



THE
COMPLETE
TEXT

*A Wild
Sheep Chase*

Haruki Murakami

Read by Rupert Degas

1	A Wild Sheep Chase – Part One	14:09
2	Part Two – July, Eight Years Earlier	13:42
3	The Slip	7:06
4	Part Three – September, Two Months Later	31:34
5	Unblocked Ears	1:36
6	The Further Adventures of Unblocked Ears	6:25
7	Part Four – A Wild Sheep Chase, I	11:19
8	Now the Strange Man	12:37
9	'The Boss'	7:52
10	Counting Sheep	6:06
11	The Limo and Its Driver	5:52
12	Wherefore the Worm Universe	9:08
13	Part Five – Letters from The Rat and Assorted Reminiscences	8:44
14	The Rat's Second Letter (Postmarked May, This Year)	9:49
15	The Song Is Over	18:12
16	She Drinks Her Salty Dog, Talking about the Sound of the Waves	17:00

17	Part Six – A Wild Sheep Chase, II	19:14
18	The Strange Man’s Strange Tale Goes On	30:44
19	The Limo and Its Driver, Again	6:26
20	Summer’s End, Autumn’s Beginning	5:52
21	One in Five Thousand	8:30
22	Sunday Afternoon Picnic	13:54
23	Limited but Tenacious Thinking	10:41
24	One for the Kipper	14:17
25	Part Seven – The Dolphin Hotel Affair	19:05
26	Enter the Sheep Professor	20:17
27	The Sheep Professor Eats All, Tells All	33:09
28	Farewell to the Dolphin Hotel	4:16
29	Part Eight – A Wild Sheep Chase, III	22:10
30	The Further Decline of Junitaki and Its Sheep	32:30
31	Night in Junitaki	2:41
32	An Unlucky Bend in the Road	38:52

33	She Leaves the Mountain; Hunger Strikes	6:18
34	A Find in the Garage; Thoughts in the Middle of the Pasture	6:27
35	The Sheep Man Cometh	13:44
36	The Winds' Own Private Thoroughfare	21:40
37	Things the Mirror Shows, Things the Mirror Doesn't	13:28
38	And So Time Passes	3:33
39	Dwellers in Darkness	8:27
40	The Rat Who Wound the Clock	16:40
41	Green Cords and Red Cords; Frozen Seagulls	2:28
42	Return Visit to the Unlucky Bend	3:52
43	The Twelve-O'clock Rendezvous	6:32
44	Epilogue	8:33

Total time: 9:35:31

A Wild Sheep Chase Copyright © Haruki Murakami 1982
English Language Translation © Kodansha International Ltd 1989
Cover picture: Hannah Davies

Haruki Murakami

A Wild Sheep Chase

Haruki Murakami seems like a regular guy. From the outside, he appears to be a model of discipline and restraint – regular and strenuous exercise, many hours in a workmanlike fashion spent at his desk writing or translating, a jazz-lover when not working, as well as a spell of some years teaching in America. But open one of his books and a very different person emerges; although one who appears at first to come from the modern, comfortable, globalised world Murakami inhabits.

He was born in 1949 in Kyoto, although much of his childhood was spent in Kobe. Both his parents were teachers of Japanese literature, but he found himself much more attracted to European and American art, especially the written word and music. At university in Waseda, he majored in cinema and theatre studies, and his love of jazz inspired his first

profession – running a jazz bar called Peter Cat in Tokyo. Having decided initially that he did not have the necessary skills to write a novel, an epiphany of sorts at a baseball match changed his mind and his life. His first novels developed a cult following in Japan, but his growing audience ballooned in the mid-80s and saw Murakami's elevation to something approaching pop-star status. His discomfort at this attention sent him travelling, and he would later spend some years in the United States at Princeton and Tufts universities. His relationship with Japan – always rather uneasy - changed somewhat after the Kobe earthquake and the underground poison attacks of 1995, when he felt himself drawn back to examine the nature of the people affected by the tragedies.

