



## University of Dundee

### Close to the Heart

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# Close to the Heart



**Megan Sinclair Gary Welsh Letty Wilson Elliot Balson**  
**Catriona Laird Andrew Strachan Dave Charlton**  
**Monty Nero Anna Coughlan Ashling Larkin Kathryn Briggs**

## CLOSE TO THE HEART

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Thank you Professor Chris Murray for your constant support and advice on the project, and for helping me to fund this very personal comic. I wouldn't be here studying comics and doing what I love if it were not for you.

Thanks also to Professor Divya Jindal-Snape for helping me with the comic and encouraging me throughout the process, and to Dr Golnar Nabizadeh and Phillip Vaughan for their comics expertise and guidance.

Thanks to all the contributors for their help making this comic and to Rebecca Horner, the production manager, for pulling it all together.

Thanks also to the British Heart Foundation, who have welcomed this project and have supported me in making it as accurate and informative as can be.

Similarly, a big thank you to my family and friends for giving me the strength and support to put my story out there, and to those of you who contributed memories and stories. I hope this helps you just as it has me.

But most of all, thank you Dad.

Never in a million years would I think I could have, nor wanted to, make a comic about your death. It has been four years and I still haven't fully accepted it, but out of tragedy there is hope. You were always the happiest, kindest and most loving person. I hope making this comic shows that. As you always said, 'You can't change the past, you can only influence the future'. I hope this comic will influence others, and that it goes some way to help put an end to the heartbreak that comes when you lose someone so suddenly to heart and coronary disease.

**MEGAN SINCLAIR**

University of Dundee.

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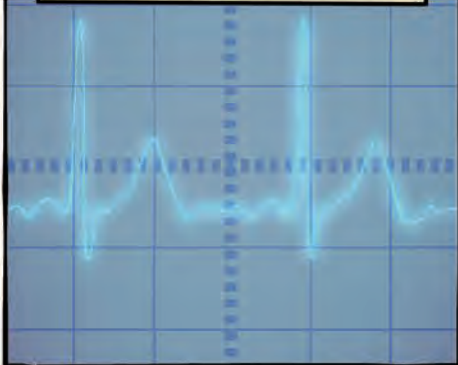
PRODUCTION BY REBECCA HORNER

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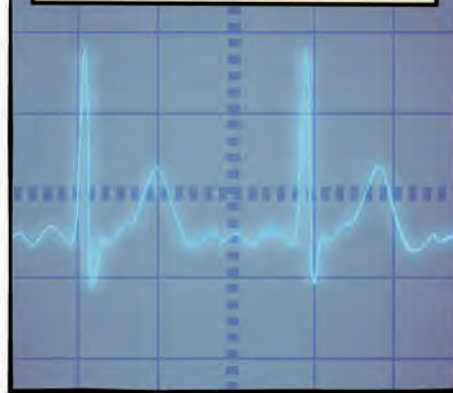
THE AVERAGE HEART BEATS 72 BEATS A MINUTE, 100,000 TIMES A DAY, 360,000 TIMES A YEAR AND 2.5 BILLION TIMES IN AN AVERAGE LIFETIME.



THE HEART BEATS 1.5 GALLONS OF BLOOD PER MINUTE.



EVERY DAY YOUR HEART PUMPS 1000 GALLONS OF BLOOD THROUGH A SYSTEM OF BLOOD VESSELS OVER 60,000 MILES LONG.



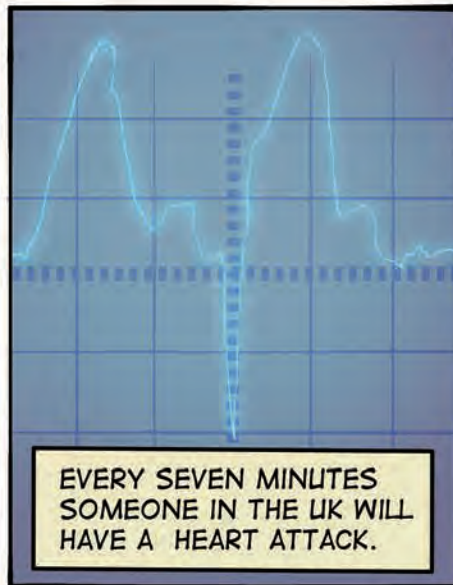
AROUND 175,000 PEOPLE IN THE UK HAVE A HEART ATTACK EACH YEAR.



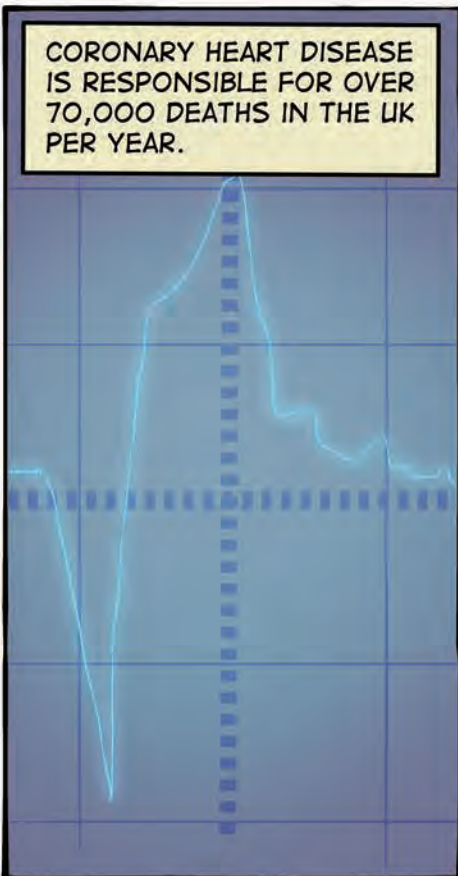
EVERY DAY YOUR HEART CREATES ENOUGH ENERGY TO POWER A TRUCK FOR AROUND TWENTY MILES.



EVERY SEVEN MINUTES SOMEONE IN THE UK WILL HAVE A HEART ATTACK.



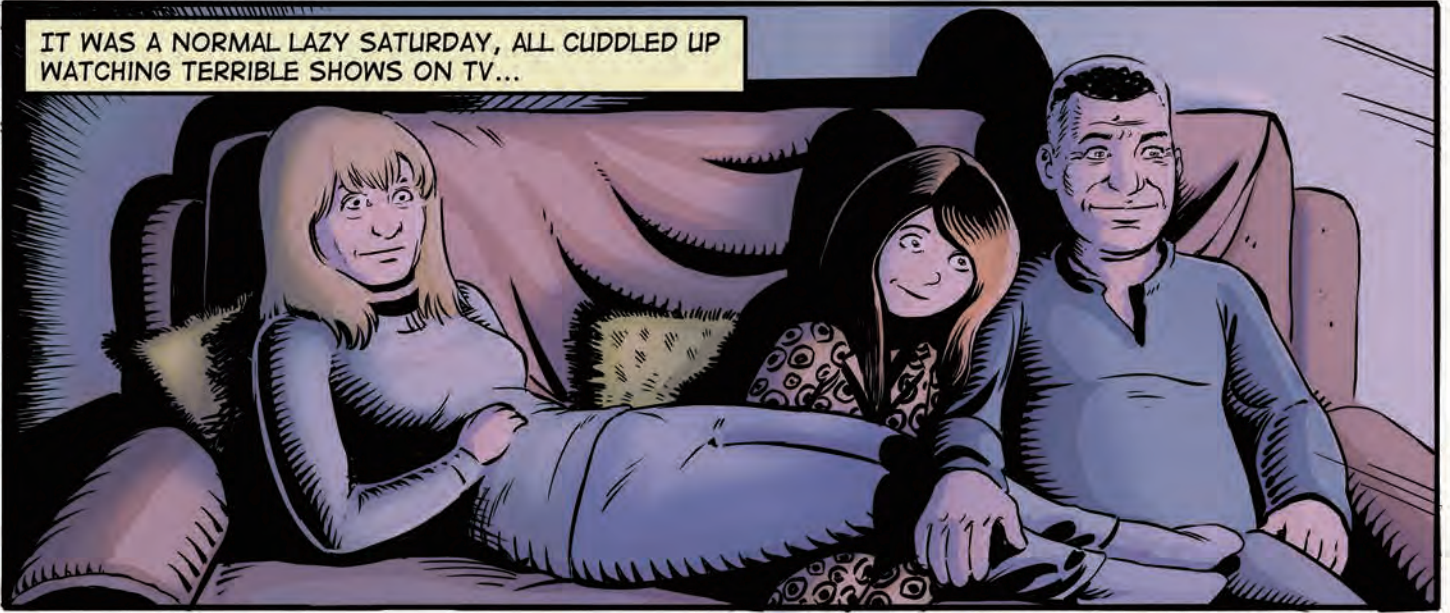
CORONARY HEART DISEASE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OVER 70,000 DEATHS IN THE UK PER YEAR.



THAT'S ON AVERAGE, 190 PEOPLE PER DAY, OR ONE PERSON EVERY EIGHT MINUTES.



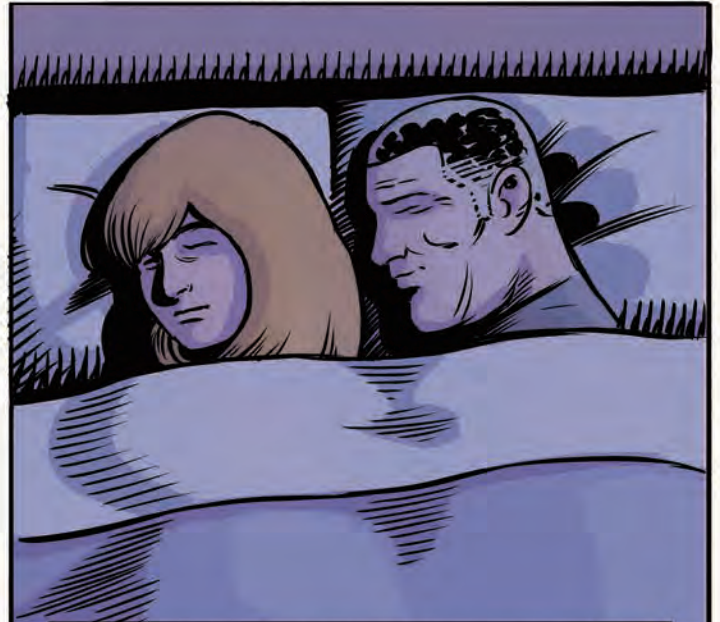
IT WAS A NORMAL LAZY SATURDAY, ALL CUDDLED UP WATCHING TERRIBLE SHOWS ON TV...



EVENTUALLY, AFTER A KISS GOODNIGHT WE WENT TO BED, ANTICIPATING THE BUSY EASTER SUNDAY AHEAD.



AS I DRIFTED INTO SLEEP, MY MIND TOOK ME TO A FANTASY WORLD SAFE FROM THE REALMS OF REALITY, FROM THE HORRORS OF WHAT LURKS IN THE SHADOWS, WAITING JUST AROUND THE CORNER.



MY MOTHER AND FATHER SLEEP PEACEFULLY, UNKNOWN TO THEM THAT ONLY ONE WILL AWAKE FROM THEIR SLUMBER.

MY MOTHER SCREAMS....



**А** **Н** **Н** **Н** **Н** **Н**

JOLTED AWAKE BY THE NOISE, I LEAP OUT OF BED..



...AND BOUND DOWN THE STAIRS TOWARDS HER.

BUT AS I REACH HER, I FREEZE IN THE DOOR FRAME.



MY LEGS GO WEAK, MY BODY AS HEAVY AS LEAD AS I STARE DOWN TOWARDS THE MOTIONLESS BODY OF MY FATHER.



HIS EYES SEEM SO COLOURLESS. HIS BODY A SICKLY SHADE OF GREY.



THE SOUND OF A STRANGER AWAKENS ME FROM MY THOUGHTS, I LOOK TOWARDS MY MUM...

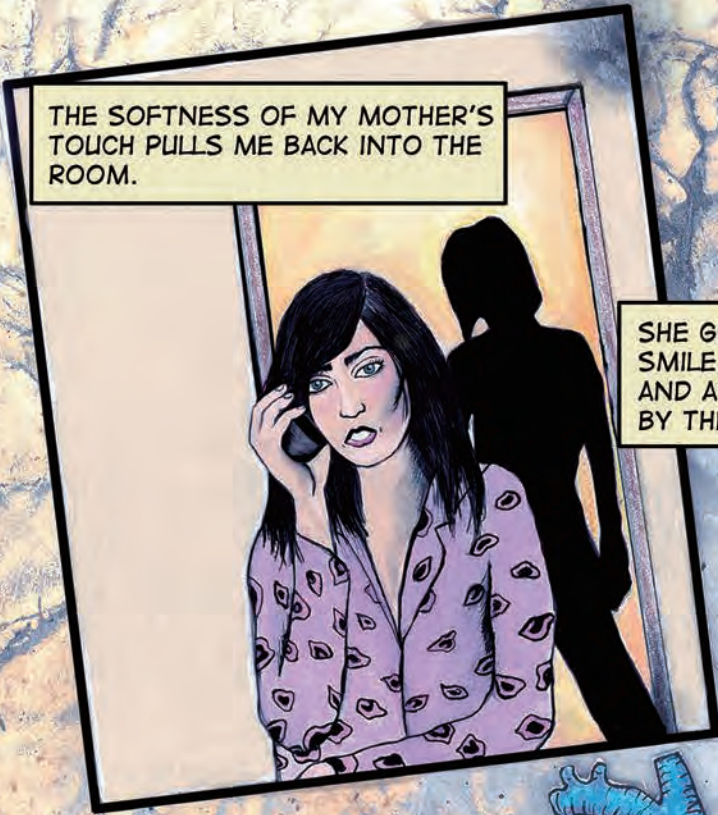


...SHE HAS ONE HAND TO MY DAD'S CHEST, THE OTHER STRETCHES OUT TOWARD ME PHONE IN HAND. THE STRANGER TALKS THROUGH, SHATTERING THE DEATHLY SILENCE.





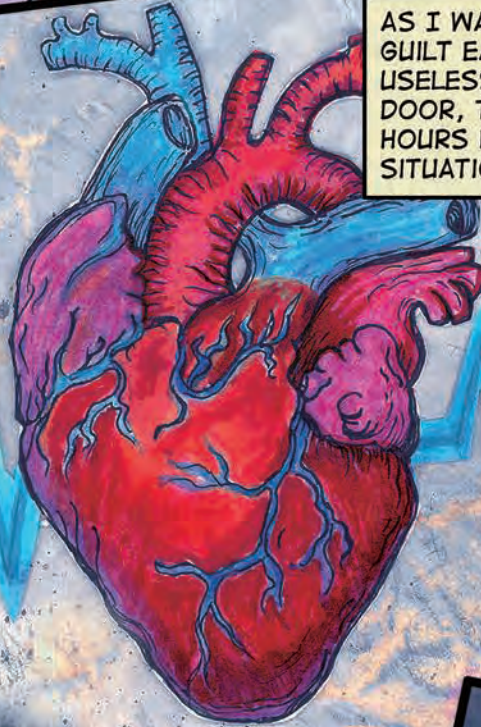
THE SOFTNESS OF MY MOTHER'S TOUCH PULLS ME BACK INTO THE ROOM.



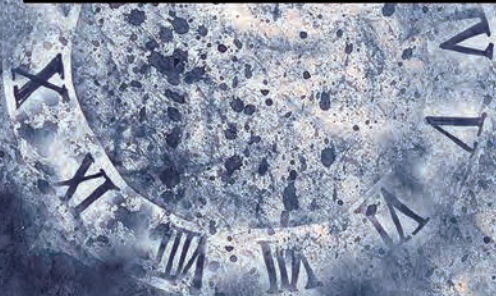
SHE GIVES ME A SYMPATHETIC SMILE, TAKES THE PHONE BACK AND ASKS ME INSTEAD TO WAIT BY THE FRONT DOOR.



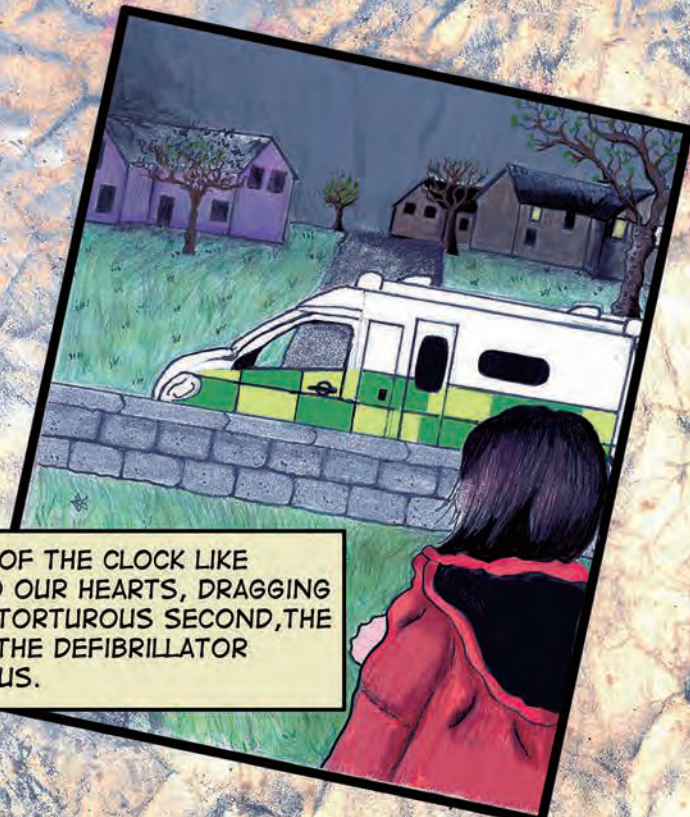
AS I WALK TOWARDS THE ENTRANCE, GUILT EATS AWAY AT ME FOR MY USELESSNESS. OPENING THE FRONT DOOR, THE FRESH AIR OF THE SUNRISE HOURS HITS AND THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION BECOMES CLEAR.



THE AMBULANCE ARRIVES AND BOTH MUM AND I ARE ESCORTED INTO THE LIVING ROOM. ONLY HOURS AGO THE ROOM WAS ONE OF WARMTH AND LOVE, NOW IT SEEMED SO EMPTY AND HOLLOW.



EACH TICK OF THE CLOCK LIKE A KNIFE TO OUR HEARTS, DRAGGING OUT EACH TORTUROUS SECOND, THE NOISE OF THE DEFIBRILLATOR TAUNTING US.



WE WAIT SILENTLY, BOTH TOO FAR AWAY IN OUR OWN HEADS.



A PARAMEDIC ENTERED.

