

## Simple Simon

-The Three Stooges, 1950

One hot spring day with the blood-red sun hovering, Cousin Simon came calling. The clattering of his rattletrap pickup gathered us to the front stoop. The rooster and chickens, usually quiet in their coops, came running.

Simon wobbled into the yard and stood. The hot sun squeaked by him on all sides. Shabby-eyed he looked sixty but was probably forty. Short and stout with scruffy, day-old graying whiskers and a swirling tumbleweed of matching hair, his stomach bulged like a sack of sunflower seeds. Not one to dress up, his clothing—no matter the weather—consisted of faded plaid flannel shirts inserted into blue, raggedy overalls. He carried a tobacco can and cigarette papers in a chest pocket of those overalls. His brown, worn roper boots reeked of cow manure. He held open palms upon which a lifetime of hauling rope and twine and cattle had written its story.

After grumbling hello from a juicy mouth, Simon explained. “I got da job with da gov’ment to make shore dey ain’t been conned. Dey need to know yields and proof. Dey don’t want farmers ‘round here to be cheatin’ bout der wheat acreage.”

Simon’s new job was measuring wheat fields and reporting the numbers. He bent and scooped a handful of dirt. Let it trail through his dirty fingers. He needed a helper.

I assumed he was hoping Dad or Cousin Luther would be the one. But no. Simon wanted my brother Gordy. *Gordy?* I was stunned. At