

Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 85

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 July

1836 – Inauguration of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France.

1907 – Sir Robert Baden-Powell sets up the Brownsea Island Scout camp in Poole Harbour on the south coast of England. The camp runs from August 1 to August 9 and is regarded as the foundation of the Scouting movement.

1921 – Adolf Hitler becomes leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

1948 – Olympic Games: The Games of the XIV Olympiad: After a hiatus of 12 years caused by World War II, the first Summer Olympics to be held since the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, open in London.

1987 – British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President of France François Mitterrand sign the agreement to build a tunnel under the English Channel (Eurotunnel).

International Tiger Day

Mohun Bagan Day (India)

National Anthem Day (Romania)

National Thai Language Day (Thailand)

Ólavsøka or Olsok, opening of the Løgting session. (Faroe Islands and the Nordic countries)

Births

1883 – Benito Mussolini

1923 – Jim Marshall

1957 – Nellie Kim

1966 – Sally Gunnell

Deaths

1833 – William Wilberforce

1890 – Vincent van Gogh

1983 – David Niven

2007 – Mike Reid

Marriages

1565 – Mary, Queen of Scots marries Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, Duke of Albany.

1981 – Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer.

Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1969 – Rolling Stones – Honky Tonk Women

Number 1 album in 1997 – The Prodigy – The Fat Of The Land

Number 1 compilation album in 1993 – Various – The Best Dance Album In The World ... Ever!

#vss365

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

They call me #hero round here, not because of anything I did, but because of a misunderstanding. Someone heard me called what they thought was #heroine, and because I'm a male they changed that to #hero.

Yet all along it was me being called out for being a heroin addict.

#vss365

Joke

A little boy goes shopping with his mum and is waiting outside the changing room for her to come out. While waiting, the little lad gets bored and as his mum comes out sees him sliding his hand up a mannequin's skirt. "Get your hand out of there!" she shouts. "Don't you know that women have teeth down there?" The little boy quickly snatches his hand away and thanks his lucky stars he didn't get bitten. For the next ten years, this little boy grows up believing all women have teeth between their legs. When he's sixteen, he gets a girlfriend. One night, while her parents are out, she invites him over. After an hour she says, "You know you can go a little further if you want" "What do you mean?" he asks. "Well why don't you put your hand down my pants?" she says. "Hell no" he cries, "you've got teeth down there" "Don't be ridiculous," she responds, "there's no teeth down there" "Yes there are" he says, "my mum told me" "No, there aren't" she insists. "Here have a look for yourself" she whips off her panties, throws her legs behind her head, and says, "look I don't have any teeth down there!" The boy takes a good long look and replies, "Well, with the condition of those gums, I'm not surprised!"

Drabble

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

The Power of Costume

He had been on his way to a big fancy dress party dressed as the man with no name from the spaghetti westerns when the power had gone out.

Two weeks later there was still no power, and he was still dressed as a cowboy. The dishevelled desperado look he had gone for to go to the party was the look that was keeping him from being attacked, and keeping him alive.

The fact the costume had real looking guns and holsters was helping as well. If they found out the guns were fake, then he'd be a dead man.

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 Never Ending Road

The road stretched on in front of me. Straighter than the Romans could even have imagined. As far as my eyes could see, and then again as far again at least. Disappearing not a vanishing point that refused to vanish no matter how far I walked along it.

The surface of the road was wet. Slick. A dark dampness without ever a hint of a puddle. Why it was wet was a mystery to me. How could it be? I had been walking for days along this endless straight road. And not once had I been rained upon. And yet there was a fine covering of liquid everywhere.

Trees lined the road, and these too were strange. Their leaves showing all the glorious colours of autumn. Reds, oranges, yellows, browns, yet not a single shade of green to be seen in the canopy above my head. But the smells were of a different season. Thick heady scents of trees in bloom. Of the cloying pollen of those late spring months making the atmosphere thick. A taste I hated as it played havoc with my allergen-stricken system.

It was hard to reconcile the two. Not a blossom to be seen, only autumn leaves, and yet the taste and smell of them were heavy in the air. I had veered off the roads and placed my hands on one of the trees. The bark was sharp, instantly cutting my hands, only for the heat the trees were giving off to just as instantly cauterise my wounds before bleeding had had a chance to start.

