

No. 7

When the find
of a lifetime
becomes a
curse for the
ages



No. 7

Written by

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An Original Screenplay
Based on a True Story

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INT. ART STUDIO - UNDETERMINED

ON A WHITE CANVAS

Two "stacked rectangles" fill the canvas. The narrow rectangle spanning the bottom, a washed-out green; the much wider middle shape a dirty brown mess.

White space still occupies the narrow top space for a third.

The paint-speckled hand brushes wide strokes of sky blue over white.

ON A GRIZZLED CHIN

Pipe in mouth wearing a smug grin, painter MARK ROTHKO (45), admires his latest work of art. He flips it over and writes something on a sticker affixed to the canvas.

FADE TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA, CA - DAY

A picture-perfect view of the Pacific Ocean and beach.

SUPER: LOS ANGELES - 1987

ANGLE ON a VW BEETLE pattering through traffic, radio BLARING OUT Bon Jovi's "Livin' On A Prayer".

Beach tanned DOUGLAS HIMMELFARB (35), a six-foot-four, larger-than-life character, drives, sporting an unkempt mane, his flip-flop-laden foot on the gas.

On the passenger side seat, an unstable pile of horticulture books (finally) topples over onto the floor mat to reveal a flyer that reads "ESTATE SALE TODAY".

He grabs a joint from the ashtray and inhales a drag.

INT./EXT. BENTLEY - SAME DAY

A CHAUFFEUR drives down a long winding driveway from a Brentwood MONTEREY COLONIAL-STYLE MANSION with two conservatively dressed SISTERS sitting in the back seat. ELLA HIRSHFIELD (60), the more serious of the two, and RUTH HERSHFIELD (58) who always parrots her older sister.

Through the car window we see an overgrown and disheveled garden.

The Bentley reaches the open electronic gates before turning right onto the quiet street.

EXT. AUCTION HOUSE - DAY

Doug parks in front of a pre-war stone front facade; Art Deco double doors flanked by identical signs on each window: "A.N. ABELL AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1916."

INT. AUCTION HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Through the high-ceilinged warehouse, Doug parts the waters through small groups of BIDDERS who dress down this fish-out-of-water beachcomber. He reaches one corner where he overhears sisterly bickering.

ELLA

...The gardener was an idiot and scoundrel, I tell you.

RUTH

An idiot and a scoundrel he was.

Doug turns to them. He spots a brightly colored PIN on Ruth's chest.

DOUG

(to Ruth)

Excuse me, but is that an Orchid?

RUTH

Why, yes it is.

DOUG

Cymbidium, I believe. It contrasts nicely with your eyes.

Ruth smiles warmly as Ella gazes intently on Doug for a moment until she cuts it short.

ELLA

I'm sure this young man has better things to do than to chat up two old ladies.

DOUG

Not selling anything. Just commenting on--

RUTH

Well, I take it you know flowers.

DOUG

Know flowers? Why Madam, given the resources, I could turn the Sahara Desert into a Garden of Eden.

RUTH

We have a garden!

Doug smiles adoringly as he pulls out a dirt-stained business card from his shorts pocket. Ruth grabs it before Ella pulls her away from Doug, who notices a doorway to the

BARGAIN ROOM

Doug sees a rack of paintings. He rummages through it until one catches his eye.

A CURATOR (50s), sporting a three-piece suit, holds a black leather-bound notebook as he approaches Doug.

CURATOR

Excuse me, may I help you?

Doug points to the rack.

DOUG

Yes, what are these?

CURATOR

Paintings of *de minimus* value.

DOUG

De minimus, huh?

CURATOR

Assets of little or no value to the estate.

DOUG

I know what it means.

Doug pulls out a medium-sized painting with signature "stacked" rectangles in the post-modernist style that he carefully discerns.

The Curator opens the notebook to a page and scans it.

DOUG (CONT'D)

This must be a fake.

CURATOR
(flatly)
Maybe it's your lucky day.

CUT TO:

BIDDING ALCOVE

An AUCTIONEER BARKS prices in a room full of mostly vacant seats. Ella and Ruth are seated in the front row.

On stage next to the AUCTIONEER (50s), wearing his eye glasses on the tip of his nose, sits the stacked rectangular painting on an easel.

AUCTIONEER
Do I have fifty dollars?

Ella quietly lifts her hand.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
I have fifty dollars, fifty
dollars. Do I have one-hundred
dollars?

The Auctioneer looks around the room.

Doug, standing in the back, nods his head at the Auctioneer.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
I have one-hundred dollars from the
gentleman in the back.

A surprised Ella turns around in her seat.

ELLA
(to Ruth)
It's that gardener.

RUTH
The gardener! What should we do?

AUCTIONEER
I have one-hundred dollars. One-
hundred dollars going once...

Ella raises her hand showing two outstretched fingers.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
I have two-hundred from the lady in
front.

The Auctioneer looks intently at Doug.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
Two-hundred going once... two
hundred going twice...

Doug nods his head.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
Three-hundred dollars.

RUTH
(to Ella)
Now what?

ELLA
Not worth the money. I just bid him
up to teach him a lesson.

AUCTIONEER
Going once... going twice... sold
to the gentleman in the back.

The Auctioneer SLAMS the gavel down against the podium.

FADE TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND - 1962

A suburban neighborhood of brick face homes. One home holds a garage sale, but few people partake.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Doug, now 10, is a string bean with long blond hair. He eyes a painting of a flower field leaning against a wall. An elderly HOMEOWNER watches him.

HOMEOWNER (O.S.)
You like that one, don't ya?

DOUG
(pointing to the painting)
Someday it'll be worth a lot.

HOMEOWNER
Hmmh. What makes ya think that?

DOUG
It's what happens to all beautiful
things when they get old.

HOMEOWNER

Well, okay then. How mucha got?

Doug pulls out a wad of dollar bills from his pant pocket and hands it over.

The Homeowner glances at the money, and then back to Doug.

HOMEOWNER (CONT'D)

That's the best you can do?

Doug holds his breath but his blank expression does not betray his excitement.

An intense moment as the two stare at each other.

HOMEOWNER (CONT'D)

Alright, you can have it.

Without a word, Doug turns around, painting in arms, as he walks away wearing a wide victorious grin.

EXT. HIMMELFARB HOME - MINUTES LATER

Doug carries the painting under his armpit when his MOM (40s) spots him. She's a tall rough-around-the-edges woman who prefers the staid predictability of the 1950s to the culture piercing arrows of the 1960s.

Brothers STEVEN (13), a remorseless piss-ant and an innocent GARY (8) watch DAD (40s), who would think a Chamberlain sculpture is of a basketball player, fix a car, hood up.

MOM

What are you doing with that... thing?

Doug walks away, head down, pretending he didn't hear.

MOM (CONT'D)

Give me that!

Mom grabs the painting from him and throws it into a garbage can.

Steven and Gary look on, grinning and chuckling to themselves.

EXT. FOREST - LATER THAT DAY

A forest clearing as sunlight peeks through the treetops. All is quiet.

An enraptured Doug wearing a plaid wool jacket lies daydreaming amongst the leaves in a clearing looking up past the treetops.

Distant voices with the rustling of footsteps grow louder, but a daydreaming Doug does not react.

Steven and brainless friends FRECKLES (13), and CREW CUT (13) close in.

STEVEN (O.S.)

Hey, Wire! Where the heck are you?

Their voices finally interrupt Doug's trance as he nervously looks around.

FRECKLES (O.S.)

He's over here!

Three boys wearing padded football jerseys appear.

STEVEN

Told ja.

Doug grabs a bouquet of wildflowers lying next to him and tries to hide it under his jacket.

CREW CUT

What's that, freak?

STEVEN

Hey 'Wire', Mom wants you inside for dinner.

All three surround Doug, now shaking.

FRECKLES

Awww, scared are you?

Crew Cut grabs the bouquet as Doug desperately tries to hold onto it in a futile tug-of-war.

CREW CUT

Hey flowerboy!

FRECKLES

What a spaz!

Crew Cut rips the bouquet away from Doug's hand and lets the flowers scatter to the ground.

All three boys trample on the strewn flowers and then pounce on him, roughhouse style.

INT. DOUG'S BEDROOM - LATER

Paintings of various sizes plaster the walls.

Handwritten lined pages of poetry, small photos of other paintings and works of art cover a large bulletin board.

Doug flops onto the bed, burying his head in a pillow.

Dad barges in without knocking.

DAD

*If you'd joined little league,
you'd have some friends.*

DOUG

*Dad, I hate little league. I hate
Pop Warner. I hate basketball. I
JUST WANNA BE LEFT ALONE!*

DAD

*Your love of art will take you
nowhere. I can guarantee you that.*

As Dad storms out, Doug looks over to the open doorway. Gary peeks in, shrugs, then walks away without saying a word.

FADE TO:

EXT./INT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - LIVING ROOM (PRESENT DAY)

Ruth holds Doug's business card as she stares at it, pensively pursing her lips. She glances around - no Ella in sight - then picks up the phone and dials.

DOUG(V.O.)

*This is Doug's landscaping. Please
leave your message.*

RUTH

*H-hello, this is Ruth Hirshfield
from the auction house last
Sunday...*

REVERSE ANGLE FROM BEHIND RUTH

We can't hear the end of Ruth's message before she hangs up.

PAST RUTH'S SHOULDER

We see Ella walk in, startling Ruth.

ELLA
Who was that?

RUTH
Who dear?

ELLA
On the phone?

Ella tilts her head as she eyes Ruth.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Please, please tell me that wasn't
who I think it was.

RUTH
But he had such kind eyes.

ELLA
Oh for heaven's sake, Ruthie!

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

The identical painting that his mother threw in the garbage bin years ago, hangs on a wall.

We pull back to see antique treasures and collectibles rest on hanging book shelves. Paintings of the modern art variety cover the walls. Potted orchids rest on the wall-to-wall rug. A lone painting sits on an easel enshrouded in burlap.

Doug sits on his bed pulling on a pair of cruddy blue jeans and a Polo shirt. He walks out to

LIVING ROOM

He slips into flip-flops, grabs the car keys from a ceramic bowl on an antique shoe rack by the door, and then leaves.

INT./EXT. VW BEETLE - DAY

Doug's sputtering VW Beetle drives past huge Brentwood mansions with high fences.

EXT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - DAY

Doug drives up to a wrought iron gate and presses the intercom button. The gate opens.

He continues through the gate up a long winding driveway. The landscaping, when compared to the other technicolor gardens in this high-end neighborhood, is a faded black and white.

FRONT ENTRANCE

His VW wheezes to a stop.

Ella and Ruth stand atop of the front door steps.

Doug gets out of the VW carrying a large note pad and small Crayola crayon box.

DOUG

What lovely estate you have.

RUTH

It used to be, Mr. Himmelfarb.

DOUG

Call me Doug.

ELLA

This is just a waste of time if you ask me.

Suddenly, Doug's car engine coughs and wheezes, even though he'd shut it off a moment earlier. The Sisters balk as if it's about to explode.

THE GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Doug, Ella and Ruth walk slowly, surveying the carnage. Doug points to a disheveled row of Ficus trees.

DOUG

Your Ficus trees are choking the life out of your garden...

Then Doug kicks up some vines with lavender and white flowers out of their path.

DOUG (CONT'D)

...and these Field Bindweeds are real garden thugs that need to be contained.

Ella maintains a watchful gaze on Doug as Ruth nervously watches her.

Doug holds up the oversized note pad and starts sketching on it with a black crayon, outlining the makings of the garden.

Doug takes out other crayons and fills in the black-crayoned outlines. After a few seconds, the crude drawing looks like a multi-colored pointilistic painting.

He holds it up to them.

DOUG (CONT'D)

This is what it should look like.

Ruth's jaw drops.

ELLA

Hmmf. It takes more than a piece of paper and some crayons to convince me, right Ruthie?

RUTH

Yes, more than paper and crayons...

FADE TO:

EXT. MANSION - GARDEN - DAY

We see the transformation taking shape with pruned bushes, fresh mounds of peat moss and planters filled with flowers.

A dirt-smudge-faced Doug gardening as Ruth gleefully looks on. Doug stands, wiping his forehead with the back of his gloved hand.

Doug walks up to a garden table and pours himself a glass of lemonade from a glass pitcher. Both Sisters watch eyes wide as lemonade drips down his chin onto his bare chest as he drinks it down.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S MANSION - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Watching Doug and the Sisters intently from an open window is FANNIE (21), a spaghetti-haired red-headed stoner with a gangly demeanor wearing cut-offs and a bandeau.

EXT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - PATIO - SAME TIME

The Sisters lounge on their comfy garden cushion chairs.

Doug sits at the garden table and sips his glass of lemonade.

ELLA

Did you know, that we met Igor Stravinsky once--

RUTH
--and Arnold Schoenberg, too.

ELLA
They were neighbors when they lived here.

RUTH
Yes, neighbors they were. But their gardens were nothing much to look at, I'm afraid.

DOUG
I suppose excelling at one thing doesn't mean you're good at everything.

Ella and Ruth lock eyes as this sinks in.

EXT. MANSION - GARDEN - LATER THAT DAY

Doug kneels putting in some plantings while humming to a Pantera song on his Walk-man.

He looks up to see Fannie staring at him from the ficus hedge that skirts the property line. Doug nods at her, and she waves back. Interest piqued, Doug removes his headphones and walks over to her.

DOUG
Shouldn't you be in school or something?

FANNIE
Hey, I'm twenty-one. Thanks a lot.

DOUG
That was a compliment.

FANNIE
You need to work on that.

DOUG
Must be lonely in there.

FANNIE
My folks are in Europe.

DOUG
Oh.

Doug stops for a second and wipes sweat off his forehead as he squints from the bright sun.

His eyes scan for the Sisters but they're nowhere to be seen. He suddenly drops his gardening tools, gives Fannie a sly glance and strides over to his VW.

FANNIE
Where are you going?

DOUG
To the beach. Want to join me?

Doug gets in and keys the ignition as the engine struggles to turn over. Fannie wears a worried look.

FANNIE
I don't know you.

Doug revs the pathetic engine, and then puts it in gear.

DOUG
I'm Doug!

FANNIE
I'm Fannie! Hey! Wait for me!

Fannie runs up and jumps into the VW next to Doug, who guns the throttle. The VW Beetle sputters and wheezes as it drives down the driveway.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - SAME DAY

Doug and Fannie step out of the water wearing bathing suits and slowly walk over the sand, wiping themselves off with beach towels.

FANNIE
That felt good.

DOUG
Yeah, you looked like you needed
some cooling off.

Fannie gives him a "*look who's talking*" stare.

FANNIE
Do you always pick up girls you've
never met?

DOUG
Only the cute ones.

Fannie wisps Doug with her towel in annoyance.

THE PIER - LATER THAT DAY

MONTAGE: Fannie and Doug eat hotdogs, walk on the pier, and horse around playing carnival games.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

Fannie and Doug ride side-by-side.

FANNIE

You're not from here, are you?

DOUG

Grew up in Maryland.

FANNIE

So why'd you move out here?

The merry-go-round slows to a halt.

DOUG

Change of scenery. I'm from a small town with small-minded people. What about you? I bet *your* parents wouldn't be to happy if they knew you took off with strangers like me.

FANNIE

They don't.

Fannie and Doug walk off the merry-go-round.

DOUG

Quite the rebel.

FANNIE

That'd be no fun if I listened to them all the time.

