

A Wild Sheep Chase Study Guide

A Wild Sheep Chase by Haruki Murakami

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Contents

[A Wild Sheep Chase Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Plot Summary.....4](#)

[Part 1, Chapter 1: Wednesday Afternoon Picnic.....5](#)

[Part 2, Chapter 2: Sixteen Steps and Part 2, Chapter 3: The Slip.....6](#)

[Part 3, Chapter 4: The Whale's Penis and The Woman with Three Occupations and Part 3, Chapter 5-6: Unblocked Ears and The Further Adventures of Unblocked Ears.....8](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 7: Before the Strange Man and Part 4, Chapter 8: Now the Strange Man.....10](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 9: The Boss Part 4, Chapter 10-12: Counting Sheep, The Limo and its Driver, and Wherefore the Worm Universe.....12](#)

[Part 5, Chapter 13-14: The Rat's First Letter and The Rat's Second Letter and Part 5, Chapter 15-16: The Song is Over and She Drinks Her Salty Dog, Talking about the Sound of the Waves.....14](#)

[Part 6, Chapter 17: The Strange Man's Strange Tale and Part 6, Chapter 18: The Strange Man's Tale Goes On.....16](#)

[Part 6, Chapter 19-21: The Limo and Its Driver, Again, Summer's End, Autumn's Beginning, and One in Five Thousand.....18](#)

[Part 6, Chapter 22-23: Sunday Afternoon Picnic and Limited but Tenacious Thinking.....20](#)

[Part 6, Chapter 24: One for the Kipper.....22](#)

[Part 7, Chapter 25-26: Transit Completed at Movie Theater; On to the Dolphin Hotel and Enter the Sheep Professor.....23](#)

[Part 7, Chapter 27: The Sheep Professor Eats All, Tells All and Part 7, Chapter 28: Farewell to the Dolphin Hotel.....25](#)

[Part 8, Chapter 29: The Birth, Rise, and Fall of Junitaki Township Part 8, Chapter 30: The Further Decline of Junitaki and its Sheep.....28](#)

[Part 8, Chapter 31-32: Night in Junitaki and An Unlucky Bend in the Road.....31](#)

[Part 8, Chapter 33-35: She Leaves the Mountain; Hunger Strikes, A Find in the Garage; Thoughts in the Middle of the Pasture, and The Sheep Man Cometh.....33](#)



[Part 8, Chapter 36-37: The Wind's Own Private Thoroughfare and Things the Mirror Shows, Things the Mirror Doesn't.....](#) 35

[Part 8, Chapter 38-40: And So Time Passes, Dwellers in the Darkness, and The Rat who Wound the Clock.....](#) 37

[Part 8, Chapter 41-43: Green Cords and Red Cords; Frozen Seagulls, Return Visit to the Unlucky Bend, The Twelve O'clock Rendezvous.....](#) 39

[Part 8, Epilogue.....](#) 41

[Characters.....](#) 42

[Objects/Places.....](#) 46

[Themes.....](#) 48

[Style.....](#) 50

[Quotes.....](#) 52

[Topics for Discussion.....](#) 54



Plot Summary

A Wild Sheep Chase by Haruki Murakami is a wonderful combination of fantasy, mythology, mystery, comedy, and drama that leads the reader through the journey of one man's quest for his own identity, as well as for a very special sheep. Along the path, the man learns that not everyone is as they appear, that there are forces beyond one's control, and that even the weakest person can be a hero. In addition, he finds that in the end, it is his own mediocrity and selfish view of life that is responsible for much of his undoing.

The main character, who remains unnamed throughout the novel, is an advertising executive whose existence is one of self absorption and meritocracy. His meaningless life has no true emotional ties for him, and he lives each day as he did the previous, without any real passions, desires, or dreams. His wife, unable to contend with his lack of emotion, has left him for one of his friends, and even this seems to affect him only peripherally. His current girlfriend, a kind woman with a pleasant outlook on life, is a prime focus of his life. However, this is primarily due to her ears, which he describes as marvels of creation that contain special powers. Throughout the entire novel, no character is referenced by name.

The man finds himself as the recipient of a photograph from a friend, the Rat. After using it in an advertisement, the man finds himself bent to the will of the Boss, an underground right wing shadow figure who runs much of the political, financial, and social empire of Tokyo. The Boss is dying and sends a messenger to inform the man that he has one month to locate one of the sheep in the photograph, or he will be financially ruined, at best.

The man and his girlfriend travel across Japan, meeting several characters along the way who lead them to the conclusion that the sheep is a metaphysical being who uses its host to perform acts in an effort to create a united front, with the sheep at the helm. In the end, it is only through the Rat's acceptance of his weaknesses and the man's confrontation of his own meritocracy that the sheep is able to be defeated. While a fantastical tale in appearance, A Wild Sheep Chase is a novel about isolation, authority, and the duality of good and evil, as well as the story of one man's journey to find himself.



Part 1, Chapter 1: Wednesday Afternoon Picnic

Part 1, Chapter 1: Wednesday Afternoon Picnic Summary

The novel is set initially in Tokyo, Japan, and begins with a phone call to the main character of the story, who remains unnamed. From that initial phone call, the story follows this man on his journey to find his own meaning of life, and an end to mediocrity, as well as to find a mythical sheep. The novel begins as the narrator of the story is phoned about the death of a young woman he used to know. He attends the funeral and recalls his relationship with her eight years previous. He had met her at a coffee shop while in college, and the two quickly began a sexual relationship, although now, he cannot remember her name without looking at the obituary.

Part 1, Chapter 1: Wednesday Afternoon Picnic Analysis

This chapter, while short, introduces the reader to both the main character as well as to the narrative writing style of the book. The main character, who remains unnamed throughout the story, is clearly a kind person, based on his descriptions of the young woman who passed away. However, he also admits to being someone lost in life during his college education, and even now seems to be unsettled in his life. The death of his old college friend and lover comes as a slight surprise to him, but serves to show his character as a soft-hearted and caring friend, while simultaneously foreshadowing the wayward journey of the man throughout the story.



Part 2, Chapter 2: Sixteen Steps and Part 2, Chapter 3: The Slip

Part 2, Chapter 2: Sixteen Steps and Part 2, Chapter 3: The Slip Summary

The author arrives home after the funeral, slightly intoxicated, to walk the sixteen steps to his door. On arrival, he sees his ex-wife's red heels and realizes she is in the house. The two talk while he eats lunch, and he explains where he has been, realizing too late he no longer needs to explain. She tells him she is only there to pick up her remaining items, but when he offers to deliver them to her new home, she refuses. She states she still loves him, but knows that is no longer the point.

Once the ex-wife leaves, the main character takes a shower and goes about his day, only to have frequent thoughts of how empty the apartment is without her presence. He wishes briefly she had left at least a slip he could hang on the chair to minimize the feeling, but when he checks, she has left nothing personal behind. He laments that it was her choice to leave a month earlier. He realizes the end of their marriage was not surprising, although helped along by her affair with a friend of his. He had let her know that whether or not to divorce was up to her, and she had decided that while she still loved him, she knew their marriage was going nowhere. Their roles had changed over the years, and they were no longer compatible.

Part 2, Chapter 2: Sixteen Steps and Part 2, Chapter 3: The Slip Analysis

In Chapter 2, readers are informed the main character was married, and is, at the time of this chapter, going through a divorce. Throughout the chapter, it is clear the two individuals care for one another, as he gets her to drink coffee and as she makes him lists of things he will need to do. However, at the same time, it is also clear there is a distance between them that has likely existed for quite some time. While he seems to be trying to make her jealous, and it seems to be working, it doesn't seem as though the jealousy is emotionally based. In the end of the chapter, the readers are told the woman still loves the main character, but that this love simply isn't enough to sustain the relationship.

Chapter 3 clarifies the reasons behind the main character's divorce. It is clear in this chapter that while his ex-wife had an affair, there were problems in the marriage prior to this indiscretion. The two individuals had grown apart over their short time together, and while they may have wanted to remain with one another, their time was wasted. Additionally, the reader can see in this section that the loneliness the main character appears to feel is not specifically related to the absence of his ex-wife, but the absence



of someone else in the apartment. He doesn't mention missing her as a person, but her belongings and her presence. On the other hand, the complete removal of all references to her by the woman herself suggests a high level of remorse about wasted time. The woman not only removed her belongings, but also every photo and every piece of herself. This action suggests a strong desire to negate the entire marriage.



Part 3, Chapter 4: The Whale's Penis and The Woman with Three Occupations and Part 3, Chapter 5-6: Unblocked Ears and The Further Adventures of Unblocked Ears

Part 3, Chapter 4: The Whale's Penis and The Woman with Three Occupations and Part 3, Chapter 5-6: Unblocked Ears and The Further Adventures of Unblocked Ears Summary

While lying with his girlfriend, the man remembers seeing a whale penis as a child. His girlfriend is twenty-one, and has, as he terms them, "perfect, bewitching ears". She admits her ears are her best feature, but reminds him they are simply a part of her, and she rarely shows them to other people. He meets her when doing a campaign about ears for his advertising agency. He asks her to dinner after finding her. She agrees, and they meet at an upscale restaurant. They talk of her ears, and he explains that they seem to have a power of their own. She thinks of them as blocked ears, or a part of herself that stands alone. He asks if her ears have special powers, and she replies that if they do, it is on a person-by-person basis. She tells him he cannot leave her side for a few months, pulls her hair back, and shows her ears. The main character is unable to speak, and seems to feel the world move as he gazes at her ears.

The woman asks if the main character now understands why she doesn't show her ears, and why she sees them as a separate entity. He explains that she has become extraordinarily beautiful and now defies understanding. She is aware of the power of her ears, and several patrons turn to gaze at her longingly. In the next chapter, he explains that she shows her ears rarely for a few days, as she is not comfortable with them. However, she does show them often during intercourse, and he admits it takes their lovemaking to an entirely new level. The main character cannot understand why such an extraordinary woman treats him so well, and she explains he is more than what he believes. As they lie in bed together, he thinks of his wife's slip again and wonders why it meant anything to him. The girlfriend tells him he will receive a call in ten minutes about a sheep, and this call will be the beginning of a wild adventure. Shortly thereafter, his business partner calls, asking him to come to the office for an emergency, and when asked, admits it relates to sheep. The main character explains that the wild sheep chase has begun.



