



## Immovable Doors

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On a Monday afternoon, I discover that my front door won't open.

I stare down at my hand on the doorhandle, jostling it a few times. When it doesn't budge, I try the lock, even though I don't remember locking it. I try again but it still won't cooperate.

I stand back to reevaluate. Maybe I'm looking at this immovable green door all wrong. Maybe it's not locked. Maybe I'm just not trying hard enough.

Yes, that must be it. I saw Robbie open the door not ten minutes ago, so it can't be locked.

I try again, harder this time. I lean all my weight against the door, then remember it's a pull, not a push. Feeling slightly foolish, I ready a self-deprecating smile and easy joke in case someone happens across me and this stupid, stubborn door.

I push down on the handle and tug it towards me. I'm met with solid resistance.

I fish my phone out of my pocket and realise I'm about to be late to class. There are a few text notifications from classmates who were waiting for me at the cafe. They've moved on and have saved me a seat in the classroom.

Irritation itches across my skin, sinking like a stone in my stomach. I finally managed to drag myself out of bed, put on a clean outfit, do my make-up and my hair, *and* do this week's reading. I'm as prepared as

I can be for this class and I can't let that effort go to waste, but the stupid, stubborn, immovable door won't open.

"C'mon, man," I say to the door, coaxing it like it's going to hear me. I pull and pull, dropping my bag and taking off my coat. I pull until class has long since finished. My flatmates walk by and give me funny looks, and I'm so embarrassed that I retreat to my room.

Once I've closed the door, I tell myself to calm down. I'm being irrational, unreasonable, and pathetic. I breath deep into my lungs, hold the air until it burns, then release it in a slow exhale.

Alright, so no class today. Fine. I'll just work on some assignments and take notes from the PowerPoint. I can still salvage this.

To help with my focus, I change out of the cute outfit and put on sweats, take down my hair and wipe off my make-up. While I wait for my computer to boot up, I scroll on my phone, drifting absent-mindedly down a stream of Instagram reels. Some small, indistinct girl in my head clears her throat and looks pointedly at the open, empty document on my computer screen, but she's drowned out by the latest trend.

I know I'm supposed to be working. If I can't go to class, I should be productive with my time – at least until I figure out how to unlock the door. It gnaws at me as the hours dwindle away, darkness deepening outside my window.

Finally, my brain wriggles free of the social media trap, and I look up, my back cramping. My stomach's growling in hunger. The clock stares back at me and blinks a mocking 3:05AM.

"Shit."

I've missed messages from my boyfriend, and my flatmates, and my classmates. They're asking where I am, he's asking why I'm ignoring him. I wince and decide I'll answer after I've eaten something.

Then I remember that I forgot to go grocery shopping.

With great effort, I lever myself out of my desk chair and shuffle to the kitchen with every intention of scavenging, but find it's a mess. My flatmates are great, but they're not very clean. I grimace at the sink full of dishes, the countertops covered in old cheese and grease-stains, the hob marred with charred food. My appetite escapes me.

I decide that today's just not right. Tomorrow will be better, I promise myself as I head back to my room, hungry and disappointed. I shower off the layers of shame on my skin with near-scalding water, relishing the heat, but forget to brush my teeth. My bed's beckoning, promising comfort, and the sweet escape of sleep. I burrow into the sheets.

My phone waits for me at my bedside. I reach for it, desperate for the comfort of all the knowledge in the world on a bright little screen. I hold it too close to my face and lose myself in its glow.

I must fall asleep eventually because I wake up at 2PM the next day.

Cursing, I fling off the sheets and scramble to ready myself. I pull on clothes that I think are clean and gather the things I need for class, then realise I didn't charge my laptop overnight.

Already angry with myself, I throw open the door and race down the hallway, almost crashing into the front door. I push down on the handle and pull back and –

My wrist barks in pain as the door refuses to move. I look down at my hand incredulously.

“Oh, man, this is seriously not cool,” I snap, pulling harder. A sea of unamused green paint stares impassively back at me. I growl between my teeth and let go of the handle, taking a few steps back.

I say, “You're useless,” but the door doesn't flinch at the barb. This only makes me angrier.

I say, “What's the point if you won't open? You're a door. That's what you're supposed to do,” but the door doesn't care.

I try another approach. “Look, I really need to go. I missed class yesterday. I can’t miss again,” but it won’t listen to reason.

Anxiety worms its way into my chest. If I don’t go to class, I’ll get kicked out. If I don’t go, people will think I don’t care. I decide to vent my frustration to the door.

I say, “Please let me out,” and it’s not what I meant to say.

The door seems to shrug and say *bad luck* and I’m about to start screaming at it, the tears welling up in my eyes, my fists curled, intent on violence.

Then Robbie appears beside me.

“Is the door stuck again?” he asks. I blink at him, my anger dwindling. In its place, shame curdles in my gut.

I stumble for that smile, that easy joke.

“No,” I reply as nonchalantly as I can. “I just got back.” I pretend like I’m coming, not going. I give him an awkward wave as I retrace my steps back down the hallway, slinking into my bedroom.

Robbie watches me leave, perplexed. Then he shrugs *–not his problem–* and opens the door.