

Dance Dance Dance: A Novel Study Guide

Dance Dance Dance: A Novel by Haruki Murakami

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Dance Dance Dance: A Novel Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
chapters 1-5.....	4
chapters 6-11.....	6
chapters 12-19.....	11
chapters 20-26.....	15
chapters 27-33.....	19
chapters 34-39.....	21
chapters 40-44.....	23
Characters.....	25
Objects/Places.....	28
Themes.....	31
Style.....	33
Quotes.....	36
Topics for Discussion.....	37



Plot Summary

"Dance Dance Dance" by Haruki Murakami is a work of fiction. It is a follow up to Murakami's book "The Wild Sheep Chase."

Murakami introduces his protagonist, a writer without a name. It is unclear why the author chose to give the writer no name except perhaps to make him more identifiable as an "everyman." The man is fairly typical. He is 34 years old, divorced, and working as a freelance writer. Like most people his age, the man has had his share of pitfalls. He has suffered from depression and on one occasion, it was so severe that he became a recluse for six months. Although the writer managed to pull himself out of the abyss, there is still a sense of abandonment from his wife and loss of former business, friendships, and romantic relationships.

The writer's background is revealed. He had fallen into a deep depression after getting a divorce and having a friend die mysteriously. A woman abandoned him. The result was a six-month stint in his apartment during which he did not go out during the day. There was some contact from the outside, including letters from his former business partner and his ex-wife - letters that had gone unanswered. The writer's cat died. In the spring, he decided that it was time to return to society.

The story begins with an unnamed protagonist thinking about his stay at the Dolphin Hotel in Sapporo, Japan. The hotel was a dive but the man cannot seem to get it out of his mind. Part of the reason for that was an extended stay with a call girl named whose name he did not know. In fact, he knew almost nothing about her. But now he cannot get the girl out of his mind. It seems as if the girl is calling him from somewhere beyond. It makes no sense but the man has to do something about it.

The trip to Sapporo is only the first step in along list of strange behaviors and occurrences for the writer.

The man encounters the Sheep Man, an otherworldly being that claims everything and everyone in the writer's life is connected. This includes a sullen thirteen year old girl that befriends the man, the girl's parents, two other call girls, a receptionist, and a former classmate from junior high.

Several deaths take place and they, too, are linked. This causes the writer to examine his life and to learn how to live in a world where everything is connected while trying to find his true place.

Much of the story is left open-ended, giving the reader the impression that the story will continue into the author's next novel.



chapters 1-5

chapters 1-5 Summary

Chapter 1:

The story begins with an unnamed protagonist thinking about his stay at the Dolphin Hotel in Sapporo. The hotel was a dive but the man cannot seem to get it out of his mind. Part of the reason for that was an extended stay with a call girl named whose name he did not know. In fact, he knew almost nothing about her. But now he cannot get the girl out of his mind. It seems as if the girl is calling him from somewhere beyond. It makes no sense but the man has to do something about it.

The author details the Dolphin Hotel in all its shabby glory. First of all, it was built in the wrong place. It lacked a sense of normalness in general. The furniture was rickety and old. There were few if any customers. It seemed as if the hotel was in The Land That Time Forgot. In fact, the hotel could be considered tragic. Clearly, it was not a place that the protagonist would have chosen. "She" chose it and he went along.

The protagonist, who is a freelance writer, refers to it as being: "Like a button on a shirt buttoned wrong, every attempt to correct things led to yet another fine - not to say elegant - mess." (Chapter 1, p. 3).

Yet the writer cannot get the girl - and the hotel - out of his mind. He will have to go back to the hotel and try to find her.

Chapter 2:

The writer goes to Hokkaido on a work assignment. The assignment includes writing about restaurants for a women's magazine. The work is not gratifying or fulfilling in any way, but it pays the bills. The writer refers to it as shoveling cultural snow.

The writer's background is revealed. He had fallen into a deep depression after getting a divorce and having a friend die mysteriously. A woman abandoned him. The result was a six-month stint in his apartment during which he did not go out during the day. There was some contact from the outside, including letters from his former business partner and his ex-wife - letters that had gone unanswered. The writer's cat died. In the spring, he decided that it was time to return to society.

Chapter 3:

The writer's entrance into the world of freelance writing is detailed. The job consisted mostly of PR work at first. It eventually turned into freelance writing for many sources. Again, the job was not fulfilling but it was money and allowed for freedom. The more the writer thinks about the girl - he finally learns that her name is Kiki - the more he needs to



return to the Dolphin Hotel. The man tells his business connections that he must go to Tokyo on business for a month.

Chapter 4:

The writer and photographer arrive in Hakodate. The writer has contracted to get information on restaurants ahead of time to be able to complete the job as quickly and efficiently as possible. The work is done rather quickly and the writer and photographer take a day to go cross-country skiing. After the assignment is finished, the writer decides to go to Sapporo to return to the Dolphin Hotel and to find Kiki. It has been 4.5 years since he has seen her.

The writer arrives in Sapporo. The weather is cold. The writer arrives at the hotel and is stunned at what he sees. Gone is the ramshackle building that served as his home once upon a time. In its stead is a twenty-six story hotel in the Bauhaus-Art Deco style. The hotel has been renamed: l'Hôtel Dauphin. It is glass and steel, decorated with flags of many nations. The writer is speechless.

"I stood there a good twenty seconds, mouth agape, staring up at it. Then I let out a long, deep breath that might easily have been beamed straight to the moon. Surprise was not the word." (Chapter 4, p. 21).

Chapter 5:

The writer enters the hotel. It is filled with well dressed business people, most likely doctors, professors, or lawyers. The interior is opulent. The writer inquires about the old hotel at the desk and is met with strange behavior and a lack of information. When the manager is approached about the old hotel, he acts suspicious and gives away nothing. The writer is even more confused than before.

chapters 1-5 Analysis

Murakami introduces his protagonist, a writer with no name. It is unclear why the author chose to give the writer no name except perhaps to make him more identifiable as an "everyman." The man is fairly typical. He is 34 years old, divorced, and working as a freelance writer. Like most people his age, the man has had his share of pitfalls. He has suffered from depression and on one occasion, it was so severe that he became a recluse for six months. Although the writer managed to pull himself out of the abyss, there is still a sense of abandonment from his wife and loss of former business, friendships, and romantic relationships. One of those relationships occurred at the Dolphin Hotel, a dive in Sapporo. Although it has been 4.5 years since the writer has been in Sapporo, the hotel and the girl he lived with there continue to haunt him. He has no choice but to return. However, upon arriving in Sapporo, the writer learns that things have changed drastically and there is not even a single remnant of the old hotel. This leaves little hope for him to find the girl whose name he has just learned.



chapters 6-11

chapters 6-11 Summary

Chapter 6 begins with the writer investigating the hotel. The hotel is opulent and so far from the old Dolphin Hotel that it does not seem possible that the buildings were in the same place, let alone the same country. The writer also investigates the local atmosphere, discussing the changes since he was last in Sapporo 4.5 years before. The writer, bored, goes to the bar. He spots a 12 year old girl sitting at a table listening to a Walkman. The girl is alone and seems to be bored. The bartender says that the girl is waiting for her mother. Although the writer and the girl do not speak, he immediately feels a strange connection to her. The writer obsesses about the type of music the girl must be listening to and how Genesis is a stupid name for a band.

The next morning the writer sees the girl having breakfast with her mother. This time the girl smiles at him.

In Chapter 7, staying in Sapporo almost seems to be pointless as the writer has absolutely nothing to do. He wanders from place to place, looking in store windows. He gets a hair cut. Eventually, he returns to the hotel where he meets the receptionist that he had spoken to upon arrival. They discuss the old hotel. The girl talks to the writer under the guise of discussing car rentals. If she is seen speaking to a guest without purpose, she can get into trouble. The receptionist and writer plan to meet that night to discuss the hotel.

