BEFORE SUNSET

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EXT. PARIS -- AFTERNOON

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?

INT. SHAKESPEARE BOOKSTORE -- AFTERNOON

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?

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 then Gulliver's Travels.

INT/EXT. BEFORE SUNRISE MONTAGE

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...

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.

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 cutta the whole thing.

Still offscreen, the Bookstore Manager chimes in.

MANAGER (O.S.)
We have time for one last question.

INT. SHAKESPEARE BOOKSTORE -- AFTERNOON

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.

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. He'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.

EXT. WALK FROM BOOKSTORE -- AFTERNOON

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.

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.

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
Ahhh! 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?
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!!!

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

CELIN
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.

JESSE
What do you do for them?

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

JESSE
Wow.

CELIN
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...

CELIN
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?

CELIN
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.

CELIN
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.

CELIN
Better! How could you possibly think that?

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

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

He laughs.

CELIN (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...

INT. CAFE -- AFTERNOON

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?

JESSE
No.

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.

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?

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?
CELLINE
No... you have this little line here.
She points to the wrinkle between his eyebrows.

JESSE
I know, I know.

CELLINE
Like a scar.

JESSE
A scar? Like a gunshot wound?

CELLINE
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.

CELLINE
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.

CELLINE
Oh I know. I actually like it too.

JESSE
I was once a drummer in a band.

CELLINE
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 rehersing, 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)
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.

EXT. STREET -- AFTERNOON

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.

EXT. GARDEN PATH STAIRWAY -- AFTERNOON

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'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.
CELINA
Did you ever keep a journal as a kid?

JESSE
Yeah, I started when I was about thirteen.

CELINA
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.

CELINA
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.

CELINA
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.

CELINÉ (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?
CELINE

Oh Shit!
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.

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
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.
CELINNE
(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...

CELINNE
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.

CELINNE
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 then 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

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
Hmmm. 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 aneurism if we were
CELINE (CONT'D)

ir 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.

CELIN
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?

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

The driver smiles.

DRIVER
Allons-y.

Jesse and Celine pile in.

INT. CAR -- AFTERNOON

They sit in the back seat.

CELIN
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.

CELIN
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.
JESE
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.

JESE
(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.

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

CELINE
Of course I remembered.

JESE
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 its 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 shouldn'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 là, 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

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 raccompagne a as porte, ca ne
vous ennui 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
smells 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 descend 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 goutera pas mes pattes aux poids chiches.

    OLDER MAN
    Pourquoi y mange pas avec nous?

    WOMAN
    Il aime pas ton short.
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.

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.

He awkwardly looks around while she heads to the kitchen.

CELINE
Would you like some tea?
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
Wheeew! 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.
I know.
They both smile.

FADE OUT:

the end