

Chapter Fifteen

A WILD-GARDEN BEAUTY, *S'IL VOUS PLAÎT*

Violence had seemed a relic of Remy's past: the young French private he danced into death; the *pieds-noirs* his handmade bombs, "blank and pitiless," blew away; the ravishing of that "foster-child of silence," his sister's *double*; the FLNers foredoomed by his *parole*; and Noura, beyond being not herself, flushed out by the beaters' flames and perpetually running through—and perpetually still among—the tall stalks of corn in the pastoral patch below the nunnery.

All reduced to a pittance, an alms-for-the-beggar pittance. "But in the beginning I kept tabs and like Foucin concocted schemes to seek my redemption through revenge. Or is it the other way around? I'll have to ask him."

His reflections having paused, he fiddled with the red-bordered badge. "Soon afterward, however, the word had descended, as parole, 'When more is known, you'll be told,' and settling into Le Puy, I admit I let it slip, 'teas[ed it] out of [my] thought[s].'"

There, its volcanic violations of the earth long spent, the sole body riven in anger was Snooks's, and Marie would deal with that: As she poured the tempered iodine onto the trenched, jagged gash below his ear, the cat had merely twitched reflexively.

An evening several weeks later, bypassing her, he sprang into Remy's lap, whose fingers, while stroking him into a purr, finecombed the spot, in search of a veritable trace of the wound. "Even Le Puy has its jesting scars!" he counseled himself, amazed.

In his exile, violence was shadowed forth as the "plaintive anthem" of a "forlorn," "buried-deep" "faeryland," its permanence lost and its permeable stasis refound only at that point, having with resignation elevated his *pourboire* trip into a "hungry-generational" haj, he imagined Noura.

Wearing a gray plaid worsted wool suit, plum tie, and white shirt, at eight Remy had situated himself in the back seat of Nemmiche's taxi, prison-bound. Immediately and mostly with success, he focused on his new stratagem.

Still, in its blocking, grave digressive ruminations intermittently obtruded: what his father had eaten, if anything, for Suhoor; the special treat Marie had put down for Snooks; how Leila was occupying her *troisième matin* in her adjudicated apartment; and most astonishing to him, what Ballard must have felt as the plank smashed against his face.

He had jettisoned that image more quickly than the others since a vexatious recognition had flared up: Whenever he envisaged her, he craved for Ballard to be hurt, to suffer, to be conscious, in his final moments, that the torment of the board was simply a prelude: Further imposed violence was at hand.

Morbid a.m. artifacts! he admonished himself. *Bending an ear to this schadenfreude, a bystander would muster the notion that I myself am the murderer.*

At visitor's check-in the guard bewildered him with a red-bordered, not the usual green-fringed, ID tag, adding in botched French, "Your client's to be found in the infirmary."

Mechanically replying, "The client of my client," Remy endeavored to mimic the puckish simper of the *gardien*, who comported himself not like one conniving for a goodly perquisite. And it dawned on him that the same disdain had been exhibited at the first two stations. "An aching tooth? Last night's prison fare sub-par excellence?"

The man looked up from the *livre d'or*, "Mayhap, a 'keen knife' to the throat," a riposte that set Remy to wondering, "What shall I do with—not what have I to do with—the violence not of thirty years ago, not of seven weeks ago, but of today? No longer a relic."

2

Inside the unstaffed clinic room Remy pushed through a threadbare waffle-weave cotton blanket, celadon-hued, one of five girdling the bed. Hung over a thick piece of clew cord, they were held in place by four strands of hay-baling wire attached to ceiling hooks.

Mohammed was lying on his right side. His fingers had twisted the selvage of the sheet, yellow from excessive whitener, into a knot. Where it was tucked under his chin, minium sprinkles had coalesced into toadlike markings.

Whoever had done this, Remy perceived, had not aimed at the jugular: The bark-brown, iodine-soaked gauze covering the lower half of Mohammed's left cheek testified that the wielder had struck at the youth's "artificial raison d'être."

"A coup de grâce," Remy inferred. Fled were the stripling's proud hopes "to p[u]mp in future days." Not even the most deformed tourist, female or male, except out of mirroring curiosity, would ever voraciously peek at him again. "An honest man now, he must grub for an honest wage," for beneath the gauze, "in a band of briars, there is a mess."

With no chair beside the bed, Remy seated himself on its edge, his right buttock inadvertently brushing against the left knee of Mohammed's angled leg. He started to stroke its calf in the same way Marie rubbed Snooks's back when the mauled cat dragged in.

For a second time, he remembered the girl they had passed off as his sister, having exsected her tongue so her glubs would be *bande-son vérité*; the eyes of the tyro, tracking the initiate's own, not the blade; and Noura, confounded by the measles-crimson sparkles of bursting tracer shells, somewhat akin to the splotches on Mohammed's bandage.

I've witnessed greater pain, caused greater pain, bemoaned Remy, the throes deep and inward, *than I am ever to experience.*

Only after Mohammed spoke, "My face's . . ." did he realize that he was squeezing the calf. ". . . been cut." Taken unawares, Remy, instinctively releasing his grip, sidled his hand back to his own leg.

"Don't tell my sister . . . just yet." Through half-fallen raven eyelashes, he gazed at Remy, his head motionless. "They won't: Embarrassing stuff's kept in-house, unless fatal. Cradling me in her lap—this was long ago in France—she would sing me to sleep:

A garden beauty's in his face,
 A wild-garden beauty,
 S'il vous plaît, s'il vous plaît.
 Seven years I, the gardener
 In winter, awaited his budding,
 As God pleased, as God pleased.
 Now I touch the flower—his face—
 My wild-garden beauty,
 And I'm pleased, as pleased
 As the garden, as God.

“Then she'd kiss me on my lips and brow.”

His left fist climbed to graze its knuckles across the gauze. Abstracting its ruin, as swiftly as a *jardinier* roots out a weed, he snatched his hand away, resettling it on his chest.

The undertone drowsed with numbness: “She bestirred neither Mother nor me that predawn ten years ago when a gloater knocked to herald, ‘Hey, brush, your father's tumbled over a bluff!’ Streaking to the crag, she raced through the clump of men to its brink.

“Over it she stared, gauging the matinal tide in loose scrum around his insensate form, sprawled face-up atop a sea-level boulder. Unless his body had flipped, he'd stepped backward from the precipice.

“(Not from her did I learn of this. She never alluded to it except that morning she joggled my right calf. I blinked to clear my eyes, yet it was a different sense I mentioned, ‘Sissy, you smell of brine.’

“Her palms having cupped my cheek, she said, ‘Papa's dead . . . He must be prepared for interment. In two hours some neighbors’—she had paid them—‘will help you bear him to the cemetery. Mother must be told. Will you sit with her, a lifeline as the swell of anguish overwhelms? The moment all's ready, I'll call. . . . To Mother's?’ I nodded.)

“Even before two of the pack could banter—‘The police are on their way to reel in the cadaver.’ ‘Aye, provided the greedy flood tide doesn't salvage it first, jetsam reborn as flotsam,’—she'd commenced to truss up the broad washerwoman's skirt about her waist.

“Grasping the topmost rock, she eased her right leg over the cliff, where, a cranny lit on, she brought the other across. ‘And whatsoever shall she do upon getting there?’ one of the astounded snorted. A cohort bestowed a playful knap on his shoulder, ‘For certain, in under ten ticks we shall fathom, if any lack of surety haunts her grappling, either with fingers or toes.’ ‘Be that so,’ a third clacked, ‘it'd be advisable to slap down our bets.’

“Two braved their way to the verge of the forty-meter steep. ‘She slips,’ one, o'erpeering, exulted, ‘a woman's destiny, and slides her body's length, but there—’

“A confrere cut him off, ‘She has more than a cat's grapnel, for the nails of her right hand, I swear, did dig into the airtight granite to arrest her tumble.’

“Nonetheless, what a teary stream of blood she parts with!” the lead elaborated. ‘Raped, raped, she is. Come forth, you cowards! Descry how the rocks her lustful anatomy do violate. “Fearful and dizzy,” it would “turn” your “brain” and, so human are we all, stand our

“diminished” “cock[s]” on end!

“During her twenty-minute descent, their commentary induced either curses or cheers when my sister’s traversal of a cleft doomed or dispensed hope to a wager.

“The instant she leapt onto the bottom grayback, the frame of another approached through the sands at the top, and the babbly switched abruptly to ‘dead air.’

“Reunion secured, having lowered our father’s salt-encrusted eyelids, she untied her waist-tucked skirt and, as waves broke about her, with a strip torn off, she wiped the russet seaweed from his face and bound his jaw.

“Only one was riveted by her struggles, his visage awe-struck, or so they say. ‘Moor the ladder and the stretcher. Why do you dawdle? We try her strength, great though it is!’”

Mohammed’s intonation remained constant, but Remy followed three shimmering tears as they glided over his left cheekbone and vanished beneath the gauze, a limbeck refining them into roseate speckles.

“In jumping from the penultimate rung of the rope ladder onto the boulder, he, in tan uniform and foot-blackening socks, lost his balance. Not bearing toward them, he crawled to the dangling litter and maneuvered it to my father’s body.

“Without either speaking, he heaved from one side, she shoved from the opposite, until it was nestled in the canvas’s center fold. Together they fastened the straps, their fingers touching at the clasps.

“As they strained to rise, a huge wave thrust in, hurling both atop my father and against each other. Anticipating its eccentric force, he clutched her wrists (they asserted), forging a chain that spanned the corpse.

“The sea sucked outward, in its net naught visible of them. With his grip surrendered, he stood and motioned to the ones above. The stretcher, with my sister, shroud-like clinging to its burden, had begun its prizing from the boulder when he signaled the hoisters to stop.

“Braced by the corpse, the two, stringed marionettes, sliddered across to the rope ladder. He gestured for her to go first: ‘The gentleman always,’ several of my informants glossed, ‘for he’d be below to catch her should she misstep.’

“In tandem they ascended, the single dead and the two quick.”

Through half-closed eyes he leveled his accusation: “With such kindness he strove to snare my sister. He hates us. Is it not so, ‘Those who have it easy are never at ease’?”

Mohammed halted, evidently expecting a reply. On discerning that none impended, he resumed, “Don’t tell her just yet, *s’il vous plaît*.”

3

Lazily he rolled from his right side onto his back, the shift drawing his knee away from its point of tangency with Remy’s buttocks.

“I hesitate to ask, appreciating that each syllable will further distend your stitches, ‘How did it happen?’” eventually he addressed Mohammed.

“I feel nothing. I wish my face could have been saved. When the Palestinian courier popped up two days early, everyone knew something was on. The prison’s captive territory to them, with three installed here to manage the traffic.

“Yesterday they huddled with the runner in a private visiting room, no meeting at the grille for them. The last time that transpired, I picked up at evening mess, a guard was discovered the next morning hanging from a shower nozzle. The one I was eavesdropping on fleered, ‘The dogs be jittery tonight!’

“At about two I woke, needing my scratch. I slipped out of my cot bound for our black-hole toilet, my sanctum sanctorum since nothing comes between you and your shit. It was halfway drained when I heard a bump at the doorless jamb.

“‘Mo-Mo, let me drag?’ Anchored on my haunches, I pushed up and trod forward. Not dislodging the joint from my mouth, I furnished him a perfect zeroing-in bull’s-eye.

“*Snip, snip*. I caught the glint of the blade—it gives off its own light—not zooming in but pulling back. The pain buckled my legs, collapsing me into a crapping squat. While the sticky blood flowed onto my chest, I thought, ‘So I’m the dog meat.’

“Slipping off my drawers, I pressed them tight against the ‘jag’ and dotted to the tap. As I washed them out, a redesigned hypothesis cropped up. Back in my bunk, the wet underwear still my bandage, I lay meditating for the two hours till the Suhoor before *salaat il-fajr*: ‘Why not kill? When one can crush, why merely bruise?’”

“And did you glean an idea?”

By then Mohammed was speaking, it struck Remy, like a person with bad teeth, his lips barely moving. “It’s you. Stumbling upon a plot of ‘hallowed ground’ out there, you’ve gotten the Plos fidgety or more likely someone else on edge, who contracted with Tinfingers to have his henchmen dice my lovely jowl, an incentive for me to confess.

“The goal’s not just to put me under, but never am I to be disinterred. Not ‘cutting to the quick’ last night, they prefer to bury me formally, all decked out as a corpse before I become one, flanked by de rigueur attorneys/de facto pallbearers. You one?”

Mohammed flashed a smile which seemed to prick his cheek. “And after a ‘right and proper’ trial, I’ll be the bona fide ‘bones,’ never to be uncharneled again. M. John and I in sync laid to rest.”

“No,” avowed Remy, attempting to sound sufficiently earnest to be credible. “Did M. John ever refer to any association he had with the Palestinians?”

Mohammed pondered for a while. “Maybe something about everyone here has to deal with the Plos at some time—the Americans, the French, the British, the Russians, et cetera. This was near three months into our friendship. He’d been chiding me about what I was going to do with myself. I was a little ‘flying,’ *maztoule*.

“‘Pray God, my cock never shrinks and the Plos’ cornucopia of hashish doesn’t run dry with the word *hope*. Each to each I would bind my days,’ I quipped, paraphrasing some bedspread passion a Cambridge don once wheezed into my balls.

“‘Plos?’ M. John knitted his eyebrows. I explained. ‘Mohammed, what’s your connection with the Palestinians?’ His delivery exhibited a mild distress.

“‘I disperse their drugs, garnering not enough to keep me high . . . in fashion. That you must do.’ I gave his thigh a squeeze. ‘Okay?’ I solicited permission. His remark followed, ‘Well, I suppose everyone here . . .’ with a chuckle appended.”

The question that second-most piqued him, Remy asked. “‘Contracted with [M.] Tinfingers,’ you adverted. And he undertakes such commissions?”

“If the money’s right, they’ll carry out any job, even ‘snuffing’ a brother Plo. I heard one, an unwilling evacuee from Lebanon, scoff, ‘The campus buzz at Beirut’s American U a year or so back was “Arafat’s got an abyssal Swiss bank account which we—by and large his rock-bottom, bankrolling sissy pussies (whatever that means)—must swell.””

Not upon the Greek mythicized anecdote was a speechless Remy musing, but that Belmazoir was finally putting a face, other than Foucin’s, on the “bastard” who had “scripted” him in: The killing of Ballard, far from being personal, could have been effected impersonally by the Palestinians at the behest of another.

Mohammed terminated the silence, albeit not in the way Remy had forecast by broaching, “And you will sniff out that archfiend?” In lieu, his query had shed a confirming hint, “You think, once this is over, Vellacott’s group will fund some plastic surgery?”

For a moment Remy concentrated on the meticulously groomed black hair, doubtless labored over subsequent to the sewing-up procedure. “Accordingly, you expect to be freed?”

“I didn’t murder M. John. You’ve exhumed something which has roiled a dragon, and last night’s attack was tailored to frighten me, or possibly you. . . . Are you?”

“I’m always scared in a foreign country.” At the concession Mohammed’s lips twitched imperceptibly.

Time to spring, Remy ordained. He stood and retreated a pace from the bed. “Yes, I *have* ferreted out something unsettling. Nothing about the Palestinians or even about the night of the murder, but the one, twelve days prior, when you elected not to go to their camp. M. Foucin and I are at betting odds.”

And, as planned, Remy switched the speakers and their statements, brutalizing himself in the reversal. “He maintains that outside the door to the Toumi apartment, you demanded, ‘M. John, let me in. I know my sister’s there.’ I contend you pleaded, ‘M. John, I don’t care that you’re fucking my sister.’”

Remy studied as Mohammed’s “face / Thrice chang’d with pale, ire, envy and despair.” However, what ensued he had not prevised: A smirk broadened, its left corner disappearing beneath the gauze.

“No, Foucin hasn’t talked with my sister, has he?” Remy sustained a blank countenance. “And he’s deputized you to strike a bargain, buttressed by the nick-nick of Plo steel. You one with ‘M. Le Grand’? The motive, familial honor, would appeal to him.”

His lips bared teeth thus far hidden. “So be it! I can’t square your odds. I don’t remember what I declaimed. Hieing past, M. John stuffed some money in my palms. When she slunk out of the bathroom, on detecting my cuffed hands, she sprang to the door. I chased after, slapping and kicking at her down the two flights. Although brimmed with money, spurning a taxi, I drove her home with invectives.”

Such familiar domain encouraged Remy. “And for eight days, you brooded over this monster who had cozened you through your sister, and the moment he finally rang up, you realized that Providence does provide.”

“Perhaps had he not phoned, I would have unearthed another Providence.” A few-second interval passed before he snapped, “What’s Foucin’s deal? I’m to confess, and my sister won’t be haled into court.”

Steadied by a fist pressed against the mattress, Remy bent forward. “So his offer intrigues

you? But did you care, to resurrect my wager (which I would win), that this ‘lullaby warbler’ was willingly being screwed? Of course, divining one’s own wasn’t your M. John’s ‘all in all,’ now that would suffice to shrink a solipsistic cock.

“She accepted that your ingrained weakness would goad you to let slide this familial insult by a patron so munificent.”

He watched the flimsy pillow, not slipcovered, puff out at its side, though Mohammed’s contemning expression never altered. “Your sister, I suspect, is without your *faiblesse*. I’ve checked with Mme. Bourceli,” Remy dissembled, “who sat with (well, sort of) your mother from six till eight on that night fatal to M. John. Where was she, whose unique utterance is ‘It is not his fault’?”

Remy drew back his hand. “And you, once you’d dispatched him, uprooted 1,325 dinars from his billfold and planted something in their stead. You must know what you deposited. Come now, the murderer would. . . . Perchance your sister will.”

Mohammed’s body shot up, his right cheek’s hue as inflamed as the gauze-shrouded left. He articulated, with teeth clamped shut, “Lazar, you’re dismissed. I would see Foucin!”

“A third would have me removed. Monsieur, I’m not yours to be banished. My client, as he is yours, exclusively can discharge me.”

Having shambled to the foot of the bed, Remy separated the draped blankets. “As per usual, I’ll detour to check-in to drop off one thousand. I apologize for being unable to deliver your message to M. Foucin. Nonetheless, I’ll apprise my employer of your predilection for surgery. A face as beautiful as *une fleur sauvage* must be pandered to.”

He had negotiated four steps toward the infirmary’s door, where awaited a guard, when the threat—“more awash with fear than force”—was blustered from behind the celadon barrier, “Bother my sister, Lazar, and I’ll slice *your* throat!”

4

The plan, Remy concluded, was solid, particularly given that some bolstering niceties divulged by Mohammed could be incorporated into it. “To Commissioner Foucin’s office,” he had at once drolly directed Nemniche though ninety-seven kilometers separated it from the prison.

There he would clarion the bad with the good: “No doubt you’ve been acquainted with the knifing of M. Mohammed. However, not that blow, rather an allusion to Mlle. Houda, I must dumbfoundedly report, inflamed him to avow his guilt and accept your terms.”

No time for Foucin to interrupt would be allowed. “Stranger still, a further probing revealed that this self-confessed murderer, now stripped of a motive to artfully dodge, was unaware of what was put in M. Ballard’s wallet. But how upset he became when I submitted that mayhap his sister would know!

“The stronger sibling she is, that you well discern, and additionally the only one beyond yourself who, I feel, would act out of a moral compulsion,” for Remy was heedful he never considered acknowledging a third, that Leila could be culpable.

He would stare down Foucin for a full ten seconds. “Do you so love her that without conspiring you implement a conspiracy, jettisoning him to salvage her? He will incriminate

himself—you ‘try’ his weakness, ‘great though it is!’—yet have you entertained that this admission is merely another of his string of lies.”

Thereupon he would suggest “not a measure-for-measure confrontation,” but a reunion of brother and sister early tomorrow. The question, “What was inserted in the billfold?” simultaneously would be tabled to both, him in the infirmary bed over which she would be leaning. “Will she let his *mea culpa* stand?”

He was quite certain of Foucin’s response: “Monsieur, an equal partner in this rummage for truth, will you accompany Mlle. Belmazoïr and me to the prison?”

With Leïla, whom he would seek out at her apartment, he must perforce resort to increased honesty, confiding that he required her help: Under the constant surveillance of Foucin and his deputies, he has been prevented from investigating a Casbah matter that could be crucial to unmasking her husband’s slayer, thereby absolving her brother. He never doubted that she would nod her consent.

The next morning at exactly eight, she was to telephone the Al-Nigma. Foucin and he had scheduled a trip to Berrouaghia. “Through my engineering we’ll be on our way to the lobby.” When the operator came back on the line, informing her, “No answer,” she was to have him take a message, “M. Lazar, I must consult with you on an urgent matter.”

As they crossed the foyer, “the receptionist will flag us down with the note. Not leery since it’ll seem I didn’t manufacture this contingency, M. Foucin will insist I tend to it, ‘your participation while salutary not essential at the prison.’”

