

"WINGS OF THE MORNING"

An original screenplay

by

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WGAW-registered

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FADE IN

INT. CASSIE'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY (1935)

CASSIE (17), despairing, sits slumped at the kitchen table, a glass of orange juice between her hands.

She's dressed simply, ready for school. She is lovely, sweet-looking, fresh.

DENNIS (36) -- hair wet, handsome, boyish -- whistles a tune as he fixes coffee, prepares toast, scouts the fridge.

Neither one looks at the other during the following exchange.

CASSIE

Dad. We've got to stop this.

Dennis pauses, then continues making his breakfast.

DENNIS

Stop what, Baby?

CASSIE

Last night.

(A beat)

Every night.

DENNIS

You know, Baby, I've been meaning to tell you. You've been real good to me since your mom died. I don't know what I'd--

CASSIE

(bitter)

I've been "real good" to you since long before Mom died...

DENNIS

(A beat)

Yeah, yeah, that's right, you have.

Wiping some butter off his hands, Dennis comes over to her, kneels down, tries to take her hands in his.

Cassie refuses to let go of the juice or to look at him.

DENNIS

Listen, Cassie. You and me, we're real special. You know that. We're a team. We don't need anybody else.

Cassie looks him squarely in the face for the first time.

CASSIE
Please, stop.

Coldness seeps into her dad's face.

He rises, takes a sip of coffee, eats a bite of toast, slowly and deliberately straightens up the counter.

Then Dennis turns and looks at her.

DENNIS
No. You're mine, Cassie. You always
have been and always will. We
belong together. We fit.

He goes over and kisses her lightly on the top of the head.

DENNIS
Bye, Baby.

Dennis slips on a Sheriff's jacket, grabs his cap, and exits. Cassie doesn't move.

CASSIE
Bye, Dad.

EXT. CASSIE'S HOUSE - DAY

A New Jersey neighborhood of middle-income homes with well-kept yards. It is May, flowers bloom.

Cassie hurries out the front door, head bowed, books clutched to her chest. She is oblivious to everything around her.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

An imposing school, three stories of stone and ivy. Students cheerfully stream into its front doors.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Cassie looks through a high, small window in a closed door.

CASSIE'S POV:

A MUSIC ROOM, with JAMIE FORRESTER (18), slender and sensitive-looking, seated at a piano.

Jamie plays with total absorption. No sound is heard.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Cassie slips into the room and leans against the door.
CLASSICAL MUSIC OF GREAT SWEETNESS SURROUNDS her.

Tears well up, spill from her eyes.

Quietly, Cassie walks over and places her hand on Jamie's shoulder, feeling the music through his body.

Jamie knows who it is without looking, deftly carries out a difficult section of music, then throws her a winning smile.

When he sees her sadness, Jamie's fingers slow down, falter. He stops playing as she slides down next to him.

They sit shoulder-to-shoulder.

JAMIE

Cass? You all right?

Cassie, head bowed, shakes her head "no."

JAMIE

Your father?

Cassie nods. She squeezes her lips tight to keep from crying.

JAMIE

Want to talk?

A harsh BELL CLAMORS.

CASSIE

I've got class!

Cassie rushes for the door. Jamie swivels around.

JAMIE

When can we--?

CASSIE

Lunch!

JAMIE

Can't! Band practice! Meet me in
the band room--

But Cassie's gone.

JAMIE

After lunch.

Jamie stares after her, troubled. He turns to the piano, and plays a thunderous, murderous CLASSICAL PIECE.

INT. STAIRWELL AND HALLWAY - DAY

Cassie takes the basement steps two at a time, hurries through the nearly empty hall, scoots through a door just as it is CLOSED.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

On each desk is an envelope with a CAMERA LOGO. STUDENTS open theirs, respond to their class photos with dismay or delight.

JEANNIE, a cheery soul, tries to get Cassie's attention, waving her photo from across the room.

Cassie is once more closed in on herself, her envelope untouched.

MISS SHEA watches her students over half-glasses, then glances at a small pocket watch pinned to her bodice.

