

The Elephant In The Room PDF (Limited Copy)

Holly Goldberg Sloan



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The Elephant In The Room Summary

Facing hidden truths and unlikely friendships.

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About the book

In "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, readers are invited into the poignant and transformative journey of a young girl navigating the complexities of family bonds and the subtle weight of unspoken truths. As the narrative unfolds, we explore the delicate dance between love and misunderstanding within her family, set against a backdrop of heartwarming moments and challenging revelations. This touching tale not only examines the power of connection and the courage to confront discomfort but also illuminates the profound impact of empathy and understanding. With rich characterization and beautifully woven narratives, Sloan's novel compels us to face our own elephants, making it a must-read for anyone who values the intricate intricacies of human relationships.

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About the author

Holly Goldberg Sloan is an acclaimed author and filmmaker known for her ability to weave heartfelt narratives that resonate with readers of all ages. With a background in screenwriting, including notable work on the beloved family film "Angels in the Outfield," Sloan transitioned into children's literature where she has achieved significant success. Her books often explore themes of friendship, resilience, and the complexities of growing up, marked by rich character development and emotional depth. Among her notable works, "The Elephant in the Room" stands out for its poignant exploration of family dynamics and personal growth, further solidifying Sloan's reputation as a master storyteller.

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Chapter 1 Summary:

In Chapter 1 of "The Elephant in the Room," we meet Sila Tekin, a young girl who treasures her favorite red-and-white striped shirt, associating it with good luck and fond memories. However, everything changes one afternoon when she comes home to find her parents deeply upset. Her mother, Oya, has to travel back to Turkey due to immigration issues involving paperwork that must be corrected to avoid deportation. This unexpected trip isn't a joyous return for Oya but a stressful necessity.

As Oya prepares for her eight-day trip, Sila is filled with mixed emotions. She understands her mother's yearning for her homeland yet realizes the trip is forced and carries heavy implications for their family. Sila, an American citizen born in Oregon, struggles to comprehend the urgency of the situation despite her parents' attempts to calm her fears. Oya gives Sila a blue glass evil eye for protection before she departs, but the weight of the separation soon becomes unbearable.

Fast forward a few months, Sila counts the days since her mother left, realizing that her absence has extended into eight months. With each passing day, her world feels increasingly heavy. Sila misses her mother profoundly, feeling an emotional and physical weight that alters her perception of life. Her father, Alp, grapples with his own grief and loss, often hiding his sadness from Sila. Their attempts to maintain a semblance of



normalcy—cooking meals and keeping the house tidy—fail to fill the void left by Oya's absence.

While Sila initially clings to routines and her friends, isolation soon takes over. She stays home after school, spending hours in her room and avoiding social interaction. The once-beloved shirt, now a painful reminder of her mother's absence, becomes a symbol of bad luck and is hidden away. Their family dinners devolve into mundane meals lacking the warmth of Oya's cooking. Communication with her mother via online calls becomes the only highlight, but even these moments feel fleeting, amplifying the emptiness in Sila's everyday life.

As the chapter closes, we see Sila and her father navigating their shared pain and longing, both silently waiting for Oya's return as the world outside continues to move forward without them. This chapter poignantly explores themes of family, loss, and the struggle between hope and despair, setting the stage for the emotional journey that lies ahead.



Chapter 2 Summary:

In Chapter 2 of "The Elephant in the Room," we get a glimpse into Sila's life in Apartment 207A, which is filled with cherished but mismatched items accumulated over time. The only luxury is a beautiful carpet from Istanbul, but Sila feels disconnected from her surroundings, especially since her mother has been gone. The noise of passing trains, once ignored, now amplifies her sense of longing and isolation.

One Saturday morning, Sila's father receives a call about a truck that needs fixing and insists that Sila join him for the trip, despite her reluctance. Sila prepares for the outing half-heartedly, packing snacks and a book, knowing her father won't take no for an answer. They set off on Highway 99 North, and as they drive away, Sila momentarily enjoys the feeling of movement and escape, daydreaming of a long journey to the Atlantic Ocean. However, the distance from her mother weighs heavily on her mind, a stark reminder of the gap in her life.

As they navigate into more remote areas, Sila's curiosity grows. They arrive at a peculiar, imposing stone wall that surrounds a mysterious property. It fascinates her; she imagines being trapped in a novel, caught up in adventure. Yet, she is gripped by dread, fearful that if they are away too long, her mother might return and find them missing. This internal conflict between the desire for adventure and the loyalty to her mother showcases the



emotional turmoil Sila is experiencing as she grapples with her new reality without her. As they approach the unknown destination, the chapter beautifully captures Sila's struggle between freedom and the fear of abandonment.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embracing Adventure Despite Fear

Critical Interpretation: Sila's journey exemplifies the struggle between longing for adventure and the fear of losing loved ones, underscoring the importance of embracing opportunities for growth and exploration even in times of uncertainty. This resonates deeply, encouraging you to step outside your comfort zone, confront your fears, and seek out new experiences, as they can lead to personal transformation and a greater understanding of yourself and the world around you.

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Chapter 3:

In Chapter 3 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila and her father, Alp, arrive at an old farmhouse in Oregon to check on a broken truck. As they approach, Sila spots a flock of red finches, which gives her a sense of hope. The landscape is striking, with sago palms that seem out of place against the Oregon backdrop. Alp and Sila are greeted by an elderly man named Gio, wearing a bright yellow jacket—a stark contrast to the muted colors of those around them.

Sila, anxious about making a good impression, struggles to smile but prepares to meet the old man as her father introduces her. Gio's gravelly voice and casual demeanor put her somewhat at ease, and he invites them to check on the truck in the barn. Initially hesitant, Sila agrees to accompany her father, feeling compelled to follow Gio despite her usual caution with strangers.

Inside the barn, Sila observes the old blue pickup and imagines the livestock that might have once filled the space. While Alp works on the truck, Gio

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Chapter 4 Summary:

In Chapter 4 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, we delve into Gio's past as he shares the story of his life as a carpenter and the transformative moment when he won the lottery with his coworkers. For nearly thirty years, Gio worked tirelessly at Chinook Modular Housing, where he built mobile homes. His labor was repetitive but offered him camaraderie among a close-knit group of coworkers, complete with bowling leagues and book clubs. Sila, curious and engaged, listens intently as Gio explains the mechanics of their job and the mundane rhythm of their days.

The story takes a thrilling turn when Gio recalls how a lottery pool formed among twenty-four of him and his colleagues. After years of playing without success, they finally hit the jackpot—an enormous win that changed their lives forever. Sila feels the excitement of their victory, but Gio soon reveals the bittersweet aftermath. The rest of their coworkers reacted with disappointment—some even mournfully—feeling left out and resentful.

As Gio recounts the upheaval in their workplace, Sila senses the deeper implications of the lottery win, particularly how it affected their relationships. Most of the group quit their jobs seeking new beginnings, except for Duncan, the welder who remained content with his work.

Through this narrative, Gio reveals his motivations and the lasting absence of his late wife, Lillian, who loved the thrill of lottery games but didn't live



to see their good fortune.

Gio describes Lillian's battle with lung cancer, sharing poignant memories of their life together and dreams they had for a farm and a family that never came to be. He confesses he owes his participation in the lottery to her, and the money feels like a reminder of her absence rather than pure joy. Their poignant connection takes an unexpected turn when Sila discovers Lillian was her beloved second-grade teacher; the bond they share over these memories draws tears to Gio's eyes.

This chapter encapsulates themes of loss, the bittersweet nature of fortune, and the impact of personal histories on our current lives. Through his storytelling, Gio reveals his vulnerability while Sila's curiosity establishes a beautiful connection, grounding their experiences in shared understanding and deepening their interactions. The chapter closes with an emotional resonance, reminding us that even amidst financial success, the shadows of grief and longing can linger deeply.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The bittersweet nature of fortune and its impact on relationships

Critical Interpretation: Imagine winning the lottery, the thrill surging through your veins, but as you celebrate, you feel an unexpected pang of sorrow—echoes of loss intertwined with excitement. This chapter nudges you to reflect on the nuances of life's fortunes; success is not merely a matter of wealth. It reminds you that every victory can carry shadows of the people and dreams that shaped you, urging you to cherish the connections you have, to navigate the highs and lows of life with a profound awareness that true wealth often lies in the relationships you build and the memories you hold dear.



Chapter 5 Summary:

In Chapter 5 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, we enter a moment filled with nostalgia and connection as characters deal with the complexities of life, loss, and the echoes of fond memories. The chapter opens with a revealing conversation when Gio, an older man with newfound wealth from winning the lottery, interacts with Sila and her father, Alp. As they discuss the condition of Gio's pickup truck, which is still running but needs repairs, a sense of camaraderie begins to develop. Sila's bright nature shines through as she expresses excitement about returning to help with the truck's repairs, hinting at the bond forming between the characters.

