



Artrage

A Novel by
**Everett
Aison**

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By Everett Aison

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Mace Caslon's eyes open slowly as he awakens. He remains lying on his back on a futon, looking off into space, remembering details of his dream about Margo: her forest green toenails; thick tufts of dark, curly pubic hair; the look of intense sexual pleasure when she bites her lower lip during orgasm; and his mouth biting her armpit.

Mace sits up and switches on the television, rolls off the futon onto a mat, and begins a series of lower backstretches, lifting his knees to his chest. The television screen is filled with details of a contemporary painting: magnified brush strokes of bright primary colors dance across the screen in an acrylic symphony of color.

"Good morning," says the female news anchor, "Prices continue to swing wildly at this week's auctions in New York City. Last night, a portrait of his mother by the eighteen-year-old Czech prodigy Patocka Bloom was purchased by the Art Institute of Chicago for three hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars."

Looking annoyed, Mace snaps off the TV.

Before entering the shower, he studies his face in the bathroom mirror, deciding whether to shave today. Reflected from the wall behind him, a framed cut paper nude figure by Matisse catches his eye.

Entering the shower, Mace adjusts the showerhead to full intensity, letting the strong force of the water massage his neck and lower back. He remembers himself at fifteen sitting under a lofty Dutch elm tree, studying a book of Matisse paintings while a pretty redheaded girl lazily draws circles on his naked back.

"How come you don't draw?"

He doesn't answer her.

"You'd be a good artist."

"I just like to look at paintings."

"Don't you want to be an artist?"

"I don't have the talent."

"How do you know that?"

Mace turns a page, staring at the sensuous line drawing of a Matisse nude.

"I know," he finally answers.

Returning to the present, Mace turns off the shower.

A gloriously sunny day finds hundreds of people sitting on the staircase leading up to the main entrance of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Japanese, Germans, Italians, Britons, Chinese, Australians, Canadians, along with Americans from all over the nation talk and flirt together while basking in the noonday sunshine.

Each is wearing a set of headphones, through which they hear: "De Kooning, thirty and one half, up two; Homer, eighty-six, unchanged; Warhol, forty-four, up four; Schnabel, three and one half, down twelve... ."

Mace and Peter Marrell pass along Fifth Avenue in front of the Met.

“Last night at the auction, a Swiss dealer asked me if I thought you’d sell him one of her paintings.”

“What did you tell him?” asks Mace.

“I said I didn’t know.”

Mace looks confused by Peter’s answer. They continue walking along Fifth Avenue.

“Tuesday was a disaster. One of my clients backed out of an agreement after I bought a Stella for him.”

“If you’re in trouble, I’ll help you out.”

“It’s not the money. This guy is one of my oldest clients, and he still tried to screw me. I know you’d never sell her paintings. My head’s not screwed on straight.”

On television screens across the nation, viewers watch magnified details of a colorful sculpture-collage composed of everyday household objects wittily placed together forming a human body in the shape of a weightlifter tensing his chest muscles.

A smartly dressed Asian American woman stands next to the piece, smiling.

“The Home Shopping Network is proud to offer the exclusive rights to this important self-taught artist’s recent work.”

An 800 number appears across the sculpture.

In a huge, expensively furnished bathroom, a muscular female plumber lies on her back under a golden sink while a thin male assistant stands watching her.

“Hand me that wrench.”

He hands her a wrench. She loosens a small pipe, and adjusts another.

“My dealer says she’ll give me a show next year if I can deliver twenty pieces by August. I work big—that’s a lot of paint and canvas.”

He thinks about what she’s just told him before answering.

“You’re lucky. I can’t find a dealer who’ll even check out my slides.”

I won’t allow myself the pretension of describing it as an epiphany. I’m comfortable recognizing it as a personal defining moment of decision.

At 4:30 on a Thursday afternoon, I left my office early and took a cab to the luxuriously understated high tech spaces of the Mellon Merrill-Forbes Foundation in the Chelsea section of Manhattan.

On exhibition were the paintings of Ms. Shakima Lilly-Pond and David Cillie, dual recipients of the three hundred thousand dollar “Biennial Career Incentive Awards,” considered by many in the art world to be the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in American painting.

