

# Flanagan's Running Club – Issue 89

## 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> November

1877 – Thomas Edison demonstrates his phonograph for the first time.

1899 – FC Barcelona is founded by Catalan, Spanish and Englishmen.

1947 – The United Nations General Assembly approve the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine.

1972 – Atari releases Pong, the first commercially successful video game.

1982 – Michael Jackson releases Thriller, the best-selling music album of all time.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (United Nations)

Liberation Day or Dita e Çlirimit (Albania)

Unity Day (Vanuatu)

William Tubman's Birthday (Liberia)

### Births

1832 – Louisa May Alcott

1898 – C. S. Lewis

1964 – Don Cheadle

1973 – Ryan Giggs

1976 – Anna Faris

### Deaths

1530 – Cardinal Thomas Wolsey

1975 – Graham Hill

1981 – Natalie Wood

1986 – Cary Grant

2001 – George Harrison

### Number 1's

Number 1 single in 1996 – The Prodigy – Breathe

Number 1 album in 1985 – Sade – Promise

Number 1 compilation album in 2014 – Various – BBC Radio 1's Live Lounge 2014

## #vss365

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

So there I was trying to fill out the online form when I came to the box that had the one word against it #Sex?

There was a lot of options available on the drop-down list, I read them all, but none of them seemed to be the answer I was looking for.

Where was "Yes please?"

#vss365

## Joke

John Paul II died and went to heaven. St Peter met him at the gate and said: "John Paul, you did such a wonderful job for us on earth, we'd like to do something special for you. You name it; it's yours." John Paul thought for a moment and said: "I'd like a private audience with the Holy Mother." St Peter told him it would be arranged. On the appointed day, St Peter escorted John Paul to the Holy Mother's sanctuary. John Paul went before Her, knelt, and said: "Holy Mother, I've always looked to you for guidance, and you have granted me peace and serenity through some difficult times. But I have one question that has nagged me during my whole time on earth. In all the paintings that were done of you, and in all the sculptures that were carved of you, you always looked so sad. Why is that?" Mary thought for a moment, pursing her lips. Then she said: "I always wanted a girl."

## Drabble

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

### Desk Man

The youngsters called him a desk man as a derogatory term. To them he was just one of the old timers who sat tapping away in front of the screen, never seeing any action out on the streets with them.

But what those snivelling little runts didn't know was he was responsible for all the action they were seeing out there on the streets.

Without him they either wouldn't have jobs, or they would all be just sat at desks tapping away. From his little humble desk, he was masterminding all the crime in the city, keeping them all busy.

## Flash Fiction

Something between the 100-word shortness of a Drabble, and the short story, these are works of fiction somewhere between five hundred and seven hundred words.

### The Only Machine

Kalvin found it by accident. He tripped over the thing hidden in the long grass on the wasteland he always took a shortcut through it on his way home from school. He picked it up and put it in his bag and took it home; despite knowing that any such item was banned on the planet and that it should have been destroyed after the Tech Wars.

Two days later the machine turned itself on, vibrating and with flashing lights and a humming noise it was working. He had the only working machine on the planet. And it scared him. Calvin knew the history, if anyone found out about it not only would he be in trouble, but his whole family would be too. His father was on the council and would likely lose his job and their house that went with it.

Unsure of what to do, Calvin put some clothes on, put the machine in his bag and tiptoed from the house making his way to the wasteland. Without the proximity of houses, he was able to sit amongst the slightly damp long uneven grass and watch the sun slowly appear between its blades and over the top of the distant houses.

He took the machine out of his bag and put it on a piece of ground in front of him. He took time to have a proper look at it. It was almost a cube shape, but one of its dimensions was slightly less than the other two. It was silver and black, in an asymmetrical pattern that didn't help with orientation. The two green lights had been joined by a white, two red, two blue and half a dozen yellow ones on all surfaces. Nothing was written on the machine, and he had no clue what its purpose was.

