

The Torch of Tangier

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*This one is for Caroline and Michael, for Matthew and Rachel
and Gabrielle and Isaac, and for the memory of Joey*

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Chapter One

Lily threaded her way out of the medina—the old city of Tangier—past old men wearing long, hooded djelabas, their bodies bent over canes as they struggled up the hill, their backless slippers shuffling along the littered street.

At first she didn't notice the two Germans keeping to the shadows. She saw them as she made her way back to the El Minzah Hotel from the medina but thought nothing of it.

Something about the pair struck her as familiar. Especially the one in the striped shirt, his neck bound by a tightly buttoned white collar. His wispy hair, dyed red-brown, had long white roots framing a ruddy, pockmarked face so that his head seemed to be floating away. His shirt, streaked with sweat, puffed outward around his arms. He looked like a weather balloon.

His companion had a moustache that punctuated his lips like a cocked eyebrow. From time to time he scanned the street with bulging bright blue eyes.

She had seen them yesterday, arguing in German with a man who wore a camel's hair jacket and a cold face. The man ignored Herr Balloon and concentrated on Lily, his eyes narrowed, his lips taut.

It was his eyes, stark icy blue, that sent a shiver through Lily's soul.

Herr Balloon's arms flailed in anger, the veins in his neck strained while the man in the camel's hair jacket continued to watch Lily.

His companion hung back with an embarrassed smile.

“*Gottverdammte*,” she had heard Herr Balloon shout as the man in the jacket walked away and Herr Balloon ran after him before they both disappeared in the swarming streets surrounding the Grand Socco.



The white city, bleached and frowsy in the sun, spread languid and lascivious between the Mediterranean and the Mountain. It reverberated with sounds of expatriates: Italians crooning love songs in the golden dusk; Spaniards, stern-faced and stiff-spined, barking orders; Germans with pink faces and bawdy leers, singing and swaying together over beer in sidewalk cafes; drugged Americans with blank eyes, mumbling as they rolled along the streets; British pensioners with loud voices and rotted teeth, nursing warm drinks, staring into space, complaining about the price of food; openly affectionate pairs of men with raucous laughter that seeped from seedy bars and echoed through alleys.

“They’re all spies,” Drury had said. “Every last one of them. Watch your back.”

And everyone complained about the shortage of food because of the war, but did nothing.



The Germans in front of her passed the gardens outside the Mendoubia and the 17th-century cannons—still aimed at the harbor, still ready to repel raids by marauding pirates and the unconquerable Moors.

Everything else had changed since Lily arrived in Tangier over a year and a half ago, in early 1941. Tangier had ceased to be an International Zone; Spain had assumed control of the Zone after the fall of France. Colonel Yuste, head of the Tangier occupation forces, appointed himself Governor General of Tangier. He dismissed the Mendoub, the Moroccan sultan’s representative in the International Zone.

Now, a Nazi flag fluttered over the Mendoubia.

And everywhere, the Spanish police strutted, menacing and arrogant. And Nazi agents—pompous, insolent—swarmed out

of the woodwork like termites after the rain and scurried through the streets of Tangier for the honor of the Fatherland.

Last November, almost a year ago, slurries of mud flooded part of the Caves of Hercules where she had worked, making excavation impossible. The archaeological team had to stop digging, waiting in the city until after the rain.

Then came Pearl Harbor.

The Spanish governors denied Americans access to Cape Spartel. We should have gone home, Lily thought, back to Chicago. Now it's the end of October, and we haven't been able to get back to the caves.

But Drury seemed to be waiting for something. They remained in Tangier, along with the other two members of the expedition staff, Clark MacAlistair and Zaid Sutton. The pair had flown here on the Pan-American Clipper with Drury before Lily arrived and stayed in a villa on the Mountain.

Drury paid for it all. He had money that seemed to fall out of the sky.

Lily skirted the dark shade of the huge banyan tree near the Mendoubia garden, its aerial roots anchored on the ground like the buttresses of a gothic cathedral.

The Germans were still ahead of her. Who were they? Refugees? Smugglers?

She passed Berber women in their conical straw hats and striped skirts, crouched next to sacks of saffron, cumin, and thyme. The musty odor of melons, over-ripe fruit, wine-heavy grapes, the bright tang of tangerines, hovered in the air. Women in dark robes, black veils stretched across their faces, floated past her.

The two Germans skulked ahead of her onto the Rue de Statut and toward the El Minzah. Were they spies? Would they work for whoever would pay them? Or were they Nazis?

Lily trailed them into the hotel. What were these two doing in the El Minzah? She could afford to stay there only because Drury paid her full room and board and gave her a small stipend.

The Germans prowled the reception area and descended the steps to the tiled patio where two tweedy Englishwomen sat

by the fountain, noisily drinking Scotch and grumbling about prices.

“For the glory of the Empire,” one of them bellowed in a resonant alto.

