Tarjei Vesaas

The Birds

Fuglane

Gyldendal Norsk Forlag 1957

208 Pages

English editions available. Full translation to Spanish available

The Birds might be Tarjei Vesaas' masterpiece. No other character has been portrayed with as much care and empathy as Mattis. Helpless in everyday life and useless as a worker, Mattis in some ways still understands more than the sharper ones.

Nature reveals secrets to Mattis. He can decipher the language of birds. He can read the letters that the woodcock writes to him with its beak and feet. And he can articulate the deepest questions of life: "Why are things the way they are?" he asks the friendly farmer's wife who offers him coffee when he has again failed in doing the work he has been asked to do.

No-one can offer any answers, but the author tells the story in such a way that the reader comes to share his empathy for Mattis, while still understanding Mattis's sister Hege and all those who want to help Mattis, but who can't reach aa the way in to him.

In 1967 The Birds was made into a film by the Polish director Witold Leszczynski.

'Vesaas's prose, spare and straightforward, soars with a poignancy of feeling ...'
worldliteraturetoday.org

'This is a quiet novel that deserves much more attention.'
thebookbindersdaughter.com