Gio reflects on his past, inadvertently connecting Sila to his late wife, Lillian, who was Sila's second-grade teacher. This realization brings a bittersweet tone; while Gio feels proud to remember Lillian fondly, he also grapples with his loneliness after her death. He struggles with an overwhelming emptiness now that he has become accustomed to a life without her. Through their discussion, Sila reveals a desire for stability and the possibility of reuniting with her mother, who struggles with immigration issues. Their musings about what they would do if they won the lottery serve as a coping mechanism, a blend of fantasy and hope that highlights their aspirations despite their struggles.

As they drive home, Sila shares memories of her beloved teacher, and the



conversation shifts to dreams of a better life, capturing the essence of youthful optimism and the longing for familial wholeness. Alp and Sila imagine what could be done with newfound wealth—practical changes like fixing sidewalks or connecting their apartments—sparking laughter and deeper inter-family bonds. The discussion also reveals underlying themes of the immigrant experience and the longing for a sense of belonging.

Meanwhile, after they leave, Gio reflects alone in his living room, surrounded by memories of Lillian and the old farmhouse he adores. This structure becomes a metaphor for his life—weathered yet full of stories and significance. The old stone wall enclosing much of his land symbolizes the barriers he feels in his emotional world, separating him from truly connecting with others after Lillian’s passing. The rich setting of his property becomes a canvas for his feelings of isolation, nostalgia, and the idea that sometimes walls can signify both protection and separation.

As he thinks about Sila and her sadness, Gio yearns to understand her better, realizing they might share a bond of loss. This chapter beautifully encapsulates the intertwined stories of loss, memory, and hope, demonstrating how each character grapples with their unique challenges while seeking connection and purpose in a world that often feels isolating.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of connection through shared experiences and memories

Critical Interpretation: Imagine a moment when you stand close to someone, sharing stories both joyful and sorrowful, each tale threading a connection that binds you together. In Chapter 5, the characters reveal that even amidst their struggles—Gio’s loss of his beloved wife and Sila’s yearning for a mother’s presence—they find solace in each other's company. This realization can inspire you to actively seek out connections with those around you, understanding that shared experiences and memories have the power to heal and uplift. Just as Sila and Gio bond over past emotions and future hopes, allowing yourself to be vulnerable and open to others can foster deeper relationships, reminding you that you are never truly alone in your journey.



Chapter 6:

Gio found himself parked outside Alp Tekin's apartment building, hesitating as he prepared to deliver some money for parts to fix his old truck. The moment Alp and his daughter Sila pulled up, Gio knew he couldn't just drive away. He rolled down the window and awkwardly explained his presence, offering cash to Alp, who accepted it gratefully. Sila, in a surprising twist, invited him in for tea and snacks, and to his own surprise, Gio accepted.

Inside, as they shared simple snacks and tea served in elegant glasses, the atmosphere was relaxed despite the initial awkwardness. As Sila acknowledged she was glad her mother was out, Gio's amusing footwear—fancy leather slippers—lightened the mood. Alp asked how Gio ended up needing his truck fixed, prompting Gio to share his past experiences at a local dealership, which had left him feeling dismissed. This struck a chord with Alp and Sila, who smiled, remembering their own endeavors to promote Alp's business by leaving cards in mailboxes.

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busy schedules. The summaries are spot
on, and the mind maps help reinforce wh
I've learned. Highly recommend!

Alex Walk

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Chapter 7 Summary:

In Chapter 7 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila eagerly anticipates celebrating her friend Gio's birthday. Concerned he might spend it alone, she and their friend Alp plan to surprise him with donuts at Hole in One, a quirky bakery run by two sisters known for their unique hours and delicious treats. Despite the gloomy, rainy weather, the trio makes their way to the bakery, where they find the comforting aroma of donuts and hot beverages.

Sila, excited to give Gio a heartfelt birthday card, feels a wave of joy when he appreciates her thoughtful gesture. Just as they settle down to enjoy their treats, a flood of colorful, lively strangers pours into the shop. This eclectic crowd—a combination of circus performers—enters with an air of chaos, bringing a sense of excitement and curiosity. Among them is a man named Chester Briot, who explains that they are part of the Briot Family Circus, which is winding down after over thirty years of touring. He shares the bittersweet news that the circus will close soon, and the family members are ready to go their separate ways.

Intrigued by their vibrant stories, Sila and Gio connect with Chester, who invites them to meet another circus member as a thank-you for Gio's generous treat. As they step outside, the rain has eased, revealing a stunning rainbow that feels almost magical to Sila, hinting at something special about to unfold. It's in this moment of serendipity that Sila meets Veda, sparking a



new adventure that promises to be significant for all of them.

This chapter beautifully captures themes of friendship, the joy of celebration, and the unpredictability of life, showcasing how unexpected encounters can lead to profound moments. Sila's admiration for Gio shines through, as does her growing curiosity about the outside world and the colorful lives around her. The mixture of warmth from their small gathering and the excitement of the circus community hints at new beginnings and the unfolding of their own stories.

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Chapter 8 Summary:

In Chapter 8 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila encounters Veda, an elegant elephant owned by Chester, who is now struggling to maintain his circus business. Sila is mesmerized by Veda's size and majesty, contrasting her childhood fascination with the elephant against Chester's weariness. Chester reflects on the glory days of the circus, feeling nostalgic as he observes Sila's enchantment with Veda. Despite his tough exterior, he shares intriguing facts about elephants, revealing his passion for them and the emotional connection he has to Veda, who he refers to as family.

As Sila stands in awe, a bittersweet moment unfolds when her father, Gio, reminds her that she must leave for school. Despite the celebration of Gio's birthday, Sila's disappointment at having to leave the elephant is palpable, and Gio feels a profound connection to her distress. Watching her drive away unexpectedly stirs something within Gio, a sense of purpose that he believes relates to the elephant's plight.

Gio contemplates his recent lottery win and his isolated life since the passing of his partner, Lillian. He connects Veda's fate, now threatened by changing regulations that ban the use of tools to control circus animals, to his own feeling of being trapped. Gio's observations about Chester's appearance and footwear highlight the socio-economic divide between them. While Chester speculates wildly about Gio's potential wealth based on his fancy slippers,



Gio finds little comfort in his financial status, indicating a deeper emotional struggle beneath the surface.

Finally, Chester approaches Gio about potentially selling Veda. Despite his reluctance to part with the elephant, Chester sees an opportunity in Gio's presence. Their meeting hints at the potential for a new chapter for both men: Gio might rescue Veda, while Chester grapples with the reality of losing his beloved companion. The chapter emphasizes themes of connection, the bonds between humans and animals, and the search for purpose amid loss and change. The imagery of Sila's wonder and Gio's internal conflict crafts a poignant moment in the narrative, intertwining their journeys with Veda's fate.

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Chapter 9:

In Chapter 9 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila Tekin is consumed by worry and unease, particularly concerning the mysterious note she received directing her to the school office. As she navigates the empty halls, her mind is filled with worst-case scenarios about her family's well-being, especially thoughts about her mother, who is stuck overseas due to visa issues. When she arrives in the office, she meets Joann Holsing, the Assessment and Curriculum Programs Coordinator, who initially eases Sila's anxiety simply by balancing on an exercise ball.

However, the conversation soon takes a serious turn. Mrs. Holsing expresses concern about Sila's recent behavior in school—her quietness in class, declining academic performance, and solitary lunch habits. Though Mrs. Holsing is compassionate, Sila feels frustrated and confused by the revelation that teachers have been "reporting" on her. As they talk, Sila grapples with the emptiness in her life and her reluctance to open up about her struggles.

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Chapter 10 Summary:

In Chapter 10 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila reflects on her long-standing yet distant relationship with Mateo Lopez, a quiet boy who lives just six blocks away. Their paths have crossed since childhood, but while Sila recalls a time when Mateo was talkative, something changed around third grade. He became reticent, occupying the back of the classroom, where he continued to excel academically despite withdrawing from interactions with peers. Sila grapples with the feeling that her own social life has suffered as she has distanced herself from her friends, and she realizes that others have largely ignored Mateo's unique nature, labeling him as having a "hidden challenge."

During one school day, Sila and Mateo are unexpectedly paired together for a meeting facilitated by a staff member. The situation is awkward; both remain silent upon entering a small room filled with puzzles, games, and art supplies. Despite the opportunity to bond, they each retreat to their books, Sila reading a novel while Mateo tackles an adult book on gravity. After an excruciatingly quiet twenty minutes, they leave without exchanging words, even though they're headed in the same direction.

