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PROJECT Z

ZOMBIES ARE PEOPLE, TOO

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SCHOLASTIC INC.

THE SMARTEST KID IN SCHOOL

There's a phrase that used to run through my head all the time back when I first escaped from the lab.

HUMANS ARE THE ENEMY. HUMANS ARE DANGEROUS.

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Jenny Kinder—who is now, unofficially, my mom—said the scientists at the lab programmed those thoughts into my brain so that I would be aggressive toward people.

She would know, since she was one of the scientists. (Long story. Like I said, you can read the first book if you want to know the details.)

HUMANS ARE THE ENEMY. HUMANS ARE DANGEROUS.

But guess what? It didn't work. Probably because it's not true.

If they wanted to be accurate, they would have programmed this:

**Even though some humans are Dangerous, most aren't.
But ALL humans hate homework. Many humans aren't
very GOOD at math. And a significant number of
humans would rather Do anything else than pay
attention to the teacher.**

When I entered the fifth grade at Bernard J. Frumpstein Elementary School, most people treated me like a total outsider—probably because I *was* a total outsider. But there were two people who were nice to me: Evan Brantley, who got on my nerves by flicking the back of my neck on my very first bus ride but quickly became my best pal; and Kiki Ambrose, the most popular kid in the whole school, who decided for some incredibly lucky reason to find me interesting.

At first, all the other kids made fun of me; then, when they saw me temporarily paralyze Ross Klepsaw with the Zombie Zing (it was his fault, I swear), they all got scared of me; and finally, when everyone found out I was a zombie but that I was more interested in being their friend than

eating their brains, they accepted me as (almost) one of them.

Which is where the whole tutoring thing comes in.

One day during lunch, a boy named Jimmy Edwards came up to me. I'd barely said five words to him before then, but he slapped me on the back like we were old pals.

"Arnold, buddy boy!" he exclaimed. "How goes it?"

I looked up at him. "It goes it pretty well, how goes it with you?"

"Great, great." Jimmy pulled up a chair next to me. "So yeah, Arnold, I got a little problem, to be honest with you."

"What's that?"

"I'm failing English."

"Oh. Gosh, I'm sorry to hear that."

Kiki, who was sitting on one side of me, rolled her eyes. "Get to the point, Jimmy."

"Right." Jimmy glared at Kiki, then turned back to me. "So anyway, Arnold, I was wondering, since you're so smart and everything, maybe you could, like, help me get my grade up?"

I was confused, since the whole process of school had seemed pretty easy to follow so far. "Help you how? If you do the work the class requires, then surely you will succeed."

Jimmy cleared his throat. "Yeah, well, uh, I guess I haven't exactly done the work required."

"Oh. I understand," I said, even though I didn't.

Evan, who was sitting on the other side of me, saw the confusion on my face. "Here's the thing, Arnold. Not all kids are the same. Some kids do their homework; others don't. Some kids pay attention in class; some kids don't. Some kids like to read; others don't."

"Nobody likes to read," corrected Jimmy.

"That's not true," insisted Evan. "I do, for example."

Jimmy snickered. "No *normal* people."

"Enough, you two," said Kiki. "I love to read, but that doesn't make me any better than kids who don't. We're just different, that's all." She fiddled with her hair. "The point is, Arnold, that you're, like, the smartest kid in the whole school, and Jimmy needs some help. Will you help him?"

"Of course I will."

That day after school, I taught Jimmy the difference between *its* and *it's*, made sure he knew the difference between an adjective and an adverb, and showed him how to use *sluggish* in a sentence ("Eating four ice cream sandwiches at lunch made Timmy sluggish at soccer practice"). Then, for the next week, I helped him with a whole bunch of other stuff.



When Jimmy got an eighty one on the test, he ran over to me. “Yo, dude, we did it!”

“You did it,” I told him.

“Nah, we!” He lifted me up in the air, which wasn’t hard for him to do, since he’s very strong and I’m very skinny. “Hey, everyone! Arnold here saved my butt! He’s, like, a genius!”

And that’s basically how I became the unofficial tutor for the entire fifth grade class at Bernard J. Frumpstein Elementary School.

“How much are you making for all this tutoring?” Evan asked me one day, while we were jumping on his trampoline.

I did a triple somersault, which is easy for me because my legs are like rubber bands. Extremely pale rubber bands. “Making? What do you mean, making?”

“I mean, how much are you charging for your work?”

“I’m not charging anything,” I told him. “I’m doing it because they need my help.”

Evan’s eyes went wide. “Are you *kidding* me right now? You need to be getting paid! Makin’ the MOAN-NAY!”

Apparently, there was still a lot I needed to learn about the ways of the humans.