

THE SECRET WHISPERS OF MR. FEATHERS

Screenplay by  
Robert Willard Bates and Jerod Brennen

Story by  
Robert Willard Bates and sc0tt summitt

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN FRONT YARD - SUNSET

SOPHIE (7) sits cross-legged on the lawn, wearing her bike helmet. Her tilted head rests heavily on one fist as she SCOWLS at her parked BIKE with its BROKEN CHAIN.

With her free hand, she angrily plucks blades of grass from their roots and hurls them back at the ground.

Sophie is having a bad day.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - SUNSET

JENNY (30's) watches Sophie through the window as she speaks into her smartphone. Her Yoga work-out clothes show off her slender form.

JENNY

Again, Bryan? That's the third time this week.

BRYAN (O.S.)

Jenny, it's not my-

JENNY

Don't, Bryan. Just don't.

Jenny's anger gives way to resignation as she continues to watch her daughter.

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE - SUNSET

BRYAN (30') sits disheveled behind his junior-level management office desk. He clutches his desk phone in one hand as he massages his forehead with his free hand.

BRYAN

If Doug had told me he needed this report at 9 instead of 3:30, I'd be home by now. You think I enjoy staying late?

JENNY (O.S.)

It's hard to tell anymore.

BRYAN

We have bills to pay, Jenny. The mortgage, the cars, your Yoga

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRYAN (cont'd)  
lessons... those bills aren't gonna  
pay themselves.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - SUNSET

The look on her face makes it clear that Bryan picked the exact wrong thing to say.

JENNY  
(dripping with sarcasm)  
You're absolutely right, Bryan. I'm  
so sorry to have put you out like  
this. Please, accept my apology for  
making your life so hard.

She hangs up before Bryan has a chance to respond.

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE - SUNSET

Bryan is stunned.

BRYAN  
Jenny? Hello?

He does his best to keep his cool, but his frustration has hit its boiling point. As he's about to throw the phone across his office, DOUG (40's) appears in the doorway.

DOUG  
Well? Is it done yet?

Bryan reels his temper back in.

BRYAN  
Almost. I just need to-

DOUG  
Spare me the details. Just get it  
done.

Doug disappears. For the briefest moment, Bryan deliberates between working on the report and calling his wife back.

He chooses the report.

EXT. SUBURBAN FRONT YARD - SUNSET

Jenny opens the front door, calls to her daughter.

JENNY

Sophie! Come in and get yourself cleaned up, honey. We're going out.

SOPHIE

What about my bike? Daddy promised he was going to fix it.

JENNY

Daddy has to work late.

SOPHIE

But-

JENNY

Now, Sophie.

Jenny disappears inside.

Sophie stands, gives her bike a longing look.

SOPHIE

(to herself)

He promised.

She unbuckles her helmet, takes it off, and lets it dangle from one hand as she mopes toward the front door.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S KITCHEN - DAY

NANA (60's), Sophie's grandmother, pours TWO GLASSES OF LEMONADE by the kitchen sink. Her wild silver-streaked hair, her jewelry, her clothing... everything about her has a hippie feel to it.

She carries the glasses to the kitchen table, where a very glum Sophie absently plays with a set of hand-made FINGER PUPPETS.

NANA

Come on, kiddo. Cheer up.

She nudges a glass of lemonade toward Sophie. Sophie half-smiles, takes a sip.

(CONTINUED)

NANA

Better?

Sophie shrugs. Nana takes a seat at the table.

NANA

Most grown-ups want to keep their promises, Sophie. They really do. It's just... things don't always work out the way they're supposed to. The best we can do is put on a smile and try to put it behind us.

SOPHIE

If he wasn't gonna fix my bike, he should have said so. He should have told me the truth.

Nana barks a LAUGH.

NANA

The truth? Child, telling the truth is even harder than keeping a promise. Well, for most people anyway. Not for you, I suspect, and certainly not for me.

This brings a real smile to Sophie's face. Nana regards Sophie in silence for a moment. She draws a deep breath, fingering the ANTIQUE KEY on the NECKLACE she wears.

NANA

(conspiratorially)

Can I tell you a secret?

Sophie is instantly intrigued. She nods. Nana stands, motions for Sophie to follow her.

INT. NANA'S FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Nana pulls an ANTIQUE WOODEN BOX down from atop her wardrobe.

NANA

My momma, your great grandma, gave me something very special when I was just about your age.

She places the antique key in the antique box, turns.

(CONTINUED)

NANA

Something to help me out when I  
wanted people to tell the truth.

CLICK.

Nana looks up. Sophie is enraptured. Nana reaches in the box  
and produces a small OWL FINGER-PUPPET.

