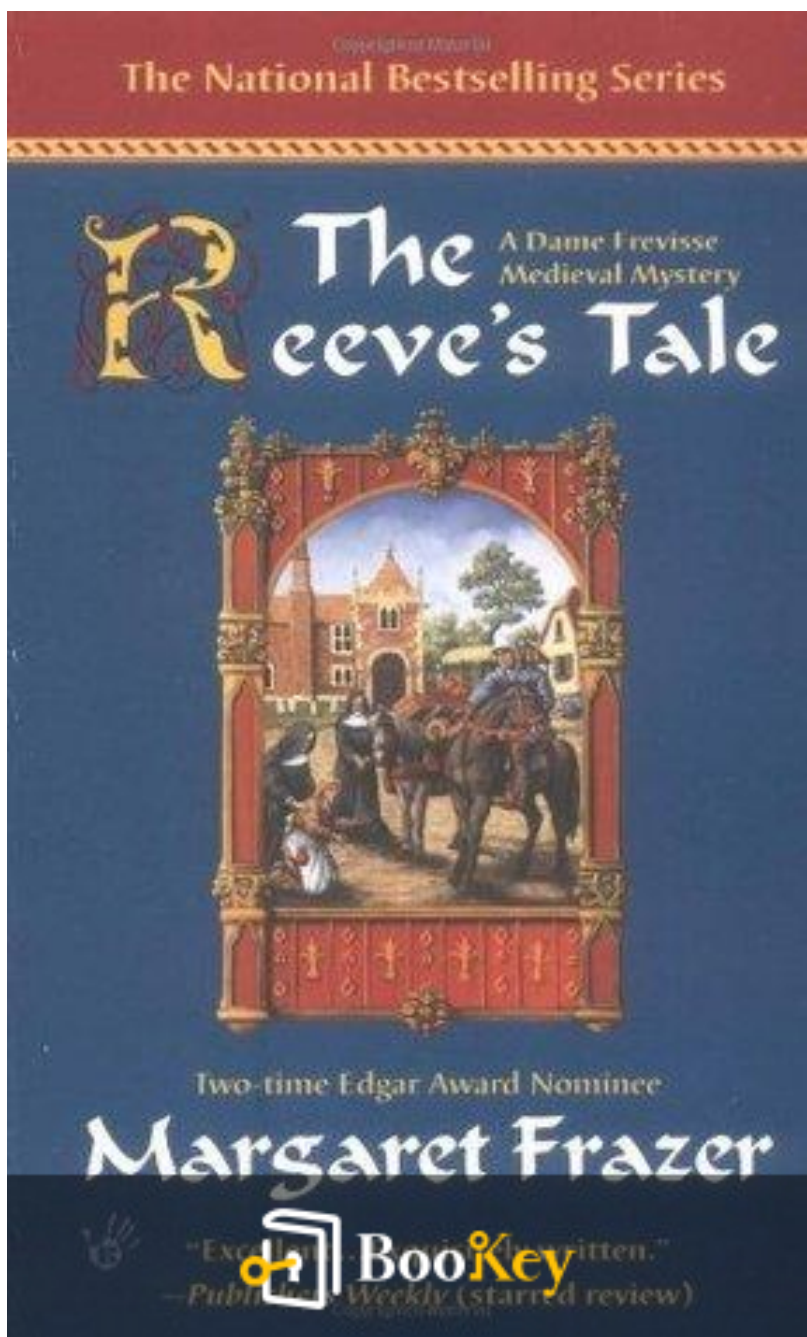


The Reeve's Tale PDF (Limited Copy)

Margaret Frazer



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The Reeve's Tale Summary

Unraveling Secrets Amidst Death and Despair in Medieval Byfield

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About the book

In the quaint village of Pryor Byfield, Simon Perryn, the local reeve responsible for overseeing community affairs, grapples with a series of disputes rooted in the everyday lives of the villagers. His challenges become increasingly complicated when the steward of St. Frideswide's nunnery, a local institution known for providing support and charity, is forced to resign. In her place, Dame Frevisse, a pragmatic and resourceful nun, is appointed, bringing a new perspective to village governance.

As the village is struck by a devastating plague, Frevisse finds herself at the forefront of both caring for the sick and navigating the complex dynamics of the community. Amidst this chaos, tragic violence erupts when two villagers are brutally murdered, igniting a climate of fear and suspicion. The atmosphere thickens as Frevisse, while managing her responsibilities to the ill, embarks on a determined quest for truth.

Frevisse's keen intellect and sharp insights become pivotal in unraveling the enigma surrounding the murders, as the web of village rivalries and personal dramas deepens. Her investigative journey reveals not only the darker side of human nature but also the resilience required to confront adversity. With a rich tapestry of historical context woven into the narrative, this tale illuminates the struggles of medieval life and the extraordinary lengths one must go to unveil the truth amidst turmoil.

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About the author

Margaret Frazer, the pen name of Gail Lynn Frazer, crafted a series of captivating historical medieval mysteries featuring Sister Frevisse, a clever and resourceful nun living in 15th-century England. After initially collaborating with Mary Monica Pulver Kuhfeld, Frazer took complete control of the series after the sixth volume, establishing her distinct voice and vision for the character. In addition to the Sister Frevisse mysteries, Frazer expanded her literary universe by introducing Joliffe, a witty player and minstrel, whose exploits unfold in a separate series set against the same richly detailed medieval backdrop.

Sister Frevisse, known for her sharp intellect and moral courage, navigates the complexities of life within the convent and the broader societal issues of her time. Each mystery she encounters unfolds against a vivid tapestry of medieval life, addressing themes of justice, faith, and human frailty. As she unravels intricate plots involving family feuds, political intrigue, and personal vendettas, Frevisse's sharp observations often lead to unexpected revelations, showcasing her ability to blend compassion with astute reasoning.

Joliffe, on the other hand, adds a different perspective to this world. As a wandering minstrel, he embodies the transient nature of life on the road, using humor and wit to charm audiences while grappling with deeper

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existential themes. His adventures juxtapose the constraints of societal structures with the freedom of a life dedicated to performance and artistry, allowing readers to explore another facet of medieval life through his eyes.