“Before the war,” her companion said, “it cost less than four pounds a week here with full board. Full board, mind you.”

“And what are you doing for the war effort?” her friend asked.

“Drinking the King’s whiskey,” said the woman. “Paying my bills as best I can. Had to give up food, you know. Too damned expensive.”

Lily followed the Germans through the Wine Bar. Herr Balloon brushed against a woman who had been cooing at a toy poodle, feeding it bits of pretzel from a dish on the table. The poodle, wearing a pink bow and a rhinestone collar, snapped and growled in a high-pitched yelp as soon as Herr Balloon and his companion entered the bar.

The woman lifted the dog with her left hand and tucked it under her arm. “*C’est tout bien, mon petit chou,*” she crooned to the dog. “*Reste-toi tranquille, mon cher.*”

“*Entschuldigen.*” Herr Balloon gripped the woman’s free hand and bowed over it. “*Pardon, Madame, perdón.*”

Lily saw him slip a small piece of paper into her palm when he bent over.

“*Crétin, idiot.*” The woman snatched her hand away, tucked the paper into the dog’s collar, and waved the German off. “Go away, *barra. Allez-vous en!*”

Herr Balloon mopped his forehead with a dingy handkerchief, continued through the bar and up the stairs.

Lily followed at a distance to the first floor, watching the men slink through the corridor, moving out of sight when they paused. She ducked behind a writing desk that stood against the wall and saw Herr Moustache pull a passkey from his pocket, jiggle open a door, and creep inside.

Into Lily’s room.

Chapter Two

Lily heard the clang of the elevator behind her, heard it hiccup to a level stop, heard the door open. She flattened herself against the wall and craned her neck to see the elevator.

Drury trudged out, frowning at some secret thought, a sheaf of papers tucked under his arm. He glanced up, noticed Lily, and raised an eyebrow. "What in hell are you doing hiding behind a potted palm?"

"Someone's in my room."

"What are you talking about?"

"Two Germans. They let themselves in with a key."

"They did, did they?" His lips formed into the bow of a smile, his eyes steely cold. "We'll fix that." He reached into his pocket for his room key. "We'll wait in my room 'til they're gone. Shouldn't take them more than ten minutes."

"I don't know what they're after. I have nothing of value."

"Course not." Drury signaled her inside and picked up the telephone. "Room service."

"You're not calling the police?"

"What police? Franco's boys, the Guardia Civil? They probably set this up. Did the same thing to me yesterday." He slapped the sheaf of papers down on the table next to him and waved Lily to a chair.

"You hungry?" He turned back to the telephone. "Dr. Drury here, room 114. An order of mashed potatoes, rolls with butter and honey, and a pot of tea. Immediately. *Directemente.*"

He crossed to the chair near the window and sat down. The bright sun behind him outlined his gaunt form in sharp contrast. “Saw Tariq in the Grand Socco yesterday, came in to tell me the Spanish army is occupying the caves. You know the High Cave where we found the Neanderthal? They use it as a stable for mules. Put anti-aircraft batteries on the headlands, right on top of the caves. Every time they shoot, a chunk of rock breaks off the roof of the cave. Practicing to shoot at *our* planes, I might add. Naturally, I complained to the Spanish authorities.”

Naturally.



Lily remembered the first time she had seen the caves, a few months after she had met Professor Hammond Drury that dark Chicago afternoon in the late fall of 1940 and agreed to come to Tangier. She sat in his office in Harper Hall at the University of Chicago, pretending he had said nothing to insult her, nothing to make her cringe.

He lounged in the chair, an expression of benign disdain in his cheerful smile.

A poster on the wall behind him pictured a kitten in front of a mirror. Looking back at it was the image of a valorous lion. The legend said, “What matters most is how you see yourself.”

Lily gazed at his pointed features, his sharp chin, his wild white hair. Does he, too, see a lion in the mirror? A tiger? A kitten?

He had just told her she was not his first choice. “In fact,” he had said, “I don’t know if you’re up to the job.”

Women never are, she thought. Good archaeologists have short hair, need shaves, and climb cliffs in the morning before breakfast.

Until the day she sat in his office, she had worked on her dissertation every afternoon from 3:00 to 6:00 in her cubbyhole of an office at the Oriental Institute, site reports scattered on the floor, papers piled on the side of the desk. She had tacked a plan of Tel el Kharub—the site where she dug in Palestine—on the wall in front of her. Little pieces of paper stuck out from

books stacked on chairs and bookshelves, marking pages she needed for reference.

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, she led discussion sessions for freshman classes in archaeology. Tuesdays and Thursdays, she had office hours. On Monday and Thursday evenings, before the war in Europe began, before Rafi left, they would have dinner together. Sometimes they went back to his apartment afterward and nestled in each other's arms.

Lily longed to break away from the wearying routine, go back into the field, to the blue sky and exotic faces, the excitement of strange streets. But most of all, she missed Rafi through the dreary days.

