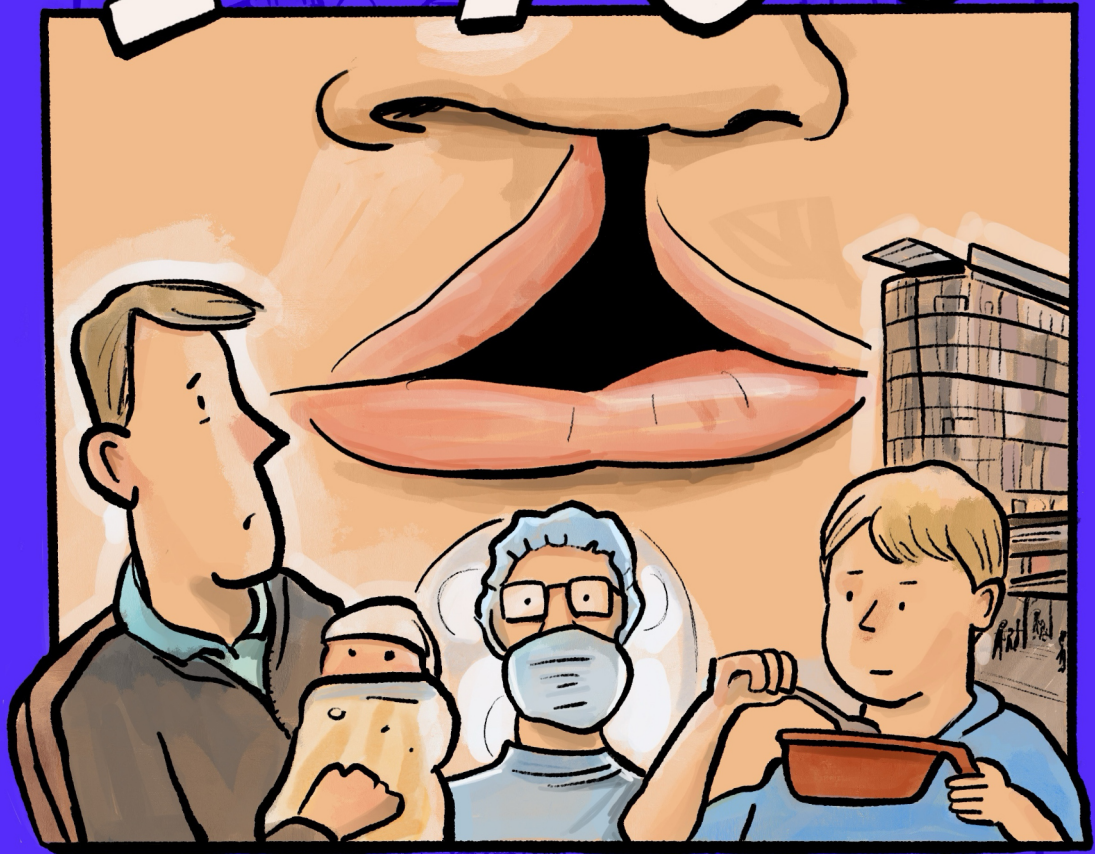


# 1 in 7000



ANDREW FRASER

TO REMEMBER!

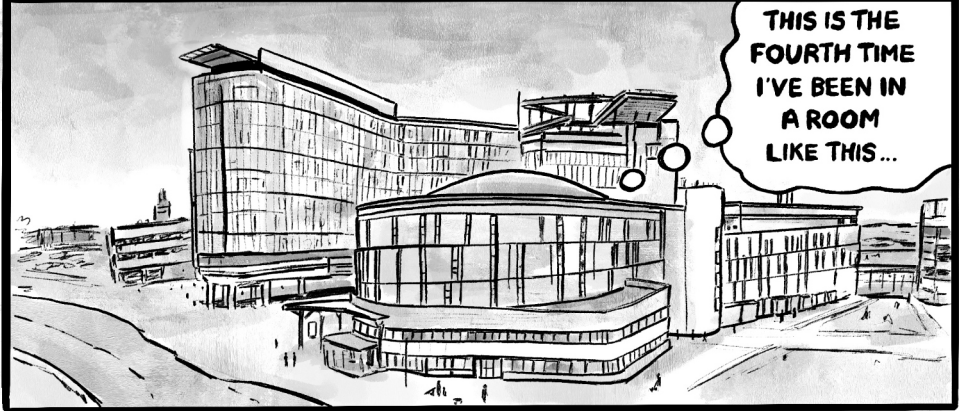




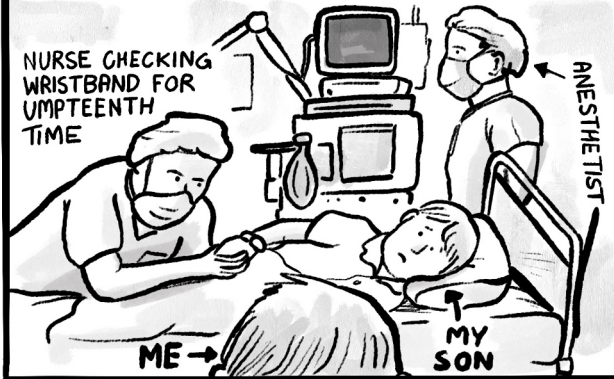
FOR MATTHEW,  
FIONA AND ABIGAIL,  
AND ALL THE NHS WORKERS WHO  
HELPED US ALONG THE WAY...

# PRE OP

SUNDAY 25TH FEB 2018 ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN, GLASGOW



THE ROOM WHERE ONE PARENT GETS TO DISTRACT YOU WHILE THEY PUT YOU TO SLEEP...



