

*The Return of Prince Nazir*

Prince Nazir, his softly oiled hair resting on a silk pillow imported from some far reach of the kingdom, from the oriental lands. His guards in their spiked helmets roaming the halls, ever-vigilant to encounter any assassin and thwart any attempt on the life of their beloved prince. A pool of flaming torches and sparkling lights nestled in the cool white arms of the Sierra Nevada. From the Mirador de San Nicolas you can see the fortress perched up on top of the hill, keeping a hollow gaze over the city like some giant Moorish gargoyle.

“I do not like looking in mirrors, I do not like being reminded of my humanity. That I have a face as hideous as the rest of these dirty creatures that mill about in the streets, doing ugly things, beneath me.”

He rushed to the window and thrust aside a heavy curtain and was introduced to a grey day, the clouds dispersed in the sky, the cold pervasive in the leafless branches. At the foot of the mountain that housed his fortress sprawled the city, a cascade of white plaster and tiled roofs. And between the structures stood and worked and walked his subjects.

On the few occasions he had by necessity to go down to the city he wore a hooded cape which he kept pulled low over his face, and tucked his gold-studded fingers deep in his pockets. If a child were to bump into him, or step on his shoe, he would be overcome with a strong urge to inflict damage to the creature, and would struggle earnestly with himself to avoid doing any such thing.

He abhorred dirt, and at any expense would avoid contact with the fingerprints or odour of others. His own body he would clean immaculately and with the greatest care and would perfume his skin and his wardrobe, although he neither expected nor desired guests. The palace guards obeyed him loyally, with never a whiff of dissent, yet he distrusted them. And when he crossed paths with them in the halls he would hurry by and avoid looking them in their eyes.

The sky found a breach in the clouds and a ray of sunlight shot down to the tower where prince Nazir stood looking out over the city, and with a horrid gasp he pulled the blinds shut with a shuddering violence. The last few times he went out during the day he would arrive at the palace feeling exhausted, and would suffer from migraines, and he would shut the blinds and sleep the rest of the day. Eventually, he wouldn't leave his room at all during the day, and took to staying up at night.

Everyday the same sunset.

And at times, he felt that this would continue for eternity.

It was festering into something more than a frustration.

He could never live like them...