"They tell me you have some background with burials," Drury continued. "My own graduate students are great in the lab."

Of course they are.

"But they don't have much digging experience," he added. Then, that unctuous smile again.

She could see the falling snow through the tiny panes of glass of the mullioned windows behind him, the gunmetal Chicago sky, and the darkening outline of the Rosenwald Museum across the Midway.

"Morocco, Miss Sampson. The Magrebh."

That's where Rafi is, Lily thought. Rafi had returned to Palestine where they had met, this time to fight the Nazis. In his last letter, he said that he was with the British, somewhere in the Western Desert.

"The Magrebh," she repeated.

"Means west. All of North Africa west of Egypt is the Magrebh. Morocco is the westernmost of all. I leave in two weeks."

To be out of the snow and under the blue sky again. Can I be ready in two weeks? Can I leave my dissertation and the notes on Tel el Kharub behind, get back to them next year when I return? Why not? Some archaeologists take years to write reports, keep going back to the field.

"There's a war on," she said.

“We’re not in the war yet, Miss Sampson. I booked your passage on the *Narragansett*. Leaves next month. Nothing to worry about, American registry. An old boat, not very fast. You’ll be getting in sometime in January, in 1941. You’ll have plenty of time to read up on the prehistory of Morocco during the crossing.”

“Morocco is a French colony, Dr. Drury. Run by the Vichy government.”

“Not to worry. Tangier’s an international city.”

“I don’t know if I have the time. I haven’t finished my dissertation.”

Work, work, work. I’m sick of work.

“You won’t need your doctorate. I’ll make the crucial decisions.”

Of course you will.

“Just competence in digging,” he said. “That’s all I ask.”

“It’s a Paleolithic site?”

“A cave.”

“I’ll think about it. Have to get back to the Oriental Institute.”

When would she have to turn in her section of the site report to Kate in London? No hurry. Kate was busy with Home Defense.

Lily stood. Her notebook fell to the floor and her notes splayed across the faded weave of a kilim, stiff with mud, that Drury used as a rug. She grabbed the notes, stuffed a wad of them into the pouch of her notebook, and shoved the rest into the pocket of her coat between her gloves and scarf while Drury watched.

“I have office hours,” she said and backed out of the room.

At the door of the building, she pulled out her scarf and the notes fell again. She picked them up, crossed the quad and skirted the Botany Pond in the lowering winter dusk, headed for her room at International House.

She ran into Drury again the next day as she was coming out of the Co-op on Ellis Avenue.

“Made up your mind?” Frozen droplets of breath billowed from his mouth. He shivered at the wind coming off the lake.

His leather-like skin, creased from countless summers in the North African sun, shone glazed and purple in the painful Chicago chill.

Her toes pinched with cold. She stamped her feet and felt the warmth evaporating through her muffler. “Warmer there than here?”

Frost hung on Drury’s tangled eyebrows and on the edges of the fur hat that hid his thatch of white hair. “Start packing, Miss Sampson,” he had said with one of those smug grins.

If he smiles in the wind, Lily had thought, his face will crack and his nose will fall off.



By the time Lily arrived in Tangier, the three of them—Drury, MacAlistair, and Zaid—had been working in the caves for the better part of a week.

The morning Lily joined them, MacAlistair and his friend Zaid were waiting for Lily and Drury in the patio of the El Minzah.

Zaid wore his digging outfit, his version of the local Riffian costume—loose pants in bright yellow, an embroidered vest, and a turban wrapped around his head for protection in the caves.

MacAlistair’s jacket was draped across his shoulders and he held his cigarette European-style between his thumb and index finger. Nobody called him Mac.

He smoked Gauloise. The acrid whiff of the strong Turkish tobacco burned Lily’s eyes. MacAlistair greeted them and coughed softly. His friend Zaid placed a hand on his arm.

“I shouldn’t dig in the caves,” MacAlistair said. “The dust is bad for my bronchitis.”

He took another puff of the cigarette, coughed again until his eyes teared, while Zaid patted his back.

“Let’s go,” Drury said. “Time’s a-wasting.”

Zaid drove them out of Tangier in MacAlistair’s Hillman, up a winding road lined with prickly pears and fragrant with the scent of wild iris. They started up The Mountain, strewn with villas silent behind walls festooned with ivy-geraniums and gardens vivid with spring.

Higher still along the ridge, the aroma of pine needles and the sea wafted toward them from round-headed umbrella pines along the coast. On their left, wild oleander bloomed bright pink among scattered cork oaks and in the crevasses of the scrub. Beyond, the Rif Mountains rose like ghosts out of a blue haze of rolling foothills.

They passed the lighthouse, sited on the barren point of Cape Spartel. In the distance children ran toward a low-lying kiosk on the edge of the land, their mothers following in wind-swept dresses.

Drury pointed to the flat, bald headlands of Cape Ashagar ahead of them on the coastal road. "There they are, on the Atlantic side of the cape." He paused dramatically. "The Caves of Hercules."

