

Chapter One

Arabian

Three hundred years after the extinction of the Arab sovereignty in Spain, the king of Spain said to his bard, “Cherish my heart with one of your amusing tales.” Gonzalez, the king’s first and wisest bard, drew a long bow and said, “Yes, my Lord, God bless your soul.” Gonzalez was an affable man whose aspect inspired the king’s confidence and relieved his thirst for knowledge. The king was copiously cognizant in the areas of explanatory science, poetry and above all, the history of Spain. The bard sat at the king’s feet and began to tell his story.

“I dedicate my tale to depict the age of chivalry and to revive the legends of the land of our fathers. About the year of Christ 711, the Arabs conquered Spain and stayed for 800 years. During the first 300 years of their reign, one caliph ruled the whole of Spain; but upon the decline of the Arabs’ power, Spain thereafter became divided among numerous Arab princes into small dominions. Spain was thus left almost destitute of a national government. The Arab princes, more or less powerful, held local sway as far as each could enforce his dominion, and occasionally those princes would unite for a common object; but in ordinary times, they were much more likely to be found in hostilities with one another. In such a state of things, the security of Spain under the Arab’s sovereignty was at the mercy and the avidity of every conqueror. Christian kings, who were defeated by the Arabs when they

first invaded Spain and were repelled to the northern provinces near the Pyrenees Mountains at the south of France, awaited a favorable opportunity to restore their land. The Christian kings even united their forces and started small wars against the northern Arab provinces. The Arab princes, realizing the danger coming from the north, decided to unite under one flag and to elect one ruler to govern the whole of Spain. Omar was the son of Abdel Rahman, the late king of Cordoba. Though only 21 years old at his father's death, Omar was elected king of Spain at a general meeting of the princes. This was not done without opposition, for there were many ambitious competitors. Some of the princes quarreled about Omar's supremacy and command. Omar decided not to waste time and at the head of his troops, he dashed into a body of twenty thousand rebellious Arabs. Omar fought a great battle against his opponents, defeated them, and pursued the victory until the whole country was under his dominion. He bestowed the subdued provinces upon his most loyal cousins and relatives, and then voyaged to the northern provinces that were under the reign of the Christian kings and laid siege to the cities of Navarre, Sanguesa, and Aragon. The siege of the cities continued for a month. When the people suffered from famine, they surrendered the cities to him. After his victory Omar divided his army into two parts. One part he committed to the conduct of his cousin Hamza, whom he ordered to march into the cities of Catalogne, Badalona and Barcelona; while Omar, with the other half of the army, would endeavor to subdue the cities of Leon, Castille and Austries. Here, repeated battles were fought, and the Arabs under the valiant leader Omar had the advantage. At length, all of the armies of the

Christian kings were totally defeated. The fugitives dispersed over the country to areas where they could hope for safety. Other kingdoms were forced to surrender unconditionally without war for fear of Omar's influence. The kings of the Christian kingdoms came voluntarily and made their submission, promising to pay tribute. Omar stayed in those parts and employed his time in restoring order and settling peace. He then returned to Cordoba and celebrated his victories with great splendor.

Omar reigned for five years in peace, exercising strict justice towards all men. Between him and each of his subjects there existed nothing but love and friendship. He loved the hunt, the tournament and hard encounters; and he achieved victory over them all. He enriched his court, his companions, and his nobles with the best Arabian horses and the best arms, along with valuable jewels; and he ceased not until his fame had flown over the face of his kingdom.

His chivalry combined invincible strength and valor, justice, modesty, compassion for weakness, and devotion to religion. He acquired these characters from the way he was raised. At seven years of age, he was removed from his father's palace and placed under the care of a sheik to teach him religion. In his leisure hours he learned to play music. The lute was his favorite instrument. He also learned popular poems until he became an illustrious poet. At fourteen he was taught hunting, falconry, fishing, wrestling, swordplay, tilting with spears, and performing military exercises on horseback. At twenty-one years of age he was taught to perform with grace all the evolutions of horsemanship. He loved his native land as the evergreen loves the earth.

His tall frame seemed to dwarf his surroundings. He was seven feet tall, his hair was jet-black, and his wide eyes were dark as midnight. In spite of his huge masculine body, he was much too beautiful to pass by unnoticed.

The years went by and Omar, whose power was established over all the sovereigns of Spain, recollected that the king of Leon had omitted to render the homage due to him. The king of Leon, by seizing every means of procuring allies, sided with the kings of the French provinces across the Pyrenees. Foreseeing that Omar might attack him soon on all sides, he reinforced his army, had the ancient fortifications repaired, and ordered new ones to be built surrounded by wide and deep ditches. Omar sent an embassy to demand that the king of Leon pay homage. When the king refused, Omar sent an army to punish him. The Spaniards were routed and the king slain, he was succeeded by Anne, his only daughter. Anne was compelled to submit and pay tribute to Omar.

Anne had been the beauty of the family. Her companions of either sex in the Royal Court were well matched in beauty, youth and grace. But among this charming group, the brilliant Anne shone as the sun outshines the stars. The sunshine in her was enough to light up the whole of existence. She was a joy to look at. She was tall with a slender figure showing an exciting sensual femininity. Her blond hair was long, cascading to her shoulders. Her facial planes and features blended into a lovely image that expressed natural grace and charm. Since she was the only child of her father, nothing was neglected in her education to elevate her to the standard of a perfect knight. When her beauty became celebrated, and her fame spread throughout the surrounding Christian

kingdoms, all the kings sent to her father a request for her in marriage. Her father consulted her about the marriage proposals, but she disliked the idea, saying that she was a princess and a future queen ruling over the people, and she desired not a man to rule over her.

When Anne's father died, she grieved for years, blaming Omar for the misery of her own soul. Although she knew that she couldn't stand against Omar's power, bitterness ate into her until all she lived for was to seek vengeance. She became furious at the Arabs, and when she came to the throne, she swore that she was not going to rest without taking vengeance for the death of her father.

Omar believed that indolence was the reason for indigence, the characteristic of weakness and folly; and none gather honey who choose indolence, nor will any fill his hand who luxuriates in repose. Omar was in the habit of joining hard encounters and hunting in times of peace. He went hunting accompanied by ten of his noble knights; they took with them provisions for thirty days. Omar and his companions followed their prey persistently for long distances across the valleys, the mountains and the mounds. The chase took them a great distance until the Pyrenees Mountains came into sight. They hunted an abundance of gazelles and wild oxen. While Omar and his knights were eating and chatting, forty furious knights assailed them. Omar's companions were taken by surprise before they even had the chance to draw their swords. As for Omar, he quickly set his hand to his sword and smote on the right hand and on the left, and at every stroke he struck down a knight. He dealt with them so vigorously that ten of them were slain. However, he and his companions were soon surrounded, overmatched and made prisoners.

The assailants were a group of Anne's routine patrols surveying the borders of Leon. Omar and his companions thus became prisoners in the city of Leon, the capital of Anne's kingdom. The prisoners were loaded down with chains and put in a dark dungeon. After ten days in prison, Omar and his knights were fetched from their dungeon by Anne's guards and ordered to be brought before her.

The prisoners, loaded down with chains, were taken to Anne's court. Anne, clad in white with a crown of gold upon her head, was sitting on her throne. Because of the heavy chains encircling his feet, Omar suddenly stumbled and fell heavily to the ground. His men quickly gathered around him and helped him to his feet. He stood up as tall and straight as a tree. Seeing this, Anne realized that Omar, amongst all the prisoners, was highest in rank or dignity.

Anne looked at Omar critically. He was huge and immensely tall. His head was above everyone else in the court. Their features paled next to his. His arms, legs, and chest were larger than any Anne had seen before. His large impressive chest angled into a taught waist. The strong column of his neck supported his beautiful arrogant head. His wavy jet-black hair fell just short of massive shoulders. His flesh was bronzed from his days in the saddle. Heads turned as he walked down the court, looking unconsciously arrogant and lethally attractive. He was enough to take any woman's breath away. Without a doubt he was the best-looking man Anne had ever seen. There was something altogether too overpowering about him that slightly frightened her.

She asked him, "Who are you?" Anger sharpened her voice.

“Arabian,” he replied, the sound of his voice deep and arrogant.

“Arabian!” she shouted with eyes sparkling with vindictiveness. “You are nothing but an uncivil lout talking to me roughly. We see nothing from you Arabs but perfidy and hostility. What were you doing here?”

He said while encountering her disdainful gaze, which didn’t seem to daunt him in the least, “Hunting brought us into the vicinity of your province.”

“I am not to be palmed off with that story; you’re an awful liar. You have murdered my finest knights; they have been treacherously slain.”

“I am no murderer; I was only defending myself.”

“Your arrogance is unbelievable. You will not only beg for mercy, you will curse the day you were born. Reveal your identity.”

Omar didn’t answer her, and anger glittered from his eyes as he stared at her. The fire in his eyes seemed to sizzle through the length of her. She shouted at him, “Answer me—am I talking to a wall?” When she received no answer, she turned to his companions and shouted hysterically, “Who is this man?” but they only looked at her with challenging eyes. Her temper rose and she insisted she would force Omar to talk. She called her executioner and ordered him to cut off the heads of Omar’s companions if he didn’t talk. His men gazed warningly at him, revealing that if he talked, the safety of his large kingdom would be threatened. When he saw that all of

his men had been killed, his eyes bulged out and grew as hard and cold as flint. He was about to attack but he painfully withheld.

Anne looked at him like a wildcat and said in mockery, "It must have been very painful to lose your friends. It's your turn now, infidel; I still know nothing about you. You better supply some information about yourself or you will join your friends."

He said with signs of sadness showing plainly on his face, "Be it known to you that we are not infidels. All who say so lie. We believe in one God and the prophet Mohammed is His messenger. If my day has come, and my blood would be shed at your hand, I will therefore surrender to God, who possesses this life and the hereafter."

Anne's hands curled over the edges of her chair in an attempt to keep herself steady. She shouted at him, "You think I am deceived by your words? I will drive you to the basins of death! I swear by God that you are closer to the hereafter than the shoes you see on my feet." Omar didn't answer her, but his black eyes were daggers burning into hers. She looked at the guards and shouted, "Load down his chains with more weight and throw him in the dungeon." She shouted while they were taking him away, "That puts you in your place, infidel."

Omar's hurt at the humiliation Anne caused him surpassed the anguish of physical pain. He was plunged into a dungeon for fifteen days where no ray of daylight ever penetrated, loaded down with heavy chains and scantily supplied with the coarsest food. Omar, now without strength and vigor, weakened by imprisonment and long abstinence,

found despair had taken up a position in his heart, and he longed for death as a relief.

After weakening Omar's strength for fifteen days, Anne called the guards to bring him from prison. He stood before her laden with heavy chains. She shouted at him, "Today you will face smallness and shame." She pointed to a huge black muscled slave standing beside her and said, "This gladiator has brought to the ground every mighty man in this town. You will wrestle with him until one of you kills the other."

Omar looked at the slave and found him huge and tall like a palm tree; Omar thought that because of his enormous size, if a group of powerful gladiators encountered him, the slave could swallow them all without much strain.

The guards unchained the prisoner, and the slave circled Omar, looking for a chance to seize him. The slave approached Omar and punched him ferociously in the face. Boiling with anger, Omar jumped onto his chest and grasped his thick neck with one hand, and with the fingers of the other pierced his eye with one powerful stroke that made the slave cry aloud with pain. Omar then pulled him down to the ground and fell upon him, thus completely immobilizing him. Omar stood up to give the slave another chance to fight, but the heavy strokes Omar launched at him in the second round made the slave stagger and fall to his knees. A powerful kick in the face threw the slave flat on his back. Omar stood at a distance waiting for the slave to come to his feet for a third round. When he was on his feet again, Omar lifted him up with formidable strength and made several quick turns before throwing him heavily to the ground. The slave fell on his back, feeling a painful

fracture in his spine. At a glimpse Omar threw himself upon him. With his knees pressing hard into his chest, Omar squeezed the slave's larynx with a painful grasp. Through interrupted breathing, the defeated pleaded, "Kill me, for death is easier than the shame you have caused me." Omar looked at Anne, waiting for an answer. She said disappointedly, "Let him be." Omar rose to his feet, looking at Anne in anger.

Anne, furious at the sight of her gladiator lying helplessly on the ground, ordered her guards to usher Omar back to prison. Omar was desperately disappointed at Anne's reaction to his victory and considered her biased response an unforgettable humiliation to his wounded pride. The slave was unable to rise again. Anne signaled to her guards, who came quickly and carried him away.

During Omar's imprisonment, Anne frequently inquired of the jailer how her prisoner bore the pains of famine and isolation. When she was sure of his weariness and fatigue, she ordered him to be brought out of prison. They brought him, bound hand and foot, as if he were being carried to his execution. He pleaded, "Tell your guard to open the chains about my feet and wrists." His eyes begged her not to let the torture go any further.

"You are destined to be thrown to a lion in a den," she said firmly.

"Be it so, death is my only remedy. I merit not to die in a dungeon; just give me a sword."

Anne had never met anyone like him before. The man aroused her antipathy, yet he fascinated her with his quiet self-assurance.

The guards unbound him and took him into a den in which a starving lion was roaring, awaiting eagerly its prey. Anne, surrounded by her nobles and dukes, stood to watch the massacre. Omar, waiting for his chance, leapt down upon the lion's back and tried to seize him round the neck, but he fell, and the lion's paw raised over him. With the rapidity of lightning, Omar plunged his sword into the lion's neck. The lion rolled over in the agony of death. The spectators applauded cheerfully, and Anne looked stricken.

When the guards helped him out of the den, he looked like a giant rising from the earth, a giant of detached strength: imperturbable, impenetrable. Still too stunned to speak, Anne signaled to her guards, who came in haste and seized Omar vigorously, threw him down, and bound him fast with a heavy chain. He struggled to his feet and gave Anne a steady look that was as sharp as a skinning knife. She could see the signs of distress that agitated his countenance. He begged, "Enough humiliation; like the bite of a mad dog is the stroke of this chain."

"Who are you? Where do you come from? I repeat."

"A passerby who seeks your kindness and forgiveness."

"The excess of your stubbornness has entrapped you into your destruction. Your life is spared for the time. After you feel all the torments of hunger and despair, I will find you a more painful death."

She ordered him to be imprisoned again until he might show the truth of his personality.

Anne convened with the council of her peers and addressed them saying, "I know not from what country this man has come. I am

perplexed respecting his case; for if I give orders to kill him, it will not be right; and if I leave him, he will increase in his boldness.” The council consented that the man was an infidel ruffian who slew ten of their best knights and deserved to be killed. Since he was a good warrior, they decided he should have to encounter three strong knights, one by one. If he survived, he would fight Salazar, Anne’s maternal uncle, known as the best knight in Leon. His sword was of the finest workmanship and of such strength and temper that no armor in the world could stand against it. Finally, if he survived Salazar’s sword, the monstrous villain could get Anne’s pardon by kneeling down at her feet and begging forgiveness.

Great preparations were made for the contest. On the appointed day, Omar was provided with horse and armor, then brought to a vast green valley. Anne sat surrounded by dukes, peers and a band of gorgeous ladies to watch the fight. Armored on his horse, Omar waited to see from where his opponent would come. Suddenly he beheld a black knight coming towards him through the valley; he prepared to receive him and encountered him violently. Both knights, having broken their lances, drew their swords and fought blade to blade. Omar struck the knight a blow through his helmet, headpiece, and visor, and through the skin, into the flesh and the bone, until it wounded the very brain. The black knight received a mortal wound and fell dead to the earth.

The second knight couched his lance and rushed at Omar, who received him and let the thrust go by him, while he struck the horseman upon the center of his shield in such a manner that his shield was split

and his armor broken, so that the cubit's length of the shaft of Omar's lance passed through his body, and sent him dead to the earth.

The third horseman put spurs to his horse and charged full against Omar, who while waving his sword as he saw the knight coming, smote off at a single blow not only his head, but also his shoulder and right arm.

Anne stood amazed like a bird that, rising to fly, finds its feet caught in a net. Her expression was a mixture of surprise and bewilderment. She could not choose but to admire the bravery and prowess with which the contest was performed; yet dictated by a disappointed spirit and a thirst for revenge, she roared in Omar's face, "Perhaps you deserve a punishment more severe. You have been given only one hour of grace to relax for the next fight."

His expression was thunderous. His intent gaze stabbed her, filling her with fear. He said calmly, "For long days I have endured the miseries of slavery and the cruelty of your injustice. It's my liberty that I require; set me free." She said sarcastically, "The pride of the Arabian is deeply wounded? I will turn your life into a burning fire."

She ordered him to be cast into a dungeon until the time of his contest with Salazar was due.

After an hour Omar was brought to the same battlefield to meet Salazar, the queen's maternal uncle, whose fame as a courageous and ferocious fighter had spread all over the Christian kingdoms. Salazar was in high spirits and jested with his companions as he advanced upon his horse. The combatants, having met and saluted each other, rode apart

to come together in full speed. The lances of the two combatants shivered at the shock, and Salazar was astonished to see almost at the same instant the sword of Omar gleaming above his head. He parried it with his buckler and gave Omar a blow on his helmet. Omar returned it with another, better aimed; for it cut away part of Salazar's helmet and with it his ear and part of his cheek. Omar attacked Salazar again with more vigor than ever; both struck terrible blows and made grievous wounds. Omar grasped his sword with both hands and struck Salazar such a blow that it cleft his buckler and cut off his arm with it; but Salazar at the same time launched his sword at Omar. Though the blow missed him, it struck the head of his horse, and the horse fell and drew down his master in his fall. Omar quickly disengaged himself, pressed Salazar with so much impetuosity that he drove him to a distance from his horse, and then brought him to his knees, tore off his helmet, and, with a sweep of his sword, stroke his head from his body.

Anne, who expected to see the head of Omar rolling at her feet, uttered a cry of horror when she saw Salazar's head separated from his body. For a while she stood silent, lips unmoving and with a steadfast gaze like a statue. Then she approached Omar, saying in contempt, "Kneel down at my feet and beg forgiveness."

He said with eyes piercing into her bones, "Bowling and kneeling in humility is only for God." His pride when aroused was as hard and unyielding as granite.

Anne's composure left her; she felt her anger rising like a swollen stream. She trembled with an overpowering desire to slap his face. She roared, "That was my last condition for granting you forgiveness. Your

arrogance is unbelievable. You had your say, and now I am going to have mine. You will be put in a cell till I devise a death sufficiently painful to satiate my revenge.”

Omar, though victorious, was badly wounded and lay helpless for many days in the cell. One night he was roused by the glare of a torch. He saw Anne enter his cell along with two guards and her physician to attend him. After his wounds were cared for, Anne asked him, “Is there anything you need?”

“A drought of water,” he said in a weak voice.

Omar seemed very weak and exhausted. Anne felt for a moment a wave of regret, but she quickly pushed it away. The jailer brought him water. Omar drank only a few drops, then glanced at Anne and said, “Set me free from prison. I beg you to consider this request favorably.”

“What else do you know besides slaying people?” she asked wonderingly.

He looked long at her green eyes and said, “*Express a high value even for one who is of little worth, and return thanks even for the smallest present, and be not desperate at meeting with refusal, nor think it impossible that a hard rock should yield water; nor despair of God’s spirit and help; for that is the part of an infidel.*”

Her mouth snapped shut in astonishment. It was as if all the wisdom of the world was collected in his chest. He added, “*Tyrannize not, if you have the power to do so; for the tyrannical is in danger of revenge. Your eye may sleep while the oppressed call down curses on you; but God’s eye sleeps not.*”

Anne managed to smile at him, feeling a twinge of guilt. She was utterly surprised that he knew that much and admired the eloquence of his tongue.

Anne, thinking of the current events, retired to her wing. The exhilaration she should have felt at her slight victory over a small group of Arabs wasn't there, and the injustice she caused Omar to suffer at her hand made her feel very small. A tide of shame and a spiraling sense of unease washed over her.

One week after her visit to Omar, Anne gave instructions to her attendants to unbind the prisoner, dress him in decent clothes, and bring him to her wing at dinnertime. When he entered the dining room, she was stunned by his magnificent appearance. He looked tall and strong and graceful. She pointed to a seat beside her. He sat so close to her that she was immediately aware of the warm male scent of him. She examined him carefully with astonished eyes. His eyes were wide and black as night; his lashes were thick and long. His eyes were thoroughly devastating—they could lure any woman into following him down the path into temptation. The smoldering heat of his gaze penetrated her whole body. His luxuriant jet-black hair relaxed on his massive shoulders. It was not fair for one man to be so beautiful, so strong and so appealing. He was probably the best-looking man in Spain. He emanated one of the most staggering sexual auras she had ever felt in her life. The wretched man was very difficult to dislike. The feelings he stirred inside her were frightening. She had never known a man who radiated such self-confidence. Arrogant and domineering he might be, but he was also the salt of the earth, thought she. His devastating beauty

and remarkable self-assurance had already steered her through more emotions than she had known herself capable of. She had the horrible feeling that somewhere along the way she had begun to like him too much. But this was a farewell dinner, and it would be stupid to begin to actually care for him now.

The moment she signaled with her hand, harmonious lyres and harps waked the air with the most ravishing notes. The charms of poetry were added in entertaining recitals. After that, appetizing and delicious food came in various vessels of gold and silver, in saucers of crystal, in cups set with brilliant pearls, and in cups of carnelian.

“Aren’t you eating?” she whispered.

“No, thank you; I’m not hungry,” he said with a faint smile.

She knew that he didn’t want to touch her food after all of the humiliation she exposed him to. His refrain from eating terribly annoyed her. She tried to hide her disappointment by focusing all her attention on her meal but found it very hard to swallow.

“I have never seen before a man so valiant and so powerful. You are a man sure of yourself, almost close to arrogant. Are you hard to get along with?” she questioned wonderingly.

“Do not be put off by the plain exterior. My nature is mild and humane, but you have forced me to suffer agitation of mind and torture of soul.”

“I was seeking revenge. The excessive force and tyranny of your King Omar killed my father and destroyed my country.”

“That shouldn’t make you consider me an enemy.”

“I can see that we are at each other’s throats. I know that we are both on edge, but I don’t want to fight with you. Not today, at any rate. Say something nice. You must have some good qualities hidden away under that stern exterior of yours.”

“Well, you could say I am also a poet.”

She said in amazement, “Really! Then recite to me some verses, perhaps my chest may thereby be dilated.”

“Sow good, even on an unworthy soil; for good will not be fruitless wherever it is sown. Verily, good, though it remain long buried, none will reap but him who sowed it.”

Her green eyes brightened, sparkling with sudden happiness. He was as sweet and smooth in utterance as the flowing of a stream of water. Now he was easy to be with, pleasant to talk to.

“I like it when we are easy with one another,” she said, feeling how his nearness affected her. She could feel the warmth of his body and breathed in the scent of him.

Glints of humor glittered in his eyes. He said smiling, “Being at ease has made you bloom with beauty. You look like a dream in that dress, and the fragrance of the intriguing perfume you wear is fascinating. Your elegance is really eye-catching.” His words sounded sweet to her.

Anne laughed lightly, trying to keep her voice calm, although her heart suddenly tripled its beat. “It seems that you are acquainted with what pleases women,” she said, still laughing.

“You are a woman of great beauty with a commanding style,” he said seriously, then continued reciting some verses of his own poem. *“When you look aside, you put to shame the gazelles; and when you walk with a vacillating gait, the willow branch is envious; and when you display your countenance, you confound the sun and the moon, and captivate every beholder. You are sweet-lipped, and tender in disposition.”*

Anne, overwhelmed by his tender sweet words, cast her eyes upon the ground and knew not what to say. She dared not to encounter his look. When at last she raised her eyes, she beheld a tender smile on his face. He recited smilingly, *“God guard your face that is veiled with loveliness. The full moon is its slave, and the stars are its servants. In beauty, I have never beheld your equal; and from your motions the branches might learn to wave.”*

Her heart was thrilled, and his lovely tender words encouraged her to say, “It seems that you are definitely aware of women’s nature.”

He said with a teasing smile, *“Never trust in women; nor rely upon their vows. They offer a false affection, for perfidy lurks within their hearts. By the tale of Joseph, be admonished, and guard against their stratagems.”*

“It’s a very narrow-minded statement,” she accused laughingly.

“You have a beautiful smile; I am glad to see you laughing.”

She found his devastating looks coupled with bland mockery extremely appealing. His pleasant company manners during dinner indicated that he was momentarily willing to forget their conflict, but after intercepting a few dark glances, she was aware that the truce was strictly temporary. Although his face was completely bland and she could discern no emotion whatsoever that gave her the slightest hint as to his thoughts, Anne felt a certain amount of fear in his assessment of her. She also realized that he took care that their conversation not degenerate into an argument, though all the while he was studying her like a fox contemplating a chicken. Anne deliberately switched the subject before Omar could probe further.

“After all the trouble you’ve gone to, I’d like to be able to do something for you in return.”

He heaved an inward sigh of relief and said, “God bless your heart.”

