



LAYLA BENDER

The Burden of Pretending Painting

This painting captures the raw essence of what it feels like to live in a world where everyone, including yourself, is forced to wear a mask. The clown, often a symbol of joy and light-heartedness, is shown here in a state of complete exhaustion, slumped in his chair, weighed down by the constant need to perform, to be something he's not. His once bright and cheerful costume now feels like a prison, trapping him in a role that no longer brings joy but rather deep fatigue. The goldfish, swimming freely in the background, represent the flickers of our true selves, untethered and genuine, yet so often hidden away. In a world where everyone is a clown, faking their reality, this piece should serve as a bitter reminder of the toll it takes on the human spirit. The candles, struggling to keep their flames alive, reflect the small but persistent hope that one day, we can all drop the act and live authentically, without the fear of being judged or misunderstood.













