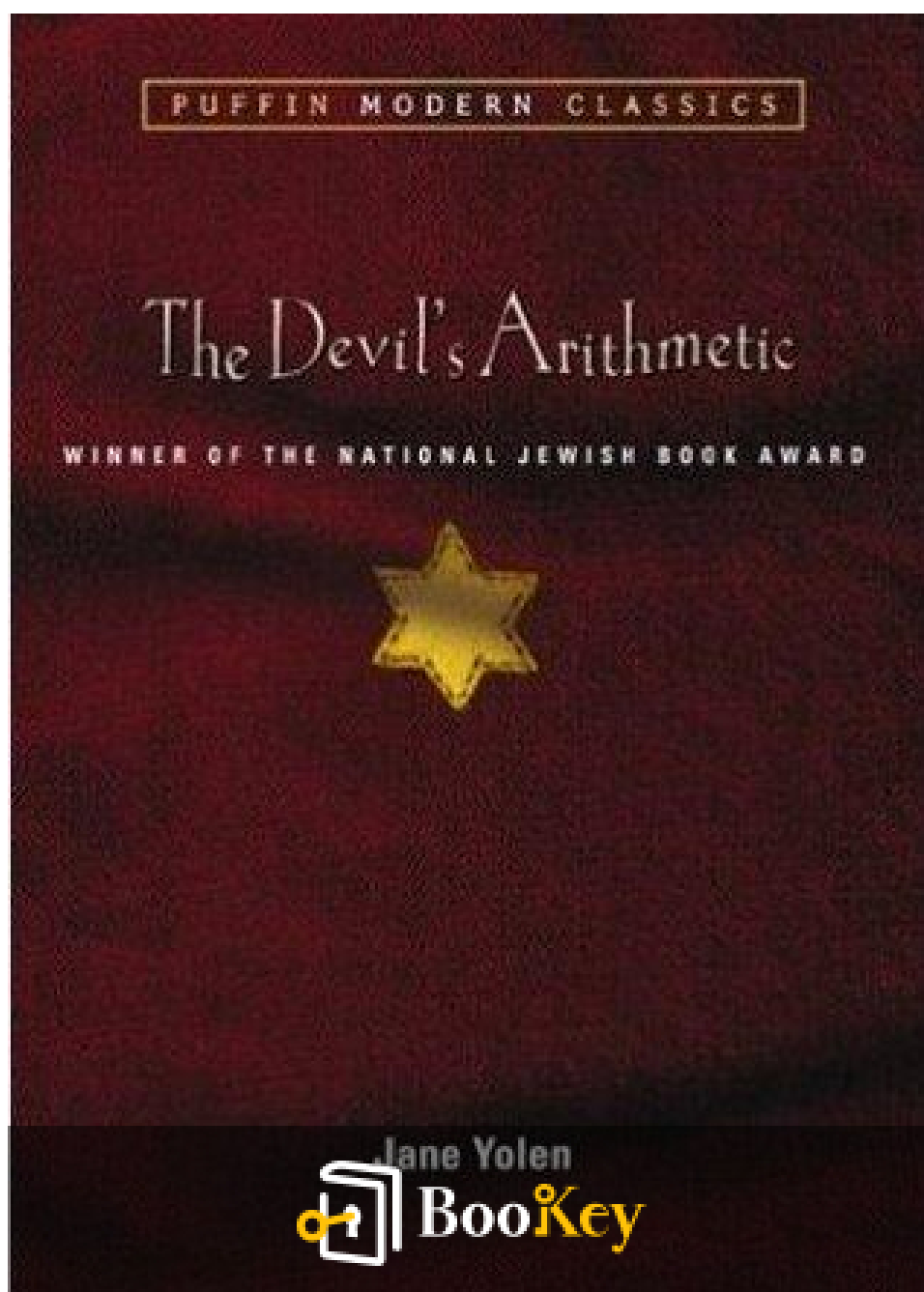


The Devil's Arithmetic PDF (Limited Copy)

Jane Yolen



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The Devil's Arithmetic Summary

Unveiling the past, one Seder at a time.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "The Devil's Arithmetic" by Jane Yolen, the protagonist Hannah Stern, a modern Jewish girl, approaches this year's Passover Seder with indifference, viewing it as a tedious family tradition rather than a meaningful celebration of her heritage. As the Seder begins, her frustrations peak, leading her to express her desire for a more exciting life rather than a continuation of age-old customs and stories.

Suddenly, during an intense moment of the seder, she is magically transported back in time to a small Jewish village in Poland during World War II, just before the Holocaust. In her new reality, she becomes Chaya Abramowicz, a young girl who is deeply embedded in her community and grappling with their cultural heritage, much different from the life she knows.

As Chaya, she experiences the vibrant presence of family and the importance of tradition—elements she had previously dismissed. However, this tranquil life is soon overshadowed by the impending horrors of the Holocaust. As she interacts with her relatives and neighbors, Hannah/Chaya begins to grasp the significance of her Jewish identity and the weight of history that her family carries.

Through these harrowing experiences, Hannah learns the value of

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remembrance and the necessity of acknowledging past struggles, ultimately fostering a renewed connection to her Jewish heritage. Her journey emphasizes the importance of understanding where one comes from to move forward, bridging the gap between past and present while carrying the lessons learned into the future.

