

JOYLESS PAINTING

Written by

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Based on real people whose estates will sue me

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SFX: a bland, 1970s-era, easy listening ditty. Slightly off-key, distorted and distant.

BOB ROSS, early 50s, materializes on screen. He has a 1960s hippie sensibility, with a bushy grey-brown afro and goatee, and wearing yellow coveralls, white painter's cap and a rag tucked in his back pocket. He wields an oversized novelty paintbrush, longer than he is tall.

He makes broad arm motions with the paintbrush, up and down and around, to conjure a painting out of thin air.

The result is a disturbing seascape from a dystopian present, or a doomsday future: calving glaciers in the background, a vortex of plastic mid-ground, and tsunami waves brutalizing eroded coastline in the foreground.

SUPER: JOYLESS PAINTING WITH BOB ROSS XXXII

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Station WIPB in Muncie, Indiana. Only black curtains as a backdrop. The studio lights flicker, intermittently, in line with an unstable power grid.

Bob holds a wide brush in his right hand. He grips a palette, loaded with paint blobs, camouflaging the loss of several distal portions of the fingers on his left hand.

He wears his trademark light denim shirt, unbuttoned to a provocative level, and dark jeans. In his shirt pocket is tucked a mutant squirrel, PEAPOD.

Bob stands in front of an easel with a blank canvas.

BOB

(to the camera)

Welcome back. Certainly glad you could join us today. I thought we'd just do a fantastic little nuclear winter scene that's very easy, something nice and chilly, and I hope you'll enjoy.

SUPER: STYROFOAM GARBAGE PATCH WHITE

BOB (CONT'D)

Let's start out and have 'em run all the colors across the screen that you need to paint along with us today.

SUPER: PEARL RIVER DENIM INK BLUE

BOB (CONT'D)

While they're doing that, let me show you what I got done up here.

Bob turns to the canvas but keeps chatting to the audience. His tone is warm and soothing.

SUPER: MESOTHELIOMA LUNG BLACK

BOB (CONT'D)

I got my standard old 18" x 24" pre-stretched double-primed canvas.

SUPER: DESERTIFICATION SIENNA

BOB (CONT'D)

But you use whatever size canvas you can find, say, in a dumpster, or maybe an abandoned Hobby Lobby in some dead mall somewhere.

SUPER: GIANT JELLYFISH SWARM RED

BOB (CONT'D)

If you got sewers nearby, you might ask some of the artists living down in there, havin' a good time.

SUPER: BURNING SWAMPS OF E-WASTE UMBER

BOB (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Heck, in a pinch, skin off your nearest dead neighbor will do.

SUPER: HIGH-DENSITY FEEDLOT MANURE SLUDGE BROWN

BOB (CONT'D)

I've covered my canvas with a very thin, even coating of liquid white.

SUPER: AMAZON FOREST FIRE YELLOW OCRE

BOB (CONT'D)

The liquid white is there to make the canvas slick and wet, and it makes painting much easier.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SHACK - DAY

WILHEM 'BILL' ALEXANDER, 73, portly and balding with white hair, stews in front of a dusty cathode ray tube TV. He is surrounded by heaps of unsold merchandise, books titled *The Art of Bill Alexander* and VHS tapes titled *The Magic of Oil Painting*. A broken Emmy award sits on a shelf behind him.

Bill watches Bob on screen - his former protege, now nemesis - and bursts out in a thick German accent.

BILL

That is MY technique! Wet on wet is MINE, you thief! I trained you, and you betrayed me - you think you can do it better?!

He hefts himself up, to manually shut off the old TV.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY (ROME, 1604)

MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO, 32, breathing and sweating heavily, enraged, stands over the body of RANUCCIO TOMASSONI, 30s. He holds a tennis racket in one hand, and a bloody sword in the other.

CARAVAGGIO

(in Italian, subtitled)

I invented wet on wet! And that ball was in! *Bugiaro!!*

He spits on the corpse. He looks up, takes notice of several horrified witnesses, and flees the court.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Bob continues his chipper prattle to the absent audience.

SUPER: PINE BEETLE INFESTED FOREST CRIMSON

BOB

If you don't got liquid white, you can use tears of your offspring.

SUPER: ABLATED GLACIER GREEN

BOB (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Shoot, they sure won't see a normal life expectancy!

He grabs a wide brush. (All of his brushes have his grinning face and afro etched in black ink on the handle, from his successful product line.)

