

Extract from *Magic Dan – A Tale from 1980s One Hit Wonderland* –
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This extract finds keyboard player Jonnie suffering from the aftermath of a party to mark the opening of their first tour of Europe. Other members of the tour party mentioned are...

<i>Ade & Joe</i>	<i>Roadies and lighting / sound tech respectively</i>
<i>Amanda</i>	<i>Photographer and daughter of the band's manager</i>
<i>'Magic' Dan</i>	<i>Producer and sound man for the tour</i>
<i>Dotty</i>	<i>Dan's wife</i>

Where the hell was I? I peered at the world and it seemed to be red and blurred and mostly composed of stairs and railings. Slowly, slowly it came together. I was in a hotel, in Amsterdam, lying on the stairs. The only lighting was the emergency lights. Surveying myself, I realised that I was freezing cold, mainly because I was naked apart from my knickers.

I sat up, and the world swung around me in a dizzying blur, as my stomach threatened to project its contents over the faded carpet. I groaned and rubbed my eyes, trying to remember how I'd arrived here. Gradually, it came back.

Back in the bar, things had been quieter, as most of the guys had paired off with female party-goers and disappeared. Ade and Joe were still there, and Joe was making an effort to stay upright by holding on to Ade with his right hand, while clutching a bottle with his left. Ade looked like he would far rather be elsewhere.

I helped him get Joe into a chair, and took his bottle off him – taking a good swig to establish that it was a friendly action. It burnt all the way down, but was sweet, orange flavoured and a bit sickly. I looked at the bottle – Southern Comfort. Not bad, though, so I had another pull.

'Go easy, Jonnie – you don't want to get Joe'd', Ade said, eyeing the ceiling.

'Whazzat?' Joe peered around, trying to make sense of the world.

I looked around to check out the girls that were left. Not many around, and the disco had finished, so no more naked dancing girls. There were a couple of nice looking chicks over the bar though, so I decided to make a play for them, when Joe grabbed my hand and pulled me down onto a chair.

Ade sat down as well, and we chewed the fat for a bit, with me and Joe

swapping pulls on the Southern Comfort.

'You had a good night?' I asked Joe.

'Fantastic – you wanna try some of these.' He fished around in his pocket and brought out a couple of capsules.

'Only two?' he looked confused, before thrusting them at me. 'you can 'ave 'em'.

'What are they?' I said.

'Um – dunno.'

'Some kind of downer', Ade said with a sniff. He only used weed and he looked down on prescription stuff. So did I really.

'How many have you had?' I asked.

'A few', he said.

'He's had half a dozen while I've been watching. I'm sharing a room with the bastard, you know. Still, at least he got the shagging in early.'

So he'd had his wicked way with the dancer, I guessed – good luck to him, I was looking to emulate him before the end of the night.

I looked at the capsules he still held out to me. Well, I thought, if he's had six, two wouldn't harm me, and I necked them, washed down with a drop more Southern Comfort.

'I thought you had more sense', Ade said, looking disapprovingly at the pair of us. 'I'm off to bed.'

It was time to try my luck with the girls at the bar. I looked over in their direction. Some nice looking women, but some part of me kept thinking of Amanda. I must have been pissed, I suppose, after all those cocktails. Then I started to tell Joe about it – I was definitely pissed.

I told him about Graham spiking our drinks.

Joe took a pull of Southern Comfort, and so did I.

I told him how I felt when I woke up next to her that morning.

Joe had another pull, and so did I.

I told him how I had tried to make peace with her.

Another pull.

I tried to explain how her stupid scouse aggression made it impossible to get near her.

We emptied the bottle.

I told him that I just wanted to clear the air.

Joe fell off his chair.

The rest of the night is a bit of a blur. I must have made it upstairs. I think I put Joe to bed - probably assisted by Ade, as they were sharing a room. I must have made it to my room and taken my clothes off and I'm pretty sure I made it into bed.

I was on the second floor, in a little room at the end of the corridor. The rest of the guys were on this floor. Ade and Joe were doubled up, as were Graham and Gideon. Me, Jake and Howie were in individual rooms. The others, including Amanda, were on the floor above us.

I thought about all that had happened over the last couple of weeks, and I made a decision. I was going to go up to her room. Surprise her. Explain everything. Make friends with her again – something like that.

It took me a long time to open the door, but when I did, the corridor was empty. I could almost walk, but I felt better on all fours. The lift seemed too complicated and I decided on the stairs. The doors to the stairway opened outwards, so I managed them just by pushing, and crawled up to the next floor. The doors were more of a challenge here, as they opened into the stairwell, and I would have to raise myself up to the handles, and pull. It seemed like a big effort, so I rested my head for a little while, and that was the last thing I remembered.

When I woke up in the cold of the stairwell, it didn't seem like a brilliant idea to knock on Amanda's door in the middle of the night while only wearing my knickers. Time to beat the retreat, I thought.

I attempted to stand up – more blurred vision and nausea – but I got upright with the help of the handrail. I needed to go down a floor, but just as I started down, I heard a door open and footsteps climbing towards me.

The footsteps seemed to be coming from a long way down. Maybe the ground floor or even the basement, so I had plenty of time to quickly and silently slip into the corridor. In my state, though, it was all I could do to hold on to the handrail, and prepare an explanation for some outraged guest or porter.

The steps approached, and Magic Dan appeared, in his ancient reefer jacket.

'Oh, Hi Jonnie – I left my book in the van. Can't get to sleep without it.' He patted something under his jacket.

'Fancied a walk?' he said – obviously suppressing a laugh. My tongue seemed to be glued to the top of my mouth, but I managed to reply.

'I seem to have over-indulged – could you help me get back downstairs?' Some of it was intelligible. Magic Dan looked a little troubled.

'Just a sec, Jonnie. I'll drop the book off, and come back out.' He went to move

past me to the door to his floor. I attempted to put my arm around his neck, but he had moved by the time my arm got to where he used to be, and I fell against him.

He put an arm around me and the book fell out of his jacket to the floor. He bent down instinctively to retrieve it, and I fell on top of him. He fell to all fours, and I tipped off him, onto the floor, just next to the 'book'.

It was a package of some brown substance, covered in cling film. I made an effort to pick it up, but he was faster than me.

'Let's talk about this tomorrow', he said.

Leaving me on the floor, he took the package and slipped through the doors. After a few minutes, he returned with Dotty. She was wearing a thick faded pink dressing gown, with fluffy slippers to almost match.

'Jonnie – you silly boy. What would your mother say if she saw you like this.' She continued scolding while they got me downstairs and into my room – the door was still open. By the time we got there, I could walk unaided and I got into bed while Dotty drew the quilt up, and smoothed my hair as if I was ten years old. As she bent over, the dressing gown gaped a little and I had a glimpse of her breasts – the sight seemed to fill me with peace and happiness rather than lust, and I felt sleep rising to overtake me.

When they left, I rolled over and picked up my watch from the bedside table. It said three-thirty.