

Pumpkin PDF (Limited Copy)

Julie Murphy



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Pumpkin Summary

Embracing uniqueness and finding strength in vulnerability.

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About the book

In "Pumpkin," Julie Murphy conjures a vibrant world of self-discovery and the empowering journey of embracing one's true self, all set against the backdrop of a life-changing high school experience. As the spirited protagonist, Waylon Russell Brewer, grapples with his identity as a plus-sized queer boy in a small conservative town, he finds solace in the most unexpected of places—the annual homecoming pageant. With a dramatic twist on traditional expectations, this heartfelt tale explores the intersections of friendship, love, and the fierce courage it takes to step into the spotlight and reclaim one's narrative. Murphy's masterful storytelling invites readers to revel in the joy of unapologetic authenticity, making "Pumpkin" not just a coming-of-age story, but a celebration of individuality and the beauty of being boldly oneself.

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About the author

Julie Murphy is a celebrated author known for her witty and heartfelt storytelling that often centers around themes of self-acceptance, body positivity, and the complexities of adolescence. With a background in creative writing and a passion for diverse narratives, Murphy gained widespread recognition with her debut novel, "Dumplin'," which was adapted into a popular Netflix film, showcasing her ability to resonate with readers of all ages. Her works, including "Pumpkin," reflect her keen insights into the struggles and triumphs of young people navigating their identities in a world that often imposes unrealistic standards. Through her engaging prose and relatable characters, Murphy has established herself as a prominent voice in contemporary young adult literature.

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Chapter 1 Summary: One

In the opening chapter of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we meet Waylon, a fat gay high school student navigating life in the small town of Clover City, Texas. He shares his survival strategy: befriending adults, particularly the school nurse, Ms. Laverne. This friendship seems to offer him a protective shield against the bullying and toxic masculinity rampant in his school environment. He highlights the absurdity of being forced to participate in physical education class where shirts and skins are required and laments how his body doesn't fit the expected mold.

As Waylon enters the nurse's office, he stumbles upon Tucker Watson, a boy he's known since childhood, shirtless and tending to a minor injury.

Waylon's immediate reaction is a mix of embarrassment and internal turmoil—he feels attracted to Tucker but is acutely aware of his own insecurities and the social dynamics at play. Tucker represents a past where they were once friends, but now their interactions are awkward, emphasizing Waylon's feelings of being an outsider.

Despite his anxiety, Waylon manages to remain composed while he waits for Ms. Laverne to finish with Tucker. This moment illustrates his self-deprecating humor and how he deals with his social discomfort. Waylon admires Ms. Laverne not just for her care but also for her fashion sense and warmth, showing how important supportive figures are in his life.



The chapter sets the tone for explore themes of identity, friendship, and the struggles that come with being a queer teen. Waylon's witty, honest voice draws readers in, making them empathize with his insecurities while also rooting for his journey of self-acceptance and understanding. The combination of humor and the harsh realities of high school life creates an engaging narrative that promises more exploration of Waylon's experiences ahead.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of supportive relationships

Critical Interpretation: Waylon's choice to cultivate friendships with adults, particularly with Ms. Laverne, highlights the profound influence that supportive figures can have in our lives. By surrounding yourself with those who uplift and understand you, much like Waylon finds solace in his nurse's companionship, you too can create a protective barrier against negativity and self-doubt. This chapter reminds you that fostering genuine connections, no matter the age, can empower you to navigate your own challenges and embrace your true self with confidence.



Chapter 2 Summary: Three

In Chapter 2 of **Pumpkin** by Julie Murphy, we dive into Waylon's life as he navigates the complexities of friendship, acceptance, and budding romance against the backdrop of his small-town world. The chapter begins with Waylon arriving home just before a marathon of his favorite drag show, illuminating his supportive yet chaotic familial environment. His sister, Clementine, and her friend Hannah seem preoccupied with teenage antics, highlighting typical youthful flirtations.

As they settle in to watch the show, Waylon reflects deeply on the challenges faced by his favorite contestant, Mimi, who grapples with societal perceptions of body image and talent—issues that resonate with Waylon himself. He relates to Mimi's struggle, especially feeling the weight of being both fat and gay in a world that often makes acceptance conditional. Hannah's connection to the show through her fond memories of a previous winner gives Waylon a bittersweet sense of camaraderie, yet he wrestles with insecurity, feeling an internal pressure to justify his existence, separate from his appearance or identity.

Amidst this, Waylon receives a text from Lucas, his charming yet closeted crush with whom he shares an unclear romantic relationship. Their encounters range from playful make-out sessions in the gas station where Lucas works to a more complicated emotional connection that Waylon



yearns to define. Lucas's struggle to come out complicates their relationship, reflecting broader themes of LGBTQ+ identity in a small town, as Waylon recognizes that being openly gay can come with risks and repercussions.

The chapter crescendos as Waylon visits the gas station, where he and Lucas engage in a moment of intimacy that reinforces their connection. However, the mood shifts dramatically when Lucas, amidst their flirtation, reveals that he has feelings for someone else, which shatters Waylon's hopes of something deeper between them. His intense emotional reaction underscores the theme of unrequited love and the pain of unspoken expectations.

Waylon ultimately walks away from the encounter, his heart heavy with hurt and rejection. The chapter encapsulates the trials of adolescence, friendship, and the search for acceptance, leaving Waylon grappling with his feelings and the harsh realities of love in a world that often feels unwelcoming. The blend of humor, heartbreak, and introspective thoughts makes for a vivid exploration of self-identity and the yearning to belong, resonating with anyone who has ever felt like an outsider in their own life.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace Your Authentic Self

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing in front of a mirror, fully embracing the person looking back at you—every quirk, size, and identity that defines you. This chapter reminds us that the journey to acceptance begins with loving ourselves despite the external pressures to conform. Waylon's struggle resonates deeply, revealing that acceptance must start from within, urging you to strip away insecurities and societal expectations. By embracing your authentic self, just like Waylon reflects on his connections with Mimi and Lucas, you ignite the courage to live unapologetically, reminding you that your worth is not dictated by your appearance or circumstances, but by the vibrancy of your true spirit.

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Chapter 3: Four

In this vivid chapter, we dive into the emotional turmoil of Waylon, who finds himself grappling with feeling double-dumped after his breakup with Lucas and the unsettling discovery that his twin sister, Clementine, may be planning to leave for college at the University of Georgia. This realization hits Waylon hard; he feels betrayed by Clem for not sharing her important decision and fears their close bond is being torn apart.

As he processes these mixed emotions—anger, hurt, and confusion—Waylon seeks solace by wallowing in Lizzo’s "Truth Hurts," but finds himself unable to escape the reality of his sister’s potential departure. Unsure of how to vocalize his feelings, he resists the urge to snoop further into her affairs. Instead, he resolves that if Clem wants to ditch him for a ‘better’ life, then he can too.

In a spontaneous act of creativity and rebellion, Waylon decides to try drag for the first time using an old makeup kit belonging to Clem. As he experiments with cosmetics, he navigates the ups and downs of makeup

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Chapter 4 Summary: Five

In Chapter 4 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we find Waylon waking up to his spirited and supportive sister, Clem, who jumps into his bed, demanding attention. Waylon is groggy and anxious, particularly about his appearance after a rough night of experimenting with makeup, which left him looking like a mess. There's a comedic and relatable exchange as Clem discovers the remnants of lipstick and foundation on his face, highlighting Waylon's internal struggle with self-image and his evolving relationship with makeup.

