

James' Story

By

Sheshatshiu Innu School

Sheshatshiu

James.....Sam Rich
 Jasmine.....Angelina Rich
 Mom.....Alyssa Sellon
 Dad.....Travis Rich
 Andrea.....Tamarah Hill
 Dr. Ross.....Sarah Nuna
 Anna.....Shania Katshinak
 Mr. Forman.....Jaden Martin
 Little Old Lady.....Sarah Nuna
 Homeless Man.....Jaden Martin
 Teacher.....Jaden Martin
 School Nurse.....Kerri-Lynn Martin

James has a life-threatening illness, and a desire to do something significant with the life he has left. Now if only he could find a way to communicate with his sister Andrea...

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Scene 1

(School)

James: Hey, Jasmine!

Jasmine: Hey man, what's up?

James: Not too much, not feeling too good. You?

Jasmine: Oh? I'm fine. Heading to class now. So Andrea is having a huge party this weekend, hey? You going?

James: You think I'm invited? She's only my sister. Everyone in the whole school is invited except me.

Jasmine: Do you want me to ask her for you?

James: Well - (staggers)

Jasmine: Hey, you okay?

(James collapses; Jasmine catches him)

Jasmine: HELP!

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Scene 2

(Hospital. James is laying on a hospital bed. Mom and Dad are leaning onto the sides of the bed, holding his hands. Andrea is texting on her phone, slouched in her chair, not paying attention to the crisis. James tries to get out of the bed, Mom gently pushes him back down.)

Mom: The doctor wants you to rest. You were unconscious for a long time.

James: What happened? Why are we here?

Dad: You fell at school. They sent an ambulance. You gave us a scare.

(Andrea's phone dings)

Mom: *(giving Andrea a sharp look)* Andrea! Can you put that away and pay attention to your brother, maybe?

Andrea: It's not my fault he fell. I don't even know why I have to be here.

(Doctor comes in, interrupting)

Doctor: We have to run some more tests. Can everyone step outside? We are going to keep James for observation tonight, and you can come back in the morning. Okay, James? Now if Mom and Dad want to come this way with me to sign some papers, we can work on finding out why you fainted today.

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Scene 3

(Hospital room, next morning. Jasmine and Anna walk into the room, carrying books and a teddy with a balloon tied to it)

Jasmine: How're you feeling?

James: What are you doing here?

Jasmine: Anna and I wanted to bring your homework to you.

Anna: I can't believe you fainted. Do they know what's wrong?

James: No, but they are supposed to have the results back today. What was for homework?

Anna: Some math questions. And a group assignment for English. It's about stepping out of your comfort zone and experiencing new things. It's pretty wide open.

James: Well, I just experienced my first night in a hospital bed. There was definitely nothing comfortable about that.

Jasmine: Miss Johnson said you can be in our group, and she'll give us an extension if we need it since you're stuck in here.

(Mom and Dad enter the room, carrying a small overnight bag for James)

Jasmine: Hey, Mr. and Mrs. Chapman.

(Mom hugs Jasmine and then Anna.)

Mom: Thanks for coming. I'm sure James was happy to see you.

Dad: *(to James)* Has Dr. Ross been in yet?

James: Not yet. The nurse was in earlier and said the results would be back soon.

(Dr. Ross enters)

Mom: There she is. Good morning, Dr. Ross.

(Dr. Ross looks solemn)

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Dr. Ross: Your results are in. If I could please ask your friends to leave, I'd like to speak with you and your parents privately.

(Anna and Jasmine hug James)

Jasmine: We'll stop by later.

(Anna and Jasmine exit.)

Dr. Ross: All of the tests suggest the presence of a brain tumor.

Mom: Oh my God! *(Mom starts to weep.)*

Dad: What do we do now? How do we treat it?

Dr. Ross: Unfortunately, it has progressed past the point of being operable. The chances of surviving surgery would be very slim. I'd like to advise you to start thinking about the quality of James' life.

Mom: We have to do something. There has to be something you can do! He's only fourteen!

Dr. Ross: We could try the surgery...

James: No! !

Mom: What?

James: If I am not going to survive it, what is the point in going through that? I want to enjoy the time I have. *(To Dr. Ross)* How long do I have?

Dr. Ross: There is no way to know for sure. Many people with your symptoms live for months, maybe even a year.

Dad: How can you know?

Dr. Ross: When we see how fast James' condition is deteriorating, we will have a better idea of the timeline. For now, it's anyone's guess.

(Mom lets out a giant sob and hangs her head.)

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Scene 4

(The Chapman house. Andrea is sitting, texting her friend about the party. Texts appear on the screen behind her, between her and a friend.)

Andrea: There were a lot more people than I expected last night.

Friend: I know. Didn't expect that many either. Feel bad James missed it.

Andrea: I know, but Mom said it was okay because he wasn't coming home until today.

Friend: Yeah, still feel bad though...

Andrea: I'm sure he didn't care he missed it. I wouldn't have wanted him there anyway. He'd just go snitching to Mom and Dad.

Friend: How is he anyway?

