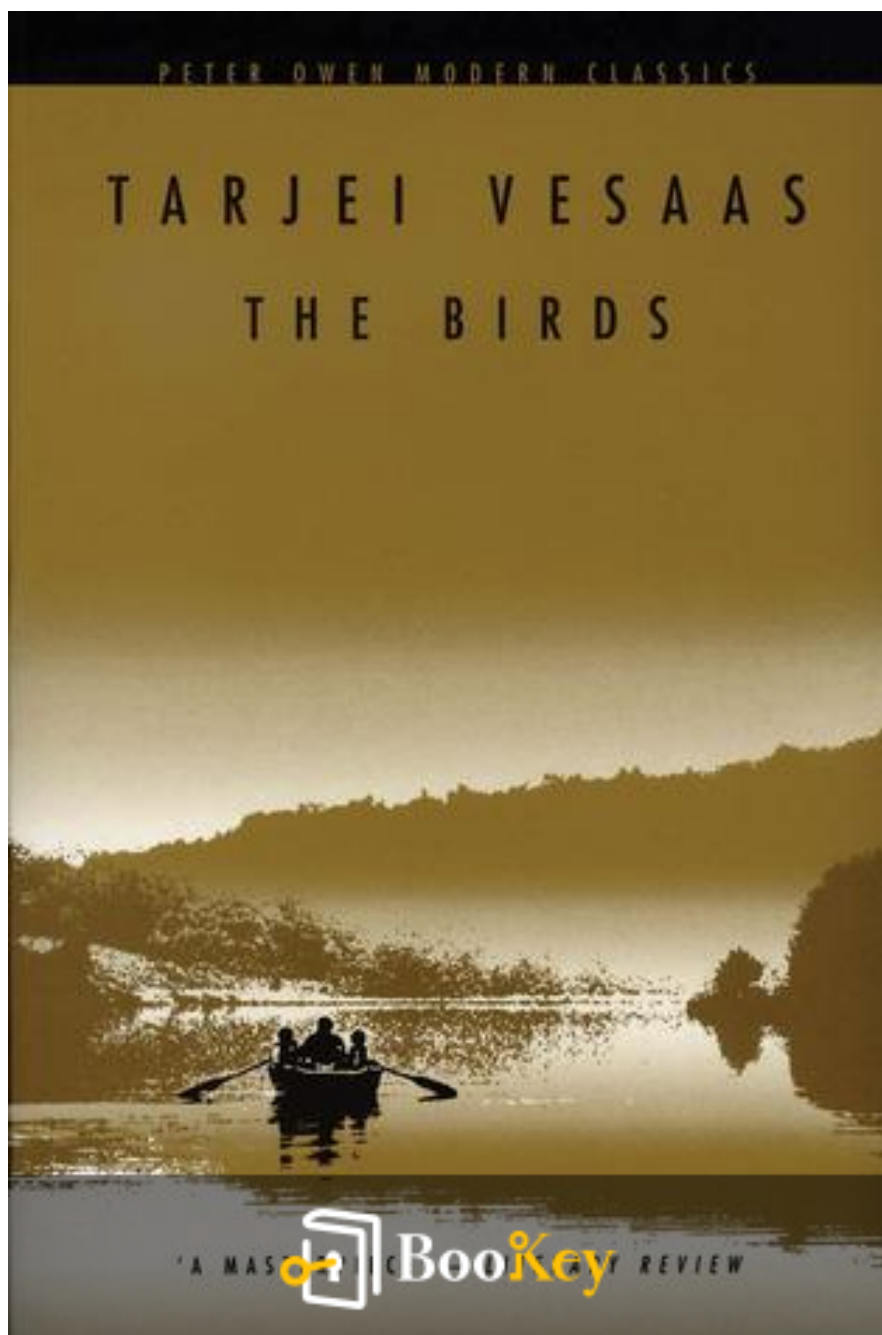


# The Birds PDF (Limited Copy)

Tarjei Vesaas



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## **The Birds Summary**

A poignant exploration of isolation and connection.

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## About the book

In Tarjei Vesaas' hauntingly beautiful novel "The Birds," the lines between humanity and nature blur as a young boy grapples with his place in a world teeming with the mystery and power of the avian realm. Set against the backdrop of a remote Norwegian landscape, the story delves into themes of friendship, isolation, and the struggle for understanding amid the chaos of adolescence. As the narrative unfolds, the enchanting yet ominous presence of the birds serves as a metaphor for freedom and fear, curiosity and danger, compelling readers to reflect on their own connections to the wild and the monsters that dwell within us all. Vesaas' lyrical prose draws you deep into the psyche of his characters, inviting you to explore the profound and often unsettling ties between the human spirit and the natural world, leaving you questioning: what does it truly mean to be free?

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## About the author

Tarjei Vesaas was a prominent Norwegian author and poet, renowned for his profound contributions to 20th-century literature. Born on August 20, 1897, in Vinje, Telemark, Vesaas grew up in a rural environment that deeply influenced his writing, often reflected in his vivid depictions of nature and existential themes. He published numerous novels, short stories, and poetry collections, blending modernist techniques with Norwegian folklore and personal introspection. Vesaas's works, including his acclaimed novel "The Birds," explore complex human emotions and the interplay between individuals and their surroundings, earning him a celebrated place in the canon of Scandinavian literature. His distinctive style and innovative narrative structures have established him as a key figure in exploring the depths of human experience.

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## Chapter 1 Summary:

In this chapter, we are introduced to Mattis and his sister Hege, who live in a rural setting with a nuanced sibling relationship. Mattis tries to uplift Hege's spirits through a playful comparison, likening her to "lightning" as she skillfully knits an elaborate sweater adorned with a large eight-petaled rose. This metaphor resonates with Mattis despite his underlying fear of actual lightning, stemming from an irrational belief that he is safe from storms when hidden in the privy—an observation he has clung to as a source of comfort.

As they converse, an underlying tension arises from Mattis's complex mental state. He is sensitive about his lack of productivity, having not brought home earnings for some time. Hege's terse remarks on this topic prick at his vulnerabilities, making her realize how deeply Mattis feels his shortcomings. Despite her irritation with his restless habits, such as tapping his knee, and his climbing dreadfulness when he mentions “thinking,” she struggles to navigate their dynamics. The conversation becomes a delicate dance—Mattis seeks validation and normalcy, while Hege grapples with the weight of his disabilities and the burden of well-intentioned criticism.

The chapter captures the dichotomy of their lives: Hege’s practical approach to work and Mattis’s internal conflicts regarding his identity and self-worth. As they navigate the complexities of their relationship, the emotional



distance creates an almost palpable tension, hinting at deeper issues of regret and the consequences of societal expectations on those who differ from the norm.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The importance of embracing one's vulnerabilities.

**Critical Interpretation:** In this chapter, as you witness Mattis's struggle with his self-worth and societal expectations, it becomes clear that embracing your own vulnerabilities can lead to deeper connections and understanding. Just like Mattis, who longs for validation yet fears the judgments of others, you too may face moments of insecurity. This realization that each person's journey is marked by challenges can inspire you to approach your own struggles with compassion.

Embracing vulnerability not only fosters self-acceptance but also allows for more authentic relationships with those around you. By acknowledging your fears and imperfections, you create a space where genuine support and understanding can flourish, reminding you that it's okay to not always fit into the molds society has set.



## Chapter 2 Summary:

In this chapter, we are introduced to Mattis and his sister Hege, who live a solitary life in a humble cottage surrounded by nature. As evening descends on a warm June day, they sit quietly on the steps, each absorbed in their thoughts. Mattis, who is often referred to as "Simple Simon" by villagers due to his perceived simplicity and struggles with work, gazes at two withered aspen trees just outside their fenced property. These trees are informally known as "Mattis-and-Hege" among the locals, a peculiar namesake that evokes both curiosity and discontent in Mattis. He finds comfort in the knowledge that the trees stand untouched, serving as silent guardians for him and Hege.

As their conversation drifts, Hege is focused on her knitting—a necessary skill that provides for their needs—while Mattis grapples with feelings of inadequacy. He contemplates his life, expressing a mix of admiration for Hege's capabilities and confusion about his own status. Their relationship is deep yet tinged with unspoken emotions and secrets; Mattis is determined to shield Hege from the truth about the trees and their shared namesake. He finds comfort in her presence but struggles with an internal dialogue that questions his worth.

During this exchange, Mattis makes a startling observation about Hege's graying hair, revealing a moment of introspection and vulnerability. This



observation, though meant to be innocuous, unsettles both Mattis and Hege, highlighting the complexities of their sibling bond. As Mattis shifts topics and refrains from voicing his deeper feelings, the reader senses his longing for connection and understanding, emphasized by his tumultuous thoughts on identity and appearance.

Ultimately, the chapter establishes themes of isolation, the burden of societal perceptions, and the fragile dynamics of familial relationships, setting the stage for Mattis's internal conflict and the external world that shapes their lives. As the warm evening lingers, it becomes clear that the tranquility they seek is fraught with deeper issues, foreshadowing the challenges ahead.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The significance of understanding one's self-worth in a familial bond

**Critical Interpretation:** As you reflect on Mattis's struggle with his perceived limitations, you may find a resonance in your own life. It's a reminder that the value you bring to your relationships isn't defined by societal standards or others' opinions. Embracing your unique qualities can empower you to foster deeper connections with those you love. Just as the withered aspen trees remain steadfast and resilient in their existence, so too can you find strength in your individuality and recognize the beauty in your contributions, no matter how simple they may seem.

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## Chapter 3 Summary:

In this chapter, Mattis returns home, appreciating the serene beauty of the evening – the calm lake, hazy ridges, and warm smells of early summer. His contemplative mood is deepened by a lingering memory of lightning, hinting at a troubled past that haunts him with thoughts of vulnerability and fear.

Mattis, who has a unique attachment to the bench he uses as a bed, reminisces about his childhood, marked by the scratches and pencil marks he left on it over the years. This bench epitomizes comfort and consistency in his life, serving as his steadfast refuge.

He then enters his sister Hege's room, drawn by the need to examine himself in the only mirror available. As he looks into the glass, he is struck by thoughts of self-reflection and identity. The act of gazing into the mirror transitions from a mundane task into a contemplative moment. Mattis wrestles with feelings of inadequacy, while simultaneously feeling a flicker of hope and defiance. He muses on the nature of his appearance, the absence of gray hairs, and the implications of aging in the context of his relationship with Hege, who is three years his senior.

Upon returning to Hege, Mattis eagerly shares his findings about his lack of gray hair, seeking validation and joy in a seemingly trivial matter. Hege, however, responds curtly, signaling her disinterest in discussing aging. This



sets off an unexpected discussion about fun and happiness in their lives, which Hege insists they experience more of than Mattis realizes. She urges him to recognize their shared moments of joy, pressing against Mattis's tendency toward introspection and doubt.

Despite his initial confusion, Mattis ultimately finds comfort in Hege's conviction about their happiness. As their conversation wanes, the bond between them is illuminated, revealing the delicate balance of their relationship amidst Mattis's simplicity and Hege's wisdom. Hege's weary exit from the conversation signifies both an end to their interaction for now and the ongoing struggle Mattis faces in understanding himself and his place within their shared existence.

