Signs of Life

A Dramatic Comedy in One Act

Deborah Brevoort

A Samuel French Acting Edition

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"Signs of Life" won the 2002 Jane Chambers Playwriting Award. In 2004 it was awarded a gold medal in the Pinter Review Prize for Drama. It also won the Theatre Conspiracy playwriting contest in 2005. In 2003 it won second place in the Hanover College Lily Foundation international playwriting contest.

"Signs of Life" was first workshopped at the Banff Playwright's Colony in Canada. Dramaturg & Director: Molly Smith. It was also workshopped under a Rockefeller Foundation Playwriting Fellowship at Perseverance Theatre. Dramaturg: Roberta Levitow.

The first draft of "Signs of Life" was produced at Perseverance Theatre in Douglas, Alaska in 1990. It was directed by Christoph Hanna. The cast was Bruce J. Hanson and PJ Gentry. Set design by Dan Deroux, costume design by Barbara Casement, lighting design by Art Rotch, sound design by Glenda Carino, props by Alan Malone, stage managed by Susan Wilder.

"Signs of Life" was subsequently produced at the Theatre Conspiracy in Ft. Meyers Florida in 2005 after winning the Theatre Conspiracy playwriting contest. It was directed by Diane Stewart. The cast was Bill Taylor and Lisa Marie. Set and light design by David Utz; stage managed by Tera Nicole Miller.
CHARACTERS

ABE: A 40-year old man
SAL: A 40-year old woman

Note to Actors: The style of the play draws heavily from vaudeville. Consequently, the actors should bear in mind that there is usually a "straight man" in each scene. Generally, SAL plays the straight man in Scenes 1-7 and ABE plays the straight man in scenes 8-12.

Although the characters in the play are at all times dead serious about what they're doing, actors shouldn't be afraid to push the silliness and extremes found in the play. (For example, in scene 10 when ABE talks to SAL like a dog, the actor should go all the way with it and treat her like a dog—whistling to her, petting her head, etc.)

On the other hand, if the comedy of each scene is not grounded in the emotional truth of that scene, the play comes across as just plain silly—or stupid. The actors must keep in mind at all times that the comedy in this play springs from pain.

Scene 6 should be staged so that the audience never gets to see SAL’s tattoo—it’s existence should remain ambiguous.
SKYSPACE

The planet earth

The play should be performed on a stage 300 feet below a very high
a very high stage. It would be very nice if the set could be
and not on a planet (to, earth).

Even though the play changes locations, 12 different through
steak were chosen should be used, rather than 12 different
indicates change of place. The stage should be in the middle
the characters, states of mind.
Scene 1

(A rest stop along a highway in the Great Salt Lake Desert. Early morning. Lights up on a Chevy Vega. In front of the car, on the ground lies a large mound covered with a blanket. The mound moves. A man’s arm and a woman’s leg pop out. The mound shifts again and lies still for a moment, before the blanket is tossed aside and a woman sits up suddenly.)

SAL. Abe! Where are we?
ABE. Hmmmmmm?
SAL. Where are we? Tell me where we are!
ABE. On the road, Sal.
SAL. But where?
ABE. (Yawns.) Salt Lake.
SAL. Salt Lake?
ABE. Utah.
SAL. (Pause.) We never shoulda come!
ABE. Sal...
SAL. We never shoulda left!
ABE. Sal!
SAL. This whole thing was a bad idea! Leavin’ everything at the drop of a hat, comin’ out here on a whim!—
ABE. (Sits up.) — It wasn’t a whim!
SAL. It was too a whim!
ABE. It was a sign! A very important sign!
SAL. When you jump in the car and drive to Utah because stars have come out in New Jersey, that’s a whim!

ABE. Sal. We’re not goin’ to Utah. We’re goin’ someplace else.

SAL. Where?

ABE. I dunno yet!

SAL. If you’re gonna abandon everything and charge off ‘cross the country, you better know where you’re goin’!

ABE. How many times I gotta tell ya! We’re followin’ the stars.

SAL. But Abe! We’ve been followin’ the stars for three days. Think it’s time you figured out where we’re followin’ ‘em to!

ABE. I can’t do that, Sal!

SAL. Why not?

ABE. Because! I don’t know! Look...all I know is... I was sitin’ in the car during the power outage, listenin’ to the radio and watchin’ the smoke float by from the landfill—

SAL. —Abe, I know.

ABE. And the smoke lifted, and I looked up—

SAL. —Abe—

ABE. —and the sky turned on! As I was watchin’ it! The stars popped on, like somebody had plugged ‘em in!

SAL. Abe! I know!

ABE. And then a voice comes on the radio and says “Follow the stars!” So I turn the dial to a different station and the voice comes on again! And says “Follow the Stars”—a second time! The next thing I know, you come outta the trailer with a flashlight and tell me you went to Diamond Eddie’s and got a tattoo...of a star, on your breast! And then you shine the flashlight on the tattoo...and BAM! The power comes back on! Well, when that happened, I knew we had to come. There was no mistakin’, it was a sign. We had to follow it.

SAL. It wasn’t a sign. It was just a coincidence.

ABE. It wasn’t no coincidence!
SAL. You imagined the whole thing!
ABE. You saw it too, Sal!
SAL. No I didn’t.
ABE. Yes you did! You said it gave you a good feelin’! That’s when we decided to come!
SAL. It didn’t give me a good feelin’. It gave me the creeps.
ABE. You said funny things had been happenin’ to you all day!
SAL. Nothin’ funny happened that day!
ABE. Since when do you go to Diamond Eddie’s and get a tattoo? (Sal doesn’t answer.) You never done nothin’ like that before. And why did you get a star of all things? (Sal doesn’t answer.) No, Sal. When the power came back on and I told ya everything I had heard and seen, you stood there and said that you had a feelin’ this would be the answer to your little problem... you know, the female problem you been havin’.
SAL. I didn’t say that!
ABE. That’s a quote, Sal!
SAL. Well...maybe I did.
ABE. There’s no maybe about it! When you said that, I started the car! ‘Cause we tried everything. I bought you all those books, I bought you bottled water. And when you said that you had a feeling that this would do the trick, that settled it. So don’t sit there and tell me it gave you the creeps. It gave you a good feeling, an’ you know it! (Pause.) You know, Sal, when you flip flop like this all over the place, it makes me feel like you don’t believe in me, like you don’t trust what I’m tryin’ to do.
SAL. I trust you. I wouldn’t of drove ‘cross the country with you if I didn’t trust you.
ABE. ‘Cause we’re in this together. And I take good care of you, I ain’t never let you down.
SAL. No, you haven’t.
ABE. Well, quit carryin’ on then! You ain’t stopped since we
left. What’s eatin’ at you anyway?

SAL. I’m just nervous.

ABE. About what?

SAL. The TV. I left it on.

ABE. What?

SAL. Just as we were leavin’, I ran back into the trailer turned it on.

ABE. You went back into the trailer and turned on the TV? liberately?

SAL. Uh-huh.

ABE. Oh no!

SAL. I think we should go back and turn it off.

ABE. But Sal! We been drivin’ for three days!

SAL. I can’t stand the thought of sittin’ here in Utah while TV is on in New Jersey.

ABE. Well, you shoulda thought of that before you went back into the trailer!

SAL. I’d feel much better if we just went back and turned it on.

ABE. Sal! We left the TV! We left the trailer! We left New Jersey! For good! We ain’t never goin’ back! It doesn’t matter if the TV is still on or not! We left everything behind! Remember?

SAL. Yeah.

ABE. What we gotta do is look ahead! We gotta think about the future! We gotta follow the stars!

SAL. Right.

ABE. (Pause.) Did you leave anything else on?

SAL. I’m tryin’ to remember if I unplugged the coffee pot.

ABE. The coffee pot!

SAL. I’m sure I did.

ABE. Well, I hope so!

SAL. No. I did. I definitely did. (Pause.) Well, don’t look at n like that! I unplugged it!
ABE. You could burn the whole place down!
SAL. Well, what’d’ya expect! You start carryin’ on about signs and stars and the next thing I know I’m in the car headin’ west! I’m sure I unplugged it. I didn’t have time to pack my toothbrush, but I did remember to unplug the coffee pot.
ABE. Did you unplug it before or after you turned on the TV?
SAL. We decided to go and the first thing I did was pull the plug. I remember now! That’s right! I pulled the plug.
ABE. Well, good. That’s settled.
SAL. *(Pause.)* I’m sure I pulled it.
ABE. Sal!
SAL. Maybe I just think I pulled it. Maybe I’m imagining the whole thing!
ABE. Just forget about the coffee pot! Just forget about the television!
SAL. I can’t! They’re burned in my mind! They’re burned in your mind too!
ABE. No they’re not!
SAL. Yes they are! You’ll keep drivin’ around the country with nothin’ but the coffee pot and TV on your mind. Just wait.

*(Long pause.)*

ABE. Allright. But I’m tellin’ ya, we’re comin’ right back. As soon as we get everything unplugged, we’re turnin’ around and comin’ back! You understand?
SAL. Uh-huh.

BLACKOUT
Scene 2

(Three days later, outside the trailer in New Jersey. ABE is sitting in the car; SAL is standing in the doorway.)

ABE. Did you unplug it?
SAL. No. It was already unplugged. I’d unplugged it before I left, I remember now.
ABE. Oh for cryin’ out loud...
SAL. I feel much better.
ABE. What about the TV. Has it been off all this time, too?
SAL. Oh, no. It was still on.
ABE. Well, good. I’d hate to drive all the way cross country nothin’.
SAL. No, it’s on. It’s definitely on.
ABE. Well, did you turn it off?
SAL. No.
ABE. Well, turn it off! (SAL doesn’t move.) Sal! Come on!
SAL. Why don’t we stay here tonight and just leave in the morn ing?
ABE. No way!
SAL. Take a nice hot shower...take a break from drivin’...watch a little TV.
ABE. Oh no, we never shoulda come back here.
SAL. We haven’t had a hot meal in a week. Why don’t I fix something to eat.
ABE. Sal! I know what you’re up to!
SAL. I’m not up to anything.
ABE. Yes you are.
SAL. I just want something to eat. I’m tired of candy and cok I want to eat a hot meal!
ABE. Sal...
SAL. How about barbequed chicken?
ABE. Sal!
SAL. We’ll have a cookout!
ABE. No!
SAL. But you love barbequed chicken!
ABE. Don’t think I can’t see past this.
SAL. Past what?
ABE. All this chicken business. It’s a *sign*, Sal!
SAL. Can’t I cook a simple meal without you seein’ signs?
ABE. I see what I see. And I see you tryin’ to get me to stay!
SAL. I’m tryin’ to get you to eat.
ABE. First it will be dinner. Then dessert. Then a shower. Next thing you know, we’ll be stuck here for life.
SAL. You gotta exaggerate everything.
ABE. We’ll be dead before you know it!
SAL. Abe, if we stay here tonight, I’ll go to a doctor first thing in the morning, I promise.
ABE. You been to a doctor! You been to a hundred doctors!
SAL. Well, I’ll go to another one.
ABE. The doctor ain’t the thing and you know it! You need something else, something no doctor can give you.
SAL. Like what.
ABE. Like land.
SAL. What’s land got to do with anything?
ABE. Everything, believe me!
SAL. Well, there’s land here. There’s land everywhere.
ABE. This ain’t land, Sal! This is land—*fill*! It ain’t the same! If I can get you to real land, green land, land with clean air, everything will fall into place, I know! ‘Cause there’s soil on that kinda land. Rich soil! And I’m gonna take you there and plant you like a seed, so you’ll grow! You can’t grow here, Sal! Nothin’ can! But there’s somewhere out there where you can! It’s waitin’ for us! A piece of
green land, with a pack of kids runnin' all over it! It's what always wanted. We're forty years old, when are we gonna get It's our last chance, we're runnin' outta time.

SAL. But Abe, you don't get land and kids by followin' stars!

ABE. Sure you do! (Pause.) Get in the car, Sal. (Pause.) Come on. (Pause.) Get in the car!

SAL. Let me just pick up the house first. I don't wanna leave lookin' like this, it's a mess.

(SAL starts to enter the trailer; ABE blocks the door)

ABE. If you go in there, you'll never come out.

SAL. Let me just bring a few things.

ABE. No, Sal, you gotta leave it all behind.

SAL. But I can't! I can't leave my things behind!

ABE. You gotta burn 'em out of your mind! We gotta follow the sign and burn the past.

SAL. I can't do that!

ABE. Wait! That's it! That's what we gotta do!

SAL. What.

ABE. We gotta BURN THE PAST. We gotta burn the TV, burn the coffee pot, burn it all, so there isn't a past to come back to!

SAL. You mean to tell me you're gonna burn down the trailer?

ABE. I gotta! So there can be no turnin' back!

(ABE grabs the charcoal lighter and douses the trailer.)

SAL. Abe! Wait a minute! Abe, no! Abe! DON'T!

(ABE lights a match.)
ABE. Trust me, Sal.

(ABE tosses the match. The trailer goes up in flames.)

ABE. Someday you’ll thank me for this.

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

(Four days later. Night. ABE and SAL are sitting on a blanket under the stars, along a highway in Needles, California. ABE is toasting marshmallows over a BIC lighter.)

ABE. Now, aren’t you glad I done what I done Sal? You woulda spent the last four days worryin’ and wonderin’ whether you turned off the oven or the radio or the hairdryer or some damn thing. And we woulda got all the way here to Needles, California and you woulda remembered something you forgot to unplug and we’d of gone back. But this way, Sal, all we got is the future to look forward to. We got nothin’ pullin’ us back, nothin’ holdin’ us down, nothin’ at all...

(ABE finishes toasting a marshmallow and hands it to SAL.)

ABE. Here you go. Just the way you like ‘em.

SAL. Thanks.

ABE. Yep. The sky’s the limit for us, Sal. The sky. Don’t that make you feel good, knowin’ that nothin’ can tie us down? Now that we’re free?
SAL. I feel dizzy.
ABE. Have another marshmallow.
SAL. No. I eat anymore I’m gonna be sick. They’re all eaten for four days.
ABE. You wanna coke?
SAL. No, I wanna lie down, I gotta lie down.

(SAL lies down on the blanket. ABE lies down next to her and looks at the sky.)

ABE. Sal. Look. Look at all them stars.
SAL. Nope.
ABE. You don’t wanna look at the stars?
SAL. Nuh-huh.
ABE. Why not! They’re beautiful!
SAL. I never look into the sky at night. Scares the life outta me.
ABE. You’re kiddin’!
SAL. Nope.
ABE. But...what’re’ya afraid of, Sal?
SAL. It gives me the feeling like I’m gonna get sucked into outer space.
ABE. Sal! That’s crazy! You mean...you don’t never look at the stars?
SAL. Oh, sometimes I do...I’ll peek up there real fast, but I won’t look at ‘em real long or nothin’. ‘Cause I get this feelin’ like I’m gonna disappear. Like I’m gonna vanish. And whenever I look up there I have to hold on to something. One time I got so scared I put my arms around a tree and hugged it! Once I ran under a street light, so I couldn’t see the sky. I just stayed there, hiding in the light. ‘till I could breathe again and go home. But usually, I just run in the house and lock the door. You know, if I’m takin’ the garbage out and look up there by accident or something. I run in and lock the door...
door and water the plants and do the dishes until that feeling goes away.

ABE. I never knew that.

SAL. Well, you learn something new every day.

ABE. You don’t know what you’re missin’! Especially on a night like tonight.

SAL. That’s alright.

ABE. There’s so many stars, Sal, they’re burnin’ holes in the sky! And they’re movin’ around up there! They got colors! Red, and blue, and green. And you know what? There’s some stars up there you can’t see at all if you look at ‘em straight. But if you cross your eyes or look to the side... well, then you can see ‘em real clear. And you know what else, Sal? The stars can talk. If you lie real still and look long enough, they’ll talk to you and you can hear ‘em! Listen. Hear that?

SAL. (Listens.) No.

ABE. They’re callin’ your name. (Whispers.) Sal!... Sal!...

SAL. (Listens.) No they’re not!

ABE. Sure they are! Listen! (Whispers.) Sal!... Sal!...

SAL. Cut it out!

ABE. Sal. If you wanna look at ‘em real quick, you can hold on to me.

SAL. Abe, I can’t.

ABE. Sure you can! Take my hand. Come on, Sal.

(She takes his hand.)

ABE. There you go...! Now open your eyes, real slow...

SAL. (She starts to open her eyes, slowly.) Ohhhhhhhhh!

ABE. Atta girl! Now open ‘em a little wider....

(She opens her eyes wider)
ABE. That’s it! Now look! Look at the stars!

(SAL stares at the stars, her eyes frozen wide. She starts to cry

ABE. Hang on, Sal! Hang on!
SAL. Ohhhhhhh!
ABE. Hang on!

(She gasps for air.)

ABE. Go on! One more look, that’s all!

(She is panting, out of breath.)

ABE. You did it! You can close your eyes now, you did it!

(SAL closes her eyes)

SAL. Oh my god.
ABE. Now, that wasn’t so hard was it?
SAL. Abe!
ABE. What.
SAL. Abe!
ABE. What!
SAL. (She sits up.) You burned the trailer!
ABE. Now calm down, Sal.
SAL. You burned it down to a pile of ashes! We got nothin' our names! No money, no clothes, nothin’ at all!
ABE. Sure we do, Sal. We got six bucks. A bag of marshm
lows. We got the car.
SAL. Abe! I gotta have something more. I gotta have a bed
sleep in, with pillows and sheets! I gotta have a chair to sit in, not the seat of a car! I gotta have a house, Abe! A home! I can’t live like this, with no place to call my own.

ABE. Sal, why do you think we came out here. We came out here to get all that.

SAL. But you burned the trailer!

ABE. You didn’t like the trailer!

SAL. It had a roof!

ABE. A leaky roof, Sal! With everything inside on the blink! A crummy little trailer sittin’ next to a landfill with fumes so bad you couldn’t breathe! Those fumes caused all your problems, you said it yourself! Your body couldn’t produce life, breathin’ those fumes, drinkin’ that water, livin’ in a trailer on land that wasn’t our own! We’re comin’ out here to get away from that Sal, remember? We’re comin’ out here to find a piece of ground that we can own! Ground you can have babies on! Where there ain’t no fumes, or clouds of smoke to hide the stars! Ground that grass grows on! Ground that has water! Spring water! And rain! Ground to give birth on! Birth, Sal! Remember? Birth.

SAL. Oh yeah... Birth.

ABE. Remember? You haven’t had much luck in that department? So, we’re comin’ out here to change all that.

SAL. Right.

ABE. So forget about the trailer. Forget about the roof. Forget about the small stuff. We’re after bigger things! More important things! We’re lookin’ for Birth! And Life!

SAL. Birth and Life, huh.

ABE. Yes!

SAL. But Abe? How do you find those things? How do you find Birth and Life?

ABE. Easy. You follow the signs.

SAL. You mean there’s gonna be more signs?
ABE. Well, sure, Sal! What'd ya think?
SAL. I shoulda figured.

BLACKOUT

Scene 4
(The next day. ABE and SAL are driving in the car.)

ABE. Well, I was right, wasn’t I? First thing this morning, I woke up and open my eyes and there it is! The sign we been waitin’ for! A border of silver stars shinin’ in the sun! And a picture of the place of our dreams! Hills of green rollin’ into the sea, and a sky that’s studded with stars!

SAL. Abe, it was just a billboard along the highway. It was an advertisement to get you to go to Los Angeles.

ABE. Sal! It said “Follow the Stars to Los Angeles!” “Follow the stars”—just like that voice on the radio!

SAL. Well, at least we’re finally gonna get someplace!

ABE. Yep! And we’re almost there!

SAL. We are?

ABE. Oh sure! Los Angeles is just on the other side of the mountains. We’ll be there before ya know it!

(They drive looking out the window at the mountains before they drive on.)

SAL. You think it’s really gonna look like that?

ABE. You’ll see for yourself, Sal! As soon as we get to the town.

SAL. Yeah?
ABE. Oh sure! When we get to the top of this mountain, Los Angeles will be spread out before your very eyes! And then you'll know why we come this whole way! 'Cause you can see the ocean from up there! The Pacific Ocean! And you can see beach houses lined up on the water like a string of pearls! And when you look out over the land, you'll see green! And you know what that's a sign of?

SAL. Birth and Life?

ABE. That's right!

SAL. What else will I see from up there?

ABE. Trees blowin' in the wind and flowers bursting from gardens... and children... all over the place!

SAL. Children?

ABE. Yeah... children everywhere. (Pause.) Yeah, Sal, this is the big moment we been waitin' for. This is the moment where it's all gonna begin. I mean, Sal, this is where we're gonna have a child!

(Long pause. They both gaze at the mountains before them.)

SAL. Abe? You know what?

ABE. What.

SAL. I think... I think... I feel something!

ABE. You do? What?

SAL. I dunno!

ABE. You're not gettin' sick are ya?

SAL. No! No! It feels good! I think... it's my body! You know, gettin' ready.

ABE. Gettin' ready? For what?

SAL. For... Birth!

ABE. Birth? Oh my God! Birth! Sal! Birth! That's wonderful! What's it feel like?

SAL. (She laughs.) It tickles.

ABE. Yeah?
SAL. Yeah.
ABE. You mean, like how I do to you under the covers?
SAL. I dunno, I never felt it before!
ABE. You know what that is Sal?
SAL. What?
ABE. A sign! A sign of life!
SAL. You know, I think you’re right!
ABE. Well, sure I am! And what you’re feelin’, Sal, is your body gettin’ ready to have the thing you always wanted! ‘Cause you’re gonna have it Sal! You’re gonna have a child!

(The car jerks.)

SAL. What was that?
ABE. Nothin’.

(The car jerks again.)

SAL. Abe!
ABE. It’s nothin’, Sal. This car does that from time to time.
SAL. It’s never done that before.
ABE. It does it all the time, trust me.

(The car sputters.)

SAL. We’re slowin’ down.
ABE. No we’re not.
SAL. Yes we are, I can feel it!

(The car sputters again; ABE revs the engine.)

ABE. No we’re not.
SAL. We’re runnin’ outta gas!

(ABE revs the engine again, then nothing.)

ABE. No we’re not! No we’re not! No we’re not!

(The car has sputtered to a stop. Long pause.)

SAL. I knew we wouldn’t make it.
ABE. Sal!
SAL. I knew we wouldn’t get there.
ABE. Will you shut up!
SAL. You can’t chase after Birth and Life if ya don’t have enough money for gas!
ABE. That kinda thinkin’ won’t get you anywhere!
SAL. Well, look where your kinda thinkin’ got us!
ABE. It got us forty miles from Los Angeles, that’s where it got us! You’re closer to it now than you’ve ever been before! And it’s on account of me always lookin’ at the big picture, of my ability to go for the big plans! I mean, Sal, where would the world be if all we ever thought about was money for gas!
SAL. (Pause.) So. What do we do.
ABE. We’re gonna wait. We’re gonna wait for a sign.

(They sit waiting, staring out the car window.)

SAL. Oh no.
ABE. What?
SAL. I think I just got my period.

(Pause.)
ABE. You sure know how to kick a man when he’s down.

BLACKOUT

Scene 5

(Several hours later. ABE and SAL are at a gas station, sitting by the vending machines at a telephone booth. The car is out of gas. ABE is looking up at the sky.)

SAL. See any signs yet?
ABE. No.
SAL. Me neither. ‘Course, I wouldn’t know one if I saw one. But you... I woulda thought you’d have seen one by now.
ABE. Yeah, well, I haven’t.
SAL. At least we got towed off the road. That was a good sign.
ABE. Will you shut up about the signs!
SAL. But Abe, we been sittin’ here for three hours. Give it a rest.
ABE. That’s a good idea.
SAL. Oh, come on Abe! We gotta do something!
ABE. No we don’t.
SAL. Do you think money’s gonna fall outta the sky?
ABE. (Pause.) Yes.
SAL. Oh my god... Abe! Will you just ask if you could work a few hours in exchange for some gas?
ABE. No.
SAL. OK, I’ll ask!
ABE. Sal, no!
SAL. I’ll work!
ABE. No you won’t! We left all that behind. With your barbeque chicken dinners.
SAL. What’s pumpin’ gas got to do with barbeque chicken?
ABE. Before you know it, your life is over.
SAL. Oh, God... I gotta do something, I’m gonna go crazy...

(SAL starts pulling nobs on the vending machines and checking the coin returns)

SAL. You know... for a minute there, I actually thought we were gonna get there. I thought that we’d get to Los Angeles and find the place of our dreams. I thought we’d pull in and celebrate!... and go to a hotel! With one of those swimming pools, with diving boards and slides! And I thought we’d have pancakes for breakfast and seafood platters for dinner! And I thought we’d go to a full service gas station, where they wipe your windshields and the bathrooms are clean. And I thought we’d take polaroid pictures of each other under the welcome sign. Well, I shoulda known better. I shoulda known that all there’d be was this. A dirty gas station somewhere, on the other side of the thing we’ve been lookin’ for, where we’d sit, stranded, and waitin’ for money to fall outta the sky!

(The telephone in the phone booth rings.)
ABE. That's it.
SAL. The telephone?
ABE. Yup! *(He answers the phone.)* Hello? Yes. This is the residence. Terah. That's right. The lady of the house. sure...uh...say. Can I ask who's calling? KSTR? Who's that? A Oh! Oh! You're a radio station! *(Pause.)* The station of the -(Pause.) Yeah? Yeah? Yeah? Well, sure! I'll put her right on puts his hand over the phone, whispers to SAL.) Sal! It's for It's a contest...a radio contest...you gotta guess a song!

*(SAL takes the phone)*


*(ABE and SAL listen intently to the phone)*

ABE. *(Whispers.)* Do you know what it is?
SAL. *(Whispers.)* Abe! Shhhhh!
ABE. *(Whispers.)* Do you?
SAL. *(Pause.)* Yes! *(To the phone.)* That's White Ralph Jefferson Airplane. Well, they turned into the Starship. Jeffuje Starship. But that was later. Sure. Gracie Slick. *(Pause.)* What What station do I listen to?
ABE. *(Whispers.)* KSTR-AM.

*(SAL stands holding the phone, stunned. ABE lets out a Whoop! jumps up and hits a vending machine. Coins pour out the turn. SAL drops the phone and runs out of the booth. She lo*
Scene 6

(Later that night. ABE and SAL are sitting by the pool at the Edgewater Hotel, on a highway outside of Los Angeles. ABE is smoking a cigar.)

