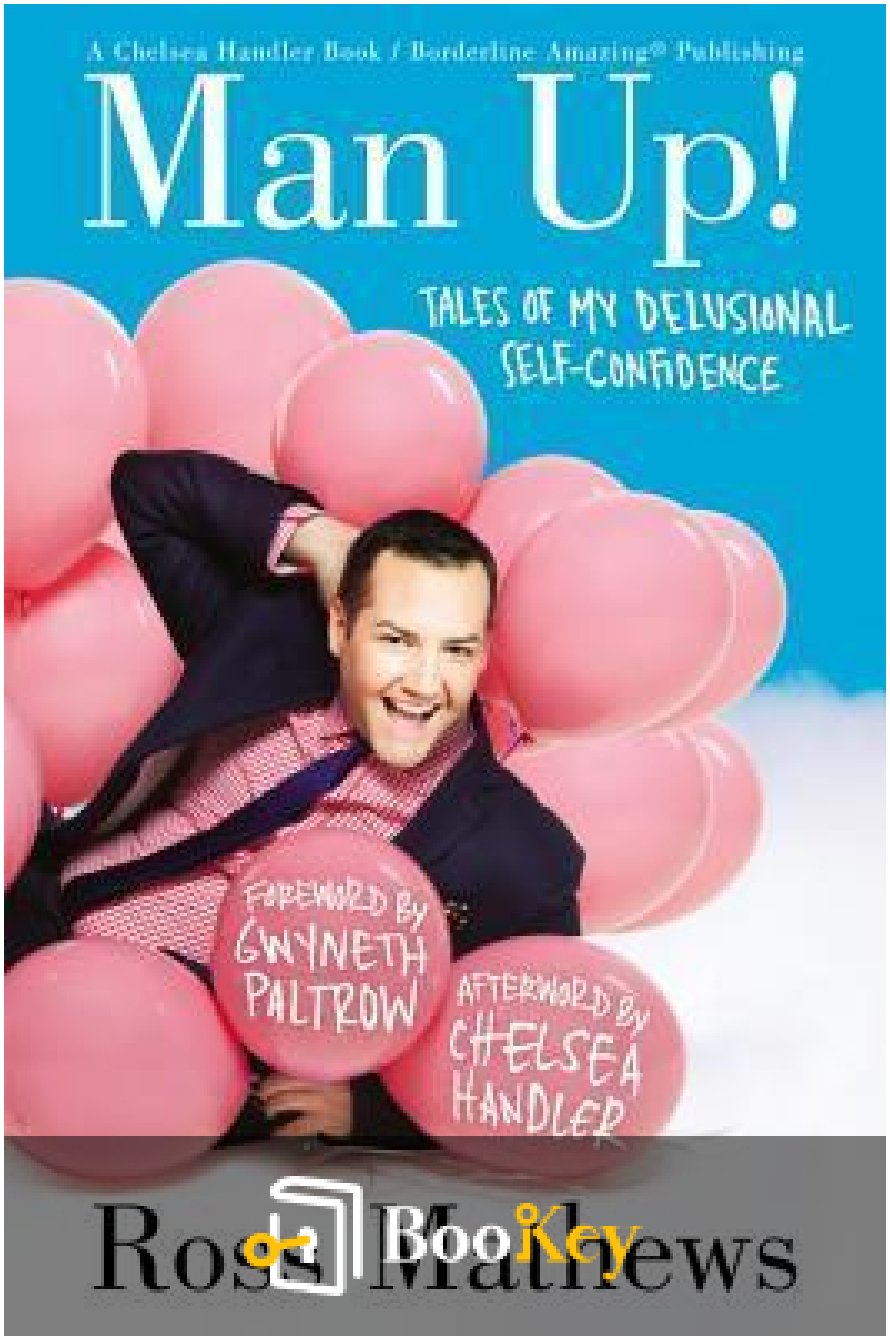
Man Up! PDF (Limited Copy)

Ross Mathews



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Man Up! Summary

Embrace Your True Self and Chase Your Dreams Fearlessly!

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In *Man Up!*, Ross Mathews, popularly known as "Ross the Intern" from *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, invites readers to embark on a humorous and heartfelt journey through his life, showcasing how he navigated his way from a small-town upbringing in the Pacific Northwest to the bustling streets of Los Angeles.

From the very beginning, Ross candidly reflects on his quirky childhood, filled with unique experiences that shaped his identity and future ambitions. He shares colorful anecdotes of his high school days, marked by moments of outrageousness and a keen awareness of his burgeoning passion for pop culture. These reflections serve to highlight not only the challenges he faced but also the resilience he cultivated, setting a foundation for his later adventures in Hollywood.

As Ross transitions into adulthood, he intertwines his love for celebrity culture with meaningful encounters, illustrating a blend of hard work and serendipity. His unexpected brushes with fame are punctuated by humorous and relatable stories, underscoring the central theme of embracing one’s authentic self.

