

Álvaro Magalhães

O ESTRANHÃO 5

DON'T JUDGE A PROFILE
BY ITS "LIKES"!

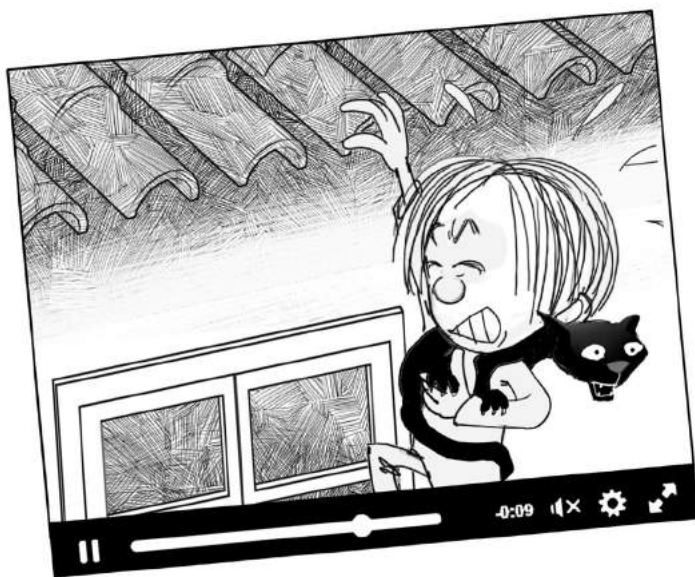


Ilustração de Carlos J. Campos

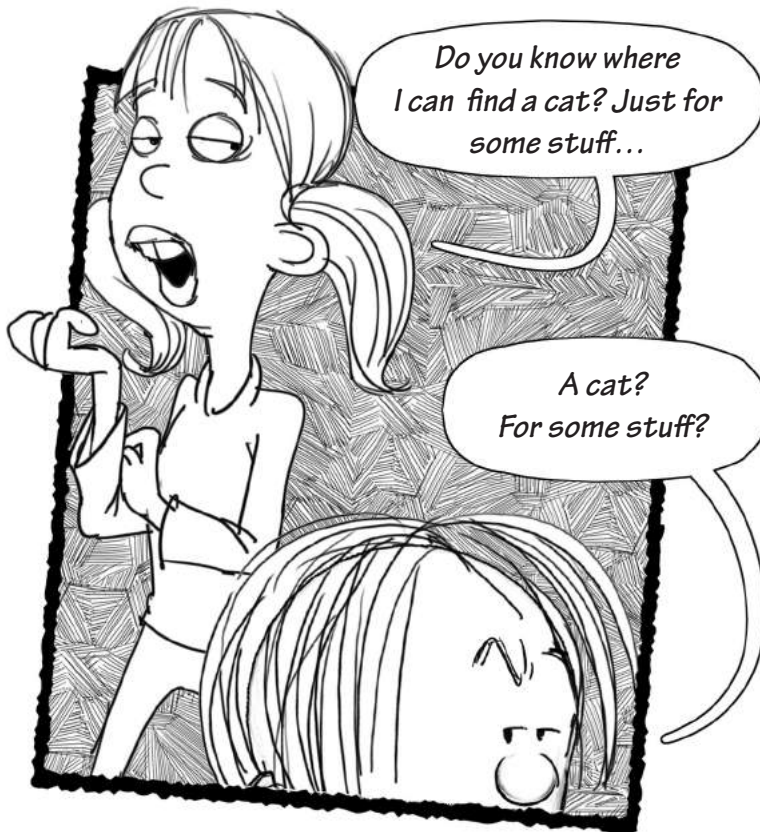
 Porto
Editora

Don't judge a profile by its "likes"

My sister failed, once again, at a casting for new singers and arrived home in tears. Before that my ears had suffered a lot because of her rehearsals and I had to buy earplugs or I would have gone crazy. Now, my suffering continued but because of all her whining and complaining. If she continued to cry like this, we would have to buy a dehumidifier for the house. It seemed a never-ending fountain.



