

# **Jemima J.: A Novel About Ugly Ducklings and Swans Study Guide**

**Jemima J.: A Novel About Ugly Ducklings and Swans  
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## Plot Summary

"Jemima J.: A Novel About Ugly Ducklings and Swans" is a novel about self worth, and about learning to value ones self regardless of body size. It is a journey of discovery, and one that shows body size is not a determiner of happiness.

"Jemima J" is a story about a young woman's journey to find herself. Jemima is a kind, generous, caring young woman whose heavy size often makes her unhappy. She lives with two tiny women who often make her feel even worse, and works with Geraldine, another gorgeous young woman. Geraldine, however, befriends Jemima, and in her, Jemima realizes that beautiful women are not always cruel. Jemima works with Ben Williams, as well, and she is head over heels in love with him, but although Ben does like Jemima, he is not romantically interested. When Ben and Jemima take an internet class, Jemima discovers the world of online dating, and soon meets Brad, a wealthy, buff, handsome man in California. Jemima pretends to be thin, and the two begin an online relationship. As she talks more to Brad, she finds the willpower she needed, and begins losing weight. She joins a gym, and becomes obsessed with exercise and eating, but she does rapidly lose the weight. Unfortunately for her, by this time, Ben has taken another job as a television presenter, and is no longer in contact. But Brad, her internet love, is dying to meet her, so J.J., as she now calls herself, flies to LA. Brad is everything she dreamed of, but although they get along well and have a successful intimate relationship, Jemima feels something is wrong. She does agree, however, to stay another three months. Eventually, however, she comes to learn that in reality, Brad is in love with his heavy assistant, but because he is obsessed with how things appear, he needed a "trophy" wife. Jemima is crushed and wants to return to England, but cannot afford the ticket change, so she must remain another two months. J.J. soon learns Ben is in LA, however, and the two meet up again. Ben falls immediately in love with the new J.J., but when he returns to England, he loses her phone number. Jemima is again crushed when Ben doesn't call, but a phone call to her good friend Geraldine straightens out the issue. Geraldine and Ben send Jemima enough money to return home, where Jemima moves out of her flat and in with Geraldine. Eventually, she and Ben marry.

"Jemima J.: A Novel About Ugly Ducklings and Swans" is a good reminder that size isn't everything, and that a person's happiness comes from the inside, not from how they look. Jemima learns, over the course of the novel, that while being healthy is important, obsessing about weight and images only leads to unhappiness. It is only by being happy with ones self that one is really able to enjoy life.



# Chapter One through Chapter Four

## Chapter One through Chapter Four Summary

"Jemima J" is the story of one woman's journey through weight loss, as she struggles to find herself after losing weight. It is a story of hope, and one that teaches that self worth is far more important, and influential, than one's weight or outward appearance.

Chapter One introduces Jemima Jones, a twenty seven year old heavy woman who wishes she were thin. She cuts photos from magazines of women she wants to look like, and she believes everyone looks at her with pity because of her weight. She also admits that she eats more than she should, and that she knows her unhappy childhood plays a role in her obesity. She knows she is kind, warm, funny, and intelligent, but she knows people look past her good features, and see only fat. She admits to sneaking food throughout the day, in part because she wants to be a journalist, but is stuck as a column writer for a small newspaper in Kilburn, London. After Jemima speaks to her editor again about being promoted, and is again turned down, she sees Ben Williams, whom she admits she and every other woman in the office has a crush on. He, Jemima, and Geraldine, a beautiful, thin woman working at the paper, often eat lunch together. Geraldine is uninterested in Ben, as she aims for wealthy men, even though Ben clearly fancies her. When Jemima returns to her flat, she is disheartened to find her two young, perky, pretty roommates still home. Jemima serves them tea, as she does every evening, and listen to their stories of the men in their office. They will, Jemima knows, eventually leave for the evening, dressed up and ready to hunt down a date for the night. Jemima marvels at their diet of champagne and cocaine, but also knows she herself is happy, although she wishes to be thin. As she goes to her room, she fantasizes about being thin, as she eats a box of cookies.

Chapter Two finds Jemima both comforted by her bulk and repulsed by it. But today, she is going to an internet class, and is excited to learn. She does find features she enjoys as she gets ready for the day, but realizes she avoids the mirror, because of her weight. She thinks of her normal morning routine, which involves heaping bowls of cereal and huge bacon sandwiches, followed by egg and bacon sandwiches at tea time, potato salads, coleslaw, and rolls with butter at lunch, cake at second tea, candy bars on the way home, and binging further at night, dreaming of romance. Jemima admits she is not a virgin, but that she has very little experience in that area. Today, though, she is excited, as Geraldine is picking her up, and Jemima is thrilled she would even be seen with her. When she arrives, Jemima is immediately intimidated by her perfection, but she also knows Geraldine cannot write nearly as well as she. Jemima often corrects Geraldine's newspaper copies, and doesn't mind, as she is her friend. The two laugh and talk, and Jemima realizes Geraldine is just as insecure as she. They pick up Ben Williams, laughing over their imagined views of his bachelor pad he shares with two others, but soon Jemima is again intimidated as they talk about their nights. Jemima lies jokingly, claiming she got drunk and stoned, and then had sex in a bathroom. Ben and



Geraldine laugh, getting the joke, and Jemima is relieved, as she doesn't have to admit she merely stayed home, again.

In Chapter Three, Jemima is thrilled to learn about the internet, and fascinated by the possibilities. She is also thrilled that Ben is just as interested, although Geraldine is bored. Following the class, Jemima is confused as Geraldine suggests a drink, and Jemima thinks she can't possibly be inviting her out. When she and Ben beckon for Jemima to follow, however, she realizes she is mistaken, and happily follows them.

In Chapter Four the following day, Jemima realizes she is having a great time with the internet, and reveals she has not had chocolate. When she arrives home, she is annoyed as Lisa and Sophie again claim to be in love with another new client. She humors them, then tells them about her evening out. She knows they think Ben must be unattractive, but she tells them of her crush anyway, needing to tell someone. The girls listen, but clearly think Jemima is lying. At the same time, Ben sits in his own apartment, dreaming of being a news anchor on television. He practices as he listens to the news, and thinks of his wealthy family, which he accepts little help from. He also thinks of his past relationships, as he heads to the pub to meet his friends.

## Chapter One through Chapter Four Analysis

Chapter One introduces several characters that are important in the novel, along with several important themes. First, readers meet Jemima Jones, a smart, witty, intelligent, kind, and caring young woman with two issues, her weight and her self esteem. It is clear from the beginning that Jemima doesn't just suffer from weight issues, she also attributes many of her daily issues to her weight. She knows her underlying problems with food, recognizes why she continues to eat, and even admits she has a problem. However, Jemima is seemingly unable to get past her issues to find the motivation to become thin. Her life, her relationships, and even her career is stalled, she thinks, as a result of her weight, but readers can also see that her weight has caused self esteem issues that may also play a part in her failing relationships. Her friendship with Geraldine, she thinks, is based on pity, while she also allows her roommates to treat her horribly. Her fantasizes of being thin push her even further into her eating binges. It is obvious that Jemima has issues far beyond simply her weight, and this is explored throughout the novel.

Additionally, Ben Williams is introduced here, as well. Ben is the classical good looking man at the office, chased after by all but his one crush. Jemima clearly finds him attractive, but also believes he could never fall for her, as a result of her weight. Geraldine is introduced here as well. Geraldine appears to be a kind young woman, although she is clearly interested in wealth and appearance. She doesn't seem to care about being seen with Geraldine, as she eats lunch with her daily, and neither does Ben. These two characters represent those in society who may be attractive, but who do not judge others by their appearance.



On the other hand, Lisa and Sophie are also introduced. These two characters care almost solely about how they appear to others, and they also look down on Jemima, as a result of her weight. They treat her almost as a miserly aunt, as they talk to her, ask her for tea and comfort, but who clearly care little for her as a person. They never invite her with them, and they don't seem to realize she is even a person. These characters represent those in society who not only care for appearances, but who judge others by how they look, and by what they can give them.

Chapter Two again shows that Jemima is torn between being comfortable with her bulk, and being repulsed by it. She does find features about herself attractive, showing she is not completely down on herself. On the other hand, her inability to believe people are willing to be seen with her again underline her insecurities. Her eating habits, described here, explain much about her weight, and one can sense the inner struggle Jemima has between comfort in her routine and her weight issues. Again, her feelings of inadequacy around Geraldine show her insecurities. At the same time, however, her ability to recognize her writing superiority also provides hope that Jemima can find the courage to accept herself, as well. Geraldine and Jemima clearly get along, foreshadowing their blossoming friendship over the course of the novel. The fact that Geraldine seems completely comfortable with Jemima, despite her weight, shows she cares little about how her friends appear to others. This is equally shown about Ben as he too is unafraid to be seen with Jemima. As Jemima becomes more comfortable with these individuals, she begins to loosen up, and they become friendlier, suggesting that part of Jemima's social issues stem not from her weight, but from her lack of confidence.

Chapter Three, while short, again underlines Jemima's self image issues. She is fascinated by the internet, foreshadowing her use of it throughout the novel, and her new shared interest with Ben suggests they now have a bonding point foreshadowing their own budding friendship. At the same time, however, when Geraldine invites she and Ben for a drink, Jemima's self image freezes her, making it difficult for her to believe anyone would invite her out. This again shows Jemima suffers greatly as a result of her perception about herself.

Chapter Four reveals more about Sophie and Lisa, as well as about Ben, and also offers a glimmer of hope for Jemima. As Jemima finds herself preoccupied, she also finds herself eating less, suggesting that as she allows herself to find interests outside of her home, she may be able to avoid overeating. Lisa and Sophie, however, prove to be completely unable to be considerate of Jemima, as she finds herself confiding in them about Ben. They are so wrapped up in appearances, even they can not imagine the possibility that Jemima could be liked, or even loved, by an attractive person. They seem to pity her in her crush, instead of encouraging her, and they inadvertently put her down.

