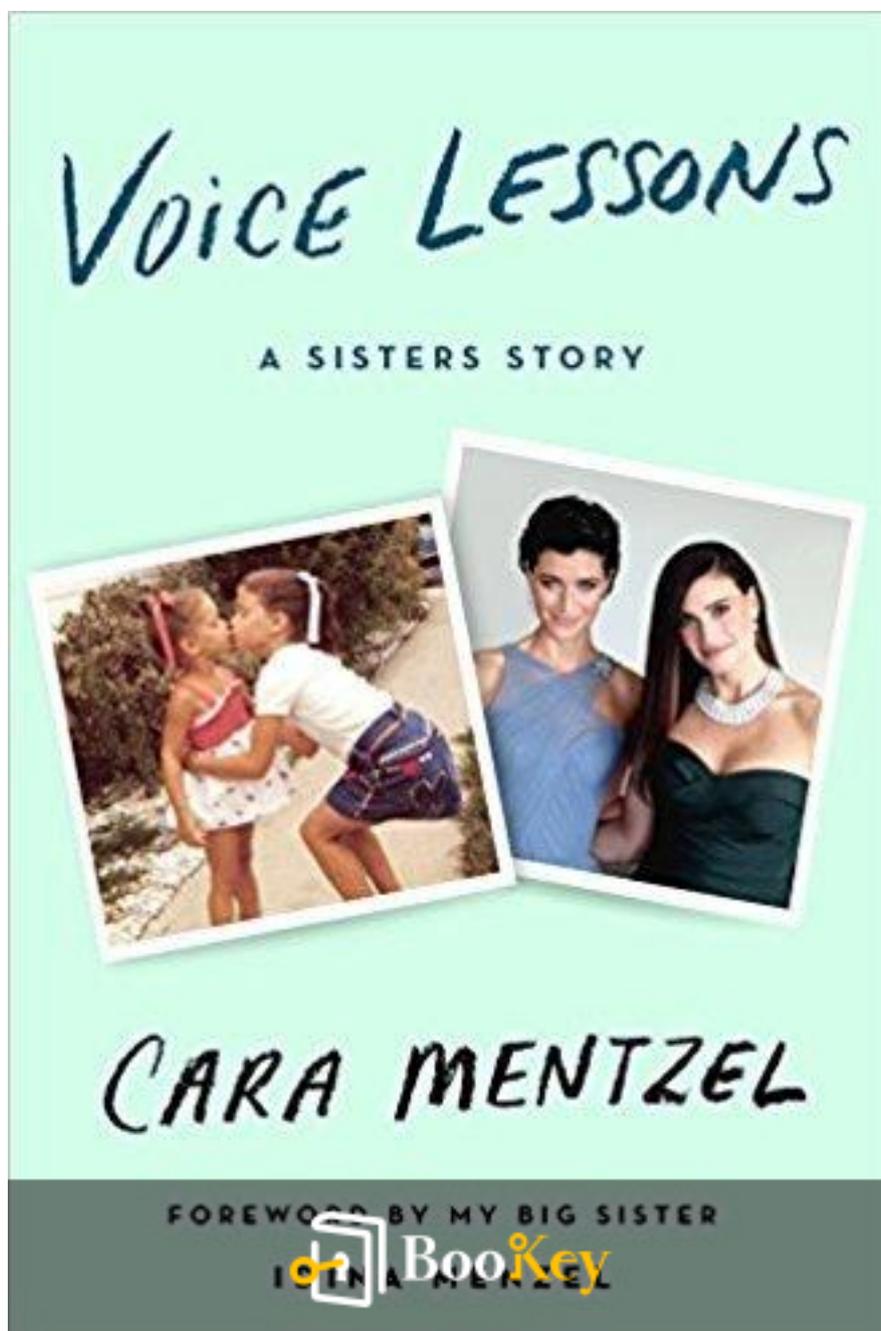


# Voice Lessons PDF (Limited Copy)

Cara Mentzel



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# Voice Lessons Summary

Finding My Voice in the Shadow of a Superstar Sister

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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## About the book

In *\*Voice Lessons\**, Cara Mentzel reflects on her life growing up alongside her sister, Idina Menzel, a celebrated actress known for her intense performances and iconic roles in Broadway productions like *\*Rent\** and *\*Wicked\**. This memoir unfolds the complexities of their relationship, illustrating how Cara navigates her own identity while often being overshadowed by Idina's remarkable fame.

Cara's narrative intertwines admiration with a sense of rivalry as she details her experiences attending significant theatrical milestones and glamorous events such as the Tonys and the Academy Awards. Through her lens, readers gain insight into the theater world, witnessing electrifying moments from the opening nights of major shows, which serve as backdrops to both her sister's successes and Cara's personal journey.

Throughout the memoir, Cara candidly shares her struggles in finding her own voice, both literally and figuratively, while also celebrating the deep bond she shares with her sister. The juxtaposition of their personalities creates a dynamic akin to popular characters Anna and Elsa from Disney's *\*Frozen\**, a connection heightened by Idina's performance of the film's signature song, "Let It Go." Ultimately, *\*Voice Lessons\** encapsulates Cara's heartfelt exploration of familial love amid the glare of Broadway lights, illustrating that even in the shadows, there is a path to self-discovery.

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and understanding.

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## About the author

In her book "Voice Lessons," Cara Mentzel takes readers on a journey through her life as an accomplished singer, actress, and author, while also sharing the challenges and triumphs of being the younger sister of the celebrated Broadway star Idina Menzel. Through a series of engaging anecdotes, Cara reflects on her experiences in the performing arts, navigating the complexities of sibling dynamics in the shadow of Idina's fame.

