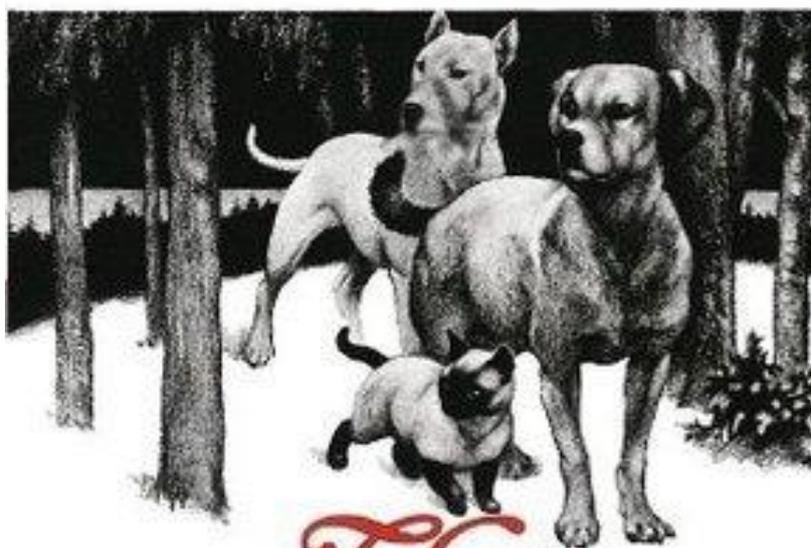


# The Incredible Journey PDF (Limited Copy)

Sheila Burnford

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## The Incredible Journey

by

### Sheila Burnford

Author of *Bel Ria*



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## **The Incredible Journey Summary**

Three Pets Overcome Nature's Challenges to Find Their Way Home.

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## About the book

In "The Incredible Journey" by Sheila Burnford, the heartwarming tale begins with three beloved pets—Luath, a brave Labrador Retriever; Bodger, a mischievous but loyal Bull Terrier; and Tao, a steadfast Siamese cat. These three companions find themselves separated from their families after being left in the care of a friend who takes them to her remote home in the Canadian wilderness. Feeling a powerful instinct to return home to their owners, they set off on a daring adventure through vast forests, over rugged mountains, and across roaring rivers.

As the trio journeys through the wilderness, they encounter numerous challenges that test their resilience and deepen their friendship. Starvation becomes a looming threat, forcing them to rely on their respective skills. Luath's strength and determination enable him to lead the group, while Bodger's cleverness comes into play when scrounging for food. Meanwhile, Tao's agility and keen sense of awareness prove invaluable in detecting potential dangers. Their bond is a testament to mutual trust and loyalty, allowing them to face the harsh elements and wild creatures that populate their path, including bears and harsh weather conditions.

Throughout their journey, the pets also experience moments of fear and loneliness, which evoke deep reflections on home and family. The love they have for their owners serves as a guiding light, motivating them to overcome

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despair and keep pushing forward, even when the odds seem insurmountable.

As their adventure unfolds, readers are not only treated to an action-packed narrative but also to profound themes of friendship, bravery, and the instinctual drive to return to loved ones. "The Incredible Journey" remains an enduring classic, celebrating the unbreakable bond between humans and their pets, and highlighting the lengths these animals will go to for love and loyalty.

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## About the author

Sheila Burnford, born Sheila Philip Cochrane Every on May 11, 1918, in Scotland, enjoyed a diverse upbringing across the UK. Her education at St. George's School in Edinburgh and Harrogate Ladies College laid the groundwork for her literary aspirations. In 1941, she married Dr. David Burnford and became a mother to three children. During World War II, she dedicated herself to volunteering as an ambulance driver, illustrating her spirit of service.

In 1951, Burnford made a significant move to Canada, where she eventually settled in Port Arthur, Ontario. This cultural transition deeply influenced her writing, particularly in her most famous work, "The Incredible Journey," published in 1961. The novel, a heartwarming tale of three animals—a Labrador Retriever named Luath, a Siamese cat named Tao, and a Scottish Terrier named Bodger—as they embark on a perilous trek through the Canadian wilderness to reunite with their owners, resonates with themes of loyalty, courage, and the bond between humans and animals. Though it began as a modest success, the book gained monumental popularity following its adaptation into a Disney film, despite Burnford's clarification that her narrative transcended the confines of children's literature.

Apart from this iconic story, Burnford's literary output reflected her fascination with Canadian landscapes and cultures. Her non-fiction work,

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"One Woman's Arctic" (1973), vividly recounts her experiences in Pond Inlet, Nunavut, providing insight into life in the Arctic and the resilient spirit of its inhabitants. Her ability to weave personal experiences with broader themes of adventure and survival contributed to her lasting legacy as a novelist.

She died from cancer on April 20, 1984, in Bucklers Hard, Hampshire, leaving behind a rich legacy of literature that continues to inspire both young and adult readers. Through her timeless tales, Burnford captured the essence of companionship and the enduring spirit found in both animals and the vast Canadian wilderness.

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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

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# Chapter 1 Summary: 1

## Chapter 1 Summary: The Incredible Journey

In the serene wilderness of northwestern Ontario, a vast region characterized by its unspoiled lakes and forests, our story unfolds in an environment alive with wildlife, including bears, moose, and myriad bird species. The area exemplifies the tranquility of nature, making it a perfect setting for introspection and human-animal bonds.

The narrative centers on John Longridge, a bachelor and writer who finds solace in an old stone house nestled within this wild landscape. Longridge enjoys his solitude, which nurtures his creative spirit, tended to by the reliable couple, Mrs. Oakes and her husband Bert, who assist with household chores and gardening.

As autumn deepens, Longridge prepares for a trip to his remote cabin by Heron Lake, located two hundred miles away, marking a significant transition that foreshadows the events to come. He shares his home with three cherished pets: a graceful Siamese cat, an elderly bull terrier named Bodger, known for his loyalty and amusing antics, and a young Labrador who carries a silent melancholy, having been separated from his original owner.

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Longridge reflects on the circumstances that brought these animals into his care—left with him by friends, the Hunter family, who are away on a trip. Initially, the transition was challenging for both the pets and Longridge, who grappled with feelings of reluctance. Over time, however, the animals have adjusted, with Bodger even delighting in the company of local children.

As night falls, casting a soft glow over his home, Longridge contemplates the impending separation from his pets, highlighting the profound emotional connections that have developed between them. This chapter masterfully weaves together themes of companionship, the bond between humans and animals, the immense beauty of the wild, and the bittersweet nature of parting, setting the stage for an extraordinary journey ahead.

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## Chapter 2 Summary: 2

### Summary of Chapter 2 - The Incredible Journey

In this chapter, we delve into the emotional farewell between John Longridge and his cherished pets: Luath, the loyal Labrador; Bodger, the aging bull terrier with diminishing sight; and Tao, the inquisitive Siamese cat. As dawn breaks on a beautiful autumn day, Longridge shares a poignant moment with Luath, who demonstrates his unwavering loyalty through a heartfelt gesture. This bittersweet departure tugs at Longridge's heart, intensifying his wish to bring Luath along on his trip.

Left alone, the trio of animals—initially waiting for Longridge's return—makes a spontaneous decision to embark on their own adventure, following the faint echoes of his departing vehicle. They navigate a tranquil country road, with Luath steadfastly supporting the elderly Bodger, who struggles to keep pace. Meanwhile, Tao often lingers, his curiosity piquing as he explores their surroundings.

Their journey leads them to a refreshing creek, where they pause for a drink before resting beneath the shade of pine trees. As exhaustion sets in for Bodger, he collapses on the ground, prompting a touching scene where Tao snuggles next to him for warmth, while Luath remains watchful, embodying

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the essence of their strong companionship. This chapter beautifully highlights themes of loyalty, friendship, and the challenges they face in their newfound independence, as the bond between the animals deepens amidst their struggles.

As night descends, the natural world envelops them with its myriad sounds, offering comfort in their shared presence. In the face of discomfort and uncertainty, Luath's instincts drive him to guide his friends towards home, a place that symbolizes love and belonging. This chapter lays the groundwork for their remarkable journey ahead, underscoring the unbreakable connection among the trio as they bravely step into the unknown together.

