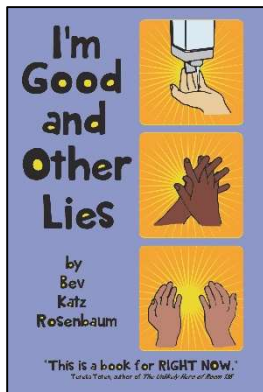


***I'm Good and Other Lies* by Bev Katz Rosenbaum** **Teacher's Guide**

Created by Martha Brack Martin with support from Bev Katz Rosenbaum and the Cormorant Team



If there's one thing Kelsey Kendler knows, it's how to take care of herself. That's what happens when your actress mother is a trainwreck of mental illness, addiction and narcissism, and your father checked out emotionally years ago. Kelsey is counting the days until she can escape her home life in Toronto and head to university, preferably far away. When the family must "downsize" in a new neighbourhood due to her mother's drug use and failing career, Kelsey switches to a different high school. She's hoping to finish off her final year with a scholarship, a part-time job and some new friends. Unfortunately, just as she's starting to realize her dreams, Covid-19 immobilizes the world. Despite her self-awareness, sense of

humour and survival skills honed from years of emotional neglect, Kelsey is not prepared for the fallout from the lockdown. She begins to follow her mother's path before realizing that it's okay to admit she's not "good," especially when she has true friends who are right there with her and understand.

Themes

Some key themes and "big ideas" in this book include:

- Family
- How people cope with life's challenges
- Appearance vs. Reality
- Resiliency
- Addiction
- Mental health and well-being
- Life in the Coronavirus pandemic

The Plot

Kelsey Kendler is struggling in her final semester of high school as it is. She's at a new school, her best friend has moved to California, her crush is giving her the runaround, and her unstable, pill-popping mom makes hanging out at home a nightmare. At least she can pick up shifts at her new part-time job to get away, right? Wrong. The Covid-19 pandemic triggers a nationwide lockdown, leaving Kelsey isolated at home. How is she going to make it through this wreck of a year?

The Setting

This story takes place in Toronto, and specifically in the Parkdale neighborhood.

What Kind of Reader Will Love This Book? One who...

- Appreciates a funny, self-aware and distinctive narrative voice
- Enjoys stories told in first-person narrative
- Loves pop culture and contemporary references in their stories
- Experienced the Covid-19 pandemic
- Lives for social media
- Is interested in the ways people cope with stress or trauma.
- Likes stories with strong female characters overcoming adversity
- Enjoys family drama and dysfunction in their stories

Pre-Teaching Prep

Trigger Warning: This book deals with addiction, parental neglect, and mental health issues in both children and adults. Consider the life experiences of your students. To improve your own awareness and support your students, some resources are provided below.

Effects of Drug Addiction on Families

<https://www.farcana.org/>

https://www.opioidlibrary.org/featured_collection/addictions-impact-on-children-and-families-resources-for-patients-and-caregivers/

<https://americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/guide-for-children>

Trauma, PTSD, and Treatments:

<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=post-traumatic-stress-disorder-in-children-90-P02579>

https://mentalhealthweek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MHW19_School_Overview-ENG.pdf

<https://stanfield.com/teaching-mental-health/>

<https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/guides-and-publications/tami-teachers-guide.pdf>

[https://walkinourshoes.org/content/Classroom Lesson Plans.pdf](https://walkinourshoes.org/content/Classroom_Lesson_Plans.pdf)

<https://www.healthline.com/health/cbt-techniques>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/about/pac-20384610>

Chapter Questions (for Independent Work or Class Discussion)

Pick and choose the questions that work for *your* students in *your* classroom. Use as many or as few as you like.

Chapter 1

1. The very first page of the story informs the reader that the book is made up of different parts. “Part One” is entitled “The Before Times,” and under that title is written “A Fresh Start (Hahahahaha).” Why do you think the author chose to begin the book this way? As a reader, how does this page make you feel?
2. The first sentence of the book gives the reader a huge amount of information in three lines:

“Yeah, so thanks to my perpetually stoned, unemployable, former comedian mom (for a comic, she’s sure a killjoy), we’ve moved from Toronto’s posh Rosedale area to ‘transitional’ Parkdale” (p. 3).

