

EVERGREEN

Written by
Heather Kennedy

(703)283-7349
heather@jollywandering.com

As the first light flickers onto the screen, we discover this is an old-Hollywood, black-and-white film.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - EARLY MORNING

From the bottom of the swimming pool, we look up toward the surface. A MAN in swim trunks floats face-down, motionless.

We hear a muffled voice from the pool deck.

EXT. EVERGREEN ESTATE - EARLY MORNING

The early morning sun shines on the beautifully landscaped backyard of a luxurious 1950s Bel Air mansion.

JOEL GARNER (50s), a light-skinned Black man, in the kind of fine suit that is provided for the help, stands at the side of the pool with a towel.

JOEL

Mr. Hairell! You know you're not supposed to be swimming alone.

The floating man, FRANK HAIRELL (80s, White), finally moves and takes a deep breath. He swims to the side.

FRANK

I can't be blamed if Joe didn't see fit to join me this morning. Asshole's afraid he'll lose.

Joel tosses Frank a towel as Frank climbs out of the pool. He's pretty fit for such an old guy.

FRANK (cont'd)

Did I ever tell you that Johnny Weissmuller taught me how to swim?

JOEL

Yes, sir. Once or twice.

Joel heads back toward the patio doors and Frank follows him, drying as he goes.

A WOMAN'S SCREAM startles them. They pick up their speed.

INT. EVERGREEN ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Joel and Frank follow the commotion.

The interior of the mansion is gorgeous. It's opulent and everything in it puts you right in 1950s Hollywood.

MARGARET MORELL (80s, White), impeccably dressed in a pantsuit, hair and make-up pristine, puts out her arm for Joel to support her in her shocked state.

Margaret speaks in that mid-century, mid-Atlantic movie accent prevalent at the time.

MARGARET

Oh, Joel. It's awful. Just awful.

Confused, Joel helps Margaret to a chair, then he sees it.

The BODY of JOE JOHNSON (80s, White), bald and liver-spotted, lies on the floor near the grand piano, dead eyes open, blood dripping from the bullet hole in his chest.

There are feathers everywhere from a pillow that seems to have been used to muffle the sound of the gun.

JOEL

Oh my god.

(composes himself)

Mr. Hairell, stay by the hall and don't let anyone in here. Ms. Morell, please return to your room. I will go phone the police.

Joel exits toward his office.

Frank walks just close enough to get a glimpse of Joe's body, shudders, and backs away.

As Margaret starts toward the hallway, GUENEVERE HAIRELL (80s), still in a dressing gown, her hair wrapped in a silk kerchief, scoots toward them in her wheelchair.

GUENEVERE

Margaret, was that you screaming?
What happened?

MARGARET

Oh, Gwennie. Please. You mustn't.

GUENEVERE

Where's Frank?

Frank appears, still drying off with the towel.

FRANK

I'm fine, darling. Nothing to worry about. I was just swimming.

(MORE)

FRANK (cont'd)
 (to Margaret)
 I'll take her back to our room.

MARGARET
 But Joel said--

FRANK (snarling) I don't care what Joel said.
 MARGARET You're supposed to watch the body.

FRANK
 He's not going anywhere. Now get out of my way.

Frank pushes Guenevere back down the hall.

INT. EVERGREEN ESTATE - OFFICE - DAY

Joel closes the door behind him. Now that he is alone, he is visibly shaken.

He walks to a nearby desk and dials 911 on the rotary phone. Someone on the other end answers.

JOEL
 Yes. I'm -- My -- resident -- A resident has been shot. He's dead.

EXT. EVERGREEN ESTATE - DAY

The front of the breathtaking estate. Quiet and peaceful.

As we pull up and back, we see its grounds, driveway, gates. We start to hear the noises of the city.

Pulling back even more, we start to see and hear present-day Los Angeles, in all it's full-color, 21st-century glory.

Modern cars. Modern billboards. Modern stores.

Sirens can be heard in the distance. They grow louder as we zero in on an ambulance and follow it through the streets.

The ambulance arrives at the gates. The driver presses a button on the callbox. Moments later, the gates open and the ambulance drives through.

As it does, we close in on the bronze sign at the gates:

EVERGREEN

Nobody ever said it WAS the 1950s.