Part 3, Chapter 4: The Whale's Penis and The Woman with Three Occupations and Part 3, Chapter 5-6: Unblocked Ears and The Further Adventures of Unblocked Ears Analysis

In the beginning of Chapter 4, the narrator explains his own feelings about sex and relates that it serves several functions. The importance of this is related to his relationship throughout the novel to his new girlfriend, and foreshadows the use of sex, sensuality, and sexuality throughout the novel in relation to their journey later on. The mention of the whale penis, while seemingly disconnected, clearly represents the power of human body parts outside of the connection to a person. Japanese animism, or the belief that power can exist within any specific object individually, is represented well throughout this chapter as the discussion of the woman's ears shows clearly they have a strong power, both over the woman and over others. In addition, this introduction shows the main character's acceptance of his lover for who she is, in addition to his fascination with her ears. It also serves to show the woman as a very fluid, adaptive person. Through her conversation about the ears, she reveals that something happened at age twelve to make her stop showing her ears, foreshadowing the later storyline. Also, this chapter serves to show a little more about the main character, in that he is unsettled in his life.

In Chapter 5, it is clear the woman understands the power of her ears and chooses to treat that power carefully. The emotions expressed by the main character show the true power of the woman's ears, again portraying the theme of animism. This section also shows the beginnings of the couple's relationship.

In Chapter 6, the theme of the power of her ears is again referenced, this time in relation to their sexual relations. It is clear through the main character's conversations with the woman that her ears are a primary focus of their relationship, but at the same time, it is clear by her reactions to such statements that this makes her slightly uncomfortable. This chapter also shows the main character's growth past his divorce as he finds himself no longer needing a reference to his ex-wife in the apartment. At the end of the chapter, the woman foretells a phone call about sheep, again showing her character as one of great power. This reference also foreshadows the adventure to come within the novel.



Part 4, Chapter 7: Before the Strange Man and Part 4, Chapter 8: Now the Strange Man

Part 4, Chapter 7: Before the Strange Man and Part 4, Chapter 8: Now the Strange Man Summary

The chapter begins with the main character explaining that his business partner has gone from a happy drunk to an alcoholic over the last several years. However, on this day, he seems sober enough, and the two talk briefly of the main character's divorce. The partner explains that he believes the firm has overextended itself into too many areas and has therefore become different in its ways. His partner believes they are exploiting the masses, since they write advertising for things in which they don't believe. The main character points out that exploitation is a fairy tale that doesn't exist and that honest work doesn't exist. The two argue, and the main character points out to his partner that the partner is far from innocent, in that he has a drinking problem. The two lament about their failing friendship and begin to talk about sheep.

A man comes to the office at eleven a.m. and is clearly a professional. He is quiet, dressed formally, and is meticulously clean and tidy. He waits motionless for thirty minutes in the lobby, before the main character's partner arrives. The strange man hands the partner a business card with a single name on it, and proceeds to tell him to burn it. The man proceeds to tell the partner that the person on the card wishes to demand certain things, which he assumes the main character's partner will follow exactly. He tells him that first, the agency must cease publishing a certain public relations bulletin—one with an image of a landscape with sheep. The other demand is to speak with the person responsible for using the image. He also states that if the firm does not comply, they will never work in the advertising field, or any other field, again. The partner agrees to pull the photo and to arrange a meeting between this strange man and the main character.

Part 4, Chapter 7: Before the Strange Man and Part 4, Chapter 8: Now the Strange Man Analysis

The main character is clearly concerned about his former friend/partner, but as with everything else, his concern is minimal in relation to his own position. His concern does not relate to his friend's health or wellness, but instead of his own position within the company. It is clear throughout the chapter that the men used to be friends, but over time, have gone separate directions in their lives. The main character, a somewhat alienated individual by nature, feels that their rise to fame requires a certain level of "fluff" to reach success; whereas, this selling out of honesty is clearly bothering the



partner. While the two are on the same path in life, it is clear through their interactions in this chapter that their relationship is going to be terminated soon.

Chapter 8 introduces the right-hand man of a clearly highly-influential character who plays a large role throughout the novel. This strange man shows a powerful level of influence the moment he indicates for whom he works. The partner realizes his options are limited and agrees to all demands immediately, foreshadowing later developments surrounding this character in terms of his high level of power. Additionally, this chapter begins the tale of the sheep, one of the primary components of the storyline throughout the rest of the novel. From the way the man speaks and the offers he makes for cooperation, as well as the threats for a lack of cooperation, the reader can only assume the man is powerful enough to follow through.



Part 4, Chapter 9: The Boss Part 4, Chapter 10-12: Counting Sheep, The Limo and its Driver, and Wherefore the Worm Universe

Part 4, Chapter 9: The Boss Part 4, Chapter 10-12: Counting Sheep, The Limo and its Driver, and Wherefore the Worm Universe Summary

As the main character's partner tells the story, the main individual exclaims that he doesn't understand how this person has so much power. The partner explains that the man's employer, known as "The Boss," is a major right-wing political figure. He was incarcerated by Occupation forces. Once released, he took half of his money and put an entire arm of the conservative party on his payroll. The other half he used to buy up the advertising industry. Further, he has full manipulation over the stock market, as he is able to force turnovers and takeovers seamlessly, and if that is not possible, blackmail or murder are used. Thus, the partner explains, The Boss is on top of a trilateral power base of politicians, information services, and stocks. The partner also tells the main character that The Boss appears to be ill with a brain hemorrhage, that the man who came to the office was The Boss' personal assistant, and that he will be sending a car at four. The main character pulls out the whiskey and has a drink.

The main character recalls the way the photograph came to be used in the bulletin. The photo is of a flock of sheep on a grassy meadow somewhere in Japan, probably in the Hokkaido area. In the next chapter, the car arrives at four. The driver is a professional, but friendly, and acknowledges that he is aware of The Boss' failing health. The main character finds a lighter with a sheep emblem on it in the rear of the limo. He falls asleep again, dreams of trying to find pliers for a talking cow, and awakens at the Boss' home. The area is clearly isolated, surrounded by beautiful forests, and speaks of money. The central home, however, is eccentric, at best. It appears to have been developed by different people over time, so that the end result is a hodgepodge of unlikely combinations of styles. He is ushered into a waiting area inside, where he sees more of the sheep emblems. He waits for ten minutes before being greeted silently by the personal assistant of The Boss.



Part 4, Chapter 9: The Boss Part 4, Chapter 10-12: Counting Sheep, The Limo and its Driver, and Wherefore the Worm Universe Analysis

In Chapter 9, readers meet "The Boss," or the man behind the political structure of Japan. "The Boss" is clearly a high level individual, and while this chapter hints at his connections within business, politics, finances, and all other areas, it only foreshadows information later in the novel. What is certain is that the man behind the decision to pull the photo of sheep is quite powerful and can cause great damage to the firm, as well as to the partners themselves. The fact that the main character does not know who The Boss is seems to suggest again a lack of attention on his part to the society in which he lives. Again readers see his alienation from the real world and from society, which has caused the man to lose his way in his life, career, and marriage. This chapter also hints at the conspiracy theories to come later in the novel, with the intrigue and secrecy surrounding The Boss' life.

Chapters 10 - 12 follow the main character from the office to the home of The Boss. The reader is told first about the sheep photograph and the plainness of the scene but is also told there is something odd about the photo, foreshadowing later events in the novel. When the car arrives, and the main character falls asleep, the dream of the conversation between the cow and the man foreshadows the searching for something, a primary theme coming up in the novel. The oddity of the dream also foreshadows the strangeness of the Boss' home. Also in this chapter, the link between The Boss and sheep is made even more clear as the man finds emblems of sheep within the limo. In the last chapter, the main character describes the very strange architectural components of the Boss' home, which shows the eccentricity of The Boss himself. Further, the sheep emblem appears again, further solidifying the link. Finally, the personal assistant appears again, showing no signs of informality or friendliness, foreshadowing the following chapters as the two men speak of business.



Part 5, Chapter 13-14: The Rat's First Letter and The Rat's Second Letter and Part 5, Chapter 15-16: The Song is Over and She Drinks Her Salty Dog, Talking about the Sound of the Waves

Part 5, Chapter 13-14: The Rat's First Letter and The Rat's Second Letter and Part 5, Chapter 15-16: The Song is Over and She Drinks Her Salty Dog, Talking about the Sound of the Waves Summary

A year previously, a friend of the main character, known as "The Rat," had written a rambling letter in which he apologizes for skipping town without saying goodbye and tells the man of many towns to which he has traveled. He tells the man he will not include his address because he fears if he does "something inside him will change." He then recants the details of his life on the road, encloses a novel, and ends the letter. The postmark is blurred, but he makes out that The Rat sent the letter from Honshu. In May the following year, The Rat sends another letter, this time proclaiming he has come to his final destination. He describes a cold, quiet, isolated area with very few people and a lot of snow somewhere in the mountains. He asks the man to say goodbye to a female friend of his in his hometown. In addition, he asks the man to use the picture The Rat encloses in the letter in some form of advertising in the future. The photo is of sheep. He encloses a check for expenses and ends the letter.

A month later, the man travels to the home town of The Rat to fulfill his wish. He arrives at the bar of a friend, J, and gives him the letters by the Rat to read while he shaves in the bathroom. J's bar, the man admits, has changed from a small dive to an upscale lounge. The two talk of their families, and the man leaves. He realizes the area has changed greatly and is saddened by it. In the next chapter, the man calls the woman from the hotel and arranges to meet her at the hotel bar the following night. When they meet, the two talk of their relationships with the Rat. They continue to talk as the night progresses and he buys her a drink as they talk of their marriages and of the Rat. She explains that her life was boring, but the Rat brought with him an unreality that made things exciting. The man gives her the letters, and the woman rises to leave. She tells the man she knew what he looked like before she saw him, as there was something she could sense about him. The man returns to the hotel room.



Part 5, Chapter 13-14: The Rat's First Letter and The Rat's Second Letter and Part 5, Chapter 15-16: The Song is Over and She Drinks Her Salty Dog, Talking about the Sound of the Waves Analysis

In chapter 13 and 14, readers discover how the man came into possession of the sheep photograph that has so far caused him several problems. The letters from the Rat appear to be rambling but do contain several clues to the Rat's whereabouts that are useful later in the novel. It is clear he has moved to the mountains and has experienced something that has changed his life, although at this point it is unclear as to what that is. His requests are simple enough, if not slightly odd, but the man, again absorbed in his own world, seems to dismiss the entire situation as he shoves the letter and photo into his desk drawer. This yet again shows the main character's self alienation and lack of true solidity within his own world.