INT./EXT. VW BEETLE - TWILIGHT

The VW chokes and jolts to a halt as Doug steers it to the shoulder.

ON FUEL METER: indicated points to "EMPTY"

Doug slams the steering wheel in frustration.

DOUG

AHHH! FUCK!

FANNIE
What do we do now?

DOUG
We walk. My place is only a couple
miles away from here.

Doug gets out and starts walking, but instantly realizes that Fannie, who eyes him with suspicion, isn't following.

Doug turns back to Fannie who's standing firm.

DOUG (CONT'D)
What?

FANNIE
You could be another Ted Bundy
psycho for all I know.

DOUG
Are you serious?

Fannie walks off in the other direction as Doug looks on shaking his head in disbelief. He walks back to his VW.

Doug reaches through the open window and opens the glove compartment, where he grabs a joint, lights it, and then inhales deeply. He takes another drag before tossing the smoldering butt onto the road.

EXT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - PATIO - MORNING

Ella, Doug and Ruth enjoy an outdoor breakfast.

We see Fannie walk up to the ficus hedge and listen in on the conversation unobserved.

ELLA
(to Doug)
Are you of the same Himmelfarbs who
belong to Beth Sinai on Hacienda?
We've been members for years.

DOUG
No. My family back east spells
Himmelfarb with one "m".

ELLA
(dryly)
Imagine that.

Fannie appears from behind the ficus hedge.

FANNIE
Mr. Gardener here is from Maryland.

DOUG
...Horticulturalist. I'm a
horticulturalist and a collector of
fine art and antiques.

ELLA
You two know each other?

FANNIE
We've met.

ELLA
(to Doug)
Why did you leave home?

Before Doug can answer, Fannie pipes in.

FANNIE
Fancy Pants here thinks his taste
matches the Southland better.

Doug can't help but to roll his eyes at Fannie.

DOUG
Too many people don't see the value
in finer things. Exotic plants,
fine wine, good food. Fine art.

The Sisters nod in agreement.

RUTH
We like finer things.

FANNIE
(to Doug)
What do you know about fine art?

DOUG
Been collecting it since I was ten.

FANNIE
One of the popular kids then.

Doug turns to Ella and Ruth.

DOUG
See what I mean?

FANNIE
Hey, I'm only into things that are
generally available.
(MORE)

FANNIE (CONT'D)

Take my parents. They're into all that classical music, ballet. You know: *high art* shit, but that just doesn't fly for my generation.

Ella scowls.

ELLA

Dear Fannie, patrons of the art are an essential ingredient if we are to have any culture at all.

RUTH

Yes, culture is very important.

Fannie eye rolls them.

DOUG

(to Fannie)

You need to keep an open mind. If you're interested, I can show you my collection some time.

FANNIE

If it's as *pristine* as your car, I think I'll pass.

DOUG

Tell you what, I can pick you up after I'm done here.

Fannie throws Doug a '*Yeah, right*' look.

After an uncomfortable beat, Doug leaves the table.

FANNIE

Where are you going?

DOUG

Back to my "gardening".

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Doug, dressed only in a pair of jeans, stands in front of a burlap covered easel. He removes the cover to expose the "stacked rectangles" painting and then flips it over.

Examining the frame, Doug eyes a peeling and stained sticker on the underside of the canvas. He grabs a magnifying glass.

ON THE LABEL THROUGH THE GLASS: "M Rothko, Cal. School of Fine Art."

DOUG
 (to himself)
 How did I miss that?

Doug grabs an old worn brown leather portfolio case and pulls out an envelope marked, "Estate Sale."

From the envelope he pulls out a letter that he unfolds and skims through until his eye focuses on something.

ON THE INVOICE: "Molly Teitelbaum."

DOUG (CONT'D)
 Bingo.

INT. TEITELBAUM HOME - ENCLOSED PORCH - DAY

MOLLY TEITELBAUM (60s), a confident and gracious woman, serves Doug iced tea as they sit in her enclosed porch.

MOLLY
 Well, I must say, I was certainly surprised when you contacted me.

DOUG
 I don't mean to pick at old scabs, Mrs. Teitelbaum.

MOLLY
 Quite all right. It was a chapter in my life I'm glad has passed. Divorces, ugly things, they are.

Doug looks around the room. *Not for her, apparently.*

DOUG
 Why did you think it was a fake?

MOLLY
 Oh, who knows what it is. I didn't very much care at the time.

DOUG
 But you decided to discard it?

MOLLY
 I certainly wasn't going to lay out the expense to get the thing authenticated. I was too busy trying to "stick it" to Murray.

DOUG
 Where do you recall finding it?

MOLLY

Some ruddy art shop up in Haight-Ashbury back in sixty-seven. I thought its box-y theme and shadings were quite... unique.

DOUG

And you've never heard of "The California School of Fine Art?"

MOLLY

No, can't say I have. The only Art school up there I know of is The California College of the Arts on 8th Street.

Doug nods while drumming his fingers on the table.

INT. ART GALLERY - RESTORATION ROOM - DAY

KAI (40), with a Billy-Idol inspired blond hair-do and loud Hawaiian shirt, stands over the "Rothko" painting lying on a table. Doug stands right behind him.

KAI

So this is the prized possession that you called about?

DOUG

And I just established provenance.

KAI

No kidding?

DOUG

What do you think?

KAI

Authentication's a tricky thing, so let me check it out.

Kai bends over to examine the Rothko.

KAI (CONT'D)

...Looks like the style and the brush strokes, the shading looks very much like a signature style stacked landscapes Rothko. If I were authenticating it...

DOUG

What do you mean, if?

KAI

That's just it: I can't. Only the Rothko estate can sign off on an authenticator. And since I have no connection with the family, it's a no-go.

DOUG

So where can I find one?

Kai walks over to a card catalogue tray, rifles through it and pulls out a business card.

KAI

Check out this guy. Consults with the National Gallery in D.C.

DOUG

Know if he's any good?

KAI

I know he never misses.

DOUG

What do you mean?

KAI

I mean he's *the* authority on anything Rothko. The family hired him as their steady authenticator. Ya' know, after a couple of earlier paintings turned out to be fakes.

Doug takes the card.

DOUG

What if this is Rothko's seminal stacked piece? How much do you think it'd be worth?

KAI

Hard to tell, but it could easily be in the millions--if it's real.

Doug stares at the card with wide eyes.

INT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Doug emerges from the kitchen with a spring in his step, wearing an apron and carrying a tray holding two plates of steaming hot food. Ella and Ruth sit at the table anxiously waiting. He sets a plate down in front of each sister.

ELLA
Veal Francese. How wonderful!

RUTH
It looks heavenly.

ELLA
You're full of surprises, aren't you?

DOUG
Bon Appetite!

ELLA
Where's Rosita?

DOUG
I sent her home. I wanted to cook something special for you tonight.

ELLA
But, why?

DOUG
That painting I got at the Teitlebaum estate sale?
(beat)
Well, turns out it could be worth a lot of money.

RUTH
Why Dougie!

DOUG
Maybe now I can finally do some traveling.

RUTH
I remember when Mama and Papa took us to Paris.

ELLA
We got lost in the Louvre, Dear.

RUTH
Lost, we were.

DOUG
First, I'll need to get it authenticated.

ELLA
That can't be that difficult. Even I can tell it's a fake.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)

Why do you think I let you have it
in the first place?

DOUG

I'll need to do some research on
it...

Ella stares at Ruth.

ELLA

Don't you still have some gardening
to do?

DOUG

No worries. I have time.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - READING ROOM - DAY

Doug sits at a large table reading art history books open to pages about "Abstract Expressionism" and biographies of Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollack, Maxim Gorky, Willem de Kooning and Lee Krasner.

We see one black and white photo of several artists posing in a living room, Mark Rothko sitting in the lower right corner wearing an distrustful glare.

Doug, fully engrossed, reads as we see phrases such as "...simple expression of complex thought...", "...sweeping swaths of paints...", "...saturated stains of color...", "...meant to reveal thoughts from the unconscious...".

INT. ART STUDIO - DOUG'S VISION - UNDETERMINED

ON A WHITE CANVAS

The same two "stacked rectangles" from the opening scene fill the canvas. The narrow rectangle spanning the bottom a washed-out green; the much wider middle shape a dirty brown mess.

White space still occupies the narrow top space for a third.

DOUG (V.O.)

Rothko's method was to apply a thin
layer of binder mixed with pigment
directly on the uncoated and
untreated canvas...

The paint-speckled hand of Mark Rothko brushes wide strokes of sky blue where the white had just been. We do not see his face.

DOUG (V.O.)
 ...And to paint significantly
 thinned oils directly onto this
 layer, creating a dense mixture of
 overlapping colors and shapes
 bleeding the colors together.

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY PARKING LOT - DUSK

Doug gets into his VW Beetle and drives off.

INT./EXT. VW - CONTINUOUS

Doug listens to the SPICE GIRLS "What I Want" as he drives up
 an L.A. Boulevard.

INT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - TEA ROOM - DAY

Ella and Ruth sip their afternoon tea. Two Empty dessert
 plates rest on a side table. A third has a piece of pie and a
 small fork.

The DOORBELL CHIMES.

O.S. footfalls on marble approaching the front door, the door
 opening and muffled greetings.

Housekeeper ROSITA (30s) enters with the Sisters' estate
 attorney EDGAR BELLEROSE (50s). He's a cue ball in a striped
 suit with a salt and pepper mustache.

Rosita leaves.

BELLEROSE
 Just stopping by to check on my
 favorite clients.
 (whiffs)
 My, have you opened a bakery here?

RUTH
 You could say that. Please have
 some.

Ruth holds out the full dessert plate to Mr. Bellerose, who
 takes it and tastes the pie.

BELLEROSE
 Delicious. Did Rosita make this?

RUTH
 No, Doug did.

BELLEROSE
I'm sorry?

ELLA
Doug, our gardener.

BELLEROSE
Gardener?

Bellerose's eyes squint with utter confusion.

ELLA
What happens when we die?

BELLEROSE
Well, the will states that a stipend in your name will be awarded to outstanding students at the L.A. Arts Academy and...

ELLA
Isn't that *sad*?

RUTH
Very sad.

BELLEROSE
What is?

ELLA
That we're the last members of our family line.

BELLEROSE
When your father, bless his soul, hired me as your estate lawyer, he made me pledge that I would protect you two.
(beat)
And so far, you've done very well.

INT. MANSION - VESTIBULE - DAY

Doug zips up his day bag, straps it over his shoulder and walks out.

EXT. MANSION - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Doug jumps into his VW and drives it down the driveway. As he rounds a curve, he spots Fannie directly in his path.

The VW LERCHES to a stop.

FANNIE

HEY!

Arms folded, Fannie's in a tank-top and shorts.

Doug gets out to face her.

DOUG

Are you insane? I could have run
you over!

FANNIE

Where are you going?

DOUG

On a research trip. Nothing fun.
Just some art schools and libraries
up in Frisco.

FANNIE

So you think I don't care about
your painting? Maybe I want to be
an "art detective", or some shit
like that. I mean, that's what
you're doing, right?

DOUG

It's a long drive, and I really
want to get there before dark.

FANNIE

You're the one who told me I needed
to learn about art so that I, too,
can be more "cultured."

DOUG

You really wanna come? I'm spending
a night or two up there...?

FANNIE

Yeah, but don't get any ideas.

DOUG

I don't sleep with my students.

FANNIE

Whatever you say, *professor*.

They both jump into the VW and off they go.

EXT. VW - DAY

The VW winds its way up the coast.

FANNIE (O.S.)
So what are we doing?

DOUG (O.S.)
First thing tomorrow morning, we
meet the Dean of the California
College of the Arts.

FANNIE (O.S.)
And then?

DOUG (O.S.)
Depends on what we find out.

INT. VW - CONTINUOUS

Doug drives as Fannie stretches her legs across the
dashboard.

FANNIE
Like what?

DOUG
Any new leads.

FANNIE
And what about tonight?

DOUG
We check into a hotel and get some
shut-eye.

FANNIE
Just so you know, I want my own
room.

DOUG
Don't think my budget covers that.

Fannie stares at Doug, who glances at her before focusing
back on the road.

FANNIE
What the fuck? What kind of dirty
trick is that?

DOUG
Fine. I can turn around and bring
you home right now... if you want.

Fannie stares out the window, contemplating her options.

Doug slams on the brakes and preforms a quick K turn, now driving back to L.A.

FANNIE
Stop the car!

Doug pulls over.

FANNIE (CONT'D)
If I go along with sharing a room
with you, don't think that means--

DOUG
--you're going to sleep with me.
Like I already told you, I don't
sleep with my students.

A misty San Francisco skyline appears on the distant horizon.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Two naked bodies. Fannie, on top of Doug, climaxes, then collapses onto his chest.

MOMENTS LATER

A sweaty Doug reaches for a half-smoked joint sticking up from an ashtray. He lights it up and inhales deeply.

FANNIE
Gimme some of that.

DOUG
You're not old enough to handle it.

FANNIE
Oh wow! I'm old enough for you to
seduce me and fuck my brains out,
but not old enough to smoke a
joint. And by the way, I thought
you said you didn't fuck your
students.

DOUG
Class doesn't start until tomorrow.

Doug hands her the joint. Fannie inhales, only to cough out the smoke in his face. He playfully slaps her butt.

EXT. CAL. COLLEGE OF THE ARTS - ENTRANCE - DAY

The VW pulls up to the school's entrance. Doug and Fannie step out.

INT. CAL. COLLEGE OF THE ARTS - OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Doug and Fannie sit across from MARSHA HEILBRONNER (40s), full figured and confident, whose desk nameplate indicates she is the Dean of the school.

HEILBRONNER

No, Mark Rothko never taught here.

Doug pulls out a photograph of the sticker from the painting.

DOUG

This is a sticker on the back of a Rothko painting.

FANNIE

Who's Rothko?

Doug squints, motioning to Fannie to cool it.

HEILBRONNER

It still doesn't connect him to C-C-A. We've called ourselves the "College of the Arts" for decades.

DOUG

Yes, but, is it possible maybe some smaller schools merged to form the existing school?

HEILBRONNER

Don't think so. We've had the same name since 1907.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO'S NORTH BEACH - STREET - SAME DAY

Doug, head down, walks around aimlessly, perusing a street of art shops. A bubbly Fannie's eyes dart around from store to store.

DOUG

Someone here's got to know something about the California School of Fine Arts.

FANNIE

My friends told me about some shops
that sell some seriously good weed
around here.

DOUG

We're not here for that.

FANNIE

C'mon, don't be such a drip.

Doug notices one shop and decides to walk in.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

I don't think this is one of them!

INT. ART SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Doug and Fannie enter. Doug looks around at the merchandise.

FANNIE

Looks like this place hasn't been
renovated since 1930. What do you
think you'll find in here?

DOUG

I don't know.

No one else is in the store except for a SHOP OWNER (70s),
who sits behind a counter.

SHOP OWNER

Can I hep' you?

DOUG

I came here looking for something,
but can't find it.

SHOP OWNER

Sounds like most everybody else who
moves to Cali.

DOUG

I'm looking for a school that
doesn't exist. Are there any art
schools besides the College of Art
around here?

SHOP OWNER

Why sure. Every crack-pot artist in
the city has a fuckin' school in
their loft. What's the name?

DOUG
It was called "The California
School of Fine Arts."

SHOP OWNER
You mean S-F-A?

DOUG
What's that?

