

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF BECKY ALBERTALLI

Becky Albertalli was born and raised in the Atlanta metro area; Creekwood High and the town of Shady Creek are based off the high school she attended, Riverwood High, and the town where she grew up, Sandy Springs. She graduated from George Washington University with a doctorate in clinical psychology and then worked as a clinical psychologist. She worked often with LGBTQ teens and adults, as well as gender nonconforming children. Though they certainly influenced her decision to write *Simon*, she's been very vocal about the fact that Simon isn't based off of any one of her clients. In 2012, Albertalli gave birth to her first son and decided to try her hand at writing, which culminated in *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. She's since written several other books including *Leah on the Offbeat*, which continues the story in Simon's universe. *Simon* has won several awards, including the American Library Association's William C. Morris award and the German Youth Literature Prize. Albertalli had the opportunity to be involved in the adaptation of *Simon* into the film *Love, Simon*, which was filmed in the Atlanta area. She still lives in the Atlanta suburbs with her husband and two sons.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda is extremely tuned into the technological landscape of the early-mid 2010s; Simon and his friends are constantly connected on social media networks such as Facebook and Tumblr, while email is treated as a somewhat dated mode of communication. Though the novel never states when Simon and Bram created their email accounts with fake names, they may have struggled to do so given that from 2011-2014, Google was attempting to promote its "real name policy." This policy insisted that users, specifically of the social media platform Google+, use names that matched their government IDs. Incidentally, this policy ignored the concerns of individuals like Simon and Bram and victims of violence or harassment, who argued that protecting their real identities online was a safety concern. *Simon* was also released mere months before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June 2015 that all states were required to recognize same-sex marriages and issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Before this, the state of Georgia only recognized domestic partnerships in a few cities, one of which was Atlanta.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Becky Albertalli has written two other books that also exist in

the "Simon-verse:" *The Upside of Unrequited* follows one of Abby Suso's cousins, while *Leah on the Offbeat* picks up at Creekwood High during senior year and follows Leah's own coming out journey. Albertalli has said that her novels are greatly influenced by the teen novels of Australian writer Jaclyn Moriarty, whose *Ashbury/Brookfield* series bears the most similarities to Albertalli's work (the stories are told through characters' writing, including letters and emails, as in *Simon*). *Simon* also joins the growing genre of LGBTQ teen lit, which includes novels such as Nick Burd's *The Vast Fields of Ordinary* and David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy*. *Simon* also bears thematic resemblance to *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, as both novels deal with the changing social and political landscape that affects teens and how they grow up and move through the world.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*
- **When Written:** 2013-14
- **Where Written:** Atlanta, GA
- **When Published:** 2015
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young adult fiction
- **Setting:** The fictional town of Shady Creek, Georgia (based off of the real-life town of Sandy Springs, Georgia)
- **Climax:** Simon discovers at the carnival that Blue is actually Bram.
- **Antagonist:** Martin Addison; homophobia
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Wrong Stereotype. Albertalli has faced criticism for Simon's taste in music, particularly his affinity for Tegan and Sara. This criticism is rooted in the fact that the group is extremely popular with gay women, not gay men.

Tumblr. Tumblr doesn't just figure prominently in the novel—it's become an integral part of the *Simon* fandom. Becky Albertalli runs her own Tumblr called "Becky Survived Puberty" where she connects with her fans, and there's a fan-run Tumblr aptly called "creeksecrets" that curates fan art, fanfiction, and *Simon*-themed playlists.



PLOT SUMMARY

Simon is sitting backstage during a rehearsal for the school play

when Martin, a classmate, reveals that he stumbled upon Simon's secret email account. Simon isn't worried about Martin outing him as gay—he's worried about Blue, the boy he's been flirtatiously and anonymously emailing, cutting off contact. Martin suggests that Simon come out and says he's not going to show the screenshots of the emails to anyone, but then suggests that Simon could help Martin win over Abby, one of Simon's best friends. Simon is enraged, but feels as though he has no choice but to agree. After school, Simon walks to his friend Nick's house, where Nick and their friend Leah are playing video games. Simon feels comforted by how normal everything feels with them. He notices that Leah is in love with Nick, who has a crush on Abby. Simon reasons that he should help Martin if only to help his friend group.

Simon and Blue email about how horrible middle school was and how they each discovered they were gay. Simon explains to the reader how he found Blue: Blue posted on creeksecrets, their high school's anonymous Tumblr account, about being gay and closeted. Simon is preoccupied on his family's "Bachelorette night," when the entire family watches *The Bachelorette* and then Skypes his sister Alice at college. He notices that his younger sister, Nora, got new piercings in one ear, and he fixates on this. He feels awful when Dad insists that one contestant is clearly gay.

Simon avoids Martin at school for the next few days and says nothing to Abby. Finally, Martin corners Simon. After rehearsal, Simon invites Martin to come to a **Halloween** party at Garrett's, where Abby will also be. Martin hastily accepts. Later that night, Simon and Blue email about Halloween. Simon used to wear dresses, while Blue used to be a **superhero** every year.

Simon goes to Garrett's party with Nick, Leah, and Abby. Nick, as usual, finds a guitar, while Simon has a beer and feels weird about it. The next day, Simon and Blue email about their Halloween experiences and about Spirit Week at school the next week. On Friday, Simon and Nick decide to go to the homecoming football game instead of going to Waffle House as usual, which makes Leah extremely angry. Despite this, Simon and Nick have a grand time marching in the parade. Simon sits with the drama club and Cal, the stage manager, for the game. He thinks Cal is extremely cute. Martin joins Simon, angry that Abby rejected his invitation to the dance. When Simon and Blue email later, Blue mentions that he doesn't ride carnival rides because he vomits, and he admits he likes thinking about sex with Simon. Simon is perplexed, given that Blue is usually very reserved and careful. He fantasizes that Blue is Cal.

On Simon's birthday, Leah brings in a sheet cake per tradition, and Simon thinks that she's amazing at celebrating birthdays. At rehearsal that afternoon, Simon tries to test if Cal might be Blue, but Cal doesn't react to any of the inside jokes Simon has with Blue. When Alice comes home a week later for Thanksgiving, Simon realizes how weird things at home have been without her. In class on Monday, Simon smiles at a boy

named Bram when he accidentally gets Bram's quiz. When Blue emails a few days later, they talk about Simon's love of the singer Elliott Smith. Blue tells Simon that he's going to celebrate Hanukkah with his dad soon, and he's considering coming out. Simon is shocked that Blue is Jewish. Simon ponders this for days; he considers himself fully nonreligious and hopes Blue is okay with this. At one point, Martin suggests that he'd like to introduce Simon to his brother, who is also gay, which prompts Simon to suggest that he, Martin, and Abby go to Waffle House on Friday to run lines. At Waffle House, Simon finds himself liking Martin and wonders if they might be becoming friends. When Simon and Blue email later, Blue says he chose not to come out after his dad gifted him Casanova's autobiography.

As Abby and Simon drive home from Waffle House a week later, Simon decides to come out to her. Later, Blue emails that he came out to his mom. She was mostly interested in talking about safe sex practices. The boys discuss how they feel like they've started down a path that they can't turn back on. Following this, Simon watches Cal closely but sees no signs that he's Blue. On the first day of Christmas break, Simon is at school for an all-day rehearsal. He makes a point to spend time with Cal, who he notices drawing superheroes. In the afternoon, the cast pushes each other in rolling chairs. Abby puts her arm around Simon when she's done. Not long after, Martin pulls Simon aside and angrily tells him that Abby rejected him.

Blue writes that his dad and mom told him that his stepmom is pregnant. Simon suggests that this admission was the adult version of coming out, and the two discuss that *everyone* should have to come out in a big, awkward production. Simon suggests in closing that he'd like to meet Blue. Simon feels out of sorts on Christmas Eve, despite his family observing all of their usual traditions. Alice, however, leaves the family scavenger hunt to take a mysterious phone call, and Nick and Leah stop by for a strange and awkward visit. They seem to think something is wrong, but they won't tell Simon what it is. Simon goes upstairs after dinner and Nora soon joins him. She asks him to go to the creeksecrets page and Simon finds a post, supposedly written by him, announcing his sexuality and soliciting sex from interested guys at school. It also makes references to Blue. Simon tells Nora he's gay, and comes out to the rest of his family the next morning. Later, Alice and Simon talk about how their parents make a big deal out of everything, and she admits she has a boyfriend. In an email later, Simon and Blue discuss exchanging phone numbers. Blue isn't excited about it. On New Year's Eve, Simon comes out to Nick and Leah at his party. Leah seems upset when she realizes that Simon came out to Abby first, but Simon refuses to talk to her about anything.

On the first day back to school, a boy grabs Simon and makes kissing noises at him. At rehearsal, two boys sneak in and hold signs making fun of Simon. Martin looks horrified, while Abby,

Taylor, and Ms. Albright chase the boys. Ms. Albright vows to get the boys suspended. After rehearsal, Abby and Simon go to watch Nick play soccer for a while. When Simon heads back to his car, he finds Martin there. Martin apologizes and insists he didn't know all of this bullying would happen. Simon angrily says that Martin took something important from Simon and sends him away in tears. Later, when Simon and Blue are emailing, Blue admits he knows who Simon is. Simon thinks he knows who Blue is too, and asks if he's Cal—he's not. Simon feels horrible. Nick starts to tease Simon about Cal the next day, and when Simon and Blue email later, Blue remarks that things seem to be working out for Simon. Simon asks for things to go back to normal and spends all weekend feeling as though Blue is no longer interested. He also realizes he doesn't know much about his friends. On Monday, he discovers that Blue left him an Elliott Smith shirt in his locker.

With two weeks to go until *Oliver* opens, the cast takes a day to perform for the whole school. Abby does Simon's makeup and answers Simon's questions about her dad, who lives in Washington, D.C. rather than Georgia. Before the second performance, Ms. Albright pulls Simon aside and says that she's going to speak to the audience—someone vandalized the cast list with homophobic slurs. That afternoon, Simon starts to wonder if Blue might be Martin, but thinks it doesn't make much sense. Abby grabs Simon and insists that she and Nick are going to take him into Atlanta. They decide not to invite Leah. Abby drives them to a gay bar, where Simon meets a college boy named Peter. Simon accepts Peter's offered drinks and tells Peter all about Martin, which clues Peter into the fact that Simon is only seventeen. When Abby and Nick try to take a very drunk Simon back to Abby's house, Simon insists they need to go back to Shady Creek to get his Elliott Smith tee shirt. Abby agrees, but Simon's parents discover that he's drunk and cut the night short. Emboldened by the alcohol, Simon calls his dad out for making jokes about gay people. Mom and Dad take Simon's phone and computer away.

On Monday, Simon is amused to discover that Abby and Nick began a relationship over the weekend. Leah, however, is distraught that they didn't invite her to the gay bar, and she refuses to talk to Simon. Later that night, Mom and Dad chat with Simon about what happened. Simon admits that he's embarrassed that his parents make a big deal out of every tiny change he goes through, and they agree to try to do better in the future. Dad also apologizes for making jokes about gay people and gives Simon his computer back.

On the play's opening night, Abby confronts Simon about his arrangement with Martin: she's upset that he tried to manipulate her into liking him. When Simon later reads back through Blue's emails, he feels like he's falling in love all over again. The next morning, Simon writes Blue that he feels as though he knows him on the inside and wants to meet him. He asks Blue to meet him at the carnival at 6:30.

After the Sunday matinee performance, Simon drives home to put on his Elliott Smith shirt before going to the carnival. He discovers that Blue taped his phone number into the shirt, though he decides not to call. Simon goes on carnival rides and makes up with Abby. Finally, Simon rides the Tilt-A-Whirl, reasoning that Blue wouldn't ride it. Bram steps into the cart with Simon and apologizes for being late. When they step out of the ride a few minutes later, Simon apologizes for not figuring out that Bram was Blue. Simon is especially upset that he never considered that Bram might be black. The two flirt the next day at school and sneak off campus for lunch. They make out in Bram's car and decide to make their relationship official on Facebook later that night. A few days later, Simon is finally able to talk to Leah, who admits that she felt as though Simon was abandoning her for Abby. Simon assures her that she's his best friend, and they both cry.

At the school talent show a few days later, Simon is shocked to discover that Leah, Nora, and Taylor are in a rock band together, though he understands why Nora kept it a secret. Nick managed to get the entire Spier family, including Alice, to the show. After the show, Alice sends her boyfriend, Theo, with a message for Simon: refuse Mom and Dad's offer of dinner out so Simon and Bram can have a few hours unsupervised at home. The plan works perfectly, and they're settled and working on homework by the time Mom and Dad get back.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Simon Spier – Simon is the seventeen-year-old titular protagonist of the novel. He's a junior at Creekside High School and is secretly gay. Emailing under the pseudonym Jacques, Simon begins an email correspondence with another secretly gay boy, who goes by the name Blue. Through their emails, Simon gradually becomes more comfortable with the idea of coming out and explores aspects of his identity he feels uncomfortable discussing with his friends and family in real life. In Simon's real life, he tries very hard to keep his sexuality a secret. He's distraught when his classmate Martin discovers Simon's emails and threatens to out Simon if he doesn't help Martin date Abby, one of Simon's best friends. Simon also struggles with his relationships with his two longtime best friends, Nick and Leah. Simon feels that because they've been friends for so long they don't need to talk about anything important, though his sense of not having much security in his friendships suggests that this isn't exactly true. Because of this, Simon chooses to come out to Abby first since he hasn't known her as long. Simon believes that Mom and Dad make a big deal out of the tiniest changes they observe in their children, which makes Simon and his two sisters, Nora and Alice, secretive about the things they're going through. After Abby rejects Martin right before **Christmas** break, Martin posts online that

Simon is gay. Following this, Simon comes out to his family and friends. All are supportive, and when Simon returns to school to a flurry of homophobic bullying, all of his friends stand up for him, and Martin is deeply apologetic. Throughout all of this, Simon begins to think that Blue is Cal Price, but Blue turns out to be Nick's quiet, soccer-playing friend Bram.

Martin Addison – Martin is a tall, gangly classmate of Simon's whom Simon doesn't know well at the beginning of the novel. However, Martin quickly reveals himself to be a dangerous enemy: when he stumbles upon Simon's secret email address and discovers that Simon is gay, Martin blackmails Simon to help him win over Abby. Until the end of the novel, Martin refuses to call what he's doing blackmail and doesn't understand why it's such a big deal. Although Simon agrees to set him up with Abby, Martin botches every chance he has to look cool for her. Over the several months when Simon, Martin, and Abby are hanging out together, Simon is torn between feeling enraged and vulnerable at Martin's blackmail and wondering if Martin is actually becoming a friend. However, when Abby decisively rejects Martin right before **Christmas** break, Martin retaliates by posting online that Simon is gay and wants to have sex with any interested guys at school. When school resumes, Martin is horrified to see the homophobic bullying that Simon suffers after being forcibly outed. When Martin tries to apologize, he again mentions that he didn't think coming out would be such a big deal. Simon refuses to accept Martin's apology and makes it clear that Martin took away Simon's ability to control his own coming-out experience. Martin finally writes Simon an email explaining that his brother came out over the summer and their parents made a big deal out of it in a positive way, which made Martin feel weird. Martin was also overcome by his feelings for Abby and felt that blackmailing Simon was the only way to get what he wanted. However, Martin understands that he did an awful thing to Simon and says that if he had the opportunity to do it again, he'd just blackmail Simon into being friends with him.

Blue / Bram – Simon and Blue begin emailing right before their junior year of high school starts after Blue posts on the school Tumblr, creeksecrets, about the anxiety he feels about being gay. Through their emails, Simon learns that Blue closely guards the fact that he's gay and desperately doesn't want Simon to figure out who he is in real life. Simon also perceives Blue as somewhat flighty, as he believes that were Blue to find out about Martin's blackmail, he'd stop emailing altogether. As a kid, Blue always dressed up as a **superhero** for Halloween and he thinks of being gay as being his superhero identity. He starts signing off with "love" on emails before Simon and is flirty in a way that surprises Simon. As time goes on, Simon learns that Blue's dad is Jewish, while Blue's mom is Christian; though Blue worries about his parents' reactions to his sexuality, both of them are supportive when he does choose to come out. After a fight about whether or not Simon and Blue should exchange

phone numbers and meet in real life, Blue leaves Simon an Elliott Smith tee shirt in his locker with his phone number hidden inside; Simon doesn't find it until much later. Though Simon makes several incorrect guesses as to who Blue is, he eventually discovers that Blue is Bram, one of Nick's friends. He's also black, which is one of the primary reasons why Simon didn't suspect Bram of being Blue. In real life Bram is extremely shy, quiet, and very smart. He chooses to come out to everyone after Simon figures out that he's Blue, and the two start dating. Though they are intimate in private (and dark public spaces), they still try to keep a distance in public as they don't feel entirely safe being out and gay in small-town Georgia.

Abby Suso – Abby is one of Simon's best friends, though he hasn't known her long; she and her mom moved to Atlanta area right before the start of the school year. Like most of the black kids at school, Abby has to take the bus to and from school about an hour each way, given the way that the Atlanta metro area is still segregated. She's extremely smart, takes mostly AP classes, and is an exceptional actress and dancer. According to Simon, Abby is the object of most boys' affections, and Martin is no exception—his feelings for Abby are what cause him to blackmail Simon in the first place. Abby, however, doesn't have feelings for Martin and instead, has a crush on Nick. The crush bubbles under the surface until January, when Simon gets grounded, and Abby and Nick take the opportunity alone to start a relationship. Abby is the first person that Simon comes out to; he feels as though he can try on this new part of his identity with her in a way he couldn't with his long-time friends Nick and Leah. She's extremely supportive and keeps his secret. When Simon is forcibly outed over **Christmas** break, Abby and Leah take it upon themselves to glare at anyone who looks at Simon funny, and Abby also chases bullies out of the auditorium when they come to taunt Simon. Abby and Simon fight when she finds out that Simon went along with Martin's blackmail, despite knowing that Abby wasn't at all romantically interested in Martin. She succinctly tells Simon that he can't control who she dates. The two make up later, and she's extremely excited when she finds out that Simon and Bram are dating.

Leah – Leah is one of Simon's best friends. She joined the friend group with Nick and Simon in sixth grade, and she spends many afternoons hanging out with Nick in his basement, playing video games. She's very into manga and even introduced Simon to yaoi, a genre of manga drawings that depict homoerotic relationships between different TV or book characters. She's also responsible for introducing Simon to the world of gay *Harry Potter* fanfiction. Leah is generally prickly in nature and is often self-conscious and snappy. Simon attributes this to Leah's very obvious but unrequited crush on Nick. Because of this Leah also doesn't like Abby very much, given that Nick clearly has a crush on Abby. It's implied that Leah doesn't dress in a particularly feminine way, given that her interpretation of gender-bender day during Spirit Week is to dress in an extra

feminine way. Despite Leah's difficult nature, she's extremely caring and loves celebrating her friends—she started the tradition of bringing in birthday sheet cakes for people who sit at her lunch table. When Leah finds out that Simon came out to Abby before he came out to her, she's extremely hurt though she tries to pretend otherwise. When Simon is finally able to talk to her about it, he discovers that Leah sees Abby as an upgraded version of his female best friend and believes that Simon is pushing her away in favor of other female friends. She does eventually forgive him. At the school talent show, Simon and Nick discover that Leah is the drummer in a band called **Emoji** along with Taylor, Nora, and two other girls. Leah admits that she spent two years teaching herself to play the drums.

