

C H A P T E R T E N

A WINDOW TO THE ABSOLUTE

Madeleine Gilot had given birth to Francoise on November 26, 1921 nine months after Olga Picasso had given birth to Paulo. Emile Gilot, a successful businessman very interested in educational theories, was determined to bring up his only child like a boy -- a very well-educated one. As a result Francoise could read and write by the time she was four and was more familiar with the gods of Olympus and the formulas of algebra than with the children of her neighborhood in Neuilly. Until she was nine, instead of her going to school, a tutor came to the house to teach her under the stern supervision of her father. One of her greatest delights was to be entrusted, when her parents were traveling, to the hands of her maternal grandmother: "With her green eyes and white mane of hair, her swift movements, her love of poetry, her independent spirit," Francoise recalled, "she was the magnetic pole of my life. In my mind there was no

limit to her power, and I felt that she could understand everything."

When the war began, Francoise was studying law, planning, in accord with her father's wishes, to become an international lawyer. But the war and the growing Resistance, joined by many of her friends, made her rethink what was really important to her. "I told my father," she remembered, "that it didn't mean anything to me any longer to become a lawyer when the law, and especially international law, didn't even exist....So, in 1941, I decided to use the time I was spending earning a master's degree at the school of law to pursue my studies of art." She had been drawing ever since she was a child, illustrating daydreams or stories she told herself, full of monkeys, devils and ghosts. But then everyone in her family had a gift for drawing, so no one took her gift very seriously. Still her mother agreed to pose for her and so did her closest friend, Geneviève Aliquot.

Geneviève, who was a pupil of Maillol, was instrumental in Francoise's decision to give up the law for painting. A French Catalanian by birth, she was at the same time earthy and mystical -- the perfect complement to Francoise's intensely rational mind and her androgynous beauty. Theirs was a deep, passionate friendship. It had begun when Francoise was twelve and Geneviève thirteen and a half. "She walked into my class in the middle of

the school year," Francoise said, "unbelievably beautiful, wearing a tango red sweater and a tight black skirt and looking like a visiting star rather than a schoolgirl. They sat her next to me, and I was so dazzled I could not stop watching her. At the end of ten days, after she had taken the measure of what was going on, she turned to me and said: 'You, you are going to do my homework from now on, because all this bores me enormously. You are obviously very intelligent, so doing the homework in two different ways will be an interesting exercise for your mind and will allow me to write poetry and paint.' I would never have done it for anyone else, but I did it for her."

At first, Geneviève called Francoise, who looked like a young boy, her page. "Up until I was fifteen," Francoise recalled, "I always dressed like a boy and had absolutely no desire to be feminine. It was not until I was fifteen that I reconciled myself to being a woman. I stopped being Geneviève's page, and we became equally absorbed in each other." Claude Bleyne, the painter who was a friend of both of them, described the deep bond between the two girls. "It was the kind of sublimated passion one often finds among adolescents, a romantic fixation that leaves no room for outsiders. There was a mystery they exuded when they were together: Francoise, more active, more angular in her voice, her temperament, her whole way of being, Geneviève, very much a woman, all-rounded femininity and harmony in her proportions as well as her behavior."

Trying to decipher the riddle of Geneviève's beauty and magnetism, Francoise did countless sketches, drawings and paintings of her. In the process, her self-confidence as an artist grew, and she came closer to an understanding of the specific character of her art. "All that I did of her," Francoise would say later, "was two or three years in advance of what I could do of anyone or anything else. The freedom she radiated, her innate sense of truth, her regal beauty have always been the ideal touchstone of my life as an artist."

Her other close friend as well as her teacher was Endre Rozsda, a young Hungarian painter and great admirer of Picasso. For two years, from 1941 to 1943, he was Francoise's guide into the mysteries of Picasso's work. "When I started studying with Endre," she recalled, "I was crazy about Matisse, about the portrayal of sensuousness and joy in art, and I was not so crazy, aesthetically or technically, about Picasso. Geneviève and I had been to the Spanish Pavilion to see Guernica, but we were not moved by it artistically -- only as a political act. It was through Endre Rozsda that I really discovered Picasso."

But Rozsda, half-Jewish and refusing to wear the Yellow Star of David, was in great danger in Paris, especially as the Occupation grew more repressive. With the help of Francoise's

father, who arranged for him to get the necessary papers, he decided to go back to Budapest. He felt that at least he had a better chance of hiding in his native land than in France, where he barely spoke the language. In February 1943, Francoise took him, together with his paintings, to the Gare de l'Est. She felt a sense of impending doom. So many of her friends had joined the underground, so many of them had already died, and now her friend and teacher was being forced to flee to save his life. As the train was about to leave, taking him away, she thought forever, she suddenly felt afraid and alone: "What's going to happen, Endre, what's going to happen?" she cried out to him. "Why do you worry like that?" he called back, "before three months have passed, you will know Picasso." The prophecy hovered in the air, unexplained and unexplainable, as the train pulled out of the station.

Before three months had passed, she did know Picasso. He watched Francoise closely that night at the Catalan and made quite sure that all his witty aphorisms and brilliant declarations were clearly overheard. It was as if they had dinner together before they ever met. Finally, it was time for dessert. Leaving Dora behind and carrying a bowl of fresh cherries as his offering and introductory prop, he went to her table.

"Well, Cuny," he said. "Are you going to introduce me to your friends?"

"Francoise," said Alain Cuny after the introductions, "is the intelligent one and Geneviève is the beautiful one. Isn't she like an Attic marble?"

"You talk like an actor," was Picasso's non-committal response. "How would you characterize the intelligent one?"

"Francoise is a Florentine virgin." It was Geneviève who had answered his question.

"But not the usual kind," amplified Cuny. "A secularized virgin."

"All the more interesting if she's not the ordinary kind. But what do they do, your two refugees from the history of art?"

"We're painters." It was Geneviève who spoke again.

"That's the funniest thing I've heard all day," said Picasso, his incredulous laughter matching his words. "Girls who look like that can't be painters."

It was just the provocation Francoise needed to launch into a defense of the seriousness of their vocation. She told him that they were both devoted to their painting and that, as a matter of fact, they were having a joint exhibition at that very moment at Madeleine Decré's gallery in the rue Boissy d'Anglas, behind the Place de la Concorde.

"Well...", he conceded, "I'm a painter too. You must come to my studio and see some of my paintings."

"When?" asked Francoise eagerly.

"Tomorrow. The next day. When you want to."

It was an invitation all the more seductive since during the Occupation no gallery was allowed to exhibit Picasso's "degenerate" art. So the following Monday morning the Greek goddess and the Florentine virgin arrived at the rue des Grands-Augustins, to be greeted by Sabartés with more than his usual surliness. While he was taking the new visitors to Picasso's studio, they passed a Matisse Still Life with Oranges that provoked Francoise's voluble admiration. She was sternly rebuked by Sabartés, who would not tolerate enthusiasm for anyone other than his boss, especially when he was only a few feet away. He deposited them with Picasso, who was already surrounded by half a dozen people and returned to his post.

Picasso was the most charming host and tour guide, waxing lyrical on all the literary and historical associations of the building, showing Francoise and Geneviève where he did his sculpting and where his engraving, and even letting the faucet in his engraving room run long enough for the water to get steamy. "Isn't it marvelous?" he said proudly. "In spite of the war, I have hot water. In fact, you could come here and have a hot bath any time you liked." He was being generous with everything except the one thing he had invited them to see: his paintings. Just as they had resigned themselves to leaving without seeing any, he showed them a few. But very few. "If you want to come

back," he said as they were about to go, "by all means come. But if you do come, don't come like pilgrims to Mecca. Come because you like me, because you find my company interesting and because you want to have a simple, direct relationship with me. If you only want to see my paintings, you'd do just as well to go to a museum."

"A minotaur," he was to tell Francoise later, "can't be loved for himself. At least he doesn't think he can. It just doesn't seem reasonable to him, somehow. Perhaps that's why he goes in for orgies." Picasso was, of course, the minotaur. And with Francoise, from the very first, it seemed as if he wanted to test whether he could, after all, be loved for himself. When Francoise and Geneviève visited his studio for the second time, bringing him a pot of cineraria, his reaction was to laugh: "Nobody ever takes flowers to an old man like me!" Then he noticed that the color of the blossoms matched the color of Francoise's dress. "Is there anything you don't think of?" he asked.

He had been to see their exhibition, but he said nothing about it. And Francoise, who knew about his visit from the all-excited lady who ran the gallery, did not dare ask. Instead she watched silently as this time he kept his earlier promise and put painting after painting on the easel for them to see. Finally,

at the end of this private show, he turned and fixed his eyes on her: "I saw your exhibition," he said. "You're very gifted for drawing. I think you should keep on working -- hard -- every day. I'll be curious to see how your work develops. I hope you'll show me other things from time to time." She left his studio floating, determined to work -- hard -- every day, and to return.

Geneviève went back to the Midi, and from now on Francoise would come to the rue des Grands-Augustins alone. With each visit, Picasso found a new excuse to take her aside, away from the assembled court. One day, he wanted to give her some tubes of paint; another, some special drawing paper; a third, when she arrived drenched from cycling in the rain, the excuse was his concern over her soaking hair: "Just look at the poor girl," he told Sabartés. "We can't leave her in that state. You come with me into the bathroom and let me dry your hair." And when Sabartés protested that this was a job for Inès, Picasso ordered him to "leave Inès where she is," took Francoise to his bathroom, and dried her hair himself.

A few days later, while he was showing her his sculpture tools, he suddenly turned and kissed her on the mouth. She accepted his latest ministration as matter-of-factly as she had accepted the tubes of paint, the drawing paper and the hair-drying -- which, of course, enraged Picasso: "That's disgusting,"

he told her. "At least you could have pushed me away. Otherwise I might get the idea I could do anything I wanted to."

Francoise told him that she was at his disposal, her tone making it clear that this was an assertion of control rather than an admission of surrender. "That's disgusting," he repeated. "How do you expect me to seduce anyone under conditions like that? If you're not going to resist -- well, then it's out of the question. I'll have to think it over."

A week later, having thought it over, he decided that something stronger than an unexpected kiss on the mouth was needed to get her off balance. Under yet another pretext, he took her to his bedroom, presented her with a book by the Marquis de Sade, and asked her if she had read it. And when she replied that she had not, he cried with pride: "Aha! I shock you, don't I?" Far from being shocked, Francoise won this round by pointing out that she had no need of the Marquis de Sade, while he obviously did. "Are you crazy?" she added. "It's ludicrous to even talk about de Sade, let alone indulge in all that, when people are being tortured and suffering for real, not for sexual games. I have no interest either in being a victim or in turning others into victims." "You're more English than French," was his exasperated conclusion. "You've got that English kind of reserve."

It was now the end of June. Endlessly inventive, Picasso picked a highly original location for their next match. He led Francoise up a ladder to a tiny room, under the eaves at the top of the house, from which there was a beautiful view of the rooftops of Paris -- and of a seven-foot phallus that some enterprising worker had painted on the wall of an opposite building. In the middle of extolling the view, he cupped, ever so casually, Francoise's breasts in his hands. "Tiens!" he said. "That drawing in whitewash on the wall over there -- what do you suppose that represents?" Perfectly unruffled, Francoise replied that it was too abstract to be able to tell. Slowly, he took his hands away from her breasts and, with elaborate politeness, guided her down the ladder to rejoin the group in the studio below.

It was their last meeting before Francoise left for Fontes, a village near Montpellier, where Geneviève's family lived. Her father was the head of the Resistance there, which brought Francoise closer to the daily dangers of the Nazi Occupation. From Fontes, the two women cycled to Les Baux, where they stayed for two weeks. Francoise's time at Les Baux was her life's major turning point. "I remember every detail as though it was today," she said. "First of all the place itself is so special. Dante was there during his exile from Florence and he was so affected by the setting he made it part of the Divine Comedy. And in

nearby Arles, Van Gogh did all those extraordinary paintings. While I was there, I had the most incredible mystical experience that challenged every aspect of myself and my life. It was not a momentary thing, there was an inner struggle that went on for days, during which I knew that I had to stop identifying with my ego and my intellect if I was to enter into that transcendent state. I felt on the edge of an abyss, and then on the other side I was sort of remade, bit by bit, from nothingness into being."

As a result of this transforming experience, she decided to leave home, to begin her life afresh as an independent human being, without having to pretend that she was going on with her legal studies when all she wanted to do was paint, without having to visit Picasso furtively, without having to lie, hide or constantly explain herself. Determined to live a life of no subterfuge, she wrote her father a long letter explaining the changes she had experienced. He was appalled and dispatched her mother to bring her home. "By the time we arrived at Neuilly," Francoise recalled, "he was even angrier and threatened to have me committed if I did not change my mind. He gave me half an hour in which to repent and revert to my old self." She took advantage of his brief absence to run to her grandmother's house for protection. It did not take long for her father to follow her and, exasperated by her completely unaccustomed disobedience,

he began beating her with all his strength. When her grandmother mercifully returned, Francoise's face was bleeding badly; but her father's wrath was unabated. The sight and authority of the seventy-five year old woman put a stop to the beating, though not to his threats to have them both committed if Francoise failed to return home and her grandmother continued to support her in her disobedience.

The break with her father would last for many years; the break with her old life would last forever. For the first time, cut off from her father's wealth and protection, Francoise had to earn her own living. While she had been the beautiful, dutiful daughter, she had had everything she could possibly have wanted: tutors and couture clothes and trips abroad and plenty of free time to ride in the Bois de Boulogne. Now she had the one dress she had been wearing the day she ran away and, to earn a living, she started giving riding lessons to beginners and training horses.

In November she went back to see Picasso. She found him in a state of extreme sadness, but she also found that she felt closer to him than ever before. "The impact of our meeting," she recalled, "would have been very different if we had met at a time of peace. The tragedy around us and the pounding of history made it extraordinary where otherwise it might have been something interesting but ordinary without the metaphysical quality that it

had. Also, in the perspective of war, the fact that Picasso was forty years older than myself didn't mean a thing. After all I could have died at any moment. And in any case, Pablo was more like a man of forty than a man who by the time I saw him again in November had had his sixty second birthday."

From then on she was a regular at the rue des Grands-Augustins, visiting Picasso about once a week when she was not giving riding lessons. Another frequent visitor and a witness to the burgeoning love affair was Brassai, who came to the studio to photograph the sculptures. "Don't you think that she is beautiful?" Picasso asked him one day, gesturing toward Françoise. "Take a photograph of her some day, will you? But be careful; her hair must be a little uncombed, a little disordered. Above everything, don't take it when she has just come from the hairdresser. I have a horror of those applied hair-dos." It was in line with his horror of pet cats. "I don't like pet cats, purring on a couch in a living room," he told Brassai as they were looking at the sculpture of a pregnant cat he was working on, "but I adore cats that have gone wild, with their hairs bristling at the ends. They chase birds, stand on ledges, run through the streets like demons. They turn and stare at you with those ferocious eyes, ready to leap at your face. And have you ever noticed that female cats -- free cats -- are always pregnant? Obviously they don't think of anything but making

love..."

Whether he had noticed an overabundance of pregnant alley cats or not, Brassai was not likely to contradict him. Even when Picasso was insulting him he did not contradict him. One day when he was setting up and pulling his tripod toward him, Picasso called out: "You'd be better off to stop pulling at that tripod and pull in your eyes" -- a cheap, offensive reference to the way that Brassai's eyes bulged out of his head. Francoise, who was present, was beginning to get an education in court behavior. "While Brassai was laughing nervously," she remembered, "he stumbled on his tripod and fell backwards into Kazbek's large basin of water. Picasso beamed with pleasure, as though this was the best thing that had happened all day. Only later did I understand what all this meant. Brassai and I had met at Endre Rozsda's studio and had spent a lot of time together. When he walked in that day, we both showed in front of Picasso how astonished we were to see each other -- the kind of astonishment that comes from seeing someone you know well in a completely different context. At the time, I did not know, of course, that the politic thing would have been to greet each other with our eyes but never openly acknowledge that we knew each other. Pablo could not stand the fact that there was life, not just life with Picasso. He wanted people to stop existing when they stopped being with him -- or at least to pretend that they did. As a result, among those who knew him well, nobody ever made any

allusion to what they did when they were not with him; no one acknowledged the existence of an outside world. Sabartés looked suspiciously at Brassai and at me, as though he had uncovered a conspiracy -- we might meet outside and say something about them or do something against them. A shadow had suddenly fallen on poor Brassai."

The next morning Brassai arrived at the studio and found the entire household of Sabartés, Inès and Marcel tense and mournful, and Picasso looking like a raving Grand Inquisitor: "My little pocket flashlight has disappeared! I left it right here, on this chair...I am ab-so-lute-ly sure of it. And it isn't there now! And if it isn't there, it's because someone took it! I spent the entire night looking for it...I-will-not-tolerate things disappearing like that, in my house. I demand ab-so-lute-ly that it be found, at once!" Suddenly, Sabartés and Brassai were both in the camp of the suspect. In this spirit of unexpected comradeship, Sabartés leaned toward Brassai and whispered: "He did it himself, unquestionably...He must have put it someplace and then forgotten it. Now, he's accusing everyone else...That's him...I know him..." The next morning Brassai inquired about the flashlight. "I found it," replied Picasso nonchalantly. "It was upstairs in my bathroom." At least for the moment, peace had been restored in the studio and the accused had gone back to work.

Everyone around him had learned to adjust to his explosions and his fluctuating moods, and only very rarely did they allow themselves to vent their hurt feelings. Once, after Brassai had almost finished photographing the sculptures at the rue des Grands-Augustins, he walked with Sabartés to the metro, talking to him about the sculptures left to be photographed at the rue La Boétie. "I'll have to go back there. Picasso promised to take me someday." This innocent statement unleashed a torrent of pent up resentment in Sabartés. "Promised?" he cried. "Get it through your head, once and for all: promise and fulfillment are two things which rarely coincide in him. I know something about it. Generally speaking, I'm the one who suffers from his unfulfilled promises. His promises...Listen -- he made me a present of the second portrait he painted in 1901. But every time I wanted to take it home with me in Paris, he said, 'I'll give it to you in Barcelona.' Well, in Barcelona he gave it to the cabaret we used to go to. That picture was sold, and passed from hand to hand until one day he was able to buy it back. It came back to the rue La Boetie. But he has never given it to me. Even though he told me that it was my picture."

It was very hard for Francoise to adapt to the world of masks, suspicions and buried feelings that surrounded Picasso. But it was easy to adapt to him: "The fact that Pablo was older than my father meant that it didn't strike me as strange when he

laid down the law or told me what to do or not to do. I would either agree or disagree but it was not a problem in my mind. Because I was thinking, well at his age he has the experience and probably he knows best and maybe I'm just being too rebellious. We were very attuned to one another then and there was no real confrontation between us, partly I think because at that time I had not yet touched the ground, I was sort of floating in the air."

And that is how Picasso perceived her, as "sort of floating in the air." One day toward the end of the year, Sabartés, who was getting more and more depressed over Francoise's continuing presence in their lives, decided to speak up in front of her and predict, like a bad-tempered nanny, that no good would come of this. Picasso told him to mind his own business. "You don't understand anything," he said. "You haven't got the intelligence to realize this girl is walking a tightrope -- and sound asleep at that. You want to wake her up? You want her to fall?... And what you don't understand, either, is the fact that I like this girl. I'd like her just as much if she were a boy."

In fact, his first image of Francoise was of a young man rather than a young woman. She reminded him of the poet Rimbaud; she was more truly androgynous than anyone else he had ever met. Like many of the Surrealists, Picasso had been fascinated by the

myth of the androgynous being that, as Breton had written, "offers man a view of himself as he had been in the past or as he will be in the future: more luminous, more close to harmony and to power than he is in his present condition." Francoise, too, saw herself as androgynous. She even signed her paintings at the time as F. Gilot, perceiving herself and wanting to be perceived as a painter rather than as a woman painter.

The character Francoise most identified with was Ariel in The Tempest -- the representative of the fluid elements of water and air and the spiritual energies of nature. In Shakespeare's play, Ariel is invisible to everyone except Prospero. And that was Picasso's fantasy. After he had sent Sabartés away, he told Francoise that he would like her to stay at the top of the house and vanish from the world: "I'd bring you food twice a day. You could work up there in tranquillity and I'd have a secret in my life that no one could take away from me."

The fantasy appealed to Francoise too, especially since at that moment in her life the two things that mattered most were Picasso and her painting. She was working hard at her grandmother's, in a large studio next to her room, signing her paintings "Ariane." The more important her relationship with Picasso became, the more fascinated she was by the myth of Ariadne, who had guided Theseus out of the Labyrinth after he had slain the Minotaur. Could she help Picasso slay the Minotaur in

himself? Could she guide him out of his labyrinth? In the myth, Ariadne saves Theseus's life only to be abandoned by him on the island of Naxos. Dominating Francoise's bedroom was the mural she had painted of Ariadne deserted by her lover, with the god Dionysus descending from Olympus to save her and make her his wife. In Francoise's work at the time, there was an affirmation of inner strength -- her forms more sculptural, the hope beyond the oppression and the sorrow of the Occupation more pronounced. There was the spiral of an ascending staircase in her portrait of her grandmother, and peace in the face of Geneviève portrayed at the Café de Flore with a string of doves around her neck.

To Picasso, Francoise was a marvel, a marvelous accident. As the girl young enough to be not his daughter but his granddaughter expressed her precocious opinions and pulled the rug out from under his tricks of seduction and control, a grudging respect welled up in him. One day in February 1944, he suggested that next time she should come in the afternoon and he would teach her engraving and not let anyone disturb them. She arrived promptly for her engraving lesson looking like a vision out of Velasquez in a black velvet dress, her face framed by its high collar of white lace, her dark red hair swept up. Once again he was the one thrown off balance: "Is that the kind of costume you put on to learn engraving?" he asked. She replied that she had dressed not for engraving but for what she had

assumed he had on his mind. "I wanted to look beautiful for you," she added.

There was both an innocence and a power in her directness that unnerved him. She kept dealing him cards he had not been dealt before: "You do everything you can to make things difficult for me," he said, throwing up his hands both literally and metaphorically. "Couldn't you at least pretend to be taken in, the way women generally do? If you don't fall in with my subterfuges, how are we ever going to get together?" He complained, and at the same time he loved it. "You're right, really," he conceded. "It's better that way, with the eyes open. But you realize, don't you, that if you don't want anything but the truth -- no subterfuges -- you're asking to be spared nothing. Broad daylight is pretty harsh."

He had issued a warning but, vibrant with all the courage of youth, she felt invincible. So far she was winning -- the twenty-two-year-old virgin was outwitting the sixty-two-year-old roué who had explored to the full the dark outer limits of sexuality. The engraving lesson forgotten, he began showing her his Vollard etchings. A fair-haired nude is sitting opposite a standing nude with dark hair and dark eyes: "There you are. That's you. You see it, don't you? You know, I've always been haunted by a certain few faces and yours is one of them." A few prints later, a minotaur is watching over a woman asleep: "He's

studying her," he explained, "trying to read her thoughts, trying to decide whether she loves him because he's a monster. Women are odd enough for that, you know. It's hard to say whether he wants to wake her or kill her."

No matter what he said, he still could not succeed in disturbing her equanimity. He was intrigued by the source of her strength; he sensed that it came from a higher place than experience, looks or brains. "You are the only woman I've met," he told her, "who has her own window to the absolute". He was excited about the possibility of a new kind of relationship in which there was reciprocity -- perhaps even love. "I guess I'll die without ever having loved," he had told her a few months earlier. And she had laughed and asked him not to make up his mind yet.

"What is it all about, anyway?" he asked her suddenly as they were looking through the Vollard prints. "Do you know?" There was hope in the challenge, hope that she might know or at least know a little more than he did. Francoise said that she didn't know for sure but that yes, she had taken the first steps on the journey of finding out. It was his cue to take her arm and lead her to the bedroom. He undressed her, then studied her. And then he marveled at how closely her body matched his image of her body. Tenderly, he put her on his knees, like a little

girl he wanted to reassure, and told her that "whatever there was between us, or whatever was to be, was surely a wonderful thing and that we must both feel completely free; that whatever was to happen should happen only because we both wanted it."

"Suddenly," Francoise recalled, "I was flooded by some of the same feelings I had experienced in Les Baux, a sense of a new beginning, a deep trust, and a sense of belonging. In Les Baux I had felt that I was no longer just a separate individual but one with the universe. Now I felt one with Pablo." He lay beside her on the bed and, as he caressed her body with infinite gentleness, he told her that he, too, felt that "this instant is a true beginning...I wish I were able to suspend time and keep things exactly at this point."

Francoise was lying in his arms filled with a peace so profound and a joy so complete that nothing else mattered and there was nothing left to achieve. She felt impervious to doubts, fears, and even to the pessimism that had seeped into Picasso's very being and which now took over. "Everything," he told her, "exists in limited quantity -- especially happiness. If a love is to come into being, it is all written down somewhere, and also its duration and content....We mustn't see each other too often. If the wings of the butterfly are to keep their sheen, you mustn't touch them. We mustn't abuse something which is to bring light into both our lives. Everything else in

my life only weighs me down and shuts out the light. This thing with you seems to me like a window that is opening up. I want it to remain open. We must see each other but not too often. When you want to see me, you call me and tell me so."

He was clearly stirred more deeply than ever before, but he also feared that what felt so different would turn out to be more of the same. By asking that they not see each other too often he was prolonging not only their happiness but also his hope that the feelings he had tapped into would blossom into love. He did not trust life enough to give himself over to what he sensed would bring light into his darkness; and he did not trust himself enough not to destroy it. By asking to see her sparingly, he was seeking to protect what had begun to grow between them from the monster that, experience had taught him, he could not control.

Francoise left, feeling that the great painter she had admired impersonally had, in the course of the last hour, been transformed into a man she could not help but love.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

COMRADE PICASSO

In February 1944, the same month that Picasso and Francoise set out haltingly on their journey together, Max Jacob was arrested at Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire and sent to the detention camp at Drancy, a stop in the long journey to Auschwitz or Dachau. On his way, he wrote to Cocteau: "Dear Jean, I'm writing this on a train out of the kindness of the gendarmes who surround us. We will very soon be in Drancy. This is all I have to say. Sacha, when they talked to him about my sister, said: 'If it was him, I could do something!' Well, it is me. I embrace you. Max." The restraint of his plea made his agony all the more poignant. From Drancy, one last appeal reached his friends in Paris: "May Salmon, Picasso, Moricand do something for me."

His friends had already begun to mobilize all the support

they could find. Cocteau drew up a moving letter about Max, about the reverence in which he was held by French youth, about his invention of a new language that dominated French literature, about his renunciation of the world. And in a discreet postscript, he added: "Max Jacob has been a Catholic for twenty years." The appeal was personally delivered to Von Rose, the counselor in charge of pardons and reprieves at the German Embassy -- who, miraculously, was a lover of poetry and an admirer of Max's work. Conspicuously absent from the petition's signatories was Picasso. His silence on behalf of one of his oldest and most intimate friends was thundering. When Pierre Colle, Max's literary executor, went to the rue des Grands-Augustins to ask him to use his considerable authority with the Germans to intervene on Max's behalf, he refused, crowning his indifference with a quip: "It's not worth doing anything at all. Max is a little devil. He doesn't need our help to escape from prison."

On March 6, Von Rose announced that he had succeeded in obtaining a liberation order signed by the Gestapo, and a car with a few of Max's friends left immediately for Drancy. There they were informed that Max was dead. He had died the day before of pneumonia, fatally weakened by the conditions in prison and the freezing cold in his damp, filthy cell. The "little devil" had flown out of his prison through death. Did the Germans know

that Max was dead when they signed the liberation order? Or was this a genuine reprieve that arrived too late? And would Picasso's intervention have made a difference?

Whenever Picasso himself got into trouble during the Occupation, whether because he was eating in a black market restaurant when it was raided or because he had his sculptures cast in bronze when it was illegal or, more seriously, because he was caught smuggling currency out of the country, someone was able to hush matters up for him. If André Dubois in the Ministry of the Interior was not able to help, he would address himself to Otto Abetz, the German Ambassador; and if he, too, was powerless, Dubois would go as high as Arno Breker, Hitler's favorite sculptor, who would appeal directly to Himmler's assistant, the SS General Müller. "If you lay a hand on Picasso," Breker had warned him at the time of the currency incident, "the world's press will cause such an uproar you'll be left dizzy." And he added that if he did not sign the documents putting an end to any action against Picasso, he would appeal directly to the Führer. Müller, who knew that on the Führer's orders statues from the squares of Paris had been melted down to provide bronze to cast the works of Arno Breker, knew better than to withhold his signature. In his memoirs, Breker recorded Hitler's response when he narrated the story to him: "You were right. In politics all the artists are innocents, like Parsifal."

Such was the power of Picasso's legend. That he did not use it to attempt to save his friend from death -- whether he would have succeeded or not -- was one of his life's greatest betrayals, as much a betrayal of himself as of Max. Later in March, there was a memorial service for Max at the church Saint-Roch. Picasso was there -- but not really there. Afraid to enter the church and be associated, even in death, with a prisoner of the Nazis, he hovered in the courtyard in front of the church, a passerby but not a participant.

One day Francoise, who already understood how averse he was to taking risks, asked him why he had stayed in Paris when he could have found refuge in America. "Staying on," he said, "isn't really a manifestation of courage; it's just a form of inertia. I suppose it's simply that I prefer to be here." His inertia was perceived as a heroic stand, a passive form of Resistance, and the perception was strengthened by the fact that many of his friends were involved in the Resistance. On March 19, Michel and Louise Leiris gathered many of those friends at their apartment for a reading of Picasso's play, Desire Caught by the Tail. The actors were Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Georges Hugnet, Jean Aubier, Raymond Queneau and Dora Maar; the director was Albert Camus. In the audience, among others, were Braque, Eluard, Pierre Reverdy, Jean and Valentine Hugo and Senor and Senora Anchorena, a very rich Argentine couple, who had been

imploing Picasso, in vain, to paint a door for them.

Four years later, in What is Literature, Sartre was to give philosophic expression to the underlying theme of Desire Caught by the Tail. He said with words what Picasso had said with images: "We have been taught to take Evil seriously. It is neither our fault nor our merit if we lived in a time when torture was a daily fact. Chateaubriand, Oradour, the rue des Saussaies, Dachau, and Auschwitz have all demonstrated to us that Evil is not an appearance, that knowing its cause does not dispel it, that it is not opposed to Good as a confused idea is to a clear one, that it is not the effect of passions which might be cured, of a fear which might be overcome, of a passing aberration which might be excused, of an ignorance which might be enlightened, that it can in no way be diverted, brought back, reduced, and incorporated into idealistic humanity....Therefore, in spite of ourselves, we came to this conclusion, which will seem shocking to lofty souls: Evil cannot be redeemed." Or as Big Foot puts it at the beginning of Act Five: "The blackness of ink envelops the rays of the sun's saliva...." The conviction that evil was not redeemable permeated not only Picasso's work but his actions and, in the case of Max's death, his inertia when there was a compelling reason to take a stand against it.

In June, a ray of sun pierced the blackness, and evil was shown to be a daily fact but not an absolute reality. The

Allied armies landed in Normandy and by August they had reached Paris. They were joined by thousands of Parisians who rose against their oppressors. Picasso left the rue des Grands-Augustins and awaited the outcome of the battle raging in the streets at boulevard Henri IV with Marie-Thérèse and Maya. While violent skirmishes were taking place in the neighborhood, he allayed his anxiety by drawing Maya, a happy little girl now that she had her mother, her father and her grandmother all around her. In fact some of Maya's happiest memories are of air raids: "My whole class, from my school that was round the corner, would take refuge in the cellars of the house where we lived. It was wonderful, I adored it. We had our teacher narrating for us the old myths in the dark. We didn't even have candles. It was fabulous. Instead of telling us the stories of Little Red Riding Hood, she told us stories of the gods, of Ariadne, of Dionysus and the Minotaur. And she was sensational! Imagine all these stories in the dark...That's why my dad loved the air raids! As for me, I was the happiest then because every time I rediscovered both my family and the old myths. And I found the Greek and Roman gods perfectly normal -- they all talked like my father."

Very soon it was not only his nine-year-old daughter who saw him as a Greek god. The liberation of Paris, proclaimed on August 25, heralded a turning point in Picasso's life. He was no longer just world-famous, no longer merely a legend. He became a

symbol of the victory over oppression, of survival and of the glory of old Europe. He was even asked to provide a drawing for the first page of an album of homage offered to General de Gaulle by the poets and painters of the Resistance. He was a celebrity they could co-opt to add more glamour to their triumph. Having always had a strong preference for symbols over reality, he accepted. There were thousands of anonymous heroes in the Resistance, but Picasso, although certainly no hero, was a monument, as well known as the Eiffel Tower and almost as accessible. He posed for photographs with his favorite pigeon perched on his head or on his shoulder; he welcomed hundreds of American GIs who lined up to visit his studio; he said, "Thank you very much," in a charming Franco-Spanish accent, to offerings of chocolate, coffee, fruit and tins of food; he answered patiently and graciously over and over again all questions about the length of time it took him to paint a picture, about how many he did a year, how many he sold and for how much.

"When the firing died down," wrote John Pudney in the New Statesman in London, "and one wept less often at the singing of the Marseillaise and less champagne was forced across one's altogether willing palate in the name of liberation, I went to see Pablo Picasso....He said that the tendency in the creative artist is to stabilize mankind on the verge of chaos." Another early visitor to the rue des Grands-Augustins was Hemingway. Picasso was out, and the concierge, used to everybody's leaving

presents, asked if he had a gift to leave for Monsieur.

Hemingway went back to his car and returned with a case of hand-grenades on which he wrote: "To Picasso from Hemingway."

Many who undertook the pilgrimage to the rue des Grands-Augustins simply waited. Francoise once counted twenty GIs sleeping around the studio. But more disturbing for her than those bodies strewn across the floor was a magazine cover she saw at a newspaper kiosk while cycling across the Place Clichy. It was a picture of Picasso with his wild pigeon, which normally would never let him come close if anyone else was in the room: "I suddenly felt as if both the pigeon and Pablo had been tamed and were available to be ogled and touched by the whole world."

According to at least one visiting American journalist, Picasso was, together with General de Gaulle, the man of the hour in liberated France. He loved the role and played it to the hilt. "It was not a time for the creative man to fail, to shrink, to stop working," he told his visitors, adding modestly: "There was nothing to do but work seriously and devotedly, struggle for food, see friends quietly, and look forward to freedom." And the visitors reported the great man's words. Some lucky ones were shown not only his work but his private quarters and then wrote admiringly about "the cool Spanish tiled floor of the bedroom" and the master's charming commentary on, for

example, the twin wash basins in the bathroom: "either a hand in each or an intelligent conversation while you wash." And all the world knew that he had plenty of young and beautiful friends with whom to share an intelligent conversation while he washed.

Now that so many saw him as a providential man, a man of destiny, he felt even more equal to the task of pitting himself against destiny, against life and God. After all, now more than ever, he was the venerable center of a burgeoning religion with a daily stream of worshipers to the inner sanctum, as Sabartés called his studio. Nigel Gosling, an English journalist who brought him as offerings some Penguin books on British art and a huge red apple from Normandy, described him moving about "like a stumpy little oriental god. Smaller than expected (great men always are) he was sallow and very firm on his feet, his black monkey eyes startlingly round and wide under the bald dome and scant white hair. He was serious and courteous, but he gave off strongly the Dionysian incandescence of the genius."

In every religion there is, of course, a heretical voice amid the deafening chorus of adulation. Misia Sert, then in her seventies, provided it. "With the hands that moved me so," she wrote in her memoirs of her visit to Picasso after the liberation, "he took down some canvases to put them within sight of my failing eyes. There were dozens and dozens of them. How I should have liked to be able to tell him that I adored them! How

happy he would have been to see me carry one off!...Alas, in all that he was doing, there was nothing that I could have lived with. I loved him far too much to be able to deceive him about my feelings....I found myself back in my car, weeping uncontrollably over all that might have been."

But dissent and tears over what might have been were a rare commodity at the rue des Grands-Augustins. The mood was one of celebration. A month after the Liberation, Eluard, full of conspiratorial excitement, whispered in the ear of Roland Penrose, who was among Picasso's visitors that day: "I have great news for you: in a week it will be announced publicly that Picasso has joined the Communist Party." On October 5, the news was not merely announced, it was trumpeted across the front page of L'Humanité, complete with photographs from the reception the day before during which Communist Party dignitaries saluted their new brother's "profound humanity," his "moral preoccupations" and his "service to mankind" and welcomed him into "the bosom of the Communist Party, the great, brotherly family of workers, peasants and intellectuals."

The paper, the official organ of the Communist Party, talked at length about Picasso's greatness as a painter as though trying to convince itself. "If they asked today the artists of the Soviet Union, those of the Anglo-Saxon nations, as

well as those of the Latin nations, they would all unanimously agree to designate Pablo Picasso as the first among them and as the master of contemporary painting." Greatness by referendum.

Picasso's entry into the Communist Party turned into a circus, and one of the more entertaining sideshows was the spectacle of Party functionaries going into contortions to demonstrate why his art, which was anathema to all the official canons of "socialist realism," was nevertheless great art. They gushed and they cooed and Picasso responded in kind. "All human utterance," he once said, "has its stupid side." And in his explanations about why he had joined the Communist Party, he proved it. "And what about the poor, all the poor?" he asked a protesting André-Louis Dubois, his protector during the Occupation. "Well, they're not going to put up with just anyone and just anything. They'll defend themselves, there'll be strikes, troubles, and during that time you want me to stay up on my balcony, watching the show? No, that can't be. I'll be down in the street with them." In fact, in the years to come, far from being "down in the street with them," he barely watched the show from his balcony.

His capacity to invent reality reached prodigious new heights in an interview he gave to New Masses, which appeared a few days later in L'Humanité under the title "Why I joined the

Communist Party": "Joining the Communist Party is the logical conclusion of my whole life, my whole work. For, I am proud to state, I have never considered painting as an art of simple entertainment or escape; I wanted, by drawing and by color, since those were my weapons, to go deeper into the knowledge of the world and men, so that that knowledge might free each of us increasingly every day; I was trying in my way to say what I considered truest, most correct, best, which naturally would be the most beautiful, as all great artists well know....These years of terrible oppression have proved to me that I should struggle not only with my art but with my whole being. So I went to the Communist Party without the least hesitation, for fundamentally I had been with the Party from the very start. Aragon, Eluard, Cassou, Fougeron, all my friends know that perfectly well; and the reason why I had not joined officially before was a kind of 'innocence' because I used to think that my work and the fact that my heart belonged were enough; but it was already my own Party. Is it not the Communist Party that works hardest at understanding and molding the world, at helping the people of today and of tomorrow to become clear-minded, freer, happier? Was it not the Communists who were the bravest in France, just as they were in the USSR or my own Spain? What could possibly have made me hesitate? Fear of finding myself committed? But I have never felt more free nor more wholly myself! And then again I was so impatient to have a country of my own once more: I had

always been an exile and now I am not an exile any longer. Until the day when Spain can welcome me back, the French Communist party has opened its arms to me, and I have found in it those that I most value, the greatest scientists, the greatest poets, and all the glorious, beautiful insurgent faces I saw in those August days when Paris rose: I am once more among my brothers!"

Never before had he so thoroughly poisoned the well of truth. Was he incapable of comprehending the magnitude of the suffering imposed by Communism, the millions murdered or incarcerated in concentration camps, the simple fact that, morally, Stalin was no better than Hitler? Or did he believe that the end justified the means? The reports coming out of Russia provided ample evidence that Stalin and his pack meant business. Picasso worshipped strength and despised weakness. Weakness smelled of death to him and he wanted to be as far away as possible from any displays of it, as though he might catch it. The Communist system claimed a monopoly of truth and sought a monopoly of power -- and that suited his personality perfectly. It also demanded the total surrender of man's being to the Party -- and that was something he was very comfortable with, since it was, after all, exactly what he demanded of those around him. Notwithstanding his rosewater expressions of concern for the little people, he admired totalitarianism. He was fascinated by its apparent efficiency and its sheer power -- no messy votes to be taken, no people to be democratically coaxed, cajoled and

persuaded. It was just the way he liked to run his own life. In that sense, he spoke the truth when he claimed that "joining the Communist Party was the logical conclusion of my whole life." He had always been a good totalitarian himself and now the hour had come when the man had found his match in the Party. And both man and Party acted as though holding and proclaiming an ideal was sufficient to abrogate the need to live by it.

Through joining the Communist Party, Picasso got a cosy, comfortable feeling of vicarious virtue and a great deal of applause. He said that he had always been an exile and now he was an exile no longer. But his exile was not from Spain -- after all he had voluntarily lived in Paris for thirty-seven years before the civil war -- but from himself. And he sought to escape from the nagging pain of that exile and from the stifling prison of his self-absorption by joining the Party and enjoying a sense, however spurious, of belonging. And as there were few things as elitist as the Party of the people, many were thrilled to belong with him, and many Party nymphets all the more thrilled to belong to him, however fleetingly. They flocked to the rue des Grands-Augustins in search of autographs from the latest Party celebrity and there they joined artistically minded petit-bourgeois schoolgirls waiting for a glimpse of the Great Artist. They often got more than that. The older Picasso was, the younger he liked his sexual partners. And in the confused

euphoria of the Liberation, many under-age French girls were initiated into the mysteries of sex by a man who was old enough to be their grandfather.

One of the young girls who found her way to the rue des Grands-Augustins, guided there by Eluard, was Geneviève Laporte. She was seventeen at the time and studying at the nearby Lycée Fenelon, where she was president of the National Student Front and editor of the school newspaper. It was in that capacity that she arrived to ask Picasso for an interview, an explanation of his Communism and an explanation of his art, which, she said, her schoolmates did not understand. "Understand!" he cried. "What the devil does it have to do with understanding? Since when has a picture been a mathematical proof? It's not there to explain -- explain what, for God's sake? -- but to awaken feeling in the heart of the person looking at it. A work of art must not be something that leaves a man unmoved, something he passes by with a casual glance. It has to make him react, feel strongly, start creating too, if only in his imagination. He must be jerked out of his torpor..."

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it," Marx had said. Geneviève asked Picasso if he had read Marx. He had not. His main exposure to communist doctrine, apart from Eluard and Aragon, had been through Laurent Casanova, one of the heads of

the Communist underground who escaped from prison during the Occupation and found asylum from the Gestapo at Michel Leiris's apartment, around the corner from Picasso. Geneviève Laporte, on the other hand, had read a lot in an attempt to convince herself to become a Marxist and join the Party; she had even read Stalin's History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. "I did my best," she said, "but it was in vain, because there were too many arguments with which I could not agree." At their first meeting, Picasso showed her his Party membership card and they both agreed that there was something amusing in his being described as "Comrade Picasso." He, who never explained his art, tried, once again, to explain his politics: "You see, I am not French but Spanish. I'm opposed to Franco. And the only way I have of publicizing this," the painter of Guernica added, "is to join the Communist Party and demonstrate that I am on the other side."

Soon, political discussion was muffled by their sexual dalliance. But unlike the rest of the young teenagers in Picasso's life, Geneviève remained an intermittent presence, contributing to the tension that was always, for him, an essential element of sexual excitement. At times, Françoise would run into her at the rue des Grands-Augustins, unaware that she, too, should be included in the long and growing catalogue of Picasso's lovers. "I had nicknamed her," she remembered, "the

swiss cheese; she was a rather big and sturdy girl and she kept bringing Pablo cheese!" Francoise was, in fact, unaware of the presence of any woman in Picasso's life other than Dora. As for Olga and Marie-Thérèse, he assured her that they belonged in his past.

By now, Dora knew of the existence of Francoise but could not believe she would ever be supplanted by "the schoolgirl," as she dismissively called Francoise from the precarious heights of her intellectual eminence. "In bed, but not at the table," she told Picasso -- which immediately led him to invite Francoise to join him and Dora at dinner. "I went," Francoise recalled, "but I took along André Marchand, who was in love with me and had done many portraits of me. So, instead of looking like the little girl who wants to be with the Master under any conditions, I was there with my own escort, who, in the eyes of the world, was the man in my life. And Dora, who knew André Marchand independently, started inviting him to dinner with her and Pablo, hoping that he would bring me along. She thought that when Pablo saw that I was obviously with André, he would lose interest in me. It had, of course, exactly the opposite effect."

When a big retrospective of Picassso's work opened six weeks after the Liberation as part of the Salon d'Automne, Francoise was faithfully on duty. It was an unexpected duty. Some "brainless young people," as André Lhote described them,

many of them students at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and "some gentlemen of advancing years" were so outraged by a combination of Picasso's work and Picasso's politics that they tried to pull down his paintings, shouting: "Take them down! Money back! Explain!" From that day on Francoise took turns with other young art students standing guard in front of the paintings. It was a concrete manifestation of one of the very strong urges that pulled her to Picasso: her urge to protect him, to save him, now from threatening demonstrators and always from himself.

Only a few of those who crowded the Salon d'Automne turned violent but many were stunned. "After the nightmare of the Occupation," explained Francoise, "it must have been a shock for the general public to be exposed to work that was so close in spirit to the years they had just lived through." Shock was also the leitmotiv of Georges Limbour's review of the exhibition: "The canvases painted by Picasso in the last five or six years and exhibited at the Salon d'Automne are as violent a shock to the visitor as any artistic spectacle could be. These intensely precise forms, aggressively strange, larger than life, weighing on the soul like objects of a greater density than is known on earth, whether of lead, china, wood or bone, plunge us at first sight into a strange but fascinating disquiet, until we recover our balance in the special atmosphere in which they exist." There were numerous cartoons prompted by the exhibition, all on

the same theme of shock and dejection. One of them shows a guide explaining to a visitor who is looking at a glum parody of Rodin's Thinker: "He's been like that ever since they hung a Picasso in front of him."

While Dora continued to stagger on as the official mistress of the present, Picasso was introducing Francoise to his past. At first he talked to her about it and then he wanted to show her the relics. One afternoon, he asked Marcel to drive them to the top of Montmartre where they got out of the car and walked to the Bateau-Lavoir. "That's where it all started," he told her gravely. And then he pointed to Juan Gris's studio, to Max Jacob's room, to the room where Soriol, the artichoke seller, lived, and finally to his own studio. "All we need to do," he said, "is open this door and we'll be back in the Blue Period. You were made to be in the Blue Period and you should have met me when I lived here. If we had met then, everything would have been perfect because whatever happened, we would never have gone away from the rue Ravignan. With you, I would never have wanted to leave this place." For the first time, Francoise understood the meaning that the Bateau-Lavoir had for him: "It was a time of struggle, but there was meaning and hope in the struggle, and everything seemed possible -- even happiness."

