

American Gods Study Guide

American Gods by Neil Gaiman

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Plot Summary

American Gods, a fiction fantasy novel by Neil Gaiman, concerns Shadow Moon, who is in prison. The warden tells him his wife Laura died. Shadow is released and takes a plane to Eagle Point, Indiana. A man named Mr. Wednesday offers Shadow a job. He knows about Laura, which unsettles Shadow, so he gets off the plane and rents a car. Mr. Wednesday tracks him and offers him a job to be his assistant and Shadow accepts. Wednesday's associate, Mad Sweeney, tells Shadow that he is a leprechaun. The next day, Shadow wakes up in a car with Wednesday. He finds a gold coin from Mad Sweeney. Shadow goes to Laura's burial and throws the gold coin into the grave. At a motel, Shadow wakes up in the night and sees Laura. She tells Shadow the gold coin brought her back, but her body is still dead.

Shadow and Wednesday go to the House on the Rock for a meeting. They meet two men, Czernobog and Mister Nancy. Shadow sees that Wednesday, Czernobog, and Mr. Nancy are gods who came to America when the people who believed in them came to America. Wednesday is the Norse god Odin. Wednesday tells the other gods that the new gods hate the old and he wants to band together against the new gods. The new gods are what people worship now, like internet, media, and drugs. Wednesday tells Shadow he is going to live in Lakeside between trips. In Lakeside, Shadow meets Hinzemann who tells him about a raffle to guess which day an old car will fall through the ice on the lake. When Shadow returns to Lakeside, Chad Mulligan tells him a girl is missing.

After some trips with Wednesday, Lakeside policeman Chad Mulligan arrests Shadow for parole violation. While Shadow is in prison, the new gods manipulate the television and show Wednesday get shot. Czernobog and Mr. Nancy pick Shadow up. They arrange to pick up Wednesday's body. Shadow recognizes one of the new god's men as Low Key Lyesmith, a friend from prison, who is the god Loki. Shadow performs a vigil for Wednesday's body by being tied to the World Tree for nine days, and dies after three days. The gods assemble at Rock City for the war. Laura stabs Mr. World, one of the new gods' men, with a stick from the World Tree. Shadow arrives, and Wednesday tells him that he and Loki, who was Mr. World, were behind the war so they could feed off of the power expended during the battle. Shadow tells the gods that Loki and Wednesday have tricked them. The gods leave the battle. Shadow takes the gold coin from Laura and she dies. Shadow returns to Lakeside and finds the missing girl's body in the car on the ice. Shadow confronts Hinzemann, who is a mythical creature, about killing children as a sacrifice to keep the town prosperous. Chad Mulligan comes into the room and shoots Hinzemann in the head.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Shadow Moon is in prison for three years. He keeps himself busy by learning coin tricks during his sentence. His roommate is Low Key Lyesmith. Shadow misses his wife, Laura. He can't wait to get out and see her. A month before his release date, he meets with a man from the prison to talk about what he is going to do after he gets out. Shadow tells the man that his friend Robbie Burton will give him a job at Robbie's gym when he gets out. When he has a week left, he calls Laura and tells her something doesn't feel right, but he doesn't know what it is.

Two days before Shadow is to be released, he is called to the warden's office. The warden tells him he is going to be released immediately because his wife has died. Shadow packs his things and leaves the prison. The prison bus takes them to the nearest city. Shadow then takes a taxi to the airport to catch a plane home to Eagle Point, Indiana. He calls his friend Robbie to let him know he's coming home. Shadow also remembers a fellow inmate, Johnnie Larch, who advised him not to make airport workers angry.

Shadow gets on the plane and falls asleep. He has a strange dream of a man with a buffalo head, who tells him changes will be coming and he has to believe. Shadow wakes up and the plane is in a storm. The plane lands due to the storm and he discovers they have landed in St. Louis. Shadow is redirected twice before he gets on a new plane. This plane is full, and another woman is assigned the same seat as Shadow. The flight attendant lets him sit in an empty first class seat. Shadow sits down next to a strange man in a pale suit.

The strange man tells Shadow that he has a job for him, and uses his name, although Shadow hasn't told him what it is. Shadow says he already has a job. The man says his sorry about Laura's death and Shadow doesn't understand how he could know so much about him. The man reiterates the job offer and introduces himself as Mr. Wednesday. He has one fake eye. The plane stops at an airport about 250 miles away from his home in Eagle Point. He rents a car and stops for gas in the town of Nottamun. He goes to Jack's Crocodile Bar to get something to eat. After he orders, he goes to the bathroom, and finds Mr. Wednesday standing at the urinal next to him. Shadow is shocked to find him there. Mr. Wednesday asks if he is ready to accept the job.

In Los Angeles, a woman named Bilquis has picked up a man and brought him back to her room. He pays her fifty dollars to have sex with him. She asks him to worship her while they have sex and he agrees. They begin and he describes how he worships her. He orgasms and realizes he is being sucked completely inside her. She pushes him the rest of the way inside her and lies back, showing no sign of having enveloped the man. The man's cell phone rings. Bilquis answers and tells the caller the man has gone away. She goes to sleep.



Chapter 1 Analysis

Shadow does not seem to be a bad man, yet he is in prison. It is unclear why he has been jailed, although it seems to have something to do with his wife, Laura. Shadow wants to get out and see Laura, but he has a feeling something bad is going to happen. His feeling turns out to be premonition, as he finds out that Laura has been killed in a car accident. Shadow is already emotionally vulnerable and confused when he meets Mr. Wednesday. He doesn't understand how Wednesday can know so much about him, but instead of confronting him, he decides to flee. Unfortunately, Wednesday has a way of catching up with him.

Mr. Wednesday is quickly revealed as a character with supernatural powers, along with Mad Sweeney and Bilquis. He is able to find Shadow, even when Shadow is making spur of the moment decisions about his path. Shadow was not aware of Jack's Crocodile Bar until someone told him about it, however, Wednesday was able to find him there. The woman in Los Angeles, Bilquis, devours a man through her sexual organs, without showing a sign outwardly that she has done so. Shadow seems able to understand something weird is going on, but at first, he doesn't fully believe that there is magic around him. It is clear Shadow is embarking on a strange journey, but the nature of Wednesday and Bilquis and how they are able to accomplish such things is not clear. Bilquis offers the first hint when she asks the man to worship her while they are having sex.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Shadow Moon tells Mr. Wednesday he has a job waiting for him with his friend Robbie Burton, but Wednesday tells Shadow that his friend is dead. They sit down to eat in Jack's Crocodile Bar. Wednesday gives Shadow a newspaper, and Shadow reads about his wife's death and Robbie's death in a car accident. Shadow believes Robbie was probably too drunk to drive. Shadow takes a quarter from his pocket and asks Mr. Wednesday to call it while he flips it. He tells him he doesn't want to work for anyone that has worse luck than he does. Wednesday calls heads, but Shadow says he rigged it and it is tails. Wednesday tells him to look again, and Shadow sees it is heads.

Wednesday sees a man named Mad Sweeney and asks him to have a drink with him and Shadow Moon. Mad Sweeney sits down and Wednesday goes to get the drinks. Mad Sweeney tells Shadow that he is a leprechaun. Wednesday returns and gives Shadow a glass of mead, which he says is the wine of the gods. He tells Shadow he needs to drink three of them to seal their bargain, which is that Shadow will work for him. Wednesday wants Shadow to travel with him and assist with whatever Wednesday has to do. Mad Sweeney leaves for the bathroom.

Shadow Moon agrees to work for Mr. Wednesday, but tells him he wants to go to his wife Laura's funeral first. Wednesday agrees, and they spit in their hands and shake on it. Mad Sweeney comes back, and Shadow Moon does a coin trick. Mad Sweeney does one too, making gold coins come from thin air. Shadow doesn't know how he did it. He drinks his third mead, and Sweeney tells Shadow if he fights him for it, he will reveal his secret. Sweeney taunts Shadow and takes a swing at him. They fight and Shadow overpowers Sweeney, who eventually passes out.

Shadow Moon wakes up in the back of a sedan that Mr. Wednesday is driving. He is very hung over, and Wednesday tells him he looks bad and gives him water. Shadow reaches in his pocket and finds a gold coin the size of a half-dollar that Mad Sweeney had given him the night before. They stop at a gas station and Shadow cleans himself up. Wednesday buys them some snacks and pretends to fumble with paying at the register. Back in the car, Shadow realizes it was an act and the girl actually gave Wednesday more money back than he owed. They arrive at Eagle Point.

Wednesday drops Shadow Moon off at Wendell's Funeral Parlor for Laura's funeral. Audrey Burton, Robbie's wife, comes in to the funeral. Audrey goes up to Laura's body and puts flowers on her chest, then spits in her face. Shadow catches Audrey before she reaches the door and asks why she did that. Audrey says because Laura died while giving Robbie oral sex in the car. Shadow goes to the burial and is surprised to see Audrey at the cemetery. He throws the gold coin he got from Mad Sweeney into the grave.



When Shadow Moon leaves, Audrey drives up and tries to give him a ride, telling him she wants to explain why she was so angry at Laura for cheating with Robbie. Shadow says no and she leaves. Shadow is knocked out by strange men and wakes up to find himself in a limo. A fat young man knows Shadow's working for Wednesday and tells him to tell Wednesday that Wednesday is obsolete. He drops Shadow off at the Motel America where he and Wednesday will be staying.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Shadow finds out more about his wife's death, namely that she died in a car with his best friend, Robbie Burton. Shadow thinks Robbie must have been drunk, but doesn't seem to really blame him for Laura's death. Since Laura is dead, Shadow feels as though he has nothing left, so he decides to join Wednesday. It seems he is interested in how Wednesday is able to know so much about him, so he wants to find out more. Before he can do that, he needs to get closure by attending Laura's funeral. No one there greets him or comforts him, showing that Laura's family has disregarded him and there is no reason he should stay. When Shadow confronts Audrey, he learns the real reason Laura died. Finding out about her affair with Robbie confuses him more, but since she is dead, he knows there is nothing he can do about it now. He refuses to join in Audrey's anger, and seems to still love his wife, since he throws the gold coin in her grave as a tribute.

Shadow either doesn't care too much about what Wednesday's doing, or knows he won't get answers, since he doesn't question him thoroughly about the job. Shadow does find out that Wednesday is mixed up in something big when the fat young man accosts him and talks to him in the limo. Shadow doesn't understand what the fat young man is getting at when he talks about Wednesday being obsolete. However, he seems to prefer Wednesday's tactics over the man's, and remains loyal to Wednesday. This shows Shadow is a loyal man who is willing to stick to a bargain once he makes it.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Shadow Moon meets with Wednesday at Motel America after getting out of the limo and tells him about the fat young man. Shadow also says he will need a week to get all his affairs in order. Shadow goes to sleep and dreams about walking through a room full of statues and carvings. A voice speaks and tells him that the statues and carvings are the gods who have been forgotten by people. The voice says the gods die when they are totally forgotten.

Shadow wakes up and goes to the bathroom. When he returns, Laura is sitting on his bed. She is still dead, but can think and talk. She explains how her affair with Robbie started, and what happened the night she died. Laura tells Shadow that the gold coin he gave her is why she is able to move and talk. She leaves, and Shadow goes to tell Mr. Wednesday what happened and that he's ready to leave right away. Shadow goes back to his room and cries himself to sleep.

In the year A.D. 813, a group of thirty Viking explorers came to America. They build a hall for their god, Odin. When the hall is complete, the bard sings songs of Odin and how he hung from the world tree for nine days, wounded from a spear. A scraeling walks into their camp, and they get him drunk. They sacrifice him by hanging to Odin and settle in for the winter. After the winter, the Vikings see that the scraeling's body is removed, and they go back to their camp. The scraelings attack that night and kill them all.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Shadow has an odd dream about a room full of statues of gods. A voice tells him that the old gods are being forgotten, and will die. This sheds some light on the reason Wednesday wants him to work for him. Wednesday either is a god or involved with the gods in some way. By using Shadow's dreams to explain things, the higher powers are able to reach Shadow when he is more open-minded and they can better explain things. The dreams lay the groundwork so he will be able to comprehend the events to come.

The first time Shadow seems to accept something strange is going on is when his dead wife Laura appears to him. He knows Laura is dead, and aside from her ability to walk, talk, and think, she appears to be dead. She gets the chance to explain her side of the affair, which allows Shadow to understand where she was coming from. Seeing her and hearing her reasons enable him to let out the grief he has been holding onto, and he is able to cry for her.

The Vikings who came to America came well before the well-documented voyage of Leif Erikson. There is no record of their journey since the group is wiped out by the Native Americans. One of the most important results of the Vikings' ill-fated journey is that they

made a hall to their god, Odin. Their worship called an incarnation of Odin to America, and even though they are killed, the incarnation is there until more Norsemen arrive to believe in it.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Shadow Moon and Mr. Wednesday meet for breakfast and talk about where they will be going. Wednesday tells Shadow they will be going to a very important meeting tomorrow night. Wednesday says they will be heading to Chicago, Illinois and Madison, Wisconsin. In Chicago, they stop at a brownstone and meet the Zorya sisters. They meet Zorya Vechernyaya, and Wednesday gives her money to get food. They go upstairs and meet Czernobog and Zorya Utrennyaya.

Czernobog tells Shadow about his job in the meatpacking district killing cows with a sledgehammer. Shadow uses the bathroom, and when he comes back, Czernobog is yelling that he won't help Wednesday, but Wednesday tells him there is no other way. Czernobog asks Shadow to play checkers with him. During the game, they make a bet. If Czernobog wins, he gets to knock Shadow's brains out with a sledgehammer. If Shadow wins, Czernobog will come with Shadow and Wednesday and help them. Czernobog wins, and they play again, and Shadow wins. Each man will get what he wants.