BOB (CONT'D)

Alright, let's start out with a little styrofoam white and lung black on the old two-inch brush.

He taps the brush into the two paints, deftly flicking his wrist to blend the two together into a putrid grey.

BOB (CONT'D)

We don't need much white, just a small amount. And we go right up in here.

He begins to apply paint, starting with the upper corners of the canvas, blending toward the centre.

BOB (CONT'D)

I'm using criss-cross strokes, little plusses. Like dead eyes in cartoons. Remember cartoons? Fill the sky up.

A dense smog takes shape on the canvas.

BOB (CONT'D)

Like so.

Bob switches out the wide brush for a fan brush. He dips this brush into all of the palate's colors, resulting in a blend even more putrid than the sky color.

BOB (CONT'D)

Alright, let's begin dancing in some little shapes, just dancing little things that hopefully will end up being nice acid rain clouds.

With gentle swirling strokes, Bob makes ominous puffy clouds.

BOB (CONT'D)

There!

He returns to the wide brush, and with generous horizontal swipes, blends the sky into an impenetrable blurry haze.

BOB (CONT'D)

Blend it 'til you can't even tell what kind of particulate you're choking on. And just like that, you got some happy little clouds!

Bob gets a childlike grin on his face.

BOB (CONT'D)

Okay, now we can wash the old brush. If you've painted with me before, you know this is the fun part of this whole technique.

He dunks the bristles in a plastic tub of clear liquid, placed beside the easel.

BOB (CONT'D)

We wash our brushes with odorless paint thinner, or formaldehyde, or whatever you got --

He shakes the brush into a garbage can beneath the easel.

BOB (CONT'D)

-- shake it off and beat the devil of out it.

He rapidly thwaps the brush back and forth on the easel leg.

BOB (CONT'D)

That's where you take out all your hostilities and frustrations. It's a lot of fun.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SHACK - DAY

SFX: a bland early 1980s synthesized harpsichord piano ditty (the intro to the long-forgotten PBS show, *The Magic of Oil Painting*.)

Bill is irrationally tearing into his canvases with a rusty box cutter.

BILL

Nachäffer! Nachäffer!!!

He is destroying picturesque mountains, oceans, cabins - all depicting life before the apocalypse.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Bob steps back a moment from the painting.

BOB

Darn, I forgot to put in the sun.  
Easy to forget about something you  
haven't seen in so long.

He dips his pinky into the sienna and umber. Making a small circle, dead centre on the canvas, he smears it into a large depressing blur.

BOB (CONT'D)

There!

Satisfied, he reaches for the palate knife.

BOB (CONT'D)

Let's build us a little mountain.  
Let's start with some ink blue and  
sludge brown, in equal parts these  
two, and a touch of the forest  
crimson.

He blends the three colors with the knife.

BOB (CONT'D)

Mix it up, pull it out very flat.  
Now come right up in here, cut  
across, get a little roll of paint,  
right on the edge of the knife.  
This is where the straight edge of  
the knife really comes in handy.

He pulls the mixture out flat and cuts a swath, to put a thin roll of paint on the knife edge.

BOB (CONT'D)

Of course, a knife comes in real  
handy a lot of the time these days  
when you're not painting.

He makes a gentle stabbing, slicing and slitting gesture, and chuckles. Reaching up to the canvas, Bob begins to scratch in some bare dark mountain shapes.

BOB (CONT'D)

This is one of the simplest ways  
for you to make mountains. Just  
push in a basic shape. You decide,  
it's your desiccated world, you  
decide. Now scrape off all the  
excess paint. You're not gonna hurt  
the canvas. Not like you hurt your  
useless old parasite father-in-law.  
Really scrape it off.

He switches out the knife for the 2" brush.

BOB (CONT'D)

Now one thing you gotta remember about mountains, it's always more distinct at the top. Because at the bottom we got mist, we got haze and pollution, we got smoke from swamps burning, methane from natural gas craters. All these things break up and diffuse light.

He pushes and drags the brush downward, blending.

BOB (CONT'D)

Push it, bend it, pull it. Automatically it mixes with the liquid white, just fades right into nothing. Like humanity, really.

Bob begins on a second mountain range with the knife.

BOB (CONT'D)

Let's give this guy a friend. Because everybody needs a friend.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

SFX: A friendly German voice repeats, "Hello, my name is Bill Alexander and I can teach you how to paint!"

