

The Corner of Prepared and Opportunity

By Mr. Chrispy

When Jim Haynes asked me a few months ago to write an article I was going to write about how I researched schools to improve my skills because a certain art director said my work wasn't polished. But as my closest friends know I just got my first contract around August 7th (a nice birthday present) so I'm going to write about that, about luck and about hope.

You want to know where I found the art director who took a chance on me? I'll tell you (drum roll)...the Yellow Pages. I've found some contacts (then lost them) by looking in market books and directories. But I had to be honest with myself I don't like the way some of the big publishers do business. For instance I just got a response to an MS/Dummy submission I sent a year ago. They're not really at fault it's just that some publishers are so big some folks get lost in the shuffle. I determined that all I want to do is make nice pictures and pay my bills and if I can find other ways of doing it besides in New York City, then I will.

It's funny but getting this contract breaks a couple of rules I know about getting published. First of all I didn't research on these publishers I just asked if they ever needed freelance illustrators for children style art and if I could send some samples. Now don't get me wrong research is great and necessary but this is one of those lucky breaks one gets.

Allow me to make a brief statement about luck. First of all I'm not necessarily a lucky guy, just ask my wife who always seems to kick my butt at cards. Anyway, it is true luck can't be controlled, it's also true you need a certain amount of it for success but luck isn't as illusive as it may seem. It simply meets you at the intersection of Prepared and Opportunity.

So stay prepared with practice and find opportunity by simply looking around.

Second thing is I've never been published before and my first gig is a picture book. Unheard of! I'll be honest I have experience in creating my own dummies and stories. I've done the illustration assignments Sue Ward and the illustration group I participate in offers. I just have never been paid before.

I really am not blowing my own horn. After about seven years of knocking on doors I am humbled by this whole experience. But I have come to realize you can take publishers critiques with a pinch of salt. Don't take everything as gospel. Now if everyone you show your stuff to say things like put more children in your portfolio, I would and did put children into my portfolio and my book has gotten a lot heavier because of them (just kidding). But

I've come to appreciate my style and everyday I thanked God for opening doors for me, before I even heard the footsteps coming to the door.

So keep drawing with faith in yourself, don't let others tell you that you can't and crush your hope, and love what you do. Good luck... or should I say stay prepared.