AND THE OTHER WAITS IN THE CORRIDOR



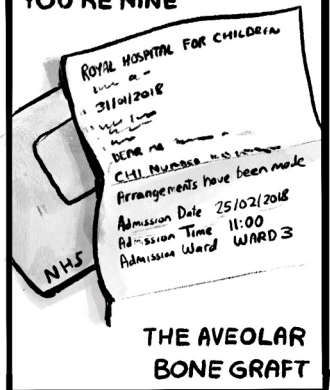
OPERATIONS 1 AND 2 WHEN YOU WEREN'T EVEN ONE

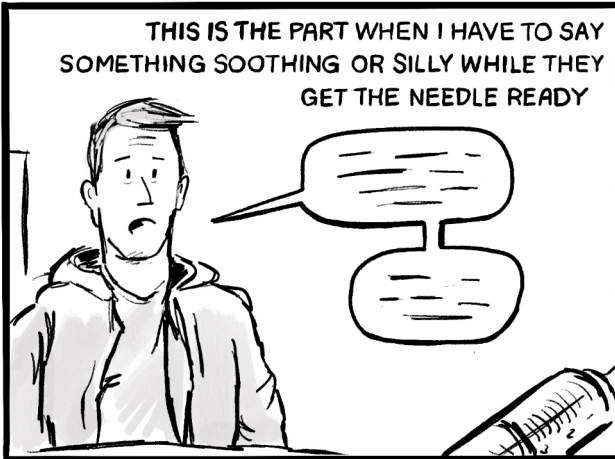


OPERATION 3 LAST YEAR WHEN YOU WERE EIGHT

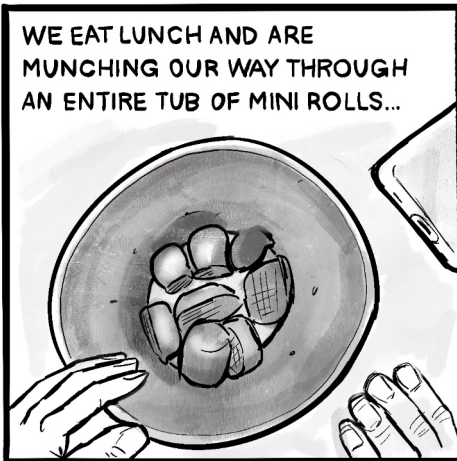
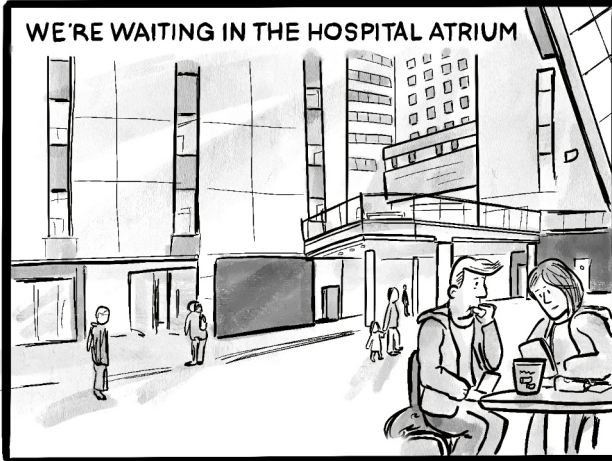


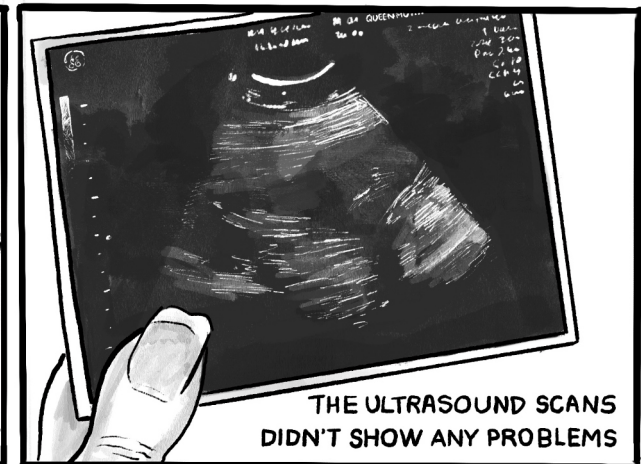
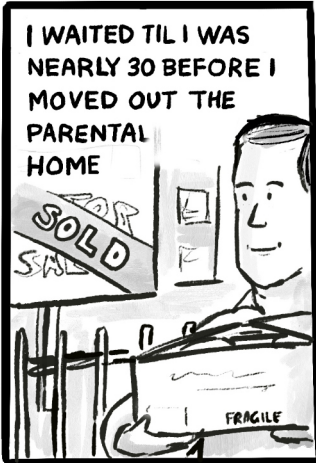
OPERATION 4 NOW YOU'RE NINE





# WAITING





# DELIVERY

WE ROCK UP TO THE QUEEN MOTHERS MATERNITY HOSPITAL\* LIKE SEASONED PROS



\* WHERE ANDY MURRAY WAS BORN

WITH THE FIRST CHILD YOU'RE LEARNING ON THE JOB...



WITH THE SECOND YOU SHOULD BE BETTER PREPARED...



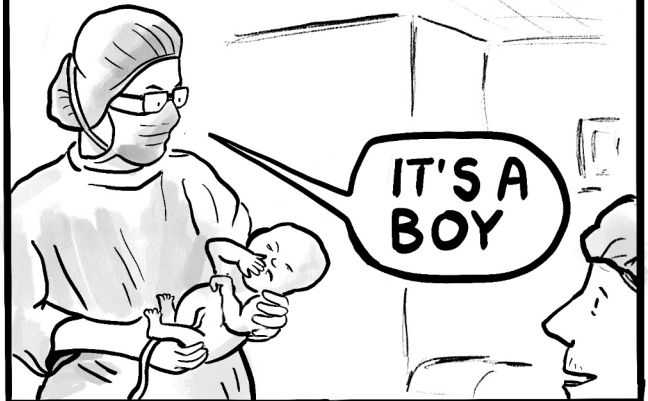
BUT SEEING LOVED ONES HAVE OPERATIONS IS NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN BE RELAXED ABOUT



YOU HAVE A NERVOUS KNOT IN YOUR STOMACH...



... UNTIL THE RISKY PART IS OVER



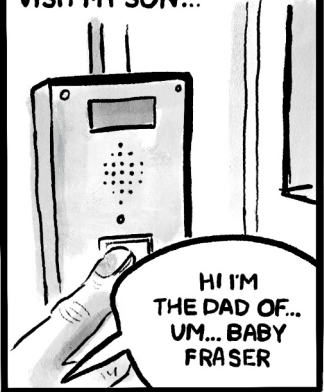


# DIAGNOSIS

THE MATERNITY HOSPITAL IS LINKED TO THE YORKHILL CHILDRENS HOSPITAL BY A BRIDGE



I'M HEADING OVER TO VISIT MY SON...



