

Snow Crash Study Guide

Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson

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Plot Summary

Hiro Protagonist, freelance hacker and the greatest sword fighter in the Metaverse, teams up with Y.T., a fifteen-year-old female courier, to delve into a mystery that mixes Sumerian myth with virtual reality in a gritty cyberpunk setting. Hiro and Y.T., along with Hiro's old girlfriend Juanita, race to stop a plot masterminded by a religious business monopolist that would brainwash the masses and knock freelance hackers out of commission.

Hiro is a freelance hacker who works as a stringer for the Central Intelligence Corporation in his free time. Hiro uploads information to the CIC database, and if anyone buys the information, Hiro gets paid.

Hiro is introduced to Y.T. literally by accident. Hiro lands his pizza delivery car in a burbclave pool while Y.T. is being pulled behind by her harpoon, or "poon". Y.T. offers to deliver the pizza for Hiro, which saves Hiro's life from the Nova Sicilia organization who owns the pizza company. Y.T. does successfully deliver the pizza, much to the chagrin of the customer, and in the process, Y.T. gets noticed by Uncle Enzo, the head of Nova Sicilia. Y.T. calls up Hiro to help get her out of a jam with the MetaCops, and they then agree on an intelligence partnership, with Hiro splitting the proceeds of any profitable intelligence that Y.T. provides him. When Y.T. and Hiro escape into a Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong franchulate, they get to see a Rat Thing, a cybernetic security device that is made from "biological components".

In the Metaverse, a computer generated virtual reality, Hiro's old girlfriend Juanita tells him something big is up, and gives him a library of information. Hiro's friend Da5id is disabled by a virus known as Snow Crash, which was given to Da5id by a man named Raven. The virus was manifested by naked female avatars unrolling scrolls to display a bitmap static image. The virus causes Da5id's avatar to break apart, and Hiro later learns that Da5id was also disabled in real life from the virus.

Hiro begins to delve into the library of information that Juanita gave him, with the help of a program called The Librarian. The data was gathered by a Dr. Emmanuel Lagos. Hiro reviews the data on L. Bob Rife, a billionaire cable-tv baron who has monopolized the fiber optic cable market across the world. Rife seems to be interested in ancient Sumerian myths. Rife also purchased an aircraft carrier and rescued thousands of refugees in Bangladesh. Hundreds of smaller boats are lashed onto the aircraft carrier, and the collection is referred to as "the Raft".

Hiro meets up with Lagos at a Vitaly Chernobyl concert. Lagos is a gargoyle, an intelligence agent that wears computers and other equipment all over his body. Lagos tells Hiro that the Sumerians didn't differentiate between evil and disease, and starts talking about nam-shubs. Hiro thinks Lagos is crazy. Hiro sees Raven deliver a briefcase to a group of Crips. One of the Enforcers providing security at the concert finds Lagos's body, sliced open from crotch to jaw.



Jason Breckinridge, a franchisee for Nova Sicilia, gets a priority delivery to a franchise in Compton where Uncle Enzo will be visiting. Jason decides to deliver the package himself, and gets yelled at because the Mafia wanted Jason to have a Kourier, specifically Y.T., deliver the package, because Uncle Enzo wants to meet her.

Hiro and the Enforcers chase after the Crips, who are going after Raven. The suitcase that Raven gave to T-Bone, the head Crip, blew up. Raven kills two of the Crips with bamboo spears and a glass knife before he escapes. The Enforcers look at the blown up case, and the head Enforcer tells Hiro that the drug that was in it is Snow Crash. The head Enforcer tells Hiro that they are trying to protect Raven because Raven carries a nuke in his side car hooked to "dead man" sensors in his brain.

Jason pays Y.T. a lot of money to deliver the package to the Nova Sicilia franchise in Compton, and even drives ahead of her so she can poon his car. Y.T. delivers the package to Uncle Enzo, and he treats her like an equal, unlike most of her deliveries. Uncle Enzo gives her his dog tags. One of the Mafia Boys gives Y.T. a new job. Y.T. goes to Griffith Park to pick up the package for the job, and all of the people there are babbling nonsense. One of the men gives Y.T. a case like the one she saw blown up the previous night. In transit, Y.T. is intercepted by a Mafia truck carrying Fisheye and some other men, and they scan the case. Y.T. delivers the case to a Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates franchise where the pastor takes a dose of the Snow Crash drug.

The military comes and picks up Hiro at his storage unit, and they go to see Da5id in the hospital. Da5id is babbling incoherently. Hiro goes to Da5id's house and sees that Da5id's computer has snow crashed.

Juanita explains the background of the Sumerian gods Enki and Asherah to Hiro, and how the bitmap that Da5id had seen was a binary representation of a nam-shub, a neurolinguistic hack. In the Metaverse bar The Black Sun, Hiro cuts the arms off of an avatar who was trying to show Hiro the Snow Crash scroll. Hiro manages to save the scroll and puts it away to examine later. Hiro and The Librarian comb through the data stack for information on the nam-shub of Enki that caused the elimination of the Sumerian language and led to the story of the Tower of Babel. The Librarian tells Hiro that Rife's archaeological teams have excavated the ancient city where Enki lived and removed many tablets.

Y.T. hooks up with security guru Ng and they go to the Sacrifice Zone to purchase some Snow Crash. Y.T. manages to get a vial of the drug and Ng freezes it before it can self-destruct. Some Rat Things help them, and Y.T. tells Ng that she had once saved a dog who had been shot and named him Fido, but one day Fido was gone. Y.T. wonders if Fido is now a Rat Thing. Y.T. passes the info about the Snow Crash drug on to Hiro. Hiro tells Y.T. that the Snow Crash virus in the Metaverse only affects hackers, and Y.T. tells Hiro that her mother, who works for the Feds, is a hacker. Y.T. goes home, tells her mother about the virus, and smashes her mother's computer.

The next day, Y.T.'s mom goes to work, and is summoned for a polygraph test. The proctors ask her if she believes Y.T.'s story about the virus.



Hiro buys a motorcycle and rides to Oregon. Hiro meets up with Chuck Wrightson, former president of TROKK, who tells Hiro about the Orthos, or Russian Orthodox refugees, who took over his territory with the threat of a nuclear bomb. A bunch of rednecks from a New South Africa franchise try to kill Hiro, but Hiro manages to escape from the rednecks and the Enforcers.

Y.T. picks up a package at Rife Advanced Research Enterprises that is to be delivered to the Feds. When Y.T. drops off the package, the Feds try to kidnap Y.T. who nearly escapes, but a stun grenade knocks her out. Y.T. wakes up in a van, and is transported over a period of days to the Raft, where she is forced to work in a makeshift cafeteria line.

Hiro drives down to Port Sherman, Oregon, the closest land point to the Raft. There are a lot of Russians staying in the hotels, including Gurov, the man who took over TROKK. Hiro manages to get on board the ship Kowloon and meets up with a large group of Mafia boys, including Fisheye. All hell breaks loose around Port Sherman, as all of the Orthos try to escape to a boat in the marina. The Mafia boys thwart their plan by ripping part of the dock carrying Gurov and other bigwigs and towing the dock out to sea. Fisheye tells Hiro that they are all part of Lagos's gang.

Raven arrives on a kayak and cuts the dock section loose from the towboat. A submarine surfaces and rescues all of the Orthos, and Fisheye is mad as hell. The submarine sinks the Kowloon, forcing Hiro, Fisheye, Vic the sniper, and Eliot the Kowloon captain off in a life raft. To pass the time, Hiro hacks the Snow Crash virus from the scroll in the Metaverse and develops a program to counteract it, called Snow Scan. Hiro also develops an invisible avatar, which may come in handy later. When a pirate ship approaches them, the men lure the pirates in and Fisheye takes them out with a blast from Reason, a souped-up Gatling gun. The men take one of the pirates' boats and head towards the Raft.

Y.T. meets Raven, who appears in her cafeteria line one day. Y.T. thinks Raven is sexy in a dangerous sort of way. Raven takes Y.T. out of the line, and brings her to what passes for a restaurant on the Raft. Raven gets a call on the radio, and has to go take care of something, leaving Y.T. in the restaurant.

Hiro and the other men approach the Raft, and are attacked by Raven and a number of other men. Fisheye is killed when Raven throws a spear through him. Eliot and Vic are also killed. Hiro finds that one of the men he killed is a wirehead; he has an antenna grafted into his skull and keeps babbling even though he is dead. Hiro offloads Reason and a few supplies into a dinghy.

Raven returns to Y.T. and they head off to the upscale portion of the Raft where Raven has rented a container to spend his last night here. The two of them start to have sex, but Y.T. forgets to remove her dentata, a device to thwart sexual assaults. The dentata shoots Raven full of sedatives and he passes out. Y.T. leaves the container and connects to the Metaverse at a public terminal.



Hiro finds he can connect to the Metaverse again. Hiro travels to Ng Security headquarters in the Metaverse and meets Ng, Uncle Enzo, and Mr. Lee. All of the men discuss what they know about L. Bob Rife, Snow Crash, and the nam-shub of Enki. Hiro tells them that he is going to the Raft to find the tablet containing the nam-shub of Enki and transmit it to all of the Raft people to break the hold that Rife has on them. The Librarian gives Hiro a virtual map of the aircraft carrier, and Hiro uses Reason to blast a hole in the hull of the aircraft carrier so he can climb in.

Y.T. is recaptured at the public terminal by a wirehead and transferred to Rife on the aircraft carrier. Medics come in to revive Raven. Y.T. is forced on board a helicopter, and sees an ancient tablet on the floor. As the helicopter takes off, Hiro threatens Rife, and Y.T. pushes the tablet out of the helicopter onto the deck of the aircraft carrier.

Rife's helicopter takes off to go to LAX, and Y.T. can see another helicopter flying parallel to theirs. Raven is in the other helicopter connected to the Metaverse.

Hiro is attacked by some wireheads on the deck, but they are subdued by Juanita, who has figured out how to develop nam-shubs of her own. She has been reviewing the tablets on board the aircraft carrier. They pick up the tablet from the deck and Hiro has The Librarian read the text over the communication system of the Raft. Once the nam-shub is released, the control over the people is cut. Hiro connects to the Metaverse and travels to the place where Rife's infrastructure is located. Inside, he sees that the US government had been working on a programming project for Rife. Hiro sees Raven there, picking up a blue shape representing a software bomb. Hiro realizes that this is a Snow Crash bomb, and Raven is planning to nuke the hackers in the Metaverse. Hiro follows Raven out to the Street.

Rife's helicopter lands in L.A. and Y.T. tries to escape, but Rife pulls her back into the helicopter. A Rat Thing in Phoenix named Fido hears other dogs barking about some bad men, and Fido recognizes Y.T. as the girl who loves him. Fido jumps out of his fence and heads to L.A. Y.T. gets the attention of a Kourier who puts out an emergency code to all of the Kouriers. A small army of Kouriers manage to bring the helicopter down. Y.T. escapes from the helicopter and disables it by throwing a harpoon cable into the rotors. Y.T. sees Raven in the other helicopter jacked into the Metaverse. Rife hijacks a pizza delivery car and escapes.

Hiro chases Raven down The Street in the Metaverse. Hiro realizes that his father knew Raven's father, and they discuss this while racing on their motorcycles. Raven enters the amphitheater and drops the Snow Crash bomb on the stage. Hiro cuts him down, and disarms the bomb using his Snow Scan program.

Uncle Enzo waits at LAX for Rife to arrive and carries a new skateboard for Y.T. Sensing something is wrong, Uncle Enzo slips off right before his lieutenant is killed. Uncle Enzo finds Raven. They injure each other, and Uncle Enzo uses the sonic blast from the skateboard to shatter all of Raven's glass knives. The story concludes with the Rat Thing Fido launching himself into L. Bob Rife's private jet, causing it to explode.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The book opens with a description of "The Deliverator". The Deliverator used to write software, now he delivers pizza for Cosa Nostra under one principle, "The Deliverator stands tall, your pie in thirty minutes or you can have it free, shoot the driver, take his car, file a class action lawsuit". To prevent customers from arguing over delivery times, each box has an LED timer that starts when the call is made. When the box is loaded into his car, it uploads customer information and optimal travel routes into the Deliverator's car, which puts the info onto a heads-up display. The Deliverator does not want to think about what would happen if Uncle Enzo had to get out of bed to apologize for a late pizza. When he arrives at the Cosa Nostra Pizza franchise, the window opens, which should never happen, and smoke comes out. An Abkhazian man is running around trying to find the proper procedure in a three-ring Cosa Nostra Pizza manual. The fire is small, and the Deliverator knows it's not serious. He activates the automatic delivery system, which places a pizza into the Deliverator's car. He looks at the LED timer, and it reads 20:00. He has a twenty-minute old pizza and the address is twelve miles away.

Chapter 1 Analysis

In this opening chapter, the reader is introduced to The Deliverator, who at first glance appears to be part of some paramilitary organization, but in reality is a pizza delivery man, and a very good one. Some of the environment is also described, including the bright glowing advertisements, the lack of standard government, and the overcomplicated modern highway system. The Deliverator is described as a type-A personality, who takes great pride in his work no matter what that work may be. The burbclaves, described as self-contained city-states, are reminiscent of gated communities in today's world. Uncle Enzo and Cosa Nostra fit the traditional Mafia mold of family, honor, and unspoken threats. The importance of on-time delivery and the Deliverator's pride is highlighted throughout the chapter, enhancing the dread that The Deliverator experiences when he sees that he has a twenty-minute-old pizza.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The Deliverator takes off in his car. There's a big slowdown ahead, so he decides to cut through one of the burbclaves, The Mews at Windsor Heights. He knows the street layout of TMAWH by heart, and he knows just which yard to cut across to get from one side to the other fast. As The Deliverator heads towards TMAWH, he notices a Kourier on a plank, a souped-up skateboard, has latched onto his car with an electromagnetic harpoon. The Deliverator makes the turn into TMAWH, and the burbclave sensors recognize the vehicle as one of the Cosa Nostra Pizza fleet. The gates open and he speeds through, with the Kourier still attached. He maneuvers the streets, heading towards that one yard he can cut through. He looks up to see a fence, something that was never there before. Hiro plows through the fence, and he lands in an empty inground swimming pool. The Kourier rolls up and ask where the pizza is going. The Deliverator then realizes that the Kourier is a girl. He gives her the address, realizing he may live if she actually does deliver the pizza on time. He opens the hatch and she takes the pizza under her arm. He gives her a business card, and Hiro tells her he owes her one, and asks for her name. The Kourier tells him her name is Y.T. Now that he is no longer responsible for the pizza, Hiro straps his swords to his back and prepares to escape out of TMAWH on foot.

Chapter 2 Analysis

In this chapter the reader learns the real name of the main character, Hiro Protagonist. Another character is introduced, the Kourier Y.T. This short chapter contains several mistaken assumptions on Hiro's part. Hiro is certain he knows the precise path through TMAWH, but then realizes too late that he made a mistake. Hiro assumes that the Kourier is male, based on the Kourier's brashness, and is genuinely surprised when he finds out that she is, in fact, female. Hiro was extremely annoyed by her presence as he was driving, but is greatly relived when she offers to deliver the pizza.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Hiro Protagonist and Vitaly Chernobyl are in their home, which is a twenty by thirty foot U-Stor-It unit in Inglewood, California. Hiro is sitting on the floor in front of a low table. Hiro has light brown skin, Asian eyes, and dreadlocks. He's wearing shiny goggles and earphones. Hiro's computer sits in front of him, connected to a translucent tube that feeds into a fiber-optic jack. Since he lost his pizza delivery job a few weeks ago, Hiro has been spending more time on his backup job, collecting information. Any information he finds, he uploads to the Central Intelligence Corporation library. Other corporations search through the library looking for information that may be valuable. If someone buys something that Hiro uploads, he gets paid. The computer creates a virtual world that Hiro views through his goggles and hears through his headphones. This place is known as the Metaverse. In the Metaverse, Hiro is walking towards The Street, the main thoroughfare. Developers can build along The Street as they can in the real world, but here they are just software that people all over the world access through their fiber-optic network. Hiro has a house on The Street in a neighborhood that he and some hacker friends developed.