Upon returning home, Sila finds herself contemplating her connection to Mateo and how she has previously overlooked him. When she sees him outside walking a large dog, a realization strikes her: she has been oblivious



to the small details about him, even when they lived so close. The chapter encapsulates themes of social isolation, the impact of silence, and the challenge of forming connections, particularly with those who are different. Sila's insights suggest a budding awareness of the importance of recognition and understanding in relationships.

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Chapter 11 Summary:

In Chapter 11 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, we see Chester Briot's frantic quest to gather the cash needed to sell his elephant, Veda. Starting at Oregon First Bank, he and Gio manage to collect the full \$41,000 from various branches, evoking a thrill akin to a heist for Chester. The scene escalates as they transport not only Veda but also additional items like a bear named Mr. Pickles, a variety of supplies for the elephant's care, and even a notebook on elephant management, cleverly disguised by Chester as used.

As Veda arrives at Gio's pink farmhouse, she experiences a transformative moment; escaping the confines of her previous life, she delights in the smells and sounds of the natural world around her, awakening her senses to the beauty outside her truck. Gio stands in awe, extending his hand to her. In a touching moment, he reassures Veda that this will be her forever home, showcasing his deep bond with her.

Chester, meanwhile, is secretly relieved to unload his responsibilities, but the excitement of the sale quickly turns to a sense of loss. As he attempts a sad farewell to Veda, she flings dirt at him in a comedic yet poignant gesture, reflecting her lack of attachment to him. After Chester departs, leaving Gio to navigate this new relationship with Veda, he is warned by Rodrigo, her former caretaker, about the dangers of an elephant without fear.



Yet, Gio refuses his advice and the controlling tool.

Once Veda is gone, Chester's joy crumbles into an overwhelming sadness. He finds himself plagued with health issues, including severe dry eyes, which he links to the day he sold Veda, feeling haunted by their separation. Despite his attempts to move on, thoughts of Veda linger, marking a profound change in his life. In stark contrast, Veda forges ahead, untouched by the past, symbolizing her newfound freedom and life ahead, free from Chester's troubling influence.

This chapter beautifully encapsulates themes of liberation and loss, intertwining the profound connection between humans and animals while exploring the emotional depths of ownership, responsibility, and the potential for renewal.

Key Elements	Description
Chester's Quest	Chester Briot gathers \$41,000 to sell his elephant, Veda, feeling like a thief while collecting cash from Oregon First Bank.
Transportation	Chester and Gio transport Veda along with supplies, including a bear named Mr. Pickles and a management notebook.
Arrival at Gio's Farm	Veda experiences freedom and joy upon arriving at Gio's pink farmhouse, awakening her senses to nature.
Gio's Promise	Gio assures Veda it will be her forever home, highlighting his bond with her.

Key Elements	Description
Chester's Loss	Chester feels relief but also sadness as he bids farewell to Veda, who humorously responds by flinging dirt at him.
Rodrigo's Warning	Rodrigo warns Gio about the dangers of having an unafraid elephant, but Gio chooses not to heed the advice.
Chester's Health Issues	After the sale, Chester suffers from health problems, particularly dry eyes, linking them to his separation from Veda.
Themes	The chapter explores themes of liberation, loss, and the emotional connections between humans and animals, addressing ownership and renewal.

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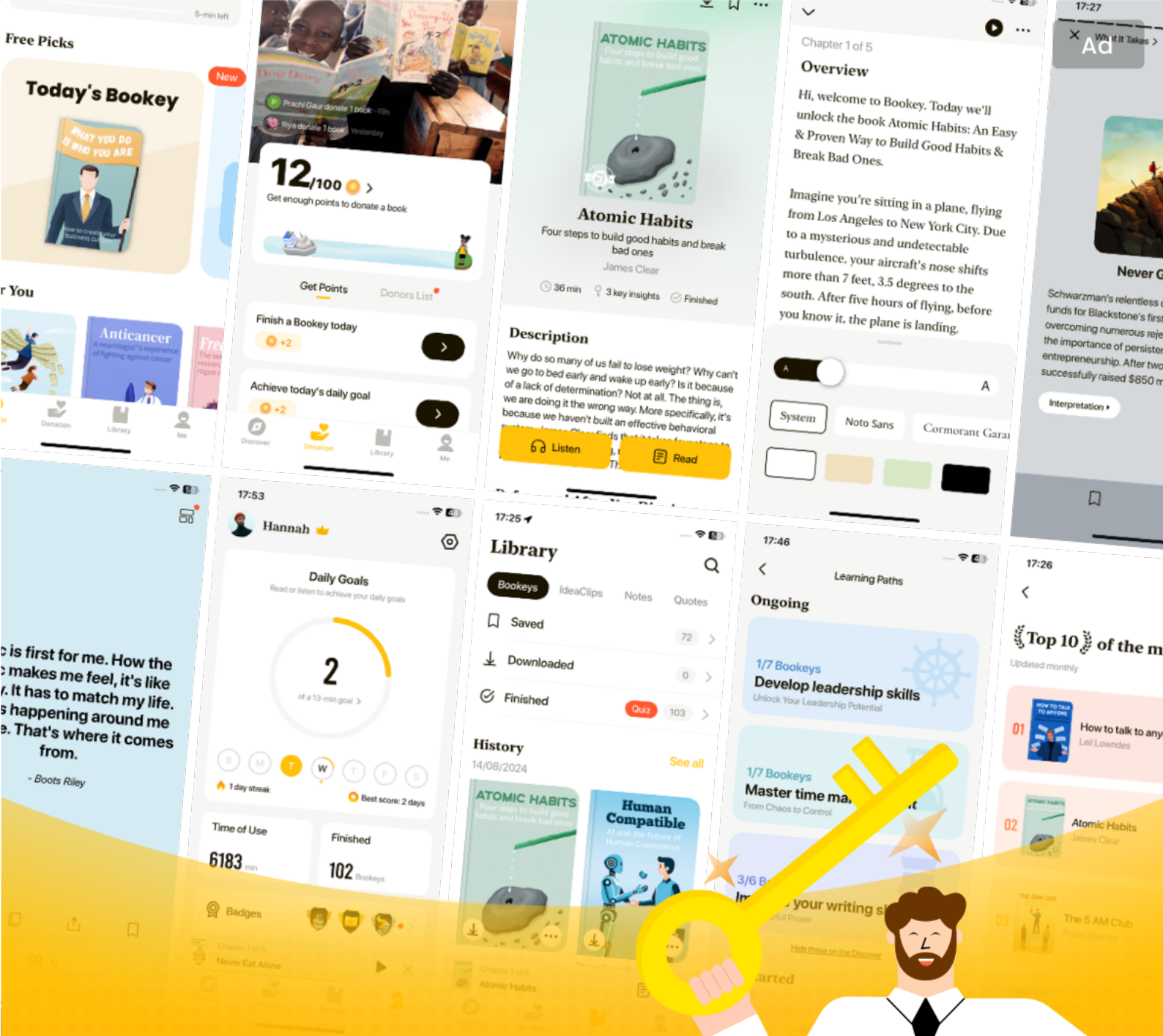
Chapter 12:

In Chapter 12 of "The Elephant in the Room," we delve deeper into the heartwarming yet chaotic relationship between Gio and Veda, the Asian elephant. After setting some red apples at Veda's feet, Gio rushes back inside his farmhouse to change out of his bedroom slippers, concerned that he might get hurt if the elephant moved unexpectedly. As he ties his boots, a loud crash draws his attention back outside, where he finds Veda standing on the demolished first step of his porch, clearly having tried to follow him inside. This incident only strengthens Gio's bond with Veda, as he realizes her overwhelming presence and vulnerability.

Soon after, Gio recalls the bear, Mr. Pickles, who is anxiously pacing in his cage within the barn. He discovers supplies left by the circus, including dog food and grape jelly, along with a set of unsettling notes detailing how to care for Mr. Pickles. The tones of these notes express both care and caution, revealing the bear's past injuries and the dangers he poses. Gio is horrified to find an electric cattle prod, which he promptly discards, choosing compassion over coercion. He unlocks Mr. Pickles' cage, and the bear

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Chapter 13 Summary:

In Chapter 13 of "The Elephant in the Room," the chaos begins with Gio's frantic attempts to control Mr. Pickles, a bear who has decided to wreak havoc in his house. Despite Gio's loud protests and efforts with various kitchen tools, Mr. Pickles demolishes the kitchen while devouring everything in sight—from ice cream to pickles—creating a hilarious yet catastrophic scene. Gio's desperate shouts and the bear's nonchalance highlight both Gio's frustration and the ridiculousness of the situation, which feels almost like a comedic show.