YOU SEEM TO BE DOING OK



I CAN HEAR SOMEONE TALKING ABOUT YOU



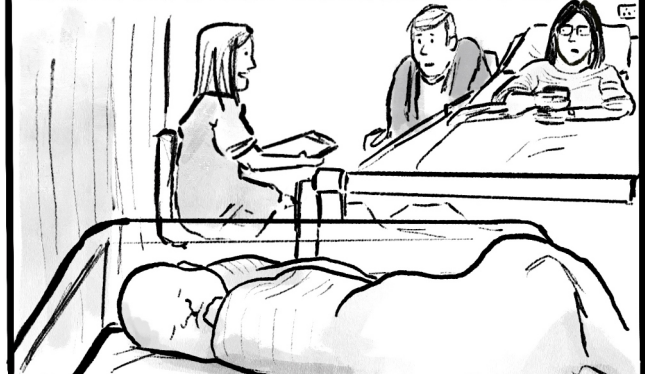
IT WAS ANNE A NURSE FROM THE CLEFT TEAM



RARELY HAS SOMEONE HAD SUCH AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON OUR LIVES...



SHE CAME BACK WITH US TO THE WARD AND CALMLY EXPLAINED THE SITUATION TO US



OUR SON HAS A CLEFT LIP WHICH IS A NOTCH IN HIS UPPER LIP ON ONE SIDE, NEARLY UP TO THE NOSTRIL

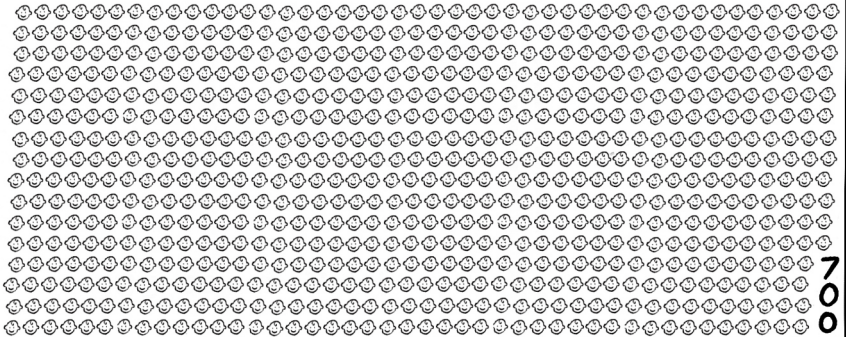


HE ALSO HAS A GAP IN THE ROOF OF HIS MOUTH OR PALATE



THIS HAPPENS IN ROUGHLY **1** IN **700** BIRTHS. IN THE MAJORITY OF CASES WITH TREATMENTS PROVIDED BY SPECIALIST NHS TEAMS YOUR CHILD SHOULD GROW UP HAPPY AND HEALTHY.

  
**1** IN



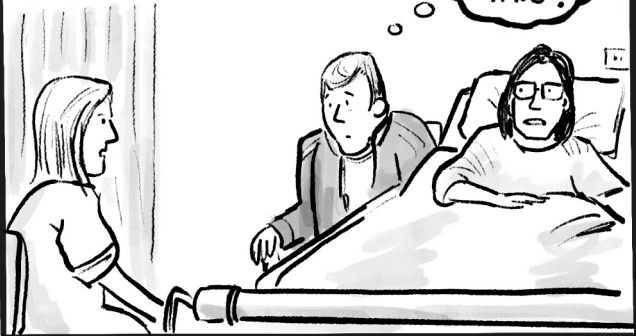
**7**  
**0**  
**0**

YET FOR ALL THE INFORMATION PACKS, WE DON'T EXACTLY KNOW WHY



THIS COULD BE CAUSED BY A COMBINATION OF ENVIROMENTAL AND GENETIC FACTORS...

DID WE CAUSE THIS?

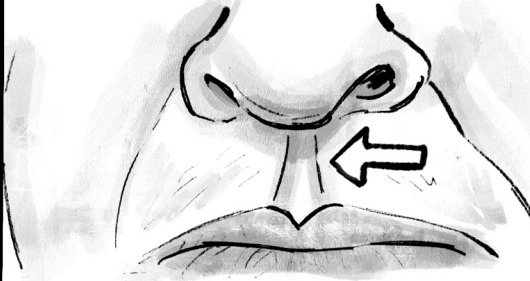


# EMBRYOLOGY\*

I DRAW LOTS OF FACES BUT FACES ARE NOT AS SIMPLE AS YOU MIGHT THINK...

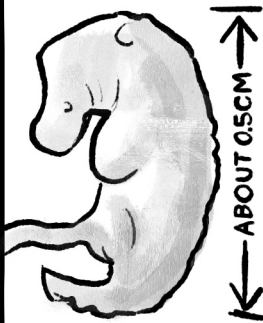


RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE THERE IS A GROOVE THAT RUNS TO YOUR LIP - THE PHILTRUM

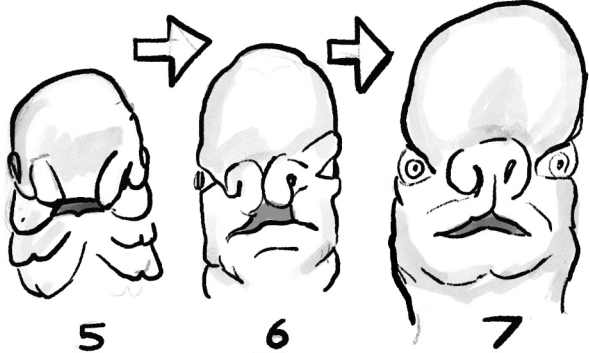


IT GIVES YOUR UPPER LIP THAT DISTINCTIVE SHAPE, AND IS A CLUE AS TO HOW FACES FORM

THIS IS AN EMBRYO IN THE 4TH WEEK



THE NEXT FEW WEEKS ARE WHEN THE FACE FORMS AND BECOMES RECOGNISABLE:



