

PENNY DREADFUL

by

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1 EXT. HYRUM'S HOUSE -- EVENING (DAY 1 - 7:00PM)

An old pioneer mansion sits on the outskirts of town, falling into decay. Large and ominous-looking. White paint chips from the wooden exterior.

There's a sliver of pink light on the horizon. This is Utah country. The West Desert.

A car pulls up the gravel drive and DENNIS (35) gets out and walks to the porch. He takes a deep breath, collecting himself, then knocks.

The door opens and RANDY (30s), a wiry redneck, stands there.

RANDY

You Dennis?

DENNIS

Yes, sir. I am.

Randy stares back, then steps aside to let him through.

2 INT. HYRUM'S HOUSE, OFFICE -- EVENING (7:10PM)

A dimly-lit space. Dennis sits, nervously tapping his hand on a chair.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Holly says you're reliable. Are you reliable?

DENNIS

Yes, sir. Very reliable. I do what I'm told, and I keep my mouth shut. Things are a little tight for me right now, and I'm just looking for a chance to--

HYRUM

I ain't interested in your life story, son.

HYRUM (60) sits behind a desk, presiding over the conversation. He's mean and hard; his eyes show no emotion.

DENNIS

No, sir. Course not.

HYRUM

You know the girl?

DENNIS

Sure, I know her. Know my way around the school too. I used to be a janitor there.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Didn't stay long, but long enough so
I got pretty familiar with--

HYRUM

I ain't interested in your life story,
son.

(pause)

You sure you're up for this?

DENNIS

Yes, sir. You can trust me on that.

HYRUM

I don't trust you. I trust Holly.
Holly says you're reliable.

DENNIS

Well, sir, I am.

Hyrum looks him over, then turns to Randy. Randy shrugs.

3 EXT. HYRUM'S HOUSE -- LATER (7:45PM)

Dennis comes out and walks back to his car.

4 INT./EXT. DENNIS'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS (7:46PM)

Dennis climbs in. He looks back at the house.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

What'd he say?

HOLLY (30) hides in the backseat. A tough small-town beauty.
Her stomach sticks out, large and round. She's pregnant.

DENNIS

I'm in.

HOLLY

What's the plan?

DENNIS

We're gonna grab her tomorrow. On
her way to school. Then take her up
to the reservoir while Hyrum calls
the dad.

HOLLY

Hyrum getting the money?

DENNIS

No, Randy's supposed to get it.
Hyrum's staying out of it as much as
possible.

HOLLY
 That's good. That's real good.
 (pause)
 He suspect anything?

DENNIS
 I don't think so.

Holly fishes through her purse. She pulls out a small gun and hands it to Dennis.

HOLLY
 This is our last chance here, Dennis.
 You hear me? Do not screw this up.

Dennis looks down at the gun. Then takes it.

5 EXT. ST. MARY'S ACADEMY -- MORNING **(DAY 2 - 8:00AM)**

A three-story red-brick building. An impressive piece of architecture in this drab, one-story town.

6 INT./EXT. RANDY'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS **(8:01AM)**

Parked across the street, Dennis and Randy watch as several kids pass by, dressed in private school uniforms.

RANDY
 You see her?

DENNIS
 Not yet.

They wait, watching.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
 So when we see her, I just grab her?

RANDY
 You just grab her.

DENNIS
 Right.

Dennis suddenly ducks low. A LITTLE GIRL (9) walks past.

RANDY
 What? Is that her?

DENNIS
 I think so.

RANDY
 You think so, or it is?

DENNIS
 It is. She wears that same uniform.

RANDY
They all wear that same uniform!

DENNIS
No, that's her. I got her.

Dennis climbs out, then sticks his head back in the window.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
So I just grab her, right?

RANDY
Yes, Dennis, you just grab her!

DENNIS
Ok, I got it.

7 EXT. SIDEWALK -- CONTINUOUS (8:02AM)

Dennis walks after the Little Girl, closing in.

DENNIS
Uh...excuse me.

