

Chapter IX

Summary

Wearily and weakly, the animals set about rebuilding the windmill. Though Boxer remains seriously injured, he shows no sign of being in pain and refuses to leave his work for even a day. Clover makes him a poultice for his hoof, and he eventually does seem to improve, but his coat doesn't seem as shiny as before and his great strength seems slightly diminished. He says that his only goal is to see the windmill off to a good start before he retires. Though no animal has yet retired on Animal Farm, it had previously been agreed that all horses could do so at the age of twelve. Boxer now nears this age, and he looks forward to a comfortable life in the pasture as a reward for his immense labors.

Food grows ever more scarce, and all animals receive reduced rations, except for the pigs and the dogs. Squealer continues to produce statistics proving that, even with this "readjustment," the rations exceed those that they received under Mr. Jones. After all, Squealer says, when the pigs and dogs receive good nourishment, the whole community stands to benefit. When four sows give birth to Napoleon's piglets, thirty-one in all, Napoleon commands that a schoolhouse be built for their education, despite the farm's dwindling funds. Napoleon begins ordering events called Spontaneous Demonstrations, at which the animals march around the farm, listen to speeches, and exult in the glory of Animal Farm. When other animals complain, the sheep, who love these Spontaneous Demonstrations, drown them out with chants of "Four legs good, two legs bad!"

In April, the government declares Animal Farm a republic, and Napoleon becomes president in a unanimous vote, having been the only candidate. The same day, the leadership reveals new discoveries about Snowball's complicity with Jones at the Battle of the Cowshed. It now appears that Snowball actually fought openly on Jones's side and cried "Long live Humanity!" at the outset of the fight. The battle took place so long ago, and seems so distant, that the animals placidly accept this new story. Around the same time, Moses the raven returns to the farm and once again begins spreading his stories about Sugarcandy Mountain. Though the pigs officially denounce these stories, as they did at the outset of their administration, they nonetheless allow Moses to live on the farm without requiring him to work.

One day, Boxer's strength fails; he collapses while pulling stone for the windmill. The other animals rush to tell Squealer, while Benjamin and Clover stay near their friend. The pigs announce that they will arrange to bring Boxer to a human hospital to recuperate, but when the cart arrives, Benjamin reads the writing on the cart's sideboards and announces that Boxer is being sent to a glue maker to be slaughtered. The animals panic and begin crying out to Boxer that he must escape. They hear him kicking feebly inside the cart, but he is unable to get out.

Soon Squealer announces that the doctors could not cure Boxer: he has died at the hospital. He claims to have been at the great horse's side as he died and calls it the most moving sight he has ever seen—he says that Boxer died praising the glories of Animal Farm. Squealer denounces the false rumors that Boxer was taken to a glue factory, saying that the hospital had simply bought the cart from a glue maker and had failed to paint over the lettering. The animals heave a sigh of relief at

this news, and when Napoleon gives a great speech in praise of Boxer, they feel completely soothed.

Not long after the speech, the farmhouse receives a delivery from the grocer, and sounds of revelry erupt from within. The animals murmur among themselves that the pigs have found the money to buy another crate of whisky—though no one knows where they found the money.

Analysis

As members of the revolutionary era in Russia began to expect to receive some compensation for all of the terrible sacrifices they had made in the revolution and in the war with Germany, they became painfully aware of the full extent of their betrayal at the hands of the Stalinist leadership. The quality of life for the average citizen continued to decline, even as the ruling class grew ever larger and consumed ever more luxuries. Orwell uses Boxer's death as a searing indictment of such totalitarian rule, and his death points sadly and bitterly to the downfall of Animal Farm. The great horse seems to have no bad qualities apart from his limited intellect, but, in the end, he falls victim to his own virtues—loyalty and the willingness to work. Thus, Boxer's great mistake lies in his conflation of the ideal of Animal Farm with the character of Napoleon: never thinking for himself about how the society should best realize its founding ideals, Boxer simply follows Napoleon's orders blindly, naïvely assuming that the pigs have the farm's best interest at heart. It is sadly ironic that the system that he so loyally serves ultimately betrays him: he works for the good of all but is sold for the good of the few.

The pig leadership's treachery and hypocrisy becomes even more apparent in the specific manner of Boxer's death: by selling Boxer for profit, the pigs reenact the very same cruelties against which the Rebellion first fights—the valuing of animals for their material worth rather than their dignity as living creatures. When a new crate of whisky arrives for the pigs, we can reasonably infer that the money for it has come from the sale of Boxer. Moreover, the intensely pathetic nature of Boxer's fate—death in a glue factory—contrasts greatly with his noble character, and the contrast contributes to the dramatic effect of Boxer's death, increasing the power of Orwell's critique. Boxer's life and death provide a microcosm for Orwell's conception of the ways in which the Russian communist power apparatus treated the working class that it purported to serve: Orwell suggests that the administration exhausted the resources of the workers for its own benefit and then mercilessly discarded them.

In order to defuse potential outrage at his blatant cruelty, Napoleon brings Moses back and allows him to tell his tales of Sugarcandy Mountain, much as Stalin made a place for the once-taboo Russian Orthodox Church after World War II. Moses's return signals the full return of oppression to the farm. While the pigs object early on to Moses's teachings because they undermine the animals' will to rebel, they now embrace the teachings for precisely the same reason. Napoleon further hopes to appease his populace by means of his Spontaneous Demonstrations, which force the animals to go through the motions of loyalty, despite what they may actually feel. The name of the new ritual bears particular irony: these gatherings are anything but spontaneous and demonstrate very little beyond a fearful conformity. The irony of the title indicates

the overriding hollowness of the event.

Because the elite class controls the dissemination of information on Animal Farm, it is able to hide the terrible truth of its exploitation of the other animals. Fallible individual memories of Snowball's bravery and Napoleon's cowardice at the Battle of the Cowshed prove no match for the collective, officially sponsored memory that Squealer constructs, which paints a picture indicating completely the reverse. With no historical, political, or military resources at their command, the common animals have no choice but to go along with the charade.