“Your courage has forced me to set you at liberty. God has decreed a new life for you.”

“Praise be to God for my safety.”

“At dawn you start your journey back to your country. If I see you here again, I will have your head on a platter.”

“I will take your good advice to heart.”

“It pleases me to see to your safety. I will help you with a constellation of my knights who will escort you to the borders.”

“May God preserve you. May I leave now?”

“If you wish.”

He made a small bow of respect and departed. She watched him stride away and hated to see him go. An empty feeling settled over her, and as time passed she began to feel more melancholy.

Omar departed and rode for four days until he reached Cordoba. He didn't tell his people about what he had truly suffered on his voyage. He told them instead that during hunting they were taken by surprise by some ruffians, and that all of his companions were killed, while he managed to escape after he slew many of the assassins.

A year later, the king of Navarre came to visit Omar and pay tribute. King Omar received him graciously and ordered a splendid repast be prepared in honor of his arrival. While the kings chatted at dinner, Omar learned from the king of Navarre that his wife had recently delivered a boy, and a religious ceremony was to be held at the Basilica de San Isidoro, the famous cathedral in Leon, to baptize his son. Queen Anne of Leon would honor the king of Navarre by meeting him at the borders before accompanying him to the church. Omar also learned that only a few men of arms were used for such occasions.

A few days after the departure of the king of Navarre, Omar made plans for twenty men of arms to take the queen of Leon and her attendants captive. After riding for four days, Omar and his men reached the borders of Leon. There they dispersed and kept themselves concealed. One day they espied a blue pavilion and colored tents pitched near a small river. Omar beheld Anne walking in long graceful strides

with her attendants by the river. He went a little way off and hid in the bushes to watch her. She was like a rising sun defying with her beauty the charm of all others. She was clothed so richly that none might look better. She seemed totally unaware of what fate had in store for her. She had with her only ten men of arms.

With his chosen band of knights, Omar immediately rushed into the camp. The sword wielded by his powerful hand cut down men and horses alike. In such confusion, his knights fell upon the rest and totally routed them. Anne was taken aback and turned pale with fear. By Omar's orders, men of arms were yanked to their feet into the river where their heads were then cut off. The water of the river turned red with their blood. Women, pages and servants were taken as slaves. Anne watched all of this in utter horror. She turned cold, the blood leaving her face until it became deathly white.

At last she found herself face to face with Omar. He looked at her from above his horse and said, "It is I, remember? I can get pretty heavy-handed when people I like are murdered. This is for killing my people and for wounding my feelings, perhaps beyond repair."

Anne felt that her freedom was now slipping out of her hands. The thought made her quake inside. She was powerless; wondering in an agony of apprehension what Omar would do to her.

"If you kidnap me, all the world will speak shamefully of you. My first cousin Marcos is on his way now with his troops, and he will make you pay for what you have done to my people. Even if you are seeking

revenge, now we are even.” It was not courage that held her defiant before him. It was simply that she was frozen by fear.

He didn’t answer her but took her on his horse and pursued his way. The horses went like the wind, and in a short time the horses and riders disappeared behind the summits of the mountains. They proceeded over mountains and through valleys for some days without meeting any adventure. They stopped for a short period in a tufted grove to rest and then resumed their way. When they approached Cordoba, he dismissed his knights after gifting them with the prisoners. Then he rode with Anne until at last they came to a beautiful valley, where there were trees of uniform growth and a river running through the valley. They rode by the side of the river, and at the extremity of a plain, there stood one of Omar’s large and lustrous palaces.

Anne thought that Omar might be trading in slavery of women and that he would sell her to one of the Arab princes or even to a band of pirates. The Arabs were slaveholders after all. It never crossed her mind that the horseman who was carrying her in arms like steel was King Omar, the most powerful man in the whole of Spain.

Omar dismounted, then took her down from his horse and led her inside the palace. He shouted, “Honyda.” An agreeable old woman came quickly and bowed respectfully saying, “At your service, my Lord.” He said, “I allocated this palace to the lady here; see that you serve her well.” Omar then left Anne under Honyda’s care.

Anne was amazed to see that the palace was extremely magnificent and full of all imaginable delights. It was a scene of architectural

grandeur surpassing all she had ever beheld. Honyda received Anne with the greatest kindness, led her to a pleasant apartment, and presented her with delicious fruits. Honyda then prepared her a warm bath and provided her with clean, elegant clothes. After Anne rested, Honyda placed before her a silver table inlaid with gold, upon which lay a cloth of yellow linen, and she brought her food. Not one vessel from which she was served was not of gold or silver.

Anne had a great desire to understand all that she saw, and which appeared to her so extraordinary. She wandered about the palace for days. It overlooked a flowery meadow planted with trees and covered with fruits and flowers. The morning sun was comforting and warm. The beauty of the scene poured like sunlight. The late afternoon colors turned the lake that penetrated the meadows into a smooth mirror of blue and gold.

Honyda treated Anne as if she were her daughter. After several days of living in the palace, Anne asked Honyda about the identity of her master. Honyda smiled and said, "He is of a noble birth and beneficent disposition."

"I find him rough and ruthless."

"How can that be, since he is rescuing the oppressed, redressing wrongs, abolishing evil customs and suppressing injustice? He is as seemly and demure as a dove, with all manner of good features, so that all men might not find his match."

Anne thought that it was hypocritical to listen to the old woman extolling her master's virtues, while she herself so violently disagreed.

It was irritating the way Honyda glorified Omar, as though he were royalty or some kind of a living legend.

The affairs of the kingdom took Omar away from Anne for several days. Then one night she was surprised to see him standing at her open door contemplating her. He closed the door and leaned back against it for a moment before straightening and walking towards her. He stared hard at her. He looked dangerous. No mercy lingered in his eyes, and the flame in them made her heart hammer in her throat. She felt the heat and anger within them. Her heart leapt with fear. She stepped back in panic. Her hand flew to her throat, as if she could swallow her panic and despair.

“Heavens, you startled me. What do you want?” she said, frightened.

“I want you for myself.” His arrogant masculinity hit her like a blow. “Don’t touch me,” she flung the words at him.

He wrapped her slender figure in his strong arms. Her breath vanished in a kiss that devoured her. His mouth was hungry, demanding.

“Let go of me. I am not what you think I am. Keep your hands off me,” she shouted desperately.

He said in derision, “Charms like yours were meant to be enjoyed. Right now you have charm to burn. After I am done with you, I’ll give your limbs as prey to the birds and beasts.”

She struggled in his arms and shouted, “You are the most aggravating tyrant of a man I’ve ever come across.”

Omar pulled her to him roughly. She wondered if her ribs would crack. Her stomach churned in instant rebellion. The heat of fear and fury beat in her face. Her heart pounded harder, and her breathing came in uneven jerks.

“Please stop. I don’t have the energy to fight you,” her voice trailed off. But the man before her was deaf to any pleas for decency.

“What a barbarian soul you had when you loaded me down with those chains. It has been hell remembering the torture you caused me,” he said reproachfully.

She swallowed the lump that had risen in her throat, and cried in his face, “My heart is bleeding hatred for you. You are causing me shame and ruin. No virtuous woman would give her virginity to any man other than her husband.”

“I have every right over you; you belong to me by capture. I am your master now and you are my slave. I am free to do with you whatever I wish. After I tire of you, you will join my harem. Now that I have you at my mercy, I’ll see that you pay in the worst way. You will surrender to the man you hate most.”

She shouted in his face, “I despise you! One of these days you will be roasting in hell.”

He swept her off her feet and carried her to the bed. His weight crushed her into the mattress. She was stiff and unyielding. She wanted to tear into him, to tear his eyes out, but his touches were strong and full of heat. She felt the heat of his massive chest flowing through her whole body. No, she would not give him any satisfaction or dominance. She

was not going to let him humiliate her by taking possession of her very precious body, the body of a virgin queen who was going to surrender to this savage beast. It would be dirty and demeaning to surrender to his wild passion. She hit his massive chest with trembling hands, but his body was rock hard as it pressed against her. He was as a forest ablaze, erupting in anger. His smoldering touches were driving her quietly mad. In his arms she moaned aloud, trying to stop the ecstasy she felt. When he exploded rushing forward, she gripped him fiercely by his muscular shoulder. Hiding her face in his chest, she screamed at him as she sank into the raging sea of her orgasm, “I hate you, I hate you.”

She lay defeated beside him, and during the night he took her several more times. When he was satiated, he strode to the door without a single backward glance.

Fortunately, he was out of sight when the tears starting rolling down her cheeks. An aching misery spread through her. He knew how to turn her pain into a sense of sensual delight. Oh God, what a devastating effect he had on her! It was a feeling she had never before known in her life, enjoyable and yet tormenting. Strangely enough, she enjoyed his lovemaking so completely, considering all that hatred she carried for him. It was almost shocking, how he so easily and wonderfully took her higher into the realms of delight. To her surprise, she wished the moments he spent with her would never end. She couldn't believe how relaxed—yet exhilarated—she felt. She had never imagined that it would be like this. The strain of pretending indifference for any length of time in the future would be intolerable. He was dangerous; he could easily break her heart. Why was she being so weak? What had happened

to her pride, she asked herself angrily. It was amazing the power he wielded over her. She knew that he had captivated her from the very first moment she set eyes on him. Her heart began to beat violently within her breast. It came as a shock to discover that she was not immune to him, that he had the power to melt her bones, set every limb trembling.

Hardly a moment passed during the following days that Anne didn't think about Omar. When he was lying beside her in bed, and her eyes locked onto his, she felt as if he were fighting his own feelings. His handsome face, haunting in the beauty of its sadness, swam before her eyes. Was that due to the tremendous danger she had subjected him to? Yes, she had caused him a lot of humiliation by torturing his soul in prison, and by weakening his marvelous body before exposing it to such destructive danger. Never before had she exposed a man to such wickedness. Despite all of the harm she had caused him, she was determined to avoid the emotional firestorm of passion. Her body had been trained to accept pain as an inevitable part of a queen's life. He was not going to make her cry again. She would never reveal her pain to him so he wouldn't think she was suffering. She must keep her pride above all sorts of humiliation.

Omar came to Anne every night and made love to her. He was such a skillful lover that his lovemaking was never the same; always he created new wonders, new accords of desire that excited her tremendously. He worked her to a shuddering orgasm until she came, biting back her cries. Repetition could not weary nor dull the appetite he had for her, and even as that appetite was totally satiated, the endless

well of his passionate desire began to fill again. He was inexhaustible in his lust and made her nights wild and furious. His love was stimulating and energy-draining all at the same time, yet it felt thrilling no matter how beastly hot it was. He was always rock-hard as if he could never get enough of her. He had aroused in Anne surging emotions, which she could not control, heady terrifying waves of physical arousal, and she wanted to punish him for it, to make him suffer. But at the same time, she wanted to take that splendid proud head of his and hold it to her bosom like a mother holds her child; she wanted to cherish him, to be gentle and love him, as well as claw and ravage and hurt him. Each time he took her, he carried her to a climax and held her there for endless moments. When he repeatedly brought her to the summit of her orgasm, her words, "I hate you," soothed his ears and satisfied his arrogance.

During the following days Anne was frequently seen weeping while walking the spacious halls of the palace. Honyda watched her from afar. One day, Honyda approached her quietly and said, "Why all those tears, my child?" Anne answered, "Your master is humiliating me by raping my body and smashing my pride. My hatred for him is consuming my soul."

Honyda commented with a knowing smile, "My master is known for his horsemanship and his beauty. Our people call him the savior because he is a great warrior protecting their land. Women call him the enchanter because his beauty and charm have so easily captured their hearts. His bondmaids, the most beautiful and educated women of the world, are dying to win a few moments with him. Your incessant tears are not expressing hatred as you proclaim, but a desperate struggle to

keep your heart untouched by his love. His strong captivating manhood has already possessed your longing body, and your love for him has taken you to the point of enthrallment.”

Anne shouted in Honyda’s face, “Get out of my sight, you crazy old woman.”

Honyda smiled at her and walked off.

Chapter Two

Great King of the Noblest Origin and Purest Descent

Anne sat on the couch hugging her knees to her chest. She didn't like this feeling of helplessness, and she didn't intend to hold onto it for long. She kept thinking: wasn't there a peace treaty between Cordoba, the capital of King Omar's kingdom, and the Christian kingdoms in the north? Why not go to King Omar and tell him about her complaint? He could undoubtedly force that ruthless Arabian to release her, that Arabian who couldn't differentiate between honorable peoples and slaves. If King Omar knew that she was the queen of Leon, he would consider the matter seriously and would pour his utmost anger upon her kidnapper. But the terrifying Omar, whose power all of the Christian kingdoms feared, was the cause of her father's death. How could she meet her father's murderer and convince him to stand against one of his subjects? But Anne felt that the seriousness of the matter deserved such a risk.

Anne talked to Honyda about her thoughts. Honyda smiled at her and said that her master gave aggravating orders to keep her mistress from leaving the palace, but Anne pleaded with her frequently to consider her request until Honyda finally promised to look carefully into the matter.

Honyda talked to her master, who agreed to see Anne on a certain day. On the appointed date, Anne rode with attendants and pages to the palace of the king. They reached an extensive plain. A splendid palace arose in the middle of the plain. Its walls shone with such brilliance that

mortal eyes could hardly bear the sight. It seemed as if nature and art had striven with one another to see which could do more for its embellishment. The palace and its surroundings were like a terrestrial paradise.

The officers of the guard made a respectful obeisance and allowed Anne free entrance. The wealth and power of King Omar must be immense. His palace was surpassing in splendor; the bars of the gates, hinges and locks were all of pure gold; all the columns were made of rock crystal. Precious refined stones of all kinds—rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and topaz—were set in ornamental designs and the walls and ceilings were adorned with pearls. The palace was extravagance at its best and wealth at its most polished.

Anne walked down several long corridors, past numerous guards standing at attention before tall doors, until finally she was brought to the court where the king awaited her. The court was constructed of polished marble and adorned with jewels. She thought that upon its floor was running water, and if anyone walked upon it he would slip. Reaching the throne seemed to take forever. She walked a long way before she reached the king. She beheld noblemen and great lords; and all kinds of flowers; and all kinds of sweet scents. The king was sitting upon the throne, performing the affairs of the people, deciding equitably between the strong and the weak. He was dressed in a rich tunic of silk and gold; a collar of precious stones about his neck, and on his forehead was a rich turban surmounted with a crescent of precious stones.

Anne bowed respectfully, then straightened herself up to face the king. Seeing him on the throne caught her by surprise. The king whose

power was established over all the sovereigns of Spain was the one she had humiliated. She had loaded him down with chains and thrown him in prison. She had disgraced a great king of the noblest origin and of the purest descent. Anne, confused and abashed, cast her eyes upon the ground. Her mouth had gone dry; her throat closed and she raised her hand to it, feeling a bitter taste in her mouth. Her eyes quickly blurred with tears and she dared not encounter his look. Seeing her confusion, he dismissed all the attendants with a signal of his hand.

He regarded her and saw the tears flowing from her eyes. “Do you feel all right?” he asked with a worried frown. She didn’t reply, but clenched her fists until her fingernails dug painfully into her palms. He looked down at her with a tenderness she had never imagined she would see in his eyes. He went down to her and cupped her face in his hands. He wiped her tears away with his fingers and whispered while looking into her eyes, “I want you to depart with satisfaction in your heart.” She said crying, “I came asking for your assistance against a tyrant who turned out to be you.”

“Be of good heart and cheerful eye, for I am willing to accomplish your desire.”

“Release me and send me back to Leon.”

He kept silent for a moment, then went to a silver table on which a golden box was placed. He opened it and took out a necklace of jewels, in the middle of which were refulgent gems. He put it gently round her neck. When she looked at the jewels decorating the necklace, her reason was confounded, and her mind was bewildered. She said wiping away

her tears, “What you did to me is a crime against my religion. I have sinned against God.”

“Aren’t you satisfied that I preferred you to my other women and enjoyed being alone with you?”

“How dare you talk to me like that!” she shouted in his face. “You think I am one of your female slaves? I am not the next in the string of your harem. I am a queen whom peoples fear the greatness of my power. Take your necklace back; I don’t need it.”

“I like to watch your eyes flash when you get mad,” he said smiling.

“You have shattered my world into a thousand tiny pieces. It was all music for me until there was you,” she said in a shaky tone.

“You say music? Come, I will show you something that will soothe your heart.”

He walked her to one of the court’s doors, through which they passed into a spacious radiant saloon. Its floor was furnished with large pieces of marble; each separated by a bar of gold. In the middle stood a green marble fountain that pumped up twinkling water perfumed with rose, musk and saffron. On its brink sat beautiful female singers like sprinkled pearls, each of them carrying a lute or lyre. Omar and Anne sat on a huge ornamental sofa adorned with pearls, jewels and jacinths. Around them stood all the maidens to wait on them. The damsels placed cushions with coverings of red linen behind them. They were served fresh fruits on silver plates, and almond juice in golden cups adorned with precious stones that sparkled in daylight. The service of the

maidens appeared to Anne to excel any attendance she had ever met with.

Omar signaled with his hand, and the singers sang verses in merry tones. Omar joyfully asked the singers to repeat the songs again and again. The female dancers were dancing round the fountain with the lightness of leaves. A sense of peace and delight enfolded Anne as she sat watching. She was greatly excited by happiness; her anxiety and grief had ceased.

Anne looked at the women singing and dancing. Are these women his favorites? she wondered. They were very beautiful and well trained as could be expected of the elite of the harem. There wasn't a woman around who wasn't aware of him, Anne noticed wryly. Each one of them seemed to want him desperately for herself.

Omar then dismissed all of the dancers and singers except one whose name was Kamar. She was the most beautiful in appearance and the most skillful in singing. He said, "Kamar, cherish my heart with your songs. Sail in the sea of eloquence and select for me the best pearls."

Kamar sang the following verses:

"O zephyr, you bringest me a gentle gale from the place in which my beloved is dwelling!

O wind, you bearest a token of my beloved! Knowest you when he will arrive?

If it were said, O beauty, have you seen such an amorous one like my beloved? Beauty would answer, the equal of him I have not."

Joy had overwhelmed Omar to such a degree that he asked for his lute. After adjusting its strings, he sang the following verses:

*“Will you oppress a friend who has never been unmindful of you,
and give him up after desiring him?”*

*I have been guilty of no fault to deserve severe conduct,
If I have offended, I regret it and come repentant.”*

Kamar sang back:

*“My tears flowed like pearls on the day of separation,
And I made of them, as it were, a necklace,
Since you parted, you also took with you the delight of life.”*

Omar sang back:

*“My eyes could not be closed after separation,
Nor did rest delight me after your departure,
It would seem to me as though I saw you in sleep,
And wished that the visions of sleep might be real,
I love sleep without requiring it, for perhaps a sight of you might
be granted in a dream,
O eye, how has weeping become your habit?
You weep in joy as well as in sorrow.”*

Anne contemplated Omar while he sang; he looked very handsome, amorous. There were no words to fit her feelings. She was utterly surprised to see that the other side of him was so sweet and so

tender. How could a man with all this strength and vehemence become placid and mild as a dove upon listening to music and poetry? Why was she suddenly seeing him in a different light? How could she have dared to torture this mixture of pleasant tenderness and majestic arrogance! A twinge of remorse swept over her.

Having sung her verses, Kamar was dismissed by Omar, who then turned to glance at Anne. He contemplated her thoroughly and wondered at her beauty and loveliness, at the shape and justness of her form. The glance he gave her caused her heart to trip, then hammer in her throat. She felt the impact of his gaze all the way down to the root of her spine. The scent of him was acting on her senses like a potent drug. He was too dangerous to her peace of mind. He knew how to strike through to her soft heart. If she could just stay mad at him long enough to get away from his devastating influence, she might be able to recover from her thoughts and longings.

Omar held out a hand to Anne and walked her to a private exit. When she said that he had not considered her request about her departure to Leon, he replied that they had all evening to chat at dinner.

In the rich saloon at her palace, Anne sat chatting with Honyda. She wanted to hear from her everything about Omar: his childhood, youth and his life until the present. Honyda asked her, “Why all that interest about him?”

Anne unconsciously sighed and said, “He is torturing my body and soul too hard.” Honyda glanced at her with worry and said, “Fear nothing my child; King Omar would never treat you with injustice.”

“We don’t get together and suffer each other’s company.”

“I thought I saw caring in your eyes.”

“I am afraid you are wrong. I am not attracted to him, not in the least.”

“Love is too precious and too rare to ignore.”

“No man is worthy of my love,” Anne said, trying to avoid Honyda’s eyes.

“Surely you think he is of the greatest handsomeness. It would take quite a woman to tie up that elegant devil. Omar has seen many beauties at his mother’s court, but his heart has never been touched by love.”

“I don’t care about his intimate life; just tell me about him.”

“Well, when Omar was old enough to be separated from his mother, his education was taken over by different learned professors. They taught him to read the Koran according to the seven traditions. Under their tuition and guidance he studied astrology and the composition of the poets. He became so proficient in poetry and the sciences that he surpassed all of his contemporaries. His boyhood was passed in horsemanship, hunting and learning to fight. His father, the late king of Cordoba, trained him to feats of arms amidst the dangers of the forest and the chase. He is a chevalier, endowed with irresistible force and unmatched beauty. He is the flower of knighthood, and his fame has reached distant countries. He learned music and became a skillful lute player and an adorable singer of his own poetry. He is a king and the son of a king. His great grandfather established the Arab

kingdom in Spain. On all occasions Omar fulfilled the duty of a true knight and defended his country with lance and sword. However, for a magnificent king who has never been involved in love would be like a man without a heart in his breast.”

Again, Anne felt a strong sense of guilt for disgracing all these qualities and exposing them to danger.

Omar came to dinner and sat with Anne at a table of silver. The food and drink were served in admirable gold or silver vessels. After dinner they sat in the rich saloon drinking minted tea. Anne commenced the conversation, “I remind you of my request to depart to Leon; I am sure you are able to grant it.”

Omar kept silent for a while then said, “If you wish that your request should be complied with, ask for that which is possible. The best thing for you is to forget about that episode.” Anne stiffened as if she had just been slapped. She stood up on uncertain legs and said, “I am afraid I don’t understand; what is that supposed to mean?”

“Marcos, your cousin, took over Leon and succeeded you to the throne. I fear he will not be pleased to see the return of the former queen of Leon. He has even renewed good faith and friendly relations with me by sending an embassy along with valuable gifts. Jealousy is moving him, and he often exercises his power with brutal cruelty. A man like that would more probably restrain you by force or put you to death.”

Anne looked at Omar wide-eyed and openmouthed. Her eyes quickly blurred with tears, and her temper got the best of her. The news that Marcos succeeded her to the throne was a torture that dug its claws

into her. She stood stricken, every organ in her body shriveling. She shouted in Omar's face, "All this has happened because of you. Since I first saw you, misfortunes have been falling upon me. By kidnapping me you gave Marcos the chance to steal my kingdom's throne. Now your behavior with me is designed to humiliate me, to smash my pride, to turn me into an obedient servant to your desires. You are enjoying every minute of my torture; you are arrogant and overbearing. Who do you think you are! The Lord of Creation, perhaps?"

Omar was taken aback. He looked at her with a tormented look on his face and said, "Anne, please try to understand. I am grieved for that which has happened to you, but everything is in accordance with fate and destiny."

"I hate you. You reduced me to nothingness," she stormed.

He rose from his seat and held her tenderly. She tried to disengage herself but he wouldn't let her go. She cried for a long while in his arms and then shrieked, "My heart will never forgive you. I don't want to see you here. Don't you ever touch me again."

He said, patting her hair tenderly, "It's all right, Anne. Let it all out. If you could only let go of the past and look at the future. Not everything in life is a fight. I will leave you alone for the time being, but it isn't over between us." Omar with sweeping steps then left Anne to recover from her sorrows.

Anne became furiously agitated and spent long days weeping until vexation overpowered her. She stopped eating for days until she fell sick with a fever that inflamed her body. When Honyda told Omar about

Anne's illness, his soul almost quit his body; he quickly went to see her. Her tears were flowing, and her bowels burning; and yet she was silent. He gathered her gently in his arms and kissed her tears away. His sweet encouraging words eased her heart. When she tossed in bed unable to sleep from fever, he held her dearly until she rested calmly in his arms, surrounded by the fragrant odor of musk emanating from his warm body. In the morning she was deeply touched to see him feeding her with his own hand. His tenderness and prolonged patience delighted her tormented soul. After she totally recovered, he came to visit her frequently in her room. Each time she looked at his face she saw beauty and dignity that captured her heart. She became confounded and feared that she might have become totally enraptured with him.

Anne lay in her bed trying to make sense of her emotions and sort out her impressions. Marcos, her first cousin and commander of her army, didn't even care to go after Omar and rescue her. It was a good opportunity for him to take possession of her throne. She knew him well. He was envious, false and treacherous. And now he was her deadly enemy.

