

Álvaro Magalhães

O ESTRANHÃO 2

WAKE ME UP WHEN IT'S OVER



Ilustração de Carlos J. Campos

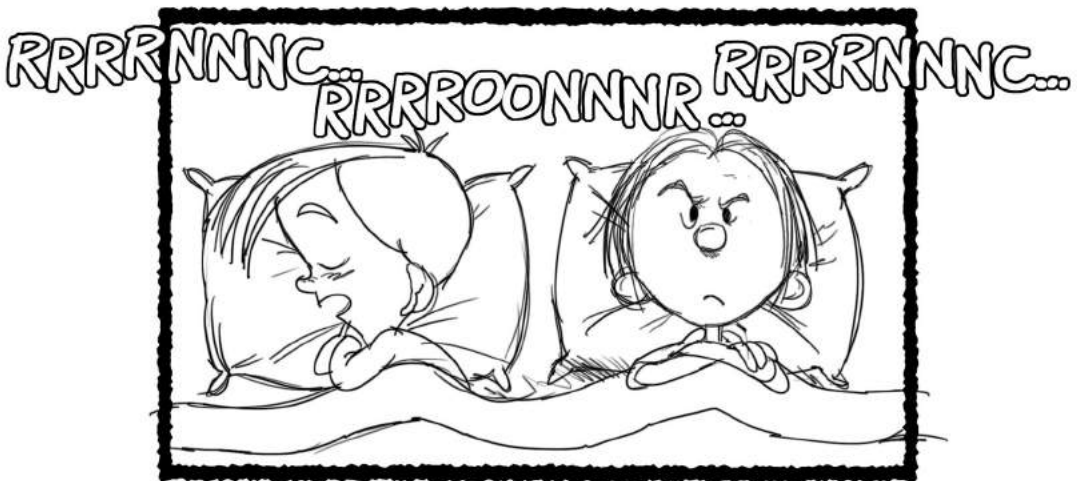
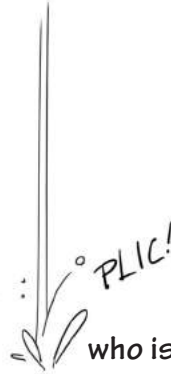
 Porto
Editora

Making a living

Can you fall asleep if there's a person snoring next to you? What if, besides the snoring, a drop of water falls in a bucket every 30 seconds? I can't!

The person next to me is my cousin Miguel, who is 6 years-old. My uncle and aunt had to go to take care of something and left him with us.

It could have been worse. He is a quiet kid who spends his days on his PlayStation and mobile phone. But it was really annoying to have to share the bed with someone who seems to have swallowed a chainsaw.

