

## Mulholland Drive

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It was a gorgeous day with cloudless blue skies and a panoramic view of the Los Angeles basin. I had received an invitation to an auction at some fancy estate in the hills *above* Beverly Hills. Never one to forego a chance to mingle with the elite, I invited my mother to join me.

Shaded by a temporary canopy, we listened as the auctioneer hawked his goods: carpets (“*real* Asian Isfahan not made by the Taliban”), ceramic figurines (“have you ever seen anything cuter?”), quilts (“true antiques, 30 years old!”), a Charlie Chaplin poster (“sure it’s torn, but when you put a frame around it, it will be worth \$400 easy”), endless Miro and Picasso prints (“see, they have the certificates of authenticity on the back”), Ming vases (“made in Italy”), Dresden porcelain (“made in China”), bronze statues of golfing children (“they come in pairs”), gaudy emerald rings (“straight from Columbia”). Of course, Medhi never did tell us if he meant the Columbian mines or Columbian drug lords. And we didn’t ask. We just sat in amazement as piece after piece was snatched up for hundreds and even thousands of dollars. We remained totally disinterested in these tasteless wares and simply came to enjoy the experience until...

Mother was overcome by the extreme garishness of three bronze statuettes of ballerinas (“just like Degas”). The figures were not only ugly, they were totally distorted and contorted, with legs way too long and fingers pointed at odd angles. Mother tried to show me just how badly proportioned the hands were by stretching her own fingers upward in an attempt to imitate the dancers. Promptly she caught the attention of the auctioneer and it was only when I pulled my mother’s arm down in panic that we were saved from buying the figurines—all three of them!