



“I love this wacky game!” shouted Kyle Keeley.

He probably shouldn’t’ve been shouting, because he was in the middle school library playing video games with his friends Akimi Hughes, Sierra Russell, and Miguel Fernandez.

Actually, he probably shouldn’t’ve been playing games on a library computer, either. This was supposed to be his “independent reading” time.

But just the night before, while watching his former classmate Haley Daley’s new TV show, *Hey, Hey, Haley*, on the Kidzapalooza Network, Kyle had seen a commercial for Mr. Lemoncello’s new *What Else Do You See?* It was an online puzzle game filled with fast-flipping, high-flying animated optical illusions.

Was it fun? “Fun?” Haley chirped at the end of the commercial. “Hell-o? It’s a Lemon-cell-o!”

Kyle just had to try it. As soon as possible! (Which turned out to be “independent reading” time.)

“This is level one,” he said as a puzzler popped onto the screen with a ticking ten-second countdown clock.



“Easy,” said Akimi, typing as fast as she could on the keyboard. “A vase and two faces. Or a candlestick holder. That vase could be a candlestick holder.”

“It’s a classic,” said Sierra, who was something of a bookworm and brainiac. “Optical illusions are an excellent tool for studying visual perception.”

“Or, you know, having fun,” said Kyle.

Akimi hit return. The screen exploded into pixelated confetti, which settled to spell out “Congratulications!”

“Let’s move up to level two!” said Akimi, eager for more.

“You guys?” said Miguel, glancing toward the librarian. (He was president of the school’s Library Aide Society.)

“We should probably go back to reading our books ”

“In a minute,” said Kyle, clacking the keyboard. A fresh optical illusion appeared: a road sign. The timer started counting down from ten again.



“That’s just Idaho,” said Miguel. He couldn’t resist the lure of a Lemoncello game, even though he knew he should. “See? ‘I-D-A-H-O’!”

“What about an old guy?” asked Kyle.

“Nope,” said Akimi. “It’s just Idaho.”

She hit enter.

A buzzer *SCRONK*ed.

“Okay. My bad.”

“Do the next one!” urged Sierra.

Sierra Russell never used to get all that excited playing games. But then she met Kyle Keeley and the legendary game maker Luigi L. Lemoncello.

Kyle clicked the mouse. Up came a new image and a new ten-second timer.



“A woman’s face!” said Sierra.

“Nope,” said Akimi. “A saxophone player with a ginormous nose. No, wait. You’re right. It’s a woman’s face. Nope. Saxophone player with a big nose . . .”

“It all depends on how you look at it,” said Miguel.

“Type in ‘woman!’” said Sierra.

“Nope,” said Kyle. “‘Saxophone dude.’”

“‘Woman!’” shouted Miguel. “No. Wait. Both!”

One more thing Kyle and his friends probably shouldn’t’ve been doing? Talking so loudly.

Because Mrs. Yunghans, the middle school librarian, strolled over to see what all the noise was about.

And Charles Chilton was right behind her.



“I thought you four were back here reading books,” said Mrs. Yunghans, sounding disappointed in the students who had made her a school-librarian legend by winning so many games inside Mr. Lemoncello’s library.

“I know that’s precisely what I was doing, Mrs. Yunghans,” said Charles. He was always super polite in front of adults. “And, if I may, I now understand why *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane is considered to be such an abiding, archetypical, and ageless classic.”

Charles also liked to use big words. The more the merrier.

“You know you just said the same thing three times, right?” said Akimi.

“Well, at least I wasn’t playing mindless video games, as you miscreants and ne’er-do-wells indubitably were.”

Charles Chilton (and his family) had been out to

get Kyle and his friends ever since Kyle's idol, the genius game maker Luigi Lemoncello, had returned to his hometown of Alexandriaville, Ohio, to build the most spectacular, technologically advanced, and awesometastic library ever built anywhere. So far, Charles had been embarrassed every time he tried to beat them at the library, so now he was trying to defeat them at school.

Mrs. Yunghans shook her head. "It is so sad to see you, my four library superstars, playing video games instead of reading books. *Et tu*, Sierra?"

"That's from Shakespeare, isn't it, Mrs. Yunghans?" said Charles.

"Yes. *Julius Caesar*."

"My, you certainly are extremely well read. That must be why you're such an excellent librarian."

"Thank you, Charles."

"But, Mrs. Yunghans," said Kyle, "this isn't any ordinary video game. Hell-o? It's a Lemon-cell-o!" He tried to trill it like Haley did in the commercials.

It wasn't working.

"Mr. Keeley?" The librarian gave Kyle a look that made his dimples wither.

"Yes, ma'am?"

"There's a time and a place for everything."