As she delves into her own musical journey, Cara touches on pivotal moments that shaped her artistic identity, including her dedication to theater, her love for storytelling, and her commitment to education. These elements come together to offer insights into the discipline required in the arts and the emotional resilience needed to pursue a creative career.

Throughout the chapters, Cara provides readers with a blend of personal stories and practical advice, aiming to inspire them to embrace their own unique paths. As she shares the lessons learned from her successes and setbacks, she emphasizes the importance of authenticity and self-acceptance in the pursuit of one's dreams.

"Voice Lessons" serves not only as a memoir but also as a motivational guide, encouraging readers to find their voices, overcome obstacles, and

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celebrate their individual journeys in both the arts and life. Cara's vibrant storytelling invites a deeper understanding of the performing arts while celebrating the bonds of family and the inspiring power of resilience.

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# Chapter 1 Summary: Lesson 1: How to Breathe

## ### Lesson 1: How to Breathe

In this chapter, we are introduced to Dina, almost seven, and the three-year-old narrator as they engage in imaginative play, pretending to be witches. Their antics evoke memories of their childhood adventures and underscore the profound bond between sisters. The narrator reflects on their early days, including the intense trials they faced when Dina was born. Their mother valiantly fought against the odds to ensure Dina's survival amidst a tumultuous backdrop of hospital visits and emotional challenges exacerbated by a misdiagnosis.

Seeking a fresh start, the family relocates from New Jersey to Long Island, where Dina assumes the role of the loving big sister, her spirit infused with warmth and a hint of magic. As they explore their new environment, the sisters' imaginative games serve to further strengthen their connection, creating a tapestry of joyful moments and shared dreams that lay the foundation for their enduring relationship.

## ### Lesson 2: How to Work Things Out—or Not

As Dina and the narrator transition into their teenage years, the dynamics of

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their relationship shift dramatically. Dina's new perm and evolving fashion sense mark her burgeoning independence, which stirs mixed feelings in the narrator as playful banter increasingly escalates into conflict. This tension is further exacerbated by their mother's protective nature, shaped by the narrator's previous health struggles, leading to frequent clashes between Dina and their mother.

The family faces a watershed moment during Thanksgiving when they receive the devastating news of their parents' separation. This announcement shatters the stability of their childhood and forces the sisters to confront the painful reality of divorce. However, in the midst of this upheaval, they find solace in each other, reinforcing the resilience of their sisterly bond.

Through the emotional turmoil, the narrator discovers that sisterhood can withstand life's challenges, deepening their connection as they navigate this personal crisis together.

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## Chapter 2 Summary: Lesson 2: How to Work Things Out—Or Not

In Chapter 2, titled "How to Work Things Out—Or Not," Cara Mentzel delves into the intricate tapestry of her childhood and the evolving relationship with her sister, Dina. The chapter effectively explores themes of identity, familial relationships, and the inevitable complexities that accompany growing up.

The narrative opens with a significant moment in Dina's life—her decision to get a perm. This act symbolizes her transition into adolescence and the societal pressures of beauty and self-presentation. In contrast, Cara grapples with her own insecurities, particularly regarding her naturally curly hair, which intensifies her feelings of inadequacy. This initial contrast sets the stage for an exploration of sibling dynamics.

Despite the underlying rivalry that sometimes surfaces during their childhood, Cara and Dina share a deep bond, characterized by laughter and cherished family movie nights. However, as Dina steps further into her teenage years, tensions rise between her and their mother, reflecting common familial conflicts of adolescence. The stress of meeting expectations leads to chaotic interactions, often escalating over seemingly trivial matters. These conflicts not only highlight the typical challenges faced in parent-child relationships but also underscore deeper issues

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stemming from their mother's upbringing. She struggles with her own childhood experiences and is determined to navigate motherhood differently than her own mother did.

The narrative takes a poignant turn on Thanksgiving Day when their parents announce their separation, a transformative event that profoundly affects both siblings. This revelation forces Cara to confront her feelings about family and belonging. In this chaotic time, she and Dina find comfort in one another, reinforcing the importance of sisterhood amidst heartache.

Simultaneously, Cara's aspirations in the realm of theater emerge as a key theme. Her desire for attention and validation is mirrored in her involvement in a summer camp's theater production. Faced with the daunting task of auditioning for the role of Adelaide, Cara confronts her fears, culminating in a performance that becomes a critical moment of personal growth. This experience is not only transformative for Cara's self-image but also serves to redefine her relationship with Dina, who is navigating her own successes and challenges.

The chapter concludes with Cara reflecting on her journey through adolescence, marked by a mix of joy and pain. She acknowledges the complexities of her admiration for Dina and the struggle to carve out her own identity against the backdrop of her sister's achievements. Through this heartfelt storytelling, Cara emphasizes the significance of sisterhood, the

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trials of self-acceptance, and the necessity of personal growth in the face of life's challenges.

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# Chapter 3 Summary: Lesson 3: How to Play a Part

## Lesson 3: How to Play a Part

### Overview of Sleepaway Camp Experience

Summer sleepaway camps are a cherished tradition on the East Coast, where parents invest considerable effort in preparing their children for an enriching experience. Families pack new summer wardrobes and large bags of necessities, while campers aged six to sixteen participate in diverse activities, from soccer to arts and crafts, and forge friendships during evening gatherings at the canteen.