ABE. And after the beach house, I’m gonna buy you a ranch in the mountains, for the weekends, and horses to ride on. And I’m gonna buy you a penthouse in Vegas, and a jet to get you there. And I’m gonna buy you a diamond necklace—with more diamonds than there are stars in the sky. But first, I’m gonna buy you that piece of land! A piece of green land, when we get to Los Angeles! First thing in the morning, I’m gonna take the five thousand bucks and buy a piece of grass-covered land, with trees and a house so we can—

(Pause.) Sal? What’s the matter?

SAL. I wanna go back to the gas station.

ABE. Gas station? Did you leave something there Sal?

SAL. No, I just wanna go back.

ABE. But—

SAL. —Take me back.

ABE. But...I got you a hotel room! The Edgewater Hotel, Sal, with one of them fancy pools you were talkin’ about! I picked it out special for you! For our big night!
SAL. I don’t like it.
ABE. Oh. Well, we’ll go to another one, then.
SAL. No!
ABE. You wanna go out for pancakes?
SAL. I don’t like pancakes.
ABE. I’ll take your picture under that hotel sign!
SAL. I don’t want my picture taken!
ABE. Well...what do you want, Sal?
SAL. I wanna go back to the gas station.
ABE. Why don’t we go swimming.
SAL. I don’t have a bathing suit.
ABE. I’ll buy you a bathing suit.
SAL. I don’t want a bathing suit.
ABE. You wanna go skinny dipping?
SAL. No way! Are you kidding?
ABE. Sal, what’s the matter?
SAL. Nothin’.
ABE. What’s got into you?
SAL. Nothin’s got into me.
ABE. This is our big night, Sal! I mean, tomorrow everything begins! Tomorrow we go to Los Angeles! Tomorrow we get the land! And then—
SAL. —You’re gonna leave me!
ABE. What?
SAL. When we get to Los Angeles and find the land, that’s when gonna happen!
ABE. Sal, what are you talkin’ about?
SAL. You’re gonna take off and dump me!
ABE. Sal! I’d never do that!
SAL. Yes you will, I know it! Like those people who get rich, their dogs along the highway, who pull into gas stations and pull them out the door, that’s what you’ll do to me! You’ll pull in so I don’t.
go to the ladie's room and I’ll come out and find you gone!

ABE. Sal! What are you talkin’ about?

SAL. That’s what you’re gonna do—

ABE. —No I won’t!—

SAL. —When you find out that when we get to Los Angeles and buy that land and find... (She starts to cry.) ... that there’s nothin’, no water, no stars, no rain, no nothin’ that can do the trick, that can give us a child—

ABE. —Hey, Sal!—

SAL. —Then you’re gonna leave, and you’ll have the right to, ‘cause if this doesn’t do it nothin’ will, and when we get there and find that there’s nothin’ else to do, then you’re gonna leave me—

ABE. —Sal!—

SAL. —I don’t wanna let you down for your big moment, I don’t wanna get your hopes up! I mean, you can just take me back to the gas station, I don’t mind, really, I don’t mind, just take me back and let me out at the gas station and I’ll—

ABE. —Hey, Sal!—

SAL. —You can take me back to the gas station, that’s OK, just let me out, just open the door, I’ll get out—

ABE. —Sal! Hey! Hey! Wait a minute! Sal! (Pause.) I’m not takin’ you to no gas station! I’m not lettin’ you out, like some dog in the night! I’m keepin’ you here with me. Sal. Child or no child, land or no land, I’m keepin’ you by my side, I won’t never let you go. And you can’t get rid of me neither. No, Sal! ‘Cause I’m a dog for you. A loyal old dog with his tongue to the ground. An old dog that’ll die at your feet. I won’t never let you outta my sight, Sal. I won’t never let you go.

SAL. (Pause.) You won’t?

(ABE licks her face.)
ABE. No, Sal, I won’t.
SAL. Really?

(He licks her face.)

ABE. Really.
SAL. Even if I can’t... you know?

(He licks her face.)

ABE. Even if you can’t.

(He licks her face again.)

ABE. Hey, you know what?
SAL. What.
ABE. You taste like a pretzel.
SAL. Yeah?
ABE. Yeah. You look like one, too.
SAL. I look like a pretzel!
ABE. Uh-huh.
SAL. My face is all puffed up, isn’t it.
ABE. No it’s not.
SAL. I bet I look like one of those fat puffy pretzels they sell on the street.
ABE. No, you just look like you got salt on your face, is all.
SAL. Salt on my face?
ABE. Yeah, from the lights. The lights of the pool... they twinklin’ on your face... you know, they kinda look like salt... more like you look like a pretzel.
SAL. Oh.
ABE. I like pretzels.
SAL. Yeah?
ABE. Oh, yeah. I love 'em.
SAL. They’re OK, I guess.
ABE. Sal? Will you do something for me?
SAL. What.
ABE. Show me your tattoo.

(SAL unbuttons her blouse and pulls it aside to reveal the tattoo on her left breast)

SAL. There.
ABE. No. I don’t wanna see it like that. I wanna see it, with nothin’ in the way. I wanna see the lights from the pool shimmer all over you...
SAL. (Whispers.) But Abe... we’re in public!
ABE. There ain’t nobody around.
SAL. (Whispers.) Ohhhhh... Take yours off, too.

(ABE takes off his shirt. SAL takes off her blouse and sits by the pool. The lights shimmer. ABE gazes at her)

ABE. (Whispers.) Your tattoo is twinklin’, Sal.
SAL. Diamond Eddie said it would do that.
ABE. He did?
SAL. Diamond Eddie said it would sparkle. And change colors. It might even change sizes, he said. You know, get bigger and smaller.
ABE. Really? How can a tattoo do all those things?
SAL. (Whispers.) ’Cause it’s magic.
ABE. (Whispers.) Magic? Really?
SAL. Well, I don’t believe in those kinda things. But that’s what Diamond Eddie said! He said the magic star has special powers and he only gives it to certain people.
ABE Yeah? And he gave it to you?
SAL. Uh-huh. I dunno why. I didn’t ask for it or nothin’. I just knew was, I was sittin’ in the trailer and listenin’ to the hum of the cars on the highway. And I got this feelin’ like they were callin’ my name! It sounded like they were sayin’... Sal!... Sal! Well, I started to walk and follow that hum. And next thing I know, I’m down the highway, standin’ in front of Diamond Eddie’s. So I go in and look at the tattoos on the back wall. And then I get this feeling, so I whirl around and...there is Diamond Eddie, standin’ a shadow, lookin’ at me! And he whispers, “Follow me.” Then he pulls back a red curtain and takes me down this dark hallway. We get to this room in the back... a red and black room with lights real dim... and he laid me on a table and covered me with velvet. Then he took out this box, a black box, and said he he said it would bring a child.

ABE. (Whispers.) A star?
SAL. Yes. And he told me to look at it, hard. So I did. And he said it would bring a child.

