

SCENES FROM
THE EPIC LIFE
OF A TOTAL
GENIUS

STACEY MATSON

SEPTEMBER

September 3rd

Dear RJ,

Did you miss me? I missed having you around. Camp was crazy, but now I have the skills to make an award-winning documentary that tells all about a boy genius! Ha-ha-ha. Oh, RJ, I bet you missed my sense of humor!

I have so much to tell you, and it's not all that boring stuff like last year. I guess I could call you something else now. I kind of like RJ though. Instead of standing for "Reading Journal," maybe now RJ means "Really Juicy"—as in the gossip I have for you.

This summer was epic! For one thing, I really thought arts camp would suck, but it was pretty cool. I wish I had time to tell you all about it right now, but I'm leaving to go and hang out with my girlfriend.

That's right. I said MY GIRLFRIEND. I told you I have a lot to tell you, but you'll have to wait!

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean



Dear Eighth Graders:

Welcome back! I hope you had a restful summer and are ready for another exciting year of English class. I'm pleased to see many of the same faces as last year, and I look forward to helping you grow your skills as writers and critical thinkers.

There are things that we will need to cover as part of the curriculum, but there's some room in the year for us to focus on things that are important to you. Please write a short paragraph on what you want to get out of this class this year. What do you like about English class? What do you dislike? What are your favorite things to talk about? To write? How do you like to learn? Do you prefer to work alone, or do you like working in pairs or groups? How can this classroom be your ideal space for learning?

Due: September 6



Dear Ms. Whitehead,

You'll be pleased to know that I'm a new man this year. That's right. Things have turned around 180 degrees. No more writer's block for me. I'm literally bursting at the seams with ideas and things to write. I don't know if there's enough

paper in the world for all the awards I'm going to win for my ideas. I'm not sure how many different genres you have to be good in to win a Nobel Prize, but I'm definitely on my way to mastering the written word.

Something that I would like to do is film related. We should watch a lot of Hollywood movies so that we can write good scripts. I learned a lot about making films this summer, and I would like to write scripts for blockbusters, which requires seeing what great directors do. My girlfriend says that most movies are written by more than one person, so if we work in partners, I want to work with Robbie because we wrote a really good script together this summer, and we're making a movie this year.

If we can't work together, I would like to work alone.

I also think that I would learn more from class if we can have Fridays off, because then I can focus on what we learn the other days and have time to reflect on your teachings. My girlfriend goes to an alternative school where they have very flexible schedules, and I think our school should have those too.

I also think that my desk should be beside the window for me to have the most ideal learning space. I do my best work when I can reflect on nature.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean

Dear Arthur,

Thank you for your detailed feedback. I will do my best to accommodate everyone's wishes; however, not everyone can sit next to the window. As far as scriptwriting goes, I'm glad to hear that you've taken an interest in a new way of writing! You should consider joining the AV Club, as we won't be doing much scriptwriting and filmmaking in class. I'm pleased to hear that you and Robbie have become friends. I look forward to seeing all your creative work this year.

Ms. Whitehead



September 8th

Dear RJ,

Man, having a girlfriend takes up a lot of time. We have these really long text conversations for hours, even though it's really boring. I don't actually have that much to say.

Which reminds me—I have a new phone! Dad gave it to me when I got back from camp. It's nice of him, but it's a piece of crap—no touch screen or anything! At least I can text, but I can't do anything else on

it. I want a phone that shoots movies. It would be awesome if it shot movies in 3-D! I could make mini documentaries and go viral. I'll start with videos of Pickles. Everyone loves cat videos—that's what my girlfriend says.

Speaking of my girlfriend, you're probably wondering who she is. Her name is Anila, and I met her at camp this summer. Anila was in the Juniper cabin, and she's in eighth grade too. She lives in Calgary, but she goes to this alternative school where they never have to go to class and they spend their days doing art and making soufflés or something. She's really nice. I mean, she definitely wasn't the coolest girl at camp—there were other girls who were *awesome*—but she's super smart. She's really environmental as well. She even started a compost program for her whole school. When I came home, I tried to compost here. After a week the cupboard under the sink had maggots and flies everywhere and it stank! So my dad threw out the bucket I was using to collect food scraps, and I think he has to call someone to clean it out with industrial-strength bleach. I told him that I didn't think that would be very environmental, but he said he didn't care at all about the environment right now—not very green of him. So now I'm diluting all the soap bottles by adding water to make them last longer.