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## Chapter 3 Summary: 3

### ### Summary of Chapter 3: The Incredible Journey

As dawn breaks, the bull terrier awakens in a cold, desolate landscape, grappling with hunger and thirst. He sets off towards a nearby pool, encountering the savvy cat who has managed to find a bit of food. Disheartened by the cat's meager leftovers, the terrier quenches his thirst and embarks on a search for sustenance, nibbling on grass and raspberries but finding little satisfaction.

Soon, the young Labrador joins him, and together they move along the road, the cat trailing behind them. Their journey leads them to an abandoned logging trail. The elder terrier is drawn to the comforting allure of the woods, hoping they might find better resources for survival. While they admire the vibrant colors of nature, the pangs of hunger become increasingly intense. The cat catches a chipmunk, but when the terrier approaches for a share, the cat's growl makes it clear that he intends to keep the spoils, leaving the terrier hungry and frustrated.

As they press on, exhaustion begins to take its toll on the old dog. He collapses next to a muddy rut, succumbing to the effects of dehydration. Despite the cat and young Labrador's efforts to rouse him, their deteriorating

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circumstances force them to leave him behind in search of assistance.

Unexpectedly, a playful bear cub appears, initially sparking fear in the old dog. The cub, unaware of the harm he might cause, engages the old dog in play. However, the cat intervenes just in time, launching a fierce attack on the bear cub to protect the vulnerable dog. This act of bravery draws the attention of the bear's protective mother, putting the cat in a perilous position as it skillfully distracts the mother long enough for the old dog to remain unharmed.

With the bear and cub retreating, the cat resumes a relaxed demeanor, feasting on a partridge he had caught earlier. Meanwhile, the young Labrador stays by the old dog's side as he slowly regains consciousness, encouraged by the alluring smell of food. With effort, the bull terrier manages to eat and recover some of his strength.

As night descends, the old dog finds comfort lying down next to his companions. Grateful for their unwavering support, they share warmth and camaraderie, demonstrating a budding bond forged through shared adversity. This chapter poignantly illustrates the themes of survival, friendship, and the instinct to protect one another in the face of life's challenges.

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## Chapter 4: 4

In Chapter 4 of "The Incredible Journey," the narrative focuses on the Labrador retriever whose intense hunger drives him to forage for food at dawn. Initially attempting to eat deer droppings proves unfruitful, but his persistence pays off when he successfully captures a frog, bringing a small victory in his struggle for survival.

Meanwhile, the old terrier, having sustained injuries earlier, spends the day basking in the sun and recuperating. As he regains strength, he reconnects with his younger companions, and by the third day, his vitality returns. The trio, comprised of the terrier, the Labrador, and their adventurous feline friend, embark on their journey together and eventually stumble upon a peaceful lake under the cover of night. There, they encounter a moose and are tantalized by the aromas of food wafting from a nearby human camp.

Drawn to the scent, the old dog ventures toward the camp, his excitement evident despite the young dog's initial hesitance to stray from the safety of their group. Their confident feline companion joins him, engaging playfully with the camp's visitors. However, when the old dog first approaches, the children are frightened until a compassionate woman intervenes, soothing their fears and greeting the Labrador warmly. Recognizing him as the legendary White Dog, she shows kindness and offers food, which the grateful dog eagerly accepts, while the cat enjoys a feast of her own.



Despite his own hunger, the young dog struggles with uncertainty about leaving his friends. Frustrated by their delay in joining him, he ultimately barks to summon the others. After a heartfelt farewell from the woman, the dogs leave the warmth and safety of the camp, re-entering the dark night.

This chapter beautifully underscores the themes of loyalty, survival, and the intricate bond between animals and humans, particularly showcasing the old dog's connection with the Ojibway tribe. Their encounter hints at the potential for good fortune ahead, reinforcing the deep-seated ties that exist in nature and community.

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## Chapter 5 Summary: 5

In Chapter 5 of "The Incredible Journey," the story continues to follow the three animal companions—Luath, the young retriever; Bodger, the old bulldog; and Tao, the wise and adventurous Siamese cat—as they navigate the wilderness in search of home. Their days pass in a steady rhythm, guided by the enduring pace of Bodger, who, against all odds, begins to regain his strength, appearing healthier than before. Meanwhile, Luath struggles with hunger due to his lack of hunting experience, a stark contrast to the shrewd Tao, who effortlessly adapts to their nomadic lifestyle and often roams off before returning to rejoin his friends.

As the seasons shift towards autumn, the animals traverse overgrown trails and deep brush, observing the natural world's beauty and the inevitable cycle of life preparing for winter. Their interactions with other creatures remain infrequent, and a brief encounter at a lumber camp nearly turns disastrous for Bodger when a gunshot startles him as he scavenges for food.

The chapter takes a dramatic turn when the trio faces the challenge of crossing a wide river. Luath, feeling confident in the water, swims to the other side and encourages the hesitant Bodger, who eventually follows after much deliberation, joyfully reaching the opposite bank. However, it's Tao who faces the greatest trial; overwhelmed by fear, he attempts a reckless dash across the river. Just as he nears safety, a dam bursts upstream, sending



a violent surge of water that carries him away.

In a heartbreaking moment, Luath dives into the churning waters to save his friend, but the tumultuous currents and debris prove too daunting. Bodger can only watch helplessly, his own strength eroded by the chaos around him. As darkness envelops the landscape, Luath and Bodger, exhausted and grief-stricken, find solace in each other's company, curling up for warmth and comfort. The old dog howls mournfully for Tao, showcasing the deep bond that ties them together and their dedication to continuing the search for their lost friend. This chapter poignantly explores themes of loyalty, the depth of companionship, and the relentless struggle for survival in the face of insurmountable challenges, leaving readers with an emotional resonance as they journey alongside these brave animals.

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## Chapter 6 Summary: 6

In Chapter 6 of "The Incredible Journey," we are introduced to the Nurmi family, who live a simple yet fulfilling life in a sturdy cabin by a river in Finland. Reino, his wife, and their daughter Helvi have diligently cleared their land to create a thriving farm. Their lifestyle reflects a deep connection to their Finnish heritage, while Helvi serves as their sole link to the outside world, embarking on a long daily trek to catch the school bus.

One Sunday, while exploring the riverbank, Helvi comes across a soaked and weak cat washed ashore. Fueled by both compassion and curiosity, she decides to bring the cat home. Recognizing the cat's desperation, her father agrees to help save it, and together the family nurtures the fragile creature back to health. Helvi plays a pivotal role in this process, providing warm milk and comforting companionship, which helps the cat regain its strength.

As the cat recovers, it transforms from a frail outsider into a vibrant and affectionate member of the family. Helvi experiences the joy of her first pet when she discovers that the cat is a Siamese, known for its striking appearance and noble lineage. She learns about the breed's history, delighting in tales of their royal ancestry, and develops a profound bond with the cat, often carrying it to bed at night.

Over time, the cat, who is deaf and thus behaves differently, becomes

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inseparable from the Nurmi family, following them everywhere and enriching their everyday lives. However, this newfound happiness takes a poignant turn when the cat, drawn by the call of the wilderness, unexpectedly disappears into the night. Helvi is left with a deep sense of loss, illustrating the fragile balance of companionship and the natural instincts of animals, while highlighting themes of belonging and the complexities of emotional connections.

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# Chapter 7 Summary: 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

In this chapter of "The Incredible Journey," the focus is on the two remaining companions: an old bull terrier and a young Labrador, who find themselves grappling with the recent separation from their feline friend, Luath. The old terrier fondly recalls their early encounters with Luath, which ignited a deep and meaningful friendship that has sustained them through many trials. Now, isolated, they must depend on their instincts for survival in the wild.

As the young Labrador attempts to teach the old dog some hunting techniques, they face the challenge of the elder's diminishing eyesight, which complicates their efforts. However, fortune smiles upon them when they discover a fisher who has caught a porcupine. This unexpected bounty provides them with a much-needed meal. The young Labrador further contributes by successfully catching a bittern, showcasing his youthful energy and hunting prowess.