Both artists worked “big”, and the huge gallery spaces at the foundation provided them with an excellent showcase for their canvases. Lilly-Pond’s twelve pieces graphically lettered the word “Hate” on floor-to-ceiling unprimed canvases using a different typeface

in the language of every member of the United Nations.

David Cillie's work was executed in a style of painted collage, and it attempted to sum up the visual, multi-textured images of the last quarter of the twentieth century: twelve-foot tall porno photos float above Cambodian, Tibetan, Mexican, African, and Albanian refugee portraits while cold, abstract geometric shapes collide against black and white photos copied from gun catalogues.

All of Cillie's works share three things (he's a triple threat): an inability to draw, an inability to paint, and an inability to think.

I spent an hour circling around and around the galleries gazing in disbelief at the banality of their work. Rage, frustration, and a deeply personal dissatisfaction with myself—no epiphany—just the sharp realization that I had come to the end of my status quo.

On television screens across the country, details of an eye, mouth, and breast are followed by a full-sized picture of Picasso's painting of *Universal Woman*.

A female anchor speaks with religious awe.

"Good morning. Last night at an auction in New York City, despite the world's economic fluctuations, American collectors Cora and Simon Nobel acquired Pablo Picasso's rarely seen 1934 masterpiece, *Universal Woman*, for forty-one million dollars."

Magnified details of the painting appear on the screen.

"Long held in a private collection, this Picasso is one of the few never exhibited to the public."

The picture changes to Cora and Simon Nobel, dressed in carefully tailored unisex suits, standing next to each other in their Manhattan townhouse. While holding hands, they smile blissfully out at the nation.

"Owning this magnificent Picasso has been our lifelong dream," says Simon Nobel.

"Loaning *Universal Woman* to the Metropolitan Museum for two weeks is our way of sharing it with the American people," says a beatific Cora, as the TV screen becomes filled with their close-ups.

At six a.m. on a crystal clear morning, Mace runs along the Hudson River in Riverside Park, moving at a brisk eight-minute mile pace. Visions of lying next to Margo begin floating through his thoughts. She turns to him with an anguished look on her face.

"I'm beginning to be attracted to other men. For the first time in our relationship, I find other men exciting."

Mace doesn't respond.

"It has nothing to do with you. I know it's my own nuttiness. I felt I had to tell you."

Mace continues to show no emotion.

"You understand it's not about you. What are you thinking?"

Mace takes her hand and puts it on his growing erection, causing Margo to burst out laughing.

In an executive office at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Richard Wilson, an African American dressed in a Brooks Brothers vested suit sits next to Mace as they leaf through a portfolio of drawings.

“When did you get this one?” Richard asks.

“In college. On weekends I’d hang out with artists and buy drawings I liked on time. When you put it in the show, list it ‘from a private collection’.”

Richard smiles at Mace in mock amazement.

“You’re one of the few collectors who doesn’t want recognition. That’s un-American.”

Mace enters his apartment, switches on the lights, revealing paintings, drawings, and framed photographs covering every inch of the walls and stacked up against the four corners of the room, in some form of ordered confusion.

He pushes the message button on his answering machine.

“Hello, Mace, it’s Margo. Please pick up the rest of your books this weekend. I need the space. Nicholas is acting out like crazy. If he calls you, please ask him to call me. I hope you’re well.”

“Mace, it’s Tony. That motherfucker put a padlock on my loft door. I’m locked out of my own studio. Can that prick do that legally? Call me as soon as you get in.”

“Hi. It’s Nick. My mother’s a jerk, and I think her new husband’s a bigger dickhead than my old man. When can I see you? I’ll call back later.”

Mace stops the machine and dials Tony.

“Tony, it’s Mace.”

“Mace, that prick locked me out. All my work’s in there ... paintings, drawings, everything. I’m going to go over and rip his fucking lock off.”

“Don’t do that. I’ll call him in the morning.”

“It’s gangster time in this city, Mace. I don’t want to live here anymore. Call me as soon as you talk to him.”

Preoccupied with thoughts of Nick’s phone call, Mace pours himself a beer and walks around the room removing one painting from the wall and replacing it with another.

He lifts a twelve-inch African Dogon geometrically carved figure of a slender man covering his face, whose features are hidden behind oversized hands.

Mace remembers it standing on a night table in his and Margo’s bedroom, whose eggshell white walls are hung from floor to ceiling with framed drawings and lithographs.

