JAMES

The Untold Story



Written By
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SPECIAL THANKS

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FOR:

ALL UNDERPRIVILEGED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HIGH LEVELS OF STRESS EVERY DAY OF THEIR LIVES

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➔ *"In the middle of difficulty lies Opportunity."*
- Albert Einstein

➔ *"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."*
- Mahatma Gandhi

➔ *"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."*
- Eleanor Roosevelt

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AUTHOR'S MESSAGE

Underprivileged children, in Canada and beyond, face numerous challenges on an everyday basis. While these challenges that youngsters face in such precarious situations are unique from those faced by privileged individuals, their awareness within our society is often undermined. As a result of the catastrophic challenges faced by these underprivileged children, their stress levels are higher than other groups, resulting in serious health implications for them further down the road. This book aims to introduce these populations to the diverse stress-busting benefits of literature. By providing these populations an opportunity to indulge themselves within a work of literature that meticulously incorporates elements of their lives, they can develop effective stress management techniques and build emotional resilience, significantly transforming their long-term quality of life for the better.

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JAMES: The Untold Story

Written and Illustrated by Aryan Sarnaik

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Chapter 1

It was a warm July afternoon, with the sun shining bright like a hero in the sky, flocks of birds racing across the clear horizon, and insects dancing around the beautiful park. It was an overwhelming feeling for James, as he watched the various aspects of mother nature coexist peacefully in the modern twenty-first-century environment dominated by technology. He too, yearned to partake in the numerous indoor and outdoor summer activities with his friends. He wished to have a fun time before the next school year began because he realized the importance of education for his ultimate goal of attending university.

He would be the first person to attend university from his family, he thought. Neither of his parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins had ever attended university. Growing up, he had always heard stories about how cost was deemed to be a significant barrier to his family attending university. This issue had been prevalent in his family for countless generations and to his demise, it was just as prevalent now. That is why he understood the importance of taking his education seriously, causing him to save all of his non-academic activities and joys for the summer while focusing solely on his studies during the traditional school year.

James attended an ordinary, publically funded elementary school in the northern side of the province of Ontario. He would take the school bus to school every single day, except the occasional days during winter when the school buses got canceled - when he would either have to walk to school or stay home. Due to his family's unstable financial situation, they were not in a position to own an automobile. To add to that, public transit around the small town was as expensive as four dollars per ride, which

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considering his family's background, was still relatively unaffordable. As a result, James dreaded catastrophic situations during winter as his perfect attendance at school would have to be compromised.

He was not a shy person, but not an overly social one either. He had a few good friends instead of many selfish, conditional friends, and was very well respected around the school community. James consistently represented the qualities of an ideal student; someone who respected his peers and teachers, paid attention during class, completed all of his homework nightly, and performed well on standardized examinations. Regardless, his classmates were often not as focused as him, and thus indulged in mischievous tasks such as creating nicknames for teachers and skipping class.

He thought back to the time when he and his peers were scheduled for gym class, and while he was engaging in sincere efforts to improve his physical education skills, his peers came up with a special nickname for the gym teacher: the Oppe. For some context, the gym teacher was relatively round in appearance, with a close eye on every student within the school in an attempt to prevent the breaching of academic integrity. Whenever the Oppe would be spotted around the school, James' peers made the unnecessary effort to change pathways to avoid contact with her. However, James, being the sincere student that he was, always interacted with his teachers and did not partake in his peers' plans.

Part of the reason why the majority of his peers did not take their studies as seriously as James' was the fact that their socio-economic status was significantly higher than that of his. They belonged to rich families with enough wealth under their belt to serve multiple future generations. As a result, the children of these families did not necessarily need to worry about developing a strong foundational career for themselves because their future positions were predetermined. These students also had access to all the new technological components, most of which James did not have due to his family's uniquely unfortunate circumstances.

James often felt like he did not fit into his school community due to his different socio-economic status from the majority. The more he tried to fit in, the more excluded he felt. This is not to say that he was being

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bullied by any of his peers, or that they were deliberately excluding him - this was definitely not the case. He found himself extremely fortunate to be in a supportive, inclusive, and progressive community but instead suffered from a cloud of self-consciousness about his financial situation. He often thought to himself, it's fine if I do not have all the latest technological components, as he believed in hard work and self-achievement - but that resulted in the fact that he could not participate in many of the activities that his peers did both during, and after, school.

