

# **A Handful of Dust Study Guide**

**A Handful of Dust by Evelyn Waugh**

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## Plot Summary

Tony and Brenda Last are a young married couple who have been together for eight years. They have a son named John Andrew and they live on a wealthy estate called Hetton. The estate is in England, two hours outside of London. One weekend, a young man named John Beaver holds Tony to a casual invitation made for him to visit Hetton. Brenda meets Beaver for the first time and is attracted to him. At Hetton, Brenda has been cut off from the social scene she once enjoyed in London. Beaver and Brenda spend the weekend gossiping on all of the latest parties, people, and trends. The next time she visits her sister in London she immediately begins to inquire about Beaver. It isn't long before she sees him and makes advances toward him. An affair begins and Brenda decides to get an apartment in London to make it easier for her to spend time with Beaver. She convinces her husband to pay for the apartment, giving him the impression that she is going to take a course in economics. Brenda spends more time in London than at home. Everyone in the London scene knows about the affair, but Tony never figures it out.

A tragedy befalls the family and John Andrew Last is killed in a horse accident during an annual hunt at Hetton. Brenda decides to choose Beaver over Tony and asks for a divorce. Tony is completely blind-sided by the entire situation; losing his son and wife within the same week. He plays fair and decides to give Brenda a divorce, which at this time means that he must pretend that he is the one having the affair. After a time, when Brenda becomes greedy and unreasonable, Tony takes a stance. He refuses to pay the money that Brenda and her family try to squeeze out of him and decides to take a six month trip, allowing Brenda to think about what she has done.

Tony's trip takes him to Brazil with a strange doctor named Messinger. They explore unknown territory in search of a lost or legendary city. It becomes clear that the doctor's plan was not well thought out and everything starts falling apart quickly. Tony becomes deathly ill with fever and the doctor drowns trying to find help for him. Meanwhile in London, Brenda has no money, so Beaver and her friends all leave her to her misery. They have no interest in her now that she is no longer a part of the upper class elite.

Delirium leaves Tony wandering through the forest and he finds the city that he and Messinger searched for. Unfortunately for Tony, the city is led by a deranged old man, Mr. Todd. The man is illiterate, and once had his father read to him from a library of Charles Dickens books every day. Once his father passed away the man longed for someone to take his place reading the stories. Since no one comes to the city much, after nursing Tony back to health, Todd keeps him prisoner. Tony spends the rest of his days trapped there and the estate at Hetton is passed on to his cousin Richard Last. Brenda remarries quickly to Tony's old friend Jock and Beaver moves to New York.



# Chapter One, Du Cote de Chez Beaver

## Chapter One, Du Cote de Chez Beaver Summary

Mrs. Beaver speaks with her son, John Beaver one late morning. Mrs. Beaver is in the business of interior decorating and real estate. They once enjoyed luxury until Mrs. Beaver's husband died. John Beaver, known as Beaver, is twenty-five years old and has no job. He remains connected to the upper class through invitation. Beaver tells his mother that he is spending the weekend with Tony and Brenda Last.

Beaver remains at home and is hopeful that he is being invited out when he gets a call from a woman named Lady Tipping. He knows that she is having a lunch party and he thought he left a good impression on her. To his disappointment, she was calling to get the name of one of his associates, Jock Grant-Menzies, and to ask where she may find him.

Beaver decides to go to the Brat's Club where younger men could enjoy drinking and cards without the traditional older man stigma. Beaver sees Jock and they speak about Tony and Brenda Last before Jock tricks Beaver into paying for their drinks. With this, Beaver calls to his house to check his messages and finds that Lady Tipping has now invited him in Jock's place.

## Chapter One, Du Cote de Chez Beaver Analysis

Money and class are the first trends introduced in the novel. The story opens with Mrs. Beaver telling the story of a fire on a property and declares, "luckily they had that old-fashioned . . . extinguisher that ruins everything". She is overjoyed that the home of the fire victim is ruined because it will lead to money for her. She has managed to hold on to her connection with the upper class and she works hard to keep it. Her son's story is clearly comparative. He works hard at spending little, organizing his days around other people's dollar. Jock Grant-Menzies jokes with his peers at the club, saying, "I made Beaver pay for a drink . . . he nearly died of it". The upper class appears to need him and despise him at the same time. It is not clear if Beaver is aware or even cares about the opinions that others have of him. However, it seems that he treats his lifestyle of invitations as a job. Overall, the Beavers are used to give the reader an idea of the atmosphere of the novel itself. The people are gossips who travel in the same circles and who hold class and status and appearances to a high account.



# Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part One

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part One Summary

Tony and Brenda Last live on the Last family grounds in a house called Hetton Abbey. The house was at one point very notable in society but it was rebuilt in 1864 in a Gothic style that has now become outdated. Even remaining family members believe it to be designed in poor taste, but Tony has every intention of keeping it as it is. He has plans to upgrade certain amenities after he pays off the estate's debts left by his parents' deaths.

Tony's mind drifts into his own thoughts as Brenda reads the mail. Outside, the Lasts' son, John Andrew, learns how to jump with his pony, Thunderclap. Right after lunch, Tony receives a telegram with John Beaver's arrival time and he is thoroughly annoyed. He didn't think that Beaver would take his offer to see the house seriously and had put it out of his mind. Brenda suggests putting up with him for the night, and letting him sleep in the worst room in the house so he won't be encouraged to stay longer or ever come back. She also offers to keep Beaver company so Tony will have minimal interaction with the young man.

Brenda entertains Beaver very cordially while Tony is out of the house. After lunch, Tony takes Beaver on a tour of the house. Knowing what was expected of him, Beaver shows that he is aware and impressed by Tony's home and the treasures it holds. At tea later, Tony learns that Brenda has encouraged Beaver to stay one more night. The two entertain themselves with games while Tony reads the paper. Finally, Brenda wishes Beaver goodnight and goodbye since he plans to catch an early train. Out of guilt, Tony wakes up the next morning to see Beaver off.

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part One Analysis

Each member of the Last household is complex in their own way. Tony is the head member; it is his family's estate that the family lives on and their way of life that the family maintains. Tony is very class driven but at the same time is not very interested in the social pettiness that surrounds this upper class. He has a love for the preserving the classic ways of life, represented by the Hetton Estate. The sign of the times however, is driven by fad, flair, and appearances. There is a hint that Brenda is very drawn to the lifestyle of the new age rich around her. She was once a socialite among them until she married Tony and her life became Hetton as well. Tony and Brenda's son is spoiled and quick with his tongue. His father has begun to groom him in the proper ways of the upper class but he is still an individual unlike either of his parents. In this segment, the rooms at Hetton even become characters. Tony sleeps in the Morgan le Fay room, known as a magician and half sister of King Arthur and said to have been unhappily married. She is an adversary to Arthur until Morgan uncovers the famous affair between Guinevere, Arthur's wife and a knight, Lancelot. The event lead to reconciliation

between the siblings. Guinevere is the name of Brenda's room and Beaver resides in the Sir Galahad room during his stay at Hetton. Sir Galahad is Sir Lancelot's son, conceived when another woman dupes him into believing she is Guinevere. The rooms are used for foreshadowing the plot, the reader now anticipating the connections.



# Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Two

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Two Summary

Brenda visits her younger sister Marjorie in London. Marjorie is married to Allan, a labor leader and political candidate. While there she starts dropping hints to her sister of her interest in Mr. Beaver. Brenda and Marjorie go shopping and along the way chat about the latest parties, specifically Polly Cockpurse's upcoming party. Brenda and Marjorie run into Polly lunching with Mrs. Beaver's party. Brenda wishes that Tony had more interest in the party because Brenda doesn't want to go alone.

Brenda allows Mrs. Beaver to coax her into meeting that evening to go over details of renting a flat in London. Brenda wonders if Beaver will be at home when she visits Mrs. Beaver. Despite two invitations that evening, Beaver is at home when Brenda and Mrs. Beaver discuss the flat. She tells Mrs. Beaver that she will go over the details of the rental with Tony and get back to her with a decision. Beaver sees Brenda to the train, at which time Brenda asks him if he would accompany her to Polly's party. Beaver goes over the idea in his mind, realizing that it would be more expensive than usual having Brenda with him for an evening and politely turns her down. The next day, Brenda receives a message from Beaver that he will take her to the party and Brenda's spirits are rejuvenated.

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Two Analysis

Brenda goes against the current trend of disdain for Beaver and opens the door for something personal to begin between them. In no time, Brenda inquires about Beaver's sex life, asks him out to a party, and hides it all from her husband. It is at first unclear if the reader is being encouraged to share this dislike for Beaver. Then, the reader is offered a few of Beaver's thoughts firsthand. He is an opportunist and that appears to be as far as his depth goes. If any relationship ensues between these two characters it will be because Beaver has something to gain from it. The chapter also uses Marjorie and Brenda's day in London to introduce the absurdity that comes naturally to this social circle. The day begins with the two shopping and eating and eventually it appears that it is inevitable that they come across their associates. This re-emphasizes the close proximity of the circle itself. The reader already knows that they live close to one another, eat and socialize at the same locations, and tolerate one another purely for social gain.





# Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Three

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Three Summary

Brenda is staying at Marjorie's while in London. The two are getting dressed for separate dinners followed by Polly's party where they plan to meet up. All of the women who don't have escorts for the evening are looking for Beaver, but he has already committed to an evening with Brenda. As they make their way to dinner, Beaver tries to kiss Brenda, but she turns down his advances. It is clear that she wants his advances but she wants to keep the upper hand in the situation. She allows him the lead from time to time, and in the end when they do kiss, he has been conned into thinking he is in command.

At Polly Cockpurse's party, Brenda merges back into her social circle with ease. Beaver is annoyed when Brenda leaves him alone because no one actually likes him. At the same time he wants to make his way into the circle, and at Brenda's side, he's accepted. The two take an early leave from the party and share a taxi. Brenda notes that she cannot ask him in that late but asks that he call her in the morning.

The next day Brenda tells Marjorie that her and Beaver's early departure was innocent, and she is unsure if he even likes her. Brenda returns to Hetton without hearing from Beaver.

Mrs. Beaver also wants to hear what is going on between Brenda and her son. He tells her that he can't pursue a relationship with Brenda because she is too costly. His mother, seeing it from a more lucrative point of view, encourages him to see her again. Beaver plans to lunch at the home of someone named Margot and he runs into Brenda there. He tries to use an excuse that he couldn't get through to her on the phone. She sees right through the lie and tells him, but she is still interested enough to send a message to Tony that she will stay in London for a few more days.