Margo walks out of the bathroom wearing an orange T-shirt that ends just above her pubic hair. Mace, in bed reading *The Art of the Dogon*, puts the book aside, watching her aimlessly walking around their bedroom. Distractedly searching through a pile of books, she selects a copy of *Max Beckmann’s Self-Portraits* drops it on her side of the bed, stops moving and stands looking at Mace as he watches her.

“I think I’ve fallen in love with a German guy I met in Dresden. He owns a gallery

there and one in Cologne. I know it's bonkers, but he wants me to fly to London next week and drive through Scotland with him."

A slight hint of a smile forms on Mace's face.

"Why don't you take me along and I'll see if he's the right guy for you now."

"Mace, I know it sounds crazy. I still love you, but I have to go with him because I need to figure this out."

"What do we tell Nick about your trip?"

"I don't know yet. He'll be confused, but I can't think about him tonight. If you really love me you'll let me explore my interest in another man."

His remembrance over, Mace shifts his gaze from the Dogon to the stack of books piled on the floor next to his futon. Selecting a thick edition of *Picasso in the 1930s*, he flops down, turning the pages until he finds a full-color reproduction of *Universal Woman*.

Seated on a purple and yellow chair backed with red leather, riveted with golden studs, *Universal Woman's* large, kidney-shaped face looks out in a wide-eyed gaze as her large uncircumcised-penis-shaped nose, with two black dot nostrils, points up to the top of the canvas. Her blood-red horizontal slash of a mouth has an enigmatic smile. The end of her blonde ponytail swings out from her right side, above two oval-shaped breasts touching each other.

Tightly fitted into a pink, green and red sweater, her left elongated teardrop arm rests comfortably on the yellow right arm of the chair. Her right elongated teardrop arm swings out over her leather belt with its silver buckle fastened above her black and dark green vertically striped trousers. Both of her hands are soft, puppy-like paws.

All of *Universal Woman* is surrounded by a coral green background.

It's one of those beautifully clear Manhattan days: seventy-three degrees with a light breeze from across the Hudson River. I walk across Central Park, trying not to think about how my life will be irrevocably changed.

On Fifth Avenue, I make eye contact with a short, energetic, bow-legged woman wearing a 1940s-style cream colored suit, who I've frequently passed in the morning on my way to the office. We discreetly flirt with each other, but never talk. Today, she stopped walking.

"How come you look me over and never say anything?" she asked. I smiled, watching her dark eyebrows moving up and down, wondering how thick her pubic triangle is. I noticed a tiny bit of orange lodged between her front teeth.

"Are you married? Or just shy? Shy turns me on. You're a lawyer, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," I manage to say.

"I'm a shrink," she says with confidence, handing me her card. "I don't really care if you're already taken, call me anyway."

Not knowing that five minutes later I would toss her card into a garbage can outside the entrance to the Met, that lady would spend tomorrow expecting a call from the police.

In a special exhibition space created within the Twentieth Century Art Galleries of the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art hundreds of people of varying ages and ethnic backgrounds, each wearing an acoustiguide headset, patiently stand, waiting their turn to view Picasso's *Universal Woman*, which hangs cordoned off behind a red velvet rope.

A female guard stands by its side, instructing a visitor from Korea that he is not permitted to take a photograph of the painting. Visitors stand in front of the canvas for one minute before politely moving along so that the next group may see the masterpiece.

Mace enters the gallery, waits in line for fifteen minutes before deftly positioning himself directly in front of the painting. Studying the Picasso with obvious pleasure, and in no hurry to move on, he is soon circled by a group of people.

Mace removes a can from his jacket, and in one smooth, rapid arc, sprays acid evenly over *Universal Woman*, which instantly begins smoldering.

People freeze in shock and horror. The female guard stands motionless in disbelief. A large woman faints. Three men try to catch her before she hits the carpeted floor. Showing no emotion, Mace watches the acid progressively eat away the canvas.

Men and women begin wandering around in erratic, dazed circles. A group charges out of the room, while others huddle together transfixed by the acid's rapid destruction. A male guard runs in carrying a walkie-talkie.

A huge man in a tight-fitting blue suit, waving a badge and a pistol, rushes in and confronts Mace, who calmly watches *Universal Woman* as it screams in visual agony, her paint and canvas burning into oblivion.