She turns around.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
You're Penny, right?

LITTLE GIRL
(hesitant)
Yeah. Why?

Dennis smiles, nervous.

8 INT./EXT. RANDY'S CAR -- MORNING (8:45AM)

They drive in silence, up a winding dirt road. The Little Girl looks out the window, confused.

LITTLE GIRL
Where are we going?

RANDY
You shut your mouth.

9 INT./EXT. RANDY'S CAR -- LATER (9:00AM)

They pull to a stop next to a small reservoir. Bare hills surround them. Isolation.

LITTLE GIRL
I thought we were getting hamburgers.

RANDY

And I thought I told you to shut your mouth. You can sit there and keep quiet, or I can put you in the trunk. Which one's it gonna be?

The Little Girl stares back but says nothing.

RANDY (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

DENNIS

We're just doing some business with your dad, then you can go home.

(to Randy)

How long you think it'll take him to get the money?

RANDY

Why? You got some place you've got to be?

DENNIS

What? No. I just mean for the girl.

RANDY

How about you worry a little less about the girl and a little more about the task at hand. How's that sound?

DENNIS

Sounds fine.

(pause)

So what do we do next?

RANDY

We let Hyrum know we got her.

Randy dials and holds his PHONE to his ear. Dennis sits back, waiting, trying to act calm.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

What's this?

They look back to see the Little Girl examining Holly's gun. Dennis quickly checks his pockets, panicked.

RANDY

Is that your gun?

DENNIS

(guilty, deflecting)

Ah...it's the gun I borrowed. Yeah.

RANDY
 (suspicious)
 Who told you to bring a gun?

DENNIS
 No one. It's a kidnapping...we're
 all bringing guns, right?

RANDY
 No one told you to bring a gun.

DENNIS
 I just thought it might be helpful.

Randy looks back. The Little Girl looks down the barrel of
 the gun.

RANDY
 Let me ask you something, Dennis.

DENNIS
 Don't say my name--

RANDY
 Just let me ask you something. Are
 you stupid? Or are you totally
 stupid?

DENNIS
 (pause)
 What?

RANDY
 I said are you stupid, or are you
 totally stupid?

DENNIS
 That...seems like kind of a trick
 question.

RANDY
 Just get your gun from the little
 girl in the back seat!

Dennis reaches back, but she points the gun at him.

LITTLE GIRL
 You said we were getting hamburgers.

DENNIS
 She's *really* hungry.

Randy shakes his head and pulls out his own gun.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
 What are you doing?

RANDY
The answer, by the way, is totally
stupid.

Randy turns and puts his gun against the Little Girl's head.

RANDY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Put it down, you little brat.

DENNIS
Will you calm down! We'll just get
the kid a burger.

RANDY
We're not getting burgers.

LITTLE GIRL
And a shake.

DENNIS
And a shake. We'll just get the kid
a burger and a shake.

RANDY
Nobody's getting a shake!

BANG. Blood splatters across Dennis's face. Randy collapses
on the steering wheel, a gaping hole in the side of his head.

LITTLE GIRL
(pause)
Uh-oh.

DENNIS
Why did you do that?

LITTLE GIRL
It was on accident.

DENNIS
You shot him in the face!

LITTLE GIRL
You're the one who's supposed to be
watching me!

Dennis notices the blood on him and starts to panic.

DENNIS
Damn it, damn it, damn it.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
Dennis.

He looks back; she's pointing the gun at him again.

DENNIS
What are you doing?

LITTLE GIRL
I can't have any witnesses.

DENNIS
What?

LITTLE GIRL
I'm going to Harvard, Dennis. I
can't have this on my record.

DENNIS
But it was just an accident.

LITTLE GIRL
You think Harvard cares about
accidents, Dennis? Harvard doesn't
care about accidents.

DENNIS
I won't say anything. They don't
even have to know. I won't tell
Harvard anything.

LITTLE GIRL
It's too late for that, Dennis. I'm
sorry.

She pulls back the hammer, cocking the gun.