### Dina's Camp Experience

The narrative begins with Dina, who embraced her first summer camp adventure. When her younger sister, Cara, just six years old, yearned to join her, their mother hesitated, worried about the impact of separation from home. However, Cara's persistent desire led to her eventual enrollment in the camp, though the experience turned out to be filled with misery and homesickness.

### Challenges of Fitting In

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While Dina flourished, surrounded by a close-knit group of friends, Cara felt out of place, struggling to connect with her peers. Instead, she found solace and comfort in the company of older international counselors. One poignant reminder of home was the gift of a Snoopy Sno-Cone Machine, which served as a comforting connection amidst the camp's novelty.

## **Second Attempt at Camp and Auditioning**

Despite her challenging first experience, Cara decided to give camp another try. Once more, she faced hurdles in forming enduring friendships. Driven by a quest for belonging, she auditioned for a production of \*Guys and Dolls\*, landing the role of Adelaide. This was a considerable achievement, especially given her apprehensions about singing.

## **Navigating the Audition and Performance**

The audition proved to be a turning point for Cara. When asked if she could sing, she experienced a clash of joy and anxiety. Ultimately, she nervously performed "Happy Birthday," which resulted in her casting as Adelaide. This moment sparked a mix of excitement and trepidation for Cara, revealing her complex feelings about performance.

## **Performance Day Reflections**

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As the performance date drew near, Cara desperately wanted her parents to attend, but camp policies prohibited parents from visiting during shows. Disappointment intensified as she learned they could not be there, leading to a confrontation with the camp director as Cara sought validation for her dreams.

### **Experience on Stage**

On the night of the performance, nerves threatened to overwhelm Cara, but she found empowerment in the audience's eyes—until the attention became overwhelming. The show had its triumphs and pitfalls, yet Cara reveled in her moments on stage, particularly during her rendition of "Adelaide's Lament." The final bow was met with relief and gratitude towards her castmates, who had supported her throughout the experience.

### **Transition After Camp**

With the performance behind her, Cara faced a new chapter as she transitioned to junior high. At the same time, Dina navigated the trials of teenage years, the sisters' bond proving essential as Cara encountered the complexities of early adolescence.

### **Dina's Development as a Performer**

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Dina's love for singing blossomed, and their mother encouraged her to chase her dreams, creating a stark contrast with Cara's uncertainty about her own aspirations. This sibling comparison led Cara to grapple with feelings of inadequacy, struggling against the shadow of Dina's talent and success.

## **Exploration of Identity**

Ultimately, Cara's journey is one of self-discovery, underscored by themes of belonging and identity. As she contemplates her future, she battles the challenge of defining herself outside of Dina's influence, oscillating between insecurity and moments of clarity about her unique strengths. Through her experiences at camp and beyond, Cara embarks on a path toward understanding her individuality and carving out her own identity in a world where comparisons are commonplace.

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# Chapter 4: Lesson 4: How to Measure a Year

## Chapter 4: How to Measure a Year

### Setting the Scene

Cara Mentzel's journey at the University of Colorado, Boulder, begins amidst a stunning backdrop reminiscent of Tuscany, a far cry from her Long Island hometown. Yet, despite the campus's beauty, her early days are marked by a sense of awkwardness as she grapples with her emerging identity in a sea of 25,000 students.

### Changing Paths

Initially aspiring to be a veterinarian, Cara's realization that this career path doesn't resonate with her leads to an undecided major. This transition acts as a pivotal moment in her life as she seeks to redefine herself in an environment devoid of familiar faces, laying the groundwork for her college experience.

### Adapting to College Life

As she acclimates to her new surroundings, Cara takes bold steps to shed her

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past identity. She transforms her style and immerses herself in the vibrant college culture of Boulder, while simultaneously facing the internal challenges arising from her introverted nature, especially within a lively party school atmosphere.

### **Sibling Comparisons**

Rooted in her adaptation is the persistent shadow of comparison to her older sister, Dina, a gifted performer experiencing success in her field. This sibling dynamic contributes to Cara's struggles with self-worth, as she wrestles with feelings of inadequacy and the underlying pressure that family expectations can impose.

### **Building Independence**

As the semester progresses, Cara begins to feel comfortable in her own skin; she finds her footing among peers and starts to cultivate a sense of independence. Surrounding herself with Boulder's natural beauty provides a comforting backdrop, enhancing her journey toward acceptance and belonging.

### **Connecting with Family**

Dina's visit brings a mix of connection and contrast. A hilarious

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rollerblading accident serves as a metaphor for their relationship, humorously encapsulating their differing life paths while emphasizing their bond as sisters amidst the dissimilarities of their journeys.

## **Romantic Relationships**

Simultaneously, Cara's relationship with Ken evolves, complicating her aspirations for success. She experiences jealousy and self-doubt, reflecting on how relationships can both motivate and challenge one's drive to achieve personal goals.

## **Defining Dreams**

As Cara confronts her future, she finds a surprising passion for psychology that reinvigorates her academic pursuits. Encouraged by a professor's mentorship, she starts to embrace her intelligence and broadens her aspirations, initiating a transformative shift in her self-perception.

## **Dynamics of Sisterhood**

Dina's presence at the university reinforces both inspiration and insecurity for Cara. Witnessing Dina's artistic triumphs highlights their divergent paths, leading Cara to confront her own uncertainties about success and fulfillment.

