



Scent of a Man: Appalachian Essence

Peggy Poe Stern

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330 pages (print edition), 101,706 words, Appalachian romance novel, Mountain family life, Contemporary women's literary fiction, Appalachian cultural heritage

On assignment for a New York women's magazine to interview a famous Blue Ridge Mountain country musician, Victoria Brown not only stumbles on the source of her reoccurring bad dreams, but also runs smack dab into her heretofore nonexistent family.

From a flashback in Chapter 6:

... One night of lovemaking and Breck had become my entire world, my reason for existing. How did I ever get to be eighteen years old without him in my life?

He held me extra tight as I stood at the door, kissed me extra hard as though he had to get enough to last the day. I hesitated wanting more but he opened the door and pushed me out. ...

From Chapter 1:

... Mother's death still seemed unreal to me. I had no warning, no closure. Mother was there, a reliable backup support in my life, one day and gone the next. I did all the necessary paperwork and boxed up what few things she had in her tiny apartment. ...

... I was now a full-grown woman with my life falling into place just the way I wanted. So why did I keep having dreams about him? He had only been a brief moment in time – a very short time. He'd hardly entered my life before he was out of it. So, why didn't those stupid dreams stop? The harder I tried to stop them, the more they crept up on me. I suppose my upcoming marriage had something to do with those reoccurring dreams. ...

From Chapter 7

... I sucked in a breath and tightened my grip on a tree limb I was leaning against to keep myself from taking off at a run. Never in my life did I think I would hear a voice sounding like his except in my nightmares. Calm down, I told myself. Your nerves are on edge and you're hearing things. His voice sounds familiar, that's all. A lot of people sound like each other. Hadn't I heard men speak with that same deep voice, that same soothing tone?

I couldn't count the times I'd whirled around to face the owner of that deep voice only to discover I had never set eyes on the man before. This would be another one of those times. The doctor would turn toward me and it would be someone I'd never seen before. ...

From Chapter 13

... The drive was narrow with a canopy of trees overhead making shadows on the road. Suddenly the trees ended and green grass appeared. An old two-story house set nestled against a bank. There was a front porch with three windows above it making a large dormer. I could almost hear the voices of people who once lived there - the laughter, the tears, and children playing in the yard. I could even hear the low of cattle that once

lived near the barn. There were still a few chickens running around, and a mixed breed dog on the porch that had gone gray with age and stiff with arthritis.

“Gives you vision of a life once lived, doesn’t it?”

So, he was feeling it too. “It’s sad,” I told him. “The good things that come and go.”

“The past usually is a bitter-sweet memory.”

“I’ll wait here for you,” I told him.

“No, Vickie. Come on inside with me. Two old women live here. It brightens their day to have company. ...

... “Cornbread baking and chicken frying always smells good,” she said as she turned to face us.

Her eyes grew huge. Her face went pale as she sucked in a gulp of air. The spoon in her hand hit the floor. I grabbed hold of the doctor with both hands as my back hit the wall. Instinctively, the doctor grabbed me in his arms as my legs turned to rubber. There was no air left in the room and the walls were twirling.

“Vickie, what’s wrong? Surely you’re not fainting,” he said.

“My Lord in heaven,” escaped Carrie’s lips. “No! It can’t be. It’s impossible. Not after all this time.”

“What’s impossible?” the doctor asked as my fingers bit into his arms for dear life. ...

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