

1. lighted s'éclaira

Crooks' face lighted¹ with pleasure in his torture. "Nobody can't tell what a guy'll do," he observed calmly. "Le's say he wants to come back and can't. S'pose he gets killed or hurt so he can't come back."

Lennie struggled to understand. "George won't do nothing like that," he repeated. "George is careful. He won't get hurt. He ain't never been hurt, 'cause he's careful."

"Well s'pose, jus' s'pose he don't come back. What'll you do then?"

Lennie's face wrinkled² with apprehension. "I don't know. Say, what you doin' anyways?" he cried. "This ain't true. George ain't got hurt."

Crooks bored in on him³. "Want me ta tell ya what'll happen? They'll take ya to the booby hatch⁴. They'll tie ya up with a collar, like a dog."

Suddenly Lennie's eyes centered⁵ and grew quiet, and mad. He stood up and walked dangerously toward Crooks. "Who hurt George?" he demanded.

Crooks saw the danger as it approached him. He edged back on his bunk to get out of the way. "I was just supposin'," he said. "George ain't hurt. He's all right. He'll be back all right."

Lennie stood over him. "What you supposin' for? Ain't nobody goin' to suppose⁶ no hurt to George."

Crooks removed his glasses and wiped⁷ his eyes with his fingers. "Jus' set down," he said. "George ain't hurt."

Lennie growled⁸ back to his seat on the nail keg. "Ain't nobody goin' to talk no hurt to George," he grumbled.

2. wrinkled se plissa

3. bored in on him = insisted

4. booby hatch = asylum

5. centered s'immobilisèrent

6. ain't nobody goin' to suppose = nobody should be supposing

7. wiped essuya

8. growled grogna

8
Crooks said gently, "Maybe you can see now. You got George. You know he's goin' to come back. S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunk house and play rummy¹ 'cause you was black. How'd you like that? S'pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody—to be near him." "He whined²," "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya," he cried, "I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."

"George gonna come back," Lennie reassured himself in a frightened voice. "Maybe George come back already. Maybe I better go see."

Crooks said, "I didn't mean to scare you. He'll come back. I was talkin' about myself. A guy sets alone out here at night, maybe readin' books or thinkin' or stuff like that. Sometimes he gets thinkin', an' he got nothing to tell him what's so an' what ain't so³. Maybe if he sees somethin', he don't know whether it's right⁴ or not. He can't turn to some other guy and ast him if he sees it too. He can't tell. He got nothing to measure by. I seen things out here. I wasn't drunk. I don't know if I was asleep. If some guy was with me, he could tell me I was asleep, an' then it would be all right. But I jus' don't know." Crooks was looking across the room now, looking toward the window.

Lennie said miserably, "George wun't⁵ go away and leave me. I know George wun't do that."

1. rummy au rami (jeu de cartes)

2. whined geignit

3. what's so an' what ain't so = what is and what isn't

4. right = real

5. wun't = wouldn't

The stable buck went on dreamily, "I remember when I was a little kid on my old man's chicken ranch. Had two brothers. They was always near me, always there. Used to sleep right in the same room, right in the same bed—all three. Had a strawberry patch. Had an alfalfa patch. Used to turn the chickens out¹ in the alfalfa on a sunny morning. My brothers'd set on a fence rail² an' watch 'em—white chickens they was."

Gradually Lennie's interest came around to what was being said. "George says we're gonna have alfalfa for the rabbits."

"What rabbits?"

"We're gonna have rabbits an' a berry patch."

"You're nuts."

"We are too. You ast George."

"You're nuts." Crooks was scornful³. "I seen hundreds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an' that same damn thing in their heads. Hundreds of them. They come, an' they quit an' go on; an' every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head. They're all the time talkin' about it, but it's jus' in their head." He paused and looked toward the open door, for the horses were moving restlessly⁴ and the halter chains clinked. A horse whinnied⁵. "I guess somebody's out

1. turn the chickens out = let the chickens run

2. fence rail grillage

3. scornful plein de mépris

4. restlessly neuvement

5. whinnied hennit

there," Crooks said. "Maybe Slim. Slim comes in sometimes two, three times a night. Slim's a real skinner. He looks out for his team." He pulled himself painfully upright¹ and moved toward the door. "That you, Slim?" he called.

Candy's voice answered. "Slim went in town. Say, you seen Lennie?"

"Ya mean the big guy?"

"Yeah. Seen him around any place?"

"He's in here," Crooks said shortly². He went back to his bunk and lay down.

Candy stood in the doorway scratching his bald wrist³ and looking blindly into the lighted room. He made no attempt to enter. "Tell ya what, Lennie. I been figuring out about them rabbits."

Crooks said irritably, "You can come in if you want."

Candy seemed embarrassed. "I do' know. 'Course, if ya want me to."

"Come on in. If everybody's comin' in, you might just as well." It was difficult for Crooks to conceal⁴ his pleasure with anger.

Candy came in, but he was still embarrassed. "You got a nice cozy little place in here," he said to Crooks. "Must be nice to have a room all to yourself this way."

"Sure," said Crooks. "And a manure⁵ pile under the window. Sure, it's swell⁶."

Lennie broke in, "You said about them rabbits."

Candy leaned against the wall beside the broken collar while he scratched the wrist stump⁷. "I been here

1. painfully upright péniblement debout

2. shortly sèchement

3. bald wrist moignon

4. conceal camoufler

5. manure fumier

6. swell = fantastic

7. stump moignon

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 darkly¹, "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 seen²."

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 right³."

"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 box⁴. Hell, I seen too many guys. Lennie here'll⁵ 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

1. **throw him off of it**
le jeter dehors

2. **harvested** récoltées

3. **overwhelmed**
submergé

4. **all picked out** toute
choisie

5. **just his keep** juste logé
et blanchi

6. **swung** tourné/ent d'un
coup

7. **heavily made up** =
with a lot of makeup

8. **slightly parted**
légèrement entrouvertes

9. **sourly** d'un ton acerbé

was his. Somethin' he could live on and there couldn't nobody throw him off of it¹. I never had none. I planted crops for damn near ever'body in this state, but they wasn't my crops, and when I harvested² '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, overwhelmed³ 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 out⁴, 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 keep⁵, 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?"

They swung⁶ their heads toward the door. Looking in was Curley's wife. Her face was heavily made up⁷. Her lips were slightly parted⁸. She breathed strongly, as though she had been running.

"Curley ain't been here," Candy said sourly⁹.

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