Throughout the series, Frazer intricately builds her characters and settings, providing a rich context that invites readers to ponder the complexities of morality and human interaction in a time marked by social stratification and religious devotion. With each chapter, the narratives weave together to explore the delicate balance between duty and personal agency, culminating in satisfying conclusions that resonate with timeless human experiences.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1

Summary of Chapter One

As the rain gives way to a warm summer day, Simon Perryn finds a sense of hope flourishing within the village of Prior Byfield, which is slowly recovering from recent famines. Serving as the reeve for Lord Lovell, Simon plays a vital role in managing disputes and ensuring harmony among the villagers, all while fostering an atmosphere of optimism with the anticipation of a bountiful harvest.

The chapter begins with a village court gathering, where Simon sits alongside Master Naylor, the steward of the nunnery, and Father Edmund, the priest responsible for recording judicial decisions. This setting provides insight into the intricate dynamics of village life. The court deals with a series of disputes that reflect the community's struggles and character.

Their first case features Bess Underbush, who faces a fine for selling unapproved ale. Her defiant nature amuse the crowd, creating a light-hearted moment in the midst of serious discussions. Following this, Hal Millwarde, the village miller, expresses his frustration over repeated fines for excessive tolls, revealing the ongoing economic challenges villagers face while emphasizing Simon and Hal's shared history of friendship and conflict.



Jenet atte Forge's plea against Hamon Otale for an unpaid loan unveils the vulnerabilities of poorer villagers like Hamon, underscoring the theme of community support in times of hardship. The resolution of this dispute emphasizes accountability and interdependence among the villagers.

Tensions flare when Tomkin Goddard and John Gregory confront each other about a goat that damages John's garden. This squabble illustrates how even minor grievances can escalate into emotionally charged conflicts among neighbors. Master Naylor's skillful mediation highlights the complexities of maintaining order while ensuring fairness.

The chapter's central conflict arises when Matthew Woderove, struggling to keep his lease, is forced to confront the more prosperous Gilbey Dunn, who seeks to take over the land. Despite Matthew's earnest attempts to retain his lease, the court ultimately favors Gilbey on economic grounds, prompting a poignant emotional response from Matthew's wife, Mary. This moment underscores the deeper societal pressures and personal turmoil faced by families in the village.

Through Simon's eyes, readers witness the intertwined lives of the villagers and the collective hardships they endure. The themes of struggle, community solidarity, and the inequities of the feudal system weave together a rich tapestry of village life amidst the backdrop of uncertainty.

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As the court adjourns, Simon reflects on the day's events, envisioning simpler pleasures, like fishing with his sons. In this tranquil yet complex environment, the narrative beautifully balances the harsh realities of life with fleeting moments of joy, encapsulating the essence of rural existence during turbulent times.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2

Summary of Chapter Two

In the tranquil months of June and July in 1440, life at St. Frideswide nunnery is depicted through the serene ambiance of its garden, a sanctuary for the nuns. Frevisse, who serves as the cellarer, is engrossed in the task of updating the kitchen accounts. However, the vivid beauty of the surroundings continually distracts her. The garden serves not only as a place of leisure but as a vital space where the nuns engage in both light-hearted conversation and diligent work; Dame Juliana cares earnestly for the plants, while Sister Johane and Sister Cecely enjoy idle banter.

Amid the gentle rhythm of daily life, Frevisse wrestles with the financial challenges the nunnery faces. Under the guidance of their current prioress, Domina Elisabeth, some progress has been made – she has managed to secure better prices for wool and initiated a lucrative scribing project. A recent commission for a psalter, intended for an anchorite, brings a momentary reprieve. Yet, Frevisse is still encumbered by her responsibilities as the weight of the accounts presses heavily on her mind.

As the day winds down, Sister Emma interrupts her thoughts, requesting Frevisse's presence in Domina Elisabeth's parlor regarding urgent news from

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a Master Spencer. He brings troubling information about Master Naylor, the nunnery's reeve, who is facing accusations of being the villein of Lord Lovell. This potential threat to Naylor's freedom casts a shadow of concern over the nunnery, spotlighting the nuances of class and social status, as his fate entwines with that of his family.

In the parlor, a tense exchange unfolds between Domina Elisabeth and Master Spencer. Elisabeth firmly asserts her authority in their negotiations over Master Naylor's fate, making it unmistakably clear that she will not permit Naylor's removal. This confrontation showcases the dynamics of power, where Elisabeth stands resolute, highlighting her protective instincts toward her staff and the nunnery.

After the meeting, Elisabeth confides in Frevisse, revealing the stakes involved and tasks her with assuming Master Naylor's responsibilities while he navigates his legal troubles. Although Frevisse hesitates, doubting her capability and fearing the implications for her own duties, Elisabeth insists she is the right choice. This insistence leads Frevisse into a state of inner conflict, grappling with her apprehension about abandoning their communal prayer duties in favor of worldly obligations.

As the chapter concludes, Frevisse is left to confront the heavy burden of responsibility now resting on her shoulders, embodying the tension between her sense of duty and the nunnery's practical needs, which may collide with



their spiritual commitments.

Themes:

- The constant struggle between duty and personal desire, reflecting the tension between a cloistered life and societal demands.
- The implications of social hierarchy are underscored by the precariousness of Master Naylor's position.
- The narrative illustrates the strength of female authority through Domina Elisabeth's determined stance in safeguarding her nunnery against external threats.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3

In Chapter Three of "The Reeve's Tale," Simon faces unsettling news concerning Master Naylor and the unexpected arrival of Dame Frevisse, a nun stepping in to fill Naylor's role. The chapter opens with Simon's reflection on the villagers' reactions to Naylor's misfortune, rooted in a lesson from his grandmother: people's true characters emerge when discussing others' hardships. While some villagers revel in Naylor's problems, Simon empathizes with the beleaguered Master.

With apprehensions about working alongside a nun, whom he doubts will grasp the intricacies of farm management, Simon finds himself surprisingly at ease conversing with Dame Frevisse. Their discussion delves into pressing matters of the farm, including immediate crop requirements and labor shortages. They also address the plight of Matthew Woderove, a villager who left after getting into trouble, leaving his wife Mary in a precarious situation. This predicament reflects broader tensions within the community, especially as Alson Bonde seeks to lease her land against her son William's wishes—fueled by fear of jeopardizing the family legacy.

