

No. 7

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LOGLINE

When a caretaker of two elderly aristocrats tries to authenticate a priceless Mark Rothko original painting, he must learn to tame obsessive behavior that threatens to destroy them and his own sanity as he challenges the art establishment.

SYNOPSIS

In 1987, antique collector and horticulturist Douglass Himmelfarb purchases a post-modernist painting at an estate sale auction in Los Angeles for a mere \$319.00. At the same auction house, Doug meets elderly aristocrat sisters, Ella and Ruth Hirshfield of Brentwood, and quickly charms his way into their lives as they hire him as their new landscaper.

Doug soon catches the eye of next door neighbor Fannie, a twenty year old college drop out. At his apartment, Fannie sees Doug's painting displayed on an easel and notices an inscription on the back side of the canvas, "No. 7". Doug starts researching Mark Rothko and other post-modernist painters. On a trip to San Francisco, he learns that Rothko was, in fact a guest lecturer at the California School of Fine Art in 1947 where he painted No. 7.

Fannie, who yearns for more romance from Doug, but it's getting it since his newfound obsession with the painting, breaks it off, informing him she'll be heading to Europe or a while.

Doug enlists the help of National Gallery art historian Dr. David Anfam to authenticate the painting. Dr. Anfam tells him that it is real and that he recalls a certain black and white photograph of the same painting in the Rothko Family archives. Ecstatic,

Doug, now living on the Hirshfield estate as their caretaker, throws a pool party at the sisters' expense while they're away. Fannie, recently returned from Europe with new friends, reconnects with Doug, who notices Fannie's telltale signs of drug addiction.,

The next day, the sisters inform Doug, over their attorney's objection, that they wish to grant him full power of attorney over all financial matters of

their estate holdings. Ruth and Ella tell him they view Doug as the son they never had.

Meanwhile, Fannie's new friends manipulate her into convincing Doug into investing in a new rock club in Malibu. Doug becomes a real estate player and local hero, albeit, using the Hirshfield's money to fund these new ventures.

In 1997, Doug learns that Dr. Anfam has refused to authenticate No.7 due to Rothko family pressure, In New York, Doug confronts Mark Rothko's son, Christopher, whose condescending comments enrage Doug enough to the point of threatening legal action. In a failed attempt at reconciliation, Doug visits Fannie, who informs him she'd been in drug rehab and is rebuilding her life. Doug looks down on Fannie, who pushes him away a second time.

Doug starts to believe he is being followed by a "dark-jacketed man" who he thinks was sent by the Rothkos to intimidate him into dropping the lawsuit.

In the wake of the MBS crisis, Doug's risky real estate investments implode on him. He also learns that Ella already knew about his risky investments and expresses deep disappointment. When Doug pleads with Ella that his Rothko painting will somehow save them, Ella tells him to "forget about the damned painting," then collapses. At the hospital, Doug learns Ella suffered a major stroke and dies while Doug looks on in anguish and regret.

Doug, with the help of his attorney, Chris Muzzi, brings his longstanding battle the Rothko Family Estate into court, which grants Doug the right to research their archives for evidence needed to authenticate the painting. However, against a strict court order, Doug pockets the mysterious black and white photographs from the archives and shares it, along with confidential court documents with the press. As a result, Doug is fined thousands of dollars. Muzzi tells Doug about a mysterious art benefactor in New York, who might be able to help if Doug agrees to give up a percentage of the painting to him.

In desperate attempt to sell the painting, Doug visits gallery owner, Janne, who views him as a bit unhinged.

Doug reconciles for good with once-again neighbor, Fannie, who hooks him up with a former drug dealer to ease his physical and emotional suffering. Muzzi calls Doug with some hopeful news: the judge has permitted Doug to sue the Rothko Estate.

Now living in and caring for Ruth in a small apartment, Doug apologizes to her, expressing regret for behaving the way he did. Moments later, Doug collapses, dying of a heart attack. When Fannie arrives as the coroners remove the Doug's body, she notices that No. 7 has been removed. As she rifles through Doug's old photographs, she answers a call from Janne, who

tells her he wants to purchase No. 7 from Doug. Outside the apartment, a "dark-jacketed man", who we now know exists, tells someone on the phone that "the painting is secure."

Meanwhile, No. 7 is secretly transported to a warehouse and placed in a nameless slot next to countless other works of art as the lights go dark.