Bill races a Mad Max-style bug-out vehicle through a burned out urban wasteland. Haunted by his memories, he grips the wheel tighter, and presses the gas pedal hard to the floor.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Mountain ranges now run the length of the canvas.

BOB

Years ago, a good friend of mine named Bill taught me this fantastic technique, and I feel as though he gave me a precious gift to share with you all.

He switches back to the fan brush, which he loads with color.

BOB (CONT'D)

He taught me to make mountains all  
snow-covered with grassy meadows.  
But heck, those days are long done.

He pauses a moment, thoughtful, the only lapse in his usual  
cheery demeanor.

BOB (CONT'D)

Anyhoo, let's take some black,  
blue, glacier green, a big old heap  
of crimson. Take that dark color,  
load up the brush full, both sides.  
And maybe, right up in here, lives  
a little stand of dying trees.

He taps in sprigs of sparse trees at the mountain base.

BOB (CONT'D)

Now these trees are real sick, on  
account of the gosh darn erosion  
and salinization, so they turn red,  
and the heat waves burn 'em up real  
easy. So we won't put too many in.  
Shoot, sometimes I get carried away  
and put in a whole forest like the  
before time!

Bob returns to the 2" brush which he coats in the dark  
mountain color. He begins haphazardly blotting in a large  
lifeless land mass into the foreground.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER - DAY

THOMAS KINKADE, early 50s, bloated, drunk, with slicked-back  
hair and a greying goatee, watches Bob on a vulgar-sized TV.

The garish Americana decor does not quite camouflage the  
doomsday bunker elements of his home. A pastel-colored cross  
looms above him. A fireplace fueled by Kinkade-brand jigsaw  
puzzles (instead of logs) illuminates him luridly.

Thomas sorts and shakes bottles of liquor and diazepam, on  
the coffee table, between the sofa cushions, on the floor -  
finding them all empty.

He wobbles to his feet and pitches himself towards the TV.

THOMAS

I am really the most controversial  
artist in the world!

He unzips his pants and begins to urinate on the TV.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

This one's for you, Bob.

The TV shorts out from this 'ritual territory marking'.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Bob is now using the palate knife to block large, leafless tree trunks into the foreground.

BOB

Remember, we don't make mistakes.  
We just have happy accidents. It's  
your dying world, you can do with  
it what you'd like.

The squirrel hisses. Several of its many teeth fall out.

BOB (CONT'D)

Now this here is my friend, we call  
him Peapod the Pocket Squirrel. I  
bet he used to live in a tree just  
like this one. I found him in a big  
old barrel, just glowing like the  
dickens, little rascal, little  
devil. He lives with me now.

Bob picks up a tiny liner brush.

BOB (CONT'D)

Now then, let's give these trees  
some arms. With a little bit of  
paint thinner on the old liner  
brush, I'm going into some brown.

A very thin coat of paint is loaded onto the brush.

BOB (CONT'D)

Let's put an unhappy little limb or  
two on this tree. I'm turning the  
brush, so it makes all kinds of  
little things happening back there.  
The paint just flows, so wherever  
you want arms, just drop 'em in.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Thomas is being chauffeured by an armless MUTANT who drives with his feet (through the same urban hellscape that Bill traversed earlier.) The vehicle is a yellow antique box car, similar to the one depicted *A Century of Racing!* (2011).

THOMAS  
(muttering to himself)  
Codpiece. Codpiece. Codpiece.

Thomas has on his lap a loaded antique pistol.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Bob scrapes off paint with the knife, to make room for --

BOB  
Let's put a little house back here.  
A nice bug-out spot, somewhere for  
hiding from the golden horde. Now,  
I'm gonna go back to the brown. And  
just like before, cut across, get  
that little roll of paint. And  
maybe our little doomsday cabin  
lives right... there.

He blocks in the rough shape of a cabin --

BOB (CONT'D)  
Zoop! Zoop! Zoop!

-- adding an attached shed.

BOB (CONT'D)  
We'll have to give him a shed. I  
like to make little sheds. Maybe  
it's where he's got his genny.  
Maybe it's where his chickens live.  
You know, chickens need a house,  
too.

Swirling brown together with white, into a marbled color, he begins gently adding wooden slats to the roof and siding.

BOB (CONT'D)  
Maybe it's where he stores his  
crossbows and machetes. Maybe it's  
where he converts his urine and  
feces into breakfast, lunch, and  
dinner, who knows?

