



La vue de ma fenêtre, Île du Levant.

Edward Gell's painting of the view from his window, of the archipelago, which includes the Île du Levant.

CHAPTER TWO

The smell of the Oleanders was so powerful in the heat of the Mediterranean sun that it has stayed with me all my life. Every time I smell them I am transported back to a moment in my youth that has always held a special reverence for me, and which began what I can only describe as the awakening of true love. We walked through the tunnel-like paths on the Île du Levant, enclosed in pink and white oleanders, my brother François and I, accompanied by my stepfather Marcel. A handsome man, with dark hair and a kind face, he had become a loving father to us after he married our mother in 1937, and our strained and tumultuous life had evened out. We felt safe with this man, a French Algerian who played the mandolin and made us all laugh.



The Island