

Stay Gold PDF (Limited Copy)

Tobly McSmith



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Stay Gold Summary

Two teens navigate love and identity in Texas high school.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "Stay Gold," Tobly McSmith introduces readers to Pony, a transgender boy beginning a new chapter in his life as he enters his senior year at a Texas high school. Pony aims for a quiet and uneventful year, hoping to fit in without drawing attention to his identity. As he grapples with the challenges of being true to himself amidst societal pressures, he also longs for the simple experience of being a typical teenager.

On the first day of school, Pony's plans are disrupted when he crosses paths with Georgia, a charismatic cheerleader who is determined to focus solely on her graduation. While both characters initially strive to keep romance out of their lives, the undeniable chemistry between them complicates their intentions. Georgia, like Pony, is grappling with her own pressures and aspirations within the school environment.

As the story unfolds, Pony must navigate the complexities of self-discovery and authenticity in a world that often feels unaccepting. Meanwhile, Georgia is faced with her own challenges, as she balances the expectations of her social circle with her desire for genuine connection. The novel poignantly captures the emotional turbulence of adolescence, highlighting themes of identity, acceptance, and love.

With touches of humor and heartache, "Stay Gold" resonates with readers

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who appreciate stories about personal growth, the power of relationships, and the journey of finding one's true self, appealing to fans of contemporary young adult fiction. As Pony and Georgia's paths intertwine, they both learn that embracing who you are—and allowing yourself to love—can be transformative and liberating. The story beautifully emphasizes that no matter the obstacles, authentic connections can flourish when one is brave enough to be vulnerable.

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About the author

Tobly McSmith, a talented writer and co-creator known for his vibrant musical parodies like "Friends! The Musical Parody" and "The Office! The Musical Parody," hails from Texas but now calls New York City home. Living there with his two cats, Bam-Bam and Bananas McSmith, Tobly exemplifies the journey of a proud transgender artist who emphasizes diversity and inclusivity in his work.

In his stories, Tobly often explores themes of identity, community, and humor, using parody as a medium to reflect on social norms and the everyday experiences that resonate with a wide audience. The characters in his parodies are often drawn with caricature-like traits, allowing for both comedic and poignant moments that highlight their flaws and successes.

As we delve into the chapters of his current work, readers are introduced to an array of new characters and concepts that deepen the narrative. Each chapter unfolds in an engaging manner, deftly weaving in background stories and motivations that add richness to the primary plot. This structure not only enhances understanding but also maintains a smooth flow, guiding the audience through the evolving dynamics between characters.

The incorporation of diverse voices is central to Tobly's storytelling, reflecting his commitment to representation. This emphasis on varied

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experiences not only enriches the themes present in each chapter but also invites readers to connect with characters on a more personal level.

As we proceed through the chapters, expect a blend of humor, wit, and heartfelt moments, all masterfully crafted to entertain while sparking conversations about identity, acceptance, and the absurdities of everyday life. Tobly McSmith's work is much more than entertainment; it serves as a mirror to society, inviting audiences to laugh, reflect, and embrace the power of diversity in all its forms.

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Chapter 1 Summary: One

In the opening chapter of "Stay Gold" by Tobly McSmith, we are introduced to the protagonist Pony, a transgender boy anxious about starting a new life at Hillcrest High School in Texas. Pony, who is navigating the transition to live as his true self, battles his nerves while seated in his car. He meticulously chooses his outfit—a black button-up shirt and jeans—to express his identity, but doubts still linger as he recalls the anxiety of frequent moves due to his father's military career. His wish to blend in and avoid attention adds to his apprehension about being authentic in a new environment.

As Pony steps out of the car, he is met with the chaos of the school parking lot, buzzing with students socializing and showcasing their high school cliques. Overwhelmed by the pressure of concealing his true self, Pony receives a supportive text from his sister, which encourages him to be brave. Upon entering the school, he becomes captivated by Georgia, the head cheerleader, whose beauty and presence ignite a mixture of admiration and longing within him.

Georgia's introduction reveals her own battles under the weight of social expectations. Though she enjoys popularity and the status of a cheerleader, she grapples with the fallout of a recent breakup with her ex-boyfriend, Anthony, and the pressure to uphold her perfect image, especially amid her



fierce friend Mia's scrutiny. As the chapter unfolds, it becomes clear that Georgia is more than just her cheerleader persona; she struggles with her own insecurities and the need to conform to her peers' expectations.

Through Pony and Georgia's parallel journeys, themes of identity, belonging, and acceptance emerge strongly. Pony's longing to be recognized as the boy he knows he is clashes with Georgia's challenge of being seen as more than just a cheerleader. Their initial interactions set the stage for a burgeoning connection, hinting that despite their starkly different experiences, they may find common ground in their struggles for acceptance and understanding at Hillcrest High. The chapter effectively portrays the complexity of high school life while laying the foundation for potential friendship—and possibly romance—between Pony and Georgia as they journey towards self-discovery amid the tumult of adolescence.

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Chapter 2 Summary: Two

In Chapter 2, Georgia grapples with the emotional fallout of her recent breakup with her ex-boyfriend, Anthony. The chapter unfolds with Georgia waking up to a text from Anthony, which reignites a whirlwind of feelings. Their relationship ended spectacularly when Georgia discovered Anthony cheating at a party, leaving her caught between anger and an enduring affection for him. As she prepares for school, memories of their chaotic yet joyful high school life—including her role as a cheerleader and the notorious pranks of her friend group—flood her mind.

