

Chapter Ten

LA CASBAH, AT LAST

The “white heart of Algiers,” the Casbah is styled, although its shape is trapezium and its colors are many—pure white, worn taupe, icy gray, periwinkle blue, golden brown, and burnt orange rust, to delineate a few, all of which mutate as the sun crosses its sloping patch of the Sahel Hills.

Its eastern, seaward boundary, two-thirds of a kilometer and thus the longest of its four sides, consists of two streets, the straight Rue Bab Azoun which curves into the more winding Rue Bab el Oued.

Its northern verge is the four-hundred-meter Boulevard Abderazak Hadad (“Foucin’s street”), which links the verdurous Jardin Marengo with the virtue-enforcing Prison Civile. These flanking bookends symbolically function to exempt the Casbah from, or enmesh it in, both of the maniacal extremes of Islam: Khayyámic play and Wahhabi solemnity.

Hadad ends by dipping into Avenue Taleb Mohammed, whose opening, quarter-of-a-kilometer, dogleg swish marks the Casbah’s western border, the shortest of the quadrilateral. Midway along this crooking stands the highest point of the medina, the renowned sixteenth-century Citadel, the castle of the Turkish deys until the French conquest. At one time it was circuted by the city’s finest soldiers; now, by curio-sellers.

The principal segment of the Casbah’s half-kilometer southern perimeter is Boulevard Ourida Meddad, which intersects with Rue Bab Azoun, the full circuit come, at the medina’s largest covered market, Marché de la Lyre.

To revert to the cardiac metaphor, the right seaward ventricle of the Casbah is separated from its left by the north-south Rue Arbadji Abderahmane, a little-used, independence-imposed name for what was termed in the colonial era the Rue Marengo since it leads to the park. It has always been familiarly dubbed “the Middle Street,” the designation adopted by Remy as his taxi moseyed up it three days ago.

The innumerable byways and lanes (almost all of which are too pinched for vehicular traffic), alleys (many of which are cul-de-sacs), and cobblestone ambages—for the Casbah is as veined as a coltsfoot—are its “tricky” part, as Remy had been twice forewarned.

From Taleb Avenue at 4:45, the close of *salaat il-asr*, he had entered through Bab El Jdid, the arched portal to the Citadel. Five minutes into his downward stroll the coronary tropology was discarded, and in apparent indifference to this place of his birth, he resumed his deliberations, “totally philosophical,” about the mercurial beauty of Leila’s face.

The informality of his dress, similarly, tended to depreciate this pedestrian moment

of spatial confrontation: a short-sleeve plum cotton twill shirt, mint-on-white linen seersucker slacks, a worsted-wood silhouette jacket, and black leather casuals with rubber outsoles.

As for the Casbah, it was awash in golden sunlight, the livid, swollen cumulonimbus draping the city at ten, when he had set out for the penitentiary, having dissipated, its cloudburst spent.

Unencumbered by his Brigg, in his right hand Remy was instead carrying an oversized cloth bag bought outside the Citadel. At a slow gait he passed establishments, their owners in no hurry to reopen post-Asr. However, there were abundant street sellers, their blankets unfurled over the paving.

After a protracted dickering with one, the first gift for Marie went into the sack: a silver-plated cosmetic holder with a complanate, tree-patterned cover six times taller than the nub wherein the rouge or kohl would be packed.

A half-hour of tacking, in which he remembered to guide himself down some dead ends, and approximately ten stops later, his route seemingly dictated by sidewalk wares, he sheered into Ruelle Bensdid, having added only one more item to his *sac à provisions*, a large unstained wooden mixing bowl.

His immediate observation was that the storefront of his father's grocery had deteriorated. Its original white was dotted by splotches where the brown clay mixture showed through. Fallen away were a third of the slats of its shutters. To its doorway, whose splintered cypress frame he had been dragged across, a shoddy composite-wood affair was hinged. Through it Remy stepped inside.

A boy of about twelve, perched atop a stool behind the counter, on which rested his head, lazily jacked up his frame. Looking past him toward the opening at the rear, Remy descried not a garden, but a dim passageway and a series of what appeared to be rooms.

He ambled over to a cooler, all the time simpering amiably at the lad. A Coke brought out, Remy asked, "*Combien?*" The sleepy youngster wavered, debating the price he should specify. "Ten dinars." Tearing a sheet from a roll of brown paper towels on the counter, Remy enveloped the wet bottle previous to stowing it in his sack.

About the shop he drifted, touching other articles. At the stairwell, he shot a glance and heard again his father, struggling free, blaze out, "God will comfort the tortured!"

Before leaving, he also purchased a fly whisk with a loden green wooden handle, slapping its bundled strands of horsehairs against the staves of a barrel to dislodge its dust. *Just such a careless flick was the pretense that sealed Algeria's fate for one hundred thirty-two years*, and forthwith Remy was evoking the historical incident.

In the audience room of the Citadel, Algiers' Dey Hussein, in a heated parley with the French counsel, switched at a fly buzzing near the diplomat's chin and "accidentally" struck his cheek. After three years of simmering on the insult, in 1830 France invaded.

As with the Coke, without paltering Remy accepted the boy's price for the whisk.

It was a somber HIV, without wordplay, who three years ago had told him that his father had been moved. The women of the neighborhood carried out the transfer since from 1963, the year the names of the Unholy Seven were proclaimed, its men had never entered his parent's store or spoken to him except in the mosque, where greetings were requisite.

They had met in the Châtelet-Les Halles metro station in Paris, where he had expected to be hustled off to the toilets; rather, HIV shepherded him to one of the platform's recessed niches of beige plastic chairs. A wary Remy, certain the blast of a teasing thunderbolt was imminent, received the brown attaché case.

"Your stipend's inside." Having not employed the accustomed *pourboire*, HIV had not, as always before, averted his eyes during the monetary disbursement.

"Your father recently had a stroke . . . paralyzed from the hips down. He ignored the entreaties of the women to be taken to a hospital and, characteristically, refused to see the first doctor our embassy sent, a testimony of how lucid his mind is.

"Next we worked through a Mme. Rafik (Hanifa) Remidi. She spurned our bribe but connived with us. By means of her fibs our second one gained entry. His sight's gone. And the examination revealed he has TB."

Mme. Remidi: That she had loved his father since childhood was recognized by everyone, a unilateral devotion which transcended both first his and then her spousal. In time, Rafik Remidi ceased being either embarrassed or irritated by his wife's barely quelled ardor. Omar's mother likewise was not upset. "Poor dear, her fifth excuse for dropping by the shop today," he overheard her murmuring to herself, with a smile commiserative.

"Satisfied that her husband's permission had been granted, to Mme. Remidi your father entrusted everything. The grocery along with its contents and the chambers above together with their furniture, were auctioned . . . not for much, given the neighborhood's suspicions about *djinn* ['evil spirits'].

"Half of a loft of a building four doors away was leased. You doubtless know its history. A nineteenth-century earthquake collapsed its upper two stories. The owner salvaged part of the second by slapping a roof over it. Since the stairway was destroyed, frugally he hewed out a trapdoor, gained by a ladder, and designated it a storage attic for his haberdashery below.

"As the Casbah's population surged, it was offered as a room for rent, despite its lack of any facilities. The best accommodation she could secure. An old woman—I forget her name—"

"Find it, please," Remy intruded.

"To be sure, within the week. This beldam who lives there was hired to be his caretaker. The garret's been split into two. Through its sole window, a dumbwaiter of ropes and a square cord basket allows for excrement to be lowered to the narrow alleyway and food and water to be hoisted up. The old lady operates this device from above. Receiver of your father's waste, as she is preparer of a once-a-day tray of hearty food, is Mme. Remidi, his, shall we say, caregiver."

Tired by the explanation, "or anticipating the stretch ahead," HIV rested a moment.

"The relocation completed, supervised by—" With an abrupt fixed scowl, he shooed off a platform mime, sashaying toward their space. "Near midnight, six women compensated beforehand by Mme. Remidi conveyed him, litter-strapped, to what's now a notions shop, left unlocked by the owner, similarly prepaid.

"Tugging at one end, pushing from the other, they manipulated him up the sixteen-rung ladder and into the loft. A policeman (again we didn't glean his name) barged in on him three days afterward. Bellowing 'Vulture! Hyena!' your father spat in his face.

That's all we know for now."

Remy was acquainted with the *dukkaan*, a one-and-a-half-story aberration. The other discovery was made on the second afternoon of "my physical repatriation": It was Foucin whom his father had driven away.

As he traipsed by the windowless-to-the-street garret, he did not peep at the fading red Arabic number "28." For HIV had been true to his word, obtaining the name of the *dame âgée*, the widow Mme. Houria Daidje, and even a photograph of the shopfront.

In truth, having opened the cloth bag to survey Marie's souvenirs, a moving Remy was too engrossed to stop and stand. Thereby he failed to emulate a fellow father-dishonorer, Dr. Johnson, who (according to Boswell) "in contrition" had stationed himself for half an afternoon before what had been the bookstall of his long-dead father, fervent with the "hope" that his half-century-late "penance" would be "expiatory."

2

At 5:45 Remy, whose direction since shambling from his childhood neighborhood had been southeasterly, reached the Middle Street.

Reflections on his daughters Françoise and Claudia, who had both, "without conspiracy," married Jews, had steered him toward the site of the Casbah's Grand Synagogue, "a 1960 casualty of the Revolution," long since transformed into a mosque.

From one of the vendors in front of it, he acquired two handcrafted pairs of ankle-high house slippers, the native *balra* that curl up at the tip.

Watched over by their husbands from windows and inset doorways, the seven would have approached, bearing the litter, a strip of canvas tied over two wooden poles. A stairwell climb—the same one he had been tumbled down twenty-eight years ago—would bring them to his father's room. He would be lying on a straw mat, the only object remaining save for his clutched Qur'an and a chamber pot.

Clad in shirt, undershirt, pants, a *gandoura*, a *burnoose*, over-the-calf socks, and sandals, by then he would have swathed his features with a *chèche*, a long cloth wrapped about the head as a turban, the neck as a scarf, and sometimes the face as a veil, thereby rendering his visage as shrouded as Remy's dying mother's.

Without speaking, they would have rolled him from the mat onto the *civière* ("litter"), impelling his helpless legs while his knurled hands hauled his upper body over. Afterward, his ankles, thighs, and chest would have been strapped down.

Five minutes past the Middle Street, Remy found himself staring into the harbor from Rue Bab Azoun, the medina's eastern border. Having purposively overshot the Mirabout by two lanes, he shammed confusion through haphazard jabs of his index. Finally he veered right and following a brief amble southward arrived at the garment souk of the Casbah.

Avoiding the moonlight, the procession would have traversed the short distance to the notions shop. Inside, the women would have proceeded to the ladder, beside which

the stretcher would have been tilted. Mme. Remidi, in her sixties, would have led the ascent, guiding and steadying the poles while the other six women hustled from below.

Even so, it would have been his paralyzed father, with his Qur'an tucked under his chest strap, who would have thrust backward, grabbed a wooden rung, and hand over hand helped to draw himself and the litter upward.

The main entrance ushered Remy into the atrium of a warehouse crammed with tables, racks, and boxes of secondhand or cheaply imported clothes. His intention was to pivot left and wend his way down the slanting corridor to the more expensive boutiques of the souk, there to buy Marie's fourth gift.

However, despite the afternoon sun, Remy spied a gloom already beginning to settle over the rear of the cavernous outlet since only its front string of cash registers was neon-illuminated. *Ah well*, he resolved, *my business here I'll deal with first*.

Three paces on, the manager of the store tagged each item in Remy's *sac à provisions* before letting him click through the turnstile onto the main floor. A glimpse back disclosed that the wall on each side of the entrance was lined with two transparent coteries of male chaperons—their presence “compulsory for all women straying from the home,” of late the Casbah Islamists had hued and cried.

The chore typically fell to teenage sons and spouses' grandfathers. The former, to the right of the doorway, were hunched in clusters of three or four, spending the time while their mothers shopped playing cards, spinning soda bottles, or casting chalked pebbles.

À gauche, in one lopsided wreath, was a pool of old men, relegated to accompanying their matronly granddaughters. Remy caught them darting glares of disapproval at the twelve or so teenagers when an extravagant, imaginary wager won in their games of *cartes*, *roulette*, or *dé* was shouted out.

Embarking on his own task, over the next twenty minutes Remy winnowed from the tables of used native garb a solid drab-white cotton *djellaba*, a brown threadbare *cachabia*, a white soiled *chèche*, and a pair of beaten-up, dun-colored sandals. The abraded woolen cloak *would* be stifling, yet what a rustic on his “premier sally” to Algiers would don.

At a table overflowing with polyester *hugub* (“head scarves”), one he was inspecting slipped from his fingers, the third instance he had fumbled an item in the vicinity. *Encore une fois* he stooped to retrieve it. His left hand, ostensibly having stumbled upon a trove, sped to rummage through one of the boxes of scarves beneath.

His right arm also moved, but less theatrically and further downward, its fist edging aside other cartons until it gained, and subsequently burrowed under, the burlap strip on which the thin legs of the metal table rested. With his eyes on a *higaab* grasped, this time the tips of his searching digits lit on the iron disk ensconced in the cement floor.

Locating its finger grip, he scratched away the caked dirt, at last securing a hold. The tug unbalanced him, and he lurched forward, almost tumbling headlong into the box of scarves that he probed. Righting himself, he carefully lowered the unseen disk, never surrendered, back into its slot.

In that crouch he silently hailed, “The tunnel of ‘Engineer’ Brahim Laffiz!” Twenty-nine years ago, this classmate of Omar's best friend Khaleel had designed and supervised its construction. “A tunnel which generations of Casbahians can use to

frustrate their inevitable overlords,” the not-shy Laffiz had boasted. “It’s built so well Time cannot destroy it!”

It ran from the clothing souk to thirty meters beyond Boulevard Gambetta (the present Ourida Meddad). There it bore through the concrete side of a drainage culvert, half a kilometer from the bay. “I thank you, French Sanitation,” with a twinkle in his eyes, the engineer had apostrophized, “for doing the lion’s share, 90.9%, of our work.”

Nevertheless, it had occupied many five-hour shifts (midnight until the call to dawn prayers) from March to November 1960: Meter by meter, its sandy walls, shored up temporarily with wooden stakes, were permanently supported by a troweled clay brickwork, which next Laffiz arched over its ceiling and across its floor.

