

# Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 72

## 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> June

1462 – Vlad III the Impaler attempts to assassinate Mehmed II (The Night Attack at Târgoviște), forcing him to retreat from Wallachia.

1631 – Mumtaz Mahal dies during childbirth. Her husband, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan I, will spend the next 17 years building her mausoleum, the Taj Mahal.

1994 – Following a televised low-speed highway chase, O. J. Simpson is arrested for the murders of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend Ronald Goldman.

Icelandic National Day

National Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Forest Fires (Portugal)

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

### Births

1919 – Beryl Reid

1936 – Ken Loach

1943 – Barry Manilow

1945 – Eddy Merckx

1980 – Venus Williams

1982 – Jodie Whittaker

1983 – Lee Ryan

### Deaths

1999 – Basil Hume

2008 – Cyd Charisse

2012 – Rodney King

### Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1970 – Mungo Jerry – In The Summertime

Number 1 album in 1982 – Madness – Complete Madness

Number 1 compilation album in 2009 – Various – Dad Rocks

## #vss365

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

She'd have to cross the stream. She could walk upstream to where it was narrow enough to jump over, or downstream to a bridge, but there was no telling how long it'd take, and she didn't have the time.

She'd have to break her promise and step on the #benthos to cross over.

#vss365

## Joke

A guy who was born with no arms goes to the doctor one day and the doc says, 'I have bad news, you are terminally ill, and you only have one month left to live.' The man was absolutely despondent - but as he walked out of his doctor's office, he looked up at the monastery atop the hill near town and thought to himself, I have always wanted to ring the bells in the monastery tower - if I don't do it now, it will never happen. So, he walks up the path to the monastery and, using his head, 'knock knock knock,' bangs on the door. A few moments later, a portly monk answers the door and asks how he may be of assistance. The man with no arms explains his plight and asks if there is any way that the monk can help. The monk pauses, then looks at his watch, looks back at the man - focusing on his lack of arms - and says, "well, I don't know how you would do it, but it is almost time to ring the bells so I will give you a shot." The man is overwhelmed with joy and can't stop thanking the monk as the monk leads him to the bell tower, slowly waddling across the yard and up the long spiral staircase to the bell tower. They reach the bell tower with just minutes to spare. The sceptical monk looks at his watch, and when the hour strikes twelves, he says, 'tis time to ring the bell, my son.' Expecting the young man to grab the rope in his teeth in his attempt to ring the bell, the monk is stunned when instead the man leans forward and runs full speed into the bell. And ring the bell the young man did. When he made contact, the bell let out the most glorious ring - a sound so beautiful that the monk was brought to tears. And as the bell rang, it slowly swung backwards from the force of the impact before swinging back. But when it did swing back, it squarely struck the young man, sending him flying out the window and down to the sidewalk just outside of the monastery. The chubby monk waddled down the stairs as fast as he could - which wasn't very fast - and when he finally gets around to the side of the monastery where the man had fallen, a passing police officer had already arrived and covered the corpse with a blanket. When he saw the monk running up in a flustered state, he just assumed that the monk knew the victim, so he pulled back the blanket and said, 'I am sorry to ask this brother, but do you know this man.' The monk paused for a moment as he looked down at the newly deceased before he said, "Well, I don't know his name, but his face sure does ring a bell."

## Drabble

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

### Out Of The Shadows

It had been following her around all day. Every day. For the whole of her life. Sometimes it was behind her, occasionally it was in front of her, and at times it would be to one side of her or the other.

She had long become sick of its almost permanent presence in her life. But it wouldn't be around for much longer. Today was the day that all ended. Today was the day she was having the operation. She knew it was a controversial treatment, but she was going to have her shadow surgically removed.

## Random Items

### Facts

The most recorded female orgasms in an hour is 134.

Jonny Wilkinson's grandfather played for Norwich City

The most golf balls stacked on top of each other without the aid of adhesive is nine by Don Athey in 1998.

### Thoughts

Most of the stuff people worry about never happens.

Failure to plan on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.

Forgive your enemies. It messes with their heads.

## Random Top Ten

The first ten different counties to win the Cricket County Championship.

No	County	Year
1	Surrey	1864
2	Nottinghamshire	1865
3	Middlesex	1866
4	Yorkshire	1867
5	Gloucestershire	1873
6	Lancashire	1879
7	Kent	1906
8	Warwickshire	1911
9	Derbyshire	1936
10	Glamorgan	1948

## 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.

### Chad

To say that Chad was not a happy man was somewhat of an understatement. Somewhere along the line there had been a lot that had gotten lost in translation.

When he had spoken to Victoria about booking a trip away, he had distinctly spoken about his love of extreme weather and that he wanted to go hiking in the winter out on the tors. He was sure he had mentioned the snow, the cold, and the Cairngorms. But what had stuck in Victoria's head was only two words, and she had gotten the spelling wrong on one of them – Chad and tours.

He had thought it odd when she insisted he brought his passport, that it would be needed. The last time he checked Scotland hadn't voted for independence. His confusion was ramped up when they got to the airport and their flight was to N'Djamena. Granted he didn't know what all the local airports in Scotland were called, but he was fairly sure that wasn't one of them. He'd never heard of the place, but he still went along with it.

It was only when they got to the gate that it began to dawn on him there would be no gloriously cold snow. They were the only white people on the flight by the looks of things. He was off to Chad.

And so, it came to be that Chad was in Chad. He was on a bus that looked as if it hadn't had any windows since the eighties, if at all, and it travelled around the southern fringes of the Sahara, on what was called the "wonderful sand mountains tour of Chad."

He was well past the point of melting, and it wasn't just the heat that had pushed him past his boiling point, which had caused him to blow up at Victoria. They hadn't spoken for the last couple of days.

The tour guide had asked him several variations of the same question; wot no nookie? Wot no jig jig? Wot no boom shak a lak? The last of which he had asked with just his hands and nose hanging over a brick wall. The tour guide was having a wonderful time hamming up the fact his tour had a Chad in Chad.

Chad tore up his tour ticket and thrown the confetti he had made from it all over the tour guide. Who just laughed, "Ha ha, it's all cool man, Chad don't need no ticket now that he was Chad in Chad on tour."

The hiking they let him do was atrocious. It was too hot, and the sand mountains were heavier going than Chad though was possible. The sand would shift with every step, and he spent nearly as much time going backwards and sideways as he did going forward. It would have been easier to walk across the snow topped tors in slippers than this. The end of the trip couldn't come quickly enough for him.

On the last night he made it up with Victoria. She promised to pay better attention to what Chad said in the future. So, Chad told her that for the next trip the key was to go to at least one tor.

Three months later he was not impressed when Victoria led him through Paddington train station and onto a train going to Torquay.

## Leicestershire

### Rutland Railway Stations

<b>Rutland Open Rail Stations</b>	
Oakham	The Station was originally opened on 1st May 1848 by the Syston & Peterborough Railway. It was later used by the Midland Railway and taken over by the London, Midland & Scottish Railway in 1923 before British Rail took it over.

<b>Rutland Closed Rail Stations – On Open Lines</b>	
Ashwell	The Station was originally opened on 1st May 1848 by the Syston & Peterborough Railway. It was later used by the Midland Railway and taken over by the London, Midland & Scottish Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 6th June 1966.
Cottesmore	The Station was originally opened on 1st January 1882 by the Midland Railway. It was later taken over by the London, Midland & Scottish Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 31st December 1980. It was reopened on the 1st of January 2005 as part of the Rutland Railway Museum.
Essendine	The Station was originally opened on 2nd October 1853 by the Stamford & Essendine Railway. It was later taken over by the Great Northern Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 15th September 1959.
Ketton & Collyweston	The Station was originally opened on 1st May 1848 by the Syston & Peterborough Railway. It was later used by the Rugby & Stamford Railway and taken over by the London & North Western Railway & Midland Railway (Joint) in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 6th June 1966.
Luffenham	The Station was originally opened on 20th March 1848 by the Syston & Peterborough Railway. It was later used by the Rugby & Stamford Railway and taken over by the London & North Western Railway & Midland Railway (Joint) in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 6th June 1966.
Manton	The Station was originally opened on 20th March 1848 by the Syston & Peterborough Railway. It was later used by the Midland Railway and taken over by the London, Midland & Scottish Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 6th June 1966.

<b>Rutland Closed Rail Stations – On Closed Lines</b>	
Morcott	The Station was originally opened on 1st December 1898 by the Rugby & Stamford Railway. It was later taken over by the London & North Western Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 6th June 1966.
Ryhall	The Station was originally opened on 1st November 1856 by the Stamford & Essendine Railway. It was later taken over by the Great Northern Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 15th June 1959.
Seaton (Originally Seaton (Uppingham), then Seaton & Uppingham)	The Station was originally opened on 2nd June 1851 by the Rugby & Stamford Railway. It was later taken over by the London & North Western Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 6th June 1966.
Stamford East	The Station was originally opened on 1st January 1856 by the Rugby & Stamford Railway. It was later taken over by the Great Northern Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 4th March 1957.  <i>NB, the station was situated in Leicestershire, but served the town of Stamford over the border in what was then Huntingdonshire</i>
Uppingham	The Station was originally opened on 1st January 1894 by the Rugby & Stamford Railway. It was later taken over by the London & North Western Railway in 1923. British Rail took over and it was closed on 13th June 1960.
Wakerley & Barrowden	The Station was originally opened on 1st November 1879 by the London & North Western Railway. British Rail took over and it was closed on 6th June 1966.

### Narborough

Narborough is a large village and civil parish in the Blaby district of Leicestershire, England, located around six miles (9.7 km) southwest of Leicester. The population of the civil parish (including Littlethorpe) at the 2011 census was 8,498. The name is derived from the Old English north burh, meaning "north fort or stronghold".

Surrounding villages include Enderby, Whetstone, Littlethorpe, Cosby, and Huncote.

Narborough is situated on or near several major transport corridors. The M1 motorway passes through the east of Narborough, and the Leicester to Birmingham railway line runs beside the River Soar on its way through the village. Coventry Road in the village centre runs along the course of the Fosse Way (Roman road), which then joins back onto the present course of the B4114 link from Birmingham to Leicester.

Narborough is often split into two distinct parts, the (old) village core to the South and the newer Pastures estate to the northeast. These areas are separated by the B4114 which runs through the middle of the two areas.

Narborough railway station, with its level crossing, is situated in the village centre and offers an excellent service, linking the village with South Wigston and Leicester to the north, and Hinckley, Nuneaton, Coventry, and Birmingham in the south and west.

To the north-east of the village lies Carlton Park, a business park that included the headquarters of Alliance & Leicester, who employed over 1,800 people locally. Carlton Park also has a Racquets and Health Club, David Lloyd (formerly Next Generation), which opened in the summer of 2006. Near to the village centre are the Blaby District Council offices. As well as Greystoke Primary School in the village, The Pastures Primary and Red Hill field Primary School are the two other primary schools serving the village.

All Saints' Church, Narborough is a parish church in the Church of England in Narborough, Leicestershire.

The current church in Narborough dates from the 13th century, although it is highly probable an even earlier church dating back to the 10th century or before stood on or near the site. A Saxon hogback tombstone was found near the church and is on display at the Jewry Wall Museum in Leicester.

The church was largely rebuilt in 1856-1883. There are two aisles, nave, chancel, and north vestry with a west tower containing a ring of six bells. The large nave of six bays has fine piers and strong shafts. The chancel was rebuilt in 1883 by F. Bacon. There is also an Ascension window by Theodora Salusbury from 1929 (Carlton church has another fine window by the artist) in the north aisle. The stained window has two fish hidden in the folds of the robes. The ornate reredos behind the altar is exceptionally fine as is the whole of the chancel area.

The church includes a number of memorials/windows to the Everard family.

The original Norman south porch was rebuilt in 1860 at a cost of £60. The font which has moved three times dates from the 13th century, and has tracery panels of various kinds including one with two parallel tree trunks. There are also sedilia in the southern aisle and a piscina. The graveyard is closed to burials now as these have transferred to the cemetery next door. In the actual churchyard there is a gravestone to a Harry Baker who died aged 49 in 1901 after being "thrown from a trap".

The parish is part of the benefice of Narborough and Huncote, within the Diocese of Leicester. The church has weekly Sunday services and other events, including a yearly Christmas Tree Festival. The church is normally locked, but regular events and open days are held.

All Saints' Church itself is a Grade II\* listed building.

Narborough also has a Congregational Church situated on School Lane and a Catholic church, St. Pius X, on Leicester Road.

Narborough has been home to The Buddhist House, HQ for the Amida Trust, a Pureland Buddhist school, since 2001.

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

Excerpts from life writing.

### **Silver**

I remember a different jubilee. Not well. Just snatches of it. After all, I wasn't even seven at the time. Not far off, my birthday just a few weeks away. The end of Primary School for me another week after that.

We had a street party for the Queen's Silver Jubilee all the way back in 1977. I couldn't tell you which day we had the street party, just that it was unlikely to have been on the Sunday.

Our street was closed, a lot were back then. Not many people in our street had cars back then, but those who did parked them at the top end of the street, the other end from where we lived. From where the terraced houses at our end of the street started, the tables started as well.

Chairs were carried out from the houses. Glasses, crockery, and cutlery were piled onto the tables. All sorts of sweet and savoury items were placed there as well. Hot and cold food. An exotic. Aged six, I'd never tasted curry, but our street had as many Indian families as it did white. I didn't like the curry then when I first tasted it. It would take a few more years for that love to take hold. I went back to the sandwiches and crisps.

There were flags everywhere, bunting over the road held in place by the upstairs sash windows. Children of all ages played football at the end of the line of tables until an adult confiscated the ball as it worried the plates of food laid out. I am sure there was rain, a sense of people rushing about. Food being put into boxes. Furniture being rushed back indoors.

And then, as if by magic we were in the church hall. The huge hall of the Harrison Road Methodist Church. The food on tables all around the outside of the room. And the children (myself included) were in fancy dress.

Mum had made costumes for my brother, Larry, and I. Together we were Tom and Jerry. There was dancing. Well, music was being played that the kids in fancy dress were supposed to be dancing to. I didn't know how to dance. Instead, we played up to our cartoon types and ran around the dancefloor. My Tom chasing Larry's Jerry.

And then it came to the judging. And we were split up. Different age groups. My brother in the under-fives, me in the next one up. The fancy dress effect broken and meaningless. Larry came third in his age group – "as a rabbit outfit." I came nowhere. And consoled myself with cake and jelly.

I remember the memorabilia as well. We all got Silver Jubilee mugs through school. And commemorative coins. They went in cupboards and drawers at home. I've no idea what became of them. They will have been joined by similar royal tat in future years, for royal weddings and the like.

And there was a new tube line announced. I didn't know anything about it at the time, but the silver-coloured Jubilee Line became one of many things London Underground related I would become obsessed with in later years. And we get another one this time around as well.

## **Poetry Corner**

### **Nightmare House**

It was dark, dingy, damp, dank, and dreary  
Fixing up this old house was leaving us weary  
The holes in the roof and the missing floorboards  
And finding the coffin and the blood-stained swords  
The windows fell out, their frames had rotted  
The sinks overflowed, the pipes had been clotted  
The electricity only worked when it felt like it  
Every surface in the house was covered in bird shit  
But two years down the line you wouldn't recognise the place  
And looking at me you'll only see a smile on my face  
All the dirt is gone, it looks shiny and new  
And out of the windows there is a wonderful view  
We call it our palace, we are the king and queen  
This is the most wonderful house we've ever seen

## **Did I Really Blog That?**

### **A Couple of Little Things**

Why is it that when we go somewhere else apart from our own sofa to watch an England game, they are always such a crushing bore and usually not a great result? And is it just a coincidence that these games are the ones that are being shown on ITV. There appears to be a pattern emerging from recent tournaments. It did leave me wondering whether one of the channels hidden away in the upper reaches of the Sky channels is dedicated to watching paint dry. Just interested for alternative viewing for the next England game ITV show.

If the game wasn't particularly good, it was a good gathering. Lots of Italian fare on offer. Pizza, dough balls, garlic bread, mozzarella sticks etc. I suppose it's one way of getting the Italians involved in the world cup. I couldn't resist

asking Simon (pronounced See Mon) how Italy were getting on in the tournament in their easy group (consisting of themselves, Scotland, Peru, and New Zealand). He didn't look impressed, not amused. Not that sarcastic me cares.

And if the game was bad enough, they left the same channel on, and so I got subjected to the first episode of I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here, in this lifetime. I failed to see any celebrities, and feel that none of those there should get out, in fact it would do many people a favour if they just landfilled the entire site with everyone still in situ.

There are some tacky TV ads featuring players at the World Cup, but none of them are as bad as the radio ad for Muller Rice. They have Declan Rice, and they sing Rice Rice Baby. If I ever find the person responsible for that shitshow then there may be a prison sentence coming in my future.

Anyway, Saturday morning came, and the long running bugbear about Maccy D's breakfasts annoyed me again. When you customise an item, it costs extra to add items (obviously, fair enough), but it doesn't reduce the price if you remove items. If it costs 80p to add an egg or sausage to a double sausage and egg McMuffin, then why doesn't it take the same amount off when you remove one? I always customise mine to remove the egg and add an extra sausage. Both items show as being the same price, so why get charged extra when all that has been done is in effect a swap of one item for another of the same price? It's just a way to rip customers off again.

It isn't as if they are putting the extra money towards staff training. Even basic reading skills would be a bonus. If the order clearly says eat in, why is it not on a tray. Why is it in a crappy take away bag?

And since they removed the self-service area for serviettes, condiments, straws etc. why are none being added to the bag? Why are they staring at me as if I'm some kind of mass murderer if I ask them for a serviette and some salt.

I get it, they don't want to be there, but by the same token, I don't want to be having to speak to you. But if you make the decision to remove these items from self-service then you have no right to be looking at customers as if they are a piece of shit.

And as for the arrogant teenagers in there. No, it fucking well isn't your seat. You are not Ronald McDonald. If you are that desperate to sit in the seat, I am in then you can wait until I am done (granted I may now take even longer to eat my food than I was originally planning on doing). Or you can fuck off and find another seat.

## Story Time

### Swings And Roundabouts

When I was a child, I always thought it was a strange thing to say. But that was because at that age I was getting the saying wrong. I was sure they were saying 'swings on roundabouts.' Which sounded dangerous to me. Having to get across the road to the centre of the roundabout to be able to play on the swings. Surely there were better places for them. I used to look out every time we went past or around one. I never saw a single one with a swing in the middle.

Of course, I know why now, but I didn't then. I wasted no end of time looking for something that wasn't there. I never asked my parents or my brother about it. I didn't ask them where were the roundabouts with swings on them. And now I am glad that I didn't. I would never have heard the end of it. The glee they would have had in teasing me. I can hear the mocking voices in my head. I can hear them saying "Ooh, has this roundabout got a swing on it?" and then their laughter.

At. Every. Single. Roundabout. Ever!

They would all still be doing it now if they were still here. And if I had ever said it as well.

But I get ahead of myself. I thought that swings on roundabouts would have been dangerous. But during my childhood I found the swings were plenty dangerous enough for me where they were. They were OK when I was small, and I sat in the little cage with my mum or dad pushing me. It was all nice and gentle and fun. But then I became too big to use the little swings with the age. I moved onto the big boy swings. There was no longer someone to push me. I had to try and build up my own momentum. And I was rubbish at it.

Back then the swings were two metal chains with a thin, almost smooth, piece of coloured plastic between them. Every single one of them had Wicksteed Park in raised letters upon them. I did go to Wicksteed Park once in my teens, but that is a story for another time. I always wondered just how many swings it must have to have passed on all their older seats to every park in Leicestershire.

No matter how I tried I couldn't get the motion to get high enough. Sat down I would find myself sliding off the plastic seat. Standing up was just asking for trouble. I lost count of the number of times I fell off onto the hard, rough concrete and remnants of broken bottles left by the bigger kids who used the parks at night.

It wasn't until they started replacing the Wicksteed Park seats with big thick black tyres that I started to be able to swing like the other kids. The deeper surface and better surface friction meant I could get them up to the point of being horizontal. And once there it meant being able to jump off and land on the grass beyond the concrete base. The scraped elbows and knees subsided. To be replaced by twisted ankles and jarred knees from terrible landings.

If the swings were dangerous to me as a child, then the roundabouts were worse. They had many different ways of getting injured.

There was the simple one of just flying off the side when it got too fast to hang on when it was being spun faster and faster by the bigger boys. And woe betide you if you flew off into one of those boys. That would get you a kicking as well.

If you did manage to hold on, then getting off once it had come to a halt could be fun. The roundabout may have stopped spinning, but my head wouldn't have done, it would still be going around like crazy. I would weave about more than I ever did when I was older and drunk. And then the inevitable would happen. My balance would go, and I would hit the deck. And then lie on the ground with the clouds in the sky above me twirling away. I would close my eyes and lie there until I felt it had passed. If it was a good day, then I wouldn't be sick. I would get up and do it all again.

Then there were the angled roundabouts. I would climb on, gingerly get to a standing position, and start walking. As I did the roundabout would start moving, and the more I walked the quicker it got, and then I would be jogging, and it would become faster still, and the next thing I knew I would be sprinting. The trick was to be able to leap off whilst at speed. Which I managed to do every time until I didn't. My last effort saw me trip and land face first on the spinning hard wooden top, at which point I blacked out, and so missed the part where I was flung off and flew through the air to land twenty feet away in a crumpled heap. I smashed my cheek bone, broke my nose, lost two teeth, and took months to recover. I never went on a roundabout again.

And of course, the saying isn't true anyway. It is never only all swings and roundabouts.

There would be the climbing frame. Solid steel bars at all kinds of ridiculous angles, and if you were lucky, built into the shape of something recognisable. My local park had a helicopter.

Then there was the rocking horse. Five seats of doom. More little plastic Wicksteed Park numbers on a big old steel elongated horse with a solid shaped head. Which some poor unfortunate sod had to push, and if you weren't on and weren't paying attention the solid head would slam into you if you got too close.

And no self-respecting play area would be complete without the long metal slide. Hotter than the surface of the sun in the summer and colder than ice in the winter. And I'd try and get a flying start from the top to get down it as fast as I could. And then instead of going all the way around to have another go I'd attempt running back up the slippery slope. With varying degrees of success.

You may be wondering why swings and roundabouts are on my mind. Well, it turns out that when it comes to life and death it is all about roundabouts and swinging.

I sit and write this in the living room of the family home. I am alone with my thoughts. Earlier today I attended a triple funeral. My mum, my dad, and my brother were all buried today. In the same plot. I have seen lots of gravestones where it eulogises multiple family members on the same slab of marble, or slate, or granite. But it was the first time I've ever been to a funeral where they have stacked multiple coffins in the same deep hole.

My mum and brother died on a roundabout. An articulated lorry couldn't – or possibly wouldn't – stop at the line and drove straight into the side of their car. Turning it over and crushing it against one of the trees in the middle of the island. It's unlikely they knew what actually hit them.

My dad was supposed to have gone with them that day. And if he had he would have been the one who would have been driving. Would the outcome have been different if he had had been? No one can tell. But my dad didn't take the survivors guilt very well and I came home to find him swinging on the end of a rope in the hall. It was less than twelve hours after the accident.

Twelve hours for me to become an only child and then an orphan. And all that goes through my mind now is "it's all swings and roundabouts." And I suppose right now that is true.

I'm not sure what I'm going to do with my life now. But I do know that one night, in the not-too-distant future; I am going to go out and build a swing in the middle of that accursed roundabout.



## Chapter and Verse

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

### The Eyes In The Dark – Refuge

It had only been a few days since Hodson and the boy had crossed over the border from Chardom into Aspepsia. It had seemed an easy decision for Hodson to make. To leave Florivan in charge of getting all the displaced people who had followed them back from the southern continent of Archmelia back across the other border. The one into Malimiland, and to reunite them with their families. Florivan was much more suited to that kind of thing. It also meant he could carry on without Florivan second guessing him all the way.

Despite the help Florivan had been in facing the Magicusians, and the return to Chardom to replace the Gargoyle icon, Hodson still didn't fully trust the man who had spent so much time chasing him around Malimiland under the instructions of Haritonio. Aristor and Grimel may have told him Florivan could be trusted, but Hodson still couldn't bring himself to.

On top of this there was the boy. Marcon had proved himself invaluable in helping all of them find their way around the side of the portal so they could return to their own continent. And on this part of the journey, he had already led them through the darkness of the cave system under the mountains. But it tore at Hodson's sensibilities. The boy had only been reunited with his mother after years apart, when they were in Archmelia. Hodson knew he needed a blind companion to find the eyes of the statue in the pits of Parapsley. He trusted the boy more than anyone he had ever met, but the boy should be with his mother, and reunited as a family with his father back in Haystead.

Hodson knew Florivan had gotten involved. And although Dorothis had said that Marcon must carry on with him to finish the quest; the words coming out of her mouth didn't match the pleading look in her eyes. A look that the boy couldn't see, and a tone in her voice the usually perceptive Marcon didn't pick up on. Instead, the boy pestered Hodson into taking him with him. A decision he felt he was going to regret until the boy was safely at home at the family's tannery.

Escaping the lunacy of Chardom now that all the gargoyles had returned to the land of the living was one thing. What Hodson hadn't been expecting was that they were being followed and harassed and had been since they'd stepped into Aspepsia. They had been lucky so far. The felled tree across the chasm had given them a bit of breathing space. As had the passage through the mountain. Their followers unable, or unwilling to follow their footsteps. But they were picked up again within hours. And each time they were, there were more of them.

Now they were in the capital of Aspepsia. The ancient city of Lausieux. The huge statue of the now blind man towered over them. Blinking briefly out of view as they walked past buildings, only to reappear. A looming presence over them regardless of where they were in the city.

Every alleyway they passed had men in them. None of them appeared to be doing any work or have any business. All of them just stared at Hodson and the boy as they passed. Whispers could be heard in the shadows of the alleyways. But no words could be deciphered. The whispers followed them more than the men's eyes could.

It felt as if the whole world was closing in on Hodson. He needed to get inside and get safe. He needed to find a refuge for the pair of them. And quickly. And so, he headed for the cathedral and hoped the men would not.

Although old and grand, the cathedral here was nowhere near as impressive as the huge edifice back in Malimiland City. But Hodson hoped it would be as safe.

Going inside quickly, Hodson closed the door behind them and then stood to let his eyes adjust to the gloom. Marcon had no such issues and walked straight up the aisle of the nave towards the altar. The building seemed deserted and Hodson could hear the soft echo of each of the boy's footsteps, and he started to follow.

Before they reached the altar, a priest appeared from between two rows of seats and stopped in front of them.

"I'm sorry, but we are closed for prayer."

Hodson stared at the priest and replied.

"We are not here for prayer. We are here to see the high priest and to arrange for refuge."

"What makes you think the high priest would want to see you, let alone offer you refuge?"

It was the kind of response he had been told to expect. The priests here were not friendly to outsiders. Aristor had told him what to say back when Hodson had been in the library beneath the cathedral in Malimiland City. And Florivan had reminded him before they had parted in Chardom. Hodson had the answer.

“Aristor sends his regards and his emissary.”

The eyebrows on the priest’s face rose by a couple of notches as he inspected Hodson and the boy again, before he scuttled off. A few minutes later another priest returned.

“My brother tells me you are claiming to be Aristor’s emissary. I have to say you don’t look the type. A vagabond soldier and a young boy aren’t exactly emissary material.”

“Yet here we are.”

“How do I know Aristor sent you?”

“You don’t. Not for certain. But let me ask you a question. Where have all your gargoyles gone?”

“Any fool could have seen they have gone.”

“But none could tell you how or why. I can. I was responsible. The Magicusians are itching to return, and it would appear they need me to help it happen.”

The high priest pondered this for a while.

“Let us say this is the case. Why would someone with that kind of backing require refuge here?”

“Because I’m tired of being followed and harassed by what looks to be every grown man of fighting age in the whole of Aspepsia. I need it to stop. I need time to think and plan, and then I need to get out of this city and to the pits of Parapsley without an audience.”

The mention of Parapsley caused a deep intake of breath from the high priest.

“You aren’t. You can’t be. No one can find the eyes of the statue. Nothing can be found once in those pits. It is impossible.”

“The Magicusians don’t appear to believe so, and my blind companion is what it needed to prove you wrong.”

The high priest looked over the pair of them again, and there was a long silence.

“I am Jungth, high priest of Lausieux. Please follow me. I have just the place you need, and the way out of the city you will require.”

He turned and Hodson and Marcon followed. A secret door in a stone wall swung open and torches were lit. they followed Jungth through a labyrinth of passageways until they came to another door.

“Wait here,” Jungth said, “I need to check the way is clear for us, and to make sure the rooms are in a fit state for visitors.”

Hodson nodded as Jungth left through the door. They stood in the passageway waiting. It was difficult to know how long it was before Marcon spoke.

“I don’t trust this priest.”

“Who? Jungth?”

“Yes, he isn’t telling us the truth. I am sure of it.”

“I’m not sure I trust him either, but Aristor vouched for him, and as it stands, he is the only option we have here.”

“I think we should leave.”

Only for the door to open and Jungth to lean in and beckon them to follow. The torches were extinguished and left by the door, and they followed Jungth through more passageways, these ones lit. The look and feel of them seemed familiar to Hodson, and it suddenly dawned on him why. They reminded him of the Emperor’s palace in Malimiland City. He turned to Marcon and said.

“I’m sorry, I think you were right.”

And Jungth led them through another door. Into a throne room. One full of soldiers.

## **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 one hundred 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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