



GLIMPSE OF SUNLIGHT

Book One of the Jonathan Dickinson Odyssey

Oumar Seydou's life turns upside down when he encounters Jonathan Dickinson and Blair Brannigan. The challenges facing the three of them, and the perseverance of the Jamaican people, leave a multi-cultural imprint on the global community that forever captures the power of the human spirit.

Also by LEONA DeROSA BODIE

Sea of Secrets Series:

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Book One of the Jonathan Dickinson Odyssey

Amazon Bestselling Author

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& G.E. GARDINER**

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DEDICATION

To the sons and daughters of toil, and
to freedom fighters everywhere.



CHAPTER 1

THE PAST TWO DAYS wore on his nerves. Beneath the wide brim of his khaki hat, Captain Kyle Seydou glared at the sea as his fingers strangled the deck rail. All the tension he'd held back since the break-in clawed at his back and shoulders.

The theft had occurred miles from this current dive site, but the burglary spooked him even now, anchored offshore, a full day's motor away. Not wanting to be anyone's victim twice, he'd upgraded his security system immediately. That still didn't eliminate his concerns about keeping his discovery safe.

It was quarter past eleven in the morning. He glanced toward the stern one more time before stepping inside the glass bridge in the pilothouse. His treasure hunting ship, the *Calypso Blue*, was outfitted with the latest high-tech equipment, including a big screen digital workstation. Seydou studied the sonar image on the bottom of the sea.

He knew it was coming, recognizable by the narrow shape shadowed in the cobalt blue current. The small cannon, encrusted with thick layers of coral and shells after five centuries underwater, rose from the ocean depths. Rolling seas and sunny skies greeted the relic as muck dripped from its underside. He watched his crane operator painstakingly hoist the swivel gun onto the deck.

A second later, he left the command station for the observation balcony. *Calypso's* first mate, an unsmiling bespectacled man, joined him there. "Did you check the archives?" Seydou asked as he scratched his temple.

"Yes, sir, the prevailing currents and wind directions were like you thought."

"Then this cannon was pointing in the wrong direction." Seydou cleared his throat while his gaze shifted from the bow to his first mate.

"For the winds to go counter clockwise—"

"Right, if this is the ship we think it is," Seydou said, "she went down in a hurricane. What news have you heard from the divers? Any gold?"

"None so far."

"I don't believe we'll find any." Seydou glanced away, nearly deafened by the roar of *Calypso's* diesel engines, revved high to jettison water down two curved metal tubes called mailboxes, fitted in front of the propellers. Below, on the ocean floor, the redirected prop wash swept away a swath of sand fifty foot wide. "No worries." Seydou raised his voice several octaves

then broke into a smile. “We have something better ... A mother lode of silver.”

He continued watching the recovery efforts off the stern where the dive ladder bounced with the swells. Five divers, bobbing up and down in the offshore surge, hung on tight, fighting the current. When the noise of the engine died down, Seydou shouted. “Ready?”

The divers nodded, flipped and plunged into the clear water, racing to the bottom. They scoured the seabed, combing the sand with metal detectors, peering into crevices for black hunks of oxidized silver. When they found artifacts, they swam with them cradled in their hands to the collection crate, where each discovery was gingerly placed. Fifteen minutes later, their air bubbles rippled the water surface and ended in an elegant swirl as they ascended.

“Get them up now,” Seydou shouted as he scrambled to the main deck, prepared to fight a freakishly large predator before his men were dragged beneath the waves. He gestured to the ship’s right side. “There’s a shark, dead abeam.”

“Yes, sir.” The first mate pressed the alarm, sending a flurry of deck hands to Seydou’s side. They safely pulled the divers back into the ship before the dorsal fin disappeared.

“Let’s take a break.” It was another worry, but Seydou was used to dealing with sharks in the Caribbean. Unless they showed signs of aggression or appeared in large schools, his crew was safe.

A while later, after a few more dives, he suspected there were thousands of Spanish silver dollars down there. These rich waters, one hundred feet below, belonged to the island nation of the Dominican Republic. Their government had contracted with his company, Seydou Marine Exploration, to search and uncover treasure from the wreck, agreeing to a fifty-fifty split.

It had been an eventful month. So far, they'd brought up five hundred coins. If he was right, they'd lucked upon a treasure ship from a fleet of twenty-eight mentioned in Christopher Columbus' journal that recorded his fourth and final voyage to the New World. Seydou was convinced the wreck he was working on, was the *Ovando*. The galleon left the island of Hispaniola for Spain the summer of 1502, carrying coins and bullion from South America.

He pinched the bridge of his nose and squeezed his eyes tight. The treasure he discovered could be worth millions. It boggled his mind what else could be down there, and it was only a matter of time before someone else happened upon the dive. As much as he didn't want to think about it, he had to stay alert. He opened his eyes then scanned the horizon. Men with no scruples and few options would do anything to survive. Even if that meant stealing the treasure he claimed, or worse. Murder.

The jarring ringtone of an iPhone sounded from his front pocket. The ringing threw him. His mind, irked by the ill-timed call, was hyper-focusing. His blood pressure spiked. Seydou withdrew the device.

His annoyance at the intrusion evaporated when he glanced at the caller ID and saw it was Donovan Bouchara. Despite the almost eighteen-year difference in their ages and their student-professor status, they were more like father and son, remaining friends even after Seydou left the University of Central Florida to start his own salvage and exploratory team.

“Hey, Dono,” Seydou said.

“Kyle, where are you now?”

“We’re a mile and half offshore in the Western Caribbean.”

“Cool. Where’s your new dive site? I wanna see it.”

“Let’s just say, we’re keeping the specific location under wraps for now.”

