

# THE OLD MAN'S PAINTING

By

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FADE IN:

INT: BEDROOM - NIGHT

A ghostly apparition stands over SIMON (76) as he sleeps. SPANKY, Simon's little terrier, appears at the bedroom doorway and barks at the ghost. Simon awakes momentarily as Spanky sniffs around the spot where the ghost had vanished. Simon returns to his dreams.

DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT: Simon walks along a beach with his wife, ANITA (40). She is a raven haired beauty. She laughs at something he says.

ANITA  
I love you, Simon.

SIMON  
Likewise, Anita.

Suddenly there is silence. Simon turns around to see Anita's fading figure walking into the waves.

ANITA  
I'll see you soon, darling.

SIMON  
But where are you going?

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE

INT: BEDROOM - DAY

Early morning light streams through Simon's curtains.

Simon sits on the side of his bed, groaning. He holds his head and grimaces.

SIMON (V.O.)

I felt like I was almost ready  
for death. With each passing  
day I seemed to enjoy life less  
and less.

It wasn't so much that my life  
was such total drudgery, but just  
that every little thing was such  
a blasted chore. The simplest  
tasks were a challenge for my  
old body which too often was wracked  
with pain.

Often I welcomed the thought of  
death's kind release. And yet  
it would be very strange to leave  
my body behind after having lived  
in it for 76 years.

Simon struggles to his feet and slowly, painfully gets  
dressed, bracing himself against the window sill.

SIMON (CONT'D)

That eerie thought strikes me at  
odd times throughout the day.  
My body is not too unlike an old  
car that I would someday have  
to abandon. As they say, our bodies  
are the vehicles for our spirits.  
Unfortunately, we cannot trade  
them in for newer models.

Simon slowly drags himself across the floor and shuffles  
into the kitchen.

INT: KITCHEN - DAY

Spanky sniffs her empty bowl. Simon looks out the window to  
see the fog lifting and the sun starting to shine.

SIMON

Mornin' Spanky. Don't you wish  
we could just hibernate like bears  
for the winter?

Spanky looks up at him expectantly and then stretches.

SIMON

Well, I suppose you're ready  
for your breakfast.

EXT: OUTSIDE OF HOUSE - DAY

Fog is clinging to the trees at the forest's edge.

SIMON (V.O.)

I'm still trying to recover from  
my horrific car accident 20 years  
ago. Often my body is crippled  
with pain from the lingering after  
effects. I'm indeed surprised  
I have lived to 76. I was sure  
this old bod would've kicked the  
bucket years ago.

INT: SIMON'S STUDIO - DAY

Simon paints in his studio. He's doing another portrait of  
his wife, Anita. She wears a one piece bathing suit that  
was popular during World War II. Simon looks dreamily at  
Anita's face in the reference photo taped by the painting.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT: ELM TREE-LINED SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

SUPER: 1945

A young, "twenty something" Simon wears his Navy "dress  
whites" with his Ensign insignia on his shoulder boards as  
he walks up the long path of an expansive lawn. He climbs  
the steps to the porch of a large home.

He rings the door bell and a young, beautiful Anita, with  
flowing dark hair and crystal, blue eyes, flings open the  
door and jumps into Simon's arms. They kiss passionately.

ANITA

Darling, are you home for good?

SIMON  
Yes, honey. The war is finally  
over.

INT: UPSTAIRS BEDROOM OF ANITA'S HOUSE - DAY

Simon lies in bed and watches Anita walk around the room wearing his Navy jacket and hat.

A song by the Benny Goodman orchestra fills the air.

SIMON  
Let's get married, sugar!

Anita lies down beside him with his Navy hat covering her eyes. She kisses him.

ANITA  
Let's do!

She unbuttons her shirt and lies on top of Simon.

END FLASHBACK

INT: SIMON'S STUDIO - DAY

Simon paints the background behind Anita. Spanky is curled up resting on the floor.

SIMON  
Those were the days, eh, Spanky?  
Glad I survived. Yes, indeed,  
I'm glad I survived! It's ironic  
that I came out of the war with  
hardly a scratch, only to be almost  
killed by a drunk driver in a car  
crash.