Chapter 3 Analysis

This chapter seems to take place a few weeks after Hiro's pizza delivery incident. He is still unemployed, though attempting to work as a freelance hacker. Hiro's roommate Vitaly Chernobyl is introduced, and their living accommodations are described. Although Hiro's storage unit is "luxurious" compared with others in the U-Stor-It complex, it is a far cry from the homes in the burbclaves. The difference in class is more apparent in this chapter, but even as one of the "have-nots" in the real world, he is much more in the Metaverse. The Metaverse is described in detail as an immersive environment, a virtual city where everything Hiro sees is actually software. In the Metaverse, the mainstream buildings are the most garish and bright, while the neighborhoods created by hackers are much more tasteful, but exquisitely programmed. The hackers see the Metaverse as an integral part of their life, not a place to visit from time to time, or a place to advertise to the public masses.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Kourier Y.T. is back on her plank. The smart wheels have spokes that expand and contract based on the terrain, so it's always a smooth ride. She latches onto a car headed in the right direction, to White Columns, where the pizza is due. She approaches the house as the timer reads 29:32. The residents are waiting outside, anticipating the celebration when their pizza is late. A bright light appears above them all. Y.T. deposits the pizza box on the feet of the resident, the timer reads 29:54, and the bright light above them turns off. While the residents were blinded by the light, Y.T. could see with her night vision goggles that the source of the light was a stealth helicopter. Y.T. assumes it's a Mafia copter, coming to witness the potential late pizza. A bright laser beam shoots out of the copter, reading the bar codes on Y.T.'s chest. Now they know who she is, who she works for, and all of her vital stats. The Mafia copter flies off, and Y.T. gets back on her plank. Y.T. considers cutting a deal with Hiro since she knows a lot of information that he could put up on the CIC library. One thing she knows is that now the Mafia owes her.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Y.T. follows through with delivering the pizza on time for Hiro. The importance of an on-time pizza delivery is again featured by the appearance of the Mafia stealth helicopter. The importance of information is also implied through the news-worthiness of a late pizza and Y.T.'s consideration of giving information to Hiro.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Hiro is out on The Street, and sees the avatars around him. Avatars are the way people look in the Metaverse, and the avatars' appearance is only limited by the user's computer equipment. Hiro approaches The Black Sun, a simple black building on the street with crowds of avatars in front of it. Hiro passes through the avatars in front of him. In the Metaverse, you can walk right through other avatars. He steps through an invisible wall in front of The Black Sun. All of the avatars are screaming, because only a select few people can enter The Black Sun. The crowd is full of airbrushed pinups, rock stars, businessmen, and the occasional black-and-white, a grainy avatar of a person accessing the Metaverse through a cheap terminal. Hiro notices a tall black-and-white avatar in the crowd. The avatar looks back at Hiro with recognition, then he asks Hiro if he wants some Snow Crash. The avatar says Snow Crash is a drug. The avatar shows Hiro a hypercard, which in the Metaverse is a representation of data. Hiro doesn't touch the card, since touching it would transmit any data that it may carry, including a virus. Hiro realizes this black-and-white is wasting his time, and he turns and enters The Black Sun.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The author provides a detailed description of the appearance of the Metaverse. Class divisions extend to the Metaverse, with people with greater means creating more detailed and diverse avatars than those who buy their avatars off the shelf from Walmart. Snow Crash makes its first appearance in this chapter. The name is significant, because it refers to a computer system crash that causes the display to show only static, or snow. Hiro thinks this is an odd name for a drug, and thinks it may be virus. The Black Sun and much of the Metaverse were created by people like Hiro, hackers looking to hone their skills.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Y.T. is heading towards the exit of the White Columns burbclave when she notices a MetaCops Unlimited car parked at the entrance. MetaCops Unlimited is the peacekeeping force in this burbclave. As she approaches the gate, she waits for it to scan her barcodes and open up, but it doesn't. The MetaCops are standing outside their car, and one of them fires a loogie gun at her, its projectile is a mass of sticky goo that grabs on then hardens on Y.T.'s arm, and she is immobilized. The MetaCops tell her that she will be taken in as a suspect in an incident at TMAWH. The MetaCops put Y.T. into a mobile unit. They get in the mobile unit and go to The Clink, a seedy franchise lockup in a strip mall. Y.T. argues with the MetaCops that her company, RadiKS, will get her out of this, but one of the MetaCops reminds her that RadiKS didn't tell her to take and deliver the pizza, and Y.T. knows that he is right. They enter The Clink and go to the basement. The manager handcuffs Y.T. to a pipe, leans her plank up against a wall out of reach, and they leave, turning out the lights.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The privatization of society is demonstrated by hired security forces bringing their suspects to a franchise jail. Y.T.'s confidence dips slightly as she realizes RadiKS may not get her out of this, but she maintains an outward defiance to the establishment.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The Black Sun is quite large on the inside. As opposed to out on The Street, avatars in The Black Sun are solid, and can't pass through each other. The Black Sun has daemon bouncers to throw out undesirables. Hiro quietly brings up an unauthorized program that he wrote called Bigboard that he uses to learn who is in The Black Sun and who they are talking to. Hiro sees that Da5id is in this usual spot, and Hiro makes his way towards Da5id. Hiro sees that Da5id is talking to a black-and-white avatar, and Hiro recognizes her immediately as Juanita Marquez, who he met in college. They ended up working together at Black Sun Systems, Inc, where Juanita developed code for the faces of avatars to express emotion. They had a relationship for a while while they worked at Black Sun Systems, then broke up. After a while, Juanita started dating Da5id, the founder of Black Sun Systems, and they eventually married, but divorced two years later.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter introduces Juanita Marquez, a former lover of Hiro and Da5id, and provides some of her backstory. She is an extremely smart and very determined woman. This chapter also discusses the details that go into avatar development. Juanita was the one who developed code for subtle nuances, for creating avatars that can say something without saying anything at all. Some information is also presented on the four quadrants of The Black Sun, and the very different type of people that frequent the bar. One thing that the visitors that are in The Black Sun have in common is the quality of their avatars. The actors and rock stars strive for the perfect look. The Nipponese businessmen, while dressed conservatively, have extremely well detailed avatars, created in order to transmit subtle nuances of body language and conversation during meetings. The hackers take pride in their programming skill, and while their avatars are not as outrageous as the actors and rock stars, they use the latest and greatest code to create perfectly rendered images.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Hiro thinks that it is ironic that Juanita is in The Black Sun with a crude black-and-white avatar, since she was the one that developed all of the nuances of facial development. Da5id notices that Hiro is approaching, and sends him a subtle expression to not come by right now, so Hiro goes to the bar to see if he can overhear any information that may be useful. Hiro opens Bigboard again to scan the list of guests. He notices that there is a temporary partition in the back corner, but the only name he recognizes from the list is L. Bob Rife, an American cable TV mogul. Hiro is interrupted by Juanita, who is coming up behind him. Juanita tells Hiro that he hopes he doesn't try Snow Crash, and he laughs at her. Juanita mentions that she has an associate she wants him to meet named Lagos. Hiro asks if this has anything to do with her church. Juanita says it does have something to do with religion, and she pulls out a hypercard and shows it to Hiro. The card reads: BABEL (Infocalypse). Hiro takes the card from Juanita.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Juanita, the creator and master of facial expression development, appears in The Black Sun as a crude black-and-white, so Hiro knows that this is an unusual visit. Juanita may be the only person in existence that Hiro trusts, due to her nature and their past relationship. Juanita melds creativity with technology and religion. Hiro knows that something is going on with Juanita that is important, and he still has feelings for her despite them not being together for so long.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

All at once, The Black Sun goes fuzzy around him, and he realizes that the hypercard that Juanita has given him contains a massive amount of data. Juanita tells Hiro to stay away from Raven and Snow Crash. Hiro makes his way over to Da5id and tells Da5id that Juanita was trying to warn him about someone peddling a drug called Snow Crash. Da5id pulls out a hypercard that he received from the black-and-white avatar at the door. The card reads, "SNOW CRASH tear this card in half to release your free sample". Hiro is surprised that Da5id took the card, but Da5id replies that he has so much antiviral medication that nothing can touch him. Da5id tears the card in half, and a small avatar appears on the table, beckons to Da5id, then whispers something in his ear. The avatar unrolls a scroll in front of Da5id's eyes. Hiro only gets a glimpse as the avatar shuts the scrolls, a pattern of static, just black and white pixels. Hiro asks Da5id what the avatar whispered to him, and Da5id replies that it was a bunch of babble. Hiro hears this word as "Babel", the word on the card Juanita gave him. They decide to go check out the Rock Star Quadrant. Hiro's attention is turned when he sees a large crowd moving out of the way. A group of bouncer daemons are heading towards Hiro. When Hiro turns to Da5id, he sees that Da5id's avatar is flashing and falling apart, sending colored polygons and pixelated lines throughout the room. The bouncers grab what is left of Da5id's avatar and throw it out of the bar.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The effects of the Snow Crash virus are shown for the first time in this chapter. The virus seems to be more powerful than Da5id's antivirus medicines can handle. This situation shows another contradiction. In this case, the perfect, all knowing, always in control Da5id loses control and suffers a system failure. Da5id becomes a casualty of the technology that he pioneered, and his own bouncers throw him out of his own bar.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Y.T picks the lock on a pair of handcuffs. Y.T. takes out the card that Hiro gave her and dials his number. Hiro agrees to try to help. Y.T. picks the lock on the handcuffs and finds an emergency exit out of the basement. Y.T. takes her plank and climbs out into the parking lot, where she sees Hiro. There are several Tajeek taxi drivers in the parking lot that Hiro didn't expect to find. The taxi drivers see Hiro and move to attack. The Clink's manager has made his way outside trying to apprehend Y.T., but she sprays him with a can of Liquid Knuckles, knocking him to the pavement. Y.T. jumps into an unattended taxi, and drives it around the building and picks up Hiro. Hiro suggests heading to Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong, because he is a citizen there. Y.T. drives through the entrance gate so fast that the tires become shredded by the severe tire damage spikes. The taxi drivers see what happened to the tires on the stolen taxi, and proceed towards Hiro and Y.T. on foot. As soon as they cross the border, the security system scans the taxi drivers, and several bright lights are trained on them. Hong Kong franchulates are known for their security systems; they can detect and identify metal objects as small as tooth fillings. It can tell that the taxi drivers have guns, and they are loaded. Guns are illegal in Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Y.T.'s practical training works to her advantage, and she manages to get out of the Clink. Despite Hiro's bravado, he is again saved by Y.T. the Kourier from a sticky situation. This chapter is an example of ethnic stereotyping gone to extremes, and this theme continues throughout the book. All of the taxi drivers are Tajeeks; the Hong Kong franchulate is neat and organized and full of electronics. Millimeter-wave radar is used by the security system to scan all of the people who enter Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong, and it becomes apparent throughout the book that this type of technology is widely used. Despite the prevalence of this technology, the average thug still relies on conventional weaponry.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Hiro turns away from the young hackers gawking at what happened to Da5id. Hiro continues walking, but is stopped by a man wearing a kimono. Hiro acts polite towards the man, but the man sees Hiro's swords and infers that he does not really know what to do with them. Hiro tells the man that he owns swords exactly like these in real life, and that his father won the swords from a Nipponese officer in single combat. The man challenges Hiro, and they draw their swords. Hiro sees that the man has some skill, but it's very orderly, like in fencing, rather than dueling to the death. Hiro slices through the man's legs, causing him to fall to the floor. Hiro cuts the head off of the man's avatar. Somewhere, the man has been cut off from the Metaverse, and his computer screen would show him low down in the rankings of sword fights in The Black Sun, with the number one position belonging to Hiroaki Protagonist.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Hiro shows that he has true sword fighting skills. It is also shown in this chapter that the only way to "kill" an avatar in the Metaverse is to cut off its head, at which point the user is disconnected from the Metaverse for a few minutes. Hiro demonstrates his knowledge of how the system of the Metaverse works, primarily because he was instrumental in its formation. Hiro may be the greatest swordfighter in the Metaverse, and his abilities are just as good in reality, his killing experience is limited to the Metaverse.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Ng Security Industry Semi-Autonomous Guard Unit #A-267 is essentially a robotic guard dog. His job is to guard his yard. Tonight he is excited because two people just came into his yard. He looks at the people to see what they are carrying. A-267 sees that they are carrying a few bad things, but the man is not a stranger, he lives here, and the girl is his guest. A-267 sees more people come into his yard. These people are angry and excited, and they are strangers. A-267 also sees that they are carrying guns.

Y.T. notices a flash of light out of the corner of her eye. Before she has time to think about it, she hears the taxi drivers screaming. All of the taxi drivers are now without their guns. Hiro mentions to Y.T. that the "Rat Thing" has taken them. The taxi drivers run back to their taxis. Y.T. is hit in the rib cage by what looks like a rock, and she looks down to see a hand grenade. Y.T. is suddenly knocked off her feet. As she hits the ground, a bang is heard from another part of the parking lot. The Rat Thing had picked up the grenade, and taken the blast on itself. The Rat Thing was the size of a large dog, and covered in armor, half blown apart, and trying to stand up. Hiro tells Y.T. that it's thought that Rat Things are actually part animal and part robot. Y.T.'s goggles show her that the inside of the Rat Thing is red hot. Hiro tells her that the Rat Things have radioactive isotopes in them for power. The Rat Thing stops twitching as Y.T. picks up its back legs and drags it back to its doggie door. She is small enough to climb inside. Cold vapor is coming out of the open hutch door, and Y.T. pushes the Rat Thing into the hutch. Y.T. makes a deal with Hiro to split the proceeds of any intel she provides fifty-fifty. He agrees, and she takes off on her plank, latching onto a passing car.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Part of this chapter is narrated from the point of view of A-267, a cyborg guard dog. This chapter's simplistic wording refers to the fact that the Rat Thing has the mind of a dog, even if he is robotically enhanced. The Rat Thing does its duty by defending its yard and taking the damage for its citizens, and it is mentioned that the Rat Things are in contact with other Rat Things, both in the same area and far away through a network system. The Rat Thing moves as fast as it does not only to do its job, but to keep itself cool outside of its hutch. Y.T. has a liking for animals, a theme that returns later in the book. This chapter also reveals that Y.T.'s mother does not know that she is a Courier.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Hiro is looking at what is left of the Nipponese man's avatar. Suddenly the lighting changes and Hiro removes his goggles. Hiro sees Vitaly is telling him its time to go. Vitaly Chernobyl and the Meltdowns are band of Soviet refugees that now play concerts in places like the L.A. river and other places where skateboarders hang out. Vitaly and Hiro drive their van around to pick up Vitaly's band equipment from another storage locker. They load up the van and drive off. Hiro connects his computer to the cigarette lighter in the fan and connects to the Metaverse. Hiro appears in his office in his house in the Metaverse and notices two new additions from the data that Juanita gave him. The first addition is The Earth, an pricey software program that allows the user to view any point on the earth from any altitude in real time. Then he notices the second addition to his home, a new room representing a library. The Librarian is probably the only software program more expensive than The Earth. Hiro starts by asking about Babel, the word on the hypercard that Juanita gave him. They have a discussion about the story of Babel from the Bible, and differing opinions on the meanings of the story and what parts could be taken literally and figuratively. Hiro asks The Librarian who programmed him, and The Librarian says he was created by a man at the former Library of Congress named Dr. Emmanuel Lagos. Hiro remembers that Juanita had mentioned Lagos as someone Hiro should meet. Hiro asks The Librarian to pull all free information from the library on L. Bob Rife.

Chapter 13 Analysis

While Hiro is the Metaverse's greatest swordsman, he still has work to do in reality. The scope of the data that Juanita gave to Hiro becomes apparent in this chapter. Two of the most expensive software programs available are included, and the added data takes up the size of a room in Hiro's house. The data that Hiro begins with revolves around the ancient city of Babel, whose famous tower is reminiscent of the large buildings on The Street in the Metaverse. Hiro is interrupted by Y.T. in reality, but Hiro can deftly transfer his thoughts between reality and the Metaverse without missing a step.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Hiro and the Librarian begin to review the data on L. Bob Rife. Rife starts his career as a sports commentator in Texas, then goes into business with his uncle, who was an oil man. There is no data for five years, then the newspaper reports pick up with articles from the religion sections of Texas newspapers about Rife's contributions. The common recipient in all of the donations is Reverend Wayne Bedford. Hiro notes that Rev. Bedford was the founder of Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates, and that Rife owns a majority share of the Pearly Gates. Rife also appears regularly in the business sections of the newspapers at the same time as the donations. Rife has become essentially a monopoly in the television market. Other articles chronicle Rife's purchase of an aircraft carrier from the U.S. Navy to become his private yacht. Another video interview shows Rife discussing privacy issues. Most of the world's information flows through his network, and his employees work with that information, but they have no right to "take that information home with them". Rife mentions that one of the things his company is working on is a method to keep all of that information under tight control, even in his employees' heads.

Chapter 14 Analysis

L. Bob Rife is portrayed as a stereotypical Texas business mogul who controls the flow of information around the world through his global fiber optic network. Rife also seems to have a wide range of interests, from religion to computer science to humanitarian issues. The mention of the Babble Brigade by one of the reporters seems to be a connection to the title "Babel" on the hypercard that Juanita gave to Hiro. The link between Rife and the Pearly Gates is interesting to Hiro, but he does not yet understand why Juanita or Lagos was interested in all of this information on a businessman.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The opening band for the concert starts playing, and Hiro moves to the outside fringes of the crowd. Hiro has hired Enforcers to provide security for the concert, even though this is Crips territory. He sees a group of nicely dressed Crips standing in the back of the crowd. Hiro keeps thinking he's seeing a red light out of the corner of his eye. Hiro sees that it's a laser beam coming from a man standing next to an old shack. Hiro walks towards him, and the man introduces himself as Lagos. Lagos tells Hiro that the standard assembly line workers are vulnerable to infection, and that Hiro can defend himself in the real world too. Lagos also mentions that Raven has an extremely sharp knife that can cut through bulletproof material. Lagos then tells Hiro that his brain is vulnerable to a nam-shub, and not to stare into bitmaps. Hiro tells Lagos about what happened to Da5id, and Lago says that the naked avatar was a cult prostitute of Asherah spreading the disease, and that Mesopotamians did not distinguish between evil and disease. Hiro walks away, thinking that Lagos is crazy.