Despite her intentions to move on, Anthony's message proves distracting, bringing forth doubts about her feelings and future, especially given that he is now attending Texas Tech University. At school, she confides in her friend Lauren, who encourages her to chase her college dreams, but Georgia feels tethered by her emotional struggle tied to Anthony. The situation intensifies when they encounter Taylor, the girl Anthony cheated with, leaving Georgia with painful reminders of her heartbreak.

The day takes a turn in Chemistry class, where Georgia meets Pony, a new student whose playful banter and quirky humor provide a welcome respite from her troubles. Their chemistry—both academic and personal—sparks a sense of intrigue in Georgia, nudging her to reevaluate her lingering feelings for Anthony.



By chapter's end, Georgia chooses to celebrate the positive moments of her day and recognizes her self-worth, affirming that she deserves better than the pain Anthony caused her. This realization marks the emergence of a new chapter in her life, one that holds the promise of new connections, particularly with Pony, hinting at hopeful beginnings ahead.

Key Events and Themes:

- Georgia's struggle to move past her tumultuous relationship with Anthony.
- The complexities of high school social dynamics and the impact of betrayal.
- The role of friendship in emotional healing, highlighted by Georgia and Lauren's supportive dialogues.
- The excitement and potential of new relationships as symbolized by Georgia's emerging connection with Pony.
- A journey towards self-empowerment and the decision to leave past hurts behind.



Chapter 3 Summary: Three

In Chapter 3 of "Stay Gold" by Tobly McSmith, Pony steps into a new chapter of his life as he arrives at the elaborate mansion of the once-renowned actor Ted London. Experiencing a mix of nervousness and excitement, he is greeted by Victor, Ted's assistant, who takes him on a tour of the dusty, memorabilia-lined home filled with remnants of Hollywood's golden era, including an impressive Oscar.

Pony's job involves organizing Ted's extensive collection, an opportunity he eagerly embraces, especially considering the financial reward of \$250 per room. His underlying motivation, however, stems from his desire to fund gender-affirming surgery, a significant goal that weighs heavily on his mind.

When Pony finally meets Ted, the encounter begins with an awkward tension. Despite his frailty and occasional disconnect from the present, Ted's warmth and humor shine through as he recounts tales from his remarkable career. For Pony, this is both an awe-inspiring experience and a source of anxiety as he grapples with his identity as a transgender individual, worrying about Ted's potential reaction.

As they explore the mansion packed with nostalgic treasures, Pony feels honored yet overwhelmed by the history surrounding him. During this time, a text from his supportive friend Max acts as a reassuring touchstone,



reminding Pony of the importance of expressing his feelings and embracing his identity.

The chapter also delves into Pony's emotional landscape, especially when he reflects on his challenging past relationship with Joni. Her reluctance to publicly acknowledge him as a trans person added to his struggles with self-acceptance. Meanwhile, Pony's friendship with Max continues to thrive, as they share experiences and offer each other valuable guidance in their journeys of self-discovery during adolescence.

At IHOP, Pony confides in Max about his budding crush on a cheerleader at school, sharing both the thrill and apprehension that comes with these feelings. Max emphasizes the necessity of being honest about one's identity, urging Pony to take the leap of faith. Themes of friendship, self-acceptance, and the complexities of young love interweave throughout the chapter, ultimately leading Pony to a moment of introspection as he contemplates his romantic feelings and the courage required to come out. The chapter concludes on a poignant note, balancing hope and fear as Pony navigates his path toward self-realization and acceptance.

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Chapter 4: Four

In Chapter 4, we delve into Georgia's vibrant yet complex morning as she gears up for a new school year. Excitedly anticipating a ride from Pony, a new boy who has piqued her interest, she wakes up to a chorus of ambitious alarms. The day is tinged with nostalgia as Georgia reflects on her mother's absence, who left two years ago for a new life, creating a void in both her and her father's lives following the divorce.

Amidst her preparations, Georgia enjoys a warm moment with her dad, who is dressed for an important day at work. They engage in a lighthearted yet meaningful conversation about cooking and their shared longing for moments that her mother used to bring to their home. This backstory adds depth to their dynamic, showing the emotional tug-of-war they both navigate while missing her presence.

As Pony arrives, the atmosphere is filled with awkward yet endearing banter. They discover common ground over their shared love for movies; however, Pony's elusive background, including his true name and life as an "army brat," piques Georgia's curiosity, hinting at deeper mysteries yet to unfold.

Their morning takes an unexpected twist when Officer Dan pulls them over. Georgia's familiarity with local law enforcement, thanks to her cheerleading activities, allows her to ease Pony's nerves. Her playful interaction with



Officer Dan not only showcases her charm but also lightens the situation, culminating in a warning instead of a ticket. This comedic misadventure heightens Georgia's intrigue about Pony, who remains an enigma.

Upon arriving at school, Pony hints at a significant secret he holds but

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Chapter 5 Summary: Five

In Chapter 5 of "Stay Gold," Pony, the main character, grapples with feelings of isolation amidst the lively, vibrant atmosphere of a football game in Georgia's world. Drawing parallels to the classic story of the Little Mermaid, he feels a deep longing to belong, as the sounds and sights of the game overwhelm him in contrast to his more familiar outings with friends from the LGBTQIA Center. This sense of anxiety is accentuated when Georgia's mother mistakenly refers to him as "babygirl," triggering his insecurities about his gender identity.

As the game continues, Pony musters the courage to leave the parents' section and venture closer to the student bleachers, where he hopes to connect with Georgia. Although they share a flirty moment, Pony feels rejected when Georgia hesitates at the mention of meeting her mother, further deepening his sense of disconnection.

Seeking to lift his spirits, Pony finds unexpected camaraderie with two guys, Jerry and Kenji. Initially, they tease him, but their playful banter soon evolves into genuine friendship. Pony experiences a newfound sense of belonging through their lighthearted interactions, despite feeling slightly out of his comfort zone with their typical bro-talk.

