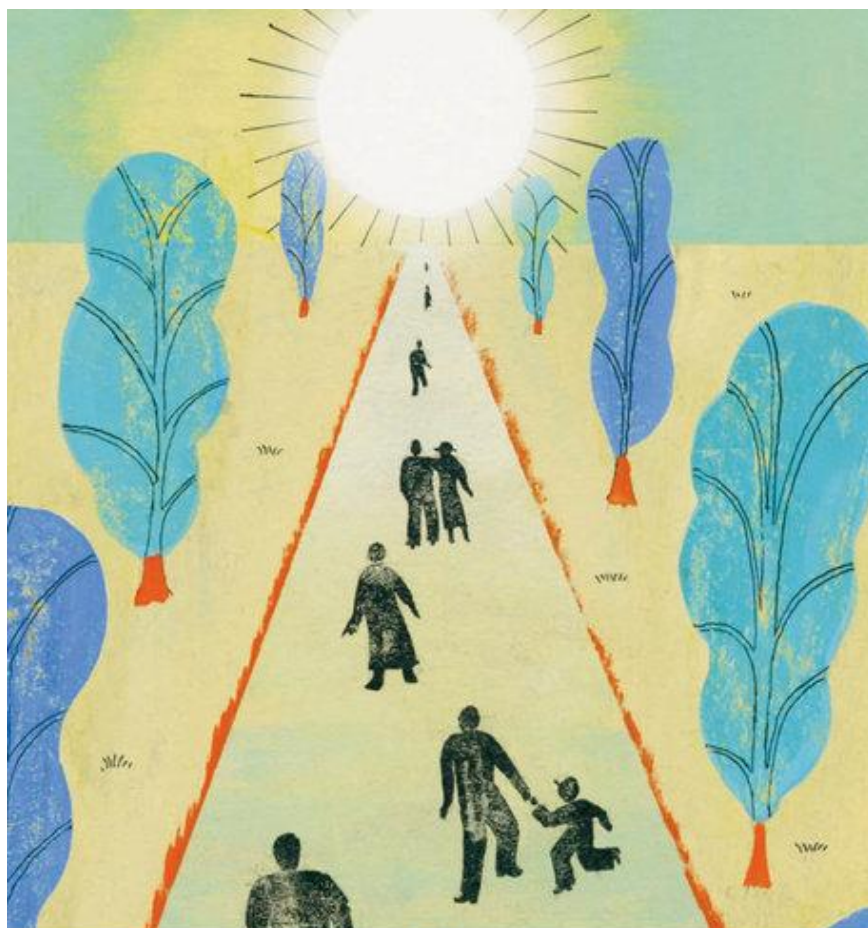


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R.K. Narayan



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Tales of Life and Humanity in a Small Town

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About the book

Malgudi Days, a remarkable collection of short stories by R.K. Narayan, invites readers into the enchanting fictional town of Malgudi, where the tapestry of Indian life is intricately woven through the experiences of its colorful inhabitants. Narayan's masterful storytelling captures the everyday struggles, dreams, and quirks of the townsfolk, revealing profound truths about human nature and the universal quest for happiness and meaning. Each tale, steeped in humor and poignant simplicity, offers a window into life's bittersweet moments—whether it's the trials of a schoolboy facing exams or the wisdom of an old man reflecting on lost opportunities. With its rich character sketches and evocative setting, Malgudi Days not only enchants readers but also evokes a sense of nostalgia for simpler times, inviting you to explore the depth and charm of an extraordinary world that feels both familiar and timeless.

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About the author

R.K. Narayan, one of India's most celebrated authors, was born on October 10, 1906, in Chennai, India, and is best known for his novels and short stories set in the fictional town of Malgudi. A contemporary of literary giants like Mulk Raj Anand and Ismat Chughtai, Narayan carved a niche in Indian literature with his simple yet profound storytelling style, often reflecting the complexities of life in rural India. His works, characterized by their rich characterizations and insightful commentary on Indian society, earned him numerous accolades, including the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Padma Bhushan. Through his vivid portrayal of the human experience, Narayan profoundly influenced subsequent generations of writers and remains a pivotal figure in the canon of Indian English literature, with "Malgudi Days" serving as a hallmark of his literary legacy.

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Chapter 1 Summary: AN ASTROLOGER'S DAY

In "An Astrologer's Day," the story revolves around an unnamed astrologer, who sets up his stall under a tamarind tree in a bustling town, dressed in a colorful turban and adorned with sacred ash. His unusual charm draws customers, even though his knowledge of astrology is largely rooted in guesswork rather than true understanding. He has left his village behind in search of a new life, fleeing a troubled past that includes a violent confrontation that had previously left him feeling burdened by guilt and fear of repercussions.

As he engages with various clients throughout the day, he showcases his keen insight into human nature, addressing their personal troubles and issues with foresight that surprisingly resonates with them. Charging three pies per question, he skillfully listens more than he talks, drawing conclusions that satisfy his clients' curiosities but ultimately reveal his own insecurity about the authenticity of his craft.

The story takes a dramatic turn when a stranger confronts him after the day's business, challenging his abilities and threatening to expose his dishonesty. This man, revealed to be named Guru Nayak, warns the astrologer that he knows about a past altercation where he nearly lost his life. Despite the astrologer's initial fear, he astounds Nayak with accurate details about his past, including a near-fatal incident involving a knife and being pushed into

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a well. The astrologer ultimately informs Nayak that the man he seeks for revenge is already dead. Granting Nayak a formal goodbye, he gives him advice to return to his village, ensuring the stranger's safety while finally releasing his own longstanding fear.

By the end of the story, the astrologer returns home to his wife, relieved yet conflicted, having unwittingly lifted a significant weight off his shoulders—the very fear that had driven him from his home. His revelation that Nayak is still alive adds complexity to his character and serves as a reminder of the burdens of guilt and the potential for redemption. The narrative touches on themes of fate, the human experience in the face of uncertainty, and the struggles of identity and self-worth, universally resonating through the simple yet profound interactions of everyday life.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embracing the power of personal transformation

Critical Interpretation: In 'An Astrologer's Day,' you discover that just like the astrologer, life's circumstances may lead you down unexpected paths, yet it's your willingness to confront your past and learn from your experiences that paves the way for genuine change. This chapter emphasizes that regardless of your previous burdens or fears, embracing your ability to evolve and release the weight of guilt can lead you to a more fulfilling and liberated existence. It inspires you to reflect on your own life choices and consider how facing your fears can ultimately free you from the shackles of your past, allowing you to craft a brighter future.

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Chapter 2 Summary: THE MISSING MAIL

In "The Missing Mail," we follow Thanappa, a dedicated postman in Malgudi, as he goes about his daily rounds, delivering letters. His job, while practical, intertwines deeply with the lives and dreams of the townspeople he serves. Among those he visits regularly is Ramanujam, a senior clerk who has long been preoccupied with finding a husband for his daughter, Kamakshi.

Thanappa has nurtured a unique relationship with the Ramanujam family over the years, witnessing joyous moments and sharing in their worries. The story highlights how he often takes the time to engage with the recipients, making him an integral part of their lives. He contributes to their hopes, especially regarding Kamakshi's marriage, giving advice and encouragement along the way.

As the days unfold, the pressure mounts for Ramanujam. His father-in-law's anxieties spike as the auspicious wedding dates draw near, and the family faces mounting disappointments in their search for a suitable groom. Despite this, a potential match emerges, lifting some spirits, and Thanappa becomes even more involved, eagerly facilitating communication.

In a race against time, the family debates whether to take Kamakshi to Madras to meet her prospective groom, illustrating the clash of modern and

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traditional values in matrimonial practices. Thanappa champions this idea, recognizing that a face-to-face meeting might spark a connection that letters alone cannot foster.

The day of the wedding finally arrives with much excitement, and Thanappa plays his part as the local postman, delivering messages of goodwill. Yet, amidst this eagerness, a twist of fate occurs—Thanappa discovers that he had been sitting on a letter announcing the death of Ramanujam's uncle, a detail he withheld to avoid disrupting the wedding festivities. When Ramanujam learns this, it brings a wave of shock and disappointment, illustrating the tension between duty and personal ethics.

The story culminates in a somber realization that life's events are intertwined with the whims of fate and the complexities of human emotion. Thanappa is left reflecting on the consequences of his actions, and while he does not face reprimand, the weight of his decision lingers in the air. This narrative poignantly captures the essence of community, the role of fate in our lives, and the social fabric that binds people together in Malgudi. Through rich character development and a realistic portrayal of relationships, Narayan crafts a story that resonates with themes of love, duty, and the sometimes challenging nature of connection.

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Chapter 3: THE DOCTOR'S WORD

In "The Doctor's Word," a poignant chapter from R.K. Narayan's "Malgudi Days," we meet Dr. Raman, a surgeon renowned for his candidness, who often encounters patients when they are near death. His gruff demeanor stems from a long practice where he has learned that sugarcoating the truth does not save lives—only hard facts do. The narrative takes a personal turn when Dr. Raman faces a desperate situation involving his dearest friend, Gopal, who has fallen gravely ill.

The chapter opens with the doctor's irritation at being called too late, reflecting his frustration with families who delay seeking help due to the emotional weight of his involvement. Dr. Raman's private world is shaken when he learns of Gopal's condition through his son. Rushing to Gopal's house, he finds his lifelong friend in a vulnerable state, bedridden for more than a month under the care of an unfamiliar doctor. Gopal's family expresses guilt for not alerting him sooner, heightening the urgency of the situation.

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Chapter 4 Summary: GATEMAN'S GIFT

In "Gateman's Gift," R.K. Narayan introduces us to Govind Singh, an ex-gateman who wrestles with the perception of his own sanity after his retirement. Once a proud gatekeeper at Engladia's, where he served for twenty-five years in a khaki uniform, Singh measured his worth through the respect he received from his boss and colleagues. Upon retirement, he finds solace in crafting miniature models of people and scenes from his past, a hobby that provides joy and creative fulfillment. His talent draws admiration and sales, leading him to regularly present his creations to the General Manager, which he views as offerings to a deity.

However, his life takes a surreal turn with the arrival of a registered letter, which sends him spiraling into a state of dread. Singh assumes it might contain devastating news about his pension or conduct, and gripped by fear, he refuses to open it. This refusal culminates in him seeking answers from an X-ray institute, absurdly hoping to "see" the letter's contents without physically opening it. There, he is met with pitying looks, leading him to question his own sanity.

In a moment of revelation, Singh humorously embraces the idea of being "mad," relishing the freedom that comes with this new identity. He begins to act out, crawling like a tiger and throwing mud at a donkey, reveling in his newfound liberation from societal norms.

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The chaos of his actions culminates when he shatters a street lamp's glass bulb, attracting the attention of a policeman, and he nonchalantly recounts his time in Mesopotamia. Unexpectedly, he runs into the accountant from his former job, who recognizes him and, upon opening the fateful letter, reveals it contains a generous reward for his artistry. Overwhelmed with relief and happiness, Singh realizes he isn't mad after all and expresses profound gratitude.

In the end, Singh returns to the office for his pension, transformed by his experience. He acknowledges that his crafting days are behind him, humorously declaring that such activities are unfit for a sane person. This story resonates with themes of identity, societal norms, and the balance between sanity and creativity, as Singh's journey reflects the joy of self-discovery and acceptance in an increasingly chaotic world.

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Chapter 5 Summary: THE BLIND DOG

In Chapter 5 of "Malgudi Days," titled "The Blind Dog," R.K. Narayan introduces us to a nondescript street dog who leads a carefree life, scavenging and getting into fights around the marketplace. However, everything changes when a blind beggar arrives at the Market Gate, accompanied by an old woman who takes care of him. The dog, drawn by the smell of food, forms an unexpected bond with the blind man, licking his hand and sharing in his meals. Over time, the dog learns to help the blind man collect alms, chasing away anyone who leaves empty-handed.

The storyline takes a darker turn when the blind man's caretaker passes away, leaving him alone in the world. A vendor gives the blind man a white tape to tether the dog to him, thus beginning the dog's confinement and loss of freedom. As the blind man becomes increasingly dependent on the dog for mobility, the dog—now known as Tiger—sacrifices his natural instincts and energy to accompany his master day in and day out.

The dynamic between the two becomes more strained as the blind man's desire for money grows, resulting in harsh treatment for Tiger when he tries to chase the distractions of the marketplace. The dog suffers physically and emotionally, but his loyalty keeps him tied to the blind man, who relies on him to navigate safely through the bustling streets.

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Sympathy builds for both characters when a group of vendors observes the dog's plight. They lament his servitude to the blind man, noting how Tiger has lost his once lively spirit and vitality. The perfumer, moved by compassion, secretly cuts Tiger's leash, granting him a brief taste of freedom. The ecstatic dog dashes off to explore his surroundings, while the blind man, suddenly deprived of his guide, is left disoriented and desperate.

After some time apart, Tiger returns to the blind man, proving that hunger drives him back to his old master. The blind man responds with frustration yet ultimately forgives the dog, shaking a new steel chain that symbolizes his regained control. The chapter closes with a heart-wrenching reflection on the dog's fate; although he shows willingness to return to a life of servitude, one of the vendors mourns for Tiger's lost spirit and reveals a poignant truth: that death might be the only escape for a creature so bound to its tragic existence.

Through this touching narrative, Narayan explores themes of loyalty, freedom, and the often-painful bonds of dependence. The story highlights how love can sometimes come at the cost of autonomy, leaving both the dog and its master in a cycle of despair that resonates deeply with readers.

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Chapter 6: FELLOW-FEELING

In Chapter 6 of "Malgudi Days," titled "Fellow-Feeling," we find ourselves on the bustling platform of a train station, where Mr. Rajam Iyer is just about to board the Madras-Bangalore Express. Amidst the chaos of a crowded train platform filled with anxious travelers and fruit-sellers shouting their wares, Rajam Iyer arrives in a flurry, squeezing into a crowded third-class compartment.

As the train pulls away from Madras, Rajam Iyer settles in, surrounded by a diverse group of passengers. He finds himself opposite a meek man who curls up to create space. This moment of calm is abruptly shattered when a new passenger, a boisterous bully, enters the compartment and begins insulting the meek man. Rajam Iyer, initially trying to maintain his distance, can't help but intervene, asking the newcomer to moderate his behavior. This sparks a heated confrontation between Rajam Iyer and the bully, who boldly challenged the traditional norms Rajam Iyer holds dear.

The argument escalates, revealing deep social currents as the newcomer

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Alex Walk

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Chapter 7 Summary: THE TIGER'S CLAW

In "The Tiger's Claw," R.K. Narayan captures a gripping tale set against the backdrop of a village celebrating the victory over a fearsome tiger that terrorized the surrounding area for five years. The excitement in the village is palpable as the hunters, garlanded with flowers, parade the tiger's body through the streets, transforming ordinary life into a day of celebration and storytelling.

Amid the revelry, a character known as the Talkative Man shares a personal account from a past experience in the obscure village of Koppal. He recounts his time as an agent for a soil fertilizer company, which led him into a dingy station surrounded by dense jungle. Despite the roughness of the place, the fascination of his audience draws them closer as he describes the dilapidated railway station and its elderly station-master, who welcomes him with genuine hospitality.

One fateful night, while sleeping in the station, the Talkative Man has a terrifying encounter with a tiger. Convinced he's merely dreaming at first, he quickly realizes the reality of his situation as the tiger breaks in. Faced with imminent danger, he cleverly uses the furniture around him to create a barricade, a moment of pure tension as both he and the tiger regard each other. The situation spirals into a battle of wits and survival as the tiger claws at the table, trying to reach him while he fends it off with a chair and,

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ultimately, a knife.

As dawn approaches, the station-master and a porter enter, unwittingly provoking the tiger to flee, leaving the Talkative Man alive but forever changed by the harrowing experience. Later, he recognizes the tiger's distinct paw, missing a few claws, as it is paraded in the village, connecting the past to the present. The Talkative Man takes pride in his confrontation with the tiger, implying that his barehanded courage should be honored alongside the hunters with their guns.

This chapter explores themes of courage, survival, and the juxtaposition of civilization against the wild. The Talkative Man's tale underlines the absurdity of fear and bravery, revealing that sometimes true valor lies not in the weapons wielded but in the resolve found when confronting one's deepest fears.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: True valor lies in confronting one's fears.

Critical Interpretation: In 'The Tiger's Claw,' you are reminded that courage isn't just about wielding weapons or being fearless; it's about facing the unknown and tackling your fears head-on. Just like the Talkative Man, who found the strength to confront a tiger with nothing but his wits and determination, you can draw inspiration from this lesson in your own life. When faced with challenges—be they daunting obstacles or fears that keep you awake at night—embracing the opportunity to confront them with bravery can transform your vulnerabilities into strengths and lead you to a deeper understanding of yourself. This chapter inspires you to recognize that every moment of courage, no matter how small, contributes to your journey and enriches your character.

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Chapter 8 Summary: ISWARAN

In Chapter 8 of "Malgudi Days," titled "Iswaran," we follow the character of Iswaran, a perpetually failing student who has become something of a local curiosity due to his repeated failures in the Intermediate examinations. As excitement fills the town of Malgudi on the day results are to be announced, Iswaran remains outwardly indifferent, humorously downplaying his situation despite grappling internally with deep anxiety about his academic future.

Iswaran, once a hopeful youth with aspirations for higher education, has now aged considerably during his time in school, becoming physically robust while grappling with existential despair. His parents, frustrated with his lack of success, have lost faith in him, often suggesting he abandon his studies for more practical pursuits. However, Iswaran's stubbornness and optimistic facade lead him to plead for "one last chance" to prove himself. The contrast between his bravado and inner turmoil is palpable; he presents himself as a carefree rebel, even skipping out on checking results to indulge in a visit to the cinema—a temporary escape from his failures.

At the cinema, Iswaran finds solace in distractions, yet he is keenly aware of his isolation as the only student there. While he is surrounded by jubilant peers who have passed their exams, he cannot escape the gnawing feeling of inadequacy. After watching a film that ultimately fails to distract him, he



finds himself overwhelmed with despair, leading to thoughts of abandoning life altogether as a means of escaping his academic failures.

When he finally gathers the courage to check the results, he is initially filled with a flicker of hope, only to be confronted with the harsh reality of his failure—his number is nowhere to be found among the successful candidates. Overwhelmed with desolation, he contemplates ending his life in the Sarayu River to escape the disgrace and his family's disappointment.

However, a shift occurs as he decides to return to the notice board one last time, and in a twist of fate, he discovers that he has passed, not just in any manner but with a second-class mark. This news transforms his despair into ecstatic triumph. Iswaran's emotions swing wildly as he revels in his newfound success, envisioning himself as a king and running wildly along the riverbank, embracing a newfound sense of identity and victory.

Tragically, in a moment of reckless jubilation as he challenges the waters, he ends up drowning in the river after symbolically urging his imaginary horse to cross. As his body is later discovered, a letter is found in his coat pocket, revealing his previously desperate mindset and the ultimate hopelessness that led to his tragic fate. This chapter poignantly explores themes of failure, despair, and the desperate search for identity, underscoring the fragility of hope and the devastating impact of societal and familial expectations.



Chapter 9: SUCH PERFECTION

In Chapter 9 of "Malgudi Days," titled "Such Perfection," we meet Soma, a devoted sculptor who has poured five years of his life into creating a perfect image of Nataraja, the dancing form of Lord Shiva. As Soma pours his heart and soul into this masterpiece, he isolates himself from the world, working tirelessly by the flickering flame of a mud lamp. When he finally steps back to admire his work, he feels a profound sense of accomplishment and reverence, prostrating himself before the figure he believes will bless his village.

However, his peace is shattered when an admirer intrudes upon his solitude. This unexpected visitor warns Soma that the image is too perfect to be seen by mortals without dire consequences. Soma's fervent wish is for his creation to be shared with the community, but upon revealing the statue, the village priest and leaders express their fears that such perfection could bring about destruction. They urge him to lessen the image's perfection, warning that it may bring harm to the village.

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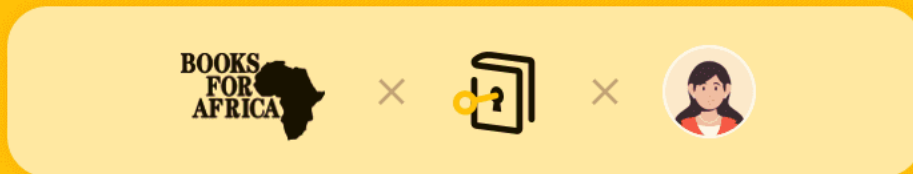
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Chapter 10 Summary: FATHER'S HELP

In Chapter 10 of "Malgudi Days," titled "Father's Help," we meet young Swaminathan, who dreads the arrival of Monday as it means returning to school, a place filled with his anxieties, especially about his violent teacher, Samuel. Waking up late, Swami concocts a headache excuse to avoid the classroom. His mother initially supports his desire to stay home, but his father, a man of firm resolve, insists he must go to school.

When pressed by his father, Swami reluctantly reveals that Samuel is a harsh teacher known for his caning methods, which leads his father to write a letter criticizing Samuel. Although Swami feels guilty for potentially harming his teacher's career, he is also burdened by his father's insistence. As he walks to school, he grapples with the moral dilemma of whether to deliver the letter.

At school, Swami finds Samuel surprisingly lenient, which confuses him further about his teacher's true nature. As the class progresses, he tries to provoke Samuel into a reaction to justify his father's complaint. Instead, Samuel continues to be more patient and understanding than usual, which only amplifies Swami's guilt. Swami's antics, hoping to be chastised, only earn him reprimands, and when he finally receives the punishment he sought, he experiences a strange thrill, feeling lighter despite the pain.

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After school, Swami learns that the headmaster is unavailable, which brings forth a sigh of relief and an opportunity to avoid delivering the letter for the time being. However, upon returning home, he faces his father's disappointment and is accused of cowardice for not delivering the letter. In a moment of exasperation, his father tears up the letter, expressing his disdain for Swami's perceived weakness and choosing instead to let his son deal with the consequences of Samuel's authority.

This chapter highlights themes of childhood fears, the complexities of parental relationships, and the often harsh realities of school life. It captures the inner conflict of a boy caught between his loyalty to a teacher he finds both fearsome yet oddly relatable, and the uncompromising stance of a father who believes in confronting injustices. The storytelling blends humor with poignant moments, drawing readers into the vibrant and relatable world of Malgudi through Swami's eyes.

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Chapter 11 Summary: THE SNAKE-SONG

In "The Snake-Song," the Talkative Man recounts a captivating yet harrowing experience from his past when he aspired to be a musician. While he and some friends leave a concert, he is seen to be in distress, prompting curiosity about his thoughts on modern music. Contrary to the assumptions made by his companions, he reflects on a time in the village of Kumbum, where he learned under a master flutist renowned for his talent yet content in obscurity.

The Talkative Man describes how devoted he was to his master, striving to gain the skills needed to perform publicly. He was eager for fame and fortune, dreaming of upcoming music festivals. This ambition drives him to practice diligently late into the night, albeit with the occasional interruption. One fateful night, a sadhu knocks at his door asking for food, but he brusquely dismisses him, only to be warned that his music would soon come to an end. After dismissing the beggar, he becomes absorbed once again in his craft.

As he plays a piece about a serpent, a black cobra suddenly appears, enchanted by the music. The Talkative Man continues to play, unable to cease, as the snake seems to demand the very song he is performing. However, despite his exhaustion, he's trapped in a loop of repetition, forced to play the snake-song all night long. The tension mounts as he fears for his



life, realizing he may not escape the cobra's grasp.

Finally, at the point of collapse, he reveals his submission to the snake, prostrating himself and imploring its mercy. When he opens his eyes the next morning, the cobra is gone, leaving him shaken. He shares the incident with his master, who advises him of the heavy consequence of playing *punnaga varali* at night and warns him about the potential return of the snake.

Faced with the possibility of recurring encounters and the emotional burden of his nightmarish experience, the Talkative Man decides to abandon his music. Despite his master's sympathy and suggestion to seek forgiveness from the beggar, he resigns to search for the mendicant, hoping to reclaim his lost passion. The chapter conveys themes of ambition, the relationship between art and the divine, and the haunting nature of unfulfilled potential, illustrating the protagonist's internal conflict between desire and fear.

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Chapter 12: ENGINE TROUBLE

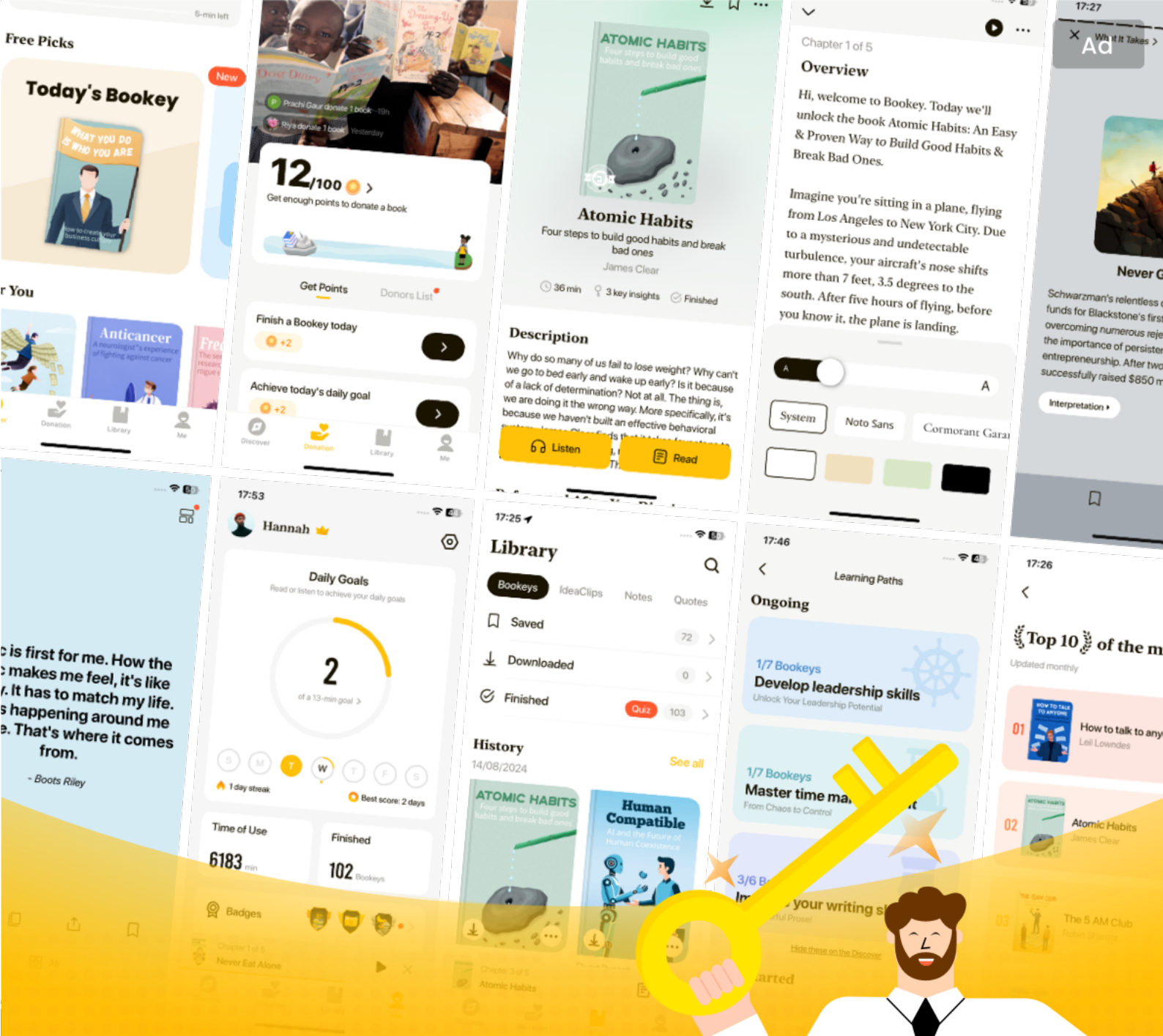
The chapter "Engine Trouble" from R.K. Narayan's "Malgudi Days" revolves around the misadventures of the Talkative Man, who wins an enormous road engine as a prize from a traveling show called Gaiety Land. Initially, the prize seems exciting, and as the Talkative Man basks in his newfound glory, he imagines the wealth and stability the engine might bring him. Friends and neighbors gather around, marveling at his luck, and he begins to feel fond of the machine, even visiting it daily.

However, when the traveling show closes, the Talkative Man is left with an unexpected burden. The municipality orders him to remove the engine from the Gymkhana Grounds or face rent charges. Struggling financially, he is forced to pay ten rupees a month for its upkeep, which strains his meager budget. His wife's increasing nagging about the useless engine adds to his distress as he fruitlessly tries to sell it. From local clubs to municipal offices, his efforts yield nothing but frustration.

Compounded by the impending cattle show that necessitates the engine's

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Chapter 13 Summary: FORTY-FIVE A MONTH

In "Forty-Five A Month," Shanta is an energetic young girl brimming with excitement as she eagerly anticipates a trip to the cinema with her father, Venkat Rao. The story opens with Shanta growing impatient in her classroom, where she is engaged in various activities like clay modeling and paper cutting. All she can think about is the time; she urgently wants to leave school because her father promised to take her to see a movie. After a minor crisis over telling time, which gets her temporarily confused, she finally gets permission to leave and rushes home.

At home, Shanta's excitement is palpable as she prepares for her outing, insisting on wearing her favorite pink dress and adorning herself with ribbons. Her mother, however, is more pragmatic and tries to dress her appropriately, but Shanta's enthusiasm wins out. As she waits for her father, her anticipation turns to anxiety when he does not return by the promised time. Feeling frustrated and left out, she decides to take matters into her own hands and heads out to find him, navigating the evening shadows and bustling street life.

Meanwhile, Venkat Rao's day at the office is far from the joyous event he'd hoped for with his daughter. He feels trapped in a demanding job that leaves little room for family life, recognizing that he barely spends time with Shanta or his wife. His heart aches for his daughter, who seems to be



growing up without the joys and experiences other children have. Resolute to change this, he promises Shanta he will take her to the cinema and vows to leave work on time.

However, as the day progresses, Venkat Rao faces mounting pressure at work, unable to escape the demands of his superiors, despite his strong intentions to prioritize his family. The office manager's insistence on his presence leads to a climactic point where he nearly resigns in frustration, feeling like a man whose worth is reduced to a mere salary.

As he clocks out late and returns home, the heart-wrenching scene unfolds: he finds Shanta asleep, fully dressed and awaiting his arrival. His heart sinks at the sight of her—hopeful and disappointed—all at once. The disheartening culmination of both characters' experiences emphasizes themes of parental love, the struggle between work and family life, and the bittersweet nature of childhood expectations versus reality.

The narrative masterfully weaves Shanta's youthful innocence and exuberance with Venkat Rao's fatherly frustrations and desires, creating a poignant exploration of familial bonds caught in the relentless gears of societal obligations. Despite their genuine love for one another, both characters are ensnared in a system that often overlooks individual dreams in favor of mundane responsibilities. The story ultimately leaves the reader with a sense of melancholy, capturing the essence of longing for connection

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in a world that demands so much, yet gives so little.

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Chapter 14 Summary: OUT OF BUSINESS

In Chapter 14 of "Malgudi Days," titled "Out of Business," we follow the struggles of Rama Rao, a man who has recently lost everything after the gramophone company he was the agent for goes bankrupt. His commitment to the business had once provided a comfortable life for his wife and children, but with the sudden collapse of the company, stemming from a series of unfortunate events in the world of finance and personal scandal, Rama Rao finds himself unemployed and desperate.

As the story unfolds, we see the family's gradual descent into hardship. They move from their well-kept bungalow to a small house behind the market, symbolizing their dwindling financial situation and the impact of Rama Rao's misfortunes on his family's happiness. His wife's attempts to cut costs, such as dismissing their cook and sending their children to a free school, highlight the stark contrast between their former lifestyle and their current struggles. Rama Rao's daily search for a job proves fruitless, and with each rejection, he feels the weight of expectation from his family, who still look to him with hope.

Desperate for relief, Rama Rao becomes obsessed with a crossword puzzle magazine, "The Captain," which offers a substantial prize for the correct answers. This new obsession serves as his escape, distracting him from his mounting worries. The puzzles captivate him, providing brief moments of

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hope as he dreams of winning, envisioning a return to prosperity. However, his fixation leads to further strain on family relationships, especially when he pressure his wife for money to send in more entries.

As the narrative reaches its climax, Rama Rao loses faith entirely when his answers fail to yield any results. In a moment of despair, he contemplates ending his life by lying on the train tracks. However, a twist of fate intervenes—a delayed train saves him, prompting him to return home, where he reencounters the warmth of his family's affection.

Upon his return, Rama Rao learns that their tenants have expressed a desire to buy their old bungalow, presenting a potential solution to their financial woes. Excitement bubbles up as he discusses the prospect of selling the house, dreaming of using the money to seek new opportunities in Madras. Yet, his wife's probing question about whether he will gamble with crossword puzzles again serves as a sobering reminder of both the precariousness of their situation and his recent obsessions.

This chapter poignantly explores themes of hope and despair, the impacts of economic downturns on family dynamics, and the struggle to find purpose in the face of adversity. Rama Rao's journey illustrates the delicate balance between aspiration and the harsh realities of life, ultimately leading him to realize the value of his family and the importance of resilience amid life's unpredictability.

Aspect	Description
Chapter Title	Out of Business
Main Character	Rama Rao
Situation	Rama Rao loses his job after the gramophone company he represented goes bankrupt.
Impact on Family	The family's living situation deteriorates as they move to a smaller home, reflecting financial struggles.
Wife's Actions	She cuts costs by dismissing the cook and enrolling children in a free school.
Rama Rao's Desperation	Attempts to find a job but faces repeated rejections, adding pressure from his family's expectations.
New Obsession	Becomes fixated on crossword puzzles from "The Captain" magazine, hoping to win a monetary prize.
Family Tension	His obsession strains family relationships, particularly when he pressures his wife for money for puzzle entries.
Climactic Moment	Rama Rao contemplates suicide but is saved by a delayed train, prompting a return home.
Resolution	Learn about the tenants' interest in buying their old bungalow, which could provide financial relief.
Themes	Hope vs. despair, family dynamics under economic strain, resilience amidst adversity.



Chapter 15: ATTILA

In "Malgudi Days," R.K. Narayan introduces us to Attila, a puppy named after the fierce warrior Attila the Hun, seen as a potential protector for a neighborhood plagued by thefts. His owners hoped for strength and ferocity in their dog, but as it turns out, young Attila was far from formidable. With his imposing appearance—square jaws, red eyes, and a massive head—he elicited admiration but failed to embody his namesake's fearsome reputation.

Despite the lofty expectations, Attila displayed a surprising affection toward everyone who crossed his path—be it a bill collector or a family friend. Instead of showing aggression, the moment anyone entered the house, he would rush forward with enthusiasm, ready to greet them with affection rather than a warning bark. His loving nature often confused his owners, leading them to question his aptitude as a guard dog. Criticism from the household characterized him as more of a “Blind Worm” than Attila, especially when he failed to defend their garden from flower thieves.

The plot takes a turn when a burglar named Ranga breaks into the house

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Chapter 16 Summary: THE AXE

In "The Axe," a story from R.K. Narayan's "Malgudi Days," we follow the life journey of Velan, a young man whose humble beginnings transform into a rich life marked by the complexities of time, love, and loss. The story opens with an astrologer predicting that Velan will someday live in a grand three-storeyed house amidst lush gardens, much to the amusement of the village that perceives him as part of a ragged family, with his father having mortgaged their meager possessions. When Velan reaches eighteen, a confrontation with his father prompts him to leave home, setting him on a path to Malgudi where he faces hardships, starvation, and eventually finds work with an old gardener tasked with creating a beautiful garden on barren land.

As Velan invests time and effort in nurturing the garden, it flourishes, and along with it, so does the magnificent house where he works. Years pass, and after many seasons of growth, Velan witnesses the house transform into a lovely home for a family, where he takes pride in his chief gardener role. Life is bountiful for Velan as he recalls his struggles, cherishes his garden, and gains a sense of fulfillment from seeing both the house and his plants thrive.

However, as time flows on, both Velan and the family age, facing inevitable changes. The master of the house passes away, leading his inept sons to

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squabble and eventually abandon it, leaving Velan to care for the garden unsupervised. The house falls into disrepair, earns the nickname "Ghost House," and ultimately becomes a haven for Velan, who shifts his residence there.

In a poignant twist of fate, a new company acquires the property, and Velan is informed that his cherished garden will be obliterated to make way for new development. This news devastates Velan, particularly when he learns that the iconic margosa tree he nurtured from a sapling will be among the first to go. In a heart-wrenching scene, Velan pleads with the workers to delay cutting down the tree, expressing that it is like a child to him. His emotional attachment is palpable as he bids farewell to the plants that have been his companions through the years.

Ultimately, Velan's journey parallels the themes of impermanence and the deep-seated connections humans forge with both nature and their surroundings. His contentment, losses, and tender relationship with his garden speak to the profound and bittersweet cycles of life, as he grapples with change while still holding on to his memories. The tale closes on a melancholic but dignified note, illustrating the enduring love for one's roots even in the face of inevitable loss.

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Chapter 17 Summary: LAWLEY ROAD

In Chapter 17 of "Malgudi Days," titled "Lawley Road," R.K. Narayan weaves a humorous tale about the complications that arise in the fictional town of Malgudi following India's independence. Initially, the town had been blissfully unaware of its Municipal Council, which kept an unobtrusive presence. The Council, inspired by the patriotic fervor of August 15, 1947, embarked on a grand mission to commemorate independence by renaming streets and parks with names of Indian leaders, leading to chaos and confusion over lost landmarks and conflicting street names.

The Municipal Chairman, initially buoyed by his apparent success, soon becomes restless and fixated on removing a statue of Sir Frederick Lawley, a once-esteemed figure whose legacy he and others have come to question. Upon confronting the statue, they realize it's far more formidable than anticipated, prompting a comical series of attempts to dislodge it, including the use of dynamite, which eventually succeeds after much effort.

However, the plot thickens when the Council discovers that their historical understanding of Lawley was misguided. As it turns out, Lawley was not the tyrant they believed but rather a significant contributor to Malgudi's development, promoting irrigation and fostering cooperative societies. Faced with public outcry and telegrams from historical societies demanding the statue's reinstatement, the Chairman seeks to revert the earlier decision, yet

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the protagonist, who has successfully brought the statue to his home, becomes embroiled in a comical legal battle.

As protests ensue in front of his house and the townspeople mistakenly view him as an enemy for holding onto the statue, the Talkative Man finds himself in a peculiar predicament, ultimately contemplating a deal to sell his house to the Municipality to have Lawley's statue formally honored.

In the end, through clever negotiations and a blend of humor and absurdity, the Chairman manages to secure the statue for the town, proposing a new park and renaming Kabir Lane to Lawley Road. The chapter lays bare themes of misguided patriotism, the ebb and flow of historical narratives, and how change can be both liberating and absurd, leaving the reader with a vivid portrayal of the comedic chaos inherent in civic governance and the shifting tides of reputation.

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Chapter 18: TRAIL OF THE GREEN BLAZER

In "Trail of the Green Blazer," we meet Raju, a skilled pickpocket navigating through a bustling marketplace filled with villagers and townsfolk. The crowd is lively and chaotic, marked by haggling, preaching, and the noise of various vendors. Among all this commotion, one vivid detail stands out: a man in a striking Green Blazer captures Raju's attention, drawing him into a cat-and-mouse game of observation. Raju is cautious and tries to blend in, disguising himself as a peasant with his loincloth and oversized turban, constantly aware of the threat of being caught by the police.

Raju is absorbed in the thrill of his profession, watching the crowd with a hawk-like focus in search of opportunities. He reflects on his experiences as a thief, recognizing the risks and rewards that come with it, particularly his love for stealing bulging purses, which provide him with enough cash to support his family without arousing too many suspicions. However, his excitement turns to regret when he spies a purse belonging to the man in the Green Blazer after an intense moment of tension as he contemplates whether

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Chapter 19 Summary: THE MARTYR'S CORNER

In Chapter 19 of R.K. Narayan's "Malgudi Days," titled "The Martyr's Corner," we meet Rama, a street vendor who runs his small food stall with diligence and a sense of pride. He starts his day early, waking up to the sound of a crowing cock, and meticulously prepares his kiosk, loaded with delicious snacks that entice passersby. Despite his seemingly easy hours, Rama faces the constant labor of frying and serving his goods, leading many to mistakenly envy his life, believing he earns a fortune with minimal effort.

Rama has a deep connection with his community, particularly with the less fortunate, such as boot-polish boys and blind beggars. Although he longs to help them more, he struggles with the reality that his business cannot be charitable. He continues to cherish the little things in life, like the satisfaction of a thriving business and the comfortable routine he has built with his wife, who helps manage their earnings.

However, peace is shattered when a violent public disturbance erupts over a political dispute, transforming the lively street corner into a battlefield. Shops are looted, and chaos ensues as police try to quell the situation. Rama is forced to hide and later witnesses the aftermath of the violence that rocks his community.

When he returns to his usual spot post-disturbance, he discovers that his

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corner is now a site of local reverence for a political figure who was killed during the riot. In a bitter twist of fate, he is pushed away from his prime location as a group erects a memorial, and business begins to dwindle. Despite his hard work, he struggles to adapt to these changes, ultimately deciding to give up his food stall.

Rama's story concludes with him reluctantly taking a job in a restaurant, trading his independence as a vendor for stability. This shift marks the end of an era in his life, showcasing the fragility of his once-thriving business and the unpredictability of life's circumstances. Through Rama's hardships, Narayan explores themes of resilience, the impact of societal upheaval, and the bittersweet nature of change, capturing the essence of life's unpredictability in Malgudi.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace Change and Resilience

Critical Interpretation: Rama's journey teaches you that life is fraught with unpredictable changes, and embracing these shifts can lead to new opportunities. While it may seem daunting when circumstances force you to let go of your familiar routines, just like Rama learned to adapt from being a vendor to seeking stability in a restaurant, you too can find strength and resilience in the face of life's upheavals. By accepting challenges as a part of your growth, you can develop a deeper understanding of yourself and your capacity to thrive amidst adversity.

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Chapter 20 Summary: WIFE'S HOLIDAY

In "Wife's Holiday," Kannan enjoys a rare day of freedom while his wife is away at her parents' home. He sits idly at the door of his hut, reflecting on how liberating it is to escape the daily grind of work, which often involves climbing coconut trees and dealing with the frugal landowners. As villagers pass by, including Sami the oil-monger, Kannan is swept into daydreams of gambling at the Mantapam, a dilapidated clubhouse that serves as a sanctuary for him and his friends.

Deep down, however, Kannan wrestles with feelings of dissatisfaction about his financial situation, painfully aware that his wife seems to have taken all their cash, leaving him with nothing but a desperate need for a few coins to sustain his idleness. He begrudges her control over their finances, leading him to a moment of decision: he will rummage through her trunk, hoping to find hidden treasure.

As he forcefully opens the trunk, he discovers the personal belongings of his wife but finds little money. His attention shifts to a red cigarette tin that belongs to his young son. This innocent symbol of childhood brings back fond memories of how they transformed it into a savings box. Driven by resentment and impulsive greed, Kannan decides to break into this little treasure, justifying his actions by thinking he will replace the money afterward.



Kannan desperately searches for tools, ultimately using a nail and a stone to access the coins inside the tin. Though he is successful in extracting six annas, his luck soon runs out at the Mantapam where he loses it all gambling. Defeated, he returns home, only to find his wife and son arriving earlier than expected.

His heart sinks as he realizes she will soon discover the chaos he has created—her trunk damaged, the contents in disarray, and his thumb injured in the failed attempt to get what he wanted. Kannan's fear intensifies when his son innocently holds up coins given to him by a family friend, prompting Kannan to groan inwardly. The chapter closes as he mechanically steps into the house, resigning himself to the impending confrontation with his wife, setting the stage for the brewing storm of emotions and consequences that stem from his choices.

Themes of guilt, impulsive actions, and the struggle over domestic power dynamics permeate the story, encapsulating Kannan's internal conflict and the societal expectations placed on him. The juxtaposition of Kannan's carefree ambitions and the harsh realities of his choices adds depth to his character, showcasing the vulnerabilities of everyday life in Malgudi.

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Chapter 21: A SHADOW

In this poignant chapter from "Malgudi Days," titled "A Shadow," Sambu, a young boy, excitedly prepares to see a film featuring his deceased father, a well-known actor. While Sambu is thrilled at the prospect of seeing his father on screen, his mother is horrified at the thought of watching the film, fearing it will be a painful reminder of her loss. Despite her deep sorrow, Sambu is insistent, highlighting the dissonance between his youthful enthusiasm and her mourning.

The film's release is marked by a parade, which Sambu views as a celebration, while his mother sees it as a public spectacle that emphasizes her grief. Sambu's excitement builds throughout his day at school, as he brags about his father's involvement in the film, eager to share this experience with his peers. However, his friends mock him, showing their disdain for Tamil cinema, so he prepares to go alone.

When Sambu finally watches the film, he is entranced by the depiction of his father, who comes to life on screen in familiar ways that remind him of their

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Chapter 22 Summary: A WILLING SLAVE

In "A Willing Slave," we are introduced to the character of the Ayah, a servant in a household where she has been a constant presence for over sixteen years. No one in the family remembers her joining them, as she has always been there, caring for their five children with a devotion that transcends her official duties. Her role is to raise and nurture the kids, perpetually adapting to their different stages of childhood, though she can only manage to cope with children up to the age of six. Beyond childcare, she takes on many self-appointed tasks around the house, such as policing the other servants and ensuring the children's tutor treats them well, showing her fierce protectiveness.

The Ayah's life is intertwined with the children's, especially with Radha, the youngest. Their playful interactions are filled with imaginative games, where the Ayah becomes the engine of a pretend train, effortlessly weaving in her own humorous stories, and keeping the children entertained. The Ayah blends magic and reality in her interactions, as she claims to be sitting guard with a knife to protect Radha from the "Old Fellow," a mythical figure meant to scare the children into behaving.

However, the Ayah's life outside the household is hinted at through her occasional trips back home to Saidapet, where she has responsibilities toward her own family, including two grown children. These journeys take

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her away from her domestic life, a reminder that she has her own world and obligations. Her character is painted as clumsy yet protective, self-sacrificing yet often the target of the family's irritation.

When the Ayah unexpectedly fails to return from one such trip, the family panics, speculating about her safety and threatening to dismiss her if she reappears. When she does return after three days, she exudes an unexpected glee, revealing that her husband has come back from many years away, creating a juxtaposition between her duties in the household and her own neglected personal life. Her laughter and excitement reflect a deeper emotional realm that the family has overlooked, highlighting her vibrant nature beneath the surface of servitude.

Her departure with her husband is fraught with bittersweet moments, especially for Radha, who fears the “Old Fellow” will take her Ayah away. In this touching ending, the Ayah's complex identity as a caregiver and a woman with her own life aspirations comes to the forefront. The story delves into themes of servitude, attachment, and the often-unseen lives of those who dedicate themselves to others, while also reflecting the interplay of innocence and the seriousness of adult relationships in a household dynamic, painted with the colors of love, loyalty, and a touch of humor.

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Chapter 23 Summary: LEELA'S FRIEND

In "Leela's Friend," we meet Sidda, a seemingly tidy and harmless man who is looking for work as a servant. Mr. Sivasanker, pondering the challenges of finding reliable help, decides to hire Sidda, especially after his five-year-old daughter, Leela, expresses her delight upon meeting him. Elated by his new job, Sidda takes on various household tasks while becoming a beloved companion for Leela. Their bond flourishes as they engage in imaginative play, conjuring wonderful stories about the moon and sharing a magical view of life. Sidda playfully claims he can touch the moon, and Leela is enchanted by his tales and encourages him to take part in her games, even giving him lessons in drawing.

However, the idyllic relationship faces a stark turn when Leela's gold chain mysteriously disappears one day after she and Sidda return from an errand. Upon noticing the loss, Leela's mother accuses Sidda, and despite his denial, Sidda flees when the police are mentioned. This event leaves Leela heartbroken and distraught, as she cannot understand why her cherished friend would steal from her.

As the family deals with the aftermath, it becomes clear that the chain was never stolen by Sidda. In a twist of fate, it is later discovered that Leela herself had dropped the chain into a tamarind pot while playing. Despite this revelation, Mr. Sivasanker remains resolute about Sidda's guilt and



dismisses the idea of keeping him employed, prioritizing the concerns of safety and reputation over the innocence of a child's misunderstanding.

Throughout this poignant tale, themes of childhood innocence, the harshness of adult judgments, and the complex nature of trust and misunderstanding underscore the simple yet profound connection between Sidda and Leela. It highlights how easily relationships can unravel under the weight of assumptions and societal expectations, leaving the pure joy of their bond overshadowed by misfortune. Leela's unwavering love for Sidda remains a testament to the innocence and loyalty of childhood, even as the adults around them struggle to comprehend the situation fully.

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Chapter 24: MOTHER AND SON

In Chapter 24 of "Malgudi Days" titled "Mother and Son," we delve into the tumultuous relationship between Ramu and his mother. The chapter begins at dinner, where Ramu's mother, with a heavy heart, introduces the topic of marriage, suggesting a bride from her family. Ramu's dismissive response—"So you are at it again!"—sets the tone for their conversation. His mother, filled with concern and resolve, puts forth her arguments: the girl is attractive, a good dowry is promised, and a man's fortune improves with marriage. However, Ramu shows no interest, imagining a different partner altogether—someone more like the beautiful figures he sees in films, not his cousin with a protruding tooth.

The mother's desperation transforms into indignation as she contemplates her son's attitude. Ramu embodies a sense of defeat; he is unable to pass his exams and lacks job prospects. The serious discussions devolve into bickering around the dinner table, where she expresses her frustration with his gloomy demeanor and he pushes back against her urgings. The tension escalates, culminating in Ramu walking out, leaving his mother feeling

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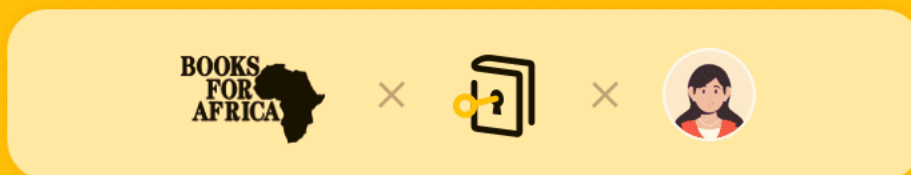
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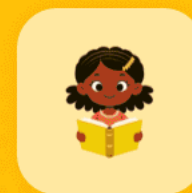
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Chapter 25 Summary: NAGA

In "Naga," a chapter from R.K. Narayan's "Malgudi Days," we encounter a young boy struggling to navigate life as a snake charmer's apprentice, following in the footsteps of his father. The boy, frustrated by the laziness of his cobra, Naga, longs for it to be either dead so he can sell its skin or more lively to attract an audience. He reminisces about his father's performances, where they would enchant and frighten onlookers with snake charm tunes and the dramatic presence of their snake, earning food and coins for their efforts. The boy's admiration for his father's dedication is palpable, but he finds himself increasingly feeling the weight of responsibility as he tries to carry on the tradition.

In a twist of fate, the boy's father disappears one day, leaving him alone with Naga. Initially feeling abandoned, the boy discovers some coins left behind, which grants him a fleeting sense of maturity and independence. He grapples with hunger and loneliness, leading him to eat the peanuts meant for his beloved pet monkey, Rama, who has also gone missing.

As the story progresses, the boy encounters a kind woman who shows compassion for his plight and gives him food, reminding him of his mother, whom he barely remembers. This moment evokes deeper feelings of abandonment and sorrow within him, especially upon realizing that his father may have left for a life with another woman, a "strumpet in a blue



sari.” The boy’s internal conflict grows as he reflects on the way his father treated him and the emotional impact of his father's absence.

Determined to reclaim some semblance of control over his life, the boy decides to release Naga into the wild, believing it would be a better life for the snake. However, he quickly becomes fearful for its safety when he sees a predatory kite in the sky, sensing danger for his former companion. In a desperate bid to protect Naga, he retrieves the snake and brings it back home.

By the end of the chapter, Naga is re-established in his basket, and the boy asserts his role as its master. He acknowledges the fragility of his situation, noting that he cannot always be there to watch over the cobra. The story encapsulates themes of abandonment, the struggle for independence, familial bonds, and the bittersweet realities of life in Malgudi. The boy's journey reflects not only his longing for connection and validation but also the profound impacts of his father’s choices on his path to maturity.

