

Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 74

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 – 17th August

1498 – Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI, becomes the first person in history to resign the cardinalate; later that same day, King Louis XII of France names him Duke of Valentinois.

1896 – Bridget Driscoll became the first recorded case of a pedestrian killed in a collision with a motor car in the United Kingdom.

1947 – The Radcliffe Line, the border between the Dominions of India and Pakistan, is revealed.

1998 – Lewinsky scandal: US President Bill Clinton admits in taped testimony that he had an "improper physical relationship" with White House intern Monica Lewinsky; later that same day he admits before the nation that he "misled people" about the relationship.

Marcus Garvey Day (Jamaica)

Prekmurje Union Day (Slovenia)

San Martin Day (Argentina)

Black Cat Appreciation Day (United States)

Births

1786 – Davy Crockett

1893 – Mae West

1920 – Maureen O'Hara

1930 – Ted Hughes

1943 – Robert De Niro

1958 – Belinda Carlisle

1960 – Sean Penn

1994 – Phoebe Bridgers

Deaths

1983 – Ira Gershwin

1987 – Rudolf Hess

Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1988 – Yaz & The Plastic Population – The Only Way Is Up

Number 1 album in 1996 – Alanis Morissette – Jagged Little Pill

Number 1 compilation album in 1981 – Various Artists – The Official BBC Album Of The Royal Wedding

#vss365

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

Stan had always wanted to be in the #group. The problem was that he had no talent. He couldn't sing, couldn't dance, and couldn't play an instrument, couldn't even bang a tambourine in time.

Yet here he was on stage with them.

He'd give their families back after the gig.

#vss365

Joke

A man was getting a haircut prior to taking a trip to Rome. He mentioned the trip to the barber, who responded, "Why would you want to go there? It's crowded and dirty — and full of Italians! You're crazy to go to Rome! "So, how are you getting there?" "We're taking United," was the reply. "We got a great rate!" "United!" exclaimed the barber. "That's a terrible airline. Their planes are old, their flight attendants are ugly and they're always late. "So, where are you staying in Rome?" "We'll be at the downtown International Marriott." "That dump! That's the worst hotel in Rome. The rooms are small, the service is surly, and they're overpriced!" "What are you going to do when you get there?" "We're going to go to see the Vatican, and we hope to see the Pope." "That's rich," laughed the barber. "You and a million other people trying to see him. He'll look the size of an ant. Oh boy, good luck on this lousy trip of yours — you're going to need it!" A month later, the man again came in for his regular haircut. The barber asked him about his trip to Rome. "It was wonderful," explained the man. "Not only were we on time in one of United's brand-new planes, but it was overbooked, and they bumped us up to first class. The food and wine were wonderful, and I had a beautiful young stewardess who waited on me hand and foot. And the hotel! Well, it was great! They'd just finished a \$25 million remodelling job and now it's the finest hotel in the city. They were overbooked too, so they apologized and gave us the presidential suite at no extra charge!" "Well," muttered the barber. "I know you didn't get to see the Pope." "Actually, we were quite lucky, for as we toured the Vatican, a Swiss Guard tapped me on the shoulder and explained that the Pope likes to meet some of the visitors, and if I'd be so kind as to step into his private room and wait, the Pope would personally greet me. Sure enough, five minutes later, the Pope walked in. As I knelt down, he spoke to me." "What did he say?" "He said, 'Where'd you get that shitty haircut?'"

Drabble

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

A Deadly Song

Most people would pay not to hear me sing, it was a standing joke, even if I were carrying a bucket with me to hold the tune in, it would escape. Yet, here I was being paid by the crown to sing a duet with Carmel de Boll, the most famous witch in the kingdom.

The specially selected crowd shuffled in, the courtiers left, and we started singing.

When my voice was amplified and aided by Carmel, it was evident my singing voice was bad enough to kill people.

That was why I'd been chosen to sing to the dissidents.