Omar, whose double-dealing was focused on operations in nearby Blida, had assisted Khaleel with the clandestine dirt removal. Djouher, another engineering student, had obtained the job of nighttime guard at the warehouse, so the project went undetected by the store’s Algerian owner and the few French police still patrolling the Casbah.

In the week after its completion, Omar had twice accompanied Khaleel and Brahim along the twenty-minute, two-stage route, rousing no-one’s heed except that of oversized nesting rats in the culvert.

The escape from the Casbah had ended with a short drop into the harbor, which washed away the excrement not ground into their clothes. The entry terminated with a thrust against the iron disk, at which Remy had just awkwardly wrenched.

The tunnel had been their secret, for—he exalted—this was one *ça-là-partout* (“here-there-everywhere”) piece of information he had never sunk so low as to reveal to his Algiers’ case officer. And soon it was only his: A month after the tunnel’s completion, in the December demonstrations termed the “Second Battle of Algiers,” a fatal grenade landed in front of the arm-linked Khaleel, Brahim, and Djouher.

At the *trappe*, which she would have opened with an upward strain and crawled through, Mme. Remidi would have put forth her hands and clenched his father’s, both extended over his head. With her knees grinding into the wooden floorboards, she would have heaved the top part of the stretcher into the attic. His father would have released her palms the instant it was transferred onto her shoulders.

At the surrender—for a moment the burden would have dangled in midair—Mme. Remidi would have commenced inching under the canvas, her back sustaining the brunt of the litter and his father’s body.

The tail ends of the poles at length within, she, who was squeezed into the position of a Muslim prayer in *Sajdah*, would have had to counterpoise its full weight until some of the women scampered through the trap.

Having grouped themselves around the *brancard* (“litter”), they would have portaged it by the old lady, huddled on her mat counterfeiting sleep, and into his section of the blanket-and-sheet divided room, lit by a nightstand candle.

There Mme. Remidi would have unfastened the straps. After his transferal to the bed, a blanket would have been spread over his slight physique, and a chair glided near for his cloak, to be doffed once his privacy was confirmed.

With the Qur’an opened, he would have begun to move his fingers across a page. Perchance, only perchance, when the others had turned around to withdraw, allotting

herself one stroke, Mme. Remidi would have slid her right hand along his calf, knowing her caress would not be felt.

Erecting himself, Remy recalled her fate: As they had quit the Amsterdam steam room last August, HIV had noted, “By the way, she’s been killed, Caregiver Remidi. A week ago battered to death beneath your father’s attic window. Some Casbah Islamic fundamentalists, we suspect, scandalized by her attention to a man not her husband.”

He had slung off his towel for their walk to the lockers. “From our embassy’s coffers, Daidje’s being remunerated an extra five dinars a month to operate both ends of the dumbwaiter. Solely for excreta. He’s in the widow’s hands now, God help him!”

Beside the table of scarves, thinking only of his parent (and himself), Remy agonized sotto voce, “Father, Father, what have I brought you to?”

As well, he took a memorial bearing (seventh aisle from left, fifteenth table down), dubbing the iron ring ungrammatically “*La Pointe de Laffiz*,” to incorporate a salute to both Revolutionary heroes, Ali la Pointe and “Engineer” Brahim.

He cashed out, paying one-hundred-thirty-five dinars for his four articles, and a moment later was padding from the cement floor of the warehouse onto the blue- and white-tiled aisleway of the souk’s progressively more expensive stores.

In a plate-glass-enclosed boutique with an elegantly scrolled French name, he bought Marie a black silk *fustaan sahra*, a loose-fitting “evening gown” sometimes worn beneath a *haik*. It had 18-karat gold embroidery around the neckline, sleeves, and bottom hem. Even haggling slashed its price fractionally, to 6,500 dinars.

Swaddled in a silk wrapping, it became the topmost item in his bag, now full: Four for Marie, one each for Claudia and Françoise, and four for himself. Ten since he had thrown the undrunk Coke into a litter bin on Rue Bab Azoun.

Striding through the market’s lower exit onto cobblestone streaked with the brilliant rays of the dying sun, fierily he whispered, “Father, I have my disguise!”

3

On his mark in front of the grille, as contrived, a scant half-hour before Friday’s noon sermon, Remy launched into an affable confidence: his scheme to perambulate the Casbah that afternoon, “in quest of some artifactual souvenirs for my family.”

“Be careful or you’ll get lost. It’s as tricky maneuvering there as in here,” Belmazoir replied with a discerning grin, the cliché replicating Foucin’s advice.

“*Merci*.” Remy paused while his own smile gradually dissolved. “Your sister, she visited yesterday?” The prisoner’s nod was barely perceptible.

“I would speak with her, with your perm—” was terminated by the adamant “She knows nothing! Let her be. I imposed a supplementary directive before she left: not to desert Mother’s side, trekking here. The onus of our parent’s dying she shoulders alone.”

His lips, the lower one bitten, gnarled with sullen compunction. “You’ve arranged your list of questions for me. Proceed with that.”

After a deep-drawn sigh, “At your service, monsieur,” Remy mordantly answered. “What’s first? Ah yes, on Wednesday you apprised me that you were usually fifteen minutes tardy to your assignations with M. Ballard. Did he ever arrive ahead of time?”

Leila's disclosure had to be validated.

An artificially studied expression preceded Belmazoir's retort. "You quiz the laggard. How would I know, being absent?" Remy rebuffed his drollery by waiting. "All right, one time in our second month I asked if he'd been there long. 'Thirty-five minutes,' he said. 'Your foil, I'm an engrained third-of-an-hour early bird.' Why? Is that significant?"

Not straightaway did Remy address the query. "On the twenty-seventh, M. Ballard quit the Zaracova changing room at the start of Maghrib prayers, 6:39. It's a ten-minute saunter to the abandoned disco, where you two were to rendezvous at 7:15. Still he wouldn't expect you until 7:30. What I've considered proposing to M. Vellacott is that his premature advent might attest he'd scheduled another engagement."

Remy, who had surmised that Belmazoir would seize on his illation, was impressed by his declining to. "No help for me there. M. John turned up just before the dot of 'on the dot' ticked, around 6:50, you seem to infer. That hurts me."

"Not necessarily since in two ways it assists M. Vellacott. If M. Ballard had preplanned a separate meeting at 6:50, he'd have reached his destination, in conformity with his notion of punctuality, at around 6:30. But at that time he was in the changing room. This routine probabilizes that such an encounter would have been unanticipated."

As he discoursed, Remy rubbed his thumb sideways beneath his nether lip. "Secondly, I've always been puzzled by the site of the attack. The blow of the plank came as M. Ballard crossed the doorsill. To strike from inside the disco, the murderer must have anteceded M. Ballard into the grove. Not trailing him in, this person evidently had ascertained his destination in advance."

"Or knew mine. The notebook at Bendari's!"

Remy's surprise at this rapid deduction was manifested by a well-tuned "Hmm?"

"M. John's last message in Fouad's tablet: 'ZB disco 7:15 Mon.' The second morning of my interrogation began with Karami, Foucin's lick-ass, brandishing the page and blustering, 'Your death warrant!' The notebook hangs alongside the phone. Anyone could have read it, an open advertisement."

A wealth of thought Remy had lavished on the café's telephone log. The date of the call was established by the heading across the top of the page, "17-7," the seventeenth of Rajab, the seventh Muslim month, corresponding to February 23, a Thursday.

The entry in Arabic listed the one sought, "Mo-Mo" (the nickname Fouad Belghiche, the café manager, had adopted for Belmazoir), the time it was received (8:30 a.m.), and finally the terse message.

The caller had not identified himself but "spoke an Englishized French. I was familiar with his voice. He'd contacted Mo-Mo sporadically over the past half year," Belghiche had glossed in his affidavit. "The next afternoon when he rang back, I relayed Mohammed's confirmation, given the previous evening, that he'd be there."

Deputy Inspector Karami with three gendarmes had confiscated the *calepin* the morning after Belmazoir's arrest. "Rather quickly," Remy had noted during his initial scansion of Vellacott's reports, "and with no attribution of how they learned of it."

Remy pursued Belmazoir's ramification. "And was aware on that Monday night, a 'Mo-Mo' had slated a 7:15 social or business transaction at Zaracova's forlorn disco." He curled his lips into a smirk. "For all we know, this 'anyone' could have been as much

concerned about where you'd be on that evening as M. Ballard's itinerary."

Inceptively squinted and somber, Belmazoïr's eyes suddenly brightened. "So I was scripted in. The bastard! Then you don't believe I killed M. John."

"As you said, you were hurt by his death financially."

Belmazoïr winced at this verbalization by someone else of an attribute he himself had repeatedly employed, reducing his friendship with Ballard to merely the monetary or, Remy self-appended, the sexual.

"It must be contemplated that 'the victim was not the victim'" (*as well for you as for another*, again a silent interposition), "thereby leading to the meddlesome 'Whose hatred for you was so intense it desired to "more than the more" destroy you?"

Remy imagined that Belmazoïr would deliberate, mark his enemies among Bendari's patrons, and mull over those at the Palestinian camp. His startling riposte, however, shot forth immediately.

Though Remy did not grimace, the response was—and this vexed him—self-displeasing, "at variance with two nights ago when you yourself entertained it."

In lieu of probing the accusation, he confounded Belmazoïr by jumping to a novel and apparently unrelated matter, the FLIRs, cognizant of the predictable sequence that term would generate: "Forward-Looking Infrared glasses," "night-vision goggles," and similar in dimensions and weight to "a skin diver's mask and headgear."

All elicited negative rejoinders; nevertheless, he noticed that Belmazoïr halted prior to the third, which, unlike the first two noes, was not accompanied by a wag of his head.

Roughly twelve minutes into their interview, as Remy had plotted, the tractable guard scuffed forward to collect Belmazoïr for the attendance-mandatory noonday sermon at Berrouaghia's mosque. Also by design his most pressing inquiry Remy held to the end. "What of the missing week?"

"Huh?"

"At our Wednesday meeting you disclosed that on the final Monday of January, M. Ballard prescribed an action heretofore never desiderated. The following week, the sixth of February, he embraced a tactic, similarly never availed, which was unsuccessfully implemented. The next, you said, he didn't show. And the twenty-seventh you found his body on the disco porch. A week is omitted, if I'm not mistaken, the twentieth."

Raising his listless eyes, Belmazoïr contorted his mouth into a rakish sneer. "I was a little 'flying' then, forgot the second 'stand-up.' Yeah, he 'stiffed' me two weeks running."

"A double dose of fretting that you'd been jettisoned, but the first seven days of your worry were probably misguided. Official business, I think, since on February fourteenth M. Ballard checked out those FLIRs from his embassy's quartermaster."

Belmazoïr shrugged, about-faced, and aligned himself with the guard. Three steps they had taken before with a twist of his neck he reiterated his earlier answer: "Only Foucin."

Once more vexed by the reply, Remy delayed until the two had gained the postern. In as much as the nominal salutation would herald a radical shift, he felt a need for self-justification: *To wit, antecedently never have I retreated from 'the client of my client' without disgust.* Riveting on the two instances where the "real" had broken through, he exulted to himself, *The artificial must forcefully labor to 'knap' the 'wantons' down.*

With his tone free of condescension, Remy matter-of-factly conveyed the valedictory agenda. “M. Mohammed, at the visitor’s desk I’ll leave a thousand dinars. Mete it out wisely: Sundry items to check on, I may not return till Tuesday.”

It had been the guard, not the inmate, who had sharply wheeled round and blessed him with an exuberant “*Merci!*”

4

The moveable Muslim prayers had advanced forty-one minutes in the month and a half since Ballard’s homicide. Thus it was at 6:50, not that night’s 6:09, when Remy tried the *porte d’entrée* of the Mirabout. It was locked, yet its blinds had not been drawn.

His polite tapping at the pane had just become peevish when the door was unbolted by a man in black pants and coat and a white shirt. In his left hand was a cherry-red bow tie, proof that he was the *maître d’hôtel* Remy sought.

“Unless you wish take-away, we’re closed,” through the ajar door informed Zerhouni—Remy foreknew his name. “In Ramadan, we open in the afternoon only for pick-up, food which may not be consumed till night.”

Remy unclenched his right fist to expose the fifty-dinar note. “I wish to take away some information.”

Widening the crack and motioning him, Zerhouni susurrated, “You must hurry.”

Around forty and tall, he had a modest paunch that his tight headwaiter uniform accentuated. At the upper edge of his neatly clipped mustache, directly under the septum of his aquiline nose grew a striking tick-shaped wart, *marvelously substantiating*, Remy inwardly joshed, *a graphic nicety of the climactic entry of Gogol’s Madman*.

Furtively eying Remy’s hand, Zerhouni stipulated his singular condition. “In less than half an hour, the fast-ending cannon will boom and simultaneously the Casbah’s muezzins will bid us to Maghrib. My prayers I will not fail and thus can grant you at most fifteen minutes.”

Compact, the Mirabout had about twenty tables in its right-side dining section, at the rear of which a *porte battante* led to the kitchen. These were skimmed over, for what initially affronted Remy on crossing the threshold were two mid-size private compartments.

Centered above them, the green Arabic letters of a yellowing cardboard sign proclaimed Family, while tarnished copper numerals on their lintels designated the right as “1” and the left as “2.”

Through the open gold-stained door of “1,” Remy perceived that against its back wall was a booth-like couch. It half-circled a long table covered with two overlapping cloths of the same Gmelin’s blue as those in the main dining section.

On it were a central vase of plastic flowers, trayed salt and pepper shakers, a candle in an Aladdin’s lamp holder, and a glass jar with a large cluster of brown twirled paper towels, the items again identical to those in the dining room..

Halting Remy one stride beyond the doorsill, Zerhouni indicated the wicker chair on his left. As he slipped away, he called back, “I must shut us down well before the cannon.”

Placing his bag beside the *chaise en osier*, from a coat pocket Remy withdrew the three photocopied pages. There was ample light for him to read, even after Zerhouni had closed the blinds, yet such scrutiny was unnecessary, their contents having been mastered.

The first was from Medlin to Leroy: “Pursuant your directive to certify where everyone at the embassy was from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. on February 27, I instructed Alan Belsches, fluent in French, to interview the maître d’ at the Mirabout Restaurant. Since I was there during a portion of that interim, I judged it inappropriate for me to accompany him.”

Medlin noted that the PAO was reimbursed the thirty dinars (\$3) paid for Zerhouni’s cooperation. He attached Belsches’ report and a subscribed statement by the maître d’.

The memorandum, from the PAO to Medlin, dated March 5, affirmed that on the fourth he interviewed Mansour Ahmed Zerhouni at the Mirabout. First Belsches described the appearance and dress of two men and a woman who had dined there five days ago.

