

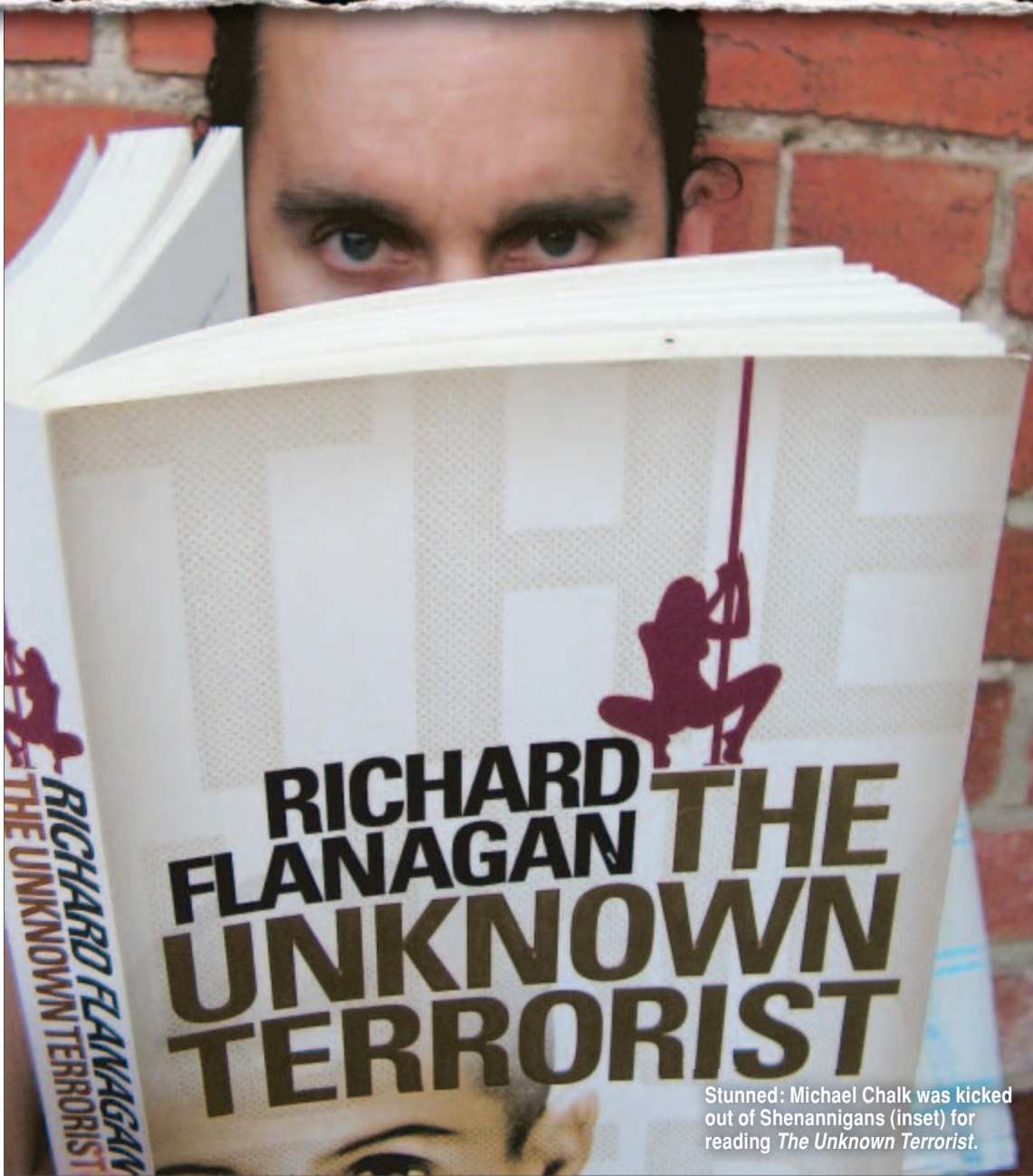
The Cairns Post

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It's Cyclone GUBA!

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MEET OUR ACCIDENTAL TERRORIST



Stunned: Michael Chalk was kicked out of Shenannigans (inset) for reading *The Unknown Terrorist*.

Bookworm booted from pub thanks to paranoid patrons

EXCLUSIVE
Gavin King

BOUNCERS kicked a Melbourne man out of a Cairns pub after paranoid patrons complained that he was reading a book called *The Unknown Terrorist*.

Teacher Michael Chalk, who was in Cairns for an education conference, left the novel on a ledge at Shenannigans to go and dance.

But he was stunned when a bouncer approached him on the dance floor and escorted him outside.

Mr Chalk, 40, was then told to "move on" because of the book he was reading.

In an eerie parallel, the main character of *The Unknown Terrorist* is mistaken for a terrorist and subjected to a witch hunt of paranoia and false perceptions.

A Shenannigans manager did not deny Mr Chalk was ejected, but refused to comment on the matter.

The book's author Richard Flanagan called it an act of "idiocy".

"It was my last night in Cairns so after dinner I walked into Shenannigans and decided to have a bit of a dance," Mr Chalk said.

"I put the book face up on a ledge near the dance floor.

"Shortly after, a security guard came over to me and said 'move to the front please sir'.

"I hadn't even bought a drink yet so I asked why, and he said he'd explain outside.

"We were on the footpath and he said several customers had complained about the literature I was reading, and I'd have to move on.

"I was absolutely flabbergasted."

Mr Chalk believes his olive skin and dark hair may have been a factor in his removal, particularly when connected with the title of the book.

"I found it quite distressing and I did feel a little bit scared," told *The Cairns Post* yesterday.

"I was wondering whether I'm in a place where everyone is in the grip of fear where they see danger everywhere, or the sort of place where a vigilante group might hunt me down for reading a book."

Mr Flanagan, a bestselling author who also wrote *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, said he was appalled by the pub's actions.

"When the paranoia in our society has reached this level of idiocy, when you can be thrown out of a bar because of a book cover," he said.

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