MANHUNT

WORLD'S BEST SELLING CRIME-FICTION MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY, 1958

35 CENTS

BRUNO FISCHER'S

TENSE, SUSPENSEFUL

"Portraits of Eve"

A HARD, TOUGH STORY

By

John D. Macdonald

EVERY STORY NEW!

Also — GIL BREWER · MIKE BRETT · TALMAGE POWELL
ROBERT TURNER · ARNOLD ENGLISH—and many others

MANHUNT

VOLUME 6, NO. 2 *Cover Painting by Michael* **FEBRUARY, 1958**

CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY

THE PORTRAITS OF EVE *by Bruno Fischer* 50

NOVELETTES

MEET ME IN THE DARK *by Gil Brewer* 13
HOOKED *by Robert Turner* 33

SHORT STORIES

BLACK CAT IN THE SNOW *by John D. MacDonald* 47
BE A MAN! *by Talmage Powell* 29
PRESSURE *by Arnold English* 9
THE HELPING HAND *by Avram Davidson* 24
THE BABE AND THE BUM *by Mike Brett* 62
THE PAINTER *by Michael Zuroy* 1
A REAL QUIET GUY *by Tom Phillips* 4
YOU CAN'T LOSE *by Lawrence Block* 43

MICHAEL ST. JOHN, *Publisher*
FRANCIS X. LEWIS, *Editorial Director*
CHARLES W. ADAMS, *Art Director*
JEFF COOKE, *Managing Editor*
GERALD ADAMS, *Assistant Art Director*
JOE SHORE, *Advertising Rep.*

MANHUNT VOLUME 6, NUMBER 2, February, 1958. Single copies 35 cents. Subscriptions, $4.00 for one year in the United States and Possessions; elsewhere $5.00 (in U. S. Funds) for one year. Published monthly by Flying Eagle Publications, Inc., 545 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. Telephone MU 7-6623. Entered as Second Class matter at the Post Office, New York, N. Y. Additional entry at Concord, N. H. The entire contents of this issue are copyrighted 1957 by Flying Eagle Publications, Inc., under the International Copyright Convention. All rights reserved under Inter-American Copyright Convention. Title registered U. S. Pat. Office. Reproduction or use, without express permission, of editorial or pictorial content in any manner is prohibited. Postage must accompany manuscripts and drawings if return is desired, but no responsibility will be assumed for unsolicited materials. Manuscripts and art work should be sent to Manhunt, 545 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions appearing in this magazine and those of any living or dead person or institution is intended and any similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in U. S. A.

THE PORTRAITS OF EVE

I'd been sent to prison, but then I was pardoned. So I had to find out whether or not I was guilty . . .

A Novelette

by
BRUNO FISCHER

I WAS BACK IN New York City, back in Greenwich Village, and nothing seemed to have changed in the quiet street where I had lived. None of the old houses had been torn down to make room for sleek apartment buildings. At the corner the cluttered Italian grocery still defied the supermarkets, and a few doors farther Ritchie's restaurant lingered on in its basement.

I paused at Ritchie's to peer into one of the barred windows jutting up above the sidewalk. It was early afternoon and the sun was bright, but inside was perpetual gloom, and the candles stuck into wax-encrusted bottles on the wooden tables were lit. Perhaps the same bottles, grown fat with their wax drippings in the ten years since I used to bring Eve here for antipasto and very dry wine.

I crossed the street. That was no longer easy to do. I had to sidle between parked cars. This, then, was the big change in the street and, in a way, in our civilization—the number of cars. In my time, few of us in Greenwich Village had been able to afford a car. Or had needed one or had wanted one. Now both curbs were crammed with those gleaming, chromed, finned monsters. I crossed the street and there was the house in which I had lived.

Its narrow red-brick front had that look of aging gracefully it had had for most of its sixty or seventy years. And as if I had been away for no more than a day, George, the janitor, sat on the stoop lighting his corncob pipe.

The same pipe, perhaps. The same wizened face. Except that the wispy hair had completely disappeared at the top and the rest had turned gray.

"Hello, George," I said.

His hand froze above the bowl of the pipe, and a breeze blew the match out.

"You look like. . ." he said. "You ain't..."

"I am," I said.

He struck another match. This time he got his

light. He puffed, never taking his eyes from me, and after a minute he said, "I thought you was up for life."

"I suppose they figured that ten years was long enough." I looked over his head at the front door that had always been white and always dirty. "I'd like my old apartment back, George."

He sniffed derisively. "You hear of the housing shortage where you were, Mr. Coulter?"

"I've heard of it. I've also heard that the way to get an apartment is to bribe the superintendent."

I was flattering him. He was a janitor, that was all, of this house and several others on the street. But he would have influence with the landlord.

"People live there," he said. "A writer and his missus."

"Has he money?"

"Writers," he sneered. "Like artists. Always broke."

That was a dig at me, that mention of artists.

"If I induce them to move," I said, "can I have the apartment?"

He shrugged. But he rose to his feet and a covetous gleam jumped into his vein-streaked eyes. "Like you said yourself, Mr. Coulter, it will cost you. I don't guess you got rich up in Sing Sing."

"As a matter of fact, I did," I said. "Not exactly rich, but I made a little money. Will two hundred dollars do?"

His manner turned respectful. "Well, now, Mr. Coulter. It'll make the other tenants nervous having you live here. You know how it is—a man who ..." He decided not to put into words what he had been about to say. He ran his tongue around the stem of his pipe and said, "Five hundred bucks. Remember I have to split with the agent."

He was taking advantage of us, but I had expected that. "Agreed," I said. "Now to persuade the tenants." I started up the steps.

"How you gonna do that?" he called after me.

I said, "The same way I did you," and went into the house.

