

Airborn Study Guide

Airborn by Kenneth Oppel

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Airborn Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1: Ship's Eyes.....	4
Chapter 2: Up Ship!.....	6
Chapter 3: Kate.....	8
Chapter 4: Hot Chocolate For Two.....	10
Chapter 5: The Log Of The Endurance.....	12
Chapter 6: Szpirglas.....	14
Chapter 7: Sinking and Chapter 8: The Island.....	16
Chapter 9: Bones and Chapter 10: Shipshape.....	18
Chapter 11: The One That Fell and Chapter 12: Shipwrecked.....	20
Chapter 13: Hydrium.....	22
Chapter 14: Nest and Chapter 15: Cloud Cat.....	23
Chapter 16: Rescue.....	25
Chapter 17: The Pit and Chapter 18: Ship Taken.....	27
Chapter 19: Airborne and Chapter 20: Airborn.....	30
Chapter 21: At Anchor.....	33
Characters.....	34
Objects/Places.....	40
Themes.....	44
Style.....	46
Quotes.....	49
Topics for Discussion.....	51



Plot Summary

"Airborn" by Kenneth Oppel is a story of possibilities. This work of fiction portrays what the world might have been like had the aircraft as we know it not been invented. Instead, airships of the day use a fuel called hydrium and resemble hot air balloons more closely than they do airplanes of today. The story centers around a cabin boy named Matt Cruse who works aboard the airship Aurora, just as his father before him had. When his father is killed in a freak accident, Matt is given a job by the captain of the ship, enabling him to continue to support his mother and two sisters.

The story begins with the discovery of a hot air balloon, adrift and in distress. The balloon's pilot, Benjamin Molloy, lives long enough to ask Matt if he'd seen 'them', and dies shortly after realizing Matt had not. A year later, Molloy's granddaughter Kate de Vries follows the closest flight path she can in the hopes of seeing the miraculous creatures he describes in his journal for herself. An unexpected confrontation with air pirates causes the Aurora to crash land on the very island Molloy described and drew so carefully. When Kate realizes her good fortune, she is determined to find evidence of the creatures her grandfather described, and restore his good name in the scientific community. She convinces Matt to accompany her into the woods in search of them, despite Matt's objections and reservations. When they encounter an aggressive, jumping snake, they take refuge in a tree, and climbing high enough to avoid the snake, they inadvertently discover a skeleton of the creature Kate's grandfather had described and drawn. Strong willed and determined, Kate defies her chaperone again and again, initially to explore the forest in the hopes of discovering evidence of the creature, then again when returning to collect the skeleton. Their escapades turn out to be fortuitous for the rest however because when they are caught in a topical storm and take refuge in a cave they inadvertently discover a source of hydrium that will enable the Aurora to fly again. As they refuel, Kate drugs her chaperone who had insisted on confining Kate to their stateroom to keep her from gallivanting again. She makes one last trip into the woods in the hopes of capturing a photograph of the creature before the ship is ready to leave. Matt is one of two who are sent to find her, and the photography session turns into a flight for life. While fleeing the creature who turns out to be less cuddly and more carnivore, Matt and Kate stumble right into the pirate's home base. They must escape, and then help to rescue the Aurora from the pirates who have taken control of her a second time. An exciting battle for control of the airship ensues and with a little bit of help from a flock of Cloud Cats, Matt helps to regain control of the ship and direct the authorities to the pirate's hideout. Kate manages to restore her grandfather's good name, touring with the proof that a previously undiscovered creature exists and earning the right to a university education.



Chapter 1: Ship's Eyes

Chapter 1: Ship's Eyes Summary

"Airborn" by Kenneth Oppel is a story of possibilities. This work of fiction portrays what the world might have been like had the aircraft as we know it not been invented. Instead, airships of the day use a fuel called hydrium and resemble hot air balloons more closely than they do airplanes as we know them. The story centers around a cabin boy named Matt Cruse who works aboard the airship Aurora just as his father before him had. When his father is killed in a freak accident, Matt is given a job by the captain of the ship, enabling him to continue to support his mother and two sisters.

The sailing is smooth two nights out of Sydney. At first, Matt almost misses the hot air balloon in the sky above them, noticing it only because it blots out the stars behind it as it passes. He calls down to the Control Car and tells Captain Walken. With a spotlight on it, Matt clearly reads the name 'Endurance'. Mr. Torbay adds that no flight plan was filed. The Captain tries to raise them but there is no answer. Knowing that they are going to try to pick up the balloon, Matt goes down to see if he can help. They get as close as they can without catching themselves in the rigging and pull the basket in with grappling hooks but the gondola itself is still thirty feet away. Captain Walken asks Matt if he can hook himself onto the davit and swing across, knowing he has no fear of heights. They swing him out and Matt starts pumping his legs like a child on a swing. Then flinging himself forward, he manages to grab the lip, and haul himself in. The braid of the flight lines is thick and when only two lines remain, the burner comes on setting fire to the balloon. Burning balloon material falls into the gondola and the metal framework of the burner shrieks with stress as the last line lets go. The crew of the Aurora reels them in while Matt puts out the fire and tends to the unconscious pilot. Matt's knees turn to jello as he tries to get out, and the Captain congratulates him on a job well done. He heads for his cabin, too tired to think and climbs into bed. As often is the case, once asleep Matt leaves his tired body and flies alongside his father. Later in the afternoon, he checks on the balloon pilot. Doc Halliday tells him things don't look good. He has pneumonia and likely had a heart seizure a couple of days earlier and his chances are slim. Matt sits with him and puts his hand over the old man's, feeling the heat of fever. His eyes open and he asks, "Did you see them?". They were beautiful, he insists and to make the man happy, Matt lies and says he saw them too. Kate would have loved them, the old man adds and sees the lie in Matt's face. An hour later, Molloy is dead.

Chapter 1: Ship's Eyes Analysis

It is September, and cool in the crow's nest. The crow's nest is parting the wind at about seventy-five miles per hour. Mr. Cruse is looking forward to the end of his shift. He can smell the fresh baked goods coming from the kitchen below, and can hardly wait for Mr. Riddihoff to climb the ladder for his watch. That all changes when he spots the hot air balloon traveling above them. He calls the Control Car beneath him and they try to raise



the pilot of the craft to no avail. The Captain takes the Aurora up to investigate, knowing that they can't leave it drifting through the sky lanes the way that it is. As soon as his replacement shift arrives, Matt heads for the bay where he knew they would be attempting to bring the wicker basket aboard. Sleep could wait, as curiosity overwhelmed everything else. When First Officer Paul Rideau sees him, he at first tries to send him on his way, but when Matt claims he is only there to lend assistance if he can, Paul tells him to put a harness on, but to stay well back. Matt does as he is told while Paul tries again to make contact with the Endurance. Matt sees the pilot on the gondola floor, pointing it out as Captain Walken enters. Getting the basket aboard proves to be a little more difficult than anticipated, and when it becomes apparent that someone will have to be transferred over there on the davit and secure the basket, the men in the bay all hoped they wouldn't be called upon. Captain Walken looks Matt's way and announces what he already knows, having had Matt on his ship for two years now. He says that of all those in the bay, he knew for certain that Matt had no fear of heights. Matt agreed, trying to maintain a professional appearance, but jumping up and down in excitement inside. They strap him to the davit in a harness and after the Captain checks it, they send him out. In a daring rescue, he manages to get aboard, cut the flight lines, and comfort the pilot until they could be brought aboard Aurora. Doc Halliday takes over the care of the pilot, who is already so near death that he would not survive. When Matt goes to visit him, he regains consciousness just long enough to ask Matt if he had seen them as well. He insisted that Matt must have, speculating that they've likely always been there, but no one knew. When, to calm the man, Matt agreed he had seen them, the man did indeed relax a bit until commenting on their incredible beauty, he sees the deception on Matt's face. He lapses back into unconsciousness, and never wakes again. Matt goes to work his shift in the nest the next night thinking about what the man said, and wondering.



Chapter 2: Up Ship!

Chapter 2: Up Ship! Summary

The ground crew of two hundred cast off the lines at the Control Car's command and the water ballast is dumped sending them quickly up and over the spires of Lionsgate City. The air is filled with dozens of ships, some landing, and the rest all headed in different directions. The Aurora is bound for Sydney, and Matt is amazed at the stores of food brought aboard for the trip. Matt is a cabin boy now, and his job involves settling the one hundred and twenty passengers who have just come on board. Shortly after take off, breakfast is prepared and served, and Matt works the dining room efficiently with Baz and Kristof. This trip, Matt hopes will be his last as a cabin boy. Rumors were that Tom Bear, the assistant sailmaker was leaving and Captain Walken had all but guaranteed the next promotion would be his after his help with the balloon rescue a year earlier. Matt could hardly believe that he would soon be an assistant sailmaker. It put him on the path to Captain one day. An ornithopter flies dangerously close to them and circles. Matt asks Baz to cover for him as he takes a try to the Control Car loaded with coffee and fresh baked goods. When he arrives, he hears the wireless operator, Luc Bayard, tell the Captain that two late passengers request landing by ornithopter. The Captain sends Matt down to help them aboard. The ornithopter is hooked on the second attempt and Marjorie Simpkins and her charge, Kate de Vries come aboard. They are escorted to their rooms after Matt puts their luggage onto the freight conveyor belt and they have watched the ornithopter take off again. Matt tells Kate that a tour is scheduled for later in the morning if she is interested, which she admits she is. He shows them how to summon help, should they need it, or send messages, and when Kate admits how hungry she is, Matt offers to bring them breakfast.

Chapter 2: Up Ship! Analysis

Matt begins to feel better as soon as the Aurora is aloft. He has never told his mother this, but for him the trips home begin happily enough, but after just a few short days, being on the ground is sheer torture. Besides, the only time Matt dreams of his father is when he is in the sky. There, when Matt sleeps, they fly together without encumbrances of either body or ship. As they take off, Matt tends to his duties as a cabin boy, settling passengers and then helping the orchestration of breakfast. This day, he is light on his feet as he contemplates the implications of Tom Bear's announcement that this was his last flight on Aurora. Captain Walken had promised him the next open promotion, and this was it - assistant sailmaker. An ornithopter takes turns around them and Matt takes a tray to the Control Car to see what is going on. As he gets there, he hears the report that two late passengers are aboard, and the Captain sends him down to greet them and help them onto the Aurora. Matt goes happily, excited to see an aerial landing. Kate de Vries, one of the two passengers boarding late, is of like mind and seems to have thoroughly enjoyed the flight while her chaperone gets out spewing insults and assuring the pilot she will contact his superiors. Kate merely thanks the pilot and insists on



staying to watch him leave in the ornithopter, scoring her even more points with Matt. He watches as she takes in her surroundings with wonder. He mentions the tour being conducted later if they are interested and then escorts them to their room, even offering to bring them breakfast when they admit to pangs of hunger.



Chapter 3: Kate

Chapter 3: Kate Summary

As Matt prepares a trolley of food for the Topkapi stateroom, chief steward Mr. Lisbon tells him the Captain wants to see him. Matt takes a breath, calming himself before knocking, and enters. The Captain tells him to sit, and Matt knows he will not be getting good news. He tells him that although he'd given his promise that the next promotion was his, he unfortunately has no choice in the matter, and must take on as junior sailmaker Otto Lunardi's (the owner's) son. The Captain offers to transfer Matt to another vessel if he can find one with an opening, but Matt declines, preferring to stay on the ship where his father had worked. The Captain promises Matt he will not break his word a second time. The ship's tour is due to go and Matt arrives to find only Kate de Vries waiting. When no others show interest, they begin. Kate shows true interest in the ship and how she works and the more appreciative she is about the vessel, the more Matt likes her. He shows her everything, and when she sees the ladder to the crow's nest, she asks if they can go up, but Matt tells her it is a 'crew only' location. In conversation, he reveals that he was born in the sky, on an airship as they make their way slowly back, neither in a hurry for the tour to end. She asks a great deal of questions most passengers are not interested in. Finally, she asks if he was on board when the balloon was found a year earlier. She is surprised when he admits that not only was he the first to see it, but was also the person who went across on a davit to help get the gondola on board. He describes the circumstances and she admits that the man in the balloon had been her grandfather. She asks if he spoke to her, and Matt tells her about the strange conversation they'd had about something he'd seen in the sky. He tells her that he had said 'Kate would have loved this' and immediately realizes that she is the Kate he referred to. She thanks him for telling her, looking drained. They get back to B-Deck and Matt asks her if she knew what her grandfather was referring to. She admits she does and that in fact is the reason she has come aboard. She hopes to see what her grandfather saw.

