**Extract from ‘Of Mice and Men’ by John Steinbeck**

Lennie looked helplessly at George, and then he got up and tried to retreat. Curley was balanced and poised. He slashed at Lennie with his left, and then smashed down his nose with a right. Lennie gave a cry of terror. Blood welled from his nose. ‘George,’ he cried. ‘Make ‘um let me alone, George.’ He backed until he was against the wall, and Curley followed, slugging him in the face. Lennie’s hands remained at his sides; he was too frightened to defend himself.

George was on his feet yelling, ‘Get him, Lennie. Don’t let him do it.’

Lennie covered his face with his huge paws and bleated with terror. He cried, ‘Make ‘um stop, George.’ Then Curley attacked his stomach and cut off his wind.

Slim jumped up. ‘The dirty little rat,’ he cried, ‘I’ll get ‘um myself.’

George put out his hand and grabbed Slim. ‘Wait a minute,’ he shouted. He cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, ‘Get ‘im, Lennie!’

Lennie took his hands away from his face and looked about for George, and Curley slashed at his eyes. The big face was covered with blood. George yelled again, ‘I said get him.’ Curley’s fist was swinging when Lennie reached for it. The next minute Curley was flopping like a fish on a line, and his closed fist was lost in Lennie’s big hand. George ran down the room. ‘Leggo of him, Lennie. Let go.’

But Lennie watched in terror the flopping little man whom he held. Blood ran down Lennie’s face, one of his eyes was cut and closed. George slapped him on the face again and again, and still Lennie held on to the closed fist. Curley was white and shrunken by now, and his struggling had become weak. He stood crying, his fist lost in Lennie’s paw.

George shouted over and over, ‘Leggo his hand, Lennie, Leggo. Slim, come help me while the guy got any hand left.’

Suddenly Lennie let go his hold. He crouched cowering against the wall. ‘You tol’ me to, George,’ he said miserably.

Curley sat down on the floor, looking in wonder at his crushed hand. Slim and Carlson bent over him. Slim straightened up and regarded Lennie with horror. ‘We got to get him in to a doctor,’ he said. ‘Looks to me like ever’ bone in his han’ is bust.’

‘I didn’t wanta,’ Lennie cried. ‘I didn’t wanta hurt him.’