

## BEFORE MIDNIGHT

JESSE

Once I remember I was watching the twins on a trampoline, you know, and they looked so beautiful. And I was happy because they were happy, you know. One of them had this hula-hoop that she was using as a jump rope, but then the other one wanted it so they started fighting over it. All of a sudden I saw it all, this petty jealousy and selfishness... I remember thinking: this is the natural human state -I mean, look at us, here we are, in a garden of Eden and we can't stop fighting.

CELINE

If that's what you see when you're watching the girls play, that means you're depressed.

JESSE Okay. Maybe I am.

Celine is slowly getting revved up again.

CELINE

I like it when they fight - it gives me hope for them.

JESSE

Well that's because you see anger as a positive emotion, you know, and you only end up hurting yourself, your work, your kids, me.

CELINE

And you never get angry?

JESSE

When I do, I don't see it as a positive.

CELINE

You know something? The way you write in your book, people come up to me and think I make love to some wildcat Henry Miller type... HA! You like to have sex the EXACT same way every time.

JESSE

When you got it, you got it. I'm a man of simple pleasures.

CELINE

Yeah, very simple, and I've been meaning to tell you that lately. You're no Henry Miller,

on any level. You know what, this room gives me the creeps, I was expecting something quaint, like the real Greece.

JESSE

This place is pretty real.

CELINE

What the hell are we doing here anyway? This is all too planned, like we're supposed to have this great evening. There's no room for spontaneity, it is all gone from our lives. It's stupid and it's not working...

JESSE

Okay. Well, obviously, right?

CELINE

Right, yeah ... and I curse Ariadni and that perv Stefanos for doing this. A couples massage - what the fuck is that? That sounds sleazy to me.

JESSE

We don't have to do it! Okay? C'mon, this place isn't so bad. I like hotel rooms... I think they're sexy.

CELINE

Yeah, I know you do, Mr. Book Tour. Mr. Radisson Hilton. And I know about that time when you were doing that reading in Washington, when your cell phone supposedly broke that night - how convenient. Swear on our kids that you didn't fuck that lady from the bookstore. Emily. Swear to me you didn't fuck that Emily girl. And I'm not jealous because I'm not the jealous type but I just wanna know, be a man and admit the truth.

JESSE

I am giving you my whole life, okay? I've got nothing larger to give. I'm not giving it to anybody else. If you're looking for permission to disqualify me, I'm not going to give it to you. I love you and I'm NOT in conflict about it. But if what you want is a laundry list of all the things about you that piss me off, I could give it to you.

CELINE Yeah - I want to hear.

JESSE

Okay! Well, uh, let's start at number one - okay, number one, you're fuckin' nuts, alright? You are, good luck finding somebody else to put with your shit for more than like 6 months. But I accept the whole package, the crazy and the brilliant. I know you're not going to change, and I don't want you to. It's called accepting you for being you.

CELINE

Yeah okay, I asked you a question. If, while I was carrying the double stroller down the stairs and getting ass-raped in Pigalle, you fucked that little Emily Bronte girl?

JESSE

Ok I don't know. Emily... what Emily? What are you even talking about?

CELINE

The one who wrote the nice emails about Dostoevsky? *"Oh Jesse, you're so right, "The Grand Commander" is the deepest passage of all Russian literature."*

JESSE

If you're asking me if I'm committed to you, the girls, and the life we've built together, the answer is a resounding YES.

CELINE

So you DID fuck her! Thank you very much.

JESSE

Do I ever ask you about the time you went to go visit your old boyfriend after his mother died? No. You want to know why? Because I KNOW the way that your fucking French ass works, and I guarantee that you at least blew that guy, but I also know that you love me, okay? I'm okay with you being a complicated human being! I don't wanna live a boring life where two people own each other, where two people are institutionalized in a box that others created - because that is a bunch of stifling bullshit.

Petrified, she exits.

Jesse sits alone waiting for her to return.

Enter Celine. She walks in, sets her room key down.

CELINE

You know what's going on here? It's simple - I don't think I love you anymore.

She exits. Jesse sits there, gazing from the cold cup of tea, to the door, to the full glasses of wine, to the rumpled, empty bed. Celine doesn't come back.