The girl meets the writer at the hotel. She talks about her strange experience. The writer cannot get the old owner out of his mind. The writer learns that there was some controversy with the purchase of the property but the girl does not remember details, only that there was an article written about it. The girl talks about her experience on the sixteenth floor. It was dark, eerie, and absolutely quiet at first. The air smelled moldy, which was not possible for a new hotel with purified air. The girl heard the sound of shuffling feet inside one of the rooms. She heard music and laughing. When the girl told the manager of the hotel about her experience, he told her not to tell anyone. No one must know about her experience. The girl believes that the hotel manager knows something.

The writer takes the girl home. The girl worries about his intentions but he does not make a pass.

The writer decides to extend his stay in Sapporo. He visits the local library and finds the news article. The article was not helpful. The purchase of the property was convoluted and well hidden, bouncing from one corporation to another, all faceless and nameless.

In Chapter 8, the writer calls his former business partner in Tokyo. There is little to say beyond the common social niceties. The writer asks about the Dolphin scandal. The



partner doesn't know much of anything. Both men suspect there is some type of cover up going on. The writer asks his partner to make some inquiries. The partner agrees.

The writer sits in the lobby and stares at the girl. She calls later to say that it makes her nervous and please do not stare any more.

The writer reads about his former classmate Gotanda's newest movie, "Unrequited Love." It is the type of movie that always features Gotanda - the teen angst type of movie that has been made so many times that one doesn't need to see it because it is so predictable.

Ryoichi Gotanda is a former junior high school classmate and former science lab partner to the writer.

The writer talks about Gotanda: "He was nice enough, but who actually knew anything about him?" (Chapter 8, p. 66).

The boys were in the same science class in junior high and once performed a lab project together. The writer recalls Gotanda being too nice to be real. At that point girls were already smitten with him. Gotanda embodied unnatural grace. Gotanda's grades were always good and he was always first or second in class. Gotanda was kind, friendly, and sincere. The writer was puzzled by him and how anyone could be so perfect.

"Of course, he was good at sports, active in school government. There was talk that he had a thing with the most popular girl in class but no one knew for sure. All the teachers thought he was great, and on Parents Day all the mothers would be enchanted with him, too. He was just that type." (Chapter 8, p. 66).

The writer decides not to see the movie.

Chapter 9: The writer is bored. He is restless and wishes that the receptionist did not have swim club that night. He thinks about swim club and wonders if such a thing existed in Egypt. The writer develops an elaborate fantasy about a young Jodie Foster playing Cleopatra and how a formerly unsuitable young man saves a life and is inducted as the new swim instructor.

The Sheep Man makes an appearance.

The writer waits until late and goes out. Upon returning to the 15th floor, he has an experience similar to the receptionist's experience on the 16th floor.

In Chapter 10, the writer steps off the elevator. There is total darkness. He feels completely paralyzed. The new carpet feels strange and spongy. The writer desperately wishes to hear the hotel's omnipresent music.

"I was reduced to pure concept. My flesh had dissolved; my form had dissipated. I floated in space. Liberated of my corporeal being, but without dispensation to go



anywhere else. I was adrift in the void. Somewhere across the fine line separating nightmare from reality." (Chapter 10, p. 74).

The writer reaches into his pockets and finds his keys and wallet - a small consolation and presence of normalcy. Everything else is foreign.

Suddenly the writer sees the receptionist making love with his classmate. He is surprised at the level of disappointment he feels. He is crushed.

The writer makes his way down the hall, using his memory of the floor plan. He makes his way to a closed door that muffles strange sounds. The writer, almost against his will, knocks. Eyes closed, he knows who will answer the door. It is the Sheep Man. The Sheep Man invites the writer inside.

In Chapter 11, the writer enters the Sheep Man's room. The writer sits across an old round table from the Sheep Man. There are no other furnishings. The men sit on stacks of books. The Sheep Man says he has been waiting a long time for the writer to return. The Sheep Man speaks in a strange way. All words in each sentence are one word, all run together.

The writer asks what the room is and where they are. The Sheep Man says he does not know much about the place except that it is dark and big. The Sheep Man has been waiting for a very long time although he cannot say how long.

The Sheep Man encourages the writer to tell his story. He talks about all of the loss and heartache he has suffered over the years. He pours out his heart to the Sheep Man. Eventually, he asks about the hotel. The Sheep Man says that the name had been kept for him so that he might find his way back to the place where everything is connected. The writer is incredulous.

"Thisisyourworld," said the Sheep Man matter-of-factly. 'Don'tthinktoohardaboutit. Ifyou'reseekingit, it'shere.Theplacewasputhereforyou. Special. Andweworkedspecialhardtogetyoubackhere. Tokeepthingsfromfallingapart. Tokeepyoufromforgetting.'" (Chapter 11, p. 84).

The writer cannot grasp what the Sheep Man is saying, thinking that something so large exists only for him is too hard to understand. The writer asks the Sheep Man who and what he is.

"WearetheSheepMan,' he chortled. 'Can'tyoutell? Wearethesh sheepskin, andweliveinaworldhumanscan'tsee.Wewerechasedintothewoodsalongtimeago. Long, longtimeago. Canhardlyrememberwhatwewerebefore. Bustsincethenwebeenkeepingoutofsight. Easytodo, ifthat'swhatyouwant. Thenwecamehere, tolookaftertheplace.'" (Chapter 11, p. 84).

The Sheep Man says that the only thing the writer can do is to dance. One must dance and never stop as long as the music plays.



chapters 6-11 Analysis

At this point the story begins to make more and less sense at the same time. The writer's mindset is clearer - he is a man that has suffered great loss and cannot always cope which explains his tendency to isolate and remove himself from the rest of the world. It is not that the writer is entirely unsociable but there are times when it seems to be better to walk away from the rest of the world rather than face the confusion and loss. The receptionist has a chance at forcing the writer to open up to some degree although she does not realize it.

Hearing about the receptionist's experiences on the 16th floor does not make the writer think that the girl is crazy. He is intrigued. The girl's demeanor shows that she is sincere. Her youth makes her timid in her work as well as in her personal relationships. The writer knows not to push her.

Being at the hotel gives the writer some sense of purpose although he is unsure of that purpose or why he has become so obsessed with the area, finding out what happened to the old building and its owner and of course, finding Kiki. The need to find Kiki may surprise him the most since he did not even know her name while they lived together nor did he know anything about her except that she was a high priced escort that worked at a local club.

The urge and the need to reconnect with people and places, including Gotanda, also puzzles the writer. After all, he and Gotanda were never really friends, only classmates. They were friendly but the writer had always felt inferior to the perfect - and now famous - classmate.

The writer's reconnection with his former business partner shows another way in which he has disconnected himself from his old life. If the writer did not need to make a living, one can assume that he would also cut himself off from his job. For a time, he does just that.

Long periods of solitude prompt the writer to slip into fantasies and strange scenarios such as the Jodie Cleopatra fantasy.

The writer's experience with the Sheep Man does not stray far from the tale told by the receptionist. The author attempt to keep some reality involved in the experience by pointing out mundane activities and common items to keep the character grounded as much as possible. The Sheep Man is difficult to understand, mostly due to the words that are all run together. The original Japanese version was not written this way and it is unclear why the English translation was altered to make this change. The change does add an otherworldly aspect to the Sheep Man.

While the writer did not receive all of the information he so desperately needs, he does learn that he is not crazy - all things are connected and there is a reason he has been called back to Sapporo. Although the writer would have stayed longer to talk more to the Sheep Man, the temperature drops so drastically that the writer must leave. The Sheep

Man warns that the writer could get stuck in the in-between. The Sheep Man does offer the reassurance that he is always there, waiting.



chapters 12-19

chapters 12-19 Summary

In Chapter 12, the writer returns to the bedroom. He is chilled to the bone. No matter what he does, insomnia plagues the man. Finally, around dawn, the man sleeps. At 3 p.m., the receptionist wakes him when she comes to visit on her break. The receptionist is still wary of the man. He tries to make her feel at ease but fails because of lack of sleep. The conversation is very strained and strange. The man keeps making references to a gray gorilla.

