

TALE OF THE MUSTANG

A treatment for a full-length
Animated feature film, with
Original music and lyrics

By
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Black. Quiet. Until:
The THUNDERING HOOVES of a DOZEN THOROUGHBREDS, explode into view, flying over our heads in the final stretch of the KENTUCKY DERBY. SKYJAMMER, a coal-black stallion, wins by four lengths.

In the WINNERS CIRCLE, Skyjammer is beside his trainer, ROMAN DANTE, a stout immigrant from Spain who perpetually wears a red cap. JONAS JACKSON JR., the owner, a charismatic and shrewd business tycoon, announces the champ has recently sired a son. He tells the crowd, "the next triple-crown sensation, WHIRLWIND, rests with his dam, ZEPHER, in California."

Back in California, in a stable at TRIPLE J RANCH, Zepher tends to her precious new colt.

One years time transforms the sleepy ranch into an EQUESTRIAN SPECTACULAR, featuring DRESSAGE, SHOW JUMPING, and POLO. MULTI-COLORED BANNERS sway. A parade of men and various horse-breeds display a dazzling procession of color. The horse is exalted for it's many virtues. A MARCHING BAND wails as their leader begins to sing.

Song: THE MAJESTY OF THE HORSE

The horse,
the horse,
the majesty of the horse!
A greater gift of nature simply
can't be found.

(The bankers)

A gambling man would wager one is
not around.

(The crowd)

The sound of all those hoofs can make a
man's heart pound!

The horse,
the horse,
the horse!

(Fresh soldiers and old war vets)

The pride,
the pride,
the pride of the horse!
A symbol for our courage and our
will to fight.

(Joined by two blacksmiths)

Their kind is loved by simple men and
kings alike.

(The pastor adds)

They'll surely be among us in the
afterlife,
the horse,
the horse,
the horse.

(Mounted knights)

The life,
the life,
the life of the horse,
Its fundamental place in history:
assured.

(Farmers hold up their forks)

Without the stallion's might, our farms would
fail for sure.

(Children sing from a merry go round)

Without the horse, our carousels would
never turn,
the horse,
the horse,
the horse.

(The jockeys)

The speed,
the speed,
the speed of the horse,
To ride atop a gallop is to
ride the wind.

(A child with a horse-stick)

Even when your thoroughbred is
just pretend.

(Show jumpers)

Wait until you've jumped a fence that's
ten-foot-ten!

The horse,
the horse,
the horse!

(The dressage riders)

The grace,
the grace,
the grace of the horse,
preciseness in their step and gait is
quite a must.

(The trainers)

With proper attitude, and coat, that's
free of dust.

(Everyone sings slowly and powerfully)

A horse is a reflection of what's
good in us.
A horse,
a horse,

(the horns join)

...the horse!

In a field adjacent to the festivities, Whirlwind, now a feisty yearling, is distracted from his training.

Roman Dante pleads in sonorous tones, "be patient, let destiny do her work. Soon, you will be in the green-hills of Kentucky, and there you will -- " Whirlwind impatiently huffs, and runs away. He bounds up a nearby slope and onto a high rock, his protest transforms into song.

Song: RUN

I'm tired of this training,
I want to show my stuff,
without some competition,
this life is not enough!

How long must I wait?
How long can the future really take?

I've waited all my life and still they say
'tomorrow may be the day'.
There's only one way to express my passion,
one way to behave ...

Run,
 and watch the people passing by.
 Just let me run,
 I'll lift my hooves and then I'll fly.

As Whirlwind sings, he bounds about, stirring up apathetic
 COWS, and CHICKENS. He brags as Roman watches from afar.

My swiftness will amaze,
 the crowds, they will adore,
 and shower me with praise,
 like the champions before me.

When the gate sets me free,
 I'll beat the best of times,
 and win by ten lengths,
 as I cross the finish line!

How long must I wait,
 how long can this preparation take?

Whirlwind sees Roman waving from a distance. Near Roman,
 beyond a six foot rail fence, a show jumping competition is
 under way.

I've waited all my life and still he says
 'tomorrow may be the day'.
 If I could jump that fence,
 I'd show him that today should be the day.

A mischievous look comes across his face. In an amazing
 show of strength, Whirlwind flips Roman on his back, jumps
 the fence and thunders through the show-jumping competition.
 To applause and amazement, he clears every jump, and for a
 finale, leaps back into his field. Roman hops off
 frantically to check his pride and joy but Whirlwind dodges
 him and sets off around the track. A moment later JJ Jr.'s
 RED WIDE-BODY PICKUP arrives pulling a LUXURY TRAILER along
 side the track.

Here comes my master,
 he drives a silver beast,
 but no truck can outpace me,
 my powers have increased.

Jonas YELLS encouragement as his million-dollar horse races
 ahead.

Run.
 I'll show the whole world who I am.
 Let it be known,
 that I'm the one they call Whirlwind.
 Run.

Jonas parks and Whirlwind greets him. Jonas tells his horse that the time has come to train in the green hills of Lexington, Kentucky. Whirlwind rears up in excitement but, seeing his mother, who has heard the news and is saddened, his joy is tempered.

Whirlwind shares a final private moment with his parents. They give him advice and remind him of his great worth, and to respect Jonas as his master for life.

"Without loyalty, there is nothing," they tell him. Roman enters. It's time to go.

As the trailer rolls away, he gazes through the rear window. It is a bittersweet moment as his parents recede from view.

The DESERT SKY burns. Distant mesas and gentle slopes dotted with silver sagebrush, nestle a lonely highway. Headlights lead JJ Jr.'s truck over a rise. Inside the trailer, Whirlwind is dozing. Dreaming of Kentucky. Dozing.

Later, it's dark, and Jonas decides to find lodging. Roman sees a road sign: THUNDER RIDGE 5 MI. A moment later, a billboard: THUNDER RIDGE ESTATES - COMING SOON! - AN UPSCALE COMMUNITY SURROUNDING THE PROPOSED THUNDER RIDGE RESERVOIR. Roman grimaces.

The truck rumbles toward an ARCH BRIDGE spanning a dry arroyo. The narrow entrance to the bridge is framed by rock walls. The pickup is nearly on the span when unexpectedly, horrifyingly, a GHOSTLY-WHITE WILD-MUSTANG darts onto the road. The pickup and trailer careen out of control around the startled horse. Whirlwind is tossed and thrown. The cab veers left, smashing into a steel support beam. The entire rig jack-knives. The friction sparks a fire. Roman and Jonas scramble out. Whirlwind sees and feels the fire. Jonas and Roman watch in horror as the trailer falls over the side, the cab lodging between the steel supports.

Whirlwind drops onto the tailgate, nearly bursting it open. The trailer dangles twenty feet above the dusty riverbed. The truck's gas tanks rupture. A BALL OF FLAME shoots skyward.

