Three Bullets

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Three Bullets

MELVIN BURGESS



ANDERSEN PRESS

First published in 2021 by
Andersen Press Limited
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 2SA
Vijverlaan 48, 3062 HL Rotterdam, Nederland
www.andersenpress.co.uk

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

ISBN 978 1 83913 050 2

Printed and bound in Great Britain
by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

Ruled Britannia

This book is part of a triptych of novels; three separate stories all taking place in the same imagined world. *One Drop*, by Pete Kalu, *The Second Coming*, by Tariq Mehmood, as well as my own book, *Three Bullets*, all take place in the UK as it might be in the near future.

Thanks to Pete and Tariq not just in terms of world building but with conversations about race, politics, gender and life in general, not to mention all the hard work that went into writing notes for one another. You guys opened a lot of doors for me – I've not had so much fun writing a book for years.

You can find out more about the Triptych on our Facebook page,
https://www.facebook.com/RuledBritannia/
Or at www.ruledbritannia.net

For my Anita,
who made Lockdown such a pleasure

1

My name is Martina. You won't like me, not many people do. Back then I lived in south Manchester with my little brother Rowan, an odious brat; my mum, a nutjob; and my friend Maude, who I used to hate but, well, she didn't turn out as bad as she might have done, put it like that. She kind of owed me, which helped. If it wasn't for me, she'd have been dead meat by then, no question.

Not so long before, I had loads of friends – well, people I knew, anyway. Not all of them were exactly friends. Now I just had Maude. She used to go to the same school as me, back in the day. We never hung out. She was way over my head. She was two years older than me and she was everything I'm not. She was *hot.* I'm not hot. Mind you, she didn't stay so hot, not without the hot short skirts and the hot tight jeans and the hot make-up. She still had the nice bum and boobs but if you dropped her back in a half decent school, she would truly *not* be lead bitch. She still got loads of boys but all you needed round there to get any number of boys was a pair of legs you could still open and that was as good as hot.

She was smart as well, which I never was – I mean, good-at-lessons smart. Good at sport and that. Oh, and a bitch. Did I mention that? A bully. You know the sort. She wouldn't even

talk to me because I wasn't cool enough. She was in a group of girls who somehow found out that I was wearing a thong one day and pulled my skirt up over my head so that everyone could see my spotty bottom. That was nice.

Then her house got bombed, and her mum and dad both got killed, and her brother, who she adored, pulled her out of the rubble, put her on a mattress on the side of the road and ran away to who-knows-where.

Maude's brother did the sensible thing. If my mum had been as dead as hers, I'd have gone, too. I'd've gone before you could lick the fat off your fingers. I was furious when my dad dragged her home on that mattress to live with us. I never saw a lot of my dad because he was always away doing important war stuff. So then what? He finally gets home after being away for months, and the first thing he does is adopt the monster bitch girl from school who spent three months calling me Cheesewire. And then he goes away again! How's that for fair, eh, Dad?

'I don't care how horrible she was, she has nothing now,' he said. Then he left us again to get on with his war work.

See? Mum needed him. I needed him. *We* needed him. And instead of helping us, he spent all his time helping everyone else. Then he brings in cheesewire girl and leaves us on our own to look after *her*!

Unbelievable.

I remember standing in the doorway of her room, looking at her lying there, all bruised and ugly. One side of her face was out like a melon, she had a bloodstained bandage around her head. She'd been bleeding from her ear.

'Not so hot now, are you?' I said.

I said it quite loud. Loud enough for her to hear if she was awake – if she could still hear – but not loud enough for Mum to hear downstairs. She opened her eyes, looked at me, turned over and lay still.

Serves you right, I thought. But I felt bad.

She woke up a few days later and I still don't know if she heard me that day. But I really hope not because we became mates. She spent a week eating all the Pot Noodles I'd got from when they bombed the Co-op, then one day she lifted her head and looked at me across the table.

'Did you get them?' she asked. 'The noodles?'

I nodded. She nodded.

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'I'm really, really sorry, Marti.' I suppose she was talking about the thong and stuff. 'I'll come out with you tomorrow and help.'

And she did. And – she was OK, Maude. She stuck to her word, for you or against you, which I liked. She had principles, which I kind of admired because I don't have any myself.

