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R.L. STINE

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Trapped

Fear Street

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Welcome to the Labyrinth . . .

"So no one's been down here for years?" Elaine asked. Her gaze traveled over the graffiti-covered walls. She couldn't help being fascinated. Forget the hallway upstairs. This really was a place that no one at school had ever seen.

"They closed the tunnels off a long time ago," Max explained. "All the entrances were blocked up."

"Why?" Elaine asked.

"Something happened," Bo replied. "Something bad."

Elaine shivered. She watched their shadows flutter along the walls. As if all the kids who partied here were still hanging out, dancing.

"What happened?" she asked.

"I don't know exactly," Bo replied. "But kids died. A lot of kids died."

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Fear Street

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BEAR STREET®
R. L. STINE

Trapped

A Parachute Press Book



AN ARCHWAY PAPERBACK

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chapter

1

“I can’t believe I’m here,” Elaine Butler muttered to herself. She steered her Civic around the deep puddle that always formed at the entrance to the Shadyside High parking lot.

The windshield wipers whisked back and forth. Elaine shivered in her coat and sweatshirt. The heater hardly helped at all.

I can’t believe it, she thought. I’m really here on a Saturday.

She tried to convince herself it was like any other day of school. But it wasn’t.

It was detention.

I must be some kind of moron, she told herself, another chill running up her spine. She put the car in park and shut the engine.

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She couldn't bring herself to get out. A strong wind slapped rain against the windows. She gazed through the mist at Shadyside High. The old building stood gray, cold, and lifeless. The windows were dark. Only two other cars were parked in the lot.

How did I get myself into this? Elaine asked herself.

She remembered the moment clearly—a moment of total panic when she realized she forgot her trig homework. She had left it on her desk at home, finished down to the last formula, folded neatly, ready to go. But she forgot to put it in her math book.

Her teacher, Mr. Forest, wasn't sympathetic.

"That's three missed assignments, Elaine," he said, stroking his mustache. He scanned his grade-book in front of the whole class. "Yes . . . one, two, and three."

He smiled. He's enjoying this, Elaine thought.

"In this class, Elaine, three is a charm. Please collect your books and go to the principal's office."

Her classmates were silent the whole time. But Elaine could feel their eyes burning into her back as she left the room. They were probably thankful it wasn't them. Everyone knew that if you missed three homeworks in Mr. Forest's trig class, you got detention.

No second chances.

"I did the homework," Elaine pleaded. "But I forgot it."

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"That's a shame," Mr. Forest replied, his expression unmoved.

Elaine knew what she was in for. She had heard the rumors. The new principal, Mr. Savage, was changing things.

The old detention was the first to go. No more two hours after school. That was too easy. It didn't solve anything. But if students had to sacrifice a whole day for their crimes . . .

Mr. Savage's Saturday detention was born.

"And I'm the guinea pig," Elaine grumbled out loud, staring out her car window. She sighed. She couldn't sit there forever.

She grabbed her backpack and got ready to run.

Look at the bright side, she told herself. At least I'm not wasting a *nice* day.

She slammed the car door and ran. It was a short distance, but the droplets still rolled down her neck like tiny ice cubes.

The front door to the school burst open before she touched it.

Elaine stopped so hard her feet skidded on the wet marble of the walkway. She caught a glimpse of a pale hand gripping the crash bar from inside.

The door opened wider.

She gazed up into the face of Mr. Savage.

His eyes were large and tired-looking, with dark bags under them. His cheeks were sunken. He always reminded Elaine of a sad hound dog.

Mr. Savage opened the door wider. "Come in, Elaine."

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Elaine didn't hesitate. She shook herself off, trying to stay on the big rubber mat inside the door. She figured Savage would give her a hard time if she got water all over the floor.

The hallway was dark. The only light came from the front office down the hall.

"You're the last one," Savage announced. But he stared out the open door as if waiting for someone else. He wore a black suit and tie, even on a Saturday.