The revelations about Ben in this chapter are important for a number of reasons. First, they show Ben is not a man of appearances, as his family is wealthy, and he refuses their complete help, choosing instead to work for his achievements. Ben is also driven, as he pursues far more than his current career. His relationships have been limited, although seemingly high profile, showing he is choosy about his partners. Ben's flat, his

room, and his practice of news casting also show he is destined for more, foreshadowing his move to television journalism later in the novel.



# Chapter Five through Chapter Seven

## Chapter Five through Chapter Seven Summary

Chapter Five finds Jemima trying to find her article information from the internet, rather than from someone over the phone. Soon, Ben joins Jemima, and suggests they look at pornography sites, which Jemima admits she was vaguely curious about. However, when images begin to come up of women in various sexual positions, Jemima blushes, but when Geraldine arrives, the trio laugh, noting the unsexiness of porn. They travel to an internet cafe, where they pose as "Honey", and begin talking to chatters. After learning the lingo from some of the individuals, and after Jemima chats to a person who describes, graphically, an oil massage, Ben chats to a woman while Jemima and Geraldine go down to the lunchroom for coffee.

In Chapter Six, Jemima begins to realize she can pretend to be anyone on the Internet, even a thin person, and since she usually just dreams of being thin and dating Ben, such fantasizes are well earned. In addition, Jemima realizes she has not had chocolate in over two weeks and she realizes her life is changing for the better. She stops at a bookstore, and as she peruses the books, finally purchasing one about the Internet, the third party narrator notes Ben, too, is in the bookstore, but the two never see one another. Outside, too, the two almost meet, but Jemima chooses to sit in a cafe, whereas Ben chooses a pub. Inside, a woman named Sam begins hitting on him earnestly, and Ben is interested, at least sexually. When Jemima leaves the cafe, she sees Ben and Sam in the pub, and immediately her bright mood is shattered. She cries as she heads home.

In Chapter Seven, Jemima admits she went home and cried for hours, and wondered why good things never happened to her. She blames her weight for her inadequate life, but she admits she does love Ben. For his part, the narrator notes, Ben did not sleep with Sam the night before, as he became uninterested when she began to make it clear she wanted to sleep with him. Ben admits he liked high maintenance women who respect themselves. Jemima, for her part, sat looking for Ben all day, being "bored, fat, and unhappy". Thus, when Geraldine calls, she is thrilled to go to tea, and even made happy when Geraldine asks if she has lost weight. She has, in fact, although she binged the night before. Geraldine discusses her current relationship, as she thinks she should starting dating others. When Jemima painfully suggests Ben, she is scoffed at, as Geraldine likes men with more money. Back upstairs, Jemima rewrites a piece for Geraldine, and looks through her Internet book. She hits the Internet cafe, and talks to a man named Brad, who claims to be a buff gym owner in California. Jemima, for her part, claims to be a fit news reporter. After a long conversation, Jemima logs off after calling herself J.J., and she is excited when Brad asks to talk to her tomorrow.





## Chapter Five through Chapter Seven Analysis

Chapter Five reveals more about Jemima, as well as introduces the idea of online dating. Jemima's feelings for Ben are even more clear in this chapter, as even his accidental brush of her breast sends her to the moon, not to mention her embarrassment at watching porn. However, Ben's interest seems genuine, but almost merely curious, suggesting he is not the type who regularly looks at such photos. The chat room, filled without people all talking, and flirting, suggests there is another world these individuals are not aware of, and introduce the idea that Jemima could be anyone online. This foreshadows her depiction of herself as thin later in the novel.

Chapter Six furthers this idea as even Jemima realizes she can be thin on the internet. As a sightless place, Jemima can be anyone, and can look the part. She is empowered by the lack of sight, in that no one can she is overweight. This alone suggests Jemima's issues may be caused more by how she thinks others see her than how they really see her. Such fantasies, considering her usual ones about Ben, are understandable. This chapter also shows that Jemima does have hope of being thin, if she can find things to do that preoccupy her mind. When she is bored, Jemima eats, and then obsesses about her eating, which makes her eat more. When she is doing something else, particularly something she enjoys, she doesn't think about food, and therefore, doesn't overeat. This foreshadows her later issues with obsession in the opposite direction. In the bookstore, the narrator, who always seems almost the voice of fate, breaks in to remind us that Ben is not interested in Jemima, at least not physically. Their near meeting may well be fate, and foreshadows their meeting up later in the novel. Also, Jemima's jealousy over Sam, although completely unwarranted shows that her life is so completely entrenched with her infatuation with Ben and her own weight, that she would be hard pressed to find happiness until she deals with both. This again shows Jemima has low self esteem, but also that she really is in love with Ben.

Chapter Seven reiterates Jemima's real problems, both with her weight and with her life. Jemima blames her weight for everything that has gone wrong in her life. She questions why nothing good happens to her, and generally feels down about herself and her surroundings, again suggesting that if Jemima could accept herself, she might find happiness. The narrator's points about Ben's reaction to Sam again show he is not the stereotypical male, but instead is a good looking male with morals and values. His penchant for high maintenance women explains his like for Geraldine, but also suggests he could love Jemima, if he got to know her, as she is an independent female of the type Ben is attracted. Geraldine's notice of Jemima's weight loss, too, shows her to be an atypical gorgeous woman, as she clearly cares about Jemima, and notices her changing. On the other hand, Geraldine's lack of romantic interest in Ben because of his career and money does suggest she is more stereotypical in other areas. Also, her use of Jemima to rewrite her copy suggests that Geraldine does use her looks to further her position, and that she is not as talented as Jemima. This foreshadows Jemima's promotion later in the novel after she loses weight. Finally, her conversation with Brad foreshadows their budding relationship, but also witnesses the birth of J.J., Jemima's

alter ego as she becomes thin in the novel. She invents JJ as a way to flirt online, but eventually, she becomes her over time.



# Chapter Eight through Chapter Ten

## Chapter Eight through Chapter Ten Summary

In Chapter Eight, Ben discovers a local news station is hiring a television reporter. Ben is thrilled, and immediately works on his resume, and finds a photo to send in with it. At lunch the following day, Ben joins Jemima, who is reading about Internet dating as she eats a plain salad. Ben and Jemima decide to go later to an Internet cafe called Cyborg, where people sit at computer terminals and chat online. After work, however, Ben arrives to explain that he has been given a last minute story. He does promise a drink, however, if he gets out of work early enough. Before she goes home, she chats to Brad online, and they talk about fashion, social life, and habits, and Jemima thinks he sounds a bit dull, but pleasant enough, although he does seem a bit overbearing. At home, Jemima tells her roommates of Ben, and although they are kind, it is clear they don't think much of her date, and think even less when she tells them she won't be making tea, as she has to get ready. Surprisingly later, as Jemima bathes, Sophie brings her a cup. When Ben arrives later, Jemima is thrilled, as Lisa and Sophie are still getting ready, and look hideous in their robes with no makeup and hair in curlers. When she leaves, however, Sophie and Lisa agree to hurriedly get ready, and follow them, as they have fallen in love with Ben's good looks.

In Chapter Nine, Ben expresses that he knows the type of girls Sophie and Lisa represent, because he has dated them in the past. In particular, Ben dated one of the hottest young soap opera stars for several months, before realizing he didn't want that kind of life. He and Jemima head to a local pub, where they talk about work, and Ben suggests Jemima might be better suited for a job with a woman's magazine, as she is an excellent writer, but not a reporter. Ben also explains about his dream job as a television presenter, and asks for her help in perfecting his application letter. Jemima of course helps, and makes it a tremendous success. When Jemima stands up to get another round of drinks, she walks to the front and sees Sophie and Lisa, dressed to the nines clearly looking for she and Ben. To avoid them, Jemima returns to Ben, asking about his demo tape, and the girls leave.

In Chapter Ten, Jemima lays in bed, dreaming of the night with Ben. When she does rise, and weighs herself, she realizes she has managed to lose ten pounds. At work, she is thrilled to see Ben again, and discovers she is nearly infatuated with him, even though she denies to Geraldine she is interested. She is also excited to see Brad has sent an email, and a photo. When she views it, however, she realizes Brad really is one of the most attractive men she has ever seen. Geraldine helps Jemima Photoshop an image of herself to make her look thin, and blonde, and athletic, and when she does, both they and the library help who assists, Paul, realize Jemima is a beautiful woman underneath her weight. She sends the photo, amazed at her own beauty, but worries Brad may want to meet her someday. Later, at home, Jemima's mother phones, and Jemima knows she is ashamed of her daughter's weight, as she is always on her to lose. Later, she stares at her photo wonderingly.



## Chapter Eight through Chapter Ten Analysis

Chapter Eight reveals that Ben may soon be leaving Jemima, and since the book has foreshadowed that Jemima can't move on without dealing with Ben, this may be the solution. Subtly, the author notes Jemima's new eating habits here, suggesting again that her use of the internet has allowed her to forget about food. This foreshadows her decision later to continue to give up her food for life. She is clearly having fun with Brad, although even now, she admits he might be a bit dull, suggesting ongoing issues with this relationship throughout the book. Again, readers see Jemima lying to Brad consistently about her life, foreshadowing her invention of a person she eventually has to become. Brad's invitation only helps to further Jemima's creation of a new person, as she continues to feel self-conscious. Lisa and Sophie don't help this as they almost laugh at her crush, again portraying these girls as stereotypical pretty girls who care little for anything but themselves. At the same time, Jemima's refusal to make tea gives them a shock, and makes them realize that Jemima may some day not wish to be at the bottom of the social pile. Ben's arrival, in all his glory, furthers this thought, but Lisa and Sophie's reaction is to try to seduce him. Instead of being supportive, these women become possessive, even after Ben sees them looking worse than they generally do. Their decision to follow the couple shows their true backstabbing nature.

In Chapter Nine, the narrator reveals that Ben has had an interesting life, already having dated the social climbing women like Lisa and Sophie, and even some much higher up that ladder. His decision to break up with the soap opera actress after finding a lack of love for the limelight shows again that Ben is a man of virtue and sincerity. This is shown again in his gentle treatment of Jemima, his clear desire for her to succeed, and his gentle advice for her future. Ben says these things because he cares, and not because he wants something from Jemima. In turn, his comfort with her allows him to reveal his dream, and Jemima's willingness to help him, despite her clear lack of desire for him to leave, shows she really does care about him, as well. Her help also foreshadows his acceptance of the position. Her reaction to Sophie and Lisa, clearly out of their comfort zone, is understandable, as again they show a complete lack of respect for Jemima. Quick on her feet, Jemima out-thinks the young women, and avoids them, but this foreshadows their continued attempts to move in on Ben.

Jemima's weight loss in Chapter Ten suggests there is hope for her in her life. This hope continues with Brad, and his amazing photo, although it is clear Jemima is in over her head. It is only with Geraldine's help that Jemima is able to send him a photo back, but this photo does much more than just attract Brad. The photo when finished makes Geraldine and Jemima both realize just how beautiful Jemima really is. This too foreshadows her beauty in upcoming chapters, and the bond between the two women continues to grow, showing their blossoming friendship. Jemima's constant worry that Brad will want to meet foreshadows that exact occurrence later in the novel. At the end of the chapter, the phone call from Jemima's mother suggests several things. First, it is clear her mother is ashamed of her, perhaps suggesting why Jemima is heavy in the first place. Secondly, her mother is clearly a selfish woman who loves her daughter, but

who also wants the perfect child. This leads to a perception that her mother is part of her weight issue, and that she is part of Jemima's underlying struggle.



# Chapter Eleven through Chapter Thirteen

## Chapter Eleven through Chapter Thirteen Summary

In Chapter Eleven, Brad seems thrilled at Jemima's photo and wants her to phone him, while Ben is contacted by Jackie, Diana MacPherson's secretary, to come in for an interview. Diana is well known for her preference of young men, and her interest in Ben is not surprising. Ben immediately phones Jemima to come talk to him, as he can't wait to tell her. Jemima, anguished inside, is outwardly proud of Ben, and hopeful for him. When Geraldine joins them, she tries to give Jemima a hard time about her new boyfriend, but Ben doesn't seem to notice, or notice that Jemima has lost weight. Later, when Jemima calls Brad, the two talk of everything from their childhoods to their hobbies. Although Brad thinks they could have a real relationship, Jemima realizes she has only been having fun. When he asks her to meet him in person, she agrees to think about it, but when she finishes the phone call, she immediately goes to a nearby gym, and asks to join.

In Chapter Twelve, Jemima fills out the form to join, and makes an appointment with a trainer the following day. She shops for workout clothes and shoes, and orders a mineral water as she reflects on what she hopes will be the new her. Ben, on the other hand, reaches home and calls a friend, Richard, but realizes he wants to call Jemima, as he wants to tell her everything about his interview. When he phones, however, Jemima is out, although Sophie is happy to take his number, knowing she can use it later. When Jemima does come home, her roommates are shocked she has joined a gym. She is thrilled to call Ben back, and the two talk for quite some time, with Jemima constantly encouraging and Ben pouring out the details of his day. The following morning, Jemima meets with her trainer, and although she is uncomfortable with being weighed and measured, and although the exercise is exhausting, she is pleased.

In Chapter Thirteen, one month later, Jemima is going to Ben's going away party, as he has gotten the job. She has lost nearly thirty pounds by eating very little and exercising compulsively. She knows Ben is her friend, but she also fears he will forget her once he moves on to television. Jemima is sick when she hears the news, although she is happy for Ben, but at home, Lisa and Sophie are thrilled to hear Ben will be on television. They are becoming jealous of Jemima, as her weight is dropping and she is becoming a threat. When Jemima leaves, Sophie immediately calls Ben to "wish him luck", knowing he will invite her to the party to be nice, and he does. Brad continues to email her, and Jemima is a bit put off at the familiarity of his letters, his adoring tone, and his sincere desire to meet her. The next day, she and Ben tease one another, but Ben has never said anything about her weight loss. She thinks to herself that means she isn't thin enough yet.



## Chapter Eleven through Chapter Thirteen Analysis

In Chapter Eleven, the reader discovers several things about Jemima. First, her childhood was unhappy, and it becomes clear this likely played a role in her weight problems. Additionally, her relationship with Brad seems to be blooming, although most of the flowering is on Brad's side. Jemima seems to be enjoying herself, but the reader realizes that Jemima has merely been playing a role with Brad. She has not been committed to the idea, nor emotionally attached, but it appears Brad has. His request to meet her, and her subsequent trip to the gym, shows she is determined to make this work, even if she doesn't have feelings for Brad yet. This foreshadows Brad's obsession with appearances, as well as Jemima's unhappiness, not only with being thin, but with her later relationship with Brad. In addition to this confusion, Jemima knows Ben is likely leaving, and even if he is not, she understands he has no romantic interest in her. This is shown by his lack of notice of her weight loss, and his lack of care for her supposed internet boyfriend. Jemima is struggling, as she has two men in her life, one who cares for her, but doesn't love her, and one who doesn't know her, but seems to be falling for a false image she presented.

Chapter Twelve shows Jemima is determined as she goes through her worst fears at the gym in order to begin her transformation. This gives the hope that Jemima will continue to improve her physical health, which by default appears to improve her mental health, as well. Her continued commitment the following day with the trainer also shows she is dedicated. Jemima continues to improve when she talks to Ben, knowing he is her friend as he wants so badly to speak with her about his day. This again shows a comfort level between these two characters that suggests they could certainly have an intimate relationship. Ben's relationship with his guy friends is no match for Jemima, showing he cares for her. This chapter also shows Jemima's roommates again as stereotypical rude friends, trying to take Ben away from Jemima.

Chapter Thirteen really highlights Jemima's unhealthy eating and exercising habits. Although Jemima has certainly seen results, she has done so through overexercising and under eating. She is becoming what she wants, but is doing so in a way that simply continues to mask what is really wrong with Jemima, her self esteem. Ben's departure foreshadows his lack of communication back to Jemima, as does her fear of this very issue. Again in this chapter, Lisa and Sophie show their cattiness by using Ben's kindness against him, and really against Jemima, but Ben again shows he is not interested in Jemima, as even now, he does not notice she has lost thirty pounds. Jemima's immediate note that she isn't thin enough yet clearly indicates that while she might think she is dieting for herself, deep down, she is really doing so for Ben, and for other potential lovers. However, her one lover, Brad, seems to be becoming overbearing, as his letters take on a too familial tone. Brad is beginning to seem like a stalker, or seem as though something else is wrong with his, foreshadowing the situation later in the novel.





# Chapter Fourteen through Chapter Sixteen

## Chapter Fourteen through Chapter Sixteen Summary

Chapter Fourteen finds Jemima working out over lunch instead of eating with Ben on his last day, because she knows she will miss a workout otherwise. On the way out, she weighs herself in at 166 pounds, and to celebrate, buys some makeup at a local store. After work, Geraldine offers to help her, and when she walks into the party, even the editor notices her new beauty. Ben, however, seems not to notice as Diana MacPherson seems to have his entire attention. Diana's date, Nick, begins flirting with Geraldine, as she knows him through a mutual acquaintance. Throughout the night, Jemima watches as Diana flirts with Ben, and although Diana isn't a threat, Jemima feels pain, knowing he doesn't have feelings for her. Soon, Lisa and Sophie arrive, and Jemima is happy to see they look horribly out of place in their fanciness. Sophie sees Diana talking to Ben and immediately intrudes on their intimacy, claiming to be Ben's girlfriend, thinking she is saving him from a random older woman who is hitting on him. Ben, clearly drunk, can barely stand, but Diana is well aware of what Sophie is trying to do, and claims to be his psychiatrist. She rants about Sophie's bravery, being his girlfriend after what happened to his last one, and as he hears voices. Diana pulls Sophie away as Geraldine and Jemima watch, laughing uncontrollably. Ben drunkenly throws his arm around Jemima, claiming she is his only friend, and after telling her he loves her, he kisses her, and stumbles away.

In Chapter Fifteen, Jemima, now more well known as JJ, is much more involved with Brad, as it has been three months since the party, and Ben has not ever called her since the month he left. She is close with Geraldine, who is now dating Nick, and spends much time on the phone with Brad. JJ now weighs 121 pounds, and Geraldine is taking her shopping, as she is headed to LA to meet Brad for the first time. JJ knows she is thin, but isn't sure how she feels about her new look. First, they stop at the hair dresser, where JJ's hair is lightened to a rich blonde, and everyone agrees she is beautiful. Next, they go clothes shopping, but JJ finds she is frightened, knowing she has dreamed of this her whole life. Once she begins trying things on, however, she enjoys herself. As she wears her new clothing outside, she is shocked to find a man looking at her. The third party narrator notes that man is Richard, Ben's friend, who immediately calls Ben to tell him about the gorgeous, unknown woman he saw downtown. JJ finally realizes she is beautiful, although she still cannot come to grips with the idea. Once home, Lisa and Sophie are clearly green with envy at JJ and her new look, and they treat her coldly. She hears them whispering about her, and feel hurt, but she knows they are just jealous. She calls her mother, and is again hurt, because although she has lost all the weight, her mother still isn't happy, and Jemima realizes she never will be. After hanging up, she admires herself in the mirror, finally accepting herself as JJ.





In Chapter Sixteen, Brad's email expresses joy at her upcoming arrival, and Jemima admits to herself that, while she is excited, she would be more excited to have Ben seeing her new self. She also admits that, under her new look, she still feels the same insecurities, and the same concerns she did when she was heavy. Paul, her trainer, is equally worried, as he knows JJ is not eating as she should, and that her weight loss was too rapid. He knows she isn't healthy on the inside, but JJ refuses to discuss it. JJ is also somewhat annoyed, as people she has known for years are finally paying attention to her, and the editor even promotes her to feature writer, which JJ attributes to her new look. She agrees to the new position, with a pay raise. The following day, Geraldine helps JJ dress for the plane, teaches her to moisturize on the plane, and gives her a case full of accessories. At the airport, many think she is a famous model or movie star, and Geraldine notes she is now a "there", or someone who has made it. As she leaves, Geraldine realizes Jemima has reminded her of the joy of female friendship, and that she does love Jemima dearly. The airline upgrades Jemima's flight, for free, and on the plane, she finds herself dreaming of what Brad will be like, but she also thinks of her longing for Ben. An hour before landing, she begins to wonder if she is doing the right thing.

