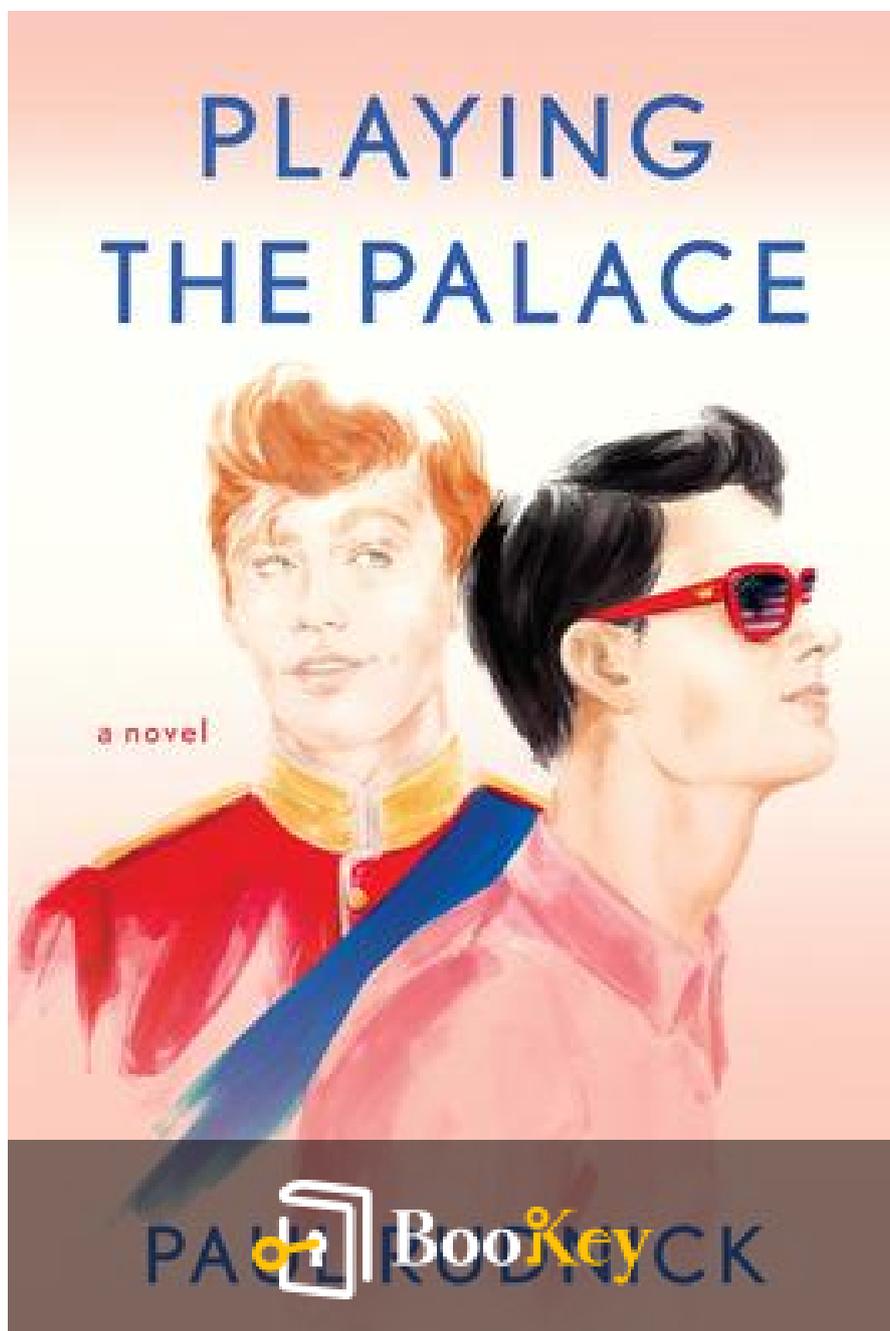


Playing The Palace PDF (Limited Copy)

Paul Rudnick



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Playing The Palace Summary

A Royal Affair Meets Unexpected Romance.

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About the book

In "Playing the Palace," Paul Rudnick artfully blends romance, comedy, and social commentary in a delightful tale that centers around the charming yet improbable love story of a young man who unexpectedly finds himself entangled in the world of British royalty. When he captures the attention of an openly gay prince, the pair must navigate the glamour, scrutiny, and expectations of their contrasting lives, all while exploring themes of identity, acceptance, and the power of love to defy convention. With witty dialogue, sharp observations, and an ensemble of endearing characters, Rudnick invites readers to laugh, reflect, and root for a love story that transcends barriers, proving that even the most fantastical of romances can be grounded in the realities of the human experience. This playful yet poignant narrative will keep you turning the pages, eager to discover how love can flourish in even the most unexpected places.

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About the author

Paul Rudnick is a celebrated American playwright, screenwriter, and novelist known for his sharp wit and keen observations of contemporary society. Born in 1957, he gained prominence with works such as "I Hate Hamlet" and "Jeffrey," which explore themes of identity, sexuality, and humor with a satirical edge. Rudnick's distinctive voice and ability to blend comedic narratives with poignant social commentary have earned him a devoted following and numerous accolades in the realms of theater and literature. In addition to his stage works, he has penned screenplays for both film and television, showcasing a versatility that reflects his deep understanding of the complexities of human relationships, which is vibrantly echoed in his novel "Playing The Palace," a humorous and heartwarming tale that combines love, royalty, and self-discovery.

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Summary Content List

Chapter 1: 1

Chapter 2: 2

Chapter 3: 3

Chapter 4: 4

Chapter 5: 5

Chapter 6: 6

Chapter 7: 7

Chapter 8: 8

Chapter 9: 9

Chapter 10: 10

Chapter 11: 11

Chapter 12: 12

Chapter 13: 13

Chapter 14: 14

Chapter 15: 15

Chapter 16: 16

More Free Book



Scan to Download

Chapter 17: 17

Chapter 18: 18

Chapter 19: 19

Chapter 20: 20

Chapter 21: 21

Chapter 22: 22

Chapter 23: 23

Chapter 24: 24

Chapter 25: 25

Chapter 26: 26

Chapter 27: 27

Chapter 28: 28

Chapter 29: 29

Chapter 30: 30

Chapter 31: 31

Chapter 32: 32

Chapter 33: 33

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Carter Ogden is adjusting to life after his three-year relationship with Callum, who moved out six months ago. Although it's a new reality, Carter still finds moments of hope, momentarily wishing Callum was just away on a job. Feeling lost, he talks to a framed photo of Ruth Bader Ginsburg hanging in his small bedroom, who serves as a moral compass and a source of tough love, urging him to snap out of his self-pity and face the day.

As part of his self-care routine, Carter goes through an elaborate grooming process with a variety of products, but despite his efforts, he feels far from healed or radiant, noticing his hair is a mess. He heads to the kitchen of their shared Hell's Kitchen apartment, where he is met by his upbeat Broadway dancer roommate, Adam, and the more cynical Louise, who is working on her novel while contributing to a feminist website. Their contrasting personalities create a lively dynamic in the apartment.

Adam, with his cheerful outlook, suggests that Carter should find someone even more attractive than Callum and create a playful, mock seductive video to send to him. Louise, on the other hand, encourages Carter to be thankful that he is rid of Callum, whom she regards negatively. In a moment of dark

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humor, they joke about the types of cereals personifying various heartbreaks and erasing memories.

Though visibly struggling with the remnants of his breakup, Carter asserts that he is ready to embrace a new chapter in life, even going so far as to declare that "love doesn't exist"—a statement met with a mix of support and concern from his roommates. Adam, determined to uplift him, sends Carter the musical score of “Pippin,” showcasing their close friendship and his commitment to cheering Carter up in tough times.

The chapter establishes Carter’s emotional state, his friendships, and the comedic yet poignant reality of healing after heartbreak, setting the stage for his journey of self-discovery and potential new love amid humorous antics and supportive banter.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embracing Friendship as a Source of Healing

Critical Interpretation: In the midst of heartbreak, you may feel isolated and lost, just as Carter does. However, this chapter illustrates the transformative power of friendship to uplift and inspire you during tough times. Surround yourself with those who support and challenge you, like Carter's optimistic roommate Adam and his insightful friend Louise. They remind you that laughter and camaraderie can be potent antidotes to despair. By allowing yourself to lean on your friends, engage in playful banter, and share humorous moments, you can begin to rebuild your confidence and outlook on love. Embrace these connections, and they will guide you toward new beginnings and brighter days.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2

Chapter 2 Summary

As Carter navigates the bustling streets of Midtown Manhattan on Valentine's Day, he reflects on his past relationships, particularly with Callum. Once a day filled with love notes and festive surprises shared between them, it's now a painful reminder of heartbreak. The festive atmosphere of couples exchanging gifts and affectionate gestures only amplifies Carter's feelings of loneliness and inadequacy. Approaching thirty, he grapples with his career as an event architect—an occupation he finds both enjoyable and superficial. He organizes extravagant events, but in doing so, he feels underqualified and aimless, torn between his aspirations for a more meaningful life and the reality of his current existence.

In the midst of the Valentine's Day chaos, Carter's thoughts drift towards an unfulfilled desire that he's never fully voiced to anyone. He wishes for purpose, fulfillment, and love—qualities that seem elusive in his life. This longing drives him to St. Patrick's Cathedral, a place he cherishes despite his Jewish background and the church's complicated history with the LGBTQ community. For Carter, the cathedral symbolizes a theatrical and whimsical escape, a sanctuary where he can candidly express his hopes and dreams.

