

The Ringlet

by Daniel Harris

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Part I: Carl

Most of Carl's neighbors considered him a lone taciturn man at best and an eccentric loony at worst. His neighbors knew him as the guy who left his house every morning at eight dressed in a suit and tie. Rarely did anyone see him return to his home, a small bungalow in an old neighborhood in Sarasota.

Marge, who lived across the street, decided to follow him one morning. Carl walked to an industrial part of town not a mile from his home. He unlocked and entered a windowless red brick building. Not long after Carl entered the building a young woman rang the bell on his door. She entered the building.

Marge had to go to work. She left and went home. The mystery of Carl played on her mind all week. On Saturday morning she again followed Carl. He went to the same address. No women rang his bell.

Marge went for a coffee and returned to watch the building where Carl entered.

About noon a young woman left the building. Marge decided to ring Carl's bell.

A buzzer sounded. Marge pushed the door open. It was a large space filled with huge easels and paintings. The canvasses were very large, twelve feet square or more. Each one had a two-foot long squiggle in the center. The fields of the paintings were different colors, but the long squiggle was some shade of black or brown.

-Yes, said Carl.

-I'm your neighbor Marge, she said completely taken aback by Carl's calm demeanor.

-What do you want? asked Carl.

-I want to know what you do, replied Marge who was very nervous because of Carl's cool.

-I'm a painter, replied Carl.

-What is it you paint? I've seen young women coming here, said Marge.

-The pubic hair of woman. But, just one of them, said Carl coolly.

-You must be kidding, replied Marge.

-No, for most of art history a woman's pubic hair was never painted. Goya's *The Naked Maja* was the first painting by a major artist to show a woman's pubic hair.

-But a single pubic hair? How could that be art? asked Marge.

-If you look closely, you will see this fine hair, many times enlarged, here on this large painting. On close inspection you will notice that I have painted the very place it came from.

-Marge looked at the large canvas on the easel. Barely noticeable underneath a translucent patina was a fully detailed painting of a woman's pudendum.

-I have documented exactly where the very hair came from, explained Carl.

-You are sick, said Marge.

-I didn't ask you to come here. I have my art, you have your opinions.

-How do you get these hairs?

-My models give them to me. Then they pose for me.

-You are one sick puppy, said Marge.

-As you wish, said Carl.

-Where do you find your models? asked Marge.

-They find me. Did you want to pose? asked Carl.

-Absolutely not, said Marge. Do you always paint so formally dressed?

-Yes, as did the great masters. I don't want my models to think I have sexual designs on them.

-You paint their pudendum in photo-realistic detail, but sublimated under a colored patina.

-Yes, I use a *camera obscura* to see the fine detail in proportion. Each woman is unique. They usually become sexually aroused in the process.

-Do you have sex with your models? asked Marge.

-Never. Many models have asked me to have sex with them, but it would ruin our relationship.

-Don't you become sexually aroused?

-Yes, but my energies go into the art, not sex.

-Do you like having sex?

-Yes, but I am here to work, not for pleasure.

Marge left Carl's studio. The pictures she saw and the very concept of them stuck in her mind, like a musical phrase one could not shake.

That night she had dinner with her best friend Isabella. She told Isabella about her experience in Carl's studio.

-I think he's a pervert, said Marge.

-I don't know, said Isabella. Did you see any red pubic hairs?

-No, just the usual, but enlarged and painted in perfect detail. Like looking under a microscope.

-You have red hair, Isabella. Is that why you ask?

-No, said Isabella.

-You're not thinking of posing for him are you? demanded Marge.

-Christ, no. I haven't taken my pants off for a man since college, said Isabella.

Monday Isabella made an appointment with Laser Hair Removal. When she left the establishment she was smooth and hair free from belly button to backbone except for one ringlet of hair near her most sexually sensitive spot.

Saturday morning Isabella rang Carl's buzzer.

-Yes, said Carl.

-I'm here to pose. My friend Marge said you were looking for models.

-Yes, that is true. You understand of course that you will have to pose nude and your private parts will come under close scrutiny. I of course, will remain fully dressed as you see me now. There is no chance of sexual contact. I paint. That is my mission.

-Let's begin, said Isabella.

-You may undress behind the screen. Would you like a cup of coffee? This is a long process and I ask that you not move for long periods of time. You may wear a robe, but I must be able to see your pudendum.

-Yes, coffee would be good. I am happy to be nude.

-I will be using a *camera obscura*. Much of the time I will be sketching and then I will transfer the sketches to the large canvas.

Isabella undressed behind the screen. Not having pubic hair, she felt especially naked and vulnerable. Her heart was beating fast and her mouth was dry.

The studio temperature was perfect. There was a large chair with an elevated ottoman.

-Please sit on the chair. Put your legs up on the ottoman.

Isabella did as requested, but kept her legs closed.

-You have no pubic hair? asked Carl.

-One. I saved it for you.

-You must show it to me.

Isabella opened her legs and displayed her lone ringlet of red pubic hair.

-I hope you are not disappointed, said Isabella.

-No, in fact this is perfect. I spend many hours painting the single hair in each painting. You did not color it did you?

-No, I was nervous enough having most of it removed. I look like a young girl now.

-No, you are quite mature and well formed. I will start to work. If you are uncomfortable or become too hot or too cold, I will stop so you can make yourself comfortable.

-Thank you, but don't look into my eyes. It makes me nervous.

-As you wish. I will be looking elsewhere.

When Isabella left she felt like an important woman. An artist was painting her in a most intimate way. She wanted to tell Marge, but was afraid Marge would blab it to all her friends. Marge never could keep a secret.

Isabella went to four more sessions with Carl. The Sunday after her fourth session she awoke to discover that her lone ringlet of pubic hair was missing. She searched her bedding, her bathtub, her underwear, the bathroom floor, and the bedroom floor. She could not find it. She prayed that Carl would not be upset, or abandon the painting.

Isabella went to Carl's studio on Saturday. Carl was dressed as usual.

-Carl, I have lost my lone ringlet of pubic hair. Will it upset your painting?

-I have captured it for eternity. He pulled back a curtain revealing his painting of her.

There on a twelve foot square canvas was her most intimate femininity in full sexual arousal with a lone ringlet of red hair. The details of her femininity were not obscured as in the other paintings.

-That's me? said Isabella.

-Yes. Only you and I will know. And now, it is only a picture of a memory.

-Use me, said Isabella starting to remove her clothes.

-You know I won't do that. Here is your missing hair, said Carl offering up her single ringlet. Save it. The painting is sold. This is your souvenir. Treasure it.

