**ELECTRIC ROSES**by David Howard *Russel*

You ever been to Las Vegas? . . . It\*s something, I\*ll tell you. . . . You gotta go at night, though. All those lights, man, it\*s something. *(He laughs a little.)* Somebody said they musta built it at night, cause it\*s so damn 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 worth-while. 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 damn grave yard. Feel like you\*re in Tubac or somewhere. 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? 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. So, anyway, we\*re drivin\* up there. We\*re out therein the desert, up past Needles, an\* you know, there ain\*t nothing out there. It\*s just black. An\* Darrell pulls the car over, and, I don\*t know, runs off to take a piss or something, an\* 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 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, "Why\*s that?" And, I said, "So I can marry you." An\* she said, "Bullshit." 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 should I marry you?" And I said . . . *(His tone becomes much more sign dl cant* — *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 pause.)* 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. 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 . . . this ass-hole, keno player . . . 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 . . . Hell, 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 friggin' nose. *(Over a speaker, we hear the voice of the bus station announcer.)* See, you gotta understand, a woman like that, geez, if you Could see how they are around her.I start thinking about that, and . . something happens inside of me. *(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?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.