With him out of the way, his shadowing agents must next be circumvented. To assist with that, would she accompany him in a walkabout beginning at the Casbah’s Citadel? Could she also “stow a *djellaba* of your brother’s in a bag?” Once there it would become his “disconnecting disguise.”

At a convenient opportunity, “one which will neither discommode nor embarrass you, say, a *cabin d’essayage* of a clothing store or a serendipitous *boutique* with an inconspicuous back door, I’ll step away, slip into Ahmed’s hooded robe, and blending in with those similarly garbed, abscond. Stay put where I leave you, projecting the demeanor that momentarily I’ll reappear.”

Fifteen minutes into the ruse, shamming exasperation, she was to exit and wend her way back to the Citadel. There, in his Western garb, he would show up in under an hour, to her repining at a “false lead,” but his mission to 28 Ruelle Bensedid accomplished.

“Such frittering minutiae,” Remy flattered himself, “a sign it will assuredly prosper.”

However, nothing proceeded as he had “storyboarded.” At Foucin’s office Sergeant Ghouraf, before rushing off to Dhuhur prayers, handed him a note from the commissioner: Houda had dialed at half past eleven, “severing her reserve with a strange petition. She postulates that in the reports of the murder is a trifling detail that will prove her brother’s innocence. I’m shooting over with the dossier. Tarry or telephone, as you desire.”

Remy lingered until 1:45, and having penned a request for Foucin to call him, he taxied to Leïla’s building on Rue des Quatre Canons, about a kilometer due west of his hotel.

Nine times in vain the *sonnette* to 508, the flat number cited in Vellacott’s *compte-rendu*, he pressed. Back downstairs, he notified Nemmiche he would walk the nine blocks to the Al-

Nigma. Instead, returning to the lobby of her building, he dallied over an hour, prior to desponding and setting out for the hotel.

The phone was ringing when he entered his room. “She will speak with you,” the voice on the other end stated, having inquired, “M. Lazar?” and receiving his “Mme. Ballard.”

Instead of soliciting an explanation of how she had arranged the interview with Houda, he insinuated a blandishing motivation, “You honor me by your efforts on my behalf.” Leila’s reply imposed a more reserved balance.

“Of the two I’ve lost, my brother’s recoverable. And the chamber of flowers you sent better persuaded than my arguments of why she should colloque with you. As the baskets and vases environed the bed and her mother’s tongue in frenzy averred, ‘Pleumartin, we return, my Houda, *mes parterres!*’ she whispered, ‘They’re from him. Is he devil or angel?’

“Before I could respond—which with certainty I could not, M. Lazar, I’m sorry to say—her arms circled me, and she who I was convinced could not, began to weep. I likewise clutched her, for are not we two poor sisters, like blasted trees fallen together, shoring up each other?

“‘Houda, a gift from our Mohammed!’ Her mother’s transported enumeration was broken by coughs and gasps: ‘Pink pompon daisies and stargazer lilies, miniature red gerberas, purple-bursting dahlias, rainbow-spanning irises, crescent-red mums, paper-white freesias, trim fluffy magenta liatris, velvety roses in their native hues! *La renaissance!*’

“She slumped onto the blanket, and her mother’s raking hands, picked from their airy bed, were clustered to her heart. Shortly thereafter, she agreed to the interview with you, and so, M. Lazar, do not credit me with your own coup.”

“I reiterate you’re more than messenger,” Remy affirmed in advance of his proposal, half embraced: Yes, she would accompany him, no chaperon needed, to Mlle. Belmazoir’s. Since yesterday morning she had sat with Houda and “her declining mother” almost continuously, leaving twice: last night from nine to ten—“I was eating supper at Foucin’s!” Remy self-glossed—to fetch some personal items from her apartment.

The second: “This morning briefly away from the shack, Mlle. Houda, breathless, reentered at around 11:30. ‘I telephoned M. Foucin, who will be here shortly, for I will speak with him too.’ Deciding my presence would be obtrusive, I excused myself, returning at two. Both intervals I spent attempting to contact you at the Al-Nigma. Scarcely back, I’m prepared forthwith to reembark.”

Remy, panicking, itemized his sweat-smearred armpits and sticky hair, the white shirt unstarched by the whirl to and from the prison, and his crinkled gray suit.

“May I come at 5:15, not to disrupt your prayers?” he stammered. A reprieve of fifty minutes, he perceived, less attentive to her *au revoir*, “I await you, M. Lazar,” than the mental image of himself rotating counterclockwise the shower knobs.

5

A half-block away, Remy spotted her, already positioned in front of the building. He parried to his Vacheron Constantin, “But I’m not Ballard.”

As his taxi drew up, he reflected, *Always and only to behold her in black*. She had not

omitted fastening even one button of the loose-hanging *haik*, which enveloped her from her shoulders to her soles. While her head and chin were draped by a *higaab*, she had, “at least,” pinned to the side her veil and thus “bared her visage.”

Remy swung open the *portière* and watched her settle into the seat he had occupied. For a moment he stared undeviatingly, as if checking that the door had been securely shut. Climbing into the *siège avant*, “Now, Bab el Oued,” he bade Nemmiche.

“‘It is not his fault’: A lament not of resignation, but for help,” as soon as the taxi began to move, she submitted, seizing the initiative. “Is not her *minimalisme* a signal she’s petrified her words will harm her brother? Perhaps he, contrapuntally, in disallowing her to speak, wishes to shelter her from any possible inculpation, akin to the perjured lengths I avouched I would go for my Ahmed.

“The instant she comprehends the self-sacrifice behind his decree, her reluctance will topple. Or so it struck me, at about eleven, my first full night in my restored apartment, having cowardly stolen away the previous evening. I had switched off the lights and, overcome by inventory stupor, lay in that *djinn*-perturbing gloom.”

At the Arabic term, Nemmiche twisted his neck around. “Spectre-perturbing,” she emended, translating it “for my benefit,” although Remy’s curiosity was most piqued by what had impelled her “cowardly” to desert the flat.

“In Bab el Oued, you’d remarked at the Al-Nigma, the Belmazoirs resided, and there I hastened yesterday morning at nine. A pharmacist directed me to the residence of the cancer patient Mme. Salima Belmazoir.

“Not introducing myself, ‘Mlle. Belmazoir,’ I commenced as soon as the door was cracked, ‘with his fabrications and through your dictated taciturnity, your brother aspires to protect you. Should you so selfishly doom one who so selflessly loves you?’

“‘I also have a brother, now lost to me because some deem he murdered my husband Paul Ballard—John Ridgemont, perhaps your brother called him.’ Her veil quickly withdrawn, she invited me in, shyly indicating a metallic folding chair, at the same time totting from a corner a wooden crate for herself.

“‘How is your mother?’ Her breviloquent response manifested an obvious impatience for me to ‘get to my point’: I urged her to meet with you, ‘the one who, in service to your brother, may have ensnared mine,’ the apposition I appended.

“‘He has forbidden me to,’ she paused, ‘yet M. Lazar, more so than the preceding outsiders, strikes me as devoted to my brother’s service.’ She, who had been averting her eyes, suddenly riveted them on me. ‘Please, tell me about your husband.’

“She let me hold forth about Paul for almost ten minutes. It hadn’t occurred to me, until I distinguished a penultimate sadness engulfing her features, to close by asking, ‘And you knew him?’

“‘Through my brother . . . and through an act of kindness beyond the necessary, his concern for my mother’s suffering.’”

As Leila spun on, principally quoting Houda, Remy was amazed that she was still committed to implanting her “florid fantasy” of Ballard. One Wednesday afternoon in December a Westerner, who had entered the Bab el Oued pharmacy shortly after her, had trailed her as she slunk out, the vociferous proclamation of its proprietor further slumping her

shoulders, “Not a centime more of credit, scrub!”

Outside he had approached and introduced himself, “John Ridgemont, a friend of your brother’s.” Mohammed did *petits travaux* for him, he added, and on Monday had even confided, “waving the salary I had given him, ‘All for my mama’s Pethidine. That gun-metal Zegna silk shirt I raved about I’ve clean forgotten.’”

Ballard had halted, “Mademoiselle . . . Houda, for he’s spoken your name as if it were an angel’s, has some emergency arisen? If so, may I advance some of his next week’s pay?” Four one-hundred-dinar notes were tendered, one of which she had hesitantly taken.

“Thank you. All I require,” she spoke through her veil. “He’s not about today.”

“Yes, I know. At the Palestinian camp, and wearing ‘Italian,’ I wager. Ah, Mohammed!” but he had raced to the defense of his “odd-jobbing” friend, “who’d pawn his Lemans Red Dial before permitting your mother to suffer. The fault, I own, is partly mine: too lax with him, a weakness that brought me here today to check up on his vow.

“And mine,” she had at once unfurled her dereliction. “Knowing how much he wanted the Zegna, I assured him that our taut line of credit had not yet snapped. Quite the handsome scamp he was this morning,” and in her account to Leila Houda had confessed to a truncated giggle, “strutting around in it, though its right cuff already had a cigarette burn.”

Her altered mood had conditioned Ballard’s smile. “Mlle. Houda, I would never have your mother inconvenienced by Mohammed’s centripetal vivacity. But I fear he’ll leisurely change, and does she or do you or I covet a conversion less slothful. To thwart a repetition, would it be too bold of me to recommend a precautionary meeting a week from today?”

Impressed by how silky Ballard’s maneuvering had been, Remy could not but pun: “Point and game-time set for match.”

With the first rendezvous set, Leila fell to *aperçu*, for the taxi was drawing near the Belmazoirs’ block. “They met eight more Wednesdays, at night to safeguard her from wagging tongues. The last three Paul escorted her to an apartment on Rue Toumi. And do you twist your neck at that, M. Lazar, it blotting out all of my prima facie?”

No answer forthcoming, she continued, “I constate the obvious: My husband’s compassionate nature sired their *entrevues*. In the privacy of that walk-up, she disclosed that Paul descanted on me, ‘and in his happy melodies, I realized his tropistic love for you. At our last meeting, he rapturously murmured, “With our marriage resplendently proclaimed, my dungeon darkness will come to an end,” before echoing, “Leila, Leila.”’”

By squirming his body around, Remy discovered himself peering into the sloe eyes and encompassing smile of one who quit speaking, speaking her own name.

6

He stepped into the street, already made dun by the overcast sky, opened the back door, and addressed Leila, “I’ll search out the *alim*,” presuming it superfluous to instruct her either to alert Houda or, after his and the holy man’s arrival, to retire to the taxi.

Doubtless having sighted the primrose-yellow cab, the *alim* was striding toward him and, even when level, did not arrest his bustle, his Arabic dictum, “Let’s go, you and I,” about-facing Remy. Between labored breaths, the rugose ancient clamored for twice his former

emolument, “*L’argent double! Francs double!*” his terms being set in French.

In the courtyard, with her glance shunted, Leila whispered to Remy, “She awaits,” before announcing, “Revered scholar, your chair’s positioned.” His glowering demand, “Remunerated double! Inform him!” not having halted her, he gruffly dragged the hallway wicker closer to the doorsill.

At once Houda appeared. “You are welcome,” she expressed generally. The gleam of three candles atop the chest of drawers at the rear of the shack barely exposed a folding chair and, three paces on, an upturned plywood box.

On his entry, a suffocating miasma of floral scents invaded Remy’s nostrils. Wreath stacked on wreath screened the walls on their side of the divider, and a bleary survey beyond it revealed tiers of bouquets strung from the tin ceiling, while a lambent flame from behind this hanging sheet silhouetted a farrago of sprays pinned to its back.

Nodding for him to take the chair, she hunched herself sidewise on the crate, as if planning to converse with the wall. “Monsieur, you wish to speak with me?”

“Mademoiselle, I wish you to speak with me. I’m privy to a veritable nimiety of details regarding you, your brother, and M. Ballard, and the triangular rendezvous at the Toumi, where hitherto the assignations had been wholly in pairs, twelve days before the homicide.”

“Is that night so fraught with meaning?” with longanimity she sighed.

“Mlle. Houda, last night your brother survived a knife attack.”

She bolted upward, gasping for air. Her head whipped round. “How? What? I must go to him!” Yet her animus was retarded by an uneasy, fleeting espial of the sheet.

After his delineation of Mohammed’s injury, she reflected, “His beautiful face. Will they leave us nothing?”

“And will the *danse macabre* descend next time to the throat?” His essay to frighten her he immediately mitigated. “Your brother did not murder M. Ballard, albeit he’ll confess to protect you . . . who likewise did not.”

“Though I had ‘full cause,’ you would append, given the stigma of the Toumi.”

“Not as much perhaps as those who would ‘leave’ you ‘nothing.’ Did they learn of that night (as I, a parenthetical outsider, did) and plot how to exploit it as a convenient veil to camouflage the envisioned murder of M. Ballard?”

“A killer’s motivation is often located in his or her victim’s psychology, here, M. Ballard’s, yours, and M. Mohammed’s, so into these I must unsparingly delve.” Remy by design leaned in, confident the thick air would dispatch this tilting.

“Mlle. Houda, to save your brother, who’s futilely exerted himself to beguile me, I must cease roaming through the idealistic ‘forest of mistakes and deceptions, of insufficiencies and mirages’ and tread on positivistic reality. I’ll have none of the halved or quartered truths you masqueraded in front of Mme. Ballard. After what her husband did to the two of you, why this rosemaling of him whose *lusus naturae* she will not sanct—”

Remy did not anticipate that she would interrupt. “Why did I lie to her? Is not your imputation, ‘Why did you lie with him?’” The question had titillated him, yet could not be delicately stalked. No obstacle for her, whose voice never wavered in its answer.

“For myself.”

The *niqaab*, puffed out by earlier exhalations, stirred in fewer bursts, and that which had

hung freely from her right zygomatic bone now adhered. “He didn’t use the locutions *substitute* or *understudy*, still that was how I identified myself.”

At that byword, Remy plummeted thirty years, and not before she refrained had he overstepped the terminal rung of the ladder to his father’s loft, capping his ascent.

“Yes, for myself!”

She slumped her chin until it recumbed upon her chest. Her head arced as if she were taking in not just him, “the solitary man” in the room or those like the *alim*, Ghazi, and his mother in Bab el Oued, but also all that was “not womanly” in the world. “They can be a lifetime cruel. Here was a man who’d gently cour— sought me out for two months and in whom I’d kindled not a passion, more a slaving, which I’d surmised I could mollify.”

The narration which succeeded, “virginally pornographic” in her every-stage blindness to Ballard’s intrigue, Remy divulged to himself at its end, “has not moved me, unless disgust, once formulated, can be intensified.”

She had limned their penultimate Wednesday tryst in the apartment, February the eighth, Remy quickly calculated. Ballard was tipsy, “a first.” Additionally, instead of gushing about Leila, he vented a swaying pique at her *coquetterie*—“got herself ‘to a nunnery.’” To an amazed Houda, he professed, “I need someone to caress, be caressed.” He cupped her cheeks, “a fond display from which I made no attempt to withdraw.”

Ballard had guided her from the straight chair to the bed. “A pathetic happiness cradled me, rejoicing that for this night she was out of his favor.” His temple had settled upon her left breast when “up he sprang, but my alarm was quieted by his specifying, ‘The light.’”

This flicked off, he detoured to the bathroom, the door of which a minute later opened and she heard him fumbling toward the bed. “The chamber was now mercifully aphotic, yet not blind to touch: When he grasped my hand, in sensing his the smoother, I recognized how coarse an expedient I was.”

Nothing uttered, he had spiraled the joined pair over his naked body, “hesitating on the bumpy cicatrices dotting the back of his thighs,” in prelude to wrenching “this cleanser-poxed claw of mine to his . . . (my vocabulary is meek) ‘piece of flesh.’ In tandem we stroked, but the more hectic our effort, the more it shrank, dwindling into its veil.”

Remy’s eyes squinted at the indisputable correlation: *For the second time in two days, an identical sexual dysfunction, but with a different Belmazoir.*

Suddenly, gritting his teeth, Ballard “reeled his frame from the bed,” Houda had forged ahead, “and stamped toward the *salle de bains*, from which came muffled grumblings. He reemerged several minutes later, dressed, and, having flipped on the light, sank into the chair opposite the one I had slunk to. Resting a palm in mine, he susurrated gently, ‘I’m sorry.’”

“‘Why?’ I unashamedly declared. ‘You did not fail me.’”

It was during the ride to Palais d’Hiver, where she had hidden the bag with her *haik*, that Ballard had suggested the next meeting, his mind already spinning, Remy knew, the “fetishized intricacies” of his revenge against both brother and sister.

At this point, Houda reassumed a self-accusatory tone. “And did not I, lavish in promise, derelict in performance, deserve the subsequent night-session’s pantomime, thereby the ensnarer of my innocent brother?” Her silence momentarily quivered.

“Yes, for myself! It was not his fault!”

7

An embarrassed Remy somewhat dissembled, “The accounting racks you, and I share your heartache. I’ll not have your anguish extenuated by a depiction of the resultant ‘dumb show.’ I esteem that I have fathomed the affairs of that night, the fifteenth,” and he accentuated the hypotactic verb. “Will not it be less onerous on you for me to render it?”

Anew in profile, she nodded slowly, whether out of gratitude or in assent he could not determine. More perplexing to him, however, was her vocal response: “Tell me how he died. She herself was drawn to the scene three nights ago: Chased from her flat by an item her inventory had chanced on, ‘a notebook of my husband’s painstaking struggles to master the Arabic script of *Allahu Akbar!*’ she hailed a taxi: ‘To Zaracova Beach.’

“There over sand and through barbed wire, into the grove she stole and, the shell of the disco attained, sat on its porch’s top cement step ‘where my husband died. When five minutes on a windblown Saïda bottle skidded across the portico, I self-mocked, ‘Still terrified by a piece of plastic?’ A signal for me to leave.’

“Her destination was not her apartment, but their flower shop. ‘The key’s always with me. There I passed the night. At seven the next morning, I returned to 508, annealed to proceed with the prescribed cataloguing and scouring.’”

Houda rubbed her temple before letting the hand fall back into her lap. “Now do you discern why I, similarly deprived, like her would visit this place of temporal divorcement?”

So elated by the unraveling of one mystery, Remy had scarcely caught her appeal. An onslaught of questions followed. Initially he concluded that through them she fancied to postpone his triumph, that is, until the minutiae of her interrogatory queue—“How far did he drag himself, exactly?” and “Draped over the top rung, was his head tilted to the right or left?” were exemplary—coerced him to accept, lessening his irritation, *She loves him still!*

Satisfied, with her “Monsieur?” she directed him to pursue his own line of inquiry.

He started by clarifying how he had located her presence at the apartment and next established how Ballard had scheduled an appointment with Mohammed that same evening. Thereafter he adverted to the checked-out FLIRs and explained their use. Her “oh!” interjection, one which conveyed both surprise and distress, gave him a moment’s pause, but undaunted he resumed.

“Per his mandate, you were in bed, expectant of the clockwise rotation of the doorknob. It came, but admitted not even a glimmer. In that darkness, how could you suspect it wasn’t an unaccompanied M. John who entered? Perhaps he immediately spluttered something, and you heard the rustling and shuffling of clothes and shoes being removed, accomplished most likely in the bathroom.”

Remy tarried, for this had been his first adoption of the word *perhaps*. When she did not intrude, he ruled, “She’s too dazzled to speak.”

“Again, in compliance with his injunction, a silent M. John climbs into the bed.”

“What?” she demanded, the intervention magnifying Remy’s discomfiture.

“Do you desire me to abridge my laboring recountal? Are the pangs too severe?” notwithstanding he was aware that he felt none.

“He tugs the sheet upward to eclipse totally both of you, but, as he ambidextrously

gropes, by degrees, a further preplanned maneuver to tantalize the goggled viewer, he allows the muslin to work its way clear, revealing . . . *Dieu seul le sait!*"

Remy shaped a curious guise—"its artificiality is quite genuine," he persuaded himself—though its aspects were once more "lost on her," who failed to wheel.

"Not instantly does a howl greet this wanton display, but when it flares out, the *awgh* is wholehearted, familiar, and absent of any protest that he will *not* 'Wallahee! Inshallah! . . . reap what I'll sow.'

"A frightened M. John streaks to the toilet, scooting past your brother, who's purging a second *awgh* from his besotted and hashished throat.

"In a trice the uplifted bathroom toggle switch lays bare his visage, the FLIRs having been stripped from it, a confrontation that compels you to shroud your own with the sheet."

By shifting tenses, Remy designed to lower the tension. "Did the rattled M. Ballard, after he had dressed, reach in the wrong pocket, pluck out the one thousand dollars he had intended for his wife, and stuff this wad of bills into Mohammed's hand as if in exchange for the snatched infrareds?