Outside, Gio's friend Veda (an elephant) observes the mayhem, munching on apples with amusing enthusiasm. After Mr. Pickles accidentally switches on a radio playing opera, the sound frightens him away, leaving Gio to confront the disaster. As night falls, he searches for the runaway bear, feeling a mix of anxiety and resignation, but eventually returns to the barn to care for Veda.

Gio sets up a cozy space in the loft overlooking the enormous elephant, feeling a deep emotional connection. Watching her eat and then fall asleep brings Gio to tears, reminding him of his late wife, Lillian. This poignant moment reveals Gio's internal struggle with loss and his growing affection for Veda, who symbolizes new beginnings in his life.



Later, he returns to the wrecked kitchen, scavenging for food and preparing peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, which taste remarkably satisfying under the circumstances. Just as he begins to doze off, Gio spots Mr. Pickles enjoying a carefree dance beneath him, bringing a whimsical touch to the chapter. The bear's surprising grace suggests a lingering remnants of his circus days, further emphasizing the bond between the animals and their journey of companionship. Eventually, Mr. Pickles finds comfort in the cage, snuggling with a quilt, and drifts off to sleep, snoring loudly—a fitting end to a day filled with unexpected wildness and heartwarming connections.

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Chapter 14 Summary:

In Chapter 14 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, Veda, an elephant, finds herself in a state of deep introspection as she shares an enclosed space with a bear. Despite their physical proximity, there's a profound silence between them—each trapped in their own world, each aware of their disconnected existence. Veda is haunted by the memories of her past, feeling an overwhelming mix of exhaustion and fear as she wonders about her uncertain future.

She reflects on her life, recalling the warmth of her mother's milk from her early days with her family. Yet, Veda's childhood was abruptly taken from her when she was separated from her family, made to adapt to a life of performance under the harsh expectations of circus life. Through her recollections, we see how she was trained to perform tricks, endure pain, and obey commands, but she acknowledges that no amount of training could teach her to trust those who control her or erase the memories of her past.

Veda's internal struggle lays bare the themes of captivity, loss, and resilience. The pain of her past continues to linger, manifesting in her dreams of her mother, encapsulating the deep emotional scars left by her traumatic experiences. This chapter poignantly highlights the challenges faced by both Veda and the bear, who, despite their differences, share the common plight of being locked away, desperate for freedom and connection.



Chapter 15:

In this captivating chapter, we dive into the sensory world of Mr. Pickles, a character who embodies the essence of living in the moment. With an acute sense of smell that shapes his experiences, Mr. Pickles connects deeply to his surroundings—he inhales the vibrant scents of life, from the sweet aromas of blooming flowers to the pungent hints of decay. His ability to detect fragrances from afar enriches his perception, allowing him to revel in the simplest pleasures, like the tantalizing scent of cookies baking or the mouthwatering waft of barbecue smoke.

However, Mr. Pickles's reality is starkly contrasted by his confinement in a circus cage. His extraordinary olfactory world makes the limitations of his physical space feel unbearable, leaving him yearning for freedom. The chapter powerfully illustrates his struggle, as he feels only half alive, tethered to a past that no longer matters and a future he cannot perceive. In his mind, it's all about the now, the scents swirling around him that define his existence.

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Chapter 16 Summary:

As Sila lay in bed, her mind drifted back to a day nearly a year ago that changed everything for her family. She felt a heavy weight on her conscience, believing that all the troubles they faced stemmed from her actions, particularly the day she wore the "unlucky shirt." It started innocently enough when her mother, Oya, came home exhausted and revealed her discontent about not being paid fairly at her job as a housekeeper at the Grand Hotel. When Sila accidentally discovered her mother's coworker Miguel Mendoza was earning more than her, she was curious and shocked. Oya, however, realized the disparity was likely due to gender biases, and in an act of courage, she confronted her superiors about the unequal pay.

Despite being a diligent employee, Oya lost her job within a week after questioning the system, as the hotel falsely claimed budget cuts. To further complicate matters, Oya's immigration status came into question, leading to a summons for her to appear in court. As a result, Oya was trapped abroad, unable to reunite with her husband and daughter, creating a gaping void in Sila's life.

One night, feeling the silence of her apartment, Sila searched through a shoebox containing her old report cards and stumbled upon a note from her favorite teacher, Mrs. Gardino, who had praised her potential. This moment



made her long for the stability and love her teacher represented, highlighting the emotional turmoil Sila faced after losing such a key figure and now grappling with her mother's absence.

The next morning, Sila woke late and contemplated faking an illness to avoid school, overwhelmed by dread. Her father, Alp, who was perceptive and caring, saw through her attempt at deception and encouraged her to get ready. The thought of facing her class and spending time in the library with Mateo Lopez, a boy she found awkward to be around, filled her with anxiety. In this chapter, Sila's internal struggle reflects the themes of guilt, loss, and the aspirations of a young girl caught in the complexities of adult issues that have turned her life upside down.



Chapter 17 Summary:

In Chapter 17 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, Gio awakens in the barn loft to an extraordinary sight: a motionless elephant and a snoring bear, Mr. Pickles. The surreal scene evokes a mix of excitement and disbelief. After pondering Mr. Pickles' future, Gio is determined not to keep the bear confined. He knows the bear lacks the skills to survive in the wild, so he embarks on a mission to find him a proper home. Thanks to the Internet, he discovers Kimmie Bouttier, a bear sanctuary owner, who agrees to take Mr. Pickles after Gio offers to finance his food for ten years.

When Kimmie arrives, Gio watches as she effortlessly bonds with Mr. Pickles, putting him into a cage for transport to a sanctuary. After they leave, Gio feels a wave of relief mixed with sadness, but later receives a photo showing Mr. Pickles thriving with other bears, easing his conscience and confirming he made the right decision.

With Mr. Pickles gone, Gio can focus entirely on Veda, his elephant. He quickly learns that Veda's roaming is not just aimless; it reflects the lifestyle of a free elephant—eating and drinking as she wanders. As she consumes everything in her path, including entire trees, Gio is amused but also concerned about her voracious appetite. He realizes he must provide her with adequate food without her destroying the property.



Discovering Veda has dug her own water hole thanks to an underground spring on his land, Gio decides to enhance it with a backhoe to create a proper pond. This newfound water source becomes a joyful part of his property, making him proud. As the chapter concludes, Gio receives a message from Alp Tekin, indicating that parts for his old truck have arrived. He shares with Alp that Sila will have a "big surprise" waiting for her, leaving Gio grinning with anticipation for the future. The themes of responsibility and the bond between humans and animals resonate through Gio's journey, culminating in a heartwarming sense of purpose.

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Chapter 18:

In Chapter 18 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila and her father, Alp, arrive at Gio's property to find him acting unusually secretive yet exciting. As they drive on a gravel lane, Sila wonders why Gio is outside with his old truck, leading her to suspect something's amiss. Gio tells them they need to stay together and hints at a surprise, but he remains vague, sparking Sila's curiosity.

Once behind a barrier wall, Gio reveals he's having a second gate put in, creating a secure area that intrigues both Sila and Alp. Despite Sila's eagerness for a dog, the real surprise is a golf cart, which they ride through Gio's sprawling property—filled with rolling hills and dense pines. As they crest a hill, the view that welcomes them is astonishing: a muddy pond with an elephant at its center!

Sila is ecstatic to see Veda, the elephant from her previous encounter at the donut shop. Her excitement is contagious, and her father's shock mirrors her own. As they watch Veda splash in the water and forage for food, Gio

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Chapter 19 Summary:

In Chapter 19 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila grapples with her complex feelings about her late mother and the handmade sweaters that now feel more like burdens than tokens of love. Ever since her mother Oya passed away, her father has been receiving her mother's knitted gifts from Turkey, which Sila finds uncomfortable and itchy. Despite the sweaters' cultural significance—mirroring intricate Turkish rug designs—Sila struggles with the embarrassment they bring, especially after a boy named Jordan cruelly compares her sweater to a lumpy carpet.

Amidst the turmoil, Sila is also caught in a difficult emotional place at school, where she has been unable to connect with her classmate Mateo Lopez during their mandated "connecting" sessions. While dealing with the weight of her mother's absence and her own academic challenges, she opts to wear one of Oya's sweaters to school, making a daily point of honoring her memory, despite the heat of early summer.

During a particularly trying day, the school Facilitator notices Sila's discomfort and suggests she take off her sweater. In a moment of vulnerability, Sila reveals the emotional weight behind the garment, an outburst that leads Mateo to speak up in her defense, acknowledging the cultural significance of the sweater. Sila feels a spark of connection with Mateo even though they struggle to communicate openly.



