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This is a free sample of the first few chapters of the shocking new bestseller from Rex Richards. Give it a go and see what you think!

SHAKESPEARE'S TRUTH

REX RICHARDS

REVIEW COPY

Hi there,

This book is dedicated to my dad, a TV broadcaster who died pursuing the evidence proving the conspiracies in this book.

Dad if you're looking down from somewhere, I hope you enjoy it. At its heart, this tale of royal and literary conspiracy, love, murder, lost treasure, secret societies, deceit, desire and danger is your story.

It's also for N. She was my inspiration, as once I hope I was hers.

If you enjoy books by people like Dan Brown, John Grisham, Ken Follett, Bernard Cornwell, and you want a page turner with serious food for thought... I'm pretty sure you'll enjoy reading *Shakespeare's Truth!* (He says, confidently. ☺) Drop me a line and tell me what you think.

RRx

www.rexrichards.com

Prologue

“To be or not to be, that is the question.”

Hamlet

The Tower of London, 1554

The guard fixed his gaze on the flickering torch at the end of the stone passageway and started to count to ten. Before he reached six, another scream erupted from the cell behind him.

He restarted his count. This time he reached three. Fresh howls of pain ripped through the air and he tried to not to imagine what was going on behind the bleak door.

Inside the cell, the woman lay exhausted on the straw bed, the smell of stale sweat heavy in the air. The pain was so fierce she was barely aware of the three women surrounding her in the fragile candlelight. One of the women grasped her hand whispering instructions, another knelt in front of her splayed legs and the third muttered prayers.

She could feel the baby wanting to escape from the prison of her womb. She screamed again as she followed the midwife’s instructions and pushed. As the baby was coaxed out into the world, she saw it for the first time. Its eyes were tightly closed against the rude interruption. She too closed her eyes, the emotions that flooded through her left her terrified. Elizabeth wanted desperately to see her son and to hold him in her arms, but she knew that would never be.

As the child burst into life and screamed its presence to the world, she felt as if a needle had been slid into her heart. She was the daughter of King Henry VIII to the executed Ann Boleyn, and was currently held prisoner in the Tower of London by her treacherous half-sister Mary who had stolen the throne in her place.

Elizabeth believed her destiny was to be Queen Elizabeth of England, head of the House of Tudor. If she could survive the Tower, her chance to become Queen could come. But if the Church ever discovered she had given birth in a prison cell and that the father was already married and a commoner, she would never leave these walls alive, let alone take the throne.

For the sake of England, Elizabeth knew her baby would have to be a secret never to be admitted to anyone, not even to herself.

Act 1: Scene One

“Out, out brief candle! life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his time upon the stage and then is heard no more.”

Macbeth

18 December 2009, 5.00 am

Sunbeams slid through the bare branches of the trees of Hyde Park and settled on the cold stone of a small, delicate statue of Peter Pan. The stone figure had been carved to look full of life and youth and seemed exuberant, ready to leap off its plinth and fly through the air to welcome in the cold dawn.

Sitting on the harsh concrete, with his back propped up against the base of the statue, was an English prince. He was stripped to the waist. His arms hung loosely at his side, and it was with a huge effort the young man lifted his head up, forcing himself to try to take in the beauty of the morning. The sun rose, cutting through the branches of the wizened oak trees and into his eyes. The scent of damp grass was tainted with a faint sourness. Blood.

He tilted his head and look down. Matted blood highlighted the horrific cuts in his chest, a dozen or so deep slashes made by a cruel hand armed with a lethal blade. Blood dripped rhythmically onto the concrete floor around the statue, a slow tattoo beating out the last moments of his life. The cuts formed two words. He tried to think, what could they mean? But constant waves of pain made it impossible to hold any thoughts for more than a few fractured seconds. He gave up on the words, knowing he was dying, and tried to think back on his brief life, had he done what was expected of him?

What were the thoughts he wanted to treasure? His mother, dressed in white, the joy in her eyes all those years ago... flashing multicoloured lights and his kid brother’s wild dancing at last night’s party... that text from his girlfriend, her funny tan lines after that first holiday in Belize at the Bella Maya... his father’s voice last week as he tried to persuade him to come up with the family for a stag hunt at Balmoral...

