

# ***Stars of the Desert***

*by*

*Joseph Arnone*

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Cast of Characters

<u>HARRY</u> :	60's
<u>CHIP</u> :	29
<u>AMY</u> :	27

Place  
Desert

Time  
Day

Setting: The play takes place out in a desert, west of America. There is an old beat up trailer that doesn't drive anymore, a large rock embedded in the sand stage left (a blue bucket beside it), a fire pit stage right with a single wooden block of bark used as a seat. There are dozens of empty beer cans scattered around and perhaps some random mechanical equipment that has rusted with time. There's a small standing barbeque just stage right of the trailer.

At Rise: The play opens with Harry drinking a beer, sitting in front of the fire pit.

CHIP: I'm here.

*Harry sizes up his son and chuckles.*

CHIP: Why you laughing?

HARRY: You look like a real shithead.

CHIP: Already startin' with the insults, Pop?

HARRY: If you were me looking at you, you'd see what I see.

CHIP: And what do you see?

HARRY: A shithead!

CHIP: Well, I'm here -

HARRY: Of course you are! I'm starin' right at ya!

CHIP: I drove fifteen-hundred miles to be here cause you called!

HARRY: Expect me to jump up and down and get all giddy inside?

CHIP: No -

HARRY: Maybe slap you on the back and give you a big ole hug?

CHIP: I'm not expectin' anything.

HARRY: Oh, you have.

CHIP: That's not true.

HARRY: You have, boy! All sons expect THINGS from their fathers. Things! Things! All kinds of little annoying things. From the moment you first set eyes on me you started whimpering and haven't stopped since. Always crying about things for no damn reason when all you have to do is extend one of your own arms and grab what you want. Always expecting your old man to show you the way. Life ain't about guidelines, it's about discovery.

CHIP: Did ya think I would come?

HARRY: What's it matter?

CHIP: I have things going on in my life...*things* you pulled me away from!

HARRY: You said you drove to these parts, I wasn't the one holdin' onto the steerin' wheel, was I?

CHIP: I guess not.

HARRY: You arrived here on your own account.

*Chip cracks open a beer, drinks, sits  
on a rock opposite his father.*

CHIP: How's it going out here?

HARRY: Don't ask me that, you know I can't stand small talk.

CHIP: Making conversation.

HARRY: Don't *make* conversation, just *have* a conversation Chip. It's all so intellectual with you. My boy's got a big mind. A BIG MIND made of mud! Problem with your kind, don't know how to look anyone in the eyes and...what's the use?

CHIP: What's eating at ya?

HARRY: The world! The entire spinnin' globe I rest my achey feet on. Swollen. Puss. Maggots! Would like to kick the shit out of all these minds thinkin' they run the world! Thinkin' they can get away with it forever, like we don't notice, like we ain't smart like em', can you imagine? They think we'll trot along like this forever...(chuckles) Ahhh, it'll last for a while alright but we've got em', we'll always have em'.

CHIP: What are you saying Pop?

HARRY: You won't understand.

CHIP: ...Are you doing okay, Pop?

HARRY: Harry.

CHIP: What??

HARRY: Harry! My name. Call me by my name Son. I'm only a man who gave you free passage to come to this place we so call Earth. That's all I am. That's all I've ever been. I wouldn't even go as far as to call me your friend. We're strangers. It's better that way. Two strangers who happen to bump into one another once in a while because we're passing through. I go my way, you go yours...that's what we are..it's...what else are we supposed to be? ..I'm good knowing that either of us can get up and go without explanation, without condemnation..eagles fly alone.

CHIP: You sayin' you're an eagle, Pop?

HARRY: I'm sayin' I could very well be any damn thing I please in this life...

CHIP: I know.

HARRY: Don't give me that *I know* bullshit. You don't know shit if it hit you in the face.

*Enter AMY from the trailer.*

AMY: Morning Harry.

CHIP: Harry, this is my girlfriend Amy.

HARRY: WHO?

CHIP: My girlfriend.

HARRY: You have a girlfriend?

CHIP: You met her last time I was here.

HARRY: No, I didn't.

CHIP: You did.

HARRY: You calling me a liar?

CHIP: ...This is Amy.

AMY: Hello Pop -

HARRY: Harry. Call me by my name, it's Harry!

AMY: Harry.

HARRY: That's it.

AMY: How have you been?

HARRY: ...What?

CHIP: Amy, just let him be, maybe go back in and -

AMY: Oh no, I'm not going back in there alone. There's critters.

CHIP: What critters?

AMY: He's got something moving around in the kitchen cabinets.

CHIP: *(to Harry)* Thought you said you cleared that rat problem you was having?

HARRY: Damned if I know.

CHIP: How can you live that way?

HARRY: Which way?

CHIP: With rats.

HARRY: It's feeding time. That's all. (*pointing*) What's her name?

AMY: Amy.

