

P I C A S S O  
A N D D O R A



A  
P E R S O N A L  
M E M O I R

J A M E S L O R D

## CHAPTER



## TWO

HAVING “just returned from combat,” I was entitled to a three-day pass, and emerged from the Gare Saint-Lazare in the midafternoon of Sunday, December 3. Though grimy and gray, Paris was glorious, everything I had ever wanted it to be, and I had wanted it to be everything I had ever wanted. In the daze of surpassed fantasy, I wandered for hours.

At nightfall I made my way to 118 Avenue de Versailles, a drab address, where I found Claudine Goutner, her husband, his parents, and her brother, Pierre, who had just deserted from the French Army. They greeted me with warmth in the dingy apartment, offering a glass of wine. It turned out that my request had entailed a good deal of bother, as Picasso’s address was not easily obtainable and he did not welcome strangers, whose business might turn out to be a nuisance. Moreover, there had been a mystery. Claudine had assumed that this must be a matter both personal and important. But when persistent efforts had finally brought her face to face with the artist on November 13, after hearing why she had come he said, “Who is this James Lord?”

Picasso possessed a fantastic acuity for instantly perceiving distinctive features, and his question was supremely to the point, the point, indeed, as to which he would soon be asked to give *prima facie* evidence, having himself been in search of it for half a century. Claudine was puzzled, but polite; she had been merely instrumental—I could never

on my own, so to speak, have located Picasso in three days’ time—but, as an individual, irrelevant. I was embarrassed. She asked me to have dinner with her and her family. I accepted gladly. We conversed in French, of course. It was my ability to do so, after all, that had brought me to France, and all my conversations with friends in this country have always been in French. When recording them, I have usually done so in English, but my translations are reasonably accurate. The evening with the Goutner–Yakovleff family was pleasant, but I never saw them again.

The rue des Grands-Augustins is a short, antique street on the Left Bank close by the river and the Pont Neuf. Number 7 is a majestic, L-shaped building of cut stone, with arched gateway and cobbled courtyard. The site is historic, for the property at one time or another was owned or occupied by several kings of France, not to mention eminent statesmen and assorted grandees, one of whom was fond of boasting that no man in Europe had made more numerous or important enemies. A phlegmatic concierge snorted in answer to my query, “Picasso? He won’t see you. Stairs to your left at the top.” They were narrow and semicircular, leading upward rather steeply for two and a half stories to a stout oak door with an iron ring set into its center. There was a bell. I pressed it. A tiny tinkling remotely announced that I was capable of something, then ensuing silence suggested that this was not much. I rang again. A muffled shuffle became audible, locks croaked, and in the middle of a slit of light appeared a pointed nose, eyeglasses, and a thin mouth, which said, “What is it?”

I explained that I wished to see Picasso but had to admit that I had no appointment. I was able to assert with conviction, however, that the artist had been advised in advance of my visit. The doorkeeper opened a little farther. He was old, dressed entirely in black, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a black beret. He squinted skeptically down at me, as I had to stand two or three steps below the door because there was no landing in front of it. My uniform was the object of his scrutiny; it bore no insignia of any kind, because intelligence personnel sometimes had to pass themselves off as autonomous “agents,” thus exempt from the symbolism and constraint of regular service. I told him that I had taken considerable trouble to send a messenger just three weeks previously, a woman, to see Picasso in person and tell him that James Lord

might soon turn up. Her name: Claudine Goutner. The doorkeeper shrugged, but the indications of painstaking prearrangement appeared to have made an impression. "You are an American officer," he said.

"American, yes," I replied, taking advantage of the ambiguous uniform.

Then the doorkeeper said I'd better come inside and led me to a long, narrow room, its high windows split into narrow panes that let down the gray daylight dustily onto an incredible collection of junk and treasure. Introducing himself as Picasso's secretary, he gave his name: Jaime Sabartés. When I told him mine while we shook hands, he remarked that we had the same forename, a felicitous coincidence. He asked me to tell him about myself, a request immediately making for such awkwardness under the circumstances, an awkwardness actually physical, that I turned in my fear of making some misstep and on the uneven flooring made a real misstep, almost stumbling, putting out a hand to catch at an adjacent table. Whereupon Sabartés asked what was the matter. "Are you ill?" he asked. "You have been wounded in the war?"

