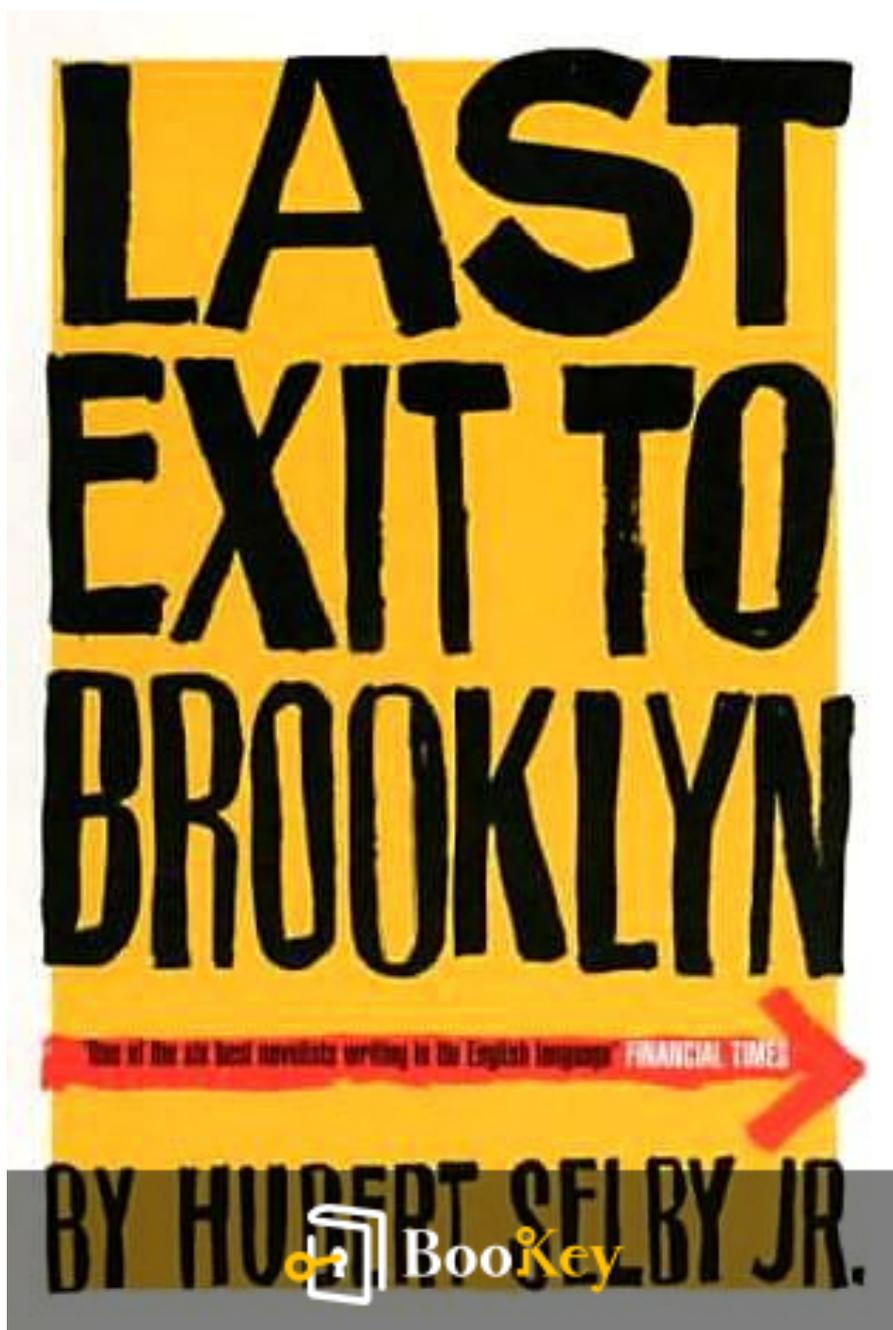


Last Exit To Brooklyn PDF (Limited Copy)

Hubert Selby Jr.



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Last Exit To Brooklyn Summary

Desperation and survival in Brooklyn's underbelly.

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About the book

"Last Exit to Brooklyn" by Hubert Selby Jr. offers a raw and unflinching portrayal of life in the gritty underbelly of 1950s Brooklyn, where the struggles of loneliness, addiction, and fractured dreams collide in the lives of its desperate characters. Through interconnected stories, Selby delves into the human experience with a brutal honesty that reflects both the darkest corners of urban existence and the visceral will to survive against all odds. Each character, from disillusioned laborers to fierce women battling societal constraints, invites readers into a world devoid of pretense, revealing the stark realities of their unyielding fight for dignity and connection. This seminal work challenges us to confront the harsh truths of humanity, making it essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of the human condition as both a haunting exploration and an urgent call for empathy.

