

The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady

(with delectation for Baron Charles Mingus)

by David Hall

for e.g.

THE CHARACTERS:

SINNER JIM WHITNEY
A good guy in a big bad world.

FREEWOMAN
Just a girl who can't say 'no'.

CHARLES
Crazy in love.

Scene 1
Freewoman's room

[FREEWOMAN is seated on bed dressed in a schoolgirlish mini-skirt and strappy top, no shoes. It's night-time outside. She has the hi-fi turned up and is listening to Cassandra Wilson's "Love is Blindness" with her eyes closed, which serves as an overture as the lights come up. The bed is single, the room is small. It is a mess of camp girly crap including, among other things a poster from the film Breakfast at Tiffany's, with a wardrobe in the corner. The door is thumped nervously, eventually disturbing the girl, who flicks the music off and scrambles to open the door. Enter JIM WHITNEY, looking a little weary already.]

FREEWOMAN: Hello?

JIM WHITNEY: Hi. How much is it?

FREEWOMAN: How much? Oh. Well, that depends.

JIM WHITNEY: Will, uh, will this be enough? [He holds out some crisp notes which FREEWOMAN gazes at blankly.]

FREEWOMAN: It'll get you started. What's your name?

JIM WHITNEY: Jim.

FREEWOMAN: Alright then. Come in.

JIM WHITNEY: Do you need the money now?

FREEWOMAN: Um no. [Pause, confused.] Just come in, sit down. [And she starts clearing him a space on the bed.] You usually pay me later, after.

JIM WHITNEY: How much? [sits] I mean, what are the options?

FREEWOMAN: Can I make you some tea?

JIM WHITNEY: Is that extra?

FREEWOMAN: No. Just thought you'd want to *relax*. I've got some wine.

JIM WHITNEY: Sure.

FREEWOMAN: Wine?

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah, whatever you want.

FREEWOMAN: I can make tea.

JIM WHITNEY: No, wine would be nice.

[FREEWOMAN pours glasses.]

JIM WHITNEY: What should I do?

FREEWOMAN: Drink the wine. Let me see... You look like someone.

JIM WHITNEY: Who?

FREEWOMAN [*shakes her head and smiles*]: Tell me about yourself, Jim.

JIM WHITNEY: Is the meter running?

FREEWOMAN: Don't worry. I'll be good. I'm a nice girl.

JIM WHITNEY: Really?

FREEWOMAN: What does that mean?

JIM WHITNEY: Nothing. You sound like a nice girl.

FREEWOMAN: I am. Now keep the money in your pocket and talk to me.

JIM WHITNEY: About what?

FREEWOMAN: Tell me – tell me why you're here.

JIM WHITNEY [*joking*]: I don't think I ought to have to tell you.

FREEWOMAN: You know what I mean.

JIM WHITNEY: I just wanted...

FREEWOMAN: Yeah but you must have a reason. I don't know you, but I think I like you, sort of. You're too nice. You ought to have a girlfriend, but you don't, and you're here and so I'm thinking maybe you've got issues or something but you haven't done this before so maybe something happened.

JIM WHITNEY: What makes you think I'm so nice?

FREEWOMAN: Was I right?

JIM WHITNEY: I do have a girlfriend.

FREEWOMAN: So what happened?

JIM WHITNEY: I just wanted...

FREEWOMAN: She's not a Christian, is she?

JIM WHITNEY: She isn't celibate, no. I wanted to see somebody else, that's all.

FREEWOMAN: You could have cheated on her.

JIM WHITNEY: I thought I was.

FREEWOMAN: Well it's not really cheating if you're paying for it.

JIM WHITNEY: Funny.

FREEWOMAN: What?

JIM WHITNEY: I don't know. It's just funny the way you said that. Maybe you're right.

FREEWOMAN: Well it's true. If you're paying for it then it doesn't mean anything. It's like living in a hotel.

JIM WHITNEY: I know people who live in hotels.

FREEWOMAN: Yeah, but they're always old men, and they spend all day shining their shoes on the machines and they're bald and they don't know how to cook. I don't think I could live like that.

JIM WHITNEY: You wouldn't really suit being bald.

FREEWOMAN: I shaved my head once, when I was sixteen. My boyfriend wanted me to do it, but I think he was gay. I have a photo somewhere.

JIM WHITNEY: Of him or you?

FREEWOMAN: Both, but me with the hair, I mean without. Do you want to see?

JIM WHITNEY: I can imagine. I think you probably look better now.

FREEWOMAN: I'm sorry. I do have the photo if you want it.

JIM WHITNEY: Show me later.

FREEWOMAN: Am I being too girly? I can be sexy if you want me to be.

JIM WHITNEY: You're just fine. My dad lives in a hotel.

FREEWOMAN: Is he bald?

JIM WHITNEY: No.