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## Navigating Motherhood

Cara's thoughts venture into the realm of motherhood, filled with both dreams and fears of what being a parent might entail. This culminates in a

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# Chapter 5 Summary: Lesson 5: How to Sing a Solo

## Lesson 5: How to Sing a Solo

At twenty-three, Cara Mentzel reflects on her evolution from a little girl who sang to her dolls to a woman who dreams of motherhood. This desire for family eclipses her initial ambitions for a singing career. Cara's relationship with Jon, which blossomed amidst echoes of a past romance, takes a significant turn when he proposes to her in La Jolla. Despite societal expectations to prioritize a career before starting a family, Cara's yearning for motherhood becomes increasingly pronounced.

Her journey takes a pivotal moment with a positive pregnancy test, stirring fears about her family's acceptance and their financial situation.

Nevertheless, she embraces the joy of impending motherhood, revealing the news to her parents, who react with a blend of concern and excitement. In contrast, her sister Dee, who is flourishing in her musical career, represents a different path, highlighting the complexities of their sibling rivalry where aspirations often clash.

The chapter progresses to the birth of her first son, Avery. Cara wishes for a serene and intimate home birth but faces fears and a challenging labor. In the end, she triumphs in her experience and discovers immense joy in her new

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role as a mother.

As Cara navigates the evolving landscape of motherhood, her identity becomes intertwined with her family's expectations. When Dee invites her to sing karaoke at her wedding, Cara confronts the fear of comparison but ultimately decides to participate, marking a significant step in her journey toward self-acceptance and confidence.

This chapter encapsulates Cara's exploration of love, family dynamics, personal aspirations, and the complicated relationship with her sister, Dee, offering a deep reflection on identity and the transformative experience of motherhood.

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# Chapter 6 Summary: Lesson 6: How to Sing a Duet

## Lesson 6: How to Sing a Duet - Summary

In this chapter, the joyful presence of Avery, a cherubic child with blond hair and dark eyes, brightens his family's life as they navigate the complexities of their relationships in a sunlit rental apartment in San Diego. The idyllic setting serves as a refuge for Dee, who visits after a challenging period in her music career, offering a backdrop for reflection and connection.

During a tender naptime routine, the narrator sings a lullaby to Avery, momentarily engrossed in the moment until she recalls Dee's presence, which stirs a sense of vulnerability. Dee's compliment about the narrator's voice opens up a wave of longing and self-doubt, prompting a deeper conversation about their intertwined past. They delve into the narrator's feelings of inadequacy and how Dee's success may have eclipsed her own dreams, revealing the insecurities and assumptions that have shaped their sisterly bond.

As a new mother, the narrator grapples with her sense of empowerment while simultaneously feeling judged by Dee's views on parenting. The chapter escalates with rising tensions as they confront starkly different philosophies surrounding motherhood. The narrator's struggle with

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postpartum depression adds another layer of complexity, highlighting her desire for stability and familial connection amidst her internal turmoil.

This tension culminates in the narrator's decision to sing at Dee's wedding rehearsal, a prospect that evokes both excitement and anxiety. She reflects on the insecurities that accompany performing in front of others, amplifying the existing pressures of being Dee's sister.

Ultimately, their duet transforms from a mere performance into an opportunity for genuine connection and joy. It symbolizes acceptance and sisterly love, transcending individual insecurities. Their shared laughter during the performance embodies the strength of their relationship, allowing them to celebrate their bond amidst the challenges they face in life.

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# Chapter 7 Summary: Lesson 7: How to Fail

## Chapter Summary: Lesson 7: How to Fail

In this chapter, the author candidly explores the tumultuous emotions surrounding her roles as a mother and wife, particularly in the context of her marriage to Jon. While she has realized her dream of motherhood, she is engulfed by feelings of inadequacy and struggles with depression and anxiety. This emotional turmoil often obscures her love for Jon, as she finds herself fixated on both his faults and her own failures, leading her to adopt the role of mediator within the family.

A crucial moment arises during a family dinner when Jon's temper erupts in a distressing interaction with their son, Avery. He harshly reprimands Avery for being inattentive, escalating to a physical intimidation that horrifies the author. This alarming incident acts as a catalyst for the author, prompting her to grapple with the dire realities of her marriage and Jon's aggressive behavior. As she steps in to comfort Avery, she is consumed by guilt, feeling that she has failed to shield her child from harm.

Following a confrontational exchange with Jon, where his lack of remorse is glaring, the author makes a pivotal decision: Jon must leave their home. This choice signifies a turning point, where she confronts her feelings of guilt and

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fear head-on and prioritizes her children's safety over the continuation of an unhealthy relationship. It also marks the beginning of her journey towards independence and self-advocacy, driving her to seek educational opportunities that will empower her to better support her children.

Throughout this chapter, the author intricately weaves together themes of love, failure, and the intricate challenges of motherhood. Her narrative captures a profound internal struggle, ultimately leading to an awakening that inspires her to embrace change in her life and family dynamic, all while aspiring to create a more secure environment for her children.

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# Chapter 8: Lesson 8: How to Love a Witch

## Chapter 8: How to Love a Witch

### Overview of Wicked's Opening Night

The chapter opens on the memorable evening of October 30, 2003, when \*Wicked\* debuted at The Gershwin Theatre. This landmark production featured an imposing dragon puppet that captivated the audience. As the author sat among her parents, she reflected on the poignant themes of change and nostalgia, particularly in light of her own recent divorce, setting a personal backdrop against the theatrical spectacle.

