

## Map Plot

### Chapter 1: Carchemish, Turkey 1914

Edward pulled back the tent flap leading to their workshop at the dig site of Carchemish in Turkey. He'd heard someone go into there, and he had to see who. A bright beam of moonlight struck a gray stone stela leaning against a wooden workbench. Hittite soldiers carrying weapons over their shoulders marched in tight formation. Right next to it stood another stela showing King Araras leading his son Kamanas and another, unnamed son. All wore long tunics with sashes for belts and headdresses that completely covered their hair.

Behind the Hittite stelae someone moved in the dark recesses of the tent. The midnight intruder bumped into a desk where they'd been working on a lion statue with cuneiform writing all over it. The beast had his mouth open, baring fangs that could barely be made out in the moonlight.

It all went plummeting to the ground. Edward plunged into the tent. He nearly tripped over the lion as it skittered across the tent floor in the darkness.

“Who goes there?” He lighted a lantern that sat on one of the work benches. Holding it aloft, he slowly moved it to the right and then to the left. He had to step carefully. This tent was where the archaeologists for the British Museum stored all the basalt reliefs, stelae, potsherds, etc., dug up under the auspices of Leonard Woolley and his college chum from Oxford, T. E. Lawrence.

Twenty-one-year-old Edward Ware heard a noise. He stood still and listened. The sound repeated itself. He started forward in that direction, where the knave must be hiding. Though he hoped it wasn't, now that England had declared war on Germany, a week ago on August 4, 1914, it very likely could be a German spy. After all, T. E. Lawrence, in addition to acting as an archaeologist, was drawing battle maps for the British High Command at British Mid-East Headquarters in Cairo. German engineers worked only a few miles away, where they were busy constructing a bridge across the Euphrates. It was

to form a key link in the Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. Naturally they would want to spy on everything that Lawrence did.

Edward rounded the sharp corner of a work bench. His light shown on a Neo-Hittite relief, a god with a dagger and horned crown, brandishing an axe above his head. It looked as if he were ready to plunge the axe into Edward's shoulder. The young man stepped back in alarm.

The intruder took advantage of the moment to slip out of the lab tent. He was very fleet of foot, leaping over stones like a galloping steed. Edward caught up to the offender and tackled him. He'd been a star rugby player at Christ's College, Oxford. He brought the would-be vandal to the ground.

The spy screeched. He could hardly believe it. Why, it was a young woman!

He clapped his hand over the intruder's ruby red lips. In the moonlight he could make out fleshy cheeks and dark eyes with long eyelashes. She clutched a knife in her fist.

"Let go!" He grabbed her wrist and squeezed it as hard as he could.

The knife clattered to the ground.

She tried to wriggle away. He wrestled her back and forth, trying to pin her to the ground.

"Oh, Englishman, please!" She burst into tears as she cried out in Arabic. "I have no money. I must eat. So I took money from the Germans to find out what you foreigners were up to."

"You were spying!" He pushed her arm up behind her back to force her to confess more. He wasn't being hard enough on her. After all, he'd picked up a few words of both Arabic and Turkish since he'd been in the Middle East. He was going to use them to communicate with this strange young woman.

She grimaced with pain and nodded. "Your friend draws maps. The Germans want to know about them." She confessed, sniffing. "You don't know what a wretched existence I lead. I have no family. I'm all by myself." Tears rolled down her cheeks. "I earn money any way I can."

Her radiant face shone in the moonlight. Her tears scintillated as she clasped her hands together

and begged his forgiveness. Her hood slipped down to reveal masses of thick, curly black hair and a long, swan-like neck as well as a swelling bosom. The Arab girl was the loveliest thing he'd ever seen.

"I --- I didn't know." Edward gulped, not sure what to do next.

After all, he felt guilty coming from a much more privileged background. His father, Sir Adolphus, not only owned an auto company specializing in sports cars, Adolphus Motors, he'd been knighted and could boast that he was a baronet. Edward would inherit the title someday himself. Instead of living in squalor in the Syrian Desert as a dirt poor Bedouin, he, his father, and his mother lived at an estate in the South of England just outside Salisbury in the New Forest called Ware Hall.

She leaned close to him and blinked away tears. Her ruby red lips opened and brushed against his. He found himself kissing her back.

He heard a green Turkish viper hiss from behind a rock as he picked her up. He paused for a moment, stared at the serpent as it slithered out where he could see it. In a ray of moonlight it looked horribly green. Its beady eyes focused on him with demonic intensity as its forked tongue went in and out of its mouth.

"Don't worry about the snake!" The girl assured him in Arabic, smoothing her hands against his cheek.

He looked back at her and kissed her again. He carried her back to his tent where he threw her down on his cot, and he climbed on top. She wrapped her arms around him. They made love all night long.

Next morning when he opened his eyes, he found himself lying on the cot totally naked. The sylph-like woman was gone. When he went to put on his clothes, he realized the latest map Lawrence had given him to take to his father's tent, to pack up and transport back to Ware Hall, was missing.

He looked everywhere in the tent for it. There was no mistaking it.

Had the girl stolen it?

He once again heard the snake's hiss and imagined that green viper slithering about.

Edward thought, *I slept with a spy.*

Yet he couldn't deny that he still yearned for her. Right now his thoughts were filled with her naked body. He could feel her arms and her lips after that hot and heavy performance in bed last night.

She showed up early the next evening when he was all alone and ran to him. He grabbed her and shook her hard. "Where is the stolen map?"

"Somehow it was mixed up in my clothes when I got home," she pleaded. "I was going to bring it back to you, but those who hired me stopped me. They beat me." She pulled her dress off her shoulder, showing off a black-and-blue mark. Then she quickly undid her dress, kicking it away so she stood there naked. She showed off a few welts across her back.

He kissed her shoulders. He turned her around and kissed her bosom. Then he kissed her lips hungrily. It was like no other passion he'd ever known, in a boyhood and young manhood of crushes on various young ladies of his social circle back in London and the south of England. This girl's blood burned hot while theirs had burned ice cold.

Before she left he handed her a wad of British pound notes. He told her, "Take this! Then you can buy food. You won't be tempted to steal anything ever again."

Night after night he couldn't satisfy himself. He plunged into her again and again and ignited his fire anew until he thought he would go crazy with longing. Was she magical or what? When he fell asleep, it was only to dream of making love to her and then wake up in her arms with her lips seeking his.

He didn't know her name. He didn't know anything about her except that she was a little thief if a very beautiful one. Somehow she was becoming the most important woman he'd ever known.

Then one day he found another map missing. It had been lying on his desk while they were making love. When he woke, his lady love and the map were gone. This time it was impossible that it

could have gotten mixed up in her clothes.

Why had she stolen the second map when she knew how he felt about it? It couldn't be to eat. He'd given her plenty of money.

He sat stunned, staring at the tent flap she must have used to leave with the purloined map. He could hear her soft words and feel the touch of her fingers against his face. Tears rolled down his cheeks. They tasted bitter indeed.

He'd learned a hard lesson. This new war was not just any old conflict. It was rather cruel and nasty.

He hurriedly packed his suitcase and participated in the evacuation of the camp, along with all the finds. Wooley and Lawrence expected the Turks to join the Germans and declare war on Britain and her Allies any day now.

If Edward was going to survive the war, he'd have to become more shrewd indeed.