

*Why does he feel
as if ice is melting
inside him?*


chivalry, wit and resourcefulness, strange and unruly things of that sort — why, good heavens, I might have been almost anything else, an explorer or an actor or a soldier! Why, I might have felt some affection for my peers, might have drunk with them, understood them, oh, there's no knowing what I mightn't have done. I felt as if ice were thawing inside me. I went through the collection, stamp by stamp, they were all there, Lombardy, Cuba, Siam, Hanover, Nicaragua, the Philippines, all the places which I had wanted to go to and which I shall now never see. On each of these stamps there was a scrap of something which might have been and never was. I sat brooding over them all night and took stock of my life. I realized that it had been an artificial and impersonal life, which did not belong to me, and that my proper life had never come into existence." Mr. Karas shook his head sadly. "When I consider all I might have been, and how I wronged Lozjik —"

*Why does Father
Voves feel that Karas
can't "put it right"?*

Father Voves, on hearing these words, looked very downcast and forlorn; most likely he had remembered something in his own life. "Mr. Karas," he said pityingly, "don't think about it; it's no use, you can't put it right now, you can't make a fresh start —"

"No," sighed Mr. Karas with a slight flush. "But you know, anyhow — anyhow, I've started collecting stamps again."

*Why has Mr. Karas
begun collecting
stamps again?*



A CLOSER LOOK

Notice the beautiful simplicity of the ending. A less subtle story might have ended by describing what has happened to Lozjik, perhaps actually making some kind of late-in-life reunion and reconciliation between him and the narrator possible. But Father Voves is right in saying that nobody can live a life again, that there is no going back, and no easy way of making up for an injustice. However, the narrator's final words end the story with hope; even an old man can change, can develop, can grow, and as he resumes his stamp **collecting**, the narrator allows feelings of humanity and the possibility of productive human relationships back into his life, at last.