In Chapter 13, at 9 p.m. the writer goes out for dinner. All signs of his previous sluggishness have vanished. He feels awake but still puzzled over recent events. He thinks about Kiki. He thinks about the Sheep Man. The writer knows that he wants and needs something but does not know what that something is. He is reminded of his ex-wife who told him that not knowing is what hurts other people.

"My ex-wife's words stuck in my head like a curse. Worse, because it was true. I hurt everybody. If I kept going like this, I'd go on losing them, too." (Chapter 13, p. 96).

Chapter 14: The man sleeps. The next day he repeats his pattern of the day before - breakfast at Dunkin' Donuts and a walk through the snowy city. Back at the hotel, he makes up a stupid story to talk to the receptionist. She is not pleased. The man is at loose ends. He walks through the city. Needing a place to use the bathroom, he steps inside the theater. "Unrequited Love" is playing but was already on for 30 minutes. The man decides that the plot could not be complicated so he goes inside. Part way through the movie he sees his old friend Gotanda seducing a woman. The woman is Kiki. The Sheep Man was right when he said that everything is connected.

The man obsesses about Kiki's role in the movie. It is a bit part but he is certain that it is Kiki. The writer feels jealous of the scene. First he is jealous of the swim club and now he is jealous of a movie scene in which Kiki makes love to Gotanda. An obsession begins.

In Chapter 15, the writer decides that there is no reason for him to stay in Sapporo. He books a flight to Tokyo. At the reception desk, he says goodbye to his friend and promises to have dinner with her when he returns. The promise sounds empty. The receptionist asks if he would be willing to accompany a young girl to Tokyo. The girl's mother had left her there to take an assignment in Kathmandu. The man instinctively knows that it is the girl with the Walkman. The writer agrees to help the girl.

In Chapter 16, the writer and Yuki arrive in Haneda. It is a long way to Tokyo and the hour is getting late. The writer is tired. Yuki says that she and Amé have a place in Akasaka. No one lives there and Yuki can stay there for a while. She has no idea when Amé will return from her work assignment in Kathmandu. The writer says he will go to



his apartment to retrieve his car, take Yuki to dinner, and then he can take her to the apartment. Yuki agrees.

The writer answers Yuki's questions about his life and work. Yuki discusses her family situation. Her mother is constantly working and never looks after Yuki. Yuki insists that her mother is not mean, that's just the way she is. The writer is familiar with Amé's work. He is also familiar with Yuki's father, a famous novelist named Hiraku Makimura. The writer thinks about the father's career as a writer. The man was once brilliant but then sank into some kind of self-imposed counter-culture. His writing suffered and according to the critics, Makimura hasn't written anything good in the recent past.

"So Makimura underwent a transformation. From naïf novelist he was suddenly avant-garde. Not that there was any change in the lack of substance. Makimura modeled his style on the French nouvelle vague, rhetoric for rhetoric's sake. A real horror. He managed to win over a few brain-dead critics with a weakness for such pretensions. But after two years of the same old stuff, even they got tired of him." (Chapter 16, p. 118).

After dinner Yuki insists that the writer take a drive so that they can listen to music. After an hour, he takes her home. When he returns to his apartment, he worries if she will remember to lock up and do other things to ensure her safety. Yuki calls and lets him know that everything has been taken care of. Yuki also mentions the Sheep Man. The writer is shaken. Yuki says they will talk about it later.

In Chapter 16, the writer and Yuki arrive in Haneda. It is a long way to Tokyo and the hour is getting late. The writer is tired. Yuki says that she and Amé have a place in Akasaka. No one lives there and Yuki can stay there for a while. She has no idea when Amé will return from her work assignment in Kathmandu. The writer says he will go to his apartment to retrieve his car, take Yuki to dinner, and then he can take her to the apartment. Yuki agrees.

The writer answers Yuki's questions about his life and work. Yuki discusses her family situation. Her mother is constantly working and never looks after Yuki. Yuki insists that her mother is not mean, that's just the way she is. The writer is familiar with Amé's work. He is also familiar with Yuki's father, a famous novelist named Hiraku Makimura. The writer thinks about the father's career as a writer. The man was once brilliant but then sank into some kind of self-imposed counter-culture. His writing suffered and according to the critics, Makimura hasn't written anything good in the recent past.

"So Makimura underwent a transformation. From naïf novelist, he was suddenly avant-garde. Not that there was any change in the lack of substance. Makimura modeled his style on the French nouvelle vague, rhetoric for rhetoric's sake. A real horror. He managed to win over a few brain-dead critics with a weakness for such pretensions. But after two years of the same old stuff, even they got tired of him." (Chapter 16, p. 118).

After dinner Yuki insists that the writer take a drive so that they can listen to music. After an hour, he takes her home. When he returns to his apartment, he worries if she will remember to lock up and do other things to ensure her safety. Yuki calls and lets him



know that everything has been taken care of. Yuki also mentions the Sheep Man. The writer is shaken. Yuki says they will talk about it later.

chapters 12-19 Analysis

The story begins to get strange at this point. The writer is in Sapporo at the hotel. He meets a receptionist that seems to be eager to talk but is nervous and aloof. It is unclear why the receptionist keeps returning to the writer except that perhaps he is one of the few she can tell about her strange experience. It is a mystery as to why the hotel manager wants to keep the experience silent. It is a bigger mystery as to what happened to the old hotel and the old owner. No one seems to know the real story. The writer's former business partner recommends letting sleeping dogs lie.

The writer begins to question his purpose in Sapporo. However, he knows that there is a connection and is determined to stick it out. The first striking piece of evidence is seeing Kiki in the film with Gotanda. That offers two connections - one to Kiki and one to Gotanda. It also confirms that everything is connected.

The introduction of Yuki is also strange. The author uses foreshadowing to hint at the future relationship between the writer and Yuki when he first sees her in the bar. They have music in common. Although the writer never speaks to Yuki, he feels a tug when he looks at her - a sense of connection and of knowing that she is special.

Although Amé is a good patron of the hotel it is unacceptable for a parent to leave her child behind without a thought or a care. It is surprising that the incident is not reported to the police. It is even more surprising that the writer would be entrusted with the care of a 13-year-old girl he had never met.

The writer begins to understand Yuki's situation more clearly when he learns about her famous mother, a world renowned photographer and her father, a once-famous novelist. The writer is intrigued by both but has a great deal of knowledge about the father's career:

"So Makimura underwent a transformation. From naïf novelist he was suddenly avant-garde. Not that there was any change in the lack of substance. Makimura modeled his style on the French nouvelle vague, rhetoric for rhetoric's sake. A real horror. He managed to win over a few brain-dead critics with a weakness for such pretensions. But after two years of the same old stuff, even they got tired of him." (Chapter 16, p. 118).

The writer is impressed with the father's lifestyle although somewhat puzzled at the man's wealth considering the sad state of his career. Makimura knows he can no longer write worthwhile material and admits it.

Yuki confirms the connection between herself and the writer when she mentions the Sheep Man.



The writer's reconnection with Gotanda is interesting in that the men were not friends as children yet share some connection beyond junior high science class. Both men are lonely. The writer is surprised when Gotanda is so eager to "catch up on old times." What old times are there to discuss? Instead, the men talk about their adult lives. As is common with former friends, each discusses how he admired things about the other. While the writer assumes that Gotanda had - and has - it all, Gotanda sees it differently. He was blessed to be sure but always felt pressure to perform.