As Simon contemplates the implications of a potential lease deal, he recognizes the unrest that could arise if the unpopular but wealthy Gilbey Dunn steps in with a better offer. In a moment of insight, Dame Frevisse proposes a marriage arrangement between William's son and Martin



Fisher's daughter, suggesting that this alliance could alleviate tensions surrounding the leasing issue. Appreciating her perspective, Simon considers drafting a new bylaw to favor local labor. Their productive dialogue is cut short by the arrival of Watt, Simon's companion, who brings news of visitors at the alehouse, prompting Simon to leave the fruitful meeting with the nun.

This chapter adeptly explores themes of community dynamics, the complexities of human relationships, and varied reactions to adversity through engaging dialogue and lively character interactions, all set against the backdrop of rural life.

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Chapter 4: 4

Chapter Four Summary

In this chapter, Sister Frevisse is drawn into the intricacies of village life as she observes the well-kept property of Simon Perryn, a dependable middle-aged man known for his strong sense of responsibility. Simon's commitment to his roles is evident, and after he departs, Frevisse remains with Sister Thomasine, who reveals a surprising joy in the outside world. Thomasine's character has developed since joining the convent, reflected in her newfound willingness to connect with a child, showcasing her growing comfort with both people and the natural beauty surrounding them.

As they wait, Anne, Simon's wife, joins them, exuding warmth and competence as she juggles her household duties with the challenges of raising children and navigating the complexities of village life. Their conversation meanders to their sons, including Dickon, who stands steadfastly by his father's reputation even as changes ripple through their community.

The chapter also introduces Elena, the wife of Gilbey Dunn, who enters bearing sweet cakes, adding layers to the narrative of village relationships and class dynamics. Elena's grace and charm are juxtaposed against the



murmurs of suspicion surrounding her husband's dealings, particularly his controversial methods of acquiring land. Frevisse senses a duality in Gilbey's character — a polished façade that belies underlying concerns regarding his integrity.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5

Chapter Five Summary

The chapter unfolds on a warm midmorning at the convent where Sister Amicia and Dame Juliana are engaged in light conversation about the pleasant weather before turning back to their daily duties. Frevisse, a nun and scribe, finds herself torn between continuing her work and seeking counsel from Master Naylor. Her contemplation is interrupted by Ela, a servant, who brings urgent news: Simon Perryn, the reeve, wishes to speak with her.

Frevisse meets Perryn by the well, where he brings distressing news—the body discovered near Wroxton belongs to Matthew Woderove, a man who vanished weeks earlier. Woderove's violent death, resulting from a stab wound and subsequent abandonment, ignites a flurry of questions, particularly concerning the inheritance of his land. As Woderove and his wife, Mary, have no children, the land's future is uncertain. While Mary has a legitimate claim, local opinion perceives her as unfit to manage the estate.

Perryn elaborates on the potential successors: Gilbey Dunn, who has made a reasonable offer to Mary, symbolizes stability, whereas Tom Hulcote, a former servant of Gilbey, intends to marry Mary as part of his claim. This



family dynamic complicates the matter, as Perryn grapples with the intertwining of personal and communal stakes.

In the interest of resolving the situation promptly, particularly with the harvest approaching, Frevisse urges Perryn to present the matter to Master Naylor. Concerned for Naylor's well-being following orders from Lord Lovell that restrict his movements, Frevisse seeks a swift resolution to the inheritance issue.

Upon arriving at Master Naylor's residence, Frevisse is warmly greeted by his family before she shares the troubling details about Woderove's demise and the contested claim to his land. Naylor listens with care, contemplating the merits of both contenders. While Tom may need support in his new role, he could offer Mary a pathway to security. Naylor ultimately aligns with Tom's proposal, viewing it as a practical resolution to the complexities surrounding Woderove's relationships and estate.

As the chapter concludes, it vividly illustrates the themes of duty, justice, and the intricate nature of human relationships within the close-knit community. Frevisse navigates these complicated issues deftly, embodying the tension between compassion and practicality against the backdrop of societal expectations and personal responsibilities.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6

Chapter Six Summary

In this chapter, Frevisse, Sister Thomasine, and Father Henry make their way to the village church amid a gentle rain, heading towards a manor court called by Simon Perryn, the reeve. Their aim is to address escalating tensions among the villagers, particularly a brewing confrontation between Tom Hulcote and Gilbey Dunn. Frevisse hopes that her presence, along with the priests, will help maintain peace during the court's proceedings.

Upon their arrival, they find the quaint and well-kept church bustling with villagers, a testament to the close-knit nature of the community yet underscored by tension. The air is thick with anticipation as Frevisse assumes her position at the front of the nave, aware of the crowd's intense scrutiny.

As the court session begins with preliminary discussions, attention soon shifts to a significant inheritance dispute involving the Woderove holding. The land was owned by the late Matthew Woderove and is now a point of contention between his sister, Mary, and her brother, Simon, who insists that law dictates the land be passed to male heirs. Mary, however, passionately asserts her rightful claim, demonstrating her determination to challenge



societal norms.

In a surprising turn, Tom Hulcote, driven by affection for Mary and perhaps his own ambitions, proposes marriage to her as a means to gain control of the holding. This unexpected offer adds another layer of complexity to the proceedings. The tension escalates further when Gilbey Dunn makes his own claim on the land, leading to a heated exchange between him and Tom. This clash of social standings and motivations showcases the intricate power dynamics at play within the village.

As arguments intensify, Father Henry and Father Edmund work to keep the peace, reminding the villagers of the sanctity of their surroundings. In an effort to de-escalate the situation, Frevisse steps forward with authority, suggesting a break before the court resumes. This intervention not only highlights her leadership skills but also underscores the ongoing theme of conflict resolution within the community. The chapter concludes with the court in a temporary pause, leaving tensions unresolved yet opening the door for potential dialogue and understanding.

Key Themes and Character Developments:

1. **Community Dynamics:** The chapter captures the intricate nature of village life, characterized by personal grievances that come to the forefront

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in a public setting.

2. **Conflict Resolution:** Frevisse emerges as a mediator, reflecting the themes of justice and authority, while underscoring the difficulties of addressing communal disputes.

3. **Social Hierarchies:** The interactions among the villagers reveal deep-rooted tensions related to class and power, especially evident in the contrasting goals of Tom and Gilbey.

4. **Feminine Agency:** Mary's assertiveness in claiming her inheritance challenges the limited rights of women during this period, revealing her strength and determination to assert her status.