The chapter takes a deeper turn when Waylon reveals that he filmed a video where he lip-syncs to various empowering songs and shares anecdotes about his life, including a humorous yet painful memory about wearing a skirt at school and his understated coming-out story that unexpectedly became a shared moment with Clem. The video is a bold exploration of his identity, with Waylon playfully calling himself "Miss Pumpkin Patch" and declaring his intentions to claim his space confidently.

Clem is visibly impressed by the video, emphasizing her belief in Waylon's talent and potential to perform, and she urges him to send the video in for a casting call he initially viewed as a joke. Despite his reservations, the exchange fuels a sense of hope and ambition in Waylon, indicating a budding realization of his passion for drag performance and self-expression, even though he doubts his capabilities compared to more seasoned



performers.

The conversation shifts to discuss Clem's spontaneous nature and her hobbies, which often leave Waylon feeling like more of a bystander in his own life. The chapter closes with Clem gearing up to help a friend, adding a touch of humor as she mentions her willingness to supervise rather than do the actual cleaning, showcasing the playful bond between the siblings. Overall, this chapter delicately weaves themes of self-discovery, sibling support, and the challenges of adolescence, as Waylon inches closer to embracing his identity and aspirations.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace Your Identity Fearlessly

Critical Interpretation: As you navigate through your own insecurities and fears, the relationship between Waylon and Clem serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of embracing your identity fearlessly. Waylon's journey highlights the courage it takes to express oneself authentically, despite the fears of judgment or rejection. It inspires you to claim your space in the world just as he does, using creativity as a means to explore and celebrate who you truly are. This chapter encourages you to pursue your passions, seek support from those who uplift you, and never be afraid to show the world your true colors.

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Chapter 5 Summary: Six

In Chapter 5 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the protagonist, Waylon, reflects on key moments in his life, particularly the experience of coming out as gay. He had envisioned a heartfelt and dramatic moment with his family, but the reality was surprisingly mundane. Waylon comes out to his parents during a casual Saturday breakfast. To his shock, his mother responds with casual acceptance, and his father lightens the moment with humor. However, his sister, Clem, unexpectedly follows suit and reveals her own secret about being gay, leading to a rollercoaster of emotions as they navigate this shared experience.

As the chapter unfolds, Waylon grapples with his feelings about Clem's announcement and her decision to leave for college across the country. This prompts a mix of jealousy and protective instincts, stirring up insecurities about how their lives will change. At school, he navigates the social landscape that includes interactions with classmates like Kyle, a charismatic student who has a simplistic view of acceptance and success that irritates Waylon. The dynamics between classmates also expose Waylon to bullying from Patrick Thomas, reinforcing his struggles with self-acceptance in a world that often feels hostile.

In choir practice, Waylon remains uncertain about his place in the group, especially with Kyle's dominating presence. Kyle's encouragement for



Waylon to embrace his talents and submit a video for a drag show sparks internal conflict for Waylon, who dismisses the idea as a joke. The complexities of his relationships show the pressure Waylon feels to fit in and be a certain kind of gay, adding layers to his identity exploration.

During lunch at Harpy's, a nostalgic eatery, Waylon faces further discomfort as he's forced to interact with Kyle and Alex, who affirm and celebrate a community Waylon feels an outsider to. The reunion with Clem and Hannah is bittersweet, as it highlights how much he values their bond, yet is also pregnant with tension, particularly regarding Clem's future separation from him.

The chapter concludes with Waylon feeling overwhelmed by emotions, depicting the struggle of navigating identity, familial bonds, and the bittersweet nature of growing up. It encapsulates themes of acceptance, the complexity of sibling dynamics, and the challenges of carving out one's identity amid societal pressures. Waylon's discomfort with his self-image and relationships sets the stage for further explorations of his journey in the face of change.



Chapter 6: Seven

In Chapter 6 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the protagonist, Waylon, reaches a breaking point in a challenging day marked by disappointments and the sting of betrayal. He recalls a time from his childhood when he depended on his grandmother, Grammy, to rescue him from school. Now, he plans to take a self-care day, knowing he needs a break from the pressures he faces at school, especially after a recent embarrassing incident involving an audition video.

As he drops off his twin sister, Clementine, at school, their conversation is tinged with a mix of lightheartedness and underlying tension. However, the day quickly takes a turn for the worse when Waylon encounters Patrick Thomas, a classmate who taunts him with cruel nicknames that allude to the audition video that has apparently been circulated among the students. The laughter of his peers feels suffocating, reinforcing Waylon's sense of isolation and humiliation, particularly when he sees Tucker, someone he thought might be an ally, looking away.

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I've learned. Highly recommend!

Alex Walk

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Chapter 7 Summary: Eight

In Chapter 7 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the story kicks off with Waylon Brewer dealing with the unexpected fallout from a video posted by Kyle Meeks. Waylon is furious to discover that Kyle accidentally shared his audition tape for a drag show to his personal Facebook page instead of the intended group, exposing Waylon to a flurry of reactions online. Although most comments are supportive, there's an unsettling wave of harsh criticism, exposing the ugly side of small-town opinions on gender expression.

As Waylon grapples with the situation, his father's call brings another emotional layer to the mix. Initially soft-spoken and concerned, his dad's reaction hints at the support that Waylon's parents offer, even as they navigate their own discomfort with the situation. Waylon's response to his parents demonstrates his self-assuredness and determination to embrace his love for drag, reassured by their unconditional love. The conversation turns heavier with the revelation that his sister Clem is moving to Georgia without informing him first, adding to Waylon's feelings of isolation and betrayal. Their family dynamic is stitched together through a blend of warmth, love, and the typical frustration of communication gaps.

Throughout this chapter, themes of acceptance, familial bonds, and the challenge of self-identity come to the forefront. Waylon's journey is not just about the fallout from the video; it's also about his relationship with his



parents, the reality of losing a sibling to new opportunities, and finding his footing in a world that doesn't always accept him. As the chapter wraps up, Waylon decides to seek comfort from his grandmother, reflecting the importance of family support during turbulent times. He reaches out triumphantly, ready to embrace the love that awaits him, even amidst chaos. The chapter effectively balances the heavy emotional beats with humorous undertones, making Waylon's unique voice resonate strongly with readers.

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Chapter 8 Summary: Nine

In Chapter 8 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the protagonist, Pumpkin, grapples with a newfound sense of anxiety and betrayal following the release of a private video at school. Arriving at her Grammy's house, she finds comfort in their shared coffee ritual and the buzz of familiar family banter. Grammy, with her customary warmth, opens up about having seen the video, highlighting Pumpkin's star quality, while teasing her about her makeup skills. This moment brings relief as Pumpkin confesses her worries about her relationship with her friend Clem, who is planning to move to Georgia.

As they talk, Pumpkin feels a mix of confusion and disappointment over their communication; Grammy gently suggests that perhaps they don't share everything, igniting Pumpkin's inner turmoil. She fantasizes about a future with Clem, envisioning a life spent together, but Grammy encourages her to consider what's best for both of them, hinting at the necessity of growth and change.

The atmosphere shifts slightly when Clem unexpectedly arrives, and Pumpkin grapples with her anger over Clem sharing the video, feeling exposed and vulnerable. Their interaction reveals more layers to their friendship; Clem insists that many reacted positively to the video, and in her eagerness to share, she inadvertently crossed a line. Pumpkin remains



conflicted, appreciating Clem's pride in her but feeling betrayed by the incident.

