

COLIN FRY

The Happy Medium

MY PSYCHIC LIFE



'One of TV's biggest psychic stars' *Mirror*

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About the Book

As one of our leading psychic mediums, Colin Fry helps people through the most difficult times of their lives. But he too has faced enormous challenges, from illness to financial turmoil, from career crises to heartbreak.

In this compelling autobiography, he shares his remarkable story and explains how the spirit world has guided him every step of the way. Discover how his experience helps shine a light on all our troubles, and how, in spite of everything, Colin became the Happy Medium...

About the Author

Born in 1962, Colin Fry received his first message at the age of four and became a working medium at seventeen. He tours internationally and is the acclaimed star of the television shows *Sixth Sense*, *Psychic Private Eyes* and *Colin Fry Live*, and has now reached a worldwide audience of 16 million regular viewers. One of the top mediums in the psychic mediumship community, Colin uses his spiritual knowledge to offer life-changing advice and support to people, providing sensible down-to-earth explanations about the unusual world of the paranormal and supernatural. He is the bestselling author of *Life Before Death*, *Secrets of the Afterlife* and *The Message*.

Also by Colin Fry

Life Before Death
Secrets of the Afterlife
The Message

The Happy Medium

My Psychic Life

Colin Fry



LONDON · SYDNEY · AUCKLAND · JOHANNESBURG

I dedicate this book to my family and friends, to my civil partner Mikey, to everyone who has been a part of my life.

To Tony Lewis and Kevin Elliott, Jenny and Sean (who keep me sane!) and to David and Julia, who have kept me going when I've wanted to give up.

To Paul (Vince) and Chris who've been such a big part of the story so far – glad we all survived it!

With my love and affection,
Colin

Foreword

I WAS SEVENTEEN years old when a fellow medium told me that I would one day write my life story. I laughed at her at the time. I had barely left school and had only just got my first job. I thought it was nonsense. 'Who on earth would want to read that?' I said to myself. But here I am, more than three decades later, having finally put my story down on paper.

If the idea that I would write my autobiography seemed far-fetched thirty years ago, the notion that I might call it *The Happy Medium* would have felt even more ridiculous. The truth was that for much of my early life I was far from happy; quite the opposite. I endured a lot of pain, so much so that I once contemplated ending it all.

Today I understand that unhappiness and suffering are as important a part of life as joy and happiness. Indeed, for a medium it is essential to experience the dark as well as the light in life.

This was something else I was told when I was a young, developing medium. 'You have to have some grey hairs,' was how my mentor at the time put it to me, rather wisely. But again, I didn't understand it at the time. Now that I have turned fifty, and have quite a few well concealed grey hairs, I understand that she was absolutely right.

I now know that to be a successful medium, you have to go through hardship in life. Because you are so intensely involved in communicating and interpreting the feelings and emotions and memories of other people, you have to have experienced those highs and lows yourself. It's what

makes the difference between a good medium and a not-so-good one.

And so this book is not just the story of the personal highs and lows of my life. It is the story of how I became a happy person – and a happy medium too. I hope you enjoy it.

COLIN FRY

1 | 'Not Long'

IN THE THREE decades since I first began practising as a medium I have received communications from many thousands of spirits who have crossed over to the other side.

These messages come in different forms - from individuals from all walks of life, from all colours and creeds, and from all corners of the world. In the vast majority of cases, I encounter these spirits only once. Invariably, they have a message they need to pass on to a loved one who is with me, either at a demonstration or a personal reading. Once that has been achieved, they are at peace and move on.

A small handful of spirits have contacted me on more than one occasion, however. And an even smaller number have been doing so throughout my psychic life, ever since I first began to communicate with the spirit world as a young boy. One of these is the spirit of a young woman. Her presence is a very ephemeral one. I have no clairvoyant vision of her; in other words, she doesn't appear in front of me, as some spirits do. So I don't know what she looks like. But I have felt her presence from her voice and the energy, and I have become convinced that she is in her early thirties and is the mother of many children. She is also, in the literal sense of the phrase, a troubled soul.