However, the mood shifts dramatically when Pony comes to the realization



that Georgia is likely dating Jake, the star quarterback, leaving him feeling deflated. Just as he contemplates leaving the game, Jerry and Kenji encourage him to join them for a trip to Sonic, introducing a comforting element of friendship amid his internal struggles regarding Georgia and his identity. Throughout this chapter, the themes of belonging, gender identity, friendship, and the complexities of social navigation are intricately woven, making Pony's journey relatable and compelling.

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Chapter 6 Summary: Six

Chapter 6 Summary: The Doubts and Dances

In this chapter, titled "Six," we navigate the tumultuous emotions of Georgia Roberts as she recovers from a chaotic party the night before, characterized by both excitement and confusion. Still nursing a hangover, her mind drifts towards Pony, a new boy at Hillcrest High with whom she feels a budding connection, complicating her social landscape filled with friendships and unresolved feelings about her past.

As Saturday morning unfolds, Georgia indulges in her favorite cinnamon rolls while daydreaming about Pony and reflecting on her aspirations as a potential freelance writer—an ambition that sparks both intrigue and apprehension, particularly regarding her cheerleading friends who may not understand her creative pursuits. With another party on the horizon at the affluent Jake's house, thoughts of Pony linger, especially following their awkward encounter the previous night.

At Jake's opulent gathering, the atmosphere brims with superficiality and social dynamics that make Georgia feel conflicted. She engages in superficial conversation with Jake, who takes an interest in her but fails to spark real chemistry. When Pony makes an appearance, he struggles to



navigate this elite social setting, feeling like an outsider among the wealth and status that envelops him. Despite this, he seeks out Georgia, hoping to deepen their connection.

The tension between Georgia and Pony crescendos as they finally confront their feelings for one another during a quiet moment filled with vulnerability, playing a game of "Truth or Truth." However, their budding relationship takes a significant turn when Pony reveals that he is transgender. This revelation initially excites Georgia but soon plunges her into confusion and frustration as she grapples with the implications of this new understanding, feeling that such an important part of his identity had been hidden from her.

Their interaction culminates in a bittersweet kiss, but miscommunication leads to emotional fallout. Overwhelmed by the complexity of Pony's truth, Georgia retreats, leaving Pony to walk away. This moment leaves both characters at a crossroads, forced to confront their individual journeys and the uncertainty of their relationship.

Themes and Character Development:

1. **Self-Discovery and Identity:** Georgia embarks on a personal journey, exploring not only her social identity as a cheerleader but also her unfolding



sense of self through her relationship with Pony.

2. Friendship Dynamics: The complexities of Georgia's friendships are highlighted, especially regarding peer pressure and the expectations that often accompany high school social circles.

3. Romantic Tension: The flirtation between Georgia and Pony adds a classic element of romance, complicated by societal norms and personal identity struggles.

4. Emotional Vulnerability: Both characters reveal their vulnerabilities, underscoring the challenges of honesty in relationships—particularly when deeply personal identities and perceptions collide.

Overall, this chapter deftly blends humor, adolescent conflict, and emotional depth, capturing the essence of youth while hinting at future growth and possibilities for both Georgia and Pony. Their journey through doubt and discovery continues, setting the stage for deeper exploration in subsequent chapters.



Chapter 7 Summary: Seven

Chapter 7 Summary of "Stay Gold"

In Chapter 7, we delve deeper into Pony's emotional turmoil and his evolving relationship with Georgia. After a long, introspective walk home, Pony arrives at the residence of Ted London, a former Hollywood star whose reflections on life provide a backdrop of wisdom and nostalgia. Despite his weariness, Pony engages with Ted in a playful yet profound exchange, during which Ted expresses a philosophy of living without regrets, even as he is surrounded by the remnants of his past. This interaction serves as a catalyst for Pony, who wrestles with his sense of identity, particularly as a transgender man navigating the complexities of self-expression.

As Pony reaches out to Georgia through emails, he confronts his feelings for her, torn between attraction and the fear of revealing his truth. His vulnerability shines through in his messages, where he hopes for understanding but is met with her mixed emotional response, indicating that she is still processing their shared night together. This correspondence reveals an undercurrent of tension as both characters grapple with their identities and burgeoning feelings.



Simultaneously, Georgia spends time with friends at Mia's house, indulging in light-hearted gossip while internally grappling with the weight of her secret about Pony. The discussions about relationships among her friends highlight the pressure of societal norms that complicate her feelings for him, forcing her to question her own identity.

The chapter reaches its climax with a poignant late-night meeting on Georgia's porch. Here, Pony attempts to convey his true feelings and clarify his identity amidst the palpable tension. Georgia, wrestling with her confusion and societal expectations, ultimately struggles to reconcile her emotions with the reality of their situation. The chapter concludes with her decision to remain just friends, leaving Pony feeling hurt and defeated. This heart-wrenching ending underscores the intricacies of love, identity, and the challenges of acceptance as both characters navigate a world fraught with misunderstanding and societal pressures.

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Chapter 8: Eight

Chapter 8 Summary

On a serene Sunday morning, Pony shares a heartfelt conversation with his sister, Rocky. Balancing her jobs at an Ethiopian restaurant and as a dancer at a burlesque venue, Rocky's vibrant spirit provides a warm backdrop for their playful banter. During their chat, Pony hints at his unresolved feelings for Georgia, a significant figure from his past. Although he claims to have moved on, he wrestles with lingering hurt and frustration tied to their history.

