in reflex till several buttons on my blouse popped and the tines of the zipper of the jeans I was wearing were stretched till they were holding on for dear life, the seams all about me now creaking with the thickness of my muscular body, I stepped into a combat stance looking for the source of the sound. Veins carved through my muscles, especially when I saw what the source of the screaming was, and then my heart began to pound and surge and the veins, forcing them to stand on end while a woman, dressed in a white gown ran toward us. She was frightened, looking over her shoulder but... she looked like a ghost.

She even passed right through Fell who gave a shiver, but not before a massive creature, hairless with elephant feet and massive scythes where the pinkie and ring fingers should've been surged through all of us, and right before our very eyes we watched her killed like a stuck pig... right where that first blood splatter was. The grisly image soon faded, but it left me breathless.

“W-w... what the *fuck* was that?!” I nearly screamed it. I’d survived Wormwood, but in all honesty, that... that right there, having a ghost go through you only to be murdered again unnerved me more than even Chernavog did.

I’d had a lifetime of haunted houses and evidences of ghosts both benign and malign around me, and it’d always put me on edge... especially the day I found skeletal hand prints of a child appear on a dresser of mine.

“A memory.” Fell replied.

“A memory?” I panted and stared at the spot where the image had left us. “Who’s remembering?”

“Not who.” Remy replied. “But what? When something of significantly powerful psychological happenings occur, it can leave a psychic imprint on the very walls. A place remembers what happens inside its structure. Haunted houses, insane asylums, the U.S.S. Arizona...”

“Wait. Isn’t that the ship that was sunk in Pearl Harbor and turned into a war memorial?” I blinked and Remy turned to stare at me and simply nod.

“Above the water, there’s nothing... but below the water... at night on a full moon...” he didn’t finish that statement. “But there are other places, like the sunken Jolly Roger, Auschwitz... and so on. Of all those places though, of all the atrocities that occurred there... none of them... not a single one of them... not several of them put together are as bad as Lea Monde.”

Lea Monde was a pyramid.

Pyramids had a certain arcane power to them... ancient magic the likes of which could be attributed only to things like Stonehenge. They were created when magic was as common as electricity was now. The Pyramids on Giza Plateau, the step style pyramids found all across South America... hell... maybe even the Luxor in Las Vegas, all of them held certain supernatural power to them.

Regardless, they were arcane powers in and of themselves, created with a geometric design that used the power of the earth to enhance the magic they were able to accomplish. I could only think about how Pyramids were typically the homes of mummies... holding death and preserving it.

Just like Lea Monde did... with all the images of ghosts and demons that assailed us nearly at every turn.

“The victims were holy people... priests and priestesses and acolytes protecting regular people who held a holy artifact known as The Cirlet.” Remy was explaining as he crept along ahead of us.

I definitely wasn’t complaining about that. He could creep along and be the bait as long as he wanted in this place... I only wish I could calm down. I was so taut that I was afraid my clothing would explode on me, so I’d loosened my belt and unbuttoned my shirt all the way, but too strenuous of a movement and all this *finery*’ would just explode right off me. But my veins... the thickness of my veins just kept throbbing... pulsating with each heart beat... and I have to tell you that it was an odd sensation to be both frightened and aroused at the same time. I walked while fingering my bicep veins for comfort, the thick, long ones that rode over my powerful biceps and forced the sleeves of the shirt I wore up into the crooks of my arms.

Caressing those veins calmed me, helped me deal with stress, and the warmth it generated between my legs added to the calm.

Some people had a worry stone, other people clicked the back of a pen repeatedly, others chewed their fingernails... I caressed my thickened veins.

“What was this Circlet?” I asked, trying to keep the conversation going. Talk was more preferable to the silence, especially when a scream could come at any time in here.

“A holy thing. You fair creatures might take some pride in this... but dozens of warrior-monks, all male, died before they figured out it was an artifact that could only be worn by women.”

“Only by women?” Fell blinked. “I wasn’t aware that there were *any* holy artifacts that only women could use. Every holy thing everywhere is almost invariably patriarchal. Kinda gives proof that the Creator is a guy.”

“They’re rare... indeed... but there are certain artifacts, quite holy... that are only for women. The circlet was for females, but primarily because there was a counterpart to the circlet... one only for males.”

“Figures.” Fell scoffed. “It’s all favoritism. Maybe we should sue the Creator for sexism, Sue.”

