

WELL HUNG

A comedy in one act
by
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PREVIEW ONLY!

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SYNOPSIS

A Mother's Day gallery trip turns into a sharp battle of wits when a sensitive theater director comes out to his fiercely narcissistic mother. Instead of a grand revelation, they weaponize a lifetime of family baggage over a questionably suggestive painting and a torturous pair of designer heels. It's a biting comedy about discovering that no matter how big your truth is, someone will always criticize the framing.

CHARACTERS

(1m, 1f)

MARCO (25, m) A sensitive theater director. He wears a stylish wool sweater and jeans.

ANNE (50, f) Marco's narcissistic mother. She wears an impeccably tailored suit, paired with a leather purse and towering designer heels.

SETTING

A high-end art gallery. An invisible painting hangs on the imaginary fourth wall, forcing the characters to stand side-by-side and stare directly out at the audience.

RUNNING TIME

10 minutes.

(AT RISE: A high-end art gallery. An invisible painting hangs on the imaginary fourth wall. ANNE and MARCO stand side-by-side, staring directly at the audience.)

ANNE

It's a little too high.

MARCO

It's perfect, Mom. It's eye level.

ANNE

Whose eye? A giraffe's? I'm straining, Marco. I can feel the vertebrae in my neck clicking like a castanet. Is that what you wanted for Mother's Day? Spinal misalignment? Combined with the sheer, unadulterated torture of these shoes?

MARCO

They're Louboutins, Mom. At brunch you said they were the most beautiful things you'd ever seen.

ANNE

They are beautiful, darling. A triumphant reminder of your latest success. But my arches are weeping, Marco. If I stay in these a moment longer, my Achilles tendons are going to snap like violin strings. I have my sensible little flats right here in my purse, just begging to rescue me... but no. I'll suffer for your itinerary.

MARCO

It's exactly sixty inches from the floor to the center of the canvas. That's the gallery standard.

ANNE

Well, the standard is elitist. It's looking down on me. Much like your father did during the entirety of our marriage. It has the same dismissive tilt.

MARCO

Can we just look at the work? Forget the height. Forget the shoes. Look at the brushwork. The way the colours bleed into the central shape.

ANNE

It looks like a bruised peach. Or a very sad lung. Why did you bring me to see a respiratory ailment, darling?

MARCO

It's not a lung. It's abstract. It's about the feeling of space. About being contained and yet spilling over. I thought you'd appreciate the vulnerability.

ANNE

I was vulnerable once. I wore a pashmina that didn't suit my skin tone to your aunt's wedding. I survived.

MARCO

You always find a way.

ANNE

Because I'm magnetic, darling.

MARCO

Effortlessly. But magnets don't just attract. If you turn them the wrong way, they violently repel.

(ANNE steps closer to the painting, shifting her weight painfully from one foot to the other. She narrows her eyes.)

ANNE

Is that a vein? Or a drip? If it's a drip, it's definitely hung too high. Gravity is doing all the work for the artist. It's lazy.

MARCO

It's supposed to be provocative! It's called "The Interior of a Secret." Doesn't that resonate with you at all?

ANNE

Secrets are like basements, Marco. If you spend too much time in them, you get mouldy. I've always been an open book. A well edited hardcover with an excellent dust jacket.

MARCO

(Under his breath)

And a few chapters missing.

ANNE

What was that?

MARCO

I just mean, you always saw what you wanted to see. Even when I was a kid. Remember that time I painted my entire bedroom ceiling dark blue with silver stars?

ANNE

I remember the fumes. I had a migraine for days and had to wear sunglasses at dinner. You were always so... theatrical with your decor.

MARCO

I wasn't trying to be theatrical, Mom. I was trying to build a world where I could hide.

(ANNE pats his cheek without looking away from the painting.)

ANNE

And you did! You were so good at it. I never had to worry about you. Unlike your cousin Ryan, who was always out breaking windows or stealing things. You just stayed in your room, putting on those little puppet plays. It was very convenient for my yoga schedule.

(She tilts her head to the left, wincing as she shifts her feet.)

If we moved it down four inches, the "lung" would actually be quite evocative. Right now, it's just hovering. Like a threat.

MARCO

It's not a threat. It's a revelation.

ANNE

A revelation should be clear, Marco. This is murky. It's indecisive. It's like that time you tried to "re-imagine" the guest bathroom with driftwood. I couldn't tell if I was supposed to wash my hands or look for crabs.