Spanky looks bored.

BEGIN MONTAGE

We see Simon's various paintings of the WWII era, all of his wife. The styles range from a colorful Fauvist palette to the golds and siennas of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Golden Age masters like Rembrandt and Vermeer.

One painting is more of a bold colorful late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century style of the Post Impressionists.

END MONTAGE

SIMON

Yes, Spanky, she was quite the beauty back then. I miss her so much.

Spanky dances a little jig on the floor. Simon stares down at her.

SIMON

Oh, alright, you'll get a doggie snack since you're being so cute.

As Simon gazes into the eyes of Anita the sun breaks out of the morning fog.

SIMON

Let's go outside.

INT: KITCHEN - DAY

Simon and Spanky walk through the kitchen towards the door. Simon tosses her a snack.

SIMON

No, I didn't forget.

EXT: OUTSIDE OF SIMON'S HOUSE - DAY

His house is dappled in sunlight. We see the expanse of acreage, with no other house in sight. They walk around his property which borders a local state forest.

Spanky zig-zags in and out of the forest's edge. She sniffs round in excitement and doesn't notice a rabbit about 20 feet from her.

Suddenly she spots the rabbit and runs towards it. The rabbit seems bored while it waits until the last moment to duck into the underbrush.

SIMON

You're getting a little too slow  
in your old age Spanky. I know,  
I know, so am I.

Simon walks slowly around the house and examines his victory garden which is still in it's winter dormancy.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I guess we'll have to replant some  
vegetables this spring. Hopefully  
we'll have a bountiful garden come  
summer time.

He inspects the new paint job he had done on the house the previous summer.

SIMON

Hey! The paint job we did last  
summer is holding up quite nicely.

Simon gazes at his house sadly.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You know we haven't had a guest  
come visit us in a long time, eh,  
Spanky? Why is that?

Spanky ignores him as she sniffs around the spot where the rabbit had just vanished into the forest.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Hmmmm..... when was the last time  
we had company over?

Simon stares down at his shadow trying to remember and then shakes his head and continues walking around the house.

INT: SIMON'S STUDIO - DAY

Simon is back in his studio painting, with Spanky curled on the floor.

SIMON

You know, Spanky, when I'm painting her sometimes it's like traveling back in time to my younger days, when I still had a vibrant and strong body with no pain at all.

Spanky stretches and yawns in boredom.

SIMON (CONT'D)

She's like my own personal Greek Goddess.

INT: KITCHEN - EVENING.

Simon finishes his dinner and dumps the scraps off his plate into Spanky's dog bowl.

SIMON

Looks like it's going to be a beautiful night outside, Spanky!

EXT: FRONT PORCH - NIGHT.

Simon sits on the front porch drinking a beer while watching the full moon rise.

SIMON

It's going to be a chilly one tonight, alrighty.

Spanky climbs the stairs back up to the porch after sniffing around in the moonlight. Simon watches the night sky for a long moment. He drinks his beer and looks sadly out at the night sky.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Oh, well, that wasn't such a bad day, was it, Spanky? I guess it's time to hit the hay.

INT: SIMON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

In the middle of the night Simon wakes up and makes his usual trip to the bathroom.

INT: HALLWAY - NIGHT

As he returns to bed he thinks he sees something in the moonlight streaming down through the skylight in the hallway. He stands still trying to focus his eyes. It seems to be a shimmering form.

Yes, it is a woman standing and looking back at him. Simon blinks and shakes his head. He walks down the hallway to get a closer look, but the woman disappears into his studio.

INT: STUDIO - NIGHT

By the time he reaches the doorway he sees nothing in the room, merely his desk and his easel holding his latest painting.

INT: BEDROOM - NIGHT

He walks back to his bedroom and lies in his bed.

SIMON

What the fuck was that? Am  
I hallucinating or am I still  
dreaming?