“Oh perish the thought...” Remy scoffed and turned back toward us. “Your holy power, the power of life like you females so often remind us that you can do and we can’t do is strictly your providence by an act of birth, while every male must earn their holy powers through work and devotion. A female can still be a fallen whore, the children coming from her womb are nothing but demons and mutants and still you keep that holy power. Oh yeah... favoritism. Yeah I see that... totally.”

“Shut up.” Fell growled.

“Don’t hate me because it’s true.” Remy smirked and gave off a series of hissings as he laughed. “But truthfully... there needn’t be too many holy relics for women.”

“Oh... and why’s that?!” Fell asked sharply, one hand akimbo as her other hand gripped her staff that Pen had given her from her first mother.

“Because another subtle truth, Fellania, that there are so few holy relics for women is that every woman is a holy relic... a grail.” That brought us both up short. “I heard a holy man say, once, that the very, very last thing that the Creator Himself had placed on the planet earth, after separating darkness and the light, separating the sun, the moon and the stars from the heavens, after separating earth from the water and placing animals and plants on the earth, after placing Adam himself, he placed woman. Only then did he proclaim all of creation good and perfect. Saved the best for last.

“The holy grail itself, was a woman... not some gilded cup. Besides... if Christ did have a cup, it wouldn’t be gilded... wouldn’t even have a golden wash to it like they showed in the Indie Jones movie.” Remy wiped his hands as he stood up fully and looked down a grand stairway, in which the smell and the chill were only more intense coming up from it. “But on occasion... Fate... the Creator... some person with enough knowledge... decides to make a grand artifact just for you girls.” He grinned at us, show us his two buck teeth. “So when you talk about favoritism... when most of the creatures of the earth are female, when so much power exists... just for females...” he turned and gestured at himself. “Look at me. I’m five foot ten, hundred and twenty pounds. Look at both of you.

Seven feet apiece or more a piece, and more strength in your pinkies than I got in my whole soggy body. So when you talk about favoritism... understand what you're talking about, and shut the hell up."

And he then turned and began to descend the stairs. Fell was silent for the first time since dealing with Remy, and she and I looked at each other and I shrugged, right before yet another scream like fingernails on a chalkboard made my shoulders clench as tight as it could possibly go... and just then several of the buttons on my shirt popped and went scattering away as I grew even more in reflex, the top button of my jeans popping as I suddenly gained a good twenty five pounds in muscle and breast weight. But the release of the buttons made my breasts disgorge and I scoffed as that naked bosom heaved out into the open air.

"Damn it." I said and gripped my fingers, but then hissed as my fingernails poked into my palms from nearly having changed into claws. I looked to the palms to see if there were any damaging wounds, but those were sealing and healing themselves quickly. "Lookit me... I'm just a fraidy-cat."

And then I heard feet pounding up the stairs, and untucking my shirt fully now, grabbing its corners, I tied them together right as Remy rose atop the stairs.

"Aw..." he groaned. "I was hoping to see boobies."

"Not today mister LeBeau." I smirked as I tied my shirt together, feeling my breasts inflating spontaneously, the milk veins thickening hotly as the disks of the areola and the erect nipples pressured into the fabric of the shirt, but nonetheless... I was now showing off much cleavage. "LeBeau... LeBeau..." I thought suddenly realizing something. "Remy LeBeau... hey isn't that the name of..."

"Yes! Yes it is..." Remy groaned. "Damn it... what luck. I meet the only women who know who else shares my name." Remy said and pouted.

"Wait... who shares his name?" Fell asked blinking at me.

"Don't you read comic books, Fell?" I asked and she blinked at me again. "Remy LeBeau is the real name of Gambit from the X-Men."

"Wait... really?"

"And he's French-American or... '*Creole*' as the case may be." And he lifted his fingers to do quotation marks as he said the word Creole. "I would call myself Acadian if I could get away with it, just so that I could distance myself from the accidental fact that some guy named Stan Lee created a character with the same name as me."

"Do you think that that guy Michael Bolton from Office Space liked being accidentally related to some prick who sings music that he hates?" he stared at us for a moment. "Yeah... and I don't like being thought of in the same sentence as some club-footed would-be thief who doesn't know his head from his ass." He smirked.

"Gambit... club footed?" I blinked.