Chapter 3: Kate Analysis

He is readying a tray for Kate and her chaperone when the chief steward comes over to tell him the Captain want to see him. Knowing there is no way that this could involve disciplinary matters, he smiles and straightens Matt's tie before sending him on. Matt feels for the compass in his pocket that was a gift from his father on his tenth birthday. The inscription reads 'From one sailmaker to another' and he always carries it. It is the moment that Matt has been waiting for - his promotion to assistant sailmaker, and he hopes he doesn't forget anything important should an impromptu quiz be given. He remembers the first time he met the Captain. He was only six at the time. Now, the Captain tells him to sit, and he looks for any sign of good news on his face. He breaks the news that Matt will not get the promotion to junior sailmaker as promised, and in fact they will be taking on Otto Lunardi's son in that position. Matt recognizes the name of



the owner of the Aurora, as well as about forty other airships, and knows the position the Captain is in. The son of the owner is apparently unfit to manage the business empire his father controls and as such is facing exile aboard the Aurora. Matt doesn't let his feelings show and leaves with a feeling of loathing for the Lunardi boy he doesn't even know. Matt wonders if he'll ever attain his dream of becoming a pilot of the Aurora - a position he coveted above all others. He returns in time to conduct the ship's tour, but only Kate de Vries is waiting. He takes her throughout the ship he loves, and when she sees the ladder to the crow's nest, she asks if she can go up. He tells her that it is an area only crew is allowed, and her disappointment endears her to Matt even further. Her interest in the vessel is so intense that it is almost disconcerting and she continues to ask pointed questions about their route, height of travel, speed, pressure, and more. Their conversation takes an interesting turn when she brings up the incident a year earlier involving the hot air balloon. When Matt reveals he was the one who sighted and then helped to bring the balloon on board the Aurora, she is surprised, and follows it with a surprise of her own. She is the Kate he referred to, and he was her grandfather. Matt is a bit embarrassed that he told the tale with such excitement and relish, but Kate is still asking questions, having ignored that. She asks if he spoke, and Matt reveals the strange conversation they'd had. Tears form and threaten, but she is under control again almost immediately. As they return to B-Deck, he asks if she knew what her grandfather was talking about. She did, and in fact hoped to see them herself. It was the reason for her trip, and the many questions she'd asked.



Chapter 4: Hot Chocolate For Two

Chapter 4: Hot Chocolate For Two Summary

Their conversation comes to an end as Miss Simpkins approaches, although Matt still has a million questions. He leaves Kate and goes back to his quarters. Baz says hi as he climbs up to his bunk to sleep. The alarm rouses him at seven that evening for lounge duty and as they get ready, Baz tells him that he plans to propose to his girlfriend, Theresa. Matt tells Baz about his meeting with the Captain and Baz reminds him that he'll probably be flying the Aurora in ten years time. Then he teases Matt until he has him laughing and they head out to grab dinner before work. The food is good, staff enjoying the same food as the guests and Vlad, the chef, although a little loony, was a spectacular cook. Halfway through the meal, Bruce Lunardi comes in to eat. He is a pleasant enough young man, with a sense of humor and somehow that fact bothers Matt even more. Losing his desire for dessert, he heads to work. The lounge is busy and filled mostly with women, while the men socialize in the smoking room. Kate de Vries and Miss Simpkins sit at a window table and Baz arrives shortly after. He sits down at the baby grand piano to entertain the guests, but Miss Simpkins doesn't enjoy the music and soon takes Kate back to the room. While Miss Simpkins is momentarily distracted, Kate wanders over and asks Matt how long he is on duty for. He tells her and her chaperone returns leaving them little room to do more than say goodnight. The evening is busy and before long, Baz is playing the kind of Bach, funeral music that sends a message the evening was over. A message in one of the tubes gets Matt's attention, and he notes that it is from the Topkapi stateroom, requesting that two hot chocolates be brought to them. He finishes cleaning up, and takes the hot chocolate to them personally. Miss Simpkins is sleeping when he arrives and Kate announces that the second hot chocolate is for him. Flustered, he tries to explain that even though he is off duty, he isn't allowed to fraternize with the guests. Disappointed, she says she'd only hoped they'd be able to talk some more. He notices the camera, and an assortment of flasks and containers nearby. She picks up a notebook, bound with a ribbon and tells him it was her grandfathers. Everything he saw is carefully written down, along with sketches. A voice calls out from behind the door and gives Matt a start. Kate puts the journal into his hands, telling him she trusts him. Read it and then return it, she adds, saying she'd bookmarked the page where he first saw them. She smiles at him and closes the door. Matt returns the tray to the kitchen and once back in his cabin he begins to read.

Chapter 4: Hot Chocolate For Two Analysis

Matt is disappointed when he sees Miss Simpkins approaching. He has a million questions he wants to ask Kate. Matt heads back to his quarters. Regardless of the lack of promotion now, Matt loves his job and his cabin. To him, this is home. He has the same library of books that his father carried when he was on the Aurora, and can lie down and look out his porthole where he could see clouds, land masses, and oceans



during the day and the stars at night. He looks out and sees something flying in the distance, but then realizes it is just a trick of cloud and light and wonders if that was what had happened to Kate's grandfather. He could hardly wait to talk to her again, and hopefully without her chaperone. When he wakes, Baz helps him get ready and they go out for dinner. While eating, they are joined by Bruce Lunardi, and the conversation is a bit stilted as Matt has no desire to fraternize with the person he perceives as the enemy. The worst part of it all is that Bruce seems like a personable and likable enough person. Matt has a hard time continuing to dislike intensely. Matt leaves before dessert, heading up to work in the lounge. Baz isn't far behind him. While Matt serves drinks, Baz plays the grand piano, entertaining the guests. Kate and her chaperone sit at a window seat for a time, but the music is too raucous for Miss Simpkins' tastes and she insists they retire. On the way out, Kate asks Matt when he is finished for the night, and manages to place an order via the message tube just as he is finishing. He takes the two hot chocolates she ordered up to the room, and discovers that Kate is awake but Miss Simpkins is not. Kate invites him in, telling him that the second cocoa is for him, but he explains that fraternizing with the guests is strictly forbidden. Kate is a bit put out by that at first, but as Matt is explaining, Miss Simpkins wakes. Kate gives Matt the journal her grandfather kept, and tells him to read it, especially the area beginning where she bookmarked, asking only that he return it when he is done. He takes the journal, and the tray, slipping out before Miss Simpkins realizes he is there. Then he goes back to his cabin, wide awake now, and ready to read.



Chapter 5: The Log Of The Endurance

Chapter 5: The Log Of The Endurance Summary

Benjamin Molloy's journal is cracked and rain swollen, held together with a hair ribbon. Matt carefully unties it and begins to journey with Molloy as he read the pages from the beginning. Molloy left from Cape Town, using the jet stream to travel over the Indian Ocean until he reached Australia. Then the winds took him northeast. He kept careful notes describing the places and creatures he saw. In the small hours of the early morning, Matt reaches the section Kate had marked as her grandfather's first encounter with the creatures, beginning with his sighting of the island on September 2nd. He describes the creatures he first thought were albatross, and sketches them many times throughout the following pages. Across two of the pages, he'd drawn first a human skeleton, then a bat skeleton, and finally, what he believed would be the appearance of the creature's skeleton. Within a few days, he has counted twenty-six of them in the flock, and wishes Kate could see them. Days later, he sees his first birthing in air. The baby plummeted from the great height his mother had flown to before giving birth. After a few moments, the baby opened her wings and began to fly. Molloy watches more females give birth until the sixth birth, which doesn't go well. The baby's left wing doesn't unfurl, and it plummets to the island below, it's frantic mother unable to help it. Out of the fourteen births, this is the only loss. The next day they feed with a frenzy, and then leave, flying an estimated eighty knots with tailwinds. From there, the handwriting blurs, as though he is caught in a tropical storm. Matt recalls that they had found him on the thirteenth of September, just five days after the creatures departed. His last entry mentions an airship in the distance that he plans to signal for help. Matt sleeps for a short time, and wakes feeling as though he hadn't. He manages to return the journal at lunch time and they talk briefly, but long enough for Kate to realize that Matt is less than convinced. She reminds him that the amount of actual sky he has traversed is minimal. She is convinced that millions of miles of sky and sea remain unexplored. As such, she asks if they are passing anywhere close to the coordinates her grandfather mentions, and Matt agrees to check and tell her the point at which they are closest. She hopes that her grandfather was right, and this is a stop of migration for the creatures.

Chapter 5: The Log Of The Endurance Analysis

Matt lies in bed and read Benjamin Molloy's journal, beginning in Cape Town, sailing with the wind to Australia and then following the wind as it changed course, heading northeast. The days that pass are marked with Molloy's observations, repairs and drawings, but they held none of the discomfort that Matt felt even just reading about the perilous adventure. Without power of any kind, Molloy is at the mercy of the winds and yet regardless of his continuing eastward journey aloft, he is stout of heart and mind. Matt begins to understand the man in the balloon, learning about him through his writing. Molloy enjoyed Shakespeare, loved Kate immensely, and with the same depth of feeling, hated the baked beans he had provisioned himself with (though he ate them



anyway, knowing the nutritional value in them) and he, like Matt, enjoyed watching the weather approaching. When Matt reaches the section where Molloy finds the island, and sees the creatures, he is amazed. Molloy's descriptions are detailed, as are the drawings he has done. The winds allow him to remain in the area as he watches them, and learns about them, charting it all in his journal. When they left, his writing changes, and Matt gets the distinct impression that he is depressed by their departure. After that, he writes little. It appears as though he was caught in a storm, and his ship damaged. His last entry is his sighting of the Aurora in the distance. Matt is disappointed when the reading is finished but not as disappointed as Kate is when he returns it to her, and tells her that her grandfather may have hallucinated the entire even, ill as he was. Kate says he is just like the others. Even the Zoological Society refused to believe Molloy wasn't in a state of delirium when he saw them, calling the incident 'deficiencies of observation'. She convinces Matt that he might not know as much of the sky as he thinks he does, having stayed primarily in their designated shipping route. He reluctantly agrees, and promises to check to see how close they will pass to the island, and let her know when they are at their nearest point.



Chapter 6: Szpirglas

Chapter 6: Szpirglas Summary

Before his shift, Matt heads to the navigation room and sees that they will come closest to the island the next morning. At dinner, he lets Kate know, slipping a note into her napkin. In the crow's nest he is looking up when he sees a shift in the stars. Then another section of the sky is blocked out and he loses his balance when a large pair of wings passes close overhead. Something lands not fifty feet from his post. He examines it a little closer, realizing he is looking at an albatross and tries to scare it off, but it doesn't move. He calls down to the Control Car, explaining the situation to First Officer Rideau, and gets permission to open the hatch and chase it off. It stays, forcing Matt to step out, making himself large to finally scare the bird off. He watches it as it banks to the east, and sees another airship in the sky, headed straight for them. First Officer Rideau takes evasive maneuvers, and calls for the Captain. They try to shake her without success, and in moments there are men dropping from weighted lines. A voice over a bullhorn instructs them to level off and Captain Walken has little choice but to comply. Six men at a time board her, with more on the way, heading for the hatch, and Matt. The Captain tells him to lock the hatch and assemble in the keel catwalk. The alarm is sounded as the hatch is wrenched open and men with guns climb in. Vikram Szpirglas is suave and deliberate as he tells the Captain that he will require access to the passenger quarters, but that no one will be hurt if everyone cooperates. The Captain has no choice but to assemble the passengers in the lounges while the pirates collect their valuables which are to be left in their rooms. Szpirglas warns the Captain that heroics or attempts to signal for help will not be tolerated. One pirate, addressed as Mr. Crumlin by Szpirglas, pushes the radio officer ahead of him, announcing he'd discovered him attempting to send an S.O.S. Szpirglas shoots him in the head and then as quickly as they boarded, they leave. Matt follows them up, hiding in the rigging, and as the pirate ship detaches, notices the storm front. He calls the Control Car to report just as the wind throws the pirate's ship into them. The pirate ship collides with the Aurora, tearing the fabric of her hull. Then it pulls away from them and Matt can hear the hydrium escaping.

