Of Mice and Men

Extract

Questions
In a moment Lennie came crashing back through the brush. He carried one small willow stick in his hand. George sat up. 'Aw right,' he said brusquely. 'Gi’me that mouse!'

But Lennie made an elaborate pantomime of innocence. 'What mouse, George? I ain't got no mouse.'

George held out his hand. 'Come on. Give it to me. You ain't puttin' nothing over.'

Lennie hesitated, backed away, looked wildly at the brush line as though he contemplated running for his freedom. George said coldly, 'You gonna give me that mouse or do I have to sock you?'

'Give you what, George?'

'You know god-damn well what. I want that mouse.'

Lennie reluctantly reached into his pocket. His voice broke a little. 'I don't know why I can't keep it. It ain't nobody's mouse. I didn't steal it. I found it lyin' right beside the road.'

George's hand remained outstretched imperiously. Slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master, Lennie approached, drew back, approached again. George snapped his fingers sharply, and at the sound Lennie laid the mouse in his hand.

'I wasn't doin' nothing bad with it, George. Jus' strokin' it.'

George stood up and threw the mouse as far as he could into the darkening brush, and then he stepped to the pool and washed his hands. 'You crazy fool. Don't you think I could see your feet was wet where you went acrost the river to get it?' He heard Lennie's whimpering cry and wheeled about. 'Blubberin' like a baby! Jesus Christ! A big guy like you.' Lennie's lip quivered and tears started in his eyes. 'Aw, Lennie!' George put his hand on Lennie's shoulder. 'I ain't takin' it away jus' for meanness. That mouse ain't fresh, Lennie; and besides, you've broke it pettin' it. You get another mouse that's fresh and I'll let you keep it a little while.'

Lennie sat down on the ground and hung his head dejectedly. 'I don't know where there is no other mouse. I remember a lady used to give 'em to me—ever' one she got. But that lady ain't here.'

George scoffed. 'Lady, huh? Don't even remember who that lady was. That was your own Aunt Clara. An' she stopped givin' 'em to ya. You always killed 'em.'

Lennie looked sadly up at him. 'They was so little,' he said apologetically. 'I'd pet 'em, and pretty soon they bit my fingers and I pinched their heads a little and then they was dead—because they was so little.'

'I wish' we'd get the rabbits pretty soon, George. They ain't so little.'

'The hell with the rabbits. An' you ain't to be trusted with no live mice. Your Aunt Clara give you a rubber mouse and you wouldn't have nothing to do with it.'

'It wasn't no good to pet,' said Lennie.