Hiro notices a man driving a large motorcycle with a side car out behind the crowd. The man looks at Hiro, and Hiro realizes that this is the same man who tried to give him Snow Crash in the Black Sun. This must be Raven. A red light falls across Raven's face, and Hiro realizes that Lagos has just scanned Raven's retina. Hiro thinks that Raven is the reason that Lagos is here, and Hiro calls Y.T. to tell her that he's going to keep an eye on Raven.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Hiro is first introduced to Lagos. Lagos is an interesting character, one who lives simultaneously in reality and in information gathering. While Hiro thinks that Lagos is strange due to Lagos's ubiquitous equipment and odd speaking patterns, Hiro adopts many of these patterns throughout the story. Lagos keeps bringing up ancient historical facts and mixing them with talks about hackers and software. Hiro also spots Raven for the first time, recognizing him from the avatar at the Black Sun. It is apparent that both Lagos and Hiro are interested in Raven.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Raven drives towards the group of Crips. Raven gets off of his motorcycle and two of the Crips scan him with metal detectors. The head Crip talks to one of the other men, who then scans Raven and his motorcycle with another device. The device blinks rapidly when pointed at the motorcycle side car, and Hiro realizes the device is a Geiger counter. Raven walks up to the head Crip, shakes his hand, and gives him a briefcase. He shakes his hand again, gets back on his motorcycle and drives away. Hiro notices that a couple of limousines are approaching the stage. Hiro walks over as several Nipponese get out of one of the limos. Hiro opens one of the limo doors and sees Sushi K sitting with some of his handlers. Hiro introduces himself and thanks Sushi K for accepting his invitation to perform. Hiro gets out of the limo and makes a path for Sushi K to get to the stage. Once Hiro gets Sushi K to the stage, the head Enforcer, introducing himself as Squeaky, gets Hiro's attention. Squeaky tells Hiro that Y.T. had tipped him off to an incident with Lagos, and that Hiro needs to come see for himself. They walk up an embankment to find Lagos's body laid out on the ground. Lagos has been sliced from crotch to jaw, almost clean through to his spine.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Raven and the Crips transact what looks like a typical drug deal, but in this story nothing is typical. The Crips, while a stereotypical gang-turned-franchise, use various forms of technology to scan Raven and his motorcycle. Raven is carrying something radioactive in his motorcycle sidecar. It's not known at this time what is in the suitcase that Raven gave to the Crips, but Hiro assumes it must have been a standard drug deal. Hiro is surprised by the barbarity of Lagos's slaying, but also realizes the skill involved to cut through Lagos as the killer did. Lagos was killed with a weapon that was sharp enough to slice through bulletproof material. The scene with Sushi K is a distraction; it turns out that it was during this time that Raven killed Lagos.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Jason Breckinridge starts his day at his Nova Sicilia franchise in the Valley. Jason goes through the list of jobs on his computer, most of which are deliveries and collections. One of the jobs is Priority, but it's just a simple delivery. He looks at the location, a franchise in Compton, and realizes that the Nova Sicilia franchise where the package is going has recently turned around a neighborhood, and that Uncle Enzo is going there today to congratulate them. Jason decides to deliver the package himself, rather than trust the delivery to a Kourier.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Jason, a typical blazer-wearing franchise owner, thinks that perhaps Uncle Enzo is interested in him by setting up this particular delivery. The mentality of personal relationships in the Mafia is evident, even if they are not reciprocal. Appearance is everything, and even something as simple as a delivery has a larger theme behind it.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Jason gets to Compton an hour ahead of schedule. He drives faster, until he approaches the Nova Sicilia franchise. The guard takes a scan of Jason's retina and replies that he's not on the list. Jason tells the guard that he has a priority delivery, and gives him the papers. After a long wait, a man comes out of the franchise and walks up to the car. He tells Jason to be quiet and listen. The man tells Jason that he was given a simple job, a job that was supposed to go to a Kourier named Y.T., and Jason screwed it up. The man tells Jason that Uncle Enzo wants to meet Y.T., and if Jason wants to live, he needs to help straighten the situation out.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Jason screws up a plan that would have Y.T. deliver a package to the Nova Sicilia franchise where Uncle Enzo is visiting. Jason had incorrectly inferred that he should make the delivery personally, thinking that it was part of plan for him to meet Uncle Enzo. Uncle Enzo has apparently taken an interest in Y.T., presumably because she helped him save face by delivering Hiro's pizza on time.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Squeaky notes that the Crips scanned Raven for weapons earlier, and didn't find anything. Squeaky tells Hiro that Y.T. didn't see Lagos get killed, but she saw Raven heading away, and Y.T. followed Raven. They get into Squeaky's car. Squeaky tells Hiro that Y.T. reported that Raven and T-Bone, the head Crip, were sighted trying to kill each other. The last report is that Raven and T-Bone were seen moving into a hops field. The hops field is full of eight-foot trellises, and provides excellent cover. Hiro notices one of the Enforcers has been impaled with an eight-foot bamboo spear. Hiro sees Raven down at the end of a row, cutting another bamboo piece into a spear with what looks like a knife. Hiro then realizes that Raven has just thrown the spear at him, and Hiro uses his katana just in time to divert the spear away from him. When Hiro recovers, he sees that Raven is gone. Hiro hears some gunfire and follows it to find T-Bone backing away from Raven, but Raven swings his knife at T-Bone, who screams and falls to the ground. Raven turns and runs, and Hiro follows him, just in time to see Raven drive away on his motorcycle. Squeaky yells at the Crip, asking why he was gong after Raven. The Crip says that Raven ripped them off, that the briefcase burned.

Chapter 19 Analysis

The "typical" drug deal goes wrong in a non-typical fashion, yet the Crips go after Raven, thinking that he screwed them over. This shows that, despite the franchization of the gangs, the gang mentality is still present. Raven shows his ability to create improvised weapons and his ability to throw spears accurately. Raven escapes from the Crips fairly easily, and although Hiro avoids being speared by Raven, he is not fast enough to catch up with Raven. This is likely a good thing for Hiro, based on the conditions of the Crips after the fight.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

The Enforcers show up en masse to investigate the incident. T-Bone's BMW is brought over by a tow truck. Y.T. arrives with some noodles. Hiro tells Y.T. to stay away from Raven. Squeaky pulls the burnt-out briefcase from the back of the BMW. It's filled with little plastic vials on one side and complicated electronics on the other. The vials have some type of liquid in them, and Squeaky says it's the drug Snow Crash. When T-Bone gets out of his car to go have a drink, he leaves the briefcase in the car. When the owner of the briefcase gets too far away from it, the briefcase self-destructs. Squeaky tells Hiro that he was trying to protect Raven. Hiro is confused, asking Squeaky why he would be protecting Raven. Squeaky tells Hiro that Raven is a Sovereign, and a nuclear power. Raven has a hydrogen bomb from an old Soviet submarine in his sidecar. Squeaky says that Raven has sensors embedded in his skull, so if he dies, the bomb detonates. Therefore, the Enforcers always try to keep people away from Raven when he is in the area.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Hiro is first introduced to the drug Snow Crash. Squeaky reveals to Hiro that Raven is dangerous not because he's a deadly fighter, but because he's carrying a nuclear bomb, and it is the Enforcers' job to keep Raven safe when he is in town. It is telling that Raven, who uses glass weapons, handmade bamboo spears, and has a crude appearance is essentially melded with technology to an atomic bomb.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Y.T. is waiting on an on-ramp for a car to latch on to. She's got a delivery into Compton and there isn't a lot of traffic getting off of the highway here. She sees a black Oldsmobile take the exit, and she grabs it with her harpoon. She realizes that the driver of the Oldsmobile is the franchisee who got her this job in the first place, and paid her a ton of money to do it. He pulls her all the way to the franchise, giving her a boost of power to sail through the entrance gate. Y.T. comes to a stop in front of the door, pops her plank up under her arm, and asks for Uncle Enzo.

Uncle Enzo is waiting for her, and she produces the package she is supposed to deliver. Uncle Enzo tells Y.T. that he wanted to thank her for delivering the pizza a few weeks earlier. They talk about Y.T.'s mother, and that she works for the Feds. Uncle Enzo asks Y.T. why Kouriers don't wear helmets. Y.T. tells Uncle Enzo that their uniforms have airbags in them to protect their heads if they fall, and Y.T. mentions that helmets would affect her hearing. Uncle Enzo tells Y.T. that when he was in Vietnam, his special forces unit didn't wear helmets either for the same reason. Y.T. likes that Uncle Enzo is talking to her as an equal. Uncle Enzo tells Y.T. that he wonders who will come after him, and that the Mafia Boys are all weak. Uncle Enzo pulls out his dog tags and gives them to Y.T., saying they are "comrades in arms".

Chapter 21 Analysis

Jason does his part to get the original Mafia plan on track, going so far as to give Y.T. something to poon on the way to the franchise. Jason probably saves himself by doing this, and helps the Mafia save face. Y.T. and Uncle Enzo meet for the first time in this chapter. Y.T. appreciates the way Uncle Enzo treats her, as more of an equal than most adults would treat teenagers. They have some commonality.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Y.T. walks out of the franchise and one of the Mafia Boys, who has a glass eye, tells her that he has a job for her. She balks, but she gets a call from dispatch for the job the Mafia Boy is telling her about. He tells her that he wants her to collect some intelligence along the way. Y.T. is to pick up a package and to take the I-5 highway to go to the delivery spot, even though it's not the best route. As Y.T. coasts down the highway, she passes LAX, some other airports, and Fedland, where her mother works. Y.T. sees the Fed special operations people on the roofs of the Fed buildings with large machine guns. Y.T. sees a taxi being stopped at the entrance gates to Fedland, where his taxi is being inspected and he is being questioned.

Chapter 22 Analysis

In this chapter, Y.T. gets her first Mafia job. Y.T. feels a loyalty to Uncle Enzo growing. While Y.T. is heading out to pick up the package, there is a lengthy description of Fedland as she passes by on the highway. Despite the technological advances, the US government has sort of folded in on itself, retreating to smaller and smaller parcels of land and not keeping up with the technology in the rest of the world. The customs procedures for Fedland are archaic, and the extreme paranoia of the Feds is evident.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Y.T. heads out to Griffith Park to pick up the package for her delivery. Y.T. has heard about a new gang down in the canyon the other Kouriers call the Falabalas, so named because they talk to each other in their own language, which sounds like gibberish. Y.T. approaches the border gate of the gang territory, and they let her in. Suddenly she's in a large flat area full of people who are dressed in rags and lack any form of personal hygiene. Some of the people are mumbling, others are clapping and singing songs. A man in an old lab coat approaches her, asking if Y.T. was here for the briefcase. Y.T. tells him she's here to pick up something for delivery. The man, who Y.T. thinks of as the "High Priest", gives Y.T. a briefcase that looks exactly like the one from T-Bone's car the night before. A woman with a shaved head wearing dirty Chanel knockoffs waves to Y.T. as she passes and says hi, then starts to babble.

Y.T. heads up I-5 like the Mafia Boy had asked her to. She sees Jason in his Oldsmobile, waving to her to latch on. Jason drives for a couple of miles, then pulls off into a parking lot where a truck is parked. The Mafia Boy with the glass eye is waiting for them, and they get into the truck, which is filled with electronic equipment. The man with the glass eye tells Y.T. that they want to run some tests on the briefcase. One of the Mafia Boys puts the briefcase inside a cylinder and tells Y.T. that its like a CAT scanner, but that it can see more.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Y.T. is freaked out by the babbling adults in Griffith Park, and she understands why the other Kouriers don't like to come near this place. The suitcase she picked up is just like the one she saw the night before, the one that Raven had given to the Crips and had blown up in T-Bone's BMW. Griffith Park seems to be the source of these drug suitcases. The Falabalas appear as another group who babbles. Y.T. gets out of Griffith Park as fast as she can. The Falabalas are about as opposite as possible of Y.T. as people can get. Y.T. is young, hip, smart, and can take care of herself. The Falabalas are unkempt, dazed, and seem to be off in another world.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

A helicopter approaches the U-Store-It, and lands in the parking lot in front of Hiro's storage unit. An athletic looking man jumps out and approaches Hiro. His name tag says Clem. Major Clem tells Hiro that Juanita sent him to pick up Hiro. The helicopter takes off, and they head to the Hollywood Hills. They land on the roof of the hospital, and Major Clem tells Hiro where to go. When Hiro arrives at the specified room, he sees Da5id laying in the bed. The surgeon tells Hiro that they had to give Da5id a temporary pacemaker because he has cardiac arrhythmia. Hiro asks the surgeon if Da5id was goggled in when this happened, but the surgeon doesn't know. As Hiro turns to leave, Da5id looks at Hiro and starts to babble in a constant flow of syllables. Hiro returns to the helicopter and they fly to Da5id's house in the hills. Hiro finds Da5id's computer and picks up the goggles. Hiro looks into the goggles and just sees static.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Hiro sees the physical effects of the Snow Crash virus for the first time when he goes to visit Da5id. The drug has "crashed" Da5id's brain, who now lies helpless in the hospital, but babbling away with a look of peace on his face. When Hiro travels to Da5id's house, a place where the hacker friends had spent a lot of time together, he sees for himself that Da5id's computer has crashed, just like Da5id's brain.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

The Mafia Boys hand Y.T. the briefcase, and she takes off into traffic, banking off the car stopped behind them. Y.T. arrives at her destination, Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates #1106. Y.T. passes by all of the people waiting in line and waits for the receptionist to finish the current transaction. The receptionist finishes the transaction for the woman in line, and the doors behind her open up to the chapel. Organ music can be heard, and the woman walks into the chapel. After a few steps, the woman falls to her knees and starts to babble. The doors swing shut. The receptionist tells Y.T. to wait, and she walks over and knocks on the bathroom door. A man replies that he is busy. The receptionist says that the Kourier is here, and the man immediately comes out. The man walks by and takes the briefcase out of Y.T.'s hands and walks off to his office. Y.T. follows him, telling him he needs to sign for it first. The man has opened the briefcase, and inserted a keycard that had been hanging on a lanyard around his neck. The man types on the keypad, then takes one of the glass vials and inserts it into a port in the briefcase. The vial is pulled down in, then pops back up, and a red LED is counting down on the red cap. When the counter gets to zero, the man holds the vial up to his nose and inhales deeply. He sits back in the chair and stares at a poster of Elvis on the wall.

Chapter 25 Analysis

After Y.T. delivers the Snow Crash to the Pearly Gates franchise, the mode of delivery for the drug is revealed. Y.T. also sees people in the chapel babbling just like at Griffith Park. The description of the donation transaction is interesting, illustrating the melding of commerce and religion.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Hiro connects to the Metaverse and enters The Black Sun, where Juanita is waiting for him in one of the private rooms. Juanita tells Hiro that Da5id doesn't have a hardware problem, he has a software problem, that Da5id's brain had a snow crash, like his computer. Juanita explains to Hiro that as a hacker, Da5id has a hard-wired ability to process binary information, and that the bitmap image transferred a large amount of information directly into Da5id's optic nerve. Hiro did not get infected because he was not looking directly into the bitmap. Juanita explains that the drug Snow Crash is not really a drug, it's a distilled blood serum from other infected people, laced with cocaine to get the users addicted. Juanita also explains that it's L. Bob Rife's private church that is spreading the virus. Juanita tells Hiro to look into the Babel information on a Sumerian goddess named Inanna.

Hiro leaves the private room and sees an odd avatar. The avatar starts to open a scroll similar to the one that snow-crashed Da5id. Hiro draws his katana and cuts the arms off of the avatar before it can fully open the scroll. Rather than chase the avatar, Hiro decides to take care of the scroll so that the other hackers in The Black Sun don't become infected. Hiro opens a trap door in the floor and pushes the scroll into it. Hiro looks up and sees Y.T. standing outside The Black Sun, and Hiro yells to Y.T. to chase the avatar with no arms. Hiro jumps down into the tunnel system under The Black Sun. A Graveyard Daemon has picked up the scroll to take it to be destroyed, but Hiro tells the daemon to roll up the scroll and put it in his workshop.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Juanita explains how the bitmap image affected Da5id's brain, and she warns Hiro that he is vulnerable too. The link between the virus, the drug, and L. Bob Rife is revealed, and Hiro notes the similarities between religion and viruses. The story of Juanita begins to parallel the story of Inanna at this point, although the nature of the story is not revealed until later. Another Metaverse Snow Crash attack occurs, but Hiro manages to disarm the attacking avatar and safely save the scroll containing the bitmap for review later. Hiro plans to use his hacker skills to carefully examine and reverse engineer the virus, in order to create an antidote.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Y.T. calls Hiro, and tells him that she is on a monorail train following the avatar with no arms. Y.T. tells Hiro about the delivery to the Pearly Gates, and that the people at Griffith Park were babbling. Hiro asks The Librarian about talking in tongues, which was part of the Babel story. The Librarian explains to Hiro that the phenomenon is technically called glossolalia, and is a neurological function that has been exploited in religion. The Librarian explains that nam-shub is a Sumerian word, and that the Sumerian language consists of single syllables linked together to form words. Hiro asks The Librarian if it would sound like glossolalia, and The Librarian does not speculate and provide an answer. The Librarian goes on to explain that nam-shub means a speech with magical force. Hiro ponders that the Metaverse is essentially a nam-shub, made of computer code, a speech that computers can understand. Y.T. calls Hiro to tell him that the armless avatar got off of the monorail at Express Port 127, which is as far from Downtown as you can get. Y.T. tells Hiro that the only thing out here is a giant black cube that is twenty miles wide. Hiro theorizes that the cube belongs to L. Bob Rife, since Rife supposedly has a large facility in the Metaverse to keep the guts of the network.

Chapter 27 Analysis

The Librarian provides an explanation of the phenomenon of glossolalia, which is apparently what all the babbling people are doing. The concept of a nam-shub is introduced. A nam-shub is essentially an operating system command that reacts with the deep structures of the brain, and Hiro compares the nam-shub to raw machine code that is unintelligible by the untrained but that a computer uses to read and execute commands. The connection between Snow Crash and L. Bob Rife intensifies when the avatar disappears into the giant structure on the fringes of the Metaverse.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Hiro follows The Librarian into the new room, which is filled with hypercards, and there are three large items representing ancient artifacts. One is a clay slab that is covered in cuneiform writing. The second item is a wooden pole with branches that make it look like a tree. The third item is an obelisk covered in cuneiform writing and a bas relief image of two figures. The Librarian explains to Hiro that there are roughly four categories of information in the room: Biblical, Sumerian, neuro-linguistics, and intelligence on L. Bob Rife. The Librarian tells Hiro that the Sumerians wrote their data on clay tablets. Hiro looks at the image of the clay envelope and asks the Librarian if the cuneiform has been translated. The Librarian replies that it is the nam-shub of Enki, and The Librarian reads the translation, which describes how Enki changed the words of men so they were no longer speaking the same language. Hiro notes that this story sounds like the Babel story, and The Librarian notes that Lagos also documented that connection. The Librarian tells Hiro that Lagos had a theory that the story of Babel actually occurred and that it took place at about the same time as the disappearance of the Sumerian language. The Librarian adds that Lagos felt that the nam-shub of Enki was a neurolinguistical virus.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Lagos had gathered a large amount of data, and this room was his virtual desk, where he connected or discarded data. Lagos had arranged the hypercards in various three-dimensional structures representing connections between the data. The Librarian explains that the me were actually created on clay tablets and stored in a temple. Lagos had theorized that the events of the Tower of Babel actually occurred, and it was the nam-shub of Enki that erased the ability of men to understand the Sumerian, or common language.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Y.T. is waiting for her ride. While she waits, she jacks into the public terminal and enters the Metaverse. She has the address of a guy named Ng that she needs to meet. The man with the glass eye told Y.T. that Ng was actually somewhere in Southern California driving around in a van that had all kinds of equipment in it. In the Metaverse, Ng lives in a villa that appears to be in Vietnam. His office looks out through French doors to fields of rice paddies. Y.T. enters the office and Ng stands up and bows to Y.T. Y.T. hears some strange sounds coming from Ng's mouth, but they sound like background noise. Ng tells Y.T. that he does security work, mostly for Mr. Lee, who prefers to use non-human system. Y.T. realizes Ng is talking about Rat Things. Y.T. disconnects from the Metaverse and heads outside to wait for Ng. His van is unmistakable, it is huge, and has a motor that Y.T. can feel coming before she sees the van. She gets in and looks over at the driver's seat, and sees a mass of wires, fiber-optic cables, and feeding lines all suspended from the ceiling of the van. Y.T. thinks she can make out the top of Ng's head inside the neoprene pouch that holds all of the equipment together. Ng explains that he was badly injured in the Vietnam war when his helicopter caught fire, and he had essentially converted a van to a motorized wheelchair. Ng tells Y.T. that they're going to Long Beach to buy some drugs in the Terminal Island Sacrifice Zone.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Ng is a disabled man who has used technology to augment his abilities and essentially enjoy life more than he could have ever done on his own in his disabled body. The increased franchization of all aspects of life allows Ng to get any service he needs via drive-thru. Ng's specialty is high-tech security, and he has been hired by the Mafia to use his technological expertise to obtain an active sample of the Snow Crash virus.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

The Librarian tells Hiro that the artifact that looks like a tree is a totem of Asherah. The Librarian continues saying that Asherah was a consort of Yahweh, and her symbol is a serpent coiling around a stick. Asherah was worshiped as the consort of Yahweh until the precursors to the Pharisees removed Asherah from religious texts. Hiro surmises that the Torah was like a virus, in that man replicated the Torah at each generation, preventing mutation. The Librarian says that Lagos regarded the Bible as a benign virus, whereas he considered the Asherah virus capable of being spread through bodily fluids. Since there is evidence that Asherah worship used cult prostitutes, the virus could be easily spread among the people. Hiro returns to the discussion of Asherah's association with serpents. The Librarian notes that Eve was also associated with trees and serpents. Hiro thinks that whoever generated the Adam and Eve legend was using the tale to explain good and evil, and why people get sick. Lagos believed that the deuteronomists changed the Adam and Eve story to create a warning to others about good and evil.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The Librarian explains the links between health and sickness and good and evil in the ancient myths. Lagos showed that Judaism, and later on, the Bible, acted as a benign virus that eliminated religious mutation through strict rules and regulations for religious and home life. The Librarian reveals a parallel between Asherah, whose symbols included a tree and a serpent coiled around a stick, and Eve, who was also associated with a tree and a serpent.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

This particular Sacrifice Zone was once a shipyard. It is fenced, but the fence is torn in places. Ng drives the van straight through a portion of the fence. The ground is littered with glass and asbestos, and rats scurry away from the lights of the truck. Y.T. hears a sound coming from the speakers, like a low hiss. The pitch grows louder, and Ng grunts a command that drops the volume. Ng tells Y.T. that the sound is from an instrument that detects cell-penetrating compounds, and that it may have found something, and if it is Snow Crash, they can abort the rest of the plan. Ng waves to a face mask and tells Y.T. to put it on so she can get out and see what's on the ground. There are many discarded hypodermic needles and little vials, but the drug of choice turns out to be testosterone. Ng and Y.T. drive through the Sacrifice Zone, passing refugees. The van approaches the waterfront, and Ng pulls up next to a building, turning around so that he can drive out quickly. Ng tells Y.T. to take some money from the glove box, and she pulls out a thick stack of trillion dollar bills. Ng tells Y.T. to go to the fourth warehouse on the left, and when she gets the vial, to throw it into the air. Y.T. gets out of the van with her plank, and she sees that the roof of the van has opened, revealing a miniature helicopter.