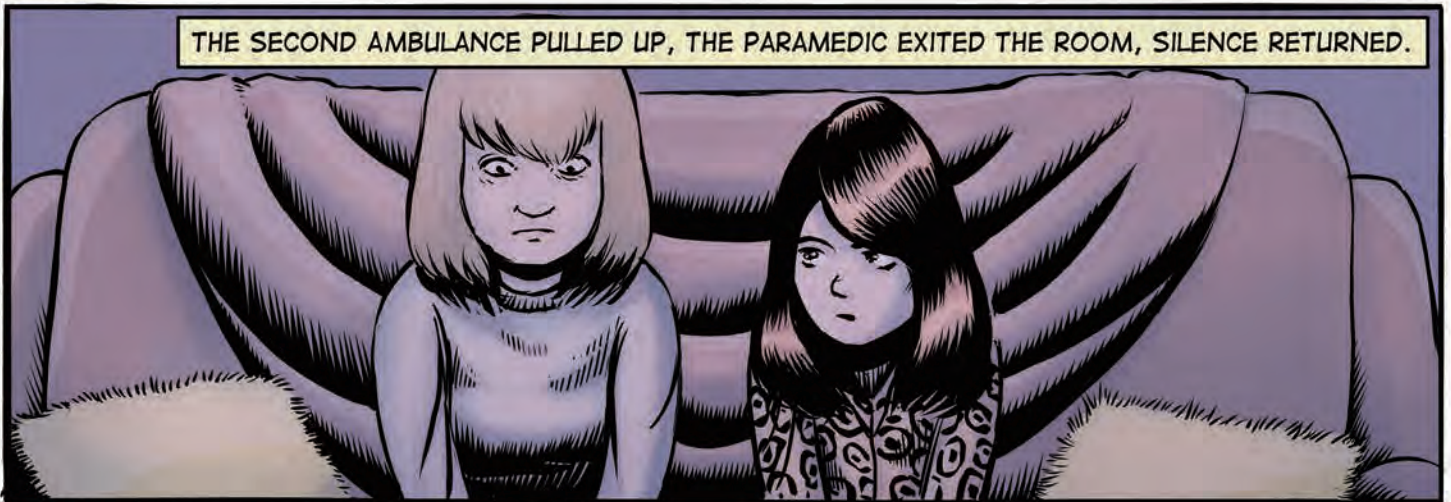
WE HAVE ANOTHER  
AMBULANCE ARRIVING  
TO HELP GET HIM  
TO HOSPITAL.

WILL HE  
BE OKAY?

WE'RE  
DOING ALL  
WE CAN.



THE SECOND AMBULANCE PULLED UP, THE PARAMEDIC EXITED THE ROOM, SILENCE RETURNED.

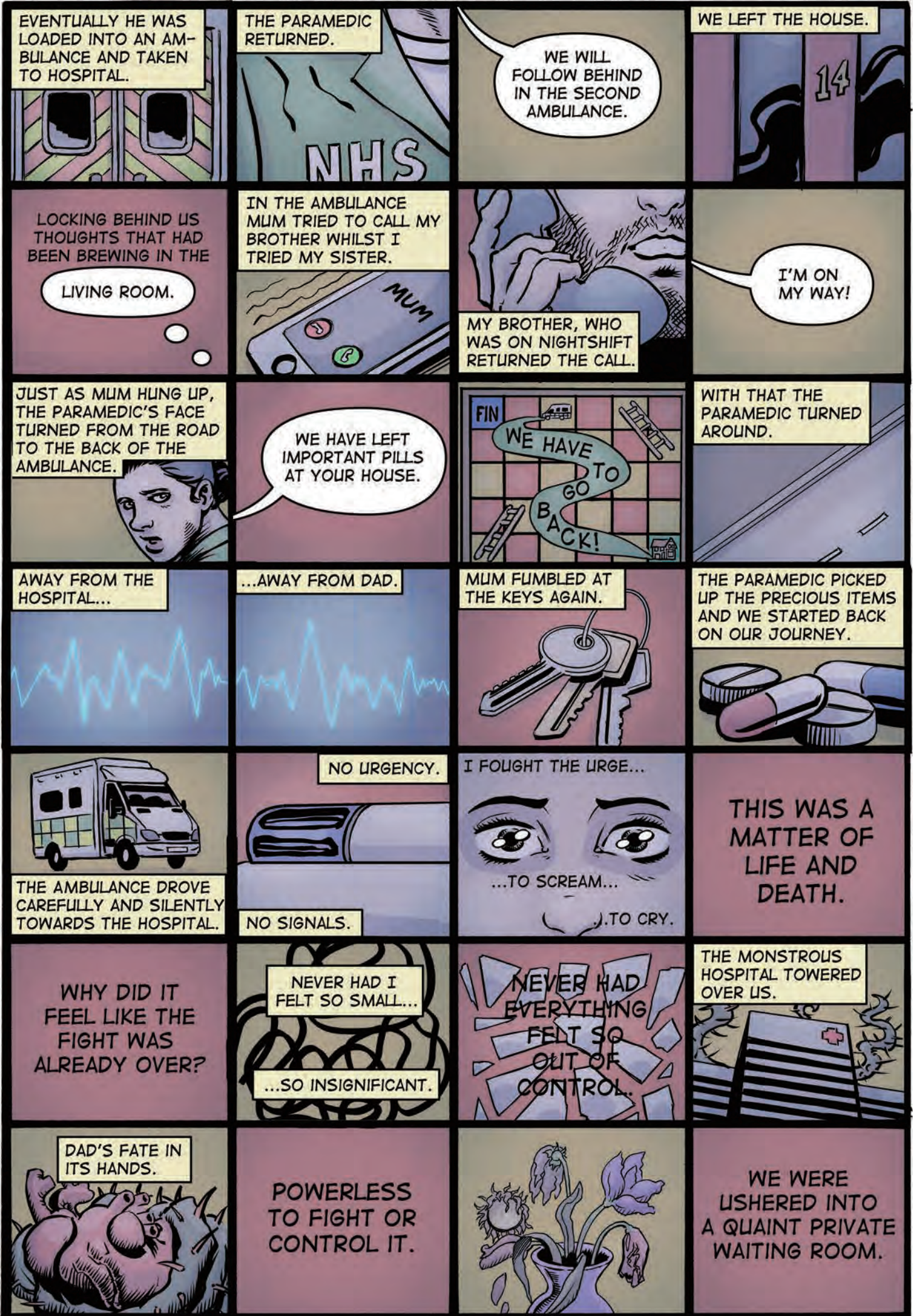


I LOOKED TOWARDS  
THE CLOSED DOOR...

**SCRAPE!**

...I HEARD THE SOUND OF  
DAD'S BODY BEING DRAGGED  
ACROSS THE CORRIDOR FLOOR...

...ECHOING THROUGH  
THE WALLS.



EVENTUALLY HE WAS LOADED INTO AN AMBULANCE AND TAKEN TO HOSPITAL.

THE PARAMEDIC RETURNED.

WE WILL FOLLOW BEHIND IN THE SECOND AMBULANCE.

WE LEFT THE HOUSE.

14

LOCKING BEHIND US THOUGHTS THAT HAD BEEN BREWING IN THE LIVING ROOM.

IN THE AMBULANCE MUM TRIED TO CALL MY BROTHER WHILST I TRIED MY SISTER.

MY BROTHER, WHO WAS ON NIGHTSHIFT RETURNED THE CALL.

I'M ON MY WAY!

JUST AS MUM HUNG UP, THE PARAMEDIC'S FACE TURNED FROM THE ROAD TO THE BACK OF THE AMBULANCE.

WE HAVE LEFT IMPORTANT PILLS AT YOUR HOUSE.

FIN  
WE HAVE TO GO TO BACK!  
TITIT

WITH THAT THE PARAMEDIC TURNED AROUND.

AWAY FROM THE HOSPITAL...

...AWAY FROM DAD.

MUM FUMBLER AT THE KEYS AGAIN.

THE PARAMEDIC PICKED UP THE PRECIOUS ITEMS AND WE STARTED BACK ON OUR JOURNEY.



THE AMBULANCE DROVE CAREFULLY AND SILENTLY TOWARDS THE HOSPITAL.

NO URGENCY.

I FOUGHT THE URGE...

THIS WAS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.



...TO SCREAM...

...TO CRY.

NO SIGNALS.

WHY DID IT FEEL LIKE THE FIGHT WAS ALREADY OVER?

NEVER HAD I FELT SO SMALL...

NEVER HAD EVERYTHING FELT SO OUT OF CONTROL.

THE MONSTROUS HOSPITAL TOWERED OVER US.



DAD'S FATE IN ITS HANDS.



POWERLESS TO FIGHT OR CONTROL IT.



WE WERE USHERED INTO A QUIANT PRIVATE WAITING ROOM.

THE DOOR OPENED, MY BROTHER  
STEPPED INTO THE ROOM.



HE STRODE TOWARDS US BOTH,  
EMBRACED US IN A HUG. HIS GRIP  
WAS STRONG AND CONFIDENT.  
AS I STRUGGLED TO KEEP MYSELF  
TOGETHER I WISHED I COULD  
POSSESS A MORSEL OF  
THAT STRENGTH.



ONCE AGAIN THE DOOR CLICKED OPEN. A  
DOCTOR STOOD IN THE DOORWAY.



A DOCTOR  
I INSTANTLY  
RECOGNISED.  
MY MIND  
DRIFTED BACK.

13/4/13

WE HAVE MANAGED TO GET MEGAN'S HEART RATE DOWN INTO THE LOW HUNDREDS.

IT SHOULD CONTINUE TO DROP RELATIVELY QUICKLY. WE WILL KEEP HER IN FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS TO CHECK THAT IT IS REDUCING AND THEN SHE WILL BE DISCHARGED.

A ROOM WITH NO TV. HOW ABOUT FAMILY EYE SPY?

10 MINS LATER.



THERE IS DEFINITELY NOTHING WITH A C IN HERE!

THE CLOCK!

I CAN'T SEE THE CLOCK, I AM LYING DOWN!

OKAY HOW ABOUT A READ THROUGH OF THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND, BET THERE IS HOT GOSSIP IN THERE.

HA HA HA

DON'T MIND ME. JUST CHECKING MEGAN OVER WITH THE ECG.

99. IT IS LOOKING GOOD TO ME. SLOWLY DROPPING TO A NORMAL RATE.

WHAT IS THE NORMAL RATE?

70 IS AVERAGE BUT THE ATHLETES LIKE YOUR OLD MAN HAVE SLOWER RESTING HEART BEATS.

HAHA WANT TO TEST THAT THEORY?

LET'S SEE THEN. BET I BEAT YOUR MUM.

72. ALL HEALTHY.

63. YOU WERE RIGHT.

HAHA SEE? FIT AS A FIDDLE!



I'M SORRY,  
THERE WAS  
**NOTHING ELSE**  
WE COULD DO  
FOR HIM.

I EXPECTED THERE TO BE TEARS BUT I JUST COULDN'T MUSTER ANY EMOTION. I WAS EMPTY, A PART OF ME HAD DIED WITH MY DAD.



SHE WALKED OVER TO MUM, HANDING HER A LEAFLET, A GENERIC HOW TO COPE WITH THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE. MUM PRETENDED TO BE THANKFUL.

IN AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK THE DEATHLY SILENCE THE NURSE CHIPPED IN ABOUT HOW LUCKY WE WERE TO GET TETLEY'S TEA, THE GOOD STUFF.



A NURSE CAME IN WITH A TRAY OF TEA AND BISCUITS. SHE SMILED, MAKING HAPPINESS LOOK EASY.



HOW TO COPE WITH THE LOSS



I ALMOST LAUGHED. HOW LUCKY INDEED. YOUR DAD'S DEAD BUT AT LEAST YOU GET A GOOD CUPPA.

I SAT WITH THE TEA IN MY HANDS.



THE LIQUID RIPPLED INSIDE THE CONFINES OF THE CUP. I GAZED INTO THE SWIRLS LIKE A BLACK HOLE SWALLOWING UP LOST STARS DESTROYING AND BREAKING APART THE STRONGEST OF FORMATIONS LEAVING AN EMPTY VOID IN ITS WAKE.



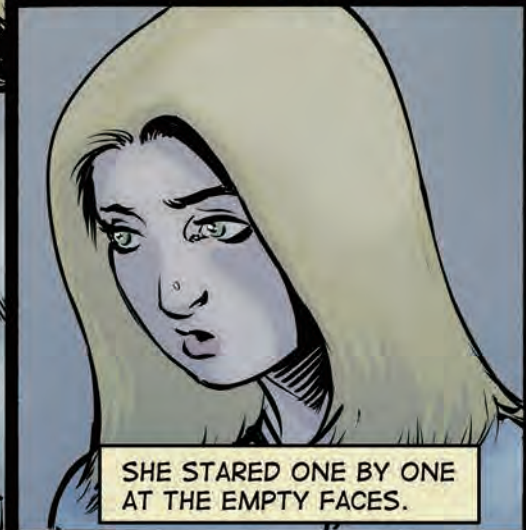
SORRY I'M LATE!  
I GOT HERE AS  
FAST AS I COULD.  
WHERE'S THE  
INVALID THEN?



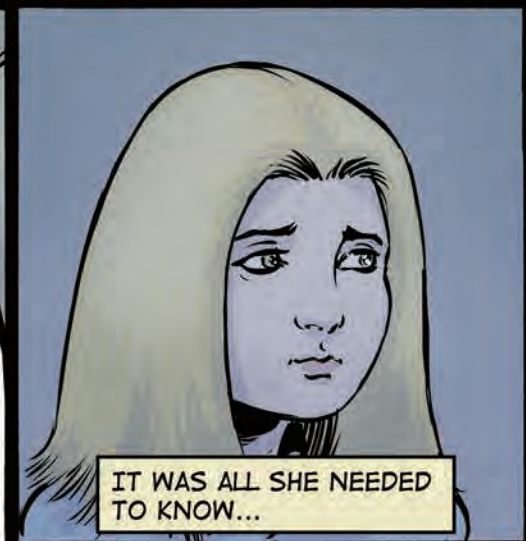
MY ELDEST SIBLING, JOANNA,  
APPEARED. SHE HAD THE SAME  
BRASSY NATURE AS HER FATHER.  
THE SAME BOISTEROUS SMILE.



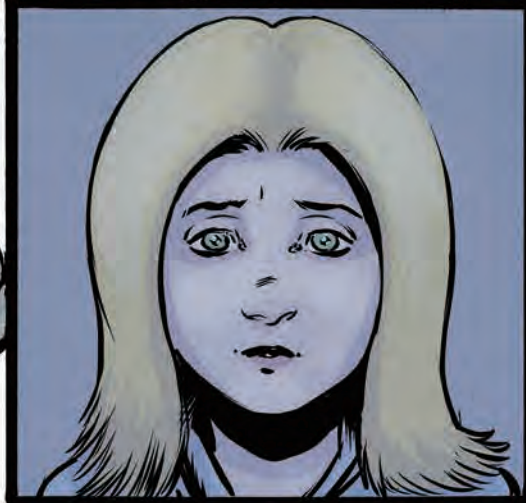
THE SMILE FALTERED.



SHE STARED ONE BY ONE  
AT THE EMPTY FACES.



IT WAS ALL SHE NEEDED  
TO KNOW...



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE STRONG FOR US. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THE MAN.

LET'S HAVE A COMPETITION, WHO CAN NAME THE MOST HEART RELATED SONGS.

TICK.

VOICES SPOKE.

GOOD NIGHT, LOVE YOU.

SEE? TOLD YOU I WAS A TOP ATHLETE.

I'M *SORRY* THERE WAS *NOTHING* ELSE WE COULD DO FOR HIM.

TOCK.

WE ARE DOING ALL WE CAN.

1 MINUTE WITHOUT OXYGEN.

I SAT, TEA IN HANDS.

I'LL BE THERE AS FAST AS I CAN!

BE GOOD, AND IF YOU CAN'T BE GOOD, BE GREAT!

WHERE IS THE INVALID THEN?

YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST. YOU CAN ONLY INFLUENCE THE FUTURE.

LISTENING.

HOW'S YOUR INDIGESTION? ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT A CURRY?

WORDS MERGED WITH THOUGHTS.

MORNING SNA'BA

MY HEAD FIGHTING TO SEPARATE REALITY FROM FANTASY.

WAIT 20 MINS. NO TELES YET.

TRYING TO FORMULATE A STRUCTURE...

I'M SORRY THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE WE COULD DO...

HE'S GONE.

A PURPOSE IN THE CONSTRAINTS OF A BODY THAT JUST... WANTED TO SHUT DOWN.



MY INNER WAR CAME TO A HALT WHEN A NEW VOICE ENTERED THE BATTLEFIELD FORCING EVERYTHING TO A STANDSTILL.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE BODY?



DID I REALLY WANT TO SEE THE BODY? TRUTHFULLY, NO. SEEING IT MEANT IT BEING REAL.



IT BEING REAL MEANT THAT MY DAD WAS DEAD. GONE FOREVER.



HE LAY THERE IN THE BED, EYES CLOSED.  
THEY HAD DRESSED HIM IN A HOSPITAL GOWN.  
HE LOOKED PEACEFUL, FAR TOO PEACEFUL.  
HE LAY STILL AND SILENT.  
IT WAS NOT THE DAD I KNEW AND LONGED FOR.

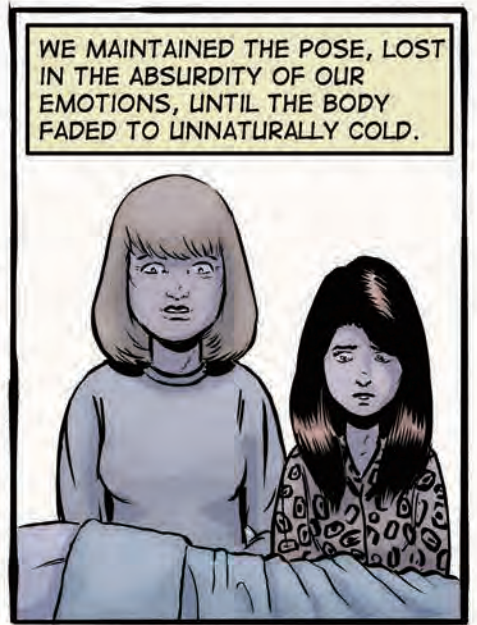
HIS MOUTH WAS PARTED. THROUGH THE SMALL GAP I COULD SEE THAT HIS FRONT TWO TEETH WERE MISSING.



THEY HAD REMOVED HIS INFAMOUS FALSERS. MY MIND DRIFTED BACK TO A HAPPIER MEMORY.



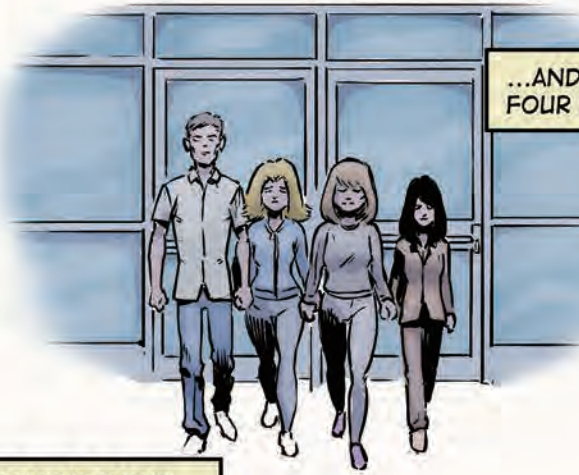
ALTHOUGH THE PARTING OF THE LIPS WAS SLIGHT, THE EMPTINESS OF THE GAP WAS NOT. THE DARK MASS WHERE ONCE A SMILE WAS FORMED WAS LOST. IN ITS PLACE A LIFELESS VOID. THE LONGER I STARED AT IT THE FURTHER I COULD FEEL MYSELF SUCKED INTO THE COLD RECESS OF THE LIFELESS BODY BEFORE ME.



AS WE PREPARED TO LEAVE, MUM, MYSELF AND MY BROTHER EACH SEEING OUR HUSBAND AND FATHER FOR THE LAST TIME, WE DESPERATELY TRIED TO SUMMON SOMETHING PROFOUND, SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL TO PART ON...



A NEW DAWN BREAKS...



...AND OUR NOW FAMILY OF FOUR DEPART THE HOSPITAL.

ON THE ROUTE HOME WE VISIT DAD'S BEST FRIEND. HE SMILES AT THE DOOR, DISHEVELLED AND HALF DRESSED, FROM THE NIGHT BEFORE.

MORNING SINCLAIRS. YOU BRINGING ME AN INVITE FOR THE EASTER PICNIC?



THE NEWS HITS HIM HARD. IN THE DARK KITCHEN HIM AND MUM EMBRACE AND CRY.



WE LEAVE HIM ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS AND MOVE ON TO VISIT GRAN.

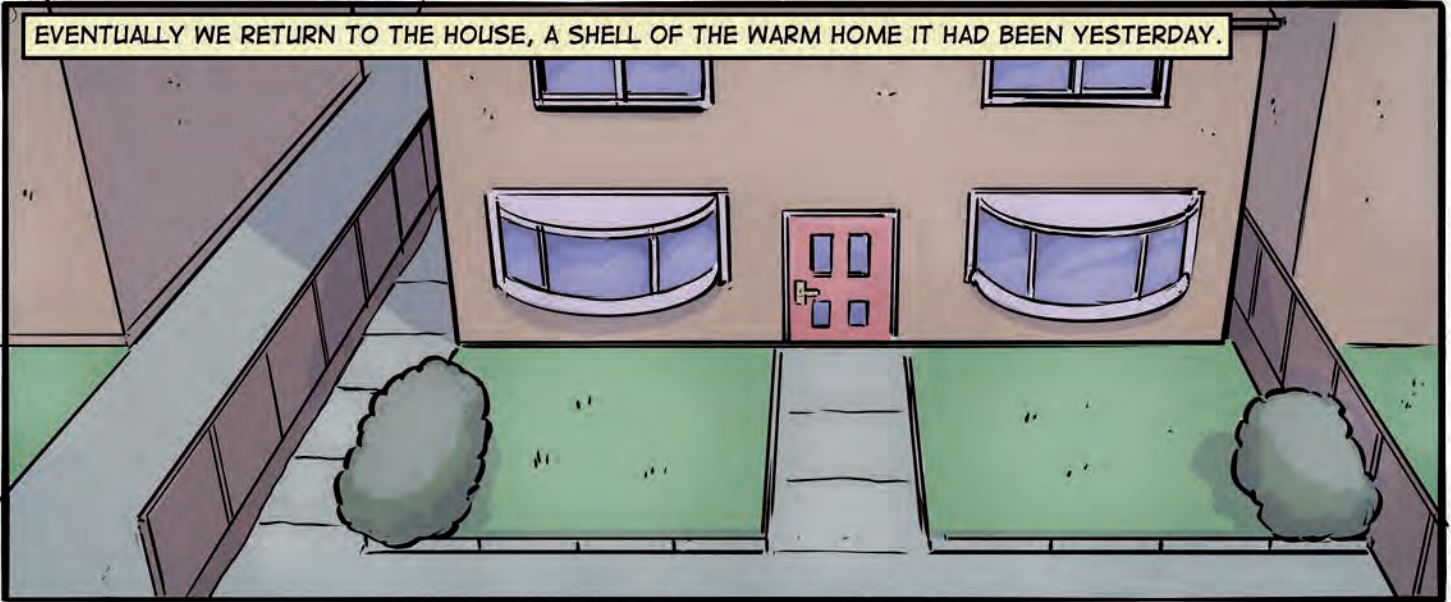


SHE IS A STRONG WOMAN WHO HAS ALREADY SAID GOODBYE TO THREE OF HER CHILDREN AND NOW HER FINAL SURVIVING SON.

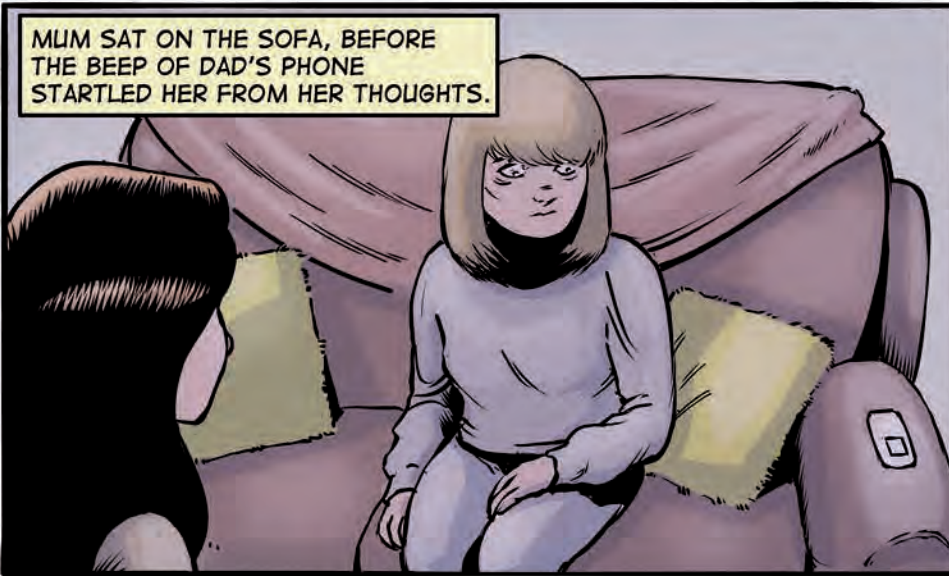
WE OFFER TO STAY BUT THE PROUD MOTHER WISHES TO BE LEFT ALONE TO MOURN.



EVENTUALLY WE RETURN TO THE HOUSE, A SHELL OF THE WARM HOME IT HAD BEEN YESTERDAY.



MUM SAT ON THE SOFA, BEFORE THE BEEP OF DAD'S PHONE STARTLED HER FROM HER THOUGHTS.



SHE PICKED IT UP, SOMEHOW HALF-HOPING IT WAS HER HUSBAND, THAT THE LAST FEW HOURS HAD BEEN A DREAM.



THE MESSAGE NEVER REACHING DAD...

FROM: JOANNA

YOU'D BETTER  
BE OKAY  
OLD MAN! XXX

1

2

3



EASTER EGGS SAT PATIENTLY IN THE DARKNESS. TAUNTINGLY REMINDING US OF THE DAY WE HAD PLANNED.





BY MID-MORNING NEWS HAS SPREAD AND OUR EMPTY HOUSE IS FILLED WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.



THE SUN GLEAMS, IT'S A GLORIOUS DAY, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PERFECT FOR AN EASTER PICNIC.



AS I LOOK OUT AT THE PARTY I CAN'T HELP BUT SMILE, SOAKING IN THE ATMOSPHERE. I CAN HEAR LAUGHTER...

...AND SUDDENLY MY SMILE FALTERS.



PILE ON FOR DAD'S 50TH.

...SUDDENLY I AM LISTENING FOR HIS VOICE...

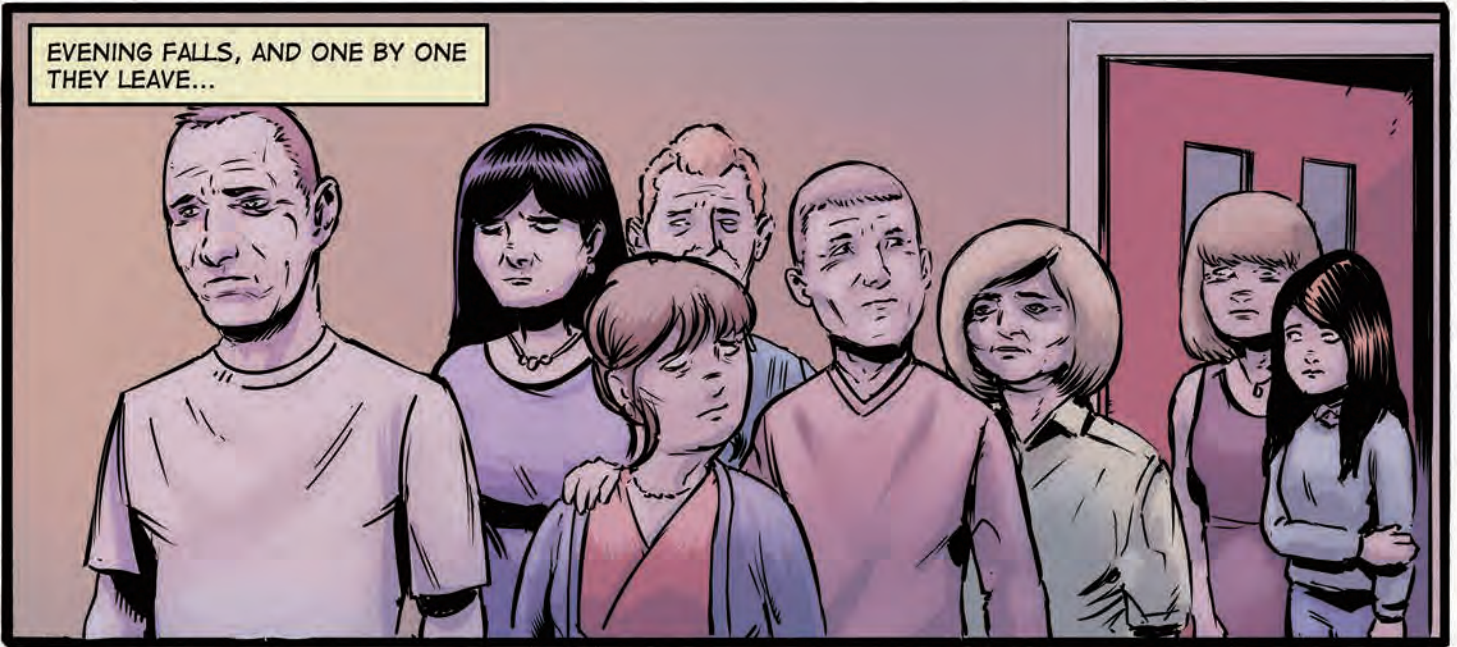


THE TECH FOOTIE CLUB WIN THE CUP.



DAD AND UNCLE STEVE WITH TOMATO KETCHUP ON THEIR NOSES PRETENDING TO BE SUNBURNT LIKE THEIR FRIEND STEVE.

EVENING FALLS, AND ONE BY ONE THEY LEAVE...



DAUGHTERS HUG FATHERS.



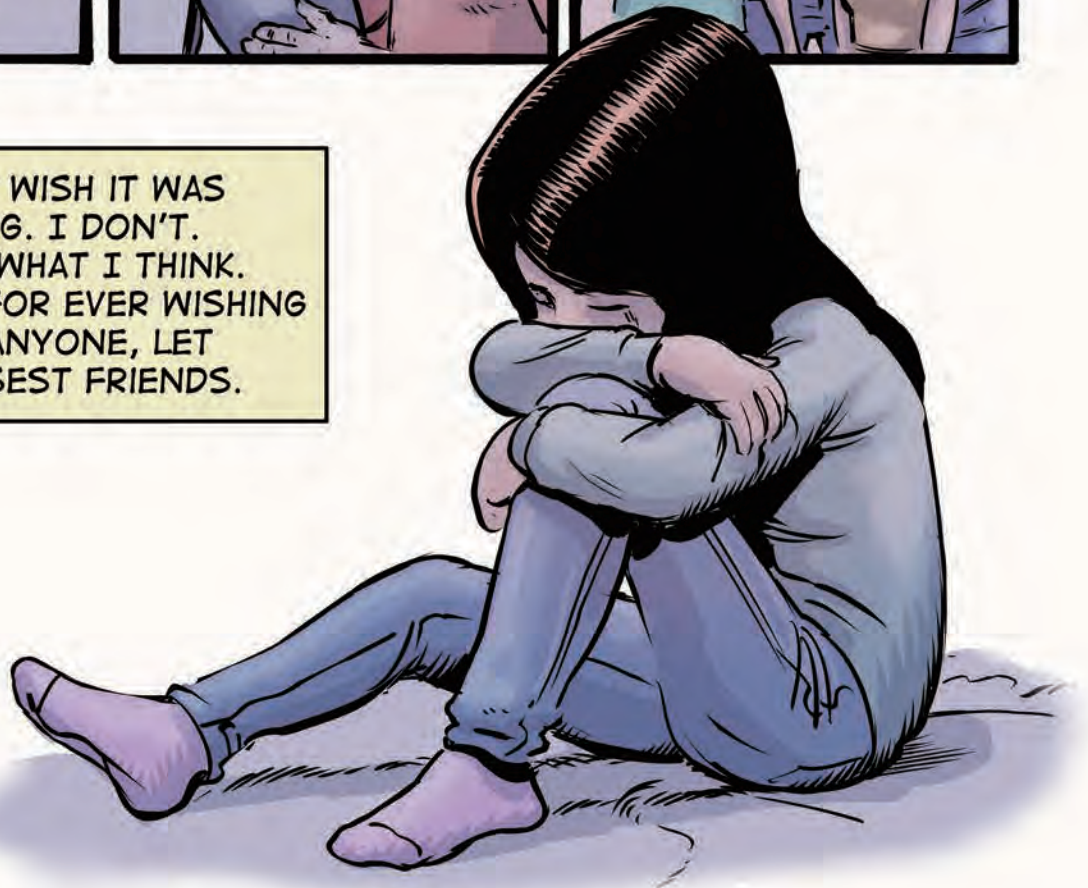
WIVES LOVINGLY KISS THEIR HUSBANDS



BACK TO THEIR HAPPY FAMILIES



I HATE THEM, I WISH IT WAS THEM SUFFERING. I DON'T. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I THINK. I FEEL GUILTY FOR EVER WISHING SUCH PAIN ON ANYONE, LET ALONE MY CLOSEST FRIENDS.



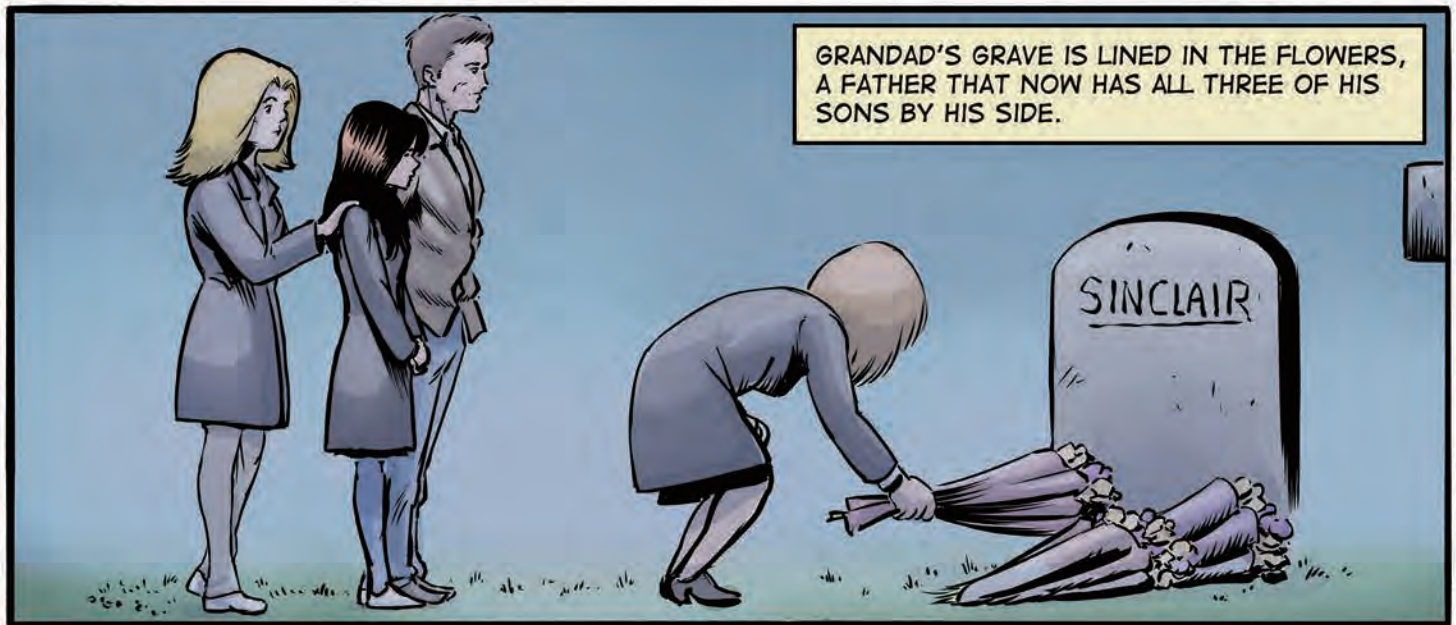
THE EMPTY HOUSE SUFFOCATES IN FLORA.

LILIES LINGER, OVERPOWERING THE AIR.

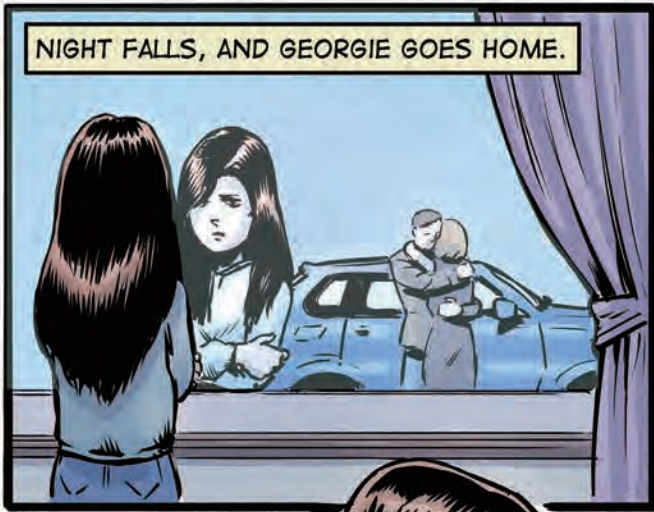
WE GATHER SOME FLOWERS

AND WALK TOWARDS THE GRAVEYARD OVER THE STREET.

