

Samuel French Acting Edition

True West

by Sam Shepard

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

SAMUELFRENCH.CO.UK

Copyright © 1981 by Sam Shepard
All Rights Reserved

TRUE WEST is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-61728-7

www.SamuelFrench.com

www.SamuelFrench.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Info@SamuelFrench.com

1-866-598-8449

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

Plays@SamuelFrench.co.uk

020-7255-4302

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French, depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *TRUE WEST* may not be licensed by Samuel French in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Samuel French office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *TRUE WEST* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play(s) does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to Samuel French before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title(s) is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Professional/Stock licensing fees are quoted upon application to Samuel French.

No one shall make any changes in this title(s) for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall upload this title(s), or part of this title(s), to any social media websites.

For all enquiries regarding motion picture, television, and other media rights, please contact Samuel French.

Please refer to page 72 for further copyright information.

CHARACTERS

- AUSTIN:** early thirties, light blue sports shirt, light tan cardigan sweater, clean blue jeans, white tennis shoes
- LEE:** his older brother, early forties, filthy white t-shirt, tattered brown overcoat covered with dust, dark blue baggy suit pants from the Salvation Army, pink suede belt, pointed black forties dress shoes scuffed up, holes in the soles, no socks, no hat, long pronounced sideburns, "Gene Vincent" hairdo, 2 days' growth of beard, bad teeth
- SAUL KIMMER:** late forties, Hollywood producer, pink and white flower print sports shirt, white sports coat with matching polyester slacks, black and white loafers
- MOM:** early sixties, mother of the brothers, small woman, conservative white skirt and matching jacket, red shoulder bag, two pieces of matching red luggage

SET

All nine scenes take place on the same set; a kitchen and adjoining alcove of an older home in a Southern California suburb, about 40 miles east of L.A. The kitchen takes up the majority of the playing area to stage left (*from the actor's point of view, facing the audience*). The kitchen consists of a sink, upstage center, surrounded by counter space, a wall telephone, cupboards and a small window just above it bordered by neat yellow curtains. Stage left of sink is a stove. Stage right, a refrigerator. The alcove adjoins the kitchen to stage right. There is no wall division or door to the alcove. It is open and easily accessible from the kitchen and defined only by the objects in it: A small round glass breakfast table mounted on white iron legs, Two matching white iron chairs set across from each other. The two exterior walls of the alcove which prescribe a corner in the upstage right are composed of many small windows beginning from a solid wall about three feet high and extending to the ceiling. The windows look out to bushes and citrus trees. The alcove is filled with all sorts of house plants in various pots, mostly Boston ferns hanging in planters at different levels. The floor of the alcove is composed of green synthetic grass.

All entrances and exits are made stage left from the kitchen. There is no door. The actors simply go off and come onto the playing area.

NOTE ON SET AND COSTUME

The set should be constructed realistically with no attempt to distort its dimensions, shapes, objects or colors. No objects should be introduced which might draw special attention to themselves other than the props demanded by the script. If a stylistic "concept" is grafted onto the set design it will only serve to confuse the evolution of the characters' situation, which is the most important focus of the play.

Likewise, the costumes should be exactly representative of who the characters are and not added onto for the sake of making a point to the audience.

NOTE ON SOUND

The Coyote of Southern California has a distinct yapping, dog-like bark, similar to a Hyena. This yapping grows more intense and maniacal as the pack grows in numbers, which is usually the case when they lure and kill pets from suburban yards. The sense of growing frenzy in the pack should be felt in the background, particularly in scenes 7 and 8. In any case, these Coyotes never make the long, mournful, solitary howl of the Hollywood stereotype.

The sound of Crickets can speak for itself.

These sounds should also be treated realistically even though they sometimes grow in volume and numbers.

TRUE WEST

ACT I

SCENE 1: *night, sound of crickets in dark, candlelight appears in alcove illuminating Austin seated at glass table hunched over a writing notebook, pen in hand, cigarette burning in ashtray, cup of coffee, typewriter on table, stacks of paper, candle burning on table, soft moonlight fills kitchen illuminating LEE, beer in hand, six pack on counter behind him, he's leaning against sink, mildly drunk, takes slug of beer*

LEE. So, Mom took off for Alaska huh?

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. Sorta' left you in charge.

AUSTIN. Well, she knew I was coming down here so she offered me the place.

LEE. You keepin' the plants watered?

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. Keepin' the sink clean? She don't like even a single tea leaf in the sink ya' know.

AUSTIN. (*Trying to concentrate on writing*) Yeah, I know.

(*Pause*)

LEE. She gonna' be up there a long time?

AUSTIN. I don't know.

LEE. Kinda' nice for you, huh? Whole place to yourself.

AUSTIN. Yeah, it's great.

LEE. Ya' got crickets anyway. Tons a' crickets out there. (*Looks around kitchen*) Ya' got groceries? Coffee?

AUSTIN. (*Looking up from writing*) What?

LEE. You got coffee?

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. At's good. (*Short pause*) Real coffee? From the bean?

AUSTIN. Yeah. You want some?

LEE. Naw. I brought some uh—(*Motions to beer*)

AUSTIN. Help yourself to whatever's—(*Motions to refrigerator*)

LEE. I will. Don't worry about me. I'm not the one to worry about. I mean I can uh— (*Pause*) You always work by candlelight?

AUSTIN. No—un—Not always.

LEE. Just sometimes?

AUSTIN. (*Puts pen down, rubs his eyes*) Yeah. Sometimes it's soothing.

LEE. Isn't that what the old guys did?

AUSTIN. What old guys?

LEE. The Forefathers. You know.

AUSTIN. Forefathers?

LEE. Isn't that what they did? Candlelight burning into the night? Cabins in the wilderness.

AUSTIN. (*Rubs hand through his hair*) I suppose.

LEE. I'm not botherin' you am I? I mean I don't wanna break into yer uh—concentration or nothin'.

AUSTIN. No, it's all right.

LEE. That's good. I mean I realize that yer line a' work demands a lotta' concentration.

AUSTIN. It's okay.

LEE. You probably think that I'm not fully able to comprehend somethin' like that, huh?

AUSTIN. Like what?

LEE. That stuff yer doin'. That art. You know. Whatever you call it.

AUSTIN. It's just a little research.

LEE. You may not know it but I did a little art myself once.

AUSTIN. You did?

LEE. Yeah! I did some a' that. I fooled around with it. No future in it.

AUSTIN. What'd you do?

LEE. Never mind what I did! Just never mind about that. *(Pause)* It was ahead of its time.

(Pause)

AUSTIN. So, you went out to see the old man, huh?

LEE. Yeah, I seen him.

AUSTIN. How's he doing?

LEE. Same. He's doin' just about the same.

AUSTIN. I was down there too, you know.

LEE. What d'ya' want, an award? You want some kinda' medal? You were down there. He told me all about you.

AUSTIN. What'd he say?

LEE. He told me. Don't worry.

(Pause)

AUSTIN. Well—

LEE. You don't have to say nothin'

AUSTIN. I wasn't.

LEE. Yeah, you were gonna' make somethin' up. Somethin' brilliant.

(Pause)

AUSTIN. You going to be down here very long, Lee?

LEE. Might be. Depends on a few things.

AUSTIN. You got some friends down here?

LEE. *(Laughs)* I know a few people. Yeah.

AUSTIN. Well, you can stay here as long as I'm here.

LEE. I don't need your permission do I?

AUSTIN. No.

LEE. I mean she's my mother too, right?

AUSTIN. Right.

LEE. She might've just as easily asked me to take care of her place as you.

AUSTIN. That's right.

LEE. I mean I know how to water plants.

(Long pause)

AUSTIN. So you don't know how long you'll be staying then?

LEE. Depends mostly on houses, ya' know.

AUSTIN. Houses?

LEE. Yeah. Houses. Electric devices. Stuff like that. I gotta' make a little tour first.

(Short pause)

AUSTIN. Lee, why don't you just try another neighborhood, all right?

LEE. *(Laughs)* What'sa' matter with this neighborhood? This is a great neighborhood. Lush. Good class a' people. Not many dogs.

AUSTIN. Well, our uh—Our mother just happens to live here. That's all.

LEE. Nobody's gonna' know. All they know is something's missing. That's all. She'll never even hear about it. Nobody's gonna' know.

AUSTIN. You're going to get picked up if you start walking around here at night.

LEE. Me? I'm gonna' git picked up? What about you? You stick out like a sore thumb. Look at you. You think yer regular lookin'?

AUSTIN. I've got too much to deal with here to be worrying about—

LEE. Yer not gonna' have to worry about me! I've been doin' all right without you. I haven't been anywhere near you for five years! Now isn't that true?

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. So you don't have to worry about me. I'm a free agent.

AUSTIN. All right.

LEE. Now all I wanna' do is borrow yer car.

AUSTIN. No!

LEE. Just fer a day. One day.

AUSTIN. No!

LEE. I won't take it outside a twenty mile radius. I promise ya'. You can check the speedometer.

AUSTIN. You're not borrowing my car! That's all there is to it.

(Pause)

LEE. Then I'll just take the damn thing.

AUSTIN. Lee, look—I don't want any trouble, all right?

LEE. That's a dumb line. That is a dumb fuckin' line. You git paid fer dreamin' up a line like that?

AUSTIN. Look, I can give you some money if you need money.

(LEE suddenly lunges at AUSTIN, grabs him violently by the shirt and shakes him with tremendous power)

LEE. Don't you say that to me! Don't you ever say that to me!

(Just as suddenly he turns him loose, pushes him away and backs off)

You may be able to git away with that with the Old Man. Git him tanked up for a week! Buy him off with yer Hollywood blood money, but not me! I can git my own money my own way. Big money!

AUSTIN. I was just making an offer.

LEE. Yeah, well keep it to yourself!

(Long pause)

Those are the most monotonous fuckin' crickets I ever heard in my life.

AUSTIN. I kinda' like the sound.

LEE. Yeah. Supposed to be able to tell the temperature by the number a' pulses. You believe that?

AUSTIN. The temperature?

LEE. Yeah. The air. How hot it is.

AUSTIN. How do you do that?

LEE. I don't know. Some woman told me that. She was a Botanist. So I believed her.

AUSTIN. Where'd you meet her?

LEE. What?

AUSTIN. The woman Botanist?

LEE. I met her on the desert. I been spendin' a lotta' time on the desert.

AUSTIN. What were you doing out there?

LEE. (*Pause, stares in space*) I forgit. Had me a Pit Bull there for a while but I lost him.

AUSTIN. Pit Bull?

LEE. Fightin' dog. Damn I made some good money off that little dog. Real good money.

(*Pause*)

AUSTIN. You could come up north with me, you know.

LEE. What's up there?

AUSTIN. My family.

LEE. Oh, that's right, you got the wife and kiddies now don't ya'. The house, the car, the whole slam. That's right.

AUSTIN. You could spend a couple days. See how you like it. I've got an extra room.

LEE. Too cold up there.

(*Pause*)

AUSTIN. You want to sleep for a while?

LEE. (*Pause, stares at AUSTIN*) I don't sleep.

(*LIGHTS TO BLACK*)

—END SCENE 1—

SCENE 2: *morning, AUSTIN is watering plants with a vaporizer, LEE sits at glass table in alcove drinking beer*

LEE. I never realized the old lady was so security-minded.

AUSTIN. How do you mean?

LEE. Made a little tour this morning. She's got locks on everything. Locks and double-locks and chain-locks and—What's she got that's so valuable?

AUSTIN. Antiques I guess. I don't know.

LEE. Antiques? Brought everything with her from the old place, huh. Just the same crap we always had around. Plates and spoons.

AUSTIN. I guess they have personal value to her.

LEE. Personal value. Yeah just a lotta' junk. Most of its phony anyway. Idaho decals. Now who in the hell wants to eat offa' plate with the State of Idaho starin' ya' in the face. Every time ya' take a bite ya' get to see a little bit more.

AUSTIN. Well it must mean something to her or she wouldn't save it.

LEE. Yeah, well personally I don't wanna' be invaded by Idaho when I'm eatin'. When I'm eatin' I'm home. Ya' know what I'm sayin'? I'm not driftin', I'm home. I don't need my thoughts swept off to Idaho. I don't need that!

(Pause)

AUSTIN. Did you go out last night?

LEE. Why?

AUSTIN. I thought I heard you go out.

LEE. Yeah, I went out. What about it?

AUSTIN. Just wondered.

LEE. Damn coyotes kept me awake.

AUSTIN. Oh yeah, I heard them. That must've killed somebody's dog or something.

LEE. Yappin' their fool heads off. They don't yap like that on the desert. They howl. These are city coyotes here.

AUSTIN. Well, you don't sleep anyway do you?

(Pause, LEE stares at him)

LEE. You're pretty smart aren't ya?

AUSTIN. How do you mean?

LEE. I mean you never had any more on the ball than I did. But here you are gettin' invited into prominent people's houses. Sittin' around talkin' like you know somethin'.

AUSTIN. They're not so prominent.

LEE. They're a helluva' lot more prominent than the houses I get invited into.

AUSTIN. Well you invite yourself.

LEE. That's right. I do. In fact I probably got a wider range a' choices than you do, come to think of it.

AUSTIN. I wouldn't doubt it.

LEE. In fact I been inside some pretty classy places in my time. And I never even went to an Ivy League school either.

AUSTIN. You want some breakfast or something?

LEE. Breakfast?

AUSTIN. Yeah. Don't you eat breakfast?

LEE. Look, don't worry about me pal. I can take care a' myself. You just go ahead as though I wasn't even here, all right?

(AUSTIN goes into kitchen, makes coffee)

AUSTIN. Where'd you walk to last night?

(Pause)

LEE. I went up in the foothills there. Up in the San Gabriels. Heat was drivin' me crazy.

AUSTIN. Well, wasn't it hot out on the desert?

LEE. Different kinda' heat. Out there it's clean. Cools off at night. There's a nice little breeze.

AUSTIN. Where were you, the Mojave?

LEE. Yeah. The Mojave. That's right.

AUSTIN. I haven't been out there in years.

LEE. Out past Needles there.

AUSTIN. Oh yeah.

LEE. Up here it's different. This country's real different.

AUSTIN. Well, it's been built up.

LEE. Built up? Wiped out is more like it. I don't even hardly recognize it.

AUSTIN. Yeah. Foothills are the same though, aren't they?

LEE. Pretty much. It's funny goin' up in there. The smells and everything. Used to catch snakes up there, remember?

AUSTIN. You caught snakes.

LEE. Yeah. And you'd pretend you were Geronimo or some damn thing. You used to go right out to lunch.

AUSTIN. I enjoyed my imagination.

LEE. That what you call it? Looks like yer still enjoyin' it.

AUSTIN. So you just wandered around up there, huh?

LEE. Yeah. With a purpose.

AUSTIN. See any houses?

(*Pause*)

LEE. Couple. Couple a' real nice ones. One of 'em didn't even have a dog. Walked right up and stuck my head in the window. Not a peep. Just a sweet kinda' suburban silence.

AUSTIN. What kind of a place was it?

LEE. Like a paradise. Kinda' place that sorta' kills ya' inside. Warm yellow lights. Mexican tile all around. Copper pots hangin' over the stove. Ya' know like they got in the magazines. Blonde people movin' in and outa' the rooms, talkin' to each other. (*Pause*) Kinda' place you wish you sorta' grew up in, ya' know.

AUSTIN. That's the kind of place you wish you'd grown up in?

LEE. Yeah, why not?

AUSTIN. I thought you hated that kind of stuff.

LEE. Yeah, well you never knew too much about me did ya'?

(Pause)

AUSTIN. Why'd you go out to the desert in the first place?

LEE. I was on my way to see the old man.

AUSTIN. You mean you just passed through there?

LEE. Yeah. That's right. Three months of passin' through.

AUSTIN. Three months?

LEE. Somethin' like that. Maybe more. Why?

AUSTIN. You lived on the Mojave for three months?

LEE. Yeah. What'sa' matter with that?

AUSTIN. By yourself?

LEE. Mostly. Had a couple a' visitors. Had that dog for a while.

AUSTIN. Didn't you miss people?

LEE. (Laughs) People?

AUSTIN. Yeah. I mean I go crazy if I have to spend three nights in a motel by myself.

LEE. Yer not in a motel now.

AUSTIN. No, I know. But sometimes I have to stay in motels.

LEE. Well, they got people in motels don't they?

AUSTIN. Strangers.

LEE. Yer friendly aren't ya'? Aren't you the friendly type?

(Pause)

AUSTIN. I'm going to have somebody coming by here later, Lee.

LEE. Ah! Lady friend?

AUSTIN. No, a producer.

LEE. Aha! What's he produce?

AUSTIN. Film. Movies. You know.

LEE. Oh, movies. Motion Pictures! A Big Wig huh?

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. What's he comin' by here for?

AUSTIN. We have to talk about a project.

LEE. Whadya' mean, "a project"? What's "a project"?

AUSTIN. A script.

LEE. Oh. That's what yer doin' with all these papers?

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. Well, what's the project about?

AUSTIN. We're uh—it's a period piece.

LEE. What's "a period piece"?

AUSTIN. Look, it doesn't matter. The main thing is we need to discuss this alone. I mean—

LEE. Oh, I get it. You want me outa' the picture.

AUSTIN. Not exactly. I just need to be alone with him for a couple of hours. So we can talk.

LEE. Yer afraid I'll embarrass ya' huh?

AUSTIN. I'm not afraid you'll embarrass me!

LEE. Well, I tell ya' what—Why don't you just gimme the keys to yer car and I'll be back here around six o'clock or so. That give ya' enough time?

AUSTIN. I'm not loaning you my car, Lee.

LEE. You want me to just git lost huh? Take a hike? Is that it? Pound the pavement for a few hours while you bullshit yer way into a million bucks.

AUSTIN. Look, it's going to be hard enough for me to face this character on my own without—

LEE. You don't know this guy?

AUSTIN. No I don't know—He's a producer. I mean I've been meeting with him for months but you never get to know a producer.

LEE. Yer tryin' to hustle him? Is that it?

AUSTIN. I'm not trying to hustle him! I'm trying to work out a deal! It's not easy.

LEE. What kinda' deal?

AUSTIN. Convince him it's a worthwhile story.

LEE. He's not convinced? How come he's comin' over here if he's not convinced? I'll convince him for ya'.

AUSTIN. You don't understand the way things work down here.

LEE. How do things work down here?

(Pause)

AUSTIN. Look, if I loan you my car will you have it back here by six?