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Three Analysis

The reader has the perspective of Tony, John Andrew, Brenda, and Beaver in this chapter. This is a turning point for these characters because a change in each of their lives is indicated here. The chapter opens with John Andrew wondering where his mother is. It is clear that he is unaccustomed to having his mother away from Hetton. Tony is a little annoyed that Brenda is socializing with people he doesn't care for, but other than that he isn't bothered by Brenda's absence. Brenda is at Marjorie's house acting like a silly child over Beaver. It is a direct contrast for how everyone else clearly feels about him. The reader is even left without any reason to find him charming or likeable. Nonetheless, Brenda tries playing cat and mouse with him even when it is clear that he isn't interested. She avoids his affections, only to make advances later. She tells him to call and can't help but call him anyway. She tries to keep the power of



the relationship balanced in her favor, but Beaver's indifference tips the balance considerably. Brenda is much more intrigued by the idea of carrying on with a young man than Beaver is at the idea of scrambling to afford a rich woman. He is however; drawn by the fact that Brenda may represent a permanent ticket to the upper class social circle. It appears that this thought is what wins out in the end, "From Beaver's point of view, these old friends of hers were quite the most desirable people at the party, and he was delighted to be seen at their table."



# Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Four

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Four Summary

Brenda's stay in London lasts four days, and as she heads back to Hetton, Tony and John Andrew anxiously await her arrival. Brenda wastes no time selling Tony on the idea of her renting a flat in London. Tony agrees to the flat and Brenda heads back to London three days later. The social scene is buzzing about Brenda's affair. Mrs. Beaver indulges her delight the most, telling more of the relationship than she even knows as fact—finally given the opportunity to brag about her son. Marjorie on the other hand, disapproves and still does not like Beaver. Hetton quickly becomes Brenda's weekend home as she spends the entire week in London once the flat is complete.

The Christmas holiday at Hetton passes in the usual way, with family and many traditions. Brenda feels like the five days spent with her sister, brother-in-law, and Tony's relatives at Hetton are unbearably long. Beaver and his mother are in Ireland for the holiday and Brenda sends his Christmas present there. Everyone leaves Hetton, and Brenda and Tony spend their first entire day alone in weeks. The next day, they go to Yorkshire to see a friend named Angela. After being there for a short time, Tony comes to Brenda with the news that Beaver is at the party. For Tony and some of the other guests, the news is surprising. Brenda and all who have seen affair unfold know that Beaver has been invited for that very reason. In an attempt to be friendly with Beaver, Tony finds out that it is Mrs. Beaver that Brenda rents the flat from and he is annoyed at the idea. By New Year's Day, Brenda informs Tony that she plans to take an economic class in London and Tony agrees to her plan.

## Chapter Two, English Gothic: Part Four Analysis

With every step Brenda takes away from Hetton and her husband and child, Beaver takes a step up the social ladder. First, the distance between Brenda and her family is established. John Andrew points out that his mother seems to be at an endless party. In his innocence even he points out that something doesn't add up with Brenda's story. If she is in town for a party, John Andrew wants to know why she is gone for four days. Tony is oblivious to any wrongdoing, so much that Brenda tells him that she has been "carrying on" with another man and he can't fathom the reality in the statement. Tony's biggest concern is carrying on life as he is accustomed. He misses Brenda, but has no real care for what she does with her time in London. He almost protests about the flat only because it may affect the timeliness of the renovations he has planned at Hetton.

The completion of the flat signals Brenda's return to society and she can't get enough. "For five years she had been a legendary, almost ghostly name, the imprisoned princess of fairy story, and now that she had emerged there was more enchantment in the occurrence, than in the mere change of habit of any other circumspet wife". Meanwhile Beaver uses Brenda to boost his standing. "Beaver, for the first time in his

life found himself a person of interest and, almost of consequence. Women studied him with a new scrutiny, wondering what they had missed in him; men treated him as an equal, even as a successful competitor". Those around them who approve of the affair are enjoying it for entertainment, almost as if real lives and real relationships are not at stake.



# Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part One

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part One Summary

Tony is having dinner at Brat's Club when he sees Jock. At first Jock feels a little awkward with Tony, since everyone knows about Brenda's affair with John Beaver. Tony carries the conversation, rambling about all of the changes in Brenda of late. Tony and Jock continue drinking to try to lift their spirits. Tony gets a message at the club from Brenda. He asks the person delivering the message to speak with her, and even after insisting, he is turned down. It turns out that Brenda has made Beaver call Tony so she won't have to speak to him, but Tony calls her back directly. He is now drunk and insisting that he will bring Jock and visit her. When Brenda can't talk him out of it, she calls the club to speak with Jock. Jock dryly agrees to keep Tony from visiting Brenda's flat. She isn't convinced that he is on her side so she tells Beaver to leave just in case.

Tony and Jock leave Brat's Club and decide that they are not ready to end their night. They decide to go to a "low joint"; a place where they can drink for the remainder of the night. Once inside, they make their way through the crowded dance floor and order brandy. Two women, who are either escorts or prostitutes named Milly and Babs join them. In his drunken state, Tony calls Brenda and wakes her up to tell her that he won't visit her after all. The two go back and forth on the subject of visiting Brenda, each changing their minds continually as to whether the visit made sense at the late hour.

The next day, Tony is ridden with guilt for behaving in a foolish manner toward Brenda. As he is wondering if he should call, Brenda calls him. She admits that she was upset with him for all of the calls the night before but is no longer angry with him. Brenda also informs him that she won't have any time to see him before he returns to Hetton. Secretly Brenda is taking full advantage of the guilt Tony feels for misbehaving and enjoys the position he is in. He takes the train back home and finds that John Andrew has come to the station to meet him. Tony is heavy with guilt and disappointment for not seeing Brenda and lashes out at John Andrew a little. Tony spends the remainder of the evening in solitude—informing one of the staff that he will take his meals in the library when Brenda is out of town.

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part One Analysis

The reader has already been given a glimpse at the mindset of the women in this social group. Tony and Jock's night together gives an inside look at what the men in this society do with their time and go through with their women. "It is not uncommon at



Brat's Club, between nine and ten in the evening, to find men in white ties and tail coats sitting by themselves and eating, in evident low spirits, large and extravagant dinners. They are those who have been abandoned at the last minute by their women". The women are selfish and indulgent, impervious to the outcome of their actions. Brenda, on the night of Tony and Jock's adventure, fits these criteria perfectly. She is angry that Tony has come to London to surprise her and ruin her night with Beaver. The men on the other hand provide the means for their women's indulgence and take the brunt of their selfishness. The description of the scene at the Brat's club isn't the only mention of the man and women dynamic of this group. "You're married, aren't you . . . your friend is too. You'd be surprised how many gentlemen come here just to talk about their wives".

The precedence for the chapter title is also established. "Hard Cheese on Tony" is the title and through it, the reader receives a hint that Tony is the character who will end up on the losing end of Brenda's affair. Tony spends the chapter convincing himself and anyone who will listen that he is fine with Brenda's decision to take an economics class and spend weekdays in London, rather than at home with him. Tony ends this segment ridden with guilt, essentially for going out with a friend and having a bit too much to drink. Meanwhile, Brenda had plans to spend the night with another man and carries on guilt free and is sure enough in her righteousness that she offers her decisions as a lesson. "He [Tony] had to learn not make surprise visits". Beaver's response offers support for Brenda's mindset; "You are one for making people learn things". The irony in the statement is that Brenda is the only one who actually has a moral lesson that needs learning.



# Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Two

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Two Summary

Tony expects Brenda home on the weekend and invited Jock for a visit, and begins counting the days until Friday. Tony is disappointed when on Thursday he receives a note from Jock saying that he can't get away from London and hopes to travel to Hetton a few weeks later. Brenda also sends Tony a disheartening message, letting him know that she will arrive on Saturday rather than Friday and with an entourage of friends and servants. With his weekend plans altered, Tony tries to find a way to pass his day on Friday. He invites John Andrew with him to an area called Little Bayton; a trip the child had anticipated for weeks. However, John Andrew is stubborn and is still angry with Tony over their argument earlier in the week. He rudely turns down his father's invitation and is also counting the moments until Brenda arrives at Hetton.

Brenda brings her friends Polly and Veronica with her as well as Mrs. Beaver to offer suggestions on transforming a rarely-used room into a sitting room for Brenda. Tony is immediately annoyed as the four women criticize the style of his home, and in the end he leaves them to their plans. For the few moments that Brenda and Tony are alone he tries to find an ally in her against the other women and their outlandish ideas, but Brenda brushes him off sweetly. She spends the rest of the day with her friends while Tony sits apart from them, reading. Later in the night, he waits for the four women to leave Brenda's room before he tries to steal more time with her. Brenda is still uninterested and deters Tony with claims of fatigue.

On Sunday morning, Tony makes excuses for why Brenda has not joined him for service. Afterward he picks flowers for himself and the women from one of the greenhouses. Back at the house he walks in on the women's laughter after making a bet about what color his lapel would be. The women leave Hetton early enough to get to London before dinner. Brenda feels no remorse for her actions and spends the time berating the house at Hetton and plotting to match Tony up with another woman.

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Two Analysis

The language in the interaction between Tony and Brenda is used to highlight the changes that Brenda's behavior has brought into the main characters' lives. There are key words and phrases that the reader is meant to take note of in order to make a distinction between the old life, represented by Tony and the new life, changed by Brenda. For example, the word "economics" has subtly become a new word for



Brenda's infidelity. Brenda's messages to Tony while she is away are long winded and cover all conversational grounds, making it easier for her to avoid having conversations with him. The messages even ask questions as if they are having a personal interaction. The usage of words directs where each character's solidarity lies. "'You see,' Brenda explained, not looking at Tony. 'What I thought was that I must have one habitable room downstairs'" (p. 105). Brenda's language has become belligerent toward Hetton, Tony's most prized possession, and she isn't even interested in his opinion enough to look him in the eye while she chooses her friends over him. This situation is repeated when they are in Brenda's room, dressing for dinner. Tony blocks Brenda's view of herself and she asks him to move before they can address her statement that she is now living in her flat. Again, when Tony visits Brenda's room before bed, it is dark and they can't see one another clearly, but it is obvious that Brenda is not interested in Tony's presence.

