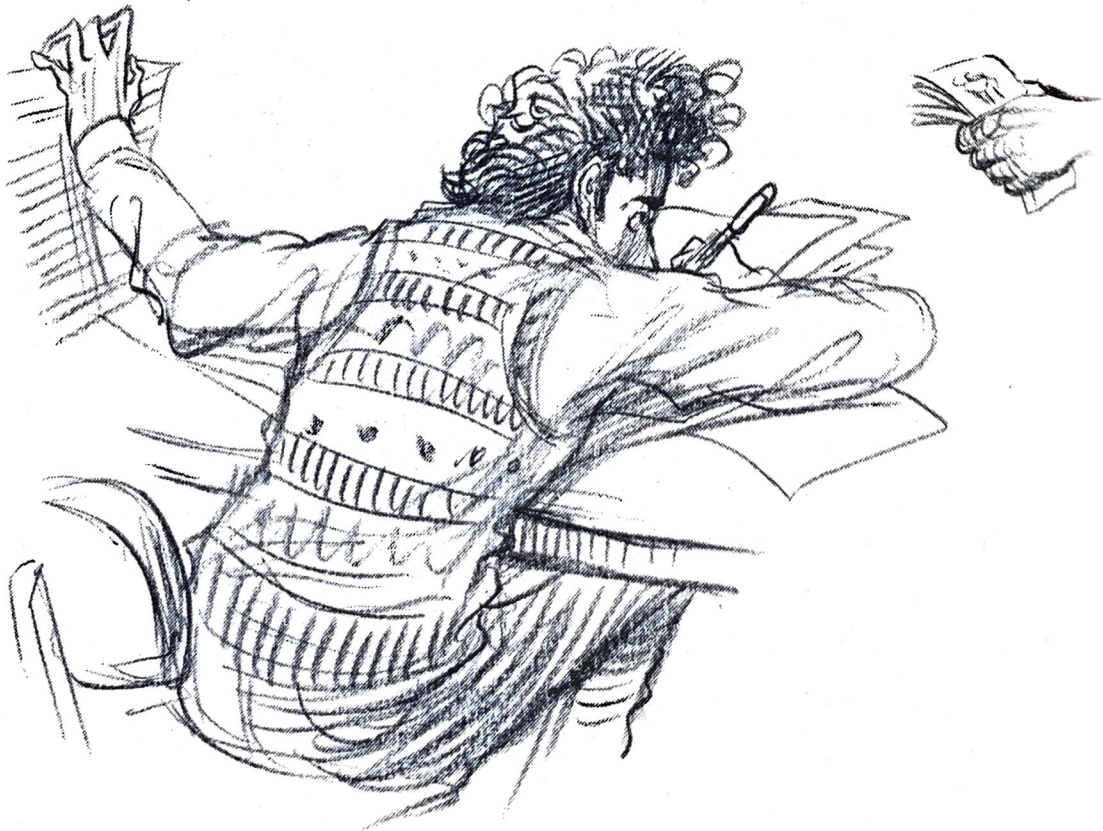


MAKE
GOOD
ART

I ESCAPED FROM SCHOOL
AS SOON AS I COULD, WHEN
THE PROSPECT OF
FOUR MORE YEARS OF
ENFORCED LEARNING BEFORE
I'D BECOME THE WRITER I WANTED TO BE
WAS
STIFLING.