Who died? Elaine wanted to ask.

Savage let out a long sigh, took one last look at the rain, and let the door slam shut. Finally, his gaze fell on Elaine.

"Mr. Savage?" she asked.

He cocked an eyebrow. "Yes?"

"Uh . . . I'm kind of new at this," she replied. "What do I do?"

He smiled coldly. "You've never had detention before?"

"No."

"You're a good student, Elaine," he stated. "I thought it was strange for you to get detention, so I reviewed your file."

Uh-oh, Elaine thought.

"Good grades," he continued, "plus student council, track, and the newspaper. What did you do wrong?"

Elaine's cheeks grew hot. "Missed three homeworks in Mr. Forest's class," she murmured.

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"Oh, right." Savage nodded. "The homework you left at home."

"Yeah."

Elaine could tell that he didn't believe her. Why would he? Kids lied to him every day. Even good students.

"I don't suppose you'll be making a habit of this?" he asked dryly.

"No."

"Good. It would be a shame to ruin such a fine school record with a bunch of detentions." He sighed again. "Even *I* learned some hard lessons in my day. Truly hard."

His voice trailed off. Elaine waited for him to say something else, but he just kept staring over her head.

Elaine cleared her throat.

The principal glared at her. "The others are in room one-eleven," he said. "Please go there."

He turned and strode toward the front office. Immediately she pictured herself slipping back out into the rain and heading to the mall. Yeah. Spending the day there. Calling up her friends. Shopping. Then telling her parents that detention wasn't all that bad . . .

Not a chance.

"This stinks," she muttered.

She strode down the gloomy corridor toward Room 111. Her footsteps echoed in the empty hall. The sound reminded her that she was here all by

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herself. No friends. No one to talk to. Nothing but rain and homework for a whole Saturday.

I'll never miss another trig assignment as long as I live, she vowed.

She pulled her jacket tighter around herself and tried to fight off the chill that refused to leave her body.

It was going to be a long day.

She had no idea how long—or how dangerous.

chapter

2

*L*ight poured out from Room 111. Voices rose in laughter. Elaine shifted the weight of her backpack and strode in.

The laughter stopped when she entered.

One guy, heavysset and wearing a flannel shirt, scribbled on the blackboard. His hair hung down over his face and his razor stubble was thick as sandpaper.

Another guy sat at a desk near the front. His name was Jerry Fox. Elaine knew him from her classes. He was short and slight, wearing a tan sweater and khakis. His sandy-colored hair was curly and cut close to his head. His biology textbook stood open in front of him.

Two others sat in the back of the classroom. The

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girl was brown-haired and pretty, but the intensely dark rings of makeup around her eyes gave her face a harsh quality. She wore a rock-concert T-shirt and tight jeans. She popped a bubblegum bubble and stared. Elaine tried not to make eye contact.

Elaine knew the last guy only by reputation. Bo Kendall, a real creep. He wore a torn army jacket, torn T-shirt, and torn jeans. His jet-black hair was spiked short. His eyes locked on Elaine's as soon as she appeared.

Wow, she grumbled to herself. Not my usual crowd.

She knew the stories about Bo. Everyone knew the stories. Fights. Smoking in class. Setting off firecrackers in the boys' bathrooms. And even worse. Supposedly, Bo stole a car. But no one knew for sure.

"Um, hi," Elaine mumbled. "Is this detention?"

"No, it's dissecting class," Bo replied sarcastically. "The dead rats will be here in a minute."

"I can't wait," Elaine replied, trying to sound cool.

The guy at the blackboard giggled. "Dead rats make great pets," he replied. "You don't have to walk them."

"Gross." The girl with the bad makeup rolled her eyes. She tossed a crumpled-up piece of paper at Bo.

Bo caught the paper and set it on his desk. Then he reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a disposable butane lighter. He flicked the cover open,

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snapped it to life, and held the paper ball to the flame.