What do we learn about Kelsey from what she says – and, just as importantly, how she says it?

3. Kelsey describes herself as “hyper-vigilant” (p. 5). How does the author show us this is true in the first chapter?
4. How do you think Kelsey would describe *you* if she saw you sitting in the cafeteria that day? Do you think you could be friends? Why?

Chapter 2

5. The author uses a series of text messages to show the relationship between Kelsey and her friend Makayla. As a reader, how did you feel about this choice of format?
6. In this chapter, we can infer that both Makayla and Kelsey are determined to go to university as a means of escaping their family issues. Consider what we’ve learned about Kelsey’s home life in the first chapter. Do you think a person can ever really escape from childhood trauma? Explain your thoughts.

Chapter 3

7. Kelsey references pop culture and current phrases and trends quite frequently. What are some of the references or phrases you’ve noted as you’ve read? Do you think this makes Kelsey’s character more believable? Why or why not?
8. When Kelsey goes home with Molly after shopping, she is struck by how “normal” Molly’s parents and home life are. Later in the chapter, the author gives us the first

glimpse of Kelsey's parents and home life. What are your first impressions of Kelsey's reality? Explain.

9. Who is the "orange menace to the south" (p. 21)? Why do you think the author inserted this section about Kelsey reviewing the news stories of the day on Twitter?

Chapters 4 and 5

10. Chapter 4 begins in italics. As a reader, what were your first thoughts upon seeing this?
11. Pretend you are a psychoanalyst responsible for making sense of Kelsey's nightmare. What would you tell her about her dream? In your role as her psychoanalyst, write your "notes" from your "session" with Kelsey in a paragraph.
12. Kelsey's health class discusses substance abuse in chapter 5. How would you have handled that if you were Kelsey? Explain.
13. Kelsey meets an assortment of characters during her training day at Soft Spot. How does the author use Kelsey's observations of each of these characters to further show us Kelsey's own personality?
14. Which character working at Soft Spot is most like you? Use details from the novel as well as examples from your own life to prove your point.

Chapters 6 and 7

15. Consider the underlined words in the following quotations from the book so far. Explain their meaning in your own words or look them up if you don't recognize them.
 - a. "I say hi, even though she was rude (albeit correct)" (p. 31).
 - b. "Lol, we're too young to be this misanthropic" (p.36).
 - c. "The host, Dr. Ashley (yeah, hard to take her seriously), has an Insta account featuring a lot of pithy sayings against rose-gold backgrounds, à la Angel" (p. 38).
16. Kelsey's Family Day at home clearly demonstrates the dysfunction in her family. What would you do if you were in her shoes during this chapter? Rewrite the chapter's dinner scene and subsequent events the way you think it would go if you were Kelsey.
17. Do you think Luca is genuinely interested in Kelsey? Defend your opinion with evidence from the novel and your own ideas.

Chapters 8 and 9

18. In chapter 8, Kelsey dreams she is being forced to drink from two different goblets. Reread that chapter. How would you interpret her nightmare?
19. Kelsey gives us more information about her early family life and relationship with her parents in chapter 9. In your opinion, is it possible for people who have experienced such trauma to live a normal life as adults? Explain.
20. Why do you think the author ends chapter 9 with the sentence, "At least that fate, I was quite certain, would never befall me" (p. 55).

Chapters 10 and 11

21. Makayla and Kelsey share that "living with wild ones" (p. 58) makes them both extremely careful in life. Do you agree that's necessarily true? Why or why not?

22. Quinn, Ruby, and Ditch Gang Guy all seem to be somewhat mysterious characters at this point. What do you predict is behind each one's behaviour and/or personality? Explain.
23. When Molly manages to finally achieve her goal of meeting Mrs. Kendler, the earlier reference in the chapter, #BeCarefulWhatYouWishFor (p. 62), seems ironic. Can you think of a time when something you desperately wished for went catastrophically wrong? Share it with a friend or with the whole class. Who has the best story?

