Although my grandmother’s identity card says that she was born in 1912, the year is just as likely to have been 1910 or 1911. In those days, in Morocco, written records were not always kept for births that took place in the countryside. A piece of identification would have only become absolutely necessary if she had participated in a public activity or when the time came for her to marry. So it was not until the day she married my grandfather, the day her marriage contract was drafted, that a specific birth year became important. By then, however, no one remembered the day or the month of her birth with the kind of precision needed for an official document. She was short and thin, with large, soulful eyes, a *retroussé* nose, and a thunderous laugh, all traits I now see in her son, my father. She was a fabulous cook, a talented seamstress, a gifted herbalist, a thrifty housewife and a shrewd businesswoman. She was a wonderful storyteller. She was also illiterate. About fifty miles from where my grandmother was born, a treaty was signed that had a huge impact not only on her life, but also on my mother’s life, and on mine. On March 30, 1912, Eugène Regnault, a plenipotentiary French diplomat, signed a treaty with the struggling Sultan Abdelhafid to turn Morocco, then still known as the Cherifian Empire, into a French colony. In this piece, I look at the combined and complicated legacy of patriarchy and colonialism on the women in my family.