



The Eternal Struggle to Limit Cell Phone Use

By Coraline O'Brien
Tusker Tribune Staff

One of my New Year's resolutions is to limit my phone usage.

There is so much research about how bad phone use is, especially for younger people. They are made to be addictive, so no wonder people are constantly on them!

Unfortunately, so far, it's not going too well. Between texting, watching my dance practice videos, Duolingo and other app streaks, and playing games--that's a lot of time!

Even if the replacement is watching a show or movie on TV, at least it's not too close to your face! Everyone is so addicted to their phones nowadays. I think it would benefit everyone to be more mindful of their phone use.

If you watch social media, everyone compares themselves to the people making videos! And really, it's sort of normal, so don't think you're crazy if you do. But try your best to stop. It's not healthy to compare negatively or sometimes at all.

Anyway, I'm always on my phone and I'm trying to stop. And everyone just sets the resolution and does it and gives up after a few days of trying.

To wrap it up, wish me luck and I'll wish you luck also with your resolutions. I encourage you to break the habit, too. If you go backwards on your resolution, just start over each time. Eventually, it can work out with effort.

Try to get off those screens with me!



The Violin and the Viola--Kind of Similar but Different

By Jaline Alonzo Javier
Tusker Tribune Staff

Two of the musical instruments in a string orchestra are called the violin and the viola. Both instruments consist of 4 strings that are played with a bow and are usually made from wood. However, the violin and the viola have important differences.

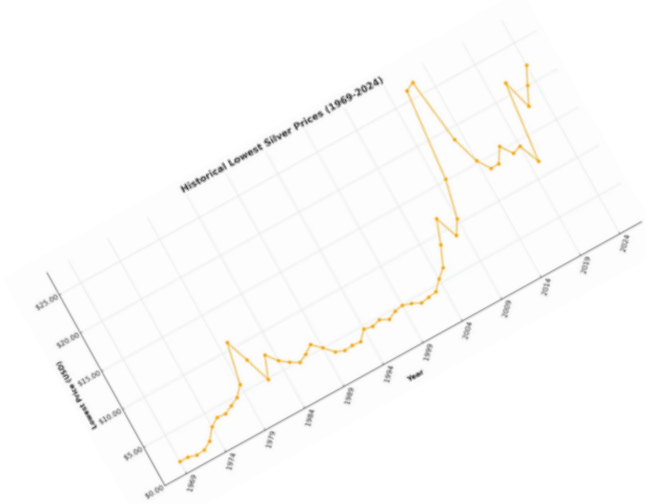
The violin is the smallest and lightest in the orchestra. Because its strings are short and thin, the violin is able to produce very high and sharp sounds. The viola is larger and heavier than the violin. Its long and thicker strings create deep, smooth sounds.

The violin and viola have different strings; the viola strings are C, G, D, and A; the viola has strings that are lower than the violin. The violin strings are G, D, A, and E since the viola has lower strings than the violin. That means that the violin has higher strings than the viola. The highest string on the violin is the E string, and the lowest string is the G string. The highest string on the viola is the A string, and the lowest string is the C string.

When you see a music sheet of the viola and violin, they have different clefs. And you might ask what a clef is; a clef is a symbol that indicates the pitch of notes represented by the lines and spaces on the staff. There are three main types of clefs used in modern music like the Treble clef, Bass clef, and the Alto clef. So, the clef that represents the violin is the Treble clef (G clef) which lands on the second line of the staff. The clef that represents the viola is the alto clef (c-clef) and it lands on the center line of the staff. And these are some examples of why you need to know the difference between the violin and the viola just in case in the future you want to either play the violin or viola. And it is important to know the differences.



Everyone Talks About Gold, But What About Silver Prices?



By Kaylee Jeon
Tusker Tribune Staff

A week ago, on January 9, the price of silver jumped by 6%. This means silver is currently becoming more pricier than gold. Here are some reasons why this is happening.

The first reason is because as of last month, only 50,000 jobs not related to farming were listed. This might mean that interest rate cuts may be happening. Essentially, this means that you can borrow money cheaper at banks, causing precious gems/materials to become more valuable and expensive.

The second reason is that silver has a lot of demand for manufacturing. Industries like electrical cars, clean energy, and data centers require certain amounts of silver, causing more demand in this certain metal. Also, with the rise of AI technology, silver is required for electrical conducting, overheating management, solar energy, batteries, and high-quality chips.

Lastly, in places like London, which are where many metals are stored, there has been a surprisingly smaller supply of silver. The actual quantity of silver stored around the world has become noticeably smaller due to sudden demand and importing and exporting restrictions.