## Chapter Fourteen through Chapter Sixteen Analysis

In Chapter Fourteen, Jemima finds herself at 166 pounds, beautiful, and still agonizing over Ben. Her obsession to weight loss is paying off, but it also causes her to miss the final lunch with Ben, showing her obsession. She does, however, allow herself to enjoy her accomplishment, and her purchase of makeup shows she does know she is a pretty person. It is Geraldine who helps Jemima again, however, and Geraldine who shows what a good friend is. She cares deeply for Jemima by this point, and wants her to be happy. But at the party, Ben's lack of notice serves only to hurt Jemima, even though he is drunk, and likely too wrapped up in his new boss. It is clear by this point Diana is trying to hit on Ben, but by this time, readers know Ben is not interested. Even Nick, Diana's boy toy, seems tired of her games. Nick and Geraldine's clear attraction to one another focuses their budding relationship, however. Also in this chapter, Sophie and Lisa are given a taste of their own medicine as they are made fools of by Diana, and Jemima has a right to laugh at their misfortune. Her own, however, hits when Ben, too drunk, tells her he loves her and kisses her. Ben won't remember this, but for Jemima, it is the whole world. This foreshadows her hurt at his lack of communication after he leaves, but also her continued infatuation with him.

The shift from Jemima to JJ in Chapter Fifteen is significant, in that it represents the new Jemima Jones. Now sleek, beautiful, and popular, the new "JJ" is Jemima's new version of herself. Her shopping spree, her beautiful new hairstyle, and her trip to LA all show she is becoming a new person. At the same time, however, JJ seems to have the same insecurities, the same fears, and the same inner problems as Jemima once did, showing that whether Jemima or JJ, she is the same person underneath. This suggests that simply losing weight won't make someone a new person. Ben's lack of contact continues to haunt JJ, and the irony that Richard was admiring her is not lost on the reader. Again, fate barely misses with JJ and Ben, foreshadowing that they are meant to



be together. Again in this chapter, Sophie and Lisa show themselves to be cold and cruel, but Jemima refuses to be abused, choosing instead to walk away. This shows Jemima is beginning to learn to deal with the pain and sorrow in her life in a way that is healthy. Jemima doesn't realize this is, in reality, what is changing her the most, and not her loss of weight. Her mother's continued disapproval shows the same, as JJ realizes her mother will never be pleased. Her acceptance of this fact shows that JJ is beginning not to rely on others to accept her, as she is starting to accept herself.

Chapter Sixteen really focuses on how appearances affect how others see us in society. As a heavy person, Jemima was largely ignored. As a thin beautiful person, she is being paid attention to, being given new positions and pay raises, has a boyfriend, and is lucky enough to be upgraded on a flight. These are things JJ attributes to her weight loss. However, the question is noted as to whether the weight loss caused the new outlook, or whether Jemima herself, in her new confidence, effected the change on her life. Her continued lack of self esteem, her desire to see Ben, and even her trainers concern for her all show that JJ is really just a shell, and that Jemima still lurks within the now thin body. This foreshadows problems in her upcoming relationship with Brad, although Geraldine's clear love for Jemima in this chapter show their friendship to be growing even stronger.



# Chapter Seventeen through Chapter Nineteen

## Chapter Seventeen through Chapter Nineteen Summary

Chapter Seventeen finds Jemima excited as she hits LA, but she also realizes she is afraid Brad won't like her. She still feels like a heavy person in a thin body, and feels unattractive. She meets a man in the airport who asks her if she is interested in movies, but he isn't Brad, and appears to just be a guy hitting on her. When Brad does arrive, he is gorgeous, and thinks the same of JJ, and she knows she is enough for him as they leave together. JJ, for the first time, feels lust for someone, and everyone watches them together, as they make almost too perfect of a couple. Stopping for coffee, Brad makes a comment about being grateful she isn't fat, and JJ, although somewhat hurt, laughs and agrees, knowing she is only months from her former self. The two talk of LA, where Brad notes women want powerful men, unlike New York or London, where women want power, and JJ is shocked and sickened at the thought, but she is happy when Brad suggests she could find television work easily in LA. The third party narrator jumps in at this point, and reminds the reader that JJ, of all people, should know better than to judge things on their appearance, and although this seems perfect, it likely isn't. The couple make it back to Brads, which is huge and gorgeous, and Brad leaves her to the spare bathroom, where she is able to have a moment to herself. As she looks in a mirror, she thinks to herself she has finally made it.

In Chapter Eighteen, JJ phones Geraldine to tell her everything is wonderful, while in another room, Brad eavesdrops on the conversation, congratulating himself. JJ dresses and finds Brad in the kitchen, cooking dinner. He clearly appreciates her beauty and hands her champagne, turns on music, and generally sets the mood. He keeps refilling her glass, and the third party narrator notes that Brad has done this many times before, and has six recipes sets he uses. As the two talk, Brad clearly flirts with JJ and she backs, but when he makes a move, she shys away. She teases him about the candle light being superb, as she cannot see him, but he sounds hurt as he apologies for not being enough for her. JJ immediately feels badly, but Brad is soon back to himself. After many drinks, JJ asks what Brad wants in a relationship, and his list is long, ending with his need for someone who takes care of their body. JJ notices his list was all wants, up until the last point, and she wonders if that is coincidence. After coffee, JJ admits she is tired, and Brad takes her gently, kissing her first, and then the two make love, where JJ has her first orgasm. Brad picks her up after she falls asleep and gently takes her to his room, kissing her softly, and thanking God she is so perfect, as he leaves to take a shower.

In Chapter Nineteen, JJ awakes and she and Brad talk, before making love again. She agrees to go rollerblading with him, although she admits she will still need to hit the



gym, as she feels guilty about not working out. After a tour of Santa Monica and breakfast, JJ admits she has never been rollerblading, but Brad shows her, and the two stroll together, everyone looking on jealously. The third person narrator notes, however, they may be falling in love with falling in love, and not one another. After lunch, they head to Brad's gym, where JJ meets several of the staff. As they eat, they begin to attack one another, only to be interrupted by Jenny, Brad's assistant, a very heavy young woman. JJ is nice, but is immediately brushed off rudely by the woman. Brad admits she can be difficult, and points out she likely stays there only because of him, as she is loyal. He claims she is like a sister, and JJ seduces him again, when Jenny leaves.

## Chapter Seventeen through Chapter Nineteen Analysis

Again in Chapter Seventeen, readers see Jemima peeking through JJ's new figure, as she is still insecure and vulnerable. Further, it is clear from the beginning of the chapter that JJ likes Brad for his looks, a point that the narrator notes as well. Brad is highly attractive, and JJ definitely wants him, but there is a sense of foreboding as she and he both think of how perfect they are for one another. Brad's comments about being thankful JJ isn't fat show he is highly critical, and cares greatly about what other people think. This continues when he points out LA women want a powerful man. JJ is independent, but one gets the impression that she is easily manipulated, foreshadowing Brad's use of her in the novel.

Chapter Eighteen begins the suspicious depiction of Brad, as his eavesdropping suggests. Also, his ease with creating a mood, the narrators points that he can't really cook, but has perfected a few meals, combined with his ease and skill in being smooth all suggest there is more sinister nature in Brad than what appears. Jemima knows this, and yet can't stop herself from falling for his moves. He uses emotion, jet lag, and alcohol to ease her, but even Jemima notices when he claims to need someone who takes care of them self. This foreshadows the knowledge later that Brad is only using JJ for her looks. However, this is all swept away when Jemima has her first orgasm. Even Brad's response to this, however, and his thankfulness that Jemima is perfect, show there is something wrong with this situation, foreshadowing the knowledge that he doesn't really love JJ.

Chapter Nineteen reveals more about JJ's relationship with Brad, and introduces the character of Jenny. First, it is clear Brad and Jemima like one another, and are attracted to one another. And yet, their conversations often seem hollow, and their days are filled with obsessive exercise, and sex. This isn't quite enough, one thinks, to build a relationship on. Further, the introduction of Jenny, and her rudeness, suggests there may be something going on the JJ isn't aware of. Although Brad passes it off as nothing, it clearly is a situation that will eventually have to be dealt with.



# Chapter Twenty through Chapter Twenty Two

## Chapter Twenty through Chapter Twenty Two Summary

Chapter Twenty finds JJ happily reflecting on her week in LA with Brad. But as she dreams of her perfect life, she thinks of Ben. She also wonders at why she finds it so odd that Brad is so forward, after only a week, seemingly to fall on her every word, and to fall in love with her instantly. She is also annoyed by his seeming lack of intelligence about literature, or important events. She calls Geraldine, who makes her feel better about the situation, but she still feels something is awry. Later, she goes to meet Brad, but runs into Jenny. She tries to be friends with the young woman again, but she clearly despises her. JJ, confused, asks Brad about the situation, but he tells her not to worry about it, as Jenny is just jealous. She borrows the car, and after shopping, admires again her life in LA.

In Chapter Twenty One, the third party narrator reveals that Ben is, in fact, extremely famous now. People ask for his autograph, and his friend, Richard, takes him to clubs to pick up women, but Ben refuses, not wanting one night stands. Diana MacPherson continues to try to sleep with him, and after too many drinks one night she succeeds, mostly against Ben's will. Unfortunately, he gives Diana the best orgasm of her life, and she is immediately hooked. After an interview Geraldine sees in a local tabloid, she sends it to Jemima, but Ben himself is embarrassed of what the tabloid drug up about him. Ben thinks of Jemima and realizes he wants to talk to her about his issues, but when he calls, he finds she is in LA.

