

# Chapter Eleven

## AN UNNECESSARY ACT OF KINDNESS

“I must proceed with Ballard’s caution,” Remy counseled himself while showering the next morning. “The hallway, atramentous. The flat’s window shade, drawn and taped down. Only after all light is extinguished must I steal from the bathroom, engulfed by a darkness so intense even Foucin’s or Leila’s eyes would not be able to pierce it.”

Over breakfast, melodrama exorcized, he fretted, “I have to engage in some ‘investigative’ activity this morning. It’ll be expected. Drop in on Chabane’s lawyer, M. Ouenough? A possibility.” He nibbled at a piece of buttered toast.

“Or M. Fouad, who jotted down the messages Ballard left for Mohammed? Good.” Meditatively, he poured his second cup of coffee. “Or call at the Gendarmerie to locate Deputy Inspector Karami, in charge previous to Foucin’s swooping in . . . officially?”

He sucked the sweet gunk of the last date from the fingers of his right hand. “I could even ring up the *commissaire divisionnaire* himself, asking him to convoy me to the Palestinian camp, a vivid testimony I’m not dodging his company.”

Before he rose from the coffee table, he had decided not to pursue any of these. An image of his father—not yet five completed of the fourteen and one-half hours of fasting, thereafter to be broken as a pauper—had impended over Remy’s every bite and draught.

From that “byzen,” his attention did not travel far: He envisaged another room-dividing sheet and heard the coughing scarcely muffled by it. “They must be desperate,” with no money coming in during the near-seven-week period of Mohammed’s imprisonment.

The act was unnecessary, he appreciated. Still it had a convincing veneer of professionalism. He would do it, the debate ending and the resolution adopted just at the instant he drank the penultimate sip of his third cup.

He would visit the apothecaries in Bab el Oued, settle up the Belmazoirs’ accounts, cart the receipts to the sister, and perchance she would abjure her silence, although a part of him wished her not to, “for such would spoil my magnanimous morning.”

Determined to work inward, Remy halted Nemmiche in front of the drugstore most distant from the Belmazoirs’ Rue Mizon. In the ride over he had obtained directions to the other six, all denoted in Algeria by a green crescent. Three thousand dinars had been cashed out at the Al Nigma’s receptionist desk since in the elevator he had made a further “leap,” to sweep clean any grocery bills.

The spirit of charity once roused, he theorized, bounding from the taxi into the stickier heat of the outside, ripens into a faith that overtakes even hope.

Three people were ahead of him in the queue leading to the apothecary’s counter. The

conspicuous feature of his physiognomy, bushy gray eyebrows, was trumped by an indulgent smile, which exceeded perfunctory greeting and virtually cosseted Remy.

“Doctor,” he employed the honorific accorded all pharmacists in the Arab World, “praise be to God, I’m in need of no drugs.” His unclenched hand displayed the two ten-dinar notes. “Perhaps we could talk?”

“Ridah, spell me,” bayed Ishak Meziani, so denominated by his Arabic nameplate. A man in an identical knee-length white smock emerged. Led to a cubbyhole in the rear, Remy was motioned to a folding chair in front of the desk Meziani was squeezing round. His typical précis sallied forth: A representative of the Belgian lawyer of Mohammed Ahmed Belmazoir, he was authorized to liquidate any of his family debts.

Meziani’s fat belly swelled, pressing his sides against the worn Naugahyde arms of his chair. “I would have embraced you as a brother had you irrupted into this office in mid-February. At that point I and my professional colleagues hereabout had despaired of the bills, creeping upward month by month, ever being cleared.

“She’d been fair, Mlle. Belmazoir, meting out the burden equally. Naturally, none of us could refuse, even given the family’s traitorous history. The moans of the mother—barely fifty, she looks seventy, I’m told—became the keenings of other tongues: . . . She suffers much. No, we could not balk, *pharmacy* and *charity* being synonyms.”

During his speech, the words changed the shape of, yet never obliterated, his rictus. “That day the state kicked her out of the hospital, euphemizing, ‘She’s “God’s care” now,’ they underprescribed her pain. As always! They cover the remnant, the ‘bitter end’; we’re left with the grandiose ‘bight’ of the rope—the guilt.

“But God is good. *Exempli gratia*: Two months ago, Mlle. Belmazoir, her body in the discards she’s always worn, appeared and—Behold!—paid in full. Subsequently, everything she’s gotten from me has been discharged with cash.”

Remy let the wonder quit his face. “Doctor, then I have been misinformed. Would you oblige me by checking your ledger? I know my mandate.”

Retrieving an accounts book, the apothecary guided it toward Remy. “See, on Thursday, 16 February—in concord with the airlines, we practitioners of medicine utilize the Gregorian—189.50 was remunerated. Two weeks earlier, with shame I’d apprised her that I couldn’t carry her deficit beyond three hundred. At least I never whispered as did my colleague up the road, ‘May she gain peace ere she bankrupts me!’”

Remy withdrew a pen and notepad from his right inner pocket to copy the entry. Similarly he wrote the dates and amounts of the four receipts of subsequent purchases.

“For the bookkeeping woes with which the Belmazoirs have invalidated you.” Remy placed a fifty-dinar bill next to the two tens on the desk.

Meziani’s cheeks tumefied into pouches, so beaming was his grin. “Unnecessary, but you’re benevolent, and God is good. May she live as long as He wills!”

At the three drugstores that followed, the pattern reproduced itself: Dinars for both arrears and all succeeding transactions, the liability paid on the sixteenth or seventeenth. The aggregate of the credit and cash on delivery from the three was 591.25.

Remy chose not to proceed to the other three, all located on the far side of the Belmazoirs’ residence. “Already close to nine hundred dinars,” he summed up, “I, as

'Dulcin' for the DGSE, should have had to recompense." However, the morning had cost merely 130 in pourboires, over half of that to the jolly-spirited Meziani.

"Into what a pitiful state the world's degenerated when benefactors cannot benefact!" protested Remy. He paused, removed a handkerchief from the right flap pocket of his Gieves & Hawkes sports jacket, and having wiped his lips, patted his cheeks and forehead. "Humidity in the 80s and I dismissed M. Nemmiche!"

"The sixteenth and seventeenth," he mused: the first of the two weeks Mohammed asserted Ballard had stood him up. "So no money there." Remy reinserted the brushed cotton *mouchoir*. "Nine hundred. How is Mlle. Houda securing such bountiful funds?" was his initial question.

The answer to the second came with his inceptive stride onto Rue Mizon, the Belmazoirs' No. 22 in sight. "The third week of February?" The connection slowed his pace. "The fourteenth. Brought back on the sixteenth. The quartermaster's log."

Inside the building, through the doorless egress he stared pensively at the tin shack. As the first query, which remained moot, led to the second, for which he had acceded to a credible solution, so this answer pointed to a most puzzling third.

"But what would this sudden wealth Mlle. Houda exhibited then, the third week of February, and since have to do with the 'green goggles'?"

## 2

The hobbledehoy Ghazi opened the door with "unnecessary alacrity, forestalling my third rap," Remy observed.

"Could your mother assume the duty the *alim* previously performed, chaperon my interview with Mlle. Belmazoir? I'll happily pay a modest fee for disrupting her Ramadan."

Ghazi's enthusiastic wagging of his head, as Remy spoke, induced the loose-hanging, faded-blue shirt that invested his lanky torso to jostle. He had just commenced a nervous, hurried response, "It's with me you should—" when a voice from within the apartment shrieked in Arabic, "Does the Great One so soon return?"

There was the clumping thud of a body hustling across the carpeted floor. Ghazi's peek back was opposed by a brawny hand, which gripped his shoulder and thrust him aside. "Monsie—" Her articulation broke off on perceiving Remy. "Who is—so he comes!" she spoke in the direction her son had been pushed.

With the latch stile cradled between her bosoms, Remy could explore only a portion of her frame. In her late forties judging from her blowzy unveiled face, she was clad in a tight-fitting gold lamé blouse or the upper half of a peignoir. Her discernible left torso was monopolized by an enormous fallen breast, "a 'huge hill of flesh,'" he reflected, evoking Shakespeare (and conscious he had evolved into his overly captious sister-in-law Caroline).

As the out-of-view Ghazi explained Remy's motive for being there, the door *peu à peu* slid further ajar, yet never at the expense of broadening the exposure of her trunk.

"Instruct this one I must have the selfsame he showered on our fist-noted hypocrite. Wangle more if you can. In this midday swelter the sun will stew me to porcine slop, for I'll not penetrate that shack of death and spoil my Ramadan."

Remy offered ten, which was accepted only after his threat to seek the *alim*'s help.

“Browbeaten since Eve! Tell the niggard I must drape myself in a *haik* and scarf,” she stoically bewailed, easing the door to even as Ghazi was translating.

*Now why would M. Foucin be calling on Mme. Bourceli and her family this morning?* Remy, lingering in the hallway, interrogated himself. *Supposing I had not stopped at the fourth apothecary, I might have encountered him.* A comical shiver accompanied his further meditation. *In this country even charity is under surveillance.*

As he waited, what had been enigmatized outside his Al-Nigma room three nights ago barged in, ““But little do you know of the Belmazoires and me.”” This memory prompted him to wonder, “Could the benefactor of Mlle. Houda be M. Foucin?”

“My salary for this is twenty, so do not arm him with any loophole licensing him to fudge on our compact,” Mme. Bourceli harangued into the tin shanty's barely cracked door. “Insult M. Le Grand with your bridling, but jeopardize not what's due to me.”

When the *niquab* swayed tenaciously from side to side, Remy swept round Mme. Bourceli. “Mademoiselle, do you wish him to die?”

Her black-veiled head, a charcoal lump, drooped. “You may have sensated a minutia, deemed irrelevant, yet when exhumed it could be impregnable in M. Vellacott's defense. Simply grant me the opportunity to pose a few questions. It's unsisterly, by an unnecessary holding of your 'tongue,' 'to doom [your] brother's death.’”

Still hunched, she rejoined in French, “He forbids me. Save him, monsieur! Prevail upon him to allow me to rescind my vow of silence. He is not at fault.”

As the door began to close, Remy outthrust his right palm. Leaning forward, he edged into the breach. “Mlle. Houda, the pharmacies. All paid. How? By you. How?”

Her shocked flinch diminished the internal force against the central batten, and abetted by Remy's own pressure, the aperture widened. Able to make out the dissevering sheet, he anticipated a moan would stir from beyond it, in outrage at the slight intake of sunshine.

Houda's subsequent plea, “Convince my brother, monsieur! Please! Please!” for some reason struck him as theatrical, artificial. “He's not persuaded I will not let him die!”

No sooner had the door been shut than Mme. Bourceli, flinging aside her headscarf, thereby revealing a “gat-toothed” grimace, shrieked: “Ghazi, hie thyself hither ere he's off without reckoning, in fear of which and because it's noonday hot, I sweat like that 'scarlet harlot' our *alim* preaches against—to cool his own lust!”

### 3

By the time they had traversed the yard, Ghazi had scampered down to station himself in the threshold. With his billfold already out, Remy requested the youth to thank his mother, whose concentration, consonant with her son's, dwelt not on the withdrawal of the sky-blue ten-dinar note, but “on the glut of bills” left therein.

“Herald that he pocketed twenty extra words from her than when he collated under the *alim*'s supervision, unless the religious devil lied. Demand an inflationary gratuity.”

Ghazi translated this as “Monsieur, we must huddle away from this biddy who, perhaps

with some justice, argues that she's worthy of an augmented grateful earnest."

Both tracked as Remy put away the *portefeuille*. After the lamentation, "And I a widow!" Mme. Bourceli snatched the ten from his right hand.

Spying Ghazi slacking, she administered a shove dictating him to precede her up the stairs. In spite of this, at the fifth step, he whirled around to entreat, "Mama, maybe he'll tip me a dinar to walk him to a taxi stand. We'll go halves."

Through his ducking spring, her slap at his occiput landed on a clavicle. "And let the neighbors spot you promenading with this 'queer foreigner.' I endured a plethora of the Qur'an-slinger's sneers that morning, with a shirt unbuttoned to your navel, you were witnessed decorating the perron of Martyrs Square."

She stopped and in the abrupt respite appeared to be extemporizing a *plan d'action*, at once unfurled. "It'll spoil my day, his absconding with such a bulky wallet. Invite him up. Entice with the sweetmeat that I'm brimming with radiant gnosis about the Belmazoirs. For an additional ten I'll spill all, but stress I do not give my conversation on credit."

Only after the second was welded to the first ten atop her heart did she tack on the stern rider. "And he need not expect tea: Use Ramadan as the pretext. A widow must be wary. Three cups, should he take thumping sugar, and I'll have forfeited a tenth of this ten."

That the apartment looked well-kept was "probably Houda's doing," observed Remy, pointed toward a fading hunter green rattan chair at the end of a scratched and stained oak dining table. Mme. Bourceli assumed the opposite rattan and Ghazi the one between.

To Remy's right was a bedroom, from the window of which he conjectured four days ago she had taunted the *alim*. Adjacent to it was a tiny bathroom, and farther on, a cramped kitchen. The corners of the front room had been partitioned off by blankets hung over guy wires, their two-metered triangles "presumably improvised sleeping quarters."

"Mama, Mama!" obtruded a small-girl peep from the chamber.

"Shut up, my dearest! Mama's at business!" Mme. Bourceli sang out, her voice absent of the harshness ostended on the stairwell.

"Albeit it's Ramadan, the sun has 'Saharaed' my person: I must have tea," she yammered at Ghazi. "I suppose that means a cup for him. Still bring an eighth-filled bowl of sugar. When has even God ever provided for a widow? Irrefutably your father—May God grant him no more than a one-second scintilla of Eternity's peace!—dying never did."

Five minutes later, Ghazi reentered with the service. In the interval, Mme. Bourceli had fluffed her white *haik* at her chest and hesitantly murmured, "*Très chaud . . . humide.*" Attempting a grin to rival hers, Remy had bobbed his head, mopped imaginary perspiration from his frons, and recited her words, trying to imitate the five mispronunciations.

Into the cup of *shai* placed before him, Remy put half a spoon of *sukkar*. "Non! Non!" Mme. Bourceli asseverated. "The sweeter the better," she added in Arabic. "Immaculately metaphorase what I say," she charged her son.

Presented another heaping spoon, Remy declined. Focused on the hostess, his guileless beam advertised that he fathomed her to be his philanthropist. "Tell your mother the sweetest treasures were created for Eve's daughters, not Adam's sons."

"What?" At Ghazi's exact, but laggard, rendering, a blush suffused her cheeks.

Having downed her initial sip—thus twice contented—she plunged into her exposé. “A bad one from a bad family. Spent all the money his face and physique could earn on silk shirts and gold-tipped shoes from Italy, even after ‘Dame Snooty’ took ill. There’s a one! Stiff-backed, she’d clean my toilet, not in the estimable manner of her Houda, who crouches over so far her chin is in the bowl. The mother never lost her France.”

