

The Yawn

by Tabatha Stirling

La Petite Ange had lived all her life in Paris under the strange architectural twists of Notre Dame. She had been a Bluebell girl once, kicking her surprisingly long legs into the air to the delight of plumbers and *Prince du sang* alike. Now, she was a *vagabonde* and took a curious delight in having lost both her looks and her legs thirty years ago to a gangrenous oversight.

She felt safe and accepted here under the horns and bat-like wings of the gargoyles. They were ugly but dear. One of the sentiments God loves most. Although Petite Ange had found the Catholic Church to be cold and expectant in its charity.

So she sat, her assorted bags and sundries displayed quite deliberately in a semi circle around her. A torn and stuffing-flatulent bear attached to her head with a piece of filthy white lace. And lastly, a thin circle of salt to keep the bad things away.

After a short while La Petite Ange lapsed into an exhausted sort of state bought on by malnutrition and perpetual anxiety. And as she relaxed, her mind opened and embraced the edges and cuts of the stone *gargouille*, marvelling at their beauty and sweetness.

Victor was her favourite. He always looked so jolly except when the rainwater drained from his mouth, that looked uncomfortable, but the rest of the time his sculptured eyes gleamed with life and glee. And today he yawned.

Right in front of her. And then winked. La Petite Ange blinked a few times and so did Victor. She licked her lips and waggled her eyebrows. Victor followed suit and this made her laugh out loud and she clamped her hands over her mouth unsure of herself.

Victor yawned once more and then settled back into his petrified state for the rest of the day and night.

La Petite Ange waited patiently for many hours for Victor to animate again but he never did. And when she died at the foot of the great Cathedral in the cast of Victor's shadow *les gargouille* held a decade-long silent vigil for her. La Petite Ange whose grace had

earned her a dip into world beyond this world and a wink from an ancient chimera.