From that point on I had kept to the middle of the road. Walking steadily along the double blue lines separating the opposing lanes. Not that it needed any separating now. Not once did I have to move to avoid traffic. I thought I had gone deaf, so little sound was there. If it hadn't been for the faint rustling of trees when a slight breeze blew through their leaves, then there would have been no sounds at all.

I didn't know where all the cars were. I hadn't seen one in weeks. It was as if they had all vanished. I had expected to see at least one. Abandoned by the side of the road, its former occupants dead inside, killed by whatever had removed the rest of all life out here.

I had seen the dead bodies. Well, more smelt them at first. Rapidly decomposing, more rapidly than it should have been possible for them to do. But out here on this never-ending tree lined tarmac road, there were no dead bodies. There were no living bodies either. Only me.

Unexpected.

Unexplained.

Alone.

Leicestershire

Charnwood Forest

Charnwood Forest is an upland tract in north-western Leicestershire, England, bounded by Leicester, Loughborough, and Coalville. The area is undulating, rocky and picturesque, with barren areas. It also has some extensive tracts of woodland; its elevation is generally six hundred feet (180 m) and upwards, the area exceeding this height being about 6,100 acres (25 km²).

The highest point, Bardon Hill, is 912 feet (278 m). On its western flank lies an abandoned coalfield, with Coalville and other former mining villages, now being regenerated and replanted as part of the National Forest. The M1 motorway, between junctions 22 and 23, cuts through Charnwood Forest.

The hard stone of Charnwood Forest has been quarried for centuries, and was a source of whetstones and quern-stones. The granite quarries at Bardon Hill, Buddon Hill and Whitwick supply crushed aggregate to a wide area of southern Britain.

The forest is an important recreational area with woodland walks, noted for their displays of bluebells in the early spring, rock climbing and hillwalking. Popular places with public access include Bardon Hill, Beacon Hill, Bradgate Park, Swithland Wood and the Outwoods and Stoneywell Cottage (National Trust).

The area of hills and open land known as Charnwood Forest has no jurisdictional boundary. (The Borough of Charnwood covers roughly two thirds of Charnwood Forest, and the eastern half of the borough is not part of the forest.) Furthermore, despite its name, Charnwood was never a royal forest, and was never subject to forest law. So although it is an ancient and well-established locality, it has only recently been officially defined, by the Natural England National Character Area (NCA) process, which takes a somewhat wider definition than many previous attempts to define the area.

Many of the craggy rocks of Charnwood Forest are of volcanic origin and are very old, dating back through six hundred million years to Precambrian times. It was the site of the first-ever recorded discovery of *Charnia masoni*, the earliest-known large, complex fossilised species on record. It was discovered in 1957 by a local schoolboy named Roger Mason (thus *masoni*) who, with friends, was exploring a quarry near the Charnwood village of Woodhouse Eaves. The rocks of Charnwood Forest remain the only place in Western Europe where these Precambrian fossils have been found.

Along the western edge of Charnwood Forest the rocks are mainly Precambrian igneous diorites. These formed from molten lava deep within the sedimentary rocks, cooling slowly to produce hard, blocky rock with large crystals. This is extensively quarried for roadstone around Groby, Markfield and Whitwick, and is known as granite (formerly also called Markfieldite).

The central area of the forest has older rocks still. These are sedimentary and are very variable in character, they were formed by material from volcanoes, settling in deep water, and it is in these beds that the fossils are found. Uplifting, tilting and erosion have produced the distinctive jagged exposures found across the highest parts of Charnwood.

On the eastern side, a much more recent series of rocks are found. Again igneous diorites, that formed deep underground, but these are Ordovician, from a mere 450 million years ago. These are extensively quarried in the areas near Mountsorrel.

The earliest form of the name Charnwood is probably derived from *cerne woda*, from the Celtic *carn*, meaning *cairn*, and the Old English *wudu*, meaning *wood*. Some sources give *cwern* as the derivation, meaning a tool used to grind grain and other materials by hand. The area was a source of stone for these tools, called *quern-stones*.