Anne spent restless nights trying also to comprehend her relationship with Omar. Alone in her apartment, she allowed the painful truth to surface after so many nights spent tossing in her bed, fighting losing battles for control of her demanding body. She desperately needed to be loved by him. Her need for him grew worse with every hour that passed. The worst part was lying in bed at night wishing he were with her. The heat of his frequent lovemaking so physically drained her body that it was impossible to do anything other than turn

into the warmth of his arms, kissing his hairy chest appreciatively and then falling deeply asleep as she nestled deeper into his embrace. Hell, what on earth did she see in him? A skillful lover, a beautiful man dwarfing everything with his maleness and power? Yes, he was so rare and her heart ached for him. She wasn't sure any more if she was ashamed of what had happened. What she had tasted was a form of magic. He had created a tempest within her; she had never known such wonder. He racked her body with shudders. His warmth brought a flow of ripples within her body. No matter how she reproached herself, a sweet quivering started up deep inside her. She was vulnerable to the ferocity of his love. The excitement of his body warmed and stirred her. Deep down, she had known it all along, the truth that throughout the days twisted into her and penetrated to the vulnerable core of her heart. He was the man she had always been waiting for. Yes, she was fighting against her own yearning heart; she was dying for him, she loved him so. The strength of her love frightened her. Hardly a moment passed during the next days that Anne didn't think about Omar. How easily he was drawing her into the flow of his life! She felt tears burning at the back of her eyes when she realized that whatever remained of her future, good or bad, would be forever marked by him. She knew that, no matter how much she had survived since the moment she'd stepped foot in Cordoba, she would not survive the loss of Omar now.

One evening Anne heard neighing and shouting coming from the palace's garden. She looked from her window and saw Omar and some grooms trying to tame a wild Arabian horse. The horse had been tied by the bridle to a tree and was violently trying to disengage himself. His

struggles shook the tree so that many of its beautiful leaves were torn off and strewn on the ground. To tame this wonderful beast, it was necessary to conquer him by force and skill. No one could approach the horse unless he was gifted with more than mortal strength and courage. Omar showed the most eager desire to combat the horse. When Omar approached him, he had to avoid a volley of kicks launched at him by the wild animal, kicks strong enough to shatter a wall of marble. In an instant Omar was on the horse's back and took hold of the bridle that was quickly untied by one of the grooms. The horse refused to acquiesce to Omar's power, backing when Omar wished him to go forward, and dropping his head and arching his back, throwing out with his legs to take Omar out of the saddle. After one hour of fighting with the horse, Omar brought him under control and was able to reduce him from a wild to a domestic state. He made the horse amble gently, that before had been trotting, then let him go bounding playfully. Omar leapt lightly from his back and let him run freely in the spacious plain. The horse now approached Omar with an air as gentle and loving as a faithful dog could be with his master after a long separation. Omar took his bridle in his left hand while with his right he patted the horse's neck. The beautiful animal, gifted with wonderful intelligence, seemed to submit entirely.

Anne watched all of this from her window. Omar's mighty strength with the horse fascinated her and made her melt and flutter with desire. A shocking awareness rippled along her nerves. She was suddenly much too warm. Longing rushed through her, and her body reacted with embarrassing swiftness. Her entire femininity wanted to be

crushed against every male inch of him. He glanced toward her window just then and caught her expression before she could hide it. Flames leaped into his eyes as he felt his own rising need. He ran up to her, taking the steps two at a time. Tears crowded in her eyes as she found him in the middle of her bedroom. Blinking them away, she turned away from him, crying out when his hand caught her by the shoulder and wrenched her around to face him. She couldn't look at his face, for his attractiveness was the enemy that threatened to break her down. She wanted him to hurt her; she wanted pain to remember, so that she would hate him for real. He raised her head to him, his wide black eyes glinting as they captured hers. He asked her in concern, "What are those tears for?" How could she say that he was the cause of her tears, no one else!

She trembled in his arms as she recognized the strength of her love for him. "You are rash and reckless and impossibly arrogant." she whispered.

"Lord, I've missed you." he murmured.

"Leave me alone, please. I need some uninterrupted solitude."

His arms tightened around her as he pulled her into his hard body. She felt her body grow warm, with subtle rivers of excitement flowing through her veins.

"Do you get everything you want?" she said, going up in flames.

"What I want, I take," he said, loving the taste of her.

"Go to your harem; choose one of your women."

“It’s you I want. Your beauty is more than tongue can tell,” he said, kissing her hair and eyes.

The shock of the words went all through her, struck at her deepest sensibilities and lodged there.

“You are rudely arrogant, and you may think you are one of God’s gift to women.” she said, returning his kisses.

“I want you now,” he said in ardent passion.

The straightforwardness of the statement made the flame of desire rush inside her. He loosened her hair into a silky blond cloud. His words stabbed at her heart, “I have a glimpse of paradise before me now.” Her face colored and she dropped her eyes. In the green depths of her eyes, he saw the desire he had wanted to ignite. For hours and hours their desire rushed and roared in blinding madness until the waves of sensation finally subsided.

They drifted off in each other’s arms, enveloped by the warmth of their bodies. He rolled onto his side and gathered her against him. His hands skimmed over her, as gentle as they had previously been demanding. He whispered, “Anne, your body is like the statue of a goddess.” The moment he said “Anne,” tears welled in her eyes. He asked in concern, “What’s wrong; did I hurt you?”

“No, but it’s the first time that you have uttered my name,” she said, choking back her tears.

His eyes met hers, and he didn’t like himself very much for the way his heart hammered in his chest.

She lay in his arms empty of everything but a deep love that filled every cell of her body; she felt whole. She curled her limbs against him before she gave herself up to sleep. After a few hours she awoke looking at his strong arms and wide masculine chest while he was asleep. He was such a beautiful man. She had not known that a man's body could be so beautiful. She hadn't thought he would have such thick, luxuriant hair; and those dark wide eyes that made a woman want to fall into them. With a tender smile of a woman in love, she studied his face, wondering at how beautiful he looked in sleep. She patted his hair tenderly and passed her fingers admiringly over the muscles of his shoulders. She buried her head in his chest and breathed in his virile essence. Lying in his arms made her feel more cherished and beautiful than she had ever felt before.

While she was watching his massive muscular chest heave as he breathed, thoughts struggled deep in the back of her brain. Could she ever allow herself to say the words of love? This would relieve her soul and make the heat of passion easier, but there was a part of her that still fought him. Admitting love would demolish the last bit of her pride. She feared she would become like one of his women slaves, waiting eagerly for him to fill her lonely nights. She would never in a million years give him the satisfaction of admitting her love to him. Never would he get the slightest hint that she loved him. She must also not forget that she was a queen who had reigned for years. Maybe one day she would be able to restore her kingdom from the traitor Marcos. Yes, although she loved Omar with all her heart, there was a part of her that was still flying over Leon, her beloved kingdom.

Omar had a brother, Elwaleed, who was ten years younger than Omar. Since their father died, Omar had looked after him with great care. He made Elwaleed learn grammar, philology and archery. Elwaleed also learned to play with the spear and everything else related to horsemanship. Over the years Elwaleed became a young man whose virtues were exempt from any defect. He was handsome and presented an appearance of joy and majesty. He loved justice and equity and hated tyranny and oppression. Omar loved him immensely and made him the governor of Valladolid, one of the most powerful and strategically located Arab provinces in Spain.

Elwaleed was enamored with his cousin Fajr, who was like him in beauty, loveliness, intelligence, rank and descent. Omar had rejoiced exceedingly when Elwaleed asked Fajr to marry. Omar summoned the judges, the witnesses, the chief officers of the kingdom, and the grandees and wrote Elwaleed's contract of marriage to Fajr.

Incense was burnt, and scented cosmetics were profusely made use of, and it was a day of great public rejoicing. Omar celebrated festivities, gave sumptuous banquets, conferred rich robes of honor upon all the princes and the generals of the army, bestowed alms upon the poor and the needy, and set at liberty all the prisoners. He gave a hundred thousand pieces of gold as an offering to God and as alms on his part.

Anne was invited along with the noble ladies of the family to attend the wedding. She looked exquisitely beautiful. She was wrapped

in a veil of silk embroidered with gold. Honyda helped her to see Omar from behind a huge curtain that separated the men from the women. She saw him rising from the throne, meeting his guests and saluting them with the best salutations. They hastened to rise to him and met him in the most polite manner with all honor and respect. She filled her eyes with him, as he was handsome in countenance and magnificent in apparel.

Anne did not escape from the envy of the other women, for she had now become the king's favorite. Honyda pointed to a beautiful lady sitting amongst the noblewomen and said that she was Alia, Fajr's sister, whom according to the wish of Omar's mother was supposed to be Omar's future wife. The women kept looking at Anne and exchanging winks until Alia arose and headed directly to Anne. She glanced at her in arrogance and said, "He will spend some time with you; then he will get bored and leave you with his other women." Alia didn't add anything else but just strode away. Anne endured the insult bravely, because the enormous love she carried for Omar allowed her to fly above pain and prompted her to be more patient until she could admit her love to her beloved.

Chapter Three

Tribal Partisanship

Two days later after sunset, the king sat on the border of a fountain decorating the center of the palace garden. The clouds broke away, and the moonlight burst forth as bright as day. The rays seemed to gild the water of the fountain. The king was so content and relaxed that he ordered the page to bring him his favorite drink. The page brought almond juice in a golden cup adorned with precious stones. Gonzalez' face lit up as he saw the king looking so pleased and relaxed. He sat by the king's feet and resumed his talk.

Tribal partisanship was common among the Arab troops that opened Spain during the Ommiade reign in Arabia. To understand the reason for tribal partisanship among the Arabs, a short description of the topography of Arabia and the origin of Arab races is necessary. Arabia is commonly divided into three parts. Happy Arabia, bordering the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the southern part of the Red Sea; Stony Arabia, lying on the Red Sea north of Happy Arabia; and the desert, including all of the interior and northern part of the country. The desert part is called Nedsjed; Stony Arabia is denominated Hedjaz; and Happy Arabia is divided into Yemen, Hadramut, Ommon and Lachsa.

The origin of the Arabs can be traced to two races, the first descended from Kahtan; the name of a man called the father of Happy Arabia; and the second descended from the offspring of Ismail, the son of Abraham, whom the Arabs call the father of prophets. The sons of Kahtan invaded Yemen territories many centuries before the appearance

of Islam, subdued the race dwelling in this area, and dominated them. From that time and until the present, it was the custom to call the sons of Kahtan the Yemenis.

The second race is related to Kais, one of Ismail's grandsons who dwelt in the Hedjaz area which includes Mecca, Nedsjed and Madeena. These places are where Mohammed the prophet lived and diffused his sacred message. Because Arabia was composed of these two races, hatred broke out between them along the centuries without any logical reason except for extreme tribal partisanship.

In the beginning of the 7th century the prophet Mohammed united these races, and under the influence of the faith of Islam, they learned how to live and fight together in order to diffuse their religion all over the world. Islam inspired them with such courage and fervor that within a century, their dominion, language, and faith extended from the Indus to the Atlantic, skirting the deserts of Africa, penetrating Spain and the south of France, embracing the whole of Asia Minor and the countries surrounding the Caspian Sea. In peacetime, however, discord spread among them. The Kaisis felt they were entitled to reign and rule because their ancestors were noble and more dignified, while the Yemenis were Bedouin who came from the less civilized part of Arabia. Therefore, two great factions existed that divided the Arab race in Spain. The two factions distinguished themselves by the color of their flags. The Kaisis' flag was red, while the Yemenis' was white.

The regimen in Spain under the Arab sovereignty was that of the family. In other words, the relatives of the ruler were appointed as governors of the provinces and were granted feudal estates. Omar was a

Kaisis, and as soon as he was appointed king of Spain, he deposed the rebellious governors and replaced them with men of trust and distinction from among his relatives. Since the Yemenis formed the majority of the Arab population in Spain, they reluctantly accepted the dominion of the Kaisis during Omar's wars with the Christian kings. The Yemenis also remembered the punishment Omar gave to their rebellious governors after he ascended the throne. Omar's regimen, although it seemed biased, was the safest way to ensure loyalty to him. Omar's policy was always to make the Yemenis and the Moorish-mixed Berber and Arab race obey his commands for unity against their common enemy. His method was either to cease hostilities or to subdue them by force. Because the Yemenis and the Berber were great warriors, their revolts were only suppressed by abundant bloodshed.

While Omar was sitting on his throne, the governor of his Salamanca province came in haste, kissed the ground before him, then stood saying, "King of the Arabs, your safekeeping was ruptured, your allegiance was renounced, your money was stolen and your people were killed."

"How did that happen?" asked Omar worriedly.

"Hozeifa, master of the Yemenis tribe in Salamanca, agitated his people against you and bribed many of the Berber to stand by him."

"How did he get the money?"

"He took me by surprise and threw me in jail, then plundered the house of treasure."

"What exactly is the situation now?"

“I have managed to escape, but you have to move fast, my Lord. The revolt is now convening in the city mosque and talking about opposing you. If Hozeifa gets angry, twenty thousand of his people get angry without even asking him why.”

“I know that there are more than three thousand Kaisis soldiers in Salamanca. Couldn't they have fought bravely for just a few hours until I sent you support?”

“We were outnumbered and overmatched.”

“Hozeifa knows perfectly well that I am a man of war. I will show him how severe my punishment is. Before I cut his head off, I will make him bewail his dead as women do, and he will find no respondent except the owls and rooks of the wilderness.”

“Their number exceeds twenty thousand, my Lord.”

“Their abundance is meager, and their power is weak,” Omar shouted in an angry voice.

Omar decided to punish Hozeifa for what he had done against his crown and dignity. He immediately called his cousin, Prince Hamza, to prepare the army for war. As soon as the necessary dispositions were made, Omar, at the head of his army, marched forth to Salamanca. Anne looked from her window and saw Omar with his army officers, covered with iron and with coats of mail, and carrying spears and bright swords. Regret that he would be away struck her. “Be safe, my love,” she whispered after him.

When the two armies came together, there was much slaughter of knights on both sides. The battle was long and obstinate, but Omar was

so courageous, and his knights fiercely followed him so that Hozeifa and his troops were put aback. Hozeifa, who was of high spirit, seeing his men repulsed, dashed into the midst of Omar's troops and gave such blows with his sword all around him that no one could withstand them. Thus he advanced thinking to conquer the field relying on his own courage until he was met by Omar, who pointed his spear at him. Omar struck him in the stomach and Hozeifa fell to the ground. Shortly afterwards, the Yemenis and the Berber were routed and fled in all directions.

Omar dismounted and approached Hozeifa, who was in the agony of death. Fire flashed from Omar's eyes and he addressed Hozeifa saying, "You bribed your people with alms money to revolt against me! Aren't you ashamed to see many of our bravest warriors killed without any logical reason? These useless disputes are weakening our strength against our common enemy."

"I took revenge for all the Yemenis you killed after you ascended the throne. We had a debt of blood against you and it has been fulfilled. Now I can die in peace."

"Blood for blood! Is that all you care for? Since I came to the throne, I have received nothing from you but the blackest jealousy and hate. Taste then the shameful calamity, and drink the pain of death."

Omar plunged his sword into his heart saying, "By slaying you, I restore the honor of all our brave knights you caused to kill in this disgraceful war."

Omar was overwhelmed with grief at the loss of so many of his bravest warriors from both sides. Seven thousand mangled bodies fell in this war without any rational cause. When the battle was done, Omar commanded his troops to bury the dead. His heart poured sadness while he watched the burial of thousands of corpses in one huge ditch.

After Omar's victory by which the Yemenis and Berber were for the time effectually put down, he voyaged back to Cordoba. During his voyage he had restless nights full of nightmares. He became much embittered by Hozeifa's obstinate resistance that had led to all these killings. But the king must be obeyed, and iron was only cut by iron.

The moment Omar reached Cordoba, he went to Anne's palace. In the bathroom of his private wing located in the first floor of Anne's palace, Omar soothed his tired body in a tessellated tub carved into the ground and filled with water perfumed with musk, ambergris and sandalwood. The perfumed water cascaded from a fountain situated in a remote corner of the bathroom and flowed through a marble course leading to the tub. Through an arabesque window in her bedroom, Anne could see Omar bathing. God, how she loved just looking at him, at his massively muscled chest and shoulders, at those mighty arms and strong legs. Seeing him coming out of water naked made her heart race with anticipation. An agha dried Omar off with a towel; another covered him with a light silky robe. Anne, seeing him ascending the steps leading to her wing, ran to the middle of the room not knowing what to do. There was a fire in her that only he could create and only he could satisfy. She stood on shaky legs; her cheeks began to heat as she heard a tap at the door. His voice came asking, "Anne, can I come in?" She opened the

door for him, and he saw her face as if a golden sunshine were flooding the room. All the toil and sorrow he felt because of the war instantly disappeared. She was wearing a white transparent nightgown on her naked body. Her feet were bare and her blond hair was tousled. He thought he had never seen a more beautiful sight than Anne standing at the door looking up at him. As a waft of fine perfume came with him, she could smell the heat of his body. O God, how much she loved him.

“You are so beautiful. Such a beautiful face you have, Anne.” His voice caressed her. His hands slid slowly down along the long proud column of her neck, over the fine-boned planes of her shoulders. Her whole body trembled, and he became aware of her shivering. He put his arms around her and drew her close to his chest for a long moment until she relaxed calmly in his embrace. She raised those veiling lashes and stared at him, her heart in her eyes. What was there in his eyes that worried her? Was it sadness mixed with the hunger of desire? Steeling herself from his potent allure, she asked him, “Your eyes look deeply concerned about something. Do you want to talk about it?”

He heaved a deep sigh and said, “I’ve been fighting my own people for days. It was a hard war that consumed the finest of our men. Partisanship was the only cause for the war. Sadness tortures my heart because all of this killing is weakening my kingdom and exposing it to the enemy. My nights became restless, and I had nightmares in which I saw my body set on fire. With the heat of the fire eating into my body, I ran searching for water. There was no water anywhere, and I didn’t know where to go. Then I saw you, clad in white, standing amongst the green stretching your hands out to me. I ran to you and took you in my

arms. Then the fire was extinguished and my life was restored. I woke up feeling a tremendous longing for you. Anne, let me rest in your arms tonight; let me feel alive again.”

She stared into his dark eyes. She had a feeling, which thrilled her to her toes, that he loved her and didn't even know it. He kissed her eyes and whispered, “I want you so bad, it's tearing my heart out of me.”

Her heart pounded hard and a nerve shattered somewhere along her spine. A quivery warmth spread through her limbs. She felt as if her heart beat for him, as if her every breath was for him. He murmured, “ I missed you terribly. You can't imagine what it has been like.” Here, she wanted to pour out her love for him and bask in his strength, for she was painfully tired of her struggle to hide her love for him.

She said with misty eyes, “Love me tenderly.” He could see the mixture of longing and love that was warming within her. He quietly held her as if he were holding something more precious than life. She curled her arms about his neck and slipped her fingers into his hair. His body rejoined her as naturally as water searching for the shore. Her body that glowed like warm cream melted down towards his warm flesh. She fed him the nourishment of her body, and he felt as if he were drinking pure nectar. Now he was her only man sleeping in her arms and she wished he would never leave. They lay entangled for hours feeling an endless delight of passion.

Anne lay cradled against the security of his chest, then drifted into a deep and refreshing slumber. Omar lay beside her with his eyes opened. He looked at her face; it was incredibly beautiful. Where in the

world was there another woman like her? And she was all his. It would kill him if he ever lost her.

In the beginning he thought that after he was through with her, he would make her one of his concubines and enjoy her exquisite body from time to time. But the more he knew her, the more he longed for her. How much he hated himself for such persistent longing. It was a kind of weakness that humiliated his pride.

He stroked the golden curls; his eyes caressing the sleeping face. He couldn't deceive himself for too long. There was a feeling that grew bigger the closer he got to her. He had never expected to have such feelings. He became addicted to her; she had gotten under his skin. Since he brought her to Cordoba, he had not seen any of his other women. To him Anne was not a passion that was rekindled when he desired her and then extinguished when he was satiated, but rather a continuous longing that brought dampness and fertility to the desert of his heart. She was the woman who could fill the voids in his life as no one else could.

A dozen thoughts went spinning through Omar's mind. His mother told him that someday a woman would come into his life who would fill it with her presence. He would love her, she would cherish him, and she would give him children. The woman his mother meant was his cousin Alia. His mother would never approve his marriage to Anne because she was different in religion and descent, and she came from people showing enmity to the Arabs. How could he even admit his love to Anne, while there was still a hindrance that detained such admittance? He had never faced any kind of humiliation before. He was raised in glory and honor,

but Anne disgraced him deeply. It was true that she didn't know who he was, but still, the hatred she showed him expressed how much she hated his people and their religion. Could love efface such sad remembrance? He loved her beyond passion, beyond desire, but did she feel the same? What would be his response if she rejected his love? This would certainly be another humiliation that would smash his pride further, a matter that he wouldn't ever allow to happen to him again. His wounded pride would not make him admit his love so easily to her. Omar closed his arms around Anne, then drifted into a deep sleep.

Anne awoke a few hours later feeling as if the fire he had rekindled in her would keep her warm for eternity. She moved her head back on the pillow so she could study his sleeping face. She trembled with unbelievable happiness at the sight of him sleeping in peace. He filled her eyes with beauty, her heart with joy. Her face softened and a beautiful smile played across her lips. His thick hair parted in the middle and fell in waves to his shoulder. She touched his hair tenderly, then cut a lock of hair and put it in a piece of emerald that hung about her neck. Now she had a part of him that would accompany her wherever she may go. A slight breeze coming from the open window whispered through his hair. She went to the window to close it, but the stillness of the night stopped her there. She turned her face up towards the moon and sank into deep thinking. Is Omar oblivious to her charms? She wasn't sure if he loved her. What would he think if she cast off her reserve entirely and told him how she really felt? Would he desert her one day for his other women? That's what his cousin Alia warned her about at his brother's wedding. How could she be sure that he would stay loyal to

her for the rest of their life together? She loved him and whatever happened, she would do almost anything to keep him in her life. But she also knew that her pride would not allow her to admit to any pleasure she had experienced at his hands.

As she stood there, she could smell the heat of his body mingling with the scent of perfume. Omar, who was watching her from the bed, came behind her to wrap his arms around her. She stayed still for a long moment enjoying the warmth of his body, then turned around and looked up at his eyes and whispered, “What is it you wish of me, Omar? What is the end of all this?” He kissed her lips softly, tenderly. She tore her lips from his and looked earnestly into his face waiting for an answer. He stared at her for a long moment. The shine in her eyes was as bright as the moon. He felt a strange tenderness he had never felt before. She seemed so tender and beautiful. He answered, “I want to keep you in my life. I wish not to lose you.”

Although his words were not a clear admittance of love, they set her heart racing. She smiled at him, and his heart melted. Her lips were trembling and eager against his as he lifted her and carried her to the bed.

Chapter Four

Escape

After his return from the war, while Omar was sitting on his throne, the usher informed him that his mother wanted to see him. Omar went to see his mother in the rich saloon that was attached to the court. He kissed her hands and sat before her wondering what was going through her mind. The mother looked intently into her son's eyes and said, "It's the mother's duty to see her children married. I want to enjoy seeing my grandsons before I am gone. I am concerned about your marriage, Omar. Your younger brother Elwaleed is now enjoying his marital life and his wife is already pregnant. Aren't you interested in getting married? Your cousin Alia is eagerly waiting for you to propose."

"I haven't seen you for so long, mother. Thank God, you look to be in perfect health."

"What's got into you? Whenever I talk to you about marriage, you turn the discourse upon other matters! You and Alia were lovers before you brought this foreign woman to Cordoba."

"Its Anne whom I love, mother. I can't love any other woman."

"You have to put distance between yourself and this woman or you will slip out of your own orbit and into hers. You know what hindered the progress of the Arabs in Spain after three hundred years of glory? It was not only tribal partisanship, but also the mixing of Arabian and Spanish bloods together. How can we fight the Spaniards who are waiting for the opportunity to attack us at any moment now while their

blood runs through our veins? You must marry a woman of pure Arabian blood. Alia is of the noblest and purest Arabian descent.”

“Alia is a parentage relationship which I appreciate and respect, but Anne is love and affection. The proverb says, *Be kindred by love, and put no trust in kin*. None is suitable to me except Anne.”

“Anne is not just an ordinary woman, but a queen with people behind her who are willing to take revenge for what you have done to her. This woman is leading you to a slaughter like a newborn lamb.”

“Life is not worth the effort without her. Anne excited love in my heart. Reason forsakes me when I don’t see her, and sleep and patience abandon me.”

Omar’s mother left him angrily saying, “You know best what is more suitable for you, but don’t forget that the consequence of this love is to be feared.”

The mother was not satisfied by the conversation she had with her son, so she took a step further and went to see Anne at her palace. Anne received her respectfully with her heart severely pounding in her chest. The mother glanced sharply at Anne and said in a nervous tone, “I think we had better find you another place to live. In the old days this palace served as a wedding place for the family princes. Omar and his cousin Alia may celebrate their wedding here in the near future. It has been my wish since they were children that they would become man and wife, and now the time has come to make my wish come true. Since Omar spends most of his time in this palace, I think I can arrange a meeting here so that he and Alia could spend a whole day together. They haven’t

seen each other for long because Omar is always busy in matters of great magnitude and with affairs of immense importance.”

