

The Mermaid Trilogy

# The Mermaid Hunters

Christie Selph

The Mermaid Hunters

BOOK 2



The Mermaid Hunters

# The Mermaid Hunters

**A novel by Christie Selph**

"Journalism is what we need to make democracy work."  
Walter Cronkite

"If I'd written all the truth I knew for the past ten years,  
about 600 people,  
including me, would be rotting in prison cells from Rio to  
Seattle, today.

"Absolute truth is a very rare and a dangerous commodity  
in the context of  
professional journalism." Hunter S. Thompson

This book is a work of historical fiction. The events are accurate and the historical figures are real though the dialogue has been imagined by the author.

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# Part One: The Turquoise Door

**Beirut, Lebanon, 1976**

Lorelei lay comatose in the American Hospital overlooking Beirut's war-torn rubble. Dr. Samuel Asper, the unflappable head of the medical complex, lifted her eyelids and focused his ophthalmoscope on her irises. Her beautiful eyes, green like Irish moss, were vacant. Her pupils didn't contract. Then he turned her head to and fro, checking her optic reflexes, and scratched his graying temples while he pondered his options.

"Her eye movements pass the Doll's Eyes test," he told Lt. Col. Joshua Bloom, the Marine Corps physician who had admitted her. "But something else is going on...."

"She's suffered a heavy blow to the head," said Bloom, who then retold the story of her accident just as the Marine colonel who had rescued her had told him. "I'm monitoring her vitals – all are below normal except her temperature is elevated."

They looked at Lorelei as white as the hospital sheet with tubes and wires running this way and that, breathing on a ventilator; her auburn hair tamed by bouffant scrub cap. Gasp, beat, beat. Gasp, beat, beat droned the machine.

"There's a cranial fracture, but it looks linear not depressed," said Dr. Asper as he scanned her X-rays. "Hopefully there's been no brain damage. It's wait-and-see time. Keep her on the ventilator until we're sure."

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“I’ll keep a close watch,” said Lt. Col. Bloom, “and will order another set of scans in three hours to check for swelling. If anything changes, I’ll notify you. Go on, you’ve got a hospital to run. It’s a madhouse out there.”

And as if he had nothing else to do, Dr. Asper patted Lorelei’s hand, stuck like a pincushion with IV needles, and told her he’d be back.

For Lorelei, the possibility that she would become a casualty of Lebanon’s Civil War, the war she was writing about for Reuters, seemed unlikely. She felt on top of her game, invincible even. Twenty-nine-year-old Lorelei’s bravado, part of young people’s dismissal of mortality, was further acerbated by the numbing routine of war which obliterated all reality that she and Philip were constantly in harm’s way.

The danger in Lebanon was far different from what they had faced in Greece. This too gave Lorelei a false sense of security. Living under a dictatorship was more insidious than living with war – in war, danger is obvious and indiscriminate; in a dictatorship, killing is selective and most often secretive.

Yet, unlike Hunter “Gonzo” Thompson, a left-wing journalist who claimed, “reporting the truth would get you jailed,” Lorelei never felt compelled to obfuscate the facts. Rather, she subscribed to Walter Cronkite’s adage that “journalism makes democracy work,” although in

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Lebanon, journalism seemed to be failing or, at least, the Lebanese version of democracy was crumbling.

Although, it had been Lorelei's idea to cover Lebanon's civil war, it was her first time in the trenches. Philip was a pro, but this assignment was new to her. Why she had abandoned Leaf Enterprises, her mother Anne's newspaper empire, and opted for war in the Middle East confounded her husband Philip though not her.

Perhaps dethroning her mother was little more than transient revenge. She had achieved her teenager's pie-in-the-sky dream of running her mother's newspaper empire and seen both Anne and her bloviating business partner and lover, Larry Milligan, sink into ignominy. But her revenge was bittersweet.

