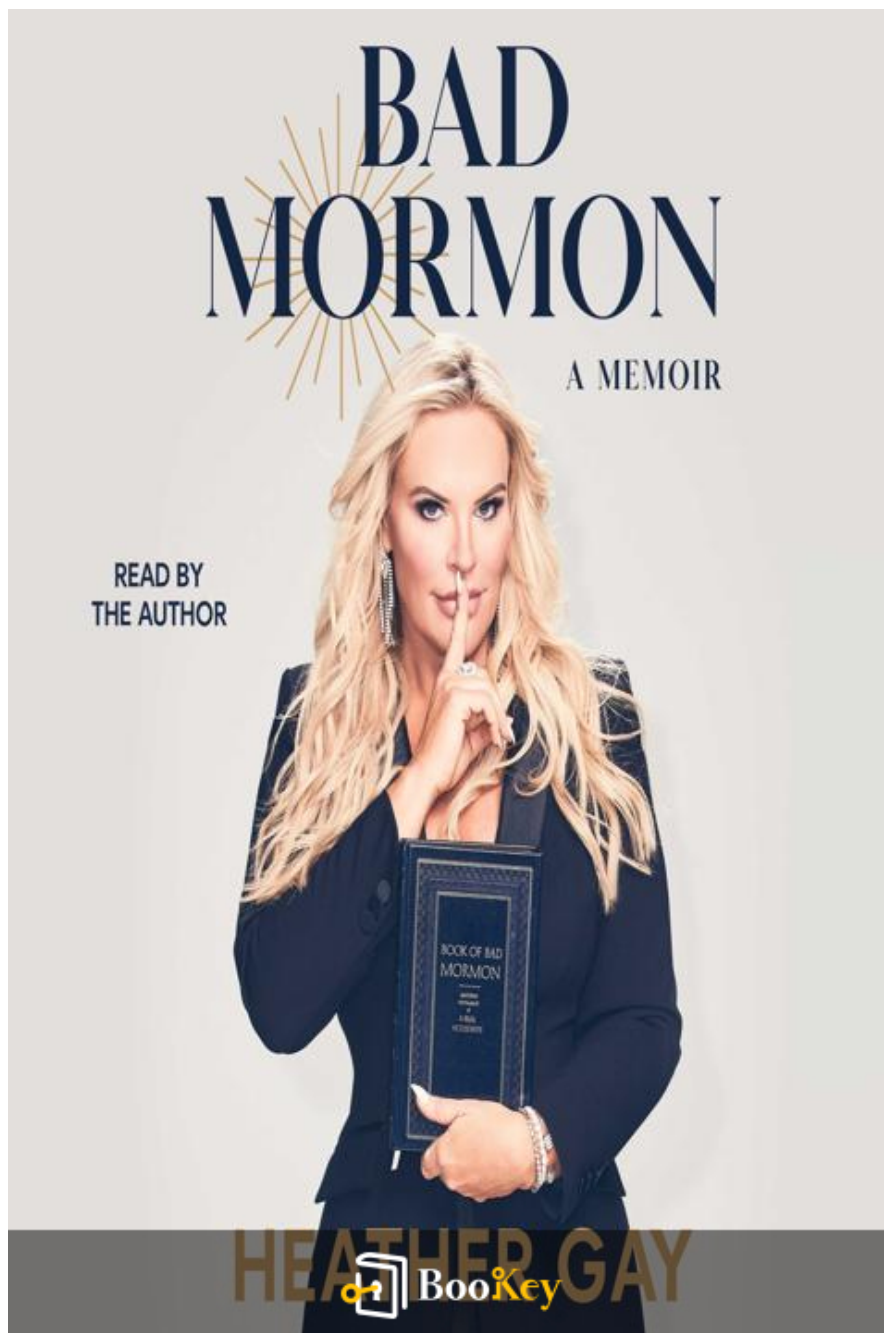


# Bad Mormon PDF (Limited Copy)

Heather Gay



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# Bad Mormon Summary

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Breaking faith and redefining identity in a strict religion.

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## About the book

In "Bad Mormon," Heather Gay invites readers into her candid and compelling journey through the intricacies of faith, identity, and rebellion within the confines of the Mormon Church. With sharp wit and unflinching honesty, she reveals the complexities of her upbringing in a rigidly structured religious environment, highlighting her struggles as she grapples with the expectations of piety and the allure of a more liberated existence. As Gay shares her humorous and often poignant anecdotes of attempting to carve out her own path, she challenges the norms of what it means to be a 'good' member of the Church, ultimately leading to a broader exploration of self-acceptance, community, and the human experience. This book is not just a memoir; it's an invitation for readers to reflect on their own beliefs and the courage it takes to pave a new way forward.

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## About the author

Heather Gay is a dynamic entrepreneur, television personality, and author, best known for her role in the hit reality series "The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City." With a background in the beauty industry, she founded a successful beauty salon and has since made a name for herself in lifestyles and entertainment, using her platform to share her candid experiences. A former member of the LDS Church, Gay navigates her complex relationship with her faith, cultural identity, and personal journey of self-discovery, all of which are explored in her debut memoir "Bad Mormon." Her sharp wit and relatable storytelling have garnered her a diverse following, making her a notable voice in contemporary discussions surrounding religion, feminism, and societal expectations.

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# Chapter 1 Summary: FEELS LIKE HOME

## Part One: Bad Daughter

### Chapter 1: Feels Like Home

In a cozy suburban home in Colorado, the narrator reflects on her childhood from her second-floor room. Gazing out of her window, she views her backyard—a personal domain bordered by a stout teakwood fence her father built. This fence not only symbolizes security and protection but also keeps the neighboring wilderness at bay, leading to her dreams of adventure and expansion beyond her playground.

The narrator's fascination with adventure is fueled by reading \*Incident at Hawk's Hill\*, a story about a boy who wanders into the wild and is nurtured by a badger. Inspired, she imagines embarking on her own escapade to rescue a lost child living in the field outside her home. Despite her parents' warnings to stay away from the gate leading to untamed land, her curiosity leads her to open it. However, once she steps outside, panic ensues as she realizes the dangers of the world outside her sanctuary. The noises of passing traffic become overwhelming, and she feels acutely aware of her isolation, understanding her parents' insistence on safety.

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Ultimately, she runs back home, overwhelmed by shame and fear. This experience impresses upon her the significance of rules meant for her protection, shaping her understanding of boundaries. Returning to her backyard, she resolves to embark on imaginary quests only within its confines, recognizing the wisdom in her parents' caution.

The chapter delves into her family's dynamics, revealing her belief that she was destined for greatness, rooted in her identity as the third child and second daughter in a large, tightly-knit family. Raised in a Mormon household, her life was framed by the principles of faith and community. She identifies as a "BIC" (Born in the Covenant), a term used in Mormonism to denote being born to temple-married parents, which grants her a sense of belonging and purpose.

Through the lens of her vibrant family life, she shares anecdotes about her mother—an energetic homemaker and creative force—and her father, whose career in the FBI instilled a sense of adventure and resilience. Her childhood was marked by the joy of being part of a loving, faith-driven community that emphasized service, family, and fun.

As she reflects on her upbringing, the narrator acknowledges that she lived in a bubble of ignorance, blissfully unaware of the complexities of the world outside her home. Her parents' journey from Utah to various states, and

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eventually to Colorado, shaped her perception of life and family. They imparted teachings that solidified her belief in her faith and community's superiority—a sentiment she carried into her young adulthood, feeling confident in her family's purpose and standing.

With the innocence of childhood and a growing understanding of her family's faith, the chapter encapsulates the narrator's initial worldview, where happiness and fulfillment are directly tied to the close-knit, covenantal life they lead.

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## Chapter 2 Summary: DOMO ARIGATO, MR. ROBOTO

In this narrative, the author describes a pivotal moment in their childhood, reflecting on identity, familial relationships, and the influence of faith. They portray themselves as an average child caught between the expectations of being either extraordinary or troublesome. The story begins with a chaotic attempt to mimic a scene from \*The Jetsons\*, where the protagonist inadvertently damages their mother's curtains with scissors, leading to dire consequences. The parents, deeply concerned about the mischief and what it implies about their child's character, interrogate her in a bid to extract a confession. But the child remains steadfast, interpreting the incident through a lens of innocence and denial, firmly believing in their own version of truth.

As the tale unfolds, the child grapples with feelings of guilt, shame, and the pressure to conform to parental expectations. The episode turns into a lesson about morality as they wrestle with their shame and the limits of honesty—illustrating a fundamental struggle between innocence, culpability, and the desire for parental approval. A moment of punishment reinforces the message that softness and compliance are valued traits in a daughter, leading the child to reflect on their own behavior and the complexities of personal integrity.

The narrative shifts to the child's perception of their heritage and culture, drawing parallels between their own life and the pioneer stories from \*Little

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House on the Prairie\*. The author paints a picture of life steeped in Mormon culture, with a constant theme of pioneering spirit and family commitment. They describe their transition to Homestead Elementary, which is infused with themes of westward expansion and traditions that resonate with their faith. The connection to ancestry instills a sense of pride and belonging within the child as they navigate school life, chores, and family dynamics.

Church plays a significant role in shaping their worldview, as Sundays become a time for family and a space to indulge in traditions and rituals that strengthen their community ties. Through charming anecdotes about interactions with church friends—the Gillespies—and lessons about religion, the child learns about the delicate balance of maintaining a religious identity while navigating social norms.

The visit from a non-member couple, Craig and Melissa, underscores the church's ability to bridge connections and provide support for its members. The author recounts a poignant family prayer for the couple's desire to have children, leading to a revelation of spirituality that they hope others will also embrace. This moment encapsulates the intertwining of faith, family, and the hopeful pursuit of connection, reflecting the author's deep-rooted belief in the gospel's capability to transform lives.

Throughout the chapters, the protagonist experiences a loss of innocence but also an awakening to the complexities of faith, family, and societal

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expectations. The narrative deftly balances the light-hearted moments of childhood with the weight of familial pressure, leaving readers with a nuanced understanding of the struggle between personal identity and the expectations that come with being part of a close-knit community.

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## Chapter 3 Summary: TELL ME LIES, TELL ME SWEET LITTLE LIES

In this chapter, the author reflects on her experiences growing up as a member of the LDS Church, particularly noting how her mother transforms into a keen observer of fellow church members during family outings. She compares her mother to a detective, constantly on the lookout for signs of fellow Mormons, which leads to an almost sisterly bond when connections are made. The narrative highlights the mother's covert operations—intently listening in on conversations and analyzing families, a somewhat humorous depiction of the lengths she goes to affirm her faith and community connections.

As the author navigates her childhood, she recalls her experiences playing soccer on a team surprisingly named the "Cracker Jills." Initially baffled by the name and feeling out of place among the non-Mormon teammates, she gradually grows to love the camaraderie and thrill of the sport. Her father, serving as the assistant coach, becomes an important figure, yet he stands in contrast to her mother, who is often overshadowed by him in social settings.

