

# Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 87

## 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> September

1829 – The Metropolitan Police of London, later also known as the Met, is founded.

1850 – The papal bull *Universalis Ecclesiae* restores the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales.

1885 – The first practical public electric tramway in the world is opened in Blackpool, England.

1923 – The Mandate for Palestine takes effect, creating Mandatory Palestine.

1923 – The Mandate for Syria and Lebanon takes effect.

1954 – The convention establishing CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) is signed.

2007 – Calder Hall, the world's first commercial nuclear power station, is demolished in a controlled explosion.

Inventors' Day (Argentina)

Victory of Boquerón Day (Paraguay)

World Heart Day

## Births

1547 – Miguel de Cervantes

1758 – Horatio Nelson

1899 – Billy Butlin

1904 – Greer Garson

1943 – Lech Wałęsa

1946 – Patricia Hodge

1956 – Sebastian Coe

1969 – Erika Eleniak

1970 – Emily Lloyd

## Deaths

1902 – Émile Zola

1973 – W. H. Auden

1981 – Bill Shankly

1997 – Roy Lichtenstein

2011 – Sylvia Robinson

## Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1993 – DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince – Boom! Shake The Room

Number 1 album in 2011 – Kasabian – Velociraptor!

Number 1 compilation album in 1991 – Various – Groovy Ghetto

## #vss365

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

There was no doubt the class was unruly, but the most #obstreperous of them was Bea. Short of a stun gun and a roll of packing tape there was no way of controlling her.

Until the reserved Ella snapped and beat the living daylights out of Bea, screaming "I WANT TO LEARN".

#vss365

## Joke

One day, a diver was enjoying the aquatic world twenty feet below sea level. He noticed a guy at the same depth he was, with no scuba gear on whatsoever. The diver went below another ten feet, but the guy joined him a minute later. The diver went below 15 more feet, and a minute later, the same guy joined him. This confused the diver, so he took out a waterproof pad and pencil, and wrote, "Amazing! How are you able to stay this deep down without equipment?" The guy took the pencil and pad, erased what the diver had written, and wrote, "I'm drowning, you moron!"

## Drabble

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

### Not The Supplies We Wanted

We had been waiting for the supply ship for weeks, it was overdue, but we could see it approaching. There was a sense of relief across the whole of the station. There were all kinds of shortages and there were fraying tempers and arguments over who should have access to what was left.

The docking was smooth and gentle. But it was the last thing that was.

When the airlock opened the pirates swarmed aboard, killing anyone who resisted. Our station not only joined their fleet, but became a major base. On the plus side, there were no more shortages.

## 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.

### Gite Tales

The night was dark.

No moon shone in the sky. No stars were visible. The nearest village was a mile away. No ambient light bounced upon the layer of cloud that must be up in that dark sky somewhere.

Rain fell.

The sound of it echoed around. Making different sounds on each of the surfaces around the outside of the gite.

He sat there with the lights out, staring out of the patio doors. Vaguely aware of the slightest reflection. The tiniest amount of ambient light given up by the orange figures on the clock on the cooker in the kitchen well behind him.

The chateau could just about be made out across the courtyard. Its stone a lighter shade than the dark sky beyond. One white shutter not secured properly blowing about in the wind the rain had brought with it.

There were no lights on in the chateau either, even if the additional cars parked beyond his sight would suggest there should be people there.

Was that movement out there? A sound that wasn't the rain pounding down. A crunch of gravel. A splash in a puddle. He placed his hands against the glass and leant in to try and get a better view out into the gloom.

He was sure there was something out there. It was making footprints across the courtyard. But only footprints. There were no feet, or shoes, or paws, or claws to be seen. A step onto the wooden boards surrounding the gite came. A movement of planks and an accompanying creak.

The feeling there is something right outside, on the other side of the glass from him, watching him as he looks for its physical presence. The outside of the glass begins to steam up as if hot breath is being expelled onto it. And he realises he is not breathing at all.

Within the steamed-up part of the glass an unseen finger begins to write. In slow steady letters a message is written.

DORS BIEN

And the presence walks away, the feeling goes with it. The steamed-up glass returns to being clear and the message disappears.

He fumbles for his phone in the dark, and goes into translate the message.

“Sleep Well” it says.

He isn't sure whether he will ever sleep well again.

