

Praise for *The Moonlight Dreamers*

“A charming and inspirational story about friendship, dreams and being true to yourself.” **BookTrust**

“Sensational and unforgettable, falling in love with this book came as naturally as breathing. The best book I’ve read all year.” **Blog of a Bookaholic**

“It has been what I can only describe as a transformative experience.” **New Zealand bookseller**

“A promising first novel with no lack of heart and soul.” **School Library Association**

“A heart-warming story told from the point of view of four girls who feel they don’t fit in. An inspirational story about friendship, life and finding your place in the world. A story that will have significance for many teenagers.” **Carousel**

“In her moving and inspiring story Siobhan Curham addresses the needs of teenagers today through the wonderful power of dreams and the imagination.” **The School Librarian**

“I liked all the characters, and although they were all different, I could relate to them and I started to know, like and worry about them, just like friends. I was kept reading right to the end and I would definitely recommend this book to my friends.” **Teen Titles, reader review**

“A brilliant read which I can’t recommend enough.”

The Overflowing Library

“AMAZING! Really gorgeous holiday read about unlikely friendship, moonlight adventure and Oscar Wilde. A summer must-read!” **@drawingonbooks**

“An easy 5/5, *The Moonlight Dreamers* is a beautiful summer read. It contains everything you would want in a book: a seamless plot, a distinct writing style and characters with personalities that form together like a strong rainbow.”

TeenBookHoots

“Absolutely brilliant. Heartfelt and real.” **Australian bookseller**

“A beautiful book about friendship, standing up for what you believe in and finding the courage to be yourself and find your own unique place in the world.” **Lamont Books**

Tell It
to
the Moon

SIOBHAN CURHAM



WALKER
BOOKS

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*This book is dedicated to the dreamers. I hope it inspires
you to live a life beyond your wildest dreams.*

“With freedom, books, flowers and the moon, who could not be happy?” Oscar Wilde

Chapter One

Although it was only Christmas Eve, Rose had already made a New Year's resolution. A resolution she swore she was going to live by for the rest of her days ... even if it killed her. It was to never again let the so-called adults in her life make her do something she didn't want to do. And being brought to this crappy interpretive dance class by her dad's girlfriend, Rachel, was only strengthening her resolve.

"Feel the music inside your body," the instructor, Harmony, cried from the front of the studio. "Feel it take you over. Feel yourself *become* the music!"

Rose stared at Harmony. She was all blonde hair and white teeth and muscles – like a Barbie doll on steroids. DANCE LIKE NOBODY'S WATCHING said the gold lettering on her top. Well, she was certainly living the logo, Rose thought, as Harmony flailed about to the cheesy theme tune from *Titanic*. She looked like she'd drunk a bottle of Jack Daniels and was about to keel over any minute.

"Become the music!" Harmony cried again, flinging her arms in the air.

Rose looked around the studio. Surely the others could see what a fruit loop she was. But all the other women had their eyes closed and were flailing in unison. It was like being at a zombie cheerleader convention and Rose didn't know whether to laugh or cry. What the hell was she doing here? Ah, yes, that's right, she was supposed to be "bonding" with Rachel. When her dad had suggested they go out to get to know each other better, Rose had assumed they'd go for coffee, but no – Rachel had brought her to Deranged Dancers Anonymous.

"Feel your heart opening!" Harmony cried once more. "Feel it grow as big as the cosmos!"

Rose glanced at the door. She could slip out now, while they all had their eyes shut, and wait for Rachel in the foyer. She could tell her she'd been feeling sick. It wouldn't be a lie. She *was* feeling sick – sick of being in New York – something she'd never, ever imagined she'd feel. The whole point of this trip was to spend some quality time with her dad, but in the week since she'd got here he'd been wrapped up in rehearsals for his next movie and she'd been stuck with doe-eyed Californian beach babe Rachel instead.

"Close your eyes and let yourself go!" Harmony called. But her eyes were open now and she was looking straight at Rose.

Against all of her better judgement, Rose closed her eyes and flung her arms in the air. Celine Dion's warbling reached a crescendo.

"Feel your heart going on and on for an eternity," Harmony said breathlessly.

Rose frowned. What did that even mean? How could your heart go on and on for an eternity? She hated all this New Age bullshit that women like Rachel lapped up like eager puppies. She wanted to storm to the front of the class and put on “Welcome to the Jungle” by Guns N’ Roses. That would give them all a reality check.

“Feel your heart expand beyond this planet, up past the stars and the moon and into infinity.”

At Harmony’s mention of the moon, Rose softened slightly. What would the Moonlight Dreamers think if they could see her now? She bit down on her bottom lip to stop herself from laughing.