Through his witty narrative, Ross encourages readers to view their own journeys through a lens of humor and positivity. *Man Up!* ultimately

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serves as an empowering message for those daring enough to defy the ordinary, urging everyone to pursue their dreams while staying true to their unique spark. With each chapter, he reminds us that success is not simply about reaching a destination but about celebrating every quirky step of the way.

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About the author

Ross Mathews is an exuberant American television personality who has made a significant impact on the entertainment industry through his vibrant on-screen presence and distinctive style. He first gained widespread recognition as "Ross the Intern" on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, where he showcased his comedic flair and charm, establishing a solid foundation in television.

Transitioning from late-night television, Ross became a beloved judge on the Emmy-winning reality show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, which celebrates drag culture and artistry. His role on the show not only solidified his status in the entertainment world but also allowed him to influence pop culture significantly, appealing to a diverse audience.

In addition to his television appearances, Ross hosts the popular podcast *Straight Talk with Ross Mathews*, where he shares humorous insights and commentary on the latest entertainment news and gossip, connecting with fans on a personal level. With residences in both Los Angeles and Palm Springs, he enjoys a balanced lifestyle alongside his partner. Ross Mathews embodies a blend of humor, charisma, and accessibility, making him a beloved figure in contemporary media.

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Chapter 1 Summary: MATHEWS VS. PHOBE

Chapter One: Mathews vs. Phobe

In the opening chapter, Ross Mathews recounts a formative and humorous moment from his childhood that underscores the themes of self-expression and identity. At just seven years old, while driving home from the dump in his father’s pickup truck, Ross mimics his father's colorful choice of words, turning swearing into a bonding experience between them. His father not only encourages this behavior but also teaches him that swearing can be an art form of self-expression, an important lesson for Ross as he navigates his own personality.

Growing up in the idyllic town of Mount Vernon, Washington—a place celebrated for its tulip exports—Ross paints a picture of his supportive family dynamics. His mother’s enthusiastic embrace of his talents instills in him a sense of confidence, while his older brother Christine, who once tormented him, has become a more positive force in his life as they mature. Ross’s inherent creativity and flair set him apart; he finds joy in performing and even devises his own drag revues, celebrating his uniqueness.

However, as he begins working as a teenager, Ross encounters the harsher realities of the world, facing his first experience with homophobia on a local

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farm. A derogatory comment from a coworker sends him spiraling into confusion and anger, compelling him to confront the societal prejudices that challenge his self-acceptance.

In a powerful act of defiance, Ross makes the decision to quit his job after standing up against the bullying behavior, marking a pivotal moment in his journey towards embracing his identity. This act of "manning up" not only signifies his resilience but also reveals his inner strength and commitment to living authentically. The chapter concludes with Ross reflecting on this transformative episode and the newfound determination to unapologetically embrace who he is.

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Chapter 2 Summary: LADIES'MAN

Chapter Two: Ladies’ Man

In this chapter, Ross Mathews takes readers on a humorous and heartfelt journey through his romantic history, shedding light on the complexities of his attractions as a gay man who found himself entangled with women. He playfully refers to himself as a "pussy magnet," acknowledging the irony of his charm amidst this emotional landscape.

First Relationships

Ross reminisces about his first crush, Becky, from fifth grade. In an attempt to fit in with his peers, Ross enters this innocent relationship, characterized by youthful exploration and awkward encounters. Their connection peaks during a field trip to a water park, which highlights his childhood insecurities about his body. In a poignant twist, Becky unexpectedly breaks up with him on the bus ride home, leaving Ross with the bittersweet realization of the fleeting nature of childhood romances and a lasting emotional impact.

Teenage Romance

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As Ross transitions into seventh grade, he develops a crush on Maria, a charismatic girl who embodies confidence and maturity. Their budding romance includes long phone calls and classic adolescent escapades like movie dates and tentative forays into physical intimacy. Through humorous anecdotes, Ross exposes the innocent confusion of teenage sexuality, leading to awkward but relatable situations that resonate with anyone who has navigated young love.

High School Relationships

In high school, Ross encounters Carrie, a beautiful and gifted classmate who becomes a significant figure in his life. Their friendship deepens, eventually evolving into a genuine romantic relationship. Ross contrasts the simplicity of his childhood crushes with the complexities of high school love, which is illustrated through a memorable moment while watching "The Lion King." This chapter delves into his struggles with intimacy, as Ross grapples with self-discovery and the incubation of his true sexual identity, culminating in a series of amusing and awkward encounters.

Conclusion

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Ross wraps up the chapter with gratitude for the pivotal women in his life, acknowledging their vital roles in his journey toward self-acceptance as a homosexual. The chapter masterfully combines humor with poignant insights, reflecting on the intricacies of youth, love, and the often tumultuous pathway of growing up. Ross’s narrative captures the essence of discovering one's identity amid the lighthearted yet serious trials of early relationships.

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Chapter 3 Summary: VOICE MALE?