From the Bateau-Lavoir, he took her to a little house in the nearby rue des Saules. There, lying in bed, was an old lady,

sick and with all her teeth gone. They talked for a few minutes, he laid some money on her night table and they left. For a while, he was silent; then he turned to Francoise and explained: "I want you to learn about life. That woman's name is Germaine pichot. She's old and toothless and poor and unfortunate now. But when she was young she was very pretty and she made a painter friend of mine suffer so much that he committed suicide." The lesson he wanted to teach Francoise about life was the same lesson that, whether intentionally or not, he was teaching the world through his work: that so much of life is about decay, degradation and death.

In February 1945 he began work on yet another painting on those same themes: The Charnel House. A heap of broken corpses is lying beneath a white table with an empty jug and an empty saucepan. Penrose called the picture "the most despairing of all Picasso's work;" Barr called it "a pietà without grief, an entombment without mourners;" countless art critics and art lovers have concluded that it was inspired by the horror of the concentration camps. Like the lesson he wanted to teach Francoise about life, The Charnel House was only part of the truth. It was a Crucifixion without even a tiny glimpse of the overwhelming triumph of the Resurrection. It was the Nazi horror without the victory over it. It was once again darkness as an ultimate reality.

It proved too much even for him. Throughout the year, he kept working on it, abandoning it and returning to it. It was not finished in time for the Salon d'Automne, and it was still unfinished when it was shown in the exhibition of Art and Resistance in the presence of that latter-day fugitive and now Communist Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Laurent Casanova. Casanova extolled "the great artists who had found in the heroic action of our brothers the elements of a new modern art," but official rhetoric notwithstanding, there were rumblings among Picasso's Party brothers about the kind of art he was producing. Picasso took the rumblings in his stride. As he told Claude Roy: "I was a stranger without a family. I joined the Party like you join a family. And it's exactly like a real family. A real family wants you to be a lawyer or a pharmacist, when you want to be an artist. And they want me to be a social realist when I wanted to be..." He searched for the right word but could not find it; "...when you wanted simply to be Picasso," Claude Roy volunteered.

"If the Germans were to come back," Cocteau asked him one night at dinner, "what would you say to them now that you've joined the Communist Party?" Picasso, clearly proud of himself, replied: "why, Jean, I'd say, 'Can't you see that was just a joke?'" But while the Germans were safely away, he behaved like

a good Party celebrity, turning out at mass meetings, reading speeches more often than not written by Eluard and, more important than anything else, giving interviews.

The man whose motto had been "Talking to the pilot is forbidden" was now anxiously asking Jerome Seckler, interviewing him for the New Masses: "Do you believe me?" Some of his statements were not easily believable. "I am a Communist and my painting is Communist painting," he assured Seckler, and then qualified it by adding: "But if I were a shoemaker, Royalist or Communist or anything else, I would not necessarily hammer my shoes in a special way to show my politics." He wanted it to be clearly understood that he had "never been out of reality." "I have always been in the essence of reality," he repeated. The unasked question was: which reality? The reality of the Corot landscape and the Rubens of "a man and a woman bursting with love" that were hanging in his bedroom at the time? Or the reality of The Charnel House that he had still been unable to finish?

In his introduction to the interview, Seckler wrote about the exasperation that he and his friends had experienced in analyzing Picasso: "The only conclusion we could ever arrive at was that Picasso, in his various so-called periods, quite accurately reflected the very hectic contradictions of the times,

but only reflected them, never painting anything to increase one's understanding of these times." It was a conclusion much more devastating than Seckler realized. Could Picasso's art really be reduced to nothing more than brilliant reporting on the century's discontents?

On March 24, a few days after his interview with Seckler had appeared in the New Masses, another interview appeared in Les Lettres Francaises, in which Picasso saw his art as creating itself in the image of the events of his time: "What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only eyes if he is a painter, ears if he is a musician, or a lyre at every level of his heart if he is a poet?...Quite the contrary, he is at the same time a political being, constantly alive to the heart-rending, exciting, or happy events of the world, wholly creating himself in their image. How would it be possible not to be interested in other people, and in the name of what ivory-tower nonchalance could one remain detached from a life they bring you so copiously? No, painting is not made for the decoration of apartments, it is a weapon to be used offensively and defensively against the enemy." Again there was an unasked question: who, or what, was the enemy?

"It was an invasion!" he complained to Brassai in May. "Paris was liberated, but I was besieged, and still am." He complained, but he remained determined to conquer every single one of his besiegers. And his weapon was not his work -- in some

cases it was a positive handicap -- but his ability to be so totally absorbed in whomever he was with, for the time he was with them, that they felt he was an old friend. "I felt as though I had known him for years," wrote Seckler in his interview. And Marina de Berg, the young Russian dancer whom Brassai took to the studio, echoed the same feeling: "It's curious," she said, "I saw him for the first time, and yet I have the feeling of having known him forever." He welcomed them in blue shorts and nothing else and only changed into a steel-gray suit shortly before they left: "Just between ourselves," confided Marina to Brassai, "he was much better in his shorts than in that gray suit. When he is dressed he becomes too much the proper gentleman, and a tie does not become him at all. But in his shorts, he was incredible."

Marina gushed over Picasso but detested his sculptures and his paintings: "There are only monsters here! Horrors!" she exclaimed to Brassai. And when Picasso joined them, she was no less forthright: "But these canvases of yours are shocking! They frighten me!...Sincerely, do you like these, Brassai? Do you find that beautiful? You just say it out of snobbishness, all of you..."

"If I understand you correctly," Picasso said to her, clearly amused by her audacity, "none of my canvases pleases

you."

"Why, yes," Marina replied. "Yes...If you were to offer me one, I would choose this portrait."

Picasso and Brassai burst out laughing. She had picked the only canvas in the room that was not by Picasso -- a woman of Arles by André Marchand. Picasso grew more and more flirtatious, running his eyes up and down Marina, who was sitting with her high-heeled legs crossed and her head cupped in her hands: "But she is very beautiful -- Marina...This profile is adorable. If only I were an artist..."

"You would do my portrait!" she interrupted him in mock-alarm. "No thank you. I don't want it. You would reconstruct me just the way you have all those women over there -- the eyes in the ears, the mouth in the nose."

"Why, no, I wouldn't treat you like other women," he assured her. "I would make you very beautiful. By the way, how old are you?"

"How old do you think I am? I never tell my age," she replied coquettishly.

"But to me, you can tell it to me. Whisper it in my

ear...an old man like me..."

The seduction game continued with Picasso inviting Marina to come back so he could give her some helpful advice; asking her to dance a game of hopscotch right there in the studio and shouting "Encore! Encore!" when she did; offering to teach her how to fasten her ballerina's waistband properly; and promising to find Olga's ballet slippers that had such good leather in them and give them to her "next time." But there was no next time. He simply liked to introduce the future into the conversation to create a mood of intimacy, a sense of bonding that made him all the more irresistible -- even when there was to be no future. Marina was enthralled, and in this case that was all he had wanted: seduction for seduction's sake.

So the legend of Picasso the magician spread, perpetuated even by people who could not bear his work. "People are asking me for the most incredible things," he complained, suffering from the side effects of his omnipotent image. In this particular instance, an American girl, Katherine Dudley, had sent him twelve 1000-franc banknotes that she had forgotten to have stamped in time for the revaluation of the currency. Now they were useless -- could he do something about them? Yes, he could. Like a true magician, he revalued them to more than their original worth by cutting a woodblock and imprinting it on the face of each

note. The only catch was that he never returned the notes.

"Every time I see him," Katherine Dudley said almost twenty years later, "he waves his arms in the air and says, 'Yes, Katherine, I did revalue your notes, and I must give them back to you.'" He never did. He loved being a magician and he could not help being a trickster.

From the first moment she set eyes on him, Francoise had been struck by Picasso's resemblance to the ancient Egyptian statue of the Seated Scribe that she had so often seen in the Louvre. And now he looked more than ever before like the ancient scribe. In a first edition of a book of poems by Mallarmé, underneath the portrait he had drawn of the poet, he wrote: "NO MORE FORELOCK! Paris, May 12, 1945." What remained of his once famous, black and recalcitrant forelock -- a small bundle of white hairs -- was now buried in the Mallarmé poetry book. "One cannot both be and have been," was his resigned epitaph.

It was a conclusion that Dora had failed to reach. She could see in his work that Francoise had not only been in his bed and at the table, but she had begun to enter his very being. Yet Dora could not accept that she was on the verge of being supplanted. And even if she could, she had so thoroughly sunk herself in Picasso's life, so totally subordinated herself to him, that she had effectively barricaded all exits. So, however agonizing her pain and monstrous his indifference, she spent her

days in a cocoon where he was the only reality, waiting by the telephone for his summons, always available to meet him wherever he wanted or to receive him at home. The only other person who maintained a tenuous presence in her life was her father. Since her mother's death he had lived at the Hôtel de Palais d'Orsay and once a week, when Picasso was with Maya and Marie-Thérèse, she went to dinner with him, always just the two of them and always at the same place -- the Hôtel Lutetia.

In the spring of 1945, Dora had an exhibition of her paintings, mostly very meditative and austere still-lives, at Jeanne Bucher's gallery in Montparnasse. One afternoon, Francoise rode her bicycle to the gallery dressed in a multicolored, striped dress. Dora was there, all in black. Soon after, Picasso arrived, very proud and pleased that the exhibition was receiving good reviews. The more the world admired Dora and the more her talents were recognized, the more pleasure he derived from her submission to him. His arrival at the gallery made Francoise feel suddenly very uncomfortable and out of place. She ran down the stairs to get to her bike as fast as possible. He followed her, shouting, "Where do you think you're going?"

This had already become the pattern of their relationship. Whenever Francoise withdrew or stayed away, he ran after her to

seduce her back. But the moment he detected any signs of real tenderness and closeness in their relationship, he pushed her away: "I don't know why I told you to come. It would be more fun to go to a brothel." Or, "There's nothing so similar to one poodle dog as another poodle dog and that goes for women, too." Once, as they were watching the dust in the sunlight that streamed into the room, he told her: "Nobody has any real importance for me. "As far as I'm concerned, other people are like those little grains of dust floating in the sunlight. It takes only a push of the broom and out they go."

She fought back -- every single time she fought back. It came as no news to her, she said, that he saw the rest of the world as easily disposable flecks of dust, but as it happened, unlike a fleck of dust, she had both the will and the ability to leave without being swept away. She left and did not return for three months. She was not an instrument he could play at will, he was beginning to discover, but a young woman with a strength that was a match for his own.

While Picasso and Francoise were carrying out their relationship in a state of armed neutrality, Dora was, quite simply, falling apart. One night, Picasso went to her apartment and, to his amazement, found that she was out. When she finally returned, with her hair dishevelled and her clothes torn, she explained that she had been attacked by a man who had stolen her

little Maltese lapdog. Ten days later, she was brought home by a policeman who had found her in the same dishevelled and dazed state near the Pont Neuf. This time the story was that she had been attacked by someone who had stolen her bicycle. When her bicycle was found undamaged near the Pont Neuf, Picasso became convinced that all these stories were nothing more than a dramatic attempt to rekindle his interest in her. So, determined not to fall for this ruse and incapable of considering anyone's feelings but his own, he went on as though nothing was happening -- until it became unavoidably clear that something was.

One night, when Picasso arrived to pick Dora up for dinner, he discovered that the dam holding back her humiliation and her suffering had broken and the released emotions were pouring out uncontrollably. "As an artist you may be extraordinary," she told him, "but morally speaking you're worthless." He tried to shut her up by warning her that he would not put up with that kind of talk. She went on regardless, urging him to repent while there was still time, and when he laughed in her face, undaunted, she reproached him for his shameful life and begged him to consider what lay in store for him after death. "You work out your own salvation in the way you see fit and keep your advice to yourself," he snapped at her, but his words could not stem the flood of her emotions.

The next morning, in breach of Picasso's rule that she was not allowed at the rue des Grands-Augustins unless specifically invited, Dora arrived unbidden and unannounced. She found Picasso talking with Eluard. There were no preambles: "You both should get down on your knees before me, you ungodly pair," she cried. "I have the revelation of the inner voice. I see things as they really are, past, present and future. If you go on living as you have been, you'll bring down a terrible catastrophe on your heads." And to underline her words, she grabbed both men by the arms and tried to bring them down on their knees. Sabartés was immediately dispatched to call Dr. Jacques Lacan, the psychiatrist whom Picasso consulted for every kind of medical problem, including the common cold. He came to the studio and left taking Dora with him. He kept her in his clinic for three weeks, treating her with electric shock and starting her in analysis, which continued long after she left the clinic.

For the first time since their friendship began, Eluard was furious with the man he idolized, so furious that, as soon as Dr. Lacan had taken Dora away, he smashed a chair to pieces. He remembered Dora, beautiful and proud among the young Surrealists, with her mystical leanings and her sharp mind, and he found it hard to forgive Picasso for the deep unhappiness he had caused her, for the monstrous and innumerable humiliations he had inflicted on her, for all the ways in which over the last ten years he had gradually accomplished the transformation of the

goddess into a ragged doormat. "Picasso can't stand for his companion to be sick," Eluard told Pierre Daix when he took him to see Dora after she had returned from the clinic. "With him a woman never has the right to give up the battle."

Picasso narrated Dora's woes to Francoise and extracted the moral for her: "The present always has precedence over the past. That's a victory for you." It was a very different moral from the one that Francoise saw in Dora's story. She expressed her fears and told him that for her the story was bristling with painful warnings. "Let's drop that whole matter," he said in response. "Life is like that. It's set up to automatically eliminate those who can't adapt....Life must go on, and life is us." When she protested that this was a very harsh way to deal with anyone less strong than himself, he accused her of being a dreamer: "That kind of charity is very unrealistic. It's only sentimentality, a kind of pseudo-humanitarianism you've picked up from that whining, weepy phony, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Furthermore, everyone's nature is determined in advance."

Francoise recognized with some apprehension the philosophy of Nietzsche's loveless Superman who must suppress all compassion: "Love is the danger of the loneliest one." "I started to see that there were strange aspects to his character," she said. "Sadistic characteristics began to come to light, so I

thought that although this is an important relationship it should remain in a context of freedom and separateness -- and distance." Picasso, oblivious to the effect the revelation of his demonic side was having on her, invited her to spend the summer in the south of France with him -- and Dora. She refused categorically, determined not to be a player in his game of setting one woman against the other even when one of them had been reduced to an emotional cripple: "Don't count on me," she told him, "to come between Dora and you; don't count on me to annoy Dora. You annoy Dora yourself." And she left to spend the summer in Brittany and maintain the distance she knew was necessary, not so much in order for their relationship to survive as for her to survive their relationship.

On June 15, 1945, it was as if time had stopped for a night. It was the première of Jacques Prévert's Rendezvous presented by the Ballets Roland Petit at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt. What remained of the beau-monde was there in force, hoping that the Diaghilev years might be resurrected. Etienne de Beaumont and Marlene Dietrich and Cocteau and Picasso -- with Dora at his side -- were in the audience, as was Brassai, who had done the sets for Rendezvous. Picasso had agreed to do the drop-curtain, but as opening night was approaching and he had not delivered, Boris Kochno, who had succeeded Diaghilev after his death, picked a still-life of a candlestick and a velvet mask that Picasso had done in 1943 and had it enlarged. There was

applause but also some boos and jeers as the house curtain rose to reveal Picasso's drop-curtain. "Beyond a slight tightening around his eyebrows, Picasso shows no reaction whatever," wrote Brassai who was seated next to him during the performance. "He has seen other demonstrations of the sort. During the intermisssion he told me that tonight's display was no more than a tempest in a teacup compared with the scandal provoked by Parade in this same theater twenty eight years ago." If he reflected that his own contribution was only an echo of years past, he did not say so.

At the beginning of July, Picasso and Dora left for Cap d'Antibes to stay with Marie Cuttoli, around whom, whether in Paris or in the South of France, there was always a salon of artists, intellectuals and politicians, among them her husband, who was a senator in the French Parliament. From Cap d'Antibes, together with Dora and Marie Cuttoli, he went to the village of Ménerbes in the Vaucluse to see the large house he had bought sight unseen in exchange for a still-life. The owner had wanted a Picasso and he also wanted very badly to get rid of his house, which was full of memories of his recently dead wife. Picasso made a present of the house to Dora. It was both a farewell gift and the symbol of a permanent bond.

From Cap d'Antibes he sent a letter to Francoise in

Brittany informing her that he had rented a place for her in Golfe-Juan, in the house of Louis Fort, an engraver and a friend of his. "Please come at once," he wrote. "I'm terribly bored." To his surprise, Francoise replied that her holiday in Brittany was not all that exciting but that nevertheless she was staying put. At the same time she wrote to her mother: "I am laughing at your advice to rest and do nothing because you know very well that laziness is the very essence of my nature and that I work only because I love painting even more than I love being lazy -- and that's saying a lot. At present I'm drawing everything I come across, even a calf's head this morning, and it's not at all tiring. Just the opposite, for me drawing is the most wonderful thing, because it makes me enter semi-consciously into a dream-world from which I have difficulty returning. That's why it's necessary to be surrounded by a great calm in order to pass from the everyday world to that perfect state where joy is possible. When I have at any moment to come down to earth to take a metro or discuss "business" it's as if a spell is broken. But here I remain "airing my soul" all day long....There are so many things that I see and love that I can't remain a mere spectator. I have to understand them, to possess them, and that I can do through drawing -- for example, a person's character reveals itself to me the moment I'm groping for the outline of his face....And the most striking thing is to discover the weakness hidden in everyone, the flaw that makes every man touching. You are overcome with great compassion when you find in each man the

source of tears..."

She had started making sketches of Picasso in 1944, searching in his face for the hidden weakness, for the source of tears. But she was struck by "the masklike fixity of his face; the burning intensity of his basilisk eyes, the geometry of his head that through a short neck was squarely implanted on his broad chest." Her fascination for him still stood in the way of revelation: the source of tears remained hidden.

When Francoise returned to Paris, instead of being overcome with compassion, she was overcome with misgivings. She feared, especially after what Picasso had told her of Dora's unravelling, that his urge to seduce was not in order to love, not even in order to possess, but in order to destroy. So she exercised all her self-discipline to stay away from the rue des Grands-Augustins. It was not easy: "Life away from Pablo had lost its zest, and there were moments when my yearning for him drowned everything else."

On November 26, as a present to herself for her twenty-third birthday, she went to see him. In the proofs of the lithographs he had been working on, she saw that he, too, had been preoccupied by her. There was a series of prints which depicted Francoise watching as another woman slept. He told her

that he was not sure whether the sleeping woman was her friend Geneviève or Dora. He continued to make changes until the sleeping woman was transformed into a thoroughly abstract nude. Only then was he sure that she was Dora. The proof was in the two insects in the margin. He explained to Francoise that for him Dora had always been a Kafkaesque personality, and so he had got into the habit of transforming any spot on the walls of her apartment into a tiny insect. There were also birds in the margins of the prints. Those, he told Francoise, were for her.

As soon as Francoise was back, he began a concerted campaign to persuade her to move in with him. She was not at all sure. While they lived apart she felt that there was a balance in their relationship and protection from the fallout of his personality: "I knew that going to live with him was the thing not to do," she said, which made him all the more determined that she would. Later, he would accuse her of being the woman who always said no, but for the moment he loved the challenge of her strength and independence. One of his pastimes was to follow her in the car, with Marcel driving, while she was riding in the Bois de Boulogne. His favorite pastime, however, was going back and telling Marie-Thérèse about this new, marvelous, young woman in his life who was such a spectacular horseback rider. He knew exactly what would most upset Marie-Thérèse, who was so proud of her athletic prowess: another woman in his life who was a superb athlete and younger still.

Marie-Thérèse decided to compete, to show him that whatever the new woman could do on a horse, she could do better. She started riding in the Bois de Boulogne, where Francoise would often see her, her beautiful face instantly recognizable from Picasso's portraits, her robust body now plumper and heavy on horseback. It was a game in which, as Picasso knew well, Francoise held all the cards: her slim, androgynous body, shown to even greater advantage on horseback, her proud youth and, above all, the Joker he had placed in her hands -- his fresh and growing enchantment with her. Marie-Thérèse soon abandoned riding; it had been one more hope that she could win him back, now dashed by reality.

Marie-Thérèse had always been the secret lover, and for a while few knew about Francoise. But now he started introducing her to more and more of his life, including Fernand Mourlot's workshop in the rue de Chabrol, where he had gone every morning since the beginning of November. It was through Braque that he had met the famous lithographer, whose father, a lithographer himself, had bought the shop in 1914. The closest Picasso ever got to working people was in Mourlot's workshop. And they loved him; he shook hands with them every morning and they showed him their latest treasures, mostly pin-up girls and pictures of cycling champions.

The only exception was Monsieur Tutin, the most skilled craftsman there, who hated Picasso's work. Yet since Picasso was constantly breaking the rules of lithography, it was Monsieur Tutin who was given his work to print. When he threw his arms up in disgust with the work and in despair over the technical difficulties it caused, Picasso would alternately insult and cajole him: "All right, then," he would say, "I'll take your daughter out to dinner some evening and tell her what kind of printer her father is," or, "I know, of course, that a job like that might be a little difficult for most of the people around here, but I had an idea -- mistakenly, I can see now -- that you were probably the one man who could do it." It worked every time: Monsieur Tutin would put both his disgust and his despair aside and achieve the impossible. As Fernand Mourlot summed it up: "Picasso looked, listened, and then did exactly the opposite of what had been shown him -- and it worked."

There was hardly anyone around him who could resist his manipulations or his needling. Gertrude Stein tried, and sometimes even gave back as good as she got: "See what fame is, Gertrude?" he bragged once as he accompanied her on her round of marketing and watched every shopkeeper double her post-Liberation rations just because she was with the celebrated Monsieur Picasso. "The main thing," Gertrude replied grandly, "is that we are both defending mankind." When he took Francoise to meet her,

he remained completely silent throughout Gertrude's long interrogation, which Francoise described as "an ordeal made worse by the menacing looks of Alice Toklas." On the way out, however, he pounced: "Well, Gertrude, you haven't discovered any more painters lately?...Oh, no doubt about it, Gertrude, you're the grandmother of American literature, but are you sure that when it comes to painting you've had quite as good judgment for the generation that succeeded us? When there was Matisse and Picasso to discover, things were simple, weren't they? But then you went on to Gris -- which was down a notch. After that, your 'discoveries' haven't amounted to much..."

He was even more vicious behind her back. "She is as fat as a pig," he told James Lord in an explosion of fury against her. "You know, she sent me once a picture of herself standing in front of a car and you couldn't even see the car. Gertrude, that pig, took the whole picture. And all that she says about me and my painting! To listen to her, the whole world would think that she created me piece by piece. But if you want to see what she really understands about painting, all you have to do is look at the trash that she likes at the moment. She says the same about Hemingway. Actually, those two were made for each other. I've never been able to stand him, never. He never really understood bullfighting, not like a Spaniard understands it. He was a charlatan, Hemingway. I've always known it, but Gertrude

never knew it." Lord was stupefied. He could not understand why, if that was how Picasso felt about Gertrude Stein, he had sent him to meet her. Nor was it easy to understand why he had taken Francoise to meet her, or why he accompanied Gertrude on her errands or why he bothered visiting her at the rue Christine.

But the torrent of his abuse was still gathering force, demolishing Hemingway on the way. "He came to see me after the liberation and he gave me a piece of an S.S. uniform with S.S. embroidered on it, and he told me that he had killed the man himself. It was a lie. Maybe he had killed plenty of wild animals, but he had never killed a man. If he had killed one, he wouldn't have needed to pass around souvenirs. He was a charlatan and that's why Gertrude liked him....As for Toklas, this little witch, do you know why she has bangs? She had a horn!" He burst out laughing; but it was not over yet: "In the middle of her forehead. A growth. Like a rhinoceros. They were a perfect couple, Gertrude and Alice: the hippopotamus and the rhinoceros. But Alice cut the horn and the bangs are supposed to hide the hole." He continued to laugh a little longer; then he added: "Now you know the true face of this slut Gertrude." With that final insult he was spent; he suddenly told James Lord that he was busy and showed him the door.

Lord was sufficiently shocked and disturbed to go straight home and, as a form of catharsis, record Picasso's tirade in his

old green notebook. "There was something satanic about that man," he recalled forty years later. "There was something about him that was prepared to come to intimate terms with cruelty, with something very dark, almost sinister, in human circumstances....There is something in his work which is frightening, sadistic....I suppose the concept of the evil genius, like Hitler, is a perfectly reasonable concept. I wouldn't call Picasso an evil genius but he certainly harmed a lot of the people who came close to him....And at the same time, he could be very funny. He could also be very sweet and gentle and tender. When he wanted to be."

For the moment, he wanted to be all those things with Francoise, especially since she had not yet fully surrendered to him. In February 1946 she fell down the steps of her grandmother's house and broke her arm. While she was recuperating in the hospital from an operation on her elbow, a delivery boy arrived one afternoon carrying a monstrous azalea with red blooms and masses of pink and blue ribbons. "Pablo," Francoise recalled, "was once again thumbing his nose at good taste. The result was more amusing and definitely more memorable, than the most beautiful, conventional flower arrangement."

Once out of the hospital, she was presented with an

ultimatum. Their relationship, he said, could not continue in this way: either it was going to become a full relationship, which meant living together, or it had to stop completely. He suggested that she go to the place he had rented at Monsieur Fort's in Golfe-Juan and there make up her mind. "By that time," Francoise said, "I was very much in love with him, but there was also the fear in me of being absorbed by him. I really didn't know what I wanted, so I thought that it would be a good idea to go to the South of France and try and sort out my own feelings."

As soon as she arrived at Golfe-Juan, Francoise wrote to Geneviève asking her to come and stay with her. She felt that she needed someone to help her clear all the conflicting thoughts reeling in her head, and Geneviève was the person closest to her. A few days later, she also wrote to Picasso, thanking him for the house, telling him how much she liked being on the Mediterranean, how she loved the harbor, how old Monsieur Fort was a little bit crazy but fun to have around. She ended the letter by saying that it was good for her to be alone for the moment and that he should not make any effort to join her.

Her letter did not have the intended effect. Picasso was simply furious to read that she would rather be alone than with him. She meant for the moment; he interpreted it forever, and ordered Marcel to get him to Golfe-Juan as fast as possible. It was six o'clock in the afternoon, the day after Geneviève had

arrived from Montpellier, when Francoise heard a commotion in the street. She went to the window and saw the large blue Peugeot that Picasso had been using during the Occupation. Marcel and Picasso emerged in a great state of agitation. She was stunned. "It was the last thing I expected," she recalled. "And I thought to myself, oh my God, Geneviève is here, Pablo is here, what a mess!"

He stormed into the house. It was their first real confrontation. "It was a very strange moment," Francoise remembers. "The war was over, peace had come back, and there I was, suddenly confronted with the same kind of violence on the personal level. He grabbed my arms, took his cigarette and held it right on my cheek for what seemed like forever. I could feel my face burning but I was so stunned, I thought this whole thing was so incredible, instead of screaming I talked to him: You can destroy my beauty, I said, but you are not going to destroy me. You can burn me if you like, go ahead, but what you are burning is the thing you say you like. He just kept holding the cigarette there through everything I said, until finally he removed it. There was a big hole left and a scar that stayed for years. He pulled away the cigarette but his rage wasn't spent. What infuriated him even more is that I hadn't screamed and pleaded with him to stop, that he hadn't been able to break me. If anything I dared him to go on, to show his true colors by

destroying what he claimed he loved. The whole thing was so barbaric, so ludicrous, so uncalled for, I was too shocked even to be angry. Look at that, I said, look at it, it's ugly, and you did it, and you'll have to look at it now..."

At that point Geneviève, who had been out, came back to the house. Francoise may have been too shocked to be angry, but Geneviève was both shocked and enraged. She called Picasso a barbarian and told Francoise that if she stayed after what had happened, she was cooperating in her own destruction. She begged her to let her take her away that very night. But Francoise was too torn and disoriented to contemplate so drastic a move. Into the vacuum of her indecision stepped Picasso. His first action was to throw Geneviève out. Determined to save her friend, however, Geneviève only went as far as Chez Marcel, the little hotel down the street. As soon as she was gone, Picasso's next move was to ask Francoise for forgiveness, to implore her to stay and to live with him.

For the next two days, Francoise was in limbo. "Geneviève," she said, "is the only woman I have really loved in my life. It was not a physical love but it was a very deep spiritual love, partly because of the mystical awakenings we had shared at Les Baux. Two very different roads, two very different lives lay in front of me. I could imagine leaving Golfe-Juan with Geneviève

and staying with her for the rest of my life, never looking back. Or staying behind and facing the minotaur. I was wondering whether I had the strength to survive living with Pablo and I was also wondering whether Geneviève had the strength to face the world living with me. If we had decided to share our lives, whatever the truth might have been, the world would have assumed that we were lesbians, and at that time that would have meant complete rejection by many people, starting with her family. I had already been rejected by my father, but could I ask that same sacrifice from her? She and I had been to the same school, but she was a boarder and never fully part of the life and freedom of Paris. She was the most beautiful creature you can imagine, in the most truly classical Greek style, but she was also rooted in the conventions of the part of France she came from -- very different from Paris, even Paris in 1946. I was afraid that choosing such an unconventional lifestyle might in the end destroy her."

Still she could not decide which would be the road not taken, the life not lived. She went to Antibes to see her grandmother who was staying there, and when she came back to the house, she found Geneviève angrier than she had ever been before and Picasso fuming. Clearly, they both had a story to tell and both were determined to fight for her. She chose to hear Geneviève first and walked with her to her hotel.

"What can possibly be the attraction of living with a man who is actually evil?" Geneviève cried even before they were out of the house. She then told her what had happened. After they had dropped Francoise at Antibes, Marcel had brought them back to the house. "I'm going to take advantage of Francoise's absence and you at the same time," he announced minutes after he had told her -- with a straight face according to Geneviève -- that he wanted to give her a lesson in engraving. "What's more," he continued, "I'm going to make you a child. That's just what you need." Francoise told her that she should have laughed in his face rather than get angry. "I'm beginning to fear," Geneviève replied, "that you have lost your capacity for anger." For the next hour, she used every argument her love for Francoise could muster to convince her to leave with her the next morning for Montpellier. Otherwise, she told her, she would be overpowered by Picasso's destructiveness. She knew that there was nothing more she could do or say and nothing to be gained by her staying longer. More worn out than angry by now, she issued her own ultimatum: "You have the night to make your choice. Tomorrow morning I'm leaving."

When Francoise returned to Monsieur Fort's, Picasso was on the offensive, accusing Geneviève of trying to seduce him behind her best friend's back and then lying to her. And when Francoise threatened to leave in the morning with Geneviève, he accused

both of them of having "some sort of unnatural relationship." Francoise refused to take him seriously and asked him instead "to stop wasting his Jesuitic tricks" on her. He began gyrating around her, calling her "Little monster! Serpent! Viper!" But he saw that none of that was working and, afraid that she might, after all, actually leave him, he changed his tactics and began wailing and wallowing in self-pity. He didn't have long to live, he moaned, and she didn't have the right to take away "whatever little bit of happiness" was left to him. He was fighting not only to keep Francoise but to defeat Geneviève and, in her, all the Spanish women of his childhood. He had often told Francoise how much Geneviève reminded him of his sister Lola, and this, together with the fact that Geneviève's mother was of Spanish background and that she was bent on thwarting his wishes, had been enough to make of her a hateful symbol of all the women who had dominated his early life.

The next morning Francoise walked to Chez Marcel and announced to Geneviève that she was staying. "I was almost unbearably proud at the time," Francoise recalled. "I believed I could succeed at anything I tried and, as a result, I had really convinced myself that I could overcome the destroyer in Pablo and maybe even save him from himself."

For Picasso, Francoise's decision was a complete victory not only over her doubts and fears, not only over her treasured

independence, but over Geneviève and all that she represented for him and all that she was for Francoise. When the two young women faced each other at Chez Marcel, they both knew that their relationship had been too deep and too intense to survive in a diluted form. Francoise also knew that in giving up Geneviève she was cutting herself off from the friend who, together with her grandmother, had been the purest and most sustained source of love in her life. Geneviève was painfully sure of something else: "You're sleepwalking to your destruction," she told her friend before she took the train back to Montpellier.

CHAPTER TWELVE

"TRUTH DOES NOT EXIST"

Francoise had closed one of the escape hatches, but she had not yet agreed to live with him. And Picasso, having failed to overpower her, now attempted to seduce her into freely choosing her surrender. It was February and too cold to sunbathe on the beach, but they walked by the sea, ate at Chez Marcel, talked about everything except the scar on her right cheek and drove to Vence to see Matisse. When they arrived at Le Rève, the villa he lived in across the street from a Dominican convent, they found him in bed, where he spent most of his days since an operation he had had five years ago. He was working on his cut-outs: cutting forms from already painted paper which he later arranged in their appropriate positions with the help of Lydia Delektorskaya, officially his secretary but in reality the woman with whom he shared the last years of his life. Francoise, on

picasso's instructions, had dressed in mauve and willow-green -- two of Matisse's favorite colors. Matisse was so taken with her that he immediately volunteered to paint her, with her hair green, her complexion light blue and her arched eyebrows sticking up like circumflex accents.

Picasso was not pleased. On their way back to Golfe-Juan, he flew into a temper about Matisse's audacity. "Really, that's going pretty far," he fumed. "Do I make portraits of Lydia?" Then he warned Francoise that if Matisse made her portrait, she should be prepared to have an Oriental rug become the most important feature in the picture and her face just an empty oval form. But never loath to use somebody else's good idea, he conceded that at last he now knew how to make her portrait himself.

As the time approached to return to Paris, he became obsessed with their living together. Magnetized by her self-sufficiency, he could not wait to put an end to it. Like a good advocate he appealed to both her emotions and her intellect. He told her that he needed her, that he really needed her. And then when she expressed her concern about abandoning her grandmother, he launched into a speech, fueled by her protests, that echoed all "the men of destiny" in history and fiction who had tried to convince themselves and the world that they were permitted

everything. "As far as your grandmother's feelings are concerned," he began, "there are things one can do and make them understood, and there are other things that can only be done by coup d'état since they go beyond the limits of another person's understanding. It's almost better to strike a blow and after people have recovered from it, let them accept the fact....It may cost a terrible price to act that way but there are moments in life when we don't have a choice. If there is one necessity which for you dominates all others, then necessarily you must act badly in some respect."

The necessity could be the demands of his genius, his latest whim or the Communist dawn around the corner, but the philosophy was the same: the end justifies the means. Francoise tried to argue with him, to point out the inhumanity such beliefs could lead to. But there was no room for discussion, only for laying down the law of the strong and mighty, embellished by civilized rationalizations. "There is no total, absolute purity other than the purity of refusal. In the acceptance of a passion one considers extremely important and in which one accepts for oneself a share of tragedy, one steps outside the usual laws and has the right to act as one should not act under ordinary conditions. At a time like that, the sufferings one has inflicted on others, one begins to inflict on oneself equally. It's a question of the recognition of one's destiny and not a matter of unkindness or insensitivity."

Francoise had never before heard him give such deliberate expression to what he believed. Normally, he preferred to dazzle the world with his pithy paradoxes that obscured as much as they revealed. Ignoring her obvious disturbance and her attempts to contradict him, he warmed to his peroration: "We are always in the midst of a mixture of good and evil, right and wrong, and the elements of any situation are always hopelessly tangled. One person's good is antagonistic to another's. To choose one person is always, in a measure, to kill someone else. And so one has to have the courage of the surgeon or the murderer, if you will, and to accept the share of guilt which that gives....In certain situations one can't be an angel....There is a price on everything in life. Anything of great value -- creation, a new idea -- carries its shadow zone with it."

Francoise's response was to tell him that until then she had only contemplated the possibility that he was the devil; now she was sure. With a growing feeling of unease, she felt that his speech would have sounded perfectly fitting from the mouth of Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment: "I didn't mean to kill her," Raskolnikov ruminates. "It just happened...Napoleon was right: a true leader is permitted everything....All the others, they're just pygmies, leeches, slaves, trash, fertilizer for the future; they live obedient lives, they like to obey, they're bound to

obey because it's their lot, the law of nature! Why it's clear as day...The trouble is, how do you know who you are, a worm or a man, a man who has the right...the right to transgress, to overstep the bounds."

Picasso had no doubt: he was a man who had the right to overstep the bounds in pursuit of whatever he wanted. And now what he wanted was Francoise -- totally and unconditionally. Mixed with his drive to possess and dominate was his rich instinct for life urging him to find the woman who would fulfill his incompleteness and help him, in some mysterious, indefinable way, to achieve the no less mysterious and indefinable state of "ultimate" painting, a struggle he often talked about to Francoise. At sixty-five and after a succession of colorful nymphs and sirens, the urge was all the more compelling -- even desperate. He recognized his need for Francoise, he had had a glimpse of the possibilities opened up by their relationship, which was why, after Olga, she was the only woman he had wanted to live with. But he was not prepared to yield his other need, that had by now become an addiction, for total control through constant manipulation.

On their way back to Paris, Francoise found an unexpected ally in Marcel. He interrupted Picasso's barrage of words every now and then to echo Francoise's arguments, asking him to give her more time, urging him not to put pressure on her, underlining

the wisdom of what she was saying. As both Picasso and Francoise were sitting with Marcel in the front of the car, he was ideally positioned for his Greek chorus impersonation.

Back in Paris, Dora's presence in Picasso's life moved to the top of Francoise's list of reasons for not living with him. He assured her that it was all over between him and Dora. One morning, he even arranged for the two of them to "run into" Dora at an exhibition of French tapestries, and he promptly invited her to join them for lunch at Chez Francis. It was the kind of situation, awkward and difficult for everyone else, that he thrived on. Dora buried her pain in dollops of caviar and everything most expensive on the menu, and in a brilliant show of aphorisms, witticisms and sparkling conversation. Picasso refused to laugh at any of it, but went instead into ecstasies of appreciation every time Francoise so much as opened her mouth. "Isn't she marvelous?" he exclaimed to Dora. "What a mind! I've really discovered somebody, haven't I?" In front of Dora it was Francoise's mind that he raved about; in front of Marie-Thérèse it was her athletic prowess. As always, he was masterly at inflicting pain with a surgeon's precision. "Well you don't need me to take you home, Dora," was his parting shot. "You're a big girl now." Dora made a desperate attempt at a comeback: "Of course not," she smiled. "I'm perfectly capable of getting home by myself. I imagine you need to lean on youth, though. About

fifteen minutes ought to do it, I should think."

That was the only hope left to Dora: that his relationship with Francoise would soon be over. A couple of weeks later when picasso dragged Francoise to Dora's apartment so she could hear from her directly that there was nothing more between them, Dora fell back on the same hope: "You're very funny," she said to him. "You take so many precautions in embarking on something that isn't going to last around the corner." She went on to say that she would be amazed if Francoise was not "out on the ash-heap before three months had passed..." But she did do what he asked and told Francoise that she need not worry about causing the break-up between her and Picasso. She said it with pride and with some contempt as she looked down on the "schoolgirl," who in her flat shoes, plaid skirt and loose sweater looked as though not just twenty years but a whole era separated them. More interesting to Francoise than Dora's assurance that there was nothing left for her to break up was her parting accusation: "You've never loved anyone in your life," she said to the man with whom she had spent ten years. "You don't know how to love."

Francoise was deeply shaken by that confrontation. She was troubled by Picasso's callousness in initiating a meeting that he knew would be one more blow to Dora's fragile equilibrium; troubled by what Dora had said; troubled by one more warning signal on top of all that had gone before. As soon as they were

outside, she told Picasso just how she felt. He reacted with the same kind of violence that had led him to brand her cheek with his burning cigarette. He threatened to throw her into the seine, accusing her of being unable "to feel intensely about anything" and of having "no grasp of what life is really like." He pushed her to the edge of the bridge against the parapet and forced her head down, facing the river below her. Knowing by now that nothing incited the demon in him as much as fear and weakness, she defied him to throw her in the water. It was spring, she said, and she was a good swimmer. He held her there a little longer and then released her; and she ran away from him as fast as she could.

But she came back. She knew, however, that her disregard of the warning signals needed an explanation: "Picasso was like a conqueror, marching through life, accumulating power, women, wealth, glory, but none of that was very satisfying any more. I hoped that having conquered all he had wanted to conquer, he would be ready to reach out with me for what is sublime in life and divine in us. I also knew that Pablo's path was strewn with casualties and I had experienced his destructive side at first hand, but I remembered my grandmother who used to say that you love people for what they are, not for what they do. And I was arrogant enough and trusting enough to believe that I could do battle with the darkness in him and reinforce the light. I knew

it was a great challenge, but I was prepared to face the risks and match myself against it." At the end of May 1946, she finally decided to match herself against it full-time. She moved into the rue des Grands-Augustins -- or rather at the end of an evening together she did not go home. It was Picasso who dictated the letters she wrote to her grandmother and her mother to announce, without revealing very much, that she was going to stay away and live a different kind of life.

It was, right from the beginning, a battle much more ferocious than she had imagined. Looking back, Francoise called it living "like Joan of Arc: wearing one's armor from day till night. Proving your strength twenty four hours a day." She also realized that, although she had said yes to living with him, it was a qualified yes: "I was playing hide and seek. Sometimes I felt as though I was invisible and therefore I didn't have to reveal more of myself than I wanted to. Not all the wrongs were on his side. Part of me never accepted that I had agreed to live with him. I never embraced him with my whole being. I could have given more of myself. I could have given all of myself, but I didn't."

Having seen the destruction he wrought around him, she was determined to shield herself. She knew that their relationship could not be complete without surrender, but she also knew it would be fatal to submit. She called their life together a

corrida. He clung to his defensive omnipotence while she was determined not to cross the invisible line between surrender and submission, too mistrustful to allow herself to be vulnerable. She did, however, immerse herself in his life, cutting off contact not only with her family and friends but with her generation.

Taking up residence at the rue des Grands-Augustins was a great upheaval for Francoise but an even greater trial for Inès and Sabartés. Inès had just given birth to a boy she named Gerard, and her adjustment to becoming a mother was made much harder by Francoise's arrival. There had, of course, always been plenty of women in Picasso's life, but never one, in her experience, who lived with him. The rue des Grands-Augustins had been Inès's realm and now there was a resident queen. One of Inès's charms was her beautiful, welcoming smile; with Francoise's arrival, she smiled less and retreated more often to her small apartment beneath Picasso's studio which, low-ceilinged and poorly-lit, was a shrine to her master, the walls covered with etchings, gouaches, lithographs and portraits of her painted as birthday gifts.

Sabartés was ambivalent about the upheaval. There were no women in the private myth he had created about his life with Picasso, just as there were no women in his narrative of

picasso's life which was published under the title Picasso: portraits and Memories two months before Francoise moved into the rue des Grands-Augustins. The installation of a woman on the very premises from which he conducted his baroque dealings with the outside world was an unwelcome intrusion; it spoiled the atmosphere of mystery and drama he loved to create and Picasso loved to inhabit. But there were compensations for Sabartés in Francoise's permanent presence in the household. It brought about the official end of the age of Dora, whom he had always despised. It brought a greater peace to Picasso's life, for which Sabartés was particularly grateful as he was a regular victim of Picasso's explosions. And, most unexpectedly, it brought him a very competent partner in the effort to keep up with Picasso's obligations to his women and children and with all the complications of his business affairs.

Francoise described Picasso's need for Sabartés as "the need for a teddy bear to go to sleep." Gradually, however, she discovered that there were "plenty of thorns in the bear." In public it was always Picasso who chided Sabartés, calling him stupid and dismissing his writings as "nothing." But Francoise soon found out that in private it was Sabartés who quietly slipped into the role of judge and executioner and, under the cover of supreme righteousness and virtue, nibbled on Picasso like a vulture, undermining his relationships, feeding the histrionic element in his character and, Cassandra-like,

prophesying that only bad would come of everything.

At the beginning, Francoise spent a large part of her time at the rue des Grands-Augustins watching Picasso paint, amazed at his stamina as he stood in front of a canvas sometimes for seven or eight hours at a stretch. She asked him once if he didn't get tired. "No," he replied. "That's why painters live so long. While I work I leave my body outside the door, the way Moslems take off their shoes before entering the mosque." One afternoon in May, he asked her to pose for him. It was the beginning of what was to become La Femme-Fleur -- Francoise bursting into flower. "We're all animals, more or less," he explained to her, "and about three-quarters of the human race look like animals. But you don't. You're like a growing plant and I'd been wondering how I could get across the idea that you belong to the vegetable kingdom rather than the animal. I've never felt impelled to portray anyone else in this way. It's strange, isn't it? I think it's just right, though. It represents you."

Later on, among the Celtic legends she loved to read, Francoise learned about the myth of Blodeuwedd, the girl-flower, who was created by a god with flower-pollen and given in marriage to a hero who had been cursed and could not marry a mortal woman; after many adventures and misadventures, she was transformed into an owl and flew away into the night. "Neither Pablo nor I," said

Francoise, "knew about the myth at that time. But soon thereafter we found a live owl in Antibes, and Pablo began to incorporate owls into many of his paintings."

At the beginning of July, 1946, Picasso announced that they were leaving for the Midi, and that he wanted to stop in Ménéribes to show her Dora's house. To Francoise's alarmed surprise, as soon as they arrived, he told her that this was where they were spending their holiday. "I made her give us the house," he said, "and now I'm going to make sure that you stay here with me." It was not a happy holiday. Francoise felt that choosing Dora's house for a holiday was a callous act, showing a complete indifference both to Dora's feelings and her own: "Everything was a trap. He was the perfect trap setter, and his timing could not have been worse, since Dora was just recovering from her attack of insanity and I was just beginning my life with him." Her sense of unease was intensified by the swarms of scorpions which filled the house at night. The more worried she looked, the more amused Picasso was. He told her that Marie Cuttoli had been stung by a scorpion the year before when they were in the house together: "As you see," he added, "she didn't die. Of course, she was pretty sick for a while." One night, Francoise turned around and, to her horror, saw three scorpions crawling by her head. "That's the kind of crown I like to see on you," Picasso laughed. "They're my sign of the zodiac."

To add to the jarring atmosphere, there were the bugles. Every evening, all the buglers of Ménerbes, scattered in their farms around the valley, rehearsed for the Bastille Day celebration. The pandemonium started at sunset and went on until after ten o'clock, shattering the peace of the countryside. Francoise did not know where to hide herself from it. Picasso, on the other hand, who had no ear for music and a passion for the bugle, was in ecstasy over the inharmonious chorus. After the Liberation, blowing thirty notes on his French Army bugle became his most beloved daily ritual. So on July 14, when the time came for the torchlight tattoo with all the local buglers, Francoise could not drag him away: "It was an almost all-male celebration of unleashed wildness. The men half-naked to the waist with their bugles and their torches, the women forgotten. Traditionally, men and women dance together to celebrate Bastille Day, but not in Ménerbes, which pleased Picasso no end. He hated dancing. In fact he considered it immoral and depraved, while sleeping around with countless women seemed to him the natural order of things."