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Chapter 2

It was lunchtime, and James, along with his peers, was eating in the school cafeteria. It was a forty-minute lunch break that they were given at his school, which he found to be more than enough time. If anything, he found lunch break the most boring period of the school day, particularly because all of his friends would spend their time playing video games on their high-tech computers.

One particular game that they played was titled *Shell Shockers*, the world's most popular egg-based non-violent shooter game. His friends played this game every day on their personal computers that they brought to school, and of course, James' school Chromebook could not run the game as smoothly as that of his friends. Regardless, he tried the game a few times on his friends' computers, who were so kind to allow him a chance to experience the true joy and excitement that they all collectively resonated with.

In some ways, James thought that *Shell Shockers* represented his own situation fairly accurately. As part of the game, there are many in-game items and rewards available for purchase, using both the in-game currency, golden eggs, as well as real currency, Canadian dollars. In addition, numerous items were only available for redemption through a concept titled "item codes", where a combination of ten characters would be required to obtain certain items. These combinations would typically only be obtainable through competitions or giveaways, and one of the only things in James' life that did not involve a disparity of socio-economic class, he felt.

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The game also involved more specific aspects such as a variation in the number of golden eggs received every time you defeated an opponent, which also differed depending on whether you played with or without VIP - the paid package of *Shell Shockers*. With VIP or Very Important Poultry, you could earn double the amount of golden eggs every time you defeated an opponent, as opposed to the mediocre amount obtained without VIP. This aspect of the game reminded James of how so many of his peers had utilized their wealth to plan advanced career-exploration activities over the summer, whereas he had to undergo the traditional process involving applications and interviews countless times.

As if that was not enough, his luck at the competitions and giveaways in *Shell Shockers* was also particularly horrible due to his inadequate access to a stable and sustainable electronic device. For example, many of the competitions were either gameplay-based or artwork-based. In terms of entering gameplay-based competitions, he could not even run the game past 30 FPS, or Frames Per Second, on his school Chromebook, let alone record viewable, iconic clips on it. For some context, the more Frames Per Second one has, the smoother their gameplay tends to be. Then, moreover, in terms of entering artwork-based competitions, digital artwork was an impossible task for James due to his computer's low-grade specifications. As far as paper artwork was concerned, he found it to be quite unprofessional compared to his friends' digital artwork that they created using paid software. Consequently, these events allowed his cloud of self-consciousness to possess him and unleash his fears.

Ultimately, what this meant was that his socio-economic status was once again an inevitable hurdle to his success and a representation of yet another instance in which wealth inequality played a pivotal role. He often observed his friends playing *Shell Shockers*, flaunting the uber-rare skins that they obtained through VIP and item codes, their in-game accessories viciously screaming "badoosh badoosh" every time they embarked on a journey to defeat their opponents.

Regardless, James felt that the game represented numerous parts of his life, that too with a solid degree of accuracy. As a result, he found it to be an excellent medium to step away from his everyday emotions for some

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time and, by playing the game on his friends' computers, imagine the world from a wealthier perspective. By playing on his friends' computers, which ran a whopping smooth 144 Frames Per Second, as well as on their accounts, which contained countless uber-rare items, James could see the world from the other side. For as long as he was playing the game and scrambling virtual eggs, he did not have to worry about his family's catastrophic financial situation. Instead, he could enjoy the pleasures and luxuries that the rich lived in - despite being a feeling that originated from a video game, he was able to extrapolate his imagination to match the parameters of the real world, allowing him to see the true beauty and freedom that exists to be seized.

Shell Shockers was James' primary source of motivation to push through his everyday challenges. He would play occasionally, gather all of the positive vibes that he could during that period, and then gradually utilize those precious moments to persevere through his ongoing obstacles. This mindset of his had a tremendous impact on his educational focus, as well as an overall peripheral desire to engage in the various social bandwidths that his peers took part in. But, at the end of the day, before he went to bed, he would realize the cruciality of the challenges that he had to undergo the very next day.

