

Tamsyn Murray was born in Cornwall in the Chinese Year of the Rat. This makes her charming, creative and curious (on a good day) but also selfish, restless and impatient (v. v. bad day).

After moving around a lot during her early years, she now lives in London with her husband and her daughter. At least her body does. Her mind tends to prefer imaginary places and wanders off whenever it can but that's not necessarily a bad thing in a writer.

When she isn't making things up, you might find Tamsyn on the stage, pretending to be someone else. She occasionally auditions for TV talent shows. One day she might get past the first round . . .

Find out more about Tamsyn at her website:
www.tamsynmurray.co.uk

My So-Called Haunting

TAMSYN MURRAY



PICCADILLY PRESS • LONDON

First published in Great Britain in 2010
by Piccadilly Press Ltd,
5 Castle Road, London NW1 8PR
www.piccadillypress.co.uk

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A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN: 978 1 84812 092 1 (paperback)

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in the UK by CPI Bookmarque, Croydon, CR0 4TD
Cover design by Patrick Knowles

*For Lisa, Cathy and Alison,
who made growing up so much fun.*



Chapter 1

I knew the woman on the bridge was going to jump a split second before she did.

‘Wait!’

The word was out of my mouth before my brain kicked in and my fingers stretched towards the window of the bus as though dragged on invisible strings. Conversations around me stopped mid-sentence and curious stares shot my way, but I couldn’t wrench my gaze away from the woman on the parapet, and everything else faded into the background. Casting one sorrowful glance over her shoulder, she launched herself into the air and plummeted to the roaring traffic below. I waited for a scream to shatter the chill morning air. It didn’t come. My ears strained for the squeal of brakes and the grim crunch of metal on bone, but there was only silence.

Somehow, that was worse. My eyes closed and I swallowed a wave of sick horror. I'd just watched a woman leap to her death. The fact that I couldn't have stopped her didn't make me feel any better.

Gradually, the sounds of London's rush hour filtered through to my numbed brain. I opened my eyes to see that the traffic was on the move. The engine of the bus roared and we lurched forwards along Hornsey Lane Bridge. Around me, passengers steadied themselves and resumed their activities as though nothing unusual had happened. My outburst had been dismissed. Dotted among the random mixture of age, nationality and dress-sense were several kids in the same Heath Park C of E Secondary uniform that I wore, but it was only my second week at the school so I didn't recognise any faces.

As I gathered my jangling nerves and peered around the packed bus, one thing was obvious; not a single person had seen the woman jump. I ran a shaky hand over my face and sighed, wondering why I was surprised. They were normal people, going about their everyday lives. None of them were like me. None of them saw ghosts.

It's not as interesting as it sounds, being born into a family of psychics. OK, so your mum is much more likely to believe that there's something lurking in the

cupboard at the bottom of your bed, but she'll probably encourage you to have a chat rather than chase it away. Since my mum was the only non-psychic in her family, I didn't even have that luxury. She accepted that ghosts existed, of course; it'd be hard not to when her sister and parents talked about them non-stop, but she couldn't see or hear them, and I don't think she ever really understood what it was like to see things other people didn't. I suppose that's why she became a biologist, because science dealt only with hard evidence and facts.

My dad died before I was even born. Mum didn't talk about him much, but I got the idea he hadn't been psychic. It was my aunt that I turned to when I was trying to make sense of my strange gift as I grew up, in spite of the fact that she lived in London and we were in Scotland. Blond-haired and blue-eyed like me, Celestine looked more like my older sister than my aunt, and the gift we shared meant we were on the same wavelength most of the time. When Mum was agonising over a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend a year studying sea horses in the Great Barrier Reef, it was a no-brainer for me to stay with Celestine while she was away. Since GCSEs began in Year Ten, we'd decided I'd stay until I'd done my exams. Sure, I'd miss my life in Edinburgh, but I'd always been a bit of a loner, and there was always MSN for the few friends I'd had. At least I wasn't leaving a best friend behind,

and as for boys – ha! Maybe a fresh start at a new school was just what I needed, and this time I planned to spend less time worrying about the dead and more time on my social life. Seriously, how hard could it be?

‘Hey, Skye,’ Celestine greeted me as I slouched into the kitchen after school and dropped my bag on to the floor. ‘Bad day?’

I slid on to a seat at the breakfast bar and scowled first at her and then at her boyfriend, Jeremy. ‘Is it that obvious?’

She finished drying the cup she was holding and dropped the tea towel next to the sink. ‘Yep. Your mood is greyer than your skirt.’

I stared at her. She’d been able to second-guess my emotions for as long as I could remember. ‘How do you do that? Am I the only person you read more easily than last week’s *Heat*?’

Jeremy rinsed his hands under the tap. ‘No, she does it to me too. You get used to it after a while.’

Celestine smiled. ‘I can see your aura – it’s like a glow around you, reflecting your emotions. Everyone has one, and yours is telling me you’re Grumpy McGrump.’

