

31 October – 1 November, 2014 - David Creed

Pancake Manor. Brisbane. Meeting of the 'Novel in November' group.

'There wasn't a countdown, the lady in the green top merely came around to our table and said, 'it has already started'.

Our table stops talking and we all begin writing with pen and laptop.

There are five at the table - Tea, Long Black 1, Long Black 2, Long Black 3 and Latte. 'Good Vibrations' by the Beach Boys plays over the speaker system. I thought someone mentioned the word 'trilogy', but they didn't.

Latte is drawing a picture of a naked man next to a deer and a tree trunk. Long Black 3 has a blank page in front of him, and a pen in his hand. He is saying that he doesn't know what a character study is.

When I look around, I can see lots of heads down and people with expressions of intense concentration on their faces. There is a table to the left where everyone is on a laptop. A chorus line of arms and hands jiggle along as they type in unison.

David S is talking about murder mystery novels. Long Black 3 still has a mostly blank page, but he has done some doodles at the top left hand corner. Latte has written quite a number of words. Tea is covering her writing with a concealing hand. David S has just written the word 'unexpected'. Two girls have walked past and gone up to the counter. David S thinks they are wearing taco outfits. I think they are wearing pancake outfits.

The restaurant is a cavernous interior, a giant barn, or a church. There are large chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. They are holding light bulbs and not candles. David S is laughing at what he is writing. There is a pool table behind me. No one is using it. The wind-up doll girl is leaving. There is an oversized key erupting from her back.

Long Black 3 is now composing music on a fresh sheet of paper. Channa is typing away like he is possessed. He has an untouched mugaccino next to him.

I had sweet, not savoury pancakes. Talitha, who writes romance novels for a living ordered a steak, but only ate half. Rachael wouldn't touch her chips until her salsa arrived. There were a number of mistake orders brought out. Who ordered that extra Pepsi?

David S suggests to Latte, whose name is actually Mark, that he use his drawings as chapter markers. Mark says, "That's a good idea." He has hand written 300 words.

Talitha seemed to get upset earlier when I got up to go downstairs for the raffle. I had forgotten about paying. I went down to the raffle anyway. We didn't win.

David S is looking up at a hanging pot plant. Long Black 3 seems to know a lot about the English language, specifically, how it evolved following the invasion of the Normans into England during the Middle Ages. I take the last of the water and feel slightly selfish. I can see the word 'elegance' on David S's note paper. This could be referring to the décor at the Pancake Manor.

Channa has turned up his collar, and continues to type like a racing car driver. I am impressed. I can smell deodorizer in the air. David S is talking about it now. Where did it come from? The hum of people talking fills the air. Mark is on the phone. The staff are looking relaxed. Perhaps the worst is over. 'Why Do We Fall In Love?' That is the song that is currently playing. David S may be pondering this in relation

to his feelings towards Mark. Unfortunately, Mark is taken. A shame! He is a tall, handsome, friendly, smart, literary, Star Wars fan. Some of the writers have left. It is nearing 1AM.

Mark's lover is here. He is sitting opposite and is quite attractive. He is not writing a book. He is more of a numbers person, not a words person. He is actually a 'clone boyfriend', which makes him less attractive to David S. We all shake hands, a gentle handshake. He is the villain of the story according to David S. He appeared out of nowhere, and seems to have a jealous nature. This is not the clone wars! David S and I have both written this sentence. David S wants to go home now. Fair enough. He has to work in the morning.

31 October – 1 November, 2014 – David Spooner

Pancake Manor. Brisbane. Meeting of the 'Novel in November' group.

It begins with three long blacks.

The tea has not brewed for long enough and looks like greasy dishwater. The hum of the coffee machine and conversation echoes through the old church, now a 24-hour pancake restaurant. The cute waiter darts down the 'staff only' staircase and 'Good Vibrations' by the Beach Boys begins to play. The caffeine kicks in.

David C had been typing, but now his concentration has lapsed. He asks, "What was that about trilogy?" Rachael is asking about the past tense of 'incredulous'. Marc is helping Isaac to get started with a character study. He says, "It's never a waste of time." I'm looking around and think that my eyes are being met by a fellow writer, but it's not so. She seems to be lost in thought, and then finds herself again. She then continues resting, face in her palm, very deep in thought now.

David C keeps clicking away on his keyboard. I find the man sitting to my left unexpectedly attractive. David C and I discuss whether or not the two girls who are paying their bill are dressed as tacos or savoury pancakes. The people at the next table are beginning to have their drinks delivered and are experiencing difficulties with space. Laptops are taking up too much room. Pancake pondering women have left now. People have been prolific, but are beginning to drop like flies.

I'm distracted by sex thoughts, looking at large lanky carpenter hands fixing the dishwasher or changing the light bulb in my room. Sexy carpenter muffin man reassures us that as long as we keep writing, it will all be ok.

Talitha is wearing a sari and joins our table. She writes romance novels, eats steak, and advises me that I should take Omega 3, 6 and 9. I look up at a plaster shield hanging on the bricks above us – higher up, there is a fake plant hanging in a pot, and higher up again there are spotlights. The wall is actually a brick archway.

Generally, the staff seem happy here. On the disgruntled side at times, but this is to be expected after long hours of dealing with the general public.

A waft of air freshener moves through the air. I ask Marc and David if they can smell it, and they agree that they can.

Marc gets off the phone with his boyfriend. He refuses to leave before 1AM. I didn't intend to notice, but the picture that comes up on his phone of his boyfriend is of a shirtless man hugging a black cat. The song that pipes up now is 'Why Do We Fall In Love?', and I agree with its sentiment. I know that I could be happy with a man and a cat of my own, but these things could be like twin shackles, one meowing and the other purring. David C keeps misspelling Marc's name. He ends it with a 'K'.

"I am an artiste!" replies Marc after I propose that we scout out some more 24-hour venues to write in this month. I think of the casino.

'What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted?' is playing. Marc's boyfriend, Brendan, appears out of nowhere. He seems the jealous type. I try to appear accommodating but it must seem forced. I ask Brendan if he is going to take part in the month of writing and he says, 'No!' emphatically, adding that he is a 'numbers man'. Marc wishes us goodnight and Brendan ushers him out. They line up to pay, as David C and I dissect the evening.

The big table has completely cleared and now has one solitary writer. Channa and Panther's table is down to fifty percent capacity, but still appears to be going strong. David C wants to write one more sentence.

This isn't the clone wars Brendan!

1 November, 2014 - David Creed

Milton Coffee Club, 4:15PM

Last night I dreamt that I was walking around in America and kept bumping into various celebrities. They were so charming and graceful, beacons of health who strolled with a casual air. Each one seemed to be illuminated from within, their skin glowing.

One of the celebrity couples was David Sedaris and his partner. David Sedaris was typically charming, even while arguing with me and when I chucked something into the back of his ute to antagonise him.

I call David S as I walk into the Coffee Club. He answers and says he is inside. I drop my phone and it smashes on the ground leaving a spider web of cracks on the screen. Bummer!

David S is sitting at the back with Mark. I go in and tell them about dropping my phone. They seem sad about it. I look around and there are about twenty or thirty other writers at the tables. There is one main group of writers at a large table. David S, Mark, and I are at a separate table off to the side, being slightly aloof. David S says that he doesn't want to sit with anyone today. He just doesn't feel like it. He says this through a yawn.

Christina, aka 'Panther', has just left. 'Panther' is the name that Channa has given her – and she has adopted this as the name of her superhero alter ego in her novel. Channa named her 'Black Panther' because she was searching for something in a park once in the dark and she reminded him of some sort of panther. She dropped the 'Black' part after David S alerted her to the fact that there was already a superhero character called 'Black Panther'. She looked downcast about this and David S tried to back pedal slightly by suggesting that it didn't matter as lots of superhero characters have shared names. However, she decided to drop the 'Black' and just go with 'Panther'.

Jon walks up and says hello. He is a red headed youngster who loves tea: particularly lemongrass and other citrus-y flavours. He had an exciting rendezvous with a possum at his house last night. It was a 2AM interaction. Mark pushes away his green tea as it is "undrinkable". I don't mind my cappuccino. Later, I take a sip of Mark's tea and he was right - it was quite bitter, yet sickly sweet, all at the same time.

David S is scribbling away on his notepad now, and has just written about a turtle. I think he is describing a dream.

Mark is leaving. He has been here since this morning. He has a drawing of a naked man and woman on his notepad. The woman has freckles. I ask Mark if they are the two protagonists in his novel and he says, "Yes, they are." I ask if it is an Adam and Eve type novel, and he says that it is. The woman is a redhead, and the man is probably not a redhead.

1 November, 2014 - David Spooner

I walk home from the Pancake Manor with David C. When we get to the Valley we part ways. A man drives past on one of those bicycle chair things and gives me the finger. I return his finger with two of mine and maintain eye contact with him until he relents and puts his single finger down. He must have thought he was at an advantage as he was not on foot. I keep the late night psycho look on my face.

I feel so excited by the whole process of meeting new people and the novel writing adventure ahead of us that I feel indestructible. Moving through the drunken Halloween hoard of Fortitude Valley, I make my way home and keep pace with a drunken zombie across the road from me.

Milton Coffee Club, 4:01PM

I would not normally come here, but this is where the write-in is being held. For once, I am on time. Wait a second. I am often on time. This is just one of those rare moments when I am on time to meet David C. Someone is sneezing loudly in the men's toilet. I see Marc and chat to a woman named Stasha who I had been talking to the previous night. She asks me what my novel was about. I tell her it is autobiographical. She is pleasant and has that intelligent abruptness that I have encountered in nerd circles before. Yes, I am a nerd too. That's why I enjoyed last night so much.

I am sitting at a different table with Marc now. We moved away from the large table he was sitting at when I arrived. He is on 1700 words and says that he'd like to get a lot more done. David C arrives with news that he smashed his phone on the way here. Smashing a phone marks a new life.

The people at the table behind me are discussing a story arc, or some such thing. They have diagrams and flow charts out. Perhaps they are not even writing, but are here for other reasons. David C buys a ginger beer and I'm going to order a coffee.

On the way here, I photographed some shrubs next to Milton railway station. They had been pruned over winter and are now bursting with new growth. Spring is well and truly here.

I notice that David C is writing about dreaming - about walking through America last night, or this morning, or whenever dreams happen. The sneezy man has entered the men's toilets, again. A short visit this time. Not one sneeze.

The last dream I can remember was from a couple of nights ago. I was walking around a place with lots of screens. It looked like a Japanese water garden. As I walked past a fence, a medium sized turtle leapt up at me and tried to bite me with his snappy mouth. At the time, I felt that the action was not altogether unfriendly. The turtle was made out of wood - some kind of mystical wood, now that I think about it. It was like a spiritual water robot.

In the dream, I resumed my path and came to a window. I climbed in and found myself in a messy kitchen. There was a woman there. She asked me what I was doing. I said I wasn't sure where I was. She told me that I couldn't stay because it was her kitchen, so I moved through the next window, and found myself in another room. In this room there was a friendly woman who told me I was on private property. I moved through a final window, out to an open space full of grey bricks. It was a train station with a hoard of zombies. Surprisingly, I had an inner calm, and made my way to safety.

Marc leaves. It is 5PM. I am feeling somewhat deflated. If only I could type, I could maintain more momentum. But it's not about that. Actually, I don't really know what it is about anymore. Endurance? Maybe I hate writing. Maybe this was all a terrible idea. I don't think it is. It was all so exciting last night, but now it's a struggle.

'The people behind us leave. They weren't writing a novel, they were designing a robot.

David C and I discuss the possibility that we might not possess as extensive a vocabulary as we might have thought. Is this...? I lost my train of thought. My finger is cramping up and I am thinking of blue skinned creatures.

28/8/16 - 1/11/14



28/8/2016 — 1/11/2014.

