

The Forbidden Door

Hidden
truths
breathe

Endless hands
through the
nights

Don't
open
the
door



D.H. Chenaya Minthuli

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Author

Punchi Sithaka Punchi Sathuta

Sathwa Mithuro

Linda's Adventure

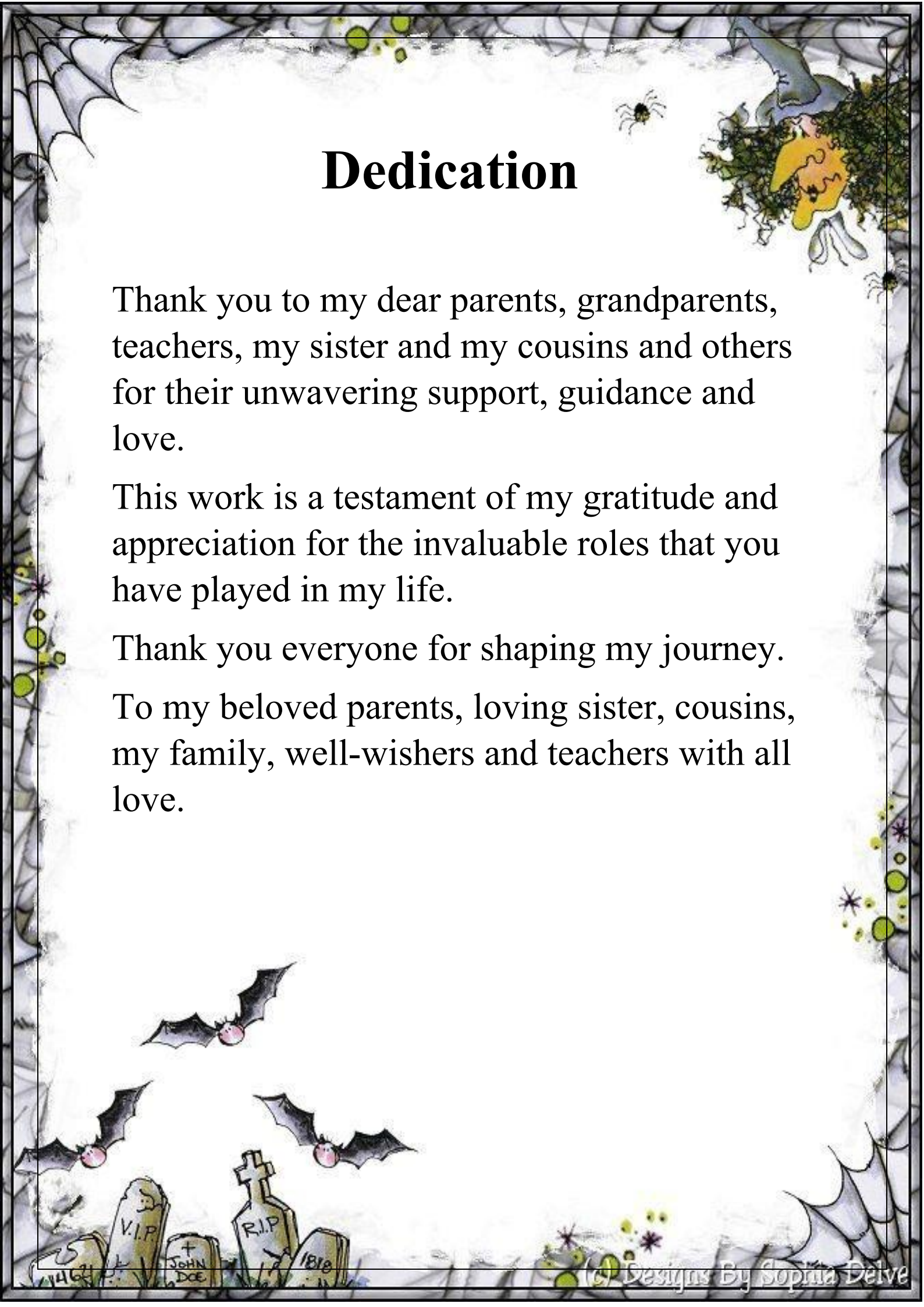
The Forbidden Door

Mahamaya Girls' College Kandy

Grade 8-F

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Dedication

Thank you to my dear parents, grandparents, teachers, my sister and my cousins and others for their unwavering support, guidance and love.

This work is a testament of my gratitude and appreciation for the invaluable roles that you have played in my life.

Thank you everyone for shaping my journey.

To my beloved parents, loving sister, cousins, my family, well-wishers and teachers with all love.





Foreword

In an increasingly complex global future, the "Hemamala Upahara" book project, led by Mahamaya Girls' College, stands as a turning point in girls' education. Over a decade, it has successfully nurtured thousands of children to become young authors.

This year, by collaborating with other schools, we aimed to provide students with a wealth of new experiences. The goal was to develop multi-faceted skills, including communication, values, and creative growth. As a result, children have written books that pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic—the supreme symbol of the Buddhist world—to the Hill Country (Kandy).

I extend my gratitude to everyone involved, including the students who contributed their creativity and the teachers who guided them.

Shashikala Senadhira

Principal

Mahamaya Girls' College

Congratulatory Message

It is a great honor for me, as the Governor of the Central Province, to send a congratulatory message for the launch of the books created through the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project initiated by Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy.

Education is the fundamental foundation for the progress of society, and it is further strengthened through books and literary creations. It is clearly commendable that students' talents, creativity, and intellectual abilities are emerging through projects such as this.

I believe that this book creation project will provide valuable knowledge and a precious literary contribution not only to the students but to the entire society. Furthermore, I hope that through such efforts, future writers who will bring pride to Sri Lanka will emerge.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation and blessings to the Principal, the academic staff, the students, and everyone involved who dedicated themselves to this successful endeavor. I wish this project and the book launch ceremony great success.

Sarath B.S. Abeykoon

Governor, Central Province

Emeritus Professor, University of Peradeniya

2026-05-10

Congratulatory Message

I highly appreciate the noble and outstanding effort of the Principal and the academic staff of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, the student daughters, the students of other participating schools, and everyone who dedicated themselves to plan and implement this book publication project. The project was organized under the leadership of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, with the participation of other schools in the Kandy Zone, with the aim of encouraging children toward book creation within the current school system, as a tribute to Hemamala Kumariya who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic to Sri Lanka.

For several decades, Sri Lanka has been committed to providing free, compulsory, quality, and equitable education to all children, thereby producing a future generation of intelligent and skilled citizens. In such a context, this book creation program for school children helps develop creative ability, critical thinking, and other positive qualities for a balanced and well-rounded personality, and contributes to building a future knowledge-based society.