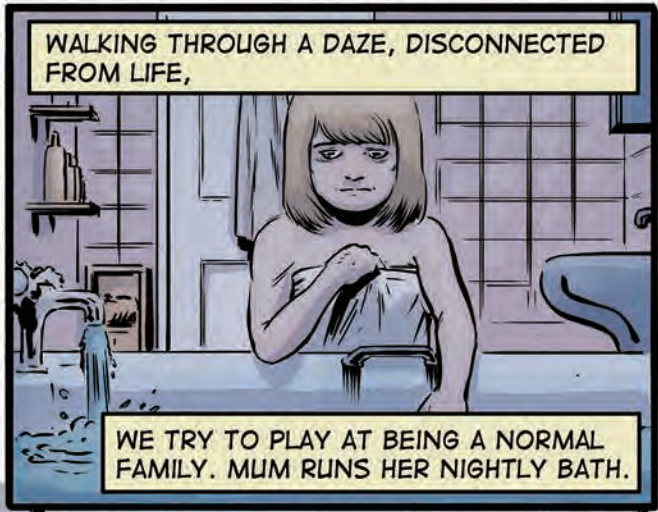




GRANDAD'S GRAVE IS LINED IN THE FLOWERS, A FATHER THAT NOW HAS ALL THREE OF HIS SONS BY HIS SIDE.



NIGHT FALLS, AND GEORGIE GOES HOME.



WALKING THROUGH A DAZE, DISCONNECTED FROM LIFE,

WE TRY TO PLAY AT BEING A NORMAL FAMILY. MUM RUNS HER NIGHTLY BATH.

JOANNA SITS IN THE LIVING ROOM WITH THE TV ON.

I STAND.



IT SHOULDN'T BE LIKE THIS.

THE SOFA. LAST NIGHT. MUM, ME, DAD.

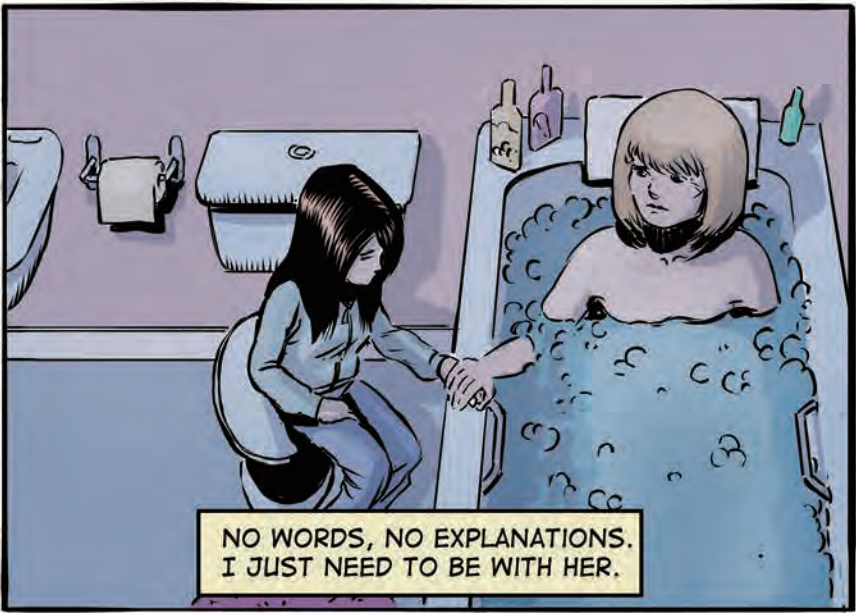




I RUN. SCREAMS POUNDING THROUGH MY HEAD, PANIC. FEAR CONSUMES ME. WHERE IS MUM? I NEED TO FIND MY MUM.

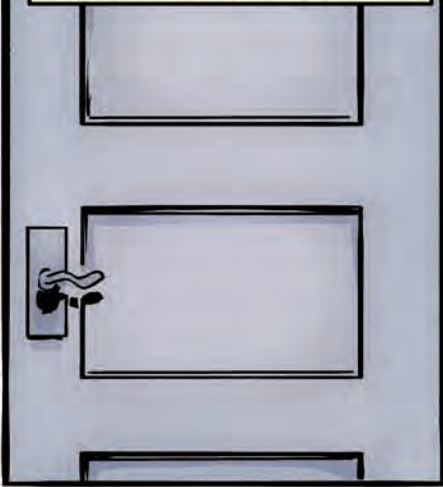


THE SCREAMING STOPS, PANIC DRIFTS AWAY. SHE IS SAFE.



NO WORDS, NO EXPLANATIONS. I JUST NEED TO BE WITH HER.

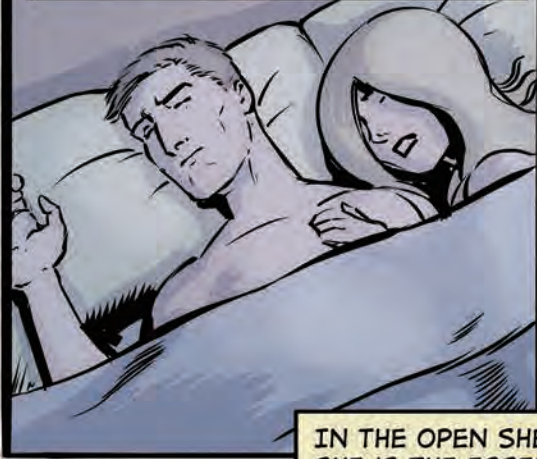
MUM AND DAD'S BEDROOM DOOR IS SHUT. LAST NIGHT'S MEMORIES LOCKED AWAY IN THE DARK OF THE ROOM.



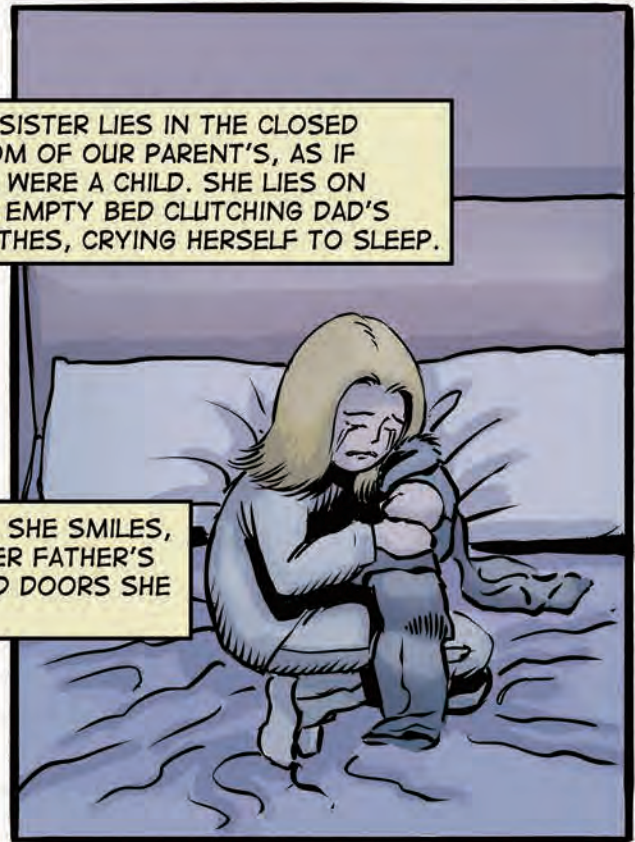
INSTEAD MUM SHARES A BED WITH ME, I CAN'T BEAR TO BE WITHOUT HER.



MY BROTHER COLLAPSES INTO SLEEP, HE IS WEAK. HE IS EXHAUSTED FROM TRYING TO STAY STRONG.

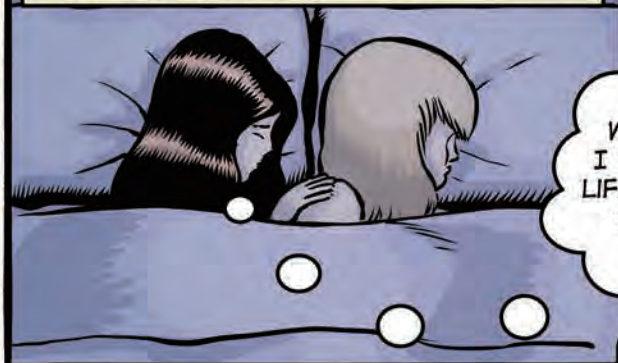


MY SISTER LIES IN THE CLOSED ROOM OF OUR PARENT'S, AS IF SHE WERE A CHILD. SHE LIES ON THE EMPTY BED CLUTCHING DAD'S CLOTHES, CRYING HERSELF TO SLEEP.



IN THE OPEN SHE LAUGHS, SHE SMILES, SHE IS THE ESSENCE OF HER FATHER'S POSITIVITY. BEHIND CLOSED DOORS SHE FALLS APART.

MY MUM AND I LIE UPSTAIRS, MY HAND ON MY MOTHER'S SHOULDER, WORDS UNSPOKEN. WHAT IS THERE TO SAY? HOW CAN WE COMPREHEND CONVERSATION WHEN WE ARE EACH, BODY AND MIND, SOMEWHERE ELSE?



I CONTEMPLATE THE POINTLESSNESS OF IT ALL. WHY SLEEP? IF I FALL ASLEEP, I WILL WAKE UP IN A WORLD, IN A LIFE SO EMPTY, THE FANTASY WILL SHATTER AND I WILL HAVE TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE LOSS OF MY HERO.

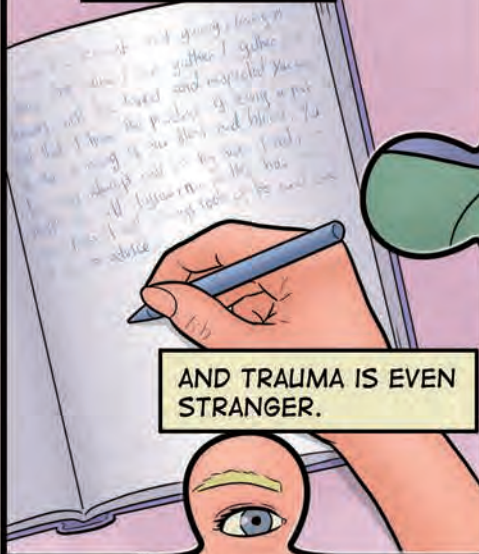
...BUT TIME DOESN'T STOP, AND A NEW DAY DAWNS EITHER WAY...



19/4/14-21/4/14

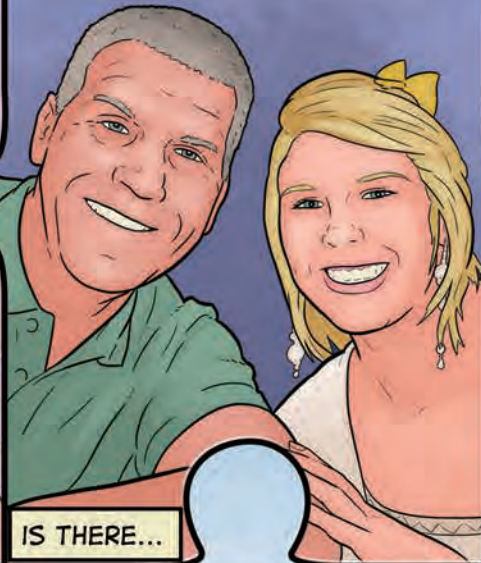
EPILOGUE.

LIFE IS STRANGE.



AND TRAUMA IS EVEN STRANGER.

ONE MINUTE SOMEONE...



IS THERE...

THE NEXT THEY ARE GONE.



HEARTS KEEP BEATING...



THERE ARE STILL LIVES...

TO BE LIVED...



THERE ARE MEMORIES TO REFLECT ON, IN BOTH GOOD TIMES AND BAD.

BUT THE CLOCK KEEPS TICKING...



THERE ARE NEW ONES FORGED, NEW LIVES CREATED, NEW LOVE TO BE GIVEN.

AND THROUGH ALL THOSE MEMORIES, HE IS THERE.



NOT IN PICTURES BUT IN WORDS, IN SMILES, IN LAUGHTER AND IN HEARTS.



WE FILL IN THE MISSING PIECES FOR HIM, WE CARRY ON TOGETHER.



THE HEART IS A WONDERFUL THING.



IT IS THE SYMBOL OF LIFE,



THE SYMBOL OF LOVE.

IN DEATH, A HEART STOPS.



IN LIFE, OTHER HEARTS LIVE ON,



THEY CARRY THE BEATS FOR THOSE THAT ARE GONE.

BUT STILL, TOO MANY LIVE WITH FRAGILE HEARTS,



TOO MANY FAMILIES LIVE WITHOUT ANSWERS.

HOW CAN SOMEONE BE GONE?



WITHOUT EXPLANATION, WITHIN SECONDS.

THESE QUESTIONS NEED ANSWERED.



THIS STORY MUST NOT BE CONTINUOUSLY REPEATED.



FIGHT FOR EVERY HEARTBEAT.



# **BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION INFORMATION**

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## **'Beat Heartbreak Forever'**

The British Heart Foundation is the UK's largest funder of research into heart and circulatory conditions and their risk factors.

The charity was founded in 1961 by a group of scientists and cardiologists concerned about the rising epidemic of heart disease. At that time, more than 7 in 10 heart attacks were fatal. Now, that trend has been reversed and at least 7 out of 10 people who have a heart attack survive.

But there's still a lot of work to be done. Overall 1 out of 4 people still die from heart and circulatory diseases in the UK. That's why the BHF funds £100,000,000 of research every year to find the best ways to prevent, identify and treat conditions like heart diseases, stroke, vascular dementia and diabetes.

The BHF also provides facts and statistics on how the heart works, annual summaries of their findings, and support for those affected by heart disease, including 'Heart Matters' magazine. They have recently launched the online community 'Health Unlocked' which allows a safe and friendly environment for people to discuss their lives and the ways heart

disease and the BHF has affected them.

In addition, the charity organises fundraising events from walks and cycles to skydiving and adventure expeditions overseas. They also provide free fundraising packs for people to organise their own events.

There are more than 700 BHF shops across the UK, raising funds for the charity's research by selling a huge range of donated and new items.

The BHF also has a 'Heart Helpline' (0300 330 3311) where cardiac nurses give information and support about heart and circulatory diseases and their risk factors. The charity also provides Call Push Rescue training kits, that include everything needed to learn life saving CPR.

This comic aims to contribute to the amazing work the British Heart Foundation is doing, it hopes to provide both a personal insight to the heartbreak that heart disease can cause as well as detailing further information and areas of support for those interested in finding out more about coronary health issues and the charity.

**To find out more please visit - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/>**

## RESEARCH PAGE

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My research centres around genre in comics, specifically how they can be adapted to teach healthcare. The genres I examine focus on the superhero and graphic medicine. These subject areas have often been considered separate, however my work argues that there is in fact a strong connection between the two, and that by using the conventions of both the work produced can have a wider, more relatable appeal.

The origins of this research stemmed from the death of my father in 2014, in the same year I began to gather notes and write down my experience. However, it was only in 2015 when the University hosted the Graphic Medicine conference which I was lucky to be a part of that I truly understood that there was a place for my story as a health-based comic.

I touched upon aspects of this in my Masters however it was only when starting the PhD a year later that I discovered that the superhero was just as relevant to my work as graphic medicine. Indeed, in the initial stages of grief it was the heroes I turned to, the ever resilient beings that helped me push through my pain and come out stronger for it. In the same year, just as I was due to begin my PhD, Paul Dini and Eduardo Risso released *Dark Night: A True Batman Story* which combined Dini's struggle with PTSD alongside the characters of Gotham, using them simultaneously to depict a metaphorical journey of his recovery. Through reading it I found the key to my research.

By the time I had discovered Dini's work, I was already in the process of creating *Close to the Heart* however the effect *Dark Night: A True Batman Story* had has hugely affected the process of my own work. For instance, the comic taught me that personal stories could be collaborative, my comic started out as a solo project now has over ten artists involved, each bringing their own insight to the narrative. Similarly, it taught me that superheroes can embody and symbolise resilience and hope in a way that personal narratives often cannot. Although medical narratives are highly emotive and engaging, the widespread popularity of the superhero is something that is instantly recognisable and relatable.

With this idea in mind, and through discussions with my supervisors Professor Chris Murray and Professor Divya Jindal-Snape we decided that *Close to the Heart* could have a superhero interpretation. Thus *Dr Heartbeat* came to be. The two comics are essentially the same story but each plays on the conventions of their genre, whereas *Close to the Heart* is a longer, personal piece, *Dr Heartbeat* is a flashy, over-exaggerated shorter work that pays homage to the Batman mythos and various traumatic origin stories which I study as part of my research. The aim is to use both as companion pieces in a case study of how genre works.

# CLOSE TO THE HEART

NO 233

15c



NUMBER

# 1



## LOCKED IN SILENCE NO MORE!

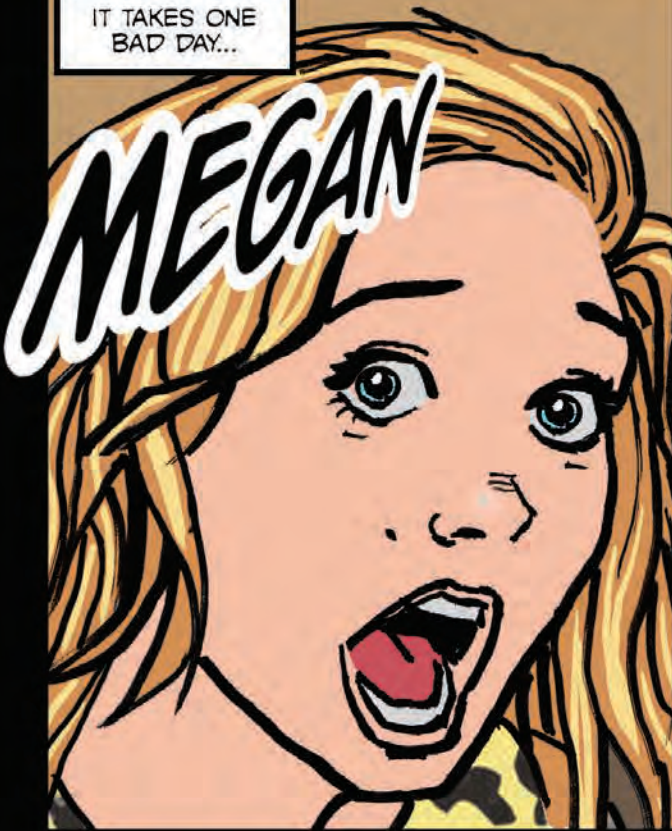
*for only is*  
NERO

### SINCLAIR

### NERO

IT TAKES ONE  
BAD DAY...