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Inside, with the quiet bustle of visitors around him, he engages in a heartfelt conversation with God. He yearns not only for a fulfilling career but to experience profound love that transcends his past ups and downs. Inspired by his idol, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, he seeks both a passion for justice and a sense of self-confidence, envisioning a life where he can contribute positively to the world. This desire for connection extends beyond romantic love; he dreams of making a difference, sharing joy, and creating beauty in others' lives.

Despite feeling overwhelmed by self-doubt and societal expectations, Carter boldly shares his heartfelt ambitions with God. He asks for guidance and the courage to pursue a life filled with purpose, creativity, and genuine human connection. His prayer is a blend of vulnerability and hope; he understands the risks of disappointment but believes that the absence of ambition is the true source of sorrow. With a mix of trepidation and excitement, he ultimately leaves the cathedral with renewed determination to chase after the dreams he's set before himself, fully aware that he's late for work but ready to embrace the challenges of life ahead.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, we follow Bailey, an event planner for Eventfully Yours, a company known for crafting imaginative and extravagant events within the tristate area. Today, Bailey finds herself preparing for a press conference at the United Nations for the Royal Clean Water Initiative, which aims to provide clean drinking water to over a third of the global population. Bailey reminisces about her diverse experiences in event planning—from extravagant wedding anniversaries to quirky promotional stunts—while also reflecting on her journey that led her here.

Bailey's boss, Cassandra Crastick, known for her dramatic personality and narcissistic tendencies, is running the show with the same urgency she applies to her chaotic personal life. Despite her high-maintenance demeanor, Bailey feels a sense of loyalty toward Cassandra, having trained under her for three years. Today, Cassandra is preoccupied with her personal woes—she laments her doorman lover, Dwayne, being on vacation and compellingly insists that Bailey oversee the final touches for the event.

As the team executes various tasks—like adjusting decorations and organizing the seating layout—Bailey finds moments of joy in the work.

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Reminiscing about her college days studying musical theater, she realizes that her career in event planning has become a form of theater in itself, allowing her to harness her creativity and bring joy even in solemn settings.

Amidst her positive energy, Bailey grapples with her feelings of inadequacy when it comes to the event's guest of honor—Prince Edgar, an almost flawless public figure dedicated to humanitarian efforts. Her resentment towards him stems from an intense comparison, fueled by memories of her childhood, where she was constantly measured against his perfection. As she adjusts the banners and prepares the venue, she decides to give her team a well-deserved longer lunch break while she discreetly completes Cassandra's "Gratitude Prayer," a peculiar ritual that involves expressing appreciation for the event's success and aesthetics.

In this moment of quiet reflection, she suddenly hears a voice with a distinctly English accent asking if she is all right, marking an intriguing shift in her otherwise bustling day. The chapter showcases Bailey's dedication to her job, the eccentricities of her boss, and her internal struggles with self-worth and comparisons, all set against the backdrop of a high-profile event.

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Chapter 4: 4

In Chapter 4, we are introduced to Carter Ogden, who has a chance encounter with Prince Edgar, the Prince of Wales. Carter finds himself utterly flustered and starstruck by Edgar's striking blue eyes and handsome appearance, having previously admired the prince's photographs online, including fabricated shirtless images. Despite his excitement, Carter is disheveled after a day of work and grapples with feelings of inadequacy in front of the royal figure.

The prince, surprisingly down-to-earth, asks for Carter's assistance with his speech, prompting a comical yet tender exchange between the two. As Edgar practices, he admits his self-consciousness about public perception, humorously referring to himself with nicknames like "Prince Plywood." Carter's theatrical expertise kicks in, and he offers suggestions to help Edgar appear more relatable by using relaxation techniques and encouraging him to embody a more approachable demeanor during his speech.

Their playful interaction escalates as Carter uses inventive methods to lighten the mood, resulting in the two engaging in a ridiculous, flailing dance. This moment helps to break the ice and reveals a more personable side of Edgar, who begins to smile more genuinely—something Carter finds utterly captivating. The chemistry between them intensifies as they share charming banter about their families, leading Edgar to protest about his



smile, which Carter insists is his secret weapon.

As Carter demonstrates his own smile to inspire Edgar, the atmosphere becomes charged with an undeniable connection. Just as they seem poised for a romantic moment—a kiss—their interaction is abruptly interrupted by James Claverack, Edgar's chief of staff, who arrives to pull Edgar away, reminding him of his responsibilities.

In the confusion of being swept back into the crowd, Carter reflects on his newfound feelings for Edgar, beginning to see the prince as more than just royalty but as a person with whom he shares a real connection. This chapter encapsulates the beginning of a charming, complicated relationship blossoming amidst the pressures of royal duty.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5

In Chapter 5, the protagonist reflects on a whimsical night filled with banter and playful teasing among friends, Adam and Louise, after an encounter with Prince Edgar, a member of the British royalty. Adam is enchanted with the idea of a love story blossoming between the protagonist and Edgar, while Louise vehemently criticizes the concept of royalty, viewing them as outdated and irrelevant figures existing solely for tourism and media portrayals.

Despite Louise's reservations, the protagonist can't shake off the strong attraction felt towards Edgar, evidenced by a vivid physical interaction that left a lasting impression. She dismisses any thoughts of love as absurd, but as the evening unfolds, she explores various imaginings about a life with Edgar—a mix of whimsical daydreams and ultimatums from her inner voice, which personifies the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as pragmatic yet humorous in her counsel about relationships.

Facing the relentless echo of thoughts about Edgar the next morning, the protagonist decides to focus on dating again and updates her profiles on dating apps after a painful breakup with her ex, Callum. The flurry of awkward dates follows, but none escape her mind's constant comparison to Edgar, illustrating her emotional turmoil and the unattainable romantic ideal she experiences with him.



Caught between her past with Callum, a charming yet uncommitted actor, and her seemingly impossible fantasy of Prince Edgar, the protagonist grapples with feelings of confusion and longing. As she reconnects with Callum, who tries to rekindle their relationship with sweet talk and charm, she notices his casual flirtation with another waiter, highlighting her insecurities about their past. Just as tensions rise, a message flashes on her phone, revealing it to be a photo from Prince Edgar, further complicating her emotional landscape and setting the stage for future entanglements between her dream and reality.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6

Chapter 6 Summary

In this chapter, we dive into the experience of Carter, who has been invited to dinner by Prince Edgar, facilitated by Edgar's aide, James. It's a mix of excitement and anxiety for Carter, whose friends Louise and Adam help prepare him for the extravagant evening ahead. Louise expresses skepticism about going out with a royal, suggesting it reflects outdated imperialist notions, while Adam excitedly pipes in with the dramatic potential of a prince falling in love with him, reminiscent of classic romantic films.

As Carter makes his way to the high-end Tribeca restaurant, he struggles with self-doubt and fears of inadequacy, exacerbated by the knowledge of Edgar's royal status. He grapples with imaginary scenarios, including canceling the date altogether due to a sudden flu-like illness, but ultimately steels himself with the encouragement of his friends.

Upon arriving at the restaurant, Carter is greeted curtly by James, who emphasizes the expected decorum in dealing with royalty—how to address Edgar, when to speak, and the importance of remaining modest. Though intimidated by James's stern demeanor, he senses a touch of humor under his clinical exterior when James informs him he is "doomed," suggesting a more

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relaxed atmosphere than his earlier instructions implied.

Entering the private dining room, Carter confronts Prince Edgar, who effortlessly projects charm and grace. After a stiff but warm greeting, Edgar expresses regret over the delay in reaching out due to his humanitarian engagements. This moment of connection briefly eases Carter's panic, although he struggles to break the ice in conversation.

Their interaction quickly becomes awkward when Carter unwisely mentions Edgar's tragic past involving the death of his parents in a plane crash. Edgar's demeanor shifts as he coldly deflects Carter's attempt at empathy, revealing how sensitive and guarded he is in social scenarios. Realizing his blunder, Carter attempts to leave but Edgar stops him, admitting the loneliness that comes with his public persona and relating it to the challenges of being a star like Beyoncé—a comparison that lightens the mood.

The chapter culminates as they begin to reconnect, seated together again as a formally dressed waiter arrives with the menu. With Carter feeling the weight of the upscale dining experience, he realizes he needs to find a way to express his apprehensions while engaging in this rare opportunity. The scene merges humor and tension, hinting at the complexities of their budding relationship against the backdrop of royal expectations.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace Vulnerability

Critical Interpretation: In this chapter, Carter's struggle with self-doubt and anxiety in the presence of royalty mirrors our own challenges when faced with intimidating situations. Just like Carter, we often feel the weight of our insecurities, but this story inspires us to embrace our vulnerability. When Carter finds the courage to express his fears and connect with Edgar, it reminds us that opening up can lead to unexpected connections and understanding, making it essential for building relationships in our own lives.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7

In Chapter 7, the protagonist takes a risk by inviting Prince Edgar to the International House of Pancakes (IHOP), a restaurant that holds nostalgic significance for her since childhood. As they settle into a booth, Edgar, trying to maintain a low profile under a baseball cap and surrounded by his security team, expresses surprise that IHOP is a uniquely American institution that doesn't exist in England. The protagonist fondly recounts memories of special family outings to IHOP highlighting quirky menu items, juxtaposing the restaurant's charm with the sometimes absurdity of American food culture.

Their dinner unfolds pleasantly, filled with genuine conversation as Edgar asks her questions about her life. Despite his royal upbringing, which typically shields him from ordinary experiences, Edgar displays an innocent curiosity about everyday matters, reminiscent of children who are homeschooled and miss out on typical social interactions. She shares personal anecdotes, explaining her family dynamics and even experiences of minor bike accidents. As they dine, she realizes that while she's dominated the conversation, Edgar has patiently listened and engaged.

