

# HOLLIS CROFT

*a matter of time*



A historical comic book by  
**Mili Rajic**  
Illustrated by Dave Howarth



## Introduction

**This comic book is dedicated to those whose world is not the mainstream.**

The book was created out of boredom and out of feeling down and is a work of fiction. Places in the book are as they were in 2017 and 1850. I have done my best to reconstruct Victorian Hollis Croft in Victorian Sheffield by using archaeological evidence, historic Ordnance Survey maps and written records. Names and characters are products of my imagination apart from Pablo Fanque (circus owner) and Madame Naomi (palmist) who are historical figures. All characters are used fictitiously.

This book would have not happened without the help of many people.  
I hope I haven't forgotten anyone. If I have, I apologise sincerely.

To the Wessex Archaeology team who excavated the site at Hollis Croft, thank you for all your hard work and comradery. To everyone from post-excavation, reporting, illustration and archiving archaeological teams, thank you for putting all the puzzles together.

To my friends who had to go through listening to me developing the story and the characters and to those who were also exposed to reading the early material, I am not sure you've helped at all, but thank you.

To Gavin Johnson, thank you for securing a chunk of the financial support for this book.

To Wessex Archaeology (as an entity), thank you for your support in a form of another chunk of the financial support.

To Dinah Saich thank you for believing in me and for letting me go off-piste with publishing the results of our excavation as a comic book.

To Polly Singer, thank you for saying that writing a comic book is cool and thank you for introducing me to Hattie Earle.

To Hattie Earle, Callum Seymour and Frazer Hudson, thank you for being involved in the first draft of the comic.

To Pippa Bradley, thank you for being kind and thank you for helping me write better.

To Karen Nichols, thank you for your endless enthusiasm and for having so much patience with my unorthodox ideas.

To Caroline Budd and Andrea Burgess, thank you for all your support throughout the years.

To the Jewitt family (Penny, Chris and the boys), thank you for letting me read the amazing Footprint Tools Archive and for making me feel part of the gang.

To Judith Winters, thank you for saying yes to publishing the book online at our very first meeting and thank you for not giving up on me.

To Paul Rowland, thank you for being omnipresent and for being a good friend with Dave Howarth.

To Dave Howarth... well, if it was not for you this would have never happened. Thank you, Dave.

And thank you to Caroline O'Keeffe for rescuing me in all moments of doubt.

If you wish to see how this story looks as a real and actual site archive and you are reading this book digitally, just click on X (You'll find them on the full splash pages).

or go to <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/wessexar1-309354/>  
This will take you to and through a full archaeological report, illustrations and photos.

If you are reading this book as a printed-out version and wish to explore more about Hollis Croft, the physical archive is deposited with Museums Sheffield under SHEFM:2019.13 and Sheffield Archives.

MR

Sheffield, 2020



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OLLIS CROFT

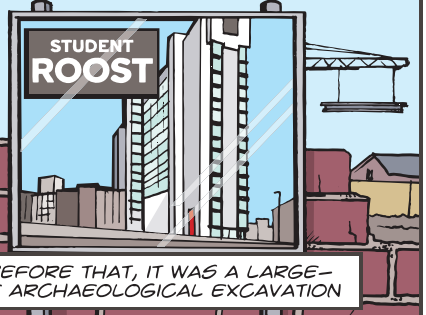


# The Dig



IN SUMMER 2017 HOLLIS CROFT STREET BECAME A CONSTRUCTION SITE

...FOR A SPARKLING NEW STUDENT ACCOMMODATION BLOCK



BUT BEFORE THAT, IT WAS A LARGE-SCALE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

BECAUSE HOLLIS CROFT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF SHEFFIELD'S HERITAGE...

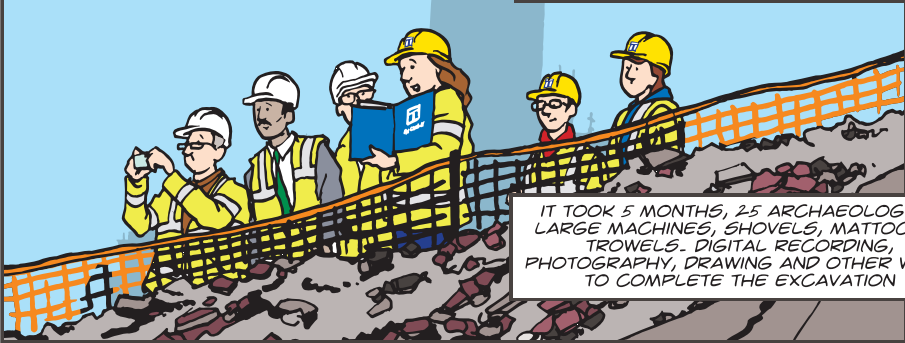
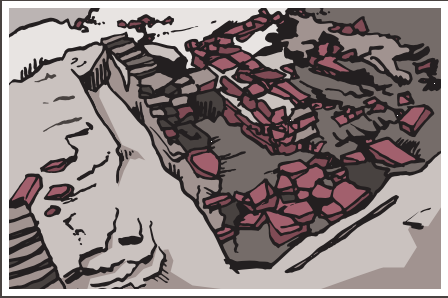
...AND THE REMAINS WERE PRESERVED





---ARCHAEOLOGISTS NEED TO RECORD IT

THE WORK WAS MONITORED BY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISORS TO THE  
PLANNING OFFICE OF SHEFFIELD COUNCIL.  
THEY MADE FREQUENT VISITS



IT TOOK 5 MONTHS, 25 ARCHAEOLOGIST,  
LARGE MACHINES, SHOVELS, MATTOCKS-  
TROWELS- DIGITAL RECORDING,  
PHOTOGRAPHY, DRAWING AND OTHER WORK  
TO COMPLETE THE EXCAVATION



YES, BETWEEN YOUR LAST VISIT AND NOW, WE HAVE  
CLEANED THE AREA A BIT MORE...AND THESE ARE  
DEFINITELY CEMENTATION FURNACES

OH, AND HERE IS A WALL OF  
THAT PUB WE COULD SEE ON  
THE OLD MAP-- THE COCK---  
THAT'S THE WALL--  
NOT MUCH OF IT LEFT,  
BUT IT'S THERE

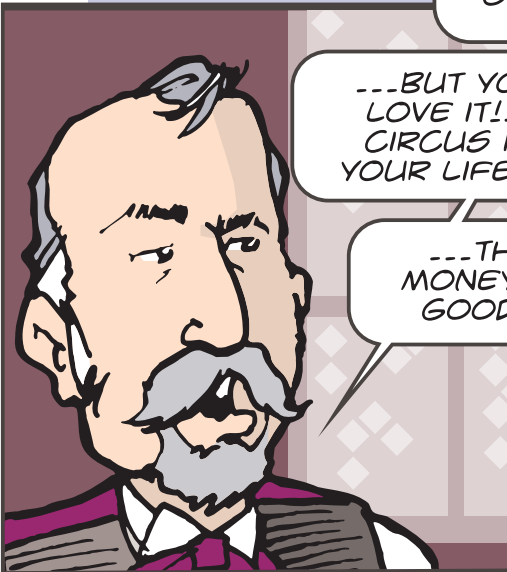




# The Cock



I AM TIRED...  
I'VE HAD ENOUGH  
OF ALL THIS...



---BUT YOU  
LOVE IT!--  
CIRCUS IS  
YOUR LIFE---

---THE  
MONEY IS  
GOOD!!



---EXACTLY,  
THAT'S WHY  
I'M TIRED

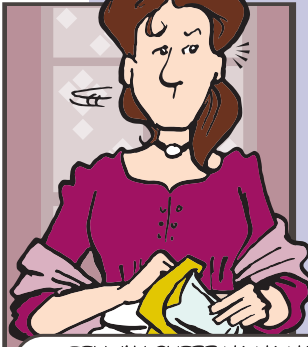


BAH!... YES 'COS NOW I'M ENTERTAINING THE MIDDLE CLASS



SHEFFIELD'S GOT A MIDDLE CLASS??

...AND LNERPOOL... AND MANCHESTER



YES, BUT SHEFFIELD IS YOUR FAVOURITE ISN'T IT? PABLO, DO TELL, IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT SWEET WIFE OF YOURS, WOULD WE STILL HAVE THE JOY OF YOUR PRESENCE??

OF COURSE, I WAS HERE BEFORE I FELL IN LOVE

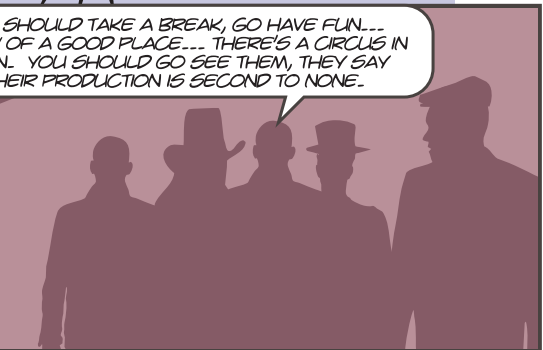
FELL IN LOVE?? HA HA HA HA... YOU'RE TOO OLD FOR THAT RUBBISH! YOU ARE A MARRIED MAN, WHAT'S THAT TO DO WITH LOVE??



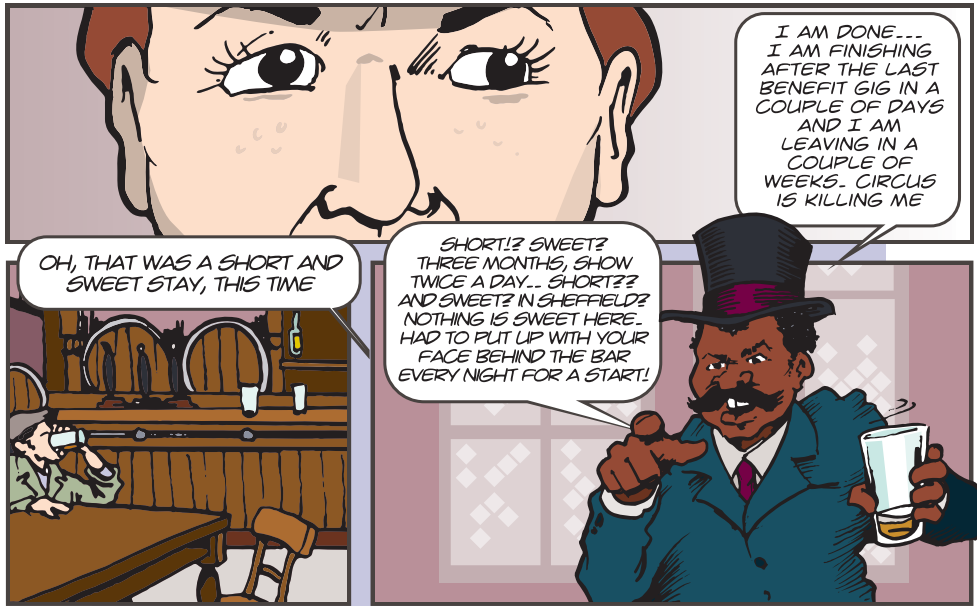
I AM TIRED!...