The chapter weaves in humor and light-hearted exchanges, particularly through the interactions with Grammy and the quirky family members, like Cleo and Bernadette. They share jokes about pop culture, providing a peaceful backdrop to Pumpkin's internal conflict. As the day progresses, the tension remains palpable between Pumpkin and Clem, with Pumpkin hesitant to confront their changing dynamics and the impending decision about Clem's move. The chapter concludes with Pumpkin retreating into the familiarity of her Grammy's home, indicating her desire to avoid facing the changes ahead, symbolizing the struggle between comfort and the inevitability of growth in relationships.

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Chapter 9: Ten

In this engaging chapter of Julie Murphy's "Pumpkin," the protagonist, Waylon Brewer, navigates the turbulent waters of high school life following a scandalous incident that has put him in the spotlight. Determined to ride out the chaos, Waylon asks his parents for a two-day break from school to let the hype settle down before prom court nominations are announced. His parents agree, albeit with conditions, leading to a couple of days filled with mundane chores rather than the relaxation he envisioned. During this time, his mixed feelings toward his friend Clem linger, as he grapples with wanting her close while simultaneously pushing her away.

When Waylon returns to school, he faces a mixture of anxiety and resolve. At his side are friends Hannah and Clem, who offer moral support as he confronts the stares, whispers, and disgust aimed at him, particularly from Tucker Watson. The emotional weight of being both fat and gay amplifies his struggles and insecurities, especially as he reflects on his complicated past with Kyle, a former friend turned rival. Their friendship fractured after Kyle's weight loss left Waylon feeling alienated and hurt.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Eleven

In Chapter 10 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, Waylon finds himself unexpectedly thrust into the world of high school politics when he and his friend Hannah are nominated for prom court. This twist sends Hannah into a frustrated and contemplative state, embodying a mix of sarcasm and resilience as she engages with Waylon about their circumstances. The narrative kicks off in the principal's office, where Hannah sits slouched, clearly unbothered by the ruckus about their nominations, which she suspects are a result of mockery orchestrated by their peers led by Patrick Thomas.

As Waylon grapples with the implications of their nominations, Hannah reveals her determination to capitalize on the situation rather than shy away from it. Despite her initial defeatist attitude, she surprises everyone, including Waylon, when she decides to run for prom king, asserting her right to redefine how they are perceived by their classmates. This choice isn't just a rebellious move; it's symbolic of her desire to take control of her narrative in a world that has often marginalized her.

Waylon, initially hesitant and worried about the fallout from Hannah's bold decision, starts to see her in a new light. The chapter delves into their personal insecurities and the weight of societal expectations, as Hannah challenges Waylon to embrace the potential of making a statement by



stepping into a traditionally normative role that has never felt accessible to someone like him. Hannah's declaration that she wants to rewrite the story inspires Waylon to contemplate his own journey and the possibility of breaking free from his shell.

Their conversation is layered with humor and vulnerability, particularly as they navigate the perception of their peers and the stark realities of being openly different in high school. Waylon's internal struggle becomes clear as he reflects on his desire for acceptance versus his longing to break out of conventional boundaries. Inspired by Hannah's unwavering confidence, he begins to envision a world where he asserts himself unapologetically, thinking about what it would mean to run for prom queen in a dramatic twist that goes against societal norms.

The chapter beautifully captures themes of self-identity, the desire for autonomy, and the rejection of societal labels. As both characters confront their fears and insecurities, they explore the prospect of turning prom—a symbolic rite of passage—into an opportunity to challenge the status quo, leaving readers with a sense of hope and possibility for change. The underlying message is clear: sometimes, the most powerful way to rewrite your narrative is by embracing the unexpected and making it your own.



Chapter 11 Summary: Twelve

In Chapter 11 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we find the protagonist, Waylon, grappling with the unexpected complexities of being nominated for the prom court in Clover City. After a brief exchange with his friend Hannah, who reluctantly joins him in this venture, Waylon reflects on how he was essentially manipulated into this situation. Despite his initial hesitation, he's determined to support Hannah, especially after hearing about her challenges and aspirations regarding acceptance and identity.

As they attend the prom court orientation, Waylon learns that the process involves several responsibilities, including community service projects and staff appreciation efforts. The faculty advisor, Mrs. Leonard, outlines the expectations and highlights the tradition behind prom court while also implying that this year may bring some changes due to the inclusion of nontraditional nominees like Waylon and Hannah. Their discussion touches on gender fluidity and the complexities of modern identities, showcasing how the school is slowly adapting, albeit with some reluctance.

Interactions with classmates reveal deeper social dynamics, especially when Tucker, a former tormentor, unexpectedly attempts to sit next to Waylon. This interaction stirs a mix of emotions, as Waylon bristles at the thought of Tucker's motivations but also grapples with the confusion of being thrust into a spotlight he didn't ask for. The moment highlights key themes of



acceptance and self-discovery as Waylon navigates his feelings and relationships.

During the crucial moment of pairing up for their projects, Waylon faces the dreaded choice of partners: Tucker or Bryce—both making him feel uneasy. In a turn of events, Waylon draws Tucker's name from the bowl, forcing him into a predicament of working with someone he considers a rival. Despite the awkward situation, the chapter paints a vivid picture of the pressure and expectations that surround prom court, culminating in Waylon's confrontation with the realities of his role.

As the chapter closes, Waylon seeks to switch partners, but Mrs. Leonard informs him that he must accept his pairing. This moment encapsulates the theme of stepping out of one's comfort zone, as he's prompted to fully embrace the journey ahead. The dialogue is filled with humor while showcasing the struggles of personal identity and the significance of friendship, leaving Waylon with the challenge to "go big or go home."



Chapter 12: Thirteen

In this chapter from Julie Murphy's "Pumpkin," the story takes us into Waylon's life in Clover City, where he shares a cozy yet cramped home with his family. The setting is established with playful imagery, describing their dollhouse-like house and their family's cautious approach to finances despite their father's successful business. Waylon is the type of person who values personal expression through his fashion choices, revealing a deeper desire to fit in while wrestling with his self-image.

The chapter unfolds as a family dinner becomes tense when Waylon confronts his twin sister Clem about feeling left out of her plans with her girlfriend, Hannah. This sibling rivalry sets the stage for underlying themes of communication and trust, emphasizing the challenges of navigating relationships, especially in a family where expectations are high. Their mother, in a bid to maintain harmony, diffuses their spat but inadvertently highlights the strain in their relationship.

The narrative then shifts to Waylon's trip to his dad's construction site,

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Chapter 13 Summary: Fourteen

In Chapter 13 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we witness a mix of youthful romance, friendship dynamics, and personal challenges. The scene opens with Mr. Higgins struggling with a TV remote as Kyle bursts into the classroom, charming everyone with a heartfelt proposal for Alex Wu, complete with matching bow ties. The light-hearted moment brings a blend of affection and some playful annoyance, reflecting typical teenage antics and the infectious nature of young love.

During lunch at Harpy's, the tempo shifts a bit as Waylon, Clem, and Hannah gather around, suggesting an intersection of friendships and unspoken tensions. They pause their arguments to engage in conversations with a wider social circle as Kyle and Alex join them, hands intertwined and radiating happiness. This chapter showcases how relationships can both blossom and face hurdles, paralleling the ongoing group dynamics.