With her lips intently pursed, she lapsed into a brief quiet, a bon mot apparently crystallizing. “Just as her husband never found his Algiers.”

At Ghazi’s abbreviated conversion, her tone grew harsh. “Say what I say, you turned-in rascal, as if it were a chapter from our Holy Qur’an, not subject to renovation. I espied what you were about on the stairs. A taxi stand! You would have tendered this dignified visitant your breech to ride! Lolling about Martyrs Square half-naked!

“Whomsoever did his smile beckon?” our *alim* tee-heed at me, joyfully appending that you no-mattered which gender tourist you simpered at. ‘And that year he was twelve and studying Qur’anic memorization, whatsoever were you groping for under his *djellaba*?’ was my snap reply. That made him jump!

“Such tumbles from grace by our holy hypocrite a son tattles to his mother, who’ll hence have them at hand to beat off the Satan in him. Say as I say, no further amending than did the Word of Allah our Prophet Mohammed—Peace be upon Him, but only if He interceded to strike limp thy father’s penis when Paradise’s seventy-two virgins came accosting!”

On the heels of this triple philippic, from deep down, she disgorged a sigh. “That, refrain from construing: This do. The sister speaks little, yet thinks much, unnatural (and unnecessary) in womankind. Especially one already manifested abnormal by her ugliness, as ill-favored as her brother is beautiful, as misnomered a female (God help her!), as you, my son (God help me!), are a male.”

She paused to console herself. “God bless you! Notwithstanding He didn’t, in assigning you the chisel nose of your father and my thimble clit. ‘There’s nothing for me to slice!’ the circumciser harrumphed. You grew. It didn’t. What prospect had you on Martyrs Square, levying shame upon me? Not even our *alim* fondled you a second time, unless you lied to your mother, ‘the highest of the Great Sins,’ the Holy Book cunningly proclaims.

“Mercy me, I’ve circumnavigated and am again miraculously re-berthed. Alter not a judicious modifier which I’ve employed against the sister! And, negligent child, lavish on my guest a ‘booster shot’ of tea.” She wiggled her pinkie at Remy’s empty cup.

“Monsieur,” Ghazi’s paraphrase ran as he poured, “this maternal nitwit babbles how hideous Belmazoir’s sister is. In truth, I’m the better, knowing this Houda by heart, having what *you* need at my fingertips. I would collogue with you, but for now, fearful of exuding a scent for her vixenish suspicion, dare not utter the trysting site.”

“Force on him a superflux of sugar!” With each word her fallen breasts jounced up and down. “Monsieur, you are from France?”

Following the translation, Remy answered, “No, from Belgium.”

“Are you sure? It wasn’t exceeding an hour I speculated you were from France, and the Great . . . and was not corrected. ‘Monsieur’—I dare not mention his name—‘mark me. He’s sent by some French cohorts of that old traitor to salvage his grandson. I fear to associate, in Ramadan, with this oblique emissary of a dead devil.’

“He pooh-poohed my concern and insisted we accord you our utmost cooperation, the sequel being he hauled aside my oaf to decant into his jug ears that I must be calm, or so my vile darling rumors. To such I can allude since you’re not from France, and are an evident worthy, no departed archfiend’s ambassador.”

Demurely she cast her eyes downward. “Your wife is there, in Belgium?”

“Alone. Our two daugh—” He checked himself. “Our daughters-in-law—we have two sons—however, visit her frequently when I’m away. They live nearby.” During the translation Remy pondered, *Where had I previously been lulled into a comparable mistake?*

“You’re blessed. My husband—With an unrelenting blunt instrument God micronize every atom of his soul!—died, stranding me with five, the other four all with the snout of this one, even the two girls. Who will take them off my hands? Only my death, still that I principally dread, for thither I might be reunited with him.”

“*Awgh!*. What widow has ever suffered as I do?” Her voice faltered. “Oh that gross-beaked brute, how could I retain my lithesome beauty with a smeller like his thrusting into my honey pot?”

Lighting upon a yawn-suppressing Ghazi, she bellowed, “Noxious imp, hearken to the pronouncements of your genetrix!” As tears welled up, she continued, “In this kind man’s eyes I can discern, ‘Her troubles interest me,’ just as God divined in the Prophet Mohammed’s that which (Archangel Gabriel avouched) ‘interested’ Him.”

“*Pardon*, my maternal manna,” bleated Ghazi before turning to Remy. “This slobberer, four years a widow, rails against my papa. (God knows, he selfishly died to escape her tongue!) She snivels how she’s abandoned with three sons—it’s my poignant affliction to be one—and two daughters.

“Monsieur from Belgium, do you understand? I’ll mumble the place, the time at the door. Had you been wise to her drooling —May a benevolent devil transform her gallbladder into a rattle!— you’d plumb the depths of my misery. Please conspire with me. At the door!”

With “borderline sincerity,” Remy addressed his hostess, “Madam, life is difficult, but yours, excessively onerous. That you have suffered perchance occasions your benefaction to the likewise widowed Mme. Belmazoir and her fatherless daughter. You bestow on the offspring employment, ensuring the two will not go hungry.” Ghazi translated literally.

“Yes, and sat with that malodorous patient the Wednesday nights this Houda, feigning necessity, was out gallivanting around. Sometimes for three hours I wet-nursed.”

Remy was intrigued when Ghazi construed her words as “Some evenings, notably Wednesdays, this Houda works three hours for us.” This contrivance to burke that disclosure Remy accommodated by switching the causerie back to Mohammed. He was apprised of how the neighborhood had rejoiced at his arrest.

“On the contrary, I was led to believe he had confreres at Café Bendari.”

Mme. Bourceli snorted a laugh at the metaphrased query. “He buys his friends in the same way he sells his body, the money from the latter procuring the former.” After translating the insult, Ghazi once more reiterated, “Listen for my threshold susurrations!”

With his second cup finished, Remy begged permission to rise. Immediately he was besieged by a crestfallen countenance. Unpocketing his wallet, he communicated his gratitude for her cordial reception and Ghazi’s dragoman service.

When he pressed a fifty-dinar note into her hand, Bourceli's upper eyelids rocketed, but thereon dipped into an undisguised regret. "A third cup, *s'il vous plaît*."

"Another time, I beseech. Your hospitality exceeds an emir's." He waved off her endeavor to budge her large hips from the green rattan.

At the doorway, a ten was slid to a slack-jawed Ghazi, who, nonetheless, with dispatch stuffed it into his jeans. The youth's murmur coincided with the creak of the twisted knob. "Tomorrow night. Eight. Park Marengo, the southwest portal."

"Why do you pester him? My earshot's weasel-acute. You've nothing he desires!" barracked his mother.

At the downstairs exit, Remy contemplated, *For three hours on Wednesdays she slipped away. Why?*—conscious that the interrogative signified he had entered and left the building asking questions about Houda.

## 4

"It's my fault, not Elbert's," in English vented Leroy. The three men were seated as at their last conference. "We've agreed I'll give the prologue which will clarify my blame."

The ambassador reached forward, grasped the handle of the mauve-colored *cruche* on the silver roundel, filled one of the four matching goblets with water, and after a stretch placed it on the leather coaster at Medlin's corner of the desk. An open-palm gesture offered the same to Remy, who with a not discourteous firming of his right hand declined.

He had resolved that ("in imitation of Houda?") he would speak as little as possible, and the first audible word he had not yet uttered, having, on being shown in at three sharp by Miss Crippen, mimed a return of their greetings.

"I'll flesh out what I sketched on Thursday. About a week before Gertie was initially scheduled to leave, she repined, 'Here I am about to fly out of Algiers, with its "fabled" Casbah sight unseen.' Her proposal followed: 'Let's go on a sub-rosa shopping spree, à la Manila. I have *nada* from Algiers for the Alexandria house.'

"Virginia, she was referring to, just outside D.C. We'd rig ourselves out in flamboyant tourist togs, hire a *voiture de location*—'no diplomatic plates'—and 'no security men,' she decreed, 'intimidating the storekeeper I'm dickering with.'"

Leroy chuckled. "I acceded. I don't mask it. Naught I can deny her. Is it so with your wife Marie?" He interrupted his scrutiny of the pink rose, the position of its vase on the desk unaltered, to look inquisitively at Remy.

The question was acknowledged with an indifferent smile: At the Al-Nigma, after his sally to Bab el Oued, he had hunted down his lapse. "Can nothing here be kept peripheral?" he had chided himself, metaphorically sucking his thumb at this self-inflicted prick.

"The outing was set for two days prior to her Wednesday departure. I would require Elbert's assistance, but said nothing to Paul, Gertie having intimated that we should use the occasion to select a special gift for Leila and him. 'Elbert has volunteered drogher duty,' I casually acquainted her. A subterfuge had already taken hold.

"There's no wife harder to buy for than mine. She spots a find she prizes past dispute. I step in to pay, merely to have her intervene with her bare-bottom 'chaffering' with the

merchant. After she hammers him to a ‘skinflint’ price, it’s still too expensive, so she, who enjoys bargaining better than buying, tows me from the store.

“This time I’d devised a scheme to out-Reynard ‘Mme. Foxy,’ and that’s why ‘I selfishly need you along,’ I confessed to Elbert. During the spree, the moment I intuitively knew she had stumbled on an artifact genuinely coveted, I’d let her go through her ritual. As we quit the shop, a nod I’d shoot to my *bras droit*”—he glanced toward his DCM—“a cue.” He trailed off with a jovial reprimand. “‘A long preamble,’ eh? . . . Elbert.”

When Medlin extended a “right arm” to the glass, clutched it, and swallowed three-fourths of its content, Remy considered he did so, reflexively, to soothe Leroy’s throat, not to prepare his own.

“I insisted that I, not Ambassador Leroy, carry out the preliminary work.” He spoke into his lap. “A dry run was essential in determining whether we could whizzle Mrs. Leroy into the chosen Mirabout Restaurant and I could scoot back to the store, obtain the present, spirit it to the trunk of our rental, and resurface without tipping her off.

“Timing was crucial. On a Thursday, February twenty-third scouting mission, from a distance I familiarized myself with the Mirabout, its prayer-closing time, and the environs. The next evening, arriving at exactly 6:07, I bribed my way in. Seated in family room ‘2,’ I monitored the way the maître d’ Zerhouni, who expeditiously reappeared with a glass and pitcher of water, closed for sunset prayer, and the one hour and twelve minutes he was away.

“At 7:22, he returned and took my order. Afterward, I settled up generously—after all, in three days I’d be back with friends—and left at 8:15. At my apartment, I adjusted for Islam’s erratic prayer times, augmenting by three minutes those I’d scribbled.

“I’m unaware of whether you unearthed this first visit from Zerhouni. Last night Ambassador Leroy and I concurred that nothing would be withheld today, Mr. Lazar.” As Medlin adverted to each, his eyes shifted from one to the other before refixing on his legs. “The rehearsal, of course, didn’t facilitate since on Monday everything went wrong.”

Leroy tilted his frame sympathetically toward his DCM. “I shouldn’t have taxed you with it.” He glimpsed at Remy. “It’s tricky maneuvering through the Casbah. He got disoriented.” With his ken once more embracing Medlin, he stressed, “The onus, mine!”

A brief transitional gap ensued. “In one of those religious *boutiques* off Rue Ahmed Bouzrina, I pinpointed the treasure Gertie was combing the Casbah for, a regally engraved edition of the Qur’an with a 1213 Hegira date, around one hundred and fifty years old. She je—haggled the price from ten thousand dinars to eight, whereupon exclaiming, ‘Oh no!’ with a gloat, and swept from the establishment.

“I’d provided Elbert with two thousand dollars, so he was well equipped to cover the cost. Gertie safely ‘offstage,’ I beckoned to him, and in a farewell to the *commerçant*, appealed sotto voce, ‘If possible, don’t shutter at the first summons to prayers. I’ll be sending him’—I motioned toward Elbert—‘to seal the transaction.’”

He snapped his chin precisely, “in probable mimicry of his gesture that afternoon.” However, Medlin interpreted this as a behest for him to take up the narrative.

“My sense of direction rivals my current olfactory and gustative senses.” Three cephalic jerks seemed designed to flick away at these inner, unrhythmic nemeses. “The maître d’ having retired, I suggested, ‘Why don’t I hustle these down to the rental?’”

“I had one bag; Ambassador Leroy, three, besides the rolled-up Baluchi prayer mat for Leila and Paul. ‘Later, gluttoned, we won’t feel like lugging them even three blocks.’ We’d parked off Martyrs Square in the lot where the buses congregate.

“Ambassador Leroy escorted me to the front door. I’d learned during my previous visit Zerhouni only bolted it during prayer. ‘Here’s the key. Deposit Gertie’s Qur’an with the others in the trunk,’ he whispered.

“‘You know the way: Straight uphill to Bouzrina Street. After crossing it, veer left,’ and next a string of bearings I can’t recite now, something about, ‘At the second lane, cut right, go to the third alley, then left. The shop is the fifth down.’ That’s as ‘off,’ I’m sure, as I was that night.”

Remy distinguished self-incrimination in Leroy’s wagging of his head, afresh supplemented by the mumbling, “My fault.”

Medlin had also heeded, for riveting his eyes on his superior, he controverted, “Sir, no! I had time in the descent to the Mirabout to lock the route in my memory.” He twisted toward Remy. “I do remember the envoi: ‘Five minutes up. It’s twenty-five till prayer, and the store owner promised to shut down dilatorily.’”

He swung back around to Leroy and, receiving no hint of an interposition, persevered with a self-deprecating smirk, “Bungling me never found it. Afterward, in a flash Ambassador Leroy conceived a surrogate diversion and executed it to perfection.

“Not like me. I didn’t return until 7:19. A relentless peering at one’s watch guarantees such accuracy. I discerned Ambassador Leroy stationed alfresco. My incompetence had reduced him to a lookout! A twenty-two-minute task had taken me an hour and four.”

He reached for the goblet, clasped it by its sides not its stem, and, his hand quivering, gulped down a noiseless draught.

Remy permitted the water to settle before he spoke, his first vocalization. What he announced triggered Leroy’s head to snap back sharply and Medlin’s face to be squeezed inward: “Which means that you were ‘missing in the maze’ of the Casbah at the approximate time M. Ballard was murdered.”

## 5

“Your first words ‘insist on [their] own way.’ They—what did Augustine asseverate?—seek ‘no profit from [their] wickedness, but only to be wicked.’”

Ignoring Leroy’s animadversion, conveyed in French, Remy never freed his eyes from Medlin. “You remarked that you ultimately secured the Qur’an. I’m curious, ‘How?’”

The answer he partially pre-knew: Among the photocopies the DCM had delivered Thursday night were the statements of the three excursionists, all of whom had mentioned twenty minutes of post-dinner shopping.