LEE. On the button. With a full tank a' gas.

AUSTIN. (*Digging in his pocket for keys*) Forget about the gas.

LEE. Hey, these days gas is gold, old buddy.

(AUSTIN *hands the keys to LEE*)

You remember that car I used to loan you?

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. Forty Ford. Flathead.

AUSTIN. Yeah.

LEE. Sucker hauled ass didn't it?

AUSTIN. Lee, it's not that I don't want to loan you my car—

LEE. You are loanin' me yer car.

(LEE *gives AUSTIN a pat on the shoulder, pause*)

AUSTIN. I know. I just wish—

LEE. What? You wish what?

AUSTIN. I don't know. I wish I wasn't—I wish I didn't have to be doing business down here. I'd like to just spend some time with you.

LEE. I thought it was "Art" you were doin'.

(LEE *moves across kitchen toward exit, tosses keys in his hand*)

AUSTIN. Try to get it back here by six, okay?

LEE. No sweat. Hey, ya' know, if that uh—story of yours doesn't go over with the guy—tell him I got a

couple a' "projects" he might be interested in. Real commercial. Full a' suspense. True-to-life stuff.

(LEE *exits*, AUSTIN *stares after LEE then turns, goes to papers at table, leafs through pages, lights fade to black*)

—END SCENE 2—

SCENE 3: *afternoon, alcove, SAUL KIMMER and AUSTIN seated across from each other at table.*

SAUL. Well, to tell you the truth Austin, I have never felt so confident about a project in quite a long time.

AUSTIN. Well, that's good to hear Saul.

SAUL. I am absolutely convinced we can get this thing off the ground. I mean we'll have to make a sale to television and that means getting a major star. Somebody bankable. But I think we can do it. I really do.

AUSTIN. Don't you think we need a first draft before we approach a star?

SAUL. No, no, not at all. I don't think it's necessary. Maybe a brief synopsis. I don't want you to touch the typewriter until we have some seed money.

AUSTIN. That's fine with me.

SAUL. I mean it's a great story. Just the story alone. You've really managed to capture something this time.

AUSTIN. I'm glad you like it, Saul.

(LEE *enters abruptly into kitchen carrying a stolen television set, short pause*)

LEE. Aw shit, I'm sorry about that. I am really sorry Austin.

AUSTIN. (*Standing*) That's all right.

LEE. (*Moving toward them*) I mean I thought it was way past six already. You said to have it back here by six.

AUSTIN. We were just finishing up. (*To SAUL*) This is my uh—brother, Lee.

SAUL. (*Standing*) Oh, I'm very happy to meet you.
(*LEE sets T.V. on sink counter, shakes hands with SAUL*)

LEE. I can't tell ya' how happy I am to meet you sir.

SAUL. Saul Kimmer.

LEE. Mr. Kipper.

SAUL. Kimmer.

AUSTIN. Lee's been living out on the desert and he just uh—

SAUL. Oh, that's terrific! (*To LEE*) Palm Springs?

LEE. Yeah. Yeah, right. Right around in that area. Near uh—Bob Hope Drive there.

SAUL. Oh I love it out there. I just love it. The air is wonderful.

LEE. Yeah. Sure is. Healthy.

SAUL. And the golf. I don't know if you play golf, but the golf is just about the best.

LEE. I play a lotta' golf.

SAUL. Is that right?

LEE. Yeah. In fact I was hoping I'd run into somebody out here who played a little golf. I've been lookin' for a partner.

SAUL. Well, I uh—

AUSTIN. Lee's just down for a visit while our mother's in Alaska.

SAUL. Oh, your mother's in Alaska?

AUSTIN. Yes. She went up there on a little vacation. This is her place. -

SAUL. I see. Well isn't that something. Alaska.

LEE. What kinda' handicap do ya' have, Mr. Kimmer?

SAUL. Oh I'm just a Sunday duffer really. You know.

LEE. That's good 'cause I haven't swung a club in months.

SAUL. Well we ought to get together sometime and have a little game. Austin, do you play?

(SAUL *mimes a Johnny Carson golf swing* for AUSTIN)

AUSTIN. No. I don't uh—I've watched it on T.V.

LEE. (To SAUL) How 'bout tomorrow morning? Bright and early. We could get out there and put in eighteen holes before breakfast.

SAUL. Well, I've got uh—I have several appointments—

LEE. No, I mean real early. Crack a'dawn. While the dew's still thick on the fairway.

SAUL. Sounds really great.

LEE. Austin could be our caddie.

SAUL. Now that's an idea. (*Laughs*)

AUSTIN. I don't know the first thing about golf.

LEE. There's nothin' to it. Isn't that right, Saul? He'd pick it up in fifteen minutes.