But then another image surfaced in his mind. The face of his attacker. There had been such burning hatred in the man’s eyes as the knife had bitten into his skin.

After it was finally over the man had leant in close, hot breath brushing his cheek. “You have no right to be here. No right to your life. I’m taking it all away from you. And when you die, a new destiny will be born.”

As the sun rose, the city of London emerged from its sleep and stretched into life; unaware that the future king of England, His Royal Highness Prince William, had died alone.

Act 1: Scene Two

“Now is the winter of our discontent.”

Richard III

Jonny, the Head of Client Services, was in full flow and his regulation shaved bald head bobbed up and down inside his regulation black shirt.

“Car parking is an exciting business. It’s full of challenges, rewards and passion. How about this?” As he spoke he lifted his hands in front of his face as if forming the words in the air. “We don’t just like what we do. We love what we do. We’re passionate about car parks.”

Dan watched his boss, trying not to laugh. The remorseless marketing double talk pinned the three clients from Heathrow Airport Car Parking Services into their chairs. Jonny had used the same basic pitch last week to Cadbury on the launch of their new range of organic premiere milk chocolate and the week before to the glorified burger bar TGI Friday’s. Next week’s meetings with Victoria’s Secret and the Ministry of Trade would probably unveil exactly the same miraculous conclusion.

Although there were aspects of his job Dan loved, such as being asked to dream up ground breaking ideas for advertising campaigns, he hated all the hot air and spin.

They were sitting in a glass walled meeting room. On the other side of the office a goggle eyed lump was gawping at him. It was the star of the show, a catfish called Eric who lived in the huge aquarium at the centre of the busy marketing agency Big Fish Branding. Dan felt a peculiar affinity with Eric. They were both foreigners trying to adapt to the English way of life. In Dan’s case, he was an American working as a creative director in London; in Eric’s case he had been scooped out of an African river before ending up in London via three months on a ship and a pet shop. As Jonny talked, Dan’s mind wandered from the meeting, contemplating instead why Eric was flapping about in such a listless manner. He guessed that having Deep Dish Doughnuts as a client and an account team always dropping crumbs into Eric’s tank might be part of the problem. Dan’s reflection stared back at him from the meeting room windows and he wondered whether he was in better or worse condition than Eric. His dark hair, grey eyes and high cheekbones looked good from a distance. Yet up close it was a different matter. His pale skin and black rings under his eyes signalled too many hours working late at the computer. It had been a demanding few months.

“I’ve got it,” continued Jonny. “We need a positioning statement for the car parks, something positive so that people can see that you’re not just converting that meadow at Terminal 2 into a car park for no reason. It’s there to provide a better service to your customers who want the convenience of a nine minute bus ride to the terminal and cost effective parking solutions. How about this for a strap line.” He held up his arms as if visualising a biblical scene in front of the clients. “Space to grow.” He paused for dramatic effect. “More spaces for parking, and with some of the meadow preserved, plants can still grow.”

“But the central p-part of our business projections is to optimise the land use. Err... we... we don’t see the need to keep any of the meadows. Each space we don’t exploit costs us significant r-revenues.” The perspiring rotund face of the senior client Derek leaned forward

across the faux Formica table. His profile cut into the beam from the projector and created shadows on top of the PowerPoint presentation that looked like a hippo sitting on a toilet. Derek's tie strayed dangerously close to his glass of sparkling water and came to rest on the plate of melting chocolate biscuits. Marnie the Kiwi girl was the other member of the Big Fish branding team in the room. Derek, in his usual cold bullying way, pointed at her. "You've been v-very quiet, what do you think the key issue is for us here?" Dan could see Marnie jump, there was no way that she would know anything about this presentation. She was even fresher off the boat than him in London and had only been drafted in to the meeting to make up numbers. Her face turned crimson.

"Aaaah well..." she mumbled.

Dan cut in. "Funny you should ask. Marnie was saying only yesterday it would be great PR if you could preserve some of the meadows in the new parking lots. The green lobby would love you. Who knows, they might even park their electric cars there when they're going on holiday." Dan leaned forward and clicked the mouse button on the Apple laptop, launching a hypnotic animation and the next part of the presentation:

Additional Revenues from Airport Car Parking Perceptions of Profit.

"Letting people park up is just the start," said Dan. "We want to talk about what happens next, when people are in the airport and on the plane. We've put together an in-depth proposal on how you can increase income with extra services and keep a section of the meadow to satisfy the environmentalists."

Jonny winked slyly at him and took over. "We're talking mobile dry cleaning services. How handy would that be when you've parked your car? We're talking advertising revenues inside car parks. We're talking about weevils. A colony inside a section of meadow we'll preserve, right in the middle of the world's first ecologically sound, carbon neutral, solar powered, pro-green and highly profitable car park."

Jonny was interrupted by a delicate knock on the door and Heidi the office manager came in bearing cups of coffee, pain au chocolat and doughnuts. It was all going terribly well and everyone took a ten minute break. Dan stood up to stretch his legs, and leaving the clients chatting headed back to his desk to check his email.

Heathrow Airport wasn't Dan's only regular client. On average he had to deal with about eight or ten, all of whom thought they were the most important people in his life. Every spare moment to catch up was essential. There were three new emails from Heathrow, all making last minute additions to the meeting agenda. Predictably the clients had forgotten all about them. Dan raced over his other emails, clicking on one from his mom in San Diego. She was asking what he wanted for Christmas, which was still a couple of weeks away, so off his radar. He dashed off a reply to her, explaining that yes, everything was okay and yes, he could look after himself in London. After all he was in his mid-thirties. Then another email caught his eye.

Subject: Destiny Sent: 18 December 2009 09:46:21
To: Dan Knight (CD) (dan@bigfishbranding.co.uk)

Dan Knight of San Diego – your destiny waits.

<http://www.nextkingofengland.com>

His finger hovered over the delete button, but something stopped him. The email didn't look like ordinary spam. This was different. The sender knew his name. That wasn't unusual in itself, but the fact they also knew his home town seemed strange. Dan read the email address; it was a *No reply*. He knew the virus paranoid IT director Marco would hate the idea, but Dan decided to break the rules.

He clicked through to the website. It linked to the video website YouTube and a window popped up on his screen. There was a low quality blurry image of a street late at night. To Dan it looked like security camera footage. The date stamp showed it was from last night. The video showed trees, streetlights and a couple of parked cars. A black cab passed by. Dan kept watching and after perhaps a minute, a man with his arm flopped over the shoulder of his girlfriend flickered over the screen. Then a limousine drove past. Another thirty seconds passed and another man appeared on the screen. He was tall, reasonably young and well dressed. He walked with his back to camera but just for a split second he turned and looked up at the camera. Dan had to stop himself gasping out loud.

The image that flashed in the camera lens was blurry but he was sure that just for the briefest moment he was looking at his own face. The video still had another six minutes to run but Dan's mind was spinning.

It wasn't him. He had been at home all night.

Suddenly strong hands grabbed him from behind and span him round in his chair.

"Those weevils are waiting," said Jonny, "don't disappoint them. Get back to the meeting."

Act 1: Scene Three

“The evil that men do lives after them.”

Julius Caesar

“**Y**ou’re a fucking disgrace to this family. What sort of attitude do you call that?

Call yourself a Fletcher? Consider yourself my worthy daughter? You’re a fool.” The old man’s thin, long face had been thrust forward, his whole body twisted in rage.

It had been months ago but the words echoed in her mind.

Fiona was in the main lecture auditorium at University College London when the unwelcome memory had surfaced. Today was a big day for her, an introductory lecture to a new course that she had designed. She had hoped that a few minutes of quiet contemplation before her students arrived would focus her mind on the upcoming lecture. Instead she found herself huddled in the deafening silence, paralysed by the ghosts of the past.

It had been early September and she had been at her parent’s house for the weekend. Throughout the visit her father had followed her and her mother everywhere, talking incessantly but vaguely about his new research. Every hour or two, Fiona had asked him to sit with her and talk through what he had uncovered. Every time he had refused, telling her it wasn’t a safe enough place to reveal his secrets.

Then on the Sunday afternoon, as she was wheeling her Triumph Bonneville motorbike out from the garage to head back to London, he had appeared in front of her. It was then, just as she was leaving, that he insisted she listen to his discoveries. She told him she didn’t have the time, she was late. His response was to explode with anger. “How dare you treat my work like that? You would be nothing without me. Do you hear me? Nothing. How can you claim Shakespeare’s of no interest? Who the hell do you think you are? Why don’t you go back to London, to your pathetic ignorant runts, your chattering classes students? You’re not wanted here. And look at the way you dress, Fiona. It’s a disgrace,” he had screamed. “You’re no daughter of mine, why can’t you be more like your brother? You don’t see him coming up here in dirty jeans looking like a ghastly hippy.”

“You don’t see him here at all,” she muttered.

“What was that? Don’t you answer me back girl. Don’t you damn dare talk back to me.”

Three of his front teeth were missing and he hadn’t shaven properly for days. Tufts of wiry grey hair were massing under his chin and the veins stood out on his neck. In hindsight Fiona knew that was the moment she should have realised how bad things were. But as it was, on that day, she had wanted nothing more than to escape.

Yet within minutes of being on the road through the beautiful Cotswold countryside, she had pulled over and burst into tears. She beat her thighs with her gloved fists and threw her helmet onto the grass verge in frustration. She was overwhelmed with a sense of guilt at leaving her mother on her own, but the desire to run away and get back to her own life had won out.

But just one week later, when Fiona was back in London, something had changed in her father’s brain. His fragile hold on reality had finally shattered, he had lost control and as a result her mother had nearly died. Months later, Fiona was still plagued by guilt. She knew

her father's violence had been a result of his illness, but all the books in the world about psychosis and schizophrenia couldn't stop her hating him for what he had done and herself for not being there. Fiona's mobile phone buzzed in her bag, dragging her back to reality. There was a message from her best friend Nicky, a mature student at the University.

Good luck honey! Coffee later? Nx

There was a sudden commotion as the main doors to the auditorium were pushed open and her students flooded in. She made her way up to the lectern and waited for the students to settle down. On the lectern was a heavy medieval book she had chosen for this introductory lecture, and her laptop. She carefully opened the book at the page she had marked. The musty pages offered a familiar comfort.

She composed herself for a moment, looking out over the crowd. She leant forward into the microphone. "Hello everyone, my name is Fiona." She paused, waiting for the students to fall silent. "Welcome to this introductory lecture titled, 'Secret Histories, the Science of Secrecy'. I'd like to thank you guys for showing up and hope you'll get enough of a buzz out of my lecture to sign up to this history module. To kick things off I'm going to read you a quote." She leant over and began to read. "Suppose that a famous weaver of magnificent cloth always presented to the world designs that people recognised as his own. Then, suppose if you were to examine in more detail the very weave of the cloth, and in truth saw it revealed a different design, from a different weaver."

She closed the book and looked up. "Now I doubt anyone here can tell me who said that, but you might have an idea what they were talking about?" As she expected there was total silence. She continued. "That quote was from a guy called Sir Francis Bacon. To those of you who don't know, Sir Francis Bacon was nothing to do with an English breakfast." There was a snigger from the crowd. "He was known to his friends as the 'jewelled mind', because of his intellect. He's been dead for quite some time now; he lived at the same time as Queen Elizabeth the first, so over 400 years ago. As well as being a spy and politician, he was a world expert at the art and science of secrecy, developing many new techniques, some of which we'll be checking out. That quote is from a book he wrote explaining something fundamental about how secret communications work." She walked over to her laptop and pressed play on the video player. "If you can get your heads around this next bit you'll understand what the course is all about."

A giant screen behind Fiona flashed into life showing a montage of images from the modern world: mobile phones, fax machines, television, postmen, radio, satellites. She talked over the top of it.

"Imagine life in the sixteenth century. There were was no television, no internet or computers, cars, trains, planes, faxes, post offices or even a police service. You couldn't pick up the phone and you certainly couldn't send an e-mail. If you had information that was important, the only way to get it anywhere was with someone on a horse, unless you wanted to walk. Think how long it would have taken to get from one end of the country to the other on a horse. Hundreds of years ago, it was as difficult and time consuming to get from London to Manchester as flying round the world is today. Mind you, in those days most of them thought the earth was flat."

"You what? You mean it isn't?" The voice came from the audience, followed by a burst of laughter. Fiona followed the sound, spotting a smart looking British Pakistani boy sat

amongst a group of similar students who had enough hair gel between them to be classified as an industrial accident. Fiona suspected he was the leader of the group.

“So what’s your name?” Fiona asked.

“Mohammed. Mo to my mates.”

“Okay Mo. Let’s imagine you’re in Elizabethan times. You’ve got some secret information you need to get to somebody, the problem is that he’s a week’s journey away by horse. How would you hide the information so it didn’t get intercepted on the way?”

“You could shove it up the horse’s arse?” Everyone laughed.

“Nice idea Mo, but I’m not sure you would ever get it back, let alone be able to read it. No, think a bit more laterally. In the ideal world, the courier doesn’t even know they are carrying secrets in the first place.” A look of confusion flashed over Mo’s face, but Fiona could see one of his crew smiling. He was a stocky youth in a Bolton Wanderers football shirt. She turned to him. “Yes. You. Go on, what do you think?”

“I’m thinking, like that guy said in that book, if you can hide the stuff inside something else, like another message that look innocent, no-one gonna know it there in the first place.”

Fiona was impressed. “Yes, spot on. That’s exactly what we’re going to learn about; ciphers, the technique of hiding a message within another message. This wasn’t just something that aristocrats used to send their mistresses sordid love notes. It’s been a vital tool used by governments and royalty for hundreds of years. Who’s heard of the Enigma machines?” This time there were more nods. “Enigma was a German cipher machine that the Nazis used in World War Two to tell their U-boat submarines where our naval fleet was operating. Ciphers and codes at one point controlled the future of the world. If we hadn’t been able to crack those codes, Hitler would probably have won the Second World War and we would all be goose stepping down Oxford Street. Internet security works essentially the same way, but that’s the tip of the iceberg. There are hidden codes and meanings in almost everything from the designs on banknotes, great works of art, barcodes and…”

Fiona stopped abruptly. There was a commotion at the back of the room. A student had run in and was talking excitedly to the students on the back benches. A Mexican wave of chatter cascaded through the students. Fiona called the newcomer down to the front. “What’s going on? Why’d you interrupt my class?” The student who arrived was red-faced and perspiring, her eyes wild with excitement. “Haven’t you heard?” The girl’s voice was shrill, almost a scream. “No, of course. I’m sorry, I’m sure you haven’t. It’s Prince William. He’s dead. It’s on the internet. A video. It’s horrible. It’s like a horror movie. If it’s true, if he’s dead, then he must have been murdered.”

Act 1: Scene Four

*“Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet Prince, and flights of angels
sing thee to thy rest.”*

Hamlet

The two men faced the row of oversized steel drawers that covered the wall of the cold room. The constant hum of industrial refrigeration units was broken by occasional clicks from harsh strip lighting and an acidic aroma that lingered in the memory of the room’s visitors for days afterwards.

Inspector Brian Sawyer, a squat and heavysset man with curly black receding hair and small dark eyes, leant forward and pulled at one of handles on the wall. The drawer slid open easily, revealing the form of a body covered in a white sheet. Waves of chemically refrigerated air flowed into the room. Sawyer rolled back the sleeve of his dull brown suit and pulled the sheet back to reveal the cold naked body of Prince William.

The two men looked down at the corpse. Neither spoke. The taller man was middle aged, blond haired and blue-eyed with a naturally warm expression. He was dressed immaculately in an understated navy blue suit. On seeing the body he staggered forward, catching the metal tray with one hand to steady himself. He dragged his eyes away from the face and sighed deeply.

“I can positively identify the deceased as His Royal Highness. Now I trust with that unpleasant formality out of the way you will allow me to take possession of the body and make arrangements?”

Inspector Sawyer looked over at his companion. He didn’t quite know what to make of the Major. He was the head of Royal Security at Buckingham Palace and by all accounts a *very* close friend of the Royal Family. Inspector Sawyer had been told by his bosses, in voices reedy with panic, that this man had total authority in this case. He, a mere Inspector in Special Branch of the London Metropolitan Police, was simply there to do this man’s bidding. This annoyed the hell out of Sawyer.

“Major Barnes-Jones this is a murder investigation. We’re going to perform an autopsy.”

The Major had seemed lost in thought as he stared at the body, but snapped upright as Sawyer spoke. “There will be no police autopsy. This is the body of the man who should have become King of England. For God’s sake do you have no respect?” The flash of anger on the Major’s face disappeared. “Now that I have made a positive identification of the body, from this point forward this investigation is to be under the jurisdiction of Royal Security.”

Sawyer looked down at the body with a sense of wonder. Despite all of his security and protection, the most privileged and important young man in the country lay dead in front of him. He couldn’t begin to imagine the fallout. The murder of the heir to the throne was going to be the most scandalous event in living memory, perhaps outweighing the death of his mother in the public conscience. The Inspector felt that he had only just recovered from the ordeal of the London 7/7 terror bombings, but here it was starting all over again – sixteen hour days, constant stress and the inevitable arguments with his wife.

Sawyer's eyes flicked over the Prince's body, making a mental note of the visible wounds. The face had been left untouched. Instead the attacker had concentrated on the torso. Deep gouges ran across the whole of the rib cage and stomach. Black blood had congealed at the edges of the wounds adding a macabre outline to the cuts, making them stand out against the pale skin. At first glance the cuts had seemed random. But once he had seen past the dried blood which covered the Prince's chest, Sawyer realised there was nothing random about it.

The cuts formed crude words.

SHALL
DISSOLVE

"Shall dissolve? You can see that too?"

"Yes." The Major had been watching Inspector Sawyer closely, trying to work out exactly what sort of man he was dealing with. He trusted his instincts, they had saved his life on more than one occasion. At first glance the police officer portrayed the image of being nothing more than a gorilla in a cheap suit. Having spent time with him, the Major was sure Sawyer was a capable, professional and experienced man. "Have you had any time to speculate as to what it may mean?"

"If you mean why did the nut who did this decide to use the Prince's chest as his notepad? No, I haven't had time to speculate. Not that I would ever speculate. In fact at this point, as this is under the Official Secrets Act and your authority is denying me any opportunity to officially examine the body, it's not going to be easy to speculate." Sawyer could feel his anger starting to come out and forced himself to calm. "In any case there was the matter this morning of taking down that video."

"Yes. Thank you for your actions. Scotland Yard's internet security team is to be complimented on acting so promptly and with such efficiency."

"I'll pass that on."

"This is no longer a police investigation. I need your assurance that no copies of the video exist."

"None of us have one," replied Sawyer honestly. "Can I ask you a question, Major?"

"If it's relevant."

"How did you let this happen? How did Prince William end up on this slab?"

"Inspector Sawyer, you'll be advised in due course of the role that the police will play. Now, we must go up to your office and sign over ownership of the Prince. The Royal household is taking this matter extremely personally and it is my duty to begin to seek resolution as soon as possible."

Act 1 : Scene Five

“Something wicked this way comes.”

Macbeth

A crash reverberated through the building and Dan woke up startled, staring into the semi darkness. He glanced at his alarm clock. The green figures showed 5 am. He groaned.

When he had first arrived in London and looked at the map, Shepherd’s Bush had seemed to make sense as somewhere to live. The Georgian style building had appealed with its stucco fronted exterior, retro art deco interior and polished wooden floors. However, that was before he had realised that away from upmarket areas like Chelsea and Mayfair, London was a sea of police sirens at night. Directly below him in a flat designed for two people lived six Australians. Three or four nights a week he was convinced that his floor was about to disintegrate into dust as the vibrations from the jackhammer sound system started up once again and the Australian party animals set about destroying their cage. This was in stark contrast to the Manhattan flat he had left. It had been higher up, in a more exclusive area and much quieter.

As he lay awake in the darkness, his mind turned back to the brief flash of what could have been his face in the video he had been emailed. He had wanted to go back to it, but work had been so insane he hadn’t had time to draw breath. Jonny had insisted on sending out the proposal to the clients that night, resulting in the team working until midnight. He’d got back home exhausted. But now he was awake, the video started praying on his mind. Dan rolled out of bed, slipped on a pair of shorts and a T-shirt and staggered through to the living room. He sat down in front of his laptop and turned it on. While the system booted up, he looked out of the small metal framed windows and tried to admire the view of Shepherd’s Bush Road. His eyes flicked along the motley collection of newsagents, Halal butchers and expensive convenience stores crowding the busy street. At this hour their ugliness was masked by the fluorescent glow from the street lights. The computer finally booted into life. Dan opened the e-mail.

Subject: Destiny Sent: 18 December 2009 09:46:21
To: Dan Knight (CD) (dan@bigfishbranding.co.uk)

Dan Knight of San Diego – your destiny waits.

<http://www.nextkingofengland.com>

Dan could feel pricks of sweat breaking out under his arms as he clicked on the link. The email software launched his Firefox web browser and he felt his pulse rising as the software searched for the video. He hunched forward in anticipation, but an error message flashed onto the screen, informing him that the page no longer existed. He slumped back, feeling a mixture of relief and anticlimax.

He stood up and started to walk over to the kitchen to get some water. As he moved across the room, he focused on something pushed under the front door. He frowned and

walked over to have a closer look. He stooped down. It looked like some sort of thin black tube. The object was metal and had a thick glass end, like a lens. He put out a hand to touch it. It shot backwards, disappearing under the door.

In the same instant there was a deafening crash and the door's lock splintered in the frame as a huge weight forced it inwards at tremendous speed. The door crunched into Dan's forehead, throwing him backwards onto the floor. Before he could react, three figures dressed in black and wearing balaclavas glided into the room. The largest of the invaders instantly landed a savage kick in Dan's ribs.

The breath was blasted from Dan's body and he collapsed onto his knees. Blood oozed into his eyes from the wound on his forehead, his vision blurred as an intense pain shot through his head. He thought he was going to vomit. He tried to get to his feet, flailing his arms around for support. Another precise kick, this time across his head. Dan collapsed back onto the floor as the man who had delivered the two kicks grabbed his arm and twisted it behind his back.

"Finish it," the man said.

Dan opened his mouth to scream but a white cloth was clamped over his face. He could feel resistance melting away as a chemical vapour flooded into his nose and throat. His mind was slipping into darkness. Within a few seconds he was unconscious.

Want to know what happens next?

Buy the book!

Available as a paperback through Amazon and other retailers, an ebook and soon as an audio book

Shakespeare's Truth by Rex Richards

www.rexrichards.co.uk

A chunk of any profit goes to charity

Rex Richards Author - Quick Bio

demo website: www.rexrichards.co.uk/index2.html (contains out of date material)

Rex lives in London and Buenos Aires, and has worked mainly in marketing as a Creative Director in top London agencies, and before that was a multi award winning TV and radio producer at the BBC and Planet 24. He has lived on a Sioux Indian reservation, worked as a chimney sweep, built houses for the poor in Guatemala, cooked for Raymond Blanc, played sport and music up to midlands and national level, been shot, was once nearly sacrificed by Satanists and is a part-time fortune teller. Other hobbies include metal sculpture, jewellery making and writing music. He was told by Princess Diana's psychic that he should be a writer, and that's what he is focused on now.

He told us about the inspiration behind Shakespeare's Truth.

"My dad died recently of Alzheimers, one of the cruellest, horrific and most demeaning diseases imaginable. During that process the family was subjected to a terrible ordeal as his grip on reality

grew ever more tenuous. It's an awful thing to find yourself wishing someone so dear to you would die, but that's the situation we were in. Before the disease destroyed him, he spent many years working on proving that Shakespeare's plays were written by someone else. He managed to get the story onto BBC2, convinced the Dean of Westminster Abbey and many other people, and wrote a huge unpublished academic book on the subject. I decided to take the simplest and most compelling bits of that research, and wrap a thriller story around them. which I hope people will find exciting and easy to read - but also make them think. So really, it's his story as much as mine. It's a strange thing, but I feel closer to him now through this than I did when he was alive. Of course I added extra elements, and put in some of my own research. I also broadened the themes. Shakespeare is one part of the book, but equally important are the origins and role of the British Royal Family, an ancient secret society, a real missing treasure, revenge, ambition and a love story born out of chaos."

He is very familiar with TV, press, radio and online media, and is a great interviewee.

The followup to Shakespeare's Truth features the same key characters but is concerned with organised religions, the origin of the human species, the relationship between science and religion and the quest for immortality. It is called *The Invisible Truth*.

He has also written a shocking satire/thriller about a TV news presenter and a serial killer called *Breaking News* which was compared to *Money* by Martin Amis. This is not for the faint hearted, and is based on his years working with filmstars and other drug-prone celebrities in central London. An early reviewer called it a 'story to melt your brain.'

Other works include two children's books, short stories and he has plans to promote his sculptures and photography over time.