### Personal Reflections

While watching her sister Dee portray the iconic character Elphaba, the author wrestled with feelings of disillusionment and the loss of hope. Flashbacks to their shared childhood surfaced, highlighting moments of innocence and idealism that now seemed distant. This contrast deepened the author's internal struggle as she observed Dee's burgeoning success on stage.

### Dee's Transformation and Performance

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Dee's striking transformation into Elphaba was the result of meticulous artistry, with a talented makeup team bringing her signature green look to life. The performance commenced with ensemble members celebrating the Wicked Witch's defeat, culminating in Dee's entrance as a bespectacled girl, launching into the powerful number "The Wizard and I." The author felt a burst of pride for her sister, even as her own insecurities loomed large.

## **The Creative Process**

Navigating through memories of Dee's auditions, the author spotlighted the challenges her sister faced in embodying the complexity of Elphaba. Dee's journey was marked by vulnerability and raw talent, supported by a dedicated creative team, yet also marred by the intense pressure and self-doubt that come with such a demanding role.

## **Dee's Tony Awards Performance**

In an emotional highlight, the chapter shifts to Dee's experience at the 2004 Tony Awards, where she was a nominee. Her performance resonated with authenticity, and the moment she won the award was saturated with poignant gratitude. The author captures Dee's heartfelt acknowledgment of her family's unwavering support, underscoring the pride that enveloped the evening and highlighting the significance of this achievement.

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## Conclusion

As Dee reveled in her success, the author experienced a blend of pride intertwined with emotional complexity. Through basking in her sister's brilliance, she began to navigate her own path of self-acceptance and recognition of their shared strength. This chapter concludes with a deep reflection on their enduring sisterly bond, set against the glittering backdrop of the theater and the personal journeys they were both undergoing.

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# Chapter 9 Summary: Lesson 9: How to Want to Win

## Lesson 9: How to Want to Win

In 2004, Dee attended the Tony Awards in a breathtaking lavender gown, nominated for Best Actress in a Musical for her portrayal of Elphaba in the acclaimed production *\*Wicked\**. This night was not only a pinnacle moment for her career but also emotionally charged, as the historic Radio City Music Hall was infused with cherished memories for her family.

As the award ceremony approached, Dee found herself amidst the hustle of performance preparations and the weight of anticipation. Though she had poured herself into her craft, self-doubt crept in, fueled by the pressure of competing for such a prestigious honor. Her journey to bring Elphaba to life was fraught with rigorous rehearsals and personal challenges, where she wrestled with insecurities about her self-image and the inevitable anxiety that accompanied high-stakes performances.

Dee's experience mirrored that of her character, Elphaba, who faced societal rejection and personal tribulations. This parallel deepened Dee's connection to the role, allowing her to channel her struggles into her performance. Her casting in *\*Wicked\** was a testament to her tenacity and passion, culminating in a journey that redefined her resilience and dedication.

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Support from her sister Cara provided Dee with a strong emotional anchor throughout this rollercoaster experience. As the Tony Awards night unfolded, a swirl of external excitement clashed with Dee's internal conflict. She grappled with her fierce desire to win while remaining wary of the potential for disappointment.

In a bittersweet turn, Dee did not take home the award; Idina Menzel won for her own performance as Elphaba. However, Dee's response was commendable—she demonstrated grace and authenticity, presenting her true self on stage instead of merely showcasing her status as a competing performer.

This chapter delves into the intricate themes of ambition, the importance of familial support, the pursuit of self-acceptance, and the complex emotions intertwined with competition and recognition in the arts. Dee's story serves as a poignant reminder that the journey holds as much significance as the outcome.

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# Chapter 10 Summary: Lesson 10: How to Make Mistakes

## Lesson 10: How to Make Mistakes

In this chapter, Cara Mentzel shares a gripping and transformative moment from her life that showcases her struggles as a single mother managing the complex demands of parenting, education, and work.

### The Incident

Cara recounts a particularly challenging day when her ex-husband, Jon, requested that she drop their children off at his apartment. Despite her qualms about potential health risks, she reluctantly complied. However, witnessing Jon breach their agreement by taking the children into his home ignited her frustration. A heated confrontation ensued, culminating in an impulsive act where Cara slapped Jon, an escalation that led to police involvement and her subsequent arrest.

### The Arrest and Its Impact

Navigating the aftermath at the police station, Cara experienced

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overwhelming fear and disbelief, feeling powerless in the grip of the justice system. Contrary to her expectation of being viewed as a victim, her actions were characterized as aggressive. This led to her arrest and a mandatory enrollment in anger management classes, marking a significant low point in her life—a moment crystallized in her sobering mug shot.

### **Support from Friends and Personal Growth**

Despite this turmoil, Cara found solace and support in her friend Dee, who not only provided financial assistance to bail her out but also helped her hire a lawyer to clear her record. Dee's generosity took a further step when she offered Cara a home, a gesture that provided her children with stability during turbulent times.

### **Transition to Teaching and Life Lessons**

Amid the crisis, Cara managed to transition into a teaching position, where her experiences often brought humor amidst the challenges of classroom management. These humorous mishaps became valuable lessons, facilitating her personal growth and self-reflection. Through writing and motherhood, Cara began to reclaim her narrative, highlighting her resilience despite overwhelming obstacles.

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This chapter captures Cara's journey through a pivotal moment filled with struggle and personal evolution. It emphasizes resilience, the critical role of supportive friendships, and the learning that stems from our mistakes, intertwining humor and vulnerability throughout her narrative.