Chapter 31 Analysis

This chapter shows some of the results of the extreme industrialization of the world in the novel. The Sacrifice Zone is essentially so ecologically damaged that it is not worth cleaning up, and it is just fenced off. The separation of this zone invites people to enter nonetheless, including burbclave boys, refugees, and undesirables. The degree of hyper-inflation is illustrated by the trillion-dollar bills, which aren't ever really used anymore, with people using quadrillions, or Kongbucks.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Y.T. walks around shipping containers topped with machine gunners. Y.T. sees a skinny man and she asks what Snow Crash costs. Y.T. talks him down, and he goes into the warehouse and returns with a silver briefcase like the ones Y.T. has seen before. The skinny guy opens the briefcase and slides his ID card into the slot, then types something on the keyboard. He puts one of the vials into the socket, the machine draws it in, then pops it back up. The skinny guys gives the vial to Y.T. and tells her to start inhaling when the counter gets to one. Y.T. starts backing up, then throws the vial up into the air. The sounds of chopper blades can be heard, and the vial is gone. The sky is then full of bright light. All of the gunmen are blinded, but Y.T.'s Knight Vision goggles compensate for the light. Then Y.T. sees some blurs and sparks, Rat Things bounding over the shipping containers and knocking the men over. Y.T. gets back into the van. Ng tells her that the helicopter successfully caught the vial and flash-froze it before it could destruct. Y.T. asks if the Rat Things are really made from animal parts, and Ng tells her they are, and that when they are in their hutch, the Rat Things are in a sort of virtual reality where they can catch frisbees, eat steaks that grow on trees, or lay beside a fire. Y.T. tells Ng that she and Roadkill had taken care of a pit bull that they had found shot in an alley. A vet fixed the dog up and Y.T. named him Fido. Y.T. and Roadkill kept Fido in an empty apartment, but one day Fido was gone. Y.T. wonders if Fido is now a Rat Thing.

Ng Security Industries Semi-Autonomous Guard Unit B-782 wakes up in a Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong franchise in Phoenix. His designation is B-782, but he thinks his name is Fido. Fido hears some doggies far away barking at some bad men trying to hurt a nice girl. Fido remembers a nice girl that took care of him. Fido loves the nice girl. Fido hears the other doggies say that the girl is safe, so he curls up and goes back to dreaming.

Chapter 32 Analysis

The image of the dark warehouses and shady characters looks familiar to the readers as a place where drug deals go down. Y.T., with the help of Ng and his equipment, manages to get her hands on a pure sample of Snow Crash before it self-destructs. Y.T. also learns more about the Rat Things, and her attachment to animals is explained. Ng has given the Rat Things new life with technology, as technology has given him new life.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Y.T. steps into Hiro's office in the Metaverse and tells Hiro that Snow Crash is like a steroid. Y.T. leaves the office, and The Librarian explains that Asherah began in Sumerian myths but was carried down through Babylonian and even Hebrew stories. The Librarian adds that there is also material on the Sumerians describing how their civilization was better than all of the others because their me was better. The Librarian explains to Hiro that me are basic societal rules on a very fundamental level. The Librarian continues, saying that Akkadian myths were based on Sumerian myths. The Librarian relates an Akkadian myth about Asherah making Enki sick, then eventually healing him. The Librarian says that Enki was the en of the city or Eridu, in southern Iraq. An en is a high-priest who guards the me of the society that is written on clay tablets and kept in the temple. The city of Eridu was recently excavated by L. Bob Rife's archaeologists. The Librarian goes on to say that Enki was the god whose word could create things. The Librarian tells a story of how the goddess Inanna tricks Enki into giving her some of the me that he guards, and Inanna brings the me back to her town, and it is written that "she brought the perfect execution of the me". Hiro translates me as the operating system that organizes people into functional societies.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Y.T. confirms how the Snow Crash drug effects the human body. Hiro learns that Enki was a keeper of me, basic "programs" of civilizations. Enki also has the ability to create new me. The concepts in Sumerian mythology parallel the technological universe that Hiro is familiar with. Zero and one are the same as nothing and creation. Hiro learns that Rife has been digging up the city of Eridu, and he realizes that Rife has the nam-shub of Enki.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Y.T. heads back out to Griffith Park with a new plank and a new set of Knight Vision goggles. She coasts down the side of the canyon, freefalling in places. She finds the woman with the shaved head that seemed harmless last time, and asks her to chat. The woman tells Y.T. that she was a systems programmer for a company in California and that one day her system crashed and then she became sick. Then the woman decided to go to the Raft. Y.T. asks the woman what they did on the raft, and the woman shows Y.T. her arm, which is full of needle holes. The woman explains that they gave blood until their veins didn't work, then they were sent here to the park.

Y.T. notices that the man she dubbed the High Priest is walking closer to them. Y.T. starts to leave, but the High Priest tells Y.T. that she really needs to stay. Y.T. sees that the man is holding a syringe full of blood. Y.T. has seen enough, and she shoots Liquid Knuckles at the High Priest. Y.T. gets out as fast as she can. Y.T. calls Hiro and tells Hiro that the woman saw static on her computer, and Hiro tells Y.T. that she doesn't have to worry about it because she is not a hacker. Y.T. yells at Hiro, tells Hiro that her mother is a programmer for the Feds, and hangs up. Y.T. races home and doesn't bother to change out of her uniform. Y.T. sees her mother sitting in front of her computer. Y.T. picks up an award that her mother had won and hurls it at the computer screen, which smashes. Y.T.'s mom starts yelling at her, and Y.T. tells her that Y.T. just saved her life.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Y.T. learns that the Snow Crash virus is spread through blood after she goes back to Griffith Park. Y.T. is shocked that the Falabalas let themselves be used on the Raft. She also realizes that, as a hacker, her mom is vulnerable to the virus. Y.T. is furious that Hiro hasn't told her about this connection, and Y.T. goes to extreme lengths to send a message to her mother about the virus. Despite her usual flippant attitude, it is obvious that Y.T. cares deeply for her mom.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Hiro looks at the Earth program, turning it to look at Oregon. Hiro sees why Juanita went to Astoria, because the Raft is floating off the coast of Oregon. Hiro zooms into see detailed images. The center of the Raft is made up of Rife's aircraft carrier, lashed to an oil tanker. These vessels are surrounded by container ships and other large ships. The outside of this core is filled with smaller boats and makeshift floating debris. Hiro decides he needs to go to Oregon and find out how Juanita is connected to the Raft.

Hiro walks into a motorcycle dealership. Hiro tells the salesman that he is here to buy a motorcycle, specifically a new Yamaha with smartwheels. The salesman tells Hiro that they don't have any in stock yet, since it's a brand new model. Hiro tells the salesman that they had ordered one a month ago, and just then a Yamaha truck pulls up with a new delivery. Hiro gives the salesman the vehicle ID number and tells him the motorcycle is on that truck. The bike has smartwheels that are similar to those on Y.T.'s plank. Hiro pays for the bike, giving the salesman a good commission over the invoice price, then goes into the Cycle Shop and buys a complete outfit. Hiro figures out a way to attach his swords to the coverall, then drives off.

Chapter 35 Analysis

Hiro shows off his ability to collect info on people and to manipulate online information so that he can get his hands on a new motorcycle. Hiro goes all out, purchasing the pinnacle of motorcycle technology and the outfit to match. The dealer tells Hiro that Hiro looks "badass" on the bike, but Hiro thinks that Raven is the one that deserves that title. Hiro decides to go after Juanita, further illustrating him as a macho male, having to run off and save the damsel, who may or may not be in distress.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Once Hiro is on the freeway, he connects to the Metaverse and enters his office. The Raft has so many ships lashed to it that it cannot navigate. It rides on ocean currents, traveling around the Pacific Ocean in a circle. A few years prior, the Raft picked up refugees in Southeast Asia, then a year later it passed the Aleutian islands, and is now floating by the coast of America, where many of the smaller vessels will disconnect from the Raft and try to enter America. Then, the Raft will continue its circle around the ocean. Hiro asks The Librarian who these Sumerian gods actually were. The Librarian tells Hiro that Lagos thought they were humans with special powers. Lagos deduced that if Enki created the Enki nam-shub, then Enki must have some neurolinguistic powers. Hiro adds that all humans have the same brain hardware, but the software is different, based on what you learn. All humans start out being able to learn language, and once they do, many are stuck with the language and customs that they learn. There are deep structures within the brain that allow humans to learn language in the first place. The Librarian notes that Lagos believed that Sumerian was perfectly suited to the development of nam-shubs.

Chapter 36 Analysis

The description of the Raft shows how people have latched on to an idea that is bigger than themselves in order to get ahead. Thousands of boats have attached themselves to the Raft for a free ride around the Pacific Ocean. Despite the control that Rife has over his followers, the Raft itself cannot be finely controlled, and it is forced to drift along the currents. The Librarian discusses the link between words and power that the Sumerian gods, and later the Kabbalists believed in. Hiro thinks of Enki as the first hacker.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Y.T.'s mom parks her car in her assigned spot in Fedland and walks up the concrete ramps into the building. She removes all metal items and passes through the metal detector. After a frisking, she gathers her materials and heads up the stairwell. She reaches her workstation, which is a chair and a computer in the middle of a room with other workstations. Y.T.'s mom checks her mail, which contains two missives from her manager, Marietta. The first is a lengthy article on employee toilet paper pools and storing toilet paper in office locations. The estimated reading time is 15.62 minutes. When she is done reading, Y.T.'s mom signs into the programming project that she is working on. There is a stack of new memos waiting for her to review about project changes. Y.T.'s mom reviews her current code to see what needs to be updated to meet the new requirements. When she finishes, Y.T.'s mom looks up to see that it is 11:30 AM. She is surprised that several people are standing around her workstation, including Marietta and the polygraph proctor.

Chapter 37 Analysis

This chapter shows just how bureaucratic the US government has become and how banal the working environment is. It takes Y.T.'s mom several hours to get caught up on reading memos before she can get to work. The mentality of loyalty and duty is so ingrained in the Fed employees that unspoken rules dominate their behavior, such as people not using the elevator in order to conserve electricity.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

They walk to the bathroom, where Y.T.'s mom urinates in a pan. The proctor puts the urine into a vial, and they take the elevator to the polygraph room. Y.T.'s mom sits in the chair in the middle of the room, and the blood pressure cuff tightens around her arm. Electrodes prick her scalp, and she feels an injection in her forearm. Y.T.'s mom hates these tests, but it is a normal part of working for the Feds. A computer-generated voice asks Y.T.'s mom some basic questions designed to get her relaxed and used to the process. The computer voice asks Y.T.'s mom about Y.T. and her job. Y.T.'s mom says that Y.T. has a job as a Courier. The voice asks if Y.T. has done anything unusual lately. Y.T.'s mom says that Y.T. broke her computer, saying that she was afraid of Y.T.'s mom getting a virus. Y.T.'s mom thinks this conversation is silly, since she knows her house is bugged with microphones and video recorders, so the Feds know what happened. Then the voice asks Y.T.'s mom if she believes what Y.T. told her about the virus. Y.T.'s mom realizes this is the answer the Feds want, something they can't deduce from video. Then Y.T.'s mom realizes that in hesitating, the polygraph proctor knows that she's hiding something.

Chapter 38 Analysis

The detailed description of the polygraph testing process, and how accepting the employees are to it is completely opposite from the traditional hacker mentality. It is also revealed that Y.T.'s house is bugged and videotaped regularly. It becomes apparent in this chapter that the Feds know something about the virus, and that the virus is something that Y.T.'s mom shouldn't know about. The interrogation techniques also show how backwards the Fed government is. Y.T.'s mom knows that each thought she has, each signal from her brain is telling the proctor something.

Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Hiro stops at a Snooze-N-Cruise on the Alcan Highway, which is essentially a two thousand mile-long franchise. Hiro parks his motorcycle and starts asking around for Chuck Wrightson, and eventually finds him. Hiro and Chuck walk into the Towne Hall, a huge inflatable building filled with different franchises. Chuck is the former president of the Temporary Republic of Kenai and Kodiak, or TROKK. Chuck tells Hiro that the Russian Orthodox people, or Orthos started pouring down the coast from Russia. About fifty thousand Russians ended up in TROKK, and one day an Airstream appeared in the town square, and the Russians issued a proclamation that told all of the Americans to leave and turn the power over to the Orthos. Of course they objected, and the head Orthos guy, a KGB general named Gurov, showed them what was in the Airstream: a ten-megaton hydrogen bomb. Chuck tells Hiro that the warhead came from a nuclear submarine. When Russia disintegrated, the captain of the submarine decided to scuttle the submarine so that the warheads could not be used. Chuck continues that someone convinced the captain to help shuttle some Orthos refugees to TROKK. For safety, all of the refugees were subject to metal detectors and remained under armed guards. One of these refugees was Raven. Chuck notes that Raven is an Aleut, and likely paddled his way to Siberia in his kayak. Hiro notes that the refugees had to pass through metal detectors, but Chuck answers that Raven uses glass knives, chipped from plate glass. The edges of these knives are only a molecule wide, so they can cut through bulletproof material. Chuck then says that Raven killed everyone except some Orthos and essential crew members. They sailed the sub to Kodiak, and turned it over to the Orthos. Chuck looks up, and someone taps on Hiro's shoulder.

Chapter 39 Analysis

The Alcan highway traveling north towards Alaska is reminiscent of the westward expansion of the Old West in America. The franchises pop up along the highway to service the people who are traveling northward, and those who reach the end of the road plant their Airstreams and effectively extend the road just a bit longer. Details on the Orthos and Raven are explained in this chapter. Hiro learns that Raven uses glass knives, which explains why they don't show up on radar and how they can slice through bulletproof material. Raven obtained his atomic bomb from the Russian submarine commandeered by the Orthos.



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Hiro turns around to see a large white man with a baseball cap with the New South Africa franchise logo on it and an enormous gut standing behind him. The man crudely asks Hiro what his ethnic background is, and Hiro swivels around to the other side of the table. Chuck has disappeared. Hiro thanks the man politely for announcing his intentions, and slices off the man's head with his katana. Hiro takes off for the door of the bar. Hiro runs out into the main hallway of the Towne Hall, and he sees the Enforcers starting to follow after him. Hiro switches on his goggles to show everything; radar, infrared, sound processing, and music by the Meltdowns. As he is running, Hiro feels something hit his back. Hiro realizes that he has just been shot, and although the bulletproof coverall prevents the bullets from piercing him, the impact breaks a few of Hiro's ribs. Hiro then remembers that this is an inflatable building, and he slices his own exit through the wall and escapes.

Chapter 40 Analysis

The men from the New South Africa franchise are another example of stereotyping taken to extremes in this novel. The reference to South Africa reflects the pre-Apartheid mentality when blacks were considered second-class citizens. Since Hiro is half-black, and has dreadlocks associated with black culture, he is a target to the men from New South Africa. However, Hiro is more than able to defend himself. In this chapter, Hiro kills someone in reality for the first time, and he notes how different it feels from killing someone in the Metaverse.



Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

Y.T. picks up a package for delivery to the United States of America. Y.T. arrives at Fedlands and goes through the cumbersome customs process. Y.T. climbs the stairs to the ninth floor, where the package is supposed to go. When she arrives, she sees cops all over the place. Y.T. finds the room number where she is supposed to deliver the package, and there are four cops working in this office. Y.T. announces that she has a package, and one of the men asks if she is Y.T. Y.T. gets defensive, and asks how they know her name. The head Fed guy says that he knows Y.T.'s mother, but Y.T. doesn't believe him. Y.T. reaches out to give the package to the head Fed guy, and the guy grabs her wrist, slapping one end of a set of handcuffs onto Y.T.'s wrist. Y.T. tries to pull away, but one of the other Fed guys grabs her other wrist. Y.T. issues a voice command to her uniform, which then sends an electric shock through her wrist cuffs. The Fed guys fall to the floor, and Y.T. pulls out a can of Liquid Knuckles. Y.T. heads down the stairwell, her smartwheels smoothing out the ride. She bursts out into the lobby and sees the glass revolving door in front of her. Y.T. activates one of the features on her new plank: the Narrow Cone Tuned Shock Wave Projector. It releases an immense shock wave that shakes Y.T.'s whole body and blasts all of the windows out of the lobby. Y.T. coasts down the stairs and heads towards the customs gate. Y.T. looks back and sees a man shooting a very large gun, and Y.T. realizes it's a stun grenade.