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Chapter 26 Summary: SELVI

In Chapter 26 of "Malgudi Days," we dive into the life of Selvi, a renowned singer whose beautiful voice has endeared her to the public, but whose personal life is tightly controlled by her husband, Mohan. As she finishes each concert, crowds of adoring fans rush to get her autograph, but instead of basking in their admiration, Selvi is often hurried away by Mohan, who relishes his role as her protector and manager. Despite her fame, Selvi's life is drastically shaped by Mohan's will; he has carefully crafted her public persona while minimizing her connections to her past and family.

When we first meet Selvi, she is a figure of ethereal grace on stage, captivating audiences with her voice. However, the contrast between her public image and private reality is stark. Mohan, who had initially discovered her talent as a young girl, has invested years into building her career and controlling her image. He refuses to allow her involvement in movies, wanting to preserve her unique status as a live performer. While he has created an impressive career for Selvi through strategic publicity, it becomes clear that he views her less as a partner and more as a product of his own making.

Selvi's origins are humble, raised in a dilapidated house with little means, under the guidance of her mother, who was her first music teacher. However, as Selvi rises to stardom, her relationships with her family fade.

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Mohan, wanting to isolate her from her roots, gradually distances her from her mother and siblings. She becomes increasingly dependent on him, almost entirely removing her own voice from her choices; her life is marked by an absence of personal agency.

As time goes on, Selvi's fame grows, earning her titles like the "Goddess of Melody," making her a symbol of status for her audience and for Mohan. Yet, beneath this glamorous façade lies a profound loneliness. Selvi seems to exist in a bubble, performing with no clear sense of her surroundings. She follows Mohan's every whim unquestioningly, seeming content to be an extension of his ambitions.

Tragedy strikes when Selvi receives news of her mother's death while on tour. This shakes her out of her docile existence. For the first time, she pushes back against Mohan, displaying unexpected strength and resolve. The experience of grief opens a floodgate of emotions that she has long suppressed. Ignoring Mohan's coaxing to return to their glamorous life, Selvi chooses to remain in her childhood neighborhood, ultimately rejecting her husband's control.

This pivotal moment reveals Selvi's evolving character. She begins to reclaim her identity and heritage, asserting herself as an independent individual rather than just Mohan's creation. Amid her mourning, she draws people in, transforming her home into a sanctuary of music, where she freely



shares her talent with everyone—a stark contrast to the isolated life she led under Mohan's control.

Mohan's attempts to regain control over Selvi fail. As he sees her thrive in the community that had once been part of her, he experiences a profound frustration and helplessness. Selvi's journey in this chapter serves as a powerful commentary on the complexities of fame, the struggle for personal identity, and the bonds of family. She evolves from a passive participant in her life to someone who stands firm in her grief and desires, highlighting the resilience of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming control.

Ultimately, this chapter encapsulates a turning point for Selvi, signaling her awakening and her newfound determination to live life on her own terms.

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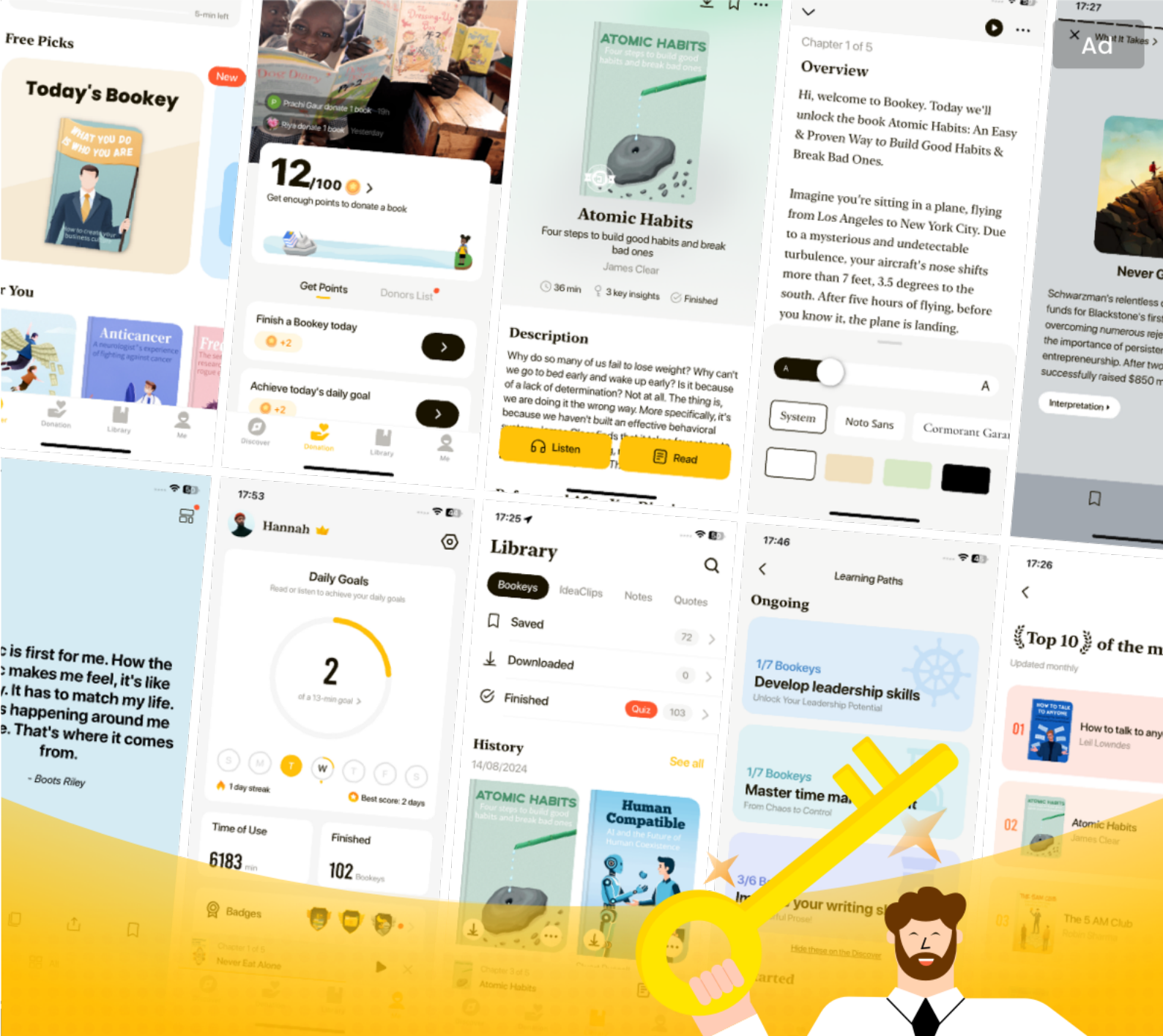
Chapter 27: SECOND OPINION

In "Second Opinion," a chapter from "Malgudi Days" by R.K. Narayan, we follow the inner thoughts and struggles of Sambu, a young man caught in the complex dynamics with his mother in the aftermath of his father's death. The story begins with Sambu stealthily entering his tiny room, which he treats as his personal sanctuary, filled with philosophical musings and memories. His relationship with his mother is marked by a growing tension, as she represents the old traditions and societal expectations, whereas he strives for independence and self-discovery.

The chapter is rich in reflections about family, societal roles, and the generational gap between Sambu and his mother. His mother, a widow, has become more precarious and anxious after her husband's passing, leaving Sambu feeling guilty for not fulfilling her expectations. As she urges him to marry, Sambu grapples with the idea of being bound by an early betrothal made when he was just a child, an arrangement he finds absurd but is pressured to consider.

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Chapter 28 Summary: CAT WITHIN

In "Cat Within," R.K. Narayan presents a vivid and humorous tale revolving around a shopkeeper, a motley group of tenants, and an ill-fated cat. The story begins in a cramped tenement on Vinayak Mudali Street, where the greedy landlord has crammed multiple families into a dilapidated house to maximize his profits. The atmosphere is tense as the shopkeeper, who sells sweets, pencils, and assorted items to local children, finds himself in a pickle when a curious cat gets its head stuck in a brass jug in his dark shop.

As chaos ensues, the noise of the jug rattling alarms the shopkeeper, who, in a state of panic, calls for help, fearing a thief is in the shop. He quickly alerts his tenants, leading to a gathering of anxious onlookers. They speculate wildly about what could be causing the ruckus, descending into a mix of fear and absurdness as they believe an evil spirit might be at play. Among the crowd is a professional exorcist, known for his peculiar theatrics and dubious credentials, who is coaxed into action despite his initial reluctance.

The exorcist spins a narrative about a "jug-spirit" and begins to concoct elaborate theories about karma and past wrongdoings, which circles back amusingly to the landlord's unexplained troubles. His bluster contrasts sharply with the shopkeeper's desperation and the tenants' frustration with their living conditions. While the shopkeeper believes he is innocent of any wrongdoing, the exorcist's probing into the shopkeeper's past raises

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alarming questions.

With the shopkeeper's anxiety escalating, the exorcist demands copper implements to conduct his 'ritual,' revealing his quirky superstition as he tries to deal with what turns out to be simply a trapped cat's antics. Tension mounts, and the humor is amplified through the dialogues, showcasing the absurdity of the situation as the exorcist's bravado is put to the test when he himself is confronted by the wild cat.

