

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Are You Dave Gorman?

Dave Gorman & Danny Wallace

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

Dave Gorman and Danny Wallace are best friends, flatmates and drinking partners. One legendary night in the pub the pair had an argument. Dave thought there must be hundreds of people in the world who shared his name. Danny didn't. They were drunk. Five hours later they were on a train to Scotland...

That morning, they unwittingly kick-started an uncontrollable adventure that would take them around the world, finding and meeting complete strangers with only one thing in common - they were all called Dave Gorman too.

During their six month odyssey, Dave and Danny got caught in a tornado in New York, they lost their shoes in Norway and caused a security alert at an Israeli airport. They met greenkeepers, booksellers, carpetfitters, gurus, policemen, film stars and a semi-retired lighthouse technician.

They appeared on page 3 of *The Sun* and they were front page news in Denmark. They were even asked to make a TV show about their adventure.

They met no one else called Danny Wallace.

The result of their travels is this book. A true story of obsessed flatmates and of a worldwide quest to find people

who could say Yes to that eternal question... Are You Dave Gorman?

**ARE  
YOU  
DAVE  
GORMAN?**

Dave Gorman & Danny Wallace



EBURY PRESS

'When Danny Wallace bet Dave Gorman he couldn't find 54 other people called Dave Gorman, neither of them could have imagined this daft quest would become a theatre show, a TV series and a book. Or could they? After all, Wallace is a journalist, and Gorman is a Bafta-winning comedian who's written for Mrs. Merton. However this trivial pursuit takes comedy and journalism to an altogether different level. Their madcap odyssey covered 25,000 miles, carrying them to Italy, Israel and the Channel Islands. They lost their shoes in Norway. They were caught in a tornado in New York. They appeared on page three of The Sun, and became front-page news in Denmark, without even going there. They met a carpet fitter, a semi-retired lighthouse keeper and the assistant manager of East Fife football club, all called Dave Gorman, and an American actor who played a character called Dave Gorman in a film. The end result of this spectacularly pointless adventure is a warm, funny, life-enhancing book about absolutely nothing'

*The Guardian.*

'A magnificent tale of obsession and adventure'

*The Independent*

'... heightens an elegantly simple concept to the peak of absurdity, as a drunken boast leads to obsession, betrayal, exhilarating victories, devastating setbacks and maxed-out credit cards. In a way, we are all Dave Gorman ... an international sensation ... a magnificent docu-comedy ... a true story that's as simple and accessible as it is maddeningly addictive'

*Time Out New York*

'This is a much better book about why boys are how they are than 'Men are from Mars Women are from Venus'

*Jenny Colgan*

'*Are You Dave Gorman?*' is the oddly touching story of how comic Dave Gorman went in search of all the world's other Dave Gormans ... it's the very frivolousness and absurdity of '*Are You Dave Gorman?*' that makes it so boyishly likeable'

[Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk)

'You would think, much like the poor chaps at school with the surnames Bates, Pratt and Smallcock, Mr. Gorman would positively shun publicity, or at the very least, come up with a more public-appeasing moniker. But no, the impressively mutton chopped comic had to go and make a bet with his best mate Danny Wallace, that he could find someone else with his daft name. This was played out, week-by-week in Gorman's gently pleasing, but genuinely funny BBC2 series, but its retelling on pages of flattened twig takes nothing away from the writer's friendly style or indeed the humour inherent in the appealingly daft situation. This is one trivial piece of nonsense that comes with "recommended" stamped all over it'

*FHM magazine*

'Nick Hornby may have explored the idea of men bringing security to their lives through obsessive devotion to music or football, but this raises the stakes to the nth degree.... It's the sheer madness of the quest that proves the compelling hook, complemented by the authors' lightness of touch and quickness of pace. And, of course, it is funny too. Above all, though, this is a cracking adventure and one which anyone can enjoy, even if you've never met a Dave Gorman'

[Chortle.co.uk](http://Chortle.co.uk)

'You'll like this so much you may want to change your name to Dave Gorman'

*Big Issue*

'What starts out as a drunken bet grows into an existential odyssey and a life affirming, heart-warming chapter in the history of English eccentricity'

*Independent on Sunday*

'Gorman is becoming the Bill Bryson of stand-up'

*Sunday Times*

# PROLOGUE

**Hello. My name's Dave Gorman.**

**Throughout this book, I'll be writing in this bold, rather confident typeface.**

Hello. My name's Danny Wallace. And I'll be writing in this relaxed, more elegant font.