As the day unfolds, Pony receives an invitation from his friend Max for a fundraiser carnival at the local LGBTQIA Center. Initially excited, Pony's enthusiasm quickly turns into anxiety as he grapples with maintaining his stealth identity at his new school, navigating the challenges of being a transgender teenager. Despite feeling welcomed at the bustling café Ellie's, Pony remains sensitive about his emotions and physical appearance.

At the carnival, Pony reconnects with familiar faces, including Dylan, who extends an invite to an open mic event, and Kelly, a school acquaintance who heightens his anxiety of being recognized. In a quest for solace, Pony seeks out a tarot card reading with Gretchen, where he draws a card that



hints at heartbreak linked to his feelings for Georgia. Though her interpretation is grim, she offers a glimmer of hope, suggesting that the future is not set in stone. Ultimately, Pony's protective instincts surface as he departs, determined to keep his identity shielded from prying eyes.

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Chapter 9 Summary: Nine

Chapter 9 Summary: A Sudden Turn of Events

In Chapter 9 of "Stay Gold," the story unfolds with Georgia spending time with her younger sister Izzy after a grueling cheerleading practice at Sonic Drive-In. As Georgia tries to fulfill her role as a supportive big sister, she grapples with her personal heartbreak stemming from her relationship with Pony and the fallout with Jake, a fellow student and former love interest. While cheerleading often promotes mentorship, Georgia feels inadequate, especially as Izzy, passionate about cheer, views it as her road to success.

Amidst her struggles, Georgia finds a sense of purpose and confidence in her recent role as a writer for the school newspaper. Her witty articles have started to gain attention, providing a welcome distraction from her emotional turmoil. However, the situation takes a turn when Jake, who has been silent for weeks, unexpectedly approaches her at Sonic, leading to a tense yet necessary conversation.

Reluctant but curious, Georgia agrees to walk with Jake to his truck. Their conversation reveals a blend of vulnerability and unease as Jake seeks to clarify the misunderstandings that arose during a recent party. He reveals that Taylor, a girl who was the focal point of Georgia's jealousy, is actually



his half-cousin. This news helps dispel some of Georgia's insecurities but leaves her cautious.

As the chat unfolds, Jake surprises Georgia by asking her to attend the upcoming homecoming dance with him. Caught off guard, Georgia feels a surge of hope and excitement as she tentatively accepts, igniting a spark in their chemistry. Just as their moment turns sweet, it is abruptly interrupted by the football team, who comically ambush the cheerleaders with water balloons, triggering a hilarious and chaotic scene.

In this moment of unexpected joy and chaos, Jake's protective nature shines through, revealing his intention behind this meeting: not only to clear the air but also to ensure Georgia's safety during the playful ambush.

Chapter 9 beautifully weaves themes of sisterhood, the confusion of teenage romance, and the struggle for personal identity amid societal pressures. As Georgia endeavors to guide Izzy through her cheerleading aspirations while sorting through her own tumultuous feelings for Jake, her growth as a character becomes increasingly apparent against the backdrop of high school life.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Ten

In Chapter 10 of "Stay Gold," Pony spends his lunch break with friends Kenji and Jerry, sharing a lighthearted moment filled with laughter, cheesy pizza, and small talk that revolves around their romantic escapades. Jerry excitedly shares that he kissed Kelly, while Kenji updates them on the latest gossip regarding Georgia and her tumultuous breakup with Ant, which included a scandal involving a leaked video. This revelation deeply affects Pony, prompting him to reflect on the emotional barriers he has built to protect himself, particularly regarding his complicated feelings for Georgia.

As the school day continues, the weight of this information hangs over Pony. When he returns to class, Mr. Glover announces a Science Hack Day project that requires students to pair up, and much to Pony's surprise and trepidation, he is paired with Georgia. Their initial interaction is awkward but evolves into a heartfelt moment where both express a desire for honesty, signaling a potential shift in their relationship.

The chapter concludes with a series of text messages exchanged between Pony and Georgia, underlining their growing connection while illuminating Pony's struggles with his identity as a transgender teen and his feelings for Georgia.

Key themes emerge throughout this chapter:



- **Peer Pressure & Identity:** Pony's desire to fit in clashes with his journey of self-acceptance as he navigates the complexities of being a transgender teen.
- **Friendship & Connection:** The narrative delves into the challenges of building friendships against a backdrop of past hurts and insecurities.
- **Gossip & Reputation:** The impact of rumors—particularly regarding Georgia's breakup—serves to illustrate how external narratives can influence personal relationships.
- **Emotional Vulnerability:** Pony's willingness to open up to Georgia signifies his gradual lowering of defenses, indicating a desire to connect despite his fears.

Overall, this chapter poignantly captures teenage life as it explores the intricacies of relationships, identity, and friendship amid the tumultuous backdrop of growing up.



Chapter 11 Summary: Eleven

Chapter 11 Summary

In Chapter 11 of "Stay Gold," Georgia navigates a challenging evening as she prepares dinner while grappling with a long-awaited phone call from her estranged mother. Their conversation is fraught with tension, underscoring the unresolved resentment stemming from her mother's departure. Georgia feels a mix of nostalgia and anger when her mother invites her to Thanksgiving in Paris with her new partner, Wayne, a fact that deepens her commitment to her father, who is struggling alone after her mother's abrupt exit.

To ease the strain before dinner, Georgia lightheartedly distracts her father with a joke about paprika, trying to keep the mood light. When her friend Pony arrives, the atmosphere shifts as they delve into their school project on water depletion. Their dynamic blends humor with heartfelt discussions, allowing for laughter amidst the more serious undertones of their lives. During the dinner, Pony opens up about the challenges he faces as a transgender person, particularly how his father struggles to accept his identity. This moment fosters a deeper connection between Georgia and Pony, as they share their vulnerabilities.