I first heard her voice as a boy of ten. Since the very beginning, her communications have always been brief; indeed, they always consist of just the same two words: 'Not long.' However, I have learned to take these two words very seriously indeed whenever I hear them. They always

indicate that someone who is physically close to me at the time will soon be passing over. Now, some people might regard this as slightly unsettling, as an ominous and frightening thing. But I have to say that, as a medium, this has actually been a great comfort to me, because it has allowed me to prepare for people's death. I heard this woman's voice shortly before the passing of both my grandfathers and grandmothers. She has also come before the loss of three close friends. She has helped me enormously.

As I say, I first heard her voice when I was a schoolboy but it is only recently that I have learned who she is and truly understood her significance in my story. I now firmly believe the voice is that of my great-grandmother, a lady called Minnie Carter. My story must begin with her story because the two – along with the story of her daughter, my grandmother – are inextricably linked.

*

The precise details of Minnie Carter's life are shrouded in mystery and it's only been in recent years that I, my mother and brother have begun to piece together her story. It is a fascinating – and tragic – one, nevertheless.

Minnie was probably married to a man named George Smith. I say 'probably' because it's not certain that they were ever officially man and wife. They must have been quite an unusual couple in those very strait-laced times. Smith wasn't even my great-grandfather's real name. We think George was in fact Jewish and had come to England from Poland with his father to escape persecution there. There's some evidence that he and Minnie lived in Kent but then ended up in London, where they had nine children together. One of the youngest of them, Lilian, born around 1903, was my grandmother.

It seems that Minnie had a connection to the world of mediumship and the paranormal. According to a great-aunt, who had known her and spoke about her to a relative, Minnie had come from gypsy stock and had once been arrested and prosecuted under the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Act. It's not quite clear what she had done. In the nineteenth century, you could be prosecuted for a variety of offences, from conducting psychic readings to looking at a set of tarot cards. She may have simply been reading tea leaves. Whatever her offence was, the punishment was severe.

The great-aunt recalled that the courts fined my great-grandmother fourteen shillings, which she couldn't pay. So Minnie was put in the London assizes (where they also had cells for short-term convictions) for fourteen days and had to take two of her younger children with her. Now, it was said that my grandmother was one of them, but when you work out the dates it couldn't have been. It must have been two of the older children.

How Minnie's incarceration affected her relationship with George is unclear, although the fact that he didn't offer to release her from her imprisonment doesn't reflect well on him. According to the great-aunt, their relationship was fractious. It must have been, because it came to an end one terrible day when my great-grandmother was thirty-two years of age. That evening my great-grandfather arrived home cradling a ginger-haired young baby, a boy called Frederick. George calmly announced that he was his child by another woman and that Minnie must bring him up as her own.

I can't even begin to imagine how devastating this must have been, but it was clearly too much for my great-grandmother to bear. Minnie's response was to commit suicide by drinking glass filings that she'd put in a glass of milk. It must have been an agonising, awful death. And as well as robbing them of their mother, it had the most

appalling impact on Minnie's children, and my grandmother in particular.

In the wake of Minnie's passing, all nine of the children – including the baby, Frederick – were split up and sent to live in different places. They were effectively thrown to the four winds and into the hands of public charity. My grandmother, who was a three-year-old at the time, was shipped off to a Roman Catholic orphanage where she was raised by nuns. Her sister Vi was sent by Barnardo's to Canada. The rest were distributed to other orphanages, charities and refuges.

It sounds unbelievable but my great-grandfather simply turned his back on all of his children with Minnie. He moved to Epping Forest where he proceeded to marry his housekeeper and have two more daughters. He had nothing to do with his children at all until many, many years later. To be honest, it was amazing that they ever felt able to see him. I'm not sure I could have forgiven him for what he did.

My grandmother's childhood was solitary and very harsh. It wasn't until she was about fifteen that she even realised that she had brothers and sisters. By that time her life had become even more miserable, if that was possible.

At around the age of fourteen she was put into service and was sent to live with this incredibly cruel family who beat her. When she – understandably – ran away, the police were informed, who arrested her and dragged her back to the house, where she was duly chained to a mangle that was guarded by a bulldog. Even Dickens couldn't have imagined anything quite so brutal.

When she ran away for a second time, the authorities decided that she must be insane to keep running away from this respectable family. She was put into an asylum at the age of fifteen. She might have remained there for the rest of her life if it hadn't been for her long lost brothers.