"Showing up drunk at her flat four hours later, he contritely verged on confession. Long before then, at Mme. Bourceli's 8:45, you and your brother were here, having tramped."

Remy leapt to his feet—"transfigured into a human exclamation point!"—and, giddy from his brandishing of truth, "hosannaed" himself: "Will you 'disannul my judgment?' Am not I right!"

Houda's concurrence, *cela va sans dire*, he anticipated, although in his presentation, he was self-consciously aware, he had betrayed a fascination less with the truth than with his being its discoverer.

Mme. Belmazoir, a respecter of the male prerogative even on her deathbed, had repressed her coughing spasm up to cessation of his stage-whispered exegesis, or so it seemed to him. Rising to minister to her mother, Houda was absent for under a minute.

"It's much the way you said," she at once commented, reseated on the crate. Not glorying in the qualifier, Remy screwed up his eyes into an aporetic frown, yet given her veiled silhouette, it was plain to him the gesture was squandered.

"The clicking on of the light undyeing the chamber's darkness, my pulling at the muslin to shield my 'bare, forked' demesne, the beholder's horror-struck countenance. Except for two particulars: The thighs of my attacker weren't scarred, and that 'piece of flesh'—again excuse my lexical modesty—chastising me (for in a fight does not one come to more than know the size and shape and substance of one's adversary?) did not duplicate that I'd fondled a week before, which was—*exempli gratia*—uncircumcised."

Curdled, pre-reflux mucus was accumulating in Remy's throat, itself dry from talking. Yet she persisted in her thrust, as if resolved he would not miss what she, once blatant in her silence, was bent on airing.

"And, M. Lazar, will this save my brother and restore his deflorated face, the revelation that a step from the footboard I saw the pairs of goggles dangling not from his hands? So much of the truth you've exposed meager need be my annotation: You have the positions of the two reversed. The bonding is not perfect."

The stertorous struggle for breath on the far side had intensified, the hacker not exhibiting

any discourtesy in smothering the words of a fellow woman. Houda had just gained the sheet when he spit forth his own congealed *awgh*, gag-restrained for thirty years.

But this time it translated not as “yes,” and this time he slid not along the wall below the “wormhole.” Rather, his frame sputtered upward, knocking over his chair. The ensuing four *awghs* were squalled at her, who by then was behind the divider, since he was determined she would not evade what he felt constrained to articulate.

The climactic two in their violence must have startled the *alim* from his dozing since he muttered aloud, “Stupid boy! The text of my holy fingers may move where they will,” and, from above, provoked Mme. Bourceli simultaneously to blare, “M. Lazar, is the rheum lighting on you? That’s the skirr our *alim* makes when, hoarded in his craw sputum thick as semen, he mosque-summons the men, ‘*Al-awgh Akbar!*’”

You came, thinking you knew all, Remy chastised himself. Rushing by the holy man, he shoved some bills, not cognizant of their denominations, into his outstretched palm. The windfall incited the “Qur’an-slinger” to exclaim, “Supposing an unbeliever can be blessed, may it be you! See, wicked woman, how the righteous are rewarded, and not to monitor your sacrilegious retort, view with impious envy what Beneficence I jam into my ears.”

8

“We’re almost there, monsieur,” Nemmiche announced, rousing Remy from his daze. During the ride back, Leila had voiced nothing, as generous a respecter of his silence as the mother had been of his speech.

Midway from Bab el Oued, endeavoring to order “what I will unbosom to my father,” he recalled the proposal he had failed to deliver to Houda, the ne plus ultra of his vanquishing declamation: “I and M. Foucin desire to reunite sister with wounded brother tomorrow. No demurrer! We’ll pick you up at 8:15.”

The angled parking spaces in the block of Leila’s building were all occupied, with the outer lanes on both sides of the street relatively occluded by a gapped line of parallel-parked cars. A few residents, impatiently counting the thirty minutes until the cannon’s boom, were loitering outside. Across the street, a gaggle of teenagers were romping over the abraded grassplot of an apartment complex in a chatterbox game of soccer.

Nemmiche was aiming for a vacant outside spot near the access walkway when a Renault whipped round them and cut in, forcing him to settle for a place two slots beyond.

As Remy opened the back door, an impulse to situate his right hand on her left elbow allured, for considering what Houda had disclosed, he deemed himself to be in need of a balancing support. But the primal urge was promptly stifled. He dismissed Nemmiche, resolving for a second time that day to tread the short measure to the Al-Nigma.

“Please forgive me for obtruding—” Begun at the double glass doors to the building, her apology was overridden by the slamming of two car doors, the silver Renault’s. They both glimpsed toward the street at the three men in dungarees and fleece zip jackets who by sharpening their tongues produced an unintelligible cacophony.

Leila waited until the exuberant bickering diminished into agitated muttering. “. . . obtruding into your introspection. Whether I can be of assistance I defer to you.”

Over the resurrected argument, Remy affirmed, more vociferously than he wished, “You have been”—and he could not compel himself to employ the ritualistic “Mme. Ballard”—“and for that I’m most grateful. I will require your imminent collaboration, yet am too weary now to elucidate.”

Three elderly men pushed through the *portes vitrées*, each tossing a dutiful sneer at the Algerian female huddled with a European-suited *berraani* (“foreigner”).

“May I beg leave to contact you tomorrow?”

“I will be returning to Mlle. Houda’s tonight. If her mother’s condition—God willing!—is stable, I can be by my phone in the morning at whatever time you designate.” He repeated out loud the number she gave. Then, aware that his subterfuge prevented him from involving her till Foucin had been enlisted, he proposed, “Eleven?”

To underline the weight he bore, he conspicuously lugged himself away, spurning even a backward glance. “Ahead,” he solaced himself, “was *une nuit d’évasion* with Gibbon,” infringed upon only by a call to “‘M. Champagne,’ which I might pass on.”

What raised his downcast stare was a soccer ball errantly booted against the windshield of an abreast-parked Citroën, cracking its pane. The noise that sent the adolescents scampering away incited ten or twelve bystanders to hurry over for a firsthand inspection.

Now at the sidewalk, Remy was shambling by the contentious three, who had elected not to join the gawkers. “Arabs can never let go of an argument” flitted across his mind. Why he had not mechanically commenced with “Algerians” he was just puzzling over, when one, whirling, threw his arms round Remy’s torso as a second plunged to vise his legs.

With its rear door swung open, he was heaved into the Renault where a fourth caught him in a chokehold. A body from without piled in upon his chest.

“I’m found out. The French have come for me—*de façon théâtrale!*”—was Remy’s sarcastic illation, but that he had discarded when a scream shrilled from the entrance.

Another plopped onto his legs as her cry closed in, “No! Help!” The back door was slammed to, and as the front passenger’s was cracked, there was a brief commotion, tormenting to Remy.

A panicky voice from the driver’s side shouted in an Arabic not native to Algiers, “Shake her off! *Yallah!* The cam—” His word was clipped by a more strident admonition from the back, “Shut up, you donkey!”

“What’s this? What’s this?” he heard some from a distance huff.

The Renault twice vibrated, from someone hurling himself into the *siège avant* and his impassioned slamming of the door. The car had not sped to the end of the block before Remy smelled the pungent cloth nearing his face.

Through it, previous to unconsciousness kicking in, he grouched, “Again.”

9

When his body slipped under the sheet, you knew it not to be M. John’s.

It may be I was past the point of sensating. It may not.

You writhed and threshed: One leg managed to straddle the side prior to being yanked

back. You aspired to scream, “No!” and had you, he’d have recognized the voice, sprung from the bed, darted out of the chamber, and possibly would still be tearing. But a palm, not overlaid by a sweetly noisome rag like the one just shoved against mine, was clamped over your mouth and nose. You were being crushed by one whom you had swaddled when he was a babe. Legs as massive as a bear’s hustled yours apart. Tell me, “So? So?”

More maybe so than maybe not.

A “fleshy thing,” to mimic your demure lexicon, missing its target poked at your navel. With limbs, at most partially restrained, you flailed at the back of his thighs, not at all dumbfounded by the absent scars. Your hands shot upward and under, grabbing the wayward prober, held hardly long enough for your nails to inflict any goodly damage but sufficient for you to verify it wasn’t uncircumcised (*vide* the preceding week) before he jerked free of your grip and range. A right elbow thrust your left arm aside; and the opposite hand manacled your right, wresting it under your shoulder blades and identically bound the first. With lips squashed and arms pinned, your calces hammered at your intruder’s spine, to scant avail, for that brawny thing burst through. Am not I right?

No maybe; ’tis so.

Two centimeters in, it breached the vulnerable hymen, the pain flashing from your “nether parts” to your throat, one not at all corresponding to the accustomed Bab el Oued boys’ taunts or being raped by a cliff’s bellowing rocks. All went black, even while through the smothering fist you persevered in struggling to supplicate the complicit M. John, “No!” De rigueur, it came out as . . . our familiar *awgh*.

“So” it may be: “Not” it may be.

A second *awgh* brought you around, a satiated *awgh*, grunted. Its tension dissipated, his body collapsed briefly on yours, nonetheless an adequate stint for the compressed fingers to chink peephole-like and for lips to deposit an indifferent kiss on yours. Thereupon, it rolled to the empty side of the narrow bed. Its bourns I demarcated one night, dallying there with M. Foucin, a man who loves you in the same way the father he killed loved you, although that you know.

Yes, to the latter. For the other, it may be more your “so” than mine.

Released, you did not stir, that is, not until the houselights switched on. Thirty seconds, certainly not exceeding a minute, in the event that my sense of dramaturgy is the equivalent of M. Ballard’s. Could that be so?

Yes, still I wasn’t clocking it. We time nothing not related to our prayers.

The instant you witnessed those then-Edenic features in all their “wild-garden beauty”—were not our primogenial parents tenders of the first garden?—you snatched at the sheet to eclipse your own: for it is a sin our Heavenly Father, et cetera. You didn’t halt to blink at the serpent as it contrapuntally wriggled away, abandoning you two—brother and sister—to take measure of each other. *Awgh* for *awgh*.

It may be so, but of him it is not.

Only in his deepest recesses did Remy, a barely buttressing backseat bolster for three Palestinians and being whisked, after a change of cars, to their camp south of Algiers, acknowledge that he and Houda “now would sleep.”

Notes and Commentary: Chap. 15: "A Wild-Garden Beauty, *S'il Vous Plaît*"**April 19, 1989 (Wednesday)**

- p. 239: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE OF CHAPTER 15: In contrast to the briar imagery of chap. 13, the title of which was taken from Blake's poem "The Garden of Love," the garden-flower imagery occurs frequently in chap. 15. The song voiced by Mohammed, "A garden-beauty's in his face" (241), was inspired by Champion's "There is a Garden in Her Face." The phrase "wild-garden beauty" or a variant is used four times: twice in the song on p. 241; sarcastically by Remy on p. 245, who says, "A face as beautiful as '*une fleur sauvage*'" ("a wild flower" in French]); and then soulfully by him in an imagined dialogue: "those then-Edenic features in all their 'wild-garden beauty'" (256).
- In the song, the reference to the "gardener / In winter" (4-5) is immediately reinforced through Remy's comparison of Mohammed's hand brought to his cheek with the fingers of a *jardinier* weeding his garden (241). At the end of the chapter, Adam and Eve are called the first gardeners and Eden the first flower shop (256).
- On p. 252, according to Houda, Leila slept over at the deserted flower shop which she and Ballard had purchased.
- On p. 253, Houda speaks of a face that has been "deflorated" (stripped of flowers).
- The procession of flowers which Remy had delivered on Tuesday are catalogued, a convention of the pastoral elegy (247). The next day, however, the flowers are decaying since they give off "a suffocating miasma of floral scents" (250).
- The expression *s'il vous plaît*, which is the formal expression in French to say "please," "if you please," or "if it pleases you," is used three times. It is twice employed in the third line of the song (241), where it means "if it [the description of his beauty] pleases you." This clause balances "I'm [the gardener's] pleased, as pleased / As the garden, as God" by his beauty (ll. 9-10). Mohammed's "*s'il vous plaît*" is attached to his request to Remy not to inform his sister of what has happened to him (242). It has an ambiguous connotation: Either he is pleading with Remy not to tell Houda something or he is leaving it up to Remy to make the choice of informing her or not. Mohammed's wording suggests that he wishes to retain a distance between Remy and himself since between family and friends, the familiar form, "*s'il te plaît*," is used to request "please" or "if you please."

pp. 239-56: CHRONOLOGY OF CHAPTER 15: Remy's morning is taken up with his drive to the prison, his interview with Mohammed, and his return to Algiers (8:00 – 12:28 p.m.) His early afternoon is spent in a futile search for Foucin and Leila, whom he plans to use without their knowledge in a scheme to visit his father (12:28 – 4:15).

At the latter time, Leila telephones Remy, and subsequently they drive to the Belmazoires' shack (5:41). Remy finally interviews Houda, but he leaves shaken by what she tells him (5:49 – 6:39).

He and Leila drive to her apartment building, outside of which something which occurred just over thirty years ago unexpectedly happens again (6:39 – 7:06).

pp. 239-40: SECTION 1

p. 239: "Violence had seemed a relic": At the visitor's check-in at the prison at 9:35 a.m., Remy is given a red-bordered ID badge (240). The guard tells him that Mohammed is in the prison's infirmary and hints of a knifing (9:36).

With the phrase "No longer a relic" (240) as a transition, this musing about violence occurs as Remy is led to the clinic (9:37 – 9:52), which is much further away than the interview room.

A cautionary note: The opening of this chapter has a greater concentration of allusions than any other page in the novel.

p. 239: "the young French private": In Remy's reminiscences about scenes of violence from his wartime years in Algeria, he first thinks of the cutting of the throat of the French private. See 2.24.

p. 239: *pieds-noirs*: The term, literally meaning "black feet," used to designate the European population of Algeria. See the 3.40 note, "black-footed," N3:15-16 for a discussion of why the appellation was used.

Omar carried out missions for the FLN against the *pieds-noirs* for over a year (from Oct. 15, 1957, when he joined the resistance group to Dec. 8, 1958, when to save Noura from being tortured he became a secret agent for the French).

On 3.42, a French clerk, taking twenty minutes, reads to him the crimes that he has committed against the French.

Even after he became a French collaborator, to protect his guise from the FLN, he took part in or planned raids which caused "French Algerian settlers to be consigned to massacre" (2.21).

p. 239: "blank and pitiless": The quote is from Yeats's "The Second Coming," l. 15: "A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun."

In using this quote to refer to the bombs, Remy implies that he the bomber was not "blank and pitiless."

p. 239: "ravishing": From the opening line of "Grecian Urn," "Thou still unravish'd

bride.”

Noura was not ravished in *Les Tombeaux*; she only appeared to be.

- p. 239: “foster-child of silence”: From Keats’s “Grecian Urn”: “Thou foster-child of silence and slow time” (2).
On 17.291, in an internal dramatic duologue, the “foster-child” quote will be applied to Remy, surprisingly by Remy himself.
Numerous other quotes from Keats’s two great odes are employed on p. 239 since Remy, like Keats in “Nightingale,” had sought escape from the suffering and violence in this world, finding it in Le Puy with Marie, just as Keats locates it through the lesson taught by the Grecian urn.
- p. 239: *double*: A counterpart or person who corresponds to or closely resembles another.
- p. 239: “FLNers”: A coined term to refer to members of the FLN, the resistance group which led the fight against the French in the Algerian war.
For the meaning of the abbreviation, see 2.21 and its note, N2:27.
As a traitor, the information which Remy passed on resulted in the death of a large number of FLN Algerian Muslims fighting for independence.
- p. 239: *parole*: This word automatically comes to Remy’s mind as he calls up an incident from his Algerian past and another from his decision to put this past behind him: “the FLNers foredoomed by his *parole*” and two paragraphs on, “the word [from his French caseworker] descended, as *parole*,” that the French, not he, now controlled what Remy would make of his past.
In French *parole* means “speech,” covering a wide spectrum, here running from Remy’s speech informing on his comrades in Algeria to the edict of the French attempting to separate him (disconnect him) from his past.
But Remy’s thoughts ironically and ambiguously incorporate its English connotations, where “parole” can mean “word of honor,” such as the *nathr* to God which the young Omar (Remy) spoke at his father’s insinuation on 3.37, or “parole” in its military context of a “password,” here allowing Remy to proceed into a zone of safety.
- p. 239: *beater*: A person employed to drive game from cover for hunters.
Remy imagines that the attackers of the nunnery where Noura stayed stomped into the cornfield below the nunnery carrying torches in an effort to drive out these nuns who had sought refuge in it, an idea picked up from his contact’s description of the aftermath of the attack: Four from the nunnery “were found quailing among the cornstalks below the southern gate” (3.40).
In Trimalchio’s, Remy imagines Noura “scurrying about in the haze of the tiny field of corn” (2.22).
Similar descriptions appeared on 5.70 and will be used on 16.262, 17.290-91, and 18.300 and 312.

- p. 239: “perpetually running through—and perpetually still among—the stalks of corn”: This combines several images from “Grecian Urn”: “What maidens loth [unwilling or reluctant]? / What made pursuit? What struggle to escape?” (8-10) recalls Noura’s real-time dashing through the fields below the nunnery, an image which has become a “still point,” whose reality is eternal in Remy’s mind. In *The Four Quartets*, Part 1 “Burnt Norton,” Eliot describes such moments which are so powerful that they become a brief moment of eternity: “At the still point of the turning world, Neither flesh nor fleshless; . . . neither arrest nor movement . . . The inner freedom from the practical desire, / The release from action and suffering . . . both a new world / And the old made explicit, understood / In the completion of its partial ecstasy, / The resolution of its partial horror” (ll. 63-80). It is this “release” from and “resolution” of the “partial horror” which Remy seeks by confronting, or seeking not to confront, the violence done to the helpless Noura. In my novel’s scheme, Eliot’s “new world” is Remy’s France and his “old” world is Algeria.
- p. 239: “stalks of corn”: This image is drawn from the picture of the melancholy Ruth in “Nightingale”: “She stood in tears amid the alien corn [the British word for ‘wheat’]” (67). Hers in some ways parallels Noura’s situation below the Algerian nunnery.
- p. 239: “pastoral patch”: “Pastoral” is used in both of Keats’s odes: “Cold pastoral!” (“Grecian Urn” 45) and “the pastoral eglantine” (“Nightingale” 46).
- p. 239: “alms-for-the-beggar pittance”: On 3.51, Omar (Remy) gave “an alms-for-the-beggar thought” for the girl, Noura’s “understudy,” who was raped and killed by the French. See the note on this page, N3:40. Remy’s happiness at knowing his sister was safe had made him forget about what agony this girl had gone through. Similarly, he has succeeded in putting aside all the horrors of Algeria except during his annual trip to collect his generous stipend from the French government, at which time he remembers Noura (2.18). Her suffering and presumed death is the genesis of his evocation of the savagery of the Algerian war.
- p. 239: “like Foucin concocted schemes to seek my redemption through revenge. Or is it the other way around?” Foucin makes two statements on “redemption” and “revenge”: “I must redeem the privilege of being Matoub Lakhtour” (6.99) and “my revenge encompassed exclusively the father” (14.232). At the end of the notes on chap. 18, N18:72-74, there will be an essay on the sin/repentance/redemption pattern in the novel. It will provide an overview of the redemption theme.
- p. 239: “red-bordered badge”: The color of the badge, repeated on p. 240, is different

from the one he had previously received.

In his first visit to the prison (Apr. 10), he had been given a “green-bordered badge,” which he “pinned to his chest [pocket]” (4.6), a procedure which was presumably duplicated at his next two visits (Apr. 12 and 14).

- p. 239: parole: Le Puy, Remy acknowledges, had sheltered him from violence, offering him (in its English sense) “parole,” mentioned in the note on the French *parole* two paragraphs above, N15:3.
Le Puy is portrayed as an Eden or Arcadia, devoid of human violence. He says that their cats would get in fights—he offers the example of Snooks—but Marie would always tend to its wounds, and these wounds to the animal seemed to disappear quickly.
- p. 239: ““When more is known, you’ll be told””: Remy quotes what his contact had said about the missing Noura at their first meeting in the assimilation camp in France (3.40).
- p. 239: “teas[ed it] out of [my] thoughts”: That is, Remy wiped his violent past and his desire for revenge from his mind, borrowing the phrasing of Keats, “Thou, silent form [the Grecian urn], dost tease us out of thought / As doth eternity” (44-45). Remy does not complete the quote, “As doth eternity,” but his description of Marie’s seemingly mystical power in so well tending to their battered cat that several weeks later there not “a veritable trace of [Snooks’s] wound” transforms her into a symbol of the eternal mother.
The use of the touching of a wound to verify an apparently miraculous change was influenced by Luke 24:39 and John 20:27 where Jesus asked his disciples to touch his wounds as a testimony that he is resurrected from the dead.
- p. 239: Snooks: Remy’s and Marie’s cat.
- p. 239: finecomb: A transitive verb meaning “to search thoroughly” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 239: “Even Le Puy has its jesting scars!”: Remy’s quip is a reference to Romeo’s “He jests at scars that never felt a wound” (2.2.1).
However, the context is different: In *Romeo* Mercutio mocks or jokes at Romeo’s scars, but here the scars make fun of (i.e., tease, as does Keats’s urn) the person.
- p. 239: shadow forth: “to represent faintly, mystically, or figuratively; prefigure; symbolize; often used with *forth* or *out*” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 239: “‘plaintive anthem’ . . . ‘faeryland’”: Remy returns to “Nightingale” for his next citations: “In his exile, violence shadowed forth itself as the ‘plaintive anthem’ [Keats, 75] of a ‘forlorn’ [70, 71], ‘buried-deep’ [77] ‘faeryland’ [70].”