There were six apartments, two on each floor. As I turned on the second floor landing, a door opened and a chubby little middle-aged woman came out. And again I had that sense of nothing having changed. Here was Louise Livingston Baker, the writer of very minor poetry, coming out of the same door to take a garbage pail down to the basement.

"Hello, Louise," I said.

She had seen me, but she hadn't really looked at me. At the sound of my voice, she jumped.

"Carl Coulter!" she whispered like a moan. And she put up the garbage pail as if to ward me off with it and backed toward the door.

I laughed. "I'm not a ghost, Louise."

But that wasn't what bothered her. She feared me because I was real. She kept backing toward her door, as if not daring to turn around, and I saw what the years had done to her. She had been a pretty little thing in her early thirties—a fragile Dresden doll type. Now she was plump and worn.

"Alexander!" she croaked, tearing open the door through which she had come.

Her husband appeared behind her. He said, "What—" and she ducked past him, the garbage pail swinging wildly, and he saw me in the hall.

"Hello, Alexander," I said.

He came out. "Well, Carl," he said and extended a pudgy hand.

2.

Like his wife, he had put on a lot of weight. Most of his was around his middle. He was a musician—a cellist.

We shook hands and he said, "I've been reading about you in the papers—how you've been painting in—in—"

"Prison. Say it. I'm not sensitive about it."

He nodded. "And your paintings have been selling," he went on. "You've become famous."

"Not so very. But I suppose that helped get me out. I got out yesterday."

"I read that too," he said. "About the move to have you pardoned." He looked away from me. "Well, I'm glad," he muttered.

Past him I saw through the door his wife peering at us.

"Then Louise shouldn't have been so startled to see me," I said.

He stood frowning at nothing in particular, and there was a kind of stifling silence. I felt I had to say something, anything. "Are any of the other tenants still here?" I asked.

"Only Louise and I." Alexander Baker looked up. "We've been doing fairly well too. I'm in the orchestra of a musical comedy that's run three years and may run another. Louise had a book of verse published last winter."

"Swell," I said. And then there was no more to be said. "I'll be seeing you, Alexander."

I moved past him and started up the second flight of stairs. I felt him stare at my back and then I heard him go into his apartment. Halfway up the stairs I stopped.

Those old walls were thin and those two must have been standing near the door and I heard him say, "What was the matter with you, acting like that? I told you he was being pardoned."

"I couldn't help myself," I heard her reply. "Seeing him suddenly in the hall, as if he's never been away, I—I became terrified."

"There's no real harm in him."

"Isn't there?" she said. "Why did he come back? What does he want?"

"A compulsion, maybe," Alexander said grimly.

I continued up the stairs and went to the door

at the rear. There I hesitated, listening to a typewriter clicking beyond the door. I had an impulse to turn and dash down the stairs and out to the street and never return. But that other impulse, the one that had brought me here, was stronger. I knocked.

A young woman opened the door. She was tall and slender, the way they grew them these days. Her hair was cut as if with an ax, which seemed to be the fashion, and she wore dungarees.

"Yes?" she said.

I looked past her. A young man was sitting at a typewriter. His hair was touseled and he had a harrassed expression and he also wore dungarees. A writer, George had said, though this studio apartment was better for an artist. He had stopped typing and was staring my way.

"What is it?" she said to me.

I roused. It was, as I had known it would be, a shock to be back here.

"I have a business proposition to discuss with you and your husband."

"A salesman?" she said suspiciously.

"Not at all. I want to offer you a thousand dollars to move out of this apartment."

The young man rose from his typewriter and joined his wife at the door. "Did I hear you say a thousand dollars?"

"You did. May I come in and discuss my offer?"

"You bet!" he said.

I stepped into the room. That was what the apartment really was, a single large studio room, plus a bathroom and a kitchenette that occupied a shallow indentation in a wall and had no door. It was the same and not the same. The furniture was shabbier and the walls needed a coat of paint.

I kept my eyes away from that part of the room where at the high, wide north window I used to work and Eve used to pose for me.

"Let's see if I follow you," he was saying. "You'll pay us a thousand dollars to move out of here?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I'm an artist," I said. "I lived here many years ago. For personal reasons I'd like to live here again."

They looked at each other. I could see that he, at any rate, was greatly tempted. But she, it turned out, was the practical one of the family.

"Where could we find another apartment?" she said. "And it's so expensive to move."

"Very well," I said. "Two thousand."

I should have been more devious. Obviously he was ready to jump at my offer, but the way I had doubled the amount so quickly started something turning in her head. She put a hand on his arm to restrain him and watched my face. Then, as if a mechanism clicked, her eyes got wide.

"An artist," she said. "What's your name?"

If I did not tell them my name, George would, soon enough. They would find out no matter what. I hoped it would mean nothing to them.

"Carl Coulter," I said.

She did not quite cringe away from me, but I think she would have if we had been alone together. Her hand tightened on her husband's arm and something like horror spread in both their faces.

3.

They knew, of course. George would have told all the tenants who had lived in this building after me. And Alexander and Louise Baker would have talked about it, too. For ten years it would have been a conversation piece among the tenants.

An artist used to live in the third floor rear studio. One afternoon he raped a model who was posing for him in the nude and then strangled her. His name's Carl Coulter and he's serving a life sentence in Sing Sing.

Those the bare outlines, and then the embellishments, repeated over and over throughout the years, told especially with gruesome relish to whoever occupied this apartment. And so these two young people now looked at me in a way that made me want to run and hide.

But I would not be deterred from what I had to do.

"Two thousand dollars," I repeated.

The girl recovered. She even smiled a little.

"We'll move for five thousand dollars," she said.