ABE. He did?
SAL. Uh-huh. He said it’s worked for the others. And when he told me that, I started to cry. I couldn’t stop. And while I’m there like that, just cryin’ and cryin’, he takes out his needles and takes out his colors... and he gives me my tattoo.

ABE. He actually said it would bring a child?
SAL. Yes.

ABE. You never told me that.
SAL. No... I didn’t.

ABE. Why not, Sal?
SAL. I was afraid.

ABE. Sal, Sal, Sal...

SAL. He said the magic star will bring a child, the magic will bring a child. He just kept sayin’ that, over and over...
(SAL dips her hand in the water and glides it back and forth. She gazes into the pool. ABE gazes at her)

SAL. Abe?
ABE. Hmmmmmm?
SAL. The night in New Jersey... when the stars came out... and you got your sign... It was the tattoo that brought the power back on. I know it. I ran back into the trailer and walked past the mirror and my tattoo shone through my shirt.
ABE. Is that when you turned on the TV?
SAL. Yeah. How'd you know?
ABE. I just know.

(SAL dips her hand in the pool.)

ABE. So all this time you had seen a sign too.
SAL. Yeah. I guess.

BLACKOUT

Scene 7

(The next day. ABE and SAL are driving on a freeway approaching Los Angeles. They are eating take-out Chinese food.)

ABE. Hang on to your seat, Sal! ‘Cause we’re almost there! Any minute now we’ll be in Los Angeles!
SAL. I can’t believe we’re finally gonna make it!
ABE. Well, believe it, Sal! Believe! ‘Cause it’s right bottom of this mountain! And this time we got nothin’ to stop our way! We got a tank full of gas, five thousand bucks and take Chop Suey from the China Star Cafe!
SAL. When will we be able to see it?
ABE. Soon as we get under these clouds!
SAL. I wonder if there will be a big “Welcome to Los Angeles” sign when we get there!
ABE. Oh, yeah. But you won’t need that to know you’re there! ‘Cause you’ll see the green, Sal! All over the place! And you’ll see the blue, goin’ all the way up to the sky! And you’ll see the stars in every direction!
SAL. Movie stars?
ABE. Them too!
SAL. Oh my god, Abe! Look! There it is! Up ahead!
ABE. Where?
SAL. There! The sign! “Welcome to Los Angeles!”
ABE. Welcome to Los Angeles? (He sees it.) Los Angeles! We made it! We made it to Los Angeles!

(ABE slams on the brakes. Car horns honk.)

SAL. What’re’ya doin’!
ABE. Stoppin’ the car!
SAL. What for?
ABE. To celebrate! What’d’ya think?

(The car screeches to a halt.)

ABE. You know what I’m gonna do?
SAL. What.
ABE. I'm gonna kiss the tattoo! I'm gonna kiss it 'till it twinkles! I'm gonna kiss it so hard it's gonna shoot like a rocket on the 4th of July!

SAL. Diamond Eddie didn't say nothin' about it shootin' off fireworks!

ABE. Oh yeah? Come here! (He grabs her.) Here's to followin' the stars and makin' it to Los Angeles!

(ABE puts his head under SAL's shirt. They topple over on the front seat. Long pause)

SAL. Well, go on! Kiss it! (ABE doesn't answer—or move.) Abe? (Still no answer.) Abe! What are you doin'??!

(ABE comes out from under her shirt)

ABE. It's gone!
SAL. What?
ABE. The tattoo. It's gone!
SAL. It's gone?
ABE. Yes!
SAL. Wait a minute... (She looks down her blouse.) But... it was just there!

ABE. Well, it ain't there now!
SAL. Oh God!...

ABE. (Yells.) Now calm down Sal! Just calm down! It's... it's around here somewhere! It's probably just... just visiting its friends...in the sky! That's right! When we pulled into Los Angeles, it shot up to the sky to say hello to its friends! That's what it did!

(ABE opens the car door.)
SAL. Where are you goin'?  
ABE. I’m gonna talk to the stars! I’m gonna tell ‘em to send the little guy home! He can’t be runnin’ off like this!

(ABE jumps out of the car. ABE jumps back in the car.)

ABE. They’re not there.  
SAL. What?  
ABE. The stars. They’re not there.  
SAL. Well, Abe—  
ABE. —They’ve disappeared too!—  
SAL. —Abe—  
ABE. —There’s not a star in the sky!—  
SAL. Abe! It’s the middle of the day! And that’s not all, Sal! The sky’s not blue! It’s yellow! And the grass! It ain’t green! It’s brown! Los Angeles doesn’t look nothin’ like that picture!  
SAL. Oh God!  
ABE. What are we gonna do? We gotta do something!  
SAL. Right! Right! We gotta do something.  
ABE. Like what!  
SAL. We’ll... we’ll do what we did at the gas station! We’ll eat lunch and wait for a sign!  
ABE. Wait for a sign! Of course! That’s what we’ll do! Come on, thinkin’, Sal!  
SAL. Here. Eat your lunch. Just eat your lunch and they’ll come back before you know it!

(SAL hands him a container of chop suey and a fortune cookie. She begins to eat, looking nervously out the window. ABE picks the fortune cookie on the dashboard and opens his chop stick. He takes a bite, but can’t eat. He puts it down. SAL reads...
over and takes his chop suey, and starts to eat it, too. Eventually, ABE looks over and notices the cookie. He stares at it)

ABE. Sal...!
SAL. (Her mouth full.) Hmmm?
ABE. (He holds up the fortune cookie.) Look!
SAL. (Her mouth full.) The fortune cookie?
ABE. Here it is! Here's our sign!

(He breaks open the cookie and stares into his hand.)

ABE. There's no fortune!
SAL. What?
ABE. There's no fortune in the cookie!
SAL. No fortune?

(ABE jumps out of the car.)

ABE. (Yells to the sky.) What kinda place is Los Angeles that they don't put fortunes in the cookies! First the tattoo, then the stars, now the cookie! That's three bad signs in a row!
SAL. That does it!

(SAL jumps into the drivers seat and starts the car.)

ABE. Sal, what are you doin'!
SAL. Gettin' outta here, what do you think!
ABE. But—
SAL. Get in! Quick!!

(ABE jumps into the back seat.)
ABE. Aren't we gonna wait for a sign?
SAL. No! We're gonna look for one! A good one!
ABE. Where?
SAL. Anywhere we can find one!

(SAL throws the car into gear and screeches out onto the freeway.
Lights fade to black.)

Scene 8

(Three days later. SAL is driving the car. ABE is in the back seat.)