Amber looked at her blank computer screen and sighed. She walked over to her bedroom window and sighed. She stared at her reflection in the mirror on the wall and sighed. But it was no good. She still couldn’t think of anything to write about. Amber had been suffering from an acute case of “blogger’s block” for weeks now. Before, she’d had no problem coming up with things to write about – everywhere she’d looked she’d seen the seed of an idea. But now her brain felt as gloopy as porridge and the world seemed to be sucked dry of all new ideas. Then a thought occurred to her. Maybe she should write a blog about not being able to write a blog. Yes! Finally she had something to write about. She hurried back to her laptop and typed the words **BLOGGER’S BLOCK** across the top of the page. Then she sat and stared into

the blankness of the screen until she started seeing dots.

“What am I going to do?” Amber gazed at the black-and-white print of Oscar Wilde that hung on the wall above her bed. “Help me, Oscar. I need some wordspiration!” She reached for the well-worn book of Oscar Wilde quotes on her desk, flicked to a random page and began to read.

“Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else’s opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.”

Amber sighed. Usually she loved the fact that Oscar always knew exactly what to say about her situation but today it felt uncomfortably close to the truth. Over the past couple of months a creeping fog of self-doubt had snuck up on Amber, paralyzing her with indecision. It wasn’t just her blog she was blocked on, it was her dreams, too. And, as the founding member of the Moonlight Dreamers, this was hugely worrying. She hadn’t told the others how she’d been feeling – she’d been way too embarrassed. So, every time they met she’d make up a dream – something she felt she ought to want to do – but there was no passion behind it. Not like the other Moonlight Dreamers. When Rose talked about her cake-making or Maali her photography or Sky her poetry they’d glow with excitement. Their dreams lit them up from inside. But when Amber talked about building her blog or visiting another of Oscar Wilde’s London haunts she felt dull inside. As Oscar so rightly said, currently, her

passions were nothing more than “a quotation”.

Amber opened her desk drawer and looked at the pencil sketch she kept inside. The sketch she didn't feel able to openly display but that she'd looked at every day since her dad Gerald had given it to her. It was a sketch of her mum – her surrogate mum. Gerald had drawn it in the hospital, just before Amber was born. The heavily pregnant woman – her mum – was gazing off into the distance, a look of sadness etched on her face. But why was she sad? Amber slammed the drawer shut. Then she highlighted **BLOGGER'S BLOCK** – and pressed **DELETE**.

Maali turned on her fairy lights and lit a stick of incense, then she sat cross-legged in front of her shrine, shut her eyes and took a deep breath. She had some serious praying to do.

“Dear Lakshmi, thank you so much for all that you've blessed me with,” she began. “I really am truly grateful. I've been trying so hard to let go of my selfish needs and focus on helping other people but I was just wondering...” Maali opened her eyes and looked at the Lakshmi statue. She was so beautiful, standing there on her lotus flower, so serene. Why couldn't she be like that? *Because you're not a goddess*, her inner voice chirped. Maali blushed. “I'm sorry, Lakshmi, it's just that I ... I really want to meet my soulmate and it's especially hard at this time of year. Everywhere I look all I see are couples cuddling in their Christmas jumpers and kissing under the mistletoe.”

This wasn't strictly true. She'd seen only one couple kissing under the mistletoe and that had been in an advert for breath-freshening mints, and yesterday she'd seen a couple in Christmas jumpers having a huge argument in the middle of Brick Lane. Apparently he was a "selfish pig" for not wanting to spend Christmas Day with her family. But still...

"I wish there was some way you could give me a sign," Maali continued, looking straight into Lakshmi's painted brown eyes. "Just to let me know that my soulmate's on his way. Or if he's not; if I'm supposed to be on my own for this lifetime and dedicate myself to God." Maali shuddered inwardly at the prospect. "Please, Lakshmi. Please give me a sign. Please let me know that my soulmate's on his way. Please let me know who he is." She took a deep breath to try to compose herself. Downstairs she could hear her parents and brother chatting with her Auntie Sita and Uncle Dev. They came over every Christmas Eve for dinner. "Thank you for my family, Lakshmi. Even my brother. Please help him to grow out of his annoying 'I'm bored' phase soon. And thank you for the food we're about to eat and all of the fun we're about to have. Thank you for this house and our shop and all our riches. And please take care of the Moonlight Dreamers and shower your blessings upon them."

Maali opened her eyes and looked at the photo of her friends on the shrine. She'd put it there a week ago, when Rose went off to New York and Sky had gone away with her dad, to bring them protection. They'd taken the photo at the end

of their last meeting. They were all leaning against the wall of Amber's roof garden, trying to look cool and mysterious but then, just before the timer on Maali's camera had gone off, a pigeon had dive-bombed the terrace and they'd all started laughing. Maali loved the picture. She loved the way the candlelight threw shadows on their faces. She loved how happy and vibrant they all looked. "Thank you so much for the Moonlight Dreamers and for bringing them into my life," she whispered to Lakshmi.

"Maali!"

She jumped at the sound of her mum's voice from the hallway below. "Yes?"

"Could you pop to the store for me, please? We've run out of ghee."

"Sure." Maali stood up. "Thank you, Lakshmi," she whispered to the goddess as she turned off the fairy lights. Then she grabbed her coat and headed down from her attic room. Her mum was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs, holding her purse. She was wearing her favourite emerald-green sari and her arms were covered with intricate henna tattoos. She looked beautiful. Beautiful and stressed. Two deep frown lines had formed between her eyebrows.

