

a long time," he said. "An' Crooks been here a long time. This's the first time I ever been in his room."

Crooks said darkly<sup>1</sup>, "Guys don't come into a colored man's room very much. Nobody been here but Slim. Slim an' the boss."

Candy quickly changed the subject. "Slim's as good a skinner as I ever seen<sup>2</sup>."

Lennie leaned toward the old swamper. "About them rabbits," he insisted.

Candy smiled. "I got it figured out. We can make some money on them rabbits if we go about it right<sup>3</sup>."

"But I get to tend 'em," Lennie broke in. "George says I get to tend 'em. He promised."

Crooks interrupted brutally. "You guys is just kiddin' yourself. You'll talk about it a hell of a lot, but you won't get no land. You'll be a swamper here till they take you out in a box<sup>4</sup>. Hell, I seen too many guys. Lennie here'll<sup>5</sup> quit an' be on the road in two, three weeks. Seems like ever' guy got land in his head."

Candy rubbed his cheek angrily. "You God damn right we're gonna do it. George says we are. We got the money right now."

"Yeah?" said Crooks. "An' where's George now? In town in a whore house. That's where your money's goin'. Jesus, I seen it happen too many times. I seen too many guys with land in their head. They never get none under their hand."

Candy cried, "Sure they all want it. Everybody wants a little bit of land, not much. Jus' somethin' that

was his. Somethin' he could live on and there couldn't nobody throw him off of it<sup>1</sup>. I never had none. I planted crops for damn near ever'body in this state, but they wasn't my crops, and when I harvested<sup>2</sup> 'em, it wasn't none of my harvest. But we gonna do it now, and don't make no mistake about that. George ain't got the money in town. That money's in the bank. Me an' Lennie an' George. We gonna have a room to ourself. We're gonna have a dog an' rabbits an' chickens. We're gonna have green corn an' maybe a cow or a goat." He stopped, overwhelmed<sup>3</sup> with his picture.

Crooks asked, "You say you got the money?"

"Damn right. We got most of it. Just a little bit more to get. Have it all in one month. George got the land all picked out<sup>4</sup>, too."

Crooks reached around and explored his spine with his hand. "I never seen a guy really do it," he said. "I seen guys nearly crazy with loneliness for land, but ever' time a whore house or a blackjack game took what it takes." He hesitated. "... If you ... guys would want a hand to work for nothing—just his keep<sup>5</sup>, why I'd come an' lend a hand. I ain't so crippled I can't work like a son-of-a-bitch if I want to."

¶ "Any you boys seen Curley?" *Extrait 9*  
They swung<sup>6</sup> their heads toward the door. Looking in was Curley's wife. Her face was heavily made up<sup>7</sup>. Her lips were slightly parted<sup>8</sup>. She breathed strongly, as though she had been running.

"Curley ain't been here," Candy said sourly<sup>9</sup>.

1. throw him off of it  
le jeter dehors

2. harvested récoltées

3. overwhelmed  
submerge

4. all picked out  
toute choisie

5. just his keep  
juste loge et blanchi

6. swung  
coup tournèrent d'un

7. heavily made up =  
with a lot of makeup

8. slightly parted  
légèrement entrouvertes

9. sourly d'un ton acide

1. darkly sombrement

2. as good a skinner as I  
ever seen = the best  
skinner I've ever seen

3. if we go about it right  
si on se débrouille bien

4. box cercueil

5. here'll = here will

She stood still in the doorway, smiling a little at them, rubbing the nails of one hand with the thumb and forefinger of the other. And her eyes traveled from one face to another. "They left all the weak ones here," she said finally. "Think I don't know where they all went? Even Curley. I know where they all went."

Lennie watched her, fascinated; but Candy and Crooks were scowling down away from her eyes.<sup>1</sup> Candy said, "Then if you know, why you want to ast us where Curley is at?"

She regarded them amusedly. "Funny thing," she said. "If I catch any one man, and he's alone, I get along fine<sup>2</sup> with him. But just let two of the guys get together an' you won't talk. Jus' nothing but mad." She dropped her fingers and put her hands on her hips<sup>3</sup>. "You're all scared of each other, that's what. Ever' one of you's<sup>4</sup> scared the rest is goin' to get something on you<sup>5</sup>."

After a pause Crooks said, "Maybe you better go along to your own house now. We don't want no trouble."

"Well, I ain't giving you no trouble. Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while? Think I like to stick<sup>6</sup> in that house alla time?"