SAUL. Sure. Doesn't take long. 'Course you have to play for years to find your true form. (*Chuckles*)

LEE. (To AUSTIN) We'll give ya' a quick run-down on the club faces. The irons, the woods. Show ya' a couple pointers on the basic swing. Might even let ya' hit the ball a couple times. Whadya' think, Saul?

SAUL. Why not. I think it'd be great. I haven't had any exercise in weeks.

LEE. At's the spirit! We'll have a little orange juice right afterwards.

(*Pause*)

SAUL. Orange juice?

LEE. Yeah! Vitamin C! Nothin' like a shot a' orange juice after a round a' golf. Hot shower. Snappin' towels at each other's privates. Real sense a' fraternity.

SAUL. (*Smiles at AUSTIN*) Well, you make it sound very inviting, I must say. It really does sound great.

LEE. Then it's a date.

SAUL. Well, I'll call the country club and see if I can arrange something.

LEE. Great! Boy, I sure am sorry that I busted in on ya' all in the middle of yer meeting.

SAUL. Oh that's quite all right. We were just about finished anyway.

LEE. I can wait out in the other room if you want.

SAUL. No really—

LEE. Just got Austin's color T.V. back from the shop. I can watch a little amateur boxing now.

(LEE and AUSTIN exchange looks)

SAUL. Oh—Yes.

LEE. You don't fool around in Television, do you Saul?

SAUL. Uh—I have in the past. Produced some T.V. Specials. Network stuff. But it's mainly features now.

LEE. That's where the big money is huh?

SAUL. Yes. That's right.

AUSTIN. Why don't I call you tomorrow, Saul and we'll get together. We can have lunch or something.

SAUL. That'd be terrific.

LEE. Right after the golf.

(Pause)

SAUL. What?

LEE. You can have lunch right after the golf.

SAUL. Oh, right.

LEE. Austin was tellin' me that yer interested in stories.

SAUL. Well, we develop certain projects that we feel have commercial potential.

LEE. What kinda' stuff do ya' go in for?

SAUL. Oh, the usual. You know. Good love interest. Lots of action. (*Chuckles at AUSTIN*)

LEE. Westerns?

SAUL. Sometimes.

AUSTIN. I'll give you a ring, Saul.

(AUSTIN tries to move SAUL across the kitchen but LEE blocks their way)

LEE. I got a Western that'd knock yer lights out.

SAUL. Oh really?

LEE. Yeah. Contemporary Western. Based on a true story. 'Course I'm not a writer like my brother here. I'm not a man of the pen.

SAUL. Well—

LEE. I mean I can tell ya' a story off the tongue but I can't put it down on paper. That don't make any difference though does it?

SAUL. No, not really.

LEE. I mean plenty a guys have stories don't they? True-life stories. Musta' been a lotta' movies made from real life.

SAUL. Yes. I suppose so.

LEE. I haven't seen a good Western since 'Lonely Are the Brave'. You remember that movie?

SAUL. No, I'm afraid I—

LEE. Kirk Douglas. Helluva' movie. You remember that movie, Austin?

AUSTIN. Yes.

LEE. (*To SAUL*) The man dies for the love of a horse.

SAUL. Is that right.

LEE. Yeah. Ya' hear the horse screamin' at the end of it. Rain's comin' down. Horse is screamin'. Then there's a shot. BLAM! Just a single shot like that. Then nothin' but the sound of rain. And Kirk Douglas is ridin' in the ambulance. Ridin' away from the scene of the accident. And when he hears that shot he knows that his horse has died. He knows. And you see his eyes. And his eyes die. Right inside his face. And then his eyes close. And you know that he's died too. You know that Kirk Douglas has died from the death of his horse.

SAUL. (*Eyes AUSTIN nervously*) Well, it sounds like a great movie. I'm sorry I missed it.

LEE. Yeah, you shouldn't a' missed that one.

SAUL. I'll have to try to catch it some time. Arrange a screening or something. Well, Austin, I'll have to hit the freeway before rush hour.

AUSTIN. (*Ushers him toward exit*) It's good seeing you, Saul.

(AUSTIN and SAUL shake hands)

LEE. So ya' think there's room for a real Western these days? A true-to-life Western?

SAUL. Well, I don't see why not. Why don't you uh—tell the story to Austin and have him write a little outline.

LEE. You'd take a look at it then?

SAUL. Yes. Sure. I'll give it a read-through. Always eager for new material. (*Smiles at AUSTIN*)

LEE. That's great! You'd really read it then huh?

SAUL. It would just be my opinion of course.

LEE. That's all I want. Just an opinion. I happen to think it has a lotta' possibilities.

SAUL. Well, it was great meeting you and I'll—

(SAUL and LEE shake)

LEE. I'll call you tomorrow about the golf.

SAUL. Oh. Yes, right.

