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The End of the Day

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To watch the sun set at Wadi Rum we ride across the desert on benches in the back of the 1950s pickup, past the petroglyphs on the red rocks to the outcroppings smoothed by eons of time with sand in their teeth. The princes in their sheepskin cloaks breast the January wind from their new jeep. Sun diffuses from marigold to pale peach, persimmon, coral, cerise, sheen of crimson. Clouds’ edges lit with gold like Bible pages, finally suffusing into cool mist, fine as silk.

Lawrence and the Arab army camped here, exhausted but exhilarated because the Turks at Aqaba thought no one could cross the fierce wilderness behind them. Camels ridden hard, men ridden harder by their fantastic hopes, tomorrow their triumph. I can still feel it here where Lawrence sat, knowing the sun that evening set on an age, and he must have shivered as I do, as he thought of what was to come.