Chapter 41 Analysis

The process that Y.T. has to endure to enter Fedland and get to her delivery point further proves the extensive bureaucracy that the US government has devolved into. The package delivery was a ruse to get Y.T. to enter Fedland, and it becomes more apparent that the Feds and Rife's organization are linked. Y.T. uses all of her tricks to get loose and to escape from the room and the building, only to be taken down by a stun grenade outside.



Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary

Hiro finds a flat spot off the road outside of Port Sherman, Oregon, and connects to the Metaverse. The Librarian states that Inanna had many interactions with Enki. In the Sumerian myth, Inanna went to a watery fortress in Eridu where Enki stored and protected the me. Inanna convinced Enki to give her the me, and Enki agreed, mainly because he was drunk and succumbed to her charms. Hiro tells The Librarian that the Raft is the watery fortress where he keeps all of his me, and Juanita is Inanna, going there to retrieve it. The Librarian relates another myth, wherein Inanna travels to the underworld under false pretenses, but the judges of the underworld see through Inanna's intentions and condemn her to death. When Inanna does not return after three days, her messenger goes to the gods for help, but only Enki will help. Enki creates two people with magical powers who go and rescue Inanna, and they return with a host of the dead. Hiro notes that Juanita left three days ago.

Hiro returns to the Earth program, which is still focused on the Raft. Hiro thinks that the head priests must be staying in Port Sherman, which is the closest point on land to the Raft right now. Hiro looks through the registrations for the local hotels and finds one full of Slavic and Russian names, with the best suite is taken by a man by the name of Gurov, the former KGB general who brought the nuke to TROKK. Hiro sees one private marina filled with only nice white boats, but the resolution isn't fine enough to pick up details. Hiro accesses the CIC database to see if anyone is uploading intel from Port Sherman. Sure enough, Hiro finds someone who has uploaded tons of video. The video shows two large ships in the marina. One is an Orthos ship, based on its flag, and the other is sporting a green flag that is associated with Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong.

Chapter 42 Analysis

Hiro realizes that Juanita is following the goddess Innana's path, and that Juanita's actions, and ultimately Hiro's actions too, will have the same results as the myth of Innana. Hiro is genuinely worried about Juanita, and is afraid that "entering the underworld" may prove too dangerous for her. Hiro is one of the people who will go to rescue Juanita from the "watery fortress". Hiro sees that the Orthos are all over Port Sherman, which is the closest land point to the Raft at the present.



Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Summary

Y.T. wakes up in the back of a van. She has a headache from the stun grenade. The van drives for eight hours, and Y.T. begins to get scared. The van pulls over and Y.T. sees the sign for a Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates. Two women get into the van and start fussing over Y.T. Y.T. learns the women are named Marla and Bonnie, and they stay with Y.T. all of the time, even when she goes to the bathroom. They all get into a van that is crammed with people. There are no seats, but the floor is carpeted. Y.T. sits between Bonnie and Marla and they hold her hands. Every so often someone in the van starts babbling, and the rest of the people join in. Y.T. just thinks it is silly. The van regularly stops at a house in a burbclave somewhere so the people can eat and use the bathroom. Eventually, Y.T. can smell that they are near the ocean. The van is loaded on a ship, and Y.T. can feel the ocean waves. The ferry is filled with lots of people like those in the van, babbling and singing silly songs. The ferry swings around the Raft and Y.T. sees some of the ships have Russian names. Y.T. is brought down into one of the Russian ships and given the job of cutting up fish. Everyone is speaking Russian. Y.T. is not very good at cutting up fish, and after a few days, they give Y.T. a new job serving food in the cafeteria. The line in the cafeteria is never ending, filled with babbling religious fanatics, mostly Asians. She starts to see some people with antennas on the back of their heads. Y.T. sees some of the people she was with on the van, but they are all glassy-eyed, and Y.T. finally realizes that the people were trying to brainwash her.

Chapter 43 Analysis

After Y.T. is captured she is brought to the Raft, likely as an effort to silence her. It is odd that despite Y.T.'s capture, she does not seem to have been given the Snow Crash virus. However, it is not stated explicitly, and it is possible that Y.T. was given the virus and she is immune to it. Y.T. is ticked off when she realizes that they were trying to brainwash her. The "wireheads" appear for the first time, and it is obvious that the wireheads are the ones that keep the masses under control.



Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Summary

Hiro notes that Port Sherman is usually a very small town, but with the Raft offshore, the population has ballooned to about fifty thousand. There are refugees sleeping everywhere. As Hiro drives into the town, his motorcycle suddenly stops working. Hiro abandons the bike and continues into town on foot. Hiro sees a helicopter approaching the town from the ocean. Hiro looks up in time to see a missile that was launched from the roof of another building fly through the air and strike the helicopter, which bursts into flames. Hiro realizes that now if Gurov wants to get to the Raft, he's going to have to come down through the hotel and out to the marina. Hiro races down the street until he finds the Hong Kong franchise. Hiro flashes his passport and the door opens. Hiro convinces the consulate to give him access to the Kowloon. The man takes Hiro's passport and creates an ID card to allow Hiro into the marina. Back on the waterfront, the Orthos have organized barricades in the hotel lobby, but Hiro does not know what they are trying to defend against. As Hiro walks down the pier, pairs of Russians occasionally run past him towards the Kodiak Queen. The Kowloon is calm in comparison, with waiters and crew members in dark windbreakers going about their normal business. Hiro is halfway to the Kowloon when gunfire erupts back on the waterfront. Hiro walks faster towards the Kowloon, keeping an eye on the action. As he walks up the gangplank, he sees two crew men on an upper deck. One of the men pushes a button on his lapel and the jacket now reads MAFIA in green letters on the back, and Hiro sees that all of the men in black jackets now have MAFIA written on their backs.

Chapter 44 Analysis

Hiro sees that refugees are starting to come ashore from the Raft, since they know they are getting close to potential freedom in California. Hiro is confused at first by the activities of the Orthos, who appear to be fortifying their position in the hotel, but their reasons become clear when the helicopter is shot down during its approach to the hotel. Hiro is surprised to see the Mafia involved against the Orthos. It is apparent that the Mafia are here to oppose the Orthos, but Hiro does not know what their connection is.



Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Summary

One of the Mafia men is dressed in a crisp suit and has a glass eye. The man tells Hiro that the first phase was to take out the helicopter. The second phase involved making the Orthos think they were being attacked at the hotel, and to get Hiro on the Kowloon. Phase three is to let the Orthos think they can escape down the pier to the Kodiak Queen. A group of Orthos are clumped together on the pier, and the man tells Hiro that the bigwigs are in that group. One of the crew members yells to the man with glass eye that Phase Four has started. The man with the glass eye produces a little black box and pushes a button. Suddenly, some small explosions are heard on the pier, and the section with the bigwigs on it breaks apart from the rest of the pier. Hiro sees that there is a tow cable connecting the pier to a tow boat out in the harbor. One of the Orthos on this new raft raises his gun, and a sniper on the top of the Kowloon takes the Ortho's head off. The man with the glass eye notes that it is now time for Phase Five, a big breakfast. Hiro and the man with the glass eye return to the dining room, and the Kowloon leaves the pier, motoring out into the harbor. The tow boat is pulling the pier segment carrying the Orthos, and keeping pace off the side of the Kowloon. The man tells Hiro that the Mafia and Hiro are all part of Lagos' gang.

The man with the glass eye explains that Lagos had stacks of information stored all over the place. A while back, Lagos approached L. Bob Rife with the information. Hiro tells the man that Lagos thought that Rife may have a use for this information on viruses, because Rife was paranoid about his employees stealing data. The man says that Lagos found something that could control elite thinkers. The man with the glass eye tells Hiro that Lagos was looking for funding to do research, and a way to modify the virus so it wouldn't destroy the programmers minds, but that Rife stole the idea. Lagos got worried when he started seeing the growth in Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates, people speaking in tongues, and all of the archaeological work Rife was directing in Eridu. Lagos approached several people, including the MAFIA, Juanita, and Mr. Lee.

Chapter 45 Analysis

Hiro finally learns that there are others who were interacting with Lagos, though Hiro has the greatest understanding of what is going on. Fisheye tells Hiro more about what Lagos was doing. The Mafia culture permeates even a commando operation, which is followed by a sumptuous breakfast buffet. Lagos had originally brought the idea of a neurolinguistic virus to Rife, but Rife stole the idea and took it to its extremes, using his immense resources to excavate Eridu and translate all of the Sumerian writings found there. When Lagos realized what was going on, he realized that he alone could not stop Rife, and he recruited organizations that could be affected by Rife's control.



Chapter 46

Chapter 46 Summary

Hiro and the other men realize that the pier section is no longer being dragged behind the tow boat. They look back and see it sitting still in the water. Hiro says that the men must have cut the cable, but the man with the glass eye says there is no way they could have cut it. Hiro sees a smaller boat between the tow boat and the Orthos. It's a one-man kayak, carrying a long haired man: Raven. Hiro asks the man with the glass eye if he knows that Raven carries a nuke. The man with the glass eye knows about the nuke, but says that the kayak is too small to hold Raven and the nuke. Raven expertly catches the waves and travels faster than any of the other boats. The Kowloon is now trying to reverse course to deal with the Orthos and Raven. The man with the glass eye says that this situation gives him the creeps. Suddenly, a swell forms near the Russians, and a submarine breaks the surface. The sub opens its gun ports, and the first shell just misses the Kowloon. The crew of the Kowloon starts to launch the life rafts, and Hiro and the others make their way down to the deck. A shell hits the Kowloon and it falls apart and sinks. Raven holds up his spear as he gets into the submarine, the hatch closes, and the submarine slides back beneath the waves.

Chapter 46 Analysis

Raven arrives to save the Orthos, and Fisheye is irritated because the carefully orchestrated plan has been ruined. Fisheye is worried more about what Uncle Enzo will think than about his own life. Raven shows his kayaking skills, and the submarine that the Orthos had commandeered comes to the rescue. The submarine sinks the Kowloon, forcing the men onto life rafts.



Chapter 47

Chapter 47 Summary

Once Y.T. realizes that all of the people on the Raft are brainwashed, she notices that they never look her in the eye. She can talk trash to them, and they don't understand her. But one day, a tall man with long hair appears in her cafeteria line, staring right at her. The man is scary looking, but Y.T. thinks the man is kind of sexy too. Y.T. talks to him like she talks to the others, asking him which nasty parts of the fish he wants. The man stares at Y.T. for a while, then asks Y.T. if she wants to get out of here. The man is turning Y.T. on. She starts walking down the line to leave, but the head Russian woman starts to yell at her. The man reaches over the counter, picks Y.T. up, and puts her down on the other side. The Russian woman goes quiet when she sees the man. The man tells Y.T. that he wanted to go out to eat instead. Y.T. asks the man where you can go out to eat on the Raft.

The man leads Y.T. up to the deck and over towards the white ships: the upscale section of the Raft. The white ships are about thirty feet below the deck Y.T. and the man are standing on. The man grabs a rope hanging over the edge and loops it around his arm and leg. The man picks up Y.T. under his arm and jumps over the edge of the ship, and slides down to the white ship below. When they are standing on the deck, Y.T. asks the man what his name is. The man replies that his name is Dmitri Ravinoff, usually called Raven. Y.T. swears to herself. Y.T. and Raven make their way through the tangle of boats and walkways. Y.T. and Raven approach the Russian area of the Raft. Everyone gets out of their way, and Y.T. realizes that everyone here is scared to death of Raven, and that she is on a date with him.

Chapter 47 Analysis

Now that Y.T. knows that the people on the Raft are brainwashed, she regularly pokes fun at them, and they are oblivious to her remarks. The appearance of Raven in the cafeteria line is a welcome distraction to Y.T. Despite what Y.T. knows about Raven, she is intensely attracted to him. It is obvious that everyone else on the Raft is deathly afraid of Raven, and Y.T. likes Raven because he's dangerous. In typical teenage fashion, Y.T. determines that she is on a "date" with Raven, since he has taken an interest in her.



Chapter 48

Chapter 48 Summary

Hiro is on a life raft with three others: Vic the sniper, Eliot, the captain of the now former Kowloon, and the Mafia guy with the glass eye, who will only identify himself by his nickname: Fisheye. Hiro, Vic, and Eliot are armed, and Fisheye has what looks like a large black suitcase. The suitcase is connected to a thick cable that flows over the edge of the life raft into the ocean and connects to a large hunk of metal with intricate fins all over it. The hunk of metal was also glowing red hot when it was pulled out of the water, revealing that it was probably full of radioactive material. All four men are wearing orange survival suits. The life raft drifts out to sea over the next two days, too far away from anything to communicate via walkie-talkie. Fisheye tells Hiro that he thinks that Uncle Enzo is really mad at L. Bob Rife.

Hiro spends time on his computer hacking. Hiro has the scroll that the avatar dropped in The Black Sun. The scroll is simply software. It is dangerous software to be sure, but can be analyzed if the right tools are used. Hiro writes some code that can analyze and extract information on the Snow Crash virus without actually looking at it. Hiro then writes an antidote called Snow Scan. Hiro also spends some time building an invisible avatar, which is very difficult to create well. Hiro pulls up scraps of code from other programs and recycles them into his new programs. While going through old folders, Hiro comes across an old motorcycle program from the early Metaverse. Before the Monorail was created, avatars had to walk or create vehicles to get around, and since the laws of physics didn't apply, vehicles could travel at the speed of sound.

Chapter 48 Analysis

The men on the life raft do what they can to kill time while they are on the sea. Vic, the sniper, is used to killing time, and has a book in his jacket to read. Hiro, in true hacker form, uses the down time on the life raft to do some hacking that he thinks will be useful later. He uses this time to analyze the Snow Crash virus and to develop an antidote, and pulls together other scraps of code to make new programs.



Chapter 49

Chapter 49 Summary

A large trawler appears near the life raft one day, coming through the fog. Eliot identifies the ship as belonging to the Bruce Lee pirates, and this seems to bother Eliot. Eliot tells the men that the leader, Bruce Lee himself, has a vest with the group logo on the back, and the logo is made from different colored scalps. Suddenly, Fisheye decides he wants to talk to Bruce Lee. Eliot says the only thing the pirates would be interested in is sex. Fisheye then decides that Hiro and Eliot need to strip down. Fisheye tells them all that the pirates will listen to reason.

Hiro and Eliot strip down, and the trawler approaches the life raft. Bruce Lee tells Hiro and Eliot to turn around, and the men on the trawler start laughing and cheering. One of the men on the trawler climbs up on the railing and starts to babble, and all of the other men join in. Hiro falls over in the raft, since it just moved quickly under him. Hiro looks up and realizes they have moved away from the trawler. He hears a whirring sound coming from the direction of Fisheye. Fisheye appears to be holding a miniature Gatling gun, connected to the black suitcase, which is now open. Inside the suitcase, Hiro can see a color monitor with graphics showing the status of the system. The gun stops whirring, and Fisheye tells them that he was sure the pirates would listen to Reason. Hiro now notices the plaque on the suitcase with the label "REASON", a hypervelocity rail gun that shoots slivers of depleted uranium. The men paddle over to one of the yachts and board it. The only crew member left alive is a Filipino boy in the galley. Eliot and Hiro patch the electrical system back together, and Hiro recharges the battery on his computer. The glow from the Raft can be seen off in the distance. Fisheye decides that they will go to the Raft to extract Y.T.

Chapter 49 Analysis

The men use what resources they have to obtain a powered vessel. Despite the fact that Fisheye doesn't like guns, he has no problems using Reason to take out the pirates. Fisheye uses the available situation to get his mission back on track. Now that he has a powered vessel, he can continue on to the Raft to rescue Y.T. for Uncle Enzo. Hiro uses his limited electronics knowledge to help Eliot get the boat functioning again, though Eliot's ability far outweighs his own.



Chapter 50

Chapter 50 Summary

Raven and Y.T. walk out onto what used to be a riverboat and is now some sort of entertainment establishment. Very loud music echoes off of the steel walls. Raven and Y.T. find a table and a waiter comes over to take their order. Y.T. can barely hear any conversation. Raven seems to be telling Y.T. about the Aleuts and how they were screwed over by the Nipponese and the Americans. Y.T. asks Raven how he got involved with the Orthos. Raven tells Y.T. that he went through a very bad period of drinking and hedonism, and he mentions that the only thing he does better than harpooning is making love to a woman. Y.T. thinks that Raven is crude, but he is really turning Y.T. on. Raven explains that he used to work on a fishing trawler, and once got so drunk that he passed out and woke up floating in the ocean in his survival suit. After a couple of days he drifted to Kodiak Island, where some of the Orthos took him in and took care of him. The Orthos showed him that things like alcohol, debauchery, and television were killing him. A waiter approaches the table and tells Raven that he is wanted on the radio. Raven downs the rest of his fish, kisses Y.T. on the cheek and tells her that he will be right back, that he has a job to do.

Chapter 50 Analysis

Y.T. goes out on a date with Raven to what passes for an entertainment complex on the Raft. Raven shares some of his background with Y.T., particularly the change in his life after he was saved by the Orthos. Raven is apparently a recovered hedonist, but it seems he has not lost his lust for women. Raven is interrupted by a call on the radio, and he is visibly irritated by the interruption. Despite Raven's "scary" persona, he takes the time to kiss Y.T. on the cheek before he leaves.



Chapter 51

Chapter 51 Summary

Hiro and the men cut all of the lights and run as dark as possible. Eliot tells everyone if they see any people with antennas coming out of their heads to kill them first. Hiro asks Eliot about this, and Eliot says they are Raft gargoyles, and they can communicate with each other. One boat strays near and Vic manages to take it out. A few other boats are circling, and they gather out of range. A couple of swimmers try to board the boat, but Eliot and Hiro take them out. Off to the left, Hiro can see something low and flat in the water. It's a man in a kayak, carrying a spear in one hand. By the time Hiro realizes this is Raven, Raven has thrown the spear. The spear hits Fisheye and passes straight through his body. Fisheye falls over the edge of the boat into the water. Hiro looks back, but Raven is gone. Hiro shoots at some more swimmers trying to board the boat, and then has to catch his balance as the boat suddenly jerks. The boat is caught in a web of cables and other flotsam. Hiro calls out for Eliot, but Eliot is no longer on the boat. Vic has been caught in some machine gun fire and is dead. Hiro goes forward and sees Reason's display screen. The system has crashed. Hiro decides that going onto the Raft can't be any worse than this situation, so he puts the boat's dinghy into the water. Hiro looks up and sees the Filipino boy that was on the boat when they first boarded the pirate boat. The Filipino boy asks to go with him, and says he can work as a guide.

