

ARMADILLO

ACT ONE: SCENE ONE. A DESERT ROAD.

As the audience enters, before us is a stunning landscape featuring the mountains and vegetation of the Nevada desert and Nevada state highway fifty-five, the "loneliest road in the United States". Upstage, a guardrail stretches across the scene. The stage itself is a blacktop with a divided highway "double yellow" lines. Sparse and dry vegetation dot the curb of the road. It is silent with the exception of a wind blowing across the landscape. Then in the distance the sound of automobiles coming from two different directions. The sound gets louder until it is very close. Suddenly horns blare! Tires squeal! The sound of the cars skidding, then a large crash, and thuds of the cars sliding off of the road. A tire bumps across the stage and lands on it's side in the middle. Then for a moment, only silence. Just the sound of the wind blowing across the desert.

After a beat, the sounds of car doors opening and people getting out. We hear their voices from offstage.

ROGER

(off)

What the hell happened? Why did you change lanes like that?

DAVID

(off)

Are you okay?

ROGER

(off)

You were in the middle of the road! Why??

GRACE

(off)

Do you think it's alright?

DAVID

(off)

Yes, it's totally fine.

GRACE

(off)

Thank goodness.

ROGER

(off)

Look at my car!!

DAVID

(off)

You're sure you're okay?

GRACE

(off)

Yes, I think so.

ROGER

(off)

Why did you swerve across the road like that!?

DAVID

(off)

I didn't see it until it was too late.

GRACE

(off)

I hope the baby's alright.

DAVID

(off)

I'm sure it's fine. This could have been so much worse.

ROGER

(off)

It's the middle of the desert, there's no one for miles. What the hell were you thinking?!

DAVID

(off)

I'm sorry sir, I'm just making sure my wife is okay. One moment please.

ROGER

(off)

But I don't understand how this even happened. Look at my car!... Look at your car! It's the middle of the desert! Now what?! Jesus!!

DAVID

(off)

Honey, we're going to have to go back up to the road, and flag someone down. Can you climb this embankment?

GRACE

(off, defensive)

Of course I can.

DAVID

(off)

Don't worry honey, we'll just flag someone down, and get a tow truck to haul us out of this gulley.

ROGER

(off)

I can't believe you swerved like that.

DAVID

(off)

Watch your step, honey. The rocks are loose.

GRACE

(off)

I'm perfectly capable.

DAVID

(off)

Be careful, honey. Don't slip.

David appears from behind and below the guard rail, pulling himself up and over. David is a handsome man in his late thirties or so. He is dressed in a short sleeved button down shirt and shorts. David surveys the surroundings.

He reaches over the guardrail and helps his wife, Grace, up and over. Grace is a pretty woman in her mid thirties.

Next David reaches over and lends a hand to Roger. He reaches out to pull him up and over the guardrail.

ROGER

I've got it, I've got it. You've done enough already.

Roger is a man in his fifties. He is dressed in something people might take for "golfing attire".

David looks out at the "audience" and surveys the beautiful desert landscape.

DAVID

Wow. No one. Absolutely nothing.

GRACE

But it's gorgeous! Just look at it!

DAVID

The colors. The desert is really beautiful.

Roger tugs on his shirt, pulls out a handkerchief and wipes his forehead.

ROGER

It's so hot!

GRACE

You can just see for miles.

Roger paces up and down the road.

ROGER

Do you see any other cars?

DAVID

Your car looks expensive, sir. We should exchange information.

ROGER

It is expensive. I hope you have insurance because it's totally your fault.

DAVID

I'm not sure about that, sir. I may have swerved a little, but your wheel came off and hit us. It must have been loose.

ROGER

My wheel wasn't loose. Why would it be loose?!

David looks at the tire laying on the road.

DAVID

I don't know. Was it bolted to the axle?

ROGER

Of course it was bolted to the axle! It came off, because you hit us!

DAVID

I'm not sure about that, sir.

ROGER

I'm sure. I'm very, very sure. I'm an excellent driver. I've never gotten in an accident in my life.

DAVID

Will your car start? Could we use the air conditioning until someone comes?

ROGER

No. I tried. It won't start.

DAVID

Ours either.

GRACE

I wonder how long we can survive in this heat without air conditioning?

ROGER

What?

GRACE

I'd say, thirty six hours, maximum.

Roger goes over to the guardrail
and looks down towards the unseen
accident.

ROGER

This is a disaster. Barbara! Get out of the car! It's 106
degrees.

DAVID

109 degrees. Last I looked it was 109 degrees.

GRACE

David's a very cautious driver.

DAVID

Grace is pregnant.

ROGER

(looking over the rail at
his car)

That was a new car.

DAVID

She's three months pregnant.

ROGER

(staring at his car)

Just look at it.

DAVID

The baby's due at Thanksgiving.