Perhaps being back in Charles County evoked unpleasant memories, calling to mind the emotional abuse of her indifferent mother. Or maybe, she realized that although community news was important, it was rarely a stepping stone to a Pulitzer prize. For the several years they had been in Washington, DC, only Lorelei had to deal with the mundanity of Southern Maryland news in the backwater where she had grown up because Philip, as the *Washington Post's* international editor, continued gallivanting around the globe.

His freedom galled her and she was riddled with jealousy. More than likely, all of these reasons provoked Lorelei's ambition and now that ambition threatened her life.



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All of these forces drove Lorelei to live on the edge, to tell the world that the mermaid hunters of Enfeh still had not returned. The tale Habib Karina had told them, his grandmother's explanation of war, intrigued Lorelei but even she wondered how long this war could continue. 'There's nothing left to destroy,' she told herself.

Since their hotel had been destroyed a few weeks after their arrival to Beirut, the more reliable teletype machines, phones, and faxes were located in the American chargé d'affaires office, forcing them to travel through one of the most dangerous parts of the city to use the tools of their trade. The route from the apartment, she and Philip now shared with their friend, Associated Press correspondent Habib Karina, to the chargé d'affaires office took them through four miles of bomb-pocked streets lined with rooftop snipers. Sometimes the snipers shot at each other, sometimes they shot at Lorelei and Philip as they rode in a UN peacekeeper's jeep or hitched a ride with a U.S. Marine, driving a troop transport.

The danger was quite real. A couple of less lucky correspondents had been wounded en route; one had died. But Lorelei and Philip survived day after day without even a scratch. No wonder she felt invincible, so much so that she started taking more chances, unnecessary according to Philip, essential according to Lorelei.

Of course, Philip tried to protect her, to keep her safe, and refused to let Lorelei go-it-alone. Naturally, she rebelled against his constraints,

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called his attitude overbearing, and claimed he impeded her ability to work. Not that they loved each other any less even though they had celebrated their fourth anniversary and the fifth quickly was approaching.

The bond between them had strengthened and Lorelei, both emotionally and professionally, had become a stronger more confident woman. No one who remembered the googly-eyed teenager would recognize today's Lorelei Harte Papadopoulos. The pageboy coif was replaced with hair-to-her-ass and instead of reticence, her worldly swagger exuded confidence. The lover of her youth, John Carlton, rotting for more than seven years somewhere in the jungles of Southeast Asia, would be proud and she was grateful for the sanctuary he had provided and the encouragement he had given her.

She still loved him but Philip, her handsome Greek Adonis with black curly hair and even darker eyes, had filled the hole in her heart. He had taught her the basics of investigative journalism and in Athens, he was her sanctuary, a refuge for an alien in a strange land.

Now, things were different. Lorelei had learned enough to wing-it, solo. The truth of the matter was both she and her husband missed the rush of reporting in-country.

“Damn it, Lorelei,” said Philip, “Whether or not you get a Pulitzer for a story about soldiers dying on the streets of Beirut is inconsequential if you're fucking dead. Some days there are just too many bullets flying around to take chances.”

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But Lorelei did not listen to her husband. In fact, she forced him to accept that Reuters, not his employer, the *Washington Post*, paid her salary. Besides, it was January. The war had slowed down since winter had arrived in Lebanon. Supposedly it would ramp up come spring when the fighting season began anew. But at the present moment, finding news to cover had become more challenging.

Philip and Habib had left early that morning to cover what would become known as the Karantina Massacre in the eastern section of Beirut. Shortly after their departure, Lorelei headed out to find the stories she wanted to write. 'Blood and guts are Philip's forte,' she told herself.

The soldiers' wolf-whistles made her smile as she walked down Salim Boustani Street from Habib's apartment to the corner. She looked over and waved to a small company of Marines, lounging around a transport. They hooped and hollered and waved back. 'Maybe it's my ass hugging jeans, 'cause nothing else about this getup is sexy,' she thought as she buttoned the flak jacket and settled a helmet on her head.