## **Leicestershire**

### **Destroyed Medieval Churches**

#### **Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary**

Built by Henry, 1st Duke of Lancaster (and 4th Earl of Lancaster and Leicester) in 1349, it stood on the site of what is today the De Montfort University's Hawthorn building. Two of the original arches from the church are maintained and can be seen in the basement of the building. It was said that the church was the finest of all the medieval churches in Leicester. It was built to house a precious thorn given to Henry by the King of France. The thorn is said to have come from Jesus' crown of thorns. The church was disbanded by the reformation in 1548, and left to decay, and robbed for stone.

#### **St. Clement's**

A Saxon church originally, it stood on St. Clement's Lane which was said to run from Black Friars to what was then High Street (now Highcross Street). Ceded to Leicester Abbey in 1143, it was transferred to Black Friars in 1226, the only later mention of it is in 1331, and the site seems to have gone by 1526, by which time the parish had merged into All Saints.

#### **St. Leonard's**

Has the distinction of being destroyed twice, once during medieval times, and again after the parish was reformed in Victorian times, in the 20th century. The ancient church was built in Norman times, and was ceded to Leicester Abbey in 1143. It was positioned close to the North Gate of the ancient town. By 1517 the chancel had fallen into disrepair, and from 1518 the lights were no longer maintained. In 1523 the parishioners sued a Lancelot Metcalf for removing seats without permission, and by 1526 the furnishings were very dilapidated, from 1530 there was no vicar, and the Bishop of Lincoln was asked for permission to demolish the church. This was never granted, and in the early 17th century the aisle roof collapsed, and although some repairs were started in 1642, the building was virtually destroyed by Fairfax's army during the siege of Leicester soon after, due to its tower and position by the North Bridge. By this time, the parish had been merged in with All Saints.

Attempts had been made to resurrect the parish in the early 19th century, but attempts in 1815, and by W. Adams in 1839 never got off the ground. However in 1870 the land surrounding the churchyard was bought, and a school was started, and from 1874 the school was used as a parish church. In 1876-77 a new church was built by F.W. Ordish & Traylen, based on the design of J.L. Pearson. It was to be expanded by increasing the North Aisle, and building a morning chapel, and an imposing tower and spire were to be added. However, none of this work was ever undertaken, despite Goddard, Paget and Goddard taking on the work in 1896. It was said to be the least attractive of all the Victorian churches built in the city. It was built with red granite walls and red Alton stone dressing. The parish withered again during the 20th century, and the church was closed in 1981, and demolished in 1983.

#### **St. Michael's**

Said to have been near the west gate, probably on the corner of Vauxhall Street and Causeway Lane, St Michael's was a Norman church, ceded into Leicester Abbey in 1143. It was a poor parish by the late 15th century, not helped by the sack of Leicester in 1173 following the rebellion against the King by the 3rd Earl of Leicester, Robert Blanchmains, and the subsequent migration from the area. The church had lost its vicar by 1487 and it is not even mentioned in the 1510 visit of the bishop, and had been merged into the parish of St. Peter's by this stage. In 1593 the site was conveyed to the town clerk.

#### **St. Peter's**

On the corner of West Bond Street and St. Peter's Lane, would have been this Saxon church. Ceded to Leicester Abbey in 1143, it was the site of a murder in 1306, when on Christmas Eve the clerk (Simon the Welshman) turned up to ring the bells, only to find the vicar at the time waiting for him and accusing him of being late, a quarrel ensued and the vicar struck the clerk around the head, and the clerk died of his injuries two days later. In 1443 due to the fact that it was allowing women to worship at the site, the church was rededicated, but it is not known who to. By 1555 parts of the building were being sold as building materials, and from 1563 it was being used as a school by the Leicester Corporation.

It was sold to the corporation by Queen Elizabeth I ten years later for the grand sum of £35. The parish was merged into All Saints in 1591. It is the only one of the four decayed parishes merged into All Saints that any remains of have been found.

### **Waltham on the Wolds**

Waltham on the Wolds is an English village located in the civil parish of Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold, in the Melton borough of Leicestershire, England. It lies about five miles (8.0 km) north-east of Melton Mowbray and eleven miles (17.7 km) south-west of Grantham on the A607 road. The population of the civil parish was 967 in 2011.