Candy laid the stump of his wrist on his knee and rubbed it gently with his hand. He said accusingly, "You gotta husband? You got no call foolin' aroun' with other guys, causin' trouble."

The girl flared up<sup>7</sup>. "Sure I gotta husband. You all seen him. Swell guy, ain't he? Spends all his time

1. away from her eyes  
évitant son regard

2. fine = well

3. hips  
hanches

4. ever' one of you's =  
all of you are

5. is goin' to get  
something on you ait  
quelque chose à racomer  
sur votre compte

6. stick  
rester coincée

7. flared up  
s'emporta

sayin' what he's gonna do to guys he don't like, and he don't like nobody. Think I'm gonna stay in that two-by-four house<sup>1</sup> and listen how Curley's gonna lead with his left twice, and then bring in the ol' right cross?<sup>2</sup> One-two' he says. 'Jus' the ol' one-two an' he'll go down.' She paused and her face lost its sullenness<sup>3</sup> and grew interested. "Say—what happened to Curley's han'?"

There was an embarrassed silence. Candy stole a look<sup>4</sup> at Lennie. Then he coughed<sup>5</sup>. "Why . . . Curley . . . he got his han' caught in a machine, ma'am. Bust his han'."

She watched for a moment, and then she laughed. "Baloney<sup>6</sup>! What you think you're sellin' me?<sup>7</sup> Curley started som'pin'<sup>8</sup> he didn' finish. Caught in a machine—baloney! Why, he ain't give nobody the good ol' one-two since he got his han' bust. Who bust him?"

Candy repeated sullenly, "Got it caught in a machine."

"Awright," she said contemptuously<sup>9</sup>. "Awright, cover 'im up if ya wanta. Whatta<sup>10</sup> I care? You bindle bums<sup>11</sup> think you're so damn good. Whatta ya think I am, a kid? I tell ya I could of went with shows<sup>12</sup>. Not jus' one, neither. An' a guy tol' me he could put me in pitchers<sup>13</sup>. . . ." She was breathless with indignation. "—Sat' day night. Ever'body out doin' som'pin'. Ever'body! An' what am I doin'? Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs<sup>14</sup>—a nigger an' a dum-dum<sup>15</sup> and a lousy ol' sheep<sup>16</sup>—an' likin' it because they ain't nobody else."

1. two-by-four house =  
a tiny/cheap house

2. right cross  
coup du droit

3. sullenness  
air maussade

4. stole a look  
jeta un coup d'œil à la dérobée

5. coughed  
toussa

6. baloney  
foutaises

7. sellin' me = trying to  
make me believe

8. som'pin' = something

9. contemptuously  
avec dédain

10. whatta = what do

11. bindle bums  
clochards

12. went with shows =  
done theatre

13. pitchers = the movies

14. bindle stiffs  
clodos

15. dum-dum  
abrut

16. lousy ol' sheep  
vieille brebis galeuse

Lennie watched her, his mouth half open. Crooks had retired into the terrible protective dignity of the negro. But a change came over old Candy. He stood up suddenly and knocked<sup>1</sup> his nail keg over backward. "I had enough," he said angrily. "You ain't wanted here. We told you you ain't. An' I tell ya, you got floozy idears<sup>2</sup> about what us guys amounts to. You ain't got sense enough in that chicken head to even see that we ain't stiffs. S'pose you get us canned. S'pose you do. You think we'll hit the highway<sup>3</sup> an' look for another lousy two-bit job<sup>4</sup> like this. You don't know that we got our own ranch to go to, an' our own house. We ain't got to stay here. We gotta house and chickens an' fruit trees an' a place a hundred time prettier than this. An' we got fren's<sup>5</sup>, that's what we got. Maybe there was a time when we was scared of gettin' canned, but we ain't no more. We got our own lan', and it's ours, an' we c'n<sup>6</sup> go to it."

Curley's wife laughed at him. "Baloney," she said. "I seen too many you guys. If you had two bits in the worl', why you'd be in gettin' two shots of corn<sup>7</sup> with it and suckin' the bottom of the glass<sup>8</sup>. I know you guys."

Candy's face had grown redder and redder, but before she was done speaking, he had control of himself. He was the master of the situation. "I might of knew<sup>9</sup>," he said gently. "Maybe you just better go along an' roll your hoop<sup>10</sup>. We ain't got nothing to say to you at all. We know what we got, and we don't care whether you know it or not. So maybe you better jus' scatter along<sup>11</sup>

1. knocked renversa

2. floozy idears = the wrong idea

3. hit the highway se remettaient sur la grand-route

4. lousy two-bit job un job pourri à deux balles

5. fren's = friends

6. c'n = can

7. corn = whiskey

8. suckin' the bottom of the glass l'échieriez le fond de vos verres

9. of knew = have known

10. roll your hoop jouer au cerceau

11. scatter along déguerpir

now, 'cause Curley maybe ain't gonna like his wife out in the barn with us 'bindle stiffs.'"