As Lorelei neared the truck, the soldiers quieted and a few even stood up. These UN peacekeepers, which is how America's State Department and Department of Defense (DOD) preferred they be called, were Special-Ops units skilled in surveillance and intelligence gathering. They joked they were Uncle Sam's eyes and ears and engaged in combat only if they were attacked first.

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Noticing the tallest soldier's chevron, she said, "Sergeant, I'd like to embed with you," and before she could finish her request, this big hulk of a man stammered, "Well ma'am, I ain't never been asked dat before."

He looked down and toed the dirt with his size twelve combat boot. Seeing his ears turn red, Lorelei realized their misunderstanding.

Trying her best not to laugh, she said, "I'd like to go on patrol with your unit, embed with your men so I'll see what's up and write a story."

It wasn't relief that washed over his face, more like a foolish grin when his buddies started to snicker and he realized his mistake. He straightened up and puffed out his chest.

"Master Sergeant James Boone Pickens, ma'am," he said. "Your request has been noted, but I'll have to check with my captain." Then he bent down and whispered, "But my friends call me JB."

"Lorelei Harte Papadopoulos," she said, and noticing how the sergeant tried to mouth her name, she added, "Just call me Lorelei, JB. My husband's last name is a mouthful."

Upon hearing she was married, some of the soldiers complained among themselves; others went so far as to pantomime a kid crying, balled fists and all.

"You normally work this corner?" asked Lorelei.

"Yes, ma'am, just sitting here watching de grass grow, 'cept ain't no mo' grass here 'cause they done blowed it to hell and back."

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Telling him she'd check back with him later, she continued down the street a couple of blocks to a bakery to pick up some fresh bread, hot from a clay oven, with the intention of returning to the apartment. She had almost forgotten what life had been like before the Battle of the Hotels when their hotel and most of the Minet-el-Hosn district in the heart of the city had been bombed and reduced to charred skeletons. 'If it hadn't been for Habib, well I...,' but she didn't finish the thought.

They'd been in-country since September and Habib, born in Beirut, had come back when the civil war erupted in April. She remembered her glib conversation with him shortly after their arrival: "Oh yes, and under the Lebanese constitution, the president of Lebanon has to be a Christian, the prime minister has to be a Sunni Muslim, and the parliamentary speaker has to be a Shia Muslim," except she didn't feel particularly glib now.

This was nothing like Greece. This wasn't democracy versus dictatorship. This was a trilateral battle fueled by religious hatred, predating the Crusades, which was destroying the very fabric of civilization.

'War is inconstant,' she thought. 'There's a lot of waiting, a lot of sitting around.' During the winter rains, normalcy of some semblance had returned to Beirut and she pulled up her jacket's collar as the drizzle turned to a downpour. Since the war's intensity had slowed, merchants, huddling under makeshift tents, hawked their goods. The souks, local

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markets of wondrous cavernous places and named streets and hundreds of shops filled with locals buying foodstuffs and shoes and everything else one could image, had been relegated to memory.

Shortly after the war had begun, the souks were burned to the ground. No longer from these labyrinths did exotic spices like *za'atar*, cardamom, or sumac slathered on grilling meats waft through the air.

Instead, Lorelei ducked under a tarpaulin, sagging with rain water, to escape the deluge and eat a plate of grilled *halloumi*, a mozzarella-like cheese made from the milk of goats and sheep. As the fighting had lessened, people ventured outside their houses, hoping the shelled buildings would protect them. You could hear the erotic music of the *mijwiz*, *tablah*, and *daf* float in the air. Men in red fezzes tempted fate and lounged in sidewalk cafes, drinking *kiahweh*, strong Arabic coffee flavored with cardamom.

