

## ACT III

### SCENE 1

*Mid-afternoon Sunday.*

*One end of interior of barn. Backstage the hay slopes up sharply against the wall. High in upstage wall a large bay window. On each side are seen hay racks, behind which are the stalls with horses in them. Throughout this scene the horses can be heard in their stalls, rattling their halter chains and chewing at the hay. The entrance is down R. The boards of the barn are not close together. Streaks of afternoon sun come between them, made visible by dust in the air. From outside comes the clang of horseshoes on the playing peg, shouts of men encouraging or jeering. IN the barn there is a feeling of quiet and humming and lazy warmth.*

*Curtain rises on LENNIE sitting in the hay, looking down at a little dead puppy in front of him. Puts out hand and strokes it clear from one end to the other.*

LENNIE: *(softly)* Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you so hard. *(bends pup's head up and looks in its face)* Now maybe George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits if he finds out you got killed. *(scoops a little hollow and lays puppy in it out of sight and covers it over with hay. He stares at the mound he has made.)* I'll tell George I found it dead. *(unburies pup and inspects it. Twists its ears and works his fingers in its fur. Sorrowfully)* But he'll know. George always knows. He'll say: "You done it. Don't try to put nothin' over on me." And he'll say: "Now just for that you don't get to tend no --- you know what's." *(his anger rises. Addresses pup)* Damn you. Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. *(picks up pup and hurls it from him, turns his back on it. Sits bent over his knees, moaning to himself.)* Now he won't let me... Now he won't let me. *(outside a clang of horseshoes on ironstake a little chorus of cries. LENNIE gets up and brings pup*

*back and lays it in the hay and sits down. He mourns.)* You wasn't big enough. They tole me and tole me you wasn't. I didn't know you'd get killed so easy. Maybe George won't care. This here pup wasn't nothin' to George.

*(CURLEY'S WIFE enters secretly. A little mound of hay conceals LENNIE from her. She carries a small suitcase, very cheap. Crosses barn, buries case in hay. Stands up and looks to see whether it can be seen. LENNIE, watching her quietly, tries to cover pup with hay. She sees movement.)*

CURLEY'S WIFE: What – what you doin' here?

LENNIE: *(sullenly)* Jus' settin' here.

CURLEY'S WIFE: You seen what I done.

LENNIE: Yeah! You brang a valise [suitcase].

CURLEY'S WIFE: *(comes near to him)* You won't tell – will you?

LENNIE: *(still sullen)* I ain't gonna have nothing to do with you. George tole me. I ain't to talk to you or nothing. *(covers pup a little more.)*

CURLEY'S WIFE: George give you all your orders?

LENNIE: Not talk nor nothing.

CURLEY'S WIFE: You won't tell about that suitcase? I ain't gonna stay here no more. Tonight I'm gonna get out. Come here an' get my stuff an' get out. I ain't gonna be run over no more. I'm gonna go in pictures [the movies]. *(Sees LENNIE'S hand stroking pup under hay.)* What you got there?

LENNIE: Nuthing. I ain't gonna talk to you. George says I ain't.

CURLEY'S WIFE: What you got under there?

LENNIE: *(his woe comes back to him)* Jus' my pup. Jus' my little ol' pup. *(sweeps hay aside)*

CURLEY'S WIFE: Why! He's dead.

LENNIE: *(explaining sadly)* He was so little. I was jus' playin' with him – an' he made like he's gonna bite me – an' I made like I'm gonna smack him – an' –I done it. An' then he was dead.

CURLEY'S WIFE: *(consolingly)* Don't you worry none. He was just a mutt. The whole country is full of mutts.

LENNIE: It ain't that so much. George gonna be mad. Maybe he won't let me – what he said I could tend.

CURLEY'S WIFE: *(sits down in hay beside him, speaks soothingly)* Don't you worry none about George or any of the others. They ain't gonna leave their horseshoes so they won't know we're talkin'. And tomorra I'll be gone. I ain't gonna let them run over me.

*(In following scene it is apparent that neither is listening to the other and yet as it goes on, as a happy tone increases, it can be seen that they are growing closer together.)*

LENNIE: We gonna have a little place an' raspberry bushes.

CURLEY'S WIFE: I ain't meant to live like this. I come from Salinas. Well, a show come through an' I talked to a guy that was in it. He says I could go with the show. My ol' lady wouldn't let me, 'cause I was on'y fifteen. I wouldn't be no place like this if I had went with that show, you bet.

LENNIE: Gonna take a sack an' fill it up with alfalfa an' –

CURLEY'S WIFE: *(hurrying on)* 'Nother time I met a guy an' he was in pitchers. Went out to the Riverside Dance Palace with him. He said he was gonna put me in pitchers. Says I was a natural. Soon's he got back to Hollywood he was gonna write me about it. *(looks impressively at LENNIE)* I never got that letter. I think my ol' lady stole it. Well I wasn't gonna stay no place where they stole your letters. So I married Curley.

LENNIE: I hope George ain't gonna be mad about this pup.