In Chapter Twenty Two, Jemima realizes she is bored and lonely, as she spends much of her daily life alone. She watches television, shops, and exercises, but she also finds a deli she really enjoys. She sees a woman at the bar smoking, and asks for one, only to realize the woman is also English. Her name is Lauren, and she and JJ hit it off, both having come to LA for a man. Lauren's situation didn't turn out, but she landed a job working for a fashion magazine, and loves living in LA. The two have much in common, and they become immediate friends. Lauren admits the reason she and Charlie broke it off was that he was bad in bed. They talk about JJ being thin, and she admits that she was invisible when she was heavy, and that people always felt sorry for her. She also admits she used her weight to hide from people. The two exchange numbers, and Lauren is thrilled to know JJ is a friend of Ben's, as she has a crush on him, as do most women by this time.



## Chapter Twenty through Chapter Twenty Two Analysis

Chapter Twenty continues to reveal that there are many issues between Brad and JJ, and many things that seem very wrong with their relationship. First, it is clear Jemima is still hung up on Ben. Secondly, it is also clear that Ben is becoming a bit too infatuated, suggesting perhaps he is faking his emotional attachment. Third, Jemima clearly thinks he is less intelligent than she would like. Fourth, Jenny's continued dismissal of her, and her clear dislike of Jemima, foreshadows the information later that she is Brad's real girlfriend. Even the call to Geraldine, who makes JJ feel better, only seems to mask what is going wrong in JJ's life.

Chapter Twenty One shows that Ben is having troubles of his own. His fame has not gotten the better of him, but the fact that his boss has suggests that Ben isn't always perfect. The interview with the local paper further emphasizes this point. Ben's action of calling Jemima to talk shows that he does care for her as a friend, but also shows he is a bit selfish, as he only thinks of her when he needs assistance. His failure to contact her again shows fate is not on their side, as of yet.

Chapter Twenty Two continues to reveal problems between Jemima and Brad. Jemima's loneliness suggests that she may not feel as deeply for Brad as she leads herself to believe. Her boring days, and increasingly boring nights, all show that Brad is spending more time away. However, Jemima's relationship with Lauren looks sets to destroy that, giving hope again that Jemima will find happiness. Her new friend has so many interested like her, they are bound to become close, foreshadowing their blossoming friendship. Additionally, Jemima's comments here about her weight shows she is beginning to accept her own failures and faults with food. However, Lauren's own tale of lost love does bring doubt again that JJ and Brad will work out.



# Chapter Twenty Three through Chapter Twenty Six

## Chapter Twenty Three through Chapter Twenty Six Summary

In Chapter Twenty Three, Brad calls home, and lets JJ know he will be home early, and wants to try a yoga class with her. After class, which JJ hates, they have sex again, and at dinner, JJ marvels at the food, and at her surroundings, as George Clooney is in the restaurant. During dinner, Brad tells JJ he loves her, and instead of being happy, JJ still feels something isn't quite right about him. She knows that sometimes he drifts off, staring at nothing, almost as if he is thinking of someone else, but she knows he doesn't have time for an affair. JJ says it back, so as not to hurt his feelings, but knows she doesn't mean it. When Brad asks her to stay another few months to see if their relationship will work, JJ agrees. She phones Geraldine to tell her, but when Geraldine admits she too is in love with Nick, JJ finds herself jealous. JJ's editor back in London agrees to let her stay in LA on leave, if she sends back weekly columns on life in America for the paper, and she agrees. For the first time, she feels, she is pushing her life to the limit.

In Chapter Twenty Four, JJ finds she is beginning to have trouble reaching Brad at the gym at times, and he is spending more late nights in meetings. She has now been there over a month, and she decides to go out with Lauren, instead of sitting at home alone. They go to the gym where they run into Jenny, who actually seems warm. When JJ questions it to Lauren, she is put off, as Lauren doesn't understand why it matters if Jenny likes her. Later, JJ gets dolled up, and she and Lauren hit a new restaurant, where Lauren begins hitting on almost every attractive male. Even JJ admits she enjoys the attention, as she and Lauren get drunk, and hit on repeatedly. At one point, Lauren thinks she sees Jenny, but knows she must be mistaken. Later, JJ realizes the time and drags Lauren out, after she yells her phone number to the bartender. When JJ arrives home at eleven, however, she realizes Brad isn't home yet. She stays up late, waiting, but he doesn't come home. She thinks of Ben as she falls asleep.

In Chapter Twenty Five, JJ wakes with a terrible hangover, only to find Brad hasn't slept in the bed at all, although she hears him in the kitchen. She rises, and goes to find him, and he claims to have simply slept at the office, after the meeting ran late. He assures her he didn't call because it was so late, he didn't want to wake her, and he apologizes profusely. Inside, JJ is worried she is overreacting, that if she becomes angry, he might leave, but outwardly, she is angry and cold. JJ knows there are things wrong in this relationship, but she allows herself to be soothed, and forgives him, even knowing there is likely more to his story than he is saying. After make up sex, she says she loves him, but the third party narrator asks again if JJ really does love him, or if she just loves the idea of him. Brad offers to take the day off, and JJ readily agrees, but when Lauren calls





later, she lies, claiming Brad came home, just later than expected, and Lauren seems suspicious. Later, Brad asks where she and Lauren went, and when she tells him, he immediately seems to act oddly. She asks if he has been there, and he claims she knows he has. Confused, JJ claims she has no idea, and he explains quickly that he thought he told her he had gone.

When the mail comes, JJ receives the newspaper clipping about Ben, and immediately becomes home sick, and realizes she is not over Ben. She pushes him from her mind, however, and she and Brad have a lovely day out. On returning home, and during sex, however, Brad receives a phone call, and JJ swears she can hear him whispering. When he finishes, he doesn't come back to bed, but instead goes to the kitchen. When pressed, he swears he wasn't whispering, and JJ believes him, because, as the narrator points out, she wants to believe him.

In Chapter Twenty Six, Ben is sent to LA to interview a famous actress, Alexia Aldridge, who agrees to interview with the show only with Ben, and only in LA. Diana is furious, as she wants Ben to herself, and seriously considers settling down with him, even though they have not had another sexual encounter. But since she wants ratings, she sends him. The night before he leaves, he remembers Jemima was in LA, but figures he will look her up when he arrives. Back in LA, JJ goes over her last encounter with Jenny in confusion. JJ, tired of being treated badly, blatantly asked Jenny why she disliked her. Jenny tells her off, tells her to screw herself, and storms away. JJ, unable to vent to anyone, is extremely upset. Later, she accidentally spills Diet Coke in bed, and calls the gym to ask Brad where the sheets are. His secretary notes they are in a bedroom cupboard, but a call with Lauren, who claims to be in love with the bartender from the other night, interrupts JJ's plan to change the sheets. Meanwhile, Brad is in a terrible state at the gym, as he swears and runs for the door, with Jenny showing serious concern. Back at home, JJ finally ends her call, but when she goes to get the sheets, a pile of pictures and magazines fall out of the cupboard. JJ looks, and freezes at what she sees.

## **Chapter Twenty Three through Chapter Twenty Six Analysis**

Chapter Twenty Three reveals again that there are several problems between JJ and Brad. First, JJ's reaction to yoga is clearly not one of pleasure, but she is still not comfortable enough around Brad to be herself. Brad's request that she stay, and his assurance that he loves her, seem forced and out of place, and even Jemima knows something isn't right. However, always insecure, Jemima not only agrees with Brad, but tells him she loves him, knowing in reality she does not. This is further shown by her jealousy of Geraldine actually being in love. Her comments about Brad never leaving the gym and not having time for an affair suggest he is having his affair with someone at the gym. At the end of the chapter, though, Jemima's new found courage allows her to ask for the time to stay, and take a position writing feature stories, showing her confidence is beginning to pay off.





The problems continue in Chapter Twenty Four between JJ and Brad as Brad starts spending late nights at the gym. Her decision to go out with Lauren when Brad tells her he will be late shows she is beginning to tire of being a housewife, and again wants to start pushing herself for more. Further, her love for the attention at the bar later with Lauren shows she is not completely satisfied with her relationship with Brad. The brief sighting of someone that looks like Jenny foreshadows an odd situation later between Brad and JJ. Further, when Brad doesn't come home, the reader knows something is likely going on, foreshadowing information later of his affair. Just as concerning however, are JJ's thoughts about Ben, showing she is still not over him.

Chapter Twenty Five solidifies that there is something amiss between Brad and JJ. Brad's excuses for being out all night don't ring true, his sudden desire to take the day off implies guilt, and his actions when JJ mentions the restaurant she and Lauren went to are odd, at best. Quick readers understand this is likely because he was at the restaurant as well, with Jenny, the same night, which is why Lauren thought she saw Jenny. Finally, his whispering over the phone and his lies to cover it up strongly suggest something is wrong. For her part, JJ is a mess. She knows something is wrong with this relationship, and is even beginning to admit that to herself. However, her insecurities keep her from asking too many questions, while her desire to be in love makes her make continuously bad decisions. She clearly still loves Ben, but is determined to see this relationship through, foreshadowing her continued struggle.

Chapter Twenty Six serves both to offer hope, and to indicate the beginning of the end for Brad and JJ. First, Ben's trip to LA, when combined with the other times in the novel fate has or hasn't stepped in with JJ and Ben, foreshadow their meeting in LA. Diana's willingness to send Ben shows she cares more for ratings than anything, and his desire to look up Jemima suggests he still cares for her. For her part, JJ is still struggling with Jenny, and her latest episode with her shows Jenny really does hate her. When she spills the soda and the photos and magazines come out, combined with Brad's reaction to JJ's likely opening of the closet and Jenny's over caring response, begin to show the reader what is likely occurring. It is clear Jenny loves Brad, but his feelings are not known. The falling of the items from the closet foreshadow the information in the next chapter of what those photos contain.



