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Joma West



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Face Summary

Unmasking Identity in the Digital Age

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About the book

In "Face" by Joma West, readers are drawn into an evocative exploration of identity, perception, and the complex interplay between our internal selves and how we are seen by the world. Through the poignant narrative of its protagonist, who grapples with the multifaceted nature of her own face—both as a mirror of her soul and a mask she wears to conform to societal expectations—West invites us to question the very essence of what defines us. As she navigates the labyrinth of relationships, self-discovery, and the relentless pursuit of authenticity, the novel challenges us to confront our own façades and the truths that lurk beneath. Dive into this captivating story that resonates on both personal and universal levels, prompting us to reflect on how we face ourselves and the world.

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About the author

Joma West is an emerging author known for her poignant storytelling and vivid character development, which resonate deeply with readers of contemporary fiction. With a background in psychology, West brings a unique perspective to her writing, exploring themes of identity, belonging, and the human experience. Her debut novel, "Face", showcases her ability to weave intricate narratives that challenge societal norms while highlighting the emotional complexities of her characters. West's work is characterized by its blend of realism and introspection, inviting readers to reflect on their own lives through the lens of her richly crafted stories.

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Chapter 1 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

The chapter introduces the character of Menial 63700578, who goes by the name Jake when not engaged in his work. Jake experiences intense, unexpressed feelings for Madeleine Burroughs, a woman whose scent and presence deeply affect him. His yearning for her is a mix of physical attraction and emotional longing, represented through vivid fantasies of intimacy—imagining the sensation of her skin against his, the warmth of a close embrace, and the intoxicating smell of her hair and skin.

Due to the societal restrictions on expressing personal desires, Jake has turned to a mysterious figure known as the confessor for guidance. The confessor serves as a digital or possibly human intermediary, allowing him to articulate feelings he struggles to understand. In their initial meetings, Jake expresses fear about the vulnerability of confessing his thoughts, worried they might not remain private. However, the confessor reassures him, emphasizing that there is no judgment and that the purpose of their conversations is to help him unburden himself.

During his confessions, Jake gradually reveals the nature of his feelings for Madeleine. He admits to experiencing intense attraction, leading to solitary moments where he engages in masturbation, a term he learns from the confessor. The confessor's supportive and patient demeanor encourages Jake to confront his emotions, but he remains hesitant to fully embrace



vulnerability.

As Jake continues to confess, he becomes increasingly curious about the confessor's perspective and whether they think of him when he shares his desires. The confessor maintains a focus on Jake's internal struggle, reminding him of the importance of fully articulating his feelings in order to achieve resolution and emotional relief.

The chapter concludes with Jake feeling a sense of satisfaction after each confession, despite the difficulty of confronting his truths. Those ten minutes of connection with the confessor provide him with a brief escape from the constraints of his reality, preparing him to return to his duties in Madeleine's pristine apartment, where he suppresses his desires to fulfill his role as a menial. This complex interplay highlights themes of longing, repression, and the search for connection within a controlled environment.

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Chapter 2 Summary: Tonia: Saving Face

In this complex narrative, we follow Tonia and Eduardo as they navigate the emotional and social intricacies of starting a family in a society where appearances and social status are paramount. They begin their journey by exploring the book "To Stud," highlighting the importance of meticulous choice when selecting a donor for their future child, signifying the societal norms surrounding parenthood in their world. Tonia reflects on her feelings of insecurity and doubts about their decision, complicating her ability to fully engage with the process.

As they prepare for a party hosted by their friend Madeleine, Tonia feels anxiety about their social standing and the expectations that come with parenthood. The event becomes a backdrop for their growing tensions, especially when a prominent figure like Dr. Wójcik—renowned for creating high-profile children—is brought into their lives unexpectedly. The revelations and the social games at play transform their initial excitement into a complicated blend of hope, jealousy, and insecurity.

At the party, Schuyler, another key character in their social circle, makes Tonia feel a mix of desire and anxiety through a seemingly innocuous physical connection, igniting inner turmoil about her relationship with Eduardo. Tonia grapples with her conflicting feelings, romantic longing, and communal pressures as Eduardo remains oblivious to the situation.



When they finally meet Dr. Wójcik in her office, the gravity of their decisions begins to crystallize. Tonia's discomfort escalates as discussions of aesthetic choices for their child intertwine with discussions of social perception, almost commodifying the process of parenthood itself. The dynamic between them grows more strained as they confront both their aspirations and fears about creating a life that reflects both their desires and society's expectations.

As they navigate the complex feelings surrounding their impending parenthood, Tonia's struggle for identity and connection reaches acute levels when the couple welcomes their baby daughter, Shea. Tonia observes Eduardo's newfound devotion to their daughter and feels a growing sense of alienation as he seems to embrace parenthood with ease while she remains unmoored. Her emotional outbursts and feelings of inadequacy culminate in tears, reflecting a profound disconnect in their previously passionate relationship.

The narrative concludes with a poignant portrayal of Tonia's emotional landscape, as she becomes increasingly aware of the tension between societal expectation and personal fulfillment. Eduardo's success in adapting to parenthood starkly contrasts her chaotic feelings, leaving their relationship strained and uncertain as they confront the realities of their new lives. Tonia's introspective journey serves as a commentary on the



complexities of love, identity, and societal pressure woven into the fabric of parenthood in this intricate world.