When Zerhouni acknowledged remembering them, he was shown unidentified passport-size photographs. He averred these to be the selfsame patrons: “We don’t get a slew of tourists, and the apparel of these three remains indelible.”

At this point, Belsches emphasized to Zerhouni that his narration should be as specific, detailed, and accurate as possible. “To be sure” was the headwaiter’s curt reply.

“I explained why we couldn’t serve them: ‘Our prayers approach.’ The taller one pleaded, ‘Traipsing about your Casbah has left us drained.’ Prior to casting a belgard at the woman, his eyes scanned the four bags and prayer mat that he and the other man, largely eclipsed by the speaker, were carrying. ‘My wife just wants to get off her feet. No need for us to dine right away.’ I seated them in family room ‘1.’”

“The time?”

“That I know, for I’d kept one eye on my watch as I stressed, ‘It may be as late as 7:30, an hour and a quarter from now, before I can return.’ On the dot 6:11. (Is that ‘specific, detailed, and accurate’ enough for you?) ‘We’re tuckered,’ responded the apparent prolocutor. ‘Just the span we require to cool off.’

“Electricity must be switched off throughout prayers, I announced, lit the candle on their table, and closed the door to the room. With the front locked and the blinds lowered, I retired to the kitchen where our cook Ali and I—an unwinding custom—rested with a smoke, awaiting the call to Maghrib.”

“Time?”

“Subtract five minutes from tonight’s, it came at 6:20. So we lit up at 6:17 and took our last puffs at 6:23. Then we set out for the small mosque up the hill—we prefer it to the nearer Ketchaoua—leaving Samir, our Christian dishwasher and busboy, to mind the store.”

They returned from prayers at around 7:20 and once more relaxed with a cigarette. “No haste to reopen since our regulars don’t drift in till nine, and the foreigners hadn’t seemed bothered. A few minutes before 7:30, I knocked on the aurulent tint of ‘1.’

“They placed their orders, delivered promptly, since the summons to Isha’ was imminent. I again fastened up, but forwent mosque prayers. They, leisurely diners, left

sever— three minutes after nine.”

The codicil to Belsches’s account: As Medlin had desired and with Zerhouni’s permission, he had tape-recorded the session. The cassette was appended.

The third paper, Zerhouni’s affidavit, “dripping facetiousness,” was in handwritten French: “On 27 February, at 6:09 p.m., the three individuals in the photographs stapled below—across each of which I have signed my name—sought service at the Mirabout, where I am the *maître d’hôtel*. Their dining finished, they exited at precisely 9:03.”

When Zerhouni reemerged, having cut off the electricity during his return from the kitchen, the room was swathed in darkness. Remy unpocketed and flicked on his legitimate ST Dupont. Save for an inconspicuous groove it was identical to the simulacrum (“HIV’s lighter”), whose recording button he had already depressed.

Angling the flame near the papers in his lap, Remy asked, “Would you acquaint me whether this is your signature?”

Zerhouni, obviously stunned, scrooched down. Immediately nodding, with his right index he jabbed at the air above the photocopies of the three snapshots and huffed, “Who are these people? Some sort of crooks?”

5

“How was it locked?” Glancing at the entrance, Remy queried as soon as Zerhouni had concluded his much interrupted recital of that night. With the *briquet* clicked on, his eyes followed the headwaiter’s stroll to the door, where he drew free the bolt and shoved it back across the frame. The demonstration over, he retraced his steps.

“Good. Now may I trespass upon the private room they used?” With each of the four strides which brought them, piloted by the lighter, to “1,” Remy was ruminating on how the first discovery had been thrust upon him in their conference at the wicker chair. The second he proposed to steer the *maître d’hôtel* to.

His launching intrusion had been a mischievous stab at Zerhouni, who had scarcely completed his account of how he had granted a “merciful” entry to the three would-be clients of the Mirabout. With the blue-green dinar note edged closer to the flame, Remy had evinced a smirk, its artificiality rendering it the more blatant.

“Other than the man’s appeal to their—principally his wife’s—fatigue, there was an additional encouragement to accommodate them.”

“None!” was staunchly asserted. “I had excellent prospects, given what had happened three nights earlier.” Baffled, Remy—thirty years an expert in dissemblance—was sanguine that in his eagerness to clarify Zerhouni would both mask and unmask his perplexity.

“The shorter man—I recognized him though he was hanging back—had been here at the same time on Friday, three days before. Babbling in gestured English, he’d jammed a five into my hand to let him in, so later when he left me a fifty for a thirty-five-dinar tab, I’d felt embarrassed. So, that evening I didn’t solicit an entrance *pourboire*.”

Inside the room, Remy held the ST Dupont over the table and, without entreating permission, lit the candle. Having circled to the booth’s couch and seated himself, he embarked upon an open dissection of a later segment of their wicker-chair *tête-à-tête*.

“To my ‘On your reentering at around 7:30, what were they doing?’ you responded, ‘Just sitting there.’ ‘Talking? Any observation, even the most nugatory, might be of benefit.’ ‘No. It was I who spoke first, expressing regret for the delay.’

“‘Did anyone acknowledge your apology?’ ‘The tall man brushed aside the need,’ you replied. ‘And the lady’s reaction? Did she speak?’ I inquired. ‘No, I don’t think so. She was straightening the silverware.’

“‘And the shorter man, the one bespectacled?’ You hesitated in answering. ‘His mind struck me as being elsewhere, likely on the absence of ventilation in the closed-off room since he was dabbing his brow with paper napkins.’

“‘But the other two weren’t perspiring?’ This time without a halt, you responded, ‘They also might have been somewhat uncomfortable since the tall one requested the ewer of water be refilled.’”

At the mentioning of each of the three, Remy had shifted his body along the booth, assuming the ranking positions he supposed they had taken, Mrs. Leroy in the center, her husband to her right, and Medlin to the left.

“The arrangement of this dining table, is it basically the same as it was that night?”

The *maître d’hôtel* bent forward, his sleek visage becoming lustrous in the candlelight, yet did not scrutinize its objects. “To a T. Our settings do not deviate.”

“Where is the silverware the lady was fiddling with? Where, the pitcher of water (and the glasses pressed into service to empty it), for did not the tall man crave its replenishment?”

Zerhouni sniffed, “Monsieur, our routine differs from those in Europe. There everything’s laid out in preparation for the customer. Here, because our Casbah has so many flies, these items aren’t brought until af— . . . after the order.”

“Monsieur, my purport’s comprehended?”

“Yes! Astute of you! I recollect now. In the kitchen, I and Ali our cook had barely lit up cigarettes when the precaution hit me. I roused our dishwasher Samir: ‘Three tourists just scurried in, one from last Friday. Not disconcerted that we can’t serve them during prayers. Still, run some water out.’ A Christian, Samir, of course, doesn’t perform *salaat*.”

“So prior to your return from yours, presumably he’d have been the final one to see them.” Remy slid the fifty-dinar bill across the blue tablecloth and into the hovering Zerhouni’s hand, all the while musing, *Why had M. “Ibid.” Medlin patronized the Mirabout on Friday, and why on his second visit three days later was he sweating profusely?*

Fumbling in his wallet, as an image of the maneuvered drawbolt flitted through his mind, Remy retrieved a hundred. “My fifteen minutes are exceeded by seven, and the suspension of your fast impends. The appeal which ensues, I promise, won’t make you unduly tardy for that supremely coveted moment: Would this M. Samir be about?”

6

For the second time in two days Remy heard a dismissive laugh accompany the notion that “M. Medlin’s the murderer.” Assessing his own tacit reception to Leila’s ridicule of the idea, “For the third,” he emended himself. Thereupon he conceded a

further correction: “For the fourth, if ellipsis stipped the sarcasm of ‘M. Champagne.’”

As on the previous night, at ten he had rung up Foucin, confident that by then he would have been notified about the Mirabout.

“You’re privy to my fortuity,” declared Remy, devoirs out of the way.

“One of my compeers was in the Casbah. Having discerned the ‘trade-off’—while you didn’t wish me as your guide, you felt compelled to invite me—I was to a degree inquisitive. Is the pair of *balra*, the pointed shoes, for wearing? They’re quite comfortable. Or will your wife tack them to the wall?” He paused. “You understand.”

“Naturally.” Now assured that “Vellacott” was not the exclusive recipient of Medlin’s photocopies which he had overseen the Al-Nigma’s fax machinist transmit that morning, Remy strove to present a convincing air. “What husband ever knows, i.e., ‘understand[s],’ what his wife will do?”

The transitional chuckle was both congenial and short-lived. “We’ve tracked the lawyer.” Remy jotted down the name along with the address and telephone number.

“Yes, an Ahmed Chabane petitioned his advice on February 14. Barrister Ouenough apprised him that his sister and her affianced were married the very instant the witnessed contract was signed. (Islamic law, I must inject, has more embracive stipulations.) M. Chabane seemed chapfallen, he annotated. The sum of his retention.”

Foucin halted until he appreciated that Remy did not intend to elaborate on the Mirabout. “So from 6:20, the point M. Samir serviced the room, postulating three yet finding only two, to 7:28, when M. Zerhouni entered to scribble down the order from the three, one of whom was lavishly perspiring—” He broke off, his minor premise unstated.

“Of course, it can’t be as the lad speculated, that M. Medlin—is he ‘*your* murderer’ now?—was ‘in the toilet.’” His laugh simply appeared to deride, but Remy was most puzzled by his certainty. “It’s I who’ll require *your* help this time. I can’t be charging into any embassy, much less the American. So you’ll close this M. Medlin loophole?”

“I deem it best to confer with Ambassador Leroy first,” Remy suggested. “I’d like to contact him tonight, but I’m without his residency telephone number.”

“And you posit I’m not.”

Below the lawyer’s, Remy wrote Leroy’s. “I talked with Messrs. Zerhouni and Samir directly,” Foucin resumed, “my comrade calling from the Mirabout. Shall I tell you what I heard, or you tell me what you both heard and saw? Missing place settings, eh?”

Confronted with this expectancy, even injunction, to take his turn, Remy, believing he could not safely withhold anything, did not attempt to, that is, up to the end.

On the way to the kitchen, Zerhouni had explained, “He speaks no French. So few of our scant Christians educated since the Revolution can.” He would have to translate.

“But he’ll remember them,” he continued. “After the taller man—quite nicely!—had settled up at the table, not to appear a greedy tarrier I’d excused myself. In the kitchen I told Samir, ‘Be on hand to bus ‘1’ as soon as they finish their tea and vacate the booth.’”

“Our nine o’clock habitués had begun to horde in. As I was jotting down an order, the boy strutted by, clearly heedless of the full tray of dishes on his shoulder. Leaning in, he whispered giddily, ‘One of the tourists’—my view blocked, I hadn’t spotted them leaving—”

‘slid me a ten!’ Yes, they’ll be etched in the coils of his feeble brain.”

The youth, possibly fifteen, sallow-complexioned and sunken-chested, was bent over a large metal platter, a scrub brush in hand. Having hung his olive *djellaba* on a kitchen nail, he was clad in standard Arab underwear, a crew-neck T-shirt and loose, calf-length underpants, both dull white. At their entry, although he looked up, he did not rise.

The headwaiter commenced without introducing Remy. “Boy, do you recall . . . Where’s Ali?” Samir glanced toward the back door. “Oh! . . . those three strangely garbed foreigners, two men and a woman, who supped here a couple of months ago?”

Samir’s answer, not immediate, was anteceded by a persuasive snap of his chin. “My last tip. The tall man ambled back and slipped me a ten while I was busing.” After pushing himself up, he noisily dropped the platter on the sink counter.

“This gentleman,” he adverted to Remy, “has some questions about them. Presumably, beetle grub, he’ll be good for another.”

“And multiply by three for your advanced stake,” Samir snickered.

With his face reddening, Zerhouni swung his head around and, through an exasperated grimace, signified, “Monsieur, the scamp is yours.”

Remy stepped from behind him. “My apologies, M. Samir, for disturbing you. I’ll be brief. Just a tiny matter of some curiosity to me. M. Zerhouni stated you table-serviced ‘1’ where those three dined. Relying on a seven-week memory, would that ministration have concurred with the Muslim prayer call?”

The query provoked a scoff in French from the *maître d’hôtel*. “Naught must I depend upon for such confirmation. A restaurant’s as ritualistic as our religion.”

He motioned to an open cupboard with the items of the table service. “The ewer of water, three sets of napkin-enfolded silverware, and three glasses: A liberal minute for that. A half to glide to the family room. Three to lay it out. Back the same as to. What, five minutes? Not the boy’s regular job, he probably took a bit longer.”

Zerhouni glimpsed at the invoked Samir, noticeably irritated at having his moment and hypothetical remuneration usurped. “By the time he reappeared with an empty salver, Ali and I would be flipping butts.” He mimed tossing a cigarette stub on the floor.

When Remy’s eyes strayed to the adolescent, the headwaiter, his chagrin palpable, recapitulated his time frame prior to concluding with the requested inquiry.

A jittery Samir nodded. “Yeah, sounds right. This starving fast you Muslims ram down our Christian throats has left me dizzy. As you say, your smokes over, you and Ali always skelp out the back door to your mosque prayers.”

“Bowdlerized” was Zerhouni’s translation, its gist being that Samir corroborated the time of service.

“Forgive me. Precision’s my fallible obsession,” prefaced Remy, apparently seeking a definitive chronology of the events. “M. Zerhouni, that night (the twenty-first of your Rajab) the exhortation to *salaat il-maghrib*”—he deliberately employed the Arabic—“occurred at 6:20: A professional investigator, I checked the prayer schedule.

“Adopting that as your point of reference, can you afresh verify the time that M. Samir would have provided utensils, glasses, and water to these three patrons?”

“Every evening (Ramadan, of course, excepted)”—Zerhouni’s tone had likewise become atrabilious—“Ali and I light up a cigarette several minutes before the sunset azan—around 6:17 that night, using your 6:20 time.

“After a few draws (6:18), I bade Samir to carry a table service to the three. Two minutes brought him to ‘1’ where he knocked and gained access at”—the *maître d’hôtel* threw his hands up, soliciting whether another response was possible—“exactly 6:20.”

“*Shokran*. ‘Thank you.’ The quintessence of precision.” Abruptly Remy dispensed with the smoke screen. “Now would you ask M. Samir: ‘How many were there?’”