I haven't told Anila because I want her to think that I'm really environmental as well, so if I brag about it, she'll know that I wasn't environmental *before* camp started. I'll just bring it up in conversation casually the first time she comes over. I can say, "Oh, by the way, you may find that the soap is really

watery. That's because I dilute it with water to make it last longer. It's better for the environment."

I invited her for supper next weekend, which means Dad and I will have to make something from scratch and not just frozen food. I asked Nicole for help, and she said that her new boyfriend is a chef, so he's got great recipes. I'm glad she's next door. She's like my adult friend, even though she doesn't act like a real adult most of the time.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean

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dude, remmember the thing
we were talking about? i have
to talk to u about it

Did someone find out? Did you tell
someone? ROBBIE!! I knew it was a
terrible idea! I told you that already!

chill out artie. its not that big a
deal. its just i need u to keep it.

Why? I don't want it
anywhere near me!

My bro and I share a closet.
i have no wear to put it! you
HAVE to take it.

Why do I already regret this?

just remmember to keep it
a secret. itll be fine

I will never forget that!



From: Kennedy Laurel (imsocutekl@hotmail.com)

To: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)

Sent: September 8, 20:16

Hi Arthur!

I've missed you! Where have you BEEN all my life? LOL!!!! In case you were wondering, Malaysia was good, but SOOO hot LOL! It got kind of boring sometimes, but I don't think you're allowed to complain if you get to go to exotic places LOL! Anyway, I hope you had a good summer! Are you glad to be back at school? I didn't want to go back to school, but I really like getting new clothes and buying pens and paper and school supplies! I know! What a DORK LOL!!!

It's too bad that we're not in the same English class! I have Mrs. Ireland, and I've heard that she's SUPER strict! I guess we'll still see each other at the newspaper meetings, right? Do you have Mr. Everett for science this year?!? He's SUCH a dork, but I still like him! He's like the Perry White of Junior High Newspapers (FYI: I TOTALLY had to google "the editor from *Superman*" to make that joke! I'm SO geeky LOL!) Anyway, I just want to make sure you're still ALIVE! See you tomorrow at the Newspaper Club!

Kennedy ☺

From: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)

To: Kennedy Laurel (imsocutekl@hotmail.com)

Sent: September 8, 22:04

Dear Kennedy,

I missed you too! You should write a travel book or something about Malaysia. I bet you would boost their tourism by one hundred percent!

Anyway, my summer was actually good—way better than last year. Robbie and I were the most popular guys at arts camp (not surprising, ha-ha-ha), and it was actually really cool. We learned all kinds of things about filmmaking, and we're going to make a blockbuster movie. We're going to get everyone in the school to be in it, even just as extras or something. Of course you'll have to be one of the stars! We already have a really good camera. It is super expensive and does amazing things to make your shots look professional. Ms. Whitehead

suggested that we join the AV Club, which I guess we'll have to do if we want to use the editing software and stuff. It kind of sucks that we have to join because the kids in the AV Club are annoying. They think they know everything! Plus, Mrs. Ireland is in charge. If she's strict in class, I bet she's the same for AV projects. But I guess we'll do it for our art.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean

PS: I'm definitely in for the newspaper this year. Mr. Everett said last year that I could have my own opinion column this year!

PPS: Nice work on the *Superman* reference. Even if you had to google it.

From: Kennedy Laurel (imsocutekl@hotmail.com)
To: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)
Sent: September 8, 22:50

Hi Arthur!

So you're going to be a famous movie director! That's AWESOME! I can't wait to hear all about your camp adventures! I've never been to summer camp, but every book and movie about it makes it sound like there's LOADS of adventures and romance LOL! And I'll DEFINITELY be in your movie! I was born to be a star, baby!! LOL! LOL!!!

