

The Scent

written by

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FADE IN:

**EXT. PORCH - SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY**

PENNY, (30s), KNOCKS on a front door.

A large dog barks inside the house, trailed by the voice of a woman.

WOMAN  
Just a minute.

PENNY  
Okay.

A few moments later, the door opens. GRETCHEN (30s), holds what appears to be a domesticated wolf by its collar.

He's very pleased to have a visitor.

PENNY(CONT'D)  
Hi, my name's Penny. I just moved in next door.

GRETCHEN  
Gretchen, nice to meet you.

They shake hands. The wolf pines a little.

PENNY  
Oh, she's adorable. What's her name?

GRETCHEN  
Lou, he's a boy. I rescued him a couple years ago. Some asshole, drug dealer dude had him from a pup but didn't look after him too well. I should call him Houdini -- he escapes from time to time. Worries me senseless.

PENNY  
Loudini, perhaps...

Lou jolts forward and slips from Gretchen's clutch. He jumps up to Penny and feverishly licks her face.

GRETCHEN  
Lou, stop that at once -- you big lummox!

She grabs his collar. Penny giggles, unperturbed.

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

You go back inside.

She drags him back into the house and closes the door. He pines.

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

So sorry. He gets very excitable -- clearly likes you.

PENNY

It's fine. I grew up with dogs in the family. No wolfs mind you, but then my brothers' were both total animals.

(then)

Anyway, I just wanted to say hello and introduce myself. Maybe you'd like to pop over for a coffee sometime?

GRETCHEN

Sure, that would be nice. Hey, you wanna grab a cup now? Got some fresh in the pot.

PENNY

That's very kind, but I gotta go unpack -- been here a week and hardly made a start.

GRETCHEN

Okay then, soon though.

PENNY

Soon -- whenever you see my beat up old car outside is good for me... bye.

GRETCHEN

Nice to meet you again -- bye.

Gretchen goes back inside and closes the door. Lou starts to bark again.

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

Oh shut up, you furry bag of wind.

Penny smiles.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - PENNY'S HOUSE - LATER**

Penny sips coffee from a mug on her couch, surrounded by unpacked boxes.

SMS text alert.

She picks up her cellphone from a coffee table.

A message from 'PHIL' reads:

*'I need 2CU - PLEEEAAASSEEEE tell me where UR. I can't go on without U'.*

She tosses the cellphone back on the table.

PENNY  
(softly to herself)  
Leave me alone. Don't make me call  
the cops again.

Cellphone rings.

Penny answers immediately -- ready to *EXPLODE*.

PENNY(CONT'D)  
Phil, will you please stop this?  
One more contact from you and I'm  
gonna fucking ring it in!

She listens as we hear:

MAY  
Did I call at a bad time?

PENNY  
Oh, so sorry -- who's this?

MAY  
It's May from work. You gave me  
your number yesterday, remember?

PENNY  
May, yes. How embarrassing. Of  
course I remember.

MAY  
Your ex bothering you again?

PENNY  
Asshole. There's a court order and  
five hundred miles between us now,  
but he just won't let it go.

MAY

Screw him. Listen, how do you fancy a glass of something naughty or two later?

PENNY

May -- that would be *great*.

**INT. WINE AND ALE HOUSE - NIGHT**

Penny and May share a bottle of prosecco at a table near the bar. Penny knocks back half a glass.

PENNY

Oh boy, that's good. I needed that.

MAY

Here's to the weekend.

They chink glasses.

PENNY

Amen. Thanks May, you're a lifesaver.

MAY

Anytime. So how are you settling in after your first week in town?

PENNY

Great. Everyone at work seems lovely and the neighborhood is nice and quiet. After the year I've had, its nice to be away from the city.

MAY

Yeah, your ex sounds like a major douche.

PENNY

Totally. You think you know someone and then...

A beat.

PENNY(CONT'D)

Hey, let's not waste time talking about him. To new beginnings.

Penny raises her glass then finishes her drink. She's a little embarrassed when she let's out a small BURP.

May knocks back her drink then BURPS too -- only LOUDER.

They share a laugh.

May's cellphone rings. She rummages through her bag and pulls it out. The screen says 'Ellie' is calling...

MAY

Shit.

She answers.

MAY(CONT'D)

Hi Ellie. Everything OK?

She nods a little as she listens.

MAY(CONT'D)

Oh, Ellie, that's terrible.

Disappointment forms on her face.

MAY(CONT'D)

No, no, it's fine -- of course it is. You need to be there. I'll be back in a half hour.

Hangs up.

PENNY

Oh no, you gotta leave?