Gotanda laments:

"I, on the other hand, was the eternal golden boy. I never did anything wrong, I got the best grades, I won elections, I was a star athlete. Girls liked me. And teachers and parents believed in me. How do things like this happen? I never really understood what was going on, but you sort of get into a groove, you know." (Chapter 17, p. 145).

Another connection appears in the form of Mei. Unfortunately, Mei has no information about Kiki.



chapters 20-26

chapters 20-26 Summary

In Chapter 20, the writer is restless. Every day is the same routine - he wanders through the city on a predetermined route. He goes to the theater to see "Unrequited Love." Sometimes he will call Yuki or she will call him. Yuki tells the writer that he needs to grow up. They make plans for dinner. The writer says that their one-way communication isn't fair and that she should give him a phone number where she can be reached in case something comes up. Yuki says that she won't stand for him changing plans. Amé is so good at it that the writer wouldn't stand a chance. The writer says he has no intention of changing their plans.

In Chapter 21, the police arrive at the writer's apartment. They ask him to come along to the Akasaka precinct for questioning. The police will not give out any details. The writer asks to be allowed to dress. The police wait. The writer is not impressed with the police. He thinks that Gotanda could play a better cop.

The police take the writer to the precinct. The writer refers to the cops as Fisherman and Bookish, after their appearances. The police ask the writer what he was doing the previous evening. The writer cannot remember. The police see this as a delaying or avoidance tactic. The cops discuss the rights of those being interrogated and lead the writer to believe that he will be able to go home after answering that one question. The writer cannot remember. He asks what is going on. If the cops will not tell him what is happening, he will refuse to answer any questions.

There is a long conversation in which the police are rude and borderline threatening toward the writer. The writer will not answer questions. The police insult the writer. The writer says he demands respect. Eventually, the police tell the writer why he is being interviewed. They show him a photograph of a murder victim. The woman in the photo is Mei. The writer denies knowing Mei. The police say that they found his business card in Mei's wallet. The writer is required to spend the night at the precinct. First, he calls Yuki to explain. Yuki is not sympathetic.

In Chapter 22, the writer is subjected to a full day of interrogation. It is obvious that the cops are trying to break the writer and are treating him horribly - without much regards to his rights. The writer goes along with it. At what seems to be the end of the questioning, the police tell the writer that he must review his statement word for word. When the writer is finished reading the forty pages, he is told that the entire document must be in his own hand or it is not legal. The writer is too exhausted to argue.

The writer does not finish until the next day. The cops promise more paperwork but for now, the writer is free to go. He thinks about Sapporo and the receptionist. He wonders if someone will kill her, too.



In Chapter 23, the police tell the writer that he is free to go. The cops tell the writer that they knew the previous night that he was not guilty but they also know that he is hiding something.

The writer goes home and bathes. He takes a nap, goes for a swim and then calls Yuki. They make plans to go out to eat. Yuki is not sympathetic or openly glad to see her new friend. During dinner, Yuki says she wants to go to Tsujido. Her father wants to meet the writer. The writer learns that Yuki called her father and told him about the meeting with the writer. She also told him about the interrogation. Makimura called t lawyer to make inquiries. Yuki tells the writer that the police had no legal right to hold him. The writer says he knew that already.

They pause along their journey to Tsujido to take a walk by the sea. Yuki asks if it is true that she is the prettiest girl the writer has ever dated. He says she is the prettiest. The girl's insecurities show through.

The writer asks about the Sheep Man. Yuki tries to explain that she did not actually see the Sheep Man, rather she sensed him through the writer's experience. Yuki tells the writer that she is a sensitive but tries to keep it shut off most of the time because otherwise it seems to cause trouble. The writer does not understand so Yuki explains:

"At school, if I felt something, I just came right out and told everybody about it. But then, it made everyone sick. If someone was going to get hurt, I'd say, so-and-so is going to get hurt, and sure enough, she would. That happened over and over again, until everyone started treating me like a weird spool. That's what they called me, 'Spook.' That was the kind of reputation I had. It was terrible. So ever since then, I decided not to say anything." (Chapter 23, p. 192).

The writer tries to understand and asks if the girl is a clairvoyant. Yuki explains that they aren't quite premonitions, more like feelings. The connection between Yuki and the writer, according to Yuki, was an accident.

The writer tells Yuki about the Sheep Man and how he sort of works as a switchboard operator.

The conversation switches gears. The writer talks about what it was like when he was 13 in school. Yuki does not go to school. She spends her days hiding out. Yuki returns to her usual demeanor and tells the writer that he is fifty years behind the times.

Chapter 24 focuses on the meeting between the writer and Makimura. The writer is intrigued by Makimura's opulent lifestyle, including the presence of his valet which seems to be at the author's beck and call. Yuki decides to take a walk on the beach while the writer talks to her father.

The men talk about golf, writing and Yuki. Makimura is grateful to the writer for his care of Yuki. The writer talks about Yuki's unhealthy situation. Makimura agrees that it is not a good situation. He offers to pay the writer if he will take care of Yuki. The writer refuses and says he will not enter into any kind of formal agreement. He will check in on



Yuki but does not want to be responsible for the girl. No one wants to be responsible for the girl.

Makimura asks about Mei. Like the police, Makimura is convinced that the writer knows something but isn't willing to talk. The writer avoids the questions.

Makimura tells the writer that he should call if he needs money or anything else. Both Makimura and Amé are wealthy. Makimura says he always pays his debts.

In Chapter 25, Yuki returns to the house and says she wants to go home. She refuses dinner from her father. Makimura tells Yuki he will be in Japan for the entire month and she should come by whenever she wants. When Yuki and the writer return to his car, Yuki says she is famished. They go to dinner.

Yuki asks about the conversation between the writer and her father. The writer gives a general recap. Yuki says the offer seems typical of her father. The writer explains that they should hang out when they feel like it, not because of some agreement. The writer declares that they are friends and can talk about things. He warns Yuki about keeping to herself too much, as she tends to do:

"You should let the stuff build up inside. It gets to a point where you can't keep it under control. You got to let off the pressure or it'll explode. Bang! Know what I mean? Life is hard enough. Holding down the fort all by your lonesome is tough. And it's tough for me, too. But the two of us, I think maybe we can understand each other. We can talk pretty honestly." Chap. 25, p. 208

The writer wonders how Yuki will turn out as an adult.

The next day the writer enjoys the spring day as he walks through the city. He realizes that he should call Gotanda and tell him about Mei.

In Chapter 26, it is late when Gotanda calls. The writer goes to Gotanda's apartment. The writer offers to drive Gotanda to Yokohama where he must report to work in the morning. Along the way they discuss many things including Mei's death. Gotanda does not understand at first why the writer lied. The writer knows that Gotanda is innocent and did not want to ruin his career. Gotanda finally understands. Gotanda invites the writer to spend the night. The writer decides to go home because he is exhausted. Along the way he thinks about Mei and how she is never coming back.

chapters 20-26 Analysis

The incident with the police is bizarre in that the writer knows his rights are being violated and that the police are being unfair yet he does not walk out or insist upon seeing a lawyer. The police admit to holding him although they know he is innocent of Mei's murder. The police are simply angry that the writer will not talk. They clearly abuse their station. The only reason the writer is let go is due to the inquiry made by Makimura's lawyer. This is unknown to the writer at the time.



The reason the writer lies is clear. He wants to protect Gotanda. He also does not want to explain the relationship with Mei and Kiki. The lie is instantaneous. Gotanda is puzzled by his friend's lie until it is thoroughly explained.

Yuki clearly has no respect for her father. She ridicules him openly. The only reason for the visit was so that the writer could meet Makimura. Makimura is in a position to try to buy the writer's time and attention for Yuki but the plan fails.

The conversation between the writer and Makimura shows that Makimura has concerns for Yuki but does not seek to push the girl into any kind of father-daughter relationship. Rather, Makimura would rather pay the writer to take his place as a surrogate. The writer turns down Makimura's offer of money in exchange for watching over Yuki. As with Amé, Makimura is a terrible parent. Still, the writer says he will check in on Yuki from time to time but will not be held to any formal agreement.

