

## Extract 1: The Quarry

By the time the bell rang for closing time, Gary had become drunk. For many of the party drunk meant loud exclamations, whirling, arguing, more drinking. For Gary it meant a battle to contain himself, and to walk in a straight line. Maybe a quiz machine, and of course more beer.

He headed for the bar, slowly and deliberately so as not to disturb his equilibrium too much. The two hours he'd just spent sat opposite Como discussing, using over-detailed terminology, the chemistry and likely effects of the pills he'd just scored, seemed to have been about an hour and thirty minutes too much. He was grateful, though, as he was having one of those nights where he felt that his own conversational skills weren't too stellar either. At least Como was incessant enough to fill time, before the main event. Gary wondered if he might regret becoming so drunk a bit later on. He had a feeling he would by the morning, but then, Saturdays weren't anything special, or at least they hadn't been since he started partying with Janice and her friends. Gary did see glory in the morning after in any case, a communal sense of suffering, like a footsoldier in a conquering army he felt righteous, victorious. And dreadful. In a way the hangover was worse than the glassy eyed nothingness of the comedown, at least then he could seek comfort in the simplicity of existence, when the alcohol racked his system nothing was a pleasure to him. Normally this effect was slightly overwhelmed by what Como had to offer him. When pain was caused by the beer, children's TV seemed like an iron fisted insult to him, the benign figure of Bob Wilson affected him in much the way that Noel Edmunds would. On the occasions when the various poisons he had consumed combined forces nothing like that really mattered as much, if at all. Fortunately for Gary, his mind had been mostly capable of blocking out the worst of the consequences, leaving him free to wilfully destroy himself the next time. But that was still to come.

The transportation had been arranged by Como, and took the form of a mate with a transit van pulling up on the street outside, following a 20 minute wait in the sharp night air. It was difficult for any of the revellers to discern what the man had planned, but he fitted in so no one questioned him. Everybody filed into the back; sat down. There was tension now, the drink and the anticipation merging into a fog of anxiety. Members of the group stared occasionally across at each other, it was unclear whether anyone knew where they were going. During the course of his long chat from Como, Gary had divined some minor facts that could almost serve as clues. The upshot of this was that he knew the venue to be at a secret location, known only to one of Como's mates.

Gary considered what he knew of Como's mates. Como knew people that would not normally cross Gary's path, that was for sure. Gary reflected that the majority of Como's acquaintances seemed to be possessed of some singular idiosyncrasy that set them apart from other people he had met. Gary found this fascinating. He surmised that the venue was most likely a squat party, which whilst it didn't suit Gary's inherent sense of order it did to a degree sate his voyeuristic streak. There

would certainly also be somewhere to dance and someone to talk to (wanted or otherwise), which meant that the event would require little effort, and might even be fun.

Gary's thoughts were overwhelmed by the sick sound of the transit's engine attempting to turn over. Como and his mate were taking part in a largely incoherent debate which appeared to concern the most effective means of facilitating such an occurrence. Finally two of the men in the back felt obliged to stagger out add their suggestions. Very shortly they found themselves marshalled into pushing positions by Como, who then placed one of his hands on the rear bumper in much the same way as one might approach a glass on an Ojua board, and called on them to put their backs into it. Hands splayed on the grubby bodywork, the boys took the strain, veins bulging and feet slipping as the van slowly overcame its position relative to every other object in the universe. Gary was aware that transit vans with a full cargo were rather heavy, so it was with some surprise that he noticed the vehicle begin to pick up speed, before, following loud shouts of indignation from the rear of the vehicle, the driver brought the clutch up and with an enormous jolt the engine fired up, throwing the unfortunate Emily to the floor in an even less dignified heap than she represented prior to the incident. Rattling and snarling, the van willingly swallowed the remainder of its cargo before setting off towards its destination.