"So true," said Charles. "And might I just add, this is definitely the time and place for me to admire your sweater vest! It's so incredibly well crafted. Did you knit it yourself, Mrs. Yunghans?"

"Why, yes, I did. Now, where was I?"

"I believe you were just about to issue Kyle, Akimi, Miguel, and, sadly, even Sierra, three detentions each," said Charles.

"Wha-hut?" gasped Akimi. "Three?"

"I've never had even one detention before," said Sierra.

"And why was I about to do that?" said Mrs. Yunghans.

"Because," said Charles, "these students were disobeying your direct orders to read a book, while using library computers to play"—he put his fist to his lips like he might be ill—"a video game!"

Mrs. Yunghans sighed. "I'm sorry, guys. I expect more from you as role models." She picked up a pen and a pink pad.

A detention meant they'd have to stay an hour after school.

"Mrs. Yunghans?" said Kyle.

"Yes, Kyle?"

"This was my fault. I'm the one who downloaded the game. I'm the one who convinced everybody else to quit reading and start playing. Akimi, Miguel, and Sierra were only breaking the rules because of me. Give me the three detentions. I earned them. But these guys are innocent."

"I admire your honesty, Kyle," said the librarian.

"Kyle should get five detentions instead of three!" blurted Charles.

"Explain your math," demanded Akimi.

“Easy. He admits he was the agitator. The rabble-rousing ringleader. The chief mischief-maker.”

Akimi rolled her eyes. “You do know you’re saying the same thing over and over, right?”

“Because it needs to be said! Let the punishment fit the crime, Mrs. Yunghans. If you don’t, you’re paving the path to anarchy!”

Mrs. Yunghans considered what Charles had said. “Charles is correct, Kyle. Playing video games on library computers during reading time?”

She shook her head and turned the “3” on the pad into a “5” with a sideways flick of her pen.

Kyle would be staying after school for five days—a whole school week.

Charles smirked. In their never-ending competition, he had just pulled ahead of Kyle by slamming him with a dreaded “Go to Detention” card.

And there was nothing Kyle could do about it.

At least not on this turn!



Five seconds later, the bell rang.

Kyle and his friends gathered up their stuff. Charles stayed back with the librarian.

“If you have a free moment, Mrs. Yunghans, I’d love to discuss making a few changes to the Library Aide Society. Miguel has been president for so long. He’s done an acceptable job, I suppose, but you and I both know we could do better ”

“Um, I’m right here, Chiltoning,” said Miguel. “I can hear you.”

Charles ignored him. “Let me help you reshelve those books .....

Pushing a library cart loaded down with book returns, Charles disappeared into the stacks with Mrs. Yunghans.

“Dudes?” said Miguel, shaking his head. “I officially hate that guy.”

“I don’t know what I’m going to tell my parents,” said Kyle when he and his friends regrouped in the cafeteria for lunch. Andrew Peckleman joined them.

“I wouldn’t tell them if I were you,” suggested Peckleman, talking through his nose and adjusting his goggle-sized glasses. “Telling them would just be stupid.”

“Can you believe the way Chilington was trash-talking me?” said Miguel.

“He’s such a suck-up,” said Akimi.

“You guys,” said Sierra, chewing her lip. “Maybe there’s something about Charles that we’re missing. Some reason he acts the way he does.”

“You mean like a jerk?” said Kyle.

“Easy,” said Akimi. “His jerkiness combined with his jerkitude and jerkosity.”

“Have any of you read *To Kill a Mockingbird*?” Sierra asked.

“It’s in my TBR pile,” said Kyle, who had the tallest stack of books to be read of any of his friends.

“Well, it’s like Atticus says to Scout: ‘You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.’ ”

“Walk around in Charles Chilington’s skin?” said Miguel. “Gross.”

“The guy’s such a slimy snake,” said Kyle, “he probably sheds his skin on a regular basis.”

Everybody at the table cracked up.

But Kyle knew Charles would have the last laugh. When school was over, Kyle would have to report to room 101.

Detention. The time-out box on the board game called middle school.

Fortunately, detention only lasted an hour. He’d still be home in plenty of time to catch *The Buzz Show* on Kidzapalooza. It was only a five-minute program. Mostly gossip and news about movies, music, fads, and celebrities. Haley Daley, who grew up in Alexandriaville and had competed in the very first escape game at Mr. Lemoncello’s library, was on it all the time. So were other Kidzapalooza stars, like Kai Kumar, Gabrielle Grande, Peyton McCallister, and everybody’s favorite cooltastic dude, Jaylen Swell.

But today, there’d be an extra-special guest on *Buzz*: Mr. Luigi L. Lemoncello.

Rumor had it, Mr. L was all set to make some sort of major announcement.

Probably about a new game.

And Kyle was going to be home in time to watch it—no matter what!