

HUNTED BY THE PAST *PSY-IV Teams #1*

Jami Gray

I started my writing career weaving tales of magic and mayhem in the Urban Fantasy genre. Three books in on my UF series, I decided it was time to shake things up by tackling the first book in my Paranormal Romantic Suspense series, *The PSY-IV Teams*. *HUNTED BY THE PAST* came about because as a writer the best way for me to stretch my creative muscles is to try new things. These self-imposed challenges can range from telling the story from a difficult point of view, creating a unique or unusual setting, switching up my genre, or adding twists even I couldn't predict.

In *HUNTED* not only did I decide to mix up the genre a bit by moving from a universe where magic existed side-by-side with the "real" world, I chose to tell my story in first person. Yeah, I'm not sure what I was thinking either, but it worked, and eventually my creative muscle was better for it.

The world building wasn't as difficult as I expected. Probably because I used psychic abilities with my main characters, which fed my need for creating a unique cast of characters. Then came starting the story and I found I had to fumble through a couple of beginnings before I could call it good.

With the story told from first person point of view of my main character, Cyn Arden, the last thing a writer wants to do is drown their readers in "I did this" or "I did that" type sentences. Yes, in first person point of view everything that is given in the story must be filtered through the main character, but no one wants to listen to someone drone on and on about themselves and what they're doing or where they're at. To avoid this obnoxious behavior required multiple rewrites on the first chapter before I managed to capture Cyn's voice without sounding like Bob Dole.

When I finally settled on an opening, there were certain pieces of information I wanted to be sure I shared with my reader in those opening pages:

- Where the story was taking place
- Cyn's basic personality
- Initial problem Cyn faced
- Hints of Cyn's history

Not only was it important to get those across, but I need a way to suck my readers in and eliminate any escape routes.

Sharing where the story took place was the easiest part. My opening line was:

"Phoenix in July. People called it Mother Nature's rendition of hell on earth."

In a matter of two sentences I wanted to get across what every person who's ever spent a summer in Arizona innately understands—it's frickin' hot in the desert. Now my readers are right there with me, feeling the heat. Of course, no telling if we're inside or outside yet, but hang tight, we'll get there.

This introduction also gave me a chance to share a bit of what drove Cyn and made her who she was, tempting my readers to follow me down into the pages:

"They were wrong. Hell existed on the other side of the world, in a much more treacherous desert. If it let you go, you ran, long and hard and as fast as you could."

You couldn't hide, but you could try. I'd been running for six long months, jumping from one remote place to another, chasing wildlife with a camera for a paycheck. A safer endeavor than chasing two footed monsters."

In two short paragraphs, I wanted to give readers hints into the demons driving Cyn. Trying to convey a tricky combination of strength and fear wasn't easy. This led to presenting Cyn's immediate problem or challenge, because if that's how she felt about coming home, why was she here?

"Unfortunately, there was one thing I couldn't outrun, family. Or the closest thing to it in my case, Kelsey. Sister by circumstances, not blood, and the only human on this planet I'd come back to civilization for, she should've been on her own plane with a group of fellow layers for some boring-ass conference. Her words, not mine. Instead, she'd managed to get a message to me, even out in the wilds of America's last frontier. Someone had been asking questions about me, and watching her."

A handful of sentences in and I've been able to give my reader where we are, hints at what haunts my character and clues to the challenge she's facing. Even better, not every sentence started with "I". In fact, the picture who Cyn is and her personality are starting to become clear.

My next challenge is to take the reader from my character's internal perspective and broaden the picture, much like a photographer adjusting a lens. To do this I add context to the story and stage with,

"Which meant one disturbing message and eight hours later, I found my self crammed into the sardine can doubling as a plane. As it rolled to a stop on the tarmac, I moved into the narrow aisle, squishing between a young mother holding a squirming toddler, and a heavy set, cranky businessman as we jockeyed for a place."

How's that image working for you now? Is it getting clearer? Is it still a little blurry? Let's see if the next part will help bring it closer.

"Juggling my camera bag while I dug out my cell phone didn't endear me to my fellow passengers either. Since our flight out of Fairbanks, Alaska had been delayed, everyone wanted off, right now. People were pulling out bags and resetting their various electronic devices. Muted conversations swelled around me while the toddler took advantage of his mother's inattention to flash me a gap-tooth grin. I wiggled my fingers at him. The grin widened, at least until his mom distracted him with a stuffed toy."

