

THE COLT

Original Screenplay

by

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SUPER:

THE CODE OF THE WEST

1. Live each day with courage.
2. Talk less and say more.
3. Respect is earned, not bought.
4. Always finish what you start.
5. Know where to draw the line.

FADE OUT.

OPEN ON:

AERIAL SHOT on the vast beauty of the Teton Mountains.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY

It's summer.

The perfect blue sky, painted yellow sun, and lush green pines contrast against the Teton's rocky and still snow-capped peaks.

The majestic mountain range expands further than the eye can see. It's quiet. Stunning. Peaceful.

Rivers wind through valleys. Trees reach for the sky. The wildlife -- undisturbed.

This is genuine nature ... America's final frontier.

The AERIAL PERSPECTIVE DIPS past conifers and DROPS DOWN a cliff face to a pebbled river bank. As the CAMERA DESCENDS, TWO OUTLINES become clearer to make out.

One -- a well-toned MUSTANG, laying on its side. Motionless.

The other -- a man. His name is JIMMY WHEELER. He's not looking any better. A MANILA ROPE noosed around his neck. The other end of the rope is fastened around the lifeless animal.

Pools of blood puddle beneath the stallion and cowboy.

The clearer the two become, the more graphic the scene manifests. Something terrible happened here ...

WE PUSH IN TO A CLOSE-UP ON JIMMY'S FACE.

Jimmy is been beaten to a pulp. Eyes swollen shut. Clothes torn. Hair drenched in what's undoubtedly blood and sweat. He's even missing a boot.

... Hard to believe that this man could still be alive.

CUT TO:

EXT. VISITORS PARKING LOT - DAY

Jimmy Wheeler, 32, steps out of a FORD SUPER DUTY attached to a HORSE TRAILER.

Jimmy is cowboy-built. Strong, lean, and rugged -- a man's man. His handsome face less resembles the battered mess we saw only moments before. Here -- he's unbroken. Determined. Stoic.

NIXON (O.S.)

What do you got for us?

A SAR (Search and Rescue) CREW sit ready on ATVs and DIRT BIKES. Positioned at a trailhead leading into the Tetons.

CHIEF BARTON, 50s, addresses them. She's a hard woman, her face sun-leathered. Barton has been the Wilderness SAR Unit Leader in Teton County, Wyoming for nearly a decade now.

CHIEF BARTON

Fourteen years old. Her name is Rian Larsen. Last contact was over twelve hours ago, headed north. I want all radios set to channel three. You find anything, report back.

Barton spots Jimmy.

CHIEF BARTON (CONT'D)

Just in time.

The SAR Crew take notice of the new arrival. *WHISPERS* are exchanged.

Jimmy is no stranger to the wake of hushed rumors and urban legends surrounding his good name.

Second in command -- NIXON, 30s, *GROANS*.

NIXON

This again, Chief.

CHIEF BARTON

Pocket your pride, Nixon. It's more important than some pissing contest between the two-a-you.

Jimmy works his way through the company.

CHIEF BARTON (CONT'D)
Because of the small window we have
left on finding Miss Larsen alive,
I've called in some help from
Sublette County -- a Jimmy Wheeler.
Y'all might know him by another
name.

Jimmy shakes Chief Barton's hand.

CHIEF BARTON (CONT'D)
Okay, I want team one working off
the trail. Team two -- the
maintenance road. Three, make your
way through the pass and team four
is with me. Wheeler, you do what
you do.

People scatter to work.

NIXON
Think you'll find anything on that
ol' nag of yours? You don't know
these mountains like we do.

CACTUS
Boy, he was born in these
mountains.

CACTUS JACK, 60s, leads Jimmy's mustang, ECHO, from the
trailer through the parking lot.

Cactus is 90% whiskey and 10% good times. He's cowboy-tough
but now -- in his age -- a step behind.

NIXON
Bullshit. Everybody knows he's from
Bondurant.

CACTUS
Was talkin' about the horse.

Cactus hands the LEAD ROPE to Jimmy.

CACTUS (CONT'D)
Long time no see, Barton.

CHIEF BARTON
Cactus... You never called.

CACTUS
(rotten smile)
Don't have a phone.

CHIEF BARTON
Prick. Alright teams, let's not
come home with bad news. I've got a
bottle for whoever finds Miss
Larsen alive.

Chief Barton climbs onto her ATV. Peels away. Two riders
follow close behind.

NIXON
Best call it now, Wheeler. You
don't want to get caught in the
storm.

Nixon and his team speed off.

CACTUS
He's right. Air does feel heavy.

Jimmy mounts Echo.

JIMMY
(bent on)
Yep.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY

Echo runs with impressive precision. The athletic stallion is
a master of this unsteady terrain -- taking paths the ATVs
and dirt bikes never could. Capable of scaling straight up
mountain ridges.

Jimmy and Echo climb the Grand Tetons. The thick forest
graduates to a rocky turf.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PEAK - DAY

Jimmy brings Echo to an abrupt halt. Jimmy's sharp eyes spot
something off in the distance. He drops down from his saddle.

On the horizon, a storm is brewing. But that's not it. Jimmy
peers through the scope on his .375 RUGER RIFLE.

West of the Tetons, in Idaho territory -- Jimmy examines a
barren, coal-mined pit.

What once -- in its heyday -- could have been a beautiful landscape is now a desolate wasteland. Humans are the only species in the world capable of such destruction ...

Echo nudges. Jimmy saddles up. With a *QUIET KISS*, Echo bolts north.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

The sky is growing a charcoal gray. Jimmy stops. Dismounts.

He studies the footing. The rocks here are loose. Jimmy walks around Echo. Peers down. The mountain drops at a 110° angle.

Roughly twenty-five feet below, RIAN LARSEN, 14, is huddled in a ball. Doing her best to keep warm.

Rian hears a *WHISTLE*. Looks up.

Jimmy dangles a ROPE tied in a triple bowline knot above her head. Rian grabs hold.

Jimmy slaps Echo's buttocks. Echo moves forward, hauling Rian up the cliffside. Rian scrambles over the edge to safety.

She collapses to the ground. Echo stops on her beat.

Rian is a mess -- covered in dirt and tear streaks. She nurses her left arm.

Jimmy kneels to her level. He checks her for injuries.

RIAN
It's my arm.

Jimmy speaks into the WALKIE from his saddlebag.

JIMMY
Cactus.

CACTUS (V.O.)
Go for Cactus.

JIMMY
Found the girl. Arm's broken.

CACTUS (V.O.)
Good on you.

JIMMY
Storm is jus' overhead. I'm gonna let it pass before we head down.

CACTUS (V.O.)
Copy that. I'll inform the parents.

Jimmy crouches next to Rian. He removes his sweat-stained STETSON COWBOY HAT. Not sure how to say this...

JIMMY
I'm going to have to set this arm
before we can get movin'.

RIAN
No, no, no, no, no --

JIMMY
Rian.

RIAN
No, please, no.

Jimmy touches Rian's arm. She rears back. Jimmy studies the poor girl's anguish.

JIMMY
I know it hurts. Pain is no fun.

Jimmy casually removes the WILD RAG wrapped around his neck -- exposing a HORRID SCAR just below his ear.

This sobers Rian right up.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Thing is... if I don't do this,
you're not going to make it far off
this mountain.

Rian stifles her tears.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(soft)
You ready to cowgirl up?

Puts on her brave face. Nods.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
On three. One, two --

Jimmy repositions the bone. Rian passes out from the pain.

EXT. FOREST - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG JIMMY, 12, rolls in agony. A COLT runs through the trees, away from the crime scene.

Jimmy's father -- JAMES SR., 40s, runs to Jimmy's aid.

JAMES SR.
Jimmy. What happened?

YOUNG WYATT, 13, is frozen in place.

JAMES SR. (CONT'D)
Wyatt?

YOUNG WYATT
H-h-he tried to r-ride --

YOUNG JIMMY
I was trying to mount one of the
colts from the McCullough Peaks
herd.

JAMES SR.
Boy, what the hell were you
thinking? Wyatt, tell Cactus to get
the truck ready. We need to take
you to the hospital. Go on, Wyatt.

Wyatt shuffles away. James Sr. examines his own.

YOUNG JIMMY
I'm fine.

JAMES SR.
No, you're not.

YOUNG JIMMY
Ow! Cut it out.

JAMES SR.
Feeling pain doesn't make you weak,
son.

Jimmy gives in -- allowing James Sr. to lift his son into his
arms.

YOUNG JIMMY
Y'should of seen me, Dad. He and I,
we were right there. Connected.
Before he got spooked.

JAMES SR.
These are wild animals. You can't
approach them like a predator. Be
patient. Let them come to you.

YOUNG JIMMY
Yes, sir.

JAMES SR.

But, Jimmy... I'm sure that was one hell of a sight to see.

Jimmy holds his head with pride.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Rian wakes. Her arm is slung-up in Jimmy's wild rag. Echo scavenges the ground for food.

Violent rain pours down outside the cave accompanied by rolling thunder.

Jimmy sits across a small camp fire -- fiddling with a worn PHOTO of James Sr. and Young Jimmy.

RIAN

What's your horse's name?

JIMMY

Echo.

Beat.

RIAN

I know who you are. The scar on your neck gave you 'way. You're "The Colt".

Jimmy should have been a poker player.

RIAN (CONT'D)

I've heard stories about you. People say you can talk to horses. Say you can't be killed. That you're more legend than man.

JIMMY

(amused)

That so?

RIAN

They say you keep a count of every man you've killed tattooed on your arm. I heard you're almost at fifty kills now.

JIMMY

What are you doing out here? Why'd you run away?

RIAN
My mom. She's...

JIMMY
A mother.

RIAN
Worse. She's out of control. Always
telling me what to do, how to live
my life.

Rian hasn't sold Jimmy anything.

RIAN (CONT'D)
You don't get it.

Jimmy thinks.

JIMMY
Take a look at Echo. I was around
your age when I found him wandering
alone in the mountains. When I
first took him home... Well, he was
a little shit. Wouldn't do anything
I asked of him. I don't think he
realized the life I was offering
him.

RIAN
I'm suppose to compare my situation
to a horse?

JIMMY
Smart girl.

RIAN
Did you ever think that maybe Echo
would have been better off on his
own? Maybe you're actually holding
him back.

JIMMY
That horse over there is fifteen
years old. He'll live to see
thirty.

RIAN
Okay?

JIMMY
You know what the average life span
of a horse in the wild is?

Rian shakes her head.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Eight years.

RIAN
Oh.

Oh is right.

JIMMY
Be grateful for dedicated parents.
He's right. She knows it.

RIAN
Colt?

JIMMY
Yeah, kid?

RIAN
I was lost for hours in the dark
before I fell off that ledge. How
did you know where to find me?

JIMMY
I figured you'd head to high
ground. Try to spot something
familiar. It's what I would have
done.

Jimmy gave her what she needed -- a little reassurance.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
My turn to ask you something.

RIAN
Shoot.

JIMMY
What kind of name is Rian for a
girl?

RIAN
What kind of name is the Colt for a
person?

JIMMY
Y'got me there.

EXT. VISITORS PARKING LOT - DAY

The sky is clearing.

MRS. & MR. LARSEN wait alongside Cactus, Chief Barton and her SAR crew. EMTs stand-by. Ready for action.

Jimmy leads Echo -- ferrying Rian -- out from a trail.

MRS. LARSEN

RIAN!

Jimmy helps Rian slide down the saddle. Mrs. Larsen and Rian embrace. EMTs rush in to check her vitals.

Jimmy doesn't wait for nor need a hero's welcome. He escorts Echo to the trailer. Time to go home.

Chief Barton pulls a BOTTLE OF BOURBON WHISKEY from her bag. Nixon stops her.

NIXON

Let me.

Nixon treads humbly.

NIXON (CONT'D)

Not bad, Wheeler. I guess you've earned this.

Jimmy shuts the trailer door.

JIMMY

I didn't come for that.

Jimmy gestures to Rian's reunion with her parents.

RIAN

I'm sorry, Mom.

MRS. LARSEN

It's okay, baby. I'm just so happy you're safe.

Jimmy blows past Nixon to his truck. Nixon has no rebuttal to a statement as pure as that ... Yet, Cactus snags the whiskey bottle.

CACTUS

I did. Don't be a stranger, Barton.
Bed is always open.

Cactus winks and hops into the truck. Chief Barton gives him the finger.

Jimmy tips his hat to Rian as he pulls out of the lot.