After Bastille Day, the bugle-torture came to an end, but Francoise still could not wait to leave Ménerbes. Even though she was physically alone with Picasso, Dora seemed to be hovering in the house, while Marie-Thérèse was a definite presence in the rapturous letters he received from her every day. Francoise, who

had looked forward to their time away as a kind of honeymoon after they had started living together, was actually expected to listen, every morning, to selected passionate passages from Marie-Thérèse's letters, punctuated by Picasso's commentary: "Somehow I don't see you writing me a letter like that....It's because you don't love me enough. That woman really loves me....You're too immature to understand things like that. You're not a fully developed woman, you know. You're just a girl." What he did not read to her were his no less passionate letters to Marie-Thérèse. They were, Maya remembers, "full of 'I love you' and 'I love you' and 'I love only you' and 'you are the best in the world'."

Assaulted by scorpions, bugles, Marie-Thérèse's letters and Picasso's barbs, Francoise began to dream of escaping from Picasso and from the oppressive presence of his past -- as far away as Tunisia. Luc Simon, a painter friend, had arranged a job for her there, making designs to record the local arts and crafts before they disappeared. She plotted it all in her mind, and one afternoon when Picasso was out of the house, she left. Since she had no money, she had decided to hitchhike to Marseille and borrow from friends there her fare to North Africa. She had not been on the main road long before a car stopped for her. It all seemed to be going according to plan except for one thing: the car was the blue Peugeot with Marcel at the wheel and Picasso in the front seat. His first reaction was anger and

incomprehension: "You must be out of your mind" he cried. But then, as always when she wanted to leave him, he knew with uncanny accuracy just what to say to bring her back: "We may have a few difficulties in making the adjustment, but now that we've come together it's up to us to build something together. Let's not toss away our chance so lightly....You mustn't listen to your head for things like that. You'll talk yourself out of the deepest things in life. What you need is a child. That will bring you back to nature and put you in tune with the rest of the world." By now, he had already pushed her inside the car, kissed her and held her close to him.

Once she was back, nothing seemed further from her thoughts than Tunisia. In fact, she decided to follow Picasso's advice to think less and obey her heart more, wherever it led her. "You won't know what it means to be a woman until you have a child," he had said, and she, who had up until then dismissed the idea of motherhood, was no longer so sure. "Before I went to live with him," she remembered, "that was one thing I absolutely had made up my mind on: I didn't want to have children. And that was one thing he absolutely had made up his mind on: I was going to have children." A little over a month later, back at Monsieur Fort's where they settled after they mercifully left Ménerbes, she was pregnant.

They were beginning, as Picasso had put it, "to build something together." For Francoise one of the hardest adjustments was learning to be herself in a world in which everything revolved around him. Dominique Desanti remembered arriving one morning in Golfe-Juan to interview Picasso. She had caught the early train from Paris and arrived at Monsieur Fort's while Picasso was still asleep. "Francoise," she said, "offered to take me to the beach until Pablo woke up. We walked to the beach and we chatted, among other things about her being pregnant, and suddenly she stopped and told me, 'I'm so glad you came early because I can have the illusion that you came a little bit for me and not only for him.' That was the first landmark of our friendship, because at that moment I understood everything -- how difficult it must be to be the wife, the woman, with a man like him, who, even if he hadn't been a bit sadistic, even if he hadn't intended to be cruel, couldn't help being voracious. He had his hours, his ways, his moods, and was used to having everybody arrange their lives around them. He was a very conscious genius; he had a compelling drive to be a genius all the time, and, as far as he was concerned, nothing compared in importance to what he had to do."

While Francoise was learning to maintain her own center in the middle of this tornado which sucked up everything in its path, he was learning to live with a woman who, as he had told her more than once, had "her own window to the absolute." He was

intrigued by Francoise's regular practice of meditating. She told him, on one of the very rare times they talked about it, that it helped free something inside her. He could understand that; years later he even talked in the same terms about his work: "If there's a single freedom in what one does, it's the freeing of something within oneself. And even that doesn't last." For a man who equated life with activity and passivity with death, there was something very uncomfortable in the stillness of Francoise's meditations. Yet there was also that vague, fearful feeling that stole into him more often around her than around anyone else that perhaps there was, after all, "a mysterious, inscrutable divineness in the world -- a God -- a Being positively present everywhere." That was how Pierre had expressed it in Herman Melville's Pierre, or the Ambiguities, a book Picasso had discovered before the war and which had deeply affected him.

One day, as they were leaving the museum in Antibes, he steered Francoise to the small church next door. He stopped near the stone-basin containing the Holy Water: "You're going to swear here that you'll love me forever." Having heard him so many times trumpet his atheism and rail against God, she was amazed. "I think it's better done here than just anywhere," he explained. "It's one of those things. You never know. There may be something to all that stuff about churches. It might make the

whole thing a little surer. Who knows? I don't think we should throw away the chance. It might help." So in the dark church, she swore to love him forever; and he swore to love her forever. Then they left, and he returned to his life's all-consuming task of trying to outsmart his creator. But at the same time, whether by seeking to consecrate their vows in a church or by keeping an old Catalan statue of the Madonna in his studio, he made sure he covered all the exits.

Until they returned to Paris at the end of November, the Grimaldi castle, which housed the museum of Antibes, became Picasso's studio. He had begun to feel cramped and frustrated at Monsieur Fort's, when Dor de la Souchère, the curator of the museum, offered him the whole upper floor of the castle. His generosity was magnificently repaid when Picasso, during the next two months, covered huge panels with paintings of nymphs, centaurs and fauns in pagan celebrations, with Françoise as an abandoned dancing nymph in the Joie de Vivre. The moribund museum had been transformed. Until then the only thing it could boast of was a collection of documents about Napoleon, who had landed at Golfe-Juan on his return from Elba.

It was while working in the old castle that Picasso came across a little wounded owl, which became his constant companion; he lavished on it all the pent up caring and compassion he so rarely allowed himself to feel for human beings. He put a splint

on its claw, and looked after it until the time came to return to Paris at the end of November. Eating at Chez Marcel with Francoise the day before they were to leave, he met Lionel Prejger, a businessman and art lover who had gone there, as he himself said, "not by chance but because I knew that Picasso went there and I absolutely wanted to meet him." Prejger not only met him but ended up with the owl, entrusted to his care until Picasso's return to the South. He asked him for a letter authorizing him to keep the owl, and Picasso, who normally bridled at the mere whiff of a suspicion that anyone was trying to take advantage of him, gladly gave him the autograph, provided his owl would be taken good care of.

On November 28, a few days after Picasso and Francoise had returned to Paris, Nusch Eluard suffered a stroke and collapsed in the street. Paul Eluard was in Switzerland when he received the news; he returned to Paris shattered. Death had once again intruded into Picasso's life. But this time the presence of Francoise, the new life she carried and her own serene acceptance of death made it much easier for life and the future to assert themselves. "Francoise is expecting a child," Sabartés announced to Brassai. "That makes him young again. He has never been so gay, so happy, so overflowing with energy."

After Nusch's death, Eluard was with Picasso and Francoise

almost all the time. He soon discovered not only that he missed Nusch terribly but that he hated not being married. "He couldn't stand being alone," Francoise remembered. "He wanted to be married and then have an open marriage." The first person he thought of was Dora. A year ago, he had said to her: "I can't imagine my life without Nusch. I can't envisage the thought of losing her. I couldn't get along without her." Now he thought of Dora as Nusch's replacement. Loving someone Picasso had loved, going to bed with someone Picasso had gone to bed with, becoming a vehicle for Dora to re-enter their circle as Madame Paul Eluard, creating a fascinating new foursome with Dora, Francoise and Pablo -- it suddenly seemed the best possible arrangement in his vision of the best of all possible worlds.

Having first secured Picasso's consent, Eluard asked Dora to marry him, rather assuming that, alone and dejected, she would accept with alacrity. She did not. "After Picasso," was her unexpected reply, "only God." Dr. Lacan, who continued to treat her both in therapy sessions and with electroshock, encouraged her to impose some structure on her mystical leanings and experiences by converting to Roman Catholicism. So Dora eschewed the opportunity to become Madame Paul Eluard and started on the road to conversion, which was to culminate in her joining the oblates of the Order of Saint Sulpice while still living at the rue de Savoie. "It was not so much the episode of madness that destroyed Dora," Francoise said, "as the electroshock treatment.

Lacan told me that he had succeeded in stabilizing her so that she would be able to lead a kind of normal life and that, he said, was the best that could be expected. Out of guilt, Pablo was paying for her sessions with Lacan, but he never sent her checks as he did to Olga and Marie-Thérèse. And Dora never asked for anything. She survived because she never lost her dignity as a human being. He succeeded, though, in killing the artist in her. Her painting had been very beautiful, very subtle, very much her and never derivative; in many ways, in fact, it was quite alien to Picasso's. But something had broken inside her and it was reflected in her work from then on."

In the winter of 1946, Picasso was almost happy to be alive. One of the beneficiaries of his unaccustomed benevolence was the American dealer Sam Kootz, who arrived from New York after Christmas, hoping to bolster the prestige of his gallery's crop of American painters -- Gottlieb, Motherwell, Baziotes -- with a few Picassos. "He never had the slightest notion," wrote Brassai who saw him while he was in Paris, "whether he was on the Left Bank or the Right, in Montparnasse or at the Place de l'Opéra. He never saw the Eiffel Tower, or even the Folies-Bergère. He never got out of his taxi long enough to risk a few steps in a Parisian street. I ask him if he has been to the Louvre. 'The Louvre? It isn't abstract enough for me,' he answers. He has only one thought in mind: Picasso." And he was lucky. Picasso

invited him to lunch at the Brasserie Lipp and sold him the nine paintings he had selected without any of the usual tortures to which he subjected Kahnweiler and the other dealers.

His good mood was not the only explanation for this shift in his behavior. At least as important was his decision to teach Kahnweiler a lesson. Kahnweiler had refused to pay the higher prices Picasso demanded after he learned that the dealer had recently sold some Braques for more than the comparable Picassos he was selling at the time. It was no use telling Picasso that Braque painted far fewer paintings in a year and therefore could occasionally command higher prices, especially as he was already enraged by a book that Jean Paulhan, the editor of the Nouvelle Revue Francaise, had published earlier in the year under the title Braque le Patron. He never read the book; it was the title that infuriated him. There was only one patron, only one undisputed master, and that was not Braque, not even Matisse, and certainly not Rouault, whom Paulhan had dared put on the same level. Now and forever it was Picasso.

In New York, at least, the art public seemed to agree. "We opened the exhibition," Sam Kootz wrote, "in the middle of January 1947 to massive crowds, with police lines formed to allow entry. We were all sold out by three o'clock that afternoon....I telephoned Picasso the good news that night. He was surprised, but bridled at my desire to return to Paris to buy more

paintings. That was a valuable lesson that I learned immediately: that Picasso liked to make the decisions."

Many were more than willing to fawn and play by his rules, but Braque was not one of them. "Picasso used to be a great artist," he would say, "but now he's only a genius." Picasso could not abide the thought that Braque would not be controlled, or that some of their mutual friends liked Braque better than they liked him; at the same time he could not stop himself from looking for evidence that they did. He even sent spies to Braque's house, or went himself, to find out who was there and how long they stayed. If it turned out that among the visitors were friends of his, such as Zervos or Fenosa, René Char or Pierre Reverdy -- he would be beside himself first with rage, then with self-pity: "I don't like Reverdy any more," he said once in a burst of manic petulance. "Besides, he's Braque's best friend, so he's no friend of mine....You know, Braque is really a bastard. He finds ways of getting all my friends away from me. I don't know what he does for them, but he must do something -- something I can't do. The result is, I don't have any friends any more. The only people who come to see me are a bunch of imbeciles who want something from me."

He would often unleash similar torrents on the "imbecile" currently taking the trouble to visit him. Françoise tried to

make him see that he was doing everything in his power to drive people away by being as unpleasant as he could possibly be. But logic, however irrefutable, was useless in keeping his anger and his moroseness at bay. He clung to them, defending them with arguments which grew increasingly perverse: "If they really loved me, they'd come anyway, even if they had to wait at the door for three days until I felt like letting them in."

Most of his days began in just such a welter of self-pity. In fact, it was then that his litanies of woe were longest and most wrenching, as if the force which had propelled him to his present heights had suddenly turned its back on him and withdrawn with no warning. A stomach ache was cancer; his doctor was interested only in his painting and not in him, otherwise he would be at his bedside every day; his soul itched; nobody understood him, which was to be expected considering how stupid most people are; life was a terrible burden and his painting was going from bad to worse; he despaired; nobody could be more unhappy; and he wondered why he should continue to exist. With every word of woe he deepened the hole into which he was sinking.

Francoise had to work hard to lift him out of it, to prove to him that life was worth living, that everybody loved him, that his work was marvelous and that what he could do if only he got out of bed more marvelous still. At last he was ready not only to begin his day but to liven things up by causing as much

mischievous as possible. By the time the sun had set he was a different man -- invincible, a magician, an immortal genius. Sunrise would once again destroy this precarious equilibrium between invincibility and defeatism, between worldly immortality and inescapable death; and once again Francoise, work and the adoration of the court would restore it.

Francoise was by no means a court favorite. Her beauty, her intellectual precocity and her unwillingness to flatter anyone or to suffer fools gladly laid her open to hostility just as the original perception of her as an ambitious young painter profiting from the old master's infatuation had laid her open to suspicion. Both suspicion and hostility were very carefully held in check by her closeness to the source of power and of favors, many of which were as good as legal tender. Her pregnancy added further weight to the growing sense that she would not be easily dislodged.

At the beginning of May, Francoise, now almost nine months pregnant, decided to override Picasso's objections and see a doctor; the baby might be born any day and no arrangements had been made for an obstetrician or a hospital. This was not an oversight on Picasso's part. On the contrary, the birth of his child was so important to him that his way of propitiating fate and ensuring that all went well was to do nothing, which -- so

went his magical reasoning -- would fool fate into believing that he surrendered to her wishes, whatever they might be. "It was better," he had told Francoise, "not to act rather than to act whenever there was a choice." So he had not wanted to consult a doctor, convinced that "it brought bad luck to watch things too closely."

Finally he called Dr. Lacan who, after he recovered from his shock that Francoise was very close to delivery and had not yet seen an obstetrician, introduced her to Dr. Fernand Lamaze. A week later, on May 15, at the Belvedere clinic in Boulogne, Francoise gave birth to a baby boy. A dream she had had over three years earlier had come strangely to life. In the dreambook she kept, she had written down the details. She was in a goat-shed with a baby carriage in the middle and two paintings by the carriage: one, a small portrait of Mademoiselle Rivière by Ingres and the other, The Representatives of Foreign Powers by the Douanier Rousseau, which she later found out belonged to Picasso. When she arrived at the clinic, she discovered that the nurse was called Madame Rousseau and the midwife Madame Ingres, her black hair parted in the middle, as in so many of Ingres's portraits. When Dr. Lacan arrived, Picasso, who remembered reading Francoise's dream, asked him, fascinated, what the meaning of a goat-shed was. It was a symbol for the birth of a child, the eminent psychoanalyst explained.

If his father had had his way, the child would have been named Pablo. It was as if Picasso, dissatisfied by his first son, hoped for a more worthy heir in his second, and so wanted him to have the same name, only this time in its full Spanish glory. But Francoise felt that having two sons with more or less the same first name was too much, and the baby left the clinic as Claude Pierre Paul Gilot, after Watteau's teacher Claude Gillot who, like Picasso, was partial to harlequins.

"It was quite traumatic having a child," Francoise recalled. "First of all I had no sister or brother and no idea what you are supposed to do with a child. So I began reading all the books and becoming immersed in being a mother." In June, mother, father and child went back to Monsieur Fort's in Golfe-Juan. It soon became apparent that Claude's arrival had introduced a new twist to their relationship. "You see, getting a woman with child," Picasso confessed later to Geneviève Laporte, "is for me taking possession, and helps to kill whatever feelings existed. You can't imagine how constantly I feel the need to free myself."

Francoise would describe Picasso as "a survivor of a very old civilization. What made dealing with him so hard was not that I was twenty-five and he was sixty-six years old but that I was twenty-five and he was sixty-six thousand years old. He

wanted to give children to his women to make them heavier, unable to run around and more dependent on him. At the same time it was a demand for intimacy, a challenge to the woman to throw open all his emotional doors and windows that he struggled to keep shut."

years later, he bragged that he had made Francoise look after the children herself and refused to employ a servant. "My loyalties became divided," Francoise remembered. "If Claude cried or was hungry or whatever, he had first claim on my attention. Even though it was Pablo who had wanted a child, the experience transformed me but not him. I may not have wanted it but once I went ahead with it and the child was born, partly I was the same and partly I wasn't."

For the moment Picasso was fascinated with baby Claude, who looked with every day that passed more and more like him, and happy to have taken greater possession of his mother. "He always wanted her very near to him," said Dominique Desanti, who visited them a few times in Golfe-Juan in the summer of 1947. "They were a very striking couple together. She was so beautiful and he was really astonishing, so aesthetically they were very striking to look at." Watching them together was also like watching a tribal game of which only they knew the rules. "He would make aggressive remarks meant to put down and humiliate her in front of others and she would laugh and make what he said seem innocuous. He would refer to her as 'the woman.' 'What has the

woman made for dinner?' he would ask. Or he would look at an erotically dressed woman on a postcard and sigh: 'What a dream to have such a woman in front of you.' And Francoise would laugh and diffuse it: 'It's very easy. We can do that. Just get me a dress like that and I'll put it on -- it would be a very amusing disguise.' She never looked cross or humiliated; she always made you feel that they were acting in a play. That was his way of being; he was cruel whether it was with his woman, his best friends or whoever was around if he felt like it. So if you decided to live with him, you needed unusual strength and unusual maturity to find your part in his play and improvise the text."

Picasso had an explanation for "his way of being": "Max Jacob once asked me," he said, "why I was so nice with people who didn't really matter and so hard on my friends. I told him I didn't care about the first group, but since I cared very much about my friends, it seemed to me I ought to put our friendship to the test every once in a while, just to make sure it was as strong as it needed to be." It was a contradictory urge to drive those closest to him away while suffering panic if it looked as though they might actually desert him.

When he was not busy driving them away he loved amusing them, all the more so when the sun and the sea thawed some of the anger and the pain. Then, on the beach at Golfe-Juan or having

dinner at Chez Marcel, he would put on a false nose, dress up like Charlie Chaplin, draw on the paper tablecloths with a wine-soaked finger, highlighting his designs with mustard and coffee; or, when a woman approached him for an autograph, he would offer instead to draw on her naked skin, especially if she was in a bathing suit. And the autographed women would not wash for days. Meanwhile Francoise would watch his antics and play with Claude. Their best times were on those rare occasions when they were alone in the evenings. She would pick a book of poetry and read to him and he would reciprocate by reciting from his favorite poets -- Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Gongora, and most often Eluard.

With Sabartés back in Paris, Francoise took over many of his duties, dealing with Picasso's business affairs and writing his checks for Olga, Paulo and Marie-Thérèse. He began his mornings by reading the mail that Sabartés forwarded from Paris, which always included a cryptic and highly coded letter from him and the latest press clippings from Lit-Tout, a service that kept Picasso up to date on everything that had been printed about him, including, of course, his latest witticisms: "But Maître, we never see you paint," a journalist ingenuously complained. "But, Mademoiselle," he replied, "I also make love, and you never see me do that." Whatever he had said or done he would soon read in a clipping. There were also plenty of cartoons in the package, most of them take-offs on his tendency to distort and deform. In one of them, a man was copying a Picasso painting and another was

commenting: "Not bad! But I think that the right foot isn't sufficiently left."

Often in the evenings, Picasso would sit and write to Sabartés in a stream of consciousness. Then he would reread the letter and laugh to himself: "This is really pretty funny. I wonder if he will be able to understand what I mean." Sometimes he read passages to Francoise: "They were a little like his plays and his poems," she remembered, "full of floating visual images or color repetitions -- the blue of the blue in the blue of the blue in the lesser blue of the mediterranean blue of the blue of the white of the horse and the scent of the Arena at Nîmes....The sentences never ended and it would be impossible to find any linear meaning in them. But his letters with their unconnected series of visual images had an impact, almost like a painting does. He was trying all sorts of absurd and erratic thoughts out on Sabartés, mixed with instructions as to what he should or should not do for him. They were very long and, to an outsider, incomprehensible." For Sabartés they were a great compensation for the unfair treatment he often received at his friend's hands and for his minuscule wages, out of which he was even expected to pay his third-class rail fare when he visited Picasso in the South.

"Being unfair," Picasso told Francoise, "is godlike."

"Once, coming back from a bullfight," she recalled, "we had a discussion about that. I told him that my greatest purpose in life was to become fully human, to incarnate in the flesh. It's not at all easy to become human but that was my quest, to understand other people's needs, to see their point of view, to be fair. He said that he had no interest in being fair, that in fact he liked, he really liked being unfair. It made him feel more like a primitive god."

If being unfair made him feel god-like, surrounding himself with conflict made him feel alive, which is why he was so loth to take any steps that might reduce it. He even relished Olga's habit of following him when he left Paris. That summer was no exception, and Olga spoiled the peace of a morning on the beach by her threats, her abuse or simply her demands for attention. Once, when she became particularly abusive as she followed Francoise, Claude and Picasso in the streets of Golfe-Juan, he turned around and slapped her. When she started to scream, he threatened to call the police. She went on following them and, almost every day, sending him angry missives in a mixture of Spanish, Russian and French. Their main theme, played out in innumerable variations, was that he had declined from his previous heights: "Your son is useless too, and he's going from bad to worse -- like you." One of her favorite variations was enclosing a picture of Beethoven and telling Picasso that he would never be as great; another was enclosing a picture of

Rembrandt with an inscription: "If you were like him, you would be a great artist."

Invariably Picasso was upset by her letters and invariably he read them from beginning to end, however strongly Francoise urged him to leave them unopened since by now he knew what they contained. Picasso and Olga were tied to each other with bonds of mutual loathing that no amount of common sense could loosen. She needed him to validate her existence and, in a curious way, he needed her absorption in him, even her negative absorption. The more people there were living just for him, the more energies he gathered into himself and the more powerful he felt. The more rivers there were flowing in his direction, the more immense an ocean he became.

Even so, the summer of 1947 was a time of inertia and discontent. He went to every bullfight that took place in the area, he went back to the museum in Antibes and did the triptych of Ulysses and the Sirens. And then he heard his own siren song. Georges and Suzanne Ramié, who were running the Madoura pottery in Vallauris, came to Golfe-Juan in August to invite him to see the three small pieces he had moulded the year before, now fired and ready for his inspection. He went and he stayed. The Ramiés placed Jules Agard, their best potter, at his disposal and he began work. It was an escape from the agony of the blank canvas,

especially at a barren time; it was companionship with the potters and the earth they worked; it was drawing on their energy and their expertise to recharge himself and multiply his powers; and it was a new medium of expression. He did not merely decorate, he transformed the pottery he held in his hands: a vase became an owl, a woman or a goddess, evoking ancient idols. His versatility, his vitality, his sharpness of vision, his magical inventiveness -- all had now found a new form through which to astound the world. And, as his original designs could be copied, even more of the world would be astounded.

That same summer, people began flocking to the museum in Antibes to admire the paintings of the pagan world he had simply left behind the summer before. One night, when Picasso and Francoise were having dinner at Chez Marcel with the Cuttolis, Monsieur Cuttoli told him what a good idea it would be if he made his gift to the museum official. "Furthermore," he continued where angels feared to tread, "you've lived here so long now, you ought to take out French citizenship. If you did, you could get your divorce and marry Francoise."

Picasso was furious at the senator's impertinence: "I invite you here as my guest and you dare say such things to me! Of course I left those paintings at the museum; but what gives anybody the right to start talking about gifts and donations? Since everybody is so fond of quoting that remark of mine, 'I

don't seek; I find,' I'll give you a new one to put in circulation: 'I don't give; I take.' And as for your idea about changing my nationality, I represent Spain in exile. I'm sure Francoise wouldn't approve of my changing that anymore than I do. I think she understands that she and our son come after Republican Spain in my scale of values. And you ought to understand right now that I have no intention of submitting my life to the laws that govern the miserable little lives of you petits bourgeois."

It was not over yet. He threw his plate into the sea, stamped his feet and snarled at his captive and frozen audience: "Well, why don't you eat? This food isn't good enough for you? My God, the stuff I get at your house sometimes! But I eat it anyway, for friendship's sake. You'll have to do the same." They ate and they pacified him and they talked of other things. The dinner went on and so did their friendship. As he boasted many times: "Nobody willingly leaves Picasso."

The Cuttolis were not alone in urging Picasso to be generous. Jean Cassou, the chief curator of the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, and Georges Salles, the director of French National Museums, hinted, suggested, implied and, in short, did everything except ask for some of his paintings for the Museum of Modern Art. The fact that they had not directly tried to influence his

decision, together with the fact that Braque and Matisse were going to be extensively represented, finally made Picasso decide to donate ten paintings. As a sign of his gratitude, Salles had the paintings brought to the Louvre before they were hung at the Museum of Modern Art, and when Picasso returned to Paris in December he invited him to be the first painter who ever saw his work hung in the Louvre. Salles even asked him to pick the painters next to whom he would like to see his own work. His immediate choice was Zurbaran, and after that Delacroix. "That bastard," he told Francoise after they had left the Louvre. "He's really good."

Among living artists, the one Picasso most enjoyed discussing aesthetic questions with was Alberto Giacometti, partly because he was too much of a visionary to think of them purely in aesthetic terms. Giacometti had further earned Picasso's secret respect by never fawning and kowtowing to him. The two men visited each other often, and sometimes, like naughty schoolboys, they went to a nearby café and pored over the pornographic magazines that Picasso had brought along. At other times, they discussed their work. "He accepted Giacometti's criticism," James Lord said, "but at the same time resented having done so, and the perverse side of his nature -- always powerful -- led him to make fun of Alberto behind his back....Making light of the sculptor's anxiety and frustration, he said, 'Alberto tries to make us regret the works he hasn't

done'."

When he was in a mood to be truthful, Picasso conceded that Giacometti's work represented "a new spirit in sculpture." He displayed a gratuitous meanness, however, one day at Giacometti's studio, when such an expression of appreciation could have made a difference to Giacometti's livelihood. He was there when, unexpectedly, Zervos arrived with an Italian collector. Three times Zervos asked Picasso if he agreed with him on the merits of a particular sculpture that he hoped the Italian might buy and three times Picasso refused to reply. The result was what he knew it would be. Faced with the conspicuous silence of the world's most celebrated painter, the Italian collector left empty-handed. "He amazes me," Giacometti said once. "He amazes me as a monster would, and I think he knows as well as we do that he's a monster."

In February 1948, after spending the winter in Paris, Picasso abandoned his studio, his cafés and his surprise visits to Giacometti and to Braque and returned to Golfe-Juan with Francoise and Claude, once again shadowed by the implacable Olga. Soon they were joined by Francoise's grandmother, who rented a house up the street from Monsieur Fort's. She was not happy with Francoise's unconventional new life, but she had accepted it; besides, she was entranced by her great-grandson. She was,

however, appalled by the half-demented woman who followed them whenever they took Claude out in his baby carriage. If her hearing had been better and her disbelief less strong, she would have been amazed to discover that the woman was Picasso's legitimate wife, threatening Francoise with unspeakable things for stealing her husband.

As the days went by, what was an intrusion and an irritation became unbearable. Olga, berserk with jealousy and anger and no longer content with shouting abuse, began assaulting Francoise, pinching, scratching, slapping and pushing her, especially if she was holding Claude in her arms. To make matters even worse, Madame Fort took sides in favor of the legal wife and started having her to tea every day. Olga would sit by the window and inform all Picasso's visitors that, as they could see, she was back living with her husband. Or if Francoise was out, she would wait for her to return and shout that the house belonged to her and her husband, and she had no business coming there.

Francoise, who could feel Olga's misery and loneliness, would not allow herself to fight back. At the same time she could not go on living in a state of siege. She told Picasso that they had to find another house. Her plea ran counter to his philosophy of stoic inaction, but in the end he realized that Francoise was adamant. So he asked Madame Ramié to help them

find another home. She did, and in May 1948 they moved to La Galloise, a small, rather ugly house in the middle of two acres of hillside in Vallauris.

On the day of the move, Picasso had second thoughts: "I don't know why I should go through with this. If I had had to move every time women started fighting over me, I wouldn't have had time for much else in my life." That said, he went on to the pottery, leaving Francoise, Marcel and his son Paulo to carry out the move. Going up and down the hill that led to the house until she was breathless with exhaustion, Francoise remembered the apocryphal story of a celebrated ceramist who had burned all his furniture so his kiln would not go cold. Picasso loved to tell the story, and he always added with pride: "I would gladly have thrown my wife and my children in, if that was necessary to keep the fire going."

Francoise could understand the impulse to sacrifice for the sake of creation; she was simply unwilling to be immolated. In the new house, which he had bought and put in her name, she turned one room into her studio and worked for long hours while Picasso was at the pottery. With him out of the house, she even allowed herself the luxury of working with classical music in the background, which always disturbed Picasso who disliked all music except flamenco and a theme from Stravinsky's Petrushka that he

was often heard whistling. "I learned a lot from him about draughtsmanship and graphic art," Francoise remembered, "but I was determined to keep my own style for myself....I assimilated a great deal from him almost subconsciously. I was surrounded by him as if he were an element. As in an element -- say, water -- I swam, but the element wasn't telling me how to swim..."

Although Picasso never made any allowances for her work, he never put it down either. Indeed Francoise became all the more valuable a possession in his eyes if, despite his demands on her time, her emotions and her sanity, she was able to go on creating.

Life in Vallauris was lived almost entirely in public. People arrived daily from all over the world to see him -- sometimes expected, often unexpected. The composer Germaine Tailleferre, whom Picasso had not seen since his Diaghilev days, invited him to a concert at her home by the duo pianists Robert Fizdale and Arthur Gold, who had recently arrived from New York. He declined and instead invited all three of them to visit him in Vallauris. They arrived together with Tailleferre's teenage daughter who looked remarkably like her mother at the time Picasso knew her. "You are the one I recognize," he exclaimed to the daughter. "Not you!" he said to the mother, in a tone implying that it was her fault that time passed, age showed and death was closer -- for him as well as for her. And he said it again and again, as though repetition would make the realization

less upsetting.

They talked of people they knew; nothing restored Picasso's humor more effectively than a good dose of gossip. He asked about Stravinsky: "How is he?...And Madame Stravinsky, who is she?"

"Why, she's Madame Stravinsky," replied Gold and Fizdale who had recently seen the Stravinskys in New York. "Madame Vera Stravinsky, the same Vera he's been with for years."

"Always the same Vera! Imagine!" Picasso cried in amazement at the thought of such alien mating customs. A guard at the bank where he stored many of his paintings had once told him how enviably different he was from so many other customers he had observed year in, year out, with the same woman, only older, while he was always with a new woman, each younger than the last. Picasso liked that. It was a way, he thought, of fooling destiny and death.

At the beginning of August, Picasso and Francoise drove to Vence to visit Matisse, who had been working on the design of a Dominican chapel and had even agreed to underwrite its cost. "You're crazy to make a chapel for those people," Picasso immediately began to rage. "Do you believe in that stuff or not?"

If not, do you think you ought to do something for an idea that you don't believe in?"

"Why don't you build a market instead?" he cried out on another occasion. "You could paint fruits and vegetables." Matisse reported the outburst to Father Couturier, the Dominican priest and champion of modern art who was also posing for the preparatory designs for the panel of Saint Dominic. "I couldn't care less," Matisse told him, his equanimity and his conviction both quite undisturbed. "I have greens more green than pears and oranges more orange than pumpkins. So why build a market?"

When Picasso and Françoise went to see him again and Picasso again criticized the project, Matisse was less aphoristic and more explicit: "As far as I'm concerned, this is essentially a work of art. It's just that I put myself in the state of mind of what I'm working on. I don't know whether I believe in God or not. I think, really, I'm some kind of Buddhist. But the essential thing is to put oneself in a frame of mind which is close to that of prayer."

And later, since Picasso would not let go of his obsessive fury at the thought of the chapel, Matisse told him, "Yes, I do pray and you pray too, and you know it all too well: when everything goes badly, we throw ourselves into prayer....And you do it, you, too. It's no good saying no." Matisse had taken to

treating picasso like a recalcitrant but brilliant and precious son. He listened to him but had no intention of heeding what he said.

Matisse's vision was clear and compelling: to create a simple "religious space" where people could come "to feel purified and freed of their burdens." "In the end," he told picasso, "it's not worth trying to be too clever. You are like me: what we are all looking for in art is to rediscover the atmosphere of our first communion." The first communion was a powerful symbol for Matisse, embodying the serenity that he himself radiated.

It was this serenity, this peace beyond his understanding, that Picasso was fighting with his explosions against the idea of the chapel. And there was something else. Matisse gave expression to it at the dedication of the chapel: "This chapel for me is the culmination of an entire life's work and the flowering of an enormous, sincere and difficult labor. It is not a labor I chose but for which destiny chose me at the end of my road...I consider it, despite all its imperfections, my masterpiece, an effort resulting from an entire life dedicated to the search for truth." Picasso, too, longed for such a culmination, for the "ultimate" painting, yet felt further and further away from it. "One swallows something, is poisoned by it

and eliminates the toxic" was his description of his process of working. Since he believed that there was no truth to be revealed at the end of the road, did he really paint as a catharsis, merely to cast out the toxic, increasingly trapped in his own virtuosity?

When Father Couturier came to see him in Vallauris, Picasso took him by the arms and said laughingly: "I should confess every day; I need to confess more than anybody else in the world." But, Francoise recalled, "Father Couturier, preferred to discuss art. 'When Picasso paints, he paints with his blood,' he said. 'Don't you rather think,' I protested, 'that he paints with other people's blood?' I was laughing, but he looked at me as though I had said something very, very naughty."

Picasso's soul ached again, but the shield of cynicism was held firmly over the pain. He threw himself into his pottery and fed off the adulation that surrounded him. Francoise and he hardly ever had a meal alone; in fact, their meals became occasions for Picasso to hold forth and dazzle those already bedazzled with his monologues, dripping with the familiar paradoxes that they would take with them and dine on for months. His chief contribution to other people's conversation was as a stimulant in absentia. While he was present, all that was required was to laugh, gape and admire. "Many of the people around us were friends in a very special sense," Francoise said.

"They reminded me of the people the Ancient Romans called 'clients,' people who did not belong to one of the important families, to a gens, but who attached themselves to the head of one of these families, to the pater familias, and followed in his wake. And the more important the person, the more clients he had."

Two recent additions were the painter Edouard Pignon and his wife, the writer, Hélène Parmelin, card-carrying clients as well as card-carrying Communists. Penrose once commented on a conversation he had heard between Picasso and Pignon: "Pignon tries to explain his motives with clarity, whereas Picasso speaks in metaphors without any thought of justification. As you listen you realize that Picasso appreciates that truth is never easily accessible." In fact, Picasso's views on truth were far more dramatic. "What truth?" he told Pignon's wife. "Truth cannot exist....Truth does not exist."

"It took me a long time to realize what a consummate liar he was," said Francoise. "One of the problems of having a constant court around us was that we had to work out our problems in public, which brought out all his histrionic qualities. And there were always those, often people I hardly paid any attention to, laying out the banana peels and mining the ground while I wasn't looking. My mother, whom I had started seeing again after

Claude was born, kept warning me: 'Remember, it's always the secondary characters, like Iago, who are the origin of the drama.' And I would laugh at her. I had learned from my spiritual studies that darkness was only the absence of light and I had wishfully interpreted that to mean that therefore there was no such thing as darkness. My mother had singled out Sabartés and Madame Ramié as two people she believed wished me ill and would bring me bad luck. But although I never liked Madame Ramié and I knew that she didn't like me, I never believed that she could do any actual harm until it was too late. As for Sabartés, Claude's arrival ended any friendship there was between us. It was no longer Pablo and he against the world. Now Pablo had a new family which also meant that my presence wasn't going to be as ephemeral as he had thought."

Among the miscellaneous friends, clients, dealers, relatives and visitors traveling in Picasso's orbit, Francoise had started making her own friends. Javier Vilato, Picasso's nephew, also a painter and only a little older than herself, was one of them, as was his Greek girlfriend, Matsie Hadjilazaros. They spent long periods in Vallauris and when they were not together, Matsie wrote Francoise long letters from Paris. In one of them, just after Claude's first birthday, she raved about the photographs of Claude that Francoise had sent her: "Words cannot express my delight. He is madly attractive -- such virile bearing and such poise and aplomb." At the age of one, Claude

was already a little man, in the image of his father.

Javier and Matsie came to spend a part of the summer of 1948 with Picasso and Francoise in Vallauris. "They were not living in our home, which was very small," Francoise said, "but they were really with us, meaning that there was real intimacy there." One day, while they were at the beach in Golfe-Juan, they were joined by a Greek friend of Matsie's, Kostas Axelos. He was twenty-four years old, tall and dark and with a throng of women back in Paris enamored of him. He had left Greece in 1945, and at the same time had left the Greek Communist Party. From the University of Athens he went to the Sorbonne and from there to Basel, where he studied philosophy with Karl Jaspers. He had recently moved back to Paris and was translating Heidegger while writing a book on Heraclitus.

"I prefer Heraclitus to Plato," Picasso told him when they met. He had not read either, but had an uncanny way of absorbing the essence of what he wanted to know. Plato mistrusted the personal sorcery of artists who led men astray from the truth. Picasso had heard that in his philosophical discussions with his poet friends; as a result, he did not like Plato. But he loved the paradoxical-sounding aphorisms of Heraclitus. So he and Kostas Axelos started off well together and the good start turned even better when it became clear that Axelos was not the kind of

man to indulge in flattery. In fact, he looked at the paintings Picasso showed him and said nothing. As far as he was concerned, art, which in ancient times had united the sky with the earth, was at an end. "Picasso's art," he said, "had already entered its period of decadence. And he knew it."

Picasso liked Axelos's mind, his fierce independence and his classical beauty. "Basically you have always loved classical beauty," Braque had once told him. "It's true," Picasso replied. "Even today that's true for me. They don't invent a type of beauty every year." Axelos, however, was much more interested in Francoise than he was in Picasso. He was struck by her beauty and by the depth of her thinking. "We were both rather unusual for our age," Francoise recalled. "Ever since I was a little girl, I felt linked to another dimension. I felt that I was living there as much as in the 'real' world. And I had never met anybody who was as sharply aware of the illusions of this world as Kostas. He and I reached depths in our discussions I had not reached with anybody else."

But before long, Axelos returned to Paris and to Heraclitus, while back in Vallauris, Picasso and Francoise decided to have another child. "I know just what you need," Picasso had told her. "The best prescription for a discontented female is to have a child....Having a child brings new problems

and they take the focus off the old ones." Francoise's reasons were altogether different. Having been an only child herself, she did not want Claude to be one. Also, with Claude now in his second year, Francoise looked back with nostalgia to her pregnancy, when Picasso had never been as good-humored and optimistic. Before the summer was over, she was once again pregnant.

THE LAST OF SUMMER

Francoise was in her first month of pregnancy when, on August 25, 1948, Picasso left for Poland to take part in the Communist-sponsored Congress of Intellectuals for Peace in Warsaw. Everybody who knew how he hated travel and dislocation hesitated when he accepted the invitation. To ensure that he would not change his mind, three days before he was due to leave, the Polish Embassy in Paris sent to Vallauris a woman whose duty was to travel with him and dissuade him all his last minute doubts for not going. Arrangements were made to fly him direct to Poland since he did not have a passport and refused to accept one from the French government. He had never flown before and was really frightened of the trip. But the Polish embassy was insistent and he was obliged, who felt that Picasso's presence at the conference would provide to the world the seriousness of his

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE LOSS OF INNOCENCE

Francoise was in her first month of pregnancy when, on August 25, 1948, Picasso left for Poland to take part in the Communist-sponsored Congress of Intellectuals for Peace in Wroclaw. Everybody who knew how he hated travel and dislocation was amazed when he accepted the invitation. To ensure that he did not change his mind, three days before he was due to leave, the Polish Embassy in Paris sent to Vallauris a woman whose mission was to trail him and forestall all his last-minute reasons for not going. Arrangements were made to fly him direct to Poland since he did not have a passport and refused to accept one from the Franco government. He had never flown before and was really frightened of the trip. But the Polish emissary was determined and so was Eluard, who felt that Picasso's presence at the conference would proclaim to the world the seriousness of his

commitment to the Communist Party.

However critical their influence, still more important was Picasso's need for new stimulation. Pottery no longer engaged him. He felt that he had exhausted its possibilities, that the period of discovery was over. So he took with him Marcel as his aide, companion and butler and flew to Poland, having promised Francoise to write to her every day and stay away no more than four days. He stayed away three weeks. "He never stopped talking about the experience," recalled Dominique Desanti, who also attended the conference. "He was under the impression that he now knew and understood everything about the Communist countries, while in fact he had seen absolutely nothing except what they wanted to show him because everything was official. He saw the destruction of the war and the reconstruction of Warsaw and he saw women working very hard in the streets, which he never forgot to mention whenever Francoise or I or any other woman around him would dare say that she was tired. 'You say you're tired,' he would come back, 'but if you saw those women in Wroclaw, then you would know what tired really was.'"

On the second day of the conference, Fadeyev, the Soviet Secretary of the Writers' Union, took the floor and proclaimed the need for Marxist thought, Marxist literature and Marxist art. He then proceeded to launch an unprecedented attack on Sartre,

one of the most prominent Communist intellectuals, whom he called "a jackal equipped with a pen" and a "typewriting hyena." Dominique Desanti was sitting between Picasso and Eluard, who was stunned, as were most of those present. Picasso took off his earphones and began to make little drawings of everybody on his blotter. Later on at one of the official dinners, a member of the Soviet delegation stood up during the toasts and deplored Picasso's decadent painting and his "impressionist-surrealist" style. Picasso responded by calling him a "party hack" and giving him a lesson in art history. He told him that he should at least have got his terminology straight and damned him not for being an "impressionist-surrealist" but for being the inventor of Cubism.

"Everything that I am, and want to be, and care about," Giacometti had said, "is considered decadent by the Communists. Why should I take a stand that eliminates myself?" Picasso continued to choose to ignore that blatant contradiction even after he had been singled out for attack. And the Polish government continued to believe that Picasso's propaganda value outweighed his violations of artistic orthodoxy. They even forgave him his violation of the strict rules of Communist public propriety when, at a press conference, he took off his shirt and proudly showed off his beautiful terracotta muscles for the cameras -- and the photographs were flashed around the world.

But prudery was not allowed to interfere with the presentation to Picasso, by the President of the Republic, of the "Cross of a Commander with Star of the Order of the Polish Renaissance," thus recognizing the contribution he had made to the Congress by his presence, by the considerable weight of his prestige and celebrity, and by the short speech he had given denouncing the detention of Pablo Neruda in Chile.

The day he was to leave, he asked Dominique Desanti to help him buy a present for "the woman." "The tone of his voice," she recalled, "clearly indicated that when he said 'the woman,' he really meant 'the bitch.' This was his lifelong ambiguity about women -- they were the marrow of life and yet were held in contempt as though their demon would rise unbridled and overwhelm him. Contempt was his way of exorcising his fear of women's power."

From Warsaw, where he was also made a freeman of the city, Picasso flew back to Paris and stayed there for a week before returning to Vallauris. Not only had he failed to keep his promise to return in four days, but during the entire three weeks of his absence he had not written to Francoise once. Even worse, he had instructed Marcel to send her a daily telegram with the text left to his own initiative. It did not take Francoise long to figure out who was composing and sending the telegrams since her name was always misspelled, the telegrams were not signed "Pablo"

but "picasso" and the ending was always the same: "Bons baisers," a favorite working-class greeting.

picasso had, of course, known that she would know. He rarely caused hurt by accident or oversight. He had intended to make it clear that he set the rules and she had to play by them, that it was his prerogative, if he so desired, to break every promise, do exactly as his whim dictated, have the driver compose and send pacifying telegrams designed to inflame her -- and that still, when he felt like returning, she would be there to welcome him home. Francoise had a lot of time to think while he was away, to see his game, to feel her pain and, while looking after their first child and carrying their second, make her decision: 'If he wanted us to live by his own rules and I was prepared to stay, then it was important for me to know what I was doing and to tell him: 'If I'm willing out of love to be a slave, I am the slave of love, not your slave. If my love ends, then so ends my slavery.'"

She told him but not right away. He climbed the stairs of La Galloise flashing his irresistible smile, and asked her if she was happy to see him. "Here's for the Bons baisers," she replied as she slapped him and then locked herself in Claude's room for the night. Her love for him was still strong and so she would go on living by his rules, but not without some protest. And the

more she protested, the more she was a goddess in his eyes rather than a doormat.

In October they returned to Paris. Soon after their return, he painted Francoise wearing the embroidered peasant coat he had brought her from Poland. There was a certain serenity in his work during this time. "It was an expressionist period," Francoise said, "but without the sadism that accompanied his work of other periods. There was no rage and fury in the paintings, and because they were softer, many people thought that they were weaker." In November, there was a show of his pottery at the Maison de la Pensée Francaise, which became the occasion for unbridled celebration among his fellow Communists. Leon Moussinac described him in Les Lettres Francaises as "the harbinger of the social role the artist will play in tomorrow's society...clay and fire, in Picasso's hands, become for us the living representation of matter and mind, their struggle and their victory..." Others, who did not have an ideological axe to grind, found the works ingenuous and delightful but hardly major examples of his creative genius. "They expect to be shocked and terrorized," was Picasso's response. "If the monster only smiles, then they're disappointed."

For the moment, in his intimate life with Francoise, the monster was smiling. He loved Francoise's fuller shape, all the

more so since she was carrying part of himself. They were constantly together. "Even when he was working," Francoise recalled, "he would come out every so often, smoke a cigarette and talk with me. It was a twenty-four hour relationship.... There are men who give so little of themselves in love that you could never experience with them the transcendent aspect of love. Not so with Pablo. When he gave of himself he gave totally. It was easy for the woman to feel like Psyche in the myth of Psyche and Eros: having tasted of love divine, she would go to the end of the earth to find it again. Or in the case of Pablo, she would stay, no matter what. It was very beguiling, especially as he was able to create a climate where the woman was glorified in paintings by the best-known artist in the world."