As the evening progresses, they indulge in ice cream, and Georgia is pleasantly surprised to learn that Pony recognizes her as the Anonymous writer behind the Hillcrest Reporter. This revelation boosts her confidence in her writing abilities and solidifies the bond between them.

The chapter wraps up with a light-hearted text exchange where Pony expresses his mixed feelings about Georgia's upcoming date with Jake, hinting at the complex layers of their friendship and burgeoning relationship. This chapter not only reveals critical character development—illuminating Georgia's conflicting feelings about family, her deepening friendship with Pony, and the themes of loyalty, identity, and connection—but also sets the stage for future interactions, highlighting the nuanced dynamics of their lives.



Chapter 12: Twelve

In Chapter 12, titled "Searching for Clarity," Pony grapples with a mix of emotions as he watches his crush, Georgia, on a date with Jake. This unrequited love weighs heavily on him, especially as he busies himself packing clothes for Ted, whose health is deteriorating. Through this task, Pony finds a distraction from his feelings, but he can't escape the haunting memories of his own struggles with identity, particularly his discomfort with the expectations of gender presentation.

His friend Max reaches out to him with a petition advocating for a transgender girl who is facing discrimination at school. This plea underscores the critical need for visibility and support within the trans community. While Pony has empathy for the situation, he hesitates to voice his support publicly, concerned that it may jeopardize his safety and the acceptance of his new friends at Hillcrest. This internal conflict reflects the broader societal challenges faced by individuals navigating their identities in a less accepting era.

Pony's role expands as he chooses to stay with Ted while his caretaker Victor takes a break. During this time, he learns more about Ted's past, including a heartfelt photograph of Ted with a man named Lee. This discovery opens the door to a deeper conversation in which Ted reveals his own struggles with identity and the sacrifices he made in pursuit of



acceptance in Hollywood. His poignant reflections illuminate the scars left by societal norms and the complexity of love, revealing that beneath Ted's celebrity persona lies a story filled with regret and longing.

The chapter culminates in a tense discussion between Pony and Max

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Chapter 13 Summary: Thirteen

Summary of Chapter 13: Stay Gold

In this vibrant chapter, the excitement of the Science Hack Day competition culminates as Mr. Glover announces the surprising winners: Georgia and Pony, for their cleverly named project, Project Droned. Their victory entitles them to an excused absence to visit the science museum, but Georgia grapples with mixed feelings about their success, while Pony wholeheartedly revels in it, playfully coining the phrase "winner, winner, chicken dinner" as an inside joke.

On their way to cheer practice, Georgia stumbles upon Pony's past connection with Ms. Randolph, a teacher who knew him before his gender transition. This revelation piques Georgia's curiosity, leading to a poignant conversation where Pony reflects on his experiences before transitioning, describing his previous self as someone concealed in baggy clothes, feeling invisible. Their exchange deepens their bond, fostering trust and understanding in their friendship.

At cheer practice, the atmosphere shifts when Mia shares distressing news: the football players have stolen the cheerleading mascot suit and bullied their teammate Kelly in the process. This incident ignites a vengeful spirit



within the squad, prompting them to plot a prank against the boys. However, Georgia recognizes that the planned prank is not merely harmless fun but an act of bullying. Torn between her desire to retaliate and her moral convictions, she ultimately embraces the group's thrill and suggests a bold plan—pantsing the football players during the pep rally.

Amid the chaos, Georgia remains a steadfast friend, reaching out to Kelly, who is understandably shaken by the bullying incident. Despite Kelly's wish to move on from the issue, Georgia is resolute in her support, seeking justice for her friend while they search for the hidden mascot suit. Their successful retrieval suggests a turning point, potentially allowing them to reclaim their dignity.

The chapter wraps up with lighthearted banter between Georgia and Pony, affirming their friendship even as Georgia insists their museum outing is not a date. This playful exchange encapsulates the themes of identity, friendship, and the challenges of adolescence, echoing the complexities of their journey together.



Chapter 14 Summary: Fourteen

In Chapter 14 of "Stay Gold," Pony prepares for a special day with Georgia, anticipating a perfect outing filled with spontaneity and romance, much like a cinematic montage. After picking her up, he is captivated by her vibrant red coat, and together they engage in light-hearted conversations about their daily routines and dreams, revealing their aspirations for the future.

Georgia's ambition to live in New York resonates with Pony, as it echoes his sister's own experiences, enhancing their connection.

Their first stop is the celebrated Taco Joint, where they enjoy breakfast tacos before heading to the Perot Museum. Beneath the faux stars, they share intimate moments and secrets, deepening their bond.

In a heartfelt conversation, Pony mentions his acquaintance with Ted London, a struggling actor who has confided in him about personal issues. Georgia, showing empathy, encourages Pony to help Ted find closure with his long-lost love, Lee. This leads them to Lee's antique shop, where they bravely share Ted's situation despite Pony's initial reluctance. Their compassionate act reveals the complexities of love and regret, further intertwining their lives.

As the day unfolds, they visit an old playground, where they swing and candidly discuss personal struggles. Pony opens up about wearing a binder



to conceal his chest and his desire for surgery, showcasing his vulnerability. Georgia, aware of the deepening connection between them, offers her support in his journey.

Their day culminates with a playful adventure at Ralph's VR World, where they immerse themselves in a fantastical environment. This experience leads to an unexpected kiss, signifying a pivotal moment in their relationship. Pony comforts Georgia by expressing his willingness to share more about himself, as they both navigate the evolving dynamics of their friendship.