She was the practical one of the two, all right. She guessed what demon was riding men and was out to cash in on her guess. I would have given her all she demanded—what did money mean?—but my funds were limited. So we haggled, my demon against her greed, and I think her husband was ashamed at profiting so greatly from a fellow man's agony. He stood by morose and uneasy, saying nothing, while the girl and I came to terms. Thirty-five hundred dollars.

That settled, I made myself turn to the north window.

There on the floor, in the clean, sharp afternoon light, I had seen Eve for the last time, lying naked and broken and dead, and the marks of her fingernails had been on my hands and arms.

4.

Ten years ago. But in a way it had started almost a year before that.

I was a high school art teacher in my home town in Indiana. I remember how I hated the job of trying to pound the essentials of perspective into bored young heads. I was a creator, not a teacher; I wanted to devote myself wholly to painting. My chance came when an aunt died and left

me three thousand dollars. Not a fortune, but in the late 1940's enough to live on for a year in reasonable comfort. So when the school term ended, I came east to New York.

I was twenty-six years old.

I worked hard and well in that top floor studio apartment in that faded red-brick house in Greenwich Village. And Andre Mierhof became interested in my paintings.

Andre Mierhof was an art dealer who liked to say that his business was investing in the future of young talent. His midtown gallery showed some of the best of the newcomers. Now and then he displayed one or two of my canvases. Not that he sold anything of mine.

Anyway, not that year.

"Have patience," he used to tell me. He was a bean-pole of a man, with a purr in his voice and the suave manners of a—well, of an art dealer. "Sales may not come for years, or in your lifetime, or at all. An artist who is worth his salt paints because he has to. For the rest, he must have patience that may have to last forever."

I had patience, but only a year's worth. After that my money would be gone.

So I worked and had little time and thought for anything else. Including women. The only friends I made were the Bakers who lived in the apartment below.

Alexander Baker was an unsmiling, prematurely bald man in his middle thirties. He was a first-rate cellist who was not quite a genius, so he had to settle for any orchestra job he could get. Louise Livingston Baker was a fragile, twittering little woman who wrote sticky poetry about nature that was sometimes printed in the women's magazines. I refer to her by all three of her names because she always did, even when she wasn't signing it to a poem. As for Alexander, he was always called that, by her and everybody else—never Al or Alex, but the whole works. What I'm getting at is that they were rather stuffy people.

But I remember liking them well enough. My other neighbors were mostly faceless people for whom I had casual hellos on the stairs. The Bakers I would drop in on quite often, and two or three times a week Alexander would come up to my apartment to play chess.

Nine months of my year passed. I had arrived in New York the first week in July. Early in April Eve Staub came to my studio.

I remember it had rained that morning and had stopped in the afternoon and there was a clean freshness in the air that made you throw the windows open wide. I heard voices muttering outside my door and then there was a knock. George, the janitor, stood outside with a strange girl.

"Did you hire a model, Mr. Coulter?" he asked.

"No."

The girl said, "The name Coulter sounds familiar, though I'm not sure that was the name on the slip of paper."

She was young, hardly in her twenties, and quite pretty. That made her unusual as an artist's model; few of them had any looks to speak of.

"What slip of paper? I said.

"Mr. Mierhof wrote the name and address of an artist down for me. I lost the paper. I remembered the address but not the name."

I laughed. "That's Andre, all right, sending me a model without letting me know."

"Then you don't want me?" She was clearly disappointed.

"Of course I do." There was something about her, a kind of wistfulness as she stood in the hall in flat heels and a short leather jacket, that made me very much want to paint her. Andre Mierhof, who knew everything, had known that she would have a special appeal for me. "Come in," I said.

She took a few steps into the room and stopped and looked at paintings of mine on the walls. Some of them were nudes.

I turned to close the door, and George was leaning in and staring slack-faced at the nudes. Then he looked at the girl, and I could see his eyes imagining her posing for me, and he licked his lower lip.

I said, "Thanks for bringing her up, George," and shut the door in his face.

The girl stood with her hands still in the pockets of her jacket. I asked her name and she told me it was Eve Staub, and I remember how she continued to stand there motionless as if waiting for something to happen.

"You can undress in the bathroom," I told her. "There's a robe on a hook."

"You want me to pose in the nude?" she said.

"I would prefer it."

She turned abruptly, but she moved slowly to the bathroom. I went to my easel and removed the canvas on which I had been painting a still life of flowers in a vase and tacked on sketch paper. I was all set for her when she came out in the blue-and-white flowered silk robe I had for models. She seemed to hesitate outside the bathroom door, then came toward me on bare feet with her head down.

"Please stand on that rug," I said. "Assume any pose that occurs to you. I want to start with preliminary sketches."

She stepped on the rug and stood approximately in the pose of a soldier at attention.

"Your robe," I reminded her.

5.

She muttered, "Of course," and fumbled open the sash. Then she turned her head and seemed

to be looking at something outside the window as she pulled the robe down over her shoulders and out of the arms and let it drop to the floor. She had a beautiful body, young and firm, every line of it clean and concise.

I sketched rapidly. I tore off the top sheet and scowled at it. She was too rigid and maybe too beautiful. I had made her seem as sleek and superficial as a woman in a beer advertisement.

"You're not relaxed," I told her.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Relax. Put one hand on your hair and the other on your hip. That's a corny pose, but it may loosen you up. You're—" I broke off as something occurred to me. "Is this the first time you've ever posed?"

"I've posed many times."

"In the nude?"

"Oh, yes. At the Art Students' League. But lately they haven't had much work for me. I'm lucky when I get a class a week." She flushed. "The truth is I never posed like this for just one person."

"Is there any difference between posing for a whole class and posing for me?"