Chapters 12 and 13

24. How do you feel about the way Molly reacts after meeting Kelsey's mom?
25. It's easy to blame Kelsey's mom for all the dysfunction in the Kendler family, but is it fair? Explain using quotations from the book and your own ideas to prove your point.
26. How do the author's use of hashtags (e.g., #NoteToSelf, #AfraidOfLosingContact) and asides in brackets help the reader understand Kelsey's character better?
27. After yelling at her father, Kelsey slams the door at the end of chapter 13. Is this how you would have handled the situation if you were in her shoes? Describe how you would have reacted in her place.

Chapters 14 and 15

28. Kelsey describes her English teacher Ms. Cole as "...one of those movie-type teachers. Lovely on the outside and in" (p. 81). In your experience, are people ever really "movie-type" perfect? Why do you think Kelsey describes her in this way?
29. Kelsey sees some similarities between herself and the fabled Minotaur of Greek mythology. With which literary or historical figure would you compare yourself? Share your reasons with a friend or the class.
30. The author uses the scene with Will Brown and Luca to allow Kelsey to learn more about their characters. How do they each respond to Kelsey, and to each other? What does this show us about them?
31. Why do you think the author doesn't go into more detail about Kelsey's mom's trip to the hospital but does include pages of texts between Luca and Kelsey? What does it say about Kelsey and her life?

Chapters 16 and 17

32. As creepy as Kelsey's nightmares are, they often include elements of humour. Do you prefer your horror or humour straight up, or does this combination work for you as a reader? Why?
33. When Luca suddenly shows up at Kelsey's house just as she is once again trying to get her mother safely inside, Kelsey concludes "I can't have nice things" (p. 95). Choose a song that you think would be the perfect backdrop for this scene. Be prepared to share it with the class and explain your rationale.
34. How do you predict Luca will respond after what he witnessed in the front yard? Explain your prediction using evidence from the novel.

Chapters 18 and 19

35. From Kelsey's perspective, everyone else's parents seem perfect. How can your own experiences shape – or misshape – your own perceptions? What can you do about it?
36. Chapter 18 ends with, "Or that the next day, everything doesn't completely turn to shit..." (p. 101). What do you predict happens the next day?

Chapters 20 and 21

37. Makayla's texts take an ominous turn in Chapter 20. How do you feel about her news?
38. Part Two introduces us to "Lockdown (A.K.A. My Worst Nightmare)" (p. 105). How did you feel when you first heard the term "lockdown" in 2020?
39. There are quite a few references in Chapter 20 to the choices made by the government to support the students in Kelsey's part of the world. How do you feel about e-learning? How does Kelsey feel about it?

Chapters 22 and 23

40. Are you surprised by Makayla's texts in Chapter 22? Why do you think the author included this scenario in the book?
41. Why does Kelsey end up feeling "woozy" (p. 118)? Do you think this would have happened if the lockdown hadn't been in place? Explain.
42. Are you surprised by the way things are going for Kelsey in these chapters? Why or why not?

Chapters 24 and 25

43. How would you interpret Kelsey's nightmare in chapter 24?
44. As the pandemic really took off, Kelsey was convinced that she had no support system. Was that an accurate assessment, in your opinion? Explain.
45. Why do you think the author included the scene with Ditch Gang Guy in the playground?

Chapters 26, 27 and 28

46. Kelsey's nightmare world and reality collide to shocking effect in these chapters. What would you do if you woke up to a giant rat on your bed while you were sleeping?
47. The kind neighbours Mika and Christina, and their children Hazel and Elijah, take in Kelsey and her parents for the night. Write a brief conversation that might have occurred between the four, after the Kendlers settle in for the night. Use correct dialogue form. Alternatively, you can write the conversation as a script. You can even act it out with classmates if you wish.
48. In your opinion, why is Kelsey able to tell Makayla about her "lil drug issue" (p. 139) and not anyone else?