The theme of unreality is strong throughout this entire chapter, from the man's sense of his hometown to the woman's descriptions of the Rat. The man's hometown has changed drastically since his departure, and everything seems highly surreal to him. However again, readers can sense a lack of true emotional attachment to the town or to any family. As J reminds him, he could stay with his family; the man notes they are no longer his family, returning to the theme of his self-alienation. The woman's descriptions of her time before the Rat also speak of alienation and unreality, in that her life appeared to be a set of actions prior to meeting the Rat. It is clear, however, that the Rat is an extraordinary character, in that he allowed her a sense of unreality that made her life more exciting.



Part 6, Chapter 17: The Strange Man's Strange Tale and Part 6, Chapter 18: The Strange Man's Tale Goes On

Part 6, Chapter 17: The Strange Man's Strange Tale and Part 6, Chapter 18: The Strange Man's Tale Goes On Summary

Back in the present, the personal secretary of the Boss speaks at length with the main character. The two discuss the losses the firm incurred as a result of pulling the bulletin with the sheep, both in monetary terms and in reliability terms in relation to customer service. The secretary offers the man a deal of a consistent, guaranteed future and monetary gains in exchange for a favor. The secretary asks the man where he got the photo, which is a poor photo taken recently according to the secretary, and why he elected to use it. When the man refuses to answer, he is threatened. However, the secretary backs off and asks the man to examine the photograph under a magnifying glass. The secretary explains the history of sheep in Japan, which includes the fact that the government introduced sheep to Japan in the late feudal period. The man notices that there is a sheep within the photo that is of a different breed than the others, who has a star on his side. The secretary explains that the breed of sheep does not exist in the world and shows him a hand drawn photo of a sheep with the same birthmark. It is the same sheep as that on the sheep emblem throughout the house.

The secretary makes it clear that the man is limiting his options by refusing to reveal his sources. He tells the man of the Boss, who is dying of a brain cyst. He should have died years ago, as the U.S Army doctors who found the cyst predicted in 1945. His symptoms included three-day headaches that required painkillers which resulted in hallucinations, most of which were terrifying in nature, and unknown to anyone but the Boss and the doctors at the time. The secretary has obtained the files and describes them as grueling. He also notes that it is a mystery as to why U.S. doctors were so interested in one man's cysts. He hypothesizes the reason is that they were secretly working out a deal with the Boss in terms of spy activities, that they were trying to figure out a link between the cyst and the Boss' power, or that they were brainwashing him. While he was imprisoned prior to the U.S. Army doctor's involvement, he had severe insomnia. Shortly thereafter, the cyst in the brain appeared.

Additionally, beginning in the spring of 1936, just a few months before his prison release, and about the time the cyst would have been developing, the Boss underwent a high-level, self-transformation that focused his entire work on right-wing politics and the restructuring of mankind. They built the underground empire, but the secretary points out that when the Boss dies, the empire will crumble. He metaphorically divides the empire into two parts—those of the Gain and the Will. He further explains that the



hand-drawn image of the sheep was drawn by the Boss while in the captivity of the U.S. doctors, and that the sheep was in at least eighty percent of his hallucinations. He spent the rest of his life looking through sheep references, trying to find something only he understood, which is how the empire stumbled on the photo used by the main character. He believes the sheep is the center of the Boss' Will, and that the sheep found his way into the Boss and remained there for forty years. The secretary tells the man he intends to find the sheep, but the man again refuses to reveal his source. The secretary tells the man that, in that case, he has two months to find the sheep in the photograph, or he and his firm are finished. He is given a large sum of money for expenses, reminds the man of the time frame, and advises him to leave.

Part 6, Chapter 17: The Strange Man's Strange Tale and Part 6, Chapter 18: The Strange Man's Tale Goes On Analysis

In Chapter 17, readers again see the power of the entities the man finds himself involved with as a result of the sheep photo. The offer of a business deal by the secretary foreshadows the plot line ahead, but the reluctance of the man to offer information also foreshadows the difficult deal that is yet to come between these men. The revelation of the hand-drawn sheep picture, which coincides with the image of the sheep in the photo as well as the sheep on the emblems implies a deep link between the Boss and this particular sheep. Further, the mention that the government of Japan controlled the sheep industry suggests a government link between this rare, if not impossible, sheep breed and the Boss. The impossibility of the sheep breed also tends toward the theme of mysticism used throughout the novel.

Chapter 18 explains much of the story surrounding the sheep, as well as the mystery behind the Boss, but does so with an air of mysticism and fantasy that supports the theme of surrealism seen within the novel through this point. Through the story of the Boss' life, it is clear that the U.S. government had a specific reason for their examination of the Boss' cyst, or of the Boss himself, implying at the very least a government conspiracy. Further, the reference of the sheep entering the Boss and his subsequent transformation implies a tie in with the Rat's own personal transformation, which foreshadows the relationship between the Rat, the sheep, and the Boss. The concept behind the Will and the Gain also implies an outside source of the Will, which is again attributed to the sheep. This foreshadows later individuals claiming the sheep entered them, as well. Finally, this chapter begins the journey of the man on his hunt for the impossible sheep. It is clear that the sheep, the Boss, and the Rat are all linked together, and that the sheep is the source of both power and pain. The sheep appears to represent a manipulation of authority and of humankind, which is a theme that the author returns to several times later in the novel.



Part 6, Chapter 19-21: The Limo and Its Driver, Again, Summer's End, Autumn's Beginning, and One in Five Thousand

Part 6, Chapter 19-21: The Limo and Its Driver, Again, Summer's End, Autumn's Beginning, and One in Five Thousand Summary

The man travels with the same driver through the city streets, talking. The driver admits to being a devout Christian and claims to call God each night, since the Boss provided God's phone number. The man suddenly realizes he has stolen the lighter, but decides to keep it. In the meantime, the driver gives the man God's phone number. The man ends up in a hotel bar, where he tries to call his girlfriend, but receives no answer. He then tries his ex-wife but decides to hang up, and instead orders more beer. He counts the money from the Boss, and finds one hundred fifty ten thousand yen notes. Shortly, he receives a phone call from the secretary, telling him the Boss' condition has changed, and that he now only has one month to find the sheep. He returns to his apartment. When his girlfriend arrives, he tells her about the sheep. She asks when he is leaving, to which he replies that he doesn't intend to go looking for the sheep. She tells him there are only five thousand sheep left in Japan, and that it should be easy to find. She cleans her ears as the two talk, and the man tells her he still thinks there is a catch somewhere. She offers to go with him, and reminds him the Rat may be in a lot of trouble, which is why he would have sent the photo. The man agrees, and the two go to bed.

Part 6, Chapter 19-21: The Limo and Its Driver, Again, Summer's End, Autumn's Beginning, and One in Five Thousand Analysis

In this trio of chapters, there are a few key points. The idea that the limo driver has been given God's telephone number by the Boss signifies again the power of the Boss and of his connections. This power is also demonstrated by the amount of money given to the man for expenses as well as by the fact that the secretary knew where the man was even right after he left the Boss' home. This also suggests the empire will be keeping tabs on him.

The conversation between the girlfriend and the man point out a few helpful pieces of information about the sheep of Japan and foreshadows pieces of the rest of the story. The woman's decision to research sheep again suggests a type of psychic ability about her, in that she took the initiative to research the issue without knowledge of the

situation. Additionally, the few number of sheep in Japan suggests an easy search, but foreshadows possible problems. Finally, the reader now knows the two plan to find the sheep together.



Part 6, Chapter 22-23: Sunday Afternoon Picnic and Limited but Tenacious Thinking

Part 6, Chapter 22-23: Sunday Afternoon Picnic and Limited but Tenacious Thinking Summary

The man awakens, eats, and calls the secretary. He tries small talk first, but the secretary clearly wants him to get to the point. The man points out that he has nothing to lose. However, the secretary points out that everyone has something they do not wish to lose, but agrees to leave the man alone for one month and hangs up. The man goes grocery shopping for supplies, buys tickets to Sapporo, and wanders about the city before returning to his apartment. His girlfriend arrives, with packed bags, and the two sit comfortably on the couch, where the man admits he never feels real. The two make love, and the man finds himself somewhat at peace. The girlfriend goes to work after asking what the man plans to do about the cat. He calls the secretary and tells him he will have to leave the cat with the secretary during his absence, to which he reluctantly agrees. He tells the secretary all of the details of caring for the cat, and the secretary hangs up. The man goes to a nearby bar and has a drink while he phones his partner. He tells him of the day and lets him know he will be gone for at least a month or more. The partner is clearly uncomfortable but agrees reluctantly when the man tells him he has to straighten up, keep his children in mind, and quit drinking. The man returns home and falls asleep.

Part 6, Chapter 22-23: Sunday Afternoon Picnic and Limited but Tenacious Thinking Analysis

The secretary shows again in this chapter that the empire holds the power over the man, and his existence at this time. Whereas the man believes he has nothing to lose, the secretary aptly points out that everyone has something they do not wish to lose. However, the secretary does understand the desire for privacy and agrees to leave the man alone, with no "shadow," for the month. Later in this chapter, readers can conclude the man does have something the empire can take away, that being his girlfriend. In addition, the ease of the man's relationship with the girlfriend and his willingness to admit the rambling, unsettled nature of the last ten years show a growth again in this character as he is coming to terms with his own sense of self, in part because of the relationship between himself and the girlfriend.

From the second conversation with the secretary, it is clear the secretary does not want to care for the cat, nor to be remotely involved with the man, other than to have him find the sheep. However, it is also clear the sheep is very important, as the secretary is

willing to send a car for the cat in order to allow the man time to find the sheep. The demands of the man, as extensive as they are, further show the theme of a defiance of authority on his behalf. The scene between the man and his partner also show a growth in character as the man realizes his partner must think of his family, quit drinking, and take some responsibility for his own life and his business.