YOU SHOULD TAKE A BREAK, GO HAVE FUN... I KNOW OF A GOOD PLACE... THERE'S A CIRCUS IN TOWN. YOU SHOULD GO SEE THEM, THEY SAY THEIR PRODUCTION IS SECOND TO NONE.







I AM DONE... I AM FINISHING AFTER THE LAST BENEFIT GIG IN A COUPLE OF DAYS AND I AM LEAVING IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS. CIRCUS IS KILLING ME

OH, THAT WAS A SHORT AND SWEET STAY, THIS TIME

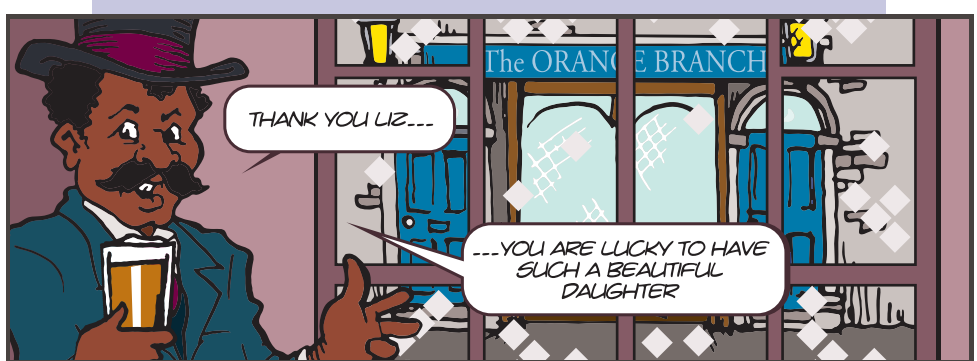
SHORT!? SWEET? THREE MONTHS, SHOW TWICE A DAY.. SHORT?? AND SWEET? IN SHEFFIELD? NOTHING IS SWEET HERE. HAD TO PLIT LIP WITH YOUR FACE BEHIND THE BAR EVERY NIGHT FOR A START!



I LOVE TAKING ALL YOUR HARD EARNED POUNDS.. LOVE IT

ENJOY IT WHILE IT LASTS... YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO TALK TO YOU MISERABLE B\*\*@\*\*@.. BE NICE TO ME OR I'LL GO ACROSS THE WAY TO HARRISON'S ORANGE BRANCH

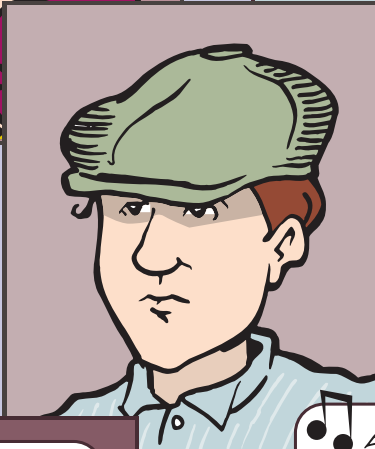
BAH!... SUIT YOURSELF



THANK YOU LIZ...

...YOU ARE LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER





TO MAKE 'EM WE ARE WILLIN'  
A BASKET FULL FOR A SHILLIN'  
RED HERRINGS AND POTATOES  
OUR BELLIES TO BE FILLIN'



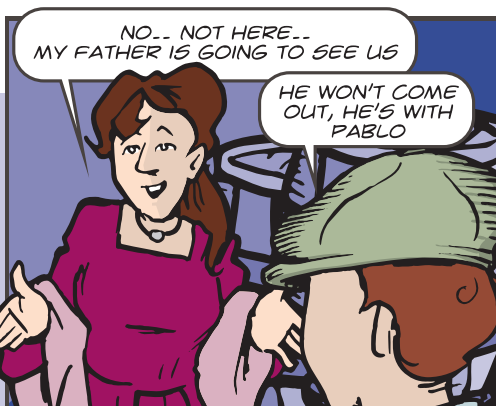




# The Outside



PLEASE DON'T...  
SOMEONE ELSE IS GOING TO  
SEE US... I AM WORRIED



NO... NOT HERE...  
MY FATHER IS GOING TO SEE US

HE WON'T COME  
OUT, HE'S WITH  
PABLO



SO ARE WE GOING  
TO HIDE FROM THE  
REST OF THE  
WORLD TOO?

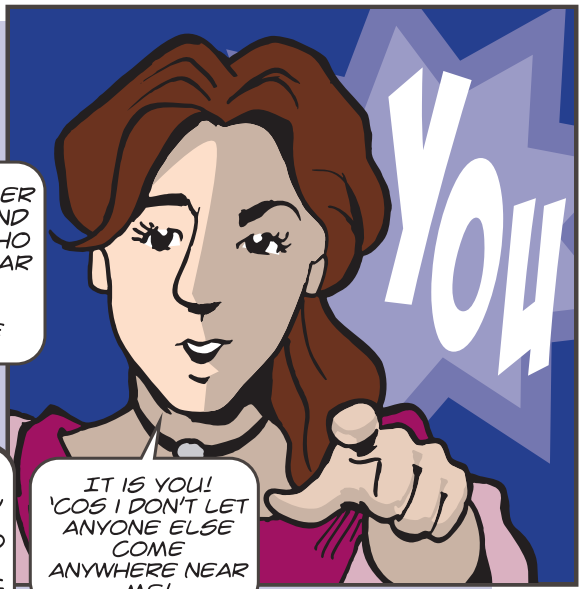
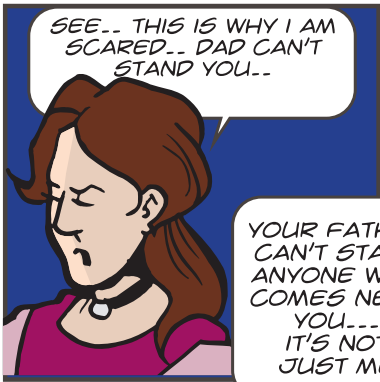


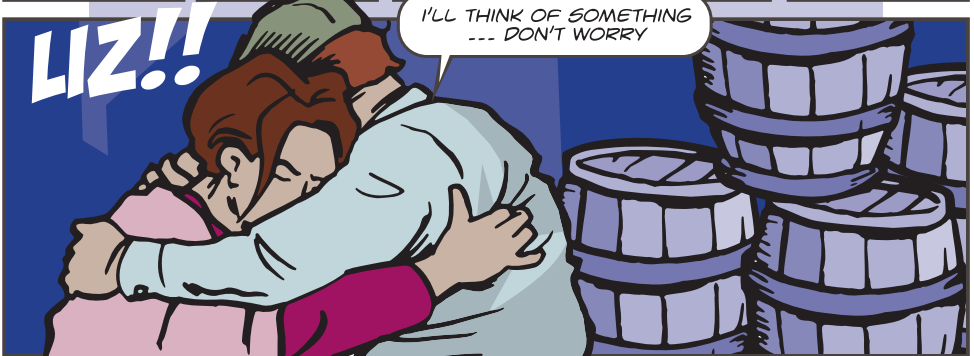
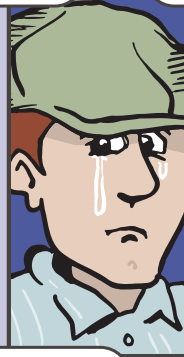
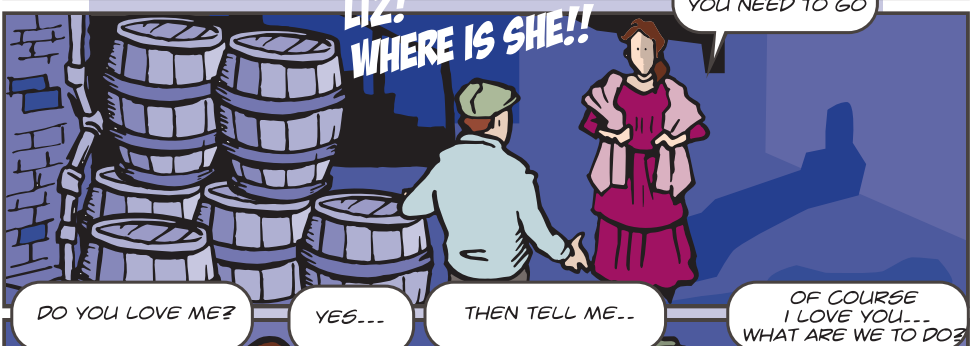
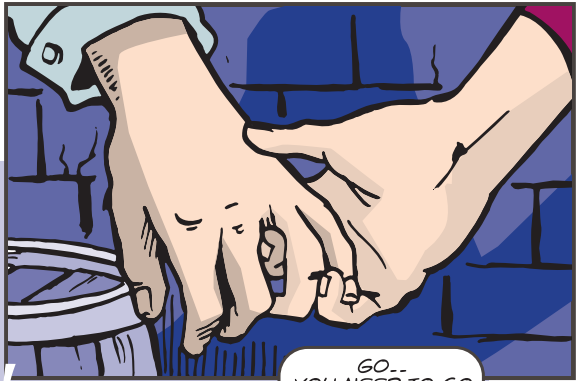
OUR WORLD  
IS SMALL...  
EVERYONE  
KNOWS  
EVERYONE IN  
OUR WORLD



THEN WE NEED  
TO DO SOMETHING  
ABOUT THAT!









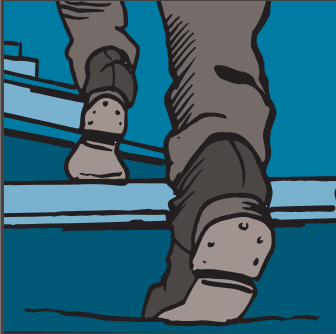




# The Crofts



F\*@@  
W\*%\*!!  
C\*@@  
OFF!

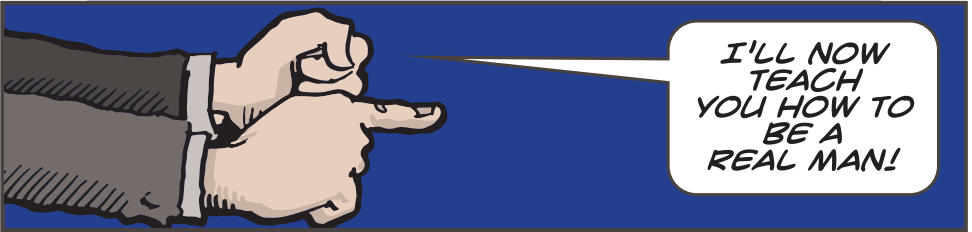




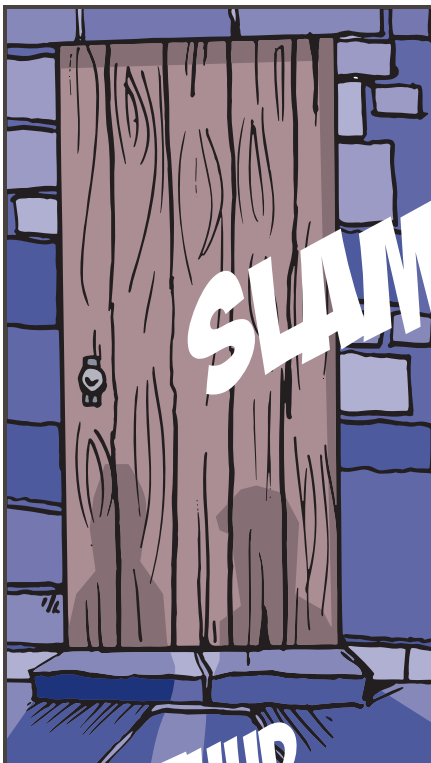












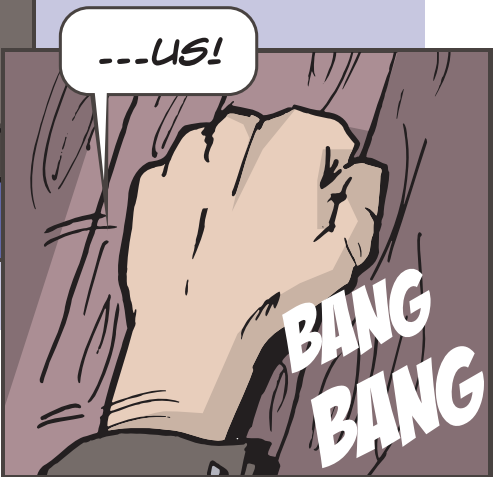
SOFTY,  
SOFTY  
SOFFTTTYYY!