Whirlwind, dazed, regains his composure only to see a demon blaze devouring the trailer above him. Literally standing on the gate, Whirlwind begins to stomp wildly. Finally, the lock splits and Whirlwind plummets twenty feet onto a layer of soft river sediment which cushions the hard landing. Whirlwind is motionless for a moment.

Roman and Jonas are frantic and SCREAM for Whirlwind to run. A shower of burning shards rains down around him. He

fights to recover. His front knee: Bloody and hurt.
 He turns his head upward to see the rig completely engulfed,
 and disintegrating. Then, amidst all the terror he spies a
 vision: the white MUSTANG, watching from the rocks above.
 Before Whirlwind can comprehend what he sees, the rig begins
 to fall. He explodes in a full tilt gallop as the rig
 crashes down, unleashing a final burst of fire and smoke.
 Roman calls for the frightened horse to return. Whirlwind,
 overcome by a wild hysteria, runs blindly into the dark.
 Unaware of a ditch, he slams into the ground.
 Again black. Quiet.

Black. Nothing. Then faint, distant SINGING in a western
 cowpoke style; male, middle age, scratchy, slightly off key,
 but respectable. The song seems improvised.

Song: MY BELLY IS HAPPY

Well, mornin' is risin',
 and I feel dern well.
 My belly is happy,
 my breakfast was swell.

As the singing grows louder, light returns.

The desert is awake under a low sun. Cathedrals of rock,
 buttressed by cactus covered slopes, are tinted with orange
 and cast cool, blue shadows. One such slope crosses the
 immediate foreground. The singing grows closer, louder.

'Cause when I woke up,
 I was grateful to see,
 a fat, tasty lizard,
 who didn't see me.

A COYOTE has been singing, and he prances over the ridge
 and stops to complete his ballad.

An' I don't choke up,
 when I think of his fate,
 cause ...

He pauses, then lights up when he thinks of the final line.

I don't feel sorry
 for nothin' I ate.

He laughs and starts again.

Well, mornin' is risin' --

Then he freezes, sniffs.

"Kangaroo rat! I love those!" cheers RAMBLE, a time-tested survivor of the desert west, whose legendary travels have left him with a salesman's cunning and an unexplained handkerchief around his throat. He lowers his voice and sets off after the source: a small rock pile near a mesquite.

Some frantic digging, and out pops three ounces of furry fury armed with half-inch razor-sharp teeth. The KANGAROO RAT rockets straight up, landing on the bush. Ramble lunges, but the kangaroo rat, with blinding speed, runs right down his back. In a blur of swatting, running, digging, and cursing, Ramble gets sand kicked into his eyes, his head caught between his legs and his tail bitten in a rear assault.

"Ahh, forget it," Ramble concedes optimistically, "if it ain't in your mouth in two minutes, move on." He happily bounces away, whistling his tune.

Suddenly, he freezes again, taking a big whiff.

"This ... ain't ... no ... Kangaroo Rat." He darts away, up and over a jagged ridge. He peers down into a shallow ravine. There on the ground, is his idea of hitting the scavenger lottery.

Whirlwind lies motionless in a ditch.

"Yes! Please don't be asleep," Ramble happily whispers. He cautiously investigates the silent stallion like a army scout, creeping and rolling from bush to rock. He pretends to have a walkie-talkie, "roger team leader, this furry-one x-three two niner, kill sighted, will attempt to make a reconnoiter."

This find could make Ramble pack leader if he can get back to the den to claim the glory first. The trouble is getting there before those rascal brothers show up.

Too late.

Popping over the ridge are WHIFFER and SNOUT the inseparable pair who's ability for sniffing out lunch from the most difficult spots, apparently, is not affected by stupidity.

Snout, obviously named for his long missile-like muzzel, feels cheated.

"I founded it with my nose 'fore you founded it with your eyes." Ramble stands between his trophy and the brothers. Whiffer, draped in an extra ragged coat, backs up his brother.

Ramble disagrees.

"Look, Brothers McStupid, I used to steal garbage from a lawyer and possession is nine-tenths of the law, and as it says clearly in section 236 of the desert scavenger code: you lose."

Unknown to Ramble, Whirlwind STIRS. Whiffer and Snout back away. Ramble takes this as vindication, adding drama, "so, if anyone decides when and where we are going to eat this horse, it's gonna be me! Why, I can eat this horse by myself if I want!"

Whirlwind REARS UP. Ramble is cast in shadow, his tail shoots between his legs and he scrambles up toward the brothers. Just as they are about to scatter, Whirlwind shocks them by backing up against a room-sized boulder. He pleads like a frightened child, "don't eat me! Please don't eat me! Where's Roman? Where am I? What kind of dogs are you?"

"Dogs?" Ramble steps forward, "we aren't dogs we're coyotes. Or as the Hopi Indian would say Coy-yo-tay."

Even with an injured leg, Whirlwind is easily big enough to whoop the coyotes, but he's still a naive, protected youth, and easily manipulated.

"You aren't going to eat me?" Whirlwind timidly inquires.

"Not since you stood up," Whiffer says, almost blowing it. Ramble kicks Whiffer in the chin and asks about Whirlwind's story. Whirlwind, still shaky, explains about the crash, his plan to train in Kentucky, and also his great worth as a thoroughbred. Ramble sees a potential source of profit and schemes to exploit Whirlwind. He signals to the brothers and they follow him around a corner to huddle.

Ramble knows there will be a reward. He proposes to take Whirlwind to town where they will find a lucky sucker to "find him" and who'll blow the reward on something worth stealing, providing a weeks worth of good dumpster raiding. As expected, Whiffer and Snout insist on being full partners. Ramble grudgingly agrees.

Ramble returns introducing himself and the brothers. He tells Whirlwind that they will take him to town, as long as he follows their every command, and warns against setting off on his own, due to a mountain lion which they call STEALTH.

Whirlwind, having no other choice, reluctantly follows the coyotes as they descend into the heart of the Sonora.

Meanwhile, in the town of THUNDER RIDGE a BURNT HULK, that was JJ Jr.'s truck and trailer, sits on a FLATBED, parked at the WILD MUSTANG LODGE. Jonas and Roman stand nearby surveying the landscape.

"He's out there," Jonas says faithfully. A voice chimes in.

"Sorry about the crash."

Jonas and Roman turn to see WAYLAND STILLTS, the old MAYOR of Thunder Ridge, a wise and respected man and the owner of the

surrounding land. Introductions are made and Wayland offers his help and a dusty white 68' Chevy pickup.

Along the dry arroyo the coyotes have the audacity to ride Whirlwind. Ramble teases him, to the brothers delight.

"Ahh, this is luxury. By the way, Wind, if you see a nice clean cactus, pull over, would ya?"