"Yes," I said, and when Sabartés came as if to help me to a chair, I limped to it, my gait made more genuinely ungainly by the assumption that a wounded man may find easier grace than an uninjured one in the judgment of a stranger. Thus I introduced myself into the dwelling of a great artist with a deliberate lie, which all unbeknownst to me revealed a truth that today has the look of childlike innocence. The wound I feigned was false, but what it revealed was straightforward and sound. In short, I was true to myself. Of course my aspiration was to become an artist.

So when Sabartés asked whether I was in pain I said no. He inquired about my role in the war. Explaining why my uniform bore no insignia, I told him that I was a member of the military intelligence service. This clearly entitled me to more serious scrutiny. He remarked that I must have had fascinating, dangerous experiences. Not in the least, I rejoined, trying to suggest that for me the war's horror had been all the more obsessive for having put me in the position of a mere onlooker.

"I understand," he said, "that it wouldn't be right for you to talk about military secrets," appearing pleased by the surmise of an importance I had just attempted to deny. "And you want to see Picasso?"

"Yes."

This, too, seemed satisfying to the secretary, and there was a pensive silence, allowing me to take a closer look around the room. It was a fantastic sight, where no order appeared to exist. On the walls hung a single painting, a tiny still life of a lemon and glass against a crimson background,\* but on the floor and on tables and chairs were posed quite a few others, mostly small, among heaps of books, photographs, newspapers, unopened parcels, musical instruments, and extraordinary objects. I noticed a remarkably complicated antique lock with an ornate, enormous key, and also a large photograph of a handsome young man in a white shirt. Upon everything shimmered a patina of dust.

Sabartés inquired whether I knew an American called Jerome Seckler, adding when I said I didn't that there were lots of Americans who had wanted to see Picasso in the three months since the Liberation of Paris. I knew no way to redeem myself from the insignificance implied by all those other Americans, so I just sat there, whereupon the secretary added, "You would prefer to see him alone, no doubt," and I nodded, wondering at the preference he attributed to me. "Then come back the day after tomorrow. At eleven o'clock exactly, because later it would be too late—for your visit to be worthwhile."

"Yes," I said, rising at once, not even curious, now that an introduction had been promised, to know why it might prove worthwhile. But I was careful to limp toward the exit, sustaining the sham meant to procure grace. Sabartés followed. At the top of the stairs I thanked him for his consideration, etc., and promised to return two days later at eleven sharp. Then I went down, still limping, and the door closed solidly behind me.

An aptitude for pretense and a readiness to resort to the virtue of false appearances might have seemed to present problems beyond the competence of a young man utterly unversed in the manipulations of point of view that art takes for granted. But I didn't question the law of gravity or care two straws how many other Americans Picasso had met. (Jerome Seckler, I subsequently learned, had interviewed the painter regarding his recent membership in the Communist Party, an allegiance

\* Zervos, Vol. 11, No. 159.

which—as yet—seemed irrelevant.) The only meeting that meant anything to me was mine, and in that scheme of significance there was plentiful potential for trouble.

Two days later, having taken care to limp while approaching, I was at the appointed place precisely on time. Sabartés opened and led me through to the farther room, remarking that I had done well to be punctual and that Picasso was extraordinarily attentive to the fact that each day brought an altered perspective to the prospects of a lifetime, “because,” he said, “genius makes every minute momentous.”

I was embarrassed. That was the first time I heard Picasso called a genius by someone whose familiarity with him would have seemed—to me—to allow for the assumption that he was a man like any other. But it was just on the grounds of my readiness to share this opinion and profit by it that I stood where I did that morning, while the secretary went on talking and I tried to feel equal to the occasion. In the periphery of awareness, the fact was now casually registered that someone else was in the room, standing slightly to the side by a window, its light behind him—a short man almost bald but with wisps of white hair, wearing a tan cashmere sweater. I took little notice of his presence, as he said nothing and was of slight stature, whereupon Sabartés jerked about like a puppet on a wire, declaiming histrionically, “Here is Picasso!”

My inadequacy was breathtaking. To look like a fool, however, may have been the very best thing that I could have done. Mumbling some salutation, I shook the artist’s outstretched hand, aware of being scrutinized, though not at the time especially awed by the famous eyes.