John Andrew's allegiance is partially defined in this chapter as well. He is willing to find an ally in anyone except Tony, following the title of the chapter 'Hard Cheese on Tony.' "He [Tony] watched John riding in paddock. The boy clearly bore him ill will for their quarrel on Wednesday; when he applauded a jump, John said 'When's mummy coming down?'" Later when Ben takes Tony's side, chastising John Andrew for his behavior toward his father, he chooses to even side with Nanny over any ally of Tony's. "You ought not to say bastard or lousy in front of me, nanny says not".





## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Three

### Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Three Summary

Much time has passed since the last communication between Tony and Brenda. She writes to let him know that she will visit Hetton over the weekend. Brenda plans to bring Polly and a new friend named Jenny Abdul Akbar. Brenda and Polly send Jenny ahead of them with hopes that Tony will start to like her. Princess Abdul Akbar is her official title and she is a very colorful woman, so much so that Tony can't even enjoy the fact that she truly appreciates his Hetton house. Jenny has renamed Tony, Teddy, without realizing her error, and the strange woman clearly makes Tony uncomfortable. She was once married to the prince of Morocco who carries the title the Moulay. She tells Tony and later John Andrew how the Moulay was a very grave man and she was mistreated while with him. John Andrew takes a liking to Jenny almost immediately. When Brenda arrives later, John begs for Jenny to come to his nursery and say goodnight. Brenda is thoroughly disappointed to learn that Tony detests Jenny completely.

The following day, John Andrew is the first to greet Princess Jenny Abdul Akbar. He already has what he hopes will be their day together mapped out in his mind. Jenny obliges the beginning of John Andrew's itinerary; church and time with Thunderclap. When they return, Brenda suggests showing Jenny the house and sends Tony off alone with her again. Jenny loves the house and is only disappointed by Brenda's work to modernize the morning room. Just as Jenny's topic of conversation began making Tony uncomfortable once again, he is saved by John Andrew. Content that she has done her part to help John deal with her absence, Brenda invites Tony to have tea with her and Polly to end their day.

### Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Three Analysis

More change is marked at the opening of this section, with Brenda apologizing for not calling or writing in a while. In previous chapters, it was noted that regardless of her behavior, she would call Tony and John Andrew every day. This letter quotes an economic subject, bimetallism, to authenticate her claims of economics studies. Brenda has also gotten into the habit of telling Tony to stay away from drinking, as if he has become an alcoholic. When Brenda met Beaver she made continual efforts to keep the power of the relationship on her side, and these mentions are her attempts to do the same with Tony. Brenda takes Tony's one moment of weakness and exaggerates it in order to make sure all of her misconduct can be ignored regardless. Brenda even convinced herself that she is justified in her affair because she has put up with living at

Hetton. She sheds her final layer of guilt with her matchmaking attempt between Jenny and Tony. It is interesting that Brenda recognizes all of Tony's positive traits but speaks of them as a burden that she would gladly put off on another woman.



## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Four

### Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Four Summary

A week later, Brenda returns to Hetton and is quick to announce that she will stay in London the following weekend. When Tony asks if he is invited, Brenda informs him that she already declined for him. Brenda is going to miss an annual hunting event at Hetton and Tony asks if she could stay for the a few extra days to catch the launch. Brenda uses her class as the reason that staying is out of the question. Brenda has arranged a small party for him with Jock, Marjorie, Allan, and another married couple they know. The men hunt rabbits, play card games, and drink, and Tony ends the night in Brenda's room. To complete the weekend, Brenda goes to church with Tony and John Andrew. Tony extends the offer that Brenda turned down to Jock, encouraging him to stay through the hunt. He tells Jock to invite the woman he is dating. Before Sunday is over, Marjorie tries to get Jock's opinion on Brenda's affair with Beaver. He believes that she will get bored with Beaver before any real harm is done, but Marjorie seems a bit more worried. She knows that Beaver doesn't actually care for Brenda, but she is the only one who seems really bothered by it all. The conversation of Brenda and Beaver passes each couple separately, each person giving their opinion, and Tony is the only one still left in the dark.

### Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Four Analysis

This part of the chapter is a transitional section. Every chapter has taken steps to display changes in Brenda's habits; calling less, coming home less, and other behavior to slight Tony and their marriage. This segment differs in that Brenda has become more righteous in her feelings and she clearly has closed the door on Tony guilt free. There is finality in all of the language used. She refers to the changes that she has made as "the new regime" also supporting the idea that Brenda is enjoying the control that she has over Tony. There is a new regime set up in their lives and not only does Tony have no say in it, but he isn't even aware of its significance. "The next day Brenda came to church with him. She had decided to devote the weekend wholly to him; it would be the last for some time" (p. 128). Again, Brenda leads Tony to believe that everything is fine between them; "This has been a jolly weekend . . . just like old times before the economics began". In fact, their enjoyable weekend is Brenda's way of symbolically ending their marriage. The segment ends with everyone invited to spend the weekend with the Lasts, discussing Brenda's affair—Brenda included. No one's opinion is truly sympathetic to Tony and the plight he is facing.



# Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Five

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Five Summary

Jock's date is an American named Mrs. Rattery. She arrives at Hetton by airplane that she pilots. Tony had pictured a busty showgirl type, completely different from the tall woman in helmet and overalls that emerges from the plane. Tony decides to write a letter to Brenda, as he has been doing often of late. He tells her how much he enjoyed the time they spent together and lets her know how the construction in the morning room is progressing. He ends the letter by telling her how excited John Andrew is about taking part in the hunting expedition.

The next day everyone gathers for the event. Three packs of hunters, including Hetton and Pigstanton take part in the annual event. Jock and Mrs. Rattery ride together, while a young woman name Miss Ripon fights clumsily with her horse. Once John Andrew gets accustomed to riding Thunderclap in the free hunting atmosphere, he starts enjoying himself. A horn blows from the woods indicating that there is no hunt there. On the way back, a bus passes and everyone slows down to give Miss Ripon's horse a chance to get by without trouble. Everything is going fine until Miss Tendril's niece stops and puts her bike in neutral, causing it to backfire. The sound alarms the wayward horse and he reacts violently. He kicks Thunderclap and John flies into a ditch. It is clear that he has been killed. The news spreads through the estate; everyone unsure of how Tony will handle it. The police and all who witnessed report it as an accident as no one is actually at fault. Tony's first thought is Brenda and how to tell her. Tony has to start making arrangements, so Jock offers to go to London to tell Brenda the news. At first Mrs. Rattery offers to take Jock in her plane, but in the end she decides it might be better if she stay with Tony.

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Five Analysis

Tony has been subject to another tragedy in his life, reinforcing once again the meaning of the heading of this chapter. The tone of this segment trails that of the previous, wherein Tony is in great spirits but something negative is looming. Brenda's absence is the first indication that things are not completely right at Hetton. The next sign is Tony's continued ignorance of Brenda's true nature even further highlighted by the closing of the last segment. Part four of the chapter closes with everyone talking about Brenda's affair, with Tony only feet away and still clueless. Part five opens with Tony writing Brenda essentially a love letter. The letter also serves as an indication of more change; Brenda has been the one sending all of the letters until this point. The finality of



Brenda's actions is highlighted. She no longer has any care for what is important to Tony or even for her son, who is also excited about the upcoming event. The foreshadowing in this segment is hidden in plain view. It is not until the tragedy of the chapter unfolds that the reader can note that John Andrew's mortality is mentioned more than once. Writing in this manner gives the reader the impression that the idea is so absurd that it is impossible, until it becomes a plot point. The final foreshadowing that the reader is left to anticipate is Brenda's response to John Andrew's death. The final exchange between Jock and Tony implies that once again Tony may be wrong about his wife's personality. Tony says, "You see she's got nothing else, much, except John I've got her, and I love the house . . . but with Brenda John always came first . . . she's been in London such a lot. I'm afraid that's going to hurt her." Jock's response is "You can't ever tell what's going to hurt people." The likeness of the name John in both the Last son and Mr. Beaver is also played upon here; "she's got nothing else, much, except John".



# Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Six

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Six Summary

The time drags by as Tony waits with Mrs. Rattery to hear from Jock. Mrs. Rattery tries to get Tony's mind off of John Andrew and Brenda with a card game, but Tony only knows a child's game. Eventually Mrs. Rattery convinces him to play but it involves making animal noises. Once Tony realizes that the staff would find his behavior in poor taste, he ends the game.

Meanwhile Jock tries to find Brenda at her flat but meets Princess Jenny Abdul Akbar instead. Jenny is on her way to Polly Cockpurse's where Brenda is and invites Jock into her flat while she gets ready. Jock tells Jenny what has happened so she understands the urgency. She interprets John's death as a result of a curse she carries. When Jock and Jenny arrive at Polly's, Brenda is in a session with a fortune teller named Mrs. Northcote. Someone asks where Beaver is and is told that he is in France. Brenda has had a bad feeling all day that something has happened to him. By the time Brenda is finished with Mrs. Northcote, all of the women at Polly's already know the tragic news. They send her downstairs to talk to Jock. She asks him if the news is that John is dead and Jock replies affirmatively, thinking that she is speaking of her son. When Jock realizes that she thinks he is speaking about John Beaver, he corrects her and is appalled at her response. Later, at Brenda's flat, Brenda tries to correct her error but they both know how wrong her reaction was. When Jock calls Tony, he doesn't share the details of his encounter with Brenda. He tells Tony that he will see Brenda to the train and won't make it back up to Hetton.

## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Six Analysis

The absurdity of the mindset of the socialite characters has been completely brought out in light of John Andrew's death. First there is Mrs. Rattery, who is a different type of socialite than the others, and who doesn't know how to deal with Tony in his grieving state. She sits with him, and the author has her playing a game of patience because it is a trait she is clearly lacking. Princess Jenny Abdul Akbar, one character who appeared genuinely nice to John Andrew, can't remember his name. She then proceeds to try to make his death relative to her in order to catch the attention of Jock. Brenda is the most appalling out of this group of characters. Her reaction is meant to surprise the reader; she has done many callous things to Tony but it is unexpected that she chooses Beaver over her son. Her relief that it is her son that is killed and not Beaver gives the reader the feeling that these characters can't get any worse. In death it has become clear that

although Tony seemed like the snob when he was first introduced, he and Jock may be the only sensible thinkers. Unfortunately for Tony, death may also bring the end of his marriage.



## Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Seven

### Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Seven Summary

There is an investigation and report to the court about the incident with John Andrew the next day. After all of the testimony, it is concluded that John's death was an accident and condolences are offered to Brenda and Tony. Tony doesn't see much of Mrs. Rattery before she leaves, and Brenda exchanges very few words with him. When Jock sends Tony a letter, he opens up a dialog with her only to find that Brenda is remaining at Hetton for a few days. She has kept her plans to spend the weekend at Veronica's to Tony's surprise, and she starts to talk about how John's death has changed their marriage. Completely confused, Tony doesn't push the conversation, let's her go, and invites Jock to spend time with him. When he tells Jock his assessment of Brenda's behavior, Jock reserves his comments. By Monday Tony receives a letter from Brenda admitting to her affair and ending their marriage. Jock apologizes for having known and for the way that everything turned out.

### Chapter Three, Hard Cheese on Tony: Part Seven Analysis

The climax of Tony's ill-treatment has been reached. Even with his haughty attitude, Tony has clearly been identified as the outsider of the social circle and therefore the most sensible character introduced. Tony has been left out of an affair that countless people watched at his expense, his son is killed and his wife is asking for the era's version of a divorce. He has taken Beaver's place as the outcast when Beaver is clearly the one who belongs in that position. Brenda has risked everything sensible and important in her life for Beaver, who has no interest in her. He doesn't even try to hide his distaste for her as she professes her love. Tony's problems may not be the only ones coming up however; there is a hint that the whole situation may be too much reality for the social circle. First, Veronica is no longer interested in Brenda while she is going through serious life matters. "It's really embarrassing for us all, Brenda coming . . . I do think she might have chucked. I shan't in the least know what to say to her". Later, Beaver, who is now spending time in the circle with or without Brenda, reacts coldly to her confession of love. "Until Wednesday, when I thought something had happened to you, I had no idea that I loved you". Beaver replies, "Well you've said it enough. You clod". The author follows directly with Tony receiving his break-up letter, just to reemphasize how foolish Brenda is acting. The reader is left to wonder if she will receive some of the treatment that she has subjected Tony to now that the Hard Cheese on Tony chapter is over.





# Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part One

## Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part One Summary

The wake of Brenda's decision to end their marriage is a hard time for Tony. He stays with Jock for a few weeks while Mrs. Rattery is out of town. He is approached with many suggestions about the right way to proceed with things between him and Brenda. Tony has no interest in reconciling with Brenda, but at a weak moment calls Brenda and try to fix things. Of course Brenda hasn't changed her mind about loving Beaver, so the three of them go around London trying to avoid one another.

Tony starts the arrangements for the divorce with a group of somewhat seedy lawyers which specializes in divorces. They inform Tony that with Brenda as the plaintiff, he has to play out a charade to show off his infidelity to society. The only problem remaining is who will join Tony in the charade of an affair. After Jock and Tony run through all possibilities of names, they resort to finding someone at the Sixty-Four club on Sink Street. They find the club practically empty but the two women they met the night they were out drinking are there again. Tony tells Milly his problem and she agrees to play the role of his mistress. and arrangements are made for Milly to travel by train and meet at a place called Victoria on the coming Saturday.

## Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part One Analysis

The structural make up of this society is shown through the ceremony surrounding a divorce. In a more modern and flexible society setting, a divorce would be straightforward in this case. Brenda committed adultery, witnessed by family and friends, and she would have to accept the consequences of these actions. Following Brenda's request for a divorce, Tony changes his movements and routines to make sure he doesn't see her. He is bombarded with advice that all support the idea of him refusing the divorce and ignoring Brenda's behavior until she gets bored with it. Most absurdly, he now has to act as if he is the one who is unfaithful in the marriage because it doesn't appear well if Brenda, the wife, has behaved in this manner. The ironic thing is that of all of the couples mentioned so far, it is always the women who are running out finding men like Mr. Beaver while their husbands carry on with other matters. They are the "brats" in Brat's Club, pouting over half eaten meals, stood up by their wives, carrying on an imitation of married life. Sadly, Tony trusted Brenda so much that it never entered his mind that she was equally shallow as the women she left behind when they were married. This is the reason that in this chapter, when Tony reflects on the errors, he thinks back to the beginning of their marriage, investigating what in Brenda's nature went unnoticed.



# Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part Two

## Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part Two Summary

Two detectives arrive first at the meeting point for Tony and Milly. They have been paid to follow Tony and Milly for the weekend as witnesses to the affair. Tony and Jock arrive next and buy the train tickets for Tony and Milly to get to the seaside hotel in Brighton. Tony is already upset about the whole plan and becomes more annoyed when he realizes that Milly has brought her daughter, ignoring his firm forbidding. When the strange group of people starts bringing attention to themselves, Tony agrees to let Tony join them just to avoid a scene. When they arrive at the hotel, Winnie insists she must go down to the sea even though it is already dark. Tony encourages the outing just to get rid of the two and is happy for the male company when he runs into the detectives at the bar. Tony is clearly upset about having to carry on the entire weekend and he tries to get an idea from the detectives how husbands usually cope. Tony's job for the weekend is one that they see often, but they warn him about the child causing problems for the impression they are trying to leave.

On the way to dinner, Milly comes across an acquaintance named Dan and his lady, who he only calls "Baby". They are checking in to the hotel but stop to have a few drinks with Tony and Milly before heading to their room. At dinner, Tony has a hard time relating to Milly and finding conversation. As the end of dinner nears and Tony wonders how they will spend the remainder of their night, Dan reappears and invites them a party. The next morning, Tony is annoyed when Winnie wakes him up. Tony had already realized that there was not arguing with the persistent child, so he gets dressed and after taking Winnie down to see the water, eats breakfast with her.

When Tony sends Winnie back up to the room, one of the detectives approaches. He chastises Tony a bit for going to the party the previous night and for having breakfast early and without Milly or the detectives present. They are counting on servants and other staff as witnesses to the affair. Tony agrees to have breakfast again, this time in bed. He wakes Milly and puts on a robe to give the servant bringing their meal the impression that they were in the middle of intimacy. After the food is brought, Milly goes back to sleep and Winnie resumes her request to bathe in the sea. Winnie can't understand why Tony had breakfast brought to the room after eating with her downstairs and talks incessantly about it. People around them start to speak of Tony as a reckless and strange father.

Tony's weekend farce is a success and Brenda makes her case that she started studying in London and Tony started drinking. She details his drunken behavior with Jock, followed by information about his affair.



## Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part Two Analysis

The set up of Tony's infidelity is a complex one that Tony refers to as "the Law". It is actually strange to see a group of characters so shallow and indulgent in direct contact with anything concrete such as the law. The only mention that appears structural is when Allan's occupation is highlighted and the random reminder of Jock and his speech on pigs. These two references as well as the framework of the Law in this segment become absorbed into the antics surrounding the characters. The law no longer appears to be the law when a man who has been publicly embarrassed by his wife's betrayal has to further the shame by faking an affair of his own. Regardless of the angle that life turns, Tony is judged and condemned at every turn. The detectives tell him that he isn't behaving right; they are clearly accustomed to customers who are seasoned in the art of divorce. Milly doesn't like his attitude, although he is simply behaving how he always has with his wife. Finally, strangers even judge him for mistreating a child that isn't his. The reader was under the impression that perhaps Tony's luck would turn, but it is clear that things will continue to get worse for him. Brenda's statement to the court reads, "My studies took me to London. I realized that he no longer cared for me as he used to. He began drinking heavily . . . from then onwards I had him watched by private agents and as a result of what they told me, I left my husband's house . . ." There is a glimmer of hope that Brenda may turn things around because for a moment she even finds the statement to the court a little excessive.



## Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part Three

### Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part Three Summary

Reggie, Brenda's older brother, hears of Brenda's affair and returns home to organize a family meeting. After speaking with Brenda, his mother, Marjorie, Allan, and the lawyer in the meeting he meets with Beaver, Jock, and even one of Tony's aunts before setting up time to see Tony. After pointing out that he doesn't like Beaver, Reggie tries to convince Tony to refuse Brenda's divorce. Tony is surprised to hear that Brenda is spreading the rumor that he had become an alcoholic and had an affair with Jenny Abdul Akbar. He relays that Brenda is now asking for two thousand dollars a year, throwing out their agreement for five hundred. The payment amount would mean that Tony would have to give up his estate at Hetton. Reggie tops off the demands by informing Tony that Beaver doesn't even want to be with Brenda unless she is provided for. The conversation takes a turn here as Reggie points out that with the evidence against him, Brenda would win her two thousand annual fund in the courts regardless, hoping to push Tony into settling.

Tony calls Brenda to make sure that she is aware of where Reggie stands on the matter and that she is asking the same of him. When she affirms that she knows that he will have to leave Hetton to afford her settlement, he hangs up on her and returns to Reggie. Tony responds that the claims against him are ridiculous and that he is going away for six months. If Brenda still wants the divorce at that time he will grant it without settlements of any kind. Polly and the rest of Brenda's group are livid about Tony's behavior when they hear what has happened.

### Chapter Four, English Gothic II: Part Three Analysis

This segment is a remarkable one because it the first that ends with a triumphant tone for Tony. Tony has listened to advice from people who never cared enough to mention to Brenda that her affair was completely unfair to Tony. These people offered him options, all bordering the same logic and idiocy of what looks right to everyone else in their circle of society. Reggie St. Cloud was the final person to offer advice before Tony realizes that he has some control over the situation and uses this power. Tony's last words to Reggie are so empowering, they almost seem like a different man from the one who has been wronged since the opening of this plot. The uncharacteristic defiance of displayed in this encounter may be a sign that Tony's small victory will be short lived. Nonetheless, Tony establishes the upper hand and even the summary of his behavior as ruthless cannot undermine his position for this moment.

This key section of the chapter highlights the family dynamic of this group. Brenda's mother is only mentioned briefly throughout the story, and finally members other than



Marjorie are brought to life. The introduction of the St. Cloud family unit offers a new contrast to the make up of the women and men in Brenda's circle. Aside from Brenda, in the St. Cloud family, the women are clear-minded and logical. Both Lady St. Cloud and Marjorie know that Brenda is being foolish and cold-hearted. Meanwhile the men, Reggie and Allan, are gossiping, greedy, and shallow. The roles in Brenda's society circle are flipped. Unfortunately for the logical characters like Tony and Marjorie, in both the family and social settings, the shallow minds are the ones in control.



# Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part One

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part One Summary

Tony is traveling by boat, and as he stands on the deck, one of the passengers approaches him with small talk. When Tony gets tired of the uncomfortable exchange with the stranger, he leaves to get ready for dinner. At the dinner table Tony and a black archdeacon sit at the absent captain's table. The archdeacon tells Tony that his wife is in her cabin suffering from seasickness—the same as Tony's new partner, Dr. Messinger. After dinner, Tony runs into the passenger from the deck and his reference to Tony as "the explorer" makes Tony reflect on the events that led to this voyage. Tony's roster of trips throughout his life amounted roughly to three; one trip to France as a teenager, traveling Europe with a friend, and his honeymoon with Brenda on the Italian Riviera. He hadn't left England since his father's death and doesn't know what to expect of the strange expedition he has taken on. It was in avoiding Beaver and any members of he and Brenda's social group that lead him to the Greville club and Dr. Messinger. Dr. Messinger, a small, bearded, prematurely aged young man, tells Tony that he is taking a trip either to Brazil or Dutch Guiana. He is in search of a city that has only been recorded as legend and through the accounts of local Spanish and Indian tribes. As Dr. Messinger tells Tony of the city, Tony decides that he will cancel his initial trip plans and join the doctor on his expedition.

The ride on the ship isn't as comfortable as Tony's cruise ship would have been, but Tony maintains. He thinks about the city and imagines what it must look like. Eventually, the boat makes it to blue and calm Caribbean waters and Tony begins to meet many of the passengers for the first time. At dinner Tony meets a young woman named Therese de Vitre. She had recently completed school in Paris and is on her way home to the island of Trinidad to find a husband. Therese and Tony become very close in the days that follow and the atmosphere on the boat is increasingly happier. Tony mentions Brenda for the first time. Therese didn't know Tony's marital status and seems offended that he never mentioned it. Tony didn't do a good job of explaining that he was in the middle of a divorce and why, so the next day when they arrive in Trinidad she treats Tony as if he is a stranger and that is the last they see of one another.

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part One Analysis

"He was going away because it seemed to be conduct expected of a husband in his circumstances, because the associations of Hetton were for the first time poisoned for him, because he wanted to live for a few months away from people who would know him or Brenda, in places where there was no expectation of meeting her or Beaver or Reggie St. Cloud at every corner he frequented . . ." Tony is in charge and has made plans that are completely different from any in his life. This character is no longer the



husband that the reader met in the beginning of the story, he isn't judgmental and class driven, and he definitely isn't the pushover who was blind-sided by his wife's affair right under his nose. Nonetheless, there is a chance that Tony's bad turns so far will follow him on his freedom journey. First, it is strange that Tony becomes so trusting of Dr. Messinger so quickly. Messinger is speaking of traveling un-chartered territory among cultures that Tony knows nothing of. There is a chance that Tony is so maddened by his situation and eager to get away from it that he hasn't thought this adventure out clearly. All of the passengers seem hesitant in understanding why anyone would take the kind of trip they have planned. Finally, Therese may have represented a potential turning point for him, and this chance also escapes his grasp. Therese is the first to say outright that she doesn't like Dr. Messinger. She uses the same terminology that everyone has used to describe Beaver in the past, and they were all correct in their misgivings. Then, Tony loses Therese when the story of his past enters their interaction. The reader is inclined to believe that if he truly left his past behind and ignored Messinger's crazy scheme, Tony would find a middle ground that is refreshingly different and he would finally leave his curse behind.



# Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Two

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Two Summary

After leaving the main boat, Tony, Messinger, and a boat crew of six black boys travel upstream in a shallow boat. They then travel by foot to the position that Messinger calls "First Base Camp". Tony rarely finds a moment of comfort, constantly getting bitten by mosquitoes and unable to shave or wash properly. He begins to think about what is going on in London at this time. These thoughts put Tony to sleep until the sound of Messinger's fussing wakes him later in the night. He is tending to a wound on his toe, having lost an unknown amount of blood to a vampire bat.

Back in London, Brenda dances with Jock and speaks of the divorce. When Jock asks if she will go through with the divorce, Brenda replies that the decision is a matter that Beaver will decide. Neither of them has heard from Tony in a while and Brenda asks if the trip is safe.

Tony, Messinger, and the crew come to an Indian village where only the women are in attendance. An elder from the village offers them drinks and a woman named Rosa introduces herself. She has learned English from a man named Mr. Forbes. The tribe is called Macushi, and eventually Messinger gives up on communicating with the woman and decides to wait until the men return.

When the men return, they are already drunk and incapable of proper interaction. Tony and Messinger wait a week for the intoxication to wear off and try communication again. Messinger tries to explain that he wants to go to the land of the Pie-Wie tribe, but Rosa insists that they are a bad group of people. The two parties negotiate for two days and come to an agreement where twelve men and seven of their wives will travel with Tony and Messinger to Pie-Wie territory.

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Two Analysis

The life in wild unknown territory that Tony and Messinger explore is distinctly being compared and contrasted with the life of the London high society. The reader has to decide where Tony is better off. Things seem very promising for Tony at first. His trip is moving fairly well; everyone around him is seasick and he is able to move around freely. When the seas calm, he meets a beautiful young woman whose company he enjoys and who seems to really like him. It is at this point that the life in London that Tony tries to escape creeps back in. First, Therese feels deceived by the fact that Tony hasn't mentioned that he is still married. Then there is a chance that if she knew the story, she might not have felt so wronged, but Tony never shares it. Now alone again with Messinger, Tony starts to think of London. The reader sees that while Tony is suffering





through extreme temperatures, discomfort, and dangers, Brenda is back in London enjoying a party. Tony is thinking of the happier times when he and Brenda met and Brenda is talking about their divorce while dancing with another man. While Messinger and Tony try unsuccessfully to communicate with the Macushi people, Jock has no problem communicating frivolous matters with the Board of Agriculture. Also, notably here is the fact that at every mention of Jock throughout the story, there is mention of his speech on pigs. The occurrence is so much that the reader is led to believe that this speech was of great importance. However, the subject seems only important to Jock and his constituents and becomes even more trivial in light of Tony's plight. The hint of Tony finding more bad luck is presented once again.



# Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Three

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Three Summary

Beaver asks Mrs. Beaver if she has a job for Brenda at her shop. They both are annoyed at what has become of the situation with Brenda. When she calls, Beaver speaks to her shortly, turning down an invitation to spend the evening at Veronica's. Brenda, unable to afford having lunch with Jenny and Polly, orders sandwiches and stays in bed, a practice she has started to become accustomed to.

Tony and Dr. Messinger travel by foot for days, averaging about fifteen miles every day. They rest and eat on evenings, barely speaking, only to return to the trek the following day. They follow the Indian group, completely unassisted by any map. After they waded through miles of a river Rosa calls Waurupang, they go without water for weeks. They reach the border of the Pie-Wie country and Messinger names their stop "Second Base Camp".

Beaver's conversation with his mother motivates her to encourage Beaver to take a vacation. Even he is unsure what he is taking a vacation from, but agrees.

Provisions dwindle quickly in Tony and Messinger's camp because the Macushi refuse to hunt in Pie-Wie forests. The next three days are spent finding the right trees for canoes to travel down the river where Messinger estimates the "City" must be. Messinger wants to take eight men with them and some of the food and trade provisions, leaving four men and the women at the camp until they return. Rosa won't acknowledge anything that is communicated to her. Rosa finally responds when approached the next day, saying, "Macushi peoples no go with Pie-Wie peoples". Messinger tries offering her a supply of cigarettes and he is convinced that they will come around by the next day.

The boats are completed by noon the next day but Rosa still insists that Tony and Messinger will travel alone. They bring out all of the trading pieces they bought in London and Rosa is interested in a few things but not enough for her to agree to continue the journey. As a last resort, Messinger takes out mechanical mice that he was saving to trade with the Pie-Wie's. It appears at first that the Indians are fascinated with the moving toy, but Tony soon realizes that they are horrified. The entire group of Indians run away from the camp, crying in terror.

Beaver and Brenda have breakfast at a place called Daisy's. Neither of them can really afford the meal; Brenda has no money at all. Beaver tells Brenda that he is taking a trip to America and the tickets have already been purchased. Brenda is clearly saddened by the news but Beaver shortly tells her to behave.



Tony's instinct proves correct again and the two men wake up to find that the Macushi came back to camp in the middle of the night and cleared out.

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Three Analysis

This segment takes almost every character through a turn for the worst. The saga of Brenda and Tony's failed marriage is winding down and the only person who has emerged unscarred is Beaver. His complete lack of depth gave him the opportunity to take what he needed from every aspect of the affair and return what he had no use for. Mrs. Beaver, equally opportunistic, helps facilitates every calculated move that Beaver makes back up the social ladder. Rather than lose the social momentum that he has gained from Brenda by staying by her side at her lowest point, Beaver opts to wait out her downfall in another country.

Tony's life is quietly becoming a mess this time due to Dr. Messinger. The reservations of the doctor, expressed by other characters in previous segments, start to prove tangible. Dr. Messinger has no clue and no instinct for the chaos they have submerged themselves in. They have endured weeks of torture that could have been avoided if he let go of his superior air when he first met the Macushi people. As it turns out, the Macushi are more savvy and intelligent than the doctor ever gave them credit for. Tony has again blindly followed someone, trusting Messinger to keep things stable at the least. Now they are both stranded in an unknown country unprepared for what is before them.



# Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Four

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Four Summary

Tony and Messinger start the journey down the river alone. Wherever the boat gets caught they get out and wade, guiding the boat until the current picks up again. Aside from the insects and sporadic encounter with alligators, their trip carries on peacefully until Tony falls ill with a fever. The next day Tony feels better and both men are optimistic that the illness passed, but the fever returns that night. The fever continues in this pattern, so Messinger decides that they will continue down river in hopes of finding human life and aid for Tony.