Chapter 51 Analysis

Hiro sees the wireheads for the first time, and Eliot confirms that they can all communicate with each other, effectively controlling the masses on the Raft. Several waves of attackers manage to kill all of the men on the boat except for Hiro and the Filipino boy. Once the boat gets tied up in the mass of cables, Hiro decides it would be more efficient to use a smaller craft to get negotiate around the Raft, so he uses the boat's inflatable dinghy instead. Raven again shows his spear and kayak expertise, and it is evident that this is the reason that Raven was called away while he was previously with Y.T.



Chapter 52

Chapter 52 Summary

Y.T. waits for a long time, but finally Raven returns. Raven asks Y.T. if she'd like to see the Raft. Y.T. asks Raven why he's not all whacked out like the others on the Raft. Raven explains that the world is full of people and entities that are larger than the average person, and if you can grab on and hitch a ride for a while, you can go far. Raven goes on to say that although he believes in a lot of the same things as the Orthos, he doesn't follow all of their tenets. Y.T. asks Raven what his goal is. Raven whispers in Y.T.'s ear, and asks her if she means short term or long term. Y.T. replies that he should start with long term. Raven replies that he's not sure, he used to have a plan to nuke the US, but that he really can't stop thinking about the present, where he has rented a nice room to spend his last night on the Raft in. Y.T. was expecting something seedy, but Raven had rented a whole shipping container, high luxury for the Raft. Raven kisses Y.T., and Y.T. is surprised at how warm Raven is. Raven squeezes Y.T.'s buttock, and she lets out a moan. Y.T. knows that Raven's got her now, since she never makes noises during sex. Y.T. falls onto the futon, and Raven follows, letting his lower body slam into hers. Raven holds Y.T. down with a kiss and unzips her coveralls. Y.T. thinks there is something that she needs to remember to do, but she is too enthralled in the moment. Raven strips himself down. Y.T. climaxes as soon as Raven enters her, something that has never happened to her before. Y.T. lets out a scream, and she and Raven both go limp. Y.T. figures that Raven must have climaxed too, and they both doze for a few minutes. Then Y.T. realizes what she was supposed to remember to do. Y.T. was still wearing her dentata, her last line of defense. When Raven penetrated her, a microscopic needle penetrated Raven and pumped him full of narcotics. Y.T. realizes that Raven will be knocked out for about four hours.

Chapter 52 Analysis

Raven reveals that although he sympathizes with the Orthos, he does not adhere to all of their beliefs. It is shown that both Raven and Y.T. hitch rides with entities that are larger than they are to get where they need to go. Y.T. succumbs to the passion with Raven, and totally forgets about her dentata.



Chapter 53

Chapter 53 Summary

Tranny, the Filipino boy, gets into the dinghy, and Hiro gathers up some water and ammunition. Hiro hears a wounded man babbling on the deck of the boat and knows that he needs to put the man out of his misery. The man has the top half of his head blown off and is obviously dead, but his vocal cords must be twitching. Hiro sees an antenna on the man's head, and tries to pull it off, but the head moves with the antenna. This is when Hiro realizes that the antenna is attached to the man's skull. Hiro switches on the radar in his goggles, and he can see that the man has several microchips in his skull and some wires that extend from the antenna into the man's brain. Hiro realizes that Rife has found a way to connect to the part of the brain where Asherah exists. The man's brain was still making his vocal cords recite babble. Hiro goes back to where Reason is and shuts it down with the power switch. Hiro loads the gun back into the suitcase, and drags the suitcase into the dinghy, making sure the steaming hunk of metal stays in the water. Once they clear the neighborhood, they arrive in what looks like a water highway between the rings of ships. Hiro and Tranny pass several neighborhoods with entrances guarded by thugs, and every so often, Hiro sees a man with an antenna like the one on the boat. Hiro and Tranny arrive at a series of houseboats, and Tranny tells Hiro this is home.

Chapter 53 Analysis

Hiro discovers more about the "wireheads" in this chapter, and realizes that Rife must use these people to control the regular people around them. Even though the wirehead is dead, the signal from the antenna can stimulate the man's vocal chords. Hiro discovers that the Raft is mainly made up of floating ethnic neighborhoods, with houseboats and trawlers lashed together. The Vietnamese, Filipinos, Koreans, and many others have staked out their territory around the Raft.



Chapter 54

Chapter 54 Summary

One of the most important skills that a Kourier learns is how to go places without garnering attention. Y.T. walks out of the container and heads to the main desk. It helps that everyone is scared to death of the man Y.T. came in with. Y.T. asks the clerk if she could use a Metaverse terminal and charge it to her room. The clerk tells Y.T. yes, and Y.T. thinks she may enjoy the perks of this relationship with Raven.

Chapter 54 Analysis

Y.T. has genuine feelings for Raven, despite what happened with the dentata, but she takes this chance to get out and contact Hiro. Y.T. finds it odd that the Raft, where she has seen the lowest of the low, and where people are living in extreme situations, has what amounts to a full-service, high-class hotel on board.



Chapter 55

Chapter 55 Summary

Hiro leaves Tranny's party and pulls Reason out onto the deck of the houseboat. He connects to Reason with his computer and reboots the system. Hiro thinks that he needs to find a software update for Reason so it doesn't crash again when Hiro really needs it. Hiro enters his house in the Metaverse. Hiro finds the headquarters for Ng Security Industries, and finds the reception desk. The woman asks if Hiro is here for sales or customer service. Hiro replies that he is here for customer service, and when the woman asks Hiro what product he is here for, Hiro tells the woman that the product is Reason. Immediately another daemon appears and has Hiro follow her. The woman leads Hiro to a paneled room where Ng himself is sitting behind a desk.

Hiro tells Ng that Reason crashed at an inopportune time. Ng replies that he had told Fisheye that Reason was a beta version. Hiro tells Ng he needs it to take over the Enterprise. Hiro turns around to see Uncle Enzo and an Asian man being ushered into the room. Hiro realizes that the Asian man is Mr. Lee, of Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong. Hiro asks Uncle Enzo and Mr. Lee what they've learned so far, and Uncle Enzo tells Hiro that they know bits and pieces. Hiro tells them that he has figured most of the story out, and he'll have the rest when he finds Juanita. Uncle Enzo then tells Hiro that Hiro has some very valuable intelligence, and hands him a hypercard representing a financial transaction of twenty-five million Hong Kong dollars.

Chapter 55 Analysis

Hiro looks at Reason as another piece of electronic hardware and realizes that it needs a software update to get it operational again. When he travels to Ng Security Industries, Hiro realizes the scope of involvement of the other entities, including the Mafia, Mr. Lee, and Ng himself. Hiro and the others finally get to put all of their respective puzzle pieces together, and it is obvious that Hiro needs to find Juanita and release the nam-shub of Enki. Uncle Enzo specifically asks Hiro to split the payment with Y.T.



Chapter 56

Chapter 56 Summary

Hiro tells the men that he is on the Raft looking for a piece of ancient software that can be used to manipulate people by tapping into the deep structures of the brain. The en Enki felt that humans were stagnant and generated the Enki nam-shub that essentially reprogrammed the brains of humans. But the deep structures contained a metavirus, one that could not be removed, and the metavirus remained dormant inside humans, like a strain of herpes simplex. After Enki had delivered the nam-shub the civilizations split, causing diversity, which Enki felt would allow the human race to adapt and grow stronger. By the time the Hebrew culture developed, their religion had become rigid and regimented, and by doing so prevented the spread of Asherah. At the advent of the Pentecostal Church, there was essentially an outbreak of Asherah, and the people spoke in tongues. The Pentecostals were suppressed by the mainline church until the 1900s and the revival movement grew. Finally, L. Bob Rife and Reverend Wayne developed a global communication network to spread the Word, and the cult of Asherah was re-established.

Chapter 56 Analysis

Hiro explains the gravity of the situation to the other men, describing how Rife's organization has mastered the process of using nam-shubs to control the minds of others. The babbling is revealed as the ancient Sumerian language which lays dormant in the deep structures of the brain. Glossolalia was suppressed by most religions until the Pentecostal movement, and L. Bob Rife was using his extensive network to spread the Asherah virus.



Chapter 57

Chapter 57 Summary

Hiro tells the men that Lagos had figured these details out and had gone to Rife to try to sell this information. Lagos figured that Rife could use the virus to control the information that his workers were exposed to. But Rife took the idea and developed it to the point that his church was creating thousands of missionaries to spread the Word throughout the world. Rife created two different delivery methods. The first was vaccinations. His missionaries visited countries all over the world and inoculated people against common diseases, but also introduced the Asherah virus. Back in America, he incorporated the virus into a drug called Snow Crash.

The Raft is a method to move his followers from the Third World to America. The Raft looks as if it is chaotic, but it is tightly controlled by the men with antennas grafted to their skulls. Hackers are essentially Rife's largest opponent, since they are very literate and creative in nature. Their skills cannot be duplicated by a machine. Hiro does not know how to cure hackers after they have been infected by the binary virus, but he does know that there is an antidote to the traditional virus: the nam-shub of Enki. Rife had found the nam-shub of Enki in Iraq and was keeping it so that it could not be used against him. Hiro proposes that if they can find the clay tablet on the raft and broadcast the nam-shub, Rife would no longer be able to control all of the people. Ng gives Hiro a hypercard with updated software for Reason.

Chapter 57 Analysis

Rife developed the most efficient ways to distribute the virus to the masses: religion and drugs. Hiro realizes that he has to act before the Raft breaks apart so that the nam-shub of Enki will be transmitted to all of the followers. Rife's success would be the downfall of the technical freedom that Hiro thrives on.



Chapter 58

Chapter 58 Summary

Hiro leaves the Ng Security Industries building and exits out to the Street to see Y.T. sitting out front on Hiro's motorcycle. Hiro tells Y.T. that he is on the Raft too, and that they're twenty-five million dollars richer. Y.T. tells Hiro that she is in trouble, and when Y.T. tells Hiro the story about her and Raven, Hiro feels woozy. Y.T. asks Hiro if he has found Juanita yet, and Hiro tells Y.T. that he hasn't. Suddenly Hiro hears a large noise in reality, and tells Y.T. that he is getting into a gunfight. Back in reality, Hiro maneuvers the dinghy through the neighborhoods and is nearly hit by another projectile. Hiro can see the "wireheads" watching him and communicating his position. Hiro is still connected to the Metaverse, he tells Y.T. that he is busy, and to put his avatar on the motorcycle and drive it back to Hiro's house. Hiro maneuvers the dinghy to a channel that is empty of people, and re-enters the Metaverse. Hiro asks the librarian for blueprints of the aircraft carrier.

Chapter 58 Analysis

Hiro uses this opportunity to regroup and plan his assault on the aircraft carrier. Hiro is nearly knocked out by the news that Y.T. got together with Raven, but pulls himself together to prepare for the siege on the aircraft carrier. The wireheads are aware that Hiro is advancing on the aircraft carrier, and they direct fire from the massive guns on the deck of the aircraft carrier. The guns are not very precise, and Hiro manages to keep away from the projectiles. The projectiles destroy several vessels in the Raft in the process, proving that Rife doesn't particularly have the best interests of the refugees in mind.



Chapter 59

Chapter 59 Summary

Hiro opens up Reason's case and boots it up. Hiro straps the gun barrel onto his torso and connects the targeting to his computer. The Librarian returns with the information on the aircraft carrier, and merges it with the program YOU ARE HERE so that Hiro can navigate through the carrier using his goggles. Hiro pilots the dinghy down one of the water channels that lead to the Core. Hiro can make out two of the Enterprise's deck guns, and he blows them away with a few blasts from Reason. As Hiro gets closer, he passes a large container ship, then an oil tanker, and finally, he is alongside the hull of the Enterprise. Using the YOU ARE HERE program, he looks for a good place to breach the hull. The ship armor is too thick at the waterline, but up higher Hiro finds a wardroom and opens fire. The hull here is still very thick, and Hiro only manages to carve out a small hole in the hull, but it is large enough for him to climb through. Hiro dumps Reason overboard, and climbs through the jagged hole into the wardroom, the hot metal melting parts of his coveralls. He finds the door out of the wardroom, and draws his katana.

Chapter 59 Analysis

Hiro uses both high-tech weaponry (Reason) and low-tech weaponry (his katana) to enter and advance through the aircraft carrier. Hiro uses up all of Reason's ammo, then enters the aircraft carrier to make his way up to the deck. Hiro does not really know where Rife would keep the tablets, and Hiro does not really have a plan at this point.



Chapter 60

Chapter 60 Summary

Y.T. is sitting in Hiro's office in the Metaverse. Someone taps Y.T. on the shoulder in real life, but she ignores him. Suddenly, her view of the Metaverse disappears, and she is looking at an Asian man with a wire antenna coming out of his head. Y.T. asks the wirehead what he wants, and the wirehead grabs Y.T.'s arm and drags her off. Y.T. sees a RARE helicopter land on the container ship and medical personnel come pouring out. Y.T. realizes that they are going to wake up Raven. The wirehead drags her across the oil tanker and puts her into a cage hanging from the Enterprise. The cage swings around to the flight deck on the aircraft carrier, and Y.T. can see a helicopter waiting on the deck with several people standing outside of it. Y.T. gets out of the cage and walks towards the helicopter. One of the men at the helicopter approaches Y.T. The man is L. Bob Rife. They get on board Rife's helicopter. Rife tells Y.T. not to step on something; it turns out to be a flat rock of some kind wrapped up in plastic. One of the men tells Y.T. that it is an ancient artifact. Rife introduces Y.T. to a couple of personnel on the helicopter. As the helicopter prepares to take off, a few explosions grab their attention. Y.T. looks out and sees Hiro on the flight deck with a sword in one hand and a gun in the other. The helicopter takes off, and Y.T. pushes the tablet out of the open door of the helicopter.

Chapter 60 Analysis

Y.T. is discovered, and a team rushes in to revive Raven. One of the wireheads delivers Y.T. to Rife, who Y.T. comes face to face with for the first time. Y.T. sees through Rife's pompous attitude and is not intimidated by him. Y.T. returns her own brand of attitude to Rife. Y.T. sees Hiro on the deck of the ship trying to threaten Rife, but Rife is satisfied that having Y.T. on board will protect him. Y.T. does her part and pushes the tablet out of the helicopter. Y.T. the Kourier successfully delivers the tablet to Hiro, though not in the manner they would have all preferred. It is obvious at this point that Hiro and Y.T. represent the two people sent to rescue Innana. Even though they didn't travel to the Raft together, both of their actions are required to obtain the tablet and eventually save Juanita.



Chapter 61

Chapter 61 Summary

Hiro sees the tablet on the deck, then a group of wireheads knock him to the ground. Hiro hears the helicopter take off. The wireheads grab Hiro's arms and legs and carry him face up to a flight deck elevator. Hiro can hear a woman's voice babbling slowly and clearly. Suddenly, the wireheads let go of Hiro and he falls to the deck of the elevator. Hiro cannot move. Hiro sees that the woman is Juanita, and she has an antenna on the back of her head. Juanita leans over and whispers another string of babble into Hiro's ear, and he finds that he can now move. Juanita tells Hiro that she had created that nam-shub. Hiro asks Juanita if she is working for Rife now, pointing at Juanita's antenna. Juanita tells Hiro that the glossolalia doesn't really work on her because she can fight it. Juanita tells Hiro that she came here voluntarily, like Inanna, so she could witness the birth of a religion. Juanita and Hiro determine that they have to release the nam-shub of Enki if they want to have any chance of escaping. Hiro goes out to the flight deck and picks up the dozens of clay pieces. Hiro separates the pieces that make up the outer wrapping from the tablet itself, and takes a digital picture of the fragments. Hiro then connects to the Metaverse and asks The Librarian to digitally put the pieces back together. The Librarian does this, and Hiro asks The Librarian to read the text out loud. Juanita connects the computer speakers to the communication system in the flight tower, and Hiro hears a string of syllables pour out. Juanita is sitting in the far corner covering her ears. Hiro goes out to the flight deck and can hear the rumble of thousands of voices talking in different languages. Juanita comes out to meet Hiro and he notices that Juanita is bleeding behind her ear. Juanita tells Hiro that she cut the antenna wire going into her skull so that she wouldn't be affected by the nam-shub.

Chapter 61 Analysis

Hiro learns that Juanita has become a neurolinguistic hacker like Enki, and that she can develop her own nam-shubs. They release the nam-shub of Enki, freeing all of the Raft people from Rife's control. Juanita cuts the connection to the antenna on her head though, so she can retain her new-found abilities. Hiro, and indirectly Y.T., save Juanita from the "watery fortress", and in the process, Juanita retains the me that she obtained from Rife.



Chapter 62

Chapter 62 Summary

Y.T. tells Rife that she was doing her job, delivering the package to Hiro. Rife tells Y.T. to shut up. The helicopter speeds across the ocean towards California. The RARE helicopter that had come in to help Raven is flying next to them, and Y.T. can see Raven sitting in the back. Raven is goggled into the Metaverse, but he sees Y.T., smiles, and waves at her. Y.T. heart skips a beat, and she pulls down the window shade.

Chapter 62 Analysis

Y.T. the Courier is happy that she could provide another satisfactory delivery, even if Rife is not satisfied with the outcome. Rife still feels Y.T. is valuable as a hostage, and takes her to LAX as a way to protect himself from Uncle Enzo. Y.T. continues to have feelings for Raven, despite the situation.



Chapter 63

Chapter 63 Summary

Hiro is on his motorcycle, heading to Rife's giant black box on the other side of the Metaverse. There is a huge plaza and amphitheater on one side of the Street. There are about half a million hackers there now, watching a benefit concert for Da5id. Juanita is goggled in with him, so she can see what Hiro sees. Hiro arrives where Y.T. had seen Rife's black box. Several security daemons block Hiro's path as he tries to approach the wall of the box. Hiro turns on the invisible avatar he had created, and pushes his way through the daemons. Hiro uses his sword to penetrate the wall of the box. This is an old hack Hiro discovered, taking advantage of the delay time in the signal between the Raft and the satellite connection.