Now, Danny Wallace isn't really a name you're going to see all that much in this book, so if I were you, I'd go back and read it again.

**A little while ago, Danny and I ...**

That's me.

**... set off on a journey that should never really have happened. It was something that would take us tens of thousands of miles around the world, meeting dozens of strangers, all of whom have one vital thing in common.**

**But I'm sure you'll work out what that is as you read on ...**

The most worrying thing about the book you are about to read is that it is true. Entirely, painfully true.

Read the book. Pity us. And then pray that it never happens to you.

**Or, follow in our footsteps and do it for yourself.**

No, don't do that.

**Thank you.**

*Dave Gorman & Danny Wallace, St. Tropez, 2001*

## *Chapter 1*

# **HARROW BOYS ...**

IF I'M TO be regarded as an authority on anything - and I hope that one day I am - I would guess it would be on the subject of flatmates. I've had my fair share, and probably yours, too.

Ranging from the freakish to the unutterably dull, more people have bought me a pint of milk than they have a pint of lager, and that's the way I like it.

There was Tony the Greek, for example; a man whose nickname stemmed not from a shady gangster background but from the fact that his name was Tony and he came from Greece. I'm quite proud of the fact that it was me who came up with the name. Before then, he'd just been Tony, which, to be honest, made him sound a bit common.

Tony would buy fishburgers from the chip shop down the street and fill every spare shelf in the fridge with them. He was a fan of what I believe polite society might term 'comical cigarettes' and would often emerge from his room surrounded by a haze of smoke and an exotic smell, take a fishburger from the fridge, and then head back to his room where he would sleep for most of the day and night. When occasionally he would leave the flat, he'd only go as far as *Tesco*, where he would prove their perfect customer and fall for each and every multibuy deal they had going. We might be two boys sharing a flat, but as far as Tony the

Greek was concerned, as long as you were saving a fiver in the process, you could never have enough tampons.

I didn't stay in that flat for long.

I have lived in a house full of Norwegians and a man called Janush who would often be mistaken for George from *Seinfeld*. I have shared a flat with eight musicians, with two fashion designers, with a bouncer called Big Al, and, variously, three dogs, a stoat and six fish.

Now, let's not draw any conclusions from this. Let's not start thinking that I must have some kind of anti-social tendencies that might cause flatmates to drop their belongings and flee the minute they walk in the door. I don't look like a serial killer, a born again Christian, or a children's entertainer. My hygiene is second-to-none. The stoat didn't belong to me. And when it's my turn to buy the milk, I treat my responsibility with all the gravitas it deserves.

But it was when I was living in a converted hotel in Harrow-on-the-Hill with a Finnish musician called Jaakko and a Polish 'visual poet' called Marcin that I found true flatmate happiness.

Jaakko was a kind and gentle Finn, who'd make proper coffee in the mornings. Marcin was wise - almost mystical - and statements of astounding profundity would often fall from his lips. 'I have noticed,' he once said, 'that items made from stainless steel have "stainless steel" written on them ... I wonder if it would not be sensible to extend this practice to other materials also, for the sake of clarity...?'

The day Marcin revealed that he was being kicked out of the country just because he was living here illegally, we were drinking Jaakko's proper coffee in the kitchen as usual. Of course, the fact that Marcin couldn't afford his ticket home, had nowhere to store his stuff, and had to say goodbye to his pretty new girlfriend wasn't great news, but the fact that Jaakko and I now had to find a new flatmate really was the straw that broke the camel's back.