"I guess there shouldn't be." She lowered her eyes—a very demure nude. "But I guess there is. When there's a whole roomful of artists, it's somehow more impersonal."

"Look," I said. "The relationship of artist and model is strictly impersonal no matter what the setting. You ought to know that."

"Oh, I do."

"Then why are you afraid of me?"

"I'm not afraid. Not really."

"Just a little shy?"

She smiled, and she had a wonderful smile, with a lot of wistfulness in it. "I'm sure I'll be all right now," she said.

I resumed sketching.

After I had done a half a dozen sketches, she put on the robe and we had a break for tea. As we sat at the table, she told me a little about herself. She was a senior at New York University. She lived in Brooklyn with her parents. Her father was a garment cutter who was sacrificing greatly to send her through college. Several months ago she had started to pose at the League to earn some money on her own.

We returned to work for another hour. When she had dressed, I paid her the two dollars for the two hours.

"Will you come again tomorrow?" I said.

"I don't think I can. I have a late class."

"Can't you find a couple of hours? I'm anxious to get started on an oil portrait."

She considered and then said, "I can be here at seven-thirty and walk over to the school for my ten o'clock class. Will that be too early for you?"

"Not at all."

I accompanied Eve to the door and she gave me her wistful smile and left.

I remember how afterward I sat down with the sketches I had done of her and looked at them for a long time. I was deciding on a pose for the oil portrait I would start tomorrow. But that wasn't the only reason I looked at the sketches. I was looking at her.

That was the beginning, and from there on the end rushed at us.

6.

There was hardly a day that Eve did not pose for me for a couple of hours and often longer. She never came on Sundays, so Saturdays were the only days when she would not have to rush in before or between or after her classes at N. Y. U. and rush out again after too short a time. She would stay a good part of every Saturday, and she would make lunch for us in the tiny kitchenette or we would go down to Ritchie's basement restaurant and linger long over antipasto and wine before returning up to my studio to resume work.

I remember how completely wasted were the Sundays and the weekdays when for one reason or another she could not come. I could no longer work on anything else. I moped in the studio and took long walks along the river and waited for the next day.

April slipped by. I had finished two full-length portraits of her.

I remember the afternoon I started the third. I had her half-reclining on cushions—a classic Venus pose.

"Aren't you getting tired of the same model?" she commented.

"Tired?" I said, picking up a piece of charcoal. "Why should I?"

"I'd think you'd want variety."

"Cezanne painted the same bowl of fruit over and over. He had something new to say each time he did."

Eve laughed. Her laughter was softly musical and completely relaxed. Reclining on the cushions in nothing but a string of beads, she was now wholly at ease with me.

"I'm not sure how to take being compared to a bowl of fruit," she said. "Though I suppose to an artist they're all the same—a woman or some fruit or a landscape."

I opened my mouth to say something, but I didn't say it. I sketched in her figure on the canvas.

April slipped by and it was May and I had finished the third painting of her. I remember I was putting it into a temporary frame, to hang on the wall with the other two, when Eve came dressed out of the bathroom and stood watching me.

"I suppose now you're through with me," she said.

Through with her! The thought frightened me.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Well, you *are* finished. You won't need me any more."

"I have another in mind." My voice got anxious. "You'll keep coming, won't you?"

"If you want me to. I can use the money."

And I was spending a lot more on models—rather, on one model—than I had planned to. At this rate my funds would never last out the twelve months. But at the moment that was a small matter.

"Then I'll see you tomorrow," I said, going to the door with her.

"I'm afraid I can't come tomorrow."

Something like panic seized me. "But tomorrow's Saturday."

"I'm sorry. I have a date."

"With a boy?"

"It's a usual thing for girls to have dates with boys, isn't it?"

It was a usual thing, but somehow it hadn't occurred to me that she had any kind of life outside of college and her home and my studio. Maybe I hadn't let that occur to me. I hated the boy, whoever he was.

"Can't you break the date?"

She put her hand on the doorknob. "No, I can't," she said crisply. "Do you want me at three Monday afternoon?"

"Of course."

Saturday, then, was a ruined and empty day, and so was Sunday. Then at last it was Monday afternoon, and I had good reason to remember clearly that day and the next.

Eve arrived at a few minutes after three. For this fourth painting I posed her seated in a chair, one arm draped over the back to give her torso a three-quarters perspective, and I stuck a rose in her hair. I hardly begun when there was a knock on the door. I was annoyed; anybody at the door, even if I did not admit him, caused complications. Because there was only that one room, she had to break her pose and go to the trouble of putting on her robe. When she had done so, I went to the door.

Andre Mierhof, impeccable in tweeds, stood in the hall.

"I haven't heard from you in some time, Carl, so I thought I'd drop in and see how you are doing." He stepped over the threshold and saw Eve coming toward us. "Ah, Miss Staub. I can see Carl finally got around to using you."

They shook hands, and Eve said, "I haven't had a chance to thank you for sending me to him. Mr. Coulter has been very generous."

"Actually he should thank me. A model so lovely is by no means—" Andre Mierhof broke off. He was staring at the three portraits of Eve on the wall. "Ah!" he said, going close to them. He turned to me, smiling. "Generous, indeed. I see what she meant. You seem to be immersed in the subject, Carl."

"Any objection?" I snapped.

"Who am I to object? An artist must choose his own subject, and you've done so well with this one." He studied the paintings some more. "I like them. I like them very much. But I see you are working. Don't let me disturb you."

I didn't say anything. Eve was lighting a cigarette.

"Go on, go on," he said. "Certainly you don't mind me watching you."

"I don't," I said. "But there's Miss Staub to be considered."

"Nonsense!" he said. "I've observed Miss Staub posing before. I met her when I visited an artist friend—you know John Yake, don't you?—at his class at the Art Students' League, and she was posing. This is no different. Is it, Miss Staub?"