The narrative flows into conversations about prom and reveals different characters' ambitions and fears. These reflections hint at deeper themes of self-identity and belonging, particularly through Willowdean's apparent struggle with attention and social acceptance. The lively dynamics take an emotional turn when Bo surprises Willowdean with a grand proposal involving a heartfelt performance. The atmosphere in the restaurant shifts from joyous anticipation to discomfort as things take an unexpected turn,



highlighting the vulnerability that often accompanies acts of love.

As the chapter progresses, Kyle proposes hosting a party while the adults are away, igniting excitement among his friends, especially Alex. However, Hannah quickly ups the ante by revealing an upcoming amateur drag show at a local bar, eliciting a passionate response from the group. Waylon's internal conflict about growing up and embracing these experiences adds depth to the narrative. The chapter concludes with the friends deciding to attend the drag show, hinting at the adventures and self-discovery awaiting them.

Overall, this chapter encapsulates themes of friendship, the complexities of love, and the grappling with the transition from adolescence to adulthood, all wrapped up in engaging humor and relatable experiences.

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Chapter 14 Summary: Fifteen

In Chapter 14 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the story centers around Waylon as he navigates the complexities of friendships, personal identity, and impending life changes. The chapter opens with a lighthearted exchange between Waylon and Tucker, revealing their growing rapport. Tucker's cheerful personality shines through as he showcases a picture of his dog dressed as Princess Leia, sparking playful banter that hints at a budding connection beyond just project partners. Through their conversation, they both acknowledge the looming deadline for their school project and the pressure surrounding it.

As the weekend arrives, Waylon spends his Friday night alone, indulging in drag makeup tutorials while his friends head out for a night on the town. This sets the stage for his feelings of exclusion and longing. A text from Tucker early Saturday morning flips the script, as Tucker proposes a spontaneous plan involving car maintenance, showcasing his eagerness to collaborate and be creative together—despite Waylon's typical reluctance toward manual labor.

The chapter also highlights Waylon's relationship with his twin sister, Clem. Their dynamic shifts when Clem expresses her desire to pursue engineering at a school far from home, prompting feelings of betrayal and fear in Waylon. He grapples with the reality of losing his twin companion, revealing



a deep-rooted anxiety about their future apart. Clem's excitement about her choices contrasts sharply with Waylon's uncertainty about his own path, making him feel left behind and disconnected.

Their conversation becomes an emotional turning point, filled with tension and vulnerability. Clem tries to reassure Waylon of their bond, but he struggles to accept their evolving identities, feeling like he has lost the plan that once united them. The back-and-forth showcases their deep care for each other, even amid pain and miscommunication. It's clear that while they might be heading in different directions, the foundation of their relationship remains important.

In a lighter moment, the twins prepare for an event that promises to be significant, marking Waylon's first outing to a gay bar. The playful interactions between them during their prep highlight their bond and lay the groundwork for the adventure ahead. Waylon encourages Clem to embrace her unique style, showing his support and understanding for her journey as she veers away from their past together. The chapter ends on an upbeat note of camaraderie and excitement, as the twins prepare to step into new experiences that both challenge and define them.

Overall, this chapter splendidly captures themes of change, individuality, and the bittersweet reality of growing up, all while maintaining a humorous and relatable approach. Waylon's journey reflects the broader struggles of



friendship and self-discovery, providing readers with a heartfelt glimpse into his world.

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Chapter 15: Sixteen

In Chapter 15 of “Pumpkin” by Julie Murphy, we dive into the exhilarating world of Waylon and his friends as they gear up for a night out at the Hideaway, a local gay bar. Waylon feels empowered as he rummages through his closet, putting together a bold outfit that combines a glamorous velvet robe, leggings, and salvaged boots. The energy is high as he and his friends—Clem and Hannah—prepare to step outside their comfort zones and embrace their true selves at the club.

As they arrive, the anticipation builds. The Hideaway is described as a vibrant, chaotic space filled with a colorful mix of people, from nervous teens to seasoned patrons. It's a stark contrast to their small-town life, where Waylon has often felt like an outsider. For the first time, he feels a sense of belonging among fellow queer people, surrounded by a community of oddballs and misfits who share his experiences and struggles.

The performance begins, featuring a drag queen named Lee, who turns out to be an old friend of Hannah's, adding a personal connection to the night. As

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Chapter 16 Summary: Seventeen

In Chapter 16 of "Pumpkin," the protagonist, Waylon, finds himself grappling with his feelings for Tucker, a boy from his past. After a restless night spent pondering a text for Tucker, Waylon is shocked to discover Tucker in his kitchen the following afternoon. Tucker has come over to help fix Waylon's mom's car, but his unexpected presence in such an intimate setting rattles Waylon, especially considering he's still in his pajamas.

As Waylon tries to process the situation, their conversation shifts from casual brunch fare to the unspoken tension surrounding Tucker's recent visit to a gay bar, the Hideaway. Tucker admits to enjoying the atmosphere at the all-ages night but evades sharing deeper feelings he may have for Waylon, reinforcing the complexity of their relationship. They reminisce about their past interactions, revealing an underlying familiarity that Waylon struggles to recognize due to their previously fraught exchanges.

While Waylon's mom disrupts their budding connection by calling him to join her for a pedicure, the chemistry between Waylon and Tucker becomes palpable, with moments hanging in the air, charged with unspoken emotions. Tucker's kindness and sense of humor seem to draw Waylon closer, yet he hesitates to acknowledge it. Their brief, intimate exchanges hint at a potential shift in their dynamic, one that Waylon is both curious about and fearful of.



As Waylon and his mother prepare to leave for the nail salon, she expresses her gratitude towards Tucker, even extending an invitation for dinner that he politely declines. This hints at a desire for connection on both sides, contrasting with Waylon's confusion and longing. The chapter encapsulates themes of self-discovery, the complexity of teenage relationships, and the struggles of understanding one's own identity amidst shifting dynamics. Waylon navigates his feelings with humor and vulnerability, setting the stage for potential growth and exploration in his relationship with Tucker.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Navigating uncertainty in relationships can lead to self-discovery.

Critical Interpretation: In this chapter, as you immerse yourself in Waylon's experience of grappling with his feelings for Tucker, you might find inspiration in the way he navigates the uncertainty and complexity of their relationship. Just like Waylon, you too might face moments in life where your emotions become tangled, especially in relationships that matter. This chapter encourages you to embrace those feelings, even if they make you feel vulnerable. It's a reminder that through humor, introspection, and open-hearted conversations, you can uncover deeper connections and greater understanding of yourself and those around you. By allowing yourself to explore these emotions, you pave the way for growth and richer, more meaningful interactions.



Chapter 17 Summary: Eighteen

In Chapter 17 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, Waylon is filled with anticipation and anxiety as he prepares to see Tucker the next day at school after a significant weekend. However, when Monday arrives, Tucker is absent, leaving Waylon feeling uneasy, especially with their upcoming prom court meeting. As Waylon walks through the school, he engages in conversation with his friend Alex, who excitedly talks about an upcoming party and karaoke plans, but Waylon playfully struggles with the karaoke idea, wanting to keep a realistic approach to their social events.

In the choir room, Waylon finds himself amid a conversation about a party that Kyle wants to throw, which leads to a discussion about obtaining alcohol. Even though Waylon is not eager to revisit his former fling, Lucas, who works at a gas station that sells to minors, he realizes that he might be their best option. When his close friends show eager support for making the party happen, Waylon reluctantly agrees to seek Lucas's help, both excited and apprehensive about the encounter.