- p. 239: “its permanence lost and its permeable stasis refound only at the point”: The paradoxical “permanence lost” (which harks back to “eternity” as well as plays on Milton’s *PL*—how can anything permanent be lost?) and “permeable stasis refound” (the contrasting flowing throughout and stopping the flow, just as Marie staunched the flow of the cat’s blood, with another play upon Milton’s epyllion *PR*) refer to Remy’s desire to connect with his lost family in Algiers, as if only through that connection could his love for his French family be complete and not possess a “trace of the wound” of desertion.
 “Point” refers to the still point discussed above, a reinforcement that the point of meaning for Remy is his return to the imagined death of Noura.
 In summary, rough beast (nothing connects), the scars of first love (nothing disconnects), the passion briefly found and quickly lost (everything disconnects), and the urn-like, song-of-the-nightingale-like eternity (everything connects) clash in Remy’s mind once he is thrust back into the world of violence.
- p. 239: *pourboire*: The term, which means a “gratuity or tip,” was used by HIV to refer to the pension which the French government gave to Remy and the other six traitors.
 See the 2.16 note, N2:5, which also lists other synonyms used in the novel to describe this money.
- p. 239: “‘hungry-generational’ haj”: See Keats’s “No hungry generations tread thee [the nightingale] down” (62).
- p. 239: “Wearing a gray plaid worsted wood suit”: This subsection shifts to 8 a.m. when Remy began his trip to the prison.
- p. 239: “new stratagem”: The “germ of a plan” (14.236) and “his plot” and “subterfuge” (14.238) formulated last night in the driveway and back in his hotel room.
 It involved maneuvering four of the central characters of the novel: Foucin, Leila, Mohammed, and Houda.
- p. 239: blocking: planning or directing the movements on stage of actors.
 Another theatrical metaphor, where the four characters mentioned in the previous note are viewed as actors in Remy’s drama.
- p. 239: Suhoor: The meal consumed early in the morning by Muslims before beginning their Ramadan fast. It is sometimes eaten between the call to Fajr (dawn) prayers and their performance although many begin eating before the call.
- p. 239: *troisième matin*: French for “third morning.”
 Leila moved back into the apartment which Ballard had leased for her and her brother on the afternoon of Sunday, Apr. 16.
 Her decision she announced to Remy and Foucin at the Aladdin Room (12.196).
 Later that night in the Toumi apartment, Foucin told Remy that he had driven

her to the apartment (13.204).

Thus her first, second, and third mornings in the apartment should have been on Mon. through Wed., April 17 – 19.

Here Remy is wondering how she was spending this third morning during his ride to the prison (8:00 – 9:10).

Later he will find that she slept only one of the four nights at the apartment, passed only two mornings there, and was not there even as he was thinking about what she was doing in the apartment.

- p. 239: “Further imposed violence was at hand”: Out of Remy’s hatred for Ballard, he employs a vicious pun on “at hand,” the hand that bore the *douk-douk* which killed the American.

- p. 240: artifact: any object made by human work, especially, a simple or primitive tool or weapon.
Here the two murder weapons: the plank and the *douk-douk*.
- p. 240: *schadenfreude*: From the German words, *schaden* (“to harm”) and *freude* (“joy”), it means “glee at another’s misfortune.”
It is not italicized in the text since the word is a part of Remy’s italicized thoughts.
- p. 240: “*the notion that I myself am the murderer*”: Remy has turned up so many suspects of the murderer beyond the obvious Mohammed that he imagines someone who has “overheard” his thoughts might conclude that he himself is the murderer.
- p. 240: “At visitor’s check-in . . . red-bordered”: This passing of the “red-bordered, not the usual green-fringed, visitor’s ID tag” occurs at 9:35 a.m.
- p. 240: “The client of my client”: For the first use of this catchphrase, see 4.56 and its note, N4:15, which lists all of its occurrences in the novel.
Here Remy corrects another who referred to Mohammed as “your client” just as he had rectified Leroy’s misuse on 8.119.
- p. 240: perquisite: a tip or gratuity.
- p. 240: “the same disdain”: Hereafter, cowed by the Palestinians, the prison personnel will be less condescending and more antagonistic to Remy.
Mohammed’s account on p. 243 about what the Palestinians did to a prison guard who was not cooperative with them explains why even Remy’s gratuities thenceforth will carry less weight than the fear of the Palestinians’ revenge.
- p. 240: “sub-par excellence”: A play upon the French expression meaning “in the greatest degree of excellence.”
One meaning of “subpar” (unhyphenated) is “not measuring up to traditional standards of performance, value, or production.”
- p. 240: *livre d’or*: A literal French translation is “book of gold.” It means “visitors’ book” (*Webster’s Third*), a log or register for the signatures of visitors and for other comments, such as the time that the visitor arrived and sometimes when he or she left.
It is also spelled as “visitor’s book” and “visitors book.”
- p. 240: “keen knife”: From Lady Macbeth’s soliloquy, “That my keen knife see not the wound it makes” (1.5.52).
- p. 240: “the violence not of thirty years ago”: Remy knows he must now confront not the violence “of thirty years ago” (specifically the rape of “Noura,” but generally

all of the horrors of the Algerian war and the span of Remy's treason, from Dec. 1958 to April 1989 or thirty years and four months) or the violence "of seven weeks ago" (52 days ago: from Feb. 27, the murder of Ballard, to this Wednesday, Apr. 19), but the violence "of today" (that which has been perpetrated on Mohammed).

p. 240: "No longer a relic": This section ends at 9:37.
As noted, thinking about violence as "a relic" produces his meditation in the first six paragraphs of this chapter. These thoughts occur while a prison guard leads Remy from visitor's check-in to the infirmary (9:37 – 9:52).

pp. 240-42: SECTION 2

p. 240: "Inside the unstaffed clinic room": Remy enters it at 9:52.

p. 240: celadon-hued: A pale grayish green.

p. 240: selvage: A woven edge that prevents cloth from raveling.

p. 240: minium: "fiery-red" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 240: toadlike: "similar to, or resembling, a toad" (*Wiktionary*, which lists the hyphenated *toad-like* as an alternative form).

p. 240: raison d'être: A French expression meaning "reason for being," which has been adopted by English, hence the lack of italics.

Remy deems it "artificial" since he regards living through prostitution as "unnatural," a choice, like treason, which disassociates a person from society or "the human 'halo,'" Foucin's phrasing (14.231).

p. 240: coup de grâce: In French, literally "stroke of mercy." Again it has been Englishized.

For Mohammed, the slash across his cheek would be a stroke which finished his career as a male prostitute.

p. 240: "proud hopes 'to p[u]mp in future days'": A variation from Samuel Johnson's poem, "Prologue Spoken by Mr. Garrick at the Opening of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 1747": "And proudly hoped to pimp in future days" (24).

p. 240: pump: to move one's penis back and forth in a cavity of a sexual partner.

p. 240: "an honest man . . . must grub for an honest wage": Based on the cliché, "An honest day's pay for an honest day's work," yet with the sexual connotation that the scarring of his face will force Mohammed to be "chaste" or "virtuous" in the

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future.

- p. 240: “band of briars”: A double variation on the title of chap. 13, “Binding with Briars,” which was taken from Blake’s “The Garden of Love: “binding with briars my joys & desires” (12).
See 13.207 and its note, N13:25.
- p. 240: “He started to stroke . . . in the same way Marie rubbed Snook’s back”: Although in his thoughts Remy has pontificated on what Mohammed had gained through his loss of his reason for being, he still feels sympathy for him since he too as a youth had lost his Algerian family, that which had given meaning to his life.
Remy mimics what he had seen Marie do—give comfort to a suffering animal (239).
- p. 240: exsect: A transitive verb meaning “to cut out.”
- p. 240: glub: “a gurgling, bubbling, or gulping sound” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 240: *bande-son vérité*: A coined phrase modeled on “*cinéma vérité*” (in French literally, “truth cinema”), it consequently means “truth soundtrack” or “a realistic sound effect.”
On 2.26, Remy recalls that as Omar he had “fretted that French adoration of *cinéma vérité* would compel them [the French paratroopers] to strike his father.”
- p. 240: “the eyes of the tyro, tracking the initiate’s own, not the blade”: See the p. 239 note above, “the young,” N15:2, and the 2.24 episode of Omar’s “first kill.”
- p. 240: “bursting tracer shells”: “ammunition that traces its own course in the air with a trail of smoke or fire.”
- p. 240: “*I’ve witnessed greater pain, caused greater pain . . . than I am ever to experience*”: Remy’s sympathy toward another’s pain incites him to examine the pain which he has caused, this confession marking the beginning of “connecting everything in life.”
Typical of Remy, this epiphany will be short-lived, and he quickly returns to that conniving egocentric aspect of his nature.
- p. 240: “My face’s”: Mohammed awakens (9:56), his first words slowing concern for his face.
- p. 240: “embarrassing stuff’s kept in-house”: This comment establishes why Foucin, although he is in charge of the investigation of Ballard’s murder, was not contacted about the attack on Mohammed.
In Remy’s imagined speech to Foucin on p. 245 he will gibe at this penitentiary

truth: “No doubt you’ve been acquainted with the knifing of M. Mohammed.”

A personal note: Mike, an American friend of mine when I taught in Abha, Saudi Arabia, was arrested for selling or serving homebrew to Saudi late-teens.

Not even Mike’s Saudi employer was allowed to see him for five days, by which time the swelling and welts from his first-night interrogation had by and large disappeared.

- p. 241: "A garden beauty's in his face": Champion's "There is a Garden in Her Face" provided the principal image, but not the content, of this poem.
- p. 241: "seven years": There is seven years and approximately four months difference between Houda (born in France on July 5, 1963) and Mohammed (b. in France on Nov. 1, 1970).
- p. 241: *jardinier*: French for "gardener."
As a gardener plucks a weed from her or his garden, so Mohammed pulls back from the ugly thought of how damaged his face is.
- p. 241: "drowsed with numbness": A variation on the opening of "Nightingale": "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense" (1-2).
- p. 241: "Hey, brush": Metonymic expression for a charwoman.
- p. 241: loose scrum: A rugby term to designate a play in which players from both sides gather around a dropped ball and attempt to gain possession of it.
Also called a ruck.
- p. 241: "Unless his body had flipped": Even with the children there is the uncertainty about whether Ahmed deliberately stepped off the cliff or drunkenly fell from it.
- p. 241: "flood tide": While most of the Mediterranean Seas has small, even negligible, tides, in its western region large tides form from the tidal flow from the Atlantic Ocean into and out of the Strait of Gibraltar.
The largest tide in the Mediterranean is at Sfax, Tunisia, the country abutting Algeria, which has a 1.5 m. tidal range.
- p. 241: "jetsam reborn as flotsam": Ahmed Belmazoir, when he fell from the cliff into the sea, is viewed as "jetsam" or "cargo thrown overboard to lighten a ship in danger" (through his act to lighten the tragedy of his family caused by his father's treason and his guilt at bringing about his father's murder).
However, since he (a failure even in his attempt at suicide) landed on a sea-spray-covered boulder over which his body moved as the waves dashed against it, he became "flotsam," "the wreckage of a ship or cargo floating on the sea."
"Reborn" is tinged with the symbolism of resurrection, which will be extended when the litter to which the corpse is strapped is pulled upward (ascends).
See the 7.105 note on "floor-lodged," N7:12, for the relationship of "flotsam" to "lagan." The latter refers to goods cast overboard with a tag to identify its owner.
- p. 241: "playful knap": A "rap" or "blow."
See the 10.161 and 13.209 notes for the previous uses of "knap" in the novel and for the line in *Lear* where Shakespeare employs it.

- p. 241: “ten ticks”: ten seconds.
The use of “ticks” in this context is British.
- p. 241: clack: “to talk fast” or “to cackle.”
- p. 241: “slap down our bets”: The onlookers’ betting on the point where Houda will fall parallels the gambling by the women of Tizi Aimoula (9.137).
- p. 241: “she slips . . . a woman’s destiny”: The Muslim male’s general consensus that woman is the weaker sex.
Thus it is in her nature to sin, fall into disgrace, or be more easily tempted by *Shaitan* (Satan) and his minions.
- p. 241: grapnel: A cat’s claws are compared with a small anchor with four or five pointed arms.
One of its uses is for grasping and holding fast to something.
- p. 241: “teary stream”: A pun on the heteronyms “tear” (drop of water from the eye) and “tear” (“a rip”).
- pp. 241-42: “‘fearful and dizzy’ . . . ‘diminished’ ‘cock[s]’: The internal quotes are from Edgar’s description of his imaginary cliff of Dover in *Lear* 4.6.11-24: “How fearful / And dizzy ’tis to cast one’s eyes so low . . . and yond tall anchoring bark / Diminished to her cock [a small ship’s boat, termed a cockboat]; her cock, a buoy / Almost too small for sight. . . . I’ll look no more, / Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight / Topple down headlong.”
“Stand your ‘diminished’ ‘cock[s]’ on end” is a play upon “stand your hair on end.”

- p. 242: grayback: A dialectical meaning is “a large boulder” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 242: “babbly”: As an adjective, it means “chattering; garrulous” (*Webster’s Third*). In my sentence “talk,” the noun which “babbly” modifies, is understood.
- p. 242: “dead air”: “silence occurring during a radio or television broadcast” (*Webster’s Third*).
As in its earlier use, 4.65, and its later one, 21.359, here is it used metaphorically.
- p. 242: “Moor the ladder and the stretcher”: Firmly attach or secure the rope ladder which Foucin is to climb down and the stretcher on which the corpse is to be raised.
- p. 242: “We try her strength, great though it is!”: Remy will subtly modify this declaration on p. 245.
- p. 242: limbeck: alembic or something that refines or transmutes as if by the process of distillation.
- p. 242: “foot-blackening socks”: A paradoxical description of Foucin as a *pied-noir*, but in socks, not the black shoes or boots of the Europeans colonists.
- p. 242: “dangling litter”: This is the sixth chapter containing a reference to a character dangling.
Here the corpse of the father Belmazoire is tied to a stretcher which is to be hoisted up the cliff. As noted, a resurrection symbol is implied.
This scene contrasts with Remy’s father who is also strapped to a litter, on which at one point he is he in a dangling position (10.158).
See the 1.14 note, N1:37, for a listing of the seven chapters where the dangling image is employed.
- p. 242: “forging a chain that spanned the corpse”: Another instance of the figure of a bond forged among the living but occasioned by a dead body.
It is related to the image of the living joined in a “ragged circle,” which is discussed in the 2.33 note, N2:62-63.
- p. 242: “naught visible of them”: That is, the huge wave did not drag away their bodies (the physical or “visible” part of them), but its force was such that, Mohammed suggests, it must have sucked out part of the spirit from their body.
- p. 242: “slidder”: A dialectical intransitive verb meaning “slither” (*Webster’s Third*) or to walk with a sliding motion.
- p. 242: “he’d be below to catch her should she misstep”: This image will reoccur on

17.281 involving the young Omar and Noura.

- p. 242: “the single dead and the two quick”: The corpse of Ahmed Belmazoïr and its two living companions, Houda and Foucin.
- p. 242: “Those who have it easy are never at ease”: Mohammed little understands how uneasy Foucin’s conscience has been since he destroyed the family of Ahmed Belmazoïr.
- p. 242: “*s’il vous plaît*”: French for “please,” “if you please,” or “if it pleases you.” See the discussion of the clause in the “title of the chapter” commentary, N15:1-2. Section 2, which lasts eighteen minutes, ends at 10:10.

pp. 242-45: SECTION 3

- p. 242: “Lazily he rolled from his right side onto his back”: The action takes up directly from section 2, so the time is 10:11.
- p. 242: “the traffic”: “the movement of something . . . usually illegal,” such as drugs, people for sex, or stolen cars (online *Urban Dictionary*). Here it designates the hashish trade in the prison, a monopoly held by the Palestinians.

- p. 243: “the grille”: The wire grating in the prison’s visitor’s room, described on 4.60.
- p. 243: “scratch”: I heard this noun used by Moroccan friends to describe what they did after the itch to smoke a joint came, as in “gotta have my scratch” or “this itch I hafta scratch.”
As a synonym for the reaction to a craving for hashish, I did not find “scratch” in any standard dictionaries.
The online *Urban Dictionary* lists three drug-related definitions: addict (from an addict’s habit of scratching himself); crack cocaine in its base form before being cut; and (as an adjective) dope.
- p. 243: “black-hole toilet”: The term in astronomy that refers to “a dark region in space.”
See the 3.42 note on “wormhole,” which lists the six uses of “black hole” in the novel. Its first is by Mohammed on 6.82.
- p. 243: sanctum sanctorum: A place of utmost privacy. It will also be used on 21.366.
- p. 243: “shit . . . joint”: terms for “hashish” and “a hashish cigarette.”
- p. 243: “zeroing-in bull’s eye”: The cigarette allowed Mohammed’s assailant to use it to “adjust so as to be aiming directly” (“zero in on”) at the circular central mark of a target (“bull’s eye”).
The last term would resonate with Remy since it was used by the lieutenant during the rape of the stand-in for Noura (3.44).
- p. 243: “the blade . . . gives off its own light”: Again this phrase, as does the knife attack itself, connects Mohammed with Ballard, who as he seeks the blade of the dagger coming toward his neck thinks that “it gives off its own light” (1.14).
Since Mohammed awoke at “about two,” he was in the toilet of the prison dormitory by 2:03. He had “halfway drained” his joint; thus at 2:08 (my chronology) the attack came.
Ironically this will occur within three hours of Foucin’s 11:12 p.m. assurance to Remy that “no harm” will befall Mohammed in prison.
- p. 243: “the ‘jag’”: A Scottish word for “prick or stab,” it is also a clothing term which refers to “a slashed section or slit of a garment” (*Webster’s Third*).
In the latter sense, it a metaphor for Mohammed’s slashing wound.
- p. 243: dotter: A British dialectic term meaning “to walk shakily; totter” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 243: “the Suhoor before *salaat il-fajr*”: The pre-dawn meal, which typically begins with the call to Fajr prayers.
This summons came at 4:16, twenty minutes before the performance of the 4:36

prayers, on this day.

Mohammed was back in his bunk by 2:15. Two hours later, the prisoners were awakened for their Suhoor, water, bread, and dates. At that time the attack on Mohammed was discovered and he was sent to the infirmary.

The stitching of his cheek wound occurred at around eight that morning.

p. 243: “merely bruise”: Again a use of a word which would evoke a painful connection for Remy since on 3.44, 46, and 50 the French lieutenant said that Noura was “but bruised.”

See the notes on these pages, N3.26, 29-30, and 37, which discuss the religious significance (Isa. 53.5) of “bruise” in the novel.

p. 243: “a plot of ‘hallowed ground’”: Sacred or consecrated piece of land, such as a cemetery or battlefield, as Lincoln used it negatively in his Gettysburg Address in stating that Americans “cannot hallow this ground” because the soldiers, both living and dead, already have.

Mohammed uses “hallowed” to indicate that sacredness implies self-interest, such as the drug trafficking would be “hallowed” to the Palestinians.

As for “plot,” its meaning is employed ambiguously: “land,” “grave,” and “scheme.”

p. 243: “the Plos”: In general, a derogatory term for Palestinians.

See the 1.12 note for the pronunciation of this neologism.

p. 243: “an incentive for me to confess”: The attack was designed to pressure Mohammed into confessing to Ballard’s murder, which would in effect stop Remy’s investigation.

p. 243: “cutting to the quick”: One meaning of to “cut (someone) to the quick” is “to slice the flesh of someone clear through to the underlying layer of the flesh or to the bone; often the attack is fatal.”