Eve merely crushed out her cigarette and strode over to the chair and removed the flowered silk robe and resumed the pose. She was a lot more at ease about it than she had been with me alone the first time. And Andre Mierhof seated himself halfway across the room and watched me and watched her.

I didn't like it. Three was nothing wrong with him being there, but I didn't like it. Irritation grew in me. After only a few minutes I turned from the easel and said, "That will be all for the day, Eve."

She gave me a surprised look, but made no comment.

When she was dressed, I paid her for two full hours. She said good-by to Andre Mierhof and to me and the door closed behind her, and I stood scowling at his back. He was again studying those three paintings.

"Sorry," I said, "but I couldn't work with anybody watching me."

"Was that the trouble?" He smiled his very smooth smile. "Carl, I'd like to show these three pictures in my gallery."

"No."

"What?" he said as if he couldn't believe his ears.

"I said no."

"I'll buy them. As speculation."

"I'm not ready to part with them."

"Then sell me one."

"No."

He sighed. "I never quite get used to the idiosyncrosies of artists. No hard feelings, Carl. Any time you change your mind . . ."

"If I ever do," I said, "I'll let you know."

I remember that before he left he took one more long look at the three nudes of Eve Staub.

7.

That evening Alexander Baker came up to play chess, as he often did. He brought his wife with him. Though I was often in their apartment, Louise had not been in mine more than once or twice.

"I'll stay only a minute," she twittered. "I simply must see your pictures of that charming Eve Staub."

The Bakers had met Eve twice. Once when we had been in Ritchie's, they had come in and joined us at our table. Another time I had been accompanying Eve down to the street when we had met them coming up the stairs and they had invited us in for coffee. Of course they had found her charming.

"Those there on the wall," I told her.

Louise looked from one canvas to the other, and I could see the fragile lines of her face harden. She turned away.

"Don't you agree with me they're works of genius?" Alexander asked her. Rather anxiously, I thought.

"I think they're lewd," she said.

I was deeply shocked. I had not suspected she had so nasty a mind. I had nothing to say.

"Now, Louise," Alexander said miserably, "there's no need to insult Carl."

Her mouth was primly tight. She opened it. "I consider it an insult to me to show me such vulgarities." She relented a little. "I realized I asked to see them. I am not blaming you, Carl; I am afraid I will never understand men." She twittered again. "Now I'll leave you two to your game."

She went, and for a moment there was an uncomfortable silence. Then Alexander said, "I should have stopped her from coming up. I was afraid she would react like that. I really believe they're great works of art, Carl."

"Thanks."

I set up the chessboard. The first move was his, but he didn't make it. He twisted on his chair to look at the portraits.

"You're in love with that girl," he said.

"Am I?"

"It's conveyed by every stroke of your brush. Do you mind my mentioning this?"

"I'm not ashamed of how I feel about her," I said.

Alexander moved a pawn and stroked his bald pate and said, "Is she your mistress?"

I managed to restrain myself from reaching across the table and hitting him.

He saw what was in my face. "No offense, Carl," he said quickly. "But you admit you love her, and—well, she does pose in the nude for you."

"She's a model and I'm an artist," I said. "I never as much as put a hand on her."

"I'm a blathering idiot! I apologize most sincerely. Forget I said anything."

We played. It was not a good game. It ended, as I remember, in a draw, and we did not play a second game. He seemed glad to get away and I was glad to see him leave.

I could not forget what he had said. I thought about it during the restless night. My love for Eve showed in my paintings for everybody to see. What kind of a man was I to make love only with paint on canvas? This was a kind of sickness. I was flesh and blood and she was flesh and blood.

Next day I touched Eve for the first time. I put my hands on her shoulders and kissed her.

It was late afternoon. She had come at three o'clock after a class, and it was six o'clock and she was about to leave. I waited until she was dressed before I kissed her.

I remember how she jerked her head aside and drew away from me. I held onto her shoulders, saying, "Eve, I love you."

"Let me go!"

"Eve, you don't understand. I want you to marry me."

She broke away from me. I went after her. I threw my arms about her. I was possessed by my need of her.

She did not struggle. She stood limply within my embrace and said, "Carl, I'm in love with somebody else."

My arms fell from her.

"Who?" I said.

"A boy who goes to N. Y. U. with me. We're going to be married."

I stared at her. "You never mentioned him."

"There's no reason why I should have."

No reason. I had been no more to her than an employer—a man who hired her for a job of work.

I said dully, "When will you be married?"

"Early next month, as soon as we both graduate." She picked up her school books. "I'm afraid you've made it impossible for me to pose for you any more."

"Eve, in heaven's name! At least let me finish this one. You can't walk out on me."

"You've made it so—so personal."

"Eve, I swear it will be just the way it was before. I give you my solemn word."

She chewed her lower lip. "We certainly can use the money," she said, speaking more to herself than to me. "We have so little to get started with. Every bit will help." She looked up, and her tone and manner were business-like. "I'll be here tomorrow at eight. I'll be able to give you all morning."

So we continued, but it was different. She did not chatter the way she used to while posing and we no longer went down to Ritchie's restaurant. We were more remote than we had been that first day.

But I was grateful to have her at all—to be able to have her there and love her with my eyes and with my paint brushes.

8.

In the middle of May my money gave out.

I had not expected it to happen so soon and I had been careless about keeping my checkbook up to date. There was a day when a check to the electric company bounced, and I remember how I went into a sweat of terror at the realization that all I had to my name were the very few dollars in my pocket. I was not so much concerned about paying my bills and even eating. Each one of the dollars I had left meant an hour of Eve. When they were gone, as they would be in a couple of days, Eve would be gone.

