

CRYSTAL CLEAR IN MY EYES

Those streets were always as miserable as the opening sequence on *Coronation Street*. Bloody chimneys of Salford poured a soot over the whole Mancunian day, like a cloak of an undertaker. If the wind was blowing in from the north west, my I would shiver in my thinning suit. Normally, I wouldn't be wearing a suit but today was different.

We turned up at 70 Portland Street, Jimmy and I, to meet Mr Moses. Moses owned the wholesale chain called Crazy Facials. He'd seen us at a gig a couple of nights before and said if we didn't get down to his place by midday today, there were other bands waiting in the wings to take our place.

Jimmy and I had written a few songs, enough to get us a night or two at The Manhattan, a dingy bar off Spring Gardens. We'd 'eard about this new record label called Rough Trade. Moses reckoned he could get us a contract on Rough Trade for two albums and maybe some singles. Manchester was a hard place back then – full of slums and football rivalries. And on the music scene, our band and those around us drew inspiration from the dirge. I suppose it was aligned to the Merseybeat of the early sixties although our lyrics were a homegrown commodity, not something ushered into port on the Cunard liners.

'Put that fag out, Rourke!' said a bellowing Moses from a squeaking crittal window. 'Get your arses up to my office. First floor and don't take the bloody lift. It's out again!'

The entrance to Moses' building was just as it had been in the thirties. Heavy mahogany swinging doors and fluorescent strip lighting wired into circuits that made them buzz. The wide treads of the staircase with fading hazard tape on damaged kickplates had obviously seen their fair share of hobnailed boots. Our Doctor Martins were like slippers in comparison. Moses met us at the top of the stairs.

'Glad you could make it boys. Not too early?' said Moses checking his watch. It was just before our noon deadline. 'I was up at five.'

'Who's that?' I asked, pointing to a well dressed man sat in an armchair in Moses' office.

'That Morris, is Mr Driscoll. He owns Rough Trade records. He wants to record you. He thinks you've got potential and could go all the way to London, maybe the bloody world!'

'How much?' piped up Jimmy.

'You leave the money to me boys. I'll see you ok. Now get in there. Play yer demos and get the contract signed, alright?'

'Alright Mr Moses. But I don't like your tie. And you support City for god sake! Where's yer heritage man? United or Bolton get it?'

'I wonder if Epstein ever had this problem with the Beatles?'

'You calling us the new Beatles?' said Jimmy.

'You ain't the Beatles. I mean, you've only been to Ancoats.'

'You're a peculiar man, Mr Moses. Right lads,' I said, 'let's sign away our future and money!'

Author's Note: The above is based on my interpretation of two books: *Autobiography* by Morrissey; and, *Morrissey's Manchester: The Essential Smiths Tour Guide* by Phill Gatenby.

Morris is Stephen Patrick Morrissey, "Morrissey" in real life. Jimmy is Johnny Marr in real life. Rourke is Andy Rourke in real life. Mr Moses is Joe Moss in real life and owner of Crazy Faces Wholesale who occupied a large building in Portland Street, Manchester. Mr Driscoll is Tony Wilson in real life who owned Factory Records that became part of the Rough Trade cartel. The fourth member of the band was Mike Joyce who is not mentioned in the story.