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About the author

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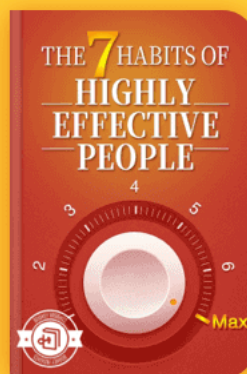
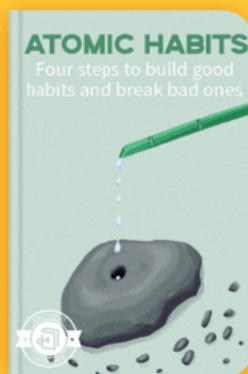
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Summary Content List

Chapter 1: 1

Chapter 2: 2

Chapter 3: 3

Chapter 4: 4

Chapter 5: 5

Chapter 6: 6

Chapter 7: 7

Chapter 8: 8

Chapter 9: 9

Chapter 10: 10

Chapter 11: 11

Chapter 12: 12

Chapter 13: 13

Chapter 14: 14

Chapter 15: 15

Chapter 16: 16

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Chapter 17: 17

Chapter 18: 18

Chapter 19: 19

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1

Summary of Chapter 1 of "The Devil's Arithmetic"

In the opening chapter of “The Devil’s Arithmetic,” we are introduced to Hannah Stern, a modern Jewish girl facing the tension between her teenage desires for independence and the weight of her family’s traditions. As she leaves a gathering at her friend Rosemary’s house, Hannah vocalizes her frustration about the impending Passover celebrations, viewing them as a tedious obligation rather than a meaningful rite. This reflects a common theme for many young people who struggle to connect with the cultural practices of previous generations.

Hannah's mother, however, reminds her of the importance of remembering the past, particularly the painful history of their people during this significant Jewish holiday. The family is en route to a Seder dinner at her grandparents' home, where the festivities and rituals are deeply rooted in remembering the Exodus from Egypt.

As they approach their destination, the journey reveals sibling dynamics: Hannah’s younger brother, Aaron, voices his nervousness about performing the Four Questions at the Seder. Their playful banter, typical of sibling relationships, adds a lightheartedness to the chapter, even as Aaron’s anxiety



hints at the seriousness of their cultural traditions.

Upon arriving at her grandparents' building, Hannah is greeted with warmth and enthusiasm by her Aunt Rose, a stark contrast to her own feelings of awkwardness and self-consciousness. Struggling with her braces and her unremarkable appearance, Hannah feels out of place amidst the familial love and the collective expectations that come with their heritage.

This opening chapter artfully sets the stage for the story's exploration of memory, heritage, and the often-complicated relationship between past and present. Hannah's experience mirrors that of many young individuals learning to navigate the legacy of their families while grappling with their own identity, establishing a foundation for the transformative journey that lies ahead.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2

Chapter 2 Summary: The Struggle with the Past

In this chapter, Hannah grapples with feelings of invisibility as her family rallies around her grandfather, Grandpa Will, who is deeply affected by his memories of the Holocaust. As he watches harrowing archival footage of concentration camps on TV, his emotional outbursts reveal the profound impact of trauma that continues to haunt him. This powerful moment underscores the generational trauma that not only echoes through his life but also influences the family landscape, marking a stark contrast to her other grandfather, Grandpa Dan, who leads a much simpler, unburdened life in America.

Hannah struggles to comprehend why Grandpa Will chooses to revisit such dark memories. This struggle is compounded by her unease about how his intense reflections may affect her social interactions and standing among friends. The chapter introduces Aunt Eva, a pivotal figure in Hannah's life, who has remained single to care for her family rather than pursue her own aspirations. Hannah is curious about Aunt Eva's choices but has ceased to seek deeper insights into her life, focusing instead on the practical wisdom her aunt provides for everyday issues. Yet, she reminisces about a time when life felt more magical and less complicated.



As the chapter unfolds, Aunt Eva performs the ritual of lighting holiday candles, a moment rich with spiritual significance that temporarily alleviates the tension surrounding them. Hannah shares a quiet connection with her aunt through whispered prayers, offering a fleeting moment of solace in the midst of familial complexities. The chapter ultimately captures Hannah's frustrations with her evolving identity and emotions amid the intricate dynamics of her family, illuminating themes of memory, trauma, and the ongoing struggle for understanding and connection within a lineage marked by sorrow and resilience.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3

In Chapter 3 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," we rejoin Hannah as she navigates the complexities of a Seder dinner—a Jewish ritual meal that celebrates Passover and the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Despite the significance of the occasion, Hannah finds herself bored by the repetitiveness of the evening's rituals and her grandfather Will's monotonous retelling of the plagues and the Exodus. Her mind drifts to thoughts of the next Seder at Grandpa Dan's, where she imagines a more vibrant atmosphere filled with fun, cousins, and fewer constraints.

As Hannah's younger brother Aaron prepares to ask his Second Question, she offers her support, demonstrating her role as a caring older sister. However, amidst the familial chaos, Hannah grapples with frustration—particularly about the restrictions of holiday food traditions. While her cousin enjoys jellybeans, she has to endure the bitter taste of horseradish, which serves as a metaphor for her discontent with the weight of tradition.

A ray of light pierces her dissatisfaction when Aunt Eva, embodying the spirit of the celebration, leads a lively song that momentarily lifts the somber mood. For Hannah, the act of drinking watered wine becomes a small rite of passage, symbolizing her transition within the family circle.



The lighter atmosphere continues as the children get involved in the joyful tradition of searching for the afikoman—an important piece of matzo hidden during the meal. Watching Aaron sneak away to hide it evokes nostalgia for Hannah, reminding her of childhood joys. She encourages him to negotiate for a prize worthy of his efforts, showcasing their close sibling bond.

However, as the evening drags on, Hannah feels a headache intensifying, symbolizing her internal conflict between wanting to join the adult conversations and the limitations dictated by her age. When it's finally her turn to open the door for Elijah, a traditional gesture meant to welcome the prophet, she feels a mixture of skepticism and obligation.

In a stunning turn of events, upon opening the door, Hannah is not met with the familiar hallway but instead finds herself in a mystical green field, confronted by an eerie figure singing a haunting melody. This unexpected moment signals a shift from the mundane to the magical, foreshadowing crucial themes of heritage, memory, and the intersection of reality and the supernatural that are woven throughout the story.

This chapter effectively encapsulates Hannah's emotional journey, highlighting her frustration, nostalgia, and surprise within the embrace of family traditions during Passover. It explores the complexities of cultural rituals and family dynamics while hinting at the deeper significance of memory and identity.



Chapter 4: 4

In Chapter 4 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," Hannah undergoes a bewildering transformation as she transitions from the familiar atmosphere of a modern Seder meal to the rustic simplicity of a shtetl—a small Jewish village in Eastern Europe, set in the past. This sudden shift leaves her disoriented, as she finds herself in a kitchen filled with the warmth and bustle of family life, where she is greeted as if she has always belonged.

She meets Gitl, a strong and nurturing figure who is baking bread and addresses her as Chaya, a Hebrew name that anchors her in this historical context. Gitl's use of Yiddish—a language intertwined with Jewish culture and heritage—somehow becomes comprehensible to Hannah, augmenting her sense of confusion yet deepening her connection to this new reality. The entrance of Shmuel, her supposed uncle, brings levity to the scene; his playful banter with Gitl and the affectionate way he interacts with Hannah evokes a sense of familial warmth and community.

As Hannah grapples with her dual identity—struggling to reconcile being Hannah from her contemporary life with Chaya from the past—she feels a pull of sadness for her true family while simultaneously finding comfort in the familial bonds forming around her. The interactions are marked by laughter and joy, but they also hint at deeper themes of hardship and loss, reflecting the often dual nature of life in the shtetl.



This chapter poignantly explores themes of memory and identity, emphasizing how familial connections can offer both solace and conflict. Hannah's internal struggle to hold onto her past while navigating her new role induces emotional tension, propelling the narrative forward. By the end of the chapter, as Gitl tucks her into bed, reassuring her that she is now part of their family, Hannah experiences a blend of comfort and unease regarding her new existence as Chaya, setting the stage for the challenges that lie ahead.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5

In Chapter 5 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," Hannah—known as Chaya in this dream-like world—awakens in a dimly lit house enveloped in an unsettling silence. As she explores her surroundings, the chilly floors remind her of the stark reality she has left behind, juxtaposing her modern life with the traditional setting of her ancestors. Hannah grapples with the nostalgia and discomfort from her recent Seder dream, where she was surrounded by family yet felt distant from their experiences.

Step by step, she finds her uncle Shmuel outside, who opens up about his own apprehensions regarding marriage. Their heartfelt exchange about mutual fears, including Hannah's dread of needles, forges a connection, illustrating the blend of past and present as Hannah navigates the cultural gap between her New Rochelle upbringing and her family's roots in Lublin. This playful banter encapsulates the generational divide and her struggle to belong in this unfamiliar yet intrinsically connected setting.

Breakfast offers a stark reminder of her circumstances when Hannah's desire for everyday comforts like cereal and white bread clashes with the simple fare typical of her relatives' life, which underscores the socio-economic disparities of the time. As Shmuel and his fiancée Gitl share light-hearted teasing, Hannah observes their familial warmth, trying to find her place within this spirited dynamic despite her feelings of alienation.



The lively arrival of Yitzchak, a brawny butcher bearing chickens as a wedding gift, further enriches the scene with humor and excitement. Conversations shift toward the wedding preparations, diving into adult themes that both intrigue and embarrass Hannah. Gitl, as the orchestrator of these festivities, emerges with a robust personality that keeps everyone in check, mirroring the strength and resilience of the community.

Throughout Chapter 5, the intertwining themes of family, tradition, and the struggles of cultural displacement are prominent. Hannah's interactions not only illustrate the warmth, humor, and richness of her heritage but also accentuate her inner conflict of feeling misplaced in a setting that, while foreign, is woven with the very threads of her identity. As the chapter closes, Hannah remains acutely aware of her past while striving to connect with her family's legacy.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6

Chapter 6 Summary: Getting Dressed for the Wedding

In this chapter, we find Hannah, now living as Chaya in a quaint shtetl, preparing for Shmuel's wedding—a significant event that brings together community and tradition. She is confronted with the task of dressing for the occasion and faces her discomfort head-on. The dress, a dark blue sailor suit chosen by her aunt Gitl, feels outdated and juvenile compared to her modern wardrobe from New Rochelle. Despite her embarrassment, Gitl's enthusiasm and insistence that she will look like a princess stir a fleeting sense of excitement.

As Hannah reluctantly adorns the dress and various accessories Gitl insists on, she undergoes a peculiar transformation. Though she resembles her former self, the old-fashioned attire highlights a disconnect between her current life and her former one, amplifying her internal conflict. Gitl's warm presence amid the wedding preparations provides Hannah with a momentary respite, yet she remains self-conscious throughout the bustling festivities and the throng of unfamiliar faces.