The climax of the chapter unfolds during a heated moment at a soccer game when her father, after an altercation with another parent, is taunted for wearing "funny underwear." This refers to the sacred garments worn by faithful Mormons, which the author had always thought of as nothing more

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than what her parents wore. This confrontation shocks her, leading to a crisis of understanding about her family's practices and beliefs, entangling feelings of pride and shame.

The author grapples with the realization that her family's unique religious customs, which she accepted as normal, could be the subject of ridicule. In the aftermath of the incident, when she finally speaks with her mother about her lingering discomfort regarding the situation, it's evident that the author is caught between her love for her family and the painful acknowledgment that their differences might not be admired by others. Her parents downplay the incident, treating it lightly, but the author struggles to reconcile the notions of identity, belonging, and the fear of judgment that arise from this unexpected confrontation.

In the end, the chapter underscores the complexities of growing up in a devout environment, with the author caught between the bonds of faith and the harsh realities of social perceptions. As she navigates her feelings, it becomes clear that the true pain lies not in her father's garments but in the realization that not everyone sees her family's uniqueness as a strength.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embracing Uniqueness Amidst Judgment

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing at the intersection of love for your family and the fear of judgment from society, just like Heather did. This chapter reminds you that embracing your unique identity and the customs that shape your family can be both beautiful and challenging. When faced with ridicule, you have the opportunity to celebrate what makes you different rather than hide it. Each person's quirks and differences are threads in the vibrant tapestry of community, and instead of feeling ashamed, let the warmth of acceptance guide you. Your family's uniqueness isn't a weakness; it's a story that adds depth and richness to your understanding of yourself and the world. You can choose to stand proud, like Heather, asserting that what sets you apart is also what binds you together with those who genuinely understand and appreciate your truth.

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## Chapter 4: I'M A PUZZLE, I MUST FIGURE OUT WHERE ALL MY PIECES FIT

In this chapter, we delve into the life of the narrator, a young girl navigating the tumultuous waters of childhood friendships, burgeoning attraction, and the cultural expectations of her Mormon upbringing. The chapter opens with a warm reminiscence of her strong friendship with Matt Geary, her equal in intellect and spirit. Their camaraderie is marked by friendly competition in academics and a shared sense of accomplishment during playful classroom activities, such as when they paired as anchormen during a school news project, capturing the lighthearted essence of their elementary years.

As the narrative shifts, the narrator reflects on the summer before sixth grade, a defining moment marking the end of her innocent childhood. The rapid changes brought on by puberty, particularly in her male classmates, lead her to feel anxious and tongue-tied in the presence of their newfound "sex appeal." She yearns for the same attention and self-confidence they exhibit, prompting a search for reassurance in her community, particularly in the church, which plays a significant role in her life.

The church, a central pillar in Mormon culture, divides young boys and girls into separate roles at the age of twelve. The boys receive the Aaronic priesthood, bestowing upon them significant spiritual authority, while girls are guided to embrace their futures as supportive daughters, wives, and

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mothers. Here, the narrator undergoes a profound internal struggle; while she is taught to internalize values such as faith, virtue, and integrity, she questions the narrowness of this scope and longs for recognition of her unique talents and humor.

Every Wednesday, the girls meet for activities aimed at instilling these values, intertwining fun and spirituality. The narrator stands out among her peers, her vibrant personality and natural leadership shining through. However, this self-expression often clashes with the church's teachings, leading to a sense of unrest within her.

A pivotal moment occurs during a youth activity when her mischievous outburst—yelling humorous remarks at passersby from a van—results in grounding and a call for reflection from her parents. Their concerns about her behavior, potentially stemming from insecurities about her appearance, lead to a mandated exercise routine with her father. This experience serves to heighten her feelings of humiliation but also demonstrates her father's desire to protect her from societal judgments.

As the chapter progresses, the narrator struggles between her desire for acceptance and her innate desire to be authentic. Her father's steadfast commitment to their morning walks embodies a paternal dedication to guide her through her challenges. They trek silently past beautiful landscapes, where she learns to suppress her instinct to make inappropriate remarks

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about others, showcasing the tension between her impulsive nature and the expectations placed upon her.

The chapter culminates in a significant family event: the dedication of a new temple in Denver, where her father holds a prominent security position.

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## Chapter 5 Summary: NIGHTSWIMMING

In these chapters, we witness the internal struggle of a young girl navigating the tumultuous waters of adolescence, morality, and faith. As she transitions into junior high, the protagonist begins to rebel against her strict upbringing in a religious household, surrounded by peers with differing values. Denver's youth culture pulls her in, tempting her with alcohol, romance, and the allure of an unchaste life, all while she grapples with the expectations of her faith as a member of the Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

The narrative details her first experiences with alcohol at a friend's bat mitzvah and her infatuation with boys, leading her toward choices she feels conflicted about. A turning point occurs when her family decides to move to Salt Lake City, Utah, framed not just as a logistical change but as a perceived opportunity for spiritual rejuvenation. However, this fresh start returns her to similarly morally ambiguous situations, where, despite being surrounded by fellow church members, the lines between good and bad become increasingly blurred.

Upon settling into Utah, she meets girls who seem good on the surface, yet partake in the same teenage antics she thought she escaped. For instance, her friends encourage her to kiss a boy named Mark, only for her to find out afterward that he had a girlfriend, Regina—an error that thrusts her into the complicated social dynamics of high school. The weight of her blunder

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amplifies her anxiety about fitting in and maintaining her reputation, especially in a place polarized by the strife of morality versus popularity among peers.

A notable relationship develops between her and Regina, who exhibits a level of understanding and support that the protagonist finds comforting amidst the chaos. Regina provides an anchor for her, as they share similar values, yet the protagonist continues to feel the tug of more rebellious temptations.

As she wrestles with her faith, she is forced into a situation where she must confess her perceived sins to her bishop, an event highlighted by her innocent confusion and subsequent shame. This interaction reveals the pressures to conform to religious ideals and expectations of purity, raising the stakes of her adolescent experiences. Topics of masturbation and heavy petting arise discomfotingly, underscoring the sexual pressure she faces during these formative years.

The protagonist's disillusionment grows as she participates in her community while recognizing that many other Mormons lead double lives, complicating her understanding of right and wrong. A particularly poignant moment captures her desire for a traditional, pure life—symbolized by a wedding video she glimpses at a reception. She yearns for the fairy tale of a loving, faithful marriage and feels the weight of her actions threatening to

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derail her dreams.

Ultimately, her high school graduation trip with friends evokes a sense of spiritual connection, reaffirming her dedication. Amidst a moment of singing by the campfire, she feels enveloped in the spirit of God, longing to preserve this feeling as she steps into adulthood. The friendships with Regina and Gretchen serve as both a support system and a reminder of the complex journey ahead in keeping faith while navigating the trials of teenage life—juggling the desires to be good, to have fun, and to fit in.

Through this narrative, the chapters masterfully juxtapose the protagonist's spiritual aspirations with the gritty realities of adolescence, illustrating a universal struggle for identity and belonging amidst the turbulent backdrop of youth.

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# Chapter 6 Summary: RISE AND SHOUT, THE COUGARS ARE OUT

## Chapter Summary:

After high school, I earned a full-ride scholarship to the University of Utah for piano performance, a journey shaped by my dedicated mother who nurtured my talent from a young age. As a child prodigy in Colorado, I immersed myself in classical music under the guidance of my teachers, Bernard and Carolyn Shaak, while my mother sat beside me during countless lessons. Ultimately, I impressed the admissions committee with a Chopin étude, earning my scholarship. However, my family preferred I attend Brigham Young University (BYU), which was considered the ultimate institution for Mormons, where faith and tradition thrived.

BYU represented not just education but also a potential for marriage, a vital aspiration for many Mormon families. Recognizing my penchant for classical music was waning, my parents promised to cover my first year of tuition, presenting an opportunity I accepted. Transitioning to BYU, I felt the weight of our community's expectations and the oppressive social structure rooted in conformity. My individuality seemed to clash with the prevailing values, and I struggled to fit in with my peers, who were primarily focused on the marriage market.

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Exhibiting ambition and initiative, I sought jobs to maintain my independence and carve out my identity. I landed a writing position at Wasatch Education Systems, where I cherished my time spent with my older sister Jenny, a devoted receptionist and soon-to-be mother. Jenny epitomized the successful Mormon woman, leaving her college pursuits behind to embrace motherhood. Our lunch breaks were precious but bittersweet, foreshadowing an inevitable separation when she took maternity leave.

Despite my childhood accomplishments in writing, I worried my sister's influence had secured my job rather than my own abilities. When she left, I feared I wouldn't measure up and would be cast aside. Seeking to establish my own career, I later secured a management position at Electric Beach, BYU's popular tanning salon. Here, I thrived and realized that work was my sanctuary, enabling me to escape from the pressures of dating and societal expectations.

During a summer gathering, I discovered an entrepreneurial spirit while crafting jewelry. Prompted by a friend, I realized I could potentially turn this hobby into a business. Partnering with a prominent campus store owner, I pivoted from bracelets to earrings and launched Steelhead Designs, which quickly gained traction. I leveraged my earnings and eventually caught the attention of Nordstrom, a significant milestone in my budding business career. Despite my success and recognition, the prevailing culture at BYU

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focused more on dating rather than my achievements, leaving me feeling undervalued as a young businesswoman.

The campus climate was fraught with tension, as feminist movements sparked controversy. Several professors faced repercussions for their outspoken views, which illustrated how dissenting opinions were met with swift punishment. It became evident that venturing beyond prescribed boundaries at BYU could lead to expulsion, a fate that loomed over every student. An incident where I inadvertently appeared in a protest photo left me anxious about potential repercussions, reminding me of how precarious our standing was in this tightly controlled environment.

On a personal level, I grappled with the loss of my grandmother, whose death brought deep sorrow to my family, especially my father. Reflecting on her life, I understood the challenges she faced as a devout Mormon married to a non-believer. At her funeral, I witnessed the church's powerful connections as apostles paid their respects; it underscored the familial and communal expectations entwined with our faith. Struck by my father's grief, I committed to being a source of pride for my family, recognizing the importance of faith, love, and adherence to tradition in our lives.

As I navigated the complexities of life at BYU, I resolved to listen to promptings and nurture my spiritual self, ultimately wanting to merit the love and security my family and faith offered. Embracing my identity and

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heritage, I vowed to remain true to my roots and uphold the values that defined who we were as a family, even amidst the uncertainties of college life.

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## Chapter 7 Summary: YOUR LIFE, LITTLE GIRL, IS AN EMPTY PAGE

In the heart of winter, filled with the rigidity of the Honor Code's domain, the narrator returns to her role at Electric Beach in Provo—a tanning salon that offers eternal summer vibes. Here, she feels a comfort in creating a welcoming space, serving patrons across all walks of life, including the intriguing older customers. The appearance of James Barnes sparks her attention; his charm and the differences in their stages of life leave her mesmerized.