Shadow, Wednesday, Czernobog, Zorya Vechernyaya and Zorya Utrennyaya eat supper together. Czernobog fills them in on the results of the game. Wednesday and Shadow stay in the apartment for the night. Shadow wakes up and meets the third sister, Zorya Polnochnyaya. She tells Shadow she was looking at the Ursa Major constellation. They go up on the roof together via the fire escape, and she tells Shadow of the three sisters who watch the sky, which are the Zorya sisters. She tells Shadow that her sister Zorya Utrennyaya is of the dawn, and it is her responsibility to let their father's chariot, the sun, out in the morning. Zorya Vechernyaya is of the evening, and she lets the chariot, the sun, back in.

Zorya Polnochnyaya tells Shadow she is the midnight sister. The sisters must watch the Ursa Major constellation, the Great Bear, because a bad thing is chained in the stars, and if it breaks free, the world is over. She tells Shadow she will give him protection. She gives him a silver dollar to keep him safe. Shadow goes back to bed, and feels like the encounter was a dream. When he wakes up, there is no fire escape, but he still has the coin. Wednesday tells him they are going to rob a bank.

In 1721, English courts let some criminals choose to be transported to America instead of being hanged. There is an English woman, Essie Tregowan, who gets pregnant by her master's son, Bartholomew. Essie is dismissed from service, but when the baby was stillborn is allowed to return to work. Essie lets her new lover come in to rob the house, and they are caught. Essie is supposed to go to America, but convinces the captain of the ship to take her back to England as his wife. Once back, she robs the captain's mother and flees into London. She begins a life of crime, but is caught again when the man who originally got her pregnant, Bartholomew, recognizes her.



She is to be hanged, but since she is pregnant by an unknown man, she is sent back to America. She becomes an indentured servant and has a child, Anthony. She tells her children and her new master, John Richardson's children about the myths of England. She marries John Richardson and has another child, Johnnie, by him. John dies a few years later. Anthony kills Johnnie in a fight, and then flees into hiding. Richardson's first daughter, Phyllida, marries, and Essie tells her grandchildren mythical stories as well. Essie meets a fairy-man, a leprechaun, straight out of her tales, right before she dies.

Chapter 4 Analysis

During the checkers game with Czernobog, Shadow shows his bravery and loyalty. Even though Czernobog says he has already won, and is asking to hit Shadow with a sledgehammer, Shadow accepts the terms. Shadow is willing to take the chance in order to get Czernobog to come with him and Wednesday. Even though he does not fully understand Wednesday's mission, he shows his loyalty to him by taking the wager. Czernobog respects Shadow for taking it, and this is why he allows a second game to be played. By winning the second game, both men will get what they want. Shadow does not appear to fear death, perhaps because there is nothing he wants from life anymore.

Shadow has another supernatural experience with Zorya Polunochnyaya. After their night journey to the roof, he doesn't believe it actually happened, a belief sustained by the fact there is no fire escape outside the window. Despite this, Shadow still has the coin she gave him, indicating the experience actually happened. The coin is meant to replace the one Shadow got from Mad Sweeney and gave to Laura. Shadow did not realize it at the time, but the first coin was supposed to protect him, but by giving it away, he lost the protection. Zorya Polunochnyaya implies that coin was very powerful, which is evidenced by the fact it was able to bring Laura back to life.

In the 1700s, a girl named Essie Tregowan, who has a very checkered past, comes to America after being banished there for her crimes. She comes with the stories of the gods and fairy-people of England and Ireland, and passes these stories on to her children and grandchildren. By passing these stories on, Essie is cementing the existence of the same gods and fairy-people in America. The gods come to where there are believers. Essie sees the results of her belief right before her death, when a leprechaun appears to her. Essie does not need to be a good or bad person to call the gods to America, all that matters is that she believes.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Shadow and Wednesday leave to go rob the bank. They go in the bank and Wednesday picks up some deposit slips. They go to Kinko's, where Wednesday photocopies the slips. He tells Shadow to think about snow, which works and it starts to snow. Wednesday changes to look like a guard and tapes a sign to the night deposit box saying it is not working. He stands there with a box and collects the deposits from people. Shadow watches from a supermarket across the street. The police stop to check on Wednesday, and he gives them a number to call to check him out. The number is for a pay phone in the supermarket. Shadow answers and pretends to be the guard's supervisor. The police leave them alone, and they leave the bank with the money.

Shadow and Wednesday head for the House on the Rock, where they will meet the other gods. When they arrive, they walk through the house and meet Czernobog. All three walk to the cafeteria, where they meet an elderly black man, Mister Nancy. They all continue on to the carousel, where they each get on an animal. Shadow doesn't understand how they are going to meet everyone, but Wednesday won't tell him how. The carousel goes around several times, and Shadow is reminded of riding carousels when he was a child. After a few revolutions, Shadow realizes he can see gods.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Wednesday again shows that he is capable of tricking people. He is able to get out of paying for food and gas wherever he and Shadow stop, and he has a good knowledge of possible scams. Wednesday uses one of his many scams to rob the bank. Although Shadow does not want to go back to jail, he is interested enough in how Wednesday will pull the scam off to help him out. Shadow shows here that although he does not wish to go back to prison, he is not adverse to Wednesday's stealing and is willing to help him if there is no risk.

When they arrive at the House on the Rock, Shadow finds the whole place to be surreal, much like their reason for being there. At this point, Shadow knows there is a war going on, and he knows this is a summit meeting for Wednesday to convince others to join him. Shadow questions where the meeting will take place, but Wednesday is still as close-mouthed as ever. Shadow is beginning to take this in stride, and it seems that despite the danger he may be in, he understands he must play his role.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Shadow sees starlight. He is riding on his carousel animal, and they are moving toward a hall. The men with him, Czernobog, Wednesday, and Mr. Nancy, are actually gods living in America. He looks around and realizes he can see each of the natures of the gods. Mr. Nancy looks like an elderly man, but also a spider, a young man, and a boy. He is the African god, Anansi. The mounts from the carousel take the riders up the hill to a hall. Wednesday reveals himself to Shadow as the Norse god Odin, also called All-Father. There are only about ten gods waiting for them in the hall, and Wednesday is upset there aren't more. Mr. Nancy tells them one of his legends about a tiger to warm up the crowd.

Wednesday tells the other gods that they were brought over by immigrants who believed in them. However, there are not many left who believe in them, but there are new gods of things like the internet, media, drugs, and credit cards. People are worshiping these things instead of the old gods. He tells them the new gods hate the old and they want to get rid of them. One goddess, Mama-ji, says they should do nothing, that they will outlast the old gods. Wednesday tells them he is offering them the chance to get some power back. The meeting ends, and Shadow finds himself back in the carousel room with the gods who were at the meeting.

Shadow and the gods go to a restaurant near the House on the Rock. Shadow drives some of the guests, including Mama-ji, a short strange-looking man, and a man who Shadow can't remember, no matter how much he looks at him. When they get to the restaurant, Shadow lets the gods out at the front door and parks the car. He is ambushed and kidnapped by strange men who work for the new gods. Shadow hears one of them say the gods are inside the restaurant and order someone to move in and round them up over a walkie-talkie.

Shadow finds himself in a tiny locked room. He does some coin tricks to keep himself calm. Two men, Mr. Stone and Mr. Wood, interrogate Shadow about his work for Wednesday. Shadow won't tell them anything and they leave. Laura, his dead wife, wakes him up. She has killed the guards so Shadow can escape. She helps him out to the road, and tells him she wants to be alive again. Laura leaves him, and Shadow begins to walk.

Chapter 6 Analysis

When Shadow meets with the gods in Odin's hall, it is the most metaphysical experience he has had yet. Most of his other experiences could be explained away as seeming like a dream or part of a dream, but the meeting with the gods is a profound experience for Shadow. Shadow is in awe of the gods, and sees their true nature during



the meeting. When he looks at Mr. Nancy, he is able to see all of his incarnations as a god, meaning all the ways people have thought of him. In the legends about the god through the years, Anansi, he is spoken of as a spider, a young man, and a boy, and these are all part of Mr. Nancy's nature.

The meeting with the gods is the moment when Shadow discovers the heart of Wednesday's mission. He learns that Wednesday is trying to unite the old gods in a war against the new gods, who feel the old gods are obsolete. Wednesday wants the gods to fight, because they are losing the belief of the people and failing in strength. If they do not overcome the new gods now, according to Wednesday, they will never be able to do it in the future. The other gods do not seem ready to believe Wednesday's plan, some because they still have enough belief to remain powerful, like the Indian goddess Mama-ji. Nothing is resolved at this meeting as far as to the next course of action by the old gods, although they may have planned to talk about it more at the restaurant before they learned of the raid by the new gods.

Shadow's accidental resurrection of his wife, Laura, is proving lucky for him. She is able to sense where he is, and if he's in trouble. She comes to his rescue when he is captured by the new gods' men and helps him escape from them. Laura is having trouble being back in the world, since she knows she is not alive and can't do everything a live person can. Shadow is sensitive to her plight and wants to find a way to help her.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Shadow is walking when he hears helicopters and hides. After they leave, he meets a crow who comes from Wednesday, and tells Shadow that Wednesday will see him in Cairo, and to find Jackal. The crow leads Shadow back to a road and a gas station. The attendant tells him where he could rent a car and that Cairo is in Illinois. Shadow buys a car from the woman's brother-in-law. He stops to sleep and dreams about the buffalo man again. A woman named Sam wakes him up by tapping on the window. Shadow gives her a ride. Sam tells him about her studies, and he tells her about his wife. They also talk about gods, although Shadow doesn't tell her what he's doing. He drops her off in El Paso, Illinois.

Shadow gets a motel room and turns on the television, setting the sleep timer. He turns on an episode of the Dick Van Dyke show, but it doesn't seem right. The lead character, Rob Petrie, gets drunk and beats his wife, Laura Petrie. The picture dissolves and becomes I Love Lucy. A new god, Media, appears as Lucy and tries to get Shadow to join them. She offers him money, but the sleep timer shuts the set off. He goes to bed and thinks that he wants to stay on the old gods' side. Shadow arrives in Cairo the next day, parks the car, and walks to a river. He sees a girl there and does a coin trick, but the girl doesn't seem interested. There is a black dog and a cat also watching. The girl leaves when the dog talks. A man with gold-rimmed glasses, Mr. Ibis, approaches and he and the dog take Shadow to his funeral parlor, Ibis and Jacquiel Funeral Parlor.

In New York City, a man named Salim is trying to make it as a salesman. He has been trying for a week with no success, and his brother-in-law back home is getting upset with his failure. Salim goes to a meeting, but the man he is supposed to see ignores him. Salim takes a cab, and he and the driver commiserate about how hard it is to make it in the city. The driver falls asleep while driving. Salim knocks his glasses off while trying to wake him, and realizes he is a jinn, a mythical Arabic figure. The jinn tells Salim that people do not believe anymore. When Salim gets out of the cab, he gives the jinn his room number. The jinn comes to Salim and they have sex. When Salim wakes up, he finds the jinn has switched lives with him, and left him all the cabdriver's id and license. Salim takes up the driver's job, happy to have a new life.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Although Shadow has become separated from Wednesday, the god is still guiding Shadow's path. Wednesday sends his ravens to tell Shadow where to go next. Shadow uses his resources to figure out the raven means Cairo in Illinois, not in Egypt, and journeys there. Since Wednesday can reach Shadow no matter where he is, Shadow has no way of running from Wednesday, even if he wants to. Along the way, he helps



Sam, a girl going to see her aunt, by giving her a ride to El Paso, Texas. They have a good conversation, and it lifts Shadow's spirits.

When Shadow is in the motel room, one of the new gods contacts him through the television. The god takes control of the image of Lucy Ricardo and uses it to try to convince Shadow to join them. Shadow is intrigued by the technique the god is using, but sees through it and rebuffs her offer. Shadow's reasoning for this is that the old gods have more class than the new ones. It is ironic that the god uses a retro or older television show to contact Shadow, when the whole basis of the god's argument is that they are the new power and the older gods, much like old television shows, are obsolete.

The story of Salim, a New Yorker trying to make it as a salesman, does not concern a god coming to America as the other vignettes do. In this case, the jinn or genie is already in America when Salim meets him, and was carried there by others' beliefs, not Salim's specifically. The genie is a cab driver, a stereotypical job for Arabic men. The jinn says he does not grant wishes. However, by taking Salim's sales items and leaving him the cab driver id, does grant Salim's wish by helping him escape from his brother-in-law's business. Whether the jinn does this to help Salim or out of the jinn's own selfish need for a better job is questionable.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Shadow Moon and Mr. Ibis are sitting and talking in a restaurant near the funeral home. Ibis tells Shadow that Mr. Jacquel has dominion over the dead, and Ibis has dominion over words. He tells Shadow the history of the funeral parlor and that they came there from Egypt. Ibis tells him many groups had come to America before Columbus. They go back to the funeral parlor, where Jacquel is doing an autopsy on a teenage girl. Shadow watches the autopsy, and when it is finished, Ibis and Jacquel ask him to stay. The three sit and drink a beer at the kitchen table. A brown cat coming and rubs against Shadow, who pets it.

Shadow goes upstairs to get ready for bed. In the bathroom, he thinks about killing himself. The cat comes in the bathroom, and shadow changes his mind. The next day, he goes to work at the Ibis and Jacquel Funeral Parlor. While going to pick up a body, Ibis tell Shadow that in the old days in Egypt, the dead would be judged. If the dead's evil deeds outweighed a feather, the dead would be fed to Ammet, the eater of souls. They take the body back to the funeral parlor.

That night, Shadow is asleep and dreams a woman in leopard-print comes to him, and she shows him a bridge. They have sex. When he wakes up, he knows it wasn't just a dream because all of his bruises have vanished. Shadow gets up and goes to the bridge, where he finds Mad Sweeney. Mad Sweeney tells Shadow that he, Mad Sweeney, screwed up and gave Shadow the wrong coin. However, Shadow gave it away to Laura and can't get it back. Sweeney is in trouble, and he tells Shadow not to trust Wednesday. Shadow gives Sweeney some money for a bus ticket and Sweeney leaves.

When Shadow gets back to the funeral home, a call comes in to pick up a body. Shadow goes out, and finds out the police have discovered Mad Sweeney's body. Sweeney bought whiskey with the money Shadow had given him earlier. In the hearse, Sweeney is still dead, but his voice tells Shadow that he wants a fine wake, and blames Shadow for killing him by giving the coin away. Shadow, Ibis, and Jacquel have a wake for Sweeney that night and drink to him. Ibis tells the story of Sweeney as a god in Ireland, and Sweeney begins adding details to the story. Sweeney shows Shadow again how to take gold from the air, from the hoard of the leprechauns, and this time Shadow understands. Shadow wakes up the next morning to find Wednesday there, who tells Shadow they are leaving Cairo.

Chapter 8 Analysis

During his stay at the Ibis and Jacquel Funeral Home, Shadow becomes acquainted with Egyptian gods and Egyptian mythology. The ancient Egyptians are famous for their



elaborate death rituals, and it is logical that the Egyptian gods should own a funeral parlor. When Shadow first arrives, he thinks about killing himself, but the interruption of the cat is enough to change his mind. Shadow has been through a lot since the death of Laura, and being surrounded by more death makes him think about ending it all. However, the cat is a significant influence on him, showing that the cat is also a god. When he gives the home a chance, Shadow seems to find comfort at the funeral parlor. He finds he enjoys the company of Mr. Ibis, and he enjoys working with them.

When Shadow meets Mad Sweeney, he discovers that Mad Sweeney blames him for losing the coin. Shadow doesn't seem to regret giving the coin to Laura, since it allowed him to talk to her and regain a semblance of life. In addition, he feels that Mad Sweeney never warned him of the coin's power. Nevertheless, he tries to help Sweeney by giving him money for a bus ticket. When he is called to collect Sweeney's body, Shadow clearly never thought that was how Sweeney would end up. It does not seem possible that a mythical being like a leprechaun could die, drunk, and freezing outside. Shadow feels bad that Sweeney had to end this way, and does his best to hold a proper wake for him. Somehow, Sweeney is able to participate in the wake, although he is dead. He even shows Shadow how to take coins from the hoard of leprechaun gold, showing he has no hard feelings for Shadow.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Shadow Moon and Mr. Wednesday leave Illinois and drive into Wisconsin. Shadow asks who the men were that grabbed him at the restaurant, Mr. Wood and Mr. Stone, and Wednesday says they are members of the opposition. Shadow asks how he and the other gods got away, and Wednesday says not to ask. They stop to eat and Wednesday tells Shadow about some of his favorite cons. Wednesday hits on the waitress and plans to meet her later. He gives Shadow an apartment key and tells him to go to an apartment in Lakeside, where he will live under the name Mike Ainsel. Wednesday gives Shadow his new id, and says he will meet him there in a week.

Shadow dreams of the buffalo man, who asks Shadow if he believes yet. In the dream, Shadow finds himself buried in rock, and a voice tells him to bargain. Shadow offers himself, and he is released. The voice tells Shadow that soon the gods will fall. Shadow wakes up when the bus makes a pit stop. He notices two young girls, one named Alison, who are also traveling to Lakeside. When they get to Lakeside, he makes small talk with the girls until they leave the bus stop. An old man who owns the Lakeside video store greets Shadow and gives him a ride to his apartment. He introduces himself as Richie Hinzelmann and tells Shadow about the town. He drops Shadow off at his apartment, and Shadow goes to sleep and dreams of Laura. Meanwhile, two men, Mr. Town and Mr. Road, come to interrogate Sam Black Crow about Shadow. They know she got a ride with him when he was going to Cairo. Sam is suspicious of them and refuses to answer any of their questions.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Shadow is introduced to the town of Lakeville. The town is mostly a prosperous farming community, which is a bit of an oddity when most small towns are failing. Shadow appears to be glad to be off the road and have somewhere more concrete to stay. Shadow has traveled for most of his life, and he is glad to have a home for a while, even if it is under a false name. He seems to get along with Hinzelmann, enjoying the old man's stories and the break from the seriousness of Wednesday's mission. Although Wednesday is not forthcoming about why he wants Shadow to stay there, Shadow is able to go along with it, showing how all his time on the road have improved his adaptability to new situations.

Shadow again dreams of the buffalo man, who does more than warn him a storm is coming. In the dream, Shadow is trapped in the earth, and must make a bargain with the buffalo man to be released. The voice asks him what his offer is, and Shadow offers all he has, himself. The buffalo man accepts his offer, and tells him that in the end, all gods must fall. His warning is cryptic, and it is not clear if he means all gods will fall in the war, or the winners of the war will still fall in the future.



The new gods used the two men, Mr. Wood and Mr. Stone, to kidnap Shadow and try to get information out of him. Now that Shadow has escaped and Laura killed the men, the new gods send two more men, Mr. Town and Mr. Road, to interrogate Sam. She is not willing to tell them anything, even when they threaten her. Sam is loyal to Shadow, even though she has only met him once. She seems to sense that Shadow is more genuine and trustworthy than these two men with made-up names.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Shadow Moon is dreaming of being a child that is raised in darkness. Eventually, the child is brought out of its hut and sacrificed. Shadow wakes up, but he can't remember this dream. Shadow tries to walk into town, but it's too far and he can't take the cold. A cop named Chad Mulligan, chief of police, picks him up and takes him to eat breakfast at Mabel's restaurant. Mulligan helps Shadow find a car to buy, then takes him shopping for clothes and supplies. He tells Shadow that the town is very peaceful, so he doesn't have much to do as chief of police.

Shadow and Mulligan go to meet Missy Gunther, and Shadow buys her son's purple Toyota 4-runner. When Shadow goes home, Hinzelmann comes to visit and gives him a basket of food. He tells Shadow about the raffle the town has, when they guess which day an old car will fall through the ice on the lake. He also tells Shadow about some kids who leave town when it gets cold, calling them winter runaways. After Hinzelmann leaves, Shadow goes to see his neighbor, Marguerite Olson, for advice on how to keep his apartment warm. Wednesday returns and tells Shadow that he picked Lakeside because the opposition won't look for him there.

Wednesday also says they are safe for the winter, because they are the dead months and the other side won't attack then. He tells Shadow that they will be going to Las Vegas to meet the god whose name is impossible to remember. In Las Vegas, that god walks through the city to a casino where he meets with Wednesday. Wednesday convinces the god to help him when Wednesday needs it, and offers him soma, a concentrated drink of prayers and belief. Wednesday and Shadow leave on a plane. Wednesday explains what Soma is, and recites eighteen charms he knows, the last charm being a secret. When Wednesday drops Shadow off at his apartment, he tells him to keep his head down and stay out of trouble.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Shadow's dream about a child trapped in darkness before being sacrificed does not seem to reference anything that has already happened to him. The dream may be foreshadowing of events to come. Shadow doesn't remember the dream when he wakes up, perhaps signifying it is something his is not ready for or something he doesn't want to see. Shadow has mostly been open-minded about the dreams he has had, so this change in the pattern is significant. Shadow also learns that the town is not as perfect as it seems. Hinzelmann tells him there are lots of winter runaways, kids who get cabin fever and can't stand the weather. Shadow finds it odd that so many kids would want to run away from such a nice town.



Wednesday comes for Shadow, and they go to meet a god. No matter how many times Shadow is told the god's name, he is unable to remember it. Since the god is in Las Vegas, it may be a god of luck or money, but it is hard to guess at his origins. Wednesday also tells Shadow that they are safe during the winter months, since the gods won't act at this time. It seems the winter is a dead, slow time in the world, and if the people of the world are depressed, they are not in a position to celebrate any gods. The charms Wednesday recites seem to come from nowhere, although it is clear he knows them well. Shadow does not know what to make of them, and Wednesday does not explain.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Shadow visits with Hinzelmann at the video store while in Lakeside. Hinzelmann tells Shadow how hard the winters are in Lakeside. Shadow buys raffle tickets for the car that will sink into the ice. When Shadow leaves the store, he goes to the library to look up thunderbirds, a Native American mythical creature that Wednesday mentioned to him. Shadow meets Marguerite Olson there, and does a coin trick for her son. When she leaves, Shadow goes down to the library's book sale and buys three books, including a book of minutes from the Lakeside Council in the late 1800's.

When Shadow gets back to his apartment, he finds Chad Mulligan waiting for him. Mulligan says he just stopped to check on Shadow. He tells him about Marguerite Olson, and how her son, Sandy, disappeared last year. Everyone in town figures his father kidnapped him and took him to another city. Shadow realizes Mulligan is in love with Marguerite. That night, Shadow examines the books he bought. He finds an ancestor of Mulligan's in the book of Lakeside Council minutes.

Shadow falls asleep while looking at the book and dreams about meeting the star people. He asks about the thunderbirds, and one woman tells him to ask them himself. Shadow climbs a tower to reach the birds. He tries to get a feather, but the phone rings and wakes him up. Wednesday is on the line, and he yells at Shadow for dreaming about thunderbirds. Wednesday says it is a recognizable sign that will make everyone know where he is. Wednesday tells him they will be going to San Francisco in the morning.

In San Francisco, Shadow and Wednesday go to meet a goddess called Eostre or Easter. She is in the park, having a picnic. They ask her to join with them and fight the new gods. Easter resists, saying that people still celebrate on her day, but Wednesday says the people do not know they are celebrating for her. Easter agrees to join them. Wednesday pays the bill, but Shadow knows he shortchanged the waitress and gives her ten more dollars. Wednesday later tells him he shouldn't have, as the waitress was a cruel person. Shadow says giving the money back was the right thing to do.

When Shadow returns to Lakeside, Chad Mulligan stops by to check where he has been and tells him Allison McGovern is missing. Shadow helps with the search, as does Hinzelmann, but no one finds her. When the search parties meet back up, some residents tell Shadow that Lakeside is really a good, prosperous town. Allison's friend from the bus, Sophie, tells Shadow about the mysterious disappearances of kids that seem to happen once every year.

In 1778, a slave girl, Wututu, and her brother, Agasu, came over in a boat from Africa. A man threatens to rape Wututu on the voyage, but she tells him she will bite him with teeth down there. He leaves her alone and she believes Elegba, a trickster god, has



saved her. When the ship landed in Barbados, Agasu was bought and separated from his sister. He was sold to a farm, where he was beaten, then to a sugar plantation. Renamed Hyacinth, he grows up and has children, and goes with the other slaves to worship their gods. Hyacinth is bitten by a spider, and his arm is amputated. In 1791, he took part in a slave revolt. The slaves won in 1804, but Agasu had died in 1802.

Wututu, who has become a slave in southern America, cries out at the moment her brother dies. Her right arm has also withered when his was amputated. Wututu, also known as Mama Zou Zou, has also kept worshiping the African gods. Women come to her for help or to find out secrets. One woman, Paris, asks Wututu to train her. Wututu tries to teach Paris about the gods and history of the earth, but Paris would not listen. Wututu teaches her ceremonies and tells her to worship the gods. As they are working, Wututu has a vision of her brother, Agasu, and tells her she will be with him soon.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Shadow is beginning to feel at home in Lakeside. He enjoys the time he spends with Chad Mulligan and Hinzelmann. After all of his time traveling and in prison, Shadow doesn't really have a home, and Lakeside is the first place he feels like he belongs. When Alison McGovern goes missing, Shadow is concerned and helps with the search. The girl's disappearance hurts the town, and Shadow wants to make sure she is safe, feeling loyal to the town. He also feels a connection to her after seeing her on the bus coming into Lakeside.

Wednesday and Shadow go to San Francisco to recruit the goddess Easter. She is reluctant to join them at first, since she feels that people are still celebrating her and she has power. However, Wednesday says that although Americans do celebrate Easter, it is not in her honor, but in Jesus' honor. He challenges her to prove that people even know the day is named for her. Easter sees his point and knows he speaks the truth, and agrees to join the old gods in the war.

Wututu and Agasu, two slaves who were brought to America in the late 1700s, both were instrumental in bringing their gods to America. Even though they were split up when they arrived, both worshiped their gods as best they could, despite the hardships they faced as slaves. Wututu in particular was able to pass down her teachings to another woman, Paris. Paris was not very interested in the gods, but Wututu's dedication to hand them down helped the gods become established in America.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Shadow Moon and Wednesday are driving in a Winnebago into North Dakota, going to an Indian reservation. Shadow tells Wednesday about Alison McGovern's disappearance, and Wednesday says it is a tragic thing. Shadow asks why he chose Lakeside, but Wednesday doesn't give a reason. Wednesday realizes there is trouble ahead, and tells Shadow to drive slower. He pulls out chalk and makes marks on the dashboard. He tells Shadow to speed up and, after they see the roadblock, to turn right, off the road. Shadow does and the world shimmers, and they find themselves somewhere at night. Wednesday tells him they are in the backstage of the world.

Shadow and Wednesday walk down a path and over a hill. There is a large mechanical spider at the bottom of the hill, next to a pile of bones. Wednesday motions for Shadow to keep away, but Shadow slips and lands between the spider and the bones. He touches a bone, and finds himself in Mr. Town's head, back at the roadblock. Mr. Town calls Mr. World to tell him the roadblock failed. They also discuss a meeting the new gods will be holding. Wednesday pries Shadow's hand off the bone and he comes back. The spider starts to light up. They freeze, and it soon stops. They walk away, and Shadow tells Wednesday about the conversation between Mr. Town and Mr. World. Wednesday tells Shadow the spider was a search engine, a tool of the new gods.

As they climb the next hills, Shadow begins to feel sick and vomits. Wednesday gives him a drink from a flask, which makes Shadow feel better. They come to a home at the bottom of a hill. A middle-aged man named Whiskey Jack lives in the home. He lets Wednesday and Shadow come in. A man named John Chapman, whom Wednesday calls Apple Johnny, is also there. Shadow realizes that Whiskey's Jack name is slightly different because of how it sounds, but he can't tell what it is. Whiskey Jack knows Wednesday wants them to join him, but he says they have lost the war already. Whiskey Jack doesn't want to join them. He tells Shadow that he is hunting something, that he has a debt to pay.

Whiskey Jack asks Shadow about his dream of thunderbirds. He tells Shadow that there are some thunderbirds in West Virginia, and if he hunts them, he could bring his wife Laura back to life. Whiskey Jack also knows Shadow has had dreams about the buffalo. Whiskey Jack trades vehicles with them, and John Chapman takes them to get the new car. They get the car from a man named Harry Bluejay. When they get back, Shadow discovers they were backstage for almost a month.

Wednesday drops Shadow back in Lakeside. He meets Marguerite Olson, who tells him Alison McGovern hasn't been found. He meets with Chad, who asks him if he wants to join the police force. Shadow says he'll think about it. Chad also tells Shadow about his cousin that has a crush on him. Chad says he is going to invite her for a visit. Over the next few weeks, Shadow and Wednesday travel a lot, as Wednesday tries to convince



more gods to join them. Shadow looks forward to getting back to Lakeside. When Shadow does get back to Lakeside, he goes for a walk to the graveyard. He sees a cat, who hisses at something he can't see. At the graveyard, he meets Laura. She tells him sometimes she can't sense where he is. However, she says she did feel a call that he wanted her, and that's why she's there. Shadow says he misses her, but he didn't want to see her because it is painful.

Elsewhere in America, the war has begun. Several people are discovered who died of strange accidents, somehow connected to the war, although the outside world doesn't know this. The Queen of Sheba, Bilquis, is working as a hooker in Los Angeles and trying to find a man. A stretch limo pulls over to her. Inside is a young, fat man, who tells her he wants sex. She gets in, and the man calls her by her name, which she hasn't told him. The young man tells her the old ones are obsolete. Bilquis waits until the limo slows and jumps out. The limo runs her down and kills her.

Samantha Black Crow gets a call from her sister, Marguerite Olson. Marguerite tells Sam about her new neighbor, Shadow, although she knows him by the name Mike. Marguerite is upset about Alison McGovern's disappearance. Sam decides to come visit her sister. In Jacksonville, Florida, Laura gets a job at a gas station.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Shadow and Wednesday's trip to meet Whiskey Jack is the first mention of a backstage area. The area is similar to the real world, however, it is only accessible by the gods. The spider that they come across is a search engine, according to Wednesday. It appears to be a physical manifestation of the type of search engines used on the internet. The fact that it is a spider correlates with the internet being known as the World Wide Web. The spider was probably placed there by the technological god to track the old gods' movements. Shadow gets ill when they are in the backstage area. Backstage seems to be a powerful place that humans can handle, therefore making them sick.

Whiskey Jack appears to be a Native American man, and is most likely a Native American god. Wednesday refers to apples about John Chapman, inferring he is the incarnation of the American folk legend, Johnny Appleseed. Whiskey Jack knows about Shadow's interest in thunderbirds, and confirms that they may help bring Laura back to life. He also tells Shadow he has a debt to pay, although it is not clear what this is.

Shadow is still attached to the town of Lakeside. As he and Wednesday travel to recruit more gods, Shadow keeps looking forward to returning to Lakeside, which he views as home. When he does get back, he meets Laura in a graveyard. On the way there, he comes across a cat, who hisses at something he can't see, possibly Laura. The cat seems to be connected to the cat at the Ibis and Jacquelin Funeral Home. When he meets Laura, Shadow tells her it is too painful to see her. It seems he is starting to move on with his life, since he is happy in Lakeside, but he can't abandon her.



Bilquis becomes the first god casualty of the war. She has not been recruited by Wednesday, but the technological god chooses her to strike against. Bilquis may not be fully aware of progress of the war, making her an easy target for the new gods. If this is so, the technological god may have chosen her to strike because he knew she would not be suspecting it. This shows the technological god is cowardly and only wants to fight if he's sure they will win.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Marguerite Olsen invites Shadow over for dinner. He stops at Mabel's Restaurant. The owner, Mabel, tells him Hinzelmann was looking for him to go ice fishing, and Chad wants Shadow to meet his cousin. Shadow goes back to his apartment and Wednesday calls. Wednesday tells him he is having a hard time getting the gods to go along with his plans. The new gods want to have a peace meeting to discuss a truce, and Wednesday is going to meet them. To kill time, Shadow reads the book of Lakeside council minutes he bought at the library. A man named Hinzelmann was instrumental in building the man-made lake, and Shadow notes this so he can tell the current Hinzelmann that one of his ancestors built the lake.

Shadow goes to Marguerite's, where he meets Sam Black Crow again, and finds out she is Marguerite's sister. Sam recognizes him, but doesn't say anything about their previous meeting. After dinner, Shadow and Sam go to the bar for a drink, and Sam asks Shadow confronts Shadow about what he's doing there. She tells him about the men who are looking for him, and he convinces her he hasn't killed anyone. He tells her about the war between the gods, and she seems to believe him. When they arrive at the bar, Chad's cousin is there, and it is Audrey Burton.

Audrey Burton screams when she sees Shadow, and tells the crowd that he is wanted for murder and she was questioned about it. Chad takes Shadow out to the porch to question him, and Sam kisses him before he leaves. At the police station, Chad discovers Shadow is using the fake name Mike Ainsel. Shadow calls Mr. Ibis and tells him what happened, and asks him to get a message to his uncle. A woman comes on the line and tells him she is watching him, and to take care of himself. Ibis comes back on and tells him they can't reach his uncle, but that he will call his Aunt Nancy.

Shadow hangs up and waits for Chad. He reads the book of council minutes, and notices a child disappeared in the winter of 1876 and one on 1877. Chad comes back and puts him under arrest for parole violation. He is handcuffed and sits down to wait for a police transport. The new gods make contact with Shadow again through the television in the room. They show Wednesday in an interrogation room through a live feed, and a man is trying to convince Wednesday to call a truce. Wednesday says he can't speak for all of the gods.

Wednesday doesn't believe the new gods will keep their word. Shadow notices a red laser point on Wednesday's face, and someone shoots Wednesday in the head. The transmission fades. Two deputies arrive to pick Shadow up, one white man and one black man. Shadow doesn't recognize them. They take Shadow to the car, and the white man tells him that Wednesday is dead. Eventually, the deputies' disguise fades and Shadow realizes they are Czernobog and Mr. Nancy. They tell Shadow that Wednesday is really dead.



In 14,000 B.C., a tribe wanders the Northern Plains. The tribe worships Nunyunnini, a mammoth god. The holy woman of the tribe, Atsula, has a vision dream. She meets with the other leaders of the tribe and they channel the god. The god tells them there is evil in the land that will cause their deaths. The god tells them to travel towards the sunrise and there will be a new land for them. Atsula doesn't believe it, and thinks they will die. The gods says the land is real, but Atsula will die before she gets there since she doesn't believe. The tribe journeys over a land bridge, and Atsula dies at the foot of the cliffs into the new world. The tribe prospers for many years, until another tribe in the new world finds them, kills their men, and takes the women and children into their tribe.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Shadow learns that Sam Black Crow, the girl he gave a ride to previously, is related to Marguerite Olson, his neighbor. Sam is fair and gives Shadow a chance to explain why he is living there under a false name. She also tells him about the men who are looking for him, showing that she judges Shadow to be a good person and is loyal to him. When they go to the bar and Audrey tells the crowd that Shadow is a murderer, Sam kisses him. Although she does not appear to have romantic feelings for him, she wants to show that she believes he is innocent and by her kiss, she stands up for him. There is a striking parallel between Sam and Audrey.

Chad's cousin is Audrey Burton, the wife of Robbie Burton, Shadow's best friend and the man his wife Laura was cheating with before Laura and Robbie died. Although Audrey knows Shadow better than Sam does, she is willing to turn on him and accuse him of murder. She has no loyalty for him, and is willing to take the word of the supposed government officials over a man she knows. Audrey has no sense of Shadow's character, and may be bitter because of the situation with Robbie and Laura. It is also interesting that Audrey and Sam are both related to people in Lakeside, and that Shadow met them before arriving there. It suggests that Wednesday may have known about these connections and placed him there on purpose. The coincidence seems too big to be fate.

While waiting for the police, Shadow looks over the minutes book from the Lakeside council. He notices a pattern for the first few years, one child disappeared every winter. Before he can investigate further, he is handcuffed and the book is taken away from him. His mind is taken off of it, however, when the new gods take control of the television and show Wednesday being shot. Shadow has become closer to Wednesday, and may look at him as a father figure, so he is very upset about his death.

The tribe who comes to America in 14,000 B.C. is another example of how the gods came to America. In this case, the holy woman, Atsula, did not have faith that the tribe would survive in the new land, so the god did not let her in. The god also told them that because of her faithlessness, the tribe would only have so many years of happiness in the new land. This prediction turns out to be true when, several generations later, the tribe is overrun by another tribe in the new land. This fate is still better than the tribe would have had if they stayed, for as they are traveling to the new land, an explosion

from the direction they came from is heard. This signifies they may have been killed if they stayed in the old land.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Mr. Nancy, Czernobog, and Shadow drive to Minneapolis, where they meet Alvisson, son of Vindalf, a dwarf king, at a Burger King. He agrees to help them in the war, along with the rest of his dwarf people. Alvisson gives them a new car. He mentions a vigil that will be held for Wednesday. Nancy, Czernobog and Shadow drive to Kentucky. Nancy talks to the new gods, and they arrange for the pickup of Wednesday's body from a truly neutral place, the center of America.

They meet the new gods at a motel in Kansas, near the center of the United States. A young woman greets them and introduces herself as Media. They go inside, and Mr. Town gives Shadow, Czernobog, and Mr. Nancy their room keys. Shadow goes to his room and falls asleep. He dreams about walking with a wolf. The wolf tells him about the sacrifice the people of Sweden used to make to Odin. The wolf says the sacrifices were done in groups of nine, and that sacrifice can bring the gods back. The wolf says it would take nine days, three hanging on a tree, three in the underworld, and three days to find the way back.

Shadow wakes up and goes out to the lobby. The chauffeur brings food for everyone, and they sit and eat. Shadow learns that the body will be given to the old gods at midnight. He goes outside and talks to Mr. Town, who says he doesn't care about the new gods agenda, he's just following orders. When Shadow goes back to his room, Media is waiting for him. She tries to convince him to join the new gods, but Shadow refuses. Media leaves, and the technological god comes in. He says he just wants to talk to Shadow. Shadow tells him to get some rest, and the technological god leaves.

Shadow goes outside the motel. The chauffeur is there, and when he lights a cigarette, Shadow sees his face and recognizes him as Low Key Lyesmith. He realizes Low Key is the god Loki. Shadow and Loki talk about the time they spent in prison. Loki says he is working for the new gods because he thinks they are going to win. At midnight, all the gods meet and the old gods take Wednesday's body with them. Mr. Town gives Shadow Wednesday's glass eye.

Shadow, Mr. Nancy, and Czernobog drive to Missouri with Wednesday's body. Nancy tells Shadow they are taking Wednesday's body to Virginia, where they will leave it under a world tree. Nancy also says the battle will happen backstage, and Shadow does not need to serve them anymore since Wednesday is dead. Shadow learns that someone needs to keep vigil for the body by being tied to the tree for nine days and nights. Shadow says he will do the vigil.

When they get to the tree, there are three women standing by the tree. Shadow assumes they are sisters. They ask if Shadow will be the one to hold the vigil, and he



says yes. Nancy says he doesn't have to do it, but Shadow says he is going to. The women tie Shadow to the tree and everyone leaves him there.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Shadow, Mr. Nancy, and Czernobog travel to the center of the United States, located in Kansas, to receive Wednesday's body. The gods tell Shadow that the center is a place where the gods do not have power, that it is devoid of any sacredness. This is a contrast to the other roadside attractions that the gods say are places of power, like the House on the Rock. The center of the United States was designed to be an attraction, but people were not interested and did not come. Therefore, the place did not gain any power from travelers or believers, and the gods have nothing to draw from when they are there. The roadside attractions have become the altars of the world, and the center is only a slab of stone. Without worship, an altar has no power.

At the motel in Kansas, the technological god comes to Shadow and says he just wants to talk. The technological god seems to be getting nervous, and does not threaten Shadow, as he had previously. Without his power, the god is not very brave. Media continues her attempts to win Shadow over, but he still denies her. He is remaining loyal to Wednesday's side, even though Wednesday is dead. Shadow also meets Low Key Lyesmith again, a man who shared his cell in prison. Shadow was unaware that Low Key was a god, and seems disappointed that he has joined the other side. Loki's name in prison gives clues to his identity. The first names sound the same, and as a trickster god, Loki was a master liar, or a lie-smith. A smith is someone who works with a certain material, such as a blacksmith or goldsmith.

Shadow's dream in the motel room foreshadows the vigil that is to come over Wednesday's body. A wolf, an animal that represents the god Odin, tells Shadow about the ritual of sacrifice and that it may bring the gods back. The ritual is a recreation of a legend about Odin, and the vigil is to reenact with the god went through. Shadow feels that it is his responsibility, since Wednesday hired him. This may be the debt he needs to pay back, which Whiskey Jack alluded to when talking to Shadow previously.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Shadow Moon is hanging from a tree in Virginia, performing a vigil for Wednesday, who was killed by the new gods. He chants to himself to steel himself for the task at hand. He hears chattering, and a squirrel comes down the tree by him. He falls asleep and dreams of an elephant-headed man. The man tells Shadow he could have avoided some trouble if he called him earlier. It rains, and Shadow is able to drink. The next day, he is in much pain. He thinks about Laura, and she responds. She says she will be there soon.

The squirrel brings Shadow a walnut-shell cup full of water. He falls asleep, and when he awakens, he finds a mad young man in the tree with him. Shadow recognizes him as the Egyptian god Horus. Horus tells Shadow the fight will begin soon before he leaves. When Shadow wakes up again, Laura is with him. She wants to cut him down, but Shadow won't let her. Laura tells him she lost her job. She tells him she will stay with him. Shadow closes his eyes, and he soon dies.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Shadow is tied to a tree to perform the vigil for Wednesday. He has several visitors while he is there. He is afflicted by pain, but he finds some help from a squirrel who brings him water. The god Horus visits Shadow, and offers him some food, but Shadow says he is not hungry. Laura comes and wants to help him down, but Shadow won't let her, knowing he has to complete the vigil to have a chance at resurrecting Wednesday. Laura is having a tough time in the land of the living, but she is still concerned about Shadow, since he is the only connection she has to the living. She stays with him to offer whatever comfort she can, but he dies from the strain of the vigil.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Shadow finds himself in a dark world. He walks down a set of rock steps and meets Zorya Polunochnaya. She tells him his questions will be answered if he wants. He gives her the Liberty coin back. She takes it and turns it into the moon. She tells him he can walk the path of fine lies, or one of hard truths. Shadow picks the path of truths. She tells him he must pay with his real name, and somehow pulls it out of his head. Zorya Polunochnaya points him to the right hand path. Shadow takes the path and sees himself in his life. He seems himself beating up two men in a VCR repair store who ripped off him and Laura in Eagle Point, the reason he went to prison. He thinks that no one ever mentioned the bank robbery that preceded the beatings at the trial. He sees his mother dying in the hospital. He eventually sees who his father is, something he's never known. His father is Wednesday.

He stops at a bend in the path, and a woman comes up to him. Shadow eventually recognizes her as the woman he had sex with at the funeral parlor. She is the goddess Bast. She takes Shadow's heart and chooses the middle path for him. He follows her advice and comes to an underground lake. A boat comes and the driver is Mr. Ibis, who is an escort of the living to the land of the dead. He tells Shadow they are going to the hall of the dead. In the hall, Mr. Jacquel, the god Anubis, judges Shadow. He examines Shadow and all his sins are laid bare. Jacquel weighs Shadow's heart against a feather. The scales balance and Shadow gets to choose where he will go. Shadow says that he only wants rest, not any afterlife. He wants it all to end. Jacquel opens a door for him, and Shadow walks through into darkness.

Chapter 16 Analysis

When Shadow dies, he comes to the land of the dead. The gods that he has met along the way help him in his journey to find peace in death. The first person he meets, Zorya Polunochnaya, gives him the choice of walking the path of hard truths or fine lies. Shadow feels he has faced enough lies in his life, and chooses the path of truth. The path takes him through his own life and shows the hard things he had to live through. It also reveals why he was sent to prison, for being involved in a bank robbery and beating up the men who held out on them. The motivation for the robbery is not made clear, nor is exactly how Laura was involved.

When Shadow continues, he meets the goddess Bast, although they are already acquainted. Shadow realizes she is the woman he had sex with at the funeral home. Bast is an Egyptian goddess, frequently symbolized by cats. She can turn into a cat, hence her mention of sleeping on Shadow's bed. She has also kept an eye on Shadow through the minds of other cats. Bast wants to take care of Shadow, and she helps him choose the best path for him to find peace. The other two paths represent the way of

the new gods and the old gods. However, Shadow must take his own path and make his own decisions.

When Shadow's deeds are weighed by Jacquel, he sees all the sins he has committed in life. Luckily, his deeds aren't bad enough that his soul will be devoured. Shadow gets to choose his own destiny, and he chooses nothingness rather than the traditional heaven, hell, or purgatory. Shadow is tired of all the complications of his life, and wants them to be over. He wants the simplicity of nothingness. Jacquel agrees, and Shadow falls into darkness.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Rock City is an attraction made up of ornamental gardens and caverns located on top of Lookout Mountain in Georgia. The gods and mythical creatures begin assembling at Rock City for the war. Laura, who is sitting with Shadow, knows he has forgiven her for cheating on him. She stayed with him while he died. She goes to the farmhouse of the three women, and they give her water. The water makes her throw up maggots and bugs. The water is the water of time, and it makes Laura alive again. She leaves the farmhouse.

Mr. Town is driving to a place called Ashtree farm, which is where the World Tree is. Mr. World asked Mr. Town to get him a stick from the tree. He gets the stick and stabs Shadow in the side before leaving. Easter is at Rock City, waiting for the battle. Horus comes to her and tells her she needs to come to Shadow. Town is driving to Rock City, but he is lost. He stops to pick up a woman hitchhiker, who is Laura. He is attracted to her. The technological god meets with Mr. World to update him on the preparations for the battle. The technological god tells him he doesn't think they need to fight, since the old gods will eventually die out anyway. He also asks why they didn't attack last night. Mr. World tells him he is waiting for a stick. He kills the technological god and hides the body.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Laura takes the water of time from the three women. The water makes her alive again, but it is hinted this is not permanent. The water also seems to give Laura a sense of purpose, as she now knows what she must do to help Shadow. Despite her affair, Laura genuinely loves Shadow and wants to avenge his death. She connects with Mr. Town, and uses him to get a ride. She may know that he is going to the battle between the gods. Mr. Town is sent to retrieve a stick from the tree. When he stabs Shadow, he recreates the spear that stabbed Odin or Wednesday when he was hung from the tree. The stick is symbolic of the spear, and the opposition apparently needs it to gain an upper hand in the battle.

The technological god is killed by Mr. World when he shows little faith in the need for the war. Mr. World's reason for disposing of the technological god is unclear. It seems he feels the god will not be much help in the battle, otherwise it does not make sense to kill someone who can help the cause. This is an indication that something about Mr. World isn't right and he might not have the same aims as the new gods.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

At the bottom of Lookout Mountain, the old gods are debating whether to start the battle or not. Shadow is in a state of nothingness when Whiskey Jack comes to him. Whiskey Jack says someone is coming to revive him. Shadow sees they are in Whiskey Jack's shack. They both have a beer. Whiskey tells him that Henry Bluejay died in a car accident, and they talk about the war. Shadow leaves and goes into the darkness, and then he starts to feel pain.

Easter takes Shadow down from the tree and brings him back to life. Back at Lookout Mountain, the battle between the gods starts. Town is enjoying Laura's company as they drive to the battle. When they get there, Laura kills him. Easter leads Shadow to a thunderbird, which will take him back to the battle. Laura takes the stick and confronts Mr. World, who tells her the water won't last and she will be dead again. Laura tells Mr. World he set up her husband. He asks her for the stick, and she waits for him to get closer. The thunderbird shows Shadow how to remove the eagle stones from a dead thunderbird. The stones can bring someone back to life. Laura waits until Mr. World is right behind her, then she stabs herself with the stick, impaling him behind her. He tries to stab her with a knife, but they are joined together by a stick. They both fall down. Shadow arrives at the battleground, but he can't see anyone. He hears a man cry out to Odin.

Wednesday comes and tells Shadow he was the perfect misdirection so no one knew what he was really trying to do. Loki, who was Mr. World, tells Shadow he is too late, because he has thrown the spear down and dedicated the battle to Odin. Shadow realizes they were working together so they could feed off of the power expended during the battle. Wednesday says without his death, the battle wouldn't have happened. Wednesday will feed off of the battle that is dedicated to him, and Loki will feed off the chaos created. Wednesday tells Shadow they had been planning this for some time, and just needed to find Shadow to make it happen. He also admits that they orchestrated Laura's death. Shadow goes out to the battlefield and is able to shift himself backstage to the battle.

Shadow tells the gods that Loki and Wednesday have tricked them. The gods don't believe him at first, but Shadow explains Wednesday's plans and the gods believe him. The gods leave the battle, and Mr. Nancy helps Shadow out of backstage. He goes to Laura, and tells her he knows how to bring her back. Laura asks him to let her go, and he removes the coin from around her neck. Laura dies, and Shadow kisses her and leaves her. The battle fails to give Wednesday and Loki enough power, and both die.



Chapter 18 Analysis

Wednesday and Loki's plot is laid clear. The two gods know their power is failing, so they orchestrated the war in order to gain a massive amount of power. Loki uses the spear to dedicate the battle to Odin, as Odin is a god of sacrifice and a battle fought in his name will bring him power. Loki is a trickster god, and would feed off the chaos of the battle itself. Wednesday has been planning to use Shadow for the plot for several years, but could not locate him because his mother moved him around so much. Wednesday also admits they had a hand in Laura's death. They needed her out of the way, so he would not have anything holding him back from accepting Wednesday's job.

Although Shadow has mixed feelings about Wednesday being his father, he cannot forgive Wednesday's selfish acts. He goes to the gods and stops the battle, and Wednesday and Loki fade away. The gods stop the battle because of Shadow's news. At first, they do not believe Wednesday could be behind the war, since he died trying to support it. However, this was part of Wednesday's plan to gain their trust. The gods do want to preserve their honor, but they will not give their power to selfish gods who manipulate them. Shadow is able to convince them, and the gods return to their homes.

Shadow is resurrected by Easter so he can help with the battle. She gives him a thunderbird to ride, and the bird tells Shadow how to resurrect Laura. However, when he meets her after the battle, Laura asks him to let her go and not bring her back to life. Much as Shadow chose nothingness when he died, Laura feels her life is ended and she doesn't want to wander the earth anymore. She feels she has gained retribution for Shadow, by stabbing Loki. She knows that he has forgiven her for her affair. Although she loves Shadow, she is ready to be at peace.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Shadow and Mr. Nancy leave the battle and talk about what they've learned. Shadow drives Nancy to his home in Florida. Shadow says Czernobog was gone when he came out of the cave, and Nancy says he will be waiting for him at home. He and Mr. Nancy got to a bar and sing karaoke. Shadow stays the night with Nancy. Before leaving, Shadow asks Shadow about the elephant god, Ganesha, and remembers Ganesha told him to remember something is in the truck.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Nancy is pleased with Shadow for coming through for the gods and stopping the battle. Nancy is ready to get on with his life. As a trickster god, he is about to let go of the bigger issues, and helps Shadow to have fun by singing karaoke. He also helps Shadow understand the message given to him by Ganesha. Shadow dreamed about the god while tied to the World Tree, and remembered his message about looking in the trunk. As Shadow leaves, he seems to understand what the message means.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Shadow returns to Lakeside and immediately goes to the car that is waiting to sink into the ice. He opens the truck and finds Allison McGovern's body. The ice under the car breaks and Shadow slides into the water. He sees all the other cars that have been sunk into the lake. Shadow struggles to the surface before passing out. He wakes up in Hinzelmann's home. Hinzelmann tells him he saw him go under and pulled him out.

Shadow confronts Hinzelmann about killing the children and putting them in the cars. Hinzelmann says he did it because he owed Wednesday a debt. Hinzelmann says he gives the children as a sacrifice to keep the town good. Shadow realizes that Hinzelmann wanted Shadow to get caught, so he brought people he knew to the town, like Sam Black Crow and Audrey Burton. Hinzelmann says Shadow would have brought too much attention to the town.

Hinzelmann picks up a poker and Shadow tells him to go ahead and kill him. Hinzelmann says he is a kobold, a mythical creature. Hinzelmann puts the poker down, and asks Shadow if he is going to kill him. Shadow says he can't, because Hinzelmann saved his life. Hinzelmann shows him that he became a god because he was sacrificed as a child.

Chad Mulligan comes into the room. He says he came to Hinzelmann to tell him the car fell through the river. Hinzelmann says Shadow threatened him, but Mulligan says he heard everything. Hinzelmann throws the poker at Mulligan and tries to run, but Mulligan shoots him in the head. He gives Shadow a ride, and Shadow senses he's going to kill himself later. Shadow reminds him that the town needs him and finds himself able to remove the memory of what happened from Mulligan's head. Shadow leaves the town.

Sam Black Crow is working in a coffee shop. Her girlfriend, Natalie, comes in, and they walk home together. Sam talks about Shadow, but Natalie interrupts when she sees Sam is holding white roses. Neither knows where they came from. Sam keeps the roses and casts them in bronze. Shadow watches Sam and Natalie as they walk, and he realizes she would never love him. He puts the roses in her hand and rushes away, and she doesn't notice him giving them to her.

Shadow goes to see Czernobog so he can fulfill the promise he made him about Czernobog hitting him in the head with a sledgehammer. He goes to the Zoyras apartment, and they try to warn him away. Finally, they let him sit down and wait. Czernobog comes back, and Shadow tells him why he's there. Czernobog falters and tells him it is not the right time, but Shadow insists. Czernobog gets a small hammer and taps Shadow with it lightly. Czernobog says he is thankful for what Shadow has done and feels as though he's changing into Bielebog. Shadow kisses the Zoyras who are awake and leaves.



Chapter 20 Analysis

Shadow realizes the message from Ganesha is directing him to when Alison McGovern is. He returns to Lakeside and finds her body in the trunk of the clunker. He realizes that a child has been sacrificed every year, and someone in town must be responsible. When he is rescued by Hinzelmann, he is able to connect the mention of a Hinzelmann in the minutes book from the 1800s to him and knows that he is responsible for the deaths. He also knows that Hinzelmann must be a god or other mythical creature. Although he is disgusted at what Hinzelmann has done, he is unable to kill him because Hinzelmann has saved his life.

When Hinzelmann shows himself as a child with two swords through his body, Shadow knows Hinzelmann was once sacrificed and then revered as a god. He remembers his dream about being a child locked away for years, then brought out and killed, and he knows this is what happened to Hinzelmann. He feels sorry for Hinzelmann, and this may be another reason he is willing to let him live. However, Chad Mulligan is not so easy to convince, especially when he learns Hinzelmann killed his father when his father figured it out. Chad is going to arrest Hinzelmann, but either because he is fearful of a possible eternal life in prison or because he just wants it to be over, tries to get away and is shot. He also tries to cover up his crimes by giving Mulligan the suggestion to shoot himself, but Shadow is mysteriously able to remove it.

