Heart of a Dog

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MIKHAIL BULGAKOV

Mikhail Bulgakov was born in Kiev, Ukraine—then part of the Russian Empire—to an elite Russian family of Orthodox clergymen and scholars. His father died in his youth, but his diligent mother, a teacher, oversaw his education and cultivated his early interest in literature. He went on to study medicine at Kiev University, then work at the Kiev Military Hospital and serve as a Red Cross physician during World War I. After the war, he became a surgeon and then began working as a country doctor in rural Smolensk province. He spent his free time writing short stories, which he eventually published in the collection *A Country Doctor's Notebook*. Bulgakov eventually returned to Ukraine, then treated patients throughout Russia during the Russian Civil War. In the war, his brothers joined the White Army and fought against the Bolsheviks, and afterward, most of his family moved to Paris. But because of a serious typhus infection, Bulgakov wasn't allowed to leave. Instead, he moved to Moscow, quit medicine, and decided to become a writer. He managed to find work writing science fiction satire for local newspapers, and in the early 1920s, he wrote several plays and novellas like *Heart of the Dog*. However, the Soviet government wouldn't let most of them get produced or published because they were critical of the Bolsheviks. Among others, the government made an exception for *The Days of the Turbins*, which ran from 1926 to 1929 and was actually one of Stalin's favorite works. But when the government definitively shut down Bulgakov's career in 1929, Bulgakov wrote a letter to Stalin asking for permission to leave Russia. Stalin called him on the phone and allowed him to work in the Moscow Art Theater as a stage director. From the early 1930s until the end of his life, he worked in various theaters but primarily dedicated himself to writing and revising *The Master and Margarita*, his last and most famous novel. While other writers were arrested, killed, or forced into exile, Bulgakov managed to survive because Stalin was a fan of his early work. But he also wasn't allowed to publish anything, which was a constant source of frustration to him. He finished *The Master and Margarita* less than a year before his death from kidney disease. Most of his work wasn't officially published until decades after his death, when the Soviet Union eased its censorship policies in the 1960s.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Heart of a Dog is set in the Soviet Union in the mid-1920s, during the New Economic Policy period just after the Russian Revolution and the Russian Civil War. In March 1917, the Russian Empire collapsed in the face of mass unrest and a new Russian Provisional Government took over. But in November of the same year, the Bolsheviks, a group of revolutionary communists led by Vladimir Lenin, took power. Lenin's government withdrew Russia from World War I, moved the national capital from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and started persecuting its political enemies, including anti-communist intellectuals and the wealthy elite (or bourgeoisie). From 1917 to 1922, the Bolshevik Red Army fought a devastating civil war against the White Army composed of several anti-communist rebel groups. The Bolsheviks won and founded the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922. During the war, the Bolsheviks controlled the entire national economy and redirected it to support the Red Army. But productivity declined, and the nation faced widespread poverty and shortages of food, fuel, and public services. This culminated in a tragic famine in the winter of 1921–2. In response, Lenin implemented the New Economic Policy (NEP), a system that combined the centralized state control of some sectors of the market with capitalist free markets in other sectors. This policy successfully increased production around Russia—especially in agriculture—and created a new class of small businesspeople called "NEPmen." Bulgakov wrote and set *Heart of a Dog* in this NEP period, when the Bolsheviks seemed to be turning back to capitalism after watching their socialist policies fail. A few years later, in 1928, Stalin ended the NEP in the Great Break. He collectivized all farmland (with catastrophic effects) and accelerated industrial production (which proved a spectacular success). He also ramped up censorship and started expelling the elite specialists—like scientists, doctors, and engineers—whom the Soviet regime had tolerated until that point. This increasing pressure on the educated elite is obvious in *Heart of a Dog*, as Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky watches the new government collectivize his apartment building and faces increased suspicion. This repression and censorship prevented Bulgakov from releasing any of his work until decades after his death in the 1930s.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The film version of *Heart of a Dog* is better known than the book—and it actually drew many Russians to Bulgakov's novel in the late 1980s. Bulgakov's best-known novel is *The Master and Margarita* (1967), which adapts the famous Dr. Faust legend to atheist Soviet Russia. However, most of Bulgakov's work—including *Heart of a Dog* and *The Master and Margarita*—was widely banned and circulated primarily in the underground publications known as *samizdat* until after the author's death. Some exceptions include Bulgakov's short story collection *A Young Doctor's Notebook* (1926), based on his

service as a village doctor in rural Russia, , and his first novel, *The White Guard*, which was partially serialized in 1925 but not published in full until 1966. During the 1920s, he also wrote several plays, but most of them weren't performed or published during Bulgakov's lifetime. The exception was *The Days of the Turbins*, an adaptation of *The White Guard*, which caused a public scandal during its three-year run at the Moscow Art Theatre from 1926–9. Other significant Soviet dissident writers include Boris Pasternak, who is best known for *Doctor Zhivago* (1957), and Joseph Brodsky, who is best remembered for his *Collected Poems* (2000) and his essay collection *Less Than One* (1986). Even the famous social realist communist writer Maxim Gorky, who supported the Bolsheviks before and during the Russian Revolution, eventually turned against the Bolshevik government. He's best known for novels like *The Mother* (1907) and plays like *The Lower Depths* (1902). Finally, George Orwell also famously used animals as an allegory for the Russian Revolution in *Animal Farm* (1945).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Собачье сердце (*Sobachye Serdtse*)
- **When Written:** 1924–5
- **Where Written:** Moscow, Soviet Union
- **When Published:** Novel and play version rejected by the Communist government in 1925–6; published underground (samizdat) from 1920s–1980s; first English translation in 1968; first official Russian publication in 1987
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Satire, science fiction, Russian literature, anti-communist literature
- **Setting:** Moscow in winter 1924
- **Climax:** Sharikov reports Philip to the Soviet authorities, then pulls a gun on Philip and Bormenthal.
- **Antagonist:** Sharikov the man, communism, the Soviet state, junk science
- **Point of View:** First-person (multiple narrators), third-person

EXTRA CREDIT

Real-Life Rejuvenators. The character of Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky is based on a series of real-life surgeons, like Serge Voronoff, Vasily Preobrazhensky, Eugen Steinach, and John R. Brinkley, who got rich transplanting animal organs into humans for the dubious purposes of rejuvenation or life extension.

Censorship and Confiscation. Bulgakov first presented *Heart of a Dog* in a reading to a group of 45 friends and acquaintances. But one of them was a Communist Party informer: he reported Bulgakov to the authorities, who then raided Bulgakov's apartment and confiscated his manuscript.

PLOT SUMMARY

In the early days of the Soviet Union, a mad scientist (Prof. Preobrazhensky) implants a human pituitary gland into a stray dog (Sharik) and accidentally turns him into a man. In *Heart of a Dog*, Mikhail Bulgakov uses this fictional experiment as a metaphor for what he sees as the failures of the Russian Revolution and communist Bolshevik government. Just as the professor's unruly experiment upends his life, Bulgakov suggests, the Bolsheviks destroyed Russian society through their unruly communist experiment in social equality.

The novel opens with the perspective of a wounded dog, who howls as he freezes to death in the harsh Moscow winter. The cook in a Soviet government cafeteria threw a pot of boiling water at him, scalding his side. The dog curses the cook, a dishonest scoundrel who serves rotten meat. He watches a young typist (Vasnetsova) run out of the cafeteria into the snowstorm and pities her. She pets him and nicknames him "Sharik" (which means "Little Ball").

Then, a well-dressed gentleman (Prof. Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky) marches over and feeds Sharik a horsemeat sausage. Thrilled, the mangy Sharik follows the gentleman through Moscow back to his huge, elegantly-decorated department. But when Prof. Philip and his beautiful young maid Zina lead Sharik to an operating room, Sharik realizes what's happening. He tries to run away and bites Prof. Philip's assistant, Dr. Bormenthal, who puts him to sleep with a noxious gas.

But Philip is only healing Sharik's scalded side, and Sharik awakens clean, bandaged up, and pain-free. He follows Philip into his office, where he naps while one strange-looking patient after another drops their pants and pays Philip a huge sum of money. It turns out that Philip is a surgeon who transplants animal organs into humans in the hopes of rejuvenating them.

Later that day, four angry young communists led by a man named Shvonder visit Philip and introduce themselves as the building's new management committee. They explain that Philip's seven-room apartment is too big and demand that he give up some of his space. He angrily refuses. He calls one of his patients, an influential government official, and gets the management committee to leave him alone.

Over the next several days, Sharik naps and lounges around in Philip's apartment while Philip and Bormenthal dine extravagantly and complain about the state of Moscow under the new communist government. Sharik eats voraciously, admires himself in the mirror, and starts hanging out with the cook Darya Petrovna in the kitchen.

One evening, Bormenthal frantically tells Philip that someone has died. The two men lock Sharik in the bathroom and

scramble to set up the examination room. Then, they put Sharik to sleep and start the operation. Philip replaces Sharik's seminal vesicles (part of the reproductive system) and pituitary gland (an important gland in the brain) with human organs he brings in jars.

The next chapter is Dr. Bormenthal's journal. After the operation, he and Philip expect Sharik to die. Instead, Sharik's condition improves. He sheds his fur, starts moaning, and walks on his hind legs. His tail falls off, he starts speaking Russian, and he increasingly looks like a human. Philip is astonished, and the newspapers are starting to gossip about his experiments. Soon, Sharik starts laughing, smoking, wearing clothes, and swearing at everyone around him. Bormenthal and Philip realize that he's becoming human—and he's taking on the attributes of the organ donor who gave him his pituitary gland, a lowlife thief and balalaika player named Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin.

With his humanization complete, Sharik becomes vile and offensive over the following weeks. He starts sleeping in the kitchen, playing the balalaika, harassing Zina and Darya, and wearing the same ugly clothes as all the other men in Moscow. He criticizes Philip's elitism, insists on being treated as an equal, and conspires with Shvonder to get government papers listing his absurd new name, "Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov."

Then, Sharikov sees a cat. He chases after it, breaks a window, and locks himself in the bathroom with the faucet on. The apartment starts to flood, and the doorman Fyodor climbs through the window to fix the faucet. Bormenthal has to send all of Philip's patients home while they clean up the water. Sharikov doesn't apologize—he starts complaining about the cat instead. He keeps up his bad manners, getting drunk at dinner and loudly criticizing Philip's elitism and taste in theatre. Philip declares that Sharikov is obviously "on the lowest rung of development" and doesn't deserve to be an equal to civilized, educated men like himself and Bormenthal.

Over the next week, Philip starts to plan something in secret. He tries to kick Sharikov out of his apartment, but Sharikov has government papers saying he now has a right to a portion of Philip's apartment. Meanwhile, Bormenthal and Philip lament their failed experiment and plot to get rid of Sharikov. They debate whether Sharikov's problem is that he's part dog, or that he's all too human. When they learn that Sharikov tried to sexually assault Darya Petrovna in her sleep, Bormenthal attacks Sharikov and promises to teach him a lesson when he sobers up in the morning.

But in the morning, Sharikov has disappeared. Three days later, he returns with new clothes and a new job as a government cat-catcher. After a few more days, Vasnetsova, the young typist from the beginning of the novel, comes to the apartment. Sharikov has lied about being a war hero and convinced her to move in with him. But Philip tells her the truth, and she leaves in tears. The next morning, Philip learns that Sharikov has reported him to the government for his anti-communist outbursts. He and Bormenthal confront Sharikov, who pulls a gun on them. Bormenthal and Philip subdue Sharikov and take him back into the examination room.

In the epilogue, the reader learns what they've done: they've turned Sharikov back into a dog. The police come to investigate Sharikov's disappearance, and Philip introduces them to his dog. He claims that Shvonder registered Sharik, the dog, for a government job as an animal-catcher in order to get back at him. That night, Sharik lazes on the rug, feeling grateful for his beautiful life and wondering why the doctors kept operating on him. And Philip, "the superior being," is back to his old peaceful self.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov – The central character in *Heart of a Dog* is a mangy stray mutt who gets turned into a man—and then, at the end of the book, back into a dog—by the gentleman scientist Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky. At the beginning of the novel, he is Sharik ("little ball"), a bitter, self-pitying dog waiting to die from a severe wound in the freezing Moscow winter. But when Philip adopts him and heals his wounds, he becomes the mirror image of his new owner: elegant, loyal, and grateful for his privileges. In fact, he's relatively well behaved until he becomes a man during Philip's experiment—and his personality completely changes. Over time, he loses his fur, starts to walk on two legs, and learns to talk. Then, he becomes a vulgar, disrespectful drunk, thief, and womanizer—just like Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin, the man whose pituitary gland and testicles he received during the surgery. He starts cursing, smoking, and spitting everywhere, and he insists on being called Polygraph Polygraphovich, an absurd name referring to the printing technology for the calendars that most Russians used to choose their children's names in the early 20th century. He plays the balalaika, plots with Shvonder to kick Philip out of his apartment, and starts harassing Zina and Darya Petrovna. Worst of all, in Philip's eyes, he starts to become a communist. While mostly human, he still has some doglike traits—he looks the part, and he obsessively chases after cats, which lands him a job purging strays for the government. When his antics grow too insufferable, Philip and Dr. Bormenthal turn him back into a dog. His transformation from a loyal, obedient dog to a vulgar, destructive human is Bulgakov's metaphor for the Russian people's transformation from dutiful subjects in the Russian Empire to incompetent rulers during the Russian Revolution, which he thinks enabled their worst instincts and ought to be undone.

Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky – Preobrazhensky is the eccentric surgeon, professor, and

aristocrat whose experiment on Sharik drives the plot of *Heart of a Dog*. He is a world-renowned expert on the brain, and his expensive rejuvenation operations are in high demand among wealthy Moscow residents. But he's more interested in science than medicine, as he thinks his side treatments can help transform people and improve the human species as a whole. This is what leads him to experiment on Sharik—with disastrous effects. He lives a lonely but admirable and cultivated life: while he spends most of his time seeing patients and researching, he also feasts lavishly with his assistant, Dr. Bormenthal, and frequently goes to the theatre. An unapologetic anti-communist, he struggles to hold onto his privileges under the new Soviet government, which wants to allocate part of his seven-room apartment to people who need the space. Over the course of the novel, he fights with the building management committee head, Shvonder, to hold onto his seven rooms and with Sharikov, the humanoid monster he created, to maintain order and sanity. He represents the refinement, the noble values, and the excesses of the Russian aristocracy, as well as of science: he takes the noble pursuit of knowledge and progress too far and creates a monster instead. Of course, the trope of the mad scientist (most famously Dr. Frankenstein) and early 20th century surgeons who actually transplanted animal organs into people are all inspirations for Philip's unusual profession. Preobrazhensky means "of the transfiguration," making it an ironic reference to Philip's aspirations to play God and transform humanity—aspirations which get ruined when he creates the monstrous Sharikov instead.

Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal – Bormenthal is Prof. Preobrazhensky's loyal assistant, friend, and admirer. Notably, the fifth chapter of the novel consists of his journal. He helps Philip with his surgeries and day-to-day medical practice, and partway through the novel, he moves into Philip's apartment to help him deal with the increasingly unruly Sharikov. He soon becomes Sharikov's main enemy and character foil. Throughout the second half of the novel, he repeatedly attacks and threatens Sharikov in order to protect Philip and the women Sharikov harasses (including Zina, Darya Petrovna, and Vasnetsova). Near the end of the novel, he begs Philip to let him kill Sharikov—but Philip refuses. Despite his violent tendencies, his friendship with the older Philip represents many of the basic values—like kindness, respect, and loyalty—that Bulgakov suggests make human life worth living, but believes that the Russian Revolution tried to eradicate.

Shvonder – Shvonder is a young working-class communist who moves into Prof. Preobrazhensky's building, immediately gets appointed to lead the building management committee, and spends most of the novel trying to confiscate all or part of Preobrazhensky's apartment. Shvonder is a caricature of cynical, mediocre, and rigidly ideological communists and a personification of the Bolshevik government. He helps turn Sharikov into a model proletarian, register for identity papers, and get a government job. He also constantly complains about Philip's "counterrevolutionary" behavior and friendship with a powerful Communist Party official, Pyotr Alexandrovich, who protects him from losing his property.

Darya Petrovna Ivanova – Darya Petrovna is Prof. Preobrazhensky's talented cook. She befriends Sharik the dog, but gets sexually assaulted in the night by Sharikov the man. Her relationship with Prof. Preobrazhensky is close but occasionally strained—for instance, she occasionally leaks information about his experiments to the press and lets curious citizens into his apartment. For the most part, however, she is a loyal servant, like Fyodor and Zina.

Fyodor – Fyodor is the doorman at Prof. Preobrazhensky's building. Notably, he climbs through the window to turn off the faucet after Sharikov floods Preobrazhensky's bathroom and helps resolve disputes between Sharikov and the neighbors. Like Zina and Darya Petrovna, he is loyal and decent, and he represents the best of the proletariat.

Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin – Chugunkin is the alcoholic, petty thief, womanizer, and balalaika player whose pituitary gland Prof. Preobrazhensky implants into Sharik. Sharik then manifests Chugunkin's offensive personality, an exaggerated version of what Bulgakov considers to be the proletariat's worst traits. Characteristically, he dies in a bar fight. The name "Chugunkin" comes from the Russian word for cast iron, which makes it a play on Stalin's name (which comes from the Russian word for steel).

Vasnetsova – Vasnetsova is a young typist who appears briefly at the beginning and end of the book. In the opening scene, she rushes out of the government cafeteria into the winter and gives Sharik his name. Later, Sharikov manipulates her into working for him by falsely claiming to be a war hero. Philip tells her the truth and promises to use his influence to protect her from Sharikov. Her poverty and relationship with Sharikov represent the way the Bolshevik government deceives women and young people.

Zinaida (Zina) ProkofievnaBunina – Zina is Prof. Preobrazhensky's young housekeeper, who helps him deal with Sharik's antics as a dog and harassment as a man. In addition to cleaning and serving dinner, she also reports to Preobrazhensky about the building management committee and assists him in his surgeries. Like Darya Petrovna and Fyodor, she is decent and loyal.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Vyazemskaya – Vyazemskaya is a woman who belongs to Shvonder's building management committee. She is androgynous-looking, and Prof. Preobrazhensky initially mistakes her for a man. This points to the way communism is changing social norms and gender roles.

TERMS

Balalaika – The balalaika is a popular guitar-like Russian folk instrument.

Bolsheviks – The Bolsheviks were the communist militants, led by Vladimir Lenin, who took power during the Russian Revolution. After the Revolution, the Bolsheviks formed the Communist Party and governed the Soviet Union as a one-party state.

Pituitary Gland – The pituitary gland, or hypophysis, is a small gland in the human brain that controls hormone secretion and regulates important processes like growth, metabolism, and energy. **Philip** transplants the criminal **Klim**'s pituitary gland into **Sharik** as part of his rejuvenation experiment.

Proletariat – In Marxism (and Soviet Russia), the proletariat is the working class, often opposed to the wealthy elite, or bourgeoisie.

Rejuvenation – Rejuvenation is the reversal of aging, which scientists, philosophers, and explorers have pursued since ancient times with little success.

