

But winter was still a long way off, and Søren continued my tour of the workshop ...



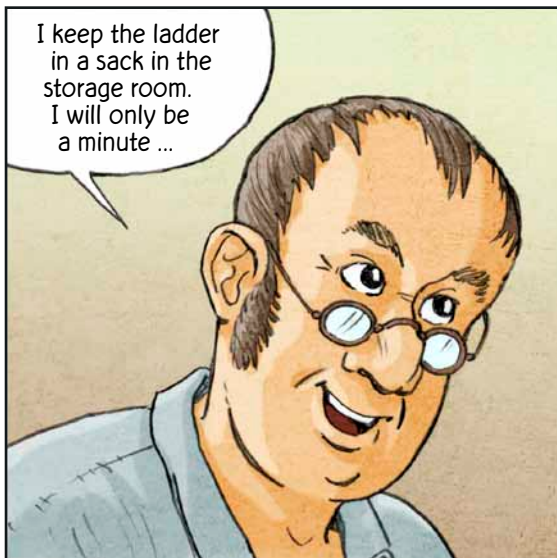
At first I simply fetched and carried and ran errands for the others. I remember especially one morning ...



Svendsen was a kind man ...



I keep the ladder in a sack in the storage room. I will only be a minute ...



Here it is. I'm afraid it's heavy, but it's the best skirting ladder I have.

Ah, thanks!

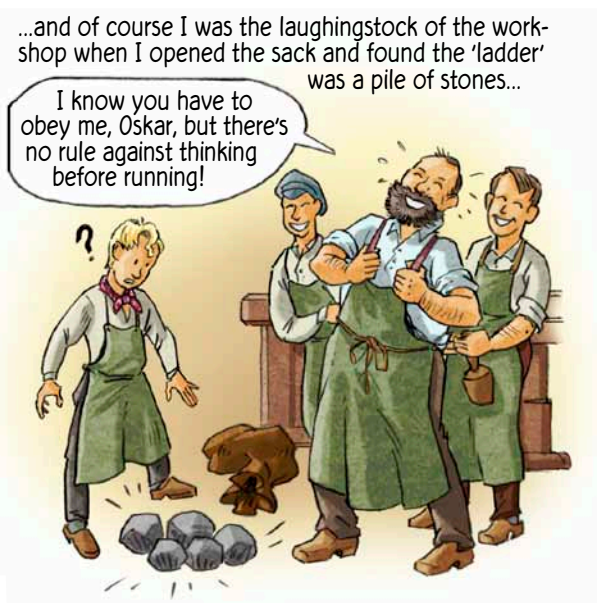


Oh, the trouble I had dragging that sack all the way home...



...and of course I was the laughingstock of the workshop when I opened the sack and found the 'ladder' was a pile of stones...

I know you have to obey me, Oskar, but there's no rule against thinking before running!



In a couple of weeks I got used to the daily routine at the workshop:

At 5.¹⁵ each morning the Master's older daughter called out from the yard. Time to get up ...



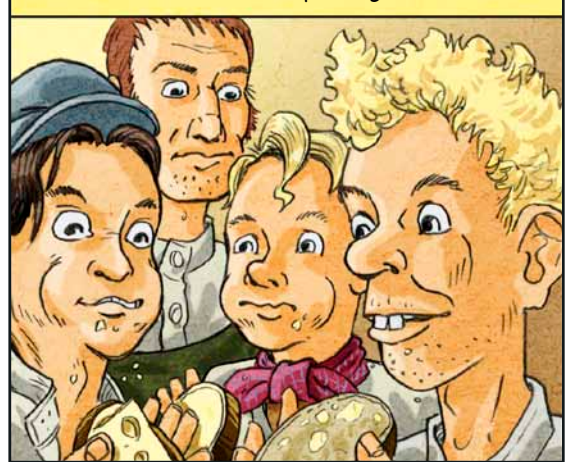
It was hard to leave the warm bed, and I wanted to stay under the covers ...



... but as the youngest apprentice I had to light the glue heater in the workshop, so while the others washed in the yard, I struggled with soot and ash.



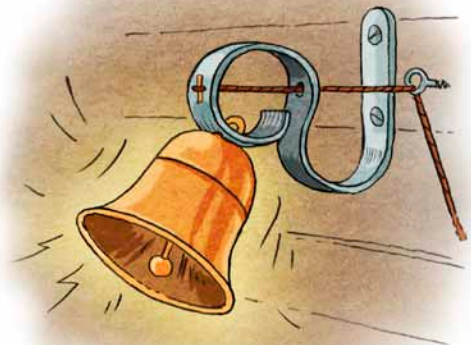
Time was short, as the Master expected us to be busy with our tools at six o'clock. We swallowed our breakfast at the planing benches.



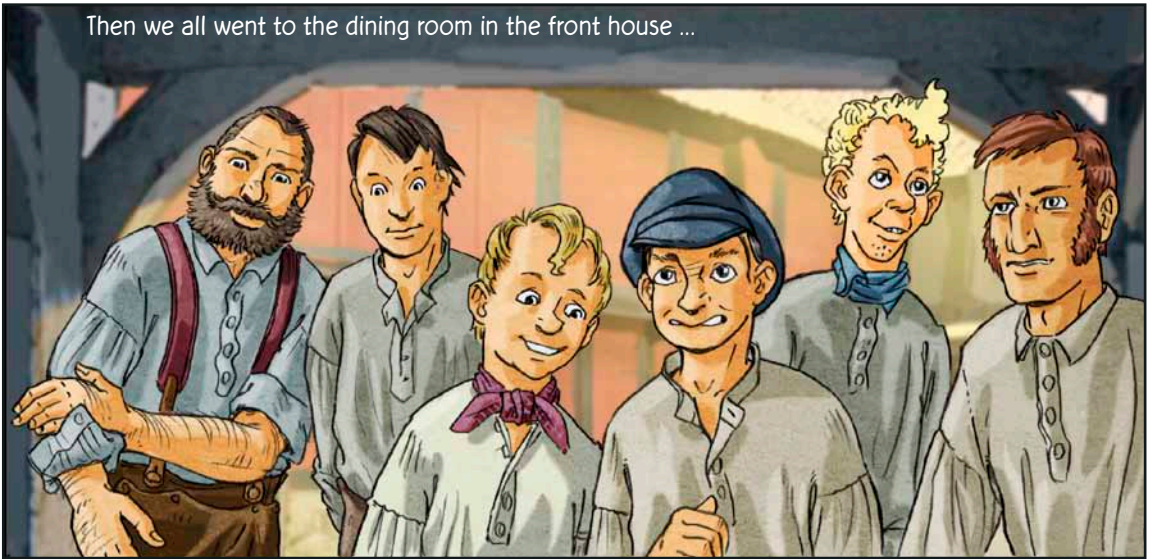
One morning I had hurried too much. The heater fire had gone out. Then I learned why the others said the Master could pack a punch ...



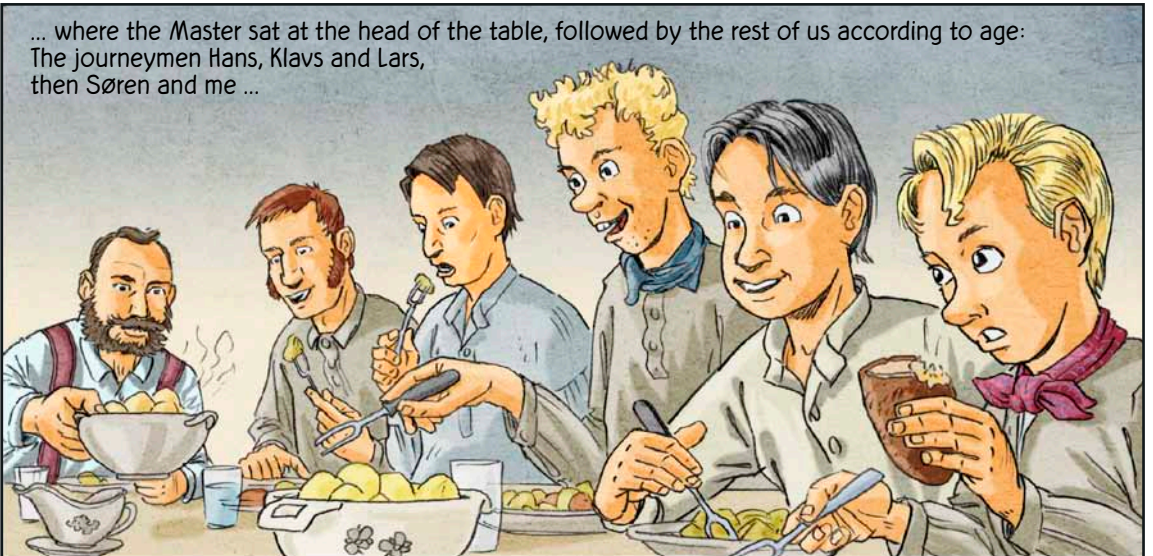
At twelve o'clock every day a little bell jangled in the workshop. The Mistress rang from the kitchen in the front house when dinner was ready.