“You wished to see me?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said.

Stepping back a pace, the artist made a gesture toward himself with both hands, as if to demonstrate the obvious, which he then did by saying, “Well, here I am.”

The fact was overwhelming, and that I had no answer to it proportionately plain, which Picasso proved by adding, “And what is it that you wanted to see me about?”

“I just wanted to see you,” I stammered, blushing hard. And perhaps it was immediate evidence of Picasso’s uncanny power that that reason may have been the very best that anyone could give for presuming

to intrude upon a great artist. What surer virtue in his sight could there be?

He said, “Have you had your breakfast?”

I admitted that I had.

“Well,” he said, “if you want to, you can come upstairs and sit with me while I have mine.”

I said yes, blushing again, and maybe it was the fire in my face that did the trick, because a blush cannot be feigned and usually signals something the blusher would prefer to conceal.

Picasso proceeded to an open door at the far end of the room, while his secretary nodded like an entrepreneur pleased by the profitable outcome of his arrangements. The young soldier followed, limping, the very picture of one who has come to harm through disasters of war, thus *par extraordinaire* entitled to the attentions of the great. Like many injuries, however, such a one as I pretended to have sustained could very well have been but the bodily manifestation of a hurt long before made wounding to the spirit. There is no need to evoke the implications of a limp.

We came into another room, filled with such a clutter that I barely had time to recognize it as sculpture, while Picasso went quickly up a circular stairway in the far corner. The room above was packed with paintings of all sizes, colors, configurations, placed on several easels and stacked one against another on the bare tiled floor in such profusion that not much space was left to move about in. “This is where I do my painting,” said the artist, waving his hand at a pile of canvases set out beside a window.

Confronted so abruptly by the creator in the presence of his creations, I was utterly at a loss for the least ability to live up to the occasion. He may have sensed how this was, as geniuses understand what effect they have on other people, being compelled to come to terms with the effect which genius has upon them, a difficulty infinitely greater than mine. He said, “Sabartés tells me you have been injured in the war.”

“It’s nothing,” I said.

“You limp.”

I admitted it.

“Sit down, then,” said Picasso, indicating a green wooden bench

of the sort found in public gardens and parks, "and tell me what happened to you in the war."

The war was a topic I definitely felt authorized to talk about, having viewed it from the sidelines, never on the battlefield, so I dwelt with disingenuous conviction on the sordid hypocrisy and moral squalor that flourish when patriotic duty summons men to murder one another.

Picasso's breakfast, consisting of a large bowl of black coffee and a couple of pieces of bread, was brought by a beautiful young woman, dark, full-breasted, with lustrous long hair, who appeared not at all intimidated by the great painter.

As for the opinions I had the temerity to advance concerning the ethics of people caught up in the lunatic circumstances of warfare, Picasso readily confirmed my impression that plenty of people in France had come to comfortable accommodation with enemy rule, and *sauve qui peut*. Gertrude Stein, he said, Jean Cocteau, and Aristide Maillol, the sculptor, had been among those not too mortified by a bit of Teutonic hegemony over the easygoing Gauls. These were only names to me, and I didn't question the artist's right to name them. He himself could hardly have foreseen that he might one day extend the credit of his genius to experiment with my discernment by making me acquainted with the first two people whose good names he had just disparaged, the third, very recently deceased, being unavailable.

It was especially against the repute and integrity of the dead sculptor that Picasso inveighed that morning. He said that Maillol had been the champion of a German sculptor called Arno Breker, Hitler's favorite artist, and had used this connection to beg favors from the Nazis. Talking about Maillol's turpitude, Picasso worked himself up into a dither, but I never wondered by what chance an insignificant American soldier, a total stranger, might have appeared to the artist a person qualified to consider the merits of his tirade. Even had I wondered I could not have understood, nor could Picasso have explained.

The war was far from over. Twelve days later, in fact, the prelude to the last act of *Götterdämmerung* started in the Ardennes, costing 75,000 casualties in four weeks. I impolitely asked Picasso what he would do if the Germans somehow managed to recapture Paris. Keep on painting, he said. All he wanted in life was to be free to keep on working. By an irony, he added, the war years had been the most peaceful

of his career. Denounced as degenerate and subversive, forbidden to exhibit, he had been left in peace to work as he pleased. Since the Liberation of Paris, he had been subjected to increased annoyance, an exhibition of his paintings had caused a public disturbance, and he constantly received insulting letters.