Andrea: I don't know. They're releasing him but they can't really do anything for him. I don't really know how to talk to him. We never talked much before this. Now it's just weird. Mom expects me to be all lovey-dovey. It's awkward.

Friend: idk what 2 say

Andrea: They're home. Gotta go. Talk to you later. *(Puts her phone into her pocket.)*

(James enters, with Mom and Dad helping him into the room.)

James: I can walk. You don't have to do that.

Mom: Andrea, look who's home!

(Andrea and James hug awkwardly)

James: How was your party?

Andrea: Alright.

Dad: I have to go get the bags in the car.

Mom: I'll give you a hand. Andrea, can you stay with James?

Andrea: Why? I've got stuff to do.

Dad: Andrea!

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James: Whatever. Go. Jas and Anna are supposed to be here soon anyway to work on our English project. I'm going to go get changed.

(James exits. Dad follows.)

Mom: Andrea! How can you treat him like that?

Andrea: I don't know what to say to him.

Mom: Just talk to him. He needs you.

Andrea: What do I say? I don't know what to say. Sorry you're dying? I'm not good at this stuff.

Mom: Just tell him how you feel.

Andrea: I can't find the words. Arrrgh! I don't want to talk about this.

Mom: *(taking Andrea's arm)* I know you are having a hard time with this. But it's not like any of us was given a script. Just speak from the heart. The words will come to you.

Andrea: *(shakes Mom's arm away)* Leave me alone! *(Stomps away.)*

(Mom hangs her head sadly. Fade to black.)

Scene 5

(James' room)

Jasmine: Maybe we could try parachuting or something. That would be outside our comfort zones.

James: I'm sure it'd be really easy to get permission to do that. And wouldn't it cost like thousands of dollars?

Jasmine: How about bungee jumping?

James: Okay, I know I'm dying but even I don't want to do that.

Anna: James!

James: Relax, Anna. Okay, we have to think about what we are going to do. What would you want to do that you don't think you have the nerve to do?

Jasmine: I don't know. Go on a trip?

Anna: We can't go anywhere. Where would we go? My mom doesn't even let me sleep at your house on weekends.

James: I just want to do something to make a difference, you know. I've been thinking a lot about this project. For you, it's stepping outside your comfort zone and trying something new. For me, it could be the last big thing I do. I'd like it to matter, you know.

(Andrea comes into the room, without knocking.)

Andrea: I'm trying to work on my music homework. Can you please keep it down in here?

Jasmine: Hey, Andrea. James came up with an idea for our English project. He wants to make a difference in someone's life. Do you have any suggestions?

Andrea: I don't know. I have my own homework to worry about. Nobody ever makes a big difference in someone's life anyway. It's the little things that matter. I'm serious about the noise. Keep it down or I'm telling Mom.

(Andrea leaves.)

James: That's it! It's the little things.

Anna: What are you talking about?

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James: If it's the little things that matter, then that's what I'll do. Random acts of kindness. Do you want to do it with me?

(Jasmine and Anna shrug and nod.)

James: Get some paper. We need to make a list.

Scene 6

(Mr. Forman's yard)

Mr. Forman: Thank you so much. My son has been saying for weeks he is going to come over and rake up, but he's been so busy with the baby.

Jasmine: No problem, Mr. Forman. We're happy to help!

(Mr. Forman passes a rake to Jasmine).

Mr. Forman: I'll be in the house if you need me. *The Price is Right* is just about to come on.

(Mr. Forman exits)

Anna: Let's get to work.

(Anna, Jasmine and James rake up leaves)

(Suddenly, Jasmine spots a little old lady on the street carrying heavy bags.)

Jasmine: What a sin! I'm going to go give that lady a hand. She shouldn't be carrying all those bags herself.

(Jasmine heads over, determined to help. She tries to take the bags from the lady, who starts whacking her with her purse.)

Little Old Lady: Help! Help! Let go of my bags!

(Jasmine holds her hands up as if to show she doesn't mean any harm. Little old lady rushes away, looking back suspiciously.)

(James and Anna are bent over, laughing, when Jasmine comes back.)

James: This random-acts-of-kindness thing is working out well for you, huh?

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Scene Seven

(Main Street)

Mom: Okay, we have to make a few stops and we don't have a lot of time. Andrea, can you and James take the grocery list and pick up that stuff while I run to the pharmacy?

Andrea: *(rolling her eyes)* I guess.

(Mom passes over the list, smiles and rushes off.)

(A homeless man huddling on the curbside reaches up and tugs on James' coat as they walk by.)

Homeless Man: Excuse me, do you have any spare change?

(James looks at Andrea to see what she thinks.)

Andrea: Come on, James! *(to the homeless man)* No, sorry, we don't.

(Grabs James' arm and pulls him into the store - offstage)

(James and Andrea go offstage, homeless man sits trying to keep warm. Shoppers walk by, barely glancing at him as they hurry past.)

(James and Andrea come back onstage, carrying cloth bags of groceries.)

James: Can I have a couple bucks?

Andrea: What for?

James: I just need it.

Andrea: Fine, whatever. *(passes him money from her wallet)*

James: Thanks sis. I'll be right back.