SHOP OWNER
The School of Fine Arts up on
Chestnut. It's what they renamed
the school back in '61.

DOUG
(excited)
You know it?

SHOP OWNER
Hell yeah, I took classes there in
'64 but--

DOUG
That's the one.
(to Fannie)
C'mon!

Fannie leans in to the Shop Keeper

FANNIE
I'm looking for some good weed.

DOUG
Fannie!

Fannie rolls her eyes as she follows Doug out to the

STREET

Doug outpaces Fannie down the bustling sidewalk, but then
stop to look back at her.

DOUG
You coming, or not?

FANNIE
What's gotten into you?

DOUG
We just got a lead, so I'm going to
chase it down.

(MORE)

DOUG (CONT'D)

You can come with me, or smoke pot
in the room for all I care.

FANNIE

Knock yourself out. If you won't
answer any of my questions, how am
I supposed to learn anything?

DOUG

Don't be a baby.

FANNIE

This is no fun. I'm going back to
the room.

Doug pulls out a wad of bills from his pocket and hands them
to her.

DOUG

Make sure you at least get
something to eat.

FANNIE

Yes, Daddy!

INT. SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS - HALLWAY - SAME DAY

Doug walks with the school ADMINISTRATOR (50s), a diminutive
but helpful man with nicotine stains on his teeth.

ADMINISTRATOR

That's right. We'd rejected the
distinction between applied and
fine arts and merged the two.

DOUG

So, did Mark Rothko teach here?

ADMINISTRATOR

Follow me.

The Administrator leads the way.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

There is no record of him on the
faculty, but he could have been an
artist in residence. You can check
it out by yourself, in our
archives.

The Administrator stops at a door at the end of the hallway
and waves Doug in.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)
We keep our year books in here.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Doug leafs through year book pages in one marked "1947" and finds an old flyer that says, "Artist Mark Rothko to speak on Abstract Expressionism at the Edgar Stone Gallery, July 10, 1947.

DOUG
(to himself)
Well, "Hello there," Mr. Rothko.

FADE TO:

INT. ART SCHOOL STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: SAN FRANCISCO - 1947

Enamored ART STUDENTS watch Rothko, a balding mad genius, paint on a canvas. His face, arms and shirt - even his coke bottle lens spectacles - are speckled with bright red paint while he applies broad strokes while lecturing, pipe in mouth.

ROTHKO
So you all came here to hear my recipe for creating a work of art? Alright: first and foremost, there must be a clear preoccupation with death... Sensuality, the lustful relationship to things that exist... Tension, that being conflict or curbed desire... Irony, the self-effacement and examination by which a man for an instant can go on to something else... Wit. You either got it or you don't.

Some Art Students snicker.

ROTHKO (CONT'D)
The ephemeral nature of chance... and finally, hope. The hope to make the whole fucking tragic concept you've just painted endurable to look at.

Most of the Art Students laugh.

Rothko finally turns to acknowledge their existence, putting his pipe in his pocket. He paces down the center aisle, avoiding any further eye contact.

ROTHKO (CONT'D)

I measure these ingredients very carefully when I paint. So I leave you with this: the form follows from these essential ingredients--

STILL (O.S.)

--and the picture results from the proportions of these elements.

Rothko looks over to the doorway where artist CLYFFORD STILL's (42) lanky visage leans against it.

Rothko can't help but shoot Still a sideways grin.

ROTHKO

Could not have put it any better myself, Professor Still...
(to students)
Dismissed.

The Art Students file out as Still approaches Rothko.

ROTHKO (CONT'D)

I know that look. What the fuck's going on?

STILL

The Dean wants to see us.

ROTHKO

What for?

STILL

What do you think?

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

JOHN METZGER (50s), a gray-bearded defender of the uninspired, sits behind his desk as Rothko and Still face him. Both Rothko and Metzger puff away on their pipes.

METZGER

The Board reviewed your proposal and decided the school can't afford to fund your "multiform" project beyond the summer session.

ROTHKO

Why not?

METZGER

Where do I begin? Too much canvas. And these chemicals: acrylic resins, phenol-formaldehyde, modified alkyd. They also got a good laugh for your request for Elmer's glue and farm fresh eggs.

STILL

His mixture quick-dries so multi-layers won't mix.

ROTHKO

How I mix my pigments is my own business. Besides, eggs are 70 cents a dozen. We all know damned well this isn't about money.

METZGER

You were invited here only as a summer artist-in-residence. And frankly, neither I nor the Board appreciates you pushing these non-traditional methods and concepts onto the students.

STILL

Isn't art supposed to challenge traditions?

ROTHKO

Your close-minded brain doesn't get it, and never will. My designs are meant to overwhelm the viewer. To create a spiritual experience where he becomes part of it.

METZGER

It sounds to me like your affection for spiritual paintings covers up their lack of substance.

ROTHKO

(to Still)

I'm through with this lousy excuse for an art school.

Rothko gets up and walks to the door.

STILL

Mark...

ROTHKO

*Don't bother. I'm heading back to
New York where, last I checked,
true art is actually appreciated.*

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Doug enters to find Fannie sprawled out on the bed wearing only undies, smoking a reefer. The TRAFFIC NOISE from the open window streams in.

DOUG

Hey.

FANNIE

Find what you were looking for?

DOUG

Better than that. I found proof!
Tomorrow we'll be heading back.

Doug shuts the window.

FANNIE

I think this could be a cool place
to live, don't you?

DOUG

You couldn't afford it.

FANNIE

Spoken like a true L.A. snob.

Doug sits down on the bed.

DOUG

I thought you came because you
wanted to be an "art detective."

FANNIE

Yeah, I know, but I found the pot
smoking to be way more fun.

Doug looks out the window.

Fannie's hand appears, holding a reefer.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

Here, have some.

Doug looks at Fannie, hesitates, then takes the reefer to his mouth and inhales.

Doug lies down on the bed next to Fannie.

He looks up at the ceiling, lost in thought as Fannie cuddles up to him.

EXT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - GARDEN - DAY

SUPER: FOUR WEEKS LATER

Doug puts the last touches on the garden that now boasts exotic plants, trees, well-manicured plants and an immaculate lawn.

EXT. BEHIND THE HEDGE - SAME TIME

Fannie watches Doug as he pours his undivided love and attention caressing some orchids, whispering to them.

As she bends a branch back to get a better view, A THORN pricks her finger.

FANNIE

Ouch!

(to herself)

Oh, fuck!

EXT. GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Doug turns around to catch Fannie sucking her finger.

DOUG

What's going on? Catch a thorn?

FANNIE

(mumbling)

You're a fuckin' thorn in my side,
that's what's going on.

DOUG

What?

FANNIE

You've been avoiding me. Why?

DOUG

No I haven't. They had me rearrange
the whole garden before Christmas.

FANNIE
Save that B-S for the sisters.

Doug starts to walk toward Fannie until she waves him off.

FANNIE (CONT'D)
Just stop, okay? I'm perfectly
fine, thank you.

DOUG
Okay...

FANNIE
I'm leaving for Europe tomorrow.

DOUG
Europe?

FANNIE
Yep. Unless you want...

An uncomfortable silence.

DOUG
Then have fun.

Fannie purses her lips and clenches her fists.

FANNIE
HAVE FUN? That's all you wanna say
to me?

DOUG
What would you want me to say?

Fannie glances away as if she'd just sucked a lemon.

FANNIE
Nothing. I don't want you to say
fucking anything.

DOUG
But--

FANNIE
SHUT UP!

Fannie storms away back behind the hedge.

An oblivious Doug STANDS ALONE.

FADE TO:

INT. MANSION - STUDY - NIGHT

Doug sits in the dark behind the desk ruminating. A PEN HOLDER topples over as he reaches for the switch to turn on the table lamp. A key falls out onto the desk.

Doug looks around before picking up the key. He eyes a keyhole in the bottom drawer, sticks the key inside and turns it until it CLICKS.

He opens the drawer to find a folder laying flat labeled "BANK FOLDER." He removes it from the drawer and slowly opens it up. He is shocked by what he reads.

DOUG
(to himself)
I can't screw this up.

INT./EXT. THE BENTLEY - DAY

SUPER: LOS ANGELES - 1997

The Bentley drives down an L.A. Boulevard with Doug (45), as the chauffeur and with Ella (70) and Ruth (68) sitting comfortably in the backseat.

RUTH
That was so much fun.

ELLA
I'm exhausted.

DOUG
How did you like that Chippendale Armoire?

ELLA
It will be perfect for the bedroom.
(to Doug)
Where did you learn to negotiate like that?

RUTH
Yes. Very impressive.

DOUG
Certain talents you're just born with.

RUTH
I'll say.

ELLA

Is it something you learned from your parents?

RUTH

Did they teach you about art?

DOUG

They taught me about ugly. I had to go out into the world to find true beauty.

ELLA

Well, you certainly found it today.

(beat)

What about that painting, Dougie? Did you finally give up on it?

RUTH

Yes, what about that painting?

DOUG

Give up on it! Why would I give up on it? Oh no, the elusive authenticator is actually flying in on Friday.

ELLA

Don't expect him to agree with you.

DOUG

I've been waiting ten years for this and don't intend to let him off the hook that easy.

EXT. HIRSHDFIELD MANSION - ENTRANCE - DAY

A taxi drives up and DR. DAVID ANFAM (35), emerges, clean cut and self-assured in his sports blazer, pre-eminent in all things in his own mind.

He nonchalantly glances at the grounds and the Bentley, walks up to the front steps and RINGS the doorbell.

DRAWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Doug and Dr. Anfam shake hands, but Anfam appears disinterested.

DOUG

Dr. Anfam, thank you for coming. I can't believe I finally get to meet you.

DR. ANFAM

Mr. Himmelfarb. Oh, I had some other business in town about some Clyfford Stills. But I must say, you have been very persistent.

Doug unveils the painting that sits on an easel. Dr. Anfam examines the painting using a portable laser.

DR. ANFAM (CONT'D)

...I see it's been painted over... not uncommon for a Rothko.

DOUG

Did you take a look at the provenance research I sent you?

Dr. Anfam ignores him completely as he continues to peruse the painting from top to bottom.

Doug realizes he's been holding his own breath.

DOUG (CONT'D)

So is it--?

DR. ANFAM

No...

Doug's eyes widen. He's about to pass out.

DR. ANFAM (CONT'D)

...doubt. This looks like a genuine Rothko.

DOUG

I knew it! I FUCK'N KNEW IT! What makes you so sure?

Dr. Anfam frowns over his reaction.

DR. ANFAM

...Because I'm the authority on Mark Rothko, and I'm also the one they've assigned to assemble their Catalogue Raisonne'. The only authorized authenticator, in fact.

(beat)

(MORE)

DR. ANFAM (CONT'D)

If memory serves me correctly, I believe I saw a photo of this very same work in the archives.

Doug, in his excitement, hits his knee on a table. He makes a painful grimace as he grabs his knee.

DOUG

Excuse me?

DR. ANFAM

(irritated)

A photograph of this very painting is in the Rothko Estate archives.

DOUG

A photograph?

DR. ANFAM

Yes. That's what I said. A photograph.

DOUG

So, when can I expect you to have the authentication done?

Dr. Anfam holds his gaze on Doug, jots down something in his little notebook, then clears his throat.

DR. ANFAM

Consider yourself a wealthy man, Mr. Himmelfarb. Of course, I'll need to verify my findings with the Rothko estate before including it in the catalogue.

Doug draws a deep breath to cover his excitement.

An uncomfortable beat as a stone-faced Dr. Anfam regards Doug.

DOUG

Oh, forgive me.

Doug reaches for a check from a side table and holds it out.

Dr. Anfam grabs the check and then his briefcase.

Doug's on CLOUD NINE.

As he walks out, Dr. Anfam turns back.

DR. ANFAM
 Oh, and Rothko used cheap paint.
 Keep it out of the light to
 mitigate any fading. Good day.

Doug tries to find his breath.

DOUG
 Okay... okay... okay.

EXT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - POOL DECK - NIGHT

A full-blown soirée with PARTYGOERS, bathing suite-clad 20-somethings, enjoy the illuminated pool, as they dive, swim, splash and just wade in distinct groups, chatting it up. A Radiohead track plays in the background.

Nubile male and female MUSES covered in only body paint walk around serving drinks.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Doug presides over a gaggle of Partygoers, as he holds court, admiring his Rothko painting taking center stage over a well-lit mantelpiece. He holds a half-filled cup of Aged Whiskey in one hand and a cigarillo in the other.

DOUG
 ...so did you hear they had to
 remove Marcus Harvey's life-size
 painting from the Royal Academy? I
 mean, how insane is that? People
 actually threw eggs and ink at it.

PARTYGOER #1
 Why?

DOUG
 Because it turns out the work was a
 painting of Myra Hindley, Britain's
 most hated woman.

PARTYGOER #2
 What'd she do?

DOUG
 In the sixties, this woman along
 with her boyfriend raped and
 sexually abused, then summarily
 butchered five children for mere
 sadistic pleasure.

PARTYGOER #3

Like that dude in Clockwork Orange.

PARTYGOER #2

Or like in Natural Born Killers.

PARTYGOER #1

But why would the artist bother?

PARTYGOER #2

Yeah, why even call that art?
Sounds like the shit people threw
on it would be an improvement.

DOUG

Au contraire. You all think art's
just there to sit on some pedestal
in a museum to look pretty? Let me
tell you, wars have been fought
over works of art. People murdered
in cold blood. I, for one, have
always believed art should be
provocative in the most unsettling
way imaginable.

PARTYGOER #3

Wow. So intense, man.

His lecture concluded, Doug gracefully leaves the group and walks out to the

EXT. POOL - CONTINUOUS

Doug watches the body-painted Muses pour wine refills for ogling Partygoers.

Others splash and chat in the pool.

Doug notices Fannie and two men, fully clothed, approach. TREVOR (30s), African American, muscular with slick raven hair, arms slung over Fannie, and JASON (30s), a well-coifed, slim and flamboyant Asian.

FANNIE

(to Doug)

Hey, stranger. I see you've found
some new students.

DOUG

It has been a while.

INSERT: Trevor's and Fannie's hands meet and a small plastic bag switches hands.

FANNIE

(to Doug)

Yeah, I couldn't resist when I heard you were throwing a party.

DOUG

I thought you'd moved to Europe for good?

FANNIE

Don't tell me you've missed me?

(beat)

Nah, I couldn't stay away from the *Good Life*.

Fannie's eyes scan the place.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

The past decade hasn't exactly *hurt* you. Has it, Doug?

Doug catches himself admiring her.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

Forget it. By the way, this is Trevor.

Doug shakes Trevor's hand tentatively with a smile.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

He's an actor.

DOUG

I'm sure.

TREVOR

Done commercials, some.

(beat)

Hey Doug, this is my boy Jason. He cool. In the nightclub biz.

JASON

What a party, Darling!

Jason throws Doug a hand-kiss.

FANNIE

Looks like you finally cashed in on that painting.

TREVOR

What painting, girl?

FANNIE

Some abstract artist. Doug says
it's worth millions.

TREVOR

Holy shit, man.
(looking around)
Looks like you already got it made.

Fannie runs up to the pool and jumps in fully clothed.

FANNIE

Hey, Trev, jump in, already!

Trevor steps away and cannonballs into the pool fully dressed
as well. They splash each other as Doug watches.

Jason turns on the charm.

JASON

I'm looking for new space. If you
hear anything, how about letting me
know?

Doug's still distracted by Fannie and Trevor frolicking.