Key Aspects	Summary
Main Characters	Tonia and Eduardo
Theme	Emotional and social intricacies of starting a family in a society focused on appearances and social status.
Initial Exploration	They explore the book "To Stud" to choose a donor, reflecting societal norms about parenthood.
Tonia's Emotional State	Experiences insecurity and doubts about their choices, complicating her engagement in the process.
The Party	Tonia feels anxiety about their social standing and faces tensions as Dr. Wójcik, a significant figure, enters their lives.
Key Social Dynamics	Interactions with Schuyler create desire and anxiety for Tonia, leading to inner turmoil regarding Eduardo.
Meeting Dr. Wójcik	Discussions of their child's aesthetic choices highlight societal perceptions, feeling like commodification of parenthood.
Strained Relationship	Tonia feels alienated as Eduardo embraces fatherhood, while she struggles with feelings of inadequacy and loss of connection.
Birth of Shea	Tonia's emotional turmoil intensifies with the arrival of their daughter, creating further disconnect in her relationship with Eduardo.
Conclusion	Tonia grows aware of the conflict between societal expectations and personal fulfillment as her relationship with Eduardo becomes strained.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of self-acceptance in the face of societal expectations

Critical Interpretation: This chapter emphasizes the critical need to embrace who you are amidst external pressures and the constant pull of societal expectations. As you navigate your own life choices, remember that self-acceptance is not just a personal journey but a vital source of strength. When Tonia struggles with her sense of identity against the backdrop of societal norms, it reflects a universal struggle; you too might find that the key to overcoming insecurities lies in affirming your own worth beyond appearances and judgments. Embracing your true self can empower you to forge authentic connections and pursue your dreams, unburdened by the weight of others' expectations.



Chapter 3 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

In this chapter, Jake, a menial worker, finds himself captivated by Madeleine Burroughs, the daughter of his employer. As she immerses herself in the In—a virtual reality platform—Jake observes her with fascination, noticing her gentle demeanor and physical presence. Madeleine's engagement with the In includes joyful expressions, which enthrall Jake to the point of distraction from his duties.

When Schuyler Burroughs, Madeleine's brother, enters the room, Jake's reverie breaks, but he refrains from following her, sticking to his role as a menial. He observes the dining scene from a distance, studying Madeleine's every move as she eats, illustrating the disparity between their worlds. Jake experiences a mix of attraction and confusion regarding feelings of resentment towards Schuyler, hinting at complex emotions fueled by his desire for Madeleine's affection juxtaposed with his status as a menial.

Jake's inner turmoil amplifies when he confesses to his unseen confidant in the In, grappling with feelings of being "sick" or aberrant. He questions whether his desires are abnormal, reflecting a deep-seated insecurity about his worth and identity. The confessor reassures him, asserting that he is not a freak, creating a sense of trust. However, the limited interaction also highlights the isolation Jake feels as someone of lower status within a rigid societal hierarchy.



Their dialogue delves into the purpose of confession, framed by the modern setting where emotional disclosures have become commodified and virtualized. The confessor emphasizes the importance of unburdening oneself of secrets to facilitate personal growth. Yet, Jake remains frustrated by the lack of reciprocation, longing for a more personal connection with the confessor, who remains an obscure figure.

Through this exchange, the narrative underscores Jake's internal conflicts—his desire for connection, fear of exposure, and feelings of inadequacy juxtaposed with his fixation on Madeleine. As he reflects on his existence within the confines of his menial role, the chapter reveals layers of complexity in Jake's experiences, setting the stage for further exploration of class dynamics and personal relationships in this dystopian society.



Chapter 4: Vidya: Faceless

In the latest chapters, we continue to follow Vidya Wójcik, a gifted birthing doctor navigating a world intricately tied to aesthetics, social hierarchies, and the politics of reproduction. The story opens with Vidya receiving an unexpected invitation to a social gathering by Schuyler Burroughs and his partner, Madeleine, intended to introduce her to a prospective couple seeking to start a family. Despite her busy schedule and reservations, Vidya agrees, intrigued by the potential prospects.

Vidya's relationship with her biologically engineered family, particularly her mothers, Ida and Otilie Wójcik, is complex. They are both influential figures in the designer baby industry, known for their wealth and status. Though Vidya maintains a professional courtesy towards them, her visits reveal the artificiality of their relationship. Her mother's eccentricities and the garish decor of their home further emphasize the discomfort Vidya feels regarding her upbringing and their expectations.

At the party, Vidya encounters the couple, Tonia and Eduardo. They are strikingly beautiful, albeit somewhat mediocre in charm. Their aesthetic fails to captivate her, yet they demonstrate remarkable honesty during their interactions, which Vidya finds refreshing. Schuyler's persistent belief in their "potential" leaves Vidya skeptical but intrigued enough to consider them as clients.