Chapter 6: Szpirglas Analysis

When Matt slips the note into Kate's napkin that evening, letting her know when they will be at their closest point to her grandfather's island, Baz happens to catch him doing it, and walks away grinning after giving him a conspiratorial wink. Matt blushed then, and almost again now in the crow's nest when he remembered it. Matt enjoys spending time with Kate, even though around her he is often painfully aware of himself and every word and gesture that he makes. When Matt first notices the disturbance in the sky, he maintains close attention until something flies very close past the dome in which he sat. Fearful at first, his mind filled with Molloy's journal and the creatures he saw, Matt is distinctly relieved when it reveals itself to be nothing more than an albatross, glad that



he didn't give in to panic and call down a report. The jokes would have dogged him for years. He studied it, and it made him realize how easy it would be to mistake them for something else, and the realization that this might have been all Molloy saw makes Matt sad. Worried that the bird's sharp feet might tear the ship's skin, he tries to scare it off to no avail. He gets permission from First Officer Rideau to chase it off, and putting on his goggles, he clips himself into a safety line and opens the hatch. He yells at the bird, waving his arms, but accomplishing little more than making him walk a few feet further away. In the process of scaring the large bird off, Matt sees a ship headed right for the Aurora. The ship changes course with them and it is quickly apparent that they won't be able to outrun it. It doesn't respond to summons by radio, and moments later she pulls up over the Aurora's tail. When it manages to attach itself to the Aurora and lower men down onto her, Matt realizes that they can only be pirates. Though it feels cowardly, Matt is relieved when the Captain tells him to lock the hatch and desert his post. The passengers are not happy when the crew is forced to wake them at four in the morning, and escort them from their rooms and even less so when they are told to leave their valuables behind. The pirates are efficient and in no time return with gunny sacks filled with the passengers possessions. Mr Featherstone apologizes to Captain Walken, and tells Szpirglas that he was acting on his own when he is caught trying to send an S.O.S.



Chapter 7: Sinking and Chapter 8: The Island

Chapter 7: Sinking and Chapter 8: The Island Summary

Bruce Lunardi is already in his gear when Mr. Levy, the chief sailmaker, asks Matt to help. He gears up and joins the team making repairs on the starboard side. The gashes are easy to find and he gets to work, wondering how much hydrium they've lost. While the gas wasn't poisonous, it fills up the air space, pushing the oxygen out causing suffocation. He hears water and knows the captain is dumping still more ballast water into the sea. Long before Matt completes his side, a call to come aboard is heard. Riddihoff tells them that they've lost too much hydrium and are unable to stay aloft. He helps to assemble the passengers and hands out life jackets. All that is required is that they step over into a life raft which is not only roomy, but has a chef on board each one, and enough provisions for weeks if necessary. The ocean is very close when Matt looks out the window and sees land, uncharted on their maps. An island reveals itself in the mist and they prepare to set down. There is a beach with a site suitable to land and enough hydrium for one landing attempt. When the call comes, sixty of them jump from the ship with lines uncoiling behind them, and they secure their lines to whatever they can, holding them with all their might against the forces that worked against them. The captain himself jumps out to help secure the ship. After twenty minutes, he pronounces her tight and Matt heads back to the ship.

The captain addresses the passengers on the beach, asked to disembark to lighten the ship as much as possible while repairs are under way. Breakfast is served outside, and afterward, Matt is instructed to go and get some sleep while he can, but he is unable to sleep on land. He gets up and joins Baz and Bruce who were instructed to find water. They run into Kate and Bruce realizes that he knows her already. She tells them about the stream just a little further down the beach and while they return to the ship to tell the captain, Matt continues to walk ahead. Kate is quick to tell him that she believes that this is the island her grandfather described in his journal. Matt is skeptical, but offers to ask Mr. Grantham if he has the coordinates of the island. Then, seeing the drawing in the journal, he realizes she is right.

Chapter 7: Sinking and Chapter 8: The Island Analysis

Bruce Lunardi and Matt set out with the rest of the team to make repairs and Matt is eager to show Bruce up, sure that he is the better sailmaker of the two. He soon forgets his competitive nature when the reality of the damage is assessed. The gashes are easy to find, and he goes from one to another, gluing, patching and then listening for the telltale hiss of hydrium escaping. The captain is still dumping ballast water, and Matt wonders if they are sinking. When the ship rolls, and then rights itself again, Matt losing



his footing, bouncing back against the skin of the ship softly again. Bruce calls out, and Matt sees him dangling upside down in his rigging. He makes his way over and helps him to right himself, noticing at the same time what a neat and tidy job of patching he is doing. When they are called back in to hear the announcement that the Aurora is sinking, Matt feels sick. He can't bear the thought of ditching his beloved ship. He puts his fear aside and helps the passengers prepare. He makes his way to Kate and Miss Simpkins, who is clearly frightened, and reassures them that they won't sink even if they land on the ocean. He tries not to think about the fact that he himself is unable to swim. Knowing he can't give in to his own fears, he wanders through the passengers, checking vests and reassuring the frightened ones that all will be well. He looks out a porthole and to his surprise, sees an island, and calls out 'land ahoy'. Less than thirty minutes later, they have her on the beach and secure. Matt looks up towards the Topkapi stateroom and sees the flash of Kate's camera as he returns to the ship.

Matt helps to string tarps, wishing he were helping to repair his beloved ship instead. The captain tells the passengers on the beach that all is well and the Aurora will fly again once repairs are made. With the exception of the loss of Mr. Featherstone, there were no casualties as a result of their encounter with Szpirglas which the captain assures them is cause to be grateful. The captain had quietly informed the crew that they should be on the watch for inhabitants. Serving breakfast to the passengers outside is an ordeal, and Matt is in no mood to pamper passengers. Baz teases him until he cannot help but smile. Afterward, he is told to get some sleep while he can, but he is unable to rest while the ship is on the ground. He joins Bruce and Baz in search of water to replace the ballast that was dumped before landing, and following them he suddenly feels like the younger brother, tagging along behind, wondering when Bruce and Baz had become so friendly with a tinge of jealousy. They see Kate on the beach and Bruce asks who she is, obviously attracted. Baz tells him that the competition from Matt will be fierce as Bruce announces that he thinks he knows her and walks over to introduce himself. She tells them about the stream just ahead, and they head back to the ship while Matt decides to take a walk on his own. Kate smiles when he returns, telling him she had hoped he'd come back alone, and thanks him for being such a comfort earlier on board. He becomes angry when she voices her disappointment that he isn't feeling just a bit excited or adventurous. She believes this is the island her grandfather wrote about, and although Matt believes it is improbable, he agrees to ask what their coordinates are. He catches sight of the drawing in the journal, and remembering how the island looked as they approached, he announces that they are here.



Chapter 9: Bones and Chapter 10: Shipshape

Chapter 9: Bones and Chapter 10: Shipshape Summary

As soon as Matt agrees to the possibility, Kate walks off toward the forest leaving Matt with no alternative but to follow. All Kate can think about is getting a set of bones to prove the creatures' existence. Matt is acutely aware that he has obligations and duties on Aurora, but can't leave her behind to fend for herself, and Kate flatly refuses to return. When she hears running water, she insists she can follow it back down and just circle the island till she finds Aurora. When she has no sign of success after looking for some time, Matt suggests that perhaps they can look again. They see a small snake, and though it appears harmless enough, its bright red color unnerves Kate who suggests it might be poisonous. It launches itself at them as though it is part pogo stick, and they run backwards, unwilling to turn around for fear that it jump on them. Persistent, the snake continues to launch at them, despite the size disparity. They climb a tree to get away from it, and pushing through a curtain of vines, come face to face with a skeleton, still sitting on the branch it died on. The entire skeleton is intact and at first Matt thinks it is a panther, but closer examination reveals the truth. They have found the creature her grandfather described in his journal. She tells Matt she wants the bones, asking him if he can find the site again. He assures her he can, and she swears him to secrecy. They return to the ship.

When they get back to the beach, they hear Marjorie shouting at the chief steward, insisting that something terrible could have happened. Kate strides out with Matt reluctantly following. The captain suggests that Kate stay closer to the ship from here forward, and Kate thanks Matt and apologizes to him for the trouble she caused him. As he walks away, the captain joins him and tells him that they have enough hydrium to lift off. The news is very welcome. First, they have to shed thousands of pounds and begin by unloading all non-essential cargo while sailmakers continue to patch. Later in the day, the entire crew helps to loosen the lines enough to see if the Aurora will rise, and to everyone's relief, she does. When she is afloat, they tie her off again to continue repairs. The captain allows the passengers to get back on and Vlad serves a meal that is beyond belief, using resources from the island. Kate comes to dinner alone, and stays behind in the lounge as one by one the passengers retire. Though he is reluctant to return to the site, Kate reminds him that he promised and they arrange to meet at first light so that Matt can be back when his shift at noon begins. It is after four in the morning before Matt finally drifts off, complete with nightmares that jumble with reality.



Chapter 9: Bones and Chapter 10: Shipshape Analysis

Stubbornly, Kate insists on exploring the island, reminding him that the captain had approved, provided a crew member was present. When Matt refused to go, she walked off on her own, and had no intention of returning. Matt follows unhappily, using his compass to take a reading so that there will be no problems returning, even though he has an impeccable sense of direction. Kate notes that he is not the same on the ground as he is in the sky. Matt agrees, explaining that he's never felt at home on the ground and compares himself to a shark, always needing to keep moving. When she begins to look dejected because they haven't found anything after a time, Matt tells her that they might have a chance to come back and look again, although for the life of him, he can't understand what would make him offer such a thing, but she brightens immediately, surprised and pleased that he would try again. A small snake that Kate identifies as possibly being poisonous jumps at them with determination, forcing them into a tree where they find the skeleton of the creature Molloy describes in his journal. With such an obviously large wingspan, Matt can't understand how it could fly, but Kate has already noticed that their bones are mostly hollow, and light. The reality of their discovery sets in, and Kate cries, able to finally prove the truth of their existence.

All hope of simply blending back in disappears as they return, hearing Marjorie berating the chief steward for not doing something. When Kate comes into view, calmly apologizing for walking out of sight of the ship, Marjorie needs a new target for her wrath. When she realizes Matt was with Kate, she insists that his behavior has been inappropriate and Kate immediately defends him although Matt's ears are burning with embarrassment to hear the accusation. The issue is mostly resolved and the captain follows Matt as he reports for duty to tell him that he won't make the fact that he is late for his shift for the first time a part of his permanent record, and adds that the ship will fly - having enough remaining hydrium. He can see how the news lifts Matt's spirits, and sends him to help the others prepare. All items that can be left must be unloaded to lighten the ship. Thousands of pounds are shed as the passengers sit in the shade. Later, as the sun is beginning to set, they loosen the mooring lines and to everyone's relief, the ship rises, straining against her mooring. Matt is so relieved that he cries and Baz teases him until he is laughing as well. Everyone returns to the ship for dinner, created by Vlad from the ocean and island bounties. Kate comes to dinner alone, telling Matt that Marjorie is in bed with a terrible headache. She shows Matt the little red hopping snake in a book which reveals it as harmless. Later, Kate manages to convince Matt to take her back to the site in the morning, despite his reluctance. She even tells him she can have Lunardi escort her. Matt becomes angry, and almost walks away before Kate stops him, apologizing and admitting that she would never do that. Instead, since Matt is the only one she trusts, if he were to refuse her, she would just have to go alone. Unwilling to allow that to happen, Matt agrees to meet her at first light and heads to bed. He is unable to sleep however and doesn't doze off until well after four in the morning.