JASON (CONT'D)

My lease is coming up and I'll be
looking to move to a new spot.

DOUG

Aha... I'll let you know.

Jason pulls out a business card from his wallet and holds it
daintily out for Doug to grab.

JASON

Tell you what, handsome, here's my
card. Call me.

Jason slips the business card into Doug's hand.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

As the party winds down, a few Partygoers remain. As Doug
enters from the backyard on his way to the kitchen, he
notices the silhouette of a person in the darkened room
lounging on the couch. He doesn't have to guess.

DOUG

I thought you left with... eh, your
friend.

FANNIE (O.S.)
Trevor. His name is Trevor, and no,
I didn't leave with him. But if you
want me to leave...

Fannie walks into the light, oddly sedated.

DOUG
I'm surprised. That's all. It
seemed like you've moved on.

FANNIE
Maybe it's you who's moved on.

DOUG
I've been busy with all the
properties--

Fannie moves in and kisses Doug on the lips as Soundgarden's
"Black Hole Sun" crescendos. They move on to

INT. DOUG'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

MONTAGE: Doug and Fannie engaged in hot passionate sex.

THE NEXT MORNING

Fannie, in her tank top, and a bare chested Doug lie in bed
sharing a joint.

FANNIE
Just like old times...

DOUG
Yeah, this is nice.

FANNIE
And that right there's the problem.

DOUG
What is?

FANNIE
We just picked up where we left off
as if time stood still and nothing
had changed.

DOUG
I though that was a good thing.

FANNIE

Let's face it, Doug. What hasn't changed is you and your fucking commitment issues.

DOUG

What? How can you say that? We haven't seen each other in like forever? You have no claim on me.

FANNIE

I can think of two who do.

DOUG

How you been holding up?

FANNIE

Don't change the subject on me.

Doug eyes track marks up both her arms and notices Fannie following his gaze to them.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

Stop it.

DOUG

I don't judge.

FANNIE

Sure ya' do. While you shack up with two old ladies whose libidos flamed out in the forties. Weird.

DOUG

Who's judging who, here?

Fannie pouts.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I care about you. I don't want to see you throw away your life on that shit.

FANNIE

The trust fund account has to be good for something.

DOUG

You should earn a degree, pursue a career in something. You can't live off your folks forever.

FANNIE

Says the guy who lives off free room and board for landscaping. I take it you've moved in?

Doug shrugs sheepishly.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. I wouldn't say another word if I were you.

DOUG

Something must get you psyched up to wake up every day--besides me.

FANNIE

Whoo-hoo! Not everyone can be a "master gardener."

DOUG

Horticulturalist. And I have other pursuits.

FANNIE

Like chasing dead artists? Are those two hags part of your antique collection?

Doug pouts at her derision, but Fannie's oblivious.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

Hey, where are they, anyway? Don't tell me you poisoned them and stuck 'em in the cellar?

DOUG

Weekend Santa Barbara.

FANNIE

So here we are. You really have them wrapped around your little finger, don't you?

Doug reaches over to the nightstand and grabs a real estate magazine.

DOUG

Look at this.

Doug opens to a property listing with a picture of an old courthouse. His eyes glaze over it.

DOUG (CONT'D)
It's in Malibu. Primed for
renovation.

FANNIE
I didn't know you had that kind of
money?

DOUG
Until I authenticate the Rothko,
I'll help them invest their money.
It'll serve as collateral.

FANNIE
Of course. I shoulda known. You
come on to them like Harold came on
to Maude. "Oh thank you for the
lemonade, El." "Oh, can I get you
anything, Ruthie?" It's like you're
in love with them or something.

DOUG
I *am* in love with them. Like I am
with you--but in a different,
Platonic sort of way.

FANNIE
Do you hear how fucking crazy that
sounds? And besides, you don't even
know if it *is* real.

DOUG
Sure it is. Only a bit longer and
I'll get the authentication I need.
Did you know Rothko's paintings
ells for over forty million?

Fannie gets out of bed and dresses.

FANNIE
I'm out, Doug. There never was an
us and there never will be.
Besides, I wouldn't want the
sisters to catch you sleeping with
another girl.

INT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

A stressed-out Doug and Rosita clean up the house. He brushes
away remnants of cocaine powder piles, removing beer bottles
and wine glasses around the house to hide evidence of the
party.

The front door OPENS and the Sisters walk in laughing.

ELLA
We had such a lovely time.

RUTH
Yes, a lovely time.

As Rosita leaves with their travel bags, Ella's eye catches a misplaced sculpture on a table with a lamp on it. She curiously picks it up and moves it to a pedestal by the wall.

TV ROOM - EVENING

The Sisters sit on their couch, watching *Singin' in the Rain* as if getting reacquainted with an old friend.

From behind, Doug walks by down the hall, avoiding them.

ELLA
Is that you, Doug?

DOUG (O.S.)
I'm going outside to lay down the soil in the flower beds.

RUTH
Nonsense. Dougie, please join us.

ELLA
(to Ruth)
The younger generation doesn't appreciate old movies.

Doug sticks his head in and watches the TV.

DOUG
Thanks, but I really have to--

RUTH
Just a few minutes...

Doug reluctantly sits down on a chaise beside them and notices a stray beer can on the floor that the Sisters overlooked.

ELLA
Look at the athleticism, the gracefulness.

DOUG

Actors back then could really sing,
dance and act. Makes me wish I had
taken up ballroom dancing.

RUTH

Oh Dougie, you are the romantic
one, aren't you.

DOUG

I had lunch with Gene Kelly once,
right after I moved out here.

ELLA/RUTH

No!

DOUG

Yep, he really was a true
gentleman.

ELLA

Dougie, we want to talk to you
about what happened here over the
weekend.

Fearing the worst, Doug stands to make a quick exit.

DOUG

I... need to check the flower--

ELLA

Don't know what you've been up to,
but everything looks spotless. Both
outside as well as inside.

(beat)

And, since you've been such a
wonderful help keeping up our
properties that are getting so
cumbersome for us to manage--

RUTH

Yes, too cumbersome.

ELLA

Ruth and I have been talking and--
this goes against my better
judgment--but Ruth convinced me
that we should ask if perhaps you'd
be interested in managing *all* of
our properties.

DOUG

Well... I don't know what to say.

RUTH
Perhaps "yes"?

DOUG
...Of course, YES!

They group hug. Doug can't believe his luck.

FADE TO:

EXT. HIMMELFARB HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND - 1974

Doug (21) walks out the front door to his VW Beetle, bulging with suitcases and a full top carrier.

Gary, now a nineteen-year-old long haired hippie, sits on the stoop, seemingly oblivious, strumming an unrecognizable tune on his guitar.

Mom stands on the stoop behind Gary.

MOM
So you're leaving us? You won't survive a day in California.

Head down, Doug is resolute.

DOUG
I'm going, Mom.

MOM
Oh, your brain always was in the clouds, collecting garbage that other people throw away.

Doug opens the passenger door and stuffs his last duffle bag in with all the rest of his junk, including the flower field painting his mother had thrown in the garbage.

DOUG
Even garbage is worth something.

MOM
Only to a fool! You pull out of here, don't count on any help from us when you fall flat on your face!

Mom turns her back on Doug and walks back inside.

The door SLAMS shut.

Doug walks up to the stoop and stands over Gary.

GARY
I'm jealous of you, big bro.

DOUG
Why?

GARY
You got the guts to hightail it out of this suburban Brady Bunch existence all the way to California.

Doug gently pats Gary on his head before turning to walk over to the VW Beetle.

GARY (CONT'D)
You really are a "wire" - a live one! I sure hope you find it, bro.

Doug gets in the driver's seat.

GARY (CONT'D)
And get high early and often for me, will ya?

Doug smiles back.

Doug revs the engine, pulls out of the drive way and waves "goodbye" as he drives away.

FADE TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES - LAW OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Bellerose sits behind his desk across from Doug, flanked by Ella and Ruth.

BELLEROSE
Are you certain about this?

ELLA/RUTH
Absolutely.

BELLEROSE
Mr. Himmelfarb, you are aware of the responsibilities involved here in managing multiple properties and trust accounts?

DOUG

Mr. Bellerose, I've managed the grounds here for well over a decade.

ELLA

He really is the best caretaker we've ever had.

(beat)

Mr. Bellerose, Ruth and I decided early on to never marry, or have children, because we've always had each other. And that's always worked for us up until Doug entered our lives and we realized what we had missed.

RUTH

The best caretaker we've ever had. Doug truly appreciates how we live and what we love. His garden arrangements are heaven on earth. He's cared for us only a true family member would.

BELLEROSE

Doesn't he have one back East?

DOUG

Ella and Ruth are my family.

Doug wraps his burley arms around each Sister.

BELLEROSE

Prudence would usually dictate someone with a finance background and familial ties.

ELLA

Mr. Bellerose, just as you, yourself have told us, we've been managing quite well for almost fifty years--

RUTH

--Very well.

BELLEROSE

Yes, but--

ELLA

Our minds are made up. Now please draw up the papers.

DOUG

I assure you, Sir, I will continue to take excellent care of these two lovely ladies. The same as I've been doing for the past ten years.

Bellerose grimaces as he lays eyes on the Sisters.

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Fannie, dressed in a party outfit, steps out of a taxi in front of a night club that's on its last leg.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - BACK OFFICE - SAME TIME

The room is dimly lit with a worn-out desk.

CLOSE ON a line of white powder on a black counter top as a straw implants itself at one end and moves along the line sucking up the white powder.

PULL BACK to see Jason inhale the line through the straw. His eyes roll back, amplified by fake lashes.

JASON

(gasping for air)
Wow...

TREVOR

Got somethin' for me?

Jason points to a brown padded envelope lying on the desk as he starts to walk out.

Trevor grabs it and thumbs through the bills inside.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Hey man, what's this! You're short?

JASON

Easy, Darling. Cash receipts were short this week.

Trevor throws him an incredulous look of "W-T-F".

TREVOR

C'mon, man. What gives? I'm not workin' for charity here.

JASON

Trev, Baby. Business has been slow lately, and the landlord just raised the rent.

TREVOR

You gotta think a' somethin' else.

Trevor eyeballs Jason, who is struggling to come up with an answer.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

What?

JASON

...I was thinking that maybe Doug Himmelfarb could help out.

TREVOR

Keep talking.

JASON

Fannie told me that those prudes he works for, own a lot of vacant properties.

TREVOR

He pretty like you?

Jason stares at the floor.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Ha! Don't count on it, man. Fannie's into him, more 'an he's into her.

JASON

I don't know. Maybe... Fannie could talk to him, and you could...

TREVOR

...help seal the deal with him, huh?

JASON,

(more relaxed now)
Grease the pole, I guess.

TREVOR

Whoa, tiger. I aint into that shit. Alright, when I see her I'll talk her up. But I'm still comin' back Thursday for the rest, you dig?

THE BAR

Techno-pop MUSIC PULSES through the space.

Fannie appears, all jacked up, heading for the bar and FRANK (30s), a slim fellow with a short beard tending it.

FANNIE

Hey Frank, you seen Trevor?

Frank rolls his eyes before turning to Fannie.

FRANK

Hi, Fannie.

FANNIE

I *really* need to see him.

FRANK

Yeah... uh, I think I saw him go in back with Jason a while ago.

FANNIE

Could ya' get him?

Frank gives her a once over.

FRANK

Hang on.

An annoyed Frank throws down his towel.

BACK OFFICE

Trevor and Jason hear a KNOCK on the door.

JASON

Yeah?

FRANK(O.C.)

Fannie wants to see Trevor.

Jason and Trevor look at each other as the gears start turning. Trevor throws a small baggie of white powder on the counter.

A BOOTH

Fannie sits at a booth by the dance floor as LIGHTS FLICKER from behind, giving her a ghoulish glow.

Trevor and Jason walk up to her and slide in real close.

JASON
What's up, sweetheart?

TREVOR
How ya doin', girl?
(to Jason)
Hey, get this girl a drink or
somethin', yo.

Jason steps away to the bar.

FANNIE
Been trying to call you all day.

TREVOR
Ya' know, makin' my rounds and
shit.

Fannie pouts.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Hey baby, I'm your number one.
Straight up.

Trevor pulls two white pills out of his shirt pocket and
slides it on the table toward Fannie.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Just for you, babe.

FANNIE
O-M-G! The "Ex" you told me about?

Trevor nods with a crooked smile. Jason appears with Fannie's
drink and slides in next to her.

FANNIE (CONT'D)
What about that other stuff?

TREVOR
We're cool.

CLOSE ON the pills.

Fannie scoops 'em up and downs both with a swig of her drink.

JASON
So how's Big Boy doing these days?

FANNIE
Doug? He's good. We sorta
reconnected after the party.

TREVOR

Jason here's been lookin' to expand. Get a bigger place, you know?

Fannie takes another generous swig.

FANNIE

Doug told me about a place in Malibu he wants to buy, maybe put a restaurant in there or something.

TREVOR

No shit.

JASON

Sounds great, but won't the sisters have to sign off on it?

FANNIE

He told me he manages all their properties. I could talk to him.

Trevor slides a plastic bag on the cushion seat over to Fannie. She covers it with her hand and Trevor quickly palms his hand over hers.

TREVOR

Remember, this is for hooking up Doug to our cause. Don't make me come chase you down later.

FANNIE

Sure... Yeahhhh, No problem.

JASON

Good girl.

Fannie fades away as Trevor puts his big arm around her neck, pulling her onto his chest.

EXT. MALIBU TOWN CENTER - DAY

On a cloudless day, Doug and Fannie sit on a park bench across from the old courthouse where CONSTRUCTION MEN haul out bits of a gutted-out interior.

FANNIE

The night club was a great idea.

DOUG

That's just the beginning. I see an invigorated downtown with bars, restaurants and shops.

Doug eyes Fannie sternly.

DOUG (CONT'D)

But don't expect any more favors.

FANNIE

(to herself)

Except I got your balls now.

EXT. RAINBOW NIGHT CLUB - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A LIMO pulls up to the curb in front of Jason's new posh night club with a lit sign that reads "RAINBOW". The rear window rolls down and we see Doug's face taking in the sight.

INT. RAINBOW NIGHT CLUB - CONTINUOUS

A hip-looking Doug walks in. An Alternative Rock BAND plays. He makes his way through to Jason.

They embrace warmly, then Jason slips in a kiss. Doug shrugs it off as he follows Jason to the

BACK OFFICE

Jason holds out some cash for Doug.

JASON

Here, Darling. Sorry, but I'm a bit short on the rent this month.

DOUG

The place is packed, why the shortfall?

JASON

Big Boy, the bands you wanted me to book this month cut into the bar profits...

Doug thinks for a moment.

DOUG

Black Angel still on for next weekend?

JASON
(worried)
Yeah.

DOUG
Love 'em.

JASON
Uh-huh. I have a little something
that will make Big Boy feel better.

Jason pours some cocaine on the counter and splits it into two lines using a credit card. He grabs a straw and inhales one line, then offers the same straw to Doug, who hesitates at first before taking it and inhaling the other line.

DOUG
You know something?... It does.

THE BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

The band wraps up its last number on stage.

Doug puts his arm around Jason in a friendly manner.

BAND LEADER (O.S.)
Hey everybody, thanks for rock'n
out with us tonight.

The Crowd CHANTS "rock on".

BAND LEADER (CONT'D)
But the real "Thank You" goes out
to the guy who made this place
happen.