Archaeological evidence has shown that the area was inhabited as far back as the Neolithic period, approximately 4,000–2,000 BC. Beacon Hill is the site of a Bronze Age hill fort, dating from between 600 BC and 43 AD. This forms one of the last surviving visible features in the landscape known to the Coritani, the tribe who occupied most of the East Midlands's area at the time of the Roman Conquest.

According to Domesday Book, there was only one settlement in Charnwood Forest in 1086, at Charley whose name would appear to come from the same root, with the suffix -ley denoting open land, rather than forest.

In the two hundred years after the Norman Conquest, newly created settlements took major areas of land out of the forest for use in agriculture. Quorn was established between 1086 and 1153, and all the land up to Woodhouse had been reclaimed from the forest by 1228.

There were comparatively few major changes in land use in the post medieval period, until the demand for timber and charcoal for the early Industrial Revolution contributed to a further loss of woodland. By the end of the 18th century, most of the woodland had disappeared leaving large areas of moorland and pasture.

The area was the inspiration for "Charnwood Poems", a collection of poems by the author, playwright, and poet Albert Francis Cross (1863–1940). It is also the setting for the speculative fiction novel "Some Kind of Fairy Tale" by Graham Joyce (2012), in which it is depicted as a possible portal to the realm of fairies.

Charnwood Forest covers approx. 67 sq. mi (170 km²) of Leicestershire, split over three local government districts: Charnwood Borough, Northwest Leicestershire District and Hinckley and Bosworth District. It includes a national nature reserve (NNR), 19 SSSIs (Some subdivided in the list of sites below), 4 Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites of international geological importance plus a further 6 GCR sites, 13 regionally important geological sites (RIGS), five local nature reserves (LNRs), seven Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) nature reserves, and one Woodland Trust woodland.

Seventeen sites have open access to the public. Footpaths and bridleways give views and limited access to the other sites listed, and to the rest of the Charnwood Forest landscape. Over half of Charnwood Forest is included within the English National Forest. It is also crossed by two waymarked long distance walking routes—the Leicestershire Round and the Ivanhoe Way.

Plants found within the woods include *Digitalis purpurea*, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, *Sorbus torminalis* and *Vaccinium myrtillus*.

Kilby

Kilby is a village and civil parish in the Blaby district of Leicestershire, England. It is the easternmost village in the district, and is six miles southeast of Leicester. Nearby places are Fleckney, Arnesby, Wistow and Kilby Bridge.

In the 1870s Kilby was described as "KILBY, a parish, with a village, in Blaby district, Leicestershire; on a branch of the river Soar, and on the Union canal, 2 miles SSE of Wigston railway station, and 6½ SSE of Leicester. Post town, Wigston, under Leicester. Acres, 1,060. Real property, £2,200. Population, 362. Houses, 95."

Kilby has had the origins of its name possibly traced back to a Scandinavian form of Old English, being translated to 'children's farm/settlement.' Kilby was mentioned in the Domesday book where it was said to have been originally formed around the parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene. In the Domesday book of 1068 Kilby or Cilebi, as it was spelt, resided in a district called 'Guthlaxton Wapentake' under the ownership of Oger the Breton who was recorded as Tennant-in-chief. Kilby was recorded as having "28 households, containing 9 villagers, 7 smallholders, 2 slaves and 10 freemen." Kilby was also reported as having a Meadow consisting of twelve acres and one mill. Prior to the Domesday book the Lord of Kilby was recorded as Eur who resided as Lord during 1066.

The parish Church is now located around a quarter of a mile away from the centre of modern-day Kilby. The original parish Church finished construction in 1220, however this was replaced by the present day parish Church which was consecrated in 1858. Population data for Kilby is available dating back to 1811 which at the time had a total population of 242. This figure is close to the 2011 census report of 270 inhabitants. Kilby reached its peak population, as dictated by census records, in 1831 with 434 inhabitants living in the village. This figure then significantly dropped to 291 in the 1881 census. The population of Kilby has remained fairly consistent from 1881 to 2011. Kilby contains a number of listed buildings such as the Bakehouse, Dog and Gun Public House and Kilby Lodge. Many of the listed buildings date back to at least the 17th century.