Part 6, Chapter 24: One for the Kipper

Part 6, Chapter 24: One for the Kipper Summary

The following day, the limo arrives to pick up the cat. The man, his girlfriend, and the driver discuss the beautiful day, and how messages from God are delivered to mankind in all forms. The cat is given to the driver, who is amazed to discover it has no name, since it is a creature who moves by his own will and forms an emotional attachment to the world. The driver names the cat Kipper and seems genuinely pleased to be caring for the animal. As the driver takes the couple to the station, they discuss again the naming of things and why some things are named, such as boats, and some are not, such as buses. The driver declares that names are given to things with purpose that are familiar and not mass produced. They arrive at the airport, and the man and his girlfriend eat lunch while discussing the amount of time saved by flying.

Part 6, Chapter 24: One for the Kipper Analysis

This chapter shows the kind-hearted, philosophical nature of the driver through the conversations about names, as well as through his reactions to the cat. He is clearly honored to be caring for the creature and takes his duties to care for the cat seriously. Additionally, it is clear he is a bright man, whose opinions often center around religion. The man and his girlfriend often offer a different opinion than the driver about ideas they are discussing, but they seem to do so not out of an expression of honest opinion, but out of a desire to play devil's advocate. We see this trait of these two individuals again in the next chapter as they discuss the time saved while flying. While it is clear the man is simply discussing the time saved in transit, the girlfriend challenges his verbiage by asking about where the saved time goes, and if time expands. As in other areas of the novel, the two individuals seem to enjoy their banter with one another.



Part 7, Chapter 25-26: Transit Completed at Movie Theater; On to the Dolphin Hotel and Enter the Sheep Professor

Part 7, Chapter 25-26: Transit Completed at Movie Theater; On to the Dolphin Hotel and Enter the Sheep Professor Summary

The girlfriend expresses on the flight that she liked the driver, to which the man agrees. The two exit the flight, enter a coffee shop, and plan their strategy for hunting the sheep. The woman will research sheep while the man will attempt to locate the area in the photograph. Once decided, the two see a double feature. They enter a restaurant and look through a phone book for a hotel. The woman chooses a hotel by name alone. When they arrive, the Dolphin Hotel is older and rundown, but the girlfriend insists on staying. The following morning, the two split up to do their research. The man checks all places dealing with tourism and travel, as well as checking local atlases and travel maps, to no avail. When the two meet later for dinner, the girlfriend reveals her search was also fairly fruitless. The government, she tells him, has stopped tracking sheep, so anyone could own that sehhe. He asks if her ears have received any messages, and she reveals they have not. The next few days were similar. On the seventh day, the man places an ad in the paper, searching for the Rat, and leaving his hotel phone number. Four individuals call, but none are the Rat. On the eighth day, the two speak with the desk clerk and discover he is actually the owner. As they talk, the owner reveals the hotel used to be the Ovine Hall. Ovine, they discover, means sheep. The owner's father was the director of the Hall, which closed when sheep became less viable, but his father, who was an avid sheep researcher, kept the second floor as a sheep records room. The couple show him the photo, and in response, he pulls from the wall a very old framed photo that was taken in the same location as their image. The woman tells the main character she knew they had to stay at the Dolphin Hotel. When asked, the owner states that his father, known as the Sheep Professor, may know where the photograph was taken. He lives above the hotel, rarely coming out of his room.

Part 7, Chapter 25-26: Transit Completed at Movie Theater; On to the Dolphin Hotel and Enter the Sheep Professor Analysis

In the first chapter, the girlfriend again shows her psychic nature by choosing the hotel to stay in by name alone, which later proves to be the break they are looking for in their search for the sheep. Further, the theme of animism again appears with the couple's

discussion of her ears. Alone in a new town, the two both feel unsettled and alienated, but find comfort in one another.

In the second chapter, the theme of alienation is again present as the man expresses several times his feelings of loneliness and sadness in the city alone. The callers who respond to the ad also imply a sense of desolation and isolation. However, when the man is with his girlfriend, those feelings appear to be negated, reaffirming the man's emotional connection to his girlfriend. When the couple realize the true nature of the hotel and the information contained within it, the reader understands the nature of the woman's psychic abilities as well as the sense of mystical forces guiding the couple's path.



Part 7, Chapter 27: The Sheep Professor Eats All, Tells All and Part 7, Chapter 28: Farewell to the Dolphin Hotel

Part 7, Chapter 27: The Sheep Professor Eats All, Tells All and Part 7, Chapter 28: Farewell to the Dolphin Hotel Summary

The owner tells the couple of the difficult life of his father, the Sheep professor. He was born into a poor farming family but was scholastically skilled, and excelled in music. He went to the Imperial University, graduated at the top of his class, and went into the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as an elite. He was sent to develop a plan for Ovine productivity in Japan and went on a site observation tour. In July of 1935, he left on horseback and did not return for a week. He claimed he had been lost, but rumors began to spread that he had enjoyed a special relationship with a sheep. When questioned, the father admitted his relationship to his superiors, but claimed it was mental and spiritual in nature, and that the sheep was inside of him. He was removed from his office. In 1950, he became head of the Ovine Association and ran the Ovine Hall for seventeen years. The Hall closed in 1967, and his son opened the hotel in 1968. The owner agrees to allow the couple to meet the father, but insists they not disclose that the owner has sent them, since his father dislikes him. They knock on the door of the office, only to be initially dismissed. The main character shouts that they have questions about a sheep that disappeared in 1936, at which time the door flies open. The Sheep Professor is of medium height with long white hair and a large frame. He smells of body odor and the room is filthy, as well as covered in papers. His clothing is disheveled and unwashed, as is everything else in the room. He yells for his son to bring his food and then politely ask the couple about their questions.

The Sheep Professor admits he has thrown his life away in search for the sheep. When he is allowed to see the sheep lighter, he is clearly taken aback. He admits it has been hell for forty years as the only thoughts in his head have been about that sheep. He admits he was lost while on the observation mission, but claims he spent the night in a cave, had a dream about a sheep, and told the sheep it could enter him. When he awoke, he knew the sheep was truly inside of him. He explains that in Northern China and Mongolia, it is not rare for sheep to enter humans and is considered a blessing. While the sheep is inside, the person is immortal, but when the sheep leaves, the person becomes "sheepless" or lost. The professor laments that the Japanese have learned nothing from their contact with other Asian nations or from sheep. He claims the sheep had plans to transform humanity and the human world. But when it left, the professor notes, it left him with only the idea and no way to expel it.



The main character then tells what he knows of the sheep. He notes that the sheep left his body in the spring, and now, the Boss is on the verge of death after building the vast underground empire. The professor explains that while the sheep used him as a transport, the sheep used the Boss to build the empire and then threw him away. Now, he imagines, the sheep is roaming, looking for a host. The man asks the professor where the photograph was taken, and the man explains it was taken at his sheep ranch. He says one other person has come looking for directions, and when the man pulls out a photograph of the Rat, the professor recognizes him. The professor gives them directions and tells them to be careful as they leave.

The couple prepares to leave the hotel to find the homestead. They buy supplies and speak again with the hotel owner. The owner expresses his desire to live a different life and to make his father happy. The couple remind him gently that his father has now given up his search for the sheep as he knows the couple is now searching. The owner believes he and his father may learn to care for one another again. Later, the couple are discussing the owner and his father, and both admit they will find each other, now that the professor's obsession has been put to rest. The couple finish packing, make love, and go to bed.

Part 7, Chapter 27: The Sheep Professor Eats All, Tells All and Part 7, Chapter 28: Farewell to the Dolphin Hotel Analysis

Chapter 27, perhaps the most informative of the novel so far, explains much of the subject material throughout the novel. The readers first learn of the difficult life of the man following his encounter with a sheep. When the couple meet the man, it is clear the sheep has left him in a state of despair, unable to function outside of his small room. He freely admits he is a captive of the sheep, even though it left him long ago. He explains the belief held in many Asian nations of the blessing of the sheep entering a human, showing again the mystical and religious theme of the novel. He also explains the experiences of the Boss, if one examines the time frame. In 1935, the sheep entered the Sheep Professor, but escaped him in the spring of 1936. At that same time, the Boss experienced his own transformation, and doctor's note a blood cyst began forming. As the main character points out, the blood cyst was simply a cover for the sheep inside the Boss. The Boss then builds the empire with the power of the sheep, making the sheep the embodiment of the Will the secretary discussed previously in the novel. The fact that the sheep was roaming, looking for a host, and that the Rat has sent a photo of the sheep suggests that the sheep may either reside in the Rat, or at least has some association to him.

While short, Chapter 28 does imply a possible reunion between a father whose life has been an obsession, and a son whose goal is only to please his father. The sheep has clearly deprived the son of his father's attention, but the couple are convinced that their taking over the search will allow the father to refocus on his life and on his son. This

foreshadows scenes later in the novel when the future relationship of the father and son are revealed.



Part 8, Chapter 29: The Birth, Rise, and Fall of Junitaki Township Part 8, Chapter 30: The Further Decline of Junitaki and its Sheep

Part 8, Chapter 29: The Birth, Rise, and Fall of Junitaki Township Part 8, Chapter 30: The Further Decline of Junitaki and its Sheep Summary

The couple takes the train to Asahikawa, during which the main character reads a book about the history of the township in which the professor's homestead is located. The book explains that the original settlers of the area, eighteen persons in total, were poor dirt farmers who were fleeing from debt in Tsugaru. They hired an Ainu guide who led them far into the mountains. For days they traveled under the guise of looking for farmland, asking the guide to continue further into the mountains. When he finally declared they could go no further, the farmers accepted the cold, harsh, unsettled area. They refused to name it, so the Territorial Government named it Twelve Falls Settlement. The young guide stayed and showed them how to root for vegetables, fish in a frozen river, and other survival skills. They built huts, which barely kept out the winter wind and cleared the land of brush and trees. They planted corn and potatoes, which were killed by a swarm of locusts. For three years, the locusts came, but eventually, the farmers began to succeed. More settlers came, and the area began to develop in earnest. The area was chosen to raise sheep prior to the Russo-Japanese war. The Ainu guide, now an adult, became a Shepard and learned to care for the sheep. After his sons died in the war, however, he became a hermit in the pasture and died. The village thrived after the Sheep Professor arrived. However, the town, according to the author, has declined in success, population, and all other areas of life. The farmlands have been reforested, and many have left for better areas.