THEMES

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REVOLUTION AND REGRESSION

Set in the early days of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Bulgakov's science fiction satire *Heart of a Dog* is really an extended allegory of the Russian Revolution of 1917. When the mad scientist Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky transplants human organs into a mangy stray dog, Sharik, he's astonished to watch Sharik take on human form and try to usurp his apartment. Shvonder, the communist head of Philip's building management committee, helps Sharik the dog become Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, the official government cat-catcher. Over the following weeks, Sharikov's stealing, drinking, cat-chasing, and womanizing start to destroy Philip's life. In fact, Philip's experiment and Sharikov's takeover are both metaphors for the Russian Revolution, in which a group of communist militants called the Bolsheviks seized power and replaced Russia's old system of monarchy with a dictatorship led by the working classes, or proletariat. However, Bulgakov thinks that the proletariat neither deserved power nor wielded it responsibly. Instead, he suggests, the Bolsheviks created a monstrous, corrupt society in which the working classes preached cooperation and equality, but really manipulated others for their own selfish ends. For Bulgakov, this shows that revolutionary change generally sets humanity back rather than pushing it forward. Whether in science, politics, or culture, Bulgakov argues that sweeping change is counterproductive because it's based on a naïve view of human nature.

Bulgakov uses his two main characters' attempts to change the world—Philip's experiments and Sharikov's attempt to steal Philip's apartment—as metaphors for the Russian Revolution. First, Philip spends his days transplanting animal testicles and ovaries into his human patients in an attempt to rejuvenate them, or restore them to youth and sexual vitality. Like the Revolution, rejuvenation promises a fresh start and a brighter future—but it's unclear whether Philip's procedures help people or simply feed their worst instincts. (Most of his patients are mainly interested in sex.) When he tries this experiment the other way around—by transplanting human organs into the stray dog Sharik—its true implications become clearer. Sharik turns into a human and takes on the vulgar personality of Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin, the criminal whose organs he received. He spends all day drinking, smoking, cursing, killing cats, and assaulting women, which infuriates Philip. The procedure doesn't improve him at all—on the contrary, it makes him worse by giving him the power to pursue all his most dangerous and destructive desires. This is similar to how Bulgakov characterizes the Revolution: it didn't improve Russia or the proletariat, but rather enabled their corruption and immorality.

After Philip's failed revolution in the examination room creates Sharikov, Sharikov's failed revolution in Philip's home creates endless division, corruption, and violence for both of them. Sharikov exemplifies many of the communist regime's worst tendencies. He gets legal papers in his absurd new name, "Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov," that say he has a right to a portion of Philip's seven-room apartment. Despite having no education whatsoever and not knowing the first thing about communism, he becomes a communist and starts preaching about equality. In reality, he just joined because the communists want to give people like him more property. His motives are totally selfish, and his supposed belief in equality is just an excuse for that selfishness—just like Bulgakov thinks the official Soviet ideology is a cover for the party members' self-interest. Then, Sharikov gets a job as a government cat-catcher and allies with Shvonder to report Philip's "counterrevolutionary" behavior. However, one of Philip's powerful friends intercepts and stops the report—ironically enough, corruption saves him from Sharikov manipulating the system. Finally out of options, Sharikov draws a gun on Philip and Bormenthal—who subdue him and then reverse their original operation, turning him back into a dog. Ultimately, both Philip's revolution in the laboratory and Sharikov's in the apartment are spectacular failures. Both believe that they're liberating people and improving the

world—Philip thinks he's helping his patients and pioneering new technologies to improve the human gene pool, while Sharikov thinks he's liberating himself and the proletariat. But in reality, both actually set the world back by enabling selfishness and corruption.

Finally, Bulgakov also attacks the Russian Revolution head-on, by showing directly how it made Russia absurd and degraded instead of progressive and equal. Even Sharik the stray dog notices how things have deteriorated in Moscow: he compares Count Tolstoy's cook Vlas (who used to toss him bones before the Revolution) to the cruel, bitter cook at the government cafeteria (who throws a pot of boiling water at him). Clearly, the Revolution hasn't improved workers' lives or even encouraged cooperation—people are more suspicious of one another than ever. For instance, Philip's neighbors have stopped putting their shoes and coats out in the hallway, and now his building's common areas are falling into disrepair. This is both evidence of the government's failures and a microcosm of those failures in Russia as a whole. In their pursuit of novelty and equality, the communists also start doing things upside down. For instance, Shvonder visits Philip to insist he give up part of his apartment and start eating in his bedroom instead of his dining room. Meanwhile, the economy is crashing, the government persecutes anyone who disagrees with it, and the bureaucracy values documents and formalities above human lives—as Sharikov explains, "a man is strictly forbidden to exist without documents." In the mid-1920s, Bulgakov sees a society around him that promises equality, modernity, and moral improvement but delivers corruption, backwardness, and vice. The Revolution tried—and failed—to improve human nature. Philip and Sharikov's experiments both highlight the Russian Revolution's specific failures and suggest that people react to sweeping change with selfishness and suspicion, not cooperation and consensus.

At the end of the novel, Philip operates on Sharikov again and turns him back into Sharik, the obedient and grateful dog. Clearly, Bulgakov wants Russia to do the same: undo the Revolution. He thinks that gradually improving existing systems is preferable to wiping them out entirely and replacing them with something new.

SOCIAL CLASS AND HIERARCHY

The second half of *Heart of a Dog* centers on the gentleman professor and surgeon Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky's conflicts with Sharikov, the freakish, vulgar dog-man he creates through a transplant experiment gone awry. During these conflicts, Philip isn't just defending his own property and privilege: he's also defending the old Russian aristocracy, which has gone from ruling the Russian people to being reviled by them in just a few years. After the Russian Revolution, when the communist Bolsheviks took power, elite scientists and professionals like Philip were increasingly viewed as an outdated relic of Russia's imperial past. But when *Heart of a Dog* is set, in the mid-1920s, the Bolshevik government still tolerated specialists like Philip because it hadn't yet trained loyal communists to replace them. While Bulgakov certainly does satirize Philip's elitism and greed, he also shows how Philip leads a fulfilling, cultivated life because of them. Bulgakov's equally exaggerated portrayal of Shvonder, the angry young communist charged with taking away Philip's apartment, and Sharikov, the bumbling proletarian lowlife who gets unexpectedly rewarded with a government job, shows his skepticism about the working class's competence and values. In fact, for Bulgakov, the difference between the cultivated elite and the foolish masses is similar to the difference between humans and dogs. Bulgakov defends Russia's aristocracy—and social hierarchy in general—because he thinks that the elite have the traits needed to govern society, while the masses are incompetent, immoral, and irresponsible.

Throughout the novel, Bulgakov presents working-class people as brutish, vulgar, and morally inferior to the competent, sophisticated elite. He exaggerates and parodies these differences, but only to argue that they exist—and never to challenge them. In fact, virtually everything in Bulgakov's Moscow is segregated by class. Working-class people eat rotten meat stew and horsemeat sausage in the government cafeteria, while Philip and his assistant Dr. Bormenthal dine lavishly on lobster, fish, and caviar prepared for them by Philip's private cook, Darya Petrovna. Sharikov goes to the circus and plays the balalaika, while Philip goes to the ballet and **hums classical songs and opera arias**. And most importantly, working-class people live in cramped apartments where they have to eat in their bedrooms, while Philip has seven rooms all to himself. Even after the Russian Revolution, then, there's a sharp division between the elite, who live opulently, and the masses, who live rudimentary, uncomfortable lives.

But Bulgakov suggests that class divisions are more than just economic and cultural: he thinks they're also intellectual and moral. This is clearest of all in the differences and clashes between Sharikov and Philip. While Philip spends his days treating patients and exploring scientific mysteries, Sharikov spends his harassing women, stealing from Philip, and killing cats. Even though some of Philip's science is dubious, Bulgakov suggests, his job is clearly more sophisticated, ethical, and valuable to the world than Sharikov's. So is his day-to-day behavior. For instance, while Philip keeps a strict routine and maintains order in his apartment, Sharikov ruins his schedule and spits, swears, and smokes all over the apartment. Most disturbingly, Sharikov is incapable of thinking for himself. He constantly repeats communist slogans and policy ideas that he learned from Shvonder, and he presents them as sophisticated theories, even though he has no education and can't even read a calendar. Philip eventually snaps and tells Sharikov the truth: he's an inferior being "on the lowest rung of development." To

Philip, so is the rest of the proletariat.

Based on the class differences he portrays, Bulgakov argues that aristocratic social and economic hierarchies are actually beneficial for society. In his mind, the superior are meant to lead and the inferior are meant to follow. Before he becomes a man, Sharik the dog illustrates this principle perfectly. At the beginning (and very end) of the novel, Sharik and Philip live in blissful harmony. Sharik is deeply loyal and grateful to his new owner, who has saved him from freezing to death in the Moscow winter. In fact, he's much happier when he accepts his position as Philip's social inferior (as a dog) than when he insists on being Philip's equal (as a man). Similarly, there is a whole group of workers in the novel, like Zina and Fyodor, who are loyal and happy for the same reason: they accept their status rather than fighting it. This is how Bulgakov imagines that society should work: the majority should accept their subservient role and follow the dictates of the elite, educated minority. Like Philip, Bulgakov suggests, this minority should use its privilege to pursue the extraordinary political, creative, and scientific goals that only it is capable of achieving. But without the privileges that hierarchy brings them—in Philip's case, the privilege of a seven-room apartment and ample free time—the elite will not have the time, space, or resources to pursue excellence. Therefore, for Bulgakov, traditional social hierarchies actually ensure that everyone ends up where they belong, and society as a whole progresses as efficiently as possible.

Of course, Bulgakov's views on the class system were practically the opposite of the Bolsheviks'. He thought they made a fatal error by trying to dissolve the Russian social hierarchy and give power to the proletariat. In Bulgakov's mind, they replaced an effective aristocratic hierarchy—in which the most sophisticated and capable people ruled society—with an ineffective political one in which a new, corrupt, thoughtless elite trampled on everyone else. Restoring order to Russian society, Bulgakov suggests at the end of the novel, really means restoring hierarchy. In the final scene, after Philip turns Sharik back into a dog, Sharik lounges around on the rug, enjoying his life, while "the superior being," Philip, sits in his chair, cuts up brains, and contemplates the mysteries of science. Inequality allows each to do what they do best.

SCIENCE, NATURE, AND MORALITY

Heart of a Dog focuses on the impossible result of a fictional scientific experiment, but Bulgakov uses this experiment to emphasize science's very real limits and ethical implications. Through the absurd premise that a doctor could transform a dog into a human being, he mocks the idea that people could or should totally conquer nature through science. But he also demonstrates that science *does* give people an immense power over the world—a power that can be used equally for good or for evil. Sometimes scientists can decide how to use this power, and sometimes they simply ignore the ethical implications of their work (like Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky with his rejuvenation patients at first). But often, they simply can't know whether they will do good or evil, change the world, or create a monster. Philip's failed experiment on Sharik suggests that, when human beings arrogantly try to dominate nature, they often *do* create monsters. Because scientists must take moral responsibility for their work, Bulgakov suggests, they ought to adapt to nature, rather than trying to change it.

Bulgakov frequently emphasizes science's sheer power, which can be both creative and destructive. After all, science is just the sum of human knowledge about how the world works and how we can manipulate it, and medicine is the same for the human body. Therefore, it's no surprise that surgeons like Philip have a sometimes unfathomable life-or-death power over living beings. Bulgakov points this out by mixing the language of medicine with the language of violence. During the operation, Philip is "positively terrifying." He "slashes" Sharik up and "roar[s]" to his assistant, Dr. Bormenthal, and they are "as frantic as hurrying murderers." Bulgakov shows how there's a fine line between surgery and dismemberment, or healing and maiming. Philip doesn't even expect Sharik to survive the surgery. Accordingly, it's no wonder that Sharik is terrified every time Philip leads him into the exam room: he knows that science can kill him. But science's great dangers don't nullify its equally great power to heal and create. For instance, Philip mainly performs rejuvenation procedures on his patients—he transplants animal organs into them in the hopes of reversing aging and improving their sexual health. Later, when he transplants *human* organs into Sharik, he's astonished to see Sharik transform into a man. In response to this transformation, Bormenthal goes on to praise Philip's godlike creative power in his journal: "The surgeon's scalpel has brought into being a new human entity. Professor Preobrazhensky, you are a creator." This shows that science's power to create and its power to destroy are inseparable. Science is neither inherently good nor inherently evil; rather, whether it does good or evil depends on the situation.

Having shown that science can accomplish either good or evil, Bulgakov next shows how scientists unintentionally do evil when they try to outsmart nature. Bormenthal and Philip often disagree about whether science's purpose is to learn about the world or to change it: Bormenthal is excited about everything Philip has learned about the brain through his experiment on Sharik, while Philip focuses on the consequences of his discovery, not the new knowledge he's producing. But in a way, both are right: Philip does make an astonishing discovery—that the pituitary gland determines human personality and identity. (This is science fiction—it's not actually true.) But this discovery also has important consequences. Once he realizes that his creation, Sharikov, is a liar, thief, and scoundrel, Philip starts to

feel a nagging sense of moral responsibility. He realizes that he intended to do good, but ended up doing harm instead. Specifically, he violated the natural order of the world by trying to change the inherent essence of things. He gave a dog a human's essence (pituitary gland), and he interfered with the natural process of human evolution. Similarly, while Philip's rejuvenation treatments appear to make patients younger, they're also clearly destructive, as they disrupt normal development. One of Philip's patients faces a physical developmental issue (he suddenly gets green hair and loses control over his knees) while another appears to be failing in his moral development (he brags about using his new youthful appearance to seduce an underage girl). Reflecting on his experiments, Philip realizes that it's dangerous to interfere with natural development. He admits that "it might be possible to [...] turn a dog into a highly advanced human." But, he asks, what's the point? "The human race takes care of this by itself," he argues, by reproducing and evolving over time. There's no need for scientists to get in the way.

Like Philip, Bulgakov was a trained doctor who both understood how humans are constrained by our biology and fought those constraints to the extent he could. In the real world, of course, rejuvenation and inter-species transformations aren't possible. But while fictional characters like Philip and Sharik don't face the same natural limits as real people, they still face consequences when they try too hard to surpass those limits. Like many other science fiction writers, Bulgakov uses the manipulation of nature in literature to warn his readers about trying to transcend nature, including human nature, in the real world.

DIGNITY, LOYALTY, AND RESPECT

In *Heart of a Dog*, the Soviet government attacks more than just Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky's oversized apartment and wealthy elite class: it also tries to eradicate the basic human values that make a life like Philip's worth living. While solitary and occasionally standoffish, Philip still believes in treating everyone—even the intolerable, mischievous Sharikov—with dignity, decency, and respect. He's also staunchly committed to nonviolence. The relationships that hold his life together are based on these values, which he shares with his assistant Bormenthal and his house staff, Zina, Fyodor, and Darya Petrovna. In fact, he thinks that loyalty and friendship are what separate people like him from people like Sharikov, Shvonder, and most of the Russian proletariat, who view others as interchangeable parts in a system of social classes, rather than as individuals. For Bulgakov, Soviet communists lose these basic values—and the sense of human connection they create—because they form relationships around abstract political ideas about economic and social equality, instead of around mutual interest, consent, and good will. To have truly meaningful relationships, Bulgakov suggests, humans actually have to be biased and individualistic to a certain degree—in other words, rather than trying to treat everyone else equally, they have to dedicate their care, attention, and loyalty to some people over others.

The novel sharply distinguishes between two different models of human relationships: those based on consent and those based on coercion. Philip and Bormenthal's partnership exemplifies the first. They work, live, and socialize together because they want to. They deeply appreciate and respect one another, and it's clear that they both gain from the relationship. For instance, shortly before they start to plot Sharikov's demise, Bormenthal sincerely thanks Philip for his mentorship and even gives him a platonic kiss on the moustache. Philip's relationships with the house staff and many of his patients are similarly respectful and loyal, although not as close. So is his relationship with Sharik (at least as first). After he lures Sharik back to his apartment with sausage, Bormenthal is surprised to see him successfully catch a stray dog. Philip responds that "kindness [is] the only method possible in dealing with living creatures"—terror will not work because it "completely paralyzes the nervous system." In other words, Philip understands that people respond better to positive incentives than negative ones. In short, he shows how genuine relationships can enrich people's lives by giving them a sense of safety, meaning, and community.

In contrast, Sharikov, Shvonder, and other representatives of the new revolutionary government have *coercive* relationships. Instead of entering human interactions with respect and decency, they treat everything as a power struggle. For example, when Shvonder and his building management committee first visit Philip at the end of the second chapter, they offer demands, threats, and a thinly-veiled call for donations. Where Philip approached Sharik with kindness, the management committee approaches Philip trying—unsuccessfully—to terrorize him into giving up part of his apartment or donating money. Something similar happens after Philip's experiment turns Sharik into a man. Instead of loyally obeying his master, Sharik (now named Sharikov) starts to insult and make demands on him. He no longer recognizes or appreciates Philip's generosity towards him, even though Philip saved his life by adopting him. When Philip asks Sharikov to quiet down and clean up, Sharikov refuses. They aren't linked together by goodwill or mutual consent, but instead by obligation—they're now roommates, whether they like it or not. (They don't.) Where Philip and Bormenthal's relationship is win-win, Philip and Sharikov's is zero-sum: it adds nothing but conflict and tension to their lives, but they can't avoid it because they're forced to interact.

Bulgakov suggests that the repressive Soviet communist government tilts the balance away from consensual relationships and towards coercive relationships by intervening

in people's private lives. Trust disappears; more connections revolve around power, and fewer involve genuine care, kindness, and affection. Philip illustrates this general loss of trust when he points out how people's shoes started getting stolen in his building around the time of the Russian Revolution, and then everyone suddenly started keeping their shoes in their apartments rather than in the shared rack. This shows how people withdrew from public and social life after the Russian Revolution. The novel suggests various possible causes: they feared government persecution, they started viewing their former peers as rivals, they started refusing to put another person's needs before their own, or they started insisting on equality in every interaction. Vyazemskaya, a member of the management committee, particularly illustrates this distorted thinking when she asks Philip for a donation for German children—but instead of telling him why he should donate, she tells him why it would be wrong *not* to. She's appealing to his sense of abstract obligation to the needy and fear of the government, *not* his sense of concern or goodwill, which would require him to feel partial towards the beneficiaries of his donation. In order to promote equality, the Soviet Union seems to think, people have to feel the same way towards everyone. Any loyalty, commitment, or affection is suspect. For instance, Philip points out that even Sharikov will probably turn against Shvonder as soon as it's convenient for him—and he does. This shows that, even though they're working together to kick Philip out of his apartment, Shvonder and Sharikov don't share any genuine connection—at best, they're temporary allies, not friends.

In contrast to the Soviets, Bulgakov sees that the most valuable relationships are precisely the loyal, biased, unique, trustworthy, and respectful ones. Philip and Bormenthal's relationship is something of an outlier—a relic, even—but it's also a sign of hope. It proves that the authoritarian government does not have to infiltrate every part of people's lives and turn every relationship into a source of suspicion and distrust.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

PHILIP'S SONGS

Throughout *Heart of a Dog*, Prof. Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky constantly sings two songs to himself, which represent his refined cultural taste and corresponding attitude towards his work. The first, Tchaikovsky's popular song "Don Juan's Serenade," starts, "From Seville and to Granada…" The other, an aria by the pharaoh character from Verdi's opera *Aida*, begins, "Toward the sacred banks of the Nile…" "Don Juan's Serenade" is about the famous seducer by that name, while in the aria, the pharaoh sings about his plans to conquer an invading army.