These three reasons are some of the main influences, but there are more different reasons for this economic problem. Analysts predict that the price of silver will stay high or maybe grow throughout this year. This problem has been growing since 2020 and will perhaps grow even more.

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2026 Winter Classic Was a Huge Success

By Noah Samuel
Tusker Tribune Staff

Friday, January 2nd was the date of a huge event in professional ice hockey – the 17th Annual Winter Classic. What is the Winter Classic? And how was this one different from the rest? Keep reading to find out more about this special event, and why this year's was the best one yet.

What it is

The NHL Winter Classic is an annual ice hockey event. But not just any event – it's a game played outdoors! The Winter Classic is usually played on New Year's Day, but sometimes the game can be on January 2nd.

The Winter Classic is usually played in a American baseball stadium, due to scheduling conflicts with the NFL, but occasionally a game might be played in a football stadium.

The NHL comes in with a Mobile Refrigeration Unit and builds an ice rink in the stadium where the field would normally be. When the rink is ready, the NHL decorates around the rink, both teams playing in the game practice on it, and then finally it is time for the big game.'

This Year's Game

You're probably still wondering why this year's was so special. This year's matchup featured the New York Rangers taking on the Florida Panthers in Loan Depot Park, home of the MLB's Miami Marlins. And that's it – this was the first-ever Winter Classic hosted in Florida! The temperature was over 60 degrees at puck drop, making it the second-warmest Winter Classic in NHL history.

The Rangers ended up winning 5-1 against the Panthers, with Mika Zibanejad recording five points and the first hat trick in Winter Classic history. This pushed the Rangers to 6-0-0 in outdoor games.

Overall, I think this year's Winter Classic was a huge success. For the first game in Florida of its kind, the game peaked at about 1.3 million viewers, with an attendance of 36,153. Fortunately the Rangers won the game, and I'm really excited for the first Floridian Stadium Series. Are you?



A 'Tune' Doesn't Just Mean a Melody . . .

By Lucas Mejia
Tusker Tribune Staff

Hello and welcome back to the Weekly Life of a 6th Grade Musician. I just want to say thank you to the people who joined the orchestra clubs, so thank you, too, if you did that. I love to see new faces in Rockestra or Chamber Orchestra.

Drum roll please . . . today is Fiddle Friday. Don't forget that we will be getting new music so stay tuned for that. Also, Mr. Gilbert has restocked the prize box, so get your tickets and get lucky. How does this work? Remember, Mr. Gilbert has to pick your ticket. Make sure to keep your instruments in tune! Right now is just that time of year when all the instruments get out of tune. This happens because the sudden change in temperatures affects the inner core of the string instruments . . . according to the theory of relativity . . . I am joking!

Also check the schedule and don't forget to bring your instrument (I must say Monday was one of the only days of the schoolyear when I forgot my instrument). That is all we have for today, and I will see you next time on the Weekly Life of a 6th Grade Musician.



Lots of Talent on Display at IIHF Championship

By Noah Samuel
Tusker Tribune Staff

January 5th was the finale of a huge event, one that not many people know about – the World Junior Championships. What are the World Juniors? And what's so unique about them? You're about to find out.

What It Is

The International Ice Hockey Federation's World Junior Championship is an international ice hockey tournament similar to the IIHF Worlds. But here's the catch – all players on all teams are under 20 years old. They could be NCAA athletes, junior hockey players, or Euro professional players, but they must be under 20.

The tournament starts with a round-robin stage between the five teams in each group (Groups A and B). The teams that finished last in the group stage are eliminated from the playoffs and play in the relegation round. The remaining eight teams play in the quarterfinals, the winners play in the semifinals, and the semifinal winners play in the gold medal game. The semifinal losers play in the bronze medal game. The loser of the relegation round is demoted to the Division I Championship for the following year (The Tier II of the WJC).

Pool Play

When the round-robin part of the tournament concluded, Sweden had the lead in Group A with 12 points, USA in second with 9, Switzerland third place with 6, and Slovakia in fourth with 3. Germany finished last with 0 points, was eliminated from the playoffs, and therefore was pushed to the relegation round. In Group B, Canada was leading with 11 points, Czechia was in second with 8, Finland in third with 7, and Latvia fourth with 4. Denmark finished with 0 points as well, was eliminated, and was pushed to the relegation round against Germany.

Playoffs

Before the playoff round started, quarterfinal qualifiers were reseeded for the quarterfinals by placement in their group, points in the group stage being the tiebreaker. Sweden then beat Latvia 6-3, the two-time defending champions USA (sadly) lost to Finland in OT 4-3, Canada beat Slovakia 7-1, and Czechia beat Switzerland 6-2. Sweden then went on to beat Finland in a shootout 4-3 in the semifinals, and Czechia upset Canada 6-4 in the semis as well. And just like that it came down to the championship game: Sweden vs. Czechia. Sweden ended up coming out on top with a 4-2 victory, and Canada took the bronze medal home with a 6-3 win over Finland. Denmark lost the relegation game 8-4 and are now in the 2027 D1 Championship. Overall, World Juniors showcased a lot of international talent in young players across the globe. These athletes are playing at a very high level of hockey already, and most of them are on the path to play pro hockey. Who knows? You might see one of them as a star in the NHL one day!