Nick – Nick is one of Simon's best friends; they've been friends since they were four years old. As such, Simon insists that he and Nick don't actually have to talk about important or deep things, as they already know so much about each other. This holds true at times; Simon finds his afternoon hangouts with Nick and Leah in Nick's basement to be comforting in their familiarity. He also enjoys it when Nick, who's an accomplished guitarist, finds guitars to play at parties. Nick is also a soccer player and as such, knows Bram much better than Simon does in real life. For much of the novel, Nick is caught in the middle of a love triangle: Leah has an obvious crush on him that he doesn't return, while Nick has an obvious crush on Abby. This causes a great deal of tension in the friend group and causes Nick to on occasion choose to exclude Leah, as her unrequited crush makes her snappy and self-conscious. Despite this conflict, Nick and Leah rally to support Simon when he's forcibly outed over **Christmas** break. They go to Simon's house to make sure he's okay after reading Martin's post on creeksecrets, and though they don't tell Simon what they read, their support is clear to him when Nora shows Simon the post later. Nick also does his best to honor Simon's wishes that he not make a big deal out of it when Simon does officially come out to his friends. In January, Nick and Abby do start dating and seem very happy and in love. At the school talent show, Nick admits to Simon that he's been working with Nora on the guitar for several months in secret.

Alice Spier – Alice is Simon's older sister; she's a freshman at Wesleyan University and only comes home to Shady Creek for holidays (though she Skypes home weekly to discuss *The Bachelorette* with her family). Though Simon doesn't describe Alice in much detail, it's clear that her absence has a very tangible effect on the Spier family members still at home, as her absence makes Simon realize how much Nora is growing up. When she comes home for **Christmas**, she begins taking mysterious phone calls that last for hours. After Simon comes out, she privately admits to him that she has a boyfriend, Theo, and she didn't want to tell anyone because she didn't want the family to make a big deal out of it. In the immediate aftermath of Simon's coming out, Alice calls out Dad for making rude

comments. She also surprises Nora by coming to visit with Theo for the school talent show and after the show, she helps Simon orchestrate a few hours at home unsupervised with Bram.

Nora Spier – Nora is Simon's younger sister and a freshman in high school. Simon describes her as quiet and studious; she often stays in to read or do homework rather than go out with friends. After Alice goes away to college, Simon starts to notice that Nora is extremely observant and begins to gain confidence. Though Simon refuses to talk about personal things with her for much of the novel, Nora also takes it upon herself to tell him about Martin's creeksecrets post outing Simon to the entire school. Thus, she's the first person in Simon's family that he comes out to. Simon is perplexed when Nora begins spending time out of the house after school, but discovers at the school talent show that Nora is part of a band called **Emoji**. Nick has been helping her learn to play guitar for months, and she seems surprisingly happy and comfortable onstage given her quiet and shy demeanor.

Mom – Mom is Simon, Nora, and Alice's mom. Simon takes major offense to the fact that Mom is extremely observant about any changes her children make, and gets overexcited about those changes. Mom, more so than Dad, is extremely strict about following Georgia's teen driving laws. After Mom speaks to Abby when Simon comes home drunk, Abby tells Simon that Mom is terrifying. Despite her ability to terrify teens, Simon also describes her as being a "cool mom" who desperately wants to know about her children's lives at school. Mom does her best to be supportive of Simon after he comes out, and Simon suspects that Mom spoke to Dad about no longer making homophobic jokes or comments.

Dad – Dad is Simon, Nora, and Alice's dad. Though Simon loves his dad, he's also put off by the fact that Dad has an affinity for making jokes in poor taste about gay people. For much of the novel, Simon can't tell if Dad is actually homophobic or just thinks his jokes are funny. He reasons that Dad probably just doesn't understand how rude his jokes are, given that both Mom and Dad are nonreligious and are Democrats. However, after Simon calls Dad out on his jokes, Dad does apologize, stops making them, and assures Simon that he'll always be supportive and loving. Both Mom and Dad are very tuned into the changes their children go through, and Simon complains that he can't even change his socks without attracting far too much attention.

Taylor Metternich – Taylor is one of Simon's classmates and the lead actress in the school production of *Oliver*. Though she's an exceptional actress, singer, and dancer, and is also blond and beautiful, Simon insists she has a dark side: she often makes comments about her own superiority that make a point to reinforce others' inferiority. However, she also becomes extremely emotional and runs after the bullies who wave homophobic signs at Simon during rehearsal, and Abby tells Simon she thought Taylor was going to punch the boys. At the

talent show, Simon discovers that Taylor is the lead singer in the band that Nora and Leah are a part of. Despite these positive attributes, Simon remains firm in his belief that Taylor is exhausting and too perfect for her own good.

Cal Price – Cal is a senior at Creekwood High and the stage manager for *Oliver*. He's blond with piercing blue-green eyes, which leads Simon to believe that Cal might be Blue. Though Cal isn't Blue, he does enjoy drawing **superheroes** and expresses romantic interest in Simon. After Simon comes out, Cal admits that he's bisexual and thinks they should hang out.

Garrett – Garrett is one of Nick's soccer friends who is also close friends with Bram. Simon initially describes him as a bit of a jerk, though Garrett is supportive when Simon and then Bram come out. He has a crush on Leah, though it's not clear if he ever acts on it.

Blue's Mom – Blue lives with his mom in the Shady Creek area. She's an epidemiologist and as such, when Blue comes out to her, she's mostly concerned with making sure he's aware of safe sex practices. She's also an Episcopalian and seems to go to church weekly. She and Blue's dad are divorced.

Blue's Dad – Blue's dad lives with his wife in Savannah, Georgia. He's Jewish, but he and Blue celebrate all of Hanukkah in a hotel room on one night when he's able to get down to Atlanta to visit. Blue believes his dad has no idea he's gay when he receives Casanova's autobiography for Hanukkah, but when Blue does come out later, his dad is supportive and insists that Casanova was actually bisexual.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Ms. Albright – Ms. Albright is the theater director at Creekwood High. She's relatively young with wild red hair, and the students all love her. Simon feels mostly ambivalent towards her until Ms. Albright gets worked up when she witnesses homophobic bullying directed at Simon. She vows to get the bullies suspended.

Theo – Theo is Alice's mysterious boyfriend at college. Theo seems very kind, though the Spier family is not crazy about his facial hair.

Peter – Peter is a college student that Simon meets in a gay bar in Atlanta. Peter buys Simon drinks, draws him into his crowd of friends, a majority of whom are gay, and kindly steers Simon back to Abby and Nick when he realizes Simon is only in high school.

Mr. Sexual Awakening – A man that Blue met at a wedding at age twelve who made Blue realize he was gay. In the present, he's married to a woman and is expecting a baby.

Mr. Wise – An English teacher at Creekwood High.

Bieber – Bieber is the Spier family's golden retriever.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



AGENCY AND CONTROL

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda begins with sixteen-year-old Simon, the titular protagonist, being robbed of his agency and control over his own life—specifically, when how, and if he chooses to come out to his friends and family as gay. After his classmate Martin Addison discovers Simon's private and romantic emails on a school computer to a mysterious boy named Blue, Martin proceeds to blackmail Simon into helping him in his own romantic pursuits by putting a good for him with one of Simon's best friends, Abby. As the story unfolds, Simon suggests that taking away someone's agency is one of the cruelest things a person can do to another, and that in most cases, doing so won't end well for anyone.

Simon is understandably and justifiably enraged when Martin confronts him about the emails and admits that he took screenshots of them—with them, Martin has the power to completely upend Simon's life as he knows it and force him to come out well before he's ready to do so, cruelly stripping him of control over his own story. While this is extremely anxiety inducing for Simon, what he finds even worse is his belief that if Martin shares the screenshots, he will also destroy his budding romantic relationship with Blue. Though Simon and Martin have no idea who Blue is at this point (and Martin seems to buy Simon's story that Blue is from California), Simon also fears that having Blue's fake name out in the world will make him extremely uncomfortable. Blue is nowhere near ready to come out in October, when Martin finds the emails, and Simon lives in fear that his simple carelessness of not logging out of his email account on a school computer will completely destroy the life of someone he's come to care about deeply. With this, the novel highlights that Martin doesn't just have control over Simon's story; he also holds a great deal of power over Blue and Simon's relationship. When Simon realizes this, it's the first time that he recognizes the high degree of trust that he and Blue place in each other by exchanging emails: either has, should they choose to do so, important information that could partially out the other, a realization that reaffirms Simon's desire to provide Blue a trusting and safe listening ear as they discuss the trials and tribulations of being secretly gay in a small Georgia town.

The anxiety that Simon feels throughout the school year—and especially after Martin posts on the Creekwood High School Tumblr page "creeksecrets" that Simon is gay—shows how

losing one's sense of agency over their life and their story is disturbing and can even be dangerous. While Simon suggests that he would've faced homophobic bullying at school regardless of whether he was forcibly outed or came out on his own, it's worth noting that the bullying he suffers is intensified and harder to deal with because it's not something he was prepared to handle. Simon is entirely unprepared for guys to jokingly grab and try to kiss him in the hallways, and when two senior boys cross-dress, sneak into the auditorium during the rehearsal of *Oliver*, and wave signs joking about gay sex, Simon is so overwhelmed that he almost has an out-of-body experience. As all of this cruelty unfolds, Marti appears to deeply regret his actions. It seems that Martin never meant for Simon to suffer this kind of bullying and intimidation as he coarsely claims that he "didn't think people still did shit like that." Martin's regret is a clear reminder that even though he had control over the timing of Simon's coming out, Martin doesn't have control over the aftermath and the way other people will react.

Even as he chafes under Martin's blackmail, Simon tries to similarly control Abby by getting her to go out with Martin. By being on the other end of this situation, Simon learns that he needs to respect Abby's autonomy and control over her own life if he wants to be a true friend—and even a decent human being. Despite Simon's nuanced understanding of the ways in which Martin robs him of control and agency, he agrees to go along with Martin's request to try to set him up with Abby, essentially depriving her of agency and control, too. Abby doesn't find out about this manipulation until the very end of the novel, at which point she pointedly tells Simon that he can't control who she dates—and that he, of all people, should understand the myriad issues that arise from trying to control someone else. By finding himself in shoes uncomfortably similar to Martin's, Simon is able to fully grasp that whether someone is a victim like him or an unthinking aggressor like Martin, attempting to manipulate others like this is fundamentally wrong and is no way to move through the world. With this, the novel ends with the assertion that respecting the autonomy of other people—including their stories, bodies, and feelings—is essential for being a good friend and a good person. Near the end of the novel, even a reformed Martin Addison reveals that he's been jealous of Simon all along, and laments that "if I could do it again, I would have blackmailed you into being my friend and left it at that."



IDENTITY AND ASSUMPTIONS

After spending months emailing about the difficulties of coming out as gay with a boy who goes by the pseudonym Blue, Simon is shocked to discover that, contrary to his assumptions, Blue (who is really Bram) is black. Realizing his own narrowmindedness, Simon asks himself why it is that people assume that someone is

straight and white until they discover evidence to the contrary. With this question, Simon begins to give voice to the immense gap between the way that society assumes people should be and the very different, nuanced ways that people actually live, identify themselves, and move through the world. By tackling these big ideas, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* illustrates that identity is something personal and individual, not something that can be painted in broad strokes by someone else.

Simon primarily takes issue with the fact that people overwhelmingly assume their peers are straight until someone chooses to come out and make it clear that this assumption is false. He believes that this contributes to the sheer amount of anxiety that he and Blue, who are both closeted at the beginning of the novel, feel about the prospect of sharing their true identities with their friends and families. Essentially, Simon observes that if one deviates from the norm—which society defines as straight and white—one has to work much harder to make a place for themselves in the world and make their identity known. Because of this, Simon and Blue discuss how different the world would be if *everyone* had to come out, regardless of their sexuality. In one of his emails, Blue writes, "it is definitely annoying that straight (and white, for that matter) is the default, and that the only people who don't have to think about their identity are the ones who don't fit that mold. Straight people really should have to come out, and the more awkward it is, the better." By suggesting that everyone should have to come out and announce this aspect their identity to the world, Simon and Blue suggest that one way to cultivate acceptance and authenticity is to do away with the idea of what constitutes "normal" or "default" in the first place.

Though Simon begins the novel thinking of the idea of coming out only in terms of one's sexuality, he comes to realize over the course of the school year that he, his friends, and his family members must constantly "come out" and announce their unexpected changes in identity to the world over and over again. Within his family, Simon attributes this to his parents' difficulties adapting to the fact that their children are very quickly becoming adults and moving away from childhood, a process that by necessity involves discovering and embracing new facets of their identity. Simon notices this specifically in the case of his younger sister, Nora, whom he characterizes at the beginning of the school year as quiet, bookish, and not particularly social. This makes it difficult for him to understand what's going on when Nora starts spending more time than usual outside the house for reasons unknown to Simon and the rest of the family. Nora then stages her own dramatic "coming out" at the school talent show, where she performs as the lead guitarist in a rock band. Simon learns that Nora has been at band practice every day after school, and has even been secretly working with Simon's friend Nick for months to learn guitar. Simon is especially shocked to see how comfortable his

shy, studious little sister looks onstage. Simon decides that Nora is "coming out" in finally making this interest known to her family, as she defines her identity that goes against the grain of people's assumptions about her.

Even Simon is forced to reckon with the fact that he also wrongly assumes things about people's identities, particularly as he attempts to figure out who Blue is. It takes Simon a few minutes to realize that Bram is Blue at the carnival, but Simon realizes that this is only because it never crossed his mind that Blue might be black. Simon was able to make this assumption in the first place because he and Blue communicated anonymously over email, meaning that major parts of Blue's identity—including what he looked like—were up to Simon's imagination. Simon's thoughtless assumption that Blue was white brings to the forefront that all people, even individuals who stand outside of what society considers to be normal, are susceptible to making assumptions about other people. Simon ultimately catches himself in making this assumption and vows to do better in the future. This moment suggests that awareness is the only way to diminish the power of these assumptions of "normalcy." In other words, people must simply make a point to catch themselves when they make unfair assumptions about others and to instead make it safe for others to be their most authentic selves.



RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPATHY

As sixteen-year-old Simon comes of age over the course of the novel, one of the major ways that he develops is in his ability to empathize with and care deeply for others. While he begins the novel insisting he has several best friends—Leah, Nick, and Abby—he eventually realizes that while he's known Leah and Nick for years, he knows little about their home lives or inner thoughts, and he has no idea what Abby's family situation is like except for in broad strokes. Through his emails with Blue, Simon is forced to recognize that in order to be a truly good friend to Leah, Nick, and Abby, as well as a good partner to Blue, he needs to be more curious and interested in the people around him in their own rights—not just in how they relate to him.

At the beginning of the novel, Simon insists to the reader that his friendship with Leah and Nick is rooted simply in the fact that they've been friends for years (Nick and Simon have been friends since preschool, while Leah joined the group in sixth grade). Because of this long history, Simon thinks that they don't need to talk to each other about personal things or connect on a deeper emotional level. While there may be some truth to Simon's assessment, especially since the friends seem to have settled into a relatively comfortable routine and way of interacting with each other over the years, the lack of emotional depth in their friendships makes them all feel somewhat isolated and disconnected from one another. For example, Simon struggles to explain Leah's prickly nature and

nobody is willing to acknowledge the crush she very obviously has on Nick. Essentially, though Simon claims that their friendship doesn't actually need anything more to be valid, it's clear that the relationships could absolutely benefit from actually have some of the tough conversations bubbling under the surface. This is supported by the way that Simon feels about his friends, both before and after coming out. Before telling them that he's gay, Simon feels unmoored in relationships with Nick and Leah, even as he tells the reader their friendships are solid. After Martin forcibly outs Simon on the creeksecrets Tumblr, however, Nick and Leah rally around Simon and offer him support that appears unprecedented and that makes him feel far more comfortable and supported.

When, after five months of anonymous emailing, Simon makes an incorrect guess at who Blue is in real life, he's confronted with the fact that he doesn't know enough about his friends or classmates to even successfully unravel Blue's clues about his identity. Simon sees this as proof that while he describes himself as a nosy person, he's only nosy about "stupid things" and not anything of note, such as his classmates' religious beliefs, family situations, or even how well his classmates do in school. This suggests that there's a major difference in being nosy as Simon describes it and being truly interested and curious about other people. After this realization, Simon makes the conscious decision to reach out to his friends and classmates and learn more about them. For instance, he asks Abby directly about why her mom lives in Georgia while her dad and brother live in Washington, D.C. Similarly, when he finally discovers that Blue is his soccer playing classmate Bram, Simon realizes he knew nothing about Bram until now (of course, since Simon knew a lot about Blue, he unwittingly knew a lot about Bram, but he hadn't realized they were the same person).

It's also worth noting that Blue is the first person in the novel that Simon gets to know on a deeper level, and that he's able to do so mostly because they only speak to each other anonymously through email. This reinforces that getting to know someone on a deeper level like this is something that can be uncomfortable and anxiety inducing—especially for individuals like Simon who have spent their lives making a point to not connect with people on a deeper level. However, the happiness that Simon feels after discovering who Bram is and learning more about his other friends suggests that this kind of knowing is not just essential to forming strong bonds with other people, but is a mark of maturity as well.



FAMILY, CHANGE, AND GROWING UP

As a coming of age novel, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* necessarily tackles the issues that sixteen-year-old Simon faces in his process of growing up and coming out. However, the novel also pays close attention to the ways in which Simon's entire nuclear family is

in a very similar process of growth and development. With Simon's older sister, Alice, out of state at her first year of college, and with his younger sister, Nora, starting high school as a freshman, all three Spier children are immersed in moments of major change, which consequently influences how the family interacts and defines itself. By paying particular attention to the changes that happen within Simon's family, the novel demonstrates that coming of age isn't just something that happens to individuals in a vacuum—families must also change and adapt as individuals grow and develop.

Throughout the novel, Simon reveals that his family is uncomfortable with change, even though it's a normal and expected part of the teenage experience. He says that one of the reasons he was hesitant to come out was that he didn't want his parents to make a big deal of it. Simon's dad especially seems to struggle with any small changes in family life, even something as small as needing to record *The Bachelor* so the whole family can watch regardless of Simon's rehearsal schedule for the school play. Simon suggests that his parents' difficulty with change makes the three kids—Simon, Nora, and Alice—especially secretive about the changes they're going through as they grow up and develop. Simon also recognizes that he, too, struggles with individual family members' changes, as when he refuses to drop the subject when he notices that Nora got yet another piercing in her ear. Taken together, the way that Simon's family interacts with each other and expects each other to be, change, or not change creates the sense that the Spier family isn't necessarily open to growth or development—while the secretiveness of the Spier children about their own changes makes it very clear that they are all indeed changing and growing, despite the family's general discomfort with that fact.