Mohammed suggests that his assailant was not instructed to kill him in body (the “quick” or living aspect of him), but only to scare him into confessing.

p. 243: “de rigueur attorneys/de facto pallbearers”: His attorneys, who must be properly capable as is required by judicial etiquette, in actual fact (“de facto”) will be his symbolic pallbearers.

p. 243: “‘right and proper’ trial”: A sham trial that is “socially and morally acceptable,” with facile puns on “right/last rites” and “proper/prop.”
“Prop” suggests the trial will be a staged performance.

p. 243: “the bona fide ‘bones’”: The implications of this phrase are numerous: The verdict of the trial, Mohammed speaks ironically, will be handed down “in good faith” and hence “without fraud or deceit.”

The Latin "*bona*" will reduce him to the phonologically similar German-derived "bone," the remnants of him in the grave.

Mohammed's hearer Remy would naturally make a connection with Foucin's assertion that he must search for his family's "bones" (6.99 and 14.232 and 235).

- p. 243: "never to be uncharneled again": Mohammed says that with his guilt properly adjudged, no-one will ever investigate his case in order to prove his innocence. His fear is the opposite of Remy's, whose opening musing about violence reveals that he wishes that this aspect of his early, Algerian life would be buried, but knows that it will be exhumed as a taunting ghost once a year, when he goes to receive his *pourboire*.
- p. 243: uncharnel: "to remove from a grave; to exhume" (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 243: "M. John and I in sync laid to rest": Mohammed has obviously heard (probably from Vellacott) that the body of Ballard will not be buried until his murderer is found.
- p. 243: "'No,' avowed Remy": He is answering Mohammed's question, "You one [of those who want him legally to be convicted and sentenced]?"
- p. 243: "'Did M. John ever refer to any association he had with the Palestinians?' Remy seeks to plant in Mohammed's mind that since the PLO were behind the attack upon him they might have murdered Ballard. He does not want Mohammed to "confess"; the youth has just said that the attack on him was designed to give him "an incentive" to do so. Remy knows that he has to present Foucin's offer and is trying to prepare the ground for Mohammed to reject it, at least for a few days after which he hopes to initiate his scheme to visit his father.
- p.243: "everyone here has to deal with the Plos at some time": In Remy's mind, this report of an admission by Ballard about the inevitability of everyone on Algiers having to negotiate with PLO agents confirms that the American was somehow involved with them. This conclusion had been offered by Remy to Foucin on 7:112 and reached by Leila on 9.145.
- p. 243: "near three months into our friendship": Late August 1988. Their first meeting occurred on May 24, although they did not begin having sex at the Toumi apartment until June 14.
- p. 243: *maztoule*: An Algerian Arabic expression, it translates as "high or stoned after taking drugs" (online *Algerian Dardja Dictionary*) or as in the text, "flying."
- p. 243: "cornucopia . . . with the word *hope*": Mohammed combines two Greek myths, that of the cornucopia ("the horn of plenty") associated with Zeus and the story of

Pandora's box.

The baby Zeus was playing with one of his nursemaids, the goat Amalthea, and accidentally broke off one of her horns. Magically unending and abundant nourishment began to spill from the horn, which was deemed the "horn of plenty."

It became associated with the Greek goddess Gaia (Earth), whose agricultural harvest sustains humanity. "Horn" also has a sexual connotation.

Pandora, in Greek mythology the first woman, unaware of what a jar given to her (probably by an agent of Zeus) had within it, opened it. From the jar (which was mistranslated by the sixteenth-century humanist Erasmus as "box") flew all the evils which will plague humankind, such as sickness, pains, toils, and diseases. Before Pandora could place the lid on the jar, only "hope" remained in it.

- p. 243: "each to each I would bind my days": Mohammed says that he hopes the days of his life will be bound together by his unshrinkable (*Webster's Third*) penis and an endless supply of hashish.
- p. 243: "Cambridge don had wheezed into my balls": The Cambridge University don doubtless was a Wordsworthian scholar since in praying that his tongue always be bound to an oversized penis and scrotum, he uses phrasing from Wordsworth's "My Heart Leaps Up": "And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety" (8-9).
- p. 243: "high . . . in fashion": A pun upon haute couture (high fashion) and "high" on drugs.
- p. 243: "Contracted with [M.] Tinfingers' . . . And he undertakes such commissions?": Again pursuing a point Mohammed had introduced, Remy pursues the possibility that the death of Ballard could have been a contract killing. This preliminary to Remy's offering of Foucin's bargain is designed by him to ready Mohammed not to accept it.

- p. 244: snuff: kill; murder. It is usually followed by “out.”
Webster's Collegiate lists the expression as slang, hence the internal quotes.
- p. 244: “Beirut’s American U”: The American University of Beirut, founded in 1866, is the leading private university in Lebanon, drawing its student body from throughout the Middle East.
It is ranked among the top 350 universities in the world.
- p. 244: Arafat: Yasser Arafat, the founder (1959) and chairman of the PLO until his death in 2004. For the last eight years of his life, he also served as the first President of the Palestinian Authority, which had been set up in the West Bank and Gaza by the Oslo Accords of 1993.
While I was teaching in Saudi Arabia and visiting many of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, the gossip I heard in the late 1980s about Arafat using his position to amass close to \$1 billion in secret accounts was not publicly verified until a series of accounting reports on his wealth from 2002 – 2004. After his death, reputable speculation raised this amount to \$10 billion.
Because his homosexuality was an open secret, accompanying by much joking, in the streets of Cairo and Casablanca, many Muslims believe he died of AIDS, contracted from sexual relationships with his bevy of young bodyguards, each of whom, a Palestinian teacher who taught with me in Saudi Arabia, was “paid more in one day than I make in a month. Through outrageous levies—a third of my salary I must remit to the PLO—he sucks us expatriates dry so he can wetly suck his boys.”
- p. 244: “abysmal Swiss bank account”: “Abysmal” prepares for the Sisyphean myth since Sisyphus was assigned to the abyss called Tartarus, an area beneath the Greek underworld reserved for master sinners, particularly those who had tricked, shamed, or been grossly disobedient to the Olympian gods.
In Tartarus, the punishment fiendishly fit the crime.
I also had in mind that the adjective “abysmal” is more often used to describe “poverty” not “wealth.”
- p. 244: “rock-bottom, bankrolling sissy pussies (whatever that means)”: One of the most outrageous puns in the novel.
“Sissy pussies” plays upon Sisyphus.
His punishment was to “roll” a large “rock” from the “bottom” of a ravine up a “bank” (steep rise of a hill). Near its top, he would slip and loss control of the boulder which would roll back to the bottom, where he would have to begin his task again.
This frustration continued throughout eternity.
The AUB male students felt that they were bottom-dwelling Palestinians who had to bankroll the masculine public persona of Arafat, even though they knew him to be a homosexual who lavished part of the “contributions” extorted from them on his cadre of sodomizing bodyguards.

The students felt emasculated by Arafat, who, in effect, had turned them into his “sissies” or “pussies,” both slang words for effeminate homosexuals.

- p. 244: “a face, other than Foucin’s, on the ‘bastard’ who had ‘scripted’ him in”: Mohammed’s phrasing from 10.161, where he quickly identified the “bastard” who has “scripted [him] in” as “only Foucin.”
- p. 244: “that archfiend”: Satan.
Remy imagines that Mohammed would so refer to the enemy who had tried to ensnare him.
- p. 244: “some plastic surgery”: The Palestinian discussion has transformed Mohammed who before it spoke of being “decked out as a corpse.” Now he is so certain of his innocence that he imagines having Vellacott’s clients funding plastic surgery on his face.
He affirms his innocence and says that Remy’s investigation had incited the murderer of Ballard to make the intimidating strike against him.
- p. 244: “*Time to spring*”: Remy goes to the prison to offer Foucin’s deal, which he hopes Mohammed will not accept until at least the next day or so when Remy will attempt to implement a plan to make a quick visit to his father.
The attack does not prod Mohammed to confess to the crime. In fact, he adamantly asserts his innocence.
Thus Remy’s purpose is achieved, but he knows that, in fulfilling his promise to Foucin, he must reveal what he and Foucin know about the meeting at the Toumi on Feb. 15, which established that Houda was engaged in an affair with Ballard.
Remy seems to believe that most likely Mohammed will brush off the revelation or, at worse, this disclosure will make Mohammed delay a decision on Foucin’s proposal until he talks with his sister.
Either way, Remy gains the needed time to implement his scheme to visit his father.
- p. 244: “twelve days prior [to the murder]”: Feb. 15.
- p. 244: “at betting odds”: The idiom “at odds” means “in disagreement; quarreling.” Remy’s augmentation means that he and Foucin are in such disagreement that they have placed bets on the matter.
Betting was also used in the Tizi Aimoula narrative (9.137) and the event described earlier in this chapter about the Bab el Oued men watching Houda’s descent (241).
- p. 244: “Remy switched the speaker s”: On 13.202, Remy had spoken outside the Toumi apartment door what he imagined Mohammed had said, “M. John, I know my sister’s there.”
However, he combines two of Foucin’s ideas: On 13.204, Foucin told Remy he

believed Mohammed did not care “a whit that Ballard was fucking his sister,” but what he projected Mohammed as saying outside the door was “I know what you’re doing, fucking my sister in our bed!” (13.205)

Remy transfers the sentiments, giving his mild one to Foucin and incorporating the commissioner’s crude verb in his.

- p. 244: “Remy studied, as Mohammed’s ‘face / Thrice chang’d with pale, ire, envy and despair.’” From *Paradise Lost* 4.114-15: “Thus while he [Satan] spake, each passion dimm’d his face / Thence chang’d with pale, ire, envy, and despair.”

Nearing Paradise, Satan thinks about his loss in the battle in Heaven. These thoughts change his complexion three times.

Most commentators interpret the two lines as follows: Satan’s countenance was successively dimmed by each of the three passions (anger, envy, and despair).

Typically envy pales one’s visage, as the common expression “pale with envy” suggests. Hopelessness (“despair”) likewise seems to drain the blood from a person’s face.

Anger (“ire”), however, is usually associated with blood pumping into one face, but it may also cause the opposite effect, causing one to grow pale.

To apply this to Mohammed’s facial change: He had been lured by Remy into thinking that he had won him over. Then suddenly the trap is sprung. Mohammed’s face undergoes a transformation similar to Satan’s: from anger (“ire”) at having fallen into Remy’s trap to a vague “envy” at how Remy had baited the trap, to “despair” at what the implications of the trap mean, not to himself, but to Houda.

- p. 244: “However, what ensued he had not prevised”: Directly after Houda’s name is associated with Ballard’s, Mohammed quickly admits to the homicide, as if he was motivated by a desire not to implicate her or by his belief that further investigation will reveal that she herself had murdered Ballard, a matter Remy brings up on the next page, or something even darker.

Remy had not “prevised” the immediate acceptance which followed. Since he has not achieved his true objective of meeting with his father, he does not desire a rapid resolution to the case.

In bringing up the Toumi incident, he had meant it merely as a segue to Foucin’s offer, which by then he was certain Mohammed would reject.

- p. 244: “he’s deputized you to strike a bargain”: Mohammed perceives that it is Foucin, whose name Remy had brought up, who has sent Remy to the prison to make a bargain with him.

He asserts that Foucin had probably employed the Plos to cut his face in order to prod him into accepting the bargain.

- p. 244: “nick-nick”: Mohammed puns on the Arabic slang word for “fuck” (usually transliterated in English as “neek”). In proposing sexual intercourse, an Arab speaker typically uses it twice in making the proposition: “Inta [you] neek-neek

[fuck-fuck]?”

An overt meaning of the English “nick” is “to make a small cut,” as in “I nicked my cheek while I was shaving.” As such, Mohammed is using understatement to refer to his wound.

The repetition “nick-nick” balances the “snip, snip” which he used on p. 243.

- p. 244: “You one with ‘M. Le Grand’?”: “The Great Man” epithet given to Foucin.
See the 11.173 and 13.201 and 205 notes for a list of its occurrences in the novel.
The form of Mohammed question is identical to the one on the previous page, “You one [with those who would deck him out as a corpse]?”
- p. 244: “familial honor”: A confirmation that all of Algeria knew what drove Foucin in his mission against the seven great traitors.
The slaughter of his birth family must have been common knowledge since on 7.114 Remy speaks of Foucin’s “familial” revenge, supposedly having been informed of it by Vellacott.
On 13.208, Foucin himself speaks of the necessity for Mohammed to redeem the “familial pride” of the Belmazoirs.
- p. 244: “So be it!”: An indication of acceptance, especially of a situation which is not entirely favorable.
- p. 244: “square your odds”: settle your bet.
- p. 244: hie: hurry.
- p. 244: “And for eight days, you brooded”: From Feb. 16, the day after the affair at Toumi, to Feb. 23, when Ballard called Bendari’s to set the meeting with Mohammed at Zaracova on Feb. 27.
- p. 244: “unearthed another Providence”: Dug up another God.

- p. 245: “lullaby warbler”:
Remy speaks of Houda as Mohammed portrayed her earlier, as a singer of the sleep-inducing “A garden beauty’s in his face” (240-41).
- p. 245: “all in all”: everything.
- p. 245: solipsistic: Exhibiting the belief that nothing exists but the self.
Here Remy uses the word to exaggerate Mohammed’s egotism and to locate Mohammed’s reality in his penis.
He is trying to set up a rivalry between Mohammed and Houda over Ballard’s affection.
- p. 245: *faiblesse*: In French “weakness.” It was used by Remy on 4.61 in describing Mohammed’s weakness.
Its third use will occur on 20.340 in an account of Ballard’s weakness of character.
- p. 245: “Remy dissembled”:
Remy lies in saying that he had checked with Mme. Bourceli who had said that on the night of Feb. 27 (the murder) Houda had asked her to sit with her mother while she went out.
- p. 245: “on that night fatal to M. John . . . Where was she [Houda]?”:
To regain the delay he needs, Remy suggests that Houda might be the murderer.
Remy’s threat is apparent: If Mohammed confesses, Remy will begin an investigation of Houda as the murderer.
- p. 245: “It is not his fault”:
Remy quotes this assertion of Houda (7. 112-13, 9.149, 12.194, and 13.207): It is her fault that her brother murdered Ballard.
- p. 245: “uprooted 1,325 dinars . . . planted something in their stead”:
The figure of the amount of money Mohammed took from Ballard’s wallet (4.57 and 8.121) and the negative print.
- p. 245: “A third would have me removed”:
Foucin (13.208) and Leroy (13:217) were the first two.
- p. 245: “My client, as he is yours, exclusively can discharge me”:
Vellacott.
- p. 245: *une fleur sauvage*: “a wild flower” in French.
- p. 245: “awaited a guard”:
This guard waiting outside the infirmary will lead Remy back to the visitor’s desk, where he will drop off the 1,000 dinars for Mohammed, check out, and walk back to the taxi (10:33 – 11:00).
- p. 245: “slice *your* throat”:
An inexact threat, for Ballard’s throat was not “sliced.” His carotid artery was punctured.

Mohammed is suggesting to Remy that if he, like Ballard, bothered Houda, he would meet the same fate as the American (10:33).

pp. 245-47: SECTION 4

- p. 245: “The plan, Remy concluded, was solid”: During his return ride (11:00 – 12:25) Remy adds some new details to the plan which, he hopes, will allow him to visit his father.
- p. 245: “ninety-seven kilometers”: For the two legs of the trip from Algiers to Berrouaghia Prison, see 4.59-60 and its note, N4.23-34.
The ninety-seven kilometers (c. sixty miles) takes about seventy minutes to the Al-Nigma Hotel, but to Foucin’s office, given the traffic, it takes seventy-five minutes.
- p. 245: “you’ve been acquainted”: Mohammed’s comment on p. 240 suggests that the prison authorities would not have informed Foucin.
- p. 245: “There he would be the clarion”: Remy imagines the speech he would deliver to Foucin in which he would propose that the next morning Houda be taken to the prison.
There she and her brother would be asked what was put inside Ballard’s wallet, the idea which had so upset Mohammed.
- p. 245: dumbfoundedly: the adverb of the adjective “dumbfounded,” meaning “confused” “with astonishment” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 245: “to avow his guilt and accept your terms”: In his imaginary account, Remy begins by reporting that Mohammed has agreed to confess and has accepted Foucin’s offer.
- p. 245: “artfully dodge”: A trifling play upon the nickname of Dickens’s character Jack Dawkins in *Oliver Twist*, “the Artful Dodger.”
- p. 245: “‘the only one beyond yourself who . . . would act out of a moral compulsion’ . . . never considered acknowledging . . . that Leila could be culpable”: Remy knows that Foucin would be flattered by this compliment of Houda. He himself with what he believes is unbiased glee similarly compliments Leila.

- p. 246: “you ‘try’ his weakness, ‘great though it is!’”: A variation on one of the details from Mohammed’s narration about what Foucin had said at the top of the cliff looking down at Houda struggling to save her father’s body: “We try her strength, great though it is!” (316).
- p. 246: “measure-for-measure confrontation”: The Biblical and Shakespearean sources of the term are given in the 1.3 note, N1:11, which examines its uses in the novel.
- p. 246: “a reunion of brother and sister early tomorrow”: A crucial aspect of Remy’s imagined scheme is revealed.
- p. 246: tabled: in the British sense of “to submit for discussion or consideration.”
- p. 246: *mea culpa*: Latin for “my fault” or loosely translated, “I am to blame.” Here, it signals Mohammed’s confession to killing Ballard.
- p. 246: “With Leila, whom he would seek out at her apartment”: After obtaining Foucin’s participation, Remy planned to seek out Leila’s. He reasons that he could get her phone number from Foucin—on 13.215 he had bemoaned not having it—but such a request would arouse the commissioner’s suspicion. Thus he plans to visit her unannounced at her apartment.
- p. 246: Casbah’s Citadel: Remy entered the Casbah through “Bab El Jdid, the arched portal to the Citadel” (or fortress) in his walkthrough the Casbah (10.153 and its notes N10:3).”
- p. 246: *djellaba*: An outer robe with a hood and long sleeves. See the 1:14 note. The hood would be sufficient to veil or shadow Remy’s face.
- p. 246: “disconnecting disguise”: The phrasing suggests that Remy disconnects from Foucin’s agents, from Leila temporarily, and from his European identity, for he planned to use the Arab garb to convince the storekeeper below his father’s attic room that he was a friend of Naaman’s who lived outside of Algiers. He wanted to pay just a short call on his incapacitated friend. (None of this is mentioned in the novel since Remy’s plan, as will soon be revealed, was not brought to fruition.) The word “disconnecting” develops the theme of connection/disconnection.
- p. 246: *cabin d’essayage*: In French “a changing room” in a clothing shop.
- p. 246: *boutique*: In French the generic word for “any shop,” not as in English where it refers to a “small shop or a department in a large store where expensive clothes and other fashionable articles are sold.”

- p. 246: *librairie*: In French, “a bookshop.”
- p. 246: 28 Ruelle Bensdid: A *ruelle* is an “alley or a lane.”
On April 13, 1961, on the French plane flying him out of Algeria, Omar says that his father was “the grocer of Ruelle Bensdid in the northwest section of the Casbah” (2.27).
On April 14, 1989, Remy enters his father’s old shop, buys two items, and “four doors” past it comes to number 28, the building to which his paralyzed father had been moved. (10.154-55).
Thus No. 28 would be within walking distance for Remy, who planned to be away from Leila for “under an hour.”
- p. 246: “However, nothing proceeded”: The time he arrives at Foucin’s office is 12:28.
- p. 246: storyboard: As a verb, “to make a board on which are outlined shots or scenes of a film, video, etc.” Remy’s storyboard is a mental one.
- p. 246: “Dhuhr prayers”: The call to Dhuhr prayers began at 12:28 and ended at 12:48, at which time the prayers commenced and lasted until 1:03 that day.
- p. 246: “Houda had dialed at half past eleven”: The next page will reveal some more details of this meeting between Houda and Foucin.
According to my chronology, the first part lasted from 11:45 – 12:28. It was broken off by the call to and performance of Dhuhr prayers (12:28 – 1:03). The second part of the conference ended at 1:45.
- p. 246: “in the reports [dossier] of the murder is a trifling detail”: Houda’s reason for breaking her silence about the case is to examine this dossier.
She will make a similar request of Remy, in which she questions him about the smallest details about the murder scene, on p. 252.
- p. 246: “Remy lingered until 1:45 . . . taxied to Leila’s building”: Having waited at Foucin’s office from 12:28 to 1:45, Remy took Nemmiche’s taxi to Leila’s, arriving at 2:05.
- p. 246: Rue des Quatre Canons: French for “The Street of the Four Cannons.” See the 13.204 note.
- p. 246: *sonnette*: In French “doorbell.”
- p. 246: *compte-rendu*: In French “report or account.”
- pp. 246-47: “he would walk the nine blocks to the Al-Nigma . . . dallied over an hour”:
Because it is crucial that Remy meet with Leila to obtain her cooperation in his scheme, he spent thirty minutes inside Leila’s apartment building, from 2:05 –

2:35, and then, after dismissing Nemmiche, returned to its lobby, his lookout point for her from 2:35 – 3:50.