By this time, in the wake of the end of World War I, the two oldest brothers, Charles and Will, were trying to

retrace the family. Being that little bit older, they remembered the family before it had been broken up and wanted to put it back together again. They had both served in the trenches, where Will got hit by mustard gas, as a result of which he suffered bronchial problems for the rest of his life. Charles fared a little better, however, and was something of a show business success story. He was a gifted musician, a trumpet player, and joined the Army Band before becoming a member of a band led by the famous Henry Hall and also of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Anyhow, Charles and Will had begun tracing the family and had successfully found all their brothers and sisters, including Vi in Canada. My grandmother was the last one that they found. To their horror, they discovered that Lilian had been sent to this institution for no real reason – something that happened a lot in those days. They made an application to have her released, which was denied. So Will and Charles decided to take the law into their own hands. Late one night they got a horse and cart, broke into the home and my grandmother's cell – then stole her away. She was taken to my great-great-aunt in Havant, where she hid for a couple of weeks until the authorities gave up their search for her. She was then moved to Hove, where she lived a quiet life with Will and his wife Daisy.

It was almost as if my grandmother had started her life all over again. She went to work as a maid for a respectable gentlemen's club in Brighton. There she met my grandfather Lawrie – Laurence Briggs – who was a bellboy. They were both in their late thirties and found love late in life, particularly for that time. She was in her late thirties when she had my mother, Margaret, in 1940.

Of Minnie Carter's nine children, it seems that only one of them inherited her unusual gifts: my grandmother. In years to come, Lilian would also play a significant part in my psychic development.

My father's side of the family didn't have quite as dramatic a background as my mother's, although they had their moments. My paternal grandmother was a lady named Freda Hutchins. She was very proud of her Scottish heritage, something that I have maintained. Through her I am entitled to wear the McDonald tartan, which I do occasionally.

My paternal grandfather was Douglas Fry. When my grandmother and he first met, he was a mechanic, but also a very skilled pianist. Sadly music was a dream of his that was never fulfilled. His disappointment at being denied the opportunity to make use of his skill had very sad consequences in the way that he treated his children - in particular, my father and his talents.

It's fair to say that Douglas was a strange man. He would swing from being the life and soul of the party, funny and witty, to being quite a scary man. He was a man with whom I had a challenging relationship when I was a child. He could be verbally volatile and I was often on the receiving end of his sharp tongue.

Douglas met my grandmother in Eastbourne, when he had changed careers once more and begun working for an abattoir, Baldocks, in the village of Wivelsfield. Because of his job my grandparents were able to get a 'tied house' owned by the abattoir. It was nothing special - a typical cottage with an outside toilet and no bathroom - but they raised their family there.

Sadly, my grandmother Fry couldn't carry girls. She miscarried a number of girls. If she'd had them she would have had twelve children, apparently. My dad, Arthur Fry, was the fourth of five boys. It seems that they looked the spitting image of the boys on the old Fry's Five Boys chocolate bar, even though they were no relation to the confectionery family.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 the slaughterhouse was regarded as a military target. My grandfather and

grandmother had three boys at that point, with another on the way. The three boys were evacuated while my grandmother remained at home to have her baby. My grandfather was exempt from military service. By then, not only was he a slaughter man, he was also a driver and was considered important to the war effort because he used to drive the meat lorries up to Smithfield Market in London. He apparently drove through the Blitz on several occasions.

At first my grandmother remained at home. But as the intensity of the German raids on southern England increased, it was decided that she should also be evacuated to Cirencester. She was pregnant with my father at the time. So it was there, at the Sunnyside nursing home, that on 21 October 1940 – Trafalgar Day – she gave birth to my father, Arthur. His being born on Trafalgar Day gave my grandmother the mad idea to call him Horatio Nelson but, thankfully for him, my grandfather stepped in and said that was daft and insisted he was christened Arthur Frederick instead. In a way, that typified the two sides of my grandfather. He had actually been christened Arthur Douglas but insisted on being known as Douglas because he hated the name Arthur. Yet even though he didn't like the name, he gave it to his fourth son. Strange.

My father didn't remain in Cirencester for long. He was only a few weeks old when my grandmother decided that she didn't like being billeted with the very old and grouchy lady with whom she had been forced to share a bed. She was so homesick she couldn't stand it. So, with the few shillings she had, she jumped on a train one day and took the day-long journey back to Haywards Heath railway station. From there she walked with her baby in her arms all the way back to Wivelsfield. To my grandfather's astonishment, she walked back through the door and in no uncertain terms informed him that she didn't care if she was bombed, she wasn't leaving her home again. She was

clearly made of strong stuff – as she proved once more shortly after that.