Amidst the socializing, Vidya receives a cryptic message from Ducha Wanjiku, the woman she had decrypted from her private conversations with her mothers regarding a potential alliance. Ducha, it turns out, is involved in a family of menial farmers with an interest in manipulating the designer baby industry. Their meeting sparks an unconventional connection, where honesty becomes a central theme. Ducha challenges Vidya to consider the implications of their social roles and the inherently flawed nature of their system.

As the narrative unfolds, Vidya grapples with her motivations and the ethical dilemmas of their world—where menials, a lower caste of genetically engineered individuals, exist for the benefit of society's elite. Vidya's work necessitates navigating both personal ambitions and the expectations imposed by her creators and society. Her bond with Ducha unusually flourishes, unveiling a curiosity that sets them both on a precipice of change.

The chapters culminate in Vidya making a pivotal decision to partner with Ducha, signaling her potential complicity in Ducha's plans to unsettle the equilibrium of their hierarchical society. Comments made by others lead Vidya to reflect on the broader consequences of her choices. As she enters a new alliance, the pressure from both her professional obligations and her ethical considerations come to the fore.



The chapter wraps with Vidya's contemplative journey through self-discovery intertwined with her rising concerns about the societal structures they participate in. Her budding relationship with Ducha, mixed with her complex dynamics with her mothers and recent interactions with Schuyler and potential clients, all serve as a backdrop for possible rebellion against the designed roles they've been entrenched in since birth.

Through introspection and new relationships, Vidya stands on the threshold of personal transformation amidst the wider sociopolitical landscape, one characterized by deep-rooted hierarchies and the heavy burden of inherited legacies. The story thus delves into themes of identity, agency, and the delicate balance of power within an aesthetically driven society.

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Chapter 5 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

In this chapter, Jake, a menial working for the Burroughs family, observes as Madeleine meticulously organizes a party that balances elegance and casualness. Her efforts are reflective of her ambition and social awareness, as she is keen to curate a guest list that includes both prominent individuals and those she refers to as "second-rate" people. This highlights the social hierarchy that permeates their relationships—those at the "top" are revered, while others occupy a lower rung.

As the party begins, the arrival of Schuyler's friends, Tonia and Eduardo, signifies the entrance of the so-called "top-tier" guests. In an unexpected moment of connection, Tonia hands Jake her coat with a certain familiarity, momentarily equalizing their statuses. Jake's internal conflict becomes evident when Schuyler, exuding an air of superiority, demands drinks from him, emphasizing their respective positions within this social dynamic. Although Jake is technically only meant to attend the door, his desire to impress Madeleine compels him to fetch drinks for her, revealing his deeper feelings and loyalty toward her.

The atmosphere shifts as raised voices interrupt the usual calm of the Burroughs' household. A confrontation ensues between Madeleine and Schuyler, uncovering the tension that simmers beneath their polished exteriors. Madeleine's anger reveals her frustration with Schuyler's



condescending behavior, while Schuyler's disdainful attitude exposes his belief that Madeleine is degrading their social standing through her actions. The harsh exchange reveals a complex history between the two and offers a glimpse into their intertwined lives.

Jake is drawn to the intensity of their argument and ultimately chooses to observe rather than intervene. His moment of candidness with Naomi, a member of the household, signifies a commonality in understanding the complexities of their environment—the facade of refinement often masking deeper emotional strife. As Madeleine's composure begins to falter, Jake empathizes with her struggles, leading him to assert that she isn't an idiot, suggesting that his admiration for her is rooted in a recognition of her worth beyond Schuyler's harsh criticisms.

This chapter unravels layers of social dynamics, personal expectations, and the fragile nature of dignity amidst a backdrop of high society, providing a memorable insight into the characters' interactions and the fragility of their facades.



Chapter 6 Summary: Tam: Face

Summary of Chapters

Tam's Awakening

From a young age, Tam realized he was different. At six, his inquiries about his origins were met with condescension from his parents, Taolin and Tegan. They were fortunate winners of two lotteries, allowing them to afford a genetically engineered child from the Vanko baby shop, yet Tam felt out of place, aware that he was something exceptional—a "one in a million" child. Aspiring to rise above his circumstances, Tam delved into the In, a digital realm of information, and became fascinated with the wealthy and powerful. In this pursuit, he idolized Schuyler Burroughs, a symbol of the pinnacle he aspired to reach.

Tam, between the ages of eight and eleven, engaged in a vivid fantasy where Schuyler would find and mentor him, unaware of his background. Although Tam's features did not align with Schuyler's refined genetics, he believed that emulating Schuyler could help him ascend the social ladder. He honed his skills in social dynamics, learned to play mysterious, and cultivated a carefully curated image, becoming an enigmatic presence at his school.



The Burroughs' World

Schuyler Burroughs was charming and successful, with an equally graceful wife, Madeleine, and their two daughters, Naomi and Reyna. While Naomi was uninspiring in demeanor, Reyna captivated Tam with her beauty and complexity. Tam became almost obsessive in his desire to connect with her, realizing that a relationship with Reyna could solidify his ascent.

Tam's interest in Reyna led him to investigate her friends and alliances, particularly focusing on Genevieve, an equally striking figure by Reyna's side. Genevieve appeared to be the perfect partner for Reyna, but Tam believed that gaining Reyna's attention would also help him claim a spot in Schuyler's orbit.

