

one morning in 852 CE, a man climbed to the top of a minaret of a large mosque in Cordoba. He was already well known as a poet, astronomer, musician, engineer, scientist and inventor. The man was Abbas Ibn Firnas and he was attempting to fly. The crowd that had gathered below were eagerly watching and waiting to see what would happen. The crowd fell silent as the man stretched open his arms and prepared to jump. This time, the nearly 70-year-old Firnas climbed to the top of a mountain in Cordoba that looked out over the city. He had already tried to fly over the desert, and hoped to fly successfully in Cordoba. The crowd held its breath as Firnas launched himself into the air. He flapped his arms frantically up and down. So, for several years, Firnas worked on improving his design. The wings were made of silk and eagle feathers. He was wearing a cloak with pieces of wood attached. He was determined to find a way to fly, and spent many years thinking up designs for wings to help him take flight. Once again there was an audience who had gathered to watch him. Firnas was nervous. Then he looked up at the sky, took a deep breath and leapt into the air. "I didn't make a tail!" "There must be a way," he thought. "Birds can fly. Why can't I?" Finally, his new flying machine was ready. Were the