Whether Philip is working alone in his office, dealing with patients, or plotting Sharikov's demise with Dr. Bormenthal, these songs frequently pop up in his thoughts or dialogue. In fact, in the novel's final line, he hums, "Toward the sacred banks of the Nile…" while he cuts into preserved brains. The classical songs that play in his head point to his aristocratic upbringing and sensibilities. They sharply contrast with Sharikov's balalaika music, which marks him as an unrefined commoner. Philip also carries his sensibilities into his work. He views himself as an artist, creating beauty by rejuvenating his patients and conquering the unknown through his scientific experiments. The songs highlight both of these attributes. Philip hums "Don Juan's Serenade" while seeing his rejuvenation patients (who will use the treatments to deceive new love interests about their true age). Similarly, he hums the *Aida* aria while planning to return Sharikov to canine form (and thereby conquer his enemy).

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Grove Press edition of *Heart of a Dog* published in 1994.

Chapter 1 Quotes

Whoo-oo-oo-oo-hooh-hoo-oo! Oh, look at me, I am perishing in this gateway. The blizzard roars a prayer for the dying, and I howl with it. I am finished, finished. That bastard, in the dirty cap—the cook of the Normal Diet Cafeteria for employees of the People's Central Economic Soviet—threw boiling water at me and scalded my left side. The scum, and he calls himself a proletarian! Lord, oh lord, how it hurts! My side is cooked to the bone. And now I howl and howl, but what's the good of howling?

What harm did I do him? Would the People's Economic Soviet get any poorer if I rooted in the garbage heap? The greedy brute!

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

Heart of a Dog opens outside a government cafeteria in the freezing Moscow winter. An injured stray dog (later nicknamed Sharik) howls into the wind, tells the reader

about his misfortunes, and wonders if the world has truly abandoned him.

But Bulgakov's dog is also full of social commentary: he connects his abandonment to communism. Most importantly, he recognizes the contradictions between the Soviet Union's ideology and the way it actually functions. Instead of sympathy for the poor and quality services for everyone, it has fostered bitterness, suspicion, and corruption. The cook, who "calls himself a proletarian"—or a member of the working class, which the Soviet Union sought to empower—doesn't seem to care about a fellow suffering creature.

This opening scene becomes an important reference point for Sharik's transformation throughout the novel. In this scene, he implores the newly-empowered proletariat to have sympathy for poor, weak, and suffering beings—but later, when he is no longer poor, weak, and suffering, he forgets his own lesson and becomes precisely the kind of disgruntled communist he derides here. Bulgakov's message is clear: he thinks that Soviet communism brings out people's worst, most selfish instincts, even as it preaches equality and cooperation.

> Cooks can be of all sorts. For example, the late Vlas from Prechistenka.
> How many he saved! Because the main thing is to get a bite to eat when you're sick. All the old dogs still talk of how Vlas would throw them a bone, and with a solid chunk of meat on it. May he be blessed for it in the Heavenly Kingdom—a real personality he was, the gentry's cook for the Counts Tolstoy, not one of those nobodies from the Soviet of Normal Diet. The things they do in that Normal Diet, it's more than a dog's brain can comprehend. Those scoundrels make soup of stinking corned beef, and the poor wretches don't know what they're eating. They come running, gobbling it down, lapping it up.

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2-3

Explanation and Analysis

As he nurses his resentment against the cook who scalded him with boiling water, the stray dog remembers some of the other cooks he's met in Moscow. Specifically, he compares aristocrat families' cooks before the Russian Revolution, like Vlas, to the "scoundrels" who work in the government cafeterias under the new communist regime.

Although it's exaggerated and a bit tongue-in-cheek—like virtually every other story and detail in this novel—the dog's comparison clearly suggests that life has gotten worse for most people since the Revolution. As a stray, Bulgakov's canine narrator is primarily dependent on charity from humans, so his survival is particularly tied to Russian society's moral strength. And he clearly sees that people were more virtuous and generous under the old system. Like the novel's other central character, Philip Preobrazhensky, he would love to go back—at least, so long as he's a dog. And when he meets Philip, he'll get to briefly pretend he's going back. (As a matter of fact, he'll also literally go back: Philip lives in Prechistenka, just like the Tolstoys.)

> "Sharik" she called him. ... "Little Ball" ... What kind of a "Sharik" is he, anyway? Sharik is somebody round, plump, silly, a son of aristocratic parents who gobbles oatmeal, and he is shaggy, lanky, tattered, skinny as a rail, a homeless mutt. But thanks for a kind word, anyway.

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker), Vasnetsova

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4-5

Explanation and Analysis

As he cowers in the cafeteria doorway and wonders if he'll survive to morning, Sharik the dog reflects on the new nickname that a young typist gave him when she passed by. He doesn't feel worthy of the aristocratic name "Sharik"—he's not cute, healthy, or happy enough to be anyone's "Little Ball." Clearly, he understands that, if there were a class hierarchy of Russian dogs, he'd fall at the bottom. And he makes it clear to the reader that, in the novel's allegory for the Russian Revolution, he also stands for the classes at the bottom: the working masses, or proletariat. Of course, in his vision of a happy aristocratic dog's life, he is also ironically foreshadowing the next section of the novel, in which he moves to Philip Preobrazhensky's apartment and gets to gobble up fancy food for a few weeks.

What's that? Sausage? Sir, if you could see what this sausage is made of, you'd never come near that store. Better give it to me.
The dog gathered his last remnant of strength and crawled in a frenzy from under the gateway to the sidewalk. The blizzard clattered over his head like gunshots, and swept up the huge letters on a canvas placard, IS REJUVENATION POSSIBLE? Naturally, it's possible. The smell rejuvenated me, lifted me from my belly, contracted my stomach, empty for the last two days, with fiery spasms. The smell that conquered the hospital smells, the heavenly smell of chopped horsemeat with garlic and pepper.

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker), Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

As he whines and wails outside the government cafeteria, Sharik the stray dog notices a gentleman approaching. It's Professor Philip Preobrazhensky, and he looks wealthy and powerful—so Sharik is surprised to see him enter the cafeteria. (He can clearly afford better food than the rotten stuff the government cooks serve.) When he comes back outside with a sausage, Philip appears as a savior figure to Sharik. For the first of many times in the book, he has power over the poor mutt's life and death.

Sharik is ecstatic to see the gentleman with the sausage. Even though he despises government cooks and the poor-quality meat they trick their clients into eating, he knows that beggars can't be choosers. What's unacceptable for humans is perfectly fine for him; he accepts that he's a lower kind of being. So when he sees the horsemeat sausage, he imagines health, happiness, and most importantly, *rejuvenation*.

The all-too-conveniently-placed rejuvenation billboard is a satirical comment on Sharik's attraction to the sausage and gratitude to the approaching gentleman. But this isn't actually its main purpose. Rather, it's meant to foreshadow Philip's profession, as a doctor who performs rejuvenation treatments, and introduces rejuvenation's important allegorical role in the novel as a stand-in for revolution.

Chapter 2 Quotes

"How did you manage to get such a nervous dog to follow you?" asked a pleasant masculine voice, and the trouser leg was rolled down. There was a smell of tobacco, and the glass jars tinkled in one of the cases.
"By kindness. The only method possible in dealing with living creatures. By terror you cannot get anywhere with an animal, no matter what its stage of development. I've always asserted this, I assert it today, and I shall go on asserting it. They are wrong thinking that terror will help them. No—no, it won't, whatever its color: white, red, or even brown! Terror completely paralyzes the nervous system."

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky, Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal (speaker), Zinaida (Zina) ProkofievnaBunina , Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 16

Explanation and Analysis

Back in his apartment, Philip presents Sharik to his assistant, Dr. Bormenthal, and his maid, Zina. Bormenthal is surprised to see that Philip convinced a suitable stray dog to follow him home, and Philip takes the opportunity to make a political and moral point.

Philip believes in positive reinforcement—or teaching any "living creatures" through encouragement and incentives, not threats and punishments. In his view, it's best to approach others with kindness and empower them to act. That way, "living creatures" can reach solutions that satisfy all of them. There's no reason to coerce someone who can be convinced.

Philip also connects this worldview to his anti-communism. He argues that the new Soviet government's values are the opposite of his own. When he says he rejects "white, red, or even brown" terror, he's making a pun on the Red Terror, Lenin's campaign of political repression in 1918. His point is that the communists try to do by force what they ought to do by consent. To Philip, this basic moral failure explains the government's descent into corruption and authoritarianism. The Bolsheviks tried to impose change on society without its consent, when real change has to come from people themselves. So if they want to develop the Russian nation for the better, they cannot use terror, which "paralyzes" people rather than encouraging them.

> What an obscene place, the dog thought, but how pleasant! And what the devil did he need me for? Will he really let me stay here? Such an eccentric! Why, he need only blink an eye and he could have the finest dog in town! But maybe I am handsome? I guess I'm lucky!

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker), Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

After he settles down in his new apartment and Philip heals his burned side, Sharik starts to wonder what he did to deserve his new, luxurious life. The situation doesn't fully add up: he can't figure out why Philip chose him instead of a nicer dog, and after seeing Philip's funny-looking human patients, he doesn't know if Philip might have some sinister plan for him.

When Sharik wonders about his newfound privilege, he extends the novel's discussion of social class and economic hierarchy. Specifically, he raises the question of whether the elite truly deserve their status. Philip clearly believes that he deserves his wealth and privilege because of his education and specialist job, but Sharik's experience suggests precisely the opposite: he's risen into luxury by complete accident. He tries to justify his new status to himself—perhaps he's particularly good-looking or has noble ancestry—but ultimately, he blames blind luck. Of course, this situation is full of dramatic irony, since the reader already knows that Philip is planning to experiment on Sharik, not just keep and pamper him as a pet. If Sharik stands for the lower classes and Philip the elite, by extension, Sharik's wonder might represent the proletariat's confusion and inability to cope with their new, higher status in post-Revolutionary Russia.

> "Eat in the bedroom," he said in a slightly choked voice, "read in the examination room, dress in the waiting room, operate in the maid's room, and examine patients in the dining room."

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker), Shvonder

Related Themes:

Page Number: 26-27

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after Sharik moves into his apartment, Philip receives an unwanted visit from the new building management committee. Its leader, a dreadful communist ideologue named Shvonder, points out that Philip's seven-room apartment is bigger than all the others in his building. So Shvonder asks Philip to give up some of his rooms for the sake of the less fortunate. Philip angrily refuses. He's attached to his luxurious lifestyle, and he's convinced that he doesn't have to lose his wealth in order for the working classes to gain more for themselves.

Most of all, Philip finds it scandalous that communists like Shvonder want to overturn common-sense norms about how people use their living space. They ask him to give up his dining room and eat his meals in his bedroom, for instance. But in Philip's mind, each room has a natural purpose, and distorting it would be absurd. He connects Shvonder's proposal to the Bolsheviks' tendency to turn old traditions upside down for no reason. If the aristocracy tended to live in large apartments with varied rooms, Philip thinks, so can communists.

For Philip, maintaining order and tradition is essential, because it's what allows him to dedicate his life to medicine. It might be possible for him to "eat in the bedroom," but certainly not to "operate in the maid's room, and examine patients in the dining room." Without his apartment in order, he feels, he will lose the routine and intellectual freedom that enable his supposedly great contributions to science. Of course, the reader may or may not agree that his work is important—by mocking his rejuvenation treatments, Bulgakov definitely suggests that it isn't as significant as Philip thinks it is.

> "You are a hater of the proletariat!" the woman declared proudly.
> "You are right, I do not like the proletariat," Philip Philippovich agreed sadly and pressed a button. A bell rang somewhere within, and the door into the corridor swung open.

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky, Vyazemskaya (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

Philip refuses to give Vyazemskaya, a member of the building management committee, a small donation for the benefit of poor German children. Her response is furious: she accuses Philip of hating the proletariat, and to everyone's astonishment, he agrees. This was a dangerous thing to say in Soviet times, when the government specifically claimed to represent the proletariat and violently persecuted anyone it associated with the old aristocracy.

On the surface, this situation is clearly absurd: the building committee is harassing Philip about his apartment, and then they expect charity from him. But it makes perfect sense when viewed through the lens of Philip's critique of Soviet morality. There's a thinly-veiled threat behind Vyazemskaya's request for charity. She's really asking Philip to prove that he agrees with the new communist government. She doesn't want him to donate out of the good of his heart—she wants him to do what every loyal communist believes is right and necessary. Giving means contributing to the communist project of redistributing wealth and preserving one's reputation under the repressive Soviet government. Therefore, she really turns the idea of charity and social equality into a tool for coercion and repression.

So when Philip declines to give money and admits that he dislikes the proletariat, this is his way of refusing to participate in a coercive power game. Of course, he's still an unapologetic elitist—he really does think that he's better than the proletariat and deserves more wealth, power, and status. But he's mainly taking a stance against the Soviet Union's manipulative, ideological culture. By refusing to agree with the government, he points out how everyone has to *pretend* to agree with it—no matter what they really think—in order to maintain their freedom.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ "If you care about your digestion, my good advice is—do not talk about Bolshevism or medicine at dinner. And—heaven preserve!—don't read any Soviet newspapers before dinner."
"Hm … But there are no others."
"That's just it, don't read any. You know, I carried out thirty tests at my hospital. And what do you think? Patients who read no newspapers feel excellent. But those whom I deliberately compelled to read *Pravda* lost weight."

Related Characters: Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 33

Explanation and Analysis

Philip and Bormenthal drink vodka and share a lavish lobster dinner in Philip's extravagant dining room. Soon, Philip starts lecturing Bormenthal about his disdain for the new communist government and his need to separate politics from his everyday life. Bolshevism, he half-jokingly muses, is bad for health. *Pravda*, the Communist Party's official newspaper and propaganda outlet—whose title means "Truth"—made his patients lose weight. (He doesn't seem to have any reservations about running experiments on them.)

As usual, Bulgakov makes his point through a heavy dose of satire. Ironically, Philip tells Bormenthal to never discuss Bolshevism at dinner, but he spends the rest of the dinner discussing Bolshevism. (As he predicts, this is bad for his health: he gets stressed out and stops enjoying his dinner.) He says not to read *Soviet* newspapers, but he really means not to read any at all, since (as Bormenthal points out) "there are no others." The Bolshevik government has censored all opposition media out of existence—and Bulgakov knew that this was likely to include his book. Dissent was only possible in private, but dissenting in private—like complaining about the Bolsheviks over dinner—is useless.

❝ "One fine day in March of 1917, all the galoshes disappeared, including two pair of mine. Also three canes, a coat, and the porter's samovar. And from that day on the stand for galoshes ceased to exist. […] I ask you why, when this whole business started, did everyone begin to go up the marble staircase in muddy galoshes and felt boots? […] Why was the rug removed from the front stairway? Does Karl Marx forbid rugs on the stairs? Does he say anywhere in his writings that the second entrance of the Kalabukhov house on Prechistenka must be boarded up, and people must go around the house and enter through the backyard? Who needs this? Why can't the proletarian leave his galoshes downstairs instead of tracking up the marble?"

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

During his dinnertime rant about the Bolsheviks, Philip points to his apartment building's management troubles as evidence that the communists are ruining Russia. Just after the Revolution, order broke down in the building. One thing led to another: people's galoshes (protective overshoes for the snow) started disappearing, and then they stopped leaving them in the communal storage stand and started bringing them up to their apartments instead. As a result, they got mud on the staircase rug, so the building took it down. The building also boarded up the other door and forced people to enter through the back. Because of communism, Philip concludes, his building—like Russia itself—has fallen from its former glory.

At the same time, Philip recognizes that this is absurd: the communists are ruining his building in totally unnecessary ways. They can rule Russia without ruining the entryway—Karl Marx never said that basic luxuries, like rugs on stairs, were incompatible with communism. By extension, of course, Philip is saying that the communists can rule without lowering people's standard of living, attacking people who disagree with them, or prohibiting dissent. In fact, if the communists truly want an equal, free society, then it's rather ironic that the building's *common* fell into ruin as soon as they took power.

In his rant, then, Philip explains that his main problem isn't with communist ideas themselves—although he's certainly no fan of them. Rather, his primary complaint is about the way the Bolsheviks have implemented those ideas. To make society more equal, they've forced the rich to live worse, not helped the poor to live better. Instead of giving the whole population equal freedom, they've imposed equal repression on them. They've attacked aristocratic morality, but instead of replacing it with something better, they've merely replaced it with total immorality. They've created a general sense of fear and suspicion, which has ironically led to the opposite of what they hoped: Russians have become selfish, private, and defensive. They hide their galoshes at home, instead of storing them on the shared stand. In Philip's view, communism has actually destroyed any semblance of communal life.

> "It's the general rack and ruin, Philip Philippovich. Economic collapse."

"No," Philip Philippovich argued with utmost assurance. "No. You ought to be the first, Ivan Arnoldovich, to refrain from using these terms. They are a mirage, a puff of smoke, a fiction." Philip Philippovich spread out his short fingers, and two shadows like turtles stirred on the tablecloth. "What is this general ruin of yours? An old crone with a crutch? A witch who has knocked out all the windows and extinguished all the lights? Why, there's no such thing! It doesn't exist. What do you mean by these words?"

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky, Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

Philip and Bormenthal are talking about the state of the Russian nation in the mid-1920s. The Russian Civil War ended a few years ago, and the Bolsheviks' Red Army won, so the communists have maintained power over the Russian state. They have faced a serious economic crisis, resulting from a combination of their catastrophic agricultural policies and shortages relating to the war. In response, they have implemented the New Economic Policy, a series of uncharacteristic free-market laws that has allowed the economy to grow and a few small businessmen to become rich. But, as Bormenthal notes, the country still faces "general rack and ruin" and the danger of a total "economic collapse."

Philip criticizes Bormenthal not because he notices that the Russian economy is in danger, but because of how he *explains* its trouble. Bormenthal uses "general rack and ruin" as an *explanation* for Russia's economic problems, as though they simply emerged out of thin air. In reality, Philip insists, "general ruin" is the result, not the cause. The real cause is specific people and the specific policies they've put in place. In Philip's opinion, more specifically, it's that the proletariat has taken power, but it's not fit to rule. Bormenthal's all-too-simple explanation of Russia's problems actually serves to hide the truth and, indirectly, defend the Bolsheviks' corruption.

Chapter 4 Quotes

But suddenly his angry thoughts broke off. For some reason, a vivid fragment of his earliest youth rose in his memory: a vast, sunny courtyard near the Preobrazhensky Turnpike, splinters of sun in bottles, cracked bricks, free, stray dogs.
Oh, no, why lie to yourself, you'll never leave here, you'll never go back to freedom, the dog spoke to himself in anguish, sniffing. I am a gentleman's dog, an intellectual creature, I've tasted a better life. And what is freedom, anyway? Nothing, a puff of smoke, a mirage, a fiction… A sick dream of those wretched democrats…

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

When Bormenthal finds a "suitable death" for his and Philip's experiment, he rushes back to Philip's apartment. While they prepare to perform surgery, they lock Sharik in the bathroom. At first, Sharik is furious at Philip (and plots to chew up his galoshes). But then, he starts to think about his journey from a free stray dog to "a gentleman's dog," with luxury but not freedom. (Little does he know that, through Philip's experiment, he's about to become a different kind of creature entirely.)

Sharik reflects fondly on his freedom, but then changes his mind and decides that freedom isn't all it's chalked up to be. Now that he's "tasted a better life," he doesn't miss his youth, when he could go anywhere he wanted but scarcely had anything to eat. In fact, Sharik's language—"a puff of smoke, a mirage, a fiction"—directly parallels Philip's words with Bormenthal, in which he called the idea that "general rack and ruin" is responsible for the deterioration of the Russian economy "a mirage, a puff of smoke, a fiction." This language shows that Sharik is starting to resemble his owner; so does his self-important idea that he's become "an intellectual creature." The name of the road also signifies the journey from freedom to luxury: the Preobrazhensky Turnpike. (Preobrazhensky is Philip's last name.)