To achieve this goal, Tam befriended Howard Møller, a mediocre tier who inadvertently opened doors to events frequented by the Burroughs family. He engineered a plan to make his presence known at Jessop's party, where he hoped to interact with Reyna. Despite an awkward first encounter, their meeting sparked a connection that Tam was determined to exploit for his benefit.

A Digital Game

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Realizing the importance of digital presence, Tam meticulously planned and staged several social media interactions with Reyna. As they built a public image as a couple, Tam expertly navigated the world of online personas, crafting a narrative that captured the public's interest. However, Tam began to notice a significant change in Reyna; she was withdrawing, seeming frustrated and disengaged.

During a meetup at a club, Tam grew weary of Reyna's disinterest and began contemplating their future together. His fears were confirmed when he learned about Reyna's decision to stop attending school, a choice he found perplexing within their ambitious branding efforts.

Tam met with Genevieve, seeking her insights on Reyna. She revealed that Reyna was struggling under the pressures of their coupling and lacked the resolve to maintain her public persona. With Genevieve's perspective at hand, Tam decided the relationship was no longer beneficial—Reyna was more of a liability than an asset.

Confrontation and Realization

After one last attempt to connect with Reyna, they met in her home where



she seemed emotionally vacant. Schuyler, witnessing the stark reality of his family, appeared diminished compared to Tam’s expectations. Tam felt both angered and disappointed, realizing that the glamorous image he had longed for was nothing more than a façade.

In the end, Tam resolved to continue his journey toward greatness, acknowledging the lesson learned from the Burroughses’ decline. Unlike them, he planned to play the social game astutely, aiming for his own personal evolution while distancing himself from the burdens of a partnership that held him back. Through self-reinvention and calculated moves, Tam committed to rising above the shadows of his past and amassing the power and fulfillment he so desperately sought.

Section	Summary
Tam's Awakening	Tam realizes he is different from others, feeling out of place as a genetically engineered child. He idolizes Schuyler Burroughs, aspiring to achieve greatness and works on his social skills to fit into a more prestigious circle.
The Burroughs' World	Tam becomes obsessed with Reyna, Schuyler's daughter, believing a relationship with her could elevate his status. He befriends Howard Møller to gain access to the Burroughs' social events and creates opportunities to connect with Reyna.
A Digital Game	Tam and Reyna start crafting a public image as a couple on social media. However, as Reyna withdraws, Tam grows concerned over her emotional state and ultimately concludes that she is a liability to his ambitions.
Confrontation and	After meeting Reyna, Tam feels disappointed in the Burroughs family and their facade. He resolves to pursue his goals independently,

Section	Summary
Realization	learning from their decline and focusing on his personal development.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace Self-Reinvention

Critical Interpretation: As you navigate through life, remember that it's never too late to reshape your identity and pursue your aspirations. Just like Tam, who realized that the glamorous world he once idolized was a mere illusion, you can gain clarity from your experiences and choices. Embrace the power of self-reinvention and strategize your personal evolution. Recognize when certain relationships or environments may be holding you back, and have the courage to move forward. By focusing on what truly fuels your ambition and happiness, you too can carve out a path that leads to your own version of greatness, free from the burdens of false expectations.

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Chapter 7 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

In this chapter, we delve into Jake's struggle for connection and his desire to communicate outside the confines of his lowly status as a menial. He expresses a deep need to speak to a woman he often thinks about, which symbolizes his longing for authentic human interaction in a world that suppresses such desires. The confessor he speaks with is more than a mere machine; the conversation reveals emotional undertones and an unexpected level of human-like concern, hinting at the societal divide between menials and the upper tiers.

Jake's frustration mounts as he tries to clarify that he does not merely want therapy or an abstract conversation; he yearns for a face-to-face interaction with the woman he idolizes. This impulse is met with trepidation from the confessor, who reminds Jake that menials are not free to pursue their wants without consequence, reflecting the oppressive nature of their society. The confessor's apprehension about Jake's intentions suggests an underlying fear of rebellion against strict societal norms.

As this dialogue evolves, Jake hints at something darker, contemplating the possibility of taking drastic measures if circumstances demand it. He grapples internally with feelings of hopelessness, emphasizing the sense of isolation common among menials, who live in a world that disregards their mental well-being.



Simultaneously, we see an exchange between Jake and Schuyler, a member of a higher class, exploring the complexities of emotional expression and social dynamics. Schuyler challenges the normative idea that menials lack ambition, asserting that everyone, regardless of class, has an innate desire to improve their situation—a radical notion given the hierarchical society they inhabit.

Schuyler's curiosity about Jake serves to unveil the shared humanity between classes, and his interest in Jake's internal world serves to further complicate their dynamic. This creates a tension as Jake confronts the stinging reality of his position while also being drawn to the warmth of Schuyler's presence, which stands in stark contrast to the coldness of his own life.

Ultimately, the chapter highlights themes of desire, societal constraints, and the struggle for self-identity while inviting readers to question the boundaries set by class systems. As Jake maintains his composure in the face of Schuyler's scrutiny, the reader is left pondering the implications of freedom in expression and the intrinsic yearning for connection that defines the human experience.