COME OUT  
SOFTY!...

COME AND  
PLAY...



WITH...



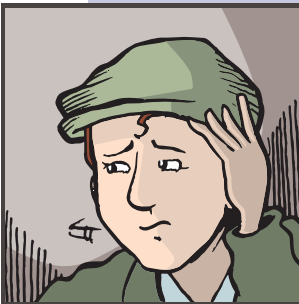
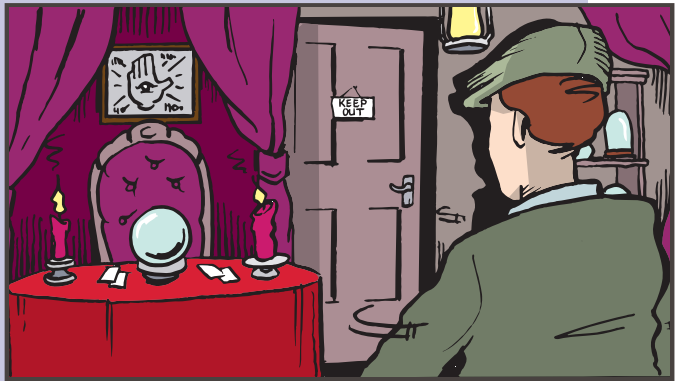
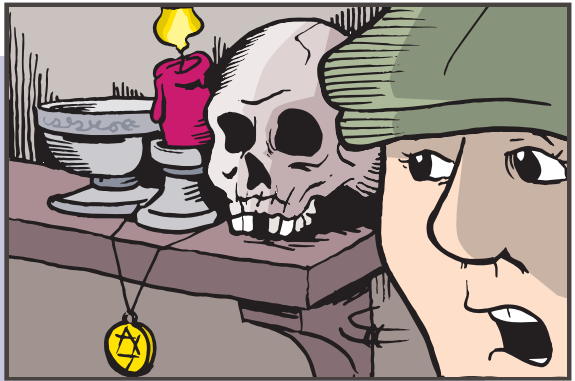
...US!

BANG  
BANG





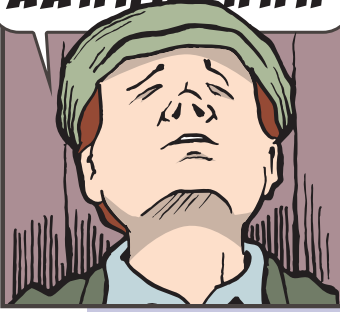
# The Room



**CREEEAK...**



AAAAAAAAHHH



SIT DOWN!



OH SPARE ME THAT... PLEASE...



SIT DOWN... I WANT TO TALK TO YOU



THAT WAS CLOSE... YOU NEED TO BE CAREFUL...



THIS STREET IS DANGEROUS AS IT IS...



BUT YOU NEED TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL



I AM... FINE...



REALLY??

REALLY??



I'VE NOT SEEN ANYONE SO NOT FINE IN AGES... TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED WHY DON'T YOU?

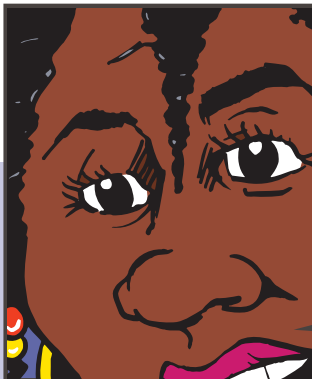


NOTHING HAPPENED... NOTHING!...





OH LOOK...I KNOW IT WILL COME TO YOU... EVENTUALLY... BUT JUST FOR THE RECORD



... I SAVED YOUR LIFE... I WANT NOTHING IN RETURN FOR THAT LITTLE DEED... JUST STOP SAYING "NOTHING HAPPENED". PLUS I AM NOT ASKING ABOUT WHAT JUST HAPPENED. I SAW IT WITH MY EYES...

I AM ASKING YOU TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU... FROM THE BEGINNING



YOU KNOW WELL WHAT I MEAN, I KNOW YOU KNOW I KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT EVERYONE HERE...

THAT'S MY JOB!..



WHAT?.. WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

...NOTHING PERSONAL, JUST A JOB LIKE ANY OTHER... IT IS JUST THAT EVERY SO OFTEN I LIKE TO CHECK...



...CHECK HOW GOOD I AM IN GUESSING THE PAST AND PREDICTING THE FUTURE. JUST FOR MY OWN RECORD

SO... CONNOR... OR SHOULD I, FOR THE SAKE OF MY ARGUMENT...

CALL YOU NEAVE?..





HOW DO YOU KNOW?... NO!  
---STOP!



I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT!



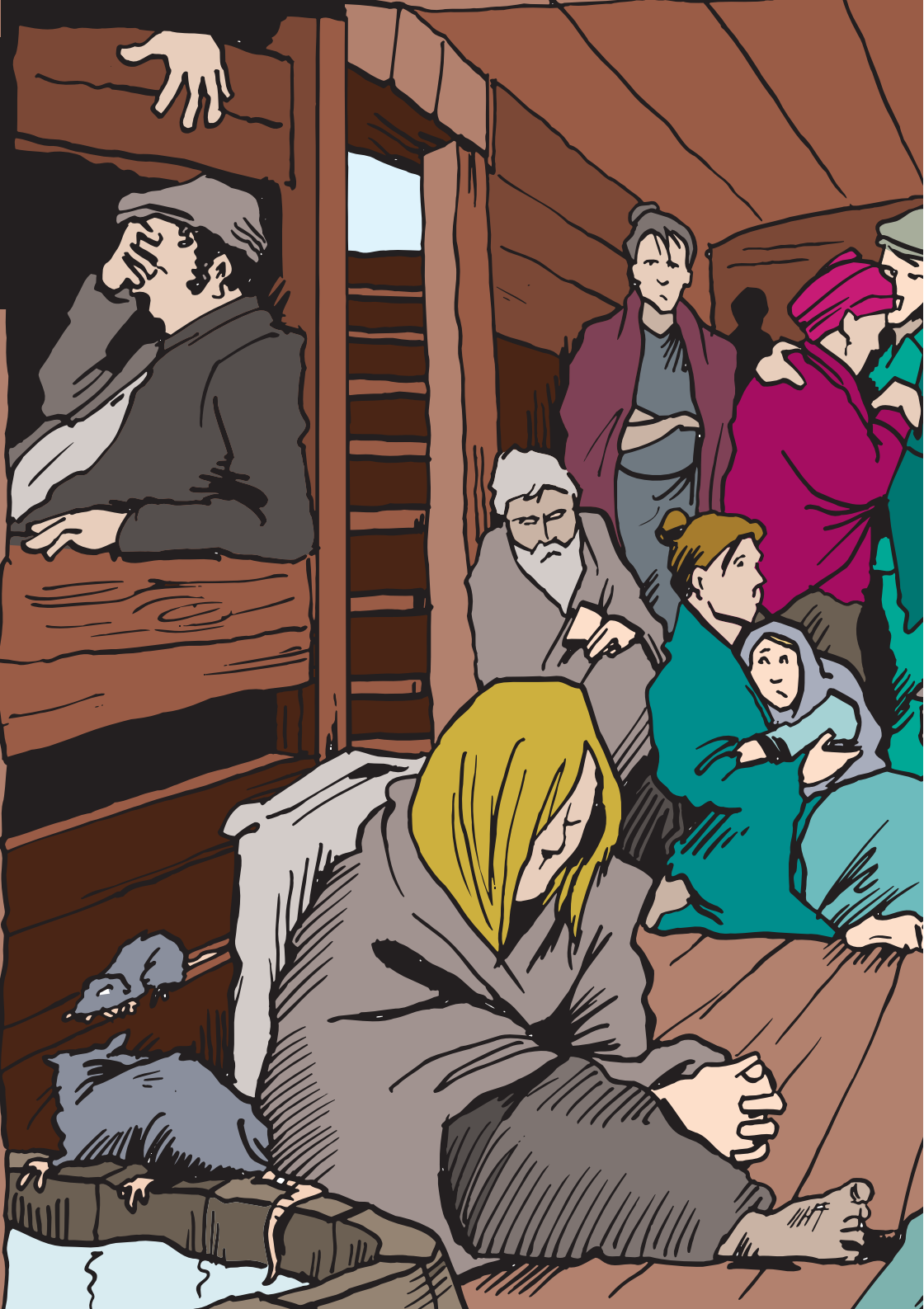
I HAVE JUST TOLD YOU THAT I KNOW YOUR SECRETS!! YOU REALLY NEED TO START PAYING ATTENTION. IF YOU WANT TO SURVIVE HERE... IF YOU WANT TO SURVIVE BEING IN LOVE WITH LIZ...