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About the author

Hubert Selby Jr. was an American author and screenwriter, renowned for his vivid and often harrowing portrayals of life on the fringes of society. Born in 1928 in Brooklyn, New York, Selby faced numerous personal challenges, including severe physical health issues and a tumultuous upbringing, which profoundly influenced his writing style and thematic focus. His most notable work, "Last Exit to Brooklyn," published in 1964, is a seminal piece of literature that captures the gritty realities of urban life, showcasing the struggles of marginalized characters through a raw and unflinching lens. Selby's evocative prose and willingness to confront taboo subjects established him as a distinctive voice in American literature, influencing generations of writers and cementing his legacy as a courageous chronicler of human despair.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1

In the setting of a rundown diner near the Brooklyn Army Base, a group of young men known as "shitkickers" gathers for another aimless night of camaraderie, fueled by their frustrations and aspirations. The diner, owned by a Greek man named Alex, is a hub for soldiers and local toughs who spend their time lounging, discussing cars, and taking jabs at each other in a seemingly never-ending cycle of machismo.

The jukebox plays a mix of hillbilly music, which irritates the patrons, as they yearn for something more up-to-date. However, their complaints fall on deaf ears, as Alex keeps those records in place to draw in customers. As they light cigarettes and sip coffee, the group spans the spectrum of relaxed banter mixed with a tinge of aggression, filled with jokes about their clothing choices and cars. They critique various makes and models, with exaggerated admiration for the latest vehicles, and play-prank games like "mum" involving playful punches among friends.

The atmosphere shifts when Rosie, a local girl with a complicated relationship with one of the men, Freddy, enters the scene. Their dynamic illustrates a toxic blend of affection and disdain. Their interactions reveal Freddy's dismissive attitude toward her, perpetuating a sense of male dominance as he seeks affirmation from his peers while belittling Rosie. Moments later, three drunken soldiers exit a bar, an atmosphere charged

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with tensions ready to ignite.

When the soldiers encounter Freddy and insult Rosie, an altercation ensues. Despite the soldiers' initial humor, they swiftly become targets of Freddy's aggression and his friends. This escalates into a brutal beating, as Freddy leads the charge, embodying the animosity that often surfaces in the gritty New York setting. The violence culminates with the soldiers left bloodied and humiliated, showcasing the underlying racial tensions and machismo that permeate their actions.

However, when the police arrive, the power dynamic momentarily shifts. Freddy attempts to manipulate the situation, framing it as self-defense while downplaying the severity of his actions. Yet, despite their bravado, the apparent aftermath—immediate laughter and bold claims—reveals a fragile camaraderie built on shared violence and bravado.

As the night drifts on, Alex, the diner owner, observes the cycle of reckless bravado and impending consequences, warning the young men that their antics may soon lead to trouble. Yet, in the face of these warnings, laughter and defiance reign, as they return to their ritual of lounging and bickering, oblivious to the deeper implications of their behavior. The chapter ends with an ironic echo of innocence, juxtaposed against the violent extremities they have just enacted.

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This chapter encapsulates the raw energy and unsettled tensions of post-war America, painting a vivid picture of young men caught in a relentless loop of violence, camaraderie, and the unyielding quest for identity amidst chaos.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The cycle of violence and camaraderie

Critical Interpretation: In the diner's chaotic atmosphere, you witness how relationships can oscillate between humor and aggression, highlighting the fragility of camaraderie built on shared fists rather than understanding. This realization may inspire you to consciously cultivate genuine connections in your own life, where laughter does not come at the expense of others, and to break away from cycles of toxic behavior by fostering empathy and support within your community.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2

The narrative explores the harrowing and chaotic life of Georgette, a transgender individual grappling with addiction, desire, and the societal restraints of her time. Georgette finds some small solace in her secret life—collecting glamorized images of male actors and athletes while navigating the complexities of her own sexual identity. Living a turbulent life, she attempts to project an image of femininity through her appearance, adorned in women's clothing and makeup, driven not just by self-expression but by a desire to find acceptance and love, particularly from Vinnie, whom she idolizes.

When Vinnie is released from prison, Georgette's infatuation intensifies, leading her to spend every moment chasing his attention while under the influence of benzadrine and marijuana. She tries to connect with him in various ways, wanting to experience intimacy but fearing his rejection, especially in front of his friends who mostly tolerate rather than accept her.

Vinnie's backstory is filled with brushes with the law; he started his delinquent behavior at a young age and gradually escalated, ultimately serving time in a correctional institution. His time incarcerated becomes a badge of honor among his peers, and he spins tales of violence and camaraderie that solidify his tough guy persona. Despite the facade of bravado, Vinnie enjoys the power he holds in their dynamic, often teasing

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and belittling Georgette, which reveals his insecurity about her affection and the fragility of his masculinity.

The tension reaches a climax in an incident involving a knife thrown at Georgette during a careless moment of teasing that results in injury. The laughter among Vinnie and his friends is harsh and mocking, exposing not just the vulnerability of Georgette but the cruelty of the environment they inhabit. Georgette's struggle intensifies as she copes with pain and humiliation, feeling trapped not only by her injury but also by her drug addiction and the oppressive realities of her existence.