Overall, this chapter intricately portrays the complexities of communal life, enriching character development while setting the stage for subsequent conflicts and resolutions within the narrative.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7

Chapter Seven Summary

As the church service concludes, the atmosphere is thick with emotion in the village, where Frevisse keenly observes the villagers' interactions, particularly the tension between Tom Hulcote and Mary Woderove. Their strained relationship comes under Father Edmund's scrutiny, highlighting the underlying issues of land ownership and the stakes tied to their holdings. The villagers have endured a series of disappointing harvests, and Frevisse reflects on their resilience amid hardship.

Tom's simmering anger clashes with Mary's anxiety over the potential loss of her home and her position in the community, crystalizing the precariousness of their situation. This personal struggle is intertwined with the broader themes of power and ambition, particularly in relation to Lord Lovell, who retains control over the land, thereby exacerbating tensions among Tom, Mary, and their peers—Gilbey and Elena.

The chapter takes a poignant turn with the arrival of Otes, the Banbury carrier, who brings the dreadful news of Matthew Woderove's death, accompanied by a wooden box containing his remains. Mary's grief is palpable; she rejects the notion of having Matthew's body brought to her



home, illustrating the turbulence of her emotions and her fragile state. As Mary sobs for comfort from Tom, the community's fabric strains further.

The tensions peak when Perryn insists that Matthew deserves his last rites, leading to a confrontation with Mary's refusal to honor her brother's wishes. The priests intervene to mediate the escalating conflict, embodying the struggle between duty and personal grief amidst rising emotions. Frevisse is caught in her own internal conflict, observing how ambition and the quest for control disrupt the villagers' lives and relationships.

Simultaneously, another crisis emerges when Anne's son, Colyn, develops a mysterious rash, prompting fears of plague among the villagers. However, Mistress Margery and Sister Thomasine quickly diagnose the rash as morbilli, or measles, easing immediate panic but reminding the community of the ever-present threat of illness.

Ultimately, this chapter delves into themes of ambition, grief, and the challenges of communal life under the shadow of mortality. Frevisse's reflections illustrate the complexities of human relationships in Prior Byfield, encapsulating the burdens the characters carry as they navigate their intertwined lives.

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Chapter 8: 8

Chapter Eight Summary

In this intense chapter, Simon finds himself in a village suffocated by fear and uncertainty as dawn breaks over a community grappling with a virulent illness that has struck eighteen children, including his own. The oppressive heat and eerie silence emphasize the gravity of the situation and the collective anxiety as villagers await the outcome of the outbreak.

Haunted by the loss of his young son, Jon, during a previous epidemic, Simon's mind oscillates between despair and determination. The memory serves as a painful reminder of the fragility of life, while the current crisis has spurred the villagers to unite under the healing guidance of Mistress Margery, the local healer. In a touching display of community solidarity, the villagers have sheltered the sick children in the cooler church to offer better care, demonstrating their willingness to support each other despite the pervasive fear.

As reeve of the village, Simon feels the weight of responsibility pressing down on him. With the impending haying season approaching and many villagers preoccupied with tending to the ill, he is acutely aware of the potential disaster that lies ahead if they fail to harvest. This dual



burden—caring for his family and managing the community's economic needs—leaves Simon fatigued, both physically and mentally. His thoughts are clouded with anger directed at those who appear indifferent to the shared suffering, adding to the strain of his role.

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Chapter 9 Summary: 9

Chapter Nine Summary

In this chapter of "The Reeve's Tale," we accompany Frevisse on her return to the priory, accompanied by Ienet Comber, who is carrying curded cheese. As they traverse the familiar landscape of the priory, Frevisse grapples with her absence from the nunnery—a stark reality imposed by an outbreak of illness devastating the village and its children. This longing for the serenity of monastic life reveals her internal struggle between her convent duties and her compassionate instincts.

Frevisse reflects on a prior discussion with Sister Thomasine, who had encouraged her to stay in the village to provide care for the ailing youth. Initially resistant, Frevisse conforms to their prioress, Domina Elisabeth's, apprehensions about the potential spread of illness, leading to an extended stay from the nunnery. Witnessing Sister Thomasine's resilience amidst the turmoil amplifies her own feelings of inadequacy, as she questions her capability to offer the same level of care.

In the village, a tapestry of fear and determination emerges. Parents, particularly mothers, rally to support their sick children, illuminating the theme of maternal strength amidst anxiety. Father Henry also plays a pivotal

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role, serving as a steadfast support for the children, providing comfort in unsettling times.

The narrative shifts dramatically when Frevisse learns of Tom Hulcote's brutal death—murdered and disposed of far from where he fell. In a conversation with Master Naylor, they explore the implications of Tom's violent demise, sketching out a web of potential suspects and motives. Tom is portrayed as a figure entangled in village relationships, raising questions about Mary Woderove, who had been urging him to leave.

As Frevisse and Master Naylor reconstruct the circumstances surrounding Tom's death, they uncover the malignant nature of the murder, prompting them to confront essential questions of justice and loyalty within their community.

Key Themes and Character Developments:

- **Longing for Belonging:** Frevisse's yearning for the nunnery serves as a lens through which we see her struggle, caught between her monastic responsibilities and her innate desire to care for the vulnerable.
- **Fear and Resolve:** The chapter vividly illustrates the strength parents muster during crises, highlighting how love and duty can surpass personal

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fears in the face of widespread illness.

- **The Weight of Responsibility:** Frevisse's self-doubt mirrors the burdens borne by those caring for the sick, as she observes Sister Thomasine's fierce dedication amid uncertainty.

- **Mystery and Morality:** The unraveling mystery of Tom's murder compels Frevisse and Master Naylor to consider deeper ethical dilemmas regarding community ties and the nature of justice.

This chapter not only delves into the emotional toll of caregiving but also exposes the darker currents of human behavior within the tightly-knit fabric of their community, revealing how kindness and malevolence coexist in times of crisis.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 10

Chapter Ten Summary

In this chapter, Frevisse grapples with two significant challenges: uncovering the circumstances surrounding Tom Hulcote's unexpected death and caring for the ailing children in her village, particularly those afflicted by a fever. Frevisse learns from Master Naylor that Tom was an unpopular figure, largely overlooked by the community, except in the eyes of Mary Woderove, a rare exception who cared for him. This context deepens the mystery of Tom's murder, thrusting Frevisse into a world of intrigue while she is already exhausted from her responsibilities toward the sick.

As she tends to the ailing children, Frevisse becomes acutely aware of the growing anxiety among the villagers. Unlike previous murders that bore clear motives, Tom's death is enshrouded in ambiguity, fostering fear and suspicion among the community, with the lurking possibility that the murderer resides among them. This anxiety heightens the urgency of Frevisse's mission, as she must not only address the immediate health concerns of the children but also soothe the fears of their worried mothers.

Her situation intensifies when she is approached by Simon Perryn, who informs her that Master Montfort, the crowner responsible for investigating

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the death, has arrived. Frevisse feels an uneasy dread, suspecting that Montfort may have preemptively formed judgments about the case without gathering all the necessary testimonies. This foreboding discussion reveals their collective worries, especially regarding Adam, a sick boy whose health is rapidly declining. The weight of potential loss hangs palpably in the air, deepening Frevisse's emotional burden.

Throughout the chapter, themes of grief, community distrust, and the immense weight of responsibility resonate strongly as Frevisse navigates the challenges within the sickroom and the encroaching investigation. The narrative intricately blends tension and compassion, drawing readers into the emotional upheaval of a community grappling with uncertainty and fear. As Frevisse strains under the physical and emotional toll of her duties, the implications of Tom's death loom large, threatening not only the outcome of an investigation but also the very stability of the lives within the village.

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Chapter 11 Summary: 11

Summary of Chapter 11 of "The Reeve's Tale" by Margaret Frazer

Chapter 11 immerses the reader in the tense atmosphere of a village reeling from the brutal murder of a local man, Tom. Simon, the reeve, is compelled to confront this crisis as he prepares to meet Master Montfort, the crowner's man, who embodies authority but lacks tact, setting a foreboding tone for their interaction. The presence of Dame Frevisse, a wise and perceptive nun, complicates Simon's plans as she insists on accompanying him, believing it is her duty to intervene in matters she perceives as within her purview.

As they approach the priest's house, an important locale where community decisions unfold, Simon can't shake the feeling of unease that has settled over the village in the wake of Tom's death. This residence, typically a site for gatherings and deliberations, becomes the backdrop for a confrontation where Montfort's haughty demeanor and aggressive approach highlight tensions surrounding justice and community trust.

Upon their arrival, Montfort immediately positions Simon and others as suspects, drawing conclusions based on circumstantial evidence, specifically a belt and hood discovered near the crime scene. This accusation ignites a heated exchange between Simon and a villager, Gilbey Dunn, both of whom



vehemently deny having any involvement in the murder. The crowner's impatience and escalating ire reveal the stakes at play, especially as he confronts Dame Frevisse, who questions the validity of the evidence against them.

The interrogation evolves, spotlighting underlying themes of authority versus justice, as villagers grapple with the anxiety of being wrongfully implicated, especially with the harvest season looming. Despite Montfort's accusations, Simon and Gilbey stand their ground, presenting solid alibis that contradict the crowner's claims.

As the tension mounts with each implication of collusion, Dame Frevisse emerges as a rational voice, challenging Montfort's narrative with logical arguments that seek clarity and fairness amidst chaos. However, Montfort's frustration boils over, and he ultimately dismisses the group, leaving behind a palpable sense of dread and unresolved tension.

This chapter adeptly encapsulates the struggle for truth amid rising suspicion and exerts a powerful commentary on the nature of justice within a close-knit community. It sets the stage for continued intrigue and conflict as the investigation unfolds, hinting at the complexities that lie ahead in the quest for clarity in an emotionally charged situation.



Chapter 12: 12

Chapter Twelve Summary

In this tense chapter, Frevisse closely follows Gilbey and Perryn as they grapple with the aftermath of Tom Hulcote's murder, delving into the urgent danger posed by Montfort, who seeks to shift blame onto them. The weight of their situation is palpable as Gilbey expresses frustration over Frevisse's scrutiny, while she maintains that their survival hinges on transparency and understanding the full context of the events.

The setting contrasts the ordinary lives of the villagers with Gilbey's surprisingly well-kept home, hinting at unspoken tensions that may lie within their social standing. His wife, Elena, embodies strength as she navigates her worries with a resilient spirit amidst the prevailing chaos. This chapter explores critical themes of loyalty, fear, and the nuances of social hierarchy, as the villagers confront Montfort's manipulative actions.

As the trio converses, the dynamics of their relationships shift, revealing deeper vulnerabilities and the strength of their bonds. The narrative brings to light the jurors' precarious positioning between seeking justice and succumbing to manipulation, which underscores a theme of power imbalance within the community. Frevisse's unwavering resolve to exonerate



them leads her to investigate who last saw Tom alive, a decisive inquiry that promises further revelations about the murder.

The chapter culminates in the realization that Tom's death is shrouded in greater complexity than initially thought. This revelation not only intensifies the stakes for Frevisse, Gilbey, and Perryn but also hints at a deeper confrontation with the sinister dimensions of their village life, as they strive to uncover the true murderer lurking among them.

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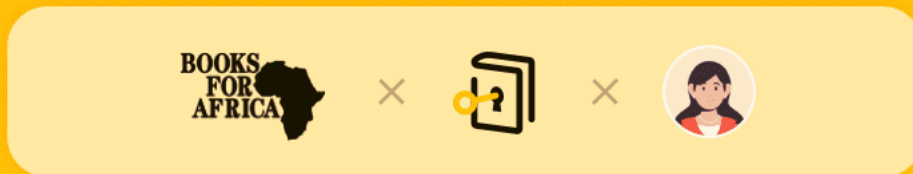




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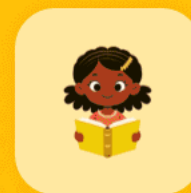
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Chapter 13 Summary: 13

Summary of Chapter Thirteen

In this gripping chapter of "The Reeve's Tale," tension escalates as characters confront the chilling reality of a murder plot aimed at framing them. Perryn and Gilbey discover that their belongings—a hood and a belt—have been ominously planted at the scene of the murder, making them prime suspects. Frevisse, displaying her keen investigative skills, takes charge of the conversation, urging the group to reflect on the events leading up to the crime.

Perryn recounts his last interaction with his hood, revealing his bewilderment during the chaotic discovery of the body, while Dickon, a younger member of their circle, opens up about the emotional turmoil caused by witnessing the aftermath of the crime. Their sorrowful reflections serve as a poignant reminder of the tragedy that has unfolded.

Elena, Gilbey's supportive wife, steps in with insights into their household dynamics, highlighting the additional strain brought on by their children's illness. Together, the group begins connecting critical details, taking note of a suspicious doctor and various townsfolk who may harbor ulterior motives. Under Frevisse's direction, they start to piece together the clues that suggest

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a deliberate attempt to frame Perryn and Gilbey.

The themes of manipulation and betrayal come to the forefront as Frevisse hypothesizes that the planting of the hood and belt is a calculated move to create discord and suspicion within their community. As the chapter progresses, the characters delve deeper into uncovering the identity of those who might wish them harm and their motivations surrounding the mysterious death of Hulcote.

Concluding the chapter, Frevisse synthesizes the information gathered thus far, skillfully steering the group towards potential suspects. This not only enriches the mystery but also enhances reader engagement, setting the stage for further revelations in the unfolding drama.

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Chapter 14 Summary: 14

In Chapter Fourteen of "The Reeve's Tale," the aftermath of Tom Hulcote's death sets the stage for an intriguing exploration of relationships and motivations among the characters. The chapter is anchored in conversations between Gilbey, Perryn, and Frevisse, which unveil a mix of frustration and unease regarding the murder mystery.

Gilbey openly criticizes Tom, dismissing him as lazy and implying that no one would have a strong motive to kill him. Both he and Perryn reflect on Tom's empty threats, suggesting that they always considered him more of a nuisance than a genuine danger. This dialogue sets a tone of suspicion, particularly with Elena, who has a vested interest in uncovering more about Tom's entanglements and connections.

As Frevisse converses with Elena, the latter shares her thoughts on Tom, who had worked at her household. Despite his apparent laziness, she acknowledges that she holds a complex view of him, seeing both his lack of worth and the potential reasons behind his ambitions, such as his desire to marry Mary Woderove. This detail adds depth to the possible motives surrounding Tom's demise, hints at romantic entanglements, and illustrates the intricate web of relationships in their community.

The conversation shifts to Elena's marriage with Gilbey, challenging the



superficial judgments often placed on her due to her beauty. She reflects on her partnership with Gilbey, emphasizing that their union is built on mutual ambition and respect, rather than mere attraction or wealth. This contrasts starkly with Tom's unfulfilled aspirations and illustrates the impact of personal choices on life trajectories.

Frevisse gains a clearer understanding of class dynamics and ambition in their society through Elena's perspective, which enriches her insights into the nature of relationships. The chapter concludes with Frevisse contemplating the emotional turmoil stemming from Tom's death, sensing a lurking bitterness in someone that hints at deeper conflicts and foreshadows the unfolding mystery as the search for truth continues.

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Chapter 15 Summary: 15

Chapter Fifteen Summary

In Chapter Fifteen, Frevisse leaves Gilbey's house burdened by the weight of recent events, particularly the deaths of children she has cared for and the troubling circumstances surrounding Tom Hulcote's demise. Though the sunset is enchanting, her mood remains dark as she is haunted by the implications of a murder in the community. As a devoted nun, she feels a strong commitment to uncovering the truth behind these unsettling events, despite her desire for the sanctuary of the church.

Frevisse heads to Simon Perryn's home with the intent of asking critical questions regarding the day Tom died. Upon her arrival, Simon and his servant Cisily provide a warm welcome. Through Cisily, she learns that Simon had ventured out into the rain early on the day of Tom's death, and while the household was busy, only a handful of visitors, including Esota and Bess, had stopped by. This initially seems unremarkable, but as Frevisse inquires further, she senses underlying tensions and hints of foul play, particularly regarding some items linked to Simon that have gone missing.

The conversation reveals Simon is grappling with his worries, notably the communal dread stemming from the disappearance of local children. As the



dialogue unfolds, Frevisse becomes increasingly aware of the oppressive atmosphere that has settled over Prior Byfield, a once-vibrant town now shrouded in silence and fear. After gathering what insights she can, she departs, reflecting on the pervasive anxiety that now grips the townsfolk.

Upon her return to the church, Frevisse confronts her escalating fears about impending deaths and the suspicions that have taken root among the residents. She finds Anne Perryn anxiously awaiting news about Simon, emphasizing how the turmoil has deeply affected the personal lives of community members.

In a demonstration of her commitment, Frevisse offers to take the night watch, illustrating her sense of duty in light of her earlier absence. During a quiet moment with Sister Thomasine, Frevisse experiences a poignant conversation about the nature of prayer and happiness. Sister Thomasine's tranquility stands in stark contrast to Frevisse's mounting turmoil, highlighting her struggle to find solace amid chaos.

The chapter concludes with Frevisse's resolve to continue her responsibilities, fully aware that the safety and well-being of her community depend on her pursuit of the truth.

Key Themes and Character Developments:

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- **Duty and Responsibility:** Frevisse's dedication to her vocation is challenged as she strives to address a community in turmoil while seeking her own spiritual peace.
- **Fear and Suspicion:** The chapter vividly illustrates the pervasive dread and anxiety within Prior Byfield, pointing to deeper societal issues linked to the murders and how they ripple through personal lives.
- **Community and Isolation:** A stark contrast exists between the expected vibrancy of the town and the current oppressive silence, reflecting the emotional states of the characters and the community at large.
- **Prayer and Inner Peace:** Sister Thomasine's calm and faith serve as a foil to Frevisse's internal conflict, emphasizing the theme of seeking solace through faith, a path that Frevisse struggles to embrace as she navigates her worries.

This chapter enhances the narrative by deepening Frevisse's character and highlighting her steadfast dedication to safeguarding her community in the face of danger and uncertainty.

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Chapter 16: 16

Summary of Chapter Sixteen from "The Reeve's Tale"

As night wraps St. Chad's nunnery in a veil of stillness, Frevisse finds herself unexpectedly in the sacristy rather than her usual cell. It is close to midnight, and she is preparing to lead Matins in place of Sister Thomasine, who is overwhelmed as many village children suffer from a fever. The serene silence amidst the chaos of illness offers Frevisse a moment of solace.

Her first concern is Adam, a feverish young boy under the care of Sister Thomasine. With gentle words about the painting of St. Chad, Sister Thomasine reassures him, invoking the saint's protective gaze, which brings Adam a measure of comfort. Frevisse, sitting beside him, wrestles with her own fears about the potential loss of the boy, reflecting the heavy emotional toll that such sickness has on her.