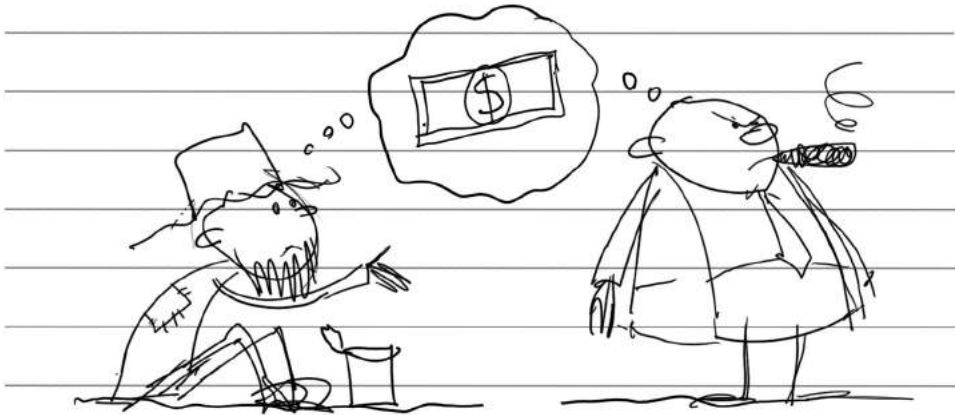




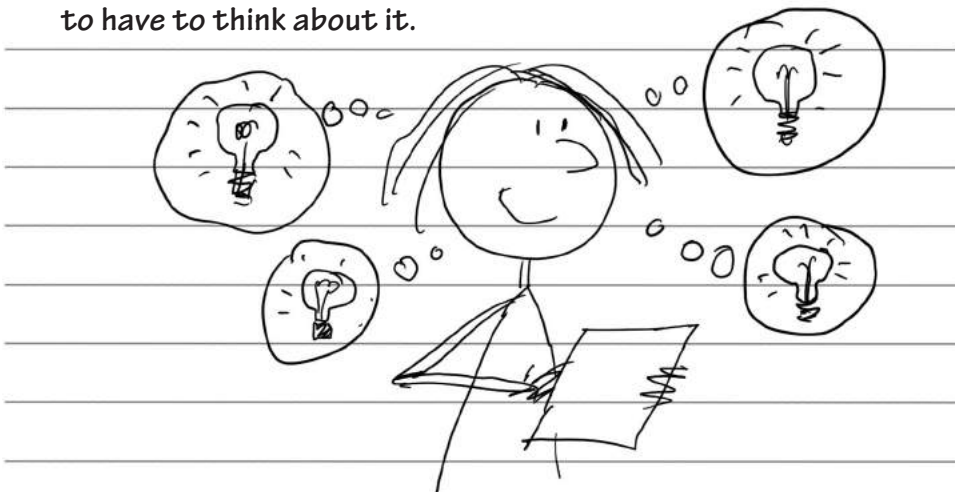
The dripping was there to stay. The roof needed to be fixed and there was no money to do so, not even for the lowest quote.

Money. Money. Money. Everywhere I turned to all I heard was about money (and sometimes pretty loud). Perhaps because we were in a crisis and there was no money to be seen.

When I grow up I don't want to have either a lot or a little money. Those who have no money only think about having it and those who have a lot do the same.

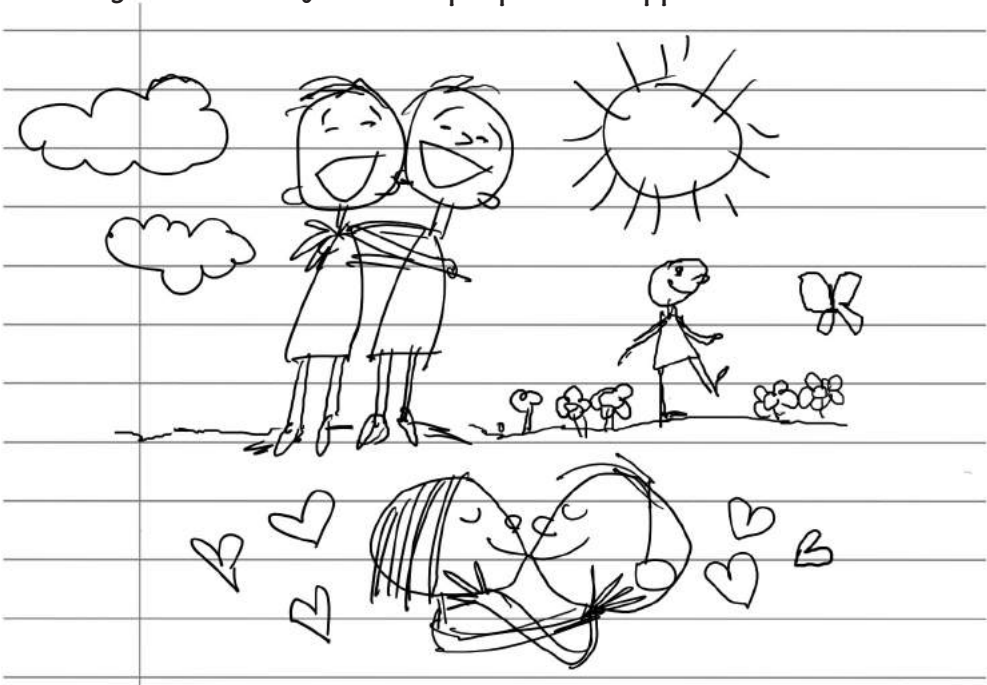


The secret is to have just enough money not to have to think about it.