Initially, she views her interactions with him through a playful lens, deftly selling him lotion while avoiding the nuances of attraction. Their banter reveals a connection, but it also invokes a mix of excitement and anxiety as she navigates the unpredictable waters of romance, especially with someone significantly older and outside her deeply-rooted cultural milieu. After their first dinner at a unique restaurant where the ambiance heightens her intrigue, the chemistry culminates in a passionate encounter, a stark contrast to the expectations placed upon her within her community.

However, after basking in the glow of romance, doubts arise as her roommates voice concerns over her date with James. Their warnings reflect the social pressures exerted on young women within the confines of their beliefs, centering around marriage as the ultimate goal. Torn between her

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desires and the expectations of her peers, she chooses to layer her enthusiasm for James with caution, fearing the implications such a relationship might have on her future.

As graduation nears, the narrator grapples with feelings of inadequacy—her peers blend marriage discussions while she contemplates a budding career and undefined prospects. The stark reality of her unmarried status, especially compared to her sister's early marriage, amplifies her anxieties. Just as she feels the weight of uncertainty, her friend Regina presents a life-altering proposition: an invitation to serve a mission—a typically esteemed path for young women in their faith that she had once dismissed.

Reluctant yet intrigued, she waves away her initial fears and shares the mission call experience with views of potential excitement. The hope for adventure overwhelms the fear of mundane duties, which she dreads.

Despite wishing for a calling abroad that would make her feel special, the moment she learns she'll serve in the France-Marseille Mission, she feels a divine confirmation of her path. The realization solidifies her faith, prompting gratitude for the choices she made aligning with her values—turning away from fleeting encounters and prioritizing her spiritual journey.

Now, ready to embrace the future, she acknowledges the significance of her decisions and the relief in leaving the trepidation of romantic entanglements

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behind, seeing her path toward the mission as an opportunity for growth and a commitment to her faith. The finality feels liberating, with newfound purpose to pursue her place in the world—a testimony of faith and self-discovery leading her towards the spiritual adventure ahead.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embracing self-discovery over societal expectations

**Critical Interpretation:** In a world often dictated by the pressures of societal norms, this chapter inspires you to embrace your path of self-discovery, much like the narrator. When faced with the weight of expectations surrounding marriage and traditional roles, consider how liberating it can be to prioritize your own passions and aspirations. By choosing to explore your unique journey—whether that means pursuing a career, taking a leap of faith in a new direction, or even embarking on an adventure that aligns with your values—you can cultivate a sense of purpose and authenticity. This encourages a life led by personal conviction rather than the judgments of others, ultimately nurturing confidence in who you are and what you aspire to become.

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# Chapter 8: LOVE IS A TEMPLE

## PART TWO: BAD MISSIONARY

### Chapter 8: LOVE IS A TEMPLE

Having received my mission call to the South of France, I prepared to undergo the pivotal rite of passage: the temple ceremony. Every missionary is required to participate in this sacred event before attending the Missionary Training Center (MTC). I had long imagined my first visit to the temple would coincide with my wedding day, as it meant wearing garments—a symbol of commitment to the gospel. The thought of constricting polyester layers under my clothes filled me with anxiety as I wondered how I would navigate dating in such attire.

Despite attending church and being raised in the faith, I was largely unprepared for what the temple experience entailed. I envisioned it as a sacred event steeped in reverence, akin to an exalted sacrament meeting, but I was entirely unaware of the rituals and practices that would define my experience within the temple.

When I was nine, curiosity led me to discover what appeared to be temple

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clothes hidden away in my mother's closet. This incident sparked confusion, especially the strange feelings it evoked, mirroring my fear and uncertainty during a later encounter with protesters at a parade in Utah. Their bizarre attire, similar to what I had seen in the secret suitcase, left me terrified and puzzled, realizing it was connected to the mysterious temple duties I had yet to understand.

In preparation for the temple, I attended a six-week temple prep class that surprisingly covered all the material in just one day. To my dismay, the instructors refused to discuss the sacred symbolism behind temple clothing, insisting it was “deeply offensive” to address outside of the temple. I felt shame and a pressure to conform to the expectation of holiness without truly comprehending what awaited me.

The temple preparation process involved a series of interviews with local church leaders to receive a temple recommend, a prerequisite to gain access to the temple. My anticipation built as I faced these spiritual rites, hoping to strengthen my connection with God and address the questions that had lingered in my mind.

On the day of my endowment, the weight of my mother's unspoken advice, particularly regarding breath mints, hung over my excitement. I arrived at the temple only partially equipped for what lay ahead. As I navigated the many layers of the ceremony, the protocols, and specifically the requirement

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of wearing specific types of undergarments, I couldn't shake a sense of absurdity and confusion.

Inside the temple, I underwent a ritual washing and anointing that evoked warmth and validation, briefly dispelling my nerves. I felt a powerful sense of divine love and belonging—at least during this private blessing. But far too soon, I was thrust back into the collective expectation of attending a public ceremony filled with strangers, all clad in white. The gathering felt surreal, and the once splendid images of the temple loomed larger than life.

As I participated in the endowment session, the interplay of theater and doctrine intertwined in bizarre ways. From a film reenacting the creation of man to the formal rites of covenants at the altar, I felt trapped between spirituality and an overwhelming sense of absurdity. The gravity of promising secret handshakes, tokens, and participation in rituals filled me with uncertainty. In the wake of this initiation, I fought to reconcile my growing discomfort with the deep-seated beliefs and love I held for my family and community.

The ceremony culminated in a strange dance of whispered tokens shared through the veil, embodying all the surreal beauty and complexity of faith intertwined with ritual. My friends and family celebrated my completion and entrance into the celestial room, but the ache of questions remained unaddressed. Whispers of breath mints lingered in the air, expanding the

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horizon of disbelief; I realized the weight of secrets carried everyone who had passed through those temple doors.

As the day ended and we changed back into our worldly clothes, there was an unspoken understanding to revert to the mundane. No one dared to

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## Chapter 9 Summary: CALLED TO SERVE HIM, HEAVENLY KING OF GLORY

In this chapter, the protagonist embarks on a profound transition, stepping away from her previous life filled with college chaos, familial ties, and budding adulthood as she enters the Missionary Training Center (MTC) to prepare for her mission. The MTC serves as a preparatory ground for Mormon missionaries, akin to a military academy, where they learn to spread the gospel while adhering to strict behavioral norms and expectations.

The protagonist is quickly introduced to Frère Beaufort, her charming and affable French instructor, whose good looks and humorous personality make a significant impression on her. She admires him as living proof that one can serve a mission devotedly yet still return to normalcy, avoiding the pitfalls of zealotry that can accompany intense religious devotion.

Alongside her companion, Soeur Brown, and three other sister missionaries assigned to the same region, the protagonist experiences camaraderie and excitement about their shared mission, despite deep-seated fears and uncertainties. Their questions about missionary life reflect their apprehension, as they grapple with the sacrifices of leaving behind personal aspirations and relationships to commit fully to their divine duties.

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Amidst this backdrop, the MTC administrators enforce routine and discipline, which is abruptly shaken when the classrooms are switched, igniting suspicions among the missionaries. As Frère Beaufort begins a lesson on reflexive verbs, he introduces a phrase that resonates with the missionaries' sense of being scrutinized for their compliance to the rules: “They are watching us.” This statement elicits a visceral reaction, prompting an inward reflection of their recent behaviors and the looming pressure to adhere to expectations of both piety and perfection.

The protagonist feels personally responsible for Frère Beaufort’s apparent discomfort, convinced that her playful engagement with him has put both their positions in jeopardy. This anxiety becomes reality when Frère Beaufort is dismissed without explanation, leaving the missionaries to grapple with the implications of their perceived actions.

In the aftermath, the protagonist confronts a harsh revelation. Years later, she discovers that Frère Beaufort had married another man, illuminating her naive assumption that her relationship with him had led to his dismissal. Reflecting with mature insight, she acknowledges the patriarchal and heteronormative structures that clouded her understanding of the events, realizing that the dynamics at play were far more complex than her binary logic allowed for.

The chapter poignantly captures the tension between youthful innocence and

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the awakening to broader social realities, portraying a journey that traverses both internal struggles and external societal norms, culminating in a sobering lesson about empathy and awareness in a world shaped by preconceived ideals.

Key Theme	Description
Transition to Missionary Life	The protagonist leaves behind her chaotic college life to prepare for her mission at the Missionary Training Center (MTC).
Introduction of Characters	Frère Beaufort is introduced as a charming French instructor, who represents the balance between devotion and normalcy.
Camaraderie among Missionaries	The protagonist connects with companions like Soeur Brown and others, sharing excitement and fears about missionary life.
Discipline and Compliance	The administrators enforce strict routines that are disrupted, highlighting the missionaries' feelings of being monitored.
Frère Beaufort's Discomfort	A phrase from Frère Beaufort about being watched triggers a sense of scrutiny among the missionaries; the protagonist worries her behavior affected him.
Consequences of Actions	Frère Beaufort is dismissed, which leaves the missionaries questioning their role in this outcome.
Aftermath and Realization	Years later, the protagonist learns of Frère Beaufort's marriage, reflecting on her earlier misconceptions about their relationship.
Theme of Growth	The chapter illustrates the protagonist's journey from innocence to a deeper understanding of societal norms and the complexity of relationships.

## Chapter 10 Summary: LE CHALEUR HUMAINE

### Chapter Summary: Missionary Experience in France

As Heather boarded her flight to France to serve a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she was filled with enthusiasm and high expectations. She envisioned becoming fluent in French, immersing herself in the culture, and joyfully serving others. Driven by the teachings from the Missionary Training Center (MTC) on the importance of obedience, she was determined to embrace this transformative experience.

Upon arriving in Marseille, she met her new companion, Soeur Slade, a Canadian who considered herself more French than her American peers due to her connection with French-speaking Montreal. Immediately, the challenges of missionary life became evident when Heather's attempt to approach a man to share the gospel resulted in an inappropriate encounter, highlighting both the excitement and the dangers of her new environment.

Soeur Slade instituted strict, idiosyncratic rules that complicated Heather's adjustment. The first was a prohibition against speaking English, even though Heather's French was rudimentary, limited mostly to a memorized testimony and few food phrases. This quickly led to frustration, especially when Soeur Slade would reprimand her for any attempt to communicate in

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English. Additionally, meal planning turned into a source of humiliation when they shared a palatable yet unappealing dish she called "truc," a sad mix of rice, tuna, corn, and vinaigrette.

Life with Soeur Slade proved to be a test of endurance, not just due to the demanding missionary tasks but also because of their dynamics. Heather recognized that to survive the demanding schedule and constant rejection, she needed to fully commit to the mission, shedding her personal insecurities; she imagined herself as Glinda the Good Witch, protected by the spirit of the gospel.