Later, during a prom court meeting, Tucker finally arrives, catching Waylon's attention with a brief but charged moment as he brushes against Waylon's thigh. This moment sparks a rush of emotions for Waylon as he navigates their complicated feelings for one another. The chapter takes a turn when Waylon decides to confront Lucas at the gas station. Their reunion is



tense yet charged, with lingering feelings between them. Their conversation quickly shifts to deeper emotional territories as Lucas shares how he's coping with coming out, and Waylon expresses his hurt over their past and current situation.

As they navigate the remnants of their relationship, Waylon stands firm about not wanting to be anyone's second choice. After a moment of vulnerability, they share a passionate kiss but Waylon pulls back, reaffirming his need for self-respect and independence. This leads to an emotional embrace where both characters find solace in each other's presence, revealing their shared struggles. The chapter ends with a hopeful and complicated reconciliation, as they decide to move forward as friends, hinting at the complexities of their relationship dynamics and selves.

Themes of identity, friendship, vulnerability, and the challenges of young love permeate this chapter. Waylon's journey toward self-acceptance is highlighted as he grapples with his feelings for Tucker and Lucas as well as the pressures of high school social life. The chapter skillfully balances humor and emotional depth, creating a resonant story about finding oneself amid confusion and desire.



Chapter 18: Nineteen

In this lively chapter of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we see Waylon Brewer gearing up for an educational yet unconventional prom court project involving free oil changes for teachers. The chapter starts with Waylon playfully persuading Tucker, his classmate, to wear their matching outfits—white coveralls and red bow ties—designed for their ambitious endeavor. The playful banter highlights their budding friendship as they navigate the complexities of high school life, including Waylon's insecurities about his size and Tucker's more practical existence with family responsibilities.

As they set up in the school parking lot, Waylon learns that Tucker juggles multiple responsibilities at home, working at his father's struggling auto repair shop. This revelation deepens the dynamic between them, shedding light on Tucker's resilience while simultaneously contrasting it with Waylon's comfortable upbringing. Their conversations reveal key character development—Waylon grappling with feelings of inadequacy while also being inspired by Tucker's work ethic and perspective on life.

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Chapter 19 Summary: Twenty

In Chapter 19 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the main character, Waylon, is grappling with the approaching prom and the pressure of his unexpected nomination for prom court. As he discusses his feelings about this with his friends Clem and Hannah, it's clear that he's conflicted—while some moments with Tucker, the guy who's historically been on his shit list, feel enjoyable, the looming prom and what to wear weighs heavily on him. The chapter begins with Clem expressing disbelief over Waylon's lackadaisical attitude toward his time with Tucker, highlighting their contrasting views on the situation.

Waylon is torn not just by fashion choices—should he stick with a classic tux or embrace his more flamboyant side with drag?—but also by deeper worries about how his plus-size body will be perceived. His friends encourage him to choose an outfit that empowers him, which sets the stage for a significant internal journey about identity and self-expression. At home, his mother, fully aware of his struggles with clothing, offers to help find the perfect outfit, but that only brings him more anxiety. Waylon struggles with the difficulties of being himself in a world that often demands conformity.

When he arrives at his father's work site to work on a school project with Tucker, he finds comfort in their banter. Their camaraderie begins to



blossom into something deeper as they discuss what meaningful changes could be made in their school. In a poignant moment, Tucker encourages Waylon to envision what school could have been like if he had felt free to be himself. Waylon realizes that simply being himself, the way he imagines himself in his head, could have changed his high school experience for the better.

As they work, Tucker inadvertently compliments Waylon's appearance, which leaves him feeling uncomfortable and self-conscious, revealing Waylon's struggles with body image. The chapter closes with them sharing a comfortable moment over their schoolwork, underscoring the budding connection between them and the unnoticed chemistry that sparks when they're close. The themes of identity, self-acceptance, and the courage to embrace one's true self continue to develop, setting the stage for the pivotal moments to come as prom approaches.

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Chapter 20 Summary: Twenty-One

In Chapter 20 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the story picks up with Waylon, who is basking in the pride of performing a graduation medley under the instruction of Ms. Jennings, a teacher who has been supportive through his high school journey. After the class ends, Ms. Jennings asks Waylon to stay behind, prompting a mix of anxiety and curiosity in him. She acknowledges the whirlwind of emotions Waylon faces, especially following prom and the viral video incident that's brought him both attention and challenges.

As they talk, Ms. Jennings provides encouragement, suggesting that college isn't the only pathway for Waylon and that he could truly shine as a drag performer—a passion he has subtly harbored. Their conversation reinforces the idea that pursuing one's art can be just as valid as traditional education, which sparks a flicker of self-belief in Waylon. He feels seen by Ms. Jennings, who not only recognizes his talents but also offers connections to the drag community in Texas. This mentor-student relationship epitomizes the theme of support and validation, showcasing that sometimes, it's critical to have someone in your corner who believes in you.

After this uplifting exchange, Waylon heads outside, buoyed by newfound confidence, only to find a group of popular seniors making fun of him, which leads to an uncomfortable encounter. They invite him to join in on a



senior prank, but rather than feeling included, he feels alienated, especially as he notices Tucker standing awkwardly among them. The moment compounds Waylon's frustration; he grapples with the desire to fit in against the realization that the company he's pursuing isn't worth his self-respect.

This chapter beautifully encapsulates Waylon's internal struggle—balancing the desire for acceptance with the courage to embrace his true self. It challenges the societal pressures of fitting in while painting a vivid picture of the complexities of teenage friendships and identity. By the end, Waylon resolves to stop hiding, symbolizing his journey toward self-acceptance and embracing his individuality, which resonates strongly with the overarching themes of authenticity and belonging in the narrative.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embracing Your True Self

Critical Interpretation: In this pivotal chapter, Waylon's journey highlights the importance of embracing your true self, regardless of societal pressures. When Ms. Jennings encourages him to pursue his passion as a drag performer, it sparks a transformation in his self-belief. This moment serves as a reminder that honing in on your authentic identity and talents can lead to profound personal growth. It inspires us to acknowledge our unique paths, urging us to resist the urge to conform and instead celebrate our individuality, knowing that true acceptance comes when we unapologetically express who we really are.

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Chapter 21: Twenty-Two

In Chapter 21 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we find ourselves in a church community setting, where Hannah and her friends are participating in a service project for Parenting with Pride, a support group for parents of LGBTQ+ kids. Pastor Rich and his wife, Sheila, are welcoming and eager to create an inclusive environment, which contrasts sharply with the experiences the characters have had in more traditional church settings.

Hannah enlists her friends to help clean the old, messy church, and as they work, personal dynamics unfold. Willowdean expresses frustration over her confusing relationship with a guy named Tucker, who has been both grand in his gestures towards her and emotionally distant. In a moment of camaraderie, the group supports one another over their collective anxiety about prom, which seems to hinge on having a date. The conversation lightens as they joke and bond while cleaning, all set to a fun music playlist.

