

# BOSS (+ George, Lennie)

(2)

START

CANDY. Naw! Superintendent. Big land company. . . . Yes, sir, that night . . . he come right in here with a whole gallon . . . he set right over there and says, "Drink hearty, boys," . . . he says. . . . (Door opens. Enter the BOSS, a stock man, dressed in blue-jean trousers, flannel shirt, black unbuttoned vest and black coat. Wears soiled brown Stetson hat; a pair of high-heeled boots and spurs. Ordinarily he puts his thumbs in his belt. CANDY, shuffling towards door, rubbing his whiskers with his knuckles as he goes.) Them guys just come. (CANDY exits sbuts door behind him.)

BOSS. I wrote Murray and Ready I wanted two men this morning. You got your work slips?

GEORGE. (Digs in his pockets, produces two slips, hands them to BOSS.) Here they are.

BOSS. (Reading slips.) Well, I see it wasn't Murray and Ready's fault. It says right here on the slip, you was to be here for work this morning.

GEORGE. Bus driver give us a bum steer. We had to walk ten miles. That bus driver says we was here when we wasn't. We couldn't thumb no rides. (GEORGE scowls meaningly at LENNIE, who nods to show that he understands.)

BOSS. Well, I had to send out the grain teams short two buckers. It won't do any good to go out now until after dinner. You'd get lost. (Pulls out time book, opens it to where pencil is stuck between leaves. Licks pencil carefully.) What's your name?

GEORGE. George Milton.

BOSS. George Milton. (Writing.) And what's yours?

GEORGE. His name's Lennie Small.

BOSS. Lennie Small. (Writing.) Le's see, this is the twentieth. Noon the twentieth. . . . (Makes positive mark. Closes book, puts it in pocket.) Where you boys been workin'?

GEORGE. Up around Weed.

BOSS. (To LENNIE.) You too?

GEORGE. Yeah. Him too.

BOSS. (To LENNIE.) Say, you're a big fellow, ain't you?

GEORGE. Yeah, he can work like hell, too.

BOSS. He ain't much of a talker, though, is he?

GEORGE. No, he ain't. But he's a hell of a good worker. Strong as a bull.

LENNIE. (Smiling.) I'm strong as a bull. (GEORGE scowls at him,

LENNIE drops head in shame at having forgotten.)

BOSS. (Sharply.) You are, huh? What can you do?

GEORGE. He can do anything.

BOSS. (Addressing LENNIE.) What can you do? (LENNIE, looking at GEORGE, gives a big nervous chuckle.)

GEORGE. (Quickly.) Anything you tell him. He's a good skinner. He can wrestle grain bags, drive a cultivator. He can do anything. Just give him a try.

BOSS. (Turning to GEORGE.) Then why don't you let him answer? (LENNIE laughs.) What's he laughing about?

GEORGE. He laughs when he gets excited.

BOSS. Yeah?

GEORGE. (Loudly.) But he's a goddamn good worker. I ain't saying he's bright, because he ain't. But he can put up a four hundred pound bale.

BOSS. (Hooking his thumbs in his belt.) Say, what you sellin'?

GEORGE. Huh?

BOSS. I said what stake you got in this guy? You takin' his pay away from him?

GEORGE. No. Of course I ain't!

BOSS. Well, I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy. I just like to know what your percentage is.

GEORGE. He's my . . . cousin. I told his ole lady I'd take care of him. He got kicked in the head by a horse when he was a kid. He's all right. . . . Just ain't bright. But he can do anything you tell him.

BOSS. (Turning half away.) Well, God knows he don't need no brains to buck barley bags. (Turns back.) But don't you try to put nothing over, Milton. I got my eye on you. Why'd you quit in Weed?

GEORGE. (Promptly.) Job was done.

BOSS. What kind of job?

GEORGE. Why . . . we was diggin' a cesspool.

BOSS. (After a pause.) All right. But don't try to put nothing over 'cause you can't get away with nothing. I seen wise guys before. Go out with the grain teams after dinner. They're out pickin' up barley with the thrashin' machines. Go out with Slim's team.

GEORGE. Slim?

BOSS. Yeah. Big, tall skinner. You'll see him at dinner. (Up to this time the BOSS has been full of business, calm and suspicious.

In following lines he relaxes, but gradually, as though he wanted to talk but felt the burden of his position. Turns toward door, U. C., but hesitates and allows a little warmth into his manner.)  
Been on the road long?

GEORGE. (*Obviously on guard.*) We was three days in 'Frisco lookin' at the boards.

BOSS. (*With heavy jocularly.*) Didn't go to no night clubs, I s'pose?

GEORGE. (*Stiffly.*) We was lookin' for a job.

BOSS. (*Attempting to be friendly.*) That's a great town if you got a little jack, Frisco.

GEORGE. (*Refusing to be drawn in.*) We didn't have no jack for nothing like that.

BOSS. (*Realizes there is no contact to establish, grows rigid with his position again.*) Go out with the grain teams after dinner. When my hands work hard they get pie and when they loaf they bounce down the road on their can. You ask anybody about me.

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(*Turns, walks out.*)

END

GEORGE. (*Turns to LENNIE.*) So you wasn't gonna say a word! You was gonna leave your big flapper shut. I was gonna do the talkin'. . . . You goddamn near lost us the job!

LENNIE. (*Stares hopelessly at hands.*) I forgot.

GEORGE. You forgot. You always forget. Now, he's got his eye on us. Now, we gotta be careful and not make no slips. You keep your big flapper shut after this.

LENNIE. He talked like a kinda nice guy towards the last.

GEORGE. (*Angrily.*) He's the boss, ain't he? Well, he's the boss first an' a nice guy afterwards. Don't you have nothin' to do with no boss, except do your work and draw your pay. You can't never tell whether you're talkin' to the nice guy or the boss. Just keep your goddamn mouth shut. Then you're all right.

LENNIE. George?

GEORGE. What you want now?

LENNIE. I wasn't kicked in the head with no horse, was I, George?

GEORGE. Be a damn good thing if you was. Save everybody a hell of a lot of trouble!

LENNIE. (*Flattered.*) You says I was your cousin.

GEORGE. Well, that was a goddamn lie. And I'm glad it was. Why, if I was a relative of yours — (*Stops and listens, then steps to front door, looks out.*) Say, what the hell you doin', listenin'?