Parked cars, carriages, and donkey carts clogged the road near the caves.

"Who are all those people?" Lily asked.

"Tourists. Visitors. In good weather they drive out from town for picnics and sightseeing. And locals have an industry hewing millstones out of the walls of the sandstone caves. The only thing that bothers us is the noise of quarrying." Drury leaned forward and looked out the window toward the crowded road. "We work in the High Cave. It's a bear to reach, so tourists leave us alone."

Zaid maneuvered the car onto a spur that led to an upper path, and parked next to the cliff face in the shelter of a small niche not visible from the road. They unwound themselves from the tiny Hillman and stood in the freshening breeze that funneled through the Straits of Gibraltar.

The Pillars of Hercules!

From here, Lily thought, I can see the end of the world. Below them, the Atlantic roiled, green and foaming. Far to the right, inside the Straits, a turquoise Mediterranean reflected the sharp cerulean sky.

A blue-eyed Riffian with a blond beard and wearing a knitted cap, orange pantaloons, and a broad smile came toward them.

“This is Tariq,” Drury said. “He’s from the village down in the valley. Medionna. He and his brother Hasan are our pickmen.”

Tariq touched his forehead and waved his hand in her direction. “Welcome, lalla, welcome.”

They scrambled down a steep path that jutted from the cliff face like a tiny shelf, just broad enough for a footing, to the mouth of the cave. Here and there, the jagged ledge was shattered. Below her, the furious sea broke against the jumble of rocks. Lily held her breath and clawed the sharp limestone of the wall.

“Afraid of heights?” Zaid reached for her. “Take my hand.” He guided her across the gaps to the entrance platform of the cave.

Inside, lit by a dim shaft of daylight from a hole in the roof, a series of strings one meter apart stretched across the floor. Lines weighted with plumb bobs hung from the ceiling like so many stalactites.

“Watch your step,” Drury said, and handed her a miner’s helmet with a lamp attached to the crown.

The others, their helmets already lit, moved cautiously among the strings, stooping under the low ceiling of the cave, casting long shadows across the cyclopean beams of the lamps. Only Lily could stand upright.

Tariq worked his way steadily along a trench down the center of the floor that led from the threshold of the cave to the back wall. He dug with the sharp end of a *khaddum*, a double-headed pick, straddling the trench, chopping at a layer of gritty red soil. His brother Hasan carried away the loose soil in a two-handed basket to a tiny shelf outside the cave.

“The boys sift the dirt through a screen with a quarter-inch mesh.” Drury’s voice echoed through the hollows of the cave, over the sound of the sea and the muted hammering of workmen in other caves quarrying mortars out of the rock. “We’ve picked up a few teeth, cut bone—some splintered for the marrow—from this level. Mainly gazelle, wild bovine.”

Tariq, crouched over the trench, looked up at Lily and grinned. “My brother Hasan and I, we find.”

“We dig in twenty centimeter increments,” Drury told Lily.

He picked up a pebble and pitched it at the top layer of soil on the side of the trench. Lily swung her headlamp around to light it. Near the surface, the deposit was dark and oily from human habitation.

“That top layer had some modern Islamic and Roman remains and Neolithic material. Last year we brought out polished stone axes, impressed pottery, sheep bones, tanged Capsian points.”

Tariq was working in the packed red earth below it.

“The red soil of the next level is from the last pluvial of the Pleistocene,” Drury said. “We’ve taken out Mousterian points, scrapers, a Neanderthal jaw.”

Lily peered into the shadows and adjusted her headlamp. She could just make out a lens of charcoal and burnt earth.

A Neanderthal hearth.

Here, in these caves at the tip of the world, they had cooked their food, chided their children, buried their dead. Long before the Romans, before the Phoenicians, even before Hercules, voices echoed in hollows lit by dim fires and the caves held the smell of habitation.

What were they like, these gruff creatures with their bulbous noses, heavy brows, receding chins? Was their hair matted? And did they smile, did they hold each other, did they croon soft songs to their babies?

MacAlistair had begun to cough again, this time uncontrollably. He groped for the cave entrance. Outside, he leaned against the rock face, gasping.

Zaid wagged his light dolefully from side to side. “He’s sick. Very sick.”

Zaid had stepped outside to comfort MacAlistair and Drury had explained, “Can’t seem to shake the bronchitis.”



Lily was still staring at the shuttered window of Drury’s room, the bright North African sun silhouetting his angular body, when his voice broke into her thoughts.

“Where the hell is room service?”

He began pacing the hotel room as if it were a cage. "Those goons must have cleared out of your room by now." As he reached for the telephone, a knock sounded at the door.

"At last." Drury opened it. He turned away from the waiter and indicated the desk. "Put the tray down here."

He signed the check and stood in the middle of the room until the waiter's footsteps faded, then went to the door, opened it a crack and scanned the hall.

"All clear."