However, when Edgar suggests they engage in an exercise of trust by allowing her to ask him anything, the atmosphere shifts. The protagonist hesitates, feeling the weight of querying a prince. She chooses to ask him

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how he copes with the public pressure of being royalty, prompting Edgar to reveal a poignant memory about a secluded nursery in the palace. In this room, filled with memories of his parents, he finds solace away from his responsibilities. His vulnerability exposes a man deeply affected by his childhood loss, navigating a world that often requires a mask of composure.

Just as intimacy builds between them, the moment is interrupted by a swarm of fans, including teenage girls excitedly recognizing Edgar. The scene escalates into chaos as the crowd clamors for selfies, contrasting sharply with the genuine connection they had just begun to establish. Edgar's security swiftly escorts him away, leaving the protagonist feeling stranded and powerless as she bids him a hasty goodbye, wishing for a chance to reconnect. In the midst of the frenzy, she reflects on how surreal it is that someone of Edgar's stature would choose to share pancakes with her, oblivious to the commotion that has overshadowed their evening. The chapter concludes with a mix of admiration for Edgar and disappointment over the abrupt end to their conversation, leaving the potential for future encounters tantalizing yet uncertain.

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Chapter 8: 8

Chapter 8 Summary

About two weeks after a seemingly magical date with Prince Edgar, Carter, the protagonist, finds himself in a state of uncertainty. He attends Adam's *NSYNC jukebox musical and chats with friends about the silence that followed Edgar's enchanting night, humorously speculating on the reasons for his absence. Carter's friends Louise and DuShawn, the latter being Adam's optimistic boyfriend, offer both sympathy and sarcasm as they dissect the reasons behind Edgar's ghosting. Louise's blunt remarks on Edgar's privilege and potential romantic escapades drive home the point that Carter's hopes might be misplaced.

As Carter struggles with his unrequited feelings, he channels his heartbreak into intense workouts, trying to take control of his life amidst the emotional turmoil. While working with Cassandra, his demanding boss, on a product launch for a trendy Texas homewares brand, Carter's distraction becomes apparent when Cassandra chastises him for not meeting standards. She doubts the legitimacy of Carter's relationship with Edgar, especially because their date occurred at an ordinary diner, expressing concern that Carter is losing touch with reality.

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Suddenly, the atmosphere shifts when Edgar makes a dramatic entrance in the ballroom, interrupting the product launch preparations. He seeks to invite Carter to lunch privately, catching both Carter and Cassandra off guard. As they retreat to a stairwell for privacy, Edgar admits he has avoided contacting Carter since their date due to familial obligations, including a

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Chapter 9 Summary: 9

Chapter 9 Summary

As Edgar and I arrived at a secluded clearing in Central Park, the scene was set for a delightful picnic expertly arranged by James. The royal tartan blanket was adorned with fine china, champagne, delicately trimmed sandwiches, and an assortment of my favorite snacks, from Hostess Yodels to M&M's. This thoughtful gesture began to mend my feelings towards Edgar, revealing a side of him that cared deeply for me.

While enjoying our meal, I probed into Edgar's dynamic with his grandmother, who had played a pivotal role in his upbringing after their parents' passing. He explained how her overprotectiveness stemmed from a place of love and responsibility for maintaining their family's unity in the public eye—a price of their royal status. This led to a playful back-and-forth filled with jokes about royal culture, American stereotypes, and Edgar's experiences with his security detail. Though Edgar's observations were steeped in humor, they highlighted the contrasts between our lives—his royal obligations versus my casual, often irreverent perspective.

The humor took a turn as I noticed Edgar's growing discomfort with the perpetual surveillance surrounding him. Despite the laughter, we both

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acknowledged the strain of living under constant scrutiny. Edgar expressed gratitude for the security team, emphasizing that their role was not merely about him but the symbolism he represented. However, as we strolled through the park, I could sense the tension within him; was he nothing more than a delicate artifact being shielded from the world?

The mood shifted when I suggested we break free from the confines of royal expectations and hop on Citi Bikes for a bit of spontaneous adventure. Edgar hesitated but ultimately succumbed to my influence, spurred on by cheeky banter. As we pedaled alongside the Hudson River, the joyful thrill of riding transformed Edgar. He shed some of his stress, revealing a more genuine self as we raced against bike messengers.

Reaching lower Manhattan, we found ourselves at the Statue of Liberty. As Edgar admired her figure, he connected the statue's regal yet whimsical nature to the complexities of his own identity. The moment was electric, charged with unspoken feelings. Yet, as he leaned in closer, the reality of his royal status seemed to loom larger, leading him to pull back and express concerns about being seen with me—a commoner in the eyes of the world.

This emotional tug-of-war culminated in a shocking kiss that caught us both off guard. For a brief instant, we transcended the barriers of our different worlds. But the moment ended just as quickly as it began, punctuated by the sudden presence of James and the security team, who were quick to

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intervene, revealing the ever-watchful eyes of Edgar's royal life.

In the aftermath of our impromptu rendezvous, Edgar asked if I would accompany him to an embassy reception that evening. However, I had plans for my sister's wedding rehearsal dinner, which complicated our budding connection. Time was slipping away as I faced the reality that Edgar would be leaving for the States soon. In a bold move, he asked to join me at the wedding as my date, hinting that perhaps this was the beginning of something unexpected between us, despite the complicated web of royal duties and social expectations.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The chapter opens with an unexpected twist: the crown prince of England, Edgar, has expressed a desire to accompany the narrator, Carter, to his sister Abby's wedding at Temple Beth Israel in Piscataway, New Jersey. Carter feels a mix of excitement and nerves, humorously warning Edgar about the potential chaotic reaction from Abby, who has a palpable obsession with celebrities and royalty. Carter describes his sister as an explosive personality—one that commands attention akin to natural disasters.

On the journey to Piscataway, Carter and Edgar travel in a sleek SUV, accompanied by James, a bodyguard. As they pass through New Jersey, Carter gives Edgar a taste of local history—mentioning Secaucus' past as the "Pig Capital" to illustrate its transformation over the years. Carter feels a growing sense of dread as they approach the familiar territory of family, fearing the embarrassment that often accompanies family gatherings.

Arriving at the temple, Carter recounts his brief history with the place, referring to his failed attempt at Hebrew school. As they enter the packed room, the vibrant mix of wedding attire elicits nostalgic memories for Carter of family events dominated by style scrutiny and fashion mishaps.



Observing the congregation, Carter braces himself for the attention that Edgar, as a royal, will attract. As anticipated, whispers and gasps ripple through the attendees, exacerbating Carter's anxiety.

The comedic tone turns joyous when the ceremony begins. Abby makes a dazzling entrance accompanied by her father, exuding the fulfillment and happiness she has sought throughout her life. Her elaborate gown reflects her long-standing passion for fashion and weddings, which Carter has cherished alongside her since childhood. Together, they've cultivated an understanding of wedding aesthetics, and Abby's big day represents a moment of triumph for her.

As Carter reflects on Abby's happiness, he nearly drowns in emotion, wishing to shield Edgar from the excesses of the occasion. Secretly, Carter had hoped that Edgar's royal presence would serve as a delightful surprise for Abby. When she finally spots Edgar, her response is pure joy, shattering Carter's nerves. Her exuberance at meeting the prince propels her to greet them both with energetic affection, demonstrating her genuine excitement and love for their shared moment.

Edgar's humble demeanor in the face of Abby's starstruck enthusiasm reveals his charming character, ensuring he smoothly integrates into her world. As the ceremony progresses with Abby beaming toward her awaiting fiancé, Dane, the rabbi humorously clarifies Edgar's identity, asserting both

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his royal status and his sexuality to ease Dane's bewilderment.

Ultimately, this chapter encapsulates the joyful chaos of family events, while highlighting the bonds of love and friendship amid unexpected circumstances. In a blend of humor and heartwarming moments, Carter realizes the importance of love—both familial and romantic—celebrating Abby's wedding as a milestone not just in her life but in his as well.

Key Element	Summary
Opening Twist	The crown prince Edgar wishes to attend Carter's sister Abby's wedding in Piscataway, NJ.
Carter's Feelings	Carter feels both excitement and nerves about Edgar's presence, anticipating Abby's chaotic reaction.
Journey to the Wedding	Carter, Edgar, and bodyguard James travel in an SUV, with Carter sharing local history to ease the tension.
Arrival	At the temple, Carter recalls his failed Hebrew school attempt and the family's style scrutiny traditions.
Abby's Entrance	Abby makes a breathtaking entrance in an elaborate gown, showcasing her love for fashion and weddings.
Carter's Emotions	Carter wishes to protect Edgar from the excesses of the wedding while hoping Abby will be pleasantly surprised.
Abby's Reaction	Upon seeing Edgar, Abby's joy is overwhelming, and she greets them with affection.
Edgar's Character	Edgar remains humble and charming, blending well into Abby's world amidst her starstruck excitement.

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Key Element	Summary
Humorous Clarification	The rabbi humorously clarifies Edgar's royal status and sexuality during the ceremony.
Conclusion	The chapter celebrates family bonds and love, marking Abby's wedding as a significant milestone for both Abby and Carter.

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Chapter 11 Summary: 11

Chapter 11 Summary

The chapter opens with Edgar and the narrator, Carter, seated at the bridesmaids' table during Abby's wedding reception held at the Grande Park Chateau, a lavish venue filled with quirky decor. They are surrounded by a lively group of Abby's friends, who immediately take a shine to Edgar, showering him with questions, compliments, and playful taunts. Kaitlynn, a marketing analyst, boldly asks Edgar if he is gay, which he confirms, leading to a flurry of excitement from the group. This dynamic reveals Edgar's charm and the bridesmaids' close-knit bond with Abby, each of them successful in their own right.

As the conversation shifts to the seriousness of Carter and Edgar's relationship, Edgar's casual yet affectionate acknowledgment of their connection makes Carter's heart race. Memories of Carter's past relationship with Callum haunt him, filling him with uncertainty about love and commitment. Despite the warmth of the moment, he fears repeating past mistakes, leading to a lingering sense of inadequacy.

Carter's mother, Sarah, soon intervenes, humorously chastising him for neglecting to introduce her to Edgar. Their interaction showcases the playful

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rapport they share, with Sarah's vibrant personality amplifying the wedding's festive atmosphere. Edgar's charm continues to impress as he converses effortlessly with Carter's family, showing kindness and a genuine interest in them, despite his royal status.

Then, Abby storms over, mockingly furious with Carter for bringing Edgar without a heads-up. She expresses her approval of Edgar and takes him aside to ensure he knows how protective she is of her brother. Abby's fierce loyalty emphasizes her deep love for Carter, revealing her desire for him to be treated well in light of his past heartbreak. Edgar reassures her of his intentions, and Abby's fierce demeanor lightens as she accepts him into their family circle.

The festivities continue with dancing and toasts that celebrate the couple's union. Edgar surprises everyone with his dancing abilities and willingness to sample all sorts of food laid out at the reception. Carter's anxiety flits back, however, as he grapples with the disparity between his reserved nature and Edgar's charisma.

As the chapter progresses, the focus shifts to Carter's great-aunt Miriam, who cornered Edgar in a comical interrogation about his future intentions with Carter. Miriam, an eccentric character with a strong personality, adds humor and tension, as she presses Edgar for answers that would reveal the depth of his commitment. Carter intervenes to save Edgar from under



Miriam's scrutiny, showcasing his own protective instincts.

In the end, Edgar remains charming and undeterred by the family dynamics, solidifying his place not just as Carter's date, but potentially as someone who could be an integral part of his life. As they leave the wedding with a floral centerpiece, Carter's conflicted feelings about their relationship surface, prompting Edgar to ask what's truly bothering him, suggesting that their journey together may still hold many complexities ahead.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace vulnerability to build meaningful connections

Critical Interpretation: In the midst of celebration and familial energy, you may be inspired to embrace vulnerability in your own relationships, just as Carter grapples with his fears surrounding love. Recognizing that authentic connections often require stepping outside your comfort zone, you can find strength in sharing your true self with others. This chapter highlights that despite past heartbreaks, opening up to someone special—like Carter does with Edgar—can lead you to deeper, more fulfilling relationships, encouraging you to take the leap of faith necessary for love to flourish.

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Chapter 12: 12

In Chapter 12, the protagonist grapples with deep-seated insecurities stemming from family dynamics and personal expectations. Edgar, a charming yet complex figure, highlights these insecurities during a conversation in an SUV with James and their driver. The narrator reveals that despite the overwhelming love from his family—especially his sister Miriam and parents—he often feels embarrassed and anxious about their perceptions, particularly regarding his romantic life as a gay man.

He describes how his sister has played matchmaker with various doctors but ultimately seems to be disrespecting his autonomy, while his parents, though supportive, contribute to his feelings of anxiety about disappointing them. This family scrutiny creates a sense of pressure, leading him to fear that he might not live up to their hopes or, worse, that he will infringe on their expectations.

As the narrative unfolds, the vehicle arrives at the protagonist's apartment, where Edgar surprises him by asking to come upstairs. The protagonist's friends—Louise, Adam, and DuShawn—greet Edgar with humorous gifts that play into royal themes, illustrating their excitement about Edgar's presence. The banter reveals the supportive, yet chaotic, nature of the protagonist's life shared with his quirky friends.



Once alone, the protagonist and Edgar experience a poignant moment of mutual vulnerability. Edgar shares the burdens of his royal upbringing, expressing feelings of inadequacy regarding romance and intimacy. He explains his past relationships—each marred by societal expectations and personal fears, which have left him feeling like a "prisoner" of his noble

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Chapter 13 Summary: 13

In Chapter 13, the narrator reflects on a profound and transformative sexual experience with Edgar, the charming crown prince. Initially fraught with tension as they both strive to impress, their coupling soon shifts from an awkward performance to a genuine exploration of intimacy. The laughter between them dissolves the weight of expectation, allowing them to abandon their self-imposed roles as if judged by an invisible panel.

Edgar's enthusiasm and assertiveness during their encounter reveal his determination to connect with the narrator on a deeper level, challenging the preconceived notions associated with his royal status. The narrator is surprised by the surprising allure of Edgar's English way of expressing desire, which brings a playful, romantic twist to their situation—imagine a character from a Jane Austen novel breaking free from the confines of propriety.

As their bodies interact, the narrator experiences moments of disassociation, where thoughts of societal labels fade away, replaced by the visceral reality of the connection they share. There's a delightful realization that both partners are stepping out of their expected identities: the narrator revels in her unlikelihood of being with a prince, while Edgar seems to embrace the thrill of crossing class boundaries.

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The chapter culminates in an intense moment of vulnerability when they lock eyes and recognize the deepening emotional connection, both exhilarating and frightening. Their first night together concludes with an embrace that feels both natural and extraordinary, encapsulating an intimate bond that suggests they are meant to be together, despite the discomfort of their intertwined bodies. This lays the groundwork for a complex relationship that intertwines romance with the challenges of class and identity.

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Chapter 14 Summary: 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The next morning, Edgar receives a frantic call during breakfast at IHOP, leading to a sudden visit to the British Consulate. His demeanor shifts from relaxed to serious, indicating the gravity of the situation. Upon arriving at the consulate, they meet several important figures, including Marc Bracegirdle, Edgar's grandmother's equerry, and Alison Talbot, the Palace media liaison. Tension fills the room as they reveal the cause of concern: a compromising photo of Edgar and Carter has gone viral, causing a scandal that has reached sensational levels.

The photograph in question depicts Edgar and Carter in a compromising yet innocent moment, wearing Burger King crowns and sharing a joyful kiss. Alison expresses outrage at the photo's intimate nature, contrasting it with previous less scandalous images of the couple. Marc emphasizes the potential damage it could cause to the royal family's reputation, especially to Edgar's grandmother, the Queen. Gerald, Edgar's younger brother, enters with an air of impeccable grooming and authority, chastising Edgar for his lack of discretion amidst prior controversies.

As the media storm intensifies—with the photo appearing on prominent

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news sites and generating millions of views—Gerald rebukes Edgar for exposing the royal family to public ridicule. In the midst of this, a series of other personal photos begin to circulate as well, showcasing a more playful side of Carter, further scandalizing the situation.

Carter, overwhelmed by the sudden scrutiny his life has faced, recognizes the vast disparity between his civilian existence and Edgar's royal lifestyle, where every action is under relentless public scrutiny. Acknowledging his role in complicating Edgar's life, Carter offers to step back from the relationship to mitigate the fallout. He feels crushed by guilt, believing his mistake has cost them both dearly.

As he departs from the consulate, a wave of despair engulfs him. He struggles with feelings of worthlessness and isolation, lamenting the end of what had been a beautiful connection with Edgar. Wrestling with regret and self-criticism, he locks eyes with a passing child, feeling as if his heartbreak is visible to the world. In that moment, he resolves to learn from his mistakes, grappling with the painful understanding that love and happiness seem to elude him once again.

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Chapter 15 Summary: 15

Chapter 15 Summary

As the chapter opens, Carter returns to the apartment where his friends, Adam and Louise, are eagerly questioning his encounter with Edgar, a charming royal figure. Adam whimsically posits that Edgar should have chased after Carter to declare his love, but Louise counters that such a romantic gesture wouldn't be practical, likening Edgar's potential laziness to an acquaintance named Callum. Overwhelmed by media attention and internal conflict about his decision to distance himself from Edgar, Carter finds solace in food, trying to drown his feelings in snacks.

Carter grapples with the reality of Edgar's life as a public figure, where every emotion is subject to scrutiny, and privacy is a luxury. His mother calls, expressing concern after seeing a photo of Carter with Edgar and noting that Edgar is an upgrade from Callum, whom she never trusted.

A knock at the door reveals Edgar, who, while donning his public persona, has an important proposal. He apologizes for the chaos surrounding their earlier interaction, which left Carter unprepared for the royal spotlight. Edgar shares his vulnerability, admitting he often retreats under pressure, locking away his emotions. He invites Carter to London for a week to meet



his family, including the Queen, hoping to forge a deeper connection away from media scrutiny.

Carter's friends listen intently, and his mother's voice carries weight in the decision-making process. While Edgar's invitation leans towards sincere intimacy, Louise remains skeptical about Edgar's place within a society that she believes perpetuates inequality. Adam, however, is eager to support the idea, pushing for a "yes" vote.

Carter feels the pressure of conflicting opinions but realizes the depth of his feelings for Edgar. He contemplates the implications of accepting the invitation, prompted by his friends' encouragement and a FaceTime call from his sister, Abby. She enthusiastically supports the idea and draws attention to the positive aspects of Edgar and Carter's relationship.

Ultimately, swayed by the collective support of his friends and family, Carter asks Edgar when they should leave for London, marking a pivotal moment in their relationship. With a blend of humor and heart, the chapter captures Carter's inner turmoil and the transitional journey toward embracing love amidst the chaos of royal expectations.

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Chapter 16: 16

Chapter 16 Summary

In this chapter, the protagonist faces resistance from Cassandra, who is concerned about workloads, including an upcoming product launch and a themed brunch. However, with a little help from Edgar, the protagonist secures a week off. The narrative shifts to a more luxurious setting as they travel to a private airport rather than a public terminal. This transition highlights the stark contrast between typical travel frustrations and the ease of private air travel, emphasizing the privilege that comes with Edgar's royal status.