Kalvin didn't hear the voices until they were on top of him, more than a dozen militia forming a circle around him with their swords drawn. And then, suddenly, nothing. The militia disappeared. Their swords hung in the air for what seemed like a lifetime to Calvin, before dropping down and sticking themselves in the ground point first to stand like a series of poles around him.

He felt more than saw the descending spaceship. It looked nothing like those in his history lessons. Instead, it looked like a much larger version of the machine in front of him. It had the same colours and a similar pattern. One of the panels of the spaceship opened. He saw the machine he had found head for the opening. And the swords worked loose from the ground and followed the machine through the air and into the opening.

A soft voice came from the spaceship. Calvin was unsure whether it was just inside his head, or if the words were aloud in the air around him.

“Thank you for finding our daughter.”

The spaceship rushed into the sky and was gone.

## Leicestershire

### Robert Hall



Robert Hall was born at Arnesby near Leicester, where his father Robert Hall was pastor of a Baptist congregation. Robert was the youngest of a family of fourteen. While still at the same school his passion for books absorbed most of his time, and in summer he used to go to the churchyard after school with a volume, and read till nightfall, making out the meaning of the more difficult words with the help of a pocket dictionary.

From his sixth to his eleventh year he attended the school of Mr Simmons at Wigston, a village four miles from Arnesby. There he showed an intense interest in metaphysics; and before he was nine, he had read and re-read Jonathan Edwards's Treatise on the Will and Butler's Analogy.

This incessant study at such an early period of life seems to have affected his health. After he left Mr Simmons's school his appearance was so sickly as to awaken fears of the presence of phthisis. He was sent to stay in the house of a gentleman near Kettering, who with an impropriety which Hall himself afterwards referred to as "egregious", prevailed upon the boy of eleven to give occasional addresses at prayer meetings.

As his health seemed rapidly to recover, he was sent to a school at Northampton run by John Ryland, where he remained a year and a half, and "hath great progress in Latin and Greek". On leaving school he for some time studied divinity under the direction of his father and in October 1778 he entered the Bristol academy for the preparation of students for the Baptist ministry. Here his earlier confidence seems to have deserted him; when, in accordance with the arrangements of the academy, his turn came to deliver an address in the vestry of Broadmead chapel, he broke down on two separate occasions and was unable to finish.

On 13 August 1780, he was set apart to the ministry, but he still continued his studies at the academy; and in 1781, in accordance with the provisions of an exhibition which he held, he entered King's College, University of Aberdeen, where he took the degree of Master of Arts in March 1785. He had no rival in any of the classes, distinguishing himself alike in classics, philosophy, and mathematics.

He there formed the acquaintance of James Mackintosh, who, though a year younger, was a year his senior as a student. While they remained at Aberdeen the two were inseparable, reading together the best Greek authors, especially Plato, and discussing, either during their walks by the seashore and the banks of the Don or in their rooms until early morning, the most perplexed questions in philosophy and religion.

Between his last two sessions at Aberdeen, Hall acted as assistant pastor to Dr Evans at Broadmead chapel, Bristol, and three months after leaving the university he was appointed classical tutor in the Bristol academy, an office which he held for more than five years. Even at this period his extraordinary eloquence had excited an interest beyond the bounds of the denomination to which he belonged, and when he preached, the chapel was generally crowded to excess, the audience including many intellectuals.

As a result of suspicions in regard to his orthodoxy, he accepted an invitation to make trial of a congregation at St Andrew's Street Baptist Chapel Cambridge, of which he became pastor in July 1791.

From the contents of a letter to the congregation which he left, it would appear that, while a firm believer in the proper divinity of Christ, he had at this time disowned the cardinal principles of Calvinism; and that he was so far a materialist as to "hold that man's thinking powers and faculties are the result of a certain organization of matter, and that after death he ceases to be conscious till the resurrection". It was during his Cambridge ministry, which extended over a period of fifteen years, that his oratory was most brilliant and most immediately powerful.

Hall began to suffer from mental derangement in November 1804. He recovered and was able to resume his duties in April 1805, but a recurrence forced him to resign his pastoral office in March 1806. On leaving Cambridge he paid a visit to his relatives in Leicestershire, and then for some time resided at Enderby preaching occasionally in some of the neighbouring villages.