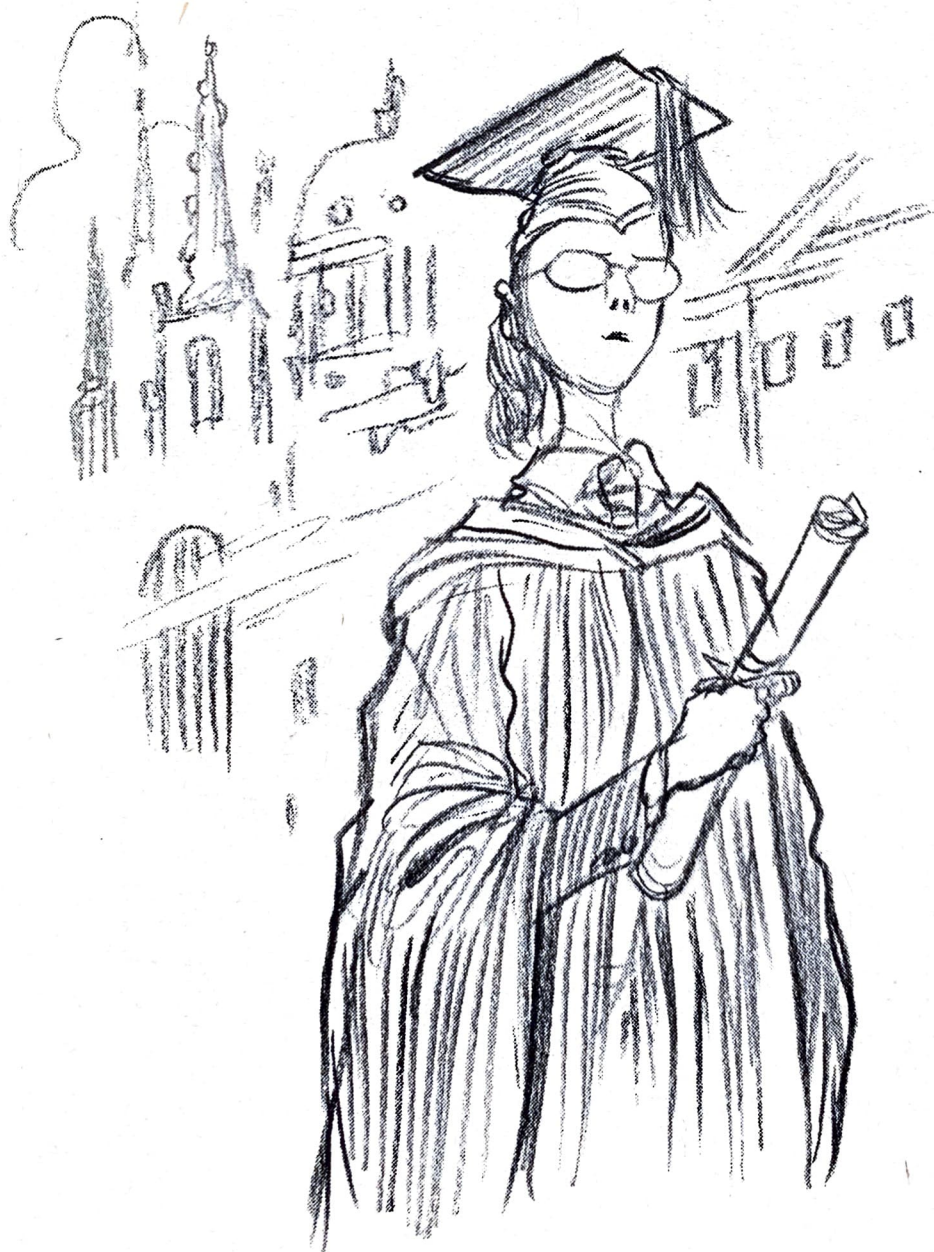
I GOT OUT INTO THE WORLD.
I WROTE, AND I BECAME
A BETTER WRITER THE MORE I WROTE,
AND I WROTE SOME MORE, AND
NOBODY EVER SEEMED TO MIND THAT
I WAS MAKING IT UP AS I WENT ALONG,
THEY JUST READ WHAT I WROTE
AND THEY PAID FOR IT,
OR THEY DIDN'T,
AND OFTEN THEY COMMISSIONED
ME TO WRITE SOMETHING ELSE FOR THEM.



WHICH HAS LEFT ME WITH A HEALTHY RESPECT
AND FONDNESS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
THAT THOSE OF MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY,
WHO ATTENDED UNIVERSITIES,
WERE CURED OF LONG AGO.

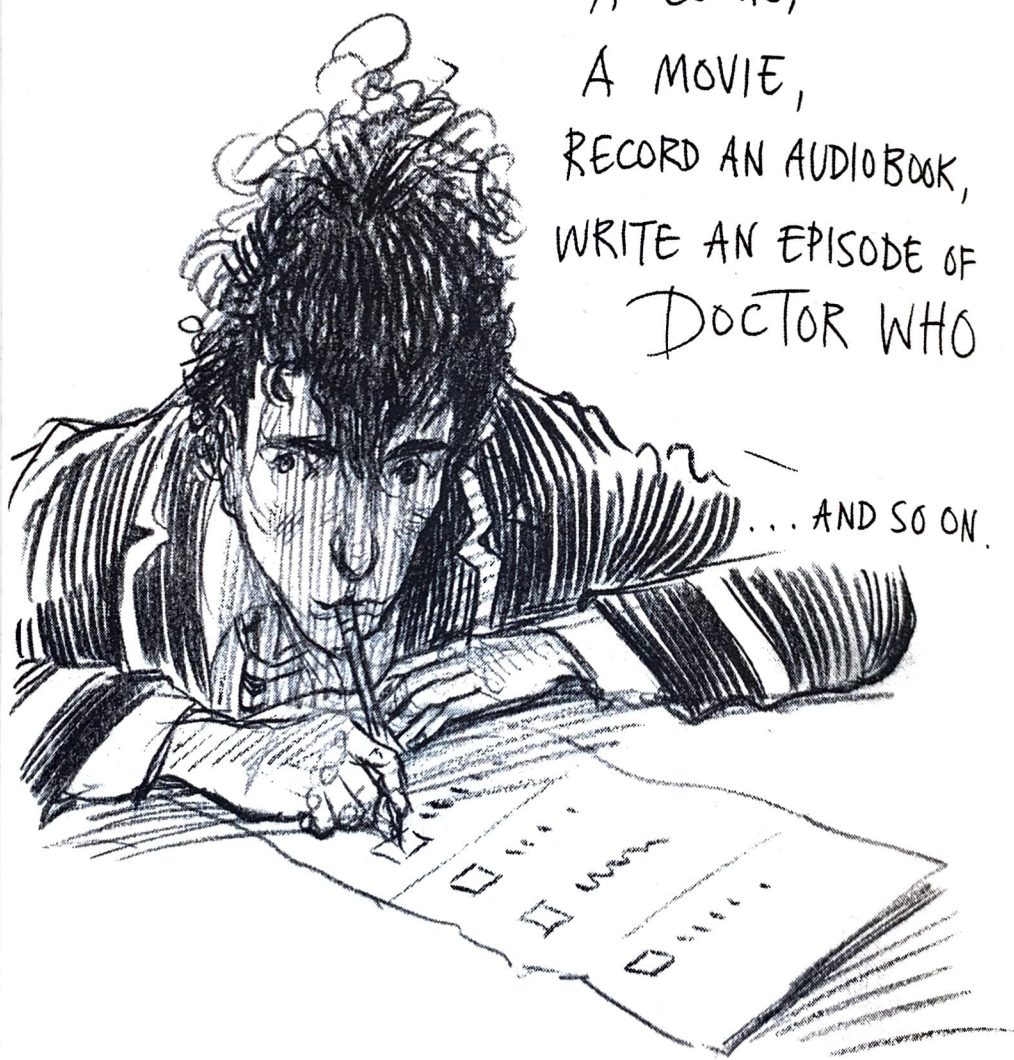
LOOKING BACK, I'VE HAD A REMARKABLE RIDE.

