

Lee + Austin #2

ACT II

SCENE 5: *morning, LEE at table in alcove with a set of golf clubs in a fancy leather bag, AUSTIN at sink washing a few dishes*

AUSTIN. He really liked it huh?

LEE. He wouldn't a' gave me these clubs if he didn't like it.

AUSTIN. He gave you the clubs?

LEE. Yeah. I told ya' he gave me the clubs. The bag too.

AUSTIN. I thought he just loaned them to you.

LEE. He said it was part a' the advance. A little gift like. Gesture of his good faith.

AUSTIN. He's giving you an advance?

LEE. Now what's so amazing about that? I told ya' it was a good story. You even said it was a good story.

AUSTIN. Well that is really incredible Lee. You know how many guys spend their whole lives down here trying to break into this business? Just trying to get in the door?

LEE. (*Pulling clubs out of bag, testing them*) I got no idea. How many?

(*Pause*)

AUSTIN. How much of an advance is he giving you?

LEE. Plenty. We were talkin' big money out there. Ninth hole is where I sealed the deal.

AUSTIN. He made a firm commitment?

LEE. Absolutely.

AUSTIN. Well, I know Saul and he doesn't fool around when he says he likes something.

LEE. I thought you said you didn't know him.

AUSTIN. Well, I'm familiar with his tastes.

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LEE. I let him get two up on me goin' into the back nine. He was sure he had me cold. You shoulda' seen his face when I pulled out the old pitching wedge and plopped it pin-high, two feet from the cup. He 'bout shit his pants. "Where'd a guy like you ever learn how to play golf like that?" he says.

(*LEE laughs, AUSTIN stares at him*)

AUSTIN. 'Course there's no contract yet. Nothing's final until it's on paper.

LEE. It's final, all right. There's no way he's gonna back out of it now. We gambled for it.

AUSTIN. Saul, gambled?

LEE. Yeah, sure. I mean he liked the outline already so he wasn't risking that much. I just guaranteed it with my short game.

(*Pause*)

AUSTIN. Well, we should celebrate or something. I think Mom left a bottle of Champagne in the refrigerator. We should have a little toast.

(*AUSTIN gets glasses from cupboard, goes to refrigerator, pulls out bottle of Champagne*)

LEE. You shouldn't oughta' take her Champagne, Austin. She's gonna miss that.

AUSTIN. Oh, she's not going to mind. She'd be glad we put it to good use. I'll get her another bottle. Besides, it's perfect for the occasion.

(*Pause*)

LEE. Yer gonna' get a nice fee fer writin' the script a' course. Straight fee.

(*AUSTIN stops, stares at LEE, puis glasses and bottle on table, pause*)

AUSTIN. I'm writing the script?

LEE. That's what he said. Said we couldn't hire a better screenwriter in the whole town.

AUSTIN. But I'm already working on a script. I've

got my own project. I don't have time to write two scripts.

LEE. No, he said he was gonna' drop that other one. (Pause)

AUSTIN. What? You mean mine? He's going to drop mine and do yours instead?

LEE. (Smiles) Now look, Austin, it's jest beginner's luck ya' know. I mean I sank a fifty foot putt for this deal. No hard feelings.

(AUSTIN goes to phone on wall, grabs it, starts dialing) He's not gonna' be in, Austin. Told me he wouldn't be in 'til late this afternoon.

AUSTIN. (Stays on phone, dialing, listens) I can't believe this. I just can't believe it. Are you sure he said that? Why would he drop mine?

LEE. That's what he told me.

AUSTIN. He can't do that without telling me first. Without talking to me at least. He wouldn't just make a decision like that without talking to me!

LEE. Well I was kinda' surprised myself. But he was real enthusiastic about my story.

(AUSTIN hangs up phone violently, paces)

AUSTIN. What'd he say! Tell me everything he said!

LEE. I been tellin' ya'! He said he liked the story a whole lot. It was the first authentic Western to come along in a decade.

AUSTIN. He liked that story? Your story?

LEE. Yeah! What's so surprisin' about that?

AUSTIN. It's stupid! It's the dumbest story I ever heard in my life.

LEE. Hey, hold on! That's my story yer talkin' about!

AUSTIN. It's a bullshit story! It's idiotic. Two lame-brains chasing each other across Texas! Are you kidding? Who do you think's going to go see a film like that?

