

# **The Long Dark Tea-time of the Soul Study Guide**

**The Long Dark Tea-time of the Soul by Douglas Adams**

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## Plot Summary

Kate Schechter is trying to make a trip from London to Norway, but she feels like the gods are trying to prevent her. In fact, several Norse gods are continuing an old fight, and Kate finds herself in the middle of it, along with holistic detective Dirk Gently. Dirk tries to crack the case while he and Kate travel to Valhalla and back.

Kate is desperately trying to make her flight, but the huge, shaggy man in front of her in line at the airport has no ticket. The ticket counter girl is no help at all, and Kate knows she is going to miss her flight. As Kate walks away from the ticket counter, it goes up in a ball of flame, knocking her unconscious. She wakes up in a hospital after a three-day coma and discovers the large man from the airport, along with a Coca-Cola machine. The man disappears from the hospital, and Kate visits another hospital, Woodhead, hoping to find him. She finds the man easily enough when he shows up at her house as Thor, the God of Thunder. Thor has been having some strange problems lately, which reduce his power and cause things to happen when he gets angry. He grabs Kate, throws his mighty hammer, and takes her to Asgard, the home of the gods.

That same day, Dirk Gently shows up five hours late for his appointment and finds that his client has been beheaded, though no one can figure out how or why. In the house, Dirk finds an envelope filled with a bundle of papers in strange writing, with many different names crossed off the envelope. Dirk notices that all the names are big names in the recording or advertising industry, and Dirk's client is the only name not crossed off. Dirk leaves his house because a large eagle is trapped inside and keeps attacking him. Dirk follows a crowd of homeless people into an empty train station, and it turns out that they are all Norse gods, and the station is Valhalla. Dirk finds out that Odin, the father of the gods, has sold his soul and the power of all the gods to a mortal couple, who has sold off most of the power to various record magnates. Thor finally manages to clear his head, and he rips up the contract. He changes the Coke machine back into the airport ticket counter girl and changes the eagle back into a fighter jet, which promptly blasts out of Dirk's house and into the mortal couple who bought Odin's soul. A new, evil Guilt God rises out of Dirk's old refrigerator and consumes several monsters.



# Chapters 1-3

## Chapters 1-3 Summary

Kate Schechter is desperately trying to make her flight to Norway to see her boyfriend. Unfortunately, some ancient Norse gods (and the airport staff) get in her way, beginning a sequence of events that requires a detective to try to figure them out. Dirk Gently, holistic investigator, does not yet realize in what he has gotten mixed up.

Kate feels that some God or Gods wish to prevent her from flying to Norway to visit her boyfriend Jean-Philippe in Oslo. So many obstacles have already come up to keep her from getting to the airport in time. Most of the time when Kate tries to go see Jean-Philippe, something comes up and he can not meet her. Kate is filled with doubt that she will make it but decides to go ahead and try. Even though Kate considers herself a New Yorker, she lives in London most of the time. Her biggest problem with living in places outside the U.S.A. is that no one will deliver pizza.

Kate's flight is just about to leave, when she finds herself in line at the check-in counter, with only one man in front of her. The man is arguing with the girl at the counter insisting he must fly to Norway, even though he has no ticket and no credit card. The man is gigantic, covered in shaggy fur and carrying a giant sledgehammer. Kate decides to butt in because she is about to miss her flight, and she offers to buy the strange man a ticket, just so that she can move forward in line. Kate writes her address on a scrap of paper and gives it to the shaggy man and writes a check to the airline for his ticket. When he reveals that he has no passport, Kate realizes that she will never make her flight in time and walks away. Moments later, she is thrown across the room by a giant explosion at the ticket counter.

No one can figure out what happened at the airport, although various terrorist groups try to take responsibility. The effects of what appears to be a giant meteorite are blamed mostly on "metal fatigue," and the incident is labeled as an "Act of God." The nature of the explosion defies any explanations based on physics. There are many minor injuries but no known casualties, though one airport employee is missing. Kate wakes up in a hospital after a three-day coma. Although she is very weak, she explores the hospital a little on her own and finds the strange, shaggy man from the airport sleeping in another room. There is also a Coca-Cola vending machine in the room. Kate hears a noise at the window, and a huge eagle beats its wings against the window pane, trying to get in. The eagle has circular markings tattooed on its wings. Kate stumbles out of the room and passes out. As she opens her eyes for a moment, she sees a short, creepy man wheel the huge, shaggy man out and then return for the Coke machine.

The next morning in another area of London, detective Dirk Gently tries to smoke enough cigarettes to get out of bed. He eventually makes it and goes down to his kitchen to examine his nemesis, the fridge. Dirk and his cleaning lady are in an endurance battle, trying to hold off on opening the refrigerator until the other one has,



both of them sure that the refrigerator contains something terrifying and deadly. While Dirk is considering how much a new fridge would cost, so he can get rid of this one, he dimly recalls that he has a client. Suddenly, he remembers Geoffrey Anstey, the strange man who is paying him a very high fee to show up at six-thirty in the morning and keep him from being killed by a monster. Although Dirk thinks the man's fear is ridiculous, he needs the money, so he happily agrees to protect the man from monsters. The only problem is, it is now eleven-thirty, so Dirk throws on a coat and rushes out the door.

## Chapters 1-3 Analysis

Dirk and Kate have a lot in common. Kate's relationship with Jean-Philippe is not very good, as evidenced by the fact that he doesn't seem to care if she flies in to see him for the weekend. Kate's primary desire is for pizza delivery, showing that she has a love of lazy, sensual delights. Dirk is in fact a slave to his physical whims, unable to even wake up without several cigarettes. His house is littered with coffee mugs, cigarettes, and of course, pizza boxes. It seems that these two appreciate the same things in life, and would really enjoy spending time together surrounded by comforts.

Adams also hints that the strange man that Kate meets in the airport is some sort of god, in which case it can be assumed that the explosion is an act of retribution against the ticket counter girl. The scene has the feel of an old fairy tale, where the hero meets a wizard in disguise, and through a small kindness or favor, receives some wonderful reward. When Kate is walking away from the counter, the man tells her that she is a woman of spirit and that he is in her debt. Kate may think little of it, but this man will probably repay her kindness as only a god can. The ticket counter girl plays the role of the person who is rude to the wizard in disguise. Such a character usually is punished in a way appropriate to the offense but typically not something as extreme as a ball of fire from heaven. Even though the girl is basically innocent, it is easy to take pleasure in her punishment, as most readers have dealt with obstinate airport staff some time or another. Interestingly, this was written in 1988, when airport regulations were far freer than today. In modern times, Kate would never be able to buy a stranger a plane ticket at the last minute.



