Electric Roses

(SCENE: The scene reflects two different locations. The first is the waiting area of a bus station in Yuma, Arizona. Seated on a bench in this area is SARA. She has a suitcase sitting on the floor next to her. She wears slightly heavy makeup, which covers a few bruises on her face. The second area is a cell in a county jail, although it may be suggested by only a straight backed chair. On the chair sits RUSS, SARA's husband. The two never see one another. They exist together for the audience's convenience.)

RUSS. (For the most part, his tone throughout the play is fairly reflective. He addresses the audience directly.) The day I married Sara, it was so hot, you could fry an egg on the hood of my truck... musta been a hundred and five—hundred and six, maybe... Course, there's nothing special about that... it was June... It's funny how things can stick in your mind, isn't it? Three years ago, an' I can still almost feel it... It was hot... So me an' Darrell was drinkin' beer... Guess there's nothing special bout that either...

(DARRELL, RUSS's best friend, appears in the other area. SARA sees him. There is a tense silence between them.)

SARA... Hello, Darrell.
DARRELL. (quietly) Hi.
SARA... What are you doing here?
DARRELL. Lookin' for you.
SARA. Why'd you come here?
DARRELL. Looked everywhere else... saw your truck.
SARA. It's not mine, it belongs to Russ...
DARRELL. Well... yeah.

RUSS. well, I drink too much. I know that... I'd be lying if I didn't say it scared me sometimes. (He thinks a moment.) So, where was I? Oh, yeah, it was hot... an' Darrell says, 'Why don't we go to Vegas? An' I said, 'When?' An' he said, 'Right now.' (SARA sits back down.)

DARRELL. I saw Russ, too.
SARA. When?
SARA. Took me three minutes to get down the stairs this morning.

SARA. Yeah?

DARRELL. Yeah, (pause)

SARA. How is he?

DARRELL. You haven't seen him?

SARA. No.

DARRELL. Umm...

SARA. (quietly) ... didn't think it was such a good idea.

DARRELL. ... yeah ... he feels pretty bad.

SARA. (thoughtfully, sincerely) I know he does.

DARRELL. He'll be out by noon.

SARA. I'll be outta here by then.

RUSSELL. You ever been to Las Vegas? ... It's something, I'll tell you. ... You gotta go at night, though. All those lights make it something. (He laughs a little.) Somebody said they used to build it at night, cause it's so ugly in the day. An' Darrell said the only thing you ought to do in Las Vegas is eat. You try to do anything else, you're just taking your money. Course, you can drink for nothing if you gamble, but ... I suppose he's right anyway. You can't drink enough to make it worthwhile. (He takes a cigarette)

SARA. You gotta match?

DARRELL. (as he takes out some matches) Shouldn't do that, you know. It can kill you. (She laughs, as he lights her cigarette. As she laughs, she primacizes a little and holds her side.)

SARA. Ohh...

DARRELL. You all right?

SARA. Yeah ... just breathing in too much. (She stops a moment, closes her eyes and palms her side.)

RUSSELL. So, we figured, you know, what the hell, you gotta do something, you can't just sit there. ... So, you know, as well as I do there's nothing to do here in Tuab, it's all right. ... The sun goes down, this place turns into a graveyard. ... Feel like you're in Tuab or somewhere.

SARA. You know, Darrell, if you hadn't been with him last night, I could be dead now. (DARRELL STANDS UNCOMFORTABLY, NOT ANSWERING) You talk to Abby last night when you got home?

DARRELL. No, she was asleep.

RUSSELL. So, he called Abby on us and went to get Sara. She was working. She works over at Jerry and Tastee Cone. ... Used to be the Tastee Freeze, all they run outta money, now it's the Tastee Cone. ... An' we go over there, an' said, you know, we're going in Vegas. You wanna come?
I said, "What?" An' he said, "That's you. That's what you are to me."