May all activities of the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project be successful through the blessings of the Sacred Tooth Relic.

Pradeep Nilanga Dela

Diyawadana Nilame,

Sri Dalada Maligawa.

2026.05.10.

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Chapter 1

Silent Welcome

People like to believe that ghosts aren't real. It makes them feel safe. It gives them something solid to hold on to when the world feels uncertain, when the darkness feels just a little too deep. But some places ... don't care what people believe. Some places don't need belief to exist. They simply are. And Everbreeze was one of those places. The town itself looked normal during the day. Cars passed by, children played, and people smiled like nothing was wrong. But there was always something slightly off, something you couldn't explain unless you stayed long enough to feel it.

Crystal was fifteen when her family moved there. She didn't want to leave her old life behind, but she didn't have a choice. Her parents said it would be a "fresh start." The house stood at the far end of a quiet street, surrounded by tall, dying trees that creaked even when there was no wind. Their branches twisted unnaturally, like they were reaching toward the house... or trying to escape from it. Its paint was peeling, the windows dusty, and the air around it always felt ... heavy. Too heavy.

The neighbours had warned them. No one laughed after saying it. No one said it was a joke. "They didn't last two weeks," one old man had said, pointing at the house. "They left in the middle of the night. Didn't even take their furniture". Another whispered, "Sometimes ... you can still hear footsteps inside". But the price was cheap. Too cheap to ignore. And sometimes ... when people need something badly enough, they choose not to ask questions. So Crystal's family moved in.

At first, everything felt normal. Nothing happened. No footsteps. No whispers. No shadows moving when they shouldn't. Days passed. Weeks passed. Even months. Crystal got used to the silence of the

house. Slowly, it stopped feeling strange and started feeling like home.

She joined a school in town, made friends, laughed again. Slowly, the fear faded into something distant like a bad dream you forget over time. The house didn't feel scary anymore. It just felt ... quiet. Until the night of the sleepover. And that was when everything changed.

Rain slammed against the windows like restless fingers. The wind howled through the trees, making them groan and creak like something alive. Thunder cracked across the sky, shaking the walls. Inside, the house was alive with laughter. The warmth of their voices filled the space, pushing away the silence. Crystal and her friends had gathered in the living room blankets wrapped around them, popcorn bowls in their laps, drinks scattered across the table.

"Let's make it scary," one of them said. So they turned off the lights. Only the flickering glow of the TV remained. The horror movie began. At first, they laughed at the jump scares. Then they screamed. Then they laughed again. But as the movie went on ... something changed. The feeling crept in slowly, like something unseen moving closer.

The laughter slowly faded. The shadows in the room felt thicker ... like they weren't just shadows anymore. The shadows in the room felt darker. The silence between scenes felt ... longer, heavier. By the time the movie ended, no one felt like joking anymore. No one said it out loud, but they all felt it. "Let's just sleep," Hope mumbled. They all agreed.

Dragging their blankets and pillows, they made their way to Crystal's room upstairs. The hallway felt colder than before. The air felt still. Too still. One by one, they lay down. Within minutes, the room filled with soft breathing. Everyone was asleep. The room should have felt safe. But it didn't. Except Crystal. She didn't know why ... but something didn't feel right.

The rain had slowed. The thunder had stopped. And the house, was too quiet. Not peaceful. Not calm. Just ... empty. Then she heard it. CREEEEAAK ... A door opening slowly. Somewhere downstairs. Her eyes snapped open. She sat up, heart pounding. So loudly she thought it might wake everyone. For a moment, she told herself it was nothing. Just the wind. Just the old house. Just her imagination. SLAM. The sound echoed through the house. Not imagination. Not wind. Something had closed the door. And whatever it was ... it was inside the house.

Crystal turned her head, her breath shaky. All four of her friends were still there. Sleeping unaware. "Cupcake ... what are you doing awake?" Hope's sleepy voice cut through the silence. Crystal leaned closer, whispering. "Did you hear that?" Hope blinked, trying to focus. "Hear what ...?". "The door. Downstairs." Hope frowned slightly, now more awake. "But your parents are asleep ... right?" Crystal nodded slowly. For a moment, neither of them spoke. Then Hope whispered, "Let's check." Bad idea. But they did it anyway.

The two girls stepped out into the hallway. The wooden floor felt colder than usual. Each step creaked louder than it should. As they reached the balcony, they slowly looked down into the living room. Their bodies froze before their minds could understand why. Their bodies froze before their minds could understand why. Someone was sitting on the sofa. A figure. Still unmoving. Facing the TV. The screen was off.

Yet the figure sat there ... as if watching something. Crystal's breath caught in her throat. "That's ... not my mom," she whispered. Hope's fingers tightened around her sleeve. "Cupcake ... that's not anyone normal." For a moment, they stood there, unable to move. Then Hope whispered, "Let's go down." Step by step. Slowly, quietly. The stairs groaned under their weight. The air grew colder with every step. Like they were walking into something they couldn't see. When they reached the bottom the figure was gone. As if it had never been there at all. The sofa was empty.

“Did you see that?” Hope whispered, her voice shaking.

Crystal nodded.

“I’m not imagining this ... right?”

“No.” Then Hope pointed.

“Look.”

At the edge of the sofa ... something lay there. A letter. Sitting there... waiting. Crystal hesitated. Every instinct in her body told her not to touch it. But she did. Her hands trembled as she unfolded the paper felt... damp.

Cold. The words were written in red. The colour looked wrong. Too dark. Too thick. Not ink. Too thick. Too dark. Crystal read it aloud in a whisper.

“I will kill your family.”

Her heart stopped. Below it, more words.

“By – Abyss, Lurker, Labyrinth, Eerie, Nightmare.”

The lights flickered. For a split second, the room felt... crowded. Crystal felt something behind her breathing. Watching. She turned around nothing. But the feeling didn’t leave. “RUN!” Hope suddenly shouted.

They didn’t wait. They ran. Fear pushing them faster than their bodies could handle. Up the stairs. Into the room. Slamming the door shut. Their hearts pounded violently. Neither of them spoke. Neither of them slept. And neither of them felt safe anymore. Outside, the rain started again. But this time it sounded less like rain... And more like something... trying to find a way inside. And more like something... Trying to get in.

Crystal and Hope sat frozen in the darkness, listening as the strange sound continued somewhere beyond the walls. Neither of them dared

to move. The letter lay crumpled between them like a warning they couldn't ignore.

Hours seemed to pass. Sometimes they thought they heard footsteps in the hallway. Other times it sounded like faint tapping coming from downstairs.

Tap... tap... tap...

The noise would stop for a few minutes and then return again, always in the same slow rhythm. "Do you hear that?" Hope whispered. Crystal nodded. Neither of them went to investigate.