The scene reminded her of Greece. The aromatic smoke from their *narghiles* made her yearn for a cigarette. Warrens of narrow streets with rows of turquoise painted doors safeguarded the fighters. Families on all sides of the conflict harbored an alphabet soup of militias, brigades, and opportunists. No, this wasn't Greece at all and for the briefest of moments, Lorelei wondered if her choice to become a war correspondent had been prudent.

When the city was quiet, as on this particular morning, Lorelei often walked the Corniche, a promenade along the Mediterranean. She

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pulled off a piece of pita and munched it as she walked along the sea.

Others like her, dressed in western attire accentuated with an occasional *hijab* or *keffiyeh*, strolled too, and for a while, the war seemed far away.

Saddened by the city's ruined splendor, she watched the mesmerizing waves slap the embankment. Now that the sun was shining, the sea shimmered postcard blue, reminding her of the Aegean. 'Five thousand years of architectural history blown asunder,' she told herself. The "Paris of the East" had become a shadow of itself.

When she got back to the apartment, she set the pita on the kitchen table then wrote Philip a brief note.

*For when you return, my love. I am off in search of a story.*

*There's sandwich stuff in the frig. Don't wait for me. Lorelei.*

Minutes later, she was sitting next to Sergeant Pickens as they toured the city.

"Capt'n says I'm to stick to you like glue. You're prime kidnapping material, Miss Lorelei. We can't have you carried off to no damn harreem," he chuckled, his southern drawl making a mockery of the word's pronunciation.

Lorelei's first patrol was the proverbial walk in the park. She chatted with the men as easily as shooting the breeze at Vic's Stag Bar, aside the railroad tracks next to her mother's former newspaper office in La Plata, Maryland. The soldiers talked about aching feet, getting rained on, and how much they missed the women in their lives.

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She probed and asked a series of personal questions: "Why had they enlisted? Did war scare them? What is the first thing you'll do when you get home?"

Some of the soldiers had been given a choice between jail or enlisting. Others spoke about love of country. One joked about the boredom, complaining they hadn't seen action for weeks, "Watching corn grow, ma'am, is as much fun as duty here."

They showed her pictures of their girlfriends and wives, sometimes both photos were crammed inside their helmets. Lorelei had to censor some of their replies about their plans for home. She laughed when they thrust their hips about, making lewd gestures and smacking their lips. She personalized the interviews. And her boss in Paris made certain their hometown papers picked up the stories when one-of-their-own was featured.

Lorelei and Philip covered the war differently. He concentrated on the politics and battle strategy; she focused on the human tragedies. In her ever-improving Arabic, she interviewed the citizens of Beirut, on all sides of the conflict. Men mouthed religious dogma – some quoted the Quran, others clenched their Bibles. They all had a different opinion when the war would end and who would win. She tired of the men's senseless tirades and concentrated on the women and children.

She wrote about the people of Beirut and the vigils they held at the graves of their loved ones, marked with photographs of their deceased



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husbands and sons and uncles and brothers. Her Nikon captured creased faces lined with grief and desperation. Like automatons, the women tended their cooking fires and pounded dough into bread.

The children were trapped. Many of the schools had been bombed and few had reopened. Young boys discarded their childhoods and marched with wooden sticks. They weren't playing when they aimed at each other. Girls were kept at home. Their mothers feared they would be kidnapped, sold into slavery, or raped.

The civilians suffered the most. Beirut crumbled around them. Survival was difficult, normalcy was illusive. The wise ones left, thousands upon thousands fled. A so-called Green Line of weeds and saplings sprouted along Damascus Street demarked the Muslim west from the Christian east.

More than once, Philip and Lorelei debated their respective approaches to covering the war. She thought he was too impersonal, that he looked at war like a game of chess. He criticized her for being too emotionally invested. Neither one of them changed how they covered the war.

On her second patrol, the photographer, Reuters had sent at her request, accompanied her. His name was Danny Bacchus, and he was as green and wet behind the ears as they come. This was his first time in a war zone and you could tell he was scared.