FREEWOMAN: That's good, 'cause then you won't be.

JIM WHITNEY: You're right about the shoes though.

FREEWOMAN: What's your girlfriend's name?

JIM WHITNEY: Jen.

FREEWOMAN: Is she pretty?

JIM WHITNEY: I don't think you'd understand.

FREEWOMAN: She's not then. Well that makes more sense.

JIM WHITNEY: No, she's – gorgeous, but...

FREEWOMAN: What?

JIM WHITNEY: I didn't come here to talk to you about my girlfriend. I don't know why you keep asking me about her. It's the last thing really, that I need. She's not here, she's not a threat. You're sexy. Obviously. It's your job. And I just wanna...

FREEWOMAN: Baby it's okay. I'm all yours now. Forget her.

JIM WHITNEY: No. I don't mean that.

FREEWOMAN: What's wrong?

JIM WHITNEY: Nothing.

FREEWOMAN: Then why you getting so angry? I don't care who she is.

JIM WHITNEY: I don't need relationship advice from a whore.

FREEWOMAN [*who'd tell him to fuck off if it weren't true*]: What do you want to do?

JIM WHITNEY: Are we going to start?

FREEWOMAN: What time is it?

JIM WHITNEY: Nearly ten.

FREEWOMAN: Let's go somewhere.

JIM WHITNEY: Where?

FREEWOMAN: I want to show you something.

[*Exit FREEWOMAN and JIM WHITNEY.*]

Scene 2
A church

[Lights up on the altar area of an old church. Enter FREEWOMAN and JIM WHITNEY through a side door]

JIM WHITNEY: Wow!

FREEWOMAN: He he. Isn't it pretty? I always come here.

JIM WHITNEY: You bring work here?

FREEWOMAN: No. Never. But it's safe here. I wanted to show you the windows.

JIM WHITNEY: What about the windows?

FREEWOMAN: I worked out who you look like. There. Benedict the Black. He's my favourite. I've been trying to read about him. He was a slave, then a hermit, then a monk, then a priest, then a saint. That's kind of all I know. Maybe I'm going to the wrong bookshops.

JIM WHITNEY: It doesn't look anything like me.

FREEWOMAN: No. He does. You can't really see it in the street light. You should come in the daytime. You know you're the first person I've been here with.

[Pause, as they look around.]

JIM WHITNEY: Why? Why are you making me the first?

FREEWOMAN: Because I like you.

JIM WHITNEY: Sure *[neutrally, with neither sarcasm nor conviction]*.

FREEWOMAN: You don't believe me? You haven't paid me any money yet – and I thought you'd like it here, that's all. I thought you looked like the window, because it does look like you, to me. I thought it would be nice. *[JIM WHITNEY stares back inquisitively.]* I know I sound funny. You're going to have to trust me.

JIM WHITNEY: Because you're a good girl.

FREEWOMAN: Because I'm trusting you.

[Pause.]

JIM WHITNEY: Is it not still a church?

FREEWOMAN: Used to be. They closed it last year. I'm going to buy it some day and open a club. I was in a place like that once with everything painted black inside except for the windows. They couldn't get rid of them. So you always knew you were in a church. The bar's going to be over here. I'm going to keep the pulpit for the D.J. box and keep everything really except for the seats and the crucifixes. You could use the old pews to build the bar. There's going to be lights up the walls so you can see the old ceiling and – I'll get classy guys like you to come in, and I'll be the pimp, and you can call me up in advance and book your favourite girls.

JIM WHITNEY: You're going to run a brothel?

FREEWOMAN: No it'll be a club, but it'll have everything.

JIM WHITNEY: I think that makes it a brothel.

FREEWOMAN: Do brothels have an altar?

JIM WHITNEY: None that I've been in, but I haven't been in very many.

FREEWOMAN: And Bollinger?

JIM WHITNEY: Some of them, I suppose.

FREEWOMAN: Well, I have expensive tastes, and I'd expect no less from my clientelle.

JIM WHITNEY: Are the pearls real?

FREEWOMAN: Yep.

JIM WHITNEY: Suits you though.

FREEWOMAN: Well thank you.

JIM WHITNEY: I got thrown out of a church once. They thought we were trying to get it on. These two tiny old Italian nuns started chasing us with their walking sticks. I think they were twins, and they're both shouting "vai vai". You'd never hear anybody shout in a church, and these two nuns just came out of nowhere like they were chasing a bull, and rattling their sticks, and I was so scared they were going to break a hip or something. But they were coming straight for us and we just got up and ran out the door. I had no idea what was going on. It was like an earthquake or something. It was like they could see inside us.

FREEWOMAN: What were you doing?

JIM WHITNEY: Nothing. I was whispering something to the girl I was with, and I think her top must have slipped off her shoulder, and she wasn't wearing a bra or anything underneath.

