

AMERICAN CLASSIC

Written by

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Based on a short story
of the same title
by the same author.

FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

Nestled within the rural landscape of Anytown, USA, an old, weather-beaten house displays the wear and tear of time and neglect.

The front porch is paint-chipped, the floorboards warped. Rocking chairs sit askew and neglected potted plants struggle to survive.

The screen door bursts open and out storms EARL WILLIBY, (50), unshaven, rustic (like the house), and fit to be tied.

EARL
You don't know what I'm capable of,
Myrtle. I'm on the friggin' edge
here!

Myrtle stands at the doorway wearing an apron, with a mixing bowl in her hands. She placidly watches him go.

MYRTLE
Oh, Earl. You're such a drama
queen.

She turns to head back into the kitchen but stops.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)
Don't forget to pick up some milk
on your way home.

EARL
I may not be coming home!
(spins to face her)
Don't you get it? I'm suicidal,
Myrtle! Don't be surprised if this
is the last time you ever lay eyes
on me!

Myrtle shakes her head, murmuring to herself, and heads back to the kitchen. The screen door shuts behind her.

Earl stands motionless, staring at her unconcerned exit in disbelief, rage filling his eyes.

Finally he jerks car keys from his pocket and heads to the LATE-MODEL THUNDERBIRD parked in the driveway.

In a cloud of white exhaust, he guns out of the driveway and disappears down the dusty road.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Whatever Myrtle was preparing, it's now ready to go in the oven. As she sets the timer, her phone rings. She picks it up, recognizing the number.

MYRTLE

Okay, Earl. What's the matter now?

The grave VOICE on the other end of the phone isn't Earl's.

MAN'S VOICE

Hello, ma'am. Are you an acquaintance of a Mister Earl Jay Williby, of two-twenty-two Benton Way?

Myrtle's hand flutters to her chest, her face loses color.

MYRTLE

This is his wife, Myrtle Williby. Who is this?

MAN'S VOICE

Ma'am, this is Sergeant Trent Galloway with the County Sheriff's Department --"

MYRTLE

My God, what's wrong?

MAN'S VOICE

We found your husband in his car out on Route Twenty-four, behind the old train station in Hickory.

(beat)

Ma'am, I'm not sure how to tell you this...

Myrtle struggles as her knees begin to give, her fingers claw the kitchen archway for support.

MAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Your husband suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

A terrible pause follows as all the blood drains from her face.

MAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid he's dead, ma'am.

The phone tumbles from her grip as Myrtle, weeping and sobbing, collapses to the floor.

EXT. BEHIND THE SACK AND SAVE - DAY

Earl takes a CRISPLY-FOLDED BILL and hands it to a HOMELESS MAN in exchange for his phone.

EARL
(pleased)
You did great.

He smiles to himself, hops in his car and speeds off.

INT. CAR - DAY

Earl driving. His face is a mixture of satisfaction tinged with guilt. But the guilt doesn't last long.

He starts to whistle, quite pleased with himself.

In the passenger seat beside him is a plastic bag containing a gallon of milk. The receipt flies out the window. Earl tries to grab it but fails.

He shrugs.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

As Earl pulls into the driveway, he notices an AMBULANCE parked out front, the back doors open. EMTs stand around.

A sheeted BODY is being carefully wheeled by EMTs from inside the house to the waiting ambulance.

The arm of a woman drops from the sheet.

INT. CAR - DAY

Earl reacts as a wave of panic washes over his face.

He throws the car in park, jumps out, racing to the front door.

EARL
What is it? What's wrong?

A PARAMEDIC, exhausted-looking, stops him in the yard.

PARAMEDIC
Are you Mr. Williby?

Earl nods, his eyes wide with panic.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)
I'm sorry to inform you that your
wife just suffered a massive
coronary.

He places a hand on Earl's shoulder.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)
She's dead, I'm afraid.

Earl drops to his knees, moaning in agony.

The EMERGENCY CREW stand around him, watching, their
expressions mixed.

Earl cries and pounds the dirt with his fists.

EARL
No! Why'd I have to be such a fool!
I just wanted her to show a little
concern!

His body wrenches with agony.

Earl suddenly jumps to his feet, runs around the Thunderbird
and hops inside, locking the door.

The emergency personnel look at each other.

INT. CAR - DAY

Earl's hands tremble as they reach for the glovebox.

He opens it and fumbles for the LOADED REVOLVER inside.

He grips the gun with both hands, sucks in a breath, aims.

The seat reclines out of view.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

The GUNSHOT is loud and piercing. Everyone JUMPS.

On the gurney, the sheeted body BOLTS UPRIGHT.

The sheet falls away, revealing Myrtle, in perfect condition.

MYRTLE

No! Not my Earl!

She scurries off the gurney, fighting her way past the EMTs to Earl's car.

She rushes to the driver's side, pounding the window with her fists and wailing in pitiful agony.

A moment later, the reclined driver's seat pops upright, and a grinning Earl appears at the window.

CLOSE ON MYRTLE

Her eyes turn into fiery red coals. She reaches over, SNAPS the antenna off the hood of the car, wielding it like a weapon.

MYRTLE

Heaven help you Earl when you get out of that car. I'm gonna beat the freckles off your ass, do you hear me?

Earl's lips widen into a satisfied grin. He finally got what he wanted.

CUT TO THE EMTS

Standing around, unsure. One of the younger paramedics addresses another, more SEASONED PARAMEDIC.

YOUNGER PARAMEDIC

Shouldn't we, like, report them, sir? For misuse of emergency personnel.

The older man's hand moves to slip a CRISPLY-FOLDED BILL into his breast pocket.

He watches with mild amusement as the old woman with the antenna circles the car.

SEASONED PARAMEDIC

Nah. Something tells me we're gonna be back here soon anyway.

FADE OUT: