

City Centre

Aftermath



City Centre.

Quiet.

And dark.

Think. Just focus. I know what it is. Bring it back.

Market... Market Street. Escalators. Underneath. Just stopped. Just lay down. That's it. Just lay down under the escalators. Where the escalators are. Were. Yes that's it. But what's covering me? It's not dark. Yes it's dark where I am, but I know that there's light. I can see it. Not see it. I can feel it.

Just reach out. Touch something. There. With my fingers. I can feel something. Something stopping the light. Rough. Rough and jagged. And...and it's got a shape. Touch. Curved. In and out. I can feel it, but what is it? Why is it dark? What can I feel? I know. I think I know. Think I know now. Yes I remember. Steel, rusty. Curves in and out, up and down. Rough on my fingertips. Steel.

Yes I pulled it over me. Tired. I was so tired. Crawled and pulled it over me. Just buried myself. Just wanted to bury myself. Not bury myself. Just wanted to hide. To sleep.

Yes I've slept. I'm under it and wanted to be under it. Wanted to sleep. Wanted to bury myself. And...and when I slept, as I slept. Such noise. The noise woke me up. I must have slept. Just crawling. That's all I remember. Just crawling underneath it. I...pulled it. Over my head and just let it lie on top of me. That's right I remember now. But when was that? I don't know. Yes I do. It was...

It was dark. Not dark like it is now. It's not dark now. There's light now. I can feel it. When I pulled it over me it was dark. Nothing. Nothing to see. It was dark. I just pulled it over me. Why did I do that? It would have done to just lie down. Lie down and sleep, that's all I wanted. Just sleep. It was a bed. It was something warm over me. Something like... It was pulling the covers over me. Yes I remember, covers. Remember them. Bed. Like pulling the covers over me. But it was...it was rough. I could feel it then. Like...like I can feel it now. It was rough and curved. Up and down, up and down. Steel. Rusty steel. Where had it come from? Yes I remember. I remember...remember not seeing it. Just feeling it.

But...but what was the noise? What did I hear? In the night. No, not in the night. Maybe it was night. I don't know. It's not night now. I know it's not dark. I can feel that it's light. Even though it's quiet. So quiet. But it wasn't quiet. There was a noise. A noise in the night. Or some time.

Just think.

Yes. That's it. I lay down and pulled myself under it when it was dark. Yes it was dark then. Night. So dark. Then...then...when I slept another noise. No, not another noise, because there was no noise. It was so quiet. I... I was sleeping and the noise came down. On top of me. Pushing. Pressing down. Down onto...onto the steel that I crawled under. Yes that's it. Something fell down. A good job...well maybe a good job that I had pulled it over me. The steel. Or maybe it wasn't a good job, because I was sleeping. That's all I wanted. Wanted to do. That's it. I wanted to sleep. Wanted to... Well wanted to stop. Wanted to...to give up. Give up I guess not sleep. Give up. But I pulled it over me like a cover. Like a bed. Maybe it was peaceful. I don't know. Don't know.

Then it came down on top of me. Whatever...whatever came down on top of me. On top of the steel. The escalator. That's it. The escalator. Up and down. The escalator. The shelter. That's it. Market Street. Yes I know now. Underneath the escalator. On Market Street. Market Street.

It...it was safe. Seemed safe. A safe place. It was still there. The escalator. On Market Street. I think it was. I thought it was dark. But it mustn't have been. Or I couldn't have seen that it was...was the escalator. On Market Street. Opposite... Opposite that shop. Those shops. Those...those shops that had been shops. Shops with their glass fronts. Glass fronts and lights. Lots of lights. The one with all the sewing machines in the window. All...All Saints. Something like that. Girls stuff. Girls stuff to wear. Glass front and lights. And...and the...the shop that sold 'phones. And the entrance to the Arndale Centre. Yes that's it. The shops and the entrance to the Arndale Centre and the escalator. The escalator where I am now. Under the...

Yes I remember. On the other side. The other side opposite the...the 'phone shop. Boots. That's it. No glass. No windows. But there must have been some light. It couldn't have been dark. It was night. But I could see. See inside. Inside Boots. Boots the Chemist they call it. But it's not a chemist. Well, it was chemist. A bit of it. A small part. I...I walked in. I know I walked in.

Because...because I fell. I remember falling. Not walked in through the doors. No not the doors. No need. Through the windows. The window. Because there was no glass. In the windows. No glass in the windows. So I walked in there. But I fell. I fell a lot, because it was dark and I couldn't see. I was...I think I was trying to get to the chemist. No, I was in the chemist. I was in Boots the Chemist. I was trying to get to the part...to the proper part. To the chemist. Because I was cut. Yes that's it. I was cut and I was bleeding. Bleeding badly I think. My arm. My left arm. I don't know why. Why was I bleeding?

Bandage. That was it. I wanted to get to the proper part to get a bandage. Bandages. But...but I gave up because I kept falling. Came here. Here to the escalator.

Yes it was dark. Quiet. More quiet than dark I think. But...but Market Street was never quiet. Never never dark. But it was last night. Was it last night? I don't know. I've slept. I know that. But I don't know how long for. How long I've slept. How long I slept before...how long I slept underneath this steel before it fell on me. On the steel. Onto the steel. Pushing me down. Underneath the steel, underneath the escalator. On Market Street.

I need to get out. Out from under this steel. It's not dark. I can feel it's not dark. Just push with my fingers. Just push up a little. Try it. No not that hand. That hand hurts. That arm hurts. No, try the other hand. Push. Just gently. Just push a little and see what happens. Just a little. Yes that's it. It's moving. It's moving a bit. No. Too heavy. Just try and turn round a bit. Just onto my back a bit. That's it. Can push better now. Try again.

It's OK. It's moving. A bit heavy. A bit heavy to move with one hand. But...

I can see now. Really see. It's not dark. It's not night. Push a bit more. That's it. I can move now, move my legs. Just bits, just bits of stuff falling in through the gap. Choking a bit. Spit it out. Just bits and...just bits of things and dust. Spit it out and push. Push. Push. Yes that's it. Careful now. One big push. One last push and kick. Kick with that leg. Kick. Push. Just bits of stuff. Spit out. Spit it out and push.

Yes. Yes. OK now. I think I can...yes I can push with my knee. Push up and push the steel up. Crawl out. Ignore the bits. Spit them out, blink them out. Just bits. Bits falling in. That's it. It's gone. Gone from on top of me and those things that fell. Fell on top of me in the night. Pushing down. Pushing me

down. Push them back now. Yes I see. Some more steel. Strips of steel on top of my steel bed cover. Strips of steel and blocks. Some blocks. Breeze block I think and some bricks. Spit the bits out. Blink. Close your eyes and one big push. Mouth closed. Eyes closed. Push. One big push.

Now.

Stand now. Push the curved steel back. With this hand. Not the hand that hurts. No. The arm. Not that arm. This one. One knee. Push. One more time. That's it. One knee now. I can stand. It's gone. My cover's gone. And the...and all the other stuff. So much dust. Just spit it out and blink it out. That's it. Breathe now. Yes it's light. It's day. Light now. Blink the light away, blink the dust out. That's it. That's it. My arm. Yes that looks bad. It hurts. Yes it hurts. But...well it's stopped bleeding. Stopped I think. The blood's dark now. Dark and...and not running. It'll be OK. I can see now. Can see Boots. Can see through the glass...well the windows where the glass was. Can see through. The door's still shut. That's funny. That's really funny. Did somebody lock the doors? Did they? That was pointless. Silly. Silly to lock doors.

I don't need the chemist now. Don't need Boots the Chemist, not really a chemist. But maybe I should. I can see now. Not like last night. Or...or how many nights? Maybe I should get a bandage. A bandage from Boots. Now that I can see. Yes, I'll get a bandage. There's nobody around. Nobody...nobody around. I don't have to ask. Here we go. Step up through the window. Through the...the bottles and glass and boxes and... Step up through the window. What a mess. So many bottles and so much glass and...and wires and...all of those things, those bits hanging from the ceiling. Wires and...and pipes and...all hanging down and all this glass and bottles and stuff. All over the floor. A mess. Walk carefully. Don't want to fall again. Just need a bandage. Maybe for later. The blood's black now. Not runny. Not red. But I might need one for later. A bandage. Might...

At the back. Through all the mess. Carefully. Not working now. This escalator. This one's not working. Stairs. The two escalators. They don't move any more. Just stairs now. That's what they are. Twisted. Hold the rail and step over the stuff. The stuff on the stairs. That's it.

"Hello?" Try a bit louder.

"Hello?"

Nobody there. Know there isn't anybody there. But just in case.

"Hello?"

Top stair now. Stop. Look around. Over there. That's where it is. The real chemist. Yes. The chemist with bandages. Look underneath. Underneath the rubbish. All the things. And glass. Here, behind the counter. Push it all away, all the stuff. All the glass. Push it away with your feet. With your foot. That's it. Push it away. Maybe in here. No. Not here. Just bandages. This is the real chemist bit. There must be bandages. Must be. Just so much stuff. Such a mess. No. Just can't be bothered. It's black now. And not runny. It won't start running again. So much stuff. Can't be bothered looking.