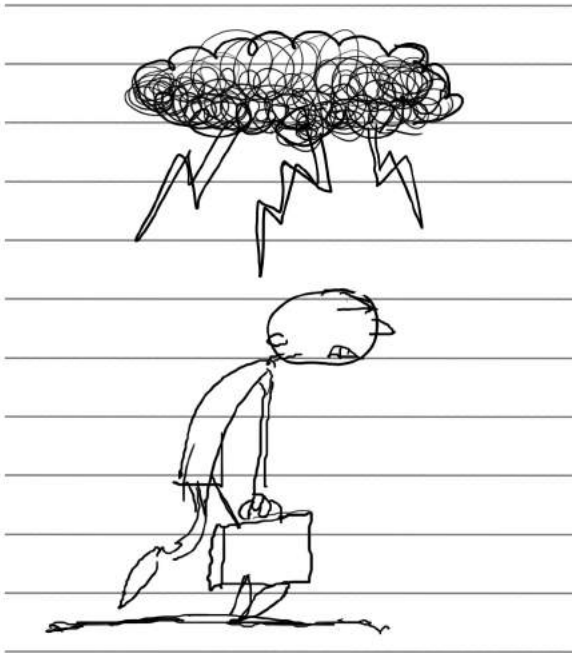


As it wasn't my case, I had to stop thinking about that and start making a living, as adults say. Doesn't anyone think is just getting here and start living? Being alive isn't free, even though there's no enrollment fee when we get here. It's like in clubs, there's no charge to get in but then everything is overcharged to make up for it.

Breathing is still free (unless it's air conditioner, that is charged). Everything else is paid for and it's expensive: clothes, food, water, electricity, Internet, transport, fun. Very few things aren't paid for like watching the sunset, playing, going for a walk, friendship, love and those are the best things but, as they are free, people don't appreciate them.



By the way, I've never understood why people say "make a living". You make money, that's true, but you lose life. When people leave their jobs they're really tired and irritated by their bosses and bad coworkers.



Actually, making a living seems to be the easiest way of losing it. But if I had to make a living which, sooner or later, I will. I decided to anticipate things for a while. And I did it the only way I knew how: inventing things.

What? Comic strips.

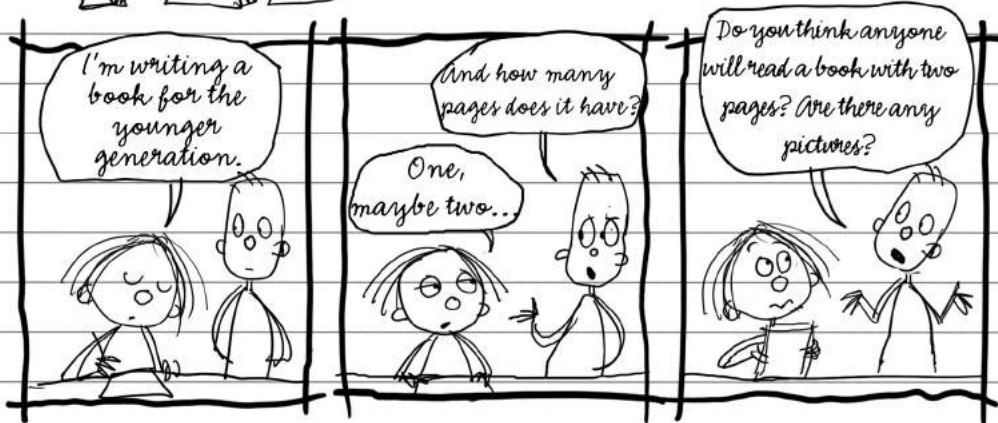
Lots of newspapers and magazines have one.



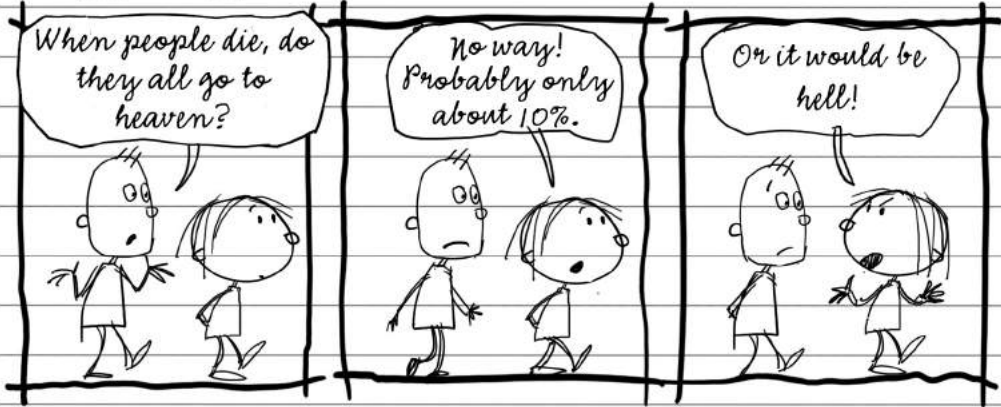
Well, let's see. Inspired by my own life I created a boy resembling me, Ted, with a life and family just like mine. Actually, he was me but incognito, undercover. Do you get it?