Once aboard a lavish jet, the protagonist is struck by the opulence of the cabin, complete with honey-colored seating, and a private stateroom. While acknowledging the excess associated with rich lifestyles, the protagonist humorously notes that such luxuries also promote seclusion away from the public eye. Edgar reflects on the moral implications of private jets, advocating for their reallocation towards humanitarian efforts. Yet, they both give in to the indulgence of their opulent surroundings.

After a playful exchange about their activities, the scene shifts to a more intimate atmosphere as they retreat to the stateroom. Here, their prior public

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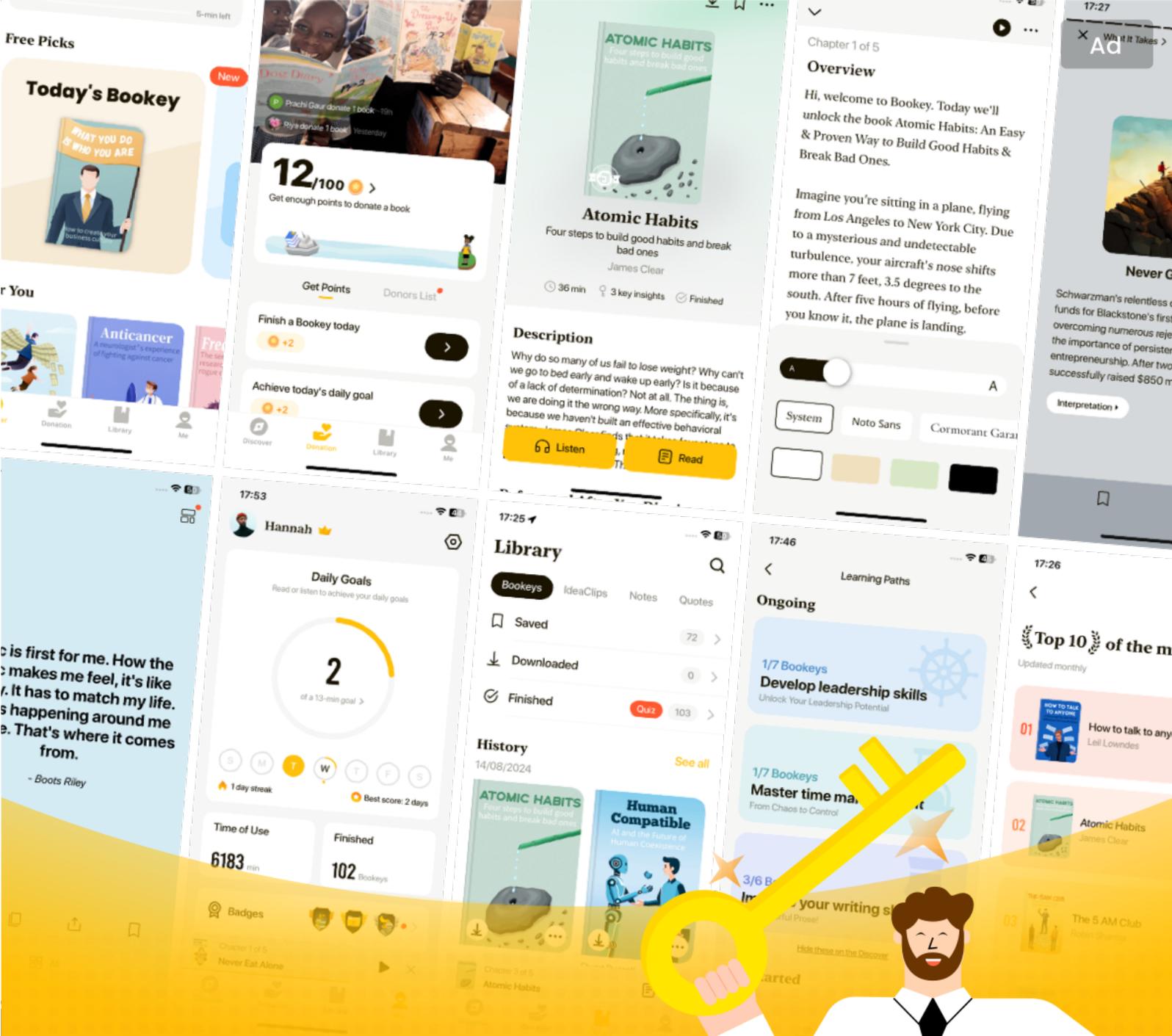
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personas dissolve away, and they allow their physical connection to deepen in a passionate encounter, filled with humor, exploration, and the thrill of privacy at such high altitudes. The protagonist reflects on the tangible difference between this connection and previous experiences in relationships, highlighting a sense of liberation in their interactions with

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Chapter 17 Summary: 17

In Chapter 17, the narrator, Carter, arrives in London with Prince Edgar after a thrilling flight on Edgar's private jet. This is Carter's first visit to the city since childhood, and he's overwhelmed by the sights—anxiously daydreaming about iconic moments from films and the rich history surrounding him. As they drive through the city, Carter struggles with the excitement of being in London alongside a prince, reminding himself that this is merely a vacation and to guard his heart.

Upon arriving at Buckingham Palace, Carter is struck by the grandeur of the place. He feels like a character in a live-action fairy tale and is acutely aware of the surreal nature of his situation—being in a royal residence where every detail is managed by a small army of staff, led by Edgar's meticulous aide, James. The sheer scale of the palace overwhelms him, and Edgar points out various features with the ease of someone who's grown up there.

Once inside, Carter is shown to his opulent guest suite. James meticulously unpacks Carter's bags, providing a glimpse into the structured life around the royal family. Amidst their banter, it becomes clear that Carter is a curious blend of excitement and anxiety—determined to fit into this world while remaining conscious of the scrutiny he faces.

Just as Carter attempts to settle down, hunger drives him to explore the



palace. Wandering through the halls, he discovers the palace kitchen and inadvertently stumbles upon Queen Catherine, Edgar's grandmother. Initially shocked and unprepared, Carter finds himself in a comical confrontation with the queen—her critique sharp yet oddly humorous. Their interaction highlights differences in class and culture, as she expresses disdain for the American ways and scrutinizes Carter's intentions with her grandson.

In a surprising turn, the queen's stern exterior softens slightly as she reveals her genuine concern for Edgar's happiness. She poses three probing questions regarding Carter's suitability for her grandson and the sincerity of his feelings. Although caught off guard, Carter successfully articulates his genuine affection for Edgar, confessing the difficulties he faces in expressing such emotions.

The chapter concludes with a blend of levity and seriousness, as Queen Catherine acknowledges Carter's resolve and expresses a begrudging acceptance of his presence at the palace. Their opening exchanges set a tone for the complex dynamics of love, family expectations, and the pressures of royal life, marking a pivotal point in Carter's journey as he navigates his burgeoning relationship with Edgar amidst the constraints of royal protocol. This marks the beginning of an emotional exploration for both characters as they face familial expectations and personal desires.

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Chapter 18 Summary: 18

Chapter 18 Summary

The chapter opens with the protagonist, Carter, preparing for a significant day filled with public appearances alongside Edgar, a prince he is romantically involved with. As they travel to Wembley Stadium, Carter shares his disdain for sports, humorously suggesting that he only tolerates them if he can enjoy them in a non-competitive context. This light-hearted banter emphasizes their connection and comfort around each other.

As they arrive at the stadium, Edgar reveals that today marks their first official public appearance as a couple, and mentions challenges they may face due to recent controversies surrounding their relationship. In the car, James, part of their entourage, jokes about the gossip swirling around them, while Carter grapples with his anxiety about being scrutinized as Edgar's partner.

James outlines strict etiquette for their appearance — Carter must never overshadow Edgar, avoid public affection, and only engage with the crowd in prescribed, safe topics such as the weather or the sport itself. Despite his reservations and budding anxiety, Carter reassures Edgar that he'll adhere to the rules, though he humorously laments the loss of freedom to indulge in

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boisterous, American-style fanfare.

Once inside the stadium, Edgar is met with cheers from the audience, prompting Carter to feel like a nervous plus-one to a celebrity. Edgar encourages him to enjoy the moment. As the rugby match begins, Carter struggles to understand the game but attempts to engage actively with the excitement around him. Edgar tries to lighten the mood by suggesting that each player secretly has a romantic interest in someone on the opposing team, which allows Carter to momentarily indulge in his unique imagination about the athletes.

Carter humorously imagines a lustful narrative involving the players and finds himself accidentally swept up in the excitement, leading him to cheer and display affection for Edgar in a way that concerns him. After the match, they retreat to a private tent. Carter worries about his behavior and expresses his admiration for Edgar as a role model in the LGBTQ community, who faces unique responsibilities and pressures due to his public persona.

Edgar responds with seriousness, explaining the weight of his role as an openly gay prince. He shares personal anecdotes about his coming out experience, highlighting the backlash he faced and the complexities of being a public figure representative of the queer community. Edgar's reflections convey a sense of burden—the pressure of being a symbol of hope while navigating his own personal challenges.

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As their conversation unfolds, Carter realizes the depth of Edgar's struggles and the profound implications of being in a relationship with someone in the public eye. Despite the initial fear of being an unwelcome distraction in Edgar's life, Carter confidently expresses his desire to stay, affirming his commitment to Edgar. The chapter culminates in an emotional and intimate moment as Carter kisses Edgar, signaling both a deepening of their bond and a shift in their relationship dynamics, suggesting Carter is ready to embrace whatever comes their way.