When Shadow goes to see Czernobog, he wants to take care of the last business he has. He knows Czernobog might kill him, but he gives the impression that he knows Czernobog will absolve him of the bet. Czernobog, although eager for slaughter, is grateful for Shadow's help in averting the war and does absolve him. Czernobog tells Shadow that his other nature Bielebog, whom he calls his brother, is returning. Bielebog is the light side to Czernobog's dark nature, and this shows that lighter times are coming for the gods. Even if they do not have worship, they are still alive and that is something to be grateful for.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Shadow journeys to Iceland to meet Odin, the original incarnation of Wednesday. Shadow tells him about the vigil. Odin tells Shadow that Wednesday was him, but he is not Wednesday. Shadow decides he has had enough of gods, and wants to travel somewhere new. He gives Wednesday's glass eye to Odin. Shadow takes a gold coin out and does a trick for Odin. Then Shadow flips the coin in the air, and walks away without waiting to see it land.

Epilogue Analysis

Shadow goes to visit Odin to find closure. While there, he realizes Odin is not his father, and that Wednesday is truly gone. Shadow is tired of dealing with the gods and wants a new start. When he flips the coin in the air, he walks away before it lands. This signifies that Shadow is able to walk away from the coins he needed all his life. He does not need them to keep his mind off of life anymore.



Characters

Shadow Moon

Shadow Moon serves three years in prison, but is released early because his wife, Laura, has been killed in a car accident. On the way to her funeral, he meets a man named Mr. Wednesday, who offers Shadow a job. Shadow is suspicious of Wednesday, who knows a lot about him, so he gets off the plane at next stop and gets a car. When he stops at a restaurant, Wednesday is there and again offers Shadow a job. Shadow accepts and meets Mad Sweeney, a leprechaun who gives him a gold coin. Before going to work for Wednesday, Shadow goes to Laura's funeral and learns from Audrey Burton that Laura had an affair with Audrey's husband, Robbie, who also died in the crash. Shadow visits Laura's grave and throws in the leprechaun coin.

That night, Laura appears to Shadow at his motel room. She is able to walk and talk, but she is still dead. The gold coin that Shadow threw into her grave brought her back to life. After she leaves, Shadow and Wednesday go to a meeting of the gods at House on the Rock. He learns that the new gods and the old gods are about to engage in war. After the meeting, Shadow is kidnapped by men working for the new gods. Laura comes, kills the men, and frees Shadow. Shadow receives a message from Wednesday telling him to go to Cairo, where he meets Ibis and Jacquel, two other gods. While staying with them, Mad Sweeney comes and is later found dead. Wednesday comes to get Shadow and tells him he is moving to Lakeside.

While in Lakeside, Shadow uses the name Mike Ainsel. He makes friends with the people there, and uses it as a home base between recruiting gods with Wednesday. His cover is eventually blown by Audrey Burton, cousin of chief of police Chad Mulligan. Shadow is arrested and while in prison, learns that Wednesday is killed. Shadow goes with Mr. Nancy and Czernobog, who break him out of prison, to claim Wednesday's body. When he learns that a vigil is to be performed for Wednesday, he says he will do it and is tied to a tree for nine days. Shadow dies on the tree, and Jacquel, an Egyptian god of death, judges his soul.

The goddess Easter resurrects Shadow, and he goes to the battle. He learns Wednesday is his father, and he and Loki started the war to feed off of the power from the death of the gods. Shadow goes out to the battlefield and is able to shift himself backstage to the battle. Shadow tells the god that Loki and Wednesday have tricked them. The gods leave the battle, and Mr. Nancy helps Shadow out of backstage. Laura asks Shadow to let her go, and he removes the coin from around her neck. Laura dies.

Shadow returns to Lakeside and immediately goes to the car that is waiting to sink into the ice. He opens the truck and finds Allison McGovern's body. Shadow falls into the water and is saved by Hinzelmann. Hinzelmann says he gives the children as a sacrifice to keep the town good. Chad Mulligan comes into the room and hears everything. Mulligan shoots him in the head.



Shadow goes to see Czernobog to fulfill the promise he made him about Czernobog hitting him in the head with a sledgehammer. Czernobog gets a small hammer and taps Shadow with it lightly. Shadow journeys to Iceland to meet Odin, the original incarnation of Wednesday. Shadow tells him about the vigil. Odin tells Shadow that Wednesday was him, but he is not Wednesday. Shadow gives Wednesday's glass eye to Odin.

Laura Moon

Laura Moon is Shadow Moon's wife. Shadow learns she was killed in a motor vehicle accident with Robbie Burton right before Shadow is released from prison. Laura has been having an affair with Robbie while Shadow was in prison. She was giving Robbie oral sex when the car crashed. She is able to walk and talk, although she does not come back to life, when Shadow leaves a leprechaun coin in her grave. She talks to Shadow before he leaves Eagle Point and explains why she was cheating on him.

When Shadow is kidnapped after the meeting with the gods, Laura finds him and kills the guards so he can escape. She visits him again in the graveyard at Lakeside, and tells him she is looking for someplace warm to go. She gets a job as a gas station attendant in Florida, but is fired because people complained. When Shadow is performing the vigil for Wednesday, Laura comes to stay with him. After he dies, she goes to the three women's home, and they give her water of life to make her alive for a short while. Laura hitches a ride with Mr. Town, and kills him when they get to Rock City. She confronts Mr. World and stabs him through herself. After the battle, Shadow comes to her and lets her die in peace by removing the coin from her neck.

Laura calls Shadow 'Puppy.' While they were married, and Laura was alive, their landlord told them they couldn't have a puppy, so Shadow told her he would be her puppy.

Mr. Wednesday

Mr. Wednesday is the American version of the Norse god Odin. He has one fake eye. He meets Shadow on the plane when he is going home after being released from prison. He offers Shadow a job, and knows a lot about Shadow that Shadow hasn't told him. Wednesday and Shadow meet with several gods to convince them to join the fight against the new gods. Wednesday is a con man; he makes a living by stiffing people out of money, and at one point has Shadow help him rob a bank. He gets an apartment for Shadow in the town of Lakeside, Wisconsin, so Shadow has a home base between their travels to recruit gods.

The new gods invite Wednesday to a meeting so they can discuss a truce. At the meeting, they shoot Wednesday, killing him. Shadow must perform a vigil to resurrect Wednesday from the dead. Wednesday's body is taken to Virginia and placed under the world tree, and Shadow is tied above it. After Shadow comes back, he goes to the battleground and finds Wednesday's spirit. Wednesday and Loki were working together to incite the war so they could feed off the battle and chaos. Wednesday admits he is



Shadow's father, and that he had a hand in Laura's death. Wednesday is destroyed when Shadow stops the battle and cuts off the power that would have resurrected him.

Mad Sweeney

Mad Sweeney is a leprechaun and an associate of Mr. Wednesday. Shadow Moon meets him at Jack's Crocodile Bar. He fights with Shadow and eventually passes out. He gives Shadow a gold leprechaun coin, which Shadow throws in his wife Laura's grave. The coin brings Laura back to life. Later, Mad Sweeney comes to Shadow to get the coin back. When he finds out Shadow gave it away, he says he will die if he doesn't get that coin back. He is found dead by police, who assume he is a wino. Shadow, Ibis, and Jacquel give him a wake.

Czernobog

Czernobog is an old god. He is living with the Zorya sisters in Chicago, and used to work at a meat plant killing cows with a sledgehammer. He has a brother, Bielebog, who is the light side to Czernobog's dark side. He makes a wager with Shadow that if he beats Shadow at checkers, he will get to hit Shadow with the sledgehammer. Czernobog wins the first game. He goes with Wednesday and Shadow to the meeting of the gods. When Shadow is arrested, Czernobog pretends to be a deputy to get him out. He goes with Shadow to claim Wednesday's body from the new gods. After the war, Shadow goes to Czernobog to uphold the wager, but Czernobog only taps him with a small hammer and lets him go.

Mr. Ibis

Mr. Ibis is the Egyptian god, Thoth. He can appear as a man with the head of an Ibis bird, or as the bird. The tales throughout the novel of the gods coming over to America are from his journal. He and Mr. Jacquel own the Ibis and Jacquel Funeral Parlor in Cairo, Illinois, where Shadow works for a while. When Shadow is holding vigil for Wednesday, he dies and Ibis leads him to the Hall of the Dead to be judged.

Mr. Jacquel

Mr. Jacquel is an Egyptian god of the embalming, Anubis. He can appear as a jackal, or a man with the head of a jackal. He and Mr. Ibis own the Ibis and Jacquel Funeral Parlor in Cairo, Illinois, where Shadow works for a while. When Shadow is holding vigil for Wednesday and dies, Jacquel judges Shadow's soul in the Hall of the Dead.



Low Key Lie-Smith/Loki

Low Kye Lyesmith is Shadow Moon's roommate in prison. He is transferred away before Shadow is released. Shadow meets him again at the center of America, where Low Key is revealed to be the god Loki. Although he is an old god, he has joined the war on the side of the new gods. He is masquerading as Mr. World. He and Wednesday planned the war between the gods so they could feed off of the battle and chaos. Laura stabs him with a stick from the World Tree. He dies when Shadow stops the battle.

Richie Hinzelmann

Richie Hinzelmann is a man who lives in Lakeside, Wisconsin. He gives Shadow Moon a ride when Shadow arrives in Lakeside. Hinzelmann runs the raffle in the winter when a car is put on the ice and the townspeople bet on when it will drop into the lake. Shadow becomes friends with Hinzelmann. When Shadow returns to Lakeside after the war, he discovers Hinzelmann is a kobold and has been sacrificing the children each year to keep the town prosperous. Chad Mulligan overhears Hinzelmann confess, and shoots him when he tries to escape. Hinzelmann became a god because he was sacrificed as a child and the tribe held him up as a god.

Chad Mulligan

Chad Mulligan is the chief of police in Lakeside, Wisconsin. He becomes friends with Shadow and shows him around the town. Chad's cousin is Audrey Burton. When Audrey comes to town, she recognizes Shadow and tells Chad he is wanted for murder. Chad arrests Shadow for breaking parole. When Shadow comes back to Lakeside and confronts Hinzelmann about killing the children, Chad overhears it and ends up shooting Hinzelmann. He is going to commit suicide but Shadow removes the memories of what Hinzelmann has done from his head.

Samantha Black Crow

Samantha Black Crow, who goes by Sam, is a girl that Shadow Moon meets on the way to Cairo. He gives her a ride to El Paso, Illinois. She is later questioned by two men who worked for the new gods, Mr. Town and Mr. Road. She refuses to tell them anything. She meets Shadow again when she visits her sister in Lakeside, Marguerite Olson. When Audrey Burton accuses Shadow of murder, Sam sticks up for him. After the war, Shadow goes to see her and give her white roses. She doesn't realize she has them until her girlfriend points it out, and looks upon them as a mystery.



Mister Nancy

Mister Nancy is an elderly black man. He is an African trickster god, named Anansi. He meets with the gods at the House on the Rock. When Shadow is arrested in Lakeside, Mister Nancy and Czernobog disguise themselves as deputies to help him escape. Mister Nancy goes with Shadow to claim Wednesday's body from the new gods. After Shadow comes back and stops the battle, he gives Mr. Nancy a ride to Florida, where he lives.

Alviss son of Vindalf

Alviss son of Vindalf is a dwarf king. He meets with Shadow and Wednesday at the House of the Rock. When Mr. Nancy and Czernobog free Shadow from prison, they meet with Alviss, who says he will support the old gods in the war.

The Technological God

The technological god, a fat young man, is a new god. He abducts Shadow Moon after Shadow leaves the cemetery where his wife is buried. He threatens Shadow and warns him about working for Wednesday. He kills Bilquis in Los Angeles by running her over with his limo. Right before the battle begins, Mr. World kills him.

Media

Media is a new god. She appears to Shadow during an episode of I Love Lucy, taking the form of Lucy Ricardo. She tries to get Shadow to join the new gods. She also takes over a television to show Shadow about Wednesday's death. Shadow meets her in person at the center of America in Kansas. At a motel there, she tries to convince him to join their side, but Shadow refuses.

Mama-ji

Mama-ji, also known as Kali or Parvati, is an Indian goddess. She is at the meeting at House on the Rock with Shadow Moon, Wednesday, and the other gods.

The God with No Name

The god whose name is impossible to remember is at the meeting at House on the Rock with Shadow Moon, Wednesday, and the other gods. Wednesday and Shadow travel to Las Vegas to meet with him.



Zorya Vechernyaya

Zorya Vechernyaya is the sister of Zorya Utrennyaya and Zorya Polunochnyaya. She is the sister of the evening, a figure from Norse mythology. She lets her father, the sun, back inside in the evening. The sisters must watch the Ursa Major constellation, the Great Bear, because a bad thing is chained in the stars, and if breaks free, the world is over.

Zorya Utrennyaya

Zorya Utrennyaya is the sister of Zorya Vechernyaya and Zorya Polunochnyaya. She is the sister of the dawn, a figure from Norse mythology. She lets her father, the sun, out in the morning. The sisters must watch the Ursa Major constellation, the Great Bear, because a bad thing is chained in the stars, and if breaks free, the world is over.

Zorya Polunochnyaya

Zorya Polunochnyaya is the sister of Zorya Utrennyaya and Zorya Vechernyaya. The sisters must watch the Ursa Major constellation, the Great Bear, because a bad thing is chained in the stars, and if breaks free, the world is over. She goes to the roof with Shadow while he is at the sisters' apartment. She gives him a Liberty coin for protection. When Shadow goes to the land of the dead while performing the vigil for Wednesday, she takes the coin and turns it into a moon for him. She also helps him choose which path to walk to judgment.

Robbie Burton

Robbie Burton is Shadow Moon's best friend. Robbie is married to Audrey, Laura's best friend. He and his wife first introduced Shadow to his future wife, Laura. Robbie is killed in a motor vehicle accident with Laura. Robbie and Laura were having an affair while Shadow was in prison.

