



FINDING GREEN

A Reader's Companion to
Out of Blue Comes Green

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SEEING YOURSELF

THE TALENT SHOW

At the talent show, Kinkade steps onto the stage with a new haircut, new clothes, and his leather jacket. He thinks, *This is my moment to recreate myself* (1).

When Kinkade says he wants to “recreate” himself, what does he hope will become different?

Will the difference take place within himself, in his friends and family, or in society? Or all three?

A DIFFERENT PAST

At one of his lowest moments, Kinkade imagines waking up to a life in which he has always been known as a boy (66–68).

He imagines changing his room and clothes, his childhood teams and activities, the name on his awards, photographs, other people's memories, and even what Christine remembers about him. He ends his list with the wish that no one remember Kayla (67–68).

Why does Kinkade imagine changing his past as well as his present?

Which things on Kinkade's list seem to matter most to how he sees himself?

A DIFFERENT KIND OF GUY

In weightlifting class, Danny notices that Kinkade can lift more than he can. He tells Kinkade, “You’re a different kind of guy than I am” (85).

Kinkade immediately asks, “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Danny explains that Kinkade is more athletic. Danny isn’t particularly interested in sports, even though his father had hoped for a wrestler (85).

Why does “a different kind of guy” bother Kinkade at first?

What does Danny mean by it?

How does Danny see himself here?

I FEEL LIKE ME

Near the end of the novel, Kinkade's dad calls the leather jacket his "rock 'n' roll jacket." Kinkade puts it on and realizes his dad is right. He feels like the jacket is distinctively his and thinks, *I feel like me in it* (341).

He sees himself as Nate Kinkade, lead singer and guitarist of Blue, performing Saturdays at O'Sullivan's Pub (341).

At the beginning: *This is my moment to recreate myself* (1).

At the end: *I feel like me in it* (341).

What has changed between "recreate myself" and "I feel like me"?

How much do you think the leather jacket affects Kinkade's impression of himself?

How much does being the lead singer and guitarist for Blue affect Kinkade's impression of himself?

BEING YOURSELF

THE TALENT SHOW

At the talent show, Kinkade walks onto the stage with his new haircut and leather jacket to perform a song he wrote himself. He is nervous about how the audience will see and hear him, but once Blue begins to play, he finds his way into the performance (1–5).

How does performing at the talent show allow Kinkade to feel more like his authentic self?

What conclusions can you draw from this scene and others about the role of music in Kinkade's life, overall and day to day? Connect your ideas to what it means to be yourself.

READY

When Dr. Behmann tells Kinkade that he has accepted himself and is willing to show that to everyone else, Kinkade immediately thinks, *I don't want to show anything to anyone else. It's none of their business* (112).

But when Dr. Behmann asks whether Kinkade is ready to transition, Kinkade's answer is clear: "I'm ready" (112).

Why do you think Kinkade wants to be himself without wanting to explain himself?

What might being "ready" mean to Kinkade?

Dr. Behmann also tells Kinkade that transitioning will not solve other problems in his life. After he transitions, he will still have to deal with his mother and with his brother being away at college (112).

In what ways might Dr. Behmann be right to assume Kinkade expects everything to be fixed in his life once he transitions?

When Kinkade thinks, *He doesn't understand all the problems it does solve*, what might he be referring to? (113).

TELLING DAD

Kinkade has been putting off telling his dad he's transgender, not knowing how he'll react and not wanting to hurt their relationship. He suspects his dad may already know. Still, saying it aloud is difficult. When he and Dad are alone one day, Kinkade attempts to tell him.

Finally, Kinkade says, "I don't feel like a girl. I never have" (235).

Why is telling his dad different from knowing the truth himself?

Why is telling his dad such an important thing? Consider the evidence from their relationship, including their interactions and Kinkade's specific concerns about how his dad will react.

BEING NATE

When Kinkade first goes to Wallin Animal Rescue, the staff mistakes him for Nathan Ashur, a boy who applied to work there who hasn't shown up. Kinkade doesn't correct them (75–77).

Later, he explains, “I came in that day to see if I could adopt a dog, and then you let me be Nate...I liked being Nate” (298).

Even though Kinkade isn't telling the whole truth, why does being Nathan Ashur at Wallin Animal Rescue feel real to him?

Once everyone at the rescue knows that Kinkade is not Nathan Ashur, Kinkade feels he has lost the place where he had been able to live as Nate.

He doesn't know whether the rescue's staff will understand him or forgive him, but he returns to talk to them. Before he walks inside, he thinks *I have to do this for me* (322).

Why does Kinkade want to talk to them when he doesn't know how they'll respond?

What does “I have to do this for me” mean here?