The sudden silence that followed didn't bode well for the future either. What was next? More silly ideas. However, in this case, the answer was a really, really, really stupid idea.



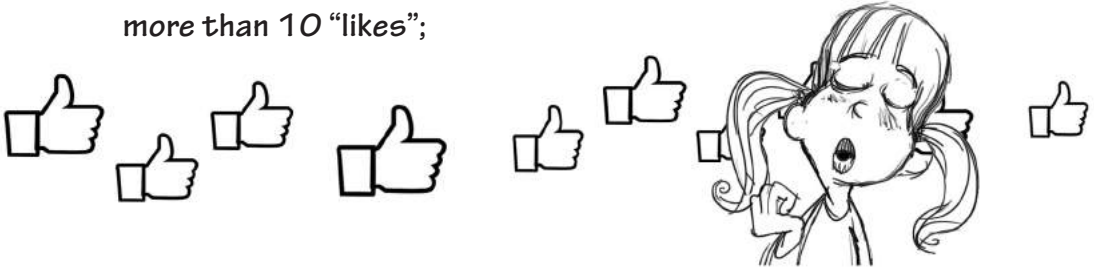
"You like animals so much" she said. "Don't you know a stray cat calm enough to shoot a scene for Facebook?"

"Ah! More fluffy kitty scenes." I said.

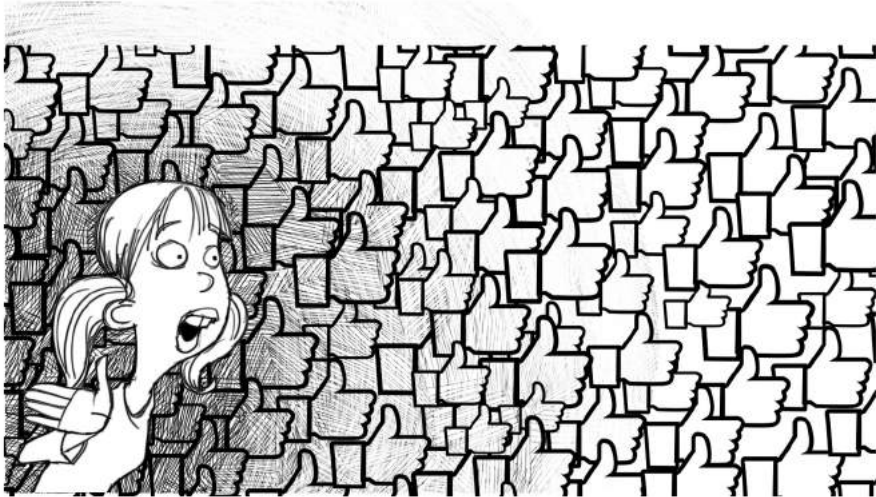
"I will get you a calm one if we can keep it at home afterwards. And what scene is that?"

She explained:

"I post cool bands, anecdotes, funny things and I never have more than 10 "likes";



if someone saves an animal or falls in a funny way, they become famous instantly. It goes viral, spreads like a virus. Shares and more shares..."



I let her continue. I wanted her to get to the point.

"A friend went viral because she had a terrible fall, which was very funny to see, when she was practicing for a parade. And it was all made up, all staged. They repeated the scene 36 times before they had the perfect shot. Her legs were all bruised from falling over all those times."

“What is all that for?” I interrupted her.

“She had more than 2,000 “likes”. Do you know what that is? Another friend had 3,200 “likes” on a video where she saved a cat that couldn’t get down from a tree. Big deal! And the comments, the praise... I was planning on doing the same.”



It was, after all, just a matter of “likes”.

“Why do you want so many “likes” anyway?” I asked.

She explained, in her own way and, this time at least, she did it well. “To be seen, appreciated, praised...” she said. “I think we need that. It feels like a shot of bubbly vitamins. We get bigger than before.”

“Puffed up, you mean, with air and wind.”