That door. I bet it's locked. I could be locked in. That's funny. Locked in when there are no windows. I can just walk out. Walk out through the windows. I'll walk out of this side. Down the escalator. The one on this side. Not the one on Market Street. This side. So much stuff. And stuff hanging down from the ceiling too. And this escalator's like a squiffy staircase now. It's leaning against the other one. The one that went up instead of down. No I'll walk down the one that went up. That's funny. I've never gone down this one, only up. And now I'm going down. Kick the stuff out of the way. Kick it away. Try the door. That's funny. Yes I'll try the door. I don't need to, because I can just walk out. Yes I'll try the door. Yes. Locked. That's funny. I knew it would be. These windows...these windows on this side...well they're not there anymore... These windows were blocked up. Well not blocked up or they probably wouldn't have smashed. Smashed like they have. They just had advertising on the inside. So you couldn't see through. I've never really realised that before. I've never seen what was behind them. Never really wanted to. Not interested. Never interested before. Not really interested now actually. Because there's not really anything behind them. Guess there never was...just...well it's just smashed up stuff now anyway.

Just step down. Just step over everything and step down. That's it. Never done that before. Stepped down through the windows at Boots the Chemist. That's funny really. Now. Just stop a minute. Yes it's black now. Not runny. It'll be fine. Maybe I should have looked a bit harder for a bandage though. Just in case. I can come back if I need to. I guess.

"Hello?"

Over there. Over there on the corner. Everything's just blowing. Blowing around. There's not much left of that now is there? Not much left. It was always a bit flimsy. Always looked flimsy. Just a box stuck on the corner. Always looked strange. Odd bit. Odd on the corner there. Just newspapers and magazines and fags and chocolate. All a bit flimsy. Always seemed so to me. Flimsy. Still. Still. Worth having a look. See what there is. No point going that way. Not yet. Can't get through there. It's blocked. Just sort of flopped in. All those shops. Shops in the arcade. The arcade through to St. Ann's Square. All that glass. Still. It's a pity. Because I liked those shoes in there. Always thought some of the shops were a bit silly. Pointless. But I liked the shoes. Barkers. Brogues. I had a pair once. Once I remember. Barker's brogues. They lasted years. Years and years. But I'll have a look at the theatre. Always good. Always liked it in there. Saw some good stuff. Robert Lindsay once. Robert Lindsay in something. Years ago. It was good. Can't remember what it was. But I remember it was good. Never saw Maxine Peake though. Wanted to. Wanted to see that play. What was it? Think it was... Can't remember. But I'll have a look on the corner first. Look at the flimsy bit that's gone now. Just things flapping around now. Might find something.

Up here. Step up. Haven't got a ticket. Doesn't matter now. The bits on the top are hanging down now. The electricity bits. The bits that joined up for the electricity to make the trams go. When they did. I wonder if the electricity is still going through those bits now that they're hanging down. Hanging down the sides. Not going to check. Can't risk that. In this door and out of the door on the other side now. Don't understand why I did that. No point really. Just getting in one side of the tram and out of the other. Pointless. Pointless really. I could have slept here last night. Or was it the night before? Not safe though. Not safe sleeping on a tram. Too open. Somebody else could have come in. Come in whilst I was sleeping. Having a kip. Maybe it wasn't a kip. Just wanted to... Anyway. They're all around I guess. Just stopped now. Three trams here. Just along here. Right from the one outside Marks and Sparks to the one on the corner of Albert Square. And this one. No windows either. Although it's easier to get in through the door than climb in through the windows. Too high. Anyway no point. No point at all. And these doors aren't locked. Aren't even shut. None of them. Just open. Look out for bits hanging down with electricity in them.

It's funny really. Quite funny. Boots still has locked doors but the tram doors are open. That's quite funny. But the arcade has just...well there were no doors. Not on the outside, but the shops on the inside had doors. Pointless now.

It's all just folded in. But I'll have a look at the kiosk. Might find something.

No. Nothing really. But I can come back. Not much left. Just things flapping around. Mainly bits of paper and that cloth thing that hung down at the front. Just flapping around. Everything's just flapping around. Marks and Sparks. That's the same as Boots. Boots the Chemist. No windows now, but I bet the doors are locked. I'll have a look at Marks later. If I want to. If there's any point. Anyway I think I looked in there... I think it was last night. Or maybe...