The question was no sooner out than the cannon thundered, the blast succeeded by the amplified call to *salaat* from nearby Ketchaoua. A Bastos frantically reached for, Zerhouni sucked in a first deep stream. “What’s this? Without a doubt, three!”

“Please.”

After Samir’s numeric, with a mocking flier, Zerhouni branded the teenager “stupid. Your memory’s muddled. You took three settings . . . and returned with none.”

Samir, unflustered and adamant, controverted the slurs. “That’s another reason I haven’t forgot. Once in the room, I thought I’d screwed up and wondered why you hadn’t corrected my three-personed tray.

“Detecting my confusion, the man at the table uttered something in beyond-me French and, on realizing I hadn’t followed, gestured for me to place a service to the left of the lady. I didn’t see the other one—alone he’d dined with us the Friday before—till I was busing up. He must have been in the toilet. Probably what he was trying to tell me.”

Zerhouni did not render all of Samir’s discourse. “He maintains there were but two at the time he brought the salver. One of the gentlemen—deducing from your interest in them, conceivably the term’s misapplied: are they crooks?—was in the toilet.”

“M. Samir was informed through gesticulation he was, or is this purely his surmise?”

The voice of the *maître d’hôtel* was compunctiously tinged. “His speculation.”

“Could he describe the man at the table?”

Again Zerhouni failed to metaphrase. “From his previous reply, ‘to the left of the lady,’ it would have to be her husband. Nevertheless, I’ll get validation.”

The teen answered, “The magnifico, the one who stole back to grace me with the splendid *pourboire*. Considerably taller than the other, recognized only afterward.”

At that point, Remy had stopped his narration to Foucin, secure that neither headwaiter nor busboy would have dared to repeat to the commissioner or his “comrade” what Samir had subsequently blurted out.

“He, the ‘shrimp’ with the thick glasses, should have begrudged me some centimes. When he was cashing out his first time here, three days ago, I’d caught him—and he knew it—ricocheting nervous ‘Tom-peepings’ at my crotch!”

7

“Excuse me for telephoning you at your residency and so late,” Remy began, after identifying himself.

“None needed. As I stated, I’m always available—”

Flaunting rudeness, Remy intruded. “Your Excellency, an essential link you repressed. I was at the Mirabout this evening. You must commit yourself to divulging what transpired there, as must the exudative M. Medlin, if you’re sincere about yearning for an alliance greater than a semblance of protocoooperation.”

Leroy requested no ancillary evidence. “Kindly accept a *mea culpa*. May we meet

tomorrow morning in my office? The explanation's simple, just as the omission's not spiked with chicanery, yet discomfiting to us both. You haven't spoken to Elbert?"

Remy ignored the last. "I'm sorry. Some other affairs occupy me in the morning. Would three be convenient?" He had nothing planned, but wanted to afford Medlin time to brood over the matter, satisfied Leroy would communicate with him that night.

"Certainly," Leroy acquiesced, leaving Remy to close full tilt and punctiliously. "*De novo* I beg forgiveness for this late perturbation. *Au revoir. Bonne nuit.*"

With the receiver cradled, the "Medlin loophole" was shelved for a more vial concern. "Not content in having me stalked, Foucin delights in slyly trumpeting the onslaught."

During the next half-hour, as he prepared for bed, intermittently he reverted to his Wednesday admonition in Foucin's office: In short order *I must escape this country.*

With Remy's digest completed, the commissioner allowed, "Your account dovetails with those passed to me. Waiters, I've found, are engrained to summon up the slightest nuances, even though initially missed. Fifty for M. Sari and double that for M. Zerhouni. Your munificence pushes me, who cannot be so generous, into the shadows."

Foucin paused before continuing. "No problems maneuvering the Casbah, I gather. It appears not to have been tricky . . . for you."

Samir's lips had opened, and Remy sensed he was about to countermand, presumably with an apology, what he had just let slip.

Zerhouni's Arabic, "You're as nasty as your uncircumcised cock!" drove the young man backward. The *maître d'hôtel* glowered at his watch. "Monsieur, six minutes I'm tardy for my prayers!" he asseverated, his hardening gloom still on the dishwasher.

"I tender my gratitude to you, monsieur, and please convey it to M. Samir." In his pocket, locating the fifty, he had to stuff it into the palm of the staggered *jeune homme*. Thirty seconds later, at the entrance to the Mirabout, the one hundred was thrust on Zerhouni, who out of indignation similarly neglected to react.

In bed, picturing himself walking by the notions shop which housed his father, Remy desponded that Foucin had not been "trick[ed]." The commissioner had reversed his psychological ruse, on his own opting not to accompany him because he knew that Remy did not wish him to.

How "specific, detailed, and accurate" had been the *compte-rendu* of his wanderings through the Casbah's sinuous byways? The white *djellaba*, the brown cloak, the sullied *chèche*, and the worse-for-wear sandals: *Has my "disguise" been spied, noted, reported?*

He conjured an image of himself in front of "28," peering into the four-object-laden cloth bag. *Will today be the nearest that I'll come to connecting with my father?*

Preceding sleep, Foucin's final observation "yet once more . . . and once more" swirled in his mind, every iteration hyperbolizing the badinage of its caesura.

Each time, as well, his rejoinder to the commissioner seemed less adequate: "No, none. I kept my face to the sea."

Notes and Commentary: Chapter 10: “La Casbah, at Last”**April 14 (Friday)**

p. 153: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE OF CHAPTER 10: Remy had driven through the Casbah in 5.78, but it is in this chapter that he walks through “the playground of his boyhood” (78).

Here, well-nigh halfway through the novel, thus structurally at the heart of it, he opens by describing the Casbah as if it were a heart, “the white heart of Algiers” (153).

He roughly associates its four boundaries with the borders of the four chambers of the heart, the left atrium and ventricle and the right atrium and ventricle.

The Casbah is so central to this chapter that only in one of its sections (3, at the prison) is the Casbah scarcely mentioned, although even that section opens with a transitional discussion of it (159).

Sections 1, 2, 4, and 5 are wholly set in the Casbah, and 6 and 7, while technically based in Remy’s hotel room, are principally concerned with events that occurred there.

A symbolic twenty-one times the word or the Casbahian variant of it is used.

Casbah past and Casbah present are interwoven in sections 1 and 2.

The French title in the chapter “*La Casbah*” indicates that Remy sees it from a French perspective, just as in chap. 3, once he had become a French agent, he had seen the lettering of the shop signs in the Casbah as being “in French” (50).

His “apparent indifference to [this] place of his birth” (153) mirrors what he had thought when he first saw Algiers from the air: The sight had “evoked no cry” that he was returning to his birthplace (4.52).

The second part of the title, “At Last,” expresses relief that he has finally reached not the place of his birth, but the place in which, he ruefully knows, his father will probably soon die.

At the end of this chapter (169) his fear is Sisyphean: that walking by the shop above which his father resides may be the closest connection he will make with his parent.

“At Last” also suggests that Remy is the last of the seven traitors, the only one whom Foucin has not brought to justice.

“Last” is used a symbolic seven times in the chapter.

pp. 153-169: CHRONOLOGY OF CHAPTER 10: April 14, 1989 (Thursday), from 11:30 a.m. to around 11:30 p.m.

Seven incidents are presented, but not in chronological order: In section 3, from 11:30 – 11:45 a.m., Remy has a brief conference with Mohammed at the prison.

Late that afternoon, in section 1 and part of section 2, from 4:45 – 6:00 Remy circuitously wanders through the Casbah buying native presents for his French family.

At the bottom of the Casbah, from 6:00 to 6:45, he does some more shopping in the stores of its large clothing souk. In its warehouse, he buys some native men's wear and makes a discovery under one of its tables dating back to the revolutionary war period (the major part of section 2).

From 6:50 to 7:28, he interviews the headwaiter and dishwasher of the Casbah's Mirabout Restaurant, the place the Leroy's and Medlin dined on the night of Ballard's murder. He makes a surprising discovery about the DCM (sections 4, 5, and part of 6 and 7).

From 10:00 to 10:15, back at the Al-Nigma, he telephones Foucin. They discuss what Remy has unearthed about Medlin (sections 6 and 7).

This call is almost immediately followed by one to Leroy (10:20 – 10:23). Remy sets a meeting with him and Medlin the next afternoon at the embassy (section 7).

Around an hour later Remy goes to bed (11:30). There he debates whether his Casbah trip has aroused Foucin's suspicion about his true identity (section 7).

pp. 153-56: SECTION 1

p. 153: "white heart of Algiers": Even before French colonization, which gave rise to the epithet *Alger la Blanche* ("Algiers the White"), the color was used to describe the Casbah because from the sea its white-washed houses and other buildings stood out.

Numerous sources, such as the African World Heritage Sites, refer to the Casbah as the "heart of Algiers."

p. 153: Sahel Hills: The slopes of the hills on which Algiers is built.

See the 4.52 note, N4:3.

p. 153: "Rue Bab Azoun . . . Rue Bab el Oued . . . Rue Arbadji Abderahmane": The six streets which border or dissect the Casbah are listed and described.

Some have been referred to previously in the text or the notes, such as Bab Azoun (3.37), Abderazak (4.55, N4:14), Arbadji (5.78, N5.30) and its previous name Rue Marengo or the "Middle Street" (3.37 and 5.57).

See 3.37 and its note, N3:7, for the French colonial names of some of these streets.

p. 153: "Khayyámic"play": Omar Khayyám (1048 – 1131 CE) was a Persian poet and

philosopher who presented an Epicurean view which emphasizes the enjoyment of the world here and now, rather than in some otherworldly paradise.

- p. 153: “Wahhabi solemnity”: A Sunni religious movement advocated by the eighteenth-century (CE) Saudi theologian Muhammad al-Wahhab. His writings stressed strict adherence to the Qur’an and the Hadiths and the elimination of any foreign influence on Islam, hence its reputation for solemnity. See the 3.38 notes on Wahhabi, Hanbali, and *ijtihad*, N3:9.
- p. 153: medina: The old native quarter of a North African city. The English word is a shortened form of the Arabic *al-madīnah al-qadīmah*, literally translated as “the old city.” The Casbah is Algiers’ medina.
- p. 153: “the renowned sixteenth-century Citadel”: In Arabic the name “Casbah” means “citadel” or “fortress,” but Citadel refers to a specific fort in the northwest corner of the Casbah. In 1556, the Ottoman-appointed dey (ruler of Algiers) had a fort, termed the Citadel, constructed at the highest point of the Casbah, 117 meters above the coastline. Over time, it became the dey’s castle.
- p. 153: ambages: Archaic term designating “winding pathways.”
- p. 153: coltsfoot: A small yellow flower. Its leaves have an intricate vein system, so part of the simile is an instance of synecdoche, “coltsfoot” meaning “leaf of a coltsfoot.”
- p. 153: “‘tricky’ part”: As Remy had been warned by Foucin (9.144) and by Belmazoir earlier that morning, although that meeting will not be described until p. 159.
- p. 153: *salaat il-asr*: Afternoon prayers, which were from 4:30 to 4:45 this day.
- p. 153: Bab El Jdid: In Arabic “el *jdid*” means “the new” and *bab*, “door” or “entrance.” In 1542, the Casbah was circled by an 11-13 m. brick wall. There were originally five points (gates or doors) of entry. Three were on the south or seaward side, Bab Azoun, the Sea Gate, and the Port Gate. One was on its east side, Bab el-Oued (“the Creek Gate”). The fifth, the arched Bab El Jdid, was on its northwestern side near the Citadel. It was called the “New Gate,” since many years would pass before two more openings were hewed out of the wall, the Gate to the fortifications and the Gate to the Casbah. The doors or gates of the original entrances were closed at sunset and opened at sunrise.
- p. 153: tropology: the use of tropes or figurative language.

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Here Remy has used the structure of the heart (“coronary”) to describe the shape of the Casbah.

p. 153: “the mercurial beauty of Leila’s face”: See 9.148 for Remy’s musings about how beautiful Leila was.

He resumes his thoughts here, but prefaces by saying his “deliberations” about her face were “totally philosophical.”

- p. 154: “at ten . . . he had set out for the penitentiary”: Remy’s taxi ride to Berrouaghia for his brief conference with Belmazoir lasted from 10:00 to 11:10, according to my chronology.
- p. 154: Brigg: Remy’s umbrella.
See the 5.70 note for further details about the umbrella.
- p. 154: “After a protracted dickering”: Remy purchased this first gift for Marie at 4:57, according to my chronology.
- p. 154: *complanate*: flattened and smooth.
- p. 154: *kohl*: eye makeup.
The English word is derived from the Arabic *kuhl*.
- p. 154: “A half-hour of tacking”: To “tack” means “to go in a zigzag course or to shift one’s direction.
The time he enters his father’s alley is 5:27.
- p. 154: *sheer*: swerve.
- p. 154: *ruelle*: In French “lane or alley.”
- p. 154: *Ruelle Bensdid*: Mentioned in 2.27 as the alley on which his father’s grocery store was located.
- p. 154: *sac à provisions*: French for “shopping bag.”
- p. 154: “mixing bowl”: This purchase of Remy’s, he recognizes, is symbolic because the mission of his trip is to connect his Algerian family with his French family.
- p. 154: “cypress frame”: See the 2.26 and 3.38 notes where the cypress tree is associated with death and mourning.
As before, here its splintering is a symbol of the shattering of the Naaman family.
- p. 154: *plank-and-batten door*: See 5.80 and its note, N5:36.
There the text defines the plank-and-batten door to the Belmazoirs’ shack as “vertical plywood boards held together by [wooden] slats.”
- p. 154: “descried not a garden”: It was in the small garden of the Naamans’ grocer where Omar’s father spoke to him about a pledge to God to always take care of Noura (3.37).
Remy finds out that the garden has been filled in with some unspecified rooms.
Remy is inside the store about ten minutes (5:27 – 5:37).
- p. 154: “*Combien?*”: “How much?” in French.

