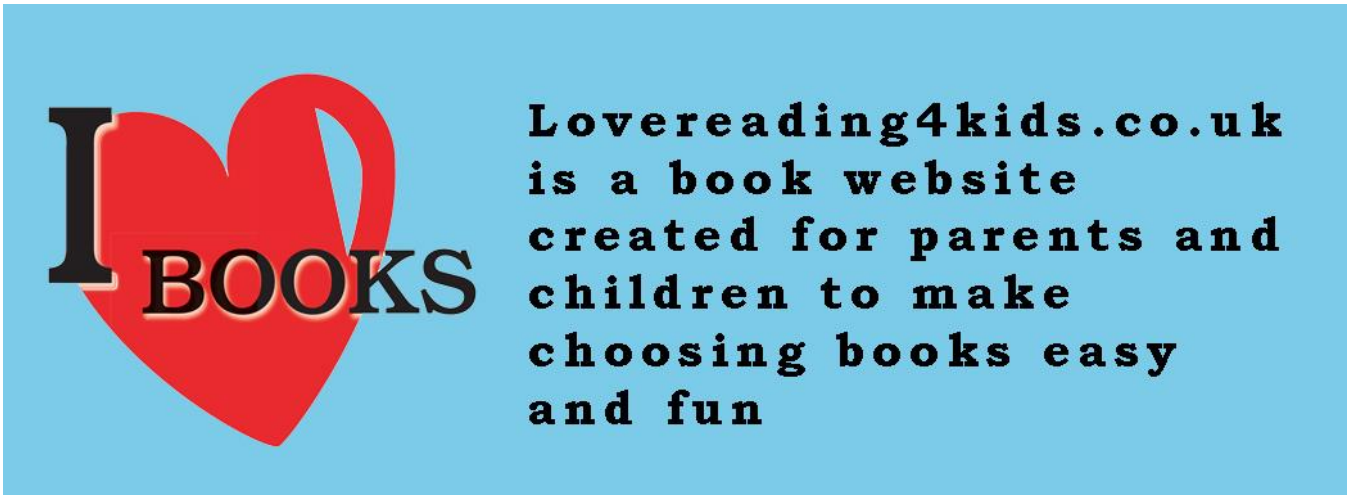


Opening extract from

Scenes from the Epic Life of a Total Genius

Written by

Stacey Matson

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SEPTEMBER

September 3rd

Dear Reading Journal,

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! Hahaha. Oh, RJ, I bet you missed my sense of humour!

I have so much to tell you about, 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 about, but you'll have to wait!

Yours truly,
Arthur Bean



Dear Grade Eights:

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 favourite 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, 360 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 grade eight 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

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 Jr. 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 ☺