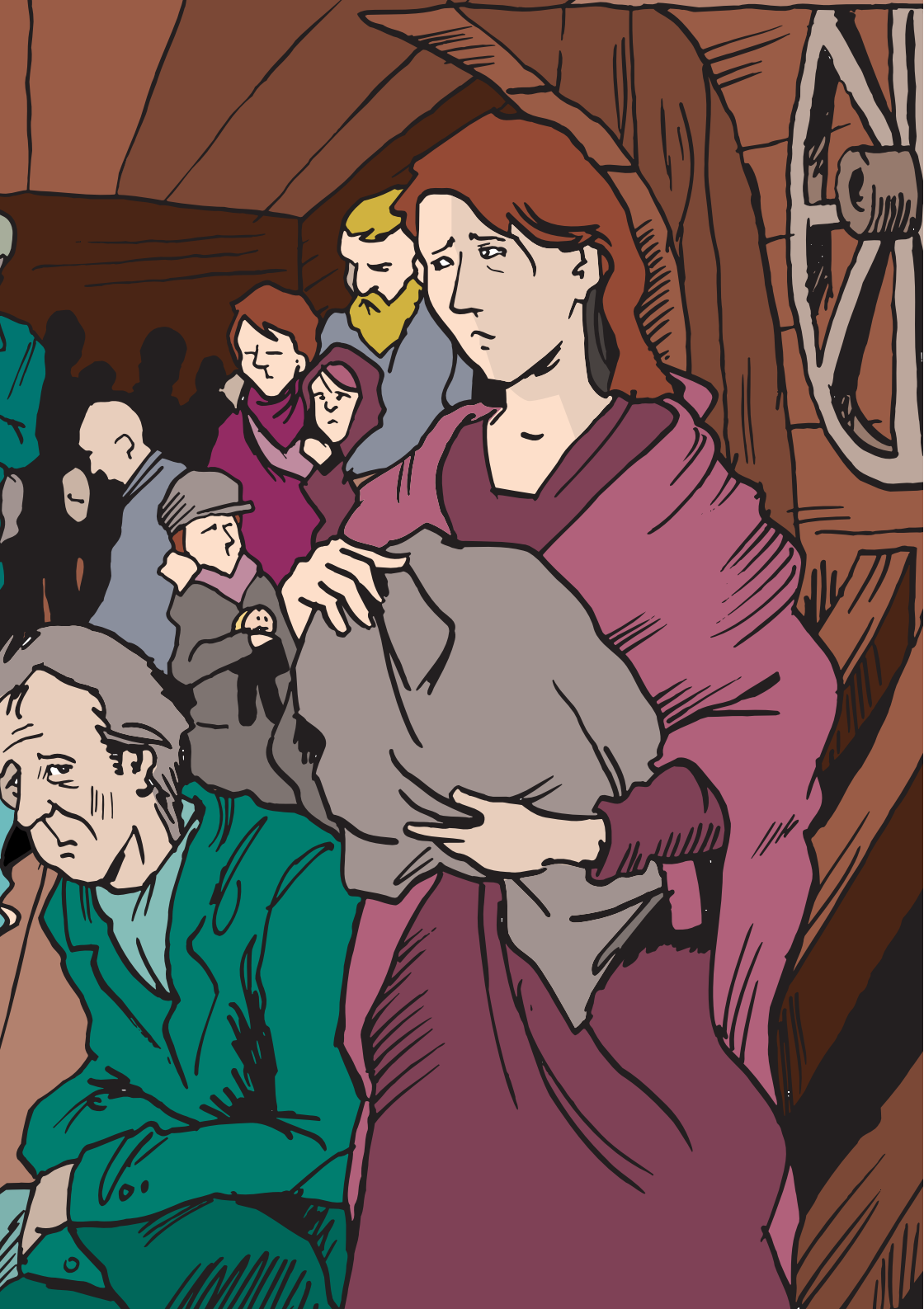
PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT PEOPLE SAY! PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY TRY TO SAY... AND MOST IMPORTANTLY TO WHAT THEY'RE DELIBERATELY NOT SAYING! SO... MY EGO WOULD LOVE TO KNOW HOW BRILLIANT THE REST OF ME IS...

START TALKING... FROM THE GOD FORSAKEN IRELAND TO THE GOD FORSAKEN HOLLIS CROFT. EVERYTHING. AND DON'T LIE, 'CAUSE I KNOW... AND DON'T DRAG IT OUT... I HAVE CUSTOMERS COMING!

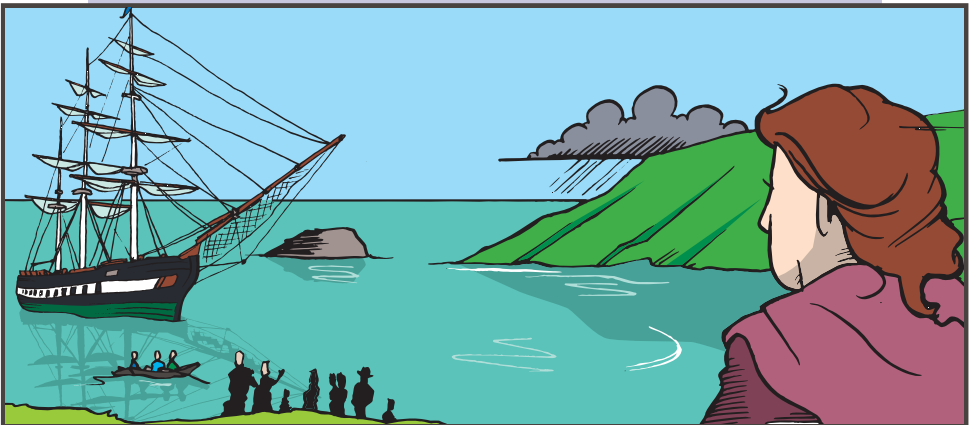


AARGH... COME HERE!..





# The Boat





-- YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY? -- MANY GIRLS END UP WORKING THE NIGHT --

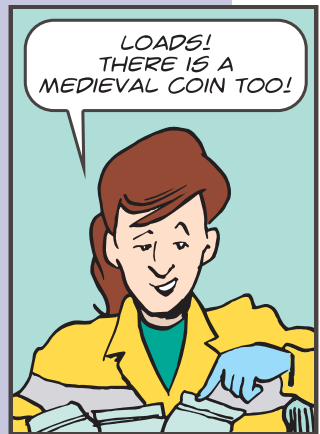
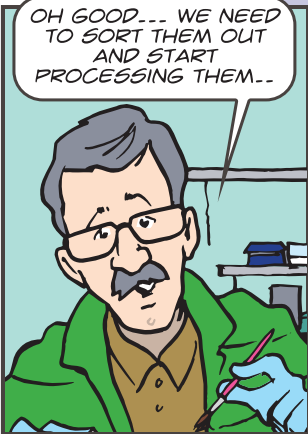


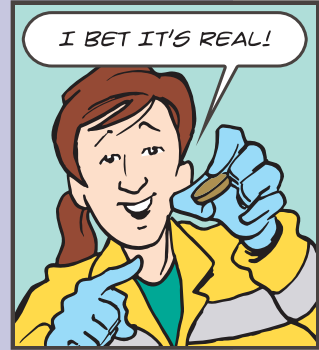
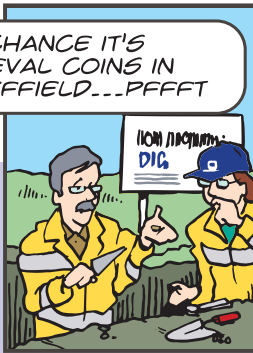






# The Finds







TAKE IT TO THE EXPERTS FOR IDENTIFICATION!



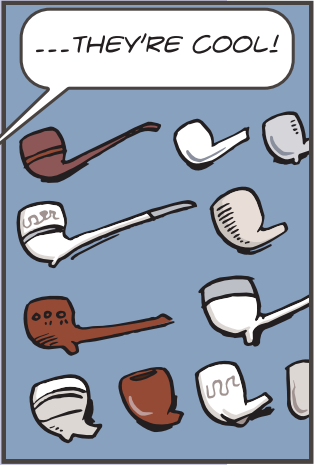
---I'LL DO IT RIGHT NOW!



WHAT ELSE IS THERE?



CLAY PIPES---



---THEY'RE COOL!



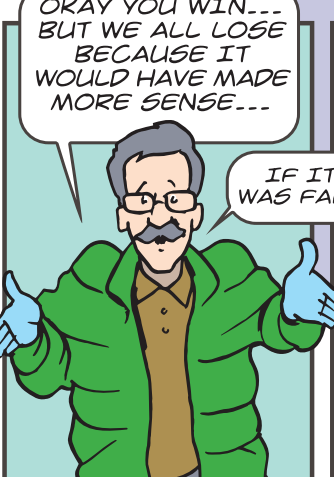
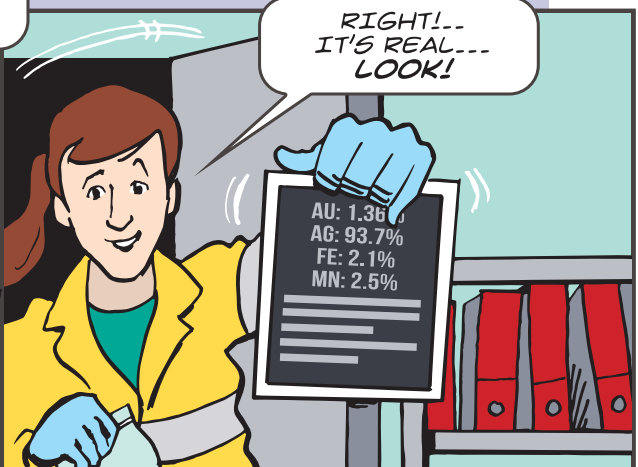
POTTERY... SOME LEATHER SHOES...



OH A FRAGMENT OF CROZZLE... THAT SHOULD BE A SAMPLE... SOME GLASS



AND... OHH LOOK AT THESE



THAT'S NICE---

BONE?...  
IS IT?

YUP---

THEY'RE LARGE...  
NOT CUTLERY...  
THESE ARE LARGE  
HANDLES

RIGHT!...  
IT'S REAL...  
LOOK!

AU: 1.36%  
AG: 93.7%  
FE: 2.1%  
MN: 2.5%

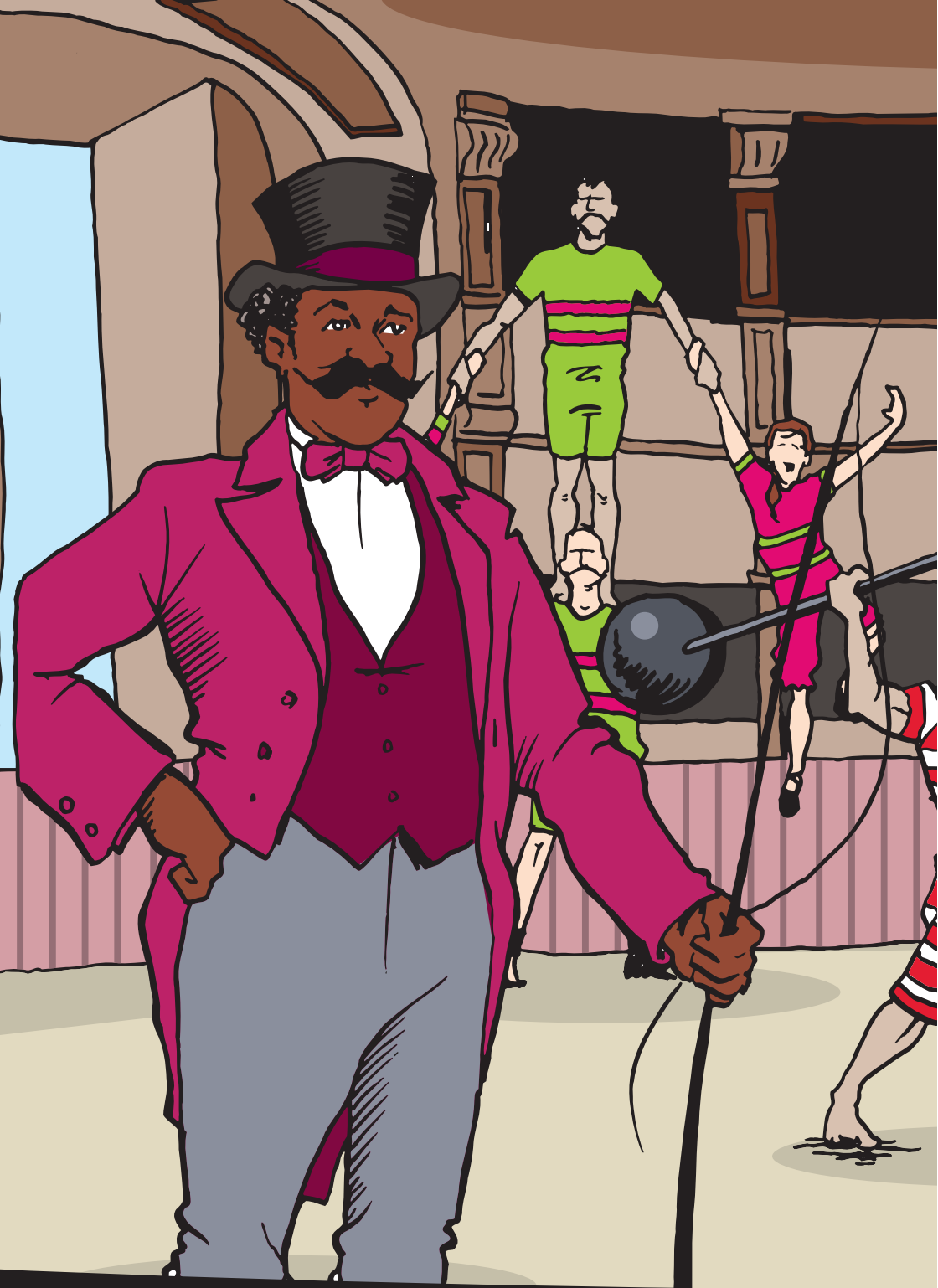
OKAY YOU WIN...  
BUT WE ALL LOSE  
BECAUSE IT  
WOULD HAVE MADE  
MORE SENSE---

