

Lee + Austin #1

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?

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 bear*)

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 someone'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 any life.

AUSTIN. I kinda' like the sound.