

Two Micros

by Jake Barnes

A Work of Art

Tom had never seen a naked woman before. The model in his art class was comely if not beautiful, neither old nor young. She always wore a little smile. When she took off her robe, the class grew quiet. The young would-be artists bent to the task. Tom liked to draw with ink, water, and a sponge. It forced a spontaneity that he otherwise did not have.

The professor was a nice person, too. A pleasant, mild-mannered man with a bristling mustache. He became a Mr. Hyde, however, whenever the subject of Salvador Dali came up. He hated Dali. He was a fraud he said. The little man gave the impression that it was personal, that he knew Dali, and that he disliked the man as well as his art.

One day on her break the model did her usual waltz around the room, moving slowly from easel to easel, chatting with the students. Tom was sitting on a stool, and he stood up when approached. She smiled. Her sidelong glance was like a curl of smoke. She peered at his drawing, then at the young man. Then she leaned in close and whispered in his ear. He blushed. She walked away trailing her Mona Lisa smile. She seemed to walk on air.

The Artist

Max made her stand against the wall as he sketched. When Tom came in and sat down, the red-haired girl covered herself. Her cheek bones turned the color of a rose.

Max stood there looking at the sketch. Tom stood up and looked over his shoulder. Max shook his head. He sighed. A masterpiece, Tom thought. Max tore it in half and threw it on the floor. The girl looked out the window.

Later they sat on the couch, the three of them, Max on one side of the girl, Tom on the other. Max held her hair piled on her head, kissed the lobe of her ear. He whispered something; the girl smiled and bowed her head. Max barked. His laughter was harsh.

Max stood up and held out his hand. "Come on," he said. "I have to get you out of here before my wife comes home."