- p. 154: “ten dinars”: Remy is quintuply overcharged.
- p. 154: “God will comfort the tortured!”: What his father had called out to him on 2.27.
- p. 154: loden green: a dark olive green.
- p. 154: “*sealed Algeria’s fate for one hundred thirty-two years*”: The victorious French ruled Algeria from July 5, 1830, to July 5, 1962.
- p. 154: “Algiers’ Dey Hussein”: Some liberties have been taken with the account of the fly whisk incident.
 Dey Hussein (1765 – 1838), had become the Ottoman ruler (dey) of Algiers in 1826. He was constantly complaining about a large sum of money which France owed Algiers.
 On April 29, 1827, Pierre Deval, the French consul to Algiers, came to the Citadel to offer congratulations on a Muslim holiday.
 During the meeting, Hussein brought up the debt and requested that King Charles of France directly communicate with him about it.
 Deval replied that it was below the dignity of a king to reply to a dey. The remark angered Hussein who struck Deval three times on the arm with the handle of a peacock-feather fly whisk.
 The incident became the pretext for France’s invasion of Algeria three years later. Within a month, the army quickly defeated the Ottoman force mustered by Hussein, and on July 5, 1830, entered Algiers through Bab El Jdid near the Citadel, seized Hussein, and established the Mediterranean coast of Algeria as French territory.
 Hussein and his family were sent into exile in Naples, Italy. Turkey made no military maneuvers to challenge French rule of Algeria.
 In my account, I leave open whether the striking with the fly whisk was intentional or accidental, and I misidentify where and with which part of the whisk Hussein struck Deval. Ah, the sins of authorial license!
- p. 154: “somber HIV . . . three years ago”: Remy’s progression through the Casbah will be paralleled by the 1986 transporting of his paralyzed father from his store to the attic of a nearby shop, his new residence.
 Here Remy learns the bare facts of the event from HIV. In section 2, during his trek through the Casbah, his imagination will concoct a more vivid account of his father’s relocation.
- p. 154: “from 1963, the year the names of the Unholy Seven were proclaimed, its men had never entered his parents’ store or spoken to him”: Just as Omar’s mother hid herself from the world with a “forever-mourning” *niqaab* (3.38) as a self-punishment for allowing the paratroopers to seize Noura in 1958, so his father is ostracized by his male neighbors from 1963.

- p. 155: “Châtelet-Les Halles metro station”: A major commuter train hub in Paris. It is named after the Châtelet monument and the former market of Les Halles.
- p. 155: *pourboire*: In French, “a tip or gratuity.”
The annual stipend which France paid Remy was called a “cadeau” until 1981 when his new contact (who later named himself HIV) called it a “*pourboire*” (2.25).
- p. 155: Remidi: This is an Algerian family name. I chose it for its “serious” pun on “remedy” since Mme. Remidi’s love and devotion to Remy’s father are the most likely remedy for humanity’s disconnection.
See the 3.38 note, which lists her appearances in the novel.
- p. 155: spousal: Now rarely used, as a noun its means “a marriage ceremony.”
- p. 155: *djinn*: The text’s definition “evil spirits” should be supplemented by referring to the 1.9 note, N1:24-25.
Djinn, neither human beings nor angels, are a separate creation of God. Inhabitants of the earth, they typically steer clear of people, but sometimes are portrayed as tempting people to evil. Satan (*Shaitan* in Arabic) is a disobedient *djinni* (singular of *djinn*).
In the novel, because Omar was a traitor, the neighbors believed he had been influenced by a *djinni* to commit his treason.
His *djinni*-inspired treason, in their reasoning, is a sign that the entire Naaman family is corrupt. Thus all the men of the neighborhood keep a distance from his father (154).
- p. 155: “haberdashery” and “notions shop”: I decided to use some linguistic tomfoolery here.
First, the building is a haberdashery in its American sense, that is, a shop which sold men’s clothing and accessories, presumably both Arab and Western. The original owner used the attic for storage.
By 1986, the year Omar’s father was moved, it had become a haberdashery in its British sense, a “notions shop” which sells small useful household items ranging from needles and thread to kitchen utensils and dishes to cheap decorative ornaments.
In the U.S., it would have been termed a five-and-ten-cent store. Since these items needed no storage, the new owner rented the attic as an apartment.
- p. 155: beldam: “a woman of advanced age” or “an old and loathsome woman” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 155: “caretaker . . . caregiver”: HIV makes a distinction between these two terms. One does the caring out of duty, concentrating on what she/he can “take.”
The other, out of love, concerned with what he/she can “give.”
This differentiation of expectation and outlook will return near the end of the

novel, 21.363.

p. 155: “litter-strapped”: The movement of Omar’s father by means of a litter will parallel two later uses of a litter: 15.242 and all of chap. 21.

- p. 156: *dukkaan*: In Arabic, “a small or neighborhood shop.”
- p. 156: “the second afternoon of ‘my physical repatriation’”: The second day Remy returned to Algeria, April 10, 1989.
That morning he had called on Foucin and discovered his obsession with tracking down “the fag end of the traitors sheltered by France” (4.58).
- p. 156: “As he traipsed by”: According to my chronology, the time that he walked by the building in which his father now lived was 5:40 p.m., so Remy has been wandering seemingly without purpose or sense of direction for fifty-five minutes.
- p. 156: “red Arabic number ‘28’”: Omar was flown out of Algeria on April 13, 1961, and returns On April 9, 1989, well-nigh twenty-eight years of exile.
Is the numerical symbolism overwrought that this is the number of the street to which his father had been moved?
See the 9:136 note, N9:5, for the use of the symbolism of twenty-eight throughout the novel, including the thirteen times, it specifically refers to the span of his exile: 2.16, 22, and 29; 3.40; 4.52; 5.78; 6.93; 7.101; 10.156; 19.320 and 330; and 20.340 and 345.
- p. 156: *dame âgée*: “elderly lady” in French.
- p. 156: shopfront: “the front side of a store facing the street; storefront” (online *Free Dictionary*).
It is frequently spelled as two words.
- p. 156: “Dr. Johnson, a fellow father-dishonorer”: Dr. Samuel Johnson’s fault and Remy’s fault, however, are different.
In 1729, Johnson, then a nineteen-year-old student at Oxford University, on a visit to his parents’ home in Lichfield, Staffordshire, was asked by his father to help him at a bookstall that his father had set up in nearby Uttoxeter market.
Johnson disdained to perform the work, saying it was beneath a university scholar to peddle books. His father died in 1731.
Many years later (probably in 1780) the elderly Johnson “desired to atone for this fault; I went to Uttoxeter in very bad weather, and stood for a considerable time bareheaded in the rain, on the spot where my father’s stall used to stand. In contrition I stood, and hope the penance was expiatory.”
Boswell used the account provided by a young clergyman who Johnson met in his last visit to Lichfield in 1784. There Johnson said the act of penance at Uttoxeter occurred “a few years earlier.”
The episode is given in the section of the *Life* relating to 1785, titled in some editions as chap. 40.
Remy’s sin against his father was not disdain, but desertion. He left his family to be whisked to France in order to save himself.
Remy will overtly quote Johnson on patriotism (the word is birthed in the Latin word for *father*) on the last page of the novel (368).

p. 156: dishonorer: “one who dishonors” (*Webster’s Third*).

pp. 156-59: SECTION 2: Inserted into Remy’s circuitous downhill trek from his father’s shop to the clothing warehouse is Remy’s imagined version of the 1986 late-night transportation of his paralyzed father on a litter from his shop to the attic of a nearby store.

Further imbedded is a 1960 account of how he minimally helped three other university students dig a tunnel leading from the Casbah warehouse to the Bay of Algiers.

Correlated incidents tie the three together. For instance, when Remy lifts the hidden and long-forgotten iron disk in the warehouse, the entrance to the tunnel (present time, 1989), and his memory elevates the heroic toil of the three students (distant past, 1960), the women bearing his father’s litter push through the door leading to the attic (near past, 1986).

p. 156: “his daughters married Jews”: On 20.341-42, the married names of Remy’s two daughters are given, Françoise Bismuth and Claudia Sitruk.

Thus intuitively “without conspiracy” they assumed the Jewish faith which Marie’s parents had abandoned, as was mentioned on 2.16.

p. 156: “Casbah’s Grand Synagogue”: On December 12, 1960, shortly after de Gaulle had proclaimed that Algeria should be governed by Muslim Algerians, a Muslim mob sacked the century-old Grand Synagogue in the heart of the Casbah.

Horne in *Savage War* describes the aftermath: “the beautiful building was gutted, the Torah scrolls ripped and desecrated, the walls inscribed with swastikas and slogans of ‘Death to the Jews’” (432).

The exodus of most of the 150,000 Jews in Algeria, whose ancestors had settled in Algeria as long ago as the first century CE, began before the country gained independence in 1962; most joined the *pieds-noirs* and resettled in France.

The c. 10,000 who remained emigrated over the next thirty years as anti-Israeli sentiment grew; there are now (2013) no operating synagogues in Algeria.

As for the Grand Synagogue, soon after independence the empty building, with a minaret added, was transformed into a mosque.

Algerians still paradoxically refer to it as “the mosques of the Jews.”

p. 156: *balra*: A North African house slipper.

It is similar in design to the more common Turkish and Middle Eastern slipper called the *babouche* in that both are richly embroidered and end in a pointed, curled toe.

However, the *balra* has a heel while the *babouche* is backless (an expansion of the definition in *Webster’s Third*).

p. 156: “Watched over by their husbands”: As Remy is walking, he begins to imagine the night the women of the neighborhood, led by Mme. Remidi, moved his father.

p. 156: “the seven [women]”: This is another instance of the major symbolic number of the novel. See the 2.23 note, N2.33, which lists the use of seven or its variants in the first two chapters of the novel.

The following summarizes the major heptads or other significant uses of seven or a variant of it through the entire novel:

The seven traitors (chaps. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10).

The seven performers in the stage numbers at Trimalchio’s (chap. 2).

The seven Algerian teenage girls kidnapped, one of whom is Noura (chap. 3).

The seven paratroopers who raped “Noura” (chap. 3).

The seven prostitutes near the Al-Nigma (chap. 5)

The seven Lakhtour children, all killed in the French attack save the one who became Foucin (chap. 7).

Ballard’s murder on Feb. 27 (chap. 1, but first mentioned on 6.84).

Seven pairs of FLIRs (8.132).

The just over seven-year Algerian war of independence (chap. 9).

The seven women bearing his father’s litter (chap. 10).

In chaps. 11-21, the seven traitors will be mentioned in chaps. 14 and 17-21. Twice heptads of young men will be bearers of something or someone (chaps. 16 and 21).

The cenotaph of Martyrs Square will be revealed as being seven years old (14.233).

Seven paratroopers will again sexually abuse a young girl (14.234).

Also it will be pointed out that in 1989 Algeria had been independent of France for almost twenty-seven years: July 5, 1962 through April 1989 (17.283).

For the entire novel, thirty-seven times “seven” is attached to the noun “traitor” or a variant; the number “37 incorporates “three” and “seven,” thus “ten,” all symbolic numbers in Islam).

And finally, fourteen times Remy is identified as the “seventh traitor” or a variant, such as “devil” (6.99; 7.116; 14.234 and 236; 17.276 and 284; 18.293; 19.322, 324, and 330; 20.348 and 350; and 21.353 and 367).

In an 11.178 note, N11:23, the symbolism of the number seven in Islam will be discussed. Finally, an even more detailed list of the use of seven will be given in the 21.352 note, N21:2-3.

p. 156: “stairwell . . . tumbled down twenty-eight years ago”: This episode is described in 2:41.

p. 156: *gandoura*: A short-sleeved or sleeveless robe without a hood.
See the 1.13 and 3.39 notes.

p. 156: *burnoose*: A wraparound hooded cloak. This definition is given in the text on 7.104 and is further explained in its note, N7:9.

p. 156: *chèche*: A large piece of cloth that may be wrapped around the head as a turban, the neck as a scarf, and the face as a veil.
Another native headdress is the *checheya*, which is shaped like a fez. It will

appear on 11.183.

- p. 156: “as shrouded as Remy’s dying mother’s [face]”: See 3:38 for a description of his mother’s death in 1982, four years before the transfer of his father.
- p. 156: *civière*: In French, “a litter or stretcher.”
- p. 156: knurled: An adjective meaning “gnarled” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 156: “Five minutes past the Middle Street . . . Rue Bab Azoun . . . shammed confusion”: The action switches from his reenactment of the relocating of his father to Remy’s journey through the lower Casbah.
At 5:55, three long blocks below the Middle Street, Remy reaches Rue Bab Azoun, the eastern, seaward boundary of the Casbah.
He pretends that he is lost, but then rights himself by turning southward.
- p. 156: souk: A marketplace. In North African and Middle East countries, all stores or shops specializing in one area (clothes, jewelry, meat, books, etc.) are grouped together.
Thus all shops selling clothes would be in the clothing souk.
After a four-minute amble Remy reaches the garment souk at six.
- p. 156: “Avoiding the moonlight”: Remy’s walk toward the souk is paralleled by the women transversing the short distance between his father’s shop/dwelling and the notions shop where he is to live.
The women carry him to the ladder which leads to the loft and they begin to heave him up it.

- p. 157: “The main entryway”: The narrative switches back to Remy inside the clothing souk. He will be there from 6:00 to 6:20.
- p. 157: atrium: A hall or court at the center or entrance of a building.
In the souk, one can use it to gain direct entrance to the clothing warehouse or walk down an aisle leading from it to the other more expensive clothing stalls or shops.
- p. 157: Marie’s fourth gift”: He has previously bought her the cosmetic holder, the mixing bowl, and the ornamental fly whisk (154).
- p. 157: “male chaperons” and “Casbah Islamists”: After the Soviet Union invaded Muslim Afghanistan in 1979, some Algerian men travelled to that country, where they received training as mujahidin or Islamic guerrilla “freedom-fighters.”
As the war was winding down in the late 1980s, some of these Algerians returned home, bringing with them the strict interpretation of Islam which was a part of their mujahidin training.
Called “the Afghani,” a term of respect by the user, they played an important role in the Algiers “bread riots” in autumn 1988, a protest which forced the Algerian President to abolish one-party rule in Algeria.
Religious leaders, the Afghani and their supporters quickly registered as a religious party, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). Their presence was growing in the Casbah by April 1989, the month of most of my novel.
One of the insinuations of the FIS was that women leaving their residence be accompanied by a male member of the family as a chaperon (*mahram* in Arabic).
- p. 157: hued and cried: The compound noun “hue and cry” is used as the verb “hued and cried” in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (Penguin 1999 ed.), p. 256.
- p. 157: À gauche: On or to the left side of something.
- p. 157: “cartes, roulette, or dé”: cards, roulette (in this case, a spinning soda bottle), or dice. The previous paragraph best describes the items used in their games of chance.
The two sets of chaperons—grandfathers and teenage sons of women shoppers—will reappear in chap. 20.
- p. 157: *djellaba*: a long-sleeved robe with a hood sometimes worn by Algerian men.
See the 1.14 note.
- p. 157: *cachabia*: a wraparound hooded cloak.
See its 4.59 note.
- p. 157: *chèche*: A traditional male headdress in Algeria.
A long cloth, it can function as a turban, scarf, and veil, depending on how it is wrapped, as the text notes.