NANA

Sophie, met Mr. Feathers.

Sophie giggles with delight.

Nana extends Mr. Feathers to Sophie. Sophie places the  
puppet on her finger, admires it.

NANA

Some folks might have a hard time  
telling the truth, but not Mr.  
Feathers. He tells it like it is.  
All you have to do... is listen.

Nana takes Sophie's hand in hers, moves the puppet towards  
Sophie's ear.

Sophie strains to listen. Then, her eyes go wide.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - MORNING

Controlled chaos reigns during breakfast-time. Bryan and  
Jenny swirl around the kitchen, grabbing coffee, stuffing  
briefcases, packing lunches.

Sophie sits in calm contrast at the table, eating her  
oatmeal, playing with Mr. Feathers.

JENNY

Sophie has a soccer game tonight at  
6. Think you can make an  
appearance?

BRYAN

Can't make any promises.

JENNY

How about this? Promise me you'll  
be a man for once and tell Doug  
where he can stick his reports.

(CONTINUED)

Bryan gives Jenny an exasperate look, then glances at Sophie as if to say, "Not in front of our daughter."

Sophie holds Mr. Feathers to her ear and listens intently. She studies Bryan as she listens.

SOPHIE

Daddy, Mr. Feathers thinks you would be better at your job if you stopped smoking your special cigarettes.

Bryan almost spits his coffee all over himself. His eyes flit guiltily to Jenny.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN GARAGE - NIGHT

A stylized black and white still image of Bryan furtively SMOKING A JOINT with a goofy grin on his face.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - MORNING

Bryan does his best to play it cool, but Jenny is fuming.

BRYAN

Uh, sweetie, what are you talking about?

JENNY

Yes, Bryan. What is she talking about?

SOPHIE

Mommy, Mr. Feathers says that maybe daddy would come home from work earlier if you weren't spending so much time with that Yoga teacher guy.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. FITNESS CLUB - DAY

Stylized black and white still image of Jenny in her Yoga togs, smiling, as a well-muscled MALE YOGA INSTRUCTOR helps her... correct her form.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - MORNING

Now it's Bryan's turn to bristle.

JENNY

Finish your breakfast, angel. Less talking, more chewing.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Another harried day at work. Bryan hunches over his computer, cradling the phone on between ear and shoulder.

BRYAN

I'm working as fast as I can, but there's no way I can make it home in time for her game.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

Jenny sits at the kitchen table, going through the mail. She has Bryan on speakerphone.

JENNY

I can't miss tonight's Yoga class, Bryan. If I'm not there for the first night, it throws off the entire series. You have to come home early.

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryan is exasperated.

BRYAN

I can't, Jenny. That's not an option. You're going to have to miss Yoga.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

Jenny's just as exasperated as her husband.

JENNY  
Not an option.

She fumes in silence.

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryan pecks at his keyboard, refusing to talk.

The silence stretches on.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - SUNSET

Sophie sits on the front steps, holding her SOCCER BALL in her lap. She glances at the setting sun.

She heaves a disappointed sigh, then heads inside.

INT. SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sophie lies tucked in bed. She stares at Mr. Feathers, perched on the nightstand by her bed.

Bryan enters. He sits on the bed.

BRYAN  
Hey, princess. Sorry about your soccer game. You doing okay?

Sophie gives him the silent treatment.

Bryan looks for an ice-breaker. He picks up Mr. Feathers.

BRYAN  
So Nana gave this guy to you?  
Pretty cool. Mr. Birdbeak?

SOPHIE  
Mr. Feathers.

BRYAN  
Ah, right. Mr. Feathers.  
(beat)  
Mr. Feathers have anything interesting to say today?

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIE  
Mr. Feathers says Mommy doesn't  
like the way you play leapfrog.

BRYAN  
(puzzled)  
Leapfff-

Bryan's eyes snap wide open.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stylized black and white still image of Jenny, frustrated  
and wide-awake in her plain nightie, sitting arms crossed in  
bed next to a bare-chested, snoring Bryan.

INT. SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryan places Mr. Feathers back on the stand by Sophie.

BRYAN  
Well, tell Mr. Feathers that we  
can't all be Ken doll Yoga  
instructors, now can we?

Sophie's puzzled look is enough to tell Bryan that she has  
no idea what he's talking about.

BRYAN  
How about this? You tell Mr.  
Feathers that things are going to  
change soon, okay?

SOPHIE  
How soon?

Bryan opens his mouth to answer, but stops short when he  
sees the pleading look in his daughter's eyes.