The boundaries of the parish of Kilby were enlarged in April 1936 when the parish extended to include Foston after the closing of Foston Civil parish. This caused the parish boundaries of Kilby to increase from 1,068 acres to 2,401 acres, an increase of 1,333 acres. To this day the parish of Kilby still includes Foston.

During the 19th century it is recorded that Kilby became an independent parish, having been previously in union with Newton Harcourt and Fleckney. It is thought that they had formed the ancient parish sometime in the 13th century. Another boundary change occurred within Kilby during the First World War. This happened due to Lord Cottesloe of Wigston selling fifty acres of smallholdings to Leicestershire County Council, which were in turn given to ex-servicemen from Kilby who had fought in the First World War.

Kilby contains one school called Kilby St Mary's Church of England Primary school which educates children from age 4 to age 11. The school came into existence in the 1850s which is currently a listed building.

Kilby Wood is a woodland comprising 12.5 acres located to the South of Kilby. The woodland is continuing its growth with a 30-year lease being given by Leicestershire County Council. Villagers from Kilby have helped expand the woodland by sponsoring trees in memory of loved ones

Life's What You Make It

Excerpts from life writing.

Tilgate Watch

Take the dog for a haircut, it'll be fine, doesn't take that long they said. But, with it being a long time since the last trim for Charlie, the mind gets muddled, and it's not an hour, but an hour and a half. So how to entertain oneself on Tilgate parade for that long.

First things first, get some money out to pay for the doggy's new do. I'm stood behind some bloke at the cash machine. He's moaning at his other half on the phone, that there isn't much money in his account as he keeps having to get meals for their teas as there's no fucking food in the fridge.

Meanwhile I'm wondering how his trousers haven't fallen down, as although he has a belt, it's halfway down his arse. And I'm sure he must have thought that I was following him. I went in to the newsagents to get a paper after getting cash and was behind him in the queue. Then next door in the convenience store I was behind him at the till getting a drink. Finally a few doors down at the bakery / café getting breakfast, I was behind him again. But I stopped and ate mine in there as he left, hopefully never to be seen again.

The café had a throughput of workmen, all seemingly from different companies, but it would appear there is a common uniform. Black cargo trousers, black polo shirt and black fleece with the company name embroidered on. All of which have varying amounts of white paint splattered all over them.

Next up was a little kid who looked like he was missing a dog. His mum was well out in front of him, but the kid had a little stick which he was throwing and then chasing himself before holding it up proudly and repeating the process. Whilst all the time his mother got further ahead of him, disappearing off into the distance, not even glancing back to check.

Now, I've been known to drink at odd times of the day in the past. But a bottle of Stella as you wander along at 9.15 seems a bit excessive. Especially when the pair doing so only looked about sixteen, and if there was a strong breeze it would blow the bum fluff off their faces.

I ambled down to the co-op to buy my lunch and was happy to find that the bloke from earlier wasn't there in the queue in front of me. The cashier was bored already and seemed to be livening up his day by asking every customer where they got something they had with them or were wearing. I was left wondering how long it would be before he started asking them, "ooh, where did you get that head from," or "that's a nice arm, where could I get one like it?"

Outside, the toilets were under maintenance. Though that wasn't my first impression, seeing as they were taped off and the bloke working on them was in the kind of white protective jump suit you see CSI's wear. It wasn't until he shouted at some random bloke who had ducked under the tape not to go in the bloody toilet as he was cleaning them, that I noticed his Healthserve Cleaning van parked up nearby.

I found a bench to sit down for the rest of my wait, the only one that had even a modicum of shade from a fledgling tree. I tried to read but was distracted by the almost constant stream of motorised wheelchairs whizzing past. They all appeared to be souped up version that could fly past at twenty miles an hour instead of the four miles an hour they are supposed to be limited to.