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Chapter 3

Coming back to James' longing to spend an eventful summer break with his inner circle of friends and family, he was finding his target of doing so quite difficult to achieve. For the most part, his parents were working away busily to afford the increasingly expensive basic lifestyles in the nation. This was when a simple meal at fast food restaurants like Popeyes cost as much as thirteen dollars, ay, caramba! Not only that, but jobs were also ridiculously hard to obtain for individuals of all ages. Therefore, it was the utmost necessity for James' family that his parents continued to work hard and maintain their jobs so that they could support their family financially.

Of course, James' wealthy friends were away on vacation to diverse parts of the world, from Australia to Hawaii. Given the ever-so-high costs of airplane tickets and hotel bookings, this was not a luxury that James' family could afford. Interestingly, cost was one of the major driving factors behind him being an only child and not having any siblings - his family just could not bear the additional financial strain of another permanent individual residing with them.

This caused him to feel lonely at times, for sure. Every day, when James arrived home from school in the afternoon, there would be a period of uninviting silence that would serve to haunt him down. He would often wonder about how he could improvise to better spend his time during this dry patch of his uneventful life. Unfortunately, the best option he could

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scout was to sit down on the porch and wait for his parents to return home. Even after completing all of his assigned homework diligently, as well as preparing for the next day's concepts, there would be hours before his parents returned home. They worked at a popular upscale restaurant in the downtown of a nearby city, so overtime and long commutes were common occurrences.

As a result, James got used to spending long amounts of time alone, reflecting upon the memories he gathered throughout the previous school year. He often deeply pondered about his positive interactions with his teachers, and his peers' mischievous deeds to humiliate those same teachers. He always enjoyed a quiet chuckle whenever he recalled the naming of the gym teacher as the Oppe, and how his peers generated jokes off her circular appearance. These were the memories that would constitute major components of his support system, he thought. He would rely on those components to act as the structural base for his future endeavors.

James knew that he had to achieve something big in life. He did not have the option, nor the luxury, of slacking off in school and still being guaranteed an executive position, constituting just a few of the luxuries that his peers had. He had to suffer, suffer through the hard way. But no matter what came his way, he was determined to match the caliber of their career through his hard work. The fact that he would be the first person from his family to attend university never scared James, but rather it further motivated him to chase his ultimate goal.

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Chapter 4

Before he even realized, summer was over and it was time to visit Walmart for some essential back-to-school shopping. James would be attending his first year of high school now, an experience that left him with mixed feelings. He was unsure as to whether he should have felt bamboozled at how fast time had flown by, or whether he should have felt a sense of excitement concerning the vast encounters lying ahead of him. He did not know whether his new group of friends in high school would be just as supportive as his friends from elementary school, or whether he would be able to maintain positive relationships with his teachers to the same extent as in elementary school.

As he imagined himself walking into his new high school, Oak Woods High, he was instantly visualizing his plans to attend university. He saw himself exploring the quiet, empty classrooms, which almost appeared as if they were the core housers of evil deeds. He experienced a surge of emotions that he had never felt before, emotions that caused him to feel weak, helpless, and fragile. For the first time in his life, James felt like he could not achieve his goal of becoming the first person from his family to attend university.

After noticing that James had been absent from the picture for quite some time now, his dad tapped him on the shoulder, provoking him a return to the present moment. They were standing in the educational supplies aisle of their local Walmart, giving it their all to survive the bustling traffic of customers who held the same purpose as James and his family. James' mom had suggested he and his dad visit Walmart over other stores due to its characteristic slogan of saving money, and therefore, living a better life.

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The two managed to successfully step aside from the crowd to take a moment and discuss the necessity of each item included in the back-to-school shopping list. They figured that they would only purchase the most important supplies, as it was an utmost necessity for them to minimize their spending in an effort to balance the insignificant monthly budget. Although an increment in the provincial minimum wage had recently been announced, it was not enough to drastically change their family's perilous financial situation. While the minimum wage may be increasing ever so slightly per hour, the costs of food, water, and shelter were soaring at a much greater rate.

James was curious as to what socio-economic background his future classmates would come from, and whether or not they would come from backgrounds as wealthy as those of his previous peers. He often thought of getting a part-time job himself so that he would be able to support his family financially, while simultaneously acquiring valuable hands-on workplace training. However, his extremely young age disqualified him from most, if not all, job positions, and to his demise, he could not obtain a job. If there was one good thing that happened amongst all the job rejections, it was that this event further escalated James' desire to attend university. By successfully following through with this promising route, he could earn the appropriate qualifications to acquire a well-paying job. This would allow him to dissociate all of his family's financial woes, he thought, and finally not have to worry about money so regularly.