One of the major ways that the novel explores the changes taking place within the Spier family is in how the family handles **holidays**. These special days affirm that the kids in the family are all growing up and changing, and that everyone in the Spier family must accept and adapt to those changes. Simon is quick to observe the ways in which his family's observation of Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas this year differs greatly from how they've celebrated in years past. This makes him extremely uncomfortable and causes him to feel unmoored in what he thought of as sacred, unchanging rituals in which every family member has a specific role to play. Some of the changes have to do with the fact that Alice, a freshman in college, no longer lives at home, which makes the time she does spend at home during the holidays feel extra precious to the rest of the family. Simon especially is very put off when confronted with proof that Alice has a life at college that's very different from the life she led at home—and that her new college life can and will change who Alice is and how she interacts with her family. Simon sees Alice's choice to take a mysterious phone call from who he assumes is her boyfriend

rather than continue participating in the all-family Facebook scavenger hunt as evidence that the holidays are no longer what they used to be. Meanwhile, Simon's decision to come out to his family on Christmas morning makes it clear that the Spiers will have to adjust to a new normal—and in doing so, reevaluate how they celebrate holidays as the Spier children approach adulthood.

Despite the entire family's general discomfort with change, several moments suggest that even though the changes may be uncomfortable in the short term, they're absolutely necessary for the long-term health and harmony of the family. Dad, for example, tells Simon that he was absolutely right to call out his habit of making homophobic comments and promises that he'll stop, an inarguably positive change regardless of Simon's sexuality. Simon also informs his parents that their insistence on making note of every tiny change their children undergo makes those perfectly normal changes, like shaving or starting to date, feels overbearing. With this, Simon makes the case that change, while uncomfortable at times, is an essential part of growing up and coming of age. His parents' agreement to try their best to follow through on Simon's request to not make such a big deal out of the small things is an indicator that just as their children are growing and changing, Mom and Dad must also learn to adapt and celebrate the people their children are in the process of becoming.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



HOLIDAYS

For Simon, one of the major indicators that he and his family are changing in fundamental ways is that holidays don't feel the way that they used to. On Halloween, Simon muses at length that his costume (a dementor from *Harry Potter*) is nothing like what he wore every year as a child (girls' dresses)—and while he's uncomfortable now with the fact that he loved wearing dresses, the fact that he's spending Halloween drinking beer instead of trick-or-treating throws his growing maturity into sharp relief. On Christmas Eve, he notes that even though his family "hits all the traditions" such as making truffles and singing the *Chipmunks* theme song, the day still manages to feel different and uncomfortable. Holidays then become a symbolic representation of the changes that the Spier family is grappling with, while also underscoring the inevitability of those changes.



SUPERHEROES

As Blue and Simon's correspondence continues,

they come to view superheroes as a symbol for what it's like being secretly gay. Around **Halloween**, Blue mentions that he always dressed up as a superhero for Halloween as a kid. Blue and Simon interpret their "superhero identities" as who they are in their emails to each other (out and happy to be gay), while their "civilian identities" are who they are in their day-to-day lives (closeted). Bram and Simon's experiences coming out then serve to merge their two identities into one that's far more comfortable than switching between two identities as superheroes do.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Balzer + Bray edition of *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* published in 2016.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ “I actually think people would be cool about it,” Martin says. “You should be who you are.”

I don't even know where to begin with that. Some straight kid who barely knows me, advising me on coming out.

Related Characters: Simon Spier, Martin Addison (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

As Martin talks to Simon about the fact that he read Simon's private emails, he suggests that Simon should come out, a suggestion that makes Simon roll his eyes. Martin's suggestion is the reader's first clue that he, to a degree, considers himself an expert on other people's stories, regardless of whether or not he has any firsthand experience. Martin's suggestion is necessarily filtered through his own experience as a straight, white male—essentially, he has no idea what it's like to be gay in small-town Georgia. Later, Martin's claim that “people would be cool about it” turns out to be overwhelmingly false; although Simon's family and close friends are supportive, he is still the target of cruel, homophobic bullying at school, often from people he doesn't even know. This suggests that one of the main reasons Martin turns to blackmail to begin with is because he comes from this place of very limited experience; he simply doesn't understand the dangers of being anything but straight and white, which society presents as the “default.”

Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ “Remember the way people would look at you blankly and say, ‘Um, okaaay,’ after you finished talking? Everyone just had to make it so clear that, whatever you were thinking or feeling, you were totally alone. The worst part, of course, was that I did the same thing to other people.”

Related Characters: Blue / Bram (speaker), Simon Spier

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Blue and Simon email about how awful middle school was for them, specifically because people made a point to act as if they don't care about anyone else. The kind of exchange that Blue describes is the starting point from which all of the novel's characters then learn to truly care about others. While they see that their maturity levels in middle school entailed making others feel bad, as Simon, Blue, and others progress to high school and closer to adulthood, they begin to realize how important it is to truly recognize others as worthy of time, attention, and love. The fact that Blue admits he did engage in this unkind behavior himself makes it clear that while the novel focuses primarily on Simon's journey wherein he learns to recognize others, Blue is going through much the same coming-of-age process.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ If Blue were a real junior at Creekwood with a locker and a GPA and a Facebook profile, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't be telling him anything. I mean, he is a real junior at Creekwood. I know that. But in a way, he lives in my laptop.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Blue / Bram

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Simon explains how his relationship with Blue is entirely dependent on remaining anonymous to each other. This begins to show how, at this point, Simon thinks of Blue as someone separate from the mysterious classmate who is absolutely walking around Creekwood. By separating these parts of Blue's identity, Simon is able to engage with the part

of Blue that makes him feel safest. This anonymity also provides a starting point for Simon and Blue to eventually figure out who they are in real life and in doing so, merge their online and real-life identities into one that's authentic to them. Similarly, this desire to remain anonymous coincides with Simon's desire to keep his sexuality hidden—as he comes out and becomes increasingly comfortable with his own identity, he wants even more to figure out who Blue is and have a relationship in real life.

☝ Like the way you can memorize someone's gestures but never know their thoughts. And the feeling that people are like houses with vast rooms and tiny windows.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Blue / Bram

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 18

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Simon explains how he found Blue on the creeksecrets Tumblr and offers some quotations from Blue's anonymous post about being closeted. When Blue suggests that people are like houses with vast rooms and tiny windows, he shows that he recognizes the difficulty of truly getting to know someone—after all, what's immediately visible can only be seen through metaphorical tiny windows. The fact that this part of Blue's post resonates with Simon so much that he chooses to relay it to the reader foreshadows Simon's development as he learns to care more deeply about the people around him. In this way, Blue can be seen as the person truly responsible for instigating this change in Simon.

☝ Leah once said that she'd rather have people call her fat directly than have to sit there and listen to them talking shit about some other girl's weight. I actually think I agree with that. Nothing is worse than the secret humiliation of being insulted by proxy.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Nora Spier, Alice Spier, Mom, Dad, Leah

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

After Dad makes an offensive joke about a contestant on *The Bachelorette* being gay, Simon feels secretly humiliated. Dad's comments in general, which Simon later says are fairly regular, make it clear that it's extremely important to not assume that people won't be offended by questionable material. This is one way that Dad could also learn to recognize the importance of being kind to people, even in these small ways that may be not so noticeable. For Simon, this begins to tell him something about his dad—essentially, that his dad may or may not take gay people seriously and by extension, might not take Simon seriously or respect him. This reveals how dysfunctional Simon's family can be on a very base level, and suggests that all members of Simon's family will have to make changes in order to accommodate the changes that Simon, Nora, and Alice are going through as young adults.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☝ “I completely see the appeal of being someone else for the evening (or in general). Actually, I was a bit of a one-trick pony myself when I was little. I was always a superhero. I guess I liked to imagine myself having this complicated secret identity. Maybe I still do. Maybe that's the whole point of these emails.”

Related Characters: Blue / Bram (speaker), Simon Spier

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Blue writes to Simon that as a kid, he was very into superheroes and always dressed as one for Halloween. Blue's interpretation of the way he still might feel about superheroes suggests that he views being gay as a kind of secret identity. This then sets up one of Blue and Simon's ongoing in-jokes where they joke about having "superhero identities," or who they are with each other in emails, and "civilian identities," which refers to who they are in public. This shows that Simon and Blue both view their identities as fundamentally split because of their identities as young gay men, especially in a world where they're still believed to be straight by default since they haven't come out yet.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☝☝ I need to spend some time in my head with this new Simon. My parents have a way of ruining things like this. They get so curious. It's like they have this idea of me, and whenever I step outside of that, it blows their minds. There's something so embarrassing about that in a way I can't even describe.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Dad, Mom

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

After Garrett's Halloween party, Simon excuses himself to think about how having a beer at the party may have changed him and to keep this fact from his parents. It's telling that Simon finds that having a beer makes him so different from the person he was earlier; it suggests that he's in tune with all the tiny ways he's changing and growing up. However, when he speaks about how overly interested his parents are in his many tiny changes, it reveals that he probably feels very insecure about the changes he's going through and simply doesn't want to share them with others until he's fully come to terms with them himself. This again suggests that as Simon gets older, his family is going to need to alter the way they interact with each other so that the changes that Simon and his sisters are experiences aren't seen as life-altering changes that require exhausting amounts of discussion or too much excitement from their parents.

☝☝ But I'm tired of coming out. All I ever do is come out. I try not to change, but I keep changing, in all these tiny ways. I get a girlfriend. I have a beer. And every freaking time, I have to reintroduce myself to the universe all over again.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Dad, Mom

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 56

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Simon explains how all of the little changes he's going through are treated like coming out moments, and it's not normal that he has to keep feeling this way. This shows that for Simon, he's fully aware that he's supposed to be changing in this chapter of life as he moves towards maturity. However, his parents cling to all of his changes and

make everything a big deal, which Simon finds incredibly off-putting. His tone in this passage suggests that he's not just interested in having these changes normalized; he'd also just like to stop having to justify them to others.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☝☝ So here's the thing: Simon means “the one who hears” and Spier means “the one who watches.” Which means I was basically destined to be nosy.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

After Simon overhears girls crying during rehearsal, he justifies eavesdropping to the reader by insisting he was destined to be nosy. It's telling that Simon refers to himself as nosy in the first place, as he actually knows very little about his classmates or even his own best friends. It's important to separate Simon's conception of nosiness from true curiosity about and empathy for other people, which the novel suggests is a far more fulfilling and worthwhile pursuit. While Simon never says what he's nosy about or offers any tidbits of information about his friends to the reader, he does share the ways in which he eventually learns that curiosity is more fulfilling than pure nosiness. Taken together, this shows how nosiness is, at this point, not something that helps Simon in his relationships; rather, it's a starting point from which he can evolve for the better.

Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ I mean, how does a person look when his walls are coming down?

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Cal Price, Blue / Bram

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

After an email conversation in which Blue and Simon discuss how they're feeling about coming out, Simon makes an effort to keep an eye out for someone at school who

looks like they're going through a major life of change. Though Simon is looking at Cal when he has this thought, this does suggest that Simon is beginning to become more aware of the people around him and more curious about what different moods and life stages look like for his friends and peers.

The fact that Simon asks the question in the first place, however, suggests that Simon instinctively knows the answer: whoever Blue is probably isn't going to look any different than usual, as the walls that are coming down are purely internal. This again brings up the idea that discovering one's identity can certainly be helped along by others, but it's a fundamentally personal, inner journey.

“ I hate feeling so distant from Nick and Leah. It's not like keeping a normal crush a secret, because we never talk about our crushes anyway, and it works out fine. Even Leah's crush on Nick. I see it, and I'm sure Nick sees it, but there's this unspoken agreement that we never talk about it.”

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Leah, Nick

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 133

Explanation and Analysis

The week after Simon comes out to Abby, he considers coming out to Nick and Leah as well but can't bring himself to do it due to their unspoken agreement to not talk about more emotional, personal matters. Though Simon has said throughout the novel that his relationships with Nick and Leah are strong, despite the fact that they don't talk about more personal things, the distance he feels from them here suggests that it's time for that to change. This reinforces that as individuals change, their family structures and friend groups must also change to accommodate new thoughts, feelings, or interests. It's also worth questioning the truth of Simon's assessment that things work out fine when they don't talk about their crushes. Leah is very upset with Simon off and on throughout the novel for understandable reasons—but for reasons that could likely be remedied, if only she, Simon, and Nick would sit down and talk openly with each other.

Chapter 18 Quotes

“As a side note, don't you think everyone should have to come out? Why is straight the default? Everyone should have to declare one way or another, and it should be this big awkward thing whether you're straight, gay, bi, or whatever.”

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Blue / Bram

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 146

Explanation and Analysis

In an email to Blue, Simon declares that everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, should have to come out and announce their orientation to the world. With this, Simon gestures to the way that society unfortunately assumes that individuals are straight until they come out and say otherwise—a situation that's fully to blame for all the anxiety that Simon and Blue feel about coming out. By insisting that it needs to be awkward, Simon seeks to make up for some of the grief that non-straight people get for their sexualities and having to announce it. Simon's question also very much alludes to the time period in which the book was written, when starting to ask questions like this and challenge long-assumed defaults was becoming more normal.

“It is definitely annoying that straight (and white, for that matter) is the default, and that the only people who have to think about their identity are the ones who don't fit that mold.”

Related Characters: Blue / Bram (speaker), Martin Addison, Simon Spier

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

In Blue's reply to Simon's suggestion that everyone should have to come out, he notes that white is also the default and suggests, essentially, that straight white people are the only ones who never have to question or announce their identity. This is the first significant clue that Blue is Bram, given that he brings race into the equation. Since he is neither straight nor white, Bram is aware of this problem in a way that Simon isn't.

Though neither Simon nor Blue mentions Martin here,

Blue's observation absolutely applies to Martin and explains one of the major reasons that Martin doesn't see anything wrong with blackmailing Simon over his sexual orientation and why he severely lacks empathy. As a straight white male, it's probably never occurred to Martin that it's scary to come out as gay, or possibly even dangerous—especially given that this book takes place in small-town Georgia.

Chapter 19 Quotes

☝ It's Christmas Eve day, and something feels a little bit off. Not bad, just off. I don't know how to explain it. We're hitting everyone of the Spier traditions.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Nora Spier, Alice Spier, Mom, Dad

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

On Christmas Eve, Simon has the unshakeable feeling that things are off, though he can't pinpoint why. When he specifically mentions that he can't explain it because his family is appropriately observing every Christmas tradition, it suggests that Simon believes that even though his family is fundamentally changing, he expects holidays to still feel the same exactly because of their traditions. This shows that Simon views traditions as unchanging and a means for stability. The fact that Simon still feels this way in December, after both Halloween and Thanksgiving feel different than usual, suggests that Simon still isn't fully comfortable with the fact that, despite his desire for things to stay the same in his family, it's undeniable that things are changing.

☝ In this moment, all I want is for things to feel like Christmas again. I want it to feel how it used to feel.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Nora Spier, Alice Spier, Mom, Dad

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

After dinner on Christmas Eve, Simon feels even more strongly like the holiday is nothing like what he remembers when he was a kid. His discomfort points to his desire for things within his family to remain the same. It's telling that he feels this way despite the fact that he himself is changing and resents his parents in part because he perceives that they want him to stay exactly the same. Taken together, this observation suggests that these changes are inevitable, and every single member of Simon's family will need to come to terms with them and adapt. While Simon's desire for things to feel the same is certainly understandable, it represents a moment where Simon will be forced to grow and accept that he can only keep moving forward.

Chapter 23 Quotes

☝ “And you know what? You don't get to say it's not a big thing. This is a big fucking thing, okay? This was supposed to be—this is mine. I'm supposed to decide when and where and who knows and how I want to say it.”

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Martin Addison

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 196

Explanation and Analysis

After Martin forcibly outs Simon and sees firsthand the homophobic bullying that Simon suffers as a result, he attempts to apologize—which Simon doesn't accept. Simon's emotional speech calls Martin out on attempting to take control of Simon's own personal story and specifically takes issue with the fact that Martin didn't think coming out was going to be such a big deal. As Simon and Blue have discussed, Martin was unaware of how big of a deal this was going to be because he's straight and has never had to think about the consequences of coming out as gay in Georgia. By minimizing Simon's experience, Martin tries unsuccessfully to make it seem as though he shouldn't be at fault because he wasn't aware.

When Simon is able to lay it all out for Martin, it shows Martin that he didn't think about anyone but himself when he chose to blackmail Simon. Essentially, Simon's speech helps Martin learn to recognize others' humanity and recognize them as the captains of their own lives, rather than try to take their agency and experiences from them.

Chapter 27 Quotes

☞ The problem is, I'm beginning to realize I hardly know anything about anyone. I mean I generally know who's a virgin. But I don't have a clue whether most people's parents are divorced, or what their parents do for a living [...] And these are my best friends. I've always thought of myself as nosy, but I guess I'm just nosy about stupid stuff.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Nick, Leah, Abby Suso, Blue / Bram

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 211

Explanation and Analysis

After incorrectly guessing that Blue is Cal, Simon comes to the realization that though he considers himself nosy, he's not actually curious enough about other people's lives. Though he feels horrible about it, this provides Simon the information he needs to make a positive change and begin treating his friends with more empathy and curiosity. It's also notable that he comes to this realization after misidentifying Blue, as this shows how becoming close to someone else for the first time in one's life has the power to make these shortcomings clear—and further, that they must change and evolve in order to continue to get close to someone. It's worth noting that if Simon knew a little more about his friends and classmates, he may have been able to make a better guess as to who Blue is. However, all Simon went off of when he guessed Cal was that Cal had blue eyes and liked to draw superheroes; he ignored Blue's religious upbringing and divorced parents. Indeed, Simon never shares what Cal's parents are like, which suggests that even though he begins to make these changes, his transformation certainly doesn't end with the close of the novel.

☞ “I feel stupid for not knowing that,” I say.
“Why would you feel stupid? I guess I never mentioned it.”
“But I never asked.”

Related Characters: Abby Suso, Simon Spier (speaker), Blue / Bram

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 215

Explanation and Analysis

When Simon finally asks Abby why her dad and brother still

live in Washington, D.C., he feels horrible for never asking her about the situation even though they're best friends. Again, this shows how Simon is beginning to learn what he discovered through misidentifying Blue to make positive changes in his life. By doing this, he's able to grow closer to Abby and form a deeper and more emotionally fulfilling relationship with her. When Simon makes this realization, it primarily impresses upon him how self-centered he's been for much of his life. By recognizing this, it allows him to care more deeply for others and at the same time, become a better friend and person in general.

Chapter 28 Quotes

☞ “But they're supposed to be Alice and Nora. They're not supposed to be different,” I explain.

“They're not allowed to change?” Abby laughs. “But you're changing. You're different than you were five months ago.”

“I'm not different!”

“Simon, I just watched you pick up a random guy in a gay bar. You're wearing eyeliner. And you're completely wasted.”

Related Characters: Abby Suso, Simon Spier (speaker), Nora Spier, Alice Spier, Nick

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 235

Explanation and Analysis

As they leave the Atlanta gay bar, Simon drunkenly asks Abby to be his sister since Alice and Nora are changing too much for his liking. Abby's questions back to Simon reinforce that she's the character really responsible for bringing positive change to Simon's friend group, as she's the one who points out that the changes that Simon's family is going through are perfectly normal. Further, she suggests that while Simon's changes are certainly interesting, they're also very normal and nothing alarming. By starting to make an attempt to convince Simon to normalize change, Abby begins to help Simon understand that though it's difficult to see his family's changes unfold, it's something that he'll need to accept and adapt to in order to maintain his positive relationships, especially with his sisters.