"Are you OK?"

Her mum nodded and forced a smile. "Could you get some matches, too?" She handed Maali some money.

"Of course." Maali followed her along the narrow corridor that ran the length of their flat. It smelled of cooked tomatoes

and coriander and cumin. Maali's stomach rumbled. As they reached the living room door she looked inside. It had all gone quiet. Her brother, Namir, was playing Lego on the floor but her Auntie Sita and Uncle Dev were sitting in silence looking at her dad, who was in his armchair next to the family shrine. He was rubbing his eyes.

"Are you OK, Dad?" Maali asked from the doorway.

He looked at her and blinked, like he couldn't see her for a moment. "What? Oh – yes, yes, I'm fine." He smiled but, like her mum's, his smile seemed forced.

"He just had a bit of a dizzy spell," her mum whispered. "Off you go."

Outside, the air was crisp and cool. Maali instinctively looked up at the moon, a thin, silver crescent over the nearby mosque. At the last Moonlight Dreamers meeting Amber had suggested that, as they wouldn't be together for a while, if they had a problem they should try telling it to the moon instead. But for once Maali wasn't comforted by its silvery light. Something was up with her dad. He'd seemed exhausted the past couple of weeks. True, the sweet shop had been packed in the run-up to Christmas, but he was used to it being busy. Maali hoped he wasn't coming down with something – it was a horrible time of year to get ill.

As she walked past a vintage clothes shop the door opened and a woman walked out, bringing with her the burst of a song from the shop stereo.

"Ashes to ashes. . ." the singer crooned.

Maali caught her breath. She'd been trying so hard not to think of Ash in the weeks since their last encounter. When she'd asked Lakshmi for a sign this was definitely not the kind she was looking for. Ash couldn't be her soulmate, tragically; he belonged to another, the glamorous Sage – or Sage and Onion, as Rose liked to call her. Maali hurried up the road. *Lakshmi, please help me find out who my real soulmate is*, she prayed. A group of men and women were weaving their way along the pavement towards her, singing a Christmas song. The women wobbled on their high heels like they were walking on a rocking ship and the men were red-faced and swigging from bottles of beer. Maali quickly looked down at the pavement. In her experience drunk people were always the most likely to be racist. It was as if the hatred they kept stored inside of them when they were sober oozed out with the stale beer fumes. She moved over to the edge of the pavement and quickened her pace.

“Merry Christmas!” one of the women cried as Maali drew level. She looked up nervously. The woman was smiling at her. Her red lipstick was smeared around her lips, making her look like a clown.

“Merry Christmas,” Maali mumbled.

One of the men staggered over. His tie was half undone and a cigarette hung from his mouth. “Merry Christmas!” he said to Maali, although his eyes seemed to be having trouble focusing on her. The ash from the end of his cigarette fell off, landing on Maali's coat.

“Thank you. Merry Christmas,” she said, hurrying along. It was only when she went to brush the ash off that she realized the significance of what had just happened. Twice this evening she’d asked Lakshmi for a sign and both times she’d been given Ash.

As the sound from the huge brass gong reverberated around the meditation room Sky glanced at her dad. He sat cross-legged, spine straight, messy blond hair tied back, eyes closed. Was he happy? She couldn’t tell. His face was completely expressionless. Ever since her mum died, Christmas had been one of the hardest times of the year. And this year Liam had seemed even sadder – his break-up with Savannah was still so fresh. The official reason they’d come to Glastonbury on retreat was for a holiday, but Sky knew that the real reason was because Liam wanted to get away from London and the memories of his break-up with Rose’s mum. Ever since they’d moved back into their houseboat there’d been an aura of sadness about him. It had been his first relationship in five years, and when it ended in such spectacular style he’d seen it as a personal failing. Sky had appreciated Liam feeling bad about moving them into Savannah’s house so soon but she didn’t want him to feel guilty. Despite their terrible start she’d ended up becoming close friends with Rose and they’d both become Moonlight Dreamers, which was without doubt one of the best things that had ever happened to Sky. As she thought of Rose she

smiled. She wondered how she was getting on in New York. Even though Rose had been playing it cool, Sky could tell she'd been really excited to see her dad.

The gong rang out again. Sky took a deep, incense-filled breath and tried to centre herself into her meditation. But her monkey mind, as the Buddhists called it, kept leaping about. She wondered how the other Moonlight Dreamers were doing. She thought of Amber and Maali at home in London. She thought of the moon, shining down on all of them – apart from Rose, of course, as it would still be daytime in New York. It was comforting to know that, no matter where they were, they could always look up at the moon and feel connected. Sky couldn't wait for their next meeting. But then a feeling of dread started seeping into her. When they got back to London something horrible was going to happen, something she'd been trying to block out for weeks. But now, in the silence of the meditation room, it echoed through her mind like a crashing gong: *when she got back to London she would have to start going to school.*