

King Louis' compulsion for collecting relics was so great that he was in the process of constructing Sainte Chapelle, his very own reliquary to store his ever-expanding collection. His private church of Sainte Chapelle in the grounds of his Palace on Ile de la Cité in Paris was to be the grandest reliquary in Europe. The eight-year building project was now at the start of its construction and when finished would boast some of the finest stained glass windows ever made.

What the pope had just revealed to him made Louis keenly aware that there was an unprecedented opportunity to acquire yet another relic to put in Sainte Chapelle, when completed. The king had, of course, heard talk of the Cathar relic, but to hear it directly from the pope was a revelation. It motivated him more than anything else he could think of, just as the pope had predicted it would. This alone was reason enough for Louis to agree to the provision of French troops to crush the heretics at Montségur. (from chapter 6)

-----

Madame Aubuchon had been happy to drop everything and fly down to Perpignan to secure a deal with Steve and Manon. Although *La Musée de l'Histoire de France* was the obvious choice, they could just have easily approached a dozen other institutions, and until a deal was done she was in not in any position to celebrate. She realised that if they did not come to a satisfactory arrangement the pair could turn elsewhere. It was critical, therefore, that she did everything in her power to secure a mutual agreement.

After the initial introductions and niceties, they moved through to the outdoor eating area and found a table, away from others, with a large umbrella to shade them from the midday Mediterranean sun. Steve ordered three *Kir royales* to drink whilst they studied the menu and talked to Chantelle about, what she now referred to as, the project.

“First I’d like to thank you for approaching our museum. I promise that I will do everything I can to make this as rewarding for you, as it will be for the museum. I can see that you have put in a huge amount of time and effort into locating the treasure, if that’s what it is, and it will have cost you a lot so far. So what exactly would you like to see happen now, and what do you want out of it?”

Manon explained to Chantelle Aubuchon about her father, about the book *Oh My God*, and the philosophy of Lubism. She explained how Steve had floated his company on the stock exchange and how he was therefore moderately well off and was not seeking financial gain.

“However Chantelle, we do have several requests and once we have agreed, we propose that we sign a contract to ensure that we are both safeguarded. We are both very happy for the museum and its specialist experts to take charge from here on, and for the goods to become the property of the museum in perpetuity. Naturally, we’ll guide you to the location, and for this, we seek no financial reward.

“Our conditions are very simple Chantelle. We want full recognition as the finders of the treasure, we want full access at any time to the recovery, restoration, and display process, and most importantly of all, we want the rights to all photographic and other records and retention of intellectual property rights as they might pertain to any book or other publication. That said, we do not wish to take away any of the glory from the museum or its right to make the most of any possible exhibiting charges you might decide upon.”

Chantelle Aubuchon was an important and surprisingly influential woman. She could make

most things happen and saw the terms given to her as nothing too unusual. She understood that Manon, as an already successful co-author, would want to write another book, as well as perhaps a glossy picture book, and that suited her fine. They would sell the books in the museum shop and make their margin that way.

Provided they didn't get too much in the way she was happy for Steve and Manon to be intimately involved with the whole recovery process and all that that entailed. She was also quite happy for them to get their moment in the spotlight, and to retain intellectual property rights. The kudos that the museum would get, not to mention the potential revenue from exhibiting, made such a deal very worthwhile. More importantly, the museum would now be able to readily secure a major injection of State funds that had been on the agenda for some years.

"I think we have a deal," Chantelle beamed as she held out her hand for an affirmative handshake. "I'll get a contract to that effect drawn up immediately and emailed to you tomorrow. Once you have signed it we can start organising the excavation and recovery. If this turns out to be what we all think it is, the museum and indeed the whole of France will be eternally grateful to you. Naturally, you will always be welcome at the museum. A variety of different specialist staff may be contacting you from now on, but please remember that you can contact me day or night should you wish to," Madame Aubuchon concluded.

With that, the discussions were finalised and their lunch orders arrived on cue. Both Chantelle and Manon had opted for the salad niçoise with grilled tuna and potatoes, and Steve had gone for the cognac shrimp with beurre-blanc, couscous, and a red pepper salad. With a bottle of local rosé wine to wash it all down, and a digestif and coffee after the meal, all three of them were feeling pleased with themselves in the late afternoon sun. (from chapter 34)