LEE. Austin's got your number, right?

SAUL. Yes.

LEE. So long Saul. (*Gives SAUL a pat on the back*)

(SAUL exits, AUSTIN turns to LEE, looks at T.V. then back to LEE)

AUSTIN. Give me the keys.

(AUSTIN extends his hand toward LEE, LEE doesn't move, just stares at AUSTIN, smiles, lights to black)

—END SCENE 3—

SCENE 4: *night, Coyotes in distance, fade, sound of typewriter in dark, crickets, candlelight in alcove, dim light in kitchen, lights reveal AUSTIN at glass table typing, LEE sits across from him, foot on table,*

drinking beer and whiskey, the T.V. is still on sink counter, AUSTIN types for a while then stops

LEE. All right, now read it back to me.

AUSTIN. I'm not reading it back to you, Lee. You can read it when we're finished. I can't spend all night on this.

LEE. You got better things to do?

AUSTIN. Let's just go ahead. Now what happens when he leaves Texas?

LEE. Is he ready to leave Texas yet? I didn't know we were that far along. He's not ready to leave Texas.

AUSTIN. He's right at the border.

LEE. (*Sitting up*) No, see, this is one a' the crucial parts. Right here. (*Taps paper with beer can*) We can't rush through this. He's not right at the border. He's a good fifty miles from the border. A lot can happen in fifty miles.

AUSTIN. It's only an outline. We're not writing an entire script now.

LEE. Well ya' can't leave things out even if it is an outline. It's one a' the most important parts. Ya' can't go leavin' it out.

AUSTIN. Okay, okay. Let's just—get it done.

LEE. All right. Now. He's in the truck and he's got his horse trailer and his horse.

AUSTIN. We've already established that.

LEE. And he sees this other guy comin' up behind him in another truck. And that truck is pullin' a gooseneck.

AUSTIN. What's a gooseneck?

LEE. Cattle trailer. You know the kind with a gooseneck, goes right down in the bed a' the pick-up.

AUSTIN. Oh. All right. (*Types*)

LEE. It's important.

AUSTIN. Okay. I got it.

LEE. All these details are important.

(AUSTIN types as they talk)

AUSTIN. I've got it.

LEE. And this other guy's got his horse all saddled up in the back a' the gooseneck.

AUSTIN. Right.

LEE. So both these guys have got their horses right along with 'em, see.

AUSTIN. I understand.

LEE. Then this first guy suddenly realizes two things.

AUSTIN. The guy in front?

LEE. Right. The guy in front realizes two things almost at the same time. Simultaneous.

AUSTIN. What were the two things?

LEE. Number one, he realizes that the guy behind him is the husband of the woman he's been—

(LEE makes gesture of screwing by pumping his arm)

AUSTIN. (Sees LEE's gesture) Oh. Yeah.

LEE. And number two, he realizes he's in the middle of Tornado Country.

AUSTIN. What's "Tornado Country"?

LEE. Panhandle.

AUSTIN. Panhandle?

LEE. Sweetwater. Around in that area. Nothin'. Nowhere. And number three—

AUSTIN. I thought there was only two.

LEE. There's three. There's a third unforeseen realization.

AUSTIN. And what's that?

LEE. That he's runnin' outa' gas.

AUSTIN. (Stops typing) Come on, Lee.

(AUSTIN gets up, moves to kitchen, gets a glass of water)

LEE. Whadya' mean, "come on"? That's what it is. Write it down! He's runnin' outa' gas.

AUSTIN. It's too—

LEE. What? It's too what? It's too real! That's what ya' mean isn't it? It's too much like real life!

AUSTIN. It's not like real life! It's not enough like real life. Things don't happen like that.

LEE. What! Men don't fuck other men's women?

AUSTIN. Yes. But they don't end up chasing each other across the Panhandle. Through "Tornado Country".

LEE. They do in this movie!

AUSTIN. And they don't have horses conveniently along with them when they run out of gas! And they don't run out of gas either!

LEE. These guys run outa' gas! This is my story and one a' these guys runs outa' gas!

AUSTIN. It's just a dumb excuse to get them into a chase scene. It's contrived.

LEE. It is a chase scene! It's already a chase scene. They been chasin' each other fer days.

AUSTIN. So now, they're supposed to abandon their trucks, climb on their horses and chase each other into the mountains?

LEE. (*Standing suddenly*) There aren't any mountains in the Panhandle! It's flat!

(*LEE turns violently toward windows in alcove and throws beer can at them*)

LEE. Goddamn these crickets! (*Yells at crickets*) Shut up out there! (*Pause, turns back toward table*) This place is like a fuckin' rest home here. How're you supposed to think!

AUSTIN. You wanna' take a break?

LEE. No, I don't wanna' take a break! I wanna' get this done! This is my last chance to get this done.