Audrey Burton

Audrey Burton is Laura Moon's best friend. Audrey is married to Robbie, Shadow's best friend. She and her husband first introduced Audrey to her future husband, Shadow. At Laura's funeral, Audrey spits in her face. She tells Shadow that Laura and Robbie were sleeping together. She is also the cousin of Chad Mulligan, and visits him in Lakeside. She tells Chad that men came to her saying Shadow was involved in a murder. She blows Shadow's cover and he is arrested for parole violation.



Bilquis

Bilquis is a goddess who is living in Los Angeles and working as a hooker. She takes a man back to her room and has sex with him. She asks him to worship her, and as they have sex he is eventually sucked completely inside her. She used to be the Queen of Sheba, and has been working as a hooker since she came to America. She is run down by the technological god's limo in Los Angeles.

Essie Tregowan

Essie Tregowan was an Englishwoman in 1721, who got pregnant by her master's son, Bartholomew. Essie was dismissed from service, but when the baby was stillborn, they allowed her to return to work. Essie let her new lover come in to rob the house, and they were caught. Essie was supposed to go to America, but convinced the captain of the ship to take her back to England as his wife. Once back, she robbed the captain's mother and fled into London. She begins a life of crime, but is caught again when the man who originally got her pregnant, Bartholomew, recognizes her.

She is to be hanged, but since she is pregnant by an unknown man, she is sent back to America. She was an indentured servant and had a child, Anthony. She told her children and her new master, John Richardson's children about the myths of England. She married John Richardson and had another child, Johnnie, by him. John died a few years later. Anthony killed Johnnie in a fight, and then fled into hiding. Richardson's first daughter, Phyllida, marries, and Essie tells her grandchildren mythical stories as well. Essie meets a fairy-man, a leprechaun, straight out of her tales, right before she dies.

Wututu

Wututu is a slave girl who comes to America from Africa in 1778, with her brother, Agasu. A man threatens to rape Wututu on the voyage, but she tells him she will bite him with teeth down there. He leaves her alone and she believes Elegba, a trickster god, has saved her. When the ship landed in Barbados, Agasu was bought and separated from his sister. He was sold to a farm, where he was beaten, then to a sugar plantation. Renamed Hyacinth, he grows up and has children, and goes with the other slaves to worship their gods. Hyacinth is bitten by a spider, and his arm is amputated. In 1791, he took part in a slave revolt. The slaves won in 1804, but Agasu had died in 1802.

Wututu, who has become a slave in southern America, cries out at the moment her brother dies. Her right arm has also withered when his was amputated. Wututu, also known as Mama Zou Zou, has also kept worshipping the African gods. Women come to her for help or to find out secrets. One woman, Paris, asks Wututu to train her. Wututu tries to teach Paris about the gods and history of the earth, but Paris would not listen. Wututu teaches her ceremonies and tells her to worship the gods. As they are working, Wututu has a vision of her brother, Agasu, and tells him she will be with him soon.



Agasu

Agasu is a slave who comes to America from Africa in 1778, with his sister, Wututu. When the ship landed in Barbados, Agasu was bought and separated from his sister. He was sold to a farm, where he was beaten, then to a sugar plantation. Renamed Hyacinth, he grows up and has children, and goes with the other slaves to worship their gods. Hyacinth is bitten by a spider, and his arm is amputated. In 1791, he took part in a slave revolt. The slaves won in 1804, but Agasu had died in 1802.

The Vikings

The Vikings come to America in the year A.D. 813. They build a hall for their god, Odin. When the hall is complete, the bard sings songs of Odin and how he hung from the world tree for nine days, wounded from a spear. A scraeling walks into their camp, and they get him drunk. They sacrifice him by hanging to Odin and settle in for the winter. After the winter, the Vikings see that the scraeling's body is removed, and they go back to their camp. The scraelings attack that night and kill them all.

Salim

Salim is a man in New York City trying to make it as a salesman. He has been trying for a week with no success, and his brother-in-law back home is getting upset with his failure. Salim goes to a meeting, but the man he is supposed to see ignores him. Salim takes a cab, and he and the driver commiserate about how hard it is to make it in the city. The driver falls asleep while driving. Salim knocks his glasses off while trying to wake him, and realizes he is a jinn, a mythical Arabic figure.

Jinn

The jinn tells Salim that people do not believe anymore. When Salim gets out of the cab, he gives the jinn his room number. The jinn comes to Salim and they have sex. When Salim wakes up, he finds the jinn has switched lives with him, and left him all the cabdriver's id and license. Salim takes up the driver's job, happy to have a new life.

Atsula

Atsula is the holy woman of a tribe who comes to America in 14,000 B.C. She meets with the other leaders of the tribe and they channel the god Nunyunnini. The god tells them there is evil in the land that will cause their deaths. The god tells them to travel towards the sunrise and there will be a new land for them. Atsula doesn't believe it, and thinks they will die. The gods says the land is real, but Atsula will die before she gets there since she doesn't believe. The tribe journeys over a land bridge, and Atsula dies at the foot of the cliffs into the new world. The tribe prospers for many years, until another



tribe in the new world finds them, kills their men, and takes the women and children into their tribe.

The buffalo man

The buffalo man appears to Shadow Moon in his dreams. He first appears when Shadow is on the plane on the way home from prison. He also appears when Shadow is asleep in the car on the way to Cairo, and when Shadow is traveling to Lakeside, Wisconsin. He often asks Shadow if he believes.

Whiskey Jack

Whiskey Jack, whose real name is Wisakedjak, is an Indian god. He tells Wednesday he won't help him. He knows about the dreams Shadow has been having and tells him there are thunderbirds in West Virginia. After Shadow dies, Whiskey Jack comes to him and they talk about the war.

John Chapman

John Chapman is an American god. He is a friend of Whiskey Jack. He represents the American folklore figure, Johnny Appleseed.

Allison McGovern

Allison McGovern is a girl in Lakeside, Wisconsin, who disappears. Shadow discovers her dead body locked in the trunk of a car that the town has been betting on to see when it will sink in the ice.

Eoster/Easter

Eostre or Easter is the goddess of springtime. Wednesday and Shadow meet her in San Francisco and ask her to join the battle on their side. She agrees after Wednesday demonstrates that the holiday Easter is not really celebrated in her name. After Shadow dies while holding vigil for Wednesday's body, Eostre brings him back to life.

Odin

Odin is a Norse god, worshiped by the Vikings. He is also known as the All-Father. Mr. Wednesday is revealed to be an American incarnation of this god. After the war, Shadow visits Odin in his homeland and gives him Wednesday's glass eye.



Three Women

The three women in Virginia tie Shadow to the tree when he is performing the vigil for Wednesday. They give Laura the water of time, which makes her alive for a short time.

Ganesha

Ganesha is an Indian god, who visits Shadow during his vigil for Wednesday. He is a god who removes obstacles. He tells Shadow to look in the trunk, leading Shadow to discover Allison McGovern's body in the trunk of the car on the lake.

Horus

Horus is an Egyptian god. He spends most of his time as a falcon, but comes to visit Shadow when he is holding the vigil for Wednesday. He goes to get Easter to revive Shadow after Shadow dies at the World Tree.

Bielebog

Bielebog is Czernobog's brother, and a god. He is the light side of the god to his brother's dark side.

Missy Gunther

Missy Gunther owns Lakeside Realty in Wisconsin. She sells Shadow her son's purple Toyota 4-Runner.

Sophie

Sophie is Allison McGovern's friend in Lakeside. She tells Shadow about the mysterious disappearances of kids in Lakeside after Allison disappears.

Mr. Stone

Mr. Stone is one of the men who kidnaps Shadow and interrogates him about the old gods. He is killed by Laura when she comes to free Shadow.

Mr. Wood

Mr. Wood is one of the men who kidnaps Shadow and interrogates him about the old gods. He is killed when Laura helps Shadow escape.



Mr. Town

Mr. Town is one of the men who help the opposition. He is at the roadblock in North Dakota when they are trying to catch Wednesday and Shadow. He is also at the motel at the center of America when Shadow goes to claim Wednesday's body. Mr. World sends him to get a stick from the World Tree. He picks up Laura on the way back, and when they get back to the battleground, Laura kills him.

Mr. World

Mr. World is one of the men who help the opposition. Mr. Town calls him from the roadblock in North Dakota when they are trying to catch Wednesday and Shadow. He is the head of the group of men pretending to be government agents. Mr. World kills the technological god before the war begins. Mr. World is actually Loki, and was plotting with Wednesday to destroy the gods and gain their power.

The Scraeling

The scraeling is a native American who stumbles upon a viking camp in A.D. 813. The Vikings sacrifice him to their god, Odin.

Harry Bluejay

Harry Bluejay is an Indian who trades his car for Wednesday's Winnebago. Whiskey Jack tells Shadow that he later died in a car accident.

Nunyunnnini

Nunyunnnini is a mammoth god of a tribe around 14,000 B.C. The god directs the tribe over the land bridge into America.

Thor

Thor is a Norse thunder god. Wednesday tells Shadow that Thor killed himself in the 1930s.

Tyr

Tyr is a Norse one handed god.



Ammet

Ammet is an Egyptian god, the eater of souls.

Sam Fetisher

Sam Fetisher is a man in prison with Shadow Moon. He tells Shadow a big storm is coming.

Johnnie Larch

Johnnie Larch is a man who is in prison with Shadow Moon. He tells Shadow not to get airport workers angry, since Larch had trouble with them when he was released and was eventually sent back to prison.

The Warden

The warden is in charge of the prison where Shadow Moon is incarcerated. He tells Shadow that his wife has died.

The Iceman

The Iceman is in prison with Shadow Moon. He is in prison for assaulting a man who touched his girlfriend.

Wilson

Wilson is a guard at the prison where Shadow Moon is incarcerated.

Natalie

Natalie is Sam Black Crow's girlfriend.



Objects/Places

Lakeside

Lakeside, Wisconsin, is where Shadow stays under the name Mike Ainsel. Wednesday gets him the apartment so Shadow has somewhere to live between their trips.

House on the Rock

The House on the Rock in Wisconsin is where the gods meet the first time. It is a roadside attraction place, with one of the oldest carousels in the world. The gods consider it a place of power.

Rock City

Rock City is in Georgia. The gods gather here for the final battle.

The World Tree

The World Tree in Virginia is where Shadow is hung for nine days. He holds vigil there for Wednesday's body.

The Carousel

The carousel is how Shadow Moon, Wednesday, Czernobog, and Mr. Nancy reach the meeting of the gods.

Prison

The prison is where Shadow Moon is incarcerated at the beginning of the novel. It is not stated where the prison is located.

Jack's Crocodile Bar

Jack's Crocodile Bar is in the town of Nottamun. Shadow Moon stops there to eat on the way to Eagle Point and meets Mr. Wednesday there for the second time. He accepts Wednesday's job while there, and also meets Mad Sweeney.



Eagle Point

Eagle Point, Indiana is where Shadow Moon and his wife, Laura, lived before he went to prison. After Shadow is released from prison, he goes back there for his wife's funeral. He leaves with Mr. Wednesday after the funeral.

Ibis and Jacquell Funeral Parlor

Ibis and Jacquell Funeral Parlor is owned by Ibis and Jacquell, and is located in Cairo, Illinois. Shadow works there for a while after escaping from the new gods' men.

Cairo

Cairo is a city in Illinois. Wednesday's crow tells Shadow Moon to go there after he escapes from the new gods' men.

Chicago

Chicago, Illinois is where the three sisters, Zorya Vechernyaya, Zorya Utrennyaya and Zorya Polnochnyaya live with Czernobog in an apartment.

Wendell's Funeral Parlor

Wendell's Funeral Parlor is where Laura Moon's funeral takes place.

Nottamun

Nottamun is the town where Shadow Moon stops to eat at Jack's Crocodile Bar.

Mabel's Restaurant

Mabel's Restaurant is a restaurant in Lakeside which sells pasties.

Motel America

Motel America is in Eagle Point and is where Shadow Moon and Mr. Wednesday stay after Laura Moon's funeral.



Las Vegas

Las Vegas is where Wednesday and Shadow Moon go to meet the god whose name is impossible to remember.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles is the home of Bilquis, the Queen of Sheba. She works as a hooker there, and is killed there by the technological god.

San Francisco

San Francisco is where Wednesday and Shadow Moon go to meet the goddess Eostre.

Backstage

Backstage is an alternate world that the gods can access. Humans do not have access to it. Wednesday and Shadow go backstage to meet Whiskey Jack.

St. Louis

St. Louis is where Shadow Moon's plane lands due to a storm.



Themes

Dreams

At many points, Shadow is given information about his journey through his dreams. Even before meeting Wednesday, Shadow dreams of the buffalo man who tells him a storm is coming. Before Wednesday gives him specific information about the war between the gods, a voice tells Shadow in a dream that the old gods are dying without belief. The dreams are a way for higher powers to get in Shadow's head and explain what's going on, without the interference of his waking mind. The dreams also lay the groundwork for upcoming events, so when the events happen, Shadow is better able to understand without question.

It also becomes clear that dreams have power for Shadow. When he dreams about thunderbirds, Wednesday calls to wake him and tell him he is sending out a signal. It seems all of the gods are able to access dreams, even the new gods, and can use them to track Shadow. When strange events happen at night, Shadow frequently assumes it is a dream, until he sees proof. When Laura returns to him, he thinks he may be dreaming until he sees proof of her muddy footprints the next morning. At the home of the Zoyras, Shadow thinks his encounter on the roof with Zorya Polunochnyaya is a dream, until he sees he still has the coin she gave him. This may be a defense mechanism that helps him cope with the supernatural. It enables him to come to terms with the idea that these things are real and are actually happening.

Belief

The reason the gods are in America is because of the beliefs of the people who have traveled to the country. Those who worship or tell the tales of the gods and mythical beings unknowingly create a new incarnation in America. Their beliefs are what give the gods the power they crave. If there is no belief, the gods must learn to fend for themselves as most humans do, although they do not forget the power. According to Wednesday, Jesus is the most powerful god in the world because of all his followers. However, Wednesday says the incarnation of Jesus in Afghanistan has a difficult time there because the country has so few believers. The basic principle is that the more people that believe in a god, the more power that god has.

