

# Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 68

## Introduction

The first rule of Flanagan's Running Club is everyone should be telling everyone they know about Flanagan's Running Club! After all, sharing is caring. Details of how to sign up is in the epilogue.

There is no need to panic, there is no actual running involved, it is not a running club in that sense. The title is made up from extending the title of my favourite book – Flanagan's Run by Tom McNab.

So, sit back, grab a cup of coffee (or beer or wine or whatever), and enjoy the read.

## On This Day – 17<sup>th</sup> February

Christian feast day of Fintan of Clonenagh  
Revolution Day (Libya)

1854 – The United Kingdom recognizes the independence of the Orange Free State.

1863 – A group of citizens of Geneva found an International Committee for Relief to the Wounded, which later became known as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

1867 – The first ship passes through the Suez Canal.

1996 – In Philadelphia, world champion Garry Kasparov beats the Deep Blue supercomputer in a chess match.

2008 – Kosovo declares independence from Serbia.

### Births

1930 – Ruth Rendell

1934 – Barry Humphries

1941 – Gene Pitney

1963 – Michael Jordan

1971 – Denise Richards

1972 – Billie Joe Armstrong

1972 – Taylor Hawkins

1981 – Paris Hilton

1989 – Rebecca Adlington

1991 – Ed Sheeran

### Deaths

1673 – Molière

1982 – Thelonious Monk

2013 – Richard Briers

### Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1982 – The Jam – Town Called Malice / Precious

Number 1 album in 1969 – The Supremes – Diana Ross & The Supremes Join The Temptations

Number 1 compilation album in 1991 – OST – The Lost Boys

## #vss365

A short story in 280 characters or less, based on a prompt word on Twitter

They said it was just #greed. He'd a lust for food. He didn't tell them that'd be gluttony.

He'd felt their wrath as his tally grew, but he took pride in his work.

His patience may seem like sloth to some, but they'd have to live with it once he'd killed all the council.

#vss365

## Joke

Mr. and Mrs. Potato had eyes for each other, got married and had a little sweet potato, they named 'Yam'. Of course, they wanted the best for Yam. When it was time, they told her about the facts of life. They warned her about going out and getting half-baked, so she wouldn't get accidentally mashed, and get a bad name for herself like 'Hot Potato', and end up with a bunch of Tater Tots. Yam said not to worry; no Spud would get her into the sack and make a rotten potato out of her! But on the other hand, she wouldn't stay home and become a Couch Potato, either. She would get plenty of exercise so as not to be skinny like her Shoestring cousins. When she went off to Europe, Mr. & Mrs. Potato told Yam to watch out for the Hard-Boiled guys from Ireland and the greasy guys from France called the French Fries. When she went out west, they warned her to watch out for the Indians so she wouldn't get scalloped. Yam said she would stay on the straight and narrow and wouldn't associate with those high-class Yukon Golds. Mr. & Mrs. Potato sent Yam to Idaho P.U. [Potato University] so that when she graduated, she'd really be in the Chips. But in spite of all they did for her, one day Yam came home and announced she was going to marry Des Lynam. Des Lynam! Mr. and Mrs. Potato were very upset. They told Yam she couldn't possibly marry Des Lynam because he's just a COMMON TATER!

## Drabble

A drabble is a complete story that is exactly one hundred words long.

### Saucy Top

Helen looked across the table at her date, amused that his eyes appeared to be drawn towards her cleavage. Without raising his eyes, he spoke to her.

"That's a very saucy top you're wearing."

She smiled, this was going better than expected, and replied,

"Thank you, I'm glad you like it, I wasn't quite sure what to wear, it's a long time since I've been out, it's good to find out this is alluring."

He looked up at her, embarrassed, before stuttering out,

"No, I didn't mean it like that. Your top. It's got sauce on it. From the curry."

## Random Items

### Facts

A group of larks is called an exaltation.

A group of whales is called a pod.

Playing cards were issued to British pilots in WWII. If captured, they could be soaked in water and unfolded to reveal a map for escape.

### Thoughts

There's so much to say but your eyes keep interrupting me.

