# The Last Leaf – Summary

A firm friendship bloomed between two young artists, Sue and Johnsy, based on reciprocal trust and shared artistic inclinations. They shared a ‘studio’ in the strange old Greenwich Village. Everything was going well till Johnsy fell ill with pneumonia in the wintry November. The illness affected her so much that she remained all day in bed sure of death. She lied down gloomily watching through her window the leaves fall off from a vine. The doctor did not have much hope of her recovery as she was utterly defeated by the sickness. When Johnsy confided to Sue that her passionate desire was to paint the Bay of Naples, Sue sat in the room sketching trying to draw her sorrow to her art. However, Johnsy was sure that death would come when the last leaf of the vine fell.

An old thwarted artist Behrman, who always declared that he would paint a masterpiece lived below Johnsy and Sue. Sue told him that her friend was dying and that Johnsy insisted that when the last leaf fell off of the vine outside her window, she would die. Even though Behrman derided the foolish notion, his protective attitude towards the two girls made him see Johnsy and the vine.

That night was horribly stormy, and icy rain spattered against the window. There was only one leaf left on the vine. Sue closed the window and pleaded to Johnsy to go to sleep because she did not want Johnsy to see the last leaf fall. Next morning, Johnsy was sure that the last leaf had fallen, and death beckoned her too, when they opened the window, they were astonished to see that there was still one leaf left. Johnsy judged that the leaf stayed there to show her sinfulness in accepting death without a fight. that made her resolve to live. Her will to live made her recovery fully.

In the afternoon, the doctor came and told Sue that Behrman was dead. But before his death, Behrman had painted a masterpiece - the last leaf was Behrman’s masterpiece. He had painted the leaf after the last leaf had fallen off the vine. His final act- the last leaf on the wall gave Johnsy hope and life.

# How Much Land does a Man Need? – Summary

An elder sister from the city visits her younger sister, the wife of a peasant farmer in the village. In the midst of their visit, the two of them get into an argument about whether the city or the peasant lifestyle is preferable. The elder sister suggests that city life boasts better clothes, good things to eat and drink, and various entertainments, such as the theater. The younger sister replies that though peasant life may be rough, she and her husband are free, will always have enough to eat, and are not tempted by the devil to indulge in such worldly pursuits.

Pahom, the husband of the younger sister, enters the debate and suggests that the charm of the peasant life is that the peasant has no time to let nonsense settle in his head. The one drawback of peasant life, he declares, is that the peasant does not have enough land: “If I had plenty of land, I shouldn’t fear the Devil himself!” The devil, overhearing this boast, decides to give Pahom his wish, seducing him with the extra land that Pahom thinks will give him security.

Pahom’s first opportunity to gain extra land comes when a lady in the village decides to sell her three hundred acres. His fellow peasants try to arrange the purchase for themselves as part of a commune, but the devil sows discord among them and individual peasants begin to buy land. Pahom obtains forty acres of his own. This pleases him initially, but soon neighboring peasants allow their cows to stray into his meadows and their horses among his corn, and he must seek justice from the district court. Not only does he fail to receive recompense for the damages but also ruins his reputation among his former friends and neighbors; his extra land does not bring him security.

Hearing a rumor about more and better farmland elsewhere, he decides to sell his land and move his family to a new location. There he obtains 125 acres and is ten times better off than he was before, and he is very pleased. However, he soon realizes that he could make a better profit with more land on which to sow wheat. He makes a deal to obtain thirteen hundred acres from a peasant in financial difficulty for one thousand rubles and has all but clinched it when he hears a rumor about the land of the Bashkirs. There, a tradesman tells him, a man can obtain land for less than a penny an acre, simply by making friends with the chiefs.

Fueled by the desire for more, cheaper, and better land, Pahom seeks directions for the land of the Bashkirs and leaves on a journey to obtain the land that he thinks he needs. On arrival, he distributes gifts to the Bashkir leaders and finds them courteous and friendly. He explains his reasons for being there and, after some deliberation, they offer him whatever land he wants for one thousand rubles. Pahom is pleased but concerned; he wants boundaries, deeds, and “official sanction” to give him the assurance he needs that they or their children will never reverse their decision.

The Bashkirs agree to this arrangement, and a deal is struck. Pahom can have all the land that he can walk around in a day for one thousand rubles. The one condition is that if he does not return on the same day to the spot at which he began, the money will be lost. The night before his fateful walk, Pahom plans his strategy; he will try to encircle thirty-five miles of land and then sell the poorer land to peasants at a profit. When he awakes the next day, he is met by the man whom he thought was the chief of the Bashkirs, but whom he recognizes as the peasant who had come to his old home to tell him of lucrative land deals available elsewhere. He looks again, and realizes that he is speaking with the devil himself. He dismisses this meeting as merely a dream and goes about his walk.

Pahom starts well, but he tries to encircle too much land, and by midday he realizes that he has tried to create too big a circuit. Though afraid of death, he knows that his only chance is to complete the circuit. “There is plenty of land,” he says to himself, “but will God let me live on it?” As the sun comes down, Pahom runs with all his remaining strength to the spot where he began. Reaching it, he sees the chief laughing and holding his sides; he remembers his dream and breathes his last breath. Pahom’s servant picks up the spade with which Pahom had been marking his land and digs a grave in which to bury him: “Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.”