Chapter 30 Quotes

“I owe you an apology, kid.”

I look up at him.

“What you said on Friday. About the gay jokes.”

Related Characters: Dad (speaker), Mom, Simon Spier

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 247

Explanation and Analysis

When Mom and Dad talk to Simon about his night of drinking, Dad first apologizes to Simon for his longstanding habit of making tone-deaf jokes about gay people. This apology represents a major shift in Simon's family, as it means that there's going to be a fundamental change in the way that the Spier family members relate to each other. Most importantly, it shows that Dad is going through a relatively similar process to Simon as he learns to recognize other people and treat them kindly and with respect. By apologizing and choosing to no longer make these insensitive jokes, Dad is able to show Simon that he cares about him and who he is as a person to do his best to make Simon feel comfortable, no matter what his orientation might be.

“It's just, you know. I get that you were in a difficult position. But you don't get to make the decisions about my love life. I choose who I date.” She shrugs. “I would think you would understand that.”

Related Characters: Abby Suso (speaker), Martin Addison, Simon Spier

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 253

Explanation and Analysis

On opening night of *Oliver*, Abby calls Simon out for helping Martin try to get her to go out with him. Specifically, Abby draws comparisons between what Simon helped do to her and what Martin did to Simon; this impresses upon Simon that he unwittingly tried to rob Abby of her agency over her own life. This reinforces for Simon how important it is to respect other people's agency, especially given how much it affected him when Martin tried to control Simon's life. It's also telling that in this situation, Abby trusted Simon to have

her best interests at heart—they're friends, and they're generally open with each other. For Abby, this makes the betrayal hurt even more given that Simon didn't just try to manipulate her, he actively betrayed her trust.

“It's weird, because of all the things I feel guilty about, it never occurred to me to feel guilty about Abby. But I'm a fucking idiot. Because who you like can't be forced or persuaded or manipulated. If anyone knows that, it's me. I'm a shitty friend.”

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Martin Addison, Abby Suso

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 254-55

Explanation and Analysis

After the play, Simon feels miserable about the fact that he manipulated Abby. His thoughts here show that after all he's learned over the course of the novel, he is now able to apply what Martin did to his own life and recognize the similarities between what Martin did to him and what Simon did to Abby. This impresses upon Simon the necessity of treating others with genuine respect and recognizing they're in control of their own stories and experiences. By assuming that Abby could be manipulated into liking Martin, Simon robbed her of the ability to choose her own boyfriend and put his own self-interest over her thoughts and feelings.

Chapter 32 Quotes

“But then I think about Ms. Albright making it her life's mission to get those in-tha-butt guys suspended. And how pissed off and determined she looked, slapping the handbook down on that chair backstage.”

I wish I had brought her another bouquet or a card or a freaking tiara. I don't know. Something just from me.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Ms. Albright

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 261

Explanation and Analysis

After the closing performance of *Oliver*, Simon wishes he'd done something for Ms. Albright to thank her for standing up to the bullies who crashed a rehearsal after Simon was outed. Because one of Simon's major journeys throughout the novel is learning to recognize other people, this moment reads as one in which Simon realizes he should've been more grateful to Ms. Albright and done more to show it. In this instance, it's less important that Simon didn't actually do anything for her than it is that he recognizes he should have. With this, the novel suggests that Simon's development won't end with the novel; he'll continue to grow up and will certainly have more opportunities to thank people for their kindnesses towards him in the future.

☝ I guess I assumed that Blue would be white. Which kind of makes me want to smack myself. White shouldn't be the default any more than straight should be the default. There shouldn't even be a default.

Related Characters: Simon Spier (speaker), Cal Price, Blue / Bram

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 261

Explanation and Analysis

Right after Bram reveals himself as Blue at the carnival, Simon feels horrible for assuming that Blue would be white. This first reinforces that Simon's lack of curiosity about his friends and peers meant that he tackled the issue of discovering Blue's identity with pretty minimal evidence—remember that he suspected Cal at first simply because Cal has blue eyes. Because Simon didn't know much about Bram, even though Bram has eaten lunch at Simon's lunch table every day of school since September, he was unable to piece together that Bram might be Blue, regardless of Bram's skin color.

When Simon reminds himself that there shouldn't be a default for race or sexuality, it reminds the reader that one of the main ways to fight assumptions is to constantly catch oneself in making them. Though Simon wasn't able to catch himself this time, this suggests that going forward, he'll be less likely to make assumptions like this.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Simon and Martin are sitting together backstage when Martin admits that he read Simon's email—apparently, Simon left his Gmail account logged in on a school computer, Martin used the computer next, and he subsequently discovered Simon's secret identity (Jacques). Simon feels like an idiot as Martin smiles and offers that his brother is gay too. Simon has no idea what to say, especially when Martin insists that being gay isn't at all a big deal. Simon thinks that coming out doesn't really scare him—it'll just be awkward—but he's not sure what it'll mean for Blue, the boy he's been anonymously emailing.

Blue is a private person and would never forget to log out of his email on a school computer. Simon tells the reader that the school blocks the wireless in the auditorium, so he has to wait until after rehearsal to see if Blue has written him back. Martin interrupts Simon's thoughts to say again that Simon should come out and just be himself, and Simon rolls his eyes that a straight kid is giving him advice on coming out. Martin then says he's not going to show anyone the emails, which makes Simon feel relieved at first and then suspicious. Martin admits he took a screenshot of the emails, mentions that Simon is friends with Abby Suso, and casually suggests that Simon could help him talk to Abby.

Simon is enraged, and then it clicks—Martin is blackmailing him. Martin doesn't seem to understand why this is a problem and asks that Simon just invite him to things when Abby is going to be there. Simon thinks Martin might put the email screenshots on creeksecrets, the school's anonymous Tumblr account, which is where all the school gossip takes place for every student to see. Ms. Albright calls Martin onstage, and as Martin leaves, he asks who Blue is. Simon answers that he lives in California, but this is a lie: Blue lives in Shady Creek too, goes to Creekwood High, and Blue is a fake name. Simon might even know him.

Simon's fear here sets up immediately that it's not only Simon's sexuality at stake; he has the mysterious Blue to worry about as well. This reinforces that Martin has control over more than just Simon's decision to come out, making his impending decision to blackmail Simon even worse. Martin's insistence that being gay isn't a big deal shows that he's not particularly sensitive to how difficult it is to be gay in small-town Georgia.



Martin's decision to blackmail Simon exhibits a shocking lack of recognition that Simon is an individual and a whole person, not just a means for Martin to use to get the girl he wants. This sets Martin up to hopefully learn to recognize others' humanity and agency as this situation progresses. Simon's explanation as to why he checked his email in the first place suggests that he's getting to know Blue differently than he knows other people, which shows Simon starting to truly learn how to empathize with others.



Again, Martin's nonchalance about blackmailing Simon shows that he's too wrapped up in his own desires (namely, his crush on Abby) to recognize that blackmailing and potentially outing his classmate is huge and violating for Simon and possibly for Blue as well. Meanwhile, the mention of creeksecrets sets up online social networks like Tumblr and Facebook as a major motif that explores how the teenage characters connect to each other outside of school.



When Simon gets home, he has an hour before dinner, so he gathers up Bieber, the family dog, puts on music by Tegan and Sara, and heads out for a walk. He thinks it makes sense that Martin is into Abby, because every "geeky straight boy" is. The fall air helps Simon calm down, as does the familiar sight when he arrives at his friend Nick's basement. Nick and Leah are sprawled in armchairs, playing video games, just as they do every afternoon. He feels as though the moment is perfect between him and his friends.

Nick and Leah are drinking sweet tea from Chick-fil-A, and Simon admits he feels weird eating there after he heard they "donate money to screw over gay people." He explains, however, that he doesn't talk about "gay stuff" with anyone but Blue—not even Nick and Leah. As Nick goes off on a tangent about a dream he had about putting in contacts incorrectly, Simon notices that Nick's philosophical mood makes Leah look very in love with him. Simon explains that this is why Leah hates Abby—Nick has a very obvious crush on Abby. Simon thinks that helping Martin woo Abby might actually be a good thing if it restores equilibrium in his friend group.

CHAPTER 2

In an email to Blue, Simon refers to middle school as an "endless horror show" and lists some events that helped him discover he was gay, such as a weird dream and his middle school obsession with the lead singer of the band Passion Pit. He then recounts his "finest moment" of having a girlfriend in eighth grade and going to the dance with her. After spending the dance under the bleachers with his friends, Simon was terrified when someone told him that his girlfriend was waiting for him outside. Rather than meet her to make out, Simon hid in the bathroom for the rest of the evening. He says that even though he knew he was gay then, he had two more girlfriends after that.

Blue writes back that it would be depressing if Simon's actual proudest moment took place in middle school, as middle school was absolutely awful for everyone. Blue then explains that he's seen the man who instigated his own discovery of his sexuality, Mr. Sexual Awakening, several times, though he's straight and his wife is pregnant. Blue closes by asking why Simon had girlfriends if he knew he was gay. Simon writes back that he didn't fully believe he was gay.

When Simon is specifically calmed by the normalcy of his afternoon hangouts with Nick and Leah, it suggests that Simon is beginning to grow and change in ways that he's not yet comfortable with; because of this, hanging out with his long-time friends is an important source of stability and comfort in a world that probably feels out of control for him right now.



When Simon tries to tell himself that helping Martin would actually be a good thing, it shows him attempting to put group harmony over his own well-being. By doing this, he steps into his regular role as a peacemaker with his friends, which is notably something that they expect of him. This then suggests that he'll need to begin to move away from this habit in order to truly come of age and to develop his own sense of identity.



Since middle school encompasses some of the early stages of puberty, middle schoolers are just beginning to discover who they are, and sexuality is a large part of identity. Simon's levity (describing middle school as an "endless horror show" and clearly dramatizing events) shows that Simon likes to perform for people and dramatize his life, which can in some cases play into him performing identities that he thinks people want to see, rather than what's authentic to him.



Though the tone of Blue's question about Simon's subsequent girlfriends isn't clear (either to Simon or to the reader), it possibly suggests that having girlfriends doesn't represent a "right" way to be gay according to Blue. This introduces the idea that the process of grappling with one's sexuality and figuring out their identity is different for everyone.



CHAPTER 3

Simon thinks the worst thing about Martin blackmailing him is that he can't bring it up with Blue. Though they don't talk about any identifying details of their identities, they otherwise don't keep secrets from each other. Simon explains how he found Blue on the creeksecrets Tumblr. Blue posted about the difficulties of getting to know people, how lonely he feels, and how he feels simultaneously hidden and exposed about being gay. Simon commented "THIS" and left his secret email account. Blue emailed him a week later. Simon thinks that if Blue found out that Martin had screenshots of their emails, he'd stop emailing altogether. Simon doesn't want to lose Blue.

Simon avoids Martin all week and feels cowardly for doing so, even though he's already decided to help Martin. On "Bachelorette night"—the night that Simon's family watches *The Bachelorette* and then video chats with Alice at Wesleyan to discuss the show—Simon is distracted. He considers telling his parents about Martin's blackmail, but decides he's not ready to be out in small-town Georgia. He thinks about Leah's hobby of drawing yaoi (manga that depicts gay relationships between pop culture characters) and his affinity for homoerotic *Harry Potter* fanfiction.

Nora sets up the video chat on the living room computer and calls Alice. Simon tries to participate in the conversation, but he's distracted thinking about Martin and wondering if Blue thinks he's a fake since he's dated girls in the past. He also notices that Nora now has five piercings on one ear and struggles to concentrate on anything else—this seems out of character for Nora.

As Mom and Alice discuss one contestant, Dad insists that contestant is gay and a "one-man Pride Parade." Simon thinks he agrees with Leah that it's terrible to be insulted by proxy, but reasons that if his dad is truly homophobic, that's a good thing to know.

A week after Martin and Simon's first conversation, Martin runs into Simon at lunch and asks to sit at his table. Simon awkwardly insists that all the seats at his table are taken, and they're already squeezing two extra chairs at a six-person table. Martin sighs that he thought they were on the same page with the "Abby thing," and Simon growls that Martin needs to let him talk to Abby himself.

Here, the internet becomes a place where closeted kids like Blue and Simon can recognize true and hidden parts of each other's identities from the safety of their own computers and privacy of their pseudonyms. This shows that coming to terms with these parts of one's identity isn't at all easy, and in the case of Simon and Blue, they need to explore this part of their identity anonymously before they make it known to the rest of the world.



*Simon and his family's love for *The Bachelorette* explains in part where Simon gets his penchant for dramatization: reality television like *The Bachelorette* is predicated entirely on dramatizing normal life events like falling in love. This suggests that Simon may view these changes as being far more monumental than they necessarily need to be, given the dramatized depictions he sees on TV.*



Simon's worry here about what Blue thinks suggests that Simon is preoccupied with being gay in the "right" way, which again shows that coming out isn't the end-all of this identity shift. His preoccupation with Nora's piercings suggests that he's deeply invested in the changes his family members are going through, and that those changes are uncomfortable for him.



It's likely that Dad makes comments like this because he assumes Simon isn't gay and therefore won't be offended. This then becomes a lesson in the importance of speaking kindly at all times.



It's worth noting that Simon never takes into account whether or not Abby is even interested in Martin, which shows that, like Martin, Simon is operating under the assumption that Abby will simply do what he wants. With this, Simon chooses to not recognize her right to control her own life.



Days pass, and Simon says nothing to Abby. He does his best to avoid Martin by sticking close to Nick and Leah. One morning, Nora asks if something is up when Simon insists on sitting in the car until school starts. She lets him be, but Simon thinks that she's becoming weirdly observant. A few minutes later, Nick knocks on the window and climbs into the passenger seat to watch YouTube videos. Simon is acutely aware that Nick knows that there's something going on, but Nick says nothing. Simon muses that he knows all of Nick's tics, but really doesn't know anything going on inside Nick's head.

On Thursday, Simon gets to rehearsal early, so he steps outside to listen to music. Martin joins him and accuses Simon of avoiding him. He promises he's not going to show the emails to anyone, but Simon doesn't believe this. He thinks he doesn't know Martin at all, but he severely underestimated him. Finally, Simon says he'll talk to Abby and angrily agrees to exchange phone numbers with Martin.

As Simon steps back inside, Ms. Albright calls for Simon and some other actors to rehearse a scene. Abby hugs Simon and tells him that she's in "Taylor hell," referring to lead actress Taylor Metternich. Taylor is perfect, but she is nasty about it. Ms. Albright leads the cast in some blocking exercises as Cal, the student stage manager, makes notes on his script. Simon suspects that Cal might be gay and thinks he's extremely attractive. As Simon happily acts, he catches Martin's eye and thinks he's hard to truly hate.

After rehearsal, Simon sits with Abby, who has to wait for a bus to take her an hour across town. All the black kids at school have to do this. Simon asks Martin, who's sitting nearby, if he's going to Garrett's **Halloween** party the next day. In his excitement to accept, Martin trips over his shoelace and then bows to Abby like he just performed something amazing. She laughs and then tells Simon she didn't know he was friends with Martin.

Again, when Simon notes that Nora is changing and growing, it shows that the entirety of the Spier family is very caught up in its members' changes and moods. Though Simon interprets it as Nick being a good friend when he doesn't necessarily bring up that there's clearly something going on, Simon's observation that he doesn't know what's going on in Nick's head suggests that there's a deeper connection missing in their friendship.



It's clear from the way that Martin acts that he has no idea how difficult of a situation he's put Simon in by blackmailing him. Being straight, Martin isn't at risk of being targeted or bullied for his orientation and doesn't seem to understand that Simon is, which again shows that Martin has a long way to go in empathizing with other people and respecting their agency.



It's worth noting here that there are the seeds of a friendship between Simon and Martin, but Martin's blackmail makes Simon wholly unwilling to let down his guard and actually try to be friends with Martin. This shows how robbing someone of their agency can ruin the chances of making meaningful connections with them people.



Though there are only a few hints throughout the novel alluding to the fact that kids at Creekwood deal with racial conflicts, it adds a layer of tension to the novel. It also makes it clear that there are other types of identities at play in the novel besides sexuality; Abby is subject to other people's assumptions about how she should act as a young black woman, just as Simon deals with how people (like Blue) think he should be gay.



CHAPTER 4

Simon emails Blue and tells him that he's never worn a scary costume for **Halloween** before; his family only does funny ones. He wore girls' dresses until fourth grade when suddenly, he was mortified to see himself in a flapper dress. Simon comments that by not dressing up, Blue is throwing away an opportunity to be someone else for a night. Blue replies that he loves dressing up and was a **superhero** every year as a kid, but he's not going out this year. He has to sit at home and give out candy—Blue's mom will be away at a work party. Blue comments that Simon was surely a great flapper and asks how his parents were about buying dresses. Blue tries to guess what Simon's costume is, but the conversation fizzles when Simon's phone embarrassingly autocorrects to sexual and suggestive language.

Blue's love of dressing up as a superhero every year for Halloween introduces the idea that both Simon and Blue hide their true selves and project an entirely different identity in their day-to-day lives—much like being a superhero or wearing a costume, both Simon and Blue mask the fact that they're gay. When Simon talks about wearing a scary costume for the first time and Blue talks about not dressing up, it shows that the way that both boys experience this holiday is changing as they grow up, mature, and their own families change.



CHAPTER 5

Simon feels as though the energy at school on **Halloween**, which is conveniently on a Friday, is infectious. He wears cat ears and a tail, and Abby comes home with him after school so they can carpool with Nick and Leah to Garrett's party. As Abby cuddles with Bieber in her Cleopatra costume, Simon notices that she seems unconcerned that her dress has ridden up to the tops of her thighs, and wonders if she knows he's gay. They make grilled cheese sandwiches and then sit with Nora in the living room. Nora makes herself a grilled cheese, and Simon beats himself up for not asking her if she wanted one.

When Simon is so caught up in the fact that he didn't offer Nora a sandwich, it shows that he does indeed have the capacity to think of other people and anticipate their needs—it's just not something that's automatic for him yet. This reinforces that he's learning how to become more empathetic and caring as he grows up and comes of age.



When they arrive at the party, Simon feels immediately alienated—kids are drinking alcohol, while he's used to parties with junk food and the game Apples to Apples. Leah declines Garrett's offer of alcohol, while Simon accepts a beer and Abby asks for vodka and orange juice. Nick runs to find a guitar, leaving Simon standing awkwardly with Abby and Leah. Leah is extra sarcastic in Nick's absence, and Simon feels as though the girls are showing off for each other. Garrett returns with drinks, teases Simon about his costume, and looks extra confused when Leah tries to explain she's dressed as a manga character.

The presence of alcohol immediately marks this party as being mature and adult, especially in comparison with Simon's innocent parties complete with junk food and kid-friendly board games. Again, this reinforces that Simon is growing up, and as he does so, the way that he celebrates holidays necessarily changes. His discomfort at this party, however, shows that this isn't necessarily a change that's easy to make or even something that's necessarily desired.



