



[Paul O'Kane](#)

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An Evening With Mr Soft
By Paul O'Kane 2011

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Kenny knocked about 4pm

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Really?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, I think it was late or early summer because there was still plenty of evening light ahead.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Right.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) He asked me to come to his job with him and there may be some extra fun.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) What was the job?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) He had a dumb, short-lived and inappropriate role as a security guard for a block of vacant offices in the east of the city - the business district.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Oh I see. And what about the fun?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) I'll come to that. Anyway, I agreed, because I guess I had nothing better to do and Kenny was the kind of person that you feared a bit while always knowing he was doing the best thing, the thing that other people who did lesser things always talked about.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, I know people like that.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) I told mum I was going out and we caught a bus near my house that went all the way into the city. Though it was a solid hour's ride it was convenient because it was kind of door-to-door.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) So when does the fun start?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Well, pretty soon actually. By the time the bus started to leave the big sprawling estate behind and hit the A-road Kenny had dug something out from a secret pocket in his jeans and offered me a trip.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Ohhh right!

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, I put the little dot in my mouth and about half an hour later started to feel that weird, throaty, minty fearful feeling as my mind started to go off into a new world.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) That's quite a good description.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) A mixture of hope and panic and a sense of no-turning-back as sound and sight and general sense were transported to another level.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah right.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) By the time we reached Kenny's place of so-called 'work' we were both beaming and flying high. When Kenny was like this he always looked like his cheeks would burst with glee and his eyes didn't seem to have time to blink for staring.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) I can just see that face!

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Inside the building it must have been dull-as-dishwater on a normal night so I twigged why Kenny wanted both company and something to change his state of mind.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) OK.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) We took the lifts and stairs – each space transformed now into truly fantastic environments worthy of detailed consideration and subject to sudden metamorphoses.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Sounds wild!

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[Paul O'Kane](#) When we reached a new floor (there must have been about twenty or so) we took a look but the scene was always the same.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) What was it like?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Always a huge empty expanse, the same rectangular shape, with a pale carpet, pulled back in places, no furniture, only telephones sat here and there on the floor at points where the desks and workers must have been.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Sounds weird.

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, it was. Maybe we didn't see every floor because we twigged it was all just repetitious but it was pretty weird, these huge empty spaces that we saw with very strange eyes indeed, a place we felt we didn't belong but were allowed to wander around in.

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) The drug must have made it much more interesting than it would usually have been.

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) Of course, I don't know how long this part went on for (it's many years ago of course) but at some point Kenny said he was allowed a 'break' which we just roared about because it wasn't like he'd exactly done any hard work for his money yet.

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) Ha Ha!

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) We went where I guess he usually went. One of those really old-style pubs you get in the city, with red curtains and carpets and cubby-holes.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Horrible!

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, but that night there was no 'nice' or 'horrible', everything was kind of amazing, you know?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, I know.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) We had a small beer and sat down. Kenny put a record on the juke-box. It was 'Mr Soft' by Cockney Rebel, which at that time was an old song but not a really old song.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) I still like it in a way.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, it's got a quirky, creepy feel about it that will always remind me of Kenny.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Ha, yeah, Mr Soft!

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Anyway, as if things weren't crazy enough being in a weird old pub, suddenly dragged out of my home and tripping like mad, that little vinyl 7-inch record was badly warped.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) You're kidding!

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[Paul O'Kane](#) No, really, so as well as severely changing the mood and dragging us into a kind of Cockney Rebel reality mixed with red carpets ad cod Victorian plush it also made everything kind of warped along with the record.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Blimey!

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, the whole pub started to feel as if it was made of wax, soft like, and kind of woozy and misshapen, sort of melting.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Were you freaked?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) No, it was kind of fascinating. It was one of those good trips where the fear doesn't get the better of the fascination.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Phew! It could have been much worse.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah. Anyway, once we were done in there we went back to 'work' as we called it and laughed again at the absurdity of it all.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) So what else was there to do?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Well, I guess Kenny was somehow seeing through his usual shift, though for me there was no sense of time at all. We went down to the basement for a change.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) What was down there?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Well, Kenny had already explored the whole place, and really, this was his favourite bit.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Why?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Because in the basement was the telephone operator's equipment. The telephone exchange for the office block with all the coloured wires, holes and plugs sticking out.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Wow! It must have looked mad to you.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah it did, but what was madder still was that Kenny had worked out how to use it a bit.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) No kidding?

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah. He'd work out how to dial a friend's phone number, then a few others and get them all talking to each-other so they didn't really understand what was going on.

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) A bit like Facebook?

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, that's funny, but it was in a way, and at a time when no-one even had a mobile phone or computer, so it was really strange.

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) I bet. And it must have been even stranger to you two in your condition!

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- [Paul O'Kane](#) Yeah, it was really wild. I can remember the madness and hilarity of it. Kenny beaming away, connecting coloured wires. Confusing the hell out of everyone like God gone mad. And their voices, laughing or complaining, saying 'what's going on?' but all knowing Kenny was somehow responsible.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) How did it all end?

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[Paul O'Kane](#) I don't recall the end of the evening. I guess we must have just come down and come home. But for some reason, it was one of those nights I'll never forget.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) I think I would remember that too.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) And sometimes, when I'm Facebooking now, it comes back to me, as if we were the first ever Facebookers, way back then, on that night with the trips, the telephones and Mr Soft.

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[Paul O'Kane](#) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89sPfrnTagY>

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