As her mission progressed, Heather faced a further challenge in her second companion, Soeur Bueller. A former nanny in Paris, Soeur Bueller was condescending about Heather's French accent, leading to a difficult partnership. Heather's efforts to gain Soeur Bueller's approval—including singing hymns and adapting her preferences—were met with resistance, furthering her feelings of inadequacy.

Eventually, Heather found solace and joy in her next companion, Soeur Bethany Campbell, who broke the mold of the typical companionship. A spirited, hip-hop-loving redhead from California, Bethany brought a sense of fun and camaraderie to their mission. Together, they enjoyed early morning runs and engaging in door-to-door proselytizing through large apartment complexes, bringing a refreshing energy to their work.

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At a zone conference, they were introduced to the unconventional "one-minute rule" of missionary work, which encouraged them to kneel in prayer as soon as they entered a home. This approach fostered connections and facilitated genuine moments of spiritual possibility, reversing the focus from prepared discussions to creating a space for shared faith.

As they interacted with French members of their wards, Heather and Bethany uncovered misconceptions about the sacred garments worn by church members, revealing a disconnect from temple teachings. With love and patience, they educated the members on the correct ways to wear garments, marking their roles not just as missionaries but as guardians of faith. Their commitment to "fixing" these practices reinforced their determination to serve God's purpose in every layer of their mission.

Ultimately, Heather's time in France transformed her understanding of faith, service, and community, as she navigated the complexities of language, culture, and personal growth through relationships with her companions and the members she served. The mission became a profound journey, teaching her about devotion, the importance of connection, and the joy of living her beliefs.

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## Chapter 11 Summary: I GOT SO HIGH THAT I SAW JESUS

In each mission around the world, missionaries maintain a sacred binder, a detailed record of their community outreach. This binder includes files on every French person contacted—whether through brief encounters or ongoing discussions about the Church. The missionaries, referring to those interested in learning about their faith as amis d'église or “friends of the church,” diligently track their progress, including who has shown interest in baptism and who has fallen away. With a sense of divine duty, they are tasked not only with preaching the gospel but also serving their communities, dedicating several hours weekly to forms of secular service.

The narrative takes a poignant turn as the missionaries are assigned to assist a single mother struggling to manage her 15-year-old son, who suffers from autism and cerebral palsy. Although the mother's desperate hope in a therapy involving alternating hot and cold towels appears misguided, the missionaries take on the task with a blend of naivety and faith. They recite English poetry during these sessions, believing it will somehow help the boy, while grappling with the ethical implications of their involvement. The experience serves as a stark reminder of the uncertainties surrounding service and belief, as well as the complexities of single motherhood—a role the narrator initially dismisses with judgment and fear, having no positive examples within the church.

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Inevitably, the emotional burden of this assignment becomes overwhelming. The missionaries recognize the futility of their actions, prompting them to seek a more suitable form of service, which leads them to volunteer with Doctors Without Borders. Their new role involves sorting medication—seemingly an ideal fit. However, they face contempt from locals who view them as unwelcome interlopers. Despite the disdain, they remain committed, bolstered by a sense of purpose derived from their missionary work, embodied in the “Standard of Truth,” a declaration of the Church’s mission.

Amidst the struggle of cultural assimilation and societal rejection, the missionaries continue their outreach, driven by a desire to spread their beliefs. Encounters with individuals from diverse backgrounds become common, revealing the clash between Mormon doctrine and the existing faiths of their contacts, particularly Islam. These interactions illustrate their attempts to merge different narratives, often leading to misunderstandings, as they recruit individuals under the premise of shared spiritual experiences.

As pressure mounts, the strain manifests in their emotional states. A fellow missionary's meltdown serves as a wake-up call that reverberates in the narrator’s mind, as they grapple with the implications of their convictions. Questions arise about the efficacy of their mission and the weight of the societal judgments they face. The juxtaposition of their relentless preaching

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of salvation against their personal emotional fatigue further complicates their commitment, leading to a realization that the experience is both thrilling and taxing.

Ultimately, the narrative unveils a poignant exploration of the dualities present in missionary work—the joy of serving and the toll of an unyielding commitment to a cause that often feels alienating. The struggle to balance personal identity with spiritual duty highlights the sacrifices made for faith, leading to a deeper understanding of the complexity of belief and human connection. Through it all, the narrator reflects on their journey, aware that the attempt to uplift others can sometimes leave one feeling profoundly empty.

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## Chapter 12: MY HEART WILL GO ON

In this chapter, the narrator recounts her experience as a highly successful missionary in France, despite her internal struggles. She proudly holds the record for baptisms, having converted sixteen individuals in just eighteen months, which starkly contrasts with her peers. Her mission president recognizes her achievements by granting her several privileges, including the ability to operate more independently, unlike most missionaries who must stay close to their companions. This liberty leads her to a moment of temptation one day as she is faced with a six-hour wait for her new companion.

Seizing the opportunity, she betrays her mission's expectations by sneaking off to watch the film *\*Titanic\**, hiding her name tag, relishing the anonymity and escape from her duties. The film resonates with her, particularly the character Rose's struggle against societal constraints—a reflection of her own hidden longings for freedom and authenticity. While lost in the movie, she feels a profound sense of peace that contrasts sharply with her daily life as a missionary.

After the film, the guilt weighs heavily on her. She worries that this small act of rebellion could overshadow her accomplishments, fearing it could lead to being sent home in disgrace. This internal battle is further illustrated through a metaphor akin to the timeless cautionary tale of *\*Willy Wonka\**,

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embodying her anxiety about losing her status and the trust placed in her.

In a modern-day reflection during a flight from Norway, she encounters a young missionary who, unlike her, is still tightly bound to the rules of their faith. She perceives a connection between them, longing to reassure him that

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# Chapter 13 Summary: LOST ON YOU

## Part Three: Bad Wife - Chapter 13: Lost on You

The chapter opens with a chance meeting between the narrator and Billy Gay, a strikingly different Mormon man from any she had previously encountered. Tall, confident, and born into affluence, Billy captures her attention with his charm, adventurous spirit, and creative ambitions. Unlike the men she had dated who struggled with their careers, Billy is a successful filmmaker who has walked away from a lucrative job to pursue his dreams. His passion for action sports films and his plans to surf around the world intrigue the narrator, who finds herself smitten.

Their instant chemistry grows during a welcome visit to Billy's new apartment, where he flirts with her effortlessly. Their first outing—a church singles event—leaves her questioning whether it's a real date, a concern quickly clarified by her roommate. In stark contrast to the casual dating culture in Southern California, Billy pursues her with intention, making her feel cherished and desired.

As they spend more time together, their relationship blossoms. Their first kiss on November 1st becomes a turning point, marking the beginning of a deeper emotional connection. Nightly phone calls and spontaneous hangouts

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replace formal dates, and they quickly become inseparable. Billy's romantic gestures—a surprise dinner date and thoughtful notes—reinforce her feelings.

About six weeks in, Billy surprises her with a trip to Hawaii, introducing her to surfing and showcasing local secrets that make their adventure memorable. Their intimacy grows, and both express their burgeoning love for one another. However, while basking in this blissful romance, the narrator learns that Billy comes from a wealthy family with well-known connections in the Mormon community. His family's company, Nutraceutical, is a major player in the vitamin industry, and his grandfather, Bill Gay, is infamous for his ties to the historical Mormon Mafia associated with Howard Hughes.

This revelation adds layers to their relationship, intertwining wealth, status, and secrecy that are characteristic of Mormon culture. The author reflects on how Mormons maintain intricate secrets, contrasting their outward appearances with the depth of their beliefs and connections.

Caught in a love fog, the narrator finds herself captivated by the allure of Billy—an ideal mate who fits her desires for marriage and stability. The chapter culminates in her realization that this relationship is a rare opportunity, both romantic and promising, leading her to believe that she must seize it without hesitation.

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## Chapter 14 Summary: SECURE YOURSELF TO HEAVEN

In these chapters, the protagonist, deeply enamored with Billy, grapples with the overwhelming sexual tension and desire to escape into a relationship free from societal expectations. Billy, a figure of stability and commitment, embodies a model of faith and devotion that intrigues her; he is a man of humble means despite his financial success, showcasing qualities of kindness and determination.

Their relationship unfolds amid the backdrop of their shared faith, operating within the confines of traditional expectations. The protagonist desires a traditional marriage, yearning for a life enhanced by Billy's strong moral principles. She envisions a picturesque future together, with vacations in idyllic locations and a cozy family life. Her longing for a structured domestic life reflects a desire for security and fulfillment found in convention.

Billy's proposal on Saint Patrick's Day marks a pivotal moment; it is both romantic and intimate as he asks her to marry him under the full moon at the beach. She enthusiastically accepts, driven by a blend of love and a desire for physical and emotional closeness. However, beneath her surface happiness lies an unresolved internal conflict—a muffled voice of doubt warning her about the impulsive nature of their decision.

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In the weeks leading up to the wedding, she hesitates to wear the engagement ring, fearing the reality of her commitment. The pressure from her roommate, a convert with a contrasting life experience, pushes her toward acceptance, reinforcing the belief that marrying Billy is her opportunity to secure a future amidst the rigid social norms of their faith.

Despite her apprehensions, societal expectations stifle her doubts. Everyone around her adheres to the same script, emphasizing the importance of securing a husband as a definitive step toward a fulfilling life. Ignored through all of this is the need to truly understand their partnership beyond surface appearances and shared beliefs.

As the wedding day arrives, she prepares for a ceremony that embodies both spirituality and simplicity. Stripping away traditional elements, she focuses on the sacredness of the event, exchanging vows in the Laie Temple in Hawaii without the typical fanfare of rings or vows. Instead, the focus is on her commitment to submit to Billy for eternity, symbolizing complete devotion to their faith and to him.

Their reception at Turtle Bay Resort is a culmination of this journey—an enchanting celebration filled with family and friends, traditional Hawaiian elements, and a heartfelt ambiance that juxtaposes the deeper complexities simmering beneath her joy. Despite the tender moments shared, the

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protagonist remains cognizant of the nagging doubts that accompany her vows, as she embarks on a lifelong journey under the weight of faith and societal expectations.

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## Chapter 15 Summary: GOD GAVE ME YOU

In this chapter, the narrator reflects on her early days of marriage to Billy, revealing both her hopes and the realities of their union. Initially, she feels empowered by the vision of transforming their home into one filled with joy and culture. With romantic ambitions, she delights in the idea of raising children in a loving environment, hoping that Billy will be continually amazed by her.

At their wedding, Billy's uncle Ron humorously reminds Billy to keep his eyes wide open before marriage, implying a need to truly understand one's partner. The narrator takes this advice to heart, choosing to engage in her marriage with an almost willful blindness. She recalls the excitement of their honeymoon in Hawaii, where a gifted book titled \*Man and Wife\* outlines expectations for newlywed women, emphasizing the importance of pleasing one's husband.

Her background, steeped in community values that equate a woman's worth with her purity, contrasts sharply with her new role, which reduces her to a guide on sexual performance rather than nurturing her own desires. This transformation is jarring; she finds herself transitioning overnight from protecting her virginity to navigating the complexities of marriage.

On their wedding night, the couple enjoys romantic experiences under the

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stars, swimming in the ocean, and sharing intimate moments. Despite this bliss, the narrator feels a gnawing sense of otherness. Having committed to a strict religious doctrine where women are instructed to obey, her longing for mutual respect clashes with the reality of being a mere "helpmeet."

The narrative shifts to their second honeymoon at Molokai, an isolated island with a troubling history of leprosy. This setting becomes symbolic of their deteriorating marital bliss, as they struggle to connect beyond their initial passion. In a comedic yet painfully embarrassing moment, they unwittingly attend a projection of *\*Scream 3\**, only to discover it's a stag film. Billy's reaction—a walkout to protest—embarrasses the narrator and leaves her questioning their compatibility, especially since they seem to share little more than their shared faith.

As the honeymoon comes to a close, the couple tries to address their growing discomfort through counseling, feigning a progressive approach while concealing their anxiety. Here, they confront the stark realization that their marriage is not the fairytale they envisioned. The therapist, drawing on conventional wisdom, reassures them that disappointments are a normal part of marriage, framing their struggles as common rites of passage.

Within this moment of vulnerability, the narrator journals her fears and doubts about her faith and commitment, recognizing a disparity in how she and Billy contribute to the marriage. She had entered this covenant believing

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it to hold blessings, but instead, feels isolated and disheartened. As they unpack their experiences, the counselor's words resonate, exposing the contradictory messages they've internalized: the idea that faith can protect them from marital strife, yet the reality reveals that their idealized expectations may be the very source of their disillusionment.

Ultimately, the narrator grapples with the haunting thought that the deeper issues in their marriage—those that require listening, understanding, and growth—are being overshadowed by a belief that adherence to faith will suffice in place of genuine emotional connection, revealing the complexities and cracks at the foundation of her newlywed life.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Recognizing the Importance of Genuine Emotional Connection in Relationships

**Critical Interpretation:** As you navigate the intricate landscape of your own relationships, let this chapter inspire you to prioritize genuine emotional connection over mere adherence to ideals or expectations. Just as the narrator realized that the foundation of her marriage was fraught with complexities requiring understanding and growth, you too can embrace the idea that true fulfillment in your bonds comes from open communication, mutual respect, and vulnerability. By acknowledging that no relationship can thrive on faith or duty alone, you empower yourself to seek deeper connections, fostering a more authentic and enriching experience in your own life.

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## Chapter 16: WHICH PART IS MINE?

In Huntington Beach, the newlywed life of the narrator takes center stage as she and her husband, Billy, navigate the early stages of marriage amidst rising discontent. Billy, true to his character as a Mormon who values frugality, gifts the narrator a red Porsche, symbolizing a new beginning and a superficial escape from their underlying issues. The narrator embraces her role as the quintessential homemaker, drawing inspiration from popular home improvement shows. She redecorates their home in vibrant colors, aspires to culinary prowess, and adopts the persona of the perfect wife—doing everything expected to fulfill the ideals of marriage.

However, her excitement quickly reveals a stark incompatibility between them. While she's eager to establish a happy home life, Billy struggles under the pressure of expectations to provide and lead. The narrator starts to sense that their differing aspirations are driving a wedge between them. In a moment of vulnerability, she confides in her mother about her growing misery and the weight of her responsibilities. However, her mother's dismissive response—suggesting that divorce is not an option—reinforces the narrator's feelings of entrapment in a marriage that isn't what she envisioned.

As the initial thrill begins to wear off, the narrator grows frustrated with Billy's stubborn adherence to frugality, especially regarding travel. His

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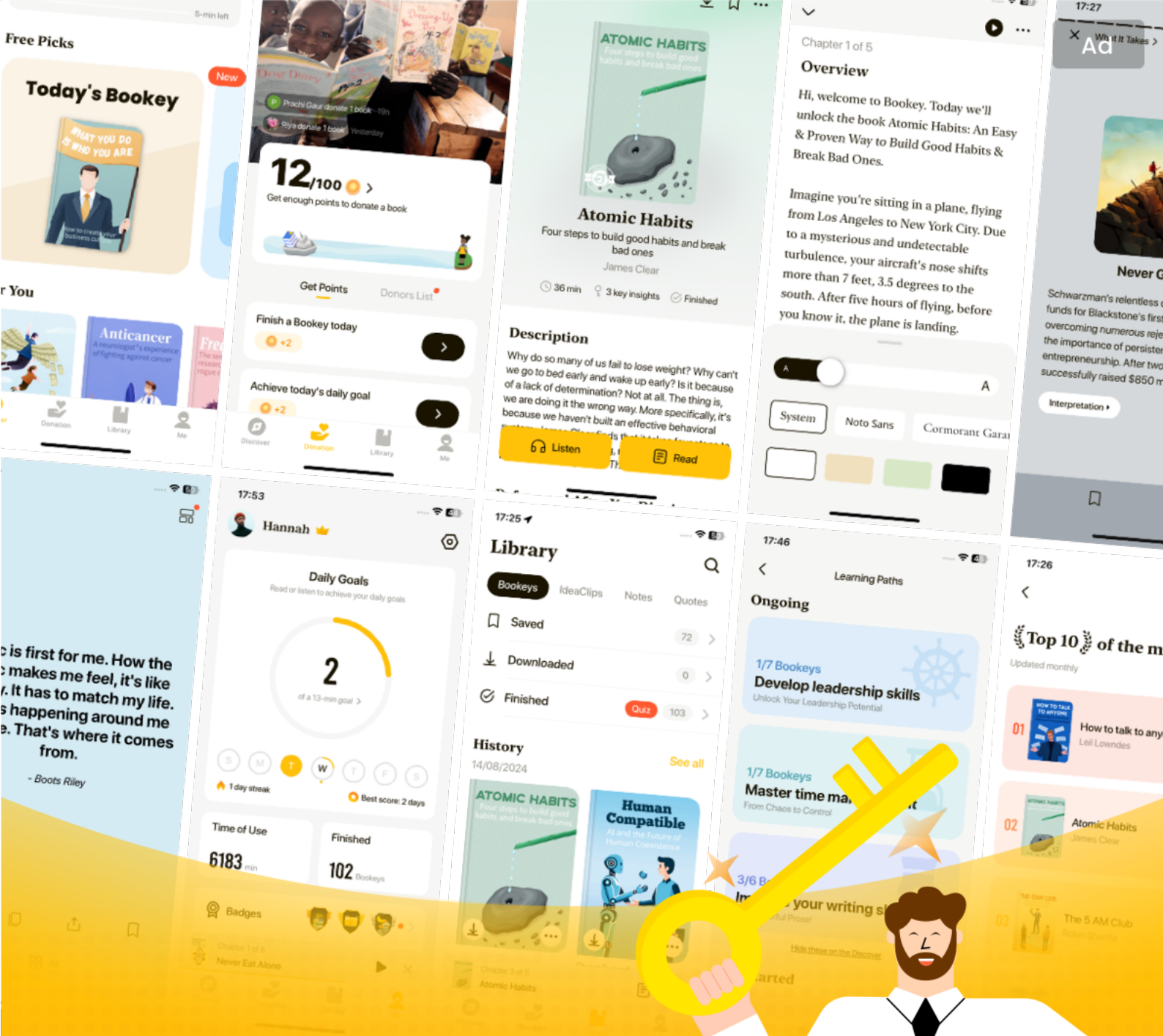
insistence on flying Southwest Airlines, despite their financial means, feels like a personal affront to her. She decides to take matters into her own hands for their one-year anniversary, presenting Billy with a framed share of Southwest stock, inscribed with heartfelt words. Yet, his reaction is less than enthusiastic, reflecting a lack of understanding of her deeper sentiment.

This internal conflict illustrates the broader themes of personal sacrifice, marital expectations, and the quest for identity within the confines of a traditional role. The narrator finds herself grappling not just with her relationship but also with the realization that the dreams of her early adulthood are not as easily reconciled with her reality.

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## Chapter 17 Summary: I'M HARBORING A FUGITIVE, DEFECTOR OF A KIND

In this chapter, the narrator reflects on her transformative experience of motherhood, which she anticipated would alter her life profoundly. Despite her previous dedication to her corporate job, she felt an undeniable shift once she gave birth, recognizing that her new primary role was that of a mother and homemaker. She grapples with the expectation of her new identity, feeling buoyed by societal norms, yet somewhat confined by them. The distinction between her aspirations and her reality becomes stark as she describes her life in Huntington Beach, managing the everyday tasks of parenting and navigating the simplicity, yet at times soul-crushing, routine that came with it.

She contrasts her situation with that of less fortunate women, acknowledging the privileges that come with her marital status, yet also wrestling with the nagging sense of lost personal ambition. She recognizes her husband, Billy, as both a source of stability and an embodiment of societal expectations. The narrator's dreams are put on hold as she contemplates finding fulfillment solely through motherhood, realizing that she'd embraced a role that was nonetheless fraught with her insecurities and doubts.

Despite these challenges, she identifies a resolve to improve her family situation by having another child, convinced that a new baby would prompt

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Billy to step up as a father and husband. This desire soon manifests through her palpable excitement for her daughter, Ashley, from the very start of her pregnancy. Midway through, after the severe nausea subsides, she indulges her maternal instincts by crafting a beautiful nursery filled with hand-made decorations, demonstrating her dedication and love.

The narrative culminates with Ashley's first Christmas, a poignant moment captured through vivid imagery. The narrator dresses her daughter in a lovingly knitted outfit and presents her with a Tiffany-blue box, containing a silver rattle inscribed with a heartwarming message that encapsulates the essence of their family journey: "We had each other, then we had you, and then we had everything." This moment brings her immense joy, overshadowing any discontent with her marriage and cementing her fulfillment through motherhood. Through these reflections, the chapter encapsulates the complex emotions tied to identity, motherhood, and societal expectations, illustrating a profound yet conflicting experience.

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## Chapter 18 Summary: SOMEWHERE THAT'S GREEN

In a deeply patriarchal society, where men hold the reins of power, women often find themselves constrained by a prevailing mantra: “keep sweet, pray, and obey.” This chapter explores the internal conflict of the protagonist, a Mormon woman who has fought her way to the periphery of success only to find herself relegated to a supporting role in her family's life. Despite her achievements, she is made to feel that her worth is contingent upon fulfilling her husband's dreams while suppressing her aspirations.

As she embarks on her planned second pregnancy, her life seems idyllic: surrounded by family and friends, with a blossoming marriage and two healthy children, Ashley and Georgia. Their lives are punctuated by social events, leisure, and a comfortable existence, all seemingly perfect from the outside. However, the protagonist's joy is challenged when she learns she is unexpectedly pregnant with a third child, Annabelle, just nine months after Georgia's birth.