I put in a long distance call to my brother who had a small lumber yard in Indiana. He complained that business was bad, but in the end promised to send me fifty dollars—a lot less than I had asked for. Still, that would be enough to pay Eve for the rest of the month if I cut down my other expenses to the bone. Meanwhile, until that money arrived, every cent I had would have to be reserved for Eve.

There happened to be very little food in the apartment. I finished it off next day and went to bed hungry. The day after that I had a couple of slices of stale bread and some tea and then there was nothing left. I thought of going down to the Bakers for a meal, but ever since Louise had called my portraits of Eve lewd I had stayed away from that apartment. I was hungry, but I had money for Eve. I paid her two dollars one day and three dollars the next day, and then I had exactly seven cents left. I was sure the check from brother would arrive in the morning.

At ten o'clock next morning I was waiting on the stoop for the mailman. Usually he arrived at ten after ten. That morning he was late. I rushed to him and he shuffled through his letters for the building. Nothing for me. No check from my brother.

I remember standing in the hot May sunlight and hearing my heart thump. Eve was due at eleven. If I did not pay her today, would she come back? There was so little time anyway before she graduated from N. Y. U. and got married and would never again pose for me. Was I to lose even those few remaining days?

I had seven cents. In those days a nickel was enough for the subway. I rushed uptown to Andre Mierhof's apartment on West End Avenue. Though it was a quarter to eleven, I had to rouse him out of bed. I asked him for money.

"My offer stands," he purred. "I'll buy one or all of those three nudes. Or are there more than three now?"

"I'll not part with them."

Standing lean and dapper in a silk dressing gown, he shrugged. "Then evidently you don't want money."

"All I'm asking for is five dollars till tomorrow."

He frowned at me and went for his wallet and took out a bill. I snatched it from him and ran.

My legs wobbled as I went down the subway stairs. I was weak with hunger, but I had no time to stop to eat. It was eleven already, and Eve might leave if she didn't find me in.

George was bringing out the ash cans as I ran up the stoop. He called after me, "That model of yours went up a while ago." When I plunged into my studio, I had no breath left in me.

I had left my door unlocked and I found her leafing through an art magazine. I gasped out apologies. She merely nodded and went into the bathroom to undress and I at once set to work assembling my brushes and paints. That fourth portrait was almost finished.

I remember the silence between us as she sat, and I remember how utterly fatigued I felt as I stood at the easel. I had run too much and not eaten and my legs would hardly hold me up. I remember putting down my palette and taking a step toward her and Eve starting to rise from the chair and saying in an oddly constricted tone, "Carl!" What happened after that I cannot remember clearly. There was a kind of shimmering vagueness, and we were coming together somehow, she infinitely beautiful in her nakedness, and as from far off there was her voice again, crying, "Carl!" and her voice faded and she faded and for a while there was nothing.

There was nothing and then there was something, as if I had been in a dark pit and was emerging up into the light. I kept pushing myself up from the pit—an actual physical effort that I realized was the slow and laborous task of rising to my feet. I remember myself standing, then, and swaying and looking down at Eve.

She was very still. She lay sprawled on the floor in a grotesque and obscene position. Her eyes were wide open, staring without sight at the ceiling. And, God help me, I could see her tongue.

I knew she was dead.

I became aware of scratches on my bare forearms and on the backs of my hands—deep furrows tinged with blood. I bent and saw her fingernails broken and I saw blood on the tips of her fingers. My blood.

I did not remember leaving my apartment, but I remember being on the floor below and pounding on the door of the Bakers' apartment. There was no answer. I descended another flight of stairs. George was sitting on the stoop filling his corncob pipe.

"George," I heard myself say, "call a policeman."

9.

The trial was short. I remember how it seemed that almost before it began the jury was filing in

and I could see by their faces what the verdict would be.

The scratches were what did it, mainly. Flecks of skin and blood were found under her fingernails, and the blood was the same type as mine. And when I took the stand for my own defense, I could not say that I had not done it. I could only say that I did not believe I could have done it.

"I loved her," I blurted out. "Would I have killed her when I loved her?"

I remember how the prosecutor had smiled at that, as if my words had assured his victory over me. He made me admit that I had known she was to marry another man within three weeks. Later he devoted much of his summation to the jury to that. He made a great deal of the fact that I, who loved her and had been rejected by her, continued to see her every day in my apartment in the nude. Those three portraits of her, three finished and one nearly finished, were there in the courtroom, and I remember shrinking into myself as the prosecutor showed them once more to the jury. She had posed for me like this, he said, and the time was nearing when she was to marry another and would be out of my life forever, and on that morning, on or about eleven-thirty, I had leaped at her and raped her and finally strangled her.

The jury was convinced beyond reasonable doubt. And could I, myself, not be convinced?

I was given a life sentence.

The first time my brother came to visit me in Sing Sing he told me that Andre Mierhof had asked him to let him have all my pictures for a one-man show. My brother had shipped everything of mine to his home in Indiana, including the four portraits of Eve, which had been evidence and after the trial had been turned over to him as my next of kin. I knew Andre Mierhof wanted to cash in on my notoriety. I didn't care. I told my brother to let Andre Mierhof have whatever he wanted—except those four portraits.

Shortly after that Andre Mierhof visited me. He wanted the portraits.

"Never," I said.

"You'll never see them again," he said. "Why not let others?"

"Never. It was bad enough having them drooled over in the courtroom."

When he was gone, I thought of writing my brother to destroy them. But I didn't.

The warden was kind to me. I was, I suppose, a model prisoner, and after a while he let me have the materials with which I could resume painting. I began to do my best work in prison. I became known. I sold. Life was not unpleasant. I was behind bars, but I was doing what I most wanted to do.