Chapter 11: The One That Fell and Chapter 12: Shipwrecked

Chapter 11: The One That Fell and Chapter 12: Shipwrecked Summary

Kate uses Matt for perspective, documenting as many angles of the creature as possible before they number and pack up the skeleton, recording it all in her grandfather's journal. The claws firmly hold the branch, proving the creature was alive when it landed. Kate starts with the skull and uses a wax pencil to number each bone before giving it to Matt who then wraps it and places it in Kate's carpet bag. They talk, Matt revealing his desire to pilot an airship one day, and Kate her plans for revealing the creature to the world. They are just done when a shriek quiets the forest. Something lands in the tree next to them and a parrot's wing flutter to the ground below. With cloud colored fur, it jumps between the trees, landing in theirs next. They hardly dare to breathe as they look at the creature who is part panther, part bird of prey, part bat. Since one of its wings deformed, they believe it is the creature her grandfather saw fall. Excited at first, Kate is soon dejected, knowing they will likely leave the next day, and may never see it again, longing to get close enough to take photos. Suddenly Matt feels the weather change and knows the ship will be in trouble. The storm is upon before they reach the ship.

The wind and rain is so intense that continuing on is unsafe. They stumble into a small cave and huddle there side by side. The smell of mangoes is strong, reminding Matt he is hungry and thirsty. He finds himself telling her about his need to continue flying and by the time he has talked himself out, the storm has subsided enough to resume their trek back to the ship. A hiss from the back of the cave hurries them on their way. Matt is stunned when he sees the Aurora. She is again on the beach half deflated, with a gash in one side. They get her level and the captain tells the crew the Aurora will not fly, although there is enough hydrium to keep her structure intact and allow passengers on. The captain finds him in the group and asks if he has seen any signs of inhabitants, but Matt admits they haven't, although the island stretches for miles west. He instructs Matt to join the exploratory team. Lunardi shares an idea he learned at the Academy, suggesting they cannibalize the ship to create a small hot air balloon with what hydrium remains so that someone can go for help. The junior wireless officer has another suggestion. His idea involves a balloon idea as well, but only to take an antenna high enough to transmit a distress signal. Vlad announces that food is bountiful and survival in the meantime will be no problem. Matt is on water duty and sees the sailmakers rigging themselves to cut into Aurora, and he suddenly has the solution. He stops the sailmakers and tells the captain about the cave that smells of mangoes and hisses like a snake. With the crates of rubber hosing he and Baz had packed out to lighten the ship, they could rig a line and use the ship's pumps. The captain claps Matt on the shoulder and work is halted until he can see the cave for himself.



Chapter 11: The One That Fell and Chapter 12: Shipwrecked Analysis

Matt and Kate return to the skeleton, and after documenting every angle and measurement she can think of, they begin to take the skeleton apart, numbering and labeling the bones as they go along. She tells Matt she will give him credit when she reveals the creature to the world but the only thing that Matt really wants to do in the future is pilot an airship. They talk about Lunardi's untimely arrival and how it affected his promotion - Kate becoming properly agitated by the news which on its own makes Matt feel better. She insists he could get a scholarship and go to the Academy himself, but he doesn't reveal the reasons that would be impossible, beginning with the fact that his employment income was crucial to his mother and sisters survival. He knows she means well, but with her wealth would never understand. They talk about family and Kate reveals that wealth is not synonymous with happiness, telling Matt that her parents will act the part of the bereaved parents when news of the crash reaches them, but it will all be for show. She tells Matt that somehow she has always managed to embarrass or disappoint her parents. As they complete their task, they are surprised by the arrival of another one. Kate tries to get a photo of it and the flash scares it off while Kate follows behind. It travels through treetops, hardly opening its wings, then drops out of sight to where Kate believes it is nesting. When Matt suddenly becomes aware of an approaching storm, he and Kate immediately head for the ship.

Within moments, the sky opens and the wind picks up, throwing branches and making even walking a challenge. To protect themselves, they take shelter in a small, deep cave. Matt pulls out his compass and Kate questions him as to the direction that the creature went, and the direction of the ship. He begins to feel claustrophobic, and puts his head in his hands, fearing the worst for the Aurora. Terrified that the storm will permanently disable the ship, or spill the remaining hydrium making flight impossible, Matt can hardly breathe. Kate asks him what he fears and in that moment he tells her what he has shared with no one so far. He tells her that if he stops, unhappiness will catch up to him. As soon as the weather allows, they head for the, Matt sick with anticipation. He expectations are correct. The ship has lost more hydrium, and is deflating, listing to one side. She looks beaten and Matt is stunned. He gives Kate the carpet bag and joins Baz and the others as they right the ship. Baz warns Matt that Marjorie is on the warpath again. Plans are made for an exploratory team the next day that the captain asks Matt to join and ideas are broached, both involving the use of cannibalized parts of the ship and the remaining hydrium to increase their chances of survival. Vlad assures them food is plentiful. Matt is put on water detail, and hauling back to the ship, he notices the sailmakers getting ready to cut the Aurora open. He imagines the gas escaping when they cut, hearing the hiss in his mind and smelling the heady mango scent when it suddenly dawns on him and he races to stop the crew from damaging his ship. Hydrium is plentiful, escaping in the cave he and Kate waited out the typhoon in. He tells the captain, who halts the work exclaiming that he feels lucky indeed to know such a remarkable cabin boy.



Chapter 13: Hydrium

Chapter 13: Hydrium Summary

The hydrium is more pure than what they were able to get from Lionsgate refineries, and the captain is very pleased. The next morning, Matt is part of the pipeline crew, unrolling the heavy tubing along the forest floor. It took until noon before they reached the cave and attached the hose to the collar the sailmakers had created. The pump is primed and started. Matt no sooner returns when Marjorie comes down the hall waving a bone in the air with Kate hot on her heels. As soon as they sit, Marjorie begins her tirade, insisting that Matt reveal where the bones came from. Kate tells her the bone where they found the bone, but Marjorie doesn't believe her. When questioned, Matt admits the same thing and Kate requests permission for another excursion. Marjorie insists that she will be confined until they leave the island. After they leave his office, the captain asks Matt to remain with the ship until they are ready to leave. Matt goes outside to check on the progress and is turned around when a flash occurs. Kate stands in her stateroom waving, and throws down a paper airplane with a note explaining she is locked in, and asking Matt to help. When Matt is reluctant, she sends another insisting they need pictures. Matt goes back inside to his duties wishing he could reconcile the two women in his life - Kate and the Aurora.

Chapter 13: Hydrium Analysis

At dinner, having come through with hydrium that will save them, Matt is hailed by the crew and given his favorite meal by Vlad. Embarrassed, he stares at his plate wishing they would go back to their meals. That night, after a mango scented nightmare, Matt lets himself into the projectionists booth and puts on a movie. He and Baz had done this together on occasion, too wound up to sleep. In the movie, Gilgamesh falls after Enkidu fails to hang on to his wrist, and the knowledge that his father had fallen to his death crept back up on him and while the movie continued to its end, Matt sat in tears, seeing none of it, and missing his father. The next morning, Matt helps to unravel the tubing through the forest to the cave. Baz told him that Miss Simpkins was keeping Kate confined to her room, and on some level Matt agrees with her strategy. It was a relief because he knew that if she asked, he would likely not have the strength to refuse her. Being on the ground was turning him into a weakling, he decides. Marjorie comes storming down the hallway waving a bone in her hands with Kate on her heels. She sees the captain, who asks Matt to join them in his office. Once there, she insists that Matt is behaving in an improper manner where Kate is concerned and that they should be kept apart for the remainder of their time on the island. The captain reminds her that without Matt, they would be living on the island indefinitely, but Marjorie is not to be placated so he gently suggests she continue her conversation with Kate in their quarters. They leave and detaining Matt, he strongly suggests that Matt remain with the ship until they are ready to leave. When Matt apologizes, the captain assures him that he would be first officer by now if he had his way.



Chapter 14: Nest and Chapter 15: Cloud Cat

Chapter 14: Nest and Chapter 15: Cloud Cat Summary

All night the ship fills and in the morning is floating again. Baz bursts into the room and tells him that Kate is missing. The captain is clearly annoyed as he instructs Matt and Baz to find Kate and return her to the ship. When they get to the bluff where they last saw the cloud cat, Baz notices that Kate has been blazing trees in order to find her way back. They begin calling out her name, and she answers from the top of a tree nearby. She refuses to leave until she gets the pictures she came for and points out the cloud cat's nest she discovered. Similar to the nests that squirrels build for winter, the cloud cat had instinctively created an all weather shelter. Bruce wants to see what they are looking at, but before he can put the spyglass up to his eye, the cloud arrives, landing in a nearby tree. Kate tries to grab her camera, but she disappears into the nest before Kate can get a decent shot. Bruce is stunned, staring at the direction the cloud cat went with his mouth open. They tell Bruce the rest and he begins to get carried away with the whole idea, telling Kate his father funds research of that kind, and has a keen interest in oddities such as this one. The phrase, and his overall attitude bother Matt, and he hopes that Kate will object at some point, but she doesn't - instead becoming carried away by the thought that the discovery will make her famous. Matt becomes agitated at the fact that they are disobeying a direct order, but Kate begs him to give her just a little time, promising him she has an idea to speed things up. On her way out, she had stolen a fish from the bunch caught by the cook, and plans to use it to lure the cloud cat out. She promises to be ready to go in half an hour, and Matt reluctantly agrees.

The fish smells so bad that Bruce does as well, after handling it. Finally, she ventures down, and they see her in all her glory for the first time. It is immediately obvious that she isn't meant for walking, as she nervously approaches the fish. When she reaches it, she opens her mouth and all thoughts that she is a shy cat vanish at the sight of her teeth. When it finishes, and looks up, Kate takes a photograph, but the click gives them away. Bruce loses his nerve, turns and runs. Seeing Bruce as prey, the cloud cat gives chase. Matt remembers Molloy writing that the sight of his spyglass seemed to frighten them, so he grabs the one from Kate and gives chase. Distracting the Cloud Cat, Matt tells Bruce to run, noticing his already injured leg. Bruce manages to get away, and Matt and Kate back up, leaving the camera behind despite Kate's initial objections. It leaps up into the trees and Matt knows they have just moments. Grabbing her hand, they race for what appears to be a field, hoping it won't follow once the trees thin.

Chapter 14: Nest and Chapter 15: Cloud Cat Analysis

In the morning, Baz bursts into the room and is clearly relieved to see Matt standing there. He tells her that during the night, Kate drugged her chaperone and somehow



managed to get out and is now missing. Matt knew she would likely head to the area she believed the cloud cat nested in and worries about her atrocious sense of direction until he discovers his compass missing and realizes that she has had it since their time in the cave, and he hadn't even noticed. On the way, Baz tells Matt how lucky he is to know what he wants to do with his life, and to love it so much. Matt doesn't understand, knowing that Baz is wealthy, and Baz explains the expectations his family has for him and his inability to live up to them. He apologizes for taking Matt's place as sailmaker, and tells Matt that if he could, he would transfer ships, but the bargain he made with his father was that he would serve two years on board the Aurora and quitting would be defeat. They finally find Kate in a tree where she has perched herself to wait for the return of the cloud cat. She is sitting where she has full view of the nest she'd found, and while they argue about the captain's orders to return immediately, the arguments are mute when the cloud cat returns, going into her nest in front of a stunned silent Bruce. Bruce tells Kate that his father would be interested in this find, and would likely fund an expedition to return. His excitement is obvious, and Matt feels himself being edged out by Lunardi again, and the idea makes him angry. He accuses them of being insensitive to the fact that by disobeying the captain's orders, they will only stand to cost him, not themselves. As people of money, their wealth insulated them from having to worry about their jobs, unlike Matt who would be in deep trouble if his job were to end. He threatens to carry Kate back to the ship, but Bruce sides with Kate, taking Matt's leverage away. He finally agrees to give Kate half an hour to try to lure it out into the open where she can get a good shot of it.