When they leave school together, Sila expresses gratitude, but Mateo deflects, suggesting she could have removed the sweater if it bothered her. Inspired, Sila finally sheds the itchy garment and revels in the relief of her decision, likening the experience to being rolled up in a carpet.

As they walk in silence, Sila becomes more attuned to her surroundings, contemplating the sounds of the world and observing Mateo's focused demeanor. Just before they part ways at his house, Mateo reflects on the concept of gravity, a comment that seems out of place but underscores his unique perspective. After he disappears into his home, Sila finds herself pondering whether people truly see and understand each other, contrasting her previous feelings of invisibility with a new sense of being seen.

This chapter highlights themes of grief, cultural identity, and the challenges of connection. Sila's journey reflects the struggle to honor one's roots while navigating personal comfort and social dynamics, revealing both her vulnerability and strength as she learns to assert her needs in the context of her mother's memory. The developing bond between Sila and Mateo hints at the potential for deeper understanding and friendship, anchoring their experiences in the shared reality of adolescence and loss.



Chapter 20 Summary:

In Chapter 20 of "The Elephant in the Room," we see Gio in action as he builds a metal enclosure for Veda the elephant, inspired by a design from the San Diego Zoo. He goes the extra mile, paying the welders he trusts double to ensure the job is done right. Veda finds joy in exploring the acreage, and after years of living in confined spaces, she contentedly returns to her new home in the barn every night.

Meanwhile, Sila and her father Alp maintain their routine, sharing a meal and discussing plans for the weekend. Sila's desire to visit Mr. Gio and bring a friend reveals a significant development in her character; she's reaching out to others despite her earlier struggles with loneliness and the weight of her mother's absence. Sila wants to invite Mateo Lopez, a quiet classmate who doesn't talk much but has been someone she has noticed and walked home with in silence. Her father's initial excitement dims when he learns that the "friend" is a boy, highlighting the protective instinct he has as a father.

Sila contemplates her relationship with Mateo and the difficulty she has in connecting with him. Despite the lack of communication, she feels a bond and believes that seeing Veda would mean something significant to him. When she finally musters the courage to ask him if he wants to join her on the trip to see Gio and the elephant, Mateo's cool response—"I'll ask my



mom”—is underwhelming but reveals his unique way of interacting with the world. Sila’s frustration turns to understanding as she realizes that Mateo communicates differently.

Their shared silence becomes a sort of game for Sila, who sees it as a way to connect with Mateo. They walk to his home silently, and when they arrive, she is introduced to a warmth she didn’t expect. Mateo’s affectionate relationship with his dog, Waffles, showcases another side of him, revealing a bond that illuminates his character beyond the quiet boy she knows at school. The chapter ends with Sila feeling a mix of anticipation and nervousness as she meets Mateo’s mother, hinting at a new dimension in their budding friendship and her journey toward connecting with others amid her grief.

Through these interactions, themes of communication, connection, and dealing with loss are explored as Sila learns the importance of understanding and patience with those around her, even with those who might seem distant or unresponsive.



Chapter 21:

In Chapter 21 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila has an unexpected encounter with Mateo Lopez's mother in their home. Startling her, Sila accidentally drops a delicate teacup, and the ensuing chaos finds them both rushing to clean up the mess. Throughout this shared moment, there's an underlying tension as Sila feels guilty for the accident while nervously trying to connect with Mateo's mother.

Rosa Lopez, Mateo's mom, seems welcoming yet surprised by Sila's presence, as she wasn't expecting company for her son. In a bid to strike up a conversation, Sila introduces herself and mentions her weekend plans to visit a friend who owns an elephant. Rosa's astonishment at the mention of a real elephant serves as a moment of shared wonder, indicating curiosity and the potential for a deeper bond.

As the conversation unfolds, Sila reveals that she and her dad are friends with Mrs. Gardino's husband, whose death she refers to as a significant event that happened over four years ago. This brings a solemn tone to their

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Chapter 22 Summary:

In this chapter, Mateo finds himself preoccupied with thoughts about an upcoming trip to see elephants with Sila, a girl who has recently captured his interest. After school, he dutifully sits down to tackle his homework, knowing he can't play video games until he's finished. However, the excitement and mystery surrounding Saturday's adventure distract him from his assignments. He becomes engrossed in researching elephants online, fascinated by their history and the peculiar image of an elephant disembarking from a circus train in 1963, surrounded by curious children.

As he immerses himself in the world of elephants, Mateo's mind begins to race with questions about Sila's motives for inviting him. He reflects on his past experiences of teasing at school, which makes him wary and anxious about the potential outing. This shift from curiosity to unease highlights his emotional complexity and the struggle between wanting to explore new friendships and the fear of getting hurt.

The chapter also illustrates Mateo's relationship with his mother, who interrupts his thoughts at dinnertime, revealing her own vulnerabilities when she accidentally drops a teacup. The stains on her pants serve as a reminder of the everyday messiness of life, paralleling Mateo's own uncertainties. Through this narrative, themes of trust, the intricacies of relationships, and the challenges of growing up are woven together, painting a rich picture of



Mateo's world as he navigates both his excitement for the adventure and his fears about friendship.

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Chapter 23 Summary:

In Chapter 23 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila is grappling with mixed feelings as she prepares for a trip with her father, Alp, and her friend Mateo Lopez. Initially apprehensive about Mateo's unpredictable nature, she fantasizes about a last-minute cancellation that would keep him from joining them. However, her daydream of bad news is interrupted when she and Alp actually pick Mateo up, who shows up dressed in a full camouflage ensemble, reminiscent of a soldier. This unusual outfit initially embarrasses Sila, but she soon reflects that it doesn't matter since no one else is around to judge him.

As they drive off, Sila notes her own questions about why she invited Mateo, even as he begins to rhythmically tap the back of her seat—a behavior she decides to interpret as his own musical beat. Their destination is Gio's house, where Gio is revealed to have cut off his beard, making him appear younger, which Sila compliments. Mateo, however, remains mostly silent, creating a palpable atmosphere of nervousness as they approach the house.

Rosa Lopez, Mateo's mother, struggles with her own concerns, suggesting she might accompany them for moral support, a request that Alp politely declines. He reassures her that they'll check in, and she sends the kids off with a bag of lunch including peanut butter sandwiches, which Sila secretly wishes were cookies instead.



When they arrive at Gio's property, with its imposing gates, Sila has hoped that Mateo might comment on its unusualness, but he remains quietly observant. Although anxious about Mateo's comfort during the visit, Sila tries to maintain a positive demeanor, promoting the rules of good etiquette when visiting friends. With a blend of emotions—nervousness, excitement, and a desire for acceptance—Sila navigates her concerns for both her friend and herself as they step into a new adventure. This chapter highlights themes of friendship, acceptance, and the anxiety of social situations, showing Sila's growth as she learns to appreciate her friend's uniqueness and the experience ahead.

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Chapter 24:

In Chapter 24 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila, Mateo, Gio, and Alp hop into a golf cart, each carrying a watermelon, ready for an adventure on Gio's property. The cart moves slowly, weighed down by both passengers and melons, which allows Sila to appreciate the natural beauty surrounding them, including vibrant boulders and soaring hawks. Although Mateo seems uncomfortable during the ride, his mood shifts when they reach the hilltop and spot the elephant, Veda, waiting at the pond. Sila's excitement is palpable, and she eagerly engages with Mateo, who relaxes in the presence of the animal.

After taking photos of Veda, Sila proposes giving the elephant a watermelon. She's eager to see the fruit roll down the hill, and when it splashes into the pond, Veda responds with childlike enthusiasm. Mateo, initially cautious, joins the fun by sending his own watermelon rolling, leading to a joyful celebration as they all laugh at the mess. This carefree moment deepens the connection among the group, with even Mateo's laugh emerging for the first time that day.

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Chapter 25 Summary:

In Chapter 25 of "The Elephant in the Room," we find Alp and his daughter Sila, along with their friend Mateo, engaged in an unexpected project at Mr. Gio Gardino's property. Donning work gloves, the kids eagerly collect elephant manure, turning a chore into a fun activity. Sila and Mateo's camaraderie shines as they work together, despite the unpleasant smell, displaying childhood innocence and teamwork.

While Alp and Gio chat on the porch, Alp reflects on his life, recognizing that since his wife's passing, he's missed the little joys, like outdoor activities with Sila. When the kids proudly show their parents the sizeable pile of manure they've amassed, Gio surprises them by offering cash as a reward, emphasizing his belief that work deserves payment. Although Sila insists they did it for fun, the comment plants a seed in her mind about the potential for summer work, which excites her as she considers how it could help her family financially and keep her engaged during vacation.

