

CARLSON

(+ George, Candy, Slim, Whit)

5

SLIM. I ain't. I'd drink it myself if I had. And I ain't got no gut ache either.

CANDY. Goddamn cabbage give it to me. I knowed it was goin' to before I ever et it. (*Enter CARLSON and WHIT.*)

CARLSON. Jesus, how that nigger can pitch shoes!

SLIM. He's plenty good.

WHIT. Damn right he is.

CARLSON. Yeah. He don't give nobody else a chance to win. (*Stops and sniffs the air. Looks around until he sees CANDY's dog.*) God Almighty, that dog stinks. Get him outa here, Candy. I don't know nothing that stinks as bad as ole dogs. You got to get him outa here.

START

CANDY. (*Lying on his bunk, reaches over, pats dog, speaks softly.*) I been round him so much I never notice how he stinks.

CARLSON. Well, I can't stand him in here. That stink hangs round even after he's gone. (*Walks over, stands looking down at dog.*)

Got no teeth. All stiff with rheumatism. He ain't no good to you, Candy. Why don't you shoot him?

CANDY. (*Uncomfortably.*) Well, hell, I had him so long! Had him since he was a pup. I herded sheep with him. (*Proudly.*) You wouldn't think it to look at him now. He was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen.

GEORGE. I knowed a guy in Weed that had an airedale that could herd sheep. Learned it from the other dogs.

CARLSON. (*Sticking to his point.*) Lookit, Candy. This ole dog jus' suffers itself all the time. If you was to take him out and shoot him—right in back of the head . . . (*Leans over and points.*) . . . right there, why he never'd know what hit him.

CANDY. (*Unhappily.*) No, I couldn't do that. I had him too long.

CARLSON. (*Insisting.*) He don't have no fun no more. He stinks like hell. Tell you what I'll do. I'll shoot him for you. Then it won't be you that done it.

CANDY. (*Sits up on bunk, rubbing whiskers nervously, speaks plaintively.*) I had him from a pup.

WHIT. Let 'im alone, Carl. It ain't a guy's dog that matters. It's the way the guy feels about the dog. Hell, I had a mutt once I wouldn't a traded for a field trial pointer.

CARLSON. (*Being persuasive.*) Well, Candy ain't being nice to him, keeping him alive. Lookit, Slim's bitch got a litter right now. I

bet you Slim would give ya one of them pups to raise up, wouldn' ya, Slim?

SLIM. (*Studying dog.*) Yeah. You can have a pup if you want to.

CANDY. (*Helplessly.*) Mebbe it would hurt. (*After a moment's pause, positively.*) And I don't mind taking care of him.

CARLSON. Aw, he'd be better off dead. The way I'd shoot him he wouldn't feel nothin'. I'd put the gun right there. (*Points with his toe.*) Right back of the head.

WHIT. Aw, let 'im alone, Carl.

CARLSON. Why, hell, he wouldn't even quiver.

WHIT. Let 'im alone. (*Produces magazine.*) Say, did you see this? Did you see this in the book here?

CARLSON. See what?

WHIT. Right there. Read that.

CARLSON. I don't want to read nothing. . . . It'd be all over in a minute, Candy. Come on.

WHIT. Did you see it, Slim? Go on, read it. Read it out loud.

SLIM. What is it?

WHIT. Read it.

SLIM. (*Reads slowly.*) "Dear Editor: I read your mag for six years and I think it is the best on the market. I like stories by Peter Rand. I think he is a whing-ding. Give us more like the Dark Rider. I don't write many letters. Just thought I would tell you I think your mag is the best dime's worth I ever spen'." (*Looks up questioningly.*) What you want me to read that for?

WHIT. Go on, read the name at the bottom.

SLIM. (*Reading.*) "Yours for Success, William Tenner." (*Looks up at WHIT.*) What ya want me to read that for?

CARLSON. Come on, Candy—what you say?

WHIT. (*Taking magazine, closing it impressively. Talks to cover CARLSON.*) You don't remember Bill Tenner? Worked here about three months ago?

SLIM. (*Thinking.*) Little guy? Drove a cultivator?

WHIT. That's him. That's the guy.

CARLSON. (*Has refused to be drawn into conversation.*) Look, Candy. If you want me to, I'll put the old devil outa his misery right now and get it over with. There ain't nothin' left for him. Can't eat, can't see, can't hardly walk. Tomorrow you can pick one of Slim's pups.

SLIM. Sure . . . I got a lot of 'em.

CANDY. (*Hopefully.*) You ain't got no gun.

CARLSON. The hell I ain't. Got a Luger. It won't hurt him none at all.

CANDY. Mebbe tomorrow. Let's wait till tomorrow.

CARLSON. I don't see no reason for it. (*Goes to his bunk, pulls bag from underneath, takes revolver out.*) Let's get it over with. We can't sleep with him stinking around in here. (*Snaps shell into chamber, sets safety, puts revolver into hip pocket.*)

SLIM. (*As CANDY looks toward him for help.*) Better let him go, Candy.

CANDY. (*Looks at each person for some hope. WHIT makes gesture of protest, then resigns himself. Others look away, to avoid responsibility. At last, very softly and hopelessly.*) All right. Take him. (*He doesn't look down at dog at all. Lies back on his bunk, crosses his arms behind his head, stares at ceiling. CARLSON picks up string, helps dog to its feet.*)

CARLSON. Come, boy. Come on, boy. (*To CANDY, apologetically.*) He won't even feel it. (*CANDY does not move nor answer.*) Come on, boy. That's the stuff. Come on. (*Leads dog toward door.*)

SLIM. Carlson?

CARLSON. Yeah.

SLIM. (*Curtly.*) Take a shovel.

CARLSON. Oh, sure, I get you. (*Exit CARLSON with dog. GEORGE follows to door, shuts it carefully, sets latch. CANDY lies rigidly on his bunk. Next scene is one of silence and quick staccato speeches.*)

SLIM. (*Loudly.*) One of my lead mules got a bad hoof. Got to get some tar on it. (*A silence.*)

GEORGE. (*Loudly.*) Anybody like to play a little euchre?

WHIT. I'll lay out a few with you. (*They take places opposite each other at table but GEORGE does not shuffle cards. Ripples edge of deck. Everybody looks over at him. He stops. Silence again.*)

SLIM. (*Compassionately.*) Candy, you can have any of them pups you want. (*No answer from CANDY. There is a little gnawing noise on stage.*)

GEORGE. Sounds like there was a rat under there. We ought to set a trap there. (*Deep silence again.*)

WHIT. (*Exasperated.*) What the hell is takin' him so long? Lay out some cards, why don't you? We ain't gonna get no euchre played this way. (*GEORGE studies backs of cards. After long si-*

END