Chapters 29 and 30

49. Kelsey is talking about whether the fire might have created a willingness in her mother to change when she says, "But I don't dare let myself hope for too much/anything" (p. 142). How does this comment apply to more than just Kelsey's feelings about her mom?
50. Kelsey references two metaphors that she describes as too "on-the-nose" and "apt" for her current reality (bottom of page 142 and top of page 143). Explain what she means.
51. Are you surprised by the way the intervention went? What's the significance of Dave saying to Kelsey on page 146, "She was really good. You know that, right?"

Chapters 31 and 32

52. How do you feel about Kelsey's dad's actions in chapter 31? How would you feel about them if you were Kelsey?
53. Makayla describes how her father's girlfriend blames her for infecting Makayla's dad, even though his girlfriend doesn't believe the virus is real. How would you handle that, if you were Makayla?

Chapters 33 and 34

54. Part 3 is entitled, "Oh God, It's Not Even Close to Being Over (But There Are Tiny Glimmers of Hope)." How is this title representative of more than just the pandemic, in this story?
55. When Kelsey returns to Soft Spot, we learn what each of the team members has been doing during isolation. Were there any surprises for you?
56. Why does the author include this scene at this particular point in the story? Explain your ideas.

Chapters 35 and 36

57. Kelsey's trying some new strategies to cope with her issues. What works for you when you need help coping? Consider if your strategies are healthy or unhealthy. Share them with others in a class discussion to create a master list of effective options you can all use.
58. Kelsey learns about cognitive behavioural therapy from her new psychologist, Cara. Why might this therapy be particularly appropriate for Kelsey?
59. Do you think it is strange that Makayla and Kelsey are never together in person, yet are so close? Explain your thoughts.

Chapters 37 and 38

60. Kelsey decides to throw a party in chapter 37. Why is this such a big deal for her? How does the author use this scene to show how Kelsey has grown and developed as a character? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
61. Kelsey reflects in chapter 38, "...maybe that's just life. Maybe it will always have obstacles and challenges. It's about finding meaning, I think. Doing something good with what you've learned from hard times" (p. 185). Do you agree with her? Share your insights.

Chapters 39 and 40

62. Kelsey gives her incoming grade 9 “buddy” some advice on pages 190-191. How do you feel about what she says? What advice would you give to a prospective grade 9 student in a similar situation?
63. When Kelsey encounters Angel and Luca, we can really see how far she’s come in her personal growth and confidence. How would you have handled that encounter if you were Kelsey?

Chapters 41 and 42

64. What do you think about Kelsey’s mom’s news? How successful do you predict she will be? Defend your prediction with evidence from the text and your own ideas.
65. What is your favourite part(s) of the Zoom graduation ceremony? Why?
66. Angel and Kelsey have a text exchange, but it isn’t written in the same way the text chapters with Makayla are written. Why do you think the author chose to write it differently?
67. Why is it particularly appropriate that Kelsey and Angel become friends at the end of the book?
68. How do you feel about the way the book ended? Explain your thoughts.

Discussion Questions and Essay Topics

These topics can be used for the traditional assessment options of discussion or essay.

- a) The author chose to write this book in three separate parts. Is this the way you would choose to set up Kelsey’s story if you were the author? Why or why not?
- a) This novel features different text elements (e.g., dream sequences, text chats, and traditional narrative chapters). As a reader, how do you feel about these introduced text elements? How do they affect your understanding and your enjoyment of the book?
- b) The author has set the book at the start of the coronavirus pandemic and uses a great many references to current pop cultural influences. In your opinion, does tying books to real events and issues make them better than books that are set in unrealistic places or times? Explain.
- c) Family is a huge theme in this novel. How does the author play with the concept of family, both literally and figuratively?
- d) Think about your favourite parts of the novel. What made these parts so memorable to you? Explain.
- e) As a reader, do you value characterization, plot, or descriptive elements the most? Is it possible to have a good book without all three? Defend your answer.
- f) Which is worse, having nightmares or not being able to dream at all? Defend your point of view.
- g) Kelsey overcomes her issues with opioids quite quickly on her own. Were you surprised by this? Share your thoughts, using evidence from the text to support them.