The preparations engulf the shtetl in lively chaos, and while Gitl gracefully receives gifts from the townsfolk, Hannah feels increasingly out of



place—longing to retreat like the timid chickens around them. A turning point occurs when she meets Rachel, a girl her age, who quickly befriends her. Their initial awkwardness fades, and Rachel introduces her to other girls, igniting a connection that momentarily alleviates Hannah's discomfort.

As they converse, cultural differences surface, revealing the contrasting lives they lead. Hannah's descriptions of modern conveniences in Lublin—such as shopping malls and indoor bathrooms—leave the other girls in awe. This interaction deepens her internal struggle as she embodies both the identity of Chaya and the essence of Hannah, torn between the two worlds. The girls' fascination with her stories draws her in closer to the rich tapestry of the shtetl, compelling her to slightly alter her narrative to align with their understanding.

This chapter intricately delves into themes of cultural contrasts, the quest for identity, and the innocence of youth against the backdrop of historical upheaval. Hannah's journey reflects the broader conflict between her past and present, embodying the struggle many face when two worlds collide, urging her to find a place where both identities can coexist.



Chapter 7 Summary: 7

Chapter 7 Summary of "The Devil's Arithmetic"

In this engaging chapter, Hannah, who adopts the identity of Chaya, captures the attention of a group of girls in her community by sharing vivid stories from her previous life in New Rochelle. Drawing from familiar movies and books like **Yentl**, **Star Wars**, and **Little Women**, she elicits emotions of both laughter and tears, basking in a newfound popularity that contrasts sharply with her experiences back home, where she felt overshadowed by peers known as "the Snubs."

As they stroll through a picturesque forest, the girls eagerly crowd around, engrossed in her storytelling. Hannah, immersed in the moment, finds herself blending her past memories with her present experiences. This connection enhances her decision to fully embrace her new identity as Chaya, reinforcing a sense of belonging.

The joyful atmosphere shifts suddenly with the arrival of a klezmer band featuring traditional instruments such as the clarinet, violin, and accordion. The villagers respond with exuberance, dancing and singing, and Hannah, initially feeling out of her element, instinctively joins in. As she sings along, she recognizes that her voice resonates with Chaya, further deepening her



engagement with the community.

Conversation turns to an upcoming wedding, illuminating the customs of arranged marriages in this culture. This prompts Hannah to reflect on the differences between these traditional practices and the more modern perspectives she knows. She also encounters a delightful character named the badchan, a wedding jester who entertains the crowd with playful rhymes and humor, humorously addressing Hannah and underscoring her unique position straddling two worlds.

Amidst the festivity, Hannah contemplates her experiences, forging deeper connections with the girls around her. This chapter artfully weaves together themes of storytelling, cultural traditions, and the enriching power of community, highlighting how Hannah's vibrant voice fosters unity and celebration. Through her reflections, she grapples with her dual identity while finding solace and joy in the warmth of her new surroundings.

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Chapter 8: 8

In Chapter 8, titled "The Forest Boils with People," Hannah, also known as Chaya, finds herself enveloped in a vibrant celebration in Viosk, where villagers joyously welcome Shmuel and his friends in anticipation of the wedding. Despite the festive atmosphere, Hannah is overcome by nostalgia for her real home in New Rochelle, highlighting her struggle with identity and the cultural displacement she feels as she navigates this historical backdrop.

As Aunt Gitl introduces her to Fayge, Shmuel's beautiful and spirited bride-to-be, Hannah begins to immerse herself in the warmth of wedding preparations. Fayge's captivating personality shines through, and the two young women quickly develop a budding friendship, bonding over their thoughts and fears about marriage during the wagon ride toward the village. The idyllic scenery adds to the charm of the moment; however, an unsettling feeling creeps into Hannah as they spot ominous vehicles waiting outside the synagogue—a stark contrast to the joyous occasion.

Fayge's father, Reb Boruch, dismisses their concerns about the trucks, assuring them they are merely part of the wedding festivities. Yet, as they draw closer, Hannah's impending dread escalates. The arrival of soldiers in dark uniforms shatters the celebratory atmosphere, revealing that they are not guests but Nazis. Alarmed, Hannah desperately attempts to warn the



villagers about the danger lurking among them, but her pleas fall on deaf ears. The villagers are resolute in their adherence to tradition and the celebration, unable or unwilling to confront the grim reality before them.

This chapter poignantly juxtaposes the high spirits of a wedding with the dark shadow of impending doom, tackling profound themes such as the struggle of cultural identity, the importance of friendship in times of uncertainty, and the harsh refusal to confront change, even when warned. Through the tension between the joy of the celebration and the menacing presence of the soldiers, the narrative encapsulates the vulnerability of community in the face of historical tragedy and the complexities of memory and identity amidst chaos.

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Chapter 9 Summary: 9

Chapter 9 Summary: The Villagers Gather and Depart

In this pivotal chapter of "The Devil's Arithmetic," the villagers of Viosk find themselves gripped by fear and uncertainty as they confront the imposing presence of Nazi soldiers who have come to forcibly relocate them. The atmosphere is thick with anxiety as the villagers gather outside their synagogue, murmuring among themselves. Amidst the tension, Yitzchak reassures his son, Reuven, by lifting him onto his shoulders, a tender act that contrasts sharply with the looming threat.

