

BEFORE SUNRISE

by

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FADE IN:

1

INT. TRAIN - AFTERNOON

1

The Eurail rolls along. Inside, passengers sleep, read, and stare out the windows. A few walk up and down the aisles. CELINE, a young woman in her mid-twenties, is curled up in her seat reading Georges Bataill's *Story of the Eye*. Strikingly attractive, she plays it down by wearing no makeup, a loose-fitting vintage dress, and flat shoes. She continues reading while taking an occasional bite of a chocolate bar. Sitting four rows back and on the other side of the aisle, JESSE, also mid-twenties, is engrossed in Klaus Kinski's memoir, *All I Need Is Love*. Casually good looking but a little scruffy, he dresses in the jeans and T-shirt mode. Suddenly a couple, two fortyish types who have been arguing semiquietly in the seat behind Celine, start yelling at each other in German. The WIFE takes a swipe at the newspaper the HUSBAND has been screening him behind.

WIFE

Will you put down that damn newspaper and listen to me?

HUSBAND

What've I been doing the last thirty minutes? Would you *shut up* for Chrissake?

WIFE

You shut up! How dare you tell me to shut up! It's the same damn thing all over again! I can't believe --

HUSBAND

I said shut up! I'm putting down my newspaper and telling you to shut up.

Celine suddenly gets up, grabs her bag, and starts looking for another seat. A few rows back, she finds a seat across the aisle from Jesse. Before sitting down, they make brief eye contact and kind of shake their heads and smile at the tension. Just as she settles in and goes back to her book, the wife gets up and storms down the aisle. Jesse and Celine follow her with their eyes, and as she passes them, they find they are looking right at each other. He makes a funny "uh-oh" face.

JESSE

Do you have any idea what they're arguing about? Do you speak English?

CELINE

Yes. But no, I don't know. My German is not that good.

(a beat)

Have you ever heard that as couples get older they lose their ability to hear each other?

JESSE

Really?

CELINE

Supposedly men lose their ability to hear higher-pitched sounds and women eventually lose hearing on the low end. I guess they sort of nullify each other or something.

JESSE

Must be nature's way of allowing couples to grow old together and not kill each other, I guess.

There's a slightly awkward moment where they don't know if they should continue talking or not. She glances back down at her book but he keeps looking at her.

JESSE (CONT'D)

What are you reading?

She holds up the book so he can see what it is.

CELINE

How about you?

He shows her what he's reading. Neither has much to say about the other's reading material.

CELINE (CONT'D)

There are so many weird people on the train, no? Last week on my way to Budapest I was sitting and talking with four other people in the lounge car and it turned out that three of them had killed people.

JESSE

No way.

CELINE

Really. One was a war veteran, one had murdered her boyfriend, and another had caused a bad car wreck.

JESSE

So you were the only one who hadn't killed anyone?

CELINE

No, I was one of them. Which one do you think?

She laughs and he slowly joins her.

JESSE

I know what you mean. I've met some weirdos. There was this British guy sitting across from me the other day who kept throwing his body against the back of his chair, yelling about how we should all join together and stop the train. He was saying, "Everybody, now, we can stop technology. All together..."

CELINE

So what happened?

He demonstrates by throwing his body against his seat.

JESSE

And you know, me and a few others tried for a while, but we couldn't stop technology.

The wife who stormed away earlier suddenly comes back and the argument resumes, right in front of them.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I was thinking about going to the lounge car sometimes soon. You wanna go?

CELINE

We better.

They get up and walk to the door of their car. He pushes the DOOR OPEN button, and as the door opens, he extends his hand toward her.

JESSE

Oh, I'm Jesse. It's James, actually, but my whole life everyone's called me Jesse.

CELINE

So it's Jesse James?

JESSE

No, just Jesse.

CELINE

Celine.

They proceed through the door and Celine pushes the DOOR OPEN button to enter the next car. There is some confusion as to who is opening the door for whom before Celine proceeds and jesse follows her toward the lounge car.

2

INT. LOUNGE CAR - AFTERNOON

2

They sit at a table, eating chips and taking an occasional swig from a drink.

JESSE

So how do you speak such good English?

CELINE

I went to school for a summer in Los Angeles and I've spent some time in London. How do you speak such good English?

JESSE

I'm American.

CELINE

I know. It's a joke. I knew you were American, and, of course, you don't speak any other language.

JESSE

Yeah, yeah, I'm the dumb, vulgar American who has no culture. But I tried. I want you to know I took four years of French. I tried, I was ready. When I was in Paris, I was standing in line at the metro going, "Un billet, s'il vous plaît.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

Un billet, s'il vous plaît." And then I got up to the window, I looked up at the lady and blanked out. "Uh, uh, I need a ticket for the subway." No more French for me.

(a beat)

So where are you headed?

CELINE

Back to Paris. My class starts next week.

JESSE

Where do you go to school?

CELINE

La Sorbonne. You know?

JESSE

Sure. But you were in Budapest?

CELINE

Yeah, I was visiting my grandmother.

JESSE

How is she?

CELINE

Okay. How about you - where are you going?

JESSE

Vienna.

CELINE

What's there?

JESSE

I don't know. I'm flying out of there tomorrow morning.

CELINE

Are you on a holiday?

JESSE

I don't know what I'm on. I've just been traveling around the last two or three weeks.

CELINE

Were you visiting friends, or just going around on your own?

JESSE

I visited a friend in Madrid for a while, but mostly I've just been...  
(new thought)

I got one of those Eurail passes, and you know what's fascinating about traveling around? You spend all this time trying to reach your destination, you get there, you look around, it's never exactly what you'd hoped, you head off somewhere else, and hope for something better.

CELINE

It's like getting ready for a party, getting there, and falling asleep. That's why when I'm traveling I kind of force myself not to expect anything from anywhere or anyone. And then, whatever happens is a surprise. The most insignificant thing can become an endless subject of interest, no?

JESSE

That's what I like about traveling - you can sit down, maybe talk to someone interesting, see something beautiful, read a good book, and that's enough to qualify a good day. You do that at home and everyone thinks you're a bum.

CELINE

I like that though. But it's like my favorite American writers. They describe everything you wouldn't want to live through, and yet you cannot stop reading of this exciting, boring life.

JESSE

So what do you study?

CELINE

Literature. But I haven't decided yet what I really want to do.

JESSE

Do you want to write?

CELINE

Yeah, but...

(new thought)

I kind of had this obsession a few years ago about creating a new form of expression. It was of course an abstract and lost quest, but I was feeling all art forms seemed used up. I was especially rejecting words. They seemed so rusted and dirty. And they've been used for such evil ends. Sometimes, you know, language is so limited. It's like...if you think about it...

She holds her hands out fairly wide and round.

CELINE (CONT'D)

This is an individual's mental experience and perception and...

She holds her hands together and forms a small circle.

CELINE (CONT'D)

This is how much can be expressed through language. We just don't have words for so many of the impressions we have.

She parts her hands and gestures to the large outer circle.

CELINE (CONT'D)

So most of our life we will never be able to express to anyone.

They sit there for an extended moment, neither sure what to say next. Suddenly Jesse smiles and jokingly starts to get up.

JESSE

So I guess...that's it - it's been nice not communicating with you.

They both laugh.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Really, though, I basically agree with you, and maybe it's a sad face of life, but I think it doesn't bother me that much. Maybe I'm wrong about this, but I think that lack of communication frustrates women more than men.



CELINE

Yes, because men are perfectly content to sit in front of TV all day drinking beer and watching sports.

JESSE

Yeah, that's true, but have you ever done that? I did it once with a friend of mine. Drank some beer, had some chips, and watched a couple of games. It was the first time in years I literally jumped for joy. On some level it's sticking your head in the sand, but on another I think it must serve some tribal purpose.

CELINE

I actually agree with you. I kind of like sports. It's one of these few times when men are treated like stupid objects...I'm joking. So you haven't told me what you do. Are you still in school?

JESSE

Nah, I never graduated from college.

CELINE

Are you working?

JESSE

I have a stupid job like everyone else.

CELINE

Is it boring? You're not happy?

JESSE

No, it's a decent job. I don't get paid that much. I don't do that much.

CELINE

So what is the job?

JESSE

I write for a newspaper, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, and pretty much get to do what I want there creatively, so it's okay.

CELINE  
So you write?

JESSE  
Kinda.

CELINE  
So has this trip been good for you?

JESSE  
Yeah. I mean, on one level, it sucked, but sitting on a train and staring out the window for days on end has actually been kind of great.

CELINE  
What do you mean?

JESSE  
I've had an idea I probably would never have had otherwise. Can I tell you about it?

CELINE  
Yes.

JESSE  
Some friends of mine are these cable access producers - you know, anyone can produce a program, and they have to show it. I got really jazzed about it. I imagined a show I want to produce that would last an entire year, twenty-four hours a day. I want to get 365 different video producers around the world to each make their own twenty-four-hour-long document of real time, capturing life around them just as it is lived. So it'd be people waking up, taking a long shower, getting a cup of coffee and reading the paper for twenty minutes, a long drive to work.

CELINE  
You mean all those boring, mundane things everyone has to do every day of their life?

JESSE  
I was going to say the poetry of day-to-day life.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

I mean, Why is your dog so great just for sleeping in the sun? And a guy getting money out of a bank machine is a moron?

CELINE

So you can put on the TV at any time of the day and see what other people are doing at the same time.

JESSE

Right. It's like parallel lives.

CELINE

That's great. I once lived in a big apartment I was sharing with friends, and we could see ten other apartments from the window. I would cut down the light, sit at the window, and watch them sitting on a couch doing nothing. It was fascinating.

JESSE

That's the trick. Life is not really about drama. That we all do the same shit and going to some market in Arabia is the same as going to Kmart in Miami. People believe they are missing out, that everyone else has this great and exciting life and they don't. I mean, we all have to get dressed, feed the kids, get our driver's licence renewed, look up what time the afternoon matinee starts, lose ourselves in entertainment, lose ourselves in sex, routine, getting a little too drunk, buying a present for someone you don't like very much - you feel guilty about not liking them, so you spend a little too much money.

CELINE

So, it's like a *National Geographic* program on people.

JESSE

Exactly.

CELINE

I can see it: twenty-four boring hours and a three-minute sex scene where he falls asleep right after.

JESSE

Exactly. And that would be an exciting episode. Maybe you and your friends can do one of those episodes from Paris. The key to making this work would be in the distribution. Getting the tapes from town to town on time...But it would play continuously twenty-four hours for a year on stations around the world.

The waiter finally arrives and gives them the menus.

3 INT. LOUNGE CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

3

Some time has passed. They have dirty dishes in front of them. They seem more relaxed with each other, more forthright, less self-conscious, a little more intimate.

CELINE

My parents have never really spoken of the possibility of my falling in love or getting married or having children. Even as a little girl, they wanted me to think about a future career as a TV newscaster, or a dentist, or something like that.

JESSE

(smiles)  
Anchorwoman...

CELINE

Yeah, I'd say to my dad I wanted to be a writer and he'd say *journalist*. I'd say I wanted to have a refuge for stray cats and he'd say *veterinarian*. I'd say I wanted to be an actress and he'd say *TV newscaster*. It was this constant conversion of my fanciful ambitions into practical moneymaking ventures.

JESSE

Parents just want you to have a nice career so they can tell their friends something interesting.

(a beat)

I musta had a pretty decent bullshit detector when I was a kid. I always knew when they were lying to me. By the time I was in highschool, I was dead set on listening to what everyone thought I should be doing with my life and then almost systematically doing the opposite. They weren't really mean about it. All their typical ambitions sounded so mediocre.

CELINE

If you have parents that never fully contradict anything you want to do and are basically nice and supportive, it makes it harder to officially complain. Even when they are wrong. It's this passive-aggressive shit. I can't stand it.

Jesse takes a swig of water and chews some ice.

JESSE

Yeah, but despite plenty of bullshit, I still remember being a kid as a magical time.

(a beat)

I remember my mom explaining death to me, and telling me that my great-grandmother in Florida had died. The whole family had just visited them. I must have been three, three and a half years old. Anyway, I was playing in the backyard a day or so later, and my sister had taught me how to spray the garden hose into the sun and see a rainbow. Well, I was spraying it and through the mist I could see my great-grandmother standing there, just kind of smiling, looking at me. I just held the hose in that position for a long time and looked at her. Finally, I took my thumb off the nozzle, let the hose go, and she disappeared.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

My parents gave me this rap about how I imagined it and how when people die you never see them again. But, I knew what I had seen, and even though I've never seen anything like that since, I've never really been very afraid of death.

CELINE

That's good you can have that attitude toward death. I think I am afraid of death twenty-four hours a day. That's why I'm on the train. I could have flown to Paris. I'm just afraid of flying. Even though statistics say it's safer, I can't help it. When I'm sitting in a plane, I already can see an explosion, me falling through the clouds. I'm so afraid of the few seconds of consciousness before dying. I mean, when you know for sure you're gonna die. I can't help anticipating the worst. Like, I was in the park with this friend of mine. There were little kids playing around. This mother was throwing her child up in the air. My friend was smiling and thought it was so wonderful, and all I could think of was her dropping it. I could already see all the blood on the ground. The big panic, the mother crying...I think like this all the time. It's exhausting.

We see out the window that the train is pulling into Vienna.

CELINE (CONT'D)

This is Vienna. You get off here, no?

JESSE

Drag. I wish I would have met you earlier. I really like talking to you.

CELINE

It was really nice talking to you, too.

JESSE

I've hardly talked to anyone in weeks.

4 EXT. TRAIN STATION - LATE AFTERNOON 4

The train comes to a final stop. The doors open and soon everyone is unboarding and boarding.

5 INT. LOUNGE CAR - LATE AFTERNOON 5

With a slight smile, Jesse looks intensely at Celine.

JESSE

I have an admittedly insane thought. If I don't ask you this, it'll be one of those things that will haunt me forever.

CELINE

What?

He just looks at her a little nervously and can't say it. She is truly intrigued and a little excited at what he's struggling with.

CELINE (CONT'D)

What?

JESSE

I want to keep talking with you. I mean, I have no idea what your situation is, but I feel some kind of...connection.

CELINE

Yeah, me too.

JESSE

So how about this. Okay, good...I want you to get off her in Vienna with me. We can check out the town.

She smiles at the thought but is not totally sure.

CELINE

So what would we do?

JESSE

I don't know. All I know is I'm getting on this Austria Airlines flight at nine-thirty tomorrow morning and I can't really afford a hotel and we'll probably just wander around all night. If I turn out to be a psycho, you can bail out anytime and get back on the next train, right?

She's still thinking but doesn't respond.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Think of it like this. Jump ahead ten, twenty years. Your marriage just doesn't have that same energy anymore. You start to blame your husband. You think of all the guys you've met and all the ones you never pursued and how things might have been different if you'd just picked up with one of them. Well, I'm one of them. You can consider this traveling back in time, to see what you are missing. See, this is really a big favor to both you and your future husband - it's a chance to see how you really haven't missed anything. That I'm just as boring and unmotivated as he is, hopefully more.

She smiles a little, ponders the situation, and then just stands up.

CELINE

I'm not sure if I got all the story, but let me get my bag.

6 EXT. TRAIN STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

6

He gets off the train with his bags and starts walking, not fully aware she's not right behind him. She has hesitated slightly and pauses at the top of the stairs. After glancing back briefly, she looks ahead and proceeds with confidence.

7 INT. TRAIN STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

7

Inside the busy train station lobby, they stop at a change machine and exchange currency.



8 INT. TRAIN STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

8

He finishes putting his stuff in a locker. She opens a locker and stuffs her bag in.

CELINE

You know what this makes me think of?

JESSE

What?

CELINE

All those people you briefly intersect with, maybe make eye contact with, and then pass by.

JESSE

Yes, we could have done that. Now it's like...

CELINE

No matter what happens, we have met.

Jesse just smiles and offers up his open hand. She touches her hand to his and there is a slow clasp and a slight pull toward one another.

JESSE

That we have.

9 EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

9

Walking along in silence, they both are observing what is around them and eventually look back at each other. Fully realizing they are now committed to one another in some strange way, there is an awkward silence.

CELINE

It's such a strange feeling. When we were talking on the train, it's like we were in public - there were people around us. Now that we're actually walking around Vienna, it's like we are all alone.

JESSE

I know. It feels a little awkward. I'm not sure what we should be doing.

He puts his hand on her shoulder and looks right at her.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
But this is okay, though, right?

CELINE  
Yes, this is great. Let's go to  
some places. Look at your little  
book.

He pulls out a little pamphlet/map and starts looking through  
it.

JESSE  
Good. Right. We're in Vienna and  
we're going to go places.

Just then two local passersby, TEX and KARL, walk past them.  
Jesse stops them.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Excuse me. Sprechen Sie English?

KARL  
Yah, of course.

TEX  
Perhaps you speak German for a  
change?

JESSE  
What?

TEX  
It was a joke.

Tex looks over at Karl, both in on it.

JESSE  
We just got into Vienna and we're  
looking for something fun to do...

CELINE  
Yeah, are there any museums we  
should see or anything?

TEX  
Museums are not exactly fun these  
days.

Karl looks at his watch.

KARL  
And they are all closing right now,  
anyway. How long are you going to  
be here?

JESSE  
Just tonight.

TEX  
Why did you come to Vienna? What  
could you be expecting?

CELINE  
We're on our honeymoon...

JESSE  
Yeah, she's pregnant, so we decided  
to go ahead and get married.

TEX  
I don't believe you. You are not  
very good at lying.

Celine and Jesse laugh while Tex and Karl talk amongst  
themselves in German.

TEX (CONT'D)  
Do you have the fliers?

KARL  
Yeah, I'll give them one.

Karl digs in his pocket and hands a flier to them.

TEX  
This is a play we're both in we'd  
like you to come to.

CELINE  
So you are actors?

TEX  
Not professional actors, but part-  
time for fun.

KARL  
It's a play about a cow, and an  
Indian searching for it. It also  
has politicians, Mexicans,  
Russians...

JESSE  
You have a real cow onstage?

TEX  
Not a real cow. It's an actor in a  
cow costume.

KARL  
And he's the cow.

TEX  
Yes, I'm the cow. But it's a weird  
cow.

KARL  
The cow has a disease.

TEX  
She's acting a bit strange...acting  
like a dog. If someone throws a  
stick, she fetches it. She also  
smokes, with her hoofs.

He demonstrates how one would smoke with a hoof instead of a  
hand. Karl points to the bottom of the flier.

KARL  
The address is on the flier. It's  
in the second district...

TEX  
Near the Prater...

KARL  
Yes, the place with the big Ferris  
wheel.

TEX  
The big wheel everybody knows...

KARL  
Perhaps you can go to the Prater  
before the play.

JESSE  
So what's the name of this play?

KARL  
It translates as...

BOTH  
"Bring Me the Horns of Wilmington's  
Cow."

JESSE  
Sounds great.

CELINE  
Cool.

Tex puts his index finger up by his head as everyone begins to walk away.

TEX

I am the cow...and you will be there?

JESSE

We'll try to make it.

10

EXT. BETWEEN THE MUSEUMS - DAY

10

They sit on a bench near a statue, looking up at the historic buildings and surroundings.

JESSE

Look at this - it's beautiful. I mean, could you imagine an American architect saying, "Hey, Bob, I've got an idea. Why don't we put a giant angel on top of this building just for people to have something beautiful to look at." It might start out like that, but before too long it'd be, "Sorry, Hank, boss said nix on the giant angel. He's thinking more along the lines of a flagpole."

CELINE

Americans always think Europe is perfect. But such beauty and history can be really oppressive. It reduces the individual to nothing. It just reminds you all the time you are just a little speck in a long history, where in America you feel like you could be making history. That's why I liked Los Angeles because it is so...

JESSE

Ugly?

CELINE

No, I was going to say "neutral." It's like looking at a blank canvas.

(a beat)

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)

I think people go to places like Venice on their honeymoon to make sure they are not going to fight for the first two weeks of their marriage because they'll be too busy looking around at all the beautiful things. That's what people call a romantic place - somewhere where the prettiness with contain your primary violent instinct. A real good honeymoon spot would be like somewhere in New Jersey.

11 EXT. TRAM STATION - DAY 11

They come down the escalator and board a tram.

12 INT. TRAM - DAY 12

They are sitting in the tram and observing everything going by.

JESSE

Okay, Q&A time. We've known each other for a little while now, we're stuck with each other, we can ask each other a few, you know, direct questions.

CELINE

So we ask each other questions?

JESSE

And you have to answer one hundred percent honestly.

CELINE

Of course.

Celine picks up on the game he is talking about.

JESSE

First question. Describe your first sexual feelings toward someone.

CELINE

Well, let me think...Jean-Marc Fleury.

JESSE

Jean-Marc Fleury?

CELINE

We were at this summer camp together and he was a swimmer. He had that bleached-out, chlorine hair and green eyes, and to improve his times, he'd shave the hair off his legs and arms. So he was like this gorgeous dolphin. My friend Emma had a big crush on him, and one day I was cutting across the field on my way back to my room, he came walking up beside me. I told him he should ask Emma out because she had a big crush on him, and he said, "That's too bad, because I have a big crush on you." And it really scared the hell out of me because I thought he was so fine. He officially asked me out on a date but I pretended that I didn't like him because I was afraid of what I might do. But I went to a swim competition and watched him swimming around. He was so sexy. At the end of the summer we sort of wrote these little declarations of love to each other and said we would keep writing and for sure meet again soon.

JESSE

Did you?

CELINE

Of course not.

JESSE

I think then this is the appropriate time to tell you I happen to be an excellent swimmer.

CELINE

Okay, I'll make a note, but it's my turn to ask a question. Have you ever been in love?

He thinks for a bit and then starts in.

JESSE

Yes. Okay, next question. What do you think is you --

CELINE

Wait a minute. We can give on-word answers?

JESSE

Why not?

CELINE

After I went into such detail about my first sexual feelings?

JESSE

But there's a big difference between those two things. I could tell you all about my first sexual feelings, no big deal. What if I asked you about love?

CELINE

I would have lied, but at least I would've made a great story.

JESSE

See. The whole concept of love is much more complex. Love's like God or something: It's everywhere...I see it, I feel it, but I don't know if another person is going to hand it to me.

CELINE

Unfortunately, I know what you mean.

JESSE

For what it's worth, my first sexual feelings were experienced through an obsessive relationship with Miss July, 1978. You know *Playboy*?

CELINE

Yes.

JESSE

Okay, name something that really pisses you off.

CELINE

Oh, gosh, everything pisses me off.

JESSE

Like what?



CELINE

I hate being told by strange men to smile, just to make them feel better about their stupid lives. I hate that three hundred kilometers away a war is going on. People are dying. And nobody knows what to do about it. I hate how the media tries to control our minds. It's a new form of very subtle fascism. And I hate in a foreign country each time I wear black or lose my temper or express an opinion about anything, everyone always goes: "Oh, it's so French, it's so cute." Oh, I hate that.

They both laugh a bit at her becoming riled up so quickly. She calms down and asks him a question.

CELINE (CONT'D)

It's my turn now. So what's a problem for you?

JESSE

You, probably.

CELINE

Huh?

JESSE

No, really, I had a thought about a week ago that's kind of a problem.

CELINE

What is it?

JESSE

Do you believe in reincarnation?

CELINE

On some level it's interesting.

JESSE

Yeah. It seems like a lot of people are talking about past lives and all that. And even if you don't believe in that in a specific way, most people have some notion of an eternal soul, right? Anyway, my thought was, if we all have our origins at the beginning of human history in some way, where did all the current souls come from?

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

The earth's population fifty thousand years ago was not even a million people. Ten thousand years ago, it was only a few million. Now, the earth's population is between five and six billion. That's about a five-thousand-to-one split of each soul in just the last fifty thousand years, which is just a blip in the earth's time. At best, we're just a tiny fraction of a soul. Is that why we all feel so scattered?

CELINE

So, that's a problem?

JESSE

I know, it's kind of a scattered thought, which is all the more reason it makes sense.

13 INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

13

They enter the old, vinyl-only store and start to browse.

JESSE

Is that a listening booth over there?

CELINE

Yes, I think so.

They keep looking through albums. She eventually finds an album and holds it up to him.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Have you ever heard of this singer?

JESSE

(reading)

No.

CELINE

I think she's American. I have this friend in LA who told me about her. I've never been able to find any of her stuff. I think it's kind of folksy, lyrical stuff.

Jesse points across the store.

JESSE

Lets' see if that listening booth works.

CELINE

Let's try it.

They walk over to the booth and enter. She takes the album out and puts it on the turntable. As the music starts they both kind of lean against opposite walls in the small glass booth and concentrate on the song.

SONG

There's a wind that blows in from the north

And it says that loving takes its course

Come here, come here

No, I'm not impossible to touch

I have never wanted you so much

Come here. Come here...

They glance subtly up at each other but usually not when the other is looking. The song makes both of them a little nervous as it brings out a shyness about the uncertainty of their relationship at that point.

14 INT. SUBWAY - DAY 14

They ride on a subway as it breaks out of a tunnel into sunlight.

15 EXT. NAMELESS CEMETERY - DAY 15

They walk down the steps toward the small cemetery. A rabbit runs past them.

CELINE

I visited this as a young teenager.  
It left a bigger impression on me  
at that time than any of the  
museums we went to.

JESSE

It's small.

Inside, they wander around looking at the mostly identical crosses.

CELINE

Yes. There was this little old man who talked to us. He was the groundskeeper. Almost everyone buried here washed up on the bank where the Danube curves away.

JESSE

How old are these?

CELINE

Around the beginning of the century or so. It's called Cemetery of the No Name because they often didn't really know who these people were. Maybe a first name.

JESSE

Why were there so many bodies washing up on the banks of the Danube?

CELINE

I think some were from accidents on boats and things like that, but most of them were suicides that jumped in the river.

(a beat)

I always liked the idea of all these unknown people, lost in the world. When I was young I always thought that if none of your family or friends knew you were dead, then it's like not really being dead. People can invent the best or the worst for you.

She stops by one grave.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Oh, here she is. This is the one I remember the most. She was thirteen when she died. That meant something to me because I was that age when I saw this. Now I'm ten years older and she's still...thirteen, I guess.

17

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - SUNSET

17

They are in the huge old Ferris wheel in the Prater amusement park. They have a large box to themselves and walk around in it looking at the various views.

CELINE

When I'm up above everyone like this, I always think like the entire human race is this body, and we're all cells in the body. It's an amazing, exquisite mess, no?

JESSE

Yeah...

(a beat)

I want to change the subject for a second. This could be an important moment. I don't know if you noticed, but we're alone in this car. The sun is going down...

(a beat)

Before the night is over, is it safe to assume that we're going to kiss?

CELINE

Maybe.

JESSE

Maybe?

CELINE

Probably.

JESSE

Probably. Then I propose we jump in time to that moment when we would naturally do that - probably a couple of hours from now after a certain amount of awkwardness and stuff - and bring that moment back to here and now, given these ideal surroundings. It'll be a great way to remember not only our first kiss, but this great sunset, the Ferris wheel, Vienna...

Celine walks over to him and puts her arms around his neck.

CELINE

How come every time you want me to do something, you start talking about time travel?

JESSE

Okay, I think we should kiss right now.

They begin kissing and the Ferris wheel keeps moving.

18

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

18

Walking along, they are in mid-conversation.

CELINE

But I don't think it matters what generation you're born into. Look at my parents. They were these angry young May '68 people revolting against everything - the government, their conservative Catholic backgrounds. I was born not long after and my dad went on to become this successful architect and we began to travel all over the world and I was raised with all the freedoms they had fought for. And yet for me now, it's another type of fight. We still have to deal with all the same shit. But you can't really know what or who the enemy is.

JESSE

I don't know if there is an enemy. Everyone's parents fucked them up. They either left them or stuck around and taught them the wrong stuff. Rich kids' parents give them too much, poor kids' not enough. You either get too much attention or not enough. My parents are just these two people who didn't like each other very much who got married and had a kid. And they tried to be nice to me.

CELINE

Did your parents divorce?

JESSE

Yeah, finally. They should have done it earlier, but they stuck together for the well-being of my sister and me. Thanks.

(a beat)

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

You know, my mom once told me, right in front of my father when they were in this big fight, that he was really, really pissed off when he found out she was pregnant with me - that I was this big mistake. Looking back on it, I think that shaped the way I think. I saw the world as this place I wasn't really meant to be and had the people who created me had more control of the situation, I wouldn't exist.

CELINE

But that's so sad.

JESSE

I think I eventually found a comfort in that. Like my life was my own doing or something.

CELINE

My parents are still together and I think they're happy. But I think it's a healthy process to rebel against your parents and everything that came before. In a certain way, more than rebelling, it's to have the feeling that we're finding a new way to deal with love, sex, society, everything. We should always have to reinvent and make it our own.

They walk in silence, just taking in all around them for a few moments. A couple walks by, but both are completely in their own worlds.

CELINE (CONT'D)

I've been wondering lately...do you know anyone who's in a happy relationship?

JESSE

Yeah, I know happy couples, but it seems like they have to lie to each other.

CELINE

People can live their whole life as a lie.

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)

My grandmother was married to this man, and I always thought she had a very simple, uncomplicated love life. But she just confessed to me that she spent her life dreaming about another man she was always in love with. She just accepted her fate. I was so sad. But I also found it very beautiful that she had all those emotions I never thought she would have had.

JESSE

I guarantee you that it was better that way. Had she got to know him, he would have disappointed her eventually.

CELINE

How do you know? You don't know who they are.

JESSE

I know. It's just people have all these romantic projections.

CELINE

What do you mean, Mr. Romantic up in the Ferris wheel kiss me now as the sun is going down...?

JESSE

(interrupting)

All right, all right. What about your grandmother? Finish your thought.

CELINE

It just amazed me that I've spent over twenty years of my life around her and I didn't know her.

JESSE

You know her, but no one really knows anyone. That's the thing about relationships - people are always saying, "I want to know you, I want to know who you are." But it is so hard for anyone to even know themselves. Who I am is always changing, so how can anyone else share in that?



CELINE

So that's it? It's been nice not knowing you.

They look over and see several elderly couples riding the bumper cars.

19

EXT. KLEINES CAFÉ - NIGHT

19

They are sitting at a table in a sparsely populated outdoor café. Jesse looks around briefly and then suddenly leans over and kisses a slightly surprised Celine.

JESSE

I just wanted to kiss you again.

Celine sort of smiles and shrugs her shoulders when a ROSE PEDDLER suddenly approaches them. She is an older gypsy-looking woman and holds up her bunch of roses toward Jesse.

ROSE PEDDLER

(in German)

You buy a rose for the young lady?

Jesse smiles and digs in his pocket.

JESSE

Sure, how many schillings?

ROSE PEDDLER

Twenty.

As Jesse hands her the coins and she gives him the rose, she suddenly turns all her attention to Celine. She impulsively grabs her hand and intensely starts looking at her palm.

ROSE PEDDLER (CONT'D)

You want your palm read?

CELINE

Sure.

Celine looks over at Jesse, who rolls his eyes, feeling a little invaded. She flashes him a "I want to do this, don't spoil it" look.

ROSE PEDDLER

Hmmm. Uhh-huuh. So you have been on a journey and you are a stranger to this place. You are an adventurer...a seeker...and adventurer in your mind.

Celine is engrossed and occasionally nods.

ROSE PEDDLER (CONT'D)

You are interested in the power of the woman. In a woman's deep strength and creativity. You are becoming this woman.

(a beat)

You need to resign yourself to the awkwardness of life. Only if you find peace within yourself will you find true connections with others.

The rose peddler looks up at Jesse and gestures to him.

ROSE PEDDLER (CONT'D)

This is a stranger to you, yes?

CELINE

Well, yeah, I guess.

The rose peddler authoritatively reaches for Jesse's hand, which he awkwardly offers up. She examines his hand thoroughly, flips it over, examines his thumb, and lets him take it back.

ROSE PEDDLER

(to Celine)

You'll be alright

(a beat)

He is learning.

(a beat)

Okay?

CELINE

Thank you. That was good.

Celine gets up and hands the woman several coins. As she walks away, the older lady adds one last bit.

ROSE PEDDLER

You are both stars, don't forget. When the stars exploded billions of years ago, they formed everything that is this world. The moon, the trees, everything we know is stardust. So don't forget. You are stardust.

They walk away, and Celine is filled with the experience but Jesse looks a little annoyed. The more he builds up to a rant, the more amused she seems to get.

JESSE

That's all nice and everything, we are stardust and all that, and you are becoming this great woman, but I hope you don't think that's much different than reading your horoscope in some syndicated daily paper.

CELINE

Well, she knew I was on vacation and that we didn't know each other and that I was going to become this great woman.

JESSE

(interrupting)

And what was that "I am learning" bullshit? That's waaay condescending - she wasn't even doing me, and I even bought that fucking rose from her.

(starting rant)

If opportunists like that would ever tell the real truth, it would put their asses out of business.

(new thought)

Just once I want to see some old lady save up her money, and just as she's about to hear all this great stuff, the fortune teller would say,

(wide-eyed stare)

"Tomorrow and all your remaining days will be a lot like today, a tedious collection of hours. You will have no new passions, travels, or thoughts. When you die you will be forgotten. Two hundred schillings, please." That I'd like to see.

Celine plays with him.

CELINE

So it's funny how she almost didn't notice you. I loved what she said.

JESSE

Of course you do. You pay your money, you get to hear something that makes you feel good.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

Hey, maybe there's some seedy section of Vienna where you can buy a hit of crack.

Celine continues to laugh at him.

20 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

20

As they are walking, Celine notices a poster for an upcoming exhibit of Seurat's drawings.

CELINE

Oh, man, this doesn't start until next week - we'll miss it.

She motions to one of the drawings on the poster.

CELINE (CONT'D)

I actually saw this one at a museum a few years ago. I just stared and stared at it - must have been forty-five minutes.

JESSE

Cool.

CELINE

I love the way the people seem to be dissolving into the background. It's like the environments are stronger than the people. His human figures always seem so transitory.

21 EXT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

21

As they walk down the street, they wander up the steps to a large cathedral. They check to see if the door is open. It is, and they go inside.

22 INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

22

They enter to find it completely empty but with hundreds of candles still burning. In the background we hear the sound of the organ being tuned.

JESSE

Too bad it isn't daytime so we could see the stained glass windows better.

CELINE

I was in an old church like this one with my grandmother in Budapest a few days ago. Even though I reject most of the religious thing, I can't help but feeling for all those people that come here lost, or in pain, guilt - who come here looking for answers. It fascinates me how a single place can join so much pain and happiness, for so many generations.

JESSE

So you're pretty close to your grandmother.

CELINE

Yes, I think so. I think it's because I've always had this feeling that I'm this very old woman, laying down, about to die, and her last thoughts are the remembrance of her youth and her life. I feel like my life is just her memories or something.

JESSE

That's wild. I always feel like I'm still this thirteen-year-old boy who doesn't really know how to be an adult. So it's like I'm pretending to live a life, taking notes for when I'll really have to do it. Kind of like a dress rehearsal for a junior high play.

CELINE

That's funny. So up there in the Ferris wheel it was this very old woman kissing this very young boy.

JESSE

Get your head out of the gutter.  
(new thought)  
Do you know anything about the Quakers?

CELINE

No, not much.

JESSE

It's really cool. I went to this Quaker wedding once, and do you know how they do it? The couple kneels down in the middle of the church in front of everyone, and they stare at each other. Nobody speaks unless God moves them to say something - a blessing, a warning, nothing, whatever. And then after an hour of staring into each other's eyes, they're married.

CELINE

That's beautiful. I like that.

They stare at each other for an extended moment. He suddenly has a new thought and smiles.

JESSE

Gosh, this is kind of a horrible story, but maybe this is an appropriate place to tell it. I was driving around with this buddy of mine who's this big atheist, and we came to a stop where there was this homeless guy holding up a sign saying he needed a job or something. My friend holds out a hundred-dollar bill to him and asks, "Do you believe in God?" The guy looks at him, looks at the money, and says, "Yes, I do." My friend goes, "Wrong answer," and drives away.

CELINE

That's so mean.

23 EXT. OUTDOOR CAFÉ - NIGHT 23

As the rain falls, they run for cover, finding a seat under a huge umbrella in an outdoor café.

24 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 24

They walk along.

JESSE

Would you be in Paris yet if you hadn't gotten off the train?

CELINE

No, not yet. And what would you be doing?

JESSE

I don't know - hanging out at the airport, reading old magazines, crying in my coffee because you wouldn't get off the train with me.

CELINE

Ahh...

She gives him a little kiss.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Actually, I'd probably have gotten off the train in Salzburg with someone else.

JESSE

Yeah, yeah. I'm just that American decorating your blank canvas.

CELINE

No, no. I'm having a great time.

JESSE

Really? Me too.

CELINE

I'm glad. I love this because no one knows I'm here and I don't know anyone that knows you that would tell me all the bad things you've done.

JESSE

I can tell you some.

CELINE

I'm sure. You hear so much shit about people. When I start dating a guy, I always feel like a general in the army - you know, plotting my strategy and maneuverings, knowing his weak points, what would hurt him, seduce him...

(a beat)

But if we were around each other all the time, what would be the first thing about me that would drive you crazy?

JESSE

I don't want to answer that. I dated this girl once who used to always ask me that. Finally, I told her that I thought that she didn't handle criticism very well. Then she flew into a rage and broke up with me. But I think she really just wanted the chance to say what she thought was wrong with me. So just tell me what it is about me that bugs you.

CELINE

No, there's nothing.

JESSE

Tell me. C'mon, what?

CELINE

I can't think of anything.

JESSE

I'm demanding you say something.

CELINE

Actually, if I think about it, I didn't like this kind of behavior back at the palm reader. You were like this little rooster prick.

JESSE

Rooster prick? What the hell is that?

CELINE

Yes, you were like this little child whining because all the attention wasn't focused on him.

JESSE

What are you talking about? This woman robs you blind...

CELINE

You were acting like a little boy walking by an ice cream shop, crying because his mother wouldn't buy him a milk shake or something.

JESSE

Wait a second. I didn't care what this flower-peddling charlatan had to say about anything.



A man, the HOMELESS POET, approaches them.

HOMELESS POET

(in German)

I'd like to ask you something.

CELINE

Uh, I speak okay, but he doesn't at all.

HOMELESS POET

(in English)

Okay, then. I'd like to make a deal with you guys. Instead of just asking for money, I'll ask you for a word. I will then write a poem in which that word will be used. I'll write it in English. If you like it, if you feel it adds something to your life in any way, then you can pay me whatever you feel like.

CELINE AND JESSE

Okay, it's a deal.

HOMELESS POET

Pick a word.

JESSE

Uhh...

(to Celine)

What word?

CELINE

Milk shake.

Jesse flashes her a look.

JESSE

I was going to say "rooster prick."  
But perfect, of course, milk shake.

The poet walks off a ways and starts writing.

CELINE

I like what he said about adding something to your life.

JESSE

I know. Hey, were we just arguing back there?

CELINE

No, no...

JESSE

Yeah, I think we were.

CELINE

Even if we were, why does everyone think conflict is so bad? Good things can come out of conflict.

JESSE

I guess so. I think if I could just accept the fact that life is supposed to be difficult, and that's what's to be expected, then I wouldn't get so pissed off about it. I'd just be happy when something nice happened.

CELINE

I think That's why I'm still in school. It's easier to have something to fight against.

JESSE

And we've all had this competitiveness drilled into us.

(thinking)

I mean, I can be doing the most nothing thing - shooting pool or playing darts socially - and I'll feel it come over me: I want to win, I want to do the best I can, and my standards suddenly shift to just beyond my abilities. I can hear every coach or male teacher or boss I ever had. "Jesse, you're not trying hard enough! Get your head out of your ass! Hustle up!"

CELINE

Is that why you tried to get me off the train? Competitiveness?

JESSE

What do you mean?

CELINE

To make sure the guy behind you didn't pick me up? Where you competing with him?

JESSE

What guy?

CELINE

That really cute, big, strong,  
Italian-looking guy two seats  
behind you that was smiling at me  
the whole time.

JESSE

He's better-looking than me?

The homeless poet returns with a small piece of paper.

CELINE

(to Jesse)

C'est la vie.

HOMELESS POET

I have your poem.

CELINE

Will you read it to us?

HOMELESS POET

Sure.

(reads poem)

Daydream delusion

limousine eyelash

Oh baby with your pretty face

drop a tear in my

wineglass

Look at those big eyes on your face

see what you mean to me

Sweet cakes and milk shakes

I'm a delusion angel

I'm a fantasy parade

I want you to know what I think

don't want you to guess

anymore

You have no idea where I came from

we have no idea where

we're going

Lodged in life

like branches in a river

flowing downstream

caught in the current

I'll carry you you carry me

that's how it could be

don't you know me

don't you know me by now

They are both silent.

CELINE

Wow...

They give him some money.

JESSE

Thanks, man. Good luck.

CELINE

It's beautiful, no?

JESSE

Yeah, that was beautiful. You know, he didn't just write that poem...I'm not saying he didn't write that poem. He just didn't write it tonight. He just plugged in that milk shake.

CELINE

What do you mean?

JESSE

Nothing. It's a nice poem.

They walk away.

25

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

25

They continue walking along.

CELINE

I want to ask you something. Do you consider me detached?

JESSE

Detached from what?

CELINE

Someone once called me this detached intellectual. I'm afraid I am like that. I comment too much on things and maybe don't feel close enough to anything.

JESSE

I don't feel that way about you at all. Whoever said that is an asshole.

CELINE

No, but it's my biggest fear. To be one of those people with that sort of academic, liberal, detached view of everything. That whole attitude has nothing to do with really living.

JESSE

Who's to say what's really living?

CELINE

Well, I wonder. That's the big question, no? I think it's either a life experienced or a life examined. But life examined *is* life experienced.

(a beat)

Maybe if I had none of these stupid artistic pretensions at all, I would be looking at the world differently.

JESSE

I know what you mean.

CELINE

What's that Thomas Mann quote? "I would rather participate in life than write a hundred stories."

JESSE

Hmmm, I like that.

(a beat)

I knew this guy once, this kind of nerdy goth-rock guy. And he was crossing the street one day, and he got hit by a car. We all went to see him in the hospital, and he was going to be okay and everything, but he told us that his strongest sensation from the accident was the joy he felt when he realized that finally something was actually happening to him.

They both laugh.

CELINE

Yeah, it's like seeing yourself from a third-person perspective. I always feel like I'm observing my life instead of living it.

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)

At my grandfather's funeral, even though I loved him, it seemed everyone else was mourning and I was too busy observing them; each of them was like a paragraph of a book I might write someday, describing every emotion in detail.

JESSE

I know. I remember when I was younger listening to my parents fight and feeling like I was in an after-school special on TV. Thinking I should act moody, or depressed. I should steal some cigarettes and sunglasses, get caught, and then blame it on the fact that I come from a troubled home.

CELINE

Yeah, I think I'm always so much more happy with books and movies and stuff. I think I get more excited about well-done representations of life than life itself.

26 EXT. HOT DOG STAND - NIGHT 26

They walk up to Viennese hot dog stand and order something to drink. They notice some of the interesting characters hanging around, including the man behind the corner.

27 INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT 27

They enter an interesting old café. Celine goes to the bathroom while Jesse waits. Separated from her for the first time, he stands around a bit awkwardly, observing posters and the goings-on in the café. She eventually returns and they exit the café.

28 EXT. ARENA CLUB - NIGHT 28

They walk in front of a bar/club from which there is music coming out.

JESSE

You want to go in?

CELINE

Yeah. Is there a cover?

JESSE

It's cheap. I'll pay.

CELINE

Don't worry about it. I've got some cash.

29

INT. ARENA CLUB - NIGHT

29

A SINGER with a guitar is onstage finishing up a weird but humorous song. He finishes and gets up to leave.

SINGER

(in German)

Hey, um, stick around. I think Liz is going to show her latest film and provide some verbal accompaniment.

A projector is set up to show against the back wall of the stage. The filmmaker, LIZ, takes the microphone and sits on the stage facing the screen. She has a piece of paper in her hand and signals for the projectionist to start. The room darkens and the film begins. Behind the first black-and-white Super 8 images is the title scratched in white, in German: A KIND OF NOISE AND A KIND OF SILENCE. The film consists of images of fairly recent (1985-1994) events, bands playing, catastrophes, televised images. Interspersed throughout is an eerie series of images of solitary individuals, some looking at the camera, some away. The film evokes a melancholy and almost romantic loneliness. She speaks in German and we read subtitles.

LIZ

Our critique began, as all critiques begin, with doubt...doubt became our life. Ours was a quest for a new story, our own, and we grasped toward this new history, driven by the Dada suspicion that ordinary language could not tell it.

(a beat)

Our past appeared frozen in the distance and our every gesture and accent bespoke the negation of an old world and the reach for a new one.

(a beat)

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

The discovery of a true communication was what it was about - or at least the quest for such a communication, the adventure of finding it and losing it...we continued looking, the unappeased and the unaccepting, beneath, outside, dispersed, communicating only by a passing glance but still knowing that no matter how empty the world seemed, no matter how degraded and used up the world appeared to be, anything was still possible.

Scratched on the film for a closing credit: TO BEGIN AGAIN,  
FROM THE BEGINNING.

30 INT. BAR INSIDE THE ARENA COMPOUND - NIGHT

30

They are taking turns playing pinball.

JESSE

So, we haven't even talked about this, but, uh, are you dating anyone? You got a boyfriend waiting for you in Paris or anything like that?

CELINE

No, no, not right now...

JESSE

You did?

CELINE

We broke up over six months ago.

JESSE

I'm sorry. I mean, I'm not that sorry, but, uh, tell me about it.

CELINE

No, no, it's boring. I can't

JESSE

C'mon, c'mon.

CELINE

I was really disappointed. I thought this one would last a while.

(MORE)



CELINE (CONT'D)

He was very stupid, ugly, bad in bed, alcoholic - I was kind of giving him a favor. But he left me saying I loved him too much and because I was blocking his artistic expression. I was traumatized and became totally obsessed with him. I went to see a shrink and it came up that I had written these little stories about how I was going to kill him - all the intricate details about how I would do it and not get caught.

JESSE

Kill him?

She realizes Jesse is looking at her a bit strangely.

CELINE

Oh no, it's nothing I would ever do, I think it was just some writing.

JESSE

I understand.

CELINE

Anyway, but this stupid shrink believed everything I was telling her. She said she had to call the police. She was totally convinced I was really going to do it even though I told her it was just my way of dealing with it. She said, looking deep into my eyes, "The way you said it, I know you are going to do it." That was my first and last session. I totally got over him, but now I'm obsessed that he's going to die from an accident, maybe a thousand kilometers away, and I will be accused.

Jesse just smiles. They change positions and she begins playing.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Why is it you become obsessed with the people you don't really care for?

(a beat)

So, what about you? Are you with anyone?

JESSE

Funny, how we avoided this question for so long.

CELINE

I know, but now you have to tell me.

JESSE

I don't know. Love is like this escape for people who haven't learned to be alone or to make something of themselves. People think love is this unselfish or totally giving thing. But if you think about it, there's probably nothing more selfish.

CELINE

So who just broke up with you?

JESSE

What?

CELINE

Sounds like you just got hurt.

JESSE

Okay...big confession.

(a beat)

Actually, I'll tell you something. I didn't just come to Europe to find myself and read Hemingway in Paris and shit like that. I worked all spring saving up money to fly to Madrid to spend the summer with my girlfriend, who's been on this asinine art history program for the last year. But I got over here, and on our first night, reunited at long last, we went out to dinner, with five of her friends: Gonzalo, Pedro, Maria, Antonio, Suzie from home. She pretty much avoided being alone with me the first couple of days I was there, but I stuck around awhile just to let it sink in that she wished I hadn't come. So I got the cheapest charter flight out of Europe, this one leaving out of Vienna tomorrow, but I had a couple of weeks to kill, so I bought a Eurail pass.

(a beat)

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

You know what the worst thing about someone breaking up with you is? Remembering how little you really thought about the people you broke up with and realizing that's how little they're thinking about you. You like to think you are both in so much pain, but really they're just relieved you're gone.

CELINE

Well, you should look at bright colors.

JESSE

What?

CELINE

That's what that shrink told me. I was paying nine hundred francs an hour to hear that I was a homicidal maniac but I could perhaps shift my obsession if I would concentrate on bright colors.

JESSE

Did it work?

CELINE

I haven't killed him yet.

31 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

31

Walking along, they are engaged in an upbeat, lively debate.

JESSE

I mean, why is a man ultimately judged so harshly on the issue of fidelity? You can be the best father and husband, you can be supportive and a great friend to your wife, but if you fuck around - uh-oh, we had it all wrong, you're really a loser. I mean, there are these breeds of monkeys, and all they do is have sex all the time. And they're the ones that are the most peaceful and the most happy. What's so bad about fooling around?

CELINE

You're talking about monkeys?

JESSE

Yeah.

CELINE

Sounds like a perfect male argument for justifying them fooling around.

JESSE

But the women monkeys are fooling around too.

CELINE

You know, I had this awful paranoid thought that feminism was mostly invented by men so they could fuck around more. Women, free your mind, free your body, sleep with me, we're all free and happy as long as I can fool around as much as I want...

JESSE

But think about it. If you had an island with ninety-nine women and one man, within a year you'd have the possibility of ninety-nine babies. If you had an island with ninety-nine men and one woman, after a year you'd have the possibility of one baby.

CELINE

Yes, and there'd probably be only about forty-three men left because they would have killed each other. And on the other island there would be ninety-nine women, ninety-nine babies, and no man because all the women would have gotten together and eaten him alive.

JESSE

There's something to that, isn't there? I think women don't mind killing men on some level. Like, I was walking down the street once with my ex-girlfriend, and we pass these four thuggy guys leaning on a Camaro, and sure enough, one says, "Hey babe, nice ass." I keep walking and I think, okay, have your fun, is it that big a deal? I don't do anything. I let it slide...

CELINE

Plus there were four of them.

JESSE

Exactly. So a few steps later, she turns and says, "Fuck you, dickheads." I'm thinking, wait a minute, they aren't going to come over and kick her ass. Who's just been pushed to the front of the line on this one? See, women say they hate it when you get all territorial and protective, but when it suits them, they tell you you're being all unmanly and a wimp.

CELINE

But I don't think women want to kill men, and if they do, they rarely succeed. I'm sure men kill more women. Anyway, this is depressing. You know what?

JESSE

Let's stop talking about this.

CELINE

Yeah. When you start talking about women and men, there's no end.

JESSE

I know - it's a skipping record. People have been trying to figure it out for millenniums. Every artist has tried their hand at it...

CELINE

And no one's come up with anything.

32

INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

32

After a series of tables of interesting people and hearing bits of conversations, we see Celine and Jesse sitting across from each other, talking for once.

CELINE

Okay. Now I'm calling my best friend in Paris, who I'm supposed to have lunch with in about eight hours. *Drrr! Drrr! Ring! Ring!* Pick up.

JESSE

What?

CELINE

Pick up the phone.

JESSE

Oh, right. Hello?

CELINE

Allo, Vani. C'est Celine. Comment ça va?

JESSE

Bien, et toi?

CELINE

Oh, tu sais ce qui n'est arrivé...

JESSE

Okay, maybe we should do it in English.

CELINE

Vanessa. I'm sorry I missed lunch, but I met a guy on the train and got off with him in Vienna. We're still here.

JESSE

Are you crazy?

CELINE

Probably.

JESSE

So he's Austrian? He lives there?

CELINE

No, no, he's just passing through here too. He's American. He goes home tomorrow morning.

JESSE

So why'd you get off the train with him?

CELINE

He convinced me, but I think I was ready after only talking to him a short while. He was so sweet.

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)

We were in the lounge car and he began to talk about him as a little boy seeing his great-grandmother's ghost. I think that's when I feel for him - just the idea of this little boy, full of dreams. He trapped me.

JESSE

Hmmm.

CELINE

And he's so cute. He has really beautiful blue eyes, nice pink lips, and greasy hair. He's kinda tall and a little clumsy. I like to feel his eyes on me when I look away. And he kind of kisses like an adolescent. It's so cute.

JESSE

What?

CELINE

Yeah, we kissed. It was so adorable. As the night went on I began to like him more and more. But I'm afraid he's scared of me. I told him of my story about the woman killing her ex-boyfriend and stuff. He must be thinking I'm this manipulative, mean, dangerous woman. I just hope he doesn't feel that way about me because - you know me - I'm the most harmless person. I just hide behind anger because it's the only way I've found to protect myself. The only person I could ever really hurt is myself.

JESSE

I'm sure he's not scared of you. I'm sure he's crazy about you.

CELINE

Okay, now it's your turn. Call your friend.

Jesse puts the phone up to his ear.

JESSE

*Brrriing.* I usually get this guy's answering machine.

CELINE

Hey, dude, what's up?

JESSE

Hey, Frank, you're there.

CELINE

So you're back? How was Madrid?

JESSE

Well, it all pretty much sucked. I'm coming back a little early. Jodie and I finally had our long overdue meltdown. The long distance thing never seems to work, does it? All my stupid, romantic projections. Ugh. I was actually only in Madrid a few days. I had to get the hell out of there. I've been wandering around Europe for the last couple of weeks like an idiot. I got a cheaper flight out of Vienna that didn't leave for a while, but it really wasn't that much cheaper. I could have come right back, but I just couldn't. I think I wanted to just wallow for a while. I wanted to run, but not home. I didn't want to see anyone I knew. I didn't want to talk. I wanted to be a ghost, completely anonymous.

CELINE

Are you okay?

JESSE

Yeah, that's just it. I'm great...rapturous. I'm a real person again. I'll tell you why. It's my last night in Europe and I've met someone very special. You know how they say we are each other's angels and demons? Well, she was literally this Botticelli angel, waiting for me at the gate back to life.

CELINE

Wow...how did you meet?



JESSE

On the train. I actually saw her a couple of hours before we ever talked, as I was finding a seat. She had her foot up on the seat across from her and didn't notice me at all as I passed by her. Then later, there was this weirdo couple fighting near her, and she moved back and happened to sit right across the aisle from me. We began to talk. I don't think she really liked me at the beginning. She is so smart and passionate and beautiful - I felt so unsure of myself. I felt everything I was saying was stupid macho stuff.

CELINE

Oh, man, I wouldn't worry. I'm sure she was not judging you. And by the way, she decided to sit next to you. I'm sure she did it on purpose. Us men are stupid. We never understand women. They act strange, the little I know of them.

33

EXT. ALBERTINA LEDGE - NIGHT

33

Celine and Jesse sit on the steps of a statue and observe the fairly constant activity around them. A serious-looking guy walks by carrying a bag.

JESSE

See that guy? We'll never see him again. That was the one moment our lives intersect.

The guy suddenly turns and walks back the other way.

CELINE

I always wonder about things like that. Like, think of the bag he is carrying. I wonder what is in it. If you think he's carrying a bomb to blow up the opera because he failed his audition for Don Juan, then his serious expression becomes this angry, vicious face.

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)

But if you imagine in his bag is a present for his young, dying wife, then he becomes this poor, sympathetic character who you want to give a big hug to.

JESSE

Hmmm.

Celine indicates a young art-student-looking woman.

CELINE

She's thinking about a TV show she saw yesterday on strippers, and even though all her friends were disgusted by it, she's thinking about giving up her low-paying office job and giving it a try.

A nerdy guy walks by.

JESSE

That guy over there...rejected by Scientology. Actually flunked his free personality test - they had no use for him.

34

EXT. ALBERTINA LEDGE - NIGHT

34

They sit on the ledge overlooking the lit-up opera house.

JESSE

I feel like this is some dream world we're walking through.

CELINE

It's so weird. It's like our time together is just ours - it's our own creation. It's like, I'm in your dream and you're in mine.

JESSE

Yeah, what we're doing this whole night shouldn't officially be happening.

CELINE

Maybe that's why this feels so other-worldly.

(a beat)

But then, the morning comes and we turn into pumpkins.

JESSE

Ahh. I don't want to talk about the morning.

CELINE

But at this point I think you're supposed to produce the glass slipper and see if it fits.

They both laugh.

35

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

35

They are on a large docked boat, the Johann Strauss, that serves as a restaurant. They are sitting at a quiet outdoor table on the bow of the boat.

JESSE

And this older friend of mine said, at the birth of his child - it was a home birth and he was there helping out and everything - at that profound moment of birth, all he could think about was death. That he was seeing something experience life for the first time, struggling for breath, and knowing that it was going to die someday. He couldn't get it out of his head.

CELINE

I think that's why life is so interesting - because it's going to end.

JESSE

I know. Death ups the ante being alive.

CELINE

It's the same for us tonight, though. If we knew we were going to see each other next week, it would not be the same energy, no?

JESSE

Yeah, I know.

CELINE

Do you think we will see each other after tomorrow morning?

JESSE

I don't know. What do you think?

CELINE

I asked you.

JESSE

Hmmm. I'm thinking how...I don't know if I'm going to be in Europe again anytime soon. Are you coming to the U.S. For any reason?

Celine puts her head down on the table, depressed.

CELINE

Oh, God, I don't want to get into the practical side of how we'd see each other again. Flying. Let's be rational adults about this.

JESSE

Okay, uh, rational.

CELINE

We should try something different.

(a beat)

It's not so bad if tonight is our only night. Maybe it makes it really special.

JESSE

Yeah, usually you exchange numbers and call each other once, maybe write each other once or twice...

CELINE

And then the slow fizzle.

JESSE

I hate that.

CELINE

There was this famous writer - I don't remember who - who said the ideal relationship was two intense years, with clean breaks, fresh starts, friends for life, something like that. It's like if you knew your relationship had to end in two years, there would be no room for fighting or wasted time. There could be more love and appreciation for one another.

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)

It's like, if everyone you met you knew was going to die at midnight, you would be a much more compassionate person. I mean, everyone's going to die, but since no one knows when, there's all the time in the world to be assholes to one another.

JESSE

Why do we think that relationships are supposed to last forever anyway, and that anything less is a failure?

(a beat)

But I hate the thought that we're just these ships passing in the night. I think the only time I get depressed is when I feel that life is just this series of momentary connections. I mean, of all the people you've ever known, how many of them are still in your life in any way? What happened to all the people you grew up with? Miss Van Sickle, my bus driver in first grade - what's she up to? What kind of life is she having?

A wandering violin player has entered the room and is playing a waltz.

CELINE

But for some people, there are no real good-byes. I think if you have a meaningful experience with someone else, a true communication, they are with you forever in a way. We are all a part of each other in ways we'll never know.

JESSE

So it's a deal? We'll die in the morning?

CELINE

I think it's the only way. I don't want to cheapen what's special about our time together. If we push for something more, it's like we're trying to commodify ourselves or something.

JESSE

Okay, no delusions. No projections. Let's just make the rest of tonight great.

CELINE

And it'll be ours forever.

JESSE

We should do some kind of special handshake or something.

CELINE

Okay.

They do a sort of handshake and then watch the violin player.

36

EXT. ACTIVE STREET - NIGHT

36

Celine and Jesse walk down a fairly busy street near some nightclubs. They come across a crowd gathered around a woman dancing, and the rhythmic sound of finger cymbals can be heard. Sitting on the ground is a man playing a dumbek who beats out a mesmerizing rhythm. Celine grabs Jesse's arm with a look of excitement and rushes toward the crowd, finding a good vantage point to watch the Middle Eastern dancer. The dancer performs in an exciting and unusual way and elicits a positive reaction from the crowd. At the end of the performance Celine places a couple of bills in the tambourine that sits on the sidewalk near the dancer's shoes. Then she and Jesse proceed down the street as the crowd disperses. Celine is obviously moved by the dance.

CELINE

I saw a documentary on that stuff - It's a birth dance.

JESSE

A birth dance? How does that work?

CELINE

Women used it when giving birth. In some parts of the world they still do it. The woman in labor enters a tent and the women of her tribe surround her and dance using their torsos and pelvises, and they encourage the birthing woman to dance with them so as to make the birth less painful. And after the baby is born, they all dance in celebration.

JESSE

Wow. My mom would have never gone for that.

CELINE

But it's a really primal dance. They think that women have usually done it mainly for other women as some kind of fertility ritual.

JESSE

That's cool.

CELINE

It's a beautiful thing. I like the idea of dance as being a common function of life, something that everyone participates in.

JESSE

I know. I heard about this old man watching a bunch of young people dancing. He said, "How beautiful. They are trying to shake off their genitals and become angels."

(a beat)

But, uh, just one question back there. When the women are being all spiritual and dancing for the gods and themselves and stuff, where are the men? Out food gathering? Just not allowed? See, Y'all don't need us?

CELINE

Men are lucky we don't bite off their heads after mating. Certain insects do that, you know - spiders and stuff. We, at least, let you live. What are you complaining about?

She laughs as he jumps on her words.

JESSE

You're officially kidding, but you keep bringing that up. There is something to that.

CELINE

(interrupting)

No, no, no. Okay, speaking seriously here.

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)

I mean, I feel this pressure to be a strong and independent icon of womanhood and not have it look like my life is only revolving around some guy, but the love of a man and returning that love means a lot to me. I always make fun of it and stuff, but isn't everything we're doing in life a way to be loved a little more or something?

JESSE

Sometimes I dream of being a good father and a good husband. Sometimes that feels really close, but other times it just seems silly, and that it would ruin my life. It's not that I have a fear of commitment or I'm incapable of loving or caring about someone else, because I can. It's just that if I'm totally honest with myself, I'd rather die knowing that I was really good at something, that I was special or had excelled in some way, than to have only been in a really nice, caring relationship.

CELINE

You know, I had worked for this older man, and once he told me that he had spent all his life thinking about his career and his work, and how he was fifty-two and it suddenly struck him that he had never really given anything of himself, that his life was for no one and nothing. He was almost crying saying this.

(a beat)

I really believe that if there's any kind of god, he wouldn't be in any one of us - not you, not me - but just this space in between. If there's some magic in this world, it must be in the attempt of understanding someone else, sharing something, even if it's almost impossible to succeed. But who cares - the answer must be in the attempt.



37 INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

37

They enter a small, almost desolate disco where one couple is dancing and a few others are sitting around - the up-all-night crowd. They split up and he goes over to the BARTENDER and starts talking to him, pleading with him. She goes over to an empty table and subtly takes two glasses. Across the room, he's made a little headway with the gruff, older bartender, who eventually relents and hands him a bottle of wine. Suddenly Lou Christie's "Lightnin' Strikes" comes over the speakers and Jesse hams it up as he crosses the dance floor on his way back to meet her at the door. He tries to get into it and has a little success.

38 EXT. PARK - NIGHT

38

Later, they are sitting in a remote area of the park, pouring glasses from their bottle of wine.

CELINE

So often in my life I've been with people and shared beautiful moments like traveling or staying up all night and watching the sunrise, and I knew it was a special moment, but something was always wrong. I wished I'd been with someone else. I knew that what I was feeling - exactly what was so important to me - they didn't understand. But I'm happy to be with you. You couldn't possibly know why a night like this is so important to my life right now, but it is. I think this is a great morning.

JESSE

It is a great morning.  
(a beat)  
Do you think we'd have other mornings like this?

CELINE

What about our vow?

JESSE

Yeah, I know.  
(a beat)  
I've had those same feelings of wishing someone wasn't there, but I think it's myself I'd like to get away from.

She looks up at him.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I've never been anywhere I haven't been. I've never had a kiss when I wasn't one of the kissers. I've never been to the movies when I wasn't in the audience or gone out bowling when I wasn't around making some stupid joke.

She smiles, not really taking him seriously.

JESSE (CONT'D)

No, really, I think that's why so many people hate themselves. I mean if we got married, after a few years, you'd hate a lot of my mannerisms, the way I drink a little too much when I'm insecure, the way I tell the same ridiculous, pseudo-intellectual ideas to every couple we have over to dinner. But you see, I've already heard all my stupid stories, so of course I'm sick of myself. But our time here has been completely out of time. Being with you has made me feel like I am someone else. I haven't had my past around to constantly drown me. The only other way to lose yourself like this is with drugs, or alcohol, dancing...stuff like that.

CELINE

Fucking...

He just looks up at her, smiling, a little surprised.

JESSE

Yeah, fucking.

CELINE

Do you know what I want?

JESSE

What?

CELINE

To be kisses.

JESSE

I can do that.

He gets up and kisses her, and tries to take it a little further.

CELINE

I have to say something stupid.

JESSE

Sure.

CELINE

It's very stupid.

JESSE

Okay.

CELINE

I don't think we should sleep together. I want to, but since we're not going to see each other again, it'll make me feel bad. I'll wonder who else you're with. I'll miss you. I know it's not very adult...maybe it's a female thing...I can't help it.

JESSE

Okay, we'll see each other again.

CELINE

No. I don't want you to break our vow just so you can get laid.

JESSE

I don't want to just get laid. I want to have sex with you. We're going to die in the morning, right? I think we should.

CELINE

No. Then it's like some male fantasy - meet a French girl on a train, fuck her, never see her again, and have a great story to tell. I don't want to be a great story. I don't want our great evening to have just been for that.

JESSE

Okay, let's not have sex.

CELINE

You don't want to see me again?

JESSE

No, of course I do. I mean, fuck, if I was asked right now to marry you or never see you again, I would marry you. I mean, maybe that's a lot of romantic crap. But people have gotten married for a lot less. I think we'd have as good a chance as anyone else. Do you want to sleep with me?

CELINE

Well, actually I already decided to sleep with you when I got off the train. Now that we've talked so much I don't know anymore. Why do I make everything so complicated?

JESSE

I don't know.

They begin making out as we see the first light in the sky.

39

EXT. STREET - EARLY MORNING

39

They are walking along slowly, awkwardly, each a little in their own world.

JESSE

What's the first thing you're going to do when you get back to Paris?

CELINE

Call my parents. What about you?

JESSE

I will go pick up my dog. He's with a buddy of mine.

CELINE

Ahh. I love dogs.

JESSE

Oh, shit - we're back in real time.

CELINE

It's awful. I can't stand it.

For the last few moments we've been hearing the sound of a harpsichord far in the distance.

JESSE

Do you hear that?

CELINE

Yeah...What is that...a  
harpsichord?

JESSE

Let's go see where the hell that's  
coming from.

They walk toward the baroque sounds. As they get closer, the music gets louder. They finally pinpoint the source. Through a small street-level window they see a guy in a basement room playing away at his harpsichord. The HARPSICHORD PLAYER's entire room is decorated in a seventeenth-to eighteenth-century fashion with wood-plank floors, old furniture, and paintings. Together with the beautiful and intense music, it is a stunning view - a living portrait. They sort of look at each other occasionally but say nothing. Celine and Jesse both begin to feel awkward at their Peeping Tom status now that the music is over, and they walk off quietly. Jesse takes her hand.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Can you dance to a harpsichord?

CELINE

I don't know. Maybe.

They dance a little on the sidewalk.

40

EXT. ALBERTINA LEDGE - EARLY MORNING

40

They sit with their heads back on a bench, staring up at the early-morning clouds.

CELINE

When you talked earlier about after a few years how a couple would begin to hate each other by anticipating their reactions or getting tired of their mannerisms, I think it would be the opposite with me. I think I can fall in love when I know everything about him - how he's going to part his hair, or what shirt he's going to wear that day, knowing the exact story he would tell in a given situation. I'm sure that's when I'd know I'm really in love.

Jesse just smiles, looks at her, and then slowly looks back up at the sky.

JESSE  
 (silly voice)  
 The years shall run like rabbits...

CELINE  
 What?

JESSE  
 Nothing. I have this great  
 recording of Dylan Thomas reading  
 this W.H. Auden poem. He has this  
 great voice. It was like...

(silly voice)  
 "But all the clocks in the city  
 Began to whirr and chime:  
 O let not Time deceive you,  
 You cannot conquer Time..."

"In headaches and in worry  
 Vaguely life leaks away,  
 And Time will have his fancy  
 To-morrow or to-day."

41 EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAWN

41

She has retrieved her bag from the locker, and they are walking along the train toward her car. They seem vulnerable, even shy, as they both finally face the inevitable.

CELINE  
 So you know what bus you're taking  
 to the airport?

JESSE  
 Yeah, no problem.

CELINE  
 I guess this is it, no?

JESSE  
 Yep. I really...you know.

CELINE  
 I know. Me too.  
 (a beat)  
 You lied to me, you know.

JESSE  
 What do you mean?

CELINE

You told me that our time together would someday make me happier with my future husband, but now I'll wonder even more.

Neither says anything for an extended moment.

CELINE (CONT'D)

Be happy, okay? Work hard and have fun with everything you're doing.

JESSE

I will. And good luck with school and everything.

(a beat)

I hate this.

CELINE

I know. I think the train is about to leave.

They look into each other's eyes. Jesse reaches out for Celine's hand and clasps it tightly. They smile, knowing that they've changed in unexpected ways, and then embrace tenderly for several moments. They part, and Celine turns suddenly and walks up the stairs to her train car. As she reaches the top step she hesitates, turns, and looks back and Jesse, who's still staring at her. He signals for her to hold on a second.

JESSE

Hey, everything we were saying is bullshit. This is all stupid - I don't want to do it.

She laughs.

JESSE (CONT'D)

And I didn't lie to you. I'll prove it.

CELINE

Yeah?

JESSE

I'll come with you.

Celine is almost laughing.

CELINE

No. You'll drive me crazy. You don't speak French. I'd have to completely take care of you.

(MORE)

CELINE (CONT'D)  
It would be a big mistake.  
(a beat)  
But perhaps we should meet in five  
years.

JESSE  
Yeah, think so? Five years?

CELINE  
No, no. Five years is too long.  
It would be more like a sociology  
experiment. How about one year?

JESSE  
Yes, one year. One year? How  
about six months?

CELINE  
But it will be freezing.

JESSE  
Okay, we can meet here and then go  
somewhere else.

CELINE  
Okay. But is that six months from  
now or last night?

JESSE  
Last night. Okay. Six months from  
last night. December sixteenth,  
six o'clock in the evening, track  
eleven. It's a train ride for you,  
but I got to fly over. But, hey,  
I'll be here.

CELINE  
Good. And we're not going to write  
or call or anything right?

JESSE  
Right. But six months.

They laugh at themselves and give a quick kiss before  
parting.

CELINE  
Good-bye.

JESSE  
Bye.

They part and Celine disappears into the train.



42

INT/EXT. MORNING MONTAGE

42

Celine finds her way to a seat. Jesse gets his stuff out of his locker and begins walking. As her train slowly pulls out of the station, we hear the harpsichord and see a series of shots of many of the locations Celine and Jesse inhabited the night before. In the early-morning light these places are now somehow different. Even though there is little human presence at this time of the morning, the transformation has begun. We see Jesse getting situated on his bus to the airport. We then see the park where they danced, sang, and stared up at the sky. A very old lady walks slowly across the grass. Celine is settled on the train and reading. She looks up from her book and just stares out the window at the landscape going by.

FADE OUT.