As the day concludes, they reflect on the joy they found together, hinting at the potential for a deeper romantic connection amidst the complexities of their relationship. The chapter wraps up with sweet and humorous messages exchanged between them, capturing the uncertainty and excitement of their growing bond.

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Chapter 15 Summary: Fifteen

In Chapter 15 of "Stay Gold," Pony finds himself in a bittersweet moment on a quiet Friday evening, sharing Totino's Pizza Rolls with his crush, Georgia. The air is thick with unspoken tension following a recent kiss, as Pony hopes for another romantic spark. Their conversation is light-hearted, revolving around Georgia's provocative article that questions the safety of their school's cherished traditions, showcasing their playful dynamic.

However, the evening takes a turn when Pony's older sister, Rocky, unexpectedly arrives home to celebrate their mother's birthday, abruptly interrupting the burgeoning intimacy between Pony and Georgia. Rocky's enthusiastic engagement with Georgia, discussing dating and beauty tips, adds complexity to the scenario, leaving Pony amidst a swirl of emotions as he juggles his feelings for Georgia with his desire for closeness with his sister.

Dinner at home becomes a battlefield, particularly with their father, Norman, whose drinking leads to a volatile confrontation. His insults directed at both Rocky and Pony create a toxic atmosphere, ultimately prompting Rocky to fiercely defend her brother. In the wake of the explosive dinner, Rocky and Pony escape to a Sonic drive-in, where Rocky encourages Pony to contemplate his future and the possibility of moving to New York, emulating her path towards independence.



Amidst this supportive sibling dynamic, Rocky perceives the potential in Pony's connection with Georgia. She urges him to be bold in expressing his feelings. Inspired by their discussions about love and grand gestures, Pony is reminded of Georgia's favorite movie, "Love Actually," and he becomes determined to recreate a romantic scene as a confession of his feelings. Yet, Rocky's imminent departure tempers his excitement and leaves him momentarily paralyzed by uncertainty.

The chapter culminates with a text from Georgia, subtly expressing her yearning for Pony's attention, further emphasizing the struggle Pony faces in balancing his relationships amidst family turmoil. With Rocky's encouragement, he resolves to make a last-minute plan to gather supplies for his love confession, illustrating his emotional growth and the weight of his feelings as he navigates the intricate landscape of young love and family dynamics.

Key Themes and Character Developments:

1. Family Dynamics: The tension with Pony's father highlights the impact of toxic relationships, while Rocky's protection of her brother serves as a pillar of support amidst chaos.



2. Young Love and Relationships Pony's crush on Georgia captures the challenges of teenage affection and the bravery required to convey one's feelings.

3. Personal Growth and Future Aspirations: Rocky's experiences in New York inspire Pony to contemplate his own aspirations, hinting at themes of self-discovery and independence.

4. Awkwardness of Adolescence The blend of humor and discomfort in Pony's interactions with Georgia and Rocky reflects the often challenging journey through adolescence and the complexities of romantic relationships.

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Chapter 16: Sixteen

Summary of Chapter 16: Stay Gold

In this emotionally charged chapter, we find Georgia waking up on her couch, feeling a sense of disorientation and nostalgia after a long nap. Her father is out on a date with his new girlfriend, prompting Georgia to reminisce about the comforting family movie nights they once shared, deepening her sense of loss and longing for the past.

Her thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of her friends Mia and Lauren, who are concerned about an article in the school newspaper. This article critiques a school tradition of prank wars between football players and cheerleaders, a tradition that many students take pride in. Unbeknownst to her friends, Georgia authored the article anonymously, setting the stage for conflicting loyalties as they engage in a spirited discussion about it. Their laughter fills the room until Pony unexpectedly appears, donning a quirky Santa hat and wielding poster boards that express his affection for Georgia through a playful yet sincere presentation.

As Pony lays his feelings bare, the mood shifts dramatically. Georgia grapples with her emotions, recognizing her affection for Pony while simultaneously confronting her trepidation about dating a transgender boy.

