

Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 83

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 – 29th May

1453 – Fall of Constantinople: Ottoman armies under Sultan Mehmed II capture Constantinople after a 53-day siege, ending the Roman Empire after over 2,000 years.

1886 – The pharmacist John Pemberton places his first advertisement for Coca-Cola, which appeared in The Atlanta Journal.

1919 – Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity is tested (later confirmed) by Arthur Eddington and Andrew Claude de la Cherois Crommelin.

1953 – Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay become the first people to reach the summit of Mount Everest, on Tenzing Norgay's (adopted) 39th birthday.

1985 – Heysel Stadium disaster: Thirty-nine association football fans die, and hundreds are injured when a dilapidated retaining wall collapses.

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers (International)

Oak Apple Day (England)

Births

1903 – Bob Hope

1917 – John F. Kennedy

1935 – Sylvia Robinson

1949 – Francis Rossi

1975 – Mel B

Deaths

1829 – Humphry Davy

1979 – Mary Pickford

2010 – Dennis Hopper

Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1986 – Spitting Image – The Chicken Song

Number 1 album in 1995 – Paul Weller – Stanley Road

Number 1 compilation album in 1998 – Various – Now 39

#vss365

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

Jo looked at the size of the field and sighed. It'd take years to find the correct body. Somewhere out on the body #farm was his great grandfather.

The body and clothes will have gone, but the sapphire he'd swallowed before dying was out there.

Jo's live depended on it.

#vss365

Joke

An old man lived alone in Minnesota. He wanted to spade his potato garden, but it was awfully hard work. His only son, who would have helped him, was in prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and mentioned his predicament. Shortly, he received this reply, "For HEAVEN'S SAKE Dad, don't dig up that garden, that's where I buried the GUNS!" At 4am the next morning, a dozen police showed up and dug up the entire garden, without finding any guns. Confused, the old man wrote another note to his son telling him what happened, and asking him what to do next. His son's reply was: "Now plant your potatoes, Dad." "It's the best I could do from here."

Drabble

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

The Final Meal

The castle had seemed deserted. After all the effort to breach the defences, it was strange to find no one inside. Suspicious even. There was only the huge, sumptuous feast laid out on tables in the great hall. As if they had been expected. It was a feast that was too hard to resist for the tired soldiers. They fell upon it and ate until they couldn't eat any more.

Only to collapse to the ground when the poison kicked in. Then the castle came to life and its residents appeared from within the walls and slit all their throats.

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.

A Wedding Surprise

I could hear the heavy footsteps. A regular pattern as the person approaching crunched their way along the gravel path, and an occasional thump as they trod on a rare, tarmacked piece of the path.

Even though I could hear the footsteps I couldn't see the approaching person from my vantage point up in the tree. I assumed it was a male, in dress shoes making their way along to the medieval church of St Wulfgram's, whose bells were filling the surrounding countryside with a cacophony of ringing. Calling forth those attending the wedding being held there on this bright crisp late autumn morning.

When I had arrived and climbed the tree the only sounds had been that of the chirping of birds, starting their days as the sun tentatively made its way up over the horizon. Although some of the leaves had started to fall, there were still plenty on the branches to hide me from any casual look up, and I was dressed to blend in as much as possible.

The footsteps stopped at the foot of the tree, and I could hear heavy breathing and then a loud hacking cough as I held my own breath. It was definitely a male, and out of condition by the sound of them. Their phone rang and they answered. "I'm nearly there, I'm on the footpath, why did the car park have to be so far away from the bleeding church?"

And the footsteps started again. As the man moved on, I could catch glimpses of his bald head and substantial girth. It was more of a waddle than a walk he was doing. Long grey morning suit jacking trailing behind him. I knew who he was. Lord Carstairs. I'd bet his chauffeur was having a good laugh at the fact he was actually having to walk more than the three steps to the front door he usually did.

Let him waddle though. He wasn't the reason I was here. Up this tree. Although it would be no loss if it had had been Lord Carstairs who was my target today. Or any other day for that matter.

The bells stopped ringing. The service must be about to start. In twenty minutes, it would be all over. Cassandra Grace would be Lady De Vere. And about five minutes after that she would be a widow.

I'm not sure who had thought this scenario up, but assassinating Lord De Vere on his wedding day in front of his new wife and the throng of entitled guests was certainly a statement. The old cynic in me would lay short odds on it being Cassandra Grace.

I could see the guests starting to leave the church. The happy couple emerged from the doors. And as they did the bells started back up. Exactly as I had been told they would. It was the cue I had been waiting for. The noise from the bells would drown out the retort of my rifle.

I took aim, took in a deep breath, and let it out slowly as I pulled the trigger.

A second later and a quarter of a mile away, Lord De Vere's head exploded. Cassandra De Vere's dress would never be a pure white gown again. And then the screaming started, which I could hear above the peal of the bells.

I carefully picked up the hot shell casing from the canoe splash cover I had out over me and slipped it in my pocket. I broke down the rifle and placed it in the camouflage bag, and climbed further up the tree. I'd be here for some time before darkness fell, but I was patient, and could wait until the cover of night to make my escape.

Leicestershire

John Biggs

John Biggs (1801 – 4 June 1871) was a British hosier and Liberal and Radical politician.

The first of seven children to his namesake, John Biggs, and Elizabeth, née Heggs, Biggs was born in Arnesby, Leicestershire. By the time his father died in 1827 the firm of John Biggs & Sons was firmly established and his family were worshipping among the dissenting élite at the Unitarian Great Meeting, and John inherited the family hosiery firm, John Biggs & Sons, and developed the business into one of the largest in Leicester, with exports to North America and Australia. In his hands, the business innovated in hosiery and glove making, and invested heavily in equipping a steam-powered factory. By his commercial powers did much for the advancement of the hosiery trade in the town, in fact he was a practical businessman.

His great kindness and benevolence gained for him the respect of the industrial classes. He was respected even by Chartists as a model employer, he exposed the malpractices to which the framework-knitters were commonly subjected, welcomed a bill to abolish frame-rent, the source of most abuses, and demanded greater regulation of children's employment.

When he gave evidence on the subject in 1842 to the Commission on Trades and manufacturers, he condemned in particular the employment of young girls. By depriving them of education and any chance of training for their responsibilities as wives and mothers it was the source of many social evils. He recommended that the employment of children should be totally prohibited for those under the age of nine, and limited to an 8-hour day for those under the age of thirteen; and that some provision should be made for compulsory schooling-proposals which, by the standards of the day, put him clearly with the philanthropists.

Biggs engaged in campaigning for political reform early into his life, helping found the Political Union and Reform Society in 1826, and supporting the anti-Corn Laws campaign. By 1846, he and a fellow hosier were named as 'the Cobden and Bright of the Midland Counties', referring to Radical leaders Richard Cobden and John Bright.

He was elected a member of the newly formed Leicester council in December 1835 for Middle St. Margaret's Ward. He was then appointed as a Justice of the Peace in 1836, and became an Alderman in 1841 after his first spell as the mayor of Leicester.

His reform views led him to become one of the leaders of the reformed corporation of Leicester, and he was made mayor in 1840, 1847 and 1856, while also a borough magistrate from 1849. Yet, his views were rejected while he was in office, with "modest proposals" for street-widening and a town hall dismissed by the Improvement committee in 1845. Becoming disillusioned with the Reform Society and local MPs Joshua Walmsley and Richard Gardner, Biggs turned "ultra-radical" and sought to return what he believed truly radical MPs for Leicester and a popular franchise. Eventually, this led to Walmsley and Gardner being unseated and replaced by John Ellis and Richard Harris, causing a 15-year battle between local Liberal factions.

He was elected Radical MP for Leicester at a by-election in 1856 triggered by the death of Richard Gardner and became known as the 'Dictator' of a 'Chartist clique' by local opponents. He held the seat until 1863, when he recognised a union was needed between the warring Liberal factions—spurred by a Conservative victory by William Unwin Heygate at an 1861 by-election for the borough—and he resigned from politics altogether.

He was a generous patron of the Mechanics Institute. In times of unemployment, he contributed lavishly to subscriptions for relief. He was said to have performed innumerable acts of private charity. His nine-bedroomed mansion in Stoneygate, which stood in five acres of land where Knighton Park Road now runs, was a centre of hospitality; and it was there that he entertained Kossuth when the Hungarian patriot visited Leicester.