She looked from one face to another, and they were all closed against her. And she looked longest at Lennie, until he dropped his eyes in embarrassment. Suddenly she said, "Where'd you get them bruises<sup>1</sup> on your face?"

Lennie looked up guiltily. "Who—me?"

"Yeah, you."

Lennie looked to Candy for help, and then he looked at his lap<sup>2</sup> again. "He got his han' caught in a machine," he said.

Curley's wife laughed. "O.K., Machine. I'll talk to you later. I like machines."

Candy broke in. "You let this guy alone. Don't you do no messing aroun' with him. I'm gonna tell George what you says. George won't have you messin' with Lennie."

"Who's George?" she asked. "The little guy you come with?"

Lennie smiled happily. "That's him," he said. "That's the guy, an' he's gonna let me tend the rabbits."

"Well, if that's all you want, I might get a couple rabbits myself."

Crooks stood up from his bunk and faced her. "I had enough," he said coldly. "You got no rights comin' in a colored man's room. You got no rights messing around in here at all. Now you jus' get out, an' get out quick. If you don't, I'm gonna ast the boss not to ever let you come in the barn no more."

1. bruises bleus

2. lap genoux

1. in scorn avec mépris

2. trap grande queue

3. strung up pendu

4. whip at him s'en prendre à lui

5. averted détournés

6. drawn in contenu

7. frammin' tendant un piège à

8. subsided céda

She turned on him in scorn<sup>1</sup>. "Listen, nigger," she said. "You know what I can do to you if you open your trap<sup>2</sup>?"

Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he sat down on his bunk and drew into himself.

She closed on him. "You know what I could do?"

Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. "Yes, ma'am."

"Well, you keep your place then, nigger. I could get you strung up<sup>3</sup> on a tree so easy it ain't even funny."

Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego—nothing to arouse either like or dislike. He said, "Yes, ma'am," and his voice was toneless.

For a moment she stood over him as though waiting for him to move so that she could whip at him<sup>4</sup> again; but Crooks sat perfectly still, his eyes averted<sup>5</sup>, everything that might be hurt drawn in<sup>6</sup>. She turned at last to the other two.

Old Candy was watching her, fascinated. "If you was to do that, we'd tell," he said quietly. "We'd tell about you frammin'<sup>7</sup> Crooks."

"Tell an' be damned," she cried. "Nobody'd listen to you an' you know it. Nobody'd listen to you."

Candy subsided<sup>8</sup>. "No . . ." he agreed. "Nobody'd listen to us."

Lennie whined, "I wisht George was here. I wisht George was here."

Candy stepped over to him. "Don't you worry none," he said. "I jus' heard the guys comin' in. George'll be in the bunk house right now, I bet." He turned to Curley's wife. "You better go home now," he said quietly. "If you go right now, we won't tell Curley you was here."

She appraised him coolly<sup>1</sup>. "I ain't sure you heard nothing."

"Better not take no chances<sup>2</sup>," he said. "If you ain't sure, you better take the safe way."

She turned to Lennie. "I'm glad you bust up Curley a little bit. He got it comin' to him<sup>3</sup>. Sometimes I'd like to bust him myself." She slipped out the door and disappeared into the dark barn. And while she went through the barn, the halter chains rattled, and some horses snorted<sup>4</sup> and some stamped<sup>5</sup> their feet.

Crooks seemed to come slowly out of the layers<sup>6</sup> of protection he had put on. "Was that the truth what you said about the guys come back?" he asked.

"Sure. I heard 'em."

"Well, I didn't hear nothing."

"The gate banged," Candy said, and he went on, "Jesus Christ, Curley's wife can move quiet'. I guess she had a lot of practice, though."

Crooks avoided<sup>8</sup> the whole subject now. "Maybe you guys better go," he said. "I ain't sure I want you in here no more. A colored man got to have some rights even if he don't like 'em."

Candy said, "That bitch didn't oughtta of said that to you."

1. coolly froidement

2. take no chances = risk it

3. got it comin' to him  
l'a bien cherché4. snorted s'ébrouèrent  
5. stamped tapèrent  
6. layers couches

7. quiet discrètement

8. avoided esquiva