He picked up the tray and carried it into the hall, pausing in front of Lily's room. "Not a word when we get inside," he whispered and signaled for her to unlock her door.

She opened it, hesitating in the hall a moment. Everything seemed to be in order, as if intruders had never been there. The Germans had vanished.

Drury eased the tray onto the dresser in Lily's room and held a finger to his lips. He ran a hand under the table, got down on the floor and looked under the dresser, the bed, the chair, all the while motioning her to silence. He took the drawers out of the dresser, turned them upside down, dumping the contents on the bed, emptied the closet, and ran his hand along the closet walls.

He went into the bathroom and peered in the medicine cabinet, under the sink, under the lid of the toilet tank. He climbed up on the toilet seat and loosened the screws holding the air grate.

He focused on the inside of the shaft, nodded knowingly, and signaled to Lily to look up.

There, inside the airshaft, dangling from a wire, was a microphone.

Chapter Three

Drury clambered down from the toilet, fetched the tray from the dresser, and brought it into the bathroom. He placed it on the sink, climbed back on the toilet seat, then slathered a coating of honey along the wire and the microphone. He motioned for Lily to hand him the mashed potatoes. He packed the soft mess around the microphone with his fingers, squeezing each clump to make it adhere.

“That should do it,” he said out loud while he washed his hands. “The only thing they’ll get now is an earful of potatoes.”

“Suppose they’re not hungry?” Lily said. “Besides, the food will attract every rat in the harbor.”

“Not to worry.” He climbed back up and screwed the grill in place. “The grid keeps all the rats in the airshaft. Except for the ones in the room above.” He tapped on the ceiling with his middle finger.

“Someone’s up there listening?”

“Probably. Earphones glued to their heads, eager for every word.”

Lily felt a spark of irritation. “Why? I have no secrets.”

He climbed down and wiped his hands on a towel. “Not yet.”

“But you have secrets, Dr. Drury?”

He strode into the other room. “Let’s have the tea.”

“You do, don’t you?”

“Milk or sugar?”

“It’s cold by now.”

“Doesn’t matter. It’s good for you.”

“Won’t they be suspicious when they don’t hear anything?” Lily asked.

“Ignore them. They’re buffoons. Chocolate soldiers in a comic opera.”

Buffoons or not, Lily felt her shoulders tense.

He reached for the tea. “But don’t underestimate them.” He took a quick sip and put down the cup. “Drink up. We’ve an appointment at the villa.” He moved to the door and held it open for Lily. “Come on, we’re late.” He stopped, halfway into the corridor. “Don’t forget to lock up.”

“The horse is already stolen.”

“If you don’t lock the door, they’ll know we spotted them.”

Outside the hotel, the woman who called herself Suzannah was canvassing stray tourists at her usual place, her shining black hair luminous in the morning sun. Drury had told Lily that Suzannah was a prostitute who lived in the mellah, the Jewish quarter of the medina.

He nodded when they passed her. The costumed doorman in slippers, fez, and orange sash, his hand clasped firmly on Suzannah’s flank, shooed her away, telling her to go back to the mellah and stay there.

Drury glanced at Suzannah with an almost imperceptible nod of his head and looked toward a café across the street from the hotel. Lily watched Suzannah swivel down the street in her high-heeled shoes, her dark satin hair flapping against her shoulders like the wings of an angel, and tried to remember where she had seen Suzannah before.



They took a taxi up The Mountain to the villa. Lily waited at the gate while Drury paid the driver.

“It’s open,” he said when he came around to the gateway and reached behind the lock to lift the latch.

They skirted a black Packard parked in the circular drive in front of the villa and entered the tiled vestibule, made their

way around a blocking wall and a corridor and into the villa, a quixotic blend of British and Moorish styles.

Drury stalked across the chintz and mahogany sitting room, with its beaded lampshades and Kerman throw rugs. He strode into a courtyard garden where the soft aroma of orange blossoms and old French roses hovered, where bougainvillea spilled against a dazzle of brilliant tiles, each tile matched to its neighbor with mathematical precision, circles embedded in circles, blue and yellow and white in intricate harmony.

MacAlistair and a stranger were seated next to the fountain in the shade of the eastern wall of the garden with glasses of mint tea on a table between them. They both rose when Drury and Lily entered.

“Lily, this is my friend Wild Bill,” Drury said.

“Hickok?”

“Donovan.” Drury turned to his friend. “Lily Sampson. I told you about her.”

Donovan was a small man in his late fifties with pale blue unblinking eyes. He wore a windbreaker, but his trousers looked like officer’s pinks.

“Donovan has a job in Gibraltar,” Drury said. “Comes over here every once in a while for a decent meal.”

“I understand you worked in Palestine,” Donovan said to Lily.

“Tel el Kharub.”

“The place where that archaeologist who was killed worked?”

Lily nodded. “Geoffrey Eastbourne.”

“You’re going back to finish the dig?”