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# Chapter 11 Summary: Lesson 11: How to Make Hello Dollies

## Lesson 11: How to Make Hello Dollies

This chapter is a heartfelt exploration of the author's profound connection with her grandmother, Sylvia Mentzel, who defied the typical grandmother stereotype with her robust personality and rich life experiences.

### Memories of Grandma

The author reminisces about Grandma Sylvia's vibrant presence during her childhood, where moments spent in her cozy apartment became cherished memories. Family gatherings filled with laughter, games, and particularly, Grandma's cooking, laid the foundation for a loving relationship that symbolizes warmth and comfort. One standout recipe is for Hello Dollies, a dessert that has become a familial tradition and represents their enduring bond.

### Connection Through Writing and Cooking

Cooking, especially the preparation of Hello Dollies, served as a unique bridge between the author and her grandmother. Each recipe not only

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highlights the flavors of heritage but also strengthens familial ties. As the author shares her thoughts through writing, the act evolves into another shared medium with Grandma, who always provided unwavering encouragement and support, creating a deep emotional connection.

## **Facing Loss**

The narrative takes a poignant turn as the author confronts the grief of losing her beloved grandmother. In the lead-up to crafting Grandma's eulogy, she wrestles with her emotions and the challenge of honoring her grandmother's complex character. The experience of grappling with her new identity as "The Writer" adds to the weight of the occasion, underscoring the depth of her loss.

## **Eulogy Experiences**

Delivering the eulogy becomes a cathartic moment for the author, capturing the essence of Grandma Sylvia's life—her imperfections, resilience, and the profound love they shared. Through honest reflections and heartfelt anecdotes, the author conveys the intricacies of their relationship, illustrating how memories can unite and heal in times of sorrow.

## **Hello Dollies Recipe**

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Finally, the chapter presents a detailed recipe for Hello Dollies, symbolizing the continuation of the author's connection to her grandmother through food. The ingredients—butter, graham crackers, chocolate chips, sweetened condensed milk, coconut, and walnuts—reflect the simplicity and joy of shared moments. The instructions guide the reader through a step-by-step process of creating this beloved dessert, emphasizing that the act of cooking itself is a form of honoring her grandmother's legacy.

## Closure

In closing, the author finds solace in the treasured memories they created together and gains a renewed sense of dignity after delivering the eulogy. The chapter beautifully encapsulates the lasting impact of Grandma's love, illustrating how love transcends loss and continues to nurture connections through memory and tradition.

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# Chapter 12: Lesson 12: How to Envy

## Lesson 12: How to Envy

In "Lesson 12," the author recounts a heartfelt trip to London, gifted by her sister Dee, who bought her a first-class ticket to see \*Wicked\* at the Apollo Victoria Theatre. Eager to escape the pressures of family and work, she embraces the adventure ahead with enthusiasm, opting for comfort over style in a cozy Juicy Couture sweatshirt, accompanied by a retro green suitcase.

The flight proves to be a blend of humor and discomfort, as the author experiences a delightful moment of champagne with a talkative gentleman proudly sharing his connections in the entertainment world. However, her luxurious travel expectations are dampened when her seatmate accidentally spills wine on her outfit.

Upon her arrival in London, Dee greets her with warmth but reveals that she is feeling under the weather, alluding to a sore throat. The sisterly bond shines through as they share stories, although the author chooses to leave out her flight mishap. Dee's life as a burgeoning performer unfolds, showcasing her growing success and the vibrant world she inhabits.

Yet, the trip is not without its complications, as the author faces anxiety over

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a suitcase mix-up that makes her feel burdensome. This situation amplifies her long-standing insecurities, casting light on the dynamics of their relationship: Dee, the accomplished sister, inspires both envy and admiration in the author.

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# Chapter 13 Summary: Lesson 13: How to Live

## Lesson 13: How to Live

This chapter is set against the backdrop of the author's life during the 2008–09 school year, providing a blend of her professional teaching experiences and the evolution of family dynamics as her children, Avery and Jake, continue to grow.

The chapter opens with a humorous teaching anecdote, where the author inadvertently says "happy penis" while trying to teach spelling, sending her students into fits of giggles. This lighthearted mishap not only provides comic relief but also serves as a reminder of the unpredictable joys of teaching.

Simultaneously, the author delves into her personal life, recounting her first date with Mark. He arrives with flowers, and their conversation takes an amusing turn when socks become a topic of discussion. Their initial meeting highlights a budding connection filled with comfort and ease between them.

Meanwhile, the narrative shifts to her sister, Dee, who is thriving in her artistic endeavors with performances and album releases. Dee mentions that she may be pregnant, a revelation that brings forth a mix of excitement and

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apprehension about motherhood. As Dee navigates this potential transition, the author offers her support and encouragement, expressing confidence in Dee's ability to balance her career and new responsibilities as a mother. This moment is pivotal, as it hints at the nurturing bond between sisters and the anticipation of shared experiences that come with motherhood.

The chapter also features an endearing scene where Avery and Jake create a humorous how-to video for Dee and her partner, Taye, intended to prepare them for parenthood. This playful initiative underscores the family's close-knit connections and the children's innocent views on life and responsibility.

A significant emotional arc unfolds when Dee goes into labor, prompting the author to arrange a flight to Los Angeles to be present for the birth of her nephew, Walker. This moment emphasizes the strong ties of family support and the urgency often felt during such important life events. Dee's decision to employ a doula and pursue a natural birth reflects her own empowerment, stirring feelings of pride and a touch of jealousy in the author, who, for reasons beyond her control, cannot be present.

