

Sky

Story

by

Jonathan Morgan Jenkins

Screenplay

By

Richard Lasser

Dennis Edwards

Jonathan Morgan Jenkins

WGA # 1072959

FADE IN:

EXT. EQUESTRIAN ARENA, MAXWELL ESTATE -- HOT JULY AFTERNOON

The hooves of a powerful black horse cut into the dirt. Pieces of sod rip from the ground and are thrown back as the majestic animal runs.

The Rider's high black boots dig into the horse's side as he leaps a series of barriers. The rider is DAVID MAXWELL, 15. In black equestrian hat, sweat streaming down his face, determined but scared, he stares at the highest show jumping barrier -- a Double wall of PVC rails.

David kicks off, gallops toward the barrier. As he charges the wall, his eyes catch a glimpse of a FIGURE watching intently at the fence. He tightens. The horse pulls up and David is thrown forward, crashes through the barrier. The PVC rails tumble in around him.

The horse comes over to David, as if to make sure he's O.K. David takes the reins.

Through the bars of his impromptu PVC cage, David, terrified, sees the Figure closing quickly. The Figure is his angry father, Victor MAXWELL, 40's. Iron-jawed, virile, handsome -- Victor's weathered features and callused hands shows he's lived with horses all his life.

Victor's dark silhouette looms over David. Victor opens his hand but he has no intention of helping. David, pathetically gives over the reins. In one dynamic sweep Victor is on the horse, charging across the arena.

VICTOR

Haaa!

David scrambles to his feet, quickly rebuilds the barrier.

Hard, fast, aggressively, Victor races across the arena, over the jumps. David, stoop-shouldered, takes each jump as a whipping from his father.

Like a warrior enraged, Victor charges the rebuilt final barrier and takes it with ease. He rips in front of the cowering David, stops in a cloud of dust. He dismounts in one move and slaps the reins into David's hand.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

It's not the horse.

A dejected David watches Victor storms away.

EXT. DIRT ROAD -- LATER

Victor and David jog side by side on a country road, surrounded by lush, northeastern foliage, bordered by a white picket fence, horses running in the background.

Victor demonstrates excellent form which David lacks. Victor allows David to pass him but picks up the pace, catches up.

While David struggles and pants, Victor smiles, David falls back, stops. Exhausted, he leans over, hands on knees.

Victor waves David on. David starts running again with all the determination he can muster. Victor matches his stride, pats him on the shoulder, runs ahead of him. David stops again -- totally frustrated.

INT. HOME GYM -- LATER

David, flat on his back, on the lifting bench. He struggles to lift a barbell, does five reps. Exhausted, he is just barely able to replace the bar on its stand.

Victor enters, smiles. David quickly grabs the bar again and tries to continue lifting. With extreme effort, grimacing, David can't hold it. His arms begin to buckle, the bar starts to fall.

Victor runs, but can't grab it in time. The bar crashes to the floor, breaking a piece of plastic off the treadmill. Victor picks up the piece of broken plastic. David shrugs with an apologetic smile.

INT. MAXWELL ESTATE, VICTOR'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Victor's once-proud office has seen better days. A mahogany and glass case in need of cleaning is filled with engraved, tarnished silver trophies.

In the dim light, strewn over a dusty, cluttered desk, are papers stamped in red, "Final Notice" and "Past Due." Victor sits in a worn, high back leather office chair. Stressed, hair disheveled he grabs his cell. Pushes speed dial.

VICTOR (O.S.)
James Pinckney, please. -- Victor
Maxwell --

Victor, squirms in his chair. He is sweating.

He can't sit, he paces, then walks out of the office down the corridor, the phone at his ear.

CORRIDOR

He passes nearly empty rooms with only a few sparse pieces of furniture. The walls and floors have areas of light color that until recently haven't seen the sun in over a hundred years. They are the ghostly outlines of antique uprights, Persian rugs, and portraits that no longer adorn the once great estate.

A short-haired pointer, Tor trots up. Victor tenderly strokes her head.

VICTOR
(to the dog)
Think you can ride?

The dog looks up soulfully.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hey, Jimmy. It's Victor. --
Look, something's come up -- I'm
just asking for -- What? For the
whole estate? I know it's a good
offer but I'm just not ready to
sell.

Victor glances at his reflection in a glass cabinet filled with pictures, show jumping trophies. A photo of himself, young and his Father, BRADLEY. Bradley smiles; the young Victor grimaces. Victor grimaces.

VICTOR
Look, when my son wins the The
Presidential I'll loan you money
from my stud fees.

Victor gives a forced laugh.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I just need a couple more weeks --
Jimmy, I said I'd take care of it.
I'm not getting out. -- Because
it's all I know!