“Do you love him?” asked the mother, examining Anne with piercing eyes. When she received no answer she continued saying, “I see love in your eyes, but I assure you it’s without future. Omar belongs to another world and to another woman; try to understand that. It’s in your hands to live in bitterness or to put it behind you. Try to recover from his love before you get hurt.”

Anne couldn’t stand it any longer. She fled to her room with tears pouring from her eyes. Although Anne’s feelings were deeply wounded, she never talked to Omar about his mother’s visit. It was enough for her to see him every night, filling her heart with joy and delighting her ears with amorous poems sung while he played on his lute.

In the succeeding days Omar was utterly surprised to see his mother and Alia visiting him frequently in Anne’s palace. He realized instantly the purpose of the visits. He was so frank with his mother that he was able to tell her that his heart was enamored of Anne, and that Alia was more suitable for any of his cousins.

Anne watched Omar entertaining his guests. When Alia strolled in the garden with Omar, it was as if a fine-bladed knife slid between her ribs and pierced her with pain. Although Omar didn’t tell her about the purpose of such visits, and she didn’t ask him either, he admired the way she received the matter. She looked calm to him, maybe because she had decided earlier that her wounded pride must never show in her manner

or eyes. Omar must not notice her jealousy, though she was jealous even of the zephyr that passed over him.

The war that had been quelled for a time now burst out anew. The tidings came to Omar that Obeid, his Yemenis governor of Tarragona along with his two sons, had rebelled against him. Omar and his brother Elwaleed convened to consult about what should be done under these circumstances. They decided to join their forces at the borders of Tarragona, and from there they launch their attack. Elwaleed hastened back to Valladolid to prepare his forces, and Omar gave orders to Prince Hamza, the head of his army, to prepare his troops for the same purpose.

The night before the day that was appointed for the departure of the troops, Omar lay entangled in Anne's arms. At midnight Anne awoke, looking at him. The steady rhythm of his breathing normally would have comforted her, but she was beyond comfort. All that day a strange feeling of foreboding that made her restless and unhappy haunted her. Quietly, she left his arms, put on her robe, then went to the window. The clouds broke away, and the moonlight burst forth as bright as day. The rays especially seemed to gild the palace garden where Anne was watching. Anne saw Omar's horse, the one he had tamed a few months ago, tied to a tree. The beast looked beautiful as his white coat glittered in the moonlight. Her heart was beating so heavily that she pressed her hands over her breasts trying to sort out her thoughts. Her breasts felt warmer than usual, with a hint of fullness to come. Her breasts never felt like this before. O God, she was pregnant! Omar's baby was forming in her womb. She heard an alarm bell ring deep in the

back of her brain. That baby would change her life completely. It would link her life with Omar's forever. Fear knifed through her, and her heart lurched into a violent rhythm. Her thoughts pushed at one another in her head. A baby was supposed to make her life more secure, though a stronger sense of danger than any she'd ever known bled over her. With all the hostility she encountered from Omar's mother and Alia, what would become of her if Omar didn't return safe from his frequent wars? And what about her kingdom, her people and her religion? Was she going to leave all this behind and live without roots in a world that considered her an enemy? Her baby must live in peace in his mother's homeland away from all of those wars and riots. Tension held her very still; then her decision was made. Yes, this was the time to make up her mind to escape. She knew that she was incapable of resisting Omar, so she must not hesitate one moment longer. One day Omar would understand; and the bitterness would be gone from his eyes; and his eyes would be alive again with that devilish sparkle. She closed her eyes as tears seeped out between her lashes, telling herself that she had no time for tears, that she needed to be tougher. Not waiting another moment, she stepped out of the room and went downstairs to the first floor, and from there she fled to the garden. She mounted Omar's horse and urged him to flee with the utmost speed. The horse set off like lightning. Her heart was thundering as loudly as the horse's hooves against the ground. Her whole body was trembling with the fear that Omar was in pursuit.

Anne journeyed on during the remainder of the night and the next day, until the heat of the sun became fierce, and the mountains became of burning heat; and thirst oppressed her most violently. The sun was

brutal; the mountains were hotter than the fringes of hell. Believing herself far from Omar and overcome by fatigue and the summer heat, she dismounted from the horse. The minute she did that, the beast fled away, searching for water to satiate his thirst. Anne was plunged into grief and terror; sore and faint, and being parched with thirst, she fell senseless to the ground.

After two hours she awoke as birds of prey, screeching horribly, flapped their wings in her face. She threw stones at them until they flew away to a nearby spot, awaiting her death. Anne, finding herself alone with all this thirst and fatigue, and abandoned in this frightful solitude, turned her eyes towards heaven and poured forth a torrent of tears. She exclaimed, "Cruel fortune, have you not exhausted your rage against me! To what new miseries do you doom me? Please terminate my life and misery." At last exhausted by her sorrows, she fell to her knees on the burning rocks.

As she rose to her feet, she heard the sound of loping hoofbeats. Anne looked out and saw Omar riding up the mountain. The blood drained from her face and withdrew from her arms and legs. A trembling swept raggedly through her body. She felt like a vulnerable small animal about to be devoured by a marauding jungle beast. Omar dismounted and threw down the reins. He stood tall and straight, striking and strong, just looking at her. She stood on shaky legs looking at him in fear. The anger in his eyes flashed brighter than she had ever seen it. He was mad as hell. She wanted to speak, but she felt as if her jaw had frozen. She wanted to run, but she could not move. He said, as his whiplash eyes cut into her, "You are going to regret this; I will beat your brains out."

When he drew a whip from his saddlebags, she pleaded breathlessly, “Omar please, I have suffered enough. I am going to faint.” His enraged voice came torturing her heart, “You have brought it on yourself. No woman walks out on me.” He began walking with determined steps toward her. When only yards lay between them, he began striking vigorously the earth at her feet, and the rocks around her, taking care not to touch her body. Anne tried hard to keep her balance before she finally collapsed onto the burning stones. The moment she fell to the ground his heart swelled, his anger melted, and there was nothing but grief on his face. He sensed her drawn exhaustion, and a wave of tenderness washed over him. He fell to his knees and gathered her to him, holding her tightly as though she was his soul. He felt her fear and her loneliness. She was his woman and he should have protected her. O God, how much he loved her. Facing life without her would be like living forever under a cloudy sky. She cheered him and warmed his body as surely as the sun.

Omar lifted Anne into his arms and carried her to his horse. He rode to a fountain whose sweet waters bubbled from the cleft of a rock. He took her robe off, undressed himself, and then carried her naked body to the water. Anne shivered in delicious pleasure as she felt its coldness against her skin. The cold water restored vigor to her body. Omar’s hand moved gently over her body looking for wounds but not finding any. He bent forward and kissed her lips tenderly. His mouth forced hers open and the soft lips parted like the fleshy red petals of an exotic blooming orchid. His voice came comforting her tortured soul, “The cold water will soothe your body; my arms will appease your

terror. Now your spirit has revived, and your soul has returned to you.” His reassuring words made her realize that her love for him was an integral part of her being, woven in her body, imbedded in her mind and spirit.

“Don’t ever run away again. The thought of you deserting me tears my heart apart. I felt as though I had died when you walked out on me. You should be more careful; I may not always be around to catch you.” His voice was filled with pain, and she felt something tear at her chest. A part of her suffered with him, and a little voice inside her told her that he wouldn’t be feeling any pain if he didn’t care deeply for her.

She said softly, “I understand the hurt you experienced when you thought I had deserted you, but I have been hurting, too.”

His head came down again and his lips covered hers for a long moment. She felt as if she were drowning in the sweetness of his embrace. His light kisses moved from her lips to her throat and then to her eyelids.

She swallowed the lump of pain that seemed to cut her breathing off when he murmured, “Now I forgive you for the injustice I suffered at your hand.” As an appreciation for his forgiveness, she silently pulled his head tenderly to her bosom and lovingly stroked his hair.

Omar whispered into her ears, “Your love has penetrated into my bones, and there it circulates as does the juice in the fruits upon the branches. You mean the world to me. When I found you, I felt as if I had been given back my life. No matter how hard I tried, I was unable to get

you out of my mind. I have never loved, nor I will ever love again, the way I love you.”

The words of love from his lips took on their full meaning, as if he uttered them with all the fervor of his ardent love for her. His words poured into her heart to be absorbed into it. She stared at him, basking in the warmth of his tender words, letting the sweet and soothing words go to the wounded places in her heart to heal her. She felt a moment of perfect happiness because she realized that she was as essential to him as his own heart. She was no longer his mistress, and sometimes an enemy, but now dwelt within him, an integral part of his life, and his man’s thoughts.

After she recovered her strength, Omar offered her dates, figs and peaches. She ate until she was satiated and contented, and her soul became at ease. Omar rode back with Anne to the palace. Her back was leaning heavily on his chest, and the warmth of his muscular body gave her a searing sense of security. When they reached the palace he dismounted and reached up to her. She slipped down into his arms. He held her dearly and carried her to her bedroom. He put her in bed and covered her with the blankets. He sat beside her, sensing her drained exhaustion. His touch was gentle when he pushed her hair back from her forehead.

“Do you love me as much as I love you, Anne?” he said, his dark questioning eyes travelling her face. The moments passed and he received no answer. He could see she was near tears although she had no more tears to cry. The air between them grew thicker with each passing moment. She stared at him. She wanted to admit her love to him and

throw herself into his arms but a sense of desolation and loss overwhelmed her.

“I am going to war, and I am not certain when I will be back. War between the Arabs is more severe than it is with your people. Don’t keep me in suspense; utter the words of love I long to hear from you.”

An aching misery spread through her. She said with a trembling voice, “I am tired to the core and utterly exhausted. Please relieve me from this tormented torture.” That she chose to ignore her feelings was her way of keeping her heart safe for a little longer and to protect herself from hurt. Disappointment darkened his eyes and he swallowed hard. He watched her with a combination of tenderness and warmth. He said softly, “I have rushed you; forgive me. I don’t want anything that’s not given with a free heart. You will utter the words of love when the time is right.”

He kissed her forehead tenderly and said, “You are excessively fatigued; go to sleep now. Everything will look better in the morning.”

After he left, she whispered in anguish, “God knows how much I love you with every fiber of my being,” but it was too late. He was gone. When she heard the thunder of his horse’s hooves as he rode out of the city, the room suddenly became very cold, as cold as a world without Omar. She lay in bed and cried silently.

Omar marched with his forces to the borders of Tarragona. Because of Anne’s escape and his involvement in her rescue, he arrived two days late. Elwaleed and his troops were already engaged in the heat

of battle. Omar, breaking through the ranks, charged the revolutionists with his men. He destroyed multitudes of them with his sword. Three hundred of his enemies were slew by his own valiant hand. Elwaleed, however, was severely wounded in his body, head and face; but as long as his breath permitted him, he maintained the fight and advanced forward with his troops. He continued to do so until he was covered with blood. Elwaleed, very weak and wounded, was led by his soldiers out of the engagement toward a hedge, so that he might cool off and take a breath. They disarmed him as gently as they could, in order to examine his wounds, dress them, and sew up the most serious. But the wounds were fatal, and Elwaleed never rose again.

Seeing Elwaleed killed drove Omar out of his senses. Omar, singling out one of Obeid's sons, split him from the crown of the head to his breast. Zeid encountered the other son, and cut his head off. Obeid, seeing his two sons lying dead, took an arrow, fitted it to his bow, discharged it, and pierced Omar's back. Omar knelt down and asked Hamza to remove the arrow as fast as he could. After the arrow was removed, Omar refused to submit to medical treatment and continued to fight with all his might. He was like a wounded lion vigorously devouring his prey. Omar's troops fought magnificently with their leader until Obeid and his troops were routed.

Omar sent his knights after Obeid. After two hours, they caught him near the borders trying to escape into another province. They brought him to Omar and pushed him down to his knees before him. Fire flashed from Omar's eyes; he shouted in Obeid's face, "Tracherous, disloyal traitor. Hope not for deliverance, for this is punishment for your

evil doings. This entire disturbance results from having been effected on your account. You don't even deserve to be crucified upon a piece of wood worth a couple of pieces of silver."

Obeid looked at Omar in hatred then said in arrogance, "I am not afraid of you. If you should take my life, I know not what better boon than death I can ask."

Omar said angrily, "You have prolonged a conversation that will not save your neck." With all the rage in the world, Omar with his sword cut off Obeid's head, and then rent him limb from limb, as easily as one would pull ripe apples from a tree.

Before Omar voyaged back to Cordoba, he committed the city and garrison of Tarragona to Marawan, one of his great officers, and provided him with ten thousand warriors. Similarly, he committed the city of Valladolid to Nasser, one of his valiant knights. Obeid's head was transported to Cordoba, where it was stuck upon the gate of the city and was exhibited to the gaze of the populace.

A severe sadness, and an overwhelming sense of despair, squeezed Omar's heart for the loss of his brother Elwaleed. All this grace and chivalry gone because of nothing more than black hatred and blind partisanship. Omar was highly agitated to the extent that he refused to see people. His mother called the chief physician to treat his wound, but Omar roared at him to leave the court at once. Exhausted by high fever, bathed in sweat, he had to meet for three days the princes and the grandees of the kingdom who came to the court to console him for the loss of his brother. After the end of the mourning ceremonies, Omar

took refuge in his court and refused completely to meet people. His wound grew more desperate each day, and his strength had nearly left him. Omar's mother, moved with love and pity at the sight of Omar wounded and depressed, quickly summoned the family princes and the chief physician for consultation. The chief physician made it clear that by now the wound must have become purulent. The treatment that was urgently needed to be applied now was to burn the wound with a blazing bar. In order to do that, two strong men must immobilize Omar. When the two men came to immobilize Omar, his severe blows put them to flight. Omar's mother convened again with the princes and after much discussion and thought, Prince Hamza suggested that since Anne was Omar's favorite, she would be the right person to convince him to submit to medical treatment. The mother agreed, because the idea seemed at last the only solution that might rescue Omar's life.

When Anne was told about Omar's critical condition, she poured forth filial tears. She gave a sigh of relief when Honyda told her that Omar's mother requested her to convince Omar to accept treatment. Anne went to the court to see Omar. He was not sitting on the throne but kneeling on the ground. Omar, still feeble from his wound, saw Anne coming through the door. She had to walk a long distance before reaching him. He sighed, less from the pain of his wound than from the shame of being so weak and desperate before her. As she watched him suffering, Anne felt as though she were bleeding to death. Pain twisted like a knife in her chest. Anne knelt down before him and looked into his eyes through misty tears of adoration. She cupped his cheeks with

her palms and kissed his eyes and his hot lips. A look of pain swept over his face, and he held her hard against his feverish body.

She said tenderly, “Omar, you must not despair, for God will make all things turn out for the best.” He said with a sad voice, “My trouble is too heavy for me to hope for relief. My own people have killed my beloved brother, and I spread hatred among them by killing the bravest of their sons and the heads of their families.”

She released herself gently from his arms, kissed his forehead, then said consoling him, “It is no use dragging the bitterness back. Do not surrender yourself to despair. The sun will still come up in the morning.”

“I was so sad, so beaten before you came. I was dying; then there was you.”

“I can’t leave you like that; you need my shoulder to lean on.”

“Do you really care for me, Anne?” he asked with tears shimmering in his eyes.

Green eyes flooded with tears looked into his. Now she adored him with greater intensity than she had ever dreamed possible. She said from the depth of her heart, “I thank God every night that you have come into my life. You’ve filled my thoughts and dreams since I first saw you. You crept into my blood until you became the complete joy and light of my life. I love you, Omar; I love you so much; I love you with all my heart.”

Her words touched him deeply. Hot tears escaped his eyes. His large frame shook with silent sobs. She had not ever thought that he had

a heart that would cry. Her shock held her immobile for a moment before she drew him close to squeeze the pain. She said with a trembling voice, “Only strong men feel deeply enough to cry. Omar, listen to me: the loss of blood has drained the strength from your body, and many sleepless nights have sapped your energy. You have but little hope of living, as fever is eating into your body, and your heart becomes every moment more faint. I want to cure you that you may be well again. The matter is not simple because they must burn the wound with a blazing bar in order to heal the purulent parts. Two strong men must seize you so that you can bear the burn.” The plea came from the depths of her heart, bringing tears to her eyes.

He pushed her gently away and glanced at her misty eyes for a long moment, then said with tears overflowing, “It’s simple, Anne; just hold me.”

His words melted her bones. She put her arms around him and pulled his face to her shoulder. She signaled to the pages, who hastily came in and removed his shirt. Then the blazing bar came like hell to burn the wound. Omar gave a great cry then collapsed trembling in her arms. She felt as if she were holding her own wounded heart. Hot tears cascaded down her blanched cheeks as she shook uncontrollably. She cried, “O God, enough torture. My beloved is sacrificing himself for the sake of his people, yet they don’t know how much pain he endures. His pain is killing me; his agony squeezes my heart. Please God, save him for me, and banish anxiety from his heart.”

Anne held Omar tightly in her arms. She looked like a lioness fighting to protect her cub from danger. Omar’s mother and Hamza were

watching all that happened from a near distance. Anne shouted at them, weeping violently, “Don’t come near him. He is my man and I am his woman. I will cure his wound and wipe out his sorrows until he becomes whole again.”

Omar’s mother knelt to her knees and held Anne and Omar in her arms. She kissed Anne tenderly and said, “Forgive me, my daughter, for all the hurt I have caused you. My son loves you deeply and you love him sincerely. You are the most suitable for him.”

Omar was carried into Anne’s bedroom. Moved by the seriousness of his wound, Anne quickly recalled the knowledge she had acquired in her homeland, where the virtues of plants and the art of healing formed an important part of her education as a princess. Anne ran to the adjoining meadow to gather plants of virtue to heal Omar’s wound. Anne, having prepared the plants by bruising them between two stones, laid them on Omar’s wound. She attended Omar for weeks, but his temperature was high and his body shook from fever. Despair began to seize her, and she spent long nights kneeling beside his bed praying to God to cure him. Finally one night, as she was standing by the window looking at the vast meadows shining in the moonlight, she heard his voice whispering, “Anne, don’t move, please. Your surprising loveliness surpasses the beauty of the shining moon. The soft glow from the moon makes your porcelain skin look as if you were carved from ivory. When you turned your face up towards the moon of heaven, you showed me two moons at the same instant.”

Anne ran to him in joy, held him tightly in her arms and showered his face with kisses. She cried out, “O, Omar, it has been too long. I

missed your voice and the tenderness of your words. My life and reality exist only through you and the meaning you give to them.” He cupped her cheek with his palms and kissed her eyes saying, “Your face is shining beauty. Your cheeks are red and lovely, and have become more fleshy.”

She said in her silvery, most loving voice, “Maybe because I am pregnant.”

“You are carrying my baby!” he shouted for joy and grabbed her in his arms. His lips fastened on hers before she could say any more. It was a kiss filled with all the passion he felt for her. He murmured, “I love you beyond reason, beyond time, beyond life itself. You are my reason for being.”

“I love you with all my heart. I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”

“As our religion permits, a captive woman can also be the mother of her master’s children.”

She said smiling, “Does that mean I am your slave and you are my master?”

He said embarrassed, “I am proposing to you Anne; can’t you see?”

She said laughing in happiness, “Well, the plain truth is, that I have become addicted to your special brand of domination. I don’t mind being your wife, master. And now, get some sleep or you will be a wreck in the morning.”

Over the succeeding days Anne devoted herself to Omar's relief, and by her loving care, his sad wound closed over, and he recovered his perfect health.

Anne was then married to Omar, and a magnificent festival was proclaimed, which lasted seven days. There was great rejoicing and gladness throughout the whole country. Seven months after the wedding, Anne delivered a boy. Omar was greatly delighted and named him Ahmad.

Omar lived with Anne in enjoyment and happiness; thus they remained for a long period of time. The boy was the delight of Omar's heart. He ceased not with the increase of age to increase in beauty and loveliness until he became ten years of age; and he was incomparable in his perfect beauty and his stature, and his justness of form and shape.

Chapter Five

Departure

The kidnapping of Anne gave Marcos - Anne's first cousin and the head of her army - the chance to ascend the throne. He could have rescued her if he wished to, but his greed for the throne kept him from even trying. When the news of her kidnapping spread over Leon, he showed sadness and grief and gave a sensational public speech mentioning Anne's virtues, thus winning the affection and support of the public. Marcos was a special form of human nature. His soul was woven out of delusion and deception. He was unmatched in pretending what he didn't really feel. He didn't want to take the throne by force, because then the lords and grandees of Leon who already blamed him for Anne's kidnapping would stand against him. He on the other hand succeeded in convincing the great officers of the army to side with him, because to him they were like body and soul. They dignified him, for he was an expert in human nature and not entirely without good qualities. He was inflexible when force was needed; and docile when softness was required, brave and sagacious; but envious, false and treacherous. When the members of Anne's council felt his attempt to take the throne for himself, they stood against him. But he was a man of resources, so he stood neutral against all parties as long as he could. Meanwhile, he announced that under the present circumstances Leon must have a king to rule and put things in order. Marcos also took a step further and made contacts with the adjacent Christian kingdoms and asked for their support. Feeling the danger which might threaten the Christian provinces from Omar in the south, or from his adjacent Arab provinces

and garrisons in the north, the Christian kings through their ambassadors in Leon exerted an immense pressure on the leaders of the discordant parties to accept Marcos as their king.

After ascending the throne, Marcos put in prison all the leaders who opposed him and were loyal to Anne, tortured them, then executed them under the pretense of treason. His claim was that they patronized the Arabs and adhered to the peace treaty in a way that weakened the kingdom. He formed his council from his great officers and loyal influential relatives. When he succeeded in establishing his own dictatorship, a kind of brutal delight seized him, and his savage inconstant nature appeared. Marcos didn't care much about religion; his God-fearing was hypocrisy; his faith was falsehood. Nothing prevented him from absorbing the pleasures of life, thereby losing public estimation.

Marcos was furious at the Arabs. He considered them people of harshness and of no safekeeping or conscience. He repeatedly mentioned to his council that if all the blood of the Arabs were gathered for him in a cup, he would drink it until he got drunk. He was the first to demonstrate amongst the Christian kings his wish to undo the peace settlement with Omar, and to conclude a confederation that would enable the Christian kingdoms to gather forces for attacking the Arabs' adjacent northern provinces and joining them to the Christian kingdoms. The kings didn't pay attention to him for fear of Omar's overwhelming power. Nevertheless, his ideas were now and then turning and jiggling in the kings' heads upon seeing the frequent conflicts the Arabs were raising among themselves, thus weakening their own power.

Marcos got the chance he was waiting for when Hicham Bin Saad, the Yemenis governor of Burgos province, rebelled against Omar. Hicham managed to convince the Berber governors of the adjacent Arab provinces of Andorra and Gerona to join him as well. The rebels gathered in Burgos and decided to divide their forces into three divisions: the first would attack Valladolid; the second Salamanca; the third Cordoba. Marcos seized the opportunity and made friends with Hicham. He sent to him maids and golden vessels and proposed to provide him with ten thousand soldiers if Hicham accepted surrendering to him the forts and citadels Omar seized during the wars with the Christian kings. Aware of Omar's power and badly in need of military support, Hicham agreed. This was the first precedent in the history of the Arab reign in Spain that the Berber and Yemenis soldiers fought with the Spaniards against their own Arabian king.

Omar received the news of the revolution against him with steadiness. He was sure that his power could subdue all of these riots, but what concerned him the most was the weakness the rebels were causing to the strength of the Arabs' reign in Spain. As a last resort, Omar sent for Hicham to come to Cordoba and acknowledge him as a sovereign, but Hicham refused. Again, war seemed to be the only solution.

Omar prepared his army and divided it into three divisions. The first was under his leadership; the second was committed to Hamza; and the third under the command of Nasser, the governor of Valladolid who succeeded Elwaleed to the governorship after his death in the Tarragona

battle. Omar decided not to wait; he would surprise the revolutionists near their own borders.

Hicham, the rebel, was commanding the army that was heading to Cordoba, but he was utterly surprised when he found Omar's troops surrounding his troops at dawn three hundred kilometers outside of Cordoba. When Hicham found his forces surrounded from all directions, he shouted angrily at Omar, "I swear that when I get my hands on you, I'll kill you."

Omar answered in contempt, " Traitor. You agitated my people against me and surrendered the forts to the enemy. I will send you to hell, for you deserve no mercy."

Hicham smiled and said in derision, "Marcos of Leon provided me with ten thousand soldiers in return. How do you like that?"