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Chapter 19 Summary: 19

In Chapter 19, the narrative unfolds with Edgar and the protagonist sharing lunch with a diverse group of friends, including notable figures from Edgar's Oxford days and his titled relatives. The dynamic among the friends is protective and playful, reminiscent of the protagonist's own tight-knit group in New York. Despite the jovial atmosphere, the protagonist senses scrutiny and feels as though she's on trial among them—a reflection of how new relationships often come with their own set of pressures and evaluations.

The day progresses with cultural excursions as Edgar takes the protagonist on private tours of significant landmarks like the National Portrait Gallery, the House of Lords, and Westminster Abbey. This exclusive experience feels surreal and somewhat confining, evoking the sensation of being within a heavily monitored environment. Edgar lightens the mood with a cheeky suggestion about committing a heist, showcasing the blend of absurdity and whimsy in their interactions.

After a formal dinner at the palace, the protagonist is torn between her desire for intimacy with Edgar and the constraints of royal oversight. A comical yet tense encounter occurs when she bumps into Queen Catherine, who, curious about her intentions, engages the protagonist in a playful yet firm conversation about her interactions with Edgar. The queen's humorous

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disapproval and unexpected candor about her own past serve to emphasize the generational and cultural gap regarding views on relationships and physical intimacy. Her vivid descriptions and the term "strumpet" humorously reflect the queen's outdated yet colorful perspective on youthful romance.

The protagonist escapes the encounter but is left reflecting on her relationship with Edgar. She connects with her friend Abby via FaceTime, discussing the complexities of coming out and the challenges faced by those in the LGBTQ+ community, including Edgar's ongoing journey with his own identity. Their bond deepens as they navigate their insecurities, aspirations, and the humorous yet heartwarming dynamics of friendship that bolster their personal growth.

The chapter culminates in a whimsical dream, where the protagonist imagines a world where the queen's voice echoes in a fantastical, humorous manner, reinforcing the blend of reality and surrealism in her life. Through these experiences, the protagonist is left contemplating the blend of romance, friendship, and self-discovery against a backdrop of royal scrutiny and personal challenges, illustrating the intricate dance of love and identity in her journey with Edgar and beyond.

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Chapter 20: 20

Chapter 20 Summary

The next morning, during breakfast in one of the palace's dining rooms, Prince Edgar and his friend Carter Ogden try to shake off the anxiety surrounding an earlier encounter with Edgar's grandmother, who has taken to hovering at the slightest hint of trouble. Carter contemplates the weight of responsibilities and social justice work, feeling overshadowed by more active associates. Yet, he is determined to contribute positively during their charity visit.

Edgar reveals that they are set to open a new wing at the St. Garvin's Hospital for Children, which he has helped fund over the years. His charisma shines as they arrive, where a throng of press and excited onlookers greet them. Dr. Sarman Vatshul, the hospital's medical director, leads them in, celebrating Edgar as a genuine source of joy and service to the community—not merely a celebrity.

As they engage with the children, Edgar and Carter distribute warm cookies, igniting exciting interactions. When Dr. Vatshul encourages Edgar to tell a story, the children eagerly demand Carter share one, initiating an unexpected moment for Carter. Reminded of his sister Abby's own struggle with

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leukemia, he reflects on how celebrations can bring joy in the toughest times. Deciding to entertain the kids, he starts telling a whimsical tale involving Edgar as a prince and Spider-Man, emphasizing themes of friendship and adventure while addressing inclusion and kindness.

However, as the story unfolds, Carter uses humor to address complex issues of bullying and acceptance, inadvertently creating a narrative that invites questions about identity and relationships. The children enchantingly beg for a romantic conclusion, leading Carter to declare that the prince and Spider-Man get married—an answer that resonates warmly with the children, prompting joyous applause.

Unbeknownst to them, the media buzzes with sensational headlines following the story, igniting a storm of controversy surrounding the royal family and Carter's perceived political commentary. As the ramifications of the day's events unfold, Edgar expresses his frustration with Carter in an emotional confrontation, mixing anger with unexpected passion, culminating in an intense and intimate moment between them.

Amidst the chaos and ensuing media frenzy, the two navigate their complicated feelings about their connection—both grappling with their upcoming thirtieth birthdays, representing milestones laced with expectation and fear. They contemplate their futures, revealing their vulnerabilities while seeking reassurance in their unexpected bond.

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Carter tries to lighten the mood, citing their shared astrological sign, both being Aquarians, and attributing creativity and adaptability to their character. Edgar, reluctant but amused, starts to acknowledge the potential for them to navigate the tumultuous events creatively—and perhaps, together.

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Chapter 21 Summary: 21

Chapter 21 Summary

In this chapter, the tension rises as the protagonist, Carter Ogden, finds himself reprimanded by Queen Catherine while dining with Edgar, her grandson. The queen's furious demeanor establishes the stakes right away; she accuses Carter of being a disgrace, equating him to a "rancid crustacean" who must depart immediately from the palace and Edgar's life.

The scene is set around an opulent mahogany table, symbolizing the vast divide between the royal family and Carter, a commoner. Edgar, attempting to defend Carter, highlights unexpected positive outcomes from Carter's previous public speaking engagements, which had inadvertently increased donations to a hospital. He insists that Carter is helping him grow into his role as a future leader, aiming to transform their public perception from mundane royal formality into something more relatable and engaging. Edgar's proposal to develop a campaign showcasing Carter is both a personal ambition to find his voice and a strategic move to humanize Carter in the eyes of the public.

Queen Catherine dismisses Edgar's arguments, exhibiting her disdain for Carter in increasingly sharp terms, calling him a "slime" and questioning

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Edgar's judgment in associating with him. Despite the queen's tirade, Edgar's earnest plea reflects his desperation for approval and desire for growth, illustrating his struggle between familial duty and self-expression.

This confrontation showcases the dynamics of power and expectations within the royal family, foreshadowing a potential shift in public relations strategy that could affect how they're perceived by the public. Edgar passionately defends Carter, invoking good humor and creativity as vital elements for engaging with the people. Carter, meanwhile, can only watch as he is evaluated like a pawn in a high-stakes game of royal chess.

In a moment of overwhelming pressure, Queen Catherine ultimately grants Edgar permission to continue his plans by dismissing him with a curt command to "get out of my sight." This response encapsulates the mix of exasperation and reluctant acceptance that characterizes the queen's leadership style, along with a hint of recognition for Edgar's ingenuity—a rare form of validation amid her scorn.

This chapter serves as a pivotal moment for Edgar as he seeks to stand out and form his identity within the royal framework, while simultaneously grappling with the repercussions of Carter's influence in a world governed by rigid traditions.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of standing up for what you believe in, even against authority.

Critical Interpretation: In this chapter, Edgar's unwavering defense of Carter in the face of Queen Catherine's harsh criticisms teaches us the vital lesson of courage in advocating for those we support. It inspires us to find our own voice and challenge the status quo, reminding us that true leadership often requires us to risk displeasing authority for the sake of authenticity and meaningful connections. When faced with opposition, let Edgar's example inspire you to stand firm in your convictions and lift others up, as it can lead to transformative outcomes that benefit not only yourself but also those around you.

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Chapter 22 Summary: 22

Chapter 22 Summary

The next morning, the characters are transported in a golf cart to the set of *The Great British Baking Jubilee*. Edgar, inspired by the need for positive media attention through a fun and engaging event, explains his idea for joining the show, which strikes a chord with Carter, the narrator. Carter, with a history of creative event planning, recalls how much his father enjoys the show. As they arrive at Hallinghurst Castle, the production manager leads them backstage, where Carter interacts with fellow royals and event organizers, revealing a mix of admiration and concern for Edgar's well-being amid subtle competition from his brother Gerald and his ambitious wife, Maureen.

As the contestants prepare to make trifles, the pressure of the live show weighs on them. Edgar views this appearance as a fantastic opportunity, while Carter feels protective of him, recognizing the stakes involved in the royal image, especially with the presence of their grandmother watching from afar.

The episode unfolds with a vibrant atmosphere filled with lighthearted commentary from hosts Agatha and Miles, who introduce Edgar, Gerald,

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Maureen, and Carter as guest judges. Edgar enthusiastically engages with the contestants, whose unique culinary creations bring both admiration and some critiques from the royal panel, stirring a mix of humor and tension. The trifles, elaborately constructed desserts layered with flavors and textures, showcase each contestant's personality, but not without complications.

As the judging begins, disaster strikes when Carter, overwhelmed and unwell, begins to vomit dramatically, covering everyone in sticky trifle. The chaos ensues as the audience panics and the tent erupts into a frenzy, leading to an improvised disaster response. Despite the hilarity and horror of the situation, the story touches on deeper themes, including the pressures of royal life and the expectations tied to public appearances.

In the aftermath of the incident, Carter lies on a cot, feeling embarrassed and frightened. Maureen visits him, sharing her own struggles with royal expectations and the harsh criticisms she faced, advising him to consider whether this life is truly for him. Edgar returns, concerned for Carter's well-being, highlighting the bond forming between them as they navigate public expectations.

As they reflect on the day's events, Carter is surprised to learn that rather than viewing the incident as a failure, Edgar sees it as a testament to Carter's willingness to support him. Edgar confesses his feelings for Carter, leading

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to an intimate moment where love blossoms amidst the chaos. This chapter beautifully interweaves the comedic misadventures of living in the royal spotlight with heartfelt revelations about love, identity, and the complexities of personal choices within such a public life.