With delivery imminent, cracks begin to show in her husband Billy's demeanor; the pressures of impending fatherhood unravel his earlier support, leaving her feeling isolated. She grapples with the weight of family responsibilities and the reality that she is carrying the load alone. Amid this emotional turmoil, she discovers a passion for photography, inspired by a desire to enrich her family life and express her creativity. She dedicates

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herself to mastering her craft, learning the intricacies of photography through online tutorials.

As her skills grow, she begins creating artistic representations of religious temples, inspired by the teachings of her faith. Her creations resonate with friends and family, and she quickly transitions from creating gifts to establishing a profitable side business with Billy's support. Together, they create a company called Old Nauvoo, which captures the spirit of their faith through art. However, this partnership soon becomes strained. Billy's decision to enlist an external graphic designer to replicate her work raises feelings of powerlessness within her. The dynamics of their working relationship shift as her contributions are overshadowed, and she finds herself sidelined.

The protagonist realizations slowly dawn that their marriage, though filled with love, lacks true partnership and emotional intimacy. She feels reduced to a supportive role, sidelined from the decisions in both their personal and professional lives. Despite her attempts to keep the marriage afloat, she senses a growing distance as Billy retreats further into himself. The subtle signs of their emotional disconnect weigh heavily on her, but she clings to the belief that things will improve, convinced that enduring and persevering is the key to achieving her dreams of happiness.

As the chapter unfolds, it poignantly captures the sacrifices and struggles of

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a woman striving to nourish her identity within the constraints of a traditional marriage. Her journey reflects the tension between societal expectations and personal aspirations, revealing her determination to adapt, endure, and ultimately, hope for a more fulfilling future.

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## Chapter 19 Summary: PUT YOUR SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL, PUSH ALONG

In the narrative, we delve into the complexities of a marriage that has experienced gradual deterioration over nearly a decade, set against the backdrop of a Utah community. Heather, the protagonist, reflects on how her relationship with Billy has drifted into a state of complacency, highlighting a metaphorical iceberg that represents the hidden issues threatening their union. As she navigates this revelation, she seeks solace in her faith, yearning for a transformative experience to alleviate her discontent.

A pivotal moment arrives when Heather is called to serve as Relief Society president, a significant leadership role for women in her church that involves guiding the women of her ward through lessons, meetings, and community support. This position becomes a source of strength for her, offering a much-needed outlet to redirect her focus from her marital struggles to meaningful service. Heather feels that this divine intervention is a direct response to her prayers, an opportunity to reconnect with her purpose and find fulfillment within the communal structure of the church.

As she immerses herself in her new responsibilities, she finds a temporary respite from the loneliness and pain of her faltering marriage. Heather experiences joy, connection, and a renewed sense of identity in her role, paralleling her efforts with the selflessness often demonstrated by historical

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church leaders like Joseph Smith. However, as she pours twenty to thirty hours a week into church activities and community service, a deeper struggle simmers beneath the surface. Despite her dedication, she feels unsupported by Billy, who does not engage with her achievements or share in her joy, leading to feelings of embarrassment and frustration.

Compounding her internal conflict, Heather grapples with the perception that she should be grateful for her blessings—family, a stable home, and community—while also acknowledging her emotional struggles. Despite outward appearances, she feels increasingly isolated, unable to articulate her needs without fear of being perceived as ungrateful. This tension encapsulates the dichotomy between societal expectations and her personal truth, where ambitions and emotional fulfillment remain unacknowledged.

Ultimately, Heather's journey highlights the profound complexity of navigating personal fulfillment within the confines of traditional roles and expectations. Her compelling desire to serve and be recognized for her efforts reveals the limits of self-sacrifice as a remedy for deep-seated relational issues within her marriage. Instead of solving her problems, Heather learns that her pursuits might be an escape rather than a solution, prompting her to reassess her understanding of fulfillment and the nature of service in the context of her life and relationships.

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## Chapter 20: IF YOU LOVED ME, WHY'D YOU LEAVE ME?

In this chapter, the narrator reflects on the deterioration of her marriage, likening it to a sinking ship where warning signs were ignored until it was too late. Once filled with love and hope, their relationship has devolved into a mere routine devoid of joy or connection. The narrator expresses a deep desire for adherence to their shared values and faith, believing that commitment to these principles would sustain their marriage in times of trouble.

As life continues—children needing registration for school, birthdays to plan—the narrator remains focused on her daughter Ashley's upcoming baptism, a significant rite of passage in their faith. According to their beliefs, at the age of eight, children are expected to discern right from wrong and make their first covenant with the Lord through baptism. The narrator reflects on her own baptism experience, poignant memories tinged with the sadness of realizing she had already told her first lie hours after emerging from the baptismal font. She is determined to create a joyful and memorable celebration for Ashley, one that celebrates her daughter's faith journey while hoping to mask her own internal struggles.

The celebration evolves into a lavish event, where every detail reflects the narrator's love and commitment to making Ashley's baptism special. She

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contrasts her careful planning with her husband Billy's disinterest and reluctance to share that vision. Their differing priorities lead to tension, culminating in a heated discussion over the baptism's timing that reveals the deep rifts in their relationship. Billy's request to change the baptism time for familial obligations clashes with the narrator's meticulous preparations, leading to a standoff filled with resentment and disappointment.

Despite her efforts to maintain the façade of a perfect event, the baptism becomes a source of heartbreak rather than pride. While Ashley is immersed in the baptismal font, the narrator feels isolated and unfulfilled, realizing that her attempts to control every aspect of the celebration only deepen her sense of despair. The burden of expectation—both self-imposed and external—leaves her feeling like a ghost of her former self.

After the baptism, the relationship continues to deteriorate, with Billy still physically present but emotionally absent. The couple engages in a silent dance of avoidance, reflecting a larger disconnect as they navigate the mundane realities of family life. Tension simmers beneath the surface until finally, as summer ends, the inevitable confrontation occurs: Billy confirms his decision to leave, marking a bittersweet culmination to the sense of loss that has permeated the chapter. The narrator, despite a part of her longing for connection, has reached a point where she no longer wishes to fight for a marriage that feels irrevocably broken. As the chapter closes, both characters are left to confront the aftermath of years of unmet expectations and

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unspoken grievances, laying the groundwork for a new chapter in their lives apart.

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# Chapter 21 Summary: I CAN BREATHE FOR THE FIRST TIME

## Part Four: Bad Mormon

### Chapter 21: I Can Breathe for the First Time

As summer waned in the Salt Lake Valley, a familiar heaviness settled in, signaling the cold grip of winter. Amid the season's transition, the narrator worked diligently to maintain an illusion of normalcy for her daughters, ensuring their school routines were seamless. This façade was deeply intertwined with her denial about the reality of her marriage – Billy had moved out, and the weight of that change was daunting. In her mind, separation was inconceivable; she had married Billy with the firm belief that men like him never truly abandon their families. She convinced herself that he would return.

In the days following his departure, she speculated that Billy was merely strategizing in their marital conflict, retreating temporarily to rally support from friends. Rumors of his activities—boating with friends and single women—stoked her feelings of betrayal, even while she clung to a façade of strength. Through conversations with friends, she masked her hurt with laughter, insisting all was well, though internally she wrestled with shame

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and anger.

Dynamic shifts in her life prompted a new perspective. With Billy absent, the mundane pressures of marriage lifted, allowing her a taste of freedom. She likened herself to Frederick the mouse from a beloved story, intent on savoring her summer solitude as a way to prepare for the chilling winter she anticipated. Her realization of newfound independence, however, was both exhilarating and confusing; she grappled with the implications of this liberation, contrasting it sharply with the lives of her still-married friends.

The arrival of Diana, a neighbor in the process of separating from her husband, became a pivotal point in her life. Diana openly embraced her independence and encouraged the narrator to do the same. Amid the backdrop of the popular reality show "The Bachelor," Diana seized on the opportunity to apply for the program, leading to a whirlwind of excitement and preparation. The night before her departure, they hosted a celebratory party filled with laughter and camaraderie, where the narrator felt seen and accepted among a fresh circle of friends.

One such couple, a gay Mormon pair, shared their own struggles with faith and identity, offering heartfelt support and validation that resonated deeply with the narrator. Their friendship became a lifeline during her time of uncertainty, reinforcing the notion that it was permissible to redefine her beliefs and embrace her true self while shedding the guilt of her upbringing.

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Diana's participation on "The Bachelor" was short-lived; she was eliminated early in the competition, a setback that stung for the narrator. Receiving the text announcing Diana's departure during church intensified her feelings of loss and disappointment. Rumblings behind the scenes hinted at controversies that further complicated Diana's experience—the realities of reality TV were harsh and unforgiving. Yet, through this experience, the narrator began to understand her own journey beyond Mormonism, with Diana serving not just as a friend but as an intriguing mentor navigating life unchained from restrictive traditions.

Thus, the chapter underscores a transformative period of self-discovery, framed by the intersections of friendship, faith, and the freedom to redefine oneself after years of conformity.

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## Chapter 22 Summary: THERE MUST BE FIFTY WAYS TO LEAVE YOUR LOVER

In the absence of her husband Billy, the narrator found newfound freedom, allowing herself to explore neglected passions such as photography. With a vivid imagination and a grasp of aesthetics, she dedicated herself to capturing beauty through the lens—crafting elaborate Christmas cards that showcased her daughters rather than the family she no longer had. Every December, the quest for the perfect Christmas card became a battleground, previously met with resistance from Billy, who dismissed it as unnecessary. Undeterred by her marital struggles, she transformed the cards into a vibrant expression of family life, wanting to project an image of the idealized family to the world despite the underlying reality.

As she navigated her evolving life, she dove into the emerging realm of social media, particularly Instagram, where she showcased her photography. Through this platform, she connected with a global community of artists, including Santiago Perez-Grovas, a Mexican boudoir photographer who visited Salt Lake City. Eager to engage creatively, the narrator offered her friend Diana as a model for Santiago's work, ready to step outside her comfort zone.

During this time, she grappled with her feelings about Billy, who still had access to their home and children's lives. Even as she enjoyed a taste of

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independence, his casual, uninvited appearances were jarring reminders of their complicated relationship. In an attempt to assert her independence, the narrator decided to change the locks on their home, hopeful that this act would signal the need for boundaries in their marriage.

However, this decision led to conflict. When Billy found himself locked out during an unannounced visit, he reacted with anger, emphasizing his rights as a father and homeowner. This shift transformed his previously relaxed demeanor into something more controlling and invasive, leading to feelings of anxiety and guilt for the narrator. The small comforts she had begun to cultivate in her newfound independence were overshadowed by Billy's intrusion, forcing her to confront the reality of their separation and what it might mean for her future. The narrator's journey illustrates the struggle of a woman redefining her identity amid domestic upheaval, while also highlighting the complexities of marriage, motherhood, and personal ambition.

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## Chapter 23 Summary: THE HILL I'M WALKING UP IS GETTING GOOD AND STEEP

In the wake of a significant shift in familial power dynamics, the narrator grapples with the realities of her marriage and the patriarchal expectations that have long governed her beliefs. Despite her determination to operate within these bounds—submitting to her husband, believing in the sanctity of their temple marriage, and striving to maintain the family unit—her efforts seem increasingly futile.