He angrily hangs up.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM

With his favorite ROCK MUSIC PLAYING, David sits at a worktable full of computers, parts and tools spilling out on the floor.

He's glowing, singing, moving to the music, obviously enjoying putting components together. The look on his face is the closest thing we've seen to happy.

Pictures of a pretty girl, COLLEEN, 16, are push-pinned to the wall next to ones of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs.

The door flies open. Victor's hand clenches the door knob.

VICTOR

Why aren't you studying the course options?

David's blissful moment evaporates. He forces a nervous grin to lighten the tension. David punks up his hair, puts on funny glasses, makes a face like *The Nutty Professor*.

DAVID

I am the mad professor. I'm writing a program that'll ride for me. It's guaranteed to win.

VICTOR

Don't start with me.

David serious again.

DAVID

Colleen asked me to fix her computer.

David fingers a graphics card.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Guess she likes me.

VICTOR

Win the Presidential. Then you can mess with that junk the rest of your life.

DAVID

(under his breath)
If I survive that long.

VICTOR

Come on, dinner's getting cold.

INT. DINING ROOM

David and Victor are seated in the formal dining room, in semi-formal attire, an attempt to hold on to a lifestyle they no longer have.

Attended by TILLIE, an ageless servant, they eat quietly, punctuated by the clinking of tarnished silverware against chipped china plates.

VICTOR
Your timing is off.

DAVID
It's Zeus. His strides are inconsistent.

David eats silently, not looking up.

Tillie marches through with an armload of David's dirty riding clothes.

TILLIE
You boys need anything else? I gotta get these washed before tomorrow.

Tillie doesn't wait for an answer.

VICTOR
You're sloppy. I've asked your Grandmother back.

DAVID
Oh, no. Not the bullhorn?

VICTOR
You'll do what she says.

DAVID
(sarcastic mimic through a bullhorn)
You're too deep, David.
(makes static noise)
Steady up on the six, David.

Victor listens, sly grin.

VICTOR
You done?

A disgruntled David picks at his food.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I've arranged for you to go first.
Fourteen jumps, one Oxer.

DAVID
God, I hate those.

Victor sighs.

VICTOR
(calling)
Tillie? Where's Jennifer?

Tillie pokes her head in the door.

TILLIE
Where do you think? You told her
she could ride till dark.

Tillie disappears again.

DAVID
Can I be excused? Not hungry.

Victor nods.

David rises and leaves through the open door. Victor watches David stop at the foot of the stairs, gaze at the one portrait still hanging in the once-grand entryway -- that of a beautiful woman in equestrian gear, standing next to a white horse. A brass plate reads: "Grace and Star"

ENTRYWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Victor comes over to his son, places his hand on the boy's trembling shoulder.

VICTOR
She'd want you to ride.

Before his father can see the tears welling up in David's eyes, the boy rushes up the stairs.

With a sigh, Victor glances out the front window. Night has already fallen.

EXT. MOONLIT SKY -- NIGHT

Wispy clouds part, revealing a magical, full moonlit sky. The lush countryside shimmers with reflections.

A lone rider on a pure white horse gallops across an open field.

A YOUNG GIRL, JENNIFER MAXWELL, 10, with high riding boots, dark hair flowing behind her, seems to fly along on the back of her majestic white stallion, SKY. They cross small shimmering streams.

As she gallops, Jennifer ignores a sign that warns "No Trespassing. Violators will be shot. Survivors will be shot again."

Suddenly Sky takes a turn and runs down a dirt path.

JENNIFER
No, Sky. Not this way. No.

Sky thunders on. A worried Jennifer looks ahead. Before them stands a stone wall directly in their path.

JENNIFER (O.S.)
No, Sky. Hold up.

Sky barrels on. Jennifer, now terrified pulls on the reins.

Jennifer's fear grabs hold of her. It seems like nothing can stop the horse. Then suddenly, Sky skids to a stop just before the wall. Her fear subsided, a relieved and out of breath Jennifer pats her horse.

JENNIFER
Good, Sky. Good boy. Now, let's go 'round the right way.

Jennifer pulls Sky around the wall along another trail.

Jennifer is brought up short as a HORSE AND RIDER jump out directly in front of her, block her path.

Sky rears up. Jennifer hangs on.

BRENT PINCKNEY, 15, stares coldly at her.

BRENT
You're trespassing.

JENNIFER
I had to cut through, I'm late.

BRENT
I got every right to confiscate that horse and have you shot.

JENNIFER
I'm not afraid of you.

Jennifer fingers her necklace, which glistens in the bright moonlight. It reads "Grace."

BRENT
What's that?

JENNIFER

Nothin'.

BRENT

Let me see.

JENNIFER

No. It belonged to my mother.

Brent reaches over and holds it, much to Jennifer's irritation.