FREEWOMAN: Well... I can see how they made the mistake. I had a dream like that a few nights ago, where I was being chased by nuns.

JIM WHITNEY: You think that's quite revealing maybe?

FREEWOMAN: Not really. I fell asleep watching the Sound of Music.

JIM WHITNEY: I hate that film.

FREEWOMAN: I used to think it was kind of fun, but no, too many nuns now. Eugh.

JIM WHITNEY: Well that's something we have in common.

FREEWOMAN: Who was it? It wasn't Jen?

JIM WHITNEY: No. It was a girl I knew in Florence. Do you know Florence?

FREEWOMAN: Sort of.

JIM WHITNEY: Well you know the British Institute?

FREEWOMAN: No, I mean, I know *of* it. I haven't been there.

JIM WHITNEY: Alright, well I was at the British Institute for a while. It was kind of strange. I was supposed to be learning Italian, but I ended up studying photography.

FREEWOMAN: Sounds like fun.

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah, I spent the whole time with this girl I met. I met her on the first night I was there. This girl was like – like you almost – with this head full of colours, this kind of Wonderland. I could have been anywhere, but every day became this adventure through her world. And for months, that's all it ever was, the two us, and now I can't even remember what she saw in me. Well I kind of know actually. What am I supposed to be saying?

FREEWOMAN: You were telling me about Florence.

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah, everyone thought she was insane though.

FREEWOMAN: Just like me?

JIM WHITNEY: No, I didn't say that.

FREEWOMAN: But it didn't work out?

JIM WHITNEY: She got so close to me, too close really. And still she needed all this time to figure herself out. She nearly destroyed me.

FREEWOMAN: So?

JIM WHITNEY: Well nobody's got me yet. She left the Institute, half-way through. But that was after we had this big argument. About all that stuff. I couldn't deal with it anymore, and I told her, and I shouldn't have told her. I didn't know how to appreciate her. I haven't seen her since. You do remind me of her though. God – you don't mind me telling you this?

FREEWOMAN: I like hearing stories. So what's Jen like then?

JIM WHITNEY: She's different. She's much easier.

FREEWOMAN: You don't sound very convinced.

JIM WHITNEY: Alright look, before we get to know each other too well...

FREEWOMAN: I get you, I get you. You want to start right – well what are you waiting for?

JIM WHITNEY: I was waiting for you. What are you waiting for? Let's go. [FREEWOMAN *moves nervously towards* JIM WHITNEY.] No, I mean let's get out of here.

FREEWOMAN: Why?

JIM WHITNEY: I don't know.

FREEWOMAN: Don't you want to do it here?

JIM WHITNEY: In a church?

FREEWOMAN: It's not really a church, and anyway, why do you care?

JIM WHITNEY: It's a church, I'm not fucking you in a church.

FREEWOMAN: Don't say that word.

JIM WHITNEY: What, 'fuck'?

FREEWOMAN: I don't like it. Look, I want to stay here. We're safe here.

JIM WHITNEY: From whom? From the police?

FREEWOMAN: Don't be stupid. Why would the police care? You think they spend their time knocking on doors hunting whores?

JIM WHITNEY: I don't know.

FREEWOMAN: You must be a saint. You want to fuck me? Do it on the altar. Come on, some men would pay double for that. [*She lies back on the altar and kicks her legs in the air.*] You can be Saint Benedict and I'll be a little pilgrim girl – I've walked a thousand miles for your blessing. Don't you want to? Don't it get lonely in the monastery? If you're a saint, you can do what you like, it's God's will. Make love to me. The Lord commands thee Benedict.

JIM WHITNEY: You're serious...?

[FREEWOMAN *stands and pulls* JIM WHITNEY *over and onto the altar.*]

JIM WHITNEY: I can't.

FREEWOMAN: Why not?

JIM WHITNEY: I'm not – religious, but this place, it's too fucking austere.

FREEWOMAN: Austere?

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah, you know what I mean? The air's so heavy here. It's like we're gonna leave marks in it.

FREEWOMAN: So what if we do?

JIM WHITNEY: Please, not here. Take me back to yours.

FREEWOMAN: I can't.

JIM WHITNEY: Why not?

FREEWOMAN: Stay here. *Fuck* me.

JIM WHITNEY: Not here.