As the leaders of the village, including Shmuel, engage in a futile argument with the Nazi chief, the gravity of their circumstances becomes chillingly clear: this relocation is part of a broader, sinister "government policy." Shmuel attempts to provide comfort to his fiancée, Fayge, about their upcoming wedding, yet Hannah, who possesses foreboding knowledge of the horrors that await them in concentration camps, tries desperately to convey the gravity of their situation. Fayge dismisses Hannah's warnings as mere imagination—an embodiment of the collective denial gripping the villagers. Gitl, protective of Hannah, intervenes, urging her to remain silent to ensure their safety.



Despite the rabbi's attempted optimism, assuring the villagers that they will be cared for during this upheaval, a palpable murmur of doubt spreads through the crowd. Hannah, torn between her historical awareness and the present reality, feels increasingly trapped as Gitl advises obedience to avert danger. Her heart races with fear as the villagers are ordered aboard the waiting trucks, crammed together like cattle—a harrowing image reflecting the dehumanization they face.

In an attempt to soothe the children amidst the growing panic, Gitl begins to sing. The songs they share resonate with a mix of sorrow and defiance, embodying the villagers' spirit and resilience. Despite her overwhelming terror and physical nausea, Hannah finds herself joining in, recognizing the power of their collective expression in the face of impending tragedy.

This chapter poignantly illustrates themes of denial, the delicate balance between hope and despair, and the strong bonds that hold the community together as they confront the bleak future ahead.



Chapter 10 Summary: 10

In Chapter 10 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," the narrative shifts dramatically as Hannah and her family, along with their fellow villagers, arrive at a train station engulfed in a palpable sense of fear and tension. The scene is dire, marked by the presence of armed guards who ruthlessly compel the frightened villagers to disembark from the transport trucks. Shmuel's urgent call serves as a rallying point, drawing attention to the grim reality that lies ahead.

As chaos ensues, Fayge's wedding dress becomes a poignant symbol of hope and innocence lost in the face of impending doom. The villagers, once filled with dreams and plans, now find their personal belongings—suitcases, toys, and medicinal supplies—scattered haphazardly on the ground, stark reminders of their abrupt and forced displacement. Hannah, recalling the historical context of her people's suffering, feels an acute sense of dread, aware of the fate that likely awaits them. However, her aunt Gitl urges her to hold her tongue, highlighting the tension between knowledge and the hope for traditional beliefs.

The officer commanding the scene resorts to brutal intimidation tactics to force compliance, firing a warning shot that reverberates through the crowd. Under the weight of fear, the villagers are ordered to lie on the ground, a moment that brutally crystallizes the reality of their situation. When allowed



to rise, the effects of the trauma are evident: visible bruises, torn clothing, and soft cries of despair create an atmosphere thick with loss.

The group is then herded into cramped boxcars, where the suffocating heat and darkness exacerbate their anxiety and despair. Inside the narrow confines, the tension reaches a boiling point, and conversations turn grim as villagers share sordid tales of other Jewish communities that have met tragic fates, igniting panic and denial about their own imminent danger.

In this charged atmosphere, Hannah, overwhelmed by the intensity of the moment, attempts to convey her knowledge of their fate, declaring that she comes from the future. Yet her desperate pleas are brushed aside by the adults, who cling to prayer and tradition as a means of coping with their dire reality. This chapter encapsulates the emotional turmoil faced by the characters, woven with themes of fear, communal strength, and the struggle against despair, as the villagers find themselves crammed in the dark boxcar, awaiting an uncertain and likely tragic fate.



Chapter 11 Summary: 11

In Chapter 11 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," Hannah and her fellow prisoners endure a grueling four-day journey in a cramped boxcar, enduring extreme conditions of blistering heat by day and freezing cold by night. The stench of sweat, urine, and waste permeates the air, creating an atmosphere of desperation. At one stop, the harsh reality of their situation is starkly illustrated as soldiers coldly discard the bodies of fellow passengers, a grim reminder that hope is fading rapidly.

When the train finally comes to a halt, the doors are flung open, and the prisoners are thrust into the harsh morning light, greeted by the violent commands of soldiers. The group, now visibly weakened and traumatized, is filtered into a fenced area emblazoned with the chilling words "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("Work sets you free"). Hannah, burdened with the foreknowledge of the fate that awaits them, translates this bitter phrase for her companions, amplifying their despair.

As they navigate the chaos of their new reality, Fayge, the bride of Shmuel, collapses. Shmuel's tender care for her amidst the turmoil underscores the human connections still struggling to survive in the face of terror. However, the soldiers swiftly separate the men from the women, heightening the fear and confusion. The women are soon ushered into a room with a stern woman who claims to be a prisoner but not of Jewish descent. She demands



Hannah's blue hair ribbons, symbolizing the loss of individuality and agency that each woman faces, and despite Hannah's resistance, they are forcibly taken.

The group is then told they must take showers, a directive that fills Hannah with dread as she fears the truth hidden behind this facade: the looming threat of gas chambers. While her companions cling to a fragile sense of hope, Hannah's knowledge creates a profound sense of isolation, leaving her torn between the desire to protect her friends and the weight of her foreknowledge. Despite the internal conflict, she chooses silence, unwilling to extinguish the dwindling hope of those around her.

The chapter reaches a peak of trauma as the women are shorn of their hair, a brutal act that strips away their identity and humanity. As Hannah's memories seem to fade with the loss of her hair, she finds solace in Gitl's comforting presence. Gitl encourages resilience, and together, they make a vow to never show weakness in front of their captors again, a moment that solidifies their bond in the face of unspeakable adversity.