Chapter Three: VOICE

In this chapter, Ross Mathews takes readers on his personal journey of self-acceptance as he learns to embrace his distinctively high-pitched voice, humorously likening it to a "clown on helium." From a young age, he felt the weight of his unusual vocal quality, especially when compared to his peers who experienced the typical changes associated with adolescence. This sharp contrast made him a target for teasing, leaving him to navigate a landscape where hurtful comments were common.

Despite the challenges, including frequent misunderstandings during phone calls and interruptions during public performances, Ross adopts a light-hearted approach. He shares comedic anecdotes that not only highlight the awkwardness of his experiences but also showcase his resilience. By using humor as a coping mechanism, he transforms moments of embarrassment into opportunities for empowerment.

As the chapter progresses, Ross reaches a pivotal realization: instead of wishing for a voice that conforms to societal norms, he embraces the very quality that sets him apart. Through this acceptance, he discovers that his voice is a vital part of his identity and a source of strength. He confidently

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asserts that he has no desire to change it, recognizing it as a testament to his individuality.

Ross's journey is not just about his voice; it's a universal message about the importance of accepting one's unique traits. He draws inspiration from various public figures who have celebrated their differences, urging readers to take pride in their own distinctive qualities, no matter how unconventional they may appear. In this chapter, self-acceptance emerges as a powerful theme, resonating deeply with those who strive to embrace their authentic selves.

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Chapter 4: ROSS THE INTERN 1: TV AND ME

In Chapter Four, titled "Ross the Intern - TV and Me," Ross Mathews reflects on his enduring love for television, which has played an integral role in shaping his life and aspirations. He shares nostalgic memories of racing home from school to catch his favorite shows and reveals how this passion influenced his everyday actions. For example, he humorously describes timing his after-school snacks and activities based on TV schedules, even singing jingles tied to his lunch menu.

A significant milestone in his TV journey occurs when he purchases his first television, affectionately naming it Jessica after a character from the iconic series "Saved by the Bell." This moment symbolizes the deep impact television has had on his life, fostering his social interactions and cultural references, often pulling from nostalgic pop culture of the past.

The narrative expands as Ross talks about the transformative moment when cable television enters his home. This technological upgrade introduces him to a universe of new content, particularly his admiration for talk show legends like Oprah Winfrey. Watching how these hosts engaged with audiences ignites his passion and solidifies his aspiration to pursue a career in entertainment.

Ross's college years bring a mix of carefree enjoyment and the looming

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pressure of graduation. During this time, a friend's story about an internship at "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" awakens Ross's ambition to explore similar opportunities. His determination leads him to prepare for an interview at the iconic show, where he comically sets the stage for both his nerves and excitement.

Arriving at the interview underprepared yet keenly enthusiastic, Ross navigates fashion faux pas and earnest self-presentation, capturing both his aspirations and the often awkward journey of breaking into the entertainment industry. Ultimately, his persistence pays off when he secures an internship on "The Tonight Show," marking a pivotal step in his journey toward a career in television and solidifying his connection to the medium that has defined much of his life.

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Chapter 5 Summary: ROSS THE INTERN 2: HE WORKS HARD FOR NO MONEY

Chapter Five Summary: Ross the Intern

Internship Beginnings

In this chapter, Ross Mathews reflects on the mix of excitement and anxiety he feels before starting his internship at *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*. His dreams are filled with the prospect of meeting celebrities and making lasting friendships. However, the reality of his first day proves to be far less glamorous. Ross is quickly thrown into the grind of menial tasks such as making copies, running errands, and delivering lunches—all hallmarks of an unpaid internship.

Meeting Jay Leno

One bright spot in Ross's inaugural day is his encounter with Jay Leno. This moment is surreal and exhilarating for Ross; Jay's warm introduction leaves him starstruck, igniting his passion for the entertainment world even further.

Daily Routine and Office Life

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As the weeks pass, Ross begins to carve out a routine commuted between his home and the NBC studio. His responsibilities evolve to include delivering mail, stocking the kitchen supplies, and managing the critical lunch orders for the staff. Despite the presence of free snacks around the office, Ross anticipates his own hunger while juggling these demanding tasks. In a humorous twist, he hatches a plan to "borrow" extra meals to mitigate his constant hunger.

Desire to Learn

Amidst the monotony, Ross remains enthusiastic about learning from the talented individuals he encounters. His determination leads him to connect with Anthony, a writer on the show, through whom he hopes to gain insight into the television industry. Their conversation becomes a pivotal moment, showcasing Ross's ambition to become a talk show host and solidifying a mentor-like relationship.

Last Day of Internship

As his internship draws to a close, Ross contemplates skipping his final day due to lingering obligations. However, he ultimately decides to uphold his commitment, embracing the culmination of his experience. An unexpected phone call from Joe, the head writer, sends him into a whirl of anxiety,

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fearing repercussions for his earlier lunch escapades.

Unexpected Encounter

With nerves rising, Ross approaches Joe's office with trepidation, envisioning dire consequences. Yet, upon stepping inside, he is met with an unexpected opportunity that proves to be a transformative moment in his career. This encounter reinforces the notion that while his time as an intern is ending, his journey in show business is just beginning, filled with new possibilities and excitement.