It's eight o'clock in the morning and they're setting the place on fire! Elaine thought.

The paper went up in seconds.

"Yow!" Bo barked, dropping it on the floor.

"You're going to set off the sprinkler system," Jerry warned.

Bo sneered. "So what?"

"I can't afford to get in any more trouble," Jerry replied.

"Who can?" the girl shot back.

Jerry turned to his book.

"Hey, Elaine," Bo called. "You going to sit down or what? You're making me nervous."

"Sorry," she mumbled. She set her backpack down and took a seat near the door.

"Hi, Elaine." Jerry nodded at her. "Get that trig homework done?"

"Ha-ha. Very funny." Elaine smiled, grateful for a friendly face. "What did *you* do?"

"Excessive brownnosing," muttered the guy at the blackboard. Elaine took a closer look at what he was drawing—graffiti. In big, swirling letters, he had written: I WILL NOT.

The rest was yet to come.

Jerry ignored him. "Did you dissect frogs in bio?" he asked.

"Yeah," Elaine answered. Just thinking of the squiggly intestines and the smell of formaldehyde made her stomach heave. "It was disgusting."

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"I wouldn't do it," Jerry said, frowning. "It's useless. You don't learn anything you can't get from diagrams. Why do we have to cut them up?"

"You got detention for *not* cutting up a frog?" Bo asked from behind them.

"I don't think we should," Jerry told him. "It's inhumane."

"The frog is already dead," Bo pointed out.

"So? Would you like it if they cut you up after you're dead?"

"I hope they do," Bo replied. "They might learn something."

Jerry snorted and turned back to Elaine. "I just didn't want to do it."

Elaine shrugged. She didn't have any moral objections to cutting open a frog. It was just gross.

"Mrs. Blaker gave you detention for that?" the guy at the blackboard asked.

"She gave me a choice," Jerry replied glumly. "Either dissect the frog or go to detention and write a thousand-word report on amphibians."

"And you chose this?" the guy asked.

Jerry shrugged.

"For a smart guy," Bo said, shaking his head, "you sure are stupid."

"I don't expect you to understand, Kendall," Jerry sneered.

"Duh, okeydokey," Bo replied. He tore several pages out of a textbook and fanned them like a hand of cards. He flicked open his lighter and set them on fire.

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"Knock it off!" Jerry snapped.

"Duh, I can't," Bo said. "I don't know right from wrong, remember?"

Bits of burning paper floated through the air. Elaine ducked away from them. She wondered what Bo planned to do when the paper burned down to his fingers.

Bo began to tear more pages out of the book in front of him.

"Hey—stop!"

Elaine whirled around to see Mr. Savage in the doorway. "Put that out—right now!" he cried.

"Okay, okay," Bo replied. He walked slowly to the front of the room and dropped the whole thing in the garbage can. Then he grabbed a flower vase off the teacher's desk. He yanked the flowers out and poured the water over the flames. He replaced the flowers in the empty vase. Then he turned to the principal and smirked at him. "Happy now?"

Is this guy nuts? Elaine wondered. What is he trying to prove?

"I hope you don't have any plans *next* Saturday, Bo," Savage said. His voice shook with rage. "Because you'll be here for another detention."

"Nuts!" Bo smacked his forehead. "There goes that croquet tournament."

The brown-haired girl giggled into her hand.

Elaine couldn't believe them. She and her friends didn't like Savage either. But she would never purposely be disrespectful to him. It was like *asking* for more trouble.

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Mr. Savage stepped toward the girl. "If anyone should keep her mouth shut, it's you, Darlene. You've cut enough classes to spend another year here at Shadyside. Would you like that?"

Darlene stared at her fingernails. "Guess not," she mumbled.

Savage turned to the guy at the blackboard. He'd only gotten as far as I WILL NOT PAINT.

"Take a seat, Max."