Random Items

Facts

Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846.

John F. Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.

Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860.

John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1960.

Both were particularly concerned with civil rights.

Both wives lost their children while living in the White House.

Both Presidents were shot on a Friday.

Both Presidents were shot in the head.

Now it gets really weird.

Lincoln's secretary was named Kennedy.

Kennedy's Secretary was named Lincoln.

Both were assassinated by Southerners.

Both were succeeded by Southerners named Johnson.

Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1808.

Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.

John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln, was born in 1839.

Lee Harvey Oswald, who assassinated Kennedy, was born in 1939.

Both assassins were known by their three names.

Both names are composed of fifteen letters.

Lincoln was shot at the theatre named 'Ford.'

Kennedy was shot in a car called 'Lincoln' made by 'Ford.'

Lincoln was shot in a theatre and his assassin ran and hid in a warehouse.

Kennedy was shot from a warehouse and his assassin ran and hid in a theatre.

Booth and Oswald were assassinated before their trials.

And here's the kicker...

A week before Lincoln was shot, he was in Monroe, Maryland.

A week before Kennedy was shot, he was in Marilyn Monroe.

In 1863, Robert Lincoln, son of the president, was saved from death when he was pulled from the path of a train by Edwin Booth. Two years later the hero's brother John Wilkes Booth shot and killed Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre in Washington.

Thoughts

You can't unsay a cruel thing.

In wine there is wisdom. In beer there is strength. In water there is bacteria

Every path has some puddles.

Random Top Ten

The ten countries who have qualified for the FIFA World Cup who have the smallest populations.

Rank	Countries	Population
1	Iceland	334,242
2	Trinidad and Tobago	1,225,225
3	Northern Ireland	1,841,245
4	Slovenia	2,063,008
5	Qatar	2,508,182
6	Jamaica	2,717,991
7	Wales	3,063,456
8	Kuwait	3,065,850
9	Uruguay	3,286,314
10	Panama	3,405,813

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.

Press The Button

He had one job. The same one he had had since his teenage years. A simple task. Press the big red button on the desk every night at exactly midnight. Two seconds work a day, for which he was paid the same or more as those working fifty hours a week. Press the button and move the planet to the next day's universe. Keep ahead of the darkness. Never forget. Never miss.

And he did it. but he always thought why? He had pondered it at length once, about how it all worked, but it had just made his head hurt. He watched the screen as he pressed the button. Watched as the never-ending darkness crept closer to them, only for the view to flick to the brightness of a billion stars as they jumped across to the new day. And then he would leave the office, go to bed, go to sleep, rise, waste his day, and come back and do it all again.

He never had a holiday, never missed a day. He went to the office, pressed the button at the allotted time and went home. He never saw anyone else at the office. Never spoke to anyone there. It was a lonely job and a lonely life. And though he had money, he had nothing to really spend it on. No nights out. No trips away. And he was tired of it now. He wanted, no, needed a break, and he was going to get one.

When his head didn't hurt so much from thinking about why and how, he had a brainwave. If he pushed the button to move forward a day to keep the darkness from catching up with them, surely if he pressed it more than once, they would be able to get a lead on the dark, to create a gap. It made sense to him, and so he made the decision that today would be the day he would try it. He was going to press the button. Not just the prescribed once, but twenty times. And then he would relax. He would go on a trip. He would have nights out. He would try to enjoy himself.

The large clock display flicked over to all zeroes as he pressed the button. And again, as he pressed it a second time. Twice more, and again all zeroes showed. He got excited and kept pressing. He didn't pay any attention to the screen.

To the stars becoming larger and brighter. He felt warm, but paid no heed to the increase in temperature. Instead, he kept pressing the button, losing count of where he was once, he was into double figures.

The alarm didn't register with him. No one had ever told him about the alarm. He had never heard it before, and didn't know what it meant. Instead, he carried on pressing the button, moving the planet forward another day. Keeping going until he had pressed the button once too often and the planet moved forward into the nearest star, vaporising the planet, and killing everyone on it.

The Galaxtors sighed. Another failed experiment. The Terrans could not be trusted to manually move themselves through time; they always either forgot and got taken by the darkness, or they became too eager and flung themselves into a star. Frying themselves through impatience or stupidity, or losing themselves in the dark due to forgetfulness or laziness.

They had had enough chances. Instead, the next experiment would see automation. The movement to keep them in front of the darkness but out of the star would be set by the Galaxtors, and the Terrans they placed on the next planet would have nothing to do with it.

This experiment they would call Earth.

Leicestershire

Ultima Sports

Ultima Sports Ltd. is a sports car manufacturer based in Hinckley, Leicestershire, England. Founded in 1992 by Ted Marlow and Richard Marlow, Ultima Sports Ltd manufacture and distribute worldwide the Ultima Evolution supercar.

The current Evolution is available in two body styles: coupe and convertible. The Ultima Evolution Coupe and Ultima Evolution Convertible have body styles unchanged from the preceding Ultima GTR and Ultima Can-Am models, respectively. Prior to the GTR and Can-Am models, the two models produced were the Ultima Sport and Ultima Spyder. All models in the Ultima range have always been primarily supplied in component form. That is, Ultima produces the parts required for an owner/builder to construct the car off-site. This is the only way to receive such a vehicle in the USA (including a 'rolling body' fully constructed minus engine and transmission). However, cars are also manufactured onsite as "turnkey" models for the European market.

The first Ultima produced was the Ultima Mk1 produced in 1983 by Lee Noble of Noble Motorsports Ltd. The car was intended to go into production, but only one was produced because before any sold, the Ultima Mk2 was introduced in 1989. The Mk2 is based on the Mk1 but features new suspension and better brakes. The car was very successful on track, winning many races and taking multiple championship wins in smaller series, being driven by Lee Noble and Ted Marlow. It was featured on the covers of Kitcars and Specials magazine, Sports Car Monthly Magazine and Autochromes Magazine. 13 Ultima Mk2s were produced in total. The Ultima Mk3 introduced in 1989 featured a brand-new fiberglass body but was still powered by the same PRV V6. It was the last Ultima produced by Noble Motorsports Ltd before Ted Marlow and Richard Marlow bought the rights to the car in 1992 and started Ultima Sports.

The preferred engine supplier for Ultima is currently American Speed, a company which specialises in re-engineering Chevrolet V8s for increased performance. It was with a 640 hp (480 kW) version of the Chevrolet small-block V8 built by American Speed, that company director Richard Marlow was able to set a number of performance records in an Ultima GTR during 2005, this combination was known as the Ultima GTR640. The latest Evolution variant is being marketed with an American Speed 1,020 hp (760 kW) motor as the most powerful available from the factory.

In 2006 Ultima beat their own 0–100 mph-0 record set in the GTR640 with the GTR720, again using an American Speed SBC engine but now with 720 hp (540 kW). The new record shaved 0.4 seconds off the time completing 0–100–0 mph in 9.4 seconds, a new world record for a production road car with street legal tyres and exhaust.

All tests were recorded on road legal tyres in controlled conditions using a standard Ultima GTR720 and verified by an official from Datron Technology (Guinness World Records timekeepers) using Microsat GPS equipment.

The Ultima GTR720 has also recorded the quickest ever road legal lap time around the Top Gear Test Track at 1 min 12.8 secs, albeit unofficially but with an independent timekeeper and GPS timing gear present. The vehicle was also driven to and from the test track on the public roads as proof of its road going ability. The same Ultima GTR720 also recorded an even quicker Top Gear Test Track lap time of 1 min 9.9 secs but this time fitted with slick racing tyres to eclipse the 1 min 10.7 secs lap time of Michael Schumacher in his \$1.8 million Ferrari FXX track car.

It has been suggested that with the substantial upgrades, the Ultima Evolution may go from 0–60 mph in 2.3 seconds, 0–100 mph in 4.9s, and 0–100 mph-0 in 8.8s.

Foxton

Foxton is a village and civil parish in the Harborough district, in the county of Leicestershire, England, to the north-west of Market Harborough. The village is on the Grand Union Canal and is a short walk to the site of the Foxton Locks and Foxton Inclined Plane. Swingbridge Street still has a working swing bridge that allows people and vehicles to pass over the canal, which can be opened to allow canal boats to pass. Foxton's population is a mix of professionals and locals. There are two public houses in the village, a village hall, and a primary school. Foxton is serviced by Market Harborough train station which is approximately three miles away. London and Birmingham can each be reached by train in approximately 50 minutes.

The village has previously been known as Foxestone and Foxtone. It is believed to have developed these names from the large number of foxes which inhabited the area. Foxton was originally a hill-top settlement, thought to have been founded in Saxon times with a landscape fashioned in the ice-age. The village gradually moved down the valley side as a farming community, working on the open three field system until it was enclosed in 1770. Foxton remained virtually unchanged between Norman times until the end of the 18th century when the canal arrived from Leicester, cutting through the village. Agriculture began to diminish as improved communication and alternative job opportunities meant that people left their village to work and in the bringing of trade and industry via the canal. In 1935 a small area in the south-east of Foxton was transferred to Harborough, and a small part of Harborough was transferred to Foxton.

The parish's approximately square ground area of 1,902 acres is hilly and well wooded. The soil is of a "rich loam; subsoil, clay". The Welland Valley was formed on the southern side of the village from a brook that cuts through Foxton from west to east; its highest point, just south of Foxton village, being 438 ft. above sea level. Features of the local countryside include spinneys and coverts which provide habitat for a large variety of wildlife.

Foxton is a nucleated village; it mainly consists of three parallel streets: Main Street, Middle Street and Swingbridge Street, which run down the hill in a south-westerly direction. The highest part of the village is home to the church and the manor house, which are cornered off from the rest of the village by the Grand Union Canal.

The Century of Origination of Dwellings in Foxton, as reported by Chambers O.B.E, David in 'A Foxton Heritage Project.' The village buildings are almost entirely built of red brick. The composition of the current dwellings of Foxton is that 2% of the houses originate from the 1600s, "9% from the 1700s, 18% from the 1900s, and 7% from the present century". The oldest building in Foxton is St Andrew's church, which was originally built around 1200. In the 11th Century the "earliest part of the Manor house was built" as the settlement developed. This was followed in the 13th Century by the "building of a second manor house, whose foundations are Orchard House".

St Andrew's Church sits at the highest and southernmost point of the parish. It was a "centre for the religious life of a Saxon community", the oldest parts of which dating to about 1200AD. From 1891-3 a restoration took place at the cost of £2,750, there is a commemorative plaque to signify this event.

Robert Monk Hall was opened in 1931 by Robert Monk; its upkeep is supplied by a trust fund, and helps to assist the people of Foxton.

Foxton Locks is a site of touristic interest situated on the Grand Union Canal; it attracts many visitors to the area.

Manor House is situated south of the Grand Union Canal and north of Swingbridge Street. It is an 18th-century farmhouse on the site of an old Norman Manor which was held by Judith, niece of William the Conqueror, after the Norman Conquest.

Life's What You Make It

Excerpts from life writing.

Cloudy Clare

I look back and wish I had been older. More able to appreciate it. to be able to get to know the family better. Instead, I only have cloudy memories.

The first time I went to Ireland I was four, and I only have the tiniest recollection of going on a plane. Something it would be over twenty years before I did again.

My dad was visiting his family in Ennis, and further out around Clare and Limerick. It was the first time he had been back since getting married to my non-Catholic mum. His mother hadn't approved. English heathens apparently.

It was said I was good as gold, as we got to go again, the whole family this time. Two weeks in summer in both 1977 and 1978. Trains up to Holyhead, a ferry to Dun Laoghaire, a night at my Uncle John's house in Swords before a relay journey across the country. First driven by John to Portlaoise, and then picked up from there by one of my aunts (there

were three to choose from) and taken down to Ennis. And then there would be the reverse of that journey nearly two weeks later.

I remember my Grandma's house in Ennis. Well, more the large back garden surrounded by trees and bushes. And getting frightened when the little dog got through from the neighbours, and I ran away thinking it would bite me (most other dogs did back then). She was an old woman, but that's all I remember about her.

We went to the beach a lot. Lahinch on the Atlantic Ocean. Golden sands. Playing in the sea. Going into a bar. Having 7-up for the first time and being amazed at the taste, and then everywhere I went after that I asked for a 7-up. And thinking it was something you could only get in Ireland.

One day we went to Spanish Point instead. And I wasn't allowed to go more than a few steps into the sea. Something about the continental shelf being almost next to the shore, and the worry of stepping off the edge and falling into the deep. I was so perturbed I wouldn't go into the sea even when we went back to Lahinch. And so, the next day we went to a Lough. I have no idea where, or of its name. But the shore of the lake was like a beach, the water was warmer with no waves, and it was surrounded by dark green grass.

There was a lot of dark green open land. Land with no houses for miles around. A dark green wilderness. I had expected it to be black or brown and hot. I thought they were calling it 'The Burn,' not 'The Burren,' it sounded the same to me. Mile upon mile of it out to the Cliffs of Moher and looking back out over the Atlantic.

For some reason we had stopped at a village shop-cum-bar in the middle of the Clare countryside. I was happily running around and making noise when everything stopped. And all the adults stared at me in disapproval at me not stopping. I had no idea what was going on. I didn't live there; I didn't know about 'The Angelus' at 6pm.

I have memories of playing football in the street one night after midnight with my cousins when our parents had gone out somewhere. It seemed so good at the time when I was an eight-year-old.

But I have never been back since. I don't really know any of my cousins. My dad and four of his siblings have died. I do know my one surviving aunt, but I have never met my single surviving uncle. He has been in a home since childhood, and I was in my twenties before I even knew of his existence.

By blood I am more Irish than anything else, but if I am, I'm a poor excuse of an Irishman. I hate potatoes, and I don't drink anymore. I tried to learn some Gaelic, but I would have more joy trying to nail jelly to the wall.

All I have is fragments. Memories of my dad's gentle brogue. Of having a Hurley, but no one to play with it against. And finding out over time that most of my dad's phrases and words of wisdom were mainly Dubliners' lyrics.

I would like to go back and see it with my older and more experienced eyes. To see what I have missed. And mourn on the family I never took the time to know.

Poetry Corner

The Moon

Look at the moon is what my head has always said
Look at the moon is just what I did
White and large sat in a dark cloudless sky
White and large it intimidates my being

I am fascinated by it
Yet I am terrified of it
I can't help but look
And so, I draw the blinds
Only to open the door and step outside
To not have anything between me and it

I reach out to touch it
To hold it
To own it
To hide it away
So, no one else can see
But especially me

With no moon to distract me I will be able to sleep
With no moon to distract me I will no longer weep

I can be sane again
I can live a normal life
Have a job, have a career
Maybe a relationship or two

But I can't reach it or get anywhere near it
Its ever-changing face is mocking me
I am still screaming when they take me away
I wanted to hide the moon from the world
Only to find I am the one hidden away from it
Another victim of the cruel cruel moon

Did I Really Blog That?

A Eulogy To A T-Shirt

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to celebrate the life of the recently passed away Adidas 2012 London Olympics stripy polo neck t-shirt.



Since its birth in 2012 and adoption into my wardrobe family in September of that year, it has been an almost constant life companion. It has accompanied me to the Caribbean, to both Cuba and St Lucia, and has been on many a European adventure, France, Belgium, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Cyprus.



It has been with me on messy nights out, often trying to soak up as much booze as I did. It's been with me to the top of cathedrals, and into castle dungeons, serenely wandering through stately homes, and formal gardens. On workdays, rest days, and play days. It has seen many a thing that it shouldn't have, but has never said a mumbling word. And I'm sure anyone who knows me will have seen this on me.



But recently the years have been catching up. Some of the labels have faded away so they are now blank. The main crest and arm numbers have stayed intact and look nearly as good as they did at birth. But elsewhere the sure signs of age and wear and tear have caught up with the poor fellow. Its remarkable shape has started to let go, and it is not just my downsizing that has caused it to become baggier these last six months. It is losing its cohesion. The coloured lines are now automatic creases, and as they become concertina like, little holes have started to appear as wisps of threads start to fall away.



None of this should be a surprise, it has been on the heaviest of heavy rotation for ten years now. Since becoming mine in the time between watching Richard Whitehead winning the T42 200 meters title in the morning in the Olympic stadium, and Ellie Simmons winning the S6 400 meters freestyle gold in the Aquatics centre in the evening, it has been worn at least once a fortnight ever since. Over 250 days and nights, and the associated washing machine cycles.



Yet, despite this, it is still a sad day where I must admit that the great servant of mine is no longer for this world. And so, with a heavy heart the time has come for me to let go. After deliberation, it is in no state for a second life with someone else via the charity shop route. Nor does unceremoniously dumping it in the bin for it to lie in land fill feel right for it. Therefore, next weekend, ten years on from its adoption, the beloved t-shirt will pass on to the other side in a private cremation service in front of a few friends, with its ashes to be scattered at a future date in an appropriate place. (Yes, in the Olympic stadium all over West Ham fans may be tempting and somewhat appropriate, but it will need a better untainted resting spot).

Thank you for covering (for) me for all these years, you will be sorely missed.

Story Time

Death Of A King

Antonio was an insufferable bore. In his little village everyone knew him. But no one wanted to. He spent his life just wandering around the village interrupting everyone else's day. Butting into their conversations. Talking over them, telling them they were wrong. He was a self-proclaimed expert on anything and everything. He would talk to people without a pause until he decided he had to go and be a pain in the arse somewhere else. There wasn't any other way of stopping him talking.

If someone tried to ignore him, he would talk all the louder. If they decided to agree with what he was saying, then it would only encourage him to talk all the more. And if there was disagreement then he might be there for days explaining in minute detail why he was right, and they were wrong.

And the thing was, Antonio was rarely right. He had never read a book; in fact, it was doubtful he even knew what a book was. He had no life experience. He had never left the village in his thirty-three years of life. He had never had a job. And had never attempted to have one either. But what he lacked in knowledge and experience he more than made up for in confidence and volume.

Many blamed his parents. Said they had indulged him from an early age. But it wasn't indulgence that had ruined their child. It was naming him Antonio, the same name as the King. A wandering minstrel had told the young Antonio what a wonderful name he had, and how he was blessed to be called the same name as the King of Molbegaria. And Antonio took those words to heart, and from that moment on, he thought he was the king of the village. It was impossible to disabuse him of the fact.

He took pleasure in telling all the villagers he was their king. And he would tell any poor travellers passing through the village that as he was named after the king, it made him king of the village, and he would often ask the travellers to pay homage to him. Most ignored him and carried on with their journey believing him to be a simpleton. Others may have given him a coin or two. Low denominations that wouldn't buy him an ale at the inn, but all adding to his unshakeable self-belief. One traveller had taken offence and punched Antonio, knocking him down to the ground. No one came to help him up, and there may have been a few cheers that day.

But news had reached the village that the King was ailing. His physician had been in permanent residence at the palace for weeks and nothing she had tried was stopping the king's declining health. It had been said that the King only had days to live. Preparations were being made for his funeral.

Antonio was upset that the king with whom he shared a name would soon be gone, but he was convinced that having the same name would bring him a special reward upon the king's death. And for once in his life, Antonio was correct in this. Only not in the way he would have been expecting.

The King wasn't happy about dying – who would be. He had not been happy about a lot of things for a long time now. He had been sick of simpering fools and power-hungry suck-ups naming their own children after him. As if them having the same name as the king meant something. He was now furious that they were in full on planning mode for his funeral and he wasn't even dead yet.

He had had a long life, but for the last ten years had grown sick of being king. Of the kingdom of Molbegaria. And of his ever bowing and scraping subjects. Most of all he hated his eldest son, and his grandson, both of which had been named Antonio after him as well. Ungrateful little sods, the lot of them. And so, he had trawled through the laws of the kingdom and found an unrepealed law long forgotten. Aptly named the Act of Forced Forgetting.

Against his physician's, and most of his ministers' advice, he had called the people to a public address. In a voice a lot of the crowd struggled to hear, the King thanked the crowd for coming. He expressed his disgust at the preparations for his own funeral, berated his subjects as fools, and declared that upon his imminent death, as was his right as King of Molbegaria, he was implementing the Act of Forced Forgetting.

The crowd applauded. None of them knew what the act was, blithely thinking it would be something great if the King had announced it. His ministers were none the wiser either. The Lord Chancellor had never heard of the act, and when one of the scribes found a copy in the archives, he was shocked to see what it entailed. Horrified the Lord Chancellor went to see the King to get him to reconsider, but the King wouldn't. Instead, he called all the ministers and his family together and made sure they all knew what the act required.

"In the event of the death of the King of Molbegaria, if they have decreed this Act of Forced Forgetting to be applied, then every citizen of Molbegaria, regardless of their age, occupation, rank, or birth rite, who share the name of the recently deceased King shall be found and summarily executed so no one of that name shall survive in Molbegaria, and no one should ever use that name for a new child in the Kingdom again."

The only happy person in the room at the end of the gathering was King Antonio's second son, Mercurio.

When the King died a few days later, the pages went out with the proclamation, and the soldiers went with them to help bring back all the Antonios to the capital to face their fate. Those in the capital, the ones who were related to the ministers, and anyone who worked for the King tried to get the message out. For any of their own kin named Antonio to hide, or to leave the Kingdom.

But when the page and soldiers arrived at the village, Antonio proudly proclaimed his name, telling them about how, having been named as the King had been, he had become the king of the village. And off he went. The soldiers weren't required to force Antonio away from his village and back to the capital. He went freely of his own accord; certain he was going to get his just rewards. He couldn't help himself and all through the journey to the capital he talked non-stop at the page and the soldiers. And so, when they arrived in the capital and Antonio was brought together with all the other Antonios, including the old King's son and grandson, he ended up being third in line when the executions started. His constant monologue only coming to an end when his head was removed from his shoulders by the executioner's axe.

Back in the village, and across the rest of the Kingdom, they came to find out exactly what the Act of Forced Forgetting was all about. And the village learned of Antonio's execution. No one cried. And as the act required, he was forgotten. No one wanted to remember him anyway.

And no one in the Kingdom decided to call their children Mercurio.

Chapter and Verse

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

Where The Lights Shine Brightest – Chapter 3

As the Tube he had just missed pulled out of the station, he saw her again, sat there staring into space, oblivious to him as always. In the five years since he had initially met her, he had seen her on a lot of occasions, maybe thirty times in all, always in a different city, and always on public transport that was just pulling off, leaving him behind.

She never seemed to change either, hair and make-up always immaculate, and it was always the same style, length, and colours. He wondered whether he was imagining it, as it seemed she hadn't aged either.

Then again, if he thought about it, he hadn't changed in the same time period either, his hair was always the same, it hadn't needed cutting since that first meeting, though he welcomed the fact that he no longer needed to shave.

At first it had freaked him out big-time, he had tried to style it, only to find it back the original style the following morning. He'd even had it all shaved off, but it was back to its current length and style when he woke the next morning. He had learnt to live with it, thinking that at least it was a fairly non-descript hairstyle, and not some god-forsaken style nightmare such as pink streaks or a dodgy weave in dreads.

As for the rest of him, it didn't seem to matter what he did nothing changed, no matter what he ate or drank, every morning he was exactly the same, almost as if he were living some kind of permanent groundhog day, but with the actual date, and his life moving on. He thought about trying something mental like in the film, as if he were Bill Murray, trying to get a different result upon waking up.

Then he thought back to the woman, and that made him think back to the first time he had seen her.

They had been in some kind of strange white room, the room of his dreams, white as far as the eye could see, with a strange lighting method that threw no shadows, and that didn't appear to have any obvious source, it was almost as if the light were in everything in the room. This has made it difficult to try and estimate how big the room was, as there was no contrast to use to get a judgement of size.

The only things in the room that weren't white were their heads and their hands, the two of theirs and those of another four people that were also visible in the room. Even the white gowns they had on seem to shine with the same bright light as everything else.

He hadn't seen any of the other faces from that room at all in the last five years, but had seen the woman at regular intervals. She was always ahead of him, as if escaping, always the same, from the first time in Kuala Lumpur, just a few days after he found himself awake in his apartment with no recollection of how he got there, through four different continents, in his home town of Philadelphia, and now here in his latest client's home city of London.

He had spent much time thinking whether it really was the same person, as there was no pattern, to the location, or to the frequency of sightings. It had been three months since the previous sighting, just a short hop away from where he was now, in Manchester.

He'd been a guest of his previous client at a Champions League soccer game, which in itself hadn't been bad, just that it had finished a tie, with no attempt to get a winner on the night, which was a fairly foreign concept to him as an American, and the sports he was used to watching.

He had come out of the game and got to the Exchange Quay tram stop, just as it pulled away, and she was sat right at the back of the tram, appearing to stare right through him. He had tried waving to get her attention, but to no avail, nothing changed in her features, she just continued staring through him as if he weren't there.

The longest gap had been about a year which had ended with that sighting in Manchester, the shortest gap had been just a single day, between her being in his hometown of Philadelphia one day, and then in San Francisco the very next day.

The shock of that sighting in San Francisco had caused him to come to a grinding halt, as everything seemed to shut down around him, all his senses stopped, and he stood oblivious to everything, rooted to the spot. As his consciousness returned to him, he turned to see the tram was only a couple of hundred yards away from him, and only trundling along. He had ran like a maniac after the tram, and to his mind having broken the one hundred, two hundred and four hundred meter world records, he caught up with the tram just as it was leaving its next scheduled stop, the good thing being that he could manage to still get on even though it was moving – something that he could have done at the previous stop if he had kept his presence of mind.

The seat that he was sure had only moments before housed the woman was empty, and she was not on the tram, he had jumped off the moving tram, much to the consternation of some of his fellow passengers, and raced back to the stop he'd got on at, but there was no sign of the woman in any direction.

If only he hadn't frozen, he might have been able to speak to her, though there was a large part of his consciousness that wondered whether he had just imagined seeing the woman, and another substantial part of it that wondered whether he had been making the whole thing up all along.

Had he ever met this woman? Did she even exist? Was the bright white room real, or just a very bad dream that recurred to him? He didn't think the answer to any of those questions was no, but he really wanted to speak to this woman to find out for certain.

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/@onettruekey>. 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](#).

And if you do read, if possible, clap for it, highlight any of it, and make a comment, even one word. All these things boost the article.

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

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