



Letter to my Younger Self

Robin Etherington

BOBBY...SORRY, ROBIN, I FORGET...you won't be known as Bobby for a few years yet. Yes, I know you're not a Robert, but we're getting off-topic and I don't have long.

Speaking to you across the years, I first have to remind myself of the manner in which you're tackling life. We burned bright back then, with firefly urgency, headstrong in the moment, prepossessed and imbued with a confidence we hadn't yet earned. Every challenge was an opportunity, locked doors were there to be picked or kicked.

As it happens, you're not going to lose that attitude for a while and it'll take you to some crazy places. What you'll discover as you move through this life is that one of your (our) greatest failings is actually destined to become the catalyst for great personal change. I'm speaking about your seething, confrontational angst towards, and quiet disregard for, formal education. Don't worry, you're not dropping out of school or anything like that, but that voice of yours – the one that whispers 'what do they know?' – it won't leave your side for a long time.

Thinking back on it now, I can almost feel its seductive breath in my ear. Thankfully my wife's lips have long since replaced it, banishing it through a mix of cool reasoning and hot disapproval. Oh yeah, sorry, you're gonna get married. You always believed in true love and it's waiting for you. Don't go looking for it. It'll find you when you're ready and not a second before, on that point you can trust me. I'd say trust me on everything actually but I'm an unreliable narrator!



Anyway, back to *that* voice. It's a little shit, but it's got a purpose and you're going to use it to take chances that others won't. While you might not respect every classroom experience, and you might not respect every teacher, you *will* learn to love the idea of collaboration, embracing the dynamic of shared ownership of the creative process. This is when things will start to get good. You've never cared for personal trophies and you never will, and your future time in the studio, on the stage, at the computer and on the field will reinforce your love of shared endeavour. It'll never leave you. The endeavour was, is and always will be, your ultimate reward. You're gonna let these other folks push you *way* out of your comfort zone. These peers will be the teachers that'll earn your respect and your dedication. Listen and learn and try your damn hardest, okay? Step up.

Now you and I like plain speaking, so I'm not going to sugar coat your future. There's trouble on your professional horizon and some of it stinks. Heartache — check. Hard times — double check. Doubt and insecurity and mild depression and immense disappointment by the bucket load but listen: keep your eyes up, guardian. God's rays lie beyond those storm clouds. You're gonna be standing in the rain for a while but at least it's refreshing and your perseverance in the face of disaster *will* pay off.

What else?

I'd say keep reading, but I don't need to. Read well and wide.

Be courteous and kind to those who deserve it and don't waste time on those that don't.

Try to be smart with your money. *Try*.

Say *Yes* as often as possible but learn when to say *No*. It is empowering. Keeping picking and kicking those locks.

From me to you, across the years, the best of wishes,



Robin...or Bobby...or whatever.

Oh, one final thought. You know those ski trips they used to talk about in assembly, the ones that only three kids in the year could ever afford? Remember how you never asked our parents if you could go because it was utterly impossible, but how you wanted it with all your heart, you wanted to fly down those snowy mountains? Well, you're in for a treat. You're going to touch the clouds, brother.