Two drunk girls slam piano keys and laugh, and Simon almost wishes he were home watching TV and eating candy with Nora. He finds his beer disgusting and marvels that people get fake IDs in order to drink it. Simon thinks better of Garrett when he goes and pulls the lid over the piano keys. Nick returns with a guitar and sits down. Simon, Abby, and Leah sit on the floor nearby. As Simon drinks, he thinks his beer isn't so bad. He watches people come over to listen to Nick and thinks about Cal Price, who he's pretty sure is Blue—when they look at each other, he feels as though they get each other.

Simon's dislike of the beer reinforces his discomfort with the changes he's undergoing as he grows up and comes of age. However, the fact that he continues to drink it even though he thinks it's disgusting reveals that he feels pressured to grow up and conform to what his peers are doing. When he decides that Garrett might not be so bad because he rescues the piano from the drunken girls, it shows Simon actively expanding his conceptions of other people.



Simon starts twisting Leah's hair. He thinks it's pretty and smells wonderful, thanks to the beer—which he now thinks is wonderful as well. He tells Leah her face looks Irish, and proceeds to drunkenly remark on how crazy it is that everyone's ancestors are from all over the world. He tries to talk about where Abby is from and wonders if knowing nothing about Africa makes him racist. She answers that her ancestors were probably West African and they ended up in the U.S. thanks to slavery. Simon stops talking, and Martin awkwardly jumps up to get people more drinks. Simon muses that he and Leah don't drink and have never had sex, and he thinks that Blue is just like them.

Abby pulls Nick up to dance. Martin jumps up too and insists that everyone needs to admire his dancing, which is extremely awkward. Abby tugs both boys onto the dance floor and then proceeds to dance by herself, leaving the boys to bob and sway near her. Leah watches this and tells Simon that this is more painful than what happened at Nick's bar mitzvah.

At midnight, Leah drops everyone off at Nick's house and Abby and Simon walk to Simon's house. He observes the smashed pumpkins and toilet paper littering the sidewalk. Abby tells Simon that earlier that night, Martin brought up homecoming several times as though he was trying to ask her to the dance. Abby says she's already going with someone else and asks Simon to tell Martin. Simon agrees, and when Abby suggests he ask Leah to homecoming, Simon laughs and considers telling her that he's gay.

Mom greets Simon and Abby when they arrive with a plate of snacks. Abby tells her about everyone's costumes, and Simon quickly excuses himself to his bedroom to lie on his bed and listen to Elliott Smith. Simon decides he won't tell his parents about the party, since his parents are always shocked whenever he expresses a new interest or changes a little bit. He thinks that his parents make everything into a "big coming out moment," which he thinks isn't normal. Simon thinks that he's tired of "coming out" over and over again as he experiences small changes.

Notice here that even though Simon is obviously intoxicated, he still groups himself in with classmates like Leah who don't partake in adult things like alcohol and sex. This again highlights that drinking isn't something he particularly wants to do, but he bends to the pressure to be cool and fit in with his classmates. Also, the fact that Simon thinks of himself as someone who doesn't drink—even though he's currently drunk—suggests that he's not fully aware of the changes he's going through.



The mention of Nick's bar mitzvah, which would've happened when Nick, Leah, and Simon were thirteen, reinforces that the friends have history that in some cases makes it hard to understand or accept the changes happening right before their eyes.



Abby is clearly aware that Martin has a crush on her (and doesn't seem to reciprocate those feelings). It's strange, then, that Simon is still trying to help Martin woo her. Though it's certainly understandable why he's going along with Martin's blackmail, the fact that Abby's own feelings don't cross his mind illustrates just how caught up in himself Simon is at this point.



Simon's explanation illustrates why he was so caught up in Nora's ear piercings earlier: he likely learned this overbearing behavior from his parents. However, it's also worth noting that when his parents get overly observant and excited about the changes their kids are going through, Simon doesn't at all appreciate the attention. Just as in the case with Abby, this shows how caught up Simon is in thinking about himself and not thinking about how his actions impact other people.



CHAPTER 6

Blue emails Simon that his **Halloween** was very quiet and he ate a bunch of candy. He admits that he's excited for homecoming, not because he likes football but because he loves the crisp fall air. Simon replies with a suggestion to just put a bowl of candy on the stoop next year and gives a brief account of the party he went to. He asks Blue if he ever feels locked into himself and like nobody knows his identity but him. Simon then brings up Spirit Week at school, which is a week of dress up days before homecoming.

Blue replies that he does indeed feel trapped into his identity, but in a way that's more about him holding himself back from doing things he wants to do because he's afraid. He declines to say what he's going to dress up as for Spirit Week, as he doesn't want Simon to figure out who he is. Blue doesn't think that their strange relationship will work if they know who they are in real life. In Simon's reply, he apologizes for making Blue uncomfortable and admits that he's nosy. He promises that he won't do anything to mess up what they have.

CHAPTER 7

Wednesday is "gender bender day," which Simon explains really just means that kids cross-dress. Mr. Wise shows Shakespeare's [Twelfth Night](#) in English class, and Simon watches soccer boys including Nick, Garrett, and Bram squeeze onto Mr. Wise's couch in tiny cheerleading uniforms. Simon is surprisingly attracted to the muscular soccer legs in tiny cheerleading skirts, and is especially surprised that Bram, who is extremely quiet and shy, dressed up. Abby arrives late to class, laughs at the boys on the couch, and accuses Simon and Leah of not dressing up. Simon explains that Leah always dresses extra feminine to be subversive, and he felt no choice but to cross-dress a tiny bit with hair clips.

Simon thinks that it's funny that the straight guys end up going all out for this day because "they're secure in their masculinity," but he thinks that that's not the same as being straight. He also tells the reader that he used to love dressing like a girl. He'd dream about **Halloween** starting in April and try his costumes on multiple times before Halloween. Now, he's just mortified by how much he loved wearing dresses. Martin enters the classroom, a cheerleading uniform barely covering his tall frame. He even stuffed the bust, and the other kids laugh and whistle. Mr. Wise sends Martin to the office to get a late pass.

Simon's question to Blue about feeling locked inside himself provides some explanation for why he's not necessarily able to look outside himself and empathize with others: he's too caught up in figuring out how to even exist in his own rapidly changing body. Spirit Week, like Halloween, is a chance for Simon and Blue to try on new identities for size with relatively few consequences.



Blue's unwillingness to share his identity with Simon suggests that at this point, he's not ready to merge his gay identity (that at this point he shares only with Simon) with whatever identity he presents at school. Notice that Simon calls himself nosy; however, in doing so, he's talking more about one of his defining qualities than about a genuine care for other people.



[Twelfth Night](#) is one of Shakespeare's most famous plays that features cross-dressing and messy love triangles. Meanwhile, the different ways that the students interpret the dress up theme reinforces again that costumes can entirely change a person into something they're totally not—Bram, for example, is quiet and reserved but goes along with the other soccer boys' plan to boldly dress as cheerleaders in skimpy outfits.



Simon's astute observation about the intersection between masculinity and sexuality again points to the way that people make assumptions about their peers based on their gender or their sexuality, and that these assumptions aren't necessarily true. Simon's mortification at his own childhood love of wearing girls' clothes illustrates how he too is growing up, coming of age, and changing as he thinks about his sexual identity.



On Friday, some of the hallways are covered in hay to go with the country music theme for the junior class. Simon loves it. At lunch, Simon pointedly avoids Martin and sits down in the middle of an argument between Leah and Garrett. Nick sits down and suggests they go to the game later instead of going to Waffle House like usual. Simon agrees, excited to be in the stands with Blue, but Leah looks angry. When Abby sits down and starts talking about the game, Leah abruptly leaves.

As Nick and Simon return to school that evening for the parade, they discuss that they're on Leah's "shit list." It's both boys' first time at a football game, and Simon is struck by how pretty and bright the stadium lights are. The excitement in the air makes Simon understand why Blue likes homecoming. Abby races up and asks Nick and Simon if they want to walk in the parade, so they follow her to the lot where the floats are staged. A girl on student council arranges the junior class and instructs them on what to chant. Though Simon thinks it's ridiculous, he enjoys feeling like a part of the group.

After the parade, Simon and Nick head to the bleachers to find the soccer team. The team is able to make room for Nick, but Simon decides to sit with the drama club. He sits next to Cal and can barely think, given how attractive Cal looks. He thinks about saying something to see if Cal is Blue, but decides against it. Martin slides in next to Simon and quietly says that Abby turned him down when he asked her to the dance. He miserably asks Simon to let him know if Abby's seeing someone next time, and Simon almost feels bad for him. He thinks about what might happen with the emails if Martin never wins over Abby, and thinks it'd be awful to have that hanging over his head forever.

CHAPTER 8

Simon and Blue are emailing about whether or not Oreos are a food group. Simon insists they are, and tells Blue about an imaginary world he made up with Nora where everything is made up of Oreos. Blue responds and jokingly asks how many servings of Oreos he should have per day, and Simon responds with a detailed nutrition plan of Oreo products. He admits that thinking about this is making him hungry, and he used to fantasize about food as a kid until he learned about sex. In his reply, Blue says he can't eat deep-fried Oreos because he once rode a Tilt-A-Whirl after eating one and vomited profusely. He also says he likes imagining Simon fantasizing about sex.

Again, Nick's suggestion that they go to the game appears to be an unprecedented decision, and therefore is one that reinforces that Nick, Leah, and Simon are changing and are, especially in Leah's case, not necessarily happy about it or comfortable with the changes.



The tone that Nick and Simon use to talk about being on the outs with Leah indicates that this isn't necessarily a new development. This suggests either that Nick and Simon aren't as kind to Leah as they could be, or that Leah holds her friends to impossible standards and is frequently mad at them. At the very least, it's clear that Leah is adamant about rejecting any changes that come her way, which implies that this is an issue rooted in her own anxieties.



Even though Martin is absolutely the antagonist in Simon's story, it's important to pay attention to the fact that Albertalli doesn't make him an entirely unlikeable character. By doing this, she makes it clear that Martin's identity is also multifaceted, just like Simon's is, and it shows that he's also dealing with a great deal of anxiety as he navigates adolescence. When Simon is able to empathize with Martin, it shows Simon beginning to recognize his humanity, even as he remains unable to recognize Abby's right to choose her own romantic partners.



Remember that Simon has already situated himself as a teen who's not necessarily interested in alcohol and hasn't had sex yet. This email exchange suggests again that these parts of Simon's identity are starting to change. In addition, this conversation also shows that contrary to what Simon thought of Blue, Blue is also thinking about sex and is therefore also coming of age and changing, even in the short amount of time that he and Simon have been emailing.



CHAPTER 9

Simon feels jittery after reading that Blue likes to imagine him fantasizing about sex. He's confused, mostly because Blue never writes stuff like that, and because Simon thought he was the only one who thought about the two of them having sex. He fantasizes about kissing Blue, who he thinks is Cal Price, and masturbates before he goes to bed.

Monday is Simon's birthday. Leah grabs him in the morning, gives him a mix CD, and Simon apologizes for ditching her to go to the homecoming game. At lunch, Leah brings in a sheet cake, per tradition. Everyone is wearing party hats, as one must wear a hat to get a piece. Simon is surprised when Abby tapes a gold bowtie to his chest as Leah cuts the cake. The cake is perfect, and Simon thinks that Leah is amazing at celebrating birthdays.

Simon takes the leftover cake to rehearsal. He sits on the risers to watch when he's not onstage, and Cal joins him to wish him a happy birthday. Nervous, Simon chooses not to tell Cal that his birthday plans are reading birthday wishes on Facebook and hanging out with his family, but does mention that he's getting an Oreo cake. Cal doesn't have any notable reaction to the mention of Oreos, but he does put his hand on Simon's shoulder as he gets up to leave.

CHAPTER 10

At four in the morning on the day after Simon's birthday, he emails Blue and apologizes for the sugary, exhausted mess that his email will surely be. He laments that he'll be a zombie for his French quiz and brings up a reality show where people dated in the dark. He suggests that they could date like that and it wouldn't ruin anything. When Blue replies later, he wishes Simon good luck on his quiz and says he doesn't know much about reality TV at all. He does want to know how they'll keep from recognizing each other's voices. When Simon emails back, he's aghast that Blue doesn't watch reality TV. He shares that reality shows are required viewing at his house and suggests that, in their situation, they could use voice warping software or just do things that don't require talking.

Simon's confusion is, again, rooted in his beliefs as to what kind of a person he is and what kind of a person he assumed Blue was. His fantasies show clearly that his confusion doesn't mean he's not open to this kind of change, though it doesn't make it any less strange for him.



Here, the bowtie from Abby represents yet another deviation from tradition, though not one that's as overt as some of the other changes Simon has noticed. This again makes it clear that as Simon grows up, plenty of things in his life are going to change in all sorts of ways, both big and small.



Remember that Simon is pretty convinced that Cal is Blue; however, Cal's non-reaction to the mention of Oreos would suggest otherwise. Simon's nervousness around Cal suggests that he very much wants Cal to be Blue, which though Simon doesn't realize it, means that he's making a lot of assumptions about who Blue is based on relatively flimsy evidence.



It's worth noting that as anxiety-inducing as it surely is to write these sexually charged emails, it's still relatively safe for both Simon and Blue to experiment with voicing their feelings and to admit that they're sexually attracted to each other due to the anonymity of email. Their online anonymity gives them the freedom to experiment and be who they think they'd like to be, with none of the consequences that can come with these sorts of comments falling flat in real life. Because of this, they're able to get to better know each other exactly because they don't actually know each other in real life.



CHAPTER 11

The day after **Thanksgiving**, the entire Spier family sits outside playing a game. Alice is home from college, and Simon finally realizes how weird it's been without her. Simon's phone buzzes with a text from Martin, immediately tanking Simon's mood. Martin mentions that his brother is home, and Simon can't tell if it's a joke or a threat. Finally, Alice offers to get her package of cookies out of her suitcase, and Simon feels as though the evening will be okay. The family moves to the living room, where Nora gets peanut butter so they can have "Nick Eisners"—cookies with peanut butter on top, which is what Nick thought peanut butter cookies were when he was a kid.

Alice asks how Nick is doing and is happy to hear he still loves his guitar. She's quiet for a minute and then asks if they remember his bar mitzvah. Nora giggles, and Simon throws a pillow at Alice. At Nick's bar mitzvah, Simon had danced embarrassingly to "Boom Boom Pow," and he hasn't yet lived it down. Alice wishes she could go back and just stop herself from doing weird things in middle school, and Nora wishes she could do the same. Simon finds this perplexing, as Nora was normal and popular in middle school.

In school on Monday, Mr. Wise hands back quizzes on Thoreau. Simon is amazed when he discovers he got 100% until he realizes that Mr. Wise gave him Bram's quiz. Bram shyly accepts his quiz from Simon, and Simon tells the reader he thinks that Bram is probably funny in his own head.

At rehearsal that afternoon, Abby is frantically and silently running lines when Simon interrupts her. He assures her that she'll be fine to have them memorized by the end of **Christmas** break, but she insists that he doesn't have any lines so it's easy for him to say. She immediately deems her reply bitchy, and Simon plays along. However, Martin hears Simon jokingly call Abby a "stealth bitch" and takes major offense. Simon thinks it's ridiculous that Martin is blackmailing him *and* trying to take the moral high ground, but he feels awful for calling Abby a bitch anyway. He also knows that Alice would be disappointed in him. He apologizes and heads onstage.

The "Nick Eisners" illustrate how, even as all the characters grow up and move towards adulthood, there are still parts of their past and their childhoods that will remain integral parts of their identity and family traditions.



When Simon is perplexed about Nora's reaction, it makes it clear to him that Nora has an inner life that clearly diverges from what he and others perceive her. This brings to light the fact that while Simon certainly assumes things about his sister's identity, those assumptions aren't necessarily true and don't entirely describe her lived experience.



When Simon makes this observation about Bram, it indicates that Simon is beginning to think more critically about those around him and is becoming more curious about those people as he develops his capacity for empathy.



Simon's mention of Alice shows just how much he idolizes his older sister. In her absence, Simon must learn to monitor his own language now that she can't do it, which is partially to blame for his sense of guilt here. This illustrates another way that the entirety of the Spier family is growing and changing as the Spier children get older.



Simon looks around at the drama club and notices one girl crying over something someone wrote on the Tumblr. He thinks that he was destined to be nosy, as Simon means "the one who hears," and Spier means "the one who watches." Simon smiles at Cal and feels his day might be getting better—until he notices that a girl's ankle is crossed over Cal's. It's raining when Simon leaves rehearsal, which makes him feel even worse, and he feels like he's on the outside of everything when he sees Leah leaving Nick's house.

Again, Simon thinks of himself as naturally nosy, but there's little evidence that he's particularly curious about his friends and their inner lives, something he's mostly discussed in terms of Nick. This suggests that Simon's assessment might not be entirely truthful, and that he'll need to reevaluate this part of his identity.



CHAPTER 12

Blue emails Simon and admits that in his curiosity about Simon's email address (hourtohour.notetonote), he searched for the words and learned that they're from an Elliott Smith song. Blue says he then listened to a bunch of his music and really likes it, and thinks the music reminds him of Simon. Since then, he's been looking to see who at school wears Elliott Smith shirts, even though he thinks it's unfair to try to figure out Simon's identity. Blue gives Simon a hint to his own identity: Blue's dad is visiting from Savanna this weekend to celebrate Hanukkah with him at a hotel. Blue says he's considering coming out to his dad then.

By diving into Simon's music taste, Blue has the opportunity to get to know Simon on a much deeper level. Because one's musical tastes can be an extremely personal and intimate part of their identity, this again illustrates how the anonymity of email and not knowing each other in real life facilitates these deeper conversations and feelings. Coming out to his dad would mean a major change in Blue's family, showing that Simon's family isn't the only family in flux.



In Simon's reply, he is shocked to learn that Blue is Jewish and commends Blue for thinking about coming out. He asks how Blue thinks his parents will react. He then says that he doesn't wear band tee shirts, since he thinks people should have to go to shows in order to wear them, and he's not been to many shows. Blue writes back and says he's not technically Jewish, and Blue's mom is Episcopalian. He says that both religions are supposedly friendly to gay people, but it's hard to tell if your own parents will be okay with it. He says that if he could, he'd buy Simon all the band tee shirts online, or they could just go to shows together.

Even though Simon later goes on to describe himself as staunchly nonreligious, it's telling that he never questions what Blue's religion might be. This shows that Simon is still very much tuned into himself and not necessarily into others, which in turn leaves him open to making misguided assumptions.



CHAPTER 13

On Thursday, Simon is far too preoccupied thinking about Blue and the fact that Blue's mom and Blue's dad are religious to pay any attention in class. He hopes that Blue doesn't think it's a big deal that Simon is the self-professed "most blasphemous person in the world." Later, Abby tries to ask Simon where his mind is, but Martin interrupts. He mentions that he'd like to introduce Simon to his brother, though he looks miserable saying it. Simon thinks he deserves to feel miserable, but suggests that the three of them go to Waffle House the next day to practice lines for the play. Abby thinks it's a great idea.