When Omar heard his words, he was violently enraged and gave the signal for his troops to attack. Omar rushed into the midst of his enemies. Some fell by the edge of his sword, while others saved themselves only by rapid flight. Omar's knights clapped spurs to their horses and flew to the charge. Hundreds fell wounded on both sides, and both parties were made drunk with blood. Omar's troops fought courageously with their king, and their severe blows made the enemy retreat defeated before them. At this stage, Hicham for the first time felt his courage sink, and a dark presentiment of death came over him. He flew away leaving his Berber and Yemenis troops to Omar and took refuge in one of the forts he formerly surrendered to Marcos. Omar went with his troops and besieged the fort to compel Hicham to submit, but

all without success. Omar ravaged all the country roundabout, so that supplies of food should be cut off. Hicham's resources had been brought so low that it seemed useless to contend any longer, and he and the fort's garrison surrendered to Omar. The traitor threw himself at Omar's feet and cried to him for mercy. Omar hesitated at not striking him dead, for the wretch deserved no pity.

The other commanders, Hamza and Nasser, performed prodigies of valor near Andorra and Gerona. The governors of these two provinces were killed and their troops were defeated. When Omar saw the Spanish soldiers amongst the prisoners, anxiety seized him, for he became worried about the movements of the Christians in the north.

Marcos took advantage of the riot raised by Hicham and made contact with the neighboring Christian kingdoms. This time he was able to form a confederation with the kings of Austria, Castille, Navarre and Aragon. They thought that since the Arabs were busy fighting each other, the opportunity to organize themselves was now available. They formed a general council of war and convened several times consulting about when to attack. Marcos' success in restoring the Christian fortresses as well as in providing Hicham with ten thousand soldiers in his war against Omar were highly appreciated by the kings. After several meetings, Marcos was able to convince the kings to assign him as the commander general of all the Christian forces for such a national and most divine demand: the restoration of the occupied land. Marcos raised more difficulties by attacking the Arabs inhabiting the fortresses that Hicham had previously surrendered to him. He killed the men,

captured the women and took them as slaves. He also fortified the fortresses with men and arms. Although all this seemed to the kings a divine task, to Omar it was a mere violation of the peace settlement.

Abdullah, the Kaisis governor of Zaragoza who refused to join Hicham in his war against Omar, tried to restore the fortresses surrendered to Marcos by Hicham. He fought Marcos courageously with valor and discretion, thus weakening Marcos' forces and preventing him from initiating a big war against Omar. The winter stopped the war between Marcos and Abdullah, who seized the opportunity and hastened to Cordoba to see Omar. Abdullah entered Omar's court and saluted him with the best salutation. When Omar saw him, he rose to him, treated him with the greatest honor, and ordered him to sit. Omar asked him about the present situation in the north. Abdullah said that his forces had been exhausted and the war had eaten the best of his men. He said that the cause of such war was the treacherous Marcos of Leon, who had humiliated the Arab inhabitants living in the fortresses, broke the peace treaty, and persuaded the kings of the north to form a confederation against the Arabs. Omar commanded him to hold on until the spring, and provided him with fifteen thousand warriors.

In the palace garden, Omar and Anne sat on the border of a fountain enjoying the scene before them. The water was so clear and smooth it reflected every object around. A sense of peace enfolded Anne as she watched the fruit trees that quivered with the fresh air, and breathed in the fragrant perfume of numerous flowers growing in basins of beautiful designs. Anne glanced at Omar and sensed that beneath his

cheerful exterior was a deep concern about something that was bothering him. Anne saw with sadness the changed looks of her beloved. She was so close to him that she was able to understand that he felt that his kingdom, because of the frequent riots in the north, was slipping out of his grasp as time went on. There must be something he could do to save it. She felt his silence, felt the tension of it. His tormented mood entered her heart like the dark winds of a storm.

Anne patted his hand saying, “You don’t have to look so stricken about the riots of the north.”

He said smiling, “Don’t worry, darling. I have learned to live with such things.”

Trying to change the subject he pointed to a flower basin and said, “Those are flowers that in Arabia grow.”

She said, gazing intently in his eyes, “Oh, come now, my love, we must have some talk together.”

Omar stared at Anne and said laughing, “What’s going on in your little head? Speak to me of your thoughts.”

“Let’s pluck up this dangerous plant before it has grown to its full height. Better to grasp the bull by the horns than be gored to death.”

“What exactly do you mean?” he asked seriously.

In the midst of her thoughts, one idea was clamoring for attention and eventually broke through her consciousness. The idea fell into her mind like manna from heaven, but she was sure that Omar would reject it without giving it a fair thought. She said, feeling her heart

accelerating in her chest, “Instead of fighting all of the kings together, you fight only one king—the one who is moving them against you, and gathering them into a confederation.”

“You mean Marcos of Leon!”

“Yes. By doing so you could undo the confederation, defeat the commander general of their forces, and add to your northern provinces another one that will be loyal to you.”

“And who is going to ascend the throne after Marcos?”

“The legal heir of the throne.”

“You mean you!” he shouted unbelievably.

The determination in her eyes and the quiver of her voice told him that she meant what she said.

“Don’t be rash; think it over,” she said persistently.

“Anne, what has got into you? You’re my wife and I won’t permit this madness!”

“We must look forward and sheathe our claws for Marcos. The man is a menace. He is not a man to be denied once he has set his mind on a goal. Letting him increase in power would be very dangerous. If you win the war with Marcos, I could help you escape the kings’ power, but you must do as I say.”

“How could you do that?” his eyes didn’t lessen their intent gaze.

“As the queen of Leon, I could ease the situation in the north instead of aggravating it. I could convince the kings that Marcos was taking them to their doom. I will keep the peace treaty with you so that

the other kings will follow suit. The defeat of Marcos would force them to accept peace. This is the method we have to hit upon. You can take it from here.”

“You are not talking as my wife, my sweetheart, but as the queen of Leon.” Omar said grieved.

“Omar, please, it’s serious. You had better get started. You must surprise Marcos now, in winter. Your victory must be quick and decisive. You are good at things like that,” she said, trying to bolster his spirits.

“Anne, you are talking about your departure from me. How can I live without you?”

“Our souls shall not be parted. I will always be faithful to your memory as long as life should last. My departure would be only temporary, and when peace is settled, we can restore our normal life again.”

“How could you leave your son behind?” he asked with sadness squeezing his heart.

Anne wept violently at his words. Her heart felt the pangs of separation. She said after she pulled herself together, “I am forced to do so because we are getting into something from which there is no escape; something that is falling too fast and too hard. I have the feeling that something terrible is about to happen if we don’t move fast.”

“I forewarn you of the perils you will encounter.”

“This is the sacrifice I can offer for your happiness and peace of mind.”

The sadness in her eyes broke his heart. He finally responded, “I will think it over, but I don’t promise you anything.”

Several days passed and the more Omar thought about Anne’s opinion, the more it seemed reasonable to him. Peace in Spain under the Arab sovereign depended upon good relations with the Christian kingdoms in the north. Anne, after Marcos’ rule, could certainly play a vital role in restoring peace by convincing the kings that peace would benefit both sides instead of war, which would eat people and ruin cities. Defeating Marcos would give a severe blow to the confederation and would be a reminder to the kings of his invincible power. Only a few months ago they witnessed how he fought a sanguinary battle with Hicham the traitor and defeated him. A limited war surprising Marcos would give Omar reasonable time to catch his breath and better organize his forces. Yes, Anne was right in every word she had uttered. He would give her Leon and even the world if he could upon a silver platter. War with Marcos of Leon was thus settled.

Omar prepared his troops for war against Marcos of Leon. When Anne went forth and saw the preparation for travel, all her joyousness forsook her. She held her son Ahmad tightly in her arms and burst into tears. With a heavy heart she tried to make him understand that she was going on a mission with his father but that after a few weeks she would be able to see him again. As she went down the stairs of the palace for the final time, she felt as if she were walking away from her entire world, away from its shelter and protection, into a frightening unknown.

When the army moved swiftly forward, Anne fought to control her tears as the palace and her son waving farewell to her receded in the background.

Two weeks before marching to Leon, Omar sent a message to Abdullah, the governor of Zaragoza, ordering him to start a delusive attack against Marcos until Omar arrived with his great army and could engage in a decisive battle. The purpose was to exhaust Marcos' forces first, then surprise him with a thunderous attack coming from the south. With his fifteen thousand knights, Abdullah fought most gallantly. He made good use of his knights by scattering them in small groups around the outside walls of the city so that they looked small in the eyes of Marcos. When the city gate was opened and Marcos' troops came out, the scattered forces quickly reunited in military formation and attacked Marcos' troops from several directions. The attack was ferocious and quick, a matter that made Marcos unable to determine which direction he should forward his troops for attack. Abdullah also exercised the trick of retreating and flight, a matter that drew Marcos' forces far out of the city of Leon. The skirmish with Marcos' forces took three days until Marcos found himself at last surrounded by Omar's abundant troops. Here Marcos was entrapped, and his troops were shut in like a flock of sheep in the jaws of wolves, with nothing but the sky above and Omar and his troops all around them. Omar and his army were furious in the assault, and greatly distressed Marcos' soldiers, whose blood poured forth in a stream beneath their blows. Marcos, on seeing the defeat of his troops, flew rapidly on his horse at full speed heading to the province of Navarre to seek support and protection.

Omar and Anne entered Leon victoriously. When the people of Leon knew that their queen was back, they received her with respect and joyousness, for Marcos was unjust and an oppressor. Anne summoned all the grandees and princes of Leon; and many people drew unto her and said they would abide with her for better and worse.

Omar stayed with Anne for weeks until she established peace and the just administration of the laws in her kingdom. On the night of his departure to Cordoba, Omar held Anne dearly in his arms. He was her husband, her lover, and her protector. She was his heart beating in his chest and the mother of his only son. He kissed her lips, her green eyes, her forehead, then gathered her again in his arms. She tried to look at his eyes but he didn't let her, for they were filled with tears. She felt his agony, which also squeezed her heart. She whispered, "Stay with me for a few more days."

"I will set off today. You know how heavy the load on my shoulders is, but I will be back because my heart is here in Leon. Convince the kings to abide in peace and always send me your latest news. I feel a spurt of fear in my heart because I am leaving you without protection. Your people will not let you live in peace because of your relationship with me. The tidings of our marriage and the fact that you are the mother of my son had spread through Leon with the speed of a grass fire. But again, it was your desire to restore the throne, and I wished to recompense any loss that you might have suffered with me. I am leaving you among wolves waiting to snap at your body under the pretense of disloyalty to your own country. Yes my beloved, our love could bring danger upon you, but I will always be around to pick you up

from any calamity you might suffer on my account. Believe me, my love, our souls are united and nothing can split us apart.”

Anne cried violently in his arms. She said sobbing, “You have treated me with beneficence and honor. I have never witnessed in you anything but fidelity and sincerity of love. I am committed to you with a dedication that only death would destroy. It is hard for me to let you depart, but this is our fate that we have to bear.”

Omar held Anne in his arms for a long while, then strode away without looking back. As she watched him disappearing, she felt as if she had fallen into a pit from which she would never be saved.

Omar marched back to Cordoba and left Anne to manage the affairs of her kingdom. Anne knew that although Marcos was defeated, he would tirelessly seek ways to restore himself to the throne of Leon. He was not entirely powerless because he was still the commander general of the invasion forces. He was also the one who had made the idea of the confederation into reality. In his temporary exile in the kingdom of Navarre, he was surrounded by the great military officers of the kingdom who supported the idea of invasion, and also by a group of Leon grandes who fled with him to Navarre, fearing Omar’s assault. They agitated him more against Anne, demanding him to seek ways to restore his throne. Marcos made good use of the fact that Anne had restored her throne with the help of Omar, and he spread news among the kings that Anne’s reign would weaken the strength of the invasion forces. He even went further by accusing her of high treason and

infidelity because of her marriage to a Moslem king. Marcos' attempts had no doubt agitated the kings' grudges against Anne, but they preferred to wait and deliberate instead of slipping into an irrational act that might take them into a losing war. They had not forgotten that it was Omar's invincible power that made him vanquish them, forced them to peace, made them pay tribute, exterminated Arab riots, defeated Marcos, and allowed Anne to ascend the throne. The extinction of Marcos' rule stood as a stumbling block against his fervent desire to restore his throne. Furthermore, the kings considered him as one of the nobles who was not entitled to attend their meetings unless they allowed it.

As a political strategy, the kings had decided to visit Anne in her court to congratulate her for re-ascending the throne and also to discuss some strategic issues. The kings sat in Anne's court and she welcomed them and received them hospitably. The king of Navarre started the conversation saying, "As you know, we have formed a confederation in order to unite our forces against any danger that might come from the Arabs. We had also chosen Marcos as the commander general of our forces in case the decision of war against Omar was taken. Would you abide by the confederation or do you have other plans?"

"My cooperation with you will be based upon making peace with the Arabs and not war." Anne said insistently.

"The Arabs are harsh and are infidels; their greed is endless. We fear that they might invade our kingdoms and march beyond the Pyrenees Mountains. They have done that before," said the king of Castille.

“I have spent more than ten years with them; I saw nothing but honor, might, and nobility. As for their religion, it’s pure monotheism, and coincides with mind and intelligence.”

“You defend them as if you were one of them! It seems that you were too deeply entangled in the life of the Arabs, trapped as if in the strands of their dark, complex personalities,” wondered the king of Castille.

“They were good to me and received me with kindness.”

“They captured you although they knew that you were the queen of Leon. By this, they violated the peace settlement they had forced us to accept after the war,” said the king of Castille.

“It was a revengeful act from their King Omar whom I captured by mistake and made him suffer without knowing who he was.”

“Marcos is spreading rumors about you and Omar; rumors that offend us to the utmost degree. The fact that he helped you in restoring the throne further supports such rumors,” added the king of Navarre.

“Honorable kings, I have nothing to hide. I am Omar’s wife before God and all people. I am also the mother of his only son. As for treacherous Marcos, he didn’t even raise a finger after my kidnapping. It was a good opportunity for him to seize the throne without effort. You should have seen him in the field running like a coward to Navarre, leaving his troops to their fates.”

“Marcos is not to blame. He succeeded you to the throne after you had been kidnapped and not before. Leon had to have a king to manage its affairs,” commented the king of Austria.

“O no. I know the hatred he carries for me. He didn’t send forces after the kidnappers. He didn’t even send a messenger to Omar demanding my safe return to Leon. Didn’t he kill all those who held him responsible for my kidnapping?”

“You may be right in all that you have said, but Marcos’ defeat doesn’t mean at all that you withdraw from the confederation. Would you abide by the confederation or will you stand against us?” asked the king of Aragon.

“What happened to your reason? The frequent riots among the Arabs should not make you aspire to war against Omar. When they feel that we are threatening their reign in Spain, they quickly reunite under one flag and strike back severely. I have seen Omar’s overwhelming power; it’s not fading away as you might think. He is a man of war. No one is able to prevail against him on account of the abundance of his troops, and the extent of his dominions, and the greatness of his wealth. His war with Marcos was nothing but a picnic.”

“Our confederation was formed to stay, and don’t forget that Marcos is still our commander general,” said the king of Navarre.

“I will not join a confederation against the Arabs, because if I do so, I will jeopardize the safety of our kingdoms. I also don’t accept Marcos as a commander general. He is greedy, treacherous and cowardly. Your confederation is an irrational act that has revoked the peace settlement with Omar. Abiding by the peace treaty is our only safeguard against any attack from the south.”

“We will consider your views. I would suggest that we hold several meetings in the future to discuss further our matters of interest,” commented the king of Castille.

“Deliberation is what we have to adopt now. There is no point in fighting the Arabs since we have joined them in a peace league,” commented Anne.

Three years had passed since Anne ascended the throne. At her court she looked like a twinkling star surrounded by the lords and grandees of Leon who came to fill their eyes with her exquisite beauty. They were flying in the charm of her inspiration and competed among themselves to win her heart. But she was far away from them, thinking of her beloved. In her room she spent the nights lost in vivid recollections of her life with Omar. Softness touched her face and her eyes misted over at his remembrance. They shared their love in words as well as in deeds. She saw in him the man and power. She adored his clemency and tenderness. How many nights she had slept in his arms enjoying the warmth of his body, and awoke to the charm of his smile. She couldn't ever believe that his daring heart could be melted by love, fall into fragments of longing and be consumed by separation. She was a queen who knew nothing but to rule. She thought she had possession of everything until he came into her life like a tempest to steal her away and fly like a violent wind. O God, how she wanted him. He gifted her with the true treasures of life. He let flow love's compassion in her heart and caused to run love's tears from her eyes. He became her comfort, her consolation, her dreams, and her life. He bred her their son Ahmad,

who made her realize the meaning of giving. Away from him all that had been beautiful had faded away. She knew that she would never stop missing him.

After Anne's departure Omar seemed as if some part of him had died. He thought of Anne and of the years he had spent with her. He longed to see her, touch her, feel her warmth. How long the nights seemed without her! He became thin and pale, showing evident marks of the pain he suffered in separation from his beloved. In order to diminish the weight with which his spirits were oppressed, and to forget the wretched condition into which he had sunk, he occupied most of his daytime in tournaments and hard encounters. He had this persistent inner feeling that he was preparing himself to see Anne. Not only himself but also all he possessed: his army, his dominions, and his wealth. Life had become unbearable without her. In the throes of these severe encounters, he lost the tender feelings he used to share with Anne. His body had turned into steel. He consumed most of his days in breaking swords and exhausting horses; tearing shields to pieces and destroying crash-helmets; he never got tired. A raging fire was moving within him. Anne was there, with people who might hurt her. They must realize that she was his heart, and if they harmed her, he would pour down his fiery anger over their heads. "To hell with the peace settlement, to hell with all the riots in the north. Anne, I am coming to win you in glory. I am only waiting for an excuse to come to you with the mightiest warriors on earth," he shouted while encountering Hamza in a tournament.

The severe exercises stiffened Omar's body and hardened his muscles. No one could relax the stiffness of his hard body and ease the

tense of his restless soul except Anne. Her warmth was the only medicine for the fiery longing of his tormented body. Omar's only pleasure was to look at his son's face. The resemblance to Anne's face was remarkable. He had green eyes and blond hair. Anne's blood was running in his veins. This had also happened to a large portion to the Spaniards when they mixed marriage with the Arabs. Omar sighed when he remembered that the Spaniards of the north were the maternal uncles of his only son. How could he fight his relatives by marriage? But Anne was there, and they should treat her well. This could be accomplished through abiding by the peace treaty or by not supporting riots in the north. If the northern front was calm, then Anne was safe. If not, for whatever the political issue might be, then Anne was in danger, and if that were to happen, he would declare war without hesitation. In this manner Omar depended his decision for war upon Anne's safety. Unfortunately, the kings didn't ever think that Omar's Arabian blood could so easily drive him to launch a ravaging war if Anne's safety was threatened one way or another.

During the three years of peace, Omar strengthened his army that was mainly stationed at the borders of Cordoba. He also provided his mid - north and northern provinces with numerous troops that would join his main forces upon marching to war. The provision of forces and troops was carried out in utmost secrecy in the cold winter nights. Strong periodical maneuvers for all forces were also undertaken all over the Arab provinces. Omar was ready to fight at any moment now. He was just awaiting the least provocation that would make him move to the north with his great army.

Chapter Six

War

Warning signs of war between Omar and the Christian kingdoms in the north started when the Yemenis governor of Andorra and the Berber governor of Gerona decided to rebel against Omar. The sanguinary battle led by Omar in Burgos, which had killed the head of their grandees and the heads of their families, was the cause for such mutiny. Their first move was to attack Zaragoza whose Kaisis Governor Abdullah had won merited honor from Omar due to his loyalty and courageous fighting against Marcos. Since Abdullah was a great fighter and Omar had formerly provided him with fifteen thousand knights, the rebels found it wiser to seek support from the king of Castille. Such a serious request caused the king of Castille to summon the general council of war. All the kings attended the council and Marcos, as the commander general of the Christian forces, was sent for. The king of Castille reviewed the situation and asked for opinions. Marcos suggested the council provide the rebels with twenty thousand soldiers. Immediately after the fall of Zaragoza into the hands of the rebels, and before the dispute was completely over, the allied Christian forces attack Zaragoza, Andorra and Gerona at the same time, thus demolishing the already exhausted Arab troops in one blow. As for the Christian forces that would join the rebellion, they would disengage from the Arab forces and join the Christian troops the moment they heard the sound of a trumpet declaring the main attack of the allied forces. Marcos further explained that the fall of the three Arab provinces would detach the

northeast part of Spain from Omar, a matter that would further enforce the solidarity of the confederation.

Marcos' plan was applied without deviation. Abdullah of Zaragoza and his brave warriors were outnumbered by the Berber and Yemenis of Andorra and Gerona, as well as by the Castillian forces that joined them. Abdullah was defeated and killed in the battle, and Zaragoza was captured by the rebels. The moment Zaragoza fell into their hands, Marcos launched his attack on the three provinces simultaneously and won quick victories. The two rebellious governors were not rewarded by the Christian kings, and by Marcos' orders were executed without mercy.

Anne sent a letter to Omar about the situation and told him how she had tried to convince the kings to abide in peace. She explained how Marcos was moving them towards war, and how his victorious battle had dramatically influenced her consultative council. Some members supported joining the confederation, while others were inclined to silence, unwilling to embarrass the queen. Omar grieved over the Arabs' condition in the north. He sent Anne a letter saying, "Do you think I could live without you? I would rather fall by the arms of my enemies than die of grief for the loss of you. Tell your people to speak not with the tongue of enmity, nor look with its eye, but rather fulfill the peace treaty before time for discovering a remedy shall have passed. Tell them to evacuate all the Arab lands because if they don't, I will bring against them forces with which they have no power to contend against. I would reduce their cities to ruins, so that the owl and the raven should cry in them."

After the fall of the Arab provinces, Marcos became more influential than the kings themselves were. He effortlessly convinced the kings to accept the transfer of his headquarters to Leon. The kings' ambassadors in Leon paved the way for this transfer. They advised Anne that this was a tactical wish of the kings, and it would be unwise to stand against it. Marcos therefore entered Leon without war. Anne was so helpless that she couldn't even convince her great officers to stand against him, for they believed that he was their savior and could restore their occupied lands. Marcos' influential position as the commander general of the allied forces gave him the chance to impose himself on Anne's consultative council. He attended all the meetings and made them as wretched for her as he possibly could. After just a few sessions he was able, under the pretense of Anne's loyalty to Omar and their marital relationship, to convince the council that war precautions necessitated that Anne delegate her authority to him, and that Leon must join the confederation without any further delay. When Anne tried to oppose him, and warned the council about the dark fate Marcos was taking Leon into, he accused her of treason to her country and religion. Marcos had in mind to nominate himself as king of Leon after winning the war against Omar. Seizing the throne now would be a foolish tactical mistake that could provoke Omar to declare war.

In this manner Anne found herself a queen without authority. Her council stood against her and took Marcos' side. According to Marcos' order she was not allowed to convene with the council, and she was compelled not to leave her residence save by his orders. Although Anne was most of the time imprisoned in her dwelling place, she managed

somehow to send a letter to Omar about her helplessness and the movements of Marcos against her. When Omar read her letter, he looked like a man who had just been kicked by his favorite horse. Anne was now in danger, and the war became a matter of fact.

The kings convened with Marcos in Leon to discuss the strategy of the coming war. This time Anne insisted on seeing them during the meeting. When Marcos tried to refuse, the king of Navarre demanded that Marcos grant her permission. Anne again told the kings about Omar's demands: to evacuate Zaragoza, Andorra and Gerona, and to respect the peace settlement. The kings refused all of Omar's demands because now they were in a far better position than they had been before. They had possession of three Arab cities now, and their dominion extended over Gerona in the east as far as La Coruna in the west. Anne was again taken back to her residence. She knew that her imprisonment was a sort of isolation from her people and a deposition of power until Marcos grasped the chance to seize the throne. In this same meeting of the kings their decision to go to war was secretly taken.

Upon the fall of the cities of Andorra, Gerona and Zaragoza into the hands of the Christian kings, all the Arabs of Spain, whatever their descent, came to Cordoba and offered Omar their loyalty and devotion. They further provided him with more men, ammunition and horses.

In this manner, he was able to form several other small armies, which could defend the front and the rear as well as the right and left flanks of his great army. The heads of the Arab tribes convened with Omar in his court and swore by God to force upon their enemy the humiliation of war.

Marcos went to see Anne at her residence. He had a proposition to offer, but also he wanted to do battle with her; he wanted to argue and fight. He said with confidence, “After the defeat of Omar I will appoint myself the king of Leon. Because of your exquisite beauty I don’t mind marrying you so you could enjoy sharing the throne with me. I think this is a very generous offer after the dishonor Omar brought upon you.” Anne’s heart pounded and her breath came too quickly, despite her determination to appear calm.

She said angrily, “You are of little sense and judgment. Omar was the first to whom my faith was ever pledged. He is my husband and the father of my only son. I am already the queen and I desire not a man to rule over me.”

Marcos shouted in her face, “You’re going to regret this, Anne. Omar is never going to have any more of you, I can promise you that, you hear?”