Sila boldly proposes to Gio that she and Mateo could return to help out over the summer, excitedly suggesting tasks they could do together. Despite her father's initial hesitance about the idea's safety, Gio supports it, recognizing the kids' potential contributions. Sila's concern for Mateo, even though he annoys her at times, reveals her caring nature as she wants to include him in her plans. When they wrap up their visit, Sila imagines the future adventures



they might have, showing her growing independence and optimism.

As they return home, Sila's interactions with Mateo's mother, Mrs. Lopez, reveal more about Mateo's life. His parents, living apart, create a somber backdrop to his character, which Sila now sees with fresh eyes. When discussing summer plans, Mrs. Lopez hesitates, but Mateo's quick wit about spending too much time on video games gives Sila hope they'll convince her.

In the car ride home, the theme of parental concern surfaces as Alp expresses his worries about safety, particularly as they relate to Sila's mother. There is a tender exchange between father and daughter, where they both apologize to each other for frustrations borne from grief and worry. For Sila, this moment deepens her understanding of her father's struggles, highlighting their bond amid the challenges they face. As they reach their apartment, the day's experiences solidify Sila's desire for independence and adventure, setting the stage for her growth through the summer ahead.



Chapter 26 Summary:

That night in her room, Sila poured her heart into a drawing of Veda, the elephant. Instead of using photographs, she chose to illustrate Veda as she envisioned her—a massive, majestic presence that dwarfed Gio's pond. As she finished, Sila penned a heartfelt note to her father, expressing gratitude for their adventurous spirits and asking for permission to work at Gio's this summer with Veda. This moment showed Sila's deep connection to both her family and the elephant, reflecting her desire for adventure and personal growth.

Meanwhile, Gio was back in his farmhouse, nurturing memories of his late wife, Lillian, whose teaching impacted both Sila and her father, Alp. Gio found joy in Sila's spirit, sensing a connection that breathed life into his otherwise lonely existence. Her presence reminded him that the world still held surprises.

The following days were a mix of unspoken tension and hopeful anticipation as Sila awaited her father's response. A note with her drawing found a place of honor on the refrigerator, an encouraging sign. During a call with her mother, Oya, Sila felt overwhelmed with emotion as her mother sang her a childhood song, further deepening her longing for connection.

In school, Sila and Mateo Lopez, previously reserved, began to share a



genuine bond. They spent their time together in a comfortable silence, coming to know each other without needing words. Eager to take their friendship further, Sila asked to visit Mateo's home, where she encountered his lively dog, Waffles, and his distracted mother, Rosa.

Trying to sway Rosa, Sila argued that life lessons often come from experiences outside of traditional learning. With Mateo chiming in, they both expressed a desire to spend their summer with Gio and Veda instead of attending a coding camp. Sila's passionate appeal highlighted the importance of memorable experiences over mundane ones, as she pushed for an adventure that promised growth and joy.

Throughout the chapter, themes of connection, the innocence of youth, and the importance of pursuing passions shine through. Sila's determination to work with Gio and Veda encapsulates her desire for independence and adventure, while her bond with Mateo signifies the beauty of friendship blossoming amidst life's uncertainties. All together, it paints a picture of young hearts seeking cherished moments that will shape their futures.



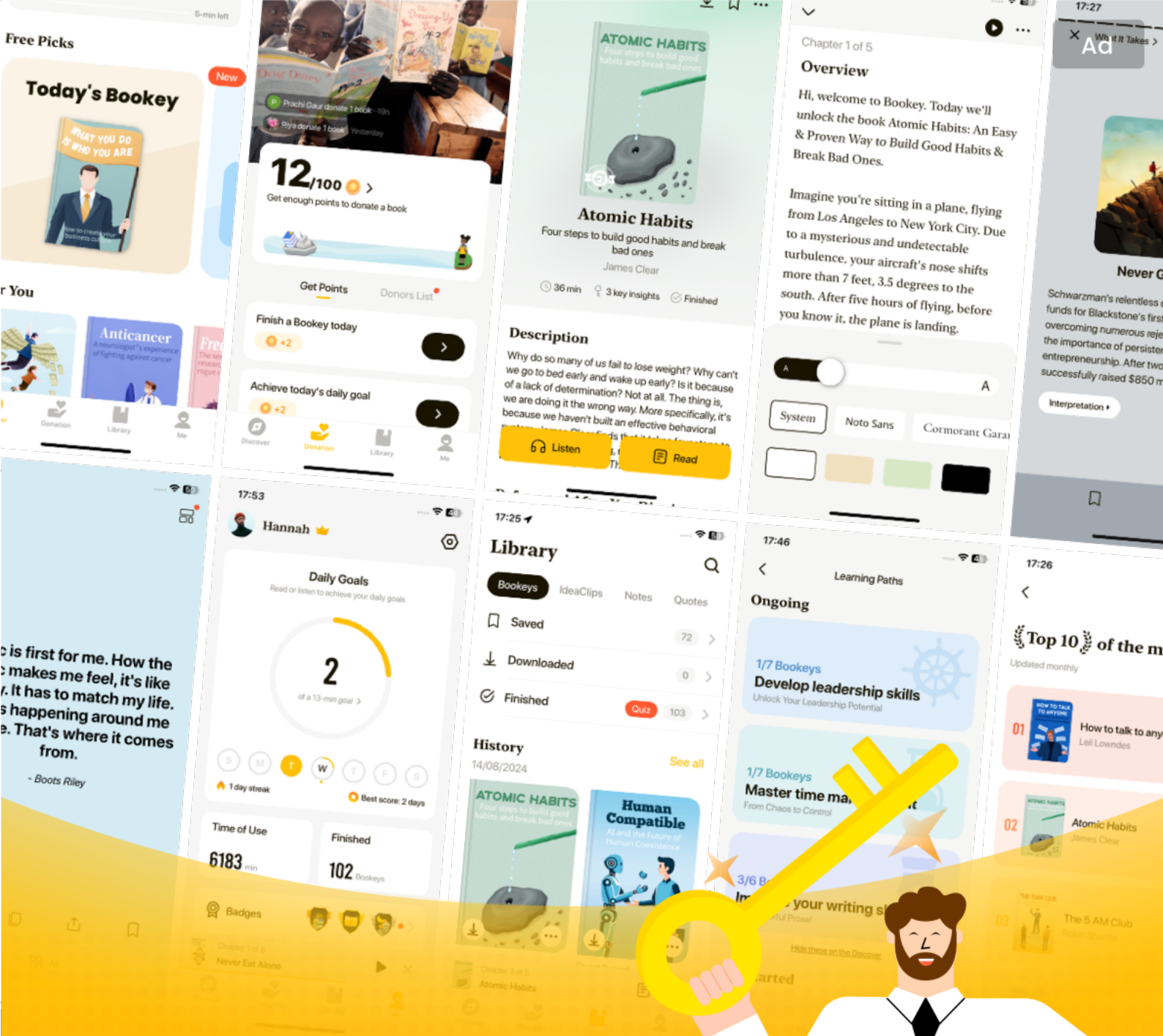
Chapter 27:

In Chapter 27 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, Rosa and Mateo Lopez visit the Tekins' apartment to meet Sila and bring two gallons of apple juice for Veda, the elephant. Sila excitedly hopes to make Veda feel special, sharing her research about elephants enjoying flavorful drinks. Mateo, dressed in blue overalls instead of his usual camouflage, corrects Sila about how elephants drink, revealing his knowledge in a way that piques her interest and shows his thoughtful side.

As they start their journey, Mrs. Lopez expresses a desire to meet Sila's mother, leading Sila to reveal her mother's immigration problems and absence for nearly a year. This moment is heavy for Sila, who struggles to hold back her emotions, indicating a deeper theme of family and belonging. After Sila has a physical reaction to her emotional state, causing her to vomit, Mateo's kindness shines through as he lends her his bandanna without words, creating an unexpected moment of laughter that strengthens their bond.

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Chapter 28 Summary:

After a delightful lunch brought by Mrs. Lopez, Sila and Mateo set out for some elephant poop collection, but their routine quickly turned into an unexpected adventure. Behind the barn, they encountered a lively scene—the mound of dung they'd created was swarmed with birds, insects, and other creatures, transforming it into a bustling hub of wildlife. As Sila marveled at the ants and worms, Mateo laughed, and the two kids grasped the surprising fact that their labor had made a thriving bird feeder, bringing various species to their farm.