Culminating Activities

Here are some other activities to consider at the end of the novel. These activities will give students the opportunity to make connections to the world and themselves, as well as to other texts, and offer some creative and engaging ways to demonstrate their understanding.

Insta Ready!

Think about each of the characters, and how they use social media. Instagram is really important to most of them.

Pick a character of your choice and create a fake Instagram account for that character on presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint). Think about:

- Who would they follow?
- What pictures or types of videos would they post?
- What kinds of stories or posts would they make?
- Would they choose to connect their Instagram account to other their other socials?

Make sure you have enough content to really show your understanding of the character. Be prepared to explain your rationale for all your choices in writing or verbally, depending on your teacher's preference.

Research Roundup

Think about the various topics introduced in the book. These could include Covid-19, various mental health and wellness topics, addiction, pop culture, social media, etc. Where would you find information about these topics? What would be interesting to share with others?

Research a topic introduced in the novel, independently or in groups. Then present your learning and research through an infographic or other presentation model of your choice.

Were You Pandemic-Ready?

If you were alive in 2020, you experienced the coronavirus in person. Were you pandemic-ready? How did you cope? What is worth remembering from those times? What would you rather forget? Were there any positives to the experience? What were the "cons?"

Write a letter to your future self, sharing your reflections and learnings from your own personal pandemic experiences. Use specific details and experiences to bring your memories and reflections to life.

We're in Business

There are a few businesses that pop up soon after Soft Spot does. All are trendy and all invariably fail. What kind of business would you have started in your neighbourhood during the pandemic?

Design a business plan for your imaginary business. Think about/include:

- What your startup costs would be?
- How would you market it?
- Where would your preferred location be?
- What would it look like?
- Who would be your target market?

We're In Business Part 2

Create the marketing materials for your startup business. Think about print ads, radio and/or television. Choose one (or all) and create your campaign.

You're Such a Nightmare!

Kelsey has a condition that causes her to have horrifying, surreal nightmares most nights. Research this specific condition and share your findings with the class.

You're Such a Nightmare...Date

Kelsey and Luca have a fabulous date in chapter 17, but not every romantic encounter always goes well. What would make a truly terrible date for you or for someone close to you? What would be a deal-breaker?

Write a story about someone's absolutely nightmarish date. Use your imagination, rich vocabulary, excellent voice, and lots of dialogue to make it pop.

Minotaur

Research the legend of the Minotaur. Write the outline for Kelsey's paper about the Minotaur, using your own ideas and what we know Kelsey was exploring.

Cover Reveal

I'm Good and Other Lies is set in the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is about so much more than just the Coronavirus. If you were chosen to create a new cover for a second edition, what kind of cover would you design?

Use technology or go "old school" with traditional art media and create a new cover for the novel. Be prepared to explain your choice and design elements.

Exploring the Same Themes in Different Texts

After reading *I'm Good and Other Lies*, consider reading *Firefly* by Philippa Dowding (978-1770865983), or *Sunny Days Inside and Other Stories* (978-1773065724) by Caroline Adderson. How are some of the same themes repeated in these stories? How are they handled differently?

Create a presentation comparing the themes in your choice of books or share your ideas orally in a class discussion.

Take Action

Opioid addiction has been described as an “epidemic” in our culture, with cases rising even higher during the pandemic. The students in Kelsey’s health class made jokes about it, but the reality is far from funny. What could you do to address this epidemic in your community?

Make a plan of action to make a difference locally. Consider organizing a fundraiser or supporting agencies with practical help (collecting resources, offering to serve at a mission that feeds those struggling with mental health and addiction, etc.)

Interview with the Author

Martha: Hi Bev! Thanks for chatting with me.

Bev: Thank *you* for chatting with *me*! I'm always happy to talk about *I'm Good and Other Lies*--it's the book of my heart!

Martha: Where did your inspiration for Kelsey’s story originate?