As Tucker finally arrives, the interactions feel charged, hinting at an underlying tension between him and the narrator, Waylon. After a brief

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Chapter 22 Summary: Twenty-Three

In Chapter 22 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the group of friends finds themselves unwittingly volunteering at a church, sparking a lively discussion about their circumstances. Amanda humorously probes Hannah about how they ended up there, leading to a candid revelation about Hannah's past. She shares the painful story of being caught by her grandmother, 'Lita, while kissing a friend and subsequently being made to feel like an abomination. This emotional moment reveals Hannah's vulnerability and the struggle many LGBTQ+ individuals face in their formative years, emphasizing themes of acceptance and the search for community.

As the group sits on the chapel steps sharing pizza, Hannah explains how, after being kicked out, she found refuge with her neighbors, Rich and Sheila, who offered her support instead of attempting to "fix" her. Their acceptance deeply contrasts with the rejection she felt from her grandmother, showcasing the importance of chosen family in the journey toward self-acceptance. The scene is heart-wrenching yet uplifting, further emphasizing the theme of connection and the support systems that help individuals navigate their identities.

The camaraderie between the friends is palpable, but it's interrupted when Ellen rushes in with news about a potential infidelity involving

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Willowdean's boyfriend, drawing the group's laughter and playful banter. This lightens the mood, blending humor with the earlier heavy themes.

After some cleaning at the church, the group earns their volunteer hours, and Pastor Rich invites them to church. The interactions illustrate the growing support and friendship among the characters. Amidst the events, an evolving bond develops between Willowdean and Tucker, stirring tensions filled with unspoken feelings.

As Willowdean gives Tucker a ride, they engage in a heartfelt conversation where Williamson confronts past awkwardness and the reality of their present connection. Tucker's reluctance to associate with his old football buddies is revealed to stem from his discomfort rather than embarrassment about Willowdean, highlighting the complex layers of teen identity.

Upon arriving at Tucker's home, they encounter his father, Mr. Watson, whose apparent alcoholism casts a shadow over their interaction. While Mr. Watson is dismissive, Willowdean's genuine compliment about Tucker's potential introduces an intimate moment of understanding between them. It becomes clear that the relationship between Tucker and his father is fraught with both care and burden, adding depth to Tucker's character.

The chapter eloquently mixes humor and heavier themes, presenting a vivid picture of young friendship amid struggles for acceptance and the



complexities of familial bonds. Tucker's journey is particularly poignant as he grapples with self-identity and the reality of his home life, forging a deeper connection with Willowdean through their shared experiences of feeling out of place. This chapter leaves readers eager to see how these relationships evolve as each character continues to navigate their adolescent lives.

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Chapter 23 Summary: Twenty-Four

In Chapter 23 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the scene opens at a party prepared by Kyle, who hopes to create a memorable night for his friends. As he organizes, tension brews over his choice of invitees—he wants a party with his close friends, but Alex feels the need to include their wider social circle to break down barriers. This conflict captures the group's struggle between wanting to be inclusive versus maintaining their close-knit dynamics.

When the pressure mounts and Alex storms off in frustration, Waylon decides to take matters into his own hands by calling Tucker to invite him and potentially expand the party's guest list. Tucker, who responds enthusiastically, represents the connection that Waylon craves, highlighting a budding relationship that adds excitement to the narrative.

As the party kicks off, various characters arrive, each adding their own flavor to the mix. There's a humorous element to the chaos, illustrated by Kyle's futile attempts to maintain order amidst the influx of guests and their carefree spirits. Characters like Willowdean and Millie bring a light-hearted vibe, with witty banter about wine and the awkwardness of teenage parties.

The chapter reaches a turning point when Tucker arrives, and he and Waylon share a significant moment that hints at their growing bond. Tucker's gesture



of bringing root beer is a humble yet thoughtful contribution—one that charms Kyle as well and causes a ripple of admiration from Waylon. This fosters a moment of connection between the two boys that suggests deeper feelings are forming.

Ultimately, the chapter balances humor and heart, showcasing themes of friendship, social dynamics, and the bittersweet nature of growing up. The party, meant to be a special celebration, evolves into an unexpected catalyst for personal connections and revelations, culminating in a joyful yet transformative experience for Waylon, especially when he finds himself holding hands with Tucker, creating an unforgettable memory.

| Element | Summary |
|-----------------------|---|
| Setting | Party organized by Kyle, aiming for a memorable night. |
| Conflict | Tension between Kyle wanting a close-knit party and Alex wanting to include more friends. |
| Character Development | Waylon calls Tucker to expand the guest list, representing a growing relationship. |
| Humor | Chaos ensues as characters arrive, with Kyle struggling to maintain order and humorous interactions among guests. |
| Key Moment | Tucker's arrival and bringing root beer signals a deepening bond with Waylon. |
| Themes | Friendship, social dynamics, growing up, personal connections. |
| Conclusion | The party becomes a transformative experience for Waylon, |

| Element | Summary |
|---------|---|
| | culminating in him holding hands with Tucker. |

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of embracing vulnerability in relationships

Critical Interpretation: In Chapter 23 of 'Pumpkin,' the dynamics of the party illustrate a profound theme: when you allow yourself to be vulnerable and open to new connections, magical moments can unfold. Just like Waylon takes the brave step to invite Tucker and deepen their bond, we are inspired to let our guards down, to embrace uncertainty in our own lives. This chapter reminds us that meaningful relationships often blossom when we step outside our comfort zone and invite new people into our personal worlds. By doing so, we not only create unforgettable memories but also cultivate a sense of community that enriches our experiences and grows our capacity for love and understanding.

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Chapter 24: Twenty-Five

In Chapter 24 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we find ourselves at a lively party where Waylon Brewer and his friend Tucker are observing the raucous activities surrounding them. The atmosphere is filled with that unique blend of excitement and nervousness that comes before significant personal breakthroughs. Waylon is intrigued by the vibrant social life he's been missing out on, as he watches the interactions of his peers—the jocks, the romantics, and the carefree.

Tucker, who is comfortably sitting with Waylon, is supportive as Waylon navigates the emotional landscape of the event. They share a tender moment of connection, discussing weighty topics like grief and family, particularly in regards to Tucker's struggles with his father's alcoholism following the loss of his mother. This exchange deepens their bond and sets the stage for Waylon to embrace more of who he is.

As the party heats up, Kyle Meeks drunkenly climbs out of a window and dramatically declares his love for Alex Wu, causing a stir that shifts the

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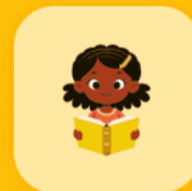
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Chapter 25 Summary: Twenty-Six

In this lively chapter, Waylon wakes up to find a tuxedo hanging over his door, courtesy of his thoughtful mom, who wanted to make sure he had something nice for prom. Although the tux is quite plain and boxy, it evokes mixed feelings for Waylon, who yearns for a style that truly represents him—an embodiment of his flamboyant alter ego, Pumpkin. His mom reassures him that they can always tailor it to perfection, suggesting that Grammy might even help jazz it up. As Waylon's day unfolds, he joins his family for dinner at Grammy's house, where a comical banter ensues about the recent end-of-year party and their lively family dynamic.

In a delightful twist, Tucker unexpectedly shows up, which sends butterflies fluttering in Waylon's stomach. The dinner is warm and inviting, filled with laughter and works as a magnificent backdrop to deepen Waylon and Tucker's budding relationship. They share details about their prom court preparations, but the conversation takes a serious turn when Tucker reveals his father's struggles with alcohol, sparking a moment of connection, especially between Tucker and Grammy, who shares a similarly painful family history.

