

Chapter V

At this . . . nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball. . . .

(See Important Quotations Explained)

Summary

Mollie becomes an increasing burden on Animal Farm: she arrives late for work, accepts treats from men associated with nearby farms, and generally behaves contrary to the tenets of Animalism. Eventually she disappears, lured away by a fat, red-faced man who stroked her coat and fed her sugar; now she pulls his carriage. None of the other animals ever mentions her name again.

During the cold winter months, the animals hold their meetings in the big barn, and Snowball and Napoleon's constant disagreements continue to dominate the proceedings. Snowball proves a better speaker and debater, but Napoleon can better canvass for support in between meetings. Snowball brims with ideas for improving the farm: he studies Mr. Jones's books and eventually concocts a scheme to build a windmill, with which the animals could generate electricity and automate many farming tasks, bringing new comforts to the animals' lives. But building the windmill would entail much hard work and difficulty, and Napoleon contends that the animals should attend to their current needs rather than plan for a distant future. The question deeply divides the animals. Napoleon surveys Snowball's plans and expresses his contempt by urinating on them.

When Snowball has finally completed his plans, all assemble for a great meeting to decide whether to undertake the windmill project. Snowball gives a passionate speech, to which Napoleon responds with a pathetically unaffecting and brief retort. Snowball speaks further, inspiring the animals with his descriptions of the wonders of electricity. Just as the animals prepare to vote, however, Napoleon gives a strange whimper, and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars charge into the barn, attack Snowball, and chase him off the farm. They return to Napoleon's side, and, with the dogs growling menacingly, Napoleon announces that from now on meetings will be held only for ceremonial purposes. He states that all important decisions will fall to the pigs alone.

Afterward, many of the animals feel confused and disturbed. Squealer explains to them that Napoleon is making a great sacrifice in taking the leadership responsibilities upon himself and that, as the cleverest animal, he serves the best interest of all by making the decisions. These statements placate the animals, though they still question the expulsion of Snowball. Squealer explains that Snowball was a traitor and a criminal. Eventually, the animals come to accept this version of events, and Boxer adds greatly to Napoleon's prestige by adopting the maxims "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right." These two maxims soon reinforce each other when, three weeks after the banishment of Snowball, the animals learn that Napoleon supports the windmill project. Squealer explains that their leader never really opposed the proposal; he simply used his apparent opposition as a maneuver to oust the wicked Snowball. These tactics, he claims, served to advance the collective best interest. Squealer's words prove so appealing, and the growls

of his three-dog entourage so threatening, that the animals accept his explanation without question.

Analysis

This chapter illuminates Napoleon's corrupt and power-hungry motivations. He openly and unabashedly seizes power for himself, banishes Snowball with no justification, and shows a bald-faced willingness to rewrite history in order to further his own ends. Similarly, Stalin forced Trotsky from Russia and seized control of the country after Lenin's death. Orwell's experience in a persecuted Trotskyist political group in the late 1930s during the Spanish Civil War may have contributed to his comparatively positive portrayal of Snowball. Trotsky was eventually murdered in Mexico, but Stalin continued to evoke him as a phantom threat, the symbol of all enemy forces, when he began his bloody purges of the 1930s. These purges appear in allegorized form in the next chapters of *Animal Farm*.

Lenin once famously remarked that communism was merely socialism plus the electrification of the countryside, a comment that reveals the importance of technological modernization to leaders in the young Soviet Union. The centrality of the electrification projects in the Soviet Union inspired the inclusion of the windmill in *Animal Farm*. Communist leaders considered such programs absolutely essential for their new nation, citing their need to upgrade an infrastructure neglected by the tsars and keep up with the relatively advanced and increasingly hostile West. Russia devoted a great deal of brain- and manpower to putting these programs in place. As suggested by the plot of *Animal Farm*, Stalin initially balked at the idea of a national emphasis on modern technology,

only to embrace such plans wholeheartedly once he had secured his position as dictator.

This chapter lies near the middle of Orwell's narrative and, in many ways, represents the climax of the tension that has been building from the beginning. Since the animals' initial victory over Mr. Jones, we have suspected the motives of the pig intelligentsia and Napoleon in particular: ever since the revelation in Chapter III that they have been stealing apples and milk for themselves, the pigs have appeared more interested in grabbing resources and power than in furthering the good of the farm. Now, when Napoleon sets his dogs on Snowball, he proves that his socialist rhetoric about the common good is quite empty. The specifics of Napoleon's takeover bespeak a long period of careful plotting: Napoleon has been deliberating his seizure of power ever since he first took control of the dogs' training, in Chapter III. Thus, the banishment of Snowball constitutes the culmination of long-held resentments and aspirations and climactically justifies our feelings of uneasiness about Napoleon.

In his use of the dogs, Napoleon has monopolized the farm's sources of defense and protection—the dogs could have guarded the farm and warded off predators—in order to create his own private secret police. The pigs claim a parallel monopoly on logic. Squealer linguistically transforms Napoleon's self-serving act of banishing Snowball into a supreme example of self-sacrifice and manages to convince the animals that no contradiction underlies the leader's abrupt about-face on the issue of the windmill. Each of Napoleon's acts of physical violence thus gains acceptance and legitimacy via a corresponding exercise of verbal violence. Political subversion depends on a subversion of logic and lan-

guage. The connection between these two forms of violence and subversion remained a central concern for Orwell throughout his life, and he examines it both in later chapters of *Animal Farm* and in his last major novel, *1984*.