

George watched him out, and then he turned back to the swamper. "Say, what the hell's he got on his shoulder? Lennie didn't do nothing to him."

The old man looked cautiously at the door to make sure no one was listening. "That's the boss's son," he said quietly. "Curley's pretty handy? He doné quite a bit in the ring. He's a lightweight³, and he's handy."

"Well, let him be handy," said George. "He don't have to take after⁴ Lennie. Lennie didn't do nothing to him. What's he got against Lennie?"

The swamper considered... "Well... tell you what. Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's alla time picking scraps⁵ with big guys. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy. You seen little guys like that, ain't you? Always scrappy⁶?"

"Sure," said George. "I seen plenty tough little guys. But this Curley better not make no mistakes about Lennie. Lennie ain't handy, but this Curley punk⁸ is gonna get hurt if he messes around with⁹ Lennie."

"Well, Curley's pretty handy," the swamper said skeptically. "Never did seem right to me. S'pose Curley jumps¹⁰ a big guy an' licks him¹¹. Ever'body says what a game guy¹² Curley is. And s'pose he does the same thing and gets licked. Then ever'body says the big guy oughtta¹³ pick on somebody his own size, and maybe they gang up on¹⁴ the big guy. Never did seem right to me. Seems like Curley ain't givin' nobody a chance."

1. what the hell's he got on his shoulder
pourquoi il s'énerve comme ça celui-là ?

2. handy habile

3. lightweight poids léger (boxe)

4. take after venir embêter

5. alla time picking scraps chercher toujours des noises

6. scrappy énévés

7. tough little guys des petits durs

8. punk minable

9. messes around with embête

10. jumps s'attaque à

11. licks him lui fout une raclée

12. a game guy un type qui sait y faire

13. oughtta = ought to

14. gang up on se liquent contre

George was watching the door. He said ominously¹, "Well, he better watch out for Lennie. Lennie ain't no fighter, but Lennie's strong and quick and Lennie don't know no rules." He walked to the square table and sat down on one of the boxes. He gathered² some of the cards together and shuffled³ them.

The old man sat down on another box. "Don't tell Curley I said none of this. He'd slough me⁴. He just don't give a damn. Won't ever get canned⁵ 'cause his old man's the boss."

George cut the cards and began turning them over, looking at each one and throwing it down on a pile. He said, "This guy Curley sounds like a son-of-a-bitch to me. I don't like mean little guys."

"Seems to me like he's worse lately," said the swamper. "He got married a couple of weeks ago. Wife lives over in the boss's house. Seems like Curley is cockier⁶ since he got married."

George grunted, "Maybe he's showin' off⁷ for his wife."

The swamper warmed to his gossip. "You seen that glove on his left hand?"

"Yeah. I seen it."

"Well, that glove's fulla⁸ Vaseline."

"Vaseline? What the hell for?"

"Well, I tell ya what—Curley says he's keepin' that hand soft for his wife."

George studied the cards absorbedly. "That's a dirty thing to tell around," he said.

1. ominously d'un ton menaçant

2. gathered... together ramassa

3. shuffled mélangea

4. he'd slough me il me jetterait dehors

5. canned renvoyé

6. cockier'n ever plus prétentieux que jamais

7. he's showin' off il frime

8. fulla = full of

1. drawn a derogatory statement tiré un commentaire péjoratif
2. wait! Il = wait until
3. a solitary une réussite
4. purty = pretty

5. she got the eye elle fait de l'oeil

6. Curley's pants is full of ants il est sur les nerfs

7. a jerkline skinner celui qui conduit les mules

8. a tart une chaudasse

9. ancient = very old

10. before long = soon

The old man was reassured. He had drawn a derogatory statement¹ from George. He felt safe now, and he spoke more confidently. "Wait!² you see Curley's wife."

George cut the cards again and put out a solitary³ lay, slowly and deliberately. "Purty⁴?" he asked casually.

"Yeah. Purty . . . but——"

George studied his cards. "But what?"

"Well—she got the eye⁵."

"Yeah? Married two weeks and got the eye? Maybe that's why Curley's pants is full of ants⁶."

"I seen her give Slim the eye. Slim's a jerkline skinner⁷. Hell of a nice fella. Slim don't need to wear no high-heeled boots on a grain team. I seen her give Slim the eye. Curley never seen it. An' I seen her give Carlson the eye."

George pretended a lack of interest. "Looks like we was gonna have fun."

The swamper stood up from his box. "Know what I think?" George did not answer. "Well, I think Curley's married . . . a tart⁸."

"He ain't the first," said George. "There's plenty done that."⁹

The old man moved toward the door, and his ancient⁹ dog lifted his head and peered about, and then got painfully to his feet to follow. "I gotta be settin' out the wash basins for the guys. The teams'll be in before long¹⁰. You guys gonna buck barley?"

"Yeah."

"You won't tell Curley nothing I said?"

1. you look her over jettes-y un coup d'oeil

2. thoughtfully pensivement

3. built four clubs on his ace pile mit quatre trèfles sur sa pile d'as

4. sparks étincelles

5. the croak of heavy-laden axles le grincement des roues d'une charrette bien chargée

6. stared at fixa

7. flounced mélangéa

8. no setup pas une blague

9. was feelin' you out te jaugeait

10. figures pense

11. a sock une raclée

12. plenty beaucoup

13. tangles = fights, argues

14. get the can être vîrés

"Hell no."

"Well, you look her over¹, mister. You see if she ain't a tart." He stepped out the door into the brilliant sunshine.

George laid down his cards thoughtfully², turned his piles of three. He built four clubs on his ace pile³. The sun square was on the floor now, and the flies whipped through it like sparks⁴. A sound of jingling harness and the croak of heavy-laden axles⁵ sounded from outside. From the distance came a clear call. "Stable Buck— ooh, stable Buck!" And then, "Where the hell is that God damn nigger?"

George stared at⁶ his solitaire lay, and then he flounced⁷ the cards together and turned around to Lennie. Lennie was lying down on the bunk watching him.

"Look, Lennie! This here ain't no setup⁸. I'm scared. You gonna have trouble with that Curley guy. I seen that kind before. He was kinda feelin' you out⁹. He figures¹⁰ he's got you scared and he's gonna take a sock¹¹ at you the first chance he gets."

Lennie's eyes were frightened. "I don't want no trouble," he said plaintively. "Don't let him sock me, George."

George got up and went over to Lennie's bunk and sat down on it. "I hate that kinda bastard," he said. "I seen plenty¹² of 'em. Like the old guy says, Curley don't take no chances. He always wins." He thought for a moment. "If he tangles¹³ with you, Lennie, we're gonna get the can¹⁴. Don't make no mistake about that. He's