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Lorelei kidded him about his Greek name, “If you are truly related to Bacchus, the God of wine, then there’s no reason for you to fear.”

But when Danny looked at her with a blank expression, she tried to console him and said, “No one has fired a round in several weeks.”

When she introduced him to Sergeant JB; his enthusiastic handshake nearly lifted little Danny off the ground.

It didn’t take long before Danny became accustomed to the reality of the war. On his very first patrol, he discovered that safety was an illusion. The sergeant, spotting a puff of smoke in the hills, tackled Lorelei and pulled the photographer down with him. A mortar shell whizzed over their heads and struck their troop carrier parked across the road. The truck exploded and the sky rained metal.

“One klick at thirty degrees,” shouted Sergeant JB, keeping Lorelei behind him.

Two soldiers shouldered rocket launchers and checked their bearings.

“Fire when ready,” he ordered.

“Roll that camera,” Lorelei shouted to Bacchus and she used the sergeant’s shoulder to steady her telephoto lens.

Whoosh, Whoosh. The rockets soared and hit their mark. The hillside erupted. An avalanche of sand and rocks slipped down the mountain.

“Stay down, Miss Lorelei.”

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Crouched on his haunches, the sergeant unfastened binoculars from his belt, and focused, “One more volley should wipe them out.”

Whoosh, Whoosh. Lorelei saw four bodies roll down the incline, “I count four,” she said.

“You’re right on the mark,” Miss Lorelei. Think we’ll promote you to head scout. We got two on the first go-round. Think we’ve wiped out that nest of vipers.”

The radioman contacted base and requested transport. Lorelei dusted off her jeans, retied her head scarf, and replaced her helmet. She looked at the men. They lounged amongst the rocks, smoking cigarettes, helmets pushed off their foreheads. No one seemed concerned except Danny whose fingers trembled while he repacked his equipment. No one in their party had been injured and that was all that mattered.

“How are you doing, Sergeant?” Lorelei asked.

“Doing just fine, ma’am,” he replied with grin. “Doing what we’re paid to do.”

She used his words as the lead of her next article.

In March, just as Habib had promised, the fighting intensified. The rains subsided and the thermometer climbed. The three of them fared well together. Journalists are competitive by nature though covering war is different especially when the companies they represent are not dog-eat-dog adversaries.

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The Associated Press, a not-for-profit cooperative, collected news for a variety of U.S. media companies. Reuters, a British-based conglomerate, serving global, paying subscribers, provided news in a variety of languages. And the *Washington Post*, one of the United States' most respected daily newspapers, completed with other national and international publications.

Together, on the floor of Habib's apartment, they sifted through their various articles and photographs they planned to submit to a variety of organizations which rewarded international reporting.

"Might as well funnel some cash our way," laughed Habib. "Awards and bylines make you famous, but more-money-honey takes you home."

On behalf of AP, Habib submitted his interviews with top government officials. Philip, for the *Post*, submitted his series on the Karantina and Damour massacres. His photos were especially gory. In January, the Phalangist Christians had killed more than 1,500 Arabs, mostly members of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Two days later, in a tit-for-tat revenge, the Arabs committed a similar atrocity, and wiped out the town of Damour, south of Beirut.

Lorelei kept her folder closed.

"Let's look at yours," said Philip.

She refused and went into their bedroom.

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“Come on, Lorelei. We’re sharing not colluding,” and turned the knob, surprised to find it locked.

“Only if you promise not to yell,” and she slipped the folder under the door. “I was a klick away.”

He leafed through the pages and slammed his fist against the door when he saw her active combat photos and articles. Lorelei had not told him about embedding with the Marines. This assignment had changed both of them. Lorelei, no longer in Philip’s shadow, set her own priorities and covered the war, up front and personal.

To calm his anger towards Lorelei, Philip, a fervent Greek Orthodox supportive of the Christians, grouched about the two dozen or so Arab conflicts since World War Two.