“Shut up, you’re just a kid. What do you know...”

I didn’t say anything else but, as a matter of fact, I do know. People need compliments more than they need money or anything else. A happy country would be one where all people complimented each other. In fact everyone does exactly the opposite, preferring to point out and criticize everyone’s flaws, there’s no doubt we do the exact opposite of what we, ourselves, like.



Continuing.

But it wasn't just about happiness, in this case.

"What use do you have for 1,000 "likes"?" I asked.

"Can't you see, nerd? A lot of them are from cute boys.

Congratulations, a smiley face and we get to know each other better."

I knew there had to be something else behind it all, a different purpose to it. My sister wasn't one to settle just for praise and the so called happiness from giving "likes".

"What do you want me to do?" she said. "I have no talent for sports, singing nor acting and all you have to do is record something with your phone."



“We put it on a high tree branch; there’s one at the end of the street in a vacant lot which is perfect. I go there and get it down, it’s easy for me!”



“Really high heights? What do you mean?”

“Heights like the Eiffel Tower or Clerigos Tower.

Can you find a cat or not?”

Where on earth was I going to find a cat to do that?

Actually...

“It can be Two Faces...” I said.

“Who’s that?”

“He is from a cat colony in an abandoned house in a backstreet. Half his face is brown and the other half is yellow.”

“Every time I go past I pet him and he thanks me. I have already taken him some food cat. If mum and dad agreed, he would be here by now.”

“Perfect!” she said.

“Not for this” I protested. “It’s too stupid!”

I would never be ok with such a stupid idea like that, really stupid. Unless...

“I have one condition. You have to help me keep Two Faces, I cant’s use his acting skills and then take him back to the abandoned house.”

“But I’m allergic...” she said.

I didn’t give her a chance.

“Take it or leave it. You choose.”



I turned my
back on the
negotiation
but she came
after me.

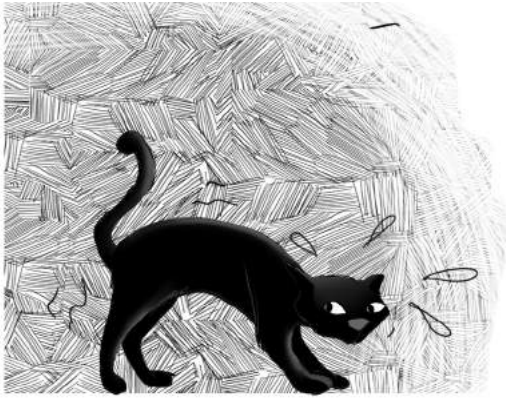


“Ok, I’ll take your side and help you convince mum and dad. Probably, in the beginning, the cat will have to stay outside in the garage.”

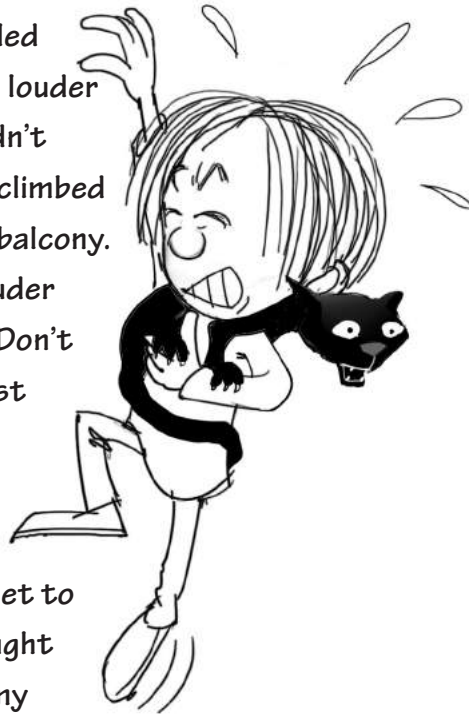
We shook hands to close the deal. Deal done. I had a list with 12 ways to get a cat, but none of them was this. It didn’t matter. I wanted a cat, no matter what.

