

THE ARTIST

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I took a group trip to Portugal,
Ventured out alone,
Saw a sign for a crafts fair
But I did not know how to get there.

I asked a man if he spoke English.
“Why not?” he said, and offered to accompany me.
I chose a hand-shaped vase that looked like polished stone.
He nodded his approval and invited me for coffee
At a restaurant on the beach in Estoril.

The man was slim and balding, ten years my senior,
An abstract artist visiting his mother.
His studio was in Paris.

He took me to his mother’s home.
Although she spoke no English she made me feel welcome
Served us lunch on her red tiled roof.
He showed me his artwork and a photo of him playing drums.
His use of vibrant colors, bold curved lines,
And his charisma were a compelling combination.
I was glad that I had come.

The group was leaving the next day
To go to nearby Lisbon.
I went with them, the city hot and humid;
Next day I got on the train to return to Estoril,
To the restaurant on the water
Where I found my artist.

Barrios said he'd go with me to Lisbon
For he needed brushes, oil, canvas.
He took an overnight case, a book of his artwork,
And the photo, playing drums
And we went to Lisbon.

He asked me, when I got home, to take his art book
To a gallery, far from where my job was.
I was a fool; I gave a friend the artwork to deliver.
She left it there without a note with no one in particular.
I could not write him of what transpired, ashamed to let him know
So I'll never see Paris with Barrios, perhaps the next Picasso.