Chapter 8: Naomi: Menial 63700578

In this series of chapters, Naomi struggles with her identity and the stifling expectations of her affluent family in a society where menials—essentially engineered servants—play a subservient role. As she prepares a dull project for Morton's psychology class on Individual Differences, she subverts expectations by deciding to study menials, seeing them as a more intriguing subject than her peers' commonplace choices.

During a family dinner, the dynamics between her, her father Schuyler, her mother Madeleine, and her sister Reyna highlight the superficiality of their interactions, deeply rooted in maintaining social cachet. Their exchanges reveal Naomi's disdain for their these social games, particularly as they discuss the decision of another couple choosing to have a child, which Naomi critiques as a risky move that could jeopardize their status.

Shifting her focus to menials, Naomi learns they are raised without the ability to exercise autonomous thought and are conditioned to be submissive. It's a disturbing realization, and this drives her to create a confession booth, a digital space allowing people, including menials, to take refuge in expressing their thoughts or secrets anonymously. Meeting with her teacher Morton, she discovers menials have been known to confess feelings of embarrassment or guilt regarding their desires, including physical self-gratification, which is forbidden for them.



As Naomi runs this booth, she interacts with various confesseees, noting the psychological depth expressed in their confessions. When a menial named Jake enters her booth seeking connection and expressing a desire to break free from the confines of his role, Naomi realizes the urgency and complexity of his emotions. Their exchange raises critical questions about autonomy, identity, and what it means to be human.

The deeper she delves into the psychology of menials, the more she contemplates societal structures that deem them less than human—especially juxtaposed against her privileges as part of the elite. Her conversations with Morton, and later Vidya, reveal the complexities of these societal constructs. Vidya comments on the instinctive need for control within social hierarchies, suggesting menials are lesser because society has designed them to be so, yet Naomi insists on their humanity.

As the chapters unfold, the intense personal journey for Naomi is underscored by familial tensions escalating between Schuyler and Madeleine, hinting at the fragility of their facade of perfection. A climactic argument between her parents marks a significant turn, leaving Naomi shaken and prompting reflections on her own existential dilemmas.

At the end of it all, Naomi's growing empathy toward menials like Jake leads her to question everything she thinks she knows about humanity,



privilege, and identity, marking a departure from her previously held beliefs as she wrestles with the implications of her insights. Her poignant internal conflict sets the stage for a broader commentary on societal norms and personal morals.

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I've learned. Highly recommend!

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Chapter 9 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

In this chapter, we delve into Jake's internal struggle and complex feelings regarding his role as a menial and his relationship with Madeleine Burroughs. As a menial, Jake is keenly aware of his societal position, acutely fearful of the consequences of any actions that might jeopardize his job or his connection with Madeleine, a woman who occupies his thoughts more than he cares to admit. This tension manifests in his desire to communicate with her; however, the weight of his emotions leaves him speechless and paralyzed with longing. For an entire month, Jake retreats into silence, reflecting on his situation without sharing his feelings with anyone, not even his confessor—a mentor figure who provides guidance and support within the menial structure.

Unexpectedly, Jake receives a call from his confessor, a rare occurrence given that it is typically the menials who initiate contact. The confessor's voice carries an undertone of relief, but Jake finds himself grappling with confusion and fear, questioning his own mental stability. He struggles with the implications of being a “beaker baby,” a term implying a flawed existence due to his origins, highlighting the societal stigma that menials face. His fear of unraveling—of losing control—intensifies as their conversation unfolds.

When prompted by the confessor to confess any recent impulses, Jake feels



cornered. He grapples with the idea of admitting his feelings for Madeleine, which he has kept secret, and is initially baffled by the call itself, fearing he might be losing grip on reality. The exchange culminates in a moment of introspection where he contemplates his desires but ultimately opts to remain silent, rejecting the opportunity to share his inner turmoil. The chapter captures Jake's isolation and longing, painting a vivid picture of a man caught between desire and duty, longing and repression. The call ends, leaving him to question the reality of the encounter, deepening his sense of uncertainty and confinement in his role as a menial.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Reyna: Better In Than Out

Summary of "Better In Than Out"

In the chapter titled "Better In Than Out," we are introduced to Reyna, a character adept at navigating the complex social landscape of her world, where one's identity is shaped by a series of curated "faces." These identities are crucial for maintaining status both in the high-stakes realm of the "In" (virtual interactions) and the "Out" (real-life connections). Reyna's ability to craft faces is a skill instilled in her by her parents, who meticulously designed her to enhance their own social standing. She is acutely aware of the necessity of projecting the right face at the right time, especially in a society where one's appearance and demeanor can directly affect social currency.

As Reyna prepares for dinner and interacts with her family—her aloof mother, Madeleine; her father, Schuyler; and her younger sister, Naomi—tensions rise. Schuyler expresses a desire to connect with Reyna, which leads to a profound conversation about identity, parenting, and the implications of choosing one's child in a world obsessed with social mobility. This conversation reveals Schuyler's past decisions regarding Reyna and Naomi, implying he manipulated their identities before they were even born. This revelation unsettles Reyna, as she grapples with the weight



of her father's expectations and the façade that has been constructed around her.