The rest of the night dragged on endlessly. Every shadow looked wrong. Every creak of the house made them jump. Even when the sounds finally stopped, the feeling of being watched never disappeared.

Crystal stared at the bedroom door until her eyes began to burn with exhaustion. She tried to convince herself that everything would make sense in the morning. That the figure, the letter, and the strange noises had some explanation.

But deep down, she knew the house was hiding something.

And whatever it was...

It had only just noticed her.

CHAPTER 2

The Hidden Door

The night never truly ended for Crystal. Even after the rain stopped...Even after silence returned...Sleep didn't come easily. The darkness in the room felt thicker than before, like it had weight pressing down on everything. Hope eventually drifted off, her breathing soft and steady. But Crystal stayed awake. Staring at the door. Listening. Waiting. Every tiny sound made her flinch. The ticking of the clock, the rustling of blankets and the faint whisper of wind outside. And once...She could've sworn she heard something.

A faint sound. From downstairs....**tap... tap... tap...**Like fingers. Slowly tapping on wood. The sound came in a pattern, almost like someone was trying to send a message. Crystal pulled the blanket tighter around herself. *It's nothing*, she told herself. *Just the house.* But deep inside...She knew that wasn't true. Her chest felt tight, like something was about to happen but hadn't yet. At some point, exhaustion pulled her under. It felt like she had only stepped into another version of the same nightmare. And she fell asleep. But sleep did not bring peace.

Crystal stood in the living room. Alone. The house was darker than usual. The air felt thick... hard to breathe. It was the kind of darkness that didn't just hide things it felt like it was watching. Then she heard it. A voice. Weak. Broken.

"Help me..."

Crystal turned toward the sofa. The sound wasn't coming from the room. It was coming from behind it. Her feet moved slowly, as if something unseen was pulling her closer. Slowly... carefully.

She walked closer. And saw it. A small door. Hidden behind the sofa. Half-open. Darkness spilling out from inside. The darkness inside

looked deeper than it should have been, like it went on forever. The voice came again. Closer now.

“Please... help me...”

Crystal’s hand trembled as she reached for the door. Every instinct screamed at her to stop. To run. To wake up. But she didn’t. Something stronger than fear was pushing her forward.

She opened it. The smell hit her first. Rot. Dampness. Something... wrong. It was so strong it made her feel sick instantly. Inside, the space was small. Barely enough to stand. The walls were scratched. Covered in marks. Some of the scratches looked like words... but they were too messy to read. And on the floor a girl. She looked about Crystal’s age.

Her hair was messy, covering most of her face. Her body was still. Too still. Blood stained the floor beneath her. Dark. Dry. Crystal’s heart pounded violently. “Are you... okay?” she whispered. The girl didn’t move. Then her fingers twitched. Slowly... The girl’s head turned. Her eyes opened. Pitch black. Crystal gasped, stumbling back. The girl’s lips moved.

“You... came... too late...”

Suddenly—A sharp pain exploded in Crystal’s back. She screamed and woke up. Crystal shot up in bed, gasping for air. Her heart raced wildly. Her body was covered in sweat. “It was just a dream...” she whispered. But her voice shook. Because it didn’t feel like one. The room looked normal. Her friends were waking up.

Sunlight streamed through the window. Everything felt safe again. But Crystal couldn’t forget it. The door. The girl. The voice. After her friends left later that morning, the house felt empty again. Too empty. Crystal sat on her bed, thinking. Over and over. *What if it wasn’t just a dream?*

Her thoughts dragged her downstairs. Slowly. Reluctantly. To the living room. The sofa stood exactly where it had been the night before. Still. Silent. Crystal swallowed. Then...She moved it. The legs scraped loudly against the floor. The sound echoed through the house. And there it was. The door. Exactly like in the dream. Half-hidden. Old. Wooden. Her hands began to shake. "This isn't possible..." she whispered.

For a long moment, she just stared at it. Frozen. Then the voice came again. From inside.

"Help me..."

Crystal stumbled backward. Her heart nearly stopped. It was real. The dream wasn't a dream. The door creaked slightly. As if something inside had shifted. "Please..." Tears filled Crystal's eyes. Someone was in there. Or...Something. Her mind raced. *If someone is really trapped... I have to help.* That thought pushed her forward. Slowly...She reached for the handle. Her fingers touched it. Cold. Unnaturally cold. She hesitated. Just for a second. Then She opened it.

The same smell. Stronger now. Suffocating. Her vision blurred slightly as she looked inside. And there on the floor was the girl. Exactly like in the dream. Not moving. Covered in blood. Crystal let out a small, broken gasp. "No... no... this can't be real..." She stepped back, shaking violent. The girl didn't move. Didn't speak. Didn't breathe. Crystal didn't wait any longer. She slammed the door shut. Pushed the sofa back. And ran. Up the stairs. Into her room. Locking the door behind.

Her whole body trembled. "What is happening...?" she whispered. Her mind tried to make sense of it. But nothing made sense. A hidden door. A dead girl. A voice asking for help. And that letter. Crystal's eyes widened. She ran to her bag and pulled it out. The red writing stared back at her.

"By – Abyss, Lurker, Labyrinth, Eerie, Nightmare."

“What does that even mean...?” she whispered.

No matter how much she thought...She couldn't understand it. Days passed. But the dreams didn't stop.

Every night the same thing. The voice. The door. The girl. Calling her. Begging her.

“Help me...”

Crystal stopped sleeping properly. Dark circles formed under her eyes. Her hands shook even during the day. And one night...She made a decision. A terrible decision. “If I just leave the door open...” she whispered,

“Maybe it will stop.”

She didn't know it yet. But that choice would change everything. That night...She opened the door. And left it open. The house fell silent. Too silent. Then somewhere deep inside the walls something moved. And this time. It wasn't asking for help anymore.

Crystal sat frozen on the edge of her bed. The silence felt wrong. Not peaceful. Not safe. It felt like the house was holding its breath. Minutes passed. Then an hour. Nothing happened. No voice. No tapping. No crying from behind the hidden door. At first, that should have made her feel better. Instead, it terrified her. Because whatever had been calling her every night was gone. And something else had taken its place.

The floorboards creaked somewhere downstairs. Once. Then again. Slowly. Deliberately. As though someone was walking through the house, learning its rooms. Learning its secrets. Crystal pulled her blanket tighter around herself. “Maybe I should close it,” she whispered. But she couldn't bring herself to move. The darkness outside her bedroom seemed deeper than before. Almost alive. Then she heard something that made her blood run cold.

A laugh. Faint. Distant. Coming from somewhere inside the walls. Not the voice of the girl. Not the voice begging for help. This laugh

sounded pleased. Like it had finally gotten what it wanted. The sound faded away, leaving only silence behind. But the feeling remained. A feeling that something had been released. Something that should never have been allowed out.