Throughout the night, Frevisse prays for the safety of the ailing children around her. As dawn breaks, she experiences a profound sense of relief when she learns that Adam's fever has subsided, a welcome reprieve for his mother, Anne, who weeps tears of gratitude upon realizing her son will recover. Mistress Margery, a reliable village woman, echoes this hopeful news, prompting Frevisse to step outside for some fresh air.



In the crisp morning light, Frevisse observes the village awakening, a stark contrast to the prior night's turmoil. While she feels burdened by the responsibilities that await, a sense of relief washes over her as the worst of the plague seems to pass. However, she cannot shake the thoughts of the

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Chapter 17 Summary: 17

In Chapter Seventeen, Frevisse embarks on a reflective journey toward Father Edmund's house, her mind consumed with the ongoing investigation into the suspicious deaths of Tom Hulcote and Matthew Woderove. Though she diligently seeks out clues in the village, her effort yields little fruit, leaving her with a sense of frustration, especially regarding the impending task of questioning Mary Woderove—someone she finds particularly unlikable.

Upon her arrival at Father Edmund's, Frevisse encounters Montfort, the local crowner, who is engaged in a casual discussion with the priest. This sight raises Frevisse's unease about their relationship, heightening her sense of exclusion in the investigation. When she attempts to address Woderove's death, Montfort brusquely dismisses her concerns, reinforcing her feeling of being ineffectual amidst the unfolding mystery.

In a welcome turn of events, Frevisse meets Christopher Montfort, the crowner's son, who unexpectedly provides her with critical information regarding Matthew Woderove's last days. He reveals that Woderove had sold a horse in Banbury shortly before his death, introducing new questions about his motivations and circumstances. Their interaction stands in stark contrast to her previous engagement with Montfort, as Frevisse finds herself intrigued by Christopher's more amiable demeanor.



Continuing her search for answers, Frevisse pays a visit to Elena Dunn, seeking insights into Tom Hulcote's character. Through a dialogue with Elena and her daughter Agnes, she uncovers troubling shifts in Tom's behavior, particularly around Whitsuntide, when he began to vanish for extended periods. Elena provides a timeline detailing Tom's absences and the conflicts with her husband, Gilbey, which allows Frevisse to grasp the intricate dynamics of Tom's life and relationships.

As Frevisse delves deeper into the complexities surrounding the two men's narratives, she grapples with mounting frustration over the unresolved questions and the urgency imposed by Montfort's investigation. The chapter encapsulates themes of truth-seeking, the intricate nature of human relationships, and the societal pressures that can cloud judgment and motive. Frevisse's determination to uncover the truth intensifies, yet she navigates a landscape fraught with uncertainty and danger, foreshadowing further entanglements in the fates of Tom and Matthew.

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Chapter 18 Summary: 18

Summary of Chapter Eighteen

In this chapter, tension escalates as Elena finds herself facing Montfort, a local authority figure, who has come with guards to search for her husband, Gilbey Dunn, accused of murder. Despite her attempt to project charm and composure, Elena feels a palpable undercurrent of fear, especially as Montfort expresses growing impatience and distrust, believing Gilbey has fled rather than simply gone to market as she claims.

Elena's ally, Frevisse, stands by her side, providing support amidst the mounting pressure. A calming influence, Father Edmund, a priest from the community, intervenes, advocating for the sick children in the household. Although Montfort is initially combative, he reluctantly allows the priest's presence as a way to maintain decorum during his search of Gilbey's belongings.

As Montfort's guards begin their investigation, rumors ripple throughout the village about Gilbey's alleged guilt and the legitimacy of Montfort's accusations. Frevisse and Perryn, the reeve—and a familiar face in local governance—take it upon themselves to gather more information to help clear Gilbey's name. They discuss potential suspects in detail, including the



deceased Tom Hulcote and Matthew Woderove, each displaying connections to the unfolding mystery.

The introduction of Mary Woderove, Matthew's widow, adds further complexity as she reacts to Frevisse's inquiries regarding her troubled history with Matthew and any ties to Tom. Her responses are tinged with anger and denial, painting her as a multifaceted character consumed by grief and bitterness.

This chapter not only highlights themes of authority and innocence but also captures the chaotic nature of rural life grappling with crime. As Frevisse navigates the intricate web of emotions and secrets surrounding these unfolding events, the villagers' whispers of gossip and suspicion create a tense backdrop, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of motivations and truths in a turbulent situation.

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Chapter 19 Summary: 19

In Chapter 19 of "The Reeve's Tale," Frevisse grapples with the selfish nature of Mary, the widow of Tom Hulcote, whose grief appears more self-centered than an expression of mourning for her husband or his secret lover. After dismissing Mary, Frevisse engages with local men, particularly Perryn, who voice their frustrations over the town coroner's disregard for their concerns regarding Tom's murder.

As they discuss Tom's death, the men reveal they found his hood and belt near his body but remained silent due to pressure from Father Edmund, the local priest. This reluctance hints at a deeper complicity between the townsfolk and church authority, suggesting that fear of repercussions stifled open dialogue about the crime. Frevisse's curiosity leads her to question how these items came to be by Tom, drawing her further into the investigation.

The conversation takes a pivotal turn when Dickon, a young boy, recounts seeing Mary in compromising situations with both Tom and Father Edmund, casting a shadow of doubt over her affections and intentions. This revelation complicates the investigation, suggesting Mary may be entwined not only with Tom but also with the church's authority, represented by Father Edmund. Perryn's frustration with Mary's clinging nature towards men adds complexity to her character, revealing layers of dependency that may factor into the murder plot.



As the chapter unfolds, Frevisse accumulates critical insights into the enigmatic connections between Mary, Father Edmund, and Tom's demise. The themes of betrayal, love, and the quest for truth resonate through the interactions, creating a dense atmosphere of tension. Frevisse finds herself at a crossroads, armed with significant but troubling information that could unravel long-held secrets in their closely-knit community. This chapter deepens the narrative, emphasizing moral ambiguities and the intricate relationships that bind the characters together, all while propelling the murder mystery toward its next phase.

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Chapter 20: 20

In Chapter Twenty of **The Reeve's Tale**, the narrative delves into a tense investigation led by Dame Frevisse into the mysterious deaths of Tom Hulcote and Matthew Woderove. The scene is charged with Simon's unease as he recounts his harrowing experience examining Tom's corpse, setting a grim tone for the unfolding events.