In conclusion, I hope you enjoyed my story about puppets and it inspires you to become a puppeteer, maybe a future voice actor on either Muppets or Sesame! Also, if you are interested, go to [Home | Folkmanis Puppets](#) for more puppets and information. This is William Mifsud, out. Bye and adios!

[illegible]

Frogs are 'Toad'-ally Cool

By Allison Posadas
Tusker Tribune Staff

Do you like frogs? Well, I know a lot of people who like frogs, so I got this idea of writing all about frogs, and I'm going to state some fun facts about frogs as well.

Their sticky tongues

Frogs often have sticky tongues, and they are super long that shoot out super-fast to catch bugs, which is what they eat.

Their skin

Their skin is literally considered magic, because they can breathe and drink water right through their skin. That's insane! It's like their skin is like a sponge.

Singing

This is random, but frogs can sing very loudly, and I mean loudly. Do I know how? No, not yet, but it's still insane how they can sing.

They are awesome jumpers

Frogs are awesome jumpers; they have super strong legs that can help them jump really high and really far

Rainbow frogs?

Last but definitely not least, did you know that not all frogs are green? Some frogs are rainbows as you can tell by the title heading. Some are blue, yellow, and blue. Some have cool spots and cool stripes. Interesting, am I right?



Can You 'Bear' to Learn All About Bears?

By Allison Posadas
Tusker Tribune Staff

Have you ever wanted to know some fun facts about bears? Well, if so, then this is just for you. So, sit back relax and enjoy.

Bears have a lot of interesting talents and secrets, and today I will list some fun facts about bears. Super great sniffers.

Bears are really good sniffers. It's incredible. Bears have an incredible sense of smell. Did you know it's way better than dogs' sense of smell? Interesting, am I right? Bears can smell food even when being miles away from the food. I can't even believe this.

Hibernation heroes

Bears can truly hibernate. Some, like black bears, enter a state of torpor, which is like a long, deep nap, so they sleep for very long.

Climbing pros

These incredible animals are really good climbers; it's incredible to believe. Even the grizzly bear can climb trees when it needs to, but especially the younger ones, which I did not know about.

Their Diet.

Lastly, let's talk about their diet. When we think of bears, we often think they like eating fish, but many are actually omnivores. Their diet can include berries, nuts, insects, roots, and maybe sometimes small animals, not big, not medium, but just small animals, but it is somewhat rare. You probably never knew this, and I did not until now, but some like polar bears, which I never knew about.

I hope you enjoyed learning all about bears stay tuned for more soon.

When The Lyrics to the Song Don't Match Reality--A Suspense Story

Note: This is a story written by Elizabeth as part of an ELA 8 Suspense Story Unit being taught by Mr. Suranna and Ms. Reynolds.

By Olivia Pelhank
Tusker Tribune Staff

I'm practically Taylor Swift's famous lyric: "I never miss a beat." I mean, who else has the most perfect grades possible and a very secure position on the Brookside Girls volleyball team? Not to mention my lovely parents who spoiled me, but not rotten. I'm probably the kindest girl you'll meet. Everyone loves me (rightfully so.) You will never meet a girl like me. Unless you meet Julie.

It was on a random Monday that I first found out about her. My evil clone. One of my closest friends, May, told me about a new girl. Usually I love new girls, but when I heard May fawning over her, I got a bad feeling about her. Some might say jealousy, but I think it was just my perfect judgment. I'm not a jealous person. So, I painfully wait until lunch to meet this girl. I realize May isn't the only one fawning over her as I start walking up to her.

"Hello, my name is Cierra, if you didn't know already. It's nice to meet you, I've heard great things about you!" I say confidently. Chances are she's heard of me, but I'm trying to be nice. Her response didn't surprise me.

"Hi Cierra, I'm Julie. I've heard many great things about you, it's great to finally meet you! I'm sure we will be close, I've been informed we have lots of classes together!"

I love her confidence. I mean, I wouldn't be totally against getting close with her. If she is in lots of classes with me, she must be smart. Really smart even. But I have many friends and don't need another. Sorry, not sorry.

After a long, painful conversation with her, I finally went and sat back down. I finish my sushi without saying much. I'm perfect, not jealous. I'm kind and happy. I shouldn't worry about her.