The writer worries about Yuki. He wants to make it clear that any time he spends with the girl is voluntary because they are friends - not because Makimura has offered to pay for the service. Although Yuki does not respond to this concept, it is clear that she respects the writer's choice and will continue to open up to him about her personal life and feelings, something that she would not otherwise do. Although Yuki sees the writer as a dolt, an old man, and someone who is 50 years behind the times, she likes him. The writer can relate, even though it is often in a marginal way.

Gotanda is upset about Mei and laments days gone by.



chapters 27-33

chapters 27-33 Summary

In Chapter 27, the writer and Yuki both have time to waste. Sometimes they have dinner or go for a drive. Yuki suggests that they go to Hawaii where Amé is working. It seems like a good idea. Both could use a change of scenery and Hawaii seems like a good place to do it. Although the writer objects, Makimura offers to pay for everything. The writer asks Gotanda to go along. Gotanda says he cannot afford the trip. Aside from a lush expense account, Gotanda is all but broke because of alimony, taxes, and other expenses. Gotanda makes the writer promise to call when he returns from the trip.

Yuki tells the writer that the receptionist's name is Miss Yumiyoshi. The writer calls her at work. The receptionist says she will call later. When she calls she tells the writer that she has had another experience like the one on the sixteenth floor. She is now afraid to ride the elevator.

In Chapter 28, Yuki and the writer go to Hawaii. They spend days on the beach. Nothing else happens.

In Chapter 29, they make a trip to visit Amé where they meet her newest conquest, a one-armed poet and Vietnam vet named Dick. After a brief chat, Amé says she wants to spend some alone time with Yuki. Dick and the writer go to take a walk on the beach.

Before Yuki and the writer leave, he has a talk with Amé. He tells Amé that she is hurting Yuki. Amé says that she is glad that the writer is Yuki's friend. Amé says she probably isn't a good mother but that she has other things to do. She hopes for a "blood friends" type of relationship with Yuki. The writer knows he is out of line but is incensed at how Yuki is treated by her parents.

On the way home Yuki breaks down into sobs. The writer tries to comfort the girl.

At dinner, Yuki and the writer talk at length about Amé. The writer says he does not understand. Yuki tries to explain but does not understand her mother, either. It seems that the only choice is for Yuki to grow up.

That night, alone at the hotel, the writer is greeted by a woman named June. Makimura has sent a call girl to his room. The writer refuses repeatedly but eventually gives in to the woman. June says she will return because she has been paid for three nights. The writer tries to hide the encounter from Yuki. Yuki knows immediately and is furious and disgusted.

In Chapter 30, the writer and Yuki visit Amé several times. The writer and Dick form a nice rapport. Dick reads poetry to the writer, some of which he does not understand because of the language. Yuki never reveals the content of the discussions with Amé. The writer does not ask.



The writer and Yuki are driving through downtown Honolulu when the writer sees Kiki on the street. He jumps out of the car, locking Yuki inside. He chases Kiki. Once she responds to his calls with a smile over her shoulder. Kiki vanishes. The writer is desperate to catch Kiki. Eventually he follows her into a building. Inside an apartment he finds six skeletons. Kiki is gone. There is a phone number written on a scrap of paper and left on the windowsill. The writer takes it. When he calls, there is no answer.

The writer keeps thinking about the skeletons and death. He decides that it is time to go home. Yuki will stay with her mother.

In Chapter 31, the writer returns home and attends to the mundane chores of shopping and other household duties. He leaves a message for Gotanda. There is finally an article about Mei in the newspaper. She has not been identified.

In Chapter 32, Gotanda picks up the writer for dinner. They spend the evening talking and drinking. Gotanda blows off steam about his lifestyle. The writer seems to be the only person he can talk to honestly about things. At the end of the night Gotanda asks if the writer will trade cars with him. Gotanda takes the Subaru and leaves the writer with his Maserati.

In Chapter 33, the writer begins to try to connect things together with "The Organization." Three mysterious call girls are involved, Makimura, Gotanda, Yuki, and so on. There are clear connections but they still do not make sense to the writer. The weeks go by. The writer's life is relatively normal although he still does not work. He spends some time with Gotanda. Eventually, Yuki returns to Tokyo. The writer must explain to Yuki that he will not be at her beck and call because her father wishes it and pays for it - rather, he will spend time with her because they are friends.

chapters 27-33 Analysis

In this section, the writer begins to break out of his own apathy when he confronts Amé and Yuki about their behavior. The writer knows he may be out of line like he was with Makimura but no one seems to take offense. The writer knows he is right in objecting to Amé and Makimura's treatment of Yuki.

The writer is not ready to return to work and is still obsessed about the mystery that surrounds him. While Gotanda and Yuki are a part of the mystery - as is Yumiyoshi, the writer will have to figure it out and untangle the knots on his own.



chapters 34-39

chapters 34-39 Summary

In Chapter 34, Dick North dies. He is shopping at a local market and is hit by a truck. Dick is killed instantly. Yuki says she feels bad because she did not treat him well in life and often said mean things about him. The writer is not willing to comfort her and let her off easily. He explains that you can't just say things because you can't take them back. She can never take back what she said about Dick.

"Maybe I'm being too hard on you. But listen, I don't care what other people do. I don't want to hear that sort of talk from you. You shouldn't say things like that lightly, as if saying them is going to solve anything. They don't stick. You think you feel sorry about Dick, but I don't believe you really do. If I were Dick, I wouldn't want your easy regret. I wouldn't want people saying, 'Oh, I acted horribly.' It's not a question of manners, it's a question of fairness. That's something you have to learn." (Chapter 34, p. 311).

The writer spends time with Gotanda. He tells Gotanda about the first time he saw Kiki. Kiki was an ear model. She had exquisite ears and the writer became obsessed. Kiki agreed to have dinner with him.

A long conversation revolved around Kiki. Gotanda wonders aloud if Kiki might be dead. The writer talks about seeing her in Honolulu and her subsequent disappearance.

Gotanda talks about wanting to do comedy. His reconciliation with his ex-wife - although secret - would be ruined if he gave up his current career.

In Chapter 35, the writer runs into Bookish the cop at a local store. Bookish asks if the writer will join him for a cup of coffee. The writer agrees. Bookish talks about Mei. Although it is clear that the writer is not the killer, he knows that the writer is still hiding something. Bookish reveals that Mei comes from a wealthy family. It is a mystery why she worked as a call girl. During the investigation the police learned about the agency. When they tried to search the offices, they were cleaned out. There is obviously a leak inside the police department. The men go their separate ways.

In Chapter 36, it has been two and a half months since the writer has worked. Days and weeks float by. He and Yuki keep in touch, their odd relationship intact. Yuki says that Amé is just sitting around kind of spacing out. They are doing very little. The writer says he will come to visit. He sees everything as Yuki explained on the phone.

In Chapter 37, the writer visits Yuki and Amé three times at the house in Hakone. Amé is a zombie. Yuki acts like a wooden figure. The writer takes Yuki out a few times and worries about her state of mind. He recommends that she return to Tokyo for a few days. Yuki says the trip would not change anything.



The writer and Yuki go to see "Unrequited Love." Yuki thinks the movie is terrible. When Kiki's scene comes on, Yuki doubles over as if she is in pain and can't breathe. The writer takes her out of the theater.

In Chapter 38, Yuki gets sick. The writer takes her to the beach where they sit in the rain. Yuki says that Kiki is dead. Gotanda has killed her. She can see him strangling Kiki. The reaction in the Maserati was due to the fact that Gotanda transported Kiki's body in the car and then buried it. Yuki is afraid that the writer will be mad. The writer says he will ask Gotanda about it because there is no other way to know the truth.