When Vinnie helps her after her injury, the moment offers a fleeting sense of care amidst the chaos. However, the prospect of returning home threatens her safety as Georgette fears the reaction of her older brother, Arthur, to her state, anticipating abuse rather than support.

The chapter culminates in a suffocating atmosphere as Georgette returns home, knowing she must hide her true self and her addiction from her family. There is a palpable tension as she wrestles with the desire to maintain her facade while grappling with the chaos of her reality, embodying the struggle of many against rigid societal norms. The chapter serves as a somber reflection on love, identity, and the lengths individuals go to survive in a world that often rebuffs them.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The struggle for acceptance despite societal rejection

Critical Interpretation: In the turbulent journey of Georgette, you witness the relentless pursuit of acceptance amidst the chaos of addiction and societal rejection. This profound insight can inspire your own life by instilling a sense of resilience in the face of adversity. It reminds you that the quest for love and validation is a universal longing, and even when confronted with harsh rejection, the pursuit of your true self is paramount. Just as Georgette navigates her struggles, you too can embrace your identity, acknowledging the vulnerabilities that make you human, while striving for the acceptance you seek in a world that might not always understand.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3

Summary of "Last Exit to Brooklyn - Chapters 40 & 41"

In these chapters, the narrative follows the tumultuous lives of a group of marginalized individuals navigating their struggles amid a backdrop of substance abuse and complex relationships. Key characters include Georgette, a drag queen, and her brother Arthur, who embodies the tensions within their family dynamics.

As the chapter opens, Arthur confronts Georgette with rage and disdain over unconventional desires, making his feelings clear by calling her "filth" and a "degenerate." This emotionally charged exchange reveals Arthur's internal conflict about their identities and societal expectations. Georgette, feeling trapped and alone, seeks solace in drugs to escape her reality, highlighting her sense of isolation and desperation.

After an intense confrontation with her brother that culminates in a physical altercation, Georgette leaves home, desperate for companionship. She arrives at Goldie's place, a hub for local queens and misfits seeking refuge. Amongst the group, the atmosphere becomes vibrant as they celebrate Georgette's defiance against Arthur with a party spirited by drugs and alcohol. Goldie, the hostess, facilitates the festivities, demonstrating her



leadership among the group.

The celebration unfolds with laughter, camaraderie, and a cocktail of drugs, as Georgette becomes the center of attention, reveling in stories of her defiance. The group engages in a celebratory ritual, dropping "bennies" (amphetamine pills) into cups of bouillon and toasting to Georgette's victory. Their laughter temporarily masks the underlying anxieties about their lives, relationships, and the absence of genuine love.

Amid the revelry, the known cast of characters, including the dainty Lee and the nervous Camille, interject their observations and experiences, contrasting their own stories of hardship with Georgette's bravery. Yet, the scene takes a darker turn when Mary's entrance shatters the party's euphoric bubble. Wracked by labor pains and on the verge of childbirth, she becomes the focal point, eliciting mixed emotions from the group—amusement at her pain and sympathy for her plight.

As Mary physically struggles, the atmosphere grows tense; her screams incite shock and discomfort within the group. Reflecting the chaotic nature of their lives, the scene crescendoes with clumsy attempts to assist her as she is reluctantly dragged away, leaving an uneasy silence in her wake.

In the midst of the upheaval, Georgette seizes the moment to recapture attention. She begins reciting "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe, her voice

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resonating with the tender yet haunting beauty of the poem. This moment of artistry amidst chaos becomes a powerful expression of her identity, evoking not only the darkness of their reality but also the flickers of hope found within art and camaraderie. Through her recital, Georgette commands the rapt attention of her peers, reminding them—and herself—of the artistry that still exists even within their wretched circumstances.

In conclusion, these chapters encapsulate the struggles of identity, connection, and the desperate search for love within a disenfranchised community. The balance between joy and despair is delicately portrayed, revealing a poignant blend of resilience and vulnerability among a group bound by their shared experiences.

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Chapter 4: 4

In the chapters of "Last Exit to Brooklyn," the narrative unfolds within an environment rife with despair yet embodies an air of resilience and fleeting moments of beauty. The characters inhabit a stark yet compelling world reflecting the complexities of desire, affection, and pain amid their chaotic lives.

We are introduced to a scene buzzing with the remnants of a night filled with emotional highs and the intoxicating presence of substances. Georgette, captured in a whimsical moment of self-reflection, envisions a life replete with love and connection. The imagery of the early morning light pouring into the dim room symbolizes hope, a stark contrast to the surrounding darkness of their reality. The characters relish in moments together as they sway between the highs of drug use and the lows of their circumstances, seamlessly blending humor and tragedy.

As various characters engage in this intoxicating celebration, we witness the tensions that ripple beneath the surface. Georgette's interactions with Vinnie provoke a complex mix of affection and desperation, as she navigates her feelings for him. Theirs is a dance filled with the longing for genuine connection, underscored by the weight of their circumstances. Vinnie, caught in his own turbulent emotions, oscillates between treating Georgette tenderly and succumbing to the roguish camaraderie among his peers.