The sense of upheaval that Simon feels at learning Blue's religious background shows again how averse Simon is to change. However, it's worth noting that Blue's religious ties are so anxiety inducing for Simon because it makes him question his own identity. This suggests that Simon's discomfort with change in general is actually related to his desire for stability and familiarity.



On Friday night, Simon sits across from Abby and Martin at Waffle House. Martin asks Abby all sorts of silly questions, all while seeming unbelievably nervous. Simon watches Martin try to inadvertently touch Abby, though Abby shrinks away and turns their attention back to the script. Simon finds the whole thing painful. Finally, Abby laments that Taylor already has her lines memorized. Martin and Simon insist that of course Taylor does because she's perfect, and they all start laughing. Simon thinks that Martin might be growing on him.

Again, the text implies that there's a very real possibility for Simon and Martin to become friends, but Martin's blackmail means that Simon will likely never feel comfortable enough to be his true self around Martin.



CHAPTER 14

Simon emails Blue and asks if he came out, and Blue says he didn't exactly come out. He explains that when he got to the hotel, Blue's dad had everything arranged perfectly. Blue decided to wait until after they'd open gifts. However, he was shocked to receive *History of My Life* by Casanova, which he sees as evidence that his dad has no idea he's gay. Blue's mom should be the first to know anyway, and Blue laments the difficulties of having divorced parents.

Giacomo Casanova (1725-98) was, and still is, known for his numerous sexual exploits with women. To Blue, receiving Casanova's autobiography likely comes across as a desire on his dad's part for his son to come of age sexually—specifically, with women. Blue's shock and decision to wait to come out to his dad illustrates just how destructive assumptions about other people's identities can be.



Simon comforts Blue about having divorced parents and says he's planning on just sitting his parents down and telling them both when the time comes. Simon and Blue both mention how easy the other is to talk to, and Simon mentions that Mr. Wise says that Simon is bad about using sentence fragments. In his reply, Blue suggests that Simon is leaving more clues than he really should. Simon apologizes for the clue.

For Blue, the thought of learning Simon's true identity and merging it with what he knows of Simon through their emails represents a level of knowing that is, at this point, a little too much for him to handle. This is likely because Blue is still not fully comfortable with his own identity yet.



CHAPTER 15

The following Friday, Abby and Simon arrive at the Waffle House first. Martin arrives a few minutes later, promptly destroys Abby's house of sugar packets, and announces he forgot his script. Both Abby and Martin have their lines better memorized, so Simon's mind wanders to Blue. He's pulled back to real life when he hears Abby telling Martin "no." Martin is kneeling in the booth, belting one of the songs from *Oliver*. He sings the entire thing as everyone in the restaurant stares. Abby hugs Martin when he's done, which makes Martin smile hugely. Simon smiles back and wonders if they're actually becoming friends.

It's worth noting that Martin's impromptu performance is something he undertakes fully of his own volition, without listening to Abby—in short, he's showing Simon exactly the kind of agency that he took from him by blackmailing him. Simon seems unaware of this and seems far more interested in what this tells him about Martin's character, which does suggest that Simon is becoming gradually more interested in other people as time goes on.



Two hours later, as Simon and Abby climb into Simon's car, he feels strangely electric and excited. They listen to Leah's birthday mix and discuss that while Martin is cute, he's not Abby's type or Simon's type. At a red light, Simon thinks about Blue how is telling Blue's mom tonight that he's gay, and he asks Abby if he can tell her something. Simon swears her to secrecy and tells her he's gay. Abby is quiet for a moment and then asks Simon to pull over. She holds his hands and says she's not surprised, though she didn't know. She tells Simon she loves him and then they head home.

For Simon, the knowledge that Blue is also doing something scary tonight is enough to bolster him and give him the confidence to come out to Abby. This illustrates how his growing relationship and intimacy with Blue has the power to give each of them more confidence in their individual lives and push them towards bravely recognizing these hidden parts of their identities.



CHAPTER 16

Blue writes to Simon that Blue's mom took the news relatively well. She's an epidemiologist, so she was mostly concerned with talking about safe sex practices. Blue thanks Simon for giving him the courage to come out. Simon replies that he's proud of Blue, and notes that Blue's parents seem strangely invested in his sex life. He suggests that Blue should only think about sex with someone who likes sentence fragments and accidentally discloses too much personal info.

When Blue thanks Simon, it shows that Blue is also taking confidence from Simon's support. This shows that both boys are learning how to effectively support another person emotionally, while also learning how to be emotionally intimate and vulnerable with someone else. Turning the conversation to sex again makes it clear that Simon and Blue are headed for a sexual coming of age.



Simon tells Blue about his own coming out experience. He says that now he feels as though he's crossed a border and can't go back. It's exciting and probably good, but he's not sure. When Blue writes back, he says he feels the same way. He suggests that coming out is a one-way process in that you can't go back into the closet after coming out. In closing, Blue assures Simon that he only thinks about sex with people who hide from their girlfriends, eat Oreos, and listen to depressing music.

What Blue and Simon are really getting at with their discussion of coming out is the idea that as one's identity shifts to accommodate new interests or beliefs, that identity will never be the same as it once was. For Simon, this means that even as he's unsettled by how different holidays feel, for example, he'll never be able to go back to how he experienced them as a child.



CHAPTER 17

Simon feels as though he absolutely has to meet Blue in person. He tries to tell himself that Blue lives in his computer, but Simon feels actually a bit in love with him. At rehearsal, Simon stares at Cal, hoping for a clue. Cal pulls out a book that disappointingly turns out to be [Fahrenheit 451](#). Simon wonders what a person looks like when their walls are coming down. Simon isn't the only one having trouble focusing; everyone is worked up over something posted on creeksecrets. Ms. Albright lets rehearsal out early because of this.

Simon's sense of being in love with Blue speaks to the power of truly getting to know someone and sharing intimate details of one's life with them. The mention of creeksecrets and the students being worked up over it reminds the reader that while email has the power to bring Simon and Blue together, other parts of the internet are somewhat more malicious.



Simon grabs his dog Bieber and walks to Nick's house. He runs into Leah just pulling into Nick's driveway, and Leah and Simon head into the basement. Nick and Leah embark on a discussion of *Doctor Who* while Simon lies on the floor, lost in thought about Blue. Simon thinks he has no idea how to tell Nick and Leah he's gay, as he fears they won't recognize him afterwards. Martin texts about going to Waffle House again, which Simon ignores, and he thinks he hates feeling distant from Nick and Leah—even if they never talk about crushes anyway.

Simon spends the first Saturday of **Christmas** break at school for an all-day rehearsal. He feels far away as he eats donuts and drinks coffee with the cast, all in pajamas. He mulls over the fact that he didn't take any of his chances to tell Nick and Leah that he's gay this past week, and tries to not think about how flirtatious Blue is. Martin walks onstage in a nightgown and curlers, and Ms. Albright calls the group to order. She explains the plan for the day and then gives everyone a few minutes before they start.

Simon goes and sits down next to Cal, who is drawing in his binder. Cal comments on the Labradors on Simon's pajamas, which Simon tells the reader are clearly golden retrievers. However, Simon forgives this and asks Cal about his drawing. It's of a **superhero**, which makes Simon's heart clench given Blue's affinity for superheroes. Simon looks up to see Abby looking at him knowingly, so he gives her the stink eye.

Ms. Albright sends a group to the music room with Cal to practice some of the songs. The students goof off and Taylor throws away a mysterious set list of classic rock songs, which Simon thinks fits right in with Taylor's personality. Cal plays the piano accompaniments of the songs, which they run through once, and then there's an hour before they need to return to the auditorium. They sing Disney songs and then have races pushing each other in rolling chairs down the hallway. Cal pushes Simon in one race and after, instead of giving Simon a high five, he laces his fingers through Simon's for a moment.

Abby and Taylor have a go on the chairs, and when they're done, Abby collapses into Simon. They sit on the floor, arms around each other, and watch the freshmen race. When the group finally heads back to the auditorium, Simon notices that both Cal and Martin have been watching him. Martin angrily pulls Simon aside and accuses Simon of trying to humiliate him. Martin doesn't agree that what he's doing is blackmail, but insists the whole thing is over—Abby rejected Martin right before she snuggled with Simon. Martin storms out, leaving Simon confused.

Simon's musings here indicate clearly that even if he's said that his relationships with Nick and Leah don't need anything more to be valid, their friendships could benefit from a bit of vulnerability and having some of the tough conversations hiding under the surface. Not having those conversations makes Simon feel distant and alone, even with people he considers his closest friends.



Again, the fact that Simon is dwelling on his choices to not come out to Nick and Leah makes it extremely clear that this is something that will need to happen for Simon to feel secure in his relationships with them again. Because Simon now recognizes this, it represents a turning point in his development; his correspondence with Blue has shown him that being vulnerable with other people is positive and necessary.



Simon's emotions here ignore the fact that plenty of people like superheroes—he is quick to assume that Cal must be Blue just because of this connection. Though he's making progress in his journey to learn how to connect with people, Simon's assumptions here suggest that he's perfectly willing still to make Cal's identity match Blue's, even without more compelling evidence.



There's very clear sexual tension between Simon and Cal, which at this point is mostly giving Simon practice being truly himself in a real-life setting, not just over email. Because of this, it doesn't matter as much whether Cal is actually Blue—Simon is still learning important things about how to show affection in person and how embrace his sexuality in public.



While the reader (as well as Simon and Abby) are well aware that Simon and Abby's relationship is purely platonic, the fact that Martin takes offense to their physical affection after being rejected illustrates how his emotions color the assumptions he makes about people. Martin's insistence that he's not blackmailing Simon shows that he hasn't yet realized how much power he has over Simon.



CHAPTER 18

A few days before **Christmas**, Blue writes that he came home from school to find both his parents at Blue's mom's house, which is an extremely unusual situation. Blue was terrified his mom told Blue's dad he's gay, but when it became clear that she didn't, Blue decided to tell his dad himself—but then he couldn't because his dad said that Blue's stepmom is pregnant. Blue signs off his email using "love." Simon tries to make jokes, offers congratulations if Blue wants it, and suggests that Blue's dad admitting his wife is pregnant is the adult equivalent of coming out. Simon suggests that everyone should have to come out and it should be painfully awkward for everyone.

Blue very much appreciates Simon's humor and admits he's not too upset about having a stepsibling. He agrees that it's annoying that straight and white are the default, and seconds Simon's suggestion that everyone should have to come out. Simon replies that he hopes the baby is a boy, citing his own experiences with sisters as his reasoning. He explains he had a weird day but declines to give more info, and the conversation devolves into sexual innuendos. However, in Simon's last email, he suggests that they should meet in person.

Simon's suggestion that everyone needs to come out expresses a desire to eliminate some of the assumptions that people make about each other. Then, by recognizing that it was surely very difficult for Blue's dad to share that his new wife is pregnant, it suggests that both Simon and Blue are learning to empathize with others and recognize when other people have to do difficult things. This announcement also shows how even Blue's family is changing rapidly.



Though Blue's comment about the default being straight and white is definitely true, it's also worth questioning whether Blue is simply a very perceptive kid (especially since Simon hasn't made such a leap) or if he knows that this is the case from experience and isn't actually white. When both Simon and Blue try to be happy about Blue's future stepsibling, it shows them trying their best to embrace familial change.



CHAPTER 19

On **Christmas Eve**, Simon feels as though things are off despite the fact that his family has observed all of their typical traditions. The family sits in their pajamas in the living room, participating in a Facebook scavenger hunt. They have to find friends on Facebook who are on vacation somewhere tropical, posting about breakups, or posting about being Jewish on Christmas. When Simon reads a classmate's status out loud about having a perfect night, complete with a winking emoji, he thinks it's gross but he also cannot stop thinking about Blue signing his emails with "love." Alice receives a phone call, leaves to take it, and is gone for two hours. The scavenger hunt fizzles.

Simon gets a text from Leah that she's outside. He goes to let her and Nick in and finds them standing awkwardly on the step. They suggest they take a walk, and Simon detects something strange in her tone. Simon changes and grabs his dog Bieber. Before they're even out of the driveway, Leah asks Simon if he's okay in a strangely gentle voice. Simon knows something is going on, but neither Nick nor Leah will tell him what. Finally, Leah decides she's leaving and walks away. Nick stands with Simon for a minute, but still refuses to tell him what's going on. Simon thinks he's never seen him look like this. Nick touches Simon's arm, which he never does, and wishes him a good **Christmas** before heading back to his house.

Despite the fact that Simon can't pinpoint what's different about Christmas Eve this year, it's worth noting that this is the first year that Alice lives away from home and is only coming home for holidays. This represents a major change, and Alice's phone call also indicates that she has a life away from home that is clearly influencing how she interacts with her family.



As obvious as it is to everyone involved that there's something up, Nick, Simon, and Leah's habit of not talking about important or personal things prevents them from actually addressing whatever's going on here. Despite all the places where this interaction falls short, it's also important to note that Nick and Leah are trying their best to show Simon that they care about him. Nick's unprecedented show of physical affection suggests that their relationships are going to start to change.



Simon's family has French toast for **Christmas Eve** dinner on nice china, per tradition. Simon still feels as though things aren't the same, and thinks he's felt this way all week. He wonders if it's because Alice is at college or if it's because he's spent his week pining over Blue, who isn't ready to meet in person. After dinner, Simon joins Nora and his parents in the living room to watch a movie. He squints at the lights to try to make them look like he remembers, but decides to go upstairs to listen to music.

Soon after, Nora knocks on the door and lets herself in. She reaches for Simon's computer and says she needs to show him something. Simon snatches his computer from her, but does as she says and navigates to the creeksecrets Tumblr page as she settles in beside him on the bed. Simon stops dead when he finds a post, seemingly written by him, announcing his sexuality and his sexual availability to any interested guys. The post makes sly references to Blue. Nora explains she already reported it, and Simon knows that Martin did it. He hopes Blue hasn't seen it.

After a few minutes, Simon says it's true that he's gay. Nora said she could tell from Simon's reaction to the post. Simon insists he can't do anything but wait for the administrators to take the post down. He says he thinks that Nick and Leah already know, and he insists he doesn't want to deny the fact that he's gay. He becomes suddenly angry at Nora when she tries to tell him that people would be okay if he came out. She hands him his phone, which shows notifications of multiple texts from Abby assuring him she didn't tell anyone.

On **Christmas** morning, Simon wakes up relatively early. He sits with Bieber on the couch until everyone else gets up, thinking about Blue. Everyone else is up by nine, and Mom makes a big fuss when Simon pours himself coffee. Simon thinks his parents are so against any changes he makes, and reasons it'll be a big morning for them if they're even interested in his new coffee drinking habits.

Everyone opens their presents in a frenzy of paper and bows. When all the gifts are opened, Simon tries to casually tell his family he has something to talk about. Dad starts joking and suggests that Simon is either gay, pregnant, or got someone else pregnant. Simon plays along for a moment before saying that he is indeed gay. Mom and Alice are happy and proud, but Dad asks which girlfriend turned Simon off of women. Alice calls Dad out, and Simon thinks that these reactions are exactly what he expected.

Though Simon's suggestions as to why Christmas feels weird are certainly contributing factors, it's also true that this is the first Christmas for the Spiers where their children aren't actually kids anymore, a shift that naturally comes with changes. Simon also isn't helping to make things feel the same, given his decision to not participate in the movie tradition.



Nora's decision to bring this to Simon's attention reinforces that the relationships between the Spier children are changing, especially since this entire interaction seems unprecedented. It also tells Simon that Nora absolutely cares about him on a deep level, which illustrates that she's going through a similar process of coming of age and recognizing others, even if Simon isn't as aware of it.



Though Simon has somewhat of a choice here to come out to Nora, it's also largely forced on him because of the Tumblr post. His (justified) emotional reaction to this illustrates the negative consequences of having admissions like this forced upon someone, rather than that person actually being able to control when this information gets out.



Though Simon is understandably in a bad mood, he's also hyperaware of the way his parents fixate on his changes. This suggests that Simon is struggling with the changes himself as well as the surveillance of those changes, emphasizing that making these changes isn't easy to do.



Even if Dad means his reaction comment as a joke, it does imply that being gay isn't normal and instead, is something deviant. Even if Simon expected reactions like this, it doesn't make this any easier to hear and shows that just as Simon is growing and changing, Dad will also need to think more carefully about his words if he wants to keep from alienating his son.



Later, Alice follows Simon into his room. She refuses to let him put on his depressing playlist aptly titled "The Great Depression" and insists that they can talk about boys. Simon asks Alice to tell him about her boyfriend and Alice grudgingly says his name is Theo. Simon immediately pulls up Facebook to find him, and Alice tells Simon to stop—this is why she didn't want to tell anyone in the first place. Simon gets it, and Alice promises to tell Mom and Dad about Theo.

When Alice asks Simon to not search for her boyfriend online, it makes it clear that Simon isn't the only Spier child who has a hard time with Mom and Dad's interest in their children's lives—and it shows too that Mom and Dad's interest drives their children to keep secrets in attempts to not be made to feel uncomfortable about perfectly normal changes.



CHAPTER 20

Simon emails Blue and says he had a weird and awful **Christmas** in which he came out to his family and will soon be out to everyone else. He asks Blue to distract him from his woes and suggests that they could exchange phone numbers. In Blue's reply he tells Simon he's cute, mentions that he daydreams about Simon, and expresses concern about texting. He refuses to elaborate on his daydreams.

Exchanging phone numbers would represent the next level of connection and trust, though it would also give both Simon and Blue a little more control over the other's life. Blue's unwillingness to exchange numbers suggests he's very attuned to the ways that he could easily lose control over his story.



CHAPTER 21

The Saturday after **Christmas**, Simon, Alice, and Nora go to Waffle House for breakfast. Alice smiles at a guy across the room that Simon thinks looks vaguely familiar. Alice says the guy is Carter Addison and starts to suggest that Simon talk to him, but Simon cuts her off and leaves the restaurant. Nora joins him in the car after a few minutes, and Simon tells her that Martin, Carter Addison's brother, is the one who posted on creeksecrets. He briefly explains that Martin likes Abby and thinks that Abby has a crush on Simon. Alice comes out of the restaurant and angrily demands that Simon let her drive home. She wants to know why he left the restaurant. Nora tells Alice to let it go, which is something she never does.

When Simon mentions that this is the first time that Nora has ever stood up to Alice, it shows how the family dynamics are beginning to change. This change continues when Simon chooses to confide in Nora, something that also seems like a new turn in their relationship. Though Alice means well by suggesting that Simon talk to Martin's brother, Simon interprets it as an assumption that they should get on just fine only because they're both gay in small-town Georgia.



On **New Year's Eve**, Simon and Mom argue about Simon needing to clean the basement before having a party. She also says that they'll need to talk about how to handle Nick sleeping over in the future, which makes Simon angry. Regardless, the party proceeds as Nick, Leah, Abby, and Simon's parties usually do. Nick pulls out a guitar and in a lull, Leah mentions that "they" took the post down. She insists they don't have to talk about it but asks if Simon knows who wrote it. He admits he does, but won't say who.

Despite the fact that Simon describes the party as mostly normal, it's clear that things are different this year—remember that Abby is a new arrival in the friend group, and Leah's mention of the creeksecrets posts suggests that they're going to have to make room for Simon's changing identity.