Kennedy ☺



September 9th

Dear RJ,

Well, dinner with Anila and my dad was kind of a bust. My dad seemed to be doing his best mime impression and barely said anything. Anila tried to ask him about yoga, but he didn't have anything to say. And my choice of menu was a little off. It's a good thing we had the salad, because I forgot that Anila is half-vegan, so she barely ate any of the chicken pasta, and she talked about how awful it is how chickens are raised. I didn't realize how terrible chickens have it. I just wish that they didn't taste so good. I'll have to try to be more vegan, I guess. Although I don't know what exactly a vegan is. I think it's a fancy vegetarian.

I had kind of forgotten what Anila was like. I haven't really seen her since coming back from camp. She doesn't think my jokes are hilarious (which, for the record, RJ, they are). She kind of laughs at them, but a lot of the time she pauses a long time before she laughs. I asked her about it once, and she said that she does think I'm funny, but that sometimes she doesn't get it right away because English is her second language—which is weird because her English is perfect. And she talks a lot. She actually talks almost as much as Kennedy, but about different things, like current events. It made me think that I should read the newspaper more.

Know what was the strangest part though? I'm really happy to see Anila and hang out with her, and I like getting texts from her, but I don't really think about her when she's not there. It's almost like I forget that I have a girlfriend. Is that bad?

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean



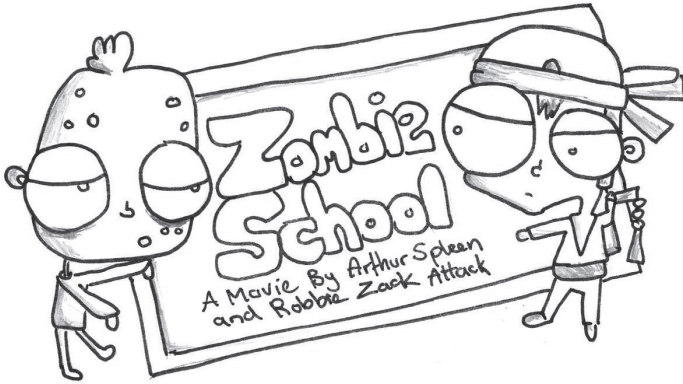
ZOMBIE SCHOOL MOVIE

by Arthur Bean and Robbie Zack

I, Arthur Bean, hereby declare an equal partnership between Robbie Zack and Arthur Bean on the making of the next Hollywood blockbuster movie, where zombie teachers take over a school and it's up to the coolest, most awesome students to destroy them and restore order to a troubled universe. We declare that we will meet every couple of weeks to write and direct our movie, where we both do equal amounts of work and both of us get credit for everything all the time, no matter whose idea it is. I decree that I promise to write down all the important things because Robbie hates doing that, and he will sketch out scenes, or, as we call them in the biz, storyboards.

It is through this official contract that we will create the greatest movie ever created by eighth graders in Canada, equally.

Signed,
Arthur Bean
Robbie Zack



Hi, Artie!

Welcome back to the Newspaper Club! With some of last year's members returning, it looks like "read" will be the hottest color at Terry Fox Junior High this year!

The eighth-and-ninth-grade band is going to Ontario (OnTerrible is more like it!—Just kidding! I'm from there!) this year for MusicFest! To help them get there, they are doing a silent auction of goods and services. Mr. Eagleson had some concerns about not getting enough people and asked if

the newspaper could help out by giving them some free advertising. Would you be able to talk to Mr. Eagleson and find out what kind of prizes they have and what MusicFest is and write something that will get students interested in bidding on their auction? That would be as grand as a piano!

Mr. E

» » »

From: Kennedy Laurel (imsocutekl@hotmail.com)
To: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)
Sent: September 12, 20:49

Hi Arthur!

A whole bunch of us are going to the mall on Saturday to hang out, like me and Jill and Catie and I think even Robbie and maybe Ben?!? Do you want to come? It's supposed to be SUPER rainy outside! Maybe the mall isn't your thing though LOL! We're probably just going to eat fries and wander around!!