- p. 157: “what a rustic”: Remy’s plan to visit with his father is suggested here.
Using these rustic garments, he will go in the notions shop and through a bribe passed to the shop attendant be allowed to climb to the attic, perhaps saying that he is a countryside relative of the old woman residing there, Widow Daidje.
This scheme is never developed because on p. 166 Foucin will admit that he had Remy followed. This information leads Remy to ask himself on p. 169, “Had his disguise been spied, noted, reported?”
The question will be definitively answered on 13.209, where Foucin describes the four native items which Remy had purchased. (However, even this information will pale beside something which Foucin learned while Remy was walking through the Casbah, but this revelation is delayed until 16.270.)
- p. 157: “At a table . . . lit on the iron disk . . . the tug unbalanced him”: His pulling on the disk occurs at the same time that his mind sees Mme. Remidi, tugging at his father’s litter, push through the ceiling door leading to the attic.
- p. 157: *hugub*: The plural of *higaab*, “head scarf,” in Arabic.
- p. 157: *encore une fois*: once more or once again.
- p. 157: “the tunnel”: In 6.89, the tunnel and its builders are briefly mentioned.
- p. 157: “‘Engineer’ Brahim Laffiz”: Not a real-life person.
“Engineer” is in single quotes to indicate that Laffiz was an engineering student, but had not yet gotten his degree.
- p. 157: Casbahians: Residents of the Casbah.
See 6.89 and its note, N6:23. A third use of the term will occur on 20.346.

- p. 158: “inevitable overlords”: Laffiz seems knowledgeable of the historical invaders of Algeria, which are listed in 2.24.
- p. 158: “It’s built so well Time cannot destroy it!”: This boast will reappear on 20.346.
- p. 158: “Boulevard Gambetta (the present Ourida Meddad)”: As mentioned on p. 153, Ourida Meddad is the southern boundary of the Casbah.
The clothing soul borders it.
- p. 158: apostrophize: To speak an apostrophe, usually to a person or thing that is not present.
- p. 158: “doing the lion’s share, 90.9%”: The total distance from the iron-disk entrance in the cement floor of the clothing warehouse to the end of the culvert in the bay is around 550 meters: 20 meters from the warehouse to and under the adjacent Boulevard Gambetta; 30 meters from the far side of the boulevard to the intersection with the underground culvert; and 500 meters (half a kilometer) from the culvert to the bay.
Thus only about 9.1% of the passage would have been dug by the Algerian trio.
- p. 158: “double-dealing”: By the time Remy was helping with the tunnel, he had been a secret agent for France for a span of about fifteen to twenty-three months (December 1958 to March through November 1960).
- p. 158: Blida: a city about forty-five km. south of Algiers.
See the pp. 2.21 and 24 and 3.38 notes.
This was the city where Remy was initiated into the FLN.
- p. 158: “few French police still patrolling the Casbah”: By November 1957 the FLN in Algiers was basically wiped out, and the Casbah was pacified to such an extent that the French police seldom bothered to patrol it (6.88-90).
- p. 158: “*ça-là-partout*”: As the text indicates, the French phrase means “here, there, [and] everywhere,” in essence “in every place.”
Here the phrase comes to Remy’s mind since two years before this incident the French lieutenant while interrogating Omar had used it in listing the types of information about the FLN which the French wanted him to pass on (3.43 and its note N3:23).
It will also be employed later in 8.127 and 20.341.
- p. 158: “Algiers’ case office”: He was first referred to on 3.50.
He was the French military officer who supervised Omar during the period from Dec. 1958 to April 1961 when he served as a secret agent.
- p. 158: “Second Battle of Algiers”: This is the term which Algerians use to refer to a spontaneous three-day demonstration (Dec. 10-13, 1960) by the people of Algiers

in support of the FLN, which the French were trying to bypass in the secret negotiations to end the war.

Neither French paratroopers nor tanks nor barbed wire nor bullets nor grenades could prevent thousands upon thousands of men, women and children from erupting everywhere in the city, chanting FLN slogans.

The acclaimed film *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), which concentrated on the dismal First Battle of Algiers in 1957, closes with this defiant and triumphant demonstration, which some feel sealed the fate of France in Algeria.

p. 158: “At the *trappe*”: French for “trapdoor,” that is, “a lifting or sliding door covering an opening in a roof, ceiling, or floor” (*Webster’s Third*).

The action shifts back to Mme. Remidi pulling the litter into the loft and the transfer of his father from it to his bed.

p. 158: “dangled in midair”: Remy’s father body dangled as the litter was transferred onto Mme. Remidi’s shoulders.

The dangling image occurs in seven chapters as explained in the 1.14 note, N1:37. This is its fourth use and will contrast with the dangling body of another father, who is also tied to a stretcher, on 15.242.

p. 158: *Sajdah*: The procumbent position of a praying Muslim. It is defined in the text on 7:102.

p. 158: *brancard*: Another French term meaning “litter” or “stretcher.”

p. 158: portage: A transitive verb meaning “to carry”; or to engage in “the labor of carrying or transporting,” to borrow wording from the definition of the noun “portage” in *Webster’s Third*.

p. 158: “the blanket-and-sheet divided room”: Remy’s father is isolated behind a barrier similar to that of the mother of Mohammed and Houda: Belmazoïr speaks of “the bedsheet dividing the [one] room” of their shack (4.65) and, spying into it, Remy sees a “soiled white sheet hung as a room divider” (5.81).

p. 159: “the Amsterdam steam room last August”: In 2.16, Remy describes his meeting with HIV at an Amsterdam bathhouse on Aug. 17, 1988 [date not specified in the text].

There Remy concentrates on his annual *pourboire* which HIV was bringing to him and the sordid place in which they were meeting.

Not mentioned in chap. 2 was that his contact told him about the murder of the one person in Algeria, Mme. Remidi, who cared about his father, now a blind, paralyzed invalid with tuberculosis.

With this caregiver dead, the helpless condition of his father weighs on Remy’s mind and influences his decision to return to Algiers under an alias.

p. 159: “Caregiver Remidi”: See the p. 155 note above, where HIV distinguishes between a caretaker (the Widow Daidje) and a caregiver (Mme. Remidi).

p. 159: “A week ago battered to death [by] some Casbah Islamic fundamentalists”: Mme. Remidi’s death occurred on Aug. 10, “a week” before Remy’s and HIV’s meeting in Amsterdam.

She was killed by some “Casbah Islamic fundamentalists” who were “scandalized by her attention to a man [Remy’s father] not her husband.”

See 1.11 and its notes, N1:29, for the rise of the Islamists in Algeria during the late 1980s.

They desired Algeria to be governed by the *Sharia*, Islamic law, and the obliteration of all Western influences. Members of its group, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), particularly targeted women. For instance, its followers would throw acid on the face of a Muslim woman not wearing a veil.

The brutal killing of Mme. Remidi by these Muslim fanatics in the Casbah parallels the killing of Remy’s university friends by a French grenade (1958).

p. 159: “Daidje’s being remunerated . . . in the widow’s hands, God help him”: Daidje is the “old woman [or] beldam . . . hired to be his [father’s] caretaker” (155).

One of her duties is to help Mme. Remidi operate the dumbwaiter-like mechanism by means of which Remidi gets “a once-a-day tray of hearty food” to his father.

The mechanism also allows his father’s bedpan (and presumably Daidje’s) to be emptied daily (155).

Since the death of Mme. Remidi on Aug. 10, 1988, Remy’s father had to rely on the beldam, who, HIV’s exclamation suggests, has been grudgingly and minimally performing her duties.

p. 159: “excreta”: “excretions,” the singular of which is defined as “a waste product (as urine, feces, vomitus) eliminated from the confines of an animal body; excrement—not used technically” (*Webster’s Third*).

That is, physicians and/or other scientists make a distinction between excreta (urine, sweat) and feces.

- p. 159: “thinking only of his parent (and himself)”: The absence of any eulogy for Mme. Remidi is an instance of an egotistic aspect of Remy’s which quite often manifests itself.
- p. 159: “Father, Father . . . what have I brought you to?”: This tormenting question, which first appeared on 1.17, will reoccur on 17.281 and 291. Here, Remy delivers it at 6:20 p.m. in the clothing warehouse.
- p. 159: “dubbing the ring [the iron disk] ungrammatically ‘*La Pointe de Laffiz*’”: Remy combines the names of the two martyrs Ali la Pointe (6.88-90) and Engineer Brahim Laffiz (158). The grammatical error is that “point” meaning place is a masculine noun so it should be “le point.” The feminine noun “la pointe” means the tip or end of something, such as one’s nose.
- p. 159: *pad*: an intransitive verb meaning “walk,” usually soundlessly.
- p. 159: *aisleway*: a passageway for inside traffic within a building.
- p. 159: *fustian sahra*: As described in the text, a stylish Algerian loose-fitting evening gown, typically worn around the family, but it is covered with a *haik* when worn outside the house.
- p. 159: *haik*: A draping robe sometimes covering the entire frame, but in other designs it covers the area from the shoulders to the feet. An Algerian woman typically wears it when she leaves her residence.
- p. 159: 6,500 dinars: approximately US \$650.
- p. 159: *aisleway*: a passage for traffic within a building.
- p. 159: *undrunk*: “unswallowed” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 159: “my disguise”: At 6:45, on exiting the garment souk, Remy confirms that the native garments he has purchased are to be the disguise he plans to use in order to visit his father. Disguises are part of the clothes metaphor of the novel. In chap. 6, Remy had already donned one, the HIV-2 garments.

pp. 159-62: SECTION 3

- p. 159: “On his mark . . . scant half-hour before Friday’s noon sermon”: Remy is in the visitor’s room at the prison at 11:30 for an interview with Belmazoir, which he

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knew could last no more than fifteen minutes since the prisoner would have to attend the required Friday's sermon.

p. 159: artifactual: "of or relating to an artifact" (*Webster's Third*).

p. 159: "tricky maneuvering . . . replicating Foucin's advice": See 9.149 and its note, 9:35.

p. 159: "not to desert Mother's side, trekking here": Not only denying Remy access to his sister, he also cuts off his own access to her, seemingly because Remy is providing him money to obtain drugs in the prison so she does not have to smuggle them in.

- p. 160: “Leila’s disclosure had to be validated”: That her husband always came twenty minutes early to a meeting (9.150).
- p. 160: “in our second month”: Presumably during June, 1988, since Ballard’s and Belmazoir’s relationship began on May 24, although they did not have sex until June 14.
- p. 160: foil: A person who sets off or enhances another by contrast. Ballard suggests that his twenty-minute early arrival contrasts with Belmazoir’s typical fifteen-minute tardiness.
- p. 160: illation: conclusion; inference.
- p. 160: “just before the dot of ‘on the dot’ ticked, around 6:50”: Belmazoir suggests that Ballard came a little early: 6:55 would be “on the dot,” or exactly his third-of-an-hour early, before the 7:15 rendezvous.
- p. 160: probabilize: a transitive verb meaning “to cause to be probable or to seem probable” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 160: Bendari’s: The Bab el Oued café previously mentioned on 6.85 and in its note, and 8.167.
- p. 160: “Fouad’s tablet”: Fouad Belghiche, the manager of Bendari’s.
- p. 160: “ZB disco 7:15 Mon.”: Although alluded to in earlier chapters, this is the first exact statement of the message from Ballard to Belmazoir setting up the meeting in the grove, as taken down by the Belghiche.
- p. 160: “Karami, Foucin’s lick-ass”: See 7.107 and its note, N7:16, where his title, Deputy Inspector, is given. His full name, Hussein Karami ben Djelloul, will not be revealed until 21.354.
“Lick-ass” appears to be a neologism as a noun which I formed from the verb phrase “lick ass.”
I did not find it used as a noun in print or on-line dictionaries.
Its inverted form, “Ass-licker,” is the standard form for crudely designating a person who curries favor or is a fawning person or sycophant.
- p. 160: “Mo-Mo”: A personal note: The real Moroccan young man to whom this book is dedicated was called “Mo-MO” by all of his friends.
Nicknames for other Mohammeds which I heard were “Moo-Moo,” “Muh-Muh,” “Mo-Med,” and “M’ham.”
- p. 160: “The date of the call”: Ballard’s call leaving the message for Mohammed was made on Thursday, Feb. 23, four days before the murder.

- p. 160: Englishize: “Anglicize” or “to cause to become adapted in customs, manners, speech, or outlook to the culture of the English-speaking world” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 160: “The next afternoon”: On Friday, Feb. 24. The call came in the afternoon since at this time in Algeria most cafés closed during the morning on mosque day (Friday).
- p. 160: *calepin*: French for “notebook.”
- p. 160: “confiscated the [notebook] the morning after Belmazoir’s arrest . . . ‘Rather quickly’”: On Wednesday, March 1, the telephone log was seized. Although Vellacott’s reports did not say how the police knew to confiscate it, since Le Puy Remy has puzzled over the obvious means: Belghiche or someone else who had seen the public message alerted them. Yet as an Algerian for twenty-one years, he also knows the reluctance of any Algerian, who is not a “hired snitch,” to court involvement with the police. The doubts of Remy—always ready to exploit another situation which will buy him time until he can visit his father—will lead him to seek out Belghiche on Monday, April 17 (13.211-14).
- p. 160: “this ‘anyone’”: In single quotes because Mohammed had used the indefinite pronoun five paragraphs above, “Anyone could have read it.”