As the evening winds down, Tucker and Waylon steal a moment outside, where the tension between them culminates in their first passionate kiss. It's a thrilling moment full of longing and desire, with Waylon feeling liberated



as he allows his true self to emerge. Their kiss solidifies their connection, setting the stage for Waylon's next steps as he navigates prom and his relationship with Tucker amidst the tapestry of family love and support. This chapter captures the contrasts of self-discovery, romantic exploration, and the significance of familial bonds in a delightful and engaging way.

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Chapter 26 Summary: Twenty-Seven

In Chapter 26 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we find our protagonist, Waylon, backstage with his friend Hannah just before their school's prom court announcements. Hannah is visibly anxious, a stark contrast to her usual confident demeanor, revealing her deep desire to end her high school experience on a high note with prom king and a romantic moment with her girlfriend, Clementine. Their conversation unveils Hannah's apprehension about the significance of these moments, as well as her affectionate feelings for Clem, which she plans to express amidst the prom festivities.

Waylon, still buzzing from a recent romantic encounter with Tucker, offers encouragement to Hannah, reminding her that the crown shouldn't be her ultimate goal—the real prize lies in expressing love. As they prepare to go on stage, the theme of self-acceptance and openly embracing one's identity runs through their interaction.

On stage, each nominee is introduced, showcasing their accomplishments. Waylon surprises himself by receiving enthusiastic cheers, sensing a shift from being the typical outsider to someone who is actually recognized and valued among his peers. As the questioning continues, he delivers an honest and heartfelt speech about vulnerability and breaking free from societal fears, igniting a supportive response from the audience.



Amidst the excitement, when the topic of prom dates arises, Hannah boldly claims Clem as her date, making a heartfelt declaration of love that draws warm reactions from their classmates. Inspired by her confidence, Waylon decides he will ask Tucker to prom rather than waiting for him to make the move. However, the atmosphere shifts drastically when Melissa, Tucker's ex-girlfriend, declares him as her date, leaving Waylon feeling discarded and heartbroken.

This chapter poignantly captures key themes such as the pressure to conform to high school expectations, the complexity of young love, and the bittersweet nature of stepping into adulthood while confronting feelings of rejection and self-worth. As Waylon grapples with the unexpected turn of events, his determination to seize the moment and embrace love becomes central to the unfolding narrative.



Chapter 27: Twenty-Eight

In Chapter 27 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the protagonist, Waylon, finds himself grappling with a mix of emotions after a tense interaction with Tucker, a boy he has developed a crush on. As the chapter opens, Waylon is eager to leave the auditorium where the prom candidates were just announced. His mind is racing, recalling how he once dismissed prom but now can't imagine attending without Tucker by his side.

When Tucker unexpectedly catches up with Waylon outside, things get messy fast. Tucker reminds Waylon that he had promised to take his ex, Melissa, to prom. Waylon, feeling blindsided and hurt, confronts Tucker about their recent kiss and his secretive nature regarding his relationship status. Waylon's anger bubbles to the surface as he expresses his frustration—he feels foolish for developing feelings and accuses Tucker of dragging him along without being honest.

The conversation intensifies as Waylon reveals his insecurities, highlighting his struggles with self-acceptance as a fat, femme gay guy with aspirations

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Chapter 28 Summary: Twenty-Nine

In Chapter 28 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, we catch up with Waylon as he navigates a whirlwind of emotions during the lead-up to prom. After school, he heads to a meeting for the prom court but finds himself dreading the arrival of Tucker, the boy he's been trying to avoid all day. Mrs. Leonard, the prom coordinator, shares that Tucker has decided to step down from the running for prom king, a decision that stings Waylon because of his feelings for Tucker, particularly since he's going with Melissa. Mrs. Leonard encourages Waylon to go ahead with a legacy project that he and Tucker had planned together, suggesting it could even earn him some recognition.

After the meeting, Waylon encounters Kyle, who confronts him about his snarky comments. Their conversation unravels deeper issues around body image and self-worth. Waylon feels hurt by the way Kyle has spoken about weight loss and the implications it has had on how he views himself. The exchange becomes emotional as Waylon lays bare his feelings, explaining that Kyle's past comments made him feel like a failure for being in a larger body. Kyle, taken aback, apologizes, but the damage has been done, leaving Waylon feeling conflicted and upset.

Back home, Waylon's sister, Clem, senses that something's wrong. He confides in her about his fraught conversation with Kyle and his frustrations over body image. Their bond shines through as Clem listens empathetically,



supporting her brother's feelings. She urges him to take a chance and sign up for an upcoming amateur night, despite Waylon's hesitations about his stage fright and lack of confidence.

The chapter beautifully explores themes of body positivity, self-acceptance, and the complexities of friendship. Waylon grapples with his insecurities, but with Clem's encouragement, he begins to contemplate sharing his love for performance. This internal struggle highlights the pressure he feels from society's standards of beauty, especially against the backdrop of his strained relationships with those around him. The chapter ends on a hopeful note, suggesting that even amidst difficulties, there is potential for growth and empowerment as Waylon starts to consider stepping out of his comfort zone.

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Chapter 29 Summary: Thirty

In Chapter 29 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the protagonist, Waylon, has a turning point after a day of despair. Following the emotional fallout from a note Tucker gave him, which revealed Tucker's feelings about dropping out of prom court to support Hannah, Waylon realizes he needs to take action. The note had stirred up intense feelings, leading him to confront his own struggles while also needing to reach out to Kyle, someone he has unresolved issues with.

Determined to set things right, Waylon seeks Kyle out after choir practice, leading to a heartfelt moment where they both express apologies. Kyle opens up about the lingering effects of his past weight struggles and how Waylon's words made him reflect on deeper issues he had thought he had overcome. This exchange showcases not just their individual growth but also raises themes of body image, friendship, and the importance of communication.

Waylon acknowledges his own shortcomings in their relationship and admits to needing help, which brings a light-hearted element back into the narrative. He asks Kyle for a favor, and in a moment of camaraderie, Kyle, alongside Alex, expresses enthusiasm for supporting Waylon, hinting at rekindling their friendship.

The chapter wraps up with Waylon and his friend Hannah joining the Prism



Club, feeling a mix of excitement and regret for not engaging with the community sooner. This moment highlights Waylon's journey toward acceptance and belonging, as he starts to embrace who he is and the support around him, reinforcing the theme of finding one's place and the power of friendship in personal growth.

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Chapter 30: Thirty-One

In Chapter 30 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the protagonist rallies her fellow Prism members to paint a vibrant mural outside the cafeteria in celebration of pride. With the remarkable support of her friends—Clem, Alex, Hannah, and Kyle—she demonstrates her leadership skills as they choose to replicate the colors of the Pride flag. The chapter begins with her excitement as she prepares for their collaborative effort, highlighting the camaraderie that exists within the group.

As they gather for the project, the atmosphere is light-hearted despite the underlying complexities of the protagonist's emotions. She feels a mix of anxiety and elation as they work on this large wall, an emblem of their identity that stands in stark contrast to her previously muted style. The moment offers a pivotal reflection on vulnerability; she grapples with the idea of expressing her true self in both art and life. Her mother arrives with tacos, grounding the scene in familial love and support, while imparting wisdom about sincerity being a strength rather than a weakness.