MAY

Babysitter's dad has been taken ill and she needs to go to the hospital.

PENNY

What about your husband, can he go?

MAY

Golf weekend in Florida.

PENNY

Too bad.

MAY

Them's the breaks. The joys of being a mother.

May gathers her coat and bag.

MAY(CONT'D)

I'm really sorry. Can we pick this up again tomorrow?

PENNY

Sure. Don't worry, it's fine --  
really.

May blows Penny a kiss and exits.

Deflated, Penny empties the last dribble of prosecco into her glass.

PENNY(CONT'D)

Cheers.

A guy at the bar, TODD, (30s), catches her eye. They gaze for a moment before Penny looks away. She picks up her cellphone and pretends to be busy.

Todd appears behind May's empty chair.

TODD

Can I get you a refill miss?

PENNY

(uneasy)

That's very kind, but I'm leaving soon.

Todd produces a bottle from behind his back.

TODD

That's a shame cos I have this bottle of prosecco and I hate to drink alone. Especially when there's a pretty lady in the same boat.

Penny tries to hide a smile.

PENNY

You know what? Screw it -- one drink.

Todd sits.

TODD

I'm Todd. Pleasure to meet you.

They shake hands.

PENNY

Penny. Likewise.

Todd fills Penny's glass halfway.

PENNY(CONT'D)

Keep going.

Todd tops her up -- then fills his own glass.

TODD

Sorry if I appear nosy Penny, but I couldn't help overhearing the conversation with your friend. You're new in town?

PENNY

Yep, just broke the first week. You lived here long?

TODD

No, I live in Maine. I'm a travelling salesman. Only in town every few weeks or so. Always end up in here though when I'm around. A creature of habit, you could say.

PENNY

What do you sell?

TODD

Accounting software. Very dull.

PENNY

Oh, I don't know. People will always have computers and will always spend money. You have somebody back home?

TODD

Never married. Can't seem to find anyone who'll put up with me being away so much.

PENNY

Dodged that bullet myself recently.

TODD

Sorry, but I overheard that too. Sounds like a total dick.

PENNY

Don't apologise. Things were OK until we got engaged and then he just went crazy. He became really possessive, started drinking heavily, throwing his weight around...



Takes a big glug.

TODD

- I'm sorry, if it's none of my business...

PENNY

- Never hit me. Had me by the throat a couple times. Eventually, I bailed and ended it. Then it got worse. Showing up at work, following me around. Ended up getting a court order.

Todd leans forward a little.

TODD

Guy should have his frickin' balls cut off.

PENNY

Why stop with his balls?

(then)

Listen to me harping on. I shouldn't be laying all this on you. We've just met and you're a total stranger.

TODD

Just as well I'm a good listener. Anyhow, maybe we can get to know each other...

PENNY

- Oh, I don't know, I...

TODD

- very slowly. Hey, I'm only here once a month.

**INT. KITCHEN - GRETCHEN'S KITCHEN - DAY**

Gretchen and Penny enjoy coffee, seated at a table.

PENNY

I've met him three times now. He's a real sweetie. Shame he lives so far away.

The wolf barks as he raises, ears pricked.

GRETCHEN  
Don't mind him. Probably the mail  
man.

PENNY  
Seeing him again on Friday.

GRETCHEN  
You and him, y'know, got close yet?

Penny smiles a little.

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)  
You have!

PENNY  
No, no, not yet.

GRETCHEN  
Not yet? Sounds like you want to  
though?

The wolf exits the room to investigate.

PENNY  
(coy)  
Well, it's been a while, and I do  
like him. I Really like him. He's  
just so easy to be around.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

Penny stands outside a Whole Foods store, laden with  
groceries. She pulls out her cellphone from a pocket and  
dials Todd's number.

She hails a cab -- and is ignored.

PENNY  
Shitbag!

On phone:

TODD  
Charming... I'm only running a few  
minutes late.

PENNY  
Sorry Todd, not you -- darn cab  
driver. I was just calling to say  
I'm gonna be back late myself. You  
know where the spare key is right?

TODD

Sure. Want me to pull a J-turn and pick you up?

PENNY

No, it's OK, I'll call an Uber. Be back in half hour at the most. I'm cooking you something nice, so no sneaky snacking while I'm away.

TODD

Sounds great. I'm famished. Let's hope it goes well with this nice wine I got you.

PENNY

Ah, I forgot wine -- you're the best!

A cab arrives.

PENNY(CONT'D)

Oh, gotta go, a cab's pulled up -- bye.

**EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE PENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Todd exits his car and sets the alarm.