In Chapter 39, the writer shuts down. He spends five days in his apartment, not eating, drinking or sleeping. He thinks about Kiki and Gotanda and Yuki. He ignores the phone when it rings. Finally Gotanda drops by. The men go out for pizza. The writer bluntly asks why Gotanda killed Kiki. Gotanda says he does not know. Did he kill Kiki? The conversation turns very strange. Gotanda says he probably did kill Kiki. He remembers trying to strangle her at his apartment. However, he is relatively sure he did not kill Mei. Regardless, there is no evidence. Who would believe him if he confessed? The writer tells him to forget about it. When the writer returns to the table from the bar, Gotanda is gone.

chapters 34-39 Analysis

The writer laments Dick North's death. Dick was a nice guy and the men had things in common. The writer liked Dick. The death was sudden and tragic. It is clear that those around Dick mourned more for themselves than they did for the man.

Yuki expresses sadness about Dick seems false. The writer does not appreciate Yuki's glib sense of remorse. He knows that Yuki is not a nice person and has things to learn about the way to treat people fairly. Yuki does not take well to the criticism.

Yuki continues to show a lack of control when it comes to her gifts. She is deeply affected by her mother's condition and says it would not matter even if she was away from Amé. The reaction in the Maserati and the theater show that Yuki is susceptible to the influences of the paranormal and cannot block things as well as she thinks she can.

The conversation between Gotanda and the writer solves little. Gotanda seems truly puzzled about Kiki's death and if he did in fact kill her. Gotanda comes around to believing that he probably did kill Kiki but what could be done about it? Gotanda's disappearance only solidifies his guilt.



chapters 40-44

chapters 40-44 Summary

In Chapter 40, Gotanda's Maserati is dredged from the bottom of Tokyo Bay. The writer is not surprised. Gotanda is the fifth person to have died in the writer's life. Who is next? Yoshiyumi is not meant to die. Yuki is too young to die. The writer goes to see Bookish and gives a statement about Gotanda's state of mind. He does not mention Kiki. Still, the deaths upset the writer to distraction.

"Mei's death had left me shaken, Dick North's death sad and resigned. But Gotanda's death was unsalvageable. Gotanda never really got himself in tune with his inner impulses. He pushed as far as he could, to the farthest edge of his awareness - and then right across the line into that dark otherworld." (Chapter 40, p. 361).

The media issues many reports on Gotanda's life. The writer is angry and says he feels like throttling every scandalmonger in town.

In Chapter 41, the writer contacts Yuki and tells her about Gotanda. Yuki worries that his death is somehow her fault. The writer assures her that it is not. Yuki says she has asked her father to hire a tutor. She wants to learn more and a tutor is the best way.

The writer is grief-stricken and does not know how to handle yet another loss.

In Chapter 42, the writer has a strange dream about Kiki. The writer, following Kiki's instructions, learns that he can walk through walls.

In Chapter 43, the writer returns to the Dolphin Hotel. He is desperate to see Yumiyoshi but she is not at work. He calls her apartment in Sapporo every half hour but there is no answer. Finally, just when the writer is convinced that something has happened, he and Yumiyoshi make contact. He tries to explain why he needs to see her right away. She says it will have to wait until the next night.

It is 3 a.m. when Yumiyoshi arrives at the writer's hotel room. After a conversation, they make love for the first time. Yumiyoshi says she will return. For the first time in a long time, the writer feels happy.

In Chapter 44, Yumiyoshi returns to the writer's room. She brings clothes and says she wants to stay with him. The writer worries that she will get caught and get into trouble with her boss. Yumiyoshi says she will be careful. The writer says he cannot afford to stay at the hotel indefinitely. However, there seems to be little or nothing left in Tokyo for him. The writer proposes moving to Sapporo. He can get a job and an apartment. They can be together whenever they like. The possibility of a future together is there. Yumiyoshi is thrilled.



One night in the middle of the night Yumiyoshi wakes the writer. It is dark. The otherworld has returned. The writer grabs a light and they venture out into the hall. They find the Sheep Man's room but he is gone. The writer panics when Yumiyoshi goes through a wall. It is a dream. The writer awakes and cannot understand what has happened to the Sheep Man. Was he the sixth skeleton?

chapters 40-44 Analysis

The puzzle is not solved. The reader never learns if Gotanda actually killed Kiki although it is likely. Mei's murder is not solved. The reader gets the idea that the relationship between the writer and Yuki is all but ended without fanfare.

Yumiyoshi does not explain her absence. The change in the girl is miraculous. She goes from being shy and aloof to being overly eager to spend her nights in the writer's bed.

The reappearance of the otherworld is also a mystery. It is mentioned out of the blue that the old hotel's owner was a sheep professor of some sort. The Sheep Man must have inherited all of the old man's belongings. The Sheep Man is not in his room. He seems to have disappeared. The writer's reaction to Yumiyoshi's sudden disappearance through the wall is natural because he fears being left alone again.

Much of the story is left open-ended, giving the reader the impression that the story will continue into the author's next novel.



Characters

The Writer

Murakami introduces his protagonist, a writer with no name. It is unclear why the author chose to give the writer no name except perhaps to make him more identifiable as an "everyman." The man is fairly typical. He is age 34, once divorced, and working as a freelance writer. Like most people his age, the man has had his share of pitfalls. He has suffered from depression on occasion, once so severe that he became a recluse for six months. Although the writer managed to pull himself out of the abyss, there is still a sense of abandonment from his wife and loss of former business, friendships, and romantic relationships.

The writer's background is revealed. He had fallen into a deep depression after getting a divorce and having a friend die mysteriously. A woman abandoned him. The result was a six-month stint in his apartment during which he did not go out during the day. There was some contact from the outside, including letters from his former business partner and his ex-wife - letters that had gone unanswered. The writer's cat died. In the spring, he decided that it was time to return to society.

The writer's entrance into the world of freelance writing is detailed. The man focused on PR work at first because it was enough to pay the bills. This shows that the man does what needs to be done but at times he puts forth no more effort than is absolutely necessary. The writer's job is not fulfilling but it allows for freedom.

Ryoichi Gotanda

Ryoichi Gotanda is a former junior high school classmate and former science lab partner to the writer.

The writer talks about Gotanda: "He was nice enough, but who actually knew anything about him?" (Chapter 8, p. 66).

The boys were in the same science class in junior high and once performed a lab project together. The writer recalls Gotanda being too nice to be real. At that point girls were already smitten with him. Gotanda embodied unnatural grace. Gotanda's grades were always good and he was always first or second in class. Gotanda was kind, friendly, and sincere. The writer was puzzled by him and how anyone could be so perfect.

"Of course, he was good at sports, active in school government. There was talk that he had a thing with the most popular girl in class but no one knew for sure. All the teachers thought he was great, and on Parents Day all the mothers would be enchanted with him, too. He was just that type." (Chapter 8, p. 66).



The writer, desperate to find Kiki, contacts Gotanda to ask for information. Although it had been more than twenty years since they had spoken, and never really knew each other well in the first place, Gotanda is happy to hear from the writer. They begin to spend time together, drinking, eating, and attempting to unravel the mystery of Kiki who seems to have disappeared without a trace.

Through his conversations with Gotanda, the writer learns that the actor's perfect life is not nearly as perfect as it seems and the man longs to find some sense of meaning. This is another thing he has in common with the writer. The connection with Kiki and school confirms the Sheep Man's theory that everything is connected.

Yuki

Yuki is a 13-year-old girl that the writer meets at the Dolphin Hotel. Yuki's mother has gone off to work and left her daughter. The writer is asked to accompany Yuki to Tokyo. Yuki and the writer become friends.

Kiki

Kiki is the woman that lives with the writer at the Dolphin Hotel in Sapporo 4.5 years ago. Kiki was a call girl turned actress. The girl is mysterious and disappears without a trace.