Excited, they fetched the adults, including Gio, who was astonished by this change. He noted that the modifications to the environment were creating a ripple effect, attracting not just birds but also a variety of mammals and insects. As they scanned the surroundings, a red-tailed hawk glided by, and they spotted squirrels and possibly even mouse droppings nearby. Mrs. Lopez pointed out that new plants were sprouting from the nutrient-rich manure, suggesting that Veda's healthy diet was contributing to a small ecosystem thriving around them.

As they walked back to the farmhouse, Gio felt a longing for Lillian, whose teaching philosophy centered on experiential learning. Inspired, he resolved to install cameras to capture the nighttime activities of the animals, convinced that the elephant dung was more than waste—it was a catalyst for



life in their corner of the Willamette Valley.

That evening, Sila left with mixed feelings. While she and Mateo had shared an incredible day, she wondered what his mother thought about the happenings at the farm and what the summer would hold for them. Before departing, Sila had a poignant moment by the pond with Gio and Veda, marking the start of a deepening bond of trust and friendship among them.

Veda, the elephant, was experiencing a newfound freedom, awakening to a world rich with nature's beauty—golden hills at sunset, a lively ecosystem, and safety under Gio's care and Sila's companionship. As she drifted off to sleep, she felt a connection to her past and the joy it brought her, a feeling solidified by the kindness and care that surrounded her in this new life, guiding her dreams onward.

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Chapter 29 Summary:

In Chapter 29 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, Sila experiences a whirlwind of emotions and events that deepen her understanding of friendship and family. The chapter opens with Sila eagerly joining her father in the kitchen to watch a video from Gio, where they see a mountain lion trying to get onto Gio's property. The sight of the big cat sparks a conversation about the wildlife around them and the need for change regarding the animal waste on the property, indicating Sila's growing sense of responsibility and her initiative to help with the situation.

Sila and her friend Mateo plan to bike to Gio's place, with their mothers cautiously agreeing to it. This journey symbolizes their growing independence and friendship. As they navigate the bike ride together, Sila reflects on how their adventure on rough gravel roads becomes an enjoyable and bonding experience rather than a daunting challenge. Their arrival at Gio's leads them to work hard, cleaning and caring for the animals, which showcases their willingness to contribute and be part of something larger than themselves.

A pivotal moment occurs when Sila and Gio feed Veda, the elephant, while Sila sings a song her mother used to sing. This act brings Sila a sense of connection to her mother, despite her absence, and reinforces her bond with the animals, particularly Veda. From a distance, Mateo's mother realizes the



invaluable lessons of compassion and responsibility their kids are learning, suggesting a shift in parental perspectives regarding the value of real-world experiences over more conventional summer plans.

Later, as Sila reflects on her day, she grapples with feelings of regret for not understanding Mateo better before now. She questions why she didn't pay attention to others who might be struggling, which sparks a larger introspection about empathy and shared experiences of pain. This self-awareness signifies Sila's growth as she begins to comprehend the complexities of her relationships and the nature of generosity.

The chapter concludes with Sila receiving a letter from her school's program, which recognizes her strengths. However, she feels conflicted about the praise and hides the letter, underscoring her struggle with her identity and her unresolved feelings regarding her mother's absence. As summer begins, Sila is determined to focus on the work at Gio's, suggesting hope for growth and the ability to channel her emotions into positive action.

Through rich imagery and character development, this chapter highlights themes of friendship, responsibility, and the journey toward self-discovery, while also capturing the bittersweet complexities of childhood and loss.



Chapter 30:

In Chapter 30 of "The Elephant in the Room," Mateo grapples with his feelings about the letter from the Facilitator, which is addressed to his mother. After a brief time spent with his beloved dog, Waffles, he retreats to his room, opting for quiet reflection instead of a video game. Mateo recalls how in the past, he felt overwhelmed by bright lights but found that distraction made such discomfort manageable, particularly during his outings with Gio.

This school year marks a significant shift for him, primarily due to his friendship with Sila. Although having a friend brings joy, it also sparks anxiety in Mateo, who recalls painful experiences of betrayal from friendships gone wrong. As he hears his mother return home, he recognizes the familiar sounds—her computer bag, Waffles's excited welcome, and the dog treats being dispensed. These sounds ground him in his routine.

Mateo reflects on his time spent in the library, where he felt the pressure to conform and stifle his natural expressions to avoid disrupting others. Deep

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Chapter 31 Summary:

In Chapter 31 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila and Mateo embark on an eventful bike ride to Gio's property, striking a contrast to the previous rides when Mateo's mom would accompany them. As they navigate through the initial tension of the highway, Sila's feelings of freedom turn into worry, revealing her anxiety about their pace and the journey ahead. Mateo's exuberance as they arrive at Gio's, calling out "We made it!" indicates both his relief and joy, hinting that he feels the stress of the ride too.

Once at Gio's, Sila's interaction with Veda, the elephant, showcases their growing bond; Sila expresses her affection with an apple, demonstrating her affection and connection. As Sila and Mateo help out, we see a glimpse of Mateo's unique perspective; he counts his steps around the pond to measure its size, providing insight into his character—precise, inquisitive, and occasionally quirky. Their experience is enriched by the unexpected discovery of a porcupine in the barn, sparking playful banter and curiosity, which illustrates the blending of their worlds with nature.

Gio introduces a new venture named "Wasteland" to handle Veda's waste, which transforms a problem into an entrepreneurial opportunity. As he spins it into a productive business selling elephant fertilizer, Sila and Mateo embrace new responsibilities, engaging actively in the care of Veda while learning practical life skills. Their camaraderie sharpens as they sing



together—a delightful mix of work, learning, and spontaneous joy that creates a sense of belonging.

Over time, the arrival of Gio's new workers, Carlos and Klay, expands the community and reinforces a nurturing environment for the kids. They engage in hands-on activities, from tending to a garden of vegetables and sunflowers to thrilling explorations in the woods, emphasizing the themes of growth, teamwork, and discovery. Sila discovers solace from her loneliness through the rhythm of their tasks, showing how friendships and meaningful work can help her cope with her feelings of missing her mother.

As they bike home, Mateo reflects on their good fortune, which Sila wholeheartedly agrees with. The chapter closes with an uplifting sense of adventure and joy, showcasing how the bond between Sila and Mateo continues to strengthen, marked by moments of laughter and warmth amidst their busy lives at Gio's. Through this journey, the idea that friendship, community, and connection to nature can heal and enrich lives emerges as a prominent theme.

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Chapter 32 Summary:

On a Sunday night at the end of June, Gio calls Alp to announce the arrival of some friends for Veda, urging the kids to head over to his place early. Curious, Sila asks what Gio means by "friends," but her father merely shrugs, leaving them in suspense. When the kids arrive, excitement builds as they hear the gate buzzer and see a cargo van pull in, followed by a curly-haired man named Pip Rozaire, who appears both energized and weary after a long journey.

The initial reveal of what's inside the van is surprising: rather than dogs, it's flamingos! Pip explains that caring for flamingos requires specific conditions, starting with sand that must be kept wet, and he shares tips on their care, including the need for an exotic bird vet and warnings about the birds' clumsiness. As Sila takes notes, it becomes clear that Gio hadn't fully prepared for the responsibilities these flamingos entail. The group sets to work unloading the birds from the crates, which proves to be a chaotic process filled with enthusiasm and unexpected surprises as the flamingos dash out and explore their new surroundings.

Pip provides essential tools, like feather clippers, explaining the importance of keeping their wings trimmed. There's a moment of tension when he mentions the option of "pinioning," which would involve a surgical procedure to prevent the birds from flying. Gio firmly rejects the notion of



cutting their wings. The kids visibly relax when Gio asserts that they will not be making such drastic decisions. After signing a release, Pip hands over care instructions and shares that the largest flamingo is named Pink Floyd, but they can choose any names they like.

As Pip hastily departs, warning Gio about the challenges of owning flamingos, the kids are left to observe the birds. In a humorous twist, the flamingos, seemingly oblivious to their watery and fruity surroundings, instead become fascinated with Veda's poop, prompting Sila to quip that the first person to use "birdbrain" likely had flamingos around. This chapter encapsulates themes of unexpected responsibility, the humor of new experiences, and the unpredictability of nature, while also showing the kids developing a sense of curiosity, teamwork, and resilience.

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Chapter 33:

In Chapter 33 of "The Elephant in the Room," the journey to acclimate eight flamingos to their new pond turns into quite the adventure, akin to herding cats. Sila, Mateo, and Gio work together, using bags of Veda's droppings as bait to lure the flamingos down to the water. As the flamingos arrive, Veda, the elephant, observes them with a curious expression. The initial interactions suggest a lack of camaraderie, but things begin to change when Veda inadvertently contributes to the flamingos' nesting process with her droppings, hinting at the potential for a unique bond.

