

LOST CASES



When the road gets rough,
everyone goes their own separate ways.
True friends travel with you,
till the end of your days.

Arya Dharod

LOST CA()SES

McFarland is a dull sleepy town, almost non-existent, in the middle of nowhere.

Theo hates the town, the people, his school, his teachers and just about everything here.

And to add salt to injury, the 'Big 5', bully him emotionally, psychologically and even physically.

Journey through the lives of six teenagers, bound by misery, yet unwavering!

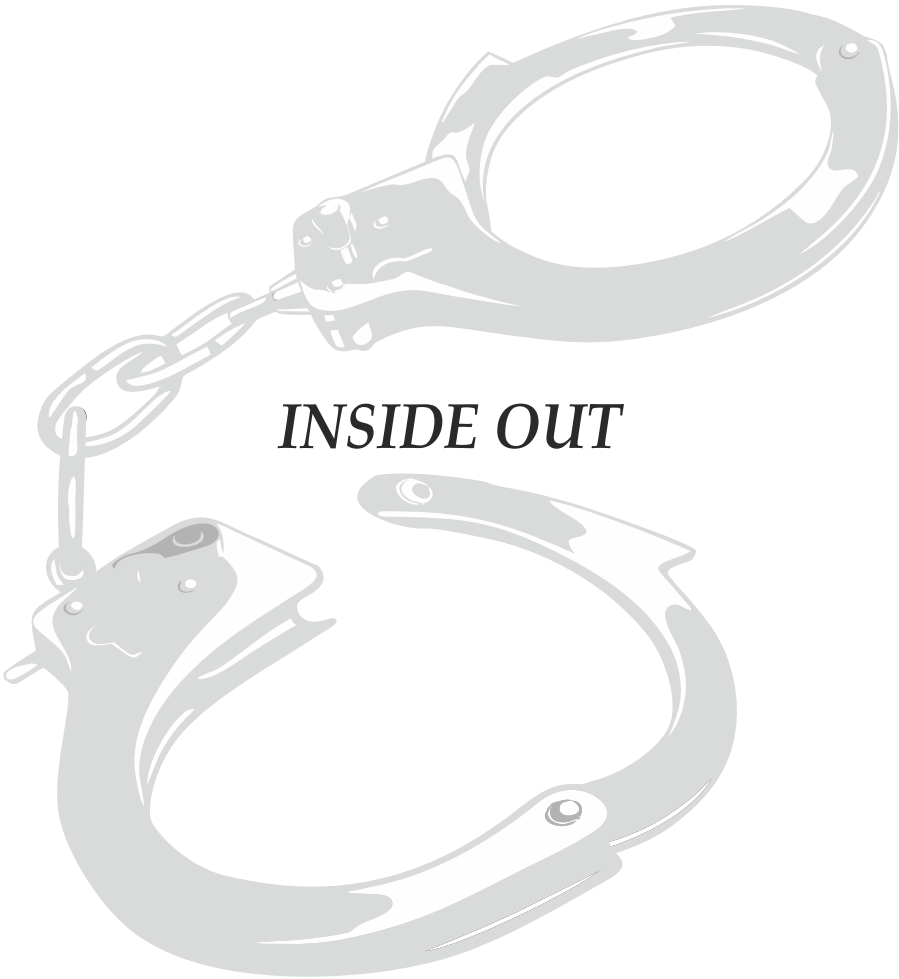
A fire, bank robbery, scarred corpses, secret criminal organization, extortion, mental depression

Experience the roller coaster ride, as it all unfolds through shocking revelations!

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Darkest hour

The room was dark and dreary, and the air was filled with a deep sense of gloom and misery.

There was a man sitting in the middle of the room, his face wrinkled and scarred with age. On his face, sat the smallest of frowns, but you could see the fear, gloom and despair in his eyes. His eyes said it all. A little boy came into the room panting, with a huge smile on his face. He was a six-year-old kid, who had just got home from playing with his friends in the garden. His smile vanished as soon as he saw the old man sitting in the dark room.

"Uncle, what are you doing here?", he demanded, perplexed, and a hint of fear in his voice.

Antonio spoke in a heavy voice, "You're coming with me to my house now."

The child didn't seem to understand. His face turned angry. "Why Uncle? I'm not coming with you", Peter said defiantly.

The old man remained silent, and just stared long and hard at the boy.

"I'm not coming with you!", Peter repeated, raising his voice.

"You're coming with me", the uncle repeated, raising his voice this time.

The child crossed his arms, and sat down on the armchair next to his uncle. He looked up at the old man, and said in his most defiant of voices, "No. I'm waiting for my parents to come home. They're returning from their trip tonight!"

"Your parents are not returning Peter", the uncle said in a grave deep voice. He looked right into Peter's eyes.

“How can that be? They promised they'd come back. They promised they'd get me a new train set! Where are they going now uncle? Are they going to be delayed? What about my new train set? Why aren't they coming back?!” He was flooding Antonio with questions. He didn't understand what his uncle had said. He was angry about his train set, and he thought his parents were going somewhere else on business trip, as they frequently did.

