

The Artist

by Michael D. Brown

I met the artist at a party in honor of his exhibition at The National Arts Club, where Carmel was a member, and somehow, when we shook hands and our eyes met, I knew we would become friends because I liked his work on first sight and we spoke of technique and symbolism for about twenty-five minutes. Carmel, who had introduced us, seemed a little perturbed we hit it off so famously to the exclusion of herself, but she had brought me there because I was into art, and she was there to conduct insurance business.

After a while when Miguel went to get himself a drink and speak to his agent, Carmel and I wandered around pretending to look at his canvases. "Isn't this one great?" I asked.

"I don't get it, and Clare," she said, "you shouldn't monopolize the artist's time because this little shindig is only on for an hour and a half tonight. Why don't you mix with some of the younger visitors and try to drum up some business?"

I was taken back, as she is always working, but some of us do like to take a break, and I thought she had invited me on my night off, telling me to wear something sexy; besides I found Miguel quite attractive and he was obviously interested in getting to know me. "I thought that's what you were doing," I said, then immediately regretted having said it because she would think me a hanger on. rather than her motivated protégé. Truth to tell, I had very little interest in insurance and if Miguel was looking for a protégé, I would have readily switched allegiance, but didn't see why I couldn't aim in both directions.

"I'm going to get a drink," Carmel said, without offering to bring me back something, nor did she invite me to go with her, and I wondered if art had triumphed over business, or I'd be looking for a job on Monday.