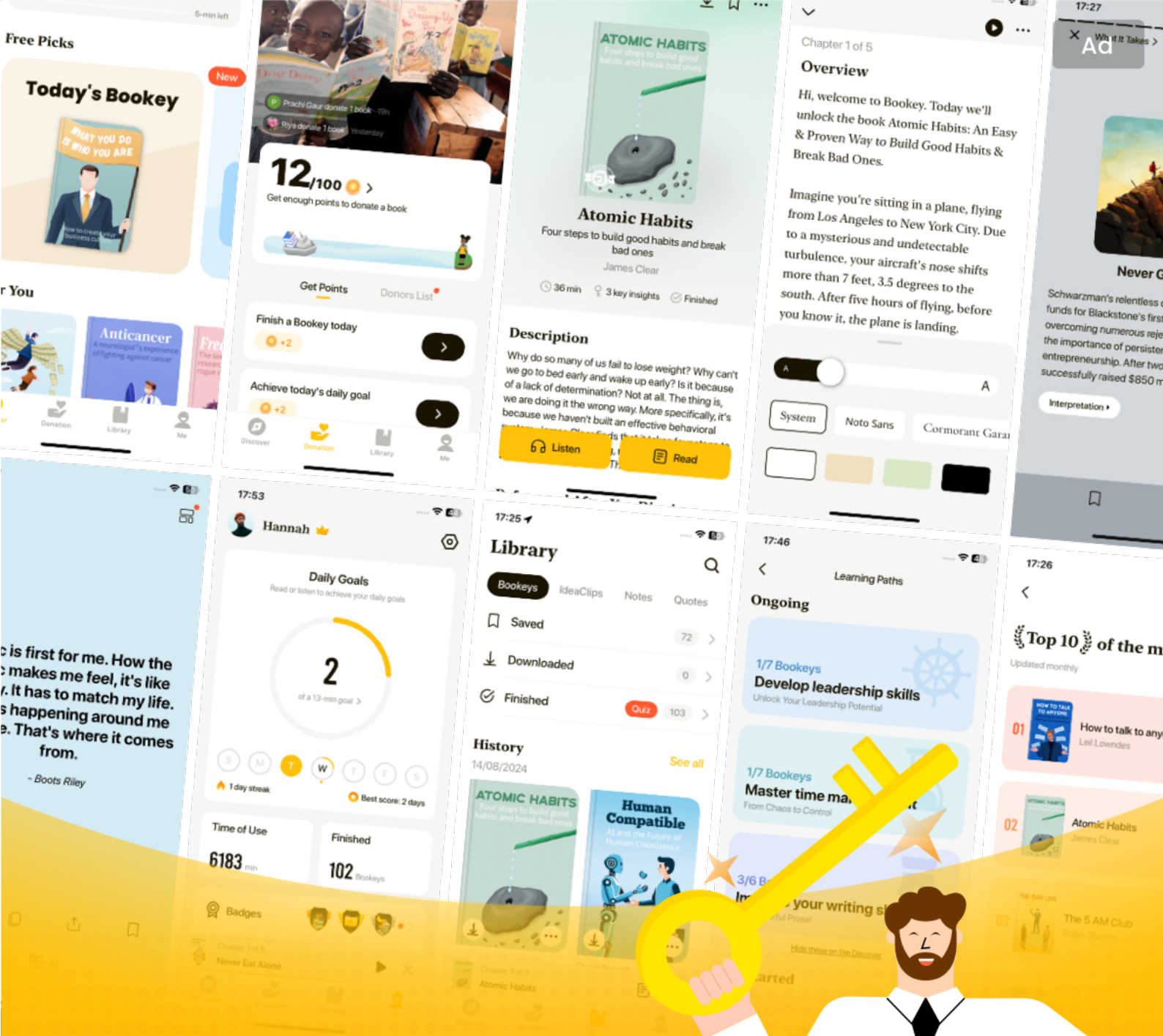


She is apprehensive about the social implications such a relationship might carry in their high school environment. Frustrated by her hesitation, Pony passionately argues that love should defy societal norms and expectations, urging her to reconsider her fears.

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Chapter 17 Summary: Seventeen

In Chapter 17, we witness Pony's internal battle with despair and the temptation to escape his pain through self-harm. This particularly difficult Sunday brings forth haunting thoughts of suicide, yet he finds a glimmer of comfort in the presence of family, especially his mother and sister.

Struggling with overwhelming emotions, he seeks refuge at the home of Ted London, a figure who provides an opportunity for connection and understanding.

Upon arriving at Ted's place, Pony is taken aback to learn that Lee Grayson, a significant person from his past, had recently visited. This revelation stirs anxiety within him, prompting reflections on his own journey with his gender identity. With bravery, he confides in Ted about being transgender. Their conversation exposes the generational divide in understanding gender identity and highlights a universal theme: the necessity to conceal one's true self for safety and acceptance.

After their sobering discussion, Pony leaves Ted's feeling uncertain yet slightly uplifted. The narrative takes a positive turn when he receives a FaceTime call from his sister, Rocky, who is enjoying a vibrant outing in New York with friends. Through their conversation, Pony discovers a circle of support among the LGBTQIA community, embodied by Rocky's friends, who offer words of encouragement that ignite a flicker of hope within him.



The chapter culminates on a promising note as Pony decides to reach out to Gretchen, a friend from the LGBTQIA Center, suggesting they meet for dinner. This step signifies his evolving journey toward finding companionship and healing. Overall, this chapter delves into the complexities of identity, the crucial role of acceptance, and the power of community, marking a pivotal moment in Pony's quest for connection and self-acceptance amidst his struggles.

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Chapter 18 Summary: Eighteen

Chapter 18 Summary of "Stay Gold"

In this introspective chapter of "Stay Gold," Georgia finds herself alone in an empty classroom, waiting for Ms. Randolph. The absence of her friend Pony hangs heavily in the air, symbolizing her feelings of isolation as the pressures of homecoming week loom. She juggles her cheerleading commitments alongside the weight of social expectations, feeling creatively stifled and unsure about her next writing project.

When Ms. Randolph arrives, she reveals that Georgia's latest article, which playfully tackles pranking, has stirred up controversy among the parents, many of whom want to know the identity of its anonymous author. This revelation frustrates Georgia; her fear of judgment prevents her from claiming her work. Ms. Randolph encourages her to embrace her voice, highlighting the importance of self-expression.

As Georgia heads to cheerleading practice, she encounters her friend Lauren, who is distraught over rumors of her boyfriend Matt's infidelity. The emotional turmoil escalates as Georgia and another friend, Kelly, try to support Lauren while wrestling with their own friendship dilemmas. In a vulnerable moment, Georgia breaks the unspoken rule of loyalty by calling



Matt a "douchebag," leading to rising tensions as Mia, another friend, questions Georgia's honesty and the trust within their group.

In parallel, we glimpse Pony's internal struggle via a text exchange with his friend Max. Pony is caught between his desire to support Max in protesting discrimination and his fear of the social backlash that could ensue. This creates a stark contrast to Georgia's own fight for authenticity and honesty, culminating in a theme of urgency and conflict for both characters.