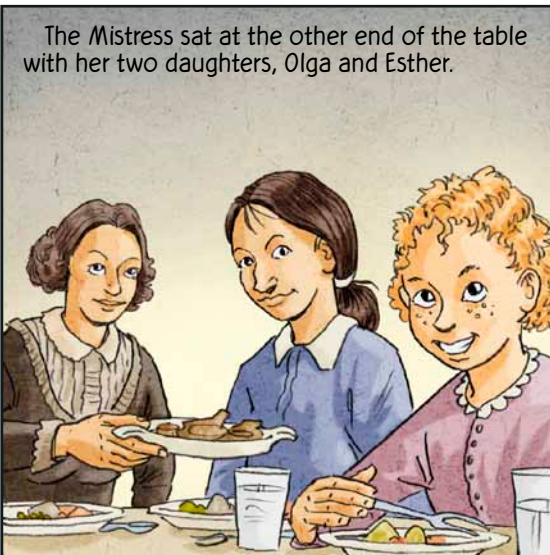
Then we all went to the dining room in the front house ...



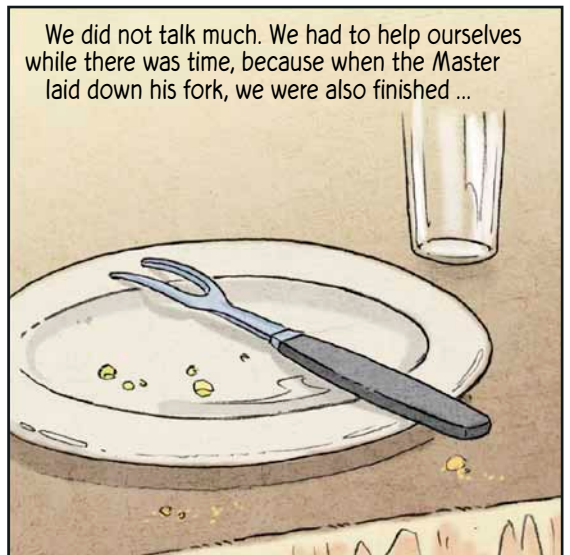
... where the Master sat at the head of the table, followed by the rest of us according to age: The journeymen Hans, Klavs and Lars, then Søren and me ...



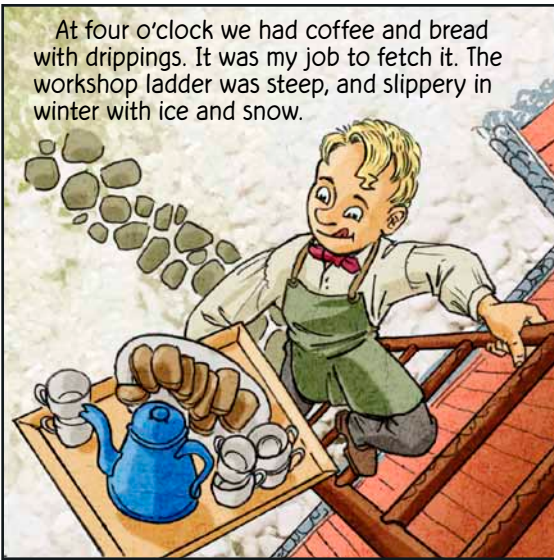
The Mistress sat at the other end of the table with her two daughters, Olga and Esther.