- p. 247: “setting out for the hotel . . . phone ringing”: From 3:50 to 4:15.
- p. 247: “She will speak with you”: Leila had arranged for Houda to be interviewed by Remy.
- p. 247: Pleumartin: The village in midwestern France mentioned on 14.219 and in its note, N14:4. There old Belmazoir, his wife, and his son Ahmed and his family lived from 1961 until Ahmed decided to take his family back to Algeria in early November 1972.
Ahmed, born in 1945 (although this is never mentioned in the novel), would have been sixteen when his father and the other great traitors were flown out of Algiers.
Although it is not stated, France would have gotten old Belmazoir’s wife and Ahmed out of Algiers at some time between Apr. 13, 1961, when the seven were flown to France and the Jan. 1962 revelation about the seven great traitors.
Ahmed thus married a Muslim woman Salima in France. Houda is born in Pleumartin on July 5, 1963, and Mohammed there on Nov. 1, 1970.
I mention these details again, most of which are nowhere to be found in the text of the novel, to stress that Salima Belmazoir, in the words of Mme. Bourceli, “never lost her France” (11.224).
- p. 247: *mes parterres*: “my flower beds” in French.
- p. 247: “devil or angel”: See the 9.148 note, N9:34, which lists the instances in which Remy is called by devil by himself, Leila, Foucin (in speaking of the seven traitors), Mohisen, Bourceli, his father (as imagined in Remy’s mind), and the people of Algeria.
Remy is called an angel only here (247), although the word is used to describe the three principal women of the novel: Noura on 2.22 and 3.39; Leila on 16.265 and 267; and Houda on p. 249 later in this chapter and on 17.285.
- p. 247: “gift from Mohammed”: A deluded Mme. Belmazoir believes that Mohammed has arranged for the flowers to be delivered. Although not stated in the novel, she has not been told that he had been arrested and was in prison.
- p. 247: “pink pompon daisies . . . native hues”: This flower passage, a convention of the pastoral elegy, reinforces the “garden” image in the title of this chapter.
- p. 247: *liatris*: A showy purple flower in the aster family (its entry in *Wikipedia*).
- p. 247: “*La renaissance*”: Mme. Belmazoir speaks of a “rebirth” on her deathbed.
- p. 247: “picked from their airy bed”: As someone would pick a flower, Houda gathers her mother’s hands which were grasping at the air that separated her from the flowers being positioned about the room.

“Raking,” “airy [flower]bed,” and “clustered” extend the floral metaphor.

- p. 247: “Shortly thereafter, she agreed to the interview with you”: After informing Houda that Remy was responsible for the flowers being delivered between 3:53 and 4:30 on Tuesday (14.228), Leila again asks her to meet with Remy. Although the time is not specified in the text, at 4:47 Houda agrees, directly after the two women had performed Asr prayers in the shack.
- p. 247: “since yesterday morning”: The last time Leila appeared in the novel was on Sunday, April 16, at 1:44 p.m. (12.196), when she bade Remy goodbye before accompanying Foucin to the courts. On 13.204, Foucin mentions to Remy that he helped her complete the judiciary papers required for her to move back into apartment 508, the one Ballard had leased for her and Ahmed, and drove her to the flat, arriving at around 5 p.m. Sunday. There, as is a custom in an Arab family where there has been a death, she began to clean and inventory the residence, Leila will reveal on p. 248. (The police had bundled Leila and Ahmed from the apartment a day or so after the murder, Feb. 28 or Mar. 1, since it was rented in Ballard’s name and technically Leila had no legal proof that she should be there.) On the same page Leila will say she had “cowardly stolen away” from the apartment her first evening there. Since she offers no reason, Remy is puzzled as to why she had not spent the night of April 16 there. What had driven her from the apartment and where she had gone will not be revealed until p. 252. She was in the apartment the next day, Monday, April 17, since on p. 248 she says that in bed late that night, “overcome by inventory stupor,” she began to think of the Belmazoires’ plight and decided to visit Houda the next day. At 9:15, Tuesday, April 18, Leila goes to Bab el Oued and through a pharmacist finds out where the Belmazoires reside. She meets with Houda to try to convince her to talk with Remy. Houda does not consent to this meeting, but she does tell Leila of her friendship with Ballard (248). Seeing how sick Mme. Ballard is, Leila stays in the shack to help Houda. It is she who is there later Tuesday when Remy calls, having made his discovery at Bendari’s about the three-way confrontation at the Sovimbi apartment on Feb. 15. The cry by Mme. Ballard, “You? Who are you? Houda!” refers to Leila, as does Mme. Bourceli’s “Surely two can stifle her” (14.226-27) (3:11 – 3:14 p.m.). After the procession of flowers (3:53 – 4:30), Leila is the slender “veiled” woman who steps out of the building to give Remy “a regarding nod” (14.228) (4:30). As indicated in the previous note, at 4:47 Houda agreed to meet with Remy to discuss what she knows about the events surrounding the murder of Ballard.
- p. 247: “leaving twice”: Leila says that she was briefly away from the shack “last night [Tuesday] from nine to ten” to fetch some personal items from her apartment.

Then she had tried to telephone Remy with the news that despite her brother's command, Houda would speak with him. However, she received no answer. As Remy realizes, he was at the Foucins' apartment. That night Leila slept at the Belmazoirs.

p. 247: "This morning . . . at around 11:30": The next morning, Wed., Apr. 19, at 11:30 Houda informed her that she had telephoned Foucin since she had also decided to speak with him. He was coming to the shed with some documents relating to her brother's involvement in the crime.

Not wanting to be in the way, Leila left, planning to return at two. Again repeatedly she tried to telephone Remy in the interval from 11:50 to 1:45, but once more was unable to contact him.

From 11:50 – 12:28, Remy was on the last leg of his taxi ride from the prison, and from 12:28 to 1:45 he was at the gendarmerie waiting for Foucin to return from his meeting with Houda. He arrives at her apartment building at 2:05, missing her by twenty minutes.

Leila stayed at Houda's from two until nearly four and then left again for her apartment, from which she telephoned Remy at 4:15.

p. 247: reembark: "embark again" (Online *Free Dictionary*).

p. 247: "not to disrupt your prayers": The prayer call for Asr would have already sounded at 4:10.

As on the previous day, Asr prayers would be from 4:30 – 4:45.

Quite typical of Remy, he uses prayers in a lie rather than tell Leila the truth, that he needed a shower and a change of clothes.

p. 247: "a reprieve of fifty minutes": From 4:25, when he hangs up the phone, to 5:15, when the taxi arrives at Leila's apartment.

pp. 247-49: SECTION 5

p. 247: "A half-block away": This section opens at 5:15. In Nemmiche's taxi, Remy sees Leila waiting for him in front of her building.

p. 247: Vacheron Constantin: Remy's expensive Swiss watch.
See the 4.60 note for additional details about the timepiece.

p. 247: "I'm not Ballard": Ballard's more than prompt punctuality is mentioned by the American himself (1.4), Mohammed (10.160), and Leila (9.150, where she said that Ballard "always came twenty minutes early," and 12.191).

- p. 248: *haik*: An outer robe worn by women.
See the note on 8.133.
- p. 248: *higaab*: A headscarf.
See the note on 8.133.
- p. 248: *portière*: “car door” in French.
- p. 248: undeviatingly: “unswervingly” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 248: *siège avant*: French for “front seat.”
The ride to Bab el-Oued takes twenty-one minutes because of the rush-hour traffic (5:19 – 5:40).
- p. 248: “It is not his fault”: Leila repeats Houda’s declaration of which Remy had apprised her on 12.194.
- p. 248: *minimalisme*: French for “minimalism,” which in art designates a simple design, structure, or form which is often used repeatedly.
- p. 248: “to the perjured lengths . . . I would go for my Ahmed”: Leila told Remy that she loved her brother so much she would lie with an alibi: “And will avouch he was with me that evening” of Ballard’s murder (9.149).
- p. 248: “about eleven, my first full night in my restored apartment”: Monday, Apr. 17.
- p. 248: “having cowardly stolen away the previous evening”: Sunday, Apr. 16.
- p. 248: *djinn*: Supernatural creatures (the singular is *djinni*), which most Muslims regard as “evil spirits.”
Leila’s English synonym is “spectre” (British spelling), a ghost or apparition.
See the 1.9 note, N1:24-25.
- p. 248: “yesterday morning at nine”: Tuesday, Apr. 18.
- p. 248: “he murdered my husband Paul Ballard—John Ridgemont, perhaps your brother called him”: Ridgemont was Ballard’s alias (1.7).
At their first meeting, Remy told Mohammed that he was accused of murdering Paul Ballard, not John Ridgemont, but the prisoner answered that he knew him only as “M. John for all nine months” of their relationship (4.62).
However, according to Leila on the next page, Houda told her that Ballard had introduced himself to her as “John Ridgemont, a friend of your brother’s” (249).
- p. 248: “get to my point”: Leila had opened their conversation by accusing Houda of selfishness.

Leila's "point": If Houda unselfishly loves her brother, she will speak with Remy. To emphasize that she gives this advice without bias, Leila cites that Remy may have played a part in hurting her own brother: "in service to your brother, may have ensnared mine."

- p. 248: "through an act of kindness beyond the necessary": Another variant on the title of chap. 11, "An Unnecessary Act of Kindness."
See the 11.170 note on this title, N11:1, for a discussion of the four other chapters where variants of "kind" and "necessary" are used.
See also the 11.182 note, N11:33, for the Qur'anic views on kindness.
- p. 248: "florid fantasy": The flower motif is used by Remy to describe how Leila is still committed to presenting a fantasy view of Ballard.
- p. 248: "On Wednesday afternoon in December": It was Dec. 21, 1988. From two sources Remy knew this to be the date.
First, Leila said Ballard started to be engaged on embassy business another night besides Monday: "after your Christmas . . . he was out a second night, Wednesday" (9.147).
Ghazi's account provided even more detail. He stated that the first night Houda asked Bourceli to sit with her mother was on "a Wednesday 'twixt your Christmas and New Year's" (12.198).
Thus Ballard's and Houda's nightly meetings began on Wednesday, Dec. 28, 1988. Their only "afternoon meeting, which Houda begins to describe, occurred a week before, Dec. 21.

- p. 249: centime: The coin unit in the Algerian monetary system.
It is equal to 1/100 of a dinar, the basic monetary unit.
- p. 249: “scrub”: A synecdochic reference to Houda as a charwoman.
- p. 249: *petits travaux*: French for “odd jobs.” It is defined three paragraphs down in the participle “odd-jobbing.”
- p. 249: “mama’s Pethidine”: Pethidine is a fast-acting opioid analgesic drug, whose brand name in the U.S. is Demerol.
By the 1980s it had replaced morphine and become the most prescribed drug in the treatment of the severe chronic pain of terminal conditions such as cancer.
Its side effects include confusion, psychomotor impairment, and euphoria, as in Mme. Belmazoïr’s flower speech (247).
A bottle of twenty tablets, a four-to-five-day supply, cost around a state-subsidized 200 dinars in Algeria in the 1980s, that is, about \$1 a pill.
- p. 249: Zegna: A major Italian fashion house, specializing in men’s clothing.
A Zegna silk shirt, which sells today (2013) for around \$400, cost c. \$90 (900 dinars) in the late 1980s.
Mohammed’s Zegna was an imitation.
- p. 249: “the Palestinian camp”: Ballard implies to Houda that he knows Mohammed’s Wednesday schedule: Around noon that day he travels to the Palestinian camp south of Algiers and will not return until Thursday morning.
- p. 249: “wearing ‘Italian’”: The Zegna shirt. Mohammed had weakened, Ballard speculates, and spent his salary on the fashionable shirt, not his mother’s medicine.
- p. 249: “odd-jobbing friend”: The only dictionary defining “odd-job” as a verb is the online *Dictionary.com*: “to work at a series of unrelated or unspecialized jobs, often of a low paying or menial nature.”
The present participle form is used here.
- p. 249: Lemans Red Dial: Founded in 1975, Jacques Lemans was a stylish Swiss-based watch company in the late 1980s, with its Red Dial diver’s watch particularly fashionable with young men.
The company has steadily deteriorated in stature, signaled by its being dropped as the official watchmaker of Formula 1 in 2005.
Ballard is dropping these trend-setting names to indicate how well he knows Mohammed.
- p. 249: “to check up on his vow”: On 4.65, Mohammed, jittery and talkative because he had not had any hashish lately, had babbled that his American friend had said,

“Some [of the money Ballard gave him] for your family . . . or I’ll have to [hunt them down] to give them their . . .”

Mohammed had broken off and then added as if he wished to hide what he had begun to say, “No, that wasn’t . . . he didn’t . . . God, I need some [hashish].”

p. 249: line of credit: A banking term designating the maximum amount of credit extended by a lender.

Houda applies the expression to her bill at the pharmacies, turning it into a nautical metaphor (line, taut, snapped), presumably hoping to impress Ballard with her wit.

p. 249: “centripetal vivacity”: A reference to Mohammed’s egocentric nature, since “centripetal” means “moving to the center.”

The noun which it modifies, the positive-oriented “vivacity,” prevents Ballard’s comment from being a criticism.

p. 249: “a precautionary meeting a week from today”: On Dec. 28, 1988.

p. 249: “point and game-time set for match”: A sardonic pun on the tennis expression “point, game, set, match.”

p. 249: *aperçu*: A brief digest or sketch.

p. 249: “They met eight more Wednesdays, at night to safeguard her from wagging tongues”: Dec. 28, 1988; Jan. 4, 11, 18, 25, Feb. 1, 8, and 15, 1989.

Houda lists the fifteenth since she does not know what Remy has discovered.

p. 249: *prima facie*: A shortened form of “prima facie evidence,” a legal term meaning “evidence adequate to establish a fact or raise a presumption of fact unless refuted.”

Leila believes she has established the case that out of a concern for Mme. Belmazoïr Ballard met weekly with her daughter Houda.

p. 249: *constate*: “assert positively” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 249: *entrevues*: meetings (French).

p. 249: walk-up: An upstairs apartment in a building without an elevator.

p. 249: “happy melodies”: An echo of Keats’s “Grecian Ode”: “And happy melodist, unwearied” (23).

p. 249: *tropistic*: Tropism is the attraction of a plant or stationary animal toward or away from a stimulus, as in the sunflower’s turning toward the sun.

Houda means the word “tropistic” to suggest to Leila how necessary his wife’s

love was for Ballard.

The natural metaphor fits in with the garden image of the title of the chapter.

p. 249: “At our last meeting”: Feb. 15. That Houda closes with what Remy knows to be a lie since it makes no reference to Mohammed’s intrusion calls into question all of her account.

p. 249: “my dungeon darkness”: This dungeon image was appropriated from Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* (156), where the Chorus tells Samson, “Thou are become . . . / The dungeon of thyself.”

The dungeon image was used by Ballard on 1.6: “Ballard assayed his last half year: ‘dungeon-like’” since he had kept so much from Leila.

p. 249: sloe eyes: black eyes.

p. 249: “quit speaking, speaking her own name”: This section ends at 5:40.

pp. 249-51: SECTION 6

p. 249: “He stepped into the street”: They arrive at the apartment building where the Belmazoir shack is at 5:41.

p. 249: dun: dark or gloomy.

p. 249: “I’ll search out the *alim*”: Not stated in the text: Remy selects the holy man as the chaperon believing that if the conference with Houda is overlong he will be less likely than Mme. Bourceli to show impatience or to interfere.

p. 249: primrose-yellow cab: Still (2013) the color of taxis in Algiers.

p. 249: “Let’s go, you and I”: A variation on the opening line of Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”: “Let us go then, you and I.”

p. 249: rugose: full of wrinkles.

p. 249: ancient: an old person.

- p. 250: “*L’argent double! Francs double!*”: French for “Double the money! Francs double!”
The latter is a compression or corruption of “*Double les francs!*” (“Double the francs!”). He uses “francs,” the French currency, out of fear that Remy will not know the Arabic word for “money” (“*floos*”).
- p. 250: “a folding chair and . . . an upturned plywood box”: Remy sits in the folding chair, situated in the middle of the right side of the room. The bed with Mme. Ballard takes up the left side. The two parts are separated by a hanging sheet.
Houda, veiled, sits on a crate near the right side’s back wall.
The same chair and box Leila and Houda sat on: “shyly indicating a metallic folding chair, at the same time toting from a corner a wooden crate for herself” (248).
- p. 250: *miasma*: putrescent atmosphere.
The abundance of dying flowers serves as a counterpoint to the single “pink rose, artificially resuscitated by the vase’s water,” in Leroy’s office (8.119).
- p. 250: *farrago*: jumble; hodgepodge.
- p. 250: *nimiety*: excess.
- p. 250: “‘Monsieur, you wish to speak with me?’ ‘Mademoiselle, I wish you to speak with me’”: Their conversation commences at 5:52 with a chiasmic flourish.
- p. 250: “the triangular rendezvous at the Toumi, where hitherto the assignations had been wholly in pairs”: At this point, Houda realizes that Remy has learned about the Feb. 15 confrontation between Ballard, Mohammed, and herself.
- p. 250: *fraught with*: filled, charged, or loaded (with).
- p. 250: *longanimity*: patient endurance or restraint.
- p. 250: *animus*: intention.
- p. 250: *danse macabre*: In French the expression “macabre dance” refers specifically to the “dance of death,” a “medieval dance or procession in which a skeleton representing death led other skeletons or living persons to the grave” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 250: “descend to the throat”: This scene which Remy imagines where a knife “dances” from Mohammed’s cheek down to his throat connects not only with the central murder of the novel, where a *douk-douk* pierced Ballard’s throat (1.14), but also the initiating ritual where he as Omar cut the French private’s throat:

“Dancing with it [the mountain knife] . . . I approached the conscript” (2.24).

- p. 250: “full cause”: From *Lear*: “I have full cause of weeping; but this heart / Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws [fragments] / Or ere I’ll weep” (2.4.286-88).
- p. 250: “forest of mistakes and deceptions, of insufficiencies and mirages”: From a translation of Mario Vargas Llosa’s essay “The Importance of Karl Popper” in the October 1990 issue of *PMLA*, my notes of early 1991 indicate. Although the ideas are a part of Popper’s philosophy, the distinctive phrasing I did not find in any of his works. Thus Vargas Llosa is the one being quoted. The *PMLA* article preceded Vargas Llosa’s lecture of the same title, which was given in February 1991 at New York University. An authoritative rendering of the lecture, supervised by Vargas Llosa’s son, who apparently was not pleased with the *PMLA* translation, was published in *Academic Questions* in 1992. Here the passage has a new translation: “In the great jungle of errors, deceits, insufficiencies, and illusions through which we wander.” There is a yet another approved English translation of the essay, again with the same title, in Vargas Llosa’s book *Wellsprings*, a collection of his essays published in 2008, where the translation is again different: “In the great forests of misconceptions and deceptions through which humankind roams.” I decided to use my original source, so the *PMLA* version is quoted in my novel. From the years given, one assessment is obvious: No matter which version is used, the quote is an anachronism, for the earliest that anyone (Remy included) could have come across the wording would have been in October 1990, while the present-time action of my novel occurs during the span from the end of February to the second of May, 1989.
- p. 250: “positivistic reality”: Positivism is ‘a system of philosophy basing knowledge solely on data of sense experience. . . . It rejects speculation about or search for ultimate origins” (*Webster’s New World*). Remy contrasts this philosophical approach with Houda’s and Leila’s “idealistic” assumptions about Ballard’s character.
- p. 250: “the halved or quartered truths you masqueraded in front of Mme. Ballard”: Houda learns that the “nimiety of details” which Remy has uncovered has exposed the falsehoods which she had told Leila, particularly those of the night of Feb. 15.
- p. 250: rosemaling: A Norwegian-based noun meaning “floral decorations which were painted or carved on furniture, walls, or wooden dinnerware” (from *Webster’s Third*).
- p. 250: *lusus naturae*: In Latin, a freak of nature; a deviation from the normal in nature. Remy used the phrase to describe Ballard on 12.200.

p. 250: “sanct—“: The word being formed by Remy is “sanction.” That is, he contends that Leila will not confirm the monstrous nature of Ballard. To stop Remy from vilifying the man she still loves, Houda interrupts him and begins to place the blame on herself.

p. 250: “Why did I lie to her? . . . Why did you lie with him?”: Houda’s pun I have debated over, and at least twenty times I have changed “lie to her” to “beguile her,” myself uncertain whether a quibble is appropriate at this tense moment. Yet always I recalled *Othello* 4.1.32-36: “Iago: Lie— Oth.: With her? Iago: With her, on her; what you will. Oth.: Lie with her? Lie on her? We say “lie on her” when they belie her. Lie with her?”