The next day, I wore my favorite outfit. Confidence is key. I open my locker, and a note drops out. Perfect, just what I needed. My friends sometimes do this. I read the note, and my smile quickly drops into a frown. It reads: "Julie is better." Pfft. What are we, middle schoolers? Even though I can't lie, it does hurt my feelings a bit, Julie could have done way better to try and scare me.

I tell my friends, and I get them all to agree on one thing: Julie isn't the perfect angel she seems to be. I see May sitting next to her, and I quickly walk over. I whisper in her ear the truth. May is usually always on my side, but she seems so...weird. She simply shrugs, as if it's no big deal! I walk back to my table, obviously angry. Whatever.

The next day my friends pressured me to visit the counseling center. I've never visited her, and I can't help but feel nervous. I inform her about the note, and of course, she agrees. Easy. I know I won, and victory feels sweet when I realize that Julie has already lost most of her friends. Poor girl.

Friday was an amazing day. At least in the beginning. I woke up early, got ready, and headed to school. I'm pretty sure I passed my chemistry test, and the rest of the day flew by. Julie now sits only with May, but they don't talk much. Traitor. And volleyball practice was fun too; we mostly just scrimmaged. When it was finally over, I checked my phone to see a text from May.

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Lyrics

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I hate to admit this made me smile; we haven't talked in a while, until I clicked on it and saw a screenshot from an unknown number: "Anything Cierra can do, Julie could do better." Ouch. May's text makes up for it. She apologizes to me and says I was right. I'm always right. Obviously, I forgive her. I'm glad to get May back.

After a long weekend, I saw Julie sitting alone in the cafeteria. Revenge is sweet. I smile and take my seat right next to May in my perfect friend group. The next time I look back, I see Julie is gone. I walk to the bathroom, and I don't even know why. From 20 steps away I could hear her crying. Look, I'm not mean. I walk in and quickly adjust my smile. I still want her to know I won.

"Julie, I'm sorry. It's a shame, we could have been friends. What you did was wrong, and I'm not going to fold," I boldly state. I know she did it, so I don't have much sympathy.

"Cierra, why would I ever do that to you? Look, I moved schools because of something similar, except I was the one receiving the notes. I went to therapy and eventually convinced my parents to move. My life was finally good. Why would I want to do that to you?" She cries even more.

I prepare what I want to say in my head and then freeze. I'm a nice person. I'm perfect. Julie isn't. Immediately, I feel horrible. I don't know why. I listen to her sobs, and I feel a new feeling, empathy.

I ran to the counseling center, leaving Julie behind. I burst into the door. "I wrote the notes; it was me, not Julie. I've been so fixed on being perfect and when Julie was taking that away, I needed to do something. I ruined someone's life, after her life was already ruined. That's not a perfect thing to do."

Next thing I know is my parents are called in and I'm sitting in the principal's office. Great. Julie is called in to which just makes this awkward. Her mascara is smudged and it's obvious she's been crying. She tells the principal that it's fine; I meant no harm. I smile. Maybe she and I could become friends.

On Wednesday, I tell May everything. "Cierra, that's a huge lie. Julie is from New York. She moved her because of her dad's work, but she constantly misses living in the city. Everyone loves her there and she's even meeting up with a few of them soon,. Her dad told me himself. Julie lied to you."



Second Chances--A Suspense Story

Note: This is a story written by Elizabeth as part of an ELA 8 Suspense Story Unit being taught by Mr. Suranna and Ms. Reynolds.

By Elizabeth Alonzo Javier
Tusker Tribune Staff

"Honk, Honk." I was late, the bus was already outside and where was I. In bed. Late. I take a quick glance at my mirror. My outfit is . . . good enough. I grab my bag, shoes, run downstairs, and take a piece of bread that's probably stiffer than my cousin who thinks she can dance. I sprint for my life as I chase down the bus, I cannot disturb my mother, who is sleeping just to drive me again to school, for the fourth time this week. I get on the bus practically already showered in sweat. I sit in the very back seat and change into some nice "cool enough" clothes. Most importantly, they are dry and do not hold a stench of sweat. I get to school and there he is, that's my best friend, Liam. Teachers have been having to separate us since kindergarten. Liam calls me over and we walk to class together. If there's one good thing about this year is that I have earth science with him. Yes, I'm proud of it, but c'mon people it's boooooooring.

"Excuse me, Mr. Anderson, may I use the bathroom" I say, as I know, I am not using the bathroom. "Got lost in this hallway I've never seen before and thought you would be here but then this room just became a whole other world."

"Oh... Look what I found." I ended up showing Liam the red stone I found in the office.

"Is that...Is that the stone from the crazy story your dad would tell us about?"

