

Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 78

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 December

- 1819 – Simón Bolívar declares the independence of Gran Colombia in Angostura (now Ciudad Bolívar in Venezuela).
- 1892 – First issue of Vogue is published.
- 1903 – The Wright brothers make the first controlled powered, heavier-than-air flight in the Wright Flyer at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.
- 1933 – The first NFL Championship Game is played at Wrigley Field in Chicago between the New York Giants and Chicago Bears. The Bears won 23–21.
- 1989 – The Simpsons premieres on television with the episode "Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire".

Accession Day (Bahrain)
International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers
Kurdish Flag Day (Global Kurdish population)
National Day (Bhutan)

Births

- 1936 – Pope Francis
- 1936 – Tommy Steele
- 1973 – Paula Radcliffe
- 1975 – Milla Jovovich

Deaths

- 1273 – Rumi
- 1830 – Simón Bolívar
- 1957 – Dorothy L. Sayers
- 2011 – Kim Jong-il

Number 1's

- Number 1 single in 1976 – Showaddywaddy – Under The Moon Of Love
- Number 1 album in 1971 – Led Zeppelin – Led Zeppelin IV
- Number 1 compilation album in 1983 – Various Artists – Now That's What I Call Music

#vss365

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

He'd declined the invitation so many times he was surprised they still asked him to go to the country. Yet they were still asking why he didn't want to be out of the grimy city to join them in the middle of all that #nature?

They didn't know he was a cyborg and unnatural.

#vss365

Joke

Two old guys are pushing their carts around Walmart when they collide. The first old guy says to the second guy, 'Sorry about that. I'm looking for my wife, and I guess I wasn't paying attention to where I was going.' The second old guy says, 'That's OK, it's a coincidence. I'm looking for my wife, too. I can't find her and I'm getting a little desperate.' The first old guy says, 'Well, maybe I can help you find her. What does she look like?' ' The second old guy says, 'Well, she is 27 yrs

old, tall, with red hair, blue eyes, long legs, and is wearing short shorts. What does your wife look like?' To which the first old guy says, 'Doesn't matter, let's look for yours.'

Drabble

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

Don't Look Back

Press the button and keep the planet ahead of the ever-stalking darkness. That was his job, the only thing he had to do. Push the button. Every day at midnight. Move the planet forward so they didn't get taken by the dark.

But he got carried away, he kept pressing the button to get further away from the darkness.

He was so busy looking behind at the distance they were getting ahead of the darkness he didn't see them catching and entering the star in front.

In the end it wasn't the dark that got them, it was the light.

Random Items

Facts

Over 2500 left-handed people a year are killed using products made for right-handed people

Rice is grown on more than 10 percent of the earth's arable surface

During 1520 to 1630 there were over 30,000 werewolf trials in France

Thoughts

An organization is like a tree full of monkeys. They are all on different limbs at different levels. Some are climbing up. Some are climbing down. The monkeys on the top look down and see a tree full of smiling faces. The monkeys on the bottom look up and see nothing but a bunch of assholes.

You can't shake hands with a clenched fist

You can't tell which way the train went, just by looking at the tracks

Random Top Ten

The first 10 Rolling Stones Albums to get to number 1 in the UK.

Pos	Album	Date Reached No 1
1	The Rolling Stones	01/05/1964
2	The Rolling Stones No 2	06/02/1965
3	Aftermath	30/04/1966
4	Let It Bleed	20/12/1969
5	Get Yer ya-ya's Out!	19/09/1970
6	Sticky Fingers	08/05/1971
7	Exile On Main Street	10/06/1972
8	Goat's Head Soup	22/09/1973
9	Emotional Rescue	05/07/1980
10	Voodoo Lounge	23/07/1994

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 Ball

I have been with my brothers and sisters, the twelve of us, born together, and living together in this box. This box and the darkness within it, is all we have ever known since our creation.

But now that is about to change. The lid was lifted off our box, and then put back after a few seconds of blinding light. We could feel the box moving. It did so for some time. We bobbed against each other, moving slightly out of our little pods, coming to rest in a slightly different position.

And then the motion stopped. And the lid came off the box for a second time. And once we had adjusted to the light, we could see a giant looming above us, massive arms coming down towards us, and then I was lifted up out of the box and into the air before being put into another dark space, softer than the box, and three of my brethren joined me in there.

Then we were moving again. Jolting all over the place without our little pods to rest in. Not knowing which way was up or down. Bumping together in this new dark strange world. And we stopped again. The opening to our new little home opened and one of the giant's hands came in and snatched me away from the others.

I was placed on a little plastic, round, uncomfortable seat, just above a never-ending vista of green ground beneath me, and of blue sky above me. I was outside and alone. Alone for the first time in my life. And it all felt very strange. I could see the giant again now. Standing tall, way above me, and waving a funny looking stick around.

The stick moved at tremendous speed. And OUCH! What the fucking fuck was that. Shit that smarts. Absolutely no need to smack me with your stick you giant prick.

Hold on, I'm flying, whizzing through the air. The blue sky is closer, the green ground further away, but it is mostly a blur. The smarting is wearing off and instead all I feel is the rush of air over and into all my dimples as I rotate slowly. And it feels wonderful.

The green is coming back towards me, rushing up to meet me. I'm going to hit it. Hit it hard. Brace for impact, and oof. It wasn't that bad. I'm tumbling along the green ground, head over heels, gradually slowing down and I stop. I'm sat within the green. It has funny little tentacles tickling me. But it feels nice. It was a nice trip after the initial shock. I quite like it here. I wonder if any of the others will be coming to join me?

Ah, here come the giant again. Making massive strides toward me. He's waving a stick again. No, No, Ouch!! Motherfucker. That stings you giant twat.

But wait, I'm flying again. This feels good. But the flight isn't as long this time. And that isn't green below me. It is darker, like a darker version of the sky, and that is what I fall into. I don't rest on the surface though. I sink through it and fall before hitting some brown murky stuff. This must be water above me. And I can see what look like long lost relatives through the gloom down here.

And I wait. Expecting the giant and his sticks. But he never comes. No one does. I stay here alone. I don't know how long I've been here. Or for how long I will remain here.

Leicestershire

The Magazine Gateway

This impressive structure was built at the new gateway into the walled enclosure known as the 'new work' or Newarke, which was built from 1330 by Henry, 3rd Earl of Lancaster. The gateway itself was built by the 3rd Duke of Lancaster, King Henry IV in 1400. There was never a portcullis on the gateway, which would suggest that it was always meant to be there to impress visitors rather than as a defensive measure. During its early use it is difficult to know what the rooms in the building were used for, but it could had been used by visitors to the Newarke, or as a dwelling by some of the townsfolk.

The gatehouse itself has two archways, used to give pedestrian and carriage access from just outside the south gates of the town, into the walled precinct. Inside the Gatehouse are rooms on three storeys. These provided living accommodation for a porter and, on the first floor over the archways, guest accommodation for visitors to the college precinct. On at least two occasions, in 1440 and 1525, official visitations found, among a range of serious lapses within the college, concern over the porter allowing access to the precinct by 'unseemly people including women of late hours', and banned the selling food and drink from the precinct and gatehouse.

After the closure of the Church of the Annunciation of St. Mary, due to the reformation in 1548, the whole area of the Newarke came to be used by the richer citizens of Leicester as a tax dodge, due to the fact that the area fell outside the borough of Leicester and therefore no tax was payable. It would seem that from this time the Magazine was used as a prison, and it can be seen from graffiti still viewable in the building that there were prisoners there from at least 1564.

In the 17th century it changed its use, to become the town armoury (or magazine), and as such stored all the gunpowder and weapons for the Leicester town militia. Despite the fact that there was fighting during the civil war siege of Leicester in 1645, around the local area, there was very little damage to the Magazine.

The 4th Battalion, the Leicestershire Regiment, created when the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment was split in 1908, was formed at the Magazine. The battalion was mobilised at the Magazine in August 1914 before being deployed to the Western Front. The Magazine was also used as the headquarters of the Leicestershire Yeomanry during the First World War.

After the civil war it became the armoury for the County militia, and after much of the stonework was replaced in 1853, barracks and a drill hall were built close by in the 1860's to house the Leicestershire militia.

In 1903 a new road was built through the gateway, and was declared at the time that it would put an end to the traffic problems in Leicester for once and for all! However the barracks and drill hall were demolished in the 1960's to make way for a new road scheme and the Southgates bus station. At the time it was also suggested that the Magazine be demolished, however due to many furious protests this idea was thankfully scrapped.

The Magazine was then put to use as the museum to the Royal Leicestershire Regiment (known as 'The Tigers'), and was used to show the history of the regiment from its inception up to its disbanding. It housed an impressive display of uniforms, medals and other artefacts connected with the regiment.

The museum was closed a few years ago and the building today stands empty, though still impressive. The unsatisfactory treatment of a grade I listed medieval building, set below the road level with traffic pounding past both sides, was finally addressed in 2007 with the filling in of the underpass. This allowed the street level on the west side to be brought back down to the same as the Magazine. The road was also shifted entirely to the east side of the gateway, and the area to the west pedestrianised, reuniting the gateway with the Newarke and creating a new open space for students at De Montfort University alongside the nearby Business and Law School.

Staunton Harold

Staunton Harold is a civil parish in Northwest Leicestershire about three miles (5 km) north of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. The parish is on the county boundary with Derbyshire and about nine miles (14 km) south of Derby. The 2011 Census (including Lount) recorded the parish's population as 141.

A brook flows from the south through the parish, heading for the River Trent which it joins about four miles (6.4 km) to the north. In the parish the brook is dammed to form a pair of small lakes. Nikolaus Pevsner (later Sir Nikolaus) described the view westwards across the lakes to Staunton Harold Hall and Holy Trinity parish church as "unsurpassed in the country – certainly as far as Englishness is concerned".

Downstream from Staunton Harold, just over one mile (1.6 km) over the boundary in Derbyshire, the brook is dammed again to form Staunton Harold Reservoir. Most of the reservoir is in the Derbyshire parish of Melbourne, but part of the upper reach of one arm of the reservoir is in Staunton Harold parish.

The estate was the seat of the Shirley family. George Shirley (1559–1622) was created 1st Baronet in 1611. Sir Robert Shirley, 5th Baronet (1650–1717) was created 13th Baron Ferrers of Chartley in 1677 and 1st Earl Ferrers in 1711.

Staunton Harold Hall is a country house that was originally Jacobean, but the 13th Baron had it enlarged in about 1700. Washington Shirley, 5th Earl Ferrers had the present Palladian east front added in 1763. It is of two storeys and eleven bays, eight of which are red brick. The three central bays are ashlar and pedimented, with engaged columns of two orders: Tuscan on the ground floor and Ionic on the first floor.

By AD 1122 the Augustinian Priory of Breedon on the Hill had a dependent chapelry at Staunton. Breedon was a house of Nostell Priory, which surrendered all its properties to the Crown in 1539 in the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Sir Robert Shirley, 4th Baronet had the present Church of England chapel of the Holy Trinity built in 1653. It is unusual for being built during the Commonwealth era and a notable example of Gothic survival architecture. Two inscriptions commemorate Sir Robert's efforts. One is in the chancel and reads Sir Robert Shirley Baronet Founder of this church anno domini 1653 on whose soul God hath mercy. The other is over the entrance and reads

"When all things sacred were throughout ye nation Either demollisht or profaned Sir Robert Shirley Barronet founded this Church whose singular praise it is to have done ye best things in ye worst times And hoped them in the most callamitous. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

Sir Robert did not manage to have the chapel completed: the Commonwealth authorities imprisoned him in the Tower of London, and he died there in 1656. After the Restoration of the Monarchy Richard Shepheard completed the chapel in 1665 for the young Sir Seymour Shirley, 5th Baronet (1647–67).

The exterior of the chapel is substantially buttressed, battlemented and pinnacled. The nave has a clerestory with square-headed Perpendicular Gothic windows. It is flanked by north and south aisles with windows of an earlier 14th

century style and arcades of three bays. Although the architecture is Gothic the furnishings are Jacobean, including extensive panelling, box pews, the pulpit and a west gallery with an organ that predates the chapel. In the chancel is a monument with the white marble semi-reclining figure of Robert Shirley, Viscount Tamworth, who died in 1714.

The west tower is of three stages divided by string courses and has a ring of eight bells. George I Oldfield of Nottingham cast the fourth, fifth and sixth bells in 1669 and Immanuel Halton of South Wingfield, Derbyshire cast the third in 1717. Thomas I Mears of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry cast the treble, second, seventh and tenor bells in 1831. For technical reasons, the bells are currently unringable.

Staunton Harold is part of the Benefice of the Church of St Mary and St Hardulph, Breedon on the Hill. Holy Trinity is now a redundant church and a property of the National Trust.

Staunton Harold Hall

Staunton Harold Hall is a large 18th-century Grade I listed country house built by the Earls Ferrers, situated within the 2,000-acre (810 ha) Staunton Harold Park in Staunton Harold, Leicestershire, England, which includes the 17th-century Grade I listed Holy Trinity Chapel (Staunton Harold church).

The Shirley family had lived in Staunton Harold for many generations. Sir Robert Shirley built the church in the hall grounds in 1653 in the Commonwealth era.

The present hall was originally a Jacobean building built for Robert Shirley, 1st Earl Ferrers as a family seat for the newly ennobled Shirley family and remained so until the 20th century. The fourth earl, Laurence Shirley, 4th Earl Ferrers, was tried, condemned, and hanged for killing his steward. The hall was rebuilt in its present form in 1763 for Washington Shirley, 5th Earl Ferrers.

It is a Georgian two-storey brick house with stone dressings in the form of a square enclosing a quadrangle. Sewallis Shirley, 10th Earl Ferrers inherited the hall in 1859 and sold most of the land. Robert Shirley, 12th Earl Ferrers gifted the church to the National Trust and put the estate up for auction. In 1955 it was acquired by Leonard Cheshire for use as a Cheshire Home and sold in 1980 to be used as a Sue Ryder Care home.

In 2003, after 50 years of institutional use, the Hall is again family owned and occupied by the Blunt family. Part of the building is used for weddings and conferences.

The stable block is occupied by a number of small craft enterprises as the Ferrers Centre for Arts and Crafts.

Life's What You Make It

Excerpts from life writing.

Tinsel Town

I'm not sure what it was about the late eighties and early nineties that made us wear tinsel on Christmas Eve. Or where it came from, but somewhere between arriving at the first pub on Christmas Eve and leaving the last pub sometime after 11pm, tinsel had been procured and it would adorn us all.

It would be tied around the top of the head like some kind of sparkly, prickly sweat band. Or in bracelet style around each wrist perhaps. Or worn like a silver and gold rope chain around the neck, and if you were really going for it, there would be a bauble hanging off it like some kind of demented medallion man.

Looking back, I can now see we probably destroyed the Christmas decorations of several pubs along the way each Christmas Eve.

Being raised a Catholic and being a regular church goer until my early twenties, when I came to my senses and realised it was all a load of rubbish, midnight mass was always the destination. And all of my friends would come with me, despite none of them being in the slightest bit religious, let alone Catholic. And every year some bright spark would ask what time the service started.

My dad would find his usual back pew and the one in front of him filled with drunken teenagers and those of us in their early twenties. All of them loved my dad. Not that he would have been sober either. There would be a wavy line of drunken, Irish, fifty-something, reprobates along the back pews of the church. Having weaved their way over the fifty yards or so from the Catholic club.

Most years I would have got everyone to de-tinsel by the time we got to the church. But 1991 saw us further away from the church when it was pub kicking out time, and so, it was a bit last minute dot com getting there. And I wasn't leading the way there, and so I wasn't de-tinselling people along the way as I was spending more time snogging my girlfriend than being the Christmas decoration police.

When we got to the church it was nearly full and so our group weren't sitting together. They were scattered around amongst the families and the serious church goers. All of them still adorned with varying amounts of tinsel. I remember looking around at the gathered throngs in the church and laughing to myself as I spotted the tinsel all over the place. And then watching it go up for communion despite none of those wearing it being of the faith. The Canon presiding over mass not caring as he would have been propping the bar up in the club all night, downing Guinness as if it were going out of fashion before the service.

And as we were leaving the church, I could see the tinsel had spread out during the service, there were other random church goers wearing little bits of it as they headed off home in the early hours of Christmas morning.

Poetry Corner

Family

Family gatherings
Reignite family feuds
Family history
Dredged up to be used as a weapon

Grudges held for a lifetime
Bubble to the surface
And spew forth with venom
Poisoning the atmosphere
What should be a celebration
Becomes filled with aggravation

And those who couldn't make it
Breathe giant sighs of relief
Whilst laughing up their sleeves
At those who had to endure

And then the gathering ends
The family disperse again
All going their separate ways
Trying to bury the memories

As tempers calm and anger dissipates
Distance heals, or appears to
Nothing is said, silence is golden
All hidden away and seemingly forgotten

And then the invite pings on WhatsApp
The tension begins to build
No excuse not to go this time
To watch it all explode again

Did I Really Blog That?

A Pint Of The Black Stuff

Another day, another wander around Crawley. I've been living in Crawley for nearly fifteen years, and this is the first time I'm going to be walking around Broadfield. I've been to the Barton a few times, but always on the bus.

This time I walk down to K2 and then across the road and behind the line of trees into Broadfield Park. A lovely space hidden away only by the trees down the side of the dual carriageway, something I've missed the countless times. And across the park is Broadfield House, a wonderful Grade II listed building from the 1830s and extended thirty years later.

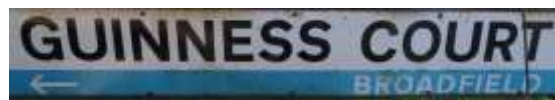


It feels hidden away again, and in many of the walks I've done in the last year, searching out historic buildings there is a common theme in that they are at the periphery of our vision. It makes me think of China Mieville's "The City And The City," where we are almost trained not to see the old historic parts of Crawley as the residents of Beszel are conditioned not to see Ul Qoma which shares the same space. There is an expectation that, as a new town, there is no history in Crawley; something I was probably guilty of thinking when I moved here.

I moved on from Broadfield House and made my way over to Woodmans Hill, snapping away at more road signs, and I walk up the hill with a long high red brick wall on the other side of the road until there was a gap and a road into the estate behind the wall. I was particularly after more road signs and this area had a number of London based names.



What I didn't know was that this whole estate lying between Woodmans Hill and Coachmans Drive is a Guinness Trust estate, which did explain the naming of Guinness Court,



and other names where the roads in this mini estate aren't named after London Parks: Kensington, St James, Regents, Hampstead, Finsbury & Highgate (a park now overshadowed by its more famous cemeteries next to it).



I spent quite some time wandering around trying to find a sign for London Fields House, only to find a map of the estate on its estate community centre which indicated where it should be, only for me to find that it has been renamed as Newfield House.



Stonebridge is both the name of a London estate which is also called Park Royal; and that estate was the home of a Guinness Brewery from 1936 to 2005 before the building was demolished in 2006.



Moynes was the title of the Barony awarded to Walter Guinness in 1932. He was the third son of the 1st Earl of Iveagh (in County Down), Sir Benjamin Guinness, who set up the Guinness Trust in 1888 in London (and the Iveagh Trust in Dublin in 1890).



The roads into the estate come in from either side, but there is no through way from any of the four roads into any of the others. The way through is by footpaths only, built this way it seems less busy with traffic. The estate has the air of being tightly packed, despite the numerous little green spaces and courtyard type areas throughout. I suppose part of this comes from the signs affixed to walls near the spaces stating, "NO BALL GAMES," which is a shame for those children who live there.



I've walked through a lot of parts of Crawley, and I've gotten some strange looks as I take photos of road signs, but I got some hostile looks as I walked around the footpaths of the estate carrying my camera ready to take photos. I definitely felt like I was intruding, and the residents were suspiciously asking what this stranger was doing in their domain. It probably didn't help that I'd doubled back and re-trod some roads two or three times trying to find the pictures I wanted.



Once I had satisfied myself in the Guinness Trust estate, I crossed over Coachmans Drive and into an area where the signs were all about areas of London, and royal palaces and castles, starting at Enfield and working around to Fulham before coming out at Holyrood Place.

From here I wanted to get pictures of the church — Christ The Lord, a multi denominational church, that apart from the cross on the roof is hard to mark as a church, it is in such a style, that it could easily be mistaken as a school, library, or community centre, and so merges into two such buildings next to it.



Having walked around the church I now found myself on Broadfield Barton. I had thought Tilgate Parade as being the largest in Crawley, and it probably is if looking at it a single row, but the Barton is bigger, being more of a normal shopping street with shops on both side of the walkway for one half and the single aspect overlooking the car park. I was surprised how busy the Barton was, both in the number of people wandering around in it (it took ages to try and get photos with a lack of people in them), but also in how many shops were open along it.



At the end is The Imperial, closed as it should be in these Covid lockdown. I think it is the only pub in Crawley I haven't had a drink in (not including those shut or demolished before I lived here). And if I mention it, it seems to elicit a sharp intake of breath about going in there. Which makes me smile as I've had some really dodgy locals in Leicester and Manchester before moving here.



There is something about the name The Imperial that appears to bring about an air of being a rough pub. It was the same in Leicester, where it is now closed and turned into flats; the one in Manchester could be described as "industrial"

on a kind day; and the one near my mums in Morecambe has been shut more time than it's been open due to drug dealing and violence.

My fatbit had shaken my arm quite some time before and being at the bus stops it put the idea of giving my aching knees a break and so I got the bus back to the top of my road instead of carrying on. There will be other days to explore other parts of Broadfield.

Story Time

The Stones

He wondered what he would do if he ever met up with Foss Gly. If that was his real name of course. It sounded slightly off. He'd never heard of anyone with the first name of Foss before and couldn't think of anything it might be short for. And it was a similar thing for the surname Gly. It looked and sounded as if it had been truncated. Perhaps if Dirk did ever meet him, he would ask him about the origin of his name. Always assuming Dirk's temper didn't take over and kill Foss before that conversation could take place.

Dirk should have already met Foss; it was the whole reason he'd come to Topeka in the first place. He had vowed never to come to Kansas, an irrational reaction to watching the Wizard of Oz as a child. But Foss had contacted him through channels Dirk would rather deny he knew about. It wasn't good for it to be known he was involved in dark web activities. That beneath the respectable veneer lay other, more sinister operations at play.

Dirk had had feelers out for over two years looking for the rocks his father had originally found in the hidden Viking cavern off the Rio Grande back in the eighties. The one that had caused such a stir when it had turned so much Mesoamerican history on its head.

It had taken him years to work out what the rocks were. He never understood why they had been stolen in the first place. But as he worked through his father's papers after his untimely death, he had come to understand that they weren't just rocks. The three that had been stolen weren't the only ones that had been recovered in the cavern. Two others had been found at the same time. They had been x-rayed, sonar-ed, and dated. And turned out not to be rocks at all, but man-made casings. Concrete mixed a millennia before it was thought to have been invented. And inside the first two were crystal effigies. Figures of a race that wasn't human, nor of any other recognisable creature to have been known to walk on Earth. One had been ruby, the second sapphire. Even without the imagery they showed, the jewels of the crystals were worth multi millions. More carats than the largest cut stones in the world.

And there were three more of them somewhere. Foss Gly's contact has included photographs of the three missing stones. Dirk had compared those photos to those in his father's files, and they were identical. And so, a meeting had been arranged.

Only for the sheriff to turn up at the motel Dirk had checked into and arrest him on some trumped-up charges of drug smuggling. Like a fool Dirk had caught the bag of white powder the sheriff had thrown in his direction, and it now had his prints on it. If he had stepped aside and let it fall to the floor, they would have nothing on him. It would show that it was most likely a plant.

The thing was Dirk couldn't see what anyone had to gain by him being in jail. He knew there must be an angle to it. But all he could do for now was sit and wait and try to work out what the angle was.

They had taken his watch and phone on arrival and there were no windows in his cell. He had no idea of how long he had been held in the cell. Food had been brought to him, but it was always the same meal. Nothing to indicate if it was breakfast, lunch, dinner, or something else. It was disorientating. And frustrating. He had no doubt this Foss Gly was responsible. Apart from when his meals arrived, he had heard no footsteps outside his cell at all. Dirk was sure he was the only prisoner here. It wouldn't surprise him if any other legitimate arrests were being held in stations elsewhere in the city. The longer he was here the more certain he was that there was no good reason for him being here.

He would have expected to have been hauled before a local judge by now. It wouldn't have been the first time he's have faced a judge, but it would be the first time he would have wanted to be up before one. He had asked about getting an attorney, but the cops who brought him his meals didn't speak to him. They just placed the tray down and took the old one. Most refused to make eye contact. The sheriff hadn't been in to see him once. Dirk wondered how long it would be before someone noticed he was missing. No one knew he was coming to Topeka. The only person with any vested interest at this stage would be the motel manager.

There were footsteps approaching now. Dirk doubted it was more food, it couldn't have been more than a couple of hours since the last tray was unceremoniously dumped on the end of his bunk. He resisted the temptation to stare at the cell door. To appear nonchalant. And he lay with his eyes closed as the cell door was opened. Only to open them when he was spoken to.

“Dirk, Dirk, Dirk. Fancy seeing you here. Lying there acting as if you don’t have a care in the world. Exactly as your father would. No doubt thinking about ways you could get yourself out of here. Thinking like your father as well as looking like him. And too trusting just like him as well.”

Dirk looked at the man in the doorway. He may look older now, but there was no mistaking who he was.

“Fletcher Gloucester. Where did they dig you up from?”

“You remember me then from when I used to work with your father. I don’t go by Fletcher anymore though. I prefer Foss.”

Dirk groaned. It all made perfect sense. Someone on his father’s expedition having stolen the stones was always the obvious answer. And for it to be someone who was supposed to have died when they broke through to the hidden chamber would explain why they were never found. No one was looking for them in the correct place.

“It was easy to fake my own death. It was pandemonium. Apart from your father there were three other groups in those caves that day, either trying to find and get into the cavern, or desperately trying to stop anyone from finding it and opening it. I saw what was in there. I knew more about what to find than your father did. It was never really about the Vikings. It was always about the aliens. I changed clothes with one of the dead guards, and mashed his head to a pulp and slipped away. And two days later slipped back in and took the remaining stones.”

“Why?”

“Because the crystal figures are invaluable. Proof of alien contact in the ninth century. Not that our government would let anyone know about them. The two they did get hold of thanks to your father are in a storage facility so deep underground they’ll never surface. More’s the pity. The full set of five would be priceless.”

“So that means you’ve tried to go after them then.”

“Of course, we would be stupid not to.”

“Why even answer me then?”

“Because you are a persistent son of a b... but what else would I expect, you are the son of your father.”

“And.”

“We needed to know if it was a private interest, or if you were working for the government. So, we needed to get you to come somewhere less obvious and then get you locked up and see if anyone would come in and demand your release, and if so, who they would be.”

“Which is why I’ve been here in solitary for so long.”

“Yes, give it five days, and if the cavalry was turning up, they’d have been here by now.”

“So, what now then?”

“Isn’t that obvious?”

And Dirk shivered. It was. He started to move, but it was too late. He wasn’t going to get to kill Foss Gly, he was going to be killed by him. The gun was already in Foss’s hand, and he felt the bullets hit him before he registered the sound, and then he registered nothing anymore.

Chapter and Verse

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

The Magicusians – Chapter 3

Florivan wasn’t getting anywhere. He had come back to Nessanville to search Haritonio’s room. The now deceased Chief of Antiquities for Nessanville had got his hands on documents and items that shouldn’t have existed. Florivan had arrived just in time to see the rooms of both Haritonio’s house, and the Antiquities office barricaded by soldiers and officials from the Antiquities agency, dispatched by their overall Chief, Archibald.

Florivan had complained bitterly to the men, and had sent word back to Aristor.

Aristor and Archibald had a series of talks about Haritonio's belongings. Archibald had started out by accusing Aristor of having his priests remove all important papers from Haritonio's body before leaving it with their agency. Despite that being true, Aristor had countered by accusing Archibald of letting his Chiefs run around out of control. Stealing items that they had no right to, and of using the priests as their lackeys in doing so. Then Aristor had gone on the attack about Haritonio. If the Chief hadn't had all these hidden papers, and had turned them over to Archibald and in turn the priests, as was required, then this may have all turned out differently. Haritonio had been power mad, and had used the papers to try and increase that power. Who knew what other dangers lurked in his property?

Archibald acknowledged the fact that there should have been more control, and after a couple of weeks had agreed that Florivan could have access to both the house and the offices. Though in giving that access, Archibald had instructed one of his agents to scrutinise anything Florivan seemed interested in. This had annoyed Florivan in the extreme until he learnt the agent was a little too literal in carrying out his instructions. When Florivan had spent longer than may be expected in the bathroom one day, the agent had spent the entire next day inspecting every last item in it. Florivan used this to his advantage to lay false trails.

The sheer volume of papers, old scrolls, maps, books, rocks, and other items that Haritonio had hidden away was phenomenal. Florivan was looking for any items that specifically related to the prophecy or beyond that anything that could be connected to the Magicusians. It had been a frustrating task. He hadn't found anything yet, and the latest pile in front of him wasn't looking promising. Every time he stayed looking at a document for more than a minute, it was whipped away from him by Archibald's agent, who would then spend hours inspecting them. He only got time to properly look at documents by feigning interest in a different one.

Florivan had been going through the latest pile all morning when he found something that might be of value. He looked across to the agent, who was engrossed in a document about the short-lived enclave of Rakimdom in Chardom. It was no use to anyone, but Florivan had decided it would be a nice lengthy piece to keep the agent busy for a while.

Florivan slipped the newly found document across to the discarded area, and started a new pile with it. For the next hour he found a host of potentially useful documents in the same pile he was looking through. Then they stopped being useful and went back to talking about Chardom. For some reason Haritonio had taken great interest in Chardom. Florivan kept one of the documents relating to mountain trails in Chardom in front of him longer than he needed to. Long enough to get the attention of the agent, who took the bait, and came and took it off Florivan.

Florivan looked at the small pile of papers he actually wanted and wondered how he could get them out of this building unnoticed. He would need to hide them on his person, and yet for a change he was here without a cloak.

"I'm finished for the day," he announced, "I'll just leave these papers on the desk and carry on with them in the morning."

The agent grunted and didn't really look up.

The next day Florivan arrived in his cloak and with a cloth bag over his torso inside his tunic. He flicked through the remaining documents in the original pile and occasionally pretended to ponder over one. Like clockwork the agent would come and take that one away for inspection. Florivan got to the end of the pile and called out to tell the agent he was putting these back, and would be getting the next load. The agent just waved him away without looking over.

The pile had come from under the floorboards of the bedroom. Florivan headed into the bedroom and nudged the door behind him, so it was nearly closed. Whilst he put most of the old pile back, he slid the ones he wanted into the cloth bag under his tunic. He then took another pile of documents and went back to the desk.

The rest of the day dragged for Florivan. He just wanted to get out of there. He didn't even try to fake the agent out. He flicked through each document in the new pile and discarded them all. It was amazing to him that so many people, had taken so much time, to write so much about so little. When he came to the end of the pile, he took them back to the bedroom and went to leave for the day.

The agent had a soldier check Florivan's cloak for any stray documents, and for a moment Florivan thought he would be found out, and that the soldier would check his person as well, but in the end they didn't.

Florivan would need to send word to Aristor. They had found something.

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/@onettruekev>. 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'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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