**MEGAN**



I NEED  
YOUR HELP,  
MEGAN!



DO SOMETHING...  
DO SOMETHING!  
BE STRONG,  
MEGAN.

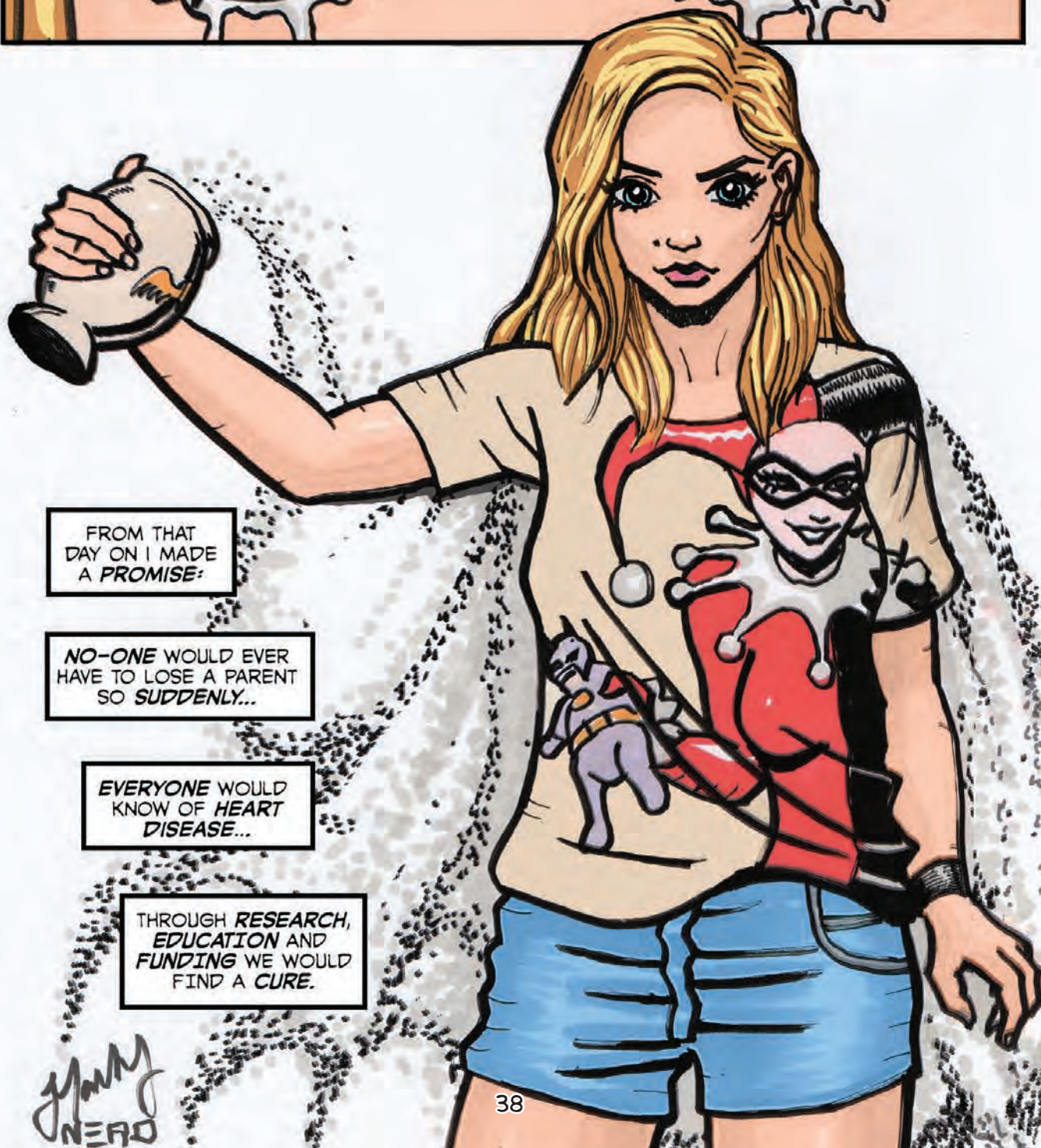
BE  
BR...



**DAD!**







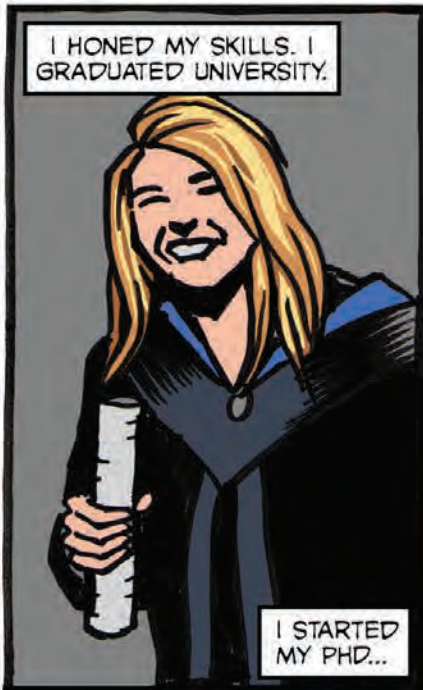
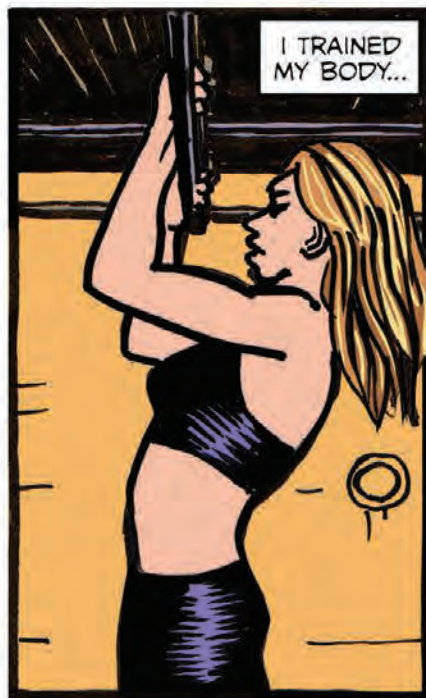
FROM THAT DAY ON I MADE A **PROMISE:**

**NO-ONE** WOULD EVER HAVE TO LOSE A PARENT SO **SUDDENLY...**

**EVERYONE** WOULD KNOW OF **HEART DISEASE...**

THROUGH **RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND FUNDING** WE WOULD FIND A **CURE.**

JOHN NEED





OUR SADNESS, OUR PAIN, OUR STORIES BECAME OUR POWERS.



TOGETHER WE WERE INVINCIBLE.



COMMUNICATION WAS OUR STRENGTH.

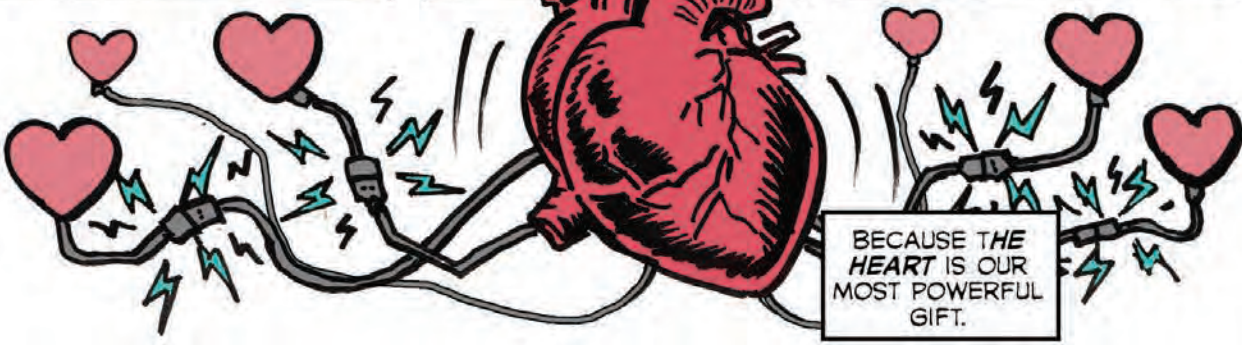


EDUCATION OUR GOAL.



MY STORY IS FOR EVERYONE.

FOR EVERY LOSS, EVERY HEARTACHE...



BECAUSE THE HEART IS OUR MOST POWERFUL GIFT.

...AND WE MUST  
FIGHT FOR EVERY  
HEARTBEAT IN  
ANY WAY WE CAN.



*John Byrne*  
12/84  
MUIER  
+SCOTT



## REFLECTION

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Close to the Heart has turned into a much larger project than I ever could have anticipated, and I am thrilled to see how so many artists have taken the story and crafted it in their own style. I feel like although it started out as my own work it has become so much more than that.

However, even prior to it becoming a collaborative piece it always was more than just mine. Although I had written my experiences, my family were a part of the story, we had all went through bereavement together. After showing my comic to Professor Divya Jindal-Snape, one of my supervisors, we discussed my family's reaction to it and their involvement. My mum was the first to read it so I knew she was happy with the comic's development, but I had yet to really consider that my interpretation of events could differ to her and my siblings. It was then that I realised the story was in my voice, it was my experience, and that although they were a part of it, it did not feel like they were truly involved in the writing process. I showed my family the comic script and thumbnails and kept them informed of edits and so forth, to which they were very supportive. I honestly can't thank them enough for their blessing and encouragement. However, I wanted them to have more of a say, and prior to devising the story of Dr Heartbeat, we came up with the idea of showing Dad as our very own superhero. Part of my research argues that the conventions of the superhero genre can be used as a metaphor for real experience, so I wanted to incorporate this into the comic somehow. It was also important to me that we depict Dad as a larger than life character, which is how we, and everyone else saw him, but this was hard to do in a story that revolved around the day of his death.

Thus I asked if my family would each be willing to write a short comic about Dad with the basic theme centred on how he was their hero. My mother, brother and sister all agreed, and contributed very different memories. They all show warm and happy memories, which also signifies the way our grief has progressed over time. As a family we will never truly get over the heartache, but we can now celebrate him and cherish the memories we made. I hope these stories provide a little more insight to who Dad was, and why he is and always will be our hero.

# CAR TROUBLES



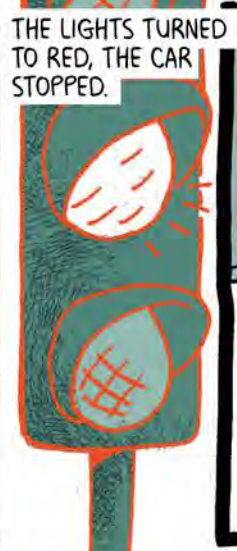
DAD AND I WERE IN THE CAR, WHEN WE NOTICED THE CAR IN FRONT SWERVING DANGEROUSLY.



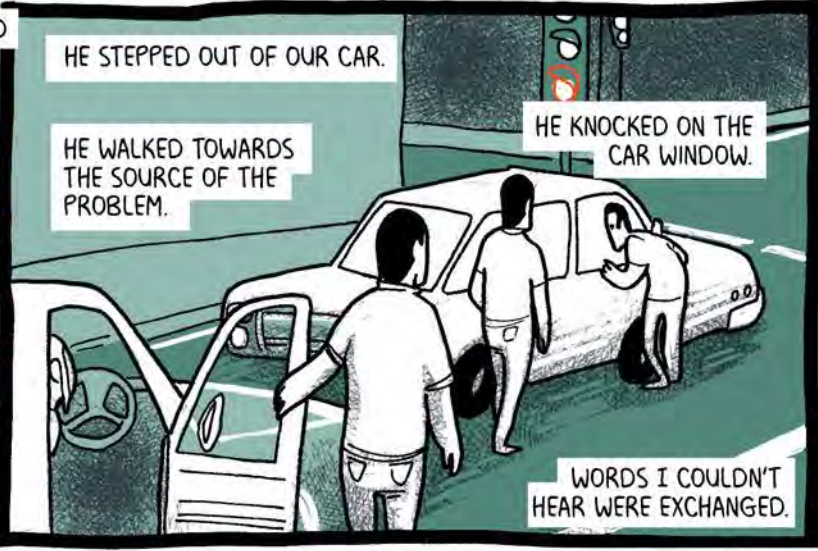
FROM OUR CAR WINDOW WE COULD SEE THE DRIVER, A MAN, SHOUTING AT THE FEMALE PASSENGER.



THAT MAN IS GOING TO CAUSE AN ACCIDENT.



THE LIGHTS TURNED TO RED, THE CAR STOPPED.



HE STEPPED OUT OF OUR CAR.

HE WALKED TOWARDS THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM.

HE KNOCKED ON THE CAR WINDOW.

WORDS I COULDN'T HEAR WERE EXCHANGED.



DAD RETURNED TO THE CAR CALMLY.



THE CAR IN FRONT DROVE OFF. DAD CLICKED THE ENGINE BACK TO LIFE AND DID THE SAME.



IN SECONDS HE HAD RESOLVED THE PROBLEM, HE HAD LEAPED TO THE RESCUE, HE HAD ...

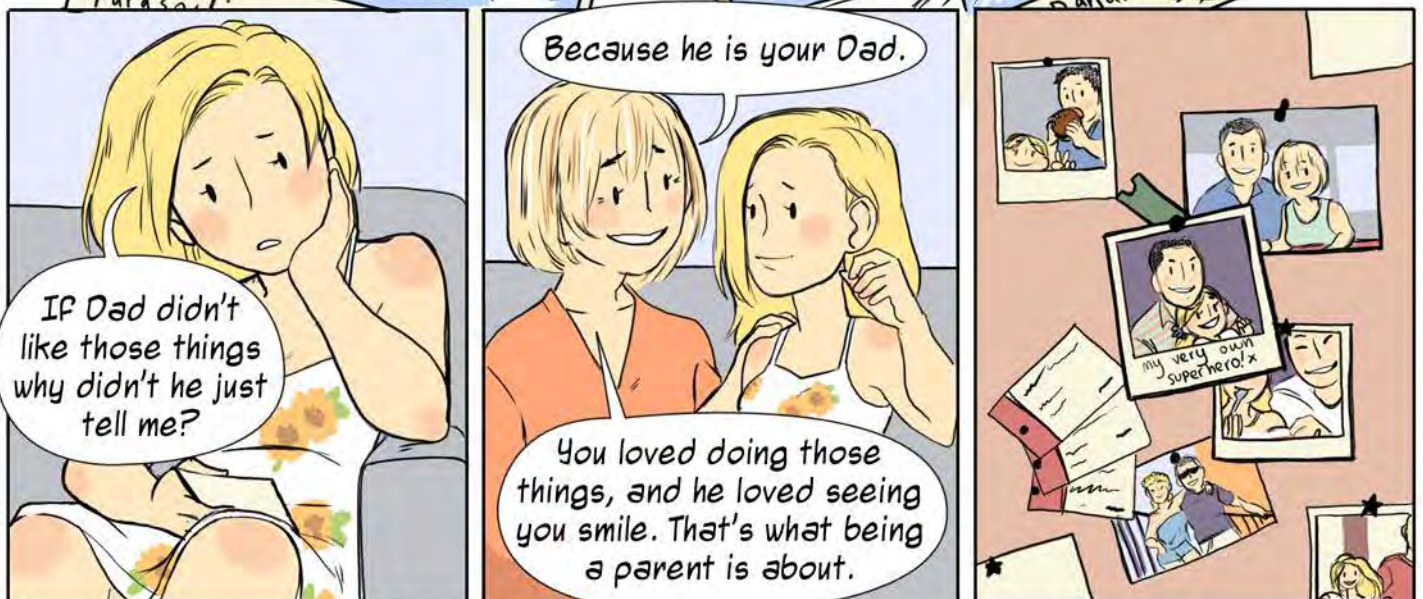
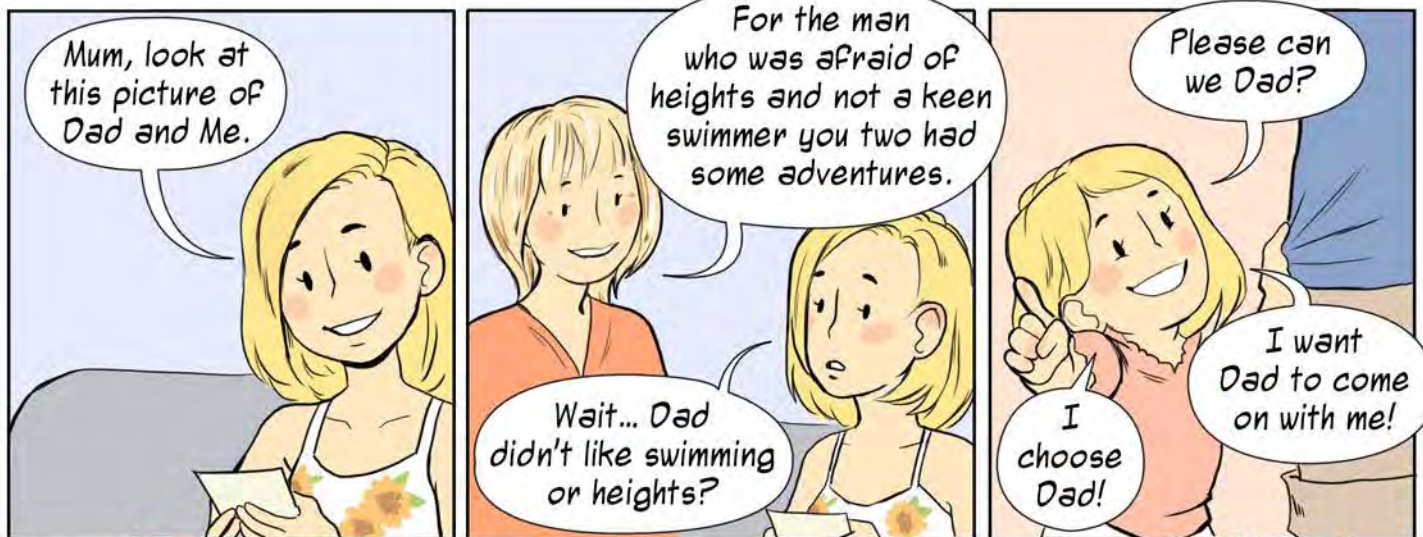


DON'T TELL YOUR MUM I JUST DID THAT.

EVER THE MODEST HERO, WE SAT SILENTLY, HIS SECRET SAFE WITH ME.

2018

# The Highs and Lows of Parenthood



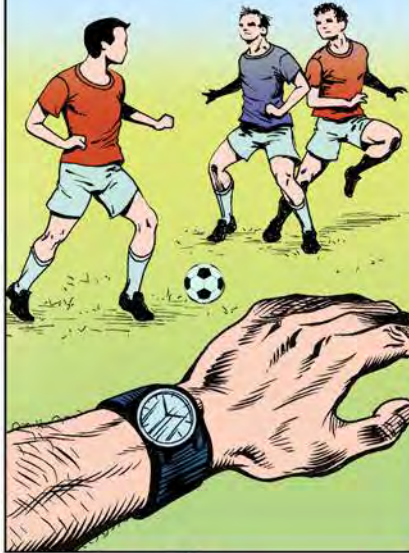
# HAT-TRICK HERO!

ART, ANDY STRACHAN

I REMEMBER GOING TO WATCH THE TECH PLAY IN ARBROATH, THEY HAD TO WIN THE GAME TO AVOID RELEGATION.



THERE WAS AROUND 15 MINUTES TO GO AND THEY WERE DOWN 1-0.



DAD, WHO WAS THEIR MANAGER, STOOD WITH CO-MANAGER 'HUGGIE'.



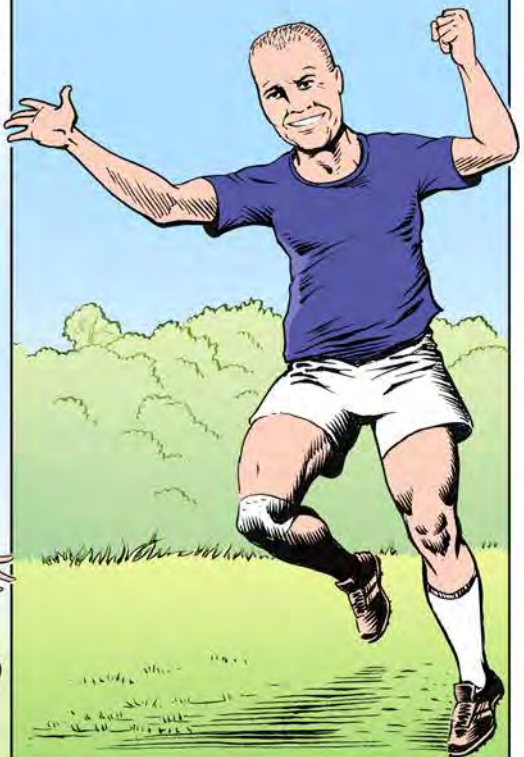
AS THE CLOCK COUNTED DOWN, DAD STRAPPED UP HIS KNEE...



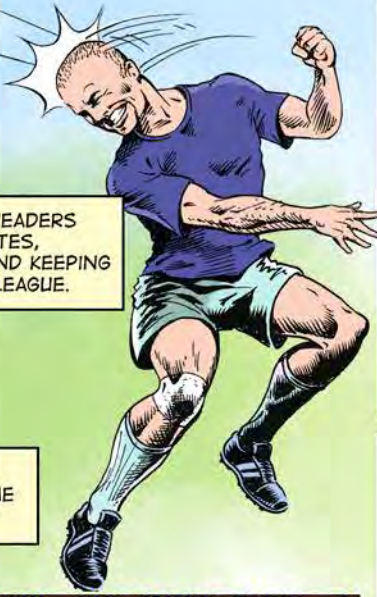
HE BEGAN TO WARM UP ...



AND THEN HE WAS ON THE PITCH, 43 YEARS OLD AND THE YOUNG OPPOSING TEAM HAD NO IDEA WHAT THEY WERE UP AGAINST.



HE SCORED TWO HEADERS IN THOSE 15 MINUTES, SAVING THE DAY AND KEEPING THE TECH IN THE LEAGUE.



THE CROWD WENT WILD, EVERYONE WAS TELLING ME WHAT A HERO DAD WAS.



IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I WAS OLD ENOUGH TO APPRECIATE SEEING HIM PLAY, AND I REMEMBER HOW PROUD I WAS THEN TO CALL HIM DAD.



HE COULDN'T RUN FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET...



...BUT HE COULD MAKE ME LAUGH.



YOU LOOK RIDICULOUS! HA HA!

HE WASN'T AS RICH AS BRUCE WAYNE...



BUT AT EIGHTEEN, HE USED HIS SAVINGS FROM HIS FIRST JOB TO STOP HIS SISTER'S ELECTRICITY BEING CUT OFF.



HE DIDN'T HAVE A BATMOBILE...



...BUT HE ALWAYS CAME OUT IN THE EARLY HOURS TO TAXI ME AND MY FRIENDS HOME FROM ONE END OF TOWN TO THE OTHER AFTER A NIGHT OUT!



PUT ON SOME TUNES, TAXI-MAN!

HE DIDN'T FLY AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT...



...BUT HE LEAPT OUT OF BED AT 5AM TO TAKE A SUITCASE LEFT IN THE HALLWAY THROUGH TO HIS FRIEND AND FAMILY AT THE AIRPORT.



\*HUFF!\*



HE WASN'T AS STRONG AS THE HULK...

BUT WHEN HE WRAPPED HIS ARMS AROUND ME AFTER A HARD DAY AT WORK I FELT CALM, SAFE AND LOVED.



GEORGE SINCLAIR WAS MY SUPERHERO.



# CLOSE TO THE HEART SCRIPT

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## Page One

A black background, with a thin 8 grid white gutter/panel outline (last panel split/doubled) layout. Running through each panel, the tracings of an ECG scan. The first three panels are of a healthy heart, the second line develops into a heart attack, the third line reaches a critical point of the heart attack before flatlining off the page. Font wise – I was wanting something quite formal/factual for this page. At the bottom of the page could there also be a little reference note that the facts were obtained via the British Heart Foundation website: [www.bhf.org.uk/about-us/press-centre/facts-and-figures](http://www.bhf.org.uk/about-us/press-centre/facts-and-figures) and <https://www.factretriever.com/human-heart-facts>

**Panel 1** - Caption: The average heart beats 72 times a minute, 100 000 times a day, 42,048,000 times a year and 3 billion times in the average lifetime.

**Panel 2** - Caption: The heart beats 1.5 gallons of blood per minute.

**Panel 3** - Caption: Every day your heart pumps 2000 gallons of blood through a system of blood vessels over 60, 000 miles long.

**Panel 4** - Caption: Every day your heart creates enough energy to power a truck for around twenty miles.

**Panel 5** - Caption: Around 175 000 people in the UK have a heart attack every year.

**Panel 6** - Caption: Heart and circulatory disease causes more than a quarter (26 per cent) of all deaths in the UK ...

**Panel 7** - Caption: ... That's nearly 160,000 deaths each year ...

**Panel 8** - (fractured/split) Caption: ... On average 435 people a day, and one person every three minutes. Caption: Coronary Heart Disease is both the UK's biggest single killer and is the leading cause of death worldwide.

## Page Two

Black background, two long panels taking up the top and middle line and two square panels on the bottom line. In the first panel, Mum, Dad and I face forward sitting on a sofa in a dark living room illuminated by the tv. In panel 2, at the left of picture, my Mum and Dad brush their teeth and wave goodnight to me as I walk up the stairs on the right of the image. Panel 3 shows me asleep upstairs, panel 4 shows my parents asleep in their bed. (I have attached photo referencing for this page, not that I want to be too pernickety, but the memory is so fresh in my head of what everyone was wearing etc that if possible I would like it quite similar.)

**Panel 1** - Captions: It was a normal lazy Saturday night, all cuddled up watching terrible shows on the TV.

**Panel 2** - Captions: Eventually after a kiss goodnight we went to bed, anticipating the busy Easter Sunday ahead.

**Panel 3** - Caption: As I drifted into sleep, my mind took me to a fantasy world safe from the realms of reality, from the horrors of what lurks in the shadows, waiting just around the corner.

**Panel 4** - Caption: My mother and father sleep peacefully, unknown to them that only one will awake from their slumber.

## Page Three

A long panel at top of the page, three small panels in middle and the remaining space makes up the bottom image. The first panel is a close up of eyes, the three small panels are of me jumping from my bed, running downstairs and reaching the bedroom door. In the final image Dad lies unconscious on the floor, covered by a towel and Mum kneels beside him looking desperately out of the comic, we are in the perspective of myself. Throughout the page a sound effect 'AHHHH' runs through the panels leading us to the bottom scene. (Most of the photo referencing is the same from the last page but I have attached an image of the stairs and bedroom doorway if it helps in anyway.)

**Panel 1** - Caption: My mother cries for me.

**Panel 2** - Caption: Jolted awake by the noise I leap out of bed...

**Panel 3** - Caption: ... And bound down the stairs towards her.

**Panel 4** - Caption: But as I reach her, I freeze in the doorframe.



## Page Four

A semi-splash page, no constructed panels. Page in thirds. First third, me in shadows at the doorframe, looking down. Middle, Dad's body, eyes distant, third section Mum kneeling, hand outstretched with a phone in it looking at the daughter (us – our perspective).

### First panel/section

Caption: My legs go weak, my body as heavy as lead as I stare down towards the motionless body of my Father.

### Second panel/section

Caption: His eyes seem so colourless, his body a sickly shade of grey.

### Third panel/section

Caption: The sound of a stranger awakens me from my thoughts, I look towards my Mum, she has one hand to Dad's chest, the other stretches out towards me, phone in hand. The stranger talks through, shattering the deathly silence.

## Page Five

Four panels joined at the top of the page. An extreme close up of the phone, the speaker, my face and my eye. The rest of the page is black with me in a spotlight in the centre of it. I appear years younger, at about five or six years old. The voice on the phone echoes in the darkness of the background.

(I will get you a photo of me as a kid and my beloved ugly teddy Keiran haha)

**Panel 1** - Caption: My hand outstretches as I take the phone from her.

**Panel 2** - Caption: I have a task, Mum awaits instruction. Both of her hands now fully focused on Dad's chest.

**Panel 3** - Caption: I can hear the stranger's voice but the words fall on empty ears.

**Panel 4** - Caption: I can't take my eyes off him.

**Panel 5** - Caption: Fear consumes me, and I feel myself reverting into a child, helpless and lost. As if my mind is desperately trying to protect me, transporting me back to a simpler, happier time.

## Page Six

The first panel squints as if I am still lost, straightening back up in panel 2 with the re-introduction of my Mum. There are three panels at top of the page, a long panel in the middle and three panels at the bottom, the last one is in black with only noises/captions written in it. I give back the phone, wait for ambulance, both me and my Mum go into living room whilst paramedics are in. The comic zooms in on clock, emphasis on the time and on noise of defibrillator. (This page changed over development, becoming more experimental in its layout).

(I think we are going to get two artists on one page for this, hoping to getting Anna in to do a watercolour background but if you could do the three panels that would be great. I can send photo referencing for the garden/ambulance etc)

**Panel 1** - **Caption:** The softness of my mother's touch pulls me back into the room.

**Panel 2** - **Caption:** She gives me a sympathetic smile, takes the phone back and asks me instead to wait by the front door.

**Caption:** As I walk towards the entrance, guilt eats away at me for my uselessness. Opening the front door, the fresh air of the sunrise hours hit and the reality of the situation becomes clear.

**Caption:** The ambulance arrives and both Mum and I are escorted into the living room. Only hours ago the room was one of warmth and love, now it seemed so empty and hollow.

**Caption:** We wait in silence. Each tick of the clock like a knife to our hearts, dragging out each torturous second, the noise of the defibrillator taunting us.

## Page Seven

Four long panels. All the same background, slight changes in each image. The setting is the living room. Mum and I are on the couch; the living room door is by the left of the images. This harks back to the first panel of the story where we are sitting in the living room watching TV. In the second panel the paramedic enters and Mum stands up and talks with her. The final panel is blank/black with just text and noise effects.

**Panel 1** - Caption: We wait silently, both too far away in our own heads to talk.

**Panel 2** - Caption: A paramedic entered.

(Paramedic Speech Balloon) 'We have another ambulance arriving to help get him to hospital.'

(Mother Speech Balloon) 'Will he be okay?'

(Paramedic Speech Balloon) '... We are doing all we can.'

**Panel 3** - Caption: The second ambulance pulled up, the paramedic exited the room. Silence returned.

**Panel 4** - Caption: I looked towards the closed door and hear the sound of Dad's body being dragged across the corridor floor echoed through the walls.

## Page Eight

28 panels, all small/constrained. Really busy page full of little panels.

**Panel 1** - (A close up of the ambulance doors) Caption: Eventually he was loaded into an ambulance and taken to hospital.

**Panel 2** - (An extreme close up of paramedic outfit) Caption: The paramedic returned.

**Panel 3** - (Speech balloon connecting the last panel. Unseen voice of paramedic) Speech Balloon: 'We will follow behind in the second ambulance'

**Panel 4** - (A close up of the front door) Caption: We left the house.

**Panel 5** - (An empty panel with the words living room bubbled and some thought bubbles below it) Caption: Locking behind us thoughts that been brewing in the living room.

**Panel 6** - (The phone ringing out, screen shows Mum calling) Caption: In the ambulance Mum tried to call my brother whilst I tried my sister.

**Panel 7** - (Image of my brother holding the phone) Caption: My brother who was on nightshift returned the call.

**Panel 8** - (Speech balloon connects the last panel) Speech Balloon: 'I'm on my way!'

**Panel 9** - (The paramedic's face looking back towards the reader) Caption: Just as Mum hung up, the paramedic's face turned from the road to the back of the ambulance.

**Panel 10** - (Speech balloon connecting to the last panel) Speech Balloon: 'We have left important pills at your house.'

**Panel 11** - (A snakes and ladders background, letters wrapped around a snake, back to square one) Speech Balloon: 'We have to go back'

**Panel 12** - (Image of a road) Caption: With that the paramedic turned the vehicle.

**Panel 13** - (Image of a heartbeat) Caption: Away from the hospital.

**Panel 14** - (Continuation of heartbeat imagery) Caption: Away from Dad.

**Panel 15** - (Image of keys) Caption: Mum fumbled at the keys again.

**Panel 16** - (Image of the pills) Caption: The paramedic picked up the precious items and then started back on the journey again.

**Panel 17** - (Image of the ambulance) Caption: The ambulance drove carefully and silently towards the hospital.

**Panel 18** - (Close up of the ambulance signals not on) Caption: No signals, no urgency.

**Panel 19** - (Close up of my face) Caption: I fought the urge to scream, to cry.

**Panel 20** - (Empty panel. Just text) Caption: This was a matter of life and death.

**Panel 21** (Again, just text) Caption: Why did it feel like the fight was already over?

**Panel 22** (Spiralled scribbles as the background) Caption: Never had I felt so small. So insignificant.

**Panel 23** (Shattered mini panels) Caption: Never had everything felt so out of control.

**Panel 24** (Monstrous, threatening image of the hospital) Caption: The monstrous hospital towered over us.

**Panel 25** (The monster's claws clutching at the text) Caption: Dad's fate in its hands.

**Panel 26** (Just text) Caption: Powerless to fight or control it.

**Panel 27** (A silent panel. Five flowers in a vase, one wilting, its petals fall onto the next panel).

**Panel 28** (Empty background) Caption: We were ushered into a quaint private waiting room.

## Page Nine

3 panel on page. Panels 1 and 3 are square, the middle panel is rectangular. My brother enters the room, with the same pose as I had in previous pages. In the middle panel the three of us embrace one another. In the third panel the doctor enters.

**Panel 1** - Caption: The door opened, my brother stepped into the room.

**Panel 2** - Caption: He strode towards us both, embracing us in a hug. His grip was strong and confident, as I struggled to keep myself together I wished I could possess a morsel of that strength.

**Panel 3** - Caption: Once again, the door clicked open. A doctor stood in the doorway. A doctor I instantly recognised. My mind drifted back.

## Page Ten

(Style of the page is in washed out crimson red – flashback scene – red/blood connection to heart?)

(Might use another artist for this page to show a real shift)

Quite a busy page (I have not properly decided on how many panels. On the thumbnails it looks to be 8 but I may play about with.) Panel 1 is again of the doctor but this time talking about me not Dad. Panel 2 is a game of eye spy to pass the time, panel 3 is us laughing at The People's Friend, panel 4 shows a nurse appearing, in panel 5 the nurse gives me an ECG scan, Dad asks the nurse to test him, panel 6 shows an ECG competition, panel 7 shows the ECG results and in the final panel we are shown that Dad wins.

**Panel 1** - Caption: Date – 13/4/13

(Doctor) Speech Balloon: 'We have managed to get Megan's heart rate down into the low hundreds. It should continue to drop relatively quickly. We will keep her in for the next few hours to check that it is reducing and then she will be discharged.'

**Panel 2** - (Dad) Speech Balloon: 'A room with no tv. How about family eye spy?'

(Dad) Speech Balloon: 'I spy something beginning with C...'

Caption: 10 mins later.

(May need another panel for this)

(Mum and Dad) Speech Balloon: 'The clock!'

(Megan) Speech Balloon: 'I can't see the clock, I am lying down!'

**Panel 3 or 4** - (Dad) Speech Balloon: 'Okay how about a read through of The People's Friend, bet there is hot gossip in there.'

Laughter

**Panel 4 or 5** - (Nurse) Speech Balloon: 'Don't mind me. Just checking Megan over with the ECG.'

**Panel 5 or 6** - (Nurse) Speech Balloon: '99. It is looking good to me. Slowly dropping to a normal rate'

(Megan) Speech Balloon: 'What is the normal rate?'

(Dad) Speech Balloon: '70 is average but the athlete's like your old man have slower resting heart beats.'

**Panel 6 or 7** - (Nurse) Speech Balloon: 'Haha want to test that theory?'

(Dad) Speech Balloon: 'Let's see then. Bet I beat your Mum'

**Panel 7 or 8** - (Nurse to Mum) Speech Balloon: '72. All healthy.'

(Nurse to Dad) Speech Balloon: '63. You were right.'

**Panel 8 or 9** - (Dad) Speech Balloon: 'Haha see, fit as a fiddle!'

## Page Eleven

Back to the present day. Splash, white background, the doctor in the centre of the page. Really expressionist – Dave McKean-ish. I can't remember what the doctor looked like so just want to emphasise the fantastical out of worldiness. Style – abstract, oil paint, rough, rugged, sketchy, no line work, manic, chaotic, as if everything is falling apart – contrasted by a plain white background.'

(Doctor) Speech Balloon: 'I'm sorry. There was nothing else we could do for him.'

## Page Twelve

A long panel at the top of the page, my brother, Mum and me are sat in silence in an empty waiting room. The three smaller panels in the middle of page are kind of floating in the tea swirl background. The first is of a nurse entering the room, the second of her handing Mum a leaflet and the third of her smiling and talking about the tea. There is one small panel of me holding the tea in the right bottom corner with the rest of the background a zoomed in look at the tea, swirling in its cup.

**Panel 1** - Caption: I expected there to be tears but I just couldn't seem to muster any emotion. I was empty, a part of me had died with my Dad.

Caption: I looked up at Mum and Georgie, they too sat expressionless. How could this have happened to us?

**Panel 2** - Caption: A nurse came in with a tray of tea and biscuits. She smiled, making happiness look easy.

**Panel 3** - Caption: She walked to Mum, handing her a leaflet, a generic 'how to cope with the loss of a loved one,' Mum pretended to be thankful.