Roger yells down the embankment.

ROGER

(yelling)

Jesus. Oh, for Christ sakes... Barbara? Did you hear me say
get out of the car?

GRACE

Is she okay?

ROGER

She's okay. She's ignoring me.

DAVID

Why?

ROGER

She wanted me to take route 80, but I wanted to take 55 because it said it was a little faster and I thought it would be more scenic.

GRACE

Look at all the wide open space. It's just spectacular.

ROGER

Which is why there is absolutely no reason we should have had an accident. No reason! ...Barbara! We're up here... Barbara!

Roger picks up a rock and violently throws it down the hill.

ROGER (CONT'D)

You're going to roast like a turkey if you don't get out of the car!

David pulls out his cell phone and studies it.

DAVID

Do you have a cell phone signal, sir? Cause my battery is dead.

Roger checks his cell phone. He is surprised that the battery has been drained.

ROGER

No. My phone is dead too.

GRACE

Just like Arlene.

David and Roger are perplexed about their phones. They turn them in their hands, they hold them up to the sky, they try to turn them on and off again.

DAVID

I could swear it was charged the last time I checked it.

ROGER

I don't understand. This is a very expensive cell phone.

He looks over at Grace.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(to Grace)

What about you? Do you have a phone?

GRACE

I don't have a cell phone. They're bad for the environment, and I eschew social media. I use David's if it's an emergency. I'm Grace, and this is David.

Grace extends her hand out. Roger walks away.

ROGER

I know. You already said each other's names. This is a huge, huge mess. Barbara is going to be so pissed. Barbara! Come out of there before the car tips over with you in it! It's not safe.

BARBARA

(off)

Alright. I'm coming. Stop making a scene, Roger.

ROGER

I'm not making a scene, I'm trying to keep you alive.

BARBARA

(off)

Well, stop it.

Roger reaches over the embankment, helping Barbara over the guardrail.

Barbara is a woman in her fifties. Like her husband she is wearing "traveling clothes" that would seem appropriate for golf or tennis. She wears a "visor" to protect herself from the sun.

ROGER

(to Barbara)

Watch yourself, the rocks are slippery.

BARBARA

I've got it!

David walks over to the
embankment and looks at the
accident.

DAVID
(looking over the
embankment)
You're right, sir. The cars do not look good.

ROGER
It was your fault. You swerved.

DAVID
(to Barbara)
Do you need some help?

BARBARA
I'm okay. I'm so sorry about my husbands driving. I don't
know why he pulled into your lane.

David walks over to the edge of
the stage, and leans around,
looking for something in the
distance.

ROGER
They swerved!

BARBARA
I didn't see them swerve. They may have swayed a little. You
over-reacted, just like always. You know, another accident is
going to raise our insurance rates again.

David walks back over to Grace.

DAVID
Honey, I think it's okay. Looks like it got away.

GRACE
Oh thank goodness! I was so worried.

DAVID
Me too.

ROGER
What's okay?

DAVID
The armadillo.

ROGER

What armadillo?

DAVID

The one we almost ran over.

ROGER

Did you swerve so you wouldn't hit an armadillo??

GRACE

It had babies. It wasn't the armadillo's fault that we built this road right in the middle of where it lives.

ROGER

Barbara. Did you hear that? We got in an accident because they didn't want to hit an God damn armadillo.

BARBARA

(chastising his language)

Roger! I apologize for his language. He's got a temper, but he's working on it. He's working on a lot of things, aren't you Roger?

GRACE

A short temper often signals that something else is wrong in your life.

DAVID

Honey, I'm concerned. We need to get you into some shade. You're sweating.

GRACE

Of course I'm sweating. We're all sweating. We all need to find some shade, David, not just me. Don't single me out. I'm not helpless.

DAVID

I'm sorry, honey.

ROGER

This is so stupid! Ugh! Why does everything happen to me?

BARBARA

This wouldn't have happened if we had flown.

ROGER

We need to get to town. We'll talk to the police, and let them sort it out.

DAVID

We can't get those cars back on the road in the condition they're in.

ROGER

YOU drove us off the road.

DAVID

Well, technically, your tire hit us, and that caused us to go off the road...sir.

ROGER

WHAT?!!

Grace gazes out across the desert landscape.

GRACE

Look at the clouds! Have you ever seen clouds like that?

BARBARA

Beautiful...I'm Barbara.

Barbara walks over, and shakes Grace's hand.

GRACE

I'm Grace and this is my husband David.

BARBARA

So nice to meet you...We're on our way to Denver for my nieces baptism.

GRACE

That's so funny. We're on our way to a funeral.

ROGER

That is funny.

BARBARA

I'm sorry for your loss.

GRACE

It's okay. It was inevitable.

ROGER

(doubting himself)

We probably should have taken route 80.

Roger paces up an