"Yeah! Isn't it crazy. All this time, I thought my dad was hallucinating."

"Joel look, on my way to the basement I found a couple dollars."

"A couple? You only found \$5? How? I found at least \$25,000, to say the least!" The lights then start to flicker. I look at Liam; he looks worried that we won't make it out.

"It was probably just because this house is so old, maybe the owner hasn't paid the light bill yet. We'll be fine," I add quickly to not worry him.

"Yeah, no, you're totally right!"

"Yeah, no biggie, let's keep exploring"

Liam and I decide to keep exploring, though we were both getting hungry. It was 1:15, past our regular time for lunch at school. I hear Liam's stomach start to rumble. I feel bad for him. It's my fault he is here; he was just supposed to get me from the bathroom, not come all the way in here with me. I don't even know if there is a way out.

"Hey Joel?"

"Yeah Liam."

"I'm getting hungry. I was wondering if we could maybe explore for food or . . . maybe even go outside and . . . try to find a nearby store, anything. I'm just hungry."

"Uh yeah, sure, why not? But we must be quick, we need to find a way out before sunset"

"Alright, before coming in here, I saw a promising deli, they could have something."

"Lead the way"

Liam and I take a couple minutes to eat. Well, initially, we wanted to take a couple minutes, but we ended up taking at least two hours to finish our huge three-course meal. The cost didn't matter to us. We just ordered what we would never order at a regular restaurant.

After eating, we headed back to the castle to keep exploring. We explored a couple other rooms in the castle. We found a lot of money which I am very happy about. This is where I realized that money could buy happiness, and we all have to admit it. I look at Liam, and he looks exhausted; it's my mission to get Liam out of here, and I will complete it. Mark. My. Words. 10:45pm. We still haven't made it out. We are currently sleeping in the bedroom all the way on the top floor. We guessed it would be the safest since, if there were to be an intruder, it would take them a long time to get up here, and they would be too tired out to fight.

6:30 am. We wake up to the sound of birds chirping, and my stomach, rumbling. I'm hungry and I need to feed myself. Liam and I head downstairs to find something to eat. We open the refrigerator door and find some frozen pancakes, waffles, sausage, and more. So, we decided to become chefs. It takes us an estimated 30 minutes to cook our food. I set the

table and place the food; I can see the smile on Liam's face. He has hope. Which makes me more determined.

We put on our shoes, and head to explore the outdoors, it's magical, I wish my backyard looked like this. The flowers are perfectly put together, and everything is in place. In color order.

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Second Chances

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On the 5th night we made the castle our own; by decorating and we found a PC that we have been using every night. Currently we are in the living room playing video games. We then start hearing some weird noises coming from the basement. Liam really wanted to check it out, due to him not feeling safe. So, me being the best friend and nicest. I agree, and we both head quietly downstairs. The Utility room door is open, which I have never seen open these past days. There is a red light that reflects the outside of the room. Through the hallway. There is also now smoke coming out of the room. I was always scared to enter the utility room. So, it never even crossed my mind to walk in, but that changes today.

I entered the room first, because I agreed after all. The room is very smokey, so it was hard to walk through and not trip over anything. I looked for a switch to turn on the lights, I found the light panel, so I blindly started flicking random switches. I flicked one and it turned out to be the switch for the power of the whole house. So now we are left with no power at all. Luckily, I knew where the flashlights were, since I've been down here before. So, I grabbed the flashlight, and when I did, Liam and I both heard breathing behind us. We slowly turned around and pointed the flashlight up. There she was. The girl I saw earlier in the orchestra room. I suddenly felt a breeze, a cold one, right down my spine. She seems . . . nice, I guess. Liam and I both wave in sync. Surprisingly she waves back.

She finally speaks. "Hello." That's all she said. Yes, I expected more like hello, how are you? But I guess I wouldn't say that, if I were a scary looking girl.

"Hello." Liam and I say together. I giggle because it's kind of funny that we say things in sync without having to plan it.

"Do you guys need help?"

I look over at Liam who is now behind me. "Yeah, actually we do."

"How long have you been down here?" Liam finally speaks up.

I turned back to face Liam, agreeing with what he said. Especially because I didn't think of that.

We both turn to face the girl.

"I just got here; I've been looking for you two."

"Us? Why us?"

"That doesn't matter." What she said surprised me and left me with a little feeling of suspicion. I start to back away from her.

"Follow me I know the way out."

Should we trust her? That's all I'm thinking about right now. Though she has caught Liam's attention; he really wants to get out. So, the decision I'm making is because I want to make Liam happy. Though I do have a bad feeling about this. I mean, she is pretty. What could she possibly do? Right, she would never. Right?

"Alright, fine, lead the way." I gestured for her to start walking.