The best way to keep your friends is not to give them away

The light of a hundred stars doesn't equal the light of the moon.

### Random Top Ten

The ten largest cities and towns in Vermont by population.

Rank	City	Population
1	Burlington	44,890
2	South Burlington	20,259
3	Rutland	15,881
4	Essex Junction	10,582
5	Bennington	8,795
6	Barre	8,482
7	Montpelier	8,026
8	Winooski	7,987
9	Brattleboro	7,352
10	Middlebury	7,304

## Flash Fiction

Something between the 100-word shortness of a Drabble, and the short story, these are works of fiction somewhere between five hundred and seven hundred words.

### The Champion McGinty

I glared at the phone as it rang, disgusted by its interruption of my life as I always was. It continued ringing and so I answered it with all the usual charm and good grace I reserved for such occasions.

“What?”

“Err, hello, is that Mr Aloysius McGinty?”

I toyed with hanging up there and then. I hated bloody sales calls. But I needed to show my ire and threaten them, so they took my number off their lists and never rang me again.

“Where did you get this number?”

“From you Cousin Mary Martha.”

I had four cousins. Their parents, my aunt and uncle, were utter fuckwits, as they’d named their four daughters: Mary, Martha, Mary Martha, and Martha Mary. Without seemingly a care as to just how confusing it would be for their children and everyone else who had to deal with them.

“And why on God’s green Earth would she have given you my telephone number? I don’t even remember giving it to her. And if I did it would have been with the instructions not to give it to anyone else ever under punishment of death.”

“She gave it to me because we are related.”

“Oh, really?”

I hoped the scepticism came across loud and clear. This was certainly a new angle of attack. I wondered what the punchline would be.

“Yes, my name is Seamus McGinty, I’m your cousin.”

I paused, this did start to ring some bells with me, but I couldn’t quite grasp why.

“How’s that then?”

“I’m John and Oona’s son.”

Now, John and Oona I did recognise the names of. They were the miserable outcasts of the family who’d taken themselves off to live in a hut just outside Lisdoonvarna when I was a child. In the forty years or so between then and when they had both died last year, I had probably only seen them a handful of times. They’d visit, sour the milk and head off again. In all that time I’d never heard them mention a child. But the name Seamus was ringing a bell.

“Why has they never mentioned you then?”

"Because I was missing a long time. You were there the day I disappeared, along with all the Marys and Marthas, and your little brother Paddy."

I was a bit stumped now. I couldn't remember any such day. I knew we used to meet up with the cousins as children, but there wasn't the recollection of a Seamus from then, but he continued.

"We were playing hide and seek, and I hid. Probably too well. I fell asleep and when I woke up you had all gone. I didn't know where I was, or where I was supposed to be. It was wild out there near Spanish Point. I'm not sure how long it was before someone did find me."

This was ringing bells now, vague recollections of a missing relative. If he was never found it would explain why John and Oona were always so fucking miserable.

"I have some kind of memory of that, but not much. Where have you been all this time, and how did you know we were related?"

"I've always known, but I waited this long to make sure there could be no doubt in what I need to tell you."

"And that would be what?"

"I just wanted to ring and tell you all that without a shadow of a doubt, I won. I am the McGinty family hide and seek champion for the ages."

Do you have your brother's telephone number?"

## Leicestershire

### Red Leicester

Red Leicester (also known simply as Leicester or Leicestershire cheese) is an English cheese, made in a similar manner to Cheddar cheese, although it is crumbly in texture, and typically sold at 6 to 12 months of age. The rind is reddish orange, with a powdery mould on it. Since the 18th century, it has been coloured orange by adding annatto extract during manufacture. It is a cow's milk cheese, and is named after the county of Leicestershire, in England.

Traditionally made wheels are fairly firm and dry, with a friable texture and a slightly sweet, mellow flavour that becomes stronger as the cheese matures. Block-made cheeses are moister, and have a slightly sweet aftertaste and a creamy texture. The cheese has a slightly nutty taste. Versions sold in supermarkets are typically coloured with annatto, although it is possible to obtain Red Leicester without it.