AUSTIN. (*Moves back into alcove*) All right. Take it easy.

LEE. I'm gonna' be leavin' this area. I don't have time to mess around here.

AUSTIN. Where are you going?

LEE. Never mind where I'm goin'! That's got nothin' to do with you. I just gotta' get this done. I'm not like you. Hangin' around bein' a parasite offa' other fools. I gotta' do this thing and get out.

(Pause)

AUSTIN. A parasite? Me?

LEE. Yeah, you!

AUSTIN. After you break into people's houses and take their televisions?

LEE. They don't need their televisions! I'm doin' them a service.

AUSTIN. Give me back my keys, Lee.

LEE. Not until you write this thing! You're gonna' write this outline thing for me or that car's gonna' wind up in Arizona with a different paint job.

AUSTIN. You think you can force me to write this? I was doing you a favor.

LEE. Git off yer high horse will ya'! Favor! Big favor. Handin' down favors from the mountain top.

AUSTIN. Let's just write it, okay? Let's sit down and not get upset and see if we can just get through this.

(AUSTIN sits at typewriter)

(Long pause)

LEE. Yer not gonna' even show it to him, are ya'?

AUSTIN. What?

LEE. This outline. You got no intention of showin' it to him. Yer just doin' this 'cause yer afraid a' me.

AUSTIN. You can show it to him yourself.

LEE. I will, boy! I'm gonna' read it to him on the golf course.

AUSTIN. And I'm not afraid of you either.

LEE. Then how come yer doin' it?

AUSTIN. *(Pause)* So I can get my keys back.

(Pause as LEE takes keys out of his pocket slowly and throws them on table, long pause, AUSTIN stares at keys)

LEE. There. Now you got yer keys back.

(AUSTIN looks up at LEE but doesn't take keys)

LEE. Go ahead. There's yer keys.

(AUSTIN slowly takes keys off table and puts them back in his own pocket)

Now what're you gonna' do? Kick me out?

AUSTIN. I'm not going to kick you out, Lee.

LEE. You couldn't kick me out, boy.

AUSTIN. I know.

LEE. So you can't even consider that one. (Pause)

You could call the Police. That'd be the obvious thing.

AUSTIN. You're my brother.

LEE. That don't mean a thing. You go down to the L.A. Police Department there and ask them what kinda' people kill each other the most. What do you think they'd say?

AUSTIN. Who said anything about killing?

LEE. Family people. Brothers. Brothers-in-Law. Cousins. Real American-type people. They kill each other in the heat mostly. In the Smog-Alerts. In the Brush Fire Season. Right about this time a' year.

AUSTIN. This isn't the same.

LEE. Oh no? What makes it different?

AUSTIN. We're not insane. We're not driven to acts of violence like that. Not over a dumb movie script. Now sit down.

(Long pause, LEE considers which way to go with it)

LEE. Maybe not. (He sits back down at table across from AUSTIN) Maybe you're right. Maybe we're too intelligent huh? (Pause) We got our heads on our shoulders. One of us has even got a Ivy League diploma. Now that means somethin' don't it? Doesn't that mean somethin'?

AUSTIN. Look, I'll write this thing for you, Lee. I don't mind writing it. I just don't want to get all worked up about it. It's not worth it. Now, come on. Let's just get through it, okay?

LEE. Nah. I think there's easier money. Lotsa' places I could pick up thousands. Maybe millions. I don't need this shit. I could go up to Sacramento Valley and steal me a diesel. Ten thousand a week dismantling one a' those suckers. Ten thousand a week!

(LEE opens another beer, puts his foot back up on table)

AUSTIN. No, really, look, I'll write it out for you. I think it's a great idea.

LEE. Nah, you got yer own work to do. I don't wanna' interfere with yer life.

AUSTIN. I mean it'd be really fantastic if you could sell this. Turn it into a movie. I mean it.

(Pause)

LEE. Ya' think so huh?

AUSTIN. Absolutely. You could really turn your life around, you know. Change things.

LEE. I could get me a house maybe.

AUSTIN. Sure you could get a house. You could get a whole ranch if you wanted to.

LEE. (Laughs) A ranch? I could get a ranch?

AUSTIN. 'Course you could. You know what a screenplay sells for these days?

LEE. No. What's it sell for?

AUSTIN. A lot. A whole lot of money.

LEE. Thousands?

AUSTIN. Yeah. Thousands.

LEE. Millions?

AUSTIN. Well—

LEE. We could get the old man outa' hock then.

AUSTIN. Maybe.

LEE. Maybe? Whadya' mean, maybe?

AUSTIN. I mean it might take more than money.

LEE. You were just tellin' me it'd change my whole life around. Why wouldn't it change his?

AUSTIN. He's different.