IF IT  
WAS FAKE

IT'S ANOTHER  
MYSTERY---

...LIKE THESE  
HANDLES---

OKAY, RIGHT...  
WE BETTER DO  
SOME ACTUAL  
WORK TODAY!

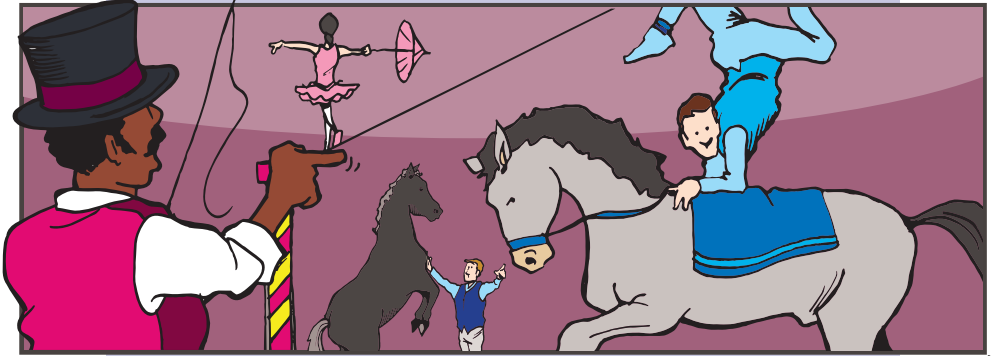
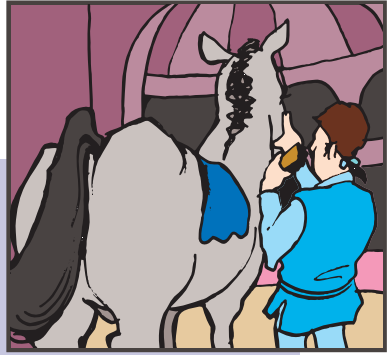




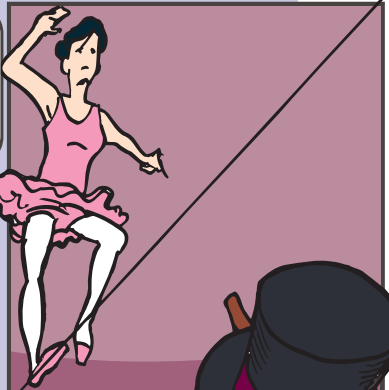


# The Circus





ONE SMOOTH MOVEMENT OR THE HORSE WILL SENSE YOU AND WILL NOT OBEY YOU!

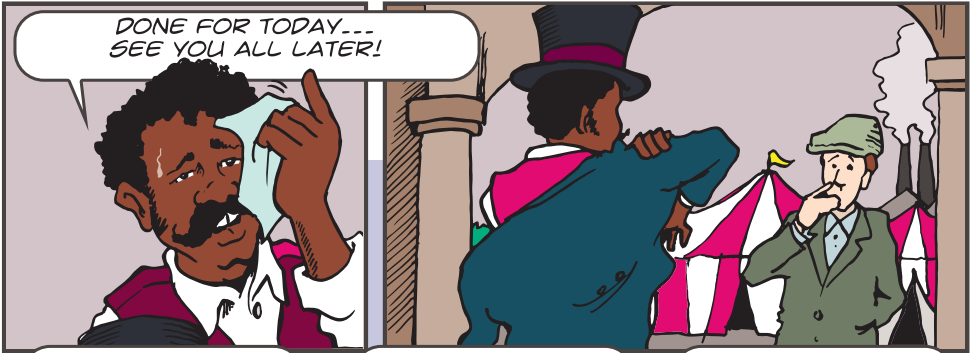


OKAY... KEEP DOING THE SAME! PRACTICE... PRACTICE!! THIS NEEDS TO BECOME SECOND NATURE TO YOU! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!!

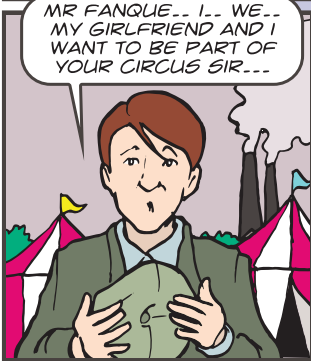


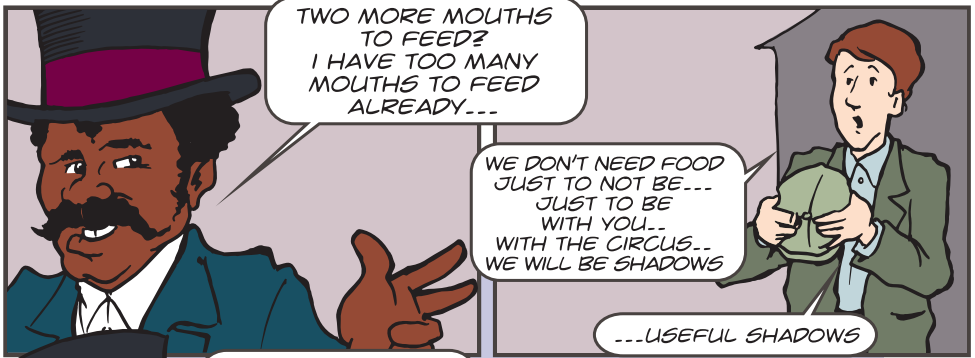
KEEP MOVING! ...KEEP GOING... STAY IN MOTION!





DONE FOR TODAY...  
SEE YOU ALL LATER!





TWO MORE MOUTHS TO FEED?  
I HAVE TOO MANY MOUTHS TO FEED ALREADY---

WE DON'T NEED FOOD JUST TO NOT BE... JUST TO BE WITH YOU... WITH THE CIRCUS... WE WILL BE SHADOWS

---USEFUL SHADOWS



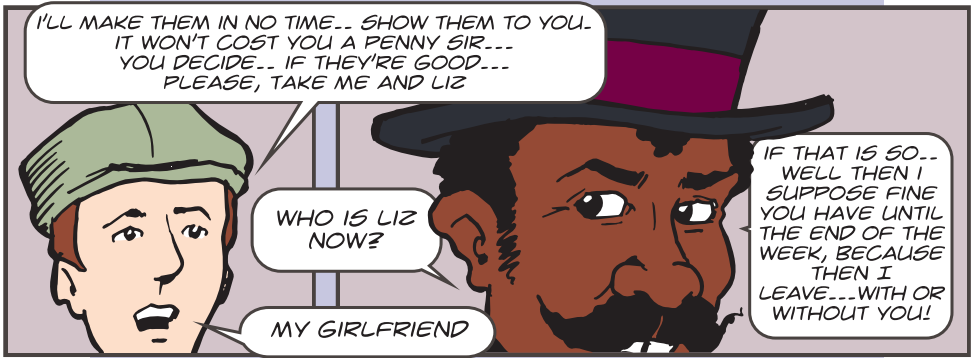
I CAN MAKE YOU BRAND NEW KNIVES SIR

I DON'T NEED NEW KNIVES

--- BUT SIR YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THESE KNIVES... MADE OF STEEL... LONGER LASTING!



WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?



I'LL MAKE THEM IN NO TIME... SHOW THEM TO YOU... IT WON'T COST YOU A PENNY SIR... YOU DECIDE... IF THEY'RE GOOD... PLEASE, TAKE ME AND LIZ

WHO IS LIZ NOW?

MY GIRLFRIEND

IF THAT IS SO... WELL THEN I SUPPOSE FINE YOU HAVE UNTIL THE END OF THE WEEK, BECAUSE THEN I LEAVE... WITH OR WITHOUT YOU!

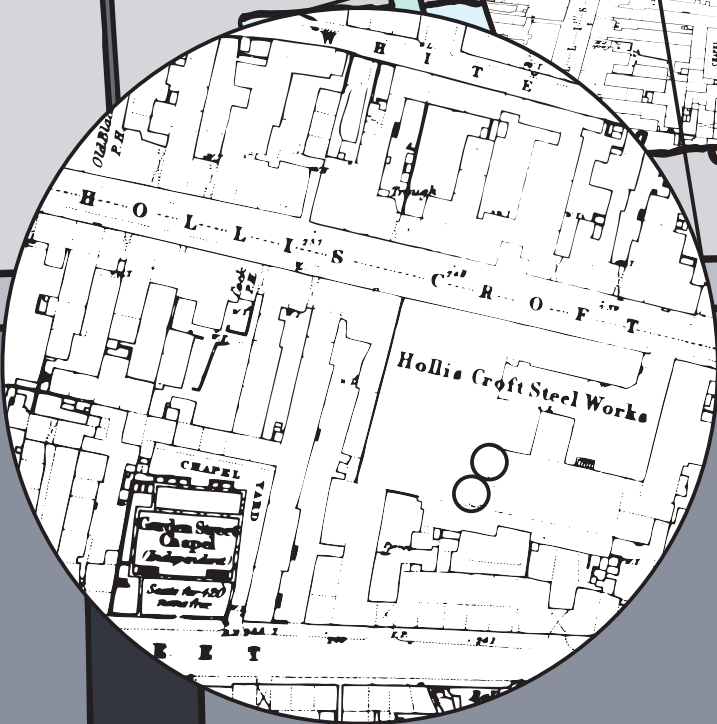


BUT... IF YOU ARE YET ANOTHER LIAR... ANOTHER TIME WASTER... THEN STAY AWAY FROM ME... AND STAY AWAY FROM MY CIRCUS!