He kisses Sophie on the forehead and tucks her in.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE OF FOUR SCENES (NO SYNC SOUND):

1. INT. SUBURBAN GARAGE - DAY

Bryan opens the garbage can, looks over his shoulder, then  
pitches his weed.

2. INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

(CONTINUED)

Bryan sits in the easy chair, reading WHAT WOMEN WANT. On the stand beside him, more books, including THE JOY OF SEX.

3. INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jenny lies in bed, awake. Bryan enters. Jenny pretends not to notice. Bryan nuzzles in her shoulder. Jenny's surprise quickly turns to pleasure as she turns to embrace him.

4. INT. FITNESS CLUB - DAY

Our well-muscled YOGA INSTRUCTOR places his hands on Jenny's hips in an effort to correct her form (again). Jenny gently shrinks away from his touch with a polite, insincere smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN FRONT YARD - DAY

Bryan works on Sophie's bike chain as Sophie excitedly looks on. Sophie shows her fixed bike to Mr. Feathers.

SOPHIE

Can we go for a bike ride now,  
Daddy?

BRYAN

Definitely.

Sophie squeals with delight.

BRYAN

Let me get my bike, and I'll be  
right back.

Bryan turns, but stops as Sophie tugs on his shirt.

BRYAN

What is it, Sophie?

Sophie struggles with her decision, then extends Mr. Feathers to her dad.

SOPHIE

Here. I want you to have Mr.  
Feathers.

BRYAN

Sophie, I can't-

Sophie pushes Mr. Feathers into her dad's hand. Bryan is touched. He squats down to face his daughter, to accept this token of her affection.

(CONTINUED)

BRYAN

Tell me again how he works.

Sophie puts Mr. Feathers on Bryan's finger, then moves his hand to his ear.

SOPHIE

You just listen.

Bryan pretends to listen, his facial expression matching the imagined conversation.

BRYAN

Mr. Feathers tells me that you're a very special little girl, Sophie, and that I'm lucky to be your dad.

Sophie frowns.

SOPHIE

No, dad. Listen.

She puts both hands around Bryan's and nudges the puppet closer to his ear. Bryan humors her. He closes his eyes.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Stylized black and white still image of Doug, furtively feeding hard copy financials into a shredder.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN FRONT YARD - DAY

Bryan's eyes shoot open as a powerful realization takes hold.

CUT TO:

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryan sits at his desk, more poised, more in control. He studies his computer screen as he speaks on the phone.

BRYAN

So unless you send any changes my way before close of business today, Jim, we'll consider my quote final. Fair enough?

(CONTINUED)

Jim's response brings a huge smile to Bryan's face. The smile doesn't falter when Doug appears in the door.

BRYAN

Very good. I appreciate it, Jim.  
Take care, and thanks again.

The receiver hasn't even touched the cradle before Doug starts barking at Bryan.

DOUG

If that was Jim Ogden over at Buckman, you're wasting your time. He's only testing the market. He's not ready to buy.

Bryan shrugs, maintaining his self-satisfied smile.

DOUG

Call him back. Tell him we're not interested.

BRYAN

Why? So you can call your buddy over at Trimont-Phillips and sell to him instead?

Doug's shocked expression makes it apparent that Bryan knows something no one else is supposed to know.

BRYAN

The audit committee would be very interested in the... irregularities... I found in our deals with Trimont-Phillips, deals that you set up.

DOUG

So you're a bookkeeper now?

BRYAN

Nope. Just an analyst with enough sense to know a kick-back when I see one.

Doug stiffens, lowers his voice. He's scared, but also a little cocky. He leans over Bryan's desk.

DOUG

I'd be very surprised if you had proof to back up such a ridiculous claim. I suppose a little birdie told you?

BRYAN

You could say that.

Bryan reaches into a desk drawer and produces REASSEMBLED SHREDDED DOCUMENTS. The blood drains from Doug's face.

Doug leans back, speechless. Dazed, he walks out of the office.

Bryan reaches across his desk and picks up Mr. Feathers, placing the puppet on his middle finger. He wiggles the finger, admiring the puppet, inadvertently flipping Doug the bird.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE OF THREE SCENES (NO SYNC SOUND):

1. INT. BYRAN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Bigger office, happier Bryan. Clock reads 4:30. Bryan powers down and leaves for the day.

2. INT. NANA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Nana scoops up her finger puppets, lays them carefully in the antique wooden box. She admires them with a twinkle in her eye before she closes the box and locks it.

3. EXT. SUBURBAN PARK - DAY

Bryan, Jenny, and Sophie pedal a bicycle-built-for-three, a happy family having the time of their lives. Mr. Feathers rides at the front, secured to the handlebars. If we didn't know any better, we'd swear he was smiling.

FADE TO BLACK.