Kennedy ☺

» » »

From: Anila Bhati (anila.i.bhati@gmail.com)
To: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)
Sent: September 13, 13:06

Dear Arthur,

I know you're at school right now, but I was thinking about you and thought I would write you an email! I have computer lab time right now. I was going to use it to start a letter-writing campaign to my MP, but I couldn't get focused. So, instead of doing my work, I'm writing you an email.

I was thinking about how amazing it is that we met. I mean, the chances are slim that we will ever meet someone who is so in tune with who we are, and to meet at the same camp and be from the same city—it is truly something... Remember that old oak tree at camp? You know, the one where everyone carves their initials, and you can see the people's initials disappear as the tree grows... Some people's initials are probably not even visible anymore. Let's make a promise to not be like those initials and be remembered together forever.

I was looking earlier at articles about the North. Did you hear about the polar bears? They're disappearing too. It's awful, isn't it? I'd love to know what you think... I miss talking to you about this stuff!

I can't wait to see you on Saturday. I hope we are still going to hang out! I miss you!

Love,
Anila

From: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)

To: Anila Bhati (anila.i.bhati@gmail.com)

Sent: September 13, 19:33

Dear Anila,

I'm not really sure if the tree with initials was an oak. I think that it was a different type of tree, like a spruce maybe? Oaks have leaves, and I'm pretty sure that the initial tree has needles. Also, I think you can see all the initials on it.

Anyway, your email is really nice. I can't wait to see you either. I was thinking of going to the mall on Saturday, but I know you hate it, so I can do that before we hang out. It's supposed to rain on Saturday. Also, I've been reading stuff in school about oil spills, and they are really bad for the environment too! We can talk about that if you want to.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean

From: Anila Bhati (anila.i.bhati@gmail.com)

To: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)

Sent: September 13, 21:09

Dear Arthur,

I prefer to think of the tree as an oak. The symbolism is more powerful. I'll call it poetic license. ☺

You're right. I do hate the mall. There's just so much to buy and there's no need for any of it! I could meet you there though, if you have to go. Then we could go to the

park. Or, actually, there's this thing...a few people from school were talking about cleaning up the park nearby. We could do that!

I also read this M. T. Anderson book this week. It was very bleak, and the future is so overwhelmed by advertising and technology that there are Internet feeds literally inside the brains of the characters. Maybe I'll bring it for you to borrow. I think you will appreciate the social message.

Love,
Anila

From: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)
To: Anila Bhati (anila.i.bhati@gmail.com)
Sent: September 14, 8:12

Dear Anila,

Let's not meet at the mall. I can get the stuff I need there later. I don't want you to have to go and be bored.

I've read that book, I think. Is it *Feed*? I liked it. It was really funny the way language was all screwed up.

See you on Saturday.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean



dude too bad u didnt come to the mall. it was fun.

I really wanted to come!
What did you guys do?

Hey, I'm just curious, but is Kennedy dating anyone right now? She never said anything. I'm just curious. No reason.

u missed out. kennedys brother was there 4 a bit tho + he's a total turd. how was ur gramma?

Hey, do you want to hang out and plan the movie tomorrow? My dad can drop me off and pick me up.



Assignment: Description and Imagery

I've asked you to bring in three objects that each have personal meaning for you. Choose one of these objects and write a short piece about its importance. Make sure that you describe it: What does it look like? What does it feel like? Does it have a taste? A smell? Why is it important?

Due: September 24



September 17th

Dear RJ,

Kennedy actually came and sat with me and Robbie at lunch for a bit. I mean, not for the whole lunch, but she sat down at our table and talked to us about the AV Club. She said that Mr. Everett was thinking that she should write a piece for the newspaper about some of the clubs people could join and he wants the AV Club on the list. The thing is, Robbie and I aren't sure that we want a bunch of nerds joining our project. What if they have really terrible ideas? So I told her that we aren't letting people in except by invitation only.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean



The Day the Band Went Silent

by Arthur Bean

This is the end of the concert band at Terry Fox Junior High.