We start walking, I still have a weird gut feeling, but anything to make Liam happy. Liam right now is walking alongside her; how come he doesn't feel what I feel? The lights start to flicker, with each step she takes. That's what I started to notice. That's weird, where is she even taking us? I've never been on this side of the castle. I don't think this was here, because Liam and I made sure to check out every room here.

"Liam, can I talk to you for a second?"

"Yeah, give me a second Atlas."

"Atlas?" I whisper to myself.

"What did you want to talk about Joel?"

"I Don't think we should follow her anymore."

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Second Chances

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"Why not?"

"Because haven't you registered the hints yet!"

"What hints! Joel, you're going crazy! Not everything is about your weird mysteries."

"W-what..."

"You're not mentally ok, you never are. You're always telling me your crazy stories; You're just like your dad. It's your fault I'm here, and it's not going to be your fault that I can't get out. Ok, so . . . Just let me be!"

"Liam, this isn't about mysteries at all. I'm trying to get you out of here safely. Can't you see that... I care about you?"

"If you really care about me let me leave, I'm not going to help you with your . . . whatever you're doing! I came to get you from the bathroom, not get stuck here, I'm going with Atlas, whether you like it or not."

"Liam, you need to trust me!"

"I've had enough, I need my own bed, my own house. I might even need a new best friend!"

That shattered me. Why does it hurt that he said that? It shouldn't hurt this much. I feel tears filling up my eyes. It's the fact that he compared me to my dad, my dad . . . he was a drug addict; he was very addicted, I hate when people bring up my dad. I never really talked about him since his death.

"Liam, please don't... don't go. Please!" I fell on my knees, knowing that Liam was my only best friend. The only one who cared for me. For us. Or at least he did. I watch him walk away, the only thought I had was, I need to save him. Now, and change his mind.

As a person who is very determined I start to find more clues on . . . what was her name . . . oh yeah, Atlas. Already very suspicious. I headed back to the office where I first found the stone that's now on my necklace. I check all the cabinets. I find a folder marked "KEEP HIDDEN AND OUT OF REACH". So I, obviously, open it. AHAA, I found her! Atlas Dingleberry. That's funny. imagine having the last name "Dingleberry". I need to read more. I start to read everything on the paper, I try to look for a birth certificate, I find one all the way at the bottom. "Atlas Dingleberry born... UNKNOWN! What . . . unknown? What could this mean? I need to find out more, and then I'll warn Liam about this. Even if he said he didn't care about what I thought about this. I still need to give him hope. I must.

I can't seem to find real information about this girl. Weird. Then I check the other file cabinets and find a Wanted Poster that says, "Atlas Dingleberry--wanted for murder and kidnapping. Reward: \$100,000".

The moment I read "murder and . . . kidnapping", my heart sinks down to my feet and horror builds up in my eyes. I read the bold letters: Atlas: not human.

"Oh no... I must get to Liam now." My eyes fill with determination and a feeling of rage, it's not even about the amount of money I would get, it's about saving Liam.

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Second Chances

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I shoved the papers into my backpack and ran towards Liam. Down the stairs, through the door, and . . . wait . . . the door it's . . . it's not there anymore. The door was here a minute ago; how come it disappeared? This can't be happening, I . . . I was too late. There must be some sort of secret button or lever, like in the movies, there is always a book that you just must pull, and the door opens. Aha, exactly what I wanted to see, a bookshelf. I pulled every book that was on that bookshelf until I got to the other side of this wall.

uddenly, the floor starts to rumble, I turn around and, Bam! The wall cuts into half and opens. I quickly grab my backpack and pick up a heavy rock that was conveniently right next to the bookshelf and place it in-between the wall so it wouldn't close. Because I. Will. Be. Back.

I start to walk through the hallways, being very cautious with each step, because you never know, there can be hidden traps. Anywhere. I started to hear muffled noises and knew I had to check it out immediately. I head into the closet quietly, and I see Liam tied up onto a chair, with his mouth taped shut. I could feel my mouth open with a silent scream and my eyes widening in horror. Liam's eyes glare at me with sudden terror. I could feel his heart get taken by a hand of fear. I signal for him to not draw attention towards me, so that I can free him.

I see that Atlas is distracted with something. I couldn't quite make out what she was doing or even looking at. So, I took my chance and silently ran towards Liam. I hugged Liam. I could feel his heart beating alongside my temple. "You're going to be OK, Liam, I promise," I say with a shaky breath, unsure of how we will make it out, but knowing we will get out of here no matter what. I searched my backpack for a pocketknife; I found it on my way here. I cut through the rope as fast as I could, while looking over at Atlas every 30 seconds to make sure we're safe. When I free Liam, he jumps on me, happy that he is free. Though when I fell back, the pocketknife slipped from my hands and made a sound once it hit the ground. Liam doesn't notice the sound. I do. That's when I see Atlas slowly turning around to face us. "Liam . . . uh . . . Liam I don't mean to ruin our moment but. . . turn around," I whispered into his ear.