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Chapter 6 Summary: ROSS THE INTERN 3: FLOATING“ON-AIR”

Chapter 6: Ross the Intern - Floating “On-Air”

In this chapter, Ross Matthews vividly recounts a transformative moment from his early career as an intern on "The Tonight Show." He begins by reflecting on his childhood dreams of fame and success, often fantasizing about acceptance and recognition, akin to imagining himself winning an Oscar while gazing into the mirror.

His dreams take a remarkable turn when he receives an unexpected invitation from a head writer to interview celebrities at the premiere of "Ocean's Eleven." Initially overwhelmed yet bursting with excitement, Ross recognizes the significance of this opportunity and vows to remember this milestone. This moment resonates deeply with him, as he understands how such experiences can shape one's narrative.

Adding humor to the narrative, Ross describes a comical conversation with his mother, whose exaggerated reaction highlights their close bond and adds warmth to his story. As he prepares for his national television debut, Ross grapples with nervous anticipation, aware of the delicate balance between potential acclaim and the risk of ridicule. Yet, he is determined to remain

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authentic, prioritizing genuine laughter over judgment.

Once on stage, he is exhilarated to hear his name announced by Jay Leno. What follows is a whirlwind of celebrity encounters, including a lighthearted exchange with Matt Damon and a rather awkward moment with Brad Pitt. These interactions serve to liberate Ross from his previous inhibitions, allowing him to fully embrace the moment and showcase his personality.

Afterward, he savors the praise from the crew and reflects on the triumph of the experience. This pivotal debut not only cements Ross's place in the world of broadcasting but also propels him into subsequent opportunities that build his career as a correspondent for "The Tonight Show." He concludes the chapter with a profound insight: success is not a mere stroke of luck but rather the intersection of readiness and opportunity, emphasizing the importance of being prepared when chances arise.

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Chapter 7 Summary: A THIESSEN TO CELEBRATE

Chapter Seven: A Thiessen to Celebrate

In 1995, Ross Mathews vividly recalls his fervor for meeting Tiffani-Amber Thiessen, a prominent actress from the beloved TV show "Saved by the Bell." As a quintessential figure of 90s pop culture, Tiffani embodies the era's fashion and charm, captivating audiences with her sweet disposition. When Ross discovers she will be appearing at a local department store in Seattle, he feels a surge of determination to meet her—a moment he has long awaited.

However, being only 15 and without a driver’s license poses a challenge. Undeterred, Ross persuades his friend Molly to take him to the event. They humorously entertain themselves during the drive by belting out TLC's hit "Waterfalls." After a lengthy three-hour wait in line, Ross meticulously prepares a heartfelt message, eager to express how profoundly her work has inspired him.

But when the moment arrives and he stands in front of Tiffani-Amber, nerves take over. He finds himself flustered and unable to articulate his thoughts, fixating instead on a minor detail—mascara in her eye. An aura of

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awkwardness envelops him, causing Ross to freeze, while Molly steps in to act as his representative, attempting to bridge the gap created by his shyness.

Despite the fleeting encounter and a hurried photo together, Ross walks away feeling embarrassed, convinced that he has made a fool of himself. Seeking solace, he drowns his disappointment in a soft pretzel, but fate humorously intervenes as he unexpectedly crosses paths with Tiffani-Amber yet again. In a moment of panic, he blurts out incoherent messages, heightening the comedy of his earlier awkwardness.

Ultimately, Molly reassures Ross with a laugh, suggesting that the chaos of his interaction will make him memorable to Tiffani-Amber among her fans. This chapter encapsulates the themes of hero-worship, the trials of idol encounters, and the relatable discomfort that often accompanies moments of fame, illuminating the bittersweet nature of these experiences.

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Chapter 8: YOU BETTERWORK (AND A LIFELONG SECRET REVEALED)

Chapter 8: You Better Work (And A Lifelong Secret Revealed)

In this chapter, Ross Mathews recounts his formative experiences in the workforce, starting as a teenager at age thirteen, largely motivated by the success of his older brother, Eric. Inspired by Eric's quick ascent in a restaurant job, Ross felt a blend of envy and aspiration, particularly drawn to the lifestyle and perks Eric enjoyed, especially the snacks. Eager to carve out his own path, Ross took on various early jobs, including a role at a tulip and daffodil farm, which he found tedious and uninspiring.

Seeking a more engaging work environment, Ross's attention turned to McDonald’s. Captivated by the restaurant’s modern layout and plentiful food benefits, he reveled in his new role, enjoying free meals during breaks and earning a reputation as a dependable employee. However, when he was transferred to a McDonald's in the mall, he was confronted with a harsh reality: retail workers looked down upon him, prompting a quest for a more appealing job.