“We closed down the site after Eastbourne was killed.”

“What happens now?”

“His assistant, Kate Hale, is writing up the site report in London. I’m doing the section on the cemetery.”

“You’re working on it now?”

“I didn’t bring my notes. I thought we’d just be here for the 1941 season, then go back to Chicago.”

Donovan glanced at Drury. “But you stayed,” he said to Lily. “Over a year longer. It’s 1942, almost November now.”

“The war,” MacAlistair said. “How would she get home? She’d have to go south to the Cape, then over to South America.”

“And Drury won’t pay for that, I suppose.” Donovan turned to Lily. “So what do you do with your time?”

“Not much. Getting to know the city.”

“Participant observation. Isn’t that what you anthropologists call it?”

“I’m an archaeologist. I’m just observing, not participating.” Again Donovan glanced at Drury.

“You speak Arabic, Miss Sampson? French or Spanish?”

“I can speak a little of the local dialect they use in Palestine. It’s different from what they use here but I can understand most of what the Tanginos are saying. As for French, my pronunciation is awful and my vocabulary tends toward archaeological terms like *tesson* for potsherd, *niveau* for level. Just high school Spanish.”

“But you can get along.”

“Pretty much.”

“With all that free time, you must be bored. Maybe you could help out at the Legation.”

“I don’t...” Lily began.

But before she was sure of her answer, Drury stepped in. “Great idea. We’ll both go down there, offer our services.”

Donovan gave a grunt of approval. He moved toward the door. “I took the liberty of mentioning both of you to the *chargé d’affaires* at the Legation. Name is Quentin Boyle. He’s expecting you.”

Drury seemed satisfied. “We’ll drop by this afternoon.”

“I’ll call and tell him you’re coming.” Donovan started to leave. “Be careful,” he said to Drury and then turned to Lily. “Good to have met you Miss Sampson. Maybe we’ll meet again.” He sauntered toward the inside of the house and then stepped back into the garden.

“While you’re there,” he said to Drury, “check out the personnel. I’d like to hear what they’re up to.”

“Something wrong?”

“Nothing I can put my finger on.”

MacAlistair coughed gently, looking from Donovan to Drury and back to Donovan. "I'll see you out," he said and followed Donovan out of the garden.

"Looks like you'll be working at the Legation," Drury told Lily.

"How do you know? We haven't gone there yet, haven't asked for the job."

"Wild Bill always gets his way. Nobody can turn him down."

MacAlistair returned, followed by Zaid.

"Who was that?" Zaid asked.

MacAlistair hesitated, looked over at Drury. "A friend of Drury's."

"What was he doing here?"

"Dropped by to say hello," Drury said.

Lily watched the water splay in the fountain while MacAlistair crossed to the chair he had been sitting in earlier, sat down with a sigh, and picked up the glass of tea.

Zaid sat in the other chair and leaned forward. "The tea is cold. I'll get you a fresh pot."

"We have to leave. Have an appointment at the Legation," Drury told him.

Zaid seemed annoyed, distracted. "Want me to drive you?" He stood up, searched in his pocket and pulled out the car keys.

"Sure." Drury strode out of the garden, through the sitting room, and was waiting at the Hillman before Zaid and Lily reached the drive outside the gate.

Chapter Four

At the Legation, the acrid smell of an old building—damp plaster and musty wood—hung in the air. A Marine corporal in dress uniform perched in a glass enclosure at the entrance nodded to Drury and gave Lily a quizzical look.

“She’s with me,” Drury told him. “We have an appointment with Boyle.”

The corporal waved them through.



In the office of the chargé d'affaires, Quentin Boyle leaned back in his chair, both hands on his desk. “So you say you’re an expert on Arab affairs, know how they think.”

Boyle had auburn hair and a pale redhead’s skin. He had a nick on the right side of his nose, and his nostril flared and fluttered when he spoke.

Drury sat on the edge of his chair. “I know the Riffians,” he repeated, his tone growing more insistent with each sentence. He leaned his elbow on Boyle’s desk. “Came here in the Twenties during the Riff war when they fought for their independence against Spain. Fascinating people. Blue-eyed, blond Arabs.” He gave Boyle a knowing grin. “The Vikings were great explorers.”

“You’re trying to tell me Leif Erikson was here?” Boyle glanced at Lily with half a smile, as if expecting a reaction. She raised an eyebrow and Boyle glared at Drury’s arm resting on the corner of his desk.

He removed his glasses and leaned forward. "This is the second time you walked into my office to make demands and tell me what to do. And now you have your friend Donovan call, put the pressure on me." Boyle waved his glasses in Lily's direction. "And Goldilocks over here? What does she want?"

Goldilocks?

"She's my assistant," Drury said.

"I'll bet she is."

"My name is Lily Sampson." Goldilocks, indeed. "But you may call me Miss Sampson. I'm an archaeologist. I've worked on sites in the Middle East before."