Francoise knew that it was very important for their relationship that he felt loved for himself, not because he was a great painter or could glorify her in his work. "I told him many times," she recalled, "that I would always be happy to witness the birth of a great painting, but whether it was a portrait of me or not was entirely irrelevant. Also, frankly, I never recognized my essence in any of the paintings he did of me. 'You are glorifying my external features,' I told him once, 'but you still don't know me, and you don't even try.' My features were all that mattered to him. He had painted them even before I was born. He could work from the features to a personal interpretation of them, but, as I said to him many times, what was much more

important to me was to work from the soul to a personal interpretation of that soul, whether through the features or abstractly. He never did that. He never sought access to my spirit. So he just missed me as a dynamic force. It was as if he had made a brilliant reproduction of a car without the motor."

she was intensely involved with his work, trying to explain her thoughts, to help him see that working from the soul would be a way to reach the ultimate in his painting. "I felt that there was no comprehension," she said, "that on this point we were really apart." But she went on trying. Determined, even while she was pregnant, to keep up with Picasso's late nights and Claude's early mornings and to continue with her own painting, she found herself sacrificing sleep, getting as little as four hours a night. As for Picasso, he was grappling with the new depths of intimacy that he and Francoise had reached. In the paintings and lithographs he made of her early in 1949, serenity jostles with aggression and chaos with a starry sky. Love and hate, trust and betrayal wrestled in the deep recesses of his soul and, afraid of probing the darkness to resolve the battle in the light, he began to flee from the new-found intimacy.

On April 19, the day of the opening of the second Peace Congress in Paris, Francoise went to see Dr. Lamaze. The baby was not due for another month, but he found her in such a run-

down state that he instructed her to check into the Belvedere clinic at once. She went back to the rue des Grands-Augustins, told Picasso what had happened and asked him if Marcel could drive her to the clinic. Irritated at the mere thought of having his day disturbed, Picasso told her that he needed Marcel to drive him to the Peace Congress. "If you need a car," he snapped, "you'll have to find another solution. Why don't you call an ambulance?" It was as if he felt he had already given her enough. Since he had given her the greatest of all things, since he had given her himself, since they had possessed the universe together, how could she be petty enough to ask for little things like a car to drive her to the clinic?

Fortunately, though Marcel had no sense of literary style in composing telegrams, he had an earthy sense of priorities. He intervened and suggested that nothing would be easier than to drop her at the clinic on the way to the Congress. But even a detour was too much of an inconvenience. Finally, a compromise was reached, Marcel took Picasso to the Congress and came back to fetch Francoise.

She arrived at the Belvedere clinic at five o'clock. At eight o'clock that night, she gave birth to a little girl. Picasso was notified at the Congress, and when he came to see Francoise and his new-born daughter, he was full of apologies for his earlier behavior. posters of his celebrated dove, announcing

the peace Congress, were already plastered all over Paris. On the steps of the Congress he had met Hélène Parmelin and told her that he had decided to call his daughter Paloma. "He was anxious or pretended to be anxious, or both...he was anxious to know if giving the little girl this name was likely to make people laugh. He was really anxious. It was no laughing matter." Finally, the little girl was named Ann, after Francoise's grandmother, and Paloma after Picasso's dove: Ann Paloma Gilot.

That night, he and Eluard had dinner at the rue des Grands-Augustins with Ilya Ehrenburg, the Russian writer and "agitator of Soviet culture." They talked of Communism, peace and pigeons. "Picasso likes them," Ehrenburg wrote, "and always keeps some; laughing, he said that pigeons were greedy and cantankerous birds; he could not understand why they had been made into a symbol of peace." Certainly that was never Picasso's intention. It was Aragon who, after Picasso had failed to produce a poster for the Congress, had picked a marvelous lithograph of a pigeon Picasso had completed at the beginning of January, declared it a dove and turned it into the poster of peace. He had left Picasso's studio at noon on the day before the Congress; by five o'clock that afternoon, the poster appeared all over Paris. From there, the dove flew around five continents, and Picasso became for millions the world over the man of the dove, the man of peace. "Poor old Aragon," Picasso chuckled as soon as Aragon had left his studio.

"He doesn't know anything about pigeons. And as for the gentle dove, what a myth that is! There's no crueller animal. I had some here and they pecked a poor little pigeon to death because they didn't like it. They pecked its eyes out, then pulled it to pieces. It was horrible. How's that for a symbol of Peace?"

"This famous Picasso," wrote Parmelin, "did the dove of peace for the Peace Movement. There was the international power of the title. There was the power of art, whether consciously or unconsciously felt, and there was audacity. There was the power of his fame and celebrity." And there was, above all, the power of myth that transformed a man at war with the universe into "the man of peace" -- and a cantakerous bird into the symbol of peace.

Overnight, as never before in his life and like no other artist ever, Picasso seized the public imagination. There were doves everywhere, even on the lapels of men's jackets and women's coats. Journalists and photographers tried to break into Francoise's room the day after Paloma was born to take photographs of the baby. As for L'Humanité, it had become not only the official organ of the Communist Party but the official chronicler of the Party's most celebrated member, with accompanying photographs of Picasso dressed and half-undressed, on the beach and at his studio, alone and with his photogenic young family.

With all the talk of "our brother Pablo Picasso," however, there was only one true brother for Picasso in the Communist party and that was Paul Eluard. He never felt the same warmth for Aragon. It was, in fact, a long time since he had felt it for his son Paulo who, three weeks after the birth of Paloma, became a father himself. He gave Picasso his first grandchild, named Pablo after his grandfather, but always called Pablito. Picasso had absolutely no interest in grandchildren, either the idea or the reality of them, so Pablito's birth did nothing to strengthen the bonds between him and Paulo. The truth was that Picasso never forgave his son for not being extraordinary; in fact, it sometimes looked as if he had determined to punish him. Under the pretext of not spoiling him, he even took him away, one day, from the toy cars with which he was still playing in his teens and forced him to walk up and down the Champs-Élysées for hours begging the passers-by for money while his father watched.

Paulo was twenty-seven years old when Pablito was born. He had stayed in Switzerland through the war, and returned to Paris after the Liberation, having avoided military service. Over six-feet tall, red-haired and without a job, he was subsisting on a tiny allowance from Picasso and was already dependent on drugs and alcohol. His greatest joy was racing his Norton motorcycle. So far, he had followed in his father's footsteps only by siring Pablito out of wedlock. A year later, Emilienne Lotte, Pablito's

mother, became Paulo's wife, but their life together continued to be lived within concentric rings of fear, anger and stifled pain that Paulo would try to make bearable by getting stupendously drunk -- or drugged.

His self-esteem was so low that he never even tried to shake off his dependence on his father. When his weekly allowance ran out, which it did long before the end of the week, he would go to his father for help. Unable to ask across the barrier of his isolation for the help he really needed, he asked for some more money. And when his relationship with his father was particularly strained, he would ask Marcel to intercede. Ever since Paulo had ceased being of interest to his father -- ever since, that is, he was no longer the adorable little boy in the harlequin costume -- Marcel had become a father figure for him. He even emulated the way Marcel talked and the way he walked. In the world of cars and motorcycles that he and Marcel shared, he could escape from his psychotic mother, whose life revolved obsessively and forever around her husband, and from his own obsession with a father whose love he had never consciously known.

When Picasso and Francoise moved back to Vallauris in June 1949, Paulo began once again to spend time with them, staying at Chez Marcel in Golfe-Juan, where Marcel also stayed. If there was any change in his life since he had become a father, it was

not noticeable. One night he and a friend brought back to the small hotel a couple of girls they had picked up in one of the bars of Juan-les-Pins, where they had stopped during the night. Early in the morning, having run out of things to do with them and by then thoroughly drunk, they tried to throw them out of the window, but the girls cried so hard and howled so loudly that the police commissioner arrived, and Paulo would have spent what was left of the night in jail if he had not been Picasso's son. But Isnard, the police commissioner, was proud to consider Monsieur Picasso his friend. In fact, he often visited La Galloise to regale him with the latest criminal gossip of the Riviera, which always cheered Picasso up.

A few hours after he had prevented Paulo from throwing the girls out of the window, Isnard was in Picasso's bedroom describing the exact fashion in which his son was caught "disturbing the peace." Picasso ordered Francoise to find Paulo and bring him to the house immediately. When he walked into his father's bedroom he tried to hide behind Francoise. As soon as Picasso saw him, he started ranting, calling him "the son of the White Russian," and throwing at him -- and since Francoise was in front of him, at her too -- everything that was within his reach and not nailed to the floor, including his shoes and the books on his night table. When Francoise protested that she was hardly to blame, he told her to stop "trying to pass the buck." Making up

the rules as he went along, he continued: "He's my son. You're my wife. So he's yours, too. It amounts to that, anyway. Besides, you're the one who's here. I can't go on looking for his mother. You've got to stand up and take your share of the responsibility."

paulo said nothing while his father ranted on at the top of his voice, calling him a "worthless creature" and "the lowest form of human existence." He found his voice, however, as soon as picasso expressed his disbelief that anyone could conceive of such an absolutely mad thing as throwing a woman out of the window. He told his father that someone as familiar with the Marquis de Sade as he was should have no problem understanding such peccadilloes. At last the "worthless" son had found a shaky piece of common ground with his celebrated father. But Picasso was not about to discuss his taste for intensifying pleasure through pain -- other people's, of course -- with his first-born. Instead he called him "the most disgusting son in the world" and "a bourgeois anarchist," an insult he had picked up from his party comrades, and spent the rest of the day in bed sulking. He could not bear to look at his own predilections in the distorted mirror of his son's behavior.

Every Thursday and Sunday, Marcel drove Picasso to Juan-les-Pins where Marie-Thérèse and Maya were spending their summer holidays -- less than ten miles away from Picasso's new family.

For some time now, Francoise had been campaigning for an end to this artificial situation. She found it absurd to go on hiding behind a wall that did not even exist, pretending that there was nobody else in Picasso's life. Why, she kept asking, shouldn't Maya meet Claude and Paloma and why shouldn't she meet Marie-Thérèse? Why have Maya continue to grow up in a lie, hearing at school or reading in newspapers and magazines things that her mother invariably denied at home? "It's the easiest way to go crazy," Francoise told Picasso, "not knowing if you are seeing the sun at noon or the moon. You pretend you are unusual, then let's really lead an unusual life, instead of playing hide-and-seek with the truth." He did not like the idea of Francoise trying to put an end to his games, but at the same time he was intrigued by the possibilities opened up by such an encounter. He finally agreed to invite Marie-Thérèse and Maya to visit them at La Galloise. "With a bit of luck," he told Francoise, "you might even come to blows!"

But Francoise had begun to untangle Picasso's strategy. "He always put those around him in competition with each other -- one woman against another, one dealer against another, one friend against another. He was masterly at using one person like the red flag and the other like the bull. While the bull was busy charging against the red flag, Pablo could, unnoticed, deal his wounding thrusts. And most people didn't even think to look who

was hiding behind the red flag."

It was too late for Marie-Thérèse. For years now Francoise had been the red flag with which Picasso had taunted her, and she had all too irrevocably allowed herself to fall victim to Picasso's strategy of dividing and conquering. "She had grown to hate Francoise," Maya said, "and she wanted me to hate her too." When, in the summer of 1949, Marie-Thérèse finally found herself in front of her adversary, there was only one thing she really wanted to tell her and, as soon as they were alone for a few moments, she did: "Whatever you may be thinking, there is no way that you could ever break our bond and take my place."

"I can't take your place," Francoise replied, "and I don't wish to. The place I'm in is one that was vacant." Francoise knew that Marie-Thérèse was only the red flag and not the enemy. And she also knew that "one truth does not annihilate another truth and one relationship does not invalidate another, in the same way that you don't love your first child less because you have a second one."

Having the blindfold taken off was at first very hard on Maya. Suddenly at fourteen, she was confronted with a little half-brother and a baby half-sister and another woman at the center of her father's life. "When she first saw them she wanted to kill them," recalled Francoise, "but that, of course, had been

instigated in her by her mother. When she was allowed to have her own experience of her father's new family, it all changed and she was happy that the charade was over." Many years later, Claude would tell Maya's husband: "You know, the first children of Maya were myself and Paloma."

Maya had her mother's blond hair, but otherwise looked much more like her father. Her zany sense of humor and her philosophical approach to life were completely her own. Her eyes were blue -- but, she says, "not the blue sky of the South of France but the blue sky of Paris, which is more gray than blue." She had just come back from England, where she had not learned much English but had acquired a taste for cornflakes and steamed-pudding, and had learned something else, much more important: "I had made all these new friends and they were all so worried over exams, it helped me see clearly that it is not worth making a big deal either of our defeats or of our victories; it was enough to cross the frontier and a French defeat became Trafalgar, an English victory! It was a wonderful realization. Otherwise the main words I learned were 'naughty girl.' The lady I was staying with did not stop telling me all the time I was there: 'Naughty girl, naughty girl!'" As for my father, he kept writing letters and postcards that often had no other message except 'Write to me, Write to me, Write to me.'"

despite Marie-Thérèse's attempts to poison Maya against Francoise, they were soon friends. Maya was grateful that, thanks to Francoise, she was now part of a much bigger slice of her father's world and Francoise enjoyed her feistiness and her inventive mind. Maya loved making up stories of battles and marriages and larks for her little brother and would hold him spellbound for hours. Sometimes she adapted well-known stories with twists of her own: "In my story of Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf ate Little Red Riding Hood and then Little Red Riding Hood ate the wolf from inside. And it went on for hours like that...." There were times, however, when she found that a good thrashing was the only way to deal with Claude. "He was the king of troublemakers," she said. "No, not the king, the tsar, the emperor, the god of troublemakers, especially when it came to Paloma. He believed in his gut that little boys are superior to little girls and men superior to women, and the first woman on whom he could impose his macho will was his sister."

"Claude was very possessive," Francoise recalled, "so the arrival of Paloma was hard on him." What made it harder was that Francoise took a positively sensual pleasure in her little girl. "It seemed like the culmination of everything. When Claude was born I knew nothing about babies so I was worried and fearful, especially as he had been born with a congenital heart defect. With Paloma, it was all different. Although she was born at eight months, she was perfectly healthy and by then I

felt competent to take good care of her. So I was much more serene than I had been after Claude's birth and I could really enjoy her. Also it was nice to have a boy and a girl. I felt complete. Who could really want more?"

she seemed to have everything and yet, gradually and at first almost imperceptibly, it became clear to her that the vital current was missing. It started with her health. She had heavy hemorrhages and physically she was feeling spent. She found it very hard to recover from Paloma's birth, and her exhaustion and hemorrhaging made it impossible for Picasso and her to continue their very active sex life. "Pablo had tremendous sexual needs and I began to feel harassed. Also I felt tremendously burdened with the children and all the duties of our life and all the people around, especially as Pablo made it really hard for me to get any stable organization going at the house that could support me and take some of the burden off. It was always 'No, I don't want him, no, I don't want her, no, I don't want this, no, I don't want that.'" Often in the night he would wake her up as many as half a dozen times, insisting that something was wrong with "the money," his nickname for the children, that he could not hear any breathing and that she should get up and check. He had started that pattern with Claude and continued now with Paloma. Making sure the children were all right would often wake them up and Francoise had to spend even more time coaxing them

back to sleep before she could go back to bed herself.

By the time fall came, Picasso had added another arduous task to her daily routine. He had bought an old perfumery in the rue du Fournas that he converted into his painting and sculpture studios and he insisted that Francoise was the only person who could build the fires in the morning so that the place was warm enough for him to begin work there in the afternoon. So every morning from November on, no matter what time she had gone to sleep, Francoise stoked the furnace at La Galloise and then bicycled down to the rue du Fournas to start the fires there. Picasso would sleep until noon most days and wake up grumpy but recharged, while Francoise's health continued to deteriorate.

Her letters to her mother were full of requests for help in trying to contact Dr. Lamaze for advice on what she should do about her continuing hemorrhages: "Dr. Lamaze who is very kind but so busy and a little distracted has still not replied to my letter and I still don't know whether I should come to Paris or be treated here. If it is not too much trouble, could you please call him on Monday early in the afternoon, tell him that you are my mother and that you would like to know his answer to the letter I sent him (where I explain to him what the doctor here has told me)....If by chance my letter to him has been lost I could write to him again....I would just like to know whether I could be treated here and if so what the treatment should be." A

few days later she wrote another anxious letter to her mother: "I understand from your telegrams that he does not want to operate here; this is clear, but could I be treated here or do I have to come to Paris?...I embrace you with all my heart, Francoise.

P.S. I just tried to call Dr. Lamaze. He was not there -- I left a message that I had not received his letter."

There was no telephone at La Galloise and Francoise had to go back and forth to the pottery to call Dr. Lamaze; and if he was not there, he could not easily call her back. But that was not the main reason why she had asked for her mother's help. She was still bleeding, she was exhausted and she wanted to know that someone cared enough for her to make phone calls, send telegrams and write concerned letters. Picasso, far from providing any kind of support, constantly complained about the state of her health. "I don't like sick women," he kept repeating.

"Everything became my fault," said Francoise. "And I began to feel that it was all so unfair -- that I had gone to the maximum to fulfill his wishes, from having the children to building the fires in his studio, and instead of what I did leading to a ripening of our relationship, it had all backfired. My health had never been worse, our sexual relationship was impaired and he was telling me both through his words and through his actions that I was no longer as convenient as I used to be. On top of that, I was feeling guilty, trying to master the weakness of my

body and working even harder to compensate. It was the beginning of my resentment and my deep disenchantment."

The hardest thing was dealing with Picasso's withdrawal from her. Until Paloma was born, with the exception of his trip to Poland, she had always been with him. Now, he would suddenly announce that he was going to Paris for a few days and she would find herself alone with the children. "I had never envisioned our lives like that," she said. "At that time I was so involved with Pablo that without him there were moments when I was almost unable to breathe. There was such a symbiosis between us that it was as if not only one arm was cut off but half my body. It was really difficult to take; in fact in order to take it I had to re-enter myself. I had been completely out there with Pablo, and now I had to find myself again, first of all in order to know what was happening and then in order to know how to handle it."

At first when she began to look at what was happening, things were pretty fuzzy at the edges -- events mixed with emotions and simple facts with complex feelings. Gradually, her thoughts came into focus. She remembered the first time Picasso came to the clinic after Paloma was born. "So you are pleased," he had said. "Yes, of course," she had replied. It had not occurred to her that he might be any less pleased himself. Yet, looking back, she realized that his tone had been strange -- nothing obvious, just a signal that all was not well. "So, you

are pleased," he had said.

"I didn't know at the time that it was a recurring pattern," Francoise said, "but after Maya's birth Pablo began abandoning Marie-Thérèse and seemed unable to get on with his work. The birth of a girl in Pablo's life was clearly traumatic. He had made a pact with God over his little sister and now he was reliving the trauma of that pact over the birth of his daughter: she might die and then he would feel terribly guilty or she would live and his work would suffer. All his unresolved fears were activated again. He kept saying how beautiful Paloma was but he was restless, agitated. It was a creatively barren time and he even started talking about getting another apartment where I could be with the children when we were in Paris. I didn't like that at all, because either I was going to be with him or else....He was beginning to disengage not in words but in deeds, and I was so sensitive to him that I began to feel as though I was falling from the eighth floor down. And since our health comes from our whole being, it was my body that was paying the price even before my mind knew why."

She asked herself what she should do next. "The answer came back as a clear directive: to concentrate on my work even more, to concentrate on the children even more and to concentrate if not on Pablo himself at least on my duty toward him, on what

the Indians call the dharma -- seeing to it that he had a life as well-balanced as possible and as free as I could make it from problems and people that distracted him from his work." She spent hours drawing and painting the children. In one of the long letters she wrote jointly to her mother and her grandmother, she described her efforts to draw Paloma while she was asleep: "The poor darling is really a martyr. I try all sorts of ways to keep her from sleeping at hours which don't work for me and to make her sleep when I'm there poised, pencil in hand. If she moves in her sleep, I try to rearrange her the way she was before which ends up waking her!...I'm continuing a gouache on a plywood panel, with Claude in Tyrolian costume, seated on the ground, chin pressed in hand. He's looking at his sister who is stretched out on her stomach and hanging onto his other hand." Claude was still having trouble adjusting to the arrival of Paloma. "My mother went to a bad hotel," he used to say, referring to the Belvedere clinic, "and she came back with a little sister and I don't like her. I wanted a red one and she is all white, she is too white!"

He was a bright, enchanting boy. In another letter to Chères Dames, as she sometimes addressed her mother and grandmother, Francoise proudly gave them examples of his intelligence: "Claude knows about everything. Yesterday he grabbed your last letter and casting a sly look my way, he started mimicking, 'Chère Francoise bla bla tra bla bla,'"

pretending with inarticulate sounds that he was someone reading out loud. Then at the end he said, 'It's a letter from grandmother' and burst out laughing. All the time I was shaking with laughter myself because I had never read a letter out loud to him. He must have understood what it was all about all by himself. It seems certain that a great stock of knowledge is inborn and just a few clues are enough to unlock the memory -- and the understanding."

Every now and then, Picasso would read a letter from Francoise's mother and grandmother in which they told her that they were praying for her. "But they ought to pray for me, too," he would complain. "It's not nice to leave me out." And when Francoise protested that since he was an avowed atheist, he should not care whether they left him out, he was all the more insistent: "Oh, but I do care. I want them to pray for me. People like that believe in something and their prayers certainly do something for them. So there's no reason why they shouldn't give me the benefit too."

He had nicknamed Francoise's grandmother "the great German orchestra conductor" because of her booming voice and her imposing personality, while the best thing she had to say about him was that he had very smooth skin "like a piece of polished marble." Otherwise she did not like him. And she had told him

so to his face: "I don't care about you, you know. I care only about her. If you think I come to see you you are wrong. I just come to see my grand-daughter. My grand-daughter is my grand-daughter whether you like it or not."

He could not stand the idea of someone not being ensnared by him, so he tried to seduce her. But she was not seducible. "Where shall I take you to dinner?" he asked one night.

"Dinner with you doesn't interest me," she told him. "I'd rather go to the casino because I always have a lot of luck there. I don't think you would have the energy to stay up with me -- I like to stay very late."

She was, in fact, a few years older than Picasso and, although she did have the most incredible luck when she gambled, she did not go to the casino that night. She just wanted to put him in his place, to let him know that not everyone was waiting to get marching orders from him.

One thought that did not cross her mind, either when she was with them or in her letters, was that Francoise, living with a multimillionaire, might actually be in need of money. "I have never been as poor in my life," recalled Francoise, "as when I was with Pablo. It's hard to believe, but that's the way it was. Marie Cuttoli was the one who had dresses made for me since I

couldn't afford any of my own. It was one more way to exert his power over me, to have me ask for things since he believed that he could buy me emotionally if I needed him financially. And I didn't want to do this, especially since I loved him and I knew that if he could humiliate me he would lose his respect for me. If I asked for anything material, he could then accuse me of being trapped in the bourgeois game of possessions and he would be the pure one. The way his mind worked, I would then be nobody and he would once again be alone on the mountaintop. He was so acutely aware of the balance of powers in a relationship....So I asked for nothing -- not for clothes, not for a better house, even though we were living in a really ugly, small house. And when I asked for more help with the children and the house, he would find all sorts of ingenious ways of refusing."

After Paloma was born Picasso gave Francoise a beautiful watch as a gift. By then, she too was alert to any shift in the balance-sheet of their relationship, so the following Christmas she returned the favor by buying him a very nice watch.

"Perhaps," she said, "we both felt that we needed to remind each other that the clock was ticking."

Time was passing, but not at the same rate for both of them. With the birth of her two children, Francoise had quickly moved from adolescence to the full bloom of womanhood, while for

Picasso time mercifully moved more slowly, its passage marked on his children much more than on himself. He drew them and he painted them, often with Yan, the new boxer puppy, but there was something impersonal and detached about these pictures -- the artist's ingenuity much more present than the father's warmth.

"He was put out by the children...disturbed," recalled Francoise. "He had thought they would make our relationship more stable but the opposite had happened. They began to be in his way. 'They are not children, they are elephants,' he would complain. 'They take so much room.' It was better in French -- les enfants, les éléphants. Then he started telling me how marvellous it would be to give him as many children as Oona gave Charlie Chaplin. I told him that that was really strange, wanting more children when he couldn't accept the noise and the inconvenience of two. He liked the idea of new life as he was nearing seventy but he didn't want to be bothered by it."

In the fall of 1949, Gallimard published his second play, The Four Little Girls, which revealed a world full of games and anguish. "Let's play at hurting ourselves," says the First Little Girl, "and hug each other with fury making horrible noises....Make the best you can, make the best you can of life. As for me, I wrap the chalk of my desires in a cloak, torn and covered with black-ink stains that drip full-throated from blind hands searching for the mouth of the wound." "In all our

caperings," announces the Fourth Little Girl, "we are going to shout aloud the joy of being alone and mad." For Picasso, as he was entering his sixty-ninth year, making the best of life meant being away from La Galloise as often as possible. Francoise was left behind while he began to give full vent to his desires, practicing seduction and conquest without respite, intoxicated with his caperings, with his casual affairs and, above all, with continuing proof of his virility.

La Galloise became the launching pad for his expeditions to Paris, more than his home. One day, his old friend Dr. Reventos came to see him at the rue des Grands-Augustins together with Pierrette Gargallo, the late sculptor's daughter. She had just arrived from Barcelona and brought Picasso a letter from his sister. "You are so lucky," she told him. "You have success, wealth, your health, a beautiful woman by your side, young children -- you have everything." "No," he replied, "I don't. I'm missing five centimeters." There was something irrevocable about his dissatisfaction, as irrevocable as his height. "If we weren't unhappy," he had told Matisse that summer, "we wouldn't be painting. We paint because we are not happy." And because he was not happy he was chasing around, more and more anxious about death. Death was a major preoccupation of The Four Little Girls. "Isn't she stupid?" the Third Little Girl remarks contemptuously about the First Little Girl's obliviousness to the threat of

death. Afraid that he was running out of time, Picasso was grabbing for happiness -- or at least temporary release from unhappiness.

Meanwhile, Francoise, who had been offered a contract by Kahnweiler, was losing -- and finding -- herself in her work and in her children. With Kahnweiler's contract, she was, for the first time since she had been with Picasso, financially independent. "It was a life raft," she said. "He had thought that giving me children would tie me down, and I couldn't leave, but now I was earning a living and, if necessary, I could take care of my needs and the needs of my children."

She was entranced by her little daughter. "As for the most beautiful of the most beautiful," she wrote to her mother and grandmother, "I'm doing a series of drawings of her next to me. I'm not working from life, but I'm trying to bring out the poetry that emanates from her elusive freshness -- a little head, in the manner of Louis David, tufts of hair on the brow, eyes with lashes like rapid birds, a perfect cream of sleep, in contrast to the woman near her more bitter and worried than I really am when I'm able to liberate myself through drawings which follow rapidly one another, modulating their song like the lines of a poem. In the passion of my work I achieve a certain degree of happiness because it's not a question of conquering a particular artistic form or a new vocabulary, but rather of giving myself over

completely in a way which leaves room neither for reflection nor for regret -- in order to open the gates to lyricism. For me it's good to be here among nature, the children. I absorb their influence and my thoughts are enriched and clarified."

Her letters to her mother and grandmother made no mention of Picasso. They were reports from that part of her universe where only her work and her children existed. "If only I had him inoculated against rage as well as against typhoid fever," she wrote after Claude had beaten up Paloma "on the sly." In another letter she announced with joy that the medical massages Claude was having had made his thorax much less constricted. In another, she described the packet of odds and ends that Claude had prepared on his own initiative for his grandmother: "You must send this right away together with the big balloon to amuse grandma," he had told her. And Francoise wrote instead a two page letter describing the packet.

It was a world in which Picasso was only a passing visitor. "To produce babies at my age is really ridiculous," he had said. And he now recoiled from any but the most perfunctory involvement in the life of his young family, while Francoise herself maintained a protective distance that precluded greater intimacy. He always used tu when he spoke to her, but she always addressed him with vous, as though she was talking to a parent or a

teacher. "It infuriated him," Francoise said. "It had become a symbol of the distance I was trying to keep. Looking back, I needn't have done it. I could have called him tu or mon chéri, but I never did. Since he had turned our relationship into a battle, I, too, was using whatever weapon I could find."

Marcel joined in this game by calling Francoise "Mademoiselle." "You must stop calling her Mademoiselle," Picasso would reprimand him. "It's ridiculous. Here she is, with two children. You must call her Madame." The more annoyed Picasso was, the more insistent Marcel became. "No, no. She's so young. For me she will always be Mademoiselle." It finally became a free-for-all, with Eluard and Paulo calling Picasso "le malheureux fils père," (the unfortunate celibate father). But what most upset him was arriving at a hotel with Francoise, Paulo and the children and being given one key for himself and one for "his son and daughter-in-law and the grandchildren."

When he was in Vallauris, Picasso spent most of his day at "the factory," as he called his new studio; everybody else referred to it as "Le Fournas." He even had a housewarming party there as though this were his true home: "Picasso is dining at Picasso's," read a huge poster hung over the fireplace. The painter Manuel Ortiz sang flamencos, and among those singing along were Edouard Pignon and Hélène Parmelin. Picasso had invited them to share "a painter's life" with him and they were

living and working in the rooms above his studios.

"We were all Communists, then as ever," wrote Hélène Parmelin, "and at the centre of the furious quarrelling about painting on the extreme left. Our leisure, our meals and our amusement all took place in an atmosphere composed of hot passion, fury, anecdote, drama and melodrama, active rebellion, eternal argument, laughter and depression. When showing us the oval lights through which the owner of this old mill used to keep an eye on his workmen, Picasso told us he had opened them especially so that we could watch him throughout the day to make sure he was keeping to the Party line....Whenever he took visitors into the passage, he invariably said we were there to see he kept to the line; and that before our arrival he had always been deviating. But now, as soon as they see I'm deviating, he said, they just tap on the pane, or whistle, and I immediately return to the line, with a ruler...."

They were there when Picasso finished his Goat in plaster, with two pottery milk pitchers for its teats, a palm branch for its backbone, a wicker wastebasket for its stomach, vinestalk for its horns. Each night, the goat lost two inches of its plaster nose and each morning Hélène Parmelin "picked up the nose and replaced it." Picasso loved collecting scrap pieces from the junk heap that was conveniently situated next to his studio and

transforming them into his assembled sculptures. Sometimes Francoise walked along with him, pushing a baby carriage into which he dropped whatever had caught his fancy. "Down with style!" he had proclaimed to Malraux. "Does God have a style? He made the guitar, the Harlequin, the dachshund, the cat, the owl, the dove. Like me. The elephant and the whale, fine -- but the elephant and the squirrel? A real hodgepodge! He made what doesn't exist. So did I."

It was a hodgepodge that went into making the Little Girl Skipping Rope, including a wicker basket that he used for her body and two cumbersome shoes, both for the same foot, that he had found in the junk heap, for the little girl to wear. He wanted her not to touch the ground. "Since she was skipping, how did I keep her up in the air?" he asked rhetorically. "I pressed the rope down on the ground. No one ever noticed." There was method to his magic, but it was no less magical and its power no less inexplicable for that. "The eyes of the artist," he said, "are open to a superior reality; his works are evocations."

He continued to struggle with his belief that his work was "something sacred": "We ought to be able to say that word or something like it," he told Parmelin, "but people would take it in the wrong way....We ought to be able to say that such and such a painting is as it is, with its capacity for power, because it is 'touched by God'. But people would put a wrong interpretation

on it. And yet it's the nearest we can get to the truth."

On August 6, 1950, all the people around Picasso who would have put a wrong interpretation on a work of art being "touched by God" were gathered at the central square in Vallauris for the unveiling of the Man with the Sheep, which Picasso had offered to the Communist Municipal Council of the town. Francoise, in a bright, flowered dress, was standing beside Picasso as the mayor proclaimed him an honorary citizen of Vallauris and Laurent Casanova cried out with emotion: "Salute to Picasso, our brother in arms!" Casanova was there to do the unveiling. He had recently published The Communist Party, the Intellectuals and the Nation in which he declared with the papal authority that was the hallmark of all his pronouncements that "religious art no longer inspires the true artists." The municipality of Vallauris, clearly in agreement with the great Communist leader, offered Picasso a well and truly deconsecrated chapel off the main square for him to decorate according to the dictates of his secular inspiration.

Eluard, Tzara and Cocteau were all there to witness the celebrations; Cocteau, who had been flirting with the Communist Party, watched the proceedings from a second-story balcony with his great friend, Madame Weisweiller. When he was in the South of France, which was more and more often, he and Edouard Dermit, his

latest lover, known as Doudou, always stayed with her in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. Coming to visit Picasso at La Galloise after the high luxury of Santo Sospir, the Weisweiller villa, he teased him about the "ostentatious simplicity" of his life. "You have to be able to afford luxury in order to be able to scorn it," replied the honorary citizen of Vallauris.

picasso's involvement with the Communist cause continued, as if he hoped to discover through it a meaning and a significance to his life that had so far eluded him. Francoise, who was in correspondence with Endre Rozsda, her teacher and friend, now living in Hungary, asked Picasso many times to intervene through his Communist contacts so that Rozsda could come to France at least for a visit. "I never liked to ask Pablo for anything," Francoise recalled, "but I did ask for Endre. He was an abstract-surrealist painter and found it impossible to produce the social-realistic paintings that were the only kind allowed. So to earn a living, he ended up making puppets and working on stage sets, and unable to function under the Communist system, he had had a nervous breakdown."

The first time Francoise asked Picasso to help Roszda, he replied: "Absolutely not. If he's not happy in a Communist country he has to be a bad person."

"Please don't give me that," Francoise said. "You know as

well as I do that he's an artist who is not allowed to express himself. As an artist, if you were in that position, wouldn't you be grateful to have someone help you get out?"

"Certainly not," he said, "because I'm a good Communist."

Francoise tried again and again, hoping to catch him in a moment when he was in a better mood and not such a good Communist. But, everytime, the answer was the same.

In November he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize and in the same month he arrived at Victoria Station in London to take part in the third Communist peace congress that was to be held at Sheffield. He came off the train alone. As he explained to Roland Penrose who was there to meet him, everybody else traveling with him had been refused entry at Dover. Both the government and the public mood in England were vociferously opposed to a Congress dedicated to Communist propaganda in the middle of the Korean War. "And I," Picasso asked, "what can I have done that they should allow me through?" He did not like being perceived by the authorities as a safe revolutionary, but his one-minute speech at Sheffield justified that perception: "I stand for life against death: I stand for peace against war." That was his peroration and there was not a man alive who would, at least verbally, challenge it.

In January 1951, still in the grip of his Communist addiction, he painted the Massacre in Korea. Based on the execution scene of Goya's Third of May, it was intended as a grand artistic protest against the American intervention in Korea. It turned out to be, as James Lord described it, "a faint bleat in the pandemonium of political propaganda" -- too faint for the Party brothers he had aimed to please and too depressing for his non-partisan admirers. "As a formal production," wrote Lord, summing up the disappointment, "it makes facile use of aesthetic devices long since done to death by the painter. That is its truest image of violence. Something had happened to Picasso. He was now a changed man, and artist....He surrounded himself with mediocre sycophants and third-rate artists, none of whom could remind him that moments of major attainment were no longer at hand."

At the beginning of March, Kahnweiler arrived in Vallauris to see him. He had flown to Nice and was met by Marcel, who took him straight to the studio. It was only eight months until Picasso's seventieth birthday and he seemed preoccupied with old age. He mimicked an old man, getting up with difficulty. "That's what's so terrible! Now we are still able to do whatever we want. But wanting and no longer being able to do: that's what's so terrible!" He did add, however, that for the moment he was feeling as though he was fourteen. And, afraid of impending old age, that is how he was behaving. He was running in every

direction away from Francoise. And one direction led to Geneviève Laporte. "I feel a constant urge to destroy what I have built with much difficulty," he told her, and he seemed determined to destroy what he had built with Francoise. "Was Picasso afraid of his happiness," Geneviève Laporte asked, "afraid of succumbing to a more profound emotion than he was willing to cope with?"

Even when they were together, Francoise felt him far away from her. She withdrew into her own world, kept her suspicions and her fears to herself and watched while her relationship with Picasso began to feel more and more like a business partnership. She managed his dealings with galleries, publishers and the world, and immersed herself in her own work. Picasso was pleased that she had a contract with Kahnweiler, pleased that Paul Rosenberg had also asked to represent her (but she was already taken), pleased that her drawings and lithographs would soon be illustrating books of poems by Verdet and Eluard. And Francoise was grateful for any signs, however spasmodic, that she existed for him as something more than a useful adjunct. At the same time she was "chilled by the growing recognition that I had to pay for any signs of affection on his part by the pain he caused me when he immediately switched and became harsh and cruel. He called it 'the high cost of living,' but it was really the high cost of living with Pablo. Any time he was at all loving or

caring and I allowed myself to relax and be open and vulnerable, he would turn, and the battle would start again. The result was that I could never lower my guard."

When she was not attending to his business, to her own work or to the children, Francoise's main release was crying. As always, the smell of pain brought out in Picasso the impulse to inflict more pain. "You were a Venus when I met you," he told her once when he caught her crying. "Now you're a Christ -- and a Romanesque Christ, at that, with all the ribs sticking out to be counted. I hope you realize you don't interest me like that....You should be ashamed to let yourself go -- your figure, your health -- in the way that you have. Any other woman would improve after the birth of a baby, but not you. You look like a broom. Do you think brooms appeal to anybody? They don't to me."

The cost of living with him was growing higher and higher. When early in 1951 Teriade asked her to write the text for a special issue of Verve devoted to Picasso's recent work, she replied, "Of course not!" It was her way of fighting back, of saying no when Picasso wanted her to say yes. And no amount of persuasion from Teriade or from Picasso would make her change her mind. She helped Teriade select the works to be photographed, but writing the text came to symbolize for her taking one too many steps toward being absorbed by him. "I didn't see why, on

top of everything else, I should be obliged to write a text of biography about him and his work. In the end, of course, it was nothing more than an absurd act of defiance. It didn't prove anything." It was another expression of the antagonism simmering in their relationship. "You are the son of the woman who always says no," Picasso complained to Claude, who at four years old could not have been expected to do very much about it.

On June 14, 1951, Picasso and Francoise were witnesses in the town hall of Saint-Tropez at the wedding of Eluard to Dominique Laure. They had met at a small gallery of ceramics in Paris and soon after, by chance, again in Mexico. Even before their wedding, they had settled in Dominique's apartment in Saint-Tropez, overlooking the harbor. But they were constantly back and forth between Saint-Tropez and Vallauris. One day, as they were driving home after lunch with Picasso and Francoise, Dominique commented on how well the lunch had gone. "Beyond any shadow of doubt," Eluard replied, "Pablo is at this very moment busy badmouthing us."

And he was. "If Paul thinks that I'm going to honor him again by going to bed with his wife," he told Francoise, "this time he's wrong....When I don't like the wife of a friend that takes away all the pleasure I get out of seeing that friend. She's all right by herself, but the combination, no. She's not

the wife Paul should have." He thought that Dominique would have made a good wife for a sculptor, but that she was too Amazonian for a poet. And next time he saw Eluard, he told him: "A woman who is there, under foot, looking as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar, isn't very appropriate for a poet. You'll wind up not being able to write a line. You should be sighing and suffering for a pale young girl, and one who isn't here, to boot."

But what really annoyed him was not Dominique's solidity -- after all he usually preferred his women solid -- but her refusal to join the adoring chorus. "One thing that I found insufferable," she recalled, "was the perpetual reverence around Picasso. It kindled my desire to provoke him -- for which he always took his revenge. When, for example, he said once that he wanted to do my portrait, I told him that he would never be able to give me a bosom as beautiful as in the drawings that Valentine Hugo had made of me. He was not at all used to that kind of talk. He retaliated by making a dozen drawings of me, putting them all in an envelope, tying them with a string and tearing them up in front of my very eyes."

"There's no such thing as love," Picasso had told Françoise. "There are only proofs of love." And he loved putting every one around him through daily tests. He insisted on Dominique staying in a room in the dark and damp basement of La Galloise, on Françoise wearing a really ugly dress he had bought

for her in a street market, on both Dominique and Francoise wearing the junky necklaces he had bought in Vallauris. Francoise passed that particular test by wearing both the dress and the necklace and was rewarded by being given one of the silver necklaces he had made himself. Dominique failed the test by never so much as putting on the ugly necklace -- and she was punished by being given nothing.

"Eluard was fascinated by Picasso," Dominique recalled. "He loved him as if he were a woman; it was a kind of mental homosexuality." And Picasso confessed to Geneviève Laporte: "I'm a woman. "Every artist is a woman and should have a taste for other women. Artists who are pederasts can't be true artists because they like men, and since they themselves are women they are reverting to normality."

Now that Picasso did not seem at all eager to re-create with Dominique the triangle that had existed between Eluard, Nusch and him, Eluard was anxious to bring someone else linked to his life into Picasso's bed. It was he who, in 1944, had introduced Geneviève Laporte to Picasso, and now, seven years later, he did everything he could to facilitate their affair. His attitude was not shared by Dominique. "Picasso had been to our house with Francoise and the children," she said, "and then eight days later he appeared again with Geneviève. And when I

didn't want to receive them, he attacked my lower-middle-class values. I still found it shocking that with Francoise only a hundred kilometers away he would come to as public a place as Saint-Tropez where everybody looked and everybody knew." Her husband, however, got a special thrill from his role of procurer and panderer. He sent a letter to Geneviève informing her that on Picasso's instructions he had found them an apartment close to theirs for the summer. Picasso was already in Paris and the next day Marcel drove him and Geneviève to Saint-Tropez.

"Even if you were entirely free to choose," Eluard told Picasso, "there is no answer that would make you entirely happy." But for the moment, Picasso was busy inventing a past and re-creating the present to make them more seductive for Geneviève. "I've never been able to think of myself, and no one has ever bothered about me," he told her. "I have always been afraid of hurting people, perhaps through cowardice. Take Francoise, for example: I've never loved her. But she's like a cup full of memories which I don't want to drink from any longer; on the other hand I don't want to smash it. So what am I to do?"

Of course, the last thing he wanted was advice. As Eluard told Geneviève: "Picasso has only ever done in life what he intended to do." Acting the role of the long-suffering victim was part of what he intended. "You know, don't you," he told Eluard at a moment when he was sure that Geneviève could

overhear, "that all my affairs of the heart have been spoiled by friction and suffering: two bodies enveloped in barbed wire, rubbing against each other and tearing the flesh. With her, it's been all sweetness and honey. She's a hive without bees." Geneviève did overhear and was "exhilarated," as he intended her to be.

"He will praise a fair girl's amiability," Leporello sings of Don Giovanni, "a dark one's constancy, a white-haired one's sweetness...so long as she wears a skirt, you know what his game is." Geneviève Laporte was the official "other woman," but by no means the only other woman in Picasso's life during this season of raging sexuality, fueled by fear of death, of old age, of the sap failing to rise. While Picasso was cavorting around the French coast adding "women of every rank, of every size, of every age" to Leporello's catalogue, Francoise was often in Paris visiting her grandmother at the clinic in Neuilly, where she had been since a stroke had left her paralyzed on one side. One day, when she was back in Vallauris and Picasso in Saint-Tropez, "visiting the Eluards" as he had told her, Madame Ramié took Francoise into a corner and told her that Picasso was, in fact, in Saint-Tropez with another woman. She was telling her as a friend, she said, for her own good, because she did not want her to hear about it from an outsider. It was only his latest adventure, she continued, but this time she felt that it was her

duty to tell Francoise because she had heard that he was planning to go away with this woman to Tunisia.

"I felt as though I had been poisoned and the life was draining from me," Francoise recalled. "Of course I had suspected, but I had put such thoughts out of my mind. And finding out from somebody who I knew only wished me ill made it so much harder."

When Picasso returned home, she asked him point blank: "Is it true? Please tell me the truth. I am an adult. I can take the truth. Just tell me the truth."

"You must be crazy," he said with the utmost conviction, "to fall in for the latest gossip. There is nothing going on."

He was so adamant that Francoise wavered. Maybe Madame Ramié had made it up, maybe her suspicions were all imaginings, maybe he was really only visiting the Eluards or going to the bullfights or taking care of business in Paris.

The next few weeks were filled with the anguish of knowing and yet not wanting to know. Stories of Picasso's affairs had even started to appear in the newspapers, but he continued to deny them as unfounded and libelous. Her feelings of betrayal would quiet for a while, then swoop out of their slumber and fill

her whole being, leaving her wretched. It was in such a state that, at the beginning of August, she received the news of her grandmother's death. She was at the pottery when the telephone rang and the postal clerk, thinking he had Madame Ramié on the line, announced matter-of-factly: "Francoise's grandmother is dead." She left immediately for Paris. And there, at her grandmother's funeral, she saw her father again, for the first time in eight years. "It was awkward at first," Francoise recalled, "but very moving. He held my hand and asked me home after the church, although he did say that he was doing it for my mother."

Yet he was also doing it for her. He, too, had read in the papers about Picasso's affairs and he wanted Francoise to know that the past was past, that he would never again raise all the things that had separated them, and that if she needed him at this difficult moment in her life, he would be there to help her. "Ever since I had been a child," Francoise recalled, "my father had instilled in me that the real aristocracy consists of people who have enough inner resources with which to escape from any situation in which they are trapped and be free again. What I knew he was telling me after my grandmother's funeral was that if I had enough inner resources to leave, he would provide me with emotional support and also make a will in the children's favor."

It was the moment that more than any other crystallized for Francoise what had happened to her. "There is no question that when I decided to go and live with Pablo, mixed with my love and my admiration for him was a strong desire to rebel against my bourgeois upbringing, to destroy once and for all my father's authority over me. And now here was my father feeling pity for me and offering his money and his protection. And here I was, a mother and yet a child again. For the first time I realized that my emotional situation was common knowledge. It was very demeaning, especially when he said that he had followed in the newspapers what had been happening and it was clear to him that if Picasso had wanted to have an affair he could have done it quietly without everybody knowing and that, therefore, he had actually wanted me to know. So my father had made the diagnosis about how sick things were and now I had to face that conclusion."

She returned to Vallauris, feeling very vulnerable and alone and longing to talk to Picasso. But no sooner was she back than he left for a bullfight in Arles. While he was away, Madame Ramié took her aside again and very conspiratorially, and for her own good, of course, revealed to her that the woman Picasso was with that very moment was Geneviève Laporte. Francoise now had one clear objective: to hear from Picasso's mouth what the truth was. "I want you to have the courage," she told him as soon as he was back, "to tell me the truth -- when it started, how long

it has been going on and whether you want it to continue. Then I will know what I want to do myself. For over a year now I didn't question you and you had ample time to tell me yourself. Now I'm asking."