I'M NOT SURE I CAN CALL IT A CAREER, BECAUSE
A CAREER IMPLIES THAT I HAD SOME KIND OF
CAREER PLAN, AND I NEVER DID.



THE NEAREST THING I HAD WAS A LIST I MADE
WHEN I WAS 15 OF EVERYTHING I WANTED TO DO:

TO WRITE AN ADULT NOVEL,
A CHILDREN'S BOOK,
A COMIC,
A MOVIE,
RECORD AN AUDIOBOOK,
WRITE AN EPISODE OF
DOCTOR WHO



I DIDN'T HAVE A CAREER. I JUST DID THE
NEXT THING ON THE LIST.

SO I THOUGHT I'D TELL YOU EVERYTHING
I WISH I'D KNOWN STARTING OUT,
AND A FEW THINGS THAT, LOOKING BACK ON IT,
I SUPPOSE THAT I DID KNOW.

AND THAT I WOULD ALSO GIVE YOU
THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE I'D EVER GOT,
WHICH I COMPLETELY FAILED TO
FOLLOW.



FIRST OF ALL:

WHEN YOU START OUT ON A CAREER IN THE ARTS
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU ARE DOING.

THIS IS GREAT.

PEOPLE WHO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING
KNOW THE RULES, AND KNOW WHAT IS
POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE.

YOU DO NOT.

AND YOU SHOULD NOT.

THE RULES ON WHAT IS POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE IN
THE ARTS WERE MADE BY PEOPLE WHO HAD NOT
TESTED THE BOUNDS OF THE POSSIBLE BY GOING BEYOND
THEM.

AND YOU CAN.

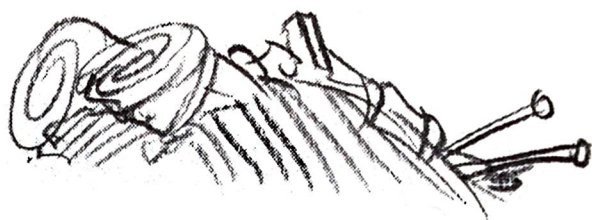


IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
IT'S EASIER TO DO.

AND BECAUSE NOBODY'S DONE IT BEFORE,
THEY HAVEN'T MADE UP RULES TO STOP
ANYONE DOING THAT AGAIN,
YET.



SECONDLY:



IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA OF WHAT YOU WANT
TO MAKE, WHAT YOU WERE PUT HERE TO DO,
THEN JUST GO AND DO THAT.