Latterly he ministered to a small congregation in Harvey Lane, Leicester, and at the close of 1806 he accepted a call to be their stated pastor. In the autumn of 1807 he moved from Enderby to Leicester, and in 1808 he married the servant of a brother minister. He had proposed after an almost momentary acquaintance, allegedly in very abrupt and peculiar terms; it seems to have been a successful marriage.

On the death of Dr Ryland, Hall was invited to return to the pastorate of Broadmead chapel, Bristol, and as the peace of the congregation at Leicester had been to some degree disturbed by a controversy regarding several cases of discipline, he resolved to accept the invitation, and removed there in April 1826.

He suffered badly from renal calculus, and increasing infirmities and sufferings afflicted him. Gradually the inability to take proper exercise led to a diseased condition of the heart, which resulted in his death. He is remembered as a great pulpit orator, of a somewhat laboured, rhetorical style in his written works, but of undeniable vigour in his spoken sermons.

Hall's writings at Leicester embraced various tracts printed for private circulation; a number of contributions to the Eclectic Review, among which may be mentioned his articles on Foster's Essays and on Zeal without Innovation; several sermons, including those On the Advantages of Knowledge to the Lower Classes (1810), On the Death of the Princess Charlotte (1817), and On the Death of Dr Ryland (1825); and his pamphlet on Terms of Communion, in which he advocated intercommunion with all those who acknowledged the "essentials" of Christianity. In 1819 he published an edition in one volume of his sermons formerly printed.



A large Baptist church on the corner of Narborough Road and Upperton Road is named in his honour, and his statue is situated opposite St Stephen's Church in De Montfort Square.

## **Birstall**

Birstall is a large village and civil parish within the Charnwood borough of Leicestershire, England. It is three miles north of Leicester city centre and is part of the wider Leicester Urban Area.

It is the largest village in Charnwood, with a population only marginally lower than the neighbouring town of Syston at the 2001 census.

Birstall lies on the A6 and is the last major settlement before Leicester when arriving from the north. Birstall thus forms part of the Leicester Urban Area. The village centre lies just off the A6, along Sibson Road. The village contains two supermarkets, a garden centre, and a variety of other shops. There are a number of schools, including Highcliffe Primary School, Riverside Primary School, and The Cedars Academy. The village contains the Anglican church of St. James the Great, the St Teresa Roman Catholic Church and Birstall Methodist Church.

There is a large housing estate in the north-west of the village, leading off Greengate Lane.

The Grand Union Canal runs through the bottom end of the village, separating it from Watermead Country Park, a series of lakes in the bottom of the Soar Valley, which have been set aside as a recreational area and country park.

The Great Central Railway steam railway has its southern terminus near the village, where the A6 meets the Leicester outer ring road at Red Hill Circle. Just north of Red Hill Circle, and west of the A6, is Red Hill filling station, which became a Grade II listed building in 2012. The railway also forms the boundary of the southern end of Birstall Golf Club.

To the north of the village, the A6 meets the A46 Leicester Western Bypass and then continues on towards Loughborough along the Soar Valley.

The symbol of Birstall is a Cedar tree. The original tree stands in Roman Road. It was once in the grounds of the now demolished Birstall Hall. The local Air Training Corps unit is 1947(Birstall) Squadron.

The area of the Parish is 791 acres (3.20 km<sup>2</sup>).

The name Birstall comes from the Old English for "old disused fort" - Burhsteall. Saxon remnants have been found in the village and surrounding area. The village was called Burstalle in the Domesday Book when it belonged to Hugh de Grandmesnil. Willard held these lands for Hugh and the sixteen acres (65,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of meadow and a mill were said to be worth three ounces of gold. The village was a small one until the arrival of the Great Central Railway in 1899. From then onwards development has continued and still continues to-day. Between 1901 and the 2001 the population grew from 611 to over 11,000.

