

The Scent

written by

Vic Burns

Address
Phone
E-mail

FADE IN:

EXT. PORCH - SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

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

A large sounding 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 huge 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, almost tipping her over.

GRETCHEN

Lou, stop that at once -- you big lummo!

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? 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 tells us 'Ellie' is calling...

MAY

Shit.

She answers.

MAY (CONT'D)

Hi Ellie. Everything OK?

She nods 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 rises, 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 U-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 -- its menacing growls and 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 Todd.

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...

Todd 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 missing 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.

Phil's screams are hellish, we almost feel sorry for the fucker 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 boy, I got this now.

He limps a little into Penny's en suite bathroom -- blood spots drip from his mouth and leg 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 dog 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.

No wolf in sight, but we do find:

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

There'a shallow cut along his left calf.

Penny, hands on hips, stands in stunned silence for a few beats...

She should be in shock after her ordeal -- but she seems more angry than anything else.

PENNY (CONT'D)

OK Todd -- some questions...

THE END.