“Since you moved to Leon, I have kept company with you through fear of your oppression and flattered you without a hope of receiving your kindness. Yet you keep accusing me in public of infidelity and treason, and now you want to seize my throne again. Omar is a victorious lion and he will punish you for all that you have done to me.”

Marcos’ voice barked, “You damned tramp. What the hell has got into you? I have thrown my heart at your feet and you treat me like a dog. You have been whoring with that infidel for ten years. I won’t stand for it. You have helped him hammer the last nail in my coffin.

What more do you want? To witness my suffering? To share in the pleasure of my humility?”

Anne stood staring into his inflamed face, shocked, speechless. When she pulled herself together she said at last, “Well Marcos, every dog barks at his own door. I can see that terror has descended on you. I wonder if you will remain as impudent as you are now when you meet Omar. I am sure that cowardliness will overtake you as happened before. Keep a civil tongue in your head when you speak about my husband and the father of my son. You’re a nothing, and you’ll stay like that because you’re treacherous and greedy. Don’t ever speak to me again, and stay out of my life. I despise you.”

Anne turned her back with a gesture of utter disdain and stalked from the room.

Omar went to see his mother before leaving to war. She was crying in silence. Anxiety seized his heart when he saw his mother weeping.

“Mother, what makes you cry?” he said worriedly.

“I cry for fear that you might be eaten by the dust of earth.”

He held her saying, “Help me endure what faith has decreed and don’t let sorrow affect you.”

“I have seen a terrible dream. I have seen it so many times that its vision does not fade by the lapse of time.”

“Calm down, mother, and tell me about your dream.”

“I saw you and Anne leaving the earth and rising up to the sky. Abundant blood was pouring down from both of you.”

“Take it easy, mother; it’s nothing but a nightmare.”

She said holding him tight and still weeping, “Nothing remains now after a comfortable life but bitterness.”

“Don’t cry, mother; this is not how our farewell should be.”

“You say farewell! I fear that your end has come and that I may not see you again.”

“Don’t fear anything, mother; we are much stronger and more numerous.”

“This time something is going wrong and looks very black. I discern that something dreadful is about to happen, something treacherous and bloody.”

“Grieve not on account of calamities, since every affliction will have its final end. When adversities are multiplied upon man, where shall he find refuge from fate and from destiny? He whose death is decreed to take place in one land, will not die in any but that land.”

The mother held her son tightly in her arms and said with tears overflowing, “May God prolong your life, and grant your eternal permanence; and may you not cease to subdue those who oppose you, and to be the refuge of those who have recourse to you, and the advocate of those who put their confidence in you.”

Omar kissed his mother’s forehead in compassion. He gazed long at her eyes before he left her. As he strode away, her words about the

dream vibrated in his ears. He murmured silently, “Has my soul been announced dead to me?”

Omar ordered his knights to clothe themselves in the long coats of mail, and to hang on to the keen swords, and to place in rest the terrible lances, and mount the high blood horses. Nothing being now wanted, Omar, at the head of his army, marched forth from the city of Cordoba. The army was composed of four regiments each consisting of twenty five thousand soldiers. Each regiment was divided into troops and the troops into companies. Omar commanded the first regiment; Hamza the second; Marawan, Governor of Tortoza, the third; and Nasser, Governor of Valladolid, the fourth. As the army marched up north, the troops and garrisons of the Arab provinces of Badajoz, Caceres, Guadiana, Albacete, Valencia, Salamanca, Valladolid, Tarragona, Barcelona and Burgos joined the main army. The army traversed without difficulty those vast fields and numerous hills that separated the valley of Tagus from Zaragoza. By the time the army reached the vicinity of Zaragoza, it numbered two hundred and fifty thousand warriors.

Engines for casting stones, placed in convenient selected positions, battered the walls of Zaragoza with frequent volleys. The soldiers, making themselves a way beneath the ground, undermined the foundation of the walls, while soldiers bearing shields planted ladders and sought an entrance over the ramparts. The soldiers managed to make several holes in the wall from which thousands of soldiers penetrated into the city. In a short space of time Zaragoza fell into Omar’s hands. Omar then marched to Andorra, which he also subdued. On his way to Gerona, he took every fortress that came before him, though after hard

fighting and deep wounds. Gerona couldn't stand before his powerful warriors and surrendered after only a few hours fighting. Omar then went to restore all the mosques that the Christians had overthrown. He placed his governors in each city and appointed justices and sheriffs, and the three cities were subject to him in every way as Cordoba was.

After his victorious battles in Zaragoza, Andorra and Gerona, Omar marched west to fight Marcos' forces that were pouring down from the cities of Pamplona, Bilbao, San Sebastian and Leon. Marcos' army had not marched for more than a few hours before they heard a crash of drums and trumpets behind the hills. Marcos rode up the nearest height, and from the top of it beheld the first army of Omar already forming in the passes. Marcos put spurs to his horse and galloped back down the hill to his troops.

“Well?” cried the kings in concern.

“Omar is here in arms, and all the world is with him.” Marcos said, obviously disturbed.

After the gathering of Omar's forces, the first regiment commanded by him encamped on the hills that were looking at the valley located between Burgos and Leon. The allied forces of Marcos were seen down the valley. Marcos thought that all of Omar's forces were encamped on the hills before him, but he soon heard the tidings that Marawan and Nasser, the commanders of the third and fourth regiments, had already conquered Pamplona and Bilbao, and had burned San Sebastian to the ground. Fear and panic possessed the kings, for after the fall of their cities due to the small number of garrisons left in

them, their main army became surrounded by Omar's forces from the north, east and south.

As Omar was too strong for Marcos and his allies, Marcos and the kings took counsel. They resolved to use Anne as a trick in deceiving Omar. They brought her in haste from Leon, and asked her to see Omar and convince him to accept peace and cease war. Although Anne didn't trust them, she accepted their proposition because seeing Omar was her utmost desire. Since Marcos and the kings were entrapped from nearly all directions, they had in mind to gain time and support while negotiating the peace terms, then surprising Omar with a quick attack. They sent therefore an embassy to the dukes of Oviedo and La Coruna in the west beseeching their assistance.

While Omar was sitting alone in his pavilion thinking about the final battle with Marcos, he heard the guards shouting, "A messenger from Leon." Omar ordered them to let the messenger in. When Anne entered the pavilion, Omar stood gazing at her, not believing his eyes. She stood there smiling up at him. Her smile was tender, adoring; her green eyes soft and lustrous. The sheer joy of his attraction melted her inside. The two of them stared at each other for a long moment before Anne flew to his arms. "O, Omar." The tears of joy on her cheeks were promptly washed away as they clung together. "O, God. How much I love you, how much I have missed you. Don't ever leave me again; I could never survive without you," he said, raining her face with his kisses. She said weeping, "My soul has died out since you left me. Living away from you is like wandering about with perdition."

“I would have sent you my heart if it would have had great power to serve you. You are the sun of my life, the soul of my body,” he said, holding her tight.

“I know, my love, how separation has made you suffer.”

“No more agony, no more deprivation. With sword and lance I will erect a bridge above all these necks to carry you to a brighter world.”

His eyes sought hers, passionate yet questioning. “I have waited so long for you, Anne. Shall I show you how much I love you?” he whispered.

“Oh, yes, Omar.” she said, “Please do.” She lifted her mouth to his, abandoning herself to emotions too long submerged.

They kept stealing precious moments from the eyes of fate. The meadows of love flourished in their hearts and the past and present seemed to collide. She saw his spirit brim over with compassion. He saw in her eyes the brightness of his days. Now she was back in his arms again. Gone were the restraints of the past. It was in his arms where she wanted to be - where she needed to be. Nothing else mattered. Their love kept growing in their hearts and he didn't care any more about the mountains of distress.

She whispered in his ear, “No more sadness, no more agony. Cease wounds, silence grief, for my beloved is here with me.” Time ceased around them, and their love kept flourishing, thus defying the vicissitudes of time. The whole world instantly narrowed down to encapsulate just the two of them.

They made love and ate and talked. As she told him of her pain and anguish at their separation, he held her in the curve of his arms and soothed her as though she was his own heart.

The night had come, and they went out looking at the beauty of the moonlight spreading over the hills. A wailing of a rook saddened their hearts. Somehow they knew that this night was not a beginning; it was an ending. There was no way to bridge the world that separated them. They have travelled far from each other and there was no road back. Anne glanced at him and murmured, "I will remember you until the end of time." He held her in grief as if he was protecting her from a severe calamity, and he remembered his mother's dream.

Anne told Omar about all of the events that had befallen her since the day she had left him. She told him about Marcos' perfidy, his greed for her throne, and the kings' decision to make peace with him. Omar kept thinking of her words for a long time, then said, "They used you after they knew how dear you are to me. I am smarter than that; I sent my eyes and spread my soldiers; surprise and war are what they want."

"How could you know that? They might be right about peace this time."

"Marcos and the kings have no other place to retreat to after the fall of their cities into my hands. They are besieged from nearly all directions now, a matter that would undoubtedly force them to fight until the end. Sending you here, Anne, is a snare, nothing but a deceit.

My men captured Marcos' messenger to Oviedo and La Coruna asking for assistance. I am here for war, not to retreat."

"I felt perfidy in their talk, but I was hoping for peace."

"The sword will decide the winner."

"Is there any other way for settling peace? My people and yours are the ones who are going to suffer."

"Don't fear anything, my love; nothing is there to separate us any more. I have come to win you in glory. Just watch the events until God gives judgment between us."

She looked long at his eyes and realized something he didn't say, something only the two of them could understand.

In the morning he rode with her along with a constellation of his knights. Three leagues distant from his army they beheld Marcos' troops gathering in military forms. Here Anne realized that Omar was right and that war was inevitable.

She bid him farewell saying, "Until I see you again."

He said, "Yes."

Anne set off, and Omar kept looking at her until she disappeared. He turned his eyes towards Marcos' army. Ardor agitated his soul, and strength crept into his body. The gleam of revenge flashed in his eyes. He kept drawing the hilt of his sword then returning it to its sheath several times. The sound of the sword agitated his stallion and caused him to rear up on his hindquarters, desiring to attack.

Omar shouted at the enemy below, “I am Omar, the son of Abdel Rahman. I hold dominions over the whole of Spain, and over each tract of it. All the stubborn armies submitted themselves to me. In glory I reigned, abasing kings; and the people of the earth used to tremble before my majesty. And I beheld the tribes and armies in my power, and saw the countries and their inhabitants dread me. When I mounted, I beheld my army, comprising a million bridles upon neighing steeds. We had a peace treaty; you broke it, so don’t blame but yourself.”

Omar put spurs to his stallion and put him into a dead gallop heading to his camp. The stallion went up and stretched at the jump, flying free of earth, neatly gathered and fully in hand, a superb piece of horsemanship. Omar summoned the commanders and officers of his army and asked them to assist each other at the hazard of their own lives, and never to retire from battle till they had defeated the enemy. He shouted, “Let us die, if die we must, like gallant men, so that it shall be said of us, it was only our bodies that died.” And with these words, Omar cried, “Away against the enemy.”

Chapter Seven

Rise to the Whispering of the Roses

Omar's battalion advanced in good order to meet the enemy; many hard blows were given with swords, battle-axes, and other warlike weapons. The battle now raged; great was the pushing of lances. The Arabs being more numerous and anxious to defeat the enemy, kept in a contact body and forced the Spaniards to draw back. Omar's knights attacked with irresistible charge, on horses swifter than eagles, and urged on like lightning to attack the enemy. They broke through the enemy like a net. Omar and his warriors pressed with such boldness that they nearly crushed the front. Wherever Omar went the thunderbolts fell upon helmets. The sound of the rattling of blows on helmets was as if the orifice of a volcano had been thrown open. And now the fight raged beyond all that had gone before. You could see the enemy's horses with their saddles displaced. Marawan and Nasser attacked violently the right and left flanks of the enemy. The kings of Navarre and Castille were killed in the battle. At length Marcos decided to retreat, but Hamza came with his regiment from behind and harassed the rear. By this manner Omar closed up the way of escape to Marcos, compelling him to fight until the end. Marcos' army, beaten on all points, fled from the Arabs in all directions.

Marcos, seeing his army defeated, turned his back and fled with horror towards Oviedo in the far west. The kings of Austria and Aragon also fled to the Pyrenees Mountains seeking the protection of the kings of the French provinces. While Marcos was riding swiftly towards Oviedo, he beheld Anne on horseback on a hill watching in sorrow the

blood and corpses of her own people. Since the greed for power was the only element that moved Marcos in all of his affairs, he thought that now was the right time to get rid of Anne, so that when the time came, he could ascend the throne of Leon without difficulty. At the same time Omar beheld Anne on horseback watching the dead. He hurried up to her, and Anne dismounted to receive him. But Marcos was nearer to her. When Anne saw the signs of evil on his face, she realized that he wanted to cause her harm. She ran from him, trying to hide behind the thick trees. Marcos dismounted and ran after her until he overtook her. Omar cried aloud, "Hold, Marcos!" and sprang forward with drawn sword.

A stiff smile dawned across Marcos lips.

"Ah, yes. The knight in shining armor is coming to your rescue. I promised you before that he is never going to have any more of you. Take this." He said while stabbing her in the belly with his dagger.

Anne, pouring abundant blood, fell to the ground beneath a tree. Omar, upon seeing this, felt as though the earth had dropped away beneath him. He cried aloud, "Traitor, now is your death-day come."

Frightened at his own crime, and fearing the vengeance of terrible Omar, Marcos' face had gone pale, and he ran to escape, but Omar overtook him and threw him to the ground. With both hands Omar raise his sword to drop it down on Marcos' head. Marcos seized the opportunity and thrust the point of his dagger through Omar's belly, but at the same time Omar raised his sword upon Marcos with all his rage behind it and cleaved Marcos' head in two.

Omar summoned all of his strength and crawled over to Anne. He found her wound was deep; there was no hope that she would live.

She said, grieved, “O, Omar my love, you didn’t take heed while striking Marcos. I ask your pardon. I cost you your life.”

“Your love is what I care for. I came to join you preceded by my happiness.”

“You don’t know how much I love you.”

“We are one soul in two bodies.”

“The reign has gone; nothing remains but the two of us.”

“Such is the world—a landing followed by departure.”

“I feel a strong compassion towards you; I long to hold you before I go.”

He held her and kissed her tenderly, then relaxed his body next to her, leaning his head on her hair. The rippling leaves above them provided a soothing kind of day music, and they felt a wondrous sense of oneness with the universe.

Side by side Omar and Anne sat with their backs against the tree. Their souls were joined together, their hearts beating against each other. There was a radiance about them, a deep peace that engulfed them. For long moments they stayed joined so that no one or anything could drive them apart. They had reached beyond the material world, to the land of eternal love.

The sky was bright; the birds came and settled upon the tree and sang. A sand-laden wind had blown. The sand covered their wounds and

prolonged their lives a little. Nothing was now heard except moaning, inhalation and exhalation. The sun now became brutal, and they became parched with thirst.

Anne murmured, “Are you still here?”

“Yes, my love,” he whispered.

“I didn’t know before that death could be so beautiful.”

“It’s because we will go together.”

She said with a soft smile covering her face, “Omar, I see before me a region of peace and joy, in a climate of eternal spring.”

He looked before him. Although horrible was the sight of the field that looked like a great slaughterhouse trampled in blood, Omar could see green meadows penetrated by shining rivers and ornamented with colorful flowers.

He whispered, “ I see golden flowers fluttering and dancing in the breeze. They are tossing their heads in sprightly dance.”

Light clouds pushed by a tender wind cast a shadow over them, protecting them from the heat of the burning sun.

A soft cold breeze rippled through the golden and honey-rich fire of her hair, and a perfumed zephyr brought her a gentle gale from heaven.

She whispered in compassion, “There could be no happiness like this. A scented fragrance has spread over my meadow.”

He said tenderly, “Our paradise has been found at last. Rise to the whispering of the roses.”

A radiance gleamed on the horizon and stole away the glow of life from their eyes. When they ceased to breathe, their souls rose up to the heavens. The earth seemed to them but an insignificant spot in the distance. Their wandering souls had found at last the land of peace and eternal love.

Hamza and the great officers came up at last. There under the tree, they saw Anne clinging to Omar, merging with him as life and death merged. Hamza threw himself from his horse and embraced and kissed Omar's body. He said weeping, "When they died, a light in the soul of Spain went out."

Hamza ordered the lovers to be buried in a blooming garden. From the tomb of Omar there sprung a vine, which went along the walls and descended into the grave of Anne. Their spirits hover about the blooming garden and will not leave it until God summons the dead to judgment.

Chapter Eight

Words of the King

Gonzalez the bard had finished his tale. The chivalry and love events of the tale flowed into the king's heart. He smiled at Gonzalez and said cheerfully, "The tale, though not to be completely trusted for its facts, is worthy of all credit. It tends to cherish in our mind the idea of the source from which we have sprung. However, you were really shameless when you tried hard to draw my attention to your legendary tale by reciting some uncovered love scenes between Omar and Anne."

Gonzalez said, "Forgive me, my Lord; I spiced it up to draw your attention. I heard this tale from my father when I was a small boy. Things have changed now and all of Spain has once again returned to the sovereignty of the Spaniards."

The king replied, "The Arabs ruled eight hundred years during which they so blended with the natives that no distinction existed between the two races. Their blood ran in our veins to the extent that our human nature has assumed their character."

"Yes, my Lord, I can see their faces in our faces".

"Do you know, Gonzalez, what demolished their reign in Spain? It was the mixing of their blood with ours, and warring with one another after dividing Spain among themselves into small dominions. Anyway, eight hundred years are more than enough for the fall of any empire. Tell me, Gonzalez, what came after Anne and Omar?"

"The Arabs stayed for another five hundred years. Near the end of their reign in Spain, the Arab kings of the small dominions fought each

other. In order to do that, they sought the aid of the neighboring Christian kings. The last Arab kings were the sons of Elahmar, who stayed in Spain until they saw the kings of Castille seizing their forts and dominions one by one. They stayed until they had witnessed the entrance of the cross to Granada—their last capital in Spain—from one door, and the going out of the Koran from another.”

The king continued, “The pressure became severe on the Arab citizens who remained in Spain after the defeat of their last king. Despotic trials were set up to force the Moslems to convert to Christianity. Those who agreed under the threat of the sword were spared their lives; those who refused were killed. When the Christians discovered that the Islamic religion permits the reversion to another religion under vanquishing as long as the heart is still faithful to Islam, they killed even those who reverted to Christianity. Hundreds of thousands were killed without any logical reason. The Moslems had no choice at the end but to escape to North Africa from where they first came.”

“But, my Lord, the Arabs hadn’t left behind one single mark that influenced our lives or reflected on our behavior. Maybe because the Bedouin does not hope for a better future than his present, and his careless free spirit does not match our nature which inclines to aspiration, progress and development.”

“So, you think our imagination is richer than theirs, and that we owe our progress to that distinguished imagination?”

“Yes, my Lord. Whenever lack of imagination exists, progress becomes distant. In order to complete a civilized life, man has to imagine a picture of a perfect society. The Arabs are not rich in imagination even if it was said otherwise.”

“Do you have any proof for such an accusation?”

“No doubt they are more sentimental than we are, but they don’t have any imagination. For example, their literature lacks creativity and describes only what they see, feel and touch. You can see this in their poetry, which only cares about adequate expression and eloquence. When they settled in Spain and occupied themselves with scientific matters, their poor creativity compelled them to translate and explain only the books of the ancients. They might have added some precise and correct comments, but still they didn’t create anything of value. They didn’t bless the world with one fruitful idea. Perhaps they surpassed us in generosity, chivalry, family ties, and strong feelings of dignity, but still they don’t carry in their souls the seeds of progress.”

Time crept toward midnight. Gonzalez kept repeating his same ideas in different words. The king yawned and said, “It’s time to bed. I will see you tomorrow, Gonzalez, for I want to continue my talk with you.”

In the morning the king continued his discourse with Gonzalez.

“I have stayed for days listening to your imaginary tale. You have thrown a charm on its events that made it look real, but it seems that you have forgotten that I am very much acquainted with the history of the

Arabs in Spain. Now it's my turn to talk. I will take you back to the true history of our ancestors."

"I just wanted to cheer you up, my Lord. I know that amongst all the people of Spain you are the most cognizant of its past, present and what is to come in the future."

The king rose from his throne, walked to the spacious verandah and sat on a comfortable chair. Gonzalez followed him happily and sat at his feet. He was anxious to know what information the king had about the Arab's epoch in Spain. The king commenced to talk:

"It was no coincidence that within only one century after the appearance of Islam that the Arabs' reign, language and faith extended over countries to the east as far as the Indus, northward over Persia and Asia Minor, westward over Egypt and the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and thence over to Spain and the south of France. In Mecca, in the year 571, Mohammed was born, and at the age of forty, God sent him to the Arabs as the prophet of Islam, the last of religions. At that time Arabia was an undeveloped country, and most of its inhabitants wandered over the deserts, pitching their tents where either inclination or necessity compelled them. Paganism was their religion. Laudatory and dispraise poetry, eloquence, chivalry, and boasts of noble descent were their main concerns. Wars between tribes frequently occurred. One of these wars lasted for forty years. Islam changed them completely and made them believe in the oneness of God. It spread among them justice, brotherhood, equality, freedom and fear of God. It taught them how to take a share of morality and of materialism that cared for the interest of the individual, leaning neither this way nor that.

Nothing deters them from enjoying their freedom in all its different aspects except the ideals of religion. They stop their freedom at a certain limit, going beyond which would bring about their loss and destruction. Their holy book, the Koran, is not only a Holy Scripture for Muslims throughout the world, but also a supreme classic of Arabic literature. In its 114 Suras, or chapters, it comprises all the revelations believed to have been communicated to the prophet Mohammed as a final expression of God's will and purpose for man. The revelations were received over a number of years, the first dating from AD 610; the last shortly before Mohammed's death in AD 632; and the definitive canon was established some twenty years later. As the Koran stated, Islam was the last of religions, and the prophet Mohammed was sent not only to the Arabs but also to the entire world. Their book further stated that the descent of the Koran was the last chance for all people to learn God's instructions about the right path to salvation and the road for a pleasant life in the hereafter. The appointment with God would not be through any more books but rather at the day of resurrection where people's deeds would be submitted to God's judgment. As mentioned in the Koran, dying while diffusing the instructions of the last of religions was considered martyrdom and heaven was the reward. This had inspired them with such fervor and courage that they raced to spread God's holy message to the world. The only reward they desired while relaying Islam to the world was martyrdom and God's consent. It was really hard to fight people who were willing to die. Perhaps this is how they managed to conquer in just a few years the Persian and Roman empires in the east, then crossed the Mediterranean and penetrated Europe through the

whole of Spain and appreciable parts of France and Italy. In their opinion they were not invaders, but rather diffusers of God's holy message for the goodness of mankind."

"The wisdom of the Koran had made the Arabs religiously bent on the search for belief, fighting their way to righteousness, groping for the truth. They became champions, hotheaded and stronghearted. They knew that they were under God; they managed to keep acting as if it were more important to be right than to be great. That is what they were like when they first came to us. It was therefore rather silly and utterly fanatic to call them infidels, since they believed in one God and in a book that carried within it all of this wisdom. They even believed in Judaism and Christianity but only in the manner stated in the Koran."

"I know how they think. God comes first, then materialistic life. They strive throughout their lives to acquire the characteristics of God, which are mentioned in their book. They hate injustice because God is the Compassionate, and the all-Merciful; they hate ignorance because God is the Omniscient; They hate infidelity because God is the believer; they hate weakness because God is the Capable; they hate stinginess because God is the generous, and so forth. They think that by acquiring God's characteristics after a persistent struggle against all sorts of temptations, they deserve His blessings."

At the time of the Omniades' reign in Arabia, their famous military leader Tarek Bin Zeyad along with twelve thousand soldiers crossed the Mediterranean Sea into Spain. Rodrigue, the King of the Aquitanians in Spain, encountered him with one hundred thousand soldiers. The war between the two armies lasted eight days after which

Rodrigue was defeated. Tarek then marched up north and opened Cordoba and Valladolid, where he made a peace treaty with its inhabitants, disclosing respect for Christianity and protection of their seven churches. Thereafter, Tarek marched northeast and opened Tarragona and Barcelona, and kept chasing out the Aquitanians until he repelled them beyond the Pyrenees Mountains. After a few years the Arabs crossed the Pyrenees Mountains to France until they reached the cities of Bordeaux, Aquitaine, Bourgogne, Nice, Languedoc, Carcassone, Orleans, Auxerre and Sens. They stayed there for nearly 60 years. In the year 731 Charles Martel was the only duke who was able to stop them from rushing forward to the north of France; he defeated them in the battle of Tours. The Arabs, notwithstanding the severe blow, continued to hold their ground in the south of France. But Pepin, the son of Charles Martel, who succeeded his father's power and assumed the title of king, successively took from them the strong places they held; and in 759, by the capture of Narbonne, their capital, extinguished the remains of their power in France(1).