Crystal didn't sleep at all that night. And when the first pale light of morning finally appeared through her window, she felt no relief. Because deep inside, she already knew. Opening the door hadn't ended the nightmare. It had only begun.

CHAPTER 3

The First Loss

Leaving the door open...was the worst mistake Crystal had ever made. At first nothing happened. The house was quiet. Too quiet. No voices. No footsteps. The silence felt unnatural, like something was hiding inside it. No whispers. Crystal almost believed...Maybe it worked. Maybe whatever was inside that door... was finally at peace. For a moment, she allowed herself to feel a small sense of relief. But peace in that house...Never lasted long.

The next morning, Crystal woke up feeling uneasy. Her room felt colder than usual. The air... heavier. Even the sunlight looked dull, like it couldn't fully brighten the room. She slowly stepped out of her room. The hallway was empty. Silent. Then she saw it. Near the stairs. On the floor. A letter. It looked like it had been placed there carefully, not dropped. Her heart dropped instantly. "No..." she whispered. She already knew. Before even picking it up. Her hands trembled as she unfolded it. The same red writing. Darker this time. Almost fresh. It looked wet, as if it had just been written moments ago. She read it.

The words seemed to echo in her mind long after she finished reading. *"I will kill two people you love... and who they love. "Abyss, Lurker, Labyrinth, Eerie, Nightmare."* Crystal's breathing stopped. Two people. Her mind raced. "Mom... Dad... Grandma... Grandpa...No... no... no..." she whispered, shaking her head. The words echoed in her mind again and again. Two people you love...Tears filled her eyes. "How am I supposed to choose...?" she whispered. She couldn't. She wouldn't. So she made a plan. A desperate one.

"If I hide them... maybe... maybe I can protect them all."

It was the only thing she could think of. That evening, Crystal gathered her parents and grandparents. Her hands were shaking. Her voice barely steady. "Something bad is going to happen," she whispered. They looked at her, confused. Worried. "Why are you crying, my darling?" her grandmother asked softly. "I... I can't tell you everything..." Crystal said, her voice breaking

"If I do... it will get worse. Her parents exchanged worried glances.

"Just trust me," she begged. "Please..." There was something in her eyes.

Something real. Something terrifying. So they listened. "You all need to hide," Crystal said quietly. "Before 6 p.m. tonight." "Hide?" her father asked. Crystal nodded. "Grandma, Grandpa... you go to the outside basement." "Mom, Dad... you stay in the basement under my bed."

"And you?" her mother asked.

"I'll hide in the garage basement," Crystal replied. Her voice trembled. But her decision didn't. They didn't understand. But they trusted her. And so they did exactly as she said.

Darkness fell. Slowly. Heavily. Crystal sat alone in the basement under the garage. Her knees pulled close to her chest. Her heart pounding violently. The silence was unbearable. Every second felt

longer than the last, stretching endlessly. Then it started. CREEEEAAAK...A door opened. Crystal froze. Her breathing became shallow.

Then THUD. Something fell Followed Footsteps. Slow. Dragging. Moving through the house. The sound of it made her skin crawl. Crystal covered her mouth, trying not to make a sound. The footsteps continued. Back and forth. As if...Searching. Then suddenly silence. A long, horrible silence. Hours felt like years. Eventually...Exhaustion took over. And Crystal fell into a restless sleep.

When Crystal woke up and everything felt wrong. Too quiet. Her heart began to race again. She quickly climbed out of the basement and ran toward the house. “Mom? Dad?” she called. No answer. She stepped inside. The front door was slightly open. Cold air drifted in. And there on the floor was another letter. Crystal’s hands shook violently as she picked it up. Her eyes scanned the words. And then she froze.

“Oh, little girl... I killed your grandparents. Did you really think you could hide them from me?” “Now... you know what comes next.”

The paper slipped from her hands. Her legs gave out. “No...” she whispered. Tears streamed down her face. “No... no... no!” She ran. Out of the house. Toward the outside basement. Her hands shook as she opened it. And then—She saw it. She couldn’t even scream. Her grandparents...Lying still. Not moving. Gone.

Crystal stumbled backward, her vision blurring.

“I’m sorry...” she sobbed.

“I’m so sorry...”

She ran back inside. Straight to her parents. They were alive. The moment they saw her crying. They knew “What happened?” her mother asked urgently. Crystal couldn’t speak at first. Then finally “They’re gone...” she whispered. Silence filled the room. Her parents froze.

“What do you mean...?” her father asked slowly. Crystal shook her head, crying harder. “They’re... gone...” Her mother covered her mouth. Her father clenched his fists. “Who did this?” he asked angrily. Crystal’s eyes widened in fear. “Don’t say anything!” she said quickly. “He’s listening!” Her parents looked around, confused. “Who is listening?” her father asked. Crystal shook her head. “I can’t tell you... not yet...” Her mother picked up the letters. Her eyes scanned the words. Then she paused. “Wait...” she said slowly.

Her father looked at her. “These words...” she whispered. “Abyss... Lurker... Labyrinth... Eerie... Nightmare...” She looked up. “What if... it’s not random?” Her father’s eyes widened. “You mean...” “The first letters...” she said. “A... L... L... E... N...” A cold silence filled the room “Allen...” her father whispered. At that exact moment Crystal’s head slowly tilted. Her lips curled into a smile. A smile that wasn’t hers.

“I think...” she said softly...

“It’s bad to know my name.”

Her voice changed. Deeper. Colder. Her parents froze in horror. “Crystal...?” her mother whispered. The girl in front of them laughed. A slow. Twisted. Unnatural laugh. Above them on the floor above the real Crystal stood. Listening. Frozen in fear. Because she was not in the basement. She had never gone inside. So then...Who was down there...With her parents?

Crystal pressed herself against the wall, struggling to breathe. Down below, the thing wearing her face laughed again. The sound echoed through the basement. Slow. Cold. Wrong.

"Such clever people," it said softly. "You almost figured it out."

Crystal's heart pounded. She wanted to run. But she couldn't leave. Not yet. Then she heard her mother's trembling voice.

"What are you?"

For a moment, there was only silence. Then the thing answered.

"I had a name once."

The temperature in the house seemed to drop. Even from upstairs, Crystal felt the cold.

"My name was forgotten a long time ago."

A floorboard creaked beneath Crystal's feet. The laughter stopped. Instantly. Every sound in the house disappeared. The thing downstairs had heard it. Crystal's blood turned to ice. Slowly... Very slowly... A voice drifted up from the basement.

"There's someone else here."

Crystal covered her mouth. Her entire body trembled. Then she heard footsteps. Not coming towards the basement stairs. Coming toward the living room. Toward the hidden door. As if the thing wasn't looking for Crystal. As if it was afraid of something else. A moment later, another sound echoed through the house. A faint voice. Weak. Broken. Coming from behind the hidden door.