For a while we did nothing. We tried to ride it out. But now that there were only two of us, it seemed like *every other night* it was my turn to do the dishes.

Jaakko felt the same. And so one night, after taking the last of Marcin's stuff to the tip, it was decided.

We would take out an ad for a new flatmate.

**If there's one thing I knew about myself it was that I didn't want to live with other people. I lived alone in a one bedroom flat, overlooking the canal basin in the centre of Manchester and I loved it that way.**

**I had spent most of my life sharing with other people. For the first ten years of my life I had shared a room with my brother, Nick. For nine months before that we had shared a womb - he's my *twin* brother. Since leaving home I had lived with first seven people, then five people, then four people, then three people, then two people, then one person, then one-person-I-was-sleeping-with who turned out to be one-person-I-wasn't-the-only-person-sleeping-with and so, finally, I lived alone. And I was convinced that each of these arrangements had been better than the last. (Although, obviously, I missed the sex).**

**It's not that I don't like other people. It's just that with fewer people there's less compromise. And with no people there is none. I was happy this way: just me, my music, my choice of TV channel, my furniture and my sleep pattern.**

**Living alone means never having to say you're sorry. Living alone means you can use the toilet without shutting the door. If that isn't the very definition of personal freedom, I don't know what is. And when I look back at that flat, that flat so full of good memories, I am unable to tell you whether or not the bathroom even had a door.**

**The only problem with living alone was having a mortgage. Apparently, there's something in the small print that means you have to pay all that money back. Crazy, isn't it? So, the mortgage needed paying, which meant that *I* needed paying, which in turn meant I would have to involve myself in the grubby world of work.**

**There was an offer and it left me on the horns of a dilemma. A TV company had asked me if I might like to work for them. The contract would last for nearly four months, the wage would more than adequately cover my mortgage, but - and here comes the particularly tricky horn - the job was in London.**

**Manchester had been home for ten years, I lived alone in a flat that I adored but in order to pay for it I would have to spend four months not living there. Worse ... the cost of living in London *and* paying the mortgage in Manchester meant I would have to, gulp, live with other people.**

**With a heavy heart I bought a copy of *Loot* and started making my way through the small ads.**

I was looking for a payphone in Budapest Central Station. Yes, I know it's a little early in the story to suddenly confuse you with tales of Eastern Europe, but it's the truth, that's where I was, and it seems a little silly to lie to you and tell you I was in Bournemouth when Budapest is far more glamorous and makes you feel your buying this book has already been a little worthwhile.

Anyway, it was midnight, it was freezing, it was Hungary, and my only concern was whether or not Jaakko had managed to find us someone new to live with. I dreaded not being in on the big decision. Jaakko had wanted to wait until I got back from Hungary, but I was insistent; I trusted him to find the right person for the flat.

And anyway, I was going to be late for my plane and I hadn't changed any money yet. A few people were coming round to look at the flat that night, but I was sure, as is the way, that none of them would be suitable candidates for our very metropolitan way of life.

I'd been asked to go to Hungary to write an article for a magazine, but it was a last minute thing and they needed me to go out there as soon as possible. Before I left for the airport, I'd tutored Jaakko on what to look out for in a potential flatmate. I gave him a few pointers, a few questions he might like to throw in. I warned him of women who look like they might just have split up with their boyfriends and would simply love two male flatmates to spend twelve hours a day pouring her heart out to, and then the other twelve hours screaming at for all the Bad Things Men Do. I warned him of men who look like they might be about to bring an unnecessary amount of computer equipment to the flat and then never leave their room. And I warned him about the people who look like they might very well take an active interest in live folk music and all that that entails (I have, over the years, come to realise that there is nothing more terrifying than discovering your new flatmate has brought an acoustic guitar and some bongos with them).

On the plane to Budapest, though, I began to have my doubts. It's a big thing, deciding on who should move into your flat with you. A lot of issues come into play. I couldn't put my finger on any of them, but I knew they existed, and that was enough to fluster me. I now dreaded coming back from Hungary and meeting whoever Jaakko had decided should move into the flat. I became convinced that he would almost certainly have taken leave of his senses, or panicked because he couldn't answer a potential flatmate's question about the water rates. Or perhaps he would buckle under the pressure and simply offer the room to the

first bucktoothed simpleton with a set of bongos to walk through our door...