“No Peter. Stop asking questions. You don't understand”, the uncle got up and grabbed Peter by the arm.

But Peter wriggled away from his grip. “I'm not coming. Just tell me how many more days before my parents come home!? And if they're getting my train set!? And...”, he looked deeply, pleading at his uncle.

Antonio got frustrated now and held the boy's arm with such an iron grip, that the boy couldn't wriggle free, no matter how hard he tried. “Peter, your parents aren't returning. Not now, not ever. You are coming with me to my house.”

The boy finally understood. Tears welled up in his eyes. He tried to speak but words didn't come out. “Are they Are they... ?”, he stuttered.

He recollected seeing Alice lying on the floor, phone in her hand, shocked expression on her face, not breathing – just lying so still. Antonio looked at Peter with a face so deep, so dark, so grim, that it would even scare a grown-up man. As he nodded, and uttered those dreadful words that would change Peter's life forever.

“Yes Peter.

Your parents are dead!

They are no more!

They are never ever coming back!”

McFarland USA

In a small town, known as McFarland, on the eastern coast of the US, there lived a 14-year-old boy.

If you were to be standing bang in the centre of the town, next to a sad looking run down KFC store, you would see a huge school with the name "McFarland High School", in bold white letters written on the entrance gate. Under the name of the school, engraved in smaller white letters, was the school's motto - "Good as new". However, the school was a mockery of the motto.

McFarland High School was a single building, five years old, five storeys high, and five times as horrible as any other ordinary school. There was a huge sports field just in front of the academic block. It was a large, round 300-metre track with a patchy grassy pitch right at the centre of it, the grass all brown and dried. This pitch was used for every other sport, except for running, which the track was meant for. The chalk lines on the track had long since faded away, and due to poor maintenance, there were holes and uneven bumps all over the track. In comparison to the track though, the school was much worse.

The windows of the school were covered with a layer of thick grey dust, making it tough for one to see anything through them. The bricks looked old and ready to fall, seeming as though the school would come crashing down any minute. Cobwebs hung all over the entrance door, and there were thin cracks in the cement on all of the school's walls.

One could go on and on about this hideous, wretched version of a school and an extremely dirty, filthy disgusting visual would form

in one's mind. However, one must get the idea. Despite the school being only 5 years old, it looked like a 200-year old dirty, long forgotten artefact, which was held onto just for the sake of it. It was an absolutely horrible place.

If you were to walk through the entrance door, and into the second classroom to your right - Grade 9, and once in the classroom direct your gaze toward the third desk in the third row; you would see a very bored glum looking, dejected 14 year old boy, sitting at his desk quietly. This was the boy around whom this entire story revolves. This was the boy who would bring about a great transformation in this miserable, little town.

He was the hero, the protagonist, the game changer of this story.

Author's note

I would like to dedicate this book to all the teenagers around!

I am a 9th grader studying in Indus International School Hyderabad, and I am 13 years old.

Teenage is probably the most dramatic phase in any person's life! You are in the transformation stage, wanting to hold on to that child in you, and yet not fully prepared to become an adult. You are not here, nor there. You're stuck in the impact zone.

Adults hate teenagers, because they just don't understand them, conveniently forgetting that even they were teenagers once.

And what's worse, overwhelmed by these physical and emotional changes, teenagers also hate themselves.

Yet, I do believe that teenage can, and should, be the most wonderful phase of your life!

It is the time to shape up your personality through as many experiences you can give yourself, develop your passion and hobbies, have as much fun as you can, and make loads of new and interesting friends.

It will shape up the 'adult you' that you become.

How you get affected and influenced by your peers and friends, and most of all, 'the darkness you experience in the world'.

These critical years would determine the direction of your life.

It's your time!

Use it wisely!



Arya Dharod, loves to share his perspectives about the world we live in, through the characters and situations in his books.

He has a natural flair for writing, which he has been nurturing since a very young age of six.

His stories are a reflection of the present generation's life perspective, especially teenagers – their dreams, hopes, fears and character traits.

Lost Ca(u)ses is his fourth book, a crime thriller with a social relevance in the present day milieu.

His first standalone writing was 'Jungle Book : A Share Khan

perspective' – a contrarian take on the classic story from the antagonist's viewpoint!

'Clumsy Diaries' is a fictional autobiography of Clumsy, an African Wild Dog, from his first to last breath, and an exclusive preview into Heaven after death!

'2051 : Gen-i', is a sci-fi, giving us a sneak peek into a utopian future world, where the lines between man and machine have blurred, and Mars has been inhabited!

Arya, age 13, studies in Grade 9 at Indus International School Hyderabad, India.

He loves to watch movies and read books across genres, enjoys music and finessing his drumming skills, and play all kinds of sports.

He is passionate about travel, and zealously possessive of his family bonding over meals and sweet nothings.

His new fond fascination is human psychology, which he is exploring through books, documentaries, TED and discourses.

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