

THE SHORES OF ILLYRIA

FADE IN:

INT. CASSIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

CASSIOPEIA aka CASSIE sits in front of a piano biting down on A PENCIL. She is 29 years old, wide-eyed and beautiful. She is struggling through the creative process of an original composition, alternately playing or replaying several bars then stopping to jot down corrections, changes, or new directions.

EXT. CHRISTINA'S BRIDAL SHOP - A DAY IN LATE SPRING

Establishing shot.

INT. CHRISTINA'S BRIDAL SHOP - DAY

A bridal shop in a small NEW JERSEY town. GARMENTS are strewn over the tops of chairs and tables. A PHONE RINGS several times and abruptly stops.

CHRISTINA is 34. She is attractive with an innate intelligence.

She is helping her younger sister Cassie try on A NEW KNEE LENGTH BRIDAL GOWN. The girl's ITALIAN MOTHER, BENEDETTA sits nearby drinking COFFEE and evaluating the activity. Cassie examines herself in the dress in a three-sided mirror.

CASSIE

What do you think, Ma?

BENEDETTA

(unimpressed)

Eh? You got thick ankles, babe, and that dress ain't doin' them any favors. Can you bring it down a little in front Christina? Some cleavage would bring the eye up and give it some pop.

Ignoring her, Cassie continues to examine herself in the mirror.

CASSIE

Thanks for the restraint, Ma.

CHRISTINA

Stop it Ma, before I pop you. Her ankles are perfectly normal.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

I think it shows you off
beautifully Cass.

BENEDETTA

Raise the hem and lower the neck
Christina. Accent her chest.

(to Cassie)

Let your strengths overcome your
weaknesses. I read that.

CASSIE

Just clip it, Ma. Why don't you
step outside and have a cigarette
or a mini-stroke or something.

Benedetta downs her coffee, pulls A CIGARETTE from A PACK IN
HER PURSE and moves to the door.

BENEDETTA

That's real nice. Here I am trying
to divert attention away from some
minor flaws ...

CHRISTINA

Nobody has flaws, Ma.

BENEDETTA

Oh, nobody has flaws? What a
relief, hon. World Peace everybody.

CHRISTINA

You're not helping, Ma.

BENEDETTA

It's one thing to see thick ankles
walkin' down the street, Christina.
People accept that. But at a
wedding? No, no, no. They'll
overshadow everything.

(to Cassie)

Believe me. You'll thank me later,
honey.

CASSIE

Why wait, Ma. Thanks for another
beautiful mother daughter memory to
cherish.

(to Christina)

This is why I never kept a journal.

BENEDETTA

Alright. You know what, I can't win
with you.

(MORE)

BENEDETTA (CONT'D)

Everything I say is gonna be misconstrued. So here we are, back on familiar ground. Once again, I'm the villain.

Benedetta starts to leave but can't. She takes several steps towards Cassie.

BENEDETTA (CONT'D)

I'm just going to say one more thing, then I'm going to leave it there. I've been around a little while Cassiopeia, and I've been to a few weddings.

(lights the cigarette)

Not to mention one of yours.

CASSIE

Oh my God! Here we go! Ladies and gentlemen, she has managed ... TO GET THERE!

CHRISTINA

(upset)

Ma! You can't be serious! Bringing this up now! You're insane! You're varicose veins are cutting off the blood supply to your head.

CASSIE

(as Benedetta)

This is my daughter Cassie. Did I mention she married a homosexual? Well. Yeah. She did. She married a gay.

BENEDETTA

For Christ's sake, Cassiopeia, he was prettier than you are. How many pairs of shoes did he own?

CASSIE

Shoes? What the ...

CHRISTINA

Just go, Ma!

Cassie begins pacing around the shop.

CASSIE

I *wish* I had one of those shoes right now, Ma. One with heels. I'd tap you in the head with it!

Benedetta opens the door to leave.

BENEDETTA

Oh beautiful. That's some sentiment. Suddenly all the sacrifice is worth it.

CASSIE

Sacrifice?