Doug stands and looks to the stage.

BAND LEADER (CONT'D)
Let's give a loud shout-out to
Doug, whose vision made Rainbow the
rock n' roll place that it is now.
Thanks Doug.

The Crowd WHOOPS, HOLLERS and CLAPS.

Doug, in his element, bows.

KAI (O.S.)
Hey, Doug!

Kai, the art appraiser, walks up from the end of the bar.

JASON
Catch you later, handsome.

Jason slips away.

KAI
So, how's it feel to be popular?

DOUG
It's overrated.

KAI
Hey, ever sell that painting?

DOUG
Not yet, but very soon.

KAI
Cool. Soon you'll be rollin' in it.

DOUG
No doubt about that.

EXT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - ENTRANCE - DAY

Doug watches as a flatbed TRUCK DRIVER has just finished unloading various exotic trees, shrubs and soil.

Doug looks across to Fannie's property and notices a lawn sign that reads "FORECLOSED PROPERTY". He sees Fannie walk out. Their eyes connect for one moment, but Fannie turns away and walks off.

The Truck Driver hands an clipboard to Doug, who looks over an invoice quickly before signing it.

Doug looks over to watch Fannie, but she is gone.

As the flatbed truck pulls away, a UPS Van drives up. A UPS DRIVER immediately steps out and walks up to Doug.

UPS DRIVER
Package for Douglas Himmelfarb.

DOUG
That's me.

The UPS Driver hands him a flat package.

With childish excitement, Doug tears open the package as he walks inside.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As he walks, Doug tosses the packaging and begins leafing through a thick book entitled, "ROTHKO CATALOGUE REISONNE".

EXT. MANSION - PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Doug walks over to the lounging Sisters, sipping iced teas.

DOUG

Finally!

Doug holds up the book for the Sisters to see.

As Doug flips through it, his face crinkles up.

DOUG (CONT'D)

What the...

ELLA

Dougie, what is it?

DOUG

It's not in here.

(beat)

Unbelievable!

Doug scrambles for a chair and sits, ferociously rifling through pages.

DOUG'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Doug on his cellphone, pacing with deliberation.

DOUG

Yes, I need to reach David Anfam.
It's urgent.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

I'm sorry, Dr. Anfam is traveling
in Europe. Who may I ask is
calling?

DOUG

Douglas Himmelfarb from L.A.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

One moment, please.

Doug continues to leaf through the catalogue, shaking his head in disbelief.

SECRETARY (V.O.)
 Dr. Anfam is not taking calls at
 this time. I'm very sorry.

DOUG
 You just said he was traveling in
 Europe.

The line CLICKS off.

Doug tosses the thick catalogue to the floor.

DOUG (CONT'D)
 I'll kill that little shit!

EXT. WASHINGTON, DC - DULLES AIRPORT - DAY

A JET touches down on a runway.

INT./EXT. NATIONAL ARCHIVES - ENTRANCE - DAY

An agitated Doug walks into the front entrance and gives his
 ID to the SECURITY GUARD (30s), at the desk.

Doug walks to the elevator.

DR. ANFAM'S OFFICE

Doug approaches a RECEPTIONIST.

DOUG
 I'm here to see Dr. Anfam.

INTERCUT WITH: Dr. Anfam sitting in his private office at his
 desk covered with Rothko prints and bulging file folders. He
 leans back listening to the commotion outside.

RECEPTIONIST
 I'm sorry sir, but Dr. Anfam is
 unavailable.

DOUG
 No, this can't wait. I've got to
 see him. He promised me.

Doug's stares down the receptionist and looks as if he might
 strike her. Instead, he moves past her and tries to open Dr.
 Anfam's door, but it's locked. He bangs on it like a child.

DOUG (CONT'D)
 Damn it! Come the hell out of
 there. I want my authentication.

RECEPTIONIST
 Sir, I'm calling security.

The horrified receptionist picks up her phone and dials.

DOUG
 I won't leave until I get what I
 came for.

The door opens and Dr. Anfam stands in the doorway.

DR. ANFAM
 Mr. Himmelfarb, my receptionist
 just instructed you to leave.

DOUG
 You said you'd include it in the
 catalogue. Why didn't you?

DR. ANFAM
 The situation has changed. I'm very
 sorry.

DOUG
 But the authentication. We agreed--

DR. ANFAM
 As long as I live, I will *never*
 authenticate your painting, Mr.
 Himmelfarb.

DOUG
 You said yourself in *my* home that
 it was the real deal.

DR. ANFAM
*I am afraid you will have to take
 that up with the Rothkos. There is
 nothing I can do for you.*
 (awash in sarcasm)
 So nice to have known you, Mr.
 Himmelfarb.

Dr. Anfam turns back into his office and SHUTS the door
 behind him.

DOUG
 (losing it)
 You-you--I'll tear your fuck'n
 heart out!

Doug throws himself at the door, trying to force it open.

DOUG (CONT'D)
 Open the fuck'n door! You think
 you'll get rid of me that easy!?
 Think again, you pathetic imbecile.
 I'll take you and the fuck'n art
 world down before this is over!

The elevator doors open with a DING, and TWO SECURITY GUARDS
 step out and grab Doug.

DOUG (CONT'D)
 This is not over! Do you hear me?!

The Security Guards pull Doug into the elevator. As the doors
 close, Doug's voice echoes out.

DOUG (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 By the time I'm through, you'll
 never authenticate anything again!

INT. NEW YORK CITY - A MODERN ART GALLERY - NIGHT

The subdued MURMUR of voices in a private room. The walls
 display Mark Rothko originals as small groups of smartly
 dressed PATRONS admire them. A SERVER walks through,
 balancing a silver hors d'oeuvre tray as some Patrons
 partake.

Dr. Anfam holds a filled Champagne flute talking to an
 interested young female SOCIALITE.

DR. ANFAM
 ...So his infatuation with
 architecture seemed to guide him to
 create these haltingly iconic
 rectangular facades.

Dr. Anfam notices behind the Socialite, a three-piece-suited
 CHRISTOPHER ROTHKO (35), with a boyish face and big shoes to
 fill, directs Dr. Anfam to the exit with his eyes.

DR. ANFAM (CONT'D)
 Facades that ironically, not only
 symbolize his concealment of
 emotion, but also a revelation of
 Mark Rothko's true feelings... I'm
 sorry. If you will excuse me.

Dr. Anfam walks out into the

HALLWAY

Dr. Anfam and Christopher walk side-by-side along the empty space, their voices reverberating softly.

CHRISTOPHER

This Himmelfarb situation must be put to bed.

DR. ANFAM

I had warned you that it might be easier said than done.

CHRISTOPHER

How someone with no formal art training has the audacity to tell the art world the difference between real and fake art, is preposterous.

DR. ANFAM

True, but in the case of Number Seven, he does have a point.

Christopher stops and faces Dr. Anfam.

CHRISTOPHER

I don't care. I don't want him associated with my father's legacy in any way, shape or form.

DR. ANFAM

And if he refuses to go away?

CHRISTOPHER

Then find another way.

DR. ANFAM

I understand the sentiment. However, having met the man, I believe him to be an obsessive compulsive sort who will never let go. Perhaps a settlement of some kind to avoid any "unfavorable" publicity for the family, would be preferable.

CHRISTOPHER

Authenticating questionable works from every charlatan who's desperate for quick cash will only serve to devalue our portfolio, and we will never let that happen.

DR.ANFAM

There is the issue of the photo...

CHRISTOPHER

Perhaps I wasn't clear enough earlier. If Douglas Himmelfarb's forgery is ever validated, then we would consider transitioning to more loyal authenticators.

(beat)

Maybe I'd better deal with him myself.

INT. POOL ROOM - THE FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT - DAY

Doug, bandage on his forehead, sits alone at a table for two across from an oddly appropriate rectangular marble pool.

Through the ceiling-high windows, a bustling 52nd Street.

A WAITER (20s) appears.

WAITER

What will you have to drink, Sir?

DOUG

A Whiskey Sour on the rocks.

As the Waiter turns around, Doug focuses on his white jacket.

The picture window shows the same street scene, but now with passing cars and people walking outside in the 1950s.

INT. POOL ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY - 1958

Rothko and his wife, MELL (45), follow a white-jacketed MAITRE D' through the dining room, past the pool.

Throngs of well-dressed and tipsy BUSINESSMEN cajole and laugh, while several MARRIED COUPLES devour their entrees.

MAITRE D'

Messrs. Bronfman and Rohe called to say they shall be arriving shortly.

The Maitre d' seats Rothko and Mell at a table for four.

Meanwhile, Jackson Pollock's masterpiece, "Blue Poles", hangs high above them.

Rothko lights his pipe.

MELL

Just think, your murals will
replace that.

A white-jacketed WAITER approaches.

WAITER

Will you be enjoying drinks?

MELL

I'll have a Scotch and soda,
please.

ROTHKO

Nothing for me.

The Waiter hands them menus.

Rothko scans the room before perusing his menu, then grimaces
with disgust.

ROTHKO (CONT'D)

God, it's criminal to spend more
than five dollars on a meal.

MELL

Oh, dear Mark, we're not the ones
paying for it.

MESSRS. EDGAR BRONFMAN (35), the Seagrams company CEO and
architect LUDWIG ROHE (70), both wear sharp suits as they sit
at the table.

BRONFMAN

I apologize for the lateness, Mr.
Rothko. This is Ludwig Rohe, our
architect assigned to your project.
So, what do you think?

ROTHKO

This is my wife, Mell. I'm thinking
what fitting brutal aesthetic
revenge it will be when my murals
of solemn horror cause your diners
to choke on their food, spluttering
into their precious Richebourg
Grand Cru.

Nervous looks and delayed laughter from the others.

BRONFMAN

Well, Seagram's is certainly interested in what is fashionable, and right now, your abstract art is quite fashionable.

ROTHKO

Fashionable is regressive. I never cared about any of that. If that's what you really wanted all along, then you should have hired some starving pop-artist to deface your restaurant. Then you'd come crawling back to me so I could demand double your commission offer.

MELL

Mark, please--

BRONFMAN

But pop-art is what's gaining in popularity these days.

ROTHKO

Forget the H-bomb. Pop art is what'll kill us all. I fought for years to keep out all those charlatans and opportunists, but now I hear you're all too willing to welcome them right through your front door.

ROHE

I have found that there is no crime in being popular.

ROTHKO

You people don't grasp the truth of my work, what my paintings say about the human condition. My critics don't, and your patrons certainly won't. Why bother?

MELL

But honey, you're--he's almost finished with the last mural.

ROHE

Why don't you expound upon what your paintings "say" about the human condition?

ROTHKO

Everything you need to know about what they say about it lies between the stretch bars.

ROHE

We can all agree that your choice of color relationships are quite moving to the eye.

ROTHKO

Then you miss the point! The color relationships are merely a means to express basic human emotions: tragedy, ecstasy, doom. Did you even know that many people have broken down and cried while immersed in my paintings? Did you? They have the same religious experience I had when I painted them in the first place, damn-it.

(beat)

So, I've decided to send back my advance tonight. Put down the drink, Mell. We're leaving.

Rothko gets up and grabs Mell, forcefully pulling her out of her chair.

BRONFMAN

You'll be hearing from our lawyers, Mr. Rothko.

ROTHKO

(points at menu)

I don't care. Anyone who'll eat this kind of food for those kind of prices will NEVER set eyes on a painting of mine.

Rothko and Mell leave the two men dumbfounded.

INT. POOL ROOM - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Christopher Rothko approaches dressed in casual business attire.

DOUG

Mr. Rothko, I presume?

CHRISTOPHER

Mr. Himmelfarb? Your persistence is legendary.

Doug rises to shake hands but Christopher ignores the gesture as he sits.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
I wasn't certain if it was safe
meeting you today.

DOUG
What are you talking about?

CHRISTOPHER
The man by the door is my security.

Doug turns around to see a DARK-BLAZERED MAN (50s) in
wayfarers and a chalky beard. His GOLD BRACELET GLEAMS in the
ambient light.

Embarrassed, Doug turns back to Christopher's blank stare.

The Waiter returns, serving Doug his Whiskey Sour.

WAITER
(to Christopher)
Sir?

CHRISTOPHER
Nothing for me.

Doug raises his eyebrows as the Waiter steps away.

DOUG
I'm very appreciative that you took
the time to meet with me, here.

CHRISTOPHER
This was the very site of my
father's last act of rebellion.

DOUG
Yes, and he'd painted the murals
for the lobby and they bait-and-
switched them to hang in here.

CHRISTOPHER
Which he refused to have them do.

DOUG
I believe at the time he said that
he didn't want his paintings
hanging in a place where--

CHRISTOPHER

--they charge more than five dollars on a meal, or something like that.

DOUG

Yes.

(uncomfortable beat)

You were quite young when he died.

CHRISTOPHER

Six, actually. I was spared the bloody details at the time, although I was in the room when Mom keeled over and died six months later.

The Waiter serves Doug's drink. He takes a sip.

DOUG

I understand you recently took over the reins of your father's estate?

CHRISTOPHER

My sister, Kate, will always be a presence, but yes, if you consider the public face to be taking the reins.

DOUG

There seems to be a misunderstanding about Number Seven.

CHRISTOPHER

Oh?

DOUG

All I need is for Dr. Anfam to sign the authentication form and--

CHRISTOPHER

You'll be a rich man, is that it?

DOUG

I'm not doing it for me. For someone I look after, who I care very deeply about. I also feel as a lover of art, I can play a role in preserving your father's legacy.

CHRISTOPHER

What is it you do, Mr. Himmelfarb?

DOUG

I'm a horticulturist. And a collector of fine art and antiques.

CHRISTOPHER

You strike me as someone who seizes the opportunity when you see a ray of hope.

DOUG

What do you mean, exactly?

CHRISTOPHER

Our family has been through so much turmoil over the years--

DOUG

Yeah, I know that, but--

CHRISTOPHER

--and we would prefer to be left alone in our own misery without opportunists like you abusing the legacy of my father.

DOUG

Wait a minute, I didn't come here to be insulted. I wanted to clear things up.

CHRISTOPHER

There is no misunderstanding, Mr. Himmelfarb. I thought Dr. Anfam made it clear to you during your last "courtesy" visit that he has other estate business to attend to and won't be available for any authentication services.

DOUG

No. He has the proof to authenticate. It's real.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm sorry, but you will have to look elsewhere for your *payout*. Good luck to you.

Christopher walks away. Doug SLAMS his fist on the table and leans back staring at the ceiling for the strength to control himself.

EXT. THE FOUR SEASONS - CONTINUOUS

As Christopher opens the door of his limousine, the Dark-Blazered Man blocks Doug in his tracks, and then gets in the driver's seat and shuts the door.

DOUG
YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT NUMBER SEVEN.
IT'S REAL AND I'LL PROVE IT!

Christopher, seen through the back window, looks straight ahead. The limo pulls away.

DOUG (CONT'D)
BASTARDS! I'LL FIGHT YOU ALL AND
WIN!

PEOPLE on the street stop and stare.

Out of breath, Doug leans against the building.

INT. LOS ANGELES - LAW OFFICE - DAY

Doug sits across from Attorney CHRIS MUZZI (40s) in a plush office, the walls adorned with a framed law diploma and several modern works of art.

A picture window behind the sharply dressed attorney streams in the bright California sunlight as tall palm tree sway to-and-fro.

DOUG
So you think I can win?

MUZZI
Absolutely, but it'll take an
effort to wear them down.