The interior of Rife's Metaverse land is full of geometric shapes and bright colors representing data and system architecture. Hiro finds a set of blue boxes representing an old network with new technology built all around it. Juanita tells Hiro that the cubes are the Government of the United States. Hiro thinks that the Feds are working on a big programming project for Rife. The big blue American cubes feed into another big blue cube off to the side. Hiro sees a motorcycle parked next to the cube, and Raven standing next to it. Raven removes a large round shape from the cube and puts the shape into the sidecar of his motorcycle. Hiro and Juanita realize that this is the equivalent of an atomic bomb in the Metaverse, a device that will release Snow Crash to all of the hackers, and a good fraction of the hackers are already gathered in the amphitheater for Da5id's benefit concert.

Chapter 63 Analysis

Hiro shows his knowledge of the mechanisms of the Metaverse to obtain an edge over Rife, and ultimately Raven. The US government and Rife were indeed linked. Rife had hired the Feds to create the Snow Crash bomb. Raven is hoping to realize his dream of nuking America, even if it is virtual. This chapter also focuses on the graphical representations in the Metaverse. While the avatars represent people, the boxes and cables in Rife's complex represent organizations and connections between them where information can pass.



Chapter 64

Chapter 64 Summary

Raven maneuvers his motorcycle through the blocks and tangles and exits to the Street. Hiro runs back out through the wall, returns to his regular avatar, and starts his motorcycle. Hiro draws his katana and drives up behind Raven. As Hiro is about to swing the katana at Raven's neck, a security daemon gets Raven's attention. Raven sees Hiro and accelerates, causing Hiro's katana to swing through virtual air. The two motorcycles race towards downtown at completely unrealistic speeds. Hiro tells Juanita that if he can cut off Raven's head, then Raven will get kicked out of the Metaverse. Juanita tells Hiro that once Rife and Raven land, they can get someone else to enter the Metaverse and finish the job, but Hiro tells Juanita that Uncle Enzo and Mr. Lee will be waiting for them.

Chapter 64 Analysis

Hiro chases Raven out of Rife's Metaverse complex and towards downtown. While Raven has the upper hand in the chase, Hiro evens the odds with his knowledge of the way the Metaverse works. Hiro knows that the only way he can stop Raven is by decapitating his avatar, but if Rife can get someone on land to continue the job, the bomb may still detonate.



Chapter 65

Chapter 65 Summary

Y.T. wakes up in the helicopter. Rife and the pilot are talking about someone jamming their skyphone. Rife decides that they will land and use the first pay phone they can find. The helicopter lands and Y.T. throws a nearby fire extinguisher at one of the crew. Y.T. manages to get free, and runs across the parking lot. Y.T. sees a Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong franchulate and tries to scale the fence. Y.T. gets part of the way up the fence when she is grabbed from behind by Rife, who carries Y.T. back to the helicopter. Y.T. sees a Kourier standing off on the side of the parking lot, and she tells the Kourier that her name is Y.T. and that these men have kidnapped her. The Kourier watches the helicopter take off, pulls out his phone, and calls in to RadiKS. The Kourier pushes a button, and calls in a Code. Over two thousand Kouriers are watching a Vitaly Chernobyl concert. All at once, their phones all start to blink red.

Rat Thing number B-782, who thinks of himself as Fido, wakes up in a franchise in Phoenix. The doggies are barking far away, but it is something urgent. Some strangers came close to a nice yard, and they had guns. A bad stranger shot Fido once, and a nice girl took care of him and loved him. Fido sees what the strangers looks like, and he can see that the bad strangers are chasing a girl and hurting her. Fido recognizes the girl—this is the girl who loves him. Then Fido does something he's not supposed to do. Fido leaves his yard and jumps over the fence. Fido hears the doggies in a big flat place being warned that the bad strangers are coming there. Fido sees what the big flat place is and where it is. When Fido reaches the highway, he picks up enough speed to break the sound barrier.

Chapter 65 Analysis

Y.T. seizes the opportunity of the helicopter landing to try to escape, but even her Kourier skills can't keep her from being re-apprehended by Rife. Y.T. reaches out to the Kourier, and the reaction of the Kouriers show how loyal they are to each other. Loyalty is also represented by Fido's actions, as he races to save the girl who loves him.



Chapter 66

Chapter 66 Summary

Hiro connects to Raven's voice phone, a feature of vehicles in the Metaverse. Hiro tells Raven about Hiro's father, who served in World War II. Hiro's father had been captured by the Nipponese and put into a prisoner camp with prisoners of varying nationalities. There were two men in the camp that Hiro's father couldn't place, but who turned out to be Aleuts. One of the Aleuts died pretty quickly but the other Aleut was very tough. Raven tells Hiro that the Aleut was Raven's father. The Aleut brewed up a poison and slipped it into the officers' food one day. The Nipponese brought all of the prisoners back from the fields, and while crossing a bridge, the Aleut dove into the water. Raven tells Hiro that the Aleut man had been making harpoons and hiding them in the ditches. Hiro continues that his father decided to help take out whatever Nipponese he could, and Hiro's father and the Aleut managed to escape. The Nipponese found them just outside of Nagasaki. One of the officers drew an ancient samurai sword to kill the men, but just then Nagasaki was bombed. Raven says that the blast blinded his father. Hiro says that his father was facing away from the blast, so he was only temporarily blinded. Hiro's father rose up and fought the Nipponese officer, and won, taking his sword in the process. The war was over in a few weeks, and they were rescued. Raven tells Hiro that America nuked his father twice, once in the war and once in 1972, when the American set off a test nuke in Amchitka.

Chapter 66 Analysis

As Hiro and Raven race across the Metaverse on their virtual motorcycles, it is odd that they have a conversation about their fathers. The link between Hiro's father and Raven's father is revealed, and how different their paths after the war were. Raven is deeply affected by the damage the Americans had done to his father, and it is his life's ambition at this point to inflict as much damage as possible on Americans. His association with the Orthos and Rife is giving him the chance to disable hundreds of thousands of hackers; the elite of today's society.



Chapter 67

Chapter 67 Summary

Y.T. feels the helicopter get hit by some Kourier harpoons. Y.T. can see into the other helicopter; everyone except Raven is staring at the Kouriers on the ground. Raven is still connected to the Metaverse. The other helicopter pilot says that there are still harpoons attached to the underside of the helicopter. Y.T. hears this and leaps out of the helicopter. Y.T. grabs onto a hand hold and swings underneath the helicopter. Y.T. can hear Rife screaming at the pilot to land, and Y.T. realizes that she still is a valuable hostage. Y.T. grabs one of the harpoon cables and wraps it around her body, then goes into a controlled slide down to the harpoon handle. Y.T. looks over at the other helicopter and sees Raven looking at her and smiling. Y.T. realizes that Raven is not mad at her for what happened. Y.T. lets go of the handle and sets off the airbags in her coverall. The airbags deploy, and Y.T. bounces down the highway, coming to a stop in the windshield of a car. A large group of Kourier have now latched onto the helicopter, preventing it from taking off. Rife's helicopter lands, and Y.T. takes an unused harpoon and cable and throws it up into the whirling blades of the helicopter. The cable winds around the rotor, causing it to fail miserably. Rife has taken off running. Rife yells to the other helicopter to go to LAX, and he commandeers a Cosa Nostra pizza car from the stopped traffic. Raven is staring and Y.T. with a big grin, and gives her a thumbs-up. Y.T. flips him the bird, then heads across the street to a Buy N Fly to call her mom.

Chapter 67 Analysis

The Kouriers come to Y.T.'s rescue, and it is obvious that they take care of their own. They see Rife as an un-hip adult giving Y.T. a hard time. Once Y.T. sees Raven's reaction, Y.T. realizes that Raven isn't mad at her for what happened, that he loves her. The Kouriers work together to take down Rife's helicopter, and Y.T. lands the killing blow by throwing the poon cable into the rotor. Despite her experience and all that she has been through, Y.T. is still a teenager, and calls her mom for a ride home.



Chapter 68

Chapter 68 Summary

Hiro loses Raven somewhere in Downtown, but Hiro heads for the amphitheater. Hiro launches his motorcycle into the amphitheater to a cheer from the audience. All of these hackers think this is part of the show. Raven takes the round shape out of his sidecar and drops it onto the stage. The shape cracks and opens, and light starts to grow out of it. Hiro lunges at Raven and Raven tries to shove Hiro back, but physics don't work the same way in the Metaverse, so Hiro doesn't move, and Hiro then cuts off both of Raven's arms. The crowd is going crazy, and then Hiro cuts off Raven's head. Quickly, Hiro switches to his invisible avatar, whispers a voice command to start his Snow Scan program, and leaps into the glowing blue shape. The growing light from the stage revolves itself into immense three-dimensional displays, coalescing into four human forms. There are four nude women, each holding a closed scroll. The women unroll the scrolls, each scroll becoming a massive movie screen. An image resolves on each screen, but it is only words. Words that Hiro had written, "If this were a virus, you'd be dead right now. Fortunately, it's not. The Metaverse is a dangerous place. How's your security? Call Hiro Protagonist Security Associates for a free initial consultation".

Chapter 68 Analysis

The scope of the programming of the Snow Crash bomb is revealed. Although Raven finishes his task of deploying the bomb, Hiro successfully diffuses it with his Snow Scan hack. Hiro has added his own twist to the Snow Scan anti-viral, and injected a bit of humor into what could have been a devastating situation.



Chapter 69

Chapter 69 Summary

Uncle Enzo is waiting at LAX, and carrying a new plank for Y.T. Uncle Enzo is talking to a surveillance guy from Ng Security when a Mafia guy approaches. Uncle Enzo thinks of this guy as "the lieutenant", even though the guy doesn't have any sort of rank. The lieutenant tells Uncle Enzo that the second chopper met up with the pizza car and picked up Rife, and that the helicopter is on its way to LAX. Uncle Enzo tells the lieutenant to get someone to pick up the pizza car. Rife's private jet is sitting on the tarmac. Rife's personal pilots have now sworn loyalty to Uncle Enzo, after watching all of Rife's security personnel meet violent ends. Uncle Enzo trusts their loyalty now. Uncle Enzo asks the Ng Security guy if he has seen anyone approach. The guy replies that he has only seen a few maintenance workers and none of them were armed. Uncle Enzo checks in with the lieutenant, asking if everything is ready, and asking about the pizza car. The lieutenant tells Uncle Enzo that he hasn't done anything about the car yet. A bit of buzz comes over the lieutenant's headset, and he tells Uncle Enzo that someone got out of the helicopter and drove the car away when they picked up Rife. Uncle Enzo moves quietly between the planes puts the plank down and removes his shoes and socks. Uncle Enzo then takes his straight razor and cuts off his pant legs so they don't make noise against his leg hair.

Chapter 69 Analysis

Uncle Enzo is at LAX waiting for Rife. It has reached the point in Uncle Enzo's mind where if he wants something done, he has to do it himself. He is upset about all of the good men he lost on the Kowloon, and is disappointed that the remaining leadership in the Mafia does not meet his expectations. Uncle Enzo again shows his attention to detail by bringing the new plank for Y.T. Uncle Enzo is also disappointed in the state of his franchises based on the actions of the lieutenant.



Chapter 70

Chapter 70 Summary

Uncle Enzo hops up onto a plane and listens. Uncle Enzo then hears a short scream, and realizes that the lieutenant is probably dead now. Uncle Enzo sees Raven, and while Raven is up on the wing of a plane, Uncle Enzo slices one of Raven's Achilles' tendons with his straight razor. Raven falls to the ground, and lunges at Uncle Enzo, slicing into one of his thighs. Uncle Enzo pulls away, managing a deep cut into Raven's shoulder. Uncle Enzo feels a thud in his back, and realizes that Raven has thrown a glass knife at him, but Raven couldn't throw it hard enough to pierce the bulletproof material. Uncle Enzo hears Rife's helicopter land and he falls to the ground from loss of blood. Raven hops over to the helicopter, talks to Rife, and then hops back towards Uncle Enzo while drawing another glass knife. Uncle Enzo pulls himself towards the plank on the ground on his elbows. Uncle Enzo presses a button on the plank, the button that says "RadiKS Narrow Cone Tuned Shock Wave Projector". Uncle Enzo can see Raven standing there surrounded by small shards of glass from all of Raven's broken knives.

Chapter 70 Analysis

Uncle Enzo gets the chance to act like he did in the jungles of Vietnam, something he hasn't done since that time. Uncle Enzo has not lost his abilities; and although he is wounded by Raven, Uncle Enzo manages to thwart Raven's attack using the skateboard he happened to bring for Y.T. Uncle Enzo seems to relish the idea of being back in the trenches, rather than having his Mafia Boys do all of the dirty work.



Chapter 71

Chapter 71 Summary

Rife decides he needs to leave now before the reinforcements get here. Rife sees a large explosion off on the horizon and he can see something small and dark at its center heading towards him. It is a Rat Thing, and it is Fido. Rife sees that Fido is heading straight at him, and he races onto the plane. The pilot also sees what is happening and quickly gets the plane onto the runway and hits the throttle. Y.T. sees this happening since she was planning to have her mom pick her up at the airport. As the plane builds up speed to take off, Fido launches himself into one of the jet engines, and the plane explodes in a fireball. Y.T. watches the scene for a while, then heads out for her mom to pick her up.

Chapter 71 Analysis

Rife tries to escape in his airplane, but Fido does the one last thing he can for the girl who loves him by attacking the man who was hurting her. Y.T. is amused by the spectacle, and sticks around after the explosion to watch the fire and rescue crews.



Characters

Hiro Protagonist

Hiro Protagonist is the primary character in the story. In the first chapter, he is referred to as The Deliverator. After a Metaverse sword fight in The Black Sun, his name on the scoring list is written as Hiroaki Protagonist. Hiro's father was an African-American from Texas, and his mother was a Korean by way of Nippon. Due to his mixed race, he has light brown skin and almond eyes. Hiro lives in a U-Store-It storage unit with his roommate Vitaly Chernobyl, lead singer of Vitaly Chernobyl and the Meltdowns. Hiro has two Nipponese swords that his father won from a Nipponese officer at the end of World War II. Hiro is a master swordsman, both in real life and in the Metaverse. Hiro used to have a full time job as a programmer for Black Sun Systems, but left the corporate world. Hiro is now a freelance hacker and part time stringer for the Central Intelligence Corporation. Hiro went to college with Juanita Marquez, and dated her at one time. Hiro was one of the early hackers in the Metaverse, and he has a great deal of understanding of its history and mechanics.

Uncle Enzo

Uncle Enzo is the head of the Nova Sicilia organization, commonly known as The Mafia. Nova Sicilia owns the Cosa Nostra Pizza company, which employs Hiro at the beginning of the book. Uncle Enzo takes an interest in Y.T. after she delivers Hiro's pizza before its timer goes off. Uncle Enzo likes Y.T. because she can think for herself. Uncle Enzo fought in Vietnam, and he has a very practical approach with dealing with people. Uncle Enzo takes pride in small details, such as purchasing a new skateboard for Y.T. after Y.T. was kidnapped at the Fed building.

Y.T. - the Kourier

Y.T. is a fifteen-year-old girl who has a job as a Kourier for RadiKS. Y.T. lives with her mother in a burbclave, and her mother does not know the extent of her job with RadiKS. Y.T. changes her clothes each morning and night at a local McDonald's to keep her mother in the dark. Y.T. is considered a thrasher, a hip teenage skateboarder who listens to thrash metal bands like Vitaly Chernobyl and the Meltdowns. Y.T. is an expert skateboarder and harpooner, and her upper body strength is above average due to using the harpoon in traffic. Through her Kourier training, she has learned how to get out of many difficult situations, including being handcuffed. Throughout most of the book, Y.T. wears her orange and blue RadiKS coveralls, but the electropigment can be switched to black with the push of a lapel button. The coveralls also have an inordinate amount of pockets and a built-in voice-activated security system. Y.T. is extremely self-confident and attractive, and she knows how to use her looks when she needs to.



Da5id Meier

Da5id Meier was the founder of Black Sun Systems, a programming firm that helped to develop the Metaverse. This venture made Da5id and his employees rich. Hiro and Juanita also worked with Da5id at Black Sun Systems. Da5id was the proprietor of The Black Sun in the Metaverse. Da5id was once married to Juanita. Da5id viewed the Snow Crash virus from the card that Raven gave him, and the virus caused both his computer and his brain to crash.

L. Bob Rife

L. Bob Rife is a cable television and fiber optic baron with a world wide monopoly on information transfer. Rife is the primary financier of the Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates franchise and Rife Bible College. Rife financed extensive archaeological excavations of the city of Eridu in Iraq. Rife purchased an aircraft carrier as a personal yacht, which morphed into the Raft as he picked up refugees in south Asia and infected more followers with the Asherah virus. Although it was Lagos who brought the idea of the Asherah virus to Rife, Rife was the one who saw its true potential as a means to control the masses of the world. In the videos of Rife that Hiro reviews, Rife is portrayed as arrogant and extremely self-confident. He has a large torso and a carefully groomed mustache.

Juanita Marquez

Juanita Marquez is the former girlfriend of Hiro and the former wife of Da5id. Juanita's past accomplishments include pioneering the art of facial expressions and avatar development while she was working at Black Sun Systems. Juanita went to college with Hiro and dated him at one time. Juanita was also married to Da5id for two years but was divorced at the time of the story. Juanita has a deep interest in religion, having been raised as a strict Catholic and going through a period as an atheist. Juanita's journey to the Raft parallels the myth of Annana, who enters the "watery fortress" and returns with the "me". Juanita voluntarily joins the "wireheads" on the Raft, but she is resistant to the control of the nam-shubs. She discovers that she has some powers of her own, and develops new nam-shubs. She severs the antenna connection to her brain before the nam-shub of Enki is released so that she does not lose her neurolinguistic hacking abilities. It is implied that Hiro and Juanita will get back together once they get off of the Raft and home.

Raven

Raven, whose full name is Dmitri Ravenoff, is an Aleut whose primary goal is to destroy America. Raven uses glass knives as weapons, since they are undetectable by radar or metal detectors. Raven is an excellent kayaker. Raven is associated with the Orthos and with L. Bob Rife, but he is mostly along for the ride. There is intense chemistry



between Raven and Y.T. that becomes unfulfilled after the incident with the dentata and later events in the story. Raven is very tall with long black hair, and a mustache that Y.T. thinks does not accentuate Raven's features. Raven drives a motorcycle with a sidecar both in reality and in the Metaverse. In reality, Raven keeps an atomic bomb in his sidecar that is wired to sensors in his brain. If he dies, the bomb explodes. In the Metaverse, Raven uses his sidecar to transport the Snow Crash bomb to the amphitheater.

