

THE WITCHFINDER

by

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EXT. FIELD - DUSK - END OF SUMMER

THE WITCHFINDER is dressed in black.

Black hat, black boots, black cape, black cane.

A cross hangs from his neck, and as he slowly lifts his head, we see his face: pockmarked and gaunt, a goatee shaping his chin.

But it's his eyes that really disturb.

Piercing, and unrelenting in their cruelty... as they cut right through us.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. FIELDS - END OF SUMMER - AFTERNOON

Sunburnt fields stream by...

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

We see the face of LOUISE (16), her blue eyes staring at the same space, the sky, the sheer emptiness.

Driving is her sister, RACHEL (30). Her dark hair brushes her shoulders. There's a dreaminess to her.

RACHEL
(glancing over)
Are you okay?
(concerned)
It's just you haven't said
anything all day...

Louise finally turns...

LOUISE
Is she coming?
(looking at her)
Because you promised.

After a moment...

RACHEL
She's coming...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They reach a crossroads. Rachel stops, pulling out a map. They turn left and hit a dirt track.

Trees shade the road. They drive on, it's bumpy, isolated. Rachel stops again and glances over her shoulder. She starts to reverse, there's a sign nailed to a tree. It reads 'FENRIS HOUSE'.

They drive on until a gate blocks their way. Rachel gets out and drags it open.

They continue... finally reaching an Elizabethan house.

Neglected and half choked by ivy, the classic timber front seems crushed by the weight of the roof. They get out.

EXT. FENRIS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

RACHEL
(unfolding letter)
The key should be over here.

They wander to the side. Jammed against a wall is a steel bound barrel. Rachel slides the lid off and peers at the inky black water. We see a flicker of fear from Louise.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
(worried)
It's okay, I'm sorry. I'll get it.

Louise heads to the front door, but can't resist glancing back. And as her sister's hand plunges in, Louise looks like she may faint...

RACHEL (CONT'D)
(turning to Louise
with key)
Got it.

Louise snaps out of her memory, shaken. Rachel unlocks the front door, and they enter.

INT. FENRIS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Deep slits disfigure the beams of the old low ceiling.

A hallway leads to the back garden, and on the left is a staircase. Tucked underneath is a small toilet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rachel wanders to the kitchen, as Louise passes in front of the stairs to the sitting room.

INT. SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A blackened fire place is gouged into the facing wall. Worn sofas flank the sides, paintings clutter the walls, windows expose both front and back gardens.

Louise wanders across to a doorway at the other end, and heads through.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Light spills in from the back garden, streaking across a large wooden table. Dried flowers, pint jugs and rusty farm implements hang from the ceiling.

Rachel heads to the sink, briefly glimpsing her car through the antique windows. She turns a tap on. Nothing. Suddenly brown liquid spurts out. Slowly it starts to lighten.

GEORGIE (O.C.)

I SO wouldn't drink that...

Rachel turns and smiles. Standing by the door is GEORGIE (29), tall, black, trendy.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

(playful)

Is this officially the most remote fucking house in England?

MIA (O.C.)

It's so her boyfriend can't find her.

Just behind is MIA (28), blonde, hot as, dressed for town.

MIA (CONT'D)

(teasing)

What I wanna know, is what it's like marrying someone you've just met?

RACHEL

(equally sarcastic)

Really good thanks.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Probably almost as fulfilling as
shagging someone you've just
met...

Georgie lets out a spurt of laughter... Mia smiles,
grabbing Rachel's hand, inspecting her engagement ring.

MIA
(having fun)
Is that it? How long have you
actually known him? Three weeks?

RACHEL
(retrieving her hand)
Hilarious, eight months. And
believe it or not He has a name.

Mia whispers in Georgie's ear.

GEORGIE
ADOLF?

And Mia's amused...

RACHEL
Yes that's right, his parents
named him after the fucking
Fuhrer.
(sarcastic smile)
Try John.

GEORGIE
Accountant?

RACHEL
(sarcastic)
If you must know, he's a grave-
digger.

MIA
Sex-yyy.

GEORGIE
(motioning)
Photo...

RACHEL
God...

She pulls out her phone and selects a picture. Georgie
commandeers it, Mia crowding round.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGIE

Christ he really does look like a
grave digger.

RACHEL

(snatching back her
phone)

Remind me why you're my friends?

MIA

(hugging her)

Coz we love you...

RACHEL

(noticing how dressed
up she is)

You do realise there's nothing
here? No bars, no clubs, and
definitely no men.