A new housing development called 'Hallam Fields' commenced construction in 2006 and was well advanced by 2008. It occupies land to the west of the A6, between the 'Gates' estate and the A46. The development will take ten years to complete, consisting of up to nine hundred properties including schools, shops, offices, industrial units, and a fire station. It has been described as a mini Poundbury. By April 2010 it had eleven streets. These are Archdale Close, Bridge Green, Dale Close, Far Pastures Road, Halfpenny Close, Hallam Fields Road, Little Connery Lees, Pinfold Close, Brook Furlong Drive, Palmer Square and Lady Augusta Road. North of the development, on the roundabout connecting the A46 and A6 is a new service area with a KFC, a Shell petrol station, and an Etap Hotel.

The closest village to Birstall is Wanlip, a smaller village, with the village of Rothley being the next closest. The villages of Thurmaston and Syston are also nearby. Birstall shares its southern border with the City of Leicester.

Twinned with Belgium Rixensart, Walloon Brabant, Belgium

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

Excerpts from life writing.

### **Make It Snappy**

The most unusual food I've seen on a menu, and eaten was when I lived in Leicester. It was at Rum Runner, one of the plethora of Mexican restaurants along Braunstone Gate. For some reason in the early nineties there were four Mexican restaurants on the one hundred and fifty yards of Braunstone Gate as it swung around from the river at the Bowstring Bridge up to the start of the Narborough Road. A little oasis of Mexico in the middle of the never-ending mass of curry houses and kebab shops in that part of Leicester.

Rum Runner was the only one of the four though that was open post nightclub kicking out time. Therefore it was often frequented by groups of us as we made the walk back from The Fan Club or Alcatraz to my house for post drinks drinks. It is the only time I've seen alligator on the menu. I had ummed and ahed about ordering it for months, and eventually, one early Saturday morning I took the plunge and went for it.

I almost shouted out the words,

"I'll have the alligator steak please, and make it snappy."

To the less than impressed waiter, who just rolled his eyes and wrote the order on his little notepad. God alone knows just how many times he had heard the same joke from drunken wags over the years.

When the steak arrived and I started to eat it, I wondered whether it had come directly from a live alligator, or if they had just cooked up an old handbag. If the damn thing had been any tougher it could have had a job as a bouncer at one of Leicester's nightclubs.

My jaw ached for days after trying to munch my way through it. It was unusual, and I ate it, it was quite tasty in the spicy sauce that came with it, but I wouldn't be ordering it again, no matter how snappy they were at serving it.

## Poetry Corner

### The Bombs

A bomb fell  
Screaming through the sky  
The building reduced to rubble  
And its inhabitants all die

Another bomb lands  
Another building is wiped out  
More lives are extinguished  
As voice begin to shout

A retaliatory strike  
Whistles through the air  
The target doesn't really matter  
As long as there is despair

Immediate escalation  
Tit for tat for tit  
Just keep firing while they can  
And don't worry where they hit

It is raining bombs  
Rubble is all that will remain  
Death is the only outcome  
Can no one see this is insane

The bombs get bigger  
To obliterate all they can  
A whole country laid to waste  
With not a single surviving man

It's still not enough  
Wipe it off the map is the call  
Out comes the nuclear weapon  
And it will destroy us all

## Did I Really Blog That?

### All Saints

No, don't run away, I'm not going to be talking about the rubbish covers band from twenty years ago.



I'm going to wax lyrical about All Saints church, on Margaret Street in London. One a hundred yards away from the hustle and bustle of Oxford Street, yet almost unnoticed. And I almost didn't notice it. Helen saw it as we passed by at the other end of the road, and so we ambled down to investigate.

The above is all you see from the street, if you were walking down its side of the street you probably wouldn't give it a second glance. But we did, and it looked different from the outset. There is some very nice intricate brickwork on the outside of the church, its outbuildings, and the spire tower. It reminded us very much of the patterned brickwork on St Stephan's in Vienna.