Their newfound optimism is abruptly challenged when they encounter a farmer's aggressive collie. The young Labrador is quickly overwhelmed in the scuffle. Just as hope wanes, the old bull terrier taps into his long-buried

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warrior instincts, courageously stepping in to defend his younger companion. His bravery and clever tactics turn the tide, freeing them from danger. This victory rejuvenates the old dog's spirits, resulting in a small catch of his own that evening.

Seeking refuge, the two dogs find a cave to escape the elements and share a moment of respite. However, their solace is short-lived; the young Labrador, eager to emulate their earlier success, jumps at a porcupine and suffers injuries from the quills lodged in his cheek. Despite his attempts to extract the painful barbs, he faces discomfort as they continue their journey.

Throughout this chapter, themes of companionship, resilience, and the struggle for survival resonate strongly. The bond between the two dogs deepens, propelled by the old dog's instinct to protect and the hardships they confront in the wilderness. As the narrative weaves together moments of intense action and thoughtful reflection, it captures the essence of their extraordinary journey.

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## Chapter 8: 8

### Summary of Chapter 8 from "The Incredible Journey"

In this chapter, we delve into the thrilling solo adventure of a nimble Siamese cat as he traverses through the wilderness. Despite his distaste for rain, his agility and stealth allow him to navigate the dense forest effortlessly, all while keenly observing the surrounding wildlife. The cat takes pride in his natural hunting skills, adept at foraging without leaving a trace.

However, his journey takes a perilous turn when he encounters a lynx, a formidable predator known for its strength and hunting prowess. This confrontation leads to a tense standoff, as the cat realizes his survival hinges on cunning rather than brute force. A chase ensues through the woods, and the cat musters all his agility to evade the lynx. Just when it seems he might be caught, he narrowly escapes by diving into a rabbit burrow, avoiding a lethal attack.

The situation changes dramatically with the arrival of a young boy hunting with his father. The boy, noticing the danger the cat is in, fires his rifle at the lynx, successfully saving the cat from a grim fate. Though shaken by the experience, the boy feels a rush of triumph as he inspects his catch.

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Once the danger has passed, the Siamese cat emerges from the burrow, seemingly unfazed by the recent drama, and cleans himself nonchalantly, dismissing the lynx's lifeless body with contempt.

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## Chapter 9 Summary: 9

### Summary of Chapter 9 - The Incredible Journey

In this chapter, the journey of Luath the Labrador, Bodger the bull terrier, and Tao the Siamese cat presses on as they traverse over two hundred miles together through an increasingly populated landscape. Luath is struggling significantly; his infected jaw prevents him from eating, making him reliant on Tao's hunting skills for sustenance, which emphasizes their teamwork and the theme of survival.

As the scenery shifts from wild terrain to human habitats, Luath clings to hope for human kindness, contrasting sharply with Bodger's instinctive wariness of people. Bodger's instinctual caution leads him to prefer the safety of the woods, while Luath's vulnerability fosters a tension between their perspectives, highlighting the ongoing conflict between trust and fear.

Their journey takes a harrowing turn when they cross paths with a timber wolf. Overcome by fear, Bodger flees to a nearby country road, where the trio encounters small farms. Bodger's hunger compels him to approach a cottage, but his attempt to beg for food results in a humiliating rejection from the homeowner, increasing his distrust of humans.



As night falls, Luath, in pain from his injuries, finds refuge at a welcoming farmhouse owned by an elderly couple, James and Nell Mackenzie. The couple's kindness stands in stark contrast to Bodger's experience, as they treat Luath with compassion and feed him, reinforcing the bond between humans and animals. When James discovers Luath's injuries, he wastes no time in providing care, performing surgery to remove quills from Luath's face. This act of empathy deepens the connection between them, showcasing the theme of compassion.

The chapter concludes with the trio finding a momentary respite in the stable, feeling safe and content. However, Bodger's instinct to move on returns as dawn approaches, and Tao, sensing the need for further travel, leads the way. This symbolizes their resilience and the unwavering journey towards home.

