

**Antagonists Challenge Protagonists to Grow and Succeed in Micol Ostow's
*Julie and the Phantoms: The Edge of Great***

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Abstract:

The protagonist of a novel will always face challenges by the antagonist. It will always be a challenge for the protagonist to succeed in life. In the novel *Julie and the Phantoms: The Edge of Great*, Julie is the main protagonist who faces many hurdles to succeed in life. She is confronted with a number of opposing forces towards her growth. Generally, antagonist is viewed as a barrier but the serve as a catalyst for character development. This paper attempts to explore how the protagonist faces many external antagonisms which affects the growth of the protagonist. The protagonist also faces many failures but these makes the protagonist to keep trying. By seeing all this shows how antagonist shape the protagonist life towards growth and success.

Keywords: Antagonist, Protagonist, Challenges, Fear, Self growth, Temptation.

Introduction:

Micol Ostow is an American novelist, editor, and storyteller also specialised in middle-grade and young adult literature. She also developed a successful career which includes original books, licensed properties and so on. Her humour, psychological, love and culture combine to create a unique approach that make both contemporary and genre works. Most of her works focus on themes like family, identity and self-discovery. She also writes novels inspired by web series. Some of her works are *Emily Goldberg learns to salsa* (2006), *So Punk rock* (2009), *My New Crush gave to me* (2017), *Life on the Edge* (2013), *Julie and the Phantoms: The Edge of Great* and so on.

The novel *Julie and the Phantoms: The Edge of Great* was published in the year 2020, which is a written extract of web series. It is a beautiful novel about family and re-building one's life. This is a great music fantasy novel. In this novel the author also focusses on the antagonist view on how it affects and makes the protagonist grow.

In literature the antagonist not only oppose the protagonist but also, they promote and develop a self-growth in the protagonist life. In *Julie and the Phantoms: The Edge of great*, Julie was completely alone in her life after her mother's death. But because of the competitive force created by the antagonist, she could again find her true identity, confidence and focus on her self-growth.

External Antagonist:

Julie, the novel's main protagonist, had several tribulations at the hands of two antagonistic individuals. Like Julie, Alex, Reggie, and Luke, the novel's phantoms, experienced several challenges in their quest for success. The two antagonists are Carrie and Caleb Covington. Carrie is a real-world competitor, whereas Caleb Covington is a supernatural antagonist.

Julie and Carrie were once best friends, but there was always a competition between them. Carrie is constantly cunning toward Julie. She always considers Julie a failure.

“Here you go,” she said, gliding up to me and thrusting a flyer in my face. She ignored Flynn's disgusted look. “My group's performing at the spirit rally tomorrow.” She gave me a withering once-over. “I'm sure you guys have nothing better to do.” (12)

Carrie always thinks that she is a better person and great singer and she always kind a mock at Julie. Carrie was famous because of her musician father and has a boyfriend named Nick, secret crush of Julie. Julie is a great singer and a pianist but after her mother's death everything turned upside down and now, she is been in a last trail at her school music band. On entering the room Julie see's Carrie sitting in the front row. It was her turn to play but when the moment came, she was overwhelmed by the memories of her mother that blocked her from proving herself. So, she got up and said that she can't play but in spite that, she could hear Carrie saying "Is this is the part when we clap?" (16). Carrie takes advantage of each opportunity to criticize Julie.

Julie being unable to join the school music club, goes back home very depressed, felt hard to express the feeling to her father. For the betterment of Julie's mental health her father decides to move to different place so that Julie would not miss her mother. Though Julie's mother was a musician, she has set up a small studio in their garage. Julie's father requests her to clean the musical garage since it will help him to take good pictures and sell the house. However, every time Julie enters the studio, she is constantly disturbed by her mother's sentiments, but she faces them and goes in to clean the garage. While cleaning she found a box with lots of musical stuff, in it she finds a CD written sunset curve along with t-shirt. Julie got curious to know the music from the CD, so when she played it, suddenly there appeared three phantoms which literally shook her.

The phantoms identified themselves as members of the sunset curve band. When she googles it, she realizes that they are phantoms who died in 1995 after eating a hotdog. But now it's 2020. She claims they died several years ago, yet it feels like they just ate that hotdog. The phantoms introduced themselves as Alex, Reggie, and Luke. By seeing the piano in the studio Reggie asked Julie whether she plays piano, instantly she replied that it belonged to her mother.

After finishing the cleaning, she returns home, where her aunt arrives and notifies everyone that Julie is no longer in the school band. Her father was surprised and questioned her about why she didn't tell him, but he eventually understands. The next morning, they heard music in the garage and listened silently from outside, to their amazement, Julie was playing the piano with the notation on it. Later that day, she tells Flynn that she played the piano, and they both decides to go to school and request for second chance. However, the teacher will not accept. Evening when she returns home, Luke encourages her to return to the

music club by singing a song called Bright, composed by sunset curve. Julie approaches Flynn and tells her about her plans to sing and show to Mrs. Harrison that she is capable of rejoining the Band.