Through this episode, we see the complexities of sibling dynamics emerge, alongside themes of self-image, the passage of time, and the quest for contentment in life's mundane realities.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The importance of self-reflection in understanding identity and relationships

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing before a mirror, contemplating not just your reflection, but the entirety of your existence—the choices you've made, the memories you've created, and the relationships that shape you. As you engage in this profound act of self-reflection, like Mattis, you may confront feelings of inadequacy, but you also uncover glimmers of hope and empowerment. This moment serves as a reminder that understanding yourself is vital in fostering genuine connections with those around you. It teaches you to appreciate the little joys in life, recognize the bond you share with loved ones, and value their insights, ultimately encouraging you to embrace both your vulnerabilities and strengths as you navigate your journey.



## Chapter 4:

In this chapter, Mattis finds himself reflecting on his life and the dynamics of his relationship with Hege, the woman who has been taking care of him for years. Hege, exhibiting signs of stress, retreats to her room earlier than usual after a brief, impatient conversation with Mattis, who is left feeling confused and worried about the state of their relationship. He speculates whether their struggles may stem from her gray hair, comparing it with his own unblemished locks, and feels an unsettling bitterness at the thought of being dependent on her for food and support.

Mattis wrestles with his feelings of inadequacy and shame as he acknowledges the heavy weight of being reliant on Hege. He reflects on his previous attempts to secure work on local farms, realizing that despite his efforts, he often returned empty-handed, leading him to feel invisible to those who could provide him with employment. The bitter reality of his situation culminates in his acknowledgment that his current state—dependent and unproductive—has contributed to Hege's declining mood.

The chapter encapsulates Mattis's struggle with self-worth and the burdens of dependency, as well as the awareness that his relationship with Hege is faltering under the strain of these unfulfilled expectations. As he resolves to seek work the next day, he recognizes the weight of his influence on Hege's



well-being, provoking a profound sense of shame within him. This sets the stage for Mattis's internal conflict and highlights his need for change and redemption in the days to come.

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## Chapter 5 Summary:

In this chapter, Mattis finds himself restless and unable to sleep, prowling around outside as he grapples with feelings of anxiety and loneliness. His mind fixates on Hege, a significant figure in his life, leading to a spiral of dread about her potentially leaving him. Despite his fears, he acknowledges that Hege has never indicated she would leave, yet the thought torments him, manifesting as vivid imagery of her departing with her belongings.

As twilight settles over their cottage, nestled amid birches, aspens, and conifers overlooking a dark lake, Mattis is momentarily distracted by nature's beauty. His melancholy deepens as he contemplates the evening, becoming increasingly absorbed in his thoughts until an unexpected event disturbs his reverie.

Suddenly, he hears the fluttering of wings and a peculiar call from above—a woodcock passes overhead. This marks a significant moment for Mattis, as he realizes that the woodcock had not been part of the landscape in previous years, yet now it has chosen to fly over his home during the evening hours. The presence of this bird transforms his perception of his surroundings; it no longer feels distant and foreign but rather intimate and connected to his own life.

Anticipating that the woodcock will return, Mattis sits filled with



anticipation, awash with a newfound sense of hope. The bird does indeed return a second time, further solidifying his belief in this remarkable occurrence. With each sighting, Mattis feels a change within himself, as if a weight has been lifted, instilling in him a sense of assurance and connection to the world around him.

Ultimately, he is eager to share this experience with Hege, convinced that her belief in the woodcock's presence will bridge their emotional distance. The chapter closes with a sense of renewal in Mattis; having witnessed this extraordinary moment in nature, he feels transformed and hopeful that Hege, too, will now see the world through a different lens.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Finding hope and connection in unexpected moments

**Critical Interpretation:** As you navigate through life, much like Mattis in his restless night, remember that hope can emerge from the most unexpected encounters. The sudden appearance of the woodcock becomes a symbol of connection and change for Mattis, reminding you that even in moments of anxiety and loneliness, nature has the power to inspire renewal and open your heart to the possibilities around you. Embrace these fleeting moments—they just might alter your perception of your world, offering new perspectives and reminding you that you are never truly alone.

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## Chapter 6 Summary:

In this chapter, Mattis finds himself caught in a whirlwind of emotions as he interacts with Hege, a character who seems to embody stability and resilience. Known for her vibrant personality, represented by her "eight-petaled roses and sweaters," she has long been a significant presence in Mattis's life. However, Mattis is struggling with his own insecurities and self-worth, contemplating putting his needs before Hege's.

The chapter opens with Mattis entering Hege's room late at night, only to discover that she's already asleep – a fact he quickly realizes was foolish to ignore. Hege wakes up irritated but soon softens her tone, indicating her weariness rather than anger. Despite her sleepy demeanor, Mattis excitedly shares the exhilarating news that a woodcock, a mysterious and symbolic bird, is flying over their house. This sensation fills Mattis with awe, but Hege's reaction is one of indifference. To her, it is just a bird, and she urges him to go back to sleep, suggesting that the animal's presence is not as momentous as Mattis believes.

Unable to grasp her lack of enthusiasm, Mattis pleads for her to join him outside to witness the bird. His eagerness stands in stark contrast to her calm dismissiveness. The woodcock represents an opportunity—a moment of beauty and excitement that he wants to share, yet Hege sees it as just another occurrence unworthy of disturbance. Mattis's frustration mounts as he feels





her apathy toward something he interprets as important, leading to an argument that exposes their different perspectives on significance and exhilaration.

Hege's emotional strain becomes evident, yet Mattis fails to recognize her exhaustion. He continues to press the issue, leading to an emotional outburst from her, filled with exasperation and sorrow. Her plea for him to leave her in peace reveals an underlying truth: she's overwhelmed and cannot engage in his fervor at that moment. As she turns away, her vulnerability stirs in Mattis a complex mix of guilt and bewilderment. He grapples with the realization that while he seeks excitement, Hege is battling her own inner turmoil.

Feeling rejected yet determined, Mattis leaves her room, contemplating the differences in their reactions. Although he feels a profound sense of connection to the night and the woodcock, Hege remains distant from this shared moment. The chapter concludes with Mattis finding solace in his thoughts under the night sky, envisioning the possibilities of tomorrow when Hege might come to appreciate what he cherishes. With a sense of hope and a hint of possessiveness, he resolves that things will change, and Hege will one day understand the wonder he feels. As he drifts to sleep, he feels a warm sensation, hinting at his longing for connection and recognition of his own worth.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The importance of understanding and embracing each other's emotional states

**Critical Interpretation:** In this chapter, you realize how essential it is to recognize and respect the emotional struggles of those close to you. Mattis's excitement clashes with Hege's exhaustion, highlighting the need for empathy in relationships. This lesson inspires you to cultivate a deeper awareness of others' feelings, allowing you to forge stronger connections and navigate the complexities of human interaction. By embracing vulnerability and seeking to understand those around you, you create an environment where both you and your loved ones can thrive, finding beauty in shared moments even amid emotional turmoil.



## Chapter 7 Summary:

In this chapter, titled "The Woodcock," Mattis experiences an enchanting dream that shifts his perspective and enhances his self-image. As he drifts into sleep, he hears a friendly voice assuring him that help is on the way, and is soon enveloped in a bright light that revitalizes his once-familiar surroundings. The transformation extends beyond the house itself, as an inner change overtakes him, endowing him with newfound strength and confidence.

Feeling empowered by his impressive physique, he engages in playful banter with invisible friends hidden in a nearby grove. His interactions show a striking shift from his previously timid nature; he is no longer stumbling over words but articulating them boldly, eager to showcase his growth. With a sense of anticipation, he calls forth a special girl from his thoughts, expressing a longing that seems to resonate with the atmosphere around him.

When she finally appears, fragrant and vibrant, he feels a deep connection. She is not just a figment of his imagination but a real presence, yet he refrains from rushing their encounter. The girl's silent understanding mirrors his own unspoken wishes, and their interaction becomes an intimate dance of energy and emotion. He attempts to provoke a reaction from her by flaunting his newfound strength, which leaves her mesmerized, effectively showcasing the profound changes he has undergone.



As they share this magical moment, Mattis recognizes that their connection holds unexpressed secrets and deeper meanings. The air fills with the song of birds, symbolizing the beauty and possibility of their budding relationship. Ultimately, this chapter portrays Mattis's awakening—both in body and spirit—as he reconciles his dreams with reality, igniting hope for a meaningful bond with the girl who embodies the essence of his aspirations.

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## Chapter 8:

In Chapter 8, the morning unfolds in a tense yet familiar atmosphere as Mattis and his sister Hege navigate the remnants of an emotionally charged night. Hege, being the first to rise, stirs Mattis from his restful state, where he is lost in the memories of a vivid dream and the aftermath of their previous evening's sadness. With Hege's presence imposing, Mattis feigns sleep, reflecting his discomfort regarding their recent conversation.

As Hege prepares breakfast, Mattis grapples with a mix of optimism and insecurity. His recent dream, perceived as a turning point, is juxtaposed against reality, especially the unforgotten promise he made to Hege about looking for work, which brings a shadow over his newfound hope. He attempts to assert that magical changes are afoot since his dream, symbolized by the woodcock he mentioned, but Hege remains pragmatic, dismissing his whimsical notions.

Tension simmers as Mattis's eagerness to share his dream collides with Hege's practicality. When pressed to reveal his dream, he retreats, asserting that its intimate nature is not for public discussion. Hege's attempt to rationalize dreams as mere reflections of opposite outcomes irks Mattis, leading to a conflicted outburst and a significant mess at the breakfast table—a metaphorical representation of their tangled emotions.



Hege's practicality emerges sharply as she insists on sticking to their commitment, indicating a shift in their dynamic where she balances support and firmness. The conversation spirals into a deeper confrontation over unspoken feelings and underlying tensions, with Mattis feeling increasingly helpless and misunderstood. The chapter closes on an uneasy agreement—Hege compelling Mattis to face his new reality of seeking work today, setting the stage for his internal struggle and the challenges that lie ahead in their relationship.

This interaction layers the emotional complexities between siblings, revealing not only their past reconciliations but also the burden of expectations and the quest for individual identity against familial ties.

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## Chapter 9 Summary:

In Chapter 9, Mattis finds himself reflecting on a transformative dream as he meanders through a sunlit summer morning. The ambiance is enchanting, filled with sweet scents and gentle breezes, which starkly contrasts with his companion, Hege, who is likely indoors, displeased with his refusal to seek work. This inner turmoil propels Mattis to contemplate three significant changes he feels deeply about—the nature of these transformations remains vague, yet they resonate within him like the vibrating string of a fiddle.

As he throws stones into the still waters of the lake, lost in thought, he hears Hege calling him for food. The sound evokes a comforting domesticity, yet simultaneously reminds him of his current predicament and her frustration over his lack of ambition. Over the meal, Mattis expresses his longing for those three elusive changes but is met with Hege's insistence on practicality and concern for his well-being.

Their conversation reveals a rift in understanding between the two. Hege, focused on her knitting, questions his commitment to a trip he has been hesitant about, furthering his annoyance. Mattis's thoughts drift into a darker place as he tentatively suggests that life is fragile, a statement that unsettles Hege. Unable to cope with the weight of their exchange, Mattis retreats, feeling vulnerable.





That night, he finds himself anxiously awaiting the return of a woodcock, a bird whose call stirs something profound within him. When it finally appears, Mattis feels a connection—an inexplicable bond with the creature that transcends his understanding. In this moment of joy, he resolves to acquiesce to Hege's wishes, with the sole condition of avoiding thunderstorm weather.

As the evening progresses and he heads to bed filled with warmth and dreams of summer, Mattis is left disappointed, finding no trace of the enigmatic dream that had once held the possibility of change. The chapter captures Mattis's struggle with identity and the external pressures of his life, contrasting his yearning for connection and transformation with the mundane reality he faces alongside Hege.

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## Chapter 10 Summary:

### ### Chapter 10 Summary

In the morning light, Mattis wanders aimlessly, reflecting on his troubled life and the past conversations with Hege, a significant figure in his life who has always encouraged him, albeit sometimes unhelpfully. His thoughts drift as he walks along a busy road lined with farms, a landscape that serves as a reminder of his history with failure and embarrassment in seeking work. This morning, however, is different; he recalls a dream involving a woodcock, a symbol that fills him with a new sense of possibility.

Despite his initial determination to avoid approaching any nearby farms, a sudden urge drives him to seek work. Surprisingly, he finds himself at a farm where he is greeted by the farmer and two young people preparing to weed turnips. This encounter takes a more positive turn than he expected, as the farmer offers him a job immediately. Mattis feels a sense of relief and mingled apprehension, aware of the pressure of performing well despite his past failures.

As they begin work in the large turnip field, Mattis wishes to impress but finds it challenging to keep up with the efficient young couple working alongside him. The pressures of his insecurities weigh down on him, as he



recalls previous moments of awkwardness with people he had tried to work with before. Watching the shared camaraderie between the young man and girl fills him with both admiration and envy; they seem carefree, enjoying their work and each other's company, drawing him into their world with their laughter and flirtation.

Though initially encouraged by the friendly atmosphere, Mattis soon feels overwhelmed. His anxiety manifests physically; his hands fumble awkwardly with the hoe, and he becomes frustrated, pulling up turnips instead of weeds. The farmer notices his struggle but remains sympathetic, understanding the demanding nature of the work. Mattis's isolation grows as he realizes his limitations in doing what is required.

The chapter delves into themes of loneliness, insecurity, and the complexity of human interactions, further amplified by the symbol of the woodcock, representing hope yet highlighting Mattis's struggle to change his fate. By the time lunch is called, Mattis has slowly gained confidence from brief interactions with the young couple, particularly with the girl, who brightens his spirits despite his self-doubt.

The chapter closes with Mattis feeling exhausted but slightly uplifted as he joins the others for a meal at the farmer's house. The warmth and camaraderie of the moment soften his self-imposed isolation, although he continues to grapple with his place in the world. He succumbs to fatigue and



falls asleep, leaving behind the struggles of the day, reflecting the fragility of hope and connection he's yearned for.

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## Chapter 11 Summary:

In Chapter 11, we find Mattis waking up under the midday sun, feeling scorched and embarrassed by falling asleep while others worked in the fields. He discovers that the farmer's wife, a familiar figure from his past, had intentionally let him sleep instead of waking him. Their conversation reveals her kindness and understanding, providing Mattis with an opportunity to share about his struggles and lack of sleep due to a woodcock's flight over his house. Although he longs to discuss his issues, the woman gently steers the conversation away, indicating her wisdom in knowing that some matters are too personal to share.

During their coffee together, Mattis reveals his insecurities about being a burden to his sister Hege, who works tirelessly to support him. The farmer's wife, however, keeps their exchange light-hearted by discussing the woodcock and thus offers him a reprieve from his troubled thoughts. Their conversation reflects a moment of gentle connection, though Mattis still feels the weight of shame for not assisting in the fields.

When the farm workers return, Mattis's anxious anticipation culminates in a feeling of dread. As he awkwardly explains his absence from work, the farmer responds tersely, emphasizing the completion of Mattis's rows. Mattis's embarrassment deepens as the young couple, whom he had earlier enjoyed watching, seem distant and embarrassed themselves around him.



At the dinner table, despite his self-consciousness, Mattis surprises everyone by inquiring about the girl's tiredness, inadvertently coming off as endearing rather than foolish. The laughter that follows signals a moment of camaraderie. However, as dinner concludes, the reality of their situation sets in; the young sweethearts depart for home, and Mattis realizes he might not return to help again.

The chapter reaches a poignant moment when Mattis awkwardly suggests he won't be needed for work the next day, and the farmer confirms this with a hint of discomfort. Their interaction culminates in a hesitant financial settlement for the day's work, emphasizing Mattis's desire for dignity despite his perceived shortcomings. As he leaves, a mix of relief and lingering uncertainty fills the air, highlighting the complex interplay of human relationships, self-worth, and societal expectations. Mattis's internal struggle and longing for connection remain palpable, setting the stage for further exploration of his character in subsequent chapters.



# Chapter 12:

## Chapter 12 Summary

Back at home, the sun began to set, casting elongated shadows as Hege sat outside working on a project. Mattis, upon entering the clearing, caught sight of her and felt a mix of admiration and curiosity at her seemingly fragile appearance, akin to a little ball of wool. He pondered what might be hidden beneath her delicate exterior, contemplating her intellect and strength.

As Mattis approached, Hege greeted him, and their conversation turned to his day. He shared his experiences from the farm, feeling proud of the work he'd accomplished and eager for her approval. Despite his excitement, Hege's focus on specific details frustrated Mattis; her questions about his earnings and encounters, especially about the farmer's wife, led to a brief quarrel. Hege chided him to stop asking “silly” questions, and though Mattis remained silent, he recognized that she already understood what he had sought to discover.

Later, Hege expressed her intention to see Mattis's prized woodcock, a bird he had grown fond of. Filled with anticipation, Mattis felt a silent bond bloom between them amidst the stillness of the evening. The bird's arrival stirred deep emotions in both siblings, symbolizing a connection that



transcended words. Mattis tried to convey that their home had transformed, imbued with a sense of beauty he believed he had uncovered.

However, tension surfaced when Hege challenged him, implying he took ownership of the bird. Upset by her comment, Mattis sought to retaliate,

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## Chapter 13 Summary:

In Chapter 13, the story resumes two days after the previous events, where Mattis feels trapped in a cycle of inaction. Hege, his sister, asserts that he should seek work again, recalling his success from before. Although she expresses concern for his lack of productivity and seems impatient with his lethargy, Mattis resists the idea, wanting to avoid labor he despises, like thinning turnips.

Mattis spends the morning on the shore, contemplating his thoughts while throwing stones, an activity that symbolizes his discontent and feelings of stagnation. Although Hege believes there are plenty of small jobs available, Mattis is reluctant to return to the farm he previously worked at, having felt a connection to the workers there that he does not want to revisit. As he meanders past familiar places and faces, he grapples with feelings of isolation and the wish for recognition, particularly from a young girl he encounters who innocently refers to him as "Simple Simon," a nickname that underscores his self-perception as perceived by others.

Upon arriving at a store, Mattis indulges in a purchase of candy, enjoying the brief interaction with strangers that makes him feel momentarily normal. Yet, the conversation turns to ominous weather predictions, igniting his anxiety about an approaching thunderstorm. This fear drives him to hurry home, as he associates thunderstorms with danger and seeks the safety of his



home.

While rushing along, he has a brief interaction with an acquaintance who reassures him about the lack of impending storms. This encounter momentarily eases his anxiety before he sees a mysterious, beautiful bird on the path. The sight of this unfamiliar creature captivates him, compelling him to rush home to share his experience with Hege.

Ultimately, when he arrives home, Hege is engaged in her own activities and initially seems dismissive of his excitement over the bird. However, Mattis's fervent retelling of the encounter and his confession about returning home early due to the absence of work leads to a moment of connection between him and Hege. She senses his wonder, which hints at a deeper bond between the siblings, revealing her softening demeanor toward his peculiarities. This interaction reflects a subtle shift in their relationship, showing that underneath her pragmatic exterior, Hege is capable of recognizing the beauty in Mattis's world, just as he has recognized the beauty of the bird.

Element	Description
Chapter Number	13
Time Frame	Two days after previous events
Main Character	Mattis
Supporting	Hege (Mattis's sister)

Element	Description
Character	
Conflict	Mattis feels trapped in inaction and resists seeking work
Symbolism	Throwing stones represents Mattis's discontent and stagnation
Mattis's Past	Resistant to return to previous farm work due to emotional ties
Theme of Isolation	Mattis grapples with feelings of needing recognition and connection
Nickname Impact	Referring to him as "Simple Simon" highlights his self-perception
Candy Purchase	Mattis briefly feels normal through social interaction at the store
Anticipated Danger	Mattis fears an approaching thunderstorm, representing underlying anxiety
Bird Encounter	A beautiful, mysterious bird captivates Mattis and leads him home
Sibling Interaction	Hege initially dismisses Mattis's excitement but connects over his experience
Character Development	Hege softens and recognizes beauty in Mattis's world



## Chapter 14 Summary:

In chapter fourteen, Mattis awakens with a profound sense of joy and connection to nature, specifically to a woodcock that has been flying above his home. This bird seems to signal a shift in his life, inspiring hope and optimism that something positive is about to occur. His emotional state is heightened by his fascination with the woodcock, leading him to share these feelings with Hege, his companion. However, Hege, engrossed in her daily tasks, is oblivious to the depth of Mattis's sentiments and responds with gentle indifference.

As they talk, Mattis's excitement bubbles over, and he tries to express his vision of the woodcock's flight to Hege through gestures. Yet, this playful exchange reveals their differing perspectives—Mattis feels an emotional and almost spiritual connection to the woodcock, while Hege, pragmatic and busy, cannot fully grasp or appreciate this bond.

Undeterred, Mattis ventures into a nearby wooded area beneath the path of the woodcock, where he becomes entranced by the signs of the bird's presence—its footprints and feeding marks in the earth serve as messages that resonate deeply with him. In an act of whimsical communication, he uses a twig to leave his own message in the ground, feeling a sense of unity with the woodcock that transcends words.





Momentarily lost in the enchanting setting, Mattis contemplates waiting for the bird to return, but he ultimately rejects this idea, fearing he might disrupt the delicate bond he senses forming. Instead, he resolves to return the next day to see if the woodcock acknowledges his greeting. He heads home, still filled with wonder and song, fully aware that Hege may never understand this extraordinary connection he shares with the woodcock. This chapter captures Mattis's deep emotional world—a blend of hope, longing, and the simple joy of nature—while contrasting it with Hege's more grounded attitude, highlighting the nuances of their relationship.

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## Chapter 15 Summary:

In Chapter 15, Mattis embarks on a day filled with anticipation, eager to receive a new message from the elusive woodcock that had become a symbol of friendship for him. His heart races when he discovers a recent mark from the bird, confirming that a bond had formed between them. In a moment of joy and seriousness, he communicates back with a twig, expressing a mutual sense of great friendship through the simple act of pricking a message into the ground. This exchange epitomizes the pure and unfiltered connection he feels with the bird, contrasting sharply with the limitations of human language which he finds inadequate and coarse.

As the days progress, Mattis finds himself increasingly enchanted by this unique form of communication. He imagines that the woods are alive with conversation, picturing the bird's footprints as evidence of a joyous dance. However, amidst his excitement, he grapples with the fear of misunderstanding from those around him, particularly his companion Hege. Although tempted to share this newfound language with her, he realizes it could lead to ridicule and suspicion.

But after several rewarding days of exchanging messages, Mattis is met with an unsettling silence on the fifth day. The absence of a greeting raises the terrifying thought that the woodcock might be dead. He battles against despair, trying to hold onto the joy they've shared. Just as he contemplates



the fleeting nature of life, the woodcock finally returns, delivering the reassurance he desperately needed.

