

Corley, Carlson, Whit, Slim,
George, Lennie
start

CURLEY. (Explaining.) Well, I didn't mean nothing, Slim. I jus' ast you.

SLIM. Well, you been askin' too often. I'm gettin' goddamn sick of it. If you can't look after your own wife, what you expect me to do about it? You lay off of me.

CURLEY. I'm jus' tryin' to tell you I didn't mean nothing. I just thought you might of saw her.

CARLSON. Why don't you tell her to stay to hell home where she belongs? You let her hang around the bunkhouses and pretty soon you're goin' have somethin' on your hands.

CURLEY. (Whirls on CARLSON.) You keep out of this 'less you want ta step outside.

CARLSON. (Laughing.) Why, you goddamn punk. You tried to throw a scare into Slim and you couldn't make it stick. Slim throwed a scare into you. You're yellow as a frog's belly. I don't care if you're the best boxer in the country, you come for me and I'll kick your goddamn head off.

WHIT. (Joining in the attack.) Glove full of vaseline!

CURLEY. (Glares at him, then suddenly sniffs the air, like a hound.) By God, she's been in here. I can smell— By God, she's been in here. (To GEORGE.) You was here. The other guys was outside. Now, God damn you—you talk.

GEORGE. (Looks worried. Seems to make up his mind to face an inevitable situation. Stands. Slowly takes off his coat, folds it almost daintily. Speaks in an unemotional monotone.) Somebody got to beat the hell outa you. I guess I'm elected. (LENNIE has been watching, fascinated. Gives his big, nervous chuckle.)

CURLEY. (Whirls on him.) What the hell you laughin' at?

LENNIE. (Blankly.) Huh?

CURLEY. (Exploding with rage.) Come on; you big bastard. Get up on your feet. No big son-of-a-bitch is gonna laugh at me. I'll show you who's yellow. (LENNIE looks helplessly at GEORGE. Gets up, tries to retreat upstairs. CURLEY follows, snatching at him.

~~Gathers mass themselves in front of the contestants. "That ain't no way, Curley—he ain't done nothin' to you. . . . Lay off him, will you, Curley. He ain't no fighter. . . . Suck him back, big guy! Don't be afraid of him. . . . Give him a chance, Curley. Give him a chance. . . ."~~

LENNIE. (Crying with terror.) George, make him leave me alone, George.

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