There. Oh I see now. Those escalators. The big ones on Market Street where I slept. Well...where I went to sleep. They're just hanging on. Hanging on to the Arndale. Hanging on at the top. No wonder bits fell off in the night. Fell down on top of me. Just hanging on. Just by...just by wires. Bits of steel. Bits. I bet I could kick one of them. Kick one of them at the bottom and it would fall down. At the bottom where I slept. Where I stayed. But what would be the point of that? What would be the point? I might try though. Might try later. That would be like Fred Dibnah used to do, years ago on the telly. Chimneys. Factory chimneys. He didn't kick them though. He used to knock some bricks out and prop the hole up with wood then set fire to the wood and when the wood burnt through, the chimney would start to fall and he'd just run. Run for his life. Funny that was. Funny looking back. Might try and kick one of the escalators on Market Street down later. That would be funny. Funny I guess.

The jewellers. The one on the corner. The corner on the opposite end to the floppy kiosk. Bet there's nothing in there now. There won't be any windows, that's for sure. I'll have a look. Always thought these shops were a bit strange down this side. Seemed to change all the time. Sold odd things. Soap. Think one of them sold soap. Or something like that. Clothes mainly. Clothes down this side and that...that shop that just sold fancy bits for women to dress up. Girls. Accessorise I think. Although did they spell it with a z not an s? Sounds too American. Not sure. No. Nothing left in the jewellers. No windows of course. I wonder if somebody took everything before...

I'll go that way. Into the Royal Exchange from this side. Just steps, stone steps. Or marble I think. Old anyway, so they won't be squiffy. Bet all the glass bits have gone though. Like everywhere else. But these shops on this side were a bit pointless like the others. Always liked Paperchase of course. Always. Interesting stuff. Rubbish a lot of it. But always interesting. I'll have a look. One window. One window left, but the doors are open. Well one of them is. It's a bit squiffy, but it's not locked. Not shut.

"Hello?"

Just stuff flapping around. That's funny. I suppose that's all there was going to be. Going to be in that they sold paper. Paper, not papers like the kiosk did. Still the same thing I guess. And lots of rubbish on the floor. Not rubbish, rubbish. The rubbish stuff they sold. Mostly. And cards.

"Hello?"

I'd try the stairs, because the best stuff was always on the top floor. They never had an escalator. Just stairs. Sort of windy, bendy ones that went one way then the other. Bendy. But they don't seem...well everything's bendy now. All over. These seem just the same but you can't tell. I can't tell. So I think I'll leave it. Won't bother. No point. Guess there'll just be stuff all over the floor. And flapping about. Like...

It's still black and not runny. I've just looked. Not red. So I guess I didn't need the bandage. But it might start again later. So maybe I should have looked harder but I can go back. But I don't think I'll go through the tram if I do. Pointless. Not sure why I did that anyway. Pointless.

I'll go to the theatre. I always liked the theatre, but I wish I'd been to see Maxine Peake. All the glass has gone the other way. It's just struck me. Not the glass has struck me. No the glass hasn't hit me. That's funny. The glass hasn't struck me, I mean the glass is all over St. Ann's Square, like a...like a carpet almost. A carpet. Crunching. Everywhere else it's gone in. Into places. So when you go into places it crunches. Everywhere else. But in St. Ann's Square it's just a carpet. Beautiful really. Beautiful in a strange way. And not quiet. Not quiet because it's crunchy. Crunch. Crunch. Beautiful. In a strange way.

I knew these steps wouldn't be squiffy. But the glass has gone. All gone. And that lift thing. That disabled lift in a box...I never saw anybody use it...has just dropped. Fallen down. Sort of on its side a bit. Something else squiffy. But no matter. I never saw anybody use it. Good steps. Not squiffy steps. Because they were built properly. Not like today. Not like...proper steps. Built to last. A long time ago. That's the difference. Built to last. Not like... I suppose that I knew it would have keeled over. Everything's squiffy now. But this is spectacular. The theatre part. It's like...well it's still in one piece. One piece sort of. But like it's landed squiffy. Not gone squiffy, landed squiffy. Like they always said. Like it was a space ship, a space capsule. And it's landed and it's

bent over a bit. Like a proper bad landing on the moon. Or Mars or something. It's not going anywhere. I mean I know it's not a space ship that's supposed to go somewhere. I mean you can see...I can see...that it's proper just settled down on one side. A bit broken. But still...still in one space ship piece. Strange. Strange. I'm not going in there. I'd like to. But I don't trust it. Don't trust it not to just go again. More leaning over and more squiffy. Although it doesn't look like it's going anywhere. Although there's no roof now. I don't mean that the space ship hasn't got a roof. I mean that the building hasn't got a roof. But it was glass anyway. Glass you see. A lot of the roof was glass. I know that I said this place was built to last, but not that bit. Not the roof. That was meant to let the light in. So of course it was glass. But it's gone now and so I guess if the space ship wanted to take off – if it could take off – well then it... But I'm not going in. Not going in there because I don't trust it. Not any more.