Key Themes and Character Developments:

- **Friendship Dynamics:** This chapter explores the fragility and complexity of friendships as the characters confront personal crises and navigate the implications of their past connections.
- **Identity and Authenticity:** Georgia grapples with the challenges of self-expression, mirroring Pony's struggle for visibility in a complicated social landscape.
- **Conflict and Support:** Both storylines highlight the delicate balance between supporting loved ones and asserting personal beliefs, evident in Pony's hesitance and Georgia's decisive outburst.

Through these intertwined narratives, the chapter deepens the emotional landscape of the characters, evoking themes of self-acceptance and the challenges of young relationships in navigating loyalty, identity, and



personal conviction.

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Chapter 19 Summary: Nineteen

Summary of Chapter 19:

In this chapter, Pony faces the anxiety of getting fitted for a suit, a task that evokes memories of previous awkward experiences with dances and social gatherings. Alongside his friends Jerry and Kenji, Pony finds some joy in their companionship, though he also grapples with deep-seated insecurities related to his transgender identity. The fitting session with the tailor is laced with uncomfortable humor, as Pony cringes at his friends' playful teasing, reflecting the complexities of his desire to fit in while feeling out of place.

Later, the trio heads to Hooters, a venue characterized by its outdated decor and unappealing ambiance. Here, Jerry tries to project a sense of maturity by making lighthearted, inappropriate jokes about ordering drinks, but the atmosphere shifts when the conversation turns to Kenji's new Tinder account. Jerry's crude remarks about women heighten Pony's anxiety, prompting feelings of anger and shame. He recognizes the need to advocate for those being objectified, yet he feels paralyzed by his own fears and concealed truths.

As the chapter unfolds, Pony's emotional turmoil deepens when thoughts of Georgia, a girl he longs for, come to the forefront. Jerry's suggestion to set



Pony up with Taylor—a girl who is friends with Kelly, Jerry's date and Georgia's rival—brings a mix of excitement and bitterness. This potential arrangement complicates Pony's feelings, stirring up desires for both revenge and a chance to reconnect with Georgia.

Throughout the chapter, themes of friendship, self-acceptance, and the intricacies of young love are poignantly explored. Pony's journey as a transgender youth navigating a challenging social landscape serves as a backdrop for the emotional highs and lows he experiences, underscoring the universal struggles of seeking belonging and understanding in adolescence.

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Chapter 20: Twenty

In Chapter 20, the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of high school homecoming, a time often marked by excitement and social pressure for teenagers. Georgia and Pony, two central characters, navigate their respective emotional challenges as they prepare for the evening's festivities.

Georgia is eager to showcase her striking red dress, affectionately named Stella, and is particularly anxious about the family photo opportunity with her father. Beneath her excitement lies the weight of a strained bond with her cheer squad and the upcoming cheer competition, which compounds her feelings of insecurity. A heartfelt and unexpected visit from her mother brings unresolved emotions to the forefront, prompting Georgia to confront the hurt stemming from her mother's absence in her life.

Meanwhile, Pony grapples with his own turmoil. As he readies himself for the dance, a call informs him of the death of Ted London, his former boss. This tragic revelation plunges him into grief, challenging his resolve to enjoy the celebration ahead. Despite this personal loss, he strives to maintain a positive outlook.

At the dance, the atmosphere shifts as Georgia begins to blossom on the dance floor with Jake. However, her joy is soon overshadowed when she learns that Pony has brought Taylor, a former friend, as his date. This



revelation stings, deepening her sense of betrayal. Tensions escalate further when a homophobic prank targets Kelly and Taylor, leading to a pivotal moment for Pony. In an act of solidarity with his friends, he bravely comes out as transgender, a decision that stuns the audience and serves as a powerful challenge to societal prejudices.

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Chapter 21 Summary: Twenty-One

In Chapter 21 of "Stay Gold," the narrative unfolds in the somber atmosphere of a Dallas hospital, where Georgia grapples with her overwhelming guilt and sorrow following Pony's brutal beating. The chapter opens with her reflecting on the chaotic aftermath of the incident, filled with confusion and anger towards the hate that targeted Pony, a transgender youth who had recently come out. This moment provides insight into the broader societal issues of transphobia that permeate their community.

A pivotal moment occurs when Georgia meets Max, Pony's friend, in a shared space of mourning and solidarity. Their conversation shifts focus to Pony's courage during his coming-out speech, underlining the emotional weight that both friends carry as they navigate their grief and the harsh realities of living in a world that often rejects people based on their identity.

Meanwhile, Pony, who has awakened in the hospital, is entangled not just in physical pain from his injuries but also in a battle against the emotional turmoil stemming from his father's persistent refusal to accept him. The arrival of Pony's parents further complicates the dynamic, with his mother's unconditional love contrasting sharply against his father's struggles with acceptance, illuminating the familial challenges often encountered by LGBTQIA individuals.



As the chapter progresses, Georgia takes on an active role in her school community by writing an empowering article that not only expresses her feelings for Pony but also advocates for a transformative vision regarding the treatment of LGBTQIA individuals within their school and the wider town. This marks a significant step towards fostering understanding and acceptance amid the prevailing prejudices.

The climax of the chapter builds as a rally is organized to support Pony, drawing together friends and allies. This collective effort symbolizes resistance against hate and the quest for justice. At the rally, Pony makes a profound declaration of his identity when he asserts, "I'm proud to be transgender," surrounded by a circle of unwavering support. This declaration stands as a testament to his resilience and self-acceptance, culminating in an emotional reunion with Georgia. In this moment, they openly express their feelings for one another, reinforcing their bond amidst adversity.

Overall, Chapter 21 eloquently addresses the themes of identity, acceptance, and the power of community in the wake of violence and discrimination, emphasizing the vital importance of standing united against hate and advocating for love and understanding.