Houda admits that she lied to Leila, although certain parts of her account seem factual, particularly that of their first meeting (248-49). Ballard would have had to initiate it and, as mentioned above in the p. 249 note, N15:34-35, according to Mohammed, Ballard had said that if he did not allot some of the money for his family he would “hold back on you, hunting out your family to give them their [share]” (4.65).

However, the last meeting which Houda described to Leila, in which Ballard supposedly spoke lovingly of her (249), will contrast with Houda’s account of the penultimate meeting, Feb. 8, in which she told Remy that Ballard ridiculed Leila (251).

Furthermore, as previously noted, Houda withheld from Leila any reference to the events which Remy knew happened at the Feb. 15 meeting, when Ballard tricked a drunken Mohammed into spying on him and his sister engaging in sex.

p. 250: *niqaab*: “veil.”

Houda is wearing a full niqaab, one which completely covers her face.

p. 251: zygomatic bone: cheekbone.

p. 251: “*substitute* or *understudy*’ . . . At that byword Remy plummeted thirty years” and “overstepped the terminal rung of the ladder to his father’s loft”: The French lieutenant, after revealing that Noura had not been raped, said, “Every play has its rehearsal. Every star, her understudy” (3.50).

Houda’s word causes Remy to remember Dec. 8, 1958, just over thirty years ago, when “Noura’s ‘understudy’” (3.51) was raped.

Remy’s mind leaps to the future when he imagines himself stepping into his father’s loft on a pilgrimage in which he hopes will gain him release for the torment he has brought to his family.

p. 251: byword: A favorite or pet word or phrase.

p. 251: recumb: An intransitive verb meaning “lean, recline” (*Webster’s Third*).

p. 251: arced: moved in a curved course.

Her head did not “arch,” that is, “form an arch”; it was not elevated.

Rather sideways, with her head bowed, Houda stares toward the open door of the shed and symbolically sees the masculine Muslim world’ treatment of women.

Her subsuming view balances that of Foucin at the Andaloos, whose eyes seemed to move from those in the restaurant to those outside of it and on to “Algiers itself, and all of Algeria” (7.106).

p. 251: “the solitary man”: From Yeats’s “Vacillation”: My fiftieth year had come and gone, / I sat, a solitary man, / In a crowded London shop” (35-37).

Remy, like Yeats’s persona, rues “Things said or done long years ago” which “Weigh me down” (51-54).

p. 251: “cour—”: Houda starts to form the word “courted.”

p. 251: “for two months”: From Dec. 21, 1988, to Feb. 15, 1989.

p. 251: slaverling: slobbering or drooling, but with a play upon “slaver,” one who is engaged in slavery.

The latter association reinforces a political theme of the novel: The exploitation by the West of Africa.

Just as the French *pieds-noirs* exploited Algeria, symbolized by the French lieutenant’s torturing of the Naaman family, so the American Ballard represents the neocolonial Western abuse of native Africans.

p. 251: “virginally pornographic”: An oxymoron, as intended by Remy.

His assessment of Houda’s narrative is similar to his reaction to Leila’s account of the Feb. 16 drunken visit by Ballard: “The meticulous frankness—*Embarrassing!*” (12.192).

p. 251: *coquetterie*: coquettishness.

p. 251: “got herself ‘to a nunnery’”: From *Hamlet*: “Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?” (3.1.122-23)

Again a charged word for Remy since Noura was placed in a nunnery (2.27 and 3.40) and at the opening of this chapter, Remy calls up vivid scenes of her in the cornfield below it (239 and 240).

p. 251: aphotic: without light.

p. 251: cicatrices: scars.

p. 251: “cleanser-poxed claw”: “Pox” as an archaic word means “to infect with a pox,” a disease which is characterized by skin eruptions (*Webster’s Third*).

In describing her hands, Houda presents their skin as being covered with rough scars caused by lye and other cleansers.

p. 251: “‘Piece of flesh’”: Samson’s allusion to his erect penis in *Romeo* 1.1.28-29: “Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and ’tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh,” although the phrase likewise calls to mind Shylock’s “an equal pound / Of your fair flesh” (*Merchant* 1.3.148-49).

p. 251: in tandem: Ballard’s covering hand moved hers in the masturbation.

Earlier in this chapter, p. 242, “in tandem” was used to describe the ascension of Houda and Foucin as her father’s body was hoisted from the sea boulder.

p. 251: “*For the second time in two days, an identical sexual dysfunction, but with a different Belmazoir*”: On Mon., Feb. 6, Ballard’s attempt to sodomize Mohammed ended in failure (6.84-85). On 14.227, Remy speculated that this impotence led to Ballard’s scheme on Feb. 15 to punish Mohammed by showing him that he was sleeping with Houda.

Here Remy learns that on Wed., Feb. 8, a similar experience had occurred with Houda where Ballard was unable to achieve an erection. Ballard’s “‘fetishized intricacies’ of his revenge” would now encompass “both brother and sister.”

Ironically this double failure appears to fit in with Foucin’s conjecture that at the Feb. 27 meeting at Zaracova a “fleering” Ballard told Mohammed he was resolved “to sever all constricting ties with both Belmazoirs” (13.207).

p. 251: *salle de bains*: In French, “bathroom.”

p. 251: Palais d’Hiver: From 1839 until independence, it was “the winter palace” of the French governor of Algiers. From 1962 until the early 1990s, it was a ceremonial residence. It then underwent renovation in order to house the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

See the text on 5.78 and its notes for a description of it. Located opposite Martyrs

Square, other aspects of it are given in the 12.198 note.

As mentioned on that page, according to Ghazi, Houda stepped behind the hedges in front of it to remove her Arabic covering garment, which she concealed there.

p. 251: *haik*: An outer robe worn by Algerian women over native or Western clothes.

p. 251: fetishize: to make a fetish of.

p. 251: "It was not his fault!": This declaration by Houda, always before stated about her brother, is applied here to Ballard.

Remy's "disgust" at her narrative, given ten paragraphs above, in which he seems to regard Houda's infatuation with Ballard as merely sexual, and his egotism cause him to miss the implication of her statement: Despite everything Ballard did to her brother and her, Houda still loves Ballard.

Belatedly, Remy will make this discovery (252).

This section ends at 6:09; thus up to this point they have spoken seventeen minutes.

pp. 252-54: SECTION 7

- p. 252: “An embarrassed Remy”: This is a continuation of section 6, so the time is 6:10.
- p. 252: dumb show: A theatrical term used in Elizabethan drama, it means “a part of a play presented through actions without speech.”
It describes the sexual scene which Ballard preferred, according to Mohammed: “I could speak if exigent, though he would never banter during sex” (4.64).
- p. 252: hypotactic: of, relating to, or exhibiting the syntactic subordination of one clause to another.
In Remy’s statement the subordinate clause is “that I have fathomed the affairs of that night.” Therefore the hypotactic verb is “fathomed.”
- p. 252: “She herself was drawn to the scene three nights ago”: On the afternoon of Sunday, Apr. 16, Leila took possession of the apartment (12.196 and 13.204).
- p. 252: “chased from her flat”: On p. 248, Leila told Remy that on her first night in the 508 apartment, she had “cowardly stolen away.”
- p. 252: “*Allahu Akbar!*”: In Arabic, “God is Great!” Called the *Takbir*, these words open the azan or call to daily prayers by the muezzin, and they are incorporated into all sequences of the prayers.
“*Allahu Akbar!*” is also called out at times of distress and as a battle cry during war. The words appear on the Iraqi, Iranian, and Afghani flags.
- p. 252: “through barbed wire”: While Ballard had stepped over the barbed wire (1.10), Leila squeezed through it as did Remy on 6.94.
- p. 252: “Saïda bottle”: The most popular brand of bottled water in Algeria.
See the 3.41 note for information about the Algerian city Saïda, the source of the name for the bottled water.
- p. 252: “Still terrified by a piece of plastic”: The use of “still” indicates that Leila is referring to the “snip of thermoplastic film” (12.194) which Remy told her was most probably placed in Ballard’s wallet by his murderer.
- p. 252: “returned to 508”: The number of Leila’s apartment.
- p. 252: anneal: strengthen and temper the mind, will, etc.
- p. 252: “temporal divorcement”: The time when Houda was disunited or separated from Ballard.

- p. 252: “unraveling of one mystery”: On p. 248, Remy had wondered what “had impelled [Leila] ‘cowardly’ to desert the flat.”
- p. 252: “coerced him to accept, lessening his irritation, *She loves him still!*”: Up until this point, Remy missed all the hints that Houda still loved Ballard. When Remy had attacked him and his *lusus naturae*, Houda had cut him off (250). His words had moved her to tears: Her veil “which had hung freely from her zygomatic bone now adhered” (250-51). She assailed others such as “the *alim*, Ghazi, and his mother” (251), but would allow nothing critical of Ballard to be voiced. Houda portrayed herself as a willing participant in his sexual advances and was crushed when she thought his repulsion toward her charwoman’s body had been the reason for his darting from the bed. Afterward she told Ballard that she had failed him and averred that she, not he, was responsible for “the ensnar[ing] of my innocent brother” (251).
- p. 252: “the checked out FLIRs and explained their use. Her ‘oh!’”: That Houda had seen the two pairs of goggles is implied on 1.2 and confirmed (if she is to be believed) on p. 253. Her “oh!” reaction, indicating to Remy “both surprise and distress,” came from his explanation of what the goggles were used for. She realized that she had been the subject of voyeuristic exposure.
- p. 252: “his first adoption of the word *perhaps* . . . ‘She’s too dazzled to speak.’ . . . he felt none”: Instances of Remy’s egotism.
- p. 252: “‘What?’ she demanded”: Remy misinterprets this question, believing that his detailed disclosure of what happened in the room is causing her pain. The true reason for Houda’s question will be revealed on the next page.

- p. 253: “*Dieu seul le sait!*”: “God only knows!” This expression indicates that Remy does not expect (or desire) Houda in her comments on his account to detail her and Ballard’s sexual activity, which is best left a secret known only to God.
- p. 253: “its artificiality is quite genuine”: Remy realizes that in his narration he is quite casually assuming an oxymoronic posture where the artificial becomes the genuine.
- p. 253: “the *awgh*’s wholehearted, familiar”: A cry of pain from the heart.
See the 3.43 note, N3:23, for the use of *awgh* in seven chapters of the novel.
Remy employs “familiar” to indicate that he believes Houda at once recognized her brother’s voice.
- p. 253: “and absent of any protest that he will *not* ‘*Wallahee! Inshallah!* . . . reap what I’ll sow!”: Mohammed’s puzzling declaration to Belghiche on receiving the message about the Feb. 15 Toumi meeting: “‘*Wallahee! Inshallah!* I’m going to reap what I’ll sow!” (14.225, and partially quoted by Remy on 14.230).
See the 14.225 note, N14:23, for an examination of the statement.
- p. 253: hashished: Probably a coinage since I did not find an adjective or verbal form of *hashish* in any dictionaries when I first used it in a 1991 draft of my novel. However, a Google search revealed its recent use in blogs: “hashished out of my mind” and “drunken, hashished update.”
- p. 253: in a trice: An idiomatic phrase meaning “in a short time; instantly.”
- p. 253: toggle switch: A switch which opens and closes an electric current.
On 4.64, Mohammed had mentioned in passing that the circuit breaker box was in the bathroom of the Toumi apartment.
- p. 253: “By shifting tenses, Remy designed to lower the tension”: Remy began his account in the past tense: “Per his mandate, you were in bed” (252).
However, he shifts to present tense almost immediately: A “silent M. John climbs into the bed” (252).
He continues in this tense until the fifth true paragraph of p. 253 when he reverts to past tense: “Did the rattled M. Ballard.”
- p. 253: “four hours later”: More exactly four and one-half hours later. On 14.226, Remy estimated that Ballard and Mohammed arrived at the Toumi apartment “at, say, 7:45 p.m.”
The time Ballard was in bed with Houda and the confrontation afterward, Remy’s account suggests, lasted fifteen minutes. Thus Ballard would have left at eight.
- p. 253: “verged on confession”: On 12.191-92, Remy saw through Leila’s account that every time Ballard started to talk about his sin Leila would cut him off. She said

that the next morning, he “launched into an apology, but I stopped him. . . . What did he have to apologize for?”

- p. 253: “Mme. Bourceli’s 8:45”: Bourceli calls out to the returning Mohammed and Houda that it is “8:45” (13.203 and 206).
- p. 253: “hosanna”: As a verb, it means “to acclaim with shouts of ‘hosanna’” or enthusiastic praise (*Webster’s Third*).
The word was used in one of the stanzas of “Georgie” on 2.26. See its note, N2:39.
- p. 253: “disannul my judgment?”: From Job 40:8, where God tells Job that in his complaint he has challenged His judgment: “Wilt thou also disannul my judgment?”
Remy demands of Houda whether she dares to dispute the correctness of his version of the events of the fifteenth.
His megalomania leads Remy into comparing himself with God.
- p. 253: “Am not I right!”: This is intended to have the syntactical structure of a question but the intonation of an exclamation.
- p. 253: *cela va sans dire*: A French expressions meaning, “that goes without saying.”
- p. 253: “a fascination less with the truth than with his being its discoverer”: This statement once more shows Remy to be an advocate of Popperism (the philosophy of Karl Popper), which holds that truth is not inherent in the universe, imposed by some nonhuman being, but is discovered by people.
See the 6.95 note, N6:39; the 12.196 note, N12:25; and the 13.207 and 217 notes, N13:26 and 51-52.
- p. 253: “the respecter of the male prerogative”: In Muslim cultures, typically a woman will not interrupt or speak over a man.
- p. 253: stage-whisper: A transitive verb meaning “to speak in a stage whisper,” that is, “a loud whisper by an actor that is audible to the spectators but is supposed not to be heard by one or more of the actors” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 253: “Houda was absent for under a minute”: The time that she will begin her answering speech is 6:33.
- p. 253: “not glorying in the qualifier”: The qualifier “much” in Houda’s statement, “It’s much the way you said.”
The prideful Remy would have preferred her response to have been, “It’s just the way you said.”

- p. 253: aporetic: skeptical (*Webster's Third*).
- p. 253: "undyeing": "Undye" as a verb does not appear in any standard print or online dictionary. *Webster's Third* lists "undyed" as an adjective meaning "not dyed" and *Wiktionary* adds a second meaning, "in its natural color." A search of Google turns up the verb form in such expressions as "How do I undye my hair, shirt, dress, etc.?" Sometimes the construction is spelled with a hyphen, "un-dye." Houda's meaning is that the turning on of the light drained the dark room of its darkness, although symbolically she realizes that this light reveals a greater darkness. This passage about "undyeing the chamber's darkness" harks back to the John 1:5 which Remy quoted in chap. 4: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (4.54). Its note, N4:10, states that the essence of a murder mystery (or a tragedy) is to move from darkness to light, from mystery to comprehension. Additionally, through using "undyeing," I achieved a stark play upon "undying" meaning "immortal," the etymology of which indicates that human beings cannot traffic with this concept.
- p. 253: "'bare, forked' demesne": From *Lear* 3.4.105-06: "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art." "Demesne" here figuratively refers to her body; its literal meaning is "region, domain, or what real estate one owns."
- p. 253: "The thighs of my attacker weren't scarred": Recognition by Remy is immediate: Houda's rapist is her brother. Houda gives Remy only a few details of what transpired in the room, such as that she fought her attacker and during this fight grasped his penis. However, these are sufficient to allow Remy to imagine the rape (section 9, pp. 255-56, a hypothetical interior dramatic duologue in which his id assumes the role of Houda and his superego that of her questioner).
- p. 253: "that 'piece of flesh'": See the p. 251 note above, N15:41, which cites the passage from *Romeo* where the phrase is used.
- p. 253: "again excuse my lexical modesty": On p. 251, Houda says that her "vocabulary is meek"; thus she describes Ballard's penis as "his . . . 'piece of flesh.'"
- p. 253: "the size and shape and substance of one's adversary": Houda's wording, which will be resurrected on 19.317, is similar to Omar's own, which was used symbolically on 3.50 to characterize his dazed condition after agreeing to be a traitor to Algeria: "the dusk, whose sundry colors blur and blend and bruise . . . shape and size and substance." The "shape, size, substance" order, however, will be employed when Remy is

describing another person on 17.279 and concocting a scheme on 21.354.

p. 253: *exempli gratia*: The Latin phrase is translated as “for the sake of an example” or “for example.”

Houda means that being uncircumcised was only one aspect of several in which the two penises differed.

p. 253: pre-reflux: This term was not found in standard print and online dictionaries. However, through a Google search I came across several medical articles which used “pre-reflux” as an adjective meaning “occurring before reflux”: “their old pre-reflux diet” and “in your pre-reflux days.”

In my novel, using “reflux” in its etymological meaning of “to flow back,” the term “pre-reflux” describes the period where mucus that has been swallowed from the mouth is gathering in the throat before it is expelled, or flows back, into the mouth.

p. 253: “once blatant in her silence, was bent on airing”: Remy’s puzzlement is perhaps mirrored in the reader. Why would Houda reveal to a man she barely knows this horrible family secret, that her intoxicated brother had been tricked into violating her?

An answer will come, but not until chap. 18. Here some clues are provided: Houda, who had been basically silent throughout the novel, suddenly shows a willingness to speak to three people in a day and a half, and in some cases contradictorily.

To Leila on Tuesday, Apr. 18, she portrays Ballard as a benefactor of their family and a devoted husband to Leila, about whom he often used their meetings to express how much he loved his wife (248-49). However, before she discusses her nine meetings with him, she asks Leila to “tell me about your husband” and receives an answer of “almost ten minutes” (248).

That same day she agrees to speak to Remy, and the next morning, Wednesday, Apr. 19, she contacts Foucin to ask to see the case file on her brother, which would, of course, contain much about the murder of Ballard (246 and 247).

That afternoon, she meets with Remy and agrees to tell him about her last two meetings with Ballard in the Toumi room (Feb. 8 and 15). During her account of the first, she portrays Leila as her rival for Ballard’s affections; according to Houda, at that rendezvous a tipsy Ballard made fun of Leila and initiated sexual advances to Houda(251).

After her description of Feb. 8, she strangely requests that Remy “tell me how he [Ballard] died” (252).

What stands out is not just the puzzle of why she revealed her “rape” to Remy, but also why she sought from him, Foucin, and Leila a plethora of information about Ballard.

Finally, how does it profit the silent woman to become the vocal liar?

p. 253: deflorate: A transitive verb meaning “to take away the prime beauty and grace

of; ravage; despoil; to deprive or strip of flowers" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 253: "The bonding is not perfect": Houda states that in identifying the positions and roles of the two men in the room Remy has not correctly bonded her rapist with Mohammed and the voyeur with Ballard.

The "bonding" theme appears frequently in the novel as the following overview suggests:

Chap. 1: Although neither "bond" nor "bind" is used, the bond established by the "marriage contract" and spousal love (1, 2, 4, 11, and 13) is implied. Additionally the bond of friendship is stressed, particularly Ballard's longtime friendship with Leroy (1, 7, and 10) and his short-term one with Mohisen (5 and 8).

Chap. 2: The bond between France and the seven traitors (18); HIV's and Remy's bond (29); and the bond of the seven traitors to aid each other (33).

Chap. 3: Remy's bond or *nathr* to God committing him to always watch after Noura (37), and the French lieutenant's bond with Omar (46).

Chap. 4: The so-called orphanage bond (52).

Chap. 5: The bond between Leroy and Ballard (73).

Chap. 7: The three hands joined as if in a bond (109); the bond of Algeria's revolutionary leaders (114).

Chap. 9: The bond that Remy proposes to Leila (144) and the bond made by the women of Tizi Aimoula (151).

Chap. 12: Leila's bond with Remy (190); the brother-sister bond (194); and Remy's bond with Leila (194).

Chap. 13: Mme. Belmazoir's affirmation of the mother-child bond (203); "binding with briars" (207 and 218); bonded to alcohol (213); and Remy's artificial avowal of a bond between himself, truth, and justice in the Ballard case (217).

Chap. 14: The bond of the seven traitors (220); Foucin's bonding with Houda and Mohammed (222 and 232); Remy's "bind" (231); Foucin's avowal of how the death of Omar Naaman will seal his bond to bring the seven traitors to justice (235); a family bond (236); and a bribe viewed as reinforcing a familial bond (236).

Chap. 15: Bonded to sex and drugs (243); Houda corrects the bonding which

Remy has established (254).

In later chapters, the theme continues. These instances are listed without specifics in order not to disclose plot development.

Chap. 16: The bond cementing humanity (266).

Chap. 17: A bonding with a father (278 and 291).

Chap. 18: A bond between brother and sister (295); a redemptive bonding (299).

