

Slim George
Side 1

SLIM. It wasn't nothing. I would have had to drown most of them pups anyway. No need to thank me about that.

GEORGE. Wasn't much to you, mebbe, but it was a hell of a lot to him. Jesus Christ, I don't know how we're going to get him to sleep in here. He'll want to stay right out in the barn. We gonna have trouble keepin' him from getting' right in the box with them pups.

SLIM. Say, you sure was right about him. Maybe he ain't bright—but I never seen such a worker. He damn near killed his partner buckin' barley. He'd take his end of that sack—(*A gesture.*) pretty near kill his partner. God Almighty, I never seen such a strong guy.

GEORGE. (*Proudly.*) You just tell Lenie what to do and he'll do it if it don't take no figuring. (*Outside the sound of horseshoe game goes on: "Son of a bitch if I can win a goddamn game."...*) "*Me neither. You'd think of them shoes was anvils.*"

SLIM. Funny how you and him string along together.

GEORGE. What's so funny about it?

SLIM. Oh, I don't know. Hardly none of the guys ever travels around together. I hardly never seen two guys travel together. You know how the hands are. They come in and get their bunk and work a month and then they quit and go on alone. Never seem to give a damn about nobody. Jest seems kinda funny. A cuckoo like him and a smart guy like you travel together.

GEORGE. I ain't so bright, neither or I wouldn't be buckin' barley fo my fifty and found. If I was bright, if I was even a little bit smart, I'd have my own place and I'd be bringin' in my own crops 'stead of doin' all the work and not getting' what comes up out of the ground. (*Falls silent for a moment.*)

SLIM. A guy'd like to do that. Some time I'd like to cuss a string of mules that was my own mules.

GEORGE. It ain't so funny, me and him goin' round together. Him and me was both born in Auburn. I knowed his aunt. She took him when he was a baby and raised him up. When his aunt died Lennie jus' come along with me, out workin'. Got kinda used to each other afte ra little while.

SLIM. Uh huh.

GEORGE. First I used to have a hell of a lot of fun with him. Used to play jokes on him because he was too dumb to take care of himself. But, hell, he was too dumb to know when he ad a joke played on him. (*Sarcastically.*) Hell, yes, I had fun! Made me seem goddamn smart alongside of him.

SLIM. I seen it that way.

GEORGE. Why, he'd do any damn thing I tole him. If I tole him to walk over a cliff, over he'd go. You know that wasn't so damn much fun after a while. He never got mad about it, neither. I've beat hell out of him and he could bust every bone in my body jest with his hands. But he never lifted a finger against me.

SLIM. (*Braiding a bull whip.*) Even if you socked him, wouldn't he?

GEORE. No, by God! I tell you what made me stop playing jokes. One day a bunch of guys was standin' aroun' up on the Sacramento Rive. I was feelin' pretty smart. I turns to Lennie and I says, "Jump in."

SLIM. What happened?

GEORGE. He jumps. Couldn't swim a stroke. He damn near drowned. And he was so nice to me for pullin' him out. Clean forgot I tole him to jump in. Well, I ain't done nothin' like that no more. Makes me kinda sick tellin' about it.

SLIM. He's a nice fella. A guy don't need no sense to be a nice fella. Seems to be sometimes it's jest the other way round. Take a real smart guy, he ain't hardly ever a nice fella.

GEORGE. (*Stacking scattered cards, getting solitaire game ready again.*) I ain't got no people. I seen guys that go around on the ranches alone. They ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a while they get mean.

SLIM. (*Quietly.*) Yeah, I seen 'em get mean. I seen 'em get so they don't want to talk to nobody. Some ways they got to. You take a bunch a guys all livin' in one room an' by God, they gotto mind their own business. 'Bout the only private thing a guy's got is where he comes from and where he's goin'.