**Rue Beranger**

Rue Beranger was a busy street in Paris, teeming with cars, pedestrians, and a few children playing ball in the courtyard of one of the eighteenth century apartment blocks. There was a narrow gateway between the apartments on the street, wide enough for a hand cart, that led into a courtyard. Two of the pedestrians stopped to watch. One was a man in his early thirties well dressed in a pale yellow silk suit and lavender shirt with an open neck. There was a heavy gold chain about his neck. His hair was lustrous black, his face clean shaven, his facial features Egyptian. His eyes were unusual - a lambent tawny yellow, which coupled with his curved nose gave him a striking resemblance to a bird of prey.

His companion was a tall, well built African woman, well dressed in designer red slacks, silk blouse done in black and green and gold, and a stylish black leather jacket. There were large diamond stud earrings in her ears along with a pair of large gold hoops. She appeared to be in her late twenties, and in her low heeled shoes was about ten centimeters taller than her companion.

As they watched the ball sailed through the gates and onto the busy road. Elanor moved instinctively, grasping two of the children as they chased the ball. The third and youngest dodged between her legs. She made a desperate grab but missed, and she watched in horror as the toddler ran onto the road.

A moment later her companion Luke launched himself in front of the traffic, grasping the laughing toddler and throwing him at Elanor. There was a screech of brakes and Luke disappeared beneath a car.

Elanor was open mouthed in shock but still managed to catch the child. A moment later the mother ran screaming from the gates. “Michel! Michel!” She spied Elanor holding the infant. “Merci! Merci! Michel, you naughty boy!” Elanor handed the child over wordlessly, staring at where Luke had vanished.

The cars all braked, miraculously stopping without hitting one another. A moment later Luke emerged from beneath a van. He shook himself, shrugged his shoulders and twisted his neck from side to side as if getting the kinks out, then proceeded to brush the dirt off his suit. Elanor dashed to him.

The driver of the car reached him first. “Mon deiu! I thought I had killed you! Are you unharmed monsieur?”

“I’m a stunt man.” Luke replied. “Nothing is broken, but I may have some bruises. It was lucky none of you swerved or hit one another. And the child is very lucky. Now, if there is no damages, we are causing a traffic jam, you should all go back to your cars and drive on.” With that Luke caught Elanor’s arm and they walked back to the footpath. Elanor felt herself trembling, and tried not to show it. The drivers did as he bade them and drove off.

The woman began to thank Luke and Elanor. Luke stopped her. “Madame, the children were fortunate we were there to stop them running onto the street. I suggest you keep the gate closed when they are playing in the courtyard.”

“Monsieur, I will tell the other residents, but some prefer to leave the gate open.”

Luke smiled “Tell them what happened and you will prevail.” He turned to Elanor “And now we must go.” He linked his arm through hers and they began walking. Elanor stopped him and turned to wave goodbye to the children. Luke spoke again “May your god be with you.” They walked away.

Fifteen meters further and Elanor stopped again. “Luke, hold me. You might be indestructible, but I’m not!”

Luke hugged her fiercely, standing on the balls of his feet to bring his head level with hers. “I am immortal, not indestructible. If I were mortal I would be messily dead now.”

“I know!” Her trembling was subsiding. “You don’t normally do things like that. Couldn’t you have been less obvious and simply stopped the child from going onto the street at all?”

Luke released the hug, stepped back with his hands holding her shoulders. “Elanor,” he said mildly, looking earnestly into her eyes. “Unless someone asks me to help, I am constrained to behave within human limits. A normal human cannot influence the child’s mind so that it stays off the road. If you learn to do that, then I can also without you asking me. As it was you did not ask me or tell me to stop the child. A human would have no other choice than to leap after the child and throw him to safety.”

“And get himself killed in the process.” Elanor was thinking about what he said. “You went under the car, and you’re not even injured. The cars stopped but there was no pile up. You obviously did something no human could do, how were you allowed to do that?”

“Ah, up until the car hit me I was constrained to act as a normal human. Once the car hit me I was causing an accident and that I could undo. So nobody swerved, everyone braked uniformly, there was no pile up. And then I sent them all on their way. I disappeared as the car struck me, and reappeared once they stopped.”

“What will they remember?”

“That I saved a child that tried to run onto the road. The car that hit me is undamaged, as am I, so I must have dodged. The truth is unbelievable so they will believe the story I gave them.” He smiled “Elanor, I am sorry I scared you, but there was no time to explain.”

Elanor said nothing for a moment. He was fine, and if he hadn’t acted the child would be dead. “You knew this was going to happen. That’s why we were there at the right time, and we stopped to watch.”

“Not quite. I knew we should be there at that time. I did not know ahead of time what would happen. If I had known, I would have told you so you could ask me to help in advance.”

Another thought struck her. “You said something about if I learned to do things, then you could to. What did you mean by that?”

“My limits are fluid, depending on those around me. If you had developed the ability to influence the child’s mind, then I could do that without you asking me. If I were amongst powerful sorcerers, then I could do what they could without anyone asking me, because that would be normal.”

“Can I learn those sorts of things?”

Luke smiled his angelic smile. “All living things have the potential to be able to perform magic, sorcery and miracles. But it is like being an athlete - different people have different skills. You have potential and I can train you. What you are capable of is up to you.”

Elanor relaxed and grinned at him. “Well monsieur immortal who says he has been Horus, Apollo, and Lucifer among others, you better start planning you lessons - we can’t have you having human limits when you go around saving the world.”

He linked his arm through hers and they began walking again. “It seems to work for Batman and the Phantom. Not all the comic book heroes are superhuman.”

“You forgot Doctor Who. He never uses a gun.”

“And he’s an alien and he lives a long time.” They turned a corner and were gone.