MISS SHEA

(clapping her hands)

Class. Class! You are, quite naturally, excited about the upcoming festivities, commonly known as "graduation"--

CHEERS from various parts of the room.

MISS SHEA

However, there are several days of "real" work left to do in your other classes!

GROANS. Miss Shea glares at the offenders, then relents.

MISS SHEA

Well, my dears, I had wanted to share a rather personal anecdote with you...

The girls' eyebrows raise in interest, the boys wrinkle their noses.

MISS SHEA

How many of you are aware of a much-ballyhooed international sporting event soon to be--

JEANNIE

The Olympics!

MISS SHEA

Exactly, Jeannie! -- To be held in Los Angeles. It will be quite thrilling, I have no doubt--

She lifts yellowing NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS from her desk.

MISS SHEA

But I cannot imagine anything to match the drama of the '24 Olympics in Paris! I was there.

(handing out the clippings)

One heart-stopping, record-breaking performance after another: Nurmi, Weismuller, Abrahams! But no one won the hearts of the crowd as did one, quiet-spoken, gentle young man...who ran like a man possessed.

Miss Shea looks around the room for something.

MISS SHEA

Ah, yes, I believe Cassie has that clipping.

Cassie sits up with a start at the mention of her name. She notices the clipping on her desk for the first time.

ON CLIPPING

ERIC LIDDELL, head thrown back, eyes closed, exultant smile on his face, breaks the finish tape. FRENCH HEADLINE: "LIDDELL! TRIUMPHANT!"

MISS SHEA (V.O.)

Eric Liddell, the Flying Scotsman.

BACK TO SCENE

Miss Shea paces, vivid with her memories.

MISS SHEA

Favored to win the Blue Ribbon event of any Olympics -- the hundred meters -- Eric refused to run on a Sunday -- "The Lord's Day is not a day for sports," he said. Newspapers labeled him a religious fanatic, a traitor, even. But Eric wouldn't budge.

CASSIE

But Miss Shea, it says he won.

MISS SHEA

The 400 meters, yes!
(passionate)

The sporting wisdom of the day said a 100-meter-man would crumble at that terrible distance. But Eric showed them! He looked positively awful, of course--

(imitating)

Arms and legs pumping, thrashing the air, clawing it. Passing every runner and never seeing any of them.

(laughing)

How could he? With his head thrown back, his eyes closed, and that smile...that smile like he was looking at the Face of God!

Miss Shea halts, assuming Eric's "pose," head thrown back, eyes closed, a smile SPREADING across her face.

CASSIE is spell-bound.

The BELL RINGS. Miss Shea "wakes" to see the class swarming out. She returns to her desk and picks up an old PHOTO.

Cassie comes over, lays the clipping on the desk, and leans comfortably against her teacher to look at the picture.

ON PHOTO

A younger Miss Shea shakes hands with 22-year-old Eric Liddell, dressed in college blazer, tie, and slacks.

His is an honest, open, affectionate face, fair hair already receding. Grinning broadly, ERIC LIDDELL LOOKS DIRECTLY OUT AT US...

INT. BAND ROOM - DAY

A small group of BOYS "jam." Jamie is the obvious leader, playing JAZZ IMPROVISATIONS on a saxophone. He is in his element, happy, absorbed. The music is cheerful, hip.

Cassie enters and sits. She looks decidedly less depressed. The music helps. Jamie sees her, waves cheerily. She nods.

The group finishes. CHATTERS as they grab their things, exit. Cassie watches, her face revealing her envy at their joy.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Behind the school, a large lawn, shade trees, and a small creek. Cassie and Jamie head toward the creek.

Cassie talks torrentially, hands clenching and unclenching.

EXT. CREEK - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jamie leans against a tree. Cassie sits, her feet in the water, watching WATER BUGS. She is spent, her body loose.

JAMIE

You've got to get out of there.

Cassie turns to look at Jamie. How?!

JAMIE

Come with me!

Cassie doesn't know what he means.

JAMIE

To Paris!

CASSIE

What?