Once the cordon of the M25 had been broken the roads were dark, occasional pools of light flashing across the silent and motionless group, making them look like extras in an art-house movie. These moments were the worst for Gary; stuck in the trough between depressants and stimulants, his thoughts were upon him. Space and time were infinite and the situation was becoming desperate. Depression takes many forms, but when chemically induced it is cruel; here today and gone tomorrow, reducing its victim in a flash to an echo of what they might one day become. Gary hadn't been quite drunk enough to remain so for the entire journey; he was still coming up. The flood of consciousness he needed was a good few minutes away. Some of the group were still feeling the positive effects of the drink, occasionally chattering like nervous monkeys, but most stared ahead of them, giving the impression that a prison rather than a party was their final destination. It didn't help that no one knew this destination; under the circumstances the paranoia only grew. Even the driver seemed confused at intervals. Como was talking continuously into his ear, in a low and staccato monotone which although utterly incomprehensible to the passengers, was clearly laced with mounting moments of urgency.

As the roads got darker Gary wondered if the Promised Land would ever be delivered. The next shaft of light sprayed by an oncoming vehicle illuminated him. The light shimmered a little more, moved a little slower, as it passed over the assembled company in the back of the van. A trace of a smile flickered across the corners of Gary's haggard face. He had indeed seen the light. Gary spent an indeterminate period of time staring at the others in the group with increasing awe and fascination.

Eventually, by a combination of good fortune and a scientific quirk of the concentric circles in which they had been travelling, they at last reached their destination. Or at the very least a destination.

The sky in the middle distance was aglow, projecting green phosphorescence; Gary could almost see the bass jumping. As the van approached the scene Gary had become transfixed, had to be prodded out of the van by Janice, who was used to his reaction, and was always glad to play the role of attorney in such situations. Gary had forgotten about Janice. He had become a child. Everything took on significance, from the sound of the fall of his feet crunching and scraping the gravel beneath them and sending fragments skittering all around, to the heavy rhythmic rasping of his breath, to the smell of the air mixed with grass mixed with sweat, to the touch of his clothes. Everything was wonderful. Everything seemed new, amazing, responsive, worthy of attention.

Janice was worthy of attention  
Como was worthy of attention  
Emily was worthy of attention  
Even Stuart was worth of attention

Well, almost. The lights distracted him, the colours, the feelings. To dance, perchance to dream? But then the morning after would most likely come for him.

The group were ascending a ridge overlooking a large crater in the earth. The crater had gently sloping sides, which rose at one end to form a substantial cliff face which loomed imposingly over the entire scene. Revelers were scattered all across a plain of aggregate, some looking better equipped for the night ahead than others. An enormous stack of primitive looking speakers were stacked against the cliff face, a combination of home-made and shop hired disco lighting wove a tattoo of hazy colour across the bleak night sky above them, a mass of cables were coiled around the feet of the hardware. The DJ looked, even at such an early stage of the night, to be in a worse state than the majority of the punters, if you could call them that. In a sober state Gary might have wondered what the motivation for the event was – as things stood he was happy to stare all around himself, taking everything in. The overall scene spoke volumes for the amateurism and free spirited nature of the event, and little for the organisational skills of those responsible. The most wonderful thing about an e-fuelled crowd is that they really don't care – the numbers would swell to leave the pit heaving by the time day broke.

Gary followed with some intensity the primitive pattern that the lighting rig was painting across the sky. Open-mouthed, then close-mouthed, he was gurning furiously; his feet struggled for grip on the loose and abrasive surface whilst, largely independently of his free will, he marched unsteadily on the spot and waved his arms in the air.

He knew he wanted to stay forever, but he didn't know why – something told him this feeling was common, indeed it was one he had experienced many times before.

Within an hour of their arrival, the amount of space per person had decreased to the point where people occasionally actually made physical contact with each other. The atmosphere was becoming heightened one of intensity and sweat.

For Gary, everything – the light and the sound, and the people around – everything blended and melded to become a part of him, everyone was moving as one as the music took firm hold over the darkness and the cold. As time quickly passed, there were only fleeting glimpses of reality available to the partygoers. By the first light of a new weekend their covenant was sealed, another shared experience that most would never consider until the next time had been absorbed.

As the crowds thinned, the cold became more noticeable and motor functions seemed increasingly impaired. The beginning of the end was signalled as the real world began to encroach upon the day; the sad fact as people left was that they had to find a way home.