LEE. It's not a film! It's a movie. There's a big difference. That's somethin' Saul told me.

AUSTIN. Oh he did huh?

LEE. Yeah, he said, "In this business we make Movies, American Movies. Leave the Films to the French."

AUSTIN. So you got real intimate with old Saul huh? He started pouring forth his vast knowledge of Cinema.

LEE. I think he liked me a lot, to tell ya' the truth. I think he felt I was somebody he could confide in.

AUSTIN. What'd you do, beat him up or something? LEE. (Stands fast) Hey, I've about had it with the insults buddy! You think yer the only one in the brain department here? Yer the only one that can sit around and cook things up? There's other people got ideas too, ya' know!

AUSTIN. You must've done something. Threatened him or something. Now what'd you do Lee?

LEE. I convinced him!

(LEE makes sudden menacing lunge toward AUSTIN, wielding golf club above his head, stops himself, frozen moment, long pause, LEE lowers club)

AUSTIN. Oh, Jesus. You didn't hurt him did you?

(Long silence, LEE sits back down at table)

Lee! Did you hurt him?

LEE. I didn't do nothin' to him! He liked my story. Pure and simple. He said it was the best story he's come across in a long, long time.

AUSTIN. That's what he told me about my story! That's the same thing he said to me.

LEE. Well, he musta' been lyin'. He musta' been lyin' to one of us anyway.

AUSTIN. You can't come into this town and start pushing people around. They're gonna' put you away!

LEE. I never pushed anybody around! I beat him fair and square. (Pause) They can't touch me anyway.

They can't put a finger on me. I'm gone. I can come in through the window and go out through the door. They never knew what him 'em. You, yer stuck. Yer the one that's stuck. Not me. So don't be warmin' me to do in this town.

(*Pause, AUSTIN crosses to table, sits at typewriter, rest*)
 AUSTIN. Lee, come on, level with me will you? It doesn't make any sense that suddenly he'd throw my idea out the window. I've been talking to him for months. I've got too much at stake. Everything's riding on this project.

LEE. What's yer idea?

AUSTIN. It's just a simple love story.

LEE. What kinda' love story?

AUSTIN. (*Stands, crosses into kitchen*) I'm not telling you!

LEE. Ha! 'Fraid I'll steal it huh? Competition's gettin' kinda' close to home isn't it?

AUSTIN. Where did Saul say he was going?

LEE. He was gonna' take my story to a couple studios.

AUSTIN. That's my outline you know! I wrote that outline! You've got no right to be peddling it around.

LEE. You weren't ready to take credit for it last night.

AUSTIN. Give me my keys!

LEE. What?

AUSTIN. The keys! I want my keys back!

LEE. Where you goin'?

AUSTIN. Just give me my keys! I gotta' take a drive. I gotta' get out of here for a while.

LEE. Where you gonna' go, Austin?

AUSTIN. (*Pause*) I might just drive out to the desert for a while. I gotta' think.

LEE. You can think here just as good. This is the perfect set-up for thinkin'. We got some writin' to do

here, boy. Now let's just have us a little toast. Relax. We're partners now.

(*LEE pops the cork of the Champagne bottle, pours two drinks as the lights fade to black*)

—END SCENE 5—

SCENE 6: *afternoon, LEE and SAUL in kitchen, AUSTIN in alcove*

LEE. Now you tell him. You tell him, Mr. Kipper. SAUL. Kipper.

LEE. Kipper. You tell him what you told me. He don't believe me.

AUSTIN. I don't want to hear it.

SAUL. It's really not a big issue, Austin. I was simply amazed by your brother's story and—

AUSTIN. Amazed? You lost a bet! You gambled with my material!

SAUL. That's really beside the point, Austin. I'm ready to go all the way with your brother's story. I think it has a great deal of merit.

AUSTIN. I don't want to hear about it, okay? Go tell it to the executives! Tell it to somebody who's going to turn it into a package deal or something. A T.V. series. Don't tell it to me.

SAUL. But I want to continue with your project too. Austin. It's not as though we can't do both. We're big enough for that aren't we?

AUSTIN. "We"? I can't do both! I don't know about "we".

LEE. (*To SAUL*) See, what'd I tell ya'. He's totally unsympathetic.