**Panel 4** - Caption: In an attempt to break the deathly silence, the nurse chirped about how lucky we were to get Tetley branded tea, the good stuff.

Caption: I almost laughed, how lucky we were indeed. Your Dad's dead but at least you get a good cuppa.

**Panel 5** - Caption: I sat with the tea in my hand.

(The text is swirled round into the tea filled background)

Caption: The liquid rippled inside the confines of the cup. I gazed into the swirls, like a black hole swallowing up lost stars, destroying and breaking apart the strongest of formations leaving an empty void in its wake.

## Page Thirteen

The page is split into three long vertical sections of Joanna entering the room. There are four small panels in the centre of page, each a close up of the family's expressions, the fourth is Jo realising from our expressions the bad news. The last vertical section is of her broken down on her knees, hands covering her face.

**Panel 1** - Caption: My eldest sibling appeared, she had the same brassy nature as her Father, the same boisterous smile.

(Joanna) Speech Balloon: 'Sorry I'm late I got here as fast as I could, where's the invalid then?'

**Panel 2** - Caption: The smile faltered.

**Panel 3** - Caption: She stared one by one at the empty faces.

**Panel 4** - Caption: It was all she needed to know.

## Page Fourteen

An image of me in the corner, in shadow. The page taken up by speech bubbles/dialogue.

### Speech Balloons:

- You don't have to be strong for us. You don't have to be the man.
- Let's have a competition. Who can name the most heart related songs.
- Tick
- Tock
- Goodnight. Love you.
- See, told you I was an athlete.
- I'm sorry. There was nothing else we could do for him.
- I'll be there as fast as I can.
- We are doing all we can.
- 1 minute without oxygen.
- You can't change the past, you can only influence the future.
- Where is the invalid then?
- Be good and if you can't be good be great.
- How's your indigestion? Are you sure you want a curry?
- Morning Sna'ba.
- Wait 20 mins. No get teles yet x

## Captions overlapping the speech bubbles:

Voices spoke ...

I sat, listening ...

Words merged with thoughts ...

My head fighting to separate reality from fantasy ...

Trying to formulate a structure... (this going in a panel – maybe with speech repeated ‘Im sorry there was nothing else we could do.’ And ‘He’s Gone’)

A purpose in the constraints of a body that just ... (He’s gone frantically repeated in another panel)

Wanted to shut down.

## Page Fifteen

No panel in the first section, I’m coming out of the daze, panels form in the right top corner as the doctor reappears. Four panels in the middle, again of close ups of the family each saying yes or no to seeing the body. The bottom of the page is open, the image of my brother, mother and I walking towards the reader.

(Open Panel)

Caption: My inner war came to a halt when a new voice entered the battlefield, forcing everything to a standstill.

**Panel 1** - (Doctor) Speech Balloon: ‘Would you like to see the body?’

**Panel 2** - (Joanna) Speech Balloon: ‘No.’

**Panel 3** - (Mum) Speech Balloon: ‘Yes.’

**Panel 4** - (Georgie) Speech Balloon: ‘Yes.’

**Panel 5** - (Megan) Speech Balloon: ‘Yes.’

Open panel

Caption: Did I really want to see the body? Truthfully, no. Seeing it meant it being real. It being real meant that my Dad was dead. Gone forever. But I needed to.

## Page Sixteen

Splash Page. An image of Dad lying in a hospital gown in bed.

(Written onto the bedsheets) Caption: He lay there in the bed, eyes closed. They had put a hospital gown on him. He looked peaceful, far too peaceful. He lay still, he lay silently. It was not the Dad I knew and longed for, not my loud, vibrant Dad.

## Page Seventeen

Panel 1, a close up of Dad’s face. Panel 2 and 3 are flashbacks (coloured using another palette to differentiate) of Dad sticking his false teeth out. The bottom section of the page is a close up of the mouth, dark and gaping.

**Panel 1** - Caption: His mouth was parted. Through the small gap I could see that his front two teeth were missing. They had removed his infamous falsers. My mind drifted back to a happier memory.

**Panel 2** - [FLASHBACK] (Young Megan) Speech Balloon: ‘Again Dad! Do it again please!’

**Panel 3** - (Silent Panel) Dad pushes his tongue onto the bridge of his mouth pushing out his two front teeth. (Open Panel) A close up of inside of Dad’s mouth (reminiscent to David Small’s Stitches – text on the tongue?)

Caption: Although the parting of the lips was slight, the emptiness of the gap was not. The dark mass where once a smile was formed was lost. In its place a lifeless void. The longer I stared at it the further I could feel myself sucked into the cold recess of the lifeless body before me.

## Page Eighteen

3 panels at the top of the page, the first of my Mum touching my Dad’s arm, the second of me touching the arm and the third of us holding it together. In the bottom section is an image of the three of us circled around Dad.

**Panel 1** - (Mum) Speech Balloon: 'Here! Feel this bit of his arm it's still warm!

**Panel 2** - Caption: Joining Mum, I clung to the arm, to the life that was slipping away from us.

**Panel 3** - Caption: We maintained the pose, lost in the absurdity of our emotions, until the body faded to unnaturally cold.

(Below the three panels) Caption: As we prepared to leave, Mum, myself and my brother each seeing our husband and father for the last time, we desperately tried to summon something profound, something beautiful to part on.

(Megan) Speech Balloon: 'I'll make you proud Dad.'

## Page Nineteen

The top panel is of the hospital at sunrise, our now family of four leave it. The path from the hospital spirals down the page guiding us through the next 4 panels. Panel 2 shows Mum and I arriving at Dad's best friend's door. Panel 3 shows Jimmy crying leaning against the kitchen counter. Panel 4 shows us visiting Gran, panel 5 shows me touching her shoulder as we leave. The background can be pretty expressionist, whatever you think suits.

**Panel 1** - Caption: A new day breaks and our now family of four depart the hospital.

**Panel 2** - Caption: On the route home we visit Dad's best friend. He smiles at the door, dishevelled and half-dressed from the night before.

(Jimmy) Speech bubble: 'Morning Sinclairs. You bringing me an invite for the Easter picnic?'

**Panel 3** - Caption: The news hits him hard, in the dark of the kitchen him and Mum embrace and cry.

**Panel 4** - Caption: We leave him alone with his thoughts and move onto visit Gran. She is a strong woman who has already had to say goodbye to three of her children and now her final surviving son.

**Panel 5** - Caption: We offer to stay with her but the proud mother wishes to be left alone to mourn.

## Page Twenty

Panel 1 is an image of the house, panel 2 of us on the sofa as we had been before, Dad's mobile phone beeps on the sofa arm, panel 3 is of mum picking up the phone, panel 4 is a close up of the text, panel 5 a darkened close up of untouched Easter eggs.

**Panel 1** - Caption: Eventually we return to our house, a shell of the warm home it had been yesterday.

**Panel 2** - Caption: Mum sat on the sofa, before the beep of Dad's phone startled her from her thoughts.

**Panel 3** - Caption: She picked it up, somehow half-hoping that it was her husband, that somehow the last few hours had been a dream.

**Panel 4** - (Text on the phone from Joanna) YOU BETTER BE OKAY OLD MAN! XXX

Caption: The message never reaching Dad...

**Panel 5** - Caption: Easter eggs sat patiently in the darkness, tauntingly reminding us of the day that had been planned.

## Page Twenty-One

A long panel showing a line of people going into the house, greeting and hugging Mum at the door. Panel 2, also long, shows the back garden filled with fun and laughter as I watch on, the bottom section of the page shows snaps of past family BBQs. Will can them scanned in so no need to draw them.

**Panel 1** - Caption: By mid-morning news had spread and our empty house is filled with friends and family. The sun gleams, it is a glorious day. It would have been the perfect day for our Easter picnic.

**Panel 2** - The garden is filled to the brim with beer and BBQs, people laugh and celebrate a great man.

As I look on outside at the party, I can't help but smile, soaking in the atmosphere.

I can hear laughter, and suddenly my smile falters, suddenly I am listening for his voice. The life and soul of every party.

## Page Twenty-Two

Long panel, the repeat of the page before but this time it is evening and the guests are leaving. The rest of the page is of the empty hallway, three panels of people returning to normal life in the foreground, at the bottom of the page a hunched me, face covered.

**Panel 1** - Caption: Evening falls, and one by one they leave.

**Panel 2** - Caption: Daughters hug their fathers.

**Panel 3** - Caption: Wives lovingly kiss their husbands.

**Panel 4** - Caption: Back to their happy families.

Caption: I hate them. I wish it was them who were suffering. I don't. I don't know what I think. I feel guilty for ever wishing such pain on anyone, let alone my closest friends and family.

## Page Twenty-Three

A page covered in flowers, real lilies scanned in to the background, our silhouettes cut out of Dad's memorial section in the newspaper.

Captions:

The empty house suffocates in flora.

Lilies linger, overpowering the air.

We gather some flowers and walk towards the graveyard over the street.

## Page Twenty-Four

A long panel at top of page, visiting grandad's grave and giving him some of the many flowers. Panel 2 shows Georgie going home, panel 3 shows Mum running a bath, panel 4 shows Joanna sitting on the sofa watching TV whilst I stare at her.

**Panel 1** - Caption: Grandad's grave is lined in the flowers, a father that now has all three of his sons by his side.

**Panel 2** - Caption: Night falls, and Georgie goes home

**Panel 3** - Caption: Walking through a daze, disconnected from life, we try to play at being a normal family. Mum runs her nightly bath.

**Panel 4** - Caption: Joanna sits in the living room with the TV on. I stand. It shouldn't be like this. The sofa. Last night. Mum, me, Dad.

## Page Twenty-Five

Silent?

Me in forefront running, replicating me running downstairs at beginning of the story. Images around me of Dad's body, Mum holding out phone, kissing Dad goodnight lying on sofa together, jumping out of bed, parents in bed etc. Mind in overdrive. Panic. (AHHH running through the page – like page 3)

## Page Twenty-Six

Panel 1, the AHHH still echoing from last page connecting them. I run to the bathroom, standing at the doorway, a repeat pose of that morning at Mum and Dad's bedroom door. However, instead in panel 2 I am greeted by Mum in a bubble bath. For the rest of page, I sit on the toilet seat next to her, both of us holding hands.

**Panel 1** - (Maybe not actually a lined panel, have myself bordered between two of the Hs for the AHHH)  
Caption: I run. Screams pounding through my head, panic. Fear consumes me. Where is Mum? I need to find my Mum.

**Panel 2** - Caption: The screaming stops, panic drifts away. She is safe.

**Panel 3** - Caption: No words, no explanations. I just need to be with her.

**Panel 4** - Caption: My sister is in the closed room of our parent's, as if she were a child. She lies on the empty

bed clutching Dad's clothes, crying herself to sleep. In the open she laughs, she smiles, she is the essence of her Father's positivity. Behind closed doors she falls apart.

**Panel 5** - Caption: My Mum and I lie upstairs, my hand on her shoulder, words unspoken. What is there to say? How can we comprehend conversation when we are each, body and mind, somewhere else?

I contemplate the pointlessness of it all. Why sleep? If I fall asleep, I will wake up in a world, in a life so empty, the fantasy will shatter and I will have to come to terms with the loss of my hero. But time doesn't stop, and a new day dawns either way ... 19/4/14-21/4/14

## Page Twenty-Eight

The last page is a collage of pictures, like a jigsaw, since losing Dad, a kind of hopeful message that life goes on.

**Panel 1** - My hand writing in a diary.

Caption: Life is strange and trauma is even stranger.

**Panel 2** - An image of me and Dad.

Caption: One minute someone is there...

**Panel 3** - Picture of me and Michael at Graduation.

Caption: The next they are gone.

**Panel 4** - Image of Buddy and I.

Caption: But the clock keeps ticking...

**Panel 5** - Joanna and her family

Caption: Hearts keep beating...

**Panel 6** - Georgie and Jenny's wedding

Caption: There are still lives to be lived. There are memories to reflect on, in both good times and bad.

**Panel 7** - Scarlett's birth

Caption: There are new ones forged, new lives created, new love to be given.

**Panel 8** - Images of countries I have visited and a passport – Italy. China. America. Australia.

Caption: And through all those memories, he is there. Not in pictures but in words, in smiles, in laughter and in hearts.

**Panel 9** - Family photo

Caption: We fill in the missing pieces for him, we carry on together.

## Page Twenty-Nine

ECG scan repeat of the first page. The bottom panels have the BHF symbol merged into it.

Caption: The heart is a wonderful thing.

Caption: It is the symbol of life, the symbol of love.

Caption: In death, a heart stops.

Caption: In life, other hearts live on, they carry the beats for those that are gone.

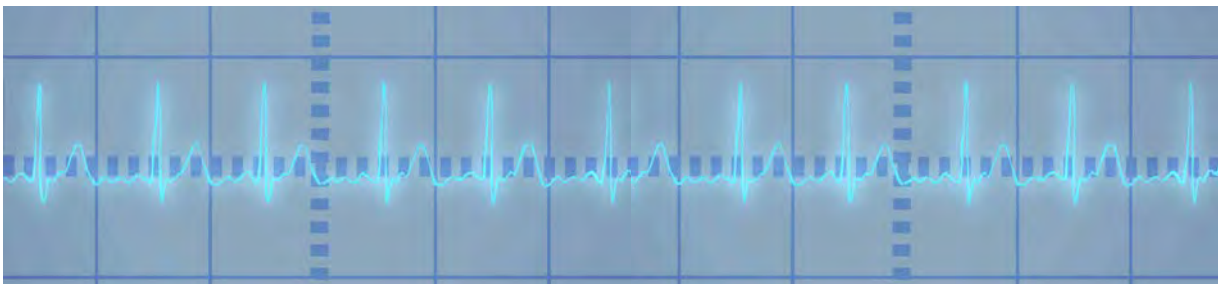
Caption: But still, too many live with fragile hearts, too many families live without answers.

Caption: How can someone be gone? Without explanation, within seconds.

Caption: These questions need answered.

Caption: This story must not be continuously repeated.

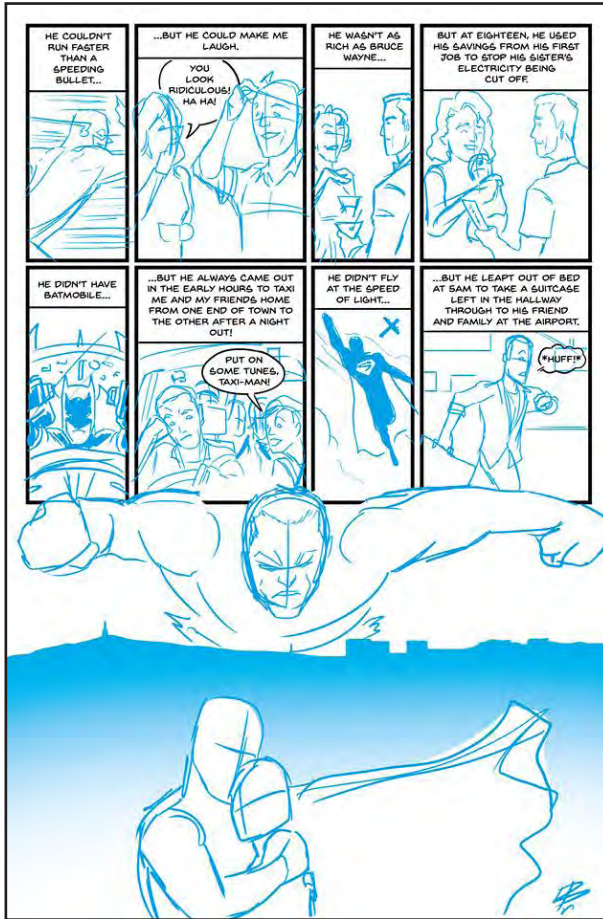
Caption: Fight for Every Heart Beat.



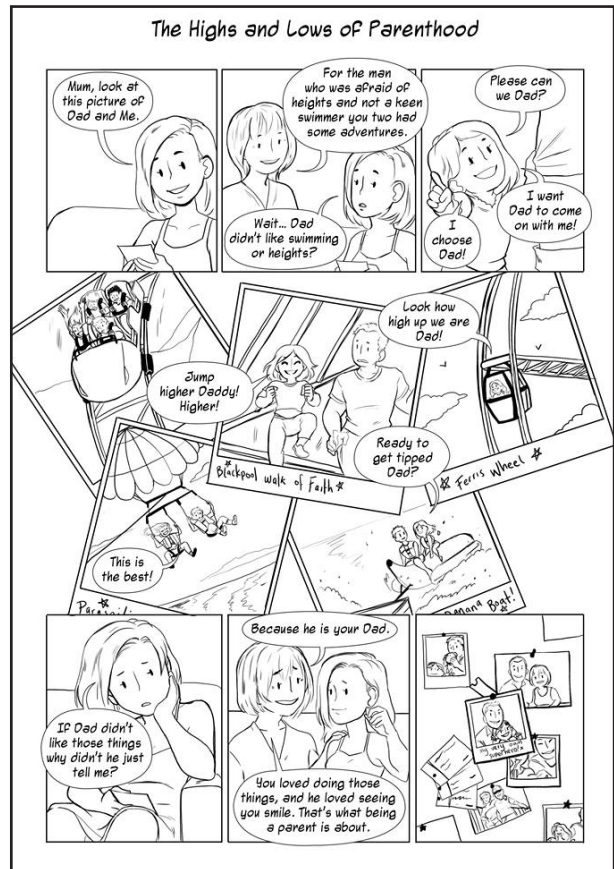
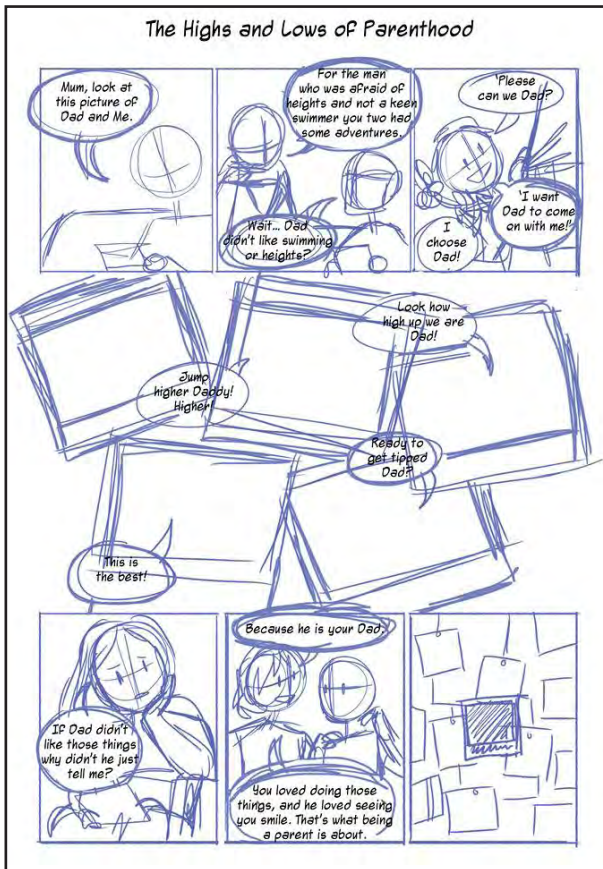