He walks up the path to Penny's front door and finds the key under a plant pot.

As he opens the door, he hears a car engine start. He turns around and is dazzled by its headlights as it slowly motions off and rounds the corner. It stops briefly outside Penny's house -- then ominously cruises away.

Todd suspiciously eyes the car as it leaves.

**INT. PENNY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Todd puts the wine in Penny's refrigerator. He takes off his jacket and hangs it over a chair at a small dining table that Penny has laid out in preparation for their evening meal.

He checks his watch - 7:45 pm.

**EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE PENNY'S HOUSE - LATER**

Penny waves goodbye to the cab driver.

**INT. PENNY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Half asleep, Todd is startled as the front door SLAMS.

PENNY  
Sorry, traffic was terrible.

Todd rises, gives Penny a kiss then takes her bags from her.

TODD  
Nothing of it -- Was a good excuse  
to grab forty winks. Long drive.

PENNY  
This is gonna take a while to cook  
so I'd better crack on.

TODD  
Well maybe we should order in and  
have that tomorrow?

PENNY  
Tomorrow?

TODD  
(embarrassed)  
Yeah, I was thinking of sticking  
around for an extra day. Got some  
leave time.

PENNY  
(pensive)  
Okay...

TODD  
I mean, I can stay in the motel  
around the corner. I wouldn't wanna  
make assump...

Penny grabs his shirt and kisses him. They gaze for a moment,  
then go at it like teenagers.

**INT. PENNY'S BEDROOM - MORNING**

Penny wakes from her slumber and glances at her alarm clock -  
9:15 am.

PENNY  
Jeez, it's after nine already.

No reply from Todd.

Penny turns to Todd -- he isn't there. She sits up, clearly disappointed.

**INT. PENNY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Penny finds a note from Todd against the coffee machine:

*'Had to shoot early and grab a few things - you looked so peaceful and beautiful this morning - I didn't want to wake you. Back soon xxx'*

Penny smiles, then kisses the note.

**INT. PENNY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Penny kicks back into her couch and presses play on the TV remote.

The movie 'Taxi Driver' plays from her TiVo.

Moments later -- a knock at the door.

Penny picks up her coffee and motions to the door.

**EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE PENNY'S DOOR - CONTINUOUS**

She opens the door -- nobody there? She curiously bobs her head out slightly. Gretchen SUDDENLY appears from round the corner.

Spooked, Penny spills her coffee on her vest.

PENNY

Ohhh shit!

GRETCHEN

Sorry, sorry. I didn't mean to scare you -- I was just putting the lid back on your trash can. Probably those darn raccoons in the night.

PENNY

It's OK, it wasn't hot. Do come on in.

GRETCHEN

Clumsy ol' me. I'll just pop back and get a stain remover bar for that vest. Two minutes.

Gretchen jogs back to her house.

PENNY  
(hollering)  
I'll leave the door ajar...

**INT. LIVING ROOM - PENNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Penny closes the front door then continues with 'Taxi Driver'.

There's another knock at the door...

PENNY  
I left it open...

No reply.

Penny crosses back to the front door.

PENNY(CONT'D)  
I left the door off the latch.

She opens the door -- a tall shady looking guy is stood outside -- Penny *JUMPS OUT OF HER SKIN*.

PENNY(CONT'D)  
Phil! -- what the *heck* are you doing here?

PHIL  
(anxious)  
I sent you a whole bunch of messages -- you never replied. I just wanted to check you were OK.

PENNY  
Phil, please -- just leave me alone. It's over.

PHIL  
What, we can't even be friends?

PENNY  
No! We *cannot* be friends.

PHIL  
But I still care about you...

PENNY  
Come on Phil, I had to take a court order out against you for heaven's sake.

PHIL  
But I've changed.

PENNY  
I don't believe you.

PHIL  
I have, I swear...

PENNY  
...Nor do I care.

Penny tries to close the door, but Phil jolts forward, jamming his foot in the way.

PHIL  
Penny, please!

PENNY  
Phil, stop, you're scaring me.

Something strikes Phil on the back of his head, a soap bar falls to the floor.

GRETCHEN  
Hey, what the fuck you think you're doing?!

Phil swings around.

PHIL  
Who the fuck are you bitch?

GRETCHEN  
Never you mind, asshole.

Phil's anger intensifies...

PHIL  
Oh, you wanna piece?!

From the back of the shot we see the GROWLING wolf RUN towards Phil -- he *LEAPS INTO THE AIR*, front paws land on Phil's chest knocking him flat on his back...

PHIL(CONT'D)  
Holy shit!