The implication is clear: Philip is training Sharik to be a superior, sophisticated being. In the novel's allegory for the Russian Revolution, this represents the way Bulgakov thinks the working classes *should* advance: by learning from the upper classes. Instead, however, they decided to seize power and rule over the only people capable of improving them.

Of course, Sharik's language has similar political undertones. But it can be interpreted in different ways. Perhaps the working classes have sacrificed their comfortable but unfree lives under the aristocracy in exchange for a mirage of freedom under the Bolsheviks. Or perhaps it's the other way around. Maybe, under the Bolsheviks, the Russian people have sacrificed their personal and political freedoms in the false hope of living the comfortable lives they could never have in the past.

Philip Philippovich threw him a vicious glance, mumbled something, and cut still deeper. Bormenthal cracked a glass ampule, sucked out the contents with a syringe and treacherously stuck the needle somewhere near Sharik's heart.

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

When he describes Philip and Bormenthal performing surgery on Sharik, Bulgakov emphasizes the violence and power inherent in modern medicine. The surgery is "vicious" and "treacherous." The men cut up Sharik's brain, heart, and genitals—organs associated with identity. There's a fine line between healing the patient and killing him—often, it's just a few centimeters with a scalpel. In fact, Philip and Bormenthal actually expect to kill Sharik in the surgery. Instead, they change his entire personality.

In short, medicine gives Philip an almost godlike power over life and death. Although he's operating on a dog, Bulgakov makes it clear that Philip exercises this power over human beings, too. Throughout the second half of this book, Bulgakov raises the problems that are at the heart of most classic science fiction: to what extent are scientists responsible for the unforeseen effects of their work? Is science ethically justifiable when it can be used for evil as well as for good? What matters more: the knowledge that scientists gain, or the technologies and real-world effects they produce? By showing Philip murderously cutting up Sharik in the quest to improve humanity and Bormenthal "treacherously" piercing his heart with a needle in an attempt to keep him alive, Bulgakov suggests that the good

and evil in science are often impossible to separate.

"The devil take it. He didn't die. Oh, well, he'll die anyway. Ah, Doctor Bormenthal, I'm sorry for the mutt. He was sly, but affectionate."

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal

Related Themes:

Page Number: 55

Explanation and Analysis

After he and Bormenthal finish operating on Sharik, Philip expresses his pity and regret for taking Sharik's life. After all, he expected Sharik to die during the operation. And even though Sharik survived, Philip still assumes that, one way or another, he will die in the aftermath. (What he certainly doesn't expect is what really happens: Sharik survives and becomes human.)

This is one of the few places in the novel where Philip openly shares his feelings, and it invites the reader into his conflicting ideas about science, morality, and the beings he considers inferior to himself. Philip regrets hurting Sharik because he considers Sharik fundamentally innocent—he knows that Sharik doesn't deserve to die. At the same time, Sharik's inferior intelligence and abilities—the same things that make him innocent and not deserving of an untimely death—are the same factors that make him an ideal test subject for Philip's experiment. Simply put, people tend to feel that dogs have a lower moral worth than humans, so they would more readily conduct life-or-death experiments on dogs than on each other. Therefore, Philip's words to Sharik—which he assumes will be his last—reflect this mix of pity and resignation. He pities having to hurt other living beings for the sake of science, but he's resigned to the fact that he must.

Chapter 5 Quotes

January 6. (Partly in pencil, partly in violet ink)
Today, after his tail dropped off, he enunciated with utmost clarity the word "saloon." The recording machine is working. The devil knows what is going on.
I am totally bewildered.

Related Characters: Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal (speaker), Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin, Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

The fifth chapter of *Heart of a Dog* consists of Dr. Bormenthal's notebook, in which he describes Sharik's gradual change into a human over the three and a half weeks after his operation. With his testicles and pituitary gland replaced by the criminal Klim Chugunkin's, Sharik begins to transform. He starts standing up on two legs, loses his tail, and talks unintelligibly. About two weeks after the operation, as Bormenthal notes here, Sharik finally starts to speak clear words, which makes it clear that he's being humanized.

Bormenthal and Philip are astounded: while they never explain what, exactly, they expected from the experiment (besides Sharik's death), they would never have predicted that the transplant would turn Sharik into a man.

In fact, Sharik's transition is central to the novel in terms of its plot, structure, and allegorical meaning. It connects the first half of the novel, in which Sharik adapted to his comfortable new life as Philip's pet, with the second half, in which he rebels against Philip and tries to take over his apartment. Importantly, the transition phase is also narrated by Bormenthal's transitional voice. He connects the first part of the novel, which was dominated by Sharik's voice and thoughts, with the second part, which focuses on Philip's. Finally, Sharik's transition from animal to human is central to the novel's allegory, because it represents the Russian Revolution—or the masses transitioning from subservience to political power.

January 8. Diagnosis established late in the evening. Philip Philippovich, like a true scientist, acknowledged his mistake: a change of hypophysis produces, not rejuvenation, but complete humanization *(underlined three times)*. This does not detract in the slightest from the staggering importance of his amazing discovery.

Related Characters: Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

A few weeks after the operation, Philip finally concludes that he's turned Sharik into a human by replacing his pituitary gland. This implies that the pituitary gland is the essence of human identity. Bormenthal enthusiastically notes this in his journal—it represents a groundbreaking scientific discovery that could revolutionize Philip's career and the field of medicine. (Of course, it's not really true—it's science fiction.)

But surprisingly, Philip's important discovery doesn't play a significant role in the rest of the novel. He's simply not as enthusiastic about his own work as Bormenthal. He never presents his finding to other scientists, uses it to treat patients, or even seriously explores its potential applications. Instead, he concludes that his experiment was a failure (and eventually undoes it).

Philip and Bormenthal's disagreement about the value of Philip's discovery shows that Bulgakov—who was himself a doctor—had conflicted feelings about science's value and role in society. Bormenthal praises Philip for uncovering new knowledge, but Philip doesn't think that this knowledge is valuable in itself. Instead, he worries about the effects of his discoveries. Bulgakov asks which of these views is correct: is science really about accumulating knowledge or about changing the world? While he shows that there are reasonable arguments to be had on both sides, he seems to conclude that mere knowledge isn't a sufficient justification for science: knowledge also has to be beneficial for society.

❝ Prof. Preobrazhensky's amazing experiment has revealed one of the secrets of the human brain. From now on, the mysterious function of the hypophysis—the brain appendage—is explained. The hypophysis determines human characteristics. Its hormones may be described as the most important ones in the organism—they are the hormones of the human shape. A new realm is opening in science: a homunculus was created without any of Faust's retorts. The surgeon's scalpel has brought into being a new human entity. Professor Preobrazhensky, you are a creator. *(Blot)*

Related Characters: Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62-63

Explanation and Analysis

Bormenthal explores the results of Philip's experiment on Sharik and excitedly points out that this experiment seems to have "revealed one of the secrets of the human brain"—the purpose of the hypophysis, or pituitary gland. Sharik has turned into the man whose pituitary gland he received, so this suggests that the pituitary gland contains the essence of a person's identity.

The homunculus is a tiny human being (whether literal or metaphorical) that exists inside the brain and controls a person's thoughts and behavior. So when Bormenthal refers to the homunculus, he's explaining how Philip has finally located human identity in the brain's biology—something that alchemists, philosophers, and scientists have been trying to do for centuries. Bormenthal compares him to the protagonist of Goethe's *Faust*, the famous Dr. Faust, who creates a tiny homunculus in a glass jar. After all, Bulgakov intentionally makes Philip an exaggerated version of other famous literary scientists, like Dr. Frankenstein.

Therefore, Philip has found a way to turn beasts into humans *and* solved one of the greatest scientific mysteries of all time. It's no surprise that Bormenthal praises him as a great "creator." But this raises all the moral questions that become the focus of the second half of the book. Philip abuses his godlike power to create life, and in so doing, he creates trouble for himself: Sharik starts misbehaving, assaulting women, and trying to steal Philip's property, yet Philip can't get rid of him, since Sharik is now a man with legal rights.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ There is no doubt whatsoever that this is his illegitimate son (as they used to say in the corrupt bourgeois society). This is how our pseudo-scientific bourgeoisie amuses itself. Anyone can occupy seven rooms—until the gleaming sword of justice flashes its scarlet ray over his head.
Shv...r.

Related Characters: Shvonder (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 67

Explanation and Analysis

After Sharik the dog turns into Sharikov the man, Shvonder—a newcomer to Philip's building and the head of its management committee—writes to the newspaper to complain about the new inhabitant in Philip's apartment. Of course, he's really looking for any excuse he can find to seize some of Philip's rooms and redistribute them to needier Russians.

Shvonder's letter shows how the public is finding out about Philip's experiments, but it mostly allows Bulgakov to make a series of jokes about Soviet communism. When he writes things like "corrupt bourgeois society" and "the gleaming sword of justice," Shvonder uses the Bolsheviks' characteristically absurd, self-righteous language. At the same time, it's not clear that Shvonder actually believes in the moral principles he so self-righteously claims to defend.

For instance, Shvonder tries to reject the concept of illegitimacy because it's rooted in the "corrupt bourgeois society" that the Bolsheviks want to reject, but he also can't come up with a new term for "illegitimate son." So he just uses the term anyway and then points out why it's "corrupt." However, he then goes on to admonish Philip for having an illegitimate son—which shows that he's actually still using the same bourgeois moral code he's criticizing. Through Shvonder's contradictions, Bulgakov suggests that the Bolsheviks were reactionary, naïve, and insincere. They blindly believed in the party line, and they used their ideology mostly as an excuse to get power. They tried to completely reject Russia's bourgeois culture but didn't realize that this was futile—instead, Bulgakov suggests that they should have figured out what parts were worth keeping.

❝ "Why are you nagging all the time? … Don't spit. Don't smoke. Don't go here. Don't go there … What sort of business is it anyway? Just like in the streetcar. Why'nt you let me live? And as for 'dad,' you've no call to … Did I ask you for the operation?" The man barked indignantly. "A fine thing! Grabbed an animal beast, slashed up his head with a knife, and now they're squeamish. Maybe I never gave you no permission to operate? And likewise (the man rolled up his eyes to the ceiling, as though trying to remember a certain formula), and likewise my relatives. I have the right to sue you, maybe."

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker), Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 70

Explanation and Analysis

After the operation, the newly-humanized Sharik starts acting out and ruining Philip's day-to-day life in increasingly egregious ways. Like Klim Chugunkin, the drunk and petty thief whose pituitary gland he received in the operation, Sharik starts swearing, spitting, smoking, and playing the balalaika all around Philip's apartment. Philip tries to stop him, and this is Sharik's response. Sharik believes that Philip has no right to control his behavior—even though he's moved into Philip's apartment—and he justifies this by pointing out that he didn't consent to the operation that created him.

Sharik's misbehavior certainly represents what Bulgakov sees as the lower classes' unrefined buffoonery. It also serves as a metaphor for what Bulgakov considers the Bolsheviks' incompetent governance after the Russian Revolution. Yet it also presents a significant ethical dilemma. Since Philip created Sharik during the experiment, does Philip have authority over him? Is it any different from a father's authority over their child—which disappears after a certain age? And is it any worse for Sharik to behave disruptively without Philip's consent than for Philip to experiment on him without *his* consent? At the time, he was a dog—which might mean that it wasn't possible or necessary for him to consent—but now he's a human, so he clearly has that right. Through his misguided scientific experiment, Philip has stumbled into unexpected moral responsibilities.

❝ "And what do you wish to call yourself?"
The man adjusted his tie and answered:
"Polygraph Polygraphovich."

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

In addition to showing his face in all kinds of unwanted ways in Philip's apartment, one of Sharik's first priorities as a man

is showing his face to the outside world, which means getting legal documents in his name. Of course, he needs something more than just "Sharik," so like many Russians, he decides to choose a name from the liturgical calendar. But instead of taking one of the saints' names, he decides to name himself after the polygraph printing technology used to make the calendar. Therefore, he ends up with the absurd, hilarious name Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov.

Polygraph Polygraphovich's new name is a sign of his total incompetence and lack of social awareness. It's also a parody of Philip Philippovich's. At the same time, the Soviet government takes Polygraph Polygraphovich seriously, attesting to its own backwardness. In fact, during the early years of the Soviet Union it was common for parents to give their children new, atheistic names. Many named their children after Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and some even named them after branches of the Communist Party. For a while, the Soviets even told parents to "Octoberize" their children instead of baptizing them. So Bulgakov's joke about absurd Soviet names would have been familiar and salient to his audience.

❝ "Excuse me, Professor, but citizen Sharikov is entirely right. It is certainly his right to participate in the discussion of his own fate, especially insofar as it has to do with documents. A document is the most important thing in the world."

Related Characters: Shvonder (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 75-76

Explanation and Analysis

Sharikov demands that Philip support him in his quest to get official government documents, and then Shvonder visits to support his case. In Shvonder's mind, "citizen Sharikov" now has the same rights as anyone else living in the Soviet Union. And in order to exercise those rights, he needs documents, which are "the most important thing in the world." Shvonder isn't exaggerating—although Bulgakov certainly is.

Bulgakov uses Shvonder's obsession with documents to parody the rigid Soviet bureaucracy, in which it's (apparently) more important for someone to have a piece of paper saying they exist than for them to *actually* exist. He argues that, because the Soviets were so obsessed with equality and standardization, they could only deal with information in a readymade form—like in the official ideology that all Russians were supposed to believe, or the official documents demanded from everyone. For Bulgakov, this is ridiculous and backwards. He thinks people's private lives as individuals are more important than their public lives as citizens. And he also suggests that the Soviet government's insistence on documents was just another way for it to exercise an unjust power over every part of its citizens' lives.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ "And what is your opinion of it, if I may ask?"
Sharikov shrugged.
"I don't agree."
"With whom? With Engels, or with Kautsky?"
"With neither," answered Sharikov.
"That's marvelous, I swear. Everyone who says the other … And what would you propose yourself?"
"What's there to propose? … They write and write … congress, Germans … who knows them … makes your head spin. Just take everything and divide it up…"
"I thought so," exclaimed Philip Philippovich, slamming his hand on the tablecloth. "Exactly what I thought."
"Do you know how to do it, too?" asked Bormenthal with curiosity.
"How, how," Sharikov began, growing voluble after the vodka. "It's plain enough. What do you think? One man spreads himself out in seven rooms and has forty pair of pants, and another hangs around garbage dumps, looking for something to eat."

Related Characters: Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal, Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

Once he becomes a human being and legally takes up residence in Philip's apartment, Sharikov starts becoming a loyal communist. Shvonder sends him some classic Marxist readings, like Friedrich Engels's correspondence with the philosopher Karl Kautsky, and Sharikov soon regards himself as an educated, intelligent citizen.

Of course, Sharikov doesn't understand the first thing about communism. Philip didn't have to ask him about it for the reader to realize this, but he does anyway. Sharikov can't

even form a complete sentence about Engels and Kautsky, and he seems to think that communism is as simple as "just tak[ing] everything and divid[ing] it up."

In reality, Sharikov's politics isn't based on principle, but rather selfishness and resentment. He wants more things, and he sees that Philip already has a lot. This ends up being deeply ironic, because he calls himself a communist in order to ask for more private property (which, broadly speaking, the Soviets argued shouldn't exist). He also has no idea that Kautsky actually opposed the Bolsheviks, but that's the least of his concerns.

Bulgakov uses Sharikov's political beliefs to parody what he saw as the unreflective character of Soviet communism. Sharikov doesn't analyze evidence and come to his own conclusions—instead, he just accepts what other people tell him and repeats it as though it were fact. To Bulgakov, this is how propaganda spreads—and allows the Soviet government to subdue and control the population by controlling their thoughts and beliefs.

"You are on the lowest rung of development," Philip Philippovich shouted still more loudly. "You are a creature just in the process of formation, with a feeble intellect. All your actions are the actions of an animal. Yet you permit yourself to speak with utterly insufferable impudence in the presence of two people with a university education—to offer advice on a cosmic scale and of equally cosmic stupidity on how to divide everything … And right after gobbling up a boxful of toothpowder too…"

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 90-91

Explanation and Analysis

During their heated dinner conversation, Philip snaps at Sharikov. He says what he's been thinking all along: some beings are simply more developed and sophisticated than others, and they are better suited to make big decisions about the fate of humanity and the world. Specifically, Philip and Bormenthal are superior to Sharikov—they're more educated, competent, knowledgeable, prudent, and trustworthy. It's absurd for Sharikov, an uneducated man who used to be a dog, to say how the world should be run and how all the world's goods should be divided.

Philip's comments get to the heart of Bulgakov's argument about human hierarchy. Most people accept that humans are superior to animals—and even Sharik accepted his own inferiority when he was a dog. But people continue to believe in human equality: they resist saying that certain people are better than others. To Bulgakov, this is nonsense. He uses Philip and Sharikov, a comically extreme case, to prove his point. He thinks nobody can honestly view Philip and Sharikov as equals, which means they have to accept that other kinds of hierarchies—like the elite's power over the masses—might be justified, too.

"Doctor, would you please take him to the circus? But, for God's sake, take a look at the program first—make sure they have no cats."

"How do they let such trash into the circus?" Sharikov wondered morosely, shaking his head.

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker), Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal

Related Themes:

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of their fitful dinner, Sharikov decides that he wants to go to the circus, and Philip asks Bormenthal to chaperone him. For once, Philip hopes, he'll have a night of peace and quiet without Sharikov in the house. But first, he and Bormenthal have to make sure there are no cats at the circus—if there are, Sharikov can't be trusted to stay calm and peaceful.

These household dinner plans underline Philip's belief that Sharikov is an inferior, unintelligent being. For one, the circus is less serious and refined than Philip's preferred forms of entertainment, the theater and the opera. But more importantly, even children can be trusted not to interrupt the circus by attacking its performers—but Sharikov can't, because his canine instincts still lead him to attack every cat he sees. Like all the other Bolsheviks in Moscow, he justifies his personal prejudices by pretending they're universal principles—it's not that he hates cats, but that cats are "trash" who don't belong in the circus. In addition to providing comic relief, then, Bulgakov uses this moment to show how low men like Philip and Bormenthal must stoop intellectually to deal with Russia's new class of

leaders.

Chapter 8 Quotes

Dr. Bormenthal, pale, with resolute eyes, raised a glass with a stem as slender as a dragonfly.
"Philip Philippovich," he exclaimed in a voice full of emotion, "I shall never forget how I came to you as a half-starved student, and you gave me a place in the department. Believe me, Philip Philippovich, you are much more to me than a professor, a teacher … My immense regard for you … Permit me to kiss you, my dear Philip Philippovich."
"Surely, my dear friend…" Philip Philippovich mumbled with embarrassment and rose toward him. Bormenthal embraced him and planted a kiss on his fluffy, smoke-browned mustache.

Related Characters: Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 99-100

Explanation and Analysis

As they confront Sharikov's increasingly erratic and dangerous behavior, Philip and Bormenthal take stock of their lives and work. Bormenthal decides that it's an appropriate time to express his appreciation and devotion to Philip, the man who has launched and guided his entire career. Their moment of tender human connection stands in stark contrast to the tension, violence, and disrespect that has filled the book since Sharik became Sharikov.

In fact, Bulgakov seems to think that relationships like Bormenthal and Philip's were a dying breed in the early Soviet years. Their partnership is affectionate, trusting, and mutually supportive because they share a basic sense of trust and respect. But this basic goodwill doesn't exist in their relationships with men like Sharikov or Shvonder. Whereas they clearly choose to spend their time and careers together, they only interact with Sharikov and Shvonder out of obligation. Those relationships are struggles for power, not genuine partnerships. Those relationships suck time, energy, and motivation out of Philip and Bormenthal's lives—while their relationship with each other deeply enriches both of their lives.