She endeavors to create opportunities for her husband, Billy, to reconnect with their children, hoping that his involvement might rekindle his sense of responsibility. However, when she returns home from a Relief Society welfare visit, she is confronted with an alarming sight: Billy is emptying their shared drawers, preparing to leave. The house is a mess, and the children are neglected, underscoring the stark contrast in their priorities and lifestyles. This turning point reveals the deep rift that has formed between them—their values irreconcilable and their experiences worlds apart.

An intense confrontation ensues as the narrator refuses to allow Billy back inside. The struggle becomes a physical manifestation of their tumultuous relationship—her instinct to protect her home and family fiercely clashes with Billy's determination to reclaim his autonomy. In the heat of the moment, she contemplates calling the police, recognizing that doing so will

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forever alter the course of their marriage and their family narrative, a reality she dreads to face.

Yet, desperation prevails, and she makes the call, leading to Billy's swift departure. The police arrive and insist on filing a report, despite her hesitations, demonstrating that legal protocols can feel impersonal and unyielding in personal crises. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Billy turns to the shelter of his family – an unwavering support system that believes and defends him, leaving the narrator isolated in her shame and denial.

For weeks, she holds onto the hope that Billy will return to fulfill his marital vows, believing that a return to normalcy is still possible. However, her optimism is shattered when Billy confronts her with a court summons accusing him of domestic violence in the presence of their child. Johnny accuses her of being the cause of his unhappiness, further entrenching her feelings of blame and isolation.

As the truth of her failing marriage becomes undeniable, the narrator recognizes that her long-standing denial is no longer sustainable. Nine months of struggling to maintain appearances have led her to a breaking point, drowning in the reality that their union has fundamentally failed, and that her efforts to hold onto a sinking ship are in vain. With her emotional and physical surroundings disintegrating, she acknowledges the need for

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change, even when it feels like the very earth beneath her is collapsing.

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## Chapter 24: LOOKING FOR HEAVEN, FOUND THE DEVIL IN ME

In the wake of an unexpected divorce summons from her husband Billy, the protagonist grapples with the enormity of her situation. Confiding in a friend, she seeks solace in a Kelly Clarkson concert that becomes a cathartic release, her emotions spilling over as she resonates with the singer's empowering anthems. Through the lyrics of "Since You've Been Gone" and "Stronger," she begins to embrace her newfound identity as a single mother, yet remains trapped in a fog of despair and self-doubt.

Feeling vulnerable and unsure, she immerses herself in her church commitments and her role as Relief Society president, trying to mask her trauma. However, as she seeks to fill the emotional void left by the divorce, she finds herself spiraling into reckless behavior—partaking in drinks and nightlife, seeking temporary escape from her pain.

During a night out with friends at a club, her decision to drive home while under the influence of alcohol leads to a sobering encounter with law enforcement. Pulled over for driving without headlights, she is taken aback to learn that, despite a BAC of 0.05, she faces DUI charges. This incident weighs heavily on her conscience, reinforcing her feelings of failure and shame, further complicating her tumultuous emotional landscape.

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Yearning for forgiveness and support, she turns to her bishop, who compassionately reassures her that one mistake does not define her worth. His guidance encourages her to move past her recent struggles, emphasizing that she is loved and supported by her faith community.

Despite these reassurances, the deep pain of her marriage's unraveling remains. In a conversation with her brother, she reveals the truth about Billy's departure, fighting against the expectations of church doctrine that dictate a woman's duty to uphold her marriage at all costs. While he suggests exploring reconciliation, she expresses her doubts about wanting to fix what seems irrevocably broken.

As Christmas approaches, she attempts to create joyful memories for her children, even traveling to visit her brother in Palo Alto. However, the holiday brings unexpected challenges, including illness in her daughters that leaves her physically and emotionally drained. Coping with feelings of inadequacy, she wrestles with the realization that her joyful childhood traditions cannot be replicated, forcing her to confront the stark reality that her future will be forever altered.

During a Relief Society meeting, struggling under the weight of her unresolved pain, she finally admits her fears about her marriage to her counselors. One counselor's candid reply—"Run. Run, and don't look back"—unexpectedly resonates, giving her a glimpse of hope and validation.

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For the first time, someone acknowledges her need for safety and self-preservation over adhering to conventional expectations of marital fidelity.

As she navigates her tumultuous journey, the protagonist realizes that while the path ahead is uncertain, there is potential for a brighter future, one where her happiness and well-being are in her own hands. Through the support of her unlikely allies and her emerging sense of self, she begins to envision a new chapter of her life that may lead to fulfillment, joy, and the strength to thrive as an individual.

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## Chapter 25 Summary: IN MY LIFE, I LOVE YOU MORE

In this emotionally charged narrative, the protagonist grapples with the complexities of her impending divorce from Billy while navigating the challenges of single motherhood and her deteriorating physical health. The story begins with the innocent observation of their daughter, Georgia, who, during a school art project involving family members represented by goldfish, inadvertently reveals her father's absence. This moment serves as a painful reminder of the family's fractured state and leads to revelations echoing throughout their community.

The protagonist experiences a growing sense of vulnerability as Georgia's candid statement becomes public knowledge, prompting concern from other parents, particularly Bonnie, who seeks clarity about the situation. Feeling overwhelmed, the protagonist retreats into herself, illustrating the emotional toll of the divorce—a stark contrast to the façade she maintains in social settings.

The narrative takes a poignant turn when the protagonist suffers a physical manifestation of her stress: Bell's palsy, a paralysis affecting one side of her face. This diagnosis marks a significant moment of introspection, as it forces her to confront her turmoil. The metaphor of being struck dumb, reminiscent of the biblical story of Korihor, signifies her struggle with expressing herself

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amidst the chaos of her life. The protagonist interprets her condition as a divine signal, a lesson in humility and self-reflection as she navigates the tension of her dissolving marriage and financial control exerted by Billy.

Amid this crisis, she begins to acknowledge the reality of her separation from Billy. Despite her initial disbelief that their marriage could end, she slowly comes to terms with the divorce process—characterizing it as neither overly contentious nor amicable, but inevitably a necessary step. Her journey illustrates a struggle to let go of a relationship that no longer serves her or her children, symbolized by the freezing grip of their shared past.

Through moments of despair, the protagonist recognizes the importance of moving forward for her daughters, Ashley, Georgia, and Annabelle. She resolves to redefine her identity and embrace independence, motivated by a fierce commitment to ensure a better future for her children. In doing so, she articulates a heartfelt promise to them: to survive and thrive despite the adversities they face.

Ultimately, this chapter encapsulates a profound evolution in the protagonist's life, transitioning from the paralysis of doubt and emotional turmoil to a renewed determination—an unwavering pledge to navigate the challenges of single motherhood while fostering resilience and hope in her family's future.

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# Chapter 26 Summary: ALL OF THESE LINES ACROSS MY FACE

### PART FIVE: BAD ASS

#### Chapter 26: All of These Lines Across My Face

After finalizing her divorce, the protagonist finds herself adrift in an ocean of despair, likening her emotional state to a vast, dark sea without direction or hope. The comfort she once found in anonymity and the solace of watching romantic tales has dissipated, leaving her feeling exposed and desperate for revival.

With her ex-husband Billy limiting her financial freedom, she has to improvise to maintain her appearance. Recognizing the value of her skills as a photographer, she devises a plan to barter her services for cosmetic treatments at local med spas. An unexpected encounter at church with a friend who points out her overdone Botox—nicknamed "spocking" due to her raised eyebrows—leads her to Visage MD, a med spa run by a well-meaning but frazzled doctor. In exchange for managing his social media, she secures free treatments, leveraging her marketing knowledge to revive his struggling practice.

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Her first event, an influencer soirée, showcases her ability to attract a glamorous crowd, impressing the doctor so much that he offers to sell her the business. Embracing her entrepreneurial instincts from her past endeavors, she decides to take the plunge, motivating her with nothing to lose as a single mom of three.

While adjusting to running a med spa, she feels overwhelming pressure and finds herself in over her head until a chance encounter brings her back together with Andrea Robinson—a former acquaintance who embodies the hardworking single mother archetype. After learning of their mutual struggles, they decide to team up, establishing a business that prioritizes customer empowerment and transparency in cosmetic procedures.

Together, they disrupt the med spa industry by introducing the "Mini Lip Plump," an innovative service offering affordability and accessibility, standing against the status quo set by large corporations. This approach exhibits their commitment to customer satisfaction and authentic service, creating an environment where clients feel in control of their beauty decisions.

As "Beauty Lab + Laser" arises from the ashes of a failed practice, their dedication leads to undeniable success. They advocate for their clients' desires, no matter how unconventional, breaking down barriers that often restrain female entrepreneurs in a male-dominated market.

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Alongside industry challenges, their alliance and newfound venture give them a sense of purpose, impacting the beauty landscape in Salt Lake City. As they gain momentum, the protagonist juggles her growing business with her enduring passion for photography, leading her to embark on boudoir sessions that empower women to embrace their sensuality.

One standout client, Whitney Rose, exemplifies confidence and allure during their shoot, fully embracing the freedom of self-expression. Their chemistry harkens back to classic cinematic moments, symbolizing a delightful meeting of creative minds where artistic boundaries are pushed.

In this chapter, the protagonist's journey showcases resilience, self-discovery, and the transformative power of collaboration as she navigates her life's new chapter, merging her past with her entrepreneurial ambitions and artistic pursuits. The narrative captures not only her personal evolution but also her commitment to empowering others along the way.

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## Chapter 27 Summary: ONLY GIRL (IN THE WORLD)

In this chapter, the main character reflects on her relationship with Lisa Barlow, a dynamic and confident personality known for her extravagant lifestyle and reality TV aspirations. Lisa's over-the-top nature makes her a fascinating figure; she embodies the "fake it till you make it" ethos, blurring the lines between reality and performance in her life. With impeccable fashion sense and a knack for name-dropping, she captivates attention wherever she goes. The narrator admires Lisa's confidence, though she also recognizes the facade behind it, relating to Lisa's tendency to create a performative reality for herself.

Amidst this backdrop, the narrator receives an unexpected text from Joey, a casting agent interested in her for Lisa's proposed reality show. Anticipating a brief conversation, she candidly discusses her life, including her background as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This involves detailing the church's beliefs and practices, such as the Law of Tithing and the Law of Chastity. The narrator shares her struggles with living authentically within two conflicting worlds: her faith and her burgeoning independence as she steps into a more vibrant social life, teasing the potential of a new, freer identity.

Throughout the casting process, she learns to navigate personal questions that challenge her upbringing and societal expectations. As these inquiries

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deepen, her anxiety about revealing her true self grows. The contrast between her public persona and inner conflict becomes palpable. She grapples with the fear that revealing her drinking habits or dating life could jeopardize her relationships with family, friends, and even her customers.