MIA

(mischievous)

There're always men.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A huge oak table lies in broken strips propped against
the far wall. On both sides of the room heavy curtains
shield the windows. Louise draws the set nearest to her.

Blinding light sears in from the front garden.

She turns, covering her face, briefly choking on the veil
of dust, wandering past a suit of armour, its hands
wrapped round an axe. Finally she stops, her eyes
settling on an old map hung from one of the walls.

CLOSE: We can see the outline of the house, and below,
shapes of a church and village. Louise traces her finger
over the curve of a nearby RIVER...

Suddenly there's a noise. She turns to the window
behind...

EXT. FENRIS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Two more women wander to the front door: RUTH (31),
rotund, short black hair, kind, moral, courageous.

And BETH (29), auburn, willowy, but behind her pretty
green eyes there's a profoundly damaged person.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruth searches for some phone reception.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rachel glances towards the window having heard the car.
Georgie's nearer but can only see Ruth.

GEORGIE
Who's that with Ruth?

RACHEL
Beth.

GEORGIE
You're shitting me! I swear if she
tries any of that God bothering
shit on me I'll...

BETH (O.C.)
You'll what?

Georgie turns, caught out.

BETH (CONT'D)
Actually find some meaning in that
frivolous life of yours, Heaven
forbid.
(beat)
How's the girl band going? Slept
with your manager yet?

Mia smirks, as Georgie flashes her best 'go fuck
yourself' smile.

Ruth enters, slightly flustered, looking for Rachel.

RUTH
I don't suppose there's a land
line? I've got absolutely no
reception and I promised I'd say
good night to the boys.

RACHEL
Er, no...
(beat)
But I'm sure someone's got a
signal.

They all look. Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGIE

(playing)

So how the fuck are you Ruth?

RUTH

(serious)

I'm fine, but d'you have to swear?

GEORGIE

Sorry Miss, forgot we were all
still in fucking kindergarten.

RUTH

(a little annoyed)

It's just that some of us believe
there are more than three words in
the English language to express
our excitement Georgie.

RACHEL

(exasperated)

Jesus, will everyone please try
and be nice to each other!

An awkward beat.

MIA

(enthusiastic)

Hey where's little sis?

RACHEL

(turning/unsure)

Exploring I think...

RUTH

How is she?

RACHEL

(lying)

Okay...

She's got Rachel thinking now...

GEORGIE

So is this it?

RACHEL

(vague)

I don't know.

MIA

(confused)

You don't know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGIE

What the fuck's that mean?

RACHEL

It means I don't know if they're going to come.

RUTH

Who?

And everyone's looking at Rachel...

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Louise carefully draws the remaining set of curtains, then using her sleeve she cleans a hole in the glass, revealing a garden segmented by low stone walls.

Beyond that she can make out the crumbled spire of a ruined church, and in the distance fields, surrounded by woodland.

She tries to open one of the windows. It lifts a few inches but is then locked rigid by a pair of bolts.

Resting nearby is a key.

She sticks it in, but it falls, disappearing through a crack in the floor boards. She crouches down to reach it, her fingers brushing the top. Suddenly she hears a dog barking.

She looks up, staring through the window. Another bark, and we see her whole face illuminate, the first time she's smiled. She gets to her feet and rushes to the door.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stunned silence. Faces fixed on Rachel.

GEORGIE

Are. You. Mental?

(beat)

Why the fuck would you invite your ex to your hen do?

RACHEL

(defensive)

She's not my ex, she's my best friend.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 (like it's nothing)
 Anyway we've spoken, it's fine...

RUTH
 (still shocked)
 Your EX?

RACHEL
 (passionate)
 Look, the fact is my sister's
 barely said a word to anyone in
 the last six months, and when she
 did it was to ask for Lakshmi.
 (beat)
 And because I... and because I
 miss her and haven't seen her in
 over a year.
 (beat)
 And like I said I doubt she'll
 come.

They can all hear voices coming from the back garden.

MIA
 I think she just did...

And a dog barking.

BETH
 (anxious)
 Was that a dog?

EXT. BACK GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Walking to the backdoor is LAKSHMI (29), long dark hair,
 cool as hell, beautiful.

And Wolfie, a five year old HUSKY DOG.

Wolfie races up to Louise, licking her face.

LAKSHMI
 (smiling)
 Hey you.

Lakshmi casually drops her rucksack as Louise hugs her
 like a long lost sister.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lakshmi, Louise and Wolfie walk in. Lakshmi immediately making eye contact with Rachel.

GEORGIE

(bemused)

Did you walk here or something?