The couple continue their journey to the village of Junitaki without speaking. During a layover, the two speak of the history of the town, and how Japan appears to live war to war. The dilapidated train arrives, and the two board. When they arrive in Junitaki, they find an old, dying town near extinction. The two check in to the hotel, and while the woman bathes, the man investigates the Town Hall. He visits with the livestock Inspector, who tells him there are two hundred head of sheep in the town, and of the Sheep professor's homestead, located three hours away in the mountains. The ranch is on loan to the town, so that each summer the sheep are taken to graze. One man is currently caring for the sheep. The man asks the inspector if he can meet the caretaker, and is told he can.



The inspector drives him to the sheep farm and discusses again that the town is slowly dying from poverty and a lack of labor. The inspector drops him off, and the man enters the sheep house, which is dim and full of sheep pens. The sheep, all appearing to think with one mind, stop to stare at him as he makes his way through the barn. He finally makes his way to the caretaker's quarters, and finds a man, who tells him tomorrow is the day to disinfect the sheep. The caretaker also informs him that once winter hits, the area will be completely isolated. He notes the ease of moving hundreds of sheep, since they are cooperative animals, looking to be led. The caretaker also tells the main character the owner of the villa is living in the home. When the man notes that the inspector said no one was living there, the caretaker replies there is much the inspector doesn't know. He says the owner arrived in spring and describes him. The main character recognizes the description as the Rat.

Part 8, Chapter 29: The Birth, Rise, and Fall of Junitaki Township Part 8, Chapter 30: The Further Decline of Junitaki and its Sheep Analysis

Chapter 29 serves to show the rise and fall of the town which appears to have borne the spirit of the sheep. The original settlers clearly cared for the land, and the original Ainu guide was primarily responsible for the success of the area. And yet, as with so many other individuals who encounter the sheep, he died a poor, lonely death. The town only faltered after the arrival of the sheep, signifying again the relation between the sheep and the power of authority. This chapter also foreshadows the scene encountered by the couple when they arrive in the village in upcoming chapters.

It is clear by the vast description of the area in Chapter 30 that the village and the surrounding forests are dying. Poverty, the harsh climate, a lack of interest in cold weather farming, and a lack of industry in the area are all contributing to the demise of the area. However, as the main character learns more about the sheep ranch and those attending to the animals and the homestead, it is clear there is more here than meets the eye, foreshadowing events between the main character and the man living in the villa in later chapters. Also, the continued stress throughout the chapter on the harshness of the area in winter suggests a risk to the man as he prepares to travel up the mountain to find his friend, who has isolated himself in the villa.

This chapter also continues the theme of isolation, as the caretaker, his crew, and the Rat have all chosen isolation over society, as has most of the town. Several times, the townspeople speak of a desire to leave the town, but there seems to be an overwhelming passion to stay, even though they can see the town is severely limited in possibilities. Additionally, the relationship between the main character and his girlfriend appears to be suffering in this isolated area, as the two seem to be distancing from one another. Further, the discussion of the caretaker about the sheep symbolizes again the relationship between authority and human kind. The sheep represent the mass of human beings, and their willingness to follow those in authority, regardless of the

character or value of those in power. Readers have seen this theme before from the opposite angle in the character of the Boss as the authority figure.



Part 8, Chapter 31-32: Night in Junitaki and An Unlucky Bend in the Road

Part 8, Chapter 31-32: Night in Junitaki and An Unlucky Bend in the Road Summary

The main character negotiates with the caretaker to pick him and his girlfriend up at eight in the morning. The caretaker warns he may only be able to take them partway up, as the mountain roads will be soft from the rain. As the man is walking back down to town, he recalls that the Rat mentioned his father owning a villa in the mountains of Hokkaido and admonishes himself for not recalling that important fact. He reaches the inn and tells the girlfriend of his findings as they eat. They go to sleep without having intercourse. At eight, the caretaker arrives, and drives the couple up the mountain.

The road continues to worsen as they make their way up the mountain, and the caretaker finally stops, claiming he can go no further. When the man questions him, the caretaker admits the upcoming curve in the road is bad luck. The two set out walking, and the man finds a cigarette butt, so he knows someone has been on the same path recently. The woman pulls back her hair and asks if the man still likes her ears, to which he replies he does. They arrive at the villa, which is old and worn, as the rain begins to fall. There is no one in the house. The woman complains of a headache, saying her ears are out of commission and not sending any signal. The man determines they will wait for the Rat while the woman makes coffee. She offers to make dinner as the man drifts to sleep. She tells him to show spirit, and that everything will be fine.

Part 8, Chapter 31-32: Night in Junitaki and An Unlucky Bend in the Road Analysis

The knowledge that the villa is owned by the Rat, and that the main character knew this on some level leads readers to believe the man is being led to a specific outcome. It is also clear from this chapter that there is something wrong with the area in general. There is a sense of foreboding around every piece of scenery, and even the caretaker appears to be somewhat intimidated by the mountain. The woman and the main character seem even more distanced throughout the chapter as well. Throughout the novel, the couple have had intercourse nearly nightly. In this chapter, there is no lovemaking, indicating an ever-expanding chasm between them. Their journey to the villa is silent, which is a signal as well. The woman's comments about her ears also signify a clear and tangible distancing between these characters, foreshadowing later events. Although she still cares for the man, and he for her, it is obvious that their relationship is beginning to wane.



The discussion of the stud ram is yet another reference to authority and the position of power in society. As the caretaker notes, those who rise to power are often discarded for a younger, more powerful group of individuals. As one is out of sight working, others are taking over positions. This relates back to the conversation with the secretary, when he mentioned that as the Boss lay dying, others were seeking to gain power in the empire.

Finally, the lack of signal to the woman's ears also leads readers to believe there is something amiss. The woman's sixth sense, seemingly located through the power of her ears, is blocked by something within this area. The Rat, who appears to have stocked the villa for winter, is nowhere to be seen. However, the cigarette butt indicates a presence. All of these facts combined foreshadow the eerie events of the next chapter.



Part 8, Chapter 33-35: She Leaves the Mountain; Hunger Strikes, A Find in the Garage; Thoughts in the Middle of the Pasture, and The Sheep Man Cometh

Part 8, Chapter 33-35: She Leaves the Mountain; Hunger Strikes, A Find in the Garage; Thoughts in the Middle of the Pasture, and The Sheep Man Cometh Summary

The man awakens in total darkness. The room is very cold, and it is nighttime. He knows immediately the girlfriend is gone and cannot accept that, nor anything else that is occurring. He thinks of the Rat and realizes that if the rat does not return, the man will be stuck in this villa through winter. He awakens the following morning and realizes he feels very lonely without the woman present. He goes for a walk and finds more cigarette butts, but realizes the ashtrays in the house had been empty. The Rat, he realizes, does not smoke, and someone else must be in the area. He finds a vehicle in the garage, knows it is the Rat's, and pulls sheep wool from the cushions. He sits in the pasture to think and realizes society is moving on without noticing his absence. He arrives back at the villa and reads until the Sheep Man arrives. When the man opens the door to the sound of knocking, he finds the Sheep Man standing two yards away. He is short, slouched over, and bow legged, with a rapid form of speech that blends all words into a single phrase. After removing his mountain boots, he enters the villa and sits on the couch. He wears a sheepskin pulled over his head, including stitched on arms and legs, and a hood with real sheep antlers. Wire reinforced ears are attached to the hood, and the leather mask matches the gloves and socks in color. A zipper runs from the neck to the crotch of the suit. The sheep admits he has been watching the man and claims to have told his girlfriend to leave the villa. He even claims to have driven her down the mountain. When the man questions why, the sheep replies that she wasn't supposed to come here, and that she wanted to leave, but felt she couldn't. The sheep tells the man he is selfish for bringing her in the first place, and that the man will never see her again. The man asks the sheep where the Rat is, or if he knows anything of the sheep with the star on his side, to which the sheep replies he does not. It is clear, however, that he is lying. The man pretends to lose interest, and the sheep begins to apologize for his outbursts. The man notices that the movements are much like those of the Rat, but believes the sheep is the wrong size and shape to be the Rat. The sheep leaves. The man wonders if the sheep man was an illusion as he cooks dinner and imagines himself owning a restaurant. Among these thoughts, he wonders if he has truly lost his girlfriend; the idea depresses him greatly, although he knows the sheep was right, and that he should not have brought her into the situation.



Part 8, Chapter 33-35: She Leaves the Mountain; Hunger Strikes, A Find in the Garage; Thoughts in the Middle of the Pasture, and The Sheep Man Cometh Analysis

These three chapters together contain events that foreshadow the rest of the novel. In the first, the man finds the woman has gone. There is no explanation as to why, and the reader is left wondering why she would have left without a note or an argument or situation to push her into leaving. However, as was foreshadowed in the last few chapters, the relationship between the man and the woman was beginning to falter. While the man is upset, the sheep situation has become an obsession that not even her absence can halt. In the next chapter, the man finds clues that lead the reader to suspect foul play. He finds automobiles still on the premises, which one can surmise the Rat would have used if he had left the premises. He also finds cigarette butts, but the Rat doesn't smoke. It seems, at this point, that something odd has occurred to the Rat. When coupled with the sheep wool in the back of the vehicle, this seems even more probable. In the last chapter, readers meet the Sheep Man. An apparent man in sheep's clothing. The Sheep Man is a very odd character, whose mannerisms, way of speech, and tone all remind the main character of the Rat. Yet, the sheep is not built like the Rat and seems to be a cross between an animal and a human being. This, coupled with previous references to animism and the habitation of humans by sheep, suggests that the sheep is the metaphysical embodiment of the habitation concept. As the sheep man leaves, the reader is left to assume he will return. The man's realization that he should not have brought his girlfriend suggests he is beginning to understand his own selfishness, as well.