Bev: This book has had quite a journey. I actually had a full draft of it before Covid, which might seem strange, as now the Covid element is such a big part of the story! It's a personal story for me--the book of my heart, as I said. I grew up dealing with some of the same issues Kelsey has to deal with and always knew I wanted to write a book with a character dealing with those issues. (Though the book is fiction, not a memoir--it's not exactly my story.) And like Kelsey, I've been diagnosed with Depression. But though I was happy with the book's first incarnation in terms of the voice and the writing itself, I knew it was lacking a bit in the way of plot and structure. When Covid-19 came along and I started hearing about people stuck in bad home situations during the lockdowns, my heart really went out to them, and I knew I had to add in that element. And adding that element had the benefit of giving the book a kind of built-in plot and structure. Problem solved! (BTW, I made sure to include a bunch of different Covid-related issues, not just the stuck-with-bad-parents one, so that teens who weren't in Kelsey's situation could relate to the book too!)

Martha: Did you know where the story was going from the start? Or did Kelsey take you on her own journey?

Bev: I knew exactly where I wanted to go re: Kelsey and her parents, but once I added in the Covid-19 element, I had to figure out what happened when in terms of real-life Covid-related events, so that entailed some research. And as I said, I (and my editor) decided we wanted to include a variety of Covid-related experiences so teens who weren't in Kelsey's situation could relate to the book too. For example, most of us know people who became very ill, so I had Kelsey's friend Makayla's mother become very ill. Many people experienced depression as the result of losing activities, and friends who weren't good at staying in touch. Kelsey was already at risk of depression due to her home situation, but the lockdown sealed the deal by separating



her from the friends she was just starting to make at her new part-time job. Those friendships never got a chance to bloom.

Martha: What is your writing process like? Are you an “outliner” or a “fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants” kind of writer, normally?

Bev: I don't do the kind of super detailed outlines that some people I know do--I think I'd get sick of the book before I even started it! But I must have a sort of skeleton outline to work from. I jot down a line or two for every scene--what I want to happen in that scene and what I want the scene to do in terms of moving the story along. I think it's important to outline so you don't get lost in the weeds. But it's also important to leave room for flexibility. I like to surprise myself a bit--that's part of the fun of writing! It's so exhilarating when you find yourself writing lines and conversations you hadn't thought of or intended!

Martha: Kelsey's mom is really quite a piece of work, and her father isn't much better. Despite their abysmal parenting, you managed to give Kelsey's character a sense of humour and some fabulous self-deprecation skills. How did you settle on her “voice” in the story?

Bev: Kelsey's voice is basically my voice! For a novelist, I'm not terribly imaginative – all my main characters end up sounding like me! I'm so glad you noted the humour—thank you! Everything that's been written about *I'm Good and Other Lies* talks about the serious aspects of the book, and I'm glad about that, but I keep wishing people would talk about the lighter moments too! My favourite books are those that are both moving and funny and that's the kind of book I like to write. Life is a mix of comedy and tragedy, after all. Also, humour can be a kind of coping mechanism. It has always been that for me and it is for Kelsey too.

Martha: I have to give you props for being able to show us that Kelsey was still craving a relationship with both her parents, despite a childhood of neglect and trauma. I believe that's likely true for many children in Kelsey's situation. Was that hard to write?

Bev: Thank you. Yes, it was hard to write. It's a heartbreaking reality that we always want people to love us even if they're not capable of loving us the way we want them too. I wanted to reflect that reality and also the fact that as a result of not receiving much in the way of real love, Kelsey's self-esteem level is pretty low, making her prone to accepting not-great behaviour from people (such as Luca--I think I said somewhere she has to text him fifty times before he texts back!). I included the therapy sessions at the end to have Kelsey learn she is deserving of love and also that she can (and should) set boundaries with people who treat her badly.

Martha: Something else that really struck me was how three-dimensional you made each of the secondary characters. So often in young adult fiction, the characters are stereotypes, but you've written Kelsey's friends as so much more than that. I loved that they were all inherently good people. Was it important for you to surround Kelsey with true friends, even if she didn't recognize them as such right away?