ABE. See any signs yet?
SAL. No, Abe, not yet.
ABE. There's one!
SAL. Where?
ABE. Right there!
SAL. (Reads.) “The whole world's switching to Pell Mell”
ABE. Yeah! Pell Mell. That must mean something!
SAL. No, Abe. It's just a cigarette ad.
ABE. Oh. Well, what about that one there?
SAL. (Reads.) “Next Exit, Rt. 13”?
ABE. Yeah. Is that a sign?
SAL. Yes, but not a good one! Look at the number. It's 13! That's unlucky!
ABE. (Whimpers.) When are we gonna see a good one?
SAL. How am I supposed to know!
ABE. (Whimpers.) We been drivin' for three days and haven't seen a thing!
SAL. Tell me about it!
ABE. *(Whines.)* Sal... *What* are we gonna *do?*
SAL. We’re just gonna keep on lookin’! That’s all we can do!

*(They drive on looking for signs.)*

ABE. What about the magic star.
SAL. What about it.
ABE. Is it still gone?
SAL. Yes, it’s still gone.
ABE. When was the last time you checked?
SAL. Five minutes ago! The last time you asked!
ABE. Maybe you should check it again.
SAL. Abe! I been checkin’ it every five minutes for the last three days!

ABE. Well, check it one more time! *Please!*

*(SAL pulls aside her blouse and checks.)*

SAL. See?
ABE. *(Whimpers.)* Where could it have gone?
SAL. I dunno, Abe. I dunno.
ABE. *(Whimpers.)* As soon as we crossed the line into Los Angeles, it just went “poof!” and disappeared into thin air!
SAL. The magic star didn’t go “poof!”
ABE. Then what did it do?
SAL. It just... went away for awhile. But it didn’t go “poof.”
ABE. Well, if you ask me, it went “poof.” And the signs went “poof” too! Ever since Los Angeles, *everything’s* gone “poof!” Even the stars in the sky!
SAL. Calm down. The stars will be out sooner or later, that’s one thing you can be sure of.
(ABE looks out the window.)

ABE. Where are we anyway?
SAL. We're on a freeway.
ABE. I can see that! What freeway!
SAL. I don't know! They just keep runnin' into each other! All look the same to me!
ABE. You can't just drive around without knowing where you're going!
SAL. Why don't you lie down and take a nap.
ABE. Take a nap? Why?
SAL. Because you're tired, that's why.
ABE. No I'm not!
SAL. Yes you are. Lie down.
ABE. But—
SAL. —Go on, lie down—
ABE. —But Sal!—
SAL. —Lie down!

(ABE lies down.)

ABE. But what if there's a sign!
SAL. If I see one, I'll wake you up.

(Long pause.)

ABE. Sal?
SAL. What.
ABE. Do you see any?
SAL. What.
ABE. Signs.
SAL. No!
ABE. What about the magic star.
SAL. Abe, it’s still gone. Now go to sleep.

(Long pause.)

ABE. “Poof.” How could the magic star just go “poof” like that, and disappear?
SAL. (Whispers.) Shhhhh...Go to sleep...

(Long pause. They drive in silence)

SAL. Abe!
ABE. What.
SAL. Be quiet! Please!
ABE. I didn’t say nothin’.
SAL. Oh...I thought you did.

(They drive on in silence.)

SAL. What!
ABE. What?
SAL. What’d’ya want now?
ABE. Nothin’!
SAL. Well, shut up then!
ABE. Sal! I didn’t say nothin’! You’re hearin’ things!
SAL. It must be the hum of the tires on the highway, or something.

(SAL drives, staring straight ahead. She looks up at a road sign. She puts on a blinker.)
ABE. Sal? What are you doin’ now?
SAL. Gettin’ off at the next exit.

(ABE sits up.)

ABE. Why?
SAL. I have a feeling.
ABE. A feeling?
SAL. Yeah. That it’s time to get off the freeway and try something else.
ABE. But Sal! You can’t take just any exit that comes along. You gotta wait for the right one!
SAL. I got a feeling this is the right one.
ABE. What’s at this exit anyway?

(SAL points to a sign. ABE looks up.)

ABE. Desolation Desert Drive?
SAL. Yes.
ABE. Hey, wait a minute! Sal! Sal! You don’t wanna go on a road like this!
SAL. Why not?
ABE. I...I...don’t like the look of it!
SAL. Don’t be ridiculous. We’re goin’.
ABE. Sal! Hold on! You can’t go on this road! Look! It’s blocked off!
SAL. It is?
ABE. There’s a roadblock up ahead! There’s a big “Do Not Enter” sign!

(SAL slams on the brakes and stops the car. She sits looking out the window at the roadblock.)
ABE. You see that? "Do Not Enter!" Now, that's a good sign! That's the best sign I've seen in three days!
SAL. You're right...

(SAL puts the car in reverse and backs up.)

ABE. Atta girl, Sal! Atta girl!

(SAL stops the car.)

SAL. If the road is blocked off, then there must be something out there.

(SAL puts the car in forward.)

SAL. Something good.
ABE. Sal! What're'ya doin'?!?

(SAL turns the car and drives around the roadblock.)

ABE. Sal! You can't do that! You can't drive around a roadblock!
SAL. I just did.

BLACKOUT
Scene 9

(Several hours later. ABE and SAL are walking in the Desol Desert. SAL is leading the way. ABE follows.)

ABE. I’m tellin’ you, Sal! They didn’t put that road block up nothin’!

SAL. Shhhh... just keep walkin’...

ABE. (Whines.) But why? Why do we gotta walk?

SAL. I told you, I got a feeling.

ABE. Well, if you ask me, you’re takin’ this feeling of yours so far! I think you should just forget about this feeling and go back to the car! (Pause.) You know, Sal, I got feelings too! I got a feeling we should get outta here! I got a feeling we should go back to the gas station!

SAL. We’re not goin’ back to the gas station. We’re stayin’ here.

ABE. But there’s nothin’ out here! Nothin’ but sand and rocks. And funny little holes in the sand!

(ABE stops to inspect one of the holes in the sand.)

ABE. What’s inside them holes anyway?

SAL. Abe, I dunno...

ABE. Well, I don’t like the look of ‘em!

SAL. Don’t look at ‘em then!

ABE. I can’t help it! They’re everywhere!

SAL. Just keep walkin’!

ABE. Ughhh! I never seen so many holes in my life!

(SAL stops. She looks around, listening.)

SAL. Abe... shhhh!
SIGNS OF LIFE

ABE. What now?
SAL. Be quiet, please! I just got another feeling.
ABE. What's with all these feelings anyway! I thought we were supposed to be looking for signs!
SAL. Feelings are just another kinda sign.
ABE. What kinda sign?
SAL. Inner signs. Signs inside you.
ABE. Well, I'll take the kinda signs you can get at a gas station any day! You know why? 'Cause you can see those kinda signs! They're right before your eyes! And you don't gotta walk across a desert to feel 'em! All you gotta do is drive in! All you gotta do is pull into a gas station and fill up on signs!
SAL. Abe, shhhh!
ABE. What.
SAL. You hear that?
ABE. What!
SAL. That.
ABE. Don't tell me you're hearin' things again!
SAL. Shhhhh! Listen!