After several unsuccessful attempts to break into retail, Ross finally landed a

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position at Lane Bryant, a plus-size women's clothing store. There, he thrived in a supportive atmosphere, bonding with coworkers and enjoying the sense of camaraderie. However, his experience took a downturn when he became entangled with a new assistant manager, Alexis. Her bad influence led Ross down a destructive path, culminating in the poor decision to steal

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Chapter 9 Summary: HOW I BECAME BFFS WITH OSCAR WINNER GWYNETH PALTROW

In Chapter Nine, titled "How I Became BFFs with Oscar Winner Gwyneth Paltrow," Ross Mathews shares the delightful and unexpected journey that led to his friendship with the acclaimed actress Gwyneth Paltrow. His admiration for her ignited in 1996 when he first saw her at the Golden Globe Awards, fueling a fascination that made him an avid follower of her career.

The pivotal moment came in March 2002, during the Vanity Fair Oscar party, where Mathews was thrilled to serve as a red carpet correspondent. He saw this as a golden opportunity to potentially meet Paltrow. When she arrived, his excitement bubbled over, and in a bold yet endearing move, he called out to her. To his astonishment, she recognized him from his appearances on "The Tonight Show." This surprising connection led to a spontaneous hug and a playful request: “Will you be my best friend?” To his utter disbelief, she enthusiastically replied, “Yes!”

The chance encounter blossomed into a genuine friendship as Mathews and Paltrow exchanged contact information and began communicating through heartfelt emails. Their correspondence revealed personal stories and shared struggles, including the grief that accompanied the loss of loved ones. This journey not only solidified their bond but transformed it into a meaningful relationship that surpassed Mathews’ initial dreams of a celebrity friendship.

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Mathews concludes the chapter with a humorous note, playfully claiming Paltrow as his own best friend and encouraging readers to seek out their own celebrity pals, emphasizing the joys that come from unexpected connections. Through his storytelling, he illustrates how such relationships can provide support and depth, ultimately enriching one's life in ways they might never have imagined.

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Chapter 10 Summary: PRACTICALLY PAW-FECT IN EVERY WAY

Chapter Ten: Practically Paw-fect in Every Way

In this poignant chapter, Ross Mathews delves into his emotional connection with dogs, illustrating how they've shaped his life. He fondly recalls his childhood companion, a Labrador named Iggy, whose loyalty and hunting prowess created a bond that transcended words. Through vivid memories, Ross expresses the profound grief he felt at Iggy's passing, yet he recognizes that the love for dogs has always been a steadfast part of him.

As Ross reflects on societal norms regarding masculinity, he shares his evolution in preference from larger breeds to smaller, more portable dogs. He playfully critiques the notions surrounding dog size and celebrates the unique joys small dogs offer, noting their cuteness and ability to bring happiness to everyday life.

Ross narrates the serendipitous moment he found his new partner, Louise, a delightful small puppy that instantly captivated his heart. This encounter marked a new chapter; it not only fulfilled his desire for companionship but also aligned perfectly with his circumstances, as he found an apartment that welcomed pets.

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Years later, the family expanded with the addition of Mijo, another small dog who brought both laughter and valuable life lessons to Ross and his partner, Salvador. Together, Louise and Mijo exemplify the richness that love and companionship can provide, regardless of size.

In conclusion, Ross reflects on how his canine companions have significantly enhanced his life, offering solace during challenging times and reinforcing the theme of unconditional love. They form an inseparable part of his family, embodying the joy and warmth that pets bring into a home. This chapter ultimately serves as a heartfelt tribute to the bond between humans and their furry friends, underscoring the simplicity and depth of these relationships.

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Chapter 11 Summary: MALE BONDING

Chapter 11: Male Bonding

In this chapter, Ross Mathews delves into the theme of male bonding, drawing on his experiences with outdoor activities shared with his father and brother. With his trademark humor, he expresses his aversion to traditional camouflage clothing, preferring to stand out in a crowd rather than blend in, a reflection of his vibrant personality.

As a child, Mathews would excitedly watch his father prepare for duck hunting, feeling a mix of disappointment and relief when he was considered too young to participate. This allowed him to remain indoors with his mother, where he felt more at ease. However, once he reached the appropriate age, he donned an oversized camouflage jacket for his first hunting trip. This experience, fraught with anticipation yet resulting in a hilarious mishap where a high-pitched scream startled both himself and others, led him to realize that he preferred fishing, which allowed for a more relaxed and carefree atmosphere.

Fishing trips became a treasured memory for Mathews, filled with bonding moments, chants for good luck, and humorous incidents. These escapades not only strengthened his bond with his father but also created lasting

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memories. They found common ground in shared interests such as football, despite Mathews' own limited athletic skills. His passion for the Seattle Seahawks was an avenue for connection, transcending expectations of traditional masculinity.

Mathews recounts his attempts at various sports, including T-ball and soccer. Although he struggled with performance, these experiences brought him joy through camaraderie and connection. His comedic reflections on these activities further illuminate the contrasts between the traditional expectations of masculinity and his unique personality.