(to Christina)

I'm not going to make it through this. I'm telling you right now I'll sacrifice myself. I'll slit my own fat ankles.

Benedetta gives a dismissive wave of her hand on her way out.

BENEDETTA

That'll be the day. I'll call you later.

Cassie looks around frantically for something to throw. She spots her mother's empty coffee cup, picks it up and **THROWS IT VIOLENTLY AGAINST THE WALL.**

CASSIE

(pointing at wall)

I'LL ... pay for that! God damn it! I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I let her get to me. I'm twenty nine years old, Christina. I can't believe she can still do this. That woman knows how to piss me off!

Christina brushes the hair from Cassie's face.

CHRISTINA

Cass, honey, you know if you want to get through this alive, you're going to have to tune her out.

CASSIE

Oh God, if only it was that simple. The woman is an evil frigging genius.

Christina pinches the material around Cassie's waist.

CHRISTINA

I'm going to take it in a little right here.

(Tenderly)

You know, you really do look beautiful.

Cassie tears up. This is something she wishes she'd heard from her mother.

CASSIE

Just don't look at my ankles.

Christina laughs.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I don't know what I'd do if it wasn't for you, Christina. Look at you. You're giving me this dress. You're letting me have the wedding at your beautiful house. You've always been there for me.

Christina embraces Cassie.

CHRISTINA

Hey, as long as I'm around you're always gonna be my baby sister, right? You know that. Fat ankles and all.

Cassie's turn to laugh.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

Listen, I need to talk to you but this really isn't a good time. I have appointments lined up all day. Have breakfast with me tomorrow.

CASSIE

Yeah, sure. What is it? You're scaring me. Tell me what's going on.

CHRISTINA

Don't worry. It's better if I tell you tomorrow. I'll meet you at the Eagle's Nest around eight?

CASSIE

Okay. But, you know how I hate not knowing something. That's another great little hand me down from Ma.

She looks in the mirror again.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I don't know? Maybe we should bring the neckline down a little, you know? What do you think?

CHRISTINA
 (beginning to yield)
 You got the chest for it, honey,
 that's for sure.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

A cold and sterile atmosphere. White walls, DIPLOMAS, A WHITE LAB COAT hanging from a hook, the pale blue light of a computer screen.

BRIAN is 35 and deceptively handsome. A gentle disposition belies his angular, rough-looking exterior. He sits alongside HIS FATHER MITCH.

Mitch is about 75. Its evident from his dress and manner that he comes from a solid blue collar background.

They are sitting directly across from THE DOCTOR whose eyes dart back and forth between them. Brian struggles with his emotions in the aftermath of what had just been said.

BRIAN
 You're sure about this, Doctor?

DOCTOR
 I'm very sorry. Of course, I recommend that you get a second opinion. That's typical in situations like these. You've every right to have a second set of eyes, well, look over the ...
 (stumbling slightly)
 The test results.

BRIAN
 I'm sorry. I just don't know ... exactly ... what I should say. I've never had to ... Dad, what do you ... do you want to say something? Ask something?

MITCH
 Can I smoke?

The doctor looks briefly at Brian and then shifts his gaze back to Mitch.

DOCTOR
 I'm sorry. We don't allow smoking in the office Mr. Byrne.

Mitch rises.

MITCH

Okay, listen. We didn't have to go through all this rigmarole, Brian. Right? Is this supposed to be a shock? Gimme a break. Let's get the hell out a here.

He starts for the door.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You know Doc, you tell a guy he's gonna croak, maybe want to suspend your shit ass rules for a second.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, Mr. Byrne. It's a building policy. After all, this is a medical facility.

MITCH

Uh-huh. The age we live in. God forbid a sparrow farts in a fuckin' field somewhere.

BRIAN

Pop?

MITCH

To tell you the truth Bri, it's almost a relief. For Christ's sake, what have we turned into in this country? Can't smoke. Can't curse. Have more than two drinks anymore and they ship you off to rehab. Take a shot at somebody nowadays and a lawyer'll catch the asshole in his arms before he hits the floor then come after your house. Listen to me now. I had a great life and I'm smart enough to know the best parts are all behind me. What do I have to look forward to? Huh? A chance to get in line behind all the other dominos, smile politely and take it up the ass. Then listen to some moron tell me to ...