Having returned home with my father, she decided that she was going to put the whole family back together. It's funny how this is a recurring theme in both my families. As was the case with my great-uncles, when they rescued my other grandmother from an asylum, Freda showed a very similar mix of spirit, determination – and ingenuity. She wrote to the Home Office to check on the three boys' whereabouts, but there was some confusion and they couldn't find them at first. This wasn't good enough for my grandmother, so out of desperation she wrote a letter to one of the most famous women in England at the time: Lady Nancy Astor, the first woman MP. It must have been one heck of a letter. Not only did Nancy Astor receive the letter, she replied to it – with a personal visit to my grandmother's house. Driven by her chauffeur and sitting in a gas-powered car, Nancy Astor came down from the House of Commons to this little house in Wivelsfield where, over a cup of tea and some home-made cakes no doubt, she promised my grandmother that she would get her children back for her. She was as good as her word. Within two weeks the three older sons were back home. I wish we still had that letter. Sadly, my grandmother only told me this story very late in her life. I wonder how it might have affected my relationship with my paternal grandfather if I had known this story earlier.

The two sides of my family lived several miles apart from each other, but in one of those strange moments of synchronicity, their paths did cross.

Towards the end of the war, when my father was about three years of age, my grandmother was taken ill and my father had to be temporarily taken into a care home. He didn't go very far; he went to Eastbourne. By a really strange coincidence, my mother was sent to the exact same

home at the same time because her mother was also ill. It was only during the early years of their marriage, when they began talking about their wartime experiences, that they realised the coincidence. The thing that confirmed they must have been in the same place at around the same time was they both remembered the fact that there had been a tortoise living there.

My parents' paths diverged pretty wildly during their childhoods in the 1950s. My father left school early and got a job working as a farmhand on a chicken and dairy farm in Wivelsfield. He didn't venture far from the family's home at all - unlike my mother, who wandered a little too far at times.

I think it's fair to say that my mother was a bit of a wild child. When she was around fourteen years old, she and a friend decided that they wanted to visit France. So they stowed away on a train to Portsmouth and got on a cross channel ferry with no passport. Of course, they got no further than passport control in France where they were taken into custody and plonked straight on the next ferry back across the English Channel. They were brought home by the police. It caused a huge fuss, apparently, with the local authorities getting involved.

My mother was so wilful that it was decided she should be sent to live with her aunt and uncle for a while, to calm her down. My grandmother was ill at the time with pernicious anaemia and really couldn't cope with her high-spirited daughter. So my mother was sent to live with her Uncle Charlie and Auntie Vera in London.

She had the time of her life, it seems. My mum was there during the time of the coffee bars and the birth of rock 'n' roll. She dated Tommy Steele's brother Colin for a while. It was a family joke that I was named after him, whereas in fact I was named after a famous cricketer. I have no idea why - my dad wasn't a cricket fan. I think they just liked the name.

Later, my mother dated Norman Linton Jr for a short time. After the war utility clothes were quite popular. Norman Linton was the market leader and made fashionable clothes for ladies. Norman Jr was his son and heir, and he wanted to marry my mother but she wasn't interested.

It took an accident on the streets of London to slow my mother down - and bring her back to the Sussex countryside. When she was sixteen she was running to jump on a bus when she slipped and fell on the pavement really heavily, hurting her spine badly. Many years later a doctor told her that it was something of a miracle that she'd been able to carry children at all because of the damage the accident had caused.

In the wake of the accident, my mother returned home. It was then that she met my father. They were both in their late teens. By the time they were approaching their twenty-first birthdays, they had decided they wanted to marry. This, of course, was a bit of a problem in those days because you needed parental consent to marry before you had 'come of age' at twenty-one. At first, both sets of parents objected. They thought they were too young. But they were obviously persuasive and managed to get married in March of 1961, a month ahead of my mother's twenty-first in April and seven months ahead of my father's in October. They got married in Wivelsfield. It was snowing that day, apparently - and the atmosphere would have been distinctly chilly inside the church too, I can imagine. My grandmother, Lilian, disapproved very strongly of the fact that her daughter was getting married in a non-Catholic church. The nuns' influence over her remained strong, it seems.