Their path leads them past the accident site. Incredibly, Wayland's white Chevy passes directly overhead. Inside, Jonas and Roman are unable to see their prize directly below. Whirlwind, ironically, not recognizing the truck, shrinks in disappointment.

Later, at a breathtaking vista, Wayland, Jonas, and Roman scan the desert with binoculars. Roman asks about the canyon.

"Is that the one to be flooded for water sports?"

"Well, the deal's not done yet," Wayland explains, "and believe me I wish I could keep the land in it's natural state. It's been my family's for five generations. But, I'm old and I want to retire. Some folks say I could turn it into a park and make a living off tourism, but the cost of converting the land is more than I can afford. So, it looks like the dam will be built."

"It's a shame," he also mentions, "hundreds of wild mustangs used to roam there, but the folks who are puttin' the dam up said they had 'em rounded up. I bet the one that jumped in front of you must have gotten loose. Hey, maybe they can help you find your horse. They have a ranch a few miles away, I've haven't been there in a while but I guess it's time we pay them a visit." says Wayland.

Not far away, in the shadow of a butte, Whirlwind is hungry. Ramble is unsympathetic.

"It's not that bad, really," chirps Whiffer. Snout is hungry too, so they decide to swing by the den to check out the morning's catch. They descend into a box canyon and pass beneath a TOWERING NATURAL STONE ARCH, and around a bend. Whiffer reminds Ramble about the, "strict orders" to bring back something for the pack to eat, but, Ramble is not concerned, for a moment at least.

"A live horse?! What are we supposed to do, wait for it to keel over?" screams TULIP, Ramble's mate, appearing out of nowhere, "now, get down from there, does that thing look like a limousine? Where have you been for three days?" They scramble down and stand in attention.

"What dumb scheme is it today? Are you becomin' cowboys? Gonna raise cattle for your family? Why can't you bring home regular prey?"

"EIGHT?" Tulip explodes, "that was three days ago! Try sixteen." She stomps around the corner.

"You showed her," Whiffer pokes.

"How many?" Ramble dizzily inquires.

Whirlwind follows the coyotes through a thin rock crevasse. The DEN is a cave populated with uncountable COYOTE PUPS, being tended to by a dozen ADULTS. Everywhere are piles of junk including LAMPS, CHAIRS, SOFAS, A OLD FRIDGE dumped by someone decades before. Other items collected by the pack, like BASKETS and BLANKETS, create a trailer park feel.

Ramble and the brothers are greeted by the hoard of pups. The fathers roll about with the kids. Whirlwind is overwhelmed and the pups make quick fun of his tail.

Ramble pops over to the old doorless refrigerator resting on it's back, and with some help from his pups scares up a mouse and devours it.

"Hey, Wind, ya' hungry? Ramble says, "I'm sure there's more, you know how it is you see one mouse, there got be others." Lilly arrives with a mouth full of hay and offers some much needed sympathy to Whirlwind.

"We was use'n' for a nest," she says, "but yer welcome to eat it. There's more ... you look pretty bad." Finally someone cares enough for him to act strong.

"I'm okay." And with that, he was.

"Look at all this junk," Whirlwind says, disgusted.

Ramble returns with a mouse in his mouth.

"Aruf sur u donwan won?" he says. Whirlwind winces and declines. Ramble shrugs his shoulders, swallows it down with a burp, and continues with out a beat

"Okay, everything's satisfactory with the den mother."

"And?" Whirlwind inquires.

"And," Ramble admits, "she said if I ain't findin' food in the next ten minutes I'd be flatter 'n a chuckwalla in a buffalo stampede." Whirlwind laughs and smiles for the first time.

"Oh, don't do that. I may take to likin' ya. An' if'n ya' keel over on account of your injuries, I wouldn't have the stomach to eat ya." Whirlwind seems to know he's in no harm.

He glances around the den and asks how Ramble manages to feed them all.

"We're resourceful," he explains.

"What's that?"

"Well, let's look it up," Ramble replies. He digs with his nose through some old books, finding and opening a dictionary.

"Hmmm, interestin'," Ramble thinks.

"I can't read," he says smiling, "but I'll show you what I mean."

Song: RESOURCEFUL

Now, say you're hungry and you wanna eat
You're droolin' for a big ol' chunk of meat,
but when you look around,
there's no meat to be found,

but do you quit and just accept defeat?

No!

It doesn't take a lot to be ingenious,
The answer may be found below your feet.

You dig into the dirt
and catch a little squirt --

Ramble digs furiously and quickly snacks on a centipede.

-- and suddenly your menu is complete.

Be resourceful, think it out
be inventive, when in doubt.
If the path is blocked,
by fallen rock,
you try another route.
Be resourceful, think it out!

Our bonds have let us spread across America,
our ties have helped our population soar,
and millions we have lost,
in survival's ruthless war,
but wait until next week; --

Ramble is surrounded by a multitude of pups,

we'll have a million more.

The pups listen intently as Ramble scares them with a passage
about there only real enemy: man.

Now some folks think coyotes are a menace,
they hate us and would squash us on a whim,
But they shoudn't knock our style,
and put us all on trial,
'cause everything we do, we learned from them.

Be resourceful, think it through,
Be creative, we can't lose.
If the weather's rough,
and times are tough,
we all get tougher too,
Be resourceful, think it through.

The fun is over for now, that is, after the pups smother
their favorite den dads.

By now, Wayland, Jonas and Roman are arriving at the ranch
operated by the reservoir development company. They are
dismayed at the sight of hundreds of mustangs crowded
together in dusty holding pens. Vicious dogs patrol the
parimeter taunting the horses.

"They said they would treat these horses right," Wayland says, ashamed.

Wayland parks.

"These horses need water," Roman cries, grabbing a hose and filling the troughs. Jonas, and Wayland enter the small office where most of the ranch-hands are playing cards.

"Gentlemen!" Wayland yells, startling the men, "I haven't signed the papers for this deal yet and if you don't start treating these horses right, you can forget about your lake."

"Yes sir, Mr. Stills," says KARL WINSTON, standing up.

"Don't you worry Mr. Stills, ol' Karl Winston is gonna see that --"

"Nevermind! This here is a friend of mine, his name's Jackson, Jonas Jackson, Jr." They greet.

"I lost my horse in the canyon last night," Jonas says, "he's very special to me. There's a ten-thousand dollar reward."

"Ten-thousand? Well, Mr. Jackson soon as the chopper gets fixed we're goin' for another round up," Karl says, "we thought we got all of 'em but our trackers say there's a pesky bunch that don't want to cooperate. So, there's a fair chance if your horse is out there, we'll find it too."

"What is to become of these horses?" Roman asks as he enters from outside.

"Don't you worry partner, they all gonna be transported to another locality up north. Just as soon as we find the last of 'em."

Whirlwind, Ramble, Whiffer and Snout walk in a narrow BOX CANYON. Whirlwind stops and demands to know where Ramble's handkerchief came from. Ramble tells the story of how someone tried to make him a pet.

