

# ONE

---

*Colby: I'm not giving up on us. XO*

I was wet and cold, and wondering what the hell I was going to do. I had no cell service, and no one knew where I was. Well, at least no one I would want to know. I could only hope the Mysterious Texter anonymously threatening me was not waiting for me at the end of this. Luckily, the long, stone passageway, lit only by my cell phone flashlight, looked infinite, so if he were there, maybe he would get tired of waiting and leave.

I moved cautiously, the ground was composed of uneven stone, and it was damp and slippery. Dressed in a sleeveless tank top, sport capris, and cross trainers, I really wished I'd worn my jacket. It might be Indian summer above ground, but down here, in the dark and damp, it was refrigerator-like.

I picked up my pace, hoping that there was a way out of this folly. I'm not normally claustrophobic, but I could feel the walls closing in the further down the dark tunnel I walked. I squinted ahead. I turned off my flashlight, let my eyes adjust, and looked again. It looked like there was light ahead. Where the walls began to curve, it appeared to be the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. I turned my flashlight

back on and continued my trek, hopeful there would soon be an exit.

The light brightened as I closed in on it and with it, my spirits. However, I was to be disappointed, for it turned out to be a window of sorts. It was an egress, about two feet tall and a bit wider, a good three feet above me. But it was definitely open to daylight. That was a good sign. It meant the tunnel had stopped its descent and was once again ascending, raising with it my expectations that I might soon be at the other end. I quashed the fear that it could all end in a closed and locked door.

Suddenly, there was movement ahead of me. I heard stones scrape against the cobblestone. I froze. Alone was terrifying. Someone else in the tunnel with me could be deadly. I flashed my light down the path. It was empty. I heard the sound again and followed it with my flashlight. Tracing the light along the ground, I caught the movement, and then suddenly, too many yellow eyes were flashing back at me. I almost dropped my phone and stifled a scream. Rats. Huge assed rats. Luckily, the light startled them, and they scattered. I leaned against the cold stone wall and let my heart rate drop back to normal.

Nothing like a little adrenaline to make you forget you're freezing. I forged ahead. I wanted to creep forward, but my desire to be done with this portion of my adventure was strong.

This was stupid. Really, really stupid. But I needed to know if, at the end of this tunnel, I'd find the answers I needed. A man's life hung in the balance, and I was determined to make sure both of us made it out of this alive. I crept on. It was getting warmer. Mind you, I wasn't getting warmer, but I could feel warmth in the air. Then I saw a

shadow ahead of me. Something besides cold stone and as I got closer, I could see the glint of metal.

A bit closer, and I could make out the outline of wheels. A few more steps and my light gave shape to it. It was the remnants of an old wooden wheelchair, tipped on its side, the silver wheels frozen in time.

Every Stephen King book I'd ever read flashed in my already overstimulated mind. It was simultaneously fascinating and genuinely terrifying. I was so engrossed in it that I almost missed the boarded-up window on my left. It was only a few feet off the ground, meaning just beyond the wall was daylight. I was no longer underground. Finally. I had to be close.

I moved with purpose, anxious to round the curve in front of me. It didn't take long before daylight flooded the passageway. I quickened my step. Another boarded up window, this time with a few broken boards near the top allowing light to pour in. I stood on my tip-toes to look out. I could see the shore and water. Lots of water. But that should be expected since I was on an island.

The door couldn't be far now. If it opened, I wondered what it would reveal and where I'd find myself. It would have been smart, I presumed, if I had known that before I impetuously plunged into the darkness. Oh, who was I kidding? Impetuous was practically my middle name.

I walked just a bit further, and there it was. The door. Appearing more formidable than the one at the beginning of my journey. Now I needed to go through it and pray the tip I got would pay off, and I could end all of this for good. I grabbed the heavy metal thumb latch and pressed down.

I tugged on the door, thinking this was not the adventure I had imagined a week ago when I was sitting in my favorite spot in all of Boston, ready to begin my new life.