Finally, Simon says that he is gay, but he doesn't want it to be a big deal. Nick simply says "okay," which Abby finds an inadequate response. She suggests that Nick say something supportive or hold Simon's hand like she did. Leah is upset to learn that Simon already came out to Abby, and Simon rushes to get everyone ice cream. After midnight, when Nick and Abby are already asleep, Simon asks Leah if she's mad that he told Abby first. Leah insists she has no right to be mad, but Simon can tell she's upset. He refuses to tell her how his sexuality ended up the subject of a Tumblr post and pretends to fall asleep.

Nick's response appears to be exactly what Simon wants, which does give some credence to Simon's earlier assertions that he and Nick know each other well enough they don't have to talk about much. Though Simon is certainly not required to share everything with Leah, it's worth noting that his unwillingness to include her in what he knows is definitely making her feel like she's less important to him.



CHAPTER 22

Blue emails Simon and writes that his **New Year's** was pretty slow. His stepmom and the wife of Mr. Sexual Awakening compared ultrasound photos, though Blue was grossed out by the 3D ultrasound picture of Mr. Sexual Awakening's fetus. In his reply, Simon apologizes for the fact that Blue is now scarred for life because of the 3D ultrasound. Simon says that he just got home from Target, where the Super Sharpies reminded him of Blue's love of **superheroes**. He also comments on Blue's unwillingness to exchange phone numbers.

The ultrasound pictures are symbolic of changes to come, and Blue's apparent willingness to engage with his family and friends as they look at the pictures suggests that he's reasonably willing to embrace this change. This could mean that unlike Simon's family, Blue's family may be slightly more adept at handling family members' changes.



Blue laughs at the **superhero** Sharpies and then says he's not ready to exchange numbers. He's afraid that Simon would call, get his voicemail message, and recognize his voice. Blue insists he's just scared to lose Simon. Simon replies that he won't call Blue if Blue doesn't want him to, but he just wants to text like normal people. He says he's ready for them to know each other in person, and asks Blue to think about it.

Being ready to know Blue in person suggests that Simon is becoming comfortable enough in his identity to make it known that he's not just gay, but is actually attracted to someone in real life. This would, notably, allow Simon to take control again of his own story and disseminate it how he chooses to.



CHAPTER 23

Simon considers just sitting in the car all day on his first day back at school after the break. Nora is finally able to talk Simon into going in. He starts to relax when he doesn't find homophobic notes in his locker, though he feels a sense of dread at the thought of seeing Martin. As Simon is walking up the stairs, a football player grabs Simon's cheeks and makes kissing noises. Everyone around laughs. Simon knows none of the people laughing. In English class, Martin refuses to look Simon's direction.

The football player's bullying reveals that Martin was very wrong about being gay not being a big deal at their school—clearly, there are others who think it's absolutely a big deal and something to make fun of. This shows how even though Martin did have control over when and how Simon came out, Martin has no control over what others do with that information.



Abby and Leah shoot dirty looks at anyone who looks at Simon funny throughout the day. At lunch, the girls discuss who Simon should date, though things devolve quickly when someone jokes that Nick is gay, and Abby suggests they find Leah a boyfriend. Leah icily says she's not interested and leaves the table, which makes Bram and Garrett exchange a look. Simon tells Bram to ask Leah out if he likes her and thinks he's tired of straight people who won't deal with things.

Things seem okay at rehearsal until Martin suddenly stops singing. Simon follows Martin's gaze to the back of the auditorium, where two boys, one dressed like Simon in a skirt, are both holding signs making fun of Simon and gay sex. Simon feels as though he's watching from far away as Taylor and Abby race towards the boys, with Ms. Albright close behind them. Simon notices that Martin is covering his face. After a few minutes, Abby, Ms. Albright, and Taylor return. Taylor looks like she's been crying, and Abby tells Simon that Taylor was just about to punch the bullies. Simon is concerned that Taylor will get in trouble. Ms. Albright tells the cast that she's taking this incident seriously, and tells Simon that she'll get "those assholes" suspended.

Abby is stuck at school until the late bus arrives, and Simon feels somehow responsible. They decide to go watch soccer tryouts so they can pester Nick. Abby hangs over the fence and Simon enjoys the view. Nick, Garrett, and Bram all run over during a break to say hi. As Abby and Nick flirt, Simon turns his attention to Garrett and Bram. He notices that Garrett has bright blue eyes and wishes he knew both of them better. He thinks that Bram is cute, even if he's a mess about liking Leah. Bram and Simon smile at each other and blush, and Simon feels a little like he's betraying Blue.

Simon feels surprisingly good until he gets to his car. Martin is leaning against it and wants to apologize. He insists he didn't know that people still bullied people about being gay, and admits he didn't think Simon's sexuality would be such a big deal. Simon says nothing, though he sarcastically notes that Shady Creek isn't exactly progressive. Martin responds that he was upset about Abby, his brother got upset when he found out, and Martin deleted the screenshots long ago. Finally, Simon points out that Martin blackmailed him, and insists that Martin has no right to say this isn't a big deal. Simon says *he* was supposed to be in control of when he came out, and it's awful that he brought up Blue too. Martin starts to cry but agrees to leave, and Simon cries as soon as he gets in his car.

The conversation at lunch suggests that the girls (who aren't named) see Simon's sexuality as something of a novelty, while their desire to find him a boyfriend assumes that he even wants to date. Essentially, everyone at the table is making assumptions (Simon doesn't give any reason why he calls Bram out instead of Garrett), which suggests that doing so is something that all people do.



Again, Martin has entirely lost control of what happens to Simon after his sexuality becomes common knowledge. Martin seems remorseful, which indicates that he made assumptions about how people would react, all of which are clearly being proven wrong. When Taylor chases down the bullies, it shows Simon that she's not as one-dimensional as he once thought; she truly does care for other people—even those she's not all that close to, like Simon.



Simon's desire to know more about Bram and Garrett suggests that as Simon comes of age, he's becoming more and more tuned into the people around him and more interested in them as people. This suggests too that Simon's initial assumptions about Garrett (that he was kind of a jerk) may also have been incorrect.



By calling Martin out on all of his misguided assumptions, Simon will hopefully help Martin recognize that there are major consequences to assuming the rights to someone else's story or private information. Martin's insistence that he was unaware of what the consequences would be suggests that Martin has never had to think about the consequences of being something other than the default; his position as a straight, white male in small-town Georgia means that his safety is far more reliable than it is for Simon or for Blue.



CHAPTER 24

Simon emails Blue, excited that it's snowing but upset about his day. He asks Blue if he ever gets so angry he cries, or feels guilty for being angry. Blue suggests that Simon eat Oreos to make himself feel better, and admits that he thinks he knows who Simon is and why he's angry. Simon replies that he thinks he knows who Blue is too, and sends a list of things he thinks are true about Blue, including that he has blue eyes, shares a name with a president, and once pushed him in a rolling chair. He also mentions the creeksecrets post. When Blue writes back, he says that most of Simon's guesses were wrong; he's not who Simon thought he was, and he hasn't been on creeksecrets since August. To ask Simon who he is, he writes "Jacques a dit" (meaning "Simon says" in French).

Simon's guesses as to Blue's identity (that Blue is Cal) show that Simon isn't exempt from making assumptions about other people, as at the very least, he's assumed that the only other person at school he suspects of being gay is Cal. Blue's suggestion that he knows why Simon is angry indicates that Blue is actually part of Simon's extended social circle and probably heard about or witnessed some of the bullying that happened.



CHAPTER 25

Simon isn't surprised that Blue figured out his identity, but he feels horrible for thinking that Cal was Blue. All through the morning, Simon moves like he's in a daze. He keeps thinking of Blue and by the end of the day, when no classmate professing to be Blue has come forward, Simon feels heartbroken.

When Simon feels horrible about his assumptions, he gets to experience a small taste of the guilt that Martin is experiencing in relation to his own assumptions.



On Thursday, Cal casually mentions he's bisexual and suggests that he and Simon hang out. Simon can barely respond. He forgets all about it until the next day in English, when he walks into the classroom to find Nick on Abby's lap. Nick wants to know all about Cal, and Simon doesn't know how to explain to them that he's kind of already taken. Blue, however, hasn't been returning emails, and Simon thinks Blue seemed to like him better before he discovered who Simon is.

Here, Simon's unwillingness to let any of his friends in on his relationship with Blue means that Simon feels even more alone than ever. However, it's also important to notice that Simon believes Blue isn't returning emails because he now knows who Simon is. This is a pretty self-centered belief, as it ignores that Blue may just be upset that Simon didn't figure out who he was.



CHAPTER 26

Simon emails Blue and promises he won't push Blue to reveal himself before he's ready, but he thinks it's weird that Blue knows Simon's "superhero identity," and Simon doesn't know his. Blue's response is short and says he's happy that things are working out for Simon the way that Simon wanted them to, which confuses Simon. He emails that he has no idea what Blue is talking about. Simon writes that he hates that things are different now; even if Blue isn't attracted to him anymore now that he knows who Simon is, they still feel like best friends. Simon asks if they can pretend this never happened and go back to normal.

Since Simon wrongly thought Blue was Cal—and because Cal is now showing interest in him—Blue probably feels that Simon wanted Cal all along. This shows both Simon and Blue making assumptions about the other, and the consequences here are that the assumptions are fundamentally altering the terms of their friendship.



CHAPTER 27

On Sunday, Simon spends his day on his bed listening to music. He's annoyed that Nora is mysteriously out of the house. He runs through what he knows about Blue, but realizes that he doesn't know much about anyone in his class. He doesn't know about anyone's parents, and Simon thinks that's kind of terrible. Simon feels like even if he does figure out who Blue is, Blue clearly isn't interested anymore, and it's the worst feeling.

On Monday, Simon finds a grocery sack looped through his locker. He initially thinks it's a homophobic prank, but it turns out to be an Elliott Smith tee shirt from Blue. Simon considers changing into it, but he feels self-conscious and decides not to. Simon feels happy all day until rehearsal, when he and Cal pass each other on their ways in and out of the auditorium. They smile at each other and suddenly, Simon feels angry that Blue is brave enough to leave a tee shirt, but not brave enough to approach Simon in person. Simon thinks dating at all is pointless.

Simon is exhausted all week, as it's two weeks until *Oliver* opens. Dad is sad that he has to record *The Bachelor* to accommodate Simon's rehearsal schedule. On Friday, the cast is set to perform the play for the school twice; once for freshman and seniors and again for sophomores and juniors. Nora comes to school early with Simon and tapes up cast lists photos in the atrium. Simon gets dressed and then finds Abby to do his makeup. As Abby puts on Simon's eyeliner, he asks why her dad lives in Washington, D.C. She explains that he's still looking for a job in Georgia, and her brother is a freshman at Howard. When Simon says he feels stupid for not knowing, she insists she never said anything.

Abby finishes Simon's makeup with a flurry of powder and tells him he looks extremely attractive. Simon agrees; he can barely stop looking at himself in the mirror. The first performance goes perfectly, and Simon is excited to wear his makeup to lunch. Leah loves it, and Simon notices Bram staring. After lunch, he heads back to the auditorium. Simon is excited at the thought that Blue is out there, even though he's still mad at him.

Simon's desire to figure out who Blue is leads him to understand that though he considers himself nosy, he's not genuinely curious about his classmates in a way that helps him get to know them better. This is a major turning point in Simon's coming of age process, as now he'll be able to practice being curious about his peers' lives.



When Simon is dismissive of Blue's bravery, it suggests that Simon is feeling somewhat vulnerable as the only one of the two of them who is out at school. As Simon sees it, Blue's unwillingness to come out to everyone else is a way for him to tell Simon that he's not interested enough in a relationship with Simon to conduct it in public.



*When Dad is sad about having to tape *The Bachelor*, it reminds the reader that Simon's parents lean heavily on their routines and don't adjust to new routines easily, even when it's something as inconsequential as recording a TV show instead of watching it live. Simon's decision to ask Abby about her family shows him being genuinely curious and invested in his friends' lives in a way that will help him form deeper and more meaningful relationships with them.*



Simon's interest in his new look shows him that some changes don't have to be bad or uncomfortable; they can, in some cases, make him feel more attractive and confident. This begins to show how theater as a whole allows Simon a relatively safe space to experiment with his identity.



As Abby and Simon peek at the audience and point out Nick and Leah, they notice Cal frowning about whatever he's being told through his headset. After a minute, Ms. Albright fetches Simon and calls him to a dressing room. Martin is already there. Ms. Albright explains that someone altered the cast list in the atrium to "something inappropriate." Ms. Albright explains she's going to chat with the audience before the show and asks Simon if he wants to cancel the show. Simon doesn't. Martin apologizes, but Simon brushes him off.

Simon feels as though he's tired of caring about what people call him. He watches Ms. Albright go onstage with the student handbook to review the school bullying policy. The audience isn't at all interested, and Simon thinks it must be awful to be a teacher. When Ms. Albright is done, she comes backstage with a scary look in her eyes. Simon isn't sure he really wants to perform, but he does anyway.

CHAPTER 28

While washing his makeup off that afternoon, it suddenly hits Simon that Blue could be Martin—he shares a name with former president Martin Van Buren. Simon thinks through what he knows about Martin, but keeps coming back to his belief that Martin is clearly not gay. Abby appears, interrupts Simon, and tells him to leave some of the eyeliner on. She says that she and Nick are taking him out, and they're going to spend the night at her house. As Abby insists they need to go into Atlanta, Simon continues to mull over the Martin problem. He wonders if Blue was just a joke, but decides he can't think about it.

Abby and Simon meet Nick in the parking lot. Abby asks if they've talked to Leah, and Nick carefully suggests they not invite Leah. Simon knows she'd be weird, self-conscious, and snappy, so he agrees. They stop at a couple of shops, including a feminist bookstore with a good LGBT section. Abby buys Simon a book and then they head back to Midtown to a restaurant called Webster's. Simon notices rainbow banners and asks if it's a gay bar. It is, but it also has a restaurant where underage guests can eat.

Ms. Albright's commitment to making sure that bullies face consequences for their actions provides Simon an example of someone who recognizes him as a person worthy of care and deserving of safety. This also reinforces that while Simon is at school, his parents can't necessarily protect him. Therefore, Simon is forced to rely on teachers to fill those gaps and stand up for him.



When Simon thinks that being a teacher must be terrible, it indicates that he's continuing to expand his curiosity and empathy to even teachers. This is a big step for him, given that he's barely spoken about teachers through much of his narration. This suggests he's starting to view them as full people too.



When Simon finds himself considering the possibility that Martin is Blue, it shows that Simon is now fully aware of how little he knows about his classmates. His firm belief that Martin is straight complicates some of this, but the fact that Simon is even considering this shows that he's even more aware of the assumptions he's made about people and understands that they've likely compromised his interpretation of his world.



Gay bars are places where gay people like Simon are the default and their sexuality is normalized—in this situation, Abby and Nick are the ones on the outside. This experience will then remind Simon that there are places in the world that are more accepting of his identity than his small southern town and high school.



There's a short wait, during which Simon, Abby, and Nick giggle over the menu items, all of which are innuendos. Simon tries to not make eye contact with the other guys there and finally excuses himself to the bathroom. On his way back, a college guy taps Simon on the shoulder and calls him Alex. Realizing his mistake, he introduces himself as Peter and buys Simon a green apple martini. Peter is complimentary and wants to know if Simon is a student. Peter buys Simon a shot of something orange and sweet, teaches him how to take a shot, and Simon begins telling Peter all about Abby and Nick.

All of Peter's friends are nice and cute guys, and someone passes Simon a beer. He drinks it even though things are already spinning. Simon finds himself telling the group about the Martin fiasco, but Peter leans forward and asks Simon if he's in high school. Simon admits he's only seventeen. Peter steers Simon into the restaurant to Abby and Nick, deposits him in the booth, and hugs him goodbye. Simon digs into his cold hamburger, says he loves it here, and struggles to count how many drinks he had.

Nick and Abby walk Simon to the car as Simon talks about how cute Peter was. He says hi to everyone on the street and doesn't protest when Nick puts him into the front seat in case he needs to vomit. Simon suddenly asks where they're going. When Abby says they're going to her house, Simon insists they need to go home so he can get his Elliott Smith tee shirt. He says he never went to any of Smith's shows because Smith committed suicide when they were five. Abby and Nick exchange a look and then Abby turns around.

Simon tells Abby he loves her and invites her to be his sister, insisting he needs new ones—Alice and Nora are changing too much. He doesn't think it matters when Abby points out that he's changing too.

When they get to Simon's house, Simon lurches inside. He finds Mom and Dad watching TV. They ask him why he's home, and Simon's explanation clearly shows that he's drunk. He starts laughing uncontrollably. Dad makes Simon sit down, makes sure Abby didn't drink and drive, and then Mom goes outside to send Abby home. Dad insists that they have to cancel Simon's night out since Simon is drunk, to which Simon points out that at least he's not lying about anything. Dad looks suddenly very angry. Simon asks if he's upset that he can't make fun of gay people anymore and drunkenly giggles. Dad just stares.

Though Peter is certainly making wild assumptions about Simon (particularly about his age), Simon goes along with it in part because hanging out with Peter is something like wearing a mask: Simon gets to try out being gay with other gay guys who seem far more comfortable being out, which he doesn't see at home in Shady Creek.



Peter stands as an example of a better way to deal with misguided assumptions: after realizing that Simon is underage, Peter makes sure Simon gets safely back to Nick and Abby. Simon's apparent happiness with the situation suggests he enjoyed getting to be his true self in public for the first time.



Abby and Nick's decision to turn around shows them very kindly recognizing a new-to-them part of Simon's identity. This suggests that Simon's friends may be more willing to accommodate changes than Simon was initially willing to give him credit for, especially given how much they're humoring him.



Simon's comment about Alice and Nora reveals just how insecure he feels in his changing family right now.



When Simon calls Dad out on his affinity for making jokes about gay people, it highlights just how insecure and unsupported Simon feels in his family. Coming out means that all family members are now well aware that Simon is hurt by things he's heard his family members say without thinking. This underscores the importance of understanding that words have the power to hurt people, even if that wasn't the intention.



Mom comes back inside and sends Simon to get water. Mom and Dad talk for a moment alone and then come into the kitchen. Simon admits that this is the first time he's done this, so Dad says they'll ground him for two weeks. They'll let him perform in *Oliver*, but they take his phone and laptop.

While Martin taking control of Simon's story was dangerous, Mom and Dad take away Simon's agency as a way to protect him. This suggests that while the novel overwhelmingly insists that it's bad to take away someone's agency, doing so has its place.



CHAPTER 29

When Simon goes back to school on Tuesday, Abby is waiting for him, worried. Simon explains his parents took his phone and grounded him. Nick walks up as Abby apologizes, thinking it's her fault, but Simon insists it was all his fault. Suddenly, he notices that Nick and Abby are holding hands, and suggests they didn't miss him too much on Friday. Later, Abby tells Simon that she and Nick waited a while to see if Simon's parents were going to let him back out, but everything ended up being fine for them.