Now he lives in a suburb of Tokyo, an extremely successful writer, following a

fairly set routine of work and exercise. But when he writes, he is unsure what is going to happen, and the stories follow a path he cannot predict. For all the conformity of the outside appearance, there are unpredictable forces at work inside. It is the apparent freedom to allow his imagination to take over, rather than follow a predetermined path, that gives so much of Murakami's fiction its dreamlike quality. As he says: 'I like stories of abnormal things happening to normal people', and the Everyman nature of the narrators is a common feature of his novels. While we might at first feel at home with the central protagonist, it won't be long before he is visited by events and characters so bizarre that they seem other-worldly. And yet, as in dreams, the appearance of these events or characters is never questioned by the modern, real, very much flesh-and-blood creations with whom we feel so at ease.

A Wild Sheep Chase begins like a conventional thriller, almost a parody of the American style, with a seemingly hard-boiled narrator reporting dispassionately about himself and the death of an ex. But this narrator is Japanese, for a start; he is a

recently divorced copywriter who arranges a date with someone because he has, essentially, fallen for her ears. After that, it begins to get very strange indeed, as Murakami allows his story to develop with that imaginative freedom. There is a sheep-crazed professor; a strange and powerful (though profoundly shady) organisation; a chance picture of great significance; a runaway friend; coincidences and sixth-sense; voices of the past – and a sheep-man. It is by no means without humour.

There is something slightly surreal about the place of the book in Murakami's work. Technically, it is the third part of a trilogy, but Murakami felt uncomfortable about having the two earlier volumes translated, thinking they were 'weak', and happily *A Wild Sheep Chase* stands independent of its forebears. However, there is also a sequel (*Dance, Dance, Dance*), making *Sheep Chase* the third part of a tetralogy – but this fourth book is not seen as part of the sequence, making *Sheep Chase* a stand-alone third part of a four-part trilogy. Readers of Douglas Adams' work might feel at home here. But the book was a turning-point for

Murakami personally and artistically. In it, for the first time, he felt a joy at the feeling of telling a story and letting it flow from him, however strange and unreal it may be.

However, the surreality or absurdity of Murakami's work is more than just dreaminess. There is a melancholia underpinning his narrators, as well as a pervading sense of loss or uncertainty. It may be this that makes Murakami's work so popular throughout the West as well as in Japan; that and his unapologetic acceptance of global contemporary culture. These two elements combine to give his characters a voice that is as recognisable in London, Wellington, New York and Seoul as it is in Tokyo itself, and is one reason why his work seems at odds with the traditions of the Japanese literature that Murakami's parents taught.

Although there are strong elements of myth and fairy-tale in his stories, something else that contributes to their broad appeal, there is also the potential for symbolism. Murakami himself is uncomfortable with that idea, thinking it rather limiting; but it need not be specific to be effective. What is the symbol of a

giant in a panto other than something that needs to be conquered to allow people to live peacefully and happily? Similarly, while the sheep in *A Wild Sheep Chase* may not stand for anything in particular, the fact that it inspires philosophical discourses on the role of the individual in society, or the power of governments and the media, or the success of organisation versus chaos, means it is more than just a sheep, and therefore something the reader can chase in her or his own head.

Murakami rarely offers complete answers to any of the questions his books raise. Maybe that is what makes him so popular. Perhaps what his extraordinary number of readers want is someone who can express their sense of inexplicable alienation in a prosperous world; and if he can do it with a narrative that excites and intrigues, so much the better. Murakami draws from his own dream-world and internal life a place where others who share his uncertainties can feel at home.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Haruki Murakami was born in Kyoto on 12 January 1949. He began writing at the age of 24. The impulse to do so first struck him, he says, during a baseball match, at the very moment when a famous player hit a home run. He went straight home and started to write.

His first book, *Hear the Wind Sing*, was published in 1979 and won the Gunzou Shinjin Sho, an award for new writers. At that point he was running a jazz bar called Peter Cat in a quiet corner of Tokyo.

In 1981, he started to write for a living and the following year published one of his most extraordinary novels, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, which bears all the Murakami hallmarks of superb writing, compelling plot, zany happenings and erotic moments. It was an extraordinary achievement for a relatively inexperienced writer, especially because it was strongly original in style and content.

