

SKIN

film education

Combined Script

FADE IN:

1 EXT. LARGE OPEN FIELD, TSAKANE TOWNSHIP - DAY 1

It feels like a carnival: careering taxis jammed full of celebrating BLACK WORKERS, VENDORS hawking meat and pineapples, PICKPOCKETS, balloons tied to STRAY DOGS with VOTE ANC, SAY YES TO FREEDOM printed on them ... a long line of excited BLACK MEN and WOMEN waiting for a makeshift polling station to open for the first free elections in South Africa.

SUBTITLE: Johannesburg, 1994

1A EXT./INT. MINIVAN 'TAXI' (TSAKANE) - CONTINUOUS 1A

A mini-bus taxi honks its support as it passes. Crammed into a seat at the back is SANDRA LAING, a light-skinned black woman in her mid-30s - arrestingly beautiful, despite the haunted look in her eyes. The jubilation all around is in sharp contrast to her sadness.

The van stops near a polling station. A hand gently shakes Sandra's arm.

ELSIE
Come on, Ma.

Sandra flinches. The girl (ELSIE, 17) is smiling at her. Next to her, a young man (HENRY, 19), nods.

HENRY
Let's do it.

They spill out of the taxi and are soon lost in the crowd.

2 INT. VANDA COSMETICS FACTORY FLOOR - DAY 2

At a work station, Sandra carefully places lipsticks into their containers. She does this repeatedly, mindlessly. Workers look up as A WHITE FOREMAN points Sandra out to a three-person TV crew.

FOREMAN (waving his arm)
Sandra!

The reporter leads his crew quickly to Sandra before she can make a getaway. He is brisk and friendly without being warm.

BBC REPORTER
Hugh Johnston, World Network News. Could we ask you some questions?

Without waiting for a reply, he signals his sound and camera men to set up.

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2A EXT. VANDA FACTORY - DAY 2A

WORKERS stream out of the factory in a tide. Sandra is amongst them.

FACTORY WORKER 1
Sandra! Sandra, can I get your autograph?

She holds out a newspaper clipping with the headline, 'Too Late for Sandra' and an accompanying photo of 10 year old Sandra with her mother Sannie

Sandra stares at the photograph, disturbing memories flooding back...

3 EXT. WOODS, EASTERN TRANSVAAL - DAY 3

... 10 year-old Sandra runs through the forest. Utterly free.

2A EXT. VANDA FACTORY - DAY 2A

Sandra look up from the newspaper.

SANDRA
Sorry.

She peels away from her baffled co-workers.

3 EXT. WOODS, EASTERN TRANSVAAL - DAY 3

... matching dappled sunlight, as Sandra runs through the forest. Utterly free, she's exhilarated by her own, boundless energy. As she continues to run, we see, intercut:

4 INT. LAING HOUSE/SANDRA'S ROOM - DAY 4

Small hands tugging on a sock. A shirt pulled down over a dark curly head. A skirt being fastened at the waist. Buttons done-up on a striped blazer. Sandra stares at herself in a full-length mirror, dressed in her school uniform for the first time. Satisfied. Proud.

5 INT. LAING HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY 5

Sandra pokes a mischievous head into the room and sees:

SANNIE LAING, white, mid-40s, attractive and no-nonsense, packing freshly baked rusks into a tin. A few feet in front of her NORA, black, 30s, the Laings' domestic servant, sweeps the floor.

SANDRA
Look, Mamma!

Nora and Sannie both look up. Sandra steps inside the doorway and does a twirl like a model. Nora claps and Sannie gasps her approval. Delighted, Sandra runs past Nora to her mother, who sweeps her up in her arms. Sannie looks deep into her daughter's eyes.

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SANNIE
I've got a secret.

SANDRA
Is it a good secret?

SANNIE
Yes. Very.

SANDRA (intrigued)
Tell me.

SANNIE
(whispers in her ear)
I packed Melinda for you.