"In comparison to a rat... he's club-footed." Remy grinned. "Even the movie rendition of Gambit made him look club-footed. Now please come on... I think I found our destination."

There were more screams and more ghosts that I steeled myself against, following after him as he descended the stairs again, Fell following with me. The stairs were double-wide and double-tall, descending deep into the earth, and as we delved deeper and deeper, I could actually see my breath coming out.

The eldritch writing, made eons ago with human blood, lit the walls fine enough to see, and the deeper we went the more common after images and ghostly wisps became till it was like walking into a field of fire-flies the deeper we went. I was chilled to the bone, and every exhale I or Fell or Remy did came out as chilled breath that fell right to the ground as frost.

But at the bottom of the stairs was a chamber, and it was a chamber that truly drew both Fell and I to a screeching halt. For you see there were two things about this chamber that were most prominent. The first was that the room seemed to have... molded... or what one could call molded, look to it. Like there was lumpy pizza thrown all over the place, feet thick in places that throbbed and beat with its tendrils wrapping around the chamber, reaching to the ceiling even.

But the other piece in the chamber... was a woman, or more specifically a statue of a woman.

She was tall, porcelain and untouched... the disgusting, bubbling mass in the chamber coming near but not touching the statue in all her perfection. Her breasts were tiny, and she had a definite vulva that was so thick and powerful that it was nearly a groin, but she was nonetheless incredibly strong with a great mane of hair that flowed about her head like it was a halo. From her back were a pair of golden wings, and her body was in a position like she were holding something before her.

“Who is she?” I asked in wonder at the sight of the calming visage of a woman that... for the very first time in my life, I looked upon a woman who had the visage and presence of holy sacrifice that a crucifix did.

“If legends are correct... she’s the first bearer of the circlet.” Remy replied. “Her name is lost and there’re no records at all of her before this room... but...”

And then there were the sounds of hurried breathing and foot falls, and we turned to see another woman... frail, tiny looking, spindly without any hips or breasts to speak of. The only thing that attributed her as being a woman at all was the fact that she was wearing a gown instead of a robe.

Her hair was short and blonde, and when she reached the bottom of the stairs she clutched a stitch in her side as she looked around us.

And then suddenly there was a spiritual change in the room, and as she hurried forward into the center of the room, the bloody pizza-looking masses crept away, revealing a circle of spiritual might that flared to being as she stooped and picked up a circlet from off the floor.

“Who’s that?” Fell asked. “S-she has a circlet.”

“Her name is also lost.” Remy said.

“Convenient.” Fell smirked.

“I swear... we didn’t steal this legend.” Remy responded. “It was destroyed long before we were asked to acquire information of the old world. She left nothing of herself on the world, no one knows what happened to her or the circlet... even those who knew of Lea Monde know little of her.”

“We do know a little of the legend though that involves her. She’s known simply as *‘The Paladin’*.”

“But ask yourselves... what sort of woman is it, who understands that a thing can only be worn by man... but nonetheless... she dons the thing understanding that if she’s not the chosen bearer that the penalty is to be destroyed by holy fire?”

Fell and I both looked to Remy and then quickly back at this woman as she bit her lip, looking at the golden circle in her hands, and then donned the circlet.

The transformation she underwent as she was filled with such power... the wave upon wave of spiritual power that rushed across us made me... it made me... I don’t know. I felt it as deep in my bowels as I possibly could feel it, like a thick meaty shaft of man-meat piercing my loins slowly and surely, stroking my body in long coursing waves, tripping of pleasure centers in me as it went. It made me excited. I felt it in the marrow of my bones, the purity, the beauty... it was a wonderfully potent sensation that strangely touched off something just behind my loins within the cradle of my hips that truly... truly... activated me as a woman.

I never felt so feminine in my life!

And something inside me went... click.

And I watched as this woman’s violent transformation tore through her clothing as she kept growing stronger and stronger... stronger and stronger, a giant of a woman! Her breasts surged downward like exploding airbags, creating two impacts against the ground in the rounded shapes of her tits with two indentions for nipples... oh to have such powerfully sexual breasts like that, only to have chest muscles and shoulder muscles that looked like they could support the whole world. Her sex grew voluminous and powerful, distended like the statue’s was, so thick it was practically a groin... and her muscles!