“The Arabs went further and took possession of the islands of Cyprus, Sardaigne, Sicily and Corsica. They also occupied the cities of Bari, Calabre, Brindisi and Messine in the south of Italy and controlled the provinces of Campanie and Ambruzzes where they set up their dominions.”

Gonzalez commented, “Yes, my Lord, they made the Mediterranean an Arabian Sea.”

The king continued, “Spain before the Arabs was a primitive region with a low populace. Under the Arab sovereign it attained a level

of civilization that no other province in Europe had reached before. Europe at that time was sunk in ignorance and darkness. Charlemagne, the great emperor of Europe whose empire extended over France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, and a great part of Italy, was trying to rise out of the darkness of barbarism. His wars were chiefly against the pagan and barbarous people who, under the name of Saxons, inhabited the countries of Hanover and Holland. Charlemagne encouraged learning because he himself was illiterate. He was succeeded by his son Louis, a well intentioned but feeble prince in whose reign the fabric of society woven by Charlemagne began rapidly to fray. Louis was followed successively by two Charleses, incapable princes, whose weak and often tyrannical conduct was no doubt the cause of the rapid decline of Charlemagne's empire."

"At that time the world had only two civilizations: one in Baghdad under the reign of the Abbasites who succeeded the Ommiades to the throne, and the second in Spain under the reign of the Ommiades who fled from the Abbasites after the decline of their reign in Syria. So in an age when darkness enveloped Europe, the Arab civilization arose in Baghdad and Spain. The epoch of the Arab reign in Spain lasted 800 years, while that of the Abbasites in Baghdad lasted 509 years."

The son of the last king of the Ommiades managed to escape from the Abbasites to the north of Africa, and from there he crossed to Spain where the troops of his grandfathers who had opened Spain sixty years ago, and had already established their dominions there, were waiting for him to ascend the throne. This move was not made without opposition, for he had to fight other Arab troops paying loyalty to the Abbasites in

Baghdad. He defeated them and subdued all of Spain under his sovereignty. He also defeated the Abbasite forces that crossed the Mediterranean Sea seeking to submit Spain to the Abbasites' reign in Baghdad. When this prince ascended the throne, he was only sixteen years old. His name was Abdel Rahman the Enterer, meaning he was the first Arabian king to enter Spain and ascend the throne. This king reigned in glory for forty years and established the Arab reign in Spain”(1).

“When the Omniades first settled in Cordoba, they found Andalusia a remote harbor devoid of any reign's ornament, so they imposed on its inhabitants obedience and etiquette. They also recruited troops, bestowed bounties, and granted flags until they became feared by the greatest kings of Europe. Abdel Rahman the 1st ordered the construction of his splendid palace, the big mosque and a huge wall surrounding Cordoba. During his reign the kingdom of the Arabs was established, cities and fortresses were built, and roads and rivers were cut. He had several battles with the Christian kings and won them all. After he died his son Hicham followed him to the throne. Hicham was pious and a man of learning. He launched several incursions and opened the cities of Arbona and Valencia. His troops penetrated up to small Bretagne in the northwest of France. He renovated the famous viaduct of Cordoba and completed the big mosque his father had started. Then came his son Elhakam, who was famous for his valor and intrepidity; he extended his kingdom further; and he engaged the European kings in several battles and won most of them. Elhakam was succeeded by his son, Abdel Rahman the 2nd. In his time the rule of the Omniades

flourished and his troops penetrated up to the southwest of France. His son Mohammed opened Pamplona, and its king was killed in the battle. Abdel Rahman the 2nd fought the Normans, defeated them, besieged the city of Leon, and took possession of it. Abdel Rahman was cognizant of philosophy and jurisprudence. His reign was mostly peaceful and characterized by abundant wealth. He constructed palaces, parks, mosques, bridges, and further enlarged the big mosque of Cordoba. Abdel Rahman the 2nd didn't enjoy the company of jovial companions but was fond of listening to music. When Zeriab, the famous singer, came to Cordoba from Baghdad, Abdel Rahman rode in person to meet him and honored him exceedingly, thus allowing the profession of singing to flourish in Andalusia.”

Gonzalez commented, “When singing flourishes in a nation, it is an indication of the spreading of comfort and luxury among people, my Lord.”

The king continued, “The influence of Zeriab on the Andalusian culture was so overwhelming that we should mention his effect in detail. Zeriab was born in Iraq and was a slave of the Abbasite Caliph Elmahdy, the father of the great Caliph Harun Arrasheed. Zeriab was eloquent and of good manners. He became famous for singing when he was just a little boy learning singing from his teacher Ishak Elmouseily, the reputable musician and singer in the court of Baghdad. The fame of Zeriab as a famous singer spread all over Baghdad to the extent that Harun Arrasheed asked Ishak Elmouseily to bring him to the court to hear him. Zeriab surpassed all that was expected of him and extremely delighted the caliph with his beautiful songs. Elmouseily became jealous

of Zeriab and demanded he leave Baghdad; otherwise he would cause him harm. When Zeriab realized that his life was threatened, he travelled to Andalusia in Spain seeking a better life. When he arrived in Andalusia, Abdel Rahman the 2nd received him with open arms, flooded him with presents, gifted him with a pleasant house, gave him a high monthly salary, and granted him farms and estates worth forty thousand dinars. There the immigrant felt secure and decided to spend the rest of his life in Spain”(1).

“With his musical talents, Zeriab quickly imposed himself on Cordoba’s society. His ideas about beauty, elegance and fashion became a matter of fact for all the Andalusian Moslems. His effect also extended to include the manners and routines of people’s lives. As a professional musician he showed to the land which honored his arrival a genius for renewal. He established a conservatoire, thus placing Andalusian music in its proper position by returning it to its origins. He was the first to invent an oriental lute with five strings and used it to compose beautiful Arabian songs. He trained the Arabian families in the methods of the Baghdad kitchen. He taught them how to prepare a refined and elegant table in which the dishes are not introduced at random but in a certain order. The dishes of hot soup came first, followed by those of meat and varieties of spiced domestic fowls, then desserts made of pastry stuffed with walnuts, almonds and honey, and pancakes blended with perfumed fruits stuffed with pistachios and other nuts.”

“Zeriab spread among people the use of refined glass vessels instead of those made of silver or gold. He taught them the art of adornment, methods for dyeing and combing hair, and using toothpaste.

He developed an order for wearing clothes. People would wear white light clothes in summer and colored clothes for the rest of the year. In spring people would wear unlined brightly colored silky clothes; in fall and winter they would wear fur and densely lined coats. People eagerly adopted Zeriab's views without arguing. The grandees and inhabitants of Cordoba changed accordingly their style of dress, furniture, ways of cooking, and thus reached the summit of civilization and elegance at a time when Europe was sunk in darkness and barbarism."

"As we have said before, Zeriab learned his refined taste from his teacher Ishak Elmouseily. The latter had learned it from his father, Ibrahim Elmouseily, who had established the Elmouseily School in Baghdad for teaching beautiful bondmaids and palace singers the art of etiquette. The school program was diverse: lessons included colors of clothes matched for different occasions; various kinds of jewels, gems and ornaments; perfumes; preparation of flowers in vases; preparation of food tables for each meal; the art of talking and sitting with grandees; and the art of exchanging presents and correspondence. Zeriab brought all of this elegance with him from Baghdad, a matter that was clearly reflected in the behavior and conduct of the inhabitants of the Andalusian cities."

"During the reign of Abdel Rahman the 2nd and onward, Arabian woman had a strong influence on Andalusian society. Abdel Rahman's concubines were characterized by their beauty, culture and godliness. Each of them from her own money established in Cordoba a mosque or dedicated to charitable ends a public drinking fountain. One of them was raised in the court of Baghdad where she had received high education in

music and poetry. Another was a little girl from Navarre Province, taken as a prisoner of war, then sent to Medina in the Arab isle; there she learned music and singing. She then returned to Cordoba to fascinate Caliph Abdel Rahman the 2nd with her songs.”

The first signs of the morning appeared, and Gonzalez was still stretching his ears to learn more and more, but the king needed some rest. The king said, rising to his feet, “Tomorrow we meet again, Gonzalez, for you haven’t heard yet the glory our grandfathers have left us.”

In the morning the king sat on his throne, and Gonzalez sat at his feet staring enthusiastically at him. The king continued, “In the tenth century Abdel Rahman Elnasser ascended the throne. He was not only the mightiest of the Omniades kings in Spain but also in all of Europe. He ruled for fifty years during which the Arab civilization reached its peak. He launched several successful incursions against hostile Christian kingdoms. The kings of Castille and Pamplona feared him and visited him frequently, seeking his conciliation. When the messengers of Constantine, the Emperor of Byzantine, came to pay him respect, he treated them indulgently and they were dazzled by the greatness and splendor of his court”(1).

“Abdel Rahman Elnasser summoned the cleverest engineers from Baghdad and Constantine to construct his palaces and buildings. He brought water to his palaces from remote mountains. The water flowed through unusual ducts that were considered by historians as examples of wondrous workmanship. The water ended in a great pool, then passed through the posterior part of a huge carved lion that ejected the water

from his mouth into a great pool, thus irrigating the gardens of the palaces. Elnasser constructed the city of Alzahraa as a district to Cordoba, which was the capital during his reign in Spain. In this shining city he built formidable palaces, buildings, flowering parks and a huge natural zoological garden. He also built factories for arms, jewelry and other crafts.”

“There was in the city of Alzahraa fifteen thousand wondrous doors and three hundred obelisks made of precious colored marble brought from Africa, Cartage, Constantine and Syria. Elnasser created for himself a court called “The court of affability” in which he collected indescribably wondrous objects which fascinated the human intellect. Elzahraa Palace surpassed any other palace in splendor and majesty; its doors were made of cedar wood overlaid with gold and silver. The most radiant and elegant court was that of the Caliphate. During his reign, Cordoba became the center of philosophy and literature, competing in these areas with Baghdad. Justice and peace were spread in his days; urbanization extended; civilization enlarged; agriculture and trade flourished; and all the blessings poured into Andalusia. The cities of Andalusia had reached a total of eighty big cities and three hundred small ones; the farms and villages surpassed twelve thousand; and when Elnasser died, he left in the house of alms five trillion dinars.”

“In 961 Elnasser’s son Elhakam ascended the throne. When the Spaniards occupied the harbors, he invaded their cities and seized San Sebastian, Castille, and Barcelona. The fall of Calimeria into his hands was his great victory against the Spaniards. But science was the field of his greatest conquest. He was fond of science and knowledge; he

honored philosophers and collected thousands of books that no other king before him had done. The number of indices that included titles of books reached forty-four; each index included twenty pages comprising the titles of the subjects. He sent his men to buy all the books they could get from all other nations; they brought him four hundred thousand books written in different languages, then spent years translating and binding them. In this manner Elhakam established in Cordoba a rich library that remains unique in its wealth until the present.”

“The period of the Omniades’ reign in Spain was 284 years; their number was sixteen Caliphs; their nation was the strongest in Europe; their troops outnumbered those of other armies; their sovereignty extended; their fame elevated; in their time knowledge, art and workmanship rose and ascended; security prevailed; abundance expanded and wealth multiplied. The magnificent cities and the wonderful buildings they had constructed reflected such greatness; no nation could achieve such glory unless it had reached the summit of its rising.”

“And before that came the celebrated Harun Arrasheed, the fifth Caliph of the house of Abbas, who reigned in Baghdad from AD 786-808. An interesting proof of the high civilization in Baghdad was the striking clock sent to Charlemagne as a present from Harun Arrasheed. The clock was the first that was seen in Europe and excited universal admiration. It had the form of a twelve-sided edifice with twelve doors. These doors formed niches, in each of which was a little statue representing one of the hours. At the striking of the hour the doors, one for each stroke, were seen to open, and from the doors issued many of

the little statues, which, following one another, marched gravely round the tower. The motion of the clock was caused by water, and the striking was effected by balls of brass equal to the number of the hours, which fell upon a cymbal of the same metal, the number falling being determined by the discharge of the water, which, as it sunk in the vessel, allowed their escape. When the grandees in the court of Charlemagne watched the clock, they became distracted and thought that it was a type of sorcery. Harun Arrasheed had also gifted Charlemagne with a marvelous chess set that plundered the minds of the watchers, as well as other gifts showing the advance of civilization in the east and its delay in the west. Although Charlemagne was a mighty ruler, it was known that he was illiterate, whereas Harun Arrasheed was a poet, jurist, philologist and one of the greatest rulers history has ever known.”

“Over the centuries, knowledge seekers came to Cordoba, the Capital of Caliphate in Andalusia, to learn Arabic. Do you know why, Gonzalez? Because Arabic was the language of science. Yes, during the 800 years of the Arab’s reign in Spain, and during the 509 years of the Abbasites’ reign in Baghdad, Arabic was the language of science. The indulgence of Islam and its unbiased look at the other religions allowed knowledge seekers from other religions to attend the lectures of science in mosques and schools. In these lectures the Arabs sat side by side with pontiffs, priests, Jews, Spaniards, Italians, Germans and British to learn mathematics, algebra, engineering, astronomy, physics, chemistry, medicine and philosophy from the works of the great Arab philosophers: Gaber Bin Hayan, Elkandy, Elkhawarismy, Elrazy, Avicenna, Elbayrouny, Elzahawy, Bin Zahr and many others. Can you imagine,

Gonzalez, that among the students was the priest Gerbert d'Aurillac who, during the period 999-1003, became Pope Sylvester III? Do you know, Gonzalez, that the numbers we now use in arithmetic and mathematics are Arabic?"

"Cordoba then became the source of culture, and Europe realized that its own revival was not to be achieved save with the Arabs' knowledge. In this manner Europe was suddenly called to life after it remained in darkness for long centuries."

The king smiled at Gonzalez in mockery and said, "Gonzalez, I fear that all of this knowledge might blow your head off." The king then rose and said, "I am not finished with you yet, Gonzalez. I will call you in my leisure time to continue the history of our ancestors."

After a few days the king called Gonzalez, who hurriedly came, staring at the king in admiration. He sat at his feet and the king continued his discourse. "After the 284 years of the Omniades' reign in Spain, other Arab families ruled for another 516 years, during which their power declined to the extent of seeing the Christian kings take possession of their kingdoms one after another. But even then the radiation of the Arab culture hadn't stopped but reached its summit in the 10th century and continued until the 15th century. The appearance of the great philosophers Bin Maga, Bin Tofeil and Bin Roshd 200 years after the death of the Caliph Elnasser is a good example of that. Bin Roshd was the messenger of freethinking to Europe, although the church had interdicted the teaching of his views and burned his books."

“The kings of Aragon and Castille, after evacuating the Arabs from their lands, didn’t drive back the Arab civilization of their kingdoms but adopted its appearances in the ceremonies of their courts and welcomed all the inventions derived from such civilization. Some of the kings of Spain coined money with two faces: one in Arabic and the other in Spanish. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that Europe had established twelve universities for translating the Arab sciences into Latin and other European languages.”

“The gap between the Moslems and the Christians was not as wide as some would like to imagine. The Arabs were proud that their religion had ordered them to learn and allowed them to teach non-Moslems for the welfare of the world at large. Differences in religion didn’t stand as a barrier to marriage between the Arabs and the Christians. The widow of Rodrigue, the last king of the Aquitanians in Spain, had married the son of the Arab leader Moussa Bin Nosseir. The daughter of the Duke of Aquitain had married the Moslem governor of the province of the Pyrenees Mountains. The grand wazir (minister) Elmansour Bin Aby Amer had married the daughter of the king of Navarre. As for the great Caliph Abdel Rahman Elnasser, he was the grandson of a Christian princess who came from the Basque region. Although over the centuries groups of Spaniards had joined Islam of their free will, a good portion of Christian and Jewish subjects were allowed to form in the Andalusian cities’ illustrious colonies, having their own churches, abbeys and temples. They had their own chiefs and judges who applied the old Aquitanian law under the supervision of the Omniades’ reign in Cordoba. The caliphs usually approved the results of elections for

choosing prelates, especially those of Cordoba and Valladolid. The prelates were occasionally sent on political missions to other kingdoms”(1).

“Europe had never seen in its history such wealth of literature as Andalusia had. People from every class were fond of versification. The Arabic language with its beautiful style had spread all over Spain to the extent that even the pontiffs greatly enjoyed reading the Arabic poetry, tales and doctrines of Moslem philosophers. The Spaniards’ purpose in reading Arabic was not to reject their own language but to acquire a beautiful style for writing good Arabic. This fondness of the Arabic language made the Christian youth depart from their own language, and with the passage of time some of them even surpassed the Arabs in versification. After all this you claim, Gonzalez, that the Arabs hadn’t left behind one single mark that influenced our life! How ugly our history can be when the achievements of our ancestors are depreciated because they were defeated in a war!”

The king took a letter out of his pocket and said, “This letter had been sent several decades ago from George the 2nd, King of England, France and Norway, to the Caliph Hicham the 3rd.” The king unfold the letter carefully and read, “After extolment and reverence, we have heard about the great advancement the institutes of science are enjoying in your wealthy country. We wanted for our country to acquire knowledge in order to spread the light of science in our kingdom, which is surrounded with ignorance from its four corners. We have appointed our niece, Princess Dupont, as the head of a mission composed of English nobles. Your obedient servant, George.”

The king continued saying, “King George sent with the letter a gift of two golden candlesticks; each measuring two arms long, as well as 22 pieces of table vessels made of pure silver. It was almost as if the gold was sent to Andalusia in order to shine with the light of science and would replace the ignorance Europe was sunk under with knowledge and enlightenment.”

“The Arabs had established their modern method for experimentation only one hundred and eighty five years after Mohammed’s mission. Their religion ordered them to settle issues with justice and showed them how to do so. It also demanded that they learn and use their knowledge for the welfare of the world. The Koran urged them to contemplate, think, consider, learn, explore, and deduce; full comprehension and not imitation; discover natural phenomena and not fear the unknown. Taking these principles into consideration, the jurisconsult Elshafei (767-820) established his philosophical method for syllogism with which he was able to pass sentence upon cases that had no judgments in the Koran. He set down twelve conditions to first be followed in order to apply his method for contriving judgments. These conditions were so accurate that they became the basis for the scientific method the Arabs used to acquire science in all fields. Three hundred years after Elshafei came the jurisconsult Elghazaly, who referred to Elshafei’s work and emphasized four main errors that caused man to deviate from undertaking adequate research. Francis Bacon, who was claimed to be the first to use the modern method for experimentation, came eight hundred years after Elshafei and five hundred years after Elghazaly. He and Descartes even borrowed the same expressions and

words of Elghazaly, which he mentioned in his book “*Revival of Knowledge*.” The four errors that had been mentioned by Elghazaly were seen in Bacon’s book “*Novum Organum*” as the four idols that might drive away researchers from reality. Bacon, however, didn’t even mention Elshafei or Elghazaly’s doctrines as references, but rather deviated from truth by claiming that the centuries of enlightenment were those of the Greeks, Romans and Bacon’s. He added that there was no need to mention the Arab philosophical schools that frittered knowledge rather than adding to it! With such injustice and prepossession, Bacon considered the eight hundred years of the Arab’s contributions to knowledge as a vain endeavor. He didn’t have the courage to admit that most of the views he mentioned in “*Novum Organum*” were those of the Arabs, and what he did was only present them in an age longing for change and willing to escape from the authority of the church that was exterminating every illustrious scientist. No wonder that Francis Bacon behaved in such a disgraceful manner, since he was the one who voluntarily pled in court against his friend the Count of Essex until the count was executed. No wonder that Francis Bacon did not refer to eight hundred years of the Arabs’ advance of knowledge, since he was the one who was accused of accepting twenty-two bribes and was deposed from his position as a supreme judge after admitting all the charges filed against him. The fantastic scientific achievements of the Arabs during the eight hundred years that preceded Bacon’s age had undoubtedly proven the excellence of the scientific methods they adopted before Bacon was even born”(1).

“The Arabs’ philosophic thought and scientific methods had joined together to form their science of experimentation in all fields of knowledge. The eight hundred years of the Arabs in Spain, in Baghdad, in Egypt and in several other parts of the world—that epoch which preceded the age of enlightenment—was full of great discoveries. Their philosophers devoted themselves to a study of life on earth rather than in heaven, hell and purgatory, and brought forth radical ideas about man’s freedom and ability to carve out uncharted paths in all fields. They thus covered one of the world’s most adventurous eras of human thought and endeavor.”

“To set examples of only some of their greatest philosophers, we start with Gaber Bin Hayan (778), who was described by the Europeans as the leader of experimentalists and the first chemist in history. He was the first to explain the chemical union of metals through the combination of atoms. Dalton (1844), who came one thousand years after him, was the first European who worked in the same field. Those who studied Descartes’ method of experimentation showed that it was identical to that of Gaber Bin Hayan’s. We have already mentioned that Descartes was very much influenced by Elghazaly’s philosophy.”

“Elkhawarezmy (850) was the first to establish the science of algebra and logarithm. Then came Ghiath Elkashy (1430), who discovered the decimal fractions. He published several books on mathematics, the most famous being *Key to Mathematics*.”

“Elkandy (801-878), known to the Europeans as the philosopher of the Arabs, was a poet, philosopher, engineer and physicist. He invented compasses to measure geometrical angles, weighed liquids, and

conducted gravity experiments eight hundred years before Newton. Elkandy was also a remarkable astronomer and wrote books on visibility, astronomy, and the position of the planets and their influence upon the earth. He proved that all celestial bodies were spherical. Further, he was a chemist and proved that cheap metals cannot be transformed into precious ones like silver and gold. His talent extended to musicology and he wrote several books in this field. The Italian Cardano (1576) said that Elkandy was one of twelve geniuses who have appeared in the world. The English philosopher Roger Bacon (1294) admitted that Elkandy was in the same rank as Ptolemy.”

“Abo Bakr Elrazy (864-925), who the European historians called Galinos of the Arabs, was an outstanding chemist and a remarkable physician. His book *Elmansoury* was considered in Europe to be the main reference on medicine until the end of the 17th century. His numerous books on medicine revealed his work in animal anatomy, symptoms of disease, clinical observations, and daily effects of drugs on the human body. He was the first to build a hospital in Baghdad for treating his patients and recording medical observations. He was also the first to perform experiments on monkeys and the first to use threads made of animal intestines for sewing wounds after testing their chemical reaction on the human body. Elrazy was fond of music and used to play in his leisure time. When he saw his patients suffering from pain gathered around him to listen to his music, he realized the effect of music in relieving pain, thus discovering a new science of medication.”

“Europe had acknowledged Elhassan Bin Elhaysam (964-1040) as the discoverer of light in modern science. His theories condemned those

of Ptolemy and Eklidos who stated that the eye is the organ that sends optic rays. Europe adopted Elhaysam's theory that visible objects, not the eye, were the ones that send optic rays. He wrote 47 books on mathematics and 58 on engineering. His ideas shaped the thoughts of the Renaissance philosophers who came several hundred years later (e.g., Roger Bacon, Kepler, Leonardo Da Vinci and Copernicus).”

“Avecenna (985-1048) started his scientific career by learning jurisprudence, then completed his knowledge by learning philosophy and medicine. He wrote 107 books on science, astronomy and medicine. His most memorable book in medicine, *The Law*, remained the cornerstone for teaching medicine in Europe until the year 1700. In this book Avecenna introduced 760 drugs that remarkably advanced the sciences of botany and pharmacology. He was the first to talk scientifically about the causes of heart attacks, the spread of measles, and bladder stones. He also discovered anaesthetizing, ice sacks for soothing fever, and subcutaneous injection. Avecenna laid the foundation of psychoanalysis and was able through asking questions while feeling a patient's pulse to reveal the truth the patient was hiding. Avecenna wrote numerous books on restoring health (28 volumes), sedimentology and stratigraphy. The influence of Avecenna on the European philosophers was so overwhelming that it made Renan say, ‘The great philosophers Albert Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas are indebted to Avecenna in all that they have learned.’ ”

“Abolrayhan Elbayrouny (965-1048) was a scientist in astronomy, physics and mathematics. His achievements in science reshaped the philosophical thinking of his successors. He recorded new species of

medicinal plants five times greater than those formerly registered by Deskoridis, the Greek botanist. He measured the periphery of the earth and concluded through scientific means that the bowel of the earth is the attractant force that holds people on its surface. He therefore discovered gravity 600 years before Newton. He also proved that the earth moves like a millstone turning around on its axis, thus discovering the revolving of the earth. Elbayrouny also invented very accurate scales that adequately weighed the specific gravity of metals.”

“Bin Elbeetar (1246) wrote a book on drugs and nourishment. Elteefashy (1251) was the first geologist in history who classified metals based on the element flame test. Bin Alnafees (1296) was the first to discover blood circulation in the human body, 400 years before Harvey did.”

