

SAUL. Austin, there's no point in our going to another screenwriter for this. It just doesn't make sense. You're brothers. You know each other. There's a familiarity with the material that just wouldn't be possible otherwise.

AUSTIN. There's no familiarity with the material! None! I don't know what "Tornado Country" is. I don't know what a "gooseneck" is. And I don't want to know! (*Pointing to LEE*) He's a hustler! He's a bigger hustler than you are! If you can't see that then—

LEE. (*To AUSTIN*) Hey, now hold on. I didn't have to bring this bone back to you, boy. I persuaded Saul here that you were the right man for the job. You don't have to go throwin' up favors in my face.

AUSTIN. Favors! I'm the one who wrote the fuckin' outline! You can't even spell.

SAUL. (*To AUSTIN*) Your brother told me about the situation with your father.

(*Pause*)

AUSTIN. What? (*Looks at LEE*)

SAUL. That's right. Now we have a clear cut deal here, Austin. We have big studio money standing behind this thing. Just on the basis of your outline.

AUSTIN. (*To SAUL*) What'd he tell you about my father?

SAUL. Well—that he's destitute. He needs money.

LEE. That's right. He does.

(*AUSTIN shakes his head, stares at them both*)

AUSTIN. (*To LEE*) And this little assignment is supposed to go toward the old man? A charity project? Is that what this is? Did you cook this up on the ninth green too?

SAUL. It's a big slice, Austin.

AUSTIN. (*To LEE*) I gave him money! I already gave him money. You know that. He drank it all up!

LEE. This is a different deal here.

SAUL. We can set up a trust for your father. A large sum of money. It can be doled out to him in parcels so he can't mis-use it.

AUSTIN. Yeah, and who's doing the doling?

SAUL. Your brother volunteered.

(*AUSTIN laughs*)

LEE. That's right. I'll make sure he uses it for groceries.

AUSTIN. (*To SAUL*) I'm not doing this script! I'm not writing this crap for you or anybody else. You can't blackmail me into it. You can't threaten me into it. There's no way I'm doing it. So just give it up. Both of you.

(*Long pause*)

SAUL. Well, that's it then. I mean this is an easy three hundred grand. Just for a first draft. It's incredible, Austin. We've got three different studios all trying to cut each other's throats to get this material. In one morning. That's how hot it is.

AUSTIN. Yeah, well you can afford to give me a percentage on the outline then. And you better get the genius here an agent before he gets burned.

LEE. Saul's gonna' be my agent. Isn't that right, Saul?

SAUL. That's right. (*To AUSTIN*) Your brother has really got something, Austin. I've been around too long not to recognize it. Raw talent.

AUSTIN. He's got a lotta' balls is what he's got. He's taking you right down the river.

SAUL. Three hundred thousand, Austin. Just for a first draft. Now you've never been offered that kind of money before.

AUSTIN. I'm not writing it.

(*Pause*)

SAUL. I see. Well—

LEE. We'll just go to another writer then. Right, Saul? Just hire us somebody with some enthusiasm.

Somebody who can recognize the value of a good story.

SAUL. I'm sorry about this, Austin.

AUSTIN. Yeah.

SAUL. I mean I was hoping we could continue both things but now I don't see how it's possible.

AUSTIN. So you're dropping my idea altogether. Is that it? Just trade horses in mid-stream? After all these months of meetings.

SAUL. I wish there was another way.

AUSTIN. I've got everything riding on this, Saul. You know that. It's my only shot. If this falls through—

SAUL. I have to go with what my instincts tell me—

AUSTIN. Your instincts!

SAUL. My gut reaction.

AUSTIN. You lost! That's your gut reaction. You lost a gamble. Now you're trying to tell me you like his story? How could you possibly fall for that story? It's as phony as Hoppalong Cassidy. What do you see in it? I'm curious.

SAUL. It has the ring of truth, Austin.

AUSTIN. (*Laughs*) Truth?

LEE. It is true.

SAUL. Something about the real West.

AUSTIN. Why? Because it's got horses? Because it's got grown men acting like little boys?

SAUL. Something about the land. Your brother is speaking from experience.

AUSTIN. So am I!

SAUL. But nobody's interested in love these days, Austin. Let's face it.

LEE. That's right.

AUSTIN. (*To SAUL*) He's been camped out on the desert for three months. Talking to cactus. What's he know about what people wanna' see on the screen! I drive on the freeway every day. I swallow the smog.

I watch the news in color. I shop in the Safeway. I'm the one who's in touch! Not him!

SAUL. I have to go now, Austin.

(*SAUL starts to leave*)

AUSTIN. There's no such thing as the West anymore! It's a dead issue! It's dried up, Saul, and so are you.

(*SAUL stops and turns to AUSTIN*)

SAUL. Maybe you're right. But I have to take the gamble, don't I?

AUSTIN. You're a fool to do this, Saul.

SAUL. I've always gone on my hunches. Always. And I've never been wrong. (*To LEE*) I'll talk to you tomorrow, Lee.

LEE. An' right, Mr. Kimmel.

SAUL. Maybe we could have some lunch.

LEE. Fine with me. (*Smiles at AUSTIN*)

SAUL. I'll give you a ring.

(*SAUL exits, lights to black as brothers look at each other from a distance*)

—END SCENE 6—

SCENE 7: *night, coyotes, crickets, sound of typewriter in dark, candlelight up on LEE at typewriter struggling to type with one finger system, AUSTIN sits sprawled out on kitchen floor with whiskey bottle, drunk*

AUSTIN. (*Singing, from floor*)

"RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET
WAY OUT ON THE BLUE
PLEASE CARRY MY LOVED ONE
HOME SAFELY TO ME

RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET—"

LEE. (*Slams fist on table*) Hey! Knock it off will ya'! I'm tryin' to concentrate here.