I had read about auras before but hadn’t realised my aunt could see them; no wonder her people skills were so good. She was spot on about my mood too. After the horror of the journey to school, I’d been followed off the bus by three kids who’d taken it in turns to shout out,

‘Wait!’ in the worst impersonations of my Scottish accent I’d ever heard. I’d scurried inside the school gates with scant minutes to spare and found that Megan, the only girl in my registration group I’d broken the ice with, was off sick. With the horrible image of the suicide ghost on replay in my brain, I’d had the attention span of a toddler on Jelly Tots in my lessons and finished the morning with a stern ticking-off from Mr Evans for daydreaming. By the time he’d let me go, there was nothing left in the canteen except for curled-up sandwiches and an overcooked sausage roll. Then, to round off the perfect Monday, I had an essay on the human reproductive system to write. Was it any wonder I wasn’t doing a happy dance?

‘Why can’t I see auras?’ I asked Celestine, trying to ignore the intense, slightly cross-eyed stare Jeremy was aiming just above my head.

‘Not every psychic can. They’re a bit like the faint blue glow you see around ghosts, but they’re much stronger in the living and more colourful.’ Celestine tilted her head and Jeremy gave up trying to see my aura. ‘Why don’t you tell us what’s bugging you?’

I didn’t need a second invitation. When I’d finished, both she and Jeremy were solemn.

‘I’m not surprised you’re feeling grey,’ Celestine said. ‘What a terrible thing to witness.’

My head slumped on to my folded arms. ‘What I

don't understand is why she would jump again when she's already dead. Why put herself through that?'

'Well, assuming that's how she died, she'll be tied there and probably hasn't worked out how to leave. The rest is just force of habit, I suppose,' Celestine said, her voice filled with sadness. 'Think about it – we're supposed to go straight to the astral plane when we die, but if there's something holding us here then we don't. Some ghosts can't cope when they don't pass across, and suicides tend to find it the hardest.'

'What happened when she – you know – hit the ground?' Jeremy asked, interrupting my train of thought.

'I didn't see,' I answered, frowning slightly. 'I suppose she just sort of disappeared, but maybe she came back to the bridge and did it all again. What if she's a serial suicide?'

Oh God, I really hoped she wasn't. Settling into a new school was hard enough without seeing someone throw themselves off the bridge every time I crossed it.

Jeremy shuddered. 'Imagine what it must be like to take your own life and wake up as a ghost – you're expecting your problems to end and instead things get a thousand times worse.'

An odd tone had crept into his voice, filling me with shame at my selfish thought. It was almost as though he was speaking from experience. I knew he was part psychic, and had got to know a ghost once, but I thought she'd

been a murder victim, not a suicide. Maybe there'd been other ghosts he didn't talk about.

Celestine squeezed his arm, nodding. 'Sometimes it's easier to repeat the same actions day after day than try to work out what to do next. I've seen it at the Dearly D from time to time.'

Part of her job as a psychic at the Church of the Dearly Departed, a spiritualist church in Kensal Green, involved trying to help ghosts contact their loved ones and find their way to the astral plane. I'd been with her a few times and I knew the atmosphere there was often emotionally charged. What I'd seen that morning might all be part of a day's work for her, but I knew she cared about each and every spirit she met and felt duty-bound to do whatever she could for them. It was something else we had in common, which I guess is why the woman on the bridge had affected me so much.

'She seemed so young. I wonder who she was,' I said, remembering the desperation etched on to her face.

'We'll probably never know,' Jeremy replied, his tone subdued. 'It's a popular place for suicide.'

Perfect, just what I needed; my route to school passed through a haunting hotspot. Who knew what I'd see tomorrow?

'I could give you a lift sometimes, if you like?' Jeremy said, clearly picking up on my worried expression. 'Save you getting the bus every day.'

I threw him a grateful smile. He might have the fashion sense of Mr Bean but he was all right, really. 'That'd be great, thanks.'

I'd just have to pray no one saw me getting out of his deeply uncool Nissan Micra. In fact, maybe it'd be better if he dropped me off round the corner. I chewed my lip doubtfully. Actually, it would probably be safest to walk.

My stomach rumbled mid-thought, reminding me of my unsatisfactory lunch. A missed meal might help my waistline, but I'd never been one for diets.

'OK,' I said, jumping down from my seat and heading towards the fridge. 'Is there any of that banoffee pie left? Maybe a slice would help with my bad mood.'

Celestine raised a questioning eyebrow. 'Oh, your aura is fine now. Besides, you wouldn't want to spoil your dinner, would you?'

'And there's only one piece left and it's got my name on it,' Jeremy put in. 'So don't get any ideas.'

I stared wistfully at the wedge of cream-covered pie for a full five seconds before heaving a melodramatic sigh and closing the fridge.

'I suppose I'll make do with an apple for now then,' I said, reaching a grudging hand towards the fruit bowl. 'But I'm not sure you're going to want that pie, Jeremy. I saw Mary licking it earlier.'

Celestine and Jeremy didn't live alone. Their house

was in a leafy street in a posh bit of Highgate and it had been built on land that once upon a time had been a farm. We had the dubious pleasure of being haunted by Mary Drover, a sixteenth century witch with an attitude that was over four hundred years out of date. Since I'd moved in two weeks ago, we'd grown an instant hate-hate relationship and she never missed a chance to stir up trouble for me. Naturally, I returned the favour whenever I could.

My aunt wasn't buying it this time, though. She looked at me closely and grinned. 'No, she didn't.'

Oh great, so now she could tell from my aura if I was fibbing? Sighing, I snatched up my bag and went up to my room, making a mental note to save any little white lies for text messages in future. Like I said, sometimes having a psychic family sucked.