BEING SEEN

CHRISTINE

After the talent show, Christine talks to Kinkade with his new haircut, clothes, and leather jacket, and seems not to recognize him at first. Then she does, and calls him by name, “Kayla?” (9–10).

How is Christine’s reaction different from what Kinkade hoped for?

Why does her reaction matter so much to him?

DAD

When Kinkade finally tells his dad he doesn't want to be a girl, Dad's response of "I know that" surprises him (235). His dad also says he's not the one who decides who Kinkade is and adds, "You are who you are" (235).

What are some things Kinkade's dad has likely seen before Kinkade tells him he is transgender?

What does Kinkade's dad do that makes Kinkade feel seen?

MADI

While choosing a scene from *As You Like It* for Drama class, Madi gives Kinkade the role of Rosalind, a woman disguised as a man (226–227).

Kinkade is uncomfortable at first, until Madi explains that she chose the part so Kinkade could be a boy in the scene without drawing attention from the rest of the class. Madi says, “I thought that way you could be a boy in the scene, but everyone else wouldn’t think much of it ’cause the character’s pretending” (227).

What does Madi understand about Kinkade that makes her choose this role for him?

Kinkade thinks, *I almost want to cry about how she actually understands me* (227).

Why does Madi’s choice make Kinkade feel understood?

Later, when they perform the scene, Kinkade thinks of himself simply as a young man traditionally playing a woman’s role. Afterward, Madi hugs him and says, “Nate, we did it” (312).

How does Madi show she understands Kinkade when she calls him Nate?

MOM

While watching the news with his parents, Kinkade attempts to explain why new legislation affecting transgender youth is unfair (266–268).

Hoping to help his mom understand, he reminds her that when he was little, he wanted to be like his brother Sam when they went swimming and only wear the bottom of the swimsuit. He also tells her that at summer camp, he let the boys he befriended think he was a boy for as long as possible (267–268).

Why might Kinkade and his mom see these childhood experiences differently?

If his mom agrees with the legislation discriminating against trans youth, what does she not see in her child? What does she not understand?

[MY DAD] GETS ME

After telling his dad the truth about his identity, Kinkade feels more hopeful. He thinks, *[My dad] gets me* (236).

What does it mean to Kinkade to feel understood?

SEEING OTHERS

LIBBY

After the embarrassing event while wearing a dress and makeup for the family picture, Kinkade is distraught over Christine seeing him. But even though he thinks *[Libby] knows me better than anyone*, Libby doesn't seem to understand how upset he is (95–103).

Should Kinkade have to explain more about his feelings to the person he believes knows him better than everyone else? Why or why not?

Why might Libby not understand Kinkade's reaction to Christine?

DANNY

Danny remembers Kinkade from when they were younger. When they meet again in weightlifting class, Danny notices that Kinkade looks different. He tells Kinkade that he saw Blue perform at the talent show and remembers that Kinkade used to be a very good basketball player (30–31).

What does their conversation suggest Danny already knows about Kinkade?

Danny asks why Kinkade doesn't play basketball anymore. When Kinkade doesn't reply to Danny's question, Danny doesn't ask again (31).

What does Danny's choice to be silent make possible for Kinkade or for both of them?

LIBBY

Libby knows Kinkade better than anyone, but that doesn't mean she understands everything about him. Consider these moments:

choosing seats in art class (33–36)

humiliation at the family picture (95–103)

not asking if she wants to attend the play with Madi and him (172–179)

the importance of Dakota's surgery (249–253)

How is Libby's deep knowledge of Kinkade incomplete in these moments?

What other moments do you notice?

How might “[Libby] knows me better than anyone” mean something different than it first appeared?

MADI AND KINKADE

Madi and Kinkade are approached by a man in a dirty winter coat asking for money. Kinkade is apprehensive, but Madi gives him her last two dollars. She tells Kinkade, “You ate tonight, and he might not have.” Kinkade then wonders if the man has somewhere to go (128–129).

What is the difference in how they each see the man?

When Kinkade considers Madi’s reaction, what changes in his thinking about the man and how do you know?

What changes about how he sees Madi?

NATHAN ASHUR

For Kinkade, Nathan Ashur is the one who applied to work at Wallin Animal Rescue (75–77).

But when Dakota/Luna's owner comes to pick her up, Kinkade learns that Nathan searched for hours for his dog Luna during a blizzard. Nathan searches until he almost dies. Nathan believes Luna perished in the blizzard and blames himself (297).

Who is Nathan Ashur to Kinkade when Kinkade first goes to Wallin Animal Rescue?

What changes about Kinkade's impression of Nathan after he learns more?

In terms of the person Nathan Ashur is, why do you think it probably matters to Kinkade that Nathan searched for Luna until he himself nearly died?

FINDING HOPE

COACH WENDELL

Kinkade doesn't expect Coach Wendell to be accepting of him, but Coach surprises Kinkade with an offer to avoid the girls' locker room and change in a safe space (146–148).