# Chapters 4-6

## Chapters 4-6 Summary

On the way to work, Dirk pauses to consider how he can get away with being five hours late. His client, Geoffrey Anstey, has insisted that Dirk absolutely must be at his house at six-thirty, since his "Potato contract" is to expire at seven. Dirk thinks it is very silly that the man is afraid of a huge, hairy, green-eyed monster, but he really wants the money, so hurries over there, hoping he will still be paid. When he arrives at Anstey's house, he sees a lot of police cars outside. The police sergeant, Gliks, comes up to Dirk and asks him to come into the basement of the house.

On his way down the stairs, Dirk can hear an annoying sound, the incessant noise of a broken record. When he enters the room, Dirk sees that Anstey is sitting in an easy chair, beheaded. Anstey's head has been placed on the center of a record on the record player so that the head looks all the way around the room with each revolution. This is what is making the record skip. Dirk notices that the news is on, and he sees that the airport employee who is missing is his former secretary, Janice Pearce Smith. The police decide that Anstey's death is a suicide. They point out that the house is absolutely closed from the inside, so clearly no one has murdered Anstey and left the house. Gliks gives Dirk an envelope with Dirk's name on it, containing the fee for that day's work. Dirk feels guilty, thinking that if he had been there when he was supposed to be, Anstey might still be alive. Outside on the patio, Dirk meets Cynthia Draycott, Anstey's next-door neighbor, and she is most unhappy with the situation. Dirk jokes to himself that it is all her fault.

Dirk goes upstairs to use the bathroom and looks at a gold record framed on the wall. It is "Hot Potato," the same record which made Anstey rich and famous. Dirk realizes that "Hot Potato" is the record playing downstairs with Anstey's head on it. An envelope falls out of the frame with many names written and crossed off it, the last one being Anstey. Dirk takes it with him and goes to investigate the sounds of television upstairs. In the attic, he finds a weird little boy watching TV. It is apparent that the boy never leaves the room but just sits in a chair, watching TV and eating instant noodles. Dirk realizes the boy is Anstey's son and tries to think of the best way to tell him that his father is dead.

The boy ignores any attempts at conversation. Finally Dirk tries unplugging the TV, the boy attacks him. After breaking Dirk's nose, the boy plugs the TV back in, and continues watching. Dirk stumbles down the stairs, and tells Gliks about the child. Dirk suggests that Gliks try turning off the TV so the boy can hear him. A little while later, Dirk sees some men lead the boy out of the house, mesmerized by a portable television set. After everyone else leaves, no one sees a giant, hairy, green-eyed monster come out of hiding and pick up its scythe, before disappearing.



## Chapters 4-6 Analysis

For the second time, what presents itself as a detective novel, unleashes something from the realms of fairy tales and mythology. Dirk's casual attitude toward possible danger to his client is quickly contrasted with the grisly reality. The image of the head on the record player is disturbing and especially because the phrase that keeps repeating on the record is "pick it up." Dirk imagines himself in place of the head as the room spins around him. Dirk wants to move it, and it seems like the head also wants to be picked up, since it is Anstey's own voice in the song. Yet the police will not allow anyone to pick up the head or turn off the record, since that is for the forensics department to do. The forgotten child living in the attic is also disturbing and all too real. The boy appears to be autistic and has clearly been abused to some extent. The bizarre circumstances of Anstey's murder do not seem as important as the strange matter of his son. Since the house is closed from the inside, this child should be the only obvious suspect. The sudden explanation, that Anstey really was killed by a monster from another dimension, takes the reader off guard in a way that would not be possible in a straight "whodunit" or fantasy novel.

The implication of Anstey's "contract" running out is that this is a classic Faust story, which is a popular theme in literature. Faust stories involve a character making a deal with a demon or the devil and receiving some wish, usually fame, fortune, and power. It appears that at some point, Anstey has made a foolish deal, with the result that "Hot Potato" is a gold record. The time has come for Anstey to pay up, and so the monster poetically put his head on the record that cost him his life.



## Chapters 7-9

### Chapters 7-9 Summary

Earlier that morning, at an expensive private hospital called Woodshead, an old man wakes up. Although he is known to his nurses as Mr. Odwin, he calls himself Odin, because he actually is Odin, the father of the Norse warrior gods. With his one eye, he appears to be an ordinary old man, who has a surprising amount of personal dignity, as though he owns all the people around him. Odin spends most of his time these days sleeping. Each day he wakes up for a few minutes to eat and go to the bathroom, before going back to bed for the day. Once he slept through an entire year and did not notice. This morning, the newspaper catches Odin's eye, and he quickly guesses that the explosion at the airport is the doing of his son Thor. Odin is annoyed that Thor makes trouble and keeps his father from sleeping. He sends his favorite nurse to fetch his minion, Toe Rag. Toe Rag is an extremely creepy, greenish dwarf, or so most people think. Actually he is a goblin, which is why he is creepy and green.

Kate checks herself out of the hospital. The nurses try to stop her, saying she still needs observation, but she is desperate for pizza and a hot bath. Before leaving, she asks a reluctant nurse what became of the large, shaggy man in the night. The nurse does not want to tell her but finally says that he has been transferred to Woodshead. Kate gets home and is soaking in the tub when she remembers that she has heard of Woodshead before and rushes to dry herself so she can go there.

Thor wakes up naked in an abandoned building and can not move. He quickly discovers that this is because he is completely glued to the floor. Using telekinesis, he smashes the floor with his hammer, crashing through to a lower story. Now he can move, but has chunks of splintered wood all over him. Thor sees a note from Odin, his father, telling him to be careful before he repeats what happened in Wales. Thor is very annoyed, especially because he has been having trouble carrying out his godly duties lately due to illness. He spies Toe Rag, who admits to gluing him to the floor. Thor knows Toe Rag is only following Odin's orders, so he tells Toe Rag that he wants to meet with his father that very night in the ancient Halls of Asgard, at the Challenging Hour.

### Chapters 7-9 Analysis

Just as Thor is confused and wanting to know what is going on, so the reader also wonders about Odin's note. What else does the note say? More importantly, what happened in Wales? It seems that the same sort of exciting action that happened in Wales is brewing, since Thor clearly wants a fight. The reader also wonders how it is possible that Thor, an ancient god, can have flu-like symptoms. This collection of fantastical characters and events, contrasted with dully mundane settings and worries, is characteristic of Adams, and contributes a lot to the humor of his books. In a book by Douglas Adams, all that one can expect is the unexpected. The mystery of the Coke





machine continues, but it certainly seems to have some great importance. It is strange that such a distinctly modern object can be tied to such an old character. Since these old gods are to be found in the modern setting of London, it will be interesting to see what modern characters will end up in the Halls of Asgard.