The chapter concludes with a deep, reflective conversation the author has with her mother about personal struggles and survival. This moment of vulnerability serves as a cathartic exploration of experiences that have shaped her identity both as a woman and a mother, reinforcing the ongoing

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theme of growth through adversity.

Overall, this chapter poignantly weaves together themes of family, personal growth, and the complexities of motherhood, capturing the essence of the author's journey through significant life changes during this pivotal year.

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# Chapter 14 Summary: Lesson 14: How to Make a Mark (or Marry One)

## Lesson 14: How to Make a Mark (or Marry One)

In 2010, Dee was thrilled to receive an invitation to perform at the White House, an honor that quickly soured due to a social media blunder where a Facebook post mistakenly referred to her performance venue as a "whore house." Amidst this chaos, Dee's career continued to rise as she landed a recurring role in the popular TV series *\*Glee\**, where she played the mother of Rachel Berry. While this achievement was momentous, it also heightened her awareness of the age gap between herself and the much younger actress portraying Rachel, adding a bittersweet layer to her success.

During a family visit with her nephew, Walker, a tender moment unfolded as he noted their physical resemblance, reminding Dee of the close bonds within her family. Meanwhile, the narrator and her partner Mark celebrated a late Christmas, during which Mark proposed using two whimsical temporary rings, filling the occasion with joy and marking a new chapter in their relationship.

A notable invitation came when Dee asked the narrator to accompany her on a cruise. The trip turned into a vibrant whirlwind largely centered around

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Dee's performances, while the narrator found herself trying to navigate the social dynamics of life onboard. Despite the excitement, she began to feel a growing distance between herself and Dee, grappling with feelings of inadequacy and a yearning for a more profound connection amid their busy schedules.

During a poignant moment in a spa steam room, the sisters shared their vulnerabilities, discussing their personal battles with spirituality and depression. This heartfelt exchange tightened their bond and created a deeper understanding of one another's struggles. Amidst these reflections, Dee was preparing for a significant show titled *\*If/Then\**, which coincided with the imminent release of Disney's *\*Frozen\**. The anticipation of her performance was muddied by the emotional ramifications of her divorce from actor Taye Diggs, illustrating the toll that public life and personal challenges can take on individuals.

A visit to Dee in Washington, D.C., aimed to provide emotional support as she navigated the difficulties of her high-profile life. Their shared family time, particularly a joyful trip to Anguilla, was peppered with lighthearted moments, including playful antics from the children. However, even these moments could trigger insecurities; a breakfast remark about the narrator's singing voice brought feelings of self-doubt to the surface, prompting a heartfelt discussion between the sisters about their respective challenges and insecurities.

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The trip further pushed the narrator out of her comfort zone with an adventurous boat excursion. There, she confronted her fear of heights by climbing a rocky ledge and jumping into the sea. Although the leap was awkward, it marked a significant moment of courage and personal growth for the narrator, symbolizing her desire to reclaim her identity amidst the complexities of family dynamics and her ongoing personal challenges.

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# Chapter 15 Summary: Lesson 15: How to Jump

## Lesson 15: HOW TO JUMP

In November 2013, Dee was busy with her professional life, preparing for her role in the Broadway show *\*If/Then\** and eagerly anticipating the release of *\*Frozen\**, where she voiced the character Elsa. Despite her career success, she faced a personal crisis, announcing her impending divorce from Taye during an emotional phone call. Her primary concern was for her son, Walker, and how the divorce would affect him.

In a bid to support her sister, the author flew to Washington, D.C., where she witnessed Dee's poignant performance in *\*If/Then\**. Dee's character, Elizabeth, grapples with life after divorce, mirroring Dee's own struggles. The author observed how Dee channeled her emotional turmoil into her art, demonstrating both vulnerability and resilience.

After Thanksgiving, the family took a vacation in Anguilla, a setting that offered a brief escape from the emotional heaviness. The children splashed joyfully in the ocean, capturing a fleeting sense of carefree happiness amidst the backdrop of family challenges.

During a breakfast discussion centered on probiotics, a seemingly benign

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topic spiraled into tension. Dee critiqued the author's tone, revealing their sisters' insecurities and the complex dynamics of their relationship. This moment served as a catalyst for a deeper exploration of their feelings and the patterns of projection that had developed over the years.

As the vacation unfolded, the family took a cliff-jumping excursion that symbolized personal bravery. Initially paralyzed by fear, the author ultimately mustered the courage to take the leap—an act that became a metaphor for facing life's challenges head-on.

The chapter culminates in reflections on the complexities of family and identity, particularly the author's experience of living in Dee's shadow during significant life events. It emphasizes the delicate balance of enjoying the present while grappling with past and ongoing emotional burdens. Through themes of courage, vulnerability, and the process of letting go, the narrative illustrates the intricate web of familial ties and individual journeys.

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# Chapter 16: Lesson 16: How to Let Go

## Lesson 16: How to Let Go

### Overview

In this chapter, Cara Mentzel recounts the journey leading up to the Academy Awards, wherein her sister Dee performs the Oscar-nominated anthem "Let It Go" from the acclaimed film \*Frozen\*. Cara's narrative encapsulates her excitement and anxiety about the Oscars, illustrating the profound bond between the sisters and the emotional complexities of navigating family dynamics, personal aspirations, and the shadow of fame.