It was Leroy who replied, his exposition “dry” throughout its presentment. “The meal drawing to a close, I pretended I had espied a second gift, a native scrivener’s set, for Leila and Paul and inquired whether they were too sated for a short tramp up the hill.”

Leroy had led them by the Qur’anic store to its adjacent silver mart. “While Gertie and I remained there, absorbed in dickering, Elbert slipped away, scurried back one lane,

purchased the edition of the ‘Glorious’ Book, and rejoined us. Less than ‘to perfection’ consummated. Given the proximity of the shops, I don’t think Gertie was fooled, do you?”

The question elicited a start from Medlin. “Yes . . . no. No, she wasn’t . . . didn’t even broach the subject until we were in the parking lot. And then obliquely: ‘I’m more puzzled about the Fiat—it doesn’t appear to be where we left it—than what Elbert has in that bag. An additional keepsake for our nearly-weds?’

“Or some such innuendoed phrasing, for I do recollect she targeted a sage grin at you. An auxiliary factor in my tardiness: Like Mrs. Leroy, I’d let slip our parking spot,” a moment later luckily described by you.”

Not assured he had satisfactorily engaged the ambassador’s query, Medlin appended, “No, I believe she connected the two establishments.”

“*Merci!* One mystery you’ve unraveled. To another: Monsieur, you flitted from the Mirabout,” Remy persisted in staring down the DCM, “at, say, 6:15. Five minutes or so later the restaurant’s teenage server M. Samir, laden with his tray, detected an understaffed two in family room ‘1.’ He would have been disappointed: You’d seen him during your solo visit to the Mirabout, had you not?”

“No, I don’t think . . . so.” Medlin’s response, stalwartly initiated, trailed off into dubiety. “Does he allege I did?”

“Of no matter. With this, however, I am intrigued: As circumstantially as you can recall, how did you pass that span from 6:15, when you egressed the Mirabout, to 7:25, the reentry of M. Zerhouni, who encountered you wiping your forehead with napkins?”

Medlin’s eyes were opened wide at the inception of his account, but Remy noted their lids gradually sank till veiled over. “The buildings of the Casbah seemed to incline, smothering me in the earth’s evening surrender of its daytime-garnered, moist-fraught heat. Forthwith, their corrugated shutters were screeching downward, an enveloping clang.

“I’m confident I sheered off Bouzrina at the correct lane; even so, once there everything confused me. Several minutes into the straining shriek of the exhortation to prayer, bodies were recklessly caroming off me. Still I couldn’t entreat directions to the shop, in conversant with both Arabic and French.

“Two bags in each hand and the rug nestled under my right axilla, I staggered along, my shirt soaked, intent solely on the façades. Suddenly glancing about—the quietude broke my focus—I discovered the alleys were unpeopled. ‘The mosques have claimed them all,’ I moaned, ‘yea, even the religious vender.’

“A squint at my watch revealed that I’d been wandering in this labyrinth for a quarter-hour, achieving nothing. I won’t flatter myself by urging that I attempted to retrace my steps, for I doubt the natives themselves can accomplish such a feat. Downhill would lead me out—I’d given up on the Qur’an—but every so-trending pathway I attacked a minute after would suddenly climb.

“With the beetling structures thwarting a view of the bay, miragelike muddle set in: I had become the counterpart of one trapped under an avalanche of snow or in a black-hole bed of quicksand, not knowing which way to claw.

“I checked the time anew—6:53! From alley to alley I reeled, yet soon was not alone. Prayer must have ended since the cobblestones were sprouting men and with them the

uprooting of the horrid shutters. Passively I tagged along behind a strolling clique, whose snaking peregrination at length, amazingly, ushered me back to Bouzrina . . . out of—and I mean no sacrilege—my forty minutes in the wilderness.”

Medlin, his eyes closed tight, slumped further into the Regency chair. “No Qur’an, I was resolved not to lumber in with the ‘burden,’ my excuse for leaving. As I approached the Mirabout, I slowed my frantic pace and, hunched down among those dumped from the mosques, slunk by, in dread Ambassador Leroy would be outside scanning for me.

“At precisely 7:09, I reached Azoun Street, turned left, and jog-trotted the half block to the Martyrs’ buses. At the lot, our Regata should have been in the fourth row from where they idle while being boarded. I thought I’d memorized the route, cognizant of my duty to wend my way back. However, as I’ve indicated, even there I floundered.”

Medlin eased open his eyes as though surveying the lot. “What had been six neat rows earlier had mutated into a jagged nine, the layout undergoing a desert-sand shifting. Four minutes whizzed by before I chanced on ours. With the bags and mat stowed in the trunk, I disregarded the suspicion of those I sped by in my three-minute race to the Mirabout.

“Ambassador Leroy was marking time outside. ‘Did you get it?’ sought he, his hand on the knob. ‘I’m sorry. I got lost.’ Averting my face, I trudged through the entrance. Reseated at the booth, not to discommode Mrs. Leroy, I kept my jacket zipped: I perspire easily.”

As documentation, Medlin unpocketed a handkerchief and dabbed his brow, on which Remy did catch a dampened glow. “I got lost,” he iterated, no longer a part of his answer to Leroy, but “a present-moment self-assessment of his past failure.”

Remy was lying in wait with an animated “Whew! such a hectic clip, Monsieur! I can understand why neither napkins nor water were unnecessary!”

## 6

That night Remy had finally used the Aladdin for a purpose other than talk. Back in his room by nine, he reminded himself he had launched the day with a morning of “*je n’ai rien à faire*,” and apparently it would end with “*temps sur mes mains*.” Not even Foucin had rung up.

To Gibbon he turned. However, the end of chapter 11 left him more challenged than becalmed. “Is ‘revenge . . . profitable’ and ‘gratitude . . . expensive’?” he queried. The Machiavellian assertions detailed him to the photocopies, from which he again dug out the statements by Ambassador Leroy, his wife, and “Mr. E. M., their ‘onlie begetter.’”

None reported the absence of the DCM from the Mirabout, but they basically concurred on their “ETA”: “around six” (Mrs. Leroy), “a little after six” (Leroy), and “6:10 we were seated” (Medlin’s definitude, “one minute off Zerhouni’s snide precision”).

Mrs. Leroy was “excited to be dining in a native eatery,” and all three related that their service was delayed by sunset prayers, “so we didn’t leave till nine.”

Subsequently, they expended a third of an hour on renewed shopping before walking to their rental—a 1988 silver Fiat Regata 90 S. The agency had delivered it to the Leroy’s residence at “eleven; Donald, the guard who signed for it, telephoned up to inform me” (Mrs. Leroy’s). From Martyrs’ parking lot, they drove to Medlin’s apartment, dropping him off “at

9:45” (the deputy chief’s). “We were back home at ten or so” (Leroy’s).

As for the browsing segment of the trip, Mrs. Leroy’s was the most amplified, adverting to particular *dakakiin* (“stores”) and items paltered over. Medlin’s, the least: “Starting at the base of the Casbah (3:45), we wound our way to its apogee prior to weaving back down to the Mirabout (6:08).”

Noting with prefatory terseness that “we stopped frequently to appraise and higggle,” Leroy’s concentrated on the route, “[place]-name dropping”: Martyrs Square, the arcaded Bouzrina, the Théâtre National, the Citadel, the old synagogue (“now a mosque”), “in sight of Jardin Marengo,” and “down once more, plunging into the twisting alleys off the Middle Street—‘Dickery dickery dare,’ along the way—ultimately coming out near the Mirabout.”

All three affidavits continued well beyond the “window of culpability.” At “11:32,” Leroy received the *appel téléphonique* about Ballard’s death. He rang Medlin at roughly midnight from the morgue at the Gendarmerie.

Medlin’s: “Rushing over, I sat with the Ambassador and Mrs. Leroy till 2:15, when I was ‘ordered’ to ‘get some rest.’ As DCM I would be ‘in charge’ the next day or so.”

Leroy’s: “The autopsy and paperwork completed, at 7:30 we took possession of Paul’s corpse. The ambulance had been waiting for three hours.” Mrs. Leroy’s: “The saddest ride, our dearest friend dirged ‘home’ to the embassy.”

Remy strolled to the window in his pajamas, a Christmas *cadeau* Marie had sewn for him two years ago and the pair “I won’t let be packed. Those you slept in last night. They’re soiled!” Halfheartedly she grabbed at them as they went into one of his suitcases, unstrapped that morning expressly for their inclusion.

The curtain drawcords in his hands, he debated whether to begin his *heure du coucher* benediction with “Father, the time is not ripe” or “Father, out of joint is the time.” He bonded with neither. Instead, into the amoebalike raindrops on the windowpane, against which his breath had formed a “little O,” viva voce he implored, “Father, sleep well.”

In bed, as he pulled the dusty-rose satin sheet—“irritatingly smooth”—to his chest, he pondered whether Foucin had considered dialing him. The idea was discarded with a similar excuse, “disrupting his Ramadan feast” supplanted by “disturbing *une bonne nuit* of sleep, well-deserved, following a morning devoted to a necessary act of kindness.”

He doubted not that Ambassador Leroy would be in robust slumber, still what of Medlin? A second sleepless night for him, Remy sadly deduced.

After the DCM had blurted out the double negative, none had voiced what all three were contemplating: There, the time was not out of joint. *De novo*, Remy limned the scenario. As soon as Medlin, prescient that he would be consigned the key, left the restaurant, three hurrying minutes would have brought him to the rental—“ironically the destination he had ‘lied’ about.”

A ten-minute ride to Zaracova. Park beyond the crook in the highway formed by the protruding grove, thus out of the watchful Abukadir’s range. Slip on the *djellaba*, one of the two items Medlin declared he had bought at the garment market.

From the street, Remy had estimated, it would be less than a three-minute spurt to the clearing: “6:15, 6:18, 6:28, 6:31—plausible reckonings.” By 6:40, Ballard’s exit from the

changing room, Medlin could have been in position, inside the doorway of the club, the rummaged, nail-studded plank fisted, but any thick branch or iron rod would have sufficed.

A few steeling minutes after Ballard's advent, he would have halloooed, "Paul!" and let the wonder "sink in" before stage-whispering (for effect), "We must talk."

As Ballard ascended the steps, muttering, "What the hell you doing here, Elbert?" his grip of the board would have tensed. When his victim was at arm's length, from the shadow of the threshold he would have struck, the blow ensuring there would be no struggle.

Since the clip point of the knife was inserted at the deadliest point, where the blood would most shoot out, he would have had to accept that a plethora of Ballard's "filthy witness" would "red-tide" his hands and crimson-sheathe the blade.

"Thank goodness!" his prayerful murmur, "for the 'little water'" in the adjacent bowl-sized, granite-bedded pond "to 'wash this blood / Clean.'" Leave it to the buckling wind to brush away any footprints in the dust of the dance floor and on the porch.

At the Fiat, he would have wrapped the *djellaba* around the *douk-douk* (antecedent to the excursion "cached in a deep pocket of his jacket?"), the cotton-and-steel ensemble straightaway returned to his one sack.

The drive back: "a synaptic interim in which to meditate à la Macbeth on what he had 'done.'" The forfeited *place de stationnement*, he would have foreseen, and had probably allocated a minute or so for cruising the lot, in search of one near the original.

Intent upon the jumble of the lot, Leroy had not noticed that the Regata had been moved, and Mrs. Leroy had alluded to it only to vent her insinuation about the mysterious gift. A calculated sprint—he must be out of breath—would have whisked him to the restaurant, his confession of not "bagging" the Qur'an ready to spill from his trembling lips.

## 7

Gotten out of the way his protestation about how frenetic the tear to the Mirabout must have been, Remy had striven to frustrate what he sensed Medlin expected would be his next line of fire.

"Four bundles and a cumbrous mat you conveyed to the 90 S. Yesterday after scouring the Casbah for some folkloric curios, I was similarly laden down. May I be so bold—the typical tourist I dote on comparing purchases and prices—as to pry into your other buys?"

Leroy snickered artfully. "Gertie and I, some indigenous habiliments: a silk *haik* ('woman's outer robe'), a chiffon *higaab* (her 'headscarf'), divers *nikaab* ('veils'), a red *checheya* ('fez'), and a beige *gandoura* ('man's robe')."

"Well-nigh identical to mine!" fibbed Remy. "Each wayfarer to the Casbah must if only to convince family and friends, not to mention himself, that he's been there. My native-vestment novelties—a lot of artificiality foisting itself as the real—were from a run-down warehouse. Monsieur?" The inquiry was leveled at Medlin.

The casualness of his reply indicated Remy's gambol had not eluded him. "Much of a muchness: a robe, but mine had sleeves and a hood, one hundred seventy dinars, I recollect, and fifty for a pair of sandals."

Remy waggled an index finger in general disapproval. "The leather here's workaday,

even below Egypt's. The steel's on a par with the attire. Granted, its rusticity inexplicably complicates its design." This exclamatory hand, having dropped, settled palm in palm above his belt buckle.

"I mulled over picking up a volcanic specimen, but decided no. M. Medlin, that day you didn't happen to buy—I'd adopt your recommendation on whether I should—one of those ornamental . . . What do the natives dub them? Oh yes—*douk-douks* . . . 'dagger-ettes'?" Remy attached a hollow laugh, void of any attempt to gloss over its factitiousness.

"No!" Medlin sprang to his feet, his body trembling. "No!" his voice cresting.

"Monsieur! *Diabolique!*" Leroy's visage manifested his inner pang. However, against the grain, no saintly commentaries were affixed, Remy noted.

"If you have nothing else for Elbert . . ." The adverbial clause was left dangling.

Before Medlin withdrew, Remy had apologized, finishing with "My stab at wit was headlong, the thrust impaling the thruster. Impulsive wit like the excited prostitute—both out of control—produces the '*bâtard*,' and my conduct merits that epithet, which most assuredly crossed your mind."

"It did," beamed Leroy, the instant Medlin had closed the door. The smile, "an unwelcome caller let in," was forthwith banished. "You fathom why I attest the blame's not his. It was I, avid to outwit my wife, who vaingloriously concocted the *mécanisme*."

He gently struck the top of the desk with his fist and, as if self-cued, continued in French. "Even so, you recognize the presence of too many contingencies. Elbert's being sent on his errand cannot be a hair off: He must not merely precede Paul's arrival at the disco, but also be there well in advance since, monsieur, 'crime typically needs time.'"

A humph was puffed. "And Gertie could have failed to discover an enrapturing prize. The Qur'anic shop might not have been so tucked away. And these three could be cubed."

French, heard or spoken, relaxed Remy. Despite his deep-rooted bias, he found it a more logical language to discourse in than English. "Yet the pretext for M. Medlin to leave the dining booth had already been hatched, and it was he who volunteered to carry out the preliminary duties." Remy halted briefly. "You are aware that he and M. Ballard had a public disagreement six days anterior to the homicide."