Following this intimate dinner, Reyna retreats to her familiar digital world, where she feels safest and most in control. She engages with her various social media accounts to distract herself from the unsettling truths that have surfaced and to maintain her façade of perfection. The digital landscape serves as a refuge where she can switch between her multiple identities without the immediate pressures of real-life interactions.

The narrative further explores Reyna's social life, particularly her reluctance to engage in romantic relationships. When she is finally confronted by her peers regarding the prospect of "coupling," she dismisses the idea as unnecessary. Yet she finds herself unexpectedly drawn into a relationship with a boy named Tam, who reminds her of Schuyler. The coupling stirs mixed feelings, exposing her vulnerabilities and challenging her carefully crafted identities.

As Reyna and Tam's relationship develops, she begins to experience a decline in her social status. Despite the façade of success, her various faces reveal cracks, showcasing her internal struggles. The chapter reflects on Reyna's fear of being seen as vulnerable and her growing anxiety about maintaining her social standing. Her reliance on the virtual world further isolates her, causing a disconnect between her real self and the personas she



creates online.

Eventually, the pressures of her environment culminate in a crisis. Reyna suffers from the realization that her relationship with Tam may not be as advantageous as she initially thought. His frustration with her stagnation in their social dynamics leads them to a breakup, underscoring Reyna's fear of losing her grip on control.

Reyna retreats back into the "In," reaffirming her belief that it is better to remain within the curated safety of her virtual identities than to confront the reality of relationships and the complexities of real-life connections.

This chapter ultimately navigates themes of social identity, familial expectations, the evolution of relationships, and the contrast between virtual and real-life interactions in a world that vastly values presentation over factual existence.

Key Element	Description
Character	Reyna, skilled in navigating social identities (faces) influenced by her parents.
Main Conflict	Reyna's struggle with her identity shaped by parental expectations and societal pressures.
Family Dynamics	Tension arises during a family dinner with her aloof mother, engaged father, and younger sister.



Key Element	Description
Father's Influence	Schuyler's manipulation of Reyna and Naomi's identities pre-birth leads to deep emotional conflict.
Digital Escape	Reyna finds solace in her online presence, where she can control her various identities.
Romantic Relationship	Reyna resists coupling but becomes involved with Tam, resembling her father, which complicates her identity.
Social Status	Her relationship with Tam causes her to feel vulnerable and leads to a decline in her social standing.
Climax	The relationship ends, highlighting Reyna's fears and her struggle to control her identity.
Themes	Exploration of social identity, familial expectations, relationships, and the contrast of virtual vs. real interactions.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of authentic identity over curated personas

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing at the crossroads of your own identity, faced with the constant pressure to project a version of yourself that aligns with societal expectations. The key point from Reyna's journey in 'Better In Than Out' encourages you to embrace authenticity—the freedom that comes from shedding the weight of curated faces. This chapter serves as a powerful reminder that while the digital landscape can provide comfort, true connection, and fulfillment arise when you dare to reveal your genuine self, vulnerabilities and all. Breaking free from the confines of socially constructed identities not only enriches your relationships but also fosters a deeper understanding of who you truly are. In a world that often prioritizes image over substance, choosing to be real is an act of bravery that can reshape your life and the lives of those around you.



Chapter 11 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

In this chapter, we are introduced to Jake, a menial worker, and his infatuation with Madeleine Burroughs, who occupies a prominent social position. Set in a futuristic society where social status is critically defined and maintained, the narrative takes place at the dining room table, a space that allows Jake to observe Madeleine as she connects to the digital network known as the In. It's a realm that enables users to communicate instantly, amplifying Madeleine's natural charm and accent, which captivates Jake.

Madeleine, ever the socialite, is organizing a party and discusses plans with her sister, Naomi. This interaction reveals the complex dynamics of their relationship, with Madeleine embodying warmth and generosity, while Naomi presents a more jaded and cynical perspective. Their contrasting personalities emphasize Madeleine's unique qualities and highlight the societal pressure they both navigate. While Jake is enchanted by Madeleine's character and spirit, he feels a sense of discomfort around Naomi, whom he perceives as abrasive and unlikable.

As Madeleine sends for water, Jake promptly prepares a tray filled with her favorite drinks, showcasing his role as both a caretaker and admirer. When he delivers the drinks, he observes a moment of tension between the sisters as they exchange sharp remarks cloaked in sibling rivalry. The subtext hints at deeper familial issues and the burdens of their social status. Despite the



strain in their relationship, it's clear Madeleine adheres to the notion that their collective image matters, pushing Naomi to participate in social events to enhance their family reputation.

The scene unfolds with a party, where various social elites mingle, and amidst the festivities, Jake struggles with his desire to be close to Madeleine and his position as a menial. The arrival of Schuyler and Eduardo, both of whom share a laugh with Madeleine, emphasizes her role as the life of the party—the person everyone gravitates toward. Jake's internal conflict is palpable as he contemplates joining the celebration, driven by the hope of ensuring Madeleine is well-cared for.

When Jake finally approaches Madeleine at the center of the party, presenting her with a tray of drinks, a brief moment sparks between them. The vulnerability beneath Jake's composed demeanor highlights the emotional depth of their connection. He's acutely aware of the social chasm between them and can't shake the feeling of being an outsider, yet he is resolute in his admiration for Madeleine, whom he regards as the queen of the party.