Ultimately, Mathews emphasizes the significance of stepping outside comfort zones and the importance of trying new experiences. He celebrates the profound bond he shares with his father, illustrating that male relationships can flourish through sports, shared interests, or simply spending quality time together. The chapter captures the essence of diverse male bonding, reminding readers of the varied ways in which men connect and support each other in their journeys.

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Chapter 12: UNCLE ROSS AND ANTI-DRUG

Chapter Twelve Summary: Uncle Ross and Anti-Drug

In this engaging and humorous chapter, Ross Mathews explores his personal experiences with drugs, particularly marijuana, within the context of anti-drug education. Through a blend of candid storytelling and humor, Ross examines both the allure and the consequences of drug use, weaving in his own journey from naive youth to seasoned advocate against drug culture.

The Lure of Marijuana

Ross begins by likening marijuana to a subtle danger that can ensnare individuals in daily life—an idea reinforced by his youth spent under the heavy influence of anti-drug campaigns such as DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). He amusingly recounts his participation in DARE activities, where he embraced performance to discourage drug use. His charisma shone through even then, as he suggested grand ideas for graduation assemblies, revealing an early affinity for entertainment.

First Encounter with Drugs

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The narrative quickly shifts to Ross's high school experience, where his first encounter with marijuana occurs during a wrap party for a production of "Oklahoma!" He vividly describes the euphoric high he experienced, juxtaposed with the realization that his indulgence was impacting his academic life and personal relationships. This duality highlights the conflict many face when tempted by substances.

Drug Dealing Experience

In a surprising twist, Ross finds himself in the precarious position of needing to replace marijuana he had borrowed from his brother. This predicament leads to a comical yet cautionary tale of a drug deal gone awry, where he meets a character dubbed "Dealer Dude." The absurdity of the situation underscores the often-unexpected paths individuals tread when dabbling in drug culture.

Returning to Anti-Drug Advocacy

Having ventured briefly into the world of drugs, Ross redirects his focus back to anti-drug advocacy, this time armed with his personal insights. He

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joins the "Straight 'n' Narrows," a program dedicated to promoting anti-drug messages through performance. His personal narrative enriches his credibility, allowing him to deliver impactful and relatable messages to peers about the dangers of drug use.

Thanksgiving Incident

The chapter reaches a hysterical climax with a Thanksgiving incident involving Ross and his friend Lisa, who experiment with potent pot butter. Their lighthearted experiment quickly spirals into chaos, culminating in a trip to the emergency room. This humorous misadventure serves as a poignant reminder of the risks associated with uninformed drug use while also strengthening the bond between Ross and Lisa.

Conclusion

In closing, Ross reflects on the complexities surrounding drug use and the consequences that can follow, all while stressing the importance of informed choices. His humorous approach to serious themes aims to educate readers on the realities of drug culture, balancing laughter with important life lessons drawn from his own experiences. Through this chapter, he successfully melds entertainment with education, encouraging others to

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navigate their paths with caution and awareness.

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Chapter 13 Summary: THE KWAN AND ONLY

Chapter 13: The Kwan and Only

Personal Reflections on Failure and Aspirations

In this introspective chapter, Ross Mathews begins by candidly acknowledging his personal failures, even as he celebrates having ticked off some items from his bucket list. He reflects on his dream of being a successful figure skater, drawing an amusing analogy to his childhood favorite candy, Nerds, symbolizing the sweet exterior that veils a more complex inner life.

The Love for Figure Skating

Mathews' passion for figure skating shines through as he reminisces about its unique blend of athleticism and artistry. He humorously contrasts his daydreams of gliding gracefully across the ice with his reality, which often consisted of stumbling and falling rather than performing the elegant routines he envisioned.

Nostalgic Moments in Figure Skating History

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He takes readers back to the riveting 1994 figure skating saga involving Nancy Kerrigan and Tonya Harding, which captivated audiences and brought the sport into the spotlight. Mathews expresses admiration for both skaters, whose rivalry and drama significantly fueled his interest in figure skating.

Admiration for Michelle Kwan

Meeting the legendary Michelle Kwan becomes a central aspiration for Mathews. He describes his awe at her exceptional talent from a young age, asserting that she is the greatest figure skater of all time. Her artistry on the ice leaves a lasting impact on him, solidifying her status as a heroine in his life.

Anticipation for the 2002 Winter Olympics

As the chapter progresses to the 2002 Winter Olympics, excitement builds for Mathews, who is ecstatic at the thought of being in the same city as Kwan. He creatively leaves heartfelt messages during his on-air segments, hoping they will somehow reach his idol.

The Heartbreaking Olympic Competition

The day of the competition arrives, filled with both anticipation and anxiety.

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As Kwan takes to the ice, the unexpected happens—she falls during her routine, finishing third instead of winning gold. Mathews articulates the deep disappointment and emotional turmoil that washes over him as he watches his idol miss the top prize.