FREEWOMAN: I don't want to go back.
JIM WHITNEY: Why not?
FREEWOMAN: Don't you want it?
JIM WHITNEY: Not here.
FREEWOMAN: Come on baby.
JIM WHITNEY: No.
FREEWOMAN: What's wrong?
JIM WHITNEY: Take me back.
FREEWOMAN: I don't want to.
JIM WHITNEY: Why not?
FREEWOMAN: Because...
JIM WHITNEY: Because what?
FREEWOMAN: Because Charles'll be there.
JIM WHITNEY: Who the fuck is Charles?
FREEWOMAN: He's – I don't know – he comes every night.
JIM WHITNEY: Isn't that what people do?
FREEWOMAN: I suppose so.
JIM WHITNEY: So why are you scared?
FREEWOMAN: I'm not scared.
JIM WHITNEY: You're not scared? You're trembling. Come here.
FREEWOMAN: I don't want to see him tonight. He'll be there now. I thought you were
him when you were at the door.
JIM WHITNEY: So tell him to go home.
FREEWOMAN: He won't go.
JIM WHITNEY: Even if you're with me?
FREEWOMAN: Yeah.
JIM WHITNEY: Then come to my place.
FREEWOMAN: He'll find me.
JIM WHITNEY: How?
FREEWOMAN: He always finds me. Except when I'm here. I think he's scared of
churches or scared of Jesus or some crap like that.
JIM WHITNEY: How's he going to find you? What if we close the curtains? We can go in
through the back door.
FREEWOMAN: Do you think this funny?
JIM WHITNEY: I'm sorry.
FREEWOMAN: No, you're right. It's really funny.
JIM WHITNEY: I said I was sorry.
FREEWOMAN: God I'm so shit. You really think I'm a prostitute don't you?
JIM WHITNEY: You're not?
FREEWOMAN: I'm just shit. He comes in and he does it every night.
JIM WHITNEY: What do you mean?
FREEWOMAN: Who told you about me anyway?
JIM WHITNEY: Some guy, I don't know.
FREEWOMAN: Was it Charles?
JIM WHITNEY: I don't know.
FREEWOMAN: What did he look like?

JIM WHITNEY: Old, he had a beard.

FREEWOMAN: That's not him.

JIM WHITNEY: Why? What's Charles like?

FREEWOMAN: He's young. He doesn't have a beard.

JIM WHITNEY: So what's the problem?

FREEWOMAN: Because, I'm not really – it's just him.

JIM WHITNEY: Just him?

FREEWOMAN: Just him. There isn't anybody else.

JIM WHITNEY: Shit.

FREEWOMAN: Well there you go.

JIM WHITNEY: And you don't like it?

[FREEWOMAN *has no answer.*]

JIM WHITNEY: It's still your choice though. I mean, it's not as if you couldn't do something else if you wanted to.

FREEWOMAN: I don't know.

JIM WHITNEY: I mean, you could just tell him you don't want to.

FREEWOMAN: I think he'd do it anyway.

JIM WHITNEY: What if you said 'no'?

FREEWOMAN: I don't know what he'd do.

JIM WHITNEY: Have you ever tried?

FREEWOMAN: No.

JIM WHITNEY: What would he do?

FREEWOMAN: I don't know, I've never tried. And I don't really think I want to find out.

JIM WHITNEY: You'd rather things as they are?

FREEWOMAN: He pays me.

JIM WHITNEY: That's not the point.

FREEWOMAN: No. That is the point. He pays me. So it's fine. Why do you care anyway?

JIM WHITNEY: Sorry. I'm only human.

FREEWOMAN: Well don't be. He's not, and I quite like his money actually. It seems to go so well with my expensive tastes – oh don't be so miserable. You like my earrings?

JIM WHITNEY: You know I do.

FREEWOMAN: So leave me alone.

JIM WHITNEY: You're just like Jen.

FREEWOMAN: Really?

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah.

FREEWOMAN: That's the nicest thing you've said to me.

JIM WHITNEY: Fuck off.

[*Silence.* FREEWOMAN *sulks.*]

JIM WHITNEY: Am I not being nice to you?

[*More silence.*]

FREEWOMAN: I'm sorry. Tell me about her. I don't mind.

JIM WHITNEY: I can't believe this. Jen wouldn't look at me, she wouldn't – believe I'm here. She wouldn't believe it, she thinks she knows everything about me. It's scary.

FREEWOMAN: You love her [*more a statement than a question*].

JIM WHITNEY: I suppose so.

FREEWOMAN: You tell her you love her?

JIM WHITNEY: I have to.

FREEWOMAN: I think you'll be okay.

JIM WHITNEY: Really? You don't think she'd mind finding me here in church with a
whore.

FREEWOMAN: I'm not – she won't.

JIM WHITNEY: She doesn't know me – I know you're not.

FREEWOMAN: You'll be okay.

JIM WHITNEY: She doesn't know me at all. When I said you were like her, I meant
because you're so – everything's so easy for you. Your expensive taste, you don't
seem to worry about anything. And I'd worry. And I feel like worrying for you.
The thing is, I'll not be okay, and I'm pretty sure of that. Sometimes I wake up
beside her and I just feel like running away. I always think how I still can, that's
how I've convinced myself to stay.

FREEWOMAN: Is that a song?