MARCO

I was twelve, Mom. And I didn't re-imagine it. I just wanted one corner of the house that didn't feel like a sterile showroom for your social life.

ANNE

It wasn't sterile. It was curated. There's a difference. Curated means I've done the thinking so you don't have to. It's a gift, really.

MARCO

It was a cage. Everything had to be your way. The way the towels were folded, the way the napkins had to be heavy enough to stop a bullet,

the way I had to sit at dinner like I was being interviewed for a position I didn't want. It was never my house. I was just a prop in the background of your "effortless" lifestyle.

ANNE

You were a very handsome prop. You complimented the upholstery beautifully.

MARCO

That's why I started directing. Don't you get it? In a theater, I'm the one who decides where the light hits. I'm the one who decides the height of the walls. I finally had a world where someone listened to my vision instead of being told my vision was "a bit much."

ANNE

I've always supported your little plays, Marco. I sat through that four hour Russian thing in the basement of a laundromat. I suffered for your art.

MARCO

You didn't "suffer for the art," Mom. You spent the entire car ride home complaining about the lead actress's wardrobe.

ANNE

Because it was a visual assault! That poor, sturdy girl in those denim shorts. It was distracting.

MARCO

She was the most talented person in the department! She was playing a girl who had lost everything, and all you could talk about was --

MARCO/ANNE

(Simultaneously)

Her chubby, dimpled legs.

ANNE

They were like two tectonic plates shifting under the stage lights. How was I supposed to focus on the dialogue about famine when I was worried those shorts were going to lose the battle against her thighs?

MARCO

It was a play about human suffering!

ANNE

And I suffered! My eyes suffered! If you don't have a sense of scale, you have nothing. Which brings us back to this painting. It's

hovering. Exactly like that girl's hemline. It's too high for the weight it's trying to support.

(MARCO steps closer to the painting. A knowing smile creeps onto his face.)

MARCO

You know... It's funny you keep talking about proportion and scale. Look at that central form again. Really look at the density of it. The length. The way it commands the entire canvas without even trying. It reminds me of a guy I knew in college. An athlete. The kind of man who didn't just walk into a room, he anchored it. He possessed this incredible, unbothered posture. Everything about him was substantial, symmetrical, and completely on display. People used to whisper in the locker room, wondering if he was "well hung." They meant it as a joke, a piece of locker room trivia, focusing entirely on the anatomy. But standing here, looking at this piece, I realize what that phrase actually means. To be truly well hung isn't about measurements. It's about balance. It's about something being so perfectly suited to its own dimensions that it doesn't need to apologize for taking up space. It doesn't strain, it doesn't hover, and it certainly doesn't care if the people looking at it find it "too much." It just exists, fully formed, with its own truth.

(ANNE stares at him, utterly blank, completely missing the subtext.)

ANNE

Well, whoever he was, I hope he wore better footwear than these instruments of torture. My heels are practically bleeding into the hardwood, Marco.

MARCO

(Sighs)

You're doing it again. You're making it about the shoes and the "scale" so you don't have to look at the truth. You look at the shorts so you don't have to see the girl. You look at the height of the frame so you don't have to see the painting.

ANNE

I am looking at the painting. I'm looking at it quite intensely.

MARCO

No. You're looking at the wall. I need you to look at the secret. Mom, look at me. The reason I brought you here --

ANNE

(Fixed on a brushstroke)

You know, I was thinking about your grandmother's foyer. Not the one in the condo, but the real house. The Victorian with the black and white marble. I spent ten years of my life... ten years, Marco!... trying to get her to understand that the radiator cover was a crime against humanity.

MARCO

Mom, I'm trying to tell you something --

ANNE

And she wouldn't budge. She said, "Anne, it's functional." Functional! Can you imagine? I had to grow up in a house where "functional" was an excuse for being hideous. Every morning I'd walk past that radiator cover and it would grate on my soul. It made me feel cluttered. It made me feel like I was breathing in dust even when the house was spotless. I realized then and there that if you don't control your surroundings, they will eventually swallow you whole.

MARCO

Is that why you're like this? Because of a radiator cover?

ANNE

It was a symptom, darling. My entire childhood was a series of people placing ugly things in my line of sight and expecting me to be grateful for the shade. I had to fight for every inch of beauty I own. I had to curate myself into existence because nobody else was going to do it for me. I learned that the world is chaotic and if you don't demand a certain level of... elevation... you end up like that girl in your play. Lost in the fabric.