'A person who stands for nothing will fall for anything,' she kept telling me. Which was really annoying because I lent her that book, and also because she's the one who fell for people's bullshit every time. All you had to do was agree with her and she'd follow you anywhere. I called her Rubblehead because I think all that rubble sitting on her head for a day must have knocked some generosity of spirit into her.

'You were such a bitch before. That bomb was a blessing,' I told her. And she laughed, but actually it's true. See? Even bombs can be a blessing.

That was a joke. Right?

2

So I woke up and it was pitch black, and I couldn't see a thing and there was a great bellowing and roaring all around.

I thought, This is it. There was a big crash and a bang that knocked the breath out of me. There were bombs going off all around. It was pitch black but then there was this blinding white flash for a moment, and everything looked normal. The room, everything. I was still in bed. The walls, still there. I saw it all in a fraction of a second. The door. The glass was still in the windows, but this weird blanket of dust was creeping in at the edges.

My mum was always nagging us to sleep down in the basement with her and Rowan, but I had my reasons for staying on the first floor. There's lots of ways to die when your house gets hit. You can get burned to death. You can have a lump of masonry fall on your head. You can choke on smoke or get thrown up into the air and come down on the heap of rubble that was once your bedroom. Or, you can get buried under the wreckage with slow internal bleeding that hurts like hell, with not enough air to breathe and tonnes of bricks pressing down on top of you, hoping someone will come along and dig you out but knowing that they probably won't. I'd put some thought into this and that last one was my least favourite way of dying. Which is why I always slept on the first floor. The attic – even

a little bomb is going to come through the roof and get you. Ground floor, if the house falls down – you're dead.

Technically the basement was the safest place, but that basement was so cold and damp. The gas went last year and we only got electric for a few hours here and there.

I got this horrendous vertigo, like I was falling, but I was still in the room lying on my bed. Then, a big bump. The glass shattered in the windows. The incendiaries were flashing – one, two, three, four, like that – and I could see Maude sitting up in bed with her hair in little curls sticking up. She turned to look at me in strobe and I remember it so well, her with her blonde hair all sticking up with all that gel she used, like some crazy doll. I just had time to notice that there was something funny about the ceiling when the room began to fill up with dust. Thicker and thicker. Suddenly we were both choking and we knew we had to get out quick.

I jumped up and my head hit the roof. The room had shrunk! I was like, WTF? but there was no time to think. There was another flash and you could see how the dust was swirling around by the broken windows. I bent down under my bed to drag out my backpack, but the space under the bed had shrunk just like the room had and it was jammed tight.

'Marti!' Maude shrieked, because I wasn't getting out fast enough. You could hear the whole house groaning. But no way, *no way* was my beloved backpack staying behind because then I might just as well be dead. So I was up on my feet and heaving and tugging at it, screaming, 'Maude, Maude!' as loud as I could for her to help me, and we were both coughing and hacking and choking. But then there was another flash and that

damn ceiling was even lower, like it was some kind of monster psycho ceiling coming to get me, with cracks all over it and its insides spilling out through them, so I had to leave the backpack after all and make a dash for the window. There was both of us scrambling out, getting cut on the jags of broken glass still in the window. I cut myself badly, actually, on the arm and on my thigh. It was the dead of night. So dark. There was another flash – thank God! You have no idea how dark it gets when there's no electricity. But that dust – you couldn't even breathe. Claustrophobia? Tell me about it.

We got out onto the flat bit on top of the bay window and scuttled to the edge and then paused. It was a big drop from up there. Bombs were still going off nearby and we were still getting flashes of lights from incendiaries – but Lo! The whole house had shrunk. Instead of a view across to the stumps of the university buildings on the other side of Platt Fields, we were halfway to the ground.

What must have happened, we worked out later, is bombs must have gone off on each side of the house. The blast punched in the ground-floor walls so the house folded up under us like a pack of cards, and the attic floor above us, which was a rubbish floor that a cheap builder put in for Mum and Dad when I was just a wean, came down inside our room more or less in one piece, which is why the ceiling was so close.

We were both hanging on for dear life because it was a long way down from there normally, but when the next burst of

incendiaries went off, you could see that actually, now it was just a short drop down. So we just stepped down from the top of the bay window, which should have been three metres off the ground, straight into the front garden.

We stood there a moment coughing, like, *Really? Is that it?* We couldn't believe we were out, just like that. We walked together across the road like a couple of old folk going for a stroll and looked back to where the house was, which was like a ghost house, in complete and utter darkness, except for the flashes, which were getting duller now as the incendiaries marched past us. The whole thing was totally surreal.