The fundamental difference between these two kinds of relationships is that Philip and Bormenthal recognize each other's dignity and value each other as moral equals—even if Philip is Bormenthal's boss. While Sharikov and Shvonder want to be *economic* equals with Philip, they have no interest in respecting his *moral* dignity as a human being. They want to impose their view of the world on him, not work together to build a world they can all share. And Bulgakov sees this pattern throughout Soviet Russia: by rejecting the old values of respect, kindness, and consent, the Soviet Union turns people's lives into a relentless power struggle. It makes coercion and manipulation normal, and it punishes trust rather than rewarding it. In short, it deprives people of the meaningful mutual relationships and social connections that they need to thrive.

"Philip Philippovich, I say to you…" Bormenthal exclaimed passionately. He rushed to the door leading into the hallway, closed it more firmly, and returned, continuing in a whisper, "it is the only solution. Of course, I would not presume to advise you, but, Philip Philippovich, look at yourself, you are utterly worn out, it is impossible to go on working under such conditions!"
"Absolutely impossible," Philip Philippovich agreed, sighing.

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker), Zinaida (Zina) ProkofievnaBunina , Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal

Related Themes:

Page Number: 101

Explanation and Analysis

After Sharikov starts stealing from Philip and tries to frame the maid, Zina, Philip and Bormenthal finally agree that they must do something about him. Not only is he a disruptive and intolerable roommate, but he's interfering with their most prized possession: the daily calm and routine that makes their medical discoveries possible. Neither of them is married, and both have dedicated their entire lives to science. But without Philip's apartment, these lives are impossible for them to lead. They would do anything to get it back—they might even kill Sharikov.

Since Sharikov's transformation and disruptive behavior are Bulgakov's allegory for the Russian Revolution, Philip and Bormenthal's distress represents the way he thinks the elite are hindered from the pursuit of excellence. Bulgakov suggests that great science, art, and innovation requires the kind of luxury and calm that Philip and Bormenthal used to have—but that Sharikov has now disrupted. Without its privileges, he suggests, the aristocracy will fall into

mediocrity and insignificance. If everyone is equal, Bulgakov seems to think, then nobody can be exceptional. Just as Philip and Bormenthal look for a way to get Sharikov out of the apartment, Bulgakov suggests that the old elite should look for a way to reverse the Russian Revolution.

> "Philip Philippovich, but what if it were Spinoza's brain?"
> "Yes!" barked Philip Philippovich. [...] "Certainly, it might be possible to graft the hypophysis of Spinoza or some such devil, and turn a dog into a highly advanced human. But what in hell for? Tell me, please, why is it necessary to manufacture Spinozas artificially when any peasant woman can produce them at any time? [...] Doctor, the human race takes care of this by itself, and every year, in the course of its evolution, it creates dozens of outstanding geniuses who adorn the earth, stubbornly selecting them out of the mass of scum."

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky, Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

Philip and Bormenthal debate getting rid of Sharikov, then start to reflect on the results of their experiment. They have proven that the hypophysis, or pituitary gland, is the seat of human personality and identity. And through their surgery on Sharik, they have shown that it's possible to turn animals into humans by giving them the right pituitary gland. Bormenthal points out that, instead of using organs from criminals, they could hypothetically use ones from brilliant humans like the (long-dead) philosopher Spinoza. Philip agrees—this would let them "turn a dog into a highly advanced human." From a scholarly standpoint, this is a magnificent, groundbreaking finding.

But from a practical standpoint, Philip insists, this experiment is absolutely useless. There's no need to turn animals into humans—there are enough humans, and people are making them naturally. In order to make a dog into a genius, that genius would have to be born, live, and die in a human body first. So any transplant, while miraculous from a scientific standpoint, would be redundant from a human standpoint. Even though science can add to the great accumulated bank of human knowledge, Philip suggests, that doesn't always justify it. By turning dogs into men, he and Bormenthal are simply meddling with nature—and Sharikov's new personality shows why that's not necessarily the most responsible thing to do. Bulgakov makes his point all the more clear by mentioning evolution: people are *already* evolving, whether biologically or in society, and arrogantly trying to accelerate the process through eugenics or revolution is likely to lead to disaster.

> "Look at that business with the cats! A man with the heart of a dog."
> "Oh, no, no," Philip Philippovich sang out. "You are mistaken, Doctor. In heaven's name, don't malign the dog. [...] The whole horror, you see, is that his heart is no longer a dog's heart but a human one. And the vilest you could find!"

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky, Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal (speaker), Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin, Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 105

Explanation and Analysis

Philip and Bormenthal agree that Sharikov is incompetent, selfish, disrespectful, and cowardly—they just disagree about why. Bormenthal assumes that Sharikov is less than fully human because he started life as a dog. This explanation makes plenty of sense: it took him time to grow into his new human form, and with more time, perhaps he will grow past his canine instincts and mental limitations. But Philip disagrees: Sharikov's problem isn't that he used to be a dog, but that he's now a human—specifically, he's turned into Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin, the thief, alcoholic, and balalaika player whose organs he received during the surgery.

As a dog, Sharik was obedient and submissive, if unintelligent. Now, he's insolent, manipulative, *and* unintelligent. So the problem, Philip implies, isn't that Sharik is inferior to other people: it's that he no longer recognizes it. Philip's point helps illuminate the novel's allegory of the Russian Revolution. Before the surgery (or the Revolution), Sharik the dog (or the proletariat) accepted his place in the social hierarchy, but since the surgery (the Revolution), Sharikov (the proletariat) has decided that he ought to be able to do whatever he wants, without consequences. Just as Sharik's humanization ruins Philip's life by convincing Sharikov that he and Philip are equals, Bulgakov suggests, the Revolution ruined Russian society by convincing the proletariat that they deserved to be equal to the elite.

This exchange also has implications for the novel's commentary on science. Specifically, while Bormenthal thinks that Sharikov may continue to change and improve as he becomes more and more human, Philip thinks he will just become more and more of a scoundrel. In a sense, Bormenthal and Philip's disagreement represents the tension between evolution and essentialism. Bormenthal thinks that Sharikov can overcome his nature (evolve beyond it), while Philip thinks he cannot escape it (it's his essential nature). But regardless of whether he can move forward in the future, the surgery has been a massive step backwards.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ The document read: "This will certify that the bearer of same, Comrade Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, is the director of the sub-section for purging the city of Moscow of stray animals (cats, etc.) of the Moscow Communal Property Administration."

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky, Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

Sharikov suddenly disappears from Philip's apartment one morning and returns three days later with a government job. He proves it by producing this piece of paper, which explains that the city of Moscow has hired him to purge stray cats. He looks and smells filthy, but that doesn't seemed to have stopped the government from hiring him.

In fact, the Soviet government appears to be a perfect place for Sharikov, an incompetent, thoughtless brute whose greatest desire is to kill as many cats as possible. These purges also represent the *ideological* purges of the so-called Red Terror, in which the Bolsheviks executed hundreds of thousands of their political and ideological opponents after gaining power. Sharikov's job exemplifies the upside-down Soviet system: where the old imperial government used to hire respected, competent elites, the Bolsheviks intentionally hire uneducated working-class pawns whom they can manipulate and dominate. In Bulgakov's view, despite its claim to represent the masses, the Bolshevik government only cares about power.

❝ Philip Philippovich saddled his nose with pince-nez over his glasses and began to read. He muttered to himself for a long time, changing color every second. "... and also threatening to kill the house committee chairman, from which it can be seen that he owns firearms. And he makes counterrevolutionary speeches, and even ordered his social servant Zinaida Prokofievna Bunina to throw Engels into the stove, as an open Menshevik with his assistant Bormenthal, Ivan Arnoldovich, who secretly lives in his apartment without registration. Signed, Director of the purge sub-section P. P. Sharikov—attested to by Chairman of the House Committee, Shvonder, and Secretary Pestrukhin."

Related Characters: Shvonder, Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker), Zinaida (Zina) ProkofievnaBunina , Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 115

Explanation and Analysis

A few days after Sharikov gets his job with the government, one of Philip's friends and patients, a high-ranking military officer, informs him that Sharikov and Shvonder have filed a formal complaint against him. They are trying to use their position in the government as leverage to steal his apartment, and they know that the government is willing to target anyone with anti-Bolshevik views.

Fortunately, Philip's friend outranks Sharikov and Shvonder, and he promises to get the complaint thrown out. But actually, the complaint isn't ridiculous because it's dubious—it's ridiculous because it's *true*. The death threats aside, Philip's crimes are really all versions of the same thing: disagreeing with the government. But dissent, Bulgakov argues, shouldn't be a crime. The Soviet Union's laws against dissent reflect its corruption and self-interestedness. Of course, Bulgakov knew this all too well—virtually all of his work was banned until long after his death.

Sharikov invited his own death. He raised his left arm toward Philip Philippovich and made an obscene gesture with his scratched fist which reeked intolerably of cats. Then with his right hand, he took a revolver from his pocket and aimed it at the dangerous Bormenthal. Bormenthal's cigarette dropped like a falling star, and a few seconds later Philip Philippovich was rushing beck and forth in mortal terror from instrument case to sofa, jumping over broken glass. On the sofa, the director of the purge section lay supine and gurgling, with the surgeon Bormenthal astride his chest and choking him with a small white pillow.

Related Characters: Dr. Ivan Arnoldovich Bormenthal, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky, Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 117

Explanation and Analysis

After Philip learns that Sharikov has reported him to the authorities, he orders Sharikov to move out of his apartment immediately. But Sharikov protests—his government papers say that part of the apartment is his. And then, he pulls a gun on Bormenthal, who barely manages to defend himself. Once Bormenthal subdues Sharikov, it becomes clear that there's only one course of action left: they have to get rid of Sharikov, by any means necessary.

This scene is notable because it shows how Philip's diplomatic, nonviolent attempts to get rid of Sharikov ultimately fail. Sharikov is willing to use force to get whatever he wants, and Bormenthal recognizes that the only way to respond to such a person is with physical force, too. Philip, Bormenthal, and Sharikov's relationship ultimately devolves into violence because Sharikov doesn't respect Philip's dignity or humanity—he cares only about his own wants and not at all about his effects on others, whether short-term or long-term. In contrast, even when his own life and safety are under threat, Philip first offers Sharikov a nonviolent solution—simply moving out of the apartment. But nonviolence doesn't keep the peace if only one side believes in it. This is the difference Bulgakov sees between the old aristocratic morality, which Philip represents, and the new communist one, which Sharikov represents. While Philip treats even the vulgar, inconsiderate monster Sharikov with basic dignity and respect, Sharikov doesn't return the favor. And without a mutual regard for one another's rights, violence becomes the only solution to disagreements.

Epilogue Quotes

"I don't understand anything," answered Philip Philippovich, raising his shoulders with a royal air. "What Sharikov? Ah, sorry, you mean my dog … on whom I operated? […] Sharik is still alive, and no one has killed him."

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker), Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

The final chapter of *Heart of a Dog* ends with a great mystery: Philip and Bormenthal manage to get rid of Sharikov, but Bulgakov doesn't tell the reader how. He waits until the Epilogue to reveal the secret: Philip has reversed his surgery and turned Sharikov back into a dog. Therefore, when the police visit to report that Sharikov has disappeared and investigate whether Philip might have murdered him, Philip simply responds that there is no Sharikov—only Sharik the man.

In addition to giving the novel a clever ending and shielding Philip from criminal responsibility, Philip's comments also allow him (and Bulgakov) to continue mocking the Soviet state. Only in a distorted, ineffective, corrupt bureaucracy would a dog get hired as a government functionary. Of course, Bulgakov has already made this argument about Sharikov, the bumbling man. He points out that everyone sees the absurdity in hiring a dog for a man's job—even the policeman who works for the government. But few people in the Soviet Union seemed to see the absurdity in hiring people like Sharikov (who Bulgakov thinks are scarcely more capable than dogs) for the same job.

Philip Philippovich shrugged his shoulders.

"Science has not yet discovered methods of transforming animals into humans. I tried, but unsuccessfully, as you can see. He spoke for a while, and then began to revert to his original state. Atavism."

"No indecent language here!" the dog barked suddenly from his chair and stood up.

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov, Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

When the police visit Philip to investigate Sharikov's disappearance, Philip explains it by claiming that his experiment has failed and Sharikov has naturally turned back into Sharik the dog. Of course, this is false: the experiment was a surprising, troubling success, and Sharikov was becoming more and more human as time went on. It took another surgery to turn him back into a dog.

Therefore, Philip ends up telling the policeman the exact opposite of what he learned through his experiment. He actually *invented* "methods of transforming animals into humans." But he can't admit it, because that would amount to confessing to murder. More importantly, he wouldn't *want* to admit it anyway, because he's realized that his discovery is incredibly dangerous and unpredictable. As he told Bormenthal in the eighth chapter, humans already produce other humans the natural way, so there's no need for scientists to start doing it artificially. This shows that Philip sees the limits of science—he understands that new discoveries can be dangerous as well as beneficial, and he thinks he has a responsibility to protect the world from the monster he created.

As though to underline Philip's point, Sharik barks something that's also the precise opposite of what he generally did and believed as a human. (He was full of indecent language—not to mention his behavior.) In fact, he obediently supports Philip's benevolent lie about reversion. Of course, this idea that people revert to their ancestral inner nature (which is also called atavism) is also a sly comment about the working classes, whom Philip views as essentially primitive and stuck in the past.

> The superior being, the dignified benefactor of dogs, sat in his armchair, and the dog Sharik lay sprawled on the rug near the leather sofa. […]
> I've been so lucky, so lucky, he thought, dozing off. Just incredibly lucky. I'm set for life in this apartment. I am absolutely convinced that there was something shady in my ancestry. There must have been a Newfoundland. She was a whore, my grandmother, may she rest in the Heavenly Kingdom, the old lady. True, they've slashed up my whole head for some strange reason, but it'll heal before my wedding. It's not worth mentioning.

Related Characters: Sharik / Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov (speaker), Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 122

Explanation and Analysis

In the novel's epilogue, Philip has turned Sharikov the impudent man back into Sharik the obedient dog. After the police leave him alone, satisfied by his explanation of the case, Philip gets to go back to his old routine: seeing patients, performing experiments, and thinking about the great mysteries of human nature. On a cold winter night, Philip sits in his armchair and Sharik lays on the rug, enjoying the heating. The novel drifts back into Sharik's voice. He muses about how "incredibly lucky" he is to have found an owner, and he recognizes Philip as a "superior being." He wonders what Philip sees in him—perhaps some noble ancestry—and briefly questions the operations he's suffered, but doesn't give it a second thought. Most of all, he's grateful for Philip's charity.

Sharik the dog's thoughts about his owner couldn't be more different from Sharikov the man's. Sharikov believed that he and Philip were equals, and he insisted that he was entitled to his share of Philip's apartment (and everything in it). However, Bulgakov makes it clear that Sharikov is *not* Philip's equal and has no right to his creator's property.

The difference between the obedient Sharik and the pesky Sharikov is the key to Bulgakov's allegory about the early Soviet Union. When Sharik became Sharikov, and the masses gained power through the Russian Revolution, they went from accepting their places in a natural hierarchy to rejecting the existence of that hierarchy and trying to seize power from their superiors. When Sharikov turns back into Sharik at the end of the novel, he learns to accept hierarchy again, and this is what allows both him and his master, Philip, to live peaceful and satisfying lives.

> "Toward the sacred banks of the Nile…"

Related Characters: Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 123

Explanation and Analysis

Heart of a Dog ends with Philip cutting up brains and singing to himself, as he does throughout the novel. He has turned Sharik back into a dog and freed up his time and energy for his patients and scientific pursuits. In short, he has reimposed order on his house by taking back his rightful place as its master.

His song is an aria from Giuseppe Verdi's popular opera *Aida*, which was a favorite among the early 20th century Russian aristocracy. In this aria, the pharaoh of Egypt sings about his plans to protect Egypt and conquer the invading Ethiopian army. For Philip, the song represents similar themes. In this scene, of course, it represents his successful defense of his house against Sharikov. But throughout the novel, it also represents his ambition to conquer nature through science. Like the pharaoh, Philip is defending "sacred" ground—the fundamental truths of human nature and biology.

In fact, the two kinds of conquest are linked: Philip structures his entire life around his scientific curiosity, and when Sharikov disrupts his domestic peace and quiet, he can no longer pursue that curiosity. In the second half of the novel, he tries to win back his structured life so that he can focus on science again. And at the very end, he finally does. For Bulgakov, of course, this is all a metaphor for the aristocracy's desire to roll back the Russian Revolution. By ending the novel with this song, Bulgakov imagines the old aristocratic order being restored and great men like Philip regaining the freedom and luxury they need to continue their noble, sophisticated pursuits.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

During a snowstorm, in the doorway of a government cafeteria, a dog howls and tells the reader that it's dying. A few hours ago, the cook caught him going through the garbage and threw hot water at him, scalding him badly. Now, it's almost dark and he's thinking about food. He complains that people always abuse him, even though he's usually tough enough to get away. But the boiling water has scalded through his fur, leaving him with no protection from the cold Russian night. So the dog thinks he'll either get pneumonia or starve to death. The dog remembers Vlas, a great cook who used to work for Count Tolstoy and always reserved some spare bones for stray dogs. In contrast, the Soviet cooks are scammers who serve rotten meat to the gullible and helpless.

Bulgakov opens the novel with his characteristic bitter satire. He makes subtle jokes about dogs' unique way of perceiving the world and relatively simple instincts and needs. By presenting the world of mid-1920s Moscow from the perspective of a stray dog, he also mocks Soviet literature's tendency to valorize poverty and suffering. And by setting the scene outside a government cafeteria, Bulgakov introduces his spiteful criticism of the Soviet government. Under the old Russian Empire, the dog was treated well; under the new, supposedly egalitarian Soviet Union, he is rejected and forgotten. Of course, he stands in for the Russian people as a whole, who Bulgakov thinks suffered under Soviet corruption.

The dog sees a young typist (Vasnetsova), who can't afford to eat anywhere else but the government cafeteria. Her only luxuries in life are the stockings her businessman lover buys her—and he's probably going to leave her any day, without a second thought. The dog pities the typist, but he pities himself even more. The typist calls the dog over and nicknames him "Sharik." But then a violent gust of wind upturns her skirt. She complains about the weather and food, then rushes out into the snowstorm. In severe pain, the dog gives up and decides to just let himself die. He thinks "Sharik" ("Little Ball") is a name for a rich, fat dog and not for him.

The young typist's plight reflects the Soviet government's failure to provide for working people—the same class it claims to represent. While the government promises equality, people can only survive because of corruption, like the private favors the typist's lover pays her. Bulgakov also metaphorically connects the harsh Moscow winter to the harshness of the new, impersonal government, which sacrifices quality in the name of equality. Finally, there's a hint of satire in Sharik the dog's excessive self-pity, which Bulgakov compares to the Soviets' excessive (but seemingly insincere) shows of concern for the proletariat.

Suddenly, a well-dressed man (Philip) crosses the street. From Philip's eyes, the dog can tell that he's a true gentleman. He clearly eats too well to be visiting the disgusting cafeteria, but he briefly does. The dog crawls out of the doorway towards him, and the wind carries away a huge billboard that says, "Is Rejuvenation Possible?" Yes, the dog decides: he smells a horsemeat sausage in the gentleman's pocket. The dog begs for it, promising his eternal allegiance to the gentleman. The man bends over and says, "Take it! Sharik, Sharik!" The dog comments that he doesn't mind being called Sharik, and he gobbles up the sausage. The gentleman pets the dog and says he's "just what I need."