YOUR FACE IS A COMPLEX PUZZLE AND DURING THOSE CRITICAL WEEKS ALL THE PIECES NEED TO COME TOGETHER PERFECTLY

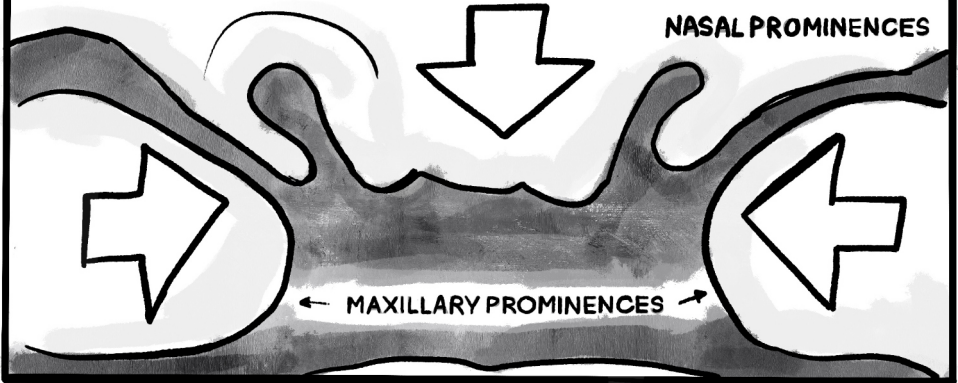


YOUR PHILTRUM IS WHERE EVERYTHING HAS TO MEET



\* A BRIEF DIGRESSION ON HOW CLEFT LIP FORMS IN THE WOMB

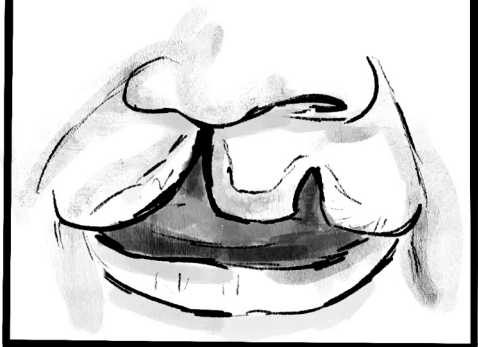
THREE STRUCTURES OR PROMINENCES NEED TO FUSE TOGETHER TO FORM THE NOSE AND UPPER LIP



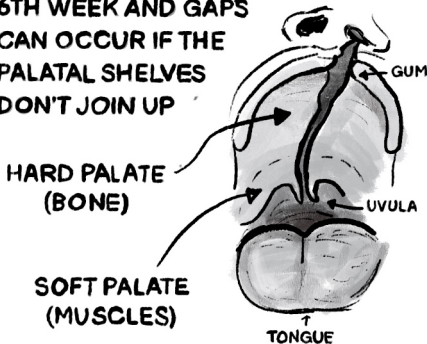
IF ONE OF THE SIDE PROMINENCES DOESN'T FUSE TO THE MIDDLE ONE PERFECTLY YOU GET A **UNILATERAL CLEFT** LIKE MY SON HAS



IF BOTH SIDE PROMINENCES DON'T FUSE TO THE MIDDLE ONE YOU GET A **BILATERAL CLEFT**



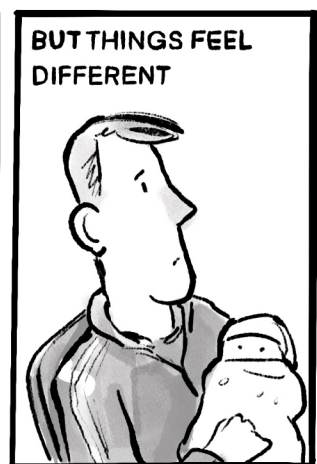
THE PALATE, WHICH IS THE ROOF OF THE MOUTH, FORMS AFTER THE 6TH WEEK AND GAPS CAN OCCUR IF THE PALATAL SHELVES DON'T JOIN UP



BACK IN 2008 MY HEAD CAN'T TAKE IT ALL IN...



# DISCHARGE

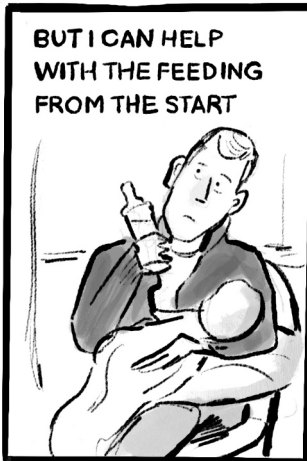




MY WIFE PLANNED TO BREAST FEED BUT ITS TRICKY WITH THE CLEFT. SO WE DECIDED TO BOTTLE FEED AND THE CLEFT TEAM HAD SPECIAL BOTTLES FOR US TO USE\*



IT TAKES A WHILE FOR YOU TO EMPTY A BOTTLE...



BUT I CAN HELP WITH THE FEEDING FROM THE START



AND THOSE WET BURPS!