It is apparent that Thor and Odin have very different ideas about how to fulfill their role of ancient Norse god in a modern world. Odin is thoroughly comfortable with living among mortals, having developed a sort of worship of clean linen. Thor, on the other hand, wreaks destruction everywhere he goes. He is loud, angry, and belligerent, whereas Odin is quiet and sleepy, yet commanding. Odin easily gets others to do his bidding, whether his nurses, or Toe Rag, the goblin. Thor can not get anyone to help him out even at the airport. Instead of trying to learn how mortals do things, he calls down a thunderbolt from the sky.



# Chapters 10-12

## Chapters 10-12 Summary

Dirk, wanting a magnifying glass with which to examine the envelope that fell out of the record, goes to a knickknack shop. He does not get a magnifying glass but does buy a calculator that uses the I Ching to calculate math problems. The only problem is, that any answer greater than four comes out as "A Suffusion of Yellow." (Chapter 10, p. 97) Dirk goes to a cafe to use it and to think about what he saw on the news about Janice. Dirk can not figure out what her connection is to the whole situation at the airport, or why she is missing, but he does use the calculator to conclude that he should get a new fridge. Dirk steals the coffee of the girl at the next table when she is not looking and drinks it meditatively. He gets up and calls a friend to order a new fridge, and when he comes back to his seat, the girl is sitting at his table.

The girl introduces herself as Sally Mills, who tells Dirk he can pay for her lunch, since he stole her coffee. She straightens Dirk's broken nose for him. Sally suspiciously asks Dirk why he has the envelope, since someone else's name is on it. When Dirk gets up and leaves, he overhears Sally describing her night at work. She is a night-shift nurse, and she complains about a patient in a coma having to be moved in the middle of the night, with his own personal sledgehammer and Coke machine. When Dirk goes out into the street, he is almost hit by a huge eagle swooping down on him.

Kate goes to Woodshead and talks to Mr. Standish, the chief of staff. A friend of Kate's who knows Mr. Standish, has called ahead and told Mr. Standish that Kate is a journalist doing an article on the many wonderful programs at Woodshead. Mr. Standish explains to Kate that there are a few very wealthy patients who check in to live there the rest of their lives and that cases that are interesting enough get to stay there for free. He goes on to show her a little girl who constantly spouts yesterday's stock prices, and a man who always says whatever Dustin Hoffman is about to say at that moment. There is an old woman who closes her eyes and writes symphonies, supposedly dictated to her by Mozart and Beethoven. Although Kate is greatly impressed, Mr. Standish does not consider these cases to be worth researching because there is no obvious money to be made in them. He insists that there is nothing supernatural in the patients' abilities. Kate tells a joke, and Mr. Standish is at first bewildered by his first exposure to humor.

Kate asks Mr. Standish if she can see the most recent patient, wanting to see the man with the sledgehammer and Coke machine. Mr. Standish says that no such patient has arrived, but then they happen to pass Odin in the hallway. Mr. Standish is about to introduce his most important patient, but Odin says that he already knows who Kate is. Kate is at a loss, having no idea how Odin knows her. A moment later, Toe Rag comes through and calls Kate by name. Mr. Standish is very suspicious, certain that Kate is some sort of spy and insists that she leave. He does not believe that she does not know Mr. Odwin.



As Kate drives away, she thinks about the horrible, greenish little man and remembers tabloids talking about a "hobgoblin" around Woodshead. Distracted, she gets lost in the country and is frustrated that the trip seems to have been a complete waste. Finally, she stops the car so she can take a little walk. Her car is hit from behind by an old Jaguar that has been following her for miles.

## Chapters 10-12 Analysis

The I Ching is an ancient Chinese system of fortune-telling. There is a series of hexagrams that are generated randomly through tossing certain objects. Each hexagram has a name and a symbolic meaning, which is supposed to point with wisdom to the best path. The meaning is expressed through a poem filled with metaphors. The fact that Dirk is using the I Ching as a pocket calculator is absurd and perfectly sums up the juxtaposition of ancient, foreign religions and philosophies, with modern technology and science. No one comments on the strangeness of using the I Ching to calculate the lunch tab, but Dirk takes the moment to explain to Sally what exactly holistic detective work is. He operates on the principle that everything in the world is connected to everything else. When Dirk tells Sally how everything is connected, he has no idea of the way all these events are connected. Sally is a nurse from Thor's hospital, and while they are talking, they listen to the record "Hot Potato." Since Dirk lives in a fictional world, it is indeed true that everything in that world is connected.



# Chapters 13-15

## Chapters 13-15 Summary

The driver who has run into Kate is none other than Dirk Gently. He knows her name, and she is very upset that he has hit her car, that he knows her name, and that he has been following her. Dirk explains that his usual navigation technique is to find someone who looks as if they know where they are going and follow them. He knows her name because she has been in the news about the airport explosion. Incidentally, before getting lost and following Kate, Dirk was trying to find Woodshead.

Dirk gives Kate a ride in his car while her car is being towed. They wait for the car to be repaired, eating in a small pub nearby. Dirk pulls out the envelope from Anstey's bathroom, and Kate recognizes many of the names which are written on it and crossed off. They include a famous popular author and several big names in the recording and music industry. Dirk starts to worry that something very bizarre is afoot, and he worries for Kate's life. He suggests that she spend the night at his house so he can protect her. She laughs at what she thinks is a bad pick-up line and drives off, letting him pay for the repair of her car.

Dirk is unable to follow her back to London because his car will not start. Dirk gets the mechanic again, but by now the man does not feel like working on Dirk's car and is in no hurry to fix the damage done by a nest of starlings in the engine. Dirk, impatient to get home, steals the mechanic's truck and parks it a ways down the road. He lets the air out of the tires, hides behind the truck, and waits, and sure enough, in a few minutes his own car speeds by and stops. While the mechanic inspects his truck, Dirk jumps into his own car and drives away to London.

In London, Kate is disturbed when she notices how many lights seem to go out just as she passes them. When the entire area has become totally dark, Kate sees the silhouette of a giant man with horns on his head. Terrified and confused, Kate asks who he is. The creature asks her if she can help him get all these bits of floorboards off his back.