LAKSHMI

(casual)

Car's down the hill. Thought this was the way in.

BETH

(anxious)

Why have you brought a dog Lakshmi?

LAKSHMI

(alpha female)

Coz she's my bitch Beth.

(beat)

Any way relax, Wolfie only bites bad people.

They stare at each other, past tension surfacing...

GEORGIE

(moving swiftly on)

So what's the plan for tonight then? Local strip joint?

RACHEL

There's a fair.

MIA

A fair? Like a fun fair?

RACHEL

No like a shit fair. You know, old fashioned, bobbing for apples.

LAKSHMI

They're gonna love us. A Hindu, a Jew, three Pagans, and a Christian...

MIA

What are you Lou?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUISE

I dunno...
 (beat)
 Human?

All but Beth smile.

GEORGIE

Is Mia allowed to fuck a bumpkin?

RUTH

You really are disgusting aren't
 you Georgie?

GEORGIE

You should see me when I'm
 horny...

Ruth sighs.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I thought this was
 supposed to be a hen-do?

LAKSHMI

(provocative)
 Yeah Rache, we're meant to be
 celebrating your engagement to Mr.
 Random Fuck.
 (trying to shock)
 It's not like the last time we saw
 each other we'd just had sex or
 anything...

And Lakshmi smiles obnoxiously at Rachel, the others now
 wanting the walls to swallow them.

MIA

I think we should get our bags...

GEORGIE

Yeah...
 (beat)
 Why don't you take Wolfie for a
 walk Lou...

She nods, and they all head to the door, leaving Rachel
 and Lakshmi to their confrontation.

EXT. FENRIS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Georgie heads to her car with Mia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGIE

Cluster...

MIA

Fuck.

Beth pulls a bag from Ruth's Volvo. Ruth fiddling with her phone again, marching further away, Louise following Wolfie to the church.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lakshmi smiles at Rachel.

LAKSHMI

You know you look different with your clothes on...

RACHEL

(very uncomfortable)
Don't.

LAKSHMI

(spiky)
Don't what Rache? Don't remind you of what happened? Don't question what you're doing? But that's why you invited me. To tell you it's all bullshit. Coz it can't have been just to humiliate me...

RACHEL

(out of her depth)
You said you were happy for me.

Lakshmi smiles, her face full of mischief.

LAKSHMI

Well... maybe I lied.
(beat)
Besides, we both know the real reason I'm here.
(beat)
Guilt.

RACHEL

(getting angry)
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAKSHMI

That's right. Guilt for what
you've done to me, and guilt for
what happened to your sister...

Rachel shakes her head in shocked disbelief.

EXT. RUINED CHURCH - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The broken foundations of a long dead village sketch
shapes across the earth. Nearby, a road winds past an
ancient stone cross towards the fair.

Hidden beneath a tree Louise can see Lakshmi's scratched
out Land Rover. Shadowing the land opposite is a ruined
church, a graveyard spilling into the woods.

Wolfie has started to sniff around the entrance of the
crypt. Suddenly she disappears down the stone steps.

LOUISE

Wolfie. Wolfie...

But someone is watching her from the bushes. A YOUNG MAN
(25). His face is thin, his eyes marked by some long
buried obscenity.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Unrelenting tension as Lakshmi glares at Rachel:

RACHEL

(betrayed)
...that is not fair.

LAKSHMI

(explosive)
Fair? What the fuck would you know
about fair? I have spent the last
year watching my friends get blown
to pieces, while the closest you
get to stress is banging out a few
words of your non existent novel.

Rachel can't believe this is happening.

LAKSHMI (CONT'D)

(unrelenting)
You know what I think. I think
it's all about having the perfect
excuse to give up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

What?

LAKSHMI

(dissecting her)

Yeah that's right. Get married,
have kids, then who can possibly
call you a failure anymore?

And that's really hurt.

RACHEL

(dismayed)

How can you say that? You know
what I've been through.

(beat)

You know I'd almost forgotten how
cruel, how arrogant you could be.

LAKSHMI

No, that's you Rache.

RACHEL

(angry)

If all you want's a fight then why
did you come?!

LAKSHMI

(like a sledge
hammer)

Why did I come? I came because you
begged me to. Pleaded with me.
Wrote me a ten page fucking
letter.

(pulling it from her
pocket)

Said I was your best friend. That
little sis needs me. That only
Lakshmi could sift through the
bones of your fucked relationship.

(twisting the knife)

Because we both know I'm the
sister she never had...

RACHEL

(on the verge of
tears)

What's happened to you?

LAKSHMI

(staring at her)

Oh everything Rache.