I will admit, with a bit more training of that creative muscle that this section could be trimmed, but at the time, it helped paint the picture of what was going on. It also played opposite of the next part.

"Thumbing my phone's screen, I discovered seven missed calls and two voicemails. Nerves tightened.

Numbers scrolled across my incoming call list. The first one held a 619 area code. Coronado, California. It repeated twice. My stomach lurched and old anger snarled. I scrolled past it like all the others I'd received in the last few months, and then found the one I needed. It was listed four times.

Damn it!

My stomach roiled.”

Not only does this portray Cyn’s state of mind, her personal stress on top of the stress of traveling, but it adds more clues to what’s happening in the story, enough so the reader is intrigued enough to keep turning those pages. Of course, that is my ultimate goal.

This next part contains a couple of repeated words my editors and I missed in our numerous rounds of editing, but these last two paragraphs set up the beginning of a heart-pounding race that one reviewer described as “...an emotional roller coaster, from betrayal, anger, fear, love...”.

“I hit the icon to retrieve my voicemails, then tucked the phone between my shoulder and ear. It made pulling my battered backpack from the overhead compartment tricky. Finally getting it free, I settled it on my free shoulder, only then able to reclaim my phone. The awkward juggled allowed me to ignore the strange visual dance of adverted glances from my fellow passengers. Of course the burn scars curling under my jaw and dripping like delicate lace down my neck before disappearing under my T-shirt were hard to miss, Hell, even I wasn’t used to them yet.

‘Cyn? You need to call me as soon as you land.’ Frantic and breathless, I almost didn’t recognize Kelsey’s voice. My fingers tightened on my phone. ‘Look, there’s been a change of plans. I’m heading north to hole up and wait for you.’ Her harsh breathing was audible even with the rumblings of the departing passengers as we shuffled to the exit. ‘Whoever’s been watching me, I think they go in my condo. You that itch you talk about? Yeah, well it’s graduate to hives!’ Her voice became muffled, and then cleared, “...not comfortable sharing over the phone, so just hurry the hell up and get here, okay?”

And there you have it, my first two pages of HUNTED BY THE PAST. I hope I’ve managed to hook you into following the men and women of the PSY-IV Teams, a unique group of ex-military who use their psychic abilities to complete dangerous missions. You can continue the adventure with the second book of the series, TOUCHED BY FATE, coming May 24th, and follow up with the third, MARKED BY OBSESSION, coming late 2016/early 2017, all from MuseIt Up Publishing.



BIO:

Jami Gray is the award winning, multi-published author of the Urban Fantasy series, The Kyn Kronicles, and the Paranormal Romantic Suspense series, PSY-IV Teams. She can be soothed with coffee and chocolate. Surrounded by Star Wars obsessed males and two female labs moonlighting as the Fur Minxes, she escapes by playing with the voices in her head.

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HUNTED BY THE PAST, PSY-IV Teams #1

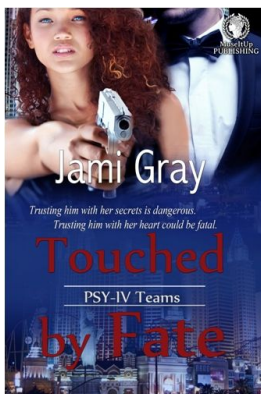
Sometimes death is the only way to out run the past...

Changing the past is impossible, a fact ex-marine, Cynthia Arden, understands all too well. Struggling with the aftermath of a botched mission, a panicked phone call brings her home to face a killer's game. Unfortunately, the distracting Kayden Shaw returns as well, the one man she thought would stand by her, until he chose his job over her.

To survive, will Cyn risk her heart or lose the man she loves and her life?

Coming May 24th, 2016

TOUCHED BY FATE, PSY-IV Teams #2



Trusting him with her secrets is dangerous. Trusting him with her heart could be fatal.

As a specialized consultant for the Department of Defense, Risia Lacoste understands the bargaining chip of a well-kept secret. When her current assignment threatens to unearth her deeply buried skeletons, she's forced into a high-stakes game of lies and loyalty where even her ability to foresee the future can't predict the winner.

Darkness lies under the skin of every man, and PSY-IV Team operative and touch empath, Tag Gunderson, has the demons to prove it. Scarred by betrayal and disillusionment, he's not Risia's top pick for a partner in the game, but he's all she's got.

As the game draws them deeper into a pit of intrigue and their list of enemies grow, will Risia trust Tag with more than her secrets or will his demons destroy them both?

Amazon: <http://amzn.com/B01EVWKG4>

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