Bev: Thank you! Yes, I felt so bad for Kelsey, I really wanted to give her some true friends. And yeah, something I thought about while writing and which became important for me to convey was the idea that not every friend you have has to fulfill every friend-related need. We have this idea, from books and movies, that you must have a BFF who gets you in every way, and that's not always--or maybe ever--how it works in real life. So instead, I gave Kelsey a bunch of people she could bond with in different ways, over different things.

Martha: I loved how you surprised me by bringing back Angel as a friend for Kelsey late in the story, and how even Will Brown made a return appearance as Kelsey's companion for online graduation. I really appreciated them returning because, again, it made them feel more three-dimensional, and they both so easily could have been stereotypes. Was that always the plan?

Bev: Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say that! Thank you! I didn't know until the very end that I was going to bring back Angel and Will! That was something that came as a surprise to me. But I liked the idea of showing that people can surprise you--they can change and grow. And we never know what's going on in other people's lives. Turns out perfect Angel had all these stresses Kelsey had no idea about. Not that we should always give people the benefit of the doubt or chances they don't deserve, but sometimes we can. It's on a case-by-case basis. For what it's worth, I'm not sure Kelsey will ever be buddy-buddy with Will--he was too cruel to her. But she appreciated that he made the effort to chat with her at online grad and she was polite in turn. I think Angel could turn out to be a real friend to Kelsey.

Martha: The character of Makayla is interesting, especially as we only meet her through texts. Where did she come from?

Bev: It was my editor who suggested I give Kelsey at least one friend at the beginning! She wasn't there before! And as I mentioned, we decided we wanted to show people having a variety of different Covid experiences so we had Makayla's mother become very ill. Also, I write short and we needed to bulk up the book! Those texts between Kelsey and Makayla, though added at the end stage, became some of my favourite parts of the book.

Martha: Kelsey is immersed in pop culture and social media, like so many teens are. How did you decide what trends and references you wanted to include?

Bev: That's easy--I wanted this book to be a real record of that time (January to June, 2020), so at the end of the book, when the friends gather outdoors and talk about what they've been listening to and watching, it's all stuff that we were listening to and watching during that time. (Let it be noted that it KILLED me not to include Taylor Swift's albums *Folklore* and *Evermore*, but they weren't out till later on in the pandemic!) As for slang and such, I'm a pop culture junkie, and also use a lot of slang myself, so that just kind of crept in there.

Martha: The running gag of trendy new businesses popping up in the neighbourhood (and failing soon after) was inspired.

Bev: Haha, thank you! One of my absolute favourite things about writing is coming up with business ideas for my worlds!

Martha: What new business would you have started if you were in Kelsey's 'hood during Covid?

Bev: The book is set in the Parkdale area of Toronto, an area that some people started calling 'Vegandale' a while back so it was already ripe for parody! My son actually started up a soup business during Covid and he called it Soup Dealer, which was pretty inspired. I make a mean chocolate chip cookie, so if I hadn't been writing away during the lockdowns, I might have considered opening up a cookie biz. Called...Comfort Cookies!

Martha: Mmm, cookies. Now I'm craving them. Thanks for that!

Bev: You're welcome! <grin>

Martha: You've left *me* with a craving for cookies, but what do you hope to leave with your *readers* as they turn the last page?

Bev: Mostly, I just want anyone who's been adversely affected by a crappy home situation or Covid to know they're not alone and not to give up hope for a better future. Things really will get better.

About Bev Katz Rosenbaum:

Bev Katz Rosenbaum is the author of several novels for young people, most recently, *I'm Good and Other Lies*. She is also an award-winning fiction editor and has taught writing at the college level. Rosenbaum, a devoted chocoholic, spends her downtime reading, baking, hiking and movie-watching. She lives in Toronto, ON.

Related Weblinks and Resources for Further Learning

<https://bevkatzrosenbaum.com/>

[Virtual Launch: I'm Good and Other Lies by Bev Katz Rosenbaum](#)

[Interview with a Storyteller - Bev Katz Rosenbaum](#)

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2020/jan/14/my-parkdale-is-gone-how-gentrification-reached-the-one-place-that-seemed-immune>

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/parasomnias/sleep-paralysis>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/about/pac-20384610>