Carrie performed in a musical show at school, and her team's name was dirty candy. After the show, Julie wanted to perform and showcase her talent, as well as prove everyone especially Carrie, who had always derided her, that she could play music. "Before my legs could become fully formed blocks of ice, I ran for the keyboard. I sat down, hovering my fingers over the Keys" (67). She was afraid to sing, but her best friend encouraged her, and she stepped on stage and began to sing. The moment Julie began to sing, the phantoms joined her; as they sang, everyone witnessed them. Once they finished performing, the band ceased to exist and no one could see them.

"Then the gym *exploded* in a chorus of applause and wild cheering. All those eyes that were trained on me were smiling, encouraging me, telling me they believed in me" (69). Mrs. Harrison came up after the song and told Julie that they were delighted to have her back in the school band. Everyone cheered with enthusiasm, and Flynn felt overwhelmed when Julie got back into the same band. Everyone was amazed to watch her performance. "Carrie and her Dirty Candi bandmates glared at me, curious and obviously hating themselves for it" (70). They couldn't accept the way she performed and conquered Julie's insecurity. "Carrie shot her a *zip it* look, but I could have swept her up and kissed her. "Yes!" I blurted" (71). In contrast, Julie now felt more confident in seeing Carrie and showcasing her progress in front of everyone at school. So, everyone thought Julie sang with a hologram band. She says the same thing to Flynn, but she denies to accept it.

One day, Alex walks out alone and encounters Willie, a friend. He also happened to be a ghost. He initially believed Alex had gone through a lifer, but he later revealed that he was a ghost. Then Alex tells him that he and his bandmates collapsed after eating a hotdog, as well as talked about Julie and how people can see them when they play with her.

Julie now rushes home and tells her father that she has been accepted into the school's music program, which makes him ecstatic. Now she heads to the garage to see the phantoms, where they happily announce that Julie, Alex, Reggie, and Luke together would form a band. Meanwhile, Flynn returns home in search of Julie, but she could see Julie conversing in the garage, as if she is alone. Flynn exploded when Julie revealed that they were ghosts rather than holograms. To console Flynn, they sing a song written by Julie about Flynn while she

was with her during her solitary days. While Flynn observed with her own eyes, she believes they are ghosts, not holograms. Flynn became persuaded of Julie after listening to the song.

Next day, Julie and Flynn go to school. She felt stronger and more confident than ever “Not only stronger than before-stronger than *ever*. For the past year, I’d walked the halls of school like *I* was practically a ghost. But not anymore. Now I danced down the halls and all my friends joined in” (95). Flynn made public that she will be her band’s marketing staff and has distributed a flier stating “*Julie and her Hologram Band-tonight at the dance!*” (97) which was pretty shocking for Julie. After school, she ran home to observe Luke’s response to their show at school. On hearing the news, the phantoms became happy about their opportunity to perform. However, Alex was nowhere to be seen. In order to give an astonishing performance, they started practicing, not knowing the whereabouts of Alex. But Alex was hanging out with Willie, doing ghost stuff together. While they were practicing, Alex poofed back. Julie now showed them one of her and her mother’s favourite songs, by Trevor Wilson. To their surprise, it was the legendary song by sunset curve, when they view the photo, they realized it was Trevor, another sunset curve bandmate who, being a vegetarian, did not eat the hotdog and survived. Initially Julie guessed that these spirits were tied to her mother, but she now discovers that they are linked to Carrie’s father. They became really upset with Trevor and wanted to teach him a lesson. But Alex, Reggie, and Luke obtain a second chance to join a band and play alongside Julie. They decided to visit Trevor’s house and torment him and Trevor got terrified. Luke, Alex and Reggie felt so heavy that Trevor took full credit for their efforts.

Julie reminded them that they’d compose new songs with her to show Trevor that they have potential. The phantoms felt they could get some help from Willie in ghost stuff, so they decided to visit Willie first, and then they could rush back to Julie for the performance. They found Willie in a park and discussed about lifers. Willie said he had no idea, but he knew a ghost who could help them. So, he urged them to come to the Hollywood Ghost Club where they went to meet him. When they went there the room was packed with lifers, and Willie said that everyone would pay a high price to be here after death. And now comes Caleb Covington the founder of Hollywood Ghost Club. He was singing, dancing and everyone was having a good time; he could make the ghost visible to the lifers. Caleb appeared unexpectedly behind them and introduced himself. He was already aware that Alex, Reggie, and Luke are visible to Julie, and when they perform with her, they are visible to everyone.

Alex, Luke and Reggie liked spending time with him. Meanwhile, Julie and Flynn are ready and Flynn was keeping the crowd engaged in dance with her DJ Skills. But Alex, Luke and Reggie were not there. Julie was expecting them for a long time. Nick and Carrie have also come there but Julie couldn't face her. Nick took the mic and said, it's time to off the music and listen to Julie and the Phantoms but immediately Julie took the mike and said that there is some problem with the hologram so the show is been cancelled.