As the story peaks, the hopelessness of the landlord's grip on power becomes apparent, along with the tenants' shared misery. When the cat finally escapes, the event leaves everyone both relieved and skeptical about the encounter they just witnessed. The exorcist departs, not seeking payment immediately, signifying the ongoing absurdity in their world—a cycle of ignorance, superstition, and relentless survival.

In sum, Narayan's narrative cleverly intertwines themes of desperation, the illusion of control, and the folly of human fears in the face of the unknown, all conveyed through delightful characters and a light-hearted situational comedy. The tale leaves behind a lingering question about the nature of reality and the unseen forces that govern human lives, all encapsulated in the image of a simple cat causing a profound stir.

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Chapter 29 Summary: THE EDGE

In Chapter 29 of "Malgudi Days" by R.K. Narayan, we meet Ranga, a witty yet beleaguered knife sharpener who navigates the challenges of his life with resilience and humor. Ranga, whose age is a playful mystery, has been profitably sharpening not just knives, but also scythes and scissors, traveling through the streets of Malgudi on his portable grinding wheel. Despite the hardships of being ignored by potential customers who prefer to procrastinate getting their tools sharpened, Ranga employs charm and persistence to coax them into taking advantage of his services. He insists that neglecting dull knives will lead to missed opportunities and boasts about his sharpening skills, promising satisfaction with each job.

His life, however, is marked by a sense of purpose and familial struggle. Ranga dreams of a better future, primarily for his daughter, who is breaking from traditional expectations to pursue education—an aspiration that causes friction with his traditional wife, who believes girls should remain focused on domestic roles. Ranga, inspired by a kind schoolmaster, clings to the hope that education will lift his daughter out of the cyclical poverty that binds them. He gathers the sparse income from sharpening tools, supplemented by small meals and handouts, all while dreaming of a more prosperous life—especially in the bustling town of Malgudi.

Ranga's tough past includes a difficult relationship with a previous

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blacksmith employer, which he eventually leaves to pursue his fate as a street sharpener. His attempts to establish his own identity are met with ridicule from his wife, who frequently bickers over financial straits and constantly questions his assertiveness. Despite the domestic tension, Ranga is a loving father who wants his daughter to embrace opportunities that were denied to him.

As the narrative unfolds, Ranga embarks on an ambitious trip to Malgudi, envisioning new opportunities and yearning for a different life for his family. However, his dreams quickly turn surreal when he encounters strangers in a seemingly benevolent camp promising him wealth in exchange for compliance with dubious instructions. This encounter swiftly turns ominous as it is revealed to be a government-sponsored sterilization project, and Ranga's playful banter and resilience turn into panic when he realizes the grim reality of the situation.

In a comical yet poignant climax, Ranga resists the impending procedure, fleeing the camp in terror, calling out the very cry he used to draw in customers: "Knives sharpened!" This moment encapsulates Ranga's deep-rooted fears and fierce determination, showcasing his spirit in the face of absurdity. Ultimately, the chapter highlights themes of identity, societal expectations, the pursuit of education, and the challenges of navigating personal dreams against harsh realities. Through humor and heartache, it raises questions about manhood, survival, and the indomitable nature of

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hope.

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Chapter 30: GOD AND THE COBBLER

In "God and the Cobbler" from R.K. Narayan's "Malgudi Days", we find a thought-provoking encounter between a humble cobbler and a wandering hippie in a bustling Indian town. The cobbler, a man of few possessions, sits in a small space near a temple, content with simple tasks like mending sandals and accepting the random blessings of nature—a shower of flowers from the margosa tree above him. He leads a life grounded in routine, stitched with the threads of patience and pride in his craftsmanship, turning discarded sandals into wearable items for those in need.

The hippie, on the other hand, embodies a carefree spirit, shedding conventional identities and seeking deeper meanings in life. He observes the cobbler with admiration, noting the man's ability to find joy in his labor and serenity despite the chaotic world surrounding them. As they begin to converse, the hippie, intrigued by the cobbler's philosophy, asks him about the existence of God and their relationship to divine beings. The cobbler's candid reflections reveal a profound understanding of life's circumstances; he likens God to a busy official who cannot attend to every petition,

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Chapter 31 Summary: HUNGRY CHILD

In Chapter 31 of "Malgudi Days," titled "Hungry Child," we find Raman, a signboard painter, navigating through a bustling Expo in his town. The Expo, filled with noise and lights, offers everything from trinkets to a displayed vintage Ford car, but Raman feels overwhelmed and exhausted by the chaotic atmosphere. Initially, he struggles with feelings of apathy, having not worked in months, which allows his rival, Jayaraj, to thrive. As he observes the exhibits, his attention is drawn to a strange placard of a fish-woman, which prompts a cynical reflection on his own artistic purpose.

Amid the noise, he hears an announcement about a lost boy named Gopu, prompting his curiosity about the child's situation and his careless parents. Contemplating the nature of abandonment, he decides to check on the boy at the Central Office, where the child is found causing a ruckus. Unexpectedly drawn to the boy, Raman impulsively agrees to take him home, despite not knowing anything about him.

Raman shares some cotton candy with Gopu, who affectionately takes to him. This moment sparks a sense of paternal longing in Raman, savoring the boy's joy and imagining a future as a father. As the day progresses, they enjoy various food stalls, rides, and attractions, with Raman feeling rejuvenated by the child's presence. His earlier melancholy begins to dissipate as he simply delights in Gopu's excitement and appetite, relishing

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the joy of eating ice-cream and riding the Giant Wheel together.

Raman's thoughts drift into dreams of the future, imagining how the boy could fill his vacant home with life and happiness, shifting his perspective from loneliness to enthusiasm for parenting. He envisions decorating a room for Gopu and guiding him through childhood, sparking a deep and affectionate bond. However, when the child expresses fear of school, Raman reassures him, reflecting on his own disdain for education.

As they near the end of their adventure, Gopu spots his family, leading to a bittersweet conclusion. While Raman had entertained dreams of a new life with Gopu, the boy runs to his parents, who immediately scold him for wandering off. This moment shatters Raman's hopes, leaving him to confront the emptiness of his own life once again as he watches the boy return to his family, marking the end of a brief yet transformative escape from his solitude. The chapter beautifully captures themes of loneliness, the desire for connection, and the fleeting nature of happiness, all encapsulated in a tender encounter between a man and an abandoned child.

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Chapter 32 Summary: EMDEN

In "Malgudi Days," Chapter 32, we meet an elderly man named Rao, who has earned the nickname 'Emden' due to his past as a formidable figure in town. With his age estimated between ninety and over a hundred, Rao has long lost track of time and avoids celebrating his birthdays, particularly since his elaborate eightieth celebration left him bedridden for weeks. This event serves as a turning point for him, as he becomes increasingly detached from his family and the everyday workings of his household.

Rao lives in Ratnapuri, a residential area he had ambitious plans for in his youth. His family consists of three sons, their families, and numerous descendants, yet he has grown distanced from them, often forgetting their names and faces. He finds solace in his routine, enjoying solitary moments of reflection in the afternoons as he sips coffee and reads the newspaper, occasionally engaging with philosophical discourses. His life has become monotonous, marked by a retirement that allows him to relish simple pleasures without the burdens of familial expectations.

As Rao embarks on his evening walks, he follows a well-trodden path, moving cautiously to both avoid falls and enjoy the vibrancy of Market Road. The bustling crowds remind him of a less distant past when he was more engaged and vibrant. Despite the murmurs of concern from others about his age and safety, he continues to navigate his surroundings with a

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resolve to maintain independence.

One day, driven by nostalgia and regret, Rao decides to venture beyond his usual orbit, seeking a long-forgotten love, symbolized by the enigmatic ‘S.’ He recalls memories of a past relationship filled with tenderness and jealousy, and despite his frail condition, he feels compelled to make amends. However, his quest to locate her home presents challenges. The bustling streets of Market Road have transformed, and he struggles to find Gokulam Street, symbolizing how the past has slipped away from him.

Rao encounters various townsfolk and reflects on how time has changed them—many faces are now unfamiliar to him. The journey grows frustrating as he searches for a coconut tree from his memories, a landmark he now realizes may no longer exist. As dusk approaches, his anxiety mounts; he is more concerned about how his family might react to his tardiness than his possible physical missteps.

In the midst of his wanderings, a brown mongrel unexpectedly startles him, causing him to drop the jilebi he had purchased, resulting in a bittersweet moment of loss. As the dog scurries away with the treat, Rao muses that perhaps this canine might be a reincarnation of his lost love, reflecting his deep longing and the fragility of memory.

Through Rao's journey, the chapter touches on themes of aging, memory,

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loss, and the bittersweet nature of nostalgia. It illustrates a poignant exploration of a man's inner world as he grapples with both the weight of his past and the stark reality of his present, inviting readers to ponder the passage of time and the legacies we leave behind.

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