A Magical Encounter

Amidst the heartache of the competition, a delightful surprise awaits Mathews. During a celebratory dinner, Kwan approaches him and hands him a rose, a gesture that resonates deeply. This enchanting moment shifts his emotions from sadness to overwhelming joy, instilling in him the understanding that winning isn't everything and leaving him with a treasured memory of meeting his lifelong hero.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

Mathews wraps up the chapter by reflecting on the important lesson gleaned from this experience—that the value of moments goes beyond mere accolades. He humorously juxtaposes this revelation with his not-so-secret hopes for any future children to emerge victorious in beauty pageants, balancing his newfound wisdom with his playful dreams.

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Chapter 14 Summary: THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

In Chapter 14, titled "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year," Ross Mathews joyously celebrates the holiday season, highlighting its transformative power of magic, goodwill, and joy. With a humorous tone, he critiques those who feel down during this time, believing that his own boundless Christmas cheer can inspire others to discover their happiness.

Ross's enthusiasm for the holidays is palpable, as he playfully suggests that if it were up to him, the festive spirit would permeate every day of the year. He dismisses Thanksgiving as merely a warm-up for Christmas, pointing out its lack of traditional holiday elements like gift-giving and cheerful songs.

The chapter then delves into Ross's cherished childhood memories, particularly family Christmas parties filled with laughter and chaos. He reflects on how these experiences instilled in him a desire to create enduring holiday traditions in his own life, such as gathering with loved ones to decorate Christmas trees while basking in the sounds of festive music.

A whimsical highlight occurs when Ross recounts his first Christmas as an adult, where he and a friend crafted quirky ornaments from scandalous newspaper ads, showing that creativity can flourish even in times of financial constraint.

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By the end of the chapter, Ross passionately advocates for the spirit of the holidays, urging readers to embrace joy and humor throughout the year. He captures the essence of the season, emphasizing its unique ability to inspire light-heartedness and connection among people.

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Chapter 15 Summary: LIKEA PRAYER

Chapter 15: Like A Prayer

In this compelling chapter, Ross Mathews reflects on his evolving relationship with Madonna, a figure who initially intimidated him with her bold, provocative persona. Despite his early hesitations, everything changed for Ross when he watched the film *Who's That Girl?*, igniting a fascination that blossomed into a deep admiration for the pop icon.

The narrative revisits the height of Madonna's fame in 1996, a pivotal year marked by her critically acclaimed album *Ray of Light* and the film *Evita*. Ross details how Madonna's artistic evolution and emotional depth in *Evita* resonated with him, highlighting her ability to convey complex feelings through her performances.

However, Ross's admiration is deeply intertwined with personal experiences, particularly when Madonna was snubbed for an Oscar nomination. This moment of disappointment struck a chord with him, prompting him to indulge in comfort food as a way to cope with both her heartbreak and his own.

Despite feeling that meeting Madonna was a distant dream, a surprising

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opportunity emerged when Ross and a colleague schemed to sneak backstage at one of her concerts. After careful planning and unexpectedly receiving approval from Madonna's team, Ross found himself on the brink of achieving his dream.

The chapter culminates in the electrifying moment when Ross meets Madonna backstage. He describes the surreal experience of joining her "prayer circle" before the concert, an immersive moment that signifies the culmination of his lifelong admiration. The exhilarating connection he makes with her, however brief, encapsulates a powerful transformation, illustrating how a single encounter with a cultural icon can profoundly alter one's life. Ross concludes with a heartfelt reflection on Madonna's enduring impact, celebrating the magic that comes with celebrity fandom and the personal connections forged through art.

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Chapter 16: SQUASH INJUSTICE

Chapter Sixteen: Squash Injustice

In this inspiring chapter, Ross Mathews passionately advocates for the belief that everyone possesses the ability to effect change in the world. He takes readers on a journey, beginning with his early days of blogging during the 2006 Winter Olympic Games, which marked the beginning of his dynamic online presence. His website, HelloRoss.com, became a vibrant community hub, notable for its engaging "Talky Blogs" that captivated a growing audience.

Ross shares personal anecdotes, particularly his fondness for Koo-Koo-Roo, a fast-casual restaurant famous for its healthy rotisserie chicken and his cherished side dish—hearty butternut squash. His connection to this restaurant was not just culinary; it represented a piece of his identity. However, his joy turns to dismay when he learns that Koo-Koo-Roo has discontinued the butternut squash, leaving him heartbroken.

Refusing to accept this injustice quietly, Ross reaches out to Koo-Koo-Roo's customer service to voice his concerns, rallying his loyal blog community to do the same. To his astonishment, this heartfelt appeal resonates widely, prompting thousands of calls and comments from his supporters advocating

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for the return of the squash. This grassroots movement highlights the power of social media and community activism as Ross and his followers unite for a common cause.