JIM WHITNEY: No, that's just me.

FREEWOMAN: You ought to write one.

JIM WHITNEY: Probably. I used to think there were two types of people: the people with
problems and the people with real problems. You ought to be the one with the real
problems here but look at me – I'm sorry...

FREEWOMAN: So wise. Don't they say misery brings out the best in people?

JIM WHITNEY [*smiling*]: I'm glad you're not a prostitute.

FREEWOMAN: Me too. Can you play any instruments?

JIM WHITNEY: Clarinet. Why?

FREEWOMAN: For your song.

JIM WHITNEY: You're so funny.

FREEWOMAN: And I was wondering if the organ still worked here, but I don't know how.

JIM WHITNEY: Probably needs the electricity put on.

FREEWOMAN: Really?

JIM WHITNEY: What?

FREEWOMAN: I thought they were mechanical.

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah but – never mind.

[*Pause.*]

FREEWOMAN: Jim?

JIM WHITNEY: Yes?

FREEWOMAN: What am I gonna do?

[*Pause. Then JIM WHITNEY takes FREEWOMAN in his arms.*]

JIM WHITNEY: I can't – you'll find something, somehow.

FREEWOMAN: I'll be a hermit maybe, or a monk. I'll be a saint.

JIM WHITNEY: Maybe.

FREEWOMAN [*weeping*]: I could shave my head again.

JIM WHITNEY: Don't cry.

FREEWOMAN: I'm sorry.

JIM WHITNEY: Don't be sorry. You'll be okay.

FREEWOMAN: Would you help me?

JIM WHITNEY: Help you do what?

FREEWOMAN [*laughing*]: I want you to kill Charles for me.

JIM WHITNEY: No. You can't be serious. Are you jok...?

[*FREEWOMAN's laughter breaks through her tears.*]

FREEWOMAN: Of course I'm joking.

JIM WHITNEY: Thank God for that.

FREEWOMAN: But you'll help me?

JIM WHITNEY: I'm not going to leave you here.

FREEWOMAN: Why would you? Not the money, forget the money.

JIM WHITNEY: I just...

FREEWOMAN: Just stay here with me. Just a while.

[*Lights go down on the couple.*]

Scene 3
Freewoman's room

[We hear banging on the door as in Scene 1.]

CHARLES [*outside*]: Baby, it's me. It's Charles. Let me in [*etc.*].

[Eventually CHARLES enters through the unlocked door, carrying groceries.]

CHARLES: Darling! Baby why didn't you let me in? It's Charles. You here? You better not be hiding again. [*Looks under bed. Tries to open wardrobe, but it's locked.*] So you want to play this game? Baby I can't wait tonight. I need you tonight. I need you now. Please, come out. [*Starts unpacking his bags onto the table. The contents include Champagne and other luxury items.*] I bought you all the things you wanted. Except the *pains au chocolat* – they'd run out – but I got you croissants. I wasn't sure if you had any coffee so I got you some too, and some more wine. It's – it's special. Why are you hiding? Darling I need you. Stop hiding. Stop doing this. You do this every night. You know you shouldn't do this to me. [*Knocks on wardrobe.*] Are you in there? If you don't want to talk just come out. We don't have to talk, we don't have to do anything. I just want to see you. I need to see you. I need to talk to you. Something's happened and I need to talk to you. You used to be so good to me.

[Enter FREEWOMAN and JIM WHITNEY.]

CHARLES: What? Who are you?

FREEWOMAN: This is Jim Whitney. He's my pimp.

CHARLES: Your what?

FREEWOMAN: My pimp.

CHARLES: And what's he supposed to do?

FREEWOMAN: What pimps do. He's looking after me.

CHARLES: Does he talk?

JIM WHITNEY: I can talk.

CHARLES: What's she been telling you?

JIM WHITNEY: Charles, I presume?

CHARLES: Yeah, what did she tell you? She's not a whore, she doesn't need a pimp.

JIM WHITNEY: That's more or less what she said.

CHARLES: Baby I need to talk to you alone.

FREEWOMAN: No.

CHARLES: Where did you find this guy? What are you doing? I need to talk to you.

Remember last time?

FREEWOMAN: What last time?

CHARLES [*to JIM WHITNEY*]: She did this before. I caught her cheating on me.

FREEWOMAN: How could I be cheating on you?

CHARLES: Well, let me see. You call this faithfulness?

FREEWOMAN: It's not...

JIM WHITNEY: She doesn't want to see you.

CHARLES: She can't tell me that herself? Listen, you don't know her like I do. She doesn't know what she wants. You remember the poem I wrote you?

FREEWOMAN: Yes I remember your goddamn poem.

CHARLES [*trying another tactic*]: I need to talk to you. My brother's dead.

[*Pause.*]

FREEWOMAN: You don't have a brother.

CHARLES: You know who I mean.