Matt worries about Kate's assumption that the cloud cat is benign in nature. When it comes into the clearing, and lands on the ground, Matt senses how wrong the ground is for it, and understands its discomfort. All his pity vanishes when she opens her mouth and reveals her teeth. Bruce is shaking and Kate is pale as all three of them realize how largely they underestimated the cloud cat and her nature. Only twelve feet away from them, they are all truly afraid. Bruce makes the mistake of running, giving the cloud cat something to chase. It runs him down, and has him pinned when Matt gives chase and distracts it. When the cloud cat's attention is diverted, Matt tells Bruce to run. Now, it turns its attention to Matt and Kate. They are forced to leave the camera behind and flee, hoping to reach a clearing before it overtakes them from above.



Chapter 16: Rescue

Chapter 16: Rescue Summary

They reach the clearing just in time to see a small airship. It takes Matt a moment to realize it is the pirate ship, but by then it is too late. They have already been spotted. Matt quickly makes up a story to explain their presence on the island, telling Kate as they go along, and reminding her to keep waving and smiling. Greeted by Crumlin first, Matt tells the story he concocted, and then repeats it for Szpirglas as he disembarks. Szpirglas introduces himself as Captain Anglesea, and claims to be from the Sky Guard, offering them a meal and shelter, claiming to be anxious to hear about their ordeal. Crumlin leads them to a large village where it is obvious the pirates have made their home base. On the wall in the lodge, Matt is horrified to spot the trophy head of a cloud cat and Crumlin takes pleasure in recounting the sport of his kill, telling them that over the years, they'd killed four or five of them. It explained why the cloud cats feared the spyglass, likely thinking it was a gun. Szpirglas tests Matt a dozen different ways, trying to trip him up without success as they sit there drinking the mango juice offered. They are served dinner, and though it was overdone, the pirates dug in with enthusiasm as did Matt and Kate who were starved. Matt realizes that the mango juice is spiked as he begins to get drunk. Szpirglas offers to telegram their families for them, but Matt knows he is more interested in Kate's pedigree. Then he sets them up in separate rooms for the night. Kate and Matt agree to meet at the edge of the forest where they had come out earlier, as soon as they are able to slip away.

Chapter 16: Rescue Analysis

When Matt first sees the airship, it takes a second or two to register who they are, but the dark ship without any markings is the same one that attacked the Aurora. He tries to pull Kate back into the forest, but she doesn't understand and by the time he manages to explain it to her, the pirates have already seen them. Now, Kate is reluctant, but Matt tells her if they run, they'll still have to deal with the cloud cat waiting in the trees at the edge of the forest, and will likely lead the pirates to the others. He quickly makes up a story, and rids himself of all Aurora insignias, hoping they won't be recognized. A plan forms in Matt's mind. He knows the Aurora will be ready to leave the next afternoon, and if they bide their time pretending to be castaways, they can sneak away in the night and return to the Aurora in time to leave with them. In a bizarre turn, Matt and Kate are taken to the pirates' village where their wives and children lived. It looked as though it had taken years to create the kingdom that Szpirglas had. Matt realizes that they will never let them escape. There is no chance that Szpirglas would take a chance on their home base being discovered. Over dinner, and with several helpings of spiked mango juice, Szpirglas tries to trip them up, even offering to contact their families to let them know that they are okay. Kate tells him that her father is the superintendent of police on the Hawaiian islands. Szpirglas sets them up in separate rooms for the night. They have

only a few minutes beforehand to agree on a plan to meet once everyone has fallen asleep and Matt only hopes that Kate doesn't fall asleep first.



Chapter 17: The Pit and Chapter 18: Ship Taken

Chapter 17: The Pit and Chapter 18: Ship Taken Summary

Matt is given a hammock he knows will be almost impossible to get out of it without waking Crumlin or Szpirglas, asleep on the floor at his feet. When he thinks they are both asleep he begins the journey across the room to the window. Another body is asleep outside on the veranda, but Matt gets past him also. Then he is free and heads for the clearing where he hopes Kate waits. He searches the area, and then decides to go back where he discovers her fast asleep. He wakes her, and opens the door to find Szpirglas on the other side. Now, he knows the Aurora is near, and assembles a search party to find it. Meanwhile, Matt and Kate are thrown into a pit. The only air that hasn't been pushed out by hydrium seepage is on the ground, and they lie there until Matt comes up with a plan to get them out. Using Kate's harem pants, he creates a balloon and fills it with the escaping gas which is so pure that it is strong enough to pull them both to the surface. He knew they couldn't rest, and had to reach the Aurora before the pirates found them and all was lost. After a moment of rest, Matt and Kate head through the trees to the Aurora. They pass the cave and find the hosing still attached, but no one is there. They hear someone coming and hide, watching one of Szpirglas' men run by. Kate tells Matt he is a scout, and will bring everyone back with him. The Aurora looks ready to launch when they get there, and Matt carefully circles the area. The Control Car is empty and then Matt sees Szpirglas in the window of the starboard passenger lounge.

Bruce whispers to him, and tells Matt he saw the whole thing happen. His leg is still bleeding from the cloud cat's bite and he looks ill. He heard a couple of gunshots and then one pirate left again - the scout that Matt and Kate had seen. They know they have limited time, and Kate is convinced that they must find a way to kill the pirates. She tells them all they have to do is get one separated from the others, and bash him over the head, taking his pistol. Then they can shoot the rest. They begin by climbing into the tail fin and from there into the auxiliary control room. Matt can see that the ship is ninety-nine percent fueled and airtight. Kate opens the bandage on Bruce's leg, revealing infection. Matt makes his way to the infirmary, making no noise on the catwalk in bare feet. He stops at his own room first to pick up the pass keys to the ship and then climbs through an access panel, crawling along it until he can look down into where the passengers are being held. Then he follows Szpirglas and Crumlin as they leave the room, learning that the rest will be there in only three hours, and that they plan to strip and scuttle the Aurora. He also learns that Vlad will be making lunch for the pirates. He gets what he needs from the infirmary, taking a bottle of the sleeping draft that Kate had used on Marjorie as well. Using the dumb waiter, Kate sends Matt down to the kitchen where he drops the sleeping elixir off with Vlad who empties the entire bottle into the



soup 'for flavor'. Then he sends Matt back down with a bowl of soup in his hands, but Kate is not in the room at the bottom when he gets there.

Chapter 17: The Pit and Chapter 18: Ship Taken Analysis

Szpirglas insists that Matt take the only hammock in the room, and Matt can't argue too strenuously without attracting attention to himself, so he tries to appear grateful and gets in. He waits for what seems like a long time, until he is sure they are asleep before he goes over his escape in his mind, all the while hoping that Kate hasn't fallen asleep. He reminds himself that he is lighter than air, and jumps from the doweling that secures the hammock to the window sill where he carefully and quietly opens it and slips outside, careful not to let it slam shut as he drops to the ground outside. Matt can't bring himself to leave Kate behind when he reaches the forest and she is not there. He goes back for her, finding her asleep in her bed, and when they open the door to make their escape, Szpirglas is waiting for them. He now knows with certainty that they are from the Aurora and assembles a group to search for her. Then he takes Matt and Kate to the pit where hydrium is seeping from the ground, and pushing out all oxygen. As he stands there, talking to them before putting them in, Matt realizes the truth of Molloy's last entry and the ship he had seen in the distance had been Szpirglas' airship. Szpirglas had killed Molloy. Crumlin shoves them into the pit and dropping some distance, he finally hits the ground below. Matt comes up with a brainstorm and using Kate's harem pants, creates a balloon to float them out of the pit. They lay gasping for a moment, and Matt realizes Kate is crying. Without thinking, he leans over and kisses her. She stops crying, and asks him to do it again, which he does without reservation. Kate admits that it is her first kiss from a boy. They hurry back to the Aurora only to discover it has already been found, and Szpirglas can clearly be seen in the passenger lounge window. The Control Car is empty.

Bruce calls out quietly from the forest, surprising Kate and Matt as he explains how he returned to the ship in time to see Szpirglas and his men take over. Kate is ready to kill them all, surprising Matt who tells her that he doesn't believe he can take a life - not even one as bad as Szpirglas. Bruce and Matt argue about who should be in charge, and Kate solves the debate by suggesting they simply get on board first. Once inside the tail fin, they make their way to the auxiliary control room and Matt leaves Kate and Bruce there while he goes to the infirmary for disinfectant, bandages, and whatever else he can find. He tries not to give in to the jealousy he feels at leaving them behind together, still enjoying the feeling he got when she slipped her hand into his and squeezing it, expressed her fear that something might happen to him. He stops to grab his keys, resisting the urge to climb into bed and pretend none of it ever happened. Fear and exhilaration keep him safe as he creeps around the ship he knows better than anyone else. His sense of direction, and knowledge of every nook and cranny of Aurora enable him to spy on the pirates, check on the passengers and crew, and get to the infirmary to pick up supplies for Bruce's injury and as an afterthought, a bottle of the sleeping elixir Kate used on Marjorie. Eight drops had rendered Marjorie unconscious.



Matt and Kate bandage Bruce's leg, give him some aspirin, and discuss his idea to take the ship up into the air before the other pirates return. They separate, Matt and Kate going to deliver the sleeping elixir and to begin taking lines off forward while Bruce begins aft. At first, Matt is worried that Vlad may not know what to do with it, but when he sees Vlad empty the entire bottle into the soup, he stops worrying. When the dumb waiter gets back down to where Matt left Kate, he is stunned to find she is no longer there.



Chapter 19: Airborne and Chapter 20: Airborn

Chapter 19: Airborne and Chapter 20: Airborn Summary

Kate is hiding in a cupboard, having heard someone coming down the corridor. Matt takes her to the starboard side to begin casting off lines. On their way back to the stern they see movement and realize the cloud cat is on the ship. She doesn't move as they continue to the auxiliary room where Bruce waits. They switch the controls from the main car to their room, and Matt hops out to release the final stern line. The first of the pirates arrives and Matt yells, 'Up ship!'. Unable to make it back to the ship in time, Matt grabs the stern line as it slithers past him. They start the engines and leave the small room to hide elsewhere. Two pirates see them and give chase and they run. Matt uses his keys to put distance between them and manages to lure them into position over the landing bay doors, opening them and decreasing the pirate count from eight to six. Matt feels the ship turning and realizes that Szpirglas wouldn't have eaten the soup, hating fish like he did. They decide to close off the fuel lines, stopping the engines. Matt and Kate get one engine shut down, and Kate heads for the second while Matt waits to make sure the engine stops. When it sputters, he heads up just as a pirate is coming down. Matt hurries out a hatch onto the ship itself, making his way to another hatchway in, and although he avoids the first pirate, Crumlin is waiting for him on the inside, holding onto Kate by one arm.