Part 8, Chapter 36-37: The Wind's Own Private Thoroughfare and Things the Mirror Shows, Things the Mirror Doesn't

Part 8, Chapter 36-37: The Wind's Own Private Thoroughfare and Things the Mirror Shows, Things the Mirror Doesn't Summary

The man sits and waits for the Rat for several days. As he is reading a book, he finds a newspaper clipping of the ad he had taken out in the paper in the book's pages. He realizes that while the Rat did not seek him out, he did lead him to the villa, suggesting that whatever he was supposed to find was not with the Rat, but in the villa. The following day, he goes for a walk, and finds the Sheep Man. When the man asks why he is hiding in the mountains, the sheep reveals he did not want to go to war. The man returns to the house and cooks for several days to remain occupied. On the ninth day, he finds a volume in the bookcase that appears to be about Pan-Asianism; it is a one-sided wartime edition. Near the end of the book, the man finds a page of notepaper with a list of Pan-Asianists and their residences. The Boss is listed as living in Hokkaido, Junitaki. The man suddenly realizes he has been knowingly led to the birthplace of the Boss for some unknown purpose, as planned by the secretary. He realizes he has no choice but to let the situation play out, but he is angry about his role as a pawn. On the morning of the tenth day, the man cleans the house to pass the time. He finds an old mirror and cleans it thoroughly, wondering why the Rat didn't do so. On the twelfth day, the man is playing guitar when the Sheep Man returns. The sheep tells him he was unable to pass on the man's message to the Rat. The man, in response, tells the sheep he is very angry with the situation and smashes the guitar. The sheep says he is sorry, and the man goes to the kitchen to get a beer. On the way, he looks into the mirror and realizes the Sheep Man has no reflection. Upon his return, he tells the sheep he plans to wait one day for the Rat and then leave. He says he knows the Rat will appear at ten that evening. The sheep leaves, and the man falls asleep.

Part 8, Chapter 36-37: The Wind's Own Private Thoroughfare and Things the Mirror Shows, Things the Mirror Doesn't Analysis

In this chapter, the clues from previous chapters begin to come together. It is clear now that the secretary who put the man into this situation already knows where the sheep is located, that the Rat was involved, and that the Boss was from this remote location. Why the man is being used as a pawn is still somewhat questionable, but the situation is not what it originally appeared. Further, the reference to the Boss in the book on Pan-



Asianism shows someone was researching the Pan-Asianist viewpoint when the Boss was still residing in the town below the villa as a poor farmer. This would suggest that if the sheep hailed from this area, as the previous chapters foreshadowed, than perhaps the Boss was sought out as a host for the sheep at that point, leading him to the path that would give rise to his position of power.

The Sheep Man appears even more peculiar in this chapter, as he appears even more mystical and fantastical than in previous chapters. While on one hand, he appears to be a man in that his suit is homemade and he knows he is from the town. On the other hand, his behaviors are much like an animal. His mention of the war and the town full of soldiers, indicates his original life stems from the time of the Ainu guide and his children, but he is also from the current time. His mentions of a fire without smoke simply further his role as part of the metaphysical world.

In the next chapter, this metaphysical nature is confirmed. The fact that the sheep has no reflection indicates the sheep does not exist in the physical world. The man believes the sheep is a conduit to the Rat in some sense, as the man is trying to tell the Rat through the Sheep Man that he is planning to leave the next day. The time the man gives foreshadows the meeting between the Rat and the man in the next chapter.



Part 8, Chapter 38-40: And So Time Passes, Dwellers in the Darkness, and The Rat who Wound the Clock

Part 8, Chapter 38-40: And So Time Passes, Dwellers in the Darkness, and The Rat who Wound the Clock Summary

The man wakes at eight in total darkness. At nine, the Rat begins speaking to him from the darkness. The Rat tells the man his father bought the villa for a vacation home but stopped using it as it became harder to reach. The Rat came eleven years ago just to get away. Last year, he came across the photo of the area in the Dolphin Hotel, and decided to come back again, simply for sentimental reasons. He then ran into the sheep. The Rat asks if the man has any questions. The man asks if the Rat is already dead, and the Rat confirms he is. The Rat tells the man he hung himself from a beam in the kitchen the week prior, and the Sheep Man buried him in the garage. Once the sheep entered him, he committed suicide so the sheep could not escape. The Rat explains that there is a special weakness in some men that makes them weak to morality, consciousness, existence, and everything in between. The sheep wanted his body, memories, weaknesses, and contradictions, and in return, promised to fulfill his desires beyond his imagination. The Rat suspects the Boss has been completely insane for years and only functioned as the sheep.

When the Boss physically dies, the Rat was earmarked to become the leader of the power base because of his weakness. The sheep planned for a realm of total conceptual anarchy that would result in a unification of all opposites, with the sheep in control. He notes that the world has created two entities from the same ingredients. The Rat also tells him the Sheep Man is real, but that he borrowed the sheep man's form so he (the Rat) could converse with the man personally in the light. He also says he didn't want to deal with the girlfriend, which is why he sent her away. He claims she has a sixth sense and would have been able to sense his presence. He tells the man she is fine, but that she no longer has her power, so the man would no longer find her special. In closing, the Rat tells the man to set the grandfather clock at nine a.m., connect the cords at the back of the clock, and be completely gone by nine-thirty. He says he has a meeting at noon. The man agrees, and the two part ways.



Part 8, Chapter 38-40: And So Time Passes, Dwellers in the Darkness, and The Rat who Wound the Clock Analysis

This trio of chapters explains in detail the final weeks of the sheep and the Rat. Appearing out of no where, the Rat admits he is dead and is speaking only in spirit form. He has stopped the cycle of the sheep by killing himself while the sheep was in him, thereby killing the sheep. His discussion of his own weaknesses, particularly when promised better things by authority, clearly represents the weakness of mankind in general at the hands of authoritative powers. His own character appears to symbolize the cycle of power and weakness in humankind. In the end, the only solution to this cycle is the strength of the weak, just as the only solution in the book is the final strength of the Rat to end his own life to save others.

The Sheep Man, shown to be a real person, is clearly disturbed. However, he appeared even more disturbed after the Rat inhabited his form, because the duality of man simply could not be contained within the single entity. This explains the eccentric character readers meet in the novel, but does not fully explain the sheep man who existed prior to the Rat's appearance. Readers are left to assume he is a townsman, who lives the life of an animal to avoid the war and rebellion of society, again showing the theme of isolation.

The sheep's final plan is yet another display of the author's clear opinions against authority. This plan symbolizes the misuse of power by the government to further their own existences by limiting the existence of others. This ties back into the previous conversations of the fall of the township, the poverty of Japan, the original settlers of the area, and the Boss and secretary themselves. Even the removal of the power of the woman shows this abuse of power, as the entity of the sheep took away the only special quality the young woman possessed, which made her desirable. The Rat's mention of two separate entities from the same ingredients seems to imply that both good and evil can come from the same set of ideals and is only dependent upon the catalyst for those ideals. Finally, the Rat's instructions foreshadow the final end of the sheep, and the mention of the noon meeting indicates a final confrontation in the ending of the novel.



Part 8, Chapter 41-43: Green Cords and Red Cords; Frozen Seagulls, Return Visit to the Unlucky Bend, The Twelve O'clock Rendezvous

Part 8, Chapter 41-43: Green Cords and Red Cords; Frozen Seagulls, Return Visit to the Unlucky Bend, The Twelve O'clock Rendezvous Summary

The man is sick with a fever and vomiting. His head buzzes with memories of people he has met, and places that have had an impact on his life. When he awakens, he is well again. He connects the clock as directed and leaves the villa. He rounds the corner, and crosses the unlucky bend in the road, only to find a brand new jeep in front of him, with the Boss' secretary inside. The secretary tells him he has been waiting for him. He admits he has a sixth sense, which is how he became the secretary to the Boss. He informs the man that the Boss died last week and that all of Tokyo is trying to find a successor. The secretary admits that the man has done well and tells him the reason he was sent on this quest was to lure the sheep from his mental lair. The sheep, he says, places the host in shell shock, but that the man was able to coax the host, or the Rat, from that state because he didn't know the situation, and so could be trusted. The man says he has, in fact, done so, and that the Rat is planning to meet the secretary at twelve o'clock. The secretary pays the man, tells him the partner has closed the advertising business, and walks toward the villa. The man travels with the driver from the beginning of his journey back toward town. The driver mentions that since the Boss' death, he has been unable to reach God by telephone. The man boards the train, and shortly thereafter, hears explosions on the mountain as the villa is destroyed.

Part 8, Chapter 41-43: Green Cords and Red Cords; Frozen Seagulls, Return Visit to the Unlucky Bend, The Twelve O'clock Rendezvous Analysis

At last, readers know the true reason the man was sent on a journey that seemed pointless. In order to lure the sheep from the Rat, the secretary employed the man. However, unbeknown to the secretary, the sheep was outwitted by the weakest man. As the Rat killed the sheep, the Boss passed away, and the empire began to crumble. The secretary, the only other person who knew the situation, was killed by the Rat through the actions of the man. The end of the powerful empire came about through the actions of a weak man and a man who was unsettled throughout his entire life. Again, this shows the theme of a defiance of authority. The driver's mention of an inability to



contact God following the Boss' death seems to indicate that the Boss was, in fact, a figure for God. On the other hand, when combined with the idea that the phone at the villa was inoperable shortly after the death of the sheep, which coincided with the death of the Boss, this knowledge could suggest that the sheep was God.



Part 8, Epilogue

Part 8, Epilogue Summary

The man informs the Sheep Professor that the sheep is dead. The professor thanks him, and when the man says he has lost everything, reminds him that he still has his life. As the man leaves, the professor begins to weep. The owner of the Dolphin Hotel informs the main character that his girlfriend has left, seeming somewhat ill. The man watches the news, but sees nothing of the explosion on the mountain. The owner tells the man that his father is not eating and will soon perish. The following day, the man arrives again at J's bar. The two talk, and the man gives J the money from the secretary. He tells J he will give him the money in return for a silent partnership in the bar. He does not ask for dividends or interest, but simply a place for himself or the Rat if they are ever in trouble. J agrees, and the two talk briefly before the man leaves. He walks to the river, a place of his childhood, and cries harder than he has ever cried. As he walks away, he remembers the sound of waves from his childhood.

Part 8, Epilogue Analysis

This final chapter ends the journey of the sheep chase, but also the end of other journeys, as well. The Sheep Professor, unable to escape his obsession for over forty years, is left with nothing but bitterness and a wasted life. The owner of the Dolphin, who hoped the end of the sheep would mean a uniting with his father, watches his dream slip away as his father refuses to eat. The man realizes the finality of his relationship with his girlfriend, as he realizes she has left the hotel without a word. Finally, the man sits on the bank of the river of his childhood, crying not only for the loss of his friend, girlfriend, partner, and life, but also for the end of his own innocence. He has drastically changed since the beginning of his journey and now finds himself unsure of not only his position, but also his own existence. However, having invested his money into the business of his friend, he does seem to understand he is now beginning a new life.