"This isn't an excavation, Miss Sampson. And we aren't in the Middle East," Boyle said. "The Middle East is the Levant, Palestine, Syria. This is the Near East."

Drury let out an impatient sigh. "I know the founder of the Republic of the Riff, Abd el-Krim."

Boyle drummed his fingers, his gaze fastened on Drury's hands resting next to the tray of pens on Boyle's desk. "I don't know what you're really after." He watched as Drury rearranged the pens in the tray. "I know you're up to some tricks, but I don't know what they are. I only know that I have instructions from higher up to accommodate Donovan." Boyle's nostrils expanded with an irritated quiver and a pink flush of anger suffused his face. "And frankly, I resent it. I wouldn't know what to do with you. You don't know squat about consular work."

He looked pointedly at Drury's hands, still fumbling with the pens on Boyle's desk.

"I apologize for whatever." Drury dropped his hands to his lap and leaned back in the chair. "Didn't mean to step on your toes, but I'm here to help. There's a war on, you know."

With a contemplative nod, Boyle twirled his glasses by the earpiece, first clockwise, then counterclockwise. "We're in a delicate situation here. Have to be careful. It's touch and go whether Franco will join the Axis."

"I understand." Drury bent toward Boyle again and lowered his voice. "That's where the Riffians come in." He spoke slowly

now. "We can use them in a pinch, throw them against the Kraut. I'm sure of that."

Boyle took in his breath. He seemed to give the suggestion some thought, nodding his head, tapping his fingers, blowing out his cheeks. "At the least Spain may allow German troops free passage through the territory."

Boyle fiddled with the paper clips in the well of the pen tray. "Maybe there is something you can do. Let me talk to Armand Korian." He folded his glasses, placed them on the desk, and strode to the door. He signaled the secretary. "Tell Korian to bring the news bulletins."

He returned to the desk, the door still open. "Korian edits the Legation Bulletin," he told Drury. "We send out pamphlets in French, Spanish, Arabic." He shrugged. "Doesn't seem to do much good."

"Miss Sampson can be of some help," Drury said. "She's supposed to be working for the State Department, like me."

That's the first I've heard of it, Lily thought.

Boyle raised his eyebrows. "You work for State?"

Drury nodded and leaned forward again. "You have an empty room here she can use? She can sit, read books. She won't bother you. She'll keep out of your way."

Out of his way? Nothing like feeling superfluous.

Boyle shook his head. "We don't have room here." He looked Lily up and down with an appreciative smile. "Why don't you spend your time at the beach, Miss...?"

"Sampson." My God, is he flirting? Should I bat my blue eyes? Fluff out my golden hair?

"She needs a cover. For safety," Drury said.

"I'm busy serving the government here. Proud of it, I might add." Boyle hesitated, then continued in a more conciliatory tone. "So are you, I suppose, in your way. And from what I can see of your friend, Miss...?" He paused.

Lily sat straighter in the chair. "Sampson," she repeated.

"Miss Sampson." Boyle looked her up and down again. "You've got nothing to be ashamed of, either." Boyle smiled at her. "Go to the beach."

Drury rose, blocking Boyle's affable leer. "She'll be too noticeable there."

Boyle tilted back his chair. "Indeed she will."

The secretary knocked on the open door. "Korian is here with the pamphlets."

Boyle brought his chair upright. "Go to the beach, Miss Sampson. Improve our relations with the Tanginos."

A man came into the office, clutching a pipe between his teeth. He carried a stack of leaflets and balanced them on the edge of Boyle's desk.

"Meet Armand Korian," Boyle said. "He's in charge of our news bulletin. Counteracts Spanish propaganda."

Korian had droopy eyes, a sharp nose, and hair glowing with too much brilliantine. He wore a shiny three-piece suit with baggy pockets and a blue spotted bow tie. He looked like an unsuccessful insurance salesman.

The front of his shirt and his lapels were dappled with bits of tobacco and ash. He reached into a pocket and pulled out a pouch of pipe tobacco.

"Professor Drury here is an expert on the region," Boyle told Korian.

Korian looked at Drury and wagged the pipe in his mouth.

"He's going to assist you with the bulletin."

Korian began to fill his pipe. "I don't need any help."

Boyle handed a leaflet printed in Arabic to Drury. "Read this, tell us what you think of it."

Korian pulled a match from his pocket and lit it by scraping his thumbnail across the head while Drury stared at the leaflet in his hand. Korian began to draw on the pipe and Drury crossed to the window, held the paper to the light and squinted at it.

Boyle waited. Korian puffed, billowing smoke out of the side of his mouth. The room filled with the sticky-sweet smell of his pipe tobacco.

"Trouble reading it?" Korian took the pipe from his mouth and aimed the stem at Drury. "Need some help?"

Drury brought the paper closer, then held it at arm's length and stared at it.

Boyle picked up a pencil and tapped it on the desk. "I thought you knew Arabic."