BRENT

All right, I'll let you go through this time. I'll just take this for payment.

Brent rips off the necklace and rides away.

JENNIFER

Brent! You creep! Give it back!

Jennifer kicks her heels and Sky charges after Brent.

JENNIFER

Go, Sky.

Brent and his horse dash across the meadow. Jennifer, on the faster Sky, chases after.

Brent, realizing she's catching up, changes tactics.

BRENT

You want it? Swim for it.

Brent tosses the necklace into a stream.

Jennifer quickly turns Sky. The necklace catches on the branch of a log floating down the river. She charges down the river bank alongside the floating log. She meets up with it downstream.

Brent watches, laughs at his cruel joke.

The log bounces along until it floats out across a wide pool.

Without breaking stride, Jennifer and Sky splash across the waist-deep pool. Jennifer grabs the necklace off the branch which is now within easy reach.

Brent, annoyed that Jennifer seems to take it all so fearlessly, calls after her.

BRENT

Next time I'll have you arrested.

Jennifer, smiling, rides out of the pool and continues across a meadow in full stride toward the lights of the Maxwell Estate.

EXT. STABLES

Jennifer arrives at the stables, dismounts.

She walks down the long hallway flanked by twenty stables, all empty, except for Zeus's. Jennifer's wet boots slosh and leave a trail of water with each step. Over the door of the last stall is a beautiful handwritten sign: "SKY."

INT. SKY'S STALL

They enter the stall, a Double-wide space. There's a television mounted at horse-eye level, a clean Astro turf floor and a top-hinged swinging door at the rear.

The feed trough is filled with oats. A sack on the ground is labelled: "Organically-grown Oats"

Jennifer dumps the water out of her boot. SKY nods, whinnies, then ever-so-gently touches a floor-mounted remote with his front hoof. The television set turns on. It's a DVD of "Mr. Ed."

Upset by the broken necklace, Jennifer tries to put it back on. The clasp is bent, she takes a pair of needle-nose pliers from a toolbox, deftly bends it back. She reaches behind her neck, tries to close the clasp. Two large hands come up from behind and take the ends of the chain.

VICTOR

Let me help you.

Jennifer stands frozen as Victor, behind her, clasps the necklace chain.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

There. Missed you at dinner.
Where were you?

JENNIFER

Riding.

Victor turns her around to face him.

VICTOR
You know the rules. No riding
after --

He sees the necklace for the first time. He stares at the
word "Grace."

VICTOR (CONT'D)
-- Where'd you get that? I told
you not to go through her things --

JENNIFER
I -- I -- found it. In the dirt.

Jennifer can't look at him.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
When she fell.

Victor
And you've kept it all this time?

Jennifer nods. Victor sighs. Sky, sensing that Jennifer is
hurting, steps over and nuzzles her. She pets his cheek.

Victor too, gives Sky a pat.

He looks at Sky, then Mr. Ed on the television. He shakes
his head as if to say, "What a waste."

VICTOR
Sky's the offspring of the best
jumper I ever saw. No one could
touch Grace when she was riding
Star. Guess Sky just didn't have
it in him.

Jennifer continues to stroke him.

JENNIFER
When I'm older I'll take Sky some
place where there are no walls or
fences. We'll ride for miles and
miles -- It'll be just like flying.

VICTOR
You're a little late. Everything's
fenced in now.

Victor starts to leave.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Tillie saved you some dinner. Don't
stay out too long.

JENNIFER

I won't.

She listens as Victor's footsteps trail off and the stable door is closed.

She grabs a flashlight, climbs up the hay bales. A combination lock blocks the opening to an attic door. But Jennifer neatly snaps the shackle and the bar separates where it has been cleanly severed with a hack saw.

She unhooks a cord, pulls open the attic door, climbs up the wooden pull stairs, and enters the loft. She sticks her head down, one last check, then closes the door, disappears into the ceiling.

INT. ATTIC LOFT

She clicks on the flashlight. The beacon shines across a collection of feminine furnishings.

She passes a dust covered easel, unfinished paintings and keepsakes that once belonged to her mother.

Making her way to the far end, she lifts an Italian lace table cloth, pulls out an antique trunk. Jennifer sits in a child's rocking chair, sets the flashlight down so it's perfectly aimed at the chest. Her attempt to open the trunk fails. She needs a key.

She opens a box, finding the treasures of her mother's past, lovingly caressing each item. Picks out photos of Grace riding a young Sky in full show dress.

While she's gazing at the items, a light, mysterious gust of air blows, tousles Jennifer's hair, there is a hint of a glittering sparkle -- almost as if the presence of her mother has surrounded her.

**To Read the Full Script, contact Jonathan Morgan Jenkins @
skymusic@cox.net Or 949-842-9351**