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Chapter 5

The seventh day of September was James' first day of high school. As the determined young man boarded the school bus to embark on a new journey filled with all sorts of adventurous experiences, he noticed some aspects that were significantly different from when he boarded the bus in his elementary school days. Right away, he noticed that the bus was much, much more filled than his previous one. This gave him a strong idea of the population density of high school compared to elementary school, which meant that he would have a larger pool of peers to socialize and interact with. Given his characteristic preference of having a few good friends instead of many conditional friends, this drastic change regarding the population density of the school community could be deemed to be either beneficial or harmful to his nature. He could either become a social butterfly and embrace a new personality, or he could continue to follow his core principles and see where his experiences lead him.

The seats on the school bus were meant to ideally only provide comfortable seating to two students per seat. Regardless, a surprisingly meticulous effort had been made to sit three students per seat, with the student closest to the aisle essentially... being only halfway seated on the seat. James observed these peculiar, unfamiliar instances, pondering about the various strange things heading his way once he got to school.

One thing that he was certain of was that his socio-economic status would be deemed to be a barrier to his success once again. Although not all of his co-passengers on the bus appeared to be ultra-wealthy, everyone seemed to earn family incomes that were sufficient enough to lead comfortable lives - except one individual.

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On the last seat of the bus, the sole seat which was designed to seat only one student, sat a boy with thick, dark brown hair, blue eyes, and frankly the only student on the bus without a phone in his hand. Being the only place left that even appeared negotiable for a seat, James made his way over to the mystery boy, hoping that this phone-less individual would offer him a seat.

As James got closer and closer to the last seat, the boy's eyes widened and widened, reflecting an array of curiosity, delightment, and joy upon seeing the new passenger trudge towards him. "Hi there, do you mind if I share this seat with you?" asked James. "Why why, it would be my pleasure!" exclaimed the individual. He expressed his delight regarding how James was the only person on the bus without a phone, other than himself. Mike was his name, and he instantly became a close friend of James'.

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Chapter 6

As time went on, James and Mike became best friends. Mike too, just like James, came from an underprivileged socio-economic background. As a result, the duo shared mutually prevalent struggles. Funnily enough, Mike also aspired to be the first person from his family to attend university and was just as focused as James on his academic career. While James aimed to graduate with a degree in Finance, Mike aimed to graduate with a degree in Accounting. Both degrees are known to highly complement each other in the professional world, representing the duo's dynamic rhythm in yet another prosperous aspect.

After what seemed like a quick minute, the students arrived at the school and were greeted with a welcome speech by the school's principal, Mr. Andrews. Mr. Andrews was a tall man with an even taller neck. James was keen to find out whether or not his new peers would invent a nickname this time around. As a few moments passed between the rumble and screeching of plastic chairs, his classmates took their sweet time hyper analyzing the principal's appearance in a signature attempt to generate a nickname. Seated just behind the row in which James and Mike were present, a group of mischievous students came up with a nickname for the principal - *Giraffe*. They had utilized the principal's long neck to their convenience and came up with Giraffe. James and Mike were both upset over the whole incident, as it is never a good thing to come up with offensive nicknames based on individualistic characteristics. They wondered whether or not they should report the mischievous group of students to a nearby teacher, but since they did not have any solid proof of their activities, the duo remained quiet.

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The principal's speech was followed by the speech of the vice principal, Ms. Richards. She went on to congratulate the students on their wonderful accomplishment of completing elementary school with a strong finish and provided them with valuable words of inspiration to further motivate them along their high school journey. James and Mike were curious to see whether or not the mischievous group seated behind them would create another nickname, this time for Ms. Richards. The duo, being the honest, innocent, and hard-working individuals that they were, hoped that another nickname would not be made. To their delight, the mischievous group of students refrained from making another nickname and the duo's sincere prayers were answered.