We spoke in French, of course, Picasso's Spanish accent throaty and lilting, my own accent pronounced but less lyrical, and when he laughed, as he occasionally did, it was akin to a lingering whinny, the humorous neigh of a wild pony on a windswept mesa. I tried to tell him how much I admired his art, which he took in with tolerant indifference, gesturing toward the pictures stacked near the window. He said he would show me the room where he worked on etchings. It was small, opening from the rear of the main studio, and contained principally a large, old-fashioned press with a four-hafted cylinder. But no etchings were to be seen. In one corner was a sink. Picasso turned on the water, letting it trickle for a minute over his fingers, splashing, then shut it off abruptly, spun around, and said, "So? Have you nothing further it's necessary to speak to me about?"

"No, no, nothing," I apologetically admitted.

"Well, then . . ." He shrugged, went back to the studio, where I followed, and took the stairs to the room below, which indeed was filled with large sculptures, though I hardly had the competence to study them. "You understand," he said, "that other people are waiting. I must say goodbye."

"Oh yes," I exclaimed, anxious not to seem presumptuous when I had been nothing else. But I did not forget to limp as we went through into the room where Sabartés and two or three other men waited.

However, the artist added that my visit had been welcome; I had done well to come and see him. Now that I knew the way, and hour, I should not hesitate to return when circumstances allowed. I said thank you and that I would.

Sabartés went with me to the stairway and, saying goodbye, added, "Do take care in case of danger."

"Oh, I've never been in the slightest danger," I said, though this was untrue, and certainly it was time for me to leave, as I had sustained false appearances almost beyond endurance.

My friends, when I got back to MIS HQ, were unimpressed when I let slip the news that their buddy had made the acquaintance of Picasso. Soldiers, to be sure, are famous for being braggarts, tricksters, and liars, a fact gladly agreed upon by them all, making it easier, perhaps, to pretend that they are not in the business of dying young. Mortality was much on my mind despite the actual slightness of danger, and certainly death obsessed Picasso, and maybe my desire to make his acquaintance was dictated not only by admiration but also by fear.

When I reported for reassignment, a supercilious captain told me I was to proceed to Brittany—there to engage in some counterintelligence duty—traveling with several others by rail in a French train due to depart on December 7 at 0700. We missed it, a lovely stroke of luck, laughed, and said we'd take the train on the eighth instead, giving ourselves an extra day to enjoy Paris. I knew immediately what enjoyment I wanted, and the craving must have lain in wait deep within. If Picasso was the obvious person, I could not have known he was the inevitable one. Comprehension, however, is not the key to satisfaction. That chilly December morning the transcendent potential of portraiture took possession of me for the first time, seized me as fiercely as lust, and doubtless it had much to do with cravings of the flesh. By way of what Picasso did, as well as by virtue of what he was, my satisfaction would be made. The temerity of the thing was fraught at the same time with a sense of peril, but I could no more have discarded my idea than I could have thrown myself into the Seine.

Along the Quai Voltaire was a shop that sold supplies for artists, and instinct suggested that even a perfect portraitist might be helped by having the instruments of perfection thrust upon him. I bought a pad of drawing paper and one pencil. They were cheap but were all I could provide in addition to my mere appearance in quest of something to compete with the rot of eternity.

Approaching Picasso's house, I fell into the wounded way of walking on which my access to the place seemed to have been dependent from the outset. Apprehensive, I hung back on the lower steps of the staircase. Then a door flew open on the landing above. Out came the pretty girl who had served the artist's breakfast. She gave me a smile and said I'd no doubt come to see her boss. But it was still a little early; better to wait a few minutes in her place, she advised. I followed her into a small,

dim, low-ceilinged room, crowded with ugly furniture. But the walls were resplendent with Picassos, several of them superb portraits of her.\* I made an admiring exclamation, for here was sudden proof that my purpose might be to the point. The girl's name was Inès. She apologized for having no coffee to offer. The boss himself, she said, had trouble getting supplies, and he had connections. I realized I should have brought something. If ever opportunity came again, I resolved to arrive bearing supplies for all the household.