Poetry Corner

Survival

It has been tense
It has been tough
We have been dreadful
And often not tough enough

We have played badly
And we have played well

And lost time after time
Putting the fans through hell

In the relegation zone often
In danger of leaving the league
With only very rare wins
To prop up the emotional fatigue

A point today was good enough
But no goals were scored
Still there was plenty of action
To prevent us being bored

The final whistle was blown
And we got the point we need
Survival is now ensured
Despite all those blown leads

The season didn't go to plan
In fact, it was a nightmare
Let's learn from this next time round
So, we don't repeat this despair

Did I Really Blog That?

A West Green Wander

I was at a loose end on a Saturday for a change, so it was time for another Crawley wander. I was heading (nominally) for St Peter's Church for their book sale. It was a bright morning when I set out, and as I turned onto the path at the end of my close, I was greeted with a sight of a green tunnel, a view that would make you think you were in the middle of the country, and not in the middle of a load of houses.



I head down Southgate Road and laugh (again) at the sign for the new house behind and the lack of imagination of the road being called Southgate Road Gardens. They have a gate across the entrance to the houses now. Probably to stop nosey gits like me going down there to have a look. I wonder if they had a vote on whether to put a gate in. And if the one house outvoted curses their neighbours every time they have to stop and open the gate (and close it behind them) every time they leave or come home.



Carrying on I turn into Brighton Road, passing as I often do the sign for Godolphin Court, and wonder if it is just a misspent youth (and probably adulthood as well) that every time I do, all I can think of is racing horses.



Passing the big boarded up house, the question enters my mind of whether whatever is being done there will ever be finished, and we'll be able to see its grandeur again.



Looking at the former Imperial Cinema building I also wonder if they will ever have the retail units originally planned for the ground floor level.



I do love the locally listed building Nightingale House (now a solicitor's office) on the corner of Springfield Road, one of those I take a picture of every time I pass.



On the other side of the road is the signal box, and I take the time to notice the plaque on it (which I hadn't seen before) and note that the view of the side of the signal box is ruined by the billboard in front of it. And note that it is worse than usual at the moment as it has the waste of skin that is Piers Morgan on it.



As I amble up Springfield Road, I take time to notice the variety of styles and ages of the buildings along there.



And one named Crawley Hotel, which looks as if it has seen better days.



As I cross over the level crossing, I feed another compulsion and take photos of the tracks in both directions. I will get caught out by this one day and be caught by the barriers coming down as I'm mid shot in the middle of the tracks. But not today.



Because I know it is there, I take a detour to snap the blue plaque to Sir Charles Court on Albany Road



Before heading towards to church and past the Swan. We went in a couple of weeks ago and were surprised how nice the refit was. Granted a couple of people with us weren't impressed having known it from their youth, but I really liked it.



I took pictures of the conservation area street signs



And the church



Before going in.



I hadn't been inside the church before, and so spent the first five minutes in there taking photos of everything I could (as another obsession kicked in, this one with church interiors).



Before looking at the books. There were lots and I like to think I showed restraint by only buying an unlucky thirteen. There were some boxes that looked as if they could have been my bookshelves in the nineties or noughties (especially the box full of Dean Koontz books).



When I came out there was a helicopter overhead. They are looking for me again.



And looked back towards Southgate and home it would appear that Bill's mother lives there.



I change the filter on the camera to get the red pop of the phone box and pillar box outside the church before heading on.



I take a slow walk around the loop of St Peters Road and St Johns Road, and back up past the (now for sale) Smugglers Cottage



And to another blue plaque, this one to Sarah Robinson, tucked away on the new builds behind Asda.



I carry on along Ifield Road and onto the High Street, where there are photo opportunities every few yards. Two more blue plaques. Roger Bastable.



Mark Lemon.



St John's Church.



The George.



Ancient Priors.



The White Hart.



A plaque on Prezzo (why couldn't they have gone instead of Ask).



The listed phone boxes outside the Jubilee Oak (the red pop didn't work quite as well on these).



And the Brewery Shades.



Before heading towards Wilkos, where in a first for me I remembered to take a picture of both the blue plaque to Richard Browne



And the statue he created on the side of the building on the same day.



After some shopping I head towards home, and as I do I walk toward the station and Overline House. Now, naively when I saw work starting on Overline house I was under the impression they were going to be tearing the whole building down. So, it was somewhat of a surprise to see they have put modern glass fronting on one side of the ground and first floors. Definitely not what I was expecting.



I cross over the iron footbridge, when the plates with the bridge number on have both been covered by hemp sale stickers. Them being there does make me wonder what exactly they are expecting to crash into the footbridge. I mean, it's not as if we're going to get a stray Godzilla or King Kong rampaging through the town, is it?



Yes, I take photos each way as I cross over the train tracks.



The new flats next to the station entrance on East Park look as if they are coming along well and it can't be long before they are being populated.



As I head up Malthouse Road towards home, I notice two things. One which is there most of the time. The wonderful Hanging (basket) Gardens of Crawley.



And at the end of the spur off Malthouse Road opposite Brewers Road I wander up and take a look as when passing it recently it looks to have changed, I could have sworn it ended sooner than it does now (a view shared by my better half). But going up and looking around I can't see how it could have done. There are two houses down there beyond where I thought the end was, and they are not new, and then road markings suggest it's always been that way. It's strange how the mind remembers things.



Story Time

Knock Three Times And Ask For Sam

It has seemed like a fool's mission to Hodson when he set out. The latest in a long line of them he had experienced recently. Three days it had taken him to get here, following the vaguest of instructions given to him back in Clothard. Or so he had thought when given them. Perhaps there was little difference between vague and simple instructions.

And so now he stood in front of the door. It looks exactly as it had been described to him. He raised his hand to knock on the door. And hesitated. Who was Sam? Would they really be able to tell him what he needed to know? Would they even listen to his questions? He had spent three days preparing the words he needed, yet now he was here he wondered if it was all a mistake. If this was a wasted journey.

Time he felt he could ill afford to lose. He should be with Gundarthal, out on the seven great lakes of Kopinger. Retrieving the discarded pieces of the horse. Did he trust Gundarthal to do what he said he would. Hodson didn't like the sudden change in attitude from Gundarthal. The enthusiasm that came after the reticence, as if a switch had been flicked.

Hodson knew he was deflecting. The real issue being a fear of what the answers to his question might be. And did he really want to know.

He took a deep breath and knocked three times on the wooden part of the blue door. The door swung open. Inside was just darkness. No one and nothing to be seen. Suddenly his mouth was dry, and his lips didn't want to move. It was a struggle to get the words out.

"I've come to ask for Sam."

And the lights within the house came on. A warm yellow glow, lighting up a room filled with furniture. A patterned carpet covered the floor. A wooden table and chairs were laid out as if for dinner. More comfortable chairs with cushions and covered in colourful velvet were to the other side of the room he could see. And there was a fire in the hearth, a well established one. Something that should have been visible when the door opened, even without the lights being on.

"Don't just stand there looking like a fool and letting the day in. Step inside."

Hodson couldn't see anyone, and couldn't tell which direction the voice had come from, but it was honied and melodious. It felt soothing and he took the steps required to be inside the house. As soon as he had cleared the threshold the door closed gently behind him.

"Well, now you have ventured inside, have a seat. You must be tired after your long journey."

There was still no sign of who it was who was speaking. He looked at the available seats, passed up the comfortable looking chairs, walked around the table and sat on a corner chair at the laid-out table. Picking a chair from which he could see the whole room and not have someone be able to sneak up behind him. As he sat down there came the sound of gentle laughter.

"It is all right Hodson Sequoia, you have nothing to fear from me. Unless you are afraid of the truth that is."

Being called by his full name wasn't as big a shock as he might have thought. After all it was the promise of Sam's gift that had led him here. A year ago, it may have had him running for the door, but now it was just another thing that happens. What had been unusual was now the everyday occurrence.

But he did jump when hands were placed on his shoulders and the voice whispered in his ear. It shouldn't have been possible for anyone to be behind him.

"Are you sure you wouldn't prefer a more comfortable seat closer to the fire? You are going to be here for a while, so you might as well feel at home."

The woman stepped around the table and walked across to one of the comfortable chairs and sat in it facing Hodson. He hadn't known whether Sam would be a man or a woman until he had heard the voice, but he had expected a man. She appeared to be older than him, long white hair contrasted with the emerald green long dress she wore. Her face seemed vaguely familiar to him, as if it had been made up of different people he had known over the years. He got up from the table and made his way to a more comfortable chair facing the woman.

There was a hint of a smile on the woman's face.

"Would you like me to tell you what you need to know?"

"It is why I am here; I have questions."

Hodson thought his voice sounded strange, as if it weren't him speaking. As if it was someone else's tongue in his mouth trying to make the sounds.

"I know you have questions. I know what the questions are. I know the doubts you harbour. I know the fears you try and hide. You have been through so much, but the end is within sight for you."

"Do I need to ask the questions then?"

"I could speak without you asking, but it would be better if you did ask. You can then get the information in an order you want it to be in, not as I do."

Hodson sat and thought about what he wanted first. But what came out came from some hidden corner of his mind and surprised him,

"Are you a Magicusian?"

Sam laughed, and Hodson wondered if it was because of the look on his face, as he couldn't stop the feeling of surprise.

"No one has asked me that in a long, long time. I doubt many people would even know they existed. I suppose I am as far as anyone on this continent and in this time would know. But the Magicusians would say I am not. I am a prophetess, and as such I am both feared and revered by the Magicusians. I am probably the last of my kind. The Magicusians would have killed all the others. They wanted no prophecy after the one you are trying to fulfil."

"And do I succeed?"

"You do."

"So, the Magicusians will return and take over then."

"No."

"Then I don't succeed?"

Sam laughed again, a long warm tinkling sound. Hodson sat staring at her.

"What is so funny?"

"It is what they are doing. You haven't seen the full prophecy, only the truncated one they wanted you to, the false trails. I thought Aristor was a better archivist than it appears he is."

"What do you mean?"

"You have seen a copy of the prophecy then?"

"Yes."

"And it says you pave the way to bring the Magicusians back to this continent by restoring the objects of power."

"Yes."

"Did it say they were to take over?"

Hodson thought long and hard about that.

"No."

"But they have suggested that to you?"

"Yes."

"Very tricky of them."

"Why?"

“Because that isn’t the outcome of the prophecy at all. You aren’t here to bring the evil Magicusians back to power, you are here to destroy them for once and for all.”

Hodson grinned, that was something to which he could really commit.

Chapter and Verse

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

The Repsuli Deception – Chapter 6

The door slammed; I ignored it. Then it slammed again. When it slammed for the third time I opened my eyes. Vipond was stood by the door and had opened it again to have another go.

“Alright already, I’m awake.”

“About time, getting me to do all the work whilst you lounge about in bed.”

“I needed the rest after last night, and before flying us out of here this evening. It’s not good to pilot when tired.”

“You could always let me fly.”

“Look Vipond, we’ve had this discussion a thousand times. You have many talents; flying is not one of them. I can’t afford a new spaceship, and I can’t afford to pay for damage to anyone else’s ship at the space port either.”

“If you won’t let me fly, how do you expect me to get any better?”

“Go and take lessons, learn to fly. In another ship, just not mine.”

“How do you suggest I do that on what you pay me?”

“Vipond, it is literally the only thing you actually need to spend money on.”

“I have my tailor to consider.”

“What for? You don’t need clothes. You have a perfectly useful metal body for that purpose.”

“But people look at me funny with a metal body.”

“Not half as funny as they look at you when you’re wearing a three-piece suit.”

“I feel more comfortable when I’m wearing clothes. It’s good not to be naked.”

I slumped back down on the bed again. How had I ended up with a robot with this kind of personality? The agency must have seen me coming for a week.

“Who programmed you this way? You’re just not right!”

“I am programmed to interact with my owner. I pick up traits from their behaviour, so I am better able to help them.”

“Well you certainly didn’t get the trait of buying ridiculous looking three-piece suits from me, which is exactly why I think your programming is up the swanee.”

“What is a swanee?”

“It doesn’t matter.” I was getting a headache again. “Let’s just get ready for when our client gets here.”

“She is already sat in the office.”

“Well, why didn’t you tell me that first?”

“I had to wake you up first, but then I got distracted by the talk of flying and wearing clothes.”

I got off the bed and headed for the bathroom. I ducked my head in the sink and turned the cold water on full tilt. As the sink filled, I drank some of the water and seriously considered inhaling. Instead I turned the water off and took my head

out of the sink. I dripped onto the floor and onto my clothes. I looked for a towel, but they were all gone. The bedspread would have to do. I dried my face and hair off, picked up my bag and headed for the office.

Tarrega Opsulate sat in the same chair as before. She hadn't changed her clothes. She didn't appear to have any luggage with her. Vipond stood by the exit, looking like a metal doorman.

"Evening your highness, have you met my partner Vipond yet?"

"Yes, I have, and please, do not call me your highness again. I do not travel with a royal entourage so that I may keep a low profile. I do not want that to change. For the purposes of this trip and this case, you can call me Tarry."

"OK, Tarry it is. Are you ready to go, I can't see any luggage?"

"I am ready, it is already at the space port, it didn't make any sense to bring it over here and then take it back there when I was staying next to the space port anyway."

"Vipond, is everything ready with the ship?"

"It is."

"Well, let's go then."

We walked in single file through the streets to the space port. Once there Vipond asked Tarry where her luggage was. He could speak to her in Repsuli, but all I could hear was clicks and grunts. Vipond went off to get the luggage and Tarry followed me to my ship. When I got to it and opened her up, Tarry let loose a stream of clicks and grunts. Vipond was making his way over, so I called for him to translate. Tarry clicked and grunted again and Vipond chuckled. I don't know where he had picked up that habit from, but it would soon get as annoying as the eye rolling.

"What's so funny?"

"Well, most of it was colourful vernacular if you will, but it boiled down to 'surely we're not flying anywhere in that barrel of rusty bolts'."

"Well, kindly tell her, if she wants first class, hire a freighter or a liner. If she wants to go with us, then stop moaning and get it."

More clicks and grunts followed as Vipond and Tarry spoke, then Vipond turned to me.

"Tarry would like to know where she should store her luggage."

"Under or behind her seat, just like anyone else."

Vipond pointed to the trailer he had been pulling and I shook my head in disbelief as he replied.

"Brodie, I didn't realise any of the seats on the ship were that big."

"As you well know Vipond, they aren't. We haven't got room for the thirty odd cases on that trailer. Travelling low profile my arse. Tell her to pick three and that's it. No more!"

There was a bout of very loud clicking and grunting. I suspected a universal translator wouldn't have coped with a lot of it.

"Can she have five?"

"No, three maximum." I held up three fingers to emphasize the point. "We can take five, but then there is no room for her. And if she can't decide which three in the next five minutes then we're going without her."

With that I stalked onto the ship, threw my bag under the pilot's seat, and started up the various systems. I hesitated over the universal translator, thinking that Vipond could deal with her. But I knew he wouldn't tell me everything she said, or he would paraphrase. I decided it was better to hear everything first hand. It would probably help.

Tarry came on board with what looked like the three largest pieces of luggage from her trailer. I pointed her to the chair behind me, and carried on checking the systems. Vipond got on board a few minutes later.

"The rest of your bags are in the safe storage facility Tarry."

“Thank you Vipond. Why didn’t you tell me your ship was so old and small Brodie?”

“You didn’t ask. I didn’t ask you to come along either, you insisted. And whilst you are on the subject of information sharing, why did the data chip on your husband make no mention to the fact that he was the owner of Frantech?”

“Because he isn’t anymore, I am since we were married. His life before marriage isn’t important.”

“Not to you perhaps princess, but it could be very important to why he’s gone missing.”

“Do not call me princess, we have spoken about this already.”

“I know, but whilst I am investigating this case, you need to stop acting like a princess. We are not your subjects.”

“That is good for us all. I wouldn’t want you to be, and if you did happen to be, you would be in line for execution now.”
“I best cancel my request for Repsuli citizenship then.”

I could hear only clicks behind me, and Vipond was doing his eye rolling thing sat next to me. I ignored the pair of them and concentrated on getting my ship off the ground and out of the space port.

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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