He denied everything. He told her that nothing had happened, that nothing had changed and that he had no idea what she was talking about. And then he added: "Instead of asking about things that don't exist, you should know something that's real -- whenever a third person enters any relationship, from either side, both people have asked for it, one maybe actively, the other passively, but both, in their different ways, have invited the third person in."

She asked him if he meant that it was her fault, perhaps because of her bad health, perhaps through her passive participation, that a third person had entered their lives. He denied that there was a third person and, whichever way she asked the question, he denied it again and again. "That," Francoise said, "was the mistake. There are always mistakes from both sides in a relationship, but that was the unacceptable mistake. I had accepted his long and eventful past and all the ways in which it infringed on our lives and I might even have accepted the present if he had been open about it, but to go on refusing to admit what everybody else was talking about, to go on treating

me like a fool, was to attempt to deprive me of whatever self-esteem I had left."

Like the thirteenth strike of a clock, it threw into question all that had gone before it. Suddenly Francoise began to see the tissue of lies that had preceded the big lie; one by one all the excuses and all the reasons he had given for disappearing for days on end became transparent. "It was the loss of innocence and the end of trust," she said. "From then on not a day passed that I did not discover one more corpse in one more dark corner of a closet. I felt as though I was stepping deeper and deeper into a slimy pond. My whole universe had crumbled and my grandmother's death coming more or less at the same time had intensified my loneliness and my despair."

To sustain herself through that time, she began putting Geneviève Aliquot back in her paintings. "It's ironic," Francoise said, "that it was the discovery of his affair with one Geneviève that brought about the unraveling of everything, and that it was my exploring of my love for another Geneviève through my painting that began gradually to restore my balance and my trust in life. I did not see her or contact her, but the knowledge that there was someone who had loved me and whom I had loved so deeply helped me live from one day to the next."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"NOBODY LEAVES A MAN LIKE ME"

In August 1951, seals were placed on the doors of the apartment in the rue La Boétie. The legal proceedings that disputed the city's right to evict Picasso had failed. There was an acute housing shortage, the apartment was vacant and he had not lived in it for years, but he was still incredulous that the authorities had insisted on treating him as one among equals before the law. He refused to have anything to do with the move. Sabartés, Inès and Marcel were put in charge of crating all the works that had been abandoned at the rue La Boétie under years of accumulated dust and disorder. He had recently bought two small apartments in the rue Gay-Lussac for Francoise and the children and, as the threat of requisition hovered over them too while they remained unoccupied, he considered moving the whole family

there for a while.

But first, on October 25, his seventieth birthday was celebrated by the entire town of Vallauris. Absent from the throng was Marcel. After more than twenty-five years in Picasso's service, he had been fired for taking his wife and daughter on an outing sixty miles from Paris, one Sunday, and driving the Oldsmobile into a tree. Francoise tried in vain to save Marcel's job. "You can't fire a man," she told Picasso, "just because he had an accident like that. Not a good man like Marcel, who has been so faithful to you, and not after twenty-five years. It could have happened to anyone." Picasso was unrelenting: "He knows that he's not supposed to drive the car on his days off." Marcel, as always, spoke his mind. "You think you can do anything you want to anybody," he cried. "After all I've been to you, you are firing me without giving me another chance. You have no heart. You'll suffer for that. You'll see. You'll drive every decent human being away. Next, it will be Mademoiselle who leaves you." And with that prophecy hovering in the air, Marcel walked out of Picasso's life. Quite unstirred, Picasso bought a Hotchkiss and told Paulo that if he wanted any more money from him, he had to take Marcel's place and become his driver. Paulo obeyed.

After his birthday celebrations were over, Picasso, suffering from an attack of lumbago, had to take to his bed. It was there that, in November, he received a visit from Giacometti, who immediately became a target for one of his dark moods: "You don't like me as much as you used to," he growled. "You never come to see me anymore." Not living in the South of France was an unacceptable excuse; distance was no obstacle where his true friends were concerned. "Then," James Lord wrote, "Picasso performed one of those abrupt, unpredictable pirouettes of style so typical of him. He extended an invitation. What a lovely thing it would be, he said, if Alberto came to stay with him there in Vallauris. That would be proof of friendship.... Alberto's own lodging, though he may never have known this, would have been a dank room in the basement, where Picasso had recently lodged Eluard and his ailing bride. The invitation, of course, was the crudest kind of taunt. Picasso gleefully pressed Alberto to accept. Twenty years before, when they had first met, Alberto had wanted to make sure Picasso saw that he was not on his knees. Picasso had seen, had appreciated, but his craving to see people in that posture had not yielded to the years but only become more arrogant, and now he wanted a show of force to prove he could make Giacometti comply with a condescending caprice."

To add to the capriciousness of the invitation, Picasso did not extend it to Giacometti's wife, but suggested instead that

she stay in a hotel room in Cannes or Antibes. And to avoid any delay in the execution of his whims, he wanted Teriade, who had accompanied Giacometti, to go back forthwith and fetch his suitcases.

But it was not to be. Giacometti refused to be manipulated. Picasso was furious: "I can't stand people who say no to me," he shouted.

"And I'm not interested in having a relationship with you if I cannot say yes or no as I please," replied Giacometti.

"I have reached a point in my life," Picasso continued, "where I don't want any criticism from anyone."

Giacometti had the last word: "Then you have reached the point when I go and do not return." That was the end of their friendship. Giacometti's view of Picasso the man had always been damning. No less devastating was his summing up, perhaps in a moment of wrath, of Picasso the artist: "Picasso altogether bad, completely beside the point from the beginning except for Cubist period and even that half-misunderstood. French artist illustrator journalistic....Ugly. Old-fashioned vulgar without sensitivity horrible in color and non-color. very bad painter

once and for all."

Picasso was doing his best to cut himself off from all his friends who had any kind of spirit and mind of their own -- who refused to say yes to him automatically. In this way he was able to make true his constant complaint that he was alone and there was nobody out there to match him. He had already fallen out with Chagall, whom he accused of not returning to his native Russia because there was no money to be made there. "I'm like a mosquito buzzing around Picasso," Chagall complained. "I sting him once, I sting him twice, and bang, he squashes me." Later on, when Picasso ran into Chagall in Antibes, he proudly waved his Communist Party card at him. "Yes," was Chagall's comeback, "but the day they oblige you to make paintings you don't want...?"

"They never will," said Picasso.

"Then you see very well," Chagall said, "that you are no more Communist than I am..."

Chagall's view of Picasso the artist was not much kinder than Giacometti's: "What a genius, that Picasso," he said. "It's a pity he doesn't paint." One night Francoise and Picasso ran into Chagall's daughter Ida at the ballet. Chagall's wife had

just left him. "Papa is so unhappy," Ida told them, which provoked much laughter from Picasso. "Don't laugh," she reproached him; "it could happen to you." Picasso laughed even more heartily. "That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard," he said.

As Pablo and Francoise began their first winter together in the rue Gay-Lussac, the idea that she might leave him did indeed seem ridiculous. She was unhappy, but had convinced herself that by staying she was doing the right thing, that instead of seeking her personal happiness she should do her duty by her children and by Picasso, at least in terms of providing some stability for him and bringing all the different elements of his life together. She even suggested that they get a big house and bring their own children and Marie-Thérèse and Maya and Paulo and Emilienne and Pablito and his new-born sister all under one roof. "My feeling was that we were a ship in a tempest and that we should at least try and save the people even if it meant hauling out the cargo -- the casual affairs and the lies and the unnecessary mysteries. I felt that with any new person aboard, however casual and short-lasting Pablo's involvement, there was less affection and less caring to go around. I had seen clearly his pattern of telling one person that everything wrong was on account of someone else in his life and I thought that by

bringing everyone together we could put an end to that. We could have got a house big enough for everybody to have their own wing and, as far as I was concerned, Marie-Thérèse could oversee the whole household. So my attempt was at a sort of integration rather than the disintegration that was getting worse and worse."

He was aghast at her suggestion and so was Marie-Thérèse. "She still thought," said Francoise, "that I would finally go and Pablo would be all hers. That's what he had led her to believe. As for Pablo, he was infuriated by my idea because underneath it all he was pretty conventional and trapped in his old tricks, in a vicious circle of lies and guilt, recriminations and self-pity."

Nevertheless, Francoise contacted a real estate agent and started looking for a big house in Paris. She even found one. "It was a big mansion at the Cité de Varennes," she said, "a palace compared with the rue Gay-Lussac, which was cramped and simply awful. I thought that living our eccentric life might be easier if at least we were living it in comfort. I suppose when you are desperate you are prepared to pin your hopes on anything. I finally persuaded Pablo to come and look at it. He got out of it by saying that he didn't like the style of architecture."

His eighth decade had not begun well, what with his

lumbago attack, the inescapable awareness of old age and the need to return to Paris to occupy the small apartments in the rue Gay-Lussac. The vital current that normally passed through him had short-circuited and he was left drained and morose, unable to paint or even to write. He was suffering from an interminable cold and spent listless hours watching Francoise work, preparing for her spring exhibition at Kahnweiler's. The children too were sick, first with colds and then with measles, and altogether there was a dark cloud hovering over the rue Gay-Lussac.

Francoise had her thirtieth birthday in November, and his birthday present had been to inform her that "any girl of eighteen is more beautiful than you." But over the last few months, she had gradually learned to shut off a part of herself and what he said or did no longer hurt so much. "There was a crippling that took place," she said, "but at first I did not even notice it. I had tried to stop the pain of the betrayal I felt and in the process I had amputated a part of myself and of our relationship." She had been brought up to place a high premium on dignity and self-control and now she continued to maintain all the forms of their life together, saying nothing about her pain, expressing none of her needs. "You go silent on me," Picasso complained once, "become sarcastic, a little bitter, aloof and cold. I'd like just once to see you spill your guts

out on the table, laugh, cry -- play my game." But she did not. Instead, she grew more aloof and distant. And she threw herself into her work for her first important show.

There was a guest book at the gallery with the title in Louise Leiris's handwriting: Exposition Francoise Gilot. Underneath is the date of the opening: 1 April 1952. The first entry is Paul Eluard's, the fifth Sabartés's and the seventh Picasso's. Three months later, Paul and Dominique Eluard wrote to Francoise saying how much they were missing her and Picasso in the South of France; a postscript summed up the feeling her show had aroused: "We are still under the strong impression your exhibition has made on us. And we are not alone; keep up the good work Francoise." Cocteau was also impressed. "Francoise's painting," he wrote, "uses Picasso's syntax, but with a feminine vocabulary, full of grace. This syntax provides a backbone to her painting." And soon after the opening of her exhibition, she received a request from the State to buy at a reduced price a Still Life that a certain Monsieur Cogniat, who went by the very French title of Principal Inspector of Fine Arts, had particularly liked at her show.

Back in Vallauris, Francoise, encouraged by the reaction to her show, devoted even more time to painting. Picasso, still unable to work, continued instead his forays around the French

countryside, from bullfight to bullfight and from woman to woman, while Francoise locked herself for still longer hours in her studio. Paloma, who loved to sleep, never complained. In fact, she was so cooperative that she earned an accolade from her father: "She'll be a perfect woman. Passive and submissive. That's the way all girls should be. They ought to stay asleep just like that until they're twenty-one."

Claude, on the other hand, wanted a lot of attention and would always get it, sometimes by being rebellious and sometimes by being seductive. One day when Francoise was deep in painting, he knocked on her studio door. "Yes," Francoise answered absent-mindedly. "Mama, I love you," Claude said, and when his mother replied "I love you too, my darling" and went on painting, he waited for a few minutes and then tried another tack: "Mama, I like your painting," he said. "Thank you, darling. You're an angel," she replied but still kept the door closed. Claude was not going to admit defeat: "Mama, what you do is very nice. It's got fantasy in it but it's not fantastic." "That stayed my hand," Francoise recalled, "but I said nothing. He must have felt me hesitate. He spoke up, louder now. 'It's better than Papa's,' he said. I went to the door and let him in."

Not surprisingly, the children too spent many hours

painting and drawing. Claude, who was uncannily astute at the age of five, knew how to provoke a reaction from his father by signing what he painted "Henri Matisse" and then looking innocently up and exclaiming: "Now, there's a real painter!" It never failed to work. Claude wanted to rile his father; Paloma wanted to adore him. Whenever, at mealtimes, Picasso started drawing on the tablecloth or doing his magic tricks with paper towels and wine corks and flower petals, she would just watch, utterly absorbed and fascinated. Sometimes she herself would start drawing. Her father encouraged her but never advised her. He was loth to impede the freedom and spontaneity of a child's drawing with expert direction. "When I was their age," he said after visiting a children's exhibition, "I could draw like Raphael, but it took me a lifetime to learn to draw like them." When Inès used to take to him drawings her son had done, he would draw things on the margins but never correct the little boy's creations.

When the celebrated bullfighter Luis Miguel Dominguin asked him for "a few basic notions of painting," he adopted a similar attitude: "The time will come when you will suddenly realize that, without any help from outside, you've learned all you need to know. Anything I might explain to you meanwhile would be of no earthly use to you." Picasso may have trusted in very little, but he did trust a certain instinctive naturalness in painting.

"Enough of Art," he said to Hélène Parmelin. "It's Art that kills us. people no longer want to do painting: they make Art. People want Art. And they are given it. But the less Art there is in painting the more painting there is."

"Despite the practice of a science, almost forgotten because it is intuitive, Picasso's art is reunited with the childish scribbles from that period of life when drawing is not yet a language," Maurice Raynal wrote in Le Point in October 1952. At the same time Picasso was completing the War and Peace murals for the chapel in Vallauris, where his art was truly "reunited with the childish scribbles." "None of my paintings," he told Claude Roy, "had been painted with more speed as far as the covered surface....In modern painting, every touch becomes an act of precision and is part of a clockwork....I wanted to paint as one writes, to paint as quickly and fast as the thought happens, within the rhythm of the imagination." He started with War: "What imposed itself first in my mind was the awkward and jolting course of one of those provincial hearses that one sees passing in the streets of little towns, so pitiful and screeching. I began to paint from the right side, and it's around this image that the rest of the painting was constructed." There is a harnessed battle steed in War, and in Peace fishes in a bird cage and birds in an aquarium -- an affirmation of

limitless possibilities.

While he was working on War and Peace, Picasso remarked admiringly to Cocteau that Matisse had never succumbed to the solemnity of the old. And he wanted to make sure that he did not either. It was one more way to outmaneuver death. Bullfights were another. The bullfighter's duel with death was his own. "A bullfighter can never see the work of art that he is making," he said. "He has no chance to correct it as a painter or a writer has. He cannot hear it as a musician can. He can only feel it and hear the crowd's reaction to it. When he feels it and knows that it is great it takes hold of him so that nothing else in the world matters."

Picasso had known this urgency and this absorption in his studio; he relived it in the arena where the stakes were life and death. "It was one thing," Hemingway wrote of Dominguin, "to live to be the number one in the world in his profession and have that be the one true belief in his life. It was another thing to be almost killed each time he went out to prove it..." The great bullfighters looked as though they had thrown the fear of death away -- the greatest perhaps had -- so maybe they had a secret that could armor Picasso against the great adversary, or at least against the growing fear that the adversary instilled. Going to a bullfight meant for Picasso observing all the rites, from

inspecting the bulls and discusssing with the breeder their relative merits to the solemn ritual for those honored enough to be invited to attend the dressing of the matadors in their magnificent embroidered costumes. Picasso, who was addicted to all sorts of rituals of good luck himself -- including never leaving the house for a trip until a minute's silence had been observed by all, even the children -- felt that a bullfight lost much of its power unless he had observed its every rite.

"The first matador," Francoise wrote in a letter home, "always offers up the bull to Picasso -- that is to say, if the bull is killed, the honor goes to him." In the same letter, she described a bullfight they went to in Arles where one of the bullfighters was Conchita Cintron, a young Chilean girl who, that day, fought two bulls from horseback: "She was extremely beautiful and mounted with great elegance. She only dismounted to kill the bulls. What's funny is that after the fight, since we were with the mayoral, the man who had brought the bulls from Spain and was wearing his distinctive costume, several people mistook me for her and had me sign autographs." Picasso had so loved it that, when Francoise informed her "fans" they had got the wrong person, he told her to "stop arguing and just sign." She did and they all left happy. "One of the men even told me knowingly," Francoise recalled, "that he understood very well why

I wanted to preserve my anonymity by signing with another name, but he wasn't fooled: he knew that I was Conchita Cintron."

"You're going to think that I have bloodthirsty tastes," Francoise wrote at the end of her long letter, "but it's the combination of the rites, the spectacle, the crowd, the sun and the dust that all together make such a stunning mixture. Also, it's a little like the times I was competing on horseback -- there is a nobility in all this, a chivalrousness in front of a very real danger that transcends the ordinary."

Toward the end of 1952, she was facing some extraordinary challenges in her own life. More than ever, she lived with Picasso in a state of armed neutrality in which anything short of complete submission on her part was perceived as capital disloyalty. One day he brought back from the foundry three small sculptures he had made to be worn as necklaces and gave them to her. She took two of them, told him how much she loved them, put one on right away and gave him back the third, suggesting that he give it to somebody else. Zette Leiris, who was there visiting them, said she would love to have it; she added that it was really beautiful and, in her opinion, the best of the three. "You see," he said, "there are people who appreciate all that I do and who are not choosy like you. How dare you find something I did ugly? Well, I'm giving it to Zette and that's that."

"I'm very happy that you are," Francoise said. "So she's pleased, I'm pleased, you're pleased -- everybody is pleased."

"I'm not at all pleased," he protested.

"He was in fact furious," Francoise recalled, "all the more so because he really knew that the heavy-handed satyr's head of the necklace was a miss. But he no longer wanted to be challenged about the quality of his work. And there were enough people around telling him that everything was wonderful for him not to have to be. The truth, of course, is that one Picasso was not as good as another; some were overwhelming, others were unfinished or mediocre, and to say that they were all great was to belittle those that were. But he absolutely hated it if I ever said that one work was more beautiful than another; he could not bear to hear that there was a difference in the quality of his works. But there was, and he knew it, and if you didn't, or pretended you didn't, he was in fact full of contempt for your judgment. So you couldn't win; there were only different ways to lose. But he couldn't win either. He attached no importance to the uncritical adulation of everyone around him, yet the more he doubted the direction and the power of his work, the more he cut himself off from anything but adulation. And grasping for a

yardstick for the value of his work, he began to equate its worth with the money he could get for it. It was a bad confusion for an artist to make since money has nothing to do with the creative process, yet he talked of his work more and more in terms of money."

At the end of October 1952, Picasso announced that he was leaving for Paris. Putting her pride aside, Francoise asked him again and again to take her with him. He refused, and for the first time she warned him that the more time they spent apart, the greater the chance that she would leave him. He laughed at the idea: "Nobody leaves a man like me. Besides, people who threaten things like that never do them." And he left for Paris. Despite all the defenses she had built over the last year, Francoise was shattered. "Suddenly," she said, "I found myself on the other side of the Magic Mountain that my deep love for him had created. At the beginning of our relationship, he often talked about ascending our Magic Mountain together. And even after all the disillusionment and the pain of the last year, there was still something left of the Magic Mountain. Now I was on the other side of it and during the weeks Pablo was in Paris I realized that I was out of love and that the Magic Mountain had disappeared."

On November 18, Picasso called Francoise from Paris.

Eluard was dead; he had died of angina. For the last twenty years, he had been the closest thing to an intimate friend in Picasso's life. "In fact," Dominique Eluard said, "it was Eluard who was a friend to Picasso; and the other way round only to the extent that Picasso was capable of friendship." At his funeral, Picasso was seated next to Eluard's widow, both of them surrounded by Party luminaries. It was the Party that had organized the funeral, and it was Eluard the party member, rather than Eluard the poet, who was the principal subject of the day's tributes. "The whole world is there, composing, decomposing and recomposing," Eluard had written of Picasso's work. His death added to the decomposition in Picasso's life, depriving him of a friend whose brilliance he could respect, especially since he was willing to subordinate his life to Picasso's, and to offer him, in return for his heavily qualified friendship, unconditional love.

Back in Vallauris, he was confronted with the possibility of another loss. During his absence, Matsie Hadjilazaros had come to stay with Francoise and had urged her to leave him. Francoise, still torn, issued another warning: she told him that she could no longer find any "deep meaning" in their union and therefore could see "no reason for staying." It was a warning but also a covert plea that maybe there was still time to

resurrect some meaning in their union and give her a reason for staying. picasso's response was to act as though he wanted to give her every possible reason to leave. His life during the last months of 1952 became a comedy of Don Juanism indulged -- an old man darting about the countryside, driven not so much by desire as by the fear of waning passion. It turned out to be an occupation infinitely more exhausting than work, and each time he returned to La Galloise, haggard and worn out, he would ask Francoise defiantly if she still wanted to leave him. "I began to despise him," she said, "and I could not forgive him for turning the man I had loved into the man I despised. He had been transformed into a dirty old man, and it was all so grotesque and so ridiculous that I could no longer even be jealous."

At the same time that her love for him died, so did her desire, and the mere thought of going to bed with him filled her with disgust. She began to find his continuing sexual demands repugnant and longed for his absences as fervently as she had once longed for him to return home. "Our relationship had lost all poetry and romance, so sex had become simply sordid," she said. "This was no progressive cooling and dwindling of desire; this was a real signal from the deep that something had snapped for ever. What made it particularly disturbing was that the sexual part of our relationship had always been a very strong bond between us. It might have helped if I had gone to see an

analyst who perhaps could have shown me a way through the accumulated resentments, but I never did. Instead I went on feeling the whole weight of the unfairness. I'm so much younger, I thought, and this should be my season, the season of spring; instead I'm being trodden underfoot. I had somehow to wade my way through all these bitter thoughts and feelings, so I asked him to let me take the children and spend the next six months in the mountains. I thought that there I could reflect on everything without having to face each night that he was at home both the point of contention that sex had become between us and the realization that I had become sexually allergic to him. He refused categorically."

Ever since her childhood, Francoise had had an almost magical belief that the sacred quality of certain things depended on their integrity, on the fact that they were whole. She could not bear to have anything chipped around her, whether it was eighteenth-century porcelain or an ordinary mug that she loved. Her mother's advice was that if she cared so much about things being chipped, she should preserve them in a case and not use them. "But I could never do that," she explained. "The more I love something, the more I want to use it every day, and if it breaks or chips, then I just throw it away because I can't stand the idea of it no longer being whole. It was the same with

Pablo. If our relationship could not have a certain wholeness, if it had degenerated into something trivial, then I would rather have nothing at all. I have always been a little absolute about that, a little too absolute and too intense. I know that it's not a very mature approach to life, but that's how I felt."

Despite her feelings, she went on working throughout the fall of 1952 to help prepare the big exhibitions of Picasso's work in Rome and Milan. To strengthen herself and find some harmony when all was in turmoil, she would often go to a small Roman Catholic church on the Croisette in Cannes. "It was very peaceful and always filled with flowers," she recalled. "And every time I went, I saw Olga there praying. She obviously preferred this little church to the Orthodox one, where I would have expected her to go. We never spoke, but in the dark of the church I felt that we mentally made peace with each other."

In Vallauris she was almost never with Picasso at his studio or at the pottery. So she did not know that he was spending quite a lot of time at the pottery, chatting in Spanish with a young salesgirl while he was working. She was a cousin of Madame Ramié's in her late twenties who had been imported to help out at the pottery at the end of the tourist season, when there was almost nothing for her to do except amuse Picasso with her broken Spanish. She came from the Roussillon and was tiny -- at

least two inches shorter than Picasso -- with big, hazel eyes. Recently divorced, she had moved together with her six-year-old daughter to a house between Golfe-Juan and Juan-les-Pins. The house was called Le Ziquet, "the little goat," and Picasso's nickname for her was Madame Z. Her name was Jacqueline Hutin, but soon after arriving in Vallauris, she returned to her maiden name and, reborn as Jacqueline Roque, she wiped from her life both her engineer husband and all the time she had lived with him in Africa. Catherine Hutin, her daughter, was the only remaining link to that life and to her past. And Jacqueline made sure that she was no distraction from her apparent goal of distracting Monsieur Picasso. Madame Ramié was more than happy with the way her newest salesgirl was occupying her time.

Toward the end of the year, Francoise went to Paris to discuss the sets and costumes she had been commissioned to design for Janine Charrat's ballet Heracles that was to open in the spring. While she was there, she wrote a letter to Picasso telling him all the things that she had had such difficulty expressing to him in person: the tragedy of love denied that their relationship had become; the ways in which he had disfigured and violated their love; his betrayal not just of her and of what they had had together, but, even more important, of what their love could have bloomed into; all the anguish he had caused her; and what had

been the hardest thing for her to accept, his continued refusal to admit the truth about the other women in his life, even after she had confronted him with it. She ended the letter by saying that she would not return to Vallauris and to him unless he washed his hands clean -- unless he finally told the truth.

He rushed to Paris. He knew, with the unerring instinct of all great manipulators, that the time had come for a theatrical confession. He arrived at the rue Gay-Lussac holding her letter in his hand. "Everything you wrote in the letter is the truth," he admitted. "And it's such a beautiful letter -- you write so well. And not at all in a way that is demeaning to me." Then he cried. For the first time since she had known him, he cried and asked for forgiveness. He also promised that he would immediately end all affairs. And to prove that he meant it, he told her that at that very moment Geneviève Laporte was waiting for him in the restaurant around the corner and that he was going to go down and tell her that it was over. He went and quickly came back and cried some more. But Francoise did not cry; she realized that just as he was leaving Vallauris to come to her to confess and ask for forgiveness, he had made an appointment to meet Geneviève in the neighborhood restaurant. Much as she would have loved to, Francoise could not believe that the man facing her with tears streaming down his face was a transformed man. But at the same time she decided, with her eyes open, to try once

again. yes, she said, she would stay and give their life together one more chance.

The next day at six in the evening as she passed the restaurant, Francoise saw Geneviève Laporte through the window, alone and waiting. The next day, at the same time, she was still waiting; and the day after that. For two hours each night she waited for the man who had told her "I've never wept over a woman," as he wiped his tears and left their "haven of bliss" to return to Francoise. He never came back to the restaurant, which had been one of their regular meeting places, not because he had really turned a new page, but very simply because he had had his fill of her. And there were so many others waiting in line, and time was running out.

"Picasso was a sun all on his own," Geneviève Laporte wrote in her memoirs. "He lit up, burned, consumed and reduced to ashes anyone who approached him, not even sparing himself." Like Marie-Thérèse before her, and encouraged by all the lies Picasso had fed her during their time together, she invented a lie to sustain herself: "How can I find the courage to write: 'I believe that I was the only profound love of Picasso's life and probably the last one?'"

so Geneviève Laporte joined the ranks of all those -- men, women and children -- who believed that they were the only profound love of a man who was incapable of loving shallowly, let alone profoundly. She also joined the ranks of those happy to offer themselves as a sacrifice to Picasso's sun. Long after she had finally given up waiting at the restaurant on the rue Gay-Lussac, her brief affair with Picasso continued to be the great event of her life; for her, it was clearly preferable to be "reduced to ashes" by his sun than to stay alive and whole out of his orbit.

Not so for Francoise. Back in Vallauris, she no longer allowed her life to revolve around him and his work. When in the morning he would go through his usual routine of self-pity, of how awful everything and everybody was, she no longer exhausted herself trying to alleviate his despair. Instead, she agreed with him and even predicted that everything would probably get worse. And then she went about her own business. After this had continued for days, by which time Picasso felt trapped in his own net, he threatened to commit suicide. "This would certainly be an effective solution to all your problems," she told him, determined not to be sucked into the melodrama, "and I plan to do nothing to stop you."

"You, who were so sweet and gentle, what have you become?"

he asked in utter disbelief. "You've lost the Magic Mountain. You used to be a kind of somnambulist, walking on the edge of the roof without realizing it, living in a dream or a spell."

He was more right than even he knew. She had been under a spell and, unlike everyone else who had been under the same spell, she was waking from it. And she had lost the Magic Mountain and, still unsure of her bearings without it, was groping toward reality. In March 1953, he painted two pictures of Francoise attacking his dog Yan that were violent expressions of how he felt as, for the first time in his life, he was no longer in control of his relationship with a woman: "The dog's helplessness as he lies pinned to the floor," wrote Mary Gedo, "may reflect Picasso's own felt impotence in coping with his mistress."

In the same month he experienced his impotence in coping with the Communist Party. When he had first joined, he was overcome by an almost limitless sense of power; not only had he been treated like a hero of the people but he had successfully tested his belief, in the face of Kahnweiler's fears, that even in the middle of the Cold War, the bourgeois world he despised would not buy one Picasso fewer because he was a member of the Communist Party. In the last nine years, he had allowed himself

to be turned into an instrument of Communist propaganda, attending conferences, giving interviews, letting his works be used for posters, providing drawings and lithographs for the chief Party organs, Les Lettres Francaises and L'Humanité. He had even made a cheerful drawing for the seventieth birthday of the man who, in no more than the time Picasso had been a member of the Party, had been personally responsible for the murder of half a million people. On the drawing was Picasso's handwritten salutation: "To your health, comrade Stalin."

On March 5, at the age of seventy-four, Stalin died of a stroke which had left him speechless three days earlier. Aragon sent a telegram to Picasso in Vallauris asking urgently for a portrait of Stalin; it had to be ready by the next day. Working from a photograph of Stalin in 1903, Picasso produced a drawing that Francoise told him looked more like her father than Stalin. "Maybe if I tried to do a portrait of your father," he said, laughing, "it might look more like Stalin."

The drawing was published in the next issue of Les Lettres Francaises under the headline "What we owe to Stalin." The furor that followed, though certainly laughable, was no laughing matter for the outraged Party faithful for whom Picasso's drawing was not sufficiently statesmanlike and dignified. On March 18, L'Humanité published on its front page a communiqué from the

Party leadership: "The Secretariat of the French Communist Party categorically disapproves of the publication in the March 12 issue of Les Lettres Francaises of comrade Picasso's portrait of the Great Stalin. Without questioning the integrity of the great artist Picasso, whose attachment to the cause of the working class is known to all, the Secretariat of the French Communist Party regrets that comrade Aragon, a member of the Central Committee and the director of Les Lettres Francaises, which otherwise leads a courageous fight for the development of realist art, allowed this publication. The Secretariat of the French Communist Party wishes to extend its thanks and congratulations to the numerous comrades who have immediately let the Central Committee know of their disapprobation. A copy of their letters will be forwarded to comrades Aragon and Picasso."

The following day Aragon reproduced the communiqué in Les Lettres Francaises together with his own "self-criticism," in which, toad-like, he thanked the Party leaders for their rebuke and announced that he had made it his own. To complete his public humiliation he published, as the Secretariat had directed him to do, excerpts from the outraged letters sent from the different Communist cells: "We found in the portrait neither the genius nor the ever-alert intelligence, nor the kindness, nor the humor one sees in all the photographs of comrade Stalin..."; "Our

comrade picasso has altogether forgotten that he was first and foremost addressing himself to the workers in mourning, struck by this terrible blow..."; "We consider this a political mistake and because we love and honor Stalin, who will for ever live in us, we think it is our duty as Communists to tell you what we think...." There was also a Salieri-like letter from Fougeron, the party's model social-realist painter, who had finally found an opportunity to vent his bitterness at his celebrated colleague and comrade: "I wish to thank the Secretariat of the Party regarding its criticism of comrade Picasso's drawing which pretended to portray the great Stalin. The correction was absolutely necessary....We were shocked, my wife and I, when we saw this drawing...the goodness and nobility, which characterize stalin to the highest degree, are completely absent....It would have been better to reproduce a photograph, or better still, the honest rendering of a Soviet artist -- and fortunately there is no lack of them in the motherland -- of the man whose terrible passing has put conscious humanity in mourning and has made it clench its fists before returning to the struggle."

Picasso kept mute. A few years later, he told Cocteau that "a government which would punish a painter for choosing the wrong color or the wrong line would be an impressive government." It was a statement that gave rare expression to that guilt-ridden part of him which wanted to be punished and was impressed with

anyone strong enough to do it. He did not resign from the Party, nor did he defend himself or artistic freedom. Only after the uproar had died down, did he ask angrily: "How can Aragon, a poet, agree to endorse that it is the public that should be the judge of reality?" But at the height of the controversy, he fell back on his routine response concerning any problems with the party: "There are always quarrels within a family." When the press descended on Vallauris and surrounded La Galloise, the artist-rebel was, in a remarkable turnabout, transformed into the obedient Party member: "I suppose it was the Party's right to condemn me," he told the assembled reporters, "but it's certainly the result of a misunderstanding, because I had no bad intentions. If my drawing shocked or displeased anybody, that's something else again. It's an aesthetic matter, which can't be judged from a political point of view."

There were many who refused to treat Picasso's membership and continued support of the Communist Party as an artist's whimsical eccentricity. Breton was one of them. When Picasso ran into him once in Golfe-Juan, he even refused to shake hands with him: "I don't approve of your joining the Communist Party nor with the stand you have taken concerning the purges of intellectuals after the Liberation." But Breton was no longer around, nor was Giacometti, nor Braque, nor anyone else who might

raise a brazen, dissenting voice.

At the end of March, Francoise left for Paris alone to work on the sets and costumes for Heracles. In her free moments, she saw a lot of Kostas Axelos. "I was so lonely at the time, he was really a god-send," she said. "At first it seemed so natural and convenient, I didn't think at all about what it might lead to." Then, gradually, he started to challenge all her reasons for staying with Picasso. When she talked of duty, he told her that she was really a coward, avoiding all the trials of her own generation by living with someone who had soared above the battle. When she talked of being prepared to sacrifice her personal happiness, he told her that she was in fact choosing what was most convenient, a position that gave her a lot of power by association. When she talked of not letting down her children, he talked of her betrayal of herself. Trained in the arts of persuasion, he was a formidable challenger. "He fought me inch by inch, personally and philosophically," Francoise said, "with all the verbal weapons in his arsenal. Greece had always held a fascination for me, and here was Kostas, the young, handsome philosopher-prince!"

At the end of April, Picasso arrived in Paris with the children. He knew that they were powerful reminders of the life they had built together and powerful allies, silently pleading

his case. He dutifully attended the opening night of Heracles, sitting in a box with Francoise and Maya. At the end of the performance, Francoise left the box to go on stage to take a bow with the choreographer and the conductor. Kostas Axelos was waiting for her backstage; he kissed her, congratulated her and disappeared into the night, while Francoise went on with Picasso to a gala dinner being given by André Boll, who had written the story of the ballet, in his elegant apartment on the Quai d'Orsay. It was her night, and as the guests were swarming around her to compliment and congratulate her, Picasso could be overheard muttering to himself: "Ballets always bring me bad luck."

At the rue Gay-Lussac, Picasso was writing poems in Spanish full of loneliness, violence and pain: "The black small mules of the burial started to ring the bells and to make coolness in the fire...in a corner sitting or rather lying down nude with loose ends face-up sliced to shreds by the colors of the rainbow...a boy of cardboard vomits his bullfighter's garb and turns on the lightbulbs of the oil texture of the road...the wheel plants its teeth in the wound and sinks his stare around the well of the eye...the fingernails beating the roof with sun."

"It was suddenly a complete reversal of what our life had

been like," Francoise said. "He was the one now waiting until I was ready to go back to Vallauris, and when I told him that I wanted to spend more time in Paris alone, he took the children and returned to the South of France to wait for me there. Kostas and I were still intimate friends but nothing more. One night in June, soon after Pablo had left, we went to see a Jacques Tati movie, Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot. I found it so silly that after half an hour we left. That night was the turning point in our relationship. Kostas put aside the philosophical arguments and addressed me man to woman. He told me that he loved me and that even though I didn't love him yet, he could, for a while, love for both of us and help sustain me while I mastered enough strength to leave Pablo. We became lovers -- I think less because of compelling sexual desire and more because he wanted to assert, before I returned to Vallauris, that our relationship was real on many levels, including the sexual one."

As soon as she returned to Vallauris, she was inundated by telegrams and letters from Axelos, all of them intended to strengthen her resolve and all of them ending "I love you." Picasso asked her what was going on; she told him and added that she had decided to leave with the children on September 30. "I had finally reached the conclusion that my life with Pablo was like a sickness," she said, "and I knew that I had to eliminate everything that was sick in me." She enrolled the children at

the École Alsacienne in Paris and even made the train reservations, but Picasso was still convinced that it was all for show. He repeated again and again that nobody leaves a man like him, a challenge that only made her all the more eager to leave. "Wait and see," she told him finally. "If nobody leaves a man like you, you are, in that case, going to see something you have not seen before."

It was a hot, tense summer, eased by the presence of Maya, who both understood and had the ability to clown her way through all awkward family moments. The arrival of Totote Hugué, Manolo's widow, and Rosita, her adopted daughter, also helped to lessen the tension for a while. They had brought with them the Count and Countess de Lazermé, who immediately invited Picasso and Françoise to visit them in Perpignan. Françoise declined; Picasso had made all too clear his fascination with the tall, beautiful Contessa and she saw no reason to add excitement to his new pursuit by her presence.

On August 12, he arrived in Perpignan with Paulo and Maya. It was the closest he had been to Spain for a long time. "He loved to take walks up a mountainous path," said Paule de Lazermé, who often accompanied him, "and stop for a long time at a plateau from which he could see Spain. He kept talking about

Spain and he loved to listen to the people in the streets speaking Catalan." Both Paule and Jacques de Lazerme were clearly thrilled by his presence and to entice him back they transformed the attic of their vast house into a studio for him. "Everything he touched came to life," Paule de Lazerme recalled wistfully. "Everything was always so different with him, improvised from one day to the next. I cannot understand why Francoise wanted to leave."

picasso spent most of August and September going back and forth between Vallauris and Perpignan, with side-trips to Nîmes and Collioure for the bullfights. He returned home from his last trip to Perpignan on September 29, and bragged to Francoise that in Perpignan he had been, once again, inseparable from Madame de Lazerme. Both that night and the next morning when Francoise was busy with last minute packing for herself and the children, he refused to face the fact that she was indeed leaving -- as if his refusal to empower reality with his attention would make it go away. He watched silently and incredulously as the taxi arrived to take them to the station, the driver helped them with their bags, and first the children and then Francoise got into it. All along, he had refused to say goodbye; as the taxi pulled away, he uttered one word only, "Merde," and stalked back into the house.

In his angry grief he, who in the past had talked to no one

about his private life, now talked to everyone. And the court, already pulling long faces as the rumors of Francoise's affair with Axelos and her decision to leave had begun to circulate, now pulled out the knives. Feeding Picasso's outrage became everybody's favorite occupation that fall. Francoise was accused of selfishness, of wickedness and, worst of all, of having failed to understand the genius of our time. "The gossip about her was horrible," said Dominique Desanti, "but what it all came down to was that you just don't leave Picasso. She was not an intimate friend of mine at the time and I did not know all the reasons that made her decide to leave, but I felt for her as a woman and I understood her fight to be herself. As I could not have stood living with Picasso for a week, I had really admired her for having stood it for years. And I also knew that at a certain moment, if she was going to survive, let alone unfold and expand, she had to leave."

The other voice raised in Francoise's defense belonged to Elsa Triolet, Aragon's wife. She told everybody that leaving Picasso was the most courageous thing Francoise could have done and dedicated her latest book to her with the following inscription: "No one loves anyone anymore, everybody goes to bed with everybody else, and even when it does not appear to be so, it really is so."

The story of their separation made great copy for gossip columnists, all the more so because of the presence of a young, handsome Greek in the background. "Their favorite quote," Francoise said, "was a remark I never made: 'I could not go on living with a historical monument.'" In fact, she ignored all requests for interviews and concentrated on creating her life without Picasso. Things had not gone at all as she expected. She had asked Picasso to speak to no one about their plans, to try to find between them a new way of relating to each other, in friendship, if not in love. But she soon realized that this was going to be impossible. "He could not bear the thought that I was free to leave him, that I was not dependent on him for my life. He was a sadist and what thrilled him was to apply the screw; and here I was depriving him of the opportunity. Also, he who always needed to understand everything in depth, who like a child took everything apart to see what was hidden inside, felt that I had removed myself from the scene before he had finished with me. Nobody before had done that to him. It was defeat, old age, death."

Francoise's decision to abandon him as death was drawing closer was indeed a symbol of life leaving him, of death displacing the vitality that had always been his hallmark. He talked of her treachery to anyone who would listen, as if,

through venting his anger, he could master his grief. But he suffered alone, and on November 28, a month after his seventy-second birthday, he stopped talking, took his despair in hand and started working. He worked feverishly, and in just over two months produced one hundred and eighty drawings. Michel Leiris called the series a "visual diary of a hateful season in hell, a crisis in his private life leading him to question everything."

Francoise had lamented his transformation in the last years of their life together into a grotesque old man she despised. Now that she was gone, as in a revelation brought about by the bleak horror of his anguish, he mercilessly saw himself as she had seen him -- only more so. In these confessional drawings, he is not only old and grotesque, but ugly, dwarfish, flabby and pathetic, trying to capture through his art the vitality that eludes him in life. He is extremely skillful, a superb craftsman, full of imagination and wit in all the different ways he portrays his model and himself, but an air of meaninglessness hangs over the whole enterprise of his art. And the young woman, the eternal feminine in many different guises and disguises, knows it. She is amused by him, but cannot take him seriously as an artist and certainly not as a lover. She is much more delighted playing with a monkey or fondling a cat, with its fur, as Rebecca West wrote, "soft against her smooth flesh, its

nervous energy crackling against her serenity, her faculty of acceptance bringing the little animal into unity with herself. She is as strongly affirmative as a Greek goddess." She is the tree of life and the tree of knowledge. And the painter's despair is not just that he is an old man crying out against having to give up "his place at the feast of sensual pleasure;" it is, much more tragically, that he is an old man who will die without knowing why he has lived and why he has painted. Neither his gifts nor his endless sexual adventures have brought him any closer to the secret of life that the young woman seems to know and from which she seems to draw her serenity and her deep acceptance of everything, including the absurd little old man.

"Never will Picasso look like the photograph of Matisse, with his white goatee, spectacles and hat, offering a sweeter vision of 'a happy old age,' in harmony with the world," wrote the art historian, Christine Piot. "The Spaniard always had the haughty reflexes of challenge and insolence -- in the best tradition of the anarchist spirit and as unrepentant as Don Juan before the statue of the Commendatore at the end of Mozart's opera." The series of drawings that he finished on February 3, 1954 were the closest Picasso came to repentance -- to an end to self-deception and a willingness to confront a painful reality. As he had written in 1935, getting to the "bottom of the well" could lead to rising to heaven. It could have been the first

step on a journey toward truth, whose existence he doubted or denied, toward life's secret that he continued trying to decipher "like a cryptogram"; toward some understanding and mastery of himself, and toward the ultimate in painting which he still longed for. It could have been; but it was not.

At Christmas, Francoise had taken the children to Cannes and Madame Ramié had picked them up at the station and taken them to their father. Shortly before the Easter holidays, Francoise wrote to him to tell him that she would like to bring the children herself and to see him. This time, some of his anger exorcised through the work of the last few months, he agreed that she and the children should spend the Easter holidays with him. He had heard that she had broken up with Axelos and that had been balm to his ego: "I knew," he told her, "that you wouldn't be able to make out with anyone except me." The truth was that she had not felt ready for a new commitment. Axelos had wanted to move in with her while she needed her own time to heal. "As far as I was concerned," she said, "my relationship with Kostas had already been a great success. It had strengthened my resolve to move on with my life."

But she saw no point in telling Picasso all that, since he had already made up his mind. He continued with his monologue,

growing more and more brutally pessimistic about life without Picasso: "I'm going to talk to you now like the old philosopher talking to the young philosopher. Whatever you do from now on, your life will be lived before a mirror that will throw back at you everything you have lived through with me....That is why I have told you that you are headed for the desert, even though you think you're moving toward understanding and communication. You made your life with me, I passed my own brand of anxiety along to you and you assimilated it. So now, even a person who might be willing to dedicate himself completely to you, since he hasn't been tested in the same fire that you have, wouldn't be able to save you, any more than you were able to save me."

It was a prophecy, a curse, a rare admission that he needed saving and, above all, a powerful introduction to asking her to come back and live together as friends, with no questions about what either of them did outside La Galloise. Francoise had heard that Jacqueline Roque had been spending a lot of time with Picasso. She had apparently told many of their friends in many different ways that, at his age, Picasso should not be left alone, that he needed someone to take care of him and she was the best person to do it. Francoise also noticed when she went to her closet that her clothes had been worn and the hooks of her Spanish gypsy dress altered to fit someone broader. But Picasso had clearly decided that he was not yet ready to settle for a

nurse and guardian, and Jacqueline was nowhere to be seen during the two weeks that Francoise spent in Vallauris with Picasso and the children.

"It's terrible that you have to go away again," he said as the time approached for them to leave. "There's nobody I can talk with about the things that interest me most, the way I can with you. The solitude is so much greater since you left. We may have had our troubles living together, but it seems to me it's going to be even harder living apart."

Francoise was moved. She had not expected him to be able to admit as much. She also knew that even if she could believe she would one day meet a man whom she could love as deeply as she had loved Picasso, she had definitely not met him yet. But could she trust him? That was the question she kept asking herself. Could she believe that this was a real change and not one more trick? There were too many signs that she could not, that he was, in fact, unable to give up the old games that had worked so well in the past.

Before she arrived, he had begun making portraits of a young woman with a charming blond ponytail, Sylvette David. He had first noticed her in the rue de Fournas, across from his

studio, where she helped her English fiancé, Toby Jellinek, construct some very unusual chairs made of iron, rope and felt. Now that Francoise was there, he tried to use the presence of a new woman in his art to rile her into submission. Realizing he had not changed, she urged him instead to make more pretty portraits of the pretty girl with the pretty pony tail and scrupulously avoided being around whenever she knew that Sylvette would be there posing. "You don't seem at all unhappy," he complained, for the first time outwitted at his own game. "You should refuse to admit another face into my painting. If you knew how Marie-Thérèse suffered when I began making portraits of Dora Maar and how unhappy Dora was when I went back to painting Marie-Thérèse. But you -- you're a monster of indifference."

He still believed that a combination of jealousy, fear of life without him and his confession of his need for her would bring Francoise back. To make sure that she had enough to be jealous about, he asked her to go and see Madame Ramié who, as he knew she would, told her that her place had been filled. In fact, for the first time, Madame Ramié was openly mean to her: "She told me," Francoise recalled, "that I was shameless, that I had no compassion, that the poor man had already suffered enough in my hands and that I should leave him alone and never come back."