Throughout the chapter, themes of survival, companionship, and the profound relationship between animals and humans are woven together, illustrating the trials and victories faced by Luath, Bodger, and Tao as they persist in their quest despite the myriad challenges ahead.

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## Chapter 10 Summary: 10

### Chapter 10 Summary of "The Incredible Journey"

As the chapter unfolds, excitement fills the air for the Hunters, a family returning from England to Montreal. Peter and Elizabeth cannot contain their joy as they eagerly anticipate reuniting with their beloved pets—Tao the Siamese cat, Bodger the bull terrier, and Luath, their loyal retriever.

Elizabeth's mind races with worry that Tao may not remember her, while Peter remains confidently optimistic about Bodger's loyalty.

In stark contrast, John Longridge grapples with despair over the mysterious disappearance of the animals. He reflects in disbelief on how three such distinct companions could simply vanish from sight. Together with Mrs. Oakes, Longridge considers the various misfortunes that could have befallen them, contemplating their last known actions. He recalls Luath's strong instincts and the possibility that the animals may have attempted to navigate their way home, a daunting journey of almost 300 miles filled with peril.

Longridge and Mrs. Oakes find their hope mingled with grim acceptance. They fret over the potential fates awaiting the pets—starvation, exposure, or danger from wildlife. Driven by desperation, Longridge resolves to enlist help from local authorities, but his efforts yield little fruit, mirroring the



growing hopelessness in his heart. As he reviews a daunting map that outlines uninhabited regions, the reality of their situation weighs heavily upon him.

Just when despair seems insurmountable, a glimmer of hope emerges late at night. A telephone call brings news of a girl who rescued a Siamese cat—presumably Tao—from a river. Additionally, rumors of "visitors" spotted near a remote mine hint at the possibility of the animals still being alive. Longridge lies awake, his mind racing with possibilities; could Luath be leading them back to safety? The chapter closes with a poignant realization of the deep bond between humans and their pets, highlighting themes of love, loyalty, and the lengths these animals might go to find their way home.

This chapter effectively contrasts the Hunters' joyful excitement with Longridge's heartache, illustrating the powerful connections we share with our pets and the essential journey of love and survival they undertake in the wilderness.

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# Chapter 11 Summary: 11

## Summary of Chapter 11 from "The Incredible Journey"

In Chapter 11 of "The Incredible Journey," the tension intensifies as the Longridge family continues their search for their beloved pets—Bodger the dog, Luath the retriever, and Tao the Siamese cat. With mixed reports about the animals' whereabouts, the family tries to piece together the pets' possible path westward. Peter is consumed with sorrow, believing Bodger may be dead, while his sister Elizabeth clings to hope for Tao's return.

To momentarily escape the heaviness of their search, the family decides to camp at the Hunters' summer cottage by Lake Windigo, a location along the route they believe their pets may have taken. Although Elizabeth is initially hesitant to leave their home, the prospect of Tao potentially finding them there brings her solace. Engaging in photography and immersing themselves in the beauty of nature, they momentarily distract themselves from their worries.

On Peter's birthday, the family embarks on a hike along the Allen Lake Trail, where memories of their pets linger. The atmosphere shifts dramatically when Elizabeth hears what she thinks is Luath barking, reviving hope within the family. They wait in eager anticipation, and

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eventually, Longridge's call is met with a chorus of joyful barks emanating from the woods.

In an emotional reunion, they are overjoyed as Tao, Luath, and finally Bodger return, though Bodger appears frail. Elizabeth shares a heartfelt embrace with Tao, while Longridge is overwhelmed with emotion upon seeing Luath again. Peter, however, finds himself in a bittersweet position; he smiles for his family but still grapples with the grief over Bodger's weakened state.

This chapter encapsulates themes of hope, family togetherness, and the complex emotional landscape that accompanies reunions. As they gather to celebrate the return of their pets, the blend of joy and lingering sadness marks a significant moment in their incredible journey, reinforcing the enduring bonds of love amidst the trials they have faced.

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