The gentleman's dignity, kindness, and air of abundance obviously contrasts with the harsh, unforgiving landscape that has dominated the novel so far. Philip represents the refinement and luxury of the Russian aristocracy, as compared with the barren desperation of the masses. The billboard foreshadows his profession as a doctor performing rejuvenation treatments, but it also clearly points to Sharik's hope to find a new lease on life through the gentleman's kindness. Of course, this symbolism is all part of Bulgakov's satire: readers can tell that he has something sinister in mind with Sharik, who is too dull to notice because he's a dog. In fact, when Philip operates on Sharik, he doesn't rejuvenate or improve him—instead, he makes him into a revolting and intolerable humanoid. Therefore, the billboard is also an ironic sign of the way Philip's experiment fails: Bulgakov seems to think that rejuvenation is not possible. Of course, rejuvenation is always a metaphor for revolution in this book—and Bulgakov's disdain for the Russian Revolution is already clear.

Sharik the dog eagerly follows Philip up Prechistenka street, kissing his shoe and clearing him a path through the snow to express his gratitude. When a tomcat smells the sausage and comes onto the sidewalk, Sharik is furious to think that he might have to share, so he angrily growls at the newcomer.

Sharik transforms into Philip's loyal companion because he recognizes that he's Philip's inferior and beholden to his gratitude. (This all changes in the second half of the novel, when Sharik becomes a human and no longer accepts Philip as his superior.) And even though he's just benefited from a stranger's generosity, Sharik has no interest in sharing his sausage with another animal. These are both ironic comments on communism and human (and animal) nature. Bulgakov suggests that people thrive and get along best when they obey social hierarchies, and he thinks that most people—especially the masses—are really selfish, even if they say they believe in equality.

When they reach Philip's building, the gentleman offers Sharik another piece of sausage. At first, Sharik is afraid of the building's doorman (Fyodor), but when the gentleman invites him inside, Sharik is delighted and comments that doormen are evil dog-hating scoundrels. The doorman tells the gentleman, Philip Philippovich, that the government is moving extra tenants into all the apartments except his own. Philip Philippovich leads Sharik upstairs.

Sharik's narration shows how he's guided by naïve animal instincts (which, for Bulgakov, means he represents the lower classes). He blindly trusts the hand that feeds him, and he harbors an absurd prejudice against doormen because he can't step outside of his own perspective. (Later events in the novel disprove this prejudice—Fyodor is one of the book's most loyal and benevolent characters.) Notably, the apartment building is gaining residents because of Soviet redistribution policies. This illustrates how Philip's privilege—and the class he represents—is under attack.

CHAPTER 2

Moscow's dogs inevitably learn to read the word "sausage" on shop windows. As a puppy, Sharik learned to distinguish the butcher shops by their blue-green signs. But after a fateful encounter with an electric goods store that had a similar sign, he learned to distinguish the butchers—and many other shops—by their signs' letters and other distinctive features. So at Philip's front door, Sharik makes out "Pro" on the nameplate. This confuses him: "Pro" can't possibly mean "proletarian."

This extended commentary on Sharik's reading abilities—which go exactly as far as they need to for him to find food—shows that he is less intelligent than humans but still much more intelligent than human readers might expect. In Bulgakov's allegory, this solidifies the link between Sharik and the uneducated or illiterate masses. In addition to poking fun at Soviet-era politics, the joke about Philip's nameplate (which really says "Professor") also explains the other half of the allegory. Namely, Philip represents the wealthy aristocratic class that Marxists call the bourgeoisie.

A beautiful young woman (Zina) opens the door, which leads into an extravagantly-decorated entryway. Sharik glimpses himself in the mirror, and the woman calls him "mangy." Philip disagrees, but then notices the huge burn on Sharik's side. Sharik yelps out that it's the cook's fault.

Philip's palatial apartment and beautiful servant further prove that he's a traditional Russian aristocrat. But the "mangy" Sharik clearly doesn't belong there—it's still unclear why Philip has taken him in.

Philip has Zina lead Sharik down a hallway to a medical examination room. Sharik realizes they're going to cut him up and tries desperately to escape, shattering a glass door in the process. Another man (Bormenthal) rushes in the room, releases a noxious-smelling liquid, and holds Sharik down. Sharik bites him and starts to lose consciousness. Convinced he's dying, he says goodbye to the world.

In this scene Bulgakov plays a joke on the reader, who—like Sharik—probably expects Philip to perform his radical experiment immediately. Actually, he's just trying to heal Sharik's wounds. But Sharik and the reader can't tell: they only know that Philip has power over life and death in his operating room, but not whether he's using this power for good or evil. Sharik's escape attempt and attack on Bormenthal are the first of his many futile efforts to escape fate.

Sharik wakes up, covered in bandages but surprisingly free of pain. Philip hums **a song**, "From Seville and to Granada…," and criticizes Sharik for biting Bormenthal and breaking the glass door. Philip explains that he lured the dog in with kindness, which is a better way to persuade than with terror. He comments that he still has sausage, and Zina says the sausage is too expensive to give to dogs—she'd rather eat it. Philip Philippovich replies that it's not safe for humans, and Zina leaves to answer the phone.

Philip's comments about terror are a play on the Red Terror, the Bolshevik government's political repression campaign. Evidently, his belief in kindness and persuasion is at odds with the government's belief in violence and coercion. Dignity and consent are the essence of this difference: where Philip believes it's wrong to make other people do things they don't agree to, the Bolsheviks think they know how the world ought to be, and they try to impose this order on everyone else by any means necessary. Of course, Philip goes on to operate on Sharik without his consent, so it's unclear how sincere his values really are.

Philip leads Sharik into his extravagant office, which Sharik realizes isn't just any hospital or clinic. There's even a stuffed owl inside. A man with bizarre features walks in and takes off his pants, at Philip Philippovich's request. Although his hair is green and one of his legs doesn't bend at the knee, the man triumphantly comments that women are fawning over him. Philip Philippovich examines the man and says everything is working. Delighted, the man pays Philip Philippovich a huge sum of money and leaves the office giggling.

The unnaturally green-haired, giggling patient offers the first indication of what Philip does for a living. Sharik doesn't get it, but the reader will see that Philip is offering some kind of dubious sexual rejuvenation treatments. Early 20th century readers would have likely connected Philip's treatments to the famous surgeons who promised rejuvenation by transplanting monkey genitals into people's. Many professionals took this practice seriously for a generation, but by the time he wrote this book, Bulgakov (who was a doctor) already saw that it was a useless fad .

Next, a nervous woman visits and tells Philip that her life is a "tragedy." She lies about her age, complains about her husband, and takes off her pants. Philip sings **his song**. Ashamed to watch, Sharik covers his eyes and falls asleep. When he awakens, Philip Philippovich is telling the woman that he will give her a monkey ovary transplant on Monday. He sings his song again and agrees to do the transplant in his office for an extra fee. Sharik falls back asleep.

Like numerous people throughout human history, Philip's distraught patient seems to think that youth and sexual vitality will transform her life and fix all her problems. With his operations, Philip is cashing in on this likely futile hope. This makes the connection between rejuvenation and revolution clearer: both are arrogant, misguided attempts to improve humanity by replacing what's truly human in people with something lower or animalistic.

Sharik awakens to hear a man tell Philip about his affair with a 14-year-old girl. Sharik is scandalized by Philip's strange appointments and wonders why he wouldn't just adopt a finer, well-bred dog. Then he falls asleep again.

Bulgakov satirizes rejuvenation even further. He suggests that, beneath all his professed scientific principles, Philip might really be in the business of helping women surprise their husbands and turning older men back into teenagers to abuse young women. Just like the Bolsheviks do with the power of government, Philip uses the power of medicine to corrupt humanity, not improve it.

Four young men visit Philip, who angrily tells them they've chosen the wrong footwear for the weather. One of the visitors, Vyazemskaya, reveals that she's really a woman. Their leader, Shvonder, explains that they have just moved into the building and been named as the new management committee. They claim that Philip Philippovich's apartment is too big—he has seven rooms. He scathingly replies that he'd like one more—a library. Scandalized, the visitors ask him to simply be more efficient with space. For instance, he can eat in his bedroom, like everyone else in Moscow. He replies that this is unreasonable.

The committee tries to bring the revolution to Philip's apartment: in the name of equality, they think, he has to redistribute his extra space. But Bulgakov mocks Bolshevik culture through the committee's faux pas—like their improper shoes, Vyazemskaya's androgyny, and their insistence that Philip use his rooms for the wrong functions. Specifically, they push their rejection of aristocratic traditions to a thoughtless, pointless extreme. They reject better things—like good boots and dining rooms—simply because they're associated with the wealthy. When Philip insists on keeping his apartment the way it is, he's defending this aristocratic common sense and the stable domestic life that allows him to do his scientific and medical work in peace. But the reader has already seen the absurdity in his rejuvenation work, so it's worth asking whether there really is anything admirable in his selfishness.

The committee threatens to report Philip Philippovich to the authorities. In response, Philip calls one of his patients, Pyotr Alexandrovich, and reports that he's leaving Russia because the committee is taking his home. The visitors are horrified, but Alexandrovich convinces Philip to stay on the condition that the four visitors never bother him again. Shvonder takes the phone, and after briefly chatting with Alexandrovich, agrees that Philip can keep his apartment. Before leaving, Vyazemskaya asks Philip to buy some magazines from her to help support German children, but he refuses. She says he would certainly be arrested if he weren't so famous, as he clearly hates the proletariat. He responds that he does. Zina brings him dinner and the four visitors leave.

Philip's phone call settles the conflict with the house committee, but it also shows the Soviet government's absurd, dysfunctional corruption. Aristocracy used to protect Philip's privilege, but now, nepotism does. Despite the government's professed belief in equality, it doesn't make society much more equal—it just replaces an educated, civilized aristocracy with a cynical, manipulative communist elite. Vyazemskaya's magazines for German children reflect what Bulgakov sees as the distorted Soviet attitude towards others: Vyazemskaya wants Philip to give because of social pressure to help others and an abstract commitment to equality, not because he actually cares about the German children. When he refuses, he's not just greedily hoarding money and property—he's also defending the right to choose his own values, commitments, and loyalties, instead of being forced to have the same ones as everyone else. In other words, he sees the communist emphasis on equality and redistribution as an affront to individuality, which requires being able to favor some people over others.

CHAPTER 3

At dinner, there is an extravagant spread of fish, cheese, and caviar; several different kinds of liquor; and a sizzling lobster plate for Philip Philippovich and Dr. Bormenthal (the doctor Sharik bit). Philip and Bormenthal drink vodka but complain about its quality. Then, they toss Sharik a bit of food. Before they start on their lobster, Philip lectures Dr. Bormenthal about the importance of eating well, which means not talking about Bolshevism or reading government newspapers over dinner. (This depresses his patients and ruins their appetite.) Zina brings Sharik a fish filet and piece of roast beef. He stuffs himself and falls asleep.

Philip and Bormenthal clearly enjoy the finer things in life: their lavish feast represents their aristocratic background and the supposedly refined, superior sensibilities it's given them. But Bulgakov exaggerates their indulgence and anti-communism to the point of parody, suggesting that attitudes like theirs are why the working classes revolted against the aristocracy's excesses. Meanwhile, Sharik seems to have advanced from one class to another. After rummaging for food in the trash, Sharik now gets to dine like an aristocrat, too.

Sharik awakens to hear Zina tell Philip that the building committee is calling another meeting. Philip Philippovich complains that they'll ruin the plumbing and heating, but Dr. Bormenthal is more optimistic. Philip Philippovich laments that when the newcomers came, someone stole everyone's galoshes, so now everybody uses galoshes inside and gets the marble stairs muddy. So the building had to remove the fancy carpet and shut one of the entrances. He asks why the proletarians can't just leave their boots downstairs—Dr. Bormenthal comments that they don't have any, but Philip Philippovich energetically insists that they do, since they stole his!

The changes in Philip's building under new management are a metaphor for the changes in Russia under the Bolsheviks. It's not only that everyone got equal goods and services; it's also that many people—at least, people like Philip—got worse ones. Philip isn't ashamed of his elitism: he frankly believes that the masses simply don't understand or respect the basic rules of civilized life, and he doesn't think they will learn. So he'd prefer not to mix with them whatsoever.

Dr. Bormenthal says that things are falling into a "general rack and ruin," but Philip says the problem isn't general: it's "in the heads" of specific people, who have risen into social positions they're not ready to occupy. Sharik dozes off and dreams about Philip's owl and moustache. Meanwhile, Philip continues ranting. He complains about the police and the music outside. Bormenthal jokes that he's being "counterrevolutionary," and Philip replies that this word could mean anything. He promises that he's just offering sound advice, based in experience.

Philip believes that the Russian Revolution has turned society upside down. The masses have gained power over the old ruling classes, but Philip thinks that they're incapable of leading, because leadership requires an education and refinement that only the aristocracy possesses. Sharik's dream exemplifies the difference between the ruling classes' and masses' attitudes and concerns: Sharik is thinking about banal objects from his everyday experience, while Philip and Bormenthal are thinking about how society should be run. When Bormenthal jokes that Philip is being "counterrevolutionary," Philip points out that "counterrevolutionary" is really just code for anything that goes against the government. He suggests that the Bolsheviks disguise their self-interest through their philosophy—they argue that their beliefs are the truth, when they really just want to hold onto power and avoid dissent.

Philip Philippovich puts down his napkin, then pays Dr. Bormenthal 40 rubles and sends him home for the evening. Philip is going to the ballet—he tells Bormenthal that his secret to living well is never attending political meetings, sticking to his own work, and never meddling in anyone else's. He reminds Bormenthal to keep looking for "a suitable death" to bring in for their experiments. Meanwhile, the men will focus on helping the dog heal.

Philip's evening plans again reflect his aristocratic cultural values. First, the ballet is emblematic of Russian imperial high culture, which the Bolsheviks reject but he still appreciates. Second, he clearly values his privacy and personal boundaries, while the Bolshevik government tries to regulate people's private spaces and lives through public policy. When he talks about everyone sticking to their own work, he's defending the capitalist principle that the most efficient division of labor is the one people choose for themselves—not one determined by the state. Finally, he believes that people work better when they have control over their work and accountability for it.

Sharik is surprised that Philip cares about him—he wonders if he might be dreaming, but quickly realizes that he isn't. When the apartment's heater turns on, Sharik feels deeply grateful to his new owner. He starts admiring himself in the mirror and decides that he must be a beautiful "canine prince," because Philip is too refined a man to adopt just any old street dog.

In the freezing Moscow winter, good heating is a luxury for everyone, especially for a street dog. Sharik's gratitude to Philip suggests how Bulgakov thinks society should be structured: the superior, wealthy, and powerful should protect the inferior, poor, and powerless—who should be grateful for their benefactors' charity. At the same time, Bulgakov also mocks this conception by showing that Sharik sees himself as superior to other dogs. He points out how the aristocracy justifies its inherited privileges, but also how the lower classes (once they get a taste of privilege) quickly come up with similar excuses. In other words, he suggests that humans are naturally self-interested and will hold onto their privileges, even if they claim to believe in equality.

Over the next week, Sharik eats voraciously and chews up some expensive decorations, most notably the stuffed owl. Zina suggests whipping him, but Philip refuses and sticks Sharik's nose in the torn-up owl instead. He sends Zina to re-taxidermy the owl and buy Sharik a leash and collar. Sharik initially hates the collar and wants to break free, but when Zina starts taking him on walks, he realizes that all the other dogs are jealous of him.

Philip continues to train Sharik using positive reinforcement instead of violence. As he said in the previous chapter, he believes in kindness, not terror—he thinks lesser beings like Sharik are more likely to improve when they trust their superiors than when they fear them. Of course, this is a metaphor for his belief in gradually improving society by incentivizing progress and success, rather than changing it all at once through coercion and control. Meanwhile, Sharik's struggle against the collar represents the working classes' desire for freedom. But when Sharik recognizes that other dogs envy him, this shows that he chooses status over freedom—he would rather be a great man's pet than a free but forsaken stray. This also plays into Philip's worldview: Sharik is learning to accept that he will only grow by accepting his inferiority and submitting to his superiors.

Next, Sharik starts visiting the kitchen. The cook, Darya Petrovna, initially kicks him out. But she soon takes a liking to him and starts letting him watch her cook. One evening, Sharik lays on the still-warm stove and watches a man with Darya in her room. She comments that the man is acting like he'd gotten the rejuvenation treatment, but he brags that he didn't need it. Later that night, Philip sits at his desk, dissecting human brains with a small knife, while Sharik lazes on the carpet and thinks about dinner.

Sharik's still concerned first and foremost with food—his natural instincts continue to control him. In contrast, Philip is cutting up brains: science gives him control over nature. For Bulgakov, these represent the two extremes of class hierarchy: nature dominates the masses, while the elite dominate nature. But Philip and Sharik manage to live together peacefully, suggesting that the elite and masses can coexist harmoniously if they accept hierarchy. Of course, the rest of the book will show what happens if they don't accept hierarchy.

CHAPTER 4

One fateful day, Sharik wakes up with a sense of dread, but goes about his daily routine as usual. In the evening, Philip gets a call, and soon Dr. Bormenthal arrives with a suitcase. He reports that someone died three hours ago, and he and Philip rush to the examination room. Confused, Sharik decides to go eat, but Philip has the staff lock him in the bathroom instead.

Philip and Bormenthal finally get the "suitable death" they've been waiting for, in order to get human organs to transplant into Sharik. But, being a dog, Sharik still doesn't understand what's going on—and he continues in blissful ignorance.

Stuck in the bathroom, Sharik angrily plots revenge: he'll chew up Philip's boots in the morning. Then, he starts reminiscing about playing in a courtyard with other dogs. But he reminds himself that he's grown into "a gentleman's dog" and can never return to his old life of freedom—besides, he decides, freedom is meaningless. Still, he starts to howl and scratch maniacally at the door. Eventually, he gives up, and then Zina opens the door and drags him into the examination room by his collar.

While Philip and Bormenthal focus on their serious, groundbreaking scientific experiments, Sharik naively daydreams and plots revenge. Bulgakov uses this humorous contrast to emphasize the difference between the excellence of the elite and the banality of the masses. Sharik's new self-image as "a gentleman's dog" shows that he recognizes and respects this difference.

In the examination room, a bright white light blinds the confused Sharik. Wearing a cap, gloves, and apron, Philip hums **his song**, "toward the sacred banks of the Nile." He orders Zina to remove Sharik's collar, and then Dr. Bormenthal smothers Sharik with a sweet-smelling cloth. First baffled and furious, and then calm and grateful, Sharik loses consciousness.

This passage nearly repeats the surgery scene from chapter two, and Sharik's instinctual fear of human medicine mixes with his gratitude for the last procedure (which healed his wounds). He eventually recognizes that he can't understand or control what's happening to him. Philip's song is the conquering pharaoh's aria from the Verdi opera Aida*—it suggests that the surgery represents a great scientific conquest for him.*

Dr. Bormenthal shaves Sharik's belly and head while Philip Philippovich looks on and explains that sewing on the pituitary gland will be the most important part of the operation. Half-joking, he says he pities the dog. After Dr. Bormenthal finishes shaving the dog, Zina helps him wash his hands and then leaves. Dr. Bormenthal hands Philip a knife, and Philip cuts into Sharik's belly with gritted teeth. He starts pulling apart Sharik's organs until he finds the dog's testicles, which he cuts out and replaces with another pair from a jar. He sews them in place and then closes up Sharik's abdomen.