That is, it could be if they don't get the support and money for their band trip. The senior concert band is in dire need of

some money to help get them to Ontario to compete in this year's MusicFest, a national competition of junior high concert bands that is held every other year in Ottawa, Ontario. Terry Fox Junior High has been invited to compete in this battle of the bands, but they can't go without help from the rest of the school.

Older students will probably remember last year's fundraising attempt, a time that will forever be referred to as the Culturally Insensitive Christmas Wrapping Paper Debacle. This year Mr. Eagleson is hoping that a silent auction will bring in the money that the band desperately needs.

A *silent* auction, you say? Auctions are typically held with a fast-talking auctioneer. A silent auction requires bidders to write down the bid for their item on a piece of paper. Each bid must be higher than the bid written down before it. On the final day, the last bid on each piece of paper will be the winner. The silent auction will run from October 10 until October 19, when the winners will be announced. The auction will also be open during parent-teacher interviews on the evenings of October 17 and 18.

Mr. Eagleson said that there are some great items up for auction. A list of items can be found on page three. Remember: IF you don't buy something, a piece of the arts will die.

Hiya, Artie!

*This is a little extreme, don't you think?
Don't get me wrong, buddy, I like the way
you make the arts important, but I'm not
sure that this is the right tone for a piece
where we want people to buy things! I really
like the paragraph explaining how a silent
auction works, and your sly wink to last*

year's Christmas paper fund-raiser made me smile. But let's work on this article at lunch and see if we can't strike a different chord for the band! ☺

Cheers!

Mr. E

Dear Mr. Everett,

Remember how last year we talked about how I had such a strong voice in my writing that I would do a great job at having my own column? I just thought this would be a good time to start running that as a regular feature in the newspaper. We have a new generation of news readers, Mr. Everett, and I know they will appreciate my unique perspective. Without it, the news is so boring! If you like, I could focus on one thing, like writing about movies. I'm learning so much about them, and I'm sure people would appreciate an insider's view of filmmaking.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean

Hi, Artie!

I'm not sure about having your own column, but let's see what you do with a perspective piece! As you know, the annual

Terry Fox Run is coming up. Since its inception, our school has been a benchmark for participation in the run, and I'm really hoping that you can write a piece for the paper. On your mark, get set, go!

Mr. E



ZOMBIE SCHOOL

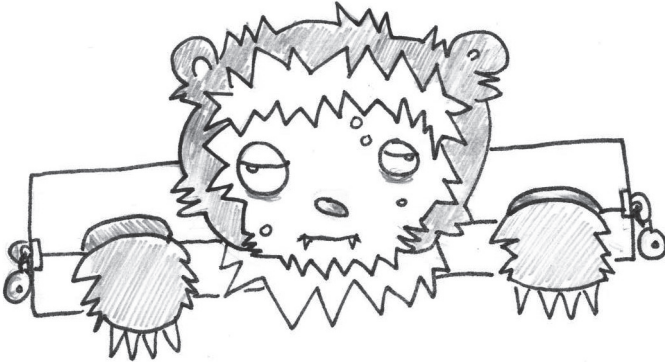
by Arthur Bean and Robbie Zack

September 21 Production Meeting

Notes from today's meeting:

As script director, I feel certain that my idea of having a “ghosts vs. zombies” movie could be the greatest twist ever, because no one will see it coming (HA-HA-HA! Ghosts... See them coming!!). When the students turn out to already be dead but coming back to life as they are killed by zombies, it will be the most epic battle scene of all time. Robbie says it's stupid. I'm writing down my idea because Robbie will realize that I was totally right and that it will be amazing. Then I will show him this paper and it will serve as proof that I was right and he was wrong. (Read it and weep, future Robbie Zack!)

We also decided that our production company will not be called BEAN THERE, DONE ZACK PRODUCTIONS like I wanted, but it will be called MISERABLE WOLVERINE PRODUCTIONS.



From: Kennedy Laurel (imsocutekl@hotmail.com)
To: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)
Sent: September 21, 20:31

Hi Arthur!