Tony soon starts to hallucinate and Brenda is the first person he sees. When Tony is more coherent, Messinger explains to him that his illness is only going to continue and it is dangerous for him to have visions and delirium while in a canoe. He decides to leave Tony for the night and return for him with help in a day. He moves downstream and there is still no sign of life. Before long the waters become rough and Messinger realizes too late that a waterfall is ahead. Messinger's efforts are useless and his boat capsizes. It isn't long before he loses ground and the water closes over him.

Brenda meets with one of the family lawyers, Mr. Graceful, with hopes of obtaining some form of money from Tony's accounts. Mr. Graceful tells her that Tony left strict orders to keep Brenda away from all finances. Mr. Graceful replies that there is nothing Brenda can do to reverse the situation without a costly and lengthy court battle. As far as a final will, Mr. Graceful only discloses that Mr. Last would most likely have left all money to keep the estate at Hetton in its original grandeur. Back in her flat, she realizes that she is completely alone now, all of her friends are on luxurious trips and she is stuck in London barely able to afford a meal.

In Tony's mind, Brenda appears dressed in a ragged gown like the Indian, Rosa. They talk about a mix of the past and the present and all of the people they have encountered in their lives. The more he talks, the more jumbled things become. Eventually he sees the gates of the city they were in search of but he describes it like the City of Heaven and the gates are open waiting for him.

## Chapter Five, In Search of a City: Part Four Analysis

Tony and Messinger's adventure has come to an end. Simultaneously, Brenda's adventure has also closed. Sickness offers Tony the reality of traveling to an unknown country in search of an unknown civilization. They had no real medical support and no human beings around for miles to assist. The events lead to Messinger's death and



Tony is now stranded and hallucinating, near death himself. With all of the confusion in Tony's last moments, it's almost a relief that he may have come to the gates of heaven.

Even in delirium, Tony still thinks of Brenda because he loves her. As much as it may have seemed that Hetton was most important in his life, it has become clear Brenda has always been fundamental. Brenda tries to hold on to the memory of her marriage as a means to surviving. Brenda is left alone; all of the allies she had who encouraged her to carry on with Beaver and found amusement in Tony's pain have now left her. She sadly thinks that she has been wronged by Tony when it was her summer fling that cost Tony his life. At the same time, the peace that the chapter closes with is also brought about by the fact that Brenda may have finally gotten what she deserves.



# Chapter Six, Du Cote de Chez Todd

## Chapter Six, Du Cote de Chez Todd Summary

Mr. Todd has lived in the city called Amazonas for sixty years, essentially with no one knowing of his existence. The area which he lived were often claimed to be owned by both Brazil and Dutch Guiana, but none of the inhabitants recognize either government. Mr. Todd's house is distinctly close to the waters where Messinger's life ended. One of the Pie-Wie Indians whose village surrounds Todd's come to him with news that there is a stranger wandering through the forest. The man is Tony and he is still babbling in an incoherent state. He sees Todd's hut and comments, As the days pass, Todd nurses Tony with herbal medicines, and he slowly returns to life.

Tony and Mr. Todd don't speak much and Tony spends most of his time awake thinking about Brenda. Once Tony makes it through a full week without fever, Todd shows Tony his collection of books. Tony feels restless and starts to mention arrangements for leaving. As Tony presses the questioning, asking for a boat or means of transportation, Mr. Todd becomes obviously evasive. Tony tries talking to the Pie-Wie people about building a canoe in the language he picked up from the Macushi, but they don't respond. It is when Tony is reading one night that he realizes his fate. He finds a promissory note that the black man, Mr. Forbes drew up to hold Mr. Todd to their agreement to set him free. Tony tried refusing to read only to see Mr. Todd threateningly place a gun nearby.

Weeks pass with no change in Mr. Todd and Tony's routine. Finally a stranger comes to the city and gives Tony a renewed hope. Mr. Todd rushes the stranger away, but Tony has time to write his name on paper and slip it to the man. When weeks pass with no sign of hope, Tony decides to be cordial with Todd and obliges to take part in a celebration the Pie-Wie have planned. He is given a drink called piwari and is told that it is in good manners to drink the entire portion at once. He is handed numerous servings of the drink and while the Indians dance and celebrate, Tony sleeps. He wakes up with a headache, missing his watch and feeling strange. Tony finds out that he has been tricked. He was asleep for two days, long enough that he missed the search party who arrived looking for him. Todd gave the men Tony's watch as proof that he was there and showed them the gravesite of Mr. Forbes, implying that Tony was buried there. They both know that Tony's last hope of leaving is now lost.

## Chapter Six, Du Cote de Chez Todd Analysis

Mr. Todd is the topping on Tony's torment. When he thought in the previous chapter that he found the gates of Heaven, it was in fact the exact opposite. Brenda's infidelity and Messinger's incompetence led him straight into the hands of the devil. He compares his trust for Brenda and Messinger in his unintelligible babbling. "You're the first person who's spoken to me in days . . . the others won't stop . . . Brenda was with me at first



but she took the canoe and went off. She said she would come back that evening but she didn't. I expect she's staying with one of her new friends . . . rotten thing for a man to have his wife go away in a canoe. That was a long time ago. Nothing to eat since". Brenda and Messinger's action intertwine perfectly. Brenda also told Tony that she would be right back on her first trip to London but she never really returned.

Again, language is used to foreshadow what is to come. Mr. Todd is illiterate but plays on his words the entire chapter. "There is medicine for everything in the forest . . . to make you well and to make you ill . . . to cure you and give you fever, to kill you and send you mad". Todd establishes his power as soon as Tony is coherent enough to hear his words. "That is why they obey—for that reason and because I have the gun". If Tony paid attention he would have known his host's ill intentions from the start. The first book Todd has Tony read is *Bleak House*, a Charles Dickens story where a dispute among the main characters leads to chaos and consequences for them all. This appears to be the state that all of these characters are left in as the novel wraps up.



# Chapter Seven, English Gothic III

## Chapter Seven, English Gothic III Summary

Richard Last and his wife have taken over Hetton. There are small changes to the estate; fewer servants and a few additions to the property, such as a silver fox farm. Otherwise, the new Lasts have preserved Hetton as Tony would have wanted. The family, which includes four children, is planning to have a memorial dedication to Tony. Brenda sends a message that she cannot make it to the memorial. She has remarried to Jock and the children do not hesitate to offer their opinions on her behavior.

Many relatives, friends, and neighbors are present for the dedication; even Lady St. Cloud, Brenda's mother. Mrs. Beaver, still trying to find opportunity in every situation, suggested they buy a stone for the memorial listing Tony's birth and death dates. As she and Richard reflect on Tony, one of the children, Teddy Last, is more concerned with the fox farm. He changes out of his memorial clothes quickly and heads over to tend to the foxes. Although unconcerned with the ceremony for Tony's death, Teddy has sincere hopes of returning Hetton to its splendor in the days of his cousin Tony.

## Chapter Seven, English Gothic III Analysis

Brenda has remarried and none of the sensible characters, represented here by her mother and the Lasts, look favorably on what she has done. It is interesting that in one of the early chapters it notes that everyone thought that Brenda would marry someone like Jock. Mrs. Beaver is overlooked again, despite her ill-intended outreach to Lady St. Cloud. She claims to have been one of Tony's closest friends and offers to arrange all types of renovation in the name of the memorial. Sensibility wins out here and Lady St. Cloud keeps the job of organizing the memorial within the Hetton estate, as Tony would have wanted it.

Tony's estate has come full circle and is complete with the peace that Tony once felt there. Richard Last and his family also have a true love for Hetton and are working hard to restore it. It seems like Teddy, the second eldest son, is a little cold at first concerning his cousin's death. But in the end he is like Tony. Strangely, "Teddy" is the name that Jenny Abdul Akbar continually called Tony in ignorance of his correct name. Tony is finally somehow compensated; his beloved home will remain a grand estate and he is remembered for loving it that way.





# Characters

## Tony Last

Tony Last is the head of the household at Hetton Estate. He has acquired his estate from his family, turned over to him upon his father's death. He is married to Brenda Last for eight years and has one son, John Andrew. He loves the estate at Hetton, which includes a village and greenhouses and a church. According to contemporary times, Hetton is completely outdated, but it is the classic finery that Tony appreciates the most. Tony is very content with his life but has everything turned upside down when Brenda gets bored with their relationship and starts an affair.

The affair starts after Tony casually invites a young man he has drinks with to see Hetton. He enjoys it when Hetton is appreciated and often extends the same invitation. To Tony's surprise, the young man, John Beaver, accepts. Brenda is attracted to him and the idea of having a young man almost immediately. Tony is in the dark about the affair for the majority of its existence. He is under the impression that Brenda is taking an economic class in London while she carries on her tryst. Tony is patient as Brenda spends less time at Hetton and more time in London.

When Tony finds out that he has been deceived for months, he is distraught but still loves Brenda and tries to be patient. Tony even puts together a charade of infidelity on his part so Brenda won't be embarrassed in the divorce hearings. When Brenda becomes greedy and wants Tony to sell the Hetton estate in order to keep Beaver around, Tony finally draws the line. He completely cuts Brenda off and takes a trip to Brazil with a strange doctor named Messinger. The trip was intended to be for a few months to explore a lost city, but Tony falls ill, gets stranded there, and never returns.

Throughout the novel, Tony is the most sensible and level-headed character. He has faith in people as a whole but is dogged because he never indulges in the social pettiness that surrounds all of his peers. His character is used as a tool to illuminate most of the wrong in the temperament of this social group.

## Brenda Last

Brenda Last is the wife of Tony Last. Her sister is Marjorie, her brother is Reggie, and her mother is Lady St. Cloud. Brenda was a social woman before she met Tony, and in the beginning, Tony even ventured into her scene in order to woo her. She functioned in a circle of upper-class shallow people, mainly women whose lives revolve around parties and trends. She is a beautiful and charming woman and it was thought that she would marry within the circle; she could have any of the top choice single men around them. However, Brenda marries Tony and one weekend playing hostess to an acquaintance of Tony's leads her to infidelity. She is bored with her marriage, living on



the Hetton estate. She misses the "in" scene, and the young man, Mr. Beaver, that she chooses for her affair is her ticket back in.

At the beginning of the affair Brenda is still a sympathetic character. Tony seems consumed with the estate at Hetton and she is understandably bored. She is that middle character stuck between Tony's sensibilities and the socialite absurdities. Everyone who meets Brenda remarks on her charm and grace. It is unfortunate when Brenda indulges too far; caring more for about partying and socializing than her husbands feelings, her character appears much less charming. She barely notices when her son is killed and is just happy that she now has a reason to be free of Tony. Brenda's sister and mother are the only ones who verbally disapprove of Brenda, but it is clear that her friends have more of a say in her actions.

