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Opening extract from

Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made

Written by

Stephan Pastis

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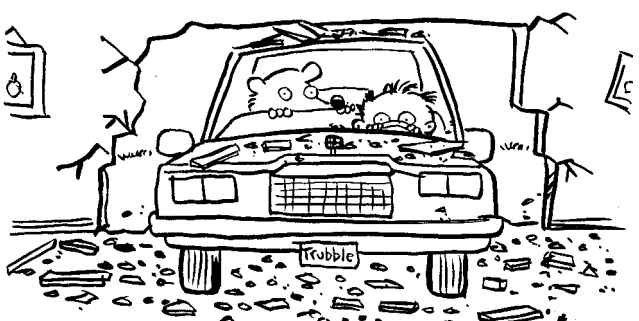
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www.walker.co.uk

www.timmyfailure.com

A Prologue That Story-wise Is Out of Order

It's harder to drive a polar bear into somebody's living room than you'd think. You need a living-room window that's big enough to fit a car. You need a car that's big enough to fit a polar bear. And you need a polar bear that's big enough to not point out your errors. Like the fact that you've driven into the wrong house. Which, when it comes to cars in living rooms, is bad.



I should back up.

(The story. Not the car.)

CHAPTER 1

Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah

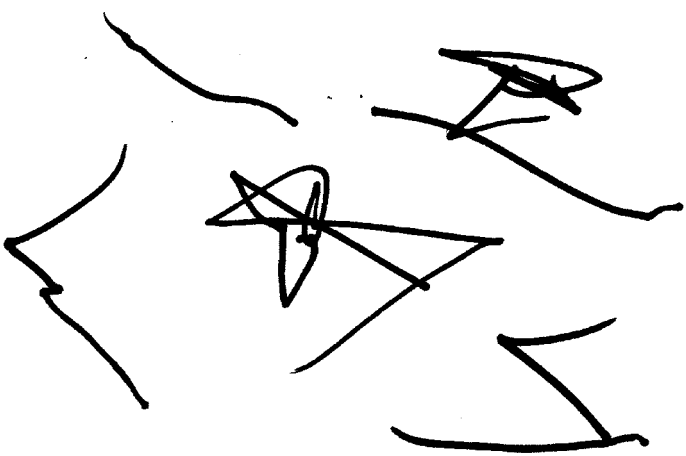
All right, let's get the boring stuff out of the way. My name is Failure. Timmy Failure. I look like this:



My family name was once Fayleure. But somebody changed it. Now it is spelled as you see. I'd ask that you get your "failure" jokes out of the way now. I am anything but.

I am the founder, president, and CEO of the detective agency I have named after myself. Failure, Inc. is the best detective agency in the town, probably the country. Perhaps the world.

The book you are holding is a historical record of my life as a detective. It has been rigorously fact-checked. All the drawings in here are by me. I tried to get my business partner to do the illustrations, but they were not good. For example, here is his depiction of me:



I have decided to publish this history because my expertise is invaluable to anyone who ever wanted to be a detective. Just read the reviews:

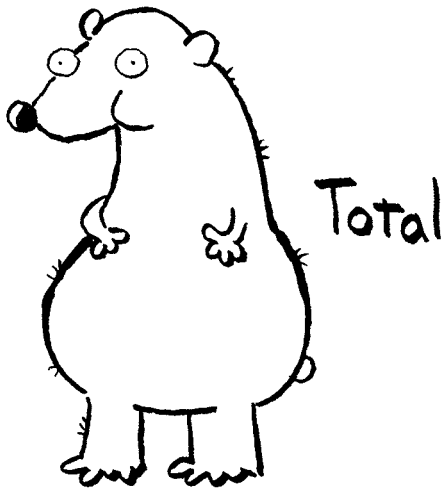
"Invaluable to anyone who ever wanted to be a detective."
—Anonymous

But success did not come overnight for me. I had to overcome obstacles. Like these:

1. my mother
2. my school
3. my idiot best friend
4. my polar bear

And yes, I'm sure you have the same question everyone else does when I list these obstacles. Why am I best friends with an idiot? I'll get to it later. Oh, and I suppose I should say a word about the fifteen-hundred-pound polar bear.

His name is Total.



Total's Arctic home is melting. So he wandered for food and found my cat dish. He is now 3,101 miles from his former home. Yes, that's a long way to roam for a cat dish, but we buy good cat food. Sadly my cat is now in Kitty Heaven (or perhaps the Kitty Badlands—he never was a friendly cat), but I still have the polar bear.

Initially Total displayed a fair degree of diligence and reliability, and thus I agreed to make him a partner in my agency. As it turned

out, the diligence and reliability were a ruse. Something polar bears do. And I don't want to talk about it. I also don't want to discuss the change I agreed to make to the name of the agency, which now reads like this in our yellow pages ad:

TOTAL FAILURE, INC.

(WE WON'T FAIL, DESPITE WHAT THE NAME SAYS.)

And now I have to go. Because the Timmyline is ringing.