"I was just playin' along for the free grub. No one's strong enough to bite it off, so it's still there."

"He's fibbin'," Whiffer whispers to Whirlwind, "he really likes it. Make's him different." Suddenly, Whirlwind bends over and bites it off.

Ramble is disoriented and confused, providing a laugh for the rest of the group. But it's clear that Ramble is saddened.

The afternoon is waning, and in the distance, tremendous THUNDER CLOUDS form. Whirlwind complains and wishes his trainer were there. He reels in anger when they tease him. A FLASH and a THUNDER CLAP spooks Whirlwind. He's never seen or heard anything like this. The coyotes tease more. Above, something is watching through a crevice. Only the coyotes are visible. More THUNDER, and LIGHTNING. Whirlwind sees the tail and gives a split second of warning to the coyotes before STEALTH, a very hungry mother puma, DIVES INTO THE GROUP. She tackles Whiffer and swats Ramble. Snout bites her tail and she reels around slashing his chest

hairs. MORE THUNDER! FLASHING STREAKS OF BLUE web the sky. The nimble coyotes confuse their old rival.

"My family's hungry too," she hisses.

"Have you tried tofu?" Ramble suggests. Then, Stealth sees whirlwind. Her eyes grow wide with anticipation when she notices he's injured.

"Now there's a meal for a hungry family." The coyotes try to distract her to protect their find. THUNDER pounds the electrified air. Stealth is in a one-way killing trance.

Then, unexpectedly, she stalls, sensing something. Now we hear it: A RUMBLE accented with a sort of FROTHING sound. Stealth's eyes grow in fear as she sees a FLASH FLOOD! A TORRENT of MUD AND WATER rounding the corner a mere fifty feet behind Whirlwind. Stealth is agile and strong and she easily leaps to safety. The coyotes scamper up the rocks on the opposite bank.

"Run!" Ramble yells. But it's too late.

The BOILING JUGGERNAUT SWEEPS WHIRLWIND DOWNSTREAM.

Ramble calls. Stealth, on the other bank, growls at the lost catch.

The MOON travels the sky, yeilding to the morning. Whirlwind awakens, but this time the desert is transforming before his very eyes. Pools of water begin to come alive with insects. They begin to sing in a hypnotic buzzing chorus.

Song: CARPE DIEM -- LIVE FOR TODAY

The ground bubbles to life as frogs emerge from their burrows and join in rhythm.

Live for today,
not for tomorrow;
life is a journey,
beginning right now.

Reach toward each other
join in the song;
we must seize the day
before it is gone.

Owls, gila monsters, jack rabbits sing.
The desert is alive. Whirlwind is amazed.

Carpe, carpe diem.
Why wait for freedom when freedom is here?
Sing, sing for today;
The dreams of the future are never this near.

A day is a lifetime,
 each dawn is a birth;
 the stars make us wonder,
 and praise mother earth.

Waste not the time now,
 or life passes by;
 we must make a promise
 to live before we die.

Carpe, carpe diem.
 The time to get started is slipping away.
 Learn, learn from the past,
 dream of tomorrow, but live for today.

A shadow attracts his attention on the rocks above, he sees the tail of a beautiful white MUSTANG fleetingly and then she's gone. He springs forward, stumbling a bit, then climbs the up the ridge.

When he gets to the top he sees a vision. She is just fifty yards away, is in a sea of wild flowers, her mane lifted by the wind. Whirlwind is in love. Or for now, infatuation. But, she is aloof. He moves, she moves. He trots, she trots. He gallops, she slams on the breaks and he runs into a cactus, unsettling a burrowing owl. The owl chastises him. She laughs and comes to his aid, picking the thorns from his muzzle. He learns she is called SONORA, the name of the desert. The owl knows love when she sees it. Whirlwind explains his predicament and to her amusement, asks her to join him.

"Where?" she giggles.

"The green hills of Kentucky!"

Song: THE GREEN HILLS OF KENTUCKY

Whirlwind sings a farcical song about a place he's only heard of. A mythic land more like Rome than Lexington. The music has the feel of a nursery-rhyme.

Across the desert, far away,
 there is a place for us.
 Where horses run and play all day,
 and in the night, there's always light
 to keep our fears at bay.

The air is pure and people sweet,
 The grounds stay green and bright.
 On silver trays they serve you wheat,
 and if you please, they rub your knees,
 massaging noon 'til night.

Come with me to the green hills of Kentucky,
 and find out what a horse can really be.

Run with me on the playgrounds of the lucky;
I'll be crowned as king with you, my Queen.

But his effort is in vain.
"I cannot go" She says.
"Why?" Whirlwind asks.

Song: THE DESERT IS MY HOME

I cannot go where I do not belong.
I mustn't follow every siren song.
A world could not exist,
more beautiful than this;
to leave my home and family would be wrong.

My place is with the sage brush and saguaro,
it's here, that there will always be tomorrow.
Not man but mother earth
is who decides my worth;
A saddle on my back would bring me sorrow.

The desert is my home
a place on earth where horses can be left alone.
A natural paradise, with endless room to roam
The desert is my home.

Whirlwind sings his vision again. She, hers. Their two
songs blend together seamlessly and leave them close enough
to touch. She backs away.

"I ... I can not leave. I'm sorry."

"Well, can I come with you?" Whirlwind asks.

"You can do whatever you like, you're free now," she says,
trotting off.

"Wait, what does that mean?"

"You don't have a master. You can go as you please."

"Where are you going?" he asks. She hesitates.

"I'm not sure."

"You're lost too, aren't you? Admit it, desert girl."
She stops.

"No, I am not lost. I know exactly where I am."

"But, not where you're going?" he quips.

"All right, it's not me that's lost, it's my herd that's
lost. They wanted to take the long and safe way, but I know
a shortcut across the highway," Sonora stops. Whirlwind's
eyes grow wide.

"It was you, on the rock last night." Sonora looks guilty
and remorseful.

"I didn't see you coming ... the people were all right ...
I -- "

"This is all your fault! I could have been killed, thanks
to your shortcut. And you want me to follow you! Well I'll
chance it on my own."

"No, please come with me. You need help. How will you

find the town?" she pleads, feeling responsible.

"Next time, stick with your family, that is if you ever find them." No need. He hears a growing THUNDER as MUSTANGS roar over a nearby slope.

The herd, twenty strong, coed, circles the two. The patriarch, CORONADO, coolly examines Whirlwind, while the young stallions make snide remarks. Other females in the group are excited by the newcomer, agitating the males. The matriarch NARRELLA, scolds Sonora for her insolence.

"We thought you had been taken." Coronado agrees.

"My sister would not be proud, have you forgotten the sacrifice your parents made to protect the herd?"

"No, Coronado." Sonora admits.

"Who are you? You're hurt," Narrella asks the strange horse, examining his leg.