AND THAT'S MUCH HARDER THAN IT SOUNDS AND,
SOMETIMES IN THE END,



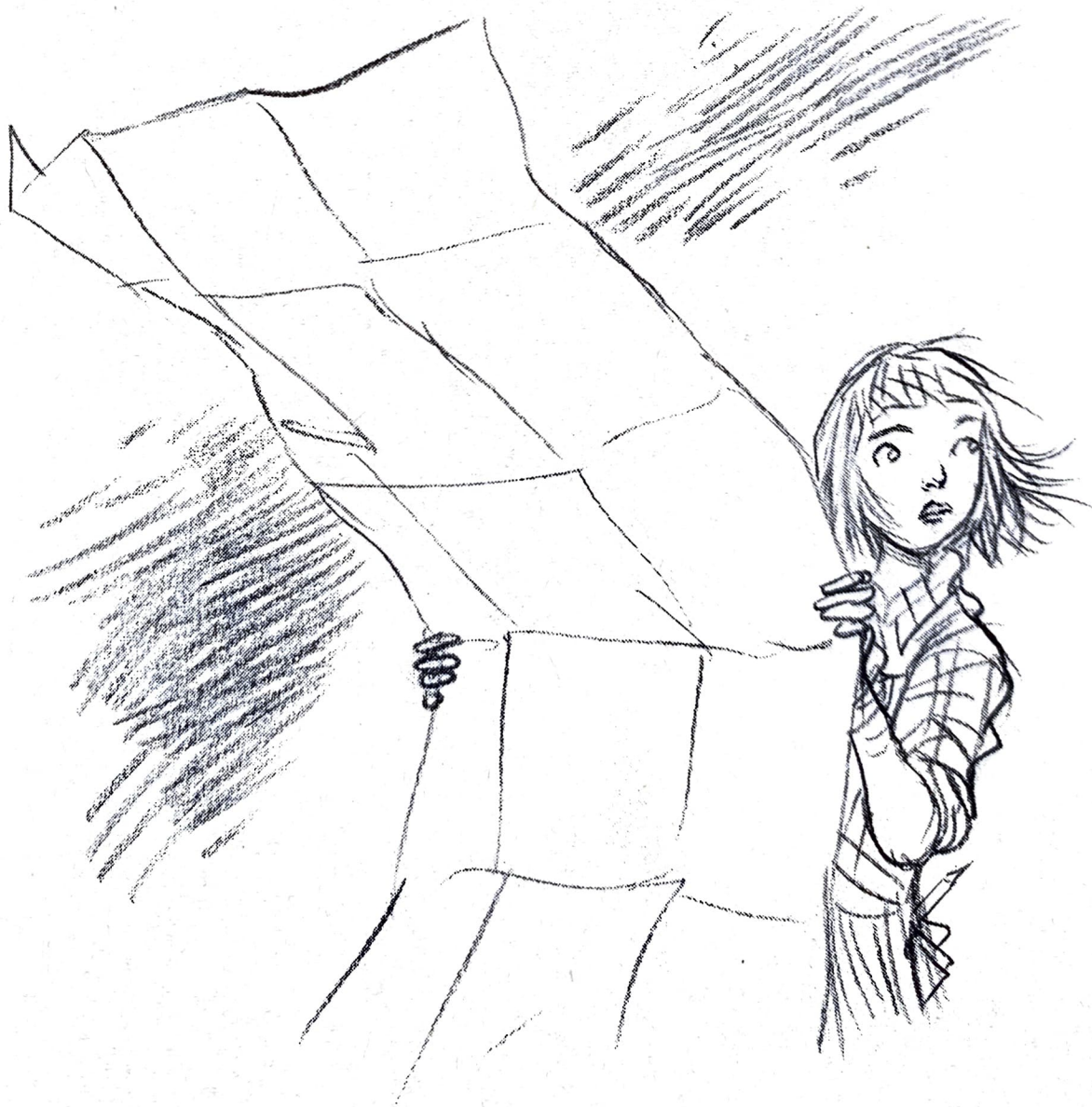
SO MUCH EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT IMAGINE.



BECAUSE NORMALLY, THERE ARE THINGS YOU HAVE TO DO BEFORE YOU CAN GET TO THE PLACE YOU WANT TO BE. I WANTED TO WRITE COMICS AND NOVELS AND STORIES AND FILMS SO I BECAME A JOURNALIST BECAUSE JOURNALISTS ARE ALLOWED TO ASK QUESTIONS, AND TO SIMPLY GO AND FIND OUT HOW THE WORLD WORKS, AND BESIDES, TO DO THOSE THINGS I NEEDED TO WRITE AND TO WRITE WELL, AND I WAS BEING PAID TO LEARN HOW TO WRITE ECONOMICALLY, CRISPLY, SOMETIMES UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS, AND ON TIME.



SOMETIMES THE WAY TO DO WHAT YOU HOPE
TO DO WILL BE CLEAR CUT, AND SOMETIMES
IT WILL BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DECIDE
WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE DOING THE CORRECT
THING, BECAUSE YOU'LL HAVE TO BALANCE
YOUR GOALS AND HOPES WITH
FEEDING YOURSELF, PAYING DEBTS, FINDING WORK,
SETTLING FOR WHAT YOU CAN GET.