DENNIS
Wait, no, please.

Dennis turns away, cowering. Then...

LITTLE GIRL
Just kidding!

DENNIS
What?

LITTLE GIRL
You should see your face. I don't
even want to go to Harvard.

DENNIS
What is wrong with you!

LITTLE GIRL
(suddenly defensive)
I've got a chemical imbalance! It's
not polite to ask about it.

10 EXT. RESERVOIR -- CONTINUOUS (9:10AM)

Dennis climbs out, panicked.

DENNIS

Damn it, damn it, damn it!

The Little Girl gets out and looks at Randy through the blood-speckled glass.

LITTLE GIRL

What's his name?

DENNIS

What?

(realizing)

Randy.

LITTLE GIRL

Hey, Randy, let me ask you something.

Are you stupid, or totally stupid?

She looks up at Dennis, smiling. Dennis is horrified.

11 EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE -- DAY (12:00PM)

Dennis knocks on the door, bracing himself for punishment. Holly opens, surprised to see him.

HOLLY

What are you doing here, Dennis?

DENNIS

Holly, I gotta tell you something, but you have to promise not to--

HOLLY

Oh, you gotta be kidding me.

She sees the Little Girl waiting at the bottom of the steps.

12 INT. HOLLY'S HOUSE, BEDROOM -- DAY (12:10PM)

Dennis peeks into the front room where Holly gives the Little Girl some MILK AND COOKIES. Holly then storms into the bedroom and shuts the door behind her.

HOLLY

How did your gun 'accidentally' go off? Can you explain that to me?

DENNIS

It wasn't my fault. The kid is crazy.

HOLLY

Oh, no. Uh-uh. Don't you dare put this on that sweet child in there.

DENNIS

Holly, you don't understand. It wasn't my--

HOLLY

What are you doing here, Dennis!?

DENNIS

Randy's dead, Holly. We've got ourselves a problem.

HOLLY

Doesn't sound to me like we have a problem. Sounds to me like things are working out fine. Now you don't have to steal that ransom from him.

DENNIS

Are you crazy? What do you want me to do now?

HOLLY

I want you to get back out there and wait for Hyrum to call.

DENNIS

He's probably already calling. He probably knows something's wrong by now.

Holly paces, thinking.

HOLLY

I knew you were gonna screw this up.

DENNIS

Hey, I just did what you told me.

HOLLY

So now this is my fault?

DENNIS

No, I didn't say--

HOLLY

I just wanted a fresh start for our baby, Dennis. Guess that was just too much to ask.

She storms out of the room.

DENNIS

Holly.

13 EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER (12:15PM)

Holly marches to the car. Dennis comes out after her, followed by the Little Girl.

DENNIS

Holly, where are you going?

HOLLY

I should have married Chip Conroy.

DENNIS

Holly, don't start with Chip.

HOLLY

Chip and I went to junior prom together. Had ourselves a real swell time too.

DENNIS

Holly, this is serious. What am I supposed to do with her?

HOLLY

She knows your name, Dennis. She knows where I live. You've got to get rid of her.

DENNIS

(whispering, horrified)
You mean like drown her in the bath or something?

HOLLY

No, I don't mean drown her in the bath or something. I mean take her and get that ransom. 'Drown her in the bath?' That's the first thing that jumps into your head?

DENNIS

How am I supposed to get the ransom now?

HOLLY

I don't care how you do it, Dennis. I've got a baby coming. Either you start providing for it, or I'll find someone who will.

That stops him. His phone RINGS; he looks at it.

DENNIS

It's Hyrum.

HOLLY

Answer it.

DENNIS
What am I supposed to say?

HOLLY
You tell him everything's fine!

DENNIS
(answering it)
Hello. Yeah, we got her.
Everything's fine. Yeah, no Randy's
right here. Ah...he can't talk at
the moment. I'll just tell him.
No, Sir. Bye now.

He hangs up.

HOLLY
What'd he say?

DENNIS
He sounded kinda suspicious.