Leroy squinted, his gaze visually frozen by the divulgence. "The punctilious M. Medlin did not impart this exchange to you? Accordingly, it's of no graver import than he made it out to be, especially since his dismissal of it corresponds with that of Mlle. Chabane. In dialogue with her I stumbled on it while examining her brother about his argument with M. Ballard . . . who apparently had little peace in his final week."

Remy summarized what he had learned about the coffee-room "words" from Leila and the DCM. "Again probably of no significance, or why would M. Medlin have solicited me to verify his account with the secretaries who were there? This brings me to my request. With M. Belsches presiding, may I be permitted to interview them on Monday?"

Leroy gave a brisk nod. "Tomorrow would be better. A Sunday, Elbert won't be in." He was rotating a pen inconsciously plucked from its desk holder. "What you cast about for, I think I know. After their scene, Elbert was afraid Paul would finesse me into vetoing his Washington assignment: the motive. Elbert wasn't where he—and I—propounded that he was at the approximated time of the murder: the false alibi.

“The incrimination, I’ll reveal since you ineluctably will spoor it down: We’re required to inscribe in the embassy log our whereabouts when we check out before five. On two occasions in February, Elbert pointed out entries where Paul left early, both on Mondays. “Bound for the beach,” he annexed, ‘our Algerian workers gossip.’ Citing them, he might have specified Zaracova.”

He paused to shake his head with defiant authority. “For all that, Elbert couldn’t have stalked Paul to the beach. We were on the way to the Casbah while Paul was driving there. And how could he have ascertained the bizarre scheduling of the grove rendezvous?”

Remy evoked the string of ZBs on the desk calendar, Ballard’s “death agenda.” To one snooping they were as “open” an “advertisement” as the messages in Bendari’s notebook: the place (“Z[aracova] B[each] . . . disco”), the time (“7:15”), the day (“Mon[day]”), and the date, 27 February, implicit. Additionally, had not Leila said that all the embassy staff were cognizant of Ballard’s penchant for arriving twenty minutes ahead of time?

At once he addressed Leroy’s question with his own, previously answered by the image of an index finger speeding across the fourth row of a brown metal cabinet: “As deputy chief, M. Medlin has keys to all rooms in the embassy?”

“Of course,” Leroy rejoined—*abstractedly*, Remy’s inference, *for he doesn’t follow it up. In his own maze, he’s looking for a Foucin ‘loophole.’* The pen reinserted, Leroy said, “At any rate, I suspect you’re determined to scout out Stendhal’s ‘*les petits faits vrais.*’ With Alan and the secretaries, tomorrow. Would 12:30 be convenient?”

After a silent assent, Remy allotted a further minimal cunctation. “Your Excellency, it would surprise me if these disclosures about M. Medlin are more than coincidences and peripheries. All the same, my profession compels me to investigate, tender my prima facie to M. Vellacott, and let him make of it what uses necessity dictates.”

At the door, Leroy swelled to declaim—a postvalediction, Remy perceived, reserved for its opening: “Some scientists improvise that life, this ‘great globe itself, / Yea, all which it inherit,’ is the result of fortuitous consequences. ‘Peripheries’ indeed!”

No, Medlin would not be spending a tranquil night. “And the others?”

Leila would have proceeded from prayers to bed, he was sure, opting to feast on her grief, not the fare of Ramadan. Her brother would be paralleling the plot of his father: Who would finagle the last scrap of lamb on the platter they shared?

Mohammed would be high on a hashish-gifted sleep. His sister Houda: sponging her mother’s forehead and cheeks, accepting as “my fault” that she suffered.

Remy pined to be bending over his father, the fingertips of his left hand embarking upon the motion which would carry them from the crown onto the arteries and veins of his neck, the right side massaged first. Then kneading inward, they would reach the cervicale, there rounding off the cycle—before it was begun afresh—with a pinching click.

*Connecting*, Remy unnecessarily (and alliteratively) emended. With that dream and with that word, sleep kindly overtook him.

## Notes and Commentary: Chap. 11: “An Unnecessary Act of Kindness”

**April 15, 1989 (Saturday)**

p. 170: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE OF CHAPTER 11: The title is ironic since an act of kindness should never be viewed as unnecessary.

However, unlike the commitment to kindness, the performance of an altruistic act is shown sometimes to be unnecessary: at the pharmacies, Remy learns that the Belmazoires have no debts for him to pay. (Yet, even he admits that his motive is not entirely charitable, for he hopes by satisfying the family’s financial obligations Houda will speak with him about the murder.)

His encounter with Mme. Bourceli and her son brings Remy into contact with two characters seemingly devoid of human kindness.

In Remy’s afternoon meeting at the embassy, it is revealed that Medlin’s sycophantic kind offer to assist Leroy has endangered himself, thereby suggesting that kindness must be selfless and cannot be compromised or watered down.

The chapter closes with an unvarnished act of kindness, one where necessity becomes a joyful obligation: In his imagination, Remy reciprocates for a kind act by his father.

“Unnecessary” is used seven times (170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 181, and 185), and its positive form “necessary” once (182).

Three variants of the other key word in the title are used: “kind” (176), “kindness” (182), and “kindly” (185).

For the Islamic view of the necessity for people to be kind to each other in imitation of God’s kindness toward humanity, see the p. 182 note below, N11:33, which lists passages on kindness in the Qur’an.

In four other chapters the major words of this title are used: On 15.248, one character will acknowledge “an act of kindness beyond the necessary.” On 17.288, Remy will think about “the unnecessary, yet obligatory, kindness that he was embarked upon.”

On 18.297, another character will say, “Unnecessary, yet truly obliging, your kind act.” And on 19.326, still another will praise Remy’s “more-than-necessary kindness.”

pp. 170-85: CHRONOLOGY OF CHAPTER 11: From 8 a.m. to 11:35, Remy makes an altruistic decision and tries to carry it out by visiting the pharmacies in Bab el Oued near the Belmazoires’ residence.

From 11:35 to 12:28 p.m., he proceeds to the Belmazoires’ building where he

learns more about the family from their neighbor Mme. Bourceli than he does from Houda.

From 3:00 to 3:36 p.m., Remy meets with Leroy and Medlin at the embassy.

That night in his hotel room, Remy spends much of his time contemplating the case against Medlin.

In bed just after eleven, Remy wishes that he were at his father's side massaging his neck.

pp. 170-72: SECTION 1

p. 170: "Ballard's caution": Remy surprisingly compares himself with Ballard, saying that he must emulate the caution which he had shown in conducting his sexual affair with Belmazoir.

The darkness of Ballard's Toumi apartment (the hallway and the chamber) is drawn from Mohammed's description on 4.63-64 and undoubtedly from locker 2269 reports by Vellacott and the police, from which Remy must have picked up the taped down window shade.

The darkness image harks back to 4.54 and the verse John 1:5: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

p. 170: atramentous: "black as ink" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 170: "even Foucin's or Leila's eyes would not be able to pierce it [the darkness]": Foucin's fastening or focused "dark eyes" are described on 7.106, 113, and 115. Leila's "black eyes" are deemed penetrating on 9.143—see its note, N9:22—and 148.

p. 170: "melodrama exorcized": Remy recognizes that his thoughts in the first paragraph were melodramatic.

p. 170: *commissaire divisionnaire*: Divisional commissioner, the highest rank in the Algerian national police force. See the 4.55 note.

p. 170: "not yet five completed of the fourteen and one-half hours of fasting": In Ramadan Muslims are prohibited from eating or drinking from dawn (*fajr*) to sunset (*maghrib*).

On this day in my novel *salaat il-fajr* (dawn prayers) came at 4:43, the beginning of the fast. (Note: Sunrise will not come until 6:14.)

Remy finished his breakfast at 9:25, by which time his father would have been fasting for almost five hours.

*Salaat il-maghrib* (sunset prayers), which halted the fast, came at 7:22 p.m., its span from *fajr* being fourteen and one-half hours.

p. 170: draught: In British English, "the portion or quantity that is drunk . . . at a single

swallow” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 170: “byzen””: “a disgraceful spectacle or example” (*Webster’s Third*, which lists it as English dialect; hence, it is in quotations).
- p. 170: “another room-dividing sheet”: On 10.158 Remy speaks of his father’s “section of the blanket-and-sheet divided” attic.  
On 5.81 he spied “the soiled white sheet” used to divide the Belmazoirs’ one-room shack.
- p. 170: “near-seven-week period”: Belmazoir was arrested on Feb. 28; the date of chap. 11 is Apr. 15. Thus a span of forty-seven days.
- p. 170: “The act was unnecessary”: The first use of a key word in the title of the chapter.  
The phrasing is amplified on 11.182, which speaks of “a morning devoted to ‘a necessary act of kindness.’”
- p. 170: “perchance she would abjure her silence”: Remy admits there is a selfish reason for his action.
- p. 170: “my magnanimous morning”: The idea for his considerate act sprang from thoughts about his father, so Remy quickly affirms to himself that he does not wish to profit from his decision.
- p. 170: “Determined to work inward”: The action shifts to around 10:20, at which point Remy stops the taxi in front of a pharmacy in Bab el Oued.
- p. 170: Nemmiche: Kamal Nemmiche first appeared in the novel on 9.139. He will be Remy’s taxi driver through most of the remaining chapters of the novel.
- p. 170: “the Belmazoirs’ Rue Mizon”: The Belmazoirs live in the shack behind the apartment building at No. 22, Rue Mizon (6.78).
- p. 170: “by a green crescent”: In Algeria, the façades of all pharmacies have a green crescent sign.  
This is not the case in all Muslim countries; for instance, Tunisia still uses the caduceus to denote a pharmacy, and at the time of this novel in Morocco both a green cross and a green crescent were often on the sign above the entrance to a pharmacy.  
As for the color, green was the favorite color of the Prophet Mohammed, who often wore a green cloak and turban. According to Sura 76:21 of the Qur’an, the inhabitants of Paradise will wear green garments.  
Although the crescent appears at the top of mosques, the image is not used as a religious symbol in the Qur’an or by the Prophet Mohammed. However, it was a tribal symbol in pre-Islamic Saudi Arabia, and in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the crescent

became the political symbol of the Ottoman Empire.

p. 170: “leap”: In 4.54, Remy made a “‘leaping’ deduction,” using one premise of why DGSE sent him to Algeria to reach a conclusion of the true reason they dispatched him.

In 8.124, Remy realized that in his defense of Ballard Leroy was making an “inductive leap,” moving from his particular experiences with Ballard to conclude a general truth, that Ballard was not capable of being a traitor.

(“Inductive leap” and “deductive leap” are both recognized in philosophy.)

“Leap” on p. 170 is used as a comic application of Kierkegaard’s “leap to faith” (usually referred to as “leap of faith”). It requires a person to believe in something without evidence.

Therefore, Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety* holds that religion requires such a leap to faith whereby a person instantly and totally changes from one state or condition to another.

p. 170: “The spirit of charity . . . ripens into a faith that overtakes even hope”: Remy waggishly perceives his “leap” as sequential, a gradually progression: Having decided to become charitable, he subsequently “ripens into a faith” which allows him to become hopeful.

He plays upon 1 Cor. 13:13: “And now abideth faith, hope, and charity.”

Unlike Remy, St. Paul regards the three as indivisible as the trinity: Faith (God), hope (Holy Spirit), and charity (Christ), even though he declares the last to be the “greatest” (literally, in the Greek text, “greater”).

This Pauline citation connects Remy with Ballard, who cited from 1 Cor. 13:4-7 on 1.13.

p. 171: cosset: fondle; pamper.

p. 171: irrupt into: to intrude or enter suddenly.

p. 171: keening: “the act of wailing, bewailing, lamenting, mourning, or complaining loudly” (*Webster’s Third*).  
The moaning of the dying Mme. Belmazoir inspired either sympathetic bewailing or uncompassionate complaints from her neighbors.

p. 171: “barely fifty, she looks seventy”: According to my chronology, the person who became Mme. Salima Belmazoir was born in France in 1939. (Her French name is not given.)

She was six years older than Ahmed Belmazoir, who was born in Algiers in 1945, when they were married in France in December 1962.

Ahmed along with his mother had been flown to France in late 1961 to be reunited with old Belmazoir, who had been given the alias de Villiers. This French name was partially uttered by the child Mohammed on 2.32 and will be given in full on 14.129.

The first child of “Ahmed” (his French first name is also never reported) and “Salima” (who would not take this Arabic name until the family returned to Algiers in 1972) was Houda, born on July 5, 1963. Mohammed Belmazoir will be born in France on Nov. 1, 1970.

p. 171: rictus: a fixed, gaping grin.

p. 171: “the ‘bitter end’ . . . ‘bight’ of the rope”: Two nautical terms are used by the pharmacist to describe the government’s insensitive treatment of a cancer patient near her “bitter end” or last painful extremity.

“Bitter end” is also the inboard end of a rope wound around the bitt or deck post in the mooring a ship. To employ another image, the “bitter end” is that point where one is at “the end of one’s rope.”

“Bight”—with its pun on “bite” or the sting of death—is the middle part of a slack rope, as distinguished from the nub at the end of the rope.

The pharmacist’s point is that the government sets aside only a minimal amount for the care of a dying person (the “bitter end”), leaving charitable pharmacists to provide the palliatives needed by the patient in the long period (the “bight”) leading up to death.

p. 171: *Exempli gratia*: The Latin phrase, usually abbreviated in English as e.g., literally translates as “in order to give” (*gratia*) “an example” (*exempli*, which is in the genitive case because it follows *gratia*).

p. 171: invalidated: Used metaphorically. The medicine dispensed on account to the Belmazoirs has made the pharmacist financially weak or sick.

p. 171: tumefied: swelled.

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- p. 171: “At the three drugstores that followed”: Remy is in the first pharmacy from 10:21 to 10:34. He walks to the second and is there from 10:39 to 10:53. In the span from 10:53 to 11:30, he visits the third and the fourth. Detecting the pattern that Houda had seemingly come into money around Feb. 16, he decides not to visit the other three pharmacies on his list. Instead he heads for the Belmazoirs’ residence.
- p. 171: liability: An accounting term. Here it means the debt Houda had accrued through signing vouchers at each pharmacy.
- p. 171: “591.25 . . . close to nine hundred dinars”: I worked this up as follows: At the first pharmacy, the total paid by Houda for arrears and subsequent purchases in cash was 295.50. At the second, the total was 191.50; the third, 199.25; and the fourth, 200.50. Thus for pharmacies two through four the sum would be 591.25. This added to the 295.50 of the first would produce a grand total of 886.75, which Remy rounded off to nine hundred (around US\$90).

