

*The Casanova of Córdoba*

“I can’t imagine being interested enough in somebody to do something about it”. This was the maxim he lived by. It is what he would say to himself when he would get lost looking at himself in the mirror. From his small courtyard in the *Juderia* of Córdoba he would run his fingertips over and across the soft petals of the flowers, orchids hanging thick like sexual organs from the walls in his patio, a boudoir for one.

Through the skinny streets he sauntered, his fashion always in the height of style, close to the skin, hugging his body. His gait was stimulatingly feminine, simultaneously masculine, his composure strong and direct, with wide shoulders and rhythmic hips, in exactly equal parts, androgynously, unquestionably sexual, totally self-sufficient.

On Sundays, in the cathedral of the *Mezquita*, during a moment of silence dedicated to prayer, he would press his palms together close to his chest and delve deep into prayer. And while he would spare a passing word or two for his friends and family, he would pray most intensely and most sincerely for himself, caressing himself with his self-love, raising his heart up to God to ask for his benediction.

Afterwards, in the streets, the plazas, the cafés, he would flirt. Flirting was the most satisfying sport. Smiling at women and seducing them with his interesting choice of words. But only for the sense of pride. Only for the immaculate delight of being desirable.

Flirting was both the method and the completion of his social desires. He was only interested in the possibility of others. The concrete was dull. A temporary respite. A pursuit meant for the *bajos*, the general, the basic, a flavour for undeveloped palettes. What was built up in the fleeting glances, the soft touches, the clever innuendos, would be lost forever in an instant of sweaty exertion, and then all mystery would vanish, all possibility gone. His pursuits he deemed heavenly. He sought only the eternal.

Sparingly he would deign to lower himself into an engagement, for a few days, a week, a month at most. But these were always much more like trysts, silent affairs, forbidden for some irrelevant reason, scurried away in rented apartments, the dame bringing tea on platters between bouts. And even then, he would always be ethereal, coming and going, taking to the streets, never wanting to tie himself to anything. The only thing he could dedicate himself to, was himself.

He would buy himself chocolates and roses and take himself out to eat and see the sights, and treat himself to massages in the city baths and to shopping sprees in the market. His self-love infuriated those around him. He prayed he could be young and with himself forever.

He had a habit of resting his hand on his breast, a finger resting on his nipple. His arms would wrap around his body, he would caress himself. No one could please him like he could. Everyone else was a burden, a struggle, a bore and a chore.

The only concrete was himself.

The only thing he could tie himself too.

The only love eternal.

Forever engaged.

Until at last, his wish realized, his arms wrapped tight around his torso, his body became tight, like a straight-jacket in a madhouse, completely attached to himself, unable to move, unable to embrace anything, or anyone else...