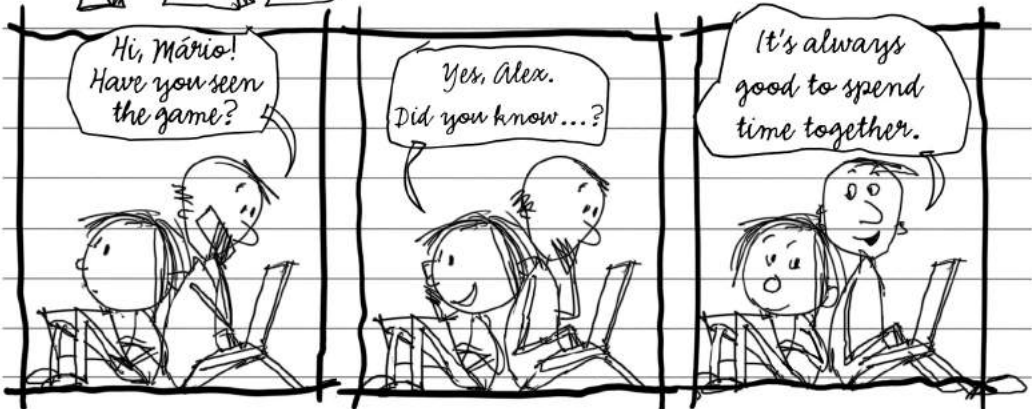
TED



TED



TED



I sent the strips to some newspapers and magazines and waited for the answers. After a week, only one answer had arrived and it said:



Dear Frederico,

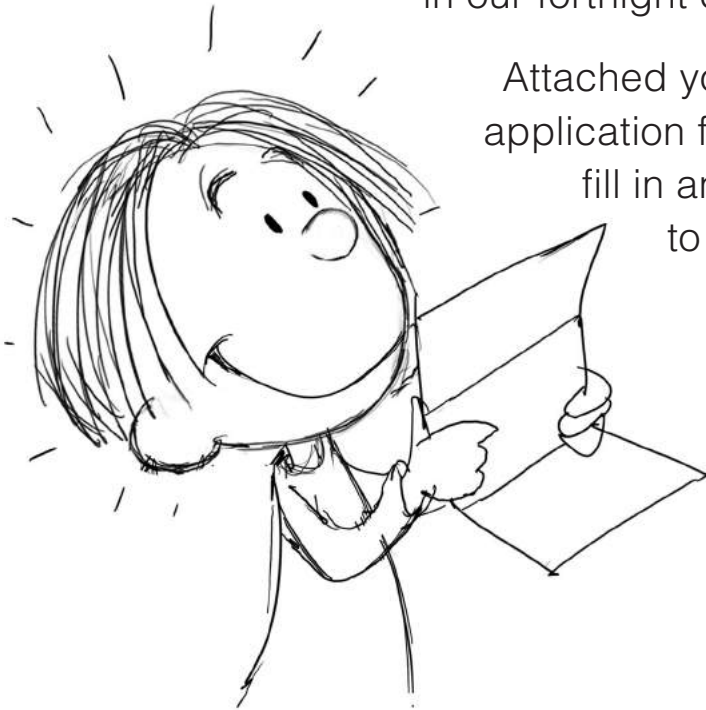
We loved your drawings but we can't publish them because you're underage. We will be waiting for you when you reach 18. Contact me, João Meireles, then. I might still be alive!

There was no hope in trying to make a living as a boy. So I got myself a new date of birth and there I was at the age of 35, with a degree in Design and an amazing CV. I stopped being a boy who wrote and drew as an adult, to be an adult who wrote and drew as a boy. That was what they wanted, I thought. I sent everything to the remaining magazines.

Two days later I got the answer I was waiting for (haven't I told you?).