- p. 172: “Dulcin”: A trademark term designating “a sweet crystalline compound used as a sweetening agent” (*Webster’s Third*).  
Remy fancifully imagines himself as a “sweetening” agent for the DGSE which would approve of his charitable distribution of *pourboires* to the pharmacists.
- p. 172: “benefactors cannot benefact”: “Benefact” is a transitive verb meaning “to act as a benefactor of.”  
The direct object in the sentence (“those in need”) is understood.
- p. 172: Gieves & Hawkes: A bespoke gentleman’s tailor located at No. 1 Savile Row, London.
- p. 172: *mouchoir*: French for “handkerchief.”
- p. 172: “Inside the building”: Remy enters the Belmazoires’ building at 11:34.
- p. 172: doorless: “having no door” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 172: moot: “open for discussion or debate,” that is, unanswered.  
The first question is concerned with how Houda seems to have come into a large sum in the third week of February. Remy has no answer.  
His second question asks what else had happened in this third week. Remy has an answer, for that is the week Ballard checked out the FLIRs.  
The third question relates to what connection there could be between Houda’s sudden wealth and the green goggles. So puzzled by the question, Remy does not even try to answer it.
- pp. 172-73: SECTION 2
- p. 172: hobbledehoy: An awkward and gawky young man.
- p. 172: “opened the door”: Remy walks up the stairs and knocks on the door to Bourceli’s apartment. Her son Ghazi answers. Remy asks about employing his mother to chaperon the call he wishes to make on Houda (11:35 – 11:37).
- p. 172: “wagging of his head”: In 5.68, the wagging head designates disapproval, but here it indicates an enthusiastic desire to cooperate.  
The image is minimally drawn from Matt. 27:39 (KJV): “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.”  
The image also appears later in the chapter (179).
- p. 172: “Does the Great One so soon return?” With this reference to Foucin, Remy knows that the commissioner has preceded his visit.  
According to my chronology, Foucin’s call on the Bourcelis occurred from 10:50,

when Remy was about to leave the second pharmacist, to 11:18, when Remy is at the fourth pharmacy.

Presumably informed by his agent following Remy, Foucin saw that the order of the pharmacies visited was leading toward the Belmazoires' shack.

He proceeded to No. 22, Rue Mizon, and sought out Bourceli as his chaperon since she is aware of what happened in his brief meeting with Houda: "Insult the Great One," Bourceli tells her (173); that is, Houda had refused to talk to Foucin. He was there to convince her to cooperate with Remy, the investigator who had visited Houda with the *alim* last Tuesday (10:55 – 11:05).

Back in the Bourceli apartment, Foucin spoke with Ghazi in private, telling him that his mother must be affable with the foreigner, or so Ghazi reported to her (176).

Foucin's request apparently explains the great desire of Ghazi to be cooperative with Remy, manifested from his opening the door (11:05 – 11:17).

None of the above times are specified in the novel.

- p. 172: "Who is—so he comes!": Expecting Foucin, Bourceli is at first puzzled by who this stranger is, having not concentrated on him at the Tuesday meeting. Then she remembers what Foucin had said: A foreign investigator might seek her out; if he does, she should cooperate with him.
- p. 172: "In her late forties": In my chronology, Bourceli was born in 1942, so she is around 47 years old in 1989, the time of the novel.
- p. 172: blowzy: fat, ruddy, and coarse-looking.
- p. 172: "a 'huge hill of flesh'": Hal's description of Falstaff girth in *1 Henry IV* 2.4.241: "this huge hill of flesh."
- p. 172: "sister-in-law Caroline": See 4.52-53 for Caroline's fault-finding nature.
- p. 172: *peu à peu*: In French, "gradually; little by little."
- p. 172: "fist-noted hypocrite": See 5.81 and 6.83 for the *alim*'s brandishing of a fist at Bourceli.
- p. 172: "porcine slop": Kitchen waste or spill, used for feeding pigs. As indicated in the 5.81 note, her name Bourceli was partially chosen because it sounds like "porcine."

- p. 173: “Browbeaten since Eve!”: The Qur’an does not refer to the wife of Adam by name, but Islamic tradition refers to her as Hawwa, a name similar to Eve. Bourceli is less a pro-feminist than an anti-masculinist.
- p. 173: *haik*: an outer robe worn by some Algerian women over native or Western garb. See the 8.133 note.
- p. 173: “enigmatize”: A transitive verb meaning “to make enigmatic.”
- p. 173: “‘But little do you know of the Belmazoirs and me’”: The enigmatic speech of Foucin occurred on 7.117.
- p. 173: “salary . . . is twenty”: Bourceli exaggerates, believing that Remy does not know any Arabic.
- p. 173: M. Le Grand: “The Great Man.” This French epithet will be used to refer to Foucin a symbolic seven times in the novel: here, 13.201, 14.234, 15.244, 20.332, and 21.353 and 355.
- p. 173: bridle: to curb or control with or as with a bridle. Bourceli uses a shortened form of the expression “bridle one’s tongue,” most famously used in James 1:26: “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (Amer. KJV). This statement suggests that Bourceli was present when Houda refused to speak (bridled her tongue) with Foucin.
- p. 173: *niqaab*: In Arabic, a “veil.”
- p. 173: “a charcoal lump”: The black veil makes Houda’s head appear to be a lump of coal.
- p. 173: “sensate”: A transitive verb meaning “to feel or apprehend through a sense or the senses” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 173: “by an unnecessary holding of your ‘tongue,’ ‘to doom [your] brother’s death’”: Another use of “unnecessary” from the title of the chapter. The quote is from *Richard III* 2.1.103-04, where King Edward laments over having ordered the death of his brother Clarence, “Have I a tongue to doom [decree] my brother’s death, / And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?” The analogy is tenuous because Edward used his tongue to order the execution of his brother while Houda by holding her tongue, Remy argues, will ensure that her brother is executed.
- p. 173: “He is not at fault”: A variant of what Houda said on the morning her brother was arrested, “It is not his fault.”

See the 7.112 note, N7:28, which lists the eight times the sentence is exactly used, the two instances, such as here, where a close variant is employed, and the six other times when the wording is echoed by others seeking to take responsibility for something.

p. 173: “central batten”: In the plank-and-batten door, the batten is a strip of wood put over the seam between planks as a fastening.

See 5.80, where it is partially defined in the text, and its note, N5.36, where a more complete definition is provided.

p. 173: “theatrical, artificial”: That Remy correctly judges her exclamation will not be revealed until 15.250 and 18.295, 298-99, and 302.

p. 173: “Gat-toothed”: Middle English for “gap-toothed.”

In her physical appearance Bourceli is compared with the two great comic characters in English literature, Falstaff on p. 172, and here with the Wife of Bath. In “Prologue,” *Canterbury Tales*, l. 470, she is described as “Gat-toothed was she, soothly for to saye [to speak the truth].”

p. 173: “hie thysself hither ere”: hurry here before. The time is 11:46 so the conference with Houda lasted only three minutes.

p. 173: reckoning: the settlement of an account.

p. 173: “scarlet harlot”: The typically red-clad prostitute.

This reference attests that the *alim* had aligned himself with the nascent Islamic fundamentalist movement in Algiers because one of the first aspects of Western influence which they railed against was prostitution.

In Christian theology, the “great whore” of Babylon is described as “arrayed in purple and scarlet color” (Rev. 17:4 KJV).

Neither the Qur’an nor the Hadiths contain a similar reference, yet the color is generally associated with a prostitute.

pp. 173-77: SECTION 3

p. 173: “By the time they had traversed the yard:” The action continues from the end of section 2. The time is 11:47.

p. 173: “he pocketed twenty extra words from her”: Not understanding Remy’s French, Bourceli makes up a number.

A count reveals that Houda spoke thirty-eight words to Remy this day.

On his first visit with the *alim* as chaperon, Houda had said no words to Remy and had uttered only five in Arabic to the *alim*: “*Nam?* [Yes?] . . . My brother forbids me” (5.80-81).

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p. 173: “religious devil”: This oxymoronic coupling of contradictory terms is a characteristic of Bourceli’s thought process.

However, her supposition is correct: The *alim* had lied.

p. 173: “Qur’an-slinger”: The *alim*. Compare her use of “sura-spinner” (5:106).

- p. 174: “grateful earnest”: Both senses of “earnest” are used: (1) earnest money or money given as partial payment and pledge in binding a bargain, and (2) token or something given as an assurance of what is to come.  
The phrase “grateful earnest” occurs in the original conclusion of Gray’s “Elegy,” which he excised: “A grateful Earnest of eternal Peace” (fifth line from the original conclusion of the poem).
- p. 174: *portefeuille*: “wallet” in French.
- p. 174: occiput: the back part of the head or skull.
- p. 174: clavicle: collarbone.
- p. 174: “queer foreigner”: In Arabic, one word for “foreigner” is *khawaaga*, but when used in reference to Western bachelors, it carries the connotation of “a gay foreigner.”  
Remy gives this definition of *khawaaga* on 4.62-63 (see its note, N4.32), which he will further embellish on 12.189.
- p. 174: perron: An outside stairway leading to a platform at the front entrance of a large building, such as a church or mansion, or in this case the monument to the martyrs of the Algerian-French war.
- p. 174: Martyrs Square: This square which houses the monument is a common meeting place in Algiers.  
See 9.142 (and its note, N9:19-20), the first reference to it in the novel.  
It will be described on 14.233 and 21.356.
- p. 174: *plan d’action*: plan of action; a stratagem.
- p. 174: sweetmeat: candy or candied fruit as an enticement.  
The word was used at Trimalchio’s as a sexual sobriquet (2.19).
- p. 174: gnosis: Knowledge of secret spiritual things discerned only by an elite few.  
The term (certainly an elevation by Remy) further exemplifies Bourceli’s confusion between the spiritual and the mundane.
- p. 174: “spill all”: informal for “divulge.”
- p. 174: rider: an addition or amendment to a contract.
- p. 174: “Ramadan as a pretext”: In Ramadan a Muslim may not drink or eat during daytime.
- p. 174: “thumping”: Informal usage when meaning “very large” or “whopping.”

- p. 174: “That the apartment looked”: This subsection begins at 11:54, a minute after the preceding one.
- p. 174: “four days ago”: Remy visited Houda on Tues., Apr. 11; the day of this chapter is Sat., Apr. 15.
- p. 174: “the front room had been partitioned off by blankets”: The third cloth-partitioned room in the novel, another indication of the dwelling shortage in Algiers during the 80s and one which continues until today (2013).
- p. 174: “Saharaed”: A Google search convinced me that making “Sahara” a verb is without precedence, and still shamelessly I use it.
- p. 174: “your father—May God grant him no more”: The first of a series of imprecations by Mme. Bourceli against her dead husband.
- p. 174: *Très chaud . . . humide*: “Very hot . . . humid” in French.
- p. 174: *frons*: forehead.
- p. 174: “the five mispronunciations”: The *s* in *très* is sounded, and its *è* comes out as a long *e*, producing a set of morphemes similar to the English word *trees*. The *ch* in *chaud* is pronounced as *ch*, not *sh*, and the *h* and *e* in *humide* are both sounded.
- p. 174: *shai*: “tea” in Arabic.
- p. 174: *sukkar*: “sugar” (Arabic).
- p. 174: metaphrase: to translate literally.

- p. 175: “Dame Snooty”: Mme. Belmazoir.
- p. 175: “The mother never lost her France”: An indication that not only had Mme. Belmazoir lived in France, but also she was French not Algerian.
- p. 175: bon mot: an apt, clever, or witty remark.
- p. 175: “Just as her husband never found his Algiers”: Though Ahmed Belmazoir had come back to Algiers hoping to regain the Belmazoirs’ home and money seized after the revolution, he never gained anything but an early death.  
The time is now 12:05 p.m., so Remy has been in the apartment just over ten minutes.
- p. 175: “turned-in rascal”: Bourceli suggests that are son’s genitalia are so small that they appear to be turned inward like a female’s.
- p. 175: “breech”: buttocks. Bourceli can make such outrageous charges because she assumes Remy does not understand any Arabic.
- p. 175: “half-naked”: Bourceli’s “with a shirt unbuttoned to your navel” (174) is exaggerated here.
- p. 175: “tee-heed”: Used by HIV on 2.33, a connection of the streets of Algiers with the tables of Trimalchio’s.
- p. 175: “groping for under his *djellaba*”: The pedophilic theme of 2.31 (see its notes N2.56-57) reappears, as it will on 12.189, 16.269, and 19.327.
- p. 175: *djellaba*: A robe worn by an Algerian male; it has long sleeves and a hood.
- p. 175: “our holy hypocrite”: oxymoron.
- p. 175: “Satan in him”: *Iblis*, one of the *djinn* (see the 1.9 note, N1:24-25), was cast out of Heaven for his disobedience to Allah in refusing to bow down before his new human creation Adam.  
Given the name *Shaitan* (“Satan” in Arabic), *Iblis* and his *jinn* followers were allowed to roam the earth tempting people to disobedience.  
*Shaitan* is called the “deceiver” or the “whisperer” because he would pour evil suggestions into the ears and heart of men and women.
- p. 175: “strike limp thy father’s penis”: Her second invective against her husband shows that her curses begin to intensify.  
This is the fourth use of the “limp penis” image in the novel.
- p. 175: “seventy-two virgins”: The Islamic concept of beautiful virgins awaiting each faithful Muslim male in Heaven is based on 55:56, 70, 72, and 74 of the Qur’an,

although the number is not mentioned in these verses.

It comes from the Hadiths of al-Tirmidhi, who reports that the Prophet stated that one reward in the gardens of Paradise for devoted Muslim men would be “seventy-two hours,” that is, black-eyed virgins of perfect beauty.

- p. 175: “triple philippic”: A philippic is a bitter verbal attack on someone. Bourceli’s triple philippic is against her son, the *alim*, and her dead husband.
- p. 175: construe: to make an inexact translation of a passage orally.
- p. 175: “The sister . . . thinks much, unnatural (and unnecessary) in womankind”: Further attestation that Bourceli is not a pro-feminist, but an anti-masculinist. Another use of a key word in the title, “unnecessary.”
- p. 175: clit: Short for “clitoris.”
- p. 175: circumciser: Because of the original title of my novel, “circumcise” or a variant of it appears in every chapter.
- p. 175: “unless you lied to your mother, ‘the highest of the Great Sins,’ the Holy Book cunningly proclaims”: A fabrication by Bourceli, although the Qur’an places kindness to parents as second after worshiping God: “And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents . . . say not to them a word of disrespect” (17:23 and 31:14). Concerning lying, Prophet Mohammed said that one of the signs of a hypocrite is “he lies” (the Hadiths of al-Bukhari 2546 and Muslim 2605). However, nowhere does the Prophet or the Qur’an specify that lying to a parent is worse than lying to anyone else.
- p. 175: circumnavigated and am miraculously re-berthed: She began the diatribe by speaking of “a chapter from our Holy Qur’an” and boasts that she has returned to the Qur’an once more. “Re-berth,” with its pun on “rebirth,” means to moor the “vessel” of her discourse once again. It appears to have been a neologism at the time this chapter was first written (1991). I still do not find it listed in any dictionaries, but it occurs in a few yachting articles on the internet (and without the hyphen in one collection of stories).
- p. 175: “booster shot”: A medical metaphor for “a second cup of tea.”
- p. 175: collogue: speak in private.
- p. 175: superflux: “superabundance” (*Webster’s Third*) or excess. On 18.298, Bourceli (or Remy’s mental translation of her speech) will cite its most famous use: “That thou mayst shake the superflux to them” (*Lear* 3.4.35).