Characters

Main Character

The main character is an advertising professional whose life is the perfect example of mediocrity. Recently divorced, the man finds himself living day to day in a routine, not particularly caring about his surroundings, his job, or even his cat, who he never named. His new girlfriend is an ear model, who he sought after for her "exquisite" ears. He seems to genuinely care about her, but more so when her ears are displayed, indicating, as the book points out eventually, that his love for her is mostly due to her ears, which have special powers. The man's life has not been one of particular hardship or suffering, nor of any real consequence. He is nearly thirty with no children and no desire for children. His viewpoint of the world is highly selfish, in that his primary concern is that of himself and his needs and wants.

When the man finds himself forced into a journey to find a sheep with a star on its back, he does not consider the danger to his girlfriend, nor the inconvenience to his partner. Instead, he thinks his partner is being selfish in not wanting to run the business without his assistance. The man is simply grateful for his girlfriend's presence. Throughout the novel, he takes his friends, such as J, for granted. He is not intentionally selfish nor unfeeling, but does not seem to have the capacity for emotional connection.

Through his journey to find the sheep, he discovers a sense of purpose and a deeper understanding of humankind, and their ability to overcome. Through the actions of the Rat, the Sheep Professor, the owner of the Dolphin Hotel, the personal secretary, his girlfriend, and the sheep itself, he begins to learn the importance of friendship and of society in general. He learns that it is only because of humankind's mediocrity that authority is allowed to overpower common sense and ruin the lives of so many. In the end, he loses nearly everything he loves, as well as his own innocence, but learns to rise above mediocrity.

Girlfriend

The girlfriend of the main character is present throughout the novel until the last few chapters. Coming into the man's life shortly after his divorce, the woman helps to keep the man as happy as he will allow himself to be. She has three jobs—a proofreader, a call girl, and an ear model. Her ears, according to the novel, have special powers. When her ears are covered, the girl is normal, although good looking and personable in nature. When her ears are uncovered, however, she becomes another person entirely. Bystanders notice, and she holds a level of control over other individuals. In addition, she has a sixth sense in relation to her ears. When "open," or unblocked as she puts it, she receives warnings and messages through her ears. When blocked, or covered, these messages are hidden to her.



Throughout the book, the girl is comfortable with herself as a person, but is not comfortable with the power her ears give her. She enjoys being with the main character, and enjoys that he likes her ears. She is supportive, caring, loving, sensual, and honest. However, she realizes the power of her ears will eventually fade, and she fears the results. In the beginning of her time with the man, she asks him to remain with her for a few months. This seems to be to see if his attraction is because of her ears, or because he likes her as a person. In the end, she thinks the ears held the power, but in reality, there is a part of the man that truly cares for the woman herself. It is only by losing her that he realizes this.

The Boss

The Boss is an unseen character in the novel, but is a primary force throughout the book. Born as a poor farmer in Hokkaido, he became a Pan-Asianist and was imprisoned for his beliefs as a youth. In 1945, doctors found a brain cyst and allowed the U.S. Military to test the man for a year. During these tests, the doctors supposedly worked with the Boss to discover spy activities in Japan in exchange for millions of dollars. During this time, the Boss also became a severe insomniac and often had hallucinations of sheep. During this time, he underwent a transformation from slight right-wing to extremist. He began to use his money to payoff the conservative party, purchase advertising companies, and gain control over the financial markets. In doing so, he built an underground empire, which continued to grow. The Boss is now on top of a trilateral power base of politicians, information services, and stocks. Throughout the novel, the readers discover that the Boss is really not the source of this power, but simply a host to a mystical sheep, who seeks to control humanity. He has gone insane, but simply functions at the Will of the sheep. When the sheep leaves his body, he ends up in a coma. This sheep is the end goal of the main character's quest, and thus, the fate of the Boss resides with the main character. When the sheep is killed at the end of the novel, the Boss dies.

The Personal Secretary

As the right-hand man of the most powerful figure in Tokyo, the personal secretary of the Boss is a powerful man by himself. He dresses very formally, with gloves, a jacket, and a tie, and speaks with nearly perfect accent, although it is clear he is a foreign-born man. In addition, he takes his role very seriously. With the eminent death of the Boss at hand, the secretary takes it upon himself to find the source of his Boss' power, or his Will. In doing so, he has located the main character. As the story continues, however, it is revealed that the secretary has also discovered the Rat, and knows the sheep has entered the Rat. The secretary knows of the mystical sheep, and of his powers, and desires to obtain those powers. In the end, however, his sixth sense and high intelligence do not save him from the same fate as the others who encounter the sheep. His death at the hands of the main character in partnership with the Rat seem a harsh end for such a man, but his goal of power and status led to his demise.



The Rat

As the man responsible for the journey of the sheep, the Rat is an old friend of the main character. He sends the man a photo to use that contains an image of a sheep with a star on the side. The Rat, readers discover, has discovered the secret of the sheep and has sought to capture and kill the animal before he can inhabit another host. The Rat has led the main character to the villa in an attempt to save his own life. In a way, he finds, the plan has worked, in that although he has died in the process of killing the sheep, he was able to see the main character, and is able to destroy the empire, and all that the sheep built.

The Owner

The owner of the Blue Dolphin is a lonely man who wants only for his father to love him. His father, however, is obsessed with the sheep and thinks of his son as weak. The owner is kind-hearted, however, and continues to care for his father, despite his cruelty. He leads the main character to his father as a resource for sheep, and is therefore responsible for the finding of the Rat and the sheep. In the end, it is unclear if the man and his father will reunite, but it is certain his son will remain loyal to his father until the end of his father's days.

The Sheep Professor

The Sheep Professor is the father of the owner of the Dolphin Hotel. He was born into a poor farming family, but was scholastically skilled. He graduated at the top of his class and went into the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as an elite. In July of 1935, he left on horseback for a study of the land and did not return for a week. He claimed he had been lost, and in reality had gotten lost, fallen asleep in a cave, and been inhabited by the sheep. He acts only as a transport for the sheep, and a year later, the sheep leaves him. He then spends forty years looking for the sheep, only to lose himself, his children, and his life in the process. In the end, when the sheep is killed, the man loses his obsession, and is left depressed and suicidal.

The Sheep Man

The Sheep Man is a man who dresses as a sheep. He claims to have come from the town below the villa to the mountains to escape the war. He has lived in the mountains for many years and finds the winter months nice, when no humans are around. He is the man who found the body of the Rat and buried him, and is also the man the Rat inhabited in order to speak to the main character. The Sheep Man is clearly more animal than man at this point, in that he is skittish, responds to fear with anger or flight, and is inadequate at social communications. However, he is also a caring, gentle individual who seems to enjoy human interaction.



The Sheep

The sheep is yet another unseen character in the novel, but is just as vital as a main character. The sheep is attempting to take over humanity in a rebellion of ideals that would place it at the helm of power. Using humans as catalysts for its ideas, the sheep inhabits humans, invoking brain tumors that allow the sheep to take over the mind. In this way, the sheep controls the human, making it immortal. Once it leaves, however, the human is left to die, either immediately or following a lifetime of misery. It is only through the weakness of the Rat that the sheep is eventually killed, as the Rat commits suicide with the sheep inside him.

The Driver

The driver for the Boss is a gentle man whose faith in God is strong. He is kind to the main character, in that he cares for the man's cat during his journey. The man speaks many times of the will of man and of the power of human choices. He also believes the Boss has given him God's telephone number. Although a minor character in the story, the driver's kindness and gentle nature leave a lasting impression.

J

The character of J is only seen in the beginning and end of the novel, but appears to show the final changes within the main character. J is a successful businessman and a friend of both the main character and the Rat. He seems to be the one these individuals turn to each time they are in trouble. He asks for nothing in return. In the beginning, the main character goes to see J, and is somewhat uncaring and only thinks of his own needs. In the closing of the novel, however, he gives his new fortune to J to pay off his loans in exchange for continued shelter. In this way, the character shows the changes in the main character that take place throughout the story.



Objects/Places

Animism

Japanese animism is the belief that power can exist within any specific body object individually, such as is the woman's ears. The power within the object is entirely independent from the main form.

Sheep

In the story, the object of the sheep represents the mediocrity of human existence.

Junitaki

Junitaki is the township above which the villa of the Sheep Professor is located.

Hokkaido

The mountainous area of Japan in which the photograph of the sheep with the star was taken.

The Will

The Will is the perceived cause of the gains of the Boss, or the underlying power within the Boss that enables him to control the empire.

The Gain

The Gain is the perceived monetary, social, and political advancement obtained by the Boss as a result of the Will.

Brain Cyst

A small blockage of circulation in the brain that will eventually burst, killing the host.

Dolphin Hotel

The hotel in which the main character and his girlfriend find the Sheep Professor, and the location of the sheep in the image.



Suffolk

A type of sheep common in Japan, and believed to be one of the only breed of sheep raised in the area.

Sixth Sense

A type of sense that allows individuals to know things without being told.



Themes

Isolation

Throughout the novel, isolation and self alienation are primary themes. The main character has, throughout his entire life, chosen a path of self isolation to avoid true emotional connections to the outside world. His existence has been completely self centered. Because of his obsession with the sheep, the Sheep Professor also chose isolation as opposed to existing within the world. The Rat chose isolation from others due to a desire for others not to see him give in to weakness. The Boss chose isolation because of a need to run his empire in the shadows. The Anui guide became isolated after giving up on humanity and their warlike nature. The sheep caretaker isolated himself, to a point, because he preferred the simplicity of sheep over the complexity of social interactions. It is clear from these characters that isolation of self is used in the novel as a means to many outcomes.

This isolation, however, takes a toll on these individuals. In terms of the main character, his isolation has made him emotionally detached from his friends as well as his lovers, leaving him alone by the end of the novel. The Sheep Professor's isolation has left his relationship with his son in shambles. The Rat's self-alienation has forced him into the life of a nomad without permanent human connections. The Anui guide, after helping to build a society, dies alone and broken. In all cases, the isolation of these characters, whether as a result of the sheep or by choice, leaves them with nothing in the end.

Animism

Animism is a vital theme throughout the novel and is represented in a number of different ways. The concept of animism is the idea that souls or spirits exist in animals, plants, natural phenomena, everyday objects, and manufactured articles. In other words, souls exist within all things. This concept is furthered by the idea that these spirits are independent from their original hosts and can move freely throughout the world.

