

CROOKS (+ Lennie)

(8)

ing his presence, raises his eyes, stiffens and scowls.
LENNIE smiles in an attempt to make friends.

START

CROOKS. (*Sharply.*) You got no right to come in my room. This here's my room. Nobody got any right in here but me.

LENNIE. (*Fawning.*) I ain't doin' nothing. Just come in the barn to look at my pup, and I seen your light.

CROOKS. Well, I got a right to have a light. You go on and get out of my room. I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse and you ain't wanted in my room.

LENNIE. (*Ingenuously.*) Why ain't you wanted?

CROOKS. (*Furiously.*) 'Cause I'm black. They play cards in there. But I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you all of you stink to me.

LENNIE. (*Helplessly.*) Everybody went into town. Slim and George and everybody. George says I got to stay here and not get into no trouble. I seen your light.

CROOKS. Well, what do you want?

LENNIE. Nothing . . . I seen your light. I thought I could jus' come in and set.

CROOKS. (*Stares at LENNIE a moment, takes down spectacles, adjusts them over his ears, says in a complaining tone.*) I don't know what you're doin' in the barn anyway. You ain't no skinner. There's no call for a buckler to come into the barn at all. You've got nothing to do with the horses and mules.

LENNIE. (*Patiently.*) The pup. I come to see my pup.

CROOKS. Well, God damn it, go and see your pup then. Don't go no place where you ain't wanted.

LENNIE. (*Advances a step into the room, remembers and backs to door again.*) I looked at him a little. Slim says I ain't to pet him very much.

CROOKS. (*Anger gradually going out of his voice.*) Well, you been taking him out of the nest all the time. I wonder the ole lady don't move him some place else.

LENNIE (*Moving into room.*) Oh, she don't care. She lets me.

CROOKS. (*Scowls, then gives up.*) Come on in and set awhile. Long as you won't get out and leave me alone, you might as well set down. (*A little more friendly.*) All the boys gone into town, huh?

LENNIE. All but old Candy. He jus' sets in the bunkhouse sharpening his pencils. And sharpening and figurin'.

CROOKS. (*Adjusting glasses.*) Figurin'? What's Candy figurin' about?

LENNIE. 'Bout the land. 'Bout the little place.

CROOKS. You're nuts. You're crazy as a wedge. What land you talkin' about?

LENNIE. The land we're goin' ta get. And a little house and pigeons.

CROOKS. Just nuts. I don't blame the guy you're traveling with for keeping you out of sight.

LENNIE. (*Quietly.*) It ain't no lie. We're gonna do it. Gonna get a little place and live on the fat of the land.

CROOKS. (*Settling himself comfortably on his bunk.*) Set down. Set down on that nail keg.

LENNIE. (*Hunches over on little barrel.*) You think it's a lie. But it ain't no lie. Ever' word's the truth. You can ask George.

CROOKS. (*Puts chin on his palm.*) You travel round with George, don't you?

LENNIE. (*Proudly.*) Sure, me and him goes ever' place together.

CROOKS. (*After pause, quietly.*) Sometimes he talks and you don't know what the hell he's talkin' about. Ain't that so? (*Leans forward.*) Ain't that so?

LENNIE. Yeah. Sometimes.

CROOKS. Just talks on. And you don't know what the hell it's all about.

LENNIE. How long you think it'll be before them pups will be old enough to pet?

CROOKS. (*Laughs again.*) A guy can talk to you and be sure you won't go blabbin'. A couple of weeks and them pups will be all right. (*Musing.*) George knows what he's about. Just talks and you don't understand nothing. (*Mood gradually changes to excitement.*) Well, this is just a nigger talkin', and a busted-back nigger. It don't mean nothing, see. You couldn't remember it anyway. I seen it over and over—a guy talking to another guy and it don't make no difference if he don't hear or understand. The thing is they're talkin'. (*Pounds knee with his hand.*) George can tell you screwy things and it don't matter. It's just the talkin'. It's just bein' with another guy, that's all. (*His voice becomes soft and malicious.*) S'pose George don't come back no more? S'pose he took a powder and just ain't comin' back. What you do then?

LENNIE. (*Trying to follow CROOKS.*) What? What?

END