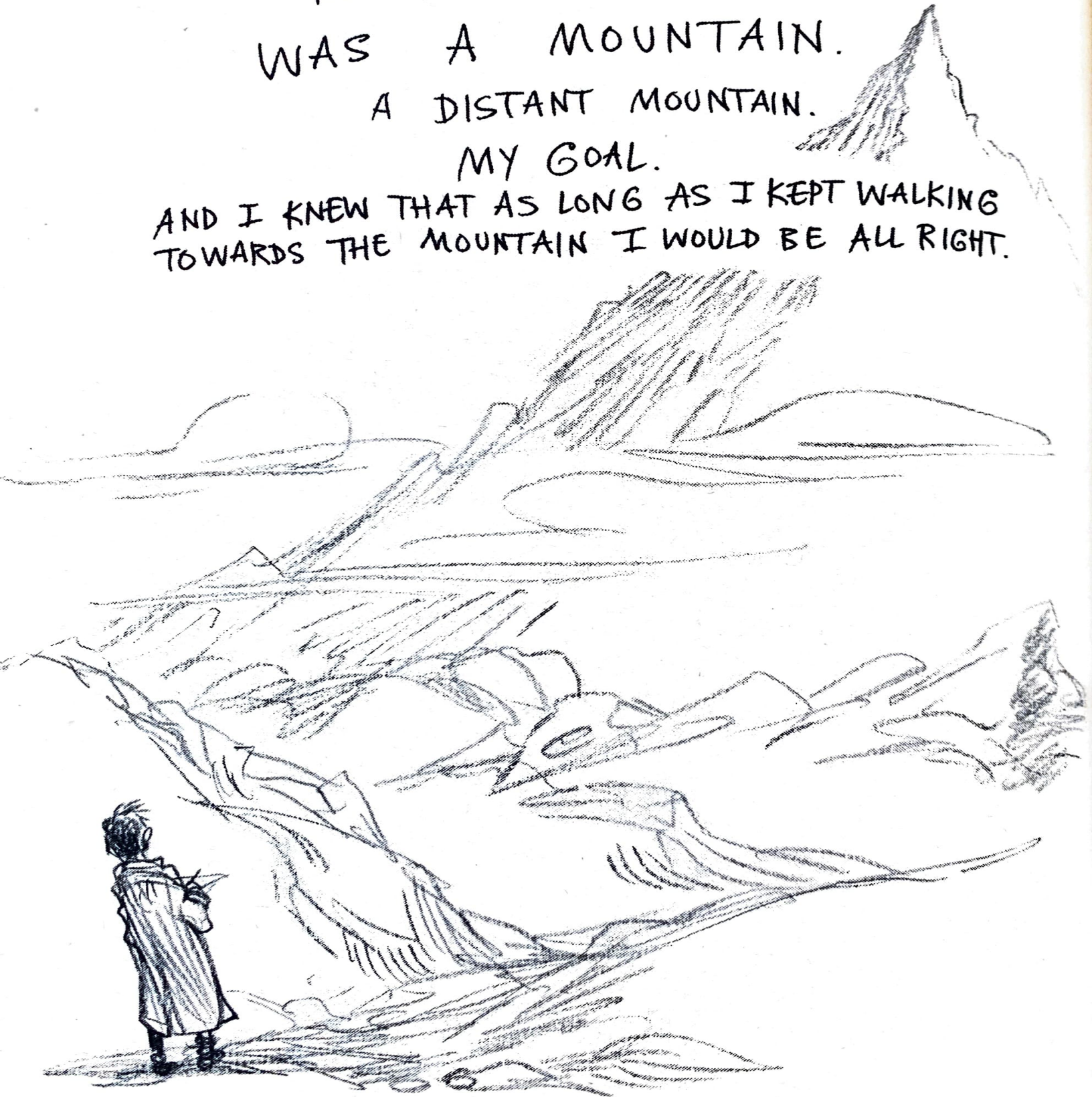
SOMETHING THAT WORKED FOR ME WAS
IMAGINING THAT WHERE I WANTED TO BE
(AN AUTHOR, PRIMARILY OF FICTION, MAKING GOOD BOOKS,
MAKING GOOD COMICS, AND SUPPORTING MYSELF
THROUGH MY WORDS)

WAS A MOUNTAIN.

A DISTANT MOUNTAIN.

MY GOAL.

AND I KNEW THAT AS LONG AS I KEPT WALKING
TOWARDS THE MOUNTAIN I WOULD BE ALL RIGHT.



AND WHEN I TRULY WAS NOT SURE WHAT TO DO,
I COULD STOP, AND THINK ABOUT WHETHER
IT WAS TAKING ME TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM
THE MOUNTAIN.

I SAID NO TO EDITORIAL JOBS ON MAGAZINES, PROPER JOBS
THAT WOULD HAVE PAID PROPER MONEY, BECAUSE I KNEW
THAT, ATTRACTIVE THOUGH THEY WERE, FOR ME THEY
WOULD HAVE BEEN WALKING AWAY FROM
THE MOUNTAIN.

AND IF THOSE JOB OFFERS HAD COME ALONG EARLIER I
MIGHT HAVE TAKEN THEM, BECAUSE THEY STILL WOULD
HAVE BEEN CLOSER TO THE MOUNTAIN
THAN I WAS AT THE TIME.