As Francoise knew very well by now, this was the official position of the Picasso court. She returned to Paris, relieved that she no longer had to live a court life, but hopeful that Picasso and she could indeed be friends. He had, after all, told her that "the reward for love is friendship" and they had agreed that at the beginning of July she would bring the children back and stay for a month.

Shortly before Francoise returned to Paris, James Lord had arrived to pay a visit to Picasso. He came from Ménerbes where he had been staying with Dora Maar; she had not seen Picasso for years and had given Lord a piece of scrap metal, the kind of junk that Picasso liked to collect, to give to him as a present from her. Picasso was not amused. Lord returned to Ménerbes and about three weeks later, on their way back to Paris, he and Dora stopped in Castille to have dinner and spend the night at the Château de Gastie, the home of the art historian Douglas Cooper. Before they even went into the house, they knew from the car parked outside who was there. It was a Sunday and they assumed Picasso had come from a nearby bullfight. "Well, are you two married?" he asked sarcastically as soon as Dora and Lord walked in. "No, only engaged," Dora said with a smile, trying as ever not to be, at least verbally, outsmarted by him.

"His whole behavior that evening, which was a rather long one," Lord said, "was very, very perverse. First of all he tried to convince everybody to go with him to Perpignan. Then, during dinner, he was extremely disagreeable to me and kept telling Dora how strange it was for him to have no woman in his life at the moment. 'There's no woman; I'm without a woman,' he kept repeating. The implication, obvious to everybody, was that maybe he and Dora could come together again. Then suddenly, after dinner, he turned to her and addressed her very affectionately: 'I want to be alone with you. I have things to tell you that I don't want anyone else to hear. Let's go over this way.' He pointed to the room beyond the main salon, which, incidentally, was filled entirely with his paintings. It was a Picasso room to start with, which gave an added significance to his presence there."

Everybody was watching, fascinated to see what would happen next. Picasso, knowing that all eyes were glued on them, milked every ounce of drama out of the situation. As Dora got up, with obvious pleasure, from her seat, he put his arm around her waist and walked her very slowly to the other end of the large room. "When they had got there," Lord continued, "without having said a word, he turned and quickly came back to his seat, leaving Dora in the far corner of the room. She had to come back alone and sit where she had been before, while he turned abruptly to Paulo,

who had driven him there, and said, 'Come on, we're going.' Without saying goodbye, he left the room. Everybody followed him, leaving me alone with Dora. I went to her and put my arms around her. She was obviously very upset and did not want to talk about it. It had been such a cruel, wounding thing to do -- so humiliating and so unnecessary. It was the last time they saw each other; but despite it all, she continued to have a great veneration for him."

Picasso had told Dora that there was no woman in his life; the truth was that there were plenty of women, but no official mistress. He was, however, spending more time with Jacqueline. On June 3, he completed three portraits of her, all entitled Madame Z: with Hands Crossed, with Flowers, with Legs Folded. Madame Z was a sphinx-like Jacqueline, with an extremely long neck that she never possessed, a blade of steel showing in her eyes in a way it had not yet shown in her behavior. But on the stroke of Francoise's arrival, in July, Madame Z returned to the lowly state of a member of the harem, relegated to the background while the prodigal wife was in residence at La Galloise.

Picasso was in a constant state of agitation. He acted as though he knew that the sand was fast running through the hourglass of his relationship with Francoise and he hated wasting

any of it sleeping. He announced to Francoise that "this time we are going to have some fun," and they spent long days at the neighboring bullfights and long nights in the nightclubs of Juan-les-Pins. He would not go home until he had seen the sun rise; and then he would often declare that there was no point going to sleep and they would all get on with the next day.

On all occasions they were accompanied by an entourage of a dozen or so people, including Jacqueline and a group of Spaniards whom Picasso had entrusted with the job of organizing the first bullfight to take place in Vallauris. Most of the time, Jacqueline was content to be treated as though she did not exist. Twice, however, she spoke out. The first time was in Bandol when Picasso insisted that Francoise share his hotel room as they had always done when they traveled. Jacqueline, who knew that they had been sleeping in separate rooms at La Galloise, found this latest indignity too much to swallow; but instead of telling him that it was very hurtful for her, she told him that it was "immoral."

The second scene took place on the morning of the bullfight. It was being held in Picasso's honor and had been publicized as a major event with press and photographers everywhere. All his children were there and so were many of his friends, including Cocteau, Jacques Prevert and André Verdet, and

hundreds of tourists. Picasso had asked Francoise to do him "one last favor": "You're going out of my life....But you deserve to leave with the honors of war. For me the bull is the proudest symbol of all, and your symbol is the horse. I want our two symbols to face each other in that ritual way." Francoise agreed to perform the ceremony of opening the bullfight on horseback.

Shortly before they were due to leave for the arena, Jacqueline arrived at La Galloise, disturbed and crying. She begged him to cancel Francoise's appearance: "It's so humiliating," she said, "and so ridiculous for all of us. What will people think? What will the newspapers say?" When it became clear that Picasso did not care in the least either about what the newspapers would say or about how Jacqueline felt, she quickly changed her tune and groveled for forgiveness. "You're right," she added. "On this, as on everything else, you're so right."

Jacqueline took her seat next to him in the grandstand, with Cocteau on his other side, and watched as Francoise made her dramatic entrance on horseback, rode around the arena making the horse perform the ritual dance-like movements and then read the proclamation that the bullfight which was about to begin was in honor of Pablo Picasso. There were shouts of 'Vive Pablo!' from

the two thousand spectators. He was exultant; to the charged atmosphere of a bullfight and a circus, he had added his favorite excitement of a triangle, with Francoise opening the bullfight while Jacqueline was sitting by his side. "You were wonderful," he told Francoise at the end. "Absolutely sublime. You've got to stay this time. You're the only one I have any fun with. You carry with you the right atmosphere. I'll die from boredom if you go."

But Francoise knew that she was "wonderful" and "absolutely sublime" because she had challenged him, because she had left, because she had made the horse do her bidding, because she had refused to subordinate her life to his, because she had her own window to the absolute at a time when he doubted whether he still had his. That was "the right atmosphere" she carried with her and took away when she left for Paris that night.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"ALL THE LIONS HAVE SHRIVELED UP"

"Picasso was unhappy, unhappy like only a Spaniard can be unhappy," Hélène Parmelin said. "So the procession of women began. It was horrible. People would come to see us to tell us about this one or the other one that he should meet. I remember one day a very famous woman came to see me to tell me that since I was such a good friend of Picasso's I should do something for him and that she knew this young Spanish woman, marvelously proportioned, intelligent, who would be so good for him. I told her that that was not my profession. It was incredible what was going on."

"It was unimaginable, extraordinary," echoed Dominique Eluard. "One day, coming out of his studio, I saw that all the

court had been anxiously waiting to see if I was the chosen one." The press joined in the game, publishing pictures of every possible candidate: "The painter says nothing," one of the captions went, "but he has posing for him a young Italian, Mademoiselle Balmas. And some declare: 'Here is the future Madame Picasso!'"

The children watched and waited. "I accepted them all," said Maya, "the ones he brought home and the ones he collected while we were traveling. I used to say, 'She's the last one to date.' As they were getting younger and younger, I could really have fun with some of them." Paulo was less generous: "Whores for Daddy" was his conclusion.

With Francoise gone, Picasso could not bear to remain in Vallauris. So the court set itself up in Perpignan for the rest of the summer. In fact, he seriously considered staying there permanently, and the local Communists did their best to convince him to make the move to Perpignan. On August 19, he painted a beautiful portrait of his hostess, the Countess de Lazerme, but the rumor was that it was Rosita Hugué whom he wanted to marry. As for Jacqueline, Paule de Lazerme described her "watching him like a fox, clearly eager to fill the vacant place." Picasso treated her abysmally -- when, that is, he bothered to take any

notice of her at all. He made it so humiliatingly clear he did not want her around that one day she finally decided to drive back home. Picasso came down to lunch, looking and sounding relieved. During lunch, Jacqueline called him from the road. "She threatened to kill herself," Picasso announced when he returned to the table, "if she could not come back to Perpignan." His response had been that she could do whatever she liked, provided she left him in peace. That night Jacqueline came back: "You told me to do whatever I liked; so here I am."

Her behavior for the rest of their stay at the Lazermes showed that returning to Perpignan was the last time she would do whatever she liked. She started calling him "Monseigneur," addressed him in the third person, kissed his hand and was ready at any moment to spread herself out like a cloak for Monseigneur to walk on. She had clearly decided to accept every humiliation, stifle all pain and subordinate both her life and her will to his, provided she could just stay around. More significantly, by the time he took her with him to the rue des Grands-Augustins at the end of the summer, he had decided to accept her offering. Having failed in his life with a goddess, he settled for the peace of living with a doormat. It was the peace of the grave, but he was a tired man. "Francoise," Dominique Eluard explained, "had asked of him to stretch to a relationship which was on a higher level and in which she was much more than just the

mistress and the vestal virgin. But ultimately I don't think that he was capable of having other than a macho relationship with a woman."

In October, he painted Jacqueline in a rocking-chair -- a stocky, matronly little Jacqueline, a far cry from the idealized, long-necked, sphinx-like creature of the previous June. Prophetically, he had painted Jacqueline as she was not yet, but as she would soon become. She had chosen her fate and he had chosen a caretaker to keep the world at bay while he painted with no other goal than to hold death in check. She was a woman he could dominate, but he had not taken into account the tyranny of weakness.

Vallauris was full of memories Picasso wanted to obliterate. The Lazermes came to visit him at the rue des Grands-Augustins and he asked them to find him a house in Perpignan. "He kept on saying before Inès and Sabartés," Jacques de Lazermes wrote to Totote and Rosita, "that he only felt good in Perpignan and with our friends from the Roussillon. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty times he asked me to find him a house in Perpignan....During our stay Pablo gave us proofs of his trust and affection that still move us very much. He didn't want to let go of us -- he didn't want us to leave." He went on to say

that he had written to Picasso already and sent him pictures of a sensational Louis XV home like theirs, only bigger, with more than thirty rooms. But Picasso would never go back to Perpignan and, although the Lazermes visited him a few more times, their letters to Totote and Rosita were increasingly full of complaints: "We have absolutely no news of Pablo," and, "We have heard nothing from Pablo."

On November 3, Picasso received the news that Matisse had died. In vain did Matisse's daughter, Marguerite Duthuit, try to reach him on the telephone to tell him of the funeral arrangements. He would not come to the telephone, nor would he go to the funeral. Matisse, too, was part of what he had left behind on the far shore for good -- or at least forever. "I have chosen," Matisse had said shortly before his death, "to keep inside me torments and anguish so as to transcribe only the beauty of the world and the joy of painting." Picasso had said, quite simply: "In the end, there's only Matisse...." He knew that Matisse was a "key-holder," in the sense in which Breton had called the lover and the inspired artist "key-holders." He also knew that by settling for Jacqueline he had given up forever the hope of unlocking life's secret through love; and he was more and more doubtful that he would ever unlock it through art. But he kept working.

"When Matisse died," Picasso told Penrose, "he left his odalisques to me as a legacy." And on 13 December, he started work on a series of fifteen canvases and two lithographs, all variations on the theme of Delacroix's The Women of Algiers. Delacroix's harem women were transformed into so many Jacquelines, but all the dislocations, juxtapositions and decompositions could not hide the fact that there was, as Anthony Blunt wrote, "a certain dilution of imaginative powers and a certain monotony of ideas under the apparent variety."

"I wonder what Delacroix would say if he saw these pictures," Picasso asked Kahnweiler one day at the rue des Grands-Augustins. Kahnweiler thought he would have understood. "Yes, I think so," Picasso agreed. "I would say to him: 'You had Rubens in mind, and painted a Delacroix. I had you in mind, and painted something different again.'" When Kahnweiler returned to his studio a few days later, he showed him another of the canvases in the series. "I sometimes say to myself that perhaps this is an inheritance from Matisse. Why shouldn't we inherit from our friends, after all?...You never know how your work will turn out. You start a picture, and it becomes something quite different. It's strange how little the artist's intention counts for. It's really tiresome: you always have a critic at your elbow saying 'I don't like that' or 'It ought to be different.'"

He grabs at your brushes, and they become as heavy as lead. He doesn't know what he is talking about but he is always there. Rimbaud was right when he said 'I is someone else.'"

In December 1954, while he was working on his harem women, Paulo was lying in hospital close to death after a lung embolism following a hernia operation. His surgeon, Dr. Blondin, sent a telegram to Picasso strongly advising him to visit his son. There was no reply. On 11 February, Paulo was still recovering, and his father was three days away from completing his Women of Algiers, when Olga died of cancer in a hospital in Cannes. She died alone and was buried with just her son and the Ramiés present. Picasso had stayed in Paris.

At the rue des Grands-Augustins, he received a visit from Rosamund Bernier, who had returned from Barcelona, bringing with her the photographs she had taken for L'Oeil of the Picassos in his sister's house. It was nineteen years since Picasso had seen Lola. "But they're much better off than I am!" he cried, when he saw a rare proof of The Frugal Repast hanging in one of the rooms. "Look at this engraving; it's worth a fortune now! I didn't remember it was down there."

In addition to the photographs, Bernier had brought messages and relics from another world, a world far away from

paris, which Picasso had long ago left behind but to which he was still very much connected. "Before I left," wrote Rosamund Bernier, in L'Oeil, of her visit to Barcelona, "they overwhelmed me with advice, first for Pablo, then for Javier, for my health, for my journey and loaded me with gifts to bring to Paris. I wondered a lot about what could possibly be contained in the bursting shoe-box that was destined for Pablo. When he opened it in his studio, he extracted from it a piggy bank in the shape of a rooster, made out of clay and painted in screaming colors. It made a metallic sound as he raised it: the family had put a few coins in it for good fortune. There was also in the shoe box a paperbag bearing the name of a pork-butcher's shop, filled with enormous sugared-almonds. 'Spain is nice,' Picasso said, 'one buys candy in the pork-butcher's shop there.' Finally, neatly wrapped in silk-paper, there was a fistful of cotton seeds, perhaps for the garden in Vallauris. Picasso looked around his studio, where canvases, books, magazines, old notes, drawing-pads, sculptures and the extraordinary collection of objects he accumulates were stacked up in piles, and said, all happy at the thought: 'Just what was needed: we'll plant them here.'"

While he was at the rue des Grands-Augustins, Francoise called him, asking to come and see him. She wanted to be the first to tell him that she was getting married. She had known

Luc Simon, the man she was going to marry, since her school days, but had not seen him through all the years she had been with Picasso, although they had corresponded and he had even found her the job in Tunisia when she wanted to escape from Picasso and Ménérbes. They had run into each other one day the previous spring at the Librairie La Hune in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where he was decorating the shop windows to make some money to supplement what he earned from his paintings. "There was an exhibition of photographs on 'Picasso and Intimacy' in the bookstore," Luc Simon recalled, "and a friend who worked there came up to me and said, 'Didn't you say that you knew Francoise? Well, here she is.' I went up to her and I could not believe my eyes. She was only two years older than me, but she was already an old woman. I was very moved and I knew that my job was to give her back her youth."

They had been good friends in their teens, crazy about old movies and very cozy with each other. "It crystallized immediately for both of us," said Francoise, "that this time it was very different. We started seeing a lot of each other and by the end of 1954, he had moved in with me. He was a very romantic man and at thirty-one just the right age for the children, who were then six and four, to relate to as a father. They loved being with him, and that was one of the factors that helped me decide to stabilize our lives and get married."

picasso's first reaction was rage: "It's monstrous," he told her. "You think only of yourself." Francoise protested that she had also been thinking of their children. "Luc will help bring up the children," she said. "He is not their father, but he will be a good stepfather, and it will be easier for them to lead a normal life." Picasso's anger was now mixed with incomprehension. "Is that what you call a normal life?" he shouted. "The only normal life would be you, me and the children." At that point Francoise saw the door from the sculpture studio, which was ajar, open wider. They were clearly not alone.

As abruptly as he had flared up, he was friendly again. He went and got her a tangerine, and they sat talking like old friends in the same place where, twelve years before, their life together had begun. For a moment, a deep, intimate silence filled the room. Then the door opened a little wider. "I later discovered," Francoise said, "that Jacqueline had been anxiously eavesdropping from the sculpture studio. At the time I just knew we were being overheard. But there was another purpose to my visit, and I wanted to complete it. I told Pablo that before marrying Luc I intended to set up a trust for the children, a conseil de famille, with my father, Luc and him as trustees.

since the children officially had no father, I wanted to make sure they would be taken care of if anything happened to me. Also I wanted to establish that my marriage would not change Pablo's status toward his children."

Picasso listened to all she had to say, and then, suddenly, as if he had just remembered her impending marriage, he started berating her for her ingratitude: "You owe me so much. This is your way of thanking me, I suppose. Well, I've got just one thing to say. Anybody else will have all of my faults and none of my virtues. I hope it's a fiasco, you ungrateful creature." He threw at her the watch she had given him: "Your time is no longer mine." She followed suit by returning the watch he had given her, at which point they both got a glimpse of how absurd and melodramatic they were being and started laughing. And then the door from the sculpture studio opened a little wider still.

Picasso did not want to stay in Paris and he certainly did not wish to return to Vallauris. So the search began for another house in the South of France. The choice fell on La Californie, an ornate turn-of-the-century mansion overlooking Cannes that had once belonged to the Moët family, of champagne fame. The "king of junkmen," as Cocteau had called Picasso, took possession of his new kingdom in June and with him went his jumble of trifles. In the vast rooms of La Californie, hundreds of canvases, on

easels and lining the walls, jostled with years' worth of bric-a-brac: bullfight posters, a Turkish coffee-pot, a wooden statuette from the Congo, old packs of cigarettes, a bronze owl, old brushes that would never be used again. With amazing speed, the elegant salon and dining room were converted into a colorful bazaar, while in the gardens his sculptures -- the Boisgeloup heads of Marie-Thérèse, the she-monkey, a skull, a pregnant woman, a cat and an owl -- looked like exotic flora among the palms, the pines, the mimosas and the eucalyptus trees.

Soon after he had moved to La Californie, Picasso started work on a film at the Victorine Studios in Nice. He painted, Henri-Georges Clouzot directed, and Claude Renoir, the painter's son, was at the camera, recording Picasso's every move on tracing paper, using the special colored inks that made it possible to follow the creation of a painting from the other side of the paper. Le Mystère Picasso, as the film was to be called, was one more attempt to understand Picasso's mystery by filming him at work. When Clouzot, for technical reasons, cried "Stop," Picasso stopped; when Clouzot told him to hurry up because there were two minutes' worth of film left, he hurried up. The genius, stocky and bronzed, "his look sinewy like his body," his feet firmly planted on the ground in his favorite Turkish slippers, obeyed the director. "He looked sometimes like an African medicine-man

and sometimes like a Roman Emperor," wrote André Verdet, "depending on the way the floodlights fell on his bald head."

"Are you happy with what you did?" Clouzot asked him during one of the breaks. "I find it already impressive." But it did not take much to impress those around him, and Picasso knew it.

"yes, yes..." he replied, "but still too external...I have to get to the bottom...Risk everything. Show all the paintings that could be behind a painting."

"That could be dangerous," cautioned Clouzot, content to film Picasso playing on the surface and to understand his mystery with the beam of a searchlight.

Picasso, however, wanted to go deeper; whatever his acolytes said, he knew the difference between being on the periphery and being at the center. "But that's what I love..." he told Clouzot defiantly. "You have to risk adventure to surprise truth at the bottom of the well." And there were all the trappings of adventure in the Victorine Studios: sweat, tension, excitement, exhaustion, the buzzing, booming confusion of soundmen, gaffers, and assorted technicians, the sepulchral tones in which Clouzot announced his intentions while feverishly sucking on his pipe: "My intention is to make a pedagogical film

for those interested in art." "And to think that I wanted to make a cartoon!" sighed Picasso.

"The analysis of the drawings and pictures," Clouzot said later, "is gradual and progressive -- you might call it chronological -- as the creator's idea develops in front of your eyes." What he did not say is that during the filming of Le Mystère Picasso there were hundreds of cuts, takes and retakes which interfered not only with the thought patterns of the creator but with his health. Picasso always said no to anxious questions about whether he was tired. Real men, after all, are never tired; they just collapse from exhaustion, which is what he did, once when the filming had to be interrupted for a few days and for several weeks when the filming was over. But the myth was a law unto itself, stronger than the fact of his collapse. "There was Picasso," wrote Hélène Parmelin, "who was exhausting because he was never tired" -- a statement that fed and perpetuated the image of the inexhaustible Picasso.

Jacqueline and Maya were at the studios the whole time Picasso was there. Jacqueline had been formally installed, together with her daughter, at La Californie, but not everybody was betting that it would be forever. And many outside the court still did not know exactly who she was. When somebody asked her

one day at the studios, she replied: "Me? I am the new Egeria..."

Inès was also often at the studios and in residence at La Californie. There was gossip in the court about the new Egeria and the still very attractive maidservant and confidante. According to Parmelin, Inès detested Jacqueline from the beginning; according to others, Jacqueline was jealous of Inès's twenty-year-long relationship with Picasso. "As far as I was concerned," Inès said, "there was only him....Picasso was first and foremost before the whole world. I came almost every month from Paris. I would leave behind my husband, my child, the refrigerator full for them, and come wherever he was....I never wore an apron. I was part of the household as if I was a wife, as I was with my husband. It made no difference to me whether it was Jacqueline or this one or the other one who was there. I was with him. Often when they were in bed at La Californie, I would sit at the bottom of the bed and we would talk. We would talk about everything, and even when she went to sleep, I would stay on and we would talk -- because I really knew him."

With "the self-assurance of a child or a monarch," he was always surrounded, whether in his bedroom or in any room other than his studio, by people whose existence revolved around him. "To live next to him," Inès said, "you had to be able to forgive

everything. You got hit on the head but that allowed you to be next to him. If you had decided that that was what you wanted, you had to accept everything. It's clear that others were not able to stay the course."

during his first summer at La Californie, he could not forget, much as he would have loved to, the existence of the woman who had chosen not to stay the course. Francoise's maid from Guadeloupe had brought Claude and Paloma to La Californie for the summer, while she was in Venice on an extended honeymoon. She had asked Picasso many times to take her to Venice, a place she had loved since she was a child. He had repeatedly said no, but now he could not bear the thought of her being there with another man who was in fact her young, tall and handsome husband -- all attributes which made the thought that much more irksome to him. "To claim that when you love somebody, you can accept the idea of seeing her go off with some young fellow is very unconvincing," he had told Francoise after seeing Chaplin's Limelight. "I'd rather see a woman die, any day, than see her happy with someone else....I'm not interested in these so-called Christian acts of nobility."

Francoise had charged Maya with the task of taking care of the children while they were at La Californie, and it was Maya

who sent her an urgent telegram in Venice saying that Paloma had acute appendicitis and had to be operated on as soon as possible. Francoise telegraphed back that she was flying to Nice that same day and would go straight to Vallauris to wait for Paloma there.

She arrived at La Galloise and found only the beds and some chairs left in the house. Jacqueline, the gardener told her, had come from La Californie the day before and taken all the paintings and drawings, including Francoise's, all her books, letters and personal belongings. Francoise called La Californie immediately to ask Picasso what all this meant. "Everything was yours when you were with me," he replied, "and nothing is yours if you are not with me. That's it."

Too shocked to argue, she merely asked him to send Paloma to her right away. "No one talks to me like that", he snapped. "I do," she said and hung up. He still did not send Paloma. "I could not believe that he was prepared to play cat-and-mouse with his daughter's health," Francoise remembered. "I called and threatened to send the police."

Soon after, Paulo brought Paloma to La Galloise, and Francoise took her immediately to the hospital in Cannes. "Sleeping in that empty house felt so sinister," she said, "that, while Paloma was in the hospital after the operation, I decided

to stay with friends of mine, Maurice and Christiane Bataille, who lived at Cap d'Antibes." They were also great friends of Cocteau's, who came to see Francoise in Paloma's room at the hospital, looking very conspiratorial. "Please don't tell anyone I'm here," he said. "I came because I'm your friend and I want to tell you what's happening, but I would hate to be caught being here." He then went on to explain that Picasso had received a terrible telegram from Luc telling him that he "deserved to be slapped in the face for acting in such an irresponsible way and putting Paloma's health at risk." Picasso was beside himself with anger at Luc's insolence. "You should have prevented Luc from sending the telegram," Cocteau told Francoise. "And you should have prevented Pablo from emptying my house," she replied. "I called Luc in Venice and told him what had happened. I had no idea what he was planning to do. So Pablo makes a mess; then Luc makes a mess. Now, stay with me for a while, if you like, or go."

At that moment, Picasso walked in. "You traitor!" he cried at Cocteau. "What are you doing here?" He had seen Madame Weisweiller's Bentley waiting outside with the driver, and had rushed upstairs as fast as he could to make sure that he caught Cocteau in the room. Cocteau, who continued to worship him, despite Picasso's oft-repeated gibe that "Cocteau is the tail of my comet," mumbled something and disappeared. Picasso left soon

after. But he came back every day. "He wouldn't spend much time with Paloma," Francoise said, "but he wanted to know who was there so that he could put them on his enemies list. Paloma's room had, in fact, become like a salon, and she was there like a six-year old queen watching everybody come and go. Pablo was convinced that I had injured and offended him so badly, first by leaving him and then by daring to marry another man, that everybody should be on his side and I should have no more friends on the face of the earth for I was so wrong and he was so right. But by then I had gone back to my old friends, and every time he came to the hospital, he would see people he did not know, who were not part of his world and whose lives did not revolve around his. And that he could not stand."

As soon as Paloma was well, Francoise took the children and returned to Paris. So far she had not asked Picasso to support the children or give her any financial assistance. She had inherited money from her grandmother, she was earning money from the sale of her paintings and, with her father's backing, she was in no need of more. But after Picasso's behavior that summer, she made sure through her lawyers that she received child support. "I did it more for legal reasons," Francoise said, "thinking ahead about establishing the children's rights since I could no longer trust that he would behave toward them like a father." La Galloise had always been in her name; when she left,

she suggested that they should both have keys to it and keep it as neutral ground where they could come together with the children. Instead he had emptied the house.

In Paris, Francoise had already sold the apartment at the rue Gay-Lussac and bought a much bigger one under construction at the rue du Val de Grâce. One weekend in the fall of 1955, when Claude and Paloma were with Picasso at Kahnweiler's house in the country, she received a call from him: "I'm not returning the children to you unless you give to Paulo all the drawings and etchings that are in your apartment." "You have to return the children first," she replied, "and then you can send Paulo to pick up the drawings." He returned the children, and the next morning she returned everything except La Femme Fleur, which he had specifically given her as a present.

It was an open declaration of war, followed by the conspicuous absence of an invitation for Francoise to exhibit at the Salon de Mai and finally, in November 1956, by a letter from Kahnweiler terminating her contract. "I began to feel as though I was living in a nightmare," Francoise remembered, "as though I was actually experiencing Jocasta's horrible dream in Cocteau's play: 'sticky paste which runs through my fingers. I shriek and try to throw this paste away, but this thing, this paste stays

hanging on to me, and when I think I'm free of it, the paste flies back and strikes me across the face. And this paste is living...." The more good news there was in the bulletins Picasso received about Francoise's new life, as when he heard that she was pregnant, the more determined he was to destroy her. He made it very clear that from now on anybody who was her friend was his enemy. She soon got used to art dealers apologizing for not exhibiting her work, explaining that they could not risk his displeasure. Any evidence that she could not only exist but flourish without him was for Picasso proof of his waning powers. He was addicted to people being addicted to him and, although there were plenty around him who were, he was obsessed by the one stray sheep.

Maya, who was now twenty, began to feel the danger of being absorbed, of becoming an extension of her father as Paulo had become. "I didn't want to be eaten up by him," she said. "I wanted my life. So I decided to leave for Spain and stay there." She had first gone to Spain in 1953, when Francoise arranged for her to stay with her aunt Lola, but this time it was different. Maya would never see her father again, even though she returned to France and married in Marseilles. She had observed at first hand the expert flamenco movements of promising, taunting and withdrawing that he had for years danced around her mother. She refused to be another victim. A few months earlier, she had even

heard that Picasso had called her mother up and asked her to marry him. "Look," he told her, "Olga is dead. We can be married." It is hard to believe that the woman who, for nearly thirty years, had lived only for him, for whatever scraps of actual attention and fantasy protestations of eternal love he could offer her, would have turned down an offer to spend the rest of his life with him. So it was another tease, another cruel game to humiliate Jacqueline further and tie Marie-Thérèse in yet more knots.

"He would often come to my room late at night," Maya remembered, "and tell me, 'Come, I'll show you what I've done.' Well, I was twenty years old, I didn't want to spend the rest of my life waiting for my daddy to come during the night to show me what he had just painted or drawn. At some point I had to say: 'You, you are Picasso, me, I am Maya.' If I had listened to him I would have just stayed there. Why? Because I was whimsical, I was funny, I talk, I sing, I laugh, I cry, I jump, I dance....He loved to joke with me in Spanish about whoever was around us. I'm the Spaniard of the family. You could say I'm 300 percent a Spaniard! But I told him that now that he had found his nth lady, I'm leaving."

So she left, and there was less laughter and less singing

and less fun in the house, while he and Jacqueline settled in to a life of being devoured in the process of devouring each other -- she by her smothering possessiveness and he by crushing first her spirit and then her humanity. "When everything went wrong," Hélène Parmelin wrote, "everything went wrong. To an unimaginable degree. The whole world was nothing but trash, friends and enemies alike, there was no truth anywhere, nothing mattered, all was rotten, everything was spoiled, all he asked of the world was to be left in peace, and the bit of chalk he had put down there had disappeared. Jacqueline, I said I would see no one. Do you mean to say so-and-so came, Jacqueline? Well, why did you send him away?...Why did you let so-and-so in? I said I would see no one..."

The Spoiled Child had met his match in the Terrible Mother, all too eager to enclose him in her deathly womb, there better to foster all that was dark, cruel, gross and mean-spirited in him. Even when he shut himself away to work, Jacqueline clung to him from behind the closed doors: "It's not merely that he might happen to want something," she said. "But I wouldn't be happy thinking that he might want something merely because I wasn't there." Parmelin observed the established routine: "One had to stay at La Californie, one's mind's eye on Monseigneur. Not go even to the bottom of the garden. Not even outside the house. Besides, at fixed times, he had to be given his pills, or his

drops: he was taking homeopathic medicines for whatever was the matter with him. What was the matter with him? Nothing. But he took the medicines. Small doses. Moreover he might want something." Jacqueline would listen for every sound coming from his studio and attempt to interpret it: "What can my Lord, Monseigneur, be doing up there? I can't hear Monseigneur's thunder of Zeus any more! Perhaps things are going well...."

If things went well for him, things went well for her. She was a vicarious being, a parasite whose power came from the life it fed on, helping to sap it long before he was clinically declared dead. She sank herself in him with a monomania that excluded even her own daughter, who had to subsist on the few emotional crumbs her mother could spare. "When one is lucky enough to have Picasso in front of one, one doesn't look at the sun!" she snapped when, one night at a restaurant, someone pointed out the beauty of the sunset to her. Jacqueline became his secretary, housekeeper, press-clipping service and the translator of his will into action; and Picasso became the tool through which she could assert her will over the rest of the world, the means through which she could experience a sense of power that, even if her imagination had not been as limited as it was, she would never have imagined possible.

The main source of her power was her role as gatekeeper, although a lot of the time the gatekeeper was only a mouthpiece for Monseigneur's wishes. He was away, asleep, working, on the beach, at the bullfights, in Paris -- any one of those authorized excuses would be used to send away the old friends or the new admirers he did not want to receive, or at least did not want to receive at that particular moment.

When Helena Rubinstein arrived from New York during their first summer at La Californie to have her portrait painted -- after she had heard from her friend Marie Cuttoli that Picasso had agreed -- it was often Picasso himself, in a badly disguised voice, who answered one of the many calls that she or her secretary Patrick O'Higgins made; and it was he who gave one of the many reasons why "Monsieur" could not come to the phone. Finally, she decided to turn up at La Californie unannounced. "Under an opera cloak quilted in shades of orange and lemon with calla lilies and sprigs of mimosa," wrote O'Higgins, "Madame wore a medieval tunic of acid green velvet." Her timing was perfect. Picasso was entertaining "a tall, lanky man who not only looked like Gary Cooper but who was Gary Cooper," and the presence of one of his movie idols had put him in a good and sociable mood. Helena Rubinstein was received; and not only received but drawn, even though Picasso had at first told her that he only drew portraits of women he had slept with. "She

wasn't against it," he bragged in recounting the story, "though I certainly was. She was horrible, so fat..."

On three consecutive evenings, he made over forty sketches that he referred to as "police notes" -- her hands, her neck, her eyes, her chin, her mouth. "That's enough," he finally said. "And my portrait?" she asked. "It will be a posthumous work," he replied. Jacqueline had already told Patrick O'Higgins, while Picasso was drawing "Madame," that there was never going to be a portrait: "He's just sketching her as a reference for a series of lithographs. He likes to use real people and Madame, Madame Rubinstein is... larger than life." Even before Picasso had played this trick on her, Helena Rubinstein referred to him as "the devil." Now she went around cursing him: "Damned be this devil."

No one was safe from Picasso's tricks, his corrosive sarcasm and his malice. He was at the rue des Grands-Augustins when he first heard the news that, on October 20, Cocteau would be admitted to the Académie Française. Geneviève Laporte had come over to see him and, for once, reality pierced through the fog of her idolatry and she saw what she described as a "a side of Picasso which made my blood run cold." "Jean wanted this consecration so badly because, as he roundly asserted, it had

never been granted to a poet of his breed during his lifetime. I was therefore astonished to arrive and find Picasso coldly resentful. He had just completed a humorous drawing of a hideous bedroom, containing an iron bedstead with bars, on which there sat an elderly, pot-bellied couple, whose faces were the embodiment of stupidity and smugness. One -- the woman I think -- was reading a newspaper, while the man was picking his toes. Picasso, with a mocking laugh, handed me this drawing, every line of which conveyed ugliness, commonness and stupidity, with the comment: 'The woman is reading in the newspaper "Jean Cocteau has been elected a member of the Académie Française" while her husband is scratching his toes.'

His malice toward Cocteau was by no means exhausted. He agreed to design the sword hilt that was part of an Academician's traditional insignia; what he produced was a drawing of a water-closet cover, a flushing chain and a toilet-bowl brush. Cocteau continued to refer to him as "Mon maître Picasso" but, every now and then, he allowed himself the luxury of calling him instead "the abominable snowman," and directing the odd barbed comment at the poetry of the man he continued to hero-worship: "Picasso is trying his hand at metaphysics, but he knows nothing about it." That was mild stuff, however, compared with the malicious sarcasm Picasso continued to heap upon him during these years when Cocteau was his neighbor on the Côte d'Azur, living at Madame

weisweiler's and sharing with her his young bisexual lover as well as large quantities of drugs, her Bentley and the wealth of her banker husband who was never there.

"The future is the only transcendence known to an atheist," wrote Roger Garaudy. On October 25, 1956, Picasso was seventy-five years old. It was growing ever harder to look defiantly to the future, to new adventures and new horizons in search of the transcendence his soul yearned for. A few months before his seventy-fifth birthday, he had had a powerful dream: "He was having lunch," Parmelin recalled. "And someone came rushing in wild with excitement and told him that a terrible thing had happened: all the lions have shriveled up...." The word used in his dream for "shriveled up" was "ratatiné," a word that, after that day, began to crop up often at La Californie. He used it and everyone around him began to use it. It became a word-symbol, conjuring up how he felt and how he desperately tried to pretend he did not feel: All the lions had shriveled up.

"I'd give anything to be twenty years younger," he had told Francoise when they first met. In October, 1956 he was in fact thirteen years older. What made the passage of time harder to accept was that in the same month Francoise gave birth to a daughter, Aurelia -- a daughter who, as well as not being his,

was tangible proof of how much future there was that he would never be part of. Jacqueline had discovered that she could have no more children after Catherine; so there were to be no more births through which he could participate, however ambivalently, in the eternal course of life.

But the world insisted on celebrating his own birth. Countless letters, telegrams and presents flooded into La Californie, from old friends and from people he had never met. And there was a banquet, with speeches and fireworks organized by the Communist municipality of Vallauris. The Pignons were there and so were the Leirises and Kahnweiler and the Gilis, who had come from Barcelona to persuade him to illustrate the Tauromaquia. The local Communist Party had tried to find out from Jacqueline, through the editor of Le Patriote de Nice, a newspaper that Picasso read from beginning to end every day, what birthday present he would like. She had said that he would like a goat; he had told her that he had always longed for a goat, and when he finally got one, that heartless Francoise had given it to some passing gypsies because it stank. The Party, after due deliberation, decided that a goat was not a sufficiently dignified present and gave him instead a huge basket of preserved fruits.

So his birthday passed and he had still not got his goat.

Jacqueline, who knew that her power lay in fulfilling every wish of her "geriatric prodigy," bought him a nanny-goat herself. Esmeralda, often to be found tethered to the bronze goat in the garden, became part of La Californie -- and so did her smell. But there was nobody left who dared complain.

"He liked people to like what he liked," Parmelin wrote. He also liked them to eat what he liked; he always ate sparingly himself, but insisted on everybody else around him overeating. Maya watched the beginnings of Jacqueline's metamorphosis from short and slim to short and stocky to short and fat. "He always liked to fatten up his women," she said, while Parmelin described how he "would do all he could to force you to eat, and force you to think it good, or at least to say you did, which was the limit. He crushed his raspberries disgustingly in milk, and said that I ought to adore them like that because the Russians always ate raspberries like that....He filled my plate with this mixture the colour of grog-blossoms and was indignant when an ordinary mortal refused his raspberries through nausea. He adored ginger and ate huge pieces of it under my nose, offering it to me twenty times over. How could one not like something so good?..."

Parmelin called him "The King of La Californie." He was, in fact, the unabashed dictator of all he surveyed. "I want to

show the world as I think it," he had told Ilya Ehrenburg. But the world, very inconveniently, was not behaving as he thought it. On November 4, 1956, the brutal Soviet regime, which he continued to think good, violently suppressed the Hungarian uprising. Earlier in the year, at the Twentieth Congress of the USSR Communist Party, Khrushchev had bitterly denounced Stalin and his crimes. The French Communist Party, which remained wholly Stalinist even after the process of de-Stalinization was under way everywhere else, described the report which was made public by Le Monde as "attributed to Khrushchev" and ignored it. Parmelin discussed it with "The King of La Californie" and attributed its publication in Le Monde to "the trickery of the American State Department." Many, less blinded by ideology or less indifferent to crimes, left the Party at this time; many more publicly tore up their membership cards after the French Communist Party supported the Soviet crushing of the Hungarian uprising. Picasso remained. "We are Communists," he would say whenever another atrocity was revealed or another aesthetic disagreement occurred. "There is only one Communist Party in France. Therefore we belong to that Communist Party."

Two journalists parked themselves outside La Californie after the publication of Khrushchev's secret report on Stalin, determined to get a comment from Picasso on what it revealed about the man whose seventy-fifth birthday he had celebrated with

one drawing and whose death he had lamented with another. Picasso sent Lucette, the new maid, out to tell them to go and see Khrushchev. "After all," he added, "they won't go and ask Khrushchev for a statement about my secret reports...." Everybody around him marveled at yet more evidence of the master's wit.

After the Hungarian suppression, Picasso did make a meaningless protest by signing, together with Parmelin, Pignon and another seven Party members, a letter addressed to the Central Committee of the Party. In it they asked for the summoning, with the minimum of delay, of "a special congress to discuss, realistically and truthfully, the innumerable problems facing Communists today." No special congress was ever summoned, and, had Picasso not been a cosignatory of the letter, the Central Committee would no doubt have expelled the less celebrated members who had dared to ask for a discussion. Instead it merely published a letter in L'Humanité, in which the signatories were castigated: "They may even become obstinate in spite of the facts, but they have no right to attempt to impose their point of view on the party by illicit means."

"Look", Picasso said to Carlton Lake, who came to interview him for The Atlantic Monthly, "I am no politician. I am not technically proficient in such matters." In fact, resigning from

the party would have been not an act of politics but a humanitarian act from the man who had given Guernica to the world. Yet he could not let go of the Party. As death drew nearer and all avenues to transcendence seemed closed, the Party offered him at least "a new theology without God." It was no bulwark against his mounting despair, but it was a vague belief that at least offered some feeling of connection to offset his growing loneliness.

There was always another round of bullfights to go to; the pignons seemed to be, at all times, arriving from Paris with fresh gossip and the latest news on everything and everybody; there were as many people to see, calls to take and letters to read as he wanted to make time for; there was some work to do and many press clippings to read about his seventy-fifth anniversary exhibitions, in the spring of 1957, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Louise Leiris Gallery in Paris. He also had a whole menagerie of pigeons, parakeets and owls, Yan the boxer, Lump the dachshund and Esmeralda the goat; his children and Jacqueline's daughter and Inès's son had filled the house for the summer; and Jacqueline was there, always there, oppressively there. But Picasso had never been lonelier and less able to drown his loneliness in frenzied activity. "Symptoms of a desperate preoccupation appeared in Picasso's expression with an intensity and persistence never known before," wrote Parmelin of

that terrible summer of 1957. "Everything bored him, the slightest thing upset him, the least hitch in the day's course seemed to destroy utterly his ability to eat, sleep, enjoy or rest."

Jacqueline made sure that her Monseigneur took his drops, drank his herb teas, ate his carrot-and-pea soup with no harmful condiments, put the proper liniment on the leg muscle that would not stop hurting; she made sure, that is, that the machine was well oiled and polished. But the machine had a soul, and of that she knew nothing. For her, as indeed for Parmelin, the torments of his soul and the torments he imposed on those around him were nothing more than moods brought about by Painting, that mythical catch-all to which all good and all evil were attributed. When, in the middle of August 1957, he began working on his variations after Velazquez's Las Meninas, Parmelin, like those primitive people who believe that it is the waving of the trees that causes the wind, was convinced that it was Velazquez who was responsible for Picasso's unhappiness, his rages and even the deterioration in his health: "From the day the idea of Las Meninas raised its head, Picasso's healthy looks became ravaged. And the battle with or without, for or against, without and within Velazquez began."

Jacqueline fell sick and had to have a stomach operation, and even that was somehow magically attributed by Parmelin to the battle with Velazquez: "...her convalescence was abnormally prolonged and she had to spend much of her time lying down. Or rather she should have done. In any case, she felt ill, and the length of her convalescence seemed to be physically linked to the birth of Las Meninas." It could have also been linked, more prosaically, to the fact that she went along to one bullfight after another with "her stomach open," as Picasso graphically put it.

From now on, Jacqueline would often be ill. She had problems with her stomach, problems with her eardrums, gynecological problems; a lot of the time she felt so listless and exhausted she could barely drag herself to bed. When she was sick, she slept in a room next to Monseigneur, so as not to bother him. And he would presage and reflect in his work the different stages of her recurring cycle of sickness and recovery. "Isn't it curious," he said, "that by the time she is ill I am painting pictures in which she appears to be well again? I don't understand it. I always seem to be ahead of events."

It was hard to distinguish cause and effect. What was certain was that Velazquez was not to blame and that, despite all attempts by Jacqueline, Parmelin and the rest of the court to

put a gloss of frenetic creativity and companionable rituals on reality, things were desperate. "One is reminded," wrote John Berger, "of the last days of some old vaudeville star: everything, creaking now, is still invented as superlative....The horror of it all is that it is a life without reality. Picasso is only happy when working. Yet he has nothing of his own to work on. He takes up the themes of other painters' pictures.... He decorates pots and plates that other men make for him. He is reduced to playing like a child. He becomes again the child prodigy."

From August 20 to November 17, Picasso locked himself in his studio, mano a mano with the great Spanish master. To prove that he was as great as Velazquez? To silence his doubts that he was not? To first test and then rape Velazquez's masterpiece? To try to go back to the beginning when everything was full of ardor and promise and his father had personally introduced him to the Prado and to Las Meninas? "Picasso really wanted to settle some score with those!" said Jacqueline. "I never saw him work like that!"

He worked and he complained. "What an appalling business," he kept saying. "One always thinks that to do a painting is just to paint....And yet it's worse than death in the ring; it is

death in the ring." It was indeed death in the ring to be, in Berger's words, "condemned to paint with nothing to say" and to keep pouring into painterly exercises all the frustration and rage of having nothing to say and an overabundance of skill with which to say it. "He was horrible during the whole time this lasted," said Parmelin. "He was in a bad mood. It was a tragedy for him. Las Meninas were a tragedy....He wanted to show them to us. He did not want to show them to us." Did he fear that Velazquez was the victor of "the corrida at Cannes", as Jacqueline called the battle raging on the second floor of La Californie, where Picasso had moved his studio?

Finally, he did show them. "Well?" he asked Parmelin as they came out of the studio. "Both ears and the tail," she replied, awarding him the highest honor that a bullfighter could receive in the arena. It was not "the enthusiasm of a clan always prepared to uncork in any circumstances the flagon of its devotion," she said. In fact, it was just that. The clan knew that nothing short of freshly unleashed enthusiasm would guarantee them tenure at court. The man who had defied the world and its opinions at twenty-six with The Demoiselles d'Avignon now sought reassurance at seventy-six that his paraphrases of the Spanish master had worked.

"Picasso was not a man of certainty," said Parmelin. "He

was a man of doubt. He often said, 'Listen, I'll show you after dinner. I don't know at all whether what I did is sublime or whether it's shit.' And that was the truth -- he no longer knew." And neither did the world. UNESCO had commissioned him to do a mural for the Delegates' Lounge of its headquarters in Paris -- over one thousand square feet. He worked on forty separate plywood panels on the floor, with Jacqueline and Miguel, his Spanish secretary who was back on the scene, helping him with the moving and shifting, and who would stay on to assist Jacqueline with her secretarial duties. He became obsessed with the UNESCO, as he called it, and before it was moved to its intended home he wanted to have it unveiled in the public schoolyard in Vallauris. The unveiling was turned into a major media event, with journalists, photographers, Communist Party leaders, a delegation from UNESCO and, of course, a crowd: "Picasso," Parmelin wrote, "mobbed by the crowd, eventually reached the foot of the fresco which was still concealed by curtains. There were both sun and limelights. The moment had come. The curtains were drawn apart. The UNESCO fresco was revealed."