In this moment of revelation, Mattis reflects on the impermanence of their connection but is uplifted by the return of his feathered friend and the promise of more shared experiences. With renewed hope, he prepares for future messages, aware that the bond they've forged transcends mere words, leaning into the charm and mystery of their unique friendship. The empty space remains for further back-and-forth, symbolizing the endless possibilities of their communication and connection.

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## Chapter 16:

### ### Chapter 16 Summary

A few days after a joyful encounter regarding a woodcock, Mattis begins to feel unwell, his discomfort rooted in anxiety rather than a physical ailment. He becomes increasingly worried after sparking a conversation with a young fowler who inquired about the bird's whereabouts. Realizing the danger he's placed the woodcock in by revealing its location, Mattis is enveloped in dread, fearing that the fowler will return with a gun.

As he paces around his home, the serene evening transforms into a landscape of paranoia; the very woods he usually feels safe in loom ominously with the threat of hidden hunters. His mounting anxiety culminates as he sees the bird in flight, only to hear the sharp report of a gunshot. Despite his desperate pleas to the forest and the woodcock, the inevitable occurs—a dead woodcock falls near him, shot by the very fowler he encountered earlier.

The young hunter appears, animated and pleased with his feat, while Mattis stands frozen with the warm, lifeless bird in his hands. A haunting moment ensues as Mattis confronts the reality of the bird's death and the fleeting life it displayed just moments prior. He is unable to relinquish the body to the boy despite pressures and the hunter's jovial demeanor. Torn between his



grief and the reality of the situation, Mattis's inability to communicate manifests as a heavy silence that unsettles the fowler, who ultimately departs when he cannot comprehend Mattis's turmoil.

Left alone with the woodcock, Mattis reflects on the consequences of his

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## Chapter 17 Summary:

In Chapter 17, Mattis finds himself exhausted and overwhelmed after performing a somber task: he has buried a bird under a heavy stone to honor its life and safeguard its remains. The weight of the stone is emblematic of both his physical and emotional burden, leaving him fatigued as he contemplates the disquieting implications of death. The night feels oppressive, and he is haunted by thoughts of his sister, Hege, as he sits in silence, feeling the coldness of the meadow around him.

Compelled by a sense of dread and a desire for connection, he goes to Hege's room, feeling the urgency of his need to be close to her after the unsettling event. Surprisingly, she welcomes him in without hesitation, indicating that he is not alone in his wakefulness. Their conversation hints at a deeper undercurrent of fear—Hege, sensing his anxiety, reassures him and encourages him to forget about the deceased bird. However, Mattis struggles to articulate the various fears that plague him beyond the bird's death.

As they share a bed, Mattis is struck by the intimacy of the moment. Hege's comforting gestures elicit a mix of brotherly affection and a longing for deeper understanding, but Mattis withholds his darker thoughts to protect her from the emotional weight of his burdens. While Hege tries to soothe him and brings a semblance of peace to the nighttime stillness, Mattis grapples with the significance of life and death circling in his mind like an



inescapable shadow.

This chapter explores themes of grief, familial bonds, and the struggle to convey deep emotional turmoil. The imagery of the closed eyes and heavy stone serves to highlight the inescapable presence of mortality, while the connection between Mattis and Hege illustrates the solace found in companionship amid fear and uncertainty.

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## Chapter 18 Summary:

In Chapter 18, the setting is the vibrant clover fields that signal the height of summer, accompanied by the bustling activities of haymaking nearby.

Mattis, the protagonist, finds himself in an uncomfortable position, becoming an unexpected focal point in his household. As the only able-bodied young man around, everyone expects him to contribute to the harvest, yet he faces a looming emptiness with no calls for help forthcoming.

Despite the growing pressure to act, there is silence from the outside world. In the cottage, only Hege, presumably Mattis's sibling or close companion, is immersed in her own tasks, creating sweaters. The expectation for Mattis to engage in labor weighs heavily on him. Every morning, the sound of the mowing machines stirs restlessness within him, and he clears his throat regularly in futile hope of receiving an invitation to join the haymaking.

As days drag on without a call, Mattis copes by rationalizing that modern machinery has made the work more efficient, leaving him on the sidelines. His conversation with Hege highlights his fragile sense of self; he manages to speak more assertively than before, referring cryptically to a "woodcock under the stone," a metaphorical expression illustrating his internal struggles. Hege's sharp retort reminds him of the power dynamics at play between them, though she softens her words afterward, suggesting a complex relationship built on familiarity and mutual understanding.



Seeking a sense of purpose, Mattis strolls toward the meadow, drawn by the lively sounds of labor. There, he encounters a man carrying poles, who unexpectedly mentions needing assistance with future hay-stacking. Mattis's heart lifts at the prospect of being needed, as he recalls his experiences spreading haystacks. The man's casual request invigorates him, offering a glimpse of hope amid his uncertainty.

Returning home, Hege remains skeptical of the small victory Mattis feels, but for him, receiving the offer is liberating. The chapter closes on a contemplative note as Mattis reflects on feelings of inadequacy and the burdens of comparing himself to those around him. The metaphorical imagery of the "streak" and the "bird closed under a stone" evokes a sense of missed opportunities and the lingering questions about his relationship with Hege, hinting at deeper emotional currents that remain unresolved. The chapter leaves the reader pondering the struggles of self-worth and the desire for belonging amidst a world that often seems indifferent.





## Chapter 19 Summary:

In Chapter 19, Mattis finds himself in a reflective mood while fishing alone on a calm lake. It's late July, and though he had a brief moment of joy when he helped spread hay, recent weeks have not been particularly pleasant. He has been sent out to fish by Hege, his caretaker and a significant figure in his life. While he tries to focus on fishing, the reality of his leaky boat absorbs him more than the art of angling. As water seeps in, threatening to capsize him, Mattis's thoughts drift back to his childhood and his parents. His father, who had been the primary breadwinner, died in a tragic accident, leaving Mattis with a sense of loss and confusion.

He recalls the remarks of others, particularly children who taunted him with the nickname "Simple Simon," a label he equates with failure. Despite this, Hege reassures him that others are not laughing at him. Their relationship is one of deep care, reflected in their daily interactions, though Mattis often feels a barrier between them, especially when Hege reveals her own struggles with meaning and purpose. He is acutely aware of her recent unhappiness, feeling guilty for not being able to alleviate her pain. In a moment of vulnerability, Hege admits to feeling lost and questions why she is alive, making Mattis feel helpless.

The conversation emphasizing Hege's contributions to his life — that she feeds him through her knitting — highlights the emotional and economic





dependency in their relationship. While Mattis wishes to help, Hege insists on handling her own issues, leaving Mattis burdened with concern for her well-being. As he sits alone in his boat, he reflects on his feelings of isolation, the simplicity of his life, and the underlying tensions in his relationship with Hege, all while hoping to catch a big fish that symbolizes a desire for validation and connection.

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## Chapter 20:

In Chapter 20, the protagonist, Mattis, finds himself in a perilous situation while out on a small, dilapidated boat. As he contemplates his thoughts and worries, he suddenly jolts upright when he hears a loud gurgle from beneath the vessel, realizing that the boat is taking on water faster than he can handle. Despite the warm summer water keeping him oblivious to the rising danger, panic sets in when he recognizes he cannot swim and begins to sink.

Desperate, Mattis frantically bails out water in an attempt to save himself, shouting for help despite being isolated on the vast lake. His cries go unheard, and as his situation becomes dire, he notices eerie eyes staring up at him from the water, intensifying his fear. In a moment of realization, he spots a rocky island nearby—a possible refuge. Ignoring his doubts about his strength, he grapples with the oars and pushes the boat towards the island, all the while fueled by a deep-seated need to escape the unsettling gaze.

Finally, after a struggle, he manages to reach the shore, where he collapses in relief, grateful to have survived the encounter. Though the island is just a bare rock with patches of grass, it offers him safety for the moment. He attempts to salvage the boat but quickly acknowledges its condition is beyond repair—it remains partially submerged and doesn't come ashore.

With no immediate plan and no sense of urgency, Mattis resolves to wait for



help while steadfastly holding onto the boat's rope, fearing that even a slight gust of wind could send it adrift. Finding solace in the warm sun, he feels a mix of fatigue and relief; his life has been saved, and he reassures himself that help will eventually come. In an act of reassurance toward the boat, he ties the rope around his ankle as he drifts into a much-needed slumber, a symbol of their intertwined fates and his determination to protect what little he has left. This moment of vulnerability also marks a transformative realization for Mattis, emphasizing his struggle for survival in a world that often feels overwhelming.

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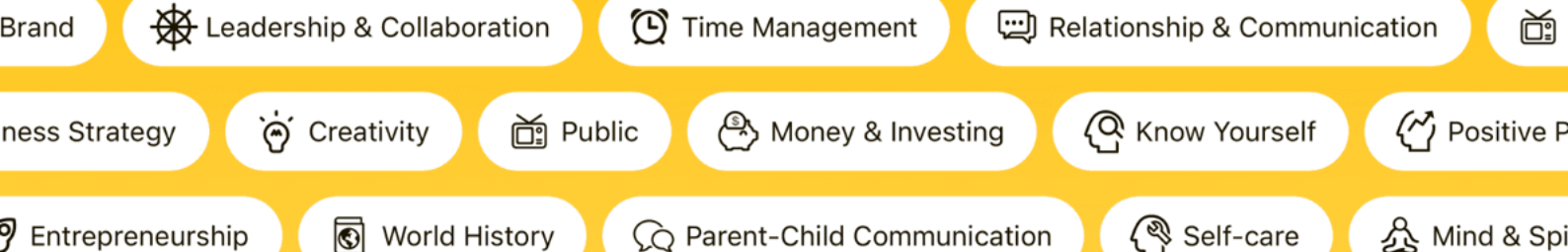




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## Chapter 21 Summary:

In Chapter 21, Mattis wakes up disoriented, abruptly pulled from sleep by girls' playful shouts and the tightening rope around his ankle, leading to a moment of confusion and fear. As he becomes aware of his surroundings, he realizes he is not alone; two cheerful girls, clad in bathing suits and enjoying their summer break, are nearby. Their laughter and friendly banter provide a stark contrast to his previous solitude, and he feels an overwhelming sense of joy mixed with nervousness.

The girls, Anna and Inger, explain that they are on holiday nearby and decided to take a rowing trip, initially mistaking Mattis's capsized boat for a distress situation. To his relief and delight, they are interested in him and share that they, too, have dreams, suggesting a level of understanding he appreciates. As Mattis engages with them, he struggles with the urge to act normally despite his self-consciousness.

As their conversation unfolds, it is clear that Mattis is deeply affected by the girls' presence. They do not recognize him, which allows him to shed his insecurities temporarily and adopt a different persona. He shares little about himself, even as they prompt him with questions, and insists that he is just a regular individual, which they seem to accept. The sense of freedom he feels is intoxicating.



Despite some initial hesitation, Mattis finds himself feeling increasingly bold, even as an internal storm of conflicting emotions rages within him. Anna and Inger's openness draws him in, and he becomes more comfortable, sharing snippets of his life. However, he grapples with guilt about how he portrays himself, especially when they inquire about his home life and family. Yet, he finds solace in their companionship and the sense that they truly enjoy his presence.