I LEARNED TO WRITE BY WRITING.

I TENDED TO DO ANYTHING AS LONG AS IT FELT
LIKE AN ADVENTURE, AND TO
STOP WHEN IT FELT LIKE
WORK.

WHICH MEANT LIFE DID NOT FEEL
LIKE WORK.



THIRDLY: WHEN YOU START OFF, YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF FAILURE.

YOU NEED TO BE THICK-SKINNED, TO LEARN THAT NOT EVERY PROJECT WILL SURVIVE.

A FREELANCE LIFE, A LIFE IN THE ARTS, IS SOMETIMES LIKE PUTTING MESSAGES IN BOTTLES, ON A DESERT ISLAND,

AND HOPING THAT SOMEONE WILL FIND ONE OF YOUR BOTTLES AND OPEN IT AND READ IT, AND PUT SOMETHING IN A BOTTLE THAT WILL WASH ITS WAY BACK TO YOU:

APPRECIATION, OR A COMMISSION, OR MONEY, OR LOVE.

AND YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT YOU MAY PUT OUT A HUNDRED THINGS FOR EVERY BOTTLE THAT WINDS UP COMING BACK.



THE PROBLEMS OF FAILURE ARE
PROBLEMS OF DISCOURAGEMENT,
OF HOPELESSNESS,
OF HUNGER.

YOU WANT EVERYTHING TO HAPPEN
AND YOU WANT IT NOW,

AND THINGS GO

WRONG.

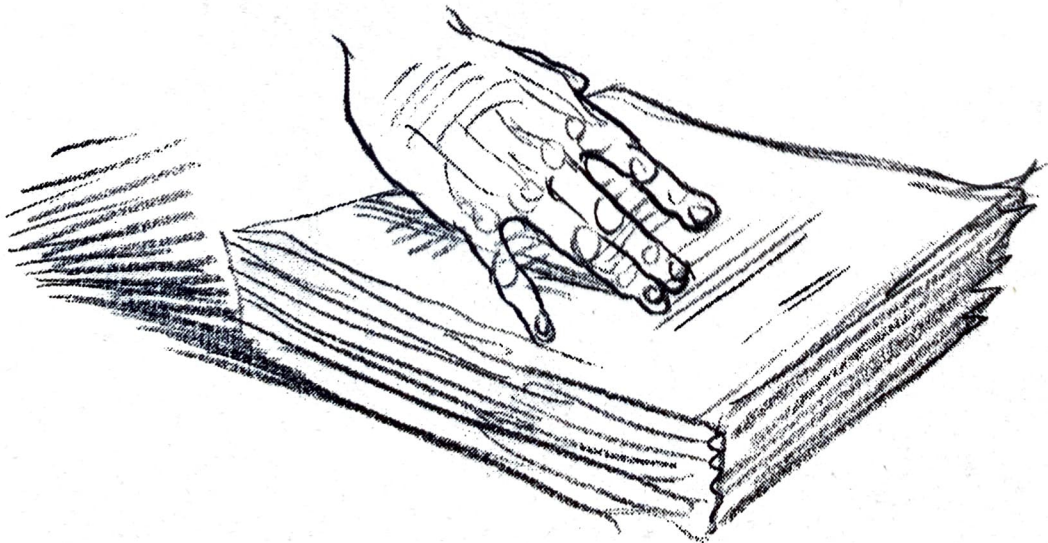


MY FIRST BOOK - A PIECE OF JOURNALISM I HAD DONE FOR THE MONEY, AND WHICH HAD ALREADY BOUGHT ME AN ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER FROM THE ADVANCE - SHOULD HAVE BEEN A BESTSELLER. IT SHOULD HAVE PAID ME A LOT OF MONEY. IF THE PUBLISHER HADN'T GONE INTO INVOLUNTARY LIQUIDATION BETWEEN THE FIRST PRINT RUN SELLING OUT AND THE SECOND PRINTING, AND BEFORE ANY ROYALTIES COULD BE PAID, IT WOULD HAVE DONE.

AND I SHRUGGED,

AND I STILL HAD MY ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER AND ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY THE RENT FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS, AND I DECIDED THAT I WOULD DO MY BEST IN FUTURE NOT TO WRITE BOOKS JUST FOR THE MONEY. IF YOU DIDN'T GET THE MONEY, THEN YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING. IF I DID WORK I WAS PROUD OF, AND I DIDN'T GET THE MONEY,

AT LEAST I'D HAVE THE WORK.



EXIT

EVERY NOW AND AGAIN, I FORGET THAT RULE,
AND WHENEVER I DO, THE UNIVERSE KICKS ME
HARD AND REMINDS ME.

I DON'T KNOW THAT IT'S AN ISSUE FOR ANYBODY BUT ME,
BUT IT'S TRUE THAT
NOTHING I DID WHERE THE ONLY REASON FOR
DOING IT WAS THE MONEY WAS EVER
WORTH IT,
EXCEPT AS BITTER EXPERIENCE.
USUALLY I DIDN'T WIND UP GETTING THE MONEY, EITHER.