"What do you mean?"

"J-just turn around, slowly if you must." I brace myself for Liam's iconic scream, which he usually only lets out when he is petrified. Though this time we both screamed. Liam quickly gets up, and he helps me get up. I grab my backpack and grab Liam's wrist. "RUN! Liam RUN!"

"RIGHT BEHIND YOU!"

We ran towards the walls that I split open with the book and thankfully I left the rock in between because we had no time to waste. We squeezed through the walls and took the rock out of there to create some sort of gap between us and Atlas.

"What just happened . . ."

"I don't know, but there is no time to waste. We need a plan, something that we've never thought we would ever do," I say as I take out my notebook to plan things out. But before I could write anything down, we hear banging and we see fingers over the door.

The door is being opened by . . . Atlas! I dropped my pencil and book and sprinted with Liam. I fell and I felt someone breathing down my neck, I turned around slowly to see Atlas breathing heavily. The stone on my necklace vibrates each time I get closer to her. A light shines through the necklace lighting up Atlas' face. Atlas reaches for the necklace. The moment she does, I back away. After all, I was the one who found it, and I wasn't ready to give it away just yet.

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Second Chances

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When I got back up, Atlas got mad and reached for it again. I didn't let her get near. So, I ran and followed Liam out. I clutched my necklace tightly in my hands. There is no time for stopping. Atlas was right behind us. My grip on the necklace was getting slightly tighter each time Atlas got closer. Could this necklace be connected to her? What does the necklace mean?

I could start to feel every step Atlas takes when chasing us. My adrenaline is high. Liam runs outside so, I follow him out, but right behind us appears Atlas. We can't escape her somehow; she just runs faster. We turn to face her and that's when she shoots electricity over at me, using just her fingers. I fell back. When I woke up, I saw Liam looking down at me. I instinctively reached for my necklace; I couldn't feel it. It wasn't there. "Oh no. . . no-no-no-no."

"What happened?" Liam asks with genuine worry.

"Where is it?" I got back up looking for it.

"Where's what?"

I turned around to see Atlas holding the necklace, smirking. Caressing the necklace. "All mine now. You thought I was going to help you get out. Hahaha. Me? Help you out? Yeah, no. All I needed was this necklace. Now it's time to get rid of you two. Should've listened to your buddy Joel."

Liam turns to face me. He mouths *I'm sorry*. I can tell he is now even more scared because, well, he just watched me get electrocuted by a girl who isn't even real. I am now more determined than ever. "Give that back now!"

"Oh this? Why should I, Joel?" She holds up the necklace and puts it in front of my face, then takes it away, putting it on her neck.

"Because I found it!?"

"Oh, hahahahaha, you found it for me. Ever since you entered, I followed you right in. Being a human is exhausting, I needed to come back from where I came from, which is here. Any monster that walks through the woods and finds that cave can walk into the human universe and become an undercover human, but they can't come back until they lure someone that is human to fall into the trap of the "The pretty girl" look, which you did. Ha.Ha.Ha. Now me and the rest of us "monsters" can take over your world."

"What do you mean, 'take over your world? How can you possibly do that?"

"Yeah, that's terrible, you have this big place where you guys live, why do you need more?" Liam says, clearly on my side.

"Oh, I know this place is big, but your humans have a way larger population, and that will make us, way larger and stronger because we turn them into creatures like us."

"You can't possibly do that." Liam turns to face me. "Can you?"

"It's possible, but you just told us your plan, so we can stop it."

"I know I told you my plan, but you two are idiots, or at least he is." She points at Liam.

"Hey! I have an B in Chemistry, and my GPA is a 3.5, I'm getting there!" Liam says defensively.

"That's not the point! Listen, you versus us. C'mon Liam." I grabbed Liam and ran away.

"Those kids don't know what's to them."

Liam and I stop running and turn to see Atlas and some other creatures running into the forest. We decided to follow so we stayed close behind. We see them at a big cave placing the rock into a slit, which then opens the portal. We quickly entered before it closed.

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Second Chance

From Page 13

"Are you sure we want to do this, Joel?"

"Yes! We need to save them. We must!"

"Fine, but this time, it better work."

We walk into the portal right behind Atlas and her friends. They head straight towards the town's hospital. What does she want from the hospital? So many different thoughts. I hear cries for help, and then I hear it. Her laugh.

"Liam, run if you see her." Liam just nods, knowing that this can't be good. "We might need to split ways..."