DOUG
I've got the money.

MUZZI
Good, because you'll need a deep
war chest to bring them to their
knees. Which reminds me, I hear you
manage a growing portfolio in L.A.
county,

DOUG
That's right.

MUZZI

Well, I can also help you expand
the Hirshfield estate.

DOUG

I'm listening.

MUZZI

Now's the perfect time to leverage
what they have by refinancing
through the M-B-S market. It's
strong now and frankly, there's no
end in sight.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Doug enters a greasy spoon diner. A "NO SMOKING" sign is
clearly displayed on the counter, but clouds of smoke
overhead tell him otherwise. He immediately recognizes Fannie
sitting by the front window.

Now paunchy with pale skin and missing a few teeth, Fannie's
reddish-hair no longer holds any youthful vim and fire.

A healthy, carefree Doug walks up to the booth and slides in
across from her. Fannie's eyes glaze over him.

DOUG

Fannie! How've you been?

FANNIE

What the fuck do you care?

DOUG

(ignores her comment)
Ella and Ruth are good. I've bought
several new commercial properties.

FANNIE

You've bought?

An uncomfortable beat, and then

DOUG

(moving on)
I sued the Rothkos for the rights
to authenticate my painting. It
took a while but I'll finally be
getting my day in court any day
now.

FANNIE

Still on that shit? Never give up,
do you?

DOUG

So what's going on with you?

FANNIE

Me? Nothing much. After Dad went bankrupt and the bank foreclosed on our Brentwood home, then the summer home. My folks had to move into assisted living then died within a few months of each other. I had to find alternate living. So I had to move out. Other than that, I'm fine.

The words sink in with Doug.

DOUG

Where do you live now?

FANNY

Been living in rehab ever since.

DOUG

I'm sorry, I didn't--

FANNIE

--know? You would've if you'd bothered to call.

DOUG

Fannie, I'll do anything for you. I'll pay for your rehab. Whatever you need. I will.

FANNIE

Just like that? You sprinkle fairy dust all over me and everything is fine? No. I don't need your *money*. I needed *you*.

Doug swallows as he regards Fannie.

DOUG

You look... good.

FANNIE

Save it, Doug. I can read the lines between your lips. You don't even want to fuck me anymore.

DOUG
I've been worried about you.

FANNIE
That's a joke.

DOUG
Sorry I didn't call sooner to catch up, but I've been so busy with all the new properties.

FANNIE
The same lame excuse.

Doug glances out the window.

FANNIE (CONT'D)
See what I mean?

DOUG
You could have called me.

Fannie rolls her eyes.

FANNIE
Why don't you ever take a look around? Sure, you got this thing going with the Hirshfield *babes* and all, but I dug you because you were a cool dude who wasn't part of that high society crowd I grew up with.

DOUG
I still am.

FANNIE
You always used to tell me I should get off my ass, find my way and do something I'm passionate about. But I look across the table and see a guy who's life passion's got him playing a couple of old coots.

DOUG
No need to worry about me.

FANNIE
Oh, I'm not, Doug.

DOUG
So what are you so angry about? As I recall it, you couldn't get your mouth off of Trevor's dick--

FANNIE
Fuck you! I'm different, now.

DOUG
You *think* you are.

Fannie eyes bulge out.

FANNIE
I bet you didn't know Trev and Jason had me play you to get you to start up the club.

DOUG
Nice bunch of friends.

FANNIE
The Feds picked up Trevor and put him away. Bet that bit of news makes you happy... There might come a time when *you'll* need a friend.

DOUG
I doubt it.

FANNIE
Go to hell, Doug!

Doug slides out of the booth.

DOUG
The truth is, I've never been happier. The real problem here is you can't accept that.

Doug walks out as Fannie seethes.

INT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: LOS ANGELES - 2009

Doug (57), cell phone to his ear, paces around the room. A wide-screen TV in the corner displays network news broadcast B-roll of "Property Foreclosure" signs in front of various single family homes as a NEWS ANCHOR drones on about the mortgage industry collapse.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
...as the recent collapse of mortgage backed securities has forced Americans out of their homes...

Through the mesh screen, Doug watches Ruth and Ella sunbathe in lounge chairs on the outdoor pool deck.

DOUG
(on the phone)
I can raise the money.

Ella catches Doug's attention.

ELLA
Oh, Dougie, please bring out some more ice teas for us!

Doug nods back with a forced smile.

MORTGAGE BROKER (V.O.)
But you've defaulted on the payments. You didn't leave the lender much choice.

DOUG
No, I need more time!

INT./EXT. DOUG'S VINTAGE JAGUAR "E-TYPE" - DAY

A pensive Doug glances up at his rearview mirror to notice a WHITE SEDAN tailing him closely, a man resembling the Dark-Blazered Man from the Four Seasons driving. Doug darts his eyes right and left, but when he checks the mirror again, the White Sedan has miraculously vanished.

EXT. RAINBOW - ENTRANCE - DAY

Doug parks his Jaguar, gets out and looks around for the White Sedan or the Dark-Blazered Man, but finds neither before walking in.

INT. RAINBOW - BAR - CONTINUOUS

A handful of mid-afternoon patrons occupy some tables. No one sits at the bar until Doug takes a seat there. Frank looks up to see him.

FRANK
Hey, what's goin' on?

DOUG
Fix me the usual.

FRANK
You sure? It's early.

DOUG
You a clock or a bartender?

Frank shrugs.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Is Jason around?

FANK
Not coming in until later.

Doug takes out a folder from his satchel and peruses the papers inside: various bills and foreclosure notices.

Frank unceremoniously sets down Doug's drink and walks away.

Doug instantly bottom-ups in one swallow, then exhales.

DOUG'S VISION

The bar darkens a bit.

Doug looks up to see the Dark-Blazered Man enter and approach him, stopping a few feet away.

DOUG
What do you want?

The Dark-Blazered Man reaches inside his blazer to pull out a pistol. He aims dead on Doug and...

DOUG (CONT'D)
No!!!

--BANG!

BACK TO REALITY

Everything brightens as Frank returns.

Doug "wakes up."

FRANK
You okay?

Without a word, Doug grabs the folder to leave. When he turns he sees a MAN wearing a black blazer walk out.

Doug runs after him, dropping the folder as papers spill out onto the floor.

EXT. RAINBOW - CONTINUOUS

From behind, Doug grabs the Man.

DOUG

Hey!

Doug realizes that the Man has no beard.

MAN

Hey, lay off! What's your problem?

DOUG

I'm--I'm so sorry. I... thought you were someone else.

Frank looks on as a breathless Doug leans against the wall.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Doug, swallowing hard, sits across from Muzzi.

MUZZI

Trust me, you need to do this.

DOUG

But... Chapter Eleven?

MUZZI

A personal re-org's nothing new. And you'll be doing yourself a favor by filing.

DOUG

But... what do I tell them?

MUZZI

It's not a death sentence.

DOUG

Easy for you to say. You're the one who got me into this mess.

Muzzi stiffens, then takes a full breath.

MUZZI

You over-leveraged their properties with subprime loans, which put the entire estate at risk. Trust me, you need to file.

DOUG

I'don't want them on the street!
They deserve so much better.

Muzzi leans in places a hand on Doug's shoulder.

MUZZI

You've invested so much of yourself
emotionally in the Sisters. It
pains me to say it, but frankly,
you'd be a happier man without
them.

Doug looks up at Muzzi, horrified.

DOUG

No, you're wrong. They mean
everything to me.

MUZZI

But Doug, think about it. How many
years do those two have left in
them? There must be someone else in
your life who you care about.

Doug ponders Muzzi's question. He already knows the answer.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Doug and Muzzi sit at the plaintiff's table in Bankruptcy
Court to the left from Christopher Rothko and opposition
counsel JONATHAN BACH (40s), Kennedy-esque looks wearing a
dark pin-striped suit.

Doug leans into Muzzi.

DOUG

(whispering)
They have to let me in the archive.

MUZZI

That'll be up to the Judge.

The BAILIFF stands as JUDGE THOMPSON (60s), enters.

BAILIFF

All rise.

Everyone stands as the Judge walks in and sits behind his
bench. Judge Thompson motions for everyone to sit, and they
do.

JUDGE THOMPSON
Counselors, what do we have here?

CLERK
In-the-matter-of Douglas B.
Himmelfarb adversary proceeding
against the Estate of Mark Rothko.

MUZZI
Attorney Christopher J. Muzzi of
Tsugawa, Biehl, Lau and Muzzi for
petitioner Douglas Himmelfarb.

BACH
Attorney Jonathan Bach for
respondent Mark Rothko estate.

JUDGE THOMPSON
Mr. Muzzi, proceed.

MUZZI
Thank you, Your Honor. We are
asking the Court to enforce a non-
party subpoena against petitioner,
The Mark Rothko Estate, to obtain
documentation that will lead to the
authentication of my client's
painting, originally painted by the
deceased in or about 1947. In so
doing, he hopes to hypothecate the
painting so that all creditors can
be paid in full.

JUDGE THOMPSON
Mr. Bach...

BACH
Thank you, Your Honor. There is no
evidence to warrant such an
outlandish request, which is why my
client vehemently objects. In fact,
he asks that sanctions against Mr.
Himmelfarb be imposed, because this
is nothing more than a frivolous
attempt to besmirch my client's
reputation, and diminish the value
of the estate--

MUZZI

Your Honor, the respondent brought this on himself after having had numerous opportunities over the last twenty years to put this behind them, if simply they would authorize the authentication to--

BACH

Forgive me, Your Honor, but my client is in no way, shape or form, obligated to entertain such requests from every attention-seeking fortune hunter out there--

Bach's eyes move in Doug's direction.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Slow down--Slow down. One at a time, counselors.

MUZZI

All we are saying is that if there's a chance that a photograph of my client's painting exists in the Rothko archive, it would help establish value for my client's most prized assets, which would go a long way to satisfying creditors, a primary goal of bankruptcy--

JUDGE THOMPSON

The court is well-aware of what the goal of bankruptcy is, counselor.

BACH

This is bald-faced harassment, Your Honor. A fishing expedition.

Doug fumes, leans back and stares at Christopher.

DOUG

(accusatory)

What are you afraid of, Chris?

Judge Thompson BANGS his hammer multiple times.

JUDGE THOMPSON

(to Muzzi)

Counselor! Control your client.

BACH

Petty theatrics! Rule 11 sanctions are clearly warranted, here.

JUDGE THOMPSON

What's warranted is *quiet* in my court--from *both* of you.

(beat)

Now, I have reviewed the disclaimer language proposals from both parties, and provided I see that the Court can properly balance the Rothkos' right to privacy with Mr. Himmelfarb's quest to attribute value to his bankruptcy asset at issue here today, then the Court shall issue the subpoena. But the Court reserves its final determination for a later date.

(to Doug)

And the Court believes it an opportune time to caution the petitioner that because the respondent does not make any representation as to the authentication of the painting, he should not make any public or private statements that would indicate otherwise.

MUZZI

But, Your Honor--

JUDGE THOMPSON

Court is adjourned.

Judge Thompson BANGS his GAVEL.

MATCH CUT TO:

A CUT OF STEAK

A MALLET POUNDS upon the meat on a cutting board.

INT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

Wearing an apron, a helpless Doug stares out through the window as a FLATBED TRUCK drives up to the front door.

A crew of FOUR MEN proceed to pull out the exotic plants and trees from the ground.

Ruth enters and joins Doug.

RUTH
 What is going on? Why are they
 digging up the plantings?

DOUG
 I... don't know.

Ella appears from the other kitchen entrance.

ELLA
 I know why, dear. I just spoke with
 Mr. Bellerose who told me Doug
 never paid the nurseries.

RUTH
 Dougie, is this true?

DOUG
 (sullen)
 Yes.

RUTH
 But, how did this happen?

ELLA
 We've always paid our bills. For
 sixty-five years, we've always paid
 our bills.

Doug continues to stare out the window.

ELLA (CONT'D)
 We trusted you to manage things,
 but now...

DOUG
 I know. I'm... so sorry. Things
 are... not the way I planned it.
 But soon I'll be able to borrow
 against the painting, all our
 troubles will be over.

ELLA
 You've been telling us that fairy
 tale for twenty-five years, now.

RUTH
 (almost in tears)
 No, El. Dougie will come through
 for us. He always does.

Ella, on shaky legs, gives her a pitiful look.

Doug finally turns to face the Sisters.

DOUG

You know I love you both and would never let anything bad happen to you. I swear.

ELLA

(to Ruth)

Doug made some bad mistakes, and that's why we have to sell our properties, and that's why they're digging up our lovely garden.

Ella starts to hyperventilate. Doug's oblivious to her discomfort.

DOUG

I did what I thought I had to do to take care of you.

ELLA

You did what you thought was right for you, Dear.

DOUG

No! That painting will save us. I know it will.

Ella walks up to his face.

ELLA

ENOUGH ABOUT THAT WRETCHED PAINTING!

She SLAPS him across the face.

RUTH

Please stop. Both of you!

Ella suddenly waivers, loses her balance and falls to the kitchen floor.

DOUG

El!

Doug kneels down to check her pulse.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Speak to me El! God, speak to me!

Ruth starts to cry as she leans against a counter.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Doug sits, head in hands on a chair in the hallway as a DOCTOR (40s), female wearing a white jacket and ID tag approaches him.

DOCTOR

She had a severe stroke, and being that she's a ninety-year-old woman, it's hard to predict the outcome. We'll have to wait and see.

Doug's head finally emerges as he looks up at the Doctor.

DOUG

May I see her?

DOCTOR

Of course, but don't expect too much.

The doctor leaves and Doug walks in to

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ella lies flat, eyes open. She cannot move. The steady BEEP of a heart monitor drones on.

DOUG

Ella?

Ella slowly opens her eyes.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

ELLA

Will I go home soon?

DOUG

Yes. Yes you are.

ELLA

Will Gene Kelly be there?

DOUG

Yes, sweetie. You'll have lunch together.

ELLA

And the garden...

Doug begins to choke up.

DOUG

I'll pick out a nice fragrant
orchid for you. So you can be...
the Belle of the Ball.

He shuts his eyes and turns away to avoid tears.

ELLA

The garden. Can't wait to run
through it with Mama and Papa...

The machine beeps suddenly and flat-lines.

DOUG

No... no... no... NO! Nurse!
Doctor! Somebody!

Doug falls to his knees and rests his head on Ella's torso as he bawls. Two NURSES run in to check her pulse, but they cannot revive her.

EXT. CEMETARY - GRAVE SITE - DAY

Doug, Ruth in a wheelchair, Bellerose, Fannie, FRIENDS and NEIGHBORS huddle around an open grave as a RABBI (60s), recites "The Kaddish."

RABBI

Yeet-gah-dahl vah-eet kah-dash sha-
may-rah-bah...

The Rabbi concludes the service and offers a shovel to Ruth. Doug wheels her over to a pile of freshly unearthed soil beside the grave, then assists her arm in shoveling a bit of dirt and dumping it on Ella's coffin.

Doug wheels her back to where they had been standing as attendees repeat the ritual.

Doug looks up to see in the distance, the Dark-Blazered Man leaning against a large grave stone.

Bellerose leans over to Doug and whispers in sotto voce.

BELLEROSE

You know, sometimes I think I can
grow Hydrangeas.

Doug looks back to where the Dark-Blazered Man had stood, but sees no one.

DOUG

You're no gardener.

BELLEROSE
That's the point.