- p. 161: script in: “to orchestrate (behavior or event, for example) as if writing a script” (*Amer. Her. Dict.*).
- p. 161: “reducing his friendship”: On 4.62, Belmazoir flippantly summed up their relationship as “He sucked me. I fucked him,” but Remy quickly picked up hints that the young man “was genuinely fond of” (62) and “misse[d] Ballard” (66).
- p. 161: “‘the victim was not the victim’ (*as well as for you as for another*)”: Just as the aim in killing Ballard (the real victim) was to hurt Leroy (the intended victim) (8.124 and 128), so the intention was for Belmazoir to be arrested for this murder, thereby making the youth as much a victim as Ballard.
- p. 161: “‘more than the more’ destroy you”: Again, the quotation is from James’s *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, chap. 13: “The more than the more is more than the less.”
Remy had previously spoken the quote to Belmazoir on 4.66.
- p. 161: “‘two nights ago when you yourself entertained it’”: On Wed., Apr. 12, in his hotel room, Remy said to Foucin, “You carry a hatred for the Belmazoirs” (7.114).
- p. 161: “the accusation”: The name of the person who so hated him that he would gladly “frame” him will be given as repetition by Belmazoir seven paragraphs down.
- p. 161: “the FLIRs . . . predictable sequence: For the synonyms which Medlin employed in explaining the FLIRs to Remy, see 8.132, where he uses the words in quotes. On 9.146, Remy said he utilized the same terms in describing the FLIRs to Leila.
- p. 161: “twelve minutes into their interview, as Remy had plotted”: At 11:42, the guard came forward to collect Mohammed for the prison’s obligatory Friday noontime sermon.
Remy had hoped (and even “plotted”) that in the hurry Belmazoir would blurt out the truth about the “missing week.”
- p. 161: “‘What of the missing week?’”: On 6.85, Remy notices that in Belmazoir’s chronological account of his last five meetings with Ballard, “a week’s unaccounted for.” Later Remy calls it “Belmazoir’s missing week” (6.94).
- p. 161: avail: One of its meanings as a transitive verb is “to use or apply to good advantage” (*Webster’s Third*).
A paraphrase of the past participle phrase employed here : He never previously availed himself of the tactic.
- p. 161: “a little ‘flying’”: Slang expression meaning “high on drugs.”
- p. 161: “stand-up”: “the act of failing to keep an appointment” (*Webster’s Third*).

Webster's New, which does not list its noun form, considers the verb “stand up” as slang.

- p. 161: stiff: As a verb, “to fail to live up to [one’s] end of a bargain” (*Urban Dictionary*).
Belmazoir’s purposeful use of three colloquial expressions in such close proximity verbally supplements his “rakish sneer.”
- p. 161: “double dose of fretting”: The weeks of Feb. 13 and Feb. 20 when Belmazoir maintained he felt he had lost Ballard.
- p. 161: “February fourteenth”: On 8.131 Medlin calls the embassy’s quartermaster and finds out that on this date Ballard checked out two pairs of FLIRs.
Remy’s suggestion to Belmazoir that this action indicates Ballard was engaged in “official business” omits Medlin’s explanation that the two pairs indicate that he and Leila were using them for a nocturnal nature trip (132).
- p. 161: “Only Foucin”: Belmazoir repeats that Foucin was the “only” person who so hated him and his family that he would desire to more-than-the-more destroy him.
- p. 161: postern: a small back door.
- pp. 161-62: “nominal salutation . . . ‘M. Mohammed’”: Up till this point, Remy had always addressed the prisoner by his last name, M. Belmazoir, and never even used his first name Mohammed when thinking of him.
- p. 161: “two instances where the ‘real’ had broken through”: The two occur on p. 160:
(1) “Remy “was impressed” that Belmazoir did not seize on something which Remy had stressed might benefit the youth’s case.
(2) Remy was also surprised by Belmazoir’s “rapid deduction” about the notebook.
However, Remy knows that Belmazoir’s natural inclination is to lie, as the image from *Lear* which comes to his mind suggests: The youth’s artificiality strives to beat down the truth.
In fact, Remy knows that Belmazoir has just told him a lie about the missing week, but he did it in such a way (the “rakish sneer” and slang terms) as to proclaim he is lying.
While it is not mentioned, Remy probably appreciates that Belmazoir foiled his elaborate plan to rush the prisoner into a confession about the missing week. Instead a briefly flustered Belmazoir recovers and is ready with the lie. Similarly, Remy notes in Belmazoir’s third no about the FLIRs, he suppressed a decisive nod of his head, an indication that he is possibly holding something back.
Yet the progress Mohammed has evinced convinces Remy to commend it by henceforth switching to a less formal address in speaking to the client of his

client.

p. 161: “*The artificial must forcefully labor to ‘knap’ the ‘wantons’ down*”: The single quoted words are spoken by the Fool in *Lear*.

He tells the king, who had just admonished himself that he must keep his “rising heart” under control (“down”), the story of a “cockney” cook, who was ignorant about how to cook eels, for she had put the eels alive in a pastry pie.

When the eels tried to wiggle out, she “knapped ‘em o’ [on] the coxcombs [heads] with a stick and cried, ‘Down, wantons, down.’” (2.4.119-23)

p. 161: knap: rap.

p. 161: wantons: playful creatures, but with a possible sexual pun.

Here the “wantons” become the truthful, which the artificial Mohammed must struggle to suppress.

pp. 162-64: SECTION 4

p. 162: “moveable Muslim prayer”: Since Muslim prayer times are based on sunrise and sunset, as these change so will the time of each prayer. Thus in the span of forty-six days from Feb. 27, when the Leroys and Medlin dined at the Mirabout, to Apr. 14 when Remy visited the restaurant, the sunset prayer had advanced forty-one minutes, from 6:09 (this time is in one of the documents brought to Remy’s hotel by Medlin I; see p. 164.) to 6:50.

p. 162: *porte d’entrée*: French for “front door.”

p. 162: *maître d’hôtel/caissier*: headwaiter/cashier. See the 8.128 note, N8:26, which distinguishes between *maitre d’hotel* (formal term) and *maitre d’* (informal).

p. 162: *susurrare*: whisper; murmur.

p. 162: “the climactic entry of Gogol’s Madman”: The last paragraph of Nikolai Gogol’s short story, “The Diary of a Madman”: “Mother, Mother, have pity on your sick child! And do you know that the Bey of Algiers has a wart under his nose?” That appears to be a confusion between “bey” and “dey” here. Dey was the title of the ruler of the regency of Algiers (Algeria) under the Ottoman Empire (1671 – 1830).

The dey, who had a great degree of autonomy from the Turkish sultan, appointed a bey to administer each of the three outlying provinces in eastern, central, and western Algeria. The dey supervised them as well as governing the capital Algiers and its environs.

Thus Algiers itself never had a bey, only a dey. This system ended in 1830 when France conquered Algeria and turned it into a colony.

p. 162: “the fast-ending cannon”: See the 6.98 note, N6:48, on the “Great Cannon” whose blast signals not only the end of the fast, but also the immediate beginning of the feast.

Only in Ramadan is there no twenty-minute interval between the call to prayers and the prayers themselves.

During this Holy Month, as soon as the call to prayer begins, a Muslim takes a sip of water and some dates, thus breaking the fast, and then hurries to a mosque to perform the Maghrib prayers.

Afterward, the person either joins in a communal feast at the mosque or most likely returns home for the banquet.

Because the time is shorter for performing the sunset prayers, Zerhouni stresses to Remy (1) that he can allow him only fifteen of the almost thirty minutes (6:53 – 7:08) till the fast-breaking call to prayers (7:21), and (2) he must continue his early shutting down of the restaurant.

In months other than Ramadan, a restaurant and other businesses begin to be closed at the sound of the call to sunset prayers. Muslims are then given a twenty-minute interval to perform such activities as shuttering their shops before

they make their way to the mosque.

p. 162: muezzin: The man, usually a mosque official, who calls Muslims to prayer five times a day.

p. 162: Maghrib: Sunset prayers. In my novel, the call to it came at 7:21 this night.

p. 162: *porte battante*: French for “swinging door.”

p. 162: Gmelin’s blue: a deep blue.

p. 162: “trayed salt and pepper shakers”: Salt and pepper shakers often sit on a matching circular, leaf, or rectangular tray.
As a verb or verbal, “tray” means “to arrange on trays” (*Webster’s Third*).
Here it is a past participle.

- p. 163: *chaise en osier*: “wicker (*en osier*) chair (*chaise*)” in French.
- p. 163: *belgard*: “a loving look” (*Webster’s Third*, which lists the word as obsolete).
See the 3.50 note for other places in the novel where the word is used.
- p. 163: “The time?”: Belsches asks the time when Zerhouni had seated the Leroy and Medlin. He answers 6:11.
His answer is facetious since he is miffed by Belsches’ request that he be “specific, detailed, and accurate.”
- p. 163: “Subtract five minutes from tonight’s”: That is, the Maghrib prayer had added five minutes from Feb. 27, the night the three had dined there, to March 4, when Belsches interviewed Zerhouni.
- p. 163: *Ketchaoua*: The largest mosque in the Casbah. It will be described on 19.315.
- p. 163: *aurulent*: “golden in color” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 163: *Isha’*: the nighttime prayers. They are performed around an hour and a half after Maghrib prayers.

p. 164: “When Zerhouni reemerged”: Remy’s mental review of the three documents had taken only three minutes since Zerhouni reappeared at 6:56.

p. 164: “HIV’s lighter”: Technically, the faux Dupont lighter was provided to Remy in the “cache” left in the 2269 locker (4.53).

However, Remy thinks of it as being from HIV since he told him that a microcassette recorder can be disguised as a cigarette lighter (2.25), thereby conditioning his request in Trimalchio’s that the recorder he wanted look like “a cigarette lighter or such” (2.33).

p. 164: scrooch: crouch; usually used with “down.” Some dictionaries list it as “informal.”

pp. 164-65: SECTION 5

p. 164: “as soon as Zerhouni had concluded his much interrupted recital of the night?": This section opens at around 7:05 with Remy, still seated in the wicker chair, asking Zerhouni how the door to the restaurant was locked.

The preceding eight minutes (6:57 – 7:05), it is stated, had been consumed by Zerhouni’s account (and Remy’s interruptions) of the arrival of the Leroys and Medlin, their seating in the family room, Zerhouni’s absence for prayer, his return at around 7:30, and what happened afterwards.

However, at this point, nothing is revealed of what was said.

p. 164: *briquet*: French for “(cigarette) lighter.”

p. 164: “thirty years an expert in dissemblance”: From Dec. 8, 1958, when Remy agreed to become a secret French collaborator, to this day, Apr. 14, 1989.

p. 164: “in his eagerness to clarify Zerhouni would both mask and unmask his perplexity”: Remy believes that in his enthusiasm to earn his fifty-dinar tip Zerhouni will fail to see Remy’s perplexity (that is, mask it), but with that same excitement the maitre d’ will elaborate on his statement, thereby unmasking that part of it which puzzled Remy.

Zerhouni does: He reveals that Medlin had eaten at the Mirabout on Fri., Feb. 24, three days before the Leroys and he visited it, Mon., Feb. 27, the night Ballard was murdered.

p. 164: *pourboire*: tip; gratuity.

p. 164: “open dissection”: As opposed to Remy’s internal or private processing of the information about Medlin’s prior visit.

p. 164: *tête-à-tête*: a private conference between two people.

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p. 165: “To a T”: to perfection; exactly.

Webster’s Third notes that the expression is a shortened form of “to a tittle.”

p. 165: *salaat*: “prayers” in Arabic, in this case Maghrib prayers.

p. 165: “prior to your return from yours”: Remy means “from your [Zerhouni’s] prayers.”

p. 165: “*M. ‘Ibid.’ Medlin*”: Remy associates the abbreviation “ibid.” with Medlin from 8.129, 130, and 132.

p. 165: drawbolt: A simple method for locking a door, it consists of a bar that moves through guides attached to a door into an adjoining socket affixed to the door jamb (based on *Webster’s Third* and carpentry articles).

Remy’s reason for having Zerhouni go through the motions of locking and unlocking the door (164) becomes apparent.

Through this procedure, he realizes that the drawbolt device would allow someone inside the deserted restaurant to exit it without a key.

p. 165: “my fifteen minutes are exceeded by seven, and the suspension of your fast impends”: At this point Remy has been inside the restaurant for twenty-two minutes (6:53 – 7:15). The fast will end at 7:21.

pp. 165-68: SECTION 6

p. 165: “For the second time”: The section begins at 10:04 p.m., just under a third of the way into Remy’s telephone call to Foucin from the Al-Nigma (10:00 – 10:15).

pp. 165-66: “‘Medlin’s the murderer . . . ‘For the third’ . . . ‘For the fourth’”: Foucin’s 10:04 comical outburst that Medlin is the murderer sets Remy to thinking that in the last two days, three other times that idea with derision had been expressed.

In 9.148, Leila had said to Remy at around 4:02 on Apr. 13: “‘You’re not insinuating Elbert’s the . . .’ Leila flung back her head, the absurdity of the notion preventing a vocalization of the word. . . . [Her] laughter appeared to soften the “hue” of her “eyes.”

Remy’s immediate response to her, part of which is tacit, hence bracketed: “Joining in her mirth, he protested, “No! No! He [could not be the murderer since he] was dining with the Leroy’s” (9.148).

Given earlier (9.147), but occurring later on Apr. 13 (9:28), is his French embassy liaison’s Monitor’s sarcastic rejoinder: “The chaperoning snigger glided into thrummed contumely. ‘. . . No, the murderer is Medlin.’”

- p. 166: “As on the previous night”: The action flashes back to 10 when Remy makes the call to Foucin, principally hoping to obtain Leroy’s home phone number. Since two and a half hours had passed since he left the Mirabout, Remy was confident that Foucin had been informed of what Remy had uncovered there. Last night he had called Foucin at ten (p. 149 and its note, N9.28).
- p. 166: *fortuity*: good luck.
- p. 166: “One of my compeers was in the Casbah”: Foucin as much as admits that he had assigned at least one police agent (he calls him his compeer) to trail Remy.
- p. 166: *devoirs*: expressions of due respect or courtesy, as in greeting.
- p. 166: *trade-off*: An exchange of one thing in return for another, especially the relinquishment of one benefit or advantage for another regarded as more desirable.
Foucin thus saw through Remy’s ploy on 9.149: Remy phrased the invitation in such a way as to achieve the result he desired, that it would not be accepted.
- p. 166: *balra*: Algerian women’s slippers.
See the p. 156 note above, N10:10. Foucin would have assumed that Remy had bought them for his wife.
Remy’s alias Christian Lazar had two married sons but no daughters as any dossier on him which Foucin had received would have informed the commissioner.
- p. 166: “You understand”: As mentioned above in the p. 157 note, “what a rustic,” N10:14, this day while Remy was wandering through the Casbah, Foucin was informed of something important which he does not reveal to Remy until 16.270. This is the first time the two have spoken since this information was received.
In this scene (and all subsequent scenes until near the end of chap. 16), I tried to incorporate details into Foucin’s conversation which display the impact of this new information, although the commissioner strove to hide what he had learned. For instance, in this section, instead of simply saying he was aware of Remy’s discovery at the Mirabout, Foucin begins by admitting that he had arranged for him to be followed and even makes specific references to items (the slippers) which he had purchased in the Casbah.
Then he seems to beg Remy’s forgiveness for this subterfuge by saying, “[As a professional investigator], [y]ou understand [why I had to do this]” (166).
Remy’s response shows that he does not appreciate such frankness; he pretends that Foucin’s “understand” refers to what his wife will do with the *balra*.
- p. 166: “Al-Nigma’s fax machinist”: The faxing of these documents to Vellacott would have occurred from around 9:30 to 10:00 that morning since to reach the prison for his 11:30 meeting with Belmazoir he would have had to leave by ten.