The few minutes went by, mercifully. Then Inès said she would go up with me. She had a key and unlocked the imposing oak door as if it were nothing. Sabartés was taken aback and said I'd reappeared quickly. Maybe my injury prevented me from resuming duty, thus keeping me out of danger, he remarked. Not really, I said. The sense of danger, however, was piercing. The secretary told me that Picasso expected numerous callers that morning. Was there any matter of particular urgency that warranted the artist's attention? I admitted there was not. He nodded pensively, said he'd see what Picasso had to say, and left me alone, Inès having disappeared. I put down the drawing pad, took off my cap and coat, looked around, and pretended to feel at ease, while intimidation took my breath away. Then Sabartés returned, saying Picasso would be happy to see me again—smiling, I thought, craftily; I was to wait.

The artist soon burst into the room. "So you have been making up to Inès," he said.

"She let me in," I said. "That's all."

"What a story!" he cried. "No wonder you are in the secret service." Sabartés, who had left us alone, came back with several men, to whom I was ceremoniously introduced, though I noted none of their names, and Picasso asked us all to come upstairs with him to the painting studio. There he showed recent canvases, stacking them one above the other to make a pyramid in the light from the window to his left. Though these were the same ones I had seen three days before, the passion of his interest in them seemed as keen as if he were viewing them for the very first time—as if someone else had painted them. And then, curiously, it occurred to me that the real Picasso might not be the man standing

\* Zervos, Vol. 12, Nos. 33 and 34.

and talking before my eyes. Yet I had to believe in his reality if my own presence and purpose were to be believable.

The artist and his friends presently left off looking at pictures to talk about politics, leading to exclamatory exchanges, leaving me out entirely, so I concentrated on the paintings, picking one up from the top of the pyramid to examine it more closely: a small canvas of boats moored beneath a bridge. By making free with it, I felt more in awe of it. I picked up another, this one larger, heavier, a distorted female figure outstretched. What bold élan! Holding Picassos in both hands in his presence, I seemed at liberty to see them not only as a challenge to my discernment but as a feature of my distinction. This was dangerous. When I placed the pictures back on their pyramid, the whole structure went suddenly askew, collapsing with a catastrophic clatter of eight or nine canvases on the tile floor.

Picasso laughed. I was paralyzed by embarrassment, clumsily trying to set the paintings right. He came over quickly and in a minute had put all the pictures one on top of another again. Then, without bothering to lower his voice, he said, "When the others leave, you stay."

It was neither a suggestion nor an invitation, as if the future quite naturally existed at his discretion. After a while he made a move to go back downstairs, the rest of us following like fragments dragged by a magnet. Sabartés took his employer to one side by a window and whispered to him. The others went toward the exit, Picasso accompanying them. When he came back, he said, "You have no plans for lunch." Again it was a declaration of fact, with which I meekly concurred. "Then you will be able to eat with me and a friend," he concluded.

I immediately said yes, never pausing for an instant to wonder why he should invite me. But I knew next to nothing at the time about his art or even about how artists lived.

Picasso picked up his telephone, dialed a number, spoke for a minute or two, put it down again, and shrugged into a woolly tan overcoat. I took my cap, coat, and pad of drawing paper from the chair where I'd put them long before. Sabartés, silent, stayed behind, while Picasso went ahead to the stairs and I limped after him.

In the street, in the open, he seemed smaller. In his studio, where everything pertained only to him, his size seemed immeasurable. Here it was different, yet he was the same man, no less Picasso than before,

and by the very semblance of being small in the perspective of the city he seemed at the same time to be immense, limitless, and, in a word, terrifying.

My chance had come to a crisis. I said, "I have something to ask you."

The artist spun around. His eyes shot at me. "What is it, then?" he demanded, as if he had been waiting just for this.

I was in the void. "I'd like it very much," I said, "if you would make a portrait of me," adding quickly before the end could come, "just a drawing, you know."

He said yes and of course, whenever I wished, but not just then, holding out his hands, palms upward, since he had with him none of the necessities. A pity.

But I had the pad of drawing paper, a pencil.