This chapter powerfully explores themes of dehumanization, the loss of identity, and the struggle to maintain hope amidst despair, leaving readers with a haunting sense of the harsh realities faced by the characters.



Chapter 12: 12

In Chapter 12 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," the narrative takes a harrowing turn as Hannah finds herself in a stark barracks, stripped of her identity and personal history. The starkness of her surroundings is amplified when she has her hair cut off, an act that not only physically chills her but symbolically ages her, representing the loss of youth and individuality. As she and the other prisoners shuffle forward, Hannah grapples with the grim reality of their situation but resolves to suppress her fear, driven by an instinct to survive.

A pivotal character, a stern woman with three fingers, arrives, sparking a brief connection with Hannah. This interaction prompts her to reflect on her predicament while reminding her to remain resilient. As she chooses a tattered dress from a pile, she feels the weight of her previous judgments about such garments. This act of choice signifies her gradual empathy toward the struggles of those around her, particularly a small child named Tzipporah, whom she instinctively feels compelled to protect.

The chapter takes a darker turn when the prisoners are ordered to undergo a branding process. One by one, they are marked with numbers, stripping away their names and identities. When it's Hannah's turn, she falters and forgets her name until Gitl, a relative who has been a source of support, whispers "Chaya Abramowicz" to her. This moment highlights a stark



transformation for Hannah, as she is informed that she is no longer Chaya but merely a number: J197241. The branding serves as a profound representation of the dehumanization endured by the camp's prisoners.

In a poignant moment, Hannah briefly connects with the tattoo artist, who recognizes her dress as belonging to his daughter, also named Chaya. This shared sorrow underscores the collective grief of the prisoners, emphasizing the importance of memory in the face of suffering. The artist's plea for her to 'live' in honor of her lost loved ones illustrates a recurring theme of survival and remembrance within the narrative.

As night descends, Hannah attempts to provide comfort to Tzipporah, despite their bleak reality. They are forced into cramped quarters, devoid of warmth or comfort, yet Hannah clings to a flicker of hope found in Gitl's laughter. Gitl reassures Hannah that she remains Chaya in spirit, reinforcing the strength of their familial bond and the resilience of the human spirit even in the darkest of times.

The chapter concludes with a chilling confrontation with a guard, who callously refers to the smoke from the chimneys as "Jew smoke," serving as a grim reminder of the fate that awaits many imprisoned. This unsettling reality strikes at the heart of the chapter, which deeply examines the themes of dehumanization and the struggle for survival amid overwhelming despair. As Hannah falls asleep, her dreams are filled with visions of food and



warmth, symbolizing her yearning for the past and her determination to endure the uncertain future that lies ahead.

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Chapter 13 Summary: 13

Summary of Chapter 13 from "The Devil's Arithmetic"

In this poignant chapter, Hannah awakens in the harrowing confines of a concentration camp, a stark contrast to her previous life. Disoriented, she recalls the traumatic experience of being transported in a cattle car and the physical pain from the hard shelf she has been sleeping on, accompanied by injuries including a bloodied shin. Memories of her harrowing experiences, including the heartbreaking loss of a baby and the tattoo that marks her as a prisoner, cascade through her mind, stripping away her sense of identity.

The environment around her is chaotic and suffocating, dominated by the harsh commands of a guard. As she grapples with despair, a fleeting moment of hope surfaces when she thinks of the familiar comforts of a Seder meal. This hope quickly dissipates upon seeing Gitl, her relative, who is visibly encumbered by her own suffering, emphasizing the pervasive anguish shared by those around them. Gitl's sharp warning to Hannah about not touching the little girl, Tzipporah, underlines the risks and fear that permeate their reality.

As the prisoners are lined up for food, they are given metal bowls, symbols of their harsh survival. Hannah encounters Rivka, a resilient girl who embodies hope in a bleak landscape. Rivka's advice to take care of her bowl



illustrates its importance in their dire circumstances and offers a glimmer of kindness amidst the despair.

After an inadequate meal, the prisoners gather once more, facing a stern officer who coldly outlines the brutal rules they must follow to avoid punishment. Hannah's fragmented memories intensify her struggle to maintain her identity in such an oppressive environment. She feels increasingly isolated, grappling with fragmented thoughts of her loved ones, and the weight of her current reality.

The chapter concludes with an air of tense uncertainty, as Hannah clings to the fading links to her past while navigating the grim challenges of camp life. Gitl's fierce whisper of her name serves as a fragile tether to hope, a reminder of resilience amid their suffering.

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Chapter 14 Summary: 14

Chapter 14 Summary: Survival and Connection

In this poignant chapter of "The Devil's Arithmetic," Hannah grapples with the brutal realities of her situation in a concentration camp, a harrowing experience set against the backdrop of World War II and the Holocaust—a time when millions faced unimaginable horrors. She encounters Rivka, a resilient girl who has endured a year in the camp and embodies strength amid despair.

Rivka, mindful of the ominous atmosphere surrounded by watchtowers and barbed wire, reassures Hannah, Esther, and Shifre that they are temporarily safe. However, Rivka's determination to survive is rooted in the pain of loss; she shares that her family has been taken from her, yet she believes that their memories continue to exist within her. Rivka's camp number, J18202, serves as a stark reminder of her identity and survival, with the "2" representing both herself and her brother Wolfe, whom she describes as being like the "walking dead." Her insistence that as long as they are alive, they carry their loved ones' memories highlights the emotional struggle against dehumanization.

