

The DOOR

ANDY MARINO



SCHOLASTIC PRESS | NEW YORK

Copyright © 2014 by Andy Marino

All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920*. SCHOLASTIC, SCHOLASTIC PRESS, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Marino, Andy, 1980– author.

The door / Andy Marino. — First edition.

pages cm

Summary: Twelve-year-old Hannah Silver can sense things that other people cannot, and living in Cliff House she is surrounded by secrets and the voices of people who are not really there — but when she finds her mother murdered she will have to confront the secret of a mysterious door that may lead to another world.

ISBN 978-0-545-55137-3 (jacketed hardcover) 1. Future life — Juvenile fiction. 2. Children's secrets — Juvenile fiction. 3. Mothers and daughters — Juvenile fiction. [1. Future life — Fiction. 2. Mothers and daughters — Fiction. 3. Secrets — Fiction.] I. Title.

PZ7.M33877Do 2014

813.6 — dc23

2013032039

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 14 15 16 17 18

Printed in the U.S.A. 23

First edition, May 2014

The text type was set in Garamond Classico.

Book design by Christopher Stengel

CHAPTER ONE



The spiral staircase to the top of the lighthouse was full of invisible traps. Hannah Silver ascended by skipping the odd-numbered steps. At step sixteen — halfway up — she planted both feet in a decisive hopscotch landing and wiggled her fingers and toes. No pain. She examined her arms and legs.

You're fine, Belinda said. If Belinda were to appear in real life, instead of in Hannah's head, she would smell like beef stew and wear a cream-colored floral housecoat. Walk normally. You're too old for this game.

"I know, I know, I know," Hannah said, but the rule was hard to defy — even though, at twelve years old, she knew better.

Take them one by one, urged Belinda. Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen. All the way up, just like that.

"Chalkdust!" Hannah said, stamping her foot. The old iron staircase protested with a metallic groan. *Chalkdust* was a swear in Muffin Language, which she had been developing since she was old enough to talk. She was the world's foremost expert on its grammar and vocabulary; a fact she had verified on the library computer.

That's because you're the only person in the world who speaks it, Belinda reminded her.

“Crepuscular slurp,” Hannah muttered. Belinda backed off. Hannah rested her hand on the railing in her best imitation of a normal person on a staircase. The odd-numbered steps before her were like dark things lurking in the corners of a dream. If she squinted, she could make out all manner of medieval torture devices, dangling leather straps and rusted screws the size of baseball bats, waiting to ensnare her limbs.

Hannah reminded herself that she was never going to make it through her new school if it took her twenty minutes to climb a few steps. The junior high school in Carbine Pass was four stories high, and the elevator was teachers-only. She shuddered at the memory of her recent tour. The assistant principal had ushered Hannah and her mother inside the elevator and pressed the button for the top floor. The button was instantly surrounded by a thin circle of yellow light, like a tiny eclipse, while the others were rimmed in darkness.

Hit two and three, urged Nancy, Hannah’s mischievous inner twin. *Light them up or the cable will snap and the elevator will fall!*

Hannah’s left hand trembled. “Grenadine magnetism,” she whispered.

“Come again?” said the assistant principal.

Hannah’s mother put a reassuring hand on her shoulder, but it wasn’t enough. Hannah punched the buttons with desperate urgency.

“Huh,” said the assistant principal, writing something on a notepad.

Her mother must have worked some kind of magic, because Hannah wasn’t kicked out on the spot. One week from today, she would be homeschooled no longer. She had gotten her wish, and now she had to learn how to navigate stairs. Outside, waves battered the rocky cliffs. The sound was a foamy murmur inside the thick walls of the lighthouse; it helped. She lifted her right foot —

“Hannah!”

— and froze. Her mother was calling from the mossy garden path that connected the Silvers’ backyard to the lighthouse.

“Come meet our guests!”

Hannah turned the word over in her mind. *Guests*. It was practically meaningless. The few kids she knew from the Carbine Pass library were never allowed over. And anyway, with no TV, no computer, and no cell phone reception, Cliff House wasn’t exactly a prime hangout spot.

With a shameful blossoming of relief at the interruption, Hannah turned and descended the stairs, skipping fourteen, twelve, ten. . . .

On the way down, these steps were trapdoors to a bottomless pit.