I couldn't stand it. I needed to be in on the decision. I asked a man in a hat where the nearest payphone was.

'Where are you coming from?' he asked.

'London', I said, and regretted it instantly. The man asked me whether I knew that in 1953, Hungary beat England at Wembley 6-3. I said I did know that, actually, although I neglected to mention that it was only because I'd been told exactly that three times already since our plane landed, each time by an eager Hungarian stranger. The man smiled at me. I smiled back. I asked him again if he knew where the nearest payphone was, and he said yes, and pointed at the most obvious-looking payphone I had ever seen, surrounded by fluorescent yellow arrows and big signs saying *Telefon* (which I have since discovered is the Hungarian word for 'telephone').

I used it to wake Jaakko up.

'Hi Jaakko.'

'Hey Danny.'

'Listen, I think we should wait with the flatmate thing until I get back...'

'Ah...'

'It's not fair me putting all the responsibility on you...'

'That's okay, 'cos...'

'I think we should both be in on the decision, so that we get someone we're both happy with...'

'Yeah, absolutely...'

'Cool.'

'But a man called Dave is going to move in this weekend. He's coming down from Manchester with all his things on Friday.'

I weighed the situation up, deciding how much anger and annoyance to show.

'Okay then.'

I'd had a list of fifteen places to look at and two days in which to do it. Number 44a was the first place I checked. It was in the heart of Harrow, which seemed an awfully long way out of town - but it was only a five-minute walk to the tube and, from there, a twenty-minute journey into central London. The house had been fairly grand in its day - although that was clearly some time ago. Since then it had been converted first into a hotel, then into two flats, with 44a being the first and second floors. The man who showed me round was called Jaakko (pronounced Yah-co). He was Finnish.

'I'm Jaakko', he said with a broad grin and a faint accent, 'I am from Finland.'

We shook hands.

'I'll show you the spare room. It was Marcin's room. He is from Poland. He's a very interesting guy - he is a visual poet.'

'A *visual* poet? What does that mean?'

'I have absolutely no idea. But he's a very interesting guy.'

'So, was it just the two of you?'

'No... there is Danny also. I'm sorry he's not here. He's in Budapest.'

'It all sounds very international. Where's *he* from?'

'Bath.'

'Oh.'

Jaakko seemed like a laid-back enough guy.

'Do you have any house rules?' I asked.

'No,' he said. 'It is very much a house of convenience. Especially convenience foods.'

At the end of the tour, I made a rash decision. I decided to take the room. There were two thought processes at work here. First, I figured that a flat full of globetrotters would be as close as I could get to living alone. You can't trot the globe *and* be in the

**living room arguing over the remote control at the same time. Second, I was meant to visit fourteen more properties before the next day was done and I just couldn't be arsed. Jaakko and I shook hands once more and the deal was done. On Monday I would move in.**

On Tuesday I returned from my Eastern European jaunt with a working knowledge of Hungarian, a few facts about the country to pepper around my article (apparently, in 1953, Hungary beat England 6-3 at Wembley), and a furry white hat which I planned to give to Jaakko to make up for the fact that I hadn't done any Hoovering since about Christmas 1971.

The fact that Jaakko had already done the deal and decided who was to move into 44a had taken a weight off my mind. There was now nothing I could do about it. If this Dave fella turned out to be a semi-professional wrestler who just loved to involve his friends in practising his new moves, I'd just have to grin and bear the inevitable headlocks.

But when I arrived at the tube station I began the five-minute walk to the house with my head low and my bags heavy. I started to feel slightly awkward about walking into my own house. Presumably this 'Dave' would now be there. He would already have unpacked his wrestling gear and found a quiet corner for his many bongos.