Life was difficult for my parents, as it was for most young newlyweds without much money to their name back then. They went on honeymoon to the Isle of Wight. My father got some grit in his eye on the ferry and had to wear

an eye-patch through the whole honeymoon. In the first weeks of their marriage, they lodged with an old lady in Wivelsfield. It was an arrangement that my mother hated.

My father had originally been a farmhand on a chicken and dairy farm, but my mother objected to the early starts and late finishes, so he took up an apprenticeship with a company called Frank White & Sons as a painter and decorator. Again, family history seemed to be repeating itself, and they were given one of the houses that Mr White rented out. It was a small two-bedroom Victorian terraced cottage. I can still remember the address: 1, Clifton Cottages, Petlands Gardens, Haywards Heath. It had no bathroom, only an outside toilet with a willow pattern on it. There was no roof on the toilet so you had to take an umbrella out with you.

My mother was a student nurse and to make up a little bit of extra money my father used to work a couple of nights a week in a local pub. Their plan was to wait for five years before having children so that they could save up for the expense. Well, the best laid plans ...

In August 1961, having just got settled into their new home where the landlord was building a new kitchen and an inside toilet for them, my mother discovered that she was pregnant. Apparently she was so furious that she didn't speak to my father for three weeks. My father on the other hand was ecstatic that they were going to have a baby.

The truth was that my mother understood the practicalities of it all. She knew the imminent arrival of a baby meant that she would have to give up nursing and that money was going to be even tighter than usual. To minimise the impact my arrival would have on them, she carried on working until she was eight months pregnant.

2 | Angels

I MAY NOT always have been an easy child, but apparently I was a very easy birth. I was born on 19 May 1962 at around 1.30 pm at Cuckfield Hospital on the outskirts of Haywards Heath. The first person to see me was my grandfather Lawrie. He was a kitchen porter at the hospital at the time. I think my dad went in when he finished work, which was the norm in those days.

My mum took a year or so off work to raise me but got very bad postnatal depression and took the decision to return to nursing. So, for large parts of the time, the job of raising me went to her mother, my grandmother Lilian.

My mother used to work three days a week and also nights. When my mum was working day-shifts, my grandmother spent the day with me. When she was working the nightshift, Lilian would be with me until my mum got up at three in the afternoon. I can still remember us walking around the house trying to be quiet while my mum slept.

That was the way it was for me from the age of eighteen months until I was nine or so. It had an enormous impact on me, not least because my grandmother had a psychic ability and, in her own particular way, allowed me to develop the strange abilities I had already begun demonstrating.

The first time these abilities had shown themselves had been when I was in my cot, apparently. My mother had put me down for the night, knowing that she'd have to get up during the small hours to feed me later. But when she had come into the nursery to check on me, to her surprise she

discovered me awake, gurgling away quite happily. She swears that suspended above my cot was a baby's rattle. It was rattling in the air but the moment she stepped towards me it just dropped back into the cot.

I have no memory of that incident at all. My earliest 'normal' memory is of me standing up in what used to be the dining area of our little house. I was in a nappy, and the floor was concrete. I can remember there being a tarpaulin covering up building work that was going on. I recall walking quickly but then hearing my mother shouting at me and dropping back to my bottom. Apparently they had been my first steps, but rather than being elated my mother had been terrified because there had been all this building work. I got the message: I didn't walk again for another three months, by which time the building work was complete.

My first memory of my being an unusual child, however, came a year or so after that, when we went to see Father Christmas for the first time. I would have been two or two and a half years old. I was taken to Wade's department store in Brighton. In those days the grottos were spectacular. I remember going with my dad, mum and my grandparents on my mother's side, Lilian and Lawrie.

There was a rather lovely nativity scene and Lawrie had pointed at this figure and said, 'Oh, look, that's an angel.' I remember clearly that I said, 'No, that's not what an angel looks like.'

Another memory, from about a year later, when I was three, offers further evidence that I was already seeing things that other people were not. At that time my best friend was the girl next door, Debbie Stafford. Our families were very close and so I often used to see her parents, whom I used to call Uncle Ken and Auntie Edith. Their house always seemed to be in a state of disrepair, with building work going on. But Debbie and I constantly played together at each other's houses.