(They listen.)

ABE. I don't hear nothin'!
SAL. Water!
ABE. There's no water in the desert!
SAL. Yes there is! It's right over there. Look!

(She comes upon a small desert spring.)

ABE. Water!
SAL. I knew it! I had a feeling something was here!
ABE. Wow... How did you know that?
SAL. Because. The desert called my name.
ABE. It did?

(SAL starts to walk slowly in circles around the water.)

ABE. What’re’ya doin’ now? (SAL doesn’t answer. She continues to walk around the water.) You gettin’ another feeling or something?
SAL. Shhhhhhhh....
ABE. Well, while you’re gettin’ another feeling, I’m gettin’ another feeling of water!
SAL. NO! DON’T!
ABE. Why not!
SAL. Just wait!
ABE. But I’m thirsty! I’m hot!
SAL. We’ll drink it later. We hafta wait.
ABE. Wait for what?

(She lies down next to the spring. ABE watches her.)

SAL. (Whispers.) Sprinkle me, Abe. Sprinkle me with water and make me grow. Take the water from the stream and sprinkle it over me.
ABE. (Pause.) You want me to...?
SAL. (Whispers.) Yes. Make me grow.
ABE. (Pause.) Whatever you say...

(ABE scoops water from the stream and sprinkles it over her.)

ABE. Like that?
SAL. (Whispers.) More.
(ABE sprinkles her again.)

SAL. (Whispers.) Yeah...like that. Now, sprinkle you. So you'll grow too!

(Pause. ABE splashes water all over his face.)

ABE. You want more, Sal?
SAL. No. I want dirt. Get some dirt from the stream and sprinkle it over me.
ABE. You want me to cover you with dirt?
SAL. Yes.
ABE. Well sure, Sal. I guess...

(ABE takes a handful of dirt by the stream and sprinkles it over her.)


(ABE sprinkles more dirt.)

SAL. Rub it in. I want you to rub it all over me. Rub it into my pores, into the water, into me.
ABE. OK, Sal...

(ABE rubs the dirt into her.)

SAL. Now rub it into you. Then lie next to me.

(Pause. ABE picks up a handful of dirt and rubs it into his arms. He lies down next to her. Long pause.)

ABE. Sal?
SAL. Yeah.
ABE. Can I ask you a question?
SAL. Sure.
ABE. What are you doin’?
SAL. I dunno. I just got a feeling.
ABE. Oh. (Pause.) Sal? Would it hurt your feeling any if I gave you that drink of water? I’m dyin’ of thirst.
SAL. Don’t drink...not yet.
ABE. OK. Whatever you say.
SAL. (SAL sits up.) There it is again. The desert. It’s callin’ my name. From the water. It’s whisperin’ my name in the water.
ABE. (ABE sits up.) Really?
SAL. It’s sayin’... Sal!... Sal!... Do you hear it?
ABE. No...
SAL. I got a feeling that means we should drink the water.
ABE. Whatever you say!

(They fill their hands with water from the spring and drink.)

SAL. Oh no!
ABE. (Spits it out.)
SAL. It’s bitter! The water is bitter!
ABE. Yecchhhh!
SAL. Why would the desert call my name... and lead me to this bitter water?

(Pause. They look at each other.)

SAL. Abe?
ABE. Yeah?
SAL. I got a feeling that is not a good sign.
ABE. I got a feeling you’re right.
(They look out across the desert as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 10

(SAL is lying on her back, staring out across the desert. ABE is standing over her.)

ABE. OK! So it’s a bad sign! No doubt about it, the bitter water is a bad sign! But Sal! When you see a bad sign, you don’t lie down and roll over like a ... dog!... and wait for another one to come along! No! You hit the road! You put your tail between your legs and run in the opposite direction! And that’s what we’re gonna do now! We’re gonna hit the road! So, come on, Sal! Roll over! Come on! You gotta roll over and get outta here!

(SAL slowly rolls over.)

ABE. Atta girl!

(SAL gets onto her hands and knees.)

ABE. Come on, Sal...

(SAL starts to crawl.)

ABE. Sal, the car’s over there! You’re goin’ in the wrong direction!
(SAL continues to crawl.)

ABE. Sal! Turn around! And head back this way!

(SAL stops)

ABE. Atta girl! Now turn around!

(SAL suddenly starts to dig a hole in the desert.)

ABE. Sal! What are you doin’!
SAL. I’m goin’ into the desert.
ABE. Huh?
SAL. I have to see the heart of the desert.
ABE. But why?
SAL. I hafta find a sign. Of life.
ABE. But Sal! There’s no life in the desert!
SAL. I know. If I can find it here, I’ll know it exists. If I can find it here, I can find it in me.

(SAL starts digging again.)

SAL. That’s what I’m lookin’ for! I’m lookin’ for a sign of life... in me! ‘Cause I haven’t been able to find one! I’ve seen it everywhere else, but not in me! I’ve seen it through the car-doors, windows when we’re drivin’, blowin’ through the grass and trees. And I’ve seen it at night, when I walk past houses with all the lights turned on. And I’ve heard it, through open windows, when children are playin’ in the street! And I’ve seen it in you, when you look up at the stars and talk about your dreams. But I can’t find it in me. (SAL stops digging.) I wonder if it exists at all, if life is just a thing of our dreams... if it’s something we only imagine. Maybe there’s really no
people in those houses at night, just shadows, movin' on the wall. Maybe there's really no children, just sounds that disappear, the minute you look out the window. Maybe there's no life in you either... (SAL starts to dig again.) But I have to know. I have to know if there's such a thing as life, or if I've only made it up! I have to have a sign. 'Cause there's no life in me, Abe. I can't find a sign of life anywhere. There's nothin' in me at all but a dry river of rocks, that's all there is, just a dry river of rocks runnin' right through me, no water runnin' over 'em, no grass growin' between 'em, no trees growin' beside 'em, no nothin'! No water, no rain, no soil, no dirt, no ground, no grass, no trees, no nothin'! Just rocks, only rocks! (She stops digging.) I thought the magic star was gonna give it to me. I thought it was gonna be the thing to fill me with life. And I thought that all the life I see bubbling over in you would spill into me and I would fill up and spill over into... someone else. (SAL looks out over the desert.) The desert called my name and the water was bitter. (She looks into the hole.) I think I know now that I came here to see...

ABE. What's that Sal?

SAL. There's no life in the desert and there's no life in me. (She runs sand through her fingers.) That's why I came here. I came to the desert because the desert is me.

(Long pause. ABE and SAL look out across the desert.)

ABE. No. You're not a desert. No, Sal.

(He picks her up off the ground.)

SAL. What're you doin'?

ABE. I'm gettin' you outta here. I'm gonna take you to a place where you can find it.