# Chapter Twenty Seven through Chapter Twenty Nine

## Chapter Twenty Seven through Chapter Twenty Nine Summary

Chapter Twenty Seven finds Ben landing in LA, and wandering around the city. JJ, meanwhile, is looking through the stack of pornographic material that fell from the cupboard, sickened to realize it is all pornography of heavy women. Looking at the women, JJ thinks "this used to be me", but she realizes this isn't true, because these women feel and look sexy, whereas the old Jemima always felt inferior. She thinks about her life now, and realizes she is the same person, and that men would possibly loved her before, had she been able to love herself. She also realize she is judged as quickly now as she used to be when she was heavy, only now she is seen as catty, or ignorant, or stuck up, because she is thin. Picking up the photographs, JJ is equally shocked to find they are of Jenny, in various positions, and she suddenly understands everything about the situation. When Brad arrives, he first tries to deny the photos and magazines are his. However, shortly, Jenny arrives as well, and explains that she and Brad went to school together. Jenny had a crush on him early on, and when she later met his mother and found out he had come to California, she followed him, and became his assistant. They shortly fell in love. However, Brad knew that, to be successful in LA, he couldn't date someone like Jenny. So he kept her a secret, and went in search of a trophy wife, which is where JJ came into the picture. JJ is sickened, but feels numb as she packs her things. Brad leaves her alone after a heartfelt apology, and JJ realizes she fell for Brad because of his looks, and because he wanted her. She never loved him. When she calls the airline to change her flight, however, she learns there will be a huge fee that she can't afford. Now stuck, she calls Lauren, and leaves a message that she will need somewhere to stay.

In Chapter Twenty Eight, JJ gives in, finally, to her food cravings, and goes on a giant binge. Meanwhile, Ben is wandering in the same area and sees a gorgeous, thin blonde he wishes he could meet, not realizing it is Jemima. Later, Jemima arrives at Laurens, and she immediately throws most of the food back up, unable to handle that quantity of food. She tells Lauren the story, but also defends Jenny, as she feels sorry for her, knowing the pain she goes through to be with Brad, even though he hides her. Lauren immediately tells her she can stay with her, and that she will hire her to write a feature story on her recent relationship problems for the magazine. JJ feels better, but when Laurel goes out for the night, JJ binges again. Meanwhile, Ben tries to call JJ at Brad's, not knowing what has happened, but he is only able to leave a message on the answering machine. That night, JJ lays in bed, and thinks of the day. She knows she won't fall into her bad habits of eating again, but also begins to realize obsessing over her weight hasn't made her a better person, either. She also decides she wants a few more curves, and that she will allow herself to live a little.



In Chapter Twenty Nine, Ben interviews the famous actress, who hits on him, but he is uninterested, much to his producer's dismay. The crew decides, however, to go out that night to celebrate. JJ and Lauren, too, decide to go out, and choose the same restaurant as Ben and Simon. At the bar, Ben notices a gorgeous blonde, and thinks he recognizes her laugh, but as she is clearly too beautiful not to be attached, he leaves the bar without talking to her. JJ, out of the corner of her eye, notices someone who looks like Ben leaving the bar, but as she doesn't know he's in LA, she ignores the tug of her heart.

## Chapter Twenty Seven through Chapter Twenty Nine Analysis

Chapter Twenty Seven again suggests fate may finally be on JJ's side, but the truth about Brad is finally revealed. The knowledge that Brad prefers heavy women is ironic, but the knowledge that he loves Jenny is not surprising, as it has been foreshadowed throughout the book. Jemima's reaction is symbolic, in that Jemima finally realizes her own lack of self esteem was the cause of her issues, and not her weight. The women in the photos feel sexy and act sexy, as Jemima never could have done, because she didn't feel sexy. Too obsessed with her weight, Jemima was never able to be happy. Her realization that she is the same person she was shows that weight loss doesn't necessarily change who a person is, but merely what they look like. Jenny's anger is now understood, as she is being so used by Brad, but cannot do anything to stop the situation. Brad, in his obsession, is unwilling to allow society to see him with a heavy woman. Instead he is willing to hurt the woman he loves and use a woman he cares about, simply for appearances. JJ is understandably hurt, but at the same time, she does realize much of this is her issue, as she knew all along she wasn't in love with Brad. Finally, her lack of ability to pay for a ticket home does again suggest fate might be on her side with Ben.

Chapter Twenty Eight reveals that old habits die hard, as Jemima binges as a result of emotional strain. At the same time, this binge allows JJ to realize she has been obsessing, and that she can allow herself to eat normally and healthily, and still be happy with herself. This chapter also suggests again that Ben and JJ will meet, as they keep almost running into one another, while it also shows Lauren again to be a great friend.

In Chapter Twenty Nine, Ben's lack of desire for the actress he interviews reminds readers that Ben is looking for more than one night stands. Again, Ben and Jemima's close call indicate they will meet at some point, and Ben's clear desire for JJ suggests their meeting will be one of fireworks. There can be no question that JJ still loves Ben, and that Ben cared deeply for Jemima. It can only be assumed that, now that he thinks she is also beautiful, they will be attracted to one another if they meet, foreshadowing their relationship later.



# Chapter Thirty through Epilogue

## Chapter Thirty through Epilogue Summary

The Chapter Thirty finds Ben and JJ in the same bookstore, but again, JJ doesn't see Ben, and although he tries to catch up to her, he misses her, and doesn't realize it is Jemima. He only knows she is beautiful. Later, JJ realizes she left a scarf at Brad's, and when Lauren calls him to confirm, she also gives JJ the message that Brad has been trying to reach her. JJ is overjoyed, and calls him immediately, agreeing to meet him later for coffee. When she goes to meet him however, Brad approaches her, and tells her she is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen, still not realizing it is Jemima. Jemima, unable to believe it, simply is speechless, and Ben, embarrassed, walks away. Lauren convinces her, once she goes home, to call Ben, and apologize for not meeting him, since he thinks she didn't show up. When she does finally meet him, she plays off his reaction, as he still doesn't recognize her. Once together, they chat like old friends, although Ben can't get over her beauty. She tells him about Brad, and he tells her of Diana, and the two feel completely at ease. Once outside, however, a gentle hug turns quickly to a passionate kiss.

In Chapter Thirty One, Jemima wakes up next to Ben, with whom she spent the night, and she knows she loves him. They snuggle comfortably, but Ben knows he has to leave. He promises to wait patiently for her to return to England, and to call and write often. Jemima returns home to Lauren and tells her everything, and the two celebrate with pancakes and ice cream. But later, when Ben doesn't call her as he said he would, Jemima feels herself dropping into a deep depression. A week later, he still hasn't called, and Jemima is crushed. Ben, on the other hand, is furious with himself, as he realized when he returned home that he lost Jemima's number. He tries everything to find her, but with no luck. He doesn't admit he is in love, but knows he is. In an interview with a reporter, however, he finds himself sharing his story, and asking for it not to be printed. Later, Jemima phones Geraldine, and when Jemima tells her everything, Geraldine explains that Ben called her, looking desperately for Jemima. She explains that Ben lost the number, and she promises to sort things out for Jemima. A few days later, Jemima receives a letter in the mail. Geraldine admits by note that she told Ben about Jemima not being able to come home because of the flight costs. Inside her envelope, Jemima finds an article, where Ben Williams openly admits he is in love with a girl named Jemima Jones. Also enclosed is a plane ticket, with a small note from Ben, telling Jemima to come home, as he misses her.

In Chapter Thirty Two, Jemima leaves Lauren behind, knowing she will be fine, as she is a survivor. Jemima realizes she, too, is a survivor. She is moving in with Geraldine, and looks forward to returning to her life, with Ben, in London. She realizes that she won't miss much of LA, and that London will always be her home. She plans to find a new job, and seek new opportunities.



In the Epilogue, Jemima Jones has finally found happiness. She has gained some weight, although not too much, and is now feminine and curvy. She has married Ben, and works on a fashion magazine. The third party narrator notes that Jemima Jones, now that she has accepted herself and her life, is finally happy, and able to live a full life.

## Chapter Thirty through Epilogue Analysis

Chapter Thirty draws readers through a painstaking near miss between Ben and JJ, before allowing the reader the satisfaction of the two finally being together. When Ben calls, JJ is clearly overjoyed, but her inability to respond when Ben is so overwhelmed with her beauty makes the situation almost unbearable. Jemima, with her insecurities particularly about Ben, acts understandably, but readers nearly think she has missed her chance. Lauren again proves to be an outstanding friend as she helps JJ through this. JJ, now able to prepare, draws on her new found strength and courage to face Ben, and the end result is the rekindling of an old friendship, and the new kindling of a romance.

Chapter Thirty One, however, shows the near destruction of this new found romance, and shows that JJ is still insecure. Ben and JJ's goodbye in LA is heartwarming, and one thinks everything is finally going to work out. Readers are therefore shocked when Ben doesn't call, but the revelation that he lost JJ's number is heartbreaking. Readers know by now JJ's insecurities, and one can understand why she assumes Ben didn't call because he didn't want to. Instead of calling him, JJ reverts back to her old, depressed self. Had she not called Geraldine, she would never have known Ben was looking for her. Geraldine and Lauren are both strong female friends in this chapter, showing the strong value of a great support system. Further, Ben's admittance that he is in love with Jemima to a report show he is no longer shy about his feelings. Combined with his sending of a plane ticket, it is clear Ben loves Jemima, and this foreshadows their future relationship.

Chapter Thirty Two reminds readers that Jemima Jones, like many of the other characters in the novel, is a survivor. JJ has gone through much in LA, but it has taught her many lessons. She understands now that in order to get anywhere in life, one has to be willing to take chances, and risks. She understands that life is not about images, but about confidence, and who one is inside. Her decision to seek her dream job, move, and date Ben all show JJ is finally able to leave her past behind, and move on, loving herself and her surroundings.

The Epilogue, the final section of the novel, reveals a completely happy Jemima Jones. Married to Ben, working as a writer, and loving her curvy body, Jemima has finally come to grips with herself. She is finally the person she always wanted to be: herself.



# Characters

## Jemima Jones

Jemima Jones is the main character of the story. As an overweight young woman, Jemima is insecure, and sees the world in a fairly negative light. She feels invisible to most friends and family, has little social life, and can't seem to climb the corporate ladder. She also has had little dating experience. Jemima believes all of these issues are related to her weight. The friends she does have, her roommates, treat her as though she is merely a confidant, and not a real friend. Jemima seems to think the friends at work, who seem to genuinely like her, simply pity her.

