

Chapter IV

Summary

By late summer, news of Animal Farm has spread across half the county. Mr. Jones lives ignominiously in Willingdon, drinking and complaining about his misfortune. Mr. Pilkington and Mr. Frederick, who own the adjoining farms, fear that disenchantment will spread among their own animals. Their rivalry with each other, however, prevents them from working together against Animal Farm. They merely spread rumors about the farm's inefficiency and moral reprehensibility. Meanwhile, animals everywhere begin singing "Beasts of England," which they have learned from flocks of pigeons sent by Snowball, and many begin to behave rebelliously.

At last, in early October, a flight of pigeons alerts Animal Farm that Mr. Jones has begun marching on the farm with some of Pilkington's and Frederick's men. Snowball, who has studied books about the battle campaigns of the renowned Roman general Julius Caesar, prepares a defense and leads the animals in an ambush on the men. Boxer fights courageously, as does Snowball, and the humans suffer a quick defeat. The animals' losses amount only to a single sheep, whom they give a hero's burial. Boxer, who believes that he has unintentionally killed a stable boy in the chaos, expresses his regret at taking a life, even though it is a human one. Snowball tells him not to feel guilty, asserting that "the only good human being is a dead one." Mollie, as is her custom, has avoided any risk to herself by hiding during the battle. Snowball and Boxer each receive medals with the inscription "Animal Hero, First

Class.” The animals discover Mr. Jones’s gun where he dropped it in the mud. They place it at the base of the flagstaff, agreeing to fire it twice a year: on October 12th, the anniversary of the Battle of the Cowshed—as they have dubbed their victory—and on Midsummer’s Day, the anniversary of the Rebellion.

Analysis

This chapter extends the allegory of the Russian Revolution to Russia’s interwar period. The spread of Animalism to surrounding farms evokes the attempts by Leon Trotsky to establish communism as an international movement. Trotsky believed, as did Karl Marx, that communism could only achieve its goals if implemented on a global scale, and he devoted much of his formidable intelligence and eloquence to setting off what Western leaders later called the “Domino Effect.” The Domino Effect, or Domino Theory, posited that the conversion or “fall” of a non-communist state to communism would precipitate the fall of other non-communist governments in nearby states. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson used this theory to justify their military involvement in Greece, Turkey, and Vietnam—countries they hoped to “save” from the spread of communism. In *Animal Farm*, the proprietors of the neighboring farms fear a similar contagion, which we might term the “Snowball Effect.” Just as the West tried to discredit Russian communism, so do Mr. Pilkington and Mr. Frederick spread disparaging rumors about Animal Farm. Just as diplomatic skirmishes between the West and Russia ended up bolstering Trotsky and his allies, the armed skirmish between humans and animals ends up strengthening the animals’ hold on the farm.

In this chapter, Orwell makes masterful use of irony, an important component of satirical writing, to illustrate the gap between what the animals are fighting for and what they believe they are fighting for. All of the animals—except Mollie—fight their hardest in the Battle of the Cowshed, but as Chapter III demonstrates, they do not fully understand the ideals for which they fight, the principles that they defend. In putting all of their energies toward expelling the humans, the animals believe that they are protecting themselves from oppression. In reality, however, they are simply and unwittingly consolidating the pigs' power by muting the primary threat to the pigs' regime—the human menace. Moreover, though the animals are prepared to give their lives in defense of Animal Farm, they appear unprepared to deal with the consequences of their fight: Boxer is horrified when he thinks that he has killed the stable boy.

Snowball's emphatic declaration after the battle of the need for all animals "to be ready to die for Animal Farm" sets up Orwell's scrutiny of the motivations behind mass violence and manipulative leadership. Many readers have assumed that *Animal Farm*, in its critique of totalitarian communism, advocates the Western capitalist way of life as an alternative. Yet a closer reading suggests that Orwell may take a more complicated stance. For if the animals represent the Russian communists and the farmers represent noncommunist leaders, we see that Orwell denounces the communists, but also portrays the noncommunists in a very harsh light. Mr. Jones proves an irresponsible and neglectful farm owner, and neither Mr. Pilkington nor Mr. Frederick hesitates to quash violently any animal uprisings that threaten his own supremacy. There is nothing noble in the men's unprovoked attack on Animal Farm—they

undertake this crusade merely out of self-interest.