We went to the abandoned house I had told her about, but Two Faces wasn’t in the front garden. There were other cats but none would let us get close. My sister went to the bathroom in a café nearby and I waited alone.





That was when I saw a black cat on what was left of the roof, meowing in despair. I called him and he meowed even louder as if asking for help. I didn't hesitate for a second. I climbed easily to the first-floor balcony. The cat was meowing louder and louder as if saying "Don't give up now, you're almost there!". However, that "almost" part was hard. I had to pile up some old bricks to climb and get to the top of the roof. I caught the cat and put him on my shoulders, which wasn't a good idea, by the way, he stuck his claws in my back to hold on. It hurt.



When we were half a foot or so from the ground, he jumped and ran down the street until he disappeared. He didn't even say thank you. A girl from the building across the street had been watching the entire scene and she was smiling. At least I had a spectator, a "like" and a smiley face. It was worth it.



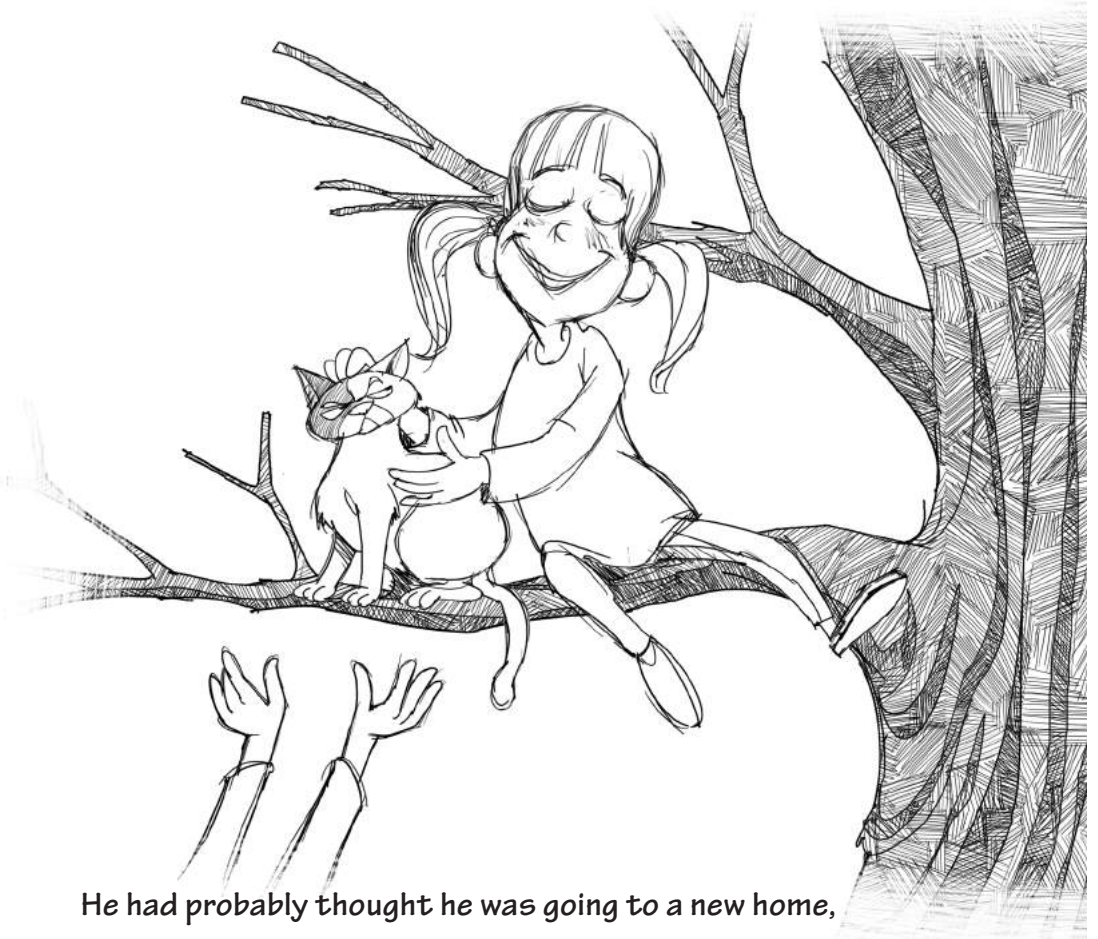
My sister came back and I told her.

