



Sometimes **death** is the only thing  
that can make you feel really alive

# CHASING THE RAPTURE

MALCOLM ROSE

“Jonab looked into her face. ‘Not just my brain. Yours too. I’m interested in what you’re running away from, Sophie.’  
‘Nothing,’ she snapped. She stood up and strode away. After a few steps, though, she stopped and returned to the table. ‘I’m just running. Okay?’ ”

Chasing the Rapture  
by Malcolm Rose

Published by Raven Books  
An imprint of Ransom Publishing Ltd.  
Unit 7, Brocklands Farm, West Meon, Hampshire GU32 1JN, UK  
[www.ransom.co.uk](http://www.ransom.co.uk)

ISBN 978 178591 693 9  
This ebook edition first published in 2019

Text copyright © 2019 Malcolm Rose  
This edition copyright © 2019 Ransom Publishing Ltd.  
Cover image: [iStockphoto.com/PonyWang](https://www.iStockphoto.com/PonyWang)

A CIP catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library.

All rights reserved. This ebook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights, and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

The right of Malcolm Rose to be identified as the author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

CHASING  
THE  
RAPTURE

MALCOLM ROSE

RAVEN





*For Jess and Colin*

*With thanks to James Manning for legal advice*

*The brain disorders in this book are taken from real cases but the patients themselves are entirely fictional*



Part 1

CRIME



# 1

The guilt was clear on Martha's face. She couldn't hide what she'd done. The horrible smell of burnt silk was proof of her mistake. She held up her husband's shirt. The material that would have lain over his heart had gone. There was a hole where she had rested the iron for too long while she held her breath, distracted, watching the glinting knife in the man's hand closing in slowly on the unsuspecting woman. The woman was always powerless, always the victim, in TV crime. The gaping wound in the red shirt was shaped rather like a heart, near the third buttonhole down, blackened around the edge.

At once, Martha's concentration shifted from the drama on the screen to the coming drama in her own front room. She knew what would happen. She knew from experience that she would be punished. She was clumsy. Ben told her often enough. 'Clumsy bitch!' he

always said. He shouted really. That's what ate away at her confidence. His constant heckling made her awkward and nervous. And she knew that this time it was his favourite shirt she'd ruined.

Ben stood up, staring first at his shirt and then at his wife. 'That's my ...' he bellowed.

She backed away. 'I know. I'm sorry.'

She still held up the shirt. Like a red rag to a bull.

He stepped towards her, picked up the iron from the pretty patterned cover. It was heavy and hot in his fist. Some black smoke rose from the charred fragments still stuck underneath.

Martha cowered. 'No. I didn't mean to. It was the programme ...'

'My best,' he yelled at her. 'My only silk one.'

A small hand pushed the living-room door open just a few centimetres and a young, frightened face gazed through the crack.

Consumed by their own world, neither of the adults noticed.

Ben thrust the ironing board to one side and it clattered into the television. Now there was nothing between him and his wife, apart from the wrecked shirt.

'It was an accident. That's all.' Looking huge and bright, a supermoon shone down on the window behind her like a spotlight.

'How many accidents do I have to put up with?'

'I'm sorry. Really, Ben, I'm sorry.'

‘This is the final straw.’

She dropped the evidence of her clumsiness and wrapped her arms protectively around her head. ‘No!’ she muttered pointlessly.

With anger and contempt written all over his face, Ben Clinkard raised the iron high. Then he let his frustration pour out.

## 2

Overflowing with lactic acid, her legs were like lead weights. Even her arms felt heavy and her lungs were on fire. She blew out the carbon dioxide and gasped down fresh air, fresh oxygen. Sophie's brain sent out an urgent message for yet more effort from her jaded legs. The response was slight: there was very little left. She was exhausted, gloriously exhausted. The only runners in front of her were a few men, twice her age. All of the other competitors were behind her as she neared the finishing arch with *Yorkshire Park 5km* written across the top. The clock showed 17:05.

There would be no sprint to the end, but her brain would not allow her pace to slacken. She would get a personal best. To the side, Mum and Dad were shouting, cheering like crazy. Her friend, Elizabeth, was jumping up and down. Her coach was scowling as always,

concentrating on what could be better rather than celebrating the triumph of a PB. The crowd clapped and cheered.

Then, suddenly, it was all over. She crossed the line.

She stopped, bent over, hands on knees, and took great big heaving breaths. Sweat ran down her face and back. A voice thundered, 'Howzat, ladies and gentlemen! First female runner home – and first Junior: Sophie Lightwing. Fourteen years old.' An official handed her a bottle of water and she nodded her thanks. Someone else gave her a medal and a winner's T-shirt, and she smiled. Nothing formal, like a podium presentation of gold, silver and bronze, but in the park there was genuine appreciation of her performance.

Another runner pulled up next to her and, hands on hips, also took great mouthfuls of air. One of the stewards handed him some water too.

The amplified voice announced, 'Second Junior runner: Jonah Quinn. Fifteen years old.'

Panting, he glanced at Sophie and nodded. 'High-voltage run.'

Sophie took his comment as a compliment. 'Your name's Jonah?' With a pained grin, she added, 'You're a long way from home.'

The boy groaned. 'You're not about to crack a joke about living in Wales, are you?'

'Too good an opportunity to miss.'

He shook his head and drops of sweat trickled over

his cheeks. ‘One: I’ve heard it seven hundred times so it’s starting to lose its edge. Two: Jonah wasn’t swallowed by a whale. It was a big fish.’

‘How inconsiderate of him to ruin a good joke.’

‘Good?’ Jonah wiped his runny nose on his wrist band and finished his water in one swig.

Running a hand over her short dark hair, Sophie replied, ‘The best I can do after a race.’

Jonah smiled at her. ‘I need more water.’

He headed towards the table to get another drink. No one came to congratulate him.

Sophie had always run. She never walked to a friend’s house; she ran. She never took the bus to the hospital; she pocketed the fare and ran instead. At school, she ran everywhere, despite the teachers’ cries. It was what she was designed to do. Strong legs, big heart and lungs, thin as a rake.

Now, she relished her ability to leave almost everyone behind, to leave almost *everything* behind.

‘And then she said, “I don’t want you out late. Do you know how many girls get mugged, murdered – or worse?”’

Sophie almost choked on her water. ‘What’s worse than being murdered?’

Most of the runners had scattered and the park had returned to normal. Elizabeth had returned to normal as

well, complaining about her mother again. ‘According to Mum, when they disappear off the streets. Abducted or something. Turned into sex slaves. Never to be seen again. She’s paranoid.’

Sophie shrugged. ‘Parents are.’

A gust of wind sent crispy brown leaves flying across the park like an aerial version of Poohsticks. As accompaniment, church bells began to boom chaotically on the other side of the city’s green oasis.

Her mobile glued to her right hand, Elizabeth mimicked her mother’s scratchy voice. “Your skirt’s too short.” “Too much make-up.” She sighed. “You haven’t been out *enjoying* yourself, have you?” “Have you been drinking?” “Have you been with a boy?” “How old was he?” What a pain! Her purpose in life is to stop me having fun. I’ll tell you what. She’s scared I might have a better time than she did when she was my age.’

Sophie laughed. ‘Probably.’

‘I wish I could go and live with my dad and his new partner. She seems okay.’

A few metres in front of the bench where they were sitting, two blackbirds were flicking over dead leaves with their beaks, searching for grubs, insects and worms. Two hunched-up old people shuffled slowly past, with their faces set permanently to grumpy.

‘Talking of being with a boy,’ Elizabeth said, holding up the screen of her phone, ‘I caught you at the end of the race.’

Sophie glanced at the photo. ‘His name’s Jonah.’

‘A bit scrawny, but I’ve seen worse.’

‘He wasn’t chatting me up.’

Elizabeth nudged her friend. ‘Yeah, right.’

Changing the subject, Sophie said, ‘My knees ache.’

‘I’m not surprised. You’ll wear them out before you can walk into a pub – legally.’

Grinning, Sophie nodded towards two boys who were squaring up to each other near the café.

‘Year Tens from school,’ said Elizabeth.

‘Yeah.’

‘We could go over and stop them.’

Sophie shook her head. ‘Let them sort it out like all boys do. They argue with their fists.’ She seemed to relish the coming fight.

She didn’t have to wait for long. One of them flew at the other like a wind turbine, arms whirling ineffectually. Slickly, the second boy sidestepped the torrent of arms and fists. He unleashed a punch to the side of his opponent’s face, kneed him in the thigh, and it was all over.

Sophie said, ‘Ah. I was wrong. They argue with their knees as well.’

The loser limped away on a dead leg.

Sophie rubbed her left thigh. ‘Now he knows how I feel.’

‘Actually,’ Elizabeth said, ‘he’s not bad. Not the windmill guy, the short black hair.’ Standing up, she

smiled coyly at the victor. ‘I ought to go and make sure he’s all right.’

With a grin, Sophie shook her head. ‘You’re supposed to be impressed by brain, not brawn.’

‘Nothing wrong with a bit of brawn – as long as it’s got a pretty face. And it can make me laugh.’

‘The other one made *me* laugh.’

‘Yeah. For all the wrong reasons. Anyway,’ Elizabeth added, ‘you wouldn’t be any good in a scrap at the moment. Not with your knackered knees.’

‘I only fight with my brain,’ Sophie said. She wasn’t interested in boys. At least, not in the same way as her friend. ‘Go on. Go and try your luck. Mum and Dad’ll be waiting for me.’



Malcolm Rose is an established, award-winning author, noted for his gripping crime/thriller stories – all with a solid scientific basis.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Malcolm was a university lecturer and researcher in chemistry.

He says that chemistry and writing are not so different. *‘In one life, I mix chemicals, stew them for a while and observe the reaction. In the other, I mix characters, stir in a bit of conflict and, again, observe the outcome.’*