Matt notices the onset of the effects of the sleeping elixir coming over Crumlin. Rhino Hand lurches his way towards them and the Cloud Cat jumps down between them. Crumlin takes aim, and tries to shoot it, but his shot goes wide, hitting Rhino Hand instead. Matt pushes Rhino Hand off his feet while Crumlin fires and misses a second time. Matt grabs Kate by the hand as the Cloud Cat leaps for Crumlin. Matt and Kate run as the Cloud Cat amuses itself with Crumlin. They hurry to the port engine hoping Bruce is just having trouble shutting it down, but find him dead on the floor - a bullet wound in his skull. Matt tells Kate to run and hide in the cargo holds. Szpirglas himself is restarting the engines, and Matt tries to stop him, making a target of himself in the process. Furious, he follows Matt who get to the glass observation dome and hauls himself out onto the back of the ship. The forward hatch is open, and to Matt's surprise, the Cloud Cat jumps out onto the skin as well. With the Cloud Cat at one hatch and Szpirglas at the other, Matt is trapped in the middle and death seems imminent. Angry, Szpirglas pushes Matt off the back of the ship and he falls toward the stern face first. He manages to grab a strut between the fin and elevator flaps, holding on as his momentum comes to a halt. Matt can see Szpirglas looking down at him, and behind him the Cloud Cat jumps from Aurora's back. Slowly, it manages to gain control and begins to fly. Seeing the miracle unfold in front of him, Matt no longer fears his own death. Szpirglas comes after Matt, trying to kick his hands loose, but Matt holds on, and



swings his legs out to kick Szpirglas' feet out from under him. He manages to grab the rope again and is headed for Matt when the Cloud Cat flies by, along with dozens of others, all headed for the island. Szpirglas turns to look, seeing Matt's expression of wonder and joy. One of them veers off and hits Szpirglas, knocking him off the ship. As he falls, he becomes a plaything for the rest of them, biting and tossing him about, feeding off him as he falls. Matt can see that the Aurora is too low and will hit the island. He manages to stagger his way to the Control Car, finding it empty and stands there, staring at the controls. In his mind, he hears the captain telling him to take her up five degrees, and he does so, instinctively knowing just how steep the climb needed to be. He turns the ship gently and the captain gives him the heading required. It takes a moment for Matt to realize that the voice he hears is no longer in his head. He puts a hand on Matt's shoulder, telling him that Kate filled them in and asks if the others are taken care of. Matt tells him they are, and the captain tells him he was born to fly without question.

Chapter 19: Airborne and Chapter 20: Airborn Analysis

When Matt and Kate have cast off the lines and are on the way back, they come across the cloud cat crouched in the keel catwalk ahead of them. Matt wonders if the smell of fish soup had lured it aboard. Between the three of them, they manage to release most of the lines holding Aurora. The stern line is the last one and Matt hops out and races across the beach to release it. When he sees the pirate reinforcements coming, he calls out to Bruce, telling him to take the ship up. Bruce does so, and Matt runs but isn't able to reach the ship before it is out of range. At the last moment, as the stern line snakes past him, he grabs it and manages to climb it up to the ship. Matt is anxious to get the ship high enough that the pirates on the ground can't climb aboard the way he did, so he dumps ballast and the ship jumps up in response. When their ears begin popping with the speed of the lift, Bruce vents gas to balance their ascent. They leave the auxiliary control room as planned, but are spotted by two pirates before they can hide elsewhere. They give chase and Matt manages to eliminate two of the pirates by opening the cargo doors as they stand on top of them. Now, only six remain. The ship begins to turn, and Matt realizes that Szpirglas has control again. They hurry to close fuel lines off, thereby stopping the engines. Before they manage to fully accomplish their task, Crumlin catches both Matt and Kate.

Crumlin's eyes lose focus for a moment, and Matt begins to hope that they can get away again. Rhino Hand approaches, but is in even worse shape than Crumlin, and neither registers the fact that the Cloud Cat has landed between them for a moment. Crumlin sees it first and is determined to shoot her but his vision and reflexes are dulled and he misses. His shot hits Rhino Hand in the neck and a push from Matt is enough to knock him over. The Cloud Cat launches itself at Crumlin, perhaps remembering him from the island and plays with him for a bit, jumping in and out of range and doing considerable damage each time. Matt and Kate head for the port engine to check on Bruce, and are horrified to find him dead on the floor, a gunshot wound to his head. He had been shot from close range. Szpirglas is trying to restart the engines and Matt sends Kate to hide before attempting to lock Szpirglas outside between the hatches, but



he is not quick enough, and Szpirglas bullies his way back in. Matt does the only thing he can against a gun - he runs. He has the advantage over Szpirglas, knowing every inch of the Aurora and all the places a person can hide. He goes up into the rigging, and furious, Szpirglas follows, leaving Matt no where to go but the crow's nest. Out of the observation dome, Matt is stymied for a moment, unsure which way to go. The forward hatch is already open, and to Matt's astonishment, the Cloud Cat comes out. Szpirglas is on his way out of the rear hatch, pinning Matt between the Cloud Cat and himself. Szpirglas pushes him off the back of the ship, and he barely grabs the tail fin but still Szpirglas won't stop, convinced that unless he sees Matt die, he will have to deal with him again. Matt has no fear, and is filled with wonder as he sees the Cloud Cat jump from the ship, ungainly at first, but then she begins to fly. The air is full of Cloud Cats, all headed for the island, and he stares at them in awe. Seeing the look on his face, Szpirglas turns and is knocked from the ship by a passing Cloud Cat. Caught by surprise, he is unable to grab the safety line and begins to fall to the ocean below. The Cloud Cats follow, taking bites out of him and tossing him between them. Using the safety line that Szpirglas had used, Matt manages to return to the ship in time to realize that they are going to crash into the mountain on the island. He races to the Control Car, using strength and speed he had no idea he still had. Once there, he stands in front of the controls, hearing the captain's voice in his mind. He lifts and turns the ship gently from danger, surprised to find the captain standing behind him. Proud, the captain gives Matt a heading and leaves him to pilot the ship alone, acknowledging again that Matt was born to fly.



Chapter 21: At Anchor

Chapter 21: At Anchor Summary

The Cloud Cat exhibit is busy and it takes a while for Matt to make his way to Kate. They go out to the terrace and Kate asks him how he is enjoying Paris. The reward they'd gotten for helping capture the pirates was enough to send Matt to the Academy. There was even enough money remaining to look after his mother and sister. They have tea and catch up, watching overhead as the Aurora docks, fully refitted with new engines and outer skin. They talk about the Aurora, the pirates, and remember Bruce. Kate tells him she is going back to the island and offers to take Matt along. At her request, he describes again how their Cloud Cat rejoined her flock. He tells her about Baz's upcoming marriage to which he will stand up as best man and she reveals that her parents have decided to let her attend university. He tells her that Paris would be a grand place to study, and she agrees to give it careful consideration. Pleased, he takes her hand and they watch the Aurora lift off.

Chapter 21: At Anchor Analysis

Matt stops in to see the Cloud Cat exhibit, amazed at the number of people who are there, and somewhat taken aback by the presentation and demeanor of Kate, now in her element. The skeleton of the Cloud Cat was carefully assembled, and even it looks proud and poised on its stand. Kate approaches and they talk, but to Matt, the conversation is strained. He resists the urge to hug her like he did on the island, and remembers their kiss. Despite his initial nervousness, after a few minutes, they are able to relax in each others company the way they used to. They talk about the island, and Kate expresses her interest in returning, inviting Matt to join her. He tells her about the Academy, and agrees that he is beginning to get his land legs, although he still prefers the sky, and fervently hopes that there will be an opening on the Aurora when his education is finished. Kate seems convinced that the Captain would make room for him. Matt sees the Aurora, newly refitted, land and Kate tells him she will be furthering her education as soon as she can. Matt plans to attend Baz's wedding, acting as best man, and suggests that Kate join the university in Paris. She promises to consider it as they stand, hand in hand, and watch the Aurora lift off.



Characters

Mr. Matt Cruse

Matt Cruse is the crow's nest watchman on the Aurora, and holds the official title of cabin boy, but has been promised a position as an apprentice sailmaker as soon as one comes available. Matt's home is in Lionsgate City. He has two sisters. Isabel, who was growing up with a definite fondness for musical instruments of all kinds, and Sylvia, who is almost twelve and beginning to think of herself as a young woman. All his life, he'd wanted to fly - towards his father and away from his mother. Allowed only a few possessions, Matt's most prized included the eight books his father had taken with him when he sailed aboard the Aurora.

When he sleeps aboard the Aurora, he often dreams of his father, long dead. He and his father fly the skies together without encumbrances of body, often alongside the Aurora, but not always. In the skies is the only place that Matt feels close to his father, but guilt keeps him from telling his mother any of this. Matt and the Aurora are only two nights out of Sidney, and Mr. Cruse in the crow's nest when he first sights the hot air balloon 'Endurance' running without its running lights. He aids in pulling it and it's unconscious pilot into the Aurora. A year later, Matt meets Kate de Vries, the granddaughter of the balloon pilot who died before the Aurora reached its port. She lures Matt into an adventure of discovery with her grandfather's journal, and retracing his path, they find the strange creatures he describes with such clarity. In a trip that is fraught with danger, and includes pirates, and a crash landing, Matt and Kate become close friends and co-founders of the creature they call 'Cloud Cat'.

Miss Kate de Vries

At approximately fifteen years of age, Kate de Vries has long, mahogany colored hair, and bright eyes that take in her surroundings with interest. She is accompanied by a chaperone - Miss Marjorie Simpkins - who travels with her in the place of her parents. She is well mannered, and obviously well heeled - a fact confirmed by the fact that they are booked into a premier stateroom. Kate is as stubborn as she is strong, and fears little. She is adventurous, curious, and has a scientific mind much like her grandfather, Benjamin Molloy, who died in his hot air balloon after discovering and documenting the first recorded sightings of the creature who would later be dubbed a 'Cloud Cat'.

Kate follows in her grandfather's footsteps, hoping to find the creatures he describes in his journal, and in a wild coincidence happens to book passage on the very airship that tried to rescue her grandfather a year earlier. She meets Matt, and soon discovers that he was not only the one who first spotted her grandfather's balloon, but was also instrumental in rescuing him, although he perished soon after. Molloy mentions the creatures to Matt, but his comments mean nothing until Kate shows him the journal he kept where the creatures are described, and hand drawn over and over. When their



airship, the Aurora, crashes after an encounter with pirates, Kate and Matt realize that they are on the very island her grandfather so carefully described. They look for and find an entire skeleton as well as a live example of the creature, and Kate becomes famous when she returns with a complete skeleton. The discovery paves the way for Kate to attend University, and for Matt to attend the Academy while still supporting his mother and sisters.

Cloud Cats

Appearing similar to large albatross in the distance, the creatures possess a plumage that is a cloud white color enabling them to fly virtually unseen through the skies. They are curious creatures, easily six feet or more in length. Instead of feathers, they have fur and it's forelegs are similar to bat wings in that they turn into wings with a single claw at the leading edge of the wing. Their wing span is estimated at between eight and nine feet across and they have stubby rear legs with curved, sharp claws. The creatures are incredibly agile and the wings appear to be unusually versatile. They seem to be able to float on the air itself, so light that they needed move their wings, and able to sleep in that manner, aloft. They also have large incisors, and intelligent looking eyes that are flecked with green. They give birth while airborne, climbing to dizzying heights and then simply birthing their baby in the air, following it down and monitoring it as it learns to fly while falling.

The skeleton that Matt and Kate find is still clinging to the tree in which it died. It had collapsed on itself, and has a skeletal system similar to that of a bat. The lower bones appear to be wings with long, thin, finger like bones at the end. The creature is large, and its bones are porous to make them light enough to enable flight, with a wing span they estimate to be nine or ten feet in length. The breastbone has a keel of sorts to hold the ribs together and strengthen the wings. It clearly has five separate metacarpals, unlike birds. It has a long tail, and no beak. The Cloud Cat is like a combination of bat, panther and bird of prey.

Captain Walken

Captain Walken is the captain of the Aurora. He has the kind of personality that immediately makes you feel as though you can trust him with your life. He has a well trimmed beard and mustache, steady, kind looking eyes and curly gray hair. He is nearing sixty years of age, and though his frame isn't particularly large, he has an imposing presence - one that makes you feel safe when he is around.

Walken hires Matt Cruse to be the cabin boy after Matt's father dies, having fallen from the Aurora to his death. Matt feels more at home on the Aurora than he does anywhere else, and has come to think of the crew as his family. Walken can see the potential in Matt, and intends to promote him as soon as a position comes available.



Walken is the captain of the watch when Mr. Cruse sights the hot air balloon from the crow's nest. He calmly and competently rescues the pilot of the balloon, Benjamin Molloy, and his strength is a calming influence on all who fly under him.