U

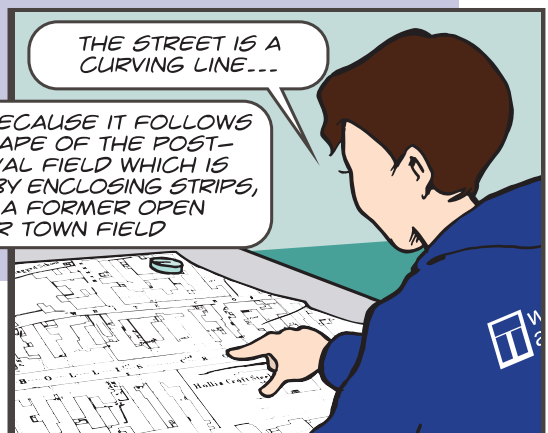
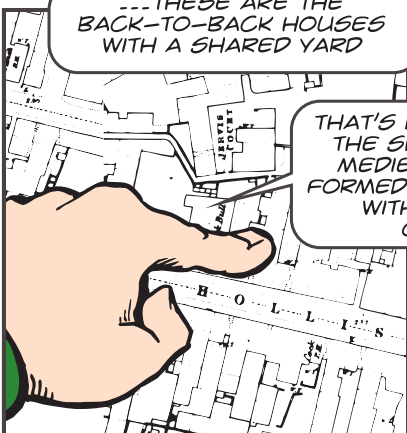
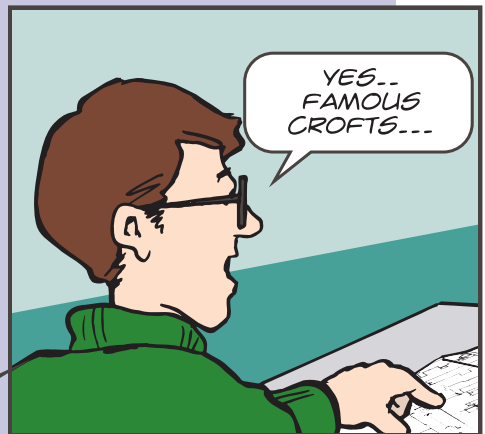
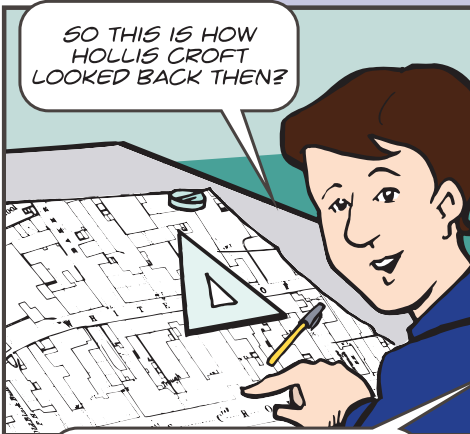




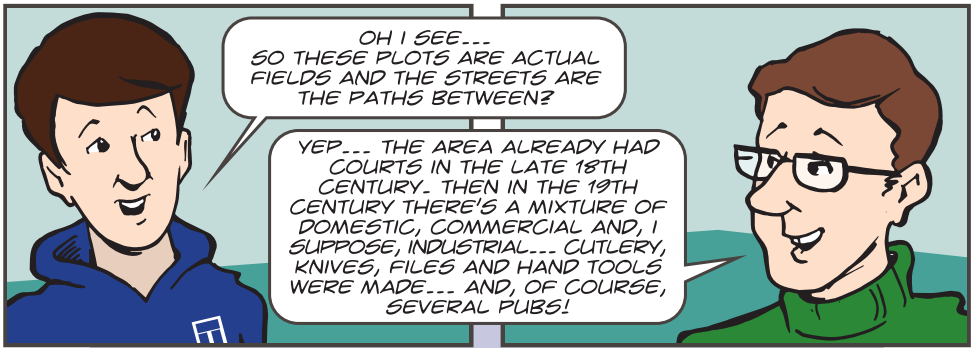
 wessex  
archaeology



# The Map

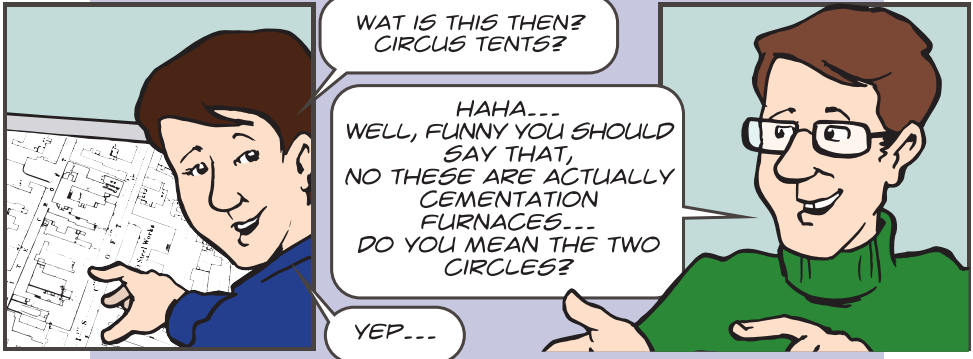






OH I SEE...  
SO THESE PLOTS ARE ACTUAL  
FIELDS AND THE STREETS ARE  
THE PATHS BETWEEN?

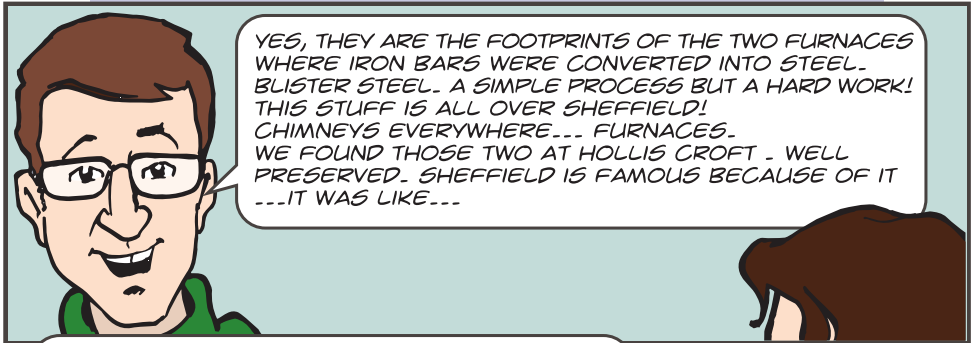
YEP... THE AREA ALREADY HAD  
COURTS IN THE LATE 18TH  
CENTURY. THEN IN THE 19TH  
CENTURY THERE'S A MIXTURE OF  
DOMESTIC, COMMERCIAL AND, I  
SUPPOSE, INDUSTRIAL... CUTLERY,  
KNIVES, FILES AND HAND TOOLS  
WERE MADE... AND, OF COURSE,  
SEVERAL PUBS!



WAT IS THIS THEN?  
CIRCUS TENTS?

HAHA...  
WELL, FUNNY YOU SHOULD  
SAY THAT,  
NO THESE ARE ACTUALLY  
CEMENTATION  
FURNACES...  
DO YOU MEAN THE TWO  
CIRCLES?

YEP...



YES, THEY ARE THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE TWO FURNACES  
WHERE IRON BARS WERE CONVERTED INTO STEEL...  
BLISTER STEEL. A SIMPLE PROCESS BUT A HARD WORK!  
THIS STUFF IS ALL OVER SHEFFIELD!  
CHIMNEYS EVERYWHERE... FURNACES...  
WE FOUND THOSE TWO AT HOLLIS CROFT - WELL  
PRESERVED. SHEFFIELD IS FAMOUS BECAUSE OF IT  
...IT WAS LIKE...



HOLD ON... I HEAR YOU KNOW EVERYTHING  
ABOUT THIS... THANK YOU. CAN I GO BACK AND  
FINISH WHAT I HAVE TO DO?... YOU CAN TELL  
ME OVER A PINT LATER?

SURE... I GIVE YOU THE INFO...  
YOU BUY THE PINTS!

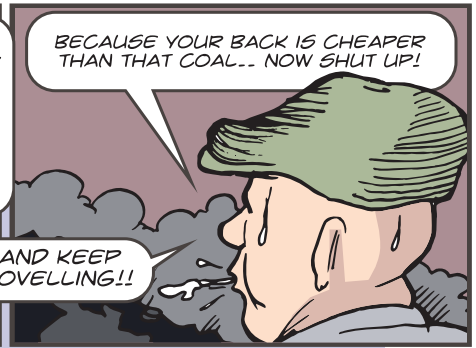
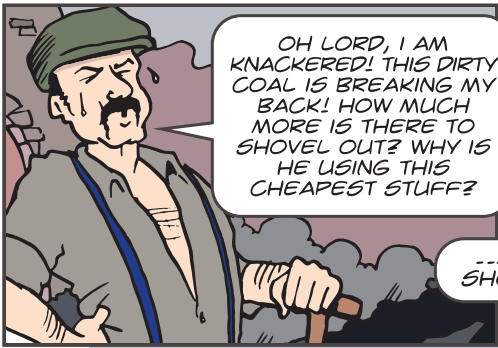
I'M NOT THAT DESPERATE  
TO KNOW THAT STUFF...  
BUT OKAY...  
IT'S A DEAL!



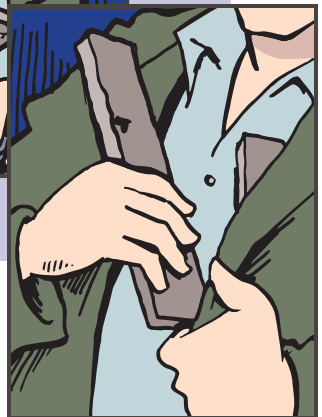
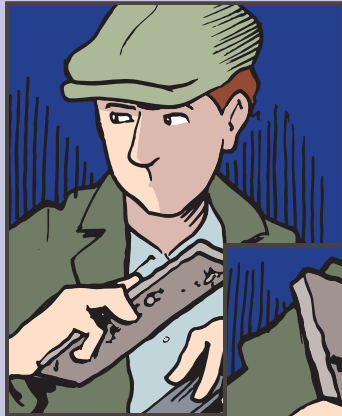


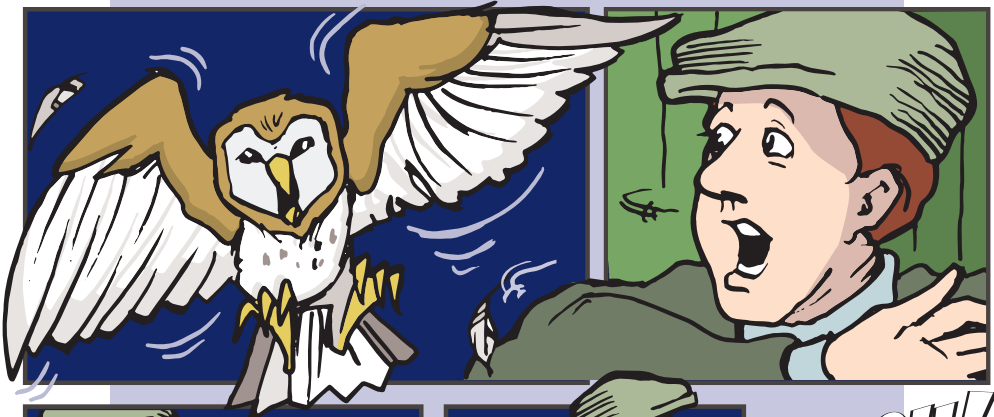
# The Factory

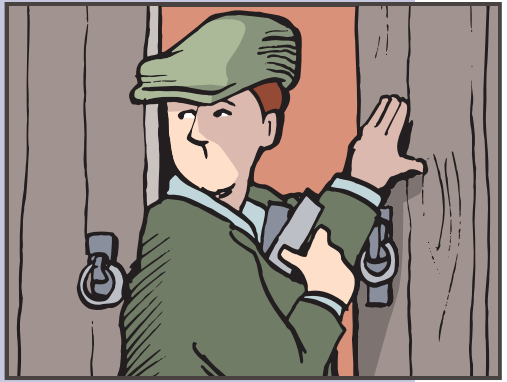




...AND KEEP SHOVELLING!!