There was a three-year gap before the publication of his next work, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, his most metaphysical, and perhaps strangest, novel. Three years after that, in 1988, came the sequel to *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Dance, Dance, Dance*, but by this time his reputation as Japan's most popular contemporary literary novelist was assured.

This was achieved with the publication of *Norwegian Wood* in 1987 which sold four million copies in Japan alone. After *Dance, Dance, Dance* there was a four-year gap as he started a new chapter in his life, living and teaching in the US. *South of the Border and West of the Sun* then came in 1992; his collection of short stories *The Elephant Vanishes* was published in 1993; and finishing this burst of creativity was *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, widely regarded as his masterpiece, in 1994.

He returned to Japan in 1995 after the Kobe earthquake, but it was not until 1999 that his next novel, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, emerged. This is another gentle study of the isolated individual, a theme that runs as a thread through much of his fiction.

After the Quake, his intriguing collection of short stories centred around, but not in, the earthquake, came in 2002. And *Kafka on the Shore*, which saw a return to his quizzical, off-beat fantasy style, was published in 2004.

With translations in other European languages, and a growing following on both sides of the Atlantic, Haruki Murakami's standing as one of the leading international writers of our time is increasing, and makes audio versions essential.



Rupert Degas can be heard reading *True History of the Kelly Gang*, *PS I Love You*, *If You Could See Me Now*, *Lord Loss*, *Demon Thief*, *Slawter* and *The Saga of Darren Shan*. He is also the voice of Pantalaimon in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*. He has lent his voice to numerous cartoons, including *Mr Bean*, *Robotboy* and *Bob the Builder* and has performed in over thirty radio productions, including *The Gemini Apes*, *The Glittering Prizes* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. He spent eighteen months in the West End performing in the comedy *Stones in his Pockets*.

Other titles on Naxos AudioBooks



Norwegian Wood (Murakami)
read by John Chancer
ISBN 9789626343937 Unabridged



Kafka on the Shore (Murakami)
read by Sean Barrett and Oliver Le Sueur
9789626344057 Unabridged



The Elephant Vanishes (Murakami)
read by Rupert Degas
ISBN 9789626344064 Unabridged



The Wind-up Bird Chronicle
(Murakami) read by Rupert Degas
ISBN 9789626344187 Unabridged

THE
COMPLETE
TEXT

Produced by Roy McMillan
Recorded & edited by Adam Hejal at Q-Sound Studios,
London
Translated by Alfred Birnbaum

Haruki Murakami

*A Wild Sheep
Chase*

Read by Rupert Degas

A Wild Sheep Chase is one of Murakami's most fantastical novels. An advertising executive, infatuated with a girl who possesses the most perfect ears, is sent on a search for the sheep with a star on its back. This catapults him into a weird adventure to find the sheep in the wilds of Hokkaido, Japan's northern island. There are strange stories, strange encounters. *A Wild Sheep Chase* is an early Murakami work, but its remarkable and individual voice makes it one of the most compelling – and funny – of his books.

Superbly read by Rupert Degas with an edge of Raymond Chandler.



Rupert Degas can be heard reading *True History of the Kelly Gang*, *PS I Love You*, *If You Could See Me Now*, *Lord Loss*, *Demon Thief*, *Slawter* and *The Saga of Darren Shan*. He is also the voice of Pantalaimon in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*. He has lent his voice to numerous cartoons, including *Mr Bean*, *Robotboy* and *Bob the Builder* and has performed in over thirty radio productions, including *The Gemini Apes*, *The Glittering Prizes* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. He spent eighteen months in the West End performing in the comedy *Stones in his Pockets*.

CD ISBN:

978-962-634-414-9

View our catalogue online at

www.naxosaudiobooks.com

NAXOS
AudioBooks

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE,
BROADCASTING AND COPYING OF THESE COMPACT DISCS PROHIBITED.
© 2006 NAXOS Audiobooks Ltd. © 2006 NAXOS Audiobooks Ltd.
Made in Germany.

Total time
9:35:31