The restaurant, noting the overwhelming response, ultimately decides to

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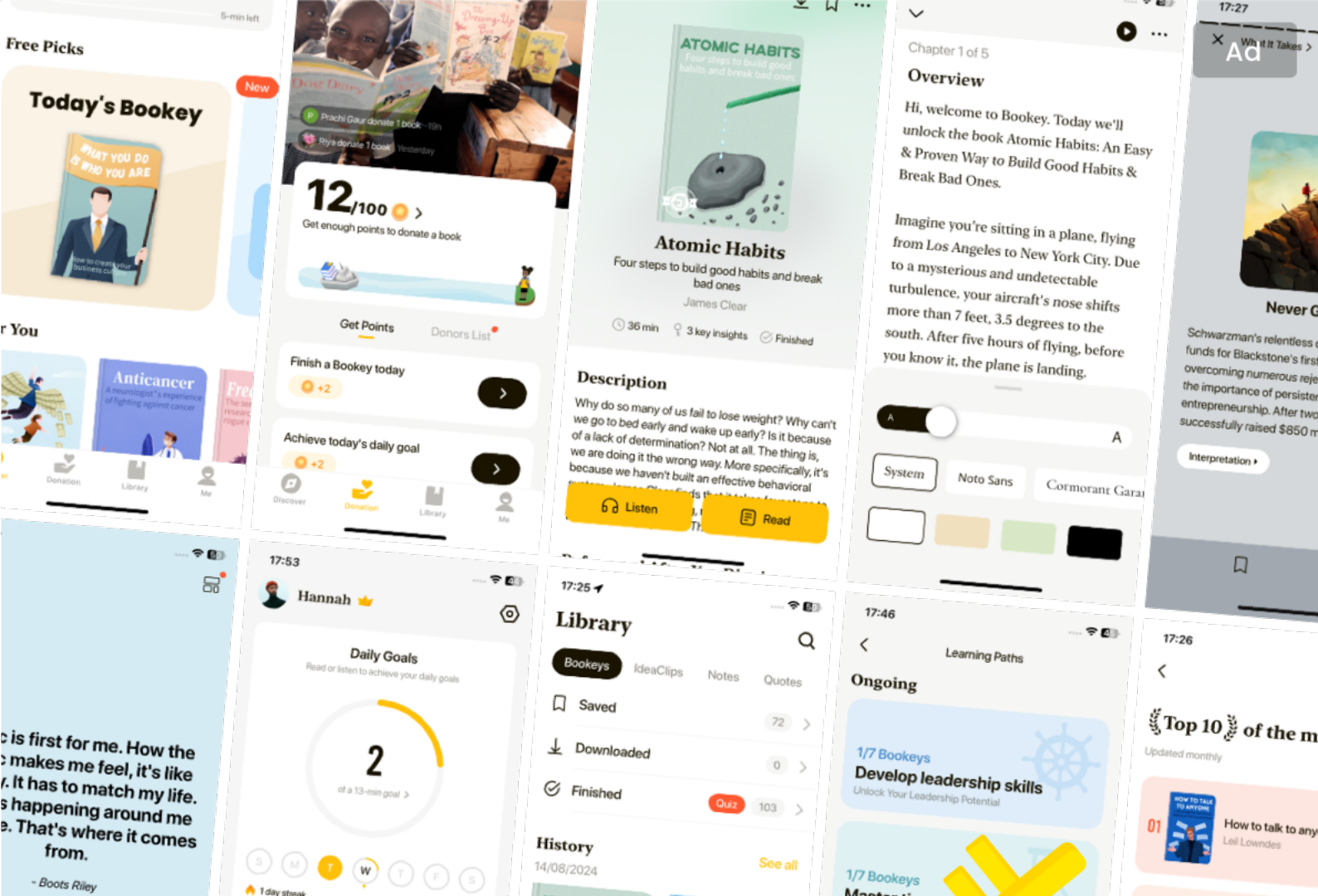

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Chapter 17 Summary: COME OUT,COME OUT, WHEREVER YOU ARE

Chapter Seventeen: Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are

In this pivotal chapter, Ross Mathews recounts a transformative moment of self-discovery that took place while he was singing in the shower—a setting where many find solace. This epiphany made him realize he was gay, a revelation he likened to solving a complex Magic Eye image after long struggles with his identity. Growing up in a small town, Mathews faced bullying and confusion, as there were few role models to guide him through what being labeled "gay" truly meant.

After embracing his sexuality, Mathews confides in his ex-girlfriend, Carrie, who had already sensed the truth about him. Her acceptance provides a comforting affirmation for Mathews at a time when he still wrestled with the societal pressures surrounding his identity. The narrative then transitions to his college years, highlighting the tension he felt over revealing his sexual orientation to his parents. Fearful of their reaction, he grappled with the decision until he finally chose to come out to them.

This moment proved to be profoundly moving; his mother welcomed his truth with unconditional love, having suspected it long before he shared. In a

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quiet yet supportive manner, Mathews’ father also demonstrated his acceptance without the need for extensive dialogue. This chapter underscores a vital commentary on the significance of parental love and acceptance for LGBTQ+ individuals, illustrating how these relationships can profoundly influence a young person's journey.

Mathews concludes with touching wisdom imparted by his mother, reinforcing the idea that authenticity is paramount. The love and acceptance he received from his parents not only shaped his own outlook but also serves as a beacon of hope for others facing similar challenges in their quest for self-acceptance.

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