

CLOCKWORK IGNI by Christina Bauer

EXCERPT

I stand in a small square room. A heavy iron door looms before me. All around, the walls are lined with intricately-entwined gears and springs. Tiny pieces whirl and tick away at high speed. With each click and swipe, a tiny jolt of worry ricochets down my spine. Sweat beads on my palms.

I'm girl enough to admit it. This scene freaks me out.

No question why, either. This isn't just any metal portal. It's Pandora's Door. As in, the girl didn't keep a box of nasties. Nope. Instead, something awful lurks behind this very entrance. If I pull on the handle, that magical whatchamacallit gets free. Based on what I've learned, the mystery something-something could make everything right again. In other words, my igni would return. I'll move souls once more. The Great Scala is back. How perfect.

Or I could release an unknown scourge that destroys all the after-realms. Definitely not as cool.

A memory appears. I picture Verus giving me a solemn warning: "No matter how tempting the door may appear, you must step back and walk away."

It's logical enough advice. Plus, Verus is an oracle angel. In my experience, she's right most of the time. Perhaps I should give up. Go home. Play with my kid. Smooch my hottie husband. Get a mocha.

That lasts all of five seconds.

Screw it. I'm going in.

I grasp the handle and pull.