The chapter culminates with a palpable tension as Mattis relents and shares his name, feeling empowered in this moment of connection. The girls express delight, and without the weight of his ordinary life, he enjoys being in their company. Ultimately, as they prepare to row him back, Mattis cherishes this fleeting moment of happiness and camaraderie, acknowledging the sweetness of this unexpected encounter and the new dimension it brings to his life.





## Chapter 22 Summary:

In Chapter 22, we find Mattis, also known as Simple Simon, embarking on an adventurous outing with Anna and Inger. The chapter opens with the girls launching their light and buoyant boat into the water, which prompts Mattis to discuss his own waterlogged vessel that he believes he must bring along to preserve his future outings on the lake.

With determination, Mattis takes charge, instructing the girls to help rock the boat to remove the water and secure its buoyancy. The girls enthusiastically assist him, making the task playful and enjoyable. As Mattis repairs a hole in the boat with a sock, he gains confidence in his abilities, revealing he has expertise not only in boat repairs but also in rowing. The girls, amused and supportive, encourage his newfound sense of authority, and Mattis takes the oars, relishing in his role.

As they row, Mattis feels an exhilarating mix of joy and pride, envisioning himself as a master of the lake and dreaming of a grand arrival where they can be seen by others. Contrary to the more introspective and shy demeanor he typically exhibits, he now has ambitions of impressing onlookers at the pier by the store. The girls, sensing his excitement, tease him playfully, but also share in his joy, marking this outing as a memorable day for all of them.

However, as they approach the pier, Mattis's confidence is tinged with a hint



of insecurity. He fears the girls will remember their time with him only as a fleeting moment, so he resolves to make the landing as impressive as possible. Ignoring his growing fatigue, he rows vigorously, desperate to maintain his facade of skill and grandeur.

As they glide towards the pier, a small crowd begins to gather, intrigued by the sight of Mattis navigating the boat with the two girls. This moment is pivotal for Mattis, transforming him from a perception of Simple Simon to a figure of admiration and competence. With a grand flourish, he stops the boat and delivers a proud farewell to Anna and Inger, publicly expressing his gratitude.

The girls, proud of their shared experiences, reciprocate his thanks, solidifying a bond between them. However, a boy from the crowd tries to diminish Mattis's moment of triumph by revealing his identity as Simple Simon. Fortunately, the girls defend him, asserting that it doesn't matter whether he's called Per or Mattis, but instead emphasizing the fun they shared. This small triumph feels monumental to Mattis, who realizes he might have left a lasting impression not only on the girls but also on the small crowd at the pier.

As the girls depart, Mattis stands tall, feeling accepted and valued. The community of spectators, instead of mocking him, acknowledges his growth and the charm of the moment. With a heart full of newfound hope, Mattis





walks home, buoyed by the experience and contemplating the possibility of further adventures with Anna and Inger. The chapter concludes with Mattis acknowledging his changing self-image and the blossoming connections that he no longer fears to embrace.

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## Chapter 23 Summary:

In Chapter 23, Mattis returns home, filled with excitement but also a tinge of melancholy. The whirlwind of his recent adventure with the two girls, Anna and Inger, has left him reflective. Although the joyful boat that brought them is now gone, he cherishes the remarkable experience he shared with them, realizing that such moments are rarely repeated in life.

As he recounts his story to his sister Hege, who is absorbed in her knitting, Mattis feels a mixture of appreciation and frustration. Hege seems preoccupied, only half-listening, which irritates him, prompting him to emphasize the importance of the tale he has to tell. When he finally captures her full attention, he shares the heartfelt farewell words from Anna and Inger—how they would remember him no matter what. This reinforcement of connection gives Mattis a newfound sense of confidence as he walks through his small town.

Back in the store, the atmosphere is different for Mattis now. The villagers, likely aware of his encounter, treat him with a newfound respect. The storekeeper tries to engage casually, teasingly asking if Mattis has been rowing again, to which Mattis responds with indifference. He finds joy in the subtle shift in how he interacts with others—he recognizes his growth in confidence, marked by his refusal to buy candy on his trip, as he now carries himself like a man transformed.



However, reality strikes him when he learns that Anna and Inger have indeed left for good. This final revelation solidifies the bittersweet nature of his experience—he is a changed person, but the girls are gone, leaving only memories behind. He navigates through this new sense of self, forever altered by a fleeting moment of happiness, aware that some moments are indeed precious yet ephemeral.

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## Chapter 24:

### ### Summary of Chapter 24

As summer finally succumbs to a brewing storm, Mattis senses the heavy atmosphere the moment he steps outside. The sky is dark, suggesting an impending thunderstorm, and he feels an internal unease that signals trouble. His sister, Hege, appears unfazed as she tidies up the house, dismissing his fears with a sense of calm that only frustrates him further. This dynamic showcases Mattis's deep-rooted fear of thunderstorms, which he has experienced throughout his life.

As Mattis tries to point out the signs of the storm, Hege maintains her composure, suggesting that the storm won't amount to anything. Ignoring her reassurances, Mattis prepares to retreat to the privy—his designated safe haven during storms—believing it to offer some protection. Over the years, he has collected various tales about lightning, convinced that the privy has never been struck.

When the storm finally erupts, Mattis's fear intensifies. He feels the electrifying tension in the air as the first rumbles of thunder grow louder. Huddled in his shelter, he counts the seconds between flashes and crashes, a habit developed from his anxiety. The rain begins to pour, and he realizes he



is enduring the storm's initial onslaught, devoid of the usual comfort of shelter. In his mind, he grapples with the idea that perhaps nothing is truly safe anymore.

Despite the chaos outside, Hege remains inside, knitting calmly, a stark

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## Chapter 25 Summary:

In Chapter 25, Mattis takes a post-storm stroll to explore his familiar surroundings, feeling rejuvenated by nature. However, he encounters a troubling sight: among two aspens—symbolically representing him and Hege—one has been struck by lightning, leaving only a fragment of its trunk visible. This event leaves Mattis in a state of unease and introspection, pondering whether the omen indicates something perilous for him or Hege.

Mattis initially contemplates calling Hege to discuss the fallen aspen, but he hesitates, sensing that she may already understand the significance of the event. Instead, he judges that he needs to be strategic to uncover the truth about the lightning strike. When he returns to Hege, who is knitting, he sheepishly hints at the disaster without revealing his deeper fears. Hege, however, brushes off the incident as unimportant. This dismissive attitude frustrates Mattis, who feels an escalating sense of dread regarding the fallen tree.

Determined to uncover more information about the incident, Mattis decides to visit the store, which serves as a social hub in their community. He prepares under the pretense of shopping, motivated by the underlying urgency to discover the identity of the struck aspen. While Hege comments on his newfound assertiveness, Mattis feels the need to keep his true intentions hidden.



At the store, he faces an embarrassing moment when the shopkeeper assumes he has insufficient funds and gifts him candy, reinforcing his feelings of inadequacy amidst the weighty concerns he bears. Though Mattis initially tries to assert his autonomy, he ultimately accepts the treat, using it as a brief escape from his worries.

On his way home, he tries to engage a neighboring haymaker in conversation, hoping to glean insights about the aspen trees. Unfortunately, the man initially misinterprets Mattis's awkward inquiries and, despite realizing what Mattis is alluding to, declines to discuss it further. Their exchange grows increasingly tense, as Mattis's fears culminate in him asking if the fallen tree represents someone at home—an implication laden with anxiety about Hege's well-being.

Ultimately, the haymaker shuts down the conversation, leaving Mattis more troubled than before. Feeling horrified by his insinuations and the looming uncertainty about who might be in danger, he is left grappling with his thoughts, unable to seek clarity from others. The chapter ends with Mattis deeply unsettled, as he holds onto his dreadful secret without any resolution.





## Chapter 26 Summary:

In Chapter 26, the protagonist, Mattis, wrestles with a heavy sense of foreboding regarding his relationship with Hege, the woman he has spent a lifetime alongside. The conversation begins with Mattis expressing a vague feeling of uncertainty that looms over both of them. He is hesitant to articulate the nature of his concerns, fearing it may reflect something grim about their future together. Their dialogue reveals a dynamic that is both familiar and complex; Hege's practicality often clashes with Mattis's more turbulent emotions.

Hege, accustomed to Mattis's enigmatic thoughts, interprets his unease as a worry about mundane matters such as food and finances, reflecting her grounded nature. This divergence in their perspectives highlights Mattis's inner turmoil versus Hege's ability to remain focused on daily survival, both a testament to their individual natures and the challenges they face in life. As she disregards his dark speculation by asserting that they will manage as they always have, she reassures him, though Mattis is aware that her optimism may not be sufficient to combat his deeper fears.

In a moment of existential dread, Mattis grapples with a disturbing revelation—Hege could represent something more vulnerable in his life, akin to a metaphorical bird that has been shot. This metaphor reflects his anxiety about her safety and their bond, as he contemplates what losing her



would mean for him. Ultimately, overwhelmed by his spiraling thoughts, he decides to dismiss the dark sentiments entirely, opting for a return to their simple, comforting routine. Hege, sensing his reversal in demeanor, readily agrees to this reprieve, affirming their willingness to push aside unsettling thoughts.

Through this chapter, the tension between Mattis's introspective fears and Hege's resilient optimism deepens, illustrating the intricacies of their relationship against the backdrop of an uncertain world.



## Chapter 27 Summary:

In Chapter 27, Mattis has diligently repaired his boat, eager to spend his summer rowing on the lake, a pursuit that brings him peace of mind compared to the confusion he feels while working on land. His thoughts drift out on the water, where he feels the presence of his lost loved ones, Anna and Inger, as their memories haunt the lake, though he knows he cannot truly see them again. The chapter captures Mattis's longing for connection and his emotional turmoil as he grapples with his feelings of loneliness.

Returning to the cottage, Mattis engages in a conversation with Hege, expressing his sense that something has changed. He becomes increasingly anxious, fearing something dire has happened that endangers Hege, prompting him to demand they leave and go far away. Hege, calm and collected, counters his frantic energy with practicality, suggesting they prepare before departing. This unexpected response leaves Mattis off-balance, revealing the tension in his mind.

As they walk into the forest, Mattis struggles with guilt and remorse over a troubling secret he harbors. Despite Hege's reassurances that everything will be alright, he cannot shake the weight of his thoughts. She urges him to stop fixating on his guilt, but he has trouble doing so. Their excursion into the serene woods serves as a turning point for both characters, allowing a moment of respite amid Mattis's turmoil. It is through Hege's steadfast



demeanor that he begins to regain a sense of clarity.

Eventually, they find themselves at the lake's edge, where Hege encourages Mattis to consider rowing people across the lake as a potential source of purpose. Mattis embraces this suggestion, excited about the prospect of a job that suits him. He begins to see a way forward, igniting hope within him.

Despite Hege's initial doubts about the feasibility of the idea, suggesting that no one lives on the other side of the lake, she eventually acknowledges that there's no harm in trying. This encouragement inspires a sense of agency in Mattis, marking the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

As he dedicates himself to preparing the boat that evening, Mattis feels a shift in his outlook. The chapter closes with him reflective yet hopeful, envisioning a brighter future despite the challenges that hound him, embodying his resilience in the face of despair. The haunting memory of the woodcock reminds readers of the fragility of life, yet Mattis carries on, eager for new beginnings.



## Chapter 28:

### ### Chapter 28 Summary

In this chapter, Mattis, a simple and somewhat awkward man, embarks on his first day as a ferryman, a job that symbolizes newfound purpose and responsibility in his life. The serene lake before him serves as a reflective canvas of his inner disposition; it is both a space of anticipation and a trial of his resolve.