Thus, the chapter intricately weaves Jake's yearning for connection with broader themes of social hierarchy and personal identity, setting the stage for the intricate dynamics of status and desire to unfold as the story progresses.



Chapter 12: Morton: Better Out Than In

In the chapter "Better Out Than In," we are introduced to Morton, a disillusioned teacher who feels trapped in a repetitive and unfulfilling life. He wakes up early, scrolls through his modest social media profile filled with vitriolic comments about students, and spends his days laboring through classes, imparting knowledge to apathetic students while grappling with his own lack of passion. Morton has evolved into a confessor, finding a piqued interest in the secrets of others, particularly the “menials” — subservient beings who yearn for physical connection and grapple with their budding sexuality.

His journey into understanding them begins with a notable encounter with a menial known by its numerical designation. When this menial confides its moments of awakening and confusion regarding masturbation — something it knows it shouldn't do — Morton guides it gently, establishing a bond of trust and naivety. This pivotal moment transforms his booth from a passing distraction into a critical element of his existence, as he becomes deeply intrigued by the menials and their struggles.

At school, Morton encounters various students, but is particularly irritated by Pixie Ximenez, a flamboyant student who revels in drawing attention to himself. During a class discussion, a student named Naomi proposes a project centered on menials, sparking Morton's interest in their psychology.



He suggests she utilize his confession booth to conduct her research, despite the apprehension that accompanies handing over something he cherishes.

After grappling with the ramifications of this decision, Morton is anxious at work, realizing he feels a void without the confessions that shaped his existence. When Naomi arrives to finalize the arrangement for the booth exchange, Morton guides her through the process, linking them in an unprecedented way. As their lives intersect further, Morton begins to reevaluate his understanding of menials and their place in society.

Morton finds himself at odds with his own feelings of isolation and longing for connection. While he navigates the world outside, he wrestles with a growing desire to seek out outliers — those who reject the digital world for a more tactile existence. As he ventures into an “antique library,” he encounters a deeper, thought-provoking discourse on human connection and tech's grip on society.

Through dialogic exchanges with Naomi, Morton reflects on societal norms about menials and the often invisible yet robust bias entrenched in their existence. She openly inquires about their contradictions and asserts that their supposed limitations might reveal a shared humanity. This ignites deeper introspection in Morton, forcing him to confront his own suppressed thoughts and memories tied to menials.



As Morton deconstructs these conflicts, he feels compelled to explore the emotional terrain that once motivated his academic pursuits, including a forgotten visit to a menial training facility. Naomi's unassuming curiosity ushers in a sense of nostalgia and challenge, leading Morton toward a more enlightened stance about himself and the beings surrounding him. The chapter concludes with Morton feeling a blend of emptiness yet groundedness, seeking solace in the realization that emotions, even painful ones, signify his humanity.

Overall, the narrative intricately weaves Morton's internal struggles with external societal dynamics as it dives into the complex tapestry of existence, identity, and connection in a world overshadowed by technology.

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Chapter 13 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

In this chapter, we delve into Jake's tumultuous psychological state.

Struggling with overwhelming feelings of desire and confusion, he grapples with his identity as "Menial 63700578," a designation that ties him to a world of servitude and emotional detachment. His disorientation is compounded by physical sensations and thoughts that distract him. Jake hears the confessor's voice in his wrist implant, a tool designed to monitor and regulate his feelings, yet he feels trapped by its prompts, especially when he's asked about his confusion.

Amid his internal chaos, Jake observes his interactions with Schuyler, a figure who embodies both tension and authority. Schuyler's lack of recognition for Jake's humanity aggravates Jake's sense of not being seen or understood. This is evident during a conversation where Schuyler questions Jake about children, dismissing Jake's potential to express deeper thoughts or desires. Jake longs for substantive acknowledgment from Schuyler, but instead, he feels invisible.

The narrative shifts as Jake watches Madeleine, a strikingly beautiful woman, prepare to visit friends and their newborn. Her presence captivates him and complements the tensions he feels towards her. Schuyler's disdain for her initial choice of dress leads to an awkward but intimate moment where Jake assists her with a zipper. This scene is laden with sexual tension;



Jake feels torn between attraction and his conditioned role as a menial servant. The physical closeness heightens his arousal, leading to his conflicted feelings of attraction and guilt.

As Madeleine changes outfits, Jake's internal struggle becomes palpable. He relinquishes control to his desires, sneaking away to relieve himself while contemplating his unfulfilled longing for connection and meaning. The chapter concludes with Jake feeling hollow after the act of release, reinforcing his sense of isolation as he meticulously cleans the house afterward, a reflection of his menial identity and the void he experiences in his relationships with those around him.

Overall, the chapter deftly illustrates Jake's inner turmoil as he navigates desire, identity, and the constraints imposed upon him by society and his own self-image.