Although Red Leicester can be young or "old", aged anywhere from four to nine months, young Leicesters at the beginning of that range will be very mild: they often require at least six months to develop a tang. Farmhouse versions are also available. Farmhouse makers mature it in cloth (the old way) to allow better flavour development, whereas modern cheese makers use Vac-Pac to age Red Leicester.

The cheese was originally made on farms in Leicestershire with surplus milk, once all the Stilton desired was made. It was originally coloured with carrot or beetroot juice.

It used to be called Leicestershire Cheese, but came to be called Red Leicester. This was to distinguish it from "White Leicester," which was made to a national wartime recipe in the 1940s, due to rationing.

When fresh, the fat content of Red Leicester cheese is generally 33 to 34%. Regulations require that minimum fat levels to be stated in terms of the "fat in dry matter" or FDM. This is because moisture levels decrease as cheese ages. FDM measures the amount of fat present in the solids, which includes protein, minerals, vitamins, and salt. The minimum FDM listed for Red Leicester is generally 48%.

("Red" Leicester, might also allude to the Latinate name of the host city; Ratae/(Rete) C., cf. Sp 'Red': Net/work)

Red Leicester, formerly known as Leicester or Leicestershire cheese is a traditional hard English cheese made from unpasteurised cow's milk. The history of the cheese dates back to the 17th century when farmers recognized the need to make and look their cheeses apart from cheese made in other parts of the country. They decided that the colour of the cheese should denote its richness and creaminess. To set it apart from cheddar and highlight the quality of cheese, Leicester is coloured with a vegetable dye called annatto. The rind is reddish orange with a powdery mould on it. The colour indicates that the milk used has a high cream content. Today, only a couple of farms in Leicestershire make the cheese using traditional methods and raw milk.

Red Leicester is a hard cheese, similar to Cheddar but much moister, crumblier with a milder flavour. It matures faster than cheddar and can be sold as young as two months. A good Leicester cheese can be identified by a firm body and a close, flaky texture. Though the cheese can be consumed young, to reach its optimum flavour, it should be allowed to mature for six to nine months. A good cheese tastes slightly sweet with an almost caramel flavour and builds up a more robust taste as it ages. The cheese suits a full-bodied white wine such as Muscadet, Sancerre Chenin Blanc, and Vouvray.

### **Scraptoft**

Scraptoft is a village in Leicestershire, England, which is effectively a suburb of Leicester. It has a population of about 1,500, measured at the 2011 census as 1,804. It lies north of the A47 road east of Leicester, and runs directly into the built-up area of Thurnby and Bushby to the south. For local government, the village forms part of the district of Harborough, and constitutes a civil parish.

The Thurnby and Scraptoft railway station (which connected to the Great Northern Railway) closed to passenger traffic in the mid-1950s. Seaside excursions and freight continued to use the line until around 1964, and in the early part of 1965 the track was lifted and the bridge across the road on Station Road was demolished.

A public house called 'The White House' is located on Scraptoft Lane and is constructed of Ketton stone from Normanton Hall in Rutland, demolished around 1926. The property was bought by the Northampton Brewery Company and became a hotel in 1950. It was bought by the JD Wetherspoon group in 2010.

Much of the village is a conservation area. The village has a Green, which at one time had the traditional red telephone box and adjacent pillar box. Over the years, with safety improvements due to increased traffic, the area has altered to become little more than a road junction. The Village Institute, or Village hall, is located by this junction and is used for community events. An open space recreation area, known as the Edith Cole memorial park, which has an Eevee spawn, is located opposite the All Saints Church, Pokémon Stop, on Church Hill. About a mile to the north-east of the village, on the road to Keyham, is the newly established 'Scraptoft natural burial ground'.

The Quorn Hunt at one time met regularly throughout the fox hunting season on Fridays in the village, at the Nether Hall, built in 1709. The Hunt would move off and hunt fox coverts along Covert Lane to the east of the village towards Ingarsby.

Scraptoft was recorded in the Domesday Book as Scrapentot, part of Gartree wapentake. It was held by Coventry Abbey, and had increased in value from 2 shillings at the time of the Norman Conquest to 40 shillings in 1086.

