

Elmer Gantry is a charismatic traveling salesman/con man who finds a new calling as an evangelical tent preacher as well as romance with the chaste woman who runs the revival. One night the raid a whore house where Elmer meets an old lover who wound up working as a whore after he deserted her. She plots her revenge by hiding a newspaper photographer on her fire escape in order to reveal Gantry for who he really is. But it's not that simple.

Burt Lancaster won Best Actor Oscar as Elmer. Shirley Jones won Best Supporting Actress Oscar as Lulu. Jean Simmons was nominated for a Golden Globe as the preacher woman.

Lots of traps with complex characters and relationships.

ELMER

You look swell, kid.

LULU

Likewise.

ELMER

Swell. Sorry about last night.

LULU

Forget it.

ELMER

If I'd known I would run into you, I would have . . .

LULU

Ah, that's ok.

ELMER

What the hell's the big idea?

LULU

Elmer, I . . .

ELMER

You think I'm really gonna sit still for a shakedown?

LULU

Baby, how could I put the squeeze on you? Who's gonna take the word of a five buck hooker against Elmer Gantry.

ELMER

A badger game, huh?

LULU

I only wanted to see you for . . .

ELMER  
For what?

LULU  
Well for . . .

ELMER  
For what?

LULU  
See? Look. I'm almost packed. The cops gave me notice. I got a ticket on the midnight bus. I got no beef against you. I only wanted to see you once more. Kick around some old memories. Maybe have a few laughs.

ELMER  
Go on.

LULU  
Who am I kidding? When you first hit town, I figured you could go to hell any way you wanted without my help. When you came busting in last night like God Almighty wearing a tin star, I got mad. Boiling mad. All I could think of was how you took me in and ditched me. That's all I could think of, me. Little Miss Lulu. The dumb pushover. When the cops said get out of town in 24 hours, all I wanted to do was spit in your eye. Blackmail you. Shakedown. Anything to hurt you. When you walked in just now, gee, honey, it was like the first time between us all over again. Goose pimply. You better beat it. I'm sorry I called. I won't make any trouble. Not even if I could. Please go now.

ELMER  
I did run out on you back there in Kansas, didn't I?

LULU  
Nobody's fault. Except maybe my old man's.

ELMER  
Ever hear from him?

LULU  
Once. Last Christmas. It read "Daughter, read first Kings chapter 21, verse 23." I looked it up. It said "and the dogs in the street shall eat Jezebel". My old man and his bible. Tell me, how is some people can only find hate in the bible?

ELMER  
Where will you be going to?

LULU  
I think I'll go tramping through Paris this season.

ELMER

Need some cash? Sort of tide you over?

LULU

Just kiss me goodbye. Just once.

(she turns down the lights so the reporters can't take any pictures)

Talk to me. Don't go yet, please. Tell me anything. Tell me a good strong lie I can believe, but hold me.

Just hold me like you used to. Please.

ELMER

(he turns the lights back on)

It's no use Lulu.

LULU

Why?

ELMER

Cause . . . I don't know.

LULU

Because of what? Because of her? That bible broad? I'm sorry, no hard feelings. Please don't go yet.

ELMER

Lulu, I . . .

LULU

You know, I could use some of that cash after all.

ELMER

Well sure. Maybe I can send you some from time to time. That is, till you get a job or maybe meet some nice respectable man.

LULU

I meet nice respectable men every night. Best bank in America.

ELMER

Take care of yourself.

LULU

Likewise, hon.