(James approaches the homeless man, passes him the money and takes food from the grocery bag and passes it to him. Homeless man hugs James and thanks him profusely.)

(James walks back to Andrea.)

Andrea: That was pretty nice of you.

James: *(shrugs)* It's not a big deal.

Andrea: Yeah but you didn't have to do it. It was nice that you did.

James: You were the one who talked about small acts of kindness. You're kind of my inspiration for this project.

Andrea: Really? *(seems shocked)*

(Mom enters, spotting them.)

Mom: There you are! Come on, Dad needs us to pick him up at work.

(They exit, Mom linking them together).

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Scene 8

(Hospital)

Dr. Ross: So besides the headaches, how have you been feeling James?

James: Tired. I get exhausted really quickly.

(Dr. Ross writes something on his chart.)

Mom: He's not eating much. No appetite he says.

(James nods in agreement)

Dad: He's been going to school and going out after school. Maybe he's just doing too much.

Dr. Ross: It's important to rest when you need it, but it's also important to live your life as normally as you can. James, have you thought about seeing the counsellor I referred you to?

James: I saw her once at school. She said I should talk about my illness with the people I care about. But, well, people don't really like it when I talk about it.

Dr. Ross: It can be hard to accept. But communication is very important, now more than ever. Keep trying. Maybe you can think about other ways to communicate your feelings. Have you ever kept a journal?

James: No.

Dr. Ross: It might be worth considering. Sometimes circles work too, if your friends and family would consider trying that with you. I'm going to order more tests and give you something to help with your appetite. But think about what I said.

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Scene 9

(James' kitchen. James is sitting at a table, writing something. When Andrea enters, he covers what he's writing with a book.)

Andrea: *(sitting opposite James)* What are you doing?

James: Just some homework.

Andrea: For that English project? Have you been doing okay with it?

James: Yeah. It isn't as easy as we thought it would be. Some people don't want strangers doing things for them. We saw Mr. Harper's dog running loose so we let it back into his backyard. But turns out it wasn't his dog, and he was pretty mad.

Andrea: Oh my God, no way.

James: Jasmine tried to help an older lady carry groceries, but she thought she was being robbed. And just last night I thought someone was breaking into the Grants' car and I called the police, but it was Mrs. Grant and she'd locked her keys inside. She wasn't too happy with me.

Andrea: At least you're trying. And I know sometimes it's working. Mr. Forman was telling mom that you raked up his whole yard last weekend. He said it took the three of you the entire day.

James: Yeah. I don't know how much more I'll be able to do. I feel like there isn't much time left.

Andrea: I'm sorry I haven't really been there for you. I don't feel comfortable talking about it.

James: It's okay. It's hard for me to talk about it, too.

(Andrea reaches out and touches James' arm. Fade to black.)

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Scene 10

(School)

Teacher: Nurse Sally, James wasn't feeling well in math class. Would you check him over and call his parents? They said to call right away if anything happened in school.

Nurse Sally: Sure thing. Come on over, James. Take a seat. I'm just going to give your mom a call and then check you over.

(Teacher exits; Nurse Sally picks up the phone and dials.)

Nurse: Hi, Mrs. Chapman, this is Nurse Sally. I'm here with James. He's not feeling well.
(pause) Okay, I'll let the office know. *(hangs up)* James, your mom is on her way to get you.

(James is unconscious, leaning across the table.)

Nurse: Help! *(calls out the door)*

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Scene 11

(Hospital)

(James is laying on a hospital bed, unconscious. His family and friends are gathered around. Dr. Ross is checking his vitals.)

Dr. Ross: James doesn't have much time. I think now would be a good time to say your goodbyes. He's not in any pain.

Dad: I love you, son. *(Chokes up, bends down, kisses James' forehead. He pulls his chair back, his arm around his wife.)*

Mom: Oh my baby. *(Strokes James' hair.)* I love you, James. It's okay. Everything will be okay. I'm so proud of you.

(Andrea takes a step away, her hand over her mouth in shock. As Anna is bent over James, whispering goodbye, Jasmine steps over to Andrea, takes a folded paper from her pocket, and passes it to Andrea.)

Jasmine: James wanted you to have this. He asked me to wait to give it to you. I think he would want you to have it now.

(Jasmine pats Andrea's shoulder awkwardly and then turns back to James. Anna has moved back and Jasmine takes her place to say goodbye.)

(Andrea unfolds the paper, and reads it.)

Dear Andrea,

If you are reading this, it means things aren't going too well right now. I asked Jasmine to give you this letter because I know it's been hard for you to talk about what's been happening. I want you to know that I love you, and that I know you have always loved me. Thank you for always being a great big sister. I know you are sad, but please know that I will be okay. I am happy that I had this time to come to terms with everything and to try to make the world a bit happier in the past few weeks. Thanks for the idea for my project. I hope that when I'm gone, you'll keep it going for me. You need to watch out for Mom and Dad because they really need you right now. Jas and Anna promised they would come around and check on you, too. Andrea, I know we fought a lot but I've always been your biggest fan and I'll always watch over you. I love you, Sis. !

Your loving brother,

Always, James !!

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