INT: INSIDE SUN PORCH - AFTERNOON

Simon and Spanky sit in the sun porch. There is just enough sun breaking through the clouds to provide solar warmth in the enclosed room. He reads from an old Saturday Evening Post magazine while Spanky naps.

SIMON

Did you see anything strange last  
night in the house, Spanky?

Simon looks over to watch his dog snoozing.

SIMON (CONT'D)

No, I guess you didn't.

INT: SIMON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Later that night Simon awakes to his dog barking. Spanky stands at his bedroom doorway barking at something down the hallway.

INT: HALLWAY - NIGHT

Simon gets up and sees the same ghostly figure. This time, though, when he walks towards the apparition the woman lingers for awhile.

The woman smiles at him before she disappears into his study.

INT: STUDIO - NIGHT

Simon follows after her, but once again, after he enters the studio there is no sign of her. He looks at the painting and notices that his wife is moving slightly in her 1940's style clothing. And then she is still and the painting appears normal.

SIMON

Now I know I'm hallucinating!

Simon looks down at his dog who is sniffing around the room.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Are you hallucinating too,  
old girl?

INT: KITCHEN - DAY.

The morning finds Simon in the kitchen turning the page of a wall calendar.

SIMON

Well, well! Guess what Spanky?  
It's March 1st! It definitely  
feels like springtime is in  
the air.

He gets up and looks through the window at the outside thermometer.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Hey, it's already 50 degrees outside. I'll bet it will hit the high 60's today.

EXT: OUTSIDE OF SIMON'S HOUSE - DAY.

Simon pulls some weeds from his "victory" garden. Spanky barks briefly as Anita appears in a nearby meadow by the forest's edge.

She is adorned in 1880's style clothing, complete with bustle, corset and parasol. Her long, dark hair is piled on top of her head in the style that was in vogue during that era.

She could've stepped right out of a painting by Monet or Seurat. She strolls toward Simon, stops in front of him and smiles, with the parasol shading her face from the bright sun.

ANITA

Hello, Simon!

Simon looks stunned and almost falls to the ground.

SIMON

Anita! Where did you come from?

ANITA

We need to talk. But not today. Just enjoy the sun today.

Anita turns around and strolls back to the forest and disappears.

SIMON

Anita, wait!

Simon walks to the edge of the meadow where Anita had disappeared.

He sits down on a nearby bench, shaking his head.

Spanky cocks her head and runs off momentarily into the forest, but immediately re-emerges.

INT: SIMON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Simon wakes up for his typical bio break. He looks down the hallway, but sees no sign of Anita.

EXT: OUTSIDE OF SIMON'S HOUSE - DAY.

Simon and Spanky sit by the garden. He watches a pair of hawks circling above the trees.

SIMON

Wow, Spanky. It must be close  
to 75 degrees today!

ANITA

Hello, Simon!

Simon looks to his side and sees Anita lying on a chaise lounge, wearing a one-piece bathing suit that was popular in the 1940s.

She drinks from a soft drink bottle she had pulled from an old fashioned ice chest sitting by her side.

SIMON

Anita, honey! Is it really you?

Simon leans over to kiss her.

ANITA

Yes, it's me darling.

SIMON

This is wonderful! So incredible.  
Where did you come from?

ANITA

I guess you could call it the  
Great Beyond.

Simon hugs Anita who pats his back.

SIMON

It's been so long. I thought  
I'd never see you again.

Anita sips from her bottle and leans back.

ANITA

After I left you, a year before your car accident, I told myself I never wanted to see you again. Not the way you treated me during our last year of marriage.

SIMON

I'm sorry, Anita. I was drinking too much back then.

ANITA

Yes, you were.

SIMON

I'm sorry. Can you ever forgive me?

ANITA

I don't know. You made life very difficult for me, Simon. It was hard for me to finally drum up the courage to leave you.

SIMON

But you're back now.

ANITA

Well, sort of.

SIMON

What do you mean, sort of? What are you doing here, then?

ANITA

I'll tell you soon enough. But for now I need to clear the air.

Simon groans. Anita purses her lips.

ANITA (CONT'D)

You need to hear me out, Simon.

