

OAHS

The Main Character, His Conflict and Other Key Characters

- **Jun** (the main character and protagonist)

Firmly believes that living the life of a Japanese salaryman is a life of quiet desperation, nothing but a waste of life, although after completing his university education in the U.S., he spends the next three years as a salaryman in California and New York City, working for American companies (instead of Japanese multinational corporations). After quitting his last real job in New York City, he decides to test himself in a larger world. He spends a period of time in India. He then moves to Thailand and becomes a high school teacher, teaching Japanese at Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School in Pathum Thani province, which is where he meets Hannah and gets involved in a romantic relationship with her. He spends two years at Pathum Kallayanee. He then starts teaching at a language school ‘Speak in Style’ – Hannah is no longer in the picture. A few years later though his income is somewhat unstable, fluctuating up and down, he is working as a freelance Japanese teacher, enjoying a degree of freedom in life, but as he approaches middle age, the realization hits him: he lives alone in a small studio apartment, not even in Bangkok but in Rangsit, Pathum Thani, a municipality bordering but outside of the capital city. He has certainly not accomplished much of anything in life. He has not achieved success in life in the conventional sense: money, fame and whatnot. Nor has he in the traditional understanding of life: getting married, having a child, sending the child to college, etc. Amidst this, the COVID-19 pandemic engulfs the world. Thailand, too, plunges into a dark time. “Can I survive through this?” he wonders. A thought flashes across his mind.

“Should I perhaps put an end to the life of a mediocre adventure, compromise and settle into mundane life, that is, to get a full-time job that at least enables me to pay my bills, that is, to become a cog of the wheel called the modern-day society at this late stage in life? Or just jump from the balcony of my studio apartment and end it all?” Amidst the time of this trial, OAHS, i.e., One Arm HandStand, becomes a symbol of hanging onto life itself vs. succumbing to the temptation to quit it. He says to himself, “No. This is not the end of the larger-than-life story of an ordinary man. I am not quite ready to give up” – this happens to be the quintessential conflict of the protagonist: to be a type of salaryman vs. to not be.

- **Hannah** (the romantic interest of the main character)

Has a traditional idea of life: getting married, having a child, sending the child to college, etc. She is about to get married to her fiancé to embark upon such a life but upon finding out his philandering behaviors, she calls off the engagement. She also comes to conclude that there is nothing for her to live for in Thailand, the country of her birth. Soon afterward she meets Brody, an American man twenty years older than her and she agrees to marry him. She then plans to move to the U.S. to start over, which is when she meets Jun and starts a scandalous relationship.

- **Brody** (Hannah’s husband)

Hannah’s husband, originally from the U.S. As a married couple, he and his wife responsibly raise their child – their son also graduates from university while Brody only finishes high school. However, by the time he reaches middle age, he finds his life too

prosaic and frankly too boring. He divorces his wife. He looks for an adventure. He arrives in Thailand, among other things, the prospect of enjoying a great sex life reminiscent of that of porn stars igniting a spark in him, which is when he meets Hannah.

- **Lilanie** (the main character's friend and his former colleague)

Jun's colleague at the language school in Prachinburi, Thailand. Originally from South Africa. Jun's first romantic interest in Thailand, though she turns out to be his unrequited love. She is a typical expat foreign language teacher. Young, energetic and full of life. She would eventually leave Thailand looking for a new adventure elsewhere.

- **Joe** (the main character's friend and a long-time expat in Thailand)

Jun's friend and colleague, first at Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School and then at the language school 'Speak in Style'. He is still in his thirties when he arrives in Thailand. Although he has a university degree, he has never held a real job. Partly because of that, he believes he belongs in Thailand where he can at least live an okay life as an expat English teacher. His view on Thailand becomes increasingly negative, however, over the years.

- **Students at Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School**

Pure animals who are being trained to become professional assholes (and thus Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School is referred to as the Professional Asshole Training School).

- **Teachers at Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School**

Social misfits, creeps and degenerates.

- **Teachers at Speak-in-Style**

Social misfits, creeps and degenerates.