Not much left on this side either. Bought so many things from this side. Gift shop side. All nice stuff in here. Was in here. Used to be in here. I wonder if they moved it before...? Or whether...? Just look at that. No, two. Two things. I'll take those. Nobody will mind.

“Hello?”

Not like the jewellery shop on the corner. The one with...the one that had curved glass but hasn't now. Guess that would be difficult to replace. It they ever wanted to. No. Everything was gone from there. Every last thing. But just two things here. And I think I'll take them. It's like they were just waiting for me. Like somebody had put them here for me. Hung them here. Like they wanted me to buy them. But I won't. Won't buy them I mean. I'll take them and wear them. They'll cheer me up. I know that they're really women's things. Women's jewellery like. But it doesn't matter now. But the main thing is that they always sold good things here. Creative. Not like the jewellers with the curved glass windows on the corner of St. Ann's. They sold standard stuff. Bet it was expensive. Sure it was. Must have been because they kept getting robbed. Just not creative. That's the important thing. Hand made. All hand made in here. Created. But I guess the stuff in the jewellery shop with the curved windows was all hand made too. But not... Anyway, it's not stealing. Not really now. And I'll wear them to...to cheer me up. Whoever made them would have wanted me to. I guess. I bet they were made by a woman. Or women. Two. Because they were probably made by different people. But I don't know. But I'll wear them.

But I don't trust the space ship and so I'm not going in there. But I'd like to.

It's crunching again. Round and round. Pointless really. Just walking round in a circle out here. I just like the noise. It's...it's sort of regular. Because everywhere else there are just bits. Stuff. Things trying to trip you up. Me up. Not like this carpet. Which looks good and sounds... I just like the sound. And right up to the doors of the church. Well not quite right up, because there aren't many...there weren't many windows on this side of the square. Just the church windows. But they were really small. Comparatively. Small in comparison. But it upsets me. Small windows broken. Although these have come out and not gone in. Like the other windows here. Like the windows I don't care about.

I guess I think the church didn't deserve it. Didn't deserve it somehow. Not that everything else deserved it, just... I'm not sure what I mean really. I guess that I liked it in here. Still do. Although it's not the same. Still more peaceful than everywhere else I guess. In a funny sort of way. Not much roof left of course. Nothing overhead. Not much anyway. And that sculpture, mobile sort of thing that was made up of lots of bits is just scrunched up on the floor now. But I won't walk on it. Not on that bit. Because I liked it. Took a photograph of it once I liked it so much. But I never looked at the photograph. And the statues are broken too. All smashed up. And that's sort of sad too.

But the doors aren't squiffy. Which is good. They were built properly a long time ago. Built to last as they say. Wood. Proper stuff. Not glass. Built to last. They are a bit twisted though. Which makes me sad. And the flower seller on the corner. The one on the corner of the church, opposite Russell and Bromley. Come to think of it that's where I bought my Barker brogues from, all those years ago. Russell and Bromley. The flower seller. Well he's not here anymore. What would be the point of that? But it always seemed a bit of colour around and that cheered me up. So did the Christmas markets. And the church. And the flower seller. But no matter.

I can see Kendals. Just the corner. There's no point going there. There's no point going anywhere though. But I wonder if the doors are locked. I bet they are. Locked. No point to that. But I bet they are. Although there are no windows. But if I had a look I bet I could get through the backs of the windows, even though they had walls inside them. Walls at the back. Not proper walls I guess. Just false walls so that they could do nice displays. But I don't think I'll try and get through. Just to find out. No point really.

And here. It's so strange. All the windows on St. Ann's Square have come out and made a carpet, but as soon as you go out of the square all the windows have gone in – not out. Like Gap. All the Gap windows are in – not out. I'll have a think about this. It's troubling me and maybe there's something I've not realised. Not worked out. I'll have a think.

Step up into the tram and step down through the other door. I'm annoyed at myself now. This is pointless. Maybe I could walk the whole way to Didsbury in and out of stopped trams, because I'm sure that they'll be there. I don't want to walk to Didsbury – or anywhere else come to think of it. Not at the moment anyway. But it would be pretty pointless stepping into trams all the way and then stepping out of them on the other side. Although if I could think of a point why it might be worth doing I might just try. But not at the moment. Maybe it's just that I haven't worked out which way to go yet. Although I might not go anywhere. And if I do I don't think that I'll do my tram stepping trick. Because it's pointless. But on the other hand I might.

