

penning the antwone fisher story

oh those handy paper towels.

There's a new Cinderella in Hollywood, complete with evil siblings, a very cool godfather and a happily-ever-after smile of sweet success. Antwone Fisher has a lot to smile about these days.

The security-guard-turned-screenwriter sold his first screenplay, *The Antwone Fisher Story*, for anything but a modest figure. The film, scheduled to begin shooting sometime in late February or early March, has already garnered interest from big stars such as Will Smith—who wants to play the lead—Danny Glover and Laurence Fishburne. Fisher's fairy tale, but true-life saga, began in prison, where he was born. His father was murdered only months before his birth. Given up for adoption, he spent two years in an orphanage and was later placed with a foster family, where he suffered verbal and physical abuse.

"I started crying when I heard his story," says Todd Black, president of Mandolay Films. Black, who was an independent producer when he met Fisher, ultimately played the role of the cool godfather.

While working as a security guard for Sony Pictures, Fisher took some time off to find his biological mother. When the Sony lot caught wind of this saga in the making, they could already picture Fisher's story on the big screen. Although there was interest in making his story, no one actually wanted Fisher to write it. He hadn't gone to film school and had never written a screenplay before, so he couldn't possibly write his own story—at least that's what one famous writer/director told him.

Although mild-mannered and soft-spoken, Fisher has a fierce determination to succeed. "When my foster parents or people told me I couldn't accomplish anything, I wouldn't say, 'Well, I'm going to try and do it anyway.' It was more like, 'I can't believe they said I can't do it,'" says Fisher.

Thus Fisher jumped into action. He took a free screenwriting course at a church and hooked up with Black and Randa Haines. As fate would have it, all of this happened just one month before he would have lost his job as part of Sony's decision to contract out its security guards. He sent Black the first draft of *The Antwone Fisher Story* handwritten on paper towels, recalls Fisher. But Black believed in Fisher and knew "how important it was to tell his story. There are so few movies that show young Black men and women who have to stand against tremendous odds, who don't get angry enough to go out and shoot people and become a menace to society," Fisher says. "Maybe now people can see someone who has had a difficult time in life but didn't do all of those [violent] things." After 26 drafts, the screenplay was bought by the first studio that read it, and the rest is history...

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— siblylla nash