The crowd applauded but was perplexed, as were the UNESCO representatives: Was this a giant doodle or was it a masterpiece? Georges Salles, who had been instrumental in persuading Picasso

to accept the commission, tried to save the day in his speech. He named the mural The Fall of Icarus, and there was, indeed, "a desiccated Icarus, already a smoky white skeleton" suspended between the sky and the sea in which he was about to drown. It is always death that wins, the mural seemed to be saying, and the higher one rises the greater will be the fall. It was a message of despair very appropriate to Picasso's emotional state but extremely inappropriate to an international organization which was supposed to strive toward a better future. And its appropriateness aside, it was a vacant work, expressing the spiritual void in which Picasso lived and worked. A lot of official puffing and booming was required to whip up any enthusiasm for The Fall of Icarus, starting with the title given to the mural when it was installed at the UNESCO headquarters in September: The Forces of Life and of Spirit Triumphant over Evil. But those capable of noticing that the Emperor has no clothes knew better than to believe it.

In May 1958, de Gaulle returned to power and created the Fifth Republic. At around the same time, Picasso painted his Still Life with Bull's Skull, a violent picture in which, as Penrose wrote, "the burning reds and yellows, a double reflection of the sun in the open window, and the monumental immobility of a horned skull in the foreground, produce a shock like a deadly explosion within the calm of a distant blue sky." As Picasso

told Penrose: "I painted it with four-letter words." His Communist friends were delighted. Finally, here was a picture painted, as Daix said, "practically on the date" that de Gaulle returned to power, that could be said to be a political picture, directed against "the great danger that Picasso saw, the danger of a return to fascism." Penrose added to the political motive the inspiration provided by an exceptional bullfight Picasso had just attended. In fact Picasso needed no stimulus from the outside world in order to produce yet another painting of rage and revulsion. He contained within himself infinite reserves of both on which he could draw.

Like the bathers in The Fall of Icarus who are unaware of Icarus falling, Jacqueline and the courtiers who surrounded Picasso watched him plunge, in slow motion, into an abyss of despair, unaware, uncomprehending and utterly unable to help. "Picasso was in a somber mood," Parmelin wrote of an evening at La Californie, "his eyes moved slowly from one to the other of us and over the kitchen....He watched us laughing with all the interest of a visitor to the Zoo seeing the monkeys make human gestures. And when we stopped laughing, he said: Well, go on, laugh! In a fury!...It was appalling....It was terrifyingly sinister....The atmosphere was suddenly all awry....In the end he succeeded in really frightening us, and only then did he

laugh....We went to bed, climbing slowly up the stairs, appalled by we knew not what, our hearts heavy, and our minds too....We were unhappy and fed up. What a splendid evening."

No matter how appalling, sinister and frightening Picasso was, and no matter how appalled, unhappy and fed up they were, it was all splendid -- because they were special enough and privileged enough to be in his presence. How could they possibly see the nightmare he lived in when they all -- Jacqueline more than anyone -- lived in their own dream of glory by association?

The tragic court had recently been enlarged by two characters straight out of Italian opera buffa. One was a Spanish barber and the other an Italian tailor. Picasso had met Arias, the Spanish barber, in Vallauris and trusted him enough to allow him to cut his hair, a major honor since Picasso believed that if his hair trimmings fell into the wrong hands, they could be used to manipulate and control him. "By the time I met him," Arias recalled, "he had very little hair....I cut it very short in the back and left more on top to disguise the baldness. And when I finished, I would always give him a kiss on the bald spot. Always." So Arias would arrive at La Californie, cut Picasso's hair, get the odd drawing in exchange, stay for dinner, talk about Spain, accompany him to the bullfights, and begin gradually to feel like Picasso's spiritual son. "Let's go to the bulls,"

Picasso would tell him. "It's the only thing left to us."

Michele Sapone, the tailor from Nice via Naples, wormed himself into the court by fathoming Picasso's sartorial mixture of dandyism and bohemianism. He would arrive at La Californie, invariably unannounced and always received, with fresh supplies of the corduroys that Picasso loved, with swatches and rolls of fabric, suits and overcoats, and he would leave with fresh supplies of Picassos. "You work for me, and I work for you," the painter said to the tailor. Picasso's expanding and exotic wardrobe and the gallery that Sapone's son-in-law later opened in Nice attested to the fact that each kept his side of the bargain.

There were hundreds who were never admitted into the magic circle, or admitted sparingly. Jacqueline was in charge of foreign relations with the outside world, and Picasso made sure that she got the blame. "We've had so much trouble trying to talk to you," guests would say, having finally been received after only they knew how many attempts. "What!" Picasso would complain to Jacqueline. "They've called and I've been told nothing?" It was not for Jacqueline to contradict Monseigneur in public, or to say how implacable were his orders that he should not be disturbed. In any case who would have believed her when he stood there so innocent and so celebrated, so indignant and so

amazed?

Nineteen fifty-four was the last year he saw Dora; 1955 was the last year he saw Francoise and Maya; 1958 was the last year he saw Marie-Thérèse and the last time he had any contact, however indirect, with Fernande. Eva was dead, and so was Olga. The circle was shrinking. Braque's wife, who had stayed in touch with Fernande, got through to Picasso and asked him to help her. Impoverished, arthritic and partially deaf, Fernande had been hospitalized with a serious case of pneumonia. Picasso stuffed an envelope with money and sent it to her. Proud to the end, Fernande had never approached him herself to ask for anything; her most precious possession, she told a reporter, was a little heart-shaped mirror that he had brought her from Normandy, all those lifetimes ago at the Bateau-Lavoir.

"There was a photographer there," remembered Marie-Thérèse of her first and last visit to La Californie, "who kept calling him 'Maître, maître...', and Picasso would nudge me with his elbow and say: 'Do you hear that? Do you hear that?' I would have loved to laugh, but I wasn't laughing; tears kept running and running down my face....At one thirty I left, and I went to have lunch in a restaurant all alone." She would never see her "marvellously terrible" lover again.

picasso was too tired and too resigned to change women. But he had to change something if life was to be at all tolerable. So he decided to change houses. La Californie was too crowded and with the current development of Cannes, no longer private enough. "I've become one of the monuments of the Côte d'Azur," he screamed one day. At the end of September 1958, he was in Arles with Jacqueline and the Pignons for the grape-harvest bullfight. He was feeling particularly depressed, and was still dispirited when they arrived at the Château de Castille to have dinner with Douglas Cooper. It was in that state of mind, when just about everything was preferable to the status quo, that he first heard about the Château de Vauvenargues, near Aix-en-Provence. "You ought to see it," Cooper said, "it's a wonderful place." He said more; that it was up for sale and that Picasso ought to buy it.

"Coincidences do not exist," Picasso had said. "Everything is normally a coincidence, the strange being the natural." The next morning, at the Pavillon Vendôme, where Marie Cuttoli's collection and her many Picassos were on show, Picasso sighed: "If only I was Madame Cuttoli's Picassos, how happy I should be here!..." If only he lived anywhere other than at La Californie and was anyone other than the Picasso he was, how happy he would be! Therefore, on to Vauvenargues!

In the eighteenth century, the Marquis de Vauvenargues had lived in his château and, at least according to the caretaker, had written his celebrated Maxims there. In the nineteenth century, Cézanne had immortalized the Mont Sainte-Victoire on which the château was built. In the twentieth century Picasso owned it. Jacqueline hated Vauvenargues -- its huge, dark, cold rooms, the secret staircases, the relics of Saint Severin in the tower, the fourteenth-century fortifications. But Picasso had never consulted her. "I've bought the Sainte-Victoire," he announced to Kahnweiler. "Which one?" the dealer asked, surprised that one of Cézanne's landscapes had come on the market without his knowing. "The real one," Picasso exalted.

"Men who do not love glory," ran one of the Marquis de Vauvenargues's maxims, "have neither enough spirit, nor enough virtue to deserve it." When Sam Kootz came to visit him in his new château, Picasso proudly told him: "Cézanne painted these mountains, and now I own them."

Hundreds of paintings and bronzes were moved from the vaults of his Paris bank to fill the rooms at Vauvenargues, a central heating system was installed and a luxurious bathroom, whose walls he soon covered with jungle fauns and nymphs and a wild beast over the bathtub. In February he moved in, and the

shuttle between La Californie and Vauvenargues began: "You know where you live," he told Parmelin, "you live in Paris, you have a house and know where you are. I'm not anywhere, don't know where I live, you can't imagine how awful that is." And indeed she could not; nor could all those around him. She thought it was funny. And everyone else thought, "here goes Picasso again being an impossible genius."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MAMAN AND MONSEIGNEUR

On June 5, 1959, a monument to Apollinaire's memory was unveiled at the corner of the churchyard of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, opposite the rue Guillaume Apollinaire. The search for the most appropriate monument had been so drawn out and so heated it was hard to believe that what Picasso donated and Apollinaire's widow unveiled, in the presence of Cocteau, Salmon, City Councilmen and many young Apollinaire enthusiasts, was a Head of Dora Maar that Picasso had done in 1941.

In Apollinaire's The Poet Assassinated, published in 1916, Picasso, appearing as the Bird of Benin, had sculpted "a statue out of nothing, out of emptiness" to honor the memory of Apollinaire's alter ego, Croniamantal: "The next day, the

sculptor came back with some workmen who lined the pit with a layer of reinforced concrete eight centimeters thick, except at the bottom, where it was thirty-eight -- all done so skilfully that this emptiness had Croniamantal's very shape and the hole was full of his spirit." Apollinaire had uncannily foreshadowed the empty gesture that Picasso's monument would be in real life.

That spring Picasso had done a series of drawings of Christ on the cross. As in many other anguished moments, he identified with Christ's Passion, but there was no solace or release in the identification. As he played out the last act of his life, love and compassion seemed to have been left in the wings, out of sight and out of reach. The people around him were real only in the sense that stage props are real, and he treated them with equal consideration. There came a moment when even Hélène Parmelin revolted and allowed herself to separate the bewitchment of the Picasso myth from the actual experience of being with him. She and her husband had just arrived in Vauvenargues where they found Picasso in "this kind of unbearable mood of his that reigns over the house and smothers it....with those moments of exasperation that make you long to get away and breathe your own air, far from this black and silent fury that you had nothing to do with...."

Instead they went into his studio. "And what an

atmosphere!" Parmelin wrote. "Picasso's eyes are like machine-guns. His voice cuts like a knife." But the unexpected prospect of being shown paintings from his own collection, including his Cezannes, made the price of being machine-gunned by his eyes and cut by his voice seem worth paying. Like a menacing monarch, he ordered Parmelin to go "at once," fetch her camera and take pictures of the studio and the paintings. "You don't seem to know that these are not just any paintings!..." he cried, choosing the insult that he knew would most hurt the woman who talked and wrote as if "Painting" was unquestionably more important than life. "Get moving instead of staying there doing nothing..."

Parmelin went, masking her distress in embarrassed laughter. She returned with her camera and had just started taking photographs, when suddenly Picasso began screaming at her in a rage, telling her that he had never given her permission to photograph Renoir's red chalk drawing and that, in any case, he had had enough of her photographs! At which point, after years of bearing his "unbearable" moods, something snapped in her: "I open the camera, tear out the roll of film and throw it in his face. And I tell him that, Picasso or no Picasso, I don't give a damn and I'll never let anyone talk to me in this tone; that I'm not one of his courtesans or his tamed devotees....Picasso and

pignon start to laugh hysterically, looking at each other....I storm out. The sun bludgeons me. I find myself on the road, without a car and with no money. I walk full of anger, determined never to see Picasso again."

Her determination lasted for a whole week during which parmelin tried to explain to Jacqueline, who kept calling her, why she felt that way. "Being Picasso," she said, "does not mean that he has the power to act like a satrap. And Picasso or whoever, I couldn't care less." But she did care, she cared very much, and at the end of the week she capitulated. What it took was Jacqueline handing Picasso the phone. "But what have I done?..." he said in a sugary voice, "I haven't done a thing!..." Hearing him utter a few words, even if they were words denying all responsibility, was enough for Parmelin. Tamed, she once again returned to the fold.

The less powerful Picasso felt, the more like a satrap he behaved. In the Romancero of the Picador, the suite he started working on in July, the picador has been reduced to an impassive voyeur, rambling into brothels, curiously unstirred as the girls dance, display themselves and go into all sorts of provocative contortions in an attempt to ignite some life into him. The picador seems drained of desire. In his life, too, new excitements lasted for shorter and shorter periods of time. The

excitement with his new château was over in a few months. When Kahnweiler had gone to see him at Vauvenargues for the first time, he had told him that it was "a magnificent place, but too vast, too severe." "Too vast?" Picasso had protested. "I will fill it up. Too severe? You are forgetting that I am a Spaniard and that I enjoy sadness."

"The exaltation ceased suddenly," wrote Maurice Jardot, the director of the Louise Leiris Gallery. "Picasso was to paint only four more pictures at Vauvenargues between 13 May and 24 June [1959] and only five during the years 1960 and 1961."

"I'm a little bored," he told Lionel Prejger when he visited him at Vauvenargues. "Your brother is a real estate agent in Cannes, you know my tastes, try to find me a house."

Prejger did just that and called Picasso with the good news: "I think I've found you a house."

"I'll be there tomorrow," Picasso said. Notre-Dame-de-Vie, as it was called after a nearby chapel, was a secluded Provencal villa on a hill overlooking Mougins, surrounded by terraces of cypresses and olive trees. There was only one road leading to

it, in utter disrepair, but the house itself had been completely restored, all-white inside and with many modern bathrooms. Picasso liked it, bought it and had a new road built. The house was put in the name of a corporation, La Société du Mas de Notre-Dame-de-Vie, consisting of Jacqueline, Kahnweiler, Picasso's banker Max Pellequer, Michel and Zette Leiris, Lionel Prejger and his brother. It was June, 1961, however, before Picasso moved into his new home. He had told Reventos that when he had a house completely full, he left everything in it and moved to another house. But Vauvenargues would never be full.

The work that spanned all three of his houses in the South of France was Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe. He began wrestling with Manet's painting in August 1959 at Vauvenargues and declared the battle over in December 1961 at Notre-Dame-de-Vie -- twenty-seven paintings and one-hundred-thirty-eight drawings later. As other men cross swords, Picasso was crossing canvases. Christine Piot wrote that he was practicing painting as a martial art: "This image contains the rapidity, the extreme swiftness that has often been associated with him and sometimes reproached him; also the art of aiming straight for the center of the target with the eyes almost closed, as if by prescience...and the sense of opposing the existing order or disorder of the world, of challenging it as well as exorcizing it, of fighting like an 'impeccable warrior.'" As well as crossing swords with Manet, he set out "to cut open

the Déjeuner's flesh and nourish his creative faculty with it."

Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe became, as well, a vehicle through which he gave expression to his ambivalence and his growing fears about his relationship with Jacqueline. In a set of variations on the Déjeuner, he subjected their bodies to successive transformations until his body "shrinks in the final oil to an appropriate green shadow while across [from him]...sits the figure of Jacqueline predatorily in command." That was not at all how things looked during the years that he was wrestling with Manet, but as he felt his strength ebb, he was clearly fearful of Jacqueline's power in the future.

He was also sick of her constant sicknesses. When in May 1960 he went to see her in the hospital, where she was recovering from an abdominal operation, he complained that he could not work "with all that" and that really, "the last thing painting needed was what was going on." Like Eva before her, as soon as she was back on her feet, Jacqueline acted as though she were perfectly well. And Picasso was more than happy to go along with this fiction. Jacqueline's greatest value to him lay in all the mechanical functions she performed, and on which he was increasingly dependent; therefore, he was most upset when they were disturbed. And she, bewitched and possessed, denied any

feelings that might upset him. All these denials and undischarged emotions drained her energies, so that even when the doctors could find nothing wrong with her, she suffered from a dogged fatigue that weighed her down and often made her shuffle like an old woman.

While Jacqueline began to forget what being healthy felt like, Picasso worried over the slightest sign that all was not well with him. "He has always been so concerned about his health!" Kahnweiler said. "In reality he has never been seriously ill. Basically, he had nothing but neuroses. And do you know how he took care of himself? With cat skins! Several times I went to see him and found him in bed, with his shoulders covered in cat fur. The enormous amount of work he turns out gives the impression that he must overwork. Not at all: he watches over himself and takes care of himself very carefully.... he has himself examined frequently by his doctor; the same doctor, as a matter of fact, who took care of Matisse. Whenever he feels a need to rest and regain his strength, he simply stays in bed for two or three days..."

In the summer of 1960, Roland Penrose, who had organized a major retrospective of Picasso's work at the Tate, did everything he could to persuade him to attend the opening. "Why should I go?" was Picasso's response. "I know them all, those paintings,

I did them myself." The Tate show was the apotheosis of Picasso as the century's official genius, his work a series of imperishable masterpieces, his life an offering to humanity. The Queen herself said during a private visit to the exhibition that Picasso was "the greatest artist of this century," while Penrose wrote in his introduction to the catalogue that Picasso's work was "born of an understanding and a love for humanity. His art goes far beyond a facile enchantment of the eye. It fulfils a more essential purpose -- the intensification of feeling and the education of the spirit." It was true in the same way that The Fall of Icarus was really The Forces of Life and of Spirit Triumphant over Evil and that, as the slogan declared in Orwell's 1984, "War is Peace."

While Penrose was extolling Picasso's love of humanity, Francoise was trying through lawyers to gain some basic rights for her children -- starting with the right to use their father's name, which Maya never had. During her prolonged negotiations with Maître Bacqué de Sariac, Picasso's lawyer, Francoise received an extremely unexpected proposal from Picasso. "Would you consider," Maître de Sariac asked on his client's instructions, "divorcing Luc Simon and marrying him? That would certainly be the easiest way to regularize the status of the children. Then you could divorce, but at least the children

would have been legitimized."

"For the sake of the children": that was the argument to which Picasso's emissary kept returning as Francoise listened to him week after week during the final months of 1960. Marie Cuttoli, Paulo and Claude, who was now thirteen, joined the chorus encouraging her to say yes. "Mama, you should do it," Claude kept pleading with her when he came back home after his summer holidays at La Californie. And both he and Paloma told her again and again that Jacqueline and their father were fighting all the time and their relationship was going from bad to worse.

At first, Francoise was incredulous and could not bring herself even to contemplate the offer. But, gradually, Picasso's proposal, like a detonated bomb, began to change the landscape of her life. Almost despite herself, she began to look at her life with new eyes. During the day, she worked in her studio in her family home in Neuilly. Her father had died in 1957, so only her mother was there now. She would return to the rue Val de Grace in the evening and she and Luc would have dinner with the children. "We were very well behaved in front of them," Francoise said, "but after they had gone to bed, there was argument after argument." Luc, who had been like a father to

Claude and Paloma, was not happy about their taking Picasso's name. Picasso's hostility toward him since his marriage to Françoise had permeated the whole art world and had been devastating to his career; and now the children he loved would carry the name of the man who had done everything he could to destroy him.

Looking back over the years since her marriage to Luc, Françoise saw clearly for the first time how much Picasso's vindictiveness had poisoned their lives. Was it really possible, she began to wonder, to put an end to his corrosive resentment? To have a life in which she could talk to the father of her children without going through lawyers? To be able to function in the art world without the stigma of Picasso's enmity? An awful burden lifted from her at the thought of life without the shadow that Picasso, the destroyer, had cast over her life.

There was something else that Picasso's proposal made her confront: that much though she loved Luc and mistrusted Picasso, she had never loved anyone with the intensity with which she had loved Picasso. And Luc knew it. He had even written a letter to Picasso, telling him that "Françoise may be my wife, but she will always be yours." Life had not been easy with the Furies of Picasso's vengeance pursuing her, but Françoise had been able not

only to survive but to heal her wounds and to grow. And, with the benefit of distance, she had seen ways in which she might have been able to achieve greater intimacy and depth in her relationship with Picasso. She saw the mistakes that she had made. What if she had learned Spanish? She remembered how enchanted he was every time he saw her take an interest in anything Spanish, as when she had translated Gongora's poems; being able to speak the language of his birth would definitely have brought them closer together. What if she had been more flexible, if she had opened her heart more, if she had mistrusted less? What, above all, if spiritually she had reached a place where she could have loved him unconditionally without losing her own center, where she could have surrendered fully without capitulating to domination, and from which she could have led him away from his own self-destructiveness?

Maybe she was dreaming, maybe it was too late and there were too many ghosts from the past, but if she accepted Picasso's proposal, then at least her children would be legitimized, she would disarm some of Picasso's hostility and Luc would be able to follow his career without the curse of having Picasso as an adversary.

In January 1961, it was published in the official legal journal that Claude and Paloma had been awarded their father's

name: Ruiz Picasso. At the end of February 1961, Francoise asked Luc for a divorce. On March 2, in utmost secrecy, Pablo Picasso and Jacqueline Roque were married in the Town Hall of Vallauris in the presence of Paul Derigon, the Communist Mayor, and Maître Antebi, a lawyer from Cannes, and his wife. The banns had not been published on the door of the Town Hall but, on Picasso's request, kept extremely quiet. Jacqueline had been Madame Picasso for twelve days before the news hit the newspapers. During that time, Picasso had carefully refrained from informing Maître de Sarrac, who had continued to clear the path for his client's marriage to Francoise.

On March 14, Francoise opened her morning paper and read that the man she was preparing to marry had been married twelve days before. The news made her shiver. She suddenly felt touched by evil. The man she had loved deeply and whom she had determined to try to love better had, in a plot befitting Mephistopheles, succeeded in persuading her to ask her husband for a divorce in order to marry him. And as soon as the divorce process had begun, he had married another. In a state of emotional upheaval, Francoise decided to go ahead with the divorce, even though there was no longer any immediate reason for it. She had never before seen so unequivocally Picasso's power of destruction.

"I had sworn to succeed in getting married with no journalists. It's done! I've won!" the press quoted Picasso. He had won -- over the press and over Francoise. He had used Jacqueline to score what he thought was the ultimate victory over Francoise and in the process handed over his life to the instrument of his victory. Marriage transformed Jacqueline from victim to victor, and crossing the line from mistress to wife unleashed the destructiveness that had been nursed in her through six years of being treated as something subhuman. She was now Madame Picasso and the mistress of all he surveyed. Before they were married, there was never a trace of evidence in his bedroom that a woman also slept there -- not a slip, not a lipstick. Now, his bedroom became clearly their bedroom. But that was a trivial assertion of her new status. A sinister assertion of her new power was the campaign she immediately began against his children.

Claude and Paloma had always provided a bitter reminder of the woman she replaced, of the woman who rode triumphantly around the arena of Vallauris while she watched, swallowing one more humiliation, of the woman she hated more than any other. Claude and Paloma were also bitter reminders of the fact that she was never going to have her own children by Picasso. She had tolerated their presence for the holidays, as she had tolerated

everything and everybody that had been part of his life while she was uncertain about how permanent a part she would be. But now she knew and the world knew, and there would no longer be any brakes on the unimpeded exercise of her will. Also the children were fast becoming adults, clever, attractive and now, to her horror, carrying their father's name. They were harder to tolerate, and she no longer had to. She started feeding Picasso lies, about how little his children cared for him, how they had been poisoned by their mother and even how the fourteen-year-old Claude had become a drug-addict and should not be allowed to join them for the Easter holidays. Both children were promptly disinvited.

They came back, but their time at Notre-Dame-de-Vie was becoming rationed. And when they were there, Jacqueline did her best to humiliate them. One day she took them, together with her own daughter, to a cheap supermarket in Cannes: "I'm bringing you here," she told them, "because this is the place where you will be shopping for your clothes and whatever else you need." When Claude and Paloma protested that she did not have to worry about where they bought their clothes since their mother took care of that, and certainly not at a place like this, she persisted: "I know, and that's the reason I brought you here. Because when you are older this is where you will have to go." It was a slap in

the face and a warning to the children whose mother was working hard to give them not only their father's name but all their legal rights. It was also a slap in the face of her own daughter, who fared less and less well the older she grew and the more hardened against all feeling her mother became. She could not forgive Catherine the fact that she came from another life, another man and another world.

The isolation of Picasso took place by stages, but it began with the discounting of every emotional claim. What Jacqueline wanted was Picasso all to herself, and she was ruthlessly clear about how to achieve her goal since what he wanted was to lose himself in work. Later on she would refer to Picasso's paintings during their life together as "their children," and she wanted nothing to interfere with the production of more and more "children" -- certainly not the presence of real children from his past. There was a window on the second floor of Notre-Dame-de-Vie, looking down on Picasso's studio. From that window, Jacqueline watched for hours as Picasso made "their children." These were her great moments -- just she and Monseigneur and the prospect of more and more of their children populating the earth.

For Picasso work was the only weapon he could pit against death, his great adversary. At the end of October, 1961, however, he left his work behind for a few days and threw himself

into a celebration of his eightieth birthday that was compared to "a holy feast in Renaissance times." The host, in whose name four thousand invitations were sent out, was Paul Derigon, the same Communist Mayor of Vallauris who had married him to Jacqueline. A Festival of Music, Song and Dance took place in Nice with, among others, Sviatoslav Richter playing the piano and Antonio dancing the flamenco. An intimate exhibition of fifty of his paintings was held in Vallauris, to which Picasso and Jacqueline were "escorted by helmeted motor-cycle police with white gauntlets." He was serenaded by guitars, given countless presents, listened to many speeches in praise of his greatness and his humanity, attended a reception in his honor at the Palm Beach Casino in Cannes with a magnificent display of fireworks, and watched a bullfight, again given in his honor, in Vallauris. Dominguin and Ortega were the matadors and this time Jacqueline had no rivals for the public's attention. The Terrible Mother was, in public, the young bride basking in the shadow of the great husband. And Picasso, who sometimes shrank from the limelight and sometimes missed it if it was not turned upon him, reveled in the adulation of the crowd.

On the occasion of his eightieth birthday, France-Soir published an interview Picasso had given to a young journalist, Sylvie Marion. He eagerly took the opportunity to show that

his flirting days were not over. "Come here so that I can hug you," he told her. "There. Now you can say that you got a hug from Picasso for his eightieth birthday. That's all. What, you don't want my kisses? Jacqueline, that's not nice, is it?...You have beautiful eyes. Let me hug you again." Finally Marion got something other than hugs and kisses: "I'm not Marilyn Monroe," he said, cupping his hands around his non-existent breasts. "To start with, I'm not that....Well, tell them that if there were no mirrors, I wouldn't know my age, and that it took me eighty years to become young. What? I already said that for my seventieth birthday? Well, tell them that I still believe it." Last came the statement that was used as the headline for the interview: "Love is the only thing that counts." And then as if to fill the gulf between his statement and his life, he repeated it: "That's what you must write, that Picasso said that love is the only thing that counts."

On the eve of his fortified isolation from all human contact, there was little in his life that had anything to do with love. Electronic gates were installed at Notre-Dame-de-Vie with an intercom system to screen visitors and guard dogs to let loose if they persisted. In their isolation à deux, the Picassos were bonded by their mistrust of the outside world. "Everybody has his price," Jacqueline used to say, "and money, always, sooner or later, triggers madness." She meant, of course, money

in other people's hands, people who, unlike her, were greedy and calculating. Because, as she had said about herself, she would have been "just as happy with a single Picasso postcard." Miguel Bose, Luis Dominguin's son, recalled that "she was terribly jealous of any other presence in the house. She would make you suffer, feel distant, strange, anytime and in any place....She was always there, always tense, keeping watch. She thought that all his friends took advantage of him, that they were his friends only because he was Pablo Picasso. And maybe she thought that way because 'all thieves think that everyone is a thief.'"

"At the end, nobody can see anything except himself," Picasso had said. "Thanks to the never-ending search for reality, he ends in black obscurity. There are so many realities that in trying to encompass them all one ends in darkness." The man who had proudly declared "I do not seek; I find" now had to admit that not only had he sought and failed to find, but he had also ended in black obscurity and darkness. He went on working - paintings, drawings, linocuts, seventy Jacquelines in 1962 alone -- but it was work born of panic and of the frenzy that panic brings. Both in his life and in his work he was retreating. It was the time of giving up, settling down and going back: giving up the hope of unearthing reality and truth; settling down as if life's gravity had taken such a toll that he

had to marry his caretaker; and going back to the mother who would order his reality, meet his every wish, and demand nothing in return except to possess him. He did not even have to maintain the fiction of loving her. He could be as estranged, emotionally absent, cruel or unfair as he felt like, and she would still be there taking care of him, because that is a mother's job. He started calling Jacqueline "Maman." And of all the women in his life, Jacqueline looked most like his mother, and came to look more and more like her as she grew stockier and sturdier with every year. Picasso liked her to give him his bath and threw violent temper-tantrums if she was not there when he wanted her.

He would not tolerate even a brief absence. Maurici Torra-Balari, a Spaniard who had known Picasso ever since his early days in Paris, remembered an afternoon after lunch at Notre-Dame-de-Vie when he, his cousins and Jacqueline had gone for a drive to Vallauris: "He was going to take a nap and it was he who had suggested that Jacqueline come with us and be back by five, by which time he would be up. But he must have woken earlier and Jacqueline wasn't there. Thunderbolts were in the offing. 'How could you leave me?' he cried as soon as we got into the house. 'You have abandoned me!' It was a child's tantrum, but even so Jacqueline made no attempt to defend herself."

In his work, too, he was regressing -- not to an earlier stage of his own life, but to an earlier, much earlier stage of man. The people populating his canvases were not modern; they were not even Egyptian or Greek. They were the old Mesopotamian people seen in the art that has survived from those ancient times: stout, squat, with hardly any neck, and above all, with the pupils suspended in their eyes, nowhere touching the lids -- big, black holes, just emerging from the cosmic darkness, fearfully watchful and still in the grip of a primeval terror. At the end of October, while he was working on his Rape of the Sabines, he painted four Warriors that proclaimed that terror. "All four of these Warriors," wrote the art historian Gert Schiff, "bespeak the same horror. Is it caused by the evil deeds they are forced to commit in the name of some questionable good?" Or perhaps in the name of some questionable god who still demanded human sacrifices? On November 14, Picasso painted a portrait of Jacqueline, Head of a Woman, on which he "projected, with their facial distortions, all the horror of the Warriors." The sphinx has disappeared, and Jacqueline, her eyes set in motionless horror, her breath held in primordial fear, is back in the world of the Mesopotamians.

"But as for them, they say nothing!" Picasso remarked about his warriors. David's Sabines, Poussin's Rape of the Sabines and

Massacre of the Innocents had been the starting point for the warriors, the massacres, the bloodshed and the destruction that filled his work for months. Then, at the beginning of February, it was over. But he was not at all sure that there had been any purpose to all that destruction. "Does one ever know what one is doing?" Parmelin asked. "Can any moral be drawn from it? Can anyone in the world give a painter certainty?...It is enough to see him looking at his warriors, to understand, that in spite of everything all his torment about them is far from being soothed."

And it would never be soothed. "Everything is changed," he said, "it's all over, painting is something quite different from what we believed, perhaps it's even the exact opposite..." He knew that he had destroyed form, that the abstract painters who followed were eliminating the subject and that it was the end of painting as it had been and as he had practiced it. No wonder that he was so uncertain about what he was doing, no wonder that he was painting without purpose. "It was during this period," wrote Parmelin, "that he declared himself ready to kill modern art, and thus art itself, in order to rediscover painting....Then down with everybody, down with everything that's been done, down with Picasso! For also and at the same time and quite naturally it is Picasso and his painting methods he is attacking."

But what was to replace what had been? "We have to look,"

he said, "for something that develops all on its own, something natural, and not manufactured, it has to evolve just as it is, in its natural shape and not its shape in art....We do the same thing over and over again, and yet we can do everything, what is there to stop us?"

It was the royal We. But he went on doing the same thing over and over, again and again. It looked different, prolific, fecund. But it was more of the same under different guises: sometimes it was warriors, and sometimes a painter and his model, sometimes musketeers, and sometimes more Mesopotamian Jacquelines, increasingly savage and repulsive. There were one hundred sixty Jacquelines in 1963, as if he had to get rid of her in his work since he had decided to cling to her in life. "In front of Picasso," Francois Mauriac wrote, "I've never been able to escape the contradictory evidence of genius and impostor. I always had the impression of witnessing a criminal attempt masterminded by a clever sorcerer, with the almost supernatural glare of a hatred for the human face." In the case of many of the Jacqueline portraits there was hatred for the human body as well. With his sexual prowess waning and with impotence around the corner, another reason was added to his deep misogyny. Lust denied turned to loathing for the female body, and sexual passion to disgust. Jacqueline's body was massacred in painting after

painting and drawing after drawing. "Sometimes I dream that he loved me," she said. But it must have been hard to sustain that dream when, as the years went on, more and more of her was brutalized by his brush.

One morning, when they woke up in a hotel in Arles, ready for that day's bullfight, they called Parmelin and Pignon, sleeping in the next-door room. "Have you made up?" they asked, as the Pignons had had a monumental fight the night before. "Of course," Parmelin answered.

"But really made up?"

"Yes, of course."

"So, you made love?" Jacqueline asked, clearly prompted by her husband.

"Please, Jacqueline," Parmelin protested.

"But did you make love?" Picasso screamed into the telephone. "It's no reconciliation if you didn't!"

"Yes, we did," Parmelin finally said, exasperated. "Are you happy now? We did make love."

"We did too!...We did too!..." Picasso chanted, loudly enough for Parmelin to hear. Making love had become an event worth bragging about.

But then, so had staying alive. Two of the key people in his long life died in 1963: Braque in August, Cocteau in October. He went on working. Perhaps work could command death out of his orbit. If not work, then what? His children, far from giving him a sense of life going on, were a grim reminder of his life coming to an end. During the Christmas holidays, he told Claude that this was the last time he could visit him. "I am old and you are young," he added. "I wish you were dead."

Paloma went back for the Easter holidays. "No, you cannot see him," she was told. So that Christmas of 1963 was the last time either child would see their father. "'Monsieur was out' for ten years..." Paloma said, "the person I loved most in the world." It was a confrontation with their father's darkness that nearly crushed them; an explosion that still detonates in their lives. "When the door slammed shut," said Claude, "it was like a bolt of lightning." Already fragile as a result of his genetic heart defect, Claude was ill-equipped to deal with such a violent rejection. "I wish you were dead," his father had said and, as

if he had been cursed, Claude tried to take his life by jumping off a wall. He did not succeed, and maybe he had not intended to succeed, but the burden of his father's rejection weighed heavily on him. Françoise decided that it might be easier if he left France for a while. She sent him to Cambridge in England, and in the first letter she received from him, he told her that he wanted to go to London and be a waiter. His letter was so full of woe and grief that Françoise, worried, wrote back and asked him "as an exercise to draw a balance sheet," and write her another letter in which he put in red all that was good in his life and in blue all that was bad.

"Maybe I could see a little too much of what was going on," Claude said later, still trying to understand how something so unnatural could have happened. "That bothered my stepmother. She was always jealous of my sister and me. It troubled her, I guess, that we should be around to bring back memories of the past." Paulo's daughter, Marina, also blamed Jacqueline: "After the marriage, my grandfather seemed to lose his humanity. We saw absolutely nothing of him, we received absolutely nothing from him. My feeling is that most of that must have originated with Jacqueline; it could have come from no one else."

Jacqueline, in fact, was ultimately only an accessory. In the spiritual clash between darkness and light that had been

raging in his soul and in his life for years, Picasso had chosen to side with the darkness and abjure the light. At the same time, he had chosen to spend the rest of his life with a woman who would ensure that there would be no light around him to challenge the darkness. Together, they rejected all the emotional ties that make man human; together they rejected love. If it looked to his family as though the moment he married Jacqueline was the moment he lost his humanity, it was only because that was the moment he gave her the power to be his co-destroyer. But he gave her that power, and without him her capacity for evil would have been as commonplace and insignificant as, without him, she would have remained. Pure evil has a monumentality to which, alone, she could not have aspired. If she behaved like a monster, and made sure that there was no reason for him not to, it was thanks to him that all that was good in her had disappeared.

In March 1964, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Picasso's arrival at the Bateau-Lavoir, Le Jardin des Arts asked a host of art-world celebrities what they thought of Picasso. Cocteau's contribution was obtained shortly before his death: "What one 'thinks' of Picasso is irrelevant. One should quote and quote again Mallarmé's definitive answer to Degas, who complained about the laborious thought process required for the

writing of a sonnet: 'But, Monsieur Degas, it is not with thoughts that one writes a poem, it is with words.' Picasso sanctifies defects. This is, for me, the only rule of genius. Everything else is play."

That was the attitude which permeated the outraged response of the Picasso faithful when, in the summer of 1964, extracts of the book that Francoise had been writing with Carlton Lake about her life with Picasso appeared in The Atlantic Monthly. In November the book itself came out in New York and The New York Review of Books became the first battleground for the war that was to rage on for the next year around Life with Picasso. "This breach of confidence," John Richardson wrote in his review, "is the more unconscionable, as Picasso loathes any public divulgence of his private views..."

James Lord replied to the review. "Now the fact is," he wrote, "that Picasso himself has chosen to live in a fish bowl. He may not have bargained for the total transparency of the facet of it with which Madame Gilot has provided us, but he has no one to blame for that but himself, and it ill becomes others to take exception to it. I think it is significant that in spite of his strictures concerning the book and its author, Mr. Richardson never categorically states that this portrait of Picasso is a false one. He neglects to do so, I believe, for the excellent

reason that he is in a position to know how astoundingly true to life the portrait is....It is important to know how perverse, cruel, ruthless, sentimental, and promiscuous Picasso could be. Indeed, how could anyone honestly study his work and imagine him to be otherwise?"

"When I started to work on the book," Francoise said, "I didn't know when I would publish it or whether I would. I wanted to put things down while my memory was clear, and it was also a way to order my thoughts and my experiences and in the process free myself from them. What gave me the green light to publish was his decision to stop seeing the children. When they had nothing more to lose in terms of their father's affection, there was no more reason for me to delay publication. Also, I felt that if the book was published while he was still alive, he had a chance to respond if he wanted. At the same time, I was very careful to make no statements which I could not document and substantiate, and there were a lot of damaging facts that I did not include since he was still alive and, even though he was not acting like it, still the father of my children."

The tone of Francoise's book was captured in its closing paragraph: "My coming to him, he said [in 1944], seemed like a window that was opening up and he wanted it to remain open. I

did, too, as long as it let in the light. When it no longer did, I closed it, much against my own desire. From that moment on, he burned all the bridges that connected me to the past I had shared with him. But in doing so he forced me to discover myself and thus to survive. I shall never cease being grateful to him for that."

He seemed determined to force her to discover even more resources in herself in order to survive what followed in the spring of 1965, when Life with Picasso was about to appear in France. His holy ire descended on her in three steps. First, he asked the courts to seize the edition of Paris-Match in which the book was being serialized, citing as the reason "an intolerable intrusion" into his private life. On March 22, he lost his case. On March 25, he brought an action against Calmann-Levy, Francoise's French publishers, asking the court to ban the book. The case was heard on April 12 and 13 and dismissed. "What saved the day," Francoise said, "is that I had included in the book only what had already, in some form or other, been in the public domain and what I could document. I had deliberately left out everything else."

He had now lost twice. But he was not finished. On May 20, he filed an appeal asking again that the books be seized and destroyed. By now the battle had been joined by forty

personalities of the art world who, organized by Parmelin, signed a manifesto published in Les Lettres Francaises, demanding the banning of the book. Artists and intellectuals, ordinarily the champions of free speech, were seized by the collective hysteria that had spread among the bien-pensants. The most strident among them actually admitted that they had not read the book and were clearly determined not to do so in case it prejudiced them in favor of the author. "I am lucky enough to know the original and can voice my outrage at the fake," wrote Pignon. "In Picasso, there is no divorce between the man and the painter. It's of no use exalting the painter if one destroys the man. The two walk hand in hand, and Picasso's way of being a painter is a source of morality in itself. If there has been such an outrage among painters and sculptors, it is because Picasso is for us an example....I am outraged when they want to make us believe that he is a destroyer. He is, on the contrary, a stimulus for the spirit, a giver of freedom, a radiant soul..."

It was all uncannily reminiscent of the language that had been used among those similarly "outraged" by the lack of sufficient reverence in Picasso's portrait of Stalin. Adding to the air of total unreality, Pignon, over a year after Picasso had cut his children out of his life, wrote: "Francoise Gilot attempts to publicly disparage the father of her children; the

fact that not even the bonds existing between the children and their father have been spared, proves what kind of book this is." From then on, the publication of Francoise's book became the excuse for Picasso's refusal to see his children. The dates belied the claim, but the received wisdom had been set.

Joining the chorus of condemnation of both Francoise and the book -- the Communist press naturally leading the way -- there was André Marchand, prostrate before Picasso's genius: "A woman who has spent ten years with him should not confuse petty personal affairs with the grand adventure of a creator"; there was Labisse, disarmingly frank: "I have not read the book, but... since Picasso has found it disagreeable, I take his side out of friendship"; there was the open letter to Picasso from the "Vallauris Communists": "We cannot lend an ear to a pack of lies contained in a book that a sensationalist press and the Gaullist radio have been publicizing in order to slander you as a man, an artist and a Communist."

At the suggestion of André Parinaud, the editor of Arts, Francoise had written an article responding to the attacks. But the pressure from his peers proved too much for Parinaud. On May 15, he wrote to Francoise: "My dear friend, you will think that journalists belong to a strange body of people, but it is sad to say that what was news one day ceases to be news the next. When

I proposed to publish your answer to the manifesto of the forty, I had at my disposal the necessary pages in the magazine and the artistic news that week was relatively scarce. Now, I find myself this week with 107 reviews of exhibitions on my hands. It would be a provocation to the painters and galleries to devote a whole page to what is called today 'l'affaire Picasso,' but which on another level is beginning to weary intelligent people. I am sorry to return your article to you. I am convinced that you will understand my reasons. I ask you to believe, my dear friend, in the assurance of my best sentiments."

With Picasso's appeal still pending and the stampede to excommunicate Francoise undiminished, l'affaire Picasso had hardly lost its topicality. But the letter summed up the cowardice and hypocrisy that Francoise had encountered in the art world ever since she had committed the crime of leaving Picasso, and then compounded it by committing blasphemy. But there were defenders. "Giacometti was one of the friends," Francoise said, "who called me often to give me strength and say that he was thinking a lot of me." Arthur Koestler and Francois Mauriac were two men of letters who also stood behind her.

Picasso's lawyers, Bacqué de Sariac and Georges Izard, pleaded his case on June 23. "Our client," de Sariac said in

court, "is not a Bluebeard, he is not intrinsically evil and does not think of money all the time. Nor is he...a primitive full of superstitions and fetishisms of all sorts."

"Even a famous man like Picasso," pleaded Georges Izard, "has a right to justice."

"picasso," countered the lawyer for the defense, Paul Arrighi, "is not a stained-glass saint. He is fallible and therefore can be criticized. And Madame Gilot has not exceeded her historian's rights. A biography does not have to be a panegyric....Finally, Picasso, the public man, has for over half a century now obligingly lent himself to publicity. He has been photographed for magazines, dressed as a torero, a clown or quite simply naked in his bathtub. Today he displays a sudden and belated proclivity for secrecy."

"In a case such as the one submitted before us," the Assistant Public Prosecutor in the Court of Appeal concluded, in Solomon-like fashion, "intimacy does not belong exclusively to either lover." He had portrayed her, as he saw her, in his paintings; she had portrayed him, as she saw him, in her book. The judgment of the lower court was upheld and Picasso's appeal rejected. Picasso had "often exposed himself to public curiosity," the court ruling said. "He has not been apprehensive

about publicity....Her personal memories were uncontestedly linked to those of the painter. So she could not evoke the ones without retracing the others. But she has absolutely not sought scandal or the satisfaction of a desire for vengeance."

The day after her victory, she received a phone call from Picasso. It was the first time they had spoken directly to each other in the last ten years. "Once more you win," he said. "I congratulate you, because as you know I like only the winners of life. I cannot stand losers."

"Thank you," Francoise said, "but you did everything you could to turn me into a loser. And, anyway, why should you love only the winners?"

That phone call, after three legal actions, after all that had been said in court trying to discredit her and after all that she had been through emotionally during months of consecutive trials, was a validation of the perversity of character that Picasso's lawyers had tried to deny in their court statements. He could recognize the existence of others only if, after he had done everything he could to destroy them, they had not been destroyed. Otherwise, like Goethe's Mephistopheles, he could have no consciousness of another's reality. Human beings were

conjured up by him and conjured away by him -- at will. Three times he had tried to conjure Francoise and her book away, and three times the courts had refused to follow his will.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?"

"He had a warrior's mentality," Picasso's cousin Manuel Blasco said. "Fight during the day and fornicate at night." In November 1965, in conspiratorial secrecy, Picasso was taken to the American Hospital in Neuilly for gallbladder and prostate surgery. From then on there would be only fighting. For a warrior who had worn his virility like a badge, the end of his sexual life was a terrible calamity. It looked in fact as though the operation might signal the end of his fighting days too. During the rest of 1965 and up to December 1966, he drew and etched but he did no painting. It was the longest he had ever been away from the battlefield. "When a man knows how to do something," he told Luis Miguel Dominguín, "he ceases being a man if he stops doing it." He urged Dominguín never to retire

from bullfighting. And he knew that he could not allow himself to stay for much longer out of the arena.

"They gave me quite a goring when they operated on me in Paris," he said. "It was a terrible shock. The scar is exactly like what a bullfighter has after an accident in the ring. The difference is that the bullfighters receive their scars when they're young and they heal better." On another occasion he said, "They cut me open like a chicken." He varied the imagery but the shock remained. His magical wholeness had been violated and he felt more than ever exposed to the vicissitudes of "evil destiny." Keeping the news of his surgery from the world was a way not only of protecting his privacy but of protecting himself. When he and Jacqueline had taken the night train for Paris on their way to the American Hospital, heavily disguised, maybe he thought that he was fooling not only the press but destiny. They had boarded the train in the little station of Saint Raphael, instead of Cannes, and Dr. Hepp, who would perform the surgery, had checked him into the hospital as Monsieur Ruiz.

He had kept death at bay, but not the despised signals of his inescapable mortality. He had had to give up his Gauloises, his life's most constant companion; his failing eyesight meant that his magnetic gaze was more and more often hidden behind

glasses; his growing deafness gave him one more reason to avoid people; and the deep scar from the operation which, once the curtain of secrecy had been lifted, he defiantly displayed to the few still allowed to visit him, was a constant hateful reminder of what he had lost forever. "Whenever I see you," he told Brassai, "my first impulse is to reach in my pocket to offer you a cigarette, even though I know very well that neither of us smokes any longer. Age has forced us to give it up, but the desire remains! It's the same with making love. We don't do it any more, but the desire is still with us!"

