

ANNALS OF ECSTASY

In a recent drug bust, U.S. customs agents seized \$4.5 million dollars worth, or 88 pounds, of the drug Ecstasy in Memphis, TN, on its way to Boston, MA. This bust is the largest in New England's history. It sounds like an incredible story, possibly the symptom of a growing social disease among the younger generation. And maybe it is? Every generation seems to have a drug of association. The 60's were all about LSD and pot. Coke was the drug of choice in the late 70's and 80's. Maybe Ecstasy is the drug of the millennium. The somewhat shocking story of the drug bust and the mass quantity involved came as no surprise to my friends and I, who are quite aware of the huge popularity Ecstasy maintains in Boston, especially among college students. However, the news of the bust started raising questions in my mind. Why is this drug so popular? What is the appeal for young people? In an attempt to answer these questions, or at least to shed some light on the subject, I am relating one of my own experiences with Ecstasy. It goes a little somethin' like this...

It is a restless Wednesday night, with two more days of classes until the weekend. My friend Karen and I decide to break the monotony and grab a drink. We end up having several and our minds flow freely, frankly. Karen randomly suggests that we do E the following night, since she will be away all weekend. I weigh the suggestion for only a moment. "Yeah, let's do it," I say, half-drunk. I've done Ecstasy many times before, but never on a regular basis, or during the week. It's one of those special planned occasions that happens maybe every few months.

Ecstasy is a popular and fairly accessible drug around campus. It's definitely the favorite amongst college-aged kids, much cheaper than Coke at \$20-25 per pill, and amazingly euphoric, a way better high than pot or alcohol. There is nothing like it. I weigh the cons- 8 a.m. class the following day, low on cash, coming down can be brutal. But no matter how much I rationalize the reasons not to do Ecstasy, it doesn't equal those few amazing hours of 'rolling.' Rolling is the term used to describe the zone you enter after dropping E. This one simple word is all that needs to be said at a club or bar to make people understand your state-of-mind. 'I'm rolling.' Ahh, and a knowing grin from the listener.

The next day I am anxious and excited for the big event. We've decided it will be a somewhat mellow night, just the two of us for a girlfriend-bonding experience. Of course, on E you could bond with just about anyone. After our class together Karen goes home to finalize the plans. It's not yet certain we are getting it. People usually buy in large quantities but we just want two pills, which is harder to get. She is supposed to be hooked up by her roommate's boyfriend, who works at a bar where some of the guys deal.

I take a shower and watch TV with my roommates, waiting for her call. I'm trying not to get my hopes up, but it doesn't work. Finally Karen calls and tells me it fell through. The guy can't get just two pills on

such short notice, it's not worth his time and effort. My hopes sink. I admit, I'm disappointed. Should we just go out with some other friends for drinks? No, it wouldn't be the same, we concur. Then Karen says there is a slim chance she can get it from another connection. She calls me back around 10:30 p.m. with the good news--"Get ready and come over, we got it."

By this time it's much later than we had planned to take it. We wanted to take it early so we could get some sleep and actually make it to class the next day. But the prospect of the night ahead is too tempting. C'est la vie!

I arrive at Karen's around 11:00 p.m. We wait until 11:30 for the guy to bring it over. I am totally psyched at this point. My stomach is fluttery. It is \$25 each, which isn't bad considering this is likely what we would spend on a night out at the bars. We do a cheers and down the hatch. The pills are triangle shaped and have an 'X' carved in the middle. I've never seen this kind but Karen's roommate, a frequent roller, claims it is good because it is pure white. Supposedly, the whiter the pill, the more heroin in the mix, which makes for a more mellow effect. The more yellow the pill, the more of a Coke consistency, which tends to be speedy, and, in my opinion, not as enjoyable.

Shortly after taking the pills, Karen's roommate drives us to a local bar where a band is playing. The Ecstasy hasn't hit yet, it usually takes around 20 to 30 minutes. In a weird way, I like the waiting period before the drug kicks in, when I am anticipating the feelings to come. The bar is not crowded. We sit down and order drinks, for appearance only since it is not advisable to drink alcohol while on E. You kill the effect of the drug. I am expecting it to hit Karen first, since we've rolled together two times already and it always hits her first. Suddenly it happens for Karen. Her whole affect changes. She is smiling and her cheeks are flushed. She says she needs to stand, so we do. I'm still waiting. Finally, about ten minutes later, it hits me. I am entering the zone.

I start to feel extremely relaxed and happy. We move closer to the band. "Let's compliment each other a lot, and hold hands. Can we hold hands?" Karen says. So we do and it feels AMAZING. I am so comfortable in my own skin, so uninhibited. My muscles are loose and my mind is just rolling along. I do not feel 'horny', like the stereotypical expectation of people who have never experienced E. I am simply mindfully euphoric and quite heightened, sensory-wise. The air on my bare skin is a caress from nature, I think. Everything in the world is perfect, harmonious to me. I close my eyes and listen to the hypnotizing music. I smile freely, at anyone and everyone.

I am a queen, a goddess of the night. Karen and I hold hands and talk about our wonderful friendship and the fact that we are both so beautiful. Short hair looks amazing on us, we pull it off, Karen keeps saying. We ignore our drinks, frequently hugging each other.

I see a boy sitting by himself, listening to the band. I go over to talk with him, without hesitation. Unlike being drunk, I am completely in control of myself. I notice my jaw is clenching and my teeth are grinding, but it feels far-away and depersonalized. Cool as can be, I start chatting with the guy and bum a cigarette from him. He flirts with me, and I think nothing other than that he is a beautiful human being. I tell him I'm rolling and he touches my arm, smiling.

Meanwhile Karen is talking to his friend. Occasionally she and I reunite to touch, to compliment each other. Touching hands is the best. My hair feels so unbelievably soft. He runs his fingers up my neck and into my

hair. Life is beautiful. Existing in a physical state, right now, is incredible. I call my boyfriend on my cell phone to tell him I love him. He is upset with me for doing E when he is not around. It doesn't bring me down, nothing could.

The guys we met and some of their friends are going to a party when the bar closes at 2. We invite ourselves, still very up and not at all ready to go home. Finally it is 2 and we all file out. I notice I'm starting to come down a little. It's worse when we step outside because it is freezing. The cold assaults me and brings me down another notch towards reality. We are shivering and waiting for all of their friends. Finally they appear, and Karen and I walk with arms linked to some guy's apartment.

When we get inside everything is cool again. Not as high but not totally down, better than being outside in the cold. It's letting us down smoothly, I think. We are hanging out with about 5 guys and a girl, listening to music and smoking bong hits. Karen, who is usually a little reserved but was very outgoing tonight, gets quiet suddenly. Shit, she's coming way down and it's going to get weird. Then I start feeling awkward being there. The guys are still flirting with us but I'm tired of it, I want to get out of there. I feel uncomfortable. My skin is no longer free. I am once again inhibited.

Who are these people, we don't even know them?!

Karen and I decide to leave and the good-byes are awkward, as expected. To smooth things over I invite them all to a party I know of the next night, leaving my number. I can't stand the awkwardness. They sense that the situation is false, that we are no longer interested in hanging out, bonding, entertaining. But they are nice, laid-back people who keep smiling politely.

We take a cab back to Karen's place. When we get there I call my boyfriend again who is really angry with me and suspicious about what happened throughout the night. Our conversation leaves a nervous feeling in my stomach.

We sit on Karen's bed in silence. I want to fill the empty space but have nothing to say. I keep thinking of the things we said to each other earlier in the night, the many compliments and promises. The words hang in my mind like an embarrassing cloud.

It is 3:30 a.m. and we are both completely down in mind and spirit, but my body is still reacting. My teeth and jaw continue to clench, stubbornly. I feel displaced and somewhat jittery. Karen says she is depressed. Time to go home. I fall asleep around 5:30 a.m., after leaving my roommates a note asking them not to wake me for class.

The next day I am sad and despondent. I have missed class, I am fighting with my boyfriend, and nothing feels right. Everything was so great the night before but now life seems bleak and dull, with nothing worth looking forward to. I keep rehashing the events of the previous night and wondering why people can't feel that good all the time. I hate the dreary, wrung-out feeling Ecstasy leaves in its aftermath. And I'm starting to understand why people get addicted to this stuff. The strange thing is, despite the downfalls of the drug and the false feelings it creates, I know I will do it again, in a heartbeat.