CURLEY'S WIFE: I ain't tol' this to nobody before. Maybe I oughtn't to. I don't like Curley. He ain't a nice fella. I might a stayed with him but last night him an' his ol' man both lit into me. I don't have to stay here. *(moves closer and speaks confidentially)* Don't tell nobody till I get clear away. I'll go in the night an' thumb a ride to Hollywood.

LENNIE: We gonna get out a here purty soon. This ain't no nice place.

CURLEY'S WIFE: *(ecstatically)* Gonna get in the movies an' have nice clothes – all them nice clothes like they wear...because this guy says I'm a natural.

LENNIE: We gonna go way...far away from here.

~~CURLEY'S WIFE: 'Course, when I run away from Curley, they'll think I ain't decent. That's what my ol' lady will say. *(defiantly)* Well, we really ain't decent, no matter how much my ol' lady tries to hide it. My ol' man was a drunk. They put him away. There! Now I told.~~

~~LENNIE: George an' me was to the Sacramento Fair. They got all kinds of stuff there. We seen long hair rabbits.~~

~~CURLEY'S WIFE: My ol' man was a sign painter when he worked. He used to get drunk an' paint crazy pitchers an' waste paint. One night when I was a kid, him an' my ol' lady had an awful fight. They was always fightin'. In the middle of the night he come into my room, and he says "I can't stand this no more. Let's you an' me go away." (her voice takes on a curious wondering tenderness) I remember in the night—walkin' down the road, and the trees was black. I was pretty sleepy. He picked me up, an' he carried me on his back. He says, "We gonna live together. We gonna live together because you're my own little girl, an' not no stranger. (sadly) In the morning they caught us...an' they put him away. (pause) I wish we'd 'a' went.~~

LENNIE: Maybe if I took this here pup an' throwed him away George wouldn't never know.

~~CURLEY'S WIFE: They locked him up for a drunk, and in a little while he died.~~

LENNIE: Then maybe I could tend the rabbits without no trouble.

CURLEY'S WIFE: Don't you think of nothing but rabbits? What makes you so nuts about rabbits?

LENNIE: *(moves close to her)* I like to pet nice things.

~~CURLEY'S WIFE: (giggles) I think you're nuts.~~

~~LENNIE: (earnestly) No, I ain't. George says I ain't. I like to pet nice things with my fingers. Soft things.~~

CURLEY'S WIFE: Well, who don't? Everybody likes that. I like to feel silk and velvet. You like to feel velvet?

LENNIE: *(chuckling with pleasure)* You bet, by God. And I had some too. A lady give me some. And that lady was – my Aunt Clara. *(he frowns)* I lost it. I ain't seen it in a long time.

CURLEY'S WIFE: You're nuts. But you're kinda nice fella Jus' like a big baby. A person can see kinda what you mean. When I'm doin' my hair sometimes I jus' set there and stroke it, because it's so soft. *(runs her fingers over top of her head)* Some people got kinda coarse hair. You take Curley, his hair's just like wire. But mine is soft and fine. Here, feel. Right here. *Takes LENNIE'S hand and puts it on her head)* Feel there and see how soft it is. *(LENNIE'S fingers fall to stroking her hair.)* Don't you muss it up.

LENNIE: Oh, that's nice. *(strokes harder)* Oh, that's nice.

CURLEY'S WIFE: **Look out now, you'll mus it.** *(angrily)* **You stop it now, you'll muss it up.** *(she jerks her head sideways and LENNIE'S fingers close on her hair and hang on. In a panic. Let go. (screams) You let go. (screams again. His other hand closes over her mouth and nose)*

LENNIE: *(begging)*

**Oh please don't do that. George'll be mad.**

*(she struggles violently to be free. A soft screaming comes form under LENNIE'S hand. Crying with fright.)*

**Oh, please don't do none of that. George gonna say I done a bad thing.**

*(He raises his hand from her mouth and a hoarse cry escapes. Angrily.)*

**Now don't. I don't want you to yell. You gonna get me in trouble just like George says you will. Now don't do that.**

*(she struggles more.)*

**Don't you go yellin'**

*(He shakes her violently. Her neck snaps sideways and she lies still. Looks down at her, cautiously removes his hand from over her mouth.)*

**I don't wanta hurt you. But George will be mad if you yell.**

*(When she doesn't answer he bends closely over her. Lifts her arm and lets it drop. For a moment he seems bewildered.)*

**I done a bad thing. I done another bad thing.**

*(He paw sup the hay until it partly covers her. Sound of the horseshoe game comes form outside. And for the first time LENNIE seems conscious of it. He crouches down and listens.)*

**Oh, I done a real bad thing. I shouldn't 'a' did that. George will be mad. And...he said...and hide in the brush till he comes...He's gonna be mad...in the brush till he comes.**

**That's what he said.**

*(Picks up the puppy from beside the girl.)*

**I'll throw him away. It's bad enough like it is.**

*(puts pup under his coat, creeps to wall, peers out between cracks, then creeps around to end of manger and disappears. Stage is vacant except for CURLEY'S WIFE. She lies in the hay half covered up, and looks very young and peaceful. Her rouged cheeks and red lips make her seem alive and sleeping lightly. For a moment the stage is absolutely silent. Then the horses tamp on their side of feeding rack. Halter chains clink and from outside men's voices come loud and clear.)*