"Whirlwind. I'm a thoroughbred." Whirlwind explains that he was simply trying to get back to town after the crash. Narrella decides for his safety he should roam with the herd. The stallions grumble.

"Let nature take it's course," Grunts MACO, a strapping male draped in striking slashes of black and brown.

"He will slow us down," protests SERRO, known for his crimson main, next in the pecking order from Maco.

"He smells like smog, he's from L.A.," Adds the grey and white, RICCO.

"I was in a fire," Whirlwind responds sharply.

"Let him come, he needs help!" pleads Sonora. Whirlwind hates the idea of looking weak.

"I don't need any of you, I can take care of myself." Coronado restores order, and holds Whirlwind in his stare.

"You will come with us to our grazing grounds until you are well ..." Sonora smiles, until Coronado continues.

"Then, you will leave us for good." Sonora shrinks. Narrella rears up and the herd moves on. As they leave, Maco whispers to Whirlwind.

"It's only temporary city-boy, so don't get any ideas. Just get well, and get back to your master."

Later, the herd moves through lands of stark beauty. Whirlwind does his best to keep up. Some of the males brush up against him. They begin to whisper as they run. Their chant becomes louder with every step.

Matching the rhythms of their hoof beats, they take turns singing, each delivering his message to Whirlwind.

Song: OUR RIGHT IS TO RUN FREE

You'll never see a rider on my back,
 you'll never see us leading in a
 foolish king's attack.
 To toil through the night,
 will not become our plight,

We will not jump when circus whips are cracked!

Our kind is not for sale or to be tamed.
 Our hearts are not the place for human's
 rifles to be aimed.
 To do the work of man,
 is not part of our plan.
 Our stubbornness and pride have never waned.

No man should enslave us,
 or draft us for their wars,
 or use us in their conquests,
 their business or their sports.
 A horse belongs to no one,
 our right is to run free,
 and shed the saddles and the reins
 of human history.

Sonora complains about the young males to Narrella, who signals to Coronado to intervene. Coronado takes his time, knowing that boys will be boys and for now, the torment is over.

It is MIDDAY, and the mustangs arrive at their grazing grounds: a meadow of freshly grown grass and flowers, set at the foot of a TOWERING ROCK WALL covered in ANCIENT INDIAN PETROGLYPHS.

Away from Whirlwind, Maco presses Sonora on her involvement with the outsider. She insists that her affections are not yet committed to any one.

LATER THAT NIGHT, the herd sleeps under a half moon. Whirlwind is wide awake listening to the sounds of the desert. Sonora, also awake, secretly watches Whirlwind.

THE NEXT DAY, the herd grazes. Sonora again watches from afar. Whirlwind has trouble with the tough desert cuisine. Sonora approaches and helps out. Their closeness rekindles their original attraction. Sonora tells Whirlwind that she's been thinking, and, "maybe Ken ...tucky isn't such a bad idea, I mean, I need more than this little place, I want to see the world." Whirlwind smiles. Maco, and his cohorts observe from a distance.

The MOON rises. Whirlwind views with wonder. He glances at his leg. Healed. Maco approaches, acting unusually cordial, noticing the improvement, "legs's better ... join us on a run tomorrow?"

DAY. The males along with Whirlwind, bound across the open desert. An impromptu race breaks out. Several horses take the lead, but finally Whirlwind pulls ahead. Revelling in his power, he is unaware of the other horses backing off. Finally, he realizes he's about to run head first into a

narrow gorge fifty-feet deep. He skids to a halt. The mustangs arrive, laughing. Whirlwind tries to laugh too.

Having past one test, Maco ups the ante for Whirlwind.

"In the past the others have all made this jump. Now it's your turn." The others seem surprised at Maco's assertion.

Whirlwind accepts the challenge anyway and trots away to build up speed.

"Maco, are you crazy?" Serro worries, "he'll kill himself. None of us could ever make that jump. Coronado w -- "

"Forget Coronado," Maco cuts in, "this is our time, besides, he'll chicken out for sure. He may be a slave, but he's not stupid."

"And if he doesn't stop, and falls?" whines PRIMALO, the muddled runt.

"Let nature take it's course," Maco coldly replies, but Whirlwind does the impossible, and barely makes the leap. Maco is dumbfounded, the others are stunned but impressed.

"Your turn," Whirlwind yells back to Maco. In danger of losing his place in the group, Maco accepts. PRIMALO, tries to stop him, but Maco's determined to protect his honor.

Maco gallops toward the gorge and his anxious pals. But, at the last minute, he hits the breaks. His front legs go over the edge. His buddies grab his tail and haul him back to safety. Maco is humiliated, Whirlwind, proud. But then Maco laughs.

"I guess you did win. Well the town's that way... See ya'." They begin to laugh and trot away, but Whirlwind shows off again with a return jump across the gorge. The males, save Maco, let out an ooh.

DUSK. The males and Whirlwind gather round to hear Coronado speak of the mustang and their Spanish Conquistador and American Indian heritage. Whirlwind and Maco share looks. Maco disagrees with Coronado's non-violent ways and breaks away in a reprise of Our Right Is To Run Free. He makes his case from a high rock. Whirlwind makes his case in defense of man. Ignoring Coronado's orders, the two tangle, and cause a rock slide. A SPARK generated from the friction of rock on rock ignites a long dead mesquite stump. The wood burns hot, providing a floorlight effect. The skirmish is interrupted by Narrella and the females, who arrive in festive floral wreaths and braids. Narrella calls for a dance in honor of the fire, and to hopefully diffuse the tension.

The horses align for a SPANISH FANDANGO. Rattlesnakes shake their rattles, providing the 'castanets'. The females dance past the males, rapidly tapping their hooves. At one climactic moment Sonora dances past all the other

stallions to Maco. He taps out a blazing series of rhythms. But, Sonora refuses his gestures, dancing on to Whirlwind, and circling him instead, infuriating Maco. Sonora, always considering herself an outcast, stands proudly with the outsider.

DAY, and the herd grazes. Whirlwind and Sonora graze close to each other. The rest of the herd is across the meadow.

Narrella is concerned with the obvious attraction between these young horses, and seeing that Whirlwind is healed, decides that it's time for the outsider to leave. Coronado nods in agreement.

"I only hope she doesn't hate me," Narrella frets.

"It's for the good of the herd," Coronado assures. He begins to walk toward them when a distant THUMPING, PULSING SOUND echoes across the rock walls. Coronado halts, his face deadly serious.

"Skyraiders!"

All the mustangs react with electrifying swiftness, sprinting to the nearest hiding place among the rocks and manzanita. Only Whirlwind remains in the open, wondering what sound could cause such panic.

A HELICOPTER screams overhead.

Whirlwind is mesmerized by the strange flying machine. Sonora calls out, but it's too loud to hear her.