The wolf stands over him -- right in his face -- menacing growls and it's hot breath leave him paralyzed in fear.

PHIL(CONT'D)  
Lady - get - this - thing - off me!

GRETCHEN  
Oh, so I'm a lady now?

PHIL  
The wolf's growls intensify...

GRETCHEN  
Lou, enough. He's got the message.  
The wolf stands down and sits next to Gretchen -- eyes fixed on Phil.

Phil clambers up and scuttles off to his car.

Penny opens the door again. The wolf whimpers -- he's glad she's OK.

Phil shouts of his car window as he drives away:

PHIL  
You should have that mutt  
destroyed!

The wolf growls again.

GRETCHEN  
That's rich, coming from a dirtbag  
like you.

The wolf motions forward -- Gretchen grabs his collar.

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)  
It's OK Lou. Go on home now -- good  
boy.

The wolf scampers off -- he stops halfway and looks back to make sure everything is OK.

PENNY  
Thanks Gretchen.

Penny bursts into tears.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - PENNY'S HOUSE - LATER**

Gretchen comforts Penny on her couch.

The front door closes with a thud -- it startles Gretchen and Penny, but it's OK:

Todd appears with a grocery bag and a clutch of bagels.



GRETCHEN

Oh thank God, it's you.

TODD

Hi Gretchen, something up?

Penny rises and cuddles Lou.

PENNY

My asshole ex turned up, started getting fresh.

TODD

Oh shit, that guy...

PENNY

What guy?

TODD

Last night, when I was letting myself in -- some guy in a car caught my eye. Didn't think much of it at the time -- just thought he was some dude lost in the neighborhood.

GRETCHEN

How do you think he found you here, five hundred miles away?

PENNY

I've no idea. He's like a dog who won't let go of a bone.

TODD

Don't worry honey, we're here for you. He won't get within a mile of you again, I promise.

GRETCHEN

OK you guys, I'll get out of your hair -- don't hesitate to call if you need anything.

PENNY

You're the best Gretchen.

Gretchen exits.

GRETCHEN

Yes I am...

Lou kisses Penny on the top of her head.

TODD  
 OK, let's get breakfast out  
 someplace. Then we'll take a walk  
 and maybe see a movie -- take your  
 mind off things.

**EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT**

Arm in arm, Todd and Penny exit the movie theater.

TODD  
 Well, that sucked. You wanna go  
 eat? Would be a shame to end the  
 day with such a terrible movie.

PENNY  
 No, I'm still stuffed full of  
 popcorn and nachos. Let's go home  
 and get an early night.

TODD  
 That sounds *much* better.

**INT. PENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

A small pane on a window SMASHES -- a black gloved hand  
 reaches through and opens the window.

A figure climbs through -- it's that shady asshole Phil  
 again.

He places a book against the broken pane, closes the curtains  
 then walks out of shot.

**INT. TODD'S CAR - NIGHT**

Raining.

Penny is asleep. 'Riders On The Storm' by The Doors plays on  
 the radio.

TODD  
 Very fitting.

No response from Penny.

Todd reaches to the back seat -- finds a tartan blanket --  
 tries his best to cover Penny with one hand.

Penny stirs.

PENNY  
We home yet?

TODD  
I'm sorry, did I wake you?

Penny sits up.

PENNY  
No, was just dozing.

She rubs her eyes.

PENNY(CONT'D)  
Gonna freshen up in the shower when  
we get back.

**INT. PENNY'S KITCHEN - LATER**

Penny throws her coat over the back of the couch.

PENNY  
Right, I'll get this shower out of  
the way and then you can help me  
demolish a tub of ice cream.

TODD  
I thought you were full of popcorn  
and nachos?

Penny's voice trails off as she goes upstairs...

PENNY  
There's *always* room for ice cream.

Todd has a moment in which he feels a little faint -- he  
anxiously checks his watch.

**INT. PENNY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Penny hums a tune. She makes the bed then motions over to her  
vanity mirror where she removes what little lipstick she has  
on with a cotton pad.

She pauses to observe herself in the mirror.

PENNY  
You talking to me? Huh? I don't see  
anyone else here. You talking to  
me?

A black gloved hand reaches into the shot then GRABS her around her mouth. Penny panics -- tries to scream but the sound is muffled through the leather clad fingers of her assailant...

PHIL  
I tried to talk to you -- but you wouldn't listen.

Penny tries to struggle free -- no use.

PHIL(CONT'D)  
You think I'm gonna let that piece of shit downstairs take you from me without a fight?

Phil wraps a length of Penny's hair around his free hand and pulls hard.