Chapter 14 Summary: Schuyler: Losing Face

In the latest chapters, the narrative explores the complex dynamics between Schuyler Burroughs, his family, and his social circle. Schuyler receives a video call from his friend Eduardo, who excitedly shares the news that he and Tonia are deciding to have a baby, signifying a significant step in their lives. Schuyler's response is warm and supportive, masking his underlying feelings of disconnection from the concept of family given his own tumultuous relationship with parenthood and social expectations.

Schuyler reminisces about how he met Eduardo and Tonia two years ago at a party—their innocence and ambition drew him in. He reflects on his own daughters, Reyna and Naomi, engaging in a dinner conversation filled with sarcasm and family banter that reveals the shifting perceptions concerning children and status within their society. Reyna, often cynical, challenges Schuyler, highlighting the superficial nature of their societal structures.

In a moment of vulnerability, Schuyler shares with Reyna how he originally chose her and Naomi, hoping for a true connection. Through his narrative, he conveys his longing for authenticity and real connection, a stark contrast to the facade everyone puts on to maintain their status in a social hierarchy.

As the celebrations continue, Schuyler finds himself increasingly frustrated with Madeleine, his partner, who embodies the competitive and superficial



values of their world. He feels suffocated by her presence and, over time, grows resentful of her shallow demeanor, dismissing her dominion over social status as tiresome.

Eventually, Schuyler confronts his tumultuous feelings towards his relationship with Madeleine and examines the ramifications of their union. He struggles with guilt and acceptance of his failures as a partner. In a moment of reckoning, he ultimately states his intention to leave her, bravely admitting that he seeks "skinship," or a deeper physical connection with someone else—specifically, Eduardo. His admission shocks Madeleine to the core, igniting a passionate outburst, yet Schuyler remains steadfast in his decision, feeling liberated.

As the chapter closes, Schuyler steps out of his house, symbolizing not just a physical departure but also his desire to break free from the superficial bonds that have constrained him, allowing room for deeper, more genuine connections in his life. The narrative weaves themes of familial love, societal expectations, and the quest for true self-identity in a world that often prioritizes appearances over authenticity.

Key Elements	Summary
Character Dynamics	Explores the relationships between Schuyler Burroughs, his family, and friends, particularly focusing on his interactions with Eduardo and Madeleine.

Key Elements	Summary
Friendship Announcement	Eduardo announces to Schuyler via video call that he and Tonia are having a baby, prompting mixed emotions in Schuyler.
Reflection on Relationship	Schuyler reflects on his past with Eduardo and Tonia, contrasting their optimism with his strained view on family and personal connections.
Family Dinner	During dinner with his daughters, Reyna and Naomi, sarcastic discussions reveal societal norms and Schuyler's struggles with family expectations.
Desire for Authenticity	Schuyler expresses his longing for genuine connection, contrasting it with the superficiality he perceives in his environment.
Frustration with Partner	As celebrations progress, Schuyler grows frustrated with Madeleine, who embodies the competitive nature of their society.
Confrontation and Decision	Schuyler confronts his feelings about Madeleine and decides to leave her in pursuit of deeper connections, admitting his affection for Eduardo.
Symbolic Departure	The chapter ends with Schuyler stepping out of his house, representing his desire to break free from superficiality and seek genuine relationships.
Themes	Familial love, societal expectations, self-identity, and the contrast between authenticity and appearances.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The Pursuit of Genuine Connections

Critical Interpretation: Embrace the journey toward authentic relationships, as depicted in Schuyler's struggle to break free from societal expectations and superficial connections. When you prioritize genuine bonds over status and appearances, you pave the way for deeper fulfillment in your life. Learning from Schuyler's decision to prioritize 'skinship' over hollow affections, you too can empower yourself to seek meaningful interactions, fostering a life rich in authenticity, love, and true belonging.

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Chapter 15 Summary: (Menial 63700578—Jake)

In the chapter, Jake wakes to the sound of voices raised in conflict, stirring him from a deep sleep. He steps out of his room to find Reyna and Naomi on the landing. Their reactions are synchronized; without a word, they retreat into their separate spaces, reflecting a tense atmosphere. The source of the confrontation is revealed when Jake hears Madeleine's anguished screams aimed at Schuyler. A shard of glass crashes, illustrating the volatility of emotions present. As he approaches, Jake finds Madeleine on the floor, her posture conveying vulnerability—her knees pulled tightly to her chest, embodying both distress and defeat. Schuyler looms over her, leaving Jake unable to discern his expression, which adds to the oppressive nature of the moment.

Just then, Madeleine's cries transform into a mixture of rage and heartbreak as she delivers a bitter farewell to Schuyler, her voice devoid of its usual strength—signifying a profound emotional fracture not only in their relationship but within Madeleine herself. This moment marks a poignant shift, illustrating the theme of brokenness that permeates this chapter.

Motivated by instinct rather than thought, Jake descends the stairs to Madeleine. He remembers a lesson about the essence of being a menial—serving and supporting one's family intuitively without them realizing their needs. He kneels in front of her, acting on his long-held desire



to offer comfort. As he wraps his arms around her in a protective embrace, Madeleine's reaction is visceral; she screams, the sound a raw outlet of her agony. This moment encapsulates the emotional turmoil surrounding them, creating an intense sense of connection between Jake and Madeleine amid the chaos and heartbreak.

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