“One more Arab uprising solves nothing,” he said. “Arabs would sell their own mothers to capture a Christian. The world grows weary,” and then he begged her to open the door.

Finally, they agreed to a truce.

“We need to talk,” he said, taking her face in his hands. “I want us to go home. You’re not safe. We’re not safe. This war is not for us.”

“War is not safe,” she said. “We have a half-year left on our contracts. You’ve made your reputation, mine’s a work-in-progress.”

Hoping to end the debate, Lorelei unzipped his jeans and initiated the foreplay he loved. He reached for a box of condoms, but she pushed his hand away. Lorelei’s deceit extended to the bedroom; she had not told

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him she was on the pill. For months, he had used protection even though the pill made condoms unnecessary.

‘Now’s not the time to be truthful,’ she told herself. ‘Maybe he’ll lighten-up if he thinks I’m trying to get pregnant.’

She watched a smile creep over his face as he entered her with passionate glee.

“God, I hate those damn things,” he said.

Lorelei tried not to feel guilty. They made love the rest of the afternoon and laughed when Habib yelled from the living room, “You’re worse than a nest of fucking rabbits.”

“Can you imagine?” Lorelei said to them, a little while later as they clinked their scotch glasses, “If I’m awarded a Pulitzer, I’ll be like Lê Đức Thọ and Henry Kissinger — two war mongers and a voyeur — the three of us profiting off the misery of others. How pathetic.”

On the day Lorelei was injured, the CO refused Lorelei’s request to go on patrol. Sergeant Pickens had to relay the bad news, himself.

“Sorry, Miss Lorelei,” he said. “He didn’t say why.”

Lorelei smiled politely, letting the sergeant off the hook.

“You tell that CO of yours that if I ever run into him, I’m going to give him more than a piece of my mind,” she said.

The sergeant grinned.

“I surely will, ma’am,” he said. “I surely will.”

But that was not the end of the matter as far as Lorelei was concerned. She wondered what was up. Did the CO think the situation had become too dangerous? Or had Philip intervened somehow? She became increasingly agitated as she considered the possibility that Philip had stuck his big Greek nose where it didn't belong.

As she walked, Lorelei convinced herself this possibility, more than likely, was probable, and she started to grow angry. 'Just as he was coming around,' she thought. 'Now he pulls this shit!' She would give Philip more than a piece of her mind when he got back from eastern Beirut. She would be waiting for him.

Deciding to head for home, she looked about to get her bearings, but found herself in an unfamiliar part of the city. She drifted block to block beneath a sky that was becoming increasingly gray, and before long an unseasonable drizzle began to fall, then a deluge. She had wandered west into a wholly different part of the city, a part of the city that was controlled by various Arab factions.

Finally, she saw a street, vacant except for a few weeds and some scraggly saplings, and a signpost marked Damascus Street. She was back in familiar territory. There was a checkpoint just ahead and she headed towards it. But in that very moment of recognition, a burst of gunfire sprayed the street.

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Before she even thought about seeking shelter, an arm pulled her into the vestibule of a small apartment with a wooden door painted blue, a faded blue that at one time had been turquoise.

“Sorry ma’am. There are four snipers engaged in a shoot-out across the way,” said a heavily-armed soldier.

Then a mortar blast shattered the wall above them and pieces of masonry tumbled, blocking access to the street. A large chunk knocked her unconscious. The Marine leaned hard against the door until the lock gave. He carried her into what used to be someone’s living room.

Everything remained intact except for the family who had joined the ever-increasing stream of refugees abandoning Beirut.

The Marine laid Lorelei on the couch and turned on the tap. After a few seconds, the spurts of brown water cleared. He removed his bandana, which he had used to protect his face, soaked it in water, and cleaned her wounds. Then carefully, almost delicately, he felt for abrasions.

