

NO. 7

Written by

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Based on a True Story

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INT. MODERN ART GALLERY - NEW YORK CITY - 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 (30), 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

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

CHRISTOPHER

This Douglas Himmelfarb situation must be put to bed.

DR. ANFAM

From the looks of it, that 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 an argument.

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 we will have to find another way to shut him up.

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 a quick buck will only serve to devalue our portfolio, and I will not let that happen.

DR.ANFAM

There is the issue of the photo...

CHRISTOPHER

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

INT. POOL ROOM - FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT - NYC - 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.

DOUG'S VISION

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.

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

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 their 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 Seagram's company CEO and architect LUDWIG ROHE (70) wearing sharp suits, approach 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

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

Rothko gets up and grabs Mell, 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.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Doug snaps back to reality as Christopher Rothko approaches,
dressed in casual business attire.

DOUG

Mr. Rothko, I presume?

CHRISTOPHER

Mr. Himmelfarb? Your persistence is
legendary.

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

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. Thank you.

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 sets Doug's and Christopher's respective drinks
down before each one of them without a word.

DOUG
I understand you recently took over
the reigns 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 reigns.

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 takes a sip of his water.

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.

Christopher throws a twenty on the counter, then rises.

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 counter and leans back staring at the ceiling for the strength to control himself.

EXT. THE FOUR SEASONS - CONTINUOUS

As Christopher opens the rear 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 CAN 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.