

"Witty, touching and totally absorbing."

—**GRAEME SIMSION**, *New York Times*  
bestselling author of *THE ROSIE PROJECT*

# CASSANDRA

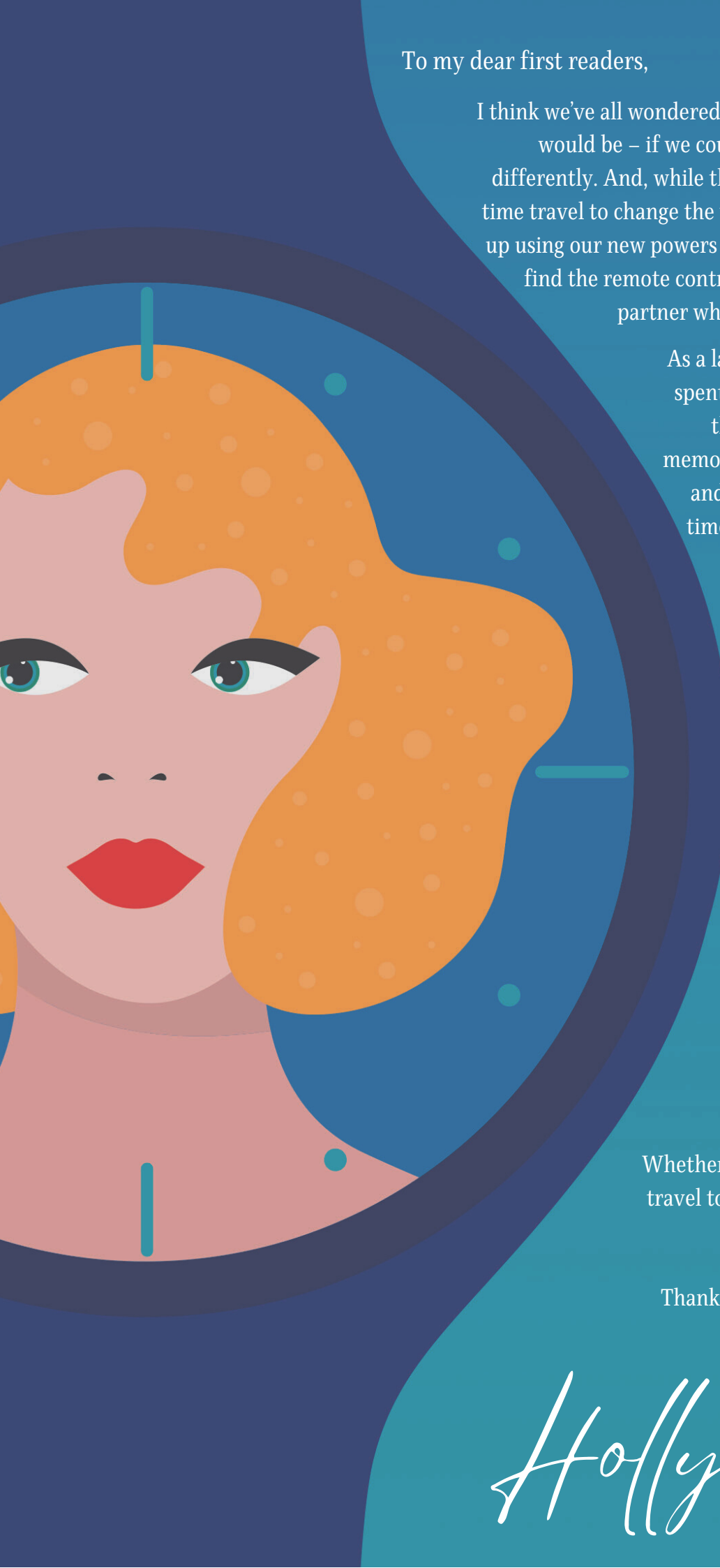
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# REVERSE

HOLLY SMALE



To my dear first readers,

I think we've all wondered where would we end up – or who we would be – if we could just go back in time and do things differently. And, while the extraordinary among us might use time travel to change the world, I suspect a lot of us would end up using our new powers to rewind TV shows because we can't find the remote control, or undo burnt toast, or get back a partner who dumped us for no apparent reason.

As a late-diagnosed autistic woman, I have spent a lot of my life wishing I could undo things I have said or done: looping my memories to find a way to be more 'normal' and less 'weird'. I have also spent a lot of time looking in books for people like me.

But if art is a mirror, held up to nature, then I have often felt like a ghost: seeking my own reflection, ripping down dust-sheets and finding... nothing. So, with Cassie, I decided to make my own.

We all deserve to live in a world where art reflects the full human experience; where our mirrors are clean, unbroken and honest – even if they are sometimes uncomfortable – and where we can see not just ourselves in them, but the faces of each other. Mirrors that allow us to recognize and understand each other better, and celebrate all the glorious, myriad ways of being human.

Whether we're saving the world or using time travel to reheat our tea, I suspect that – deep down – we're not all that different.

Thank you for helping me pull off the dust-sheet.

*Holly Smafe*

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think your first impressions of Cassandra would be if you met her toward the beginning of the book? Do you think you would tend towards understanding or frustration?

2. In her professional sphere Cassandra is described by a client as “relentlessly grating” and “unlikeable”. Do you think her behavior would be perceived differently if she were a man?

3. Greek mythology is woven throughout the book as one of Cassandra’s great passions. Outside of her mother being a world-renowned Classics professor at Cambridge, what do you think it is about these tales that draws her to them?

4. Cassandra tells Will that her emotional synesthesia is more complicated than simply “red is anger, blue is sadness, yellow is happy.” Can you imagine what it would be like to see emotions as colors? How might it impact the way you interact with others?

5. After finally achieving a successful “first night” with Will, Cassandra asks herself if she is using her rewinds to manipulate him. Is her behavior immoral? Unethical?

6. It’s revealed near the end of the book that Cassandra, like her mother, has autism. While this might not have been as surprising to you as it was for her, how did experiencing life through her eyes affect your understanding of autistic people?

7. Upon discovering her powers Cassandra’s first instinct is to save her parents, and the second to recover her career and relationship. What does she end up gaining despite not achieving any of those goals?

8. Given all of her personal and professional successes do you think that Cassandra makes the right decision to start over one final time?

9. If you had the power to go back and relive moments of your life, what would you change? How might your life improve and, in the process, what might you end up losing?





# Cassandra's Banana Muffins

## Ingredients:

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
½ teaspoon salt  
3 large bananas, mashed  
¾ cup white sugar  
1 egg

## Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a 12-cup muffin tin or line cups with paper liners. Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in a bowl; set aside.
2. Mix bananas, sugar, egg, and melted butter in a separate large bowl until well combined; fold in flour mixture until smooth. Spoon batter into the prepared muffin cups, filling each 2/3 full.
3. Bake in the preheated oven until tops spring back when lightly pressed, about 25 to 30 minutes. Cool briefly in the tin, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.



# Holly Smale



Holly Smale is the internationally bestselling, award-winning author of the *Geek Girl* and *The Valentines* teen series, which have sold 3.4 million copies worldwide.

In January 2021, Holly was diagnosed autistic at the age of 39. Suddenly a lot of things made sense. Holly regularly shares, debates about, and celebrates neurodiversity on Twitter and Instagram @holsmale.