There was a big lump on the side of Lorelei’s head though not much blood. Her pulse was elevated. He rinsed the bandana, made a compress for her forehead, and held her hand. Stroking the side of her face, he said, “Please, wake up. I have to get you out of here and I sure as hell don’t want to carry you.”

Lorelei began to stir. Her eyes fluttered as if she was dreaming, and she even started to form a word or two, but then she lapsed back into unconsciousness.



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“Shit,” said the soldier.

A volley of gunfire sprayed the building where the soldier and Lorelei were hiding. The windows shattered upon impact. A few seconds later, the Marine crouched behind the front door, his M16 ready. He knew from experience that an enemy patrol was on a search and destroy mission and he wasn't taking any chances.

Then he heard the sound of boots in the vestibule, outside. Three voices were chattering away. The voices seemed unaware that he was on the other side of the door.

The rest happened in a flash.

The door opened and the Marine fired multiple rounds. One man tumbled head first into the apartment, his chest riddled with bullet holes. His blood flowed freely. The other two men lay in the vestibule stacked against each other like Pick-Up Sticks. He kicked the ribs of the one on the bottom. No sign of life. Noticing the one on top was still breathing, the soldier finished him off, execution style, with a single shot.

“Gotta get out of here,” the soldier said, more to himself than to Lorelei. “But not the way I came in.”

He slung Lorelei and his gear over one shoulder, held his rifle pressed against his right side with his finger on the trigger, and kicked open the rear door. For the next fifteen minutes, he dodged sporadic sniper fire. Finally, he was a couple of blocks from the American University

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Hospital. Like a nightmare, the sniper fire vanished, and five minutes later, he ordered a sentry to open the hospital gate.

“Who in the hell is this broad?” asked Lt. Col. Bloom who helped the Marine lay her on gurney.

“She’s in shock,” the soldier said, ignoring the doctor’s question. “She took a nasty bump on the side of her head.”

In a matter of seconds, the doctor was surrounded by a nurse and two orderlies.

“Thanks, Doc,” said the soldier “I’ll be back to check on her. I’ve got to report to my CO. Ran into some nasty business up the road.”

Lorelei stirred and muttered something incoherent.

“Yes, yes,” Dr. Bloom said. “Go on, Miss.”

“Where is...?” Lorelei mumbled. “I must see....”

“He’s not here,” said the doctor. “He’s gone.”

“But, but,” said Lorelei, and she tried to sit up on the gurney but collapsed with the effort.

The doctor checked Lorelei’s vitals and then nodded to the staff.

“Let’s get this woman to X-Ray,” said the doctor. “We need to see what’s-up.”

**American University: Beirut, 1976**

Philip, Lorelei's husband, frantic when she did not return, phoned the American Embassy. He lost his temper and cursed an inept chargé d'affaires, a diplomatic underlying, "Of course, I'm certain she's missing. There's no fucking 48-hour rule in a war zone."

An ongoing brouhaha between Lebanon's outgoing president, Suleiman Frangieh who refused to step down, and the incoming leader, Elias Sarkis, had made it impossible for the incoming Ambassador Francis Meloy to present his credentials. This bureaucratic snafu further convinced Philip that Lebanon wasn't worth saving. Already pissed-off at Lorelei for not heeding his warnings, he fumed, "That silly woman went ahead and filed her report without taking an escort. For Chrissakes, we're in the middle of a war."

Fearing she had been kidnapped or killed, he tried to call the UN Peacekeepers' commander directly, but the call failed. The shelling had intensified and the phone lines were down again. In desperation, he headed out into the street and commandeered a U.S. Marine advisor and his jeep parked nearby. It was the same friendly sergeant from Georgia who had taken Lorelei on patrol.

"No way, not Miss Lorelei," said Sergeant Pickens. "Don't you worry. I'll move the fucking Rock of Gibraltar to find her."

Philip and the sergeant dodged mortar fire; two-wheeled-it around craters deep enough to swallow a tank; and headed towards the Corniche

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