Inside the chopper, Karl Winston handles the controls while a spotter sees Whirlwind. He radios commands to the cowboys on the ground nearby.

Within seconds the dreaded ranch dogs surround them from every side. The herd bolts and Whirlwind follows. The horses run through a muddy stream and are covered in splattered browns. Cowboys, dogs and the chopper are in hot pursuit. The horses are skillfully funneled into a trap. A hidden gate is slammed shut and the last wild horses in Thunder Ridge, and Whirlwind, have been captured.

The terrified animals are loaded into cramped trucks. Whirlwind is admonished for getting them caught. Sonora is in another truck and receives her share of scorn.

At the holding pen the trucks arrive. Whirlwind and the rest of the herd are forced into the already crowded ranch. Bittersweet reunions between separated families occur, but skirmishes break out between rival males. Rumors of the fate of the horses are rampant. Some say ... dog food. Sonora is reunited with her mother TERRAZIA but learns that her father GRANDINO didn't make it during his round up. Whirlwind cowers in a corner, dogs behind him, angry males in front. A

ranch hand sprays Whirlwind with a hose, washing away the mud and revealing his brand.

"Hey boss, I think we got ourselves a ten-thousand dollar reward."

JJ Jr.'s NEW GOLD PICKUP and TRAILER arrives at the ranch. Whirlwind, now in a separate, covered holding pen is reunited with Roman and Jonas. He should be happy but he is confused.

Whirlwind is led past the other hateful horses and loaded onto the trailer. He looks back for Sonora, but she is lost in a collage of dirty dusty faces.

Jonas pays Karl his reward, but wants one more thing: a wild horse.

"You see," Jonas says "I was a city boy who never saw the wilderness before the age of sixteen. I was afraid of it."

"You?" says Wayland.

"That's right. The reason I bought the ranch in California, was to be closer to the natural world," Jonas explains, "I've seen almost all my childhood dreams come true except one."

Song: TO TAME A WILD HORSE

When I was young I was fearful,
lost in an ignorant haze,
raised in the hands of the wealthy,
away from nature's ways.

(Jonas, as a child, peers from WallStreet skyscraper)

High in the towers I wondered,
how does it feel to be free?
How loud is heavenly thunder?
How sweet is a forest breeze?

There was a yearning inside me,
A quest for a fresh change of course.
A ranch I will trade for the city,
and tame a wild horse.

(Jonas as a young executive)

But, yielding my father's wishes,
living a life I abhor.
I took the reins of the empire,
but never tamed my horse.

(Back in reality, Jonas moves about the mustangs, stirring them up.)

To tame
a wild horse;
a dream

as yet undone.
 Now fate
 has dealt me well,
 and soon,
 the task begun.

(The mustangs freeze, and Jonas begins to choose from them)

Which one is born with the spirit?
 Which one is right as my prize?
 I'll know the look when I see it, ...

(Jonas spots Sonora)

And she has caught my eyes!

(Jonas points, the ranch hands corner Sonora and load her onto the trailer with Whirlwind. They then join in song)

To tame
 a wild horse;
 A fight
 that will be won.
 The quest
 will be complete,

(Jonas alone)

my fears
 I'll overcome!

It's SUNSET at the town of Thunder Ridge. Outside the Wayland's home, JJ Jr.'s new trailer is parked. Nearby in a small enclosure Jonas tries his hand at Sonora. She rears up in anger, huffing and scratching.

"She's a wild one all right, I can hardly wait till we get her to Kentucky," says Jonas, "the lights just about gone, lets get her in." Inside the trailer, Whirlwind is frustrated as he peers out the window. Whirlwind jumps back when the gate flies open. Sonora runs aboard. She's not happy. Roman, Wayland, and Jonas retire to the house.

Whirlwind tries to explain that his master is not going to hurt her. He reminds her of The Green Hills of Kentucky, hoping to take her mind off the hardships, but as he speaks he sees the tears begin to flow.

"It's all right," Sonora reassures him. But, looking into her eyes, he recalls the wisdom of her song The Desert is My Home, and he suddenly understands everything with great clarity.

"No, no, you have to stay here, in the desert, it's where you belong and ... it's where I fell in love with you. It's where I belong too, I can feel it ... We've got to get out of here."

"You would stay in the desert for me?"

"I'll do anything to see you happy and wild again," he

declares. Sonora knows he really does love her.

"Now how can we get out of here? I know. Be resourceful." Whirlwind checks the back gate. An opening! An unlocked-lock hanging in the latch, separates them from freedom. Whirlwind looks around. He spies the wire holding a hay bail together, and with a hard nip, clips a small piece. He looks around.

"We need some string or something." There doesn't seem to be a solution until Sonora makes a suggestion.

"Use a lock of my mane. It's all right, it will grow back." He snips a lock.

"You'll have to help me tie it." Sonora holds the wire, and they tie the knot. For a moment they seem to get the symbolism.

Now Whirlwind does his best to lift the lock free. After a couple of tries, he succeeds! The gate opens. He scrambles down and checks to see if all is clear. It is. He motions for her to come, but before she can ROMAN LEAVES THE HOUSE and approaches. Whirlwind motions desperately.

"Shut the gate he'll see!" whispers Sonora, afraid to leave. Whirlwind pushes it shut, and dives into the shadow. Roman walks out into the yard, staring at the stars. But, a shaft of light illuminates the lock on the ground. He picks it up and peers into the trailer. Black shadow shapes is all that is visible. He whispers into the dark interior.

"Don't worry Whirlwind, in the morning you and your friend will be on your way."

He returns the lock, this time clicking it closed. Whirlwind listens in horror. Roman heads back into the house.

"I've got to get you out," Whirlwind cries. But there's no budging the lock.

"I'll wait, and attack them when they come to take you!" he declares.

"No! Just surrender and we'll go to Kentucky, and be together."

"No, it's not right," he says, then thinking, "there's only one road out of town, if I could block it some how."

"But, one horse can't stop a truck," Sonora says.

"One horse couldn't, but five hundred could! I'll be back Sonora, I swear I'll set you free again." Sonora gives him general directions to the ranch where the mustangs are being held.

As Whirlwind moves quietly past the house to the opening in the fence, he passes under a balcony just as Wayland and Jonas step out. He freezes and listens.

"Wayland my friend, you found my horse and got me a mustang too. I'll have my secretary wire you the money to create Thunder Ridge Park. The town makes money and the mustangs will have a home forever. Boy I wish I could see them set the herds free tomorrow, but we got a long road ahead of us.

So, we better leave at first light." After a few more words the two men return indoors.

"My capture," Whirlwind ponders, "means her family's freedom. So, even if I free her ... I must go. She can not know this." He erupts into a gallop.

MIDNIGHT, and Whirlwind, exhausted from running, slows to a walk, then he stops for a moment.

"I'm lost."

Dejected, he lowers his head, and then, he hears the warm, welcoming sound of SINGING. Whirlwind smiles, "Ramble! The den!"

The coyotes love to stay up late, and when Whirlwind shows up Ramble runs to greet him.

"Hey Wind!" Whirlwind explains the situation. Ramble wishes he could help, but it's girl's-night out and he has to watch the pups. Strict orders. The same goes for Whiffer and Snout. Whirlwind tries to rally the troops with a verse of Be Resourceful, but no luck, the troops are tired and home for the night. Whirlwind wanders off. Ramble watches sadly.

A moment or so, later, as Whirlwind crests a slope, he hears Ramble.

"Wind! If I'm gonna get in hot water it better be good." Ramble and the brothers plus the other fathers and a horde of puppies scamper up the slope. They assemble in three-by-three formation.

"Okay troops, says Ramble, Whirlwind needs our help, the fate of Thunder Ridge is in our paws, we're gonna have to be more resourceful than ever." A rousing howl and they're off ... and then they slam to a halt.

"Wait a minute, does anyone know where we're going?" yells Whirlwind.

"You don't know?" says Ramble, "Oh if that ain't a catus quill in my butt."

"Wait a minute," says Whirlwind, "a whole lot a horses in one spot makes a big smell, right?" He turns to Whiffer.

"I love that smell --" says Whiffer.

"No you moron," says Ramble to Whiffer, "can you find it? Whiffer this is the big one ... Where is that ranch? Sniff it out, my man." Whiffer stalks left, sniff sniff, everyone follows. Right, sniff sniff sniff, they follow, left, right, left, LEFT! And away they go.

At the holding pens, the HERD sleeps.

From a distant bluff, the Coyotes and Whirlwind, survey the target and Huddle. Ramble grabs a stick and draws in the dirt. With clinched teeth, he briefs the troops.

"Our scouts have informed us of four nasty canines at these locations here, here, here and here. That's where our pups come in; they'll be on digging patrol." The pups cheer.

"Cut the chatter," snaps Ramble, "now Skeeter, Bonk, you distract the dogs. Whiffer, your with me on office infiltration. While we cut the power on the electric fence, Whirlwind will leap the fence, establish contact with the hostages to coordinate a fast escape. Let's go."

Whirlwind makes a fantastic leap over the fence, making virtually no noise and begins searching for Coronado.

The ranch-hands are in the office and watch a western on TV. Outside, the dogs are sleeping. Ramble and Whiffer dig beneath the fence and sneak in through the kitchen window.

Maco finds Whirlwind and gets right in his face.

"What are you doing here? Isn't one enough?"

They threaten to brawl. Coronado breaks in as Whirlwind explains.

"Sonora is trapped in town, my master is taking her away tomorrow morning, but we can stop them -- "

"WE?" fumes Terrazia.

"Y-yes," Whirlwind stammers. "we can block the road -- "

"That's your plan? Suicide? How are we going to get out? We can't jump as high as you," Serro demands.

"The power will be cut in two minutes. You'll be free to go, but I need -- Sonora needs you now," Whirlwind pleads.

"Why should we trust you, Whirlwind?" Narrella inquires coldly.

"My master has agreed to make this land a sanctuary for your kind and he was going to have you all set free tomorrow but there's not enough time. He will leave with Sonora at first light. They only want me, and I'll go, but we must free her. She was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. You've got to believe me.""

"Enough." Coronado determines.

"But, there's still time," Says Whirlwind.

"Enough!" Coronado continues, moving aggressively toward him, "no man is good! They steal us for slavery and mount our backs so they can relax! ENOUGH!"

"No!" Terrazia insists, "he is telling the truth."

Whirlwind calmly pleads for them to follow him.

"What about the dogs?" Maco says. Whirlwind smiles.

"Fight fire with fire."

But inside, the coyotes are nearly discovered. They manage to hide in a coat on a hat-stand, and the drunken cowboy actually tips his hat to the coat without noticing Ramble's face under the hat. Ramble lifts the set of keys and they

head for the power box.

"Oh, I hate keys and locks," says Ramble, struggling to open the fuse box. He finally pops the lock, but there are many switches.

"Hurry, these dogs are light sleepers." says Whiffer. Ramble hits the TV power by accident but quickly switches it back on before the men can get out of their chairs. Ramble cuts the power and gives the signal.

A coyote HOWL alerts the dogs. They burst into BARKING and charge toward the sound. They race across the yard, where Skeeter fakes a broken leg. Just before reaching him the dogs plummet into a freshly dug hole. They bark wildly. The pups cheer, until they see that one dog didn't take the bait and is blazing from a different direction. He chases after a few pups and then Skeeter leads him into a pigsty where Bonk slams the gate locking him in.

Inside, one of the ranch hands gets up to see what the commotion is.

"Somthin's got those dogs fired up ... Probably coyotes." He returns to his chair and cranks the TV volume.

With the dogs trapped, the coyotes chew through the wire and the horses begin to escape into the night. The herd will take the safe way to the town, but to save time Whirlwind asks Maco to show him the shortcut, across the crevace. Maco accepts the challenge and they gallop away.

DAWN is breaking, and Whirlwind and Maco can finally see distant smoke plumes over the town.

Meanwhile, Maco and Whirlwind move swiftly across a plain. They slow as they near the crevace that only Whirlwind could jump. Whirlwind makes the leap. Maco, backs up and takes a deep breath. Whirlwind encourages him. Charging like never before, he just clears the jump!

In TOWN, Whirlwind's escape has been discovered, and Jonas is hoping mad accusing Wayland of foul play.

"I know when I've been hoodwinked!"

"No, you're mistaken Jonas," explains Wayland.

"Sir, there will be no money for your park until you find that horse," Jonas declares, "until then, I'm taking the mustang for my troubles."

Whirlwind is at the edge of town, leading Maco by a quarter mile. He rounds the final corner, and is shocked to discover THE TRAILER HAS DEPARTED and has a HUNDRED YARD LEAD.

Wayland sees Whirlwind and tries to stop him, but Whirlwind races by on the way to the trailer. Wayland throws down his hat, yelling, "well, make up your dang mind, you crazy horse."

The trailer is out in front by twenty lengths. Inside, Roman brings up the throttle. Now twenty five, thirty miles an hour and accelerating.

On the road Whirlwind throttles up too, gaining on the truck. Maco keeping a respectable pace is still losing ground.

"Run, Whirlwind!"

Whirlwind steadily gains. Sonora finally notices him and cheers him on.

Inside the truck, the speedometer reads forty miles an hour.

Whirlwind cuts the lead to one length! He's within striking distance.

Jonas nearly faints when he sees Whirlwind out side his window. He slams on the breaks and Whirlwind slides in front of the rig.

Jonas and Roman are amazed and get out. They try to calm Whirlwind but he rears up in anger.

Then, Maco shows up, and stands behind Whirlwind.

"What took you so long?" Whirlwind whispers.

Knowing he cleared the big jump, Maco isn't phased by that remark.

Jonas and Roman are confounded by the strange alliance standing before them. But now, Jonas is becoming impatient,

"Get the rifle."

"But, Sir," Roman says stalling. Jonas gets the rifle.

Jonas threatens Maco with the gun. Maco steps forward defiantly. Roman pleads for Whirlwind to come with them.

In the trailer Sonora strains to see. She hears a THUNDERING sound.

Jonas and Roman look around. Finally, the herd arrives, five hundred strong taking up places behind Whirlwind and Maco.

Ramble, and the other coyotes, appear on a nearby slope.

"Are we too late, Dad?" a pup asks.

"I don't know," says Ramble and they watch the events unfold.

"Back off, all of you!" Jonas cries, shaking with fear, I'm not afraid of no animals!" Jonas lifts his rifle, but they

don't move.

"I'm warnin' you, I'll shoot!" he cries. Roman watches his boss, praying he won't fire. Jonas fires into the air but the horses stand in defiance. He aims directly at Maco and cocks the rifle. His finger trembles.

Then, a GOLDEN REY from the rising SUN, which crests a distant peak, fills his eyes and he is unable to aim. He lowers his rifle. Something clicks in his mind.

"Roman ... set the Mustang free."

Roman is surprised, "The mustang? But, sir, your wild horse ... your dream?"

"Do as I say," Jonas insists, and Roman follows orders, opening the gate.

Sonora rushes out and the mustangs reunite and clear off the road.

Whirlwind sees that she is free and looks her in the eye hoping she'll understand.

Sonora wonders why he doesn't run to her.

Whirlwind remembers the words of his mother and father to respect his Master, Jonas, and also the words of Roman to live up to his destiny as a thoroughbred. To Jonas' and Roman's amazement, Whirlwind calmly walks into the trailer.

"He really is gonna go." says Ramble.

Roman shuts the gate and he and Jonas board the truck.

Terrazia tries to console Sonora.

"We have to stop them!" demands Sonora.

"No!" Coronado insists, "his place is with the humans."

The truck begins to roll, picking up speed.

"I'll stop them," Sonora cries.

Terrazia's protests come too late. Sonora runs toward the road. She jumps before the truck. Jonas hits the breaks, but this time there's not enough room to stop.

SONORA IS GOING TO BE HIT FOR SURE, but at the last moment, RAMBLE DIVES IN WITH ALL HIS MIGHT, SHOVING SONORA OFF THE ROAD. Unfortunately he is now in the truck's path and doesn't have a chance.

RAMBLE IS HIT BY THE TRUCK.

Jonas stops and they get out to see.

"Poor old coyote ... dang, what a day," says Jonas. Roman drags Ramble to the side of the road. The herd, Sonora, and the coyotes, all watch in grief.

From his trailer, Whirlwind can't see what happened. The truck starts up, and as they drive past, Whirlwind sees Ramble's body as the pups gather around their fallen father. Sonora shakes her head. Angry and hurt, she sneers at Whirlwind.

This final, sad scene recedes from his view, as the trailer moves on, returning Whirlwind to his former world.

Again black, quiet, until:

TWO YEARS LATER.

The KENTUCKY DERBY is about to begin. All attention is focused on the stables where the horses are prepped.

One stable has attracted a larger crowd than the others. Roman Dante fends off the throng and closes the gate.

INSIDE, Whirlwind, now stronger and more impressive than ever, receives a final rub down and advice.

"All of your training pays off today, the crown is yours for the taking. Destiny saved you from the desert to win this race."

Roman pulls a photo from his bag. He shows Whirlwind. It's a portrait shot of an all-white primped and braided, mare. The Pamela Anderson of horses.

"She's from Hollywood, California," Roman says seductively, "and she's looking for a husband, eh? She is from a long line of champions, and if you win today, you will be going to California to meet her, if you know what I mean eh?" He pushes the photo in Whirlwind's face, mesmerising him.

"She is much better for you than that wild one, who almost kept you from greatness." Whirlwind rears up in anger. Roman has to fight to calm him down.

"All right, all right, I know you are anxious," he says, holding the reins tightly, "but only if you win, do you go to California. Okay?" Whirlwind settles, glaring at Roman.

THE GATES OPEN, and they're off and running in the kentucky derby. Whirlwind is in LAST PLACE rounding the first turn.

Roman and Jonas watch from their box. Jonas has faith in his horse.

Whirlwind is loosing badly around the back stretch when the announcer makes an incredible statement.

"Ladies and gentlemen, there's a dog on the track, and he's on Whirlwind's heels! This is astounding!"

On the back stretch, Whirlwind hears a voice from the past.

"Hey Wind! WIIIIIND!"

RAMBLE, now wearing another handkerchief runs as fast as he can to catch up with Whirlwind. Whirlwind turns in shock.

"W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I thought you were -- HOW DID YOU GET HERE? "

"Resourceful?" Ramble yells, "hitched the train to Phoenix, stowed on a bus to Albuquerque, I was a truckers pet in the pan handle, got another dang scarf around my neck, then I walked for a while and-- But, nevermind that, I came all the way across country to give you a message: She still loves you! Sonora wants you to come back!"

"She does?" Whirlwind trumpets. The jockey is incredulous; He thinks he hears them talking.

"Roman said if I win, I would be going to back to California." Ramble gets his drift, "we can escape in the desert! You gotta win. Run Whirlwind, run!"

The announcer is delirious.

"That dog must have given some advice to Whirlwind because he has exploded!" And as they round the final stretch, Whirlwind overtakes each opponent. He obliterates the field.

WHIRLWIND WINS BY TEN LENGTHS.

It's SUNSET and Whirlwind is in a the trailer. Jonas is up front. He whistles California here I come from his window.

Roman congratulates his champion.

"You were magnificent, are you ready to see your dream girl?" Whirlwind nods. Roman locks the gate securely and starts to walk to the cab when he notices something.

"There were two keys this morning. Hmmm, oh well, I'll have to make another." He hops in, and the rig rolls forward.

On the roof, Ramble crouches, the key in his mouth.

Once again, The desert sky burns in the hues of the sunset. Atop a mesa, Sonora gazes at the light. A loud WHINNIE alerts her to Whirlwind's presence. He sings:

My place is with the sage brush and saguaro,
it's here, that there will always be tomorrow.

She joins him in song.

The desert is our home;
a place on earth where horses can be left alone.
A natural paradise, with endless room to roam --

He charges toward her. They fly to each other, meeting at the summit.

The desert is our home.

On a nearby slope Ramble, Whiffer, Snout plus the pups and Tulip, watch the reunion.

Whirlwind and Sonora nuzzle, and as the day ends, their future together is just beginning.

THE END