Bruce Lunardi

At seventeen or eighteen years of age, Bruce is as handsome as a matinee star. His jacket collar sports junior sailmaker insignias on each corner and stamped right into the fabric is a small steering wheel in gold. His father, Otto Lunardi owns the Aurora and several other airships. As a result, when Bruce fails to adequately establish himself as the heir apparent to his father's fortune, his father consigns him to the Aurora for a two year period. Otto promises Bruce that if after two years he hasn't carved out a niche for himself on the Aurora, he will allow him to pursue any other business opportunity of his choice.

When Bruce comes aboard the Aurora, he discovers how his presence usurped the position that was promised to Matt. Though he apologizes, he is unable to change the circumstances. After the Aurora is attacked by pirates and crash lands, Bruce is assigned to help Matt find Kate who had gone in search of the Cloud Cat they had seen the day before. When they find her, she has already discovered its nest and in an effort to photograph it, Bruce is attacked and bitten. The wound is deep and becomes infected over night, but it doesn't stop Bruce from helping Matt and Kate to regain control of the Aurora after pirates take her over. Bruce is shot and killed when he is caught shutting off the fuel to the engines to stop the pirates from returning to the island for reinforcements.

Miss Marjorie Simpkins

A woman of no more than thirty years of age, she has fierce and striking features. Marjorie is the paid chaperone for Miss Kate de Vries. She is a stoic, inflexible woman who does not trust her charge. Simpkins likes attention, and often feigns headaches to ensure she is pampered and excused from any strenuous activities when she would prefer to be excluded. When Kate repeatedly defies her, going ashore and disappearing into the island woods on more than one occasion, she tries to confine her to their quarters but Kate is not that easily dissuaded. Kate uses her own sleeping draft against her, drugging her unconscious so that she can escape again. Eventually, Simpkins and Kate reach an understanding, and Kate gains a little freedom.

Benjamin Molloy (Balloon Pilot)

Looking to be somewhere in his fifties, he is unconscious in the wicker gondola when they find him. He has a face that under his whiskers appears to be all nose and cheekbones, with lips that have seen too much wind and not enough water. He is a handsome gentleman. Having tried to circumnavigate the globe, Benjamin has pneumonia, and two days prior to being found had a heart seizure as well. Now, seriously dehydrated, it is unlikely he will survive.



Vikram Szpirglas

A handsome man, Vikram has a high forehead, curly hair and large eyes. He is a handsome man and his likeness has been in newspapers around the world. Wearing dark pants and black riding boots and coat, he looks as though he could have just returned from a ride at some nobleman's estate. He is suave and deliberate, but firm in his requests, assuring the Captain that cooperation would ensure no one come to harm. He has a son named Theodore.

Mr. Pieter Riddihoff

Pieter is a third officer and is Matt's relief shift for the crow's nest. Pieter is still a junior enough officer that he is required to take shifts in the crow's nest.

Paul Rideau

First officer on the Aurora, Paul is a very good pilot. He has blue eyes and his face is long and pale. His nose is often red and he frequently sounds plugged up when he talks. This may or may not have something to do with the fact that he always looks ready to sigh in annoyance.

Doctor Halliday

Ship's doctor on the Aurora.

Luc Bayard

Wireless operator on board the Aurora.

Mr. Torbay

Navigator on the Aurora.

Baz Hilcock

Baz is Matt's cabin mate. He is the kind of person who is always in a good mood and has a great sense of humor. Baz is eighteen years of age, and comes from Australia. He has a sweetheart who waits for him in Sydney and during his upcoming month of shore leave, he intends to propose to her. Baz invites Matt to be his best man.



Chef Vlad Herzog

Chef aboard the Aurora, he has been described as volatile in the kitchen. Vlad has a Transylvanian accent and has been working as the Aurora's chef for all of the three years that Matt has been on board.

Jack Mobius

The young man behind the bar who works the afternoon shift in the lounge.

Mr. Kahlo

The rudder-man for the Aurora.

Sir Hugh Snuffler

The person who signed the letter sent to Kate from the Zoological Society regarding the findings of her grandfather.

Mr. Grantham

Navigation officer on the Aurora

Mr. Chaudhuri

Assistant radio man who tries to repair the damage done to the Aurora's communications after they land on the island.

Mr. Levy

Chief sailmaker on board the Aurora.

Crumlin

One of the eight pirates who board the Aurora, Crumlin is a large brute of a man.

Rhino Hand

One of the pirates who boards the Aurora with Szpirglas, he has a British accent and appears to fancy himself to be a dandy of sorts. His hair is greased and he carries a carbine although one handed he can barely fit his thick finger into the trigger loop.



Theodore Szpirglas

Vikram's only child, Theodore is looked after in the village by Delilah. He is an intelligent young boy who's mother died in childbirth, according to Vikram. He is polite and obedient, and will likely be as handsome as his father when he grows up.



Objects/Places

Aurora

Name of one of many airships, the Aurora is headed by Captain Walken. It sails about eight hundred feet above the Pacificus and has a crow's nest that is located one hundred and fifty feet above the Control Car, suspended from Aurora's belly. The Control Car has huge wraparound windows, but set back from the bow the way that it is, the visibility high and overhead is limited. As such, there is always someone on duty in the nest. Fully provisioned, she weighs a staggering two million pounds and is nine hundred feet from end to end - and is fourteen stories in height. Once filled with hydrium, however, it takes only two men to move her out of the hanger.

Pacificus

Name of the ocean we know as the Pacific.

Control Car

Suspended one hundred and fifty feet below the Aurora's belly.

Lionsgate City

Destination of the Aurora when she first sights the seemingly adrift hot air balloon.

Shooting Star

Competition between Baz and Matt to see who can spot the most shooting stars in the season. So far, Matt is in the lead by twelve stars.

Constellations

Star groupings that Matt's father told him stories about, including Orion, Lupus, Serpens, Draco, Hercules and others.

Skyways Law

The law established that makes it illegal to ignore another vessel in distress or adrift.



Cloud Cat

The creatures that Molloy described and that Kate is searching for. It looks like an albatross and a skeletal system similar to that of a bat.

Hydrium Gas

What the cells contain that enable air ships to go aloft, hydrium gas is lighter than helium and hydrogen. It has a smell that resembles that of mangoes.

Titania

Air ship bound for Paris.

Arctic Star

Air ship with destinations including Yellowknife, Godthab, SanktPeterburg, and Arkhangel.

Orient Express

Air ship recently arriving from Constantinople.

Sydney

Five days from Lionsgate City across the Pacificus by air ship.

Ornithopter (Nimbus 638)

Often called mosquitoes because of the whine of their engines and their small size, they are ungainly in flight with feathered wings that flap on a heavier than air craft. This one buzzes around Aurora as she is leaving for Sydney, bearing two passengers who missed the lift off.

Topkapi Stateroom

The stateroom where Kate de Vries and her chaperone Marjorie Simpkins are staying, it is aptly named after a sultan's palace in Constantinople. It is also the only room on board Aurora that boasts a bathtub instead of just a shower.



Compass

Given to Matt by his father on his tenth birthday, it is inscribed with the words, "From one sailmaker to another", and he carries it with him always. It has a hinged lid and is made of brass and glass. When Matt had still been at home, he used to let it find north and then track his father based on where he was at the time. When he died three years earlier, Matt had stopped looking at it. His father couldn't be reached now.

Airship Academy

Where anyone can train to receive certification for airship positions regardless of whether or not they have ever even been up in the air.

Island

Located at 171°43'W, 2°21'N, the island is a cone shaped, tropical island with a green lagoon behind which a crescent shaped beach lay. Beyond the beach, the island is densely forested. This is the island found by Benjamin Molloy on his last journey, where he first sighted the strange new creatures. It is the same island that the Aurora becomes shipwrecked on and strands the passengers for several days.

Mount Mataurus

One of the volcanic mountains of the Hawaiiis, it erupts as the Aurora passes by.

The Very Longe Poeme Of The Venerable Mariner

A poem Matt recalls as on of many stories that told of the bad luck a mariner would face if they harmed an albatross in any way.

Albatross

Large sea bird that landed nearly on the crow's nest of the Aurora, and that Matt thought was likely what Kate's grandfather saw.

Wolfram Gala

The affair at which Kate de Vries had previously met Bruce Lunardi.



Projectionists Booth

Where Matt and sometimes Baz would go when they couldn't sleep.

Gilgamesh

The movie Matt watches alone the night before they fill the ship with hydrium on the island.

Pegasus

The name of the ship Matt claims he and Kate had been shipwrecked from when Szpirglas discovers them on his island.

Astrolabe

The gift that Szpirglas brings home for his son, having taken it from the Aurora's display case earlier.



Themes

Seeing Is Believing

As populated as the Earth has become, we who inhabit it tend to think that we already know all there is to know about the planet and the creatures who reside on it. Although there is some room for discovery in the insect world or perhaps even the avian world, no one imagines that a large creature such as Cloud Cats could go undiscovered for so long. Part of their ability to remain hidden exists in their camouflage. Spending most of their time in the air, Cloud Cats are almost invisible to those on land or at sea, having the same color as the clouds in the sky.

The first one to realize that Cloud Cats exist is Benjamin Molloy, a hot air balloon pilot who left Cape Town in an effort to circumnavigate the globe. After passing over Australia, the winds push him off course and he carefully documents his adventure. When he first sees the creatures, he is awestruck by their grace, their beauty, and agility in the air. They are curious, and seemingly intelligent, and Molloy spends a great deal of time watching and documenting their behavior. Despite his careful notes, and drawings, and his attention to detail, the existence of these creatures is ignored. Molloy's information is considered to be the work of an addled mind, sick and likely hallucinating the entire event.

As such, when Kate retraces her grandfather's trip, she is determined not to make the same mistake. When she and Matt discover the skeletal remains of one Cloud Cat, she insists on taking it home with her. Carefully numbering and labeling each bone as it is taken from its final resting place, she manages to reconstruct it when she returns home. Despite now overwhelming evidence of their existence, many scientists still refuse to believe and stubbornly avoid the debut.

Duty vs Discovery

Matt Cruse is a cabin boy aboard the Aurora who thinks of the ship and her crew as his family. His love for the ship and the time he spends in the air is comparable to nothing else. Part of that is because his father lost his life while working on the very same ship, and something about being aboard her makes Matt feel as though he hasn't lost his father at all. In fact, when he is in the air on Aurora, he often has vivid dreams of his father in which they fly together unaided by ship or propulsion of any kind. As he never dreams of his father while on land, being on land becomes more and more difficult for him. Matt's life is close to perfect until the day that Kate de Vries and her chaperone board.

Kate's grandfather discovers an entirely new species while attempting to circumnavigate the earth in his hot air balloon, and Kate is determined to retrace his steps and find them, in the process restoring her grandfather's reputation and good name in the



scientific community. She ropes Matt into helping her using both her feminine wiles and his sense of duty against him. Her stubborn refusal to let the issue go causes Matt to be late for the very first time in his tenure aboard the Aurora. Her ongoing insistence that she retrieve the skeleton they found, and then a photograph of the live one they saw gets Matt into trouble over and over again. When she escapes on her own, having drugged her chaperone, the captain is more than just a little relieved to find Matt is still on board the ship. Matt comes to think of Kate and the Aurora as the two women in his life that are pulling him in opposite directions, but Kate's determination pays off. The discovery they share enables her to attend university, and allows Matt the financial freedom to attend the Academy while still supporting his mother and sisters.

Education and Status vs Experience and Service

In this story, as is in our life today, education and status often play a role in the kind of employment a person is able to get. It is a common misconception that an education, or relationship with someone in the hierarchy of a business will breed a better employee than the person who is not formally educated but has the benefit of experience on the job or in a related field, and has put time in. In the case of the educated applicant, a business owner may choose to believe that an education from an institute will better prepare a prospective employee to serve than an employee who is already part of the rank and file. This, of course, is not always the case. This story exemplifies favoritism when the owner of the fleet insists that his son Bruce be given a two year tenure on the Aurora as a sailmaker's apprentice. While Academy educated, Bruce has no practical experience, and is unprepared for the challenges that face them in flight. Matt, who has only the education he has gleaned from his time on board the Aurora, and as cabin boy was promised the next promotion that came available, is a far better candidate for the position. Not only is he able to maneuver himself about the rigging as though born to it, he is also displayed an avid interest in positions other than his own. Matt has spent countless hours in the Control Car, watching and learning, and participating whenever allowed, as well as learning to read charts, and plot a course. Matt, despite his missing formal education, is the candidate with the most skill, and highest aptitude for the job offered. Despite this, Bruce is given the position, and while determined to succeed, is clearly uncomfortable with a great deal of what the job entails. Education and status have little bearing on the ability a person has to accomplish a given task, providing the task is not that of a doctor/surgeon or similar such profession where schooling is a prerequisite.



