

(AUSTIN rushes up to LEE, grabs him by shoulders)

AUSTIN. You can't just drop the whole thing, Lee!

(LEE turns, pushes AUSTIN in the chest knocking him backwards into the alcove, MOM watches numbly, LEE returns to collecting the plates, silverware, etc.)
MOM. You boys shouldn't fight in the house. Go outside and fight.

LEE. I'm not fightin'. I'm leavin'.

MOM. There's been enough damage done already.

LEE. (His back to AUSTIN and MOM, stacking dishes on counter) I'm clearin' outa' here once and for all. All this town does is drive a man insane. Look what it's done to Austin there. I'm not lettin' that happen to me. Sell myself down the river. No sir. I'd rather be a hundred miles from nowhere than let that happen to me. (During this AUSTIN has picked up the ripped out phone from the floor and wrapped the cord tightly around both his hands, he lunges at LEE whose back is still to him, wraps the cord around LEE'S neck, plants a foot in LEE'S back and pulls back on the cord, tightening it, LEE chokes desperately, can't speak and can't reach AUSTIN with his arms, AUSTIN keeps applying pressure on LEE'S back with his foot, bending him into the sink, MOM watches)

AUSTIN. (Tightening cord) You're not goin' anywhere! You're not takin' anything with you. You're not takin' my car! You're not takin' the dishes! You're not takin' anything! You're stayin' right here!

MOM. You'll have to stop fighting in the house. There's plenty of room outside to fight. You've got the whole outdoors to fight in.

(LEE tries to tear himself away, he crashes across the stage like an enraged bull dragging AUSTIN with him, he snorts and bellows but AUSTIN hangs on and manages to keep clear of LEE'S attempts to grab him, they crash into the table, to the floor, LEE is face

down thrashing wildly and choking, AUSTIN pulls cord tighter, stands with one foot planted on LEE'S back and the cord stretched taut)

AUSTIN. (Holding cord) Gimme back my keys, Lee! Take the keys out! Take 'em out!

(LEE desperately tries to dig in his pockets, searching for the car keys, MOM moves closer)

MOM. (Calmly to AUSTIN) You're not killing him are you?

AUSTIN. I don't know. I don't know if I'm killing him. I'm stopping him. That's all. I'm just stopping him.

(LEE thrashes but AUSTIN is relentless)

MOM. You oughta' let him breathe a little bit.

AUSTIN. Throw the keys out, Lee!

(LEE finally gets keys out and throws them on floor but out of AUSTIN'S reach, AUSTIN keeps pressure on cord, pulling LEE'S neck back, LEE gets one hand to the cord but can't relieve the pressure)

Reach me those keys would ya', Mom.

MOM. (Not moving) Why are you doing this to him?

AUSTIN. Reach me the keys!

MOM. Not until you stop choking him.

AUSTIN. I can't stop choking him! He'll kill me if I stop choking him!

MOM. He won't kill you. He's your brother.

AUSTIN. Just get me the keys would ya'!

(Pause. MOM picks keys up off floor, hands them to AUSTIN)

AUSTIN. (To MOM) Thanks .

MOM. Will you let him go now?

AUSTIN. I don't know. He's not gonna' let me get outa' here.

MOM. Well you can't kill him.

AUSTIN. I can kill him! I can easily kill him. Right now. Right here. All I gotta' do is just tighten up. See?

(*He tightens cord, LEE thrashes wildly, AUSTIN releases pressure a little, maintaining control*) Ya' see that?

MOM. That's a savage thing to do.

AUSTIN. Yeah well don't tell me I can't kill him because I can. I can just twist. I can just keep twisting. (*AUSTIN twists the cord tighter, LEE weakens, his breathing changes to a short rasp*)

MOM. Austin!

(*AUSTIN relieves pressure, LEE breathes easier but AUSTIN keeps him under control*)

AUSTIN. (*Eyes on LEE, holding cord*) I'm goin' to the desert. There's nothing stopping me. I'm going by myself to the desert.

(*MOM moving toward her luggage*)

MOM. Well, I'm going to go check into a motel. I can't stand this anymore.

AUSTIN. Don't go yet!

(*MOM pauses*)

MOM. I can't stay here. This is worse than being homeless.

AUSTIN. I'll get everything fixed up for you, Mom. I promise. Just stay for a while.

MOM. (*Picking up luggage*) You're going to the desert.

AUSTIN. Just wait!

(*LEE thrashes, AUSTIN subdues him, MOM watches holding luggage, pause*)

MOM. It was the worst feeling being up there. In Alaska. Staring out a window. I never felt so desperate before. That's why when I saw that article on Picasso I thought—

AUSTIN. Stay here, Mom. This is where you live.

(*She looks around the stage*)

MOM. I don't recognize it at all.

(*She exits with luggage, AUSTIN makes a move toward her but LEE starts to struggle and AUSTIN subdues him again with cord, pause*)

AUSTIN. (*Holding cord*) Lee? I'll make ya' a deal. You let me get outa' here. Just let me get to my car. All right, Lee? Gimme a little headstart and I'll turn you loose. Just gimme a little headstart. All right?

(*LEE makes no response, AUSTIN slowly releases tension on cord, still nothing from LEE*)

AUSTIN. Lee?

(*LEE is motionless, AUSTIN very slowly begins to stand, still keeping a tenuous hold on the cord and his eyes riveted to LEE for any sign of movement, AUSTIN slowly drops the cord and stands, he stares down at LEE who appears to be dead*)

AUSTIN. (*Whispers*) Lee?

(*Pause. AUSTIN considers, looks toward exit, back to LEE, then makes a small movement as if to leave. Instantly LEE is on his feet and moves toward exit, blocking AUSTIN's escape. They square off to each other, keeping a distance between them. pause, a single coyote heard in distance, lights fade softly into moonlight, the figures of the brothers now appear to be caught in a vast desert-like landscape, they are very still but watchful for the next move, lights go slowly to black as the after-image of the brothers pulses in the dark, coyote fades*)

—END ACT 2—