

# The Hidden Door

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my daughter, Cassandra Martin.  
I love you.



This book is a work of fiction. All people, places and events are fictitious or have been used fictitiously. If any giant, talking cat, insect or small buzzing human/insect feels they have been unfairly portrayed, please feel free to e-mail me.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the support of my family, particularly Cassandra, who was the driving force behind its creation, as well as doing an amazing cover illustration.  
Thank you.



## 1

In an old, old house, in a dark, locked room, tucked away in a corner behind some old dusty books, lay a door. It was half the height of a normal door, with funny carvings on it, and a hole where the handle should be. Also in this house, snuggled up in bed with her favourite toys, was a girl.

Her name was Cassandra, and she was tall, smart, beautiful and brave, though not always in that order. She had long, straight, light-brown hair which she brushed every day to keep it shiny, and a smile that could infect a room.

On this particular night, as on many others, Cassandra was awake long past her bedtime. It wasn't her fault; her mind kept racing, bouncing from one idea to the next. It was all Cassandra could do to attempt to keep up with it. She had tried counting sheep, but stopped once the numbers got too high. Someone had once suggested making a mental list of birthday presents

Cassandra wanted, but she was generally a very satisfied girl, and her list was only ever one item long.

Sighing to herself, Cassandra decided to go for a mental walk through the house. She imagined herself climbing slowly out of the pink-painted wooden bunk, creeping across the floor of her room, feeling the carpet gently tickle the undersides of her feet, and carry on through the house. In this fashion, she checked in on her mum and dad, who were watching something grown-up on TV, sneaked into her older brother's room and looked at his things (because she wasn't allowed to go into his room *ever*), watched the two cats, Bubbles and Squeak, sleeping, and on and on until she came to a locked door. Because this was an imaginary trip, the lock didn't stop her. She thought about the lock opening, and it did. Then she opened the door and went into the room beyond.

In her mind, Cassandra spun around and around like a ballerina, looking at everything in the room. Faster and faster she spun, her arms slowly rising. She could see boxes, old furniture, a painting. As she twirled and danced around the room, everything blurred into one, becoming the face of a kind old woman. That gave her a start, and she immediately stopped dancing, and woke up.

The clock on the wall shone green light into Cassandra's eyes. 3:14. It was too early, and too dark to get up. Cassandra closed her eyes and drifted back to sleep, thinking about the face she had seen in her dream.

The next morning, Cassandra trotted down the stairs to the kitchen just as she normally did.

“Good morning Mummy,” she said with a smile.

“Good morning Princess,” Mummy replied, smiling as well. “What do you have planned for today?”

For seven years old, Cassandra was remarkably organised. She colour-coded her clothing to make it easier to co-ordinate her outfits; her room was laid out in the most logical order, and she always ate her toast left-handed, so she could do something else with the right. Today, being the first day of the school holidays, Cassandra had planned to do very little. In the morning she wanted to do some drawing, and in the afternoon, help Mummy with some baking. She told Mummy this.

Mummy scratched her head for a moment, the way she did when she was thinking really hard about something, and then finally said okay. And so it was. Cassandra spent two hours hunched over a square piece of paper with her crayons in hand. What had started as a blank white page soon became a bright, colourful picture of the door from the beginning of this story. Cassandra very carefully drew the carvings on the front and the hole where the handle should be, and she was very careful about colouring within the lines. Once she was finished, she showed Mummy.

“Very good, dear,” Mummy said. She picked the picture up and taped it to the front of the fridge, where Daddy would see it when he came home. Daddy worked in a chocolate shop, and often came home with sweet treats for pudding. He was as tall as the sky, and as strong as a lion. He had short grey hair which he sometimes coloured blue, a beard, and one earring, which Cassandra thought made him look like a pirate.

Mummy was also tall, and very very pretty. She had black hair (usually), and a big smile. She sometimes worked with Daddy at the chocolate shop.

After the picture was hung, it was time for lunch. Mummy made special banana pancakes, which Cassandra loved. They ate two pancakes each, and then Mummy started washing the dishes.

“Can I play upstairs, Mummy?” Cassandra asked.

“Of course, dear. But don’t disturb your brother.”

“No, Mummy,” Cassandra said.

She skipped up the stairs two at a time, chasing imaginary butterflies. When she came to Nicky’s door, she slowed down and crept quietly past. She could hear Nicky muttering something. Cassandra stopped and her hand reached for the handle, to see if he was okay. Then she remembered what Mummy had said. Her hand dropped back down, and she carried on walking away.

Cassandra couldn’t remember the last time she’d seen Nicky out of his room. He didn’t go to school like she did, he didn’t go to birthday parties, and he never played outside in the sun. Cassandra didn’t know what was so different about him, and sometimes she was a little bit scared of the sounds that came out of his room.

She was so busy thinking about Nicky that she hardly paid attention to where she was going. All of a sudden, she stopped in front of a door. It was the locked door from her dream the night before. Cassandra looked left and right, as if she were about to cross the street. No-one was around. She reached out her hand, placed it on the doorknob, and gently twisted. Nothing happened.

She twisted harder, but still nothing happened. The door was locked.

Cassandra's curiosity was fully aroused now. Overall she was a fantastic child, but if she did have a fault, it was being much, much too curious for her own good. She turned and walked to her room, thinking.

*If I was a key, where would I be? No, that's not right. If I was Daddy, where would I put the key?*

Much thinking later, Cassandra decided that Daddy, since he was sometimes forgetful, would want to keep the key somewhere it would be close by, and somewhere that he couldn't forget. He would probably keep it with his other keys. She decided to have a look that night, after Mummy and Daddy were asleep. Pleased with her cleverness, Cassandra skipped back downstairs (forgetting to be quiet when she went past Nicky's room) to ask Mummy what they would bake.