


PACE YOURSELF. TIME YOUR LAPS.
DON'T GET KILLED.

THE RUNNING CLUB



AUTHOR OF
THE
TRIVIA
NIGHT

A L I L O W E

The Running Club

About the author

Ali Lowe has been a journalist for twenty years. She has written for bridal magazines, parenting titles, websites and newspapers in London and then Australia, after she moved to Sydney sixteen years ago on a trip that was meant to last a year. She was Features Editor at *OK!* in London, where she memorably stalked celebrities in Elton John's garden at his annual White Tie and Tiara ball.

Ali lives on the northern beaches of Sydney with her husband and three young children. *The Running Club* is her second novel.

Also by Ali Lowe

The Trivia Night

ALI LOWE

The Running Club



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1

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For Joey. 'There's nothing like a
sister to understand the *real* you.'

WELCOME TO THE ESPERANCE RUNNING CLUB

Please fill in the following details so we can set up a running profile for each member, compare lap times and make sure that everyone's keeping on top of their training!



Name: Carole Latimer



Best lap time: 119.0 seconds



Emergency contact 1: Max Latimer (husband)

Emergency Contact 2: Lottie Denton (best friend)



Notes: Severe peanut allergy



Name: Lottie Denton



Best lap time: 154.3 seconds



Emergency contact 1: Dr Piers Denton (husband)

Emergency Contact 2: Shelby Massini (twin sister)



Name: Freya Harrington



Best lap time: 139.1 seconds



Emergency contact 1: Bernard Harrington (husband)

Emergency Contact 2: Lottie Denton (childhood friend)



Name: Shelby Massini



Best lap time: 119.7 seconds



Emergency contact 1: Tino Massini (husband)

Emergency contact 2: Max "Latto" Latimer (friend)



Prologue

I turn left onto the pavement, always left. Glance down the hill towards Esperance Reserve, stop at the lights to tighten the laces of my brand-new running shoes. The rules of the running club are the same as they have always been: keep your breath steady, keep your mind sharp, record your laps! Only now there's a new one: don't get killed.

I slow down as I reach the seafront, turn to admire my slender silhouette in the French window of Esperance's most extravagant beachside home. A polished red sports car in the driveway just adds to the grandeur, sitting pretty on the verge of the expansive front lawn with a gaudy designer water feature as its centrepiece. Next, a large, white-fronted home with bottle-green Italian-style shutters and out-of-control jasmine creeping up the façade, wily in its efforts. Worth six million dollars, I heard. Every house comes with a hefty price tag in Esperance. You pay for paradise – for neat front lawns and infinity pools; for snaking, flower-lined pathways and white picket fences; for polished bus-stop windows and fancy lattes: soya milk, rice milk, oat milk, goat milk!

You pay a premium.

Perhaps even with your life.

The air is pure today, with a faint waft of sea spray. It is only if you close your eyes you might sense it: the cloying scent of death. It hung heavy in the air after they found the body in the tree-lined clearing that runs parallel to the

running track. Eyes open and face set in a smirk. A fingernail neatly lacquered with her favourite shade, Cajun Sunset, standing erect, like a tiny tombstone in the mulch, long hair spread about her like Medusa. And she *was* like Medusa! She could turn you to stone with just one gaze.

That scream when her body was found was shrill enough to pierce the pendulous, grey clouds and force out the last torrents of warm spring rain. The residents of Esperance heard it as keenly as they heard the secrets that came spurting out like champagne through the neck of a shaken-up bottle in the days that followed.

So many secrets.

So many lies.

So much vengeance.

But could anyone honestly say she didn't have it coming?

Now, six weeks on, the sun has cleared the charcoal clouds that bathed our beachside town in grey in the days after her death. Esperance has a new aroma: summer. A season where things prosper and grow, where nothing dies.

In this tiny, pristine patch of the world, everyone knows you need to be perfect to survive.

I bend down, touch my toes, my legs ready to pound the pavement alongside the mulch that cushioned the decaying body of a woman who was once just like me. Who was one of us.

I really must stop thinking about it now. Lay it to rest. You can't dwell on the past, you must move on, just as I have done. I am the butterfly emerged from a cocoon, a chick fleeing the confines of the nest, a phoenix from the ashes!

I've been given a second chance at life.

I am alive. She is not.

So traumatic.

So unfair.

So wasteful.

So pleased I got away with it.