The Sheep Man

The Sheep Man is a strange being wrapped in sheepskin. He belongs to a race formed long ago. They live in an in-between world where everything is connected. The Sheep Man helps the writer figure out what is happening with his life.

Mei

Mei is a call girl hired by Gotanda. She spends the night with the writer. The writer and Mei have great rapport. The next day Mei is murdered. The police link the writer to the crime.

Ame

Ame is Yuki's mother. Ame is a world famous photographer and terrible mother. Ame often leaves Yuki alone for weeks at a time, often in strange locales.



Hiraku Makimura

Hiraku Makimura is Yuki's father. The man was once a well respected bestselling author but his career has slipped. Yuki does not seem to like her father. The man gives Yuki everything she needs in a material sense but does not seem to be a good father overall, particularly in light of the fact that Ame is often absent. Readers will note that Hiraku Makimura is an anagram of the author's name - Haruki Murakami.

Fisherman and Bookish

Fisherman and Bookish are the police officers that interrogate the writer about Mei's murder. The police are bullies and step outside the writer's rights simply because they do not like him and believe he is lying about Mei although he did not commit the crime.

Miss Yumiyoshi

Miss Yumiyoshi is the receptionist that works at the Dolphin Hotel. She and the writer become friends after she relays her experience with the in-between world.



Objects/Places

Dolphin Hotel

The author details the Dolphin Hotel in all its shabby glory. First of all, it was built in the wrong place. It lacked a sense of normalness in general. The furniture was rickety and old. There were few if any customers. It seemed as if the hotel was in The Land That Time Forgot. In fact, the hotel could be considered tragic. Clearly, it was not a place that the protagonist would have chosen. "She" chose it and he went along.

The protagonist, who is a freelance writer, refers to it as being: "Like a button on a shirt buttoned wrong, every attempt to correct things led to yet another fine - not to say elegant - mess." (Chapter 1, p. 3).

When the writer returns to Sapporo he finds the old hotel is gone. In its place is a new Dolphin Hotel. This hotel is elegant and beautiful. All remnants of the dive shared with Kiki are gone. The writer makes friends with a receptionist named Y who tells him strange tales about an eerie experience she had on the sixteenth floor, an experience the writer had later. There is also the appearance of the Sheep Man, an enigmatic figure that tells the writer he needs to dance, dance, and dance. The Sheep Man appears to Y, the writer, and Yuki, letting the writer know that they are all connected in some way although it is unclear how and why.

Sheep Man's World

One of the most prominent places in the story is the Sheep Man's world, which is never given a name. It is a place in the shadows where people go when they need to find out how things are connected.

The writer enters the Sheep Man's room. The writer sits across an old round table from the Sheep Man. There are no other furnishings. The men sit on stacks of books. The Sheep Man says he has been waiting a long time for the writer to return. The Sheep Man speaks in a strange way. All words in each sentence are one word, all run together.

The writer asks what the room is and where they are. The Sheep Man says he does not know much about the place except that it is dark and big. The Sheep Man has been waiting for a very long time although he cannot say how long.

"Thisisyourworld," said the Sheep Man matter-of-factly. 'Don'tthinktoohardaboutit. Ifyou'reseekingit, it'shere.Theplacewasputhereforyou. Special. Andweworkedspecialhardtogetyoubackhere. Tokeepthingsfromfallingapart. Tokeepyoufromforgetting.'" (Chapter 11, p. 84).



The writer cannot grasp what the Sheep Man is saying, thinking that something so large exists only for him is too hard to understand. The writer asks the Sheep Man who and what he is.

"WearetheSheepMan,' he chortled. 'Can'tyoutell? Wearethesheepskin, andweliveinaworldhumanscantsee.Wewerechasedintothewoodsalongtimeago. Long, longtimeago. Canhardlyrememberwhatwewerebefore. Bustsincethenwebeenkeepingoutofsight. Easytodo, ifthat'swhatyouwant. Thenwecamehere, tolookaftertheplace.'" (Chapter 11, p. 84).

Sapporo

Sapporo is the name of the city in which the Dolphin Hotel is located.

Hawaii

Hawaii is the vacation spot chosen by Yuki. Yuki and the writer spend time on the beach in Hawaii and also take a side trip to visit Amé, Yuki's mother and famed photographer.

Business Card

It is the writer's business card that links him to Mei. The police know that there is some link between the writer and Mei but can prove nothing based on their sole piece of evidence.

Rock 'n Roll

Rock 'n Roll is one of the writer's great loves. It is also the only bond he seems to share with Yuki.

Subaru

The writer's Subaru is indispensable. Although the car is old and was bought used, it has a special meaning to the writer when little else seems to matter as much. The writer and Yuki often take the car on long drives to listen to music.

Tsujido

Tsujido is the home of Haruki Makimura, Yuki's father.



Akasaka Police Station

The Akasaka Police Station is the location of the writer's three-day interrogation after Mei's body is discovered.

The Writer's Apartment

The writer has an apartment located in Tokyo. He spends a great deal of time there alone. At times Gotanda visits for food and drink.



Themes

Loss

One of the main themes in "Dance Dance Dance" is loss. The main character is a writer without a name. The man is fairly typical. He is 34 years old, divorced, and working as a freelance writer. Like most people his age, the man has had his share of pitfalls. He has suffered from depression and on one occasion, it was so severe that he became a recluse for six months. Although the writer managed to pull himself out of the abyss, there is still a sense of abandonment from his wife and loss of former business, friendships, and romantic relationships. The man begins to become numb to loss and does not even mourn the passing of his cat, Kipper. The man thinks that the cat has never been loved and relates to that sentiment. In some ways, loss has caused the man to give up hope.

The man pours out his story to the Sheep Man. The Sheep Man tries to convince the man that he is able to reach the in-between world because he has lost so much. In some ways, that loss is a mixed blessing. The man must face his loss and determine if the loss is worth mourning or if it is a valid lesson. He must also learn to take risks without fearing more loss.

Sheep Man's World

One of the most prominent places in the story is the Sheep Man's world, which is never given a name. It is a place in the shadows where people go when they need to find out how things are connected.

The writer enters the Sheep Man's room. The writer sits across an old round table from the Sheep Man. There are no other furnishings. The men sit on stacks of books. The Sheep Man says he has been waiting a long time for the writer to return. The Sheep Man speaks in a strange way. All words in each sentence are one word, all run together.

The writer asks what the room is and where they are. The Sheep Man says he does not know much about the place except that it is dark and big. The Sheep Man has been waiting for a very long time although he cannot say how long.

"Thisisyourworld," said the Sheep Man matter-of-factly. 'Don'tthinktoohardaboutit. Ifyou'reseekingit, it'shere.Theplacewasputhereforyou. Special. Andweworkedspecialhardtogetyoubackhere. Tokeepthingsfromfallingapart. Tokeepyoufromforgetting.'" (Chapter 11, p. 84).

The writer cannot grasp what the Sheep Man is saying, thinking that something so large exists only for him is too hard to understand. The writer asks the Sheep Man who and what he is.



"WearethetheSheepMan,' he chortled. 'Can'tyoutell? Wearetheshsheepskin, andweliveinaworldhumanscantsee.Wewerechasedintothewoodsalongtimeago. Long, longtimeago. Canhardlyrememberwhatwewerebefore. Bustsincethenwebeenkeepingoutofsight. Easytodo, ifthat'swhatyouwant. Thenwecamehere, tolookaftertheplace.'" (Chapter 11, p. 84).

Seeking

Several of the characters in "Dance Dance Dance" are seeking something. The first character, the protagonist, is the one who seems to be seeking the most meaning for his life. There have been many pitfalls in his 34 years including failed relationships - personal and professional. He feels loss of friends, lovers, and fulfillment in ways he does not yet understand.