“Almost as quickly as Carrie's response. “Only one way to save this dance. Party at my house!

Nick shot me pleading look, but Carrie hooked an arm through his and led him off, with the crowd cheering again, now.

But this time, they were cheering for Carrie.” (125)

Alex, Luke, and Reggie all turned against Julie. They were having a good time at Caleb's place. Willie stated that Caleb provides anyone who come here with a lifetime membership so they may enjoy this forever. But they wondering why they didn't cross-over, to which Willie replied that if they could enjoy this for the rest of their lives, why would they? Caleb now approaches Alex, Luke, and Reggie, inviting them to join his band. But Luke said that they already had a band. Caleb stated that if they perform with him, they will be seen to everyone and will be greeted with cheers and clapping. He replied he'd give them some time to think about it. At that time the bell struck 12 and Caleb said “The haunting hour is upon us!” (129).

Until then they didn't realize they had missed the performance with Julie in her school. Caleb returned and enquired about the deal. However, they stated that they already have their own band. Caleb stated that the Hollywood Ghost Club is always open for them. Alex, Luke and Reggie waved a good bye to Caleb, meanwhile Caleb,

“Caleb grabbed him by the wrist, pressing his own wrist to it. Then he did the same Alex, and Reggie while I watched, my stomach filling with lead. They each jumped a little bit when he made contact with them

He pulled his hand back and the guys turned their wrists over, seeing the initials HGC now seared into their shimmering skin” (130).

He stated that it was only a club stamp. They were unable to perform with Julie since they were attending Caleb's show. Then they went back to visit Julie and said they were ready to perform. But she asked whether there was anything wrong with Carrie's father that caused you to be late, and they responded no. Julie was furious when they abandoned her, and they admitted it was a mistake.

The next day, she goes to school and attends dance class, where Mrs. Kelly assigned Nick as her partner. They were both doing a joyful dance. Alex, Luke, and Reggie were discussing about Julie's departure and how they hoped she would return to band. Reggie stated that even if she does not return, they have Caleb's place to perform, but Luke responded that they already have that with Julie. At the same time, three of them experienced an electric jolt in their wrists so they rushed to find Julie. They spotted her at school and sang a song to calm Julie and stated they had booked a show. To confirm that Julie snatched the flier from them, saying how important this gig is to you, as is my school performance.

Finally, Julie, Alex, Luke, and Reggie reunited and created the band Julie and the Phantoms. Julie got imprisoned in the room after lying to her father, but Luke came and snatched her through the window for a star-making performance. Carrie was there at the school, and Julie took the mic and sang in front of the audience, with the entire band. Unfortunately, as she finished singing, her father came and brought her home. And when they got home, Julie expressed how important singing was to her. Later, her father agreed and prepared up a show at their house with You Tube live streaming. All the people who came to watch the gig had a great time. The next day, Alex noticed Willie peeking from outside and came in to confess about the Stamp on their hands, which was designed to keep them under Caleb's control eternally. Alex recounted to Reggie and Luke what Willie had said to him, and he felt horrible because it was all because of him. Julie remarked that if you figure out what the unfinished business is, then you can cross over. They said that the night they died, they were set to perform at the Orpheum. The more they spoke about performance or unfinished business they frequently received an electric shock in their wrist as a result of that stamp, and the severity of the shock increased with each passing day. Though, they did not have much time.

Luke, Alex and Reggie walked into The Orpheum, and Tasha was in the reception area. When she bent down to pick some paper, the phantoms did a small ghostly trick and searched for Julie and the Phantoms on YouTube, and when Tasha found that on her laptop

screen, her bewilderment was relieved, and she phoned Julie to book them for a concert at The Orpheum. “And just like that, our plan was falling into place” (186). They got overjoyed that they were scheduled to perform at The Orpheum. Caleb arrived in front of him and demanded them to accept the offer because the deadline was approaching. However, they did not accept him but the phantoms were suffering from severe jolts. Now it’s time for them to perform, but Julie can’t find them. She felt they could have gone to Caleb or crossed over. Julie considered however the show should go on so, she sat and began to sing and play the piano. Once she started playing, the boys appeared and together they gave a fantastic performance. Once they finished, they were free of Caleb’s jolts.

Conclusion:

Though Julie, Alex, Luke, and Reggie experienced several difficulties and obstacles, they saw it as a challenge to prove them wrong. Because of the antagonist characters Carrie, Caleb Covington, and Trevor, they accepted the challenge to play at The Orpheum. Carrie’s violent attitude gives Julie an opportunity to conquer her worries and embrace her musical talent. For Alex, Luke, and Reggie, the challenge of succeeding and proving to Caleb Covington and Trevor that they are better competent of what they do, helped them perform on a bigger platform. So, the antagonist has an enormous effect on the protagonist’s development. K.M. Weiland has said, The antagonist is the character (or force) that opposes the protagonist’s forward progression in pursuit of the main plot goal.

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