Hege, Mattis's sister, encourages him with the idea of becoming a ferryman, a suggestion that allows him a temporary escape from the confines of their home. Although Hege may be eager to have some space away from him, Mattis feels immense gratitude for this opportunity. She prepares him a lunch, signaling her practical support for his new role.

As Mattis sets out in the boat, he is filled with a mix of excitement and worry. He recalls Hege's instructions about the waiting nature of a ferryman: even without immediate calls for his services, he must remain vigilant. The essence of a ferryman's duty becomes clear to him—patience and presence are key, even in solitude. He dreams of a future where he can afford a better boat, which he believes will attract more customers.



Initially, the lake appears desolate, with no one waiting on either shore, which is natural on his first day. However, he soon hears a shout that resembles Hege's voice calling for the ferry from across the lake, igniting both excitement and confusion within him. Convinced someone truly needs him, he rows as hard as he can, only to find the shore empty when he arrives, which heightens his anxiety and leads him to question his own senses.

Determined to uphold his duty, Mattis returns to his boat, eager for the next call. Frustration brews as he grapples with the idea of being a ferryman in a seemingly empty world. Yet, he takes comfort in Hege's reassurance when he returns to her, even as she dismisses his concerns as mere imagination. Still, the allure of the water calls him back, and he resolves to prove himself worthy in this new role.

Finally, a figure emerges—a man named Jørgen, who approaches the shore. Mattis, though initially fearful and uncertain, gathers his courage. Jørgen is seeking passage across the lake, and just like that, Mattis experiences the thrill of ferrying someone for the first time. In the course of their brief but revealing exchange, Jørgen expresses weariness and the need for a place to stay, and Mattis, buoyed by the success of his first trip, offers hospitality.

As the chapter closes, Jørgen becomes a new presence in their lives. This encounter stirs a combination of pride and excitement in Mattis, who is eager to share his accomplishments with Hege. The dynamics are shifting as



their world grows ever so slightly bigger with the introduction of new characters. Thus, we see Mattis navigating not only the waters of the lake but the complexities of relationships and responsibilities as well.

The chapter encapsulates Mattis's journey of self-discovery, his aspiration to find his place in the world, and hints at how this new endeavor may lead to broader connections with those around him.

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## Chapter 29 Summary:

In Chapter 29, the arrival of Jørgen brings a subtle shift in dynamics for Mattis and Hege, who are siblings living a secluded life. Initially, Jørgen's unexpected decision to stay in their attic after finding work in the nearby forest introduces a new element of companionship, surprising both Mattis and Hege. Hege, in particular, seems to enjoy his presence, which Mattis observes with a mix of curiosity and unease.

As Jørgen integrates into their lives, he adopts a reserved demeanor, cooking his meals independently and keeping to himself. This behavior contrasts sharply with the sibling bond Mattis and Hege share. Meanwhile, Mattis continues his job as a ferryman, although his lack of passengers dampens his enthusiasm. He finds some comfort in the simple routine of his newfound role, even as he longs for more activity and the prospect of earning money for a new boat.

The chapter paints a poignant picture of Mattis's growing introspection. He notices changes in Hege, who no longer exhibits the same kindness towards him. Instead, she becomes critical and irritable, particularly when he makes remarks about their new situation. Their discussions reveal Mattis's confusion; he feels unchanged while Hege seems distant and preoccupied, often directing her attention towards the capable and enigmatic Jørgen.



The tension escalates as Hege treats Jørgen with a kind of admiration that Mattis has not seen before. He grapples with feelings of abandonment and jealousy as he observes Hege's shifting behavior, showcasing the emotional complexities that arise with Jørgen's presence. Amidst this tension, Mattis yearns for clarity on the changes in their dynamic, particularly his sister's growing fixation on Jørgen, leaving him feeling sidelined in a situation he once found comforting.

Overall, this chapter underscores the evolving relationships and internal struggles the characters face, revealing how an unexpected guest can disrupt the fragile balance of companionship and affection within their small domestic world.

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## Chapter 30 Summary:

In Chapter 30, we find Mattis continuing his routine as a ferryman, rowing alone day after day, waiting for passengers who never arrive. While he does not mind the solitude of his job, his relationship with his sister, Hege, has soured. Her nagging and critical nature increasingly irritate him, especially as she focuses on improving her appearance, presumably to attract Jørgen, the lumberjack whom Mattis feels indifferent towards.

One evening, as the moon bathes the scenery in a red glow, Jørgen unexpectedly rushes to Mattis, urging him to prepare for a possible night crossing on the lake. Despite Mattis's anxiety about the prospect of rowing at night, he feels a surge of excitement and obligation to respond to the call of the wilderness, a duty ingrained in all ferrymen.

As he sets out on his boat, he grapples with self-doubt and fears of the unknown. The serene beauty of the night surrounds him, yet his thoughts are consumed by apprehension. He rows across the lake but finds no one waiting for him at the opposite shore. After attempting to call for a passenger, he succumbs to panic, abandoning his duty and returning to the safety of the near shore.

Upon arriving back home, he is surprised to find Hege waiting for him, fully dressed and seemingly worried. Her attitude shifts from concern to a strange,



inexplicable joy when she sees him return unharmed. This moment creates a sense of warmth and gratitude in Mattis, deepening his appreciation for their bond. He expresses his desire for her to always remain close, highlighting the fleeting and fragile nature of their familial relationship amidst the chaos of his emotions. Despite the underlying tension, there is an implicit connection between them, suggesting a complex but supportive sibling dynamic.

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## Chapter 31 Summary:

In Chapter 31, Mattis observes a growing attachment between Hege and Jørgen, a lumberjack, which fuels his insecurities and jealousy. Hege's fixation on Jørgen becomes evident as she follows him with her gaze, a behavior that unsettles Mattis. Feeling ignored and rejected, he approaches Jørgen to express his frustrations but quickly discovers that Jørgen remains distant and aloof, seemingly uninterested in Mattis's concerns.

Their conversation is short-lived, and Jørgen departs for the forest, leaving Hege behind. Although Mattis is aware of Hege's affection for him, he senses a shift in their dynamic. Hege, who used to be attentive and nurturing without reservation, now channels her energy towards Jørgen. Nevertheless, she also seems unexpectedly pleased about Mattis's return after a night of ferrying, hinting at deeper feelings conflicting with her attention toward the lumberjack.

When Mattis expresses his desire for candy, Hege, now in charge of the household shopping, brusquely declines his request, citing the necessity for him to focus on his role as a ferryman. Her assertiveness surprises him, and he refrains from arguing further, noting her unwavering happiness, both at his return and in her daily life.

Amidst this tension, Hege prepares a lunch for Jørgen but insists that Mattis



should not deliver it; instead, she takes it herself. Attempting to express his displeasure about her fixation on Jørgen, Mattis speaks up, but Hege deflects his concerns with humor, prompting him to reconsider his feelings and desires.

The laughter they share unveils the underlying affection still present between them, with Mattis fleetingly thinking about his own interests in local women, Anna and Inger. This subtle exchange revitalizes his spirits. As Hege heads into the forest with the sandwiches, Mattis begins his day of ferrying but is met with deeper reflections about unseen emotions and hidden truths, symbolized by his thoughts of "eyes under stones." As he gazes over the expansive lake, he grapples with his complex feelings of jealousy, friendship, and the uncertainty that looms over his relationships.

In summary, this chapter explores themes of jealousy, longing, and the struggle for connection amidst the burgeoning affection between Hege and Jørgen, all while Mattis navigates his role in this changing dynamic.



## Chapter 32:

In Chapter 32, the tension between Mattis and the lumberjack Jørgen escalates as both men navigate their feelings for Hege, Mattis's sister. Jørgen has become an integral part of their household, working in the forest and contributing financially while also capturing Hege's attention. Mattis grapples with a mix of happiness and unease—he has brought Jørgen into their lives but is now confronted by his sister's changing demeanor.

As the next Sunday arrives, the atmosphere is thick with unspoken emotions. Mattis, bursting with the need to understand the dynamics between Hege and Jørgen, finds himself at a breaking point. He confronts Hege about his feelings of discomfort, only to have her lash out, admitting her frustration with his constant scrutiny. Her outburst stings him, but she quickly backtracks, revealing the vulnerability she feels.

Mattis's jealousy surges, prompting him to call for Jørgen to come down from the attic, defying Hege's attempts to calm him. When Jørgen appears, Mattis brazenly accuses him of altering Hege's character, unsure of how to address the emotional turmoil brewing within him. Jørgen, calm and unfazed, points out his intention to stay and dismisses Mattis's accusations that he has taken anything from Hege.

Mattis's desperate attempt to defend his sister leads to a climactic



confrontation, where he inadvertently exposes the depth of his feelings for Hege and the fear of losing her. Jørgen maintains his composure and gently asserts that he and Hege are merely friends, but the dynamic shifts when Hege emerges, blushing and clearly affectionate toward Jørgen.

Mattis is left aghast as Jørgen openly confirms their relationship, sending Mattis into a spiraling vortex of despair and denial. He grapples with the realization that Hege has found happiness in Jørgen's company, leaving him feeling obsolete. His sharp questions reveal his inner turmoil, but Hege reassures him that everything can remain as it was, dismissing his fears about losing her.

However, Mattis's resentment toward his role as the ferryman grows. He wishes he had never taken the job that brought Jørgen into their lives, but Jørgen futilely suggests that others could arrive via the lake. They allude to Mattis's ferrying duties, highlighting the bonds and complications that arise from it. Hege's unexpected embrace of Mattis showcases a fleeting moment of sibling affection, yet he is left pondering the nuances of their relationships.

As Mattis retreats to the shore, contemplating the deeper implications of his role and the arrival of Jørgen, he engages in introspection about love and conflict. He is caught between the joy of his sister's happiness and the ache of his own loneliness, wrestling with feelings that leave him feeling equally





responsible and powerless in the evolving dynamics of their family.

Ultimately, he is left to ponder the role that he, the boat, and the choices they've made have played in bringing Jørgen into their lives.

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## Chapter 33 Summary:

In Chapter 33, Mattis experiences a tumultuous emotional upheaval spurred by Hege's newfound happiness and her frequent visits to Jørgen. Since their important announcement about the future of their relationships, Mattis finds himself grappling with feelings of fear and uncertainty. Hege's joy contrasts sharply with his inner turmoil; he realizes he should be happy for her, yet the thought of losing her is terrifying. He tries to engage with Hege, referencing a bird that was shot, but the conversation ends abruptly. Hege advises Mattis to think of others and act like a grown-up; her words leave him confused and distressed.

Feeling overwhelmed, he goes to check on his boat, hesitant to ferry passengers during an impending thunderstorm. He notices that both Hege and Jørgen seem preoccupied and misaligned with their usual tasks, which deepens his feeling of isolation and confusion. The storm begins to brew, and Mattis decides to take refuge in his hiding spot, wanting to escape the chaos outside.

As thunder cracks and rain threatens, Jørgen calls for Mattis to come out, demanding he join them. Mattis, caught off guard and fearful, resists at first. However, he ultimately musters the courage to confront Jørgen. Stepping out into the furious storm, he arrives at Jørgen's side, where Jørgen, though authoritative, acknowledges Mattis's presence with respect. The exchange



between them becomes a pivotal moment, blending friendship with underlying fear.

