

Theft, Desire & A Duel

By Noam Mor



I would like to offer my thanks to
Mustapha Nadmi and Henry Mehrez,
my informants.

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My Faith is False if I Lie

A slowing of time around the cab, the darkness has them think of going but I invite them home, quietly with some urgency, as they leave early morning. Will they take a risk?

—No thank you, Jack says as if, should I not have been watching his lips, he were not speaking. Azziz raises his arms in a yawn, his fingers stretching outward then closing again, his middle finger vaguely pointing toward Jack's mouth. The Brit, John, has decided without thinking to accept my invitation. Jack looks at his shoes, reflecting on what his guts tell him. People should listen to their guts, but will he not and trust us?

—Come with us. We are going to have a good time at our home, Azziz says. Jack has known this white man known for three days and contemplates his own risk. I wonder about his honor or stupidity. What comes, comes; I do not give myself away. He hardly says yes, all his answers about trust do not pass his lips.

The cab drives along the edge of the Medina. We follow one street light to the next, the street empty but for one hooded man who crosses, a cemetery on the right. On the left, houses and ruins are scattered like shadows in the fields. Beyond this, the black oblong of the city wall.

—We have lived for generations between the tomb of King Moulay Ishmael and this cemetery. Dead things have brought you to my door. Before your crusades, my country was powerful, held Spain, though now it is so poor. You see, there are few public lights. Most light in Hassini comes from the homes where we live. There seem to be more stars. Dead ends. You will meet my family soon. We are your host. Can you read the night sky?

Mor1

I walked toward Kassas's, my informant's, home trying to remember what I'd seen along the way. Walls and crumbling walls, passing goats donkeys and trees. Someplace, a tall isolated building stands, the empty doorways and window frames so large I couldn't understand what they let in. Scarcely populated. Not one sign. Enclosed by two large walls, Orion as my guide, I hunt by a sliver of starlight. At the end of this, I'll see Kassas's home, figure out a way to escape the trap he's laid. If I can take his shoes, I'll struggle close to his heart, will hold it. I cover my mouth to mute the groveling of my stomach. On the left there is a break in the wall and I stop and study it, but there isn't enough evidence in the darkness. I continue on so I can continue occupying him, tell his story.*

*Storyteller.