"We can't. Have you ever watched horror movies? When we separate, one person dies, or we all die!"

"Liam, I promised you I would get you out of here safely. I won't break the promise." I started to walk in the direction where we heard the noise. It led us into a hospital room; we enter quietly being very aware of our surroundings. We see someone turning around, and of course it just had to be Atlas. Atlas and a whole gang of other monsters start to charge towards us. Liam and I immediately sprint out of the room. Out of breath but I'm still managing to push my legs to go further. Good thing Liam decided to do track for three years throughout high school. I should've listened to him when he wanted me to do it with him, but I'm too lazy.

"Run faster Joel, there's no time to have random thoughts!!!"

That ruined my daydream, but hey, at least he doesn't want the monsters to kill me. Why am I not focusing on helping my town? I'm being selfish. I stopped running. Liam notices me stopping and stops himself.

"Joel! What in the world are you doing?"

I glare at Atlas and the others, planning something quick in my head. I know just what to do. I run up to Atlas but she gets triggered and runs as well; she runs outside towards the town. She throws the stone up and shouts. "ACTIVATE!"

Activate? What is that going to do? The sky quickly turns red, suddenly it starts storming. Red lightning striking houses, one by one. I stepped back. Liam, mesmerized but scared, behind me. The stone. It meant something, all along I thought I just found some rusty rock, but I get it now. Atlas, the monsters, the vibrations from the stone, the flashes. It all makes sense now. Atlas and the others need the stone to be able to run this town, to be able to attack, to be able to kill humans but bring them back to life just as monsters. In a couple hours, she could have this town under her control. That's no good. No good at all. Now that I know what the stone really means, it's time to put in some action.

I run towards Liam. I explained to him my theory and he starts to catch on. I knew I wasn't going crazy. Liam decides to help me; we make out a plan on a piece of paper and are both determined. Lots of going back and forth for the perfect plan. Ding. That's when I get the perfect plan. I quickly drew it simply enough for Liam to understand. He nods smiling. "Game. On."

We gather some flashlights, pocketknife's, rope, and a first aid kit. "Ready?"

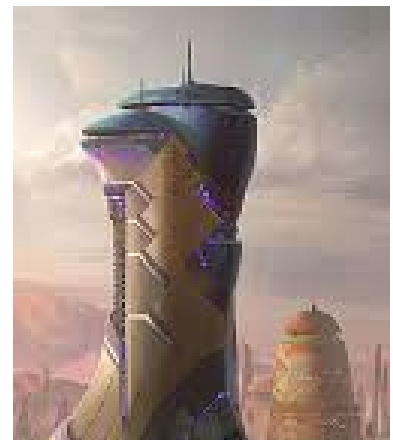
"Ready."

Liam and I run outside and see a tower which have never seen before. We assume it was Atlas' lair and quickly climb up all the stairs. Who needs this many stairs? We reach the top.

"Oh," Liam says kind of laughing. He points to the elevator.

"Bruh, you're joking, I did not just climb up those stairs for no dang rea-"

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Second Chance

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Liam cuts me off covering my mouth and telling me to get down. We hide behind the pillars. I hear footsteps and now that I have heard them so many times, I know it's Atlas. "Liam we can't get scared, we can't be afraid. I'm going in."

"I'll go with you!"

"No, stay. Be on the lookout and call me on the walkie talkie when you see something ok?"

"Alright, please be safe, please."

I nod and open the doors to enter Atlas' territory, a dangerous territory that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemies to encounter. I enter and I see Atlas putting on the necklace with the stone on it. I run and jump on her, taking the necklace.

"You little brat! Give that back, It's mine!"

"I found it, and you don't deserve it! You're doing things that shouldn't be done. I didn't get my way the first time. You did. Now. It's my turn." I reach for my rope in my backpack and tie her hands with it, I grab the necklace and put it around my neck. I then walked out of the room. "I'm sorry Atlas, I really am, but I must do what's right, not just for me or you, but this town. When I finish making everything right, I'll come back and help you find yourself and become the person everyone wants to be. I promise."

I leave and meet up with Liam, I show him the necklace; we run outside. "Ready, just say 'activate'." He nods, and shows a weak smile.

Before throwing the stone, I bring it up to my heart and wish for it to make this town how it was before. Then I throw it into the air.

"ACTIVATE!" we both say, hoping it'll work. The sky turns blue gradually, Liam turns to face me, smiling.

"We did it!!" Liam exclaimed, while looking at families gathering back together.

"We did. But we're not finished. Let's go find Atlas."

"Find Atlas? Why do we need to find her? She caused this."

I face away from him. "Everyone deserves a second chance, just like how you gave me one when I wanted to get you out of here."



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