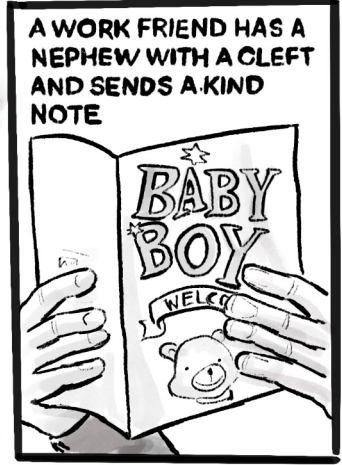
2.5 DAYS IN HOSPITAL

WE'RE GOING HOME M BOY - IT'S NEARLY CHRISTMAS

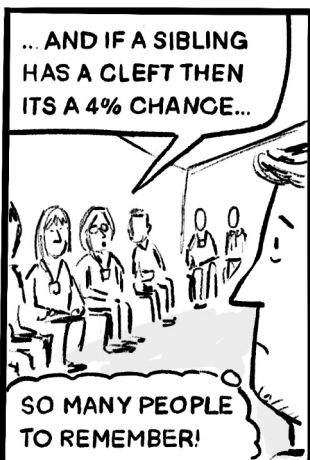


\* MAM BOTTLES AND TEATS

# CONSULT



\* THAT FIRST YEAR I USED ALL MY HOLIDAYS ON APPOINTMENTS AND OPS



# SURGERY

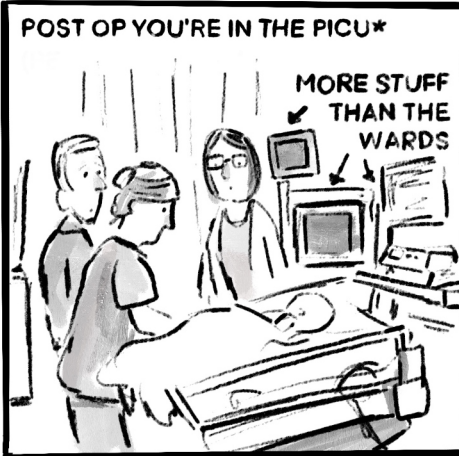
EASTER 2009 YORKHILL



THE FIRST TIME WE  
HAVE TO HAND YOU  
OVER TO SURGEONS



POST OP YOU'RE IN THE PICU\*



SOMETIMES AN ALARM GOES OFF

WAAH WAAH WAAH



AND YOU HAVE TO LEAVE

STANDING IN A CORRIDOR WITH PARENTS  
WHO'VE NEVER GOT TO TAKE THEIR  
BABIES HOME YET



GEEZ!



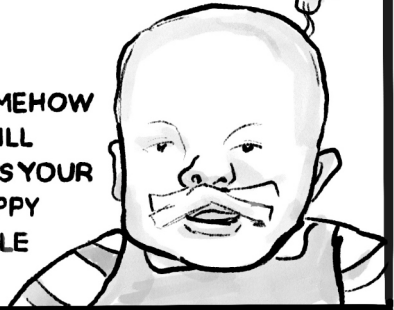
\*PEDIATRIC INTENSIVE CARE

BACK ON THE WARD YOU'RE GRUMPY WITH THE SURGICAL TAPE ACROSS THE REPAIR



IT'S A BIG DIFFERENCE

SOMEHOW I STILL MISS YOUR GAPPY SMILE



WE'RE BACK IN 6 MONTHS FOR PALATE REPAIR



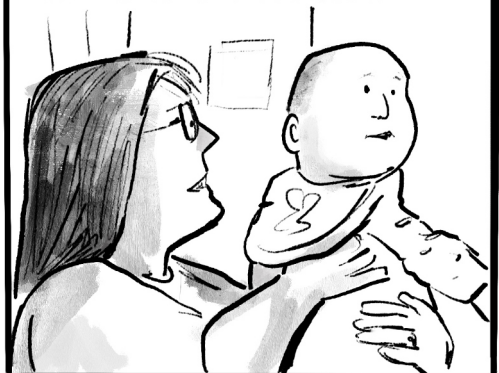
YOU MEET ANOTHER BABY FROM AYRSHIRE IN FOR A SIMILAR OP



A REMINDER NOT EVERYONE HAS A CLEFT SURGICAL SITE ON THEIR DOORSTEP



YOU TAKE TWO OPS BEFORE YOUR FIRST BIRTHDAY IN YOUR STRIDE



# AUDIOLOGY

DARKENED ROOM,  
YORKHILL\*

BEEP

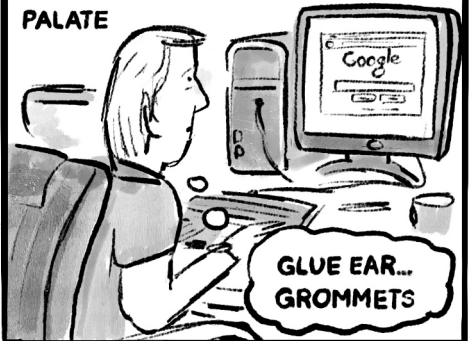


AN AUDIOLOGIST IS DOING A  
HEARING ASSESSMENT

DOES  
INCONCLUSIVE  
MEAN HE'S  
FAILED?



MY INTERNET 'RESEARCH' SAYS  
THERE CAN BE PROBLEMS WITH  
HEARING AND SPEECH WITH CLEFT  
PALATE



YOU START TO SPEAK A LITTLE  
LATER AND LOUDER THAN YOUR  
SISTER...



...BUT ARE YOU ALWAYS  
HEARING US?



\* THE AUDIOGRAM REALLY HAD A LIGHT UP MONKEY WITH CYMBALS!

**WE'RE ADVISED TO ENROL YOU IN NURSERY EARLY**



**THE IDEA IS YOU'LL HAVE TO INTERACT WITH LOTS OF UNFAMILIAR FOLKS**



**THE STAFF AREN'T SURE...**



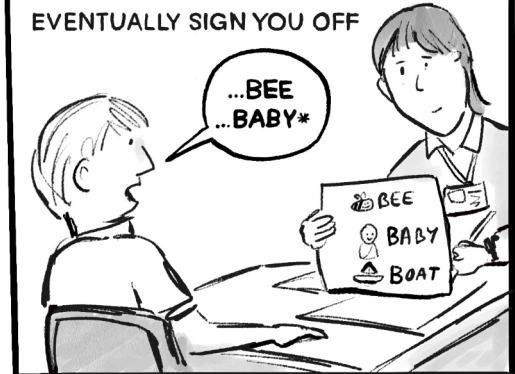
**AS WELL AS AUDIOLOGY WHEN WE GO TO THE DENTAL HOSPITAL FOR CLINICS WE SEE A NEW SPECIALIST**



**THE SPEECH THERAPISTS IN THE CLEFT SERVICE KNOW WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**



**AND AS YOU TALK BACK THEY ARE HAPPY WITH YOUR PROGRESS AND EVENTUALLY SIGN YOU OFF**



**\*B WAS ONE OF THE DIFFICULT LETTERS THEY PRACTISED**

# RESEARCH



\* CLEFT LIP AND PALATE ASSOCIATION

**WE'RE AT A GLASGOW SOFT PLAY**



**IS THIS  
HAPPY FACES?**



**YOU RELUCTANTLY  
RUN OFF WITH YOUR  
SISTER**



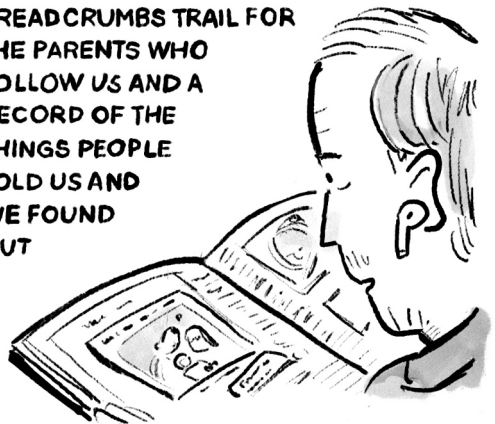
**OVER COFFEE WE ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS  
FROM OTHER PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN  
OLDER AND YOUNGER THAN OURS...**



**IN 2016 I STARTED DRAWING  
COMICS FOR CLEFT  
AWARENESS WEEK TO MAKE  
SENSE OF MY DREAD OF OUR  
UPCOMING BONE GRAFT OP**



**THIS WHOLE COMIC IS A  
BREADCRUMBS TRAIL FOR  
THE PARENTS WHO  
FOLLOW US AND A  
RECORD OF THE  
THINGS PEOPLE  
TOLD US AND  
WE FOUND  
OUT**



# POST OP

BACK IN 2018, WE'RE BACK ON THE WARD AT THE TIME THEY SAID TO BE BACK FOR



PAST THE ESTIMATED TIME...



WATCHING THE CLOCK...



OUR SURGEON COMES IN TO SAY IT WENT OK, BUT IT TOOK A BIT LONGER...



HE'S GOING HOME LIKE THIS IS A REGULAR JOB!



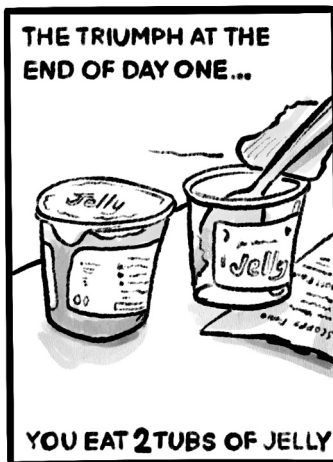
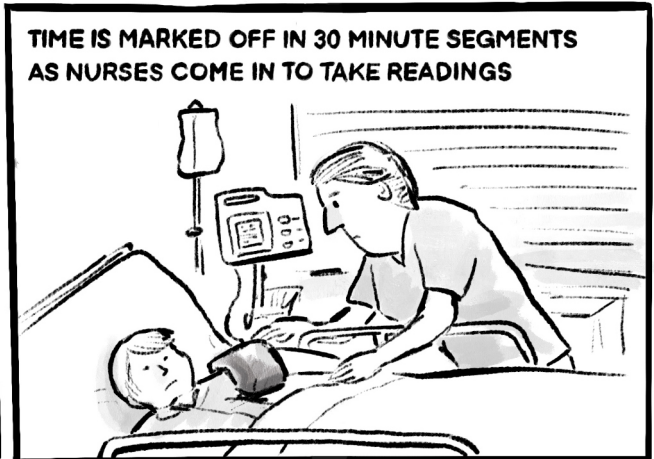
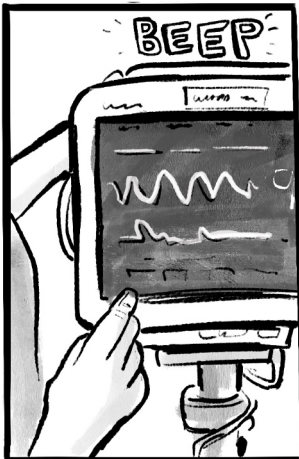
THIS IS THE WORST PART...



NURSE TRYING TO PREPARE US...



HIS FACE IS A BIT SWOLLEN



# RECOVERY

AT THE START OF DAY 2 ONE OF US IS HAVING A MELTDOWN



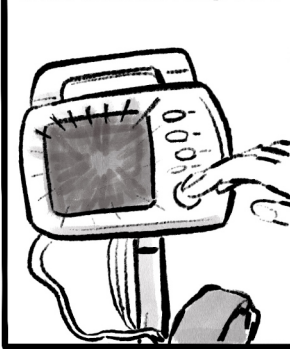
FORTUNATELY EVERYONE ELSE IS DOING BETTER



YOU CAN HOBBLE TO THE LOO WITH HELP



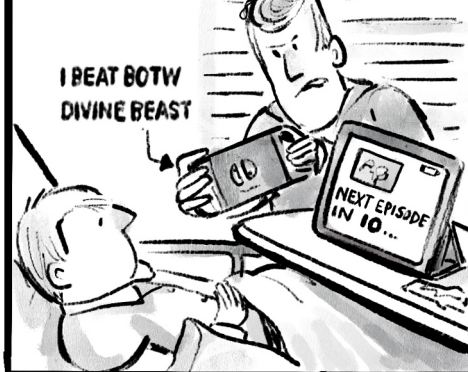
THE NURSES COME IN AND START DISCONNECTING YOU



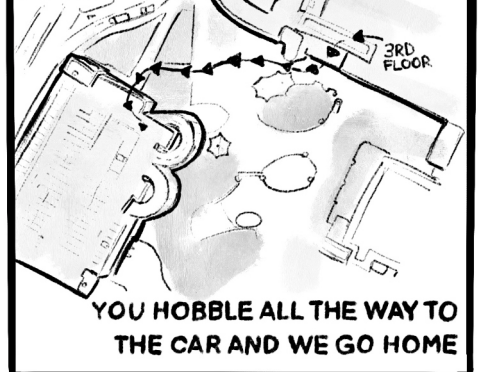
...BUT THEY CAN'T SAY IF YOU'RE GOING HOME TODAY



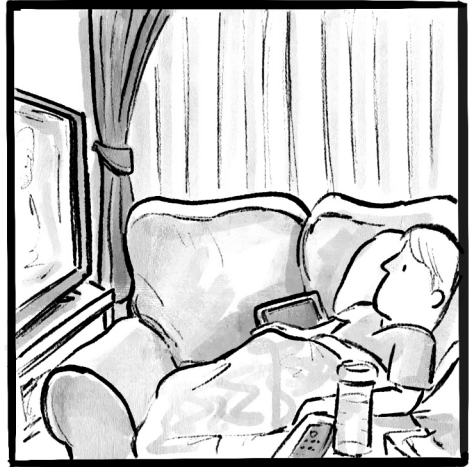
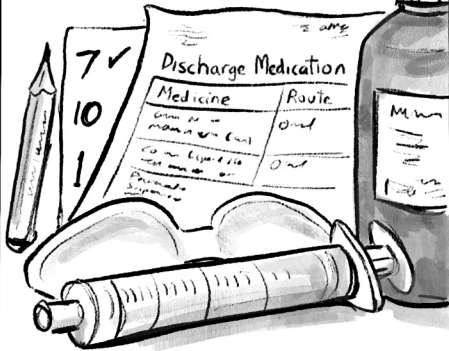
SO WE SETTLE IN FOR A NETFLIX MARATHON...



