

# Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 79

## 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, wine, rum, port, Pepsi, or whatever), and enjoy the read.

## On This Day – 29<sup>th</sup> January

1819 – Stamford Raffles lands on the island of Singapore.

1845 – "The Raven" is published in The Evening Mirror in New York, the first publication with the name of the author, Edgar Allan Poe.

1886 – Karl Benz patents the first successful gasoline-driven automobile.

1936 – The first inductees into the Baseball Hall of Fame are announced.

2020 – COVID-19 pandemic: The Trump administration establishes the White House Coronavirus Task Force under Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar.

Earliest day on which Fat Thursday can fall.

Kansas Day

### Births

1860 – Anton Chekhov

1943 – Tony Blackburn

1954 – Oprah Winfrey

1970 – Heather Graham

### Deaths

1888 – Edward Lear

1964 – Alan Ladd

1974 – H. E. Bates

### Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1987 - Steve 'Silk' Hurley - Jack Your Body

Number 1 album in 2001 - Limp Bizkit - Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water

Number 1 compilation album in 2007 - Various - Radio 1's Live Lounge

## #vss365

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

Sarah's friends dragged her to the concert. They told her she had to hear Marcus Megastar live, he was the most #tremendous singer they'd ever heard.

She didn't want to go; she'd heard her brother sing countless times. Before he'd sold his soul to the devil for his voice.

#vss365

## Joke

Two strangers are sitting in adjacent seats in airplane. One guy says to the other, "Let's talk. I hear that the flight will go faster if you strike up a conversation with your fellow passenger." The other guy, who had just opened a good book, closes it slowly, takes off his glasses and asks, "What would you like to discuss?" The first guy says, "Oh, I don't know; how about nuclear power?" The other guy says, "OK, that could make for some pretty interesting conversation. But let me ask you a question first: "A horse, a cow, and a deer all eat the same stuff, but the deer excretes pellets, the cow, big patties, and the horse, clumps of dried grass. Why is that?" The first guy says, "I don't know." The other guy says, "Oh? Well then, do you really think you're qualified to discuss Nuclear Power when you don't know shit?"

## Drabble

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

### Yeast Infection

She took the yeast from the cupboard and decided to give it a go, despite it being four years out of date. She made the pizza dough, put it in a bowl and left it to rise, thinking, what's the worst that could happen?

An hour later the dough was escaping out of the bowl. She split it into two bowls putting them in the fridge to slow it down.

Next morning she opened the fridge door and the dough escaped into the wild, soon taking over the flat and trapping her as it started its quest for world domination.

## 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.

### You Don't Just Bury Treasure

I had been to Scarborough before, climbed on the ramparts of the ruined castle. Watched the battleship display on the lake of Peasholm Park, peered out of a miniscule window of a room in the Victorian monolith of the Grand Hotel, and danced in the Scene nightclub when sixteen.

And now I was back and at the castle again. When I was a child, I don't remember it being fenced off and protected as it is now. The English Heritage boards at the entrance. It might just be my memory playing tricks, but I was sure there never used to be fences preventing unruly children from going over the edge and down the cliff face to the road below and the sea beyond it.

Perhaps it was the fear of heights that meant I never got close enough to the edge to have a proper look down.

But all that is irrelevant really. I'm not here to be a tourist. I have something to look for. My immediate need is a hiding place. Somewhere to stow myself when they come around to close up for the night. As only when everyone has gone and the place is locked up can I begin my search properly, and in peace without others overseeing what I do.

By rights, my parents should have been here doing this years before this. The message was for them, but perhaps they didn't read it, or they didn't understand it. or even knowing it was from Uncle Barry, they dismissed it as the ravings of a complete chancer that they thought he was.

He had fascinated me as a child with his tall tales. A life more interesting perhaps, especially to a child like me. His silly codes and treasure hunts always leading to piles of coins or a bag of sweets. But my mum hated it all. She had lived through the lies of her childhood with him and didn't want that rubbing off on her own children.

I had been sorting through the boxes of ephemera in the loft after she had died. It was in the box of postcards she had. Hundreds of them spanning seventy years. So many places, some memories of where they had been, others little vignettes of friends and family's trips all around the world.

The card from Scarborough was the only one I had found that was from Uncle Barry. Despite travelling the world for years in the navy he had never sent my mum another card.

