

August, 2020

RUN LIKE THE WIND

Simon Howard

Chapter 1

i

"Hey, Sherwin," hollered Dad, "Come up stairs and see what I've got! Found it last week on eBay and it didn't cost me a lot."

Sherwin threw off his rucksack, looked at Mum who shook her head. "Your dad's found another of his *bargains*, it'll end up in the shed!"

"Come on, Mum," said Sherwin, "Never know, it might be great?"

"Just wait 'til you see the machine," she said. "It's such a sorry state!"

"A bit like the tent," said Sherwin, "army surplus with lots of room? More like a Big Top in 'camo', could have easily slept a platoon!"

"And what about the pressure washer?" said Mum, "he rated **that** 5-star, He didn't say it was built for tractors, took the paint clean off my car!"

Sherwin laughed and said to his Mum, "He does sounds very keen."

"Oh, he is," she sighed, "and worst of all, it's a flippin' fitness regime. But not just for him, I'm afraid, you're part of this hair-brained scheme. He's only gone and invested in a clapped out running machine."

Sherwin went up to the room where his dad stood beaming with pride. "Son, you're gonna love this," he said, "Once you're in your stride. Throw on your trainers and give it a go, and see how good it feels. There's a program to change your speed, even lets you run up hills!"

Sherwin looked at the machine with its heavy caterpillar tread. The hand rails were thick and ugly, the display was Retro Red. "Maybe a little later, Dad, when I've got my homework done."

("Trapped!" Sherwin thought "and there's nowhere else to run!")

Dad didn't stop during dinner, said "Son, you'll be living the dream. Nice and easy to start with, then build up a head of steam!"

"OK, Dad," sighed Sherwin. "I'll nip upstairs and put on my gear. But I don't need an audience, Dad, so PLEASE stay down here."

Sherwin knew his dad meant well and was trying to encourage his son. It was tough for Sherwin having asthma, sport wasn't a lot of fun.

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He dreaded his PE lessons, it was by far the worst bit of school.
Athletics, games and gymnastics always made him feel a fool.
Team sports were always the toughest, hated friends relying on him.
Sherwin often came up with excuses and was made to tidy the gym.

ii.

So feeling a little nervous, Sherwin faced the treadmill screen.
He clipped on his safety cord and fired up the mean machine.
The LCD throbbled red, the tread began to pick up its pace.
Sherwin started to puff a bit, beads of sweat covered his face.
He tried to find a rhythm to get his breathing nice and steady
and pick up a little momentum, but his legs weren't quite ready.
Then he started struggling for air which was followed by a cough
which began to get much worse, so he switched the machine off.
He reported back to his dad and said, "Sorry, it's got me beat,
I'm useless at this running lark, I must have two left feet.
"Don't give up so easily, son, it's not easy with your condition.
It's asthma that's the problem but we won't abort the mission.
I think you should persevere with it and wait for things to click.
Try that button, says Turbo or something, it'll maybe do the trick?"
"Alright, Dad, I'll try again but please don't hold your breath,
I've a nasty feeling this plan of yours is heading for a lonely death."
Sherwin had lost all interest and he ignored the machine for days
but he knew he had no choice under the blaze of his dad's gaze.
So he resolved to give it a go but thought he'd try something new.
A couple of puffs from an inhaler, not the brown one but the blue.
Invigorated by this 'puffer', Sherwin fired up the vintage machine.
It creaked and groaned into action sounding some way off pristine.
He started to jog at first, then found himself in a groove.
He still blew out his cheeks but was finding it easier to move.
After a while he settled down and felt some energy arrive.
"Time to try 'dad's Turbo,' which was labelled '~~OVERDRIVE~~'."
He pressed this choice on the console, the machine began to stir,
and before Sherwin knew it, his world turned into a blur.
Pulse was rising sharply and he could feel his heart beat.
Sherwin was having a struggle keeping up with both his feet.

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The treadmill began to shake now, everything was spinning around.
Neon lighting swamped the room, he suddenly felt hard ground...

iii.

Sherwin was still running but not on his running machine.
Instead he was chasing a football on a pitch of brilliant green.
The noise around him was deafening, chants of “ENG...ER...LAND,”
and a sea of flags and scarves were being waved around the stand.
Sherwin, all dressed in red and white, grappled for air as he ran.
“Much weirder still,” he thought to himself, “I’m now a fully grown man!”
The match was almost over but the drama was about to begin.
England thought the game was won but let a last minute goal in.
The whistle ended the match but now it moved into extra time.
“C’mon lads,” cried a team mate, “We’ve another mountain to climb.”
Sherwin felt exhausted and his legs were heavy as stone
but the crowd, the excitement, the buzz, took him into another zone.
A lung bursting run later, Sherwin found a defensive hole.
The cross came in and he twisted, then smashed the ball at goal.
It pounded the bar but just crossed the line, England were back ahead.
A roar went up around the ground that was swamped in white and red.
“How can this be?” thought Sherwin, “I’m running like a thoroughbred.
This is definitely a different body so I must be in a different head!”
The game was nearing its end and the tension was starting to rise.
The opponents in white were pressing in a bid to equalise.
“Keep going, lads,” urged the captain, “and keep the ball at your feet!”
Both teams were starting to flag now in the blistering July heat.
Then a ball came from deep as the seconds ticked away,
so Sherwin decided on trying a last attacking play.
He was closing in on goal now, although hot and very tired.
Feeling the breath of a defender he swung his boot and fired.
The ball went in like a rocket, so hard it shook the frame.
Wembley stadium erupted; the ref whistled the end of the game.
His team mates flocked around him, Bobby Charlton and Bobby Moore,
and the scoreboard up above them displayed the 4-2 score.
Up the steps they wearily climbed to take hold of their golden prize,
and receive the World Cup from their Queen, before the nation’s eyes.
They danced around the pitch holding the trophy in the air.
Bobby Moore sat on the shoulders of his team mate’s human chair.

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Sherwin turned to a player and said, “I don’t know why I’m here?”

“Course you don’t!” said Nobby, “so let me make it clear.

You were dropped in ‘ere for a reason, son, a message you have to hear.

It’s simple really,” laughed Nobby, **“Run like the wind and have no fear.”**

“How do you know who I am.” said Sherwin, “You can’t tell by my face?”

“I spoke to a bloke, with a beard and a cloak, said he came from another place!”

Sherwin finished the victory lap then the scene disappeared into red.

His legs gradually slowed to a halt until he was back at home on the tread...

iv.

He stepped off the machine weakly and his stomach began to churn.

“What on earth happened there?” he thought, “Did I have a funny turn?”

Sherwin reached for his inhaler to stop him feeling so rough,

and he instantly felt much better just as soon as he’d had a puff.

He made his way to his bedroom, grabbed his smart phone on the way.

Googled “World Cup...England” and watched the video straightaway.

“It was Sixty-Six then,” Sherwin thought “and I played alongside these men.

The only thing that’s different is Geoff Hurst was number Ten!”

His curiosity ignited, Sherwin tapped in a search online.

“Wow”, cried Sherwin, “December 8th! Geoff’s birthday’s the same as mine!”

There came a knock on the door, Sherwin’s dad said “What did you think?”

“Great.” Sherwin replied, but thought, “Either that or I need a shrink!”



England win the World Cup, Wembley Stadium, July 30 1966

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Chapter 2...

Thanks for reading the opening chapter of my Verse
Novella 'Run Like The Wind'

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