

SONG OF QUEBEC

...from CHAPTER 42

ANGELIQUE

On the following Sunday, mid-afternoon, at the ebb of the tourist tide, departures of the week past gone, arrivals for the week ahead not yet arrived, Jack Kearney sat half dozing on a bench in the center of the Parc Jardin des Gouverneurs. The park was at the height of its summer heat, which is to say, not very hot at all. A cool breeze blew off the river, causing the leaves of the trees to sing a peaceful song.

He was tired and perplexed and beset by any number of problems. Chief among them was how to get Genevieve to love him again like she had in the sporadic hours they had spent together in that week before all hell had broken loose. He was not paying attention to anything, really, except feeling sorry for himself, and so he heard no sound until a woman's voice said from behind him, "It would be well for you to be more alert, monsieur. There are many in this town who would wish to kill you, given the opportunity."

Kearney turned and saw Angelique hovering over him with a quiet smile, her honey-colored hair being whiped around by the gentle breeze.

"Including you, given the right moment?" he asked, his voice flat and sarcastic.

"That moment has passed, Jack," she said. "Now I simply feel sorrow for you, and for Genevieve, and for my people."

"Good of you," said Kearney. "What do you want?"

"To share your bench for a while? To talk? May I sit with you?"

Kearney considered. "Sure," he said. "Why not?"

"Merci, Monsieur Jack," she said, and moved in her graceful way around the end of the bench, sat down comfortably, half turned toward him. Jack automatically adjusted his position to accommodate hers, and sat silently, waiting for her to speak.