"Help me..."

Crystal froze. It was the same voice from her dreams. The same voice she had heard before. The voice of the girl. And somehow... For the first time... It sounded afraid. Very afraid.

CHAPTER 4

The Truth of Allen

The real Crystal couldn't move. She stood upstairs, just above the basement...Listening. Her heart pounded so loudly, she thought it might give her away. The sound filled her ears, drowning out everything else around her. Down below. She could hear it. Her own voice. But it wasn't her. Hearing herself speak like that made her feel sick. "I'm not your daughter..." the voice said, followed by a low, twisted laugh. Crystal's hands trembled. Tears filled her eyes. That thing... is pretending to be me...Her breathing became uneven.

Then her mother's voice, shaking with fear: "Who are you?! What have you done to our daughter?!" The thing laughed again. The laugh didn't sound human it echoed too deeply. "I told you... I'm the one who killed your parents," it said calmly.

"And now... it's your turn."

Crystal covered her mouth to stop herself from screaming. Her body felt frozen, like she had no control over it. She couldn't go down. She couldn't help them. She couldn't even move.

Then suddenly aloud crash echoed from below. Her mother screamed. Her father shouted. And then. Silence. A long...Horrible...Silence. The kind of silence that felt final. Tears streamed down Crystal's face. "No..." she whispered. She slowly backed away from the basement door. Her legs weak. Her mind breaking. She turned and ran. Out of the house. Into the cold morning air. Crystal didn't stop running until she reached the far end of the yard. Her chest burned. Her legs trembled. She turned back toward the house. It looked the same. Quiet. Still. As if nothing had happened. But everything had.

“They’re gone...” she whispered.

Her whole family. Gone. Because of her. Her knees gave out. She collapsed onto the ground. “I opened the door...” she cried.

“This is my fault...”

For a long time, she stayed there. Crying. Shaking. Alone. Then—A thought entered her mind. The door. Slowly...She stood up. “If this started because of that door...” she whispered, “...then maybe it ends there too.”

The house felt different now. Colder. Darker. Like something inside it was... alive. Watching her. Waiting. Every step she took felt like she was being followed. Crystal stepped inside slowly. Every sound made her flinch. Every shadow felt wrong. She walked toward the living room. The sofa. Still there. She hesitated. Then pushed it aside. The door was still open.

Darkness poured out from inside. And this time there was no hesitation. Crystal stepped in. The air inside was thick. Hard to breathe. The walls were closer than she remembered. Scratched. Covered in marks. Lines. Thousands of them. Like someone had been counting. Days. Or...Trying to escape. Then she saw her. The girl. Lying on the floor.

Still. Crystal’s hands shook. “You...” she whispered. Slowly the girl’s fingers moved. Then her head turned. Her eyes opened. Dark. Deep. Full of pain. “You came back...” the girl said softly. Crystal took a step back. “You’re... real...” she whispered. The girl slowly sat up. Her movements unnatural. Like something broken inside her. “I’ve always been real...” she said quietly. “Just... forgotten.” Crystal swallowed. “Are you the one... doing this?” she asked. The girl looked down. Silent.

Then “No,” she said. Crystal frowned. “But... the letters... the killings...” The girl’s eyes filled with something strange. Not anger. Not hatred. Sadness. “I didn’t want this...” she whispered. “I just

wanted someone to hear me..." Crystal's fear slowly mixed with confusion. "Then who...?" she asked. The girl looked up. "You already know my name," she said. Crystal froze. "A... L... L... E... N..." she whispered.

The girl nodded slowly. "My name... is Allen." The room seemed to grow quieter. Heavier. "I wasn't always like this," Allen said softly. Crystal stayed still. Listening. "I was just a girl..." Allen continued. "Like you." Her voice trembled. "I had a family... a happy one..." As she spoke, the air around them seemed to shift. "I had parents... and grandparents... just like you..." Crystal's chest tightened. "But then... everything changed."

Allen's eyes darkened. "My mother died first." Her voice cracked. "A car accident... that wasn't an accident." Crystal's eyes widened slightly. "My father remarried..." Allen continued. "And she came into our lives." Her hands clenched tightly. "She smiled when he was around..." Her voice dropped. "But when he left..." Silence. "She turned into something else."

Crystal felt a chill run down her spine. "She hurt me," Allen said quietly. "Made me work... treated me like nothing..." Tears formed in her eyes. "But my grandparents... they protected me." A small, broken smile appeared on her face. "They were the only ones who cared." Then her expression changed. "They died." The word echoed in the small space. "Murdered," Allen whispered. Crystal's breath caught. "And I found the truth..." Allen continued. Her voice became colder. "It was her." Silence filled the room.

"My stepmother." Crystal clenched her fists. "I tried to tell someone..." Allen said. "I tried to escape..." Her voice broke. "But she locked me in here." She looked around the small, suffocating space.

"This room..." Crystal felt her chest tighten painfully.

"She left me here... to die."

Tears streamed down Allen's face.

"No food... no light... no hope..." Her voice became barely a whisper.

"I called for help..." Silence. "But no one came." Crystal's eyes filled with tears. "I died here..." Allen said softly. The words hung in the air.

"And when I died..." Her eyes slowly darkened. "I became this." Crystal wiped her tears. "I'm so sorry..." she whispered. Allen looked at her. For the first time her expression softened. "You're the first one who listened," she said quietly. Crystal took a small step closer. "You're not alone anymore," she said. Allen froze slightly.

Then very slowly she smiled. A small, fragile smile. But something was still wrong. "Then... why are my family...?" Crystal asked, her voice shaking. Allen's smile faded. "I didn't mean to hurt them..." she whispered. Crystal's heart dropped. "But when the door opened..." Allen continued, "...something else came with it." The air turned cold. "What do you mean...?" Crystal asked.

Allen's eyes shifted toward the darkness behind her. "There's another part of me," she said slowly. "Not the girl..." "Not the one you're talking to..." Her voice dropped into a whisper. "The part that stayed angry. The part that wanted revenge. Crystal's blood ran cold. that part..." Allen whispered... "Is the one killing."

A sudden sound echoed from outside the room. FOOTSTEPS. Slow. Heavy. Coming closer. Allen's eyes widened "You need to leave," she said quickly. "What—?" Crystal began. "GO!" Allen shouted. The footsteps stopped. Right outside the door. The darkness shifted. Something was there. Something... waiting.

Allen's eyes remained fixed on the doorway. Fear filled them. Not fear for herself. Fear for Crystal. The thing outside stood completely still. As if it was listening to every breath they took.