JAMIE

Cass, I'm finally going! After all these years of dreaming!

(A beat)

I'm leaving tomorrow night.

CASSIE

(stung)

When were you planning on telling me?

JAMIE

On the first day you weren't so wrapped up in that crazy father of yours that you could think of me for a change!

Cassie flinches, starts to rise, to run. Jamie grabs her.

JAMIE

Cass, that wasn't fair. You've been my most loyal fan for years. I never play a note that I don't see your face.

Cassie looks at him, then sits back down.

JAMIE

It's just...I quit his damned softball team just so I wouldn't be tempted to take one of the bats to him. And I used to love him, Cass. Love that stupid, lousy, son-of-a--
(A beat)
I'm sorry. Look, my uncle works in the passport office. Have you got a current picture?

CASSIE

Sure. My yearbook picture.

Cassie takes the packet from her books and hands it to Jamie. He pulls out HER PHOTO and whistles appreciatively.

JAMIE

Homely as a mud fence.

Cassie smiles in spite of herself.

JAMIE

Good. I like to see that. Now I need to get hold of my uncle right away.

CASSIE

Just leave? Forever?

JAMIE

Yes! Forever! Now, where can you go tonight, so you don't have to go home to Count Dracula?

CASSIE

Well, Jeannie's I suppose. It's a school night, but I could say I don't feel well--

JAMIE

Cramps! My sister's always getting them. Tell him you have cramps. He can't refuse a motherless child. Brilliant!

Jamie pulls Cassie up, ready for action. He sees her wavering, forces himself to be still, to wait.

At last:

CASSIE

Are you sure I won't spoil it for you?

Jamie whoops.

JAMIE

Ab-so-lutely!

Impulsively, he gives her a big kiss -- their first.

Cassie reacts with confusion; Jamie becomes awkward.

INT. JEANNIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

JEANNIE'S MOTHER is on the phone.

Cassie, wearing pajamas and carrying a tray, stands in the hallway, listening.

JEANNIE'S MOTHER

Of course, you worry about her, Dennis, and, yes, I do think a child belongs at home. Most of the time. It's just that, well, it's her time of the month and--...She ought to know, Dennis!...No, I won't put her on the phone, she's upstairs in bed--

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A SHERIFF'S CAR is parked in front of the school. Dennis leans against it smoking. He glances at his watch.

CASSIE'S FACE looks down from a high window. JAMIE'S FACE joins hers. For a moment, both look down. Then they are gone.

INT. ELEGANT APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Cassie sits on a bed in a beautifully feminine room.

Jamie rummages through a bureau, pulling out slips, underpants, camisoles, stockings. He plops them on the bed.

JAMIE

She'll never even miss them!

CASSIE

But--

Jamie holds up his hand to silence her, then goes to the closet. He pulls out one lovely outfit after another, heaping them on the bed.

Cassie sits in awe like a peasant-turned-princess.

JAMIE

You have to have traveling clothes.
We can--

MUMBLING, Jamie disappears into the walk-in closet. He comes out with several coats, including a lovely FUR.

Cassie fingers the lovely garments, but the sight of the fur brings out a fresh protest.

CASSIE

James, I couldn't! Not your
sister's fur coat!

Jamie blithely tosses the coats onto the bed.

JAMIE

Last year's. Wouldn't be caught
dead in it.

Cassie strokes the fur and watches the whirlwind Jamie is creating. He emerges from the closet with suitcases in tow.

JAMIE

There, that should do it. Now,
start packing, while I make us
sandwiches for the drive.

Cassie rises obediently and begins to pack. Jamie heads out the door, but turns back in.

JAMIE

You don't mind awfully not using a steamer trunk, do you? They're all in storage.

Cassie looks up uncomprehendingly, never having traveled.

JAMIE

No, I guess you wouldn't...

Cassie folds a matching jacket and skirt.

JAMIE

Not that one. Wear it. You can't go in your school clothes!

Jamie disappears and Cassie sets down the suit. She walks to the fireplace, touching the PRETTY THINGS on the mantle.