Jaakko would have shown him how to operate the needlessly complicated shower. He would have shown him which button on the needlessly complicated remote turns on the video without turning off the stereo at the same time. He would have demonstrated how to use the various kitchen appliances - each of them needlessly complicated, and each of them usually shunned in favour of the microwave. Which would actually have taken some

explaining before use, being one of the few things in our house that was deceptively simple.

Dave would probably have been hungry after moving his stuff into the flat - as semi-professional-wrestlers-cum-folk-musicians often are - which meant that he would have probably done his first shop. He'd have to have chosen between the *Tesco* down the road or the *Spar* two minutes away. He'd then have to have chosen which of our spare shelves was to be his.

I turned my key as quietly as I could and walked into the house. I looked around the hallway. Nothing too different. He'd clearly not had time to make his mark yet, but I bet he had plans. Oh yes. I bet he had *all kinds of plans* for that hallway. He probably already wanted me and Jaakko out, based on those hallway plans of his alone.

I walked into the kitchen. I was right about the shopping. Dave had chosen the *Spar* two minutes away. The cheap bastard. He'd also decided on the shelves right opposite the kitchen door ... no, not the ones you're thinking of, not the ones in the cupboard, but the ones out in the open and in full view of any visiting dignitaries! The sheer arrogance! His tastes, it seemed, were for canned goods - beans, tuna chunks and soup with bits in. Not the fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and garden herbs that Jaakko and I often talked about buying but never did - oh, *no*. *Convenience* foods! How would this man fit in?

An inspection of the fridge revealed that Dave had bought a new, two-litre bottle of semi-skimmed milk, presumably to try and win his new flatmates over. This desperate attempt to curry favour was too much for me, and I became instantly convinced that Jaakko had made the gravest of errors. How could he not have seen that this cheap, arrogant and lazy new flatmate of ours was in no way the kind of man that I would willingly know?

And then Dave walked into the kitchen.

And I realised that I already did.

I'd first met Danny - the man whose kitchen I now found myself in - at the Edinburgh Festival four years earlier, in 1996.

I was there performing a one-man show - which meant that I was working for one hour a night but that I was away from home for four weeks. By the time the festival was nearly four days old I'd started to get a little bored. I'd gone out to one of the many parties and I was in the mood to get drunk.

At the party, the bar was so crowded and I was responsible for getting in such a big round that every order became rather a time-consuming exercise. So to help me achieve my goal that evening (getting drunk) I had taken to the unsavoury habit of bookending. That is, I was ordering my own drink twice - once at either end of the order.

'I'll have a rum and coke, two pints of Guinness,' (at which point the rum arrives and I start to drink) '... two pints of lager, a vodka tonic, a vodka lime and soda, a whiskey no ice, three Jack Daniels and coke ...' (I finish the rum) '... oh and another rum and coke please. Oh. And a tray. Thanks.'

On ordering one round, the barman was at the till and I found myself trying to work out how best to negotiate my way out of the crowded bar area. I tried to half-turn so that I would still be able to collect my change but also be ready to sidle through the throng. Amateurishly, I dropped my shoulder, and I knocked the elbow of the man next to me and spilt the pint that was attached to it. I looked at the spillee. His forlorn face convinced me that I should do the decent thing. The barman offered me my change, and I risked the wrath of the queuing drinkers ...

'Sorry ... er ... could I have *another* pint of lager, please. Thanks.'

**I turned to the forlorn one and offered my hand,  
'I'm Dave.'**

**He shook my hand. 'Danny.'**

**I turned back to the bar.**

**'... And another rum and coke. Ta.'**

Usually, when someone spills my pint in a pub, I break their nose. Or, at least, I do it with my eyes. But I hide it behind quite a pleasant glance, an 'oops', and more often than not, I apologise to save them having to. But I think we both walk away knowing who the victor was.

On this occasion, I had been talking to my two friends Adam and Steve, fellow writers, also covering the festival, who'd been roped in to doing all the coverage for *The Daily Star* - not a paper that normally plumbs the depths of arts coverage ... *arse* coverage is a far more likely subject - but who nevertheless had decided that this would be the year the *Star* went upmarket. Shows were awarded not *points* out of five, but *pints*. You get the idea.