FREEWOMAN: No. Charles. I only know what you tell me and it changes every day. What am I supposed to know?

CHARLES: He's dead.

FREEWOMAN: Who? I don't know him.

CHARLES: It doesn't matter. I have to tell you.

FREEWOMAN: Okay what happened?

CHARLES: I don't know. He said he was going to make himself die. Now he's gone. You have to call the police.

FREEWOMAN: Why don't you phone them? I don't know what to say.

JIM WHITNEY: Don't phone the police.

FREEWOMAN: Why not?

CHARLES: Stay out of this.

JIM WHITNEY: Charles. I'm sorry, but she doesn't want to see you.

CHARLES: Will you just stay out of this? Phone them, tell them...

JIM WHITNEY: I'm not joking.

CHARLES: If you so much as touch her...

JIM WHITNEY: I'm not touching her.

CHARLES: Isn't that what pimps do? Baby how can you do this to me? You have no idea how you use me. I'd do anything for you – you know that. Anything...

FREEWOMAN: Then go.

CHARLES: I'll never leave you.

FREEWOMAN: You said 'anything'.

CHARLES: I'll come back.

FREEWOMAN: I don't want you back. Don't come back.

CHARLES: How can you say that?

FREEWOMAN: Like last time, like the time before that. Jim, I always tell him.

CHARLES: But you never mean it.

FREEWOMAN: I do. Jim, I mean it.

JIM WHITNEY: Look, please, leave her alone.

CHARLES: Who are you? You weren't there when she got sick. You didn't bring her flowers every day and bring her food and call the doctor. You don't know her like I do. You think you know her, but when did you meet her? I've known her for half a year, nearly a year. You didn't see her before – before I met her. She needs me.

FREEWOMAN: Jim. He's lying. He's lying.

CHARLES: Look at her. She can't cope. I told you, she needs me.

JIM WHITNEY: No. That's shit. It really is. She's told you to go.

CHARLES: Please baby, phone the police. Do it for me.

FREEWOMAN: Okay I'll phone them. What do I say?

CHARLES: Tell them you want to report a missing person. His name's Hans.

FREEWOMAN: Okay. Hans what?

CHARLES: Um. I don't know.

JIM WHITNEY: I'm sorry Charles, if you don't know his name...

CHARLES: I fucking do. He's my fucking brother. He's my half brother. He lived beside me. We went fishing. His name's – shit I don't know. I'm not making this up.

JIM WHITNEY: Charles...

CHARLES: Sometimes – sometimes I forget things. It doesn't mean – it doesn't mean you can just act like it's not real. He's fucking dead. I'm not making this up.

FREEWOMAN [*putting down the phone*]: I don't care.

CHARLES: What?

FREEWOMAN: I just don't care. I can't.

CHARLES: What do you mean?

FREEWOMAN: Your brother, your – whatever – your – isn't mine. And I can't... You come in here, and you screw me and you rape me and you're a shit and you think I'm supposed to care when you're so damn crazy, you know that...

CHARLES: How can you...?

FREEWOMAN: How dare you Charles? You're such a poor excuse for a human being. And you...

CHARLES: I don't understand. Is *he* making you say this?

FREEWOMAN: No.

CHARLES: Well it's the first time... and what am I supposed to do now?

JIM WHITNEY: Say goodbye.

CHARLES: Fuck you fuck you. What are you doing? I never rape her. [*To FREEWOMAN*] I never raped you. Why...?

FREEWOMAN: Think about it Charles.

CHARLES: What's he said? He's one of those – he's putting thoughts in your head. He's trying to mess with you.

JIM WHITNEY: I'm trying to help you.

CHARLES: How is that exactly? How the fuck are you helping anything, calling me a rapist? How did you figure that one out, with your fucking telepathy?

JIM WHITNEY: I...

CHARLES: I love her.

FREEWOMAN: No.

CHARLES: Don't tell me 'no'. I've always loved you.

FREEWOMAN: No. Stop it.

CHARLES: It's my own fault. I shouldn't have been so difficult, but you were never – you were never where I was. I always wanted to try to be more just-like-you or something. Why – why did you call me that?

FREEWOMAN: Jim, darling, give me a minute or two – alone.

JIM WHITNEY: You serious?

FREEWOMAN: Please... [*and she says it with a look*].

JIM WHITNEY: Alright... But I'll wait outside.

[*Exit JIM WHITNEY, against his better judgement. CHARLES crosses stage and kisses FREEWOMAN. For a moment, she kisses him back.*]

CHARLES: What's wrong with you? Who is that guy?

FREEWOMAN: I met him tonight. He wanted to sleep with me.

CHARLES: And did you?

FREEWOMAN: I was going to, but...

CHARLES: You've got some real problems, haven't you?

FREEWOMAN: Just you Charlie, just you.