HOLLY
What did he say, Dennis!?

DENNIS
(hesitating)
Her dad's got the money. He wants
Randy to go get it.

She hands him a set of car keys.

HOLLY
Don't come back here without that
money, Dennis.

Holly walks back inside.

LITTLE GIRL
Dennis.

DENNIS
What?

LITTLE GIRL
Is Holly gonna have a baby?

DENNIS
Yeah, she's gonna have a baby.

LITTLE GIRL
Boy or girl?

DENNIS
I don't know.

LITTLE GIRL
I hope it's a girl. Then we can
call her Jessica.

Dennis looks down at her.

DENNIS
Please stop talking.

14 EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY -- DAY (2:00PM)

A run-down industrial area outside town. Dennis pulls in.

15 INT./EXT. DENNIS'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS (2:01PM)

Driving, Dennis turns to the Little Girl in the back seat.

DENNIS
Stay down.

LITTLE GIRL
Where are you going?

DENNIS
I'll be right back. Just stay there.

LITTLE GIRL
I don't want to stay here. You said
we were getting hamburgers.

DENNIS
Just stay put for two minutes!

16 EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY -- CONTINUOUS (2:02PM)

Dennis pulls to a stop and gets out. Twenty yards away
another car sits waiting. MR. ANDERSEN (40s) steps out of
the other car, a nervous man in glasses and a cheap suit.

MR. ANDERSEN
Where's my daughter!?

DENNIS
Is that the money?

MR. ANDERSEN
Yes, it's the money. Now where's my
daughter!?

DENNIS
Hand it over and I'll tell you.

MR. ANDERSEN
(hesitating)
You think you're tough? You're a
real tough guy taking a nine-year-
old girl like that?
(MORE)

MR. ANDERSEN (CONT'D)

(begging)

I told Hyrum I'd get his money. I just needed a little more time.

DENNIS

Well, maybe he got tired of waiting.

MR. ANDERSEN

He didn't have to take my little girl.

DENNIS

Look, take it up with Hyrum. I'm just here to get the money.

Mr. Andersen opens the briefcase to show Dennis. There's a messy pile of cash inside.

MR. ANDERSEN

Now, where is she?

Dennis opens the car and pulls the Little Girl out.

MR. ANDERSEN (CONT'D)

Is this some kind of joke?

DENNIS

What?

MR. ANDERSEN

Who's that?

DENNIS

What do you mean who's that? That's your daughter.

MR. ANDERSEN

That is not my daughter.

DENNIS

What do you mean that's not your daughter?

MR. ANDERSEN

That is not my daughter!

DENNIS

What do you mean that's not your daughter!?

Mr. Andersen pulls out his phone and dials.

MR. ANDERSEN

Gretchen? Gretchen, where's Penny? Listen, honey, where's Penny!? Have you seen her?

(MORE)

MR. ANDERSEN (CONT'D)

(pause)
No, everything's fine. No,
everything's fine, don't worry.
I'll be home soon. Love you.

He slams his phone shut.

MR. ANDERSEN (CONT'D)

My daughter just got home from school,
asshole!

DENNIS

What?

He looks at the Little Girl. She avoids his gaze, a guilty
look on her face.

Panicked, Dennis lunges for the case. The two men struggle.
Mr. Andersen gets control and runs for his car.

Dennis is stunned. His phone starts RINGING. He looks at
it: HYRUM CALLING. He looks at the Little Girl.

17 EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY -- MOMENTS LATER (2:10PM)

Dennis in full stride, walking away. The Little Girl follows,
struggling to keep up.

LITTLE GIRL

Dennis. Where are you going? The
car's back there. Den-nis.

He stops, turns and goes straight back toward her.

DENNIS

Why did you say you were Penny?

LITTLE GIRL

I don't know. I thought maybe you
were giving her a prize or something.

DENNIS

Why would I be giving her a prize!?

LITTLE GIRL

I don't know. So, do you want to
know my real name now?

DENNIS

No, I don't want to know your real
name.