Style

Point of View

"Airborn" by Kenneth Oppel is a fictional tale written entirely in the first person perspective and solely from the perspective of the main character, Mr. Matt Cruse. Matt is a cabin boy with dreams of becoming a pilot of the airship Aurora one day. At fourteen years of age, he considers the helium filled airship to be his home, and in fact is comfortable no where else. It is important that this story is told by Matt as he is central to several issues that play out in the course of the story. To begin with, in the opening chapter Matt is the person who was on duty in the crow's nest and is the first to notice Benjamin Molloy's hot air balloon drifting above them. Matt's familiarity with the ship and the fact that climbing around the rigging comes as second nature to him makes him a perfect candidate to help haul the empty balloon and its incapacitated pilot on board. Benjamin Molloy suffered a heart attack that would prove to be fatal but not before he reveals his amazement and wonder regarding something he saw in the air. His death and the journal he kept would be the catalyst that brings his granddaughter aboard the same airship one year later almost to the day. Matt is instrumental in helping Kate and her chaperone coordinate the last minute mid air transfer to the Aurora, and Kate soon learns that it was Matt who came to her grandfather's aid. She shows him the journal her grandfather kept, and her determination to find the creature her grandfather so carefully documents will be the source of much of Matt's frustration in the coming days. As a result of the Aurora being robbed and damaged by pirates, she crash lands on the very same island Kate's grandfather described. Kate immediately corrals Matt into accompanying her for a walk in the forest so that she can search for evidence of its existence. Matt is reluctant to leave his ship, and his duties, but also taken with the young lady who is so determined. Matt's unerring sense of direction helps Kate find her way, and later helps direct others back to a cave where hydrium is seeping from a natural ground seam. Matt is gently chastised twice for leaving the area immediately around the ship, and ignores Kate's pleas for help after the second time, so she escapes her chaperone to search for the creature herself. Matt is one of two people sent to find her, and his distance from the ship is likely their salvation. Stumbling into the pirate's encampment, they must pretend to be shipwrecked alone on the island, and later must rescue the Aurora and all aboard from pirate invasion and certain death. Matt's knowledge and love of the ship enables him to take it into the air, and play hide and seek with the pirates who are on board until they can be overcome.

Setting

"Airborn" by Kenneth Oppel is set in a time and place that could have been. Most of the story takes place either on board the airship Aurora, or on the island where Benjamin Molloy first sees the Cloud Cats, and where the pirates have created their township. The story begins with the Aurora in flight. The reader is introduced to the main character, Matt Cruse, and his love for the ship and flying is briefly explained. Matt spies



a derelict hot air balloon above them, and helps to pull the basket and its near dead pilot aboard. Throughout the story, Matt is referred to as the boy who is lighter than air, and his prowess in the rigging would seem to support his nickname. The rescue is a tricky one that has Matt dangling in space, but he does so without fear - lighter than air. The story jumps forward one year, and Molloy's granddaughter boards as a passenger, arriving so late that she and her chaperone are forced to transfer to the ship in the air. Again, Matt is instrumental. Kate is in search of the wonderful creatures described in her grandfather's journal, and enlists Matt's help repeatedly throughout the story. When an encounter with pirates has them crash landing on an island beach, Kate is amazed to realize it is the island her grandfather wrote about. Several days are spent on the island. Matt and Kate run into the pirates again after they stumble on their landing site while trying to escape an angry Cloud Cat. The pirates are accommodating, feeding and providing shelter until Matt and Kate try to escape and return to the Aurora to warn them. Matt and Kate will be a fearsome opposition to the pirates on board the Aurora, and will help put the ship back into the hands of the captain. When they reach their destination, Lionsgate City, they are able to direct authorities back to the pirate's island, and are rewarded as a result. Both Matt and Kate have aspirations to be going to school, and the reward is enough to ensure that happens. The story ends with Matt in the Academy in Paris, and Kate touring with the Cloud Cat skeleton, and harboring intentions to also attend University in Paris.

Language and Meaning

Written in primarily regular English language, "Airborn" by Kenneth Oppel also contains a language all its own. This fantasy takes place in what could be current day, but the author envisions a much different Earth in some ways. As such, he brings new language and equipment to the story. For example, instead of airplanes for transportation as is the case in our lives now, "Airborn" contains a world in which the airliner was never invented. Instead, air transportation is done by airships kept aloft with a gas called 'hydrium'. When landing, the airships require a ground crew of up to two hundred people to fasten the mooring lines. The Earth is much the same, excepting that in this world not all of the oceans or their islands have been explored or documented. The airship Aurora leaves Lionsgate City, and is bound for Australia. With provisions, cargo and passengers, the Aurora weighs in at over two million pounds, carrying hundreds of pounds of water to act as a ballast. Another machine in Airborn is called an Ornithopter which is a variation of a helicopter that relies on flapping, feathered wings for lift, and are nicknamed mosquitoes for the noise they make. On their voyage, after being attacked by air pirates, they find themselves temporarily stranded on an island where they discover the creatures they name 'Cloud Cats' because of their ability to fly and their facial resemblance to a large cat. The story is supported by the usual laws of gravity, nature and aeronautics.

Structure

"Airborn" by Kenneth Oppel is between 269 and 432 pages in length depending on the version that is being read. It is divided into three sections. The first section contains only one chapter which is not labeled separately, although the second and third sections are. In the electronic version, the first chapter/section is twenty pages in length. This section introduces the main character, Matt Cruse, and gives the reader some insight as to who he is. While on watch in the crow's nest of the airship Aurora, Matt sees a derelict hot air balloon, its pilot incapacitated, and is instrumental in the rescue effort that follows. This segment sets up the story line for the segments that follow.

The second segment in the electronic version goes from pages 21 through to and including page 248 and contains chapters 2 through 20. Titled 'One Year Later', the story follows Kate de Vries as she retraces her grandfather's trip (the hot air balloon pilot) in an effort to find the creatures he documents in his journal before his death. This section details how the Aurora comes to crash land on the very island Kate is seeking, and reveals the truth behind the elusive air pirates that plague the area and the creature they dub a Cloud Cat that stops there during its migration.

The third segment, titled 'Six Months Later' contains only one chapter as well. Titled 'At Anchor', the final and 21st chapter is 8 pages in length and reveals how the events affected the main character and Kate and a peek into what their future might hold.



Quotes

"Mr. Cruse, I look at you, and of all the men, you're the one who shows not the slightest hint of fear." Chp 1, Pg. 12

Captain Walken to Matt Cruse as he makes a decision about who to send across to the gondola of the hot air balloon strapped to a davit.

"It's on account of your late arrival that you see this part of the ship at all." Chp 2, Pg. 32
Matt to Miss Simpkins as she loudly complains about the grilled metal floor that she is having trouble traversing as a result of the high heeled shoes she is wearing which keep getting caught in the grating.

"The man in the balloon, was my grandfather." Chp. 3, Pg. 44
Statement made by Kate de Vries as Matt takes her on a tour of the ship Aurora.

"Said her tea tasted like a fish had bathed in it." Chp 4, Pg. 53
Jack Mobius to Matt as Matt replaces him behind the bar in the lounge, referring to and warning him about Miss Simpkins - the woman with the 'scary hair'.

"Every year there are hundreds of unsubstantiated sightings of monstrous creatures in land, air, and sea, and we felt it is our duty as men of science to gently remind you that your grandfather was not trained, and in his state of health, he may have suffered additional deficiencies of observation..." Chp 5, Pg. 67
Comments sent to Kate in response to the letter she had written to the Zoological Society regarding the findings of her grandfather.

"This is as scandalous a breach of aeronautical law as I've ever encountered." Chp 6, Pg. 76
Captain Walken to Szpirglas after he and his pirates forcibly board the Aurora.

"In case you hadn't noticed, we've been boarded by pirates, had one of our crew murdered, and crash-landed on a desert island no one knows exists." Chp 8, Pg. 100
Matt to Kate, exasperated with her cheery demeanor and feeling out of sorts.

"Really, it seems hard to imagine you bringing me back unless I cooperated." Chp 9, Pg 102
Kate to Matt when Matt threatens to forcibly see her back to the ship as the captain instructed.

"I'm wondering if maybe your parents paid the pirates to sink our ship." Chp 11, Pg. 130
Matt to Kate, jokingly as they talk about family and how her parents feel about her.

"We're just going to disappear nice and easy into the forest." Chp 15, Pg. 179
Matt to Kate after they realize that the cloud cat is not a benign and shy animal from whom they have nothing to fear.



"If it weren't for Mr. Cruse here, I'd surely have perished." Chp 16, Pg. 188
Kate to Szpirglas as she helps Matt concoct the story of their ship wreck.

"You might give some thought to working for us, now that your own ship has been lost."
Chp 17, Pg. 198
Szpirglas to Matt after they are 'rescued' by the pirates.

"If the pirates spot us, they'll kill us without blinking." Chp 18, Pg. 211
Matt to Kate and Bruce as they discuss what to do after Szpirglas takes over the Aurora.

"You were born to it, Mr. Cruse, no question." Chp 20, Pg. 248
Captain to Matt after Matt saves the Aurora from crashing into the island.

"This is not an opportunity you want to squander." Chp 21, Pg. 253
Kate to Matt as they discuss his Academy education.



Topics for Discussion

Why is Matt determined to stay aboard the Aurora? What links him to the ship? What effects does he suffer from when he is on the ground?

What phrase or nickname is consistently associated with or used to describe Matt Cruse? When and where does Matt learn that it is not exactly true? What circumstances bring about this realization?

Who are the two women in Matt's life (as he sees it)? What conflict does he have with the two of them and why are they seemingly at odds with each other?

What do Matt and Kate discover on the island? How do they find it? What is the significance of this particular island? What impact does the item they find have on Matt? What is the impact on Kate? How do they differ and why?

What happened to Benjamin Molloy? What do Matt and Kate learn about his last day? Who mistakenly lets this information slip and where? In what context is this information given to them?

Why do Matt and Kate pretend to be sole survivors on the island? What is Matt counting on when he first realizes who their rescuers are? In reality, what are Matt and Kate needing rescue from?

Who is responsible for the crash landing of the Aurora? What does the airship lose that makes it impossible to fly? How is their supply replenished, and where is the new supply located? How do they manage to get it aboard? What circumstances had to be just right in order for this resupply to occur?

Why doesn't Matt get the promotion he was promised, and deserved? Who is promoted in his place? Why is this person given preference? What circumstances led to this person being consigned to the Aurora? What are the details of the deal he made and with whom?

Who manages to rescue the ship from the pirates who take control of it? What steps does this group take to ensure that the Aurora is not boarded by the pirate's reinforcements? When the Aurora lifts off from the island, who is on board that does not belong?

What one desire do Matt and Kate share? What obstacles stop each of them from being able to accomplish this dream? What removes the obstacles each of them faces?

Why has the creature never been previously discovered? What factors contribute to its ability to avoid human contact? What is the most compelling difference between this creature and all other creatures of similar origin? What are some of the obvious drawbacks of this trait?



What incident causes Kate to decide that the creature's skeletal remains are not enough proof? What does she want to add? To what lengths is she willing to go in order to accomplish this?

What misconception do Kate and Matt have about the creature at first? What incident changes their minds about its nature? How do these creatures reveal their true nature?

What are some of the reasons that airships of this nature could never work in place of the airplanes we currently use? What would some of the more obvious drawbacks be? In which ways would they be a benefit compared to our current modes of transportation? What issues do both modes of transportation share that make them impractical over a long term?