“I totally understand.”

Listening to the kid’s voice, Seydou pictured Dono sitting in anthropology class, wearing cargo shorts and a colorful shirt. The kid with sun-streaked brown hair almost touching his shoulders usually stared at the white board with a spacey, faraway expression. Although Donovan seemed thousands of miles away, Seydou knew he digested all the lectures and aced every exam.

“At least, tell me *how* you found it,” Donovan said.

“It’s a crazy story,” Seydou said. “I surveyed sixty-two miles of coastline and got lucky after a chance encounter with a local fisherman. He sold me an old coin he found while diving. Turned out it was one of the oldest coins ever minted. I told him if he showed us where he found the coin, he could come and work for us.”

“Seriously, dude. How’d that work out?”

Seydou didn’t answer as the familiar sensation of tension tingled along his neck. *Was the break-in an inside job?* He gave the horizon another silent once-over.

“Come on, spill. What’s the scoop, Kyle?”

“I haven’t officially confirmed which ship we’re diving.” Seydou rubbed his chin. “I have a pretty fair idea, but we’re keeping quiet for now. Just until I can verify it.”

He decided to throw the kid a bone though. “If it’s the ship we think it is, she was heading back to Spain with a haul of newly minted coins. We’ve just scraped the surface. All of the stuff we’ve found is from mucking about.”

“Any date?”

“We’re not sure yet, but it’s a significant find,” Seydou said. *It might be the oldest shipwreck ever found in the Caribbean.* But he kept that to himself.

“That’s huge. You got to tell me what you’ve found.”

“Most of the silver coins don’t have dates, so we’ve been busy cleaning them up and trawling through reference books to identify them.”

“What are you gonna do with all that money?”

“Don’t get ahead of yourself, Donovan. The coins could be worth a paltry amount—just five hundred dollars. We’re not sure yet, but one similar to ours sold for a hundred and fifty thousand the other day. We could be talking about pennies or megabucks, depends on whether this ship is the one we want it to be.”

Seydou took a deep breath and went on. “But they’re worth zilch until someone’s willing to buy them.”

“How can you keep a working dive secret? It’s impossible to keep something that big quiet.”

Seydou sighed. Yeah, that question troubled him too. “We’re only here once or twice a week. At the end of the day, we anchor elsewhere, at least twelve hours away.”

Donovan whistled. “It’s still hard for me to wrap my mind around all that precious cargo just sitting there, waiting to be plucked. You’re floating on top of tons of loot, my friend.”

“Tell me about it. We just don’t know the full scope,” Seydou said. *One set of coins could be worth a million on its own.* Again, he didn’t share that nugget with Donovan. No need to feed the kid’s curiosity. “The crew won’t know until the clean-up operation is complete. And you know I don’t dive just for the money, I dive for the money and the story.”

Donovan chuckled. “Don’t I know it.” He paused on the line. “Hey, man, I’d love to help,” Donovan said. “Could you use help researching the artifacts? I have plenty of time. Let me work with you. I could be on the next flight before you—”

“Sorry, Dono, the timing’s not right.” He studied the waters of the horizon, growing choppiier by the minute.

“C’mon, Kyle. You need the help. I want to give you a hand.”

“Sorry, buddy. It’s just not as safe as I’d like. We’ve had problems.”

“What kind of problems?”

“Piracy, sharks, gale-force winds and high waves.”

“Piracy?” Donovan sounded like a child. “Seriously, dude?”

“Yeah, it’s as big a problem now as it was back in the day. Two days ago, somebody stole thousands of dollars’ worth of our diving equipment—despite the presence of an armed government guard. Recently, a friend’s fifty-four-foot Irwin was stolen from Miami and ended up in the Caribbean. It happens.”

“I’m sorry I never thought ... piracy? Wow.”

“And the diving conditions are hazardous. The waves are so treacherous that the prospect of being crushed by rocks is very real.”

“Are you sorry you left your job? I mean, you were so successful at the university. You could always come back. Much less dangerous here.”

“No regrets, none whatsoever. Besides you forget how dangerous navigating academic politics can be. I’d rather take my chances here.” Seydou knew he’d finally found his life’s work. While backbreaking, it satisfied him like nothing else. Now, he blended his love of the sea and his love of history. Growing up listening to his father’s stories instilled an appreciation for learning about other generations long before he’d discovered his passion for history. In the end, that’s what drove him from the university and the job he loved as professor of Nautical Archeology to this.

Rather than reading about explorations, or even talking about them, he’d wanted to be there, on the front lines, using his skills to actively reclaim history

from the sea. He longed for big dollars and the acclaim that came from huge discoveries. He'd understood the reality would fall somewhat short. What he'd found instead were small discoveries and, yes, massive disappointments.

But at thirty-seven, Seydou knew this time was different. He was willing to bet everything on this dream, on his gut and intuition. "Absolutely no regrets, Dono. It's better than being tied to a desk."

"I know you're up to your eyeballs in treasure hunting," Donovan said. "Are you sure you can't use an extra hand down there? I can dive or do research."

"Aren't you still at UCF?"

"Yes, technically. If I don't get a summer job, though, I'll have to drop out for a semester. I can't find anything near home, nothing that pays well enough. Please, Kyle, I need the work or I won't be going back in the fall."

Seydou clenched his jaw then tapped his fingers on the railing. *He couldn't take anyone else on until he had a firmer handle on security. What if something happened to the kid? He'd never forgive himself. He just couldn't take that chance.* His thoughts swirled in his head; he wanted to find a solution to help Donovan.

"For the moment, Dono, I have all the hands I need. However, I know of another sweet deal if you'd like to earn some extra money and have an adventure at the same time."

"Do I ever!"

