

PART XIII
CHAPTER LXXXI

IBN SAUD is Lord of Arabia ruling by the force of his personality and the strength of his own right arm. An immense man, tremendous, vital, dominant. A giant thrown up out of the chaos and agony of the Desert—to rule.

The Desert, vast and brutal, demands extreme severity: a hand or foot lopped off for theft: a clan decimated for raiding: a head struck off for major crimes quickly and without formality.

Royal, majestic, and unperturbed, Ibn Saud rules the Desert with justice and exemplary punishment. He has branded his will on the unruly people of his vast Empire.

He lives without pomp or ceremony. Sheik or slave, rich or poor, all have the right of audience before him: all are welcome as his guests. All come before him at their own risk, for he has the power of Life and Death and mutilation, and from his sentences there are no appeals. Sitting in his palace in Mecca or in his Audience Chamber in Riad, his plain Arab cloak drawn round him, his eagle face and his massive shoulders thrust forward as he receives his subjects, listens to their petitions and complaints, or gives terse orders to his officials, he might be one of the Great Caliphs.

He stands, basing himself four square on his trust in God, straddled across Arabia holding the whole land and its people between his clenched fists. He is looked to through-

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out all Arabia and from far beyond as the potential leader against the aggressive Emperors and the infidels, and against the Jews. On his decision vast international issues depend, and he is inspired by a driving Belief—the Belief that he has been entrusted by God with a mission to knit all Arabs into one People, to lead them back to the greatness of their forefathers, and to make the Word of God supreme.

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