As the conversation unfolds, Rivka lays out crucial survival strategies in the

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camp, emphasizing the need to understand their assigned numbers—which are essential in a system designed to strip away individuality—and to discern whom to trust. She warns against forming bonds with Greek Jews, who often vanish, and underscores the painful reality of the "musselmen," individuals who have surrendered hope. Rivka's insights reflect a deep understanding of the psychological toll of their environment, and Hannah, although confused, is inspired by Rivka's fortitude and pragmatic approach to their dire circumstances.

Rivka also teaches the girls about resourcefulness, providing them with essential advice on how to navigate their harsh reality and even find strength within it. She mentions the importance of a hiding place in the midden, a strategy vital for protecting younger children during inspections. This reflects the instinct for survival that permeates the chapter, illustrating how they adapt to enhance their chances of enduring the daily horrors.

Later, Rivka takes the girls to the barracks, where she helps them find shoes, emphasizing the deterioration of their conditions compared to when she first arrived. Despite the pervasive sorrow, budding connections among the girls emerge as they cling to hope and each other, suggesting that human relationships can offer solace even in the darkest of times.

As the chapter concludes, a troubled Hannah is haunted by memories of her past life and a sorrowful weeping echoing around her. The night is filled



with an uncomfortable mix of fear, loss, and a desperate yearning for survival, encapsulating the chapter's themes of resilience and the profound connections forged in the struggle against overwhelming despair. This sets the stage for their ongoing battle against the darkness that threatens to engulf them all.

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Chapter 15 Summary: 15

Summary of Chapter 15 of "The Devil's Arithmetic"

In this poignant chapter, Hannah fully immerses herself in the harsh reality of life within a concentration camp, confronting the daily struggles of survival alongside fellow prisoners. The chapter begins with a tense scene where children scramble to hide in a garbage dump, known as a "midden," to escape the notice of the camp commandant. This moment of urgency fosters a sense of community, as Rivka teaches Hannah and Shifre to mimic clucking sounds to communicate with the hidden children, highlighting their resilience amid fear.

Hannah's burgeoning bravery surfaces when she instinctively rushes into the refuse to save an abandoned baby, a demonstration of her deepening compassion. Yet, this act also starkly reveals the grim conditions they live in; a lack of water not only makes washing impossible but also symbolizes the emotional and moral decay surrounding them. The monotony of camp life soon settles in—each day marked by roll calls, grueling labor, and minimal meals consisting of thin soup and stale bread. Nevertheless, Hannah finds small pockets of joy in sharing food with other children, showcasing her nurturing instincts in desperate times.



As the chapter unfolds, the somber reality of the camp's purpose becomes evident: the prisoners are forced to sift through the belongings of those who have been murdered. Rivka introduces the chilling concept of being "chosen," a euphemism for selection to be sent to their deaths, which weighs heavily on Hannah and her companions. The dread of the commandant's presence amplifies their fear, contributing to the atmosphere of constant threat.

Amidst the darkness, Gitl, Hannah's aunt, presents a moment of solace by gifting her a blue scarf for her birthday. This gesture serves as a reminder that life persists even in the bleakest circumstances. However, the gift is bittersweet, as Gitl shares news of family members who have been "chosen," including their rabbi, which shatters any remaining illusions of safety. Hannah wrestles with the magnitude of their situation, recognizing the critical importance of solidarity as the women come together to recite the Kaddish, a prayer for the dead, honoring those they have lost.

This chapter masterfully contrasts the horror of their reality with glimmers of kindness and the enduring spirit of community, encapsulating themes of survival, memory, and the struggle to maintain one's identity amid the relentless dehumanization they face. Through Hannah's experiences, the narrative poignantly explores the bonds formed in adversity and the small acts of defiance that keep hope alive, even in the darkest of times.



Chapter 16: 16

In Chapter 16 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," Hannah is entrenched in the reality of life within a concentration camp, caught in a daily grind of oppressive routines and harsh regulations that define their existence. As her memories of a happier past begin to blur, she engages in conversation with her friend Shifre about favorite foods. This dialogue reveals the emotional burden of their circumstances, as Hannah struggles to recall anything beyond the monotony of potato soup, highlighting her deepening sense of loss.

Rivka, another survivor in the camp, shares unsettling tales about the *blokova*, the camp guards, and the brutal repercussions of disobedience, such as the horrifying threats of losing fingers or worse, the fate of family members. Her stories create a powerful atmosphere of shared sorrow yet also foster a sense of resilience amid the despair the group faces together.

The chapter takes a dramatic turn when an unexpected visit from a commandant instills chaos in the camp. A young boy named Reuven becomes paralyzed with fear, unable to escape the commandant's menacing glare. Despite Hannah's desperate pleas for him to run, Reuven is taken away, suggesting a devastating outcome that amplifies Hannah's sense of dread and helplessness.

Confronted with the heavy weight of loss, Hannah oscillates between



feelings of frustration and guilt, grappling with the idea of resistance. She expresses her desire to fight back against their oppressors, but Rivka gently reminds her that they possess no means to do so. This exchange powerfully illustrates the pervasive hopelessness they feel, even as flickers of defiance linger in their spirits.

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Chapter 17 Summary: 17

Summary of Chapter 17: The Devil's Arithmetic

In this pivotal chapter, the atmosphere is thick with tension as Gitl confides in Hannah about a clandestine escape plan involving their family members, Shmuel and Yitzchak. Gitl underscores the significance of remembrance, urging Hannah to hold onto their past, a reference to their family's heritage and the history of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. She reassures Hannah that when the moment arrives, she will know what to do, instilling in her a glimmer of hope amidst the despair of the concentration camp.