"If you had said something, I would have recorded it and you could put it on your Facebook page. We would both be famous."

"I don't want to go viral!" I answered.

Finally, Two Faces showed up. I picked him up and he stayed fearlessly on my arms purring. Apparently, he was on board too. I can't blame him. He had no idea what a stupid idea it was anyway!

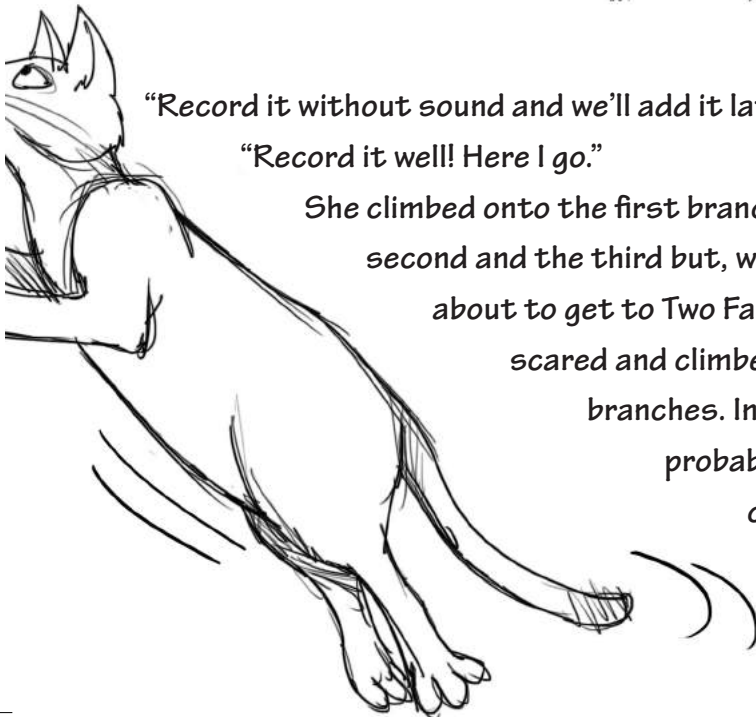
We went to the vacant lot where the tree was and no one was watching. My sister climbed onto the first branch and I handed her Two Faces, who was on his best behavior, just a little suspicious.



He had probably thought he was going to a new home, instead he was being put on a tree branch. It was beyond his understanding, poor fellow. On the ground, I was trying to reassure him by saying “You’re going home with us after this.” Too bad he didn’t understand a word I was saying.

My sister put him on the third branch,
came down and fixed her hair.
“First, shoot the cat up the tree,
meowing.”

I did exactly that.



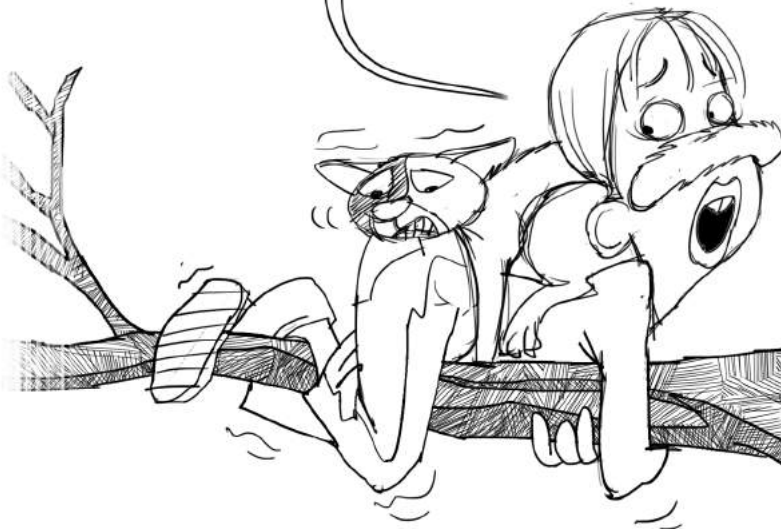
“Record it without sound and we’ll add it later.” She said.