With a loud ring, the bell rang, signifying that it was now time for the first class of the day to begin. Footsteps ruled over the ancient concrete flooring, with the momentous chaos suppressing the dull sound of the creaking school building. It was only a few moments until James and Mike discovered their future classmates, and most importantly, whether or not the duo was in the same class.

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Chapter 7

TRRRRRRING!!! The second bell had rung, signifying the end of the transition period for students. Anybody who failed to reach class by the second bell would be marked late. Though, now that the bell had rung, James explored his classroom, scanning frantically for familiar faces. In particular, he was looking for only one familiar face: Mike. Mike, on the other hand, was doing quite the same by scouting for James' familiar face. After all, these two were the only ones in the entire grade who shared the same challenges due to their mutually common socio-economic background.

To their joy, the duo was in the same class. Although seated on opposite sides as per the alphabetical seating arrangement, simply the existence of each other in the classroom provided them with a sense of motivation and encouragement. They both knew that the other would be there to support them no matter the obstacle. They knew that they could never fully become a part of the world that existed on the other side of the socio-economic spectrum, as had been previously experienced by James during elementary school. A tear trickled down James' face as he expressed his delight over being in the same class as his newly found friend. Mike returned the emotion as a tear trickled down slowly down his cheek too, signifying the common sentiments that these two individuals were experiencing at the time.

Who would have thought that a friendship that was in its earliest stages would have blossomed to this extent, to the extent of sharing common joys and reflecting them through one another's identical emotions. James found himself extremely lucky to have found Mike. Not only did they share all of the same struggles on an everyday basis, but they also

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shared similar goals for themselves regarding the future. Both James and Mike aimed to become the first people from their families to attend university, and to become extremely successful in their respective lives, financially. This signified the major binding element in their tightly knit, newly blossomed friendship, a sword that the duo utilized to power through countless challenges throughout their high school journey.

TRRRRRRING!!! The bell had rung yet once again, symbolizing the end of class and the transition to the lunch period. James, reflecting upon his elementary school friends' lunchtime activities, especially the collective group-based effort of playing *Shell Shockers*, was curious to find out whether or not his high school friends would be of the same mindset. Nevertheless, he knew that there was always one individual whom he could rely on to be like himself.

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Chapter 8

James and Mike sat in their school's cafeteria, observing the students around them. The duo quickly finished their lunch with periodic conversations throughout the process. Despite discussing numerous past experiences, and conversing about lighthearted topics, they found themselves to have finished their lunch well before their peers.

The school cafeteria represented a typical mundane, dystopian society, in which all of the students were engaged within their electronic devices, focusing away on *Shell Shockers*. Everybody except the duo was making tremendous attempts to improve at the game, as it was seen as a status symbol around the school community. Little did James know, his classmates in high school had even more advanced technological components than elementary school! From wireless headphones to special devices utilized solely for playing music (he did not know what these alien-like gadgets were called), his high school community was far more advanced in the technology aspect compared to elementary school. This further decreased his level of excitement in attending school, but, thanks to Mike's consistent presence, his morale was sustained.

James was surprised by the level at which he and his classmates' privileges differed. The idea of there being two different, distinct, and discontinuous worlds within the twenty-first century was indeed true, he thought. He had dreamt of things being different in high school. He had dreamt of things being more fair to him, and others like him. Alas, the reality remained the same - two different worlds, and thus, two different lifestyles. Although James greatly enjoyed going to class and educating himself about new concepts, lunch break was something that the duo disliked. In high school, lunch break was just as long as all of their other

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classes, averaging about seventy-four minutes. While this time passed in a relatively rapid manner during class, it became a major hurdle to James' social life around the school. He knew that he could always rely on his best friend, Mike, to partner up with and push through these difficult circumstances. However, this drastically limited James' social network around the school. After all, having only one individual to talk to every single day was not an ideal start to high school. These next four years were his to grow socially, explore new avenues with his friends, and form lifelong connections, constituting just some of the elements that he had dreamt of in the summer leading up to high school. He did not want to push all of those opportunities down the drain, but he also did not see how not to, given the utterly dystopian nature of the school's mundane cafeteria.

He hoped, with all his heart, that Mike would not move away in the next four years. The other half of the duo was the only social support that they each had, and neither of them could afford to lose it, ever.

