

Chapter II

*Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland,
Beasts of every land and clime,
Hearken to my joyful tiding
Of the golden future time.*

(See *Important Quotations Explained*)

Summary

Three nights later, Old Major dies in his sleep, and for three months the animals make secret preparations to carry out the old pig's dying wish of wresting control of the farm from Mr. Jones. The work of teaching and organizing falls to the pigs, the cleverest of the animals, and especially to two pigs named Napoleon and Snowball. Together with a silver-tongued pig named Squealer, they formulate the principles of a philosophy called Animalism, the fundamentals of which they spread among the other animals. The animals call one another "Comrade" and take their quandaries to the pigs, who answer their questions about the impending Rebellion. At first, many of the animals find the principles of Animalism difficult to understand; they have grown up believing that Mr. Jones is their proper master. Mollie, a vain carriage horse, expresses particular concern over whether she will be able to continue to enjoy the little luxuries like eating sugar and wearing ribbons in the new utopia. Snowball sternly reminds her that ribbons symbolize slavery and that, in the animals' utopia, they would have to be abolished. Mollie halfheartedly agrees.

The pigs' most troublesome opponent proves to be Moses, the raven, who flies about spreading tales of a place called Sugarcandy Mountain, where animals go when they die—a place of great pleasure and plenty, where sugar grows on the hedges. Even though many of the animals despise the talkative and idle Moses, they nevertheless find great appeal in the idea of Sugarcandy Mountain. The pigs work very hard to convince the other animals of the falsehood of Moses's teachings. Thanks to the help of the slow-witted but loyal cart-horses, Boxer and Clover, the pigs eventually manage to prime the animals for revolution.

The Rebellion occurs much earlier than anyone expected and comes off with shocking ease. Mr. Jones has been driven to drink after losing money in a lawsuit, and he has let his men become lazy, dishonest, and neglectful. One day, Mr. Jones goes on a drinking binge and forgets to feed the animals. Unable to bear their hunger, the cows break into the store shed and the animals begin to eat. Mr. Jones and his men discover the transgression and begin to whip the cows. Spurred to anger, the animals turn on the men, attack them, and easily chase them from the farm. Astonished by their success, the animals hurry to destroy the last remaining evidence of their subservience: chains, bits, halters, whips, and other implements stored in the farm buildings. After obliterating all signs of Mr. Jones, the animals enjoy a double ration of corn and sing "Beasts of England" seven times through, until it is time to sleep. In the morning, they admire the farm from a high knoll before exploring the farmhouse, where they stare in stunned silence at the unbelievable luxuries within. Mollie tries to stay inside, where she can help herself to ribbons and gaze at herself in the mirror, but the rest of the animals reprimand her sharply for her foolishness. The group agrees to preserve

the farmhouse as a museum, with the stipulation that no animal may ever live in it.

The pigs reveal to the other animals that they have taught themselves how to read, and Snowball replaces the inscription “Manor Farm” on the front gate with the words “Animal Farm.” Snowball and Napoleon, having reduced the principles of Animalism to seven key commandments, paint these commandments on the side of the big barn. The animals go to gather the harvest, but the cows, who haven’t been milked in some time, begin lowing loudly. The pigs milk them, and the animals eye the five pails of milk desirously. Napoleon tells them not to worry about the milk; he says that it will be “attended to.” Snowball leads the animals to the fields to begin harvesting. Napoleon lags behind, and when the animals return that evening, the milk has disappeared.

Analysis

By the end of the second chapter, the precise parallels between the Russian Revolution and the plot of *Animal Farm* have emerged more clearly. The Manor Farm represents Russia under the part-feudal, part-capitalist system of the tsars, with Mr. Jones standing in for the moping and negligent Tsar Nicholas II. Old Major serves both as Karl Marx, who first espoused the political philosophy behind communism, and as Vladimir Lenin, who effected this philosophy’s revolutionary expression. His speech to the other animals bears many similarities to Marx’s Communist Manifesto and to Lenin’s later writings in the same vein. The animals of the Manor Farm represent the workers and peasants of Russia, in whose name the Russian Revolution’s leaders first struggled. Boxer and Clover, in particular, embody the aspects of the working class that

facilitate the participation of the working class in revolution: their capacity for hard work, loyalty to each other, and lack of clear philosophical direction opens them up to the more educated classes' manipulation.

The pigs play the role of the intelligentsia, who organized and controlled the Russian Revolution. Squealer creates propaganda similar to that spread by revolutionaries via official organs such as the Communist Party newspaper *Pravda*. Moses embodies the Russian Orthodox Church, weakening the peasants' sense of revolutionary outrage by promising a utopia in the afterlife; the beer-soaked bread that Mr. Jones feeds him represents the bribes with which the Romanov dynasty (in which Nicholas II was the last tsar) manipulated the church elders. Mollie represents the self-centered bourgeoisie: she devotes herself to the most likely suppliers of luxuries and comfort.

The animals' original vision for their society stems from noble ideals. Orwell was a socialist himself and supported the creation of a government in which moral dignity and social equality would take precedence over selfish individual interests. The Russian revolutionaries began with such ideals as well; Marx certainly touted notions like these in his writings. On *Animal Farm*, however, as was the case in the Russian Revolution, power is quickly consolidated in the hands of those who devise, maintain, and participate in the running of society—the intelligentsia. This class of Russians and their allies quickly turned the Communist Party toward totalitarianism, an event mirrored in *Animal Farm* by the gradual assumption of power by the pigs. After Lenin's seizure of power, Communist Party leaders began jockeying for position and power, each hoping to seize control after Lenin's death. Snowball and Napoleon, whose power struggle develops fully in the next chapters,

are based on two real Communist Party leaders: Snowball shares traits with the fiery, intelligent leader Leon Trotsky, while the lurking, subversive Napoleon has much in common with the later dictator Joseph Stalin.

Orwell's descriptions in this chapter of the pre-Rebellion misery of the farm animals serve his critique of social inequality and the mistreatment of workers. They also make a pointed statement about humans' abuse of animals. Indeed, the same impulse that led Orwell to sympathize with poor and oppressed human beings made him lament the cruelty that many human beings show toward other species. He got the idea for *Animal Farm* while watching a young boy whipping a cart-horse. His pity for the exploited horse reminded him of his sympathy for the exploited working class.

Orwell creates a particularly moving scene in portraying the animals' efforts to obliterate the painful reminders of their maltreatment: this episode stands out from much of the rest of the novella in its richness of detail. In the attention to "the bits, the nose-rings, the dog-chains, the cruel knives," and a whole host of other instruments of physical discipline, we see Orwell's profound empathy with the lowest of the low, as well as his intense hatred for physical suffering and its destruction of dignity.