CHARLES: Oh, really?

FREEWOMAN: You've never felt this pain...

CHARLES: What's wrong? Are you going crazy?

FREEWOMAN: No. Look Charlie...

CHARLES: Then what are you doing?

FREEWOMAN: You know I'm serious. You have to go. I don't want it going on like this.

CHARLES: Like what? What's wrong? You and me? It's always been fine. It's all you wanted, and you said that.

FREEWOMAN: I don't always mean everything.

CHARLES: You meant that. You told me over and over. Told me what you wanted.

FREEWOMAN: That's different.

CHARLES: I know. But it's the same really.

FREEWOMAN: It's not.

CHARLES: Underneath...

FREEWOMAN: Underneath there's nothing. I learned that from you. There's only one thing, and it's an ugly thing.

CHARLES: So what's different? What didn't you want? *[Pause.]* Why did you call me that?

FREEWOMAN: What?

CHARLES: You called me 'a poor excuse for a human being'.

FREEWOMAN: Because that's what you are.

CHARLES: What if I didn't come back? What would you do?

FREEWOMAN: I'll be okay.

CHARLES *[sotto voce]*: Bitch...

FREEWOMAN: Please... You don't love me. I hate you and I hate this and – go – please.

CHARLES: Are you serious? Who'll look after you?

FREEWOMAN: I will.

CHARLES: Listen, we both have problems, but together, we're good, we'll get by. I help you don't I? Don't I? I give you everything you need. And all I need is you. And it's corny but it's that simple. We get by together. And what's wrong with that? You wouldn't survive without me. Isn't that obvious? You need me and I need you and that's love.

FREEWOMAN: I don't love you Charles. This ship is sinking, and I can get away much quicker without you. I just have to get away, and I can't help you this time.

CHARLES: What about the police? What about my brother?

FREEWOMAN: Do you want me to phone the police for you?

CHARLES *[pausing]*: No. I'll go find them myself. This money *[he takes a bank roll from his pocket, begins counting it, then hastily throws all of it on the bed]* – it ought to last you a couple of weeks if you don't buy too many pearls or whatever. I can't

believe you'd think that – I can't believe that this *ugly* thing of yours has made you think that way. I'll go and turn myself in then. Tell 'em I've been raping you for months and getting away with it.

FREEWOMAN: It wasn't rape.

CHARLES: Apparently it is. If you hate me... Do you really hate me? Do you? [*She doesn't answer.*] How long...? When did you...?

FREEWOMAN: I really never – wanted – anything.

CHARLES: You didn't enjoy it?

FREEWOMAN: Of course I did.

CHARLES: Then what are you saying?

FREEWOMAN: It doesn't mean I wanted it.

CHARLES: You think that makes sense? I think you're crazy. You think I raped you? What kind of sense is that?

FREEWOMAN: It felt like it.

CHARLES: And it's like that is it? You didn't want it? Well you fooled me.

FREEWOMAN: Some people are easier to fool than others.

CHARLES: What does that mean?

FREEWOMAN: You believe what you want to believe.

CHARLES: And you don't?

FREEWOMAN: Just get out of here Charlie. I can't live like this.

CHARLES: I don't believe you.

FREEWOMAN: Please, just go.

CHARLES: Kiss me. It'll be better...

FREEWOMAN: Ahhh! Just go.

[*Enter JIM WHITNEY, rushing in after hearing the scream.*]

JIM WHITNEY: What happened?

CHARLES: I was just leaving. [*To FREEWOMAN:*] Keep the money.

FREEWOMAN: Charles...

[*Exit CHARLES, abruptly, like a bad dream.*]

JIM WHITNEY: What happened? Did he hurt you?

FREEWOMAN: No, no he didn't. Oh Jim. Oh take me Jim, fuck me. No charge. Just do it to me. Like a saint. Like a fucking saint, I want you to fuck me. Like dying. Fuck me like dying, like I'm dying.

JIM WHITNEY: How can you...?

FREEWOMAN: Just do it! Just do it!

JIM WHITNEY: None of this is helping.

FREEWOMAN: Oh would you shut up. Shut up and fuck me! Take what you came here for. Don't tell me 'no'. You came here to fuck me, now fuck me – like dying. [*JIM WHITNEY tries to take FREEWOMAN in his arms.*] Please...

JIM WHITNEY: No. Just no.

FREEWOMAN [*struggling free*]: Why did you come here?

JIM WHITNEY: I don't know.

FREEWOMAN: Yeah you do. You came here because you wanted to know what it feels like – well what does it feel like?

JIM WHITNEY: I haven't done anything. Someone told me you were a prostitute. It was just curiosity. I figured I could afford it. I didn't exactly think it through. And anyway, I wasn't expecting this.

FREEWOMAN: I suppose not... Oh - I'm sorry.

