

# GEORGE, LENNIE

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START

face, rubs it around with his hand, pushes himself back and embraces his knees. LENNIE, after watching him, imitates him in ~~every detail~~. GEORGE, beginning tiredly and growing angry as he speaks.) God damn it, we could just as well of rode clear to the ranch. That bus driver didn't know what he was talkin' about. "Just a little stretch down the highway," he says. "Just a little stretch"—damn near four miles! I bet he didn't want to stop at the ranch gate. . . . I bet he's too damn lazy to pull up. Wonder he ain't too lazy to stop at Soledad at all! (Mumbling.) Just a little stretch down the road.

LENNIE. (Timidly.) George?

GEORGE. Yeh . . . what you want?

LENNIE. Where we goin', George?

GEORGE. (Jerks down his hat furiously.) So you forgot that already, did you? So I got to tell you again! Jeez, you're crazy!

LENNIE. (Softly.) I forgot. I tried not to forget, honest to God, I did!

GEORGE. Okay, okay, I'll tell you again. . . . (With sarcasm.) I ain't got nothin' to do. Might just as well spen' all my time tellin' you things. You forgit 'em and I tell you again.

LENNIE. (Continuing on from his last speech.) I tried and tried, but it didn't do no good. I remember about the rabbits, George!

GEORGE. The hell with the rabbits! You can't remember nothing but them rabbits. You remember settin' in that gutter on Howard Street and watchin' that blackboard?

LENNIE. (Delightedly.) Oh, sure! I remember that . . . but . . . wha'd we do then? I remember some girls come by, and you says —

GEORGE. The hell with what I says! You remember about us goin' in Murray and Ready's and they give us work cards and bus tickets?

LENNIE. (Confidently.) Oh, sure, George . . . I remember that now. (Puts hand into side coat-pocket, his confidence vanishes. Very gently.) . . . George?

GEORGE. Huh?

LENNIE. (Staring at ground in despair.) I ain't got mine. I musta lost it.

GEORGE. You never had none. I got both of 'em here. Think I'd let you carry your own work card?

LENNIE. (With tremendous relief.) I thought I put it in my side

pocket. (*Puts hand in pocket again.*)

GEORGE. (*Looking sharply at him, and as he looks, LENNIE brings hand out of pocket.*) Wha'd you take out of that pocket?

LENNIE. (*Cleverly.*) Ain't a thing in my pocket.

GEORGE. I know there ain't. You got it in your hand now. What you got in your hand?

LENNIE. I ain't got nothing, George! Honest!

GEORGE. Come on, give it here!

LENNIE. (*Holds his closed hand away from GEORGE.*) It's on'y a mouse!

GEORGE. A mouse? A live mouse?

LENNIE. No . . . just a dead mouse. (*Worriedly.*) I didn't kill it. Honest. I found it. I found it dead.

GEORGE. Give it here!

LENNIE. Leave me have it, George.

GEORGE. (*Sternly.*) Give it here! (*LENNIE reluctantly gives him mouse.*) What do you want of a dead mouse, anyway?

LENNIE. (*In a propositional tone.*) I was petting it with my thumb while we walked along.

GEORGE. Well, you ain't pettin' no mice while you walk with me. Now let's see if you can remember where we're going. (*GEORGE throws it across the water into brush.*)

LENNIE. (*Looks startled, then in embarrassment hides his face against his knees.*) I forgot again.

GEORGE. Jesus Christ! (*Resignedly.*) Well, look, we are gonna work on a ranch like the one we come from up north.

LENNIE. Up north?

GEORGE. In Weed!

LENNIE. Oh, sure I remember—in Weed.

GEORGE. (*Still with exaggerated patience.*) That ranch we're goin' to is right down there about a quarter mile. We're gonna go in and see the boss.

LENNIE. (*Repeats, as a lesson.*) And see the boss!

GEORGE. Now, look! I'll give him the work tickets, but you ain't gonna say a word. You're just gonna stand there and not say nothing.

LENNIE. Not say nothing!

GEORGE. If he finds out what a crazy bastard you are, we won't get no job. But if he sees you work before he hears you talk, we're set. You got that?

LENNIE. Sure, George . . . sure. I got that.

GEORGE. Okay. Now when we go in to see the boss, what you gonna do?

LENNIE. (Concentrating.) I . . . I . . . I ain't gonna say nothing . . . jus' gonna stand there.

GEORGE. (Greatly relieved.) Good boy, that's swell! Now say that over two or three times so you sure won't forget it.

LENNIE. (Drones softly under his breath.) I ain't gonna say nothing . . . I ain't gonna say nothing. . . . (Trails off into a whisper.)

END

GEORGE. And you ain't gonna do no bad things like you done in Weed neither.

LENNIE. (Puzzled.) Like I done in Weed?

GEORGE. So you forgot that too, did you?

LENNIE. (Triumphantly.) They run us out of Weed!

GEORGE. (Disgusted.) Run us out, hell! We run! They was lookin' for us, but they didn't catch us.

LENNIE. (Happily.) I didn't forget that, you bet.

GEORGE. (Lies back on sand, crosses hands under his head. Again LENNIE imitates him.) God, you're a lot of trouble! I could get along so easy and nice, if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy!

LENNIE. (Hopefully.) We gonna work on a ranch, George.

GEORGE. All right, you got that. But we're gonna sleep here tonight, because . . . I want to. I want to sleep out. (The light is going fast, dropping into evening. A little wind whirls into the clearing and blows leaves. Dog howls in the distance.)

LENNIE. Why ain't we goin' on to the ranch to get some supper? They got supper at the ranch.

GEORGE. No reason at all. I just like it here. Tomorrow we'll be goin' to work. I seen thrashing machines on the way down; that means we'll be buckin' grain bags. Bustin' a gut liftin' up them bags. Tonight I'm gonna lay right here an' look up! Tonight there ain't a grain bag or a boss in the world. Tonight, the drinks is on the . . . house. Nice house we got here, Lennie.

LENNIE. (Gets up on his knees, looks down at GEORGE, plaintively.) Ain't we gonna have no supper?

GEORGE. Sure we are. You gather up some dead willow sticks. I got three cans of beans in my bundle. I'll open 'em up while you get a fire ready. We'll eat 'em cold.