"Haven't studied classical, printed Arabic in years. It's worthless here, you know. The farther you get from Syria, the less it's understood."

Korian took a draft of his pipe. "How do you manage, then?" He let out a smoke filled breath.

"With locals, I speak Mogrebhi, the local Arabic. Stick to simple subjects." Drury waved the smoke away and gave a measured cough. "Why aren't you in the army?"

"Punctured ear drum. And it's none of your business," Korian took a deep draw on the pipe and blew another cloud toward Drury. "The locals understand Arabic."

"Just Moroccan Arabic. Mogrebhi." Drury pushed away the smoke like a swimmer stroking through surf. "Berbers speak a local language, Tamazight. Almost a third of the population here are Jews and they use a different dialect—mixture of medieval Spanish and Hebrew. They brought it from Spain during the Inquisition. Call it Ladino."

Korian looked sleepy, with bags under his eyes so heavy they looked like they could fall from their own weight. "I understand the people here," he said through a haze of smoke.

"You don't know which side they butter their bread," Drury told him.

"My family is from Lebanon." He shrugged and flicked a speck of tobacco from his lapel. "I'm an Arab, more or less."

"I'd say less. You don't know the locals." Drury looked Korian over, lingering on the stains on his lapel and his over-polished shoes. "You're not an Arab, you're Armenian, born and raised in California, in the Central Valley."

Drury began to pace the area in front of the desk, his hands clasped behind his back. He shook his finger at Korian as if to a naughty child. "And it's time you had a short course on Moroccans and their languages." He cleared his throat and

folded his arms. "The Romans called them Mauri, derived from the Hebrew word for west, but the Berbers were the indigenous 'Libyans' of North Africa. They've been here since the dawn of history, known to the Egyptians as 'Lebu.'" Striding up and down as if he were in a lecture hall, he droned, "The Riffian dialect changes Arabic 'L' to 'R'. 'F' and 'B' are interchangeable, hence Rifi from Libi."

Korian rolled his eyes to the ceiling. "We have to listen to this?"

Boyle grunted and Drury resumed pacing.

"I'm giving you the benefit of fifteen years of education and research."

Once he gets started, there's no stopping him, Lily thought. He'll harangue us forever. She picked up a bulletin.

"You read Arabic, Miss Sampson?" Boyle broke in.

"I read it but don't speak it. It says here that Doolittle led an air raid on Tokyo."

Korian gathered the pamphlets. "That's what it says. Good for you."

He eyed Drury disdainfully and stalked out of the room, wafting tobacco smoke behind him.

Boyle closed the door after him. "One thing I'd like you to tell me is how you know the background of Legation personnel." He waited. "You won't say, of course."

Boyle looked from Lily to Drury and back again. "You're anthropologists, aren't you?"

Drury finally stopped pacing. "That's what we are."

"You know how people in foreign cultures think?"

"That's what we do for a living."

Boyle folded his glasses and held them in his hand. "Wouldn't hurt if you prepared a report on the Riff. Work up a pamphlet about propaganda in Morocco, what would work, what wouldn't."

"Exactly what I had in mind."

Boyle tapped his glasses against his hand. "Can't pay you, of course."

"Wouldn't take the money if you could." Drury sat in the chair facing Boyle's desk and leaned back luxuriantly.

"It's settled then," Boyle said. "Busy yourself with Arab affairs, find out what they're thinking, how they can be influenced."

"We'll both work on it." Drury looked over at Lily. "As a team. Just want to do our bit for the war effort."

"And you'll shut up and leave me alone." Boyle opened the door for them. "God help us. With teams like this, we could lose the war."



Lily saved her comments until they were back on the Rue de Statut.

"Boyle made me feel like a floozy."

"He meant it as a compliment. Forget it."

"Why'd you tell them we could do a pamphlet on propaganda?"

"We can. We'll do an ethnography, chapters on social organization, kinship terms, religion. Contrast tribal areas with cities."

"I don't know enough about the Berbers."

"Doesn't matter. Throw in some anthropological jargon. Makes a good impression. The more ponderous and mysterious, the greater they'll think it is."

While he was talking, Drury stared across the street. Lily followed his gaze. Suzannah was seated at a sidewalk table in a café across from El Minzah. When they passed, Suzannah raised her eyebrows then looked away.

"Besides," Drury said, his voice hesitant, distracted. He was still looking in Suzannah's direction. "They think I work for the COI, Coordinator of Information, doing research and propaganda."

"Don't you? Who do you work for?"

Drury peered at Lily and then glanced across the street. Suzannah picked up a glass and held it to her lips without drinking.

Lily was certain Drury had given Suzannah a hidden signal, but what the signal was, or why he sent it to her, Lily couldn't tell.

“Who is she, really?” Lily asked.

Drury was watching Suzannah. “Who?” He smiled and gave Suzannah an almost imperceptible nod.

“Never mind,” Lily said. She had remembered where she had seen Suzannah before.