### Preparation for the Oscars

Cara eagerly anticipates attending the Oscars, feeling the allure of Hollywood's glitz while also prioritizing her role as Dee's emotional supporter. Initially unsure if she would be invited, Cara's joy skyrockets upon receiving Dee's text inviting her to attend. This moment emphasizes their close connection, which is a source of strength amidst the pressures of career milestones.

### Fitting and Choosing an Outfit

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Traveling to New York City for a gown fitting with Dee and her stylist, Vera Wang, Cara experiences the contrasting pressures within their lives. Dee faces the anxiety of her burgeoning career and personal challenges, while Cara grapples with feelings of inadequacy during the styling process, highlighting the mixed emotions that accompany the event.

## **Oscars Weekend**

As Oscars weekend unfolds, Cara arrives in Los Angeles and is engulfed by the world of celebrity and expectations that surrounds Dee. The narrative illustrates their nurturing interactions amid a hectic backdrop of rehearsals and preparations, where Cara steps in to provide support during Dee's hair and makeup sessions, aiming to stay composed in the whirlwind of activity.

## **Performance and Aftermath**

The climax of the chapter resonates with Dee's performance of "Let It Go," instilling immense pride in Cara. Dee's success represents not just personal triumph but a professional highlight, made even more memorable by John Travolta's name flub, which triggers a media sensation. The chapter culminates in Dee winning the Academy Award for Best Original Song, a pivotal moment that transforms both their lives and careers.

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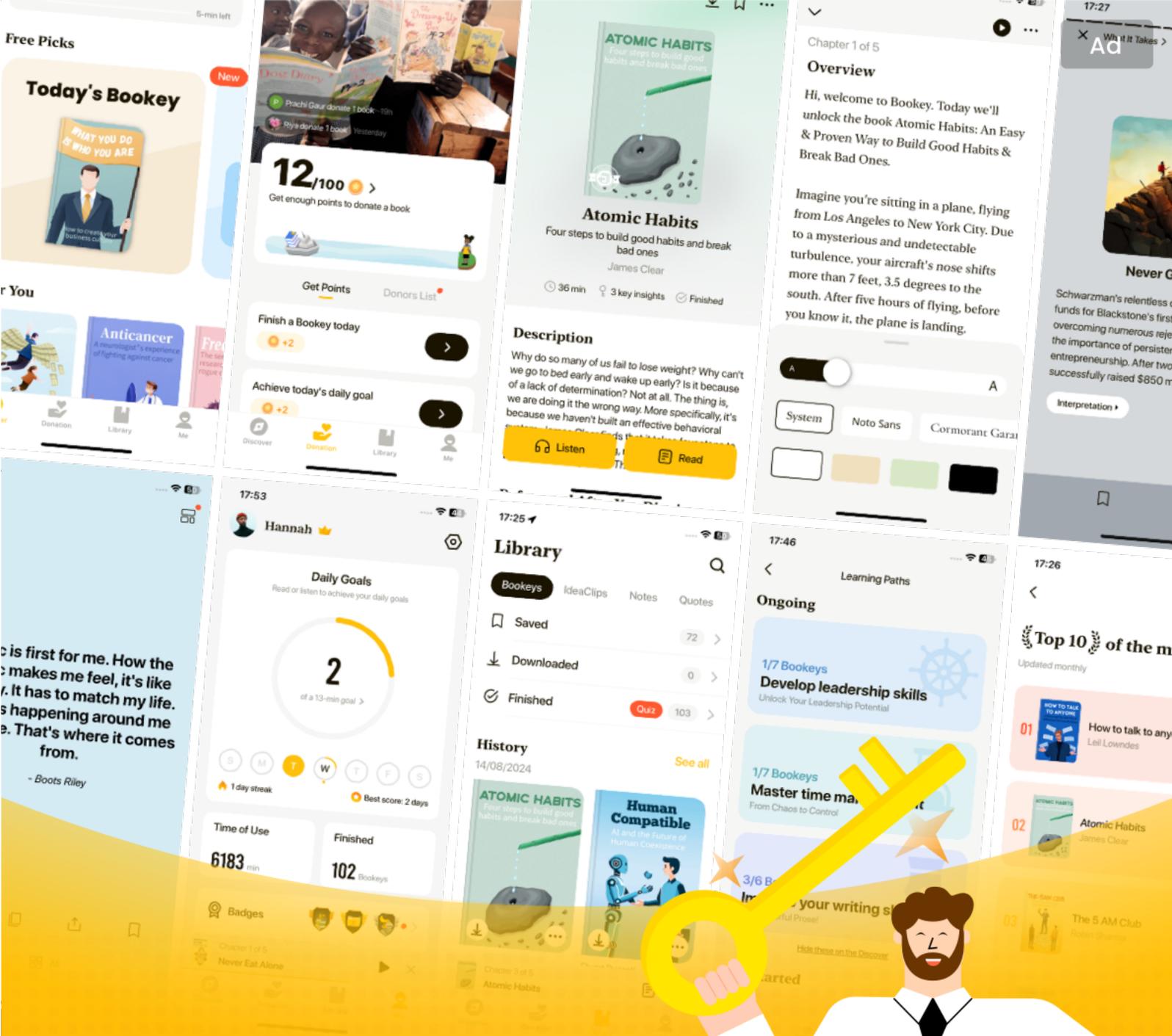
## Reflections on Relationships

Concluding with reflections on her relationship with Dee, Cara delves into the nuances of balancing her identity while living in the spotlight of her high-achieving sister. The chapter explores the necessity of letting go of

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