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Chapter 31 Summary: Thirty-Two

The chapter opens with our protagonist, buzzing with nerves, determined to show her gratitude to friends by bringing doughnuts as she heads to school. When she arrives, she's pleasantly surprised to find a crowd gathered around their collaboration—a vibrant "WE ARE" wall celebrating diversity and inclusivity at Clover City High School, intact and filled with messages from fellow students. The wall represents a safe space where everyone can express their identities, and its creation, initially a project involving Tucker and Waylon, showcases the spirit of unity among the club members.

As the day unfolds, the excitement over the wall grows, with students eagerly adding their own truths. Our protagonist shares sweet moments with her friends, especially as they create personal tributes to each other. Clem, her sister, plays a pivotal role, urging her to engage with the community around the wall and not linger on past grievances, particularly with Tucker, who observes from a distance.

The atmosphere shifts dramatically when the school bully, Patrick Thomas, shows up ready to vandalize the wall with derogatory slurs. In a burst of protective instinct, Clem intervenes dramatically, punching Patrick when he provokes her, resulting in chaos as blood spills and students are shocked. This bold act of defiance provokes a wave of solidarity among students, who begin to step forward to take responsibility for the confrontation. One by



one, friends and peers declare, “I punched Patrick Thomas,” transforming the moment from a simple fight into a revolutionary expression against bullying and oppression.

The chapter encapsulates themes of identity, unity, and the power of collective resistance. It showcases growth as the protagonist shifts from feeling like an outsider to recognizing the strength in community, finding her place and voice within her school. The power dynamics shift, with the fight against the oppressor serving as a rallying cry for camaraderie and empowerment, highlighting that their shared experiences and struggles ultimately bind them together.

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Chapter 32 Summary: Thirty-Three

In this vibrant chapter from "Pumpkin," we follow Waylon, who is anxiously preparing for her debut performance at a drag event called the Hideaway. As her friend Clem takes the truck she promised to drive, Waylon feels a mix of excitement and fear about her upcoming act. When she's picked up instead by a lively group of friends, including Millie, Hannah, and Willowdean, the atmosphere becomes buoyant despite her nerves—especially as they celebrate the thrilling news of a notorious bully, Patrick, being banned from prom.

During the ride, the girls discuss their future plans after graduation, with Willowdean expressing uncertainty about possibly joining her boyfriend in Sweden, provoking a thoughtful exchange about daring to pursue dreams versus the fear of loneliness. This conversation highlights the theme of self-discovery and the struggles of growing up.

At the Hideaway, Waylon prepares backstage, nervously applying makeup while bonding with an older drag queen named Nick, who becomes a supportive figure. There's a poignant moment as Waylon deals with the absence of her close friend Clem, hoping she'll arrive in time to see her perform. Nick shares valuable tips, lending her confidence and encouragement just before she takes the stage.



As Waylon officially transforms into her drag persona, Pumpkin Patch, and steps onto the stage, a wave of energy washes over her. The tension fades as she lip-syncs to "I Will Survive," feeling empowered and liberated under the spotlight. Despite her initial fears and worries about the audience's judgment, she comes into her own during the performance, embracing her identity and the joy of expressing herself through drag. The chapter captures the exhilarating journey of self-acceptance, the importance of friendship, and the courage to step out of one's comfort zone, culminating in an electrifying moment of personal triumph for Waylon.

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Chapter 33: Thirty-Four

In Chapter 33 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the story unfolds with a sense of relief and excitement as the main character reflects on a tumultuous evening. Clementine, affectionately called Clem, didn't meet a tragic fate; instead, her phone died, causing a brief panic for the narrator and their Grammy. The chapter highlights a bond between the sisters and their supportive grandmother, who suggests attending one of their local drag shows. Clem's hair appointment, a visit to the nail salon, and last-minute preparations for an important event create a buzz of activity.

As they navigate their day, the excitement of impending performances brings a sense of joy and urgency. The author paints a vivid picture of their self-care routine, from manicures to hair styling, reflecting themes of self-expression and identity. When the narrator receives a text from Tucker, a crush, feelings of tension and fluster arise, showcasing the emotional complexities of teenage relationships.

Grammy's warmth and nurturing spirit shine through as she surprises the

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Chapter 34 Summary: Thirty-Five

In Chapter 34 of "Pumpkin," we find Waylon, Hannah, and Clementine preparing for prom night, capturing moments with playful poses and familial love. Waylon bonds with Hannah's grandmother, Grandma Camile, who describes how much her granddaughter cherishes their friendship, hinting at Waylon's potential plans to connect more deeply with her. As the trio arrives at the Clover City Country Club, the excitement is palpable, punctuated by the Hollywood Nights theme that invokes a festive atmosphere with red carpets and glamorous decorations.

With their spirits high, they consider the prom festivities and the possibility of winning prom royalty titles, supported by Clem's encouraging pep talk that reassures them of their worth, regardless of the outcome. As they mingle, familiar faces appear, and Waylon feels a mix of pride and anxiety, especially when he spots Tucker, the boy he's had his eye on. The chapter highlights a sense of camaraderie among friends, specifically how Clem and Hannah support Waylon, reinforcing the theme of friendship and self-acceptance.

However, as the chapter unfolds, tension surfaces when Tucker is spotted storming out of the prom. Waylon instinctively pursues him, driven by an urgent need to connect before the crowning ceremony. His mix of excitement and dread culminates when he realizes Tucker departs with



someone else, amplifying feelings of rejection and loneliness. The moment encapsulates the struggles of young love and the complexities of relationships during adolescence as Waylon grapples with his emotions.

Hannah's call that it's time signifies a shift from anticipation to the reality of the event, leading readers to anticipate how the night will unfold for Waylon and his friends amid their highs and lows. This chapter beautifully captures the hopes, camaraderie, and heartache that often accompany significant life events like prom, making it relatable and poignant.

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Chapter 35 Summary: Thirty-Six

In Chapter 35 of "Pumpkin" by Julie Murphy, the excitement and tension of prom night come to a climax as Waylon and Hannah step onto the stage, surrounded by their fellow nominees. The anticipation is palpable as Principal Armstrong's lengthy speech abruptly concludes with the announcement of the prom court winners. There's a mixture of hope and anxiety swirling in Waylon's chest, especially after he learns that Melissa left the event with Tucker, leading to doubts about his own chances of winning.

Despite the uncertainty and the negative comments from peers, Waylon finds comfort in his friendship with Hannah and their shared optimism. They support each other by reassuring one another of their friendship, regardless of the outcome. Ultimately, the moment of truth arrives, and in a surge of joy and disbelief, Waylon and Hannah are crowned prom king and queen, igniting cheers from friends and peers.

Waylon's journey at this event is not just about winning a crown; it's about recognizing the value of the relationships he has cultivated and the lessons he has learned along the way. He's at peace with his past, admitting mistakes but also embracing growth and self-acceptance, a sentiment echoed in his choice to dance with Hannah, celebrating their friendship. When Tucker unexpectedly shows up after leaving with Melissa, he admits that he couldn't stop thinking about Waylon. This rekindles an emotional connection



between them, resulting in a heartfelt conversation that culminates in a tender kiss.

The chapter beautifully captures the joyful chaos of prom—the celebration of friendships, unasked questions about futures, and the bittersweet reality of change. Waylon realizes that his life is not a script, filled with uncertainties and potential paths, but the connections he forges today, like with Tucker, shape his journey forward. The chapter crescendos with laughter, dancing, and a promise of pancakes the next morning, signifying the beginning of something sweet and new between him and Tucker.

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