

# Slim + George

LENNIE. (Eagerly.) Let's go, George. Let's get out of here. It's meat here.

GEORGE. (Shrilly.) I tell you we gotta stay a little while. We gotta get a stake. (Sounds of running water and rattling of basins are heard.) Shut up now, the guys'll be comin' in! (Pensively.) Maybe we ought to wash up. . . . But hell, we ain't done nothin' to get dirty.

SLIM. (Enters c. He is a tall, dark man in blue-jeans and short denim jacket. Carries a crushed Stetson hat under his arm and combs his long dark damp hair straight back. Stands and moves with a kind of majesty. Finishes combing his hair. Smoothes out his crushed hat, creases it in the middle and puts it on. In a gentle voice.) It's brighter'n a bitch outside. Can't hardly see nothing in here. You the new guys?

GEORGE. Just come.

SLIM. Goin' to back barley?

GEORGE. That's what the boss says.

SLIM. Hope you get on my team.

GEORGE. Boss said we'd go with a jerk-line skinner named Slim.

SLIM. That's me.

GEORGE. You a jerk-line skinner?

SLIM. (In self-disparagement.) I can snap 'em around a little.

GEORGE. (Terribly impressed.) That kinda makes you Jesus Christ on this ranch, don't it?

SLIM. (Obviously pleased.) Oh, nuts!

GEORGE. (Chuckles.) Like the man says, "The boss tells you what to do. But if you want to know how to do it, you got to ask the mule skinner." The man says any guy that can drive twelve Arizona jack rabbits with a jerk line can fall in a toilet and come up with a mince pie under each arm.

SLIM. (Laughing.) Well, I hope you get on my team. I got a pair a punks that don't know a barley bag from a blue ball. You guys ever bucked any barley?

GEORGE. Hell, yes. I ain't nothin' to scream about, but that big guy there can put up more grain alone than most pairs can.

SLIM. (Looks approvingly at GEORGE.) You guys travel around together?

GEORGE. Sure. We kinda look after each other. (Points at LENNIE with thumb.) He ain't bright. Hell of a good worker, though. Hell of a nice fella too. I've knowed him for a long time.

SLIM. Ain't many guys travel around together. I don't know why. Maybe everybody in the whole damn world is scared of each other.

GEORGE. It's a lot nicer to go 'round with a guy you know. You get used to it an' then it ain't no fun alone any more. (Enter CARLSON. Big-stomached, powerful. His beard stiff drips water from, scrubbing and dousing.)

CARLSON. Hello, Slim! (Looks at GEORGE and LENNIE.)

SLIM. These guys just come.

CARLSON. Glad to meet 'at. My name's Carlson.

GEORGE. I'm George Milton. This here's Lennie Small. Carlson. Glad to meet you. He ain't very small. (Chuckles at his own joke.) He ain't small at all. Mean to ask you, Slim, how's your bitch? I seen she was under your wagon this morning.

SLIM. She slang her pups last night. Nine of 'em. I drowned four of 'em right off. She couldn't feed that many.

CARLSON. Got five left, huh?

SLIM. Yeah. Five. I kep' the biggest. Carlson. What kinda dogs you think they gonna be?

SLIM. I don't know. Some kind of shepherd, I guess. That's the most kind I seen around here when she's in heat.

CARLSON. (Laughs.) I had an airedale an' a guy down the road got one of them little white floozy dogs, well she was in heat and the guy locks her up. But my airedale, named Tom he was, he et

woodshed clear down to the roots to get to her. Guy come over one day, he's sore as hell, he says, "I wouldn't mind if my bitch had pups, but Christ Almighty, this morning she slang a litter of Shetland ponies. . . ." (Takes off hat, scratches his head.) Got

five pups, huh. Gonna keep all of 'em?

SLIM. I don't know, gotta keep 'em awhile, so they can drink Lulu's milk.

CARLSON. (Thoughtfully.) Well, Lulu here, Slim, I been thinkin'.

That dog of Candy's is so goddam old he can't hardly walk. Stinks like hell. Every time Candy brings him in the bunkhouse,

I can smell him two or three days. Why don't you get Candy to shoot his ol' dog, and give him one of them pups to raise up? I can smell that dog a mile off. Got no teeth. Can't eat. Candy feeds

him milk. He can't chew nothing else. And leadin' him around on a string so he don't bump into things. . . . (The triangle out-

side begins to ring wildly. Continues for a few moments, then