

"And you have no family?" I asked, watching the far end of the bridge where a few last carts were hurrying down the slope of the bank.

"No," he said, "only the animals I stated. The cat, of course, will be all right. A cat can look out for itself, but I cannot think what will become of the others."

"What politics have you?" I asked.

"I am without politics," he said.⁷ "I am seventy-six years old. I have come twelve kilometers now and I think now I can go no further."

"This is not a good place to stop," I said. "If you can make it, there are trucks up the road where it forks for Tortosa."

"I will wait a while," he said, " and then I will go. Where do the trucks go?"

"Towards Barcelona," I told him.

"I know no one in that direction," he said, "but thank you very much. Thank you again very much."

4

He looked at me very blankly and tiredly, and then said, having to share his worry with someone, "The cat will be all right, I am sure. There is no need to be unquiet about the cat. But the others. Now what do you think about the others?"⁸

"Why they'll probably come through it all right."

"You think so?"

"Why not," I said, watching the far bank where now there were no carts.

"But what will they do under the artillery when I was told to leave because of the artillery?"

"Did you leave the dove cage unlocked?" I asked.⁹

"Yes."

"Then they'll fly."

"Yes, certainly they'll fly. But the others. It's better not to think about the others," he said.

"If you are rested I would go," I urged. "Get up and try to walk now."

"Thank you," he said and got to his feet, swayed from side to side and then sat down backwards in the dust.

"I was taking care of animals," he said dully, but no longer to me. "I was only taking care of animals."

There was nothing to do about him. It was Easter Sunday and the Fascists were advancing toward the Ebro. It was a gray overcast day with a low ceiling so their planes were not up. That and the fact that cats know how to look after themselves was all the good luck that old man would ever have.¹⁰

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7 The old man's statement that he is "without politics" develops the theme: War affects even those who do not take sides.

Key Ideas and Details

8 These details show that the old man is dazed and tired. His unwavering concern for his animals suggests that he either does not understand or does not care about his own well-being; he has given up.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

9 Earlier in the story, the birds were referred to as "pigeons," but now the narrator calls them "doves." The fact that doves often symbolize peace underscores Hemingway's message about the effects of war on innocent civilians.

Craft and Structure

10 The narrator has done his best, but he realizes he cannot save the old man. He reports details about the time, place, and situation in a seemingly detached manner. The final sentence suggests that he holds little hope for the old man's survival, yet Hemingway leaves the story's conflict unresolved.