When Jemima begins to lose weight, she begins to gain a social life, both online, and with her coworkers. Although she attributes this to her weight loss, it appears Jemima gains self confidence, which allows her to be more aggressive, and able to handle her relationships better. Instead of merely standing on the sidelines, Jemima gains the courage to play an active role in her life. This alone changes her, and not her weight loss. When she believes she finds love, only to be crushed, it becomes more apparent that relationships in life revolve more around emotion than physical attraction.

Jemima's character seems to prove that weight is not the totality of happiness. Whether heavy or thin, one can be insecure, and those insecurities are what tend to rule one's life. It is only when Jemima is able to accept herself that she finally finds happiness, showing readers that any size of person can be happy, if they are happy in themselves.

## Ben Williams

Ben Williams is a coworker of Jemima Jones, and her constant love interest, although for much of the novel, the interest is hidden. Ben is a kind, wonderful looking man, with morals and high dreams for himself. He has been in the jet set group before, and finds he is ill suited for such a life, as he tends to find the people in it shallow. Ben is intelligent, and thinks highly of women who are also intelligent and able to stand on their own two feet. Ben likes Jemima, but sees her only as a good friend. When Ben leaves the newspaper to become a television star, he is soon pushed again into the limelight. Everyone from his interviewees to his boss want to sleep with him, and he again is faced with a lonely form of relationships. It is only when he again finds Jemima, now thin, that he realizes his true feelings for her. Ben represents a male character in the book who is less concerned about appearances than he is about propriety, and happiness. Although Jemima being thin does attract Ben's attention, one knows Ben cared for her all along, and was never afraid to show his affections, despite her size.





## Geraldine

Geraldine is another of Jemima's coworkers. Although Jemima seems to think Geraldine is too good for her in the beginning of the novel, Geraldine shows little concern for Jemima's weight issues. She does ask for her help in writing her own work, but also sits with Jemima at lunch, chats with her, and even invites her out for drinks. Geraldine clearly doesn't mind being seen with Jemima despite her size, showing again that Jemima's issues with her weight cause her social problems, and not her weight its self. As Jemima thins, Geraldine continues to show support, regardless of what path she is taking, proving she is a good friend. Her obvious love for Jemima is clear, as is her willingness to help a friend in whatever way possible. Although her own relationships tend toward the glamorous, she is not too uppity to socialize with those like Jemima.

## Sophie and Lisa

Sophie and Lisa are Jemima's roommates. Social climbers and the female version of a womanizer, Sophie and Lisa are the type of women Jemima dislikes, and they treat her as an insignificant person. Although the almost seem to like her, they really treat her as a maid, or live in confidant. They don't seem to even realize Jemima has feelings or emotions, and they treat her with pity and disdain. When Jemima begins to lose weight, they see her as a threat, and instead of being happy for her, they actually try to steal Ben away from her. What they don't realize, however, is that Ben dislikes women such as these, as they are shallow and undeserving of his affections. Sophie and Lisa are the stereotyped thin women of the world, which Geraldine counterbalances in the book.

## Brad

Brad is a California gym owner, with a gorgeous body, perfect hair, and beautiful eyes. Jemima meets Brad in an online cafe, and the two hit it off. They continue to talk online, and eventually, over the phone as well. Brad seems very kind, but he also seems a bit pushy. Finally, Brad convinces Jemima to come out to LA to visit him. Once she is there, Brad proves himself to be very nice, but even Jemima notices there is no spark, and that Brad seems to be missing something. They get along wonderfully, and he tells her he loves her, and their sex life is fantastic. However, Jemima continues to feel there is something missing in the relationship, even though Brad asks her to stay for several months. Eventually, Jemima realizes that Brad likes heavy women, but pretends to like her in order to keep up his social appearances. He has been using Jemima as a trophy girlfriend, all the while continuing to see Jenny, his true attraction. Brad's character shows how shallow people can be, and how ones drive for an image can hurt others.

## Jenny

Jenny is Brad's assistant at the gym. Jenny is overweight, as Jemima used to be, and from the beginning seems to hate Jemima for no reason. She is short, rude, and



although she seems to like her boss, she does not seem overly interested. Jemima herself feels sorry for Jenny, knowing how she feels being overweight, but when she tries to befriend her, she is immediately shot down. Towards the end of the novel, Jemima learns that Jenny and Brad are in love, and have been having an affair for years. However, because Brad is so concerned about his gym and appearances, he can't openly date Jenny. Instead he has been using Jemima as a "trophy" girlfriend, all the while continuing to sleep with and be in love with Jenny. Jenny accepts this horrible treatment, because she loves Brad, and knows her size would harm his reputation. Jenny's character represents the effects a lack of self esteem can have on the decisions people make in life.

## Lauren

Lauren is a young, kind English woman Jemima meets while in LA. Lauren, too, flew to LA to be with a man, but when the situation turned sour, she had no choice but to stay, not being able to afford to go back to London. When she meets Jemima in a deli, the two are shocked to learn they are not only both from Kilburn, but also are both in journalism. In a short time, Lauren and Jemima become close friends. It is Lauren who helps Jemima get over her devastation at being used by Brad, and also Lauren who helps Jemima find the courage to meet Ben when he arrives in LA. Lauren proves herself to be a strong friend, and shows Jemima she is a lovable, viable person even when she feels she is not. Lauren brings to the novel a sense of balance, as she is neither obsessed with food, weight, or exercise, and yet she is mostly healthy.

## Diana Macpherson

Diana Macpherson is the executive producer of London Nights, the television show Ben presents. Diana is a tough woman, who uses her power to gain access to men. She is hungry for success, and achieves everything she sets her mind to, including her male conquests. She takes an immediate liking to Ben, with his youth and good looks, and she hires him, in part, because of these aspects. She spends much of the novel trying to bed Ben, and when they get drunk one night, she finally succeeds. Ben, for his part, wishes the episode had never happened, as he finds women like Diana somewhat appalling. He prefers lower key women, and women who are not superficial. Diana eventually leaves the show, and Ben, behind.

## Bill the Bartender

Bill is a bartender Lauren and Jemima meet one evening when they go out in Los Angeles. Lauren, extremely drunk, flirts with the bartender, and gives him her phone number. She eventually begins dating him, and finds herself not only highly attracted to him, but also falling in love with his personality.



## **Simon Molloy**

Simon Molloy is the producer and director of Ben's show, London Nights. Simon is a friend to Ben, but at the same time, the two are quite different. Simon views women as toys, and cares little about lasting relationships. He uses his position to attract women, and often has one night stands. He is not a bad person, but his view of women tends to be highly sexist. His views however do not sway Ben's solid opinions of women.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Kilburn Herald**

The Kilburn Herald is the newspaper where Jemima, Geraldine, and Ben all work.

### **Kilburn, London**

Kilburn is an area of north-west London, England, where Jemima lives and works.

### **Los Angeles, California**

Los Angeles, California is where Brad, Jemima's boyfriend, lives, and where Jemima travels to see him.

### **London Nights**

London Nights is the television program on which Ben eventually lands a job.

### **LA Cafe**

The LA Cafe is the internet site where Jemima first meets Brad, her eventual boyfriend.

### **Rollerblading**

Rollerblading is a sport Brad enjoys, and teaches Jemima to do.

### **Top Tips**

Top Tips is the column Jemima writes for the paper, where she advises people on topics from how to clean drapes to getting rid of odors.

### **Saint**

Saint is a bar Lauren frequented in London.

### **B-Fit Gym**

B-Fit gym is the gym owned by Brad in Los Angeles.

## **Broadway Deli**

The Broadway Deli is where Lauren and Geraldine meet.



# Themes

## Weight and Society

One of the primary themes in the novel is that of how society views those who are thin, and those who are heavy. In the novel, Jemima is a heavy woman who is genuinely ignored by most of the people in her life, or she is treated as an invisible person. Her editor keeps finding reasons not to promote her, her roommates treat her almost as a maid, and even her mother is ashamed of her, constantly belittling her and asking about her weight. Her two friends, Ben and Geraldine, treat her well, but still seem to view her differently than others. Jemima herself even views herself as ugly, as a result of her weight. She perceives that everyone around her feels either pity or revulsion when they see her.

When Jemima becomes thin, however, things change. Her editor is willing to promote her, her roommates begin to see her as a threat, and even Geraldine treats her slightly differently. She finds people on the street whistling at her or looking at her appreciatively, as opposed to disgustedly. It is clear the author is showing that there is a perception of perks in being thin, and that society treats the thin differently than the obese. Some of the thin women in the novel are portrayed as selfish, whereas others are shown as kind, showing that the stereotypes of both the thin and the heavy are untrue.

Brad's character's actions in the novel are the perfect display of how society views weight. Brad likes heavy women. However, because he knows that society views weight as a negative, he hides his love for Jenny, his long time lover, and instead uses Jemima, now thin, as a trophy girlfriend. He is willing to partake in a shallow, emotionless relationship with Jemima, while still having an affair with Jenny, as long as his image is maintained. Although over the top, this blatant display of the lengths some will go to in order to maintain social norms does show the point that society is generally unaccepting of those with weight issues.

## Self Image

Another major theme in the novel is that of self image. Jemima, in the beginning of the novel, is very heavy, and she is highly insecure about herself. She finds her weight disgusting, and the more she thinks about it, the more she turns to food for comfort. She believes others look at her with pity or disgust, believes her mother is ashamed of her, believes her room mates think of her as almost nonexistent. Jemima is sometimes right in her assessments, but often, she places her own thoughts and emotions on others. Because she thinks of herself negatively, she assumes everyone does. The people at her gym, for example, are not "shocked" by her weight, but simply see her as a client. Geraldine, too, sees Jemima as a friend, not as a charity case. But Jemima thinks of herself in a negative light, and thus projects this on how she perceives others to feel.



Conversely, when Jemima begins to lose the weight, her self image improves. She knows she looks good, but Jemima is surprised to find her self image is still damaged. Even thin, Jemima wonders if she is good enough for others, and can hardly believe people like her. Although she becomes what she thought she wanted to be, Jemima discovers that self image is not entirely based on weight, but on a host of other factors that Jemima must overcome in her own mind. It is only when Jemima learns to accept herself as she is, regardless of weight, that she is able to find true happiness.