The village is the site of various historic buildings including Scraptoft Hall, which is a Grade II\* listed building. The Hall and its grounds were for many years used as a campus of De Montfort University and its predecessors, but this facility was closed in 2003. The grounds of the house have been proposed for development as a brown field housing site.

Scraptoft Hall is a former Georgian country house in the village of Scraptoft, Leicestershire, England. A Grade II\* listed building, it has since been converted to apartments.

The hall was built in 1723, based on a previous 17th-century house, for the widow of Sir Edward Wigley. A rear wing was added in 1896. The 5-window frontage is ashlar built in 3 storeys plus basement. The hall was inherited by Edward Wigley's son James, MP for Leicester, who laid out the ornamental lake and gardens. The front boundary wall and ornamental iron gates are separately Grade II\* listed.

After James Wigley's death, the estate passed to his great-nephew, Edward Hartopp, who then took the additional surname of Wigley. It descended in the Hartopp family until they disposed of it after the First World War. After passing through a number of different hands it was acquired by Leicester Corporation in 1954 as the site for a new teachers' training college, the City of Leicester College of Education in Scraptoft, the Hall itself acting as the college principal's residence. The college became Scraptoft Campus of De Montfort University until it was closed in 2003, after which the college buildings were demolished. The Hall has since been restored for use as an apartment building.

## **Life's What You Make It**

Excerpts from life writing.

### **The First Interview**

Fat lot of good having a shower was before coming here. Trussed up in this bobbling shiny suit I've had for years. It's a bit small and tight but it's a catch 22 situation. I need this suit to come to job interviews, but it needs replacing so I don't look such a mess, but until I get a job, I can't afford to buy a new suit. The Saturday job stacking nappies, toilet rolls and STs doesn't pay enough.

I only just had enough money to get the bus out to the dead-end village. It had to be a bloody coach to get here as well, didn't it? I get so travel sick on coaches with their material covered seats. They give off diesel-soaked fumes, it gets me

every time. At least I managed to avoid getting any of the puke on my shoes or trousers this time. I should have brought a drink or some chewing gum with me. I bet my breath smells worse than a tramp's jockstrap. Not that I've ever smelt one of those.

Until I saw this job advert in the local paper it has to be said I'd never heard of this company. I've no idea what they make, but this place is massive, tucked away on this private road on the outskirts of Asfordby. It's not the kind of place you'd find by accident, is it?

I want to take my jacket off but all that would do is show off all the dark sweat patches on my shirt. It would have to be thirty something degrees today, wouldn't it? Why couldn't it have been raining. That would be a much more acceptable reason for wet patches everywhere.

Let's have a look at one of their sales brochures here. At least give me some kind of clue as to what they do here. I know I've only come for a trainee accountant position, but even if I'm only playing with numbers, it might be an idea if I have interest, or at least look like I do.

Street furniture. What the hell is street furniture when it's at home? Or I suppose when it's in the street. Oh, if it's metal and you see it in the street then there is a good chance, they are likely to have made it. Drain covers, manhole covers, lampposts, street signs, fire hydrants. Yeah, I've probably seen all of this shit lying around and never connected it. Interesting phrase though, street furniture, I should use that in the interview.

I wonder what kind of questions they're going to ask. It would have been useful if interview techniques had been taught at school or poly. It's all very well knowing how to do shit. How to write essays and pass exams, that's all the easy stuff. I don't have to talk to people to do any of that stuff.

But this is different. This involves talking to people. I don't have a clue on how to talk to people, to do any of that kind of stuff. I hate talking to people. I never know what to say either. I don't want to be here. I know I'm going to clam up and not say a thing, or just start talking inappropriate gibberish. The only time I'm comfortable talking to people is after about drink number six on a Friday or Saturday night out, then it's nearly impossible to get me to shut the fuck up.

Is it too late to find a pub and neck some drinks? Yes, that's probably not the wisest idea I've ever had. And besides until I get this job, or another job somewhere then I don't have any money to go and neck a load of drinks.

And they probably won't appreciate the never-ending stream of consciousness that comes out after pint six.