(smiling insanely)

HAVE A GREAAAT DAY!

Mitch COUGHS and moves to the door.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You comin'?

BRIAN

In a minute, Dad.

MITCH

Make it fast, would ya. My clocks tickin'. Nothing personal, Doc. I'm a cranky old fart most days. Ask my son. It's just, now I got an expiration date so everything's ... personified. I'll be in the car Bri. See ya on the other side Doc.

He leaves. Brian sits in his chair staring blankly into space.

DOCTOR

You're fathers ... quite a character. Are you alright, Mr. Byrne?

BRIAN

Huh? I'm sorry, Doc. Yeah, he's always been ... his own man. Uh, I guess I need to know what to expect? I mean ... what type of arrangements ... I don't mean funeral ...

DOCTOR

Listen to me. Brian. You father's cancer has progressed to an advanced stage. As I said earlier, had we discovered it a year ago we'd have had options. Right now he appears to be handling it quite well under the circumstances. Of course, that will change. Gradually the pain will increase. When that happens, we'll think about his comfort. The other thing we need to be concerned about is his heart. He had a serious heart attack two years ago. This is going to put an additional strain on him. I tell you what. I'll have my nurse contact you next week and we'll see how things stand. That will give Mitch a few days to ... adjust to things. I'll also have her provide you with the names of several hospices you can look into. Until then, I suggest you just let him live his life as he sees fit.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

You know, as strange as it may sound, some people, and your father may be one of them, are much more prepared for eventualities like this than we can imagine.

The Doctor moves around his desk and walks Brian to the door.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I'll have Kathy call you next week.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Brian makes his way down the hall until a sudden surge of emotion catches him off guard. As tears form behind his eyes he stops momentarily, bemused by his own emotion until the full depth of it blind-sides him and he falls back against the wall sobbing convulsively. His suffering goes well beyond this present reality.

ON

TWO TEENAGE BOYS coming around the corner. They stop abruptly when they see Brian. They look briefly at one another and continue tentatively down the hallway, each tortured step bringing a heightened sense of the absurdity of the moment they find trapped themselves in.

Brian struggles to compose himself and seems to be winning as the boys shuffle past him.

As they pass, one of the boys is unable to suppress a laugh which he tries to stifle. It's not a cruel laugh. Just the laugh of a boy unequipped to accept the notion that a man might cry under any circumstance.

This breach of etiquette propels his friend forward and he begins running down the hallway LAUGHING WILDLY until he disappears from view and his LAUGHTER PEELS OFF.

The first boy digs his hands into his pockets as he trudges on, staring intently at the floor, his mouth pursed against the next onslaught of misplaced laughter which he is unable to suppress.

Slowly, Brian gathers himself together and gradually moves on.

INT./EXT. BRIAN'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

A new pickup. Brian is driving. Mitch smokes a cigarette and COUGHS occasionally.

Breaking the silence.

BRIAN
You're awful quiet.

MITCH
You think I'm quiet now

BRIAN
That's funny, Pop.

MITCH
Drop me at Fitzi's, would ya?

BRIAN
Is that really a good idea?

MITCH
Brian, I just found out I'm dyin',
for Christ sakes. It may be the
best god damn idea ever.

BRIAN
What did you mean back there? When
you said this didn't come as a
shock.

MITCH
Look, kid, I spent my whole life
workin' my ass off. I can count on
one hand the days I missed work.
Okay? Some things you just know.

BRIAN
I don't feel good about letting you
loose in Fitzi's.

MITCH
Let me ask you something, Brian.
What's the worst god damn thing
that can happen?

BRIAN
I just don't feel good about
leaving you alone. That's all.

MITCH
You kiddin' me? This is Fitzi's
we're talkin' about.

Copyright 2009 Richard Flynn -- All Rights Reserved

For the complete script (for production or representation consideration only)
please contact Jennifer Brooks at: info@filmmakers.com