

The Judge's Wife Part 2

by Daniel Harris

Margaux stood on a platform holding her arm in the same posture as when she ran. I sat close to her and was drawing her hands in great detail.

—Is it true hands are difficult to draw? Margaux asked, turning to see what I was drawing.

—Please hold still.

—Sorry.

—Drawing is about seeing. If you see things correctly, then you will draw them correctly. You have to draw exactly what you see, not what you think or want, but what is actually before you.

—Why is it in some paintings frequently the hands are painted so bad. Even the old masters don't always paint good hands?

—The hands may not be an important part of the painting. It's like in films. Sometimes a part of the frame is out of focus so that it won't detract from what the director has decided is important in the frame.

—I never thought of that.

—Because sculpture is three-dimensional and this is a portrait statue of you, the different parts of the body should be accurately rendered. It will be the attitude of the head, torso, limbs, facial expression and the surface that will carry the emotional weight. The integrated counterpoint of all the elements is the challenge.

—Can we take a break? I'm getting tired.

—Sure.

Margaux stretched and walked around the studio.

—Is this the marble sculpture you were working on when my husband and I visited you a month ago?

—That's it. I still have more surface work to do.

—It looks like so many different things, yet totally abstract.

—I like to give viewers a few shapes and let them fill in the story.

Margaux came and stood behind me. She studied the sketches of her hands.

—They're not the same, my left and right hands. You've captured the arthritis in my left pinky perfectly.

—Nothing on the human body is the same: eyes, ears, hands, feet, breasts, arms, legs, testicles. Different sides of the face are different. Give me your hands, Margaux.

I turned and faced Margaux. She put her hands in the palms of my outstretched hands.

—Your hands are so smooth, I said, gently holding her hands. But cold. Are you cold?

—No, not particularly. Maybe nervous.

—Do I make you nervous?

—No, but you look at me so intensely when you're drawing. It's like you are making love to me with your pencil. I can almost feel the lead on my skin.

I released her left hand and took her right hand in both of my hands.

—Your hands are rough. You should use a hand cream.

—But my lips aren't, I said, putting my lips on the back of her hand.

Margaux froze.

—You're afraid?

—No, she said, hesitating, but her voice belied her discomfort.

I began to gently trace the contours of her hand with my upper lip. She relaxed her hand. I slowly worked my way down to her fingers and gently put my lips around her first finger. She moved her finger so it just touched the tip of my tongue. Suddenly, she pulled her hand away.

—I can't remember if I washed my hands before I came here.

—You were eating chips, I said, smiling and looking up at her face.

—Hah! You've found me out, she said, tossing her head and walking to the platform. I'm ready to continue. Please don't try to romance me. It will ruin our time together.

—I need to make some profile sketches of your face, I replied ignoring her last comment. Come sit in this chair and turn sideways to me. Look at my cat, Kidd Stretch, lying so regally on the stairs.

Stretch uttered a soft chuff when he heard his name.

—Does he always have one leg stretched out like that?

—Yes, when I rescued him, he was a long and very skinny one-year-old starving cat. But he had style in spades and talked. I think there's a touch of Siamese in him.

She looked at the well-formed cat watching Jack. She could hear Stretch purring. Margaux closed her eyes.

—Please keep your eyes open. You don't run with your eyes closed, do you?

—Of course not, but I listen to music. Can't you play some music, or should I use my iPhone? For a guy who was a musician, why don't you play music while you're working with a model?

—Because when music is playing, I *listen* to it, I mean *really listen*. If I tuned out the music, I would corrupt my ability to listen critically. I literally notate music in my head as I hear it. It's the same level of concentration I bring to my drawing, painting and sculpting. I don't have enough horsepower to listen and draw at the same time.

—You can visualize the music?

—Conservatory trained.

—Yes, you said.

She turned and gave me that winning smile.

—Do you always kiss your model's hands?

I ignored her question.

—What happened to your left earlobe? I asked.

—You really do look closely when you draw. I can barely see the scar in the mirror. It happened at a high school party. Some jerk yanked the earring off my left ear. This was back when most girls didn't pierce their ears, at least while they still lived at home.

Margaux looked at her watch.

—How long will we work today? And you didn't answer my question.

—Another half hour if you can stay. That will be a full two hours, that's long for an untrained model. And, no you're the first. I'm not in the habit of kissing anyone's hand.

—Do you kiss all of your models?

—I don't often use live models. As you can see, most of my work is abstract, not realistic, though I sketch from life all the time. Could you open your mouth, like you were running?

—I breathe through my nose when I run, not my mouth.

—Impressive. Since the car wreck, I can barely breath through my schnozz.

—I never run anaerobically, always aerobically. My dad was a marathoner all his life and he taught all us kids to run for distance, not speed, though I run plenty fast. I rarely run with anyone, so I don't talk either.

I liked the smile she gave me.

—You have a delicious smile, Margaux.

—Thank you. I've never heard a smile called delicious. Lips maybe, but not a smile.

—Well, you have delicious lips, so your smile is delicious, too.

—Are you hitting on me?

—Only a little. Please, stop talking so I can draw.

They did not talk for a half hour.

—That's enough for today. A good first day. You're an excellent subject: good bones, good skin, good muscle definition.

—Can I see the drawings?

—Of course.

Margaux paged through the sketchbook.

—This hand looks alive, she said, holding the sketchbook at arm's length.

—That's a fine compliment.

She continued to examine the sketchbook.

—Is the scar that noticeable on my left ear? I can barely see it when I look in the mirror.

—Don't forget I was looking at you from the side. When you look in the mirror you are looking obliquely. Next time when I do the right profile, you'll see an uninjured ear.

—Well, Jack, I should be going. My daughter is arriving from New York City tonight.

—She's the blogger for *The New Yorker*?

—Yes. It will be fun to have her here for a few weeks. May I bring her to the next session?

—It may be boring for her.

—If she gets bored, I'll let her take my car and you can drive me home.

—That works.

Margaux extended her hand.

—Thank you, Jack. Maybe next time you can make a sketch on a loose sheet so I can show the judge.

—Ah, yes, the judge, I said, locking my eyes on Margaux's eyes.

Margaux lifted my hand to her lips and slowly put each of my fingers in her mouth. She pursed her lips and slowly fellated my fingers while lightly running her tongue over my fingertips. I was sure she could taste the drawing pencil, the eraser, and the perspiration on my fingers, maybe even a hint of Irish Spring soap. She removed my hand from her mouth and kissed the back of my hand, holding it reverently in both her hands. Such nice hands you have. She turned to leave.

—That was wonderful, Margaux. Thank you.

She lowered her eyes, but gave me that seductive smile.

—Remember, not tomorrow, but Thursday at two.

—Thank you, Jack. Will I see you at the gym tomorrow?

—Only if you're there early, early.

—Good-bye, Jack. I enjoyed myself. It's going to be a fun project.

To be continued