She finally notices the CLOCK: 5:15.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Cassie hurries into the hallway. She leans over the banister.

CASSIE

Jamie!

Jamie runs out of the kitchen, knife and cheese in hand.

CASSIE

Jamie, we've got to get out of here!

JAMIE

Why? The boat doesn't sail 'til midnight!

CASSIE

He's had two hours to look for me. What if he comes here?

The thought CHILLS Jamie, but he tries to cover it.

JAMIE

He won't even think of it.

CASSIE

Please, Jamie. Stop making sandwiches and get packed!

Jamie gives her a grin.

CASSIE
What's so funny?

JAMIE
Been packed for weeks! So as they
say in the "theatah," let's get
this show on the road!

Excitedly Jamie goes back into the kitchen.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Cassie stands before a full-length mirror, in her new suit.
Her hair is tucked into a cloche; she wears a little make-up.

Jamie dashes in, but stops so as not to break her quiet mood.

Seeing him in the mirror, Cassie turns, questioningly. Jamie
smiles admiringly, then looks down at her feet in disbelief.

JAMIE
Those shoes!

Cassie tries to hide one behind the other. They are her
SCHOOL SHOES, scuffed and plain.

CASSIE
All of the others were too big!

JAMIE
They'll have to do. For now.

Jamie heads over to the jewelry box on the bureau. He removes
a DIAMOND RING. Turning, he holds it out to Cassie.

JAMIE
You'll need this..."Mrs.
Forrester."

Cassie is stunned.

JAMIE
Our passports list us as husband
and wife. It seemed safer that way.

He slips the too-large ring on her finger. It slides around.

JAMIE
Perhaps, this will help.

He takes a GOLD BAND from his pocket.

JAMIE (O.S.)

The diamond is from one of my
sister's many ex-flames. She'll
never even miss it. But the band is
from me...

He slips it on her finger, a perfect fit. INSCRIBED ON IT:
JAMES & CASSANDRA.

The two look at each other, with shocked grins.

EXT. ELEGANT APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Dennis, drunk and weeping, HOWLS up at a top-floor apartment
that is dark.

DENNIS

Cassie! Cassie! Cassie!

PEOPLE look out their windows and from their balconies. The
DOORMAN hurries out.

INT. ELEGANT APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - SAME

Near the REAR EXIT, Cassie and Jamie, bags in hand, listen.
Frozen. Cassie's face betrays despair, confusion.

DENNIS (O.S.)

Cassie! Cassie! Cassie!

Jamie comes alive first and scoots them both out the back.

EXT. ELEGANT APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

The Doorman is trying to get Dennis to move on. Dennis rushes
past the man toward the front door. The Doorman yanks him
back. Dennis falls down the steps. Sits, blubbering.

DENNIS

Please, Baby, don't leave me.
Please don't leave me...

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A convertible tools along the highway. Jamie drives, glancing
at Cassie. She leans back, staring hollowly up at the stars.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The car crosses the bridge into Manhattan, heading toward the wharf, beautifully lit up with ocean liners.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN LINER - MID-OCEAN - DAY

Cassie and Jamie play a heated game of SHUFFLEBOARD. Other PLAYERS, older and more sedate, play nearby...smiling at the young couple.

JAMIE

You cheated! You must have! How can anyone win three games in a row who has never held a cue or laid eyes on a disk before today!

Cassie just grins at him wickedly and plays a shot that CAROMS Jamie's disk into the ten-off section.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

A luxurious room. An ORCHESTRA plays. COUPLES in tuxedos and evening gowns dance or drink at small tables.

Cassie and Jamie, dressed beautifully, enter. Cassie, overwhelmed, holds back. Jamie tries to drag her in, while trying not to be too obvious.

JAMIE

Come on, goose!

Cassie doesn't move. Tugging at her, Jamie notices a MAN admiring her. Jamie stops and kisses her on the cheek.

JAMIE

You look absolutely smashing! I'm proud to be your bogus husband.

A WAITER assists them to a table.

JAMIE

Champagne, please, my good man.