'So I was right about sleeping up there,' I said.

'Yeah,' said Maude. 'Unbelievable. I mean, it looks like that was the only floor that was . . .'

I knew what she was about to say. The first floor was the only one you stood a decent chance of coming out of alive. But then we both looked at each other, because in our relief at being alive, we forgot . . .

Maude said '—Mum.'

She'd started to call my mum just Mum, which annoyed me because she was *my* mum, not hers. But I didn't pick her up on it because – yeah, Mum! She was under all that rubble.

'Rowan,' she said.

'My backpack,' I said, and we both ran back to the house just in time to see it go up. There was no warning – no missile or whistle or anything. It just went *boom*. We both flew up in the air in the blast. I didn't actually see it because I was going backwards at the time. Then I was rolling around on my back

with bits of brick and smoking sparks falling around me, trying to get my breath and work out how many ribs I'd broken. None actually, thanks for asking. By the time I got to sit up, everything was in darkness again and you could just hear this rumbling, crashing, rolling kind of noise, which I think must have been the house falling down. Jesus. Later, I always thought of that as the sound of my mum dying.

We ran up to it, but bits of house were still falling off and it was too dangerous. It was dark, there was fire inside the house but you couldn't see much. You could *hear* stuff hitting the ground around you. It was hard to breathe. It started raining. I remember being surprised at how cold the rain was. Quite icy on the skin. It's funny what stays in your head. We stood at the front where her bedroom used to be, shouting, 'Mum! Mum! Mum!' at the top of our voices at the heaps of bricks, but no one answered. The bombs were still marching about but further away now.

People came out with torches and shovels and stuff to help. Once the dust began to clear – the rain helped – you could see the house was just a pile of rubble and tangled beams and windows and cables and pipes and bits of fire and things. Our things. We pulled away at it all night, and it was the hardest and most horrible work anyone ever did. We didn't get any sleep, obvs. When the morning came and we could see, the devastation was so bad, you just knew you were wasting your time. Some of the neighbours drifted off, but we didn't stop. We took breaks from the digging at Thomas's house across the road, sipping hot tea and eating chickpeas with the other casualties. Veronica from next door had lost her house too. It actually looked as if it had fallen

sideways onto ours, which irritated me. I mean – it just made things worse, you know?

She bandaged up my thigh for me. No one cried. What can you do? You just sit there and think to yourself that one day, maybe soon, you're going to cry your eyes out about this. But not now.

3

Mum and my brother Rowan had been sleeping in the basement which had the two side walls fall in on it and the ceiling, our floor, came down on top of that. So they were dead, weren't they? Flat as cereal packets. Even so, I dug for two days to get down to them, then at the end of the second day, when we reached ground zero – Mum zero, let's face it – that's when I got the willies and Maude and some of the neighbours made me go and wait across the road while they cleared off the final layers. It took them a few hours until Maude came to find me and gave me a little nod, and I didn't follow her when she went back. I didn't want to see it, thanks.

I cried then. Then, I cried. She'd been a crap mum for the last couple of years, but that was just because she couldn't cope with the war and the bombs and the people dying so she got into all this weird secrecy and hiding and conspiracy theories. But before that, she'd been a good mum. And even if she hadn't been, she was still *my* mum, the only mum I'd ever had or could have, and you have to love your mum, don't you? – the woman who gave birth to you and loved you no matter what.

We buried her a couple of days later in the Central Cemetery. I'm mostly glad I never got to see her dead, because who knows

what she was like underneath all that rubble? In another way, though, it does my head in because I keep getting these fantasies, like the one where she's just popped out to see someone so she wasn't even in when the house got hit, or perhaps she was having a secret affair with someone, but she got stuck and only came back after we left, and now she's looking everywhere for us and can't find us. Whereas, if I'd seen her, in whatever mess she was in, then I'd know for sure she was dead, right here in my heart, and that she is never going to come back.