Brenda becomes so consumed with re-entering this world that she no longer cares that she hurts a man who truly loves her, doesn't care about her family, and doesn't care that Beaver is completely using her. She becomes a commodity to Beaver, and when she is no longer of use to him, he leaves her. At Brenda's lowest point after Tony cuts off her finances, she is alone in her flat and doesn't even have enough money for a proper meal. After Tony is pronounced dead, Brenda marries her way back into social graces with her groom Jock Grant-Menzies, a former friend of Tony's. In the end, as Tony's relatives talk about her behavior leading up to Tony's death, it is clear that her callousness mindset outweighs her good side and others finally see it.

## **Jock Grant-Menzies**

Jock Grant-Menzies is a friend of Tony Last. He holds a representative position in the government, noted by the speech on pigs that he has been planning the entire novel. He is attractive to the women characters in the novel and is a wanted commodity. Jock and Tony become closer friends when Brenda starts having an affair. He clearly doesn't approve of how she is treating Tony. Nonetheless, he marries Brenda once Tony dies.

## **Mr. Beaver**

Mr. Beaver is a young man who will leech on anyone who will provide him a path to the upper class social society. His father was wealthy, but died and left him and his mother struggling. Before Beaver meets Brenda Last, he is only known for filling in for absent husbands on the social scene. No one really knows him and what they know they don't like. Brenda Last falls for Beaver, but from the start he doesn't care much for her. He spends the summer with her taking advantage of the fact that her closest friends are high society women and men. In the end, when Brenda has taken him as far as she can, he leaves her and takes some time away in New York.



## Mrs. Beaver

Mrs. Beaver is a lady of all trades and an undeniable opportunist. She runs an antique business but is known for accommodating anything anyone might need for their home. Like her son, she is a social climber but no necessarily liked by anyone. Mrs. Beaver finds a way to insert her services in any situation. Her most tacky display of this trait is trying to use Tony's death to get a contract on work on the church and on his memorial stone at the Hetton Estate.

## Polly Cockpurse

Polly Cockpurse is a friend of Brenda's who has married into money and is the social queen of the group. She always has entertainment and parties at her house, where everyone considered important is in attendance. Tony doesn't like her much, and when talking to his son compares her appearance to a monkey. From then on John Andrew refers to her as the monkey-woman.

## Jenny Abdul Akbar

Jenny Abdul Akbar is a princess by a past marriage who rents the flat next to Brenda. She was abused by her husband, the prince of Morocco. She is the oddest character in their group but is very wealthy and is therefore accepted. She is known for the heavy aroma of her perfume whenever she enters a room. She is very pretty, so Brenda tries to get Tony to fall from her to release her from any blame for her affair with Beaver. Tony can't stand to be in the same room with her for very long, but John Andrew loves her and even flirts with her a little.

## Marjorie

Marjorie is Brenda Last's younger sister. She is married to Allan, a politician who travels a lot for work. She is the only person who verbalizes her discomfort with Brenda's affair from the start. She sees right through Beaver immediately and thinks it's foolish to throw away a marriage with Tony for Mr. Beaver.

## Allan

Allan, Marjorie's husband, plays the stereotypical female role. The women characters determine the social hierarchy so the men fall in where they are led. Allan is no different. When speaking of Brenda's affair, he says whatever seems right at the moment, agreeing with whoever the speaker may be. Later, when the affair is revealed to Tony, he advises that Tony just allow Brenda to do as she pleases for a while and hope that everything blows over. According to him, he has done the same in his own marriage.



## **Mrs. Rattery**

Mrs. Rattery, also known as "the shameless blonde", is the only American character in the novel and distinctly different from them all. She lacks patience, flies her own plane, rides horses, wears overalls, gets dirty, and speaks her mind. She is apparently still beautiful and dates Jock Grant Menzies for most of the novel.

## **Milly**

Milly first meets Tony in a seedy bar one late night when he and Jock are completely drunk. Tony spends the entire time he is with Milly talking about Brenda. Jock pays Milly and her friend Babs for her time, so when they are trying to find someone for Tony to have a fake affair with, they turn to Milly. She is well prepared for the job, having done it before, but she brings her daughter Winnie along. In the end it is the presence of Milly's daughter that gives Tony the legal upper hand in the situation between him and Brenda.



# Objects/Places

## Hetton

The Hetton Estate has been in the Last family for generations. The estate, which houses a village, apartments, greenhouses, a church and other facilities, was important to Tony's father and equally important to Tony. Hetton is two hours outside of London by train. Architectural critics have declared Hetton outdated, but Tony has no intention of changing its make up. The estate is available for tours and Tony loves showing the property as well as some of its art and antique collections.

## Brenda's Flat

Brenda decided to rent a flat in London so she would have a place to stay whenever she partied and spent time with Beaver. Tony put aside renovations at Hetton in order to accommodate Brenda's new residence. The flat is one room with a bath and kitchen—too small for two people, according to Tony.

## Polly's House

Polly makes her house the center for all social gathering. She has a big party that everyone thought to be important attends. She also brings other entertainment; once bringing in a psychic for her and all of her friends. Some of the other women have considerably smaller houses, so everyone prefers to spend time in Polly's house.

## Brat's Club

An establishment formed by the younger upper class men who were uncomfortable trying to fit in with the old crowd at more strict discriminating clubs. These prime men attend the club to drink, sit in front of the fire, play cards, and enjoy the atmosphere.

## London

The city of London is used as a direct contrast to life at Hetton and other locations mentioned in the novel. London is at the heart of popular occurrence among this group of people.

## Brighton

Tony has to take a stranger, Milly, to Brighton, a seaside hotel area, in order to fake a love tryst. She ends up bringing her daughter along, who Tony is stuck with more than



anyone. He is unaccustomed to the brazen nature of the child and is willing to do anything she wants in order to keep her quiet.

## **Morgan le Fay Room**

This is the title of the room that Tony has slept in all of his adult life. Morgan Le Fay is known in Gothic legend as a magician and half sister of King Arthur and said to have been unhappily married.

## **Guinevere Room**

Brenda has taken this room as hers, sleeping separately from Tony. After Brenda begins her affair she is rarely at Hetton, so out of loneliness on some nights Tony breaks his habit and sleeps in the Guinevere room alone. On Brenda's last pleasant night at Hetton, they sleep in the room together.

## **Galahad Room**

This is the room that Beaver stays in when he visits Hetton for the first and last time. When Richard Last and his family take over the estate, Teddy Last chooses this room as his own.

## **Beaver Family House**

This is the first house introduced in the novel. Beaver and his mother live in this small house together. It is slightly overflowing with belongings from two larger houses that they once owned. The house is two floors and the two seem comfortable enough in it that they spend time with one another on mornings at home.



# Themes

## Trust as a Weakness

Every main character trusts someone, depending on that individual to act in a certain manner or facilitate something particular. In every occasion the trustee fails the one who trusts; leaving them in strange and desperate positions.

Tony's character trusts the most, starting with his wife Brenda. It is mentioned on more than one occasion that Tony had fallen into the habit of trusting Brenda. The first implication of this statement is that the trust is misplaced, but also rare among marriages for this group of people. As a result, Tony is the last to know about Brenda's affair with Beaver and has become too naive of her nature to understand how far she will go. Brenda uses Tony's trust to try to take everything he loves and pushes him to seek a drastic change in his life. Tony is good natured so he trusts again when he meets Dr. Messinger. He knows very little about the man but leaves his safety and livelihood in the doctor's hands. Again the trust isn't reciprocated, and Tony is taken advantage of.

Brenda trusts without realizing that in that act, she has gives up the hand of power. It is clear that power rather than weakness is important to Brenda. She is manipulatively charming and uses her charm for access to anything she wants. This all changes when trust becomes her weakness. She trusts that Beaver will remain with her despite his actions and lack of feeling for her. She gives up everything she has with Tony for Beaver and ends up with nothing. Beaver manipulates Brenda's weakness and trust to climb the social ladder. Once he has reached as far as her popularity can carry him, he leaves her at her lowest moment.

## Right vsersus Wrong

This is a novel that offers and mocks a mindset of a group of people who live life as they know how. In a plot such as this, there is always the question of which characters' actions the reader has been led to deem right or wrong. In this social group the only occupations mentioned are politics and archeology mixed with politics. Every other aspect of these characters is socially based. It therefore becomes harder to determine right and wrong as the concept becomes relative.

Nonetheless, starting with Tony and Brenda, the reader is clearly encouraged to sympathize with one over the other. They then become representatives of sensibility over superficiality, or right over wrong. Tony, although thought of as a snob due to his lack of social skill, is the most levelheaded character presented. He lives based on his feelings and understanding of humanness. It is human for him to love, trust, and honor those he has chosen for his own circle—mainly consisting of Brenda. He becomes the character with heart and the reader sympathizes. As a rational thinker, the reader believes the sensible characters to be right in their personalities, actions, and choices.



Therefore Brenda has become the clear choice to represent the wrong characters. Brenda is believed at first to be the charming and good-natured counterpart to Tony. Her charm is soon overcast by her cold manner. It takes one weekend with another man to transform her facade into a shallow socialite. As Brenda reconnects with the ladies of the upper class London, the reader sees her behavior as doing wrong. Strangely however, it isn't easy to write Brenda off with Polly and the rest of the group. She is judged more harshly because she is directly contrasted with Tony. Overall, "right" behavior is needed in these characters but is the least dominant description.

## Power through Estate

The most significant homes mentioned in the novel are the Hetton Estate, the Beaver home, Brenda's flat, and Mr. Todd's hut. Estate is used as an identification of power and understandably so in a class driven society. Those who possess the domain have the power.

The novel opens in Beaver and Mrs. Beaver's home. They are the poorest characters introduced and this is how their house is described: "There was little in it to suggest the austere elegant interiors which Mrs. Beaver planned for her customers. It was crowded with the unsaleable furniture of two larger houses, without pretension to any period least of all to the present" (p. 4). These two characters are at the bottom of the social ladder trying to make their way up.

Brenda's flat leaves Brenda powerless. It seems for a while that the small room offers her freedom and unpredictability, but her lowest scene is set in the flat, hungry and alone.