It was open, always a bonus in this day and age, we just weren't expecting what was inside. Having had a couple of days to think about it, I doubt I have ever seen such a magnificent church that wasn't a Cathedral. We went through the porch and just came to a stop, paused for a few moments, and then said Wow!

How had I never heard of this church before? It was difficult to know where to look and investigate first. No matter how many pictures I took it is impossible to do it justice. If you are ever in London shopping, trundling along Oxford Street then take a short detour and half an hour and go and check this amazing church out.



It is a sensory overload of colours. Wonderfully detailed tiles cover every large wall space. The stained-glass windows are large, intricate, and full of colour, casting wonderful hues on the wall coverings.



The ceilings are all tiled and patterned, as are the floors. The choir and altar are bright and vibrant, and the side chapel is gilded and dazzling.



The really remarkable bit about the church isn't the splendid decoration. It is the fact that it has a proper Christian attitude. At first it may not seem so, as there are a number of signs saying not to sit or lie by the tiles as it can ruin them. Then you turn the corner to go through a series of archways to the nave and there are rows of kneeling pads laid out through the alleyways and along the rows of seats, and there are homeless people happily sleeping in the sanctuary and safety of the church. A priest is having a candid conversation with a visitor about faith on seats just in front of the choir steps. There is no miserable church helper trying to shepherd anyone out of the doors.





The church itself, unsurprisingly is a Grade I listed building. It was built in the 1850's and is said to be its architect William Butterfield's masterpiece. I can't see how he would have been able to surpass this. The two buildings at the front of the small courtyard to the church are the vicarage and the former choir school – now flats for assistant priests.

I've been wiki-ing it up, and there was a chapel on this site from 1760, which was described by one of its former incumbents as "a complete paragon of ugliness". In which case it couldn't have been more different to its current incarnation.

There were funds raised to rebuild the chapel, and it teamed up with the Cambridge Camden Society to found a model church. It took nine years for the church to be built at a total cost of £70,000, a lot of money back then.

To not have heard of the church I must have been living with my head in a bucket. Simon Jenkins said about All Saints that it was "architecturally England's most celebrated Victorian Church." And the chief executive of English Heritage listed it as one of the ten most important buildings in the country.

The use of assorted colour bricks in building a church was unheard of then, and the decoration built into the structure making All Saints the first example of 'structural polychromy' in London.

It is certainly different to any other church I've been in in this country. Now I know it is there I would probably want to nip back in when passing close by. It's only a ten-minute walk away from the company I work for's London office. It would be a pleasant detour after dealing with that shower.

## Story Time

### The Junkyard

I found it in the junkyard. Well, one of the many junkyards that form the outskirts of what had once been a great city. I can remember what the city had used to be called when anyone cared. I'm old enough to remember it before the power went out. Before the solar flare put an end to all electromagnetic systems on the planet. Before the heat killed so many of its population and destroyed so many buildings. Before those remaining became feral. Scrambling over each other to get their hands on anything that might be of value to them.

Food. Water. Weapons. Clothes.

Things hidden in the mangled mess left behind from the eight hours that changed the world.

It is hard, even now all these years later to contemplate just how quickly everything fell apart, and how it was never put together again. How we could be so stupid not to try and work together to help us all instead of being such a collective of selfish, idiotic, petty fools working against each other.

In some way I can say I was lucky. The solar flare wasn't totally unexpected. Various governments and organisations had been planning to deal with such an incident and its aftermath. There were bunkers. A lot of repurposed cold war, nuclear style ones. And there was all the scientific recording of the pulsing of the sun which had suggested when a flare was due.

I was one of those people. In a bunker. In the city when the flare hit. The problem was it was so much worse than they had ever thought or planned for. All the communications had gone. And so the plans made to deal with what came after never had a chance. Government officials locked in bunkers underground with no means to communicate to the populace. No way to tell them there was a plan, let alone what the plan was. They had cut themselves off in the name of protecting themselves, and it had all backfired. By the time any of us left the bunkers it was too far gone.

Although in reality, even if they had had been able to speak to the people, what they had planned wouldn't have worked. All the efforts outside of the bunkers were for nought anyway. Nothing they had prepared worked. It was all fried. Destroyed. Expensive engineering all now worth nothing. And wherever these government officials appeared to try and



call for calm, for order, for anything really, they were met with contempt and hostility. Some escaped with their lives, but their lives were never the same again. No more cosseted existence for them. They had no more power.

The same could be said for me. But I didn't try to flag to anyone I had had power. I may have been blind to many things before the solar flare, but I wasn't blind to what was happening after it.

I was out of the bunker before most. Whilst supposed geniuses spent too long trying to open up hermetically sealed, failed electronic locks, I went to the plans. There were failsafe's. Miles of passages radiating out from the bunkers. To those doors and hatches where traditional locks, those where physical keys were still king, were ways out. Where brute force could eventually open the way.

The hatch I found only had a flimsy padlock on the outside, with rusty screws holding it against moss covered rotting plywood planks. Two minutes it took to smash through. The hatch came out in the middle of a fairway. A surprisingly safe place to emerge. No one was playing golf then. The clubs were far too valuable a weapon to waste on hitting a silly dimpled ball around.

Over the years those who survived became loners. Tough, weathered characters. Wary of strangers. It was better that way.

But some people still grouped together. There were groups gradually clearing the old city. Pulling junk from what was left of the buildings. And the junk got piled in massive open areas on the outskirts of the former city.

Some people spent their lives moving from one junkyard to another. Picking through what was piled high there. Looking for something they could use. Either to survive, or to trade, or just for the memory of what their old, normal life had been. I doubt if anything could have surprised me more than what I found in the junkyard that day. It really shouldn't have been possible. The detritus of eight million lives dragged randomly out to sit in hundreds of piles dotted sporadically around the former city.

I could have been one of those people. Those who wandered these junkyards. I wasn't, but if I were, I could have wandered for a thousand lifetimes inspecting every little piece of discarded junk. But I hadn't. I stayed away from them. I didn't want to be reminded of what a mess our lives had become. And yet today I found myself wandering through this junkyard. A shortcut between where I was before, and where I was heading to.

I wasn't looking for anything. I was only checking where I was placing my feet, not wanting to stand on anything sharp, or unstable, which may cause me to stumble and fall.

Yet this piece had caught my eye. The vibrant colour of it. the fact it hadn't faded. No sun bleaching, no weathering at all. No covering of dust. It looked exactly the same as when I had first seen it nearly fifty years ago. When I had bought it. When I had taken it home, unwrapped it, and placed it in the middle of our sideboard in the dining room of our house.

There was no logic to how such a sculpture could have possibly survived all this time. The tens of thousands of pounds I spent on it weren't due to its possible longevity and hardness. The gallery had packed it with such care. Its artist was famous for the fragility of their pieces. I had knocked it over once, and it had broken. A piece to the side had come off. And I had paid out another handsome sum for it to be made whole again.

As I looked at the piece in my hands, I could see the hairline crack where it had been skilfully reassembled. How had it made it out here to be dumped unceremoniously in the pile with all the rest of the remnants of pre flare life and not have been destroyed in the process of being dumped here.

I stared at it in my grasp and thought back. Of how my wife and child loved this piece. Of how I betrayed them. Left them to their fate as I ran and hid in the bunker fully aware of what was likely to happen. A coward, and a traitor to my own family.

I had been back to the wreck of the family home a few days after I had forced my way out of the bunker. I saw their dead bodies, piled up amongst the others from the square. I stood there emotionless at the putrid pile, and then I walked away and just kept walking.

Their bodies and lives were destroyed in an instant, and yet the fragile sculpture in my hand had survived in the state I had left it at home that fateful day. I may have been alive, but I wasn't in a good way, not like the sculpture was. None of it seemed fair.

And so, for the first time since the flare had come and changed everything, I let my emotions out. I screamed at what I had done, and with a force and a fury I had kept buried for decades, I brought the sculpture down onto the lumps of concrete and metal below me and smashed it into smithereens.

As the rest of my life had always been.

## Chapter and Verse

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

### The Repsuli Deception – Chapter 8

I hadn't even got into the queuing lane for the worm hole when one of the warning lights started flashing. It wasn't one that I had ever noticed before.

"Vipond, what's that light flashing on the panel over your head?"

"How would I know; it doesn't have a label."

"You mean you don't know what all of these lights are for?"

"Well you obviously don't, and this is your pile of junk we're flying in."

"Where's the manual?"

"How would I know, where did you put it last?"

"I'm not sure, it's weeks since I've flown the ship. Business hasn't been that great recently in case you hadn't noticed."

"Well think man."

I almost laughed. I could hear my mother's voice in there. 'Well think son' was a regular refrain as I grew up.

"Knowing me, I probably looked at something and then threw it over my shoulder and into the seat behind me."

"Well it's not there now."

"Ten out of ten for observation, but for the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question, where did you move it to?"

"What do you mean, 'where did I move it to'?"

"You cleared that seat for our guest today. So where did you put all the random stuff that was on the seat?"

"Onto the other seat."

"Right, now we're getting somewhere. Get back there and find the manual then."

There were clicks from Vipond, but I didn't care. I just needed the manual before we got to the front of the wormhole queue. It would be not much off of a standard day before we came out of the other end, and if this were a serious ship fault the warning light was relating to then it was best to find out about before we got into something we couldn't just drop out of.

"You should really sort out this junk you know."

I did know, and I kept meaning to, I just never got around to it, and then out of nowhere we suddenly need to use the spaceship.

"I have the manual."

"And what does it say?"

"Do not use on an empty head."

"If you can't be serious, give me the bloody manual and I'll look for myself."

"It's not like you to get a sense of humour failure Brodie."

"This is not a normal situation. Someone has gone out of their way to stitch me up. This case stinks to high heaven, and I've got a bloody warning light flashing just before we enter a wormhole. So less of the psychoanalysis and just tell me what the problem is."

“What do you mean this case stinks?”

“Not now princess. I have bigger issues. Vipond?”

“Apparently, it’s part of the ship’s security scanning. Were you aware that this ship has the ability to search for and report on tracking devices?”

“No I wasn’t.”

“Well it has, and that warning light up there means that there is a tracking device somewhere on this ship.”

“There we go princess, and answer to your question. This is exactly the kind of thing that happens when a case stinks. That warning light has never gone off before in all the time I have owned the ship. Which means it has never happened on any previous case. This case isn’t even a day old, and I’m being tracked by parties unknown to me.”

“Well it’s not my fault. And for the last time, stop calling me princess, you are doing it on purpose now.”

“If it’s not your fault then whose fault is it? I don’t see any other passengers on this ship, and I’m not investigating any other cases. The only reason for me having a tracking device on this ship can be because I’ve taken your case.”

“Well, we should stop and remove the device then.”

“Not now.”

“Why not?”

“Because they probably know we’re off to Earth or Repsuli, or even Betenguese Minor. If I return to Tomazin and remove the device, they will know something is wrong and they will try another way to follow us.”

“Then what will you do?”

“I don’t know yet, but I’ve got nearly a day inside the wormhole to figure it out. Vipond, turn the light off. Let’s get ready for the jump; we’re at the front of the queue now. Buckle up Tarry; this might get a bit bumpy.”

And then I jumped the ship into the wormhole. There was nothing I could do until it came out of the other end. I just hoped there wasn’t an armed reception party when we did come out. I thought it was unlikely at this stage. Whoever was tracking us probably wanted to see what we could find first. I wasn’t as sure about our survival when we were coming back home.

I pushed the speed up to maximum. It would cut a couple of hours off the wormhole jump, but the probability of coming out somewhat off course increased. Not that I thought that was a bad thing. I had no way to communicate with anyone until we got to the far end, and very few people who would want to communicate with me anyway.

Now we waited. When it settled down, I had some questions I wanted answering, and I had a lot of reading to do. I needed to be more prepared once we came out into the Chaleneor Oasis.

## **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 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/>

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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