

Number \$even

Written by

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An Original Screenplay  
Based on a True Story

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EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

SUPER: CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND - 1962

A suburban neighborhood of brick homes. A garage sale's in progress with few buyers.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

YOUNG DOUG, (10), is a string bean with long blond hair. He eyes a painting of a flower field leaning against a wall. The elderly HOMEOWNER (70), watches.

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

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

HOMEOWNER  
Hmmh. What makes ya think that?

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

HOMEOWNER  
Well, okay then. How much you got?

Young 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 him.

HOMEOWNER (CONT'D)  
That's the best you can do?

Young Doug nods. Holds his breath, 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, Young Doug leaves, painting in arms. A victorious grin spreads ear to ear.

EXT. HIMMELFARB HOME - BACKYARD NURSERY - MINUTES LATER

Young Doug crosses the yard on his way to the house, the painting under his arm. His MOM (40s), a tall, angry, rough-around-the-edges woman clinging to the 1950's, spots him from the flower beds where she's knee deep in the dirt.

MOM

What are you doing with that...  
thing?

He walks away, head down, ignores her.

MOM (CONT'D)

Give me that!

Mom snatches the painting from him and throws it in a garbage can.

EXT. SANTA MONICA, CA - DAY

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

SUPER: SANTA MONICA, CA - 25 YEARS LATER

INT./EXT. VW BEETLE - MOVING

A car weaves through traffic. Top down, radio BLARING Bon Jovi's "Livin' On A Prayer".

DOUGLAS HIMMELFARB (35), beach tanned, six-foot-four, wind in his shaggy blonde mane, larger-than-life energy, drives with intent, his flip-flopped-foot heavy on the gas.

As a light turns red, he BRAKES. On the passenger seat, a pile of horticulture books slide to the floor, revealing a flyer that reads "ESTATE SALE TODAY".

Doug grabs a lit joint from the ashtray, INHALES a long drag.

INT./EXT. BENTLEY - MOVING

A CHAUFFEUR steers the stately sedan down the winding driveway of a Brentwood MONTEREY COLONIAL-STYLE MANSION.

Two primly attired sisters sit in the back seat. ELLA HIRSHFIELD (60), the more serious of the two, and RUTH HIRSHFIELD (58) who always parrots her older sister.

As the vehicle descends, we see an overgrown and disheveled garden through the window.

Electronic gates open, the Bentley turns right onto the hushed 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

Doug enters the high-ceilinged warehouse, parts the waters through small groups of judgy BIDDERS who stare at the fish-out-of-water beachcomber. Doug reaches a corner where he overhears a sisterly banter.

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 enameled PIN on Ruth's collar.

DOUG

(pleasantly 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. Ella gazes, shrewdly assessing Doug for a moment, 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 extracts a dirt-stained business card from his shorts pocket. Ruth grabs it before Ella can pull her away from Doug, whose attention has turned to an open doorway.

INT. BARGAIN ROOM - DAY

Doug peers in, enters, spots a rack of paintings. He rummages through it until one catches his eye.

A STUFFY CURATOR (50s) in a three-piece suit, approaches Doug clutching a black leather-bound notebook.

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, hmmh...

CURATOR

Assets of little or no value to the estate.

DOUG

I know what it means.

Doug pulls out a 5 X 4 foot painting with signature "stacked" rectangles. He carefully discerns the post-modernist style. Doug realizes he's holding his breath, EXHALES quietly.

The alert Curator opens his notebook, his eyes scan the page.

DOUG (CONT'D)

This must be a fake.

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

As the Curator walks away, Doug examines the frame. He notices a peeling, stained sticker on the back of the canvas. He discreetly removes the sticker, tucks it in his pocket.

INT. BIDDING ALCOVE - DAY

An AUCTIONEER(50s) glasses on the tip of his nose, BARKS OUT prices in a room of mostly vacant seats. Ella and Ruth sit in the front row.

On an easel beside the Auctioneer rests the stacked rectangular painting.

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.