Another person feeling the need for some fulfillment is Gotanda. Although Gotanda's life seems to be filled with glamor and material goods, it feels empty and shallow. Gotanda talks about quitting everything and becoming a teacher. The men commiserate. During one of their conversations, the writer says to Gotanda:

"I feel like something's missing. I'm living a normal life, I suppose. I'm dancing. I know the steps, and I'm dancing." (Chapter 32, p. 293).

The Sheep Man seems to be the answer for those seeking something that has been lost or perhaps some direction. Those people also include Yuki and the receptionist.

The receptionist is the first to have an experience with the Sheep Man although she does not see him face to face. The girl exhibits a lot of nervousness and fear which is surely holding her back.

Yuki first "senses" the Sheep Man through the writer. As a young girl with no direction and guidance, it makes sense that she would be seeking something more. The writer has been brought to her to help although it is unclear as of yet what the girl truly needs or requires given her situation and unusual gifts.



Style

Point of View

"Dance Dance Dance" by Haruki Murakami is written in the first-person point of view, through the eyes of the main character. The use of first person in the story works well in that the reader is able to understand the modern world of a freelance writer living in Japan through the eyes of one of its practitioners. The reader is taken on a journey along with the unidentified writer and is able to see inside the mind of the man as he wends through a complicated life filled with confusion, loss, abandonment, maturation, and the otherworldliness of the Sheep Man and the interconnection of everything.

While much of what occurs in the in-between world of the Sheep Man, the author does a good job of making it connect as possible to the main character and the normal world. One example of an explanation of the writer's first experience:

"I was reduced to pure concept. My flesh had dissolved; my form had dissipated. I floated in space. Liberated of my corporeal being, but without dispensation to go anywhere else. I was adrift in the void. Somewhere across the fine line separating nightmare from reality." (Chapter 10, p. 74).

While the third-person omniscient may have enabled the reader to get a broader view of the life of the writer, Yuki, Gotanda, and perhaps even the Sheep Man, the use of first person lends an air of authenticity to the story and allows the main character - although unnamed - to become real.

Setting

The settings used in "Dance Dance Dance" are several. Two of the most prominent are the Dolphin hotel and the Sheep Man's world, which is never given a name. It is a place in the shadows where people go when they need to find out how things are connected.

The author details the Dolphin Hotel in all its shabby glory. First of all, it was built in the wrong place. It lacked a sense of normalness in general. The furniture was rickety and old. There were few if any customers. It seemed as if the hotel was in The Land That Time Forgot. In fact, the hotel could be considered tragic. Clearly, it was not a place that the protagonist would have chosen. "She" chose it and he went along.

The protagonist, who is a freelance writer, refers to it as being: "Like a button on a shirt buttoned wrong, every attempt to correct things led to yet another fine - not to say elegant - mess." (Chapter 1, p. 3).

When the writer returns to Sapporo he finds the old hotel is gone. In its place is a new Dolphin Hotel. This hotel is elegant and beautiful. All remnants of the dive shared with Kiki are gone. The writer makes friends with a receptionist - Y - who tells him strange



tales about an eerie experience she had on the sixteenth floor, an experience the writer had later. There is also the appearance of the Sheep Man, an enigmatic figure that tells the writer he needs to dance, dance, dance. The Sheep Man appears to the receptionist, the writer, and Yuki, letting the writer know that they are all connected in some way although it is unclear in what ways and why.

Language and Meaning

The language used in "Dance Dance Dance" by Haruki Murakami tends to be relatively informal and relies a great deal on dialogue between the characters. Although the main character is a writer, he insists that his work is nothing more than shoveling cultural snow. There are no attempts to use five dollar words or difficult language. Additionally, the jargon used on the job is not difficult or something that requires much explanation.

Although the original text was written in Japanese and translated into English, there are some remnants of the Japanese text but those references are mostly linked to locations rather than to specific uses of language or custom preferences.

The biggest change in the translation and perhaps the most difficult part of the language used in the text is attributed to the Sheep Man. The Sheep Man is difficult to understand, mostly due to the words that are all run together. The original Japanese version was not written this way and it is unclear why the English translation was altered to make this change. The change does add an otherworldly aspect to the Sheep Man.

The language used by the writer is very descriptive and is used in such a way that the person he is speaking to can fully understand the meaning and context of what is being said, except when he makes bad jokes to people younger than he, such as Yuki or the receptionist, who often reply with blank stares.

Structure

"Dance Dance Dance" by Haruki Murakami is a work of fiction. The book is 393 pages in length and is comprised of 44 chapters. The shortest chapter is 4 pages in length; the longest chapter is 26 pages in length. The average length of a chapter is 9 pages.

The story is told in chronological order with some flashbacks. Because the world of the Sheep Man has no time associated with real life, it is difficult to understand how that world fits in with present day. The Sheep Man simply waits for people to show up at his door.

The basic plot of the story is simple. The writer is a man who has suffered a great deal of loss in his life, sometimes due to no fault of his own. Depression is an issue for the man and may contribute to his dilemma. The man returns to the Dolphin Hotel after 4.5 years to find a girl named Kiki with whom he once lived. The man does not know why he must return to the hotel. However, he learns that there are many factors at play in his life, many of which are behind the scenes. The man learns - through his own

observation and guidance from the Sheep Man - that all things are connected and a person's path is sometimes drawn out ahead of the person by unseen forces and destiny.

Quotes

"Like a button on a shirt buttoned wrong, every attempt to correct things led to yet another fine - not to say elegant - mess." (Chapter 1, p. 3).

"I stood there a good twenty seconds, mouth agape, staring up at it. Then I let out a long, deep breath that might easily have been beamed straight to the moon. Surprise was not the word." (Chapter 4, p. 21).

"No matter how out of focus the picture, I had to unravel each strand patiently." (Chapter 13, p. 95).

"The more I walked, the less I trusted my memory." (Chapter 13, p. 102).

"But, no matter how advanced the system, no matter how precise, unless we have the will to communicate, there's no connection." (Chapter 17, p. 126).

"When I awoke the following morning, it was April. As delicately rendered as a passage from Truman Capote, fleeting, fragile, beautiful." (Chapter 20, p. 161).

"You realize what a vulnerable position you're in, don't you?" (Chapter 21, p. 174).

"My daughter's taken to you,' Makimura began again, finally. 'And she doesn't take to just anyone. Or rather, she doesn't take to almost everyone.'" (Chapter 24, p. 200).

"Humans achieve their peak in different ways. But whoever you are, once you're over the summit, it's downhill all the way." (Chapter 25, p. 209).

"Life was sinking into an abyss, bones hard as memories positioned before me." (Chapter 31, p. 264).

"I feel like something's missing. I'm living a normal life, I suppose. I'm dancing. I know the steps, and I'm dancing." (Chapter 32, p. 293).

"Unfortunately, the clock is ticking, the hours are going by. The past increases, the future recedes. Possibilities decreasing, regrets mounting." (Chapter 36, p. 332).



Topics for Discussion

What do you think drove the writer to return to Sapporo? Do you think it was curiosity, loneliness, or some otherworldly intervention? Explain.

Explain the existence of the Sheep Man. Who/what is it? Where does he come from? What is his purpose? What is the in-between world and how was it created? Who is in charge of this world? Does it exist only in the Dolphin Hotel?

How would you react if you had an experience similar to the writer's during which you met the Sheep Man?

Describe the relationship between Yuki and the writer. Do you think it is strange? How would such a relationship work in America? Does anyone question the nature of the relationship? Explain.

What is the writer's fascination with Kiki? How is it possible that he lived with the woman for months and never knew her name? How did Kiki's relationship interfere with her work? What happened to Kiki?

Examine Gotanda's life. Why is the man unhappy with his situation? How could he be so rich and be in need of money at the same time? What is Gotanda's relationship with the writer?

Examine Yuki's relationship with her parents. How is it possible that Ame often leaves Yuki behind and goes off to work? Why does Yuki despise her father? What are the writer's impressions of both? What do you think will happen to Yuki as she grows up?