This concept is first represented by the ears of the girlfriend. They are described several times as being wholly separate from the woman, having special powers of sense, making her an entirely different being when the ears are turned on. In this way, the author appears to give the ears a special soul or spirit that exists independently of the woman. Another example is the sheep itself. The sheep has a soul of its own that moves freely from host to host. The sheep's power is separate from any physical presence, which is how it moves through individuals, giving them its power only as it inhabits their bodies. In addition, animism is represented in the idea that God's messages are spread through vehicles, nature, and other nonliving entities. The spirit of the sheep within the sheep pens and the ominous spirit of the mountain and the villa are other examples of the animism concept.



Defiance of Authority

A defiance of authority is another theme that runs through the entire novel. The main character on several occasions shows a determination to defy those he deems to be above him in terms of social standing. His attitude during the conversations with the secretary, where the main character tells the secretary he thinks the secretary is insane, and the main character does not fear the threatened consequences are clear examples of such defiance. Additionally, asking the secretary to care for the cat shows the main character's disrespect for this authoritative figure. In his hometown, his disinterested comments to the guard who accuse him of littering show this defiance of authority.

In addition, the ability of the Rat to outwit both the secretary and the sheep also shows a defiance of power and authority. The Rat, a wholly nondescript individual with several weaknesses, wins the battle of good versus evil, and of the meek over the powerful, simply by using his own weaknesses against authority. Throughout his life, he has defied society by becoming a nomad, leaving everything behind, and living his life as he chose, and in the end, it is this defiance that allows him to kill the sheep, as well as end the empire. Even the Boss, who personifies authority later in life, began his existence by defying superior powers. It was this defiance that eventually puts him in the hands of the U.S. Army, which allows him access to gain extreme wealth. The original settlers of the Junitaki defied authority by fleeing their hometown, refusing to name their township, and avoiding governmental authority for several years, and were thus able to settle the land they chose.

Throughout the novel, the defiance of authority allows the characters to live their lives as they choose, without interference from others. While this choice certainly makes their lives more difficult, it also, in most cases, allows them a freedom seldom seen within modern society. The author seems to be making a statement that although this choice is the more difficult path, it is the path of happiness.



Style

Point of View

The author uses a first person narrative throughout the story. This point of view is vital to the telling of the tale, as the main character's journey is the focal point of the story. As the novel goes on, the viewpoint of the main character changes, and the first person point of view allows the reader to see such changes clearly. Additionally, this first person view allows the author to effectively shift between the main character and other characters as they tell their stories to the group. Allowing the reader to see the secondary characters through the eyes of the main character helps to show the lack of emotion within the man and the lack of societal values and links between the man and his own world. In addition, the brutal honesty of this viewpoint allows the reader to see the true mediocrity of the main character and his entire existence. Being able to essentially read the thoughts of this character as he exists in his day to day life allow the reader to truly understand the lack of purpose to the man's life. Without such a view point, such themes would not be as easily presented, and may be missed, making the fundamental journey of the story merely a tale of a mythical sheep.

Setting

The story takes place entirely in Japan, although the location within the country changes. It begins in Tokyo, where the man has an advertising agency. Following a visit from a strange man who holds a position of power and authority, he travels to the country to the home of the Boss, which is described as an architect's nightmare. A combination of modern, western, and ancient Japanese buildings, the Boss' place is unique and speaks of vast amounts of money. From there, the main character and his girlfriend travel to Sapporo, a city in Japan, where their search for the sheep begins. They stay at the Dolphin Hotel, a small rundown inn that used to be the Ovine Hall. After meeting the Sheep Professor who tells them the location of a sheep villa, they travel to the Hokkaido region of Japan, which is an area of thick forests, cold weather, and mountains. Within the region, they find themselves in Junitaki, a small, dying town that appears to lie just below the place that is the focal point for the sheep. A caretaker for the sheep farm takes the couple to the villa of the sheep, owned by the Rat, located three hours north of the town, which is up the mountain over dangerous terrain. After learning that both the sheep and his friend, the Rat, is dead and setting up the death of the last powerful member of the empire, the main character travels back to his hometown to give J the respect he deserves.

Language and Meaning

As the narrator is a man void of emotion, his tone and choice of words tend to be full of physical detail, rather than emotion or feelings in the beginning of the novel. From his



thoughts to his spoken words to others, his words show a lack of tact or thoughtfulness toward others. It is clear, through his words, that he is not a mean individual, nor cruel, but instead simply does not comprehend emotional connection. He does not seem capable of love, although he does have a friendly nature.

Since one of the main themes of the novel is isolation, the narrator's descriptions often deal with loneliness, depression, and solitude. However, it is clear that while the main character is capable of feeling these emotions, he is not afraid of them, and actually seems to embrace them. As the Rat welcomes his own weaknesses, so, too, does the narrator, as his isolation from everyone and every thing have become constant companions. However, toward the end of the novel, readers can sense a more profound longing for society and for companionship, revealing the growth of the character throughout the novel.

The writing is light, without formality or any specific structure. However, the author's descriptions tend to be long, with much detail, again showing his own lack of emotion and his focus on materialism. These long descriptions can, at times, disrupt the flow of the novel, but do serve to show the distance from reality of the narrator.

Structure

The novel is split into eight sections of unequal length, each of which appears to signify a new period in the narrator's life. The first section tells of his college years, while the second tells of his divorce. The third describes the meeting between himself and his girlfriend. The fourth through the eighth sections follow the sheep chase from beginning to end, while the Epilogue relates the end of the chase, and the beginning of the main character's new life. In addition, the sections are broken into chapters, totaling forty-three. The chapters are not of equal length, and are often very short, describing only small scenes or bits of detail. The book is three-hundred-fifty three pages long. The story is mostly linear, with only one instance of a flashback. The main plot is the journey of the man's search for himself, while subplots include the search for a sheep in an effort to stop a powerful empire and the permanent alteration of humankind. The pace of the novel ranges from slow during descriptive passages to rapid during engrossing conversations.

Quotes

"I was twenty-one at the time, about to turn twenty-two. No prospect of graduating soon, and yet no reason to quit school. Caught in the most curiously depressing circumstances. For months I'd been stuck, unable to take one step in any new direction. The world kept moving on; I alone was at a standstill." - Chapter 1, page 8.

"In one sense, her disappearance was due to circumstances beyond my control. What's done is done, that sort of thing. How we got on the last four years was of no consequence. Any more than the photos peeled out of the albums." - Chapter 3, page 25.

"She'd become so beautiful, it defied understanding. Never had I feasted my eyes on such beauty. Beauty of a variety I'd never imagined existed. As expansive as the entire universe, yet as dense as a glacier. Unabashedly excessive, yet at the same time pared down to an essence. It transcended all concepts within the boundaries of my awareness. She was at one with her ears, gliding down the oblique face of time like a protean beam of light." - Chapter 5, page 45.

"The world is mediocre. About that there is no mistake. Well, then, has the world been mediocre since time immortal? No. In the beginning, the world was chaos, and chaos is not mediocre. The mediocratization began when people separated the means of production from daily life. For when Karl Marx posted the proletariat, he thereby cemented their meritocracy." -Chapter 18, page 133.

"The sheep that enters a body is thought to be immortal. And so too the person who hosts the sheep is thought to become immortal. However, should the sheep escape, the immortality goes. It's all up to the sheep. If the sheep likes its host, it'll stay for decades. If not - zip! - it's gone. People abandoned by sheep are called the "sheepless." In other words, people like me." -Chapter Chapter 27, page 222.

"I was feeling lonely without her, but the fact that I could feel lonely at all was consolation. Loneliness wasn't such a bad feeling." Chapter 34, page 290.

"What I'm talking about now is a very individual thing. Weakness is something that rots in the body. Like gangrene. I've felt that ever since I was a teenager. That's why I was always on edge. There's this something inside you that's rotting away and you feel it all along." Chapter 40, page 333.

"It's like, well, like a blast furnace that smelts down everything it touches. A thing of such beauty, it drives you out of your mind. But it's hair-raising evil. Give your body over to it and everything goes. Consciousness, values, emotion, pain, everything. Gone. What it comes closest to is a dynamo manifesting the vital force at the root of all life in one solitary point of the universe." -Chapter 40, page 335.



"Still, roughly divided, our organization is made up of these two parts. The other parts hardly amount to anything. The part at the forefront is the Will, and the part that backs up the forefront is the Gains. When people talk about the Boss, they make an issue only out of his Gains. And after the Boss dies, it will be only his Gains that people will clamor for a share of. Nobody wants the Will, because no one understands it." Chapter 18, page 140.

"I don't know how to put it, but I just can't get it through my head that here and now is really here and now. Or that I am really me. It doesn't quite hit home. It's always this way. Only much later on does it ever come together." Chapter 22, page 167.

"As his son, it's not for me to say, but yes, an eccentric man indeed. A completely changed man since he encountered sheep. Extremely difficult, sometimes even cruel. Deep down in his heart he's kind. If you heard him play his violin, you'd know that. Sheep hurt my father, and through my father, sheep have also hurt me." - Chapter 27, page 216.

"There is no one to take over after the Boss. The organization will fall apart - a magnificent palace razed to make way for a public housing complex. A world of uniformity and certainty." Chapter 18, page 140.



Topics for Discussion

Throughout the novel, the mystical sheep invades several hosts for various purposes, such as building an empire and transportation to a new host. What or who do you think the sheep represents? Explain your belief clearly.

There are no proper names used in the entire novel. Why do you think the author chose not to include these names? Do you believe this style helped or harmed the story?

In Chapter 24, the main character, his girlfriend, and the limo driver discuss the naming of things, places, and creatures. The limo driver believes names depend on physical fixation, free will, and an emotional attachment to humans. Why do you believe we name some areas and things, such as ball parks and boats, but not others?

Do you believe the main character was selfish in his behavior when he accepted his girlfriend's assistance on the sheep chase? If not, why do you believe he accepted her assistance, knowing she would be in danger?

The Sheep Man is an interesting character; however, the novel does not clearly explain his origin. Who or what do you believe the Sheep Man represents within the novel? Be sure to support your answer with information from the book.

Do you believe the main character changed over the course of the novel? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you believe he is unable to change, even in the face of his experiences? Be sure to explain your answers.

The girlfriend as well as the personal secretary appeared to have a sixth sense, in that they were able to sense things about others without prior knowledge of the individual or situation. Give three examples of such power exhibited within the book, and explain where you believe these powers come from for each character.