But whatever my heart thought and hoped, my brain knew. My mum was dead and I was an orphan, free to realise my dream of running away from this benighted s***hole and make my home somewhere decent, somewhere with shops and beauty spas and schools and hospitals that don't get bombed. The good things in life. I remembered them and I wanted them back. Hot chocolate and tea. Nice meals every day, cake, going to the cinema, make-up, eating out, pizza, burgers, frothy coffee. Wine. Vodka. Sex. Drugs. All of it.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, What a monster! Her mum's just been squashed flat like a beetle and here she is celebrating her freedom. But don't get me wrong – I loved my mum. Not my brother Rowan, though. I didn't love him, that's true, so in that respect I *am* a monster. But my mum, yeah. Every time I think about her, even now, it hurts like a punch to the stomach. She was such a stubborn bitch! And a stupid cow, as I often had to remind her. I didn't *like* her much, but I loved her and I wept my little heart out, all on my own, sitting on the loo in Thomas's basement, until someone knocked on the door and said they

needed a poo, so I wiped my eyes on some toilet paper and got on with life.

There was only one thing for me to do now. Get the you-know-what out of there and start to *live.*

We'd had to dig down through our room to get down to Mum, so I'd already pulled out some of my stuff. A few clothes. I got my board that I painted in art class while school was still going: 'Who is Martina Okoro?' Some other bits and pieces. Couple of books. My Black Sabrina doll with the braids and hair extensions. I used to collect them for a while until I got sick of how pretty they all were – they were making me jealous – so I got rid of them all except her. My money I'd saved. Yeah, and a little bag with some gold in it. A gold chain, a few gold coins. My secret phone, which was still there under the mattress where I hid it when I slept. But most importantly – I got my backpack! Yeah! My backpack had been packed for years, just waiting for the chance to get out of this dump to a sensible country where you can actually have a life.

It was time to go. I'd spent the past few years hanging around against my better judgment looking after my mum. It was time to think about myself for a change. We all have our dreams and ambitions. Some want to Do Good, some want to travel, some want to make loads of money. I wanted to spend my war being decadent. Drugs, booze and sex. Mostly sex. Lots of sex. Every single way you can imagine.

People who know me would be surprised to hear me say that because I'm such a prude. I *never* swear. I can't watch when a

sex scene comes on a film, I have to put my head in my hands or look the other way. I'm such an iron virgin that not only have I never had sex, I've never even been *kissed.* It's true. But inside, there's a dirty bitch waiting to come out who only I know, just waiting for the right chance to be introduced to the right people. It's just that none of them have chanced along to meet me yet.

I was soooo looking forward to it.

I was already packed – I'd been packing for years. That backpack was the first thing I went looking for after the bomb, because you can bet there were plenty of people beetling about in the rubble that day, pretending to help, who were really just looking out for what they could loot. I can't tell you how relieved I was to get to it first, still intact.

All the essentials were in there. Underwear. Five or six changes of clothes. Make-up. Books – *The Gender Games* and my copy of the autobiography of Malcolm X, that my dad gave to me. If I wasn't so besotted with Beyoncé, it would be Malcolm X who'd be my hero. His motto is my motto: 'By any means necessary'. It's just that he wanted equal rights by any means necessary, and I want to get out of this hole and get stoned and you-know-whated by any means necessary. I know a lot of people who admire Malcolm X as much as I do, but none of them admire him quite like me. The big difference is that whereas they admire him for the Black liberation years, I revere him for the New York years, when he was out there busy getting his hair straightened into a conk, taking loads of cocaine, wearing a zoot and sleeping with white girls.

And my meds, they were in there. About three months'

supply – enough to get me to Amsterdam, city of fun, where you can buy the things over the counter, so they say. I'm never without a supply of meds. You better believe it.

I have family in Amsterdam. One, maybe two half brothers from my dad's past life. I haven't heard from them in ages and I've never seen much of them anyway so I can't say that they're the main attraction. But it helps to have a foothold, you know what I mean?

Once I left the loo, I got outside, hid myself away round behind the back of Thomas's house and took out my secret phone and my earphones to listen to some tunes. The phone had a bit of juice in it, where I'd charged it at Thomas's generator. Nothing but the best for our Thomas.

It was one of my very precious things, that phone. It was a present from my dad, the last present he ever gave me before he disappeared. He left one with Maude and one with Mum, but would you believe those bitches, they lost theirs ages ago, which was really careless of them, because they both knew how important the software on it was to Dad and the people he worked with. Not to mention all those poor suckers down there in the ERAC at Huntingdon, who were having their brains spring-cleaned twice a day, courtesy of the Brotherhood of the Blood of Jesus. You want to know how important that software actually was? So important it had been bugged so that it couldn't be copied, or downloaded or duplicated in case anyone fiddled with it or put a virus in it or learned how to decode it. That important. Yes, those bitches had lost

their phones and I still had mine, like the faithful daughter I was.

Which meant I had the only copy of Dad's Very Important Software existing on the entire planet. Big responsibility, huh?

Who'd have thought it?

You might not have heard about the ERAC at Huntingdon. The Bloods never exactly advertised it, obvs, and our lot up here, the FNA, the Free Northern Army, they were never too keen on making it public knowledge either. It's the old story. Most of them refused to believe it existed in the first place, and the ones that did were like, Are you kidding? You want *us* to deal with something happening way down there? That's up to the East Anglian bunch, or the southern bunch. We're too busy fighting for our own people.

ERAC stands for Evangelical Realignment Centre. It's where the Bloods fix up idolaters and heretics and believers in equal rights, that sort of thing, to put them back on the straight and narrow. Of course, being white supremacists, they have their own ways of working out if you are a heretic. So for instance, if you're south Asian in descent, you're a Muslim. Stands to reason. If you're Black, you may or may not be a Muslim, but best to take no chances. If you're a Black Christian, you're going to be the wrong kind of Christian, and if you're not a Christian, you'll have more than likely got your head full of all that equal rights nonsense anyway. Best to shove you in there, too.

I'm not saying there's no white people in ERAC, just that

they need pretty good proof that you belong there. As opposed to no proof whatsoever if you're Black.

White supremacists, don't cha just love 'em?

The ERAC isn't just any old internment camp. It's an experimental facility. They put a chip in your head, an actual microchip, and they reboot your identity with it. I know! Don't ask. It literally makes my skin crawl. They use some kind of software, but software just happens to be the thing my dad was a genius at. He'd been developing a virus that could undo the damage.

Clever stuff. Clever Dad. And he may have actually done it, too. He was just about to go down south to deliver the software when he vanished overnight. Fortunately he'd put copies of it on these phones which he then handed out – one to Mum, one to me and one to Maude – to keep safe if anything happened to him.

. . . Not that there was any need to say anything about me still having that phone to Maude. She didn't need to know everything. I told myself, 'It's a safe bet that if she does ever find out I still have it, she will seriously try to kill me.' As far as she was concerned my phone disappeared in the same police raid as hers and Mum's a few days after Dad disappeared. We thought we were safe from the Bloods because at that time, they were a hundred miles away still busy fighting for Birmingham. It must have been a task force they sent up from down there, just to take my dad out. They knew what a genius he was, even if the FNA didn't. They took him out and I guess we ought to be thankful they didn't come back and take us out as well. But they didn't. Instead they came back and took all the hardware we had – laptops, phones, USB

sticks, the lot. My dad's software, that he had spent his life working on – gone. Every last copy. And yet . . . here was my phone that Dad gave me, right here in my hand. Odd, eh? The world is full of contradictions, isn't it? You just never can tell.

I only kept it because it was a real good phone, better than my other one. It had my music on it, including the playlist my dad made for me. Wi-fi was on and off like a traffic light, the mobile masts were always being knocked out, so if you wanted tunes on demand, you needed a hard copy. Normally I kept the secret phone, well . . . secret. You know? And quiet. But on this occasion my other phone, my cheap, nasty public phone, didn't make it out of the house, so there was no choice if I wanted to listen to my tunes. Even so, I *so* wished I didn't have it, because what it meant was, that before heading off to Hull to catch a ferry on my way to Amsterdam, city of my dreams and my future home, I was supposed to go south, down towards Blood territory to deliver the software and fulfil my dad's crazy dreams of giving all those poor lost souls in the ERAC their freedom. Who, frankly, were never any of my business in the first place, except that he made me promise I would.

Except – really? I mean – *really?* Yes, I know I promised my dad if anything happened to him I'd make sure that software got down to the ERAC in Huntingdon. And yes, I know that Maude's poor heart had been broken into a thousand pieces when all that hardware went missing, taking my dad's dreams with them, which of course had become her dreams too, ever since he saved her life . . . But the thing is this; no one in the world – *no one* – had any idea that I still had that phone with my dad's software intact. And . . .

Dad was dead, wasn't he? He *had* to be dead – why would the Bloods keep someone like him alive? And promises don't count to dead people, do they? My dad was a man with a huge brain, so huge that when he spoke to you, you often didn't know what he was talking about. Tell the truth, I sometimes wonder if he understood himself. Yeah, he was a brain. But he was a dead brain now.

I kneeled down there among the bins, where I doubtless belonged. The sweet notes of Sylvester's 'You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)' filled my ears. A message from my dad. I tapped my fingers on my knee in time to the music. I could hear my dad in my ear, saying . . . 'Is it a man? Is it a woman? Do we care? NOOOOOOO!'

When we first realised that Dad had gone from our lives for ever, first thing Maude did was try to give the software to the FNA. But as far as they were concerned, my dad was just another crazy old Black man with a bunch of crazy old Black dreams that were never going to come true. After that, when they said no, she was all ready to set off on her own, all the way down there, into the very teeth of the enemy, to deliver a phone full of crazy software to some guy my dad used to know, who might not even be alive any more. Even though she'd almost certainly never make it. Even though she had no idea whether the software would even work or not. And even though she really owed it to me to stay and help me look after my mum, because I was the one who saved her life.

But! Guess what? It came to pass that it was exactly at that moment that the Bloods came and raided our house, so

she couldn't go and had to stay and help me look after Mum after all.

So there I was behind the bins, thinking, Hmmm. So, what's it gonna be, Marti? Amsterdam, with its drugs, sex and its cheap, hedonistic lifestyle? Or the ERAC, with the Bloods and all their attendant oppression, racism, torture, rape and almost certain death? Because, let's face it, as I stood there in my stockinged feet, I represented everything – *everything* – that the Bloods hated. If they ever got their hands on me, I was worse than dead. They'd spend the rest of eternity beating me up and pulling out my fingernails just for fun.

Now let me see . . .

In case you're wondering, I'm not a Muslim. Neither was my mum or my dad. And I'm not a Christian or political or anything really, except I'm really, really, really pro-Martina Okoro. So what is it about me they would hate so much?

You may well ask.

The music moved on. It was my hero, Beyoncé. I love her so much. I want to be as much like her as it's possible to be. Same face, same boobs, same life. I know, I know! Dream on. But we all need an ambition in life to keep us going. Mine just happens to be being Beyoncé.

I sat there for a few more minutes, waiting and thinking, thinking and waiting. What was it to be? Fulfilling my dad's noble ambitions – or my petty, small selfish ones? Putting myself in grave personal danger for the greater good, or running for cover and a selfish, hedonistic lifestyle? Fighting for hope,

freedom and democracy for my fellow countrymen – or making a run for it to grab whatever I could for myself?

No competition, was it?

Sorry, Dad. I know how much you wanted to help mankind, but the present is more important than the future. More to the point – I am more important than them.

And you? You're dead.

I got up. I had things to do. On the way out I walked right past the bins – Thomas still kept his bins, the snob, even though no one had collected any rubbish for years – but I didn't throw the phone away. Not yet. Those tunes were a present from my dad. They were like messages – memories, bits of information, beliefs. In a way, they were all I had of him.

I loved my dad at least as much as I loved my mum, maybe even more. I don't think I liked him much more than her, but I *admired* him. My mum was too fragile for this world. She didn't have it in her. Actually, I think Mum would have had a hard time coping even in the land of milk and honey, let alone the land of shrapnel and bullet wounds. But my dad was brave and clever and determined – all the things that I'm not and never will be. He seemed to really believe that he could force the world to see things the way he did – which was nonsense of course, but you have to admire him for it. He picked those tunes for me. It was stuff he liked, stuff I'd liked at various times of my life. Stuff my mum liked. Songs that he wanted me to know about, or that showed me something he thought was important. He'd really thought about it, like he thought about everything. He was dead, dead as a leg of lamb. He was a lousy dad even when he was alive, always away

looking after anyone on Earth so long as they weren't related to him, as far as I could make out. But those songs were all I had of him, and I wasn't anywhere near ready to chuck them in the bin.

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'Ground-breaking . . . remains the best book about teenagers and drugs to this day'
Guardian



The Lost Witch

MELVIN BURGESS

Bea has started to hear and see things that no one else can – creatures, voices, visions. Then strangers visit Bea and tell her she is different: she has the rare powers of a witch. They warn her she is being hunted. Her parents think she is hallucinating and needs help. All Bea wants to do is get on with her life, and to get closer to Lars, the mysterious young man she has met at the skate park. But her life is in danger, and she must break free. The question is – who can she trust?

'Extraordinary'
Simon Mayo,
Simon Mayo's Books of the Year podcast

'Rich, twisty storytelling'
Sunday Times