We did not talk much. We had to help ourselves while there was time, because when the Master laid down his fork, we were also finished ...



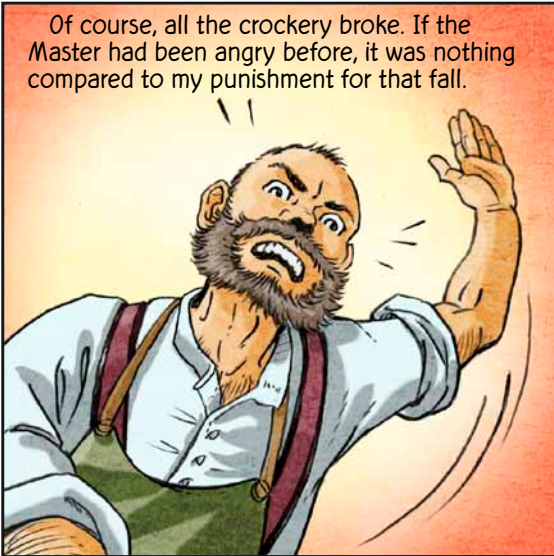
At four o'clock we had coffee and bread with drippings. It was my job to fetch it. The workshop ladder was steep, and slippery in winter with ice and snow.



One day I slipped ...



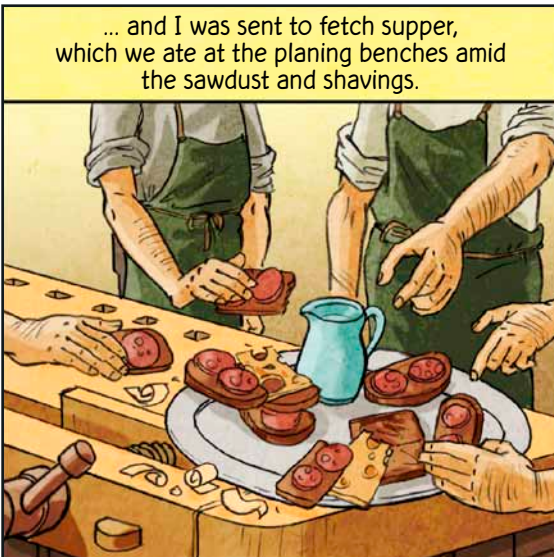
Of course, all the crockery broke. If the Master had been angry before, it was nothing compared to my punishment for that fall.



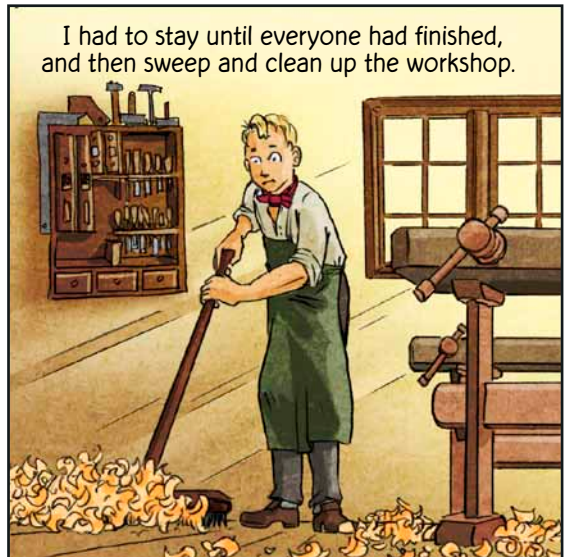
The day's work ended at seven ...



