

BEFORE SUNSET

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1 EXT. PARIS -- AFTERNOON

1

Delerue's theme from "Antoine and Colette" plays over an opening credit sequence consisting of a series of images of Paris. Each shot is composition of the streets, landmarks and the minute details of this beautiful August afternoon. The last shot begins wide on the Shakespeare Bookstore and closes in on a sign in the window announcing an event: "Jesse Wallace, young author of the acclaimed best-seller THIS TIME, Saturday, August 23." A brooding picture of Jesse is prominent. Over the image, we hear a French Journalist asking a question.

FRENCH JOURNALIST #1 (O.S.)

Do you consider the book to be autobiographical?

2 INT. SHAKESPEARE BOOKSTORE -- AFTERNOON

2

Inside this funky bookstore, JESSE, early 30's, is sitting casually with a few journalists and patrons.

JESSE

Isn't everything autobiographical, I mean we all see the world from our own tiny keyhole. I always think of Thomas Wolfe - have you ever seen that little one page 'note to reader' in the front of Look Homeward, Angel. Do you know what I'm talking about?

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Vague affirmatives.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Anyway, He says how we are the sum of all the moments of our lives, that anybody who writes will use the clay of their lives, that you can't avoid that. I remember he says he can't imagine anything more autobiographical than Gulliver's Travels.

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3 INT/EXT. BEFORE SUNRISE MONTAGE

3

Over the next section of dialog, we see an approximately 90 second series of shots from BEFORE SUNRISE that silently tell the story: boy meets girl on a train, boy and girl get to know one another, boy and girl kiss, get more intimate, part at dawn.

JESSE (O.S.)

When I look at my life, I have to admit I've never been around a bunch

JESSE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

of guns or violence, a helicopter crash, political intrigue. But my life, from my point of view, has been full of drama. And one of the most exciting things that's ever happened to me is actually connecting with another person and I thought if I could write a book that could capture that, make that connection valuable, that possibility...anyway that was the attempt. I don't know if that answers your question...

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FRENCH JOURNALIST #1

I'll be more specific. Was there ever a young French woman on a train you met and spent an evening with?

JESSE

See to me, that's not important.

FRENCH JOURNALIST #2

So, that's a yes?

JESSE

Okay, since this is the last stop of my book tour and I am in France, Yes.

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We're now near the end of the montage where Celine and Jesse say their good-byes at the train station and are soon traveling alone.

FRENCH JOURNALIST #1

The book ends on an ambiguous note - we don't know. Do you think they get back together in six months like they promised each other?

JESSE

I think how you answer that is a good test as to whether you are a romantic or a cynic.

He looks at the journalists and points at each of them as he speaks.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You think they get back together,  
you don't, you hope they do but aren't  
sure.

FRENCH JOURNALIST #1

But do YOU think they do? Did you  
in real life?

JESSE

Well, in the words of my grandfather,  
to answer that would take the piss  
outta the whole thing.

Still offscreen, the Bookstore Manager chimes in.

MANAGER (O.S.)

We have time for one last question.

4

INT. SHAKESPEARE BOOKSTORE -- AFTERNOON

4

We're now back inside.

FRENCH JOURNALIST #2

What is your next book?

JESSE

I've always wanted to write a book  
where the whole thing happens within  
the space of one pop song.

FRENCH JOURNALIST #1

What song?

JESSE

I don't know, haven't written it yet -  
"The Long and Winding Road" maybe...  
The story's about this guy living in  
Miami at his in-laws beach house,  
and he's totally depressed. His  
great dream was to be an adventurer,  
a lover, riding motorcycles through  
South America. But instead, he  
sitting at this marble table eating  
lobster. He's got a job, a beautiful  
wife, all that he needs, but none of  
it matters - what he wants is to  
fight for meaning.

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Across the room, CELINE emerges from behind a row of books,  
where she's been hiding and listening.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Happiness is in the doing, right?  
not getting what you want.

JESSE (CONT'D)

And just that second his five year-old daughter jumps up on the table. He knows she shouldn't be there - she could get hurt. But she is dancing to this pop song in a summer dress.

Celine is looking at him.

JESSE (CONT'D)

All of sudden he's 16 and his high-school sweetheart is dropping him off at home. They just lost their virginity and she loves him and the same song is playing on the car radio, and she climbs up dancing on the roof of the car. And now he's worried about her. She's beautiful with a facial expression just like his daughter. Maybe that's why he likes her. He knows he is not REMEMBERING this dance. He is there - he is there in both moments simultaneously. In fact he pulls away from a kiss with the girlfriend so as to not offend his daughter. Both moments are real, happening together. For a moment all his life is folding in and it's obvious to him that time is a lie...

He looks up and sees Celine for the first time.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Its all happening all the time and inside every moment, is another, all happening simultaneously.

He takes a beat, still looking at Celine, not sure what to do next.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Anyway, that's kinda the idea, anyway.

MANAGER

Our author needs to be going to the airport soon. I'd like to thank all of you for coming over this afternoon, and especially like to thank Mr. Wallace for being with us. We hope to see you again with your next book. So everyone, please help yourselves to champagne and cookies.

There is polite applause and people start to disperse. Jesse looks back over to Celine - she gives a little wave. He gets the manager's attention.

JESSE

(to Manager)

How long 'till I have to leave here  
for the airport?

MANAGER

You should leave about 7:15 or so,  
7:30 at the latest.

JESSE

Okay...

Jesse walks over to Celine.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Hi.

CELINE

Hello.

A slightly awkward double cheek kiss. \*

JESSE \*

How are you? \*

CELINE \*

Good, and you? \*

JESSE \*

Great. You wanna get some coffee or  
something? \*

CELINE \*

Didn't he just say you have a plane  
to catch? \*

JESSE \*

I have a little time. Want to get  
out of here? \*

CELINE \*

Okay. \*

JESSE \*

Yes? \*

Jesse goes back over to the manager.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I'll be back in thirty, forty-five  
minutes or so. We're just going to  
go get a cup of coffee.

MANAGER

Okay, but get your driver Phillipe's  
card so you'll have his cell phone.  
Call him if you're running late.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

We'll get your bags in the car so  
you won't be late to the airport.

JESSE

Okay. Thanks for everything.

As they start to exit the store, Jesse is detained briefly,  
signing a book, getting the card from the driver, etc. Celine  
exits in front of him.

5 EXT. WALK FROM BOOKSTORE -- AFTERNOON

5

Outside the bookstore, Jesse puts his hands on Celine's  
shoulders and just looks at her.

JESSE

I can't believe you're here!

CELINE

I live here in Paris. Are you sure  
you don't have to stay? Aren't you  
supposed to talk to those people.

JESSE

It's okay, they're sick of me - I  
spent the night here last night.

CELINE

You did?

JESSE

They have a loft upstairs. How are  
you? This is so weird.

CELINE

I'm fine. It's good to see you.

JESSE

It's good to see you too.

CELINE

So you want to go to a cafe?

JESSE

Sure.



CELINE

There's one a little further, that I like a lot.

JESSE

Alright.

They start walking.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I thought I was going to totally lose it in there after I saw you. How'd you even know I was going to be here?

CELINE

It's my favorite bookstore in Paris. You can sit down for hours, I love it - even if there's fleas.

JESSE

I think a cat slept on my head last night.

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CELINE

I saw your picture on the calendar about a month ago and that you were going to be here. It's funny I read an article on your book and it sounded vaguely familiar, but I didn't put it all together until I saw the photo.

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JESSE

Did you have a chance to read it?

CELINE

Yes. I was really surprised as you can imagine.

(a beat)

I had to read it twice, actually.

Jesse just looks at her.

JESSE

Comme ci comme ca?

CELINE

No, I really like it - it's romantic. I usually don't like that but it's well written. Congratulations.

JESSE

Thanks.

Celine suddenly stops and looks at Jesse.

CELINE

But before we go anywhere I have to  
ask you, did you show up in Vienna  
that December?

JESSE

Did you?

CELINE

I couldn't, but did you? I have to know. It's important to me.

JESSE

(playful)

Why, if you didn't?

CELINE

Did you?

JESSE

No.

CELINE

Oh thank God you didn't.

JESSE

Yeah, thank God you didn't either. If one of us would have been there alone, it would have sucked.

They continue walking.

CELINE

I know, I was so concerned with that. I've always felt horrible about not being there but I couldn't, my grandma died a few days before and she was buried that day, December 16th.

JESSE

(almost relieved)

She died? The one in Budapest?

CELINE

How did you remember that?

JESSE

I remember everything.

CELINE

Oh, of course, it was in your book. Anyway, I was just about to fly to Vienna to meet you when we got the news about her, then of course I went to the funeral with my parents.

JESSE

I'm so sorry to hear that.

CELINE

But you weren't there anyway.  
(suddenly suspicious)  
Wait, why weren't you there? I  
would have been there if I could  
have - I had made plans. You better  
have a good reason.

They slow to a stop and just look at each other. She realizes  
he's been lying.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Oh no! You were there, weren't you?

JESSE

(down)  
Yeah.

CELINE

Ahhhh! That's terrible! I'm so  
sorry. I'm laughing but I don't  
mean it. Did you hate me? You must  
have hated me.

(a beat)

Have you hated me all this time?

JESSE

No.

CELINE

Yes you have, but you can't hate me  
now.

JESSE

No... I don't hate you. C'mon, no  
big deal. I flew over there, you  
blew the whole thing off, I gave up  
on love, and my life's been a big  
nose-dive since then, but hey, no  
big deal.

CELINE

No!

JESSE

I'm kidding.

CELINE

I can't believe it. You must have  
felt really angry with me. I'm so  
sorry - I wanted to be there more  
than anything in the world. But you  
can't be angry anymore, I mean my  
grand-ma--

JESSE

Honestly, I had a feeling something like that might have happened. I was bummed, but I was mostly just mad that we hadn't exchanged phone numbers or any information.

CELINE

I know, that was so stupid - no way to get in touch, I didn't even know your last name.

JESSE

I know! We had nothing to go on.

CELINE

I was cursing... - If I could just reach him.

JESSE

I know, remember the reason we did that...we were both afraid if we started calling and writing it would slowly fade away.

CELINE

It definitely wasn't a slow fade.

JESSE

Sure wasn't.

CELINE

Yes, we wanted to pick it up where we left off, which would have been a good idea if...

JESSE

(butting in)  
If it'd just worked! Oh well.

CELINE

So how long were you in Vienna?

JESSE

Couple of days.

CELINE

Did you meet another girl?

JESSE

Yeah, her name was Gretchen, she was awesome. The book's actually a composite of the two of you...

CELINE

Really?!

JESSE

No... I even went back to the train station and put up a sign that had the number to my hotel, just in case you had been delayed a half day or something... total dork.

CELINE

Did you get any calls?

JESSE

Just a couple of hookers looking for a gig.

(a beat)

Hey, it was awful, what do you want me to say?

CELINE

Oh, that's so sad. I'm so sorry.

They start walking again.

JESSE

Then I just walked around for a while then eventually flew back home. I owed my dad two grand, who had warned me about French chicks.

CELINE

What did he tell you about French women?

JESSE

Nothing, lots of crap. He's never been with any French women. I don't think he's ever been east of the Mississippi.

CELINE

Why didn't you put the six months later part in the book?

JESSE

But I did!

CELINE

Really?

JESSE

I wrote a fictional version where you do show up.

CELINE

You did? What happens?

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JESSE

Oh, we make love for like ten days  
straight...

CELINE

That's interesting.

JESSE

And then they find out more about each other and realize they don't really get along.

CELINE

I like that... It's more real.

JESSE

My editor didn't feel that way.

CELINE

Yes, everybody wants to believe in love. It sells.

JESSE

Yep.

CELINE

But things are going well for you, right?

(pause)

Your book's a bestseller in the U.S.?

JESSE

It's a tiny bestseller, but officially, yes. But hey, most people haven't read Moby Dick, so why the hell should they read my book?

CELINE

I never read Moby Dick, but I liked your book, even though I thought you idealized our night a bit.

JESSE

Hey, it's fiction.

CELINE

I know, but I thought there were times when you made me, I mean her, no, me, like sometimes she's was a bit... psychotic.

JESSE

But you are a little like that.

CELINE

I know... What!!!

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JESSE

Just kidding. No really, where'd I do that?

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CELINE

Maybe it's just me...It was so strange to be reading something knowing the character in the story is based on you. It's both flattering and disturbing at the same time.

JESSE

Why was it disturbing?

CELINE

I don't know, just being part of someone's memory, suddenly seeing myself through your eyes. How long did it take you to write it?

JESSE

On and off, 3 or 4 years.

CELINE

It's a long time to be writing about one night.

JESSE

Tell me about it. I feel like I basically lived with you there for a while.

CELINE

I'd always assumed you've forgotten me.

JESSE

I had a pretty clear picture of you in my mind. I gotta tell you something - I've wanted to talk to you for so long...

CELINE

Me too.

JESSE

It's surreal, now I feel everything I say should be...

CELINE

Yeah, and now we have what? twenty minutes and thirty seconds?

JESSE

More than that, much more than that. I want to know about you. What are you up to?

CELINE

Wheew. Where to start. I'm working  
for Green Cross, it's an environmental  
organization.

JESSE

Wow. What are they all about?

CELINE

We basically work on many different environment issues, from clean water to disarmament of chemical weapons, you know, international laws that deal with the environment.

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JESSE

What do you do for them?

CELINE

Different things. Last year I was in India for quite a while working on a water treatment plant.

JESSE

Wow.

CELINE

The cotton industry there is a major source of pollution.

JESSE

I gotta say I admire the fact that it sounds like you are actually DOING something. Most people, myself included, just bitch about everything: how America's consuming all the world's resources, we're creating sweat shops in China, SUVs suck, global warming...

\*

CELINE

I'm relieved to hear you're not one of those Freedom Fry kind of Americans.

JESSE

Nah. But I gotta say, I think that's so cool what you're doing. How'd you get into that?

CELINE

When I came out of political science I thought I'd be working for the government, and I did for a short while and then I got tired of having conversations with friends about how the world was falling to pieces.

## CELINE (CONT'D)

I realized that the only thing I  
wanted to do was to look at things  
that really can be fixed and try to  
fix them.

JESSE

I gotta say, that's awesome. I always figured you'd be doing something cool like that.

CELINE

Thanks. I'm lucky to have a job I really like.

JESSE

You know, I actually alternate in thinking that everything is irrevocably screwed up, and actually feeling things in a general might be getting better.

CELINE

Better! How could you possibly think that?

JESSE

I know it sounds weird, but I think there are things to be optimistic about.

CELINE

(interrupting)

Okay, I know your book is selling, but what are you talking about - the world's a mess right now.

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He laughs.

CELINE (CONT'D)

From a western point of view things are getting a bit better - we're moving all our industry to developing nations to get cheap labor free from any environmental laws. The weapons industry is out of control, five million die every year due to preventable water diseases. So how is the world getting better? I'm not getting angry, but really I want to know?

JESSE

I know there are a lot of serious problems - I don't have one publisher in the entire Asian market.

They both laugh, approaching the cafe.

JESSE (CONT'D)

But I think there's more awareness  
out there.

JESSE (CONT'D)

It might be getting better because people like you are informed and educated and speaking out and as the world's consciousness and education rises - things like women's issues, racial rights, sexual rights, children's rights...

CELINE

I know.

JESSE

I mean the very notion of conservation and environmental issues - all that weren't even in the vocabulary until fairly recently - those are becoming the norm and will eventually be what's expected all over the world.

CELINE

I agree with what you are saying but it's dangerous. An imperialist country can use that kind of thinking to justify their economic greed. Human rights is the only issue I...

6 INT. CAFE -- AFTERNOON

6

They walk in and eventually seat themselves.

JESSE

Any particular imperialist country you got in mind there, Frency?

CELINE

No, not really. Is it okay if we sit here?

JESSE

Perfect. But what I'm really saying is the world might be evolving like a person evolves. ME for example... Am I improving? Am I getting worse? When I was younger I was healthier but I was racked with insecurity- Now I'm older my problems are deeper, but I'm more equipped to handle them.

CELINE

What are your problems?

Long Pause.

JESSE

Right now, I don't feel like I have any - just damn happy to be here. \*

CELINE

Me too. How long have you been in Paris?

JESSE

Got in last night. I've done ten cities in twelve days - I'm so glad it's over. I'm so sick of being a huckster

The waitress comes over to the table.

WAITRESS

Bonjour. Vous dinner?

CELINE

What do you want?

JESSE

Just a coffee.

CELINE

Non, un cafe, et une orange pressee avec des glacons.

JESSE

I love the coffee over here so much more than in the U.S.

CELINE

I couldn't even drink coffee when I was living over there.

JESSE

You lived in the U.S.? When?

CELINE

From '96 through '99. I was studying at NYU. \*

JESSE

Don't tell me that!

CELINE

What?

JESSE

Oh wow - that's weird. I've been in New York since '98. That's wild - we were both there at the same time.



CELINE

That is weird. You know, it actually crossed my mind, if I might run into you there, but the odds are so slim, you know? I had no idea even what town you were living in. Weren't you somewhere in Texas?

JESSE

I was for a long time but, I had to get out there. I figured it was time for me to be in New York. What made you come back here?

CELINE

I had finished my master's, for one, but I was starting to get paranoid. The stuff in the medias all the time - murders, gang violence, serial killers.

JESSE

I know.

CELINE

I was living in terror. The final straw was one night I heard some noise on my fire escape, I called 911 and the cops came...

JESSE

Like three hours later.

CELINE

After I'd been raped and killed about ten times. It was a man and a woman officer. I was describing to them what I had heard when the woman had to run downstairs to move the police car. I was alone with the male cop, and right away he asked me if I had a gun. I said no and he told me I'd better think about getting one - this was America, not France. I told him I didn't know how to shoot a gun and that I wasn't interested in firearms. That is when he pulled out his gun and said to me...

(cop voice)

"One day you're going to have something like this in your face, and if you want to live a long life, you're going to have to choose between

CELINE (CONT'D)

you or them." They left and the next morning, I actually called for an application to get a gun. Me, a gun! But then I started thinking that something was wrong, the way that cop had pulled his gun.

JESSE

Yeah, sure.

CELINE

So I canceled my demand for a gun and instead I called the police station and tried to complain about this cop's behavior.

JESSE-

What happened with that?

CELINE

It was so much paper work and with my shitty student visa, so I gave up and forgot about the whole thing. Well, actually no, I never forgot.

JESSE

Obviously.

Coffee arrives.

CELINE

But still, I wouldn't mind being back there - there's a lot of things I miss about the U.S.

JESSE

Like what?

CELINE

The overall good mood people have even if it can be bullshit. Like "hey, how you doing? Great! How YOU doin? Great! Have a great day." Parisians are so grumpy. Have you noticed?

JESSE

Really? Everyone around here seems pretty happy to me.

CELINE

They're not happy. Maybe I just mean the French men, they drive me nuts.

JESSE  
What about them?

CELINE

You know, French guys like wine, and  
food, they're fun, maybe it's just  
me, bad luck, but there not that...

JESSE

What?

CELINE

What's the word... horny.

JESSE

In that regard, I'm proud to be an 'merican.

CELINE

And you should be - in that regard only. Have you ever spent any time in Eastern Europe?

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JESSE

No.

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CELINE

I remember as a teenager I went to Warsaw when it was still a strict communist regime, which I don't approve of at all.

JESSE

Sure you don't.

CELINE

I don't at all, really. But something about being there after a while was very interesting, I found. After a couple of weeks something changed in me. The city was quite gloomy and gray but after a while my brain seemed clearer. I was writing a lot more in my journal, ideas I had never thought of before.

JESSE

Communist ideas?

CELINE

Shut up! I'm not a communist.

JESSE

I know. Go ahead, sorry.

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CELINE

It took me a while to figure out why, why I felt so different. And then, one day as I was walking through the Jewish cemetery, I don't know why but it occurred to me there, I realized I had just spent the past couple of weeks away from most of my habits. The TV was in a language I didn't understand and there was nothing to buy, no advertisements anywhere.

(MORE)

## CELINE (CONT'D)

So all I had been doing for three weeks was walk around, write, think. My brain felt like it was at rest, free from the consuming frenzy and I have to say it was almost like a natural high.

CELINE (CONT'D)

I was so peaceful inside, no strange  
urges to be somewhere else, to shop.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Maybe it could have seemed like boredom at first but it quickly it became very soulful.

JESSE

Can you believe it was nine years ago we were walking around Vienna?

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CELINE

No, that's impossible.

JESSE

Feels like two months ago... but June of '94.

CELINE

Do I look any different?

JESSE

Mmmmm. Your hair was down back then, can you...

She undoes her hair. Jesse keeps looking at her.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Little skinnier I think.

CELINE

Was I fat before?

JESSE

No, no.

CELINE

You thought I was a fatty. You wrote a book about a fat girl.

They both laugh.

JESSE

No seriously - you look beautiful. Do I look any different?



CELINE

No... you have this little line here.

She points to the wrinkle between his eyebrows.

JESSE

I know, I know.

CELINE

Like a scar.

JESSE

A scar? Like a gunshot wound?

CELINE

No, I like it. I had a terrible nightmare the other day. I was having an awful dream that I was 32, then I woke up and I was 23, relieved, and then I woke up for real and I was 32.

JESSE

Aw shit, it happens.

CELINE

Time gets faster and faster. Apparently it's because we don't renew our synapses after 20, so it's all pretty much downhill from then on.

JESSE

On the other hand, I like getting older. Life feels more immediate - You can appreciate it more.

CELINE

Oh I know. I actually like it too.

JESSE

I was once a drummer in a band.

CELINE

You were?

JESSE

And we were pretty good too. But the lead singer was so obsessed with us getting signed. We spent all our time thinking about getting bigger gigs- all about the future. And now the band doesn't even exist anymore.

JESSE (CONT'D)

But looking back at those shows we  
did, even rehearsing, it was so much  
fun.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I think now I'd be able to enjoy every minute of it.

CELINE

Well, you've got your book published and you're travelling all over the world with it... are you enjoying it?

JESSE

Not really.

They laugh.

CELINE

You know in my field, I see some people that come into it like with big idealist visions, of becoming the new leaders that will create a better world, they enjoy the goal but not the process.

JESSE

Right.

CELINE

But the reality of it is that the true work of improving things is in the little achievements of the day, and that's what you need to enjoy to stay in that field. For example I worked for an organization that helped villages in Mexico and their concerns was how to get the pencils sent to the kids in those little country schools, it was not about discussing big revolutionary ideas about a better world - it was about pencils. I see the people that do the real work, and what in a way is really sad is that the people that are often the most giving, hard working and capable of making this world better don't really have the ambition and ego to be a leader, they don't see any interest in the rewards, they don't care if their name ever appear in the press, they actually enjoy the process of helping others, they are truly in the moment.

JESSE

Yeah, that's such a struggle.

(MORE)

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JESSE (CONT'D)

It seems like we're designed to be slightly dis-contented with everything. Always trying to better our situation. You satisfy one desire and it just agitates another. But then I think, well, desire is the fuel of life. Do you think it's true that we'd never be unhappy if we never wanted anything?

CELINE

I don't know actually. Not wanting anything... Isn't it a symptom of depression? It's very human to desire.

JESSE

That's what all those Buddhist cats say, right, liberate yourself from desire and you will find you already have everything you need.

CELINE

But I feel human when I want something more than just basic survival needs. Wanting, whether it's intimacy with another person or a new pair of shoes is kind of beautiful. I like that we have ever-renewing desires.

JESSE

Yeah... I guess it's just entitlement that brings all the pain. Whenever you feel you deserve that pair of shoes, that your desires SHOULD be met. It's all right to have wants and needs as long as you don't get angry when they're not realized. Life is hard, it's supposed to be, if we didn't suffer we would never learn a thing.

CELINE

So what, are you like a Buddhist or something?

JESSE

No.

CELINE

Why not?

JESSE

I don't know, it's probably like when I go to a museum I don't get the headphones with the guided tour.

CELINE

I know. I decided a long time ago that I wanted be open to everything, but not buy into any one belief system.

\*  
\*

JESSE

I like that. I went to this Trappist monastery a couple years ago.

CELINE

Trappist?

JESSE

Catholic, Cistercian.

CELINE

Why did you go there?

JESSE

I don't know, I'd been doing a bunch of reading, thought it'd be cool. Have you ever spent time with any monks or nuns?

CELINE

Not my style.

JESSE

I was shocked - I expected them to be all glowering and stern but they weren't - they were quick to laugh and really easy to be around, very attuned to everything. They're not trying to hustle anybody, they're not trying to accomplish anything, they are trying to live and die in peace and be close with God or whatever part of them they feel is eternal - it's so refreshing to be around. You realize that the bulk of people that you meet are trying to get somewhere better, make a little more jack, get a little more respect, have more people admire them... it's exhausting.

CELINE

No kidding.

JESSE

And it's exhausting to be one of those people yourself.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I'm at a monastery, greedy to be a little more spiritual, "I want to be a better person." You can't escape.

CELINE

I had a boyfriend many years ago that wanted to be a Buddhist and he went to Asia to visit several monasteries. He was very good looking and everytime he went to one of those monasteries a monk offered to suck his cock.

They laugh.

JESSE

Well, it all comes down to that, doesn't it? That's why I think I really admire what you're doing.

CELINE

You mean sucking cock?

He laughs.

JESSE

No. I'm just saying it sounds like you're not detached from the world. You're putting your life and passion into tangible action.

CELINE

I'm just doing my best.

JESSE

You know something?

CELINE

What?

JESSE

I'm going to be sitting down on a plane and in airports for the next eight hours or something. Would you mind walking around with me a little bit?

CELINE

Are you inviting me?

JESSE

Yes, let's go.

They stand up. He glances at the bill and takes out a five Euro note.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Is this enough? Even for a tip?

CELINE

Yep.

They start walking out.

JESSE

Anywhere to walk to around here?

CELINE

It's sales day today.

JESSE

What's that?

CELINE

It's when everything is on sale in Paris. Twice a year.

JESSE

Then let's go shopping.

CELINE

No, no, no, I don't want to inflict that on you - it's madness. Let's go up to the garden path - it's a nice way back.

JESSE

That sounds better than shopping, actually, not that I wasn't up for doing anything you wanted.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

7 EXT. STREET -- AFTERNOON

7

They are walking, approaching the garden path.

CELINE

Sometimes, I can get high on just looking and trying on things, I don't even need to buy.

JESSE

A therapist would tell you it's all good.

CELINE

Are you ever in therapy?



JESSE

Does it seem like I'm in therapy?

CELINE

I don't know - has it helped your sex problems?

JESSE

(wide eyed)  
Sex problems?

CELINE

No, I'm kidding.

8 EXT. GARDEN PATH STAIRWAY -- AFTERNOON

8

They continue their walk/talk.

JESSE

No, no, tell me the truth. Did we have problems that night?

CELINE

I was kidding. We didn't even have sex anyway.

JESSE

What? That's a joke, right? \*

CELINE

No, we didn't. That was the whole thing.

JESSE

Of course we did.

CELINE

But we didn't. You didn't have a condom and I never have sex without one, especially if it was a one night thing. I'm extremely paranoid about my health.

JESSE

I'm finding this very scary that you don't remember what happened.

CELINE

You know what, I didn't write an entire book, but I kept a journal and I wrote the whole night in it. That's what I meant by you idealizing the night.

JESSE

(a bit louder)  
I even remember the brand of condom  
I used.

CELINE

That's disgusting.

Walking by are an older couple with three kids. They look  
back, a bit shocked.

JESSE

No it isn't.

CELINE

Alright, when I get home, I'll check  
my journal from '94, but I know I'm  
right.

(a beat)

Wait a minute. Was it in the  
cemetery?

JESSE

Noooo. We visited the cemetery during  
the day. It was in a park, very  
late at night.

CELINE

Wait a minute.

JESSE

Was it that forgettable? You don't  
remember, in the park?

CELINE

Wait a minute, I think you might be  
right.

JESSE

You're messing with me.

CELINE

Sorry, no you're right. It's strange  
sometimes it's like I put things in  
drawers inside my head and forget  
about it.

CELINE (CONT'D)

I guess it is less painful to put certain things away than to live with it.

JESSE

So that night was a sad memory for you?

CELINE

I didn't mean that night in particular. I meant that certain things are better off forgotten.

JESSE

God, I remember that night better than entire years. \*

CELINE

Me too, I mean I thought I did. Maybe I put it away because of the fact that my Grandmother's funeral was the day we we're supposed to meet again.

JESSE

It was a bad day for me, but it must've been even worse for you.

CELINE

Yeah it was unreal, I looked at her dead body in the coffin, I looked at her hands that used to hold me, so warm, so sweet, but nothing in that coffin resembled what I remembered of her. All the warmth was gone. I was crying looking at her, so confused about if I was crying because I was never going to see her again or never going to see you again. Sorry to go on like this, but I've been a little down this week.

JESSE

Why?

CELINE

Forget it, nothing bad, reading your book maybe. Thinking of how hopeful I was that summer and fall and since then it's kind of... I don't know, memory is a wonderful thing it you don't have to deal the past.

He laughs.

JESSE

Can I make a bumper sticker out of that? MEMORY IS A WONDERFUL THING IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH PAST. If you wrote a book about our night, that could be the title.

CELINE

Yes, I guess it would have been a different book.

JESSE

It wouldn't have a sex scene.

CELINE

But you know what - now that we've met again we can change our memory of Dec. 16th - it no longer has that sad ending of us never seeing each other again.

\*  
\*

JESSE

Yeah, a memory's never finished if you really think about it.

CELINE

Yes I know, I have memories from my childhood that I realized more recently never really happened. My mom was so paranoid when I was eight or nine she was always warning me when I walked home at night from my piano lesson about dirty old men giving me candies and showing me their pee-pees.

Jesse laughs.

CELINE (CONT'D)

As I got older I had this image in my head that this had really happened. To the point that I associated sex with that walk home. And now sometimes when I am having sex I see myself walking down that street.

JESSE

Is that street nearby?

They laugh.

\*

CELINE

Did you ever keep a journal as a kid? \*

JESSE \*

Yeah, I started when I was about thirteen. \*

CELINE \*

Me too. It's funny I read mine from '83 the other day. What really surprised me is that I was dealing with life the same way I am now. I was much more naive and hopeful, but the core, and the way I was feeling things is exactly the same as it is now. I haven't changed much at all. \*

JESSE

I don't think anyone does. No one wants to admit it, but it's like we have these innate set points, and nothing much is going to change our general disposition.

CELINE

Do you believe that?

JESSE

The older I get, I think maybe so. I read about this study where they followed people that had won the lottery and people who'd become paraplegics. We're led to believe one would make us euphoric and the other suicidal. The study showed that within about six months, once they'd more or less gotten used to their new situation, they were fundamentally the same as they were before. \*

CELINE

The same? \*

JESSE

Yeah, if they were basically an optimistic, jovial person, they were an optimistic, jovial person in a wheelchair. If they were a petty, miserable person, they were now a petty miserable person with a new house, Cadillac and boat. \*

CELINE

You mean I'll be forever depressed  
no matter what great things happen  
in my life?

JESSE

Definitely. Are you depressed now?

CELINE

No. I'm not depressed but I worry I'll get to the end of my life feeling I haven't done all I wanted to do.

JESSE

What do you want to do?

CELINE

I mean I want to paint, write more songs, learn Chinese, play my guitar each day. There are so many things that I want to do, and I end up doing not much.

He laughs.

JESSE

Well let me ask you this: do you believe in ghosts, or spirits?

CELINE

No.

JESSE

Do you believe in re-incarnation?

CELINE

Not at all.

JESSE

What about God?

CELINE

No, no.

Jesse laughs.

CELINE (CONT'D)

But at the same time, I don't want to be one of those people that don't believe in any kind of magic.

JESSE

So you believe in Astrology.

CELINE

Of course! I mean, your a Scorpio, I'm a Sag, we get along. No. There's that Einstein quote that if you don't believe in any kind of magic or mystery, you're as good as dead.



JESSE

Yeah, I've always felt there was  
some kind of mystical core to the

JESSE (CONT'D)

universe. But I don't believe that me, my personality, has any permanent place here. And the more I believe that, the more I can't go through life and think "This is no big deal." This is it. What do you see? What do you feel? What do you think is funny? Every day is the last.

CELINE

And sometimes when I feel that way I call my mom and I tell her I love her, she's always...

(imitating mother)

"Oh my God, what's wrong? You've got cancer? You're going to commit suicide?" It's almost not worth it.

Jesse laughs.

CELINE (CONT'D)

So what about us?

JESSE

What about us?

CELINE

For example if we knew we were both going to die tonight...

JESSE

Like the apocalypse was coming?

CELINE

No, that's too dramatic. Just the two of us would die, would we talk about your book, the environment or, like tell me what you would you say.

JESSE

If today was our last day?

CELINE

That's hard, no?

JESSE

I would definitely stop talking about my book, probably drop the environment...

CELINE

Okay.

JESSE

I wouldn't mind still talking about magic in the universe, I'd just like to do it in a hotel room in between sessions of us like, wildly fucking till we die.

CELINE

Wow. Why not just go over to that bench right there? Why waste time going to a hotel?

He immediately grabs her and pulls over to a bench. He twirls her into his lap as she is suddenly overcome with shyness.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Well, we're most likely not gonna die tonight.

JESSE

Too bad.

She repositions herself on the bench next to him.

CELINE

Forget about the hotel or the park bench.

JESSE

Well let's not forget about it.

CELINE

That was an extreme example but my point was to communicate with people is very hard to do.

JESSE

Yeah, most of our day to day exchanges, if you think about it, they're more like traffic control.

CELINE

I know. For example, a friend of mine was talking about she and her boyfriend's problems in bed. After they had dated for about a year, she started telling him things he could do to please her, and it totally freaked him out.

JESSE

Why?

CELINE

He thought it meant he was a bad lover and was all threatened, they almost broke up over it.

JESSE

Why'd she wait so long?

CELINE

I don't know, men are so easily offended.

JESSE

More than women, you think?

CELINE

Definitely on that subject. Plus I think it is easier to please a man than to please a woman.

JESSE

It's definitely easier to please a man.

CELINE

Depends, but generally yes. Can you name the female mammal that has opposing thumbs and is been observed in the wild to be actively encouraging males of the same species to lick its genitalia?

JESSE

No, like a baboon or something?  
What?

Celine gives a crazed look and points her two thumbs at herself, letting out a little primate shriek. They both laugh.

CELINE

The good thing about getting older  
is that I don't get wiser I just get  
dirtier.

JESSE

No shame in that.

CELINE

Anyway, my friend said the next man  
she dates, before they ever do  
anything, she's going to make a  
questionnaire about sex - what each  
of them likes and dislikes.

JESSE

Is it on paper, or do you answer out  
loud?

CELINE

Mostly written down, I think, but  
not just yes or no. Like if the  
question is, are you into S & M, you  
can answer, "no, but a spanking once  
in a while... doesn't hurt."

Jesse laughs.

JESSE

Or it could be like, do you like  
dirty talk during sex?

CELINE

Or it could be like, which specific  
words do you want to hear or not?

She looks at him.

JESSE

Me?

CELINE

Okay. Which words do you like to  
hear?

JESSE

I don't know.

CELINE

For instance, how do you feel about  
the word pussy?

JESSE

Love it.



They both laugh.

CELINE

It's amazing what perverts we've both become in the last 9 years.

JESSE

At least now we don't have to pretend that each sexual experience is some life-altering event.

CELINE

Yeah - by this time I know you've stuck it in so many places, it's probably like, about to fall off, right?

JESSE

Exactly, and I can't realistically expect you're anything but a total ho at this point, so...

CELINE

That's true, what can you do?

JESSE

Nothing.

(a beat)

So tell me, what kind of songs do you write?

CELINE

What kind?

JESSE

Yeah, what are they like? \*

CELINE

I don't know. Some are about people, relationships, one's about my cat. \*

JESSE

Sing me one.

CELINE

No. I don't have my guitar.

JESSE

C'mon. Acapella.

CELINE

No way, not right now.

JESSE

If not now, when?

Celine starts to get up, with Jesse eventually following.

CELINE

That's right, we need to get going back to the bookstore - you're going to miss your flight.

JESSE

I'll be fine.

CELINE

This will take us to the Seine. Then we can just walk from there.

JESSE

Okay, okay.

CELINE

So you're flying back to New York?

JESSE

Yeah.

They walk in silence for a bit.

CELINE

So I read in that article you are married and have a kid? That's great.

A slightly weird look from Jesse: "knew this coming, eventually."

JESSE

Yeah. He's four - can you believe it.

CELINE

What's his name?

JESSE

Henry. Hank - he's amazing. It's so much fun.

CELINE

I'm sure. And your wife? What does she do?

JESSE

Ummm...She teaches elementary school. You don't have children, do you?

Oh Shit!

CELINE

CELINE (CONT'D)

I left them in the car, with the windows up! But it was six months ago - do you think they're okay?

They laugh.

CELINE (CONT'D)

I want to some day, but I'm not ready.  
I'm in a good relationship, though.

\*

JESSE

Yeah? That's nice. What's he like?

CELINE

He's great - he's a photo-journalist and he does war coverage. He's away a lot which leaves me free to do a lot of things.

JESSE

Isn't that dangerous? Seems like a lot of those guys are getting killed these days.

CELINE

He promises me he never takes risks, but I often worry. He goes into this trance when he starts to photograph something.

JESSE

What do you mean?

CELINE

Once we were in New Delhi and we passed a bum lying in the middle of the sidewalk.

JESSE

Bomb?

CELINE

Bum... homeless. It looked like he needed help but his first reaction was to photograph him. He took a picture, very close to his face, even fixing his collar to make it look better. He was totally detached from the person.

JESSE

Well, to be good at that job, I'd think you'd have to be like that.

CELINE

Maybe. I don't judge him for it - what he does is essential and incredible. All I'm saying is that I could never do it.

They are approaching the Seine.

JESSE

Hey, let's go get on that boat.

CELINE

You don't have time.

JESSE

Come on, it'll fun, I really want  
to. We still have fifteen minutes.  
Do you have a cell phone?

CELINE

Yeah.

JESSE

I'll call him from the boat and he  
can pick me up at the next stop.  
That way we won't lose any time.

CELINE

OK, if you want to... I've never  
been on these boats, it's for  
tourists. It's a bit embarrassing.  
Oh well.

They speed up to get on the boat before it leaves.

JESSE

So what, you in love with this guy?

CELINE

What guy?

JESSE

The photo journalist.

CELINE

Yeah of course. Well, probably.

9

EXT. BOAT -- AFTERNOON

They get on the boat and pay. Celine asks the guy about  
where the boat stops next.

CELINE

Bonjour, deux ticket s'il vous plait,  
c'est quoi le prochain arret?

BOAT GUY

Quai Henri IV, Mademoiselle.

CELINE

Tell him to pick you up at quai Henri  
IV.

JESSE

Arri cat?

CELINE

Quai Henri IV.

JESSE

An-Ri-cat?

CELINE

Henri IV

9

JESSE

Oh, like Henry 4.

CELINE

Yes.

JESSE

Why didn't you say so?

Jesse makes his call while Celine walks to the back of the boat. Eventually they stand on the back of the boat, the wind blowing, as Notre Dame looms in the background.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Notre Dame, check that out. I heard a story once that when the Germans were occupying Paris and they had to retreat back, they wired Notre Dame to blow up and they had to leave one guy in charge of hitting the switch. But the guy, the soldier, just waited, sitting there, and he just couldn't do it. When the allied troops eventually came in they found all the explosives and the switch just lying there. They found the same thing at Sacre-Coeur, the Eiffel Tower and two other places, I think. I always liked that story.



CELINE

Yes, that is a great story. But you have to think that one day Notre Dame will be gone. There used to be another Cathedral there.

JESSE

Right where Notre Dame is?

CELINE

Yeah. Everything passes. People, buildings... You know what, I've never done this. I forget about how beautiful Paris is... Sometimes when you live in a city you don't even look at it anymore.

JESSE

Yeah. I think my book was like building something so I wouldn't forget the details of the time we spent together. Like a reminder that once we really did meet, this was real... this happened.

CELINE

You know I'm happy you are saying that, I mean I always feel like a freak because I'm never able to move on like this...

(snap her fingers)

People just have an affair or even a relationship, they break up and they forget, they move on like they would have changed brand of cereals. I feel I was never able to really forget anyone I've been with, because each person has their own specific qualities, and you can never replace anyone, what is lost is lost. Each relationship when it ends, really damages me, I never really recover. That is why I'm very careful with getting involved because it hurts me too much...or even getting laid, actually I don't do that. I will miss of the person the most mundane things. Like I'm obsessed with little things.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm crazy, when I was a little girl my mom told me I was always late to school, so one day she followed me to see why I was late. I was looking at... chestnuts falling from the trees and rolling down the side walk or ants crossing the road, the way a leaf cast a shadow on a tree trunk, little things. It is the same with people, I see in them little details so specific to each of them that move me, that I miss and will always miss. You can never replace anyone because everyone is made of such beautiful specific details.

Pause.

CELINE (CONT'D)

You know, like I remember the way your beard had a bit of red in it and the way the sun was making it glow in the morning right before you left, I missed that. Shit I'm really crazy.

JESSE

Now I know for sure why I wrote that stupid book - so you might actually show up at a reading in Paris and I'd walk over to you and ask, "hey, WHERE THE FUCK WERE YOU?"

Celine laughs.

CELINE

Honestly, did you think I'd be here today?

JESSE

I'm not kidding - I think I wrote it to try and find you somehow.

CELINE

I know it's not true but that is sweet to say.

JESSE

I think it is true. What did you think the changes were of us seeing each other again?

CELINE

After that December, I'd say almost zero, but we're not real anyway. We are just characters in that old lady's dream - she's on her deathbed and she is fantasizing about her youth, so of course we had to meet again.

Jesse then speaks in a voice that is both louder and more frustrated and desperate than we've seen.

JESSE

God, why weren't you there in Vienna?!

CELINE

You know why!

JESSE

I know, I mean, I wish you would have been. Things might have been so different in our lives.

CELINE

Do you think so?

JESSE

Yes, I actually do.

CELINE

Maybe not, maybe we would have hated each other eventually.

JESSE

Come on, like we are hating each other right now?

CELINE

Maybe we are only good at brief encounters walking around in European cities in a warm climate.

JESSE

Ahhh, why didn't we exchange numbers and stuff?

CELINE

We were young and stupid?

JESSE

Are we still?

CELINE

I guess when you are young, you believe that you will meet many people

CELINE (CONT'D)

with whom you'll connect with, but later in life you realize it only happens a few times.

JESSE

And you can screw it up and miss-connect.

\*  
\*

Celine is a bit tense.

CELINE

Well the past is the past, it was meant to be that way, no?

JESSE

Do you really believe that? That everything is fated in some way?

CELINE

I think the world might be less free than we think. That when given these exact circumstances, this is what will happen every time. Two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, you'll get water every time.

JESSE

No - what if your grandmother had lived another week, or died a week earlier, maybe days, things might have been very different. I believe that.

CELINE

But you can't think like that.

JESSE

I know you shouldn't on most things, but on this one, something was off. Forgive me this, but in the months leading up to my wedding, I was thinking of you all the time. And on the way there, I'm in the car with a buddy of mine, staring out the window as he drove downtown. It was raining, and I thought I saw you, not far from the church folding up an umbrella, walking into a deli on the corner of Broadway and about thirteenth. I thought I was hallucinating, and now I know it probably was you!

\*  
\*

CELINE

I lived on fifteenth and University.

\*

JESSE

See, I'm not crazy.

CELINE

(pause)

What is it like to be married? You haven't talked much about that.

JESSE

I haven't? How weird. I met her our last year of college and we broke up and got back together for a period of years. Then we were sort-of back together and then she was pregnant and ah... So yeah, marriage...

CELINE

What's she like?

JESSE

She's a great mom, - a good teacher, smart interesting pretty. I don't know. I remember thinking at the time that so many of the men I've admired most - their lives have been committed to something larger than themselves.

CELINE

So you got married because men you admire were married?

JESSE

No, it was more like I had this idea of my best self and I wanted to pursue that even if it might have been overriding my honest self. It's funny, at that moment I thought didn't matter so much "the who" of it, that ultimately nobody is going to be everything to you and that it was the simple action of committing yourself and meeting your responsibilities that mattered. I mean, what is love if not respect and trust and admiration and I felt all those things. So, cut to the present tense, I've had sex probably ten times in the last four years.

She laughs.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You're laughing at me? I know it sounds pathetic, but if somebody

\*  
\*

JESSE (CONT'D)

were to touch me affectionately, I'd disassemble into molecules. I'm sorry that's probably more than you want to hear.

\*

CELINE

Less than ten times in four years?  
Do you masturbate a lot?

\*

\*

JESSE

Don't ask that question if you don't want to hear the answer. I'm like a teenager. I have to admit, in my youthful idea of marriage, it didn't include a lot of beating off.

They laugh.

10 EXT. BOAT DOCK -- AFTERNOON

10

They exit the boat and walk toward the street.

CELINE

I'm sorry you don't seem that happy with your marriage - This friend of mine, she's a shrink.

JESSE

How is she doing?

CELINE

She's a mess, anyway she was telling me that she's been dealing with a lot of couples that are breaking up for the same exact reason.

JESSE

Hmmmm. What reason's that?

CELINE

All those couples expected after a few years of living together for the passion, that consuming desire, to be the same as at the beginning. But it is impossible.

JESSE

Yeah I know, I know.

CELINE

I mean thank god otherwise we would end up with an aneurysm if we were

CELINE (CONT'D)

in that constant state of excitement. Plus we would end up doing nothing at all with our lives. You think you would have finished your book if you were fucking someone every 5 minutes?

JESSE

I would've welcome the challenge.

CELINE

Your wife, it's natural after the birth of your son, she has to give all her love to the little one, imagine if she was totally obsessed with sex and forget about the baby while she's ridding you like a wild cat. I mean that wouldn't make sense.

JESSE

I know. That all makes perfect sense, but it's more than sex.

CELINE

I know it's obvious but couples are so confused now. Men need to feel essential and they don't feel that way anymore because it was imprinted in their head for so long that they had to be a provider. I'm a strong women in my professional life, I don't need a man to feed me but I still need a man to love me and that I could love.

They are now near his car and driver.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Well here's your driver...

JESSE

Yeah...

CELINE

I guess now it's goodbye, no?

JESSE

Woah. Why don't we give you a ride home or something.

CELINE

I can take the metro, no problem.



JESSE

Why not keep talking? My flight's not till ten - they have me arriving two hours early. I'm sure it's not a problem.

CELINE

I'm not exactly on the way.

JESSE

It'll be fine.

(to driver)

Is it okay if we drop off my friend on the way to the airport?

CELINE

C'est pas tres loin, c'est 10 rue des petites ecuries.

The driver smiles.

DRIVER

Allons-y.

Jesse and Celine pile in.

11 INT. CAR -- AFTERNOON

11

They sit in the back seat.

CELINE

For me, it's better I don't romanticize things as much anymore. I was suffering so much all the time. I still have lots of dreams but they are not in regard to my love life. It doesn't make me sad, it is the way it is.

JESSE

Is that why you are in a relationship with a man that is never around?

Celine is a bit stung by his observation.

CELINE

Yes, obviously, I can't deal with the everyday life of a relationship, we have this exciting time together and then he leaves and I miss him but at least I'm not dying inside.

CELINE (CONT'D)

When someone is always around me I'm suffocating.

JESSE

Wait a second - you just said you need to love and be loved.

CELINE

Yeah, but when I do, it quickly makes nauseous. It's a disaster. I feel really happy only when I am on my own. Even being alone is better than sitting next to lover and feeling lonely.

(getting mad)

It's not so easy for me to be all romantic. You start off that way and after you've been screwed over a few times you give up on all your delusional ideas and you just take whatever comes into your life. That's not even true - I haven't been screwed - over, I've just had too many blah relationships. They were not mean, they cared for me but there was no real excitement or connection, or at least not from my side.

She starts crying.

JESSE

I'm sorry. Are you really that unhappy?

CELINE

No, it's not even that. I was fine until I read your fucking book - it stirred shit up. It reminded me how genuinely romantic I WAS, how I had so much hope in things and now I don't believe in anything that relates to love. I don't feel things for people anymore. It's almost like in a way I put all my romanticism into that one night and I was never able to feel all this again. Somehow that night took things away from me, like I expressed them to you and you took them with you.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Somehow destiny not allowing me to see you again made me cold like if love wasn't for me.

JESSE

I can't believe that.

CELINE

Reality and love are almost contradictory for me. It's funny, every one of my exs are now married. Men go out with me, we break up and then they get married. Later they call me to thank me for teaching them what love is, that I taught them to care and respect women.

JESSE

Yeah, I may be one of those guys.

CELINE

I want to kill them! Why didn't they asked me to marry them, I would have said no but I least they could have asked! But it's my fault. I never felt it was the right man, never. But what does that mean, the right man! The love of your life? The concept is absurd. The idea that we can only be complete with another person is evil.

JESSE

Can I talk?

CELINE

I guess I've been heartbroken too many times and then recovered. Now from the start I make no effort because I know it's not gonna work anyway.

JESSE

You can't do that- spend your life trying to avoid pain at the expense of engaging.

CELINE

Those are words. You know what I got to get away from you. Stop the car and want to get out.

JESSE

No wait let's keep talking about it.

CELINE

No, it's just being around you.

Jesse takes her arm.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Don't touch me. I'm taking a cab.  
(to Driver)  
Laissez moi au coin de la rue. La  
c'est parfait.

The driver slows down.

JESSE

(to driver)  
No, no, keep going.  
(to Celine)  
Listen, I'm just so glad to be with  
you, and that you didn't forget me.

CELINE

No I didn't and it pisses me off.  
You come here to Paris all romantic  
and MARRIED. Screw you! Please  
don't get me wrong - I'm not trying  
to get you or anything. All I need  
is a married man. There's been so  
much water under the bridge, it's  
not even about you anymore.  
It's about that time, that moment in  
time that is forever gone.

\*  
\*

JESSE

You say all this stuff but you didn't  
even remember having sex.

CELINE

Of course I remembered.

JESSE

You did?

CELINE

Girls pretend things like that.  
What was I suppose to say, I remember  
the wine in the park, looking up at  
the stars fading while the sun came  
up. We had sex twice you idiot.

JESSE

You know what? I'm just so happy to see you, even if you've become an angry manic-depressive activist. I still like you and enjoy being around you.

CELINE

And I feel the same. I'm sorry I had to let it all out. I'm miserable in my love life, in my relationship. I always act like I'm detached but I'm dying inside. I'm dying because I'm so numb. I don't feel pain or excitement. I'm not bitter, I'm just...

The car makes it's way through the streets of Paris, Celine and Jesse continue talking in the back seat.

JESSE

Oh God, you think you are the one dying inside -My life is 24/7 bad. The ONLY happiness I get is when I'm out with my son. I've been to couples' counseling, things I'd never thought I'd have to do. Bought self help books, lingerie, lit candles...

CELINE

Did the candles help?

JESSE

Hell no. I don't love her the way she needs to be loved. I don't even see a future for us but then I look across the table at my beautiful boy and I think I would suffer any torture to wake up in his house and be with him for all the minutes of his life - I don't want to miss out on that. But man, there is no joy or laughter in my home and I don't want him growing up in that.

CELINE

No laughter. My parents are still together for thirty-five years - and even when they have a fight they end up laughing.

JESSE

I don't want to be one of those people getting divorced at fifty-two falling

JESSE (CONT'D)

down into tears admitting that they never loved their spouse and feel like they've lost their life into a vacuum cleaner, I want a great LIFE. I want her to have a great life, she deserves that. But we're living in the pretense of marriage, responsibility, these ideas of how people are supposed to live. I have these dreams all the time...

CELINE

What dreams?

JESSE

I wasn't going to say this, but I have these dreams where I'm standing on a platform and you keep going by on a train, again and again and again and then I wake up with the fuckin' sweats. And then there's this other dream where you are pregnant beside me in bed naked and I want to touch you so bad but you tell me not to and then you look away and I touch you anyway, right on your ankle, and your skin is so soft and I wake up in sobs and my wife is sitting there looking at me and I am ten million miles from her and I know something is wrong and I can't keep living like this. There's got to be more to love than commitment. I have to tell you I put the whole idea of romantic love to bed when you weren't there that day I swore it off.

A pause.

CELINE

Why are you telling me all this?

\*  
\*

JESSE

I'm sorry - maybe I should't have.

\*  
\*

CELINE

Isn't it weird that people always think that they are the only one getting through tough times? I thought from the article you must've had the perfect life- wife, kid, published author- but it sounds like your personal life is more of a mess than mine.

JESSE

Greaaaat!

\*  
\*

The car stops in from of her address. Celine leans up to the driver.

CELINE

Rentrez dans l'impasse, vous pouvez pas restez la, mais arretez vous sous l'arche.

JESSE

Are you relieved that I'm even more in deep shit than you are?

CELINE

Yes. You've made me feel better.

JESSE

Good, I'm glad.

CELINE

You know I really wish you the best. It's not because I'm incapable of having a family that I wish everyone to be doomed like me.

JESSE

I'm sure you'd be a great mother.

CELINE

Really, you think so?

JESSE

A few anti-depressants and you'll do great.

She raises her hand and starts moving her fingers quickly.

CELINE

Say stop.

JESSE

Stop.

She does, with the middle finger extended. Then again (?)

They step out the car.

12 EXT. CELINE'S APARTMENT COURTYARD -- AFTERNOON

12

They get out at Celine's apartment, near an arched entrance to a long corridor.

CELINE

Here. I want to test something.

She moves over to Jesse and gives him a big, long hug.



CELINE (CONT'D)

I'm seeing if you are going to dissolve into molecules or if you stay together.

Jesse is almost shaking.

JESSE

How am I doing?

CELINE

Still here.

JESSE

Good. I'm liking still being here.

They slowly part. Jesse turns to the driver.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Je la racompagne a as porte, ca ne vous ennuie pas trop.

JEAN

Aucun probleme. Je suis paye a l'heure.

They start walking down the corridor toward a courtyard.

CELINE

So it is all really true about your dream, or did you say all that just to hopefully get in my pants?

JESSE

Just to get in your pants - I use that all the time. God, you live here, this is incredible! How long have you been here?

CELINE

Four years.

She sees a cat lounging on the cobblestones ahead of them.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Oh, there's my cat, look at him he's so cute. What I love about this cat is that every morning I bring him down to the courtyard. And every single morning he looks at everything like its the first time, every plant, every tree, every little corner. He smell's everything with his little cute nose. I love my cat.

She picks him up and continues walking, they enter a giant beautiful courtyard.

JESSE  
What's his name?

CELINE  
Che.

JESSE  
Commie!

CELINE  
Che, in Argentina means "Hey"!

Neighbors are organizing a picnic dinner. Kids run around playing some kind of game. An older man sits with others eating salad and Melon.

OLDER MAN  
(in french)  
Celine! Tu nous fais quoi ce soir?

CELINE  
Taboule, je le descends dans une minute.

OLDER MAN  
Salut.

JESSE  
Salut.

A woman in her early 60's comes up to Celine coming out of a building with a dish.

WOMAN  
Salut! C'est qui celui la il est mignon. Il mange avec nous.

CELINE  
Non il prend l'avion.

WOMAN  
Tant pis pour lui, il gouteras pas mes pattes aux poids chiches.

OLDER MAN  
Pourquoi y mange pas avec nous?

WOMAN  
Il aime pas ton short.

13 EXT. HER APARTMENT STEPS -- AFTERNOON

13

They walk towards her door. She looks up at the late afternoon sky. They are on her doorstep. Moment of truth.

JESSE

You know what, I want you to play me a song.

CELINE

But you'll miss your plane.

JESSE

C'mon. We got a little more time. I'm going to be sitting around the airport for well over an hour.

She thinks about it, wondering...

JESSE (CONT'D)

Seriously, one song.

CELINE

Ok, but quick.

She gets out her keys and opens the door.

14 INT. STAIRWAY -- AFTERNOON

14

In the lobby of the building they are confronted by a big winding stairway with a little elevator in the middle.

JESSE

I love these kind of stairways. What floor are you on?

CELINE

Third.

They start up the stairs, not saying anything, but acting like everything is normal. As they continue in silence, the charged undertone seems even more pronounced. Eventually they reach her front door. She pulls out her keys and opens the door.

She closes the door.

15 INT. CELINE'S APARTMENT -- LATE AFTERNOON

15

He awkwardly looks around while she heads to the kitchen.

CELINE

Would you like some tea?

JESSE

Sure.

As she prepares a couple of glasses, we see the details of her apartment through his eyes. Some paintings, a picture of her as a child, a photo of her with her grandmother. A cat meanders over the window sill. He eventually comes across an article and a picture of himself pinned up on a bulletin board.

He notices her guitar sitting by the sofa. She walks out of the kitchen and gives him a glass.

CELINE

Is camomile okay?

JESSE

Yeah, sure. Thanks. Merci.

CELINE

Messy? My apartment is messy?

JESSE

No - merci.

CELINE

I see your French has improved.

JESSE

Oh yeah, I'm practically fluent. So what song are you going to play me?

CELINE

No, I can't. I'm embarrassed.

JESSE

Wait a minute. I come all the way over here... You can't crap out on me now. Anything will be great.

CELINE

Uhhh. Okay, but you're going to laugh at me.

JESSE

I doubt it.

CELINE

Which one do you want? I only have three in English: the one about my cat, my ex-boyfriend or the one about you?

JESSE

Ahhh... sounds like a trick question.  
Give me the ex-boyfriend.

CELINE

The ex-boyfriend, really?

She sits on the couch, all hippie style, and strums a beautiful, funny song.

All Jesse can do is sit across from her on the sofa and smile.

When Celine eventually finishes, he applauds.

JESSE

Whееew! Encore! That was awesome!  
Now the one about me.

CELINE

No, no, no. Have your tea and then  
you have to get going.

She gets up and goes into the kitchen. While she's in there, Jesse pokes around through her cds. By the time she returns, a Nina Simone song is playing and he is sitting on the couch.

JESSE

Is it okay if I put my feet up?

CELINE

Sure. Did you ever see Nina Simone  
in concert?

JESSE

No, I wish I had. I can't believe  
she's gone.

CELINE

I know, it's so sad. I saw her play  
twice. She was great. This is one  
of my favorites of hers.

The song begins:

"Just in time you've found me just in time

Before you came my time was running low

I was lost the losing dice were tossed  
My bridges all were crossed nowhere to go  
Now you hear now I know just where I'm going  
No more doubt of fear I've found my way  
For love came just in time you've found me just in time  
And changed my lonely nights that lucky day"

## CELINE (CONT'D)

She used to stop right in the middle of a song, and walk from behind the piano over to the edge of the stage. Then she'd talk to somebody in the audience.

(imitating Nina)

"Oh yeah, baby," She'd walk off a little, then walk really slow back over to the mike. She had a big ass, and this funny little walk.

Celine sort of hunches over and sticks out her butt a little and proceeds to waddle slowly across the room. As the song keeps going, and Celine keeps clowning around, Jesse just sits there with the most peaceful, happy grin we've ever seen on him.

"Just in time

Before you came my time was running low oh baby  
I was lost the losing dice were tossed  
My bridges all crossed nowhere to go  
Now you hear now I know just where I'm going  
No more doubt of fear I've found my way  
For love came just in time you've found me just in time  
And changed my lonely nights and changed my lonely nights  
And changed my lonely nights and changed my lonely nights  
And changed my lonely nights that lucky day."

## CELINE (CONT'D)

(imitating Nina Simone)

Yo baby, You gonna miss that plane.

JESSE

I know.

They both smile.

FADE OUT:

the end