The parish is the site of the Waltham television transmitting station, which serves most of the East Midlands. Apart from the main village, the parish includes the village of Thorpe Arnold, just to the north-east of Melton. To the south-east is Stonesby, which is nearer to the 1,033 ft. (315 m) transmitter. The village is on a ridge which has an escarpment close to the north-west that dramatically overlooks the Vale of Belvoir.

One of the earliest mentions of this place is in the Domesday Book where it is listed among lands given to Hugh de Grandmesnil by the King. There were one hundred acres (0.40 km<sup>2</sup>) of meadow and land for eleven ploughs. It was valued at six pounds.

The village had a railway station one mile (1.6 km) north of the village which opened in 1883 on a branch line from Scalford, but was used only occasionally by passenger trains for special occasions, such as events at Croxton Park. There was no regular passenger service. The line was owned by GNR and used mainly by iron ore trains from quarries near Knipton, Eaton and Branston. The remains of the line are still visible. The station was a terminus. There was a trailing junction with the Eaton Branch Railway (opened in 1884) to the southwest of the station. The ore trains came off this branch and then reversed before travelling to Scalford.

Two iron-ore quarries were operated at Waltham briefly in the 1880s. One was begun in 1882 by the Waltham Iron Ore Company either side of what is now the A607 north of the village. The other was further north in the northern angle between the A607 and the narrow road to Eaton. Both quarries closed in 1885. Each had a horse-drawn narrow-gauge tramway which carried the ore to the railway. The more southerly of the two quarries may have possessed a steam locomotive. Nothing can now be seen of the two quarries except (in 1992) the stone parapets of a bridge under the A607. This was used by the more southerly of the two tramways.

There was a quarry close to the railway, which was worked for limestone between 1931 and 1941.

Waltham-on-the-Wolds is also known for its connection with Mars (previously Masterfoods UK), and the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition which conducts research into effect of diet on cats, dogs, and horses (for Spillers).

The parish church, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene is built of a local, honey-coloured ironstone also used for several other churches in the district (e. g. at South Croxton). On 27 February 2008, the church spire was badly damaged by the 2008 Lincolnshire earthquake. The top 30 ft. (9.1 m) of it had to be rebuilt, at an estimated cost of around £100,000. The work was completed in 2009. The church contains some Norman features with much building of about 1300. It was restored and extended in 1850, when the supervising architect was George Gilbert Scott.

The Church of England primary school has a pre-school attached, which received the grade of outstanding in a 2011 inspection by Ofsted.

There is now only one pub in the village, the Royal Horseshoes in Melton Road. This was refurbished in 2010 and also provides meals and accommodation.

## **Life's What You Make It**

Excerpts from life writing.

### **Not Missing Exactly**

I wouldn't say he went missing exactly, we knew exactly where the four-legged miscreant was. It was just a question of getting him back.

The storms had played havoc with the fences. Our back gate and one of the panels were down and lying in the park over the path at the back of the house.

Charlie was a sly little shite. Handful doesn't begin to cover it. The same as for any Springer Spaniel I suppose.

It was nearly midnight, and he was whimpering to go out to the toilet. I went downstairs and let him out keeping an eye on him. He was doing his business whilst looking over his shoulder checking to see if I was watching him. Suddenly one

of the cats appeared as if by magic over the side fence, and in the split second my focus was diverted, Charlie was off. Down the garden and out, I heard the boards of the flattened fence flex as he bounded across them.

He wouldn't respond to calls or to the shaking of a packet of dog treats. It would require physically catching the little shite and dragging him back. I had put his collar on before letting him out, so I got the lead and put some slippers on and went after him.

I had gotten out of bed to let Charlie out, and so I was now out in the park behind Baker Close in slippers and purple boxer shorts. My milk bottle white body and legs translucent against the darkness of the park trying to retrieve the recalcitrant dog.

Baker Close isn't in a neighbourhood watch scheme, but Malthouse Road on the other side of the park is. If there were any neighbourhood watchers out at midnight that night then I'm sure there will have been retirements from the neighbourhood watch handed in the following morning. No one needs to see a fat man in only boxer shorts and slippers chasing a stupid dog around a park's field in the middle of the night.

Ten minutes it took to catch the damn dog and get a lead on it and drag him back inside, he was having the time of his life. The sooner they came and fixed the fence the better it would be for all concerned. Especially me.