Byron Russell Cheek, the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accompanied by a man dressed in a full-body white rubber apron and white rubber gloves, rush into the gallery, passing the three men who are carrying the large woman out of the room.

Removing the smoldering Picasso from the wall, the white-aproned man sets off an ear shattering alarm that reverberates throughout the gallery.

Standing directly in front of Universal Woman, I was surprised anyone could spend that kind of money for this Picasso. Several men and women patiently waited for me to move aside. Instead I stepped forward and in one figure-eight arc, sprayed the canvas, watching the acid instantly begin eating through the paint. I tried to block out the screams of horror and dismay swirling around me.

I saw fear on the face of the guard pointing his pistol at my head, and fear, confusion, and rage on the faces of everyone standing away from me in the gallery.

Two cops entered and efficiently handcuffed my arms behind my back, then escorted me into a service elevator, out a side door, and into a police car.

Speeding down Fifth Avenue, I thought I recognized Nick walking with a friend. I blocked out any thoughts of how he'd take the news.

During my fingerprinting, mug shots, issuing of jail clothes, and being read my rights, I looked directly into the faces of each cop, trying to make eye contact, but they looked

away, avoiding contamination from someone they were convinced was a raving lunatic.

For some reason, during all those procedures, I had an erection, which caused me minor embarrassment when the woman photographer taking my mugs had noticed the obvious bulge in my police issue cotton pants, imagining I was thinking of her.

I remained in this unexplained state of arousal as I was again being instructed of my rights, offered the opportunity to make one phone call—which I refused—and then escorted to a small private cell. Ten minutes later, I was escorted out of the cell and deposited into an unmarked police vehicle and driven here to the “Rothko” suite. My erection disappeared when a tired looking overweight guard brought me a set of clean sheets, a towel, a washcloth, and a tuna sandwich on rye soaked in mayonnaise. I thanked him, wolfed the sandwich down, and immediately fell asleep on top of the unmade bed.

I dreamt Nick, confused and depressed, dropped out of school and enlisted in the Marines. Suddenly, I was standing alone in front of the racetrack in Saratoga. My father appeared before me, took my arm, and began walking me around the stables.

“Don’t worry, son, it’s not your fault. The service will make a man out of him.”

I woke up around five, wishing Margo was here lying next to me. I reminded myself she disliked making love in the morning. I turned on a lamp and looked around. It was large enough, clean, furnished in 1950s style Danish modern, and it had a television set. No windows. I would have to get used to living without daylight.

Heavily perspiring in her running shorts and bra, Margo, bathed in early morning sunlight reflected from the Hudson River and New Jersey high rises, stands mesmerized on the terrace of her Riverside Drive apartment. She sips from a container of orange juice while watching a tugboat glide silently toward the George Washington Bridge.

Daniel Hoff, her new husband, wearing a lightweight cotton Japanese kimono, blowing in the wind, moves stealthily out onto the terrace, gently placing his hand on the small of her back, causing Margo to jump with a start.

“What are you doing up so early?” she asks him.

“I had a weird dream.”

“Don’t tell me about it until I’ve had coffee.”

“I’ll make some for you.”

Margo pulls him next to her, kissing him passionately while hooking her sneakered foot behind his knee, easing Daniel down onto the green astro-turfed terrace floor.

“What happens if Nick wakes up and walks out here?”

“He stayed with his father last night,” Margo answers as she opens his kimono and unhooks her bra.

“I want to describe my weird dream,” Daniel whispers, enjoying every second of being manhandled by his new wife.

I watched my mug shots on the morning news, speculating how my friends and colleagues would react. Nick will be here as soon as I’m allowed visitors.

Margo will be shocked, then embarrassed, and will keep her distance, frightened that the media and the police will hound her with questions.

My partners will immediately make a public statement, disassociating the firm from my actions, while at the same time sounding deeply saddened by the actions of a colleague who has obviously gone crazy.

It is too painful to think about my parents.

Not having a woman to talk with is going to be difficult. Not sleeping with a woman is going to be murder.

*I'll have time to read and think about why I needed to destroy *Universal Woman*.*

Whatever happens to me, I imagine I'll be out in five years. If I start drawing again, and teach myself to "see", I'll leave wherever they send me with enough work to be discovered as an "outsider artist". (Sardonic humor hiding fear.)