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Chapter 9

Three weeks into his first year, and the first semester of high school, the teacher, Mr. de Connor, introduced the class to their first group assignment. "All righty students, you're going to have to assemble into groups of five for this assignment!" he exclaimed.

Mr. de Connor was primarily a Mathematics and Computer Science teacher, and the department head for both subjects. James and Mike were both equally bamboozled at the fact that group assignments were being conducted in Math class. If anything, Math was the last class in which they expected group assignments - English and Humanities courses topped the list, after all. Regardless, the entire class was keen to hear what Mr. de Connor had to say.

"You will be, right, in charge of, right, creating a well-thought-out slideshow that thoroughly explains the distance, speed, and time concepts as discussed throughout your Mathematical educational journey thus far, right," stated Mr. de Connor. He also went on to further clarify the marking scheme for the assignment. "Right so marks will be determined on a group basis, right, so you lovely individuals get to choose your groups. Make sure to choose wisely, as it will be a group mark, right!" concluded Mr. de Connor. Mike let out a slight chuckle as he tried not to burst out laughing at the catastrophic number of times his teacher said *right*. He thought he was the only one facing this challenge of trying not to laugh, causing him to feel miserable for allowing such unnecessary, distractive thoughts to occupy his attention. However, just as he turned to look at the rest of the class, he noticed that nearly all of the students were facing the same struggle as him - except James.

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James was in a state of strong focus yet once again, as he was in quite literally every other class. Mike admired how James did not once show any hint of noticing Mr. de Connor's excessive utilization of *right*. His respect for him grew tremendously over this one instance, although he thought about confirming whether or not he noticed the incident after class. Instead of wasting his time and energy on noticing unimportant aspects like that of Mr. de Connor's habit of saying *right*, James was clear on his intent of succeeding. He was straight away asking specific questions regarding the assignment's parameters, and how certain aspects would be evaluated, to maximize his odds of succeeding.

Despite enjoying a relaxing laugh over his teacher's habit of repeating *right* countless times, Mike knew what was coming. It was time to make the groups. This would be a difficult time for the duo, Mike figured, because they did not know very much about their classmates. How were they academically? Were they welcoming of students from the other world?

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Chapter 10

The duo was paired up with a group of three other students who did not have a group of five after the timer ended. Little did the duo know, their three partners would turn out to be their worst nightmare of high school.

Mr. de Connor had posted an extensive Google folder with all of the detailed assignment instructions for the students to view. He also reinstated the fact that students may consult him for additional clarification for any of the assignment components if necessary. As the students got into their respective groups, they were to assign themselves individual tasks to complete as part of the broader project. Though, little did the duo of James and Mike know, their three group members were the three spoiled kids of rich parents. These kids had their lifetime's worth of savings already in their bank, leaving them no requirement to pursue a sustainable career in the future. As a result, they loaded the assignment prompt into the industry's most expensive artificial intelligence (AI) slideshow generator. Within a few seconds, they had artificially generated the entire assignment. Within approximately a minute or so, they were back to scrolling Instagram reels on their phones, proving their dedication and commitment to academics.

This instance of academic dishonesty was entirely against the duo's characteristic principles of honesty, hard work, and determination. On one hand, James felt a surge of anger-provoking emotions overtaking his usual calm-cool nature. He was furious, as even the slightest mention of academic dishonesty made him extensively emotional about his ultimate aspiration of attending university. He thought about confronting the three individuals from his group who initiated this dishonest idea but knew that they would not be able to comprehend the seriousness of maintaining academic honesty. After all, the artificially generated slideshow had all of the correct

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content on it, which made it difficult for James to protest with his group members under the 'effort' criteria, as clearly they do not value that aspect.

James' other option was to share the incident with Mr. de Connor, who would then take the appropriate administrative action against the three students. The problem with this option, however, was that the students would notice who snitched, further fueling the duo's exclusion from the rest of the school community. Asking to go on a walk, James consulted Mike as to what he believed should be done in this scenario and laid out the possible options theoretically in front of him. Mike took a good look at each option and thought about each one for a good while. The duo walked in silence around the hallways of their high school, tuning out the occasional sounds emerging from the various classrooms as they sauntered past them.

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Chapter 11

James' blood pressure increased by the minute. Mike seemed to be taking forever to arrive at a proper decision, a decision that James expected him to make almost immediately. He had consulted Mike primarily because he was somebody who would face the same consequences as him if they alerted the teacher, causing him to reevaluate and reconsider his choices.