LITTLE GIRL

Why not? We're best friends now.

DENNIS

We're not friends. I kidnapped you.

LITTLE GIRL

Yeah, and now we're best friends.

DENNIS

What is wrong with you!?

LITTLE GIRL

I told you. I either have too many chemicals in my brain or not enough. I can't remember which, so just stop asking!

It's hopeless. Dennis blows past her, back to the car.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

Dennis, where are you going?

DENNIS

The hell away from you, that's where.

She stops. He charges ahead, not looking back.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Dennis!

Something in her voice stops him. He turns. She's pointing the gun at him.

DENNIS

Why do you still have that!?

18 INT./EXT. DENNIS'S CAR -- DAY (3:00PM)

Dennis and the Little Girl pull up to Holly's house.

LITTLE GIRL

What are you going to tell her?

Dennis says nothing.

19 INT. HOLLY'S HOUSE -- DAY (3:01PM)

The door is slightly ajar. Dennis KNOCKS and then enters, the Little Girl behind him.

DENNIS

Holly? Baby, grab your things, we gotta go. Holly?

He hurries into the bedroom. The Little Girl steps into the room, sees something.

LITTLE GIRL

Dennis.

Dennis comes out of the bedroom, sees what the Little Girl is looking at: the GLASS OF MILK from before, spilled over, and chair on it's side. There's been a stuggle.

20 EXT. HYRUM'S HOUSE -- EVENING (6:00PM)

Dennis's car pulls up the drive. He gets out. The Little Girl follows.

DENNIS
What are you doing?

LITTLE GIRL
I'm coming with you.

DENNIS
Get back in that car right now.

LITTLE GIRL
Friends should stick together, Dennis.

DENNIS
I'm not your friend! I don't even like you. Do you get that? My girlfriend and my child are in there with that crazy old man, and it's all your fault. Now stay here.

She watches him go, hurt. Dennis knocks on the door. Holly answers.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
(confused)
Holly? What are you doing?

HOLLY
Dumb son-of-a-bitch.

She pulls the door wide to reveal Hyrum standing behind her. He holds a rifle to her back.

21 EXT. HYRUM'S HOUSE, BACKYARD -- EVENING (6:45PM)

A field of weeds. Dennis and Holly sit on two old chairs as Hyrum ties their hands behind their back. The Little Girl stands a few feet off, next to A SHOVEL that's sticking out of the dirt.

Hyrum finishes, slings the rifle over his shoulder, and walks toward the house, past the Little Girl.

HYRUM
You stay right there.

As soon as he's gone, Dennis tugs at the ropes. Holly just shakes her head.

HOLLY

Chip lives in Los Angeles. Owns his own business and everything. He doesn't have to kidnap little girls. But if he did you could bet he'd have the sense to get the right one!

DENNIS

I thought she was Penny. Penny wears that exact same uniform.

HOLLY

They all wear the same uniform, Dennis! That's why they're called uniforms.

He has no argument for that.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Chip and I were high school sweethearts. Shoulda got married, that's all.

DENNIS

Holly, Chip Conroy is gay.

HOLLY

So, what now? You're just going to go around spreading fear and hatred in front of your unborn child, is that it?

DENNIS

No, I'm saying Chip was gay. He wasn't gonna marry you.

HOLLY

He wasn't gay when I knew him. We went to junior prom when I knew him. And you better believe we had ourselves a swell time.

Dennis laughs bitterly and shakes his head.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What? Are you doubting my sex appeal?

DENNIS

No, I'm not doubting your--

HOLLY

I may be great with child, Dennis, but don't you dare doubt my sex appeal.

DENNIS

Will you stop saying 'sex?' There's a child standing right there.

HOLLY

So what? I'm talking about allure, Dennis. I'm talking about the feminine wile. I ain't talking about where babies come from.

LITTLE GIRL

I already know where babies come from.

HOLLY

She already knows where babies come from.

Dennis can't get free. He looks at the Little Girl.

DENNIS

Will you please untie us?