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However, these fleeting moments of tenderness are overshadowed by the darker turns of the narrative. A sense of dread looms as the dynamics shift, leading to violent and sexual confrontations that strip Lee, another female character, of her autonomy. These scenes starkly depict the harsh realities of their world—a reflection of the power shift and the vulnerability women face in their struggle for dignity and agency. The joyful camaraderie morphs into a scene of brutality, evoking empathy and horror simultaneously.

Goldie, another key character, grapples with her feelings of jealousy and her connections with others as she attempts to maintain a semblance of stability amidst the chaos. When taking control and seeking comfort through substances, she represents both the fragility and complexity of their entangled lives.

Ultimately, the narrative blossoms into a cacophony of desires, pains, and fleeting joys—painted against a backdrop of urban decay and desperate survival. The equilibrium they have built is consistently under threat, leaving them yearning for love, acceptance, and the kind of beauty that eludes them in their stark reality. As the characters navigate the chaotic scenes, the text speaks to broader themes of longing, disillusionment, and the struggle for meaning within a fractured world.

In the concluding sections, as characters confront their choices and

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uncertainties, the constant quest for love and connection resounds throughout the narrative, encapsulating the raw human experience amidst sorrow and fleeting joy. Their stories are emblematic of a greater struggle—not just for existence but for the right to be truly seen, loved, and connected in a world that often seems cold and indifferent.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5

In the aftermath of a wedding, a celebration unfolds as Tommy, the groom, welcomes fatherhood with the impending arrival of his child. The chapter opens with a light-hearted reflection on the wedding festivities, showcasing Tommy's motorcycle—a 1976 Indian—that becomes a symbol of his youthful exuberance and passion. He is portrayed as a tall, lean figure who fits comfortably on his bike, riding with ease and confidence as he enjoys the camaraderie of his friends.

Tommy's personality is emphasized as modest and hard-working; though he has a playful side, he is often quieter than his more boisterous peers. His relationship with Suzy, the newly pregnant bride, develops amidst the backdrop of their close-knit community. Suzy, described as a robust Polish girl, keeps her pregnancy a secret from her father until the last moments, embodying a youthful defiance while navigating the expectations of impending motherhood.

The chapter further highlights the celebratory nature of family and friendships, particularly a grand party hosted after the christening of Tommy and Suzy's baby. Tommy's father-in-law, who initially reacts poorly to the news of his daughter's pregnancy, redeems himself by planning a large celebration. The scene shifts to a raucous gathering in a bar, where tales of motorcycle dreams enliven the air, buoyed by laughter and camaraderie.



Spook, another key character, is introduced. He is depicted as motorcycle-obsessed and enamored with his friends' bikes. His excitement intensifies when he finally acquires an old police motorcycle, and his antics provide comic relief during the festivities. Generating a sense of belonging and identity among the group, his enthusiasm parallels the exuberance of the wedding celebration.

As the party unfolds, the nostalgia of youth, friendship, and the carefree moments of life are contrasted with the new responsibilities that await Tommy. Suzy, weary from childbirth, excusing herself from the revelry to care for their baby, highlights the shift from youthful independence towards familial commitments. Tommy, again urged on by Spook, decides to take a ride on his bike, further symbolizing the delicate balance between his past and his new life as a father.

The chapter culminates in lively dance and music, punctuated by humorous incidents that showcase the affectionate relationships among the friends. The old Irishmen brawl in the bar, showcasing the chaotic spirit of the celebration. Ultimately, as the night winds down, Tommy sets off on a ride with Spook, embodying both the thrill of youth and the looming responsibilities awaiting him at home.

This touching blend of humor and heartfelt moments offers a glimpse into

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the lives of young parents navigating the complexities of adulthood while cherishing the essence of their friendships and personal desires. The chapter closes with a sense of community and the anticipation of life's ongoing journey, setting the tone for the next chapter in their lives.

Element	Description
Wedding Celebration	Tommy, the groom, joyfully anticipates fatherhood with his wife's pregnancy.
Tommy's Character	Described as modest and hard-working, contrasts with his playful side; exhibits youthful exuberance on his motorcycle.
Suzy's Character	A robust Polish girl who keeps her pregnancy a secret until the last moment, showing youthful defiance.
Community Dynamics	Celebration shifts to a party post-christening, highlighting family and friendship amidst community bonds.
Spook's Introduction	A motorcycle enthusiast who brings humor and excitement to the celebrations, representing camaraderie.
Contrast of Youth and Responsibility	Tension between carefree youth and new family commitments, with Suzy embodying the shift in priorities.
Party Atmosphere	Filled with laughter, dance, and brawls among old Irishmen, illustrating chaotic celebration.
Tommy's Ride	Symbolizes the balance between past freedoms and new parental responsibilities, concluding the chapter with Spook.
Themes	Friendship, transition to adulthood, and cherishing moments before embracing new life roles.