The desire and the frustration, the rage and the self-lacerating despair were funneled into his work, and sex in anticipation, sex in action, sex in retrospect became the dominant motif of much of his painting -- once he had sufficiently recovered from the "goring" to start painting again. The reports from Notre Dame-de-Vie were that Picasso was back to normal -- his own extraordinary normal, of course. In the same way that he had all his life pretended to be an excellent swimmer, he now pretended, as best he could, to be untouched by age. "He only knows how to float and splash about a bit along the shore," wrote Roberto Otero, a bullfighting aficionado who had succeeded in penetrating the iron curtain of Notre Dame-de-Vie. "Still, the imitation is so realistic that from a distance nobody could tell if his 'swimming' is authentic or not." And

his imitation of being "fresh as the morning dew" was so convincing -- to all those who wanted to be convinced -- that the myth of the perpetually vital genius lived on. "Nine months have passed since Picasso's operation," wrote Otero in his journal on August 15, 1966. "His recovery has been remarkably swift. Even the doctors are astounded." But every now and then there were those allowed in who were not entirely blinded by the privilege of access. Cecil Beaton was one of them. "Picasso, sad to relate," he wrote, "had aged and it had taken the form of shrivelling him. There was something melancholy about his eyes, which had lost some of their brilliance; before they were black, but now they seemed a light brown."

What he had lost -- and it was reflected in his eyes -- was his capacity for joy. "In the end," he had said, "everything comes back to oneself. It's the sun in the belly with a thousand rays. The rest is nothing." Now he told Pignon: "One day you'll see what it's like, when old age arrives and your powers diminish." It was the closest he came to admitting that the sun in his belly was not what it had been. And the rest was nothing. "Painting face to face with the next world, even be it nothingness, is not the same as painting face to face with this one, even be it painting," wrote Malraux about Picasso painting face to face with death, sitting now rather than standing,

doubled-up over his canvas.

Malraux was Minister of Cultural Affairs at the time when a retrospective exhibition was contemplated to honor Picasso on his eighty-fifth birthday. The Gaullist Minister was, however, loath to approach the Communist Painter. "The trouble was that they considered themselves equals before eternity," someone said, observing their mutual suspicion. "You're mad," was Malraux's response when he was urged to visit Picasso at Notre Dame-de-Vie. "He'd leave me standing at the gate, sending word that someone was coming to open. And I'd wait there for hours while they tipped off L'Humanité." Finally Jean Leymarie was put in charge of the exhibition and all that remained was to convince Picasso to accept the honor. "We made our big decisions in the evening," Jacqueline recalled. "Pablo always worked late; afterward we'd go to the kitchen and eat something, and it was then that he would make decisions. I talked to him about the exhibition, and he said no. An hour later, before going to bed, he said: 'If that's what you really want, go ahead, but I'll have nothing to do with it.' And he stayed in bed for a week." Of course when the time came he could not resist dealing with almost everything, and he even warned Leymarie: "You'd have been better off never knowing me. You're going to have the worst problems."

At the beginning of October 1966, Leymarie had left for

Paris after a working visit to Notre Dame-de-Vie, when someone realized that he had forgotten to measure the paintings being sent to the Grand Palais. "There is a constant coming and going," Otero recalled. "Jacqueline, Louise Leiris, and the director of the gallery, Maurice Jardot, are in the process of correcting Leymarie's oversight, recognizing that he was the victim of a tremendous emotional experience."

The next day, there was a lot of flattering banter around the dinner table about how futile was the attempt to evaluate realistically the works leaving for Paris "because the government of France would fall." "In any case," said Otero, "there is no great problem, since the security measures taken will be in keeping with the value of the paintings. There will be a police escort for the trucks from Mougins to the Grand Palais, with a show of force worthy of an extraordinary bank operation. And police headquarters will follow the convoy of paintings by radio patrol during the entire trip. As if all this were not sufficient, a representative from the Ministry will accompany the expert Louvre movers in one of the trucks. Picasso listens to this talk with a mixture of curiosity and childlike admiration. It was as if he had personally unleashed a storm at sea by having accepted the homage show."

The morning that the trucks with the paintings and the sculptures finally left for Paris, Picasso, watching them from his bedroom terrace, wondered absentmindedly what had happened to the Man with the Sheep. "What a fool I am," he immediately corrected himself. "They just took it with them a moment ago....these things happen, just like asking a widow about her freshly buried husband. The worst part is that I'm going to miss the man with the sheep. I'm so used to pissing on it from the first-floor studio."

On November 26, Malraux inaugurated the retrospective of paintings at the Grand Palais and of sculptures at the Petit Palais. By now he had convinced himself that the exhibition had from the beginning been his brainchild. And in Picasso's Mask, he referred to it as the "retrospective show I had organized in 1966." Close to a million people had seen the exhibition and it was, therefore, something definitely worth having organized in retrospect, even if he had washed his hands of it in prospect. "Picasso dominates his century as Michelangelo dominated his," Jean Leymarie, who had organized the show, wrote in his introduction to the catalogue. "Still more is no doubt to be unveiled. The man whose three resounding syllables fill the century and the planet, has not finished surprising and casting his spell on us." In one of the radio shows dedicated to the exhibition, a priest announced that "if the history of our times

had not been written, one could read it in Picasso's work." He meant it as a compliment.

"Are you going? All the newspapers say you're going," palao i Fabre asked when he visited Picasso at Notre Dame-de-Vie during the retrospective. "Oh, really? Well, then, it's certain that I'm not going." Breton had said of Picasso that he had "developed to the ultimate the spirit not of contradiction but of evasion." In fact he had reached new heights in both. On the day of the opening he was greatly amused by the thought of all the other painters flocking to the show. "Poor, poor painters," he laughed, "because of me, they have achieved nothing today, while I have not stopped working from the moment I got up! How many other painters' white canvases I must have on my conscience!" And musing on the exhibition, he wondered what was the point of it all: "I really don't know why I let it happen. Basically, I'm against exhibitions and homages, as you know. Moreover, it is of no use to anyone. Painting, exhibiting -- what's it all about?"

It was the question that set the tone of the last years of Picasso's life. He felt more and more like Sisyphus, condemned to roll his heavy stone up a hill, only to have it roll back as he reached the top -- day after day. "Worst of all," he said,

"is that he never finishes. There's never a moment when you can say, 'I've worked well and tomorrow is Sunday.' As soon as you stop, it's because you've started again. You can put a picture aside and say you won't touch it again. But you can never write THE END."

Against his growing sense of futility and waste he could only pit more work, more and more frenzied, faster and faster, coarser and coarser. He was still recovering from an attack of hepatitis when, in December 1966, he started painting again. His work was suddenly invaded by soldiers -- seventeenth-century soldiers that he named musketeers and that came to him when, during his fallow period, he had spent a lot of time studying Rembrandt. "When things were going well," Jacqueline said, "he would come down from the studio saying, 'They're still coming! They're still coming!'"

"You would think," someone was quoted as saying, "he is trying to do a few more centuries of work in what he has left to live." He had already enclosed the terrace and turned it into an additional studio, having complained that he no longer had enough room to paint in: "The house is full of paintings, everywhere. They breed like rabbits!" Zervos kept arriving to photograph whatever he produced -- paintings, drawings, etchings. "It's like going to the movies -- or to a bullfight," he said.

Jacqueline and the rest of the court seemed convinced that there was greatness in numbers.

But what did he think? "The more time passed," Parmelin said, "the more concerned he was to protect his work and to achieve finally the painting he dreamt of -- the painting of which he had been dreaming all his life." And Otero wrote later, "Picasso has been painting at the rate of two canvases a day." But quantity and speed and ingenuity and prodigiousness and all the other easy yardsticks of achievement were of no relevance to the ultimate painting he longed for. That he knew. Perhaps he hoped that the more he painted, the greater the chances that he might stumble on it. White canvases had become a source of reproach to him. "What could I do," he said once after he had turned away a party of Andalusians from Malaga who had come to visit him. "I would have liked to see them -- but how? You know, two months ago Jacqueline bought sixty canvases from a paint supplier who was going out of business. Well, there are still eleven canvases unpainted, absolutely blank!"

Famished for real nourishment, he voraciously devoured the canvases Jacqueline kept feeding him. Work had become his only source of satisfaction, and the more unsatisfactory it was, the more, like an addict, he went back for bigger and bigger doses.

"I have only one thought: work," he said. "I paint just as I breathe. When I work, I relax; not doing anything or entertaining visitors makes me tired." Sartre had said: "Hell is other people," and Picasso paraphrased his war-time friend: "I suffer from people's presence, not from their absence." And later, "I despise wasting my time with people. Not only now, but ever since I can remember."

As work gradually took over his whole being and everything else was starved out, he seemed further away both from humanity and from the ultimate painting, which he even tried to describe: "The extraordinary would be to make with absolutely no constraints a picture that would incorporate itself into reality....The opposite of a photograph....A painting that contained everything of a particular woman and yet would not look like anything known about her." The closest he would ever come during his last years to capturing the invisible in painting was in words.

He suffered from a recurring nightmare about thieves. "I dream," he said, "that they're robbing me of something. I'm not sure what, but I do know that I wake up screaming 'Stop thief! Stop thief!' Then, on other occasions, I wake up in the night and mull over a thousand things while trying to get back to sleep. It's then that I begin to think about not having seen the

tiny Degas painting, for instance. Well, at that point I wake Jacqueline and ask her to bring the painting. As soon as I see it, I can begin to think about something else. And sometimes we can't find it. That's frightful. Then I begin to suspect it was carried off by the person I last showed it to in the room I last saw it in. After two months the painting turns up in another place, but meanwhile I'm certain that Kahnweiler, or Pignon... stole it." This was the nightmare world of robbers and friends turned thieves, of fear and suspicion that, asleep or awake, he lived in.

His fearful fantasies became reality in the spring of 1967; he was evicted from the rue des Grands-Augustins. It was very hard for many to believe that the man who had just been honored by one of the twentieth century's most extravagant rites, a massive retrospective show visited by a million pilgrims, was being barred from his old studio, still filled with his works, for nonoccupancy. Picasso had lobbied all his powerful friends to prevent it from happening and had even received assurances from the Minister of Cultural Affairs himself, but in the end bureaucracy, the law and his nightmares prevailed.

The task of cataloguing and moving everything fell on Inès and her son, who slept in the studio during the process,

surrounded by Picassos. "What do you owe Inès for the move?" someone asked Picasso when it was all over. "I owe her the whole of life, not the move," he replied. Four years later, the expulsion from the rue des Grands-Augustins still weighed on him as if it had just happened. "Have you heard the sad news?" he asked Brassai when he arrived at Notre Dame-de-Vie one day in 1971. "My studios at rue des Grands-Augustins don't exist any longer! They took them from me. I lost them stupidly..."

"It was," wrote Brassai, "as if he was announcing the death of someone dear to us that we had both known and loved."

"It's sad, isn't it?" Picasso repeated. "It's a terrible loss for me....All traces of the half-century I spent in Paris are now totally and definitely erased..."

Affected by Picasso's visible sadness, Brassai observed in the article he wrote in Le Figaro that it was "as if they had expelled Elizabeth of England from Buckingham Palace under the pretext that she was sojourning at Balmoral or Windsor."

Picasso mourned his old studio, in which he had not set foot for twelve years, longer and more volubly than he had ever mourned a friend. His need to feel and express affection sought refuge in the past, and not in the people of his past but in the

places. "What one will do is more interesting than what one has already done," he had said in the rue des Grand-Augustins days. He tried frantically to act as though that were still true, but the urgency was born of futility rather than passion.

Futility and disgust filled the suite of 347 etchings that he began working on in March 1968, a month after Sabartés's death and the loss of one more link to life and the past. He went on defying death by continuing to dedicate paintings to his dead friend as if he were still alive. And by working. Aldo and Piero Crymmelynck, brothers and masters of printmaking, had installed their press at Mougins and worked closely with him on the series of etchings he produced between March and October. There were brothel scenes, there was Celestina, the procuress from the Picaresque Spanish literature, there was Raphael copulating with Fornarina while relentlessly painting on her body or on nothing at all; and there were lots of voyeurs, sometimes Picasso himself as an old dwarf or a tiny clown, sometimes a king, a jester, the Pope, or a musketeer. "The proud musketeer," wrote Schieff, "has become an old geezer at a peep show for whom the glorious stage of the world has narrowed into a dark-centered cleft of flesh." The series was described as "erotic," but it was the eroticism of the gaping crotch and the Peeping Tom.

picasso was sick. And the couples that filled his work in 1969, kissing, copulating and suffocating each other bore the stamp of his sickness. His body was a sack of illls and frustrated desires. The body that had for so long served him so well had turned against him. He could not see well, he could not hear well, his lungs fought for breath, his limbs fought for the strength to sustain him and he fought for the unconsciousness of sleep. But a sickness much more frightening than the inevitable sicknesses of a man close to ninety was the soul-sickness of a man close to death and utterly disconnected from the source of life, a man staring at death and seeing his own fearful imaginings.

People who loved him and whom he had perhaps loved tried to break through the mass of his isolation. Maya, now married to the captain of a French liner and living with her two sons in Marseille, had arrived with her children at the electronic gate in Mougins and heard the gardener repeat the well-rehearsed words: "Monsieur Picasso is not in." Many times she had called and many times she had got a similar response. Claude had arrived at the electronic gate with his young American wife, three months after his wedding in New York. "Who are you?" a voice asked through the gate intercom.

"I'm Claude," he replied.

"Claude who?"

"I'm Claude Picasso. I want to see my father."

The voice went away. It came back: "He's too busy to see you."

"Well, can I come back tomorrow?" Claude persisted quietly.

"No. I don't think he'll have time tomorrow."

At that point a truck with repairmen arrived. They announced themselves and the gate was immediately opened.

"Why can't I go in, if you can?" Claude asked, as if these men, strangers to him and to his pain, might have the answer to the haunting question he had to live with.

"Oh, you need a passport to get in there," one of them answered laughing. Clearly Claude's had the wrong name on it.

The monthly checks that Picasso had been sending Marie-Thérèse for more than thirty years had suddenly stopped. They were her only means of support and in panic Marie-Thérèse wrote

him a long, sad and bewildered letter. She quoted Confucius: "Joy is in everything. One must know how to bring it out." And then, as if suddenly struck by the precariousness of her life, she quoted Schopenhauer: "Life is but a struggle for existence fought with the certainty of being vanquished." In a Composition with Letters and White Hand Picasso had painted in 1927 and kept with him ever since, Marie-Thérèse's monogram appears on a disembodied hand, a symbol of fate. Forty-two years later, Marie-Thérèse wrote about "the hand": his that had struck and forgot and hers extended like a stricken beggar's. "I say that the hand is frightening, the hand raised for false oaths, the hand that clenches the rifle, the hand that braids the barbed wire, the hand that strikes, the hand that kills. I say that the hand is wretched, the wounded hand, the hand that begs, the hand that forgets, the hand in chains, in despair, the hand of death..."

She sent the letter unsigned -- a distress signal that she hoped would stir some compassion. Picasso received it as a threatening spell and even talked to his lawyer Roland Dumas about the "evil eye" and "black magic" in it. Superstition was more than ever alive in him, now that so much else was dead, and increasingly given to paranoia and the frenzies of occult explanations, he saw even in Marie-Thérèse "demons" from whom he had to protect himself. The hand was left begging.

Maya, anxious about her mother, wrote to an art-dealer friend of hers in Los Angeles. It was "a sad letter," Frank Perls recalled. "Maya complained bitterly about her mother's lot....Marie-Thérèse was desperate. Maya wrote that her mother had some paintings by Picasso she would like to sell. Could I tell her how? Could I help?" Perls called Marie-Thérèse from Los Angeles. "Maya had told her she could trust me," he said. "Here was this beautiful woman -- whom Picasso had made into monuments of beauty, mother of my friend Maya -- crying. Over 6,000 miles away, a blond woman was crying."

Two days later, Perls arrived at No. 1 boulevard Henri IV and was met not by a beautiful blond woman but by "a little old lady." Her first question was "When did you see him last?" Perls was struck by the instant confession: he was still the center of her life. What made it all the more striking was that her words echoed those of a beautiful young girl who, a couple of months before, had come up to him outside the Café de Flore and asked him a similar question: "When did you see my father last?" It was Paloma.

Around her dining-room table in her badly heated apartment, Marie-Thérèse talked and talked about the man of whom she had

made a cult. She brought out the relics: a shoe box with all his letters and little packages of tissue paper in which rested his fingernail clippings. The eight paintings, the twenty-three drawings and the fifty-three lithographs she owned were all in the vaults of the Banque Nationale de Paris.

At five o'clock on February 6, Perls arrived at Notre-Dame-de-vie together with Heinz Berggruen, the publisher and art dealer. After many phone calls, they had sufficiently aroused picasso's curiosity about the pictures in their suitcase to have the gate opened for them. "Well, where are the hundred pictures?" he asked when they walked in. "Where could you get a hundred of my pictures?" As soon as they started unpacking them, he knew. They explained that Marie-Thérèse needed money and that they would like him to sign them. "Yes, oh, yes," he said. "I'll do that. Leave them here. I'll sign them. By tomorrow the signatures will be dry and you can take them then."

Maya had warned Perls that Picasso might try to keep her mother's pictures in Mougins -- because of Jacqueline, she had said. Perls was worried about leaving them behind, but before he could respond, Jacqueline burst in. As was her habit, she had been eavesdropping behind the door. "What the devil does that mean?" she screamed. "That woman whom you slept with once in a while on Thursday afternoons has all those pictures....Never will

you sign those pictures! Those pictures belong to you. They were only in storage with Marie-Thérèse....If she needs money why doesn't she hire herself out as a femme de ménage?" Screaming more abuse, she stormed out.

Picasso, left alone with the astonished dealers, improvised a virtuoso performance of the unwilling villain. "Oh, well, what can I do? You see how furious she is. I wish I could help Marie-Thérèse. I wish I could help you, but I cannot." They tried to remind him how much Marie-Thérèse needed the money. "Never mind," he said, "I know you are in good faith, but what can I do? Jacqueline would never forgive me, so that's that."

The idea of Jacqueline not forgiving Monseigneur was, of course, preposterous. As always, whenever it suited him, Picasso portrayed himself as Jacqueline's hapless victim. He had never intended to sign Marie-Thérèse's pictures. He did, however, very happily sign the unsigned lithographs that Berggruen had brought along with him. But then they belonged to a Scandinavian collector he had never met. On another occasion he had spent a lot of time mixing the paint just right to provide the perfect signature to an unsigned Picasso that Tony Curtis owned and had asked him to sign. But then Tony Curtis was a film star.

perls called Maya. "I started all this," she had told him in Marseille when he stopped to see her on his way to Notre Dame-de-vie, "to help my mother live a more comfortable life, to keep her from begging for her monthly check; I hope she can get enough money to buy a little house here by the sea and live near her grandchildren." When Perls told her what had happened, she cried. "I am still an art dealer," Perls wrote, "but the last time I saw Pablo was not a nice day." He had never before dared call "the great, the grand old man" Pablo.

Marie-Thérèse, still in her badly-heated apartment, with no money and no monthly check, decided to talk to a lawyer. Georges Langlois contacted Roland Dumas, and it took the two lawyers several months of negotiations before the payments to Marie-Thérèse were resumed. "Mon cher Langlois," was Dumas's first response, "it will be very difficult to resume the allowance because of the letter she sent him which has made him imagine the worst." And all too ready, like so many others in Picasso's life, to take the responsibility and the guilt, Marie-Thérèse told Langlois: "I have made a terrible blunder."

It soon became clear through the lawyers' many meetings and talks that Picasso was adamant about Marie-Thérèse not selling anything he had given her. Finally an agreement was reached, largely thanks to Roland Dumas, who, as Langlois said, did

everything he could to calm down his client's irrational fears. Marie-Thérèse agreed not to sell any of Picasso's works during his lifetime, in exchange for which he agreed to provide her, through his lawyer, with a letter recognizing her legal ownership of the works Perls had returned to her unsigned, thereby preventing any litigation after his death. He still did not sign the unsigned works, but he authenticated them as being indeed his and as being of value. "Without this," Langlois explained, "he had the right under the law to disown the works as being unsatisfactory, and even claim that he had left them with her but had intended to tear them up or otherwise destroy. He could say that this is why he had not signed them. At this moment, Picasso or no Picasso, the works would have lost their market value."

It was explained to Picasso that by sending Marie-Thérèse money on a monthly basis for thirty years, he was acknowledging what in French law is called his "natural obligation" to her. Her monthly allowance was not only resumed, but increased. "After all," Langlois said, "I had to achieve something for her to justify my existence!" So what natural feeling had not accomplished, legal pressure did. It was the language of power that Picasso understood and spoke fluently.

The Marie-Thérèse case was closed, but Francoise's legal

battle to legitimize her children went on. There the law was still on Picasso's side, so his instructions to Roland Dumas were unambiguous: to fight against all his children's claims. He had told Dumas that "his works were much more his children than the human beings that claimed to be his children." In 1970, the same year that Francoise married in Neuilly Dr. Jonas Salk, the celebrated scientist who had developed the vaccine against polio, the court in Grasse threw out her children's plea for recognition of paternity. "They have my name. Isn't that enough?" Picasso told a court reporter.

Even his own lawyers did not think so. In a dramatic turnabout, Maître Izard, who had pleaded against Francoise and her book, a member of the Académie Française and one of the best-known lawyers in France, would later offer to take on her children's case. "It was so extraordinary," Francoise said, "that at first I thought that it was another of Pablo's ploys, a way to guarantee that my children would never get their rights. But when I met with him, I saw that he really felt that Picasso had been in the wrong in trying to stop my book and extremely unfair in denying my children's rights." Six months later, Izard died of a heart attack. "It was sad to lose him," Francoise said, "but still wonderful that he had joined us. And the fact that he had made the move, that he had switched sides, proved very important psychologically."

The other lawyer in the trial against her book, Bacqué de Sarrac, had not switched sides, but was full of admiration for Francoise's goal: "Francoise cared enormously for the future of her children. That was her constant preoccupation, and her legal battles had one purpose only: to regularize their situation and give them all their rights. I have nothing but good to say about her. As I told her myself: 'I regret what has happened'."

There were many who regretted not only what was happening in Picasso's life, but what was happening in his art. The exhibition of his last year's work at the Palais des Papes in Avignon in May 1970 provoked a slashing attack even from that great Picasso enthusiast and collector, Douglas Cooper, who said that "he had looked long at the pictures and they were nothing but the incoherent scribblings of a frenetic old man in the antechamber of death." Picasso, who had once praised God for having no style, had himself abandoned style and finish and established craftsmanship, and had replaced them with savagery, decorative blues, reds and saffron yellows and a pornographic obsession.

In the same month that Picasso's exhibition opened in Avignon, in Paris a fire destroyed the Bateau-Lavoir. The place

where it all began had been consumed in flames. Picasso staggered on. "If I spit, they'll take my spit, frame it and sell it as great art," he had once said. But among his idolizers, many had grown incoherent. "Wonders, wonders, wonders," wrote Rafael Alberti about the 201 paintings that Picasso had selected himself for another show in Avignon from what he had produced between the fall of 1970 and the summer of 1972. "There are so many wonders, the most profound and the most harrowing that have ever come out of Picasso....Maybe images of anticipation of man after the next nuclear war...Picasso has invented the way to clap with one hand; he has been able to fight himself in the bull-ring and put an end to his own life by thrusting his bullfighter's sword just beneath his shoulder; and then he was dragged around the ring by the mules and returned alive in the middle of the plaza."

On October 25, 1971, he celebrated, very quietly, his ninetieth birthday. His birthday present from Jacqueline was the installation of an elevator at Notre Dame-de-Vie. His birthday present from the French State was the unveiling by the President himself of eight of his paintings in the Grand Gallery of the Louvre. "Speak to me with respect," he told the Pignons. "I'm going to be hung at the Louvre! Do you think the other Louvre painters will be furious? Will they all rise at night to throw me out?" That was when he was joking. Most of the time, though,

he was full of bitterness: "What do they want -- thanks?" It changed nothing, he would say, had absolutely no importance and what was of real concern to him was elsewhere.

No one was allowed to mention his real concern: death. "Picasso will be 100 years old in ten years" was the hubristic headline of an article that Brassai wrote for Le Figaro after his visit to Notre Dame-de-Vie in 1971. "One must say, one must emphasize," Brassai wrote, "that this man, unscathed by the anguish of old age and resplendent with all the visible signs of youth -- this ninety-year-old Picasso, whom the universe celebrates today is in great part the work, or rather the masterpiece, of Jacqueline Picasso." As well as informing the world that Picasso had discovered the secret of eternal youth, Brassai foreshadowed the veneration of Jacqueline that grew exponentially the closer she got to being the great man's widow. "Calm, serene, devoted, she is the ideal companion of Picasso in his lofty age," he concluded after he had praised her extraordinary abilities as Picasso's secretary. He had asked Jacqueline to show him her latest photographs of Picasso, because, the great photographer added, "she takes very beautiful ones." "But Brassai," she replied, "I have done nothing for years. I have no spare time. I am entirely at the service of my master..."

"I am overburdened with work," Picasso told a reporter at Nice airport where they had accompanied Roland Dumas on his way back to Paris. "I don't have a single second to spare, and can't think of anything else." That was Jacqueline's and Picasso's ultimate complicity. They were co-conspirators in a tragic game of hide-and-seek, tacitly determined to smother death with busy business: he busy with work, she busy with him. He would say "he is an old man" of friends thirty and forty years younger, but, as for himself, wasn't everybody telling him that he was "more sprightly than ever?" Of his old friends only Pallarès remained. Picasso made quite sure when he came to visit that he did not sleep there, afraid that, being even older than himself, Pallarès might suddenly die under his roof and "contaminate" him. Yet, whenever news of another friend's death reached him, he kept repeating defiantly: "You know, you must never equate age with death. The one has nothing to do with the other..."

Socrates had taught that we should "practice death" daily, evaluating the lesser in life in terms of the greater. Picasso practiced daily, nightly and relentlessly the lie of denying death. He clung desperately to his identity as a painter as though that was not only his shield, his defense, his talisman, but all that he was. Presiding over this colossal defense against truth was Jacqueline, handpicked by him for the purpose.

And at the heart of this defensive strategy was work -- frenzied work at the expense of everything, including good work. "I do worse every day," he said in a rare moment of self-awareness. But he did not let that stand in his way: "I have to work....I have to keep going."

Among the hundred and fifty-six last etchings that he did between January 1970 and March 1972, there were forty inspired by the eleven Degas monotypes that he owned, portraying scenes in a brothel. He had brought one out to show to Brassai. "The girls, clad only in long midnight blue stockings," Brassai wrote, "are clustered around their madam, an old harriidan dressed entirely in black, embracing her and kissing her cheeks. 'It's called La Fête de Madame,' Picasso explains. 'One of Degas's masterpieces, don't you think?'" Perhaps to punish Degas for producing what he no longer could, Picasso had turned Degas in his etchings into an impotent voyeur, plundering with his stare the female monsters parading their lacerated flesh. "Degas would have kicked me in the ass if he had seen himself like this," he told Pierre Daix. If Degas is ridiculed, womanhood is savaged in these forty variations on Picasso's misogyny, the repulsive whores' orifices obsessively and menacingly displayed.

"you live a poet's life," he told Parmelin, "and I a

convict's." On June 30, 1972, he looked the terror that consumed him in the face, and painted it. It was his last self-portrait. The next day, Pierre Daix came to visit him. "I made a drawing yesterday," he told him. "I think I have touched on something there...It is not like anything ever done." He took the drawing and held it up to his face, then put it down, without any comment. It was the face of frozen anguish and primordial horror held next to the mask that he had worn for so long and that had fooled so many. It was the horror he had painted and the anguish he had caused and which, in his own anguish, he continued to cause. Two months after he painted his last self-portrait, Pablito, his first grandson, tried to see him. He arrived on his motorcycle and showed his identity card. He was turned away, and when he persisted, the dogs were let loose on him and his motorcycle thrown in a ditch.

"We never mentioned his health," Parmelin said. "And he only talked about the health of Jacqueline." So the Pignons were told nothing when Picasso went into the hospital in the fall of 1972 with pulmonary congestion. Days later, after they had been calling the house and getting either no reply or no explanation, a card arrived from Jacqueline: "All is well." That was all that was ever said. In the meantime, rumors of his death were whispered in Paris.

"I no longer interest you," Picasso told the Pignons on the phone in December, his voice broken. "I know very well that I don't count." He had earlier accused Pignon of loving Tintoretto more than him because he had preferred to go to Venice rather than stay with him at Notre Dame-de-Vie. Now he could not bear the thought that they could not be there on New Year's Eve: "Why, but why?...It's idiotic; just come!" Jacqueline was just as insistent: "Come on, don't create problems! Come immediately!..."

They arrived in the morning of December 31. The Gilis were already there from Barcelona. Jacqueline was so tense that Parmelin felt that she was "continuously on the edge of cracking up." "And tonight," Jacqueline exclaimed as they were sitting around Picasso's bed, "we are going to have a party!" As soon as she was out of the room, Picasso felt that he had to account for this tinge of hysteria: "She cannot see how I am and yet I am all she can see." Jacqueline had buried the truth so deeply that for her the lie was now the truth. "Tonight we are going to have a party!" she repeated, as soon as she was back in the room. "Yes, yes, and we are going to dance too," Picasso said, humoring her. For him it was becoming too hard to deny the signals his body was sending him as it gradually capsized. Still, and even in extremis, protecting the Picasso mask was in the forefront of his

consciousness. "Tell them, above all," the Pignons overheard him say to Jacqueline as they were leaving his bedroom, "that they should tell no one that I'm sick..."

A part of him clung to the mask, but a part of him was too exhausted to care. At different times during that grim New Year's Eve, the control passed from one to the other. The house was full of tension. "Why inflict this 'party' on him," the Pignons wondered to themselves, "why not leave him in peace?" Exasperated, Picasso endorsed their silent thoughts. He told them "that Jacqueline was outside reality, that she's going to all this trouble for nothing, that he wants to see nobody, that he only wants to be left in peace, alone with his thoughts, that everybody should go and have fun but that he doesn't want to move -- for nothing in the world." And he added: "It's already difficult being with myself alone. I have to walk, to drink, to eat, 'not to let myself go', what does all that mean -- and the good doctors and the good advice? To be left alone, that's all I ask..."

He was, for the moment, tired of everyone's efforts to hide his death from him. Above all, he was tired of his own efforts, tired of all the falsehoods, the deceptions and the self-deceptions. But Jacqueline was determined that the game should go on, that they should have "a nice time." So he put on the

mask again and, arm in arm with Jacqueline, took the elevator down to the party. Antebi, his lawyer from Cannes, and his wife had already joined the others. "See, how we dressed up?" he said pointing to their party clothes. The Pignons, who moments earlier felt and acted as though they were at a wake, were all too eager to applaud the performance and fool themselves: "The Picasso who enters is the Picasso we know. Except for the voice. Animated, pleased, proud like a conqueror, which he is....I had the impression that he felt cured, ready for anything, reinstated in everyday life -- the Picasso of the good old days."

In fact, he had only regained a few inches of lost ground -- enough to find the strength to see 1973 in with his mask tightly in place. His face, the face of the last self-portrait, stayed rolled up in the dark studio next to the living room. The only painting he did that year was to rework the Character with a Bird, his variation on Rembrandt's Falconer, in which he transformed "the watchful gaze of The Falconer into the frightened stare of an idol" -- the stare of the rolled-up self-portrait.

On April 1, he wrote to Marie-Thérèse telling her that she was the only woman he had loved. Was he seeing her again as she had first been for him -- a vision of beauty and purity, a

promise of entering together a forbidden world where abandoned sexuality would lead to a heightened state of being? Or was the letter a Mephistophelian April Fool's joke, the last lie with which to secure her bondage to him, disorient her a little more and put one more nail in her cross? Perhaps he wrote to her from mere force of habit. Perhaps he spoke the truth.

On April 5, he called Pignon. It was the day before the opening of the exhibition of Pignon's Red Nudes: "Go on don't spare them!...Paint nudes, nudes and more nudes!...Show them!..." He went on in his broken voice: "...mountains of breasts, mountains of bottoms." Jacqueline took the phone when the men had finished their men's talk. "You see," she told Parmelin, "everything is fine!"

On the Sunday morning of April 8, Jacqueline called Pierre Bernal, Picasso's cardiologist in Paris. Dawn had barely broken. She had woken him up, but she sounded cool and matter-of-fact. "When are you coming to see us? You're still coming for Easter, aren't you?"

"No, not before May," he replied. "I have to go to the States right after Easter."

"So late..." she said in a tone which betrayed that this was

not a casual call at a strange hour.

"Would you like me to come right away?" he asked.

"Yes, that's it. It would please him. He wants to see you. Come!" Dr. Bernal took the first plane to Nice. Florenz Rance, the local doctor, was already there when he arrived. He had been coming up to Notre Dame-de-Vie almost every day: "A responsibility, rather like looking after the king of France!" he said.

Sitting up painfully against the pillows, in his beige pajamas, Picasso was gasping for breath. The fingers of the hand he extended to the doctor were blue and swollen. While Dr. Bernal was confirming with his instruments what his professional eye had already seen, Jacqueline, trailing her long, red dressing gown, paced up and down the room. Catherine and Miguel waited in another room. The cardiogram showed rattles in both lungs and a dangerously large congestion in the left lung.

"I knew the minute I walked in," Dr. Bernal said, "that it was the end. He asked me no questions. He did not realize that he was going to die. I tried to make Jacqueline understand, in the room next door, that it was going badly."

"We have already saved him," she said. "You are here. We are going to save him. He doesn't have the right to do this to me, he doesn't have the right to leave me..." These were the words she kept repeating through the morning like an incantation: "He doesn't have the right to do this to me, he doesn't have the right to leave me..."

"Where are you, Jacqueline?" Picasso cried from his bedroom. Left alone with Catherine, Dr. Bernal repeated to her what her mother refused to hear: "You know it's going very badly."

"I can see," replied Catherine.

"He cannot do this to me..." Jacqueline kept repeating more to herself than to anyone else.

His heart and his lungs were both fast giving out. He tried to talk, but he was suffocating. His words, coming through his gasps for air, sounded like wailing, hard to understand. He mentioned Apollinaire and seemed far away from Notre Dame-de-Vie, in the spectral world of his past. Then he was once again back in his room: "Where are you, Jacqueline?" He turned to Dr. Bernal: "You are wrong not to be married. It's useful." They

were his last coherent words.

For two hours after that, he struggled convulsively for breath. At 11:45, Dr. Bernal was giving him an injection when he noticed that his heart had failed. He started immediately a cardiac massage. At the same time, he asked Miguel to give him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and Jacqueline what turned out to be a last injection. "I could not convince her that the end had come," the doctor said. "Yet I had closed his eyes."

Someone in the room coughed. Jacqueline jumped and cried, "It's him." She compelled the doctor to take his pulse again. But the only sound he could hear was the murmur of the roses rustling against the window.

EPILOGUE

On the afternoon of April 8, in Barcelona, Manuel Pallarès, Picasso's oldest friend, was listening to the radio when the program was interrupted by a bulletin announcing the death of Pablo Picasso that morning. He took the next plane to Nice and arrived at the barbed-wire gates of Notre Dame-de-Vie in time, he hoped, to pay his respects to his friend of eighty years for the last time. It was raining and there were Afghan hounds and gendarmes guarding the gates. They announced his arrival on the entry telephone. No, came back the answer, Madame Picasso would not allow him in. The ninety-seven-year-old man was left standing in the pouring rain.

Maya, Claude and Paloma received the same answer. No, they

would not be allowed to see their father for the last time; no, they would not be allowed at the funeral. Nor would his grandchildren, Pablito and Marina, or Inés or, of course, Marie-Thérèse.

Inside Notre Dame-de-Vie, Picasso was lying on his bed covered in an embroidered black Spanish cape. At 5:00 a.m. on April 10, the funeral hearse, with the widow, in a long black cape, sitting beside the driver, left Mougins for Vauvenargues, where she had decided to bury her husband. She had hated the old castle from the beginning, and he himself had grown to hate it, but it was secluded and less accessible than any alternative: he would be buried in the same isolation in which he had lived his last years. Paulo, drunk, was following the hearse, as were Catherine, Arias, the barber, Miguel, the secretary and the Gilis from Spain. There was a highway for a large part of the 170 kilometers from Mougins to Vauvenargues, but Jacqueline had chosen a longer mountain road. It had been snowing all night -- a rare occurrence for April in the South of France -- and along the narrow, curvey road, a truck abandoned in the recent snow blocked the way. Snow plows had to be summoned to clear the road before the cortege could negotiate the difficult turn, leave the mountain road and reach the castle by the highway.

The grave-diggers and a delegation from the municipal

council of Vauvenargues were waiting at the foot of the stone steps leading up to the castle. It was there that Jacqueline had decided to bury her husband. But the ground was too rocky for picks and shovels. The silence of the snowfall was suddenly shattered by the noise of pneumatic drills.

Later, a massive black bronze of a woman with a vase would tower over the grave. Unknown to Jacqueline, it was a statue of Marie-Thérèse that Picasso had modeled in Boisgeloup in 1933.

"I wrote to Miguel, his secretary," Marie-Thérèse recalled, "I told him: 'I can't come because they won't let me in. So please kiss him for me,' and then I thanked him for having worked for Picasso. When I found out that he would be buried at Vauvenargues I went there and demanded to be let into the château. A policeman came with the gardener, and they told me that they were in so much sorrow inside that they couldn't receive me. I left, and afterward I learned that Claude and Paloma had also come with Maya and they had not been received either, so they had to go to the cemetery at Vauvenargues to place the flowers they had brought."

"When I die," Picasso had prophesied, "it will be a shipwreck, and as when a huge ship sinks, many people all around

will be sucked down with it."

Pablito had begged his father to allow him to be present at his grandfather's funeral. Paulo, once again drunk, had told him that Jacqueline had categorically refused. On the morning of Picasso's funeral the grandson who bore his name drank a container of potassium-chloride bleach. He was taken to the hospital in Antibes, where the doctors found that it was too late to save his digestive organs. He died three months later, on July 11, 1973 of starvation. His life had been prolonged by a series of operations and grafts which had been paid for by Marie-Thérèse. She had sold some of her Picassos to try to save the life of his grandson.

"It will be worse than anyone imagines," Picasso had predicted about the settling of his estate. Without a will or testament, with three illegitimate children and with French law in a confusing state of transition concerning the rights of children born out of wedlock, it was not clear either who the heirs were or what exactly there was to inherit.

Nine months after Picasso's death, a law was passed that allowed illegitimate children to receive a fraction of the legitimate heirs' inheritance, provided they had established proof of their descent before their twenty-third birthday. Francoise had already filed suits when Claude and Paloma were twenty-one, giving them the right to claim exclusion from the age barrier when the proposed legislation became law.

The law had thwarted Jacqueline's and Picasso's attempts to shut out his illegitimate children from their natural rights. Since his death, Jacqueline had clung to Picasso's ghost, as in life she had clung to him. The shutters to her bedroom were kept closed. "I have not opened them since Picasso...died," she explained, hesitating over "died." She would lay an extra place for him at the table; act out strange rituals with black capes and burning candles that the locals speculated about in hushed tones; and she had been known to announce that "Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya were here yesterday, and Vishnevskaya sang all night for me and for Pablo."

In March 1974, Claude and Paloma, and soon after, Maya, were recognized as legal heirs. On June 6, 1975, Paulo died, at fifty-four, of drug and alcohol abuse, leaving his two surviving children, Marina, twenty-four, and Bernard, sixteen, to inherit

his share in the estate. So there were now six heirs: Jacqueline, Maya, Claude, Paloma, Marina and Bernard.

Still to be determined were what the estate consisted of and what each heir would inherit. At the request of Claude and Paloma, a notary of the Central Civil Tribunal in Paris, Pierre Zecri, had been appointed the estate's official administrator. The valuation of all the thousands of works Picasso had left behind was entrusted to the eminent art expert Maurice Rheims. The wrangling over the heirs' shares was in the hands of assorted lawyers whose legal fees were estimated to have added up to one of the shares in the estate. "You can never get two members of the family," Claude said, "to agree on anything." Disharmony reigned, now as ever.

Finally in September 1977 l' affaire Picasso was over. The estate was valued at \$260 million, a figure assumed to be an underestimate since it was reached for tax purposes. The nearly 50,000 works that Rheims and his team had photographed consisted of 1,885 paintings, 1,228 sculptures, 2,880 ceramics, 18,095 engravings, 6,112 lithographs, 3,181 linocuts, 7,089 drawings and an additional 4,659 drawings and sketches in 149 notebooks, 11 tapestries and 8 rugs. Jean Leymarie and Dominique Bozo, who had been appointed director of what was to become the Musée Picasso

in Paris, selected the works the state would receive in lieu of death duties. Jacqueline inherited the largest portion, equal to three tenths of the total estate and including Notre Dame de Vie and Vauvenargues. Marina and Bernard each inherited one fifth of the total, with Marina receiving La Californie, and Bernard Boisgeloup. Maya, Claude and Paloma, as the three illegitimate heirs, each inherited one tenth of the total. It was left to luck which works would be included in the share of each heir. They drew lots for already divided groups of Picasso's Picassos -- the number of lots they drew being dependent on their percentage in the estate. They were also allowed some sentimental selections: Marina chose a picture of her grandmother Olga; Claude a portrait of himself; Maya a statue of her mother.

On October 20, 1977, five days before the ninety-sixth anniversary of Picasso's birth and in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of their meeting, Marie-Thérèse hanged herself in the garage of her house in Juan-les-Pins. She was sixty-eight-years old. In a farewell letter to Maya, she wrote of an "irresistible compulsion." "You have to know what his life had meant to her," Maya said. "It wasn't just his dying that drove her to it. It was much, much more than that....Their relationship was crazy. She felt she had to look after him -- even when he was dead! She

couldn't bear the thought of him alone, his grave surrounded by people who could not possibly give him what she had given him."

Just after midnight, on October 15, 1986, Jacqueline called Aurelio Torrente, the director of the Spanish Museum of Contemporary Art in Madrid, to discuss the final details of the exhibition of her personal selection of Picasso's paintings that was to open in Madrid ten days later. She assured him that she would be there for the opening. At three o'clock in the morning, she lay on her bed, pulled the sheet up to her chin and shot herself in the temple. She had left behind a list of everyone she wanted at her funeral.

That was the dark, tragic legacy Picasso left behind in his life. The legacy of his art has to be seen in conjunction with the legacy of our time. He brought to fullest expression the dark, shattered vision of a century that perhaps could be understood in no other terms; and he brought to painting the vision of disintegration that Schoenberg and Bartok brought to music, Kafka and Beckett to literature. He took to its

ultimate conclusion the negative vision of the modernist world -- so much that followed has been footnotes to Picasso. "He was without doubt," Pierre Daix wrote, "the most Faustian artist of a Faustian modernity, but the infinite that was his goal excluded any reconciliation with God."

His tragedy was that he longed for the ultimate in painting and died knowing that it had eluded him. Unlike Shakespeare and Mozart, whose prolific creativity he shared, Picasso was not a timeless genius. Jonson's epitaph for Shakespeare was that he "was not of an age, but for all time." And even Salieri would not have withheld that epitaph from Mozart. I began this book feeling, like the millions of pilgrims to the Picasso retrospectives, all too eager to place him on that narrow peak. I ended convinced that he was in fact a time-bound genius, a seismograph for the conflicts, turmoil and anguish of his age.

From that moment, the immense Picasso literature was suddenly alight with statements from those who, through the years, had seen the fatal flaw in his titanic genius. As early as 1914, a Russian art critic, Yakov Tugendhold, wrote of Picasso's search for "the dimension of the infinite": "Tragedy presides over the work of this intrepid Don Quixote, this knight errant of the absolute...doomed to an eternal and hopeless quest."

For art, which is essentially dynamic, cannot be everlasting; it only touches eternity when man, in love with the world, 'implores the fleeting instant to remain.'"

From the time that he shook the art world with the demoiselles d'Avignon, Picasso was out of love with the world. He saw his role as a painter as fashioning weapons of combat against every emotion of belonging in creation and celebrating life, against nature, human nature and the God who created it all. "I must obstinately remain at the moment among those who cannot see Picasso in the ultimate pantheon," wrote the artist and art critic Michael Ayrton in 1956. "If he is not here it is because whilst the whole achievement is miraculous I am conscious of a factor missing which is present in ultimately great painting, and this factor is the depth which accompanies ineloquence. The still centre."

"How difficult it is," Picasso had said soon after his eighty-fifth birthday, "to get something of the absolute into the frog pond." But however difficult, is it not the highest function of art to try to get something of the absolute into the frog pond of this world? With prodigious skill, complete mastery of the language of painting, inexhaustible versatility and monumental virtuosity, ingenuity and imagination, Picasso showed us the mud in our frog pond and the night over it. There is, of

course, "no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night," yet there is a sense in all great art that beyond the darkness and the nightmares that it portrays, beyond humanity's anguished cries that it gives voice to, there is harmony, order and peace. There is fear in Shakespeare's Tempest and in Mozart's Magic Flute, but it is cast out by love; there is horror and ugliness, but a new order of harmony and beauty evolves out of them; there is evil, but it is overcome by good. "Despite so many ordeals," cries out Sophocles' Oedipus, "my advanced age and the nobility of my soul make me conclude that all is well."

Picasso's advanced age was filled with despair and fueled by hatred. As for his art, he had told André Malraux that "he had no need of style, because his rage would become a prime factor in the style of our time." And his rage did become the dominant style of our time; but there are growing signs that something beyond rage is demanded by the present. "Modern artists," Meyer Schapiro wrote, "have greater resources than modernity allows them to disclose -- resources which are often unsuspected by the artists themselves." It was a call to modern artists to explore the worlds that would be revealed "if their art were open to all that they felt or loved."

Looking back on Picasso's death, Michel Leiris wrote, "Two or three days later, I read the conclusion of a newspaper article by an art historian devoted to the departed Picasso....He evoked in a few lines the legend according to which the passing from the pagan to the Christian era was proclaimed by a voice crying forth: 'Pan, the great Pan is dead!' The end of a world or the beginning of another?"

As we move toward the beginning of another world and a new century, what will Picasso, so irrevocably tied to the age that is dying, have to say to the age being born?

NOTES TO COME

It is expected that the notes will run approximately fifty book pages. Each quote in the text will be attributed in a footnote in the back of the book. If it came from a published source, as opposed to an interview or an unpublished letter or thesis, the page number as well as the author and title will be indicated.

In quoting from other published sources, in some instances I have used an existing English translation and in others, where I felt it would be more effective, I have translated from the original French or Spanish edition. Accordingly, a book or an article is identified in the notes sometimes in its English translation and sometimes in its original edition.

The quotes from Francoise Gilot came from extensive interviews with her. In the matter of recollecting Picasso's own words, however, she and I agreed to use them as they appear in her book Life With Picasso so as to avoid the existence of two varying records of what he said.

Where I quote from interviews with friends of Picasso who have also published their recollections of him, I have distinguished in the notes which of the two sources the quote came from.