## Chapters 13-15 Analysis

When Dirk describes his philosophy and approach to detective work, it appears to be silly, but could be profound. He says that Sherlock Holmes was wrong to say that one should rule out the impossible, and whatever is left, however improbable, is the truth. Dirk says that "The impossible often has a kind of integrity to it which the merely improbable lacks." (Chapter 14, p. 166) He indicates that everyone knows not to assume the highly improbable but to instead assume that there is some unseen outside factor. In this case, he indicates that the outside factor is some sort of god interfering. Dirk seems to have the attitude of someone who has observed supernatural events

before and thus would not be entirely surprised to see them again. Although he is worried for Kate's safety, it seems that her greatest peril is being in darkness.



# Chapters 16-18

## Chapters 16-18 Summary

The giant man Kate sees in the darkness introduces himself as Thor, God of Thunder. Just as she is trying to take in this information, the same giant eagle comes along and attacks Thor. He proceeds to battle the eagle, jumping around on top of streetlights and throwing his hammer. He drives the eagle away, but his arm is scratched. Kate takes Thor inside her building, and in the hallway is accosted by her downstairs neighbor, Neil. Neil is very annoyed that Thor has left a Coke machine in the stairwell, and he warns Kate that she had better not make a lot of noise.

Dirk, caught in a traffic jam, sits and thinks about ancient gods. He imagines that the ancient gods are real and still alive and thinks about what it would take to leave the country if one were such a deity. One would have no passport, no credit card, no birth certificate. He is by now convinced that the man in the airport is a god, probably Thor. He wonders why a god needs to take an airplane instead of just using his powers to go to Norway. Dirk surmises that perhaps so much human air traffic causes interference, making it hard for a god to travel.

That evening, Odin arrives at Valhalla, the hall of the gods, in a van. His faithful, stupid servant Hillov pushes him along in a hospital bed, and Odin talks freely to Hillov about being the father of the gods. Odin talks about what it was like in the old days before humans became so powerful. He says that although it was a lot of fun, no one ever did the laundry. He prefers modern times, with clean linen every day.

## Chapters 16-18 Analysis

Odin and Thor provide two contrasting views of the clash of old religion and modern technology. Odin happily takes advantage of modern technology, using the opportunity to rest in comfort, seeing humans as nice companions, rather like pets and servants. Thor is frustrated by trying to deal with humans and often chooses a violent method to solve his conflicts. In the old myths, Odin went through a trial and gave up one of his eyes in exchange for great wisdom and knowledge. On page 194 (Chapter 18), the narrator indicates that Odin made a great sacrifice in order to live forever in his cushy hospital. What could he have given up to stay there?



# Chapters 19-21

## Chapters 19-21 Summary

Dirk drives around trying to solve the mystery, putting all the pieces together. He drives over to Anstey's house again and runs into a BMW pulling out of the next driveway. The driver of the car, Clive Draycott, is a lawyer, and he and Dirk exchange business cards. Dirk recognizes Cynthia, the woman in the car, because he saw her this morning, since she is (or was) Anstey's next-door neighbor. Dirk drives home only to find a large golden eagle sitting on his front step, the same eagle that tried to get into Thor's hospital room. Dirk has seen this same eagle earlier today and wonders what to do about it.

Dirk cautiously approaches the eagle, which does not move to attack him. Dirk is wounded nonetheless because he trips on his steps and falls, hitting his head on the concrete. He opens his door, and the eagle accompanies him inside. Once he is in the kitchen, Dirk forgets all about the eagle because he is so delighted with his new fridge. He decides it is so nice that he will never store food in it, so it will stay this way. The eagle spreads its wings, frightening Dirk, who runs out of the kitchen and shuts the door. The eagle starts dive-bombing the door, and Dirk realizes that he needs many of the items in the kitchen, like his car keys. He opens the door, the eagle flies out, and Dirk quickly enters the kitchen and closes the door again. The eagle starts attacking the other side of the door, and Dirk examines the envelope from Anstey's bathroom. Inside he finds a bundle of papers.

Meanwhile, Kate tries to make some sense of her situation with Thor. When she offers to clean his eagle wound, he suggests a list of organic ingredients typically used on eagle wounds. Not to be stopped, Kate disappears into the bathroom and draws up a bath. She shows Thor that she has added every ingredient mentioned, in the form of various bath salts and toiletries. Kate leaves Thor to fend for himself.

## Chapters 19-21 Analysis

Dirk has already figured out that Anstey seems to have entered into some Faustian contract, since Dirk is familiar with the Faust tale. What seems strange to Dirk is not that Anstey made a deal with a demon, but that he apparently got so little for it. The original Faust receives great wealth, instant knowledge of the universe, and has every physical whim gratified. Anstey, on the other hand, seems to have gotten a house in the London suburbs and part of a stake in a very successful record deal. This seems, to Dirk, not really worth taking Anstey's head.

Kate's bathtub remedy for Thor indicates that Thor can, in fact, interact happily with mortals, even in the modern world. When Kate suggests antiseptic, Thor is sure that only a long list of ancient remedies, including ingredients from faraway lands, can help him. What he does not expect, is that Kate obsessively collects bath salts, oils,

exfoliants, and shampoos and has every ingredient readily at hand. Thus, Thor is able to benefit from the luxuries of choice afforded in the modern era, most of which were not available in ancient times. Although Thor has trouble thinking about things, since he can not think while doing any other activity, he may be able to deal harmoniously with mortals in his daily life, if only he can avoid getting frustrated and destroying everything.





# Chapters 22-24

## Chapters 22-24 Summary

Dirk looks at the bundle of papers carefully and finds that they are covered in some sort of strange writing he does not recognize. Looking over the names on the envelope, he realizes that almost all of them have achieved their fortune through some sort of media or entertainment enterprise, though the others are much more financially successful than Anstey. Dirk recalls that allegedly the lyrics for the song "Hot Potato" came from an overheard conversation. Dirk imagines that the contract is a sort of "Hot Potato," meaning that whoever is holding it when the time runs out, is out of the game. Dirk thinks that perhaps fame and fortune come from this contract, which Anstey innocently picked up, not knowing what it is. Anstey apparently did not realize that he had to pass the Hot Potato on, before the music stops. Instead, he put it in a frame in his bathroom.

Needing to get some cigarettes in order to think, Dirk escapes through a window. Only then does he realize that he has left his car keys inside. Dirk tries peeking through the mail slot to see if it is safe to go back inside, and the eagle is waiting for him. The eagle claws his hand, getting its talon tangled up, and also slashes with its beak across his nose. Dirk pulls away and looks again at the eagle. This time he notices that it has peculiar circles on its wings. A deranged bum comes along and begs a few coins off him.