“Record it well! Here I go.”

She climbed onto the first branch, then the
second and the third but, when she was
about to get to Two Faces, he got
scared and climbed two more
branches. In his mind, he was
probably thinking “Here
comes this weird
human again.”

My sister wasn't expecting that and looked down, measuring the height. It was high, even for a "specialist" in climbing trees as she was. But she must have felt heroic and climbed another branch as well. She got to a "really high height", as she named it, and what I was afraid of happened. She just froze, couldn't move anywhere, she was stuck.

I can't move. Stop recording and call the fire brigade.



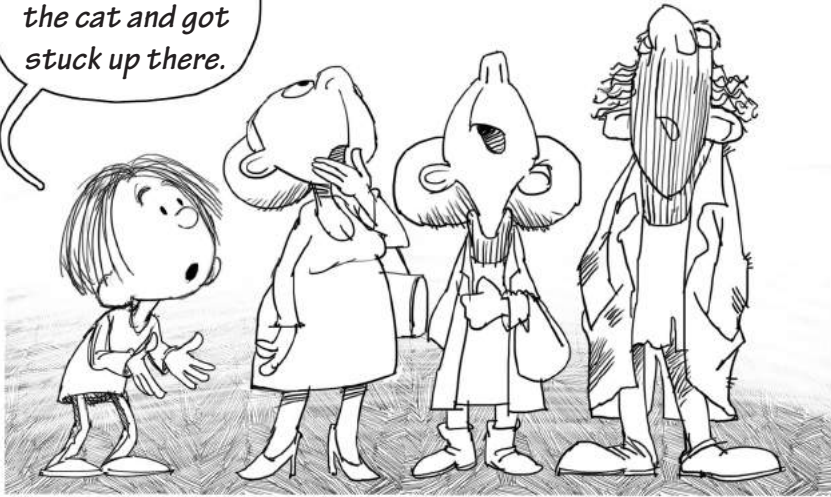
The film was ruined and the cat and my sister were in danger. Specially her, as she was having on of those vertigo things.

I tried to calm her down
but she kept on
yelling:

*Call the fire
brigade.*

Two ladies, who were passing by, and a homeless man
stopped.

*She went up
there to save
the cat and got
stuck up there.*



One of the ladies called the fire brigade, which got there half
an hour later. She was pale, like a man lost at sea, and as
they put her down she threw up everything in her stomach.

I recorded everything, except that part, of course. However, the post on Facebook was out of reach.



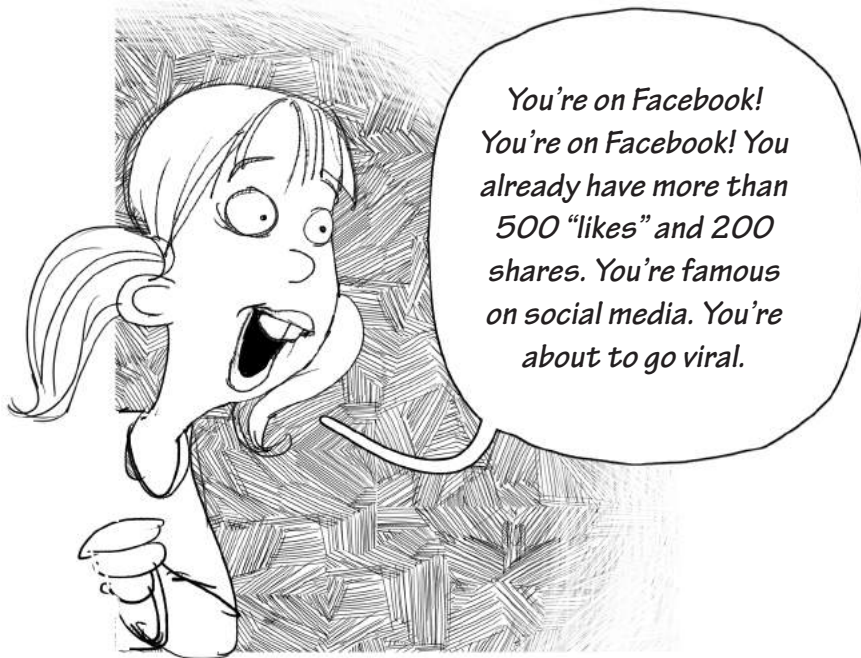
My sister wanted to be a heroine, a rescuer, not to be rescued by firemen. That was just embarrassing.