The gods can also draw power if people honor them, even if it is not intentional. Wednesday has more power on Wednesday, the day of the week, because the name of the day is derived from his old name, Woden. The goddess Easter has more power because Christians still celebrate her day, even if it to revere a different god, Jesus. These gods are able to hold some of the power they crave so dearly because in some form, they are still being revered.



In the stories collected by Mr. Ibis, the people differ in how pious and noble they are. The Vikings who bring Odin to America do so by sacrificing a man to the god. Essie Tregowan, an English girl, lives a life of crime, although she settles down into a peaceful life once she gets to America. Despite her crimes, she is able to spread the stories of fairy-people and gods from Ireland and England, and those beings also come to America. Wututu and Agasu are brought to America as slaves. They are treated badly, but both do their best to live good lives and worship their gods. These stories show very different kinds of people, but each is able to bring over the gods of their faith. It does not matter if those who bring the gods are good or bad, all that matters is that they believe.

Travel

The old gods are able to establish themselves through explorers, travelers, immigrants and slaves who arrive in America. As long as people believe in their gods, the gods are carried with them and can flourish in that new place, even if the believers are gone. Throughout the novel, several vignettes or shorter stories describe how the gods were carried to America by the Vikings, slaves, and immigrants. The gods' ability to travel like this is central to the foundation of a new world.

What is not explored, however, is why the gods cannot travel back, or if they have tried. Since the gods have a corporeal body, they could conceivably get on a plane or take a ship back to their country. Of course, the original incarnations of the gods would be present in their home countries, which may present a paradox. There may be a small amount of believers who hold the gods to America, which means an incarnation of that god is required to be in that country.

Shadow also travels throughout America, mostly with Wednesday to recruit more gods to the cause. The amount of traveling highlights how Shadow does not have a home to call his own. Since he was young, he traveled with his mom, and the home he found with Laura was destroyed when she died. Shadow is a true loner, and his traveling may represent his search to find somewhere he can belong. He enjoys his time in Lakeside, but when he discovers the truth behind the town, he can stay there no longer. That home is lost to him, and he can't enjoy it like he did before. In the end, it seems he realizes his is a born traveler and becomes satisfied with that.

Coins

Coins are very important throughout the novel. While in prison, Shadow uses coin tricks to keep his mind busy and make time go faster. When he gives a leprechaun coin to Laura, it resurrects her and allows her to walk among the living. This coin's power is emphasized when Mad Sweeney tells Shadow that he shouldn't have given it away, and blames Shadow for it because Sweeney will die without the coin. Since Shadow gave the leprechaun coin away, Zorya Polunochnyaya gives him a Liberty coin to protect him. Shadow also does coin tricks whenever he feels trapped or upset. His coins are the one thing that can always calm him and help him think clearly. At the end of the novel,

Shadow does flips a coin and walks away before it lands, signifying he does not need the coins to face life anymore.

One of the most unique things among countries is money. Until the emergence of the Euro, now used in Europe, almost every country exclusively had its own money. The design of the coins and bills are distinct in each country, much as each country has its own version of the gods. In the modern world, money is not as commonly used, since the emergence of credit cards and computer transfers. Therefore, the use of coins can be seen as a connection to the old ways, when they were the only means of barter. Money was and still is highly valued by most people, and the gods can use their power to confer protection or give luck.



Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person point of view. The narration primarily follows the main character, Shadow Moon, and is limited to his experiences and thoughts. Shadow learns the truth behind the gods' war by bits and pieces throughout the novel. At times, when the narration shifts to another character, such as Bilquis in the first chapter, it reveals another character's perspective that may provide information that Shadow does not know. One good example is when Wednesday meets the god who cannot be named. The narration covers their conversation through a third-person limited view, but Shadow is not present at that time so does not hear the exact discussion.

At times, the narration shifts to the past, mostly with entries from Mr. Ibis's collection of stories about the arrival of gods to America. These stories are contained within the chapters, and are prefaced by a heading setting them off from the bulk of the chapter. These stories are still told in the third-person point of view, and are centered on the main characters in each story. For example, the Vikings who bring Odin to America sacrifice a Native American to their god. We do not see how the Native Americans feel about this until they attack the Viking camp and kill them all. These stories are primarily used to show how the gods were able to come to America by their subject's belief. Sometimes the stories concern events from the present, such as Salim who meets the jinn or genie in modern New York. These stories are short not revisited again in the novel.

Setting

The novel is set throughout America, primarily the American Midwest. Before going to prison, Shadow lived in Eagle Point with his life, and he and Wednesday's travels take them there, to Chicago, Wisconsin, and Illinois before branching out to Las Vegas and San Francisco. These travels are necessary because the gods have become spread out through America, and in order to recruit them Wednesday needs to meet them in person. Shadow also mentions traveling around the United States with his mother at several points, showing he is used to never staying in one place for too long.

The town of Lakeside, which Shadow uses as a home base, is the setting most featured in the novel. Lakeside is located in Wisconsin and is a relatively small farming community near a lake. The inhabitants tell Shadow that town is prosperous and quiet, although the winters are very harsh there. The town has a high number of winter runaways, at least one a year, and Shadow eventually realizes the missing kids are connected to the peacefulness of the town. The town almost becomes Shadow's home, and he wants to stay there, until he learns the town's biggest secret.



Language and Meaning

The language used in the novel is primarily typical American language. Shadow is an American, and most of the novel takes place in American towns. All of the characters use modern English, although some ancient rituals and words are used to show the history of the old gods. Most of the gods, old and new, adapt to the modern way of life. One of the new gods, the technological god whom Shadow meets in a limo early on, does speak a more technological language, using words like 'obsolete' and other computing terms. This may show the unwillingness of the technological god to adapt, instead choosing to let people adapt to him.

While one might expect the old gods to use more antiquated or obsolete language, they have been in America so long they have been able to adapt to the modern tongue. While they still remember the traditions and rituals of the past, they are able to operate in modern society without being discovered. Some of the language used does invoke a sense of worship and reverence for the gods, especially when they talk about the past. However, it is important to remember that these incarnations of the gods were brought to America and were there throughout its growth as a country.

Structure

The novel is comprised of 20 unnamed chapters. Each chapter varies in length, and is introduced by a quote that enhances the text of the chapter. The quotes are from works of literature, and old and modern songs. The narration of the main story is linear, starting with Shadow's release from prison and continuing through the events leading up to, including, and after the war between the old gods and the new gods. Overall, the chapters tend to be quite long and detailed. At the end of the novel, a short postscript describes Shadow's journey to Europe after the main events of the novel.

At times, the narration shifts to the past, with entries from Mr. Ibis's collection of stories about the arrival of gods to America. The first of these stories, concerning the Vikings and Odin's arrival, is not directly credited to Mr. Ibis. The second story, regarding Essie Tregowan in the 1700s, and the third, regarding Wututu and Agasu, slaves in the late 1700's, do contain a line showing they were written by Mr. Ibis. These stories are used to illustrate exactly how the gods were able to come to America, and how belief sustained the gods in their new homes.



Quotes

"He was no longer scared of what tomorrow might bring, because yesterday had brought it." Ch. 1, pg. 3

"Rigged games are the easiest ones to beat." Ch. 2, pg. 35

"I don't like you, Mr. Wednesday, or whatever your real name may be. We are not friends. I don't know how you got off that plane without me seeing you, or how you trailed me here. But I'm at a loose end right now. When we're done, I'm gone. And if you piss me off, I'll be gone too. Until then, I'll work for you." Ch 2., 39

"These are gods who have been forgotten, and now might as well be dead. They can be found in only in dry histories. They are gone, all gone, but their names and their images remain with us." Ch. 3, pg. 58

"It was more than a hundred years before Leif the Fortunate, son of Erik the Red, rediscovered that land, which he would call Vineland. His gods were already waiting for him when he arrived: Tyr, one-handed, and gray Odin, gallowsgod,, and Thor of the Thunders." Ch. 3, pg. 69

"Chicago happened slowly, like a migraine." Ch. 4, pg. 72

"Odin's Wain, they call it. And the Great Bear. Where we come from, we believe that it is a, a thing, a, not a god, but like a god, a bad thing, chained up in those stars. If it escapes, it will eat the whole of everything. And there are three sisters who must watch the sky, all the day, all the night. If he escapes, the thing in the stars, the world is over." Ch. 4, 89

"Shadow heard himself laugh, over the sound of the music. He was happy. It was as if the last thirty-six hours had never happened, as if the last three years had not happened, as if his life had evaporated into the daydream of a small child, riding the carousel in Golden Gate Park in san Francisco, on his first trip back to the States, a marathon journey by ship and by car, his mother standing there, watching him proudly, and himself sucking his melting Popsicle, holding on tightly, hoping that the music would never stop, the carousel would never slow, the ride would never end. He was going around and around and around again... Then the lights went out, and Shadow saw the gods." Ch. 5, pg. 129

"... there are new gods growing in America, clinging to growing knots of belief: gods of credit card and freeway, of Internet and telephone, of radio and hospital and television, gods of plastic and of beeper and of neon. Proud gods, fat and foolish creatures, puffed up with their own newness and importance. They are aware of us, and they fear us, and they hate us," Ch. 6, pg. 137-138



"All we have to believe with is our senses, the tools we use to perceive the world: our sight, our touch, our memory. If they lie to us, then nothing can be trusted. And even if we do not believe, then still we cannot travel in any other way than the road our senses show us; and we must walk that road to the end." Ch. 6, pg. 139

"You know why dead people only go out at night, puppy? Because it's easier to pass for real in the dark. And I don't want to pass. I want to be alive." Ch. 6, pg. 153

"We are now and tomorrow. Your friends aren't even yesterday anymore." Ch. 7, pg. 176

"Columbus did what people have been doing for thousands of years. There's nothing special about coming to America." Ch. 8, pg. 196

"Soon they will fall and the star people will meet the earth people. There will be heroes among them, and men who will slay monsters and bring knowledge, but none of them will be gods. This is a poor place for gods." Ch. 9, pg. 248

"War was coming. No, that was not it, the war had already begun. The battle was coming," Ch. 10, pg. 280

"That's what it's like for my kind of people... we feed on belief, on prayers, on love." Ch. 10, 287

"What the hell else can I do? They don't sacrifice rams or bulls to me. They don't send me the souls of killers and slaves, gallows-hung and raven-picked. They made me. They forgot me. Now I take a little back from them. Isn't that fair?" Ch. 11, pg. 314

"'You play your cards so close to your chest,' Shadow said, 'that I'm not really sure they're cards at all.'" Ch. 12, pg. 349

"Organizing gods is like herding cats into straight lines. They don't take naturally to it." Ch. 13, pg. 385

"Yes, it's still God's Own Country ... The only question is, which gods?" Ch. 13, pg. 409

"In the god business ... it's not the death that matters. It's the opportunity for resurrection. And when the blood flows..." Ch. 14, pg. 434

It's easy, there's a trick to it, you do it or you die." Ch. 15, pg. 458

"You are the nearest thing I have to life. You are the only thing I have left, the only thing that isn't bleak and flat and gray. I could be blindfolded and dropped into the deepest ocean and I would know where to find you. I could be buried a hundred miles underground and I would know where you find you." Ch. 16, pg. 467



"I think this is maybe another strange dream on the tree. I've been having crazy dreams since I got out of prison." Ch. 16, pg. 470

"It doesn't matter whether this is a good time or a bad time. This is the time. They have been killing us. Better to die together, on the attack, like gods, than to die fleeing and singly, like rats in a cellar." Ch. 18, pg. 509

"The battle you came here for isn't something that any of you can win or lose. The winning and the losing are unimportant to him, to them. What matters is that enough of you die. Each of you that falls in battle gives him power. Everyone of you that dies, feeds him. Do you understand?" Ch. 18, pg. 539

"[Wednesday] was me, yes. But I am not him." Epilogue, 587



Topics for Discussion

The gods, goddesses, and other mythical characters are very different from the traditional descriptions of them. How are these contrasts shown? How are these characters updated for the modern world? Is this effective? Why or why not?

The old gods are being forgotten, and new gods are taking their place. What sort of gods are the new gods? How are they different from the old gods? How are or were each set of gods worshiped? Why would people worship the new gods instead of the old?

Shadow uses coin tricks to keep himself occupied in prison. Several of the mythical figures he meets give him coins. Why does Shadow choose to believe they are doing tricks? Why are coin tricks so important to him? Could coins have an important significance in mythology? Discuss.

In several chapters, past times are described, notably those when people from other countries first came to America. Why are these stories important? How does their inclusion show the origin of the gods? Are they necessary to the novel? Discuss.

The House on the Rock, where the gods have their first meeting, is considered a place of power. Do you think people's visits to roadside attractions can be considered worshipping? Why or why not? How does this help or hinder the gods and make the attraction a suitable or insufficient meeting place?

At first, Shadow resists the idea that there are old gods in America and tries to convince himself that some of the strange happenings are dreams. Discuss belief. Why does Shadow find it so hard or so easy to believe? When does Shadow finally give in and start to believe? How is belief important to the gods?

The character of Laura dies early in the novel, yet she is able to interact with Shadow and others. Several other characters, including god, die throughout the novel. What is your understanding of death and resurrection in the terms of the novel? How can gods, generally defined as immortal beings, die? How do Ibis and Jacquell carry on the Egyptian traditions of death in their funeral home?

Many of the old gods mentioned are widely known, but some are more obscure. Even the widely known gods are sometimes called by uncommon names. Does not knowing the specific gods referenced help or hinder the novel? Why or why not? Is the scant explanation of each god's origins sufficient? Why or why not? Which of the gods are referred to in the short stories that tell of how the gods arrived in America?

Loki and Wednesday worked together to incite the war for their own selfish needs. Why are they willing to destroy the other gods? How do their deaths help Loki and Wednesday get power? Why was Shadow instrumental to their plan?