Picasso had turned away. He was waving to someone who stood waiting at the nearby street corner. It was a woman. True, he had said *une amie*. Still, I was displeased, as it seemed her presence could hardly be compatible with my purpose. However, Picasso then turned back to me and said I'd done very well to bring paper and pencil, and he would be happy to make my portrait. In the restaurant, he said. He led me to be introduced to the woman, asking me to repeat my name for her. She held out her hand without removing her glove and I shook it, while Picasso told me her name, which I didn't catch or care about. I paid attention to her that first time principally because it seemed that she was far more displeased to see me than I could ever have been to see her. Picasso appeared as pleased as Punch, going on ahead, motioning to us both to follow with sweeping, exaggerated gestures that would, in fact, have been well suited to the *commedia dell'arte*. Her name, of course, was Dora Maar.

The restaurant was farther along to the left. Picasso's entrance caused a hush, an atmospheric alteration that wafted me into the empyrean of vicarious importance. The proprietor greeted his illustrious client with servile familiarity. A drawing of him by the artist hung close to the door. Our table was to the right, against the wall. Picasso and Dora sat side by side, and I facing him. I placed my pad on the table. At once the artist produced a blue packet of cigarettes, offering them first to Dora Maar, who took one, then to me—but I refused—before

placing one precisely between his lips. She opened her purse, rummaged in it, and brought out a gold cigarette holder, a slender tube several inches long like a tiny trumpet, with a black Bakelite mouthpiece and a flaring bell, into which she studiously inserted the tip of her cigarette. She had remarkably beautiful hands, the fingers exceptionally slender and graceful, with long, pointed, scarlet nails. Having set the cigarette into its holder, she placed the mouthpiece between her teeth and must have clenched them, because the holder jutted upward at an acute angle from her lips. Then she sat there, staring straight in front of her, moving not a muscle, with the unlighted cigarette projecting into space. Picasso also had his unlighted cigarette in his mouth and also sat stock-still. Then he murmured to his neighbor. He was asking her for a light. But by a barely perceptible shift of her shoulders and features, without a word, she made a negative response. Picasso insisted, mentioning a cigarette lighter. Dora shrugged, didn't glance at him, and remarked that the lighter must have gotten lost, whereupon Picasso began berating her explosively, speaking in Spanish, rapping his knuckles so loudly on the table that people turned to stare. But he appeared supremely indifferent to everyone but Dora, whose own indifference to Picasso and his tirade was evidently absolute, as she simply sat there, the unlit cigarette immobile in front of her face.

The storm stopped suddenly. A puff of air from Picasso's mouth, then stillness. Turning to me, he said, "You have matches. Sure. All soldiers smoke, get drunk, and run after girls."

People all over the world at that moment were selling themselves for cigarettes, and I was compelled to say I didn't smoke and therefore carried no matches. Picasso laughed and took from his jacket pocket a box of matches, lit one, and held it up to Dora's cigarette. She gracefully inclined her head toward the flame and puffed her cigarette alight without glancing at either of us. Picasso lit his own cigarette and dropped the match on the floor.

Edging my pad toward him, I said, "If you could do the portrait now," and put the pencil likewise in front of him. Exhaling an abrupt burst of smoke, Dora then turned to look at us. An extraordinary intensity emanated from her gaze. But she did not speak.

"I'll do it immediately," said Picasso. Taking my chin in his hand, he lifted my head slightly and turned it to the left until the position must have suited him, then said, "Good. Now don't move."

I didn't, sat staring straight ahead, yet I could see what he was doing. He opened the pad, took up the pencil, and studied me fixedly for a moment or two, no more, then drew very fast on the page, glancing again but once or twice. It was done in two or three minutes. "There it is," he said, holding across the pad so that I could see.

I had no first impression, I think. The magic of the effect was too overwhelming. Where there had been nothing, suddenly there was being, of which I was possessed.

Picasso said he would dedicate the drawing and asked me how to spell my name. Then he signed, adding the name of the city and the date, closed the pad, and handed it back to me along with the pencil. Oh, he made in his lifetime tens of thousands of drawings, to be sure, and many, many of these were portraits of people he knew far better than he ever knew me. But genius is wont to fight shy of conquests that are too easy. To capture a likeness is one thing; to accept its surrender is very definitely another. I placed the pad on the chair beside me, feeling that to concentrate immediately on what it contained would be unseemly and compromising.