He wipes the knife clean on a roll of paper towel beneath his easel, and then scrapes a door into the side of the cabin.

BOB (CONT'D)

Gotta have a door to keep zombies out. Zoop!

Smiling, he takes a small step back to admire his handiwork.

BOB (CONT'D)

Shoot, I think we have ourselves a finished painting. Now let's sign this rascal and call it done.

Dipping the liner brush into thinner and then red paint, he signs his last name, with his trademark flourished R.

BOB (CONT'D)

I hope you've enjoyed this one, I hope you'll try it out. I hope it's brought a little joy into your otherwise nightmare existence.

He turns to the camera, to address us.

BOB (CONT'D)

And from all of us here, until next time, if there is a next time, I want to wish you happy painting. And God Bless, my friend.

He gives a little wave, twinkling his fingers, winking.

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

Bob steps out from the back door of the studio, into a dingy alley. He carries under his arm three paintings, of the same nuclear winter scene.

Suspicious, he scans both directions, only seeing in the distance a group of HOBOS warming their hands over a barrel fire. He releases Peapod from his pocket, who wisely runs away to freedom.

As he takes a step to the right, Bill emerges from behind an overflowing dumpster, wielding a pipe.

BILL

Verräter!! I have come to take my revenge at long last!

Bob lets the paintings drop from his hands. He stomps the frame of one, and picks up the splintered wood to use as a weapon.

BOB

Let's get a little crazy here.

The two men approach, circling, sussing. Bill charges, but is disarmed of his pipe by the younger man. Bob, chivalrously, chucks aside his own weapon.

Bob and Bill trade punches. Bob's fighting style is that of United States Air Force training in Modern Army Combatives, with basic judo moves thrown in. Bill uses WWII-era Wehrmacht training, with basic boxing and wrestling moves thrown in.

The fistfight is protracted and indecisive, like an old man version of the battles between Peter Griffin and Ernie the Giant Chicken. Both men are quickly bloodied and bruised.

Bill grabs Bob by the afro and wrestles him to the ground. In the struggle and fall, it is revealed: the famous afro has been a wig all along!

BILL

I knew it! Schwindler!!

A yellow box car screeches to a halt at one end of the alley.

Thomas staggers out, vomiting. He drops the pistol, which misfires, scattering hobos and rodents in all directions.

Bob and Bill, entangled on the ground, pause to watch this arrival. Thomas stumbles up the alley towards them.

THOMAS

"Matthew 5:16 -- Let your light  
shine before men!"

Bob and Bill bumble to their feet, to meet their newest challenger.

The ensuing three-way battle is piteous: Thomas jabs mostly air, Bill wheezes with every knock thrown, and Bob vainly replaces his wig with every hit taken.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GALLERY - DAY

SISTER WENDY MARY BECKETT, late 80s, a diminutive nun with square-framed glasses and protruding overbite with beaverish front teeth, shuffles through an art galley hall.

The walls are chock-a-block with Alexander, Ross and Kinkadee paintings.

Sister Wendy stops to address the viewer. She speaks softly, with a distinct lisp, British accent, and prurient glee.

SISTER WENDY

All three were passionate men whose art reveals intense anguish, urges, for confrontation, and aggression.

Sister Wendy's eyes bulge with arousal.

SISTER WENDY (CONT'D)

And our eyes look on with such pleasure. Look at the pulsating lighthouses, tall and slender and white. Proud trees, like vigorous genitals! Humble cottages, waiting, waiting, waiting, to receive.

She turns back to the wall of generic landscapes.

SISTER WENDY (CONT'D)

Of course, there's more here than just pretty images. These pictures remind us of the utter misery of Western art and civilization. And this is a very sad thing.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SENIORS HOME - DAY

MARGARET KEANE, 93, has been watching everything on a TV screen in a Napa Valley care home. Behind her, salon-style, are many oil paintings of waifish children and purebred cats, in extreme close up, with enormous, intense eyes.

Though she is frail and stooped, and wears a nasal cannula and impenetrably thick black glasses, her face registers, by turns, shock, disapproval, disgust, irritation, and perhaps, a hint of amusement.

MARGARET

(to no one in particular)  
What the heck is this?!? And what in the heck is ASMR?!?

SFX: NOFX, "VINCENT" AKA "STARRY STARRY NIGHT" (2002)

FADE TO BLACK.