How's it going? Robbie told me that you guys want to be featured in my newspaper article! That's awesome!!! I can't wait to INTERVIEW you! Don't worry! I'll make you look like the COOLEST film nerds at the school LOL!! I totally want to be in your movie too! The play this year sounds SUPER lame, so you probably won't have a lot

of competition getting good actors from the drama department LOL!! ANYWAY, I was thinking we could do the interview tomorrow! I have a family thing in the morning, but we could meet at the mall and do the interview there! I told Mr. E I would have the story done by Thursday, so you BETTER be available!

Kennedy ☺

From: Arthur Bean (arthuraaronbean@gmail.com)
To: Kennedy Laurel (imsocutekl@hotmail.com)
Sent: September 21, 20:55

Dear Kennedy,

Sure, I can meet you whenever you want! Meeting outside school is a great idea. We barely get to talk at school, so that would be awesome.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean

PS: We "film nerds" actually prefer the term "film geek."
It's more inclusive. ☺

» » »

Hi, Anila. I know we said that we would meet tomorrow, but now I have to work on a project for a class, so I can't make it. Sorry!

I'm disappointed that I won't get to see you, Arthur, but I understand. I hope your project goes well. What's it on? XOXO

My class is working on a study of alternative energy sources... I can't wait to tell you about it. Maybe we could write some letters to companies about switching to different fuel sources! XOXO

How are things otherwise? Did you watch the documentary I told you about? I really think you'll find it interesting, and you'll probably never eat beef again... XOXO

I'll watch it tonight if I can. I have a lot of homework though. Sorry about tomorrow. Good night!

Good night to you too, Arthur Bean! I miss you a lot! XOXO



September 22nd

Dear RJ,

Oh, man! There was such a close call today! I was at the mall with Kennedy and Robbie when Anila walked by! She was there BY HERSELF and she walked past the food court. I don't know what she was doing there; she's always talking about how she never goes! Thankfully, she didn't see us. But I was so focused on her not seeing us that I wasn't listening to Kennedy's questions, so I didn't sound as awesome in the interview as I wanted to. Now she'll probably focus on Robbie, and he'll sound like he's in charge of our movie when really it's me.

Know what's weird though? I was so worried that Anila was going to see us, but I was even more nervous that Kennedy would find out about Anila! I don't know why I don't want her to know that I have a girlfriend, but I don't. Anila and Kennedy are two different parts of my life, and I like having them separate. My mom used to say that she never mixed her work friends and her other friends. It's kind of like that, I guess.

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean



Assignment: My Camp Necklace

by Arthur Bean

My object is my hemp necklace from arts camp this summer. I made it, and I thought jewelry making would be lame, but it wasn't. It's actually really easy to make a hemp necklace. It's basically just tying fancy knots and adding beads. I think my knitting prowess helped me, because it turned out pretty awesome. One of the beads is plain navy blue. I chose it because blue was my mom's favorite color and I knew she would have liked that one best.

One bead is a skull and crossbones because there were only two beads like that and Robbie got them both and gave one to me so that we would both have one. The next one has a spider on it, and I chose it because of my camp counselor, Spider. Spider wasn't his real name. It's his camp name. He was this huge black dude who was over six feet tall. He was just always really cool about everything, and he told me that when his dad died, he was around my age. He didn't make a big deal about it, but he was easy to talk to all the time. I was kind of nervous around him at first, but then at a campfire one night, he brought his guitar out and he was this amazing classical guitarist. Almost everything about him was awesome and kind of surprising actually.

I really like my necklace, because it's softer now after I've worn it every day for a couple of months. I didn't ever need to take it off, because it was water-proof too. Well, not really waterproof, but it didn't get ruined in the water. I wore it for the first few

days of school, but a bunch of people made fun of me for wearing jewelry, including Robbie (even though he wore his every day at camp), so I took it off and now I keep it on my bedpost so I get to at least see it every night.

Dear Arthur,

I'm pleased to see the thought you've put into this assignment. You've done a great job here; the accomplished writer in you shines through! I hope that all your assignments this year are of such quality.

Ms. Whitehead