CHAPTER 2

The Candy Man Can't 'Cos He's Missing All His Chocolate

The call is from Gunnar. Classmate, neighbor, and now just another guy missing his Halloween candy. I get a lot of candy cases. They're not headline grabbing, but they pay cash money. So I wake up my partner and hop on the Failuremobile.



I should say a word about the Failuremobile. It's not actually called a Failuremobile.

It's called a Segway. And it belongs to my mother. She won it in a raffle. And she has set forth some restrictions on when and how I can use it.

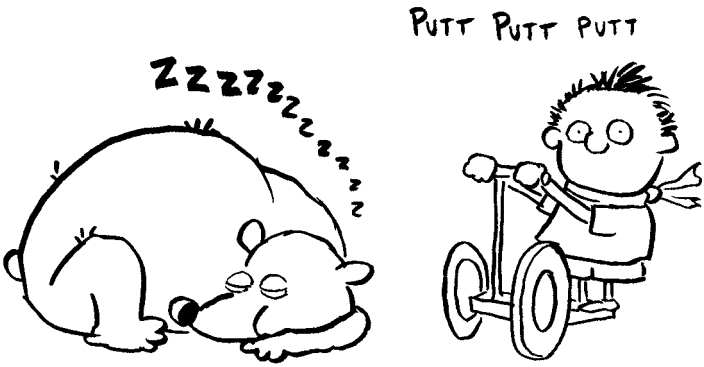


I thought that was vague. So I use it. So far, she hasn't objected. Mostly because she doesn't know.

That touches upon one of the founding principles of Total Failure, Inc., which I've memorialized in ink on the sole of my left shoe.



The only complaint I have about the Failuremobile is its speed. If I ride it somewhere while Total walks, Total gets there first. That wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for the fact that in between, Total naps.



So it isn't any surprise to me that when I get to Gunnar's house, Total is already there, doing something that he frequently does when he beats me to a house. Before I tell you what that is, let me just say this: first impressions are critical in the detective world. A client has to know at first glance that their detective is (a) professional, (b) classy, and (c) discreet.

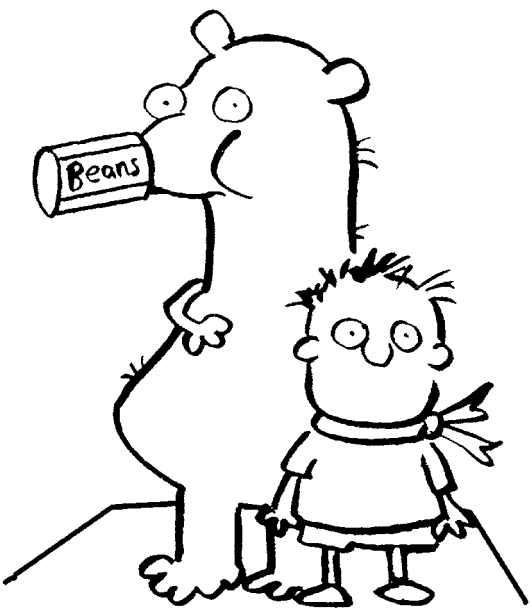
All of this is undermined when the client's first impression of their detective is this:

CHOMP CHOMP CHOMP



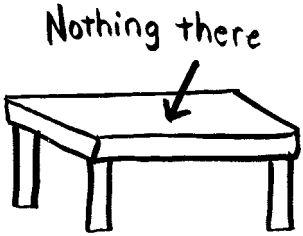
I've lectured Total so many times on eating garbage from clients' trash cans that I now believe he is purposely sabotaging the agency. Fortunately for me, by the time I knock on

Gunnar's door, Total has finished eating everything edible from the trash cans and is able to stand next to me on the porch.



Gunnar answers the door and escorts us to the scene of the crime. He points to an empty table by his bed. "My plastic pumpkin filled with candy was right there," he says while pointing at the tabletop. "Now it's gone."

I look at the tabletop. I can tell from the empty space that it is gone.



He starts listing the candy he had in the pumpkin. "Two Mars bars, a Twix, seven 3 Musketeers, five Kit Kats, eleven Almond Joys, five Snickers, an Abba-Zaba, and eight Hershey's Kisses."

Gunnar looks up at me. "You getting all this down?"

"'Course I'm getting it down."



"Let's start with the basics," I tell the client, "like payment. I take cash, cheques, and credit cards." I don't actually take credit cards, but it sounds professional, so I say it.

"How much will it cost?" asks the client.

"Four dollars a day, plus expenses."

"Expenses?" asks Gunnar.

"Chicken nuggets for the big man," I say, pointing up at Total. Total roars, which looks intimidating until he falls backward and crushes Gunnar's desk.



That, I know, will be coming out of his chicken nuggets. I tell Gunnar that I anticipate a six-week investigation. Lot of witnesses. Maybe some air travel.

"I'll show myself out," I tell him.

As I walk down the hall, I pass his brother Gabe's room. Gabe is sitting on his bed, surrounded by candy wrappers. There is chocolate smeared all over his face and an empty plastic pumpkin on the floor.



Always on the lookout for clues, I make an important note in my detective log.