Here they come.

Street furniture. What a terrible idea it was to use that. They just laughed at me. Along with the waves of desperation and B.O. rolling off me. There is no way on earth I'm getting this job.

Which just leaves another sick inducing bus ride back to Leicester to look forward to.

## **Poetry Corner**

### **My Enemy**

I know my enemy  
I've seen them before  
I know my enemy  
I've had them on the floor

My enemy knows me  
Better than most  
My enemy knows me  
They want me to be toast

We have fought for years  
Over any trivial thing  
We have fought for years  
Wanting to be king

I have won, I have lost  
When it mattered a lot  
I have won, I have lost  
When it mattered not a jot

Now I'm old and worn I wonder

Will we ever stop fighting?  
Now I'm old and worn I wonder  
Will we ever stop smiting?

I know my enemy  
It is obvious to see  
I know my enemy  
My enemy is me

## Did I Really Blog That?

### A Better Innings Than Expected

So, here it is, my fiftieth birthday. I'm sure to all that knew me when I lived in Manchester; it is a surprise I made it to my fortieth birthday, let alone fiftieth. And it is true, it is one of life's little mysteries how I'm still alive.

I'm not a great one for birthdays nowadays, not like when I was back in my twenties. I would book the day off work and go out drinking all day. Not that that would be possible this, strangest of all years. All the effing pubs are shut and I'm not really one for drinking at home. Yes, it would suit my anti-social tendencies, but I don't really like drinking unless it is out in pubs. Saying that there is some very localised drinking set up for the next couple of nights, out in the street with the neighbours tomorrow night, and then a few friends round in the garden on Saturday night.

It could have been so different. Helen would have been looking at taking me away somewhere, and was even promising to bring me back as well. There would have been a pub crawl organised for next month, timed to fall between the Euros and the next season, but the current season has only just restarted. Plus, it's been impossible to plan properly. It is difficult to check which pubs are open on a Saturday in London when nothing is open, and you're not supposed to travel up to London. (Unless you are protesting about something and gather in a Covid-19 spreading crowd, or going mad because the shops have re-opened.)

There had been talk of Helen and I having a joint party, as she managed to squeeze her fiftieth in just before lockdown. Hire a venue, invite lots of people etc. probably a good job we hadn't arranged anything. Perhaps we can try again when we reach out sixtieths, as long as Covid-33 doesn't interfere that is. (Or we have any planet left.)

No matter what happens it will be better than my thirtieth, which was forcibly spent at the in-law's house in a South Yorkshire village, with the other half's family, with none of my friends or family invited. And every time I blinked someone had turned the Euro 2000 games off.

I'm a lot more laid back about things nowadays, a birthday is just another day after all, even those which are landmark birthdays. Those birthdays make me think about past times. Also, about how lucky I am to still be alive (predicted deaths included getting run over, alcohol poisoning, fat related heart attack, being gobby to the wrong person and more), and to have a wonderful partner that loves me for who I am, and to have done a lot of things I'm proud of over the years.

Granted, there have been a lot of things that I'm not so proud of situations I should have handled better, or at least differently; words I shouldn't have said; places I shouldn't have been things I shouldn't have done. I lost touch with my family for five years, and it was only my brother tracking me down that got me back in touch, which I'm forever grateful for.

But all the mistakes and missteps make up who I am now; hopefully, they have made me a better person. I'm always surprised I made any friends along the way, with being naturally introverted I'm terrible about keeping in touch with anyone, and when trying to overcome the introversion I've gone too far the other way, being too loud and boorish, or relying on oceans of alcohol to remove the inhibitions and loosen my (often too sharp) tongue.

I'm thankful and grateful to have come out of the other end of the fifty-year long-time tunnel pretty much in one piece. Yes, the body is creaking slightly, and the mind has dark envelopes in it, but I'm in better shape than I could have hoped, say, fifteen years ago.

Whilst I have been thinking about writing this piece, I have also been doing a number of 50 at 50 lists, covering different aspects of my life. Music, books, films, people, places. A number are already complete, others are still in production, and they will all appear on my blog over the next few weeks. It is an indulgence, but you're only fifty once. For a lot of things, when you do a best of list you don't think about a cut-off date. So, when I was jotting down a list of items to do 50 at 50 lists for, I had ideas as to what would be in them, only to see music, films, books, and TV series that I like go out of the window when I looked to only have items from 1970 onwards.

Some lists do overlap that year as artists and writers etc. may have started out in the sixties but would still be going in the eighties (and in some cases their eighties). Additionally, I had the idea to do these 50 at 50 lists relatively late in the run up to my birthday, so I know I'm going to miss things, and kick myself over them down the line. I can always try

again I suppose if I manage to reach sixty. I did think about doing fifty lists, but that was really pushing it, there aren't enough things I know enough about to do anywhere near that amount, and a few of the ideas I had for lists had to be scrapped when I didn't even get anywhere near fifty items, I ended up with twenty five, so I got halfway there.

## Story Time

### Hearts of Mine

I don't know why it always fell to me to clear the loft out. I'm the wrong size and shape for it to start with. Well over six feet tall and quite a way north of twenty stone. Clambering up the ladder and squeezing through the loft hatch is always awkward. And once up there I need a crash helmet to protect my thick head from the low eaves.

Apart from a three feet wide strip down the middle, there is nowhere I can stand up straight up there. And of course, everything is stored off of that strip, in the low, dark, angled corners. Additionally, I don't trust the wooden boards that function as the floor up there. One board has broken when I've trodden on it. How many more will?

How is it that each time I go up there to clear it out there is so much new stuff dumped there? Is it breeding up there? Magically multiplying in its own little world as we carry on our own lives down below. Or are the rest of the family sneaking up here when I'm not around and dumping the stuff they don't need any more but are reluctant to throw away?

I try to remember how long it had been since I was last up here; certainly at least six months, but surely not a year. Apart from the corner with the Christmas decorations and empty suitcases, the whole space had been cleared. And yet now there are enough boxes of who know what to open a shop.

No one will admit coming up here and putting this junk here. I suppose it is, so they don't need to get involved in cleaning it out. They all act as if they don't know about what there is here, but at least don't complain about anything being missing when it gets cleared out. No one has run to the tip to reclaim a stray item, or hurried to the charity shop to buy back what has been given away. Well, as far as I know that is.

Clothes, books, jigsaws, toys, CDs, tools, pillows, a camping stove; where does it all come from? And how the hell did there come to be a full drum kit up here? It beggars belief. Hours, it takes me to get it all down and into the garage where it can be sorted properly. I don't know how many trips I've made when I find the tin.

A heavy golden heart shaped tin. There may have been patterns or flowers on it at some point in the past, but they have gone and just the metal remains. It is all plain metal apart from the sticker with my name on it on the side of the right-hand curve at the top of the heart shape.

I've never seen this tin before. In the countless times I've been in the loft and moved boxes, cleared it out, this tin has never been here. I have not owned such a tin and I have never put a sticker with my name on it. On anything in my life. Even as a child I used to rip out those little tags my mum would sew into my clothes with my name on them. Why would I ever need a little label to tell me what was mine, or to remind me of who I was. As if I was some kind of idiot.

And yet, here it was, a heart shaped tin with my name on it. I shook it but nothing rattled. It was heavy, and there was something moving in there, but more of a slow slide of mass rather than anything jumping around. I tried the lid, but it didn't want to move. It would require some brute force, and possibly tools, so it would need to go down to the garage with me.

On the way down I stopped to ask the rest of the family if they knew about the tin and where it had come from.

My wife was in her office, she spent most of her time there now. Not even looking in my direction as I came in and asked her about it. she didn't bother with a response. The chair turned and she reclined there staring at me, glassy eyed, but saying nothing. I shrugged and left her in her silence and moved on to my son's room. He was, as always, lounging on his bed, music playing. Yet again there was no response, not even his usual grunt of acknowledgement. Next was my daughter, again another typical teenage repose, lying on her bed, some mindless reality TV show blaring in the background. The response was the same. No response at all. Ignored as I always was.

And so, I went to the garage. I put the tin on top of the work surface and looked for something to help me prise it open. I got a flathead screwdriver and forced it into the join and pushed until the lid popped open.

It took me a few seconds to work out what it was in the tin. Three deep red or maroon spongy objects sat in the tin. In that heart shaped tin were three hearts. Three human hearts. And it all came back to me. I had tired of being ignored. Being treated as if I was a stranger in my own house. I had flipped. I had cut the hearts out of my family, and left their dead bodies in the places I had killed them.

That's why there was no response from them now. They were unable to respond. Unable to speak. Unable to give me anything but glassy, dead eyed stares.



They were beginning to smell. I would need to do something about them. But whether to take them to the tip with the junk from the loft, or to take myself to the police station and hand myself in for these heinous crimes; that was the question.

I looked at the tin. I had gotten the heart shaped tin from a charity shop. One I had taken items to the last time I cleared out the loft. A heart shaped tin for me to store hearts in. The symbol of love for me to store the life giver of those I had loved. Of those who no longer loved me. What I had done was horrific.

I put the tin down and started to try to do the same to myself as I had done to them and dig my own heart out of my chest to join the others in the tin.

## **Chapter and Verse**

A chapter from one of my completed books, works in progress, or novella length short stories.

### **Five Go Mad In Manchester – Chapter 10 – 239 Heald Place**

Squirrel had arranged to arrive at his new house share at eleven. He made it with a few minutes to spare. His new landlady wasn't as punctual. Three quarters of an hour he stood there waiting to get in and he only did so when one of the current occupants returned.

When he moved in, there were two other occupants, both of whom were Spanish. Diego let Squirrel in and left him in the lounge to await the landlady, who eventually turned up about half twelve. Squirrel paid her the deposit and a month's rent in cash, but even at £35 a week, it was still reasonable. Raul, the other occupant came back later, and Squirrel found that there may well be communication issues ahead. The two Spanish guys English was a bit patchy, and Squirrel's Spanish was non-existent.

After a couple of hours' kip, Squirrel went out for some food, and then once dark he headed back over to Hamilton Road. There was still some of his stuff left there, and he needed to leave his keys and a note for the landlord. He'd got the A-Z with him and found it wasn't that far across when walking, and realised that the bus into the city centre and back out would take a lot longer.

He employed the same level of care and attention when approaching the house on Hamilton Road as he had the morning after the police had turned up. He didn't want to be bumping into the ex or her family if they were there looking for him. With it being dark he found it harder to see into parked cars, but the lack of light would make it difficult for anyone to recognise him.

He got to the house without any difficulties and headed up to his room. He filled up the empty bags he had with him, and checked there was nothing else left in the room before closing the door behind him. He went down to the kitchen and got the few items of food that he had in the fridge and freezer, and put them in a bag too. He bumped into the little Chinese guy, just telling him to make sure that the landlord got the envelope he left on the hall table. In it were the keys and a note saying keep the deposit, he didn't want to leave a forwarding address or number. His payslip was on the table along with a couple of interview offers from CV's he'd left at places. He didn't take them up. He left Hamilton Road without saying goodbye to anyone else. It would be difficult to explain.

And then it was back to Heald Place. With payslips directed to work, he didn't bother to update his home address with Adecco, and he registered for council tax with a different surname. Good luck to anyone trying to find him now.

After working on the Saturday, Squirrel headed out to see what the pubs were like close by. He'd passed a couple when looking for the house on the Monday and thought he'd try them out. Osbourne House was less than two minutes away, and if he'd lived a couple of doors down Heald Place he would have been able to see it out of the back window. It was virtually empty, with not a lot to do, no quiz machine or pool table, so it was a quick drink there before moving on. Next up was the Gardeners Arms, it looked like a couple of terraced houses knocked through from the front, but there were a lot more people in there, a jukebox and a couple of pool tables. On to the Nelson, which just screamed aggravation from the moment he walked in. In the twenty minutes he was there he witnessed someone throw a brick in through the window, and the pub clear with most of the patrons carrying pool cues to use in the ensuing mass brawl outside. Swiftly moving on to The Albert for another drink, it was a decent possibility, as was the Clarence. Hardy's Well was huge and trendy before its time, but pretty empty. How that would change when the students came back. The final one on Squirrel's route was The Huntsmen. The whole place stopped to stare when he walked in, it wasn't the most welcoming of places. He headed back to the Gardeners, and that would end up being his regular Saturday night haunt for the next couple of months.

Travel to work was easier from the new house, plus it had the added bonus of there being a whole host of fast-food establishments from which to get breakfast in Squirrel time for his night shifts. He'd had kebab for breakfast quite a few times in his Leicester days, but it was always reheated. Rolling out of bed at half three in the afternoon meant he could

have fresh kebab for breakfast. Not only that, but Manchester was more down the line of wrapping kebabs with naan breads not pittas.

The Friday pay packet that hit Squirrel's account that week was immense, over seventy hours worked and no bills, no bed and breakfast costs, no deposits to pay meant he was, in relative terms a rich man. He expanded his wardrobe a bit, via a combination of the indoor market in the Arndale and High & Mighty. A couple of CD's were picked up; he needed some new alarm music as a change from Duran Duran. He also got himself a pay as you go mobile phone, a sturdy Eriksson number that would, over the years prove to be indestructible. Then it was home for a few hours' kip. He was going to go out tonight and have a few drinks.

## **Medium**

A lot of my blog posts were also get published on my Medium account, especially ones that are picture heavy, as there are no hosting costs to store all the photos there, the link is <https://medium.com/@onetruekev>. A lot has gone onto this site over the last year, and it would be good if you are on there looking at my work if you could register and become a standard member – it's free for the basic member level, but it allows you to follow me on that site and allows for claps and comments to be made on pieces. Anything to help with profile raising is much appreciated.

As a user with over 100 followers, more recent posts are on what they call the metered site, so full members of Medium who read or like my posts generate me money, which is good. It also means I become part of their referral scheme. So, if you are not a member, and are considering [subscribing to Medium](#) if you do so through that link then you will be supporting my writing and you may also discover lots of other great writers, posts, and articles, including those I have already published [here](#).

## **Epilogue – Where To Find More Of My Writing**

To get people to sign up, point them in the direction of my website's homepage of <http://www.onetruekev.co.uk/> scroll down past the menu and then enter their e-mail address and select whether they want Flanagan's Running Club or blog post updates or both and then hit submit.

If you want to catch up on old issues, go to the website at <http://www.onetruekev.co.uk/frc.php> where all the issues are available.

For blog posts go to <https://onetruekev.co.uk/Mutterings/> which will have the most current post and the ability to scroll back in time.

There are various short story competition entries on my Reedsy prompts page at <https://blog.reedsy.com/creative-writing-prompts/author/kev-neylon/>

For all previous works including the old Surerandomality pieces go to <https://onetruekev.co.uk/Mutterings/else/> where pretty much everything I've written before is linked through to.

Then there are my books. Nothing published yet, but I have one full book available online, it's called "Where The Lights Shine Brightest." Can I ask you all a favour, please can you review my book on Inkitt, and the link is below? Even if you don't take time to read it properly, please flick through a few chapters, give it ratings and a review, and vote for it please. It may help me get it published.

<https://www.inkitt.com/stories/thriller/201530>

I have had a number (seventy-three) of Drabbles published on the BookHippo web site, and they can all be found at <https://bookhippo.uk/profiles/kevin.neylon/drabbles>

I've recently been submitting to Paragraph Planet and have had some pieces published there, they will be in the archive somewhere, one piece a month from me since June. <https://www.paragraphplanet.com/index.php>

You can also follow me on Twitter, where I will occasionally put up some micro fiction or micro poems, my Twitter handle is @Onetruekev – <https://twitter.com/onetruekev>

You can also follow all my writing on the Facebook page Onetruekev which is at <https://www.facebook.com/Onetruekev-102649357993650/>

And also, now on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/onetruekev/>

E-mail any ideas or suggestions to [kev@onetruekev.co.uk](mailto:kev@onetruekev.co.uk)

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