The Waiter nods and leaves. Cassie looks up questioningly.

JAMIE

To toast our -- wait a minute, don't tell me you've never drunk champagne before!

Jamie's tone is so "horrified" that Cassie makes a wicked CHILD'S FACE at him: eyes crossed, mouth pursed, head tipped.

JAMIE
 I shall ignore that.
 (looking around)
 I hope your other admirers didn't
 see that childish display...

Cassie makes a quick, modified version of her first face. Then turns to look at her NEIGHBORS with a regal smile.

INT. BALLROOM - LATER

Jamie and Cassie dance. He COUNTS aloud. She watches her feet. She lifts her head, catching his chin a glancing BLOW.

Jamie groans. Both burst into giggles.

JAMIE
 (mouthing it)
 Will you relax!

He sweeps her, almost elegantly, around the floor.

INT. BALLROOM - LATER

Amidst the orchestra members, Jamie plays saxophone. He is very happy. Cassie watches, glowing with pride.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Twin beds are built into opposite walls. Cassie sits on one, as Jamie pours them glasses of SHERRY. They both wear men's silk pajamas.

JAMIE
 Was I wonderful?

CASSIE
 Yes, simply grand!
 (teasing)
 No one plays the clarinet the way
 you do.

JAMIE
 Saxophone.

CASSIE

Well, never mind. Your solo was the best part.

JAMIE

That was the fellow in front of me.

CASSIE

Oh. Are you sure you were up there?

Jamie "glowers" at her as he hands her a sherry. They toast each other and take a sip. Both make a face.

JAMIE

Aggghh! Too sweet.

Cassie LAUGHS up at him with open affection. Caught by her beauty, Jamie takes their glasses and sets them aside.

He KNEELS in front of her. Takes her face in his hands, KISSES her. They look at each other, both liked it.

Then, more hungrily, Jamie kisses her again. MOANING slightly. Cassie TENSES at the sound.

Jamie pulls her from the bed onto his knees. She puts her arms around his neck, confused, wanting this to work.

Jamie TREMBLES in his eagerness, this is his first time. He kisses her ear, jaw, throat. He unbuttons her top button.

JAMIE

Baby, oh, baby --

Cassie reacts with disbelief at the familiar term.

CASSIE

What?

Jamie kisses her gently on the breastbone. He moves his mouth down as he reaches for the next button.

JAMIE

Cassie, Baby --

Suddenly, CASSIE PUSHES HIM VIOLENTLY BACK, shoving herself against the bed. Jamie is stunned.

CASSIE

Don't you ever call me that again!

Cassie's eyes are GLAZED, she's SHAKING. Jamie, stricken, throws his hands up as if to do something.

JAMIE
I'm...I'm sorry, Cass. What is it?
What did I--

Cassie is starting to GAG, head down, as if needing to throw up something awful. Jamie pulls away.

JAMIE
Oh, God!

Cassie is no longer aware of Jamie. She is ROCKING, GAGGING.

CASSIE
Please make him go away! Please,
please somebody make him go away!

Jamie has his back pressed against the other bed by now. He is helpless, horrified, pleading.

JAMIE
Cass...Cass...

CASSIE
I'll be good! I promise I'll be
good! I'll do anything! Just make
him go away!

In a fury at himself, Jamie SLAPS HIS FACE as hard as he can, ONE HAND AFTER THE OTHER. BANG. BANG. BANG.

Cassie looks up, startled. She shakes her head to clear it, then recognizes Jamie and sees what he's doing.

CASSIE
Jamie! No!

Cassie crawls over, grabs his hands. He keeps SLAPPING. BANG. BANG.

CASSIE
Stop it! Stop it, Jamie!

Jamie stops. Then he begins to SOB, his head in his hands.

JAMIE
I just want to love you! Oh, God, I
just want to be allowed to love
you! Oh, God...oh, God...

Cassie LISTENS, then sits down next to him. She puts one arm around him. She lays her head on her knees. Dry-eyed, sad.

And now it is Jamie who ROCKS and SOBS.