I had plenty of time to think, and I knew what I would do if I ever got out.

I got out after ten years, pardoned by the governor.

It took three weeks for the young couple who occupied my studio—always I had thought of it as mine!—to find another apartment and move out. I moved in, and the first thing I did was open the box containing the four portraits of Eve. I had had my brother send them to me from Indiana where all this time they had been in his attic. I hung three on the wall and placed the unfinished one on the easel.

Everything was as it had been. Except that Eve was long dead.

10.

Andre Mierhof came to see me. He stepped through the door and saw the three portraits on the wall and the fourth on the easel and stood stock still.

"What are you after, Carl?" he said.

"I'm not sure. Maybe to try to pick up the pieces."

He put a fatherly hand on my shoulder. "Carl, this is a haunted place for you. You'll be living with ghosts."

"They're my ghosts," I said.

"One can't live in the past. That's a kind of madness. Carl, let me help you." He was an elderly, gray-haired man now, but the purr had never left his voice. "Let me take those pictures off your hands. They're no good for you."

I laughed out loud. "You never give up, do you, Andre?"

He laughed with me, which was like him.

Later that afternoon I went down to the floor below and knocked on a door. It opened halfway and Louise Baker's aging face appeared. I think she would have slammed the door if I had not held my shoulder against it.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

"I'd like to see Alexander."

"He's not in."

Clearly she was scared sick of me. I was not an old friend. I was a man who murdered women.

"I want to ask him to play chess with me this evening," I said.

"He works evenings. He plays in an orchestra."

"Then he must have free time during the day. Would you mind telling him to come to see me?"

"Yes, yes," she said, continuing her frantic pressure on the door.

I stepped back and the door slammed. I heard the lock being turned.

I stood in the hall for I don't know how long before I went down to the street. I made a tour of Village bookstores, asking for a recently published volume by Louise Livingston Baker. It wasn't easy to find, but after a while I did. It was called,

My Heart Goes Out, and that night I read it. I had never read such dull slop, all about the birds in the air and the flowers in the fields and her immortal soul. All the same, I read every line.

Alexander did not come up to play chess, not next day and not any day. Maybe he came while I was out. More likely she hadn't given him my message.

I was out a great deal that week. I visited model agencies and art schools and artists and photographers; I went everywhere and to everybody who had anything to do with models. Whenever I heard of a girl in the profession who at all resembled the description I gave, I got in touch with her. Most of the girls were all wrong. Those who were not wrong were not right enough.

Eventually I found her by hunting through back issues of photography magazines. There was a full-page shot of her in a brief bathing suit against a background of sky and sea. I looked up the photographer and obtained the model's name and address. Luckily she lived in the city. I phoned her and made an appointment with her at my studio the following afternoon. Her name was Margery Dawson.

I was somewhat disappointed when she walked in. She was taller and heavier and her face was too healthy-looking for wistfulness. But when she had her clothes off and assumed posing positions, I thought she would do. I had an artist's eye and memory, but for others ten years would be a long time to remember exactly.

I did not touch charcoal or brush. I told her to dress, and when she had done so I had a long talk with her. I had trouble persuading her. What did it was the substantial fee I offered her. I had been learning, since I had got out of prison, what money could accomplish.

Even though I had talked Margery Dawson into it, she left obviously somewhat uneasy about me. I would not have been surprised if she had not returned next day. But she did.

When she arrived, I phoned Andre Mierhof and asked him to be at my place at four o'clock. He got there at ten to five, which was about par in punctuality for him. He came in, saying, "What's so all-fired urgent that you—" and choked on the rest of the sentence.

She was posed in the pose he had seen ten years ago for that fourth and unfinished painting, sitting partly turned with her arm over the back of the chair and a rose in her hair.

Slowly he let out his breath. "For a moment I could have sworn she was—" He worked up a smile. "So you are finishing that fourth portrait!"

I said, "I thought you'd be interested," and went to the easel. I picked up palette and brush and made gestures at the canvas, but actually I added nothing that mattered. I could not, of course, ever finish it, for no model could take Eve's place.

Andre Mierhof did not stay long, he did not, as he had that other time, sit and watch my model. He seemed in a hurry to go. I accompanied him out to the hall where we could speak in private.

"You can't fool me, Carl," he said. "You're not painting her." And he repeated the question he had asked a week ago. "What are you after?"

11.

This time I told him. "The truth," I said.

"You think you'll find it here?"

"Where else?"

He sighed. "What do you mean by the truth?"

"I must know if I could have killed the only girl I had ever loved."

He said, "Suppose you find out you hadn't. What good can it do you now? Can it bring her back to life? Can it bring you back your ten years?"

"I have to know," I said.

He gave my upper arm a pat and started down the stairs. I returned to the studio.

Margery Dawson had put on her robe and was looking through Louise Livingston Baker's book of poems on the table.

"The sight of you startled him all right," I told her. "He was the important test."

I went to the phone and called up George in his basement room and said a pipe in the bathroom had burst. That done, I told the girl to resume her pose on the chair. Within a few minutes there was a knock on the door and I sang out, "Come in."

George entered with a heavy toolbox. He turned to me at the easel, thereby turning to the model also, and his jaw dropped. That was all that happened. He was merely an old man gawking at a naked young woman.

"Well, George, what is it?" I said.

"I come to fix the pipe."

"What pipe?"

"You phoned you have a busted pipe."

"Are you out of your mind? It must have been somebody else. Don't stand there. You're embarrassing the lady."

He left dragging his feet.

When the door had closed behind him, I wiped my sweaty hands on my pants. I felt suddenly very tired. The girl sat with her body slack and her face pale. She seemed to be exhausted, too.

"Just one more," I told her. "It's close to dinner time. He's sure to be home.