Thor emerges from Kate's bathroom, and she questions him. Thor tells her that most mortals can not see him, especially when he wears his helmet. It has been easy to blend in all these years. Many years ago, as punishment for some crime, Odin forced Thor to count all the stones in Wales. Kate is surprised to hear that the old gods are still around, and Thor explains that ancient people wanted immortal gods, so the gods are still alive. Unfortunately, now the people do not need the gods anymore and pay little attention to them. Thor tells Kate that this makes it very hard to be a god sometimes, and some gods manage to die, but it takes a special effort. Thor grows impatient with Kate's attitude and angrily knocks a lamp off a table, turning it into a kitten. Thor has to get to Asgard, to meet with his father tonight and wants Kate to come with him.

Thor and Kate go to the park, jumping over the huge fence. He throws his hammer, and when he catches it, the world seems to shift, and get much nastier. Kate can see that her surroundings have changed, and now there is a big, ugly castle some distance in front of them, which Thor identifies as Valhalla. Thor throws his hammer again, but this time he holds on to the handle, and holds on to Kate with the other hand, so that they both fly through the night sky.



## Chapters 22-24 Analysis

Although Dirk is making brilliant leaps of logic in piecing together the "Hot Potato" mystery, he does not take his deductions one step further. If the last person caught holding the "Hot Potato" contract will be killed by a monster, where does that leave Dirk? Even while he recognizes Anstey's foolishness in hiding the contract, rather than passing it on, it does not occur to Dirk that he himself is now holding the potato. However, since in one day he has dealt with a grisly murder, being beaten up by a child, two car accidents, an eagle attack, and being without cigarettes, it is understandable that he does not immediately take precautions to give the contract to someone else.

Since Thor talks about the hard times the immortals are going through, it sheds some light on his apparently strange behavior. Just as Thor is now weak enough that he has to take a plane to Norway, so perhaps Mephistopheles can now only provide a best-selling record contract, instead of all the knowledge of the universe. The confused bum that Dirk meets may very well be an old god with no more worshipers to keep him sane, now wandering the earth and wondering what happened.



# Chapters 25-27

## Chapters 25-27 Summary

Dirk quickly finds that matters are much worse than he realized. All the bars are closed, and the only place he can find some cigarettes is a convenience store which has just been held up. The attendant has a minor gunshot wound, and Dirk can hardly believe that the man uses this as an excuse not to sell him cigarettes. Dirk wanders over to King's Cross Train Station, which is a very dangerous, sleazy area. The waiting room is packed with homeless people, and a kind bum gives Dirk a few cigarettes. He notices Dirks bleeding hand, and when Dirk says that it is from an eagle, the man suggests the same ingredients for the wound that Thor demanded of Kate. Dirk comments that it seems almost as though something is about to happen. In small groups, people start leaving the waiting area, until Dirk is left alone.

Dirk gets up and follows the homeless people into the train station across the street. It is deserted, but he sees a large grey van parked there, the same one he saw earlier at Woodshead. Inside the huge, Victorian building, Dirk sees that the number of people has grown to a hundred. As he watches in confusion, people slip off into the shadows and do not reappear. Once again, he is left alone. Dirk pulls the bundle of papers out of his pocket and looks through them some more, and it occurs to him that they look similar to one of his own detective bills. As he is doing this, two more people enter the station. It is the couple in the BMW, Astey's neighbors, and as Dirk watches from the shadows, the Draycotts go to a certain spot and disappear. This time, Dirk carefully goes to the same spot. When he feels he can sense a party nearby, he shifts just slightly, and goes into another dimension. He immediately has to duck to avoid being hit by an eagle.

Kate endures her horrible flight with Thor, finally landing on solid ground in a strange place. Thor tells her that the reason he wanted her to experience this, is so she can understand why he can not go to Norway by flying with his hammer. When she asks for details, he tells her he does not want to talk about it. They are interrupted by an old woman who is happy to see Thor. Her name is Tsuliwaensis, or Tsuli for short. Tsuli takes them into her tiny shack and invites them to have a cup of tea. She was just about to kill herself when they arrived, and now she will happily put off her suicide. While they are there, she continues to excitedly talk about her proposed method of suicide and how easy it will be. Tsuli tells Kate how things used to be much better for the gods, but these days it is bad. She explains how any unfinished business in the mortal world also shows up in Asgard, although usually in a different form. Tsuli says that if a god can no longer handle being a god, he will get a disease, which makes him wander around until he lies down, and a tree grows over his head. Then the god becomes a part of the earth. Tsuli warns Thor to be careful of Odin and Toe Rag.



## Chapters 25-27 Analysis

It is beginning to seem like every person Dirk meets has some connection to Asgard and Valhalla. Clearly all the "homeless" people in the train station are heading to Asgard to witness Thor's challenge. Although Dirk had been feeling like his attempts to buy cigarettes were doomed, he does in fact give one beggar money for cigarettes, and another beggar gives cigarettes to Dirk. If in fact all these beggars are connected, it could be said that they sold Dirk exactly what he needed. Most mortals are unable to see the immortals, but Kate and Dirk can see them just fine. This could be because they both still believe. Dirk, as a holistic detective, carefully does not rule out the impossible, including interference by Norse gods. Kate, at the beginning of the book, is already suspecting that some sort of God or gods are preventing her from making her flight. The fact that Dirk can see the immortal could also explain why he is able to buy and sell with the homeless people. Thor, in his horned helmet, has become invisible to the populace, just as homeless people are invisible to most who walk by them. One interesting question is, do the people intend for Dirk to follow them to Asgard?

It is also very suspicious that Anstey's next-door neighbors arrive at the train station and go to Asgard. The fact that Clive is a lawyer certainly seems to hint that he is evil, since such modern mythology often turns out to be true in an Adams's books.



# Chapters 32-35

## Chapters 32-35 Summary

Thor crashes through the wall of Valhalla, but everyone has already left. He has figured out how to break through to Norway, and there he has found a copy of the contract Odin signed, buried deep in a mountain. Thor is excited about telling everyone this news, so he is disappointed to see the hall is empty. He decides to check Odin's quarters, and after going through the world divide, they find themselves in a pigeon-infested hotel suite. There is Odin, sitting in a hospital bed and crying.

Thor confronts Odin. Thor has read the contract and has discovered that Odin has sold not only his own power, but the power of all the gods, to the Draycotts. Thor is too powerful for Odin to steal all his power, but Odin has kept him confused and sick for a long time, to keep him from interfering. Every time Thor has tried to get angry, Odin has caused terrible things to happen. Now that Thor has had the chance to get really really angry, his head is clear. He is no longer sick and confused, and he no longer has trouble flying anywhere. For years, Odin and Toe Rag have been doing anything they could to keep Thor from getting to Norway and finding out the truth. Now that Thor is feeling better, he can easily right the wrong from the accidents. He now understands that he has turned the ticket counter girl into a Coke machine, so he changes her back. He also realizes that a fighter jet had attacked him, and he had changed it into an eagle. He changes the eagle back into a jet going at full speed, and it immediately shoots out of Dirk's house, losing both wings. It crashes into a BMW, killing the inhabitants, but the pilot is all right, although no one can figure out how the jet got into the house. Thor also turns Kate's kitten back into a lamp. He takes Odin's contract and tears it to pieces.

Odin feels very old. He tells them that Toe Rag wants him to kill Thor, but Odin would rather kill himself. Kate tells Odin that she knows a way that he can continue living at Woodshead. She will only tell if Thor will tell her how many stones are in Wales. He admits he lost count. Kate checks Odin back in to Woodshead, and he now has all the failings of old age. He has been accepted at Woodshead in exchange for his estate when he dies.

Toe Rag and the hairy, green-eyed monster escape together, fleeing Valhalla. They come upon Dirk's old fridge, but they do not know what it is. Something is trapped inside, and trying to get out. The monster goes to investigate, and when it loosens the door, something new and powerful jumps out and eats both of them. It is a Guilt God, created by Dirk and his cleaning lady from the contents of the fridge.

Dirk wakes up in a hospital, recovering from various injuries from being run over by motorcyclists. He has dreamed about Toe Rag and the Guilt God. He is woken by Sally Mills, the woman whose book he stole; she is a nurse in this hospital. She takes back her book, and Dirk opens the newspaper to see what has been going on.



## Chapters 32-35 Analysis

There are a lot of loose ends left at the end of this detective story. How does Kate know how to set Odin up in comfort? How does the matter of Odin's contract get resolved? Do the gods get their power back? How does Thor get to Norway? What havoc will the Guilt God wreak on humanity? What will become of Janice Pearce Smith, the girl who is turned into a Coke machine? What is the story behind Astey's son, the boy who breaks Dirk's nose?

It turns out that Dirk's fear of his fridge, at the beginning of the book, is completely grounded, and he is right to booby-trap the door so that he would know if it has been opened. The god born in the fridge, representing technology, quickly swallows up the ancient monsters. This is a reflection of the way the old gods have no real place nowadays, and so they wander around, unseen. This could be symbolic of the way that older ways of thinking are sometimes ignored in lieu of fast-paced, materialistic thinking, as was popular in the 1980's when this was written. The old ways can still be powerful, however, especially when the old gods learn to control and interact with technology. The Draycotts represent all that is materialistic, and they are accidentally destroyed by Thor's clumsy wielding of technology. When Thor turns the eagle back into a fighter jet, he is not planning for it to crash into the Draycotts' car.



# Characters

## Dirk Gently, holistic detective

Dirk describes himself as not being like other private detectives. His methods of investigation are as chaotic as his life. Dirk's house is covered in cigarette butts, coffee mugs, and shoes, and his fridge contains something terrifying. Dirk can not even get out of bed without smoking several cigarettes and is determined to do whatever he must to avoid opening his fridge again. He is a sloppy, overweight man, who thinks nothing of casually stealing from strangers. Dirk drives an old Jaguar when he can afford gas and navigates by finding someone who looks as if they know where they are going and follows them until they stop, at which time, he crashes into them. This has the result that he rarely gets where he is trying to go, but he often ends up where he needs to be. In describing his methods of investigation, Dirk says, "I operate by investigating the fundamental interconnectedness of all things." (Chapter 10, p.110) Unlike most detectives, Dirk does not rule out the impossible. He feels that the impossible is far more likely than the improbable, and there is likely to be some unknown factor. This is why it does not take Dirk very long to realize that there are gods involved in this story.

## Kate Schechter

Kate is an American woman used to being frustrated by life. She sometimes feels the gods are conspiring against her. At the beginning of the book, Kate is a journalist in a non-fulfilling relationship with a man who never puts much effort into seeing her. Kate has plenty of initiative, being rather impulsive, and when she can not get the line to move forward at the airline counter, she pays for the ticket of the man ahead of her in line. Kate loves taking hot baths with all different kinds of fancy bath salts, and her greatest desire is simply to have pizza delivered (which is almost impossible in London). Kate is also good at sneaking past authority figures, often by pretending to be interviewing them. When Kate is thrown around by Thor, she easily loses her temper, but she is still willing to help him and shares her bath salts with him.

## Thor, God of Thunder

Thor is the Norse God of Thunde, and the only god to retain some power when Odin sells all the power of the gods to a pair of mortals.

## Odin, All-Father of the Gods

Odin is the father of the Norse Gods. He has one eye, having traded the other for knowledge, and he also trades away all his divine power in exchange for a great retirement.



## **Toe Rag**

Toe Rag is Odin's minion. He is a nasty little greenish goblin, but most people think he is just a nasty little person.

## **Geoffrey Anstey**

Anstey writes the hit song "Hot Potato." He does not realize that his foolishness in the matter will cause a monster to cut off his head.

## **Sally Mills**

Sally is a nurse in the hospital that treats Kate and Thor. Dirk steals her coffee and her book, and she makes him pay for the coffee.

## **Janice Pearce Smith**

Janice is Dirk's former secretary who is working at the airport ticket counter when Thor and Kate are in line. Thor turns her into a Coke machine.

## **Clive and Cynthia Draycott**

Clive is a lawyer and Cynthia is an advertising executive. They buy Odin's soul but are most upset when their next-door neighbor, Anstey, is decapitated.

## **Mr. Standish**

Mr. Standish is the proprietor of Woodshead, a very exclusive hospital. He is very proud of the decor.

## **Sister Bailey**

Sister Bailey is Odin's favorite nurse because she is so good at turning down his linen.





## Objects/Places

### Dirk's House

Dirk's house in London is filled with squalor from trash, cigarette butts, an old fridge, and an eagle trying to escape. Its condition is not improved when the eagle turns into a full-size fighter jet going at full speed, guns blazing.

### Heathrow Airport

Heathrow is the airport in London. Kate and Thor are trying to make a flight when the ticket counter explodes.

### Thor's Hammer

Thor's hammer is his emblem, and he can do mighty feats by throwing it.

### Valhalla

Valhalla is the dining hall of the gods which is located secretly in a train station in London. Valhalla is a disgusting, vile place.

### Asgard

Asgard is the dwelling place of the Norse gods. Valhalla is part of Asgard.