Maybe it might be towards Bury, or Droylsden. I don't know.

But I'm upset again. Because all the small windows on the Town Hall are broken too. But what did I expect? It's the small windows that upset me. Not the big ones. Although I don't know why. I think that I should really be upset that the Town Hall is...well I was going to say squiffy. But that's not the right word. I guess that it just looks flatter. Less tall. Which is a stupid thing to think, because it is less tall. Because the clock tower is just half a clock tower now. And there's no clock. So I guess it's just half a tower and not half a clock tower. But it's the small windows that are smashed that upset me somehow. Like the ones in St. Ann's. Because they were older I guess. A lot older. But Kendals windows were quite old too. Not Boots or Gap though.

“Hello?”

OK, I'll go to Starbucks. Just there. Just over there. I'll cross at the crossing. Wait for the green man. That's silly too. The green man still keeps waking up. Silly. The only light that's working. How long has he been waking up and then going to sleep again? He must still be connected somewhere. I wonder where? Here, under the ground. I don't know how the green man works. Never wondered before. I do now. No need to wait really, the only thing I can see is the tram on the corner and that's not going to hoot. Not going to hoot to tell me not to cross, that it's coming. I'll climb in there maybe. In one door and out

of the one opposite. Then I'll only have one to do still. The one outside Marks and Sparks. Might do that later. Maybe I won't. This table is on its side, but the chair is still the right way up. This chair. Think I've sat on this one before. Opposite...when the Town Hall was still a Town Hall and not... Well, when the Town Hall had a clock. I've sat here before. On the pavement. Well not on the pavement. On a chair on the pavement. Maybe it was this chair. I don't know.

There, it's upright now. Now I have a table and a chair. Coffee. Small black Americano. Think they used to have it as Primo on the board. Not small. I never did say Primo. Just small. Too pretentious for Manchester. Not Starbucks. Starbucks is alright. Just mean using Italian words instead of English words. Or was it Costa that said Primo? I don't know. Small black Americano please. Yes that would be good. A coffee. Not water. Water is good too. But not as good as coffee. Not now. Not right now at this minute. There is some coffee still. I've looked. Found it last time. But coffee's no good. No good without hot water. Water is good. I've found some. Just a little water. Found it whilst I've been looking. Looking around. Just a bit. Just a bottle. But it's no good for coffee. No good cold. Just bits floating around. But I'll just sit here. Just for a few minutes. Just sit. Relax. That's funny. Relax. And maybe I'll go and have a look in Piccolino's. Over there. Used to go there. Not for a while though. Not now. Windows gone now. Like everywhere. No windows.

Maybe I'll have a look though. Another look. When I've relaxed for a few minutes. Oh, the green man's woken up again. Safe to cross. Cross back into Albert Square. I won't though. No point. And anyway I don't really want to see the front of the Town Hall. The half Town Hall. Don't want to see it from the front. It makes me sad. Funny really. It's old but it's broken now. Built to last. But it's not lasted. Not now, not after this. The statue's still OK though. I'm pleased about that. No point going to Piccolino's now. I don't think it's worth it. I'll just sit here and relax for a while. Just a short while. His post's leaning over a bit. I hadn't noticed that. The green man's post. Or whatever you call it. Bent over, just a little. Not straight. Not much, or I'd already have noticed it.

Put the chair back. Under the table. Well not under the table. That's what they say isn't it. Under the table. Never really thought about it before. But you don't put a chair under a table. Not properly.

Well, let's see. I'll walk past Piccolino's, on this side. Just walk past on the

opposite side. Not even sure if it's called Piccolino's now. Nothing on the front anymore. Nothing at the top, over the glass. Where the glass was. Lots of chairs in there I can see. And tables. All squiffy, though there's one still standing up. One table that is. All the others are on their side. And the chairs. Maybe I should put a chair under the table that's standing up. Maybe not. No point really. I'll walk along here. I'll walk through here to King Street. This bit always seemed a bit lost to me. This bit between Albert Square and King Street. Wonder if King Street was called King Street because of King...no it was Prince Albert, not King Albert. Never really thought about it before. Which King was King Street called after? Which one? Don't know. Maybe it wasn't one king, maybe it was just all kings. English kings I guess. They wouldn't call a street after kings from another country would they? Or maybe it's just a name for a street. Maybe it wasn't one king. Like Albert Square. Well not like Albert Square, because that was named after Albert. Prince Albert. Strange really. Not Albert Square. King Street. Named after all kings. I don't know. King Street was...was grand in its own way. Grand. That's a strange word. Grand. Well it was. At least that's how I used to think about it. Never realised really. Never thought that before. But it was. Grand I mean. Buildings. Good ones. Built to last. The glass bits are gone of course. Maybe they were never meant to be here. Putting big glass windows into old buildings. Built to last. The white one, the big white one over there. That was my favourite. At the top on the right. Up there. Lutyens. The architect I mean. Lutyens the architect. Did the war memorials in...well on the continent. France, Northern France... or Belgium. Belgium I think. Funny really. War memorials. Big white building. Built to last. Too tall though. Though I guess he didn't think that it wouldn't be one day. Too tall. It's not now though of course. Not as tall as it was. Still. Still it's my favourite building. On King Street I mean. Not favourite building of all. Anywhere. Just my favourite building on King Street. That's what I mean. Makes me sad though. Now it's not as tall.