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Chapter 23 Summary: 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Carter is reeling from Edgar's heartfelt confession of love that came during a moment of vulnerability following a disastrous public incident involving vomit. Despite vomiting rainbow trifle on international television, the moment still felt significant, and after Edgar's declaration, he left Carter to process his emotions. Seeking solace, Carter connects with his sister Abby via FaceTime, eagerly sharing the details of Edgar's proclamation. In true sisterly fashion, Abby urges him to recognize the importance of this moment—something they've both vowed to celebrate over the years, termed as "Abby Alerts," where they report back whenever a significant other says "I love you."

As Carter recounts the scene of Edgar's declaration amidst his embarrassment, he begins to grapple with fear and insecurity, questioning his worthiness of Edgar's affection. Abby fiercely rebuffs his self-doubt, insisting that he is more than enough for Edgar, who appreciates him not only for his qualities but also for the unique package he represents—his charm and the familial connection to his sister, a respected pediatric surgeon. Encouraged by her words, Carter decides to take time off from work to reinforce his commitment to this new relationship, vowing to prove the



naysayers, including their mother Maureen and the royal establishment, wrong in their doubts about him.

Over the weeks that follow, Carter undergoes a transformation that includes a custom-fit tuxedo, symbolizing his evolving identity and newfound confidence within the royal framework. He learns to navigate high-society events with wit, emphasizing his American outsider status while also embracing his role beside Edgar. This newfound confidence is complemented by a series of experiences, from waltzing at charity events to engaging playfully with Queen Catherine's scrutiny.

Carter's relationship with Edgar deepens, highlighted by a cozy and intimate experience shared in the nursery from Edgar's childhood, a hidden sanctuary filled with nostalgia and warmth. As Edgar reveals this part of himself to Carter, they both take an essential step towards emotional closeness. Through the connection with childhood memories, conveyed humorously via a puppet of a lion, they begin to trust one another, signaling growth in both their relationship and individual vulnerabilities.

Overall, Chapter 23 captures a pivotal moment of love, fear, and acceptance as Carter strives to embrace a future with Edgar and confronts the misconceptions surrounding him, setting the stage for their developing partnership in the face of royal expectations.

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Chapter 24: 24

In Chapter 24, Carter Ogden and Prince Edgar prepare for their first live television interview at BBC Studios, where their appearance is highly anticipated by a worldwide audience. As they undergo hair and makeup, camaraderie builds between them, marked by playful banter with the crew. Despite the excitement, an undercurrent of anxiety runs through the conversation, especially regarding their recent public image, with Edgar's approval rating soaring while Carter's fluctuates amid rumors that could tarnish his reputation.

Caroline Chadwick, the charismatic and glamorous host of the show, introduces them to a live audience, emphasizing their "burgeoning affiliation." Edgar and Carter express mutual admiration and affection, responding to Caroline's friendly inquiries about their relationship. Edgar refers to Carter as a "dear friend," highlighting their growing bond while Carter showcases his efforts to adjust to public life, evoking laughter when he mentions trying trifle.

However, the interview takes a dramatic turn when Caroline brings up a viral video showing Carter passionately kissing Callum Turner, a former lover, just hours before the interview. The news shakes Edgar, causing a palpable tension as Carter tries to explain the situation, insisting it was a brief encounter and not representative of his feelings for Edgar. Caroline's



relentless questioning deepens the conflict, and as tensions escalate, both men struggle to maintain composure in the public eye.

Carter insists he would never hurt Edgar, emphasizing his loyalty and desire for honesty while denouncing Callum's jealousy-driven comments. The

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Chapter 25 Summary: 25

In Chapter 25, Carter Ogden faces the aftermath of a scandal that erupted when a live interview exposed his kiss with Callum, causing a public fallout with his partner, Edgar. As he travels back to New York City, he grapples with feelings of shame and regret while surrounded by the accusatory headlines plastered across media outlets. Despite attempts to escape the turmoil with a sleep mask and silence from electronic devices, he cannot escape his reality or the blame he places on himself, feeling that he has irrevocably sabotaged his chances at love.

Upon his return, Carter's close friend Abby finds him at the airport, offering support. They head to an IHOP, which Carter initially resists due to its associations with painful memories but ultimately finds comforting. Abby insists that Carter should not feel entirely responsible for the situation, suggesting that Edgar's inability to trust may have played a significant role. Carter, however, sees the relationship as fundamentally flawed, acknowledging Edgar's privilege and the pressures from his royal life. Despite Abby's impassioned pleas to fight for the love they shared, Carter believes their romance was destined to fail from the start—a mismatched fairy tale that could never live up to its promise.

Back at home, Carter's family weighs in with their own opinions about the situation, eliciting a mix of support and criticism. His week in his childhood



room is marked by nostalgia and painful reflection, as he slowly comes to terms with the public attention surrounding his breakup and the impact it has had on his life.

Carter returns to work with reluctance, experiencing the sympathetic stares and judgment from colleagues, including Cassandra, who offers unsolicited advice on grappling with his grief. Meanwhile, his friends rally around him, denouncing Edgar's behavior and attempting to uplift him with humor and camaraderie. Despite their support, Carter feels deeply disconnected from the notion of love, seeing it as an unrealistic ideal rather than a possibility for his future.

The chapter concludes as Carter's sense of isolation deepens amid repeated reminders of his past relationship with Edgar, foreshadowing an emotionally charged Thanksgiving dinner that represents another stage in his journey of healing and self-discovery. He realizes navigating the fallout from a highly publicized relationship will not be easy, especially when faced with the unrelenting visibility of his once-happy romance.

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Chapter 26 Summary: 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Thanksgiving serves as a backdrop for an unexpected family gathering in Piscataway, symbolizing the narrator's desire to reconnect with normalcy following a turbulent period in his life, particularly involving his complicated relationship with Crown Prince Edgar. As the narrator arrives, he is greeted warmly by his family, who are in high spirits, joking about his appearance and offering upbeat remarks. However, there is a palpable tension stemming from Abby's continued hope for a reconciliation between the narrator and Edgar.

Dinner preparations highlight the mother's flair for creativity, reflected in her choice of festive decorations and new dinnerware, which contrasts sharply with the underlying tensions in the room. Just as they begin to settle into the holiday spirit, an unexpected commotion occurs at the door, signaling the arrival of Edgar's security team. This sudden intrusion foreshadows the visit of Queen Catherine, who arrives in a striking outfit, demanding everyone's attention.

The queen's presence is both shocking and awe-inducing, leaving the family momentarily speechless. Once she gathers their attention, she reveals that

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she has come to discuss two pressing matters: the narrator's lack of generational courtesy towards her hospitality and the dire state of Edgar's emotional health since their separation. The queen explains that Edgar is in a deep depression, displaying troubling signs of neglect and lack of ambition, ultimately leading to his intention to abdicate in favor of his brother, Gerald. This twist introduces significant stakes, as Edgar's well-being and the future of the monarchy seem to hinge on the narrator's past relationship with him.

In a moment filled with emotional tension, the narrator realizes that he must take action to help Edgar, recognizing the profound impact their brief but intense relationship had on both their lives. The queen acknowledges the weight of the situation, emphasizing the dire need for the narrator to find a way to reach Edgar before he makes his irrevocable decision public.

As the chapter concludes, the atmosphere is tense yet charged with possibilities, leaving the narrator grappling with the enormity of the queen's requests and the responsibility that has suddenly fallen upon him: to intervene and help Edgar reclaim his place in both his heart and his country. The chapter closes with the family's chaotic blend of concern, humor, and unexpected camaraderie, underscored by Miriam's humorous antics, which provide a moment of levity amidst the seriousness of the situation.

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Chapter 27 Summary: 27

Chapter 27 Summary

As I stepped into St. Patrick's Cathedral, I was weighed down by the chaos of my recent Thanksgiving. With my family's incessant discussions about Carter O'Reilly and Prince Edgar—debating Edgar's obligations and whether his desire to abdicate stemmed from genuine love or a diplomatic dilemma—I realized I needed solitude. After returning to the city by train, the quietness of the cathedral was a welcome contrast to the noise of the previous days.

In the back pew, I lingered in the scent of incense while contemplating my unresolved feelings for Edgar. Did I still love him? The answer lingered in the air, almost tangible, yet muddied by doubt. Was it enough to love him? What should I do—try to persuade him against abdication or respect his decision? Edgar was struggling with the role of royals in society, torn between duty and personal happiness. I believed he would be an exceptional king—compassionate and progressive—but his choice loomed larger than our past disagreements.

My mind raced with questions. Would I still care for him if he weren't a prince? Would our bond remain if he were just an ordinary guy? I dismissed

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those trivial thoughts; my love for Edgar was rooted in deeper memories of our intimacy, not the glitz of royal life. I was frustrated that he hadn't trusted me during the complicated situation with Callum, and deep down, I longed for him to reach out—if not for an apology, then for reconciliation.

I recognized the paradox of my desires. In my ideal self, I wanted Edgar to find happiness, even if that meant stepping away from me. Yet, the thought of chasing him down, begging him to reconsider his future, was daunting. What if I ruined everything again?

Just as the weight of my musings threatened to overwhelm me, my phone buzzed. I glanced at the screen to find a video message from James, and I noticed he had also forwarded it to Edgar. That notification shattered my moment of reflection, pulling me back into the tumult of my life. Confronted with the complexities of love, duty, and my own fears, I stepped outside into the fresh air, determined to see where this new development would lead.

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Chapter 28: 28

Chapter 28 Summary

In this chapter, James, an older member of the palace staff, addresses two young men through a camera in what appears to be his apartment. He begins by expressing his frustration with the technology but quickly shifts his focus to a poignant and introspective message intended for them. James reveals his extensive history with the royal family, having been hired as a footman 47 years prior, and shares a deeply personal story about forbidden love that shaped his life.