Chap. 19: The human bond (320); a recalling of the bond given on 2.29 (329); a past bond (331); a future bond tentatively requested (331).

Chap. 20: A bond forged in warfare (338); a blood-bond (348).

Chap. 21: The bond cementing humanity (364).

p. 253: stertorous: “characterized by . . . a gasping sound” (*Webster's Third*).

- p. 254: “his congealed *awgh* . . . gag-restrained for thirty years . . . below the wormhole”: See the p. 253 note above, N15:45.
Awgh is a coined interjection to express an animalistic pain or a superhuman joy—an equivalent of “speaking in tongues.”
 It may convey either “yes” or “no,” as indicated in the 3.43 note, N3:23, which indicates that *awgh* is used in seven chapters of the novel.
 On 3.50 (N3:37), *awgh*, exclaimed seven times, translates as “Yes!” for it expresses Omar’s unbearable joy on learning that Noura had not been tortured (Dec. 8, 1958). At that time, he slid from the peephole, called a “wormhole” both there and here, following a “popliteal whack” by the lieutenant” (3.50).
 Just over thirty years late, Apr. 19, 1989, he again utters the exclamation seven times, but now it means “No!” since he is protesting against the ruse which the American Ballard perpetrated on the Belmazoir siblings, a similar deceit having been played on his sister and himself by the French.
 However, part of Remy’s anger is directed at Houda for revealing, and thus involving him in, this horrible family secret: “The ensuring four *awghs* were squalled at her” since he was “determined that she would not disregard” his grievance. (Remy has forgotten that he initiated his involvement in the matter.)
- p. 254: “the *alim* . . . muttered . . . “The text of my holy fingers may move at will”: The *alim*’s pedophilic dream connects with the sexual perversion of incest just revealed to Remy.
- p. 254: *skirr*: “a whirring, rasping, or roaring sound” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 254: “sputum thick as semen, he mosque-summons the men, ‘*Al-awgh Akbar!*’”:
 Mme. Bourceli is drawn toward using sexual allusions in speaking of the *alim*.
 “*Al-awgh Akbar!*” is a corruption of the *Takbir* (the Arabic term for the first two words—“*Allahu Akbar!*” “God is Great!”) of the *azan* or call to prayers
 This garbled form looks both backward to 1.3 where a distortion of it is used, “*Al-shrh Akbar!*” and forward to “*Al-awgh Akbar!*” which will reappear as the last words of the novel (21.368).
 A third clipped form will also be used on 17.282, “*Allahu Ak-awgh!*”
- p. 254: “thinking you knew all”: The prideful Remy had concluded his speech to Houda on the Feb. 15 events with the exclamation, “Am not I right!” (253)
- p. 254: “he shoved some bills, not cognizant of their denominations, into his outstretched palm”: Again, an attempt to tie together the tragedies.
 Here Remy shoves an unknown amount of money in the *alim*’s hand just as Ballard had dropped at Mohammed’s feet the money intended for Leila (1.2).
 These episodes foreshadow a third instance where an unspecified amount of money will be showered on an unsuspecting person (17.287).
- p. 254: “Qur’an-slinger”: In his mind Remy is quoting Mme. Bourceli’s epithet for the

alim from 11.174.

- p. 254: “Beneficence”: A gift, but the capitalization indicates that the *alim* interprets that God has passed it to him through this “unbeliever.”
This section ends with the *alim*'s speech at 6:40.

pp. 254-55: SECTION 8

- p. 254: “We’re almost there”: The section opens at 6:57 when the taxi is a couple of blocks from Leila’s apartment building.
It lasts only nine minutes.
- p. 254: “as generous a respecter of his silence as the mother”: See p. 253 where Mme. Belmazoïr, “a respecter of the male prerogative even on her deathbed,” holds back her coughing while Remy is speaking.
- p. 254: “Midway from Bab el Oued”: The return taxi ride from Bab el Oued lasts from 6:41 – 6:59. Thus during the first half of the trip Remy concentrated on the tragedy of the Belmazoïr siblings, but at 6:50 Remy turned his attention to his plan to visit his father.
- p. 254: “what I will unbosom to my father”: The horror of what Houda has revealed to Remy makes him envision getting out of Algeria as soon as possible and returning to Le Puy, a hermitage devoid of such physical and psychological violence.
- p. 254: ne plus ultra: the ultimate or acme; in Latin literally “no more beyond.”
Remy anticipated that after his insistence, “Am not I right!” (253), with a one-word affirmative reply Houda would indicate that he was.
Directly after that concurrence, he had planned to deliver the “ultimatum” that Houda must accompany Foucin and him to the prison the next morning (246).
Her answer, however, takes him unawares, and he forgets about setting up the assignation.
- p. 254: “in need of a balancing support”: Normally the hand to an elbow of a rising person is meant to provide balance for that person, not for the one offering the hand.
- p. 254: “the primal urge was promptly stifled”: His desire to touch Leila is put aside since he realizes that all of his concentration should be on reconnecting with his father and ultimately reunion with Marie.
- p. 254: “dismissed Nemmiche, resolving for a second time that day to tread the short measure to the Al-Nigma”: On pp. 246-47, earlier that afternoon at 2:20 outside

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Leila's apartment "he notified Nemmiche he would walk the nine blocks to the Al-Nigma."

- p. 255: “your imminent cooperation”: He is determined that he must implement his plan, detailed on pp. 245-46, to see his father. Leila’s involvement is crucial to its success.
- p. 255: *portes vitrées*: “glass doors” in French.
- p. 255: *berraani*: As indicated in the text, colloquial Algerian Arabic for “foreigner” (online *Algerian Dardja Dictionary*).
- p. 255: “repeated out loud the number she gave”: In chap. 13 Remy angrily bemoaned “not having secured Leila’s [telephone] number” from Foucin (215).
- p. 255: “his subterfuge prevented him from involving her till Foucin had been enlisted”: On p. 245, directly back from the prison, Remy first visited Foucin’s office to initiate the scheme which would allow him to visit his father. Only once his proposal had been accepted by Foucin did he plan to approach Leila, “never doubting that she would nod her consent” (246).
When Foucin was late in returning, Remy, not stating his purpose, then taxied to Leila’s apartment, but likewise found her absent (246-47).
Here he clarifies that the purpose of that visit was simply to notify her that he needed her help, not to give her a detailed explanation of her part in the subterfuge.
Foucin’s involvement must first be obtained.
- p. 255: *une nuit d’évasion*: A night of mental escape from reality.
The word “escape” is used ironically for Remy is about to be kidnapped.
- p. 255: Gibbon: This is the last reference to Gibbon in the novel. The rapid events of the rest of the novel will allow no occasion for reading him hereafter.
Thus Remy reads seven chapters of Gibbon while in Algiers, the number being symbolic: chaps. 8 – 14.
Chaps. 8 and 9 were read on Apr. 10 (4.66); 11 and 12 on Apr. 15 (11.181); and 12 – 14 on Apr. 17 (13.215). See their notes to these pages.
- p. 255: “M. Champagne”: The codename of his French Embassy contact.
On Monday night, Apr. 17, his liaison had requested that Remy telephone him on Wednesday night, Apr. 19 (13,215).
- p. 255: Citroën: French-produced automobile. Founded in 1919, Citroën was purchased by Peugeot in 1976, which continued making models of the car.
It has long been a popular car in Algeria.
- p. 255: “one, whirling, threw his arms . . . to vise his legs . . . heaved into the Renault where a fourth caught him in a chokehold . . . piled in upon his chest”: Compare this passage with the kidnapping of Omar on Dec. 8, 1958:

A beige Peugeot 403 suddenly braked, and a man in a gray *gandoura* climbed out and started to close its back door.

From behind came a shove, and Omar's face and chest were propelled against its roof. The one in the robe whirled and, vising his left arm, bundled him through the gaping door, his own body following. A third in the *siège arrière* immediately trussed his head, detruded it facedown, and plumped his buttocks on it. Omar's own bottom was being straddled . . . and once the door was slammed, "the initial thruster" sent a crushing weight onto his legs.

"What's this? What's this?" the people at the corner shouted before the car sped away. (3.39-40)

p. 255: *de façon théâtrale*: Literarily, "in a theatrical way"; theatrically.

p. 255: "scream shrilled . . . her cry closed in . . . a brief commotion . . . 'Shake her off': Observing Remy being seized, Leila cried out, rushed toward the silver Renault, tried to fight her way past the abductor still outside the car, and was shaken off by him.

p. 255: *illation*: conclusion; inference.

p. 255: "*Yallah!*": "Let's go!" It implies "quickly" ("*besorah*"), the full command being "*Yallah besorah!*"

p. 255: "The cam—": The nervous driver is about to utter "the camp." There are many words in English which begin with "cam—." That Leila will later say (16.267-68) that she was able to use the morphemes to deduce that the speaker was referring to "camp" results from the Arabic which the speaker used: He utters "*al-mukhay—*" These first three syllables in Arabic lead only to that word meaning "the camp." The camp—its identity quite obvious since only one has been mentioned in the post-revolutionary section of the text of the novel—will be overtly revealed in the last sentence of this chapter.

p. 255: *siège avant*: "front seat" of a vehicle in French.

p. 255: kick in: Informal English for "to take effect."

p. 255: "Again": Remy connects this kidnapping with that he had endured as Omar in 1958 at the hands of the French. For that reason he first considered it to be a French operation. The second basically mirrors the 1958 one except that there Omar is given a needle injection which causes him to lose consciousness. Here a chloroform-soaked rag is used. It is badly administered, as 16.257 will establish, so Remy never loses complete consciousness. This section ends at 7:06 with the car being driven away.

pp. 255-56: SECTION 9

p. 255: "When his body slipped under the sheet": Except for its last paragraph, this section is an interior dramatic duologue of a conversation which the semiconscious Remy imagines between himself and Houda during the short drive to the second car into which his Palestinian kidnappers will transfer him (16.338). (7:06 – 7:10)

For the literary device, the interior dramatic duologue, see the 1.3 note, "protested," N1:10; the 2.21, note (N2:26); and the 3.47 note (N3:31).

The 3.37-51 section is more relevant because there Remy's superego forces Remy's id to confront the supposed rape of Noura while here Remy's superego compels his id, represented as Houda, to try to come to terms with this rape of a sister unknowingly committed by her brother.

p. 255: *sensate*: a transitive verb meaning "to feel or apprehend through a sense or the senses" (*Webster's Third*).

- p. 256: “tear”: to move violently or with speed, but with a homonymic pun on “tear” (“to fill the eyes with tears”).
- p. 256: “sweetly noisome rag”: Chloroform has a pungent, sweet, antiseptic-like smell.
- p. 256: “just shoved against mine”: 7:07, a minute after the chloroform-dabbed cloth was brought to Remy’s face.
- p. 256: “as massive as a bear’s”: Again I chose this animal because of its homonymic potential: “to sustain the burden of something or someone” and “to carry.” These meanings of “bear” are used at two seminal points in the novel. On 2.33, Omar as one of the seven traitors was signaled out: “The eldest gets off easy while the youngest [Omar] will bear the most.” And on 5.81, the second word which Remy says to Houda in the novel is “bear.” Following the *alim’s* explanation of who he was, Remy states, “I bear a message from him [Mohammed].” The other Algerian brother Ahmed Chabane is also compared with a “bear” which must be “lugged” (Ballard on 1.13) and “a salmon-stuffed bear” (Leila on 9.144).
- p. 256: hustle: As a transitive verb, “to force in a rough, hurried manner.”
- p. 256: “A ‘fleshy thing,’ to mimic your demure lexicon”: See p. 251: “to his . . . (my vocabulary is meek) ‘piece of flesh’” and p. 253: “that ‘piece of flesh’—again excuse my lexical modesty.”
- p. 256: “absent scars”: The back of Ballard’s thighs had scars: “the bumpy cicatrices” (251).
- p. 256: “wasn’t uncircumcised (*vide* the preceding week)”: *Vide*: “see or refer to.” The preceding week was that of Feb. 8, when Houda states that Ballard’s penis “shrank” and its glans “dwindle[ed] into its veil [foreskin]” (251), that is, it was uncircumcised. In contrast, the penis forced inside her on Feb. 15 was circumcised since Mohammed like all Muslim males typically underwent circumcision. See the 3.46 note, N3:29, and the 4.58 note, N4:20, for more about the circumcision of Muslim males.
- p. 256: calces: the plural of “calx” (“the heel of the foot”).
- p. 256: “two centimeters in, it breached the vulnerable hymen”: The hymen, technically part of the vulva or external female genitalia, is just inside (c. two centimeters) the opening of the vagina. I was told that a Muslim bride is expected to scream loudly in pain when her hymen is broken as a complimenting acknowledgment of the “size and power” of her male partner’s penis.

Reared a Muslim, Remy perpetuates this charade by stating that the “pain” rushed from Houda’s loins to her throat and was so great that it caused her to lose consciousness (“all went black”).

Despite horror stories about the pain and the bleeding that accompany first intercourse, most women report that they experience only minor discomfort and minimal bleeding.

Another deception often perpetrated on the first night of intercourse by the Muslim couple involves a ritual: The groom is expected to bring outside a bloody white cloth, placed under the bride to catch the blood from the broken hymen, and wave it in front of gathered neighbors as a testimony that he married a virgin. Muslim friends assured me that a substitute blood-soaked rag was always kept on hand just in case the bride wasn’t or the groom couldn’t.

p. 256: “nether parts”: An informal medical expression, listed as dated or outdated, for “the lower part of the body, especially the buttocks or genital area” (the online *Medical-glossary.com*).

p. 256: “the accustomed Bab el Oued boys’ taunts”: Ghazi’s ridicule of Houda (12.198 and 13.201 and 205) and the mocking description of Houda climbing down the cliff on pp. 241-42 are indicative.

p. 256: “raped by a cliff’s bellowing rocks”: As if delighting in their “rape” of Houda, the personified rocks “bellow,” that is, “make the powerful, reverberating roar of a bull.”
The sound actually made is that of Houda scraping across the rocks after she had slipped going down the cliff (241).

p. 256: *complicit*: An alternate spelling of “*complicitous*” (“having or showing complicity; implicated”).

p. 256: *de rigueur*: required by etiquette or propriety.

p. 256: “our familiar *awgh*”: The expression usually of pain appears four times in this section.

For its earlier use in this chapter, see pp. 253 and 254 and their notes, N15:45 and 51.

It is used fifteen times in the chapter: four by Mohammed (253 and 256); nine by Remy (254 and 256); once by Houda (256), and once by Bourceli (254).

p. 256: “chink peephole-like”: Mohammed made a chink (“a narrow opening”) between his fingers closing Houda’s mouth so that he can plant a kiss on her lips. As I did not find it in any dictionary or through online searches, “peephole-like” appears to be an awkward neologism (but “like a peephole” destroyed the cadence of my sentence).

Often partnered with “loophole,” “wormhole,” “black hole,” and “white hole,”

“peephole” appears twelve times in the novel.
For a complete listing, see the 3.42 note, N3:21-22.

- p. 256: “an indifferent kiss”: The wording is borrowed from Yeats’s “Leda and the Swan”: “Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?” (14).
The pattern of this rape in my novel is modeled on Yeats’s description of the rape of Leda by Zeus.
- p. 256: bourns: boundaries.
- p. 256: “demarcated one night, dallying there with M. Foucin”: See 13.203-04.
- p. 256: “Yes, to the latter. For the other, it may be more your ‘so’ than mine”: Houda, an aspect of Remy’s psyche, agrees that Foucin murdered her and Mohammed’s father. However, she says that the idea Foucin loves the Belmazoïr siblings is a figment of Remy’s imagination.
- p. 256: houselights: The lights that illuminate the part of a theater where the audience is seated. This theatrical term is followed by another, “dramaturgy,” just as these were preceded by “pantomime” (251) and “dumb show” (252).
These images indicate that Remy believed Ballard had drafted a play in which he exposed his relationship with both brother and sister.
- p. 256: “We time nothing not related to our prayers”: This idea was expressed twice earlier in the novel.
On 1.4, Leila said, “Only God deserves our punctuality” and on 6.86, Mohammed told Remy, “In Algiers, nothing’s on time except the prayer calls.”
- p. 256: “then-Edenic features”: “Edenic” is an adjective which means “of or relating to an Eden; paradisiacal” (*Webster’s Third*).
It may seem strange that Remy (or this aspect of his mind representing his superego’s point of view as opposed to his id’s position as presented by Houda) would describe Mohammed, who has just realized that he has raped his sister, as “Edenic.”
However, he is speaking of Mohammed’s physical visage in the Toumi apartment on Feb. 15 which would not be deflorated by the knife attack until Apr. 19.
- p. 256: “in all their wild-garden beauty”: This is the chapter’s final reference to the central words of its title.
- p. 256: primogenial: original.
It is formed from the combining of two Latin words meaning “first begotten.”
The reference is to Adam and Eve, whose role in the Garden of Eden as presented by Milton was principally that of gardeners.

- p. 256: “for it is a sin our Heavenly Father, et cetera”: Three times earlier the “sin,” reduced to an “et cetera” here, was given in full:
 (1) Ballard’s description of Mohammed looking on the naked Houda: “a sin God cannot forgive or a man ever forget” (1.2);
 (2) Remy’s remembrance of when as Omar he was forced to watch the naked Noura: “a sin a man cannot forget or God ever forgive. A brother looking on his sister’s nakedness” (3.43); and
 (3) Remy’s imagined scene where the goggled Mohammed spied his naked sister in bed with Ballard: “a sin a man cannot forget or God ever forgive” (14.226).
 Of the four references, two begin with the sin’s consequence on humanity (3.43 and 14.226) and two with God’s reaction (1.2 and 15.256).
 Furthermore, I sought to employ a pattern where 3.43 and 14.226 symbolize “everything disconnects” and “nothing connects,” since Divinity is subordinate to humanity, and where 1.2 and 15.256 represent “nothing disconnects” and “everything connects,” with the repercussions of God or “our Heavenly Father” syntactically dominant.
- p. 256: “the serpent as it contrapuntally wriggled away”: In *Paradise Lost*, after Eve ate of the apple, “Back to the thicket slunk / The guilty serpent” (9.784-85) and “changing shape / To observe the sequel, saw his guileful act / By Eve, though all unweeting, seconded / Upon her husband, saw their shame that sought / Vain covertures; but when he saw descend / The Son of God . . . / He fled. . . . With joy / And tidings fraught, to Hell he now returned” (10.333-47).
 In the Biblical and Qur’anic allegory presented here, Houda and Mohammed become Eve and Adam.
- p. 256: contrapuntally: of or characterized by counterpoint.
 Ballard (“the serpent”) wriggles away from the room, a counterpoint to his having brought the brother and sister face to face.
- p. 256: “to take measure of each other”: In seven chapters of the novel, a total of nine times, the “measure for measure” phrase in its complete or clipped form is used. As pointed out in the p. 246 note above, these are listed on the 1.3 note, N1:11, which examines its Biblical source (Matt. 7:2) and its Shakespearean source (*Measure for Measure*, title and 5.1.419).
- p. 256: “but of him it is not”: Even in Remy’s concoction, that aspect of his psyche representing Houda will not sanction a comparison of Ballard with Satan, a testimony of her love for him.
- p. 256: “Only in his deepest recesses”: The interior dramatic duologue lasts four groggy minutes, to 7:10.
- p. 256: “a barely buttressing backseat bolster for three Palestinians”: The sentence uses words and phrases similar to those employed in Omar’s kidnapping by the

French during the Algerian war: “Omar, bare-butted backseat cushion for three men” (3.40).

As there, the comic alliteration here, I felt necessary, to alleviate the tension.

p. 256: “whisked, after a change of cars, to their camp south of Algiers”: On p. 255, one of the kidnappers had begun to say the first part of the word “camp.”

From their first words, Remy recognized that theirs was “an Arabic not native to Algiers” (255). He quickly hones in on their dialect and by p. 256 concludes that his kidnappers are Palestinians (256).

Thus he infers that he is being taken their camp, particularly given the PLO attack on Mohammed the previous night.

The change of cars will be described on 16.257.

The Palestinian cantonment is about 140 kilometers south of Algiers: 120 kilometers down Route 1 (the same highway taken to the prison); then a twenty-kilometer eastern cutoff is taken.

p. 256: “he and Houda ‘now would sleep’”: Exposure of the brutal details of the rape purges its evil, possibly allowing for the calm of sleep to ensue. However, in 16.257, Remy will note that during the drive to the camp he never lost complete consciousness.

The quote is from 3.51, where Remy, having finished his interior dramatic duologue about the rape of “Noura,” says to himself, “Now we will sleep.” The first word of 4.52, “No,” reveals that he did not sleep.

In linking himself with the post-rape Houda in the same way he had with Noura, Remy appears to be assuming a symbolic fraternal role.