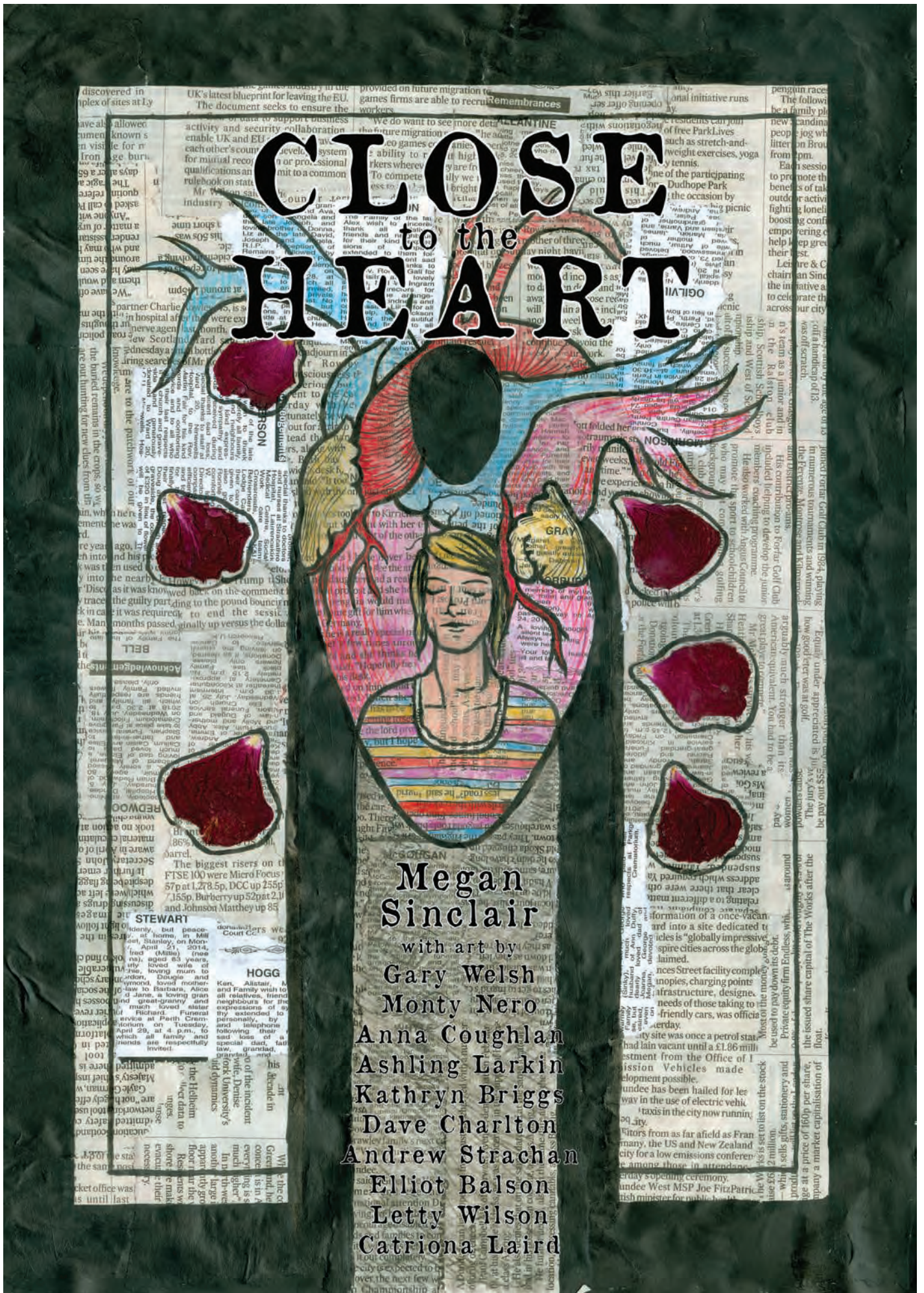
# PROCESS WORK

## GEORGE SINCLAIR, MY SUPERHERO LAYOUTS VS. INKS BY ELLIOT BALSON



## THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF PARENTHOOD LAYOUTS VS. INKS BY CATRIONA LAIRD





# CLOSE to the HEART

**Megan  
Sinclair**

with art by

**Gary Welsh**

**Monty Nero**

**Anna Coughlan**

**Ashling Larkin**

**Kathryn Briggs**

**Dave Charlton**

**Andrew Strachan**

**Elliot Balson**

**Letty Wilson**

**Catriona Laird**





# DR. HEARTBEAT SCRIPT

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## Front Cover

Image of me in superhero gear breaking out of chains (in reference to Superman #1 Kryptonite Nevermore) – Spider-Man style shadow behind me with a heart in the centre. Ref. Issue title – “Locked in Silence No More!

## PAGE ONE

Scene setting – Close ups/Heart Attack.

**Panel One** (Blank panel – all black)

Caption: It takes one bad day ...

(White sound effect running through it diagonally going out from panel) – ‘MEGAN!’

Various small panels (3?)

**Panel Two** (smallest panel) - (Extreme close up of my eyes)

**Panel Three** (larger panel) - (Close up of face)

**Panel Four** (largest of three) - (Full body panel running down stairs (or leaping from bed) – whatever is more dramatic)

**Panel Five** (long panel) - (Close up of eyes again – similar to the one before but slightly different – looking down at something)

**Panel Six** - (Close up of the phone held towards me)

Caption: I need your help Megan

**Panel Seven** - (Me holding the phone)

Caption or Speech Bubble: Do something, do something. Be strong Megan. Be br...

**Panel Eight**

(Close up of Dad on floor)

Caption or Speech Bubble: Dad.

## PAGE TWO

Silent page. Panels 1-3, blue white red – siren coloured

**Panel One** - (Dad taken out on stretcher)

**Panel Two** -(Ambulance)

**Panel Three** -(Hospital)

**Panel Four** - (Close up - Dad’s chest with defibrillators on it)

**Panel Five** - (Dad’s lifeless body – close up)

**Panel Six** -(Sheet over the body)

(Behind panels four to six is a heartbeat rate – going from fast to flat lining)

## PAGE THREE

Funeral and making promise to Dad

**Panel One** (long panel) - (Funeral casket)

**Panel Two** - (Close up of my face crying)

**Open Panel 3** - (Image of me with Dad's ashes – ashes forming a kind of cape behind me.)  
Caption: From that day on I made a promise... no one would ever have to lose a parent so suddenly. Everyone would know of heart disease, through research, education and funding we would find a cure

#### **PAGE FOUR**

Begin progression to superhero status!

**Panel One** - (Picture of Dad and I in photo frame)  
Caption: I worked hard to fulfil my promise.

**Panel Two** - (Workout image)  
Caption: I trained my body...

**Panel Three** - (Reading image)  
Caption: ... my mind.

**Panel Four** - (Graduation picture)  
Caption: I honed my skills. I graduated University. I started my PhD.

**Panel Five** - (Close up of sending an email to Chris and Divya)  
Caption: ... And eventually I was brave enough.

**Panel Six** - (Image of Close to the Heart Comic)  
Caption: My story was no longer mine alone. No longer a secret. The mask came off.

**Panel Seven** - (Me at conferences/conventions)  
Caption: I spread the word ...

**Panel Eight** - (Helping at workshops)  
Caption: I used my powers of storytelling to teach others...

**Panel Nine** - (Me placing comforting hand on someone as they show their own comic?)  
Caption: I found comfort and strength as others shared their stories with me.

#### **PAGE FIVE**

**Panel One** (long panel) - (Torsos of people – maybe superhero looking)  
Caption: Our sadness, our pain, our stories became our powers. Together we are invincible.

**Panel Two** - (Lots of different media – communication tools)  
Caption: Communication was our strength.

**Panel Three** - (Thesis completed! Printed)  
Caption: Education our goal.

**Panel Four** - (Images of loved ones all over world – memories)  
Caption: My story is for everyone. For every loss, for every heartache.

**Panel Five** - (Hearts all interconnected through valves?)  
Caption: Because the heart is our most powerful gift.

**Panel Six** - (TDKR style image of me leaping from a building – thesis and comic in one arm, other outstretched)  
Caption: And we must fight for every heartbeat in any way we can ...

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

This comic would not exist if it wasn't for the wonderful creativity of my talented artist friends. Thank you for helping me bring this story to life. You have no idea how much this means to me. Special thanks go to Gary Welsh, who provided the main artwork for *Close to the Heart*. It was a huge task to commit to and I can't thank you enough for dealing with my scribbled notes, thumbs, over-the-top photo references, and university deadlines with such care and understanding. I hope you are as proud of your beautiful art as I am.



**ELLIOT BALSON** GRADUATED FROM ANIMATION AT DUNDEE'S DUNCAN OF JORDANSTONE COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN IN 2015, AND THEN FROM STUDIES IN COMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE IN 2016. HE'S WORKED AS A FREELANCE COMIC ARTIST SINCE, STRUGGLING WITH ARTIST BIOS WITH EACH SUBSEQUENT PROJECT. HE GETS BY. [WWW.ARTSTATION.COM/ELLBALSON](http://WWW.ARTSTATION.COM/ELLBALSON)



**KATHRYN BRIGGS** IS AN AWARD-WINNING GRAPHIC NOVELIST AND ARTS EDUCATOR WITH A MASTERS IN FINE ART AND A PASSION FOR FEMINIST FOLKLORE.



**DAVE CHARLTON** IS AN AUSTRALIAN ARTIST BASED IN SCOTLAND. IN 2013 HE WON THE DUNDEE COMICS PRIZE AND HIS ENTRY *WINSTON* WAS PUBLISHED IN *TALES OF THE UNIVERSE*, ISSUE #1. HIS NEW COMIC *GUILLLOTINE* IS OUT NOW THROUGH COMICSOPOLIS.



**ANNA COUGHLAN** IS AN ASPIRING COMIC ARTIST WHO STUDIED FINE ART AT CRAWFORD ART COLLEGE IN CORK. SHE THEN PURSUED HER PASSION FOR COMICS AND GRADUATED FROM THE COMICS STUDIES MLITT COURSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES IN EDINBURGH TEACHING ART TO DEMENTIA PATIENTS. ANNA'S WORK IS PREDOMINANTLY TRADITIONAL HOWEVER, SHE ALSO DABBLES IN DIGITAL ART. YOU CAN FIND HER WORK ON INSTAGRAM @ANNAACK



**CATRIONA LAIRD** IS A SCOTTISH ILLUSTRATOR AND COMIC ARTIST BASED IN INK POT STUDIO IN DUNDEE. SHE WAS WINNER OF THE SICBA AWARD FOR UP AND COMING TALENT 2017 AND NOMINATED FOR BEST ARTIST, BEST WRITER AND BEST SINGLE ISSUE FOR HER COMIC *STINGER*. IN 2018 CATRIONA WAS NOMINATED FOR BEST ARTIST FOR HER ONGOING WEBCOMIC *CHIMERICAL*. CATRIONA IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON THE UPCOMING GRAPHIC NOVEL *NASTY GIRLS* WITH WRITER ERIN KEEPERS AND PUBLISHER GEORGE LENNOX.



**ASHLING LARKIN** IS A DUNDEE-BASED COMIC ARTIST WORKING AT INKPOT WITHIN THE DUNDEE COMICS CREATIVE SPACE. IN 2017 SHE COMPLETED HER AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC *FUNDEE*, AND HER CURRENT ONGOING PERSONAL PROJECT IS *THE ENCHANTED BOOK*.



**MONTY NERO** IS A WRITER AND ARTIST WHO CREATES COMICS FOR PUBLISHERS INCLUDING TITAN, MARVEL, DELCOURT, VERTIGO AND 2000AD. HE HAS A MASTERS WITH DISTINCTION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE IN COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS, WHERE HE WON THE DUNCAN OF JORDANSTONE PRIZE. HIS AGENT FOR WRITTEN WORK IS JAMES WILLS AT WATSON, LITTLE LTD AND HE'S CURRENTLY WORKING ON *HOLLOW MONSTERS #2* AND *DEATH SENTENCE LIBERTY #1* FOR RELEASE LATER THIS YEAR.



**MEGAN SINCLAIR** IS A PHD STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE, HER CURRENT RESEARCH FOCUSES ON COMICS IN EDUCATION. HER WORK EXAMINES USING GENRE COMICS IN HEALTHCARE, SPECIFICALLY ANALYSING THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN THE SUPERHERO AND GRAPHIC MEDICINE. AS PART OF HER THESIS SHE HAS CREATED COMICS CENTRED AROUND THESE IDEAS. HER FIRST CREATION, *BATMAN DANNY* SHOWED HOW THE SUPERHERO CAN BE USED AS A METAPHOR FOR RESILIENCE. *CLOSE TO THE HEART* AND *DR HEARTBEAT* FOCUS ON RAISING AWARENESS FOR HEART DISEASE AND BEREAVEMENT THROUGH PLAYING WITH THE CONVENTIONS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE SUPERHERO. YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HER WORK VIA HER PHD BLOG: [MADLOVE93.WORDPRESS.COM](http://MADLOVE93.WORDPRESS.COM)



**ANDREW STRACHAN** GRADUATED FROM DUNCAN OF JORDANSTONE IN 2010 WITH A BA IN ANIMATION, HAVING WORKED PREVIOUSLY AS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER, ILLUSTRATOR AND GAMES ARTIST. HIS AMBITION TO BE A COMIC BOOK ARTIST HAS BEEN FACILITATED THROUGH DUNDEE COMICS CREATIVE SPACE. HE IS CURRENTLY FOCUSED ON WRITING AND DRAWING COMIC BOOK STORIES.



**GARY WELSH** IS A FREELANCE STORY ARTIST BASED IN MOTHERWELL SCOTLAND. IN RECENT YEARS HE HAS COMPLETED AN HONOURS DEGREE IN ANIMATION AND MASTERS DEGREE IN COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS AT DUNDEE UNIVERSITY. HE HAS BEEN PASSIONATE ABOUT COMICS AND VISUAL NARRATIVE ALL HIS LIFE AND IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON A NUMBER OF FREELANCE COMIC PROJECTS.



**LETTY WILSON** IS A SCOTTISH COMICS ARTIST AND WRITER. SHE WON THE 2016 GRAPHIC SHAKESPEARE AWARD FOR *PARK WITCHES*, AND THE 2017 SICBA FOR GRAPHIC NOVEL *A STRANGER CAME TO TOWN*. YOU CAN FIND DETAILS OF HER WORK AT [BEHANCE.NET/LETTYDRAWS](http://BEHANCE.NET/LETTYDRAWS).

**REBECCA HORNER** IS A CARTOONIST AND COLOURIST BASED IN INK POT STUDIO, AND IS WORKSHOP COORDINATOR AT DUNDEE COMICS CREATIVE SPACE. SHE HAS DONE PRODUCTION ON VARIOUS BOOKS, INCLUDING THIS ONE. [REBECCAHORNER.COM](http://REBECCAHORNER.COM)

## A FINAL NOTE



A final thank you to all the contributors. You have really taken my personal story and turned it into a shared project that I hope we can continue to expand. This journey has been four years in the making and it still amazes me that my hidden away script has become a fully formed comic. You have no idea how much it means to me and how much this has helped me. I could never have achieved this without my friends and family, from giving money to help fund the comic, to contributing beautiful art and scripts, to giving me their time and advice throughout its development. This may be based on my experience, but it is truly our story, and I hope it can continue to be shared and used to help others.

**MEGAN SINCLAIR**  
October 2018



"There will be days where you feel all alone, and that's when hope is needed most. No matter how buried it gets, or how lost you feel, you must promise me that you will hold on to hope. Keep it alive. We have to be greater than what we suffer. My wish for you is to become hope; people need that. And even if we fail, what better way is there to live? As we look around here today, at all of the people who helped make us who we are, I know it feels like we're saying goodbye, but we will carry a piece of each other into everything that we do next, to remind us of who we are, and of who we're meant to be."

Gwen Stacey, Amazing Spider-Man 2, 2014



**Close to the Heart** is a story of loss, love and life. It follows the day of my Dad's death, providing a raw examination of initial grief that progresses into a celebration of remembrance and hope.

The comic aims to create an account of bereavement and heart disease and forms part of my research into the role of genre in healthcare comics - Megan Sinclair

**GORDON**  
 and died on July 14, 2016.  
 Always a smile, never a frown.  
 Always so cheerful, merry and kind.  
 Wonderful memories.  
 Always so cheerful, merry and kind.  
 Wonderful memories.  
 Always so cheerful, merry and kind.  
 Wonderful memories.

**FAIR**  
 in memory of our dear friend and loving dad of and Cathy.  
 But in our hearts you are always there.  
 The gates of memory will never close.  
 We miss you more than anyone knows.  
 With tender love and deep regret,  
 We who love you, will never forget.  
 —From all the family, K. the nywa

**MUDIE**  
 the Jack (Poppy) and one was the Seve Trophy.  
 Three years later, Mr G. began to show with Niall...

**BRUCE**  
 following a long illness...  
 Bruce passed away on...  
 Funeral service on...  
 Crematorium on...  
 Family flowers only...  
 Donations: if desired...  
 Cash for Kids...  
 Dogs For The...  
 The...  
 Crematorium...

**BIRSE**  
 loving wife of...  
 Birse passed away on...  
 Funeral service on...  
 Crematorium on...  
 Family flowers only...  
 Donations: if desired...  
 Cash for Kids...  
 Dogs For The...  
 The...  
 Crematorium...

**DUFFY**  
 suddenly, after a long illness...  
 Duffy passed away on...  
 Funeral service on...  
 Crematorium on...  
 Family flowers only...  
 Donations: if desired...  
 Cash for Kids...  
 Dogs For The...  
 The...  
 Crematorium...

**GUNSTONE**  
 peacefully, surrounded by his family...  
 Gunstone passed away on...  
 Funeral service on...  
 Crematorium on...  
 Family flowers only...  
 Donations: if desired...  
 Cash for Kids...  
 Dogs For The...  
 The...  
 Crematorium...

**MASON**  
 peacefully, surrounded by his family...  
 Mason passed away on...  
 Funeral service on...  
 Crematorium on...  
 Family flowers only...  
 Donations: if desired...  
 Cash for Kids...  
 Dogs For The...  
 The...  
 Crematorium...

**FRASER**  
 peacefully, after a short illness...  
 Fraser passed away on...  
 Funeral service on...  
 Crematorium on...  
 Family flowers only...  
 Donations: if desired...  
 Cash for Kids...  
 Dogs For The...  
 The...  
 Crematorium...

**LANE**  
 peacefully, after a short illness...  
 Lane passed away on...  
 Funeral service on...  
 Crematorium on...  
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