He recalls a time when, as a young man, he fell in love with Albert Cradham, a clerk from Savile Row. Their romance blossomed in a society where homosexuality was criminalized, forcing them to live in secrecy and denial. Despite the oppressive circumstances, their love flourished within the confines of hidden spaces, until a celebration they hosted led to their arrest for an “indecent gathering.” The police intervention shattered their bond, with James being offered clemency contingent upon abandoning Albert, who served a two-year prison sentence.

Overcome with guilt and regret, James reflects on the choice he made to protect himself rather than his lover, feeling that he ultimately betrayed

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Albert. He became a dedicated servant to the royal family, notably assisting with the upbringing of Edgar, the young man he now addresses. James expresses pride in Edgar's accomplishments and a secret joy upon realizing Edgar's similar identity, while also grappling with his own past mistakes.

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Chapter 29 Summary: 29

In Chapter 29, the urgency is palpable as Carter prepares for a crucial flight to London, hoping to confront Edgar before his abdication speech. With Abby driving eagerly and Louise providing support, Carter races against time, fueled by the pressure of the mission ahead. He grabs a framed picture of Ruth Bader Ginsburg as a good luck charm, symbolizing the values of justice and perseverance that inspire him.

As Abby speeds toward JFK, they share a moment of heartfelt communication. Abby, while expressing her desire to accompany Carter, ultimately respects his independence, encouraging him to get what he needs for the situation. This interaction emphasizes the depth of their friendship and Abby's sense of responsibility toward Carter's wellbeing, recalling a childhood promise she made to look out for him.

After a swift arrival at the airport, Carter narrowly makes his flight. However, his relief is short-lived as the plane encounters technical difficulties, leading to a series of frustrating delays. As he anxiously observes the situation from his window seat, he grapples with rising panic, desperately wishing to expedite the process and stay on schedule for his monumental task.

Carter's resolve is tested further when the flight is ultimately canceled,



forcing him to scramble for alternative options. He is informed of another flight but, despite his fervent attempts, finds himself unable to secure a seat. The chapter culminates in his feelings of defeat, emphasizing the unpredictability of life and the obstacles one must sometimes face in pursuit of goals. As the chapter closes, Carter's mission hangs in the balance, leaving the reader on edge about whether he will reach London in time to act.

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Chapter 30 Summary: 30

In Chapter 30, the protagonist, Carter, returns home to find his friends Adam and Louise filling the apartment with snacks and emotional support after a difficult time. Carter feels guilty for not doing enough to reach out to someone named Edgar, whose absence has left him despondent. Despite relentless attempts to contact Edgar and another character, James, he finds no success in reaching them, which further intensifies his feelings of isolation.

Carter, alongside his friends, prepares to watch Edgar's highly anticipated speech, which promises to be a pivotal moment. The atmosphere in the apartment is heavy with tension and concern, as Carter knows that Edgar's address could be the final nail in the coffin of their tumultuous relationship.

As the speech begins, Edgar appears on screen looking pale and unsteady, effectively capturing the emotional weight of the moment. His initial struggle to express himself hints at his vulnerability and the turmoil he's experiencing. Carter's friends make light comments about Edgar's appearance, revealing both their concern for him and their protective feelings towards Carter.

When Edgar finally speaks, he reflects on the pain he suffered after his parents' death, eventually revealing that he fell in love with someone who



challenged him – a revelation that signifies a turning point. As he describes the mistakes he made in their relationship, including pressuring this person to change rather than accepting and loving them for who they are, it becomes clear that he is addressing Carter directly, acknowledging his own flaws and expressing deep remorse.

Edgar’s heartfelt apology culminates in a public proposal, asking Carter to marry him. The moment is electric and leaves Carter—and the audience—stunned. As the reality of Edgar’s love and commitment sets in, Carter's friends rally around him, preparing for an urgent, supportive push to take action immediately. The chapter closes with Abby, Carter's sister, arriving just in time, hinting at a whirlwind of developments to come. This moment captures the intensity of love, regret, and hope, setting the stage for an impending reunion between Carter and Edgar.

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Chapter 31 Summary: 31

In Chapter 31, Carter arrives at Heathrow where he is greeted by James, who humorously holds a sign that reads “Peasant.” The chapter reflects Carter's mixed emotions—excitement and anxiety—following Edgar's public proposal. The flight attendants had cheered him on, playfully debating aspects of wedding planning, making Carter feel like a celebrity in love.

As Carter is driven back to the palace, he expresses gratitude to James for his impactful video that helped sway Edgar's decision to continue with his royal duties instead of abdication. Upon arriving at the palace, a mix of staff and security greet him, adding to the lighthearted atmosphere after the shocking proposal news. Carter shares small snacks from the plane with the guards, illustrating a brief moment of camaraderie.

Carter ascends the palace stairs, reflecting on the past and struggling with the changes it has brought to his life. He heads to the nursery, a personal space for Edgar, who is aptly described as being most authentic in this environment. Edgar, however, maintains a serious demeanor, teasingly questioning Carter about his presence.

The conversation quickly becomes intense as Edgar reveals that his public proposal was intentional, acknowledging the importance of Carter in his life. Carter admits to feeling scared, particularly after having kissed his ex,



Callum, in what he regarded as a self-sabotaging act. Edgar is somewhat lighthearted about the incident, revealing his own insecurities while reassuring Carter of his feelings.

Their dialogue deepens as Edgar suggests that together, they could redefine the royal image, making it more engaging and relatable. He expresses a dedication to choosing Carter above all else, regardless of the royal pressures they may face. Carter finds himself torn between jesting and feeling profoundly moved, battling his ingrained insecurities about being unworthy of love.

Edgar presents a vision for their future, insinuating that if Carter were to accept his proposal, he would gain a title, humorously speculating that he might become the “Duke of Piscataway.” As the exchange grows more earnest, Carter hesitates to give an answer, considering the weight of a potential royal obligation that comes along with their personal relationship.

The chapter sums up the emotional tension between the fear of commitment and the allure of a shared future, emphasizing the characters' vulnerabilities and their evolving connection amidst the pressures of royal life.

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Chapter 32: 32

Chapter 32 Summary

The luxurious Throne Room of Buckingham Palace, adorned with red silk damask and carpet, reflects a childlike fantasy of grandeur. At its center, Queen Catherine sits regally on a striking red throne in a hot pink dress, towering over a larger-than-life portrait that emphasizes her royal status with opulent details like jeweled crowns and an ermine cloak. This extravagant setting contrasts the tension in the room, as the queen receives her grandson Edgar and his partner, Mr. Ogden, who stand uncomfortably without seats—a deliberate move to highlight their subordinate position.

The dialogue begins with Mr. Ogden politely inquiring about the royal family's marriage policies. Queen Catherine confirms that her approval is required for royal marriages, sharing her authoritarian belief that such oversight could prevent heartache in the world. However, her bemused frustration is evident, as she perceives the contrasting personalities of Edgar and Ogden, realizing they are both an immense source of “tsuris,” a Yiddish term meaning headaches or troubles.

As the conversation progresses, the queen humorously accuses the young couple of anticipating her demise so Edgar can ascend the throne, jokingly



envisioning a modernized monarchy filled with hot tubs and televisions. Both men dismiss her claims, committing instead to reassure her of their loyalty. As Queen Catherine questions Edgar about his love for Ogden and vice versa, the pressure mounts on Mr. Ogden to express his feelings. Despite his anxieties, he gathers the courage to declare his love for Edgar, a

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Chapter 33 Summary: 33

Chapter 33 Summary

In this chapter, the central conflict revolves around the societal implications of a royal wedding, particularly one that involves a same-sex couple. The narrator and Edgar grapple with whether their wedding should be a grand celebration steeped in tradition or a more intimate affair that promotes charitable contributions. Edgar, stepping into a decisive role as the groom, delegates the wedding planning to the narrator, who is thrilled yet nervous about the responsibility, considering this wedding to be the apex of his professional career in event planning.

As preparations begin in earnest, the narrator enlists the help of his friends—most notably Abby, his bridezilla-like associate who envisions an extravagant, inclusive ceremony. Abby passionately argues that the wedding should transcend the couple themselves, creating a worldwide spectacle that melds traditional royal aesthetics with unique elements to reflect their shared values, emphasizing diversity and unity.

On the wedding day, the narrator experiences a mix of exhilaration and anxiety. He and Edgar have chosen to spend the night apart, respecting royal tradition while eagerly anticipating their first look at each other in

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ceremonial attire at Westminster Abbey. Queen Catherine's intervention secures the abbey for their ceremony, putting to rest any dissent about their rights to the location.

Dressed elegantly in a rainbow-striped morning suit, with subtle blue highlights in his hair, the narrator is surrounded by friends and family who exude love and support. Their shared banter, along with affectionate comments from his parents, brings lightheartedness to the tense moments before the ceremony.

As they journey to the abbey in a traditional royal carriage, the narrator is struck by the support of the crowd, contrasting earlier worries about public perception. The excitement of the occasion is palpable not just to them, but to a diverse audience, reinforcing a sense of community celebration.

At the abbey, the ceremony is infused with a blend of personal and traditional elements: the presence of family, dignitaries, and even unconventional touches—like a framed photo of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Abby's role as matron of honor encapsulates their supportive friendship, and the presence of multiple officiants adds to the inclusive vibe.

With joy and disbelief, the narrator and Edgar stand at the altar, surrounded by love, acceptance, and the promise of a shared life ahead. They realize that despite uncertainties looming beyond this moment, they are exactly where

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they are meant to be—united in love and celebration. The chapter ends heartwarmingly, depicting a fairytale-like beginning to their new life together, filled with hope, believing in each other, and ready to embrace whatever comes next.

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