The second most powerful estate is Mr. Todd's hut. Like the Beaver's home, it isn't financially valuable, but even in a delirious state Tony notices it's power. "Architecture, harmonizing with local character . . . indigenous material employed throughout". This home has given Todd the power over the village around him, and in the end, over Tony. It is where Tony is defeated and spends his last days a prisoner.

On the other end of the scale is the Hetton Estate, the most wealthy mentioned in the entire plot and the last spoken about. Many characters piggyback on the power offered by this estate. It is only when Brenda threatens to take Hetton away that Tony finds his voice and stands up against her. Hetton has given Tony his best moments, it has given employment and residence to many and it is the only estate that outlives every situation in the novel.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is written as a third person narrative. It is a story full of irony and sarcasm and the third voice gives the reader an opportunity to assume their own position. The reader is given authority to find humor and education by choice.

The chapters are made up of direct quotes and dialogue from the characters. There are few places where the story is told solely from the narrative point of view. The personality and mindset of each character is displayed firsthand. The author doesn't have to sum up for the reader that Beaver doesn't care for Brenda; the impression is summed up in their dialogue. "Until Wednesday, when I thought something had happened to you, I had no idea that I loved you."

"Well you've said it enough. You clod" (p. 171).

## Setting

The novel is set in various areas of England and Brazil. Most of the characters are native to either area. Hetton and London are the main areas highlighted in England. Hetton is the estate where the two main characters, Tony and Brenda Last, reside. There are servants and staff who dwell on the property as well, and people who live in the village. There is a church and greenhouses, both of which Tony faithfully frequents on Sundays. Overall, the atmosphere is described with a classic beauty and peace until Brenda becomes unsettled and tries to change things.

London is described as almost the exact opposite of Hetton. It is busy and lively; there are social clubs and parties every weekend, lasting all through the night. Because of Brenda's change in lifestyle, London represents freedom and infidelity for the main characters.

Brazil is the last place that Tony sees alive. It represents the unknown. Tony and Messinger encounter new languages, new climate, unknown wildlife, and new people in Brazil. Both characters are completely out of their element, and in turn Brazil becomes the place of danger.

## Language and Meaning

The tone of the writing in this piece is clearly sarcastic and mocking; however, the language is not. The author uses the direct quotes and descriptions of the characters to define the sense of absurdity that is prevalent throughout every chapter. For example, Brenda gets emotional in a conversation about the fact that the chiropractor will not



have a session with Marjorie's dog, but coldly tells Tony not to brood every time he brings up their failing marriage.

Foreshadowing is a very key component, and the author hides it in plain view. The foreshadowing is saved for events that are extremely illogical. The reader decides that it couldn't possibly come true only to find the very event unfold among the characters. The hints placed through the chapters also give the reader the feeling of superior sensibility over these characters and makes them look even worse for not avoiding all of the calamity and misfortune that overtake their lives.

## Structure

There are seven chapters in the novel, most of which are broken down into parts. The headings of the chapters give the reader an initial idea of where the story will turn. The complete novel is made up of three hundred and eight pages.



## Quotes

"she's lovely, he's rather a stick." p. 6

"luckily they had that old-fashioned . . . extinguisher that ruins everything." p. 3

"I made Beaver pay for a drink . . . he nearly died of it." p. 11

"It was, transparently, a made-up party, the guests being chosen for no mutual bond—least of all affection for Mrs. Beaver or for each other—except that their names were in current use . . ." p. 51

"a recreation [Brenda] particularly enjoyed." p. 47

"I feel big. I think it's Mr. Cruttwell. He puts all one's nerves right and one's circulation and everything." p. 55

"From Beaver's point of view, these old friends of hers were quite the most desirable people at the party, and he was delighted to be seen at their table." p. 63

"I hear Brenda disgraced herself." p. 67

"I'm sorry to be pompous, but I just don't like your Mr. Beaver hanging about the house all day and calling me Marjorie." p. 74

"For five years she had been a legendary, almost ghostly name, the imprisoned princess of fairy story, and now that she had emerged there was more enchantment in the occurrence, than in the mere change of habit of any other circumspect wife." p. 75

"Beaver, for the first time in his life found himself a person of interest and, almost of consequence. Women studied him with a new scrutiny, wondering what they had missed in him; men treated him as an equal, even as a successful competitor." p. 76

"I never thought it would last but she seems really keen on it . . . I suppose it's a good plan . . . there wasn't much for her to do at Hetton. Of course she would rather die than admit it, but I believe she got a bit bored there sometimes. I've been thinking it over and that's the conclusion I came to. Brenda must have been bored." p. 86

"It is not uncommon at Brat's Club, between nine and ten in the evening, to find men in white ties and tail coats sitting by themselves and eating, in evident low spirits, large and extravagant dinners. They are those who have been abandoned at the last minute by their women." p. 84



"You're married, aren't you . . . your friend is too. You'd be surprised how many gentlemen come here just to talk about their wives." p. 95

"He [Tony] had to learn not make surprise visits.' Beaver's response offers support for Brenda's mindset; 'You are one for making people learn things.'" p. 100

"He [Tony] watched John riding in paddock. The boy clearly bore him ill will for their quarrel on Wednesday; when he applauded a jump, John said 'When's mummy coming down?'" p. 104

"You ought not to say bastard or lousy in front of me, nanny says not." p. 105

"She's got the wrong chap. John Andrew's mad about her . . . quite embarrassing. . . My dear, I don't believe it's going to be any good . . . the poor boy's got some taste you know, and a sense of humour." pp. 120-121

"The next day Brenda came to church with him. She had decided to devote the weekend wholly to him; it would be the last for some time." p. 128

"This has been a jolly weekend . . . just like old times before the economics began." p. 129

"You see she's got nothing else, much, except John I've got her, and I love the house . . . but with Brenda John always came first . . . she's been in London such a lot. I'm afraid that's going to hurt her.'

"You can't ever tell what's going to hurt people.'

". . . she's got nothing else, much, except John.'" pp. 148-49

"Jock will be more than half way there by now, about Aylesbury or Tring. . . It's less than four hours ago that it happened . . . Brenda will hear in an hour now . . ." p. 149

"She frowned, not at once taking in what he was saying. 'John . . . John Andrew . . . I . . . Oh thank God . . .'" p. 162

"When the news became known Marjorie said to Allan, 'well anyway, this will mean the end of Mr. Beaver.'"

"That's the end of Tony so far as Brenda is concerned.'" p. 165

"I couldn't stay here. It's all over, don't you see, our life down here.'" p. 169

"Until Wednesday, when I thought something had happened to you, I had no idea that I loved you.'

"Well you've said it enough. You clod.'" p. 171

"The people who had clustered round to witness Tony's discomfort, looked at one



another askance. 'Two breakfasts? Wanting to let the child bathe?' Several of the crowd followed them round . . . curious to see what new enormity this mad father might attempt." p. 199

". . . My studies took me to London. I realized that he no longer cared for me as he used to. He began drinking heavily . . . from then onwards I had him watched by private agents and as a result of what they told me, I left my husband's house . . ." p. 200

"So what your proposal really amounts to is that I should give up Hetton in order to buy Beaver for Brenda." p. 207

"Brenda is not going to get her divorce. The evidence I provided at Brighton isn't worth anything. There happens to have been a child there all the time. She slept both nights in the room that I am supposed to have occupied. If you care to bring the case I shall defend it and win, but I think when you have seen my evidence you will drop it. I am going away for six months or so. When I come back, if she wishes it, I shall divorce Brenda without settlements of any kind. Is that clear?" p. 210

"He was going away because it seemed to be conduct expected of a husband in his circumstances, because the associations of Hetton were for the first time poisoned for him, because he wanted to live for a few months away from people who would know him or Brenda, in places where there was no expectation of meeting her or Beaver or Reggie St. Cloud at every corner he frequented . . ." p. 217

"It was this time of year in London when there were parties every night. Once, when he was trying to get engaged to Brenda, he had gone to them all. . . Tony began to imagine a dinner party assembling at that moment in London, with Brenda there and the surprised look with which she greeted each new arrival. . . Would there be a fire at the end of May? He could not remember." p. 237

"It's all a matter of holding down Mr. Beaver. He's getting very restive. I have to feed him a bit of high life every week or so . . ." p. 238

"They collected their wicker baskets and their rations of farine, their bows and arrows, the gun and their . . . knives; they rolled up their hammocks into compact cylinders. They took nothing with them that was not theirs. Then they crept back through the shadows, into the darkness." p. 266

"Nothing you can claim without application to the Courts. You might find solicitors who would advise you to take action. I cannot say that I should be one of them. Mr. Last would oppose any such order to the utmost and I think that, in the present circumstances, the Courts would undoubtedly find for him. In any case, it would be a prolonged, costly and slightly undignified proceeding." p. 276

"Architecture, harmonizing with local character . . . indigenous material employed throughout." p. 286



"I will give you something to make you feel better. The forest has remedies for everything; to make you awake and to make you sleep." p. 301

"You're the first person who's spoken to me in days . . . the others won't stop . . . Brenda was with me at first but she took the canoe and went off. She said she would come back that evening but she didn't. I expect she's staying with one of her new friends . . . rotten thing for a man to have his wife go away in a canoe. That was a long time ago. Nothing to eat since." p. 285

"There is medicine for everything in the forest . . . to make you well and to make you ill . . . to cure you and give you fever, to kill you and send you mad." p. 289

"Well I think it's a jolly good thing [that she can't attend.] She couldn't show much widowly grief. It didn't take her long to her hitched up again." p. 305



## Topics for Discussion

Explore the author's choices in naming the characters—what is the significance of character names in the plot?

Hetton and London are central to the novel. Compare and contrast the two settings. Why is Brazil added to the plot?

Decide if any of the characters have learned a lesson through all of the mishap that occurs in the plot.

What is Messigner's significance in Tony's life? Why has the author brought him into the story?

Tony's character seems to lose the most; is there satisfactory retribution for him at all in the novel? If so, explore at what points and how those around him respond to it.

Why is the reader introduced to the new Last family at the conclusion of the novel?

Does the author intend for the reader to find amusement or discord with the characters? Who specifically is the reader meant to like or dislike?

What is the distinction between the male and female characters? Are there roles that each group plays on a whole? Are these stereotypical roles?