Why is the offer surprising to Kinkade?

What possibility does Coach create that Kinkade didn't know was available? Think about this in terms of how Kinkade sees other people and hope.

MR. GERBER

Kinkade chooses to stay at Wallin Animal Rescue during Dakota's surgery, which means he misses Blue's audition for prom. By the time the surgery ends, the audition is long over (238–249).

Later, Mr. Gerber listens to Kinkade's explanation and gives Blue another opportunity to audition (274–275).

What lesson about hope and expectations about others does this teach Kinkade?

WALLIN ANIMAL RESCUE

Because Jason Ashur comes to pick up Dakota/Luna, Kinkade doesn't get to adopt her (296–298).

Kinkade also believes that pretending to be Nathan has cost him his place at Wallin Animal Rescue. When he eventually returns to apologize, Jeanie tells him that she and Troy still want him to work there. She says, “We both think you belong here” (322–323).

What does Kinkade lose in this part of the story? How does Kinkade's loss provide hope for Nathan Ashur?

Despite Kinkade's loss, what remains possible in terms of hope and expectations for other people?

REFUSING PROM

Blue earns the chance to play at prom, but Kinkade and Libby refuse when Principal Eckert insists that they follow a gendered dress code. Giving up the prom performance also means losing the audience they hoped to reach, which they believe includes the potential for a recording contract (302–305).

How does this decision affect Libby's hopes for her musical future?

What becomes possible because they reject playing at prom?

How does Danny help them see hope when this happens?

AT O’SULLIVAN’S PUB

At O’Sullivan’s on prom night, the audience continues to grow as Blue plays. Many high school students skip the prom to be there, like Madi, and others join as well, including Kinkade’s dad and his brother Sam. Even Christine shows up. Unfortunately, JT does, too (329–333).

JT takes the stage while Blue is on a break and tries to humiliate Kinkade by announcing to the entire pub, “You know that Kay’s a girl, right?”

The crowd’s reaction to Kinkade appears to be “staring eyes, grimacing faces, and furrowed brows” (334).

Why would Kinkade see only these negative features in the crowd?

When someone calls out, “No one cares!” and another tells JT to “get off the stage,” what changes for Kinkade? (335). How might this relate to hope and expectations of other people?

THROUGH THE GREEN

Green stage lights surround Kinkade, and he thinks, *Strangely, through the green, I see everything so much brighter* (336).

What can Kinkade see now that he couldn’t see before?

What does he mean by “brighter,” and what does it have to do with hope and expectations of other people?

BECOMING GREEN

LIBBY

After Kinkade misses Blue's audition to stay with Dakota during surgery, he expects Libby to understand his choice. But Libby is angry. She says, "You have this idea that you're the only one with difficult choices." Then she adds, "Everyone has sh-t they're dealing with, Kinkade. Everyone" (252–253).

What might Libby be asking Kinkade to notice?

Why might Kinkade not have considered how much other people deal with difficult choices?

In what way did he make the right choice between Dakota's surgery and Blue's audition? In what way did he not?

WHAT MEN DO Part 1

Kinkade goes to Madi's house to pick her up for the play and worries that Madi's dad might think liking theater isn't manly (178–79).

When Kinkade asks whether Mr. Sayer likes theater, Mr. Sayer surprises him by talking about the plays Madi performed in when she was younger. His face brightens as he remembers them (178–79).

Why had Kinkade made the assumption Mr. Sayer wouldn't like theater? What does that say about Kinkade?

What is Kinkade still learning?

WHAT MEN DO Part 2

Telling his dad about his true gender feelings and having Dad respond so well makes Kinkade feel like crying. He tries to hide his tears by wiping them away, but his dad says, “Men cry sometimes, too. It’s okay” (235).

Why has Kinkade thought of crying as unmanly?

What other things does Kinkade believe men should or shouldn’t do that he’s wrong about?

Why could it be unhealthy for Kinkade to think about men as needing to fit certain qualifications?

BEYOND WHAT KINKADE CAN SEE

Throughout the novel, people have lives, experiences, and reasons that Kinkade cannot immediately see.

- Coach Wendell understands more than Kinkade expects (146–148).
- Madi's life contains things Kinkade doesn't know about (178–179).
- Libby has hopes and difficult choices of her own (252–253).
- Nathan Ashur has a whole life Kinkade knows nothing about (297).

What becomes clearer when Kinkade learns more about the people around him?

Why will some things still remain unseen?

LOOK AGAIN

Throughout *Out of Blue Comes Green*, people become more complicated when Kinkade learns more about them.

Sometimes he receives new information.

Sometimes he notices something from a different perspective.

People who may have seemed simple at first become complex when we look more closely.