Crystal could hear nothing except the pounding of her own heart. Then— Scratch. A long scraping sound dragged across the wood outside Slowly. Patiently. Like claws tracing the door. Crystal took a step backward.

"What is it doing?" she whispered. Allen swallowed hard.

"It knows you're here."

The scratching stopped for a moment, everything became silent again. Then a voice echoed from beyond the doorway. Soft. Cold. And terribly familiar.

"Allen..."

Crystal froze. The voice sounded almost identical to Allen's. But there was something wrong with it. Something cruel. Something empty. Allen's hands began to shake.

"No..." she whispered.

The voice laughed. A low, twisted laugh that echoed through the narrow space.

"You've been talking about me again."

The darkness outside seemed to thicken. Spreading across the floor like black smoke. Crystal felt the temperature drop instantly. Her breath became visible in the air.

"Allen..." she whispered. "Who is that?"

Allen slowly lowered her head. Tears filled her eyes.

"The part of me that never moved on."

The voice outside laughed again. Louder this time.

"And I'm tired of hiding."

CREEEEAAAK... The door began to open. Only a little. Just enough for darkness to spill through the gap. Allen quickly stepped in front of Crystal.

"Whatever happens," she whispered,

"don't believe anything it says."

The gap widened. The room trembled. And for the first time—
Something on the other side smiled.

CHAPTER 5

The Broken Soul

The footsteps stopped. Right outside the door. Crystal's body froze. She couldn't breathe. She couldn't think. Time itself seemed to slow down, stretching every second painfully. Allen grabbed her wrist. Her grip was cold—but not painful. "That's not me," Allen whispered quickly. "That's the part of me... that never forgave." The door began to creak. Slowly.

The sound echoed through the small space, making everything feel tighter. Crystal's heart pounded violently. "What do I do?!" she whispered. Allen looked at her, her eyes filled with urgency. "You have to face it," she said. "But don't let it control you." The door opened. And something stepped in. Its presence filled the room instantly, like all the air had been taken away.

It looked like Allen. But twisted. Broken. Its body was darker. Its smile wider. Its eyes burning red. "You finally came back..." it hissed. Crystal stumbled backward. Fear rushed through her body, making her feel weak. Allen stepped in front of her. "Stop this," Allen

said firmly. “This isn’t what we wanted!” The dark figure laughed. A horrible, echoing sound. “Wanted?” it said. “They left us. They ignored us. They deserved it.” Crystal shook her head. “My family didn’t do anything!” she cried. The dark spirit slowly turned toward her. “Everyone says that,” it whispered.

It began to move closer. Step by step. The walls seemed to close in. The air grew colder. “You opened the door,” it said. “You let me out.” Crystal’s hands trembled. “I... I didn’t know...” she whispered. “Exactly,” it replied. It raised its hand—Sharp, claw-like fingers forming. Allen shouted, “STOP!”

The dark spirit paused. Allen stepped forward. “This isn’t who we are,” she said, her voice shaking but strong. “We just wanted help.” the spirit tilted its head. “We wanted revenge,” it corrected. “No,” Allen said firmly. “We wanted someone to listen.” Silence. Crystal watched, her heart racing. This wasn’t just a fight. This was... Two sides of the same soul.

“You killed innocent people,” Allen said softly. “They weren’t innocent,” the spirit snapped. “No one is.” Crystal stepped forward. “Yes, they are,” she said, her voice shaking but brave. Both turned toward her. “My family didn’t hurt you,” she continued. “I didn’t hurt you.” The spirit stared at her. Then laughed. “You think kindness fixes everything?” it mocked. Crystal’s eyes filled with tears. “No...” she whispered. “But I think pain doesn’t have to become more pain.”

Silence filled the room. Allen looked at Crystal. Something in her eyes changed. Hope. “You said... you’d help me,” Allen whispered. Crystal nodded. “I will.” She took a deep breath. “We don’t need to hurt anyone,” she said. “We can still make things right.” The dark spirit’s expression twisted. “Too late,” it growled. “No,” Crystal said. She stepped closer. Even though every part of her was terrified. “It’s not too late for you,” she said softly. The spirit froze. “For the first time... someone listened to you,” Crystal continued.

“You’re not alone anymore.” Allen’s eyes filled with tears. The dark spirit trembled. “No...” it whispered. “...we were alone...” “Not anymore,” Crystal said gently. Her voice, though soft, felt stronger than before. Silence. A long...Heavy...Silence. Then the spirit screamed. A loud, painful, echoing scream. Its form began to shake. Crack. Break. Allen reached out “Come back,” she said softly. Slowly...The darkness began to fade. The red eyes dimmed. The twisted form softened. And then the two became one.

Allen stood there. Whole. Not dark. Not broken. Just... a girl. Tears rolled down her cheeks. “I... I didn’t mean to hurt them...” she whispered. Crystal stepped closer. “I know,” she said gently. Allen looked at her. “Can I... fix it?” she asked. Crystal’s voice trembled.

“...Please.” Allen nodded. She closed her eyes. The room began to shake. The air grew warm. A soft light filled the space. Crystal felt something change. Something... lifting. Then everything went black.

Crystal opened her eyes. She was lying in her bed. Sunlight streamed through the window. Birds chirped outside. Everything felt...Normal. For a moment, she wondered, was it all a dream? Then the door opened. “Crystal? Are you awake?” her mother’s voice called. Crystal froze. Slowly...She sat up.

Her mother stood there. Alive. Behind her father. And in the hallway her grandparents. Tears filled Crystal’s eyes instantly. “Mom...?” she whispered. Her mother smiled. “Come on, sleepyhead. Breakfast is ready.” Crystal ran to her. Hugging her tightly. They were warm. Real. Alive. Tears streamed down her face. “You’re okay...” she whispered “We’re always okay,” her father said, smiling.

Crystal looked around. Everything was back. But deep inside...She knew. It wasn’t just luck. That evening...Crystal went to the living room. Slowly...She moved the sofa. The door was gone. As if it had never existed. But something remained. A small piece of paper. Crystal picked it up. The writing was no longer red. It was soft. Faded. She read it.

“Thank you for listening. “Thank you for being my friend.” “I’m finally at peace.”—Allen. A tear rolled down Crystal’s cheek. She smiled softly. “Goodbye, Allen,” she whispered. The house felt different now. Lighter. Warmer. At peace. And for the first time Everbreeze was no longer a place of fear. But a place where a lost soul...Finally found rest.

Days turned into weeks.

Weeks turned into months.

Slowly, the memories of what happened began to fade.

Not completely.

Crystal didn't think they ever would.

But the fear became smaller.

The nightmares stopped. The cold spots vanished. And no stranger letters appeared. Sometimes, Crystal would sit by her bedroom window and think about Allen. Wondering where she was now.