LITTLE GIRL

No. You hurt my feelings.

DENNIS

I didn't know you had any feelings.

She scowls and turns her back to him.

HOLLY

You call that parenting? Yelling at the child and hurting her feelings? Is that the kind of father you're gonna be?

Hyrum comes out of the house, the rifle still over his shoulder. He has a metal gas can in his hand.

DENNIS

Hyrum, listen. This whole thing's a misunderstanding.

Hyrum takes the cap off the can and pours gas all over Dennis.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Wait, what are you doing? Hyrum, please!

HOLLY

Are you crazy? What do you think you're doing?

He drops the empty can and points the gun at her.

HYRUM

You shut your mouth. This whole thing's your fault.

HOLLY

Don't you dare point that gun at me. I've got an unborn child in my belly.

He points the gun at her stomach.

HYRUM

You shoulda thought of that before you vouched for this piece of trash.

(back to Dennis)

Where's my money?

DENNIS

I don't have it. I think Randy might have stolen it.

Hyrum snickers and pulls out a book of matches.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

No, Hyrum, please. I didn't get the money. We got the wrong little girl. That's not Penny Andersen.

Hyrum stops and turns to the Little Girl.

HYRUM

What's your name?

LITTLE GIRL

Penny Andersen.

HYRUM

What's your mother's name?

LITTLE GIRL

Gretchen.

HYRUM

Sounds like the right little girl to me.

DENNIS

She's lying to you. That is not Penny. This whole thing's her fault.

Hyrum pulls out a match.

HYRUM

Where's my money?

DENNIS

I swear to you I don't have it.

HYRUM
That's too bad for you.

DENNIS
No, Hyrum. Please!

Hyrum strikes the match. Dennis closes his eyes. Then...

CLINK. Hyrum falls to the ground. The Little Girl stands behind him, the shovel in her hand.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
Thank you. Oh, jeez. Thank you.
(to Holly)
Are you ok?

HOLLY
Yeah.

They share a tearful smile. The first warm moment we've seen.

DENNIS
(turning back)
Hurry up and untie us. Before he...

The Little Girl is holding the matches.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

LITTLE GIRL
You hurt my feelings, Dennis.

DENNIS
You're right. I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry.

LITTLE GIRL
I don't care about sorries, Dennis.
It's too late for sorries.

DENNIS
(to Holly)
I told you she's crazy.

HOLLY
Don't blame her, Dennis. She's got the Stockholms.

The Little Girl lights a match.

DENNIS
No, please. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. We're best friends remember?

LITTLE GIRL
You said we weren't.

DENNIS
I was just being stupid. Don't listen to me. Of course we're friends.

LITTLE GIRL
It's too late, Dennis. I don't want to be your friend anymore.

DENNIS
No, wait, please. No!

She holds out the match, ready to light. Then...

LITTLE GIRL
Just kidding! Of course we're best fiends.

Dennis opens his eyes, on the verge of tears.

DENNIS
What the hell is wrong with you!?

22 INT./EXT. DENNIS'S CAR -- EVENING (7:00PM)

Dennis, Holly and the Little Girl climb in.

HOLLY
We'll grab some things then take the girl home.

DENNIS
She won't tell me where she lives.

HOLLY
You've got to take charge, Dennis. You're the adult in the situation.

DENNIS
It ain't that simple.

HOLLY
Princess, we got to take you home now. Your parents are gonna be wor--

She sits forward again.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Why does she have my gun, Dennis?

DENNIS
It's a long story.

Holly turns away and looks out her window.

HOLLY

Words cannot express the wonderful
time I had at that God-damn junior
prom.

23 EXT. HYRUM'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS (7:01PM)

They pull out onto a two-lane highway.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Dennis.

DENNIS (O.S.)

What?

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Where are we going?

DENNIS (O.S.)

I don't know.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Dennis.

DENNIS (O.S.)

What?

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Can we get some burgers when we get
there?

DENNIS (O.S.)

Fine.

They continues down the lonely desert highway.

FADE OUT: