

"Four to Midnight"

Carter knew Emily was working the Tuesday night shift even before he walked into the restaurant and saw her. Her truck was in the parking lot. It wasn't hard to miss. It was the only Turquoise Tacoma in Des Moines that sported tinted windows, save the world bumper stickers, and a crushed, passenger-side front quarter panel that she never intended to fix.

The restaurant wasn't busy. Most aren't on Tuesday nights. But just to make sure he sat in Emily's section, Carter tipped the hostess five bucks. He didn't let his buddy, Frank, see him do it though. Carter wanted Frank to think that running into Emily was a coincidence. Just like all the other times they ran into her around town.

Emily waited on Carter and Frank like any other table she waited on that night. She was polite, made little eye contact, served them what they asked for, then brought the bill as they were in the middle of their coffee and dessert. No one watching would have known the three knew each other. But Carter knew Emily. Extremely well, actually. And he also knew that she'd never pay him back the ten grand he let her borrow before the two of them called it quits last year.

While Frank went to the restroom Carter took care of the bill. Carter intercepted Frank on his way back to the table and the two slipped out the side door before anyone noticed they were gone. Frank suspected that Carter left Emily a big tip and wanted to leave before her eyes welled up with tears and she started begging him back. He was right—Carter did leave Emily a big tip. Written down on a barely-used cocktail napkin, Carter penned: *"Tip #4 for Emily Mathenson: Return what you borrow. Bitch."*

While Carter's tab was around 50 bucks that night, by the end of the evening, Emily's was that much less.