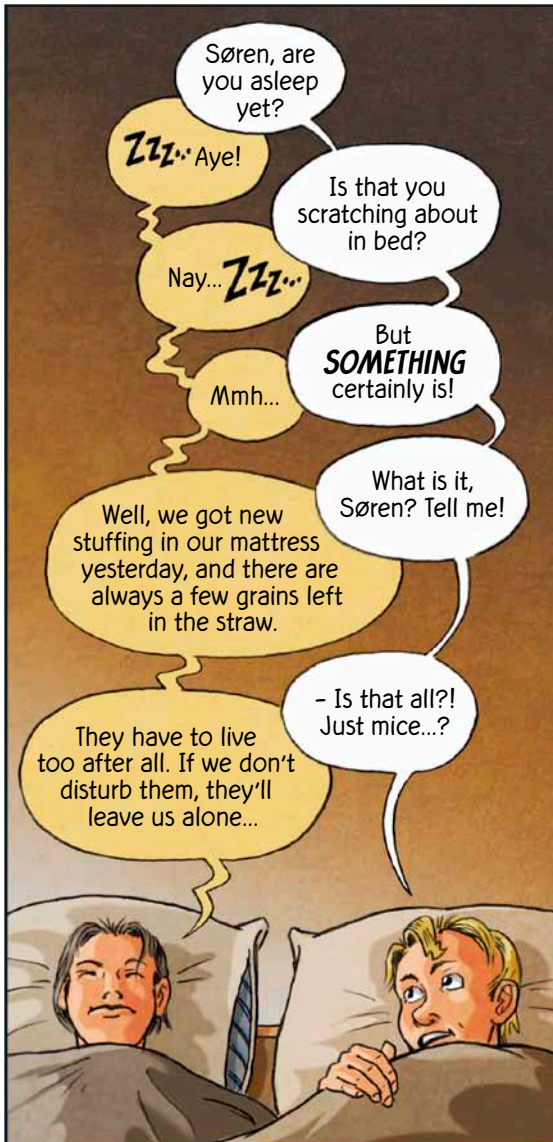
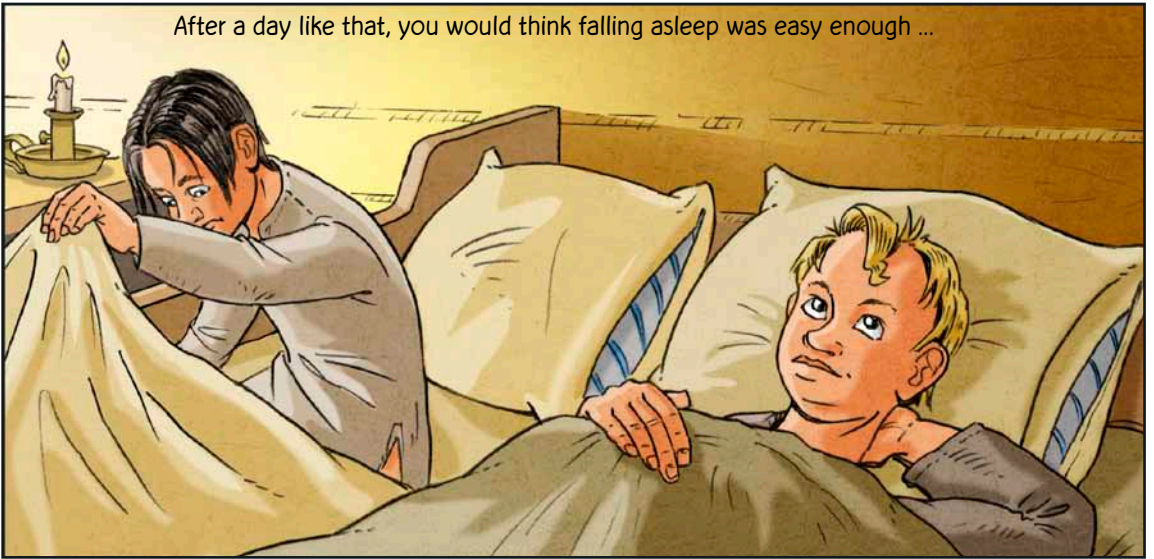
... and I was sent to fetch supper, which we ate at the planing benches amid the sawdust and shavings.



I had to stay until everyone had finished, and then sweep and clean up the workshop.



After a day like that, you would think falling asleep was easy enough ...