Jørgen simply invites Mattis to come inside and sit with them, underscoring that the storm is not a place for him. Although anger simmers within Mattis, he refrains from expressing it, instead surrendering to Jørgen's calm authority. They retreat indoors as the storm subsides, with Hege's concern for Mattis evident.

Inside, Mattis feels an overwhelming sense of inadequacy among Hege and Jørgen, who appear strong and capable, leaving him disoriented. As the chaos of the storm fades, he finds solace on a bench, allowing fatigue to wash over him, and he soon drifts into a deep slumber, his thoughts far removed from the turmoil he just faced.



## Chapter 34 Summary:

In Chapter 34, Mattis reflects on his relationship with Jørgen and his sister Hege after their intense experience during a thunderstorm. He feels a mix of gratitude and confusion towards Jørgen, who pushed him to confront his limits. Despite this newfound sense of strength, Mattis senses the emotional distance growing between him and Hege, who seems blissfully happy with Jørgen. He observes Hege's joy when Jørgen returns from the forest, making him acutely aware of his own isolation.

As Mattis grapples with his place in this evolving dynamic, he can't help but wonder about his future. He feels abandoned and questions whether Hege and Jørgen consider him capable of managing his life on his own. This uncertainty leads him to inquire directly about Jørgen's motives, only to learn that Jørgen was testing his resilience, which fills Mattis with a sense of dread, implying this challenge might be just the beginning.

While he rows on the lake, navigating the emptiness of his ferry, he reminisces about past romantic entanglements with girls like Anna and Inger. Although these memories are bittersweet, he realizes that he's learning valuable lessons on interacting with women from observing Jørgen. Despite his concerns, he tries to mask his anxiety with bravado when speaking to Hege, insisting that he can handle any news.



However, Hege's carefree attitude and happiness make it difficult for Mattis to connect with her on a deeper level. He finds himself hesitating as he attempts to reminisce about their past, ultimately abandoning the conversation as emotions overwhelm him. At this moment, the disparity between their experiences becomes painfully clear, reinforcing Mattis's sense of loneliness in a world where he feels increasingly out of place. The chapter paints a poignant picture of Mattis's internal struggle amidst the shifting dynamics of his relationships, setting the stage for his ongoing search for belonging and identity.

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## Chapter 35 Summary:

In Chapter 35, Mattis finds himself confronted by Jørgen early one cool September morning. Jørgen insists that Mattis join him in the forest to learn how to fell trees, a departure from Mattis's comfortable routine of ferrying. Although Mattis is initially reluctant, Jørgen's authoritative tone makes it feel more like an order than a suggestion. He consults Hege, who encourages him to accompany Jørgen, assuring him that it's a valuable skill to learn.

The chapter highlights a shift in Mattis's circumstances. Growing up in a rural area, he has become accustomed to a life of labor and hardship, and while his situation has improved somewhat, he still grapples with feelings of confusion and inadequacy. As they make their way to the forest, memories of his struggles with turnip thinning arise, which Jørgen fails to understand, underscoring the disconnect between them.

Upon arriving at the site filled with fallen trees, Mattis attempts to strip bark from a trunk, but his inexperience leads to frustration as his efforts do not meet Jørgen's expectations. Feeling overwhelmed and questioning his purpose there, Mattis expresses doubts about the necessity of learning this new skill. Jørgen reassures him that learning to fell trees can lead to financial independence, a life skill that could benefit Mattis.

However, Mattis remains apprehensive, sensing that Jørgen and Hege might



be planning to leave him behind. He vehemently protests his desire not to learn the lumberjack skill, but Jørgen counters that sometimes learning is necessary for personal growth. This conversation reveals the tension between their intentions and Mattis's fear of being abandoned, which stems from his history of feeling lost and alone.

In a moment of defiance, Mattis devises a plan to escape the situation by asking if he can go home, to which Jørgen's silence speaks volumes. Energized by his impulsive idea, Mattis runs off, illustrating both his desperation to assert some control over his life and his fear of change. This chapter encapsulates Mattis's internal struggle between wanting to maintain his stability and the inevitable push towards independence and self-sufficiency.





## Chapter 36:

In this chapter, we find Hege anxiously watching for her brother Mattis, who comes racing back from the forest, provoking her concern that he might have been injured during the tree-felling. Thankfully, he hasn't hurt himself; rather, he's overly excited about something he needs to discuss with her. This initial interaction reveals the bond between them, but Mattis feels his longing to reconnect with Hege thwarted by the presence of Jørgen, another man for whom Hege has feelings.

Their conversation is awkward at first, as Mattis struggles to convey his intentions. Hege, relieved about Jørgen's safety, is light-hearted, but the mood shifts when Mattis indicates he wants to rekindle their past relationship. Relying on nostalgia, he recalls their shared moments sitting together on the humps, aiming to draw her closer. However, Hege's responses reveal her emotional distance; her attachment to Jørgen casts a shadow over Mattis's efforts.

Despite Mattis's attempts to break down the barriers between them, Hege's avoidance of his gaze and her acknowledgment of Jørgen highlight the futility of his plan. Deflated, Mattis realizes that his feelings for Hege are not enough to shift her loyalty and that their past connection is overshadowed by her current affections.



As the conversation winds down, Hege conveys her willingness to support him, yet Mattis is left with a sense of despair. He feels that his thoughts and plans are meaningless if they cannot persuade her to return to him. This internal conflict underscores Mattis's vulnerability and the painful realization that their bond may no longer hold the same significance for Hege. The chapter closes with Mattis contemplating the futility of his “lightning thoughts,” indicating a tension between fleeting emotions and lasting decisions, setting a poignant stage for what may unfold next.

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## Chapter 37 Summary:

### Chapter 37 Summary

The chapter begins with Mattis feeling the oppressive influence of Jørgen's will, as Jørgen insistently takes him into the forest each morning for training. Despite Mattis's protests that he struggles with chopping wood, Hege insists that he must continue this training, failing to understand that his mind and skills are better suited to rowing a boat than wielding an axe.

During one of their breaks in the forest, Mattis finally confronts Jørgen about his growing frustrations, particularly regarding Hege, whom he feels he has lost to Jørgen. The conversation becomes tense as Jørgen urges Mattis to consider Hege's happiness rather than his own jealousy. Mattis is internally conflicted, recognizing Jørgen's point but still feeling scorned.

Their conversation drifts into an awkward silence, with Mattis voicing his dark thoughts about Jørgen. Despite Mattis's growing resentment, the discussion shifts to the poisonous toadstools nearby, which Jørgen warns him against eating. In a moment of defiance and desperation, Mattis eats a piece of the toxic fungus, convinced that this act of rebellion will empower him.



Immediately, Mattis experiences a troubling rush, feeling as if his insides are ablaze, which only fuels his defiance against Jørgen. In a fit of madness, Mattis challenges Jørgen, creating a dynamic where he believes he is becoming powerful while interpreting the world through a warped lens.

As Mattis embraces this altered state—full of wild thoughts about flying woodcocks and the blurring lines between reality and imagination—Jørgen tries to reason with him but ultimately resorts to physically restraining him when Mattis launches an aggressive stunt. The moment becomes serious as Jørgen helps Mattis cool down with water, quenching his fever of paranoia and irrational thoughts.

After Mattis gradually regains his composure, he expresses his relief that Jørgen is unharmed, indicating the complexity of their relationship. With his mind clearing, he shifts focus to the pleasant memories of Anna and Inger, girls from his past summer rowing adventures, and inquires about Jørgen's own thoughts on women.

Jørgen responds with surprising candor, reinforcing a camaraderie between them. However, Jørgen soon shifts the focus back to work, emphasizing the need to return to the task at hand. In the end, Mattis finds a mix of joy and shame over his earlier behavior, and he humorously tramples the remnants of the toadstools, acknowledging the absurdity of his previous actions while accepting his place under Jørgen's strict guidance. The chapter concludes



with a sense of growth in Mattis, as he learns to navigate the complexities of his emotions and relationships.

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## Chapter 38 Summary:

In this poignant chapter, Mattis grapples with overwhelming guilt and paranoia resulting from a frightening encounter in the forest. After nearly harming Jørgen, a young man whom Mattis is both intimidated by and admires, he is haunted by thoughts of what might have happened. The incident leaves him unsettled, prompting him to avoid the forest altogether. Despite his fears, the absence of a serious conversation about the event from Hege, his sister, and Jørgen sharpens his sense of isolation.

Hege, who is blossoming with love and vitality, contrasts sharply with Mattis' grim demeanor. Her busy, energetic nature fills their home with life, yet it only serves to deepen Mattis' feelings of inadequacy and despair. His daily refrain, "What's going to become of me?" illustrates his lingering anxiety about his future and identity.

Mattis becomes increasingly fixated on the ominous presence of toadstools, associating them with danger and the threat to Jørgen. The mushrooms, strange and grotesque, symbolize his fear and paranoia, and he reacts by violently destroying one he sees outside. Yet, when he discovers another similar toadstool on their property, he hesitates, revealing his internal struggle as he wrestles with his fears and the implications of his actions.

In a moment of desperation, Mattis seeks reassurance from Hege regarding



the prevalence of these toadstools, but her dismissal leaves him feeling unheard and misunderstood. This chapter vividly highlights Mattis' psychological turmoil while also establishing the stark contrast between his troubled mind and Hege's joyful spirit, ultimately leaving readers questioning what will become of him amidst his mounting fears.

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## Chapter 39 Summary:

### Chapter 39 Summary

In a moment that feels miraculous amidst his gloom, Mattis encounters a familiar girl from a turnip field he worked in last spring. Memories of their joyful interactions, including playful pinching, flood his mind as he stands, initially stunned. His hope that she has visited specifically for him is tempered by the knowledge that she currently has a sweetheart.

Mattis is pleasantly surprised when she confirms her romantic status has changed, sparking a mix of pleasure and sadness within him. Their conversation deepens as she shares she is essentially free, which gives Mattis a flicker of hope. However, as she reveals her intention to deliver a message to the lumberjack Jørgen, whom Mattis begrudgingly acknowledges is likely the reason for her visit, he realizes it may not be his moment after all. He suggests she leave the message with his sister instead, feeling a pang of disappointment that this interaction might not lead to anything more.

Despite that, determined to prolong their meeting, Mattis plots a way to see her again. When she humorously catches on to his intention while walking home, he asks to accompany her briefly, which she readily agrees to. However, his joy quickly deflates when he learns she is still involved, albeit



loosely, with someone else.

Their interaction brings Mattis deeper into contemplation. Seating themselves on a flat stone by the path, he awkwardly tries to engage her with small talk, asking if she found his previous comment clever. Her disappointed reaction drives him to question the connection they share, creating a moment of tension that encapsulates his vulnerability.

Despite her initial attraction, she feels uncomfortable and decides to leave, signaling it may not be destined for them. Yet, just as she begins to walk away, a deeper connection forms unexpectedly when she touches his face gently. This fleeting moment allows her to realize Mattis is different from her previous romances, leaving both of them with unresolved feelings.

Mattis is left to reflect on the significance of this brief encounter with the girl, who has now gained a special place in his heart, contrasting his experiences with Anna and Inger. He sits on the stone long after she disappears, caught between joy and uncertainty as he navigates his complicated feelings for her and the echoes of his past relationships.

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## Chapter 40:

In Chapter 41, the narrative unravels Mattis's internal struggle regarding his feelings for Hege and the presence of Jørgen, a rival for Hege's affection. The chapter begins with Mattis's resolve to keep his plans covert, feeling that discussing them with Hege might lead her to intervene and thwart his intentions. The atmosphere is charged with tension as Mattis approaches Hege, who is engaged in her own world, surrounded by her sweaters and humming a tune, seemingly oblivious to his turmoil.