Bulgakov was a surgeon, and he brings his medical expertise into the novel by describing Philip's operation in great detail. This operation is the opposite of the surgeries Philip performs on his human patients: he's replacing Sharik's *testicles and pituitary gland with* human *ones. Both of these organs are significant because they regulate hormones, which determine biological growth and development. In Bulgakov's analogy between biological and social change, these hormones represent the principles by which a society changes or progresses. In other words, Philip is changing the biological formulas through which Sharik will develop, just as the Russian Revolution changed the social and economic principles by which Russian society would develop in the 20th century.*

Next, Philip hurriedly cuts into Sharik's scalp and starts drilling into his skull. He cuts the skull away, severs through membranes, and cuts into Sharik's brain with a murderous glare. Meanwhile, Dr. Bormenthal gives Sharik injections in his heart to keep him alive. When Philip Philippovich finally cuts around to Sharik's pituitary gland, Dr. Bormenthal hands him a jar with another gland inside. Philip tosses out Sharik's gland and ties the new one in its place, then puts his brain back and closes his skull and scalp.

Bulgakov's description emphasizes the violence inherent in Philip's surgery. Intensely focused and ruthlessly efficient, Philip clearly savors the destructive power of his job. This furthers the analogy between the rejuvenation surgery and the Russian Revolution, in which the Bolsheviks violently ripped out and replaced key organs in Russian society as part of a dangerous experiment to create a new version of humanity.

Philip yells at Dr. Bormenthal to stitch Sharik's head back together, then calls for Zina and demands "a cigarette, […] fresh underwear, and a bath." While he waits, he opens Sharik's eyes and says that the dog is going to die, one way or another. He halfheartedly tells Dr. Bormenthal that he pities Sharik.

Philip's firm demands and patronizing comments to Sharik further show that he's playing God, exercising a grotesque power over life and death. He meddles with nature, but he also knows that nature will take its course: Sharik will die, whether as a result of the operation or from natural causes. Bulgakov asks whether humans should have such power—and if they do, how they should use it and what kind of people should be authorized to do so.

CHAPTER 5

This chapter consists of Dr. Bormenthal's journal. First, he describes Sharik, the shaggy stray dog. Then, on December 23rd, he describes the surgery that Professor Philip Philippovich Preobrazhensky performed to replace Sharik's testicles and pituitary gland with a recently-deceased human man's. The patient is expected to die, but gradually improves over the next week, until he sheds his fur and barks—or moans—on December 29th. The next day, it becomes clear that the patient is gaining significant weight, and the day after, he has a "colossal appetite" and barks the word "tsurt." The next day, Professor Preobrazhensky determines that he's saying "tsurt-hsif," which means "fish-trust," backwards.

The narration abruptly shifts, and Sharik's perspective won't return until the very end of the book. Bormenthal's journal serves as a transitional section between the two distinct halves of the book, which correspond to the two distinct versions of its central character: Sharik the dog and Sharikov the man. Fittingly, this transitional section covers the transition between these two versions of Sharik(ov). Bormenthal also gives the reader important scientific and social context that was only implicit in the first half of the book (like details about Philip Preobrazhensky's medical background and the operation). After the operation, Sharik gradually starts turning into a man. "Fish-Trust" is one of the signs he learned to read, so when he barks out those words, it shows that he's learning to articulate his canine intelligence in a human form.

On January 2nd, Sharik stands up on his hind legs like a human. Professor Preobrazhensky faints and hits his head on a chair. On January 6th, the patient's tail falls off, and he says, "saloon." Bormenthal is "totally bewildered," and the professor has stopped seeing patients. The next day, the "creature" walks around and starts saying more words. Now, he looks mostly human, and his head is growing. Rumors about Professor Preobrazhensky's experiments are spreading, and people are crowding outside his window. One newspaper reports that he may be hiding a Martian, and another publishes a photo of a violin-playing infant that Darya Petrovna stole from the professor. Shvonder has assembled the house committee.

Philip and Bormenthal's surprise shows that they didn't expect their experiment to humanize Sharikov—on the contrary, Philip expected him to die. Although they looked like powerful, godlike manipulators of nature in the last chapter, here it becomes clear that their science has very real limits. They haven't mastered nature yet; they're still figuring it out. Meanwhile, Sharik is also pushing the limit between animal and human—his transformation calls into question what biological, intellectual, and/or moral characteristics a being must have to count as fully human. Finally, the public outcry over the experiments helps explain why Philip hates the masses: they're nosy and want to exercise power over him and his science, even though they don't understand it.

On January 8th, Dr. Bormenthal writes that Professor Preobrazhensky has determined the problem: rather than rejuvenating the patient, he has achieved "complete humanization." Sharik is walking around on his hind legs like a man, laughing and swearing at random, which infuriates Philip. Dr. Bormenthal is surprised to see Philip off-balance, even as he hums his usual **song**.

Where the experiment sought to rejuvenate Sharik—or turn him into a better version of himself*—it actually ended up turning him into* someone else. *As he becomes human, Sharik starts with what might be considered the lowest, most vulgar human tendencies—he can laugh and swear, but not yet clearly communicate his ideas or respect others. In other words, instead of becoming a superior form of dog, he's become an inferior form of human. In Bulgakov's allegory, this also represents the way the Russian Revolution brought out humanity's worst instincts while claiming to empower their best.*

On January 9th, Dr. Bormenthal notes that Sharik is learning vocabulary fast, as though he is remembering words he always secretly knew. On January 10th, Dr. Bormenthal writes that the servants dressed Sharik, who yelled vulgar jokes at them when they tried to put on his underwear. He notes that Sharik's dog's paw is gradually turning into a human foot, and Sharik's toilet training is gradually improving.

If Sharik already knew some of the words he's fast learning, then this suggests that dogs are far more intelligent than people tend to give them credit for. At the same time, he doesn't seem to be getting any more intelligent as he turns into a human. In Bulgakov's allegory, this represents the way the Russian Revolution convinced the masses that they deserved to rule, without actually making them capable of ruling.

On January 11th, Sharik agrees to get fully dressed and then makes a tongue-in-cheek joke asking for a cigarette. He's shed all his fur, except the hair on his head, which increasingly resembles a human's. And most importantly, he is finally communicating directly with people: when Philip tells him not to throw around his food, Sharik tells Philip to leave him alone. Philip warns Sharik against insulting him, and Sharik clearly understands the threat.

Sharik is able to talk, but he only seems to understand threats and insults—forms of communication that are based on power, not respect. In fact, he's certainly less respectful and obedient than he was as a dog, when he was grateful to Philip for saving him from starvation. Bulgakov is making another point about the masses during the Russian Revolution: they used to accept their role at the bottom of the social hierarchy, but the Revolution gave them the erroneous idea that they knew how to govern just as well as the elite.

On January 12th, Dr. Bormenthal comments that Professor Preobrazhensky appears to have made a major medical breakthrough: hypophysis (pituitary) hormones determine whether people take on human form. The human gland seems to have taught Sharik to speak and tapped into his brain's hidden powers. This shows that all animals truly are related through evolution. It also suggests that dogs can think conceptually and even read. After all, Sharik read "Fish Trust."

While Philip's conclusion is pure science fiction, his findings show that he was conversant with the great scientific debates of his day. He suggests that people have a fixed, unchanging essence, which miraculously resides in the pituitary gland. Of course, Bulgakov is really parodying this idea. Specifically, he's criticizing scientists' search for a silver-bullet solution to the question of human biology, one that lets them explain all the complexities of human identity in terms of one simple trait or organ. The alternative is to recognize that people are complex, change over time, and can't be defined or understood in any singular way.

Philip's experiments are still raising a scandal. People are claiming that the end of the world is near, and Dr. Bormenthal is hiding out in Philip's apartment with Sharik. He worries that he'll have to flee Moscow. Meanwhile, when Dr. Bormenthal suggests that Sharik can develop into a highly intelligent being, Philip replies with suspicion. He is constantly looking at the human pituitary gland donor's case history, which Dr. Bormenthal copies into his notes. The donor, a 25-year-old balalaika player and petty thief named Klim Grigorievich Chugunkin, was stabbed to death in a bar fight after being released from a work camp on probation. Dr. Bormenthal doesn't understand Philip's obsession with the man.

Because science gives doctors like Philip a godlike power over life and death, the public views science through the lens of religion. People regard Philip's experiments as apocalyptic because they simply do not understand them. Bormenthal and Philip's disagreement reflects their opposing theories about human identity. Bormenthal thinks that people are capable of constant improvement and change—so Sharik will continue to improve as he becomes further humanized. But Philip thinks that people's character and ability are fixed, so Sharik will become nothing more and nothing less than the man whose organs he received. These opposing theories also bear on the novel's criticism of the Russian Revolution: the revolutionaries believed that the working classes deserve equality because they have just as much potential as the wealthy; elites like Bulgakov did not. Of course, Sharik's organ donor is a caricature of working-class vulgarity and immorality, so his development as a human will also reflect Bulgakov's beliefs about whether the working classes can rise to the level of the aristocracy.

On January 17th, Dr. Bormenthal writes that he's had the flu during the last few days. Over this period, Sharik has essentially finished his transformation into a human. He looks, talks, smokes, eats, and get dressed like any other man. Bormenthal concludes that Sharik is a totally novel kind of organism.

Sharik's humanization proves Philip's theory about the pituitary gland. On the one hand, his new human form suggests that it really is possible for people to transform—and, by analogy, for the working classes to become competent rulers of a communist society. On the other hand, if this human form is totally determined by biology—the pituitary gland—then there's a strict natural limit to how much people can change.

CHAPTER 6

By late January, there's a sheet of paper with various handwritten notes hanging on Philip's door. Inside, Philip is bent over a broken glass table, reading the newspaper. He sees that Shvonder has written in to accuse Sharik of being Philip's illegitimate son and criticize Philip's seven-room apartment. Meanwhile, Sharik is playing the balalaika in the next room. Philip asks Zina to stop the music and bring Sharik over.

The second half of the novel opens with Philip facing assaults from his two main antagonists: Shvonder, who wants the state to expropriate his apartment, and Sharik, who turns his daily life into a waking nightmare by starting to claim the space for himself. Of course, both Shvonder and Sharik represent the working classes, who waged a military, economic, and cultural war on the elite during the Russian Revolution.

Sharik is short, ugly, and badly-shaven. He comes to the door wearing a tattered, brightly-colored suit and smoking a cigarette. Philip asks him not to sleep in the kitchen and inquires where he found his ugly blue tie and shoes. Sharik explains that the kitchen is more comfortable. He also says that Darya gifted him the tie, and he wanted the same glossy patent leather shoes as all the common men in Moscow. Philip tells Sharik that he looks like a fool.

Sharik is now a caricature of the Russian working class. His poor taste in clothing suggests that he's trying too hard to attract attention, and he clearly isn't perceptive enough to understand that others will see him as a fool. Just like Shvonder asked Philip to eat in his bedroom, Sharik uses rooms for the wrong purpose: he wants to sleep in the kitchen (just like he did when he was a dog).

Philip tells Sharik to stop throwing his cigarette butts around, swearing and spitting, messing up the toilet, and harassing Zina. When Sharik jokingly replies that his "dad" is too strict, Philip furiously insists that he's not Sharik's father. Sharik complains that Philip nags and tries to control him—he didn't even ask to have an operation and become human. Philip asks if Sharik would have preferred eating garbage and freezing to death as a dog, but Sharik defends his humble beginnings. He calls Philip "comrade," which further frustrates Philip, and concludes that Philip can't stand the idea of being equal to common working people.

Sharik's misbehavior again represents what Bulgakov sees as the vulgarity and poor manners of the Russian communists and working class. When he calls Philip "dad," he's both joking about the way Philip orders him around and pointing out that Philip was the one who made him human. He no longer recognizes Philip's altruism—instead, by calling Philip "comrade," he insists that they're equals. In the novel's allegory, this represents the working classes demanding equality after the Revolution—an equality that Bulgakov thinks they certainly don't deserve.

Sharik makes a point of putting out his cigarette in the ashtray, then catches and kills a flea on his arm. He tells Philip that he needs papers, because people are "strictly forbidden to exist without documents" under the new government. He even threatens to call the house committee. Philip reluctantly agrees to help, but points out that Sharik doesn't even have a name yet. Sharik has chosen one: "Polygraph Polygraphovich." Scandalized, Philip drops a glass of water, which shatters on the ground. He calms down and sarcastically apologizes to Sharik, who explains that he chose his new name from the calendar in Philip's examination room. Polygraph Polygraphovich says he will take the surname Sharikov.

Sharik's comment about papers reflects the Soviet government's absurd, upside-down bureaucracy: government papers are more important than people's actual existence. Because the government tries to standardize everything, it loses sight of people's individuality. English speakers might not fully understand the significance (and silliness) of Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov's new name. Many Russians traditionally take on the names of saints from a religious calendar. Sharik looked at this calendar and chose the name "Polygraph," which isn't a saint's name—it's the name of a kind of printing technology, which was presumably listed somewhere on the margins of the calendar. Moreover, after the Russian Revolution, people started taking on new names, often influenced by communist political history and culture. Sharikov is just Sharik the dog's nickname— "little ball"—turned into a surname. So effectively, his whole name is equivalent to something like "Carbon Copy Fluffball" in English. Like the government's absurd attempt to forbid the existence of undocumented people, Sharikov's name is Bulgakov's way of satirizing Soviet culture. He thinks that, by blindly and unnecessarily rejecting the imperial, aristocratic culture that preceded them, the Bolsheviks made fools of themselves.

Shvonder comes to register Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov as a citizen "originating" from Philip's apartment. Philip reluctantly writes a note requesting the relevant documents, which he considers pointless. But Shvonder insists that documents are essential—for instance, Sharikov can't be drafted into the military without them. Sharikov barks out that he won't go to war, but Shvonder accuses him of "highly lacking in social consciousness." Sharikov agrees to register but says he'll refuse to fight, as he's already injured by his medical operation. Philip interrupts to ask if there are any empty rooms in the house, and Shvonder says no. The phone starts ringing and Philip throws it in a moment of fury. Shvonder and Sharikov leave the room.

In Shvonder and Sharikov's back-and-forth, Bulgakov again satirizes the Soviet Union's rigid party line thinking, which doesn't even represent what the working classes want. Shvonder and the Bolsheviks' platform is all about "social consciousness," but ironically enough, Sharikov has none. (By analogy, neither did the working classes, whom Bulgakov thinks turned out even more selfish than the aristocracy.) Meanwhile, because Sharikov "originat[es]" in Philip's apartment, it seems that he'll be allowed to stay there—and keep disturbing the peaceful home life that lets Philip achieve scientific breakthroughs. (The great scientific and artistic achievements that aristocracy makes possible are no longer possible under communism, because nobody has the means to undertake them.)

Philip tells Bormenthal that he's exhausted. Just then they hear glass breaking, a woman yelling, and something crashing outside. Bormenthal realizes it's a cat, and Zina reports that Sharikov is in the bathroom, trying to attack it. He's also left the water running. Philip tries to pry the door open. The tomcat smashes through the window above the door, falls out into the kitchen, and runs out of the apartment.

Even though he might seem entirely human, Sharikov's animal instincts are clearly still with him, and he's totally incompetent at basic human tasks like turning off the faucet and opening the door. This makes his demands for social and economic equality all the more absurd.

An old woman peeks into the kitchen and asks to see "the talking dog," but Philip kicks her out and scolds Darya for letting her in. Darya complains that there are too many visitors, and Dr. Bormenthal notes that eleven patients are waiting outside. Meanwhile, Sharikov is still locked in the bathroom, and he starts barking. He complains that he can't get out because he doesn't know how to use the lock, can't see because the cat smashed the lightbulb, and can't turn off the faucet because it fell to the floor.

Sharikov's antics aren't just a nuisance: they're also earning Philip a bad reputation and distracting him from his important (and lucrative) medical practice. The consequences of Philip's daring experiment are starting to catch up with him. Evidently, according to Bulgakov, the working classes that Sharikov represents aren't just vulgar and garish: they're also stupid and incompetent.

Bormenthal, Darya, and Zina press a rug against the bottom of the flooded bathroom door to keep the water inside, while the doorman Fyodor climbs through the window with a candle to stop the faucet. He comes out and tells everyone that they have to let the water out of the bathroom. Sharikov, refusing to come out, facetiously asks Philip, "Will you hit me, dad?"

Sharikov's values are the opposite of Philip's. He takes no responsibility and shows no remorse for his destructive incompetence. He views the world in terms of power, not morality: he wants to know whether Philip will hit him, not whether he's done something wrong or harmful. In fact, he seems to want power without accountability. For Bulgakov, this represents the way the Bolsheviks imposed their rules on others but didn't actually follow those rules themselves—they claimed to want equality but chose corruption and violence instead.

Zina, Darya, Sharikov, and Fyodor clean the floors while Bormenthal sends the patients home under the pretext that Philip has fallen sick. While the apartment floods, Philip and Bormenthal complain about Sharikov, and Sharikov complains about the tomcat, who scratched him and stole food. After the floor starts drying, Fyodor reveals that the neighbor's glass is broken: Sharikov harassed his cook, got into an argument with him, and started throwing rocks. Philip gives Fyodor some money for the damage, then locks Sharikov in the waiting room. Bormenthal asks Philip to calm down, but Fyodor tells Philip that he feels sorry for him.

The trouble with Sharikov keeps growing. Unfortunately, the new government seems to have decided that he has a right to stay in Philip's apartment. So ironically, even though this communist government believes that society as a whole should take responsibility for its members, responsibility for Sharikov's behavior falls squarely on Philip (since Sharikov won't take responsibility for himself). Because they focus on giving everybody equal power—rather than the kind of power they're prepared to wield—the Soviets end up enabling corrupt, immoral, selfish behavior like Sharikov's. In turn, Bulgakov suggests, this behavior gets in the way of actual equality.

CHAPTER 7

Philip, Dr. Bormenthal, and Sharikov are at dinner. Bormenthal refuses to let Sharikov eat until he tucks a napkin into his collar and agrees to use a fork. Sharikov reluctantly agrees, then asks for more vodka, but Bormenthal denies him because it's unhealthy and Sharikov already acts obscenely enough without it. Sharikov serves himself more vodka anyway. When Bormenthal points out that polite custom requires him to serve the other men first, Sharikov obliges with "a faint, sarcastic smile" and makes fun of the men for preserving old Tsarist customs. They ironically toast one another and then down their vodka.

Following his theory that Sharikov can continue to develop into a better and better human being, Bormenthal decides to teach him manners. However, he fails spectacularly. Like a dog who only sits in exchange for treats, Sharikov only acts civilized when it will get him more vodka. He doesn't really care about the Bolshevik principles of equality and empowerment that rejected old aristocratic prejudices: he just cites these principles as excuses for his own selfish behavior.

Philip abruptly says, "Long experience." Bormenthal is confused, so Philip repeats the line, and then adds, "Nothing to be done here—Klim." He tells Bormenthal that he's sure that "it" can be done, then comments "*Spater*."

Philip and Bormenthal intentionally use cryptic language and speak German to make sure the uneducated Sharikov can't understand them. ("Spater" means "later.") They're debating whether Sharikov can learn to become a better person or is locked into his inferior nature (whether because of his previous life as a dog or his inferior pituitary gland from the criminal Klim Chugunkin).