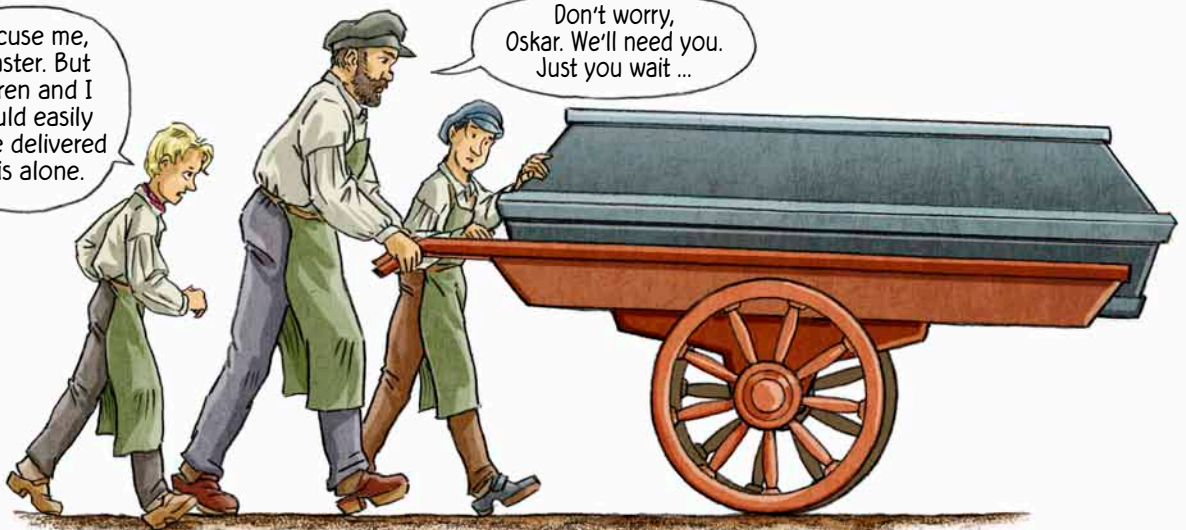
We made a lot of coffins at the workshop. Some of them were made to measure. One week Hans had made an extra large coffin, which the Master decided to deliver himself ...

Oskar and Søren!
You come with me.
We must take a coffin to Mistress Steendorf ...



Excuse me, Master. But Søren and I could easily have delivered this alone.

Don't worry, Oskar. We'll need you. Just you wait ...





We're here with the coffin ...

You must use the back stairs. We can't have this fuss in front. She's two floors up.



Ooops! Have you noticed how **WIDE** that coffin is?!!



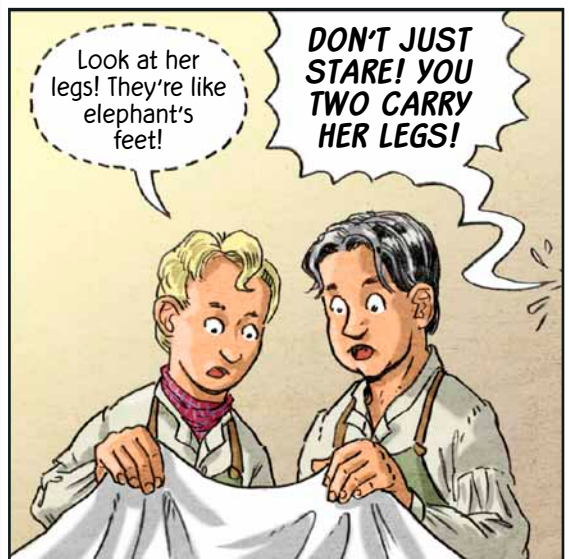
The coffin won't go up here. We must carry the old lady down.



On the second floor...

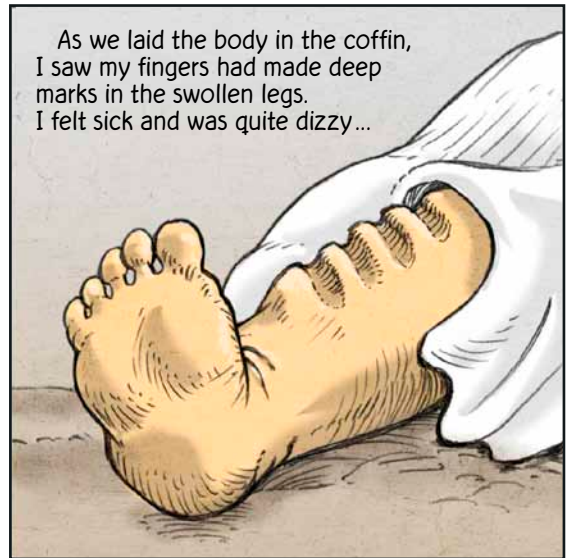
I've never seen anyone so big.