Sila interprets the flamingos' efforts to build nests from the elephant's droppings as a means of appreciating each other's existence, suggesting that perhaps they will find value in one another. As the flamingos busily work on their nests, Sila notes their cooperative yet independent nature, marveling at the creativity involved in their construction. With the flamingos' quirky feeding techniques revealed, Sila and Mateo develop a newfound understanding and appreciation for these creatures, shifting her perception beyond mere lawn decorations.

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Chapter 34 Summary:

In Chapter 34 of "The Elephant in the Room" by Holly Goldberg Sloan, Sila grapples with emotions as she remembers her mother's birthday from afar. While sitting in a golf cart with Gio at the pond, she shares her feelings of sadness, prompting a heartfelt conversation about family and longing. This moment deepens their bond, as Gio offers solace and understanding.

Later, Sila shows curiosity about her past, particularly about her time in second grade with Mrs. Gardino. Encouraged by Gio, she ventures into the living room to explore a binder filled with school memories that Gio's late wife prepared. As she flips through the pages, Sila experiences a mix of nostalgia and sorrow; memories of her classmates and special moments come alive, and she finds comfort in seeing her own smiling face from years ago.

Among these memories, Sila discovers a heartfelt poem she wrote for Mrs. Gardino, expressing love and gratitude for her teacher, alongside a note from Gio's wife acknowledging Sila as "the sweetest little girl in the world." This poignant moment makes Sila feel connected not only to her past but also to a larger lineage of support and love.

When Gio offers her the binder as a gift, Sila is overwhelmed with appreciation, realizing that it symbolizes both her childhood and the warmth



of community. As she rides home, she reflects on how the day's experiences have woven together a sense of hope, allowing her to navigate her sadness with a newfound strength, all while carrying the memoirs of her beloved teacher.

Meanwhile, Gio reflects on his own feelings of loss and the comfort that memories can bring. He acknowledges the importance of preserving the past while allowing himself to embrace the present with Sila, Mateo, and Veda. He finds solace in the idea that their future is bright, rooted in shared experiences and new bonds. The chapter beautifully captures themes of memory, connection, and the interplay between past and present, showcasing how love can persist through transitions and tribulations.

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Chapter 35 Summary:

In Chapter 35 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila is deep into research about her mother's immigration issues when her father, Alp, arrives home. She discovers a receipt showing that her elephant, Veda, was sold when she was two, revealing Veda's age to be almost twenty-three. This detail makes Sila feel a sense of accomplishment, especially amidst her family's struggles.

Meanwhile, Mateo is having dinner with his mother, Rosa. He shares his worry about Sila's situation, highlighting how she blames herself for her mother's problems after seeing unfair pay discrepancies at her mother's job. Rosa, concerned, realizes the seriousness of Sila's troubles and decides she needs to help, wondering about the legality of Sila's mother's situation.

As Sila settles into bed, she overhears Rosa and Alp discussing Sila's mother's immigration issues. Rosa offers to help by looking into the documents related to Oya's employment at the hotel, revealing her determination to assist the family without charge. This optimism contrasts sharply with Alp's quiet despair, illustrating the weight of their situation.

Rosa's nighttime routine unfolds with her reflecting on the unfortunate realities Oya faces. She learns that the Tekins legally entered the country seeking political asylum but that recent changes in immigration law have put Oya in a precarious position, especially since she is the spouse of an asylum



seeker. Rosa pieces together the connection between Oya's termination from her job and her immigration struggles, pondering whether they are linked or simply coincidental.

The chapter intricately weaves themes of family, resilience, and the complexities of immigration. Sila's hope for finding a solution contrasts with Alp's feelings of defeat, while Rosa's proactive approach sparks a sense of community support. As the characters navigate their challenges, the reader is left contemplating the broader implications of fairness and justice in the pursuit of the American dream.

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Chapter 36:

On a quiet Sunday morning, Sila walks over to Mateo's house, marking the only day they wouldn't cycle to Gio's. She's carrying Chester's notebook filled with information about Vincent Z. Doyle, an exotic animal broker who passed away six years prior. As they sit on Mateo's porch, Sila shares news about her parents receiving help from Mateo's mom, who does pro bono work, and quickly gets annoyed when Mateo defines the term before she can. Their conversation shifts to Vincent Z. Doyle and the exotic animals he once moved, piquing their curiosity about his work and legacy.

Sila recounts Doyle's obituary, revealing he died of natural causes and noting that his business has closed. This sparks Mateo's imagination as he shares a childhood memory of an ant farm that didn't quite thrive, illustrating how he often focuses on details that others might miss. Their playful banter highlights their contrasting personalities: Sila's straightforwardness and Mateo's meandering thoughts.

The duo delves deeper into their investigation, searching for Doyle's

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Chapter 37 Summary:

In Chapter 37 of "The Elephant in the Room," Rosa Lopez takes decisive action to support Oya Tekin after discovering her unjust termination from the Grand Hotel. Leveraging her experience fighting for her son's rights in school, Rosa connects with an immigration law specialist and begins the process to file a case with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Her determination signals the start of a serious investigation into Oya's employment situation, indicating a larger struggle for justice in the face of discrimination.

Meanwhile, Sila and Mateo remain fixated on finding information about Veda, the elephant born during a circus named Larmen and Falls. After several days of anxious waiting, they receive a reply from Annie Byrd at the Elephant Sanctuary Center of West Florida, confirming that Veda's mother, Madhi, is living in Arizona. This news ignites Sila's enthusiasm; she immediately wants to visit Madhi but faces resistance from Mateo, who doubts their mother would agree to such a trip.

During their conversation, Sila's frustration with Mateo's lack of enthusiasm grows, showcasing her desire for adventure and a tangible connection to the elephants. The siblings eventually meet with Gio, who finds their discovery intriguing yet ultimately declines to take them to Arizona, stating his responsibilities with Veda keep him from traveling. Sila tries to mask her



disappointment, grappling with her emotions and the challenge of nurturing her dreams in the face of practical limitations.

This chapter highlights themes of justice, resilience, and the longing for connection, blending the serious struggle for rights with the innocent excitement of childhood curiosity about elephants. Rosa's fight for Oya represents a broader battle against unfairness, while Sila's quest illustrates the hope and determination of youth, even as they navigate the complexities of their family dynamics.

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Chapter 38 Summary:

In Chapter 38 of "The Elephant in the Room," Sila reflects on how quickly summer has passed, realizing that school is just around the corner and her cherished days spent at Gio's farm are coming to an end. She misses her mother deeply, feeling the ache of separation as her father busily prepares for the new school year, cleaning and organizing their lives without seeming to notice her unhappiness. Sila grapples with the tension of longing for her mother while also trying to enjoy the lively memories of summer spent with her friends and the elephant, Veda, at the farm.

As the first day of school arrives, Sila notices a mix of emotions. She welcomes the sight of her old friends, feeling a connection that had faded during her mother's absence. They briefly reconnect, providing Sila with a sense of comfort she hadn't expected. She feels a surge of strength within herself, realizing she has grown through her experiences, even if her mother's absence left a void.

Amid hearing the joyful chatter of her friends, Sila chooses to seek out Mateo, her companion from the summer. When she finds him, she invites him to eat together, suggesting they enjoy lunch outside instead of the noisy cafeteria. Their shared love for the outdoors reminisces about the summer they both cherished.



The chapter culminates with a pivotal moment—Sila's mother returns. The joy and relief are palpable as Sila runs to embrace her, overwhelming her with happiness as they tumble into each other's arms. This reunion marks the end of her endless waiting, bringing closure to a difficult chapter and rekindling the warmth of family connection. Themes of resilience, friendship, and the joy of reconnection thread throughout, highlighting Sila's growth and shifting perspective during this transformative summer.

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Chapter 39:

In Chapter 39 of "The Elephant in the Room," Oya Tekin wins a landmark case against Grand Hotel Incorporated after fourteen months. The court awards her not just back pay for twenty-three months but also significant damages after the hotel tried to retaliate for her whistleblowing on their unfair labor practices. The judgement sets a precedent for labor rights in Oregon, but instead of returning to her previous job, Oya channels her strength into advocating for employee rights with the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

With the settlement money, the Tekin family invests in their daughter's education and opens a mechanic business for Oya's husband, Alp. They also embark on a heartwarming mission to reunite Veda, their beloved elephant, with her mother, Madhi, who lives in a sanctuary in Arizona. After months of planning and anticipation, the family takes a long train journey to meet the Randolph family, who run the sanctuary. Eventually, they strike a deal: Madhi will live with them in Oregon, and both elephants will one day return to the sanctuary together.

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