(ominous)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAKSHMI (CONT'D)

Everything...

(beat)

And they even pay me to do it.

(nonchalant)

I think I'll unpack now.

And she scoops up her rucksack and heads to the door, leaving Rachel in a state of despair.

EXT. RUINED CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The young man continues to watch Louise, closer than before, his face riddled with anxiety. Scars pierce the centre of his palms.

RUTH (O.C.)

(buoyant)

Has she gone inside?

Louise turns, startled.

The young man runs, trampling through the undergrowth.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Sorry. I didn't mean to creep up on you.

(looking at crypt)

I wonder where it leads?

Then a bark, and Wolfie reappears, padding up to Louise. She recoils at the smell.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Maybe it connects to the sewer?

Hold on Louise as we fade out...

FADE IN:

INT. RUTH AND BETH'S ROOM - EVENING

Beth looks towards the fields, to the fair. She closes her eyes, praying to a silent God.

INT. MIA AND GEORGIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Georgie is fashioning the biggest, baddest hair she can muster.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGIE
 (admiring herself in
 the mirror)
 Cool, that should scare the shit
 out of 'em.

INT. STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Ruth is struggling with several bags as Mia comes down,
 dressed in a 1920's Charleston dress.

MIA
 Need a hand?

RUTH
 (stopping)
 Why don't you just say it, you
 think I'm fat?

MIA
 (shaking her head)
 No...

RUTH
 Yes you do, and I make no apology
 for not being a scrawny stick
 insect either. In fact I bet I'm
 the fittest one here. Well maybe
 not Lakshmi, but you certainly. I
 swim, I stretch and I pick up
 babies. D'you have any idea how
 heavy babies are?

And Mia's lost for words.

INT. LAKSHMI'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lakshmi's alone in her room, unpacking. She unwraps
 something from a piece of black cloth...

A GUN.

She stares at it, her intentions unclear.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Louise tries the handle to the final room, following
 Wolfie inside.

INT. OLD STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Books and antiques litter the wood panelled room. A sixteenth century wardrobe is sunk deep into an alcove.

Louise stares at it, intrigued. Wolfie starts to bark, sniffing round the edges. Louise opens one of the doors.

LAKSHMI (O.C.)
Careful, might be a witch
inside...

Louise turns. Lakshmi's standing there, calmer, like there's been some schizophrenic shift in her mood.

LOUISE
(smiling)
Or a lion...

A beat.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
(hopeful)
Are you coming to the fair?

LAKSHMI
If you want.

Louise nods, partially closing the wardrobe.

LAKSHMI (CONT'D)
So big sis's getting married then?

Louise looks away.

LAKSHMI (CONT'D)
She love him?

LOUISE
I think she wants a baby...

LAKSHMI
(half smile)
That so?

Louise shrugs her shoulders.

LAKSHMI (CONT'D)
(gentle)
Hear you've been having a rough
time...
(beat)
Wanna talk about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Louise shakes her head. Lakshmi smiles, understanding.

LAKSHMI (CONT'D)
 (glancing at Wolfie)
 Well you can always tell her.
 She's a great listener.

INT. SITTING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

All seven women are there, some holding glasses. Lakshmi winks at Rachel, tension festering...

RACHEL
 (awkward)
 I just wanted to say thank you all
 for coming.
 (beat)
 It means everything to me.
 (beat)
 I know you've all come along
 way...

GEORGIE
 Couldn't be any fucking further
 from humanity.

Laughter.

RACHEL
 I'd also like to thank Beth, who
 found this place.

Rachel nods to her, the others less convinced. They all drink apart from Beth and Ruth.

GEORGIE
 Come on Beth! You can't pussy out
 from your own toast.

BETH
 (emphatic)
 I don't drink.

LAKSHMI
 (aggressive)
 It's a bloody hen do!

But Beth is adamant.

GEORGIE
 Come on Ruth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH
(relenting)
Oh what the hell...

And she sinks the shot.

MIA
(presenting a box)
And this is from us...

RACHEL
(hesitant)
Oh God...

GEORGIE
Stop being so bloody posh and open
it!

And she does. Inside is a crown of white summer flowers.
Beautiful.

MIA
You're our May Queen.

RUTH
It's August Mia...

RACHEL
She-Ra more like.

EXT. RUINED CHURCH - A LITTLE LATER

We watch the seven women stroll towards the fair. Some holding hands, others enjoying the warm summer air. Wolfie trails behind with Lakshmi and Louise. The sun is starting to dip, turning the sky into a blood red.