

musical. My parents were unbelievably patient.

I can't think of any great advice in terms of writing and illustrating. I just know that whenever I've met someone whose work I admire, I'll confess that with my own work, "I have no idea what I'm doing." And it's really encouraging that all the best people admit, "I don't think any of us do."

TingL: What advice would you share with young writers?

As best you can, ignore all your doubts and fears during the writing of your first draft. Save those emotions for later when you're editing. Personally, I find it impossible to edit and revise as I go along. I need to finish a draft of something – no matter how horrible it seems at the time – before I try to fix anything. I'll just smash ahead, powering like a wrecking ball through an awful manuscript that doesn't make much sense, to get to an end. And once I've reached it, I can go back and improve it. So that's what I usually advise. Bash ahead, fix it later. If I were to revise as I went along, I'd never get past the first chapter.

Also, if you think you're terrible at writing, don't worry. Everyone else does. I'm sure even Gordon Korman and Margaret Atwood doubt their talents. If you've written something, re-written it, and find you hate it and can't bear to read it one more time, it's probably pretty decent. Give it a week or so, then read it again. You might surprise yourself.

TingL: You are a very talented artist, and it is fascinating to read about your

drawing process in the *Quarter-Life Crisis* "sketchbook". How did you develop your technique over the years, and has it changed through time? What advice would you share with young artists?

I started drawing as soon as I started reading comic books. My brother Andrew and I would entertain each other by drawing our own *X-Men* and *Spider-Man* stories, and we eventually evolved to making our own comic characters and worlds. When I was a kid, I had two techniques for learning more about drawing: (1) studying *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* by Stan Lee and John Buscema like it was the Torah (I contend it's still one of the best illustration guides in print); and (2) copying comic books. I became quite regimented about it. Every six months, I'd decide on my six favourite current comic book illustrators, and I'd copy pages and pages of their artwork. Then in another six months, I'd focus on copying another six illustrators. I wasn't so much trying to ape the artists or steal their styles as I was learning how they solved various illustration "problems": how does one draw a car, an ear, a dog. This is how this artist does it, and this is how this one does it. I was building up a library of solutions to illustration problems.

By the end of high school and university, though, I was doing the proper things like drawing from life and using live models, which is probably the better way to go. But I still think you can't discount the importance of copying early in your drawing development.

TingL: What books do you read for personal pleasure? Do you have a favourite author?

Of course! Show me a writer who doesn't read for personal pleasure and I'll cock my eyebrow higher than Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. How else do you get better at writing than by reading and by writing some more? I don't know if I have one favourite author. I have a few. And to be honest, I read more adult literature than children's literature: so, stuff like Michael Chabon and Junot Diaz and Miranda July. But I was really happy to see that Jonathan Auxier won the Silver Birch Fiction Award this year, because I loved *The Night Gardener*. And I look forward to every new Susan Juby and Susin Nielsen book.

TingL: What can your readers look forward to next?

The third book in *The Dead Kid Detective Agency* series, *Loyalist To a Fault*, comes out in September, so I'm hard at work on the fourth book. The third book in the series investigates how Cyril Cooper, October's dead Loyalist friend, died. I am also attempting to make a graphic novel about an all-girl chess team, but – as I tell everyone who asks – I know nothing about (a) girls, or (b) chess, so it's going slowly.

TingL: Thank you Evan! We're looking forward to *Loyalist To a Fault*!