- p. 166: “tracked the lawyer . . . Barrister Ouenough”: See 9.149 for Remy’s request to Foucin to attempt to locate the Algiers lawyer whom Chabane contacted. Ouenough, whose first name will not be given in the novel, is a real Algerian name, not my fabrication.
- p. 166: “embrasive stipulations”: Foucin’s point is that while the witnessed signing of the marriage contract is the central validation of a marriage, other stipulations are essential. Presumably he refers to two, both of which Ballard and Leila had not completed: the publicizing of the marriage in a mosque and the *walima* or marriage banquet.
- p. 166: chapfallen: disheartened or depressed.
- p. 166: “So from 6:20”: Foucin then brings up the Mirabout, saying that from around 6:20 when Samir brought the service to the room until around 7:25 when Zerhouni entered to take their orders, Medlin may have been absent.
- p. 166: “minor premise”: The premise in a syllogism that contains the minor term. Here, Foucin means it in the following context:
 Major premise: Any suspect of Ballard’s murder was without alibi from around 6:49 (when Ballard presumably reached the disco) to around 7:30 (when Belmazoir said he found the body).
 Minor premise: For a significant part of this span Medlin’s alibi appears to be false.
 Conclusion: Medlin may be regarded as a suspect.
- p. 166: ‘*your* murderer’”: Foucin mocks Remy’s earlier use of the phrase: In 7.113, Remy said, “M. Foucin, I reiterate, ‘I know *your* history’ [quoting himself from 7.107], why only M. Belmazoir can be ‘your’ murderer.” Foucin is stung by this accusation since on 7.116 he cites it, “You stipulated “‘your’ murderer,’ as if I had the prerogative.”
- p. 166: “‘in the toilet’”: A pun on the colloquial phrase meaning “in a bad condition.” Foucin’s certainty that Medlin was figuratively, not literally, there puzzles Remy.
- p. 166: “require *your* help this time”: In 7.114, Foucin had helped Remy by arranging his meeting with Ambassador Leroy. Now he says that he needs Remy’s help with this delicate American Embassy matter.
- p. 166: “close the Medlin loophole”: Since Medlin heads up the embassy investigation of Ballard’s murder, *ex officio* he seemingly possesses a “loophole,” a means of evading or escaping any investigation of or charge against himself. “Close a loophole” means to remove this obstruction or exemption.
- p. 166: “‘I’d like to contact [the ambassador] tonight, but I’m without his residency

telephone number”: The reason for the call to Foucin is to obtain that number.

- p. 166: “I talked with Messrs. Zerhouni and Samir directly . . . my comrade calling from the Mirabout”: The “comrade” referred to is the police agent earlier termed a “compeer.”

According to my chronology, Remy left the Mirabout at 7:28 and taxied back to the Al-Nigma where he ate supper. At ten he called Foucin.

Not depicted is that the police agent tailing him approached Zerhouni as soon as the latter returned to the Mirabout from his Maghrib prayers (c. eight).

The agent telephoned Foucin, who received not only a report of Remy’s shopping in the Casbah but also interviewed over the phone both the head waiter and the dishwasher.

He found out almost “everything” that Remy had uncovered. The one remark which Remy was certain neither person would have repeated to Foucin is given on p. 168, although briefly alluded to on p. 166.

He was fairly certain Remy would telephone him about his discovery concerning Medlin. If it did not come, he planned to call Remy.

- p. 166: “scant Christians”: In 1989 (the time of this novel), there were approximately 50,000 Roman Catholics and an equal number of Pentecostal Protestants, the latter largely centered in the Kabylie, in Algeria.
Over 99 percent of its population was Muslim.

- p. 166: “Missing place settings”: The second discovery which Remy steered Zerhouni toward on (164-65).

- p. 166: “could not safely withhold anything . . . up to the end”: To Foucin (10:06 – 10:13), Remy summarizes his sessions first with Zerhouni (6:50 – 7:15) and then most of that with Samir (7:16 – 7:25).

However, the text takes up directly after section. 5 ended: Zerhouni is leading Remy to the kitchen for the interview with Samir (7:16).

- p. 166: “have to translate”: An irony of the interview with Samir is that Remy, unknown to Zerhouni, is able to follow the dishwasher’s answers in Arabic.

- p. 166: “quite nicely!”: In paying their bill, Leroy had left a generous gratuity.

- p. 166: “my view blocked, I hadn’t spotted them leaving!”: The exit of the Leroy and Medlin from the Mirabout coincided with the entrance of a stream of customers.

Attending to them, Zerhouni had not seen the three “tourists” exit.

If he had, he would have seen that they were without the rug and four bags, and consequently he would have concluded that one of them had left the Mirabout earlier.

- p. 167: “sunken-chested”: *Pectus excavatum* (“hollow chest”) is the most common congenital deformity of the anterior wall of the chest. It gives a caved-in or sunken appearance to the chest.
No dictionaries which I consulted listed an adjective or participial form for the term “sunken chest,” but a Google search produced numerous instances in which “sunken-chested” is used to describe a person or an animal: “sunken-chested” puppy, creature, rat (slang term for a person), runt, 19-year-olds, male waif, etc.
- p. 167: *djellaba*: native robe worn by males.
- p. 167: “a couple of months ago”: Zerhouni’s approximation. In his first speech to Samir, Remy gives the correct elapse of time, “relying on a seven-week memory.”
- p. 167: bus: to clear dirty dishes from a restaurant table.
- p. 167: “advanced stake”: Prepaid share in a business venture.
- p. 167: ministration: Service performed.
- p. 167: “jittery . . . ‘this starving fast’”: During Ramadan, non-Muslims are also required to fast during the daylight, a situation which makes them “jittery” particularly in the last hours of the fast.
- p. 167: skelp: to hurry along; to hustle.
- p. 167: bowdlerize: to remove passages considered offensive.
Zerhouni would have omitted Samir’s comment about Algerian Muslims’ treatment of Christians.
- p. 167: “the twenty-first of your Rajab”: Rajab is the seventh month of the Islamic (Hegira) lunar calendar. It is followed by Sha’ban and then Ramadan.
Ballard was murdered on 21 Rajab, the twenty-seventh of February, the night the Leroy’s and Medlin dined at the Mirabout.
- p. 167: “the exhortation to *salaat il-maghrib*”: Sunset prayers.
This is the 6:20 call to Maghrib prayers which Ballard hears on 1.3 and which is distorted by a faulty wire in the beach mosque’s loudspeaker, “*Al-shrh Akbar*.”
- p. 167: “Ramadan, of course, excepted”: See the above p. 162 note, which explains that during Ramadan the call to Maghrib prayers (often accompanied by a simultaneous cannon blast) signals that the fast is over.
It is not an indication, as in other Hegira months, to begin to close one’s shop or place of business.
During Ramadan this shuttering is completed well before the call, as Zerhouni was doing when Remy came to the Mirabout at 6:50.

The headwaiter thus informs Remy that while in other months before Maghrib he and the cook Ali could smoke a six-minute cigarette from three or four minutes before the call to prayer to the end of the call, which lasts three minutes, they cannot follow this ritual any night during Ramadan.

p. 167: atrabilious: cross; irritable.

p. 167: azan: The call to prayer.
See the note on 1.1., N1:2.

- p. 168: *Shokran*: “Thank you” in Arabic, as Remy translates in the text.
- p. 168: “the smoke screen”: At the end of section 5 (167), Remy’s thoughts hint that he has connected three aspects of Zerhouni’s account: the simple latching of the door which would have allowed someone to leave the restaurant, Medlin’s noticeable perspiration, and his bizarre previous visit to the restaurant. He has formed an hypothesis that Medlin might have left the restaurant during Zerhouni’s long absence. He obviously felt that by directly confronting Samir with the question of how many he found in the family room would result in a quick lie. Thus he decided to use a “smoke screen” (a variant of the mathematical trick riddle, “A train is . . .” with its plethora of numbers, until the ultimate question has nothing to do with the miles the train traveled): He bombards Zerhouni and through him Samir with questions about times, exasperating both, so they are taken off-guard by his eventual question about the number of people at the booth.
- p. 168: “the cannon thundered, the blast succeeded by the amplified call to *salaat* from nearby Ketchaoua”: The cannon sounds at exactly 7:20.
- p. 168: Bastos: A locally produced brand of cigarettes which is cheap and hence popular. As a fledgling newspaper reporter in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Albert Camus smoked them.
- p. 168: numeric: a numeral.
- p. 168: “screwed up”: Slang for “bungled” or “fouled up.”
- p. 168: “three-personed tray”: The hyphenated adjective, with its Christian connotation, is not so inappropriate as one would immediately assume, although one must suspect it is an instance of Remy’s elevated “translation” of what Samir said. After all, Samir is a Christian and thus would be familiar with the concept of the trinity. The most famous use of the phrase occurs in the first line of Donne’s fourteenth “holy sonnet”: “Batter my heart, three-personed God.”
- p. 168: “are they crooks?”: The question was previously asked by Zerhouni on p. 164.
- p. 168: metaphor: to translate literally or word by word.
- p. 168: “From his previous reply, ‘to the left of the lady’”: The wording of Samir five paragraphs above.
- p. 168: magnifico: a nobleman or a person of great importance (from *Webster’s Third*).

- p. 168: “At that point Remy stopped”: Remy stops his report to Foucin at this point (both at 7:24 earlier in the restaurant or at 10:13 in Remy’s account to Foucin), certain that neither Zerhouni nor Samir would have repeated what next was blurted out by the youth: That Medlin had cast glances at the busboy’ crotch during his first visit to the restaurant on Friday (7:25).
- p. 168: “ricocheting”: skipping or moving “with a glancing rebound or series of rebounds” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 168: “Tom-peepings”: A neologism (I believe) based on “peeping Tom.” Instead of referring to the person, the compound noun refers to the act of obtaining sexual pleasure from furtively watching others.
This is the first indication that Medlin is either a homosexual or a pedophile.
- pp. 168-69: SECTION 7: Most of the strands of this chapter are woven into this brief section.
- p. 168: “Excuse me for telephoning”: Section 7 opens with Remy’s brief telephone call to Leroy at his residence (10:20 – 10:23).
- p. 168: exudative: “of, relating to, or marked by . . . the process of exuding” or the oozing out, for instance, of “drops of sweat” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 168: protocoooperation: Remy employs a biological term: “automatic or involuntary interaction by different kinds of organisms through which they mutually benefit” (*Webster’s Third*).
- p. 168: *mea culpa*: The Latin translates as “(by) my fault.”

p. 169: full tilt: at full speed.

A variant of the expression is “at full tilt.”

p. 169: *de novo*: once more or again.

p. 169: “With the receiver cradled”: At 10:23, as soon as Remy puts down the receiver, he forgets Leroy and Medlin.

Instead, he begins to mull over how Foucin had delighted in letting him know that he was having him followed.

His mind shifts to certain comments Foucin had made during their telephone conversation, each of which possibly exposing him to danger.

p. 169: “admonition in Foucin’s office”: See 7.101, which refers to Remy twice thinking that Foucin’s “mental legerity” prodded him to finish his mission quickly and leave Algeria: once after Foucin returned to his office from Maghrib prayers and secondly in Remy’s room at the Al-Nigma when Foucin initiated a discussion of Greek tragedy.

p. 169: “With Remy’s digest completed”: Remy summary spanned from 10:06 to 10:13.

p. 169: “No problems maneuvering the Casbah . . . appears not to have been tricky . . . for *you*”: Near the close of their conversation, 10:14, Foucin says that maneuvering through the Casbah apparently had not proven “tricky,” but pauses before adding “for you,” a reference to his 9.149 advice, “Be careful in the Casbah. It can be risky maneuvering there.”

p. 169: “Samir’s lips had opened”: The action flashes back to the restaurant at 7:25. Remy sees the youth open his mouth to say something, probably an apology for his comment about Medlin.

p. 169: “about to countermand”: Not until 19.318 will Remy gain proof that his conclusion here was wrong.

p. 169: “uncircumcised cock”: The use of a form of “circumcision” in this chapter.

p. 169: “Six minutes I’m tardy”: Prayers started at 7:20. It is now 7:26.

p. 169: *jeune home*: young man.

p. 169: “In bed, picturing himself”: Around 11:30.

p. 169: “Foucin had not been “trick[ed]”: Remy has spent the span from 10:23, when he closed his conversation with Leroy, to around 11:30, when he was in bed, thinking about how Foucin now seemed a greater danger to him.

p. 169: “reversed his psychological ruse”: The ruse occurs on 9:149, where Remy thinks

that “the ideal method of waylaying Foucin’s suspicions [about his trip to the Casbah] would be to notify him of it.”

The phrase contains a mundane pun on “reverse psychology.”

p. 169: “‘specific, detailed, and accurate’”: Belsches’s admonition to Zerhouni to “be as specific, detailed, and accurate as possible” (163), the adjectives repeated by the head waiter in his response two paragraphs down: “Is that ‘specific, detailed, and accurate’ enough for you?” he sarcastically asks Belches.

p. 169: *compte-rendu*: French for “account or report.”

p. 169: sinuous: winding.

p. 169: *djellaba*: The fourth reference in this chapter to the robe worn by Algerian men.

p. 169: *chèche*: The turbanlike headdress described on p. 156 of the text and discussed in its note, N10:11-12.

p. 169: “my ‘disguise’”: The single quote is used since on p. 156 Remy apostrophizes, “Father, I have my disguise!”

On 13.209, Remy will receive a definite answer to his question about where the items he bought for his disguise have been reported to Foucin.

p. 169: “in front of ‘28’”: The number of the alley on which the notions shop where Remy’s father lives (10.156).

See its note, N10:9, for the use of the symbolism of the number twenty-eight.

p. 169: “yet once more . . . and once more”: From the first lines of Milton’s “Lycidas”: “Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more / Ye myrtles brown.”

p. 169: badinage: playful, teasing talk.

p. 169: caesura”: a break or pause.

In this case the one which Foucin left between “tricky . . . for you,” which Remy interrupts as teasing him.

p. 169: “face to the sea”: Remy believes that his 10:15 response to Foucin was inadequate.

His intuition here is that he needs quickly to escape from Algiers and return to France and Marie.