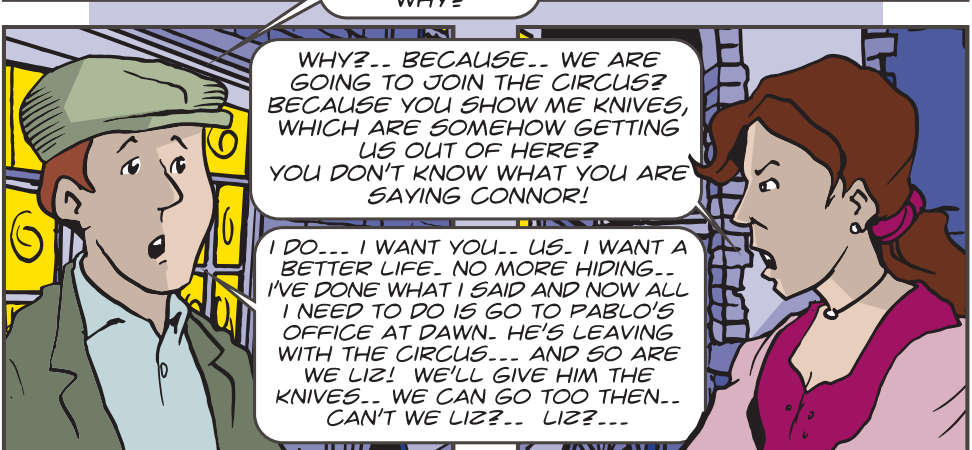
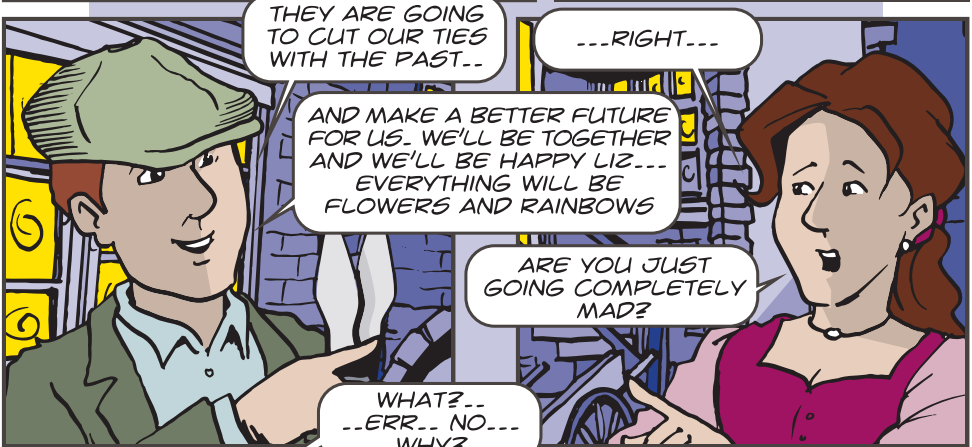






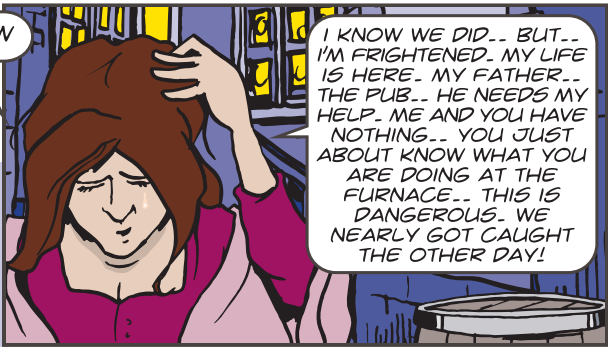


# The Steel





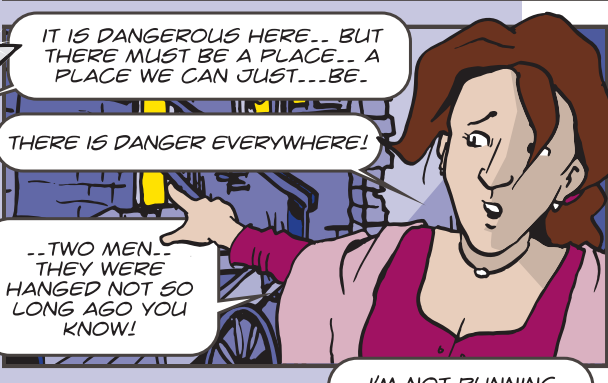
...I... I JUST DON'T KNOW



I KNOW WE DID... BUT... I'M FRIGHTENED. MY LIFE IS HERE... MY FATHER... THE PUB... HE NEEDS MY HELP... ME AND YOU HAVE NOTHING... YOU JUST ABOUT KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING AT THE FURNACE... THIS IS DANGEROUS... WE NEARLY GOT CAUGHT THE OTHER DAY!



WE AGREED?? YOU SAID YOU'D COME WITH ME?



IT IS DANGEROUS HERE... BUT THERE MUST BE A PLACE... A PLACE WE CAN JUST...BE...

THERE IS DANGER EVERYWHERE!

...TWO MEN... THEY WERE HANGED NOT SO LONG AGO YOU KNOW!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING??! OH THANK YOU WHO MADE THESE LIZ? WHO SORTED ALL THIS OUT? WE HAVE NOTHING... BUT WE WILL HAVE SOMETHING VERY, VERY SOON LIZ.



YES BUT THAT IS TWO MEN... NO ONE KNOWS ME, US... IF THEY DID, THEY WOULD THINK WE ARE JUST FRIENDS



YOU NEED TO STOP... STOP RUNNING AWAY CONNOR!



I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY! BUT I AM PUTTING UP WITH MISERY AND INJUSTICE! I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO CHANGE IT... BUT I AM NOT GOING TO LET IT CHANGE ME!!

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LET IT CHANGE YOU?? LOOK AT YOURSELF! WHAT'S YOUR NAME? WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU LOOK?? AAARGH!



PLEASE LIZ, I CAN'T DO THIS ON MY OWN... WHAT'S CHANGED? YOU WERE OKAY? YOU CAN ALWAYS RETURN?



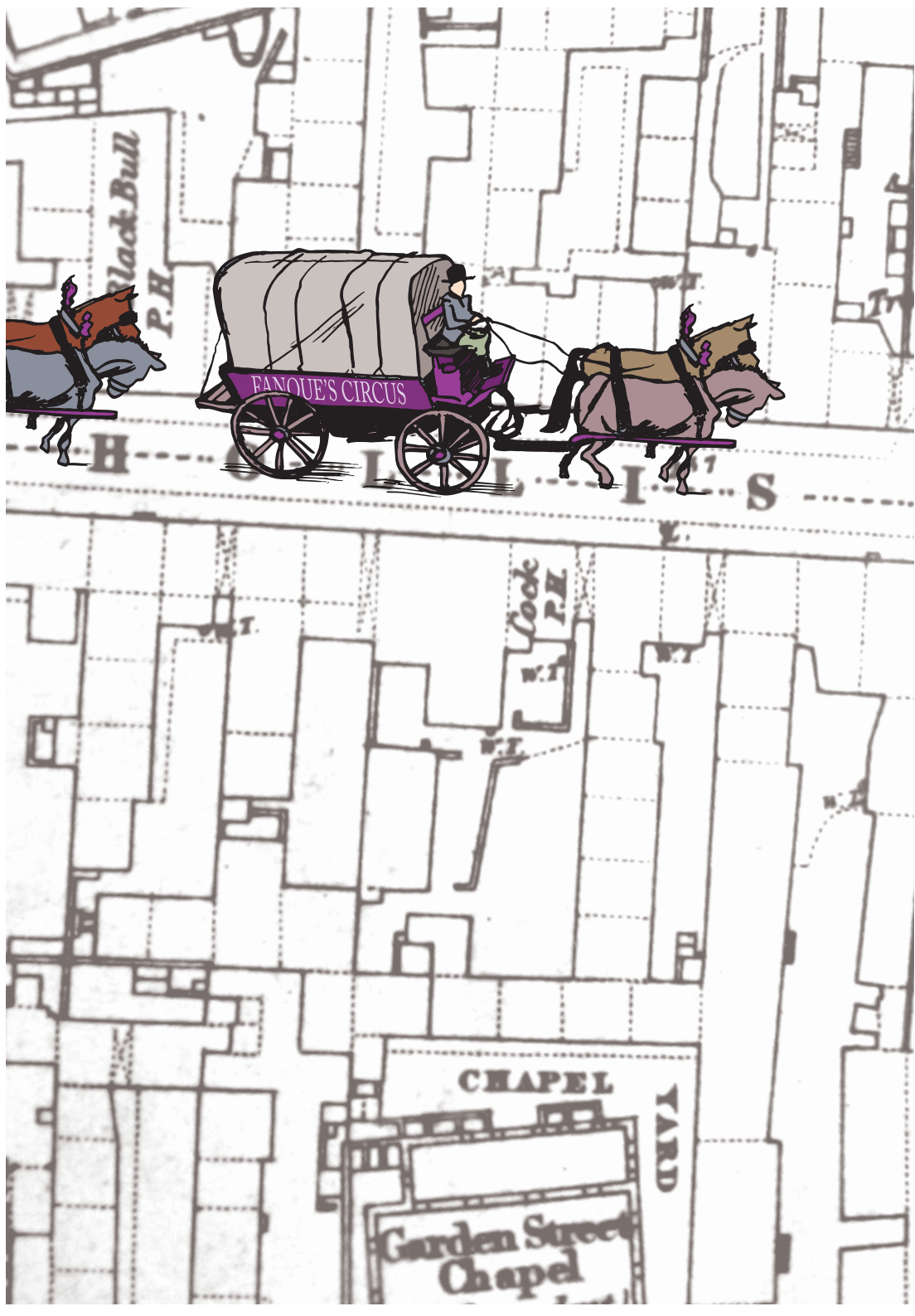
I WON'T BE ALLOWED TO RETURN... IT WILL NOT BE ME RETURNING... IT'LL BE SOMEONE ELSE

YOU CAN VISIT... PLEASE COME... I LOVE YOU LIZ

COME ON... WE CAN DO THIS LIZ... I'LL BE AT PABLO'S AT DAWN. I'LL WAIT FOR YOU AND WE WILL DO THIS TOGETHER LIZ.