Max scowled. He dropped the chalk on the floor and tromped over to a desk in the first row. Savage examined the chalk drawing.

"It's a shame you didn't think about using chalk when you spray-painted the school bus," Savage said. "Your style needs work."

"You an art critic?" Max muttered.

"Maybe if you didn't play follow-the-leader with Bo so much, you'd take your talent more seriously," Savage told him.

Max shrugged.

"Okay, people," Savage continued. "Here are the ground rules. No talking. No getting out of your seats. And from now on, if one of you messes up, you all mess up. That way you can police yourselves."

Wonderful, Elaine thought. These guys are going to get in trouble all day long—and I'm going to end up getting more detention for it. That's so unfair!

But there wasn't anything she could do about it.

"Mr. Savage, how does one police oneself?" Bo asked.

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Savage ignored him. "If you follow these simple guidelines, you can go home at three. If you don't, you come back next Saturday with Bo. Understood?"

"Yes," Jerry replied, a little too loudly.

Max made a snorting noise.

Savage surveyed the group one last time, his gaze moving from one student to the next. Elaine couldn't tell if he enjoyed punishing them or not. Some teachers lived for it. Mr. Savage was hard to read.

"I'll be back shortly," he murmured, heading to the door.

Out of the corner of her eye, Elaine saw movement. She glanced over her shoulder—and saw Bo standing up. She heard a click.

Savage didn't turn around.

Bo raised his arm above his head. With a sick feeling, Elaine realized what he held.

A switchblade knife.

Elaine gasped as Bo hurled the blade at Savage's back.

chapter

3

The knife spun through the air. Elaine heard it whistle as it flew over her head.

The classroom door slammed shut. The knife thunked into the bulletin board next to it.

Savage never knew what happened.

Elaine let out the breath she'd been holding. Bo had timed his throw perfectly . . . or had he? Bo was definitely crazy enough to show off. But was he crazy enough to try to kill Mr. Savage in front of four other people?

Elaine realized her hands were locked around the edges of her desk. Her knuckles were white. She forced herself to let go.

"Police *that!*" Bo laughed.

"What was that?" Jerry demanded.

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"A knife, stupid," Bo answered, striding toward the door.

"You could have killed him, Bo!" Darlene cried.

"Yeah, man," Max agreed. "That was pretty dumb."

Elaine felt surprised. She figured Bo's friends would think the switchblade was funny.

"Well, *I'm* dumb, remember?" Bo replied. "Bad grades, bad attitude, bad manners. Guess I'm just a bad guy."

He yanked the knife out of the bulletin board, folded it up, and put it away. Then he moved to the teacher's desk and sat down.

"Nice chair," he remarked. He swiveled back and forth a few times.

"I can't believe you," Jerry muttered.

"Why?" Bo asked innocently.

"You could have killed him."

"Are we still talking about that?" Bo groaned. He spoke in a high-pitched voice. "That was *so* five minutes ago."

Elaine glanced nervously at the door. Savage could come back at any minute, and with Bo sitting where he was, acting the way he was, they might all get in trouble.

She slumped down in her seat. Why couldn't she have remembered that stupid trig homework? Then this wouldn't be happening to her. This wasn't supposed to happen to a straight-A student!

Well, a B-plus student, she corrected herself. But

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so what? I still don't belong here. Not with these creeps.

"What are you in for?" Bo asked.

Elaine's head snapped up. Bo stared hard at her.

"Blowing off homework," she replied. Her casual tone shocked her. Was she actually trying to sound like being here was no big deal?

"Blowing off homework," Bo repeated. "Hey, Max. When was the last time we did homework?"

"Multiplication tables in third grade?"

"Yep."

Bo turned his attention back to Elaine. "You think you're tough?" he asked.

"I don't think so," Elaine replied.

"Oh, come on," he continued. "Take my lighter. Burn a book for me."

