

A Simple Canvas

By David L. Miner

Finally! Someone took me out of storage! Maybe that means this is my chance!

After all, I wasn't made to sit in any storage room. I have a great destiny ahead of me. I WILL be a thing of beauty one day. People WILL come from all over to look at me. They WILL talk about me to their friends. I WILL be famous one day!

I know this will happen. I KNOW it!

But someone has kept me in the storage closet forever! No one can be a thing of beauty while sitting in a closet.

I want to get out. I want to be used. I want people to look at me and touch me. I want people to see me and feel love and joy and mystery and wonder. I want people to be moved!

That would make me feel so special. I would feel that I found my destiny. I would feel fulfilled!

And now it can happen! They took me out of the storage room. Any day now, they will use me. I just know it.

Only, I wonder who is going to use me? I have never seen the artist. Is he any good? I mean, I don't want just anyone. I can't work with just anyone, you know. Not everyone has what it takes. I can't make just ANYONE look good. I need someone special to bring out the best in me, the best I have to give. I need...

Oh, wait! Someone is here! I can feel someone rummaging through the canvases. He is humming. Someone is humming! Someone is looking at the canvases. Maybe this is my chance! *Maybe he will pick me!*

Is this the artist? If it is, he will almost certainly pick one of us. I can't see him; is it the artist? And what is he humming?

Just move the canvas that is in front of me. Get it out of the way so you can see me. If only you look at me, you will see that I am something special. You will see that I can make your work SHINE! Just move the other canvas and you will see. I promise you...

Someone moved it. The canvas blocking me was moved and now I am out in front. Now they can see that I am easy to work with. They will see that. I KNOW they will see that!

Wait a minute. Who is that? Is that the artist? Is he the one I have to work with? Why, he is OLD! Surely he isn't the artist. I mean, he is *OLD!* He probably knew Olde Masters.

Hey. I wonder if he knew Picasso. Heck, I wonder if he knew Da Vinci! Oh, I HOPE he isn't the artist! What could he know about anything Modernist? What could he know about anything Impressionist?

Oh, no! I'll bet he only does landscapes. I'll bet he only does mountains, or forests. Oh, no! I hope he doesn't do fields. Wide open, empty fields with nothing in them. *Oh, nooooo!* I'll bet he does wide open, empty fields.

What can an artist that paints fields know about painting PEOPLE? How can that kind of artist paint hands and feet? Hands and feet are especially hard to paint. I want an artist that can paint hands and feet! And FACES! I'll bet he can't do faces. What can an artist like this do with faces? Can he put life in their eyes? Or will the eyes just be dead, expressionless? Oh, no! I can't work with anyone who can't paint faces with eyes that have life in them!

Wait! He picked me up. He is not just moving me aside; he is looking at me, looking me over! But now I'm not so sure... If he can't paint faces and hands and feet, if he can only do landscapes, if he can't paint anything except open, empty fields... Maybe he should pick someone else. Maybe another canvas is just fine for him this time.

Oh, no! He has definitely decided. He chose me! And he is moving me into his studio. And...no, wait! He is putting me on his easel. It looks like he is going to start work immediately.

Wait! Please wait! You can't use me for an open, empty field. I was meant for something better. I was meant for something BETTER! I'm the kind of canvas someone should use to create a masterpiece! I can make your work look awesome!

Wait. Maybe you should put me back. Maybe you should look for another canvas. Pretty much any canvas can be used to paint an open, empty field. Why don't you put me back and get another one?

Oh, heaven forbid! He is reaching for his paints. I guess he really is the artist, and I guess he really is going to start now, and I guess he really IS going to use me. Oh, why did he have to pick me? Why does he have to use me to paint an open, empty field?
Why couldn't it have been anyone other than me?

And why is he choosing those colors? No one uses those colors! They won't look good together, not at all. And here, start here. You should never start there!

Wait! What are you doing? You shouldn't do that! I mean, what kind of an artist are you? No one would place those things there! And no one would mix those colors together. And what are you doing now?

Okay! Okay! *YOU* are the artist. I get that. You do what you want. Only, I had hoped so much for so long to be used for something special.

And what is it you are humming?

Oh, what's the use? You obviously won't listen to me. You DO realize that I have been around artists and great art all my life. I DO know a thing or two about art. But you go ahead and ignore me and do what you want. I'm just going to shut up and leave you alone. But don't blame me when things turn out a mess! I mean, don't say I didn't tell you so. *Don't claim it is my fault that things don't come out well!*

And what are you doing with that, anyway?

You know, don't you, that you need to put the colors on in a certain order. If you don't, things just won't come out like you expect. Listen, you are an *older man*; have you been painting long? Do you have any successful paintings? I don't want to insult you or anything, but have you had any gallery shows? You know, any galleries I might have heard of?

You don't talk much, do you? I mean, if you want me to be quiet and leave you alone, just say so. Just let me know. But some artists like to talk while they work. And some play the radio. You know, for background noise. I figure that's why you keep humming. You want some background noise, right?

And what did you just put down in that corner? That looks really weird. I mean, you know, that is just my opinion.

You sure do things differently. Kinda like you didn't go to school for this. Did you? Go to art school, I mean?

Whoa! What is THAT! Did you, you know, do that on purpose? If not, I think I can help you cover it up. Not promising anything, you know, but I have been around art all my life.

And did you know... Wait! Are you finished? Already?

Look, maybe I can make some suggestions about the frame. You know, some people believe the frame is just as important as the picture. So I can...

Wait! Are you moving us already? Not even going to let me sit a few days and let the paint dry thoroughly?

Hey! Is this a gallery? You have your OWN GALLERY? Your own studio *AND* your own gallery? Wow! You must be pretty good.

And people! There are people here already. Are they here for your work? Huh? Are you putting me here? Out front? Man, this is in the main spot! I mean, everyone who comes in the door will see me here.

Hmmmm. Wait a minute! Why has everyone gone quiet? Why is everyone just looking? Hey, are they looking at me? Is something wrong? Do I look that bad? Maybe if you had listened to some of my suggestions, maybe they wouldn't all be staring. I have been around artists and art all my life, you know.

And more people are gathering around. This is weird. Not a word! What is wrong?

Maybe I should take a closer look, you know, sort of see what they are seeing. If I check it out, maybe I can...

Whoa! Wait a minute! What? Uh... Well, uh... This is pretty good. Um... Yes, this is quite good. I... uh... You did this all while I was talking? I mean... I... ah...

I am speechless. No, I am embarrassed! You did this while I was shooting off my mouth! You should have stopped me when I was questioning your ability. Uh... You should have told me to shut up when I offered suggestions.

I mean, I... uh... never expected this! I... um... I mean... This is the greatest painting I have ever seen! This... uh... is so much more than I could have ever hoped.

You ARE an artist! You DID make something wonderful, something AWESOME, out of me!

Well... Um... Well...

Please! PLEASE forgive me for my assumptions. Please forgive me for questioning you. Please forgive me for ever doubting you. You have done so much more with me than I could ever have imagined. And without my help.

I am in awe of you and what you can do. Of what you DID WITH ME!

You are worthy of any praise the people give for what they see when they look at me.

Listen. Did you hear her? That lady! She just told her friend that I was the most magnificent work of art she had ever seen!

Wait! Lady! You are wrong! I am not the most magnificent work of art you have ever seen. I am just a simple canvas.

What you see is the artist!

You look at me. At times you see some good things. I am glad you see some good things. I am thrilled you see some fine accomplishments. But you need to understand that I am not what you see. I am merely a simple canvas.

What you see is the Artist!

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do. [Ephesians 1:10, NIV]