Dear Sir,

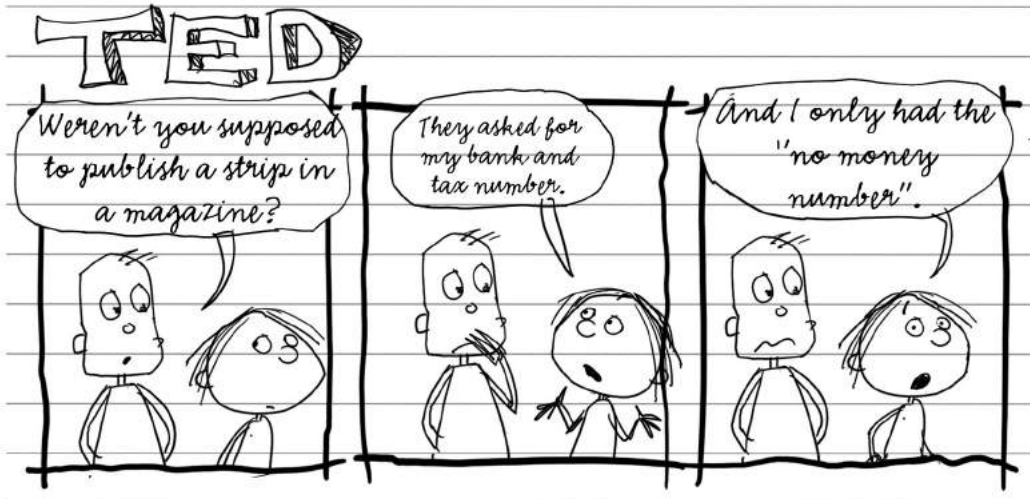
We have been analysing your letter and we have decided to offer you the job of publishing of a cartoon strip in our fortnight edition.



Attached you will find the application form for you to fill in and we ask you to send banking and payment information so we can proceed with drawing up the contract.

Check this out? On one hand, it worked, on the other it didn't, because I had no bank or tax information. And I couldn't come up with any either.

Immediately I got a new idea for another strip.



I even called The Young Entrepreneurs' Association hoping to get some help but they only accepted members who were over 18. And as the Very Young Entrepreneurs' Association still hadn't been created, I rested my case. I had to accept that making a living as a cartoon artist wasn't going to happen.

I immediately thought of a home-based business, something that waived paperwork or a big investment.





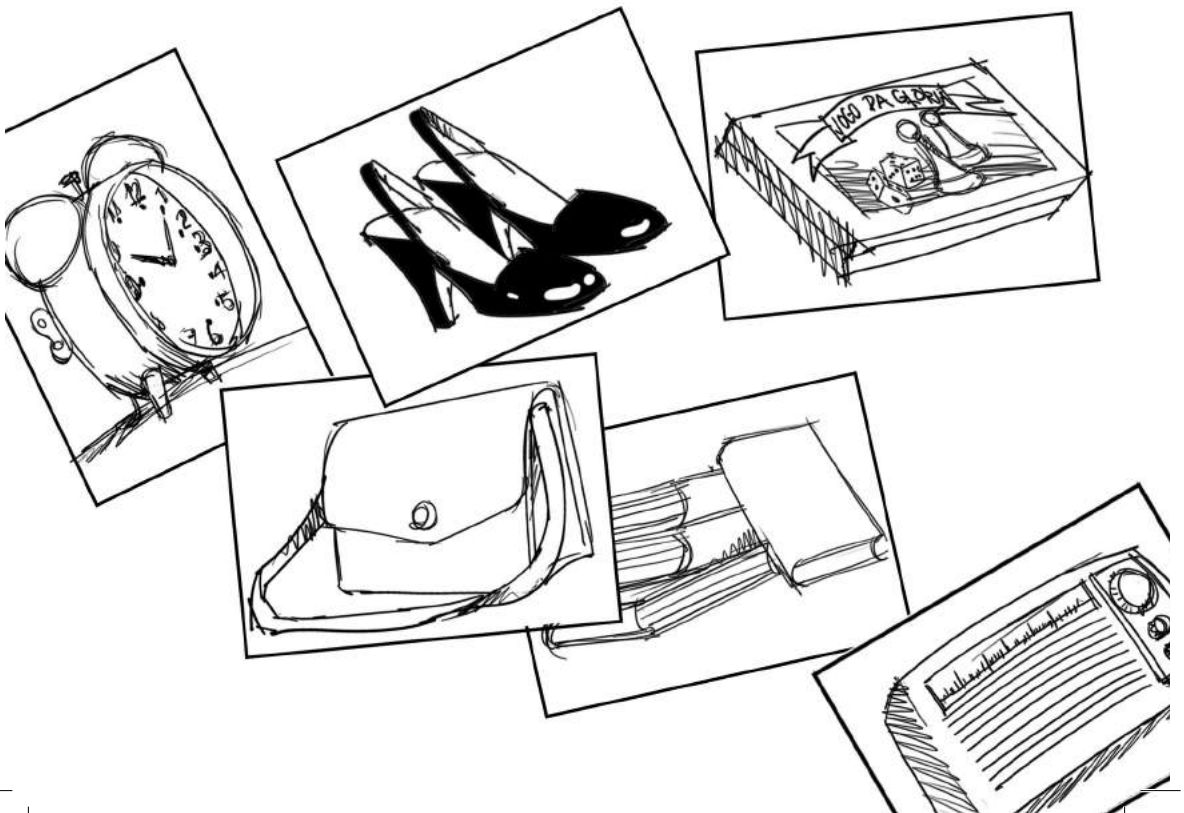
It was hard to admit that a six-year-old had business ideas faster than me, but ok. The truth was: my cousin was right. There are always people looking for this or that at a low cost.