SIMON

Yes, I know, you're right.

ANITA

I always felt that you held it against me that I couldn't have children.

SIMON

No, I don't think so.

ANITA

Yes, I think so. I think you started withholding your love for me when you first found out. That's also when you started drinking heavily.

SIMON (MUTTERING)

I feel like I need a drink now.

ANITA

Go on, Simon. Go on with your old bad habits and see where that gets you.

SIMON

No, you're right. I'll listen to you this time

ANITA

You just shut me out, Simon. You made me feel so alone in our marriage.

SIMON

Well, at least things were good in the bedroom, weren't they.

ANITA

Yes, but a relationship is more than just sex, Simon. Sometimes I just wanted to be held.

SIMON

I'm sorry.

ANITA

Sometimes I felt like I was married to a sex crazed teenage boy.

SIMON

I guess I was a little immature.

ANITA

Case in point. During my father's funeral you didn't hold me like my sister's husband held her. You stood away from me. Too far away.

Simon looks depressed.

ANITA (CONT'D)

That was very symbolic of the way you were in our marriage. Remote and distant.

SIMON

Again, I'm sorry. How can I make it up to you?

ANITA

We're past that now. At least I am, finally.

SIMON

But you came back for me.

ANITA

Well, sort of.

SIMON

What do you mean, sort of? You keep saying that.

ANITA

You'll find out very soon. For now I need to know that you still love me.

SIMON

Of course I still love you honey!

Anita walks in a circle and shades her eyes against the sun. She surveys Simon's house.

ANITA

It's almost time, Simon. Truthfully  
I did come for you, afterall.

SIMON

What's it time for?

ANITA

It's time to remember what  
you forgot.

SIMON

Huh? What did I forget?

ANITA

Something that happened to you  
a long time ago.

Anita drinks again from the bottle and arches her back.

SIMON

Hmmmmmm, something that happened  
to me a long time ago?

Anita walks around in a circle.

ANITA

Yes, if you can remember ....

Anita points to their immediate surroundings.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Then all this will make a lot  
more sense.

SIMON

What do you mean, make sense?  
The only thing that doesn't  
make sense to me is you.

ANITA

Oh, really? So I'm the one who  
is unreal to you!

SIMON

Well, yes, I would say so. You  
seem to be escaping from my  
paintings.

ANITA

Tell me Simon, when was the last time you went to town? When was the last time you had any friends come over to visit you?

SIMON

Oh, I don't know. Seems like quite awhile I suppose.

ANITA

Quite awhile? Quite awhile?!

SIMON

Well, yes. I can't recall exactly how long.

ANITA

How about 20 years, Simon!

SIMON

20 years? No, no way! I've been to town since then!

ANITA

Really? Think Simon, when was the last time?

SIMON

I don't know. I don't know, I can't remember.

ANITA

That's because it's been 20 years.

SIMON

No! You're crazy!

ANITA

Okay then. How come you never have to go to the store to buy groceries? How come your refrigerator is always stocked with your favorite food and beer?

Anita stands in front of Simon with a challenging look.

ANITA (CONT'D)

By the way, Simon, your brand of beer hasn't been around for 17 years. They don't make it anymore.

SIMON

That's impossible! I just had a couple last night.

ANITA

You thought you had a couple last night.

Anita kneels down and looks into his face with concern.

ANITA (CONT'D)

The truth is Simon - this is all in your mind. Your nicely kept-up house, your little garden, even your dog. She died a couple of years after you did.

SIMON

What? What are you talking about? You're a crazy lady!

Simon stands up and looks for Spanky.

SIMON

Spanky! Spanky! Come here girl!

Simon scans the yard but finds no sign of Spanky.

ANITA

I'm sorry, Simon. But she's long gone.

Simon slumps back down in his chair.

ANITA

Simon, listen to me! Remember your car accident 20 years ago?

SIMON

Of course, how could I forget?

ANITA

Simon, I don't know any other way to sugar coat it. But you died in that car accident.

SIMON

I died?