Then I saw that Dora Maar was looking at me. Her gaze possessed remarkable radiance but could also be very hard. I observed that she was beautiful, with a strong, straight nose, perfect scarlet lips, the chin firm, the jaw a trifle heavy and the more forceful for being so, rich chestnut hair drawn smoothly back, and eyelashes like the furred antennae of moths.

Of the lunch itself—what we ate, etc.—I remember nothing, except that the plentiful quantity and good quality of the food made it clear that we were being fed by the black market. The artist and his mistress spoke occasionally, sometimes in Spanish, and even I now and then managed to find something to say. Picasso took a fountain pen out of his pocket and on the paper table covering drew a face, beginning with the eyes, a woman's face, very lifelike and exquisite, closely resembling Dora. When he put away his pen, she took up a knife, cut away the drawing as expertly as a surgeon, rolled it up carefully, and put it into her purse. Picasso smiled.

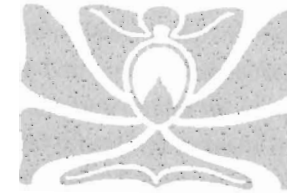
An elderly man from one of the neighboring tables came over to ours to speak to Dora and Picasso, in Spanish, calling him Pablo. That was the first and absolutely the only time I ever heard anyone make free to call the artist by his first name. Dora did not appear to mind. She

meticulously inserted another cigarette into the trumpet tip of her elegant holder, then brought out from her purse a silver lighter and lit it. Turning with reptilian rapidity, Picasso darted his head very close to hers and whispered something into her ear, whereupon both of them burst out laughing, as though struck simultaneously by the thunderbolt of hilarity. It excluded everyone and everything else. The elderly man went away. I sat there. When the laughter of my companions had ended, the meal had ended.

Picasso stood up, so Dora and I did likewise. No money changed hands, no bill was even presented. I later learned that Picasso could, and often did, pay for almost anything with a work of art. We went outside into the gray afternoon, I clutching the pad that now held my likeness. At the street corner where we had met Dora an hour or so before, Picasso turned to me to shake hands and say goodbye, adding that I must come to see him whenever I wanted to. I held out my hand to Dora, who allowed her gloved fingers to be pressed only briefly before withdrawing them but gave a little nod of her head as a sign of politesse. It was then that I realized I had hardly heard her voice during the time we had been together. Picasso walked away beside her along the narrow sidewalk, and hardly had they gone eight or ten paces before she started to speak. I couldn't hear her words but the sound of her speech was quite audible, rising in volume and velocity as they moved away, and they seemed almost to be conveyed physically down the street by the momentum of her utterances.

Alone, I limped along the rue des Grands-Augustins toward the Seine. I didn't look at the drawing. Not yet. It, I felt, would know when the moment was propitious. Already, however, and with such apparent simplicity, my aspiration seemed to have been gratified. I had made the acquaintance of a great artist, the most famed and most emblematic of his era, and had in my possession my portrait from his hand, tangible proof—was it not?—that my person had commanded the scrutiny of a genius. Such consummation, I was aware, came to very few, and so I might naturally have assumed that in this domain of craving I had nothing further to want, that my quest was at an end. But no. It was only beginning.

## C H A P T E R



## T H R E E

I WAS sorely disappointed.

All that Thursday afternoon, wandering the wintry streets and boulevards, again and again I reopened the pad for still another look at the drawing inside,\* as if one more glance might generate the satisfaction I'd wanted. It didn't. But why? The first portrait ever made of me, executed by the most remarkable artist to live during my lifetime, seemed the very image of inadequacy. The secret self must have been up to something. I described in my diary the meal with Picasso and Dora, also the portrait: "A quick little sketch dashed off during lunch." That was all I had to say about the drawing. Why so depreciate a work of art representing such idealistic presumption?

Picasso's attention and creative faculties clearly had not been engaged very deeply either by his model or by his drawing while I sat before him in the restaurant. The ink sketch on the paper table covering had been appreciably more vivid and exciting. I saw in my portrait principally evidences of haste and indifference, its inadequacy, not my own. The rendering of the GI-cut hair, the ear, the body, eye and eyebrow, to be sure, is perfunctory. Not so the profile, though, which is aquiver, especially the mouth, feeling and alive. But I didn't have

\* Zervos, Vol. 14, No. 122.