DOUG
I'm sorry.

BELLEROSE
I'm just an estates lawyer who
learned very early on never to
stray outside my lane.

Doug gazes downward.

BELLEROSE (CONT'D)
Your piss-poor judgment has brought
nothing but misery upon them. Don't
you get it?
(beat)
Ruth still needs you. So take my
advice: forget about the Rothko.

Bellerose gives Doug a perfunctory pat on the shoulder.

BELLEROSE (CONT'D)
Now don't go screwing *that* up, too.

Bellerose leaves abruptly, leaving Doug cold.

EXT. FANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A healthy-looking Fannie appears at the top of the steps
holding a small bag of groceries.

She finds a haggard-looking Doug sitting on the floor with
his back up against her apartment door.

FANNIE
Doug?...

DOUG
Hi, Fannie.

Doug struggles to pull himself up. Hesitates, then embraces
Fannie. She does not pull away.

FANNIE
How?... When did you get here?

DOUG
I needed to see you.

FANNIE
Man, you look like shit. Come in.

Fannie unlocks her door and the two enter.

INT. FANNIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Darkly lit with old furniture.

FANNIE
It's not Brentwood, but it's all I
have now. Sit.

Fannie motions Doug to the ragged sofa.

DOUG
Thanks.

Fannie glides over to the galley kitchen and places her grocery bag on the counter top.

FANNIE
You want anything? Water?

DOUG
Agua will do just fine.

She moves to the overhead cabinet to grab a glass and runs the faucet to fill it.

FANNIE
You always cracked me up, with that
high-faluten talk.

DOUG
You look good.

Doug's attempt at flattery falls short.

FANNIE
Yeah, it's amazing what years in
rehab can do.

DOUG
I wanted to help.

FANNIE
I know. It was probably for the
better, the way it happened.

Fannie grabs an ice tray from the freezer and empties it into a bowl.

DOUG
I apologize for last time.

Fannie, momentarily touched, does not turn to him.

FANNIE

We both said things we shouldn't have.

(beat)

So, what's going on?

DOUG

Things have changed.

Fannie returns to the living room and hands Doug his ice water. She remains standing.

FANNIE

Too bad about Ella.

DOUG

They took it all. Art, antiques, our properties. Even Rainbow. Everything.

FANNIE

I figured something happened when the club shut down.

DOUG

Ruth and I need to find a place.

FANNIE

Wow. And NOW you need help from an old friend. Things must be pretty fucked up for the two of you to ask a washed up drug addict harpy in recovery for real estate advice. Well, look around. This shit hole's reasonable. They're always looking for renters.

DOUG

I'm sorry if I devalued what you've accomplished for yourself.

FANNIE

Yeah-yeah, I forgive your pompous ass.

Fannie sits on the sofa beside him, but not too close.

DOUG

Did people use me all the time?

FANNIE

Oh, Doug. Any drug addict and fame seeker in this town wants to suck the biggest dick they can find.

DOUG

And I was the dick.

FANNIE

No, you just knew how to shake the money tree loose.

Without asking, Doug, exhausted and close tears, leans over and rests his head on Fannie's shoulder.

DOUG

It was always you.

Fannie stares straight ahead, not knowing what to say.

EXT. HIRSHFIELD MANSION - ENTRANCE - DAY

Doug parks in the driveway in a used CHEVY SONIC. A VAN sits out front with "A.N. ABELL AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1916" inscribed on its side.

INT. MANSION - VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

MOVING MEN wrap up pieces of art and carrying out furniture. The main hall is completely empty, footsteps echoing throughout the room.

Doug looks back through the rear French doors out over the dying orchid garden.

LIVING ROOM

Doug walks in and looks on in silence as the Moving Men walk past him. He walks into the now empty room, except for Number Seven that sits against a wall.

Doug rips off the wrapping, grabbing the frame as if to strangle it, when his CELL PHONE BUZZES.

INSERT: "MUZZI"

He puts No. 7 back down gently and answers.

DOUG

Yes?

MUZZI (V.O.)
Are you sitting down?

Doug looks around the empty room for a chair.

DOUG
No.

MUZZI (V.O.)
Well guess what. The judge ruled in
your favor. The Rothkos have to
give you access to the archives.

Doug looks down upon the painting intently.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - ROTHKO ARCHIVE WAREHOUSE - DAY

A layer of snow covers the ground.

Doug PRESSES A BUZZER, and then MARION KAHN (60), short white hair, glasses and cigarette in hand, opens the door. She gives him a suspicious once-over.

DOUG
I'm here for--

MS. KAHN
We know. Follow me.

INT. WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ms. Kahn walks down an aisle, Doug trailing behind.

We pull back to see them walk through a huge collection of wrapped artwork in the cavernous space. She leads him to a corner of the warehouse to a sealed-off room.

REVIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MS. KAHN
I was instructed to give you
restricted access to these files.

Kahn points to a box with trans-files sitting on a metal table marked "1940s".

MS. KAHN (CONT'D)
Nothing leaves here.

DOUG
I know.

FADE TO:

INT. REVIEWING ROOM - HOURS LATER

Doug sits at the table sifting through files and pulling out documents and photos, not finding anything.

DOUG
(mumbles)
This is fruitless.

Doug sees a padded envelope filled with plastic bags of assorted photographs marked "No. 1", "No. 2" and "No. 3". He pulls each photograph out separately and scans each one, recognizing none of them. Doug tosses the photos on the table and bangs his fist.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(full voice)
Bastards removed the evidence!

MS. KAHN (O.S.)
Are you done in there?

DOUG
Done? I haven't even started.

Doug continues to search. He rifles through the files until he get to plastic bag "No. 7". He stops short for a moment, holding his breath as he stares at it.

Doug opens the bag and dumps out the photographs on the table. He spreads the photos and starts to scan them. He holds his breath again for a longer get as his eyes widen at one particular photograph.

CLOSE UP: the black and white photo that's identical to Doug's painting.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(exultant)
Oh, yes! Yessss!

Doug jumps up as if struck by a lightning bolt. He inadvertently knocks over the box with files spilling out onto the floor.

Ms. Kahn walks in.

MS. KAHN
Everything okay in here?
(notices the mess)
What did you do?

Doug shimmies around, gesticulating in what can best be described as an out-of-body experience.

MS. KAHN (CONT'D)
Mr. Himmelfarb...

Doug bends down over the mess and picks up the photograph from the pile and holds it up to her.

DOUG
Do you see this?

Doug erratically waves the photograph in front of Ms. Kahn, unable to lock eyes on the perpetually moving object.

Doug grabs Ms. Kahn's head with both hands and applies an eye-popping big wet kiss right on her mouth. He continues to shimmy out the door.

MS. KAHN
(shell shocked)
Mr. Himmelfarb...
(shouting after him)
Remember the gag order!

INT. CAFE - DAY

Doug sits restrained with hands folded, but can't hide a gleaming smile, with Wall Street Journal reporter JENNIFER MALONEY (30s), in a posh café. Mousy hair and bookish, dark-rimmed glasses soften her eyes trained to reveal truth.

As they sit by a window, snow falls lightly outside.

JENNIFER
So what have you got?

Doug hands her the photos.

DOUG
A copy of the black and white photo. For reference, here's a color photo I took of Number Seven.

Jennifer adjusts her glasses as she compares them.

Doug reaches down into his soft black briefcase and pulls out thick wads of paper held together with rubber bands and hands it over to Jennifer.

JENNIFER

What's this?

DOUG

Depositions of Christopher Rothko and Marion Kahn, the Rothko archivist. They never say Number Seven isn't authentic.

JENNIFER

But they confirm Anfam's story about the photo filed away in the archives all these years?

DOUG

Yes. Without the court order, they never would have given it up.

JENNIFER

That's huge.

DOUG

And there's more. The Rothkos, they've got someone following me around. Everywhere.

JENNIFER

Following you?

Doug's eyes dart right, then left. He glances back quickly over both shoulders.

DOUG

Yeah. They think they can scare me into abandoning my search for the truth. But they don't know the real Douglas Himmelfarb. I'd rather go to my grave before quitting.

Jennifer regards Doug as she sips her latte.

MS. MALONEY

Doug, did the court state any restrictions on how to handle this evidence?

DOUG

No. Just go and write your article so the world will finally know what the Rothkos have been pulling on me all these years.

EXT. ART GALLERY - DAY

As Doug walks down a SoHo New York side street, he stares upward to the sign of one store front. "RESISTANCE ART GALLERY" is etched on one darkened window.

Doug extinguishes his cigarillo against the stone facade, then takes out a handkerchief to wipe off his sweaty forehead. With labored breaths, he walks in.

INT. ART GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Doug enters to see a space with spotlights arranged at precise angles, illuminating the hanging modern works of art.

Doug walks over to one painting and peruses it closely, ignoring JANNE (male, 50), wearing a black jumpsuit and yellow sneakers, who's hanging another painting.

DOUG

(to himself)

That's interesting!

Janne turns to see Doug, with some difficulty, lay down on his back, head touching the wall, looking up at the painting.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Yup. That's what I thought.

JANNE

(perplexed)

What?

Janne stands over Doug who still looks up at the heavy textured abstract painting directly above his head.

Suddenly, Doug sits up and grabs Janne's arm.

DOUG

Lie down here, and I'll show you.

Doug pulls Janne down lying next to him.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Ever seen anything quite like it?

JANNE

Seen what?

POV Doug and Janne: looking up at the abstract painting in a skewed angle.

DOUG

Mars... what a landscape! It's absolutely stunning. I see canyons, riverbeds and mountain peaks. Just incredible!

After an uncomfortable beat, Janne turns to Doug.

JANNE

I'm sorry, I'm Janne, the gallery owner. And you are...?

DOUG

I'm Doug. Doug Himmelfarb.

JANNE

Nice meeting you.

They shake hands, still lying down in this awkward exchange.

JANNE (CONT'D)

Would you happen to be in the market?

DOUG

It's my job to discover hidden gems.

JANNE

Hmmh... well, she's a very interesting artist.

DOUG

Who is she?

JANNE

Lisa Beth Older. You might even say she's a reincarnation of Jackson Pollock himself, but with her very own distinct style.

DOUG

(chortles)

Jackson Pollock has nothing on her.

Doug ponders for a moment.

DOUG (CONT'D)
What do you think about Rothko?

JANNE
Rothko, Pollock, de Kooning. Birds
of a feather. Why?

DOUG
What if I told you that I have an
original Rothko?

Doug pulls out a black and white copy of the photograph of
the painting and hands it to Janne, who skeptically eyes it.

DOUG (CONT'D)
You could own a piece of it.

JANNE
Sorry, but I don't really deal in
"Blue Chip" art.

The entrance door opens and a VISITOR cautiously sets his
foot into the gallery and instantly eyes the two men sprawled
out on the floor.

VISITOR
Excuse me, but are you open?

Collecting himself, Janne jumps up from the floor.

JANNE
Yes, of course we're open.

Doug, with some difficulty, stands, and then hobbles out. As
he reaches the door, Doug drops a business card on the floor.

DOUG
Call me if you change your mind.

JANNE
I'll--

The door slams shut.

JANNE (CONT'D)
--do that.

ON TV SCREEN

A grainy video clip of a news report with Doug speaking to an
INTERVIEWER. The Chroma-key reads: "NEWS AT 6. DOUGLAS
HIMMELFARB ART OWNER. KITV-4 NEWS".

REPORTER

Douglas Himmelfarb is convinced this is the buy of a lifetime. He says three hundred nineteen dollars bought him an original painting by artist Mark Rothko.

DOUG

The photograph is what says it's authentic. The black and white eight-by-ten photo from Mark Rothko's personal file which was never accessed publicly--that is my proof and that's "End of Story".

MUZZI (PRE-LAP)

You gave them out to how many people?

INT. LOS ANGELES - LAW OFFICE - DAY

Muzzi sits at his desk, miffed, as Doug sits opposite.

DOUG

A few.

MUZZI

You violated the court order. So now you'll have to list everyone you shared the photo and Kahn's testimony transcript with and sign an affidavit. The Rothkos are coming after you.

DOUG

Then let's have it out in court. Let it come out that they're sending people out to harass me into surrendering my right to authenticate. Everywhere I turn they've got a guy following my every move.

MUZZI

Doug, no one is following you. Trust me.

DOUG

Damn it, you're wrong. THEY ARE!

MUZZI

The judge *will* sanction you. The question won't be if, but for how much. You broke confidentiality. There's no way around that.

DOUG

Then I'll argue it myself.

MUZZI

You can't take on both the Rothkos and the courts. Not without the funds to keep up the fight.

DOUG

I have to. The world needs someone like me to lead it there. It was never about money. I already had everything.

MUZZI

Suit yourself.

(sighs)

I know someone in New York who might be able to help you out.

Muzzi jots down something on a Post-it and hands it to Doug.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Doug and Bach stand in court behind their respective tables. Judge Thompson sits on his bench as he reads a document.

JUDGE THOMPSON

I have here a motion to impose sanctions on Mr. Himmelfarb in blatant disregard of my order.

(beat)

Mr. Himmelfarb, do you have anything to say before the court renders its decision?

Doug holds up the photograph of Number Seven.

DOUG

This photograph proves that my painting is an original Rothko. Period.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Even if true, unless you have an expert to sign off on that, this court can't help you.

DOUG
But, Your Honor--

BACH
Correct, Your Honor. All that this proves is that Mr. Himmelfarb has a painting and a photograph that appear similar, but without a forensic evaluation, that doesn't mean anything, in any court of law.

DOUG
Your Honor, the public deserves to know!

JUDGE THOMPSON
Thank you, gentlemen.
(to Doug)
Mr. Himmelfarb, the court hereby sanctions you with a fine of Sixty-Eight-Thousand Dollars for violating the order.

DOUG
That's outrageous, I object. I OBJECT!

JUDGE THOMPSON
Court dismissed.

Judge Thompson rises and walks out. Bach walks past a stunned Doug from behind.

BACH
(sarcastic)
I sure hope it was worth it.

Bach walks out.

DOUG
This is *not* over!

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Doug and Ruth, in a wheelchair, enter their modest apartment, a carbon copy of Fannie's. In one corner sits an easel that holds "No. 7" on full display.

Doug wheels Ruth through their small living room past his open sofa bed to the

BEDROOM

Doug grimaces lifting Ruth up before setting her down gently into her bed. Breathing heavily, he adjusts Ruth's pillow between her back and the headboard.

RUTH

You look so pale. Have you seen a doctor?

DOUG

I'm fine, Ruthie. I know its going to be hard to adjust to this tiny place, but now you should rest.

Doug hobbles out, arm on lower back, then stops.

RUTH

You're like that poor soul from The Pearl.

DOUG

What?

RUTH

The Pearl. Steinbeck's novel. That cursed painting robbed you of peace of mind. You think your frustration makes me sad? Well, I am. But I'm even more saddened to think that people who know and love you will remember you for that painting, instead of knowing the funny, engaging, passionate and wonderful person you are.

Doug can't bear to face Ruth. Instead, he stares out the window to the parking lot.

FADE TO:

INT. ART STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Rays of sunlight shimmer through a skylight of Rothko's studio adorned with human-sized canvases of finished and incomplete paintings.

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY - 1970

Two NYPD OFFICERS rummage through the space.

ANGLE ON a CORONER in a suit stooping in front of a BODY whose face we cannot see as a pool of blood trails from the body's right arm.