She had muscle on top of muscle, muscle in places no human had muscle as she began angelic in nature, wings unfolding from her back to thicken back muscles and chest muscles further to support them, a rounded butt and billowing arms and legs...

Fell wasn’t even that strong... and this woman wasn’t even a Lycan! A Lycan was perhaps to weak of a creature in comparison to what this woman was becoming, twice my height, her body popping and unfolding with thickening sinew and bone, flaring wings. She was an angel.

Armor appeared on the statue and flew to her, forming about her body, folding around breasts and chest muscle that were greater than those even the statue had. But with all that armor on the statue before flying to this newly developing angel, I understood the misunderstanding that her people had thought that the circlet was for a man and not a woman. With all that armor it was difficult to determine the gender of the statue, and with the statue’s flat chest and billowing sex, she looked marginally male-like while armored. And who’d touch a holy relic like that to determine the nature of the statue gender beneath?

She rose, great and massive, a giant of a woman with heaving musculature greater than an entire army.

A sword was drawn by her as she was now mostly borne flesh, with her armor only artfully and rather revealingly covering her, her body greater and stronger than the body of the statue, with the fully-covering armor on the statue nothing more than an armored two-piece bikini on her. With sword in hand, and even the sword unfolding and growing powerful and great, blazing forth with light as her back flared wide with the two angelic wings decorating

it, like some Valkyrie she fought her way back up the stairs even as demons came down it, and the room quieted soon thereafter.

But in the center... there was still the circle where she'd transformed, perfectly rounded, still glowing with energy that the organic matter of corrupted flesh perhaps tried to surge back into but was unable to.

I stepped forward, looking about, and then it remarked on me.

"Where's my first mother's scroll?" I asked, turning about, looking to the statue. "I-it's not under all this stuff is it?"

"Sue..." Fell stated as she came before me, looking down. "Check your feet."

And I looked down and backed up, thinking the tendrils were about to get me, but instead I was standing in mid air on a plane of energy like I were standing on a slab of glass. And that glass was etching itself with lines and symbols rather quickly.

Remy squatted beside me, looking at the lines.

"It... can't be." he whispered.

"What?" I blanched, looking about and trying to understand, but the language in the circle writings were too old for me. I didn't even recognize the geometric structure of the circle... circles... I couldn't even tell if it was a concentric magic circle or not. Only... "A... spiral." I gasped as three sets of lines were circling around me as they etched in a slow circle toward the center, eldritch green in color.

A spiral was only used to make a gateway, but I'd only heard of a single spiral, let alone three together like this. This was way above what I've learned or been taught about magic, and suddenly my brain flashed as I realized that there was more to the circle than just this one spot as I saw it joining with other lines in the room that had been hidden beneath the mess of coagulated matter that'd been here. The whole of Lea Monde was the circle! The lines and etchings written in blood on the walls! They were all a part of it! This whole place was a trap hundreds of millennia old!

I surged to the edge of the circle but slapped against it, and then scrabbled against it with my claws but a barrier I'd unwittingly stepped into only allowed one-way movement. I could enter, but I couldn't get out. I felt like a damned roach.

"Q-quick! You have to disturb the lines, break them... do *something*." I panicked and clawed at the crystalline like barrier, and Fell immediately raised her staff and stuck at the lines, breaking the floor tiles beneath the lines, but the lines didn't break... they remained in place. Only the most powerful of magics was formed above and off a surface where breaking the floor wouldn't break the circle. What was worse... after a moment or two the fragments of rock slipped backward and reformed themselves as if the damage had never happened!

"It's no use." Remy said, and rose, walking past the circle barriers to step inside with me. I gaped at him while the spiraling lines continued to carve themselves in the center of the circle.

"Are you stupid?! Why'd you do that?" Fell gasped.

"This place has a memory that is a quarter of a million years old. This place has been made into a timeless gateway, it's memory keeps everything in the state it's been since the sundering of this place. Your friend is about to be

transported to a different plane of existence... I thought that wherever she goes... it'd be best to provide my services there. So you being her friend, a better question lady Fellania are: *'What are you not doing?'*”

Fell gaped at us and then scowled at Remy, and looking at the nearly completed spiral, she surged across the barrier to join us right as the three individual carving liens of the spiral met at the center.

“Going down.” Remy chuckled, right as the glass-like floor and the ground we were at folded downward, spiraling open like an oculus and dropping us right into darkness.