THE TRIUMPH AT THE END OF DAY 2



BACK HOME WE KEEP TRACK OF YOUR MEDS



THEN THE 'BEAST FROM THE EAST' HITS AND WE STRUGGLE TO HUNT DOWN MILK TO KEEP UP YOUR THREE A DAY RICE KRISPIES HABIT



IF THE SURGERY WAS SCHEDULED FOR NOW WE'D BE IN TROUBLE



AFTER 2 WEEKS YOU'RE BACK AT SCHOOL



BUT NO P.E. FOR 6 ADDITIONAL WEEKS

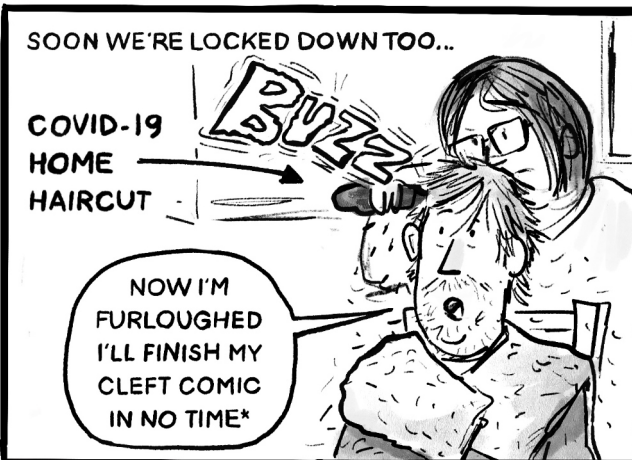
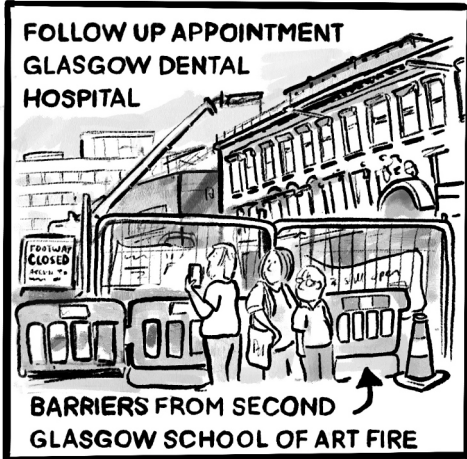
DIET GOES FROM SLOPPY



WAFFLES!



# PANDEMIC



\* I'M DRAWING MY PENULTIMATE PAGE 4-YEARS LATER...

WE DRAW RAINBOWS AND  
CLAP ON DOORSTEPS...



FOR OUR NHS  
FIGHTING COVID



UNTIL VACCINES  
CAN BE DELIVERED

A LONG TIME UNTIL  
VIDEO CONSULTS...



AND SOCIALLY  
DISTANCED MASKED  
APPOINTMENTS

LOTS OF WAIT AND SEE DENTISTRY  
UNTIL...



THEY PUT YOU ON A LIST FOR A  
PRE-BRACES TOOTH OPERATION...

...THEY SAY SUMMER BUT WITH  
THE BACKLOG THREE PMS COME  
AND GO...



BORIS → LIZ → SUNAK  
SEP OCT

4 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS  
WE'RE IN FOR A TOOTH  
EXTRACTION



IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE STARTING TO  
BE TOO OLD FOR THE CHILDREN'S  
WARD

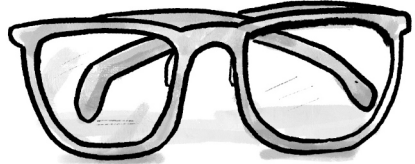


# PROGNOSIS

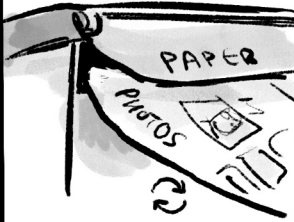
OUR LAST SCHOOL PHOTO OF YOU IS QUITE OLD...



IT'S BEFORE YOU EVEN STARTED WEARING GLASSES



YOU DON'T WANT TO KEEP THE NEWER PHOTOS



YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR SMILE IN THE PHOTOS

YOURS IS THE VOICE THAT HAS BEEN MISSING FROM THESE PAGES...



SO WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO MAKE IT HEARD...



CAN HE SPEAK TO SOMEONE?

IT'S A QUESTIONNAIRE TO FILL OUT



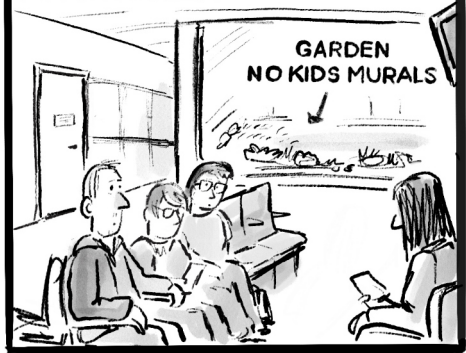
THERE'S ARE QUESTIONS ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER...



WE'RE HEADING TO THE NEUROLOGY BLOCK OF THE ADULT GLASGOW HOSPITAL



YOU'RE GOING TO SPEAK TO A SURGEON AND A PSYCHOLOGIST



I WORRY THAT ALL YOUR CHILDHOOD SURGERY WILL PUT YOU OFF GOING BACK FOR MORE



...THAT IT COULD BE HARDER TO GET THINGS DONE ONCE YOU'RE ACTUALLY AN ADULT



...BUT MOSTLY THAT THIS IS THE END OF OUR ABILITY TO STEER YOUR JOURNEY



AS SEMISONIC SANG 'EVERY NEW BEGINNING COMES FROM SOME OTHER BEGINNINGS END'



WHATEVER HAPPENS NEXT IS YOUR STORY TO TELL...