PHIL(CONT'D)  
Huh?

Pulls a little harder.

Penny winces, eyes closed, unable to voice her pain.

PHIL(CONT'D)  
He won't want you anyway when he sees what I've done to that innocent little face of yours.

Penny struggles - knocks over a vase - breaks in half.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - PENNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Todd hears the vase break and calls up to Penny...

TODD  
Honey?... Everything OK?

He takes a sip of wine... a CREAK on the stairs...

He gets up to go see if she's OK -- he gets as far as the foot of the stairs...

BLAM! -- Phil kicks him square in the face with the flat bottom of his boot...

Todd stumbles back before crashing on his ass against the back of the couch -- out cold.

Phil runs back upstairs...

A few seconds later, Todd comes around and begins to convulse -- like he's having seizures.

He shakily finds his feet -- he's in no fit state to tackle Phil and heads out the front door towards Gretchen's house.

**INT. PENNY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Penny is now sat on the floor. Her hands are zip tied to the bottom bed post and her mouth is gagged.

Phil nervously paces back and forth.

PHIL

You think you can just move town  
and that's the end of it? After all  
those good times we had together.

Penny tries to shout for help. Phil kneels in front of her.

PHIL(CONT'D)

Nobody's coming Penny -- it's just  
you and me.

He rises and begins to pace again.

PHIL(CONT'D)

Penny, Penny, my dear Penny. What  
to do you with you. I gave my heart  
and soul to you Penny. I trusted  
you -- and you threw it all back in  
my face.

He takes off his gloves and undoes her gag, motioning to her to shush.

PHIL(CONT'D)

Now, if you scream -- I'll have to  
make you stop. Please don't make me  
do that.

PENNY

(softly)

Please Phil, don't hurt me, I'll  
come back with you, I promise.  
It'll be just like before -- just  
you and me.

He produces a knife and holds it to her face.

PHIL

Really? You wouldn't just run off  
the first chance you had?

PENNY

No, no. I hate it here, it's so boring and lonely. I miss you so much -- I just didn't know how to say it after all that's happened with the cops an' all.

Phil leans back.

PHIL

You're lying -- just trying to get me to let you go.

PENNY

Kiss me, you'll know if I'm lying.

Phil leans forward, a smile forms across his face. He and Penny kiss.

A few seconds later Penny BITES AS HARD AS SHE FUCKING CAN on Phil's bottom lip and tugs with full force.

He shoots back in agony, dropping the knife to nurse his lip with both hands.

PENNY(CONT'D)

Fuck you Phil -- I fucking hate you -- I'd rather die!

THE WOLF LEAPS INTO THE BEDROOM and sinks his teeth right into Phil's crotch -- growling, twisting, yanking -- we almost feel sorry for the fucker.

Phil's screams are hellish as he fumbles around for the knife.

He gets a hand to it, swings around to stab the wolf but only manages a scrape across it's lower front leg.

Gretchen appears with a shotgun.

GRETCHEN

Drop it fuckface!

Phil complies. The wolf calms to his master's voice and let's go of Phil. His furry face and neck, covered in blood.

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

It's OK Lou, I got this now.

He limps a little into Penny's en suite bathroom -- blood spots drip from his mouth along the way.

Phil's pain subsides -- just enough for him to mutter:

PHIL

Please - get me - to a hos-pital.

GRETCHEN

Shut the fuck up. The cops can take you -- they'll be here any minute.

Gretchen takes the knife from Phil -- cuts Penny free -- she immediately lunges for Phil...

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

Penny! It's not worth it!

Penny sees sense.

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

I'm guessing he's lost half his dick and maybe a ball or two. He won't bleed out, but he'll be too dizzy to do any harm.

Gretchen takes a step closer to Phil...

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

Up you get.

Phil painfully finds his feet.

We hear a couple of cop cars pull up.

Gretchen ushers Phil out with the shotgun...

GRETCHEN(CONT'D)

Downstairs -- Penny you check on Lou in the bathroom.

Penny nods -- taking it all in.

Gretchen takes Phil downstairs at gunpoint.

Penny heads to the bathroom to see if the wolf is OK...

PENNY

Lou, you OK boy?

She pauses outside the door...

PENNY(CONT'D)

It's only me, Penny -- it's OK boy, he's gone now.

She cautiously opens the door and steps into the bathroom.

Todd, butt naked, is seated on the edge of the bathtub cleaning blood off his face and neck with a towel.

There is a four inch, shallow cut along his left calf.

Penny stands in stunned silence for a few beats...

She folds her arms.

PENNY(CONT'D)

OK Todd... some questions.

THE END.