The men eat turkey and drink a lot more. This calms Philip down but energizes Bormenthal, who asks Sharikov about their evening plans. Sharikov chooses the circus, like every other day. Philip proposes the theater instead, but Sharikov refuses, saying the theater is foolish "counterrevolution." Philip laughs at Sharikov and proposes that he try reading. But Sharikov insists that he *does* read—he recently read Engels's correspondence with Kautsky, although he disagrees with both writers and thinks it's better to just divide everything up equally. He considers it unfair that men like Philip live in seven rooms, while men like himself have to eat from the trash.

Sharikov disguises his preference for the circus over the theater as Bolshevik anti-elitism, but he really prefers it because he's unsophisticated. Similarly, he only reads traditional communist writers because the Communist Party wants him to, and everyone else is doing it. His taste in literature is as unsophisticated as they come—and so is his proposal for dividing up wealth. He doesn't see the irony that Philip has seven rooms and he had to eat from the trash as a dog under the same Soviet government that promises equality. *And he certainly doesn't know the ironic fact that Kautsky opposed the Bolsheviks. (Engels was already dead.)*

Philip replies that, if they're going to divide things up, Sharikov owes him 130 rubles, a third of the revenue he lost for sending his patients home yesterday. Sharikov ruined the house during the incident with the cat and the faucet, and he's harassing the neighbors. Bormenthal points out that he even groped and bit a woman on the stairs. Philip declares that Sharikov is a feeble animal "on the lowest rung of development," who is pretending to be on the same level as two educated and intelligent men. He believes men like Sharikov ought to just obey others and accept their place in society.

Philip points out how Sharikov's apparently principled belief in equality contradicts his actual behavior: he's selfish and doesn't recognize other people's rights or dignity. In contrast, Philip openly declares that he believes in a natural hierarchy of different kinds of people (and animals). Of course, he puts cultivated aristocrats like himself at the top, and he puts uneducated brutes like Sharikov at the bottom. In fact, Sharikov did *mostly obey Philip and accept his own inferiority when he was a dog. But just like the Revolution convinced the working classes that they deserved equality, Sharikov's operation has convinced him that he no longer owes anything to Philip.*

Philip asks who gave Sharikov the Engels book and isn't surprised when Sharikov admits that it was Shvonder. All three of the men furiously call out for Zina—and then Philip tells her to burn the book. Bormenthal realizes that things are going to end badly between Philip and Sharikov.

Burning an Engels book is the equivalent of heresy to the Bolsheviks. Bulgakov was writing in the same time and place he's depicting, so it's easy to see why Heart of a Dog *immediately got banned upon publication. By showing Philip burning Engels he's pointing out the Soviet double standard: the Soviets banned anti-communist literature but couldn't tolerate anyone banning* their *literature.*

Zina brings dessert, but Sharikov tells everyone that he won't have any and smokes a cigarette instead. Philip starts reading the newspaper and asks Bormenthal to take Sharikov to the circus, as long as there aren't any cats. Bormenthal reports that Solomonsky's circus has "Yuesems, whatever they are," and Nikitin's has elephants. Sharikov agrees to see the elephants, which he considers far more sophisticated than cats.

Sharikov's ridiculous, uncontrollable hatred for cats is a holdover from his canine roots. But it's also an obvious double standard, because it contradicts his constant rants about equality. Actually, just like Philip, he still believes in a natural hierarchy that puts some beings above others. He only rejects hierarchies that put him *far from the top.*

Bormenthal and Sharikov leave for the circus, and Philip goes into his office and paces around. He hums "**toward the sacred banks of the Nile**," smokes a cigar, and thinks for awhile. Then, he takes out the jar where he's stored the dog Sharik's pituitary gland and stares at it intently. He lays down on his couch and decides, "By God, I think I will." He looks forward to Bormenthal and Sharikov's return.

With Sharikov out of the house, Philip finally gets some peace and quiet to contemplate his situation. As he always does when he's working, he sings the classical songs that represent his sophistication, education, and intelligence. He's already determined that the pituitary gland contains the essence of an organism's personality, so when he looks at Sharik's, he seems to be considering whether he can (or should) bring the dog's old personality back.

CHAPTER 8

Nobody knows what Philip has decided to do, and the next week is unremarkable but tense. Vyazemskaya brings Sharikov his documents. Then, Bormenthal and Philip get into an argument with Sharikov because they refuse to respectfully call him by his new name, Polygraph Polygraphovich.

Contrary to Bormenthal's hopes, Sharikov doesn't seem to develop or improve any further. He still insists on his absurd name, and the absurd government gives him the documents he needs to formalize it. Even though he doesn't cause any additional crises, he appears to be stuck at what Philip called "the lowest rung of development."

Fed up, Philip declares that he won't stand Sharikov any longer: he's finding him a new place to live. But Sharikov pulls out his documents, which show that he now belongs to the tenants' association and has a right to a portion of the apartment. Philip exclaims that he would shoot Shvonder if he could, and he informs Sharikov that he will not feed him any longer if he continues to misbehave. Astonished, Sharikov calms down for awhile. However, he cuts himself badly while trying to shave.

Sharikov has made it clear that he cares about power, not respect—he doesn't take Philip's authority seriously, in part because he's loath to recognize his own incompetence. Instead, he selfishly does whatever he can get away with, regardless of Philip's needs or desires. Therefore, their relationship becomes a game of power, not consent. Unfortunately for Philip, the new government is taking away his power over his apartment. So, to subdue Sharikov, he has to threaten the one thing he still has control over: food. By showing Sharik and Philip's breakdown, Bulgakov might be suggesting that humans (unlike dogs) are stuck with their personalities and can't be trained. But more likely, he's arguing that, once the Revolution convinced the masses that they're equal to the elite, they stopped trying to improve themselves because they stopped recognizing that elites were more improved.

The next evening in Philip's office, Philip and Bormenthal discuss Sharikov's latest scandal: he stole money, went out all day, and came home drunk, bringing two random men he wanted to move into the apartment. Fyodor kicked these men out, but not before they stole Philip's expensive ashtray, hat, and cane. Sharikov denied stealing the money and said that Zina must have done it. She burst into the room and broke down in tears, and Philip and Bormenthal started comforting her, until Sharikov began to retch and vomit. They carried him to bed while he slurred obscenities at them.

The government documents that establish Sharikov's right to part of the apartment embolden his bad behavior. This takes the allegory between the novel and the Russian Revolution even further: the poor (Sharikov and his lowlife buddies) start literally stealing from the rich (Philip). Of course, the Bolshevik government wouldn't consider it theft, since it believes Sharikov has a right to the apartment. So the novel starts to center on a new question: how can Philip re-establish order in his household, now that the law no longer recognizes it as his?

Now it's two hours later. Dr. Bormenthal tells Philip how much he appreciates his guidance and kisses him as a gesture of gratitude. Touched by this display of kindness, Philip hums **his song**, admits that he's deeply lonely, and tells Bormenthal he admires his work. Bormenthal shuts the door and declares that it's impossible for the men to work with Sharikov around. He proposes that they try the solution that they're both thinking about, but Philip says he doesn't want to consider it. They would face terrible punishments, especially because their fathers were both elites. Bormenthal thinks that the government wouldn't punish Philip, because he's famous, but Philip proudly says that he wouldn't abandon Bormenthal.

While Sharikov and Philip's relationship is now a mere struggle for power, Bormenthal and Philip's is loyal, respectful, and mutually enriching. This is exactly what Bulgakov thinks the Bolsheviks are trying to eradicate: human relationships based on respect and mutual consent, rather than power and coercion. Because of this respect, Philip refuses to put Bormenthal in danger, even if it would let them get rid of Sharikov. And this respect, trust, and goodwill also makes their scientific collaboration possible by giving them the security they need to focus on their work. In contrast, Sharikov constantly threatens their safety and autonomy.

Philip reminds Bormenthal that he's a world-class expert on the brain, but admits that he made a mistake with the operation. They made an interesting discovery, but now they have to put up with Sharikov. Philip wonders if his research on the hypophysis (pituitary gland) is all for nothing.

Philip asks whether science is valuable because of the knowledge it produces or because of its effects on the real world. Was his experiment worth it, if it contributed to human knowledge but is impractical (not to mention it created a monster)? (By extension, what about the social experiment of the Russian Revolution?) Philip's answer seems to be no. *If understanding the world requires upending it, Bulgakov suggests, then it's better to leave things as they are.*

Bormenthal wonders how the operation would turn out if they used a brilliant person's brain, but Philip says that it would be pointless to create "highly advanced human[s]" through science when people already make them naturally. He decides that his discovery is worthless. All he's done is bring Klim Chugunkin back to life. Humming **his song**, Philip concludes that the pituitary gland determines human behavior, like a miniature version of the brain. This experiment was part of his mission to improve humanity through eugenics, but it totally failed. Philip even considers *himself* a failure.

Bulgakov uses Bormenthal and Philip's conversation to criticize both overambitious science and the Russian Revolution. Philip's conclusion is that anything that can be done naturally doesn't need to be done artificially. This suggests that it's dangerous to change human nature by modifying human biology. (In the 19th and early 20th centuries, eugenics proponents tried to improve human genetics by encouraging some groups of people to reproduce and discouraging, or even forcibly preventing, others.) And it's equally dangerous to try improving humanity by seizing power and restructuring society, when society is already evolving on its own.

Bormenthal offers to poison Sharikov with arsenic, but Philip refuses—he doesn't want to become a criminal. Bormenthal notes that Shvonder is manipulating Sharikov to work against them, but Philip argues that Sharikov will probably turn against Shvonder, too. Bormenthal laments that Sharikov has "the heart of a dog," but Philip argues that Sharikov's real problem is that he now has Klim Chugunkin's *human* heart. Bormenthal wants to kill Sharikov, but Philip insists that they can't. They hear footsteps outside and start talking in German.

Bormenthal seems to have concluded that, since Sharikov wants to seize power by any means necessary, he and Philip have to be willing to do the same to get it back. But Philip is still unwilling to condone violence. He recognizes that, when people abandon dignity and a basic respect for life, they only multiply violence and destruction. This is why he won't kill Sharikov, and this is also why he thinks Sharikov is a dangerous ally for Shvonder to have—Sharikov will turn against Shvonder as soon as it benefits him. Bormenthal and Philip's debate about whether Sharikov's real problem is his dog nature or his human nature illuminates the core of Bulgakov's allegory: Sharik might be inferior and incompetent because he's a dog, but he's unable to recognize it because he's a human. As a dog, he was obedient and grateful; as a human, he has become demanding and insolent. Bulgakov suggests that the Revolution led the Russian people down the same dreadful path.

When they open the door, Philip and Bormenthal see Darya Petrovna in her nightgown, angrily dragging the drunk, naked Sharikov behind her. She says he assaulted her in her sleep, but she woke up and caught him. She runs off, and Bormenthal furiously grabs the whimpering Sharikov, but Philip stops him. Bormenthal says that he will "teach [Sharikov] a lesson" in the morning and drags him out to the waiting room. In distress, Philip cries out, "Well, well…"

As time goes on, Sharikov's behavior keeps getting more destructive and intolerable. As with the Bolsheviks, the more power he has, the more he abuses it. Philip and Bormenthal are more and more powerless to stop him. By this point, they have to respond to violence with violence—there's no other way for them to defend the dignity and safety of everyone in their household.

CHAPTER 9

Sharikov disappears in the morning, so Bormenthal can't teach him his lesson. Shvonder doesn't know where Sharikov is, but complains that he stole money from the house committee. And Fyodor can't find any trace of him. They learn that Sharikov left in the morning with his coat and a stolen bottle of alcohol. Darya and Zina say they hope he never comes back. Three days later, Philip sends the militia to search for him—and he immediately turns up at the apartment, wearing new work clothes and stinking of cats. He explains that, with Shvonder's help, he got a government job purging stray cats from the city.

Like almost everything else about him, Sharikov's disappearance and new job highlight the utter absurdity of the new Soviet government. On the one hand, he responded to his conflict with Philip and Bormenthal by getting a job, like a responsible adult. On the other hand, he's a prime example of irresponsibility: he disappeared precisely in order to avoid consequences for his actions, he's unhygienic, and his new job caters to his most vulgar, unsophisticated instincts. Bulgakov suggests that the Soviets reward irresponsibility and incompetence, while punishing prudence and intelligence. So it's no surprise that Sharikov fits right into the government.

Furiously, Bormenthal grabs Sharikov by the throat and orders him to ask Zina and Darya Petrovna for forgiveness. Sharikov pretends to agree, tries and fails to call out for help, then asks for forgiveness and promises never to assault them again. The women tell Bormenthal to release Sharikov, who goes on to explain that he's moving back into his home—Philip's apartment. Philip asks what happens to the cats Sharikov kills. Sharikov explains that they get turned into coats and sold to workers, who think they're buying squirrel fur.

Sharikov doesn't take responsibility for his behavior—he doesn't show any remorse or recognize the harm he's caused. Furthermore, Bormenthal and Philip only get Sharikov to apologize for his actions through violence (and the threat of further violence in the future). Respect and morality totally break down in their household because Sharikov refuses to honor them. Meanwhile, the cat-fur jackets exemplify how the Soviet state shortchanges and deceives the workers it claims to represent. Its principles are just like Sharikov's: nonexistent. It will take whatever it can get away with, and its ideology is merely a pretense for its self-interest.

For two days, the apartment is quiet. Everybody, including Sharikov, works during the day and dines peacefully together at night. But after two days, a young woman (Vasnetsova) arrives at the apartment with Sharikov, who explains that she's his typist and will be moving in with him. Bormenthal leads Sharikov away and Philip tells the young woman that Sharikov was a failed lab experiment. The woman cries. Sharikov told her that he was a war hero, and she hoped he would save her from having to eat the horrible government cafeteria food. She can't believe Philip found Sharik in the same cafeteria's doorway.

Vasnetsova's arrival brings the novel full circle, since she was the first person who met the injured Sharik in the opening scene. Like Philip, she showed sympathy to Sharik—but unlike Philip, she didn't have the power to help him. Now, as a human, Sharikov repays her kindness by taking advantage of her. In Bulgakov's allegory, the working classes demand pity when powerless and refuse to offer it when they gain power after the Revolution.

Philip brings Vasnetsova out to the waiting room and asks Sharikov to tell her the truth about the scar on his forehead. But he says it was from the war, and the young woman leaves in tears. Sharikov says he's going to fire her, and Bormenthal furiously asks for her name. Sharikov tells him. Bormenthal grabs Sharikov and says he will shoot Sharikov if he fires her. Sharikov comments that he can get a gun, too, and he runs out of the apartment.

Sharikov again refuses to own up to his lies and misbehavior—when confronted, he just doubles down on it by threatening Vasnetsova. His tensions with Bormenthal continue to escalate, in part because Bormenthal is also willing to use violence to stop Sharikov from hurting others. Bulgakov raises the question of whether there's any other way to stop rogue, violent, selfish actors—among them the Bolsheviks—besides force.

The next afternoon, Philip gets a surprise visit from one of his patients, a military officer. The officer pulls out a copy of an official report that Sharikov and Shvonder have filed against Philip for counterrevolutionary activities, like threatening Shvonder and telling Zina to burn an Engels book. When Philip asks if he can keep the document or if the officer needs it for a further investigation, the officer is offended—the report is obviously bogus, and there will be no official investigation. Philip apologizes profusely for the offense.

Sharikov and Shvonder's report again highlights the immorality and absurd contradictions of Soviet politics. First, Sharikov and Shvonder are trying to threaten and manipulate Philip by accusing him of threatening and manipulating them. The government apparently cares about offenses against communists, but excuses communists' offenses against others. At the same time, the report gets thrown out because of Philip's personal relationship with a corrupt official—which again shows that the government isn't actually treating citizens equally, even though that's its party line. Most of all, Philip's friend throws out the report, assuming it's full of lies, even though everything in it is actually true. The official assumes that Sharikov and Shvonder are simply lying, but the law is fair, when the truth is far more troubling: the law is the problem, and Sharikov and Shvonder are telling the truth about behavior that probably shouldn't be illegal.

When Sharikov returns to the apartment, Philip and Bormenthal call him into the examination room and order him to move out of the apartment immediately. But Sharikov insists that he has a right to live there. He pulls out a gun and aims it at Bormenthal, who jumps on him and starts choking him with a pillow.

With Sharikov's final attack on Philip and Bormenthal, the men's conflict devolves into an all-or-nothing struggle for survival. While Sharikov and his communist comrades always demanded equality, *Bulgakov suggests that they always really wanted* supremacy.

A few minutes later, Bormenthal posts a note on the front door saying that Philip is sick and visiting hours are cancelled. Covered in blood, Bormenthal asks Zina and Darya Petrovna to stay home, and he locks all the doors. That night, the apartment is quiet. The neighbors report that the examination room lights were on all night, and Zina reports that Bormenthal burned a book of patient records. But nobody truly knows what happened on that quiet night.

Philip and Bormenthal finally do what they must to resolve their Sharikov problem. Bulgakov doesn't yet reveal how, but the quietness he describes in Philip's apartment clearly implies that Sharikov is gone and Philip has won back his peace and quiet. Of course, the ending is largely tongue-in-cheek—readers can easily guess what Philip and Bormenthal are doing to Sharikov, and Bulgakov will reveal it in a couple pages. But the ending's implications for the novel's allegory are less clear. Was it possible for Russia to undo the Revolution in 1924? Perhaps Bulgakov is asking it to do so, or perhaps he is suggesting that the Bolsheviks were already doing so through the New Economic Policy.

EPILOGUE

Ten days later, the police visit Philip to search his apartment. An embarrassed policeman admits that Philip, Bormenthal, Zina, and Darya are suspected of murdering Sharikov. Philip claims not to understand and asks if "Sharikov" is his dog—who is still alive. Bormenthal leads a dog into the waiting room; his fur is patchy and he has a huge scar on his forehead. The policeman is confused—how could the dog have worked for the government? Philip explains that Shvonder recommended him for the job. Philip claims that his experiment failed, and Sharikov naturally turned back into a dog. Sharikov now speaks less and less. He barks out, "No indecent language here!" One of the policemen faints. In the ensuing chaos, Bormenthal threatens Shvonder, who accompanied the policeman.

The police's search answers the lingering question from the end of the last chapter: Philip and Bormenthal reversed their operation and turned Sharikov back into a dog. When he explains himself to the policemen, Philip merely leaves out the part about the second operation. Ironically, this was the experiment that really rejuvenated Sharik: the men recognized their mistake, reversed it, and returned Sharik to his previous, better self. In doing so, they also recognized and reversed their folly in meddling with nature. Philip's absurd comment about the dog working for the government isn't just a neat sort of revenge against Shvonder—and the fulfilment of his prediction that Sharikov would hurt Shvonder more than help him. It's also a thinly-veiled critique of the government, which is so bureaucratic, absurd, and upside down that it would give a human's job to a dog.

At night, "the superior being" Philip sits in his chair while Sharik lays on the rug, feeling calm and pleasant. He reminds himself how lucky he is to live in Philip's beautiful apartment. He praises his beautiful ancestors and wonders why the doctors cut up his head. Meanwhile, Bormenthal packs up his tools and Philip hums, "**toward the sacred banks of the Nile**...," while he cuts into brains.

At the end of the novel, the new operation has brought order to Philip's house by restoring social hierarchy. Again an ignorant dog, Sharik recognizes Philip as his superior, appreciates Philip's generosity, and has no need to understand the complicated medical procedures he's been subjected to. In the novel's allegory, of course, this stands for reversing the Russian Revolution and reimposing aristocracy—although it's unclear whether Bulgakov thinks that would really be possible.

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