# CASE NOTES

IN WRITING THIS I'M AWARE THAT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A **TYPICAL** CLEFT TREATMENT AND WITH **5** SURGERIES SO FAR OUR SON'S JOURNEY HAS BEEN RELATIVELY STRAIGHTFORWARD COMPARED TO SOME I'VE READ ABOUT ON CLEFT PARENTS FACEBOOK GROUPS. **CLAPA** SAYS SOME NEED OVER 20 SURGERIES BY THE TIME THEY FINISH TREATMENT WHICH IS MUCH HARDER. I WRITE THIS NOT AS A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WHAT PARENTS WILL ENCOUNTER BUT MERELY ONE EXPERIENCE OUT OF MANY.

IF I WAS TO GO BACK 15 YEARS TO THAT DECEMBER DAY WHEN I WAS REELING FROM THIS NEW DIAGNOSIS I'D TELL MYSELF IT WON'T AS BAD OR AS GOOD AS YOU THINK.



ONE OF MY FAV PICS OF MY SON'S GAPPY SMILE

I LOVE TO CATASTROPHISE AND IT FELT ON THE DAY THAT I HAD TO PUT A BRAVE FACE ON WHAT FELT LIKE A TERRIFYING TURN OF EVENTS, BUT MY WORST FEARS WERE NOT REALISED. THIS COMIC MAKES IT SEEM THAT WE SPENT ALL OUR TIME IN NHS WAITING ROOMS WHEN IT WAS REGULAR, BUT NOT CONSTANT, BOUTS OF TREATMENT, AND IN THE GAPS A NORMAL LIFE WAS LIVED.

THIS COMIC ALSO COUNTERS ANY OPTIMISTIC NOTIONS THAT THIS CAN BE DEALT WITH IN CHILDHOOD WITH A FEW SURGERIES. AS I WRITE THIS BOTH MY KIDS ARE BECOMING ADULTS, AND THE REALISATION THAT THIS ISN'T DONE IS SINKING IN. SUPPORTING MY SON AS HE NAVIGATES ADULT CLEFT SERVICES WILL JUST BE ANOTHER STEP IN THE JOURNEY.



MATTHEW AND I

ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH WE WERE FORTUNATE WAS OUR SON WAS BORN IN A MATERNITY HOSPITAL ATTACHED TO A CHILDRENS HOSPITAL WITH A CLEFT TEAM, AND WE LIVE IN

GLASGOW CLOSE TO THE ONLY HOSPITAL IN SCOTLAND DOING CLEFT SURGERIES. OTHER FAMILIES HAVE TO TRAVEL FURTHER FOR SURGERIES ALTHOUGH THEY MAY HAVE CLINICS CLOSER TO THEM.



I NEARLY DREW A PAGE ABOUT THE CONSULTATION ON SCOTTISH CLEFT SERVICES OF 2015-16 WITH EMAILS, SURVEYS AND A STRANGE MEETING WHICH RESULTED IN EDINBURGH BEING CLOSED AGAINST LOTS OF PARENTS WISHES AS IT WOULD HAVE BROKEN THE NARRATIVE OF MY SON'S TREATMENT. AS A PARENT YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE **NHS** MORE THAN MOST, AND AS WELL AS BEING IMPRESSED BY THE PROFESSIONALISM OF ITS SPECIALISTS (WHO ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T NAME THEM IN THIS COMIC WERE BRILLIANT), YOU WILL ALSO SEE AN ORGANISATION UNDER PRESSURE ESPECIALLY AFTER THE PANDEMIC AND AUSTERITY. THE **NHS** AND THE CHARITIES SUPPORTING THE CLEFT COMMUNITY NEED OUR HELP.

I DON'T KNOW HOW EASY IT WOULD BE STARTING AGAIN NOW WITH ALL THE ADDITIONAL PRESSURES, BUT WE WILL ALWAYS BE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SUPPORT THE CLEFT COMMUNITY AND THOSE ON THE SAME JOURNEY AS US

*DREW '24*



FAMILY IN NY 2023

# REFERRAL

YOU'RE A UK BASED PARENT OF A CHILD WITH A CLEFT (OR ABOUT TO BE) WHERE DO YOU GO FOR HELP/INFO?

ON DIAGNOSIS FROM SCAN/  
BIRTH/AFTER BIRTH GP OR  
HOSPITAL REFERRED TO



WEB INFO SPREAD ACROSS  
DIFFERENT HOSPITAL /  
REGIONS SITES

YOUR LOCAL  
NHS CLEFT TEAM



MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
TEAM



CLEFT LIP  
AND PALATE  
ASSOCIATION

WEBINARS, GROUPS,  
EVENTS



MEET OTHER FAMILIES  
AT LOCAL EVENTS  
IF YOU CAN



[WWW.CLAPA.COM/WHAT-IS-CLEFT](http://WWW.CLAPA.COM/WHAT-IS-CLEFT)  
CONTAINS LINKS TO  
USEFUL INFO



BEWARE OF  
GOOGLED OR  
ANECDOTAL INFO  
IF YOU DON'T  
KNOW THE SOURCE



THEY TAKE YOU OVER TO A CORNER TO DO AN ASSESSMENT?

AT YOUR LAST SCAN DID ANYONE NOTICE

WHEN MY SON WAS BORN WITH AN UNDIAGNOSED CLEFT LIP AND PALATE WE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT IT DESPITE IT OCCURRING IN 1 IN 700 BIRTHS.



THIS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC OUR JOURNEY AS PARENTS FROM BIRTH THROUGH THE DREADED BONE GRAFT TO MOVING INTO ADULT SERVICES.

ANDREW FRASER (*Drew*) IS A GLASGOW BASED CARTOONIST WHOSE WORK HAS APPEARED IN PRIVATE EYE, THE WEEK AND A FEW OTHER PLACES. HE CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT [CARTOONSIDREW.COM](http://CARTOONSIDREW.COM) AND VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA WITH HANDLE @CARTOONSIDREW