### Eagle/ Fighter Jet

When Thor is attempting to fly home, a fighter jet tries to shoot him down. He turns the jet into an eagle, which then pursues him until he changes it back.

### Coca-Cola Vending Machine

For most of the book, Thor carries around a Coke machine, and everyone wonders about it. In the end he reveals that it is Janice, the girl from the airport.

### Kate's Apartment

Kate takes Thor to her apartment to get cleaned up. Her downstairs neighbor, Neil, complains a lot about the Coke machine on the landing.



## **Hot Potato Contract**

Toe Rag tricks the Draycotts into accepting a bill with a "hot potato clause," which must be quickly passed on because the price must be paid by whoever has the contract last. The price is to be beheaded.

## **King's Cross Station**

King's Cross Station is an area of downtown London populated by homeless people and hustlers. Dirk follows all the vagrants to Valhalla.

## **Anstey's House**

Anstey's neighbors, the Draycotts, are not happy to see Anstey's house crawling with police after Anstey is murdered in his basement.

## **Dirk's Fridge**

Dirk goes so long without cleaning or opening his fridge, that a new god is born inside.



# Themes

## Serendipity

Serendipity is when things just happen to occur at just the right place and time, unexpectedly. The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul is filled with coincidences. Conveniently, all these coincidences help the characters wrap up loose ends and solve the mystery. It is a coincidence that Anstey, who gets his head cut off because of the "Hot Potato" contract, lives next door to the Draycotts, who originally enter into the contract, never thinking the blood will end up on their doorstep. It is another coincidence that Dirk happens to move the gold record on the bathroom wall, causing the contract to fall out from behind it. Dirk himself is confused by the coincidence that his former secretary is the one who disappears in the airport explosion, after she does not take care of Thor who wants to fly to Norway. Dirk crashes his car into two other cars, and both times, it is someone very important for him to encounter. Later, the Draycotts are destroyed in their car by a fighter jet, again by great coincidence. Dirk serendipitously steals the coffee of a nurse from Thor's hospital, and thus he learns where he should go next. When Dirk is wandering around the city trying to find cigarettes, he just happens to follow a large group of Norse gods to Valhalla. There are tiny coincidences too, like how Anstey's son is watching the same television commercial that inspires Odin to seek out the Draycotts, or how Dirk steals Sally's book, written by one of the beneficiaries of the "Hot Potato" contract.

## Ancient Principles in a Modern World

The old gods are in a most distressing situation. They were created in ancient times by Norsemen, who wanted their deities to be immortal. The gods are not designed to die, even when all their worshipers do. The gods all get confused by modern society and technology and basically just live as homeless people. Sometimes they can die, but it takes a special effort. Most mortals do not even see the gods, as though they are invisible. There are two ways to deal with this conflict. One is for the gods to learn to be more modern, using new technology to make their lives better. Odin and Thor do this, by learning to bathe and use clean sheets, instead of stomping around destroying things and fighting. Another way to deal with the conflict of new and old ideas is for modern people to take a fresh look at some old concepts. When moving forward, it is easy to forget some of the wisdom of old times; if it is forgotten for long enough, it will die out. By being willing to accept the supernatural as a possibility, Dirk and Kate are able to see things that the rest of the world can not.

## Kate's Worst Day Ever

At the beginning of the book, Kate is having such a tough time that she has already decided that the gods have conspired against her. Before the story starts, Kate has to



deal with her pregnant cat, her annoying neighbor, the death of her other neighbor, having trouble getting plane tickets, a leak in the roof, a missing wallet, bad weather, and an obnoxious taxi driver, to say nothing of the fact that she is planning a trip to see a boyfriend who does not care whether or not she comes to visit. This is before she has to deal with an unhelpful airport employee, a huge explosion, and a three-day coma. As Kate is waiting in line at the airport, "Kate's spirits sank to the very bottom of her being and began to prowling around there making a low growling noise." (Chapter 1, p. 7) Before Kate goes into a coma, she has just long enough to reflect on the events of the day. "As she lay beneath a pile of rubble, in pain, in darkness, and choking dust, trying to find sensation in her limbs, she was relieved to be able to think that she hadn't merely been imagining that this was a bad day." (Chapter 1, p. 11)

Counting the coma as part of one day, since Kate is not awake to experience it, Kate then has to deal with waking up in a strange place, alone and with an IV in her arm, then passing out in the hallway. After waking again, Kate is rear-ended in her car, while lost, and finds that all the strangers she meets that day know her name. She thinks that her day can not hold any more stress. "Kate, who didn't realize that the day was still only softening her up for what was to come, made the mistake of thinking that it had just reached a climax of shock." (Chapter 11, p. 130) She then has to deal with light bulbs spontaneously exploding when she looks at them, being dragged to Asgard, and defending the gods from their own lawyers. As Kate tells Dirk, "I've had the sort of day that would make Saint Francis of Assisi kick babies." (Chapter 13, p. 154)

# Style

## Point of View

The narrator has a somewhat omniscient third-person point of view, but he speaks like one telling a story. When it helps the story for the narrator to know what is going to happen next, or what someone is thinking, he tells the reader. Other times, the narrator holds back on knowledge in order to leave the reader in suspense. The narrator hops from explaining the inner thoughts of one character to the next, including the thoughts of non-characters, such as the designers of the airport. Sometimes, even the motivations of inanimate objects are discussed. For example, when the check-in desk explodes, it is described as having gotten "fundamentally fed up with being where it was." (Chapter 2, p. 13) Most chapters focus on the viewpoint of one specific character, but the narrator will often mention, as an aside, that the character is right or wrong in their thoughts. A few characters are made more mysterious because the narrator never tells what they are thinking. The Draycotts, the monster, the Guilt God, and Toe Rag all keep their thoughts to themselves, distancing themselves from the reader. Some very stupid characters get the same treatment, such as various mental patients, and Sally Mills, the nurse. This shows that their thoughts are not deep enough with which to bother.

## Setting

There are two main settings for the book. The primary setting is London in the 1980's, when the book was written. One problem with London, which is often cited, is that there are no pizza places that deliver. The characters rove from upscale suburbs, where Anstey and the Draycotts live, to sleazy areas like King's Cross, which is populated by the homeless and various riff-raff. Kate and Durk both live in modest homes. The area is urban but not far from the countryside. Woodshead, the exclusive hospital, is out in the country away from the noise and smoke of the city.