Following his departure from politics, Biggs fell afoul of several other personal problems, starting with financial failure. In 1862 his house, used as security for a debt of £10,086, had to be sold, including his collection of allegedly 'old master' paintings. The business was sold to another firm as a going concern. Meanwhile, his sister died, and her husband James

Francis Hollings—editor of the Leicestershire Mercury and historian and luminary of the Literary and Philosophical Society—committed suicide.

For the rest of his life Biggs lived in a terrace house, 46 West Street, near the prison. In 1871, living alone he too died, leaving behind little wealth but what some historians describe as a significant impact on the city. The town hall he had campaigned for during his earlier political life was approved and built and frame-rent was abolished.

His will, a short record bearing date 3 February 1866, was proved at Leicester on the 26th of June 1871 by Joseph Biggs of Tunbridge Wells, brother, the sole executor, to whom administration was granted. Effects under £1,000. The bulk of his estate passed to his said brother.

Biggs was buried at Welford Road Cemetery. The service was conducted by the Revd C. C. Coe, minister of the Great Meeting, whose sermon was afterwards published. After his death, his friends launched a public subscription to fund a simple plaque over his grave. Encouraged by the campaigning of local printer John Burton, the response was so great that the plan was changed to involve the erection of a statue in the town. Among the contributors to the fund were said to be more than a thousand workingmen. A donation even came across the Atlantic from Leicester people who had emigrated to German Town, Philadelphia, and remembered Biggs in their exile.

The result, a statue in Sicilian marble by George Anderson Lawson was unveiled in Welford Place on 15 April 1873. Unfortunately, it was damaged in a collision with a tram, and replaced by a bronze cast of the original in 1930. The statue was grade II listed on 14 March 1975.

It is suggested that the character of Augustus Debarry in George Eliot's novel Felix Holt, the Radical is based upon John Biggs.

Ratcliffe on the Wreake

Ratcliffe on the Wreake is a village and civil parish in the Charnwood district of Leicestershire, England. The population of the civil parish at the 2011 census was 179. It is just to the north of the River Wreake, opposite East Goscote.

The village is small enough not to have a parish council; instead, it has a parish meeting consisting of all the electorate. The 14th-century St Botolph parish church is a Grade II* listed building.

The church dates from the 14th century and was restored in 1876. Since then it hasn't undergone any major structural work / development and retains many original features.

The Spire dates from the 14th century, and was rebuilt in 1812. It is made from granite rubble stone, with Swithland slate roof tiles and has a north facing clock face.

The nave is the oldest part of the church, it dates from the early 14th century and was originally wider, with a North aisle. The North aisle was removed between 1791 and 1795, the four octagonal piers can still be seen internally. On the North wall, adjacent to the Chancel is a memorial to a Victorian schoolboy killed when he fell from his Pony, the memorial is in the form of an angel praying.

The chancel itself dates from the 14th Century, however the roof is a newer addition, dating from the 19th Century. The Chancel is separated from the Nave by a double chamfered arch on polygonal responds, and is also two steps lower than the main body of the church.

On the northern wall is a recess with a double chamfered arch and an effigy of a priest from the 14th Century.

The majority of the church windows are clear glass, with very little stained glass. Exceptions to this are:

The West (tower) window dating from the 19th Century.

The East window which contains a depiction of the Baptism of Christ, flanked by Saint John to his left, and Noah to his right. The window dates from 1878.

There are three windows to the South of the Chancel all with Geometric tracery, the middle of these contains fragments of medieval glass.

The round font located to the West of the (main) South door dates from the 12th / 13th century and stands on an octagonal base, probably from the 19th Century. The remainder of the furniture is from 1869 and by RJ & J Goodacre. Ratcliffe Hall is a Grade II listed country house built c. 1812 by Robert Shirley, 7th Earl Ferrers and was inherited by his granddaughter, Caroline Shirley, Duchess Sforza Cesarini, who had married into the Italian aristocracy. It subsequently descended to the pioneer aviator, Sir William Lindsay Everard, who set up Ratcliffe Aerodrome, which opened with a 'Grand Air Pageant' on 6 September 1930.