Now that Nick and Abby have decided to admit their feelings for each other, it suggests that they were willing to have the conversations that the rest of the friend group has been unwilling to have. The fact that they both seem happy with the outcome shows that there's a lot to gain from having these tough conversations and being honest.



Bram and another kid had birthdays over the weekend, so there are two sheet cakes at lunch. Simon is confused, however, because Leah isn't there and wasn't in classes either. Another girl tells Simon that Leah is at school, but Simon is worried anyway. He notices her car in the parking lot over the next few days, but can't figure out where she is. On Thursday, Simon finally catches Leah coming out of the bathroom. She asks if he, Abby, and Nick had fun on Friday. Simon apologizes, but Leah isn't willing to accept it. Simon walks away and Leah calls after him that next time they hang out without her, they should text her pictures so she can pretend they're still friends. In tears, she turns back into the bathroom.

When there are sheet cakes but no Leah, it suggests that she may not be the one responsible for the sheet cakes all the time. This would mean that Simon has been making even more assumptions about the people around him in an effort to make things seem the way he wants them to be. Leah rightfully sees her exclusion as something hurtful and mean, which will mean that if Simon wants to fix their relationship, he'll need to figure out a little more who Leah is and how to be a good friend to her.



CHAPTER 30

Simon feels antsy and upset when he gets home. He thinks that Leah is often mad, but this feels worse than normal, and he's never seen her cry before. After dinner, Simon listens to music in his bedroom. Around nine, Mom and Dad knock and ask if they can talk. They establish that Simon shouldn't get drunk, and then Dad apologizes and says that Simon was right to call him out about making gay jokes. Dad says he loves Simon, no matter what. He says that Simon can always rein in him and Mom, and admits he knows he didn't make it easy for Simon to come out.

Simon's inclusion of the fact that Leah is often mad suggests that Leah may feel extremely insecure in her friendships, more so than Simon realizes. Again, this means that Simon and Nick may have to reevaluate how they interact with her to give her more of what she needs. Dad's apology shows that not all the Spier family's changes are bad—not making jokes about gay people is an inarguably positive change for the whole family.



Simon says he only hesitated to come out because he knew Mom and Dad would make it a big deal. Simon insists that they make a big deal out of everything, from him drinking coffee to shaving. Mom laughs and tries to explain that when Simon was little, she got to watch every tiny change he went through, but now she misses things. She agrees that he should be changing. She asks that Simon keep them updated about his changes, and promises they'll try to not be weird about it. As he stands to leave, Dad tosses Simon his phone and says he can have his laptop back if he remembers his lines for the play. He doesn't care that Simon doesn't have any lines.

Simon is nervous on opening night. He changes early and waits for Abby to arrive so she can do his eyeliner. She's in a strange mood when she arrives and answers Simon's questions with one-word answers. As she begins to draw on the eyeliner, Simon asks if everything is okay. After a minute, Abby asks what happened with Martin. Martin already told her what happened. Simon says he didn't tell anyone about the blackmail and didn't feel as though he had a choice but to go along, even though he knew Abby wasn't attracted to Martin. Abby insists she gets it, but when she finishes his makeup, she tells Simon that he doesn't get to make decisions about who she dates. Deflated, Simon apologizes.

The play goes well, but Abby disappears immediately afterwards. Simon feels miserable. Dad gives Simon a ridiculous bouquet and asks on the way home if he's friends with Martin. Simon feels blindsided by Abby's anger. He gets that nobody can be forced or manipulated to like someone, and he of all people should know that. He feels like a terrible friend, but also reasons that whatever Martin shared with Abby, he didn't mention Blue. Simon reasons that this could mean that Martin isn't Blue.

Simon gets his computer and logs into his secret email. He suddenly realizes that every email from Blue is time-stamped, and most were sent while Simon, Martin, and Cal were in rehearsal in the auditorium, where the internet is blocked—so Blue can't be Martin or Cal. Simon reads all the emails and feels as though he's falling in love with Blue all over again.

This conversation between Simon and his parents shows both parties sitting down to truly understand each other and relate as equals, especially in the way that Mom agrees to Simon's terms. This suggests that there is definitely room for Simon's family to evolve to accommodate his changes and those of his sisters as well. Taken together, this conversation suggests that familial harmony is contingent on truly listening and getting to know family members on a deeper level.



Simon finally realizes that in some sense, he did exactly what Martin did to him by trying to manipulate Abby out of his own self-interest. By attempting to facilitate a romance between Martin and Abby, regardless of Abby's feelings on the matter, Simon tried to take away Abby's agency to preserve his own flimsy sense of control. The fact that Simon was ineffective in doing so only reinforces the novel's assertion that taking away someone's agency like this is can only end poorly, and doesn't help friendships in the least.



Again, though Simon certainly isn't required keep his parents in the loop about what's happened with Martin, by not telling them about the situation, Simon is forced to listen to his dad express interest in Simon being friends with his blackmailer. This makes the case yet again for more openness between people who have close relationships.



Having Blue's anonymity reinforced allows Simon to divorce all the ills of Martin and Cal from what he knows of Blue, essentially letting him start fresh. This gives Simon the opportunity to stop making assumptions about who Blue is and instead, let Blue tell him who he is on his own time.



CHAPTER 31

On Sunday morning, Simon writes a lengthy email to Blue. He says he knows who Blue is on the inside, even if he doesn't know who exactly Blue is in real life. Simon says that he wants to take chances and put his heart on the line now. He confesses that he really likes Blue and truly wants to get to know him. Simon writes that there's a carnival tonight; he'll be there at 6:30 P.M., and he hopes Blue will come.

When Simon gives Blue the decision to show up or continue to remain anonymous, it suggests that actively choosing to cede control of a person or a situation can have positive outcomes. Insisting he knows Blue on the inside shows that Simon is abandoning some of his assumptions about who Blue is.



CHAPTER 32

Simon tries not to think about his email to Blue as he heads to school for the Sunday matinee performance. He barely remembers the performance after it's over. Afterwards, the seniors get roses, and Ms. Albright gets a huge bouquet. Simon thinks about how she promised to get the bullies suspended, and wishes he'd gotten her something. Then, the cast changes into their street clothes to take down the set. Simon finally leaves at six. He tries to not feel too excited, since Blue might not come to the carnival, but he can't help it.

When Simon wishes he'd done something for Ms. Albright, it shows that he's learned that teachers are people too, and he understands that they can be appreciated just like his peers. This suggests that while Simon wasn't able to follow through in this instance, it's hopeful that he'll think about it next time as he continues to develop his sense of curiosity about others.



Before heading to the carnival, Simon drives home to get the Elliott Smith shirt that Blue gave him. After the shirt is on, Simon feels something pokey on his back. He discovers a piece of paper taped inside with a postscript. It says that Blue loves Simon's smile, hair, and gray eyes. Underneath is Blue's phone number. Simon feels warm and decides not to call and instead, hopes he'll find Blue at the carnival.

Again, Simon's warm and fuzzy feelings here show that there are clearly gains to be had from choosing to give up control, as it makes the carnival and the hopeful meeting between Simon and Blue all the more exciting.



Simon gets to the carnival by seven. He's worried that Blue has already come and gone, but busies himself buying tickets and riding all the rides. He notices Abby and Nick sitting on a curb, surrounded by stuffed animals that Abby won for Nick. Abby invites Simon to sit with them and apologizes. Simon apologizes too, but Abby insists he gets a pass since he was blackmailed. Abby asks if Simon's shirt has to do with the guy he's clearly looking for. She tells him it's okay to be romantic and says she hopes he finds whoever he's looking for.

When Abby can very clearly tell that Simon is looking for someone, it shows that Abby is the person who brought positive change and a deeper understanding to the group. She's the one most responsible for teaching the others, mostly Simon, of the importance of being curious about others and tuned into what they're feeling.



By eight thirty in the evening, Simon still hasn't found Blue. He feels like an idiot for having had Blue's phone number under his pillow for two weeks, and reasons that Blue could've changed his mind since then. Simon has a few more tickets, so he rides the Tilt-A-Whirl. He figures he won't find Blue there. Simon belts himself in, and then Bram asks if he can join Simon. He comments on Simon's shirt and is aware that it shows Elliott Smith. Simon and Bram stare at each other for a minute, and as the ride starts spinning, Bram apologizes for being late.

Considering the fact that Blue—who is finally revealed as Bram—left his phone number for Simon after their final email argument about meeting in person, his phone number becomes an even bigger indicator of his desire to get to know Simon and step outside his comfort zone. By riding the Tilt-A-Whirl, which he hates, Bram shows Simon again that he cares for him and is willing to do hard things to be with him.



Simon does his best to keep the ride from spinning too much as Bram holds his hands over his nose and mouth. They step out and to the curb when the ride stops. After a minute, Simon says he had no idea that Bram was Blue. Bram says he thought it was obvious, and he didn't tell Simon outright because he knows that if Simon had wanted Bram to be Blue, he would've figured it out. Simon desperately wants to touch Bram and isn't sure how to respond. Bram explains that his email address, bluegreen118, is his birthday (January 18) and a play on his name, Bram Louis Greenfield. Simon wants to "smack" himself for assuming that Bram would be white.

Simon apologizes for not figuring it out, and Bram insists that all of Simon's dropped hints didn't do as much as the fact that Simon writes the way he talks. Simon scoots closer and asks how Bram is a president. Bram says his full name is Abraham. Simon whispers that he wants to hold Bram's hand, and Bram tells him to do so.

CHAPTER 33

On Monday, Simon spots Bram in English class and thinks he looks adorable sitting next to Garrett. Garrett compliments Simon's performance and explains that Bram made him go to the play three times. Simon has no idea what to say, so he asks if Bram did the reading. Mr. Wise calls the class to order and Simon tries to pay attention, but he can't concentrate. He looks onto Bram's book and their knees touch as they read. After class, Abby comments that she didn't know Simon and Bram were good friends.

Bram shows up at Simon's locker right before lunch and suggests they go off campus. Only seniors are allowed to do so, but they decide to risk it. In Bram's car, he gives Simon free rein of the music. Bram pulls into a spot at the local grocery store and tells Simon to go find a pint of milk. Simon ignores texts from Abby and does as he's told. When he and Bram reconvene, Bram has gotten mini Oreo cups and spoons.

They eat in the car. Simon says, "Abraham," and then leans in to kiss Bram. After they kiss, they turn back to their Oreos. Simon asks if Bram is ready to be out to people at school, and Bram says he's all in if Simon wants to be his boyfriend. Simon grins. That night, both Bram and Simon change their Facebook statuses. Simon declines to call Alice and tell her about it and instead, calls Bram. They joke about posting kissing selfies on Facebook.

Bram's insight points to the way that assuming something—like Simon assuming Blue was Cal—requires that the person assuming wants, on some level, for their assumption to be true. Simon's embarrassment over assuming Bram would be white shows that he wrongly gave into the narrowminded idea that white is the "default."



Getting to the point of holding hands like this impresses upon Simon that in order to form these closer relationships with people, he needs to actually ask for what he wants and be willing to engage with people on their terms, both of which he does here.



Though it's somewhat unclear if Bram is out to Garrett, it's definitely clear that Garrett and Bram have a very close friendship, and that Garrett is willing to support Bram, even for something as seemingly trivial as seeing the school play three times. This reinforces the importance of treating others' requests with kindness and as though they're important.



Bram's shopping list is a way for him to show Simon how closely he's been paying attention and how much he cares for him. This again shows Simon the importance of truly getting to know people, as this makes Simon feel seen in a way he hasn't felt before.



By recognizing their relationship on Facebook, Bram and Simon are able to show each other and the rest of their friends how much they care about each other. This is also a major announcement of their identities as gay young men, which shows them coming even more fully into their mature identities.



The next day, Abby asks Simon what's going on with Bram. Simon blushes, and Abby tells him he's cute and sends him away. At lunch, Simon leads Bram to the auditorium. They lock themselves in the dressing room, kiss for a while, and then settle in to talk. Bram says that according to Blue's dad, Casanova was bisexual. Simon feels very in love and texts Bram that he misses him as soon as he gets home.

Mom notices that Simon is in an unusually good mood, but Simon declines to explain why. He hears Nora get home and is surprised to see that Leah drove Nora home. Mom insists that Simon can't go outside to talk to her since he's still grounded, but agrees to let him go in exchange for five minutes on Simon's Facebook to look at Bram. Before Leah can say anything, Simon jumps into the passenger seat. Leah tells Simon to get out, but he refuses and asks her to take him to Waffle House. She angrily agrees.

Simon tries to apologize and asks if their friendship is over. Leah accuses Simon of being platonically obsessed with Abby and calls Abby an upgraded female best friend. She refuses to listen when Simon assures her that *she's* his best friend. Simon explains that he came out to Abby first because Leah and Nick know him too well, and he doesn't have that history with Abby. He says that let him try on being gay with her first, and then it just got harder and harder to bring up with Leah. Simon asks Leah what happened with her dad. She says he left for a nineteen-year-old and didn't come back. Simon is distraught that he went six years without asking. He starts to sob and apologizes for everything. Leah even cries a little bit.

CHAPTER 34

Martin writes Simon an apology email. He says he can't stop thinking about what Simon said about taking something personal from him, and he understands it now. Martin says he took the Tumblr post down and admits he feels sick with guilt about everything he did. He starts to explain why he did it.

Martin starts by saying he's not homophobic and thinks gay people are awesome. His brother came out over the summer, and it was a big deal for Martin's family. His parents now march in Pride parades, but his brother doesn't even seem to care. Martin felt weird about all that, and also admits that he felt desperate about liking Abby. He admits that he's jealous that Abby befriended Simon over anyone else. Martin apologizes again, wishes Simon good luck with Bram, and says he enjoyed getting to know him. He closes by admitting that if he could do it again, he'd only blackmail Simon into being his friend.

Bram's dad's mention that Casanova was bisexual comes across as a way for his dad to try to show Bram that he does truly care about him and who he is as a person. Casanova's autobiography does contain some veiled references to exploits with men, which offers hope that Bram's dad is more accepting than Bram initially thought.



The negotiation between Mom and Simon suggests that both of them are holding up their end of their agreement, which shows that Simon's family is indeed capable of changing for the better. Simon's insistence on speaking with Leah shows that he's finally taking it to heart that he must have hard conversations with people in order to maintain his relationships with them.



Leah's admissions show that what she's most insecure about is that Abby is taking over her place as Simon's best friend, though it's important to note that Simon and Abby have been able to have more of the tough conversations the novel insists are necessary. This indicates that Leah will also need to make some changes in order to make her friendship with Simon fulfilling for both of them. Simon's decision to ask about Leah's dad shows that he finally understands the importance of recognizing his friends.



Martin's email is a true apology—he takes ownership of his actions and actually apologizes. This is one way for Martin to show Simon that he does care about him and genuinely regrets what he did.



When Martin brings up his mixed feelings about his brother, it tells Simon that his family isn't the only one going through major changes and struggling to adapt. When put in this context, it makes more sense why Martin felt so desperate and lost and felt driven to blackmail. Essentially, this makes it clear that familial strife and change is extremely difficult for everyone, and not all families can successfully change.



CHAPTER 35

Nick and Simon arrive for the school talent show just as the lights are going down. They find Bram and Garrett in the back and sit with them. When the lights go out completely, Simon takes Bram's hand. The talent show comprises mostly of girls singing Adele songs, and then Abby dances alone with a violin accompanist. She dances beautifully, and then the curtains close for the last act to set up. Nick checks the program and discovers the last band is called Emoji. The curtain opens to five girls on instruments. Simon is shocked—the drummer is Leah, the singer is Taylor, and Nora is playing lead guitar.

Emoji's music is electric, and girls dance in the aisles. Simon thinks that Bram was right that people are like houses, with big rooms and small windows. Nick admits that he's been secretly working with Nora on the guitar for a few months now. She apparently asked that he keep it a secret so the Spiers wouldn't make a big deal out of it. Nick also explains that he got Simon's family to come to the show, even Alice. After the band finishes, a guy with a beard slides into the seats in front of Simon. He introduces himself as Theo and says he has a message from Alice: Simon and Bram are to refuse Mom and Dad's offer of dinner out, and they should go home to do homework—which translates to two hours of unsupervised time at home.

Bram looks mischievous and says he's in as he heads to the atrium with Simon. Simon goes straight to Alice, who admits she's been stalking Bram on Facebook for weeks. The girls of Emoji come out from backstage, and Nora flings herself at Alice for a hug. Mom and Dad give her a bouquet, and they all join one huge group with Bram, Abby, and Theo. Leah admits to Simon that she's been teaching herself drums for two years. When Mom and Dad suggest dinner out, Simon insists he has to catch up on homework.

Alice tells Simon to keep his phone on so she can text when they're on their way home, and then Simon follows Bram to his car. They don't hold hands, as it feels too public for Georgia. As Simon goes to the passenger side, the car next to him turns on. Martin is inside. Simon just looks at him and thinks that he hasn't replied to Martin's email yet. Simon gets into Bram's car and watches Martin back out, and then he and Bram decide to go to Simon's house.

When Simon is surprised to see Leah, Taylor, and Nora in the band, it indicates again that he's spent much of his life making assumptions about people, just as others have done to him. This revelation means that as he continues to come of age, Simon will have to continually check himself when he makes assumptions. In doing so, he'll hopefully be able to form better and more fulfilling relationships with his friends and family.



When Nick tells Simon that Nora wanted to keep her involvement in the band a secret, it again shows that all of the Spier children feel forced into secrecy about their changing interests because of their parents' habit of making things seem far more significant than they really are. This again makes the case that Simon's family will have to continue to evolve to make everyone, including Nora, feel safer voicing these changes to her family.



Leah's admission that she's spent two years teaching herself to play drums is something else that comes across as a coming out moment; like Simon's sexuality, it's something she's been hiding for a while. Now that it's common knowledge, it leaves room for Simon and Leah to repair their friendship and use the new information they have about each other to make it even stronger.



Simon's inclusion of "yet" when he talks about not replying to Martin's email suggests that the two may actually have a chance at repairing their relationship. However, now that Simon is in control of whether or when he replies, he's able to feel far more confident in whatever he chooses to do about Martin.



Simon feels as though he's seeing his house for the first time when Bram walks in. Bram greets Bieber and looks at family photos on the way up to Simon's room. Simon apologizes for his mess and tells Bram that he usually emails him from the bed. They sit there, side by side, and start kissing. As they lie down, Simon suggests they do nothing but kiss. Bram says he would like to see a movie. Simon finds himself thinking about Bram's mom's talk about safe sex, and thinks her talk might apply to him someday. Bram returns to the subject of seeing a movie, and they lie together until Alice texts.

Bram and Simon are seated in the living room with textbooks by the time Mom and Dad get home. Mom looks slightly disapproving that the boys were home alone, and Simon knows that they'll have some big discussion about ground rules soon. He thinks it's okay that this is a big deal.

The sense that he's seeing the house for the first time with Bram speaks to the power of another person to change one's perspective: because Simon and Bram are beginning to get closer to each other and see how the other person sees the world, they're each getting a new view of their own worlds. This shows that learning to recognize others isn't just about making others feel good; it also widens one's own worldview.



When Simon decides that it's not so bad if he and Mom have to have this conversation, it represents a shift to seeing his sexuality and his life as something that should be important, rather than something that should be hidden.





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