

VICK: James Brown?

LAUREN and VICK: The Godfather of Soul.

VICK: A method to her madness.

LAUREN: And that's what scares me, Vick, because lately—lately, I hear music.

(JOHN enters through stage right doorway and crosses to the window.)

VICK: James Brown?

LAUREN: Christmas carols.

VICK: Okay, Lauren, it's Christmas.

LAUREN: No, in my head, I hear Christmas carols, I hear—

(A hotel room. That same night. T, a beautiful young woman wearing headphones, enters. LAUREN and VICK exit.)

T: (Singing.) "Santa baby, hurry down the—" (Removing her headphones.) Oh, Hi. I hate Christmas but I love Christmas music, is that weird? I'm T.

JOHN: T?

T: T.

JOHN: Like "a cup of"?

T: Like the letter.

JOHN: Does it stand for anything?

T: No. What do you stand for...?

JOHN: John.

T: Right, John. Can't beat a classic.

JOHN: How do you mean?

T: You're a "John"...

JOHN: Yes...?

T: Never mind.

JOHN: You look just like your picture in the!

T: /Money before funny.

JOHN: Aren't you afraid I might be a cop?

T: Are you a cop, John?

JOHN: No.

T: Didn't think so. It's three hundred for just showing up. Three-fifty if you touch me, four hundred if I touch you.

JOHN: You have beautiful hair.

T: It's fake. Four-fifty if you perform oral on me, five hundred if I perform on you.

JOHN: You have sort of, uh, a bedside manner/issue, or—

T: /Five-fifty if you screw me, six hundred if I screw you and an even thousand for anything involving bodily fluids.

JOHN: I don't usually!

T: /Sure!

JOHN: /Do this. In fact/

T: /It's your first time?

JOHN: You don't believe me?

T: Hey, I'll believe anything you want for the next hour.

JOHN: Is that really an option? You screwing me?

T: It's a surprisingly popular choice. (Starts to take off her top.)

JOHN: What if I just want to talk?

T: You're kidding.

JOHN: No, I'm not actually.

T: Dirty?

JOHN: No, just...regular.

T: I don't get it—are you gonna whack off while we talk? Or...

JOHN: No, there's nothing, um... I just want to talk.

T: Is this some Julia Roberts-*Pretty Woman* fetish?

JOHN: No.

T: So, you're not going to buy me things, sweep me off my feet?

JOHN: No.

T: Oh. Then I guess...three hundred. Don't try anything.

JOHN: I won't.

T: I'm serious. I know seven ways to kill you and I won't break a sweat.

JOHN: No one's going to die. How do you know seven ways—what's one of them?

(T nonchalantly pulls out a knife from her backpack.)

JOHN: Oh.

T: (Takes out an apple from her backpack.) I was in the Army. Is this what you wanted to talk about, 'cause the meter's runnin'.

JOHN: Yes, no. So... I appreciate you coming...Christmas Eve...in the storm and all.

T: It's my job.

JOHN: Did you take the train or... you were in the Army? I guess not many people ask you to—

T: More often than I'd like. Mind if I sit? (She does. She pulls another apple out of her backpack.) Want an apple?

JOHN: No, thank you.

T: It'll make you smart.

JOHN: Said the serpent.

T: Apple a day, keeps the doctor away.

JOHN: I'm not worried about the doctor.

T: Oh, just take the goddamn apple.

JOHN: I, uh, thank you. (Takes the apple.) Why don't you like Christmas?

T: (Carves and eats her apple.) I'm allergic to tinsel.

JOHN: That's a joke, right?

T: Well, I thought so, but... No, I don't like Christmas.

JOHN: But it's a time of hope and forgiveness, isn't it?

T: Oh, don't get me wrong, it's a brilliant gag. Man has managed to make a buck on everything, what...sacred? Death, religion, sex. Did you know that you can actually hire someone over the Internet to pray for you? Brilliant.

JOHN: I didn't know that.

T: Stick with me, kid, I'll learn ya. I do love the winters, though. The way the cold burns like a lover that's a little rough. I read that somewhere. The snow wipes everything clean and then it melts and you can start all over, be someone new.

JOHN: I wish that were true.

T: It is. Or, it is if you want it to be. You just choose. If you choose to believe that a virgin magically gave birth in some stable in the middle of the desert then, hey, why not.