I dialed a number on the phone. Louise Baker answered.

"I'd like to speak to Alexander," I said.

"Who is this, please?"

"Carl Coulter."

"He's not—"

"Put him on!" I cut her off. "Let him speak for himself."

Perhaps she needed to be shouted at. She said weakly, "Just a moment," and after a pause Alexander's voice was on the line.

"What is it, Carl?"

"Come up to my place at once."

"I can't. Louise will be serving dinner soon."

"Something has happened," I said. "It concerns you vitally."

"What?"

"I can't tell you on the phone. I advise you to hurry."

The line sounded empty. I was beginning to think he was no longer on it when I heard his voice. "I'll be right up," he said.

He wasn't right up. I had never thought that minutes could be so long in passing. I kept wiping my hands on my pants and Margery Dawson sat silent and pale and huddled on the chair.

Then there were footsteps on the stairs, followed by tapping on the door.

At that moment I decided to do it a bit differently. I whispered to her to lie down on the floor. She stared at me in bewilderment.

"Do as I say," I whispered harshly. "Quick!" She obeyed. "No, sprawled out on your back. That's it, but looser, as if you were dead. Good enough."

The tapping on the door grew louder. I stretched out on the floor near the girl. We lay half a dozen feet apart, the naked girl limp as a bundle of rags and I. That was the way it must have been ten years ago.

"Come in," I called.

I heard the door open. From where I lay, I could see only the stubby legs, but I could imagine the rest of him, the potbelly and the always solemn face and the glistening bald scalp. I saw the feet move. They took two or three hesitant steps into the room, then they stopped.

He screamed like a woman.

The feet turned and plunged out through the open door.

12.

In a few minutes I followed him. I knocked on the door of the apartment below mine. Nobody came to admit me. The knob turned in my hand; the door wasn't locked. I went in.

Alexander sat hunched on the sofa and Louise stood over him. Both were turned to the door, their heads and torsos held in a kind of helpless immobility as they had watched it open and now stared at me enter. His face was shattered, but hers was like stone.

"What are you doing to him?" she said to me.

I spoke to him, not to her. "Does she know?"

Alexander nodded as if he were unaware of nodding.

I closed the door and stood with my back against it. "I suppose she was here with you when Eve banged on the door that morning. She saw you leave with Eve and she saw you come running back; and later, after I had found that Eve was dead had come down and knocked on your door, you kept Louise from opening it. You couldn't let anybody see you, not me then and not the police when they arrived. Because of the scratches on your hands and arms. You had to keep under cover till they healed. But Louise had seen you come and go and had seen those scratches and had known what they meant."

Louise said, "I knew nothing. There was nothing to know."

I ignored her. I continued to speak only to Alexander.

"I passed out that morning while Eve posed for me," I said. "I was weak with hunger and I had done too much running about and I fainted. Eve got frightened when she couldn't revive me. She ran for help. Whom would she go to in this building? Not to total strangers when she knew there were friends of mine. Maybe to George. There was always that possibility. During all my thinking about what must have happened, I had to consider George—that she had gone for him first or that she had gone for him after she had not found you at home. But this was the first door she would have knocked at. You were closer than George, and you were my friends. So she knocked and you were in and you went up to my apartment with her. Ther you found that I had merely fainted. And Eve was very close to you, wearing only that thin silk robe. You knew what she was like under the robe. You had seen my paintings of her many times. I remember how during our chess games you used to keep glancing at them. And there she was and I was unconscious and you—"

"Stop it!" he burst out. "Haven't I gone through hell for ten years?"

I found that, after all, I did not hate him so very much.

"I've been reading the poetry of Louise Livingston Baker," I said. "They are all about things, never about people. They are full of love for nature, but never for a man. There's no blood in them. No sex."

"I do not write of lewdness," Louise Livingston Baker said stiffly.

I looked at her. "Poor Alexander!" I said. "I remember you called my paintings of Eve lewd." I looked at him. "It could not have been easy on you, Alexander, living with a woman who was too pure, too disembodied, to consider sex anything but lewdness."

"Yes," he said in a small voice, and he put his head in his hands. Then he looked up. "Something came over me. As you said, Carl, there had been those pictures of her whenever I had been in your apartment, and then that morning there she was

kneeling beside me and the robe fell partly open." He uttered a broken sob. "God help me, I didn't know what I was doing."

I said, "But you knew what you were doing afterward when you choked her to death."

"I had to. She was going to scream. I held her by the throat to prevent her from screaming. I didn't want to . . . I didn't mean to . . ."

His voice went to pieces.

I said, "But you meant to do what you did after she was dead. You saw the scratches on your skin and you saw your blood on her fingers. You knew the police would look through the building for somebody who had been scratched. You had to keep that from happening. You had to make it appear that I was the one against whom she had struggled, so you made those scratches on my hands and arms with your own fingernails. As it turned out, luck was with you because we were both the same blood type. Type O, the most common. Oh, yes, you were lucky. I was in jail and you were outside. But I wonder how lucky you really were. How bad were those years, Alexander? How deep in hell were you?"

He was about to tell me, but Louise didn't let him.

"You've said too much already," she scolded him as she would a small boy. "He has no evidence. He can't hurt you."

Alexander laughed in a way that was not nice to hear. "Can't hurt me!" he muttered. "Dear God, can't hurt me!"

"Exactly," she snapped. "Bear that in mind. He has no evidence." She turned to me, and that little, chubby woman stood like a rock in that room. "Please leave," she said to me. "You must see that you can prove nothing. You can do nothing."

Without a word, I went out through the door and back to my studio and the four portraits of Eve.

Louise was right—I couldn't do anything. But Alexander could. During the night he cut his throat.