Time for the second phase: choosing a name for the company. Everything starts with a name, doesn't it? *Second Life*, I said. Used items looking for a second chance in life.



It was once again hard to take marketing lessons from a six-year-old boy but, once again, he was right. That was the second lesson so far. Anyway, I'd rather learn from someone who doesn't know than from a know-it-all.

Second life was born. I created the website. What could I sell? Books, DVDs, games, my mother's, sister's and dad's clothes, shoes and bags. The basement was also full of old things belonging to grandpa, and lots of people like old things like those. Step by step, I gathered a 23 item-stock, photographed everything (a good picture can work miracles) and posted them on the website.



Then Marketing got in to action to spread the word.



I believed him in a wink of an eye because besides being good at finding names for companies, he was a young IT technician who had already solved some problems. He even solved his own problems faster than mine! Hear this, while he was with us, he did his homework in a flash. Was he a genius?

One day, he opened up a bit and told me his secret, he had an app to do his homework.

I couldn't believe it but he showed me and so I saw it with my own eyes!



These younger kids learn to use apps faster than they learn to read. And there are apps for everything or almost everything. There used to be applied students, now there are apps and they learn to apply them.

Why study hard to learn a little – people never learn much – when you have a phone that knows everything at hand? And you can even call your girlfriend immediately after.

The younger you are, the more you think technology is good and the more you use it.

My cousin teaches me,



I teach my sister,



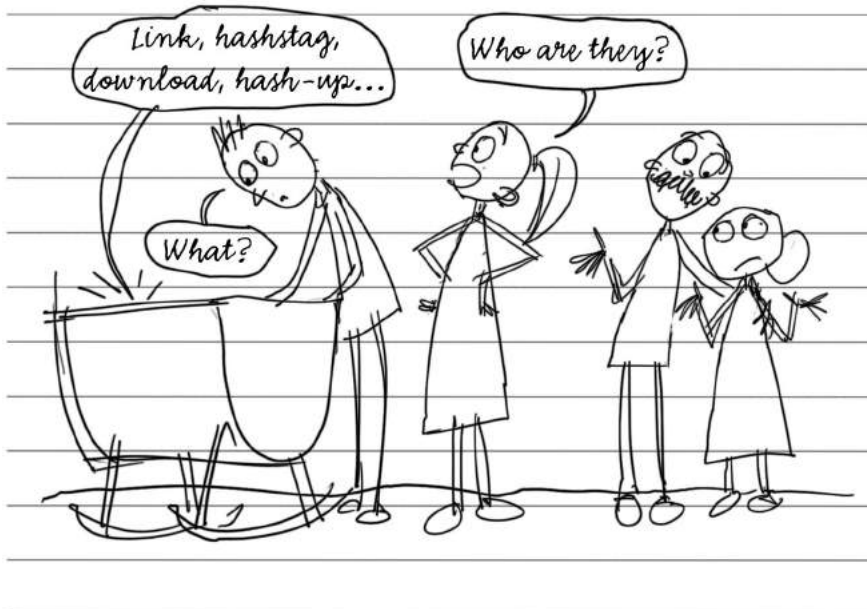
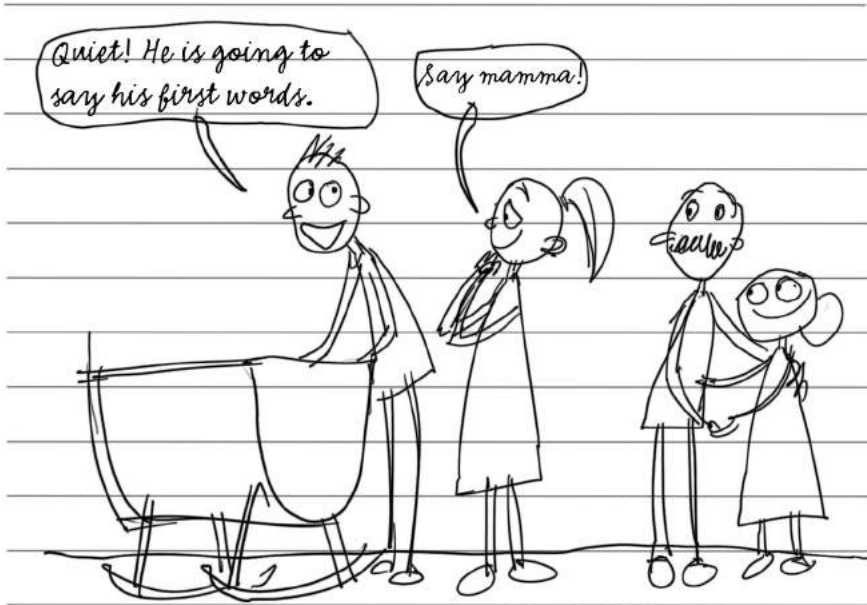
who teaches my dad,