The harshly-lit police mug shots of Mace's left and right profiles, and full-face, flash on and off the television screen, causing Margo to spill her coffee over the *Art Forum* magazine she has been casually reading.

Daniel continues eating his cheese danish, fascinated by the televised images of Mace, and Margo's stunned reaction.

They watch Simon Nobel nervously hold his wife's hand, with Byron Russell Cheek standing at their side.

"This is the saddest day of our lives. We don't know what to say."

Looking distraught, the Nobels are unable to continue speaking. Byron Russell Cheek addresses the interviewer.

"Picasso's *Universal Woman* has been mutilated. It is an incalculable loss to our nation and the world. I have ordered the museum's flags to be flown at half staff."

A shaken Margo turns to Daniel.

"The media is going to have a field day with this."

Dressed in prison garb: white cotton buttoned-down shirt and matching jeans, Mace sits alone reading *Art News* in the Rothko Suite of the New York City Police Department's Art Crimes Unit.

The windowless suite consists of one large room, with its four walls painted to represent a Rothko-like version of sunrise, morning light, afternoon light and sunset. Two Charles Eames chairs stand on each side of a small dining table, with a black couch and a 32" color television set completing the decor.

Captain Melvin Van Zant, an African American in his mid forties, unlocks a door and enters the suite.

"I'm Captain Melvin Van Zant. You can call me Melvin. Along with a doctorate in criminology, I've a doctorate in art history, specializing in Thomas Eakins, and I wasn't that fond of the Picasso either."

Mace shakes his hand.

“We laughingly call this our ‘Rothko Suite,’ temporary home to those accused of art theft, art forgery, and other art world scams. You’re our first guest who has totaled a masterpiece.”

Capt. Van Zant opens a folder and begins reading.

“Mace Caslon, forty-four, born in Saratoga Springs, New York. Only child of Charles and Elizabeth Caslon. Mother’s a registered nurse, father works at the famous racetrack. Brilliant student from day one. Full scholarship to Williams College, summa cum laude, then on to Yale Law School, graduating in the top fifth of his class. Currently a partner at McAdams, Goldstein and Bingham, one of the most respected law firms on the street.”

Van Zant looks at Mace, who remains expressionless.

“Serious collector of contemporary art. Never married. A six-year relationship with Ms. Margo Brodsky, art dealer, ended last March. A fling with Ms. Alice Apthorp, a New York City Deputy Commissioner of Culture, burned itself out after two months. Amateur boxer, and three-hour and twenty-two minute marathoner.”

Van Zant closes his folder and looks at Mace, who remains silent and impassive.

“A blue-collar kid who makes it as a top lawyer and a serious collector ... trashes a forty-one million dollar Picasso. Mr. Caslon, you are on the cutting edge of inconsistency.”

Captain Melvin Van Zant projecting an aura of being amused by life introduced himself. He doesn’t need my confession; they have a gallery of witnesses. Van Zant is fascinated to learn why I did it. Everyone will want to know more about why. Myself included.

Staring impatiently out the window of a cab stuck in heavy traffic along West End Avenue, Margo, already fifteen minutes late for a meeting at her Chelsea gallery, watches a young father on a bike, with his ten-year-old son seated behind him, weave between and around the long line of stalled cars.

Devilishly performing for Margo, Mace, and their doorman, Nicholas Brodsky tears down the street on his new mountain bike. Leaping the curb, he spins around like Evel Knievel and breaks to an abrupt stop seconds before colliding into a parked delivery van.

Mace and the doorman smile at his youthful exuberance. Margo looks at Nick in disbelief.

“Are you on a suicide mission?”

With a charming smile, Nick lifts his bike, walks into the lobby with them and enters the elevator.

“I want to get a tattoo,” Nick remarks casually, eager to test their reactions.

“Why?” Margo inquires.

“Where?” asks Mace.

“On my right shoulder.”

“Eleven-year-olds aren’t allowed to be tattooed,” Margo says.

“In the Amazon, boys get tattooed when they’re six years old,” Nick announces.

“Only if it’s a portrait of their mother with hearts and arrows circling her face,” Mace says to the obvious amusement of Margo and Nick.