I have never delivered such a big coffin. She had the dropsy. We had better wrap her in the sheet...

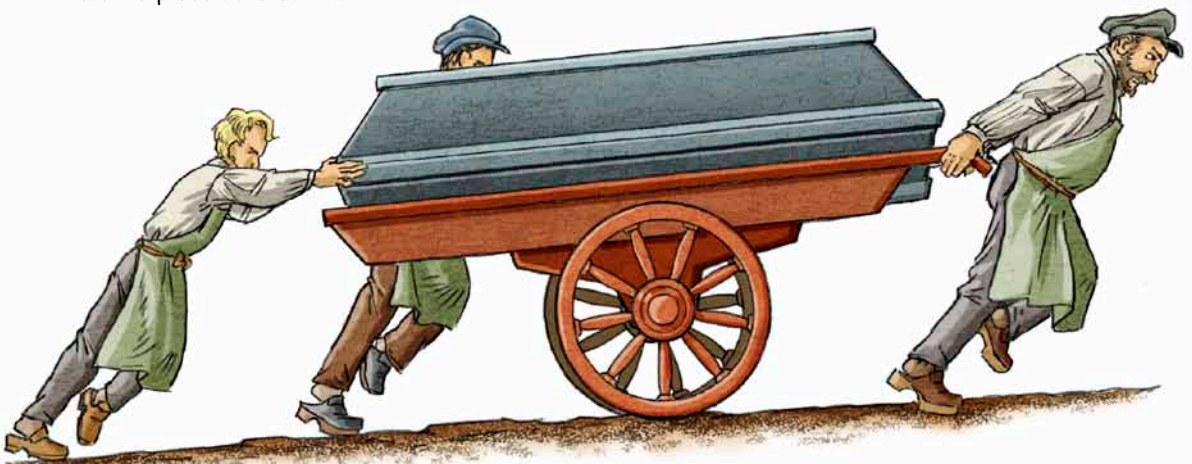


Look at her legs! They're like elephant's feet!

DON'T JUST STARE! YOU TWO CARRY HER LEGS!



... but I managed to follow along to the mortuary, where we placed the coffin.

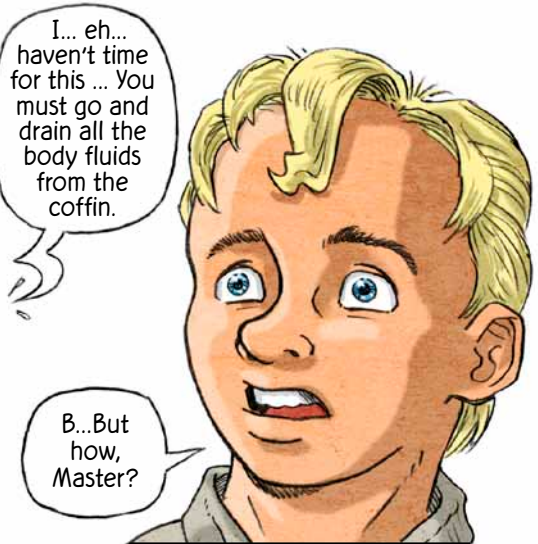


Though my trials were not over.
A few days later ...