who teaches his dad.



You know what? Someday we'll have tech-babies!



Thus, my first company was born. I hired Miguel as an IT consultant, weekly wage paid in stickers from the World Football Championship and chocolates.

At home, no one believed in it but when people started arriving, phoning and emailing they finally gave it credit.

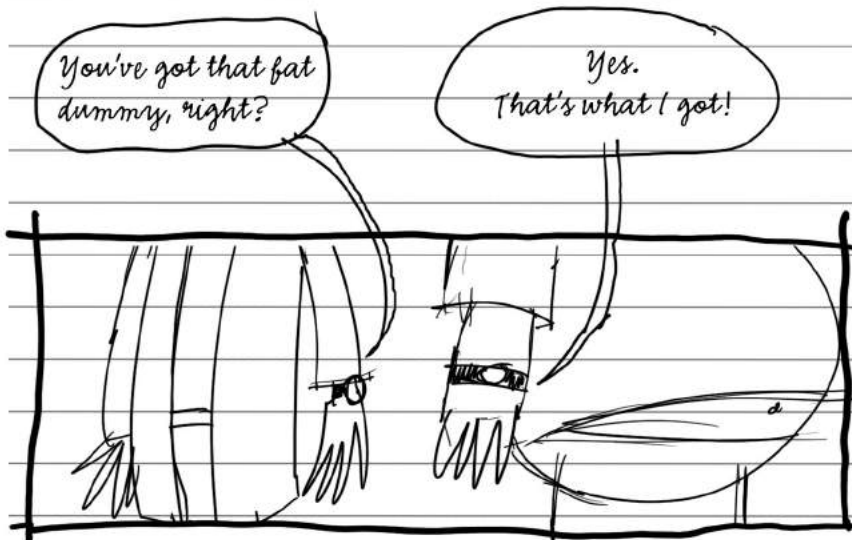


Things were flying out the door. I felt some had a hard time letting go, staring at things going out the door, clueless of what was happening.

“There goes my sweater, my bracelet, my pen” they said here at home. I say, people think they own things but it is the other way around. We die, they stay. Therefore we are just the people they have to take care of them for some time.

Otherwise, how could a ring or a watch, for example, go to a football match, the opera or travel to the other side of the world where even time is different?

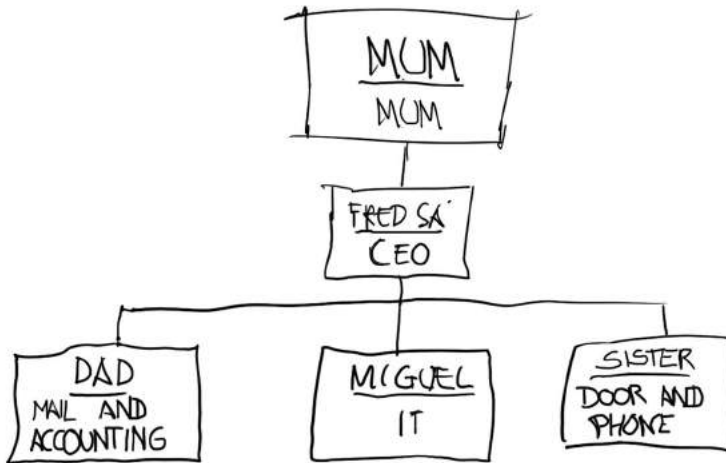
No one knows but I suspect things have a life of their own and talk to each other like we talk about them.