JIM WHITNEY: For what?

FREEWOMAN: For everything.

JIM WHITNEY: Don't be sorry. What have you done? I'm the sorry one. I ought to go.

FREEWOMAN [*in disbelief*]: You're going to go?

JIM WHITNEY: I have to...

FREEWOMAN: What? Because of – Jen. She'll be waiting for you?

JIM WHITNEY: No. I didn't really tell you but...

FREEWOMAN: Tell me what? Something's wrong, isn't it?

JIM WHITNEY: Well, maybe. She might not be home. In fact, thinking about it, she's probably gone back to her parents' house. I should have told you, but things were pretty bad.

FREEWOMAN: I guessed.

JIM WHITNEY: Really?

FREEWOMAN: Is she leaving you? You don't have to say.

JIM WHITNEY: I suppose so. Maybe. I don't know.

FREEWOMAN: So she's not really so perfect then?

JIM WHITNEY: Well, I thought she was.

FREEWOMAN: She is or she was?

JIM WHITNEY: She's not – we're not. No-one is. But we were, and I don't think we are anymore. It's like everything else, like all the others.

FREEWOMAN: So that's why you came here to see me.

JIM WHITNEY: Not really. I think she's just tired of me.

FREEWOMAN: She's 'tired'?

JIM WHITNEY: And she's pissed off. She'll have gone.

FREEWOMAN: So stay. I need you more. You're Benedict, you have to stay with me now. You can't leave me alone now – what if Charles comes back? You have to.

JIM WHITNEY: I don't have to do anything. Maybe, I might want to, but that's different. It's a lot to ask. Maybe I'll come back – but I don't think tonight.

FREEWOMAN: That's not fair – you made all this happen.

JIM WHITNEY: I didn't mean to.

FREEWOMAN: Yeah you did. It's what you're like. Like that girl in Florence, trying to help people, trying to be nice – well you ought to follow through sometimes. You sound like Charles, you know that? Like you always know, and he always knew, and he never asked. And he's gone, and now you're about to go, and I hate it when you justify things, and you think everything you do is right. Everyone does bad things, I've learned that. And you do too. You'll tell yourself everything's right forever, and you'll just go on thinking you're right when you're way past being wrong. You'll lose it like Charles. He used to be good to me, you know, you probably wouldn't believe that, but you're like that, you wouldn't believe it.

Sometimes people are good and sometimes people are bad and no-one ever really notices themselves.

JIM WHITNEY: You know that's kind of like in Plato... I studied all that.

FREEWOMAN: You're so funny. You can't stop.

JIM WHITNEY: Stop what?

FREEWOMAN: You talk about yourself.

JIM WHITNEY: So do you.

FREEWOMAN: Look, it's your choice.

JIM WHITNEY: What do you want?

FREEWOMAN: Just a friend. I don't have very much. Haven't you noticed?

JIM WHITNEY: I've noticed.

FREEWOMAN: Congratulations. I just want you to stay here. And it's not a lot to ask.

I've been living like a stray cat on his money for months now, and nobody cares.

Nobody knows me. People who live here think I'm some weirdo, or they see

Charles and they start to work it out. And half of them are scared of me because I

never talk to anyone and I never go out, but I've got nowhere to go. I sit around

here all day, with all these old records and all this fucking wine I can barely drink

waiting for him, and then I can't bear it when he comes. If he's not coming back...

I just need a friend. You go home now and you're doing what he's done.

JIM WHITNEY: You wanted me to fuck you.

FREEWOMAN: Don't say that – I know I said it. Haven't you felt like that before? I suppose you probably haven't. [*Pause.*] Remember earlier, why didn't you want to have sex?

JIM WHITNEY: I told you, we were in a church.

FREEWOMAN: Really?

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah.

FREEWOMAN: Oh, Jim. You know I like you. I told you I do.

JIM WHITNEY: Would it be alright if I stayed?

FREEWOMAN: You're staying? Just like that?

JIM WHITNEY: Is it alright?

FREEWOMAN: You've changed your mind. Why'd you change your mind? Because of what I said?

JIM WHITNEY: It doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter. I just want to stay. I don't want to go home. Just tonight.

FREEWOMAN: Really? Oh Benedict.

JIM WHITNEY: I'm not a saint.

FREEWOMAN: Have you just realised? – And isn't that what I said...? Can I call you 'Benedict' anyway?

JIM WHITNEY: Call me whatever you want. I want to stay. You know that?

FREEWOMAN: You're really going to stay?

JIM WHITNEY: Yeah.

FREEWOMAN: You're going to stay?

JIM WHITNEY: I want to.

FREEWOMAN: Will you tell me another story? Like the one in Florence.

JIM WHITNEY: Okay. Let me think...

[Lights fade and “Love is Blindness” returns, wrapping the night around them.]

The End