“Then came Elwaleed Bin Roshd (1126-1198) who is known to us as Averroes. He was one of the most eminent Arab philosophers in Spain. He wrote books on jurisprudence, philosophy, medicine and astronomy. His knowledge was encyclopedic. He revised the philosophy of Aristotle and explained his corrected ideas that coincided with the laws of the Islamic statute and condemned those that contradicted it. By doing so he was able to purify Aristotle’s philosophy and interpret it to the world without the mystery it had encompassed before. That is why the Europeans call him “The Interpreter”. Bin Roshd was a profound philosopher who corrected the errors of human thinking and added indispensable wealth to the fruits of the mind. He glorified freethinking and stated that there was no separation between philosophy and statute. He removed the mystery that encompassed ancient philosophical and

holy books. He believed that all holy books were aimed at directing people towards goodness and righteousness in order to reach social perfection. He went further and purified Christianity from the misinterpretation of the priests which deviated from the true laws of the original Bible. His purification was based on the Koranic verses, which mentioned such deviations and promised severe punishment at the day of judgment to those who made or joined in such deviation. He stated that the unjust ruler governs for his own benefit and not for the good of his people. The most intolerable injustice was that of the priests when hindering the mind from freethinking. Likewise is the injustice of men to women, who form two thirds of the populace. It was man who decreed that woman should live in reliance on him without seeking decent work, and that form of slavery in which man had raised woman had destroyed her talents, hence degrading nations to the lowest point. The Europeans thinkers and philosophers agreed with his work and followed his instructions and his way of freethinking.”

“Ten years after Bin Roshd’s death, the Roman church rendered a judgment to break faith with all European philosophers that followed Bin Roshd’s views. In 1269 the bishop of Paris attacked Bin Roshd’s philosophy, and the European philosophers suffered from the restrictions imposed by the church on freethinking—the same as the Moslems had suffered from the Spaniards after the distinction of the Arabs’ reign in Spain. In 1512 the church court sentenced to death the Hollander priest Reizoik because he abided by the views of Bin Roshd. Reizoik said while he was taken to death, ‘The most cognizant philosophers are Aristotle and his interpreter Bin Roshd. They are nearer

to the truth; due to them I was rightly guided, and I saw light before which I was blind' ”(1).

“In 1492 after the fall of Granada, the last capital of the Arabs in Spain, the inquisition burned all of Bin Roshd’s books in addition to another eighty thousand Arabic philosophical books. The books of Bin Roshd, however, and those of the other Arab philosophers had been translated beforehand into Latin by European students seeking knowledge.”

“The war the church declared against Bin Roshd, as well as the rage of the fanatics, made the freethinkers abide further by his views. Bin Roshd thus became the pioneer of liberal thinking at the beginning of the Renaissance age. The war of the church against Bin Roshd and his European followers was nothing but an attempt to shut up the loud voice which arose in human consciousness announcing the fruit of the Islamic civilization, which paved the way for the age of Renaissance to appear. The famous European philosophers like Descartes, Leptnez and Maliranche who came after Bin Roshd adopted his views, which glorified the mind and sought its independence from the unjust authority of the church. Portraits of Elrazy, Avecenna and Bin Roshd decorate the walls of the Faculty of Medicine at Paris University. All three of them were physicians, and the latter two were also jurists.”

“Now I move to Bin Khaldoun (1322-1406), who was the first to establish social science. His most famous book, *Introduction of Bin Khaldoun*, contained social analysis and a logical interpretation of history in the light of religion, economy, administration, inhabitants, roots, tradition, construction, institutes, temples, mosques, churches,

war, power and ways of life. He concluded that man was civil in nature, and the utmost goal of society is to achieve happiness by its inhabitants. Natural disposition forces animals to sociability, while man is pushed by natural disposition and by his mind. Weather affects the human body, and consequently the behavior and civilization of society. The most suitable regions for civilization are those with temperate climates. A fertile environment might affect the individuals so as to kill courage and spread leisure time, while barren land would impel struggle. He thought that nations go through three phases: wilderness, invasion, then civilization. Civilized nations overflow with ease and comfort, after which they are conquered by other nations. This is how nations rise and fall. He spread abroad the idea of free economy and thought that art, language, belief and tradition are the pillars on which societies are founded.”

“Bin Khaldoun’s observations reached up to the level of laws. He said, ‘Nations could be established without religion and become strong, but they don’t last or remain strong except with religion; nations have certain ages exactly like people; the conquered is fond of imitating the victor; farming is the living of the feeblest; nations if close to ruin, grow less in workmanship; big cities and elevated statues are constructed by great kings; a law that distinguishes between right and wrong is in fact a process that reads the facts of life and what agrees with their nature.’ ”

The king ceased talking for a while then said, “Well, Gonzalez, as you see the Arabs had three schools of thought through which they were able to establish their philosophical method. The first was the school of deducing facts from premises. The second was that of the

experimentalists who concluded the laws of science after studying the characteristics of materials and then analyzing and verifying the results. The third was that of the mathematicians who in their work used observatories, scientific instruments, and mathematical and engineering indicators. They invented their own tools to study chemistry, physics and astronomy. Those were the schools with which the age of the Renaissance had crossed to the great achievements we are witnessing today”(1).

A wave of fatigue washed over the king. He stopped talking for long moments. The silence seemed to stretch into eternity. The king then rose saying, “I think we have had more than enough for one day, Gonzalez. It’s time for bed now, but tomorrow we will meet again to talk about another facet of the Arabs’ epoch in Spain.”

The next day, at their usual sitting, the king began to talk again. This time he was not talking about the Arabs’ scientific achievements, for he switched to Islam—their religion—and its impact on Christianity and Judaism.

The king proceeded, “God in Arabic means Allah, and the word Islam means submission to Allah alone, and recognition of His angels, His divine books and His messengers. Moslems believe that there has come to them from Allah light and a perspicuous book. The Koran is Allah’s eternal miracle revealed to the prophet Mohammed, not only for the Arabs, but also for all of mankind. It has been revealed for all succeeding generations as a last admonition to all creatures to re-establish the sincere worship of Allah alone, without association of any partners with Him. Moslems believe that the Koran is the actual word of

Allah revealed to Mohammed as the Seal of the prophets, and that Allah has perfected His religion for all mankind with the revelations of this Book.”

“Moslems do not claim to have a religion peculiar to them. Islam is not a sect or an ethnic religion. In its view all religions are one, for the truth is one. It was the religion preached by all the earlier prophets. It was the truth taught by all the inspired Books. In essence it amounts to a consciousness of the will and plan of Allah and a joyful submission to that will and plan. If anyone wants a religion other than that, he is false to his own nature, and he is false to Allah’s will and plan. Such a one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance. As all religion is one, it has only been renewed in Islam. It has been renewed to abolish the errors of the past, and to curb the extreme formalism of the Mosaic law and the extreme other-worldliness professed by Christianity. The witness must be unselfish, equipped with first-hand knowledge, and ready to intervene in the cause of justice. Since the Koran has been revealed in the Arabic literary tongue, and the message is universal, it was the commandment of God to Moslems to spread its tenor, or general sense and meaning, to the whole world. This is why they came to our world in the first place. They came to us as diffusers of the last of the religions. They have fulfilled their task, and have left us with the final expression of God’s will and purpose for man. Being outside our ranks, we people of the Book were doubly annoyed at the Moslems that they should receive God’s revelations, and that having received such revelations, Moslems should be able to prove before God in the hereafter that we have been foretold about Islam, the last of

religions, which God wishes all his subjects to pursue without deviation”(2).

“The contents of the Koran are not confined to a particular theme or style, but contain the foundations for an entire system of life, covering a whole spectrum of issues, ranging from specific articles of faith and commandments to general moral teachings, rights and obligations, crime and punishment, personal and public law, and a host of other private and social concerns. These issues are discussed in a variety of ways, such as direct stipulations, reminders of Allah’s favors on His creation, admonitions and rebukes. Stories of past communities are narrated, followed by lessons to be learned from their actions and subsequent fates. The critics of the Koran have been struck dumb by its ineffable eloquence, surpassing beauty and glorious sermon.”

“As stated in the Koran, Allah has taken upon Himself the duty of preserving the Koran forever in its entirety. So well has it been preserved both in memory and in writing, that the Arabic text we have today is identical to the text as it was when it was revealed to the prophet. Not even a single letter has yielded to corruption during the passage of the centuries. The Koran is, then, the only sacred book that withstood the test of time for over twelve centuries, and as it seems, shall remain distinguished and conspicuous until the day of judgment. On the other hand, we have several Bibles disputing the nature of Jesus Christ. Is he God? The son of God? Or the son of a goddess? For example, we have the Gospels of Luke, Matthew, Mark, John; apocryphal gospels, and canonical gospels. We have also the Geneva Bible, an English Bible issued by several English divines at Geneva in

1560. The Gutenberg Bible, an edition of the Vulgate printed at Mainz before 1456, is ascribed to Gutenberg and others. There is the Mazarin Bible, the first known copy of which was discovered in the library of Cardinal Mazarin (1602-61). There is also the Treacle Bible, an English Bible of the year 1568; the Vinegar Bible and English Bible were printed at Oxford in 1717. Then there is the Wicked Bible, a Bible printed in 1631, in which the word *not* is omitted from the commandments.”

“The same applies for Judaism, for there is no standard text of the Old Testament in its Hebrew form, but several versions differing from each other frequently in minor particulars and sometimes in important particulars. The original form of the Torah that was promulgated by Moses and is recognized in Islam as having been an inspired Book was lost before Islam was preached”(2).

“Mohammed as a prophet is not to be denied. There are verses in the Koran stating that Mohammed was known to all other prophets before he was born, and that he was mentioned in the Torah and the Bible as the one who will purify the religion of God from all of the superstitions imposed by those who think themselves holy men and stand between people and God. As people of the Book, the Jews and the Christians had received scriptures in the same line of prophecy that came from Mohammed. Their scriptures should have prepared them for the advent of the last of the prophets. In the Old Testament as it now exists, The Jews were promised a prophet like Moses that would come from their brethren or cousins: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto

him ye shall hearken.” (Deut. xviii.15). The rise of the Arab nation was also mentioned in Isaiah xlii11, for Kedar was a son of Ismail and the name is used for the Arab nation. In the New Testament as it now exists, Jesus promised a comforter (Gospel of St. John; xiv 16, xv 26 and xvi 7). The future Comforter cannot be the Holy Spirit as understood by Christians, because the Holy Spirit was already present, helping and guiding Jesus. The Greek word translating “Comforter” is “Paracletos” which is an easy corruption from “Periclytos”, which is almost a literal translation of “Mohammed” (Qlxi 6). Further, there were other Gospels that have perished, but of which traces still remain, which were even more specific in their reference to Mohammed (e.g., the Gospel of St. Barnabas, of which an Italian translation is extant in the State Library at Vienna)”(2).

“Now I will move to the influence of Islam on Christianity,” the king said, resting his eyes on Gonzalez. “Moslems worship only one God. There is no God but He. As indicated in the Koran, God is the Knower of the unseen and the visible; He is All-merciful, the All-compassionate. He is the King, The All-Holy, the All-Peaceable, the All-faithful, the All-preserver, the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the All-sublime. Glory be to God above that they associate. He is the Creator, the Maker, and the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most beautiful. All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies Him; He is the All mighty, the All wise.”

“Islam prohibits trinity and taking God into partnership. Polytheism is totally forbidden and is considered the greatest sin of all. There is no divination or priesthood in Islam, for all people are equal

before God. The truth does not necessarily come from priests, or from the superstitions of whole peoples. It comes from God, and where there is a direct revelation, there is no room for doubt. Consecrated priesthood in Christianity and Judaism should not stand between man and God. The same applies to the worship of saints. They may be pure and sincere, but no one can claim Lordship over people except God.”

“Mary, the mother of Jesus, was unique in that she gave birth to a son by a special miracle without the intervention of the customary physical means. This of course does not mean that she or her son was more than human. Mary and her son had as much need to pray to God as anyone else did. The Christian dogma, in all sects except the Unitarians, holds that Jesus was God and the son of God. The worship of Mary became the practice in the Roman Catholic Church, which calls Mary the mother of God. This seems to have been endorsed by the Council of Ephesus in 431, in the century before Mohammed was born. In this council Nestorius (380-451) was charged with impiety because he believed that Jesus was not God, and his mother Mary was not the mother of God. Historically, the ministry of Jesus lasted only about three years, from 30 to 33 years of his age. During this short period of his teaching, he was charged by the Jews with blasphemy as claiming to be God or the son of God. The Christians, except for a few early sects that were annihilated through persecution, and the modern sect of Unitarians, adopted the substance of the claim, and made it the cornerstone of their faith. In the Koran God has cleared Jesus of such a charge or claim.”

“The Koran describes Jesus as a prophet and utterly rejects the dogma that he was God, or the son of God, or anything more than a man. If it is said that he was born without a human father, Adam was also so born. Indeed, Adam was born without either a human father or mother. As far as our physical bodies are concerned, they are merely dust. In God’s sight, Jesus was as dust just as Adam was or humanity is. The greatness of Jesus arose from the divine command “Be”, for after that he was more than dust; he was a great prophet and teacher. Jesus was called the son of Mary in the Koran to emphasize this. The praise is due to God who called Jesus to His office and by His word gave him spiritual strength. Jesus was a prophet then, and the Holy Spirit with which he was strengthened was the angel who brought the revelations to him. It was those who misunderstood him who obscured his clear signs and surrounded him with mysteries of their own invention. It is not in reason or in the nature of things that Jesus as God’s messenger should preach against God. Jesus came to preach and convey the true message of God. Islam stated that Jesus was a servant of Allah, thus negating the false notion that he was God or the son of God. Begetting a son is a physical act depending on the needs of men’s animal nature. God Most High is independent of all needs and it is derogatory to Him to attribute such an act. It is merely a relic of pagan and anthropomorphic materialist superstitions. The Koran strictly opposes crooked superstitions, which take refuge in all sorts of metaphysical sophistries to prove three in one and one in three. In the Koran there is no crookedness. Christ’s teaching was simple like his life, but his followers have made it crooked.”

“Allah has instructed Moslems to follow the religion of Abraham, the true and straightforward devotee, for he never incorporated Allah with other deities. The Jews claimed that Abraham was a Jew, and the Christians claimed that he was a Christian. The Koran, however, indicated that Abraham could not be called a Jew or a Christian, as he lived long before the laws of Moses or the Gospel of Jesus was revealed. The number of sects among the Jews and the Christians shows that they wrangled and disputed even about some of the matters of their own religion, of which they should have had some knowledge. But when they talk about father Abraham, they are entirely out of court as he lived before their religious books had evolved”(2).

“The people of the Book fell from the true, straight and standard religion into devious ways. When the promised prophet Mohammed came, they rejected him, because they did not seek truth but only followed their own fancies and desires. The responsibility of the people of the Book is greater than that of pagans, because the people of the Book had been prepared for the standard and straight religion by the revelations that they had already received. Yet, when the clear evidence came in Islam, they resisted it. To be given the faculty of discrimination between right and wrong, and then to reject truth and right, is the worst folly that a creature endowed with a will can commit. It must necessarily bring its own punishment, whether the creature calls himself one of the children of Abraham, or one of the redeemed of Christ, or whether he goes by the mere light of nature and reason as a pagan. Honor in the sight of Allah is not due to race or color, but to sincere and righteous conduct—a conduct that is expressed in sincere devotion to Allah;

prayer and praise as drawing man nearer to Allah; and the service of Allah's creatures by deeds of practical charity."

"Apart from the diffusion of the instructions of the Koran to Europe through the Arabs of Spain, and the crusaders who became knowledgeable of Islam during their wars in Jerusalem, the Koran has been translated many times and into many languages; first into Latin, *Circa* 1143. The earliest English version appeared in 1657"(2).

"So the coming of Mohammed was foretold in many ways; and when he came, he showed forth many clear signs, for his whole life from beginning to end was one vast miracle. He fought and won against odds. Without learning from men he taught the highest wisdom. He melted hearts that were hard, and strengthened hearts that were tender and required support. In all his sayings and doings men of discernment could see the work of Allah's hand; yet we called it sorcery! This most solid fact of human history we called unreal! It is wrong in any case to uphold falsehoods, but it is doubly wrong when these are put forward in rivalry or opposition to Islam. Allah sends His guidance freely but withdraws His grace from those who willfully do wrong. Allah's light is unquenchable. The more the foolish ones try to quench Allah's light, the clearer it shines to shame them."

"The instructions of Islam paved the way for freethinking in Europe. A movement of reformation arose to protest against the pervasive corruption in the church by criticizing fundamental Catholic teachings. From the revival of the Holy Roman Empire by Otto I in 962, popes and emperors had been engaged in a continuous contest for supremacy. This conflict generally resulted in victory for the papal side

but created bitter antagonism between Rome and the German Empire. This antagonism was augmented in the 14th and 15th centuries by the further development of German nationalist sentiment. Resentment against papal taxation and against submission to ecclesiastical officials of the distant and foreign papacy was also manifested in other countries in Europe. In England the beginning of the movement toward ultimate independence from papal jurisdiction was the enactment of the statutes of Mortmain in 1279, Provisors in 1351, and Praemunire in 1393, which greatly reduced the power of the church to withdraw land from the control of the civil government, to make appointments to ecclesiastical offices, and to exercise judicial authority”(3).

“The 14th century English reformer John Wycliffe boldly attacked the papacy itself, striking at the sale of indulgences, pilgrimages, the excessive veneration of saints, and the moral and intellectual standards of ordained priests. To reach the common people, he translated the Bible into English rather than Latin. His teachings spread to Bohemia, where they found a powerful advocate in the religious reformer John Huss. The execution of Huss as a heretic in 1415 led directly to the Hussite wars, a violent expression of Bohemia nationalism, suppressed with difficulty by the combined forces of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope. The wars were a precursor of religious civil war in Germany in Martin Luther’s time. In France in 1516 a concordat between the king and the pope placed the French church substantially under royal authority. Earlier concordats with other national monarchies also prepared the way for the rise of autonomous national churches.”

“As early as the 13th century the papacy had become vulnerable to attack because of the greed, immorality, and ignorance of many of its officials in all ranks of the hierarchy. Vast tax-free church possessions, constituting according to various estimates as much as one-fifth to one-third of the lands of Europe, incited the envy and resentment of the land-poor peasantry. The so-called Babylonian Captivity of Popes at Avignon in the 14th century and the ensuing Western Schism gravely impaired the authority of the church and drove its adherents into becoming partisan to one or another pope. Church officials recognized the need for reform. Ambitious programs for the reorganization of the entire hierarchy were debated at the Council of Constance from 1414 to 1418, but no program gained the support of a majority, and no radical changes were instituted at that time.”

“Humanism, the revival of classical learning and speculating inquiry beginning in the 15th century in Italy during the early Renaissance, displaced Scholasticism as the principal philosophy of Western Europe and deprived church leaders of the monopoly on learning that they had previously held. Laypersons studied ancient literature, and scholars such as the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla critically appraised translations of the Bible and other documents that formed the basis for much of church dogma and tradition. Humanists outside of Italy, such as Desiderius Erasmus in the Netherlands, John Colet and Sir Thomas More in England, Johann Reuchlin in Germany, and Jacques Lefevre in France, applied the new learning to the evaluation of church practices and the development of a more accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. Their scholarly studies laid the basis on

which Luther, the French theologian and religious reformer John Calvin, and other reformers subsequently claimed the Bible rather than the church as the source of all religious authority”(3).

“Protestantism began as a movement to reform the Western Christian church in the 16th century, resulting in the Protestant Reformation, which severed the reformed churches from the Roman Catholic Church. The declared aim of the original reformers was to restore the Christian faith as it had been at its beginning, while keeping what they thought valuable from the Roman Catholic tradition that had developed during the intervening centuries. Protestants affirm the authority of the Bible, which is considered the sole source and standard for their teachings; they rejected the Roman Catholic position giving ultimate authority to the pope in matters of faith and morals. Luther and other reformers therefore made translations of the Bible to enable the laity to study it and use their own judgment in matters of doctrine. The leaders of the Reformation reacted against the Catholic institution of the priesthood by affirming the “priesthood of all believers.” Furthermore, as Luther argued, the vocation of any Christian, by contributing to society and thus serving one’s neighbor, is as fulfilling before God as any specifically religious vocation. Nevertheless, most Protestant denominations have an ordained ministry. Whereas the Roman Catholic priest is seen as a mediator of God’s grace through his administration of the sacraments, the Protestant minister is regarded as one of the laity who has been trained to perform certain church functions, such as preaching and administering the sacraments. As a result of this belief in

the essential equality of all church members, the Protestant church government has been democratic in tendency.”

“Another form of Protestant rationalism was Unitarianism. It had originated in the 16th century, where it was called Socinianism, after its founder, the Italian reformer Fausto Socinus. After the Toleration Act of 1689, Unitarianism was openly professed in England and began to gain adherents in New England as well. Unitarians denied the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ, stressing instead his ethical teachings and examples. Unitarianism also rejected revelation and miracles.”

“The four main Protestant traditions that emerged from the reformation were the Lutheran, known as Evangelical; the Calvinist; the Anabaptist’ and the Anglican. Despite the considerable differences among them in doctrine and practice, they agreed in rejecting the authority of the pope and emphasizing instead the authority of the Bible and the importance of individual faith. The term “Protestant” has gradually been attached to all Christian churches that are not Roman Catholic or part of the Orthodox or other Eastern Christian traditions.”

“The reformation had largely consistent results throughout Western Europe. In general, the power and wealth lost by the feudal nobility and the Roman Catholic hierarchy passed to the middle classes and to monarchical rulers. Various regions of Europe gained political, religious, and cultural independence. The destruction of the medieval system of authority removed traditional religious restrictions on trade and banking and would open the way for the growth of modern capitalism. During the reformation national languages and literature

were greatly advanced by the wide dissemination of religious literature written in the languages of the people, rather than in Latin. Popular education was also stimulated through the schools founded by Colet in England, Calvin in Geneva, and the Protestant princes in Germany. Religion became less the province of a highly privileged clergy and more a direct expression of the beliefs of the people. Religious intolerance, however, raged unabated, and all the sects continued to persecute one another for at least a century”(3).

The king was torn by conflicting emotions. He contemplated the horizon for a long while, then said in a sad tone, “After all this giving to the world, do you know what we have done to Moslems? In the 16th century our church claimed itself as the defender of the Christian faith, and considered the Moslems living in Spain as heretics, so we invented the Inquisition, that cadaverous arm of the church responsible for routing out Moslems. The holy office of the Inquisition executed them in hundreds of thousands, claiming that they were heretics. Cardinal Cisneros, the fortune-teller of Queen Elisabeth of Portugal, launched a campaign to burn all of the Arabs’ books after the end of the restoration war. We were too fanatic when we claimed that all the achievements of the Arabs were ours and not theirs. In the year 1501 a frenzied campaign was launched to force the Moslems living in Spain to adopt Catholicism or be executed. Those who remained Moslems were killed, and those who reverted to Christianity were spared. In 1609 King Philip the 3rd gave orders to evacuate one million Moslems to Africa. They were put in wrecked boats and hundreds of thousands of them were drowned at sea. It was a senseless butchery. In this disgraceful manner the Moslems

were totally evacuated from Spain, and the Spaniards thought that by this they had totally rid themselves of the Arabs and all of their achievements in Europe.”

The sun descended towards the horizon, coloring it red. The king looked at the mounds and mountains before him. He felt a yearning flow in his chest that took him to the deepness of history. The air he breathed was mixed with the perfume of old Spain and with the echoes of many events. He kept silent for a while then said, “The Arab philosophers animated our thoughts and went to the heart of the true nature of matter. They detected the innermost force that binds the world and guides its course. Their age in Europe was heroic and it brought with it a breaking of taboos, and the advance into an open world from which there is no return.”

Gonzalez was astounded at all that he had heard. He said, extremely astonished, “Sire, your knowledge about the Arabs’ era in Spain is so overwhelming that it seems precise and encyclopedic.”

The king gazed intently at Gonzalez eyes then added, “So, as you see, Gonzalez, the Arabs have sown the seeds of progress in a barren land, and we were the ones who reaped the fruit. Their influence will remain alive in the consciousness of the world and in the history of Europe. Can’t you see it in the souls of the Spaniards, in our faces, language, food, music, poetry and dancing? This is not going to be veiled by the neglect of the cognizant or the disregard of the ignorant, because civilization is a gift from God, and human thinking is a chain with attached rings. We must not rejoice or grumble, as we do not know the whole of God’s plan or wisdom. If you know, Gonzalez, that the

world is revolving, and that history does not proceed in a uniform manner, and when a matter is completed it starts to grow smaller, then it is not a coincidence that the Arabs came to our world and left. It was the will of God that they came here to teach us through their science and religion how to separate the true from the false, and knowledge from ignorance.”

The king drew a deep breath as if he had at last arrived at peace with himself.

Gonzalez opened his mouth in amazement and said, “Sire, you are the most cognizant of the Arabs’ achievements in all fields.”

The late sun burned through the horizon, cutting long shimmering beams across the valley, and one of these fell full on the king. The king rose to his feet and glanced at Gonzalez with an unusual sharpness that was enough to send Gonzalez’ blood running cold. He then said in a serious tone, “During the past few days you have not been listening to a tale, Gonzalez, but to my words. You have been listening to the voice of history, the words of truth, the words of the king.”

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