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- p. 175: “Are you sure?” A typical response of Bourceli, always reluctant to admit that she is wrong, even when she challenges a person’s declaration of nationality. Ironically her assumption is in fact more truthful than Remy’s.
- p. 175: “wasn’t exceeding an hour”: Since the time Bourceli is speaking to Remy is 12:12, Foucin would have been in her apartment at around 11:12. See the p. 172 note above, N11:7-8, which lists the chronology of Foucin’s morning visit with the Bourcelis and Houda.
- p. 175: “sent by some cohorts of that old traitor to salvage his grandson”: Again the ridiculous Bourceli alights on Remy’s situation: In a sense, he has been sent by the DGSE, “cohorts of that old traitor,” old Belmazoir, to save “his grandson,” Mohammed.
- p. 175: “oblique emissary of a dead devil”: Bourceli becomes another one who refers to Remy as being affiliated with a devil (old Belmazoir).
- p. 175: oblique: indirect; devious; sinister; not direct in descent.

- p. 176: “decant into his jug ears”: What Foucin whispered to Ghazi will not be revealed until 13.204.  
“Decant” means “to pour from one container to another.”  
My image is a paraphrase from *Hamlet* 1.5.64-65, where the ghost of Hamlet’s father says of his poisoning, “And in the porches of my ears did pour / The leprous distilment.”  
This passage will be partially quoted by Foucin in the above-cited 13.204.
- p. 176: “departed archfiend’s ambassador”: Her second reference to Remy as an agent of the devil.
- p. 176: “Our two daugh— . . . our daughters-in-law . . . two sons . . . a comparable mistake”: Lazar, the investigator whom Remy is impersonating, had two married sons. In a mistake which he catches and corrects, Remy begins my referring to the two daughters he and Marie had.  
He senses that he had made a comparable familiar blunder before.  
On p. 177, Remy will realize where he had made the error.  
On 8.128, in conversing with Leroy he had referred to his wife’s name as Marie.  
Not until 13.218 will someone refer to the name of Lazar’s wife, Evelyn, and Remy will have to attempt to lie his way out of this slip of the tongue.
- p. 176: micronize: To reduce to particles of only a few microns in diameter.  
A micron equals one millionth of a meter.  
This is the third curse Bourceli calls upon her dead husband.
- p. 176: “snout”: Another instance of how impervious Bourceli is to the indignity of her comparison of her son’s nose to the snout of a swine.  
As among Jews, so with Muslims, the consumption of pork is prohibited, and swine are considered unclean.  
Unable to “bridle” her tongue, Bourceli contrasts with Houda, whom she had censured for “bridling” her tongue (173).
- p. 176: “Awgh!”: A coined interjection first used in 3.43 to express unbearable, animalistic pain.  
Bourceli uses it here to express her disgust at the thought of being reunited with her husband in an afterlife.  
See the 3.43 note, N3:23, for a list of the other occurrences of this expression.
- p. 176: smeller: “nose” (*Webster’s Third*).  
Bourceli continues her metaphoric association of the nose with the penis.
- p. 176: genetrix: a “mother” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 176: “Archangel Gabriel”: The archangel who delivered the Qur’an to Prophet Mohammed, first in the cave of Mount Hira near Makkah in 610 and 613 C.E and then sporadically until just before Mohammed’s death in 632.

In Arabic, the name is pronounced as Jibril or Jibrail. After speaking his name, a Muslim should say, "Peace be upon him," but as to be expected, Bourceli does not.

Her comment that, according to Gabriel, God saw something in Prophet Mohammed's eyes which "interested" him, my notes indicate, was taken from a book on Islam in English, which I read in 1990 while in Saudi Arabia.

It was a commentary on Sura 96:1-5 of the Qur'an which deals with Gabriel's first visit to Mohammed.

The verses which Gabriel had Mohammed repeat announced that Allah had formally chosen Mohammed to be his last Messenger to humanity.

Through internet searches I have found no reference to God looking into the eyes of Mohammed. However, I am keeping the passage in my novel since it can be construed as another instance, although an unfair one, of Bourceli's mangled knowledge (actually mine) of the Qur'an.

Gabriel also descends to the earth one night every year, accepted by many Sunni Muslims as the 27<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan, called *Lailatul Qadr* (the Night of Greatness). This was the night of Gabriel's first revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Mohammed.

Symbolically my novel will end with the prayer call heralding the beginning of *Lailatul Qadr* (21.368).

- p. 176: "my maternal manna": Ghazi sarcastically says he regards her as his spiritual food and divine sustenance.
- p. 176: "May a benevolent devil transform her gallbladder into a rattle": Ghazi imitates and inverts his mother's formulaic curse: "May she develop gallstones!" His use of "a benevolent devil" evinces how he has mastered her use of the oxymoron.
- p. 176: "the Wednesday nights this Houda . . . was out gallivanting around": This revelation surprises Remy for he comes back to it at the end of this section (177). He cannot pursue this matter with Bourceli because Ghazi omits the idea from his translation.
- p. 176: wet-nurse: A transitive verb meaning "to devote unremitting or excessive care to" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 176: burke: to set aside, suppress, or avoid, such as an issue, a parliamentary bill, a discussion, etc.
- p. 176: causerie: discussion or chat.
- p. 176: confrere: broadly, a "fellow" or "comrade" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 176: susurration: whispering.

p. 176: “to budge her large hips”: The wording again connects her with Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, who in the “Prologue” is described as having a “foot-mantle aboute hir hippes large” (474).

p. 177: dragoman: A hired interpreter, chiefly of Arabic, Turkish, or Persian (*Webster's Third*).

p. 177: rocket: rise rapidly.

p. 177: barrack: to jeer or shout at; an Australian term.

p. 177: "At the downstairs exit": The time is 12:28.

p. 177: "*For three hours on Wednesday . . . Why? . . .* he had entered and left the building asking questions about Houda": Remy is thinking about Bourceli's revelation that on Wednesday nights Houda left their shack for three hours or so.

On p. 172, "inside the building" he had asked himself what Houda's "sudden wealth" had "to do with the 'green goggles.'"

Remy's concentration on the FLIRs seemingly prevents him from forging another connection with something Leila had said: "As was the one that emerged after your Christmas, at which point he was out a second night, Wednesday" (9.145).

pp. 177-79: SECTION 4:

p. 177: "It's my fault": Leroy echoes Houda's "It is not his fault" (7.112). This is a variant which is used by Houda herself on p. 173 above, "He is not at fault."

See the 7.112 note, N7:28, for a list of other characters who assert they are at fault, not someone else.

p. 177: "previous conference": Their Thursday, April 13 meeting (8.118).

p. 177: *cruche*: French for "pitcher."

p. 177: roundel: "a circular tray" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 177: "He had resolved that . . . he would speak as little as possible": Remy wants to receive Leroy's and Medlin's account of why the latter had left the Mirabout. Zerhouni's comment to Remy that he did not see the Leroy's and Medlin exit the restaurant after their meal (10.166 and its note, N10:32) reveals that he had no knowledge that they had left without the four bags and the rug or that the DCM had used some of the interval before Zerhouni returned to carry them to their rented car.

Though a mission such as this would explain Medlin's absence, there were other points that Remy wanted clarified, such as why Medlin had made an initial trip to the restaurant three days prior, why he had chosen to leave the Mirabout secretly, and why such a short walk from the restaurant to the car had left him perspiring profusely.

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- p. 177: “at three sharp by Miss Crippen”: Leroy’s secretary.
- p. 177: “flesh out”: to make full by the addition of details.
- p. 177: “a week before Gertie was scheduled to leave”: Mrs. Leroy was to leave Algiers on Mar. 1, listed below as a Wednesday.
- p. 177: “fabled”: The adjective is placed in single quotes because it is so frequently used in tourist guide books to describe Algiers’ Casbah.
- p. 177: sub-rosa: As an adjective, “designed to be secretive or confidential” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 177: “à la Manila”: Leroy was the ambassador to the Philippines from 1982-83. The Leroy’s were married in 1977 while he was serving as the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) in Sri Lanka (1975-1978).
- p. 177: *nada*: Spanish for “nothing.”
- p. 177: *voiture de location*: French for “rental car.”
- p. 177: “‘with your wife Marie’ . . . hunted down the lapse . . . self-inflicted prick”: As alluded to in the p. 176 note, N11:17, in speaking with Leroy, Remy had made reference to his wife Marie’s pricking her finger while sewing (8.128). He did not realize until that afternoon after returning from Bab el Oued he should have given the name of Lazar’s wife, which on 13.218 is revealed to be Evelyn. This self-inflicted wound reminds Remy of the difficulty and danger involved in assuming another’s identity.
- p. 177: drogher: porter or carrier.
- p. 177: chaffer: In its rare usage (hence the single quotes), it means “to haggle over a price” or to “bargain” (*Webster’s Third*).

- p. 178: “skinflint”: Single quotes are employed because “skinflint,” a noun, is used in an adjective position.  
For Leroy’s use of a variant of “skinflint,” see 1.2 and its note, N1:6.
- p. 178: “out-Reynard ‘Mme. Foxy’”: “Reynard” is the French word for “fox.” In medieval European fables, Reynard is an anthropomorphic red fox known for his trickery and slyness.  
Although not mentioned by name, he is the fox in Chaucer’s “Nun’s Priest’s Tale,” where he plays upon the inflated ego of the rooster Chauntecleer in order to seize him.  
However, in turn, by flattering the fox Chauntecleer gains his own escape. So the trickster is tricked.  
Leroy hopes to do the same with his wife, who considers herself to be a foxy or wily bargainer.
- p. 178: *bras droit*: literally, “right arm” in French, but typically translated as “right-hand man,” the later meaning “a valuable assistant upon whom one is accustomed to rely” (*Webster’s Third*).  
In English “right arm” has also come to be used to designate a “most reliable assistant.”
- p. 178: “a long preamble”: Leroy has spoken for five minutes (3:00 – 3:05).  
The quote is from the “Prologue to ‘The Wife of Bath’s Tale’”: “This is a long preamble to a tale” (837).  
Altered to incorporate a sexual connotation, the quote was used by Remy on 6.83.
- p. 178: “a ‘right arm’”: Remy seizes on this action in an internal pun on the French expression which Leroy has just used.
- p. 178: dry run: An informal expression for “a simulated or practice performance; a rehearsal.”  
Although unmentioned, Remy would have mentally noted that this account provided a plausible explanation of his question about why Medlin had visited the Mirabout three days prior to going there with the Leroy’s.  
Additionally Medlin’s dry run minimally connects with the “rehearsal” for Noura’s rape: “Every play has its rehearsal” (3.50).
- p. 178: whizzle: As a transitive verb, “to get by stealth or cunning” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 178: “On a Thursday, February twenty-third scouting mission”: Medlin had decided that the “dry run” needed a “dry run,” so the afternoon of his Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> conference with Leroy he drove to the Casbah, parked in the lot near the bus stop, familiarized himself with the area around the Mirabout, and from a distance observed what happened when the call to sunset prayers came.

- p. 178: “The next evening ”: Friday, Feb. 24.
- p. 178: “6:07 . . . one hour and twelve minutes . . . 7:22 . . . 8:15”: Medlin exhibits his conscientiousness by listing the exact times.
- p. 178: “closed for sunset prayer”: Throughout his narration, Medlin refers to the singular “prayer,” seemingly unaware that the correct translation from Arabic to English would be “prayers.”
- p. 178: “Islam’s erratic prayer times”: Sunset prayers would move up three minutes. Thus Medlin arrived at 6:07 on Thursday, but he and the Leroy’s came at 6:10 on Monday.
- p. 178: “tricky maneuvering”: Five times this expression is used in the novel, and except for the first all are connected with the Casbah.  
On 1.13, Ballard says it was “tricky maneuvering through the thick darkness.” Foucin (9.149 and 10.169), Mohammed (10.159), and here Leroy speak of how tricky it is to maneuver through the Casbah.
- p. 178: ken: Now considered rare is the use of this word as a noun meaning “range of vision.”  
Famously used by Keats in His “Chapman’s Homer” sonnet, “When a new planet swims into his ken” (10).
- p. 178: onus: Responsibility for a wrong; blame.
- p. 178: *boutique*: A shop, a much broader term than its specialized use in English.
- p. 178: Rue Ahmed Bouzrina: The Mirabout Restaurant is located between two major north-south streets in the Casbah: Rue Bab Azoun, which forms the eastern/seaward boundary of the Casbah, and the next major artery above it, Rue Ahmed Bouzrina.  
(Just over 150 meters up from Bouzrina is the central street of the Casbah, the dissecting Middle Street, formally termed Rue Arbadji Abderahmane.)  
Bouzrina, the colonial Rue de la Lyre, is wholly commercial. It is a short street, only c. 400 m. long, running from Ketchaoua Mosque south to Place de la Lyre. The Mirabout in the novel is located about 100 m. down from Bouzrina
- p. 178: “a 1213 Hegira date”: The numbers of the date add up to a symbolic seven, a sacred number in Islam.  
For instance, the Prophet Mohammed while still alive ascended into the seven heavens with Allah’s messenger Gabriel as his guide.  
In performing the haj ritual, Muslim pilgrims walk around the Kaaba seven times and hurl seven stones three times at the image of the devil.  
The Muslim profession of faith—“There is no God save Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet”—has seven words in Arabic, and the number seven is used twenty-

five times in the Qur'an; most of these passages stress Allah as the all-powerful creator.

The year of the novel is 1989 CE or 1367 AH. If the Qur'an which the Leroy's are interested in dates from 1213, it would be 154 years old, numbers which add up to a symbolic ten in Islam.

For the long list of heptads in the novel and other uses of "seven," see the 10.156 note, N10:11.

An even more detailed list of the appearances of "seven" will be given in the 21.352 note, N21:2-3.

p. 178: "she je— haggled": Leroy catches himself before finishing the offensive expression "jewed the shopkeeper down."

On 1.2, he mocked the Jewish officials in the U.S. State Department. See its note, N1:6.

p. 178: "ten thousand dinars": Approximately US\$1,000.

p. 178: "offstage": Mrs. Leroy was outside the store.

p. 178: *commerçant*: In French, "shopkeeper."

p. 178: "my current olfactory and gustative senses": Medlin has lost his senses of smell and taste.

p. 178: cephalic: of the head, skull, or cranium.  
That is, Medlin nodded his head three times.

