

## Brush Strokes

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Chloe watches him jab and knead the buttons with his thumbs, his sweaty palms slipping on the plastic controllers. The glowing TV ensnares his unblinking eyes. A woman appears on the screen, she's wearing no bra and yet her breasts are somehow lifted into their perky positions by invisible hands. The screen says, "Push A to kiss her". His thumb crushes the button into the socket. "Push AB to fuck her" His thumb races to obey the motions.

"Let's go do something different tonight. Let's go try that new coffee place in Western Springs. I hear they have live musicians there."

"Just Let me just finish this level."

Trudging down the basement stairs, Chloe gazes at the four oil paintings lying on the floor she had just completed for her art final: a picture of she and her boyfriend, the coliseum, a leopard, a ship at sea. She stares at the stationary images for minutes, but the sound of explosions from upstairs nudges her to set to work.

She props the paintings up and screws them together so the four images face inwards. She turns on music, the new-age kind that transports one to the primitive, the kind that he hates, and she ducks into her newly constructed canvass box. After tearing off her clothes, she pounds on the coliseum canvass to the sound of the drums in the song. The wet canvass resonates.

Pressing lightly clawed hands to the paint, she slowly spins, scraping the colors in smudgy lines across the leopard, coliseum, ship, and the portrait of he and she. She dances and rolls her entire body over the images, leaving her wounded with slashes of paint over her skin, the images on the canvasses blur from her naked brush strokes. She smiles.

"What the fuck are you doing?"

He stands on the stairs, controller in hand. Only her head is visible over the top of the canvass box, and he sees her hair clumped together in red, purple, and yellow strips.

"What's wrong with you?"

Her smile drops.

"Turn that shit down will ya?"

Chloe crawls out of the box wearing only the smears of fresh paint over her body. She sways her hips as she saunters up to him, stretches her hand lower and lower towards his belt, grabs his plastic controller, and drops it into a can of paint.

He rushes to save the controller, she puts on her clothes.