Chapter 6 Summary: 6

In the narrative, we meet **Tralala**, a resourceful and opportunistic 15-year-old girl navigating the gritty landscape of post-war Brooklyn. Initially, Tralala engages in casual sexual encounters, seeing them more as diversions than acts of passion. She frequents local hangouts, known as "the Greeks," where she and other girls mingle with neighborhood boys and servicemen, engaging in flirtation and free-spirited antics. Tralala, characterized by her voluptuous figure, quickly learns to capitalize on her attractiveness, using it to gain favors and small sums of cash.

As time goes on, the boys she associates with evolve from mild flirtations to darker, more criminal activities, such as preying on vulnerable drunken seamen. Together, they rob men, often using Tralala to lure them into vulnerable situations. The rising tension and violence escalate as they transition from petty theft to brutal beatings. Each robbery brings them a greater share of money, like the incident where Tralala steals \$50 from a soldier after a failed encounter.

Tralala's relationships are transactional; she is driven to reap the maximum benefits from the men in her life. On a harrowing night, her gang brutally assaults a soldier and leaves him in bad shape while they laugh off the consequences. However, when the police begin investigating them, Tralala's world starts to crumble as violence turns into fear of repercussion.

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Then, a soldier named Harry enters Tralala's life. Seeking connection, he treats her with more care and offers to buy her new clothes and spend time with her. Tralala sees Harry not only as a potential benefactor but also as a key to escaping her grim reality. They share moments of intimacy, and for her, this relationship represents both hope and a desperate attempt to secure a future beyond living day-to-day in the bars and on the streets.

However, Harry departs without providing her the financial support she had anticipated. In a disheartening twist, he hands her an envelope that turns out to be just a letter, devoid of any money. Instead of feeling cherished, Tralala feels robbed of her last chance for something more meaningful, only to be met with the harsh reality of her existence.

Tralala's struggle progresses as she attempts to navigate a world that views her as a commodity, ultimately returning to the streets and bars, increasingly desperate and degraded. As the narrative unfolds, she descends from evenings filled with laughter and lively escapades into a squalid existence. Her identity, initially wrapped in the allure of youth and beauty, deteriorates as she continues to engage in increasingly reckless behavior, driven by survival and the search for validation in the chaotic environment around her.

The chapter culminates in a grim tableau: Tralala finds herself used and discarded in a horrific ordeal, symbolizing not only her loss of innocence but

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the depths of human depravity. The juxtaposition of her earlier ambitions with her current state illustrates the tragic trajectory of her life, leading to an ending that underscores the despair and futility pervasive in their world.

Overall, this narrative arc highlights the desperate survival tactics employed by individuals in a broken society, revealing the stark realities of exploitation and loss, ultimately inviting readers to reflect on the broader implications of such a relentless cycle.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7

In these chapters from "Last Exit to Brooklyn," we delve deep into Harry's troubled psyche, revealing the turmoil and hostility that shroud his everyday life. The narrative begins with Harry observing his infant son, grappling with conflicted emotions about fatherhood and intimacy. His discomfort escalates when he reflects on moments with his wife, Mary, who, in stark contrast to his feelings, seeks connection with him. This tension culminates in a disturbing sexual encounter that illustrates Harry's inner rage and detachment; he is portrayed as someone who resorts to violence in his intimacy, indicative of his broader dissatisfaction with life.

Harry's nightmare, which he remembers vividly, epitomizes his feelings of being trapped and tormented by the pressures of his existence. The harpies in his dream symbolize his fears of losing control and being devoured by his circumstances. This imagery points to a larger theme of entrapment—both in his job and personal life—highlighting a deep sense of worthlessness and a foreboding future.

Moving to Harry's workplace, we see him as a union shop steward, increasingly frustrated by the dynamics of power at play. He displays a rebellious streak against authority, regularly undermining management and rallying his colleagues to challenge the status quo. The narrative captures his convoluted relationship with his job, reflecting how he misuses his influence

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within the union while also using it as a coping mechanism to escape his failing marriage and disillusioned life.

Harry's interactions with his coworkers and supervisors expose the class struggle inherent in factory work, with themes of camaraderie among workers contrasted sharply against the executives' disdain for them. As union negotiations loom, the foreboding specter of a strike amplifies Harry's sense of control and power, igniting excitement within him about the potential for disruption and revenge against a system he feels oppresses him.

Ultimately, these chapters paint a grim picture of Harry's life—a cycle of frustration, aggression, and failed connections—with his struggle for agency culminating in the potential for confrontation with authority. The intertwining threads of his home life and work underscore the pervasive nature of his despair, foreshadowing the outcomes of the looming strike and personal reckoning that awaits him. As the situation escalates, we are left pondering the fragile boundaries between desperation and rebellion, love and violence, in the life of this troubled man.

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Chapter 8: 8

In this chapter, the narrative centers on a tense union meeting led by the President of Local 392 as they prepare to strike against their employer. The atmosphere is charged with anticipation as the President conveys the harsh realities of the company's contract offer, outlining unacceptable terms such as minimal pay raises and strict work conditions. As he passionately addresses the assembled workers, rallying them for the impending struggle, a sense of solidarity builds among the members, punctuated by cheers and cries of defiance against the company.

The President's fiery speech articulates the genuine grievances and demands of the workers, highlighting their need for fair wages, better benefits, and improved working conditions. Emotions reach a crescendo as he presents their proposal: a shorter work week and substantial pay increases — requests met with roars of approval. The momentum transitions smoothly into a formal vote to strike, with an overwhelming majority in favor, sealing their collective resolve against their employer's meager offers.

The preparations for the strike commence, and the narrative shifts to Harry Black, a shop steward thrust into a position of leadership as the strike unfolds. The atmosphere at the newly established strike headquarters, a humble store, reflects camaraderie and distraction as Harry grapples with the responsibilities of his new role. Alcohol becomes an escape for him; while



he initially steers the strike organization, the pressures mount, leading him to seek comfort at a bar where he encounters vibrant personalities that pull him away from his work.

As the days of the strike progress, the initial excitement wanes into boredom

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Chapter 9 Summary: 9

The chapters depict the chaotic aftermath of a violent labor strike, focusing on the emotional turmoil and aspirations of its participants, primarily Harry Black, a shop steward. Following a fierce clash between strikers and police, the streets are littered with debris and injured men, revealing the desperation and frustrations of the workers fighting against their oppressive bosses and scabs. Amid this tumult, Harry wanders through the chaos, attempting to maintain connections with his fellow strikers while grappling with his cowardice in avoiding direct confrontation.

As the police enforce barriers and prepare fire hoses to disperse the crowd, the strikers display their resilience and solidarity, with Harry adeptly navigating the groups and relishing the camaraderie. However, the tension peaks as they wait for trucks to breach the picket line, triggering a brief renewed hope among the strikers for a decisive confrontation that could shift the momentum of the strike.

Despite the anticipation, the strike continues without major incidents, as management remains steadfast and the company strategically avoids engagement. Harry's gradual intoxication throughout the narratives evokes feelings of both power and impotence as he fantasizes about asserting his authority within the union while wrestling with his tumultuous personal life. His relationship with his distant wife, Mary, reflects the strain of the strike,

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amplifying his desire for escape and respect.

The narrative shifts to Harry's interactions with various characters, including Sal and Vinnie, who resort to acts of sabotage against the company trucks. Their mischievous deeds ignite excitement among the strikers, symbolizing their desire to reclaim control. In a blur of intoxication and reckless abandon, Harry finds himself mingling with Ginger, a flirtatious and biting character who manipulates him with her playful yet merciless demeanor, highlighting his profound insecurities.

Harry's escapades lead him to a bar, initially feeling out of place among the diverse clientele of gender-bending performers and their openly sexual attitudes. His conflicting feelings intensify with memories of Alberta, a woman he encounters who embodies mystery and allure, leaving him longing for deeper experiences of happiness and connection, contrasting sharply against his dreary existence with Mary.

The chapters culminate in a surreal progression of Harry's emotional state: from uncertain bravery during the strike, to revelry amidst the bar scenes, culminating in his intimate experiences with Alberta that challenge his identity. As he drifts between various roles—from a union steward championing workers' rights to a cowardly husband succumbing to temptation—Harry's journey reflects a broader commentary on masculinity, power dynamics, and the quest for identity amidst societal pressures.

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Through these experiences, the narrative serves to paint a fraught picture of working-class struggles, personal demons, and the complex interplay of hope and despair in the wake of relentless challenges, ultimately forcing Harry to confront the hollowness of his victories and the façade of his identity.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 10

Summary of Selected Chapters from "Last Exit to Brooklyn"

In the depicted chapters, the story unfolds against the backdrop of a prolonged strike led by Harry Black, a determined yet deeply troubled figure within the union. Tension mounts both in his personal life and in the labor struggle as Harry's actions begin to reflect his inner turmoil.

Initially, Harry's relationship with Mary, his partner, takes a violent turn when he strikes her—an act born of frustration and a vague yearning for dominance. This incident signifies the unraveling of their already strained relationship, showcasing Harry's increasing detachment from his domestic duties and emotional connections. Understanding their lives reveals the chaotic environment in which they reside, marked by poverty and desperation amplified by the ongoing strike.

As the strike drags on, Harry finds himself increasingly isolated, his respite from life's harsh realities manifested in escapades at Mary's, a local bar. There, he mingles with a diverse group of people, including various queer individuals, which temporarily lifts his spirits. However, despite these fleeting connections, he remains haunted by a sense of awkwardness and discontent, never quite fitting in due to an underlying instability that others

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perceive but cannot articulate.

The strike, meanwhile, is characterized by tension and unease among the workers. The men walk the picket lines with a sense of camaraderie, yet a pervasive sense of hopelessness underlies their actions. While some men search for work elsewhere, others express resentment and frustration, leading to an air of despondency during their meetings. Their leaders struggle to keep the men motivated, yet the officials feel little urgency to resolve the strike on the workers' terms, primarily due to the control of the Welfare Plan that is at stake.

As autumn turns to winter, Harry's relationship with Regina, a young woman he meets at Mary's, begins to blossom. She brings a new dynamic to his life, characterized by a carefree spirit that stands in stark contrast to his earlier interactions. Their connection evolves quickly, marked by intimacy and affection, despite Harry's occasional longing for deeper relationships. However, this cheerful phase does not shield him from the encroaching dullness that accompanies the colder months of the year, especially as the striking workers grapple with dwindling resources.

Thanksgiving provides a brief respite as union leaders distribute extra provisions amidst an atmosphere of strained morale. They rally the members, whipping up enthusiasm with promises of victory, though the workers, battered from months of hardship, remain skeptical about their

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uncertain future.

As the strike finally nears its conclusion, external pressures force the company to compromise. Yet, negotiations lead to further tension when the union is presented with the condition to allow the firing of Harry, which they vehemently oppose. This demand reflects the power struggles not only within the union but also between corporate leaders and the workers. The union's commitment to protecting Harry, despite his shortcomings, underscores the loyalty and complexity inherent in labor movements.

The narrative reaches a chilling climax as Harry's darker choices culminate in an act of violence fueled by desperation and alienation. This drives home the thematic exploration of personal and collective suffering within the bounds of economic struggle. His tragic downfall serves as a poignant commentary on the chaos of interwoven lives within the socio-economic tapestry of Brooklyn during this era.

In conclusion, the chapters navigate the complexities of human relationships, the harsh realities of union struggles, and the deep-seated emotional battles faced by individuals like Harry. Through vivid character portrayal and intense conflicts, "Last Exit to Brooklyn" offers a profound exploration of the human condition amidst systemic despair.

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Chapter 11 Summary: 11

In the opening chapters of this text, we are introduced to the struggles of urban life through the experiences of several characters living in a difficult housing project.

Mike and Irene's Tumultuous Morning:

The chapters begin with Ike Kelly, or Mike, avoiding responsibility as his wife, Irene, urges him to get out of bed and help with errands before she goes to work. Their interaction reveals deep-rooted tensions in their relationship, characterized by name-calling and accusations of neglect. Mike's apathy extends to their children, as Irene feels overwhelmed by parenting alone, taking on the roles of both caregiver and provider, while Mike sleeps in. This dynamic paints a stark picture of domestic discord, illustrating how both exhaustion and frustration manifest in their chaotic morning routine.

As Irene rushes through her morning tasks - dressing the children and preparing for work - we see her internal monologue reflecting her anger and disappointment with Mike. She leaves the apartment in a hurried state, resentful of the lack of support she receives, and the scene effectively captures the repetitive, cyclical nature of their arguments.



Ada's Reflection on Solitude:

The narrative then shifts to Ada, who finds solace in the warm spring weather. Her thoughts contrast with the winter months filled with isolation and sorrow. We learn of her late husband, Hymie, and her son, Ira, who died young. Ada's mixed emotions of gratitude for the sun and sorrow for her losses paint a vivid picture of her inner life. Despite her loneliness, she reflects fondly on moments of joy shared with Hymie, revealing her nostalgia for love and companionship.

Vinnie and Mary: The Struggle of Parenthood:

In the next section, we meet Vinnie and Mary, a couple who also embody the struggles of parenthood and financial strain. Their chaotic morning includes loud fighting and a lack of communication, which illustrates a similar dynamic to that of Mike and Irene. Vinnie's crude behavior and lack of respect for Mary further emphasize the toxic environment of their living situation. Despite sharing a home and raising children together, their relationship is rife with conflict, misunderstandings, and a lack of support for one another.

Lucy and The Reality of Domestic Life:

The narrative follows Lucy, a mother juggling tasks while addressing the

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unpredictability of life with kids. She faces a minor crisis in the laundromat where her children's behavior reflects both innocence and the challenge of maintaining order within the chaos. Lucy's frustrations grow as she deals with petty incidents involving her children, reflecting her desire for a sense of control over her environment and her aversion to the judgment of others.

Abraham's Daydreams:

Next, we enter the mind of Abraham, a father who dreams of a more glamorous lifestyle amid the chaos he lives in. His reminiscing about an attractive woman from the previous night fills him with aspirations that contrast sharply with his current existence. This insight into his character reveals a longing for escapism, as he wishes to break free from the mundane realities of life in the housing project.

Conflict and Community Dynamics:

The chapters culminate in depictions of the children playing in the streets, showcasing the harsh realities of life within the projects, where conflicts arise among the gangs. Their games mirror adult conflicts, and a sense of innocence is bittersweetly intertwined with the aggression displayed among the children.