HARRY: Amy, why don't you go on and feed them some bamboo doggy treats..there's a giant bag of 'em behind the front door soon as you walk in. They're absolutely crazy for 'em.. There's a small bowl already in the bag, just scoop some treats on up and toss it under the kitchen sink cabinet. You'll hear some mayhem but it's all too exciting. Mind you, these aren't your New York City rats, the ones infected with disease, no, I have a pure bred family of Sumatran Bamboo Rats. Ugly as beavers, but they sure are cuddly once you get to know 'em. Hell, Jasper, the big one, keeps them coyotes from coming around these parts. Some mornings him and I sit out here sippin' tea together, watching the sun rise. It can get pretty nice those days.

AMY: Chip, I'll be in the car, where it's safest.

*Amy exits.*

CHIP: Couldn't you be nice to Amy?

HARRY: Whose Amy?

CHIP: Harry, you have me worried.

HARRY: Why's that?

CHIP: When you called and you never call, EVER..you didn't sound right on the phone.

HARRY: How'd I sound?

CHIP: You were screaming obscenities at me, saying you were dodging explosions, that soldiers were coming for you and I heard what sounded like gunfire.

HARRY: And that's why you drove here?

CHIP: I couldn't get back in touch with you. I had no way of reachin' you!

HARRY: What's it matter?

CHIP: I've been concerned, I've been worried, I thought maybe something had happened to you. I couldn't rest until I got here.

HARRY: Now you're here.

CHIP: And you doing okay? Can't you just answer that question?

HARRY: I'm doin' fine.

CHIP: Why wouldn't you answer your phone?

HARRY: You know I don't like answering phones.

CHIP: You can't expect me to drive here each time something's wrong.

HARRY: That's on you.

CHIP: You're so difficult. You know I put up with your shit constantly. I'm halfway across the country and I still have you stressing me out. Why do you do this to me? It's your sick pleasure? Ain't IT?

HARRY: Someone's upset.

CHIP: You're damned right I'm upset. You think I have nothin' better to do with my life? I have a lot of shit going on. I can't play babysitter to you over a thousand miles away. The least you could do is pick up your lousy phone. Even if it's to say, "I'm fine" and you hang up. That's all you need to do. Can't you at least do that?

HARRY: I can do that.

CHIP: You can?

HARRY: Sure.

CHIP: Well, alright then, I appreciate that.

HARRY: See ya.

*Harry gets up.*

CHIP: We're you headed?

HARRY: I don't have to answer to you.

*Harry walks to one side of the stage.*

CHIP: Dad...Harry.

*Harry squats over a bucket and relieves himself.*

CHIP: Aww man..you're crapping in buckets now?

HARRY: Toilet's jammed up. Haven't been able to figure it out but I'm getting close.



CHIP: How long have you been using buckets?

HARRY: Can't remember, actually.

CHIP: Want me to take a look at it?

HARRY: No point. If I can't figure it out, you certainly can't.

CHIP: Want me to call a plumber?

HARRY: Plumbers don't come out this way.

*Harry wipes himself clean. Walks  
back over to Chip.*

CHIP: ...I'm getting married.

HARRY: Huh?

CHIP: I might as well tell ya. I'm going to get married.

HARRY: To who?

CHIP: AMY! It's three fucking letters!

HARRY: Amy, right. Why?

CHIP: Why do you think?

HARRY: She gets you all warm and fuzzy inside? *(chuckles)*

CHIP: You're a real winner, you know that?

HARRY: I am a man aware of my own limitations. Not giving a fuck is one of them.

CHIP: I don't even know why I told you.

HARRY: I don't know why, either.

CHIP: I thought we could all, I don't know what I thought; was thinking maybe we could go out to eat.

HARRY: Where?

CHIP: Brewster's Burgers. You like their food, figured we could celebrate.

HARRY: I gotta get dressed up for this?

CHIP: You could go as you are now, I guess.

HARRY: Brewster's Burgers, haven't been there in years.

CHIP: You wanna go?

HARRY: What for?

CHIP: I just told you what for.

HARRY: Why does it matter to you to buy me a burger?

CHIP: I don't know. Isn't that what people do when there's something good about to happen?

HARRY: They buy each other burgers?

CHIP: They celebrate.

HARRY: Aren't celebrations for when something DOES happen?

CHIP: Seeing as I don't see you and I'm certain you won't be present at my wedding, and considering I'm here now with Amy, thought we could spend some quality time is all. I'm not sure when I'm going to see you again Pop...

HARRY: I want you to get back in your car with your *soon to be* and head back to New York Son. I want you to keep driving without nothing more than a single thought of me. You drive, as fast as you can, back to your dreams and never turn back. Let me die out here alone as I wish, let me drink myself to death and play with my rats, let me fix my broken toilet and stand under the starry sky, let me feel the warmth of the rising sun as it wraps itself around my cheeks, let me slither in the sand and chase wolves in the night, let me relive the days that I try to forget with nothing more than a brush of your mother's brown hair across my face...so that I can die alone in peace, without all the expectations, without you, without forgiveness, without time, without fear and without needs...go on shithead, go, be the one you've set out to be.

*Harry turns his back on his son.*

*Chip back peddles a few feet and slowly turns around before walking off in confidence.*

*Lights slowly fade to black.*

**END OF PLAY**