ANITA

Yes, you did die from a drunk driver. But that drunk driver was you!

SIMON

Me?

ANITA

Yes. You drove off a cliff one night when you were hammered.

SIMON

But I thought....

ANITA

At least no one else was involved. No one else was hurt or killed.

Simon slumps down in his chair.

ANITA

It will be okay, Simon. Don't worry. You always had a tendency to worry too much. Probably why you drank so much.

Simon looks at her. Something is different, something has changed. Anita is still beautiful, but something is seriously wrong with his house. It is old and dilapidated.

SIMON

What happened to my house?  
What happened to that brand new paint job I finished last summer? Everything looks so abandoned in my yard.

Simon looks at the meadow with weeds which have taken over the yard.

SIMON  
Where's Spanky?

Anita looks concerned.

ANITA  
I already told you, Simon.  
She's long gone. I took  
took her in after you died in  
that car crash. She lasted only  
a couple of more years.

Simon rubs his face.

ANITA (CONT'D)  
Didn't you ever stop to think  
that she would've been about  
28 years old now, if you had survived?  
That's quite ancient in people  
years you know.

SIMON (sighing)  
Oh well, I suppose you're right.  
So this was all in my mind?

ANITA  
Yes.

SIMON  
But what about the pain and  
everything. If it was just my  
imagination why did the pain seem  
so real? And why would I want  
to imagine pain in the first place?

ANITA  
Because you had convinced yourself  
that you had survived and your mind  
logically filled in the gaps.  
Remember, Simon, you tended to be  
a little too pessimistic and negative  
when you were alive. Consequently  
this subsequent life you imagined  
was a reflection of you pessimism.

SIMON

Okay, I guess that makes sense,  
sort of.

ANITA

I know it's all hard to accept.  
But, hey, Simon, you're not the  
first ghost to have held themselves  
back in their world. In fact, it  
happens all the time.

Simon looks forlornly at his old house.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Simon. We all have  
gone through life not knowing  
who we really are. We all get  
entangled in our Ego-Created  
false selves. But our true selves  
live on after we die, while our  
false selves drop off like old  
clothes.

SIMON

That sounds nice to me. I think  
I can accept it all now.

ANITA

Good! Now it's time for you to  
move on. Seriously, it's way past  
time. Come on, now, let's go!

Anita takes his hand and leads him to the forest's edge.  
Simon briefly sees his reflection in a broken window of his  
house. He is a much younger 56 years old again.

He also notices that Anita is now wearing a bejeweled Belly  
Dancing costume. Her eyes are eye lined like Cleopatra's.

SIMON

Anita, why are you dressed like a  
Belly Dancer?

ANITA

I guess it just strikes my fancy at  
this particular moment.

Anita holds Simon's hand.

SIMON

Wait, where are we going? Am I headed to some sort of Heaven or Nirvana?

ANITA

Probably not this time, Simon. But someday soon you'll get there. For now, though, you have to come back into this world for your next life.

SIMON

You mean I have to start all over again back here on earth?

ANITA

Unless you can become enlightened right now and achieve Total Consciousness.

Anita stares at Simon.

ANITA

I'll wait.

SIMON

Total Consciousness? What's that?

Anita continues to stare at Simon.

ANITA

I guess you're not ready yet. Better luck next life.

Simon looks downcast.

ANITA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Simon, you won't be starting completely over again. You did make some progress in this last life. I think you'll be happier in your new life, back here on Earth or some other planet very much like it.

Anita regards Simon for a moment.

SIMON  
Will I see you there? Will we  
be together?

ANITA  
Sometimes. I'll come visit you  
from time to time.

Simon looks depressed.

ANITA(CONT'D)  
Don't worry so much, Simon. Just  
be natural and be your true self.  
You'll be fine then.

SIMON  
Okay, I'll try.

ANITA  
Are you ready?

Simon takes one last, sad look at his house.

SIMON  
I guess so.

ANITA  
By the way, Simon, I do forgive  
you.

SIMON  
Thank you.

Anita and Simon walk into a bright light shining in the  
forest.

FADE OUT: