

LAST CHANCE

by

Kname of Rider

OVER BLACK:

The sounds of a horse racetrack. A bugle blares.

The starting gate bell rings. An announcer calls out the names of the horses as their hooves pound the dirt.

FADE IN:

EXT. DIRT PARKING LOT - DAY

KATIE, 7, stands in the middle of a dirt aisle clutching a stuffed toy horse. Her wispy brunette hair wafts across her tear streaked face.

She reaches one hand out calling for her dad, ALLAN, 32, as he runs after a tow truck hauling their car away, loaded with everything they own.

The tow truck disappears down the road in a cloud of dust.

Allan stops as he realizes the futility.

He clenches his fists in frustration and shouts in rage.

Katie shakes a little startled by her dad's outburst.

Allan marches back to Katie, grabs her hand, and storms off.

EXT. RACETRACK COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Cotton candy, lemonade, kettle corn, and hotdog stands dot the outer edge of the sunny space.

Happy women wearing fancy dresses and oversized hats laugh with men in khaki slacks and polo shirts. Sugar rimmed Martini glasses clink with highball glasses.

Allan and Katie march past them. Their dingy clothes and unkempt hair make them stick out like a sore thumb.

The laughter stops as the men and women whisper to each other, passing judgement.

Katie sees the hotdog stand and pulls her hand from her dad's. She runs to the stand and looks back at him.

Allan glares at her, but then a look of realization... she's hungry. His anger gives way to despair.

He calmly walks over to her and pulls out his wallet.

He opens it and takes out TWO ONE DOLLAR BILLS.

He looks to the sign for the hotdogs: "\$5.00"

Tears well up in his eyes. A look of shame and sadness wash over him.

Katie realizes he doesn't have enough money and scoots closer. She wraps her arms around him.

Still holding the money and wallet, he hugs her back doing everything he can to keep from breaking down.

He looks to the heavens as though to ask for an answer. His lip quivers.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Alright ladies and gentlemen this is it, the one you've all been waiting for, the steeplechase, will start in one hour. Get down to the paddock and pick your winner now.

Allan picks up Katie and holds her tight. He looks down at the two dollars in his hand.

EXT. PADDOCK - CONTINUOUS

Allan rests his elbows on the fence as the horses for the upcoming race trot in front of him. Katie stares in wonder at the massive animals strutting by.

Allan looks at the Tip Sheet with the horse information on it. Scribbled along the edge is the word "Superfecta".

Next to that he has some numbers... "Second place #6. Third place #10. Fourth place #8."

He writes down a number next to "First place" but then erases it and scribbles another down, then erases that one.

Meanwhile, a few feet from her dad, Katie peers through the fence at the horses as they pass by. Mouth agape in awe at the majestic creatures.

One horse passes by. Then another. Then another. Her eyes and head track the horse to the right.

Suddenly there's a NEIGH right next to her. Her eyes snap back to her front.

Standing before her is a jet black horse casting its shadow over her. Its midnight hair glimmers in the sunlight.

Katie looks up at the horse and stares into its eyes.

The horse stares back directly into Katie.

For a moment the two are locked in a trance with each other.

Then the horse's handler nudges it along. Katie gets a look at the horse's number. "1"

Katie breaks from her trance and sees her dad agonizing over his last pick.

She climbs up the fence to see what he has written down.

The Tip Sheet has a hole where Allan has written a number and erased it so many times.

Katie calmly points to a horse: "#1 Chance".

He looks at the name. Then looks back to her. His eyebrows raise to question her choice.

Then his eyes relax and he shrugs his shoulders. Why not?

He circles "#1".

EXT. TRACKSIDE - LATER

Katie peers over the top of the low fence as her dad stands behind her, propping her up. Away from the crowds they have a good view of the last turn before the final straightaway.

They look over to the starting gate as the last horse enters its stall.

Allan looks at the ticket: "Superfecta 1-6-10-8".

He closes his eyes.

CLUNK DING!

The gates open and the horses launch from their stalls.

Allan and Katie watch the horses on the big screen as they round the track.

The horses come to the first fence and leap over it, the pack starts to stretch out.

#5 is in the lead followed by #2 then #7.

The rest of the horses cluster together too tightly to tell their position.

EXT. RACETRACK - CONTINUOUS

The horses pound their hooves into the grass and they hurtle along the track.

Their bodies side by side shoving each other to make way.

Positions change. Jockeys whip.

They leap over the second fence.

Tufts of grass fly through the air.

EXT. TRACKSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Katie and Allan watch as all four of their horses drop to the back of the pack.

Allan closes his eyes, shakes his head. This was a mistake.

The horses continue around the track, leaping over every fence, his horses continue to bring up the rear.

He crushes the ticket in his hand.

As the horses round the last turn they come to the final fence.

The lead horse leaps over the fence.

But as it lands it stumbles.

The horses directly behind it have nowhere to go and a chain reaction happens.

One horse stumbles into another, and another, and another until all of the lead horses lose their momentum.

Allan's horses, only a few lengths behind the leaders, have time to maneuver.

They shift to the outside lane, leap over the fence and charge toward the finish line.

Katie gasps.

Allan opens his eyes to see his horses in the lead.

The #6 horse leads followed by the #10, #8, and then Chance, the #1 horse, in fourth.

Allan checks his ticket: 1-6-10-8.

The horses rush by right in front of them.

Katie sees Chance and squeezes her stuffed toy horse tight.

EXT. RACETRACK - CONTINUOUS

Chance sees Katie and they lock eyes.

The world slows down as Chance thunders by her.

At full speed he enters the final straightaway and digs deep.

He pushes his way past the #8 horse to third place.

His momentum surges him past the #10 horse.

The finish line only a few lengths away.

Chance chases down the #6 horse.

Side by side Chance and the #6 horse shoot forward.

Just as they are about to cross the finish line, Chance lurches forward and claims the victory.

EXT. TRACKSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Allan and Katie scream in disbelief.

They hug each other. Allan breaks down in tears as he falls to his knees.

Katie pulls back a little and wipes the tears from his face.

They both smile then burst into laughter.

EXT. RACETRACK COURTYARD - LATER

Alan and Katie sit on a bench eating several hotdogs and drinking glasses of lemonade.

Katie picks up a bag of kettle corn and offers some to a large ARMED GUARD standing next to them with a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist.

The guard reluctantly takes a bite, then smiles.

FADE OUT.

THE END