- p. 179: “Baluchi prayer mat”: Baluchi tribes reside in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Their women are expert rug weavers, using mainly geometric designs. The Afghani tribe is famous for its tree-of-life Muslim prayer mats.
- p. 179: “wagging of his head”: See the p. 172 note above, N11:7. Through this wagging action, Leroy is censuring himself for having put Medlin in an untenable situation.
- p. 179: envoi: something said in farewell or conclusion.
- p. 179: alfresco: outdoors, that is Leroy was waiting outside the Mirabout.
- p. 179: “‘missing in the maze’ of the Casbah at the approximate time M. Ballard was murdered”: At 3:12 Remy finally speaks, his first words since he entered the office at three. His *m* alliteration renders his charge against Medlin sound almost comical.
- pp. 179-81: SECTION 5:
- p. 179: “Your first words”: This section takes up directly after the preceding one; so the time is 3:12. Leroy’s speech indicates that he was aware that Remy had not spoken during the first twelve minutes of the meeting.
- p. 179: ‘insist on [their] own way’: From 1 Cor. 13:5: “love does not insist on its own way.” The quotation was used by Ballard on 1.13 and will reappear on 19.326.
- p. 179: “what did Augustine asseverate?—seek ‘no profit from [their] wickedness, but only to be wicked’”: From Augustine’s *Confessions*, bk. 2, chap. 4: “My soul was depraved and hurled itself down from security in You [God] into utter destruction, seeking no profit from wickedness, but only to be wicked.”
- p. 179: preknew: “to know beforehand” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 179: “dry”: not colored by emotion; matter-of-fact.

- p. 180: “‘Glorious’ Book”: The Qur’an is typically referred to as “the Glorious Qur’an.”
- p. 180: “‘to perfection’”: Leroy quotes Medlin’s comment four paragraphs from the end of section. 4 (179).
- p. 180: “a start from Medlin”: The DCM had been caught up in a two-minute brown study since Remy had indirectly associated him with the murder of Ballard, but after a stammer he recovers his narrative ability.
- p. 180: “nearly-weds”: Ballard and Leila. According to Medlin’s account, Mrs. Leroy like her husband regarded Ballard and Leila engaged, not married. Her statement that Ballard and Leila are soon to be married, which was made at around 9:30 p.m., is the first time in the text that Medlin was aware of their planned marriage. This appraisal occurs almost two hours after the speculated time of Ballard’s death.
- p. 180: innuendo: As a transitive verb or its verbal, it means “to give effect to by innuendo” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 180: “let slip”: A shortened form of “let slip from my memory.”
- p. 180: “One mystery you’ve unraveled”: That is, how the Leroys purchased the Qur’an.
- p. 180: “understaffed”: Samir had table service for three and was surprised to find only two in dining room “1.”
- p. 180: “during your solo visit to the Mirabout”: On 10.168, Samir stated that he had seen Medlin staring at his crotch, of course not specified by Remy. Medlin denies that he had seen the busboy and then backtracks a little. Remy does not pursue the matter, concluding that just as he was certain on 9.147 that Medlin was not cognizant of jabbing he plastic knife in his palm in the embassy coffee room so the DCM was probably unaware he had stared at the busboy.
- p. 180: “Medlin’s eyes were wide open at the inception of his account”: Medlin’s narration begins at 3:16 and finishes at 3:24.
- p. 180: Bouzrina: See the p. 178 note above for the location and description of Rue Ahmed Bouzrina.
- p. 180: “inconversant”: “lacking experience in or familiarity with” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 180: “the rug”: The Baluchi prayer mat.
- p. 180: axilla: armpit.

p. 180: “unpeopled”: “uninhabited; unpopulated” (*Webster’s Third*).

Medlin’s meaning is that the streets are without people, all of whom have been swooped up the mosques.

p. 180: “religious vender”: The Qur’anic shopkeeper.

p. 180: “a quarter-hour”: Medlin left the Mirabout at 6:15. The first call to prayer that night came at 6:20 (as Remy informed Zerhouni on 10.167), beginning while Medline was still on Bouzrina.

He did not turned off of it until 6:23 since he says that he was hopelessly wandering through its side alleys for fifteen minutes, that is, until 6:38 just before the prayers began and the streets became empty.

The Casbah buildings hang over the street and thus block any view of the sea, thereby preventing Medlin from using the bay to orient himself to what is up and what is down.

He meanders through the lanes during Maghrib prayers, checking his watch at 6:53, two minutes before the prayers ended.

With the streets now once again crowded, he followed a group which eight minutes later led him back to Bouzrina (7:03).

p. 180: “beetling”: overhanging.

p. 180: “miragelike”: “resembling or characteristic of a mirage” (*Wiktionary*).

- p. 181: peregrination: an act of traversing or an excursion on foot.
- p. 181: “amazingly”: An anguished pun on the “maze” of the Casbah.
- p. 181: “forty minutes in the wilderness”: As noted above, Medlin was in the maze off Rue Ahmed Bouzrina from 6:23 to 7:03.  
The wording plays upon Jesus’s forty days in the wilderness, spent fasting, before being tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1-2, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-2).
- p. 181: “Regency chair”: See 8.118 and its note, N8:2.
- p. 181: “burden”: A bitter pun by Medlin:  
“Burden” refers to the packages he was carrying and to his mental sorrow at his failure, which would be revealed in a “refrain” (burden) of his excuse for leaving the restaurant.
- p. 181: “At precisely 7:09”: It took a hurrying Medlin six minutes to traverse the distance from Rue Ahmed Bouzrina to Rue Bab Azoun (7:09).  
Another three minutes brought him to the lot where their rental was parked. It took him four minutes to find the car and another three minutes to rush back to the Mirabout (7:19, the time Medlin gave on p. 179).  
Thus his mission took from 6:15 to 7:19, the “one hour and four” minutes which he listed on that same page.
- p. 181: mark time: “to wait in readiness,” although Medlin may be employing a second meaning (“to keep time while at a halt by lifting the feet alternately as if marching”) in order to convey Leroy’s shifting from one foot to another, a sign of impatience at Medlin’s lateness.
- p. 181: “neither napkins nor water”: On p. 180, Remy told Medlin that Zerhouni had “encountered you wiping your forehead with napkins.”  
Not so subtly, he returns to the napkins and the pitcher of water which led to his discovery that Medlin had been absent from the Mirabout (10.165).  
The comment, made at 3:24, closes section five.
- pp. 181-83: SECTION 6
- p. 181: “That night . . . the Aladdin for . . . other than talk”: The action suddenly shifts to Remy’s hotel where he notes that from 7:40 to 9:00 he dined in its Aladdin Room, a first for him.  
For the first week in Algiers (Apr. 9 – 15) he had taken his meals in his room, except for April 12 when he had eaten with Mohisen at the Andaloos Restaurant. On the next day, he had used the Aladdin for conversation while Ahmed Chabane feasted.

- p. 181: “launched the day with a morning of ‘*je n’ai rien à faire*’: The French is translated as, “I have nothing to do.”  
Chap. 11 opens with Remy fretting that he has nothing planned until the three o’clock meeting with Leroy and Medlin (170).
- p. 181: “*temps sur mes mains*”: French for “time on my hands.”
- p. 181: “To Gibbon he turned”: On his first night in Algiers, Apr. 9, Remy read chapters 8 and 9 of Gibbon’s *Decline*, seizing on an observation about personal property (4.66). Thus this night he began with chap. 10 and again read for two hours.
- p. 181: “‘Is ‘revenge’ ‘profitable’”: The quote from Gibbon, chap. 11: “Such, indeed, is the policy of civil war; severely to remember injuries, and to forget the most important services. Revenge is profitable, gratitude is expensive.”  
Although not elaborated on in the text, Remy seems intrigued by the paired Machiavellian assertions, apparently debating whether there is a relationship between Gibbon’s conclusion and how Medlin would “profit” (that is, gain his “revenge” against Ballard who had threatened to stop his appointment) by employing a low-risk (hence “inexpensive”) act of “gratitude” (offering to help Leroy with his plan to deceive Mrs. Leroy).
- p. 181: detail: Here it means “to assign someone to a particular task,” that is, the quotation from Gibbon ordered (detailed) Remy to peruse again the three statements of the Leroy and Medlin about their activities on the day Ballard was killed.
- p. 181: “Mr. E. M., their ‘onlie begetter’”: This statement is an alteration of Thorpe’s dedication to Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*: “To the Onlie Begetter of These Ensuing Sonnets Mr. W. H.”  
Here Remy appears to be accepting that “begetter” in the dedication means the person who obtained the sonnets for Thorpe to publish.  
Mr. E. M. (Elbert Medlin) had brought the photocopies of the “affidavits” (8.128) to Remy’s hotel room two days before (9.146).  
The reference to the dedication is not meant to be decorative (on my part) or playful (on Remy’s part).  
It is designed as a subtle indication that Remy is beginning to believe that Medlin is the “onlie begetter” in the sense of “creator” or perpetrator of the crime.
- p. 181: “ETA”: the abbreviation for “estimated time of arrival.”
- p. 181: “one minute off Zerhouni’s snide precision”: On 10.163, Zerhouni’s statement to Belsches listed the seating time as 6:11.  
The head waiter said he greeted them at the door at 6:09 (10.162 and 164), but Medlin, who was paying most heed to the time, specified that the door was opened at 6:08 (to be cited on p. 182).

- p. 181: “a third of an hour on shopping”: This information that the Leroys and Medlin had done some shopping after their meal at the Mirabout had interested Remy when he read the statements for the first time on April 13. When Medlin informs him that the time had been spent walking back to the bookstore to buy a Qur’an, Remy exclaims, “One mystery’s you’ve unraveled” (180).
- p. 181: “a 1988 silver Fiat Regata 90 S”: A sedan produced by Fiat from 1983 to 1990. Earlier on this page Medlin referred to it as “our Regata.”

- p. 182: “browse”: “to look through or over (some) items casually,” with the example given, “browsing the gift shops for souvenirs” (*Amer. Her. Dict.*)
- p. 182: *dakakiin*: The plural of *dukkaan*, “store” or “shop” in Arabic, as indicated in the text.
- p. 182: palter: to quibble, as in bargaining.
- p. 182: apogee: the highest point, here the Citadel or Fortress of the Casbah.
- p. 182: “higgle”: a weakened form of “haggle.”
- p. 182: “[place]-name dropping”: As indicated by the brackets, the play upon “name-dropping” is Remy’s, not Leroy’s.
- p. 182: “Martyrs Square, the arcaded Bouzrina, the Théâtre National, the Citadel, the old synagogue . . . Jardin Marengo . . . the Middle Street . . . the Mirabout”: Leroy indicates the direction of their trek through the Casbah. They began near Martyrs Square, where they parked their rental, walked southerly along the shop-laden Rue Ahmed Bouzrina. It ends in the de la Lyre Square, where there is a large outdoor market and the National Theater. They turned west onto (or just before) Blvd. Ourida Meddad, the southern border of the Casbah, and then north which led them to the Citadel or Casbah Fortress. There they veered easterly for around 700 meters, coming within sight of the Marengo Park. Turning almost due south, they walked several times up and down the Middle Street (Rue Arbadji Abderahmane), making a stop to view the site of the old synagogue, now a mosque. Gradually they worked their way eastward/seaward, stopping in at a religious bookstore off Rue Ahmed Bouzrina, the major street below the Middle Street, where Mrs. Leroy dickered over an ancient Qur’an. From there it was a short further easterly walk to the Mirabout Restaurant. Their shopping spree lasted from 3:45 to 6:08, as indicated by Medlin on p. 182.
- p. 182: “old synagogue (now a mosque)”: For the desecration of the Casbah’s Grand Synagogue, see the 10.156 note, N10:10.
- p. 182: “Dickery dickery dare”: In some versions, the second stanza of the nursery rhyme “Hickory Dickory Dock” is “Dickery, dickery, dare, / The pig flew up in the air. / The man in brown / Soon brought him down! / Dickery, dickery, dare.” The opening line is probably alliterative nonsense, although it undoubtedly was evoked by Leroy whose wife loves to “dicker.”
- p. 182: “the window of culpability”: Remy’s phrasing of the “directive” given to Medlin by Leroy “to certify where everyone at the embassy was from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. on February 27” (10.163).

- p. 182: *appel téléphonique*: French for “telephone call.”
- p. 182: “‘in charge’ [of the embassy]”: That is, Medlin would handle the routine matters of the embassy while Leroy concentrated on the personal matters involving Ballard’s interment.
- p. 182: “dirged ‘home’”: “to sing a dirge [or song expressing a solemn sense of loss] for [someone dead],” a meaning which in its transitive verb form *Webster’s Third* lists as archaic.  
The clause is transitive since “being” is implied before “dirged.”  
Mrs. Leroy uses both “dirged” and “home” metaphorically, the first to symbolize their grief and the second to designate the American embassy.
- p. 182: “Remy strolled to the window in his pajamas”: The action jumps ahead to eleven. Remy walks to the window of his hotel room.
- p. 182: *cadeau*: French for “gift.”
- p. 182: “‘Those you slept in last night. They’re soiled!’”: A reference to the night of Friday, April 7, where Remy and Marie slept together the night before he was to leave for “Canada” (4.53).
- p. 182: drawcord: “a cord so arranged as to draw draperies across or back from an opening in a single operation” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 182: *heure du coucher*: French for “bedtime.”
- p. 182: “the time is not ripe”: The expression “the time is ripe,” meaning “the right moment for something,” probably was first used by Shakespeare in *1 Henry IV* 1.3.292: “When time is ripe, which will be suddenly.”  
Remy muses about apostrophizing his father to inform him that the occasion for them to connect is still not propitious.
- p. 182: “out of joint is the time”: The phrase means “inauspicious.”  
The wording syntactically inverts Hamlet’s protest, “The time is out of joint. O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right” (1.5.197-98).  
While the time is not favorable for Remy to rendezvous with his father, three paragraphs down he concludes that concerning Medlin and the murder, “There, the time was not out of joint.”
- p. 182: “amoebalike”: “having the characteristics of an amoeba” (*Wiktionary*).
- p. 182: “a little O”: The third use of the “O” image, but this one is taken not from *Henry V*, Prologue 1:12-14, as the first two (4.80 and 8.155) were: “Or may we cram / Within this wooden O the very casques / That did affright the air at Agincourt?”

The “little O” here is from *Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.79-80, where Cleopatra says Antony’s face “lighted/ The little O, the earth.”

Remy’s yearning to be with his father, he parallels with her desire to be reunited with the dead Antony.

p. 182: *viva voce*: “orally” or “aloud,” but also connoted is the literal translation from Medieval Latin, “with living voice,” to contrast with Cleopatra’s desire for death.

p. 182: *une bonne nuit*: French for “a good night.”

p. 182: “a necessary act of kindness”: Remy imagines Foucin complimenting him for paying the Belmazoires’ bills at the pharmacies, but he has the commissioner alter his own phrasing to conform with true Islam, which necessarily binds everyone to perform acts of kindness.