At this point, the narrator embarks on an exciting yet terrifying journey of self-discovery. She finds herself infused with a thrilling sense of self as she reveals anecdotes from her social life, pinning friends with quirky names that reflect their personalities. The focus on her flourishing Beauty Lab further extends her social reach, establishing her as part of a network of intriguing women in Utah.

The casting process quickly intensifies, illuminating her decisions about the women she wants to showcase. Here, the narrator introduces Whitney Rose, a bold personality with a rich backstory, describing her in vivid detail. Despite Whitney's potential, Lisa expresses concern about her fit for the show, highlighting the tensions and differing visions for the narrative being crafted.

As the narrator continues in the casting process, she meets new and increasingly difficult-to-impress contacts, including the formidable Mary M. Cosby. Mary's unique presence is both a source of intrigue and intimidation as the narrator navigates their relationship dynamics at a lavish dinner where Mary's demands leave an impression on those around her.

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Mary's unapologetic nature and unfiltered wisdom serve as an invigorating challenge for the narrator. The dinner offers a microcosm of the power dynamics at play within the group, showcasing Mary's larger-than-life persona alongside the competing desires of the narrator to connect authentically despite the pressures of television expectations.

Overall, the chapter encapsulates a gradual yet profound internal evolution as the narrator grapples with her identity in a rapidly changing social landscape. The prospect of reality television becomes both an opportunity for self-reinvention and a battleground for her underlying anxieties about acceptance and authenticity. The vibrant personalities surrounding her—Lisa, Whitney, and Mary—serve to amplify her journey toward understanding who she is, not just on screen, but in a broader societal context.

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## Chapter 28: A DIVA IS A FEMALE VERSION OF A HUSTLA

In the vibrant world of reality television, the need for a complete cast is crucial, and our story revolves around a group of strong women in Salt Lake City who are trying to build a cohesive family dynamic for their upcoming show, "Utah: Untitled." The opening scene sets the stage at a reality table, where the primary players are seated: Lisa Barlow and Meredith Marks lead like the doting parents, while I, the dutiful eldest daughter, navigate my insecurities about fitting into this ensemble. Among the eclectic mix, Mary M. Cosby demands respect for her space (and her purse), and Whitney Rose is labeled as the “little girl” of the group. The team is dynamic yet incomplete, and it's clear they need an electric personality to kick things up a notch.

Enter Jen Shah, regally adorned and bursting with charisma. A leader in her own right, she not only brings glamor but also a relatable messiness to the group dynamics. Her energy quickly fills the gaps, but there's a lingering concern about diversity in this predominantly white state, given its historical backdrop of Mormon culture. Despite recognizing the lack of representation in casting, I remember Jen's undeniable impact and pitch her as a pivotal character to our production team. Her swift agreement to join us triggers the creation of a sizzle reel, an initial showcase of what the series could become.

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Filming the sizzle reel unfolds like a mini-episode, complete with a full crew and elaborate scenes. Various locations serve as backdrops, including my workplace, Beauty Lab + Laser, where we film the ladies interacting with staff and undergoing signature procedures. A lavish dinner party hosted by Jen at a mountain mansion becomes a climactic scene filled with lively banter and forthright drama, encapsulated by Whitney's unforgettable retort to Jen when tensions flare. This moment solidifies her place in the cast, showcasing the mix of levity and conflict that defines the ensemble.

As filming progresses, I grapple with my own identity in the eyes of the producers. They invited me to wrap interviews in Burbank, signaling not just my inclusion, but a newfound validation of my entire life's journey—the divorces, the struggle, and my emerging sense of self beyond the confines of tradition and expectation. For years, I wore a mask of happiness while silently grappling with my brokenness. This endeavor, however, allows me to embrace my imperfections, and for the first time, the light of who I am shines brighter than my past.

Returning from Burbank, I confide in my bishop about my television plans, and he offers a wary, conservative viewpoint, urging caution but also acknowledging that it's my choice to make. In a moment of clarity, I realize I am no longer beholden to traditional expectations or the church's constraints; I can navigate my life authentically. The show eventually garners interest from several networks, and ultimately, Bravo picks it up, setting in motion a

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journey that would unfold in front of cameras and millions of viewers.

The narrative shifts gears as I join Jen Shah in New York City for a glamorous adventure, a stark contrast to my Salt Lake roots. Energized by the city's pulse, I revel in shopping for fall fashion despite the summer heat. Our evening transforms into a wild escapade filled with spontaneous decisions and luxury, culminating at a club where Jen's charm turns our group into VIPs almost effortlessly. Jen, acting as both friend and protective wingman, ensures I feel safe while threading the line of risk and excitement.

When I lock eyes with a tall, captivating stranger, Jen takes it upon herself to facilitate a connection, wielding her influence with a humorous blend of assertiveness. As the night unfolds, our decisions become indulgent—playing with boundaries while embracing spontaneity. Yet, with the dawning light comes a reflective moment for me; in the excitement, I confront my reality and the risks that come with living outside my structured past.

Ultimately, I leave the night behind, light-hearted and adventurous, embodying the spirit of Hot Girl Summer while also recognizing that it's okay to explore my identity on my own terms. The chapter closes on the brink of transformation—both within the television narrative and my personal journey—emphasizing that sometimes shedding the expectations of Eve allows us to discover our own parables of resilience and boldness in the

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face of life's complexities.

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## Chapter 29 Summary: STARTED FROM THE BOTTOM, NOW WE'RE HERE

About a month after our exhilarating experiences in New York City, in early October 2019, I received a thrilling call from our producer revealing the title of the new show: \*The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City\*. The official cast included Lisa Barlow, Mary M. Cosby, Heather Gay, Meredith Marks, and Jen Shah. The news filled me with excitement, as I had long been an avid fan of the \*Real Housewives\* franchise, following the dramatic lives of women across various cities—from the iconic antics of New York to the lively charm of Orange County. Now, I was about to step into this world as a cast member, prepared to reclaim my identity on my own terms.

The only requirement from Bravo was to be “real,” a word that carried significant weight for me. Completely unprepared, I welcomed the Bravo executives into my home for an intimate look at my life, while they assessed our suitability for the show. From interviewing my employees to checking my background and social media presence, they scrutinized every aspect. As someone accustomed to presenting curated versions of myself, the idea of such visibility was both thrilling and daunting.

Initially, Whitney Rose was not part of the cast, but during a pivotal dinner with the executives, her potential for inclusion was discussed. However, the execs indicated that she had been entirely edited out of the sizzle reel, a stark

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reminder of how easily they could shape the narrative. As filming loomed ahead, I faced the reality of being part of such a fickle world.

Meanwhile, my business partner Dre and I were experiencing success with Beauty Lab, our med-spa venture. We were invited to judge a business panel at Silicon Slopes Shark Tank, a significant recognition that marked the culmination of our hard work over the past three years. As we drove home, exhilarated by our achievements, everything changed in an instant.

I received a shocking text from Dre: “My brother is dead.” The words hit like a punch to the gut—Tim, Dre’s younger brother, had died by suicide at just thirty-seven years old. Tim was beloved, known for his kindness, musical talent, and adventurous spirit. His death left an immense void in the lives of all who knew him, and particularly in Dre’s life. He had been a dedicated supporter of Beauty Lab, always encouraging us and sharing in our successes.

In the wake of our grief, we founded the Don’t Leave Foundation in Tim’s honor. This organization provides free laser treatments for individuals with self-harm or addiction scars, aiming to support those struggling in our community where such issues are prevalent.

The day after Tim's passing, I filmed my first scene as a Real Housewife. Sitting in Whitney’s backyard, I felt a mix of emotions but resolved to

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embrace this opportunity authentically. I was done hiding; I wanted to use my platform to address real issues surrounding self-worth and belonging, especially for those who feel inadequate due to societal pressures. My experience with the housewives and the losses I had faced strengthened my commitment to speak out boldly for those who needed support.

Ultimately, stepping into this new chapter of my life, I recognized the responsibility that came with my voice—seeking to uplift others and advocate for those facing similar struggles. My journey was no longer just about fame; it was about making a real difference in the lives of others. With the opportunity to serve, I felt compelled to answer the call, committed to ensuring that everyone feels valued and loved, no matter their struggles.

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## Chapter 30 Summary: I THINK LIFE CHOSE ME AFTER ALL

In the chapters reflecting on her experience as a cast member of \*The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City\*, the author navigates the transformative and tumultuous journey of self-discovery amidst the chaos of reality television. She likens her new life to a blend of \*Survivor\* and \*Project Runway\*, where she must maintain her composure in glam as she faces the judgments and dynamics of her fellow cast members and an audience.

Raised in a strict Mormon culture, she grapples with her identity as a "Housewife" and the conflicting values instilled in her from an early age. The realization that a SWAT team could arrive unexpectedly, or watch her friend Whitney stir drama on camera, paints a vivid picture of the show's unpredictability. The first challenges arise with her struggles to reconcile her upbringing with her newfound desire for freedom, demonstrated poignantly when she observes her daughter, Annabelle. During a casual drop-off at her workplace, Annabelle's choice to remove her cross earrings speaks to the insular culture surrounding them—Mormons typically do not don crosses, signaling their distinct religious beliefs.

The author reflects on the duality of her life. Initially, being on the show felt exhilarating, as it allowed her to express herself and temporarily escape the constraints of her upbringing. Yet, as her newfound fame began to alienate

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her from friends and family, the pressure mounted. A pivotal moment occurs when she orders her first drink on camera, revealing her insecurities and unfamiliarity with the lifestyle she now inhabits. Her desires clash with her upbringing, leading her to question how to navigate these contrasting aspects of her life and the expectations of her community.

In a daring act of defiance, she attends social gatherings wearing clothing that strays from Mormon standards and even indulges in wine, illustrating a breaking away from deeply rooted cultural norms. While she feels liberated, the guilt of betraying her family's expectations looms large. This inner turmoil culminates in a heart-wrenching decision to reveal her desire to leave the Mormon Church to her daughters. She fears the repercussions of this choice: potential estrangement from family milestones and the discomfort it may bring. However, during this vulnerable moment, her daughters respond with love and support, reaffirming the strength of their bond.

Through her journey, she finds that the validation from fans and viewers empowers her to embrace her authentic self. The transformative impact of the show allows her to see her life from a new perspective, recognizing the complexities of motherhood, her career, and personal identity beyond the confines of her past. The realization dawns that while she may have lost parts of her former life, she has gained a richer sense of self and community.

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Ultimately, her life and values are more than just titles or roles; they encompass her relationships, business endeavors, and growth as a mother. By risking her ties to the church and traditional expectations, she embarks on a path of self-acceptance and celebrates her resilience. The author closes with a renewed sense of purpose, affirming that being a strong and unapologetic woman among her peers matters more than the labels that once defined her. This journey of self-discovery marks the beginning of her liberation, asserting that she is precisely where she needs to be—with the people who matter most.

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