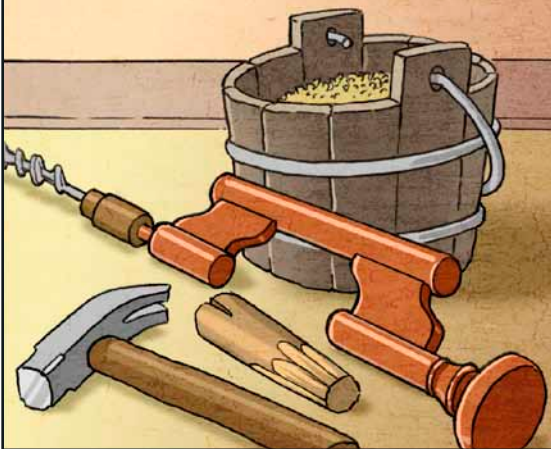
We've had complaints from the mortuary: The big coffin is dripping, and there is an awful stench.

I... eh... haven't time for this ... You must go and drain all the body fluids from the coffin.



B...But how, Master?

Master told me to make a one-inch plug and take it to the mortuary together with a crank brace, a hammer and a bucket of sawdust ...



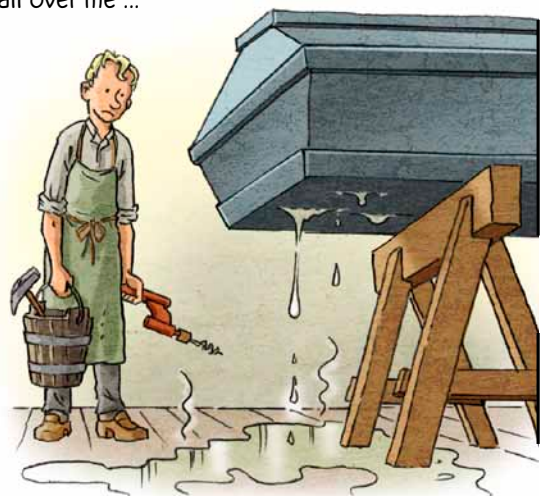
I was in no rush to reach the mortuary but finally arrived ...



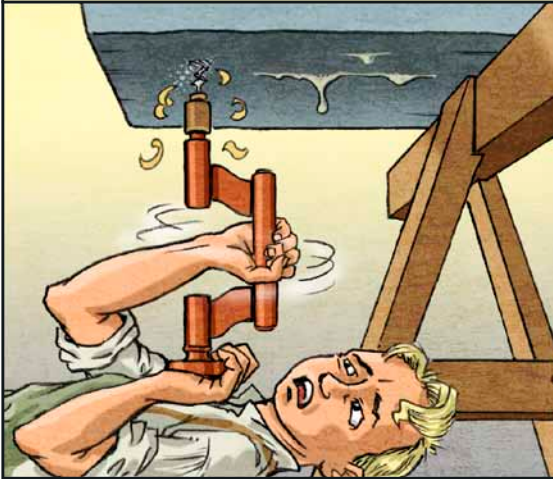
First I spread sawdust on the floor. I could understand why they complained about the stench.



I wondered for a long time how to drill a drain hole in the coffin without getting the slimy fluid all over me ...



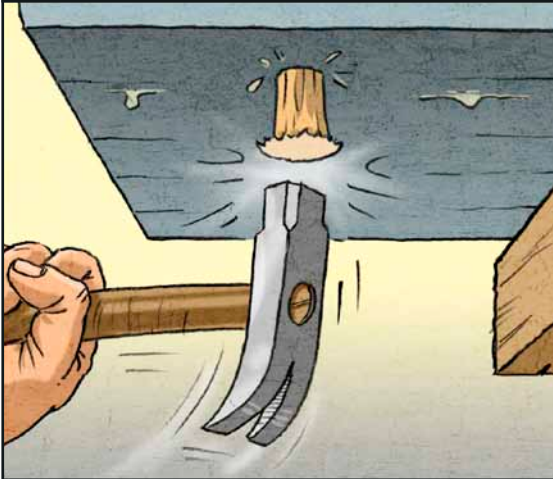
There was no way around it. I got down on the floor and drilled as fast as I could ...



... but the disgusting slime dripped all over me nonetheless ...



When the trickle finally stopped, the bucket was half full. I hammered the plug into the hole.



The mortuary was close to a pond, where Master had told me to throw the bucket.



It was also a good place to wash off the slime.



On the way home I was quite proud of myself. I had completed a task that even the Master did not want to take on ...