In the Qur’an 57:27, Allah says, “We put in the hearts of [the faithful] kindness and mercy.” In the Hadiths, the Prophet said the following: “Verily Allah is kind and He loves kindness” (Muslim 6273); “Kindness is not to be found in anything but that it adds to its beauty and it is not withdrawn from anything but it makes it defective” (Muslim 6276); and “Only kindness prolongs life” (Al-Tirmidhi 4925).

See the p. 170 note on the title of this chapter, N11:1, which lists the other four chapters in which the major words of the title are used.

p. 182: “Remy sadly deduced”: To himself Remy expresses his genuine remorse at implicating Medlin in the crime, a selfish act since it is designed to focus attention away from himself so he can slip off to visit with his father.

p. 182: “the double negative”: The two exclaimed “no’s” by Medlin occurred in Leroy’s office at 3:27, just before he was excused. This scene will be given on p. 184.

p. 182: *de novo*: once more; again.

pp. 182-83: “There the time was not out of joint”: Remy envisions the scenario which Leroy, he himself, and even Medlin had been working out in Leroy’s office after Medlin’s “No!” outburst: That the times were right for Medlin to have committed the murder.

Remy runs quickly through these possibilities:

6:15 Medlin left the Mirabout.

6:18 Medlin gets in their rental in the parking lot.

6:28 Medlin makes the ten-minute drive to Zaracova.

6:31 Having slipped the robe over his jacket (in which before the evening began he had placed the *douk-douk*), Medlin after a three-minute walk reaches the disco.

(Except for these first four, no specific times are given, although the text does refer to minutes which Remy reasoned had elapsed.)

6:31 – 6:40 Medlin searches for something to strike Ballard with. He

finds the plank and waits.

6:39 – 6:50 Ballard walks from the changing room to the cement bench outside the disco.

6:50 – 6:53 Medlin waits a few minutes after Ballard's arrival before he calls to him.

6:53 – 6:57 When Ballard approaches the entrance, Medlin knocks him down with the plank. He then stabs him with the *douk-douk*.

6:57 – 7:02 Medlin cleans the dagger and washes off any blood which might have gotten on him. He is not concerned about the robe since that will be placed in his bag and destroyed later.

7:02 – 7:05 Medlin rushes back to the car and stuffs the knife and robe into his bag.

7:05 – 7:17 Medlin drives the ten minutes back to the parking lot. Knowing he probably would not get the same spot, he had allotted a few minutes for one close to it to open up.

7:17 – 7:19 Medlin jogs to the restaurant, where he meets Leroy outside, ready with his story about getting lost in the Casbah. He had not purchased the Qur'an, but had placed the rug and four bags in the trunk of the Fiat.

These thoughts passed quickly through Remy's mind so this penultimate part of his reflections in bed would have finished by around 11:10.

p. 182: "consigned the key": To the rental.

p. 182: "the destination he had 'lied' about": The ruse which Medlin and Leroy had devised to allow the DCM to leave the restaurant was his volunteering to carry the items which they had bought to the rental (178-79).

This "lie" was designed to fool Mrs. Leroy, but if Medlin used the stratagem to proceed directly to the rental and then on to Zaracova Beach, he was now lying to Leroy, but being truthful to Mrs. Leroy.

p. 182: Abukadir: The old parking attendant at Zaracova. On 13.216, Medlin will reveal that one time when he had tailed Ballard to Zaracova the "meddlesome" attendant had approached him.

p. 182: *djellaba*: A robe with a hood and long sleeves. It was previously defined on p. 175.

On p. 183, not employing its Arabic name, Medlin will say that during the excursion he bought "a robe" which had "sleeves and a hood."

- p. 183: steel: As a verb, “to make hard, tough, or unfeeling.”  
It is used as the present participle “steeling” here.
- p. 183: stage whisper: “any distinctly audible whisper” (*Webster’s Third*). Another use of the theater/stage metaphor in the novel.
- p. 183: “What the hell are you doing here, Medlin?”: From 1:13, which presents a factual account of what happened at the disco, readers will know that this conversation did not occur, but they will also realize that the errors in Remy’s scenario do not eliminate Medlin as a suspect.
- p. 183: clip point of the knife: In a clip point knife, part of the spine (the top, thicker part of the blade) will begin to dip, as if it had been “clipped away.”  
This produces a concave surface (clip) that continues to slope downward all the way to the tip or point of the blade.  
Sharpening this back edge of the clip makes it an effective weapon for piercing.  
See the 4.57 note on *douk-douk*, N4:17-18.
- p. 183: “the deadliest point, the carotid artery”: Piercing the carotid artery produces a gushing spray of blood.
- p. 183: “filthy witness”: This is the first of a series of quotes from *Macbeth* 2.2. Lady Macbeth tells her husband, “Go get some water, / And wash this filthy witness [evidence; Duncan’s blood] from your hand” (50-51.).
- p. 183: “red-tide”: The noun “red tide” is unconventionally used as a verb “red-tide.” The image is partially borrowed from Macbeth’s brief soliloquy, “No, this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red” (65-67).  
A red tide results when a proliferation of red algae incarnadine the sea water; it is extremely toxic to marine life caught in it.
- p. 183: “little water”: Lady Macbeth sneers, “A little water clears us of this deed” (71).
- p. 183: “wash the blood / Clean”: In his soliloquy while his wife is absent returning the daggers, Macbeth rhetorically asks, “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?” (64-65).
- p. 183: buckling: causing to bend, give way, or crumple under the influence of some external agent.
- p. 183: *douk-douk*: The clip point knife used to kill Ballard, as explained eight notes above.
- p. 183: “synaptic interim”: Of or relating to “synapse” or “the minute space between a nerve cell and another nerve cell, through which nerve impulses are transmitted

from one to the other.”

This spatial relationship is used by Remy as a temporal one.

p. 183: “meditate à la Macbeth on what he had ‘done’”: Throughout 2.2.15-78, Macbeth verbalizes to his wife and himself the effects on him of murdering Duncan. See particularly “Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor / Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more” (46-47).

“Done” is used to evince how that introspection preceded the murder as when Macbeth says, “If it [the murder] were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well / It were done quickly” (1.7.1-2).

p. 183: *place de stationnement*: French for “parking place.”

p. 183: “‘bagging’ the Qur’an”: The punning upon “bag” is Remy’s, not Medlin’s.

The latter had not “enclosed [the Qur’an he had been sent to buy] in a bag”; the book viewed as a prey, he had not “captured,” and even the third meaning of “kill in or as in hunting” surely darted through Remy’s mind.

pp. 183-85: SECTION 7

p. 183: “Gotten out of the way his protestation”: The action switches back to 3:25, the beginning of the last part of the conference of Remy, Leroy, and Medlin. It takes up at the point section 5 ended (181).

p. 183: “the ‘90 S’”: Their rental car, a Fiat Regata 90 S.

p. 183: *haik*, *higaab*, *niqaab*, *checheya*, and *gandoura*: These garments are all translated by Leroy, who would have been uncertain whether Remy knew the Arabic terms.

p. 183: “‘Well-nigh identical to mine!’ Remy fibbed”: Remy had purchased none of the garments listed by Leroy.

Instead the three clothing items he had bought on 10.158 were a *cachabia* (a man’s cloak), a *chèche* (a male turban/head wrap), a *djellaba* (a man’s robe with long sleeves and a hood, neither feature found in the Leroy’s *gandoura*).

p. 183: “artificiality foisting itself as the real”: For the real-artificial theme, see the 2.28 and 34 notes, N2:45-46 and N2.64.

The term “artificial” or its variants are or will be frequently applied to Remy: 2.28 and 34; 4.53; 15.253; 16.272; 17.292; 18.304; 19.330; and 20.342. And to Mohammed (principally by Remy): 4.67; 10.159 and 161; and 15.240.

Because of Tinfingers’ artificial hand, the term is much used in chap. 16, the principal chapter in which he appears.

“Artificial” is used on two occasions in referring to Houda: 11.173 and 18.297.

And twice to Foucin, 6.96 and 13.203. A similar two times it describes an aspect of Algeria, 11.183 and 18.299.

That Ballard realizes his life is dominated by artificiality is stressed on 1.6, although the term is not used. The one place it will be used to describe him, 12.191, Ballard is playacting.

Likewise only once will “artificial” be affiliated with Leroy, 13.218.

It is never used in speaking of Noura and Leila.

p. 183: gambol: playful tone.

p. 183: much of a muchness: “very much the same; just about the same” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 183: “a robe, but mine had sleeves and a hood”: A *djellaba*. See the fourth note above for the distinction between the two robes, the *gandoura* and the *djellaba*.

- p. 184: “below Egypt’s”: Remy comments on the handicraft of this North African country because his alias Lazar had been sent there by Vellacott (4.55).
- p. 184: volcanic: “of or relating to . . . working in iron or other metals” (*Webster’s Third*)
- p. 184: “dagger-ettes”: The *-ette* suffix indicates an imitation or substitute for something real, such as “leatherette” for “leather.”  
Here it means that a *douk-douk* is not formally classified as a dagger, though it has some of the characteristics of one.  
Foucine used “dagger-ette” to describe a *douk-douk* on 4.57.
- p. 184: “No! . . . No!”: The “double negative” which Remy referred to on p. 182.
- p. 184: “*Diabolique!*”: “Diabolical!” Another occasion where Remy is called a “devil.”
- p. 184: “against the grain, no saintly commentaries”: Against his “temper, inclination, or prevailing direction” (*Webster’s Third*), Leroy had not quoted from the two saints Paul and Augustine as he had the first time he had censured Remy (179).
- p. 184: *bâtard*: bastard.
- p. 184: *mécanisme*: mechanism.
- p. 184: “self-cued”: Ending his previous sentence with a French word cued Leroy to continue in French.
- p. 184: “crime typically needs time”: Single quotes are used to indicate that the intonation of Leroy’s voice sets off the idea as a rhymed aphorism.  
They do not indicate that he is quoting someone else.
- p. 184: “And these three could be cubed”: The three obvious contingencies, Leroy says, are the time which Medlin had, the inability to know Mrs. Leroy’s intention, and the location of the shop.
- p. 184: “the pretext for M. Medlin to leave”: Leroy and Medlin had presumably settled on this ploy the night or the next day after Medlin’s solo visit to the Mirabout on Friday, Feb. 24.  
Two days earlier, in confiding his plan to Medlin, Leroy had generally indicated that he would need Medlin to slip off and purchase the present for Mrs. Leroy.
- p. 184: “Leroy’s . . . gaze . . . frozen by the divulgence”: Since Leroy had never mentioned Medlin’s argument with Ballard on Tues., Feb. 21, Remy believes that the DCM had kept it secret.

p. 184: “of no graver import than [Medlin] made it out to be . . . his dismissal of it corresponds with that of Mlle. Chabane”: See 9.146-47.

p. 184: inconsciently: “inattentively” or “absentmindedly” (*Webster’s Third*).

pp. 184-85: “What you cast about for, I think I know”: Leroy summarizes the “case” against Medlin:

- a. Motive – Medlin had the motive of fear, being afraid Ballard would use his friendship with Leroy to veto Medlin’s appointment to Washington.
- b. Alibi – Elbert was not where he first suggested he was.
- c. Incrimination – Leroy volunteers the following, saying he is certain Remy will find out about it. Elbert had approached him several times in February saying Ballard was skipping out of work early. Medlin says the gossip among the embassy Algerian workers is that Ballard had been seen at the beach. Leroy admits that Medlin might have even specified Zaracova.

- p. 185: spoor: to trace or track by the print, trail, dropping, scent, etc. left by an animal. The image indicates that Leroy sees Remy as a hunter and Medlin as reduced to his prey.  
This conception perhaps induces Remy's almost immediate defense that he is doing only what his professional "obligation" to his employer Vellacott requires and his acknowledgment that the disclosures about Medlin are mere "coincidences and peripheries."
- p. 185: "death agenda": See 8.130, where Remy concludes that Ballard "set the agenda for his Zaracova death."
- p. 185: "as 'open' an 'advertisement'": On 10.160, Mohammed said that the messages to him in the "notebook" beside the phone at Bendari's was "an open advertisement" of his meeting with someone at Zaracova.
- p. 185: "all the embassy staff were cognizant of Ballard's penchant for arriving twenty minutes ahead of time": Leila told Remy that "to everyone's admiration at the embassy [Paul] always came twenty minutes early" (9.150).
- p. 185: "an index finger speeding across the fourth row of a gray metal cabinet": See 8.129, where Remy sees Medlin choose the key to Ballard's office from a case which apparently contains all the keys of the embassy.
- p. 185: "*In his own maze, he's looking for a Foucin 'loophole'*: Remy remembers his own wording to Medlin, "Which means that you were 'missing in the maze' of the Casbah" (179).  
On 10.166, Foucin speaks of closing "this M. Medlin loophole." Here Remy believes that Leroy is inwardly searching for any means to allow Medlin to escape incrimination.
- p. 185: "Stendhal's '*les petits faits vrais*.' This much-cited phrase means "the little true facts."  
Stendhal uses it or variants of it in letters in which he discusses the art of the novel.  
In the Pléiade edition of his *Correspondences*, vol. 2, (1968), p. 563, Stendhal writes that "the public wants little, true facts about a passion or a situation in life." See also pp. 564 and 568.
- p. 185: cunctation: Rarely used, it means "a delay or hesitation."
- p. 185: prima facie: A shortened form of "prima facie evidence," a legal term for "evidence adequate to establish a fact or raise a presumption of fact unless reputed."
- p. 185: postvaediction: A neologism, the product of the following reasoning:

“Valediction” means “the act of bidding or saying farewell.” “Postvaldediction” is what is said as an addendum to this farewell.

- p. 185: “‘great globe itself, / Yea, all which it inherit’”: From *Tempest* 4.1.153-154: “The solemn temples, the great globe itself, / Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve.” In asserting that everything is consequential and thus nothing is peripheral, Leroy is asserting here that “everything connects.” The embassy meeting closes at 3:36 p.m.
- p. 185: “No, Medlin would not be spending a tranquil night”: With the timetable of Medlin’s supposed actions finished (11:10), Remy again tells himself that he was certain Medlin would not be having a tranquil night (182). That Foucin’s comment at the end of chap. 10, p. 169, had given Remy a restless night foreshadows Medlin’s disturbed night.
- p. 185: “my fault”: Remy suggests that Houda has turned herself into a catch-all scapegoat.
- p. 185: “the right side massaged first”: This scene foreshadows an incident on 17.291.
- p. 185: cervicale: “the tip of the dorsal spine of the seventh cervical vertebra” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 185: “connecting”: Remy changes his initial thought, “pinching click,” to “connecting click.”
- p. 185: “unnecessarily . . . kindly overtook him”: The key words of the title of this chapter are incorporated in its last paragraph. Dreaming of connecting with his father, Remy goes to sleep (11:15).