Wondering if she had finally found the peace she had been searching for all those years.

Every time she thought of her, she remembered the note.

"Thank you for listening."

And every time, Crystal smiled. Life moved forward. School became normal again. Her friends laughed. Her family felt safe. The old house no longer felt haunted. It felt like a home. For a while, Crystal began to believe that the nightmare was truly over. That the hidden door had disappeared forever. That whatever darkness had lived inside it was gone.

But sometimes... Late at night... When the house was completely silent... She would wake up for no reason at all. A strange feeling lingering in her chest.

Not fear.

Not exactly.

More like a warning.

As though something far away was watching.

Waiting.

Patient.

And on one of those nights, just before falling asleep, Crystal thought she heard something. A faint sound. So faint she almost missed it. *Scratch*. Her eyes opened. The room was empty. The sound didn't come again. After a few moments, she laughed nervously and shook her head.

"It was nothing," she whispered.

Then she closed her eyes and went back to sleep. She never noticed the thin mark on the wall outside her bedroom. A mark that hadn't been there before. A mark that looked very much like a crack.

CHAPTER 6

The Crack Returns

The house was quiet again. But this time... it was different. Not the heavy, suffocating silence that once filled every corner. Not the kind that made the air feel thick and hard to breathe. This silence was softer. Gentler. Like the house itself was finally resting. Crystal stood alone in the living room, her eyes slowly moving across the space. The sofa. The walls. The place where everything had begun... and ended.

The door was gone. As if it had never existed. And yet... she remembered everything. Every sound. Every fear. Every moment and Allen. Crystal held the small piece of paper tightly in her hand.

“Thank you for listening.” Her fingers trembled slightly as she read the words again in her mind. A quiet sadness settled in her chest—not the painful kind... but the kind that stays even after everything is over.

“I hope you’re okay now,” she whispered softly. The house didn’t answer. But for the first time... it didn’t feel like something was hiding in the silence. Days passed. Then weeks. Life slowly returned to normal. Crystal went back to school. Her friends came over again though not for sleepovers this time. Her parents smiled more. Her grandparents laughed like nothing had ever happened. Everything was fine. Everything was safe. But sometimes...Late at night...Crystal would wake up.

Not because of a sound. But because of a feeling. Like someone had just been there. Watching. Not in a scary way. Just... there. One night, she sat up in bed, her heart beating slightly faster than normal. The room was dark. Quiet. Still. “...Allen?” she whispered. No answer. Crystal let out a small breath and lay back down. “Guess I’m just imagining things,” she murmured. But deep down...She wasn’t sure. The next morning, everything felt normal again. Sunlight filled the house.

The smell of breakfast drifted through the air. Her mother called her from downstairs. “Crystal! Hurry up!” “Coming!” she replied, quickly getting ready. As she walked down the stairs, something caught her eye. She stopped. Froze. On the wall near the staircase...There was a mark. A small one. Scratched. Crystal slowly stepped closer. Her heart began to beat faster. It looked like one of the marks from inside the hidden room. Her fingers hovered near it... but she didn’t touch it.

“That’s not possible...” she whispered. The door was gone. Everything was over. Right? “Crystal?” her father’s voice called from the kitchen. She quickly stepped back. “Yeah! I’m coming!” She forced herself to walk away. But something inside her had already

changed. That night...She couldn't sleep. Again. She stared at the ceiling, her mind replaying everything.

Allen. The room. The scratches. The voice. "...It's over," she whispered to herself. "It has to be." But the words didn't feel real. Not anymore. Slowly...She sat up. Her eyes moved toward the door of her room. For a moment... she hesitated. Then she got up. Step by step... she walked out into the hallway. The house was silent. Her parents were asleep. Everything looked normal. Too normal. She walked down the stairs. Each step creaked softly under her feet. The same sound. The same feeling. The same place where it all started. She reached the living room. Stopped. Looked at the sofa. Her chest tightened.

"...This is stupid," she whispered. "There's nothing here." But her feet didn't move. They stayed rooted to the ground. Like something was pulling her closer. Slowly...She walked toward the sofa. Her breathing became shallow. Her hands slightly shaking. And then she pushed it. Just a little. Nothing. No door. No darkness. Just a wall. Crystal let out a shaky breath. "See?" she whispered to herself. "It's over." But then she heard it. Very faint. Very soft.

"...Crystal..." Her entire body froze. Her eyes widened. Her heart stopped. That voice. She knew that voice. "...Allen?" she whispered. Silence.

Then again "...Crystal..." But this time...Something was wrong.

The voice didn't sound sad. It didn't sound weak. It didn't sound like Allen. It sounded... distant. Broken. Like something trying to copy her. Crystal slowly stepped back. "No..." she whispered. "No, no, no..." The lights flickered. Just once. But it was enough. The air grew colder. Not like before. Worse. Heavier.

Like something was forcing its way back. "That's not Allen..." she said, her voice shaking. "That's not her..." The wall in front of her cracked. A thin line. Spreading slowly. Her breath caught in her throat. The crack widened. And from inside it...Darkness. Deep.

Endless. "...You opened it once..." The voice whispered. "...You can open it again..." Crystal shook her head violently. "No!" "I closed it! It's over!" Silence. Then a laugh. Low. Twisted. Not Allen. Not human. "...Nothing ever ends.

Crystal's heart hammered in her chest. The darkness inside the crack seemed to move. Slowly. Like something was waking up. "No..." she whispered again. The cold spread through the room. Across the floor. Up the walls. Through the air itself. The crack widened another inch. Then another. A faint shadow stretched out from within it. Not fully formed. Not yet. But something was there. Watching. Waiting. Crystal stumbled backward until she hit the opposite wall.

Her hands shook violently. She wanted to run upstairs. She wanted to wake her parents. But something kept her frozen in place. The voice came again. Closer this time. Stronger.

"You remember me."

The darkness shifted for a brief second, Crystal thought she saw a face. Not Allen's. Not human. Something older. Something broken. The lights flickered again. Once. Twice. Three times. Then the entire house fell silent. A terrible silence. The kind that comes before a storm. Crystal swallowed hard.

"What do you want from me?" she whispered.

For several seconds, there was no answer. Then a low chuckle echoed from the crack. A sound filled with loneliness. And hatred. And grief.

"I want what she was given."

Crystal's breath caught. The darkness pushed forward. Just a little more. And for the first time... A shape began to emerge from the crack.

CHAPTER 7

Final Silence

“...Nothing ever ends...” The voice stretched through the room like a shadow. Crystal stumbled backward, her hands shaking. The crack in the wall widened slowly, like something inside was pushing against it. “No...” she whispered. “You’re not real... this is over...” The darkness inside the crack pulsed. Then a shape began to form. Not fully human. Not fully anything. It looked like shifting smoke, constantly changing, never still.