MARCO

You don't see how that sounds, do you? You're talking about your "struggle" to have a nice foyer while I'm trying to --

ANNE

It wasn't just a foyer, Marco. It's why I was so firm with you. I didn't want you growing up in a house that felt accidental. I wanted you to have the gift of precision. If I was hard on your plays, it's because the world is even harder on things that are "almost" right. An almost right painting is just a stain on a wall. An almost right son is... well, you've always been more than almost, haven't you? Even if you're currently defending a hanging height that is frankly nauseating.

(She finally turns to him, her face glowing with self-centred warmth.)

I did it all for your eyes, Marco. So you wouldn't have to look at anything as offensive as what I had to look at. I've made your life a masterpiece of order. Now, what was this little "secret" you were so desperate to share? Does it involve a renovation? Because I have thoughts on your kitchen.

MARCO

(Quietly, almost to himself)

You've made the world so perfect that there's no room for me to sit down in it.

ANNE

Don't be dramatic, it's Mother's Day. Now, out with it. Why are we standing in front of this respiratory failure?

MARCO

Because, Mom... I'm gay.

(A heavy silence falls between them. ANNE doesn't flinch. She doesn't gasp. She slowly turns her head back to the painting, her face cool and unyielding.)

ANNE

I think it's the lighting.

MARCO

(Stunned)

The lighting? Mom, did you hear what I just said?

ANNE

I heard you, Marco. I'm not deaf. I'm also not stupid. But the lighting in this gallery is doing this piece no favours. It's too harsh. It's exposing things that were clearly meant to stay in the shadows. Look at that corner, the way the pigment is forced to reveal itself. It feels... unnecessary.

MARCO

It's the truth. I'm telling you the truth about my life.

ANNE

The problem with the truth is that people often mistake it for an invitation to be messy. This painting, for instance. It was clearly designed to be a certain way. It has a structure. It has a purpose.

But the artist got greedy. He wanted to spill over the edges. He wanted to be seen so badly that he forgot to be pleasant.

MARCO

I'm not trying to be pleasant! I'm trying to be me!

ANNE

And who is "you," Marco? Is "you" this sudden desire to disrupt a perfectly lovely Sunday? We were having such a nice time. And now you're standing here, insisting on this... adjustment. It's like the painting being too high. It's a choice that draws attention to the flaw rather than the composition.

MARCO

You think I'm a flaw?

ANNE

This piece would be so much more successful if it just accepted its place on the wall. If it didn't try to scream its "interior" at everyone walking by. Some things are better left as a subtext. A hint of colour. A suggestion of a shape. Once you put it in a frame and label it, it becomes static.

MARCO

It becomes real.

ANNE

It becomes a conversation piece. And I've always found those to be incredibly tedious.

(She steps back, crossing her arms.)

ANNE

If we just lowered it. If we tucked it away in a smaller room, with softer bulbs, and perhaps a nice velvet rope to keep people from getting too... intimate... with it. Then it might work. Then it wouldn't be such an eyesore.

MARCO

You can't "lower" me, Mom. You can't put me in a smaller room.

ANNE

(Coldly)

I can certainly choose which rooms I decide to enter, Marco.

MARCO

The painting isn't too high, Mom. You're just too small to reach it.

(ANNE stops dead. She doesn't turn around, but her shoulders stiffen.)

ANNE

Small? I'm the only reason you have any sense of height at all. I spent twenty years pulling your chin up, Marco. I built the pedestal you're standing on just so you could have a clear view of the world, and now you're telling me I'm... diminutive?

MARCO

I'm saying you're looking at the frame because you're terrified of what's inside it. You want everything to be sixty inches from the floor because you can't handle anything that exists outside of your reach. My life isn't a radiator cover, Mom. You can't just find a more tasteful way to hide it.

ANNE

(Turns slowly, her voice low)

I don't hide things, Marco. I refine them. There's a dignity in restraint. You think this "revelation" makes you deep? It makes you common. It's the same crisis every sensitive boy has when he realizes his mother isn't an audience member he can control.

MARCO

I don't want to control you. I want you to see me.

(ANNE looks back at the painting, her eyes cold and clinical.)

ANNE

I see exactly what's in front of me. I see a piece of work that refuses to coordinate with its surroundings. But look at it, Marco. Really look at it. Without the lighting and the prestige of the gallery, it's just pigment. It's a mess that someone decided to call art so they wouldn't have to clean it up.

MARCO

Is that what I am to you? A mess you don't want to clean up?

END OF PREVIEW

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