Famed aviator Amy Johnson made an unexpected trip from London to participate with Sir Sefton Brancker, Director of Civil Aviation. Some five thousand spectators were treated to a show with one hundred planes and staged bombings of Chinese pirates. There was one crash, but no one was killed. Ratcliffe Aerodrome was one of the finest in civil aviation with a comfortable clubhouse and an outdoor pool. The hangars were first class and the many air shows and displays had the atmosphere of a garden party.

Ratcliffe is known for its abundance in wildlife especially crayfish which inhabit the River Wreake right through the village. As RAF Ratcliffe, it was an important Air Transport Auxiliary ferry pool in World War II.

Life's What You Make It

Excerpts from life writing.

First Day of School

Brand new school, brand new uniform, different journey. No longer a five to ten minute walk, but instead a twenty to twenty five minute bus journey to the other side of the city.

And so I'm stood at the bus stop in my brand new black shoes, slip ons of course, I still can't tie laces. Black socks as well, white socks aren't allowed, not that we'll stick to that over the years. Black trousers too, a single crease down the front and back, two side pockets to the front and a single button rear pocket on the right. A black belt with a metal buckle holds them up.

There is a crisp white long sleeve shirt, button cuffs of course, not the environment for cuff links, and it has a single breast pocket on the left hand side. The tie is predominately black, but it has diagonal red and yellow strips of varying widths running up to the right.

Over the top is a black blazer, two outside waist level pockets, and a breast pocket with the red, yellow, and black school crest sewn on to the outside of it. It has two inside pockets as well.

I'm carrying a black griffin Savers hold all with the little yellow emblem and words on one end. It has my packed lunch and pencil case in it. And lots of space for any books I'll pick up that first day.

It will be the smartest I'll ever be for any day at the school.

Poetry Corner

Floating Above The Clouds

Floating Above The Clouds
Speeding along but with the appearance of not moving
The sun reflects up off their surface
And all you can see
For miles in all directions
Is what appears to be a snow-covered landscape
There are little peaks
Plateaus and hill sides and open fields
As if the entire world is covered in snow
Firm and solid underneath
And then there will be that one fluffy cloud
A piece that could not possibly be landscape
And then another
It all starts to change
The clouds break apart
No longer a rolling landscape of snow
Through the cover comes the gaps
Windows to the water beneath
Pockets of dark blue show through
And the illusion is shattered

Did I Really Blog That?

A Wander To The Watermill

It wasn't a planned outing; Helen had gone to her mum's and was meeting friends for dinner later. I'd done a bit of decorating, and it looked OK outside weather wise, so I put some trainers on and tightened the belt to walking mode and headed out, camera in hand.

I decided I was going to make my way to Ifield Watermill for the open day, but I wasn't going to go the direct route. Instead I cut through the park at the back of the house out onto Malthouse Road, and past the locally listed buildings there.



It would seem the council town planners have run out of imagination, and definitely aren't channelling the spirit of John Goepel in the naming of the road for the new houses behind Southgate Road. Yes, they were built in what had been gardens of house on Southgate Road, but calling them Southgate Road Gardens shows a real lack of imagination.



I carried on, crossing Brighton Road near the locally listed Park Lodge,



up Perryfield Road and through to West Street in the West Street / Brighton Road conservation area.



Before crossing over the railway,



and going up Albany Road, catching the blue plaque as I did so.



I wandered happily through West Green and through the underpass at Crawley Avenue onto The Mardens. The Elim Church Crawley on the corner of Ifield Drive and The Mardens was one of the few I hadn't taken pictures of in the last year or so. It had used to be the Trinity United Reformed Church, but they left to join with the Pound Hill congregation, and the Elim congregation moved to this church from their former church in Langley Green, which now houses the Noor Ahmadiyya Mosque.



Then my next destination was to see what I could see of Ewhurst Place, one of the former moated houses of Crawley, and a Grade II* listed building. One you only get glimpses of from Ifield Drive. It is well protected all around by the houses on Ifield Drive, Ardingly Close and Climping Road; the latter's garages offer the best views. There is no view at all of the Grade II listed bridge over the moat in the grounds.



I traipsed around the winding streets between Ifield Drive and Warren Drive taking pictures of all the street signs; ones named after Sussex villages, a theme that carries on all the way up to Ifield train station. One of which was Midhurst Close, the last of those roads with a name that is also the site of a castle in Sussex. There were a number of stragglers to go with the main set in Pound Hill.



Opposite here is Deerswood Court, locally listed flats set in the old grounds of Deerswood Farm, a pre-Tudor mansion demolished in the 1950's.



And next to it is Ifield Community Centre, used as a place of worship by The Salvation Army and the Powerhouse Revival Centre.



Crossing over Warren Drive I come to Ifield Parade, one I've passed a few times, but somehow it doesn't seem as big as I remember and wonder whether I just have Tilgate Parade embedded in my mind.



I stop to get a soft drink. It's actually a lot hotter than it had looked when I left the house and I'm quite warm and feeling a bit lobster like. I check my phone to find Helen's dinner had been cancelled, and so arrange to meet her at the Watermill.

What is now closer to being a trudge than a walk continues. I pass the Pelham Buckle



before cutting through to the Rusper Road to make my way along to the Watermill. In doing so I pass (and photograph) several Grade II listed buildings. The first of which is Turks Croft.



Then there is Brook Cottage.



This section of Rusper Road has a lot of nice houses and the road isn't too busy at this time, but there is the danger that proposed housing in the vicinity could change that. (Plus, I've never had to walk along here during rush hour when it's the only road in and out of Ifield West.)

I get to the car park for the Watermill ahead of Helen, and so I take the opportunity to get a couple of photos of the Grade II listed Ifield Watermill, and the privately-owned Grade II listed Ifield Mill House.



We had a good visit to the Watermill, which I've written about separately, and then I was glad to get a lift home as it was far too warm to walk all the way back again.

Story Time

Days Of Endless Summer

I can't remember the last time I had seen rain, let alone felt its cooling drops of moisture upon my skin. The official count was now just above twelve hundred days, but it was at least double that, I don't know where they had the official monitoring station, but it certainly wasn't anywhere near where I lived.

Nothing was green. Well, not naturally anyway. Lots of people had taken to painting the outsides of their sun-baked properties green to try and give the impression that something natural was alive and growing out there.

But the green would absorb more of the heat from the cloudless days and make the insides of those properties even warmer. I kept my shack white to reflect as much of the sun as possible. The paint also disguised the fact that the walls of my shack were covered with discarded pieces of asbestos sheeting. Disguised so people wouldn't recognise them for what they were and report me, making my shack a health hazard, and have it removed at my expense.

I knew the potential health issues the asbestos could bring about, but I could live with, or possibly die with, that. The heat it absorbed and stopped from getting into my shack was worth it to me. And besides, there were many other things that would kill me a lot sooner than any potential asbestos poisoning ever would.

They had called it global warming, but no one believed it was real, they were all too blasé, untrusting of government to do what they asked of them. And as it turned out all the so-called experts were wrong. It was nothing to do with the ozone layer, or carbon dioxide. Of course, it was still the human race's fault, but it had nothing to do with the pollution and population explosion.

It was far worse than that and it was all to do with other kinds of explosion. We had managed to change the course of the planet's orbit. At a nuclear level. It had started with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and it continued with proliferation and testing of more advanced nuclear weapons. And each time the explosion would shift the orbit. Moving us ever closer to the Sun.

It took a long while for anyone to notice. In the vastness of space, a hundred thousand miles isn't very far at all. But it was enough to heat us up significantly. The two outbreaks of nuclear weapon use back in the thirties pushed us too far. North Korea may have wiped South Korea off the map, but in doing so they killed themselves off. Israel didn't learn from that and taking Palestine out had destroyed Jerusalem and poisoned the whole of the eastern Mediterranean coast. Israel and Lebanon were no more, and the resulting tsunamis decimated the entire population of Cyprus.

What we wouldn't give for a tsunami nowadays to get some water, no matter how salty onto the dry broken land. The ice caps may have melted, but the sea level didn't rise, it fell as the water evaporated, and then disappeared as it certainly wasn't up in the sky in clouds. The scramble to claim new islands for sovereign states when they appeared was lunacy. But lunacy is the new sane now.

Nothing grows out there, and yet the proper food looks and tastes the same as it ever did. Not that I can afford any of the proper stuff, not many can. Bags of brown goo of indeterminate flavour is what we get. It is probably best if we don't know and don't ask how it is made. Three bags a day is enough to keep us alive. The lack of water doesn't stop us. We are surprisingly resilient and adaptive. I haven't seen anyone die recently. Or perhaps I should say I haven't seen any dead bodies being carried away.

But people disappear. One day they are there, and the next day they are gone. Someone else lives in their shack, new belongings appear overnight, and the new people act as if they had always been here. Where had the old people gone? Where did the newcomers come from? Questions that few were brave enough to ask anymore, as it was often the questioners who were the next to be replaced in the middle of the night. It was strange that no one ever saw or heard a thing.

Everyone is tanned. The days of milk bottle arms and legs protruding uncomfortably from shorts, skirts and t-shirts are long gone. As is any form of sun lotion. There is no protection. It's not as if there is any air conditioning either. You might have thought with all this extra sunlight there would have been a boom in solar generated electricity. Apparently, it's the wrong kind of sunlight. Too strong for the photo voltaic cells to cope with, they all melted or got fried.

In fact, there is little electricity used now at all. The drop in sea levels and river flows put paid to most of the hydro and nuclear power plants, there being a certain irony in the latter I suppose. There is little wind. Fossil fuels are all the rage again, but the prices are just stupid, and most of us do without. As I said before, we adapt.

But today looks different. There are clouds congregating, more than I've seen in years. They are coming in from all directions. There was a little wisp when I first got up, but it didn't dissipate like it usually would. It didn't move, it grew as other little wisps came to join it. as if it was an epicentre or a leader perhaps, calling all the others to join it here.

We learnt about clouds and weather formations back in school in the noughties. Obviously, the world has changed beyond recognition since then, but there is nothing to suggest that this is a natural occurrence. I'm not the only one to have noticed. People are all out, stood in the dusty road looking up. I suppose some of the smaller children will never have seen clouds like this before.

It keeps growing, I can see the shadow it casts move across the city. I doubt anyone is doing any work. Word has got out; this is more compulsive viewing than television ever may have been. I can hear the question bouncing around.

"Is it going to rain?"

And I can hear the excitement level growing, they want the rain. They want to be able to celebrate the weather change. I shiver.

The cloud cover isn't over me, I'm still stood in the burning sun, there is no breeze, there is no reason for me to feel cold. Yet I shiver again. A voice in my head screams at me.

RUN.

I want to laugh, want to tell it not to be stupid, tell it to shut up. But I don't. I listen, and I run. I haven't run since I was a child, but now I do, and it is not only the heat my body objects to. My muscles complain, they don't know what I am asking them to do. My legs are unsteady. I probably have the gait of a new-born deer. As if trying out my legs for the first time. But they soon get used to it.

People are staring at me as I rush past them and away from the ever-growing cloud. I hear mutterings as I leave them in my wake. I look over my shoulder and it appears as if the shadow is chasing me, and so I try to run faster.

I don't know how long I ran for, but I left the city behind and out onto the empty, dry, dust bowl beyond the city, my heavy footfall almost drowned out by the sound of my own blood rushing through my system.

And the light flashed behind me, followed a few seconds later by the boom. For those who had never experienced a storm before, it would have been mistaken for thunder and lightning. But the sound was something else, the initial boom didn't rumble and fade away, if anything it increased in pitch and volume.

I couldn't help myself, I stopped and turned around to see what it was. As I did, I wished I never had. I knew my fate now. If I had carried on running, I would have had the same fate, but at least I would have never seen it coming.

It could be said that there was rain coming down from the clouds. It was raining death and destruction. I would never know if it was another country, or another planet that was wiping us out, but through the cloud came an incessant stream of weapon fire, destroying everyone and everything in the city. If I had had some kind of vehicle then I might have escaped, but my own two feet were never going to be fast enough.

Instead, I stood there and watched my fate speed towards me, watching the already destroyed land be ripped to pieces. And then I was no more.

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 5

The thing was that when he smelt that particular smell, he always hoped that he would turn around and find that it came from his fiancée and only real love Keera Fallenfant. She had always worn Eternity, from the very first time they had met, right up to the end, and he smiled at all the times when she wouldn't wear anything else but the perfume.

He drifted away, his memory caught up with visions of Keera, he closed his eyes as tightly as he could and thought back to their time together, remembering everything about her, starting with her smell, the way she looked, the way they had made love, the way she smiled, and the way she had made him smile during their time together.

But that had all changed; the pain had started not long after her twenty-third birthday, just a few months after they had been engaged. At first, she had not really thought about it seriously, and hadn't mentioned it to him, and then as the pain increased, she stopped smiling. She still didn't mention the pain, and he selfishly blamed himself for making her unhappy, not thinking that there might be something wrong with her that didn't involve him.

They started rowing about trivial things, bickering over the silliest things, her because of the pain she was feeling and him because he didn't understand, and was still hurting from family tragedies, which made him act like a little spoilt immature brat. Then one day, during yet another argument, she let it slip about the pain in her back that was troubling her so much. She told him that it had been hurting for nearly three months, and that it was making her tired and irritable.

He realised what a pain in the arse he had been, and was concerned for her, knowing that it wasn't right to have this pain for this length of time and, although she was reluctant, he persuaded her to go to her doctor. She was in turn referred to an orthopaedic clinic specializing in back pain.

She was diagnosed as having a malignant Vertebral column tumour, which had spread there from some, until then undetected breast cancer.

A course of Chemotherapy was started immediately to try and eradicate the cancer, and was partially successful. The breast cancer was diagnosed as being in full remission, but the pressure on the spinal column caused by that tumour was still causing her great pain, and it was decided to operate to remove the tumour.

She was admitted to hospital, so she could be treated with the correct level of pain medication whilst they waited to get a slot for the operation. The few days spent waiting saw him hardly leaving her room, when she was awake, they spent the time talking about everything they would do when she'd recovered from her operation.

She went down for the operation in the early evening on the Thursday. It was the last time that he saw her alive, his last words to her had been "I love you."

Unfortunately there were complications from the operation caused by her having a previously undiagnosed extremely weak heart, the tumour had been removed successfully, and they were stitching her back up when she had a heart attack on the operating table. Her heart stopped, and after forty-five minutes of fruitless attempts to get it restarted, they had declared her dead.

When the surgeon had found him to tell him the news, he refused to believe them, and eventually had to be restrained and sedated after attacking the surgeon and trashing the private room Keera had been in.

The funeral had come and gone in a blur of some serious drinking, and the insinuations from Keera's family over the length of time to report the back pain being his fault had led to angry scenes at the wake.

He didn't really speak to anyone for months after, a feeling of guilt refusing to leave. His only correspondence being with Trebling software, who he was working for as a freelance computer programmer.

His speciality being the animation of human motion, and he was busy doing the coding for Trebling's blockbuster summer release Sacrilege, a role-playing game involving a priest of all things.

At least being freelance he didn't have to go in as long as he sent in regular updates. He had plenty of time to do just that, as he seemed unable to sleep, sometimes three or four days would go by, and he wouldn't have been anywhere near his bed. He refused to speak to his "friends" and after two months most of them had given up on him. They no longer rang or came to try and visit.

It was during the testing stage for Sacrilege that he had decided that he was going to leave Trebling. Yet even this couldn't clear his mind of everything and his mourning period for Keera continued, even though all he seemed to remember of her now was her pained expression from her last few months.

Books

After years of prevaricating, I have finally gotten around to self-publishing some books. Since the last issue of this I now have three books available. The first is the novel which spent many years available on the Inkitt website. "Where The Lights Shine Brightest", this is available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1738539601> .

Next up is a collection of drabbles, three hundred and sixty six of the little hundred word stories, under the title of "A Drabble A Day Keeps The Psychoanalyst Away", this is available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/173853961X> .

Finally, there is an autobiographical work, released under my alter ego of Kevin Rodriguez-Sanchez, which covers a two year period in the early noughties when I lived in Manchester – "Five Go Mad In Manchester." Again, this is available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1738539628>

They are all available as paperback or eBook. And if you have Kindle Unlimited then they are available on there to read whenever. Please buy / read / leave reviews.

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

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