On the front of the card were four views of the town that brought back memories for me. But on the back was the code, and the treasure hunt. Just as I had seen dozens of times as a child. I didn't know what it was going to be, but it was clear to me that there was something hidden away in the castle grounds. The postcard might have been sixty years old, but the layout of the site had never changed in all that time. I'd found the old guidebook on eBay, and compared it to the flash recent one sold on site by English Heritage. A new gift shop and a couple of footpaths had come along with the fences, but there hadn't appeared to have been any excavations.

When everyone had gone, I stayed in my hidey hole. I gave it a lot more time than was necessary, it was always better to be safe. It was late summer, but there were still a couple of hours of daylight to use to search. I had paced the grounds before hiding and knew where I was to dig, and so with my extendable spade I started.

The ground was firm, and it took longer than expected before I hit something metal. It still took a bit of digging to uncover the whole of the metal box, which was much bigger than I had imagined it might be. It was heavy as well and it took a while for me to struggle with it and drag it out of the hole.

I used the spade to break the lock off the box and threw open the lid and then stood there staring at the contents of the box.

It turned out that mum was right all these years. There wasn't treasure here. The box only contained a pile of bones and some scraps of cloth.

I wondered how I would manage to explain all of this.

## **Leicestershire**

### **Stockdale Harrison**

Stockdale Harrison (1845-10 November 1914) FRIBA was a well-known Leicester architect active in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods based in Leicester and best known for Usher Hall, Edinburgh. He was born on the 31st of December 1845, the son of William Harrison (1813-1873) timber merchant, and Mary Everard (1820-1869). He was christened on 2 December 1846 in St George's Church, Leicester.

His training included an initial period from 1862 articled to James Bird, Leicester, followed by a move to London where he worked with Mr George Somers Clarke. In 1870 he returned to Leicester and began his private practice from Hotel Street. In 1876 the practice moved to 7, St Martins. In 1882 he became an Associate of the RIBA; in 1890 he became FRIBA. During 1890-1892 he became President of the Leicestershire and Rutland Society of Architects.

He married artist Marianne Bailey (1847-1923), daughter of James Bailey and Mary Ann nee Musk, on 4 September 1872 at St Paul's Church, Leicester, and their children were: James Stockdale Harrison (1874-1952), Shirley Harrison (1875-1961), Marianne Harrison (1878-1971), Florence Harrison (b. 1878), (Captain) Everard Harrison (1880-1917), Gregory Harrison (1883-1889), Priscilla Harrison (1885-1975), Margaret Harrison (1891).

Two of his sons joined the practice at 7, St Martins, Leicester. James Stockdale Harrison (1874-1952) was articled to his father from 1892 and became an assistant on passing his qualifying exams in 1898. He probably eventually worked as the firm's business manager. Leicester Trade Directories suggest that Shirley Harrison (1876-1961) joined his father's practice in 1904. From 1904 the practice was known as Stockdale Harrison and Sons.

Stockdale Harrison initially designed in the gothic revival style which he continued to use for churches. By the 1880s he developed his own version of the Domestic or Vernacular Revival style, mainly in Leicester, but also in other areas of the East Midlands.

A fine example is the Grade II listed Spinney Hill Park Lodge of 1888 built of red brick with a Swithland slate roof. Later he built his own residence at 15 Elms Road in a design drawn from a variety of historical English architectural styles. Stockdale Harrison & Sons designed several enchanting Arts & Crafts style houses, including 146 to 154 Upper New Walk, and several in Stoneygate. These homes have enhanced the street scene for decades, helping to make Stoneygate a desirable place in which to live. Other fine Arts & Crafts style houses include Hastings House of 1902 by Stockdale Harrison, Middlemeade of 1904 by Shirley Stockdale Harrison and Southmeade by the partnership. These houses are now used as University halls of residence and can be seen from the Botanic Garden in Oadby.

In the city centre, the former Saracen's Head adjacent to the elegant City Rooms, is an attractive Arts & Crafts style building in red brick with a graduated Swithland slate roof. Designed by Stockdale Harrison, this charming building is sadly diminished by the present-day addition of a plastic advertising banner and nondescript blackboard signage at the entrance.

Another notable building by Stockdale Harrison is the Abbey Pumping Station (1889-91) built to house the magnificent Gimson beam engines in a grand style, which carried out the noble task of disposing of sewage for the citizens of Leicester.

De Montfort Hall was built in 1913 for Leicester Corporation as a concert hall, to a design by Shirley Stockdale Harrison. This is surely the jewel in the crown of the partnership. The hall has faced up to the changing tastes in entertainment, having been a venue for classical music, boxing, fashion shows and pop music concerts. Today the hall hosts music festivals and diverse events throughout the year. Both universities use the hall for their graduation ceremonies, when the new graduates no doubt take away with them treasured memories of their special day. The magnificent organ, the gift of Alfred Corah, is the only surviving concert organ built by the Leicester company, Stephen Taylor & Sons. It was fully restored in 2004. In the De Montfort Hall, Shirley Stockdale Harrison created a building which is virtually timeless in design. Fronted by attractive gardens, it looks as elegant and pleasing today as it did, newly built, a century ago.

His last work was St Guthlac's Church, South Knighton, Leicester, 1912. From 1904, many of the arts and crafts style works by the practice were designed by his son, Shirley Harrison who with H. H. Thompson also designed De Montfort Hall, 1913 and the Usher Hall, Edinburgh.

He died on 10 November 1914 leaving an estate valued at £22,529 7s 10d (equivalent to £2,300,184 in 2021) and the business continued under the management of his sons James and Shirley.

### **Works**

Conway Buildings, Grey Friars, Leicester 1878  
Church School, St Saviour's, Leicester 1882-83  
St Martin's Church, Desford 1884. Extension and restoration  
Infirmary Wards, Workhouse, Fox Hill, Leicester 1886  
Holy Cross Schools, New Walk, Leicester 1886 - 1887  
Spinney Hill Park Lodge, Leicester 1888  
Westcotes Free Library 1889  
15 Elms Road, Leicester  
146-154 Upper New Walk, Leicester  
Wentworth, London Road, Leicester  
Newstead, Birstall Hill Park Road, Birstall  
Vaughan College, Leicester (replaced in 1967)  
Abingdon House, Springfield Road  
Four Gables, Elms Road, Leicester  
27 Elms Road, Leicester  
Abbey Pumping Station, Leicester 1889-91  
Vestry Street Baths, Leicester 1891  
Grovesnor Rooms, 16 Halford Street, Leicester 1892  
St Thomas' Church, South Wigston 1892 - 1893 with tower of 1901  
Freemen's Cottages, Wigston Road, Leicester 1893  
Stockdale House, 18 Stoneygate Road, Leicester 1897  
10-16 Stoneygate Road, Leicester 1897  
1-7 Albert Road, Leicester 1897  
Redcliffe, The Park Estate, Nottingham 1897-98  
St Stephen's Church, North Evington 1897-98  
Hastings House, Stoughton Drive South, 1902  
Middlemeade 1904 (by Shirley Stockdale Harrison)  
Saracen's Head, Hotel Street/Market Place, Leicester 1904  
Rectory, Sawday Street, Leicester 1911  
Usher Hall, Edinburgh 1911-1914  
Britannia Mills, Markeaton Street, Derby 1912-13  
De Montfort Hall, Leicester 1913  
St Guthlac's Church, South Knighton, Leicester 1912  
14 Woodland Avenue, Stoneygate, Leicester 1913

### **Gaddesby**

Gaddesby is a village and civil parish in the Melton borough of Leicestershire, England. The population of the civil parish (including Ashby Folville and Barsby) at the 2011 census was 762. It is located around 5.5 miles (8.9 km) southwest of Melton Mowbray and 8 miles (13 km) northeast of Leicester.

Gaddesby has 170 households and a population of around 450, while the parish, which includes the nearby villages of Ashby Folville and Barsby, has a total population of 762 according to the 2011 Census. Recent housing development has made Gaddesby a popular, rural dormitory for Leicester.

Gaddesby's name is derived from the Old Norse words gaddr and by, indicating that it was a settlement during the Danish occupation of England between the 9th and 11th centuries.

It is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Gadesbi, a mainly pastoral village with a mill, within the hundred of Goscote.

The Grade I listed St Luke's Church was originally built as a Norman chapel - a single space without a tower. It was part of the soke of Rothley from the tenth century. The two aisles, North and South, the tower and the Chancel were added in the thirteenth century and elaborated in the next two hundred years. The church is reputed to have some of the finest examples of fourteenth century stonework in the country which adorns the Southwest corner on the outside of the Knights Templar's chapel. The oak pews in the nave are probably fifteenth century and the limestone font dates from 1320. There is a peal of eight bells, the earliest dated 1562.

The size of the church attests to the importance of the village during the period of its development. Gaddesby had grown as a result of the importance of the wool industry in East Leicestershire. Indeed, it had a weekly market and an annual fair from the fourteenth century. As the wool industry declined and the Western half of the county rose in prominence during the Industrial Revolution, so Gaddesby settled back into being a rural backwater.

The near life-size marble sculpture of a dying horse and rider on a marble chest, created by Joseph Gott in memory of Colonel Edward Hawkins Cheney, C.B., of the Scots Greys, was originally at Gaddesby Hall. It was moved to the chancel in 1917.

Gaddesby Hall was built on the site of an earlier house called Paske Hall, which was surrounded by a moat and dated back to 1390. This old hall was pulled down in 1744 and the present hall erected. The houses in the village formed part of the estate of Gaddesby Hall. Over the years the hall had several owners, including the Nedham, Ayre and Cheney families, all of whom are commemorated in the church. The estate was put up for sale in 1917, at which time the celebrated statue of Colonel Cheney was moved into St Luke's. After suffering neglect and from its use by the American Armed Forces during the Second World War, the hall was reduced in size and renovated during the 1950s.

The village had many springs, and there are still two water pumps in Chapel Lane. On the corner of Chapel Lane and Cross Street, a large boulder called "the blue stone" marks a spot from which John Wesley is reputed to have preached. The Methodist chapel was demolished in 1966. Many listed and older properties, including former hunting lodges, still exist. An old windmill remains just outside Gaddesby.

## Life's What You Make It

Excerpts from life writing.

### I Steal

I steal.

Well, I probably don't anymore. (Work stationery and printing off copies of my writing may be a grey area.)

But I did.

As a child I did it a lot. There wasn't a lot of morality going on in pre-teenage years. I was already at odds with the Catholic upbringing by the time first confession came and went. And you can be sure that my little stealing sprees weren't mentioned when it came to confession time.

It was like a compulsion. There is a line in The Jam song "Thick As Thieves" which goes, "we stole anything that we could steal". The problem being was that our childish brains didn't think long term. I'd walk out of the shop with the pilloined items and hit a new problem. How to explain why I had a brand-new large box of Lego that we obviously couldn't afford. A lot of things were left at a lot of friends' houses. Or abandoned – a double waste looking back.

But my main penchant was football cards and stickers. I was obsessed, and I was able to buy some packets, but never enough for my liking and not enough to complete the sticker album or the card sets.

Back then the packets weren't behind the counter. They didn't think there was an issue with them being at the other end of the shop. And so, every time I went in, I'd pick up a big thick wodge of packets and stick them in my pocket. And nobody was any the wiser. They were small enough to sneak into the house and easy enough to hide in my bedroom.

Then came the day when it all fell apart. I'd been sent to the shop as normal, and as usual I'd detoured to the sticker section and picked up a load of packets and gone to put them into my pocket. Only to realise I had no pockets. I was wearing some multi coloured stripy trousers my mum had made, but without pockets. So, instead of doing the sensible thing of putting the packets back for another occasion, I had the brilliant idea of holding them between my legs.

Obviously, that was no hiding place really, and the lovely American woman who owned the newsagents asked what I had there, and so I put all the packets on the counter. She asked if I had the money for them and I said no. she let me pay for the paper whilst shaking her head and I left without my ill-gotten gains this time.

The next evening, I got home from school to the wrath of mum. she had been into the newsagents and been told of my attempted heist. Before I'd got home, she had made a cardboard sign that read 'I am a thief' and she took me to the shop and made me wear it there for an hour or so.

I was banned from having stickers and cards (friends had them in the meantime), and it did sort of put me off wholesale theft going forward.

## Poetry Corner

### How The Mighty Have Fallen

Once it stood tall and proud overlooking the Weald  
But, oh how the mighty have fallen  
It now lies on its side  
Roots ripped from the earth beneath  
And now it only sees the ground  
Or the ever-changing sky above

Did it fall with a mighty crash?  
Gone over in one fell swoop  
Or slowly lean and list and tilt  
Until it could hold itself up no more  
And topple unceremoniously to the floor

The noise I hear is of running water  
Cascading past me down the hill  
Through holes in the ground it has made  
For it now manages to run underground  
To undermine the once strong hold  
The earth had on the mighty tree's roots  
Until it gave up, roots and all  
Crashing down crushing all in its path

And now the other trees look down on it  
Laughing at how it had been so proud  
So grand, so majestic, so regal  
Only to become as common as muck  
Lying low on the ground  
Never to rise up again  
Just destined to become a rotting mass of mulch  
Or be chopped into pieces and taken away to be burnt

But once the others have had their laugh  
They will realise it is only a matter of time  
Before one of them is the next in line  
To fall themselves and be a mighty goner too

## Did I Really Blog That?

### A Trip To The Museum

I paid a visit to the museum on Friday 21st May. I am a member and had been a couple of times between lockdowns last year. Although most of it is the same, the main exhibition space upstairs changes periodically, and it is worth popping back on a regular basis to see what the current exhibition is. I will touch on the current exhibition (at the time) later.

Although I have been before, Helen hadn't. Well, not recently, the last time she had gone to the Crawley Museum it had been at Goffs Park. Even with having been before, I find there is always something else I notice that I didn't on the previous visit.

Wandering around, the museum is deceptive in that it initially looks quite small, but the way the space is set up on both floors, and how the exhibits are laid out, it crams a lot in, and it seems to be a lot bigger than you first think. The ground floor deals with the history of The Tree, both the building the museum is housed in, and the actual tree it took its name from, and then takes Crawley history from the Victorian era to the modern day.



It has some of the original war memorial plaques (others having been stolen), that are replicated on the entrance to the Memorial Gardens from County mall. With my love of churches I am drawn to the Chapel sign, and of course to old street signs.



The wall around the stairs up to the first floor have a number of great photographs by Jeff Pitcher, where he is holding an old photograph in the foreground of the modern view of the same spot.



Upstairs, beyond the main exhibition hall, in a series of old, Tudor beamed rooms, is the more ancient history of Crawley from Iron Age times through to the Georgian era. I hadn't noticed the little cupboard in the corner of the furthest room from the stairs before. It made a great place to hide so I could pop out and surprise Helen. Yes, I am still a very big child.

There is ongoing work to a new display, with a reconstruction being made to show Crawley High Street in Tudor times. It wasn't complete when we visited, but what had been done to that point looked good, and I look forward to revisiting and seeing the finished version.



With the museum only having re-opened, the fact that the music exhibition was going to end the following week, was the main reason for this visit, and the main difference from my previous visits. I knew The Cure were famously from Crawley, and that Chico was, but it was surprising to learn about some of the other acts shown in the exhibition.

What I don't know is whether what has been going on since is a coincidence, or whether the exhibition has prompted me to be on the lookout for musical links to Crawley.



On leaving the museum that Friday afternoon I soon found myself in Oxfam and browsing in their music selection I found the 7" single by Terry Dactyl & The Dinosaurs – "Sea Side Shuffle"; something I had been reading about less than an hour before. At 49p I couldn't resist buying it and adding it to my wall of vinyl at home.



Then on Bank Holiday Monday, Radio 2 were doing all day Popmaster, and one of the questions was "Which one hit wonder had a 1972 hit with Sea Side Shuffle". I'm not sure I'd have known the answer ten days before, and the contestant certainly didn't. Other questions on the day asked about The Cure, Ms Dynamite, and Chico.





Speaking of The Cure, Mojo (the music magazine) had given away a cover CD called “I Wish I Were You” in April, which was a collection of covers of The Cure’s songs. Although I’d had the CD for a while, I was only really listening to it at the end of May. The track that caught my attention was one called “I Don’t Know”, which I didn’t recognise as a Cure song, but it was a hip-hop track using “Lullaby” as a sample. I was quite taken by the song and looked at who it was by to find it was Akala – Ms Dynamite’s younger brother – and another who I had read about in the exhibition. Again, I hadn’t really heard about him until reading the stuff in the exhibition. I went away and listened to some more of his tracks and now have bought his first two albums.

It’s possible all of this would have happened anyway, but I was certainly more aware of it all because of my trip to the museum.

And of course, any trip to any museum anywhere ends with me in the gift shop. I was quite restrained this time having spent a lot of money on my last visit, but I did manage to get a copy of John Goepel’s “How I Chose Crawley’s Street Names”, something to help me in my street sign photo taking obsession.

## Story Time

### Her Motel Look

She had that look again, the one that I’d seen more often over the last few years. Slight disappointment, tinged with a bit of disapproval. My choices were found to be somewhat lacking again. A lack of basic research. The motel wasn’t where its title may have suggested. OK, it was within the city limits, but out here in the desert the city limits can go on for miles and we were as far from the bright lights of the strip as it was possible to go without being in another town or another state.

The room was nice and big if somewhat sparsely decorated, and the huge windows gave views out across the scrub to the start of the mountains less than a mile away. Unfortunately, they were next to the road, and although the late afternoon sun streaming in from the west was warming and hiding us from easy view during the day, we wouldn’t be able to enjoy the view with lights on in the evening without showing ourselves off to the passing world.

Not that we were likely to be here at night. The plan would be to go to downtown Vegas, spending money we didn’t really have on the slots and tables, pretending we knew what we were doing.

She was sat on the bed with her back to me, staring out of the window, only for her to turn back and give me that look. And as she did, I felt a shiver, as it seemed clear to me this would be our last trip together.

When I asked if she wanted anything she just shook her head sadly and I left the room. Leaving her with the oppressive silence in there for her to think of a dozen reasons why she would leave me.

I didn’t need anything myself, apart from to get out of that room. And so, I walked. Out across the road in front of the motel, and over the scrub desert sand towards the foot of the rolling mountains. Surprised by how green the mountains looked in the harsh heat of a Nevada summer.

Which lunatics had decided to build a city out here amongst all this sand, all these rocks, and the seemingly never-ending sun beating down?

I should have turned back.

It would have been the sensible thing to do. I wasn’t dressed for walking in this heat. I loosened my tie, and I took off my jacket and slung it over my shoulder. My shoes were no longer shiny, but instead covered in dust. And I had no water with me. But it felt as if something was calling me on. Dragging me into the mountains. And I didn’t want to stop.

I headed south to a ravine between the foothills. A dry channel where once a river would have been cascading down from the mountains. A river long gone to be replaced by dust and the occasional lizard. I followed its course, glad of the shade its steep slopes offered, carrying on until the ravine stopped and came out into an unexpected clearing. A natural amphitheatre in the middle of the mountains.

And there in its midst was a cylinder. At least three times as tall as me, and it looked as long as the Amtrak train that had brought us here from San Francisco. Unlike most may have done, I didn't bat an eyelid at the strange metal object, I just kept walking towards it. And then into it through the conveniently open end.

There was something hypnotic about the green light inside the cylinder, something that called me to enter, perhaps where any sane person would have run screaming from the amphitheatre and the cylinder it held. Which is probably what I should have done.

Once inside the light disappeared and the open end of the cylinder closed behind me. I felt the movement of the cylinder even if I could no longer see anything. And now I did scream, only because I was in there with nowhere to run. Even if there had have been somewhere to run to, I wouldn't have been able to. With the darkness came the metal limbs wrapping themselves around my arms and legs, stopping me from making movements of my own.

Only to find myself moving, just not of my own accord, travelling through the inside of the cylinder gripped by unseen metal bindings which I couldn't escape from.

The movement stopped and lights came on, a variety of colours, white, green, blue, yellow. And with the lights I was able to see, and as I looked around, I could see myself. Not a reflection, and not just the once.

A dozen versions of me sat there staring at me, all of them dressed in the same white t-shirt and blue jeans. They all reached down in front of them, picked something up, which turned out to be sunglasses, which they all donned in unison, as if it were just the one motion replicated across all twelve.

I blinked and they were gone. I never saw them again. Not in the cylinder. And I spent a lot of time in the cylinder, able to explore its entire length, never meeting a living soul, but kept fed and watered as if by magic. It turns out I was in that cylinder for more than thirty years. Right up until the morning I woke up and I wasn't in the cylinder anymore.

That morning I woke in the same motel room I had walked out of and left her sitting on the bed thinking of reasons to leave me. I had left her but not intentionally.

I looked out of the window, and I couldn't see mountains anymore. Buildings were now rising high above the motel on the other side of the road, blocking my view of them. All of them had billboards attached to the roadside of them. And every billboard was showing my face. I wondered what the hell I had missed.

The room had a strange screen, far different from any television I had known before the cylinder. It took me a while, but I was eventually able to turn it on. To find myself on the screen. One of the twelve I had seen on the cylinder more likely. There in all their glory as the President of the United States of America, and by his side, there she was. She hadn't left me, well this on-screen version of me anyway, and now she was the First Lady. But I could still see it.

She still had that look, slight disappointment, tinged with a bit of disapproval. I suppose you just can't please some people.

## **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 4**

The rush of air and noise that greeted the arrival of the next train hit him, and he flashed back to the present. How long had he been stood there motionless with all those thoughts going through his head? It had seemed like an eternity, but looking at his watch indicated only three minutes had gone since he had arrived on the platform. It also indicated he hadn't managed to clean all the toothpaste off of it earlier either; and he set about removing the last traces.

He looked down the platform towards the approaching train, and he could see that people were staring at him, and he wondered what he had been doing whilst his mind was elsewhere to attract their attention, it had happened before that he had randomly shouted out, and the rocking side to side incident, but things like that had only happened on a couple of occasions.

He jumped on to the train as the doors opened, and was surprised to find a seat available pretty much directly opposite him. He rushed over and sat down, whilst doing so, noticing an extremely attractive brunette in the seat next to the one he had taken. That was nearly as good a reason to be in that seat as the fact that it was right near the doors as well.

For a reason he couldn't explain, nowadays he always felt the need to be as near to an exit as he possibly could be, almost as if he could make an escape at any moment, though by nature he had always been a rational calm man, recent years had added an edge to him that, although unnoticeable to strangers, had been picked up by those few who knew him reasonably well.

His closest associates - he found it difficult to go the whole enchilada and call people friends, as he had difficulties bringing himself to confide in them - could pinpoint the change in him to roughly five years ago, and had tried to get inside him to help, but who could help, and who would have believed what he had to tell them.

It was probably a good job that he had no surviving family members that he knew of, as to deny that closeness and sharing of feeling to family would have been a lot tougher.

He casually glanced at the woman sat next to him, and realised his initial estimation had been somewhat off the mark. Extremely attractive was somewhat of an understatement; her hair was perfectly coiffured into a bob that allowed her striking features to be accentuated. Well-mascaraed eyelashes outlined the kind of perfectly green eyes that he could easily drown in. The remaining make up was minimal, with just a hint of pink lip gloss, on full, but not pouting lips, and a perfectly formed nose. She was slim, but not one of those horrible stick-like creatures that graced so many a magazine cover, and wore a tailored cream suit, with a knee length skirt that showed shapely legs. Underneath was a smart white blouse that made the image of a perfect businesswoman, though still allowing her full femininity to show through.

As he stared at her reflection in the window opposite his seat, he wished he wasn't such a tongue-tied fool when it came to women. He might have tried to declare his undying love there and then. However, she looked back at him, catching him looking at her, and he reddened visibly and shifted his line of sight away from the reflection, glancing occasionally at the reflection out of the corner of his eye.

She smiled to herself and looked away again, obviously used to drawing admiring glances, and confident enough in herself not to be overly bothered by it, and therefore able to brush it off.

Embarrassed by being caught staring, and his obvious reddening, he decided to look up at the map of the underground that was positioned above the seat opposite him, and tried to concentrate on that, instead of the beauty sat next to him. Despite the intense concentration he was putting into studying the mass of different coloured overlapping lines to occupy his visual senses, he couldn't help but notice the sweet smell emanating from the woman next to him, and he groaned inwardly.

She was wearing the only brand of perfume that he recognised, and for that matter really liked the smell of. No matter when it was, or where he was, that smell always seemed to invade his consciousness, and it made him stop what he was doing as he tried to figure out just where the smell was coming from.

He didn't need to wonder where it was coming from this time; it was obvious it was coming from right next to him. He needed to resist the temptation to turn round and look directly at the woman, and the other temptation to lean over and start sniffing her, so he closed his eyes and tried to think of something else.

## **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.

Lots of stuff on my Medium page, clap, comment, or highlight any article and earn me a couple of cents. <https://medium.com/@onetruekev>

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.

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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