As the taxi pulls up to her gallery, Margo pays the driver, not noticing a female television reporter carrying a portable camera shaped like a hair dryer with a microphone mounted on top, eagerly awaiting her arrival.

When Margo steps out of the cab, the reporter dashes up to her.

“Ms. Brodsky, may I talk with you for a minute?”

Annoyed and frightened, Margo sidesteps the reporter and quickly enters the gallery.

Last night I dreamt Kendall Norton came here with an eighteen-year-old young man who looked like me. The visual similarity was striking. He never said a word. He just stood erect as if at attention, holding Kendall’s hand and staring directly into my eyes with a hostile expression.

“After we broke up, I found out I was pregnant. You had just started law school, and I didn’t want to tell you because I knew we weren’t right for each other, so I went to Holland and had my son there.”

I lay awake in the dark, trying to figure out this dream. The last time I saw Kendall, she was in New York as a delegate to the National Republican Convention. We met at her hotel for a drink, and she told me how madly in love she was with her third husband. She never had children because she knew she’d be a terrible mother. She still looked very attractive; I remembered how acrobatic we were in bed, and how I spent my first year in law school painfully trying to get over her.

Sitting across from Mace, Yolanda Manrique offers Mace her purple fingernailed hand with silver rings on each finger.

“I’m sure you know who I am. If you don’t have a lawyer yet, I’d like to represent you. And if you do, I’d like to be a part of your defense team.”

Mace studies her with a certain amusement.

“Why? You don’t need the publicity. You’re a media favorite.”

“They pay attention to me because I’m their Hispanic Poster Girl: a successful trial lawyer with a smart mouth and a winning record. How many of us are there?”

Mr. Caslon, this is going to be a highly unusual case. Any attorney would find it an exciting challenge, and I need an exciting challenge for my creative soul. Plus, I’m no stranger when it comes to art.”

As she continues talking, Mace begins imagining Yolanda without clothes. Her mouth becomes an enlarged arc of deep reds and purples. Her left breast travels up, resting on her right shoulder, while her legs twist pretzel-like into an X-shaped design.

In his mind, Mace has created a Picasso nude portrait.

“I wrote my master’s thesis on Grandma Moses, and I do a little collecting myself,” continues Yolanda. “*Universal Woman* was not one of Pablo’s greatest works. Personally, I’m crazy about his Cubist period.”

“What if I’m crazy?”

“A guy who has going for him what you have, and still does such a wild act, must have a sensational reason, plus be a little bit off the wall. I find that combination of contradictions very attractive.”

This afternoon, Ms. Yolanda Manrique introduced herself. On television, she comes off as the strident, embattled protector of our nation’s civil liberties. In person, she’s a sexy lady with a flair for dramatic outfits and a subtle, ironic sense of humor: a skilled actress.

Does she want to represent me because she thinks I’m loaded and will help her pro bono clients? Too early for me to speculate on her motives.

The cleverly designed logo for *Art Speaks* animates on television screens across the nation.

Everett Stella, whose face resembles a dark curly-haired Harpo Marx, hosts the most popular weekly art show in the United States.

Wearing a black armband over a brightly colored Kandinsky-inspired sweater, Everett is seated at a highly polished George Nakashima table. Byron Russell Cheek sits facing him, dressed in black.

“Good evening. Tonight the world is in mourning for Pablo Picasso’s masterpiece *Universal Woman*. The collectors Simon and Cora Nobel remain in seclusion. Byron Russell Cheek, the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has kindly agreed to be our guest on this terrible and sad evening.

“Mr. Cheek, there is a long history of paintings and sculptures being attacked in Europe, but has it ever happened before in America?”

“This mutilation of a great work of art is one isolated incident by a deranged and demented individual. No one can understand his insane act.”

“Was the museum insured?”

Byron Russell Cheek’s complexion turns ashen.

“Our attorneys have advised me not to discuss any aspect of this horrendous crime.”

Capt. Van Zant holds up large color photographs detailing blow-ups of jagged white lines gouged into oil paintings.

“About two years ago, some fruitcake began scraping a key across paintings, right above the bottom frame. We’ve kept it quiet because the Met is panicked about copycat crazies. I’ve had our lab run tests and none of your keys could have made these scratches.”

Van Zant studies Mace’s reaction.

“Do you have an assistant?”

Mace is not amused.

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