Final Thoughts:

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These opening chapters effectively create a complex tableau of life in a challenging urban setting. The narratives intertwine to showcase themes of neglect, obligation, loneliness, and the desire for escape. As the characters navigate their lives, their interactions reveal a world marked by both familial love and communal strife, ultimately painting a vivid picture of the human condition in times of hardship.

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Chapter 12: 12

The chapters from "Last Exit to Brooklyn" depict everyday life in a gritty urban environment filled with racial tensions and family struggles. Lucy, a weary mother, engages in a humiliating incident at the laundromat, accidentally overflowing a washing machine and facing judgment from the staff and other patrons. Embarrassed, she resentfully mops up the mess while feeling inferior, grappling with her own insecurities and her perception of the working-class people around her. She calls for her son, Johnny, who seems carefree and oblivious to her frustration.

Meanwhile, Abraham, a character exuding confidence and pride, revels in his Cadillac, enjoying the luxury it represents. He indulges in small pleasures like getting a haircut and fantasizes about his image as a suave, popular figure in the community. His interactions with those around him highlight themes of masculinity and social status within their shared environment.

The narrative shifts to a playground buzzing with rowdy children. Their chaotic play often turns to violence as older kids shove younger ones and fight over toys, illustrating the harsh realities of childhood in these circumstances. The scene shifts to a household where Vinnie and Mary argue over their son Joey's hair length. Tensions escalate into physical confrontation, culminating in violence as Vinnie insists Joey gets a haircut to



avoid what he deems a “sissy” appearance. The chaos in the home encapsulates the pervasive dysfunction and frustration present in their lives.

Johnny's behavior in a supermarket, where he distracts his mother by wandering off, illustrates the relentless demands of motherhood and Lucy's growing frustration. She juggles shopping while feeling trapped within her circumstances, with her husband Louis superficially dismissive of her struggles. Their mutual frustrations and unfulfilled dreams surface in their dialogue and arguments about their home and the suffocating atmosphere of their apartment.

In the Women's Chorus segments, the neighborhood women gawk at those less fortunate, mocking others for their disabilities and misfortunes, revealing a significant lack of empathy and a desire to escape into gossip. The narrative deepens with scenes of parents' conflicts over how to raise their children, with humor and violence intermingling in the fabric of their lives.

Tragedy strikes in the community when the remains of an infant are found in an incinerator, adding a tragic layer to the collective suffering of the characters. The investigation reveals a harsh reality that children in this environment can be neglected or worse.

Overall, these chapters reflect a vivid portrayal of life marked by hardship,

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societal issues, and an ongoing struggle for dignity amidst chaos and despair, encapsulated through the interactions of various characters against a backdrop of urban life.

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Chapter 13 Summary: 13

Summary of "Last Exit to Brooklyn" Chapters: Women's Chorus IV, The Dasher, The Worshippers, The Contest

In the "Women's Chorus IV," a group of women congregate on a bench, recounting the aftermath of a tense incident where a baby was saved from a precarious situation. Their laughter lightens the mood, as they discuss the likelihood of the police intervening and the impact on their lives reliant on government Relief. The dialogue showcases the women's camaraderie, mixed with a sense of frustration at the inspectors who scrutinize their homes, probing their means of survival. As their conversations shift towards personal lives and routines, one character, Ada, reflects on fond memories with her late husband, Hymie, as she watches children play and greets the setting sun from her window. Yet, the warmth of her past contrasts sharply with her present loneliness, encapsulated in her solitary dinner where she's haunted by memories of family gatherings filled with laughter and love.

In "The Dasher," we meet a young girl waiting for a bus, embodying a blend of youthful independence and vulnerability. She fends off the unsolicited advances of a man in a car, emphasizing the struggle many women face in navigating public spaces. She retreats into her world of friends but is left to contemplate her social life and budding adulthood. The scene juxtaposes her

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innocent hopes with the harsh realities of street harassment, blending themes of desire, personal agency, and safety.

Next, the "Worshippers" illustrate a chaotic religious scene, where fervent expressions of faith become almost comical amidst the backdrop of a community's shared laughter beyond the walls. As a woman unleashes her passionate cries for salvation, the embodiment of desperation and longing resonates through her disarrayed prayers, reflecting broader societal struggles and the need for both communal support and emotional release.

Finally, "The Contest" depicts a volatile encounter between rival gangs, highlighting societal tensions and violence rooted in racial and cultural divisions. The confrontation escalates quickly, capturing the chaotic atmosphere of urban life where desperation and aggression intertwine. As clashes erupt, the grim realities of street life lay bare the breakdown of order, leaving casualties in the aftermath. Characters like Mike and Sal, trapped in their own cycles of disappointment, seek solace in fleeting pleasures and bravado while grappling with their inability to find fulfillment in deeper connections.

As these chapters interlink, they paint a complex picture of life in Brooklyn society during the harsh realities of the 1950s, emphasizing themes of loneliness, longing, and the struggle for survival amidst personal hardships and communal strife. Each character, in their own way, navigates their

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existence, driven by hope, longing, and a relentless pursuit of connection amidst a backdrop of urban challenges.

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