I was thinking about these things when my mum came to me. There were someone at the door to pick an old clock and another on the phone asking if there wasn't a discount on the green bag.

I had a lot to do and that was no joke.

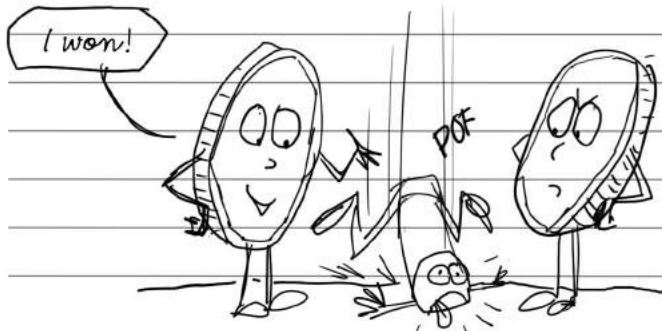
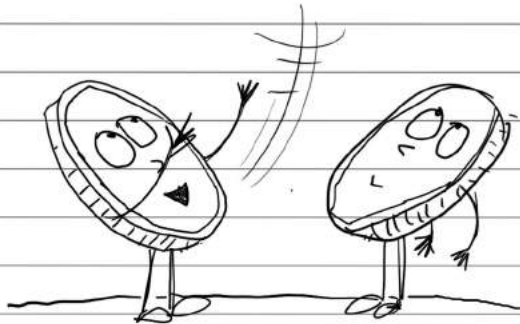
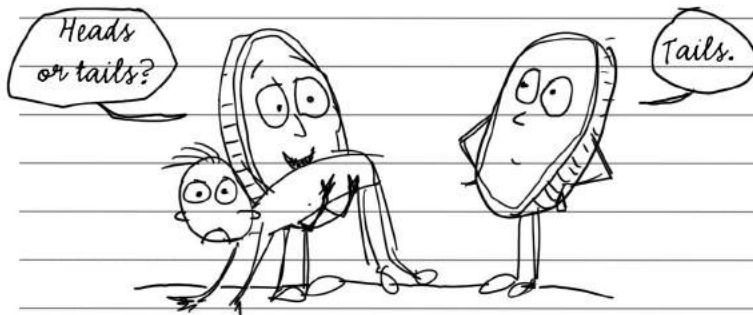
Later that evening, I had to gather my staff (as a company boss I'm obligated to use this language) in the dining-room and create a system. My sister was in charge of answering the door and the phone. My dad got accounting and mail. And my mum? She would be in charge of playing the role of mum, while we did the rest.



On some occasions they would offer to sell some things they weren't planning to get rid of to begin with. That was how we made a small fortune in a little more than two weeks.



In the evening, when we were counting the money made, we would see small bundles of bills smiling at us. Money is very seductive. It promises this and that which only it can make possible but then traps us and makes slaves out of us. Man invented money for our use but gave it so much power that they ended up belonging to it.



What about the company? Business ended when we ran out of things to sell. There was a board meeting and we concluded it was needed to expand the business to the rest of the family and charge a percentage of the sales. I said no! If I have done that, Second Life would have gone from 5 employees to 50 then to 500 and so on. If I wanted to be a young Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, that would have been great, but I was Fred, a boy who didn't want businesses nor financial complications.

My goal in life is to be happy and I doubt I could be happy if I had a company with 6,000 employees.



I resigned from the company and made my sister CEO, she would ruin it shortly.



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bla bla bla, bla bla bla, bla, bla bla b

But the dripping problem in my room was fixed. Oh! and my cousin returned home. I could go back to my old life, enjoying my bedroom and my bed just to myself.

It was a happy thought that my mum soon found a way to ruin. That's a mum's job.

We also have some work to be done in the garage. Try to come up with some kind of business.



“I have more on my mind right now” I replied immediately
“My brain wasn’t born for this. For now, at least. Haven’t you noticed I’m still a child? I don’t even have a tax number.”

That wasn’t the main reason, you know. But listen, just between us, I can tell you the truth, quietly...

Come over here...

*It is one thing to
earn money, it’s quite
another to let money
beat us.*