## Obsession

Another theme in the novel is the dangers of obsession. Jemima is obese at the beginning of the novel, and tends to overdo many things. She overeats constantly, and obsesses over her weight, belittling herself constantly for her choices. She gets into a self destructive pattern that is highly dangerous. When she does decide to lose the weight, however, Jemima finds herself equally obsessive. Eating very little and exercising nearly non stop, Jemima rapidly changes her body, at the cost of her own health. She knows what she is doing is unhealthy, but once Jemima begins to see her body change, she becomes obsessed with the image she has in her head.

Jemima's character in the novel has several moments of obsession. When Jemima discovers what has happened, in terms of Brad using her, she binges, again using food as a way to comfort herself excessively. She obsessively watches what she eats, and exercise daily, even when she is in Los Angeles. Jemima never allows herself to stop obsession about her weight, whether she is thin or heavy. By the end of the novel, however, Jemima learns that happiness is found in discovering a balance in life between one end of the spectrum and the other. When she accepts herself for who she is, Jemima finds that her body finds a natural balance that she is happy with, in terms of weight. She may not be ultra thin, but she finds she is happy.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in the novel is interesting, as it switches from first person to third person throughout the book. In first person view, the teller of the tale is Jemima, the main character of the novel. When in first person view, the narration is reliable, as only Jemima can know the thoughts and emotions she has. Jemima's inner feelings about herself and the world around her are vital to the novel, as it follows her journey through weight loss, love, and relationships. Without this first person viewpoint, the impact of Jemima's emotional journey would not be as poignant.

When in third person view, the narration is equally necessary, and reliable. As an omniscient view, third person allows the author to delve deeper into the thoughts and emotions of the other characters in the novel. In addition, third person allows a step back from Jemima's own litany of thoughts. The third person narrator allows the reader to see Jemima, and the other characters, without the bias of Jemima's own thoughts and opinions. By stepping outside Jemima, the lives of Ben, Geraldine, and others can be examined in a closer light.

The story is told with a mix of dialog and narration, and the switching from first to third person allows the reader both an insight into Jemima, using her own thoughts and biases, and insight into others and Jemima herself, without bias. The reader can understand Jemima's self image, but then can step back and see her from the outside as well, providing a much deeper understanding of the effects of body image on a person, which is a vital theme in the novel.

## Setting

The novel is set in two primary areas, those of the Kilburn area of London, England, and in Los Angeles, California. In Kilburn, the setting is often rainy, and far from glamorous. There are shopping areas, restaurants, flats, and businesses, as usual, but it is a working man's area, with little atmosphere. Jemima and her friends frequent small, local pubs, where working men and women go to escape for a while. There are glamorous people, but most frequent other areas of London.

On the other side, Los Angeles is a glamorous haven of beauty. The people are generally tanned, well groomed, and spend much of their time worrying about their looks and how they appear to others. The town is considered one of movies and money, and almost everyone Jemima meets is of that mind set. It is portrayed as constantly sunny, with beautiful weather. The contrast between this and Kilburn is intentional, as these two settings represent the two sides of Jemima. On one hand, Jemima is a working girl, who enjoys simplicity and familiarity. On the other hand, Jemima dreams of beauty, thinness, and glamor. It is only when Jemima travels to Los Angeles and



experiences it that she is able to realize her true love is Kilburn, and her home. She discovers that beauty really is in the eye of the beholder, and that she herself finds her home the best place to be.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is lighthearted and fun. The sentences are simple and informal, as the book is written to be entertaining. The novel is, therefore, not only easy to read, but also easy to understand. The lightheartedness adds a dimension to the novel that helps to show the true, good natured personality of the primary character, Jemima Jones. The reader is able to glimpse into the simple yet fun world of the characters, made more believable by the style of the writer.

The language of the novel also helps to show the different personality types within the novel. Much of the novel is dialog, and the reader is better able to understand the characters through their language. These characters are educated, and speak properly, without much slang or foul language. They are, however, vastly different in what is important, and their dialogs show this. Sophie and Lisa, for example, often talk about men or styles, showing they tend to be shallow. Lauren and Jemima speak often of men, but in terms of their feelings and emotions, showing them to be more in depth characters. The language helps the flow or the narration in the novel, making the novel a quick read.

## Structure

The novel is comprised of thirty two chapters and an epilogue, all of unequal lengths. Each chapter is named only by chapter number, thus not revealing anything that may happen in the chapter. Due to the short nature of some of the chapters, this is necessary. The chapters flow together well, with little time happening between them, and they consist of a blend of dialog and narration.

The plot of the novel is straightforward, without flashbacks or subplots. The novel is about an overweight woman, Jemima Jones, who longs to live the glamorous life she images the thin women live. Jemima is a kind, sweet, pleasant, funny woman with a kind heart, but her love of food, and her low self esteem, make it nearly impossible for her to lose weight. She is a talented writer, but is given little notice, as her weight tends to make her invisible. When she meets Brad online, however, she is able to transform herself into the person she believes herself to be. However, on the journey, she discovers that being thin doesn't change her, and her insecurities are still just as strong. She learns, eventually, to embrace herself as she is.

The novel's pace is quick due to the flow of language, and is a very easy read. The plot is light and engaging, and provides a wonderful, lighthearted read.



## Quotes

"There is nothing in the world quite like the smell of bacon frying, I'm sure you will agree. Together with dill, fresh lavender, and Chanel No. 5, it is one of Jemima's favorite smells. If it simply remained a favorite smell then all would be fine, but Jemima's nostrils are stronger than her willpower." - Chapter 2, pg. 17.

"The internet is another world, where people can be anyone they want, and, even as you read these words, marriages are disintegrating through lack of communication, thanks to a little colored screen tucked away in a corner of the house." - Chapter 4, pg. 29.

"I mean, this could open up a whole new life for me, a new life that doesn't care about looks, about weight, about expanses of flesh." - Chapter 6, pg. 55.

"Her mother wants to walk down the street with Jemima and feel immeasurably proud, she wants to soak in the admiring stares, bask in her daughter's beauty. What she doesn't want is what she's got. A daughter she loves, but of whom she's ashamed." - Chapter 10, pg. 127.

"I may be cynical but you, my dear Jemima, are an innocent, and that's why you need fairy godmothers like myself to keep your best interests at heart." - Chapter 11, pg. 130.

"I can already see myself as I'm going to be. Slim. And beautiful. As I once was, I suppose, when I was a child, before my father left, before I discovered that the only thing to ease the pain of being abandoned by an uncaring father was food." - Chapter 12, pg. 145.

"What if I'm not what he expected? What if he sees through the illusion and sees the fat, unhappy girl lurking beneath? " - Chapter 17, pg. 214.

"Well, maybe Jemima Jones is right, because it is oh so very easy to be blinded by what people look like, and yes, she's right, Brad is the ultimate specimen of the perfect man. But let's be honest here, they hardly know each other, and although they like the look of each other, which is, as we all know, a good start, looks - and Jemima of all people should be remembering this - aren't everything" - Chapter 17, pg. 223.

"Jemima and Brad look like the perfect couple, like they've just stepped out of a romantic love story, and even though they're not really talking, they're giggling together and teasing one another in a way that is increasingly like two people falling in love with each other. Or could that be two people falling in love with love itself?" - Chapter 19, pg. 246.

"You can't even begin to imagine what it was like being fat. It colors your whole life. Nobody wants to be seen with you, nobody notices you, or if they do it's because they think you're worthless." - Chapter 22, pg. 293.





"But what Jemima Jones never understood was that sometimes, in life, you have to make things happen. That you can change your life if you're willing to let go of the old and actively look for the new. That even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." - Chapter 23, pg. 306.

"This is about me. This is about finally thinking you've found someone to spend the rest of your life with, and not being good enough for them. It's about thinking being blonde and slim and perfect will automatically bring you happiness, and then discovering that life is full of as many disappointments as there were before." - Chapter 27, pg. 356.

"But fairy tales can come true, and just like Jemima Jones, or Mrs. Ben Williams as she's known outside of the glossy magazine where she now works, if we trust in ourselves, embrace our faults, and brazen it out with courage, strength, bravery, and truth, fate may just smile upon us." - Epilogue, pg. 416.



## Topics for Discussion

One of the main themes in the novel is self image. How did Jemima originally see herself? How did this affect her life? How did she see herself after her weight loss? What changed? Did this change her personality? What does this say about self image, and how it affects your life?

Jemima J, in the novel, goes from one extreme, being heavy, to another, as she pushes herself dangerously thin. In the end, however, Jemima finds a healthy balance. What causes her to find this balance? What does this balance do for Jemima, and how does this help her?

Jemima loses weight in the novel by eating very little, and exercising tremendously. What drives her to lose the weight? Does she lose it for Brad, or does she lose it for herself? Do you think Jemima is happier thin? Why or why not? What does being thin do for her that would not have happened had she not lost the weight?

In the book, Ben falls for Jemima after she loses the weight, although he liked her, in a friendly way, prior to her weight loss. Do you think Ben ever would have dated Jemima, had she not lost weight? What does this imply about being heavy? Do you think Jemima had more opportunity thin? Why or why not? What does this say about society?

Ben's life is filled with beautiful people, but he rarely wants to date them. Why? What does he think of most of the women? Why does he dislike them? Why does he fall in love with Jemima? What qualities does she have, other than beauty, that the other women in Ben's life do not have? What does this imply about the importance of beauty?

In the novel, Brad hides his true love, Jenny, from the world because of her size. He uses Jemima for her thinness, all the while really loving heavier women. Why does he do this? Why doesn't he show his true feelings to the world? What does this say about Brad? Why do you think Jenny allows him to treat her this way? Why does Jemima seem to forgive Jenny?

Geraldine proves to be a wonderful friend in the novel, regardless of Jemima's weight. Why do you think Geraldine is such a good friend? What qualities in Jemima does she admire and enjoy? Why does Jemima seem so surprised that Geraldine is friends with her? Why do you think Geraldine is able to look past Jemima's weight, and see the wonderful person inside?