

“Orange” by Daniel Takacs

(LEO, 20s, is alone in a basement bedroom, painting the walls orange. FRANK, 40s-50s, in a suit, rushes down from upstairs and sees Leo painting.)

FRANK

Hey, there, Leo, kiddo. (*He looks around.*) What’s all this?

LEO

Festive. Bright.

FRANK

Did you... run this by your mother?

LEO

It gets so dreary. So I thought: orange!

FRANK (*pointed*)

Well. I don’t know what to say.

(Pause.)

LEO

Me neither.

(He paints.)

You can leave the door open when you go. Fumes.

(Pause. Frank stays.)

FRANK

I wish you had asked first.

LEO

I wish you had asked before you married my mother, but life is made of little compromises.

FRANK

Well. That’s just — that’s just not your affair. That’s between your mother and I.

LEO

And this is between me, and my room.

(Pause.)

FRANK
But, Orange?

LEO
Festive. Warm.

FRANK
It's like the inside of a pumpkin.

LEO
I like pumpkins.

FRANK
Pumpkins belong — outside!

LEO
What about pumpkin pie?

FRANK
Your room is not a pie.

LEO
Not yet.

(He paints.)

FRANK
A room should not be a pie!

LEO
Alright, Frank, you win. A room should not be a pie.

(He paints.)

FRANK
When you move out I'm going to re-paint it.

LEO
It's your house.

FRANK

Yes. It is.

(Pause.)

I just wish you had asked.

LEO

Well, there it is.

(He paints.)

FRANK

Look at me.

(Leo stops. Leo holds his gaze. Long pause.)

FRANK

I don't like this color. You have to do — something else.

(Pause. Leo dips the brush. He raises it. Frank gives him a warning look. Leo streaks paint across the wall.)

FRANK (ct'd)

Give me that!

(Frank rushes to take the paintbrush. They struggle gingerly. Frank gets the brush, but also gets paint on his suit.)

FRANK (ct'd)

Look at this!

LEO (*not sorry*)

Oops.

(Frank tries to rub it out.)

FRANK

Fantastic. Magnificent.

LEO

It suits you.

FRANK

This is a six thousand dollar suit.

LEO (*fashion term*)

You're definitely an Autumn.

(Leo is holding the paint roller. Frank lunges for it. They struggle. Leo dabs Frank again. Frank dabs Leo. They struggle until both of them are covered in paint. Frank is furious. He splashes the bucket on Leo. Leo bear-hugs him. Frank breaks away. Leo laughs.)

FRANK (ct'd)

Don't hug me.

(Leo laughs harder.)

FRANK (ct'd)

I'm telling your mother!

(Leo laughs harder.)

FRANK (ct'd)

Why do you hate me so much?

LEO

I don't hate you.

FRANK

You don't even pretend.

(He tosses Frank a towel.)

LEO

I pity you.

FRANK

Me? I have a job. A wife. A life. I have kids. I have this house. What do you have? Your trademark wit? I'm not the one living in a *basement*. When I was your age I was a licensed CPA, with prospects, and look at me now!

(He looks orange.)

LEO

You think a suit matters? The color of a room? It's all just — things.

FRANK

Maybe if you had any *things* of your own, you would *respect* things more!

LEO

But what if I never have any things?

FRANK

Then you'll have to earn them.

LEO

But what if — I'm just the kind of person who's destined to always fail?

FRANK

If you don't take responsibility for your life — .

LEO

— Don't you think I know that? You think I like living in some — dungeon? I'm a suck on society. It's humiliating!

(Pause.)

FRANK

Really?

LEO

Of course! Do you know what it's like to have to take favors from a stranger? I'm nothing. I deserve to live in a basement.

(Frank doesn't know what to say. Long pause.)

FRANK

When Liza and me bought this house, we were your age. Three kids under five, and I was under a lot of stress at that time from work, we were moving during tax season, well, you can imagine. But this house... it was a miracle. Such a steal. I talked the guy down, too. Renovated the kitchen and the master bath. Raised the value fifteen percent. I installed that de-humidifier down here after this one big fight we had. We grew up here. (*Beat.*) And now it's all... orange.

LEO

It's not orange. It's sunlight.

(Pause. Frank takes that in. Frank removes his coat and tie.)

FRANK

Pass me that.

(Frank takes the roller. He rolls it in the paint, and lays a block of orange across a bare stretch of wall. It doesn't look as bad as he thought. Leo joins him. Frank hands him a brush. They paint together for a long time.)

END