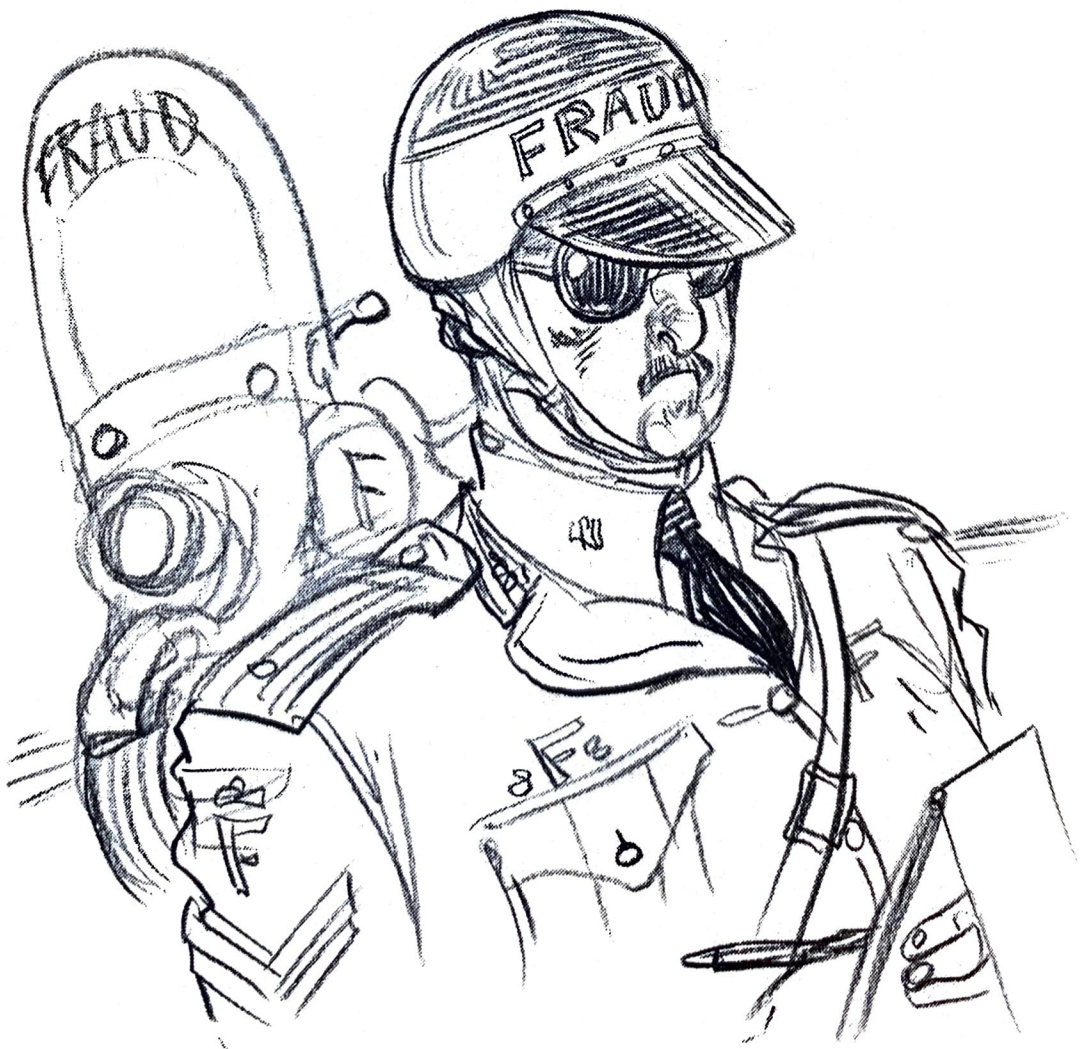


THE THINGS I DID BECAUSE I WAS EXCITED,
AND WANTED TO SEE THEM EXIST IN REALITY,
HAVE NEVER LET ME DOWN, AND I'VE
NEVER REGRETTED THE TIME I SPENT
ON ANY OF
THEM.



THE PROBLEMS OF FAILURE ARE HARD.
THE PROBLEMS OF SUCCESS CAN BE HARDER
BECAUSE NOBODY WARNS YOU ABOUT
THEM.

THE FIRST PROBLEM OF ANY KIND OF EVEN LIMITED SUCCESS
IS THE UNSHAKABLE CONVICTION THAT YOU ARE
GETTING AWAY WITH SOMETHING,
AND THAT ANY MOMENT NOW
THEY WILL DISCOVER YOU.
IT'S IMPOSTER SYNDROME, SOMETHING MY WIFE,
AMANDA, CHRISTENED THE FRAUD POLICE.