INSERT: Newspaper clipping headlining "MARK ROTHKO FOUND DEAD IN APPARENT SUICIDE."

BACK TO SCENE

Doug watches the parking lot and eyes a the White Sedan idling with a dark figure at the wheel. He tenses up and then hobbles out of the apartment.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Doug hurries out onto the parking lot as the White Sedan peels out and follows its distant tail lights. Some residents look on.

DOUG
GET THE HELL AWAY FROM MY PAINTING!

Hobbling, Doug trips and falls onto the blacktop, crying.

EXT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - ENTRANCE - DAY

Doug parks his used CHEVY SONIC. Heavy legged, he limps toward the entrance using a cane.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Doug enters and asks the head waiter something we cannot hear. The head waiter motions to the rear.

EXT. ITALIAN RESTUARNT - REAR - CONTINUOUS

Doug exits through a rear door to find Jason wearing an apron, sitting on a stoop smoking a cigarette.

JASON
What the fuck!

DOUG
Fannie told me.

JASON
I can't right now.

DOUG
I'm sorry about the club, all
right?

JASON
No, Doug, it's *not* all right.

DOUG
I need to borrow some money.

JASON
Money!? I'm working for the "Man"
now, you fucking asshole.

DOUG
I can get you back on your feet
again, once I get the money from
the Rothko painting. I just need
some to tide me over... I helped
you when you needed it.

JASON
And see where it got me?

Jason throws the cigarette on the ground, stamps on it, then
brushes Doug aside as he defiantly walks back inside.

JASON (CONT'D)
Go fuck yourself.

INT. FANNIE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Doug and Fannie look at old photos of themselves spread out
over a cheap wooden coffee table.

FANNIE
That's when you had that hot
"Fabio" look.

Doug strains to smile.

DOUG
It was that "gardener" complex.

FANNIE
Why don't you keep doing it?

DOUG
Landscaping? Look at me. My back's
a wreck. Those days are behind me.

FANNIE

You'll have to start doing something else.

DOUG

(giggles)

I used to tell you that all the time. The Rothko will provide all the income we need.

FANNIE

(sighs)

Now I know better than to try to steer your Titanic clear of that iceberg, but I gotta ask: all those paintings and antiques and sculptures and armoires and whatever "high art" you surrounded yourself with all those years, now that they've probably gone to some rich Beverly Hills fuck, what is Douglas Himmelfarb really about?

DOUG

...I screwed up, all right, Fannie? Is *that* what you want to hear?

FANNIE

Doug--

DOUG

No, it's true.

FANNIE

When you called and wanted to come over, I said to myself "don't let that fool back into your life again after all the pain he caused you."

DOUG

I'm sorry, Fannie. I know I've been an ass. Can you forgive me?

FANNIE

...Okay, so you *did* get carried away, but you're not a bad guy.

(beat)

It's too late to give up, now.

DOUG

I'm exhausted and I don't know if I have it in me anymore.

FANNIE
Just rest up for a few days, and
you'll be fine.

DOUG
I can't. I'm on edge night and day.
I need something...

FANNIE
Whoa, you know I'm struggling to
stay clean as it is.

DOUG
I know, it's just that life's so...
unyielding right now.

Fannie picks up her phone and texts Doug a phone number.

FANNIE
Call this guy.

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Doug takes out a small plastic bag with white powder in it from his pocket and puts it on the table. He continues to put a CD in the player when he notices the "No. 7" manila folder stacked on top of it, with the Post-it note Muzzi had given him, still attached to the outside.

Doug bends over to pick up the Post-it and stares at it, exhaling deeply.

INT. NEW YORK CITY - HOTEL BAR - DAY

Sitting with a half-filled drink before him, a worn-out Doug speaks on his cell phone to attorney DEVLIN MACKEY (60s), whose gruff voice insinuates numerous hidden skeletons.

DEVLIN MACKEY(V.O.)
Where are you?

DOUG
The Edison on Eighth Avenue.

DEVLIN MACKEY(V.O.)
Look for a black Town Car. Twenty
minutes.

The line CLICKS OFF. Using his CANE, Doug limps over to the

RESTROOM

Doug enters, puts the cane aside and somewhat unsteadily sets an ANTIQUE SNUFF BOX on the sink as he looks at himself in the mirror. He opens the box and proceeds to dip his pinkie into some white powder, which he snorts. He then turns on the faucet and splashes his face with water, before giving his troubled reflection one long last look.

EXT. BROOKLYN - OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Doug emerges from the Town Car at the address, a run-down pre-war facade.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

INSERT: Newspaper clipping headlining DEVLIN MACKEY representing a mobster in an art heist investigation.

Doug sits across from Mackey, who talks through a dark vulture-shaped mustache and thick unibrow. His shirt is unbuttoned to reveal some chest hair.

DEVLIN MACKEY

I heard about your *predicament* and am willing to help.

DOUG

How much?

DEVLIN MACKEY

The art world's cruel to outsiders. It basically has to be a slam dunk to get authenticated, and even then...

DOUG

With the photograph it's a slam dunk all right.

DEVLIN MACKEY

Doug-may I call you Doug? Look, it sounds to me like you've done everything you could. Maybe it's time to call it quits. What if it turn out to be a fake? There's a lot of 'em out there.

DOUG

I didn't come all this way for you to tell me to give up.

DEVLIN MACKEY

No one said anything about giving up. What I'm proposing is a better way to screw the Rothkos without their authentication.

DOUG

What are you talking about?

DEVLIN MACKEY

Just call it a plan B.

DOUG

Go on...

DEVLIN MACKEY

Ever heard of N-F-Ts?

DOUG

No, should I have?

DEVLIN MACKEY

Most people haven't. It's the newest thing in digital art and it's all on the Internet. I know a guy who could convert your painting into a 3-D digital image called uh... a non-fungible token.

DOUG

Sounds like a high tech voodoo scam to me.

DEVLIN MACKEY

Like it or not, that's where high end art's going. Think about it: you establish provenance on the web, you verify its authenticity. It's like your own time stamp into eternity, and the Rothkos can't do a damned thing about it. The best part is, some pieces have sold for millions.

DOUG

I'm not done with the Rothkos.

DEVLIN MACKEY

(sighs)
Suit yourself.

Devlin Mackey slides a contract across the desk.

DEVLIN MACKEY (CONT'D)
Twenty-five percent.

DOUG
The estimated market value is forty million, and twenty-five percent of that is ten million. That's a lot of money for one of those *fakes*.

DEVLIN MACKEY
It's a hell of a lot better than one hundred percent of *nothing* that the Rothkos will ever give you.

Doug leans back and exhales.

DEVLIN MACKEY (CONT'D)
Alright, alright. I'll even add in the N-F-T option. Either way, I'll get my cut. It's a win-win for both of us. So what do you say?

Doug sniffs and wipes his nose before staring off into a distant void.

INT./EXT. LOS ANGELES - CHEVY SONIC - DAY

SUPER: FIVE YEARS LATER

Doug drives down an L.A. Boulevard, forehead sweating profusely, as he speaks into his cellphone.

MUZZI (V.O.)
Thanks for the check.

DOUG
I need you to get me back into court, now.

MUZZI (V.O.)
...Doug, you're in the wrong court. Moving forward, we have to get into federal District Court. Bankruptcy judges don't deal much at all with intellectual property rights.

(beat)
We have to sue the Rothko estate directly. They're the ones depriving you of the rights.

DOUG
So, how the fuck do we do that?

MUZZI (V.O.)

We have to file a motion to amend
the stay of your bankruptcy that
will get your case into the
district court.

DOUG

Then fuck'n do it already!

Doug presses the disconnect button and instantly speed dials
another number.

FANNIE (V.O.)

*"You got Fannie. Either leave me a
message or leave me alone."*

BEEP.

DOUG

(excited)

The Rothkos are finished. I finally
got 'em. Drop by tomorrow morning
and I'll explain.

Doug tosses the cellphone as he looks in the rearview mirror
at a white sedan eerily similar to the one he chased out of
the parking lot. Doug pulls over as his brakes SCREECH.

Doug watches the white sedan drive by harmlessly with a
mother driving with kids in the back. He rests his head on
the steering wheel fighting back tears.

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ruth sits in her wheelchair watching a BLARING TV in the
living room. A half-eaten food tray rests in front of her.

The painting sits on an easel against a wall adjoining the
kitchen.

Using pot holders, Doug removes two ramekins of Crème Brûlée'
from the kitchen oven and gently places them on a tray.

Doug opens a kitchen drawer to grab a bag of white powder
crammed in the back. He quickly opens it, dips his pinkie
inside and snorts some, twice.

DOUG

How was it?

RUTH (O.S.)

Exquisite.

On shaky legs, he plods back into the living room.

DOUG
I'll cut the rest of the meat if
you like.

RUTH
No Dougie, I'm very full. But thank
you.

Thoroughly winded, Doug sits on the sofa next to Ruth.

DOUG
(breathing heavily)
I want you to know that everything
is going to be okay. I've secured
money to make sure that the
painting will finally be
authenticated.

RUTH
Doesn't matter much now, does it?

DOUG
There... may be another way...

Ruth turns to Doug, who is pale and shaky.

RUTH
Are you okay, Dougie?

DOUG
I'm burning up, aren't you?

RUTH
No, I'm fine.

Doug winces as he stands, then trudges over to the wall unit
air conditioner and turns it up.

Doug sits next to Ruth. They both stare silence at the TV
screen for a moment before Doug grabs the remote and lowers
the volume.

DOUG
Did El hate me before she died?

RUTH
No.

Ruth keeps watching the TV.

DOUG

(tormented)

You have to believe me when I say I didn't want for any of this to happen. I wanted to take care of you and Ella. I wanted you to be proud of me, but instead my obsession with that painting got the better of me and I ruined everything.

(beat)

I'm truly sorry, Ruth.

RUTH

Doug, I don't want to think that El was right, but maybe I was too blind to see?

Doug's eyes well up as he grabs his head, as if trying to hold it together.

DOUG

My head feels like it wants to split open.

RUTH

Then take some aspirin, for goodness sake.

Doug rises and walks to the kitchen.

Doug passes the easel--STOPS IN HIS TRACKS--and WHACKS THE PAINTING with his hand so that it flies off the easel.

Suddenly, Doug waivers.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Doug?...

DOUG CLUTCHES HIS CHEST, trying to squeeze out the pain.

A helpless Ruth can only watch.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Doug! What's wrong?!

DOUG

RUTH! Ahhh!!

DOUG CONVULSES, then fall flat onto the floor with a THUD.

RUTH

DOUG!!!

Doug's eyes bulge out.

Sprawled out on the floor, he reaches for the painting lying next to him.

As Ruth looks on in horror, she grabs her neckless alarm button, and with shaky hands presses it.

Doug's hand quietly loses its grip of the canvas. He let's out a final WHEEZING SIGH.

His eyes FREEZE OPEN into a lifeless stare as foam form around his mouth.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - THE NEXT MORNING

The lights of a parked LAPD SQUAD CAR flash in front.

A MEDICAL EXAMINER TEAM carries a GURNEY with what is Doug-- enshrouded in a BODY BAG--out of the apartment toward a waiting VAN marked "LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER" on its side panel.

A POLICE OFFICER (20s) trails behind.

Fannie runs to the van as the Medical Examiner Team heaves the gurney into the van.

FANNIE

Oh my God, what happened?!

The Police Officer blocks her path.

POLICE OFFICER

Ma'am, please step back.

FANNIE

(frantic)

You're not answering my question!
Is Ruth okay? She's a hundred
fucking years old!

The Police Officer points to the entrance where Ruth, slumped over, is wheeled out by an AIDE (20s) wearing a SOCIAL SERVICES patch on her shirt.

Fannie runs up to meet Ruth, ignoring the Aide entirely.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

Ruth! What happened?

RUTH
Dougie is dead. I can't believe he
abandoned me.

The Person continues to wheel Ruth to the parking lot as Fannie looks on, frozen silent.

The Police Officer walks back to his squad car and grabs a radio.

The Medical Examiner Team SLAMS the rear door shut.

As the squad car and van leave, Fannie looks out onto the parking lot. We see the White Sedan.

POV WHITE SEDAN: We see Fannie double over in grief as the LAPD car and van leave. A gleaming gold-bracelet-clad wrist appears, resting on the steering wheel. The other hand appears as it speed dials a number on a cellphone. We hear a RING. The line CLICKS ON but we can't identify the voice on the other end.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN (O.S.)
He's dead... Yeah, I'm sure...

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fannie enters using a spare key and notices the EMPTY EASEL and No. 7 nowhere to be found. Fannie glances around the room. Fannie walks into the

KITCHEN

On the wall by the kitchen phone, she sees the Post-it that reads: "Devlin Mackey's phone: (646) 345-6789." She rips the Post-it away, holding it as she enters

BEDROOM

A dresser is covered with ladies perfumery and a hairbrush. She opens the top drawer to find men's and women's clothing.

Fannie sees a shelf filled with various photo albums. She grabs the most tattered one and opens it.

She flips through several pages of Doug hamming it up with the Sisters in various settings. Then she opens a page of photos with Doug and Fannie clowning around together at the Santa Monica pier in Eighties-style clothing. They are happy.

Fannie's shoulders slump as she slides down on the floor when the phone on the nightstand RINGS. She answers.

FANNIE

Hello?

INT. NEW YORK CITY - RENAISSANCE GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

JANNE

Hello, this is Janne from the Renaissance art gallery. Is Doug there?

FANNIE (V.O.)

Who?

JANNE

Tell Doug to call me. I have a serious collector interested in buying his painting.

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inconsolable, Fannie drops the phone and shakes her head.

FANNIE

You stupid, crazy... big old love-able fool!

Fannie grabs the album and heaves it across the room. The album breaks apart and pages spill out onto the floor.

Fannie spots a manila envelope that had fallen out of the album marked "NO. 7 FOR FANNIE."

Fannie tears open the envelope. A black ZIP DRIVE falls to the carpet that she quickly scoops up and eyes closely.

She pulls out Devlin Mackey's "25% CONTRACT" and flips through the pages.

Fannie notices a PHONE NUMBER "(646) 345-6789," on the cover page.

FANNIE (CONT'D)

YOU FUCKING ASSHOLE!!!

Fannie GIGGLES as she wipes her tears with both hands.

She dials the number.

DEVLIN MACKEY

Hello?

FANNIE

Mr. Mackey, this is Fannie. Doug is dead.

DEVLIN MACKEY

Well, sweetheart, it looks like this is your lucky day.

INT. AUCTION HOUSE - DAY

BIDDERS sit in rows as an AUCTIONEER stands behind a podium and a work of modern art is displayed on an easel beside him.

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

We see a raised woman's hand SHOOT UP in the air holding a PLACKARD that reads "NO. 7." We only see her flowered hat from behind.

AUCTIONEER

Going once... going twice... SOLD to the woman in the flowered hat!

The auction is over as we follow the WOMAN out.

TV NEWSCASTER

Non-fungible tokens, or N-F-Ts, continue to rock the art world as a Mark Rothko inspired digital painting called "Number 7" sold on the Internet for an astounding Thirty-Eight million dollars last week to an anonymous buyer only three short months after it was posted online.

EXT. AUCTION HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The WOMAN gets in a waiting limousine.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

We see that the Woman is Fannie.

Ruth sits next to her.

RUTH

Another fun day at the auction, dear?

FANNIE
Ya know, I think I could get used
to this.

They both smile at each other.

EXT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

The limousine drives away, as we

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END