

AFTER THAT

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James graduated high school in the spring of 2012. He had aspirations of starting up his own booming industry that left him so wealthy that he never had to borrow quarters for laundry ever again.

After that, James received a full-ride scholarship to Vanderbilt University to pursue a business degree. His late nights studying at the local coffee shop, and endless amounts of caffeine had paid off. James's acceptance to this prestigious school became his entire family's pride and joy.

After that, James entered a long year of stress. He was naïve to assume the hard work stopped once you finally made it to college. There were many nights James lay awake wondering if all of the stress was worth it. He decided that one day it would be.

After that, his "one day" arrived. During his junior year, he took a real business experience class that proved to be very successful for James. He came up with the idea of flavored lick-able envelope strips. It turns out not very many people enjoyed the waxy, dry adhesive taste of these strips, and much preferred the taste of the root beer or bubblegum ones that James had designed. James wasn't prepared for this high demand of interest though, and sold out entirely of both flavors within two weeks.

After that, James created additional flavors: peppermint, cookie dough, and chocolate. These flavors proved to be even more popular, and within a few weeks, James received multiple emails from various enterprises offering to buy him out of his invention, and take it on for

themselves. James refused.

After that, James decided to drop out of Vanderbilt and run his own personal business selling these products. He made more than enough money than to have to borrow quarters for laundry ever again, and this wealth far overshadowed his parent's dismay with him for dropping out of their prided prestigious university.

After that, James created over three hundred different flavored lick-able envelope strips. He was now twenty-eight, and featured in *Forbe's* "Thirty Under Thirty" most successful people of 2022. He lived in an upscale loft in downtown Chicago with an office that always reeked of his latest flavor invention. Currently it was warm cinnamon apple pie.

At this time, most of James's friends were either married or parents. James was neither. But this didn't get James down the way it would some people. Visiting his colleague's houses that were full of rambunctious or wailing kids simply served as a reminder that this life James currently had was the one that he wanted. He had no patience, tolerance, or time for the sticky messes and the putrid scents that children brought.

After that, James hosted an extravagant gala to celebrate the ten-year founding of his company. The most expensive champagne money could buy was popped, and fancy plates with miniature shrimp cocktails were passed around. That was about all James remembered from the night.

After that, James decided to finally give in to one of his friend's suggestions to go on a blind date. It was a rather common opinion that a man of thirty-one years old should at least have a girlfriend. James found this opinion both annoying and absurd, but had agreed to go on one date in the hopes of shutting everyone up.

James arrived at the four-star Italian restaurant ready to get the show on the road. The food would've been much more enjoyable without the unnecessary company, but at least this would put an end to his friend's nagging to go on a date.

After that, the most beautiful woman James had ever cared to lay eyes on approached his booth. Her long, dark hair cascaded in waves down her shoulders upon her breasts and her bright blue eyes met James's. He was absolutely entranced.

She spoke of her time studying at Yale, the late night indulgences

in textbooks and the early mornings exams. They discussed their mutual love for Italian food, and bonded over both of their family's apprehensive feelings towards their business careers. They exchanged laughs, and for once, James was not thinking about work. He was thinking about the flavored, lick-able envelope strip he would create after her: creamy purple lavender, the flower of a first love.

After the date came to an end, James took her soft hand in his, and walked her to her car. He opened her door for her, and it was then that he noticed a name badge with the title "chief marketing officer" for the envelope company Manila. Manila did not endorse lick-able flavored envelope strips.