After what felt like an eternity of silent walking, Mike let out a big sigh. He had been brewing up a solid plan to counter this situation all this time and assured James that everything would be taken care of once the plan was implemented successfully.

The plan was to propose a similar replacement assignment to Mr. de Connor, but the clause would be to make it tech-free. In addition, the assignment must only be completed during class time, under the professional supervision of Mr. de Connor. This way, none of the students would be able to cheat their way through academics, as they would not have access to the industry's most expensive AIs, or their handy-dandy two thousand dollars' worth of MacBooks in class, reducing the occurrence of academic dishonesty. All of the students would be evaluated on a raw basis, using the traditional paper-and-pencil method. This meant that all of the students would have to study hard and be well-prepared to succeed on this assignment, as compared to simply artificially generating the entire project, specifically tailored to not get flagged under the teacher's AI detector.

James was instantly on board with Mike's brilliant plan. The duo returned to class after their long walk and proposed the idea to Mr. de Connor as soon as the bell for lunch break rang. Waiting for that iconic *TRRRRRRING!!!* was a pivotal aspect in ensuring the seamless implementation of Mike's brilliant plan, because it had to be done privately

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to avoid any unnecessary details from reaching their peers. This way, the duo would not face any further discrimination from their peers.

After hearing the plan, and the unique benefits that it had to offer the class as per Mike's intelligent persuasive skills, Mr. de Connor was satisfied with the proposal and decided to implement it for the next assignment. He also made it clear that he had observed their group's shenanigans in terms of artificially generating the slideshow, and how he would be dealing with the three mischievous students separately. Furthermore, he lauded the superb duo of James and Mike for their continuous hard work, determination, and commitment to their academics, and encouraged them to keep going.

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Chapter 12

The acceptance of the proposal to Mr. de Connor, and the consequent revelations made by the dual-department head himself assured the duo that hard work always pays off.

This incident was a significant turning point in their beliefs, especially the fact that their socio-economic status does not limit their future potential at all. James reflected upon his past self, and how his not already having his lifetime's worth of savings gathered, unlike his classmates, does not mean that he cannot gather them throughout the rest of his journey ahead. He was more inspired and motivated than ever to chase his ultimate aim of attending university.

He made bigger, better goals, and developed effective strategies to achieve them over the longer term. This was the last time James ever considered his socio-economic status to be a limitation, and instead considered it his strength to better fuel his hunger for education.

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Chapter 13

Mike, on the other hand, had similar intrinsic thoughts encircling his mind. Although his past experiences had not been as extreme as that of James', he too, had undergone similar challenges.

Despite his background, he decided not to let it be his downside, but to rather uphold it as his key to success. He utilized his newly found confidence to his advantage by partaking in numerous enrichment opportunities and career-building workshops, all of which would come in handy to better shape his prospects.

The duo mutually agreed upon the fact that they would never shy away from following their core principles of honesty, hard work, and determination that have led them up until this stage, no matter what circumstances they may encounter later down the road.

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Chapter 14

Transitioning a few years into the future, the duo graduated from high school and successfully gained acceptances into two of the country's most prestigious universities.

They have also started an organization to advocate for youth who come from backgrounds just like that of the duos, serving as a viable means for them to contribute towards the betterment of their community.

The iconic duo of James and Mike continues to uphold their core principles, as well as constantly engaging in the process of creating and achieving new goals at recurring intervals. Their story is truly inspirational for all of the youth of the twenty-first century coming from underprivileged and vulnerable communities and are eyeing a different future.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank You:

- Every homeless shelter for connecting underprivileged and vulnerable youth with roofs over their heads
- Every food bank for providing underprivileged and vulnerable youth with food
- National helplines for allowing underprivileged and vulnerable populations an opportunity to navigate through their complex thoughts and emotions
- Worldwide bursary programs for allowing financially unwell families to attend post-secondary institutions

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aryan Sarnaik is an aspiring medical doctor. He is currently pursuing his undergraduate studies in Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada.

James: The Untold Story is his first original work of literature that has been published and has been inspired primarily by underprivileged and vulnerable populations.

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➔ ***"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."***
- William James

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