As he broaches the subject, Mattis makes a solemn request for Hege to choose between him and Jørgen. Hege's response is immediate and unwavering; she expresses her commitment to Jørgen without flinching, shattering Mattis's hopes. Their exchange reveals a stark contrast in their perceptions of love and relationships—while Mattis harbors a flicker of hope that things might change, Hege is resolute in her choice, reinforcing her loyalty to Jørgen.

Mattis grapples with his heartbreak, reflecting on the finality of Hege's declaration. Despite Hege's confidence that she and Jørgen will manage their relationship without issue, Mattis feels increasingly isolated, realizing the extent of his emotional loss. Their conversation closes with Hege's warm, yet dismissive demeanor, leaving Mattis standing alone, confronting the reality of his situation.



The chapter encapsulates themes of unrequited love and the painful acceptance of one's circumstances, highlighting the complexity of human relationships and the heartache that often accompanies them. As Mattis prepares to implement his clandestine plan, the emotional weight of his encounter with Hege looms large, setting the stage for his next course of action.

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## Chapter 41 Summary:

In this chapter, Mattis, a somewhat isolated and rough-hewn character, finds inspiration in a pair of neglected, unfinished wooden oars that have sat in the shed for years. Despite their crude appearance, Mattis sees potential in these oars, leading him to believe that they play a vital role in a private plan he has conceived. His intention revolves around embarking on a journey that feels both thrilling and dangerous, as he is fully aware of the risks involved: his old boat is in poor condition and he cannot swim.

As he scrapes and smooths the oars, he contemplates the dual nature of his undertaking—success would bring him back to his home and loved ones, while failure could mean sinking beneath the water. Nonetheless, there is a sense of inevitability to his plan; he feels he is at the mercy of fate and the unknown.

When Jørgen, another character interconnected with Mattis' life, returns home and notices him working, he prompts Mattis to consider returning to his role as a ferry operator, suggesting that having a job is crucial for everyone. However, Mattis remains evasive, knowing that revealing too much about his intentions might lead to unwanted consequences.

That night, as he prepares for bed, Mattis is infused with a mix of anticipation and dread. He hears laughter and soft voices from the attic





where Jørgen and Hege, another significant figure in his life, are chatting. This brings him a tumultuous blend of longing and self-doubt, reinforcing his feelings of being a burden. Yet, the readiness of his newly crafted oars offers a glimmer of hope, as he thinks about what tomorrow might hold, assuring himself that he must wait for the right weather conditions before setting off.

As he drifts off to sleep, the wind picks up outside, filling him with a sense of peace. He acknowledges that tomorrow's winds may hinder his plans, but he is comforted by the thought that he can wait for the right moment. This chapter encapsulates Mattis' internal struggle as he prepares for a life-altering decision, illustrated through his relationship with the weather, the oars, and the distant voices of those he cares about.

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## Chapter 42 Summary:

In Chapter 43, Mattis is anxiously preparing for a crucial test that hinges on the calmness of the lake. He has set specific conditions for his task: the water must be smooth and mirror-like when he begins. Despite his anticipation, days pass with persistent winds disrupting his hopes. Each morning, he rises with trepidation, wishing for a windless day to arrive, yet each day unfurls with waves crashing against his boat.

As he reflects on his situation, he feels a strange sense of solitude in his secret purpose; despite everyone around him—namely Hege and Jørgen—being oblivious to his inner turmoil regarding the lake and his plans, he grapples with feelings of inadequacy and cleverness. He doubts his ability to navigate the situation without revealing his intentions to them.

One morning, anticipating the potential for a calm lake, Mattis is still met with disappointment as winds whip across the water. His mounting anxiety manifests as he notices Hege watching him closely, prompting him to question if his distress is evident. In a bid to escape scrutiny, he decides to mend his boat, suggesting to Hege that he will be busy with it. Her agreeable response seems to provide him with a small comfort, although the prospect of revealing his secret looms large.

As he works on the dilapidated boat, Mattis discovers a dangerously weak





spot in its structure, contemplating whether he might accidentally damage it further in frustration. Overwhelmed by memories and thoughts of his past—his family, his sister Hege, and the various paths of his life—he finds himself wrestling with both emotional weight and the realities of his present.

With the wind swirling and the lake transforming beneath its force, he struggles to maintain hope. He yearns for the calm that seems so fleeting, understanding that both wind and calmness are transient states. In his contemplative state, he recognizes that life too can feel heavy and burdensome, filled with unresolved thoughts and dreams. The chapter closes with Mattis sitting beside the boat, enveloped in the scent of tar and decay, reflective yet hopeful that stillness may soon come to both the lake and his troubled mind.

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## Chapter 43 Summary:

In Chapter 44, Mattis interacts with his sister Hege after preparing the boat for ferrying. They have a contentious exchange as Mattis attempts to assert his independence, insisting he is ready to return to rowing despite the boat's deteriorating condition. Hege, concerned for his safety, warns him about the potential dangers, but Mattis brushes off her worry, displaying a mixture of bravado and internal turmoil. He manages to downplay the risks, even as he grapples with insecurity about how changes in their relationship—especially with Jørgen, Hege's fiancé—affect them both.

As their conversation progresses, Hege reveals her intention to consult Jørgen regarding the boat's safety, which infuriates Mattis. He reacts defensively, emphasizing his capability and longing for autonomy, stressing that he doesn't need Jørgen's input. This moment highlights the tensions between the siblings, particularly the impact of Jørgen's presence on their dynamic. Mattis feels alienated and reflects on how Hege has changed, seemingly becoming part of Jørgen's world, which fills him with both sadness and envy.

After Hege declares her feelings of happiness, which she attributes to Jørgen, Mattis's frustration boils over. Still, he ultimately encourages her to seek Jørgen's opinion, a sign of his mixed emotions. As Hege leaves, the chapter closes with Mattis feeling drained and contemplating the uncertainty



of the future—whether the winds tomorrow will be stormy or calm—and the looming presence of Jørgen’s influence in his life. He crawls into bed, reflecting on the ongoing changes and the heaviness of his thoughts as the wind continues to blow outside, signaling the arrival of whatever tomorrow might bring.

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## Chapter 44:

In Chapter 45, Mattis awakens in the stillness of the night, realizing that the wind has ceased. He reflects on his prior activities, specifically when he had been rowing, and feels a sense of apprehension about the journey that lies ahead. Despite the calm atmosphere, his mind is restless; he grapples with conflicting thoughts about what tomorrow may bring, and the uncertainty of whether the wind will pick up again in the morning. Mattis's thoughts are less about the present moment and more about the potential future, filled with worry about his upcoming ventures.

As he gets up, the serene moonlight illuminates his surroundings, broadening his perspective of the lake, which seems larger and more alive in the bright night. The stillness allows him to notice details he often takes for granted, like the vegetation along the stream. He contemplates drinking from it, an act that symbolizes a yearning for simplicity and connection to nature. However, he recoils from seeing his reflection, associating it with awkwardness and uncertainty.

In a moment of introspection, he questions how he wants his situation to unfold. The voice in his head poses a daunting inquiry about the unpredictability of his journey in the boat, leading him to declare that the outcome is now out of his hands. He speaks to the moon, placing his trust in the unknown and simultaneously feeling the weight of his circumstances.



The clearing he wanders into feels both familiar and foreign, inviting him to ponder his life and the many depths of experience. As he sits among the hillocks under the moonlight, he becomes aware of the cold, prompting him to return indoors to bed. Yet, sleep eludes him as his restless thoughts drift to

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## Chapter 45 Summary:

In Chapter 46, the scene begins with Mattis awakening at dawn, having missed the quiet morning interactions between his sister Hege and Jørgen. As he wakes up, he hears Hege remarking on the calmness of the lake, allowing Jørgen to navigate out on it. This comment jolts Mattis, flooding his mind with anxious thoughts. As he struggles to suppress these thoughts, he prepares to execute his plan for the day.

Mattis observes the serene lake from the window, noticing the mist lingering over the water, heralding the arrival of a bright autumn morning. Upon entering the kitchen, he finds Hege alone, and her immediate concern for him reflects their close sibling bond. Despite his turmoil, he tries to mask his unease, stating he is overwhelmed with thoughts. Hege's straightforward yet comforting response sets the stage for them to discuss the day's venture: the ferrying.

Hege expresses enthusiasm for Mattis's plan, although she recalls her earlier concerns about the boat's condition. Mattis assures her that the boat is fine when the weather is calm, comforted by her support. Their conversation indicates a mix of excitement and concern as they navigate the complexities of Mattis's feelings and the uncertainties of the venture ahead.

After Hege urges Mattis to be cautious with the boat, he reluctantly prepares



to leave, burdened by an unexpressed weight of thoughts and emotions. As he descends towards the lake, the sun rises, casting a warm glow over the landscape, yet he wrestles with the significance of the day. He attempts to encourage himself by vocalizing optimism about ferrying.

Reaching the beach, he smells the tar from the boat and admires the new oars, readying them to go out. However, in a moment of frantic indecision, he momentarily pulls the boat back, feeling an impulsive need to mark the day. He bites into the bark of a nearby tree, an act symbolizing a primal connection to the moment, leaving his mark on the world as he grapples with his inner turmoil. This raw display of emotion is brief, but it emphasizes his struggle.

Finally, Mattis climbs into the boat and begins to row away from the shore, leaving behind the familiar landscape and unresolved feelings. The imagery conveys a sense of departure, not just physically but also emotionally, as he navigates the uncertainties of his journey ahead while the reminders of his thoughts and connections linger in the distance.





## Chapter 46 Summary:

In this chapter, we follow the protagonist, Mattis, as he undertakes a deeply introspective and pivotal journey across a lake. Alone in his motorboat, the expansive serenity of the water contrasts with the tumultuous thoughts racing through his mind. The chapter opens with Mattis meticulously rowing in a routine manner, relying on muscle memory rather than conscious navigation. He is torn between the allure of the inviting shores and his resolute determination to reach a place of solitude where he can execute a significant decision—one that he feels has been relinquished to the hands of others.

As he moves further from the shoreline, Mattis contemplates the nature of his existence and feels somewhat disassociated from his actions, as if he is watching himself from a distance. The narrative captures his apprehension as he approaches the moment of truth. He is determined to sink his boat, an act he believes will lead to a crucial transformation. The act itself, however, is fraught with anxiety; he feels disconnected from his own body, as if he is merely a vessel carrying out a preordained fate.

Finally, he disrupts the fragile hull of the boat, and as water floods in, he is plunged into the depths of the lake. Rather than succumbing to despair, Mattis instinctively begins to swim, fighting against the water and struggling toward the distant shore—a point of refuge that feels both close and



agonizingly far. However, just as he hopes to reach safety, a wind rises, churning the lake into chaos and threatening to overwhelm him. His calls are swallowed by the vastness around him, leaving his fate uncertain in the face of nature's relentless force.

This chapter effectively captures Mattis's internal struggle as he grapples with existential questions, isolation, and the daunting nature of his decision. It serves as a turning point, highlighting themes of fate, self-discovery, and the interplay between man and nature. The urgency of Mattis's actions, combined with the tumultuous environment, creates a tense atmosphere that propels the narrative forward, drawing readers into his psychological and physical journey.

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