"Russ, we were standing there, an' I could feel her there next to me . . . that dark all around us. And I said, "You know why we're going to Vegas, don't you?" And she said, "What's that?" And I said, "If I can marry you. An' she said, "Oh, An' I said, "I'm an 'makin' you at Vegas, and I'm gonna marry you when we get there." And she laughs, and she says, "Why in the hell would I marry you?" And I said, "His to-be becomes much more significant — the words mean considerably more."

"Cause no one in the world is ever gonna feel what I feel for you right now. (There is a pause.)"

"Darrell frustrated."

"Some things would be a lot easier if we could just tell him what we know.

"Sara. Yeah..."

"Darrell: Just tell him to go screw himself."

"Sara. Yeah... (pause)"

"Darrell: Not that easy though, is it?"

"Russ. Hell, I don't know what was in her head to say yes to me, but she did. I guess maybe she knew how much I wanted it... (He thinks a moment.) First thing we did when we hit town was find a place that would do it for us. You know, they've got places that will do it all right. An' we found one... little white house with electric roses that lit up the outside, an' I marries her."

"Darrell: You know what Abby's gonna do to me when she finds out I was here, don't you? I might be better off if I got on the bus with you. (In spite of hebetes, SARA smiles. Mocking respuesta.) You know, you're ruining our social life, don't you?"

"Sara: Can I..."

"Darrell: I'll tell her. She will. Cheryl Ann's not coming in my house. She's putting out trash, cheap trash. (SARA louder.)"

"Darrell: Well, she is..."

"Russ. Times an', we were sitting in this bar... Darrell's eatin' shrimp cocktail. You know, forty-nine cents. An' Abby's over playing the nickel slots. An' this guy..."

"Sara: He's a nickeling player..."

"Russ: He got this shirt with flowers all over it, and it just looks like... you know, Mr. California-Dude. An' he's sittin' there lookin' at Sara... just staring at her, an' you know what..."
I'm talkin' about . . . I wanted to break his greasy neck. An' I said, "What are you lookin' at, pal?" An' he says, "Do you own her?" An' I said, "Yeah, I do." And then I broke his nose. (Over a speaker, we hear the voice of the bus station announcer.)

ANNOUNCER. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Trailways bus for Blythe, Lake Havasu, Las Vegas and all points north is now boarding outside the terminal. Would all passengers ticketed for this route please make your way to the boarding area.

RUSSELL. If you could’a seen what he was doing . . . what his eyes were doing. . . . (He stops to think.) What he wanted . . . If he were here now, I'd break it again, looking at her like that. (SARA stands, grabs her suitcase and begins moving out to the bus.)

SARA. (as they look at one another) Well, I guess I better . . .

DARRELL. Yeah . . .

RUSSELL. See, you gotta understand, a woman like that, geez, if you could see how they are around her. (As SARA moves to the exit.)

DARRELL. (His voice stops her Exit.) Sara . . . ?

SARA. Huh?

RUSSELL. I start thinking about that, and . . . something happens inside of me.

DARRELL. (He speaks with a pain in his voice.) Umm . . . (He thinks a moment) I guess I'm just gonna miss you, that's all. (She looks at him for a moment, then crosses to him and embraces him. They are both near tears.)

RUSSELL. (It is painful for him to speak.) I admit it . . . I've hit her . . . (Pause. He looks over the audience.) Well, what do you want me to say? I'm not proud of it . . . Sometimes, when I drink . . . all them looks . . . (quietly) Sometimes, you just wonder how strong a person is, you know? (As DARRELL and SARA part.)

SARA. You take care, Darrell.

DARRELL. Yeah.

SARA. Tell Abby goodbye for me.

DARRELL. I will. (SARA crosses to the exit. She turns before she exits.)

SARA. (As she cries) I love him, you know that.

DARRELL. Yeah, I know.

ELECTRIC ROSES

(The lights begin to fade on the bus station, it becomes nearly a silhouette as RUSS finishes.)

RUSSELL. God knows, I love her . . . She's the most important thing in the world to me . . . she knows that, too. No matter what happens, she knows it.

THE END