The Librarian

The Librarian is a computer program that accompanies the large library of data that Juanita gives to Hiro. The Librarian has the ability to retrieve data and make logical decisions, but he cannot develop his own theories or interpret the words of others. Hiro notes that the Librarian is the only software program that is more expensive than The Earth.

Dr. Emmanuel Lagos

Lagos was a researcher at the Library of Congress when it became part of the Central Intelligence Corporation. Lagos made a living collecting and analyzing information. Lagos gathered all of the information that Juanita gives Hiro about the Sumerian myth and L. Bob Rife. Lagos was referred to as a gargoye, because he wore computer and surveillance equipment all over his body so that he could collect data wherever he was.

Fisheye

Fisheye, nicknamed because of his glass eye, is a Mafia man. Fisheye gives Y.T. her first assignment for the Mafia, and Fisheye is also part of the Mafia crew on the Kowloon. Fisheye ends up on the life raft with Hiro, Vic, and Eliot, but is killed by a spear thrown by Raven. Fisheye initially operates Reason.

Y.T.'s Mom

Y.T.'s mom is a programmer who works for the Feds. She puts up with long hours and primitive working conditions because of her loyalty to the United States.

Enki

Enki was a Sumerian god who had the role of en, or keeper of the me in the temple. Enki developed a nam-shub that would cut off access to the deep brain's structures of humanity, which resulted in the creation of numerous languages and the elimination of the Sumerian language.



Asherah

Ashera was a Sumerian goddess who was worshiped through the advent of Judaism.

Annana

Annana was a Sumerian goddess who convinced Enki to give her the me from the temple. Juanita's story parallels the story of Annana.

Ng

Ng is the head of Ng Security Industries. Ng was badly injured in Vietnam and now has a large truck that serves as a high-tech motorized wheelchair. Ng has a great deal of interest in cybernetics, and developed the Rat Things.

Mr. Lee

Mr. Lee is the founder of Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong franchises. Hiro is a citizen of Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong.

The Mafia

The Mafia, also known as Nova Sicilia, is a franchise that also operates Cosa Nostra Pizza.

RadiKS

RadiKS, or Radi Kourier Systems, is a delivery company. It's employees are generally hip teenagers.

The Crips

The Crips are gang that have expanded into a franchise, similar to the Mafia.

The Enforcers

The Enforcers are a freelance security agency. They are usually very large muscular men. Hiro hires Enforcers to provide security at the Vitaly Chernobyl concert.

Orthos

The Orthos are a group who has broken away from the traditional Russian Orthodox church and have embraced Pentecostal Christianity. The Orthos have allied themselves with L. Bob Rife.



Objects/Places

The Metaverse

A three-dimensional virtual world developed by hackers and exploited by industry. The Metaverse is represented as a large sphere, with a main road called The Street which circles the sphere. The center point of The Street is called Downtown, and also referred to as Node 0. This is the most developed portion of the Metaverse. People are represented in the Metaverse by avatars, which could be photorealistic or fantastical. A person's economic status can be determined by the quality and customization of his or her avatar. A monorail system parallels The Street, allowing avatars to quickly travel between nodes. Neighborhoods branch off away from The Street, and people can build virtual houses. Hiro's avatar in the Metaverse looks just like he does in reality, but his avatar wears a black leather kimono. Hiro frequents the bar called The Black Sun, operated by his friend Da5id Meier.

U-Store-It

Hiro and his roommate Vitaly live in a twenty by thirty foot storage unit in Inglewood, CA. Their unit is considered to be high-class because it has its own door that opens up to the outside, rather than a door that opens to a communal hallway.

Burbclaves

A burbclave is a slang term for a gated community. In the book, gated communities are like individual countries with borders, security services, and customs. Some of the burbclaves mentioned in the book are Gila Highlands, The Mews at Windsor Heights, White Columns, and The Farms of Merryville.

Snow Crash

Snow Crash refers to three separate things. A computer system snow crash is caused by an error that causes even the signal to the monitor to crash, resulting in a screen of static that resembles snow. The Snow Crash computer virus is represented by a bitmap, that when transmitted into the optic nerve of a hacker, will cause the brain to crash. The Snow Crash drug is a delivery mechanism for the Asherah virus developed by L. Bob Rife's organization.

Rat Things

Rat Things are cybernetic security systems that are part animal and part machine, developed by Ng Security Industries. The Rat Things are connected over a network so



they can transmit sights, sounds, and smells to other Rat Things. The Rat Things think of themselves as "nice doggies" in a pack with other nice doggies. The Rat Things are powered by a nuclear source, so they must travel very fast in order to keep cool. Ng mentions that the Rat Things can break seven hundred mph on a straightaway and the Rat Thing Fido breaks the sound barrier.

The Kowloon

The Kowloon is a yacht docked in Port Sherman, Oregon and owned by Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong. The Mafia chartered the Kowloon as a base of operations for their assault on the Orthos, and as a means of getting to the Raft to extract Y.T.

The Raft

The Raft is the floating home of L. Bob Rife and his followers. Rife purchased an aircraft carrier, and after he used it to rescue refugees from Bangladesh, other ships and boats of varying sizes lashed on to create a floating continent that drifts in a clockwise direction around the Pacific Ocean.

Fedland

Fedland is the slang term for one of the remaining pockets of the United States government in southern California. Y.T.'s mom is a programmer who works in Fedland.

Alcan Highway

The Alcan Highway is referred to as a two thousand mile-long franchise that is only a few hundred yards wide. It is a growing passageway north out of the United States, through Canada and heading to Alaska. Hiro goes to a Snooze N Cruise on the Alcan highway to find Chuck Wrightson, former president of TROKK.

The Hoosegow and The Clink

The Hoosegow and The Clink are two separate franchise jails. Since the burblcaves do not have on-site jails, the hired security forces bring people that they arrest to one of the local franchise lockups. Y.T. is first brought to The Hoosegow after being apprehended by the MetaCops in the White Columns burblclave. However, The Hoosegow has no room left for any female prisoners, so the MetaCops bring her to The Clink, which in Y.T.'s eyes is a far less desirable place to be.



Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong

Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong is one of the many franchise sovereigns in the Snow Crash universe. Hiro is a citizen of Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong, and Hiro notes that just about anyone can apply to be a citizen there. Two Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong franchises are prominent in the book. The first is where Hiro and Y.T. escape into when being pursued by the taxi drivers. The second is in Port Sherman, where Hiro gets a pass to the marina to get onto the Kowloon.

Port Sherman, Oregon

Port Sherman is where Hiro goes to find passage to the Raft. The town is swollen with refugees from the Raft, and many Orthos. Hiro obtains passage on the Kowloon in Port Sherman.

Themes

Privatization

All aspects of existence in the Snow Crash universe have been privatized. This includes the breakdown of the military to private forces and security organizations, the competition between highway companies, and the shrinking of the United States government to the point where the average person does not know who the President of the United States is. The franchise concept has been distilled to an exact science, easily recognizable by the three-ring binder in the hands of a manager. Government regulation has been reduced so far that L. Bob Rife can easily establish a global monopoly on the fiber-optics market without resistance from world governments. The original structure of the United States has been sold off and sub-divided to the point that the land is made up of self-governing franchised city-states. Even highways have been privatized, and competing franchises resort to gang warfare.

Demographic Extremes

Every demographic portrayed in the novel is played up to extreme. This includes the burbclaves and bimbo boxes in suburbia, the orderly and tech-savvy Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong, the rednecks from New South Africa, and the south Asian boat people on the Raft. L. Bob Rife is a larger than life Texas billionaire, and Hiro himself is a hacker with a virtual persona that is larger than it is in reality. Ethnic groups tend to stick together, such as the Tajeek taxi drivers, due to ethnic mistrust. This fact makes the characters of Hiro and Y.T. stand out from the masses; Hiro because he is bi-racial, and Y.T. because she is willing to associate with people like Hiro or Raven who are outside her ethnic group. In the Metaverse, classes are less determined by ethnic origin, but rather by quality of technology. The kids who buy cheap generic avatars at Walmart are looked down upon by people who can afford custom-built and intricately-detailed avatars.

Roles of Women

Although the female characters in Snow Crash are the focus of the narrative less often than the male characters, it is the female characters who accomplish the most. In the beginning of the book, Y.T. delivers the pizza for Hiro, saving Hiro from the wrath of the Mafia. Y.T. is also the one to obtain the Snow Crash sample, and provides Hiro with useful intelligence on the drug. Juanita is the one who sets the main plot in motion, giving Hiro enough information to come through when she needs him. Juanita had past success while working for Black Sun systems when she pioneered avatar facial development for the Metaverse. The primary trait of the male characters in Snow Crash is bravado, whereas the female characters focus on getting results. Despite the extreme changes in technology and government and the apparent relative equality of the

genders, the relationships between Raven and Juanita and Y.T. and Raven show that the mechanisms of love and lust have not changed.

Style

Point of View

The book is written entirely in third person, although a significant portion of the text refers to internal thoughts and observations of the characters. The book primarily moves between the activities of Hiro and Y.T., with some chapters focusing on other minor characters. The author provides intricate details of the character's observations and interactions.

Setting

Snow Crash is set in the relative present (early twenty-first century), although it is an alternate present, with more highly evolved technology and industrial privatization. This approximate time frame is confirmed by the facts that Hiro and Raven's fathers served in World War II and that Uncle Enzo served in the Vietnam War. Near the end of the book, Hiro notes that both he and Raven were born in the 1970s.

The primary setting of the book is split between industrialized Southern California and the virtual world of the Metaverse, although a significant portion at the end of the story takes place on The Raft, the floating home of L. Bob Rife and his followers. The environment is similar to that in other novels in the cyberpunk genre, but commercial development is more horizontal than vertical in Snow Crash. Whereas many cyberpunk novels describe tightly built cities with skyscrapers and underground levels, the Snow Crash universe has franchises that spread horizontally across the country. The development of the Metaverse, particularly Downtown with its skyscrapers that defy physics and persistent garish advertisements, are a more typical cyberpunk fixture. In reality, ethnic groups are more segregated, and the author plays up the stereotypes of different ethnic groups, from the intolerant white men from New South Africa to the Tajeek taxi drivers who reek of incense.

Language and Meaning

The story is told in a very informal writing style and is laced with the occasional slang and profanity that would be expected from the characters. This type of writing style is common to many books in the cyberpunk genre. The coarse style reflects the grungy environment of common urban living in a world where the world revolves around technology, and those who do not have access to it are beaten down. The informal speaking style of the characters contrasts strongly with the highly academic research on Sumerian myths that are presented in the book.

Structure

The novel consists of seventy-one short chapters, each averaging approximately six pages per chapter. The chapters do not have titles associated with them. Some chapters are as short as half of a page, focusing on a single event.

At the beginning of the book, the story moves back and forth between events that occurred a few weeks apart. This structure is required to properly introduce the two main characters, Hiro and Y.T. Once the story line for the two characters has been established, the story moves to a linear format, with only limited "flashbacks", which are mostly represented as internal thoughts. There is also quite a bit of slang used in the book. The story does move back and forth between reality and the Metaverse, highlighting how integrated the virtual world is into society.



Quotes

"Since then the Deliverator has kept the gun in the glove compartment of his and relied, instead, on a matched set of samurai swords, which have always been his weapon of choice anyhow. The punks in Gila Highlands weren't afraid of the gun, so the Deliverator was forced to use it. But swords require no demonstrations." p. 2

"Until a man is twenty-five, he still thinks, every so often, that under the right circumstances he could be the baddest motherfucker in the world. If I moved to a martial-arts monastery in China and studied real hard for ten years. If my family was wiped out by Colombian drug dealers and I swore myself to revenge. If I got a fatal disease, had one year to live, and devoted it to wiping out street crime. If I just dropped out and devoted my life to being bad.

"Hiro used to feel this way, too, but then he ran into Raven. In a way, this was liberating. He no longer has to worry about being the baddest motherfucker in the world. The position is taken." p. 271

"Rife's key realization was that there's no difference between modern culture and Sumerian. We have a huge workforce that is illiterate or alliterate and relies on TV—which is sort of an oral tradition. And we have a small, extremely literate power elite—the people who go into the Metaverse, basically—who understand that information is power, and who control society because they have this semimystical ability to speak magic computer languages." p. 379

"He pokes his katana through the side of the cube and follows it through the wall and out the other side. . . His blade doesn't have the power to cut a hole in the wall . . . but it does have the power to penetrate things. Avatars do not have that power. That is the whole purpose of a wall in the Metaverse; it is a structure that does not allow avatars to penetrate it. . . In theory, it cannot be ignored. But in practice, it depends upon the ability of different computers to swap information very precisely, at high speed, and at just the right times. And when you are connected to the system over a satellite uplink, as Hiro is, out here on the Raft, there is a delay. . . That delay can be taken advantage of." p. 435

"In the real world—planet Earth, Reality—there are somewhere between six and ten million people. At any given time, most of them are making mud bricks or field-stripping their AK-47s. Perhaps a billion of them have enough money to own a computer; these people have more money than all of the others put together. Of these billion potential computer owners, maybe a quarter of these have machines that are powerful enough to handle the Street protocol. That makes for about sixty million people who can be on the Street at any given time. Add in another sixty million or so who can't really afford it, but go there anyway, by using public machines, or machines owned by their school or their employer, and any given time the Street is occupied by twice the population of New York City.

"That's why the damn place is so overdeveloped. Put in a sign or a building on the Street and the hundred million richest, hippest, best-connected people on earth will see it every day." p. 26



"Pizza delivery is a major industry. A managed industry. People went to CosaNostra Pizza University for four years just to learn it. Came in its doors unable to write an English sentence, from Abkhazia, Rwanda, Guanajuato, South Jersey, and came out knowing more about pizza than a Bedouin knows about sand. And they had studied this problem. Graphed the frequency of doorway delivery-time disputes. Wired the early Deliverators to record, then analyze, the debating tactics, the voice stress histograms, the distinctive grammatical structures employed by white middle-class Type A Burbclave occupants who against all logic had decided that this was the place to take their personal Custerian stand against all that was stale and deadening in their lives: they were going to lie, or delude themselves, about the time of their phone call and get themselves a free pizza; no, they deserved a free pizza along with their life, liberty, and pursuit of whatever, it was fucking inalienable." p. 3

"He is not seeing real people, of course. This is all part of the moving illustration drawn by his computer according to specifications coming down the fiber-optic cable. The people are pieces of software called avatars. They are audiovisual bodies that people use to communicate with each other in the Metaverse. . . Your avatar can look any way you want it to, up to the limitations of your equipment." p. 36

"It is a jamboree of Young Mafia. These youths are even duller than the ones from the all-Mormon Deseret Burbclave. The boys are wearing tedious black suits. The girls are encrusted with pointless femininity." p. 153

"The Mafia has a sample of the drug for the first time, thanks to me and my pal Ng. Until now, it always self-destructed before they could get to it. So I guess they're analyzing it or something. Trying to make an antidote, maybe.' 'Or trying to reproduce it.' 'The Mafia wouldn't do that.' 'Don't be a sap,' Hiro says. 'Of course they would.' Y.T. seems miffed at Hiro. 'Look,' he says, 'I'm sorry for reminding you of this, but if we still had laws, the Mafia would be a criminal organization.' 'But we don't have laws,' she says, 'so it's just another chain.'" p. 250

"Gargoyles represent the embarrassing side of the Central Intelligence Corporation. Instead of using laptops, they wear their computers on their bodies, broken up into separate modules that hang on the waist, on the back, on the headset. They serve as human surveillance devices, recording everything that happens around them. Nothing looks stupider; their getups are the modern-day equivalent of the slide-rule scabbard or the calculator pouch on the belt, marking the user as belonging to a class that is at once above and far below human society. They are a boon to Hiro because they embody the worst stereotype of the CIC stringer. They draw all of the attention. The payoff for this self-imposed ostracism is that you can be in the Metaverse all the time, and gather intelligence all the time." p. 123

"The Nipponese businessman lies cut in segments on The Black Sun's floor. . . But the air does not rush out of him, he fails to collapse, and you can look into the aperture of a sword cut and see, instead of bones and meat, the back of the skin on the other side. It breaks the metaphor. The avatar is not acting like a real body. It reminds all The Black



Sun's patrons that they are living in a fantasy world. People hate to be reminded of this." p. 102

"The business is a simple one. Hiro gets information. It may be gossip, videotape, audiotape, a fragment of a computer disk, a xerox of a document. It can even be a joke based on the latest highly publicized disaster. . . Millions of other CIC stringers are uploading millions of other fragments at the same time. CIC's clients, mostly large corporations and Sovereigns, rifle through the Library looking for useful information, and if they find a use for something that Hiro put into it, Hiro gets paid. He has been learning the hard way that 99 percent of the information in the Library never gets used at all." p. 20

"'I deal in information,' he says to the smarmy, toadying pseudojournalist who "interviews" him. . . 'All television going out to consumers throughout the world goes through me. Most of the information transmitted to and from the CIC database passes through my networks. The Metaverse—the entire Street—exists by virtue of a network that I own and control.'" p. 107



Topics for Discussion

Hiro's name is a variation of the character types Hero and Protagonist. Does Hiro fit one or both of these character types?

Compare and contrast the male (Hiro Protagonist, Raven, L. Bob Rife) main characters with the female main characters (Y.T., Juanita). What are the roles of the different genders in the story? Do the characters' activities fit traditional gender roles?

Discuss the parallels of ancient myths and modern technology described in the story.

The characters and entities in this book exhibit many extremes, such as extreme vehicle speeds in the Metaverse, extreme privatization of traditionally government functions, and extreme difference between the "haves" and "have nots" in the world. Describe some of the extremes that the characters and entities in the book personify.

Discuss the stereotypes represented in ethnic groups and franchises in the book, including the Mafia, Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong, the Feds, and others.

Describe the similarities between the Metaverse as described in the book and the Internet as we know it today, including 3D massively multi-player games and interactive sites such as Second Life. Keep in mind that Snow Crash was written in 1992.

Juanita's avatar facial development was an important mechanism leading to the success of the Metaverse. Why is facial development so important?

The use of technology to augment biological systems is apparent in various degrees in the book, from gargoyles wearing computer equipment, to Ng and the Rat Things, who could be considered cybernetic. Compare how these characters think of themselves versus how the outside world thinks of them.