As days blur together, Hannah's anticipation builds until one night, Gitl awakens her, signaling that it's time to act. An intoxicating mix of fear and excitement courses through Hannah as she follows Gitl outside. Their whispers reflect the weight of their circumstances—each decision layered with love and the instinct to survive.

However, chaos erupts when gunshots pierce the night, sending panic through the camp. Gitl reacts swiftly, pulling Hannah back into the safety of the barrack just as searchlights scan the area, highlighting the ever-present dangers they face. Demonstrating quick thinking, Gitl concocts a plausible story to deceive the blokova, the camp overseer, ensuring they remain



undetected.

Once back in their makeshift sanctuary, anxiety grips Hannah as she worries over a pair of shoes she accidentally left outside during the commotion. In a moment that blends relief and shock, Gitl reveals that the shoes belong to the blokova, a detail that means Hannah is not at risk of being discovered for the escape attempt.

This chapter weaves together the profound themes of fear, resilience, and the indomitable will to survive, accentuating the deep familial bond between Gitl and Hannah. Their connection and shared memories serve as a lifeline amidst the horrors they endure, solidifying the significance of family and history even in the darkest moments. As the chapter closes, the precarious balance of hope and dread becomes evident, encapsulating their harrowing reality.

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Chapter 18 Summary: 18

In Chapter 18 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," the narrative unfolds with a chilling morning roll call in a concentration camp, starkly illuminated by the harsh sunlight that contrasts with the somber reality faced by the prisoners. Commandant Breuer, flanked by menacing SS guards and surrounded by an eerie serenity marked by chirping birds, addresses the assembled captives with a tone of derision. He refers to them as "pets," highlighting their perceived privilege before delivering a grim proclamation about six men captured after an escape attempt, threatening them with imminent execution—demonstrating the cruelty and oppression pervading the camp.

Among the men, Hannah spies familiar faces: Shmuel and the violinist from the klezmer band, both bearing the scars of brutal treatment. As Breuer prepares to execute the prisoners, Hannah's heart aches with dread, ultimately witnessing Fayge, Shmuel's beloved, rush toward him in a moment of tragic defiance, only to meet a fatal end beside him. This heart-wrenching scene leaves an air of stunned silence hanging over the camp, a testament to the brutal reality of their existence.

The narrative shifts to Hannah and her friends as they seek solace in their mundane tasks despite the backdrop of horror. Surrounded by nature's stark beauty, they find themselves juxtaposed against their grim circumstances. In



an effort to uplift spirits, Hannah shares stories of hope, holding onto the memories of her past and the belief in the promise of a brighter future for the Jewish people.

As the girls navigate this uncertainty, the threat of being selected for labor duty looms, a random cruelty that underscores the precariousness of their lives. When the new guard begins making selections, the fear intensifies, prompting Hannah to take a bold step for her friend Rivka's safety. In a moment of courageous resolve, she offers to assume Rivka's identity, embodying the spirit of survival and solidarity.

While sharing stories of her life in America, Hannah weaves a tapestry of dreams and possibilities, illuminating the power of memory and narrative as tools for resilience in the bleakest of times. As they confront the foreboding darkness of "Lilith's Cave," Hannah's determination to cling to hope amidst despair shines brightly, emphasizing the enduring human spirit and the importance of maintaining one's identity and stories even in the face of overwhelming adversity.

This chapter masterfully explores the intricate themes of memory, identity, and the juxtaposition of hope and despair, illustrating the struggle to preserve humanity and connections within a dehumanizing environment.



Chapter 19 Summary: 19

In Chapter 19 of "The Devil's Arithmetic," Hannah finds herself in a dimly lit hall before a green door marked 4N, a significant symbol of her family's heritage and tradition. As she navigates her surroundings, she notices that her companions, Shifre and Esther, have mysteriously vanished, leaving her feeling increasingly alone and disoriented. Her attention is drawn to a beautifully set table covered with a white cloth, overflowing with traditional Jewish foods, where her relatives are gathered in anticipation of a guest who is missing.

An elderly man at the gathering gently nudges Hannah to acknowledge the absence, prompting her to admit that no one will be joining them.

Nevertheless, Aunt Eva, her warm and caring relative, encourages Hannah to join them at the table with a heartfelt toast of "L'chaim," which means "to life." Taking her seat in a place typically reserved for the prophet Elijah, Hannah becomes aware of the poignant tattoo on Aunt Eva's arm, etched with the number J18202, a grim reminder of her history as a Holocaust survivor.

As their conversation unfolds, Aunt Eva reveals the intricate tapestry of their family history, expressing a deep desire for Hannah to understand the painful legacy they share. Hannah, moved, touches the tattoo, compelling Aunt Eva to recount her experiences, intertwining their identities with



threads of memory and history that feel almost surreal.

Through Aunt Eva's story, we learn about her brother Wolfe, who suffered a tragic fate during the war, adding weight to their conversation and illuminating the scars left by their past. This shared trauma fosters a connection between Hannah and Aunt Eva, awakening memories within Hannah that she had not known she possessed. The chapter reaches a poignant climax as Hannah boldly declares, "I remember. Oh, I remember," reinforcing the themes of memory, familial identity, and the vital importance of acknowledging and honoring the past, especially in the face of collective suffering and resilience.

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