## Poetry Corner

### Summer Malaise

In the summertime when the weather is hot  
I hide indoors and I plan, and I plot  
Things to do, places to see, places to be  
To escape the heat and its never-ending lunacy

The warmth that others love and crave  
Is my enemy trying to see me in the grave  
My skin does burn, and my skin does leak  
For the shade and air conditioning is what I seek

A rain dance ails the sky stays clear  
Not even my karaoke cat's chorus does it hear  
It does not relent even for a day  
The clouds have gone, and the sun does stay

The night brings shade but no relief  
We're all going to melt is my strong belief  
And the day returns hotter than ever  
Like a motorbike going hell for leather

The ground is yellowed there is no green  
Thunder is heard and lightning is seen  
But not a drop of rain falls to the ground  
It is all a light show and a rumbling sound

The earth contracts and cracks appear everywhere  
The grass has gone, and the ground is bare  
It isn't global warming, that isn't our fall  
The sun has expanded and swallowed us all

## Did I Really Blog That?

### All Bets Are Off

It's the first game since the 0-0 draw against Gillingham two Tuesday nights ago. And lots has happened since then. Last Sunday saw the announcement that Lewis Young had parted company with the club. Which to me meant one thing; he wasn't going to be made the permanent manager of the side, and so finally he'd had enough of being messed about and was off, hopefully to find somewhere he would be appreciated.

An hour later came the announcement that Matthew Etherington was to be the new manager. He was the under-twenty-three coach for Peterborough and had briefly been the interim manager there last February. The announcement included

the words data driven, which went down like a bag of sick with the fans on the forums. There were mini meltdowns as it has all the hallmarks of a Kevin Betsy Mk II. Only this time with a Tottenham background instead of Arsenal.

In fact, I can remember seeing Matthew Etherington and his assistant Simon Davies playing for Tottenham back in the early noughties. Back in the days when I was a Tottenham fan before the whole Mourinho and European Super League debacle.

Some wags have said Matthew Etherington's appointment is somewhat of a gamble, in a less than subtle dig about his well-documented gambling issues and the £1m plus that he blew. Though somehow, I'm drawn to wondering what the odds are on him lasting the season.

There was no game last weekend as we'd been knocked out of the FA Cup by Accrington. So, it's back to league action today and next up this week are Swindon Town. I have it in mind that it is imperative to get to the ground early, as this was one of two fixtures last season where all the programmes were sold out by the time I got to the ground, and I've still not been able to get a copy of. (The other was the Sutton game.)

Swindon Town sit just inside the playoff places in seventh place, twelve places and thirteen points above us in the league. Even with a win we can't climb the table, but all points are good points, and it would be great to get off to a winning start under the new manager. Plus, we've done quite well against clubs in the playoff places so far this season. By the time we kick off over half the games in the division will be over, three moved to Friday night, three had 12:30 kick offs, and one had a 13:00 kick off as clubs have moved games to avoid potential World Cup clashes, as if England had finished runners-up in their group they would have been playing at the same time as we were today.

It's a chilly day, so plenty of layers, and we amble down and get there in plenty of time, possibly the earliest Helen has been in her seat before a match. So early in fact, that Helen is possibly developing a Herbert Lom style twitch as it isn't the last possible moment.

I got a programme. There is the usual sloppy blatant error included. This time there is a double page spread of photos, and down the right-hand side of the pages it says Barrow Vs Crawley Gallery. Only for all the pictures to obviously be of training this week, as they include the new manager, and assistant, and not an opponent in sight. It's just sloppy.

There were three coaches parked up for the away fans, and the away end is looking full well before kick-off, and the Swindon Town fans are making lots of noise. They are playing in a green and white kit, diagonal checks on the front, green back, arms and socks, and white shorts, looking like some kind of Ireland youth side. They usually play in red as we do, but it took their fans about quarter of an hour to stop chanting come on you reds.

There is no Harry Ransom in the squad for us today, which means he won't be playing against the side he's captained for most of the two previous seasons.

We saw Al as we walked round for the match, he was chatting away to another steward in the car park. He's on duty on our West Stand today, where there seems to be a dearth of Stewards. The club put out a statement that they were short staffed everywhere today, and they weren't joking. The programme has adverts for all types of game day staff.

Five minutes in and we are having to make an injury substitution. Teddy Jenks pulls something with no one near him, and James Tilley comes on in his place. All in all, it is a jittery start from Crawley. But we get a shot away in the ninth minute. If we were playing rugby, it would have been worth three points as Jack Powell belts it out over the bar and over the KRL Logistics away terrace.

On twenty-one minutes we have the ball in the net. There is a scramble from a corner and the ball is poked in, but the celebrations are short lived as the linesman has his flag up for offside.

Just after the half hour mark ball two disappears, this time over the Eden Utilities home terrace, again from a wayward shot, this time by a Swindon Town player. There aren't a great deal of chances for either side and the first half slips away in a midfield mire, and after three minutes of injury time the half time whistle goes with the score at 0-0.

From somewhere the half time playlist has found a new song, but I'm not convinced that McFly is a great addition to the playlist. And for a change both sides come out together after the half time interval.

There are a few more chances in the second half, and Crawley seem to be a lot less jittery. We make another early in the half substitution. James Balagizi goes off after a decent fifty or so minutes in his first game back after injury. Nineteen minutes into the second half and ball three of the afternoon disappears out over the KRL Logistics away terrace, with another wayward Swindon Town shot.

In the thirty-fourth minute of the half a free kick into the box is headed out as far as Nick Tsaroulla a few yards outside the penalty area, and he fires in a shot, which takes a wicked deflection, wrong footing the Swindon keeper and it is 1-0 to Crawley.

Less than five minutes later and Otey is chasing a poor Swindon back pass. The Swindon keeper rushes out of the area and slides in to get the ball first, it goes to Jack Powell, who hits it towards the open goal from forty yards out. For once he doesn't hit the first man and it goes in, and we lead 2–0.

Swindon hit the post with a speculative shot, and then not long before the end of full time they hit the post for a second time. Just not with the ball this time, one of their players smacks into the post headfirst and bounces off and goes down. There is a lengthy stoppage for treatment as stretchers are called for. During the stoppage it is shown there will be nine minutes of injury time, but it ends up being nineteen minutes as it was another ten minutes before the player was wheeled from the pitch.

The sponsor's man of the match was announced as being Nick Tsaroulla (not even a forty-yard goal is going to swing it for Jack Powell). The attendance is announced as being 3,230, with 920 away fans.

Eighteen minutes into injury time and ball four is hoofed away over the west stand by Ashley Nadesan. A minute later the final whistle goes, and Crawley win 2–0. And here comes the Black Eyed Peas.

There is no position climb for Crawley, but we now have three teams above us within a win of us, and we play bottom of the league Hartlepool next. Swindon dropped two places and out of the play off places. Their sixty-one percent possession not converting into shots on target, as they had none (even if they did hit the post twice — but only once with the ball).

Come on you reds.

## Story Time

### The Wrong Door

The green door wasn't easy to see. If I hadn't been given very precise instructions to its whereabouts, and hadn't been very carefully looking for it I doubt I would have found it. I would have walked straight past and wouldn't have looked twice at it.

I am sure that most people would walk past here and not be aware that there was a wall here as well. Over a millennia old and hidden by layers and layers of greenery and plants. There is ivy here certainly, but there are many other creeping, climbing plants which I don't know the names of. A dense barrier of nature hiding the manmade structure behind it.

The door is flush against the plants which somehow don't grow over the door or the doorway. They don't cover it and hide it away as they do the stone walls. But the door has been painted in such a way it looks as if the verdant leaves continue on unabated.

The paint is rough and mottled. Deliberately so, and it is not gloss and uniform. I feel the roughness against my fingertips. It feels as the bark of a tree or the stem to a plant would, and it absorbs the light of the sun without reflecting it, just as the plants all around it do.

There is no handle on the door, no keyhole in its surface, nothing to indicate the roughly painted wood is a door at all. I push the door and there is no movement and I wonder if this has been another wasted journey. Could it be that this is not the promised door? Am I in the wrong place after all? Is the chance for me to change the course of my life not here? I push the door again and still there is no movement in it. I sigh and lean against the other side of the door, and it swings open, and in surprise I fall through the opening that is suddenly there. Somewhat shocked, but also annoyed at my own stupidity in not trying both sides of the door I stood in front of.

Slowly, I scramble up, getting back on to my feet, and as I do the door closes behind me and the brightness of the day disappears with its closing.

On this side of the door there is only darkness. And so, I make the assumption that I must be inside. That it wasn't just a wall covered with thousands of years of plant growth out there, but a covered building.

But my eyes start to adjust to the darkness. It isn't completely black, that was the initial change from being out in the bright sun on the other side of the door. I can make out some moving shapes above me, and realise there is no roof, that there are clouds, or at least I assume them to be clouds, above my head.

I don't understand how it can be so cloudy and so dark on this side of the door when less than a minute ago I was in the bright sunshine of a cloudless day. I feel a breeze against my face, and I breathe in, not realising I had been holding my breath. And as I do I splutter, and try to force the breath back out again.

It tastes wrong. There is a foreign foulness to the air. There is a coppery, earthy, taste of decay and rot in it. A taste I had hoped never to taste again. The one from the dungeons of the mad Count. I feel I have made a mistake entering the green door, and I turn back to it. I need to leave this place and its stench.

But of course, there is no door. There is nothing there at all. No wall, no plants, no trees, no wood. I try in all directions. I take five steps back from where I fell to the ground. I turn left and take ten steps in that direction. I take another left and walk fifteen steps that way. Yet another left and this time twenty paces forward. Left again and twenty-five steps now. An ever-increasing sense of panic as with each turn and lengthening walk, I find nothing. I carry on in an ever-widening scale, working up in five step increments all the way up to two hundred and beyond, to the point where I have no idea as to which way I am facing.

How can it be possible. Surely the door I came through must be here somewhere. But I find nothing. All I see is an inky greyness in all directions. I look up and try to focus on the clouds. I can see they are moving. Is that a break I can see in them now? It appears to be. There is light starting to peer through a gap in the clouds. A purple glow is coming through as the gap gets bigger. And as they drift away the largest moon I have even seen comes into view. I stand transfixed at the sight wondering how the moon could appear so large and be such a colour.

Only for my jaw to drop even further as a second bright green moon appears in the sky as the clouds further dissipate. What is this? Where am I? How can I be seeing two moons? It would appear I am no longer in my own world, or the foul air is causing me to hallucinate.

It is only when the third, orange moon becomes visible that I realise what a mistake I have made in entering the green door.

I have been tricked. Veriton has had his revenge on me. I know where I am now. I am in the nether world of Bursture. I searched for the door that would change the course of my life. Only ever assuming that it would be for the better. That I could improve on what I had done before. That I could put the life of petty crime and feudal subservience behind me and be a better person.

It is true, my life is now changed beyond all it ever was. I would have been better to stay where I was and carry on in the old life I had.

I may not be dead, but to everyone I ever knew I am, as being here in Bursture I will never be able to return to the land of the living. If the legends are to be believed I am here for eternity. I will not die, not in the sense that anyone might understand, but my life is forfeit, I am doomed to walk the nether world for eternity.

## **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 6**

He opened his eyes, and wondered how long he had been drifting in his memories. The Tube was now in daylight, and just leaving somewhere called Osterley, and he looked up at the map to find himself only five stops from Heathrow, the journey had gone a lot quicker than expected, probably because he had been drifting in his memories all the way from just after Russell Square, some fifteen or so stops earlier. He looked in the window opposite to see if the woman was still there, but there wasn't a reflection now they were in daylight, so he glanced to his side, and was somewhat surprised to see the woman still there, and still smiling.

Then it hit him like Tyson blow; the woman sat next to him was so obviously a beautiful double of Keera, only one that smiled, and was sat there next to him in the here and now. He closed his eyes again, rubbed them and then reopened them and turned to look at the woman again. It was true, it wasn't just the olfactory sensation of the Eternity and the memory of Keera that it had triggered, the woman looked enough like Keera did that he was surprised that he hadn't noticed it immediately. The features were more outstanding, and the hairstyle different, but the likeness was almost spooky.

She turned and looked at him again, and this time he didn't look away, their eyes locked, and they held each other's gaze for what seemed like an eternity, but what was in reality only a few seconds. He found himself smiling, but was unable to bring himself to speak, dumbstruck at what he was seeing and feeling. The woman's own smiled broadened and a small giggle seemed to tumble out from somewhere within her.

She opened her mouth and started to speak, but from the moment she started to speak, he couldn't be certain of a single thing that she had said, he was vaguely aware that she had called him by his name, which didn't even register as being a surprise, what had stunned him was her voice.



It was as if Keera speaking to him, the Philadelphia accent was there, though somewhat anglicised, but the pitch and tone were the same, almost as if it was a recording. He felt like he was going to suffocate, was he imagining it all, unless he could snap out of his trance and speak, he couldn't be sure.

He felt like he'd fell from a great height into a freezing cold pool of water. All his senses were numb, and yet screaming at him at the same time. He couldn't breathe, he tried but no air came, there was just a moist taste and smell of salt, his lungs felt like they were going to explode.

He tried to look around, but everywhere he turned everything was dark and blurry, he couldn't hear sounds as they were being made, he only heard them as hollow vibrations, all his senses felt the same as if he were underwater, and in danger of drowning. He became vaguely aware of something shaking him.

His senses began to return, and he realised it wasn't something, but someone - the woman was trying to shake him out of his reverie. The smell of her Eternity invaded his nostrils again, and snapped him back to the land of the living. His eyes opened wide, and he could see everything outside of shadow now, and he managed to take that first gasping breath, just as he would have done if he were emerging from beneath the water of a swimming pool, or the sea, after too long underneath.

From the corner of his eye he saw that the Tube was stopped at a station, and as if he had been given an electric shock, he jumped up, grabbed his case and dived from the Tube just as the doors were shutting, amazing himself in the process, both with the speed of movement, and with the fact that he had had the presence of mind to remember his case.

He turned as he heard the woman shout

"Wait!"

But it was too late, the doors had already slid shut, and the Tube was starting its slow build-up of speed as it pulled away towards the next stop. He looked around and found that he was at Hatton Cross, and was surprised to find the Tube had travelled four stops in what seemed no time at all, especially at this end of the line where the stations were further apart.

How long must he have been in a fugue state this time? He found a seat on the platform, and slumped down into it. He needed time to pull himself together before he could continue his journey. In the space of less than forty minutes his mind had descended into the kind of panic and desperation that had previously taken three years and thirty thousand dollars-worth of therapy to remove after the death of Keera, and acknowledging that he had some issues.

It wasn't that he had seen the same mystery woman on the Tube pulling out of the station, before the one he had boarded, that had happened enough times by now for that to be of minor consequence. Yes, he'd love to speak to the woman, and see if she knew any more about that white room, and what had happened during those missing eleven days of his life, but he was certain that it wasn't supposed to be.

There must be a reason why he just kept seeing her, but just missing her, and he was sure that it would become apparent at some stage, but it wasn't worth worrying about now.

He was also sure that it wasn't the Eternity thing, god knows how many times he had smelt it in the years since Keera's death, and although it normally bought about brief thoughts of her, more than often it was gone in seconds, and he just carried on.

For some reason today, it had triggered a drift away that had lasted the best part of half an hour. He wondered whether his subconscious had been well ahead of his senses and realised that the attractive brunette he had sat next to on the Tube was so spookily similar to Keera, that when his olfactory senses kicked in, it triggered a larger flashback the like of which he had never experienced before.

The look-alike had really freaked him out, and he remembered that it was her starting to speak to him, and sounding exactly like Keera had sounded as well, that had triggered such a large sensory shutdown, he vaguely recalled that while he was slipping into his mental paralysis that she had called him by his name.

He wondered how the hell she knew it; he was certain that they had never met before, and although he was becoming a known face in Philadelphia, it wasn't as if he thought he had national, let alone international recognition outside of security circles.

He thought that it must have been the combination of events that had caused him to lose it completely and then bolt from the Tube like a crazy man, which he supposed was what he had been like. As his heartbeat returned to normal, he made a mental note that perhaps he should give his shrink a ring when he got back to Philly.

## **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. <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 X, where I will occasionally put up some micro fiction or micro poems, my X 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/>

I'm on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/onetruekev/>

I have two Mastodon accounts, one on the central server, and one on the Medium server.

Recently I've added accounts on Threads <https://www.threads.net/@onetruekev>

And BlueSky <https://bsky.spp/profile/onetruekev.bsky.social>

E-mail any ideas or suggestions to [kev@onetruekev.co.uk](mailto:kev@onetruekev.co.uk)

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