IN MY CASE, I WAS CONVINCED THAT THERE WOULD BE A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, AND A MAN WITH A CLIPBOARD (I DON'T KNOW WHY HE CARRIED A CLIPBOARD, IN MY HEAD, BUT HE DID) WOULD BE THERE, TO TELL ME IT WAS ALL OVER, AND THEY HAD CAUGHT UP WITH ME, AND NOW I WOULD HAVE TO GO AND GET A REAL JOB, ONE THAT DIDN'T CONSIST OF MAKING THINGS UP AND WRITING THEM DOWN, AND READING BOOKS I WANTED TO READ.

AND THEN I WOULD GO AWAY QUIETLY AND GET THE KIND OF JOB WHERE YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE THINGS UP ANYMORE.



THE PROBLEMS OF SUCCESS.
THEY'RE REAL, AND WITH LUCK YOU'LL EXPERIENCE
THEM. THE POINT WHERE YOU STOP SAYING YES
TO EVERYTHING, BECAUSE NOW THE BOTTLES YOU
THREW IN THE OCEAN ARE ALL COMING BACK,
AND HAVE TO LEARN TO SAY NO.

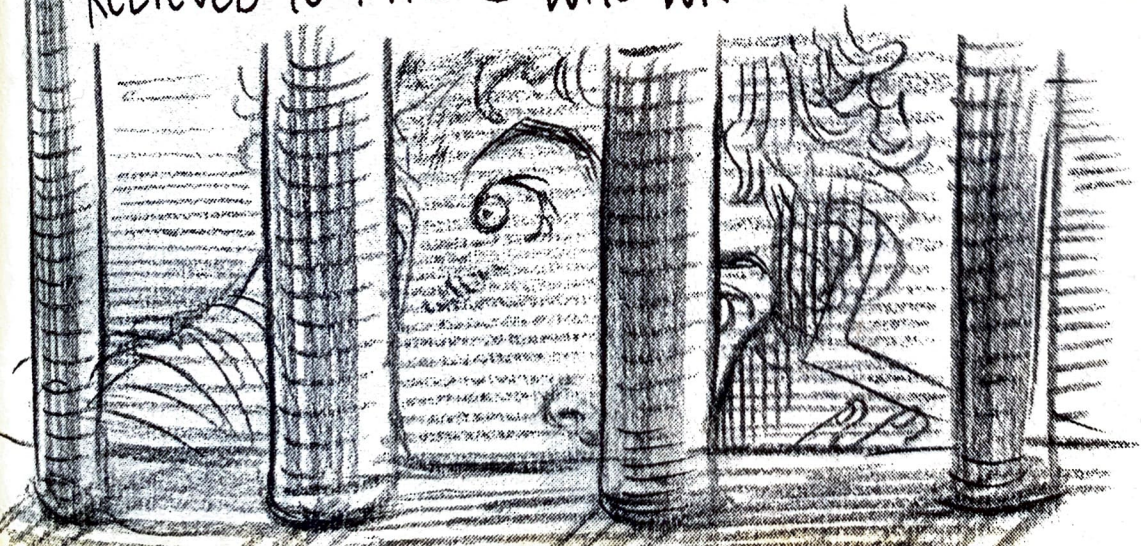


I WATCHED MY PEERS, AND MY FRIENDS, AND THE ONES WHO WERE OLDER THAN ME AND WATCHED HOW MISERABLE SOME OF THEM WERE: I'D LISTEN TO THEM TELLING ME THAT THEY COULDN'T ENVISAGE A WORLD WHERE THEY DID WHAT THEY HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO DO ANYMORE, BECAUSE NOW THEY HAD TO EARN A CERTAIN AMOUNT EVERY MONTH JUST TO KEEP WHERE THEY WERE. THEY COULDN'T GO AND DO THE THINGS THAT MATTERED, AND THAT THEY HAD REALLY WANTED TO DO; AND THAT SEEMED AS BIG A TRAGEDY AS ANY PROBLEM OF FAILURE.

AND AFTER THAT, THE BIGGEST PROBLEM OF SUCCESS IS THAT THE WORLD CONSPIRES TO STOP YOU DOING THE THING THAT YOU DO, BECAUSE YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL.

THERE WAS A DAY WHEN I LOOKED UP AND REALISED THAT I HAD BECOME SOMEONE WHO PROFESSIONALLY REPLIED TO EMAIL, AND WHO WROTE AS A HOBBY.

I STARTED ANSWERING FEWER EMAILS, AND WAS RELIEVED TO FIND I WAS WRITING MUCH MORE.



FOURTHLY: IF YOU'RE MAKING MISTAKES, IT MEANS
YOU'RE OUT THERE DOING SOMETHING.

AND THE MISTAKES IN THEMSELVES CAN BE USEFUL.
I ONCED MISPELLED CAROLINE, IN A LETTER,
TRANSPOSING THE A AND THE O, AND I THOUGHT
'CORALINE LOOKS LIKE A REAL NAME...'