After the rescue the fireman went to get Two Faces and brought him down. He was also safe, although scared and confused. We brought him home but my sister, who was upset, wanted to break the deal. I threatened to tell on her what forced her to cooperate.

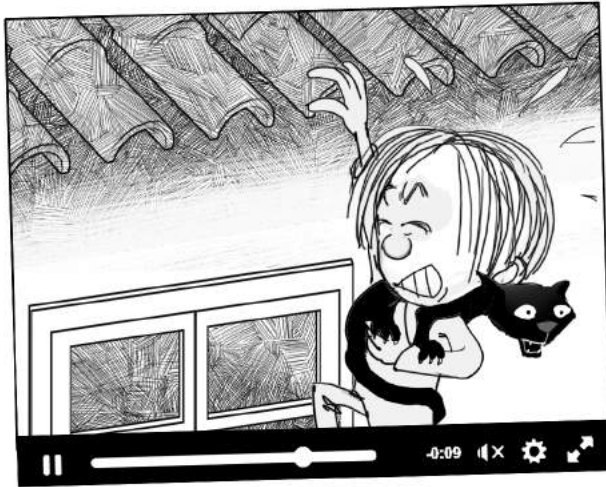
There was another problem. Two Faces was still suspicious and ran away to the colony in the old house the first chance he got.

He didn't trust us. Who could blame him? If the idea was to put him up on a tree, it was best to leave him where he was. However, the story was far from over.

The best part was still to come. I was in my bedroom, drawing cartoon strips, when my sister stormed in yelling.

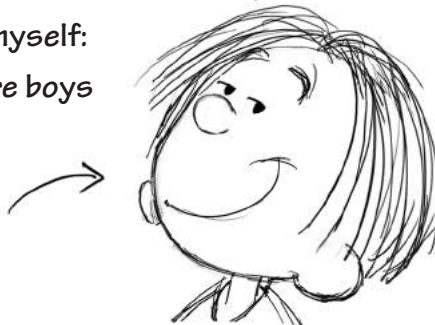


“Me? Famous? Viral?” I couldn’t believe it but it was true. The girl who watched me climb onto the roof, recorded the entire scene on her phone and posted it on Facebook with the following description: This happened today in my street. I didn’t think there were boys like this anymore!



What a compliment, folks.
I kept repeating it to myself:
I didn’t think there were boys
like this anymore!

Like this = Like me.
I hope you’re following.



I remained glued the computer, the “like” counter going up and up: 873, 874, 875. It was nice. After all, it’s all a matter of “likes”. We get one and then immediately check the profile of the person who “likes” us.

Don't judge a profile by its "likes", that's true but it feels really, really good. So many people "liking" us make us like ourselves, no matter all we know about ourselves. Ah, I also met a cute girl. Yes, some comments were from very interesting girls, who would send messages, requests for friendship. One of the cutest commented with a smiley face. I answered with another and thanked her. We exchanged private messages and became friends. What my sister tried to make happen to her, didn't. It happened to me, without asking for it.

Remember this: a really, really stupid idea can take you to a better place. We are learning all the time!