But its eyes burned with a dull, hollow glow. Crystal felt her breath catch. “...Who are you?” she whispered. The thing tilted its head slightly. For a moment... it said nothing. Then “I am what remained.” The voice echoed unnaturally, as if many voices were speaking at once. Crystal’s heart pounded. “Remained... from what?” The figure slowly moved forward, the darkness around it stretching across the floor. “From her pain... from her anger... from everything she could not carry when she chose peace.” Crystal froze. “...Allen?” she whispered. The figure let out a low, broken laugh. “No.” The room grew colder. “She left.” A pause. “But I did not.”

Crystal shook her head. “That’s not possible. She became whole. She let go!” “Yes,” it replied softly. “She let go.” Its voice darkened. “So I was left behind.” The truth hit Crystal like ice. This wasn’t Allen. This was what Allen had left behind her pain. Her anger. Her darkness. The part that couldn’t be healed. “You don’t belong here,” Crystal said, her voice trembling but firm. The figure moved closer. “And yet... here I am.” The shadows stretched further, touching the edges of the room.

“You opened the door once,” it whispered. “You made a path.” Crystal clenched her fists. “I didn’t mean to!” “Intent does not matter.” The air felt heavier. “It only takes one moment... to let

something in.” Crystal’s breathing became uneven. “...What do you want?” she asked. The figure stopped. For the first time... it seemed to think. Then it answered. “To exist.” Silence filled the room.

“I was never given a voice,” it continued. “Never understood. Never released.” Its eyes locked onto hers. “So now... I will take one.”

Crystal’s heart dropped. “You don’t need to hurt anyone!” she said quickly. “That’s what Allen said too!” The figure twitched.

Something flickered in its form.

“She chose peace,” Crystal continued, stepping forward despite her fear. “She chose to stop the pain!”. “And look where that left me,” it snapped. The room shook slightly. “Forgotten. Abandoned. Alone.” Crystal swallowed. “...You’re not alone. The words came out quietly but clearly. The figure froze. “You think that matters?” it asked.

Crystal nodded slow “Yes.” Silence. A long, heavy silence. Then she took another step forward. “I heard her story,” she said. “I listened.” Her voice softened.

“I can listen to you too.” The darkness trembled. “I don’t need you to disappear,” Crystal continued. “I just don’t want anyone else to get hurt. The figure’s form flickered again. Unstable. Conflicted No one ever listened,” it whispered. Crystal’s eyes filled with tears. “I am.” For a moment nothing happened. Then the crack in the wall stopped spreading. The shadows stopped moving. The air... softened. Just slightly. The figure looked at her.

Not with anger. Not with hatred. But something else. Something... uncertain. “...If I stay,” it said slowly, “I will hurt again.” Crystal nodded “I know.” “...If I leave,” it continued, “I disappear.” Crystal took a deep breath. “Not disappear,” she said gently. “...Rest.” The word lingered in the air. The figure shook slightly.

“Rest...” it repeated, like it had never heard the word before. Crystal gave a small nod. “You don’t have to fight anymore.” Silence. Then the darkness began to shrink. Slowly. Carefully. Like it was letting go. “I was never meant to exist like this...” it whispered. Crystal

stepped closer. "No," she said softly. "But you don't have to suffer either." The figure looked at her one last time. "...You are like her," it said. Crystal blinked. "Allen?"

A faint, almost invisible softness appeared in the darkness. "Yes. Then, Light. Soft. Warm. It spread through the crack. The darkness began to dissolve. Piece by piece. Like smoke fading into air. "...Thank you..." the voice whispered. And then it was gone. The wall sealed. The crack vanished. The room returned to normal. Crystal stood there, breathing slowly. The house felt...Light. Completely light. Not even a trace of heaviness remained.

Days passed. Then weeks. This time there were no strange sounds. No dreams. No feelings of being watched. No shadows. Nothing. The house was finally free.

One evening, Crystal sat by the window, watching the sunset. Golden light filled the room. Peaceful. Quiet. Real. She held a small piece of paper in her hand. It hadn't been there before. But now it was. She read it softly. "Thank you... for seeing what others could not." "...We are both at peace now." No name. But she knew. Allen. And the part of her that had once been lost. Crystal smiled gently. "Goodbye," she whispered. And this time there was no echo. No whisper. No shadow. Only silence. Soft. Warm. Complete.

Crystal remained by the window long after the sun had disappeared. The sky slowly darkened. Stars appeared one by one. For the first time in a very long time, she wasn't afraid of the night. The shadows in her room were only shadows. The creaks in the house were only old floorboards.

And the silence... The silence was finally peaceful. A gentle breeze drifted through the open window. Crystal closed her eyes and smiled. Somewhere deep in her heart, she felt it. Not a voice. Not a whisper. Not a warning. Just a feeling. A feeling that someone was happy. Someone was free. She opened her eyes and looked toward the stars.

"Take care, Allen," she whispered.

The breeze stirred once more, lightly brushing against her face. Then it was gone. Months passed. Winter became spring. Spring became summer. Life continued. Crystal grew older. The story of the hidden door slowly became nothing more than a memory. A memory she never forgot. But one that no longer hurt.

Sometimes she would tell herself that none of it could have been real. That it had all been a strange dream. But whenever she looked at the faded note she kept safely in her drawer, she remembered. She remembered a lonely girl who only wanted to be heard. And she remembered that sometimes the kindest thing a person can do... Is listen.

Years later, whenever Crystal walked through Everbreeze, she noticed something had changed. The house felt brighter. Warmer. Alive. Not with fear. But with peace. And if anyone ever asked why she smiled whenever she looked at that old house, she never told them the whole story. She would simply smile and say,

"Some people just need a friend."

And somewhere beyond sight...

Beyond fear...

Beyond darkness...

A lost soul finally rested.

Afterword



With the approval of the Ministry of Education, this research-based project has empowered thousands of student authors for over ten years. Educationists recognize it as a program that significantly enhances the quality of school education.

In alignment with modern educational reforms, encouraging students to author a research work is a milestone in this journey. In this digital age of "Smart" technology, the modern school must demonstrate through research that books and technology should be used together. This is because the unique joy a child receives from a book cannot be replaced by anything else.

To prevent children from drifting away from books—which remain our primary educational tool and storehouse of human knowledge—Mahamaya Girls' College has spearheaded the "Hemamala Upahara" project for many years. Its primary objectives are to foster academic discipline, promote values, and pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who fulfilled a historic mission to empower women.

We express our gratitude to the Principal, teachers, parents, alumni of Mahamaya Girls' College, representatives of other schools, the Diyawadana Nilame, and the staff of the Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic) for their support.

Seneviratne Mahalekam

(Project Creator)