I'll walk through here, through this square. Though it's not square, it's... Well it's not square. Not exactly. Albert Square's much more square, though I doubt whether that's really a square either. Not a real square. Things don't have to be square to be called a square do they? It's just a word. Square.

Closed in. Closed in this bit. Narrow. A bit like the part between Albert Square and King Street. Though there's more here. More...well it goes somewhere and it's full of offices. And banks. Banks too. Well it was. A van. That's squiffy too. Just on one side. Two tyres flat. Two on one side. Maybe that's why it's still here. Maybe they were flat when... Maybe that's why it wasn't used

when... Why it stayed here. Two flat tyres. Locked too. This door...and... Yes all locked. But I doubt whether there's anything in it. Not anymore. So why did they lock it? I don't know. Maybe it was locked before. And they just left it. Because it had flat tyres. Two. Both on the same side.

Here we are. More escalators. No the most scary escalators. Been in here...up these a few times. They were scary when...when they were OK. A long way up. And down. But they're not squiffy. Not like the others. Just standing there straight. Straight up and down. Slaters. Slaters Menswear. Still there. The sign, the sign that says Slaters Menswear. Could always find something in there. Slaters I mean. And the prices were good. Well, OK. But the escalators were scary. Even then. So long up. And down. Still...I still don't trust them. I'd have a look, because they're still straight. Not squiffy. If I need...if I need something to wear I might have a look. Later. If I need something. Not now though. Too risky. They always scared me, so I'd need a reason...more reason to climb up there. Walk up. Have a look if there's anything to wear. If I need something. But they might trap me. Keep me up there. You can never tell. But they're still straight, not like the others. So I might try. Later. I might.

Tesco. Tesco Express. That's what they call it. Called it. Half of the sign's still there. Just half. Well, half of each word really. No glass. No glass of course. Been here before. Can always find something. If you look hard enough. Mostly everything's gone now of course. But if you look, move all the bits, everything that's fallen down. Fallen over... You can usually find something. Not in this bit on the corner. Nothing worth having there, even if there was anything left. Just...here in the corner though. I've looked here before and you can usually find something. I don't want to go in any further. Well you can't really anyway. I don't trust it, further in. Too much hanging down and I don't mind moving bits, just moving bits to find something, but you have to be careful. It doesn't look safe. Just one thing moved and...well you never know. Here, under this, just lift it. Lift it up. I've not looked under here before. I don't think. Maybe I have. Careful now, just lift a little bit, don't try and move it too far. Just lift it so you can see. Yes there. I can see now. A packet. Maybe two. No. Just one. I can see it. That's OK, I can reach. Pot Noodle. That's OK, careful...just pull with your fingers, the ones with blood on, although it's not bleeding now. I know because it's black not red. And anyway I couldn't lift this with that arm, so I have to lift it with the other one and use the fingers...the finger with blood on. Careful, just drag it out a little bit. Good that's it. I've got it now, can pull it out. Pot Noodle. That's good. I'll take it back. Like the coffee really. Though not as bad. Coffee's no good without water. Hot water that is. It's just bits.

Floating. But Pot Noodle's alright. You can eat Pot Noodle without water. Better with water of course. Hot water...but... I'll maybe find some water. Later. I'll look again. Maybe in Marks and Sparks. There might be something. I don't know. You never know. But I'd have to go downstairs. Downstairs in Marks' and I'm not sure I want to do that. I don't know. I'll have a think. Later. I'll have a think later when I've eaten this Pot Noodle.

In bed. That's where I'll eat it. Well not bed. Under the escalator. Here. Opposite. Under the escalator here on Market Street. Just pull that sheet back now. Underneath. Just lift it up and just sort of crawl under. Not crawl. Not really. Just I mean crouch down a bit, get underneath. With the Pot Noodle. That's it. Just under. Safe, although something might drop on top again. I don't know. We'll see. I was going to kick it and see. Kick it to see if it fell down. Like Fred Dibnah used to make things fall down. Well not like he did, but you know what I mean. Maybe I'll try later. I don't know.



How did it start? Well I don't know. I don't know really.

Nothing in particular I don't think. No starting point, although I guess there must have been. Just nothing you could pin down to one thing. Or another.

I guess it started slowly, over years. Politics I guess you'd say. But not really politics. Just people. Like it always is. That's what politics is really. People taking sides. Sides that suited them. And uneasiness. Yes lots of uneasiness, which grew. Gradually. Nothing that you could say started it. Started it definitively. Uneasiness and unrest, after the first election, then grew after the second election. Maybe you could say that it was when the country – the United Kingdom that is – voted to leave the European Union. If you ask when it started, maybe it was then. But there had been uneasiness before. For a long time. Maybe decades. The problem was that overall the UK voted to leave the EU. But that was mostly in the North. The North of the UK that is. The South voted to stay, as did Scotland. But then the South was much more prosperous, always had been.

So the differences grew from there I guess. Started to grow. Scotland had already started to pull away. They had voted for independence and won at the third attempt. That meant that they distanced themselves even more from the South of England of course. Almost totally. Even to get in or out of Scotland you had to cross a border and that was for goods too. Which didn't make a big difference at first, but then the rest of the world started to ship goods straight into Scotland, bypass England and the ports close to Europe. Of course when Scotland discovered more oil supplies – much more – off their coast they became stronger and that caused more troubles now that they were independent from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Oil imports from Scotland were cheaper than from most of the rest of the world, even though they were more expensive to produce. But that meant that Scotland had more power over the island.

So the South of England imposed tariffs on goods – clothing and food, electrical goods and so on – crossing the border into Scotland. Of course this meant that more money flowed into the South, whilst the North were made to pay more for oil and transport, even though they were closer to Scotland. And oil and transport made jobs, but the jobs were gradually lost, year-by-year in the North of England.

Yes there was unrest, with demonstrations on the streets of Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds, right up to Newcastle and Carlisle. The whole of the North of the country gradually slipped further and further into poverty, with food supplied in many places direct from the Government in the South. Mobile food banks travelled the towns and cities of the North, but eventually there weren't enough supplies to feed everybody and the demonstrations turned into riots.

The turning point came, I guess, when Government food lorries and trains were stopped on their journeys and food looted before it reached the towns and cities. Looters armed themselves first with molotov cocktails and improvised bombs and then a supply of guns reached the North through ports in Scotland. It was said that these were supplied by Middle Eastern states which had an interest in disrupting the supply of Scottish oil to England, but we'll never really know. And if so, why the guns and ammunition were allowed through Scottish ports.

But it appears that large supplies of guns and ammunition – and other combat materials – were either intercepted by, or supplied direct to Scotland, who had few armaments of their own, particularly after the nuclear submarine bases were moved to the South West coast of England. Nor is it clear whether the insurgence of Scottish part time militia was sanctioned by the Scottish Government or spontaneous as unrest grew.

The introduction of armed support from Scotland led to Government troops escorting the food convoys, but these were now met with insurgent armed groups further South, hijacking trains and lorries and some armed skirmishes happened as far South as Birmingham. Conflict grew and arms supplies fell into the hands of individuals across the country from Liverpool to Hull. Mostly individuals who were foraging violently for food for their families.

But a leader emerged who, over many months, persuaded the foragers to form a Northern militia, controlling food and goods distribution to Northern cities. Of course conflict escalated and eventually all supplies North of Birmingham were stopped, leaving Northern towns and cities relying on Scotland to provide survival.

When the small Scottish regular army were deployed South to aid Northern towns and cities, Government troops were deployed North to defend what was seen as a potentially dangerous move towards the South of England.

It's unclear where or why the main conflict began. Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Hull, or any particular town or city. But Government troops were deployed across the country from East to West. The popular uprising was suppressed, but attrition continued and, with further fears that insurgency would spread South, troops used firearms and then military hardware to quell those uprisings.

A final Government push saw all towns and cities along the M62 Motorway attacked simultaneously with heavy armour, causing whole populations to flee North towards Cumbria and Northumberland. Fearing a further organised uprising, Government troops pursued the population to the Scottish border, where they were admitted to safety in hastily prepared refugee camps, financed by international aid from the USA and some European countries. Although the whole population of the North of England were forced to flee, a few were isolated and trapped within the military confines imposed around each major city and a no-go line formed by the M62.