When Dave nudged my elbow and made my knees wet, Adam and Steve had just spotted Scottish belle Gail Porter - then just an obscure kids' TV presenter - and were trying to work out how to get through the crowded bar to try and speak to her.

I, however, had just been bought a pint by a stranger, and it would've been rude not to talk to him for at least a while.

**Now, there are certain situations that seem to disable proper conversation. For example, during the first seven days of anyone's time at university it is impossible to have a conversation without discussing each other's A-level results, even though they are no longer relevant and were never interesting. Well, the Edinburgh Fringe is like that. No conversation can**

occur without discussing the Fringe itself and your place in it. All conversation must centre on why you have decamped to Edinburgh for the month. What you do/what you've seen/what you *should* see ... these are the accepted subjects of conversation, those are the rules.

Well, that night, Danny and I *broke* those rules. We talked about all sorts of things - we worked out that if an aircraft were to take off vertically and then wait for the earth to rotate before descending it would only take five hours to travel to New York; we established that a slinky on an up escalator would be in a state of perpetual motion; we decided that the introduction of 'Uncle Albert' had damaged the sitcom *Only Fools and Horses* almost as much as the introduction of 'Scrappy Doo' had damaged the cartoon *Scooby Doo*; and we invented *Travel Twister*. We didn't discuss the festival once. And that was why I liked him. In a city obsessed with self I had found someone with something else on his mind.

I was working as a features writer and reviewer for *The Scotsman* that year - a paper with integrity and independence high on its list of priorities - and *The Scotsman's* reviewers are generally highly discouraged from making friends with performers.

Bizarrely, it's seen as just one step away from moving in with them.

The next day I discovered an alarming fact about Danny Wallace. He was a journalist. Worse, he was a reviewer. I knew then that any potential friendship that might have grown out of the drunkenness of the night before was illicit. Performers and reviewers just don't mix. Seeing the two together is like seeing a

Premiership footballer wining and dining next Saturday's referee; it just isn't done. So that was that. Neither of us mentioned it, we just shrugged our shoulders and got on with things while making sure not to get on with each other. He was a Montague and I was a Capulet and that was that. Over the next couple of years we occasionally crossed paths in the course of our work, but while we would nod at each other in acknowledgement, there was never any conversation.

But now here he was, standing in front of me once again, in Harrow, looking shocked. Surely it would be okay to talk to him now that we shared a kitchen?

I'd been upstairs trying to work out where to put my bongos. Then I figured they might look quite decorative on the mantelpiece in the living room. It occurred to me that it would be a nice conciliatory gesture on my first proper day in a new flat to donate something like that to the shared rooms of the house, so I'd taken my bongos downstairs. While doing so I heard the front door shut. I got downstairs and there was a suitcase in the hallway. I walked into the kitchen and there was Danny. The man I'd met four years ago in Edinburgh was now standing in my kitchen. Or rather I was standing in his kitchen. Or rather, we were standing in what was now *our* kitchen.

There was a big pause. Eventually, Danny spoke.

'Do you want a rum and coke?'

Alcohol seemed like the sensible option in this situation, given that a) that bloke Dave had moved in, and b) he'd brought some bloody bongos with him.

**And that was how we started talking. And from there we talked, and drank, and talked some more into the early hours of the next morning.**

**As time moved on I realised I was actually enjoying living with Danny and Jaakko. I wasn't just tolerating it. It was an actual pleasure. The compromise I'd so wanted to avoid just wasn't there. They were, but the compromise wasn't. In the months we shared, I don't think there was ever an argument or even a discussion about what should be on the TV. We all made each other cups of tea, we kicked a football around together, we put a dartboard up in the hall, and there was always a cocktail being mixed in the kitchen.**

**The toilet door remained closed, but apart from that, life at 44a was close to perfect.**

**I rented out my flat in Manchester to a young professional couple who were only too pleased to pay me more money in rent than I needed to cover my mortgage, and I decided to stay in London.**

Dave and I became firm friends almost immediately. Our strange sleep patterns and willingness to brew up at the drop of a hat only served to strengthen that. And there was a real synchronicity to our lives. If I decided, at 3 o'clock in the morning, that what I really wanted to do was watch *Karaoke Challenge* on cable TV, you could bet I'd bump into Dave in the hallway. And more often than not, he'd have two cups of tea in his hands.

The nature of our jobs meant that our hours were our own to keep. We didn't have bosses. We had only the lightest of responsibilities. We could stay up all night, and sleep in all day. It was like being unemployed, but without the hassle of looking for work. We were perhaps the only two people in the country to watch more than one episode

of 3-2-1 in a week, beginning, as they did, halfway between when most people go to bed and when they get up. We became avid viewers of Harrow's local cable TV channel, eagerly awaiting each new programme recorded on home video-cameras by the town's surly fifteen-year-old schoolchildren.

In short, we had a lot of time and not much work to do.

Jaakko wasn't so lucky. He was working every hour of every day in a soulless telemarketing job, researching things that really didn't need to be researched, so that he could save up enough money to visit his fiancée, Yoko. As is the fashion with many Japanese people these days, Yoko lived in Japan, and what with her busy job in banking and her various hobbies, some evenings it just didn't make sense for her to make the trip over to Harrow.

But Jaakko and Yoko remained in love thanks to frequent phone calls and infinitely more frequent e-mails. In addition, they must have known they were in with a chance of making a go of it; it's usually couples with rhyming names that stay together the longest. Who knows how different things could have been if Prince Charles had only changed his name to Guyana? It may also, I think, be the real reason why William of Orange never found true happiness.

But one morning, doubtless as Dave and I were sleeping off the tea-soaked night before, Jaakko received some happy news. I knew this because my room was nearest the kitchen, and I could smell bacon, coffee and all manner of other smells guaranteed to rouse his flatmates. It was clear he had something to say.

He did. Yoko had been offered a job in London, and would soon be joining her husband-to-be in the upstairs bedroom. This was great news. Their patience, loyalty and love had paid off. They would marry. They would live together in bliss. They would live together in love. More

importantly, they would live together in a converted hotel with me (and Dave).

I sensed the possibility of change in the air.

**Jaakko and Yoko were married at the Finnish Church in London one sunny summer's day.**

**The bride and groom were swamped by their families - the Finns unable to speak Japanese, the Japanese unable to speak Finnish, and no-one able to speak English. This made Danny's best man speech quite a tough gig, all told.**

**The reception was on a canal boat in London's Little Venice, and it was there, on the deck, champagne in hand, that Danny and I began to talk about Jaakko, about Yoko, and about 44a. We now had to consider the possibility that Jaakko and Yoko might not want to live with us any more.**

**We'd ignored the thought before, of course. How could marital bliss possibly compare with a scruffy houseshare with two scruffy men? But as the day came to an end, and Jaakko and Yoko prepared for their honeymoon, Danny and I reached a virtually unspoken agreement. The days of 44a, of long afternoons in the sun-trap garden, of darts and cable TV, of cocktails and tea, were coming to an end.**

**We would need somewhere new to live. And we had a fair idea where it would be.**

The East End of London in general is a wonderful place. And trendy, apparently. Shoreditch is where it's all happening this week, but next week it'll be Bethnal Green, and in a fortnight, the clever money and all the new bars will be opening up in Aldgate. There's Bow, as well, which apparently some circles now refer to as 'Bow-ho' but as far as I can work out contains nothing more than a *Costcutters*

shop, a long and busy road, and a police station that the Kray twins used to visit quite regularly. The part of town we chose, though, was authentically *untrendy*. In fact, it was shit.

Our new flat was opposite a number of convenient amenities. A genuine East End pub, as rough as any you'd ever seen. A genuine East End cafe, as greasy as any you could imagine. A chip shop, a newsagent, an off licence. The type of barber's shop you really had to be careful while passing should any accidentally lopped-off ears bloody your shoes. Each of these places we would come to know intimately in the next few months, but most of all the pub.

This pub was the type of place you really wouldn't visit if you didn't live opposite it, and even then you wouldn't really visit it unless you were two twentysomething men with time on your hands and a penchant for darts. Or a man named Graham whose quest for a free pint was only slightly stronger than the smell of his deodorant.

Every minute we spent in that pub probably took five off our lives. It remains a place which, to our continued amazement, somehow escapes the knowledge of the Environmental Health department - I would say it's no coincidence that the urinals are located directly above where the beer barrels are kept. Nevertheless, it's a pub that seems to *glow* at night, and whatever the weather, that's a tempting sight.

**A few weeks into our new flatshare, it was Danny's birthday. Well, no, actually, it wasn't. His birthday had been about six months before, but his present - a shiny new video camera - had only just arrived. And the rule in our house is, if you get your present, it's your birthday.**

**We got a few friends together and decamped to the pub. The landlord had promised us the day before**

that if we turned up late enough, he'd officially allow us an illegal East End lock-in ... and at 11.30 that night, the revelry began...

Danny had his video camera out and Graham, as usual, was buzzing around trying to blag a free pint. We bought him one - well, it *was* a birthday celebration after all - and amazingly, he instantly reciprocated with a round of tequilas.

Now, tequila is not a drink that Danny or I would ever willingly get involved with. It is an evil drink, put on this earth to make us do stupid things, and as such is best avoided. But this was the first time Graham had bought anyone anything at all, and provided us with yet another reason to celebrate. The tequila was gratefully downed, and slowly began to edge its way towards becoming that evening's official drink of choice.

Now, when I'm drunk, I like to tell stories. When Danny's drunk, he likes to not believe me. I had a feeling tonight would be no different. I'd had an e-mail that day, and tucked away in a PS at the bottom was a fact that made me all but forget what the rest of the letter was about ... apparently, in the 1970s, East Fife Football Club had had a goalkeeper by the name of Dave Gorman. He was, it went on, still working at the club to this day, now in the capacity of Assistant Manager. I found this news of a Scottish namesake fascinating. Dan, of course, didn't. In fact, as usual, he didn't even believe me.

This wasn't the first time I'd heard of another Dave Gorman. One time, in a pub in Manchester, a taxi driver had come in and shouted 'taxi for Gorman?'. I stood up. *So did another man.* The taxi driver looked at us both, then at the scrap of paper in his hand, before saying '*Dave Gorman*'? We both remained standing. There was confusion, we showed each other

some ID. We were indeed both Dave Gormans. There was a small argument about who should take the taxi but I graciously stepped down. Mainly because I remembered that I lived 200 yards away and hadn't ordered one. But it was a true story. A true story that Danny once again refused to believe.

I ploughed on. On another occasion, a friend of mine had rung me up to ask why on earth I was applying for a job with their company. I hadn't applied for *any* job - to do so wouldn't be like me at all - and I told her so. There was a confused silence, then she read the application form back to me as if to jog my memory. It was indeed an application from a Dave Gorman, but it wasn't this one. The confusion was further compounded by the fact that he lived only ten doors away from me. And that is a true story. And Danny didn't believe it.

I brought another round of tequila to the table and placed Danny's in front of him.

'All I'm saying, Dan,' I slurred, 'is that there must be hundreds of people in the world called Dave Gorman, or I wouldn't have heard of *three* of them.'

'It doesn't mean that there are hundreds, Dave,' he said, 'it means that there are at least three others, that's all. If they even exist, which I very much doubt.'

'I'll show you the e-mail later.'

'And what does that prove?'

'Well, that proves that my friend has found out about another Dave Gorman.'

'Doesn't prove he's *real*, though, does it? Doesn't prove he *exists*. For all you know, you might be the only person in the *world* with your name.'

The thought chilled me. Maybe I was all alone. I downed my tequila.

'Bollocks, Dan. There are *plenty* of Gormans in the world, some of them *must* be Davids.' I was getting