JOHN: There are things I tried very hard to believe didn't happen—but they did.

T: You're not trying hard enough.

JOHN: What do you believe?

T: I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way.

JOHN: Really?

T: No, man, it's a song. *(Singing.)* "I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them hm hm hm..." Hi, where have you been for the last, like, century?

JOHN: Funny you should ask.

T: Did you have your sense of humor surgically removed?

JOHN: It's hard to find things to laugh about.

T: You need to ask Santa for some jokes.

JOHN: You still didn't say why you hate Christmas.

T: I'm actually glad you called.

JOHN: Don't you have family to spend the holidays with?

T: Don't you?

JOHN: No, I don't. Well, not really.

T: Why are you asking so many questions?

JOHN: I think I should get to know you before I spill my guts.

T: Like my mama always said, "Don't spill nothin' you can't wipe up." I think she said that. But I make up memories all the time so...

JOHN: And what does your mother think of your career?

T: I was abandoned by my mother, crack whore slut, and left, literally, on the doorstep of a clinic. Only she was stoned and she didn't realize, or who knows, maybe she did, that she had left me at a veterinarian clinic. It's why I'm such an animal. Growl.

JOHN: My God, is that true?

T: Do you want it to be true?

JOHN: Is it?

T: No, my mother's a librarian on Long Island. I'm a compulsive liar. And you are gullible. How old are you?

JOHN: Older.

T: Than what?

JOHN: Than you would think.

T: I don't know, I think a lot.

JOHN: You, now, you're smarter than—

T: You would think?

JOHN: Sorry.

T: I'm a hooker, not an idiot.

JOHN: So, how old are you?

T: You don't want to know.

JOHN: Would I go to jail?

T: You're hiring a prostitute. Either way...

JOHN: I see your point.

T: Why are you hiring a prostitute to talk to?

JOHN: Why am I hiring a prostitute to talk to?

T: You have an embarrassingly small penis?

JOHN: I do have an embarrassingly small penis.

T: I was kidding.

JOHN: No, it's okay, I do. But that's not why.

T: That's not why?

JOHN: I believe my immortal soul is in peril.

T: ...And you *don't* want a blowjob?

JOHN: And I think you were there.

T: I was where?

JOHN: So, really...how old?

T: Seventeen.

JOHN: Seventeen?

T: I'm kidding. I'm twenty-two.

JOHN: It's just that the truth is important to me.

T: Well, how old are you?

JOHN: Older.

T: Lie.

JOHN: I don't want to lie.

T: I told you I'd believe anything you wanted.

JOHN: But you won't tell me anything I can believe?

T: ...I'm twenty-six...going on thirty. The clothes and everything—the hair—makes me look younger.

JOHN: Yes.

T: People will believe pretty much anything you tell them.

(LAUREN and VICK enter.)

JOHN: Will they?

T: And I can charge more if they think I'm younger.

JOHN: Does that mean I get a rebate?

T: Ha.

(She tosses JOHN her backpack.)

T: You kill me. **← STOP.**

(T exits, and JOHN follows her, compulsively.)

LAUREN: I wanted to kill Mom. I wanted to kill her for being such a bitch all of these years, for being in so much pain, for knowing such joy.

VICK: I want to kill Prescott, that sanctimonious, homophobic...homophobe.

LAUREN: I mean, the level of hate required to kill someone—you've got to *hate* someone to imagine killing them. So, maybe, to have aroused that much hate, passion, to have made that kind of impact...you know? Maybe that could be seen as a *good* thing.

VICK: How long have you been drinking?

LAUREN: Have you ever wanted to kill me?

VICK: No, of course not.

LAUREN: I want to kill you. All the time.

VICK: Welcome home.

(VICK kisses LAUREN.)

LAUREN: Thank you.

VICK: I worked out with the hottest chick at the gym today.

LAUREN: And that's why I want to kill you.

VICK: She's an underwear model or something.

LAUREN: How wonderful for you.

VICK: And *she* approached *me*.

LAUREN: You can die now.

VICK: And she didn't know who I was.

LAUREN: Honey, you're a TV news reporter, for Madonna.

VICK: Oh, now...don't...go...

LAUREN: What?

VICK: All...like...

LAUREN: Yeah, okay, you're going to hate to use full sentences.

VICK: You're upset.