Asgard, the home of the Norse gods, exists in the same place as London but in another dimension. Asgard is desolate and stinking. It is unclear whether this is because the gods are so neglected, or if Asgard is just a naturally disgusting place. Thor causes some major storms on the North Sea and some earthquakes around it. Asgard contains Valhalla, the great dining hall, which is even worse than the rest of Asgard. Valhalla is a loud, stinking orgy of filth, fighting, food, wine, and animals.

## Language and Meaning

The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul is told in a very conversational tone. Although slang and name-brands (such as Coca-Cola) are very common, Adams does not include much slang that is specifically British. The book takes place in England, but Adams has a very large fan base in America, and a lot of British slang would make it hard for non-Brits to understand. The book is filled with jokes, usually in the form of



exaggerating small things. For instance, Kate considers it to be a great trial that no one delivers pizza in England. Adams is very fond of using a metaphor and then continuing that metaphor past the point where it makes sense. Another humor tactic Adams uses is to write in a very proper British voice and then either deliver absurdities in the same proper style or switch from proper English to casual slang. The contrast appears to be making fun of the narrator for taking his story so seriously. The narrator, warming to his role, also makes various asides to the reader, such as pointing out how the scene would be shot if this were a movie and not a novel. Even in the abode of the gods, the narrator is irreverent, pointing out that these gods, at least, are anything but holy.

## Structure

The book is divided into thirty-five short chapters. In general, every other chapter focuses on what is happening to either Dirk or Kate. One chapter will be about Kate, and just when the reader is wondering what comes next, there is a chapter about Dirk. The chapters often end cliff-hanger style, by hinting that some momentous event is about to begin but not telling what that life-changing event will be. This increases the sense of trying to solve a mystery, little by little, and it also makes the reader wonder what amazing thing the main character has just remembered.

Chapters 1-6 set up the story, introducing Kate and Dirk, and making them go through much trauma to start their respective days. Kate ends up in the hospital, and Dirk discovers his client has been mysteriously murdered. Chapters 7-9 introduce Odin, Toe Rag, and Thor and let the reader know that this is not just a mystery, but a mystery involving Norse gods. This changes the nature of the story, since it now becomes obvious that the typical scientific forensic methods will not solve this case. Chapters 10-15 follow Dirk and Kate in their attempts to solve the mystery. In Chapters 16-23, Kate begins to interact more with the gods, and Dirk begins to figure out the mystery. In Chapters 24-30, Dirk and Kate travel to Asgard, where they attempt to protect the rights of the gods and to keep from being killed by partying gods. Chapters 31-35 wrap up the action, following major characters as they are killed, or as they think about the events and try to go on with their lives.



## Quotes

"It can hardly be a coincidence that no language on earth has ever produced the expression, 'As pretty as an airport.'" (Chapter 1, p. 1)

"A yard or so from Dirk, a warrior was standing on top of a table fighting a pig which had been roasting for six hours, and he was clearly losing, but losing with vim and spirit and being cheered on by other warriors who were dousing him down with wine from a trough." (Chapter 28, p. 270)

"If it could not possibly be done, then obviously it had been done impossibly. The question was how?" (Chapter 27, p. 264)

"The detective business was currently as brisk as the tomb." (Chapter 3, p. 30)

"'Virtually everything you decide today will be wrong.'" [a newspaper horoscope] (Chapter 4, p. 39)

"'You know,' he said, 'these smart-alec show-off suicides really make me tired. They only do it to annoy.'" (Chapter 5, p. 49)

"The kid was deliberately and maliciously watching television at him." (Chapter 6, p. 63)

"God cuts loose, makes nuisance of himself in airport." (Chapter 7, p. 75)

"It was a silence of the most profound eloquence." (Chapter 9, p. 95)

"Into the well-kempt grounds that lay just on the outskirts of a well-kempt village on the fringes of the well-kempt Cotswalds turned a less than well-kempt car." (Chapter 11, p. 114)

"There emerged from the car a pair of the sort of legs which sound-track editors are unable to see without needing to slap a smoky saxophone solo all over, for reasons which no one besides sound-track editors has ever been able to understand." (Chapter 11, p. 115)

"'So in effect you are in the business of giving scholarships to people with particularly gifted diseases?'" (Chapter 11, p. 119)

"Kate found such contentedness almost unbearably distressing." (Chapter 11, p. 127)

"Pigeon droppings were everywhere, and the peeling paintwork make it look as if several small families of starfish had exploded on the walls." (Chapter 32, p. 296)

"'Clearly we need to sort out the jokes which have any kind of genuine psychological value from those which merely encourage drug abuse and should be stopped. Good.'" (Chapter 11, p. 140)



"I know exactly who she is,' said Odin in a quiet but distinct voice, and there was in his eye for a moment the sense of an aerosol looking meaningfully at a wasp." (Chapter 11, p. 143)

"There are some people you like immediately, some whom you think you might learn to like in the fullness of time, and some that you simply want to push away from you with a sharp stick." (Chapter 11, p. 144)

"He was a rather overweight man who had been driving wearing a long leather coat and a rather ugly red hat, despite the discomfort this obviously involved. Kate warmed to him for it." (Chapter 13, p. 150)

"Think about it. Odin, the chief and fount of all the power of all the Norse gods, thinks he might be able to get paid for being in a television commercial to sell soft drinks." (Chapter 30, p. 289)

"I myself missed it through rampant apathy, but the events of today have rather forced it on my attention." (Chapter 13, p. 155)

"The pub contained all the traditional English qualities of horse brasses, Formica and surliness." (Chapter 14, p. 158)

"Words used carelessly, as if they did not matter in any serious way, often allowed otherwise well-guarded truths to seep through." (Chapter 17, p. 187)

"Dennis Hutch had stepped up into the top seat when its founder had died of a lethal overdose of brick wall, taken while under the influence of a Ferrari and a bottle of tequila." (Chapter 23, p. 227)





## Topics for Discussion

Are the Draycotts bad people? They view themselves as good people and think they have done an admirable job upholding their end of the contract. Are they being realistic?

Why did Adams choose Thor and Odin as the main deities of the story? Why did he choose Norse gods, specifically, for a story set in England?

Is Dirk a good detective? How could he improve on his methods while still being holistic?

Do you think that holism is a good basis for a detective agency? What are some other professions where holism is appropriate?

The story deals with the old gods having trouble functioning in modern society. What do you think will become of all the homeless gods in the story?

Thor does his best to take care of the Coke machine. Does the ticket counter girl deserve to be turned into a Coke machine? What do you think Thor's feelings are toward her?

At the end, Odin appears to have taken on characteristics of mortals, but this is never explained. What sort of deal do you think Kate suggests to him, that allows him to stay at Woodshead?