

ELECTRIC ROSES by David Howard

1st Production May 17, 1988

Director. Andrea Urice
Sets. Paul Owen
Lights. Lynn Lefkoff
Costumes. Kevin McLeod

CAST

RUSS. DEL PENTECOST
SARA. ADRIANNE KRSTANSKY
DARRELL. WAYNE E. PYLE

SETTING

A bus station and a cell in a county jail.

All programs and publicity materials for this play must carry the following notice:

FIRST PRODUCED AT ACTORS
THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE

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 make-up, 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'a fried 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.)

Start

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. Guess 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?

DARRELL. 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.

~~RUSS. You ever been to Las Vegas? . . . It's something. I'll tell you . . . You gotta go at night, though. All those lights, it's something. (He laughs a little.) Somebody said they musta built 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, they're just taking your money . . . Course, you can drink for nothing if you gamble, but I suppose he's right anyhow . . . you can't drink enough to make it worthwhile. (SARA takes out 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 grimaces a little and holds her side.)

SARA. Ohh . . .

DARRELL. You all right?

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

~~RUSS. So, we figured, you know, what the hell, you gotta do something, you can't just sit there . . . an' you know as well as I do there's nothing to do here in Yuma at night . . . the sun goes down, this place turns into a grave yard. Feel like you're in Tubae 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.

~~RUSS. So, he called Abby, an' we went to get Sara. She was working. She works over at Jerry's Tastee Cone . . . Used to be the Tastee Freeze, til they run outta money. Now it's the Tastee Cone . . . An' we go over there, an' said, you know, we're goin' to Vegas. You wanna come?~~

SARA. Took me three minutes to get down the stairs this morning.

DARRELL. . . . You look good.

SARA. Yeah?

DARRELL. Yeah, you can hardly tell.

SARA. (She smiles slightly.) Thanks . . . I don't like to wear so much make-up.

DARRELL. I know . . . but, it looks okay . . . kinda sexy.

SARA. (as she laughs) Darrell, you always were full of crap

~~RUSS. An' she said, "I gotta change my clothes. I can't be as Vegas with hot fudge all over me. So, we went to Darrell's and got Abby and then went over to pick up Sara . . . an' . . . (He thinks a moment.) When she came outta her place, she'd . . . fixed herself all up . . . see, she was good at that, real good . . . I can still see her in my head. (He pauses again.) I guess I win for the rest of my life.~~

DARRELL. So . . . where you headed? (SARA shakes her head.) Come on, Sara.

SARA. Darrell, if he figured you knew, he'd get it out of you one way or another.

DARRELL. . . . yeah, I suppose he would . . . north?

SARA. I guess.

DARRELL. . . . don't go to your sister's. That's the first place he'll go.

SARA. I'm not stupid, Darrell.

DARRELL. Yeah . . . sorry.

~~RUSS. You see, a woman like Sara . . . I mean, she was pretty an' all, but . . . that ain't it. It was like, when I looked at her, something happened . . . (He puzzles over what he feels.) She put a hook inside of me that wasn't ever gonna let go . . . I knew that . . . I knew that the minute it happened.~~

DARRELL. You need money or something?

SARA. No.

DARRELL. I can run over to the bank. Only take a minute.

SARA. No, I'm alright.

DARRELL. You sure?

SARA. I'm fine. (pause)

DARRELL. Well here. (Takes \$10 out of his wallet and hands it to her.) Let me buy you lunch . . . wherever . . .

SARA. (resignedly) Thanks, Darrell. (She takes the money.)

~~RUSS. You know, I woke up this morning, an' my hand was busted . . . it was all wrapped up, an' it hurt like . . . (He examines it a moment.) An' I looked at it, and I thought, "What the~~

~~happened to you?" You know? Did that ever happen to you. You know, where you wake up, and there's something different, and you didn't even know it?~~

DARRELL. What are you gonna do?

SARA. I don't know. Get a job, I guess.

DARRELL. Well . . . you can always get a job in Vegas. It's easy to work there, I hear.

SARA. (looks at DARRELL) . . . I'll keep it in mind.

DARRELL. You know, Sara . . . (not sure about continuing — he does anyway) . . . you're the best thing that ever happened to Russ. (pause) This is gonna kill him. You know that, don't you?

SARA. I can't think about that. (pause)

DARRELL. I just want to know if you're sure, that's all.

SARA. If I wasn't sure, I wouldn't be here.

DARRELL. (quietly) Yeah.

~~Russ. So, anyway, we're drivin' up there. We're out there in the desert, up past Needles, and you know, there ain't nothing out there. It's just black. And Darrell pulls the car over, and I don't know, runs off to get something, and me and Sara get out of the car. . . . Abby was asleep. She always does that in the car. . . . An' you know, there's nothing around. . . . The only light you've got is from the stars. And I'm telling you, you look up and you look up and you can see things you never believed were up there. . . .~~

SARA. (troubled) It's not just this, you know . . . not just . . . last night.

DARRELL. I know.

SARA. (begins to cry a little) Sometimes, it would scare me to go out of the house, the way he'd look . . . I felt I couldn't breathe, you know?

DARRELL. Sara, you don't have to tell me nothing. (A pause. SARA looks at a diamond necklace which she wears around her neck.)

SARA. You remember when he bought this? (DARRELL nods.) In Vegas?

DARRELL. Yeah.

SARA. I remember, he took me outside to show it to me. And he held it in his hand up over my head. And I could see it glittering there in the dark . . . you couldn't see nothing but the light sparkling on it. And he said, "You know what that is, Sara?" And

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, "So I can marry you." An' she said, "What?" An' I said, "I am. I'm takin' you to 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 tongue becomes much more significant — the words mean considerably more.) I said, "Cause no one in the world is ever gonna feel what I feel for you right now." (There is a mouse.)~~

~~DARRELL. (frustrated) You know things would be a lot easier if you could just tell him to go screw himself, you 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 night. An' we found one. . . . this little white house with electric roses that lit up the outside, an' I married her.

DARRELL. You know what Abby's gonna do to me when she finds out I was here, don't you? . . . might be better if I got on the bus with you. (In spite of herself, SARA smiles. Mock seriousness.) You know, you're ruining our social life, don't you? I mean, . . . so's Abby gonna play cards with?

SARA. Can call Cheryl Ann.

DARRELL. . . . She will. Cheryl Ann's not coming in my house. She's not taking out trash, cheap trash. (SARA laughs.)

DARRELL. Well, she is.

Russ. Later on, we were sitting in this bar. . . . Darrell's eating shrimp cocktail. You know, forty-nine cents. An' Abby's over playing the nickel slots. An' this guy. . . . He's got this shirt with flowers all over it, and his hair 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 . . . [REDACTED] 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 [REDACTED] 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.

RUSS. If you could'a seen what he was doing . . . what his eyes were doing . . . *(He stops to think.)* What he wanted . . . [REDACTED] 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 . . .

RUSS. 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?

RUSS. 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.)*

RUSS. *(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.

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

RUSS. 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