...I'LL BE THERE...





Black Bull  
P.H.

FANQUE'S CIRCUS

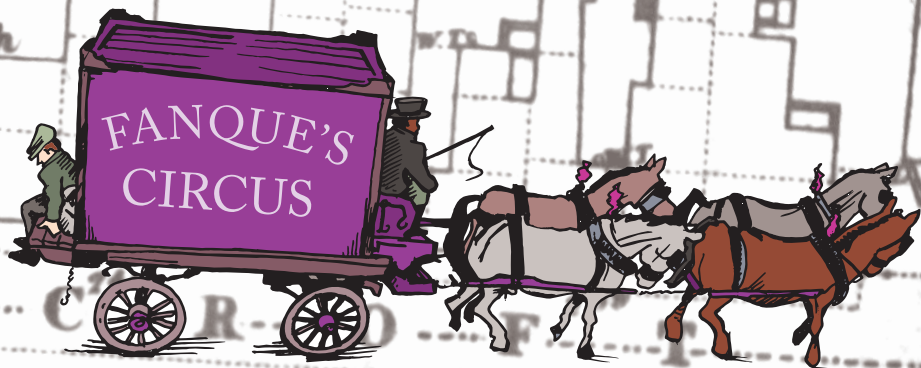
W. Lock  
P.H.

CHAPEL

YARD

Garden Street  
Chapel





FANQUE'S  
CIRCUS

Orange  
Branch

Hollis Croft Steel Works

# The Circles



MAKE SURE THAT THIS TIME  
WE HAVE ALL OUR  
GEAR WITH US!  
I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO  
IMPROVISE AGAIN YOU HEAR?



O!... ARE YOU  
TRAVELLING  
LIKE THAT?

YES!... I DIDN'T  
HAVE TIME TO  
CHANGE!



...AND THERE'S  
NO SPACE FOR  
THE COSTUME!

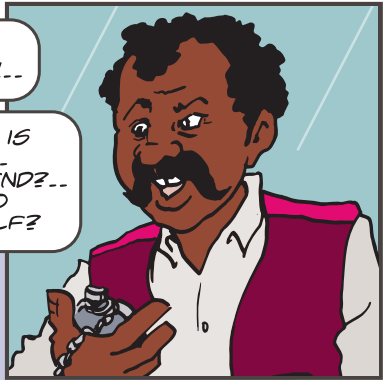
HOW IS IT THAT EVEN  
WITH YOU LOT  
FORGETTING THINGS,  
WE SEEM TO HAVE  
MORE STUFF THAN  
WE ARRIVED WITH??

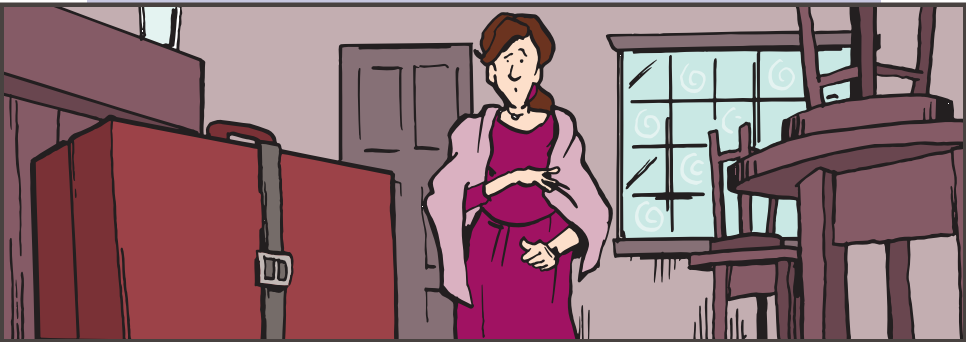


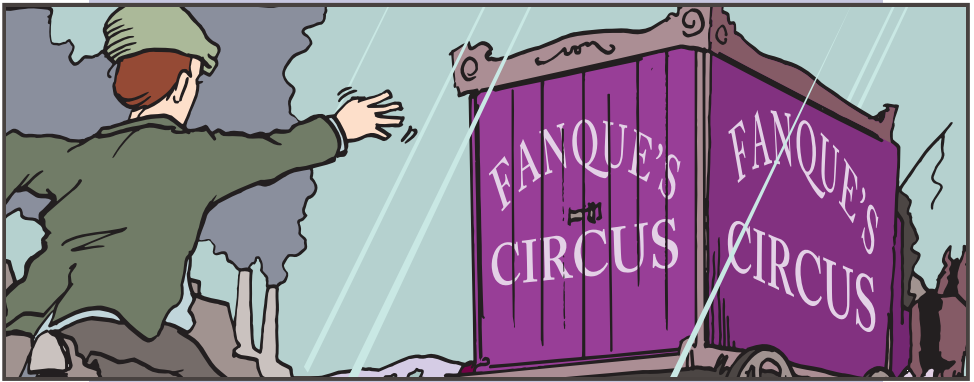
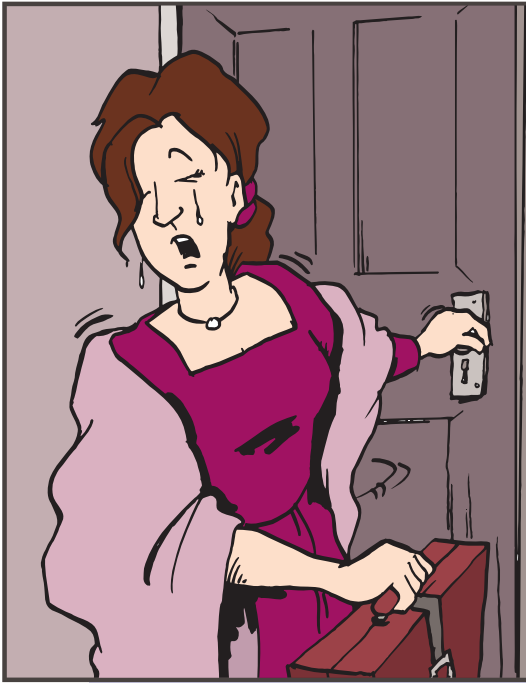


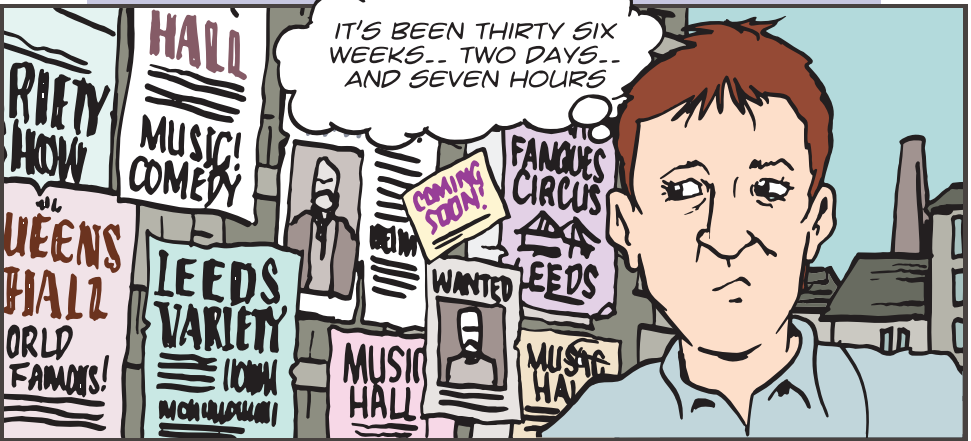
IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO RAIN NOW!...

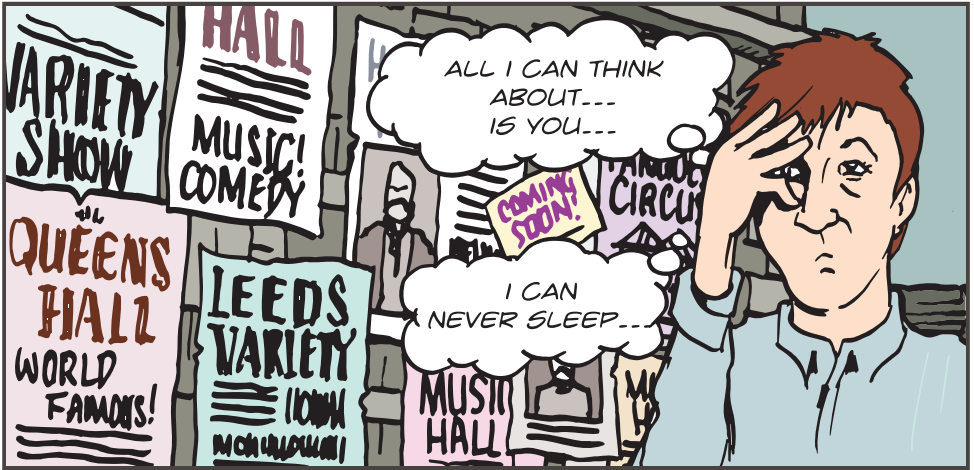
...SO WHERE IS THAT BOY?.. AND HIS GIRLFRIEND?.. WHY DO I DO THIS TO MYSELF?







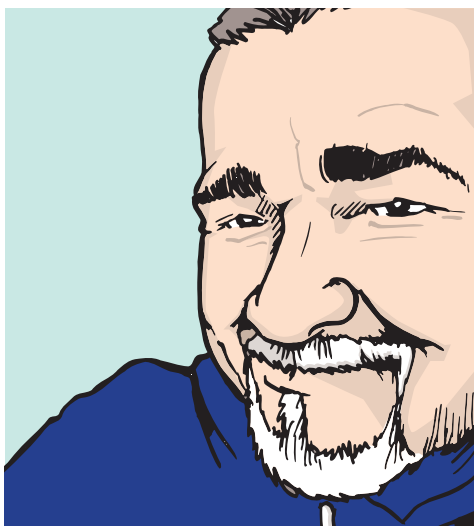







*The Author*

Milica (Mili) Rajic is an archaeologist.  
She reads an unhealthy number of comics,  
likes prime numbers and odd things.  
She lives in Sheffield and is deliberately getting old.



*The Artist*

Dave Howarth is a cartoonist and illustrator,  
He buys and listens to an unhealthy number of  
records, likes real ale and live music.  
He's Sheffield born and bred and *is* old.



Sheffield, mid-19 century, the peak of the steel industry that both built and scarred the city. Dark streets and darker attitudes smother life in the grimy tenements and back streets.

A young woman, Neive, leaves the poverty of her parents' home in West Ireland to seek work in the industrial cities of Northern England.

She finds herself in Sheffield, having to hide her femininity to get work in steel cementation factories, she also must hide her forbidden love.

An unlikely salvation occurs to her in the shape of a famous circus impresario...

but will her plan lead her to a new life?

Archaeologist Milica (Mili) Rajic imagines a human story entwined within the archaeological remnants and artefacts uncovered in the heavily industrialised Victorian Sheffield.

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