Dame Frevisse's incisive questioning reveals crucial insights into the circumstances surrounding the murders, particularly implicating Mary Woderove, Tom's lover. The chapter uncovers Mary's treachery, which involved her betrayal of Matthew through an affair with Father Edmund, the parish priest. The implication here is that Mary's entanglement with these men may have precipitated their tragic ends. A chilling hypothesis arises: Tom might have been murdered to facilitate Mary's relationship with Father Edmund.

As the investigation escalates, Simon and Dame Frevisse resolve to convene the jurors and confront Mary, suspecting her involvement in both killings. In a pivotal meeting at Simon's home, Dame Frevisse unveils her suspicions with cold precision, accusing Mary of orchestrating Matthew's death to pave the way for her newfound connection with Tom, only to subsequently eliminate Tom as well to sever any remaining ties to him.



Mary's reaction is one of frantic denial and deflection, yet the mounting evidence, as pieced together by Dame Frevisse, suggests that Mary needed both men gone to pursue her desires unimpeded. This chapter showcases a gripping psychological confrontation, with Dame Frevisse dismantling Mary's defenses while Simon wrestles with loyalty to his sister against the

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Chapter 21 Summary: 21

Chapter 21 Summary

In this gripping chapter, Frevisse finds herself at the center of a moral storm as she confronts Mary and Father Edmund about their illicit affair. The tension escalates when Mary becomes frantic, realizing that rumors of their relationship—and the ensuing accusations—are intensifying. Father Edmund, attempting to assert his authority, minimizes the situation and seeks to silence Mary, but Frevisse's scathing remarks cut through their facade, laying bare the depth of their wrongdoings.

Frevisse boldly accuses Mary and Father Edmund of complicity in serious crimes, notably the murders of Mary's husband, Matthew, and Tom, a man who had harbored feelings for her. Employing sharp dialogue, she masterfully highlights their reckless behavior, suggesting that their affair has culminated in tragic violence. As Frevisse elaborates on their schemes—staging alibis and manipulating others—Father Edmund's previously unshakable confidence begins to waver, revealing the cracks in their carefully constructed deception.

The intensity of the confrontations amplifies as Frevisse presents her evidence, compelling them to face the reality of their actions. Distrust

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permeates the air, leading Mary to lash out violently in response to Frevisse's provocations—a clear sign of her desperation and moral decline.

This chapter delves deeply into themes of deceit, justice, and the intricate moral landscape entwined with love and betrayal. Frevisse emerges as an unwavering champion of truth, wielding her intellect like a blade against the corrupt couple. The narrative not only builds suspense but also unravels the dark consequences of unchecked desires, emphasizing the intricate relationships between personal ambition and morality.

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Chapter 22 Summary: 22

In Chapter 22 of "The Reeve's Tale" by Margaret Frazer, the protagonist Frevisse finds herself in a state of turmoil as she strolls through a tranquil garden, reflecting on her recent confrontations with Mary Woderove and Father Edmund. Moved by a tumult of emotions stemming from the wrongful deeds they committed, Frevisse's mind drifts to the peace she usually finds at St. Frideswide's altar. Instead, she is ensnared in the aftermath of grave betrayals and murders, wrestling with the heavy burden of their actions.

During a pivotal confrontation, Frevisse had successfully exposed Father Edmund's complicity in the deaths of innocent men, utilizing her anger to counteract Mary's manipulative nature. Simon Perryn, Mary's brother, confronts the priest regarding his betrayal, and during this tense exchange, Mary is forced to acknowledge her own role in the murders despite her attempts to deflect blame. This painful realization leaves Frevisse deeply unsettled, recognizing that she may bear the emotional toll of these violent events long after the culprits face justice.

As Frevisse continues to grapple with her conflicting emotions, Perryn approaches her, offering solidarity and understanding for the difficult decisions she has made. They discuss the impending consequences for Mary, who faces execution, while Father Edmund is likely to receive a more

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lenient punishment due to his status as a priest. Frevisse feels a bitter resignation toward this injustice, but her spirits lift slightly when Perryn shares that he has obtained a confession from Father Edmund that could potentially exonerate Master Naylor, a man wrongfully implicated in the chaos.

Their conversation takes on a lighter tone as Perryn humorously speculates about Father Edmund's future, suggesting that Mary might eventually grow weary of him. This moment of shared laughter serves as a much-needed respite from their grief, intertwining their sorrow with fleeting happiness. Overall, the chapter explores themes of betrayal, moral ambiguity, and the intricacies of human relationships, while showcasing the resilience of Frevisse and Perryn as they navigate the challenges of their tumultuous world.

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Chapter 23 Summary: Epilogue

Summary of Chapter 23 from "The Reeve's Tale"

In the concluding chapter of "The Reeve's Tale," Sister Frevisse finds herself amid the vibrant finale of the harvest season, accompanied by Master Naylor and Sister Thomasine at the priory. Having recently dedicated her time to caring for sick children in the surrounding village, Frevisse embraces the uplifting sight of the community—comprised of men, women, and children—joyfully reaping their wheat crop. This moment encapsulates the resilience and solidarity of the villagers, who have triumphed over a season fraught with challenges.

The pivotal moment occurs when Simon Perryn, designated as the harvest lord, approaches Frevisse and her companions with a noteworthy request: the villagers wish for Sister Thomasine to have the honor of cutting the last sheaf of wheat. Traditionally, this honor is bestowed upon a young girl, making the villagers' choice a notable departure from custom and a profound recognition of Sister Thomasine's contributions to their lives.

Though taken aback, Frevisse wholeheartedly supports the villagers' decision, leading to an emotional moment where Sister Thomasine graciously accepts the honor. As she steps forward to join the villagers, the

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air is thick with excitement and celebration, amplifying the sense of community uniting in a shared moment of triumph. The chapter reaches its climax with cheers and revelry, marking the conclusion of the harvest and symbolizing a bountiful season following a period of hardship.

Interwoven throughout this narrative are themes of mercy, community, and renewal. The festive gathering reflects not only the joy of the present harvest but also serves as a poignant reminder of the adversities faced and overcome. Frevisse's reflections highlight the significant transitions occurring in her life and the lives of those around her, capturing the enduring spirit of resilience that is integral to the fabric of their community.

In her authorial commentary, Margaret Frazer touches upon the authentic complexities of village life during the medieval period. She emphasizes the significance of self-governance and resilience in that era and encourages readers to delve into the historical context through further readings, showcasing her commitment to vividly bringing the medieval world to life through her storytelling.

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