Before Elaine could answer, Darlene marched up the aisle. She sat down on the teacher's desk in front of Bo, blocking his view of Elaine.

Elaine felt as if a weight had lifted—having to stare into Bo's eyes made her nervous. She watched Darlene. Darlene was so obvious—like a dog guarding her territory.

"I'm bored, Bo," Darlene complained. "Stop talking to Miss Yuppie and let's do something fun."

Miss Yuppie? Elaine frowned. She wanted to say something back, but who knew how Darlene would react. She might pull a knife of her own.

"I have an idea," Bo said. "Come on."

He stood up. So did Max and Darlene.

"What are you doing?" Jerry demanded.

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“Getting out of here,” Bo replied.

I knew it, Elaine thought. Here comes another detention for sure.

“Where are we going?” Darlene asked.

“I don’t know,” Bo said. “But I’m not rotting here all day. Let’s go see if we can snag some snacks in the cafeteria.”

“Cool,” Max agreed.

“Are you nuts?” Jerry snapped. “Savage said he’s going to be right back!”

“So?”

“I’m not getting more detentions just because you can’t sit still,” Jerry said.

“So don’t come,” Darlene replied.

“I won’t.”

Bo leaned over Elaine’s desk. She got a good look at his rugged face and deep brown eyes. He really is kind of good looking, she thought. If you like that type.

“What about you?” he asked her.

“What about me?”

He smirked at her. “Are you coming with us?”

Elaine felt her cheeks heat up. She tried to meet his gaze. Why was it so hard to make eye contact with him?

“Let’s go,” Darlene growled.

Bo ignored her. He continued to stare at Elaine. “Think about it. Either way, you’ll probably end up with more detention. Savage used to say, ‘If one person messes up, everyone gets in trouble’ even back when he was teaching driver’s ed. Basically,

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you've broken the rules already. You might as well come along and get some food out of it."

Elaine knew she should stay put. But she couldn't help it. Deep down, she was glad Bo wanted to include her. It wasn't like they were doing anything really bad. And besides, she didn't want Darlene to make any more "Miss Yuppie" comments.

"Okay," Elaine replied, getting to her feet. "Let's go."

Bo grinned. "That was easy, wasn't it?"

"Great," Darlene muttered. She rolled her eyes.

"Elaine, are you crazy?" Jerry yelled. "You'll get busted!"

"So will you, Jerry," she replied. "Even if you just sit here. Come on."

"No way."

"Leave him, Elaine," Max growled. "He wasn't invited anyway."

"Okay," Bo blared. "Let's get out of here."

He slowly opened the classroom door. The hinges squealed. Bo slipped through the door and peered up and down the hallway. "All clear."

"I'm not covering for you," Jerry called after them.

"Shut up," Max muttered.

"Seriously," Jerry continued. "I won't do it."

Bo stepped out into the hallway. Darlene grabbed on to the back of his army jacket, and Max followed. Elaine crept along after him.

The corridor was deserted. No sign of Savage. Rain washed against the plate-glass window at the

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far end of the hall, sending shadowy waves of light across the floor. Elaine's heart pounded with excitement.

This is dumb, she told herself. It better be worth it.

A heavy hand landed on her shoulder.

Elaine gasped. She spun around to see Jerry.

"What are you doing?" she demanded. "You scared me half to death!"

"Sorry," he replied.

"Nice of you to join us, Fox," Bo muttered. "Now be quiet."

"Fine," Jerry whispered.

They started toward the cafeteria, walking silently. Bo halted every few steps. Elaine figured he was listening for Savage's shoes clicking on the floor. She expected to hear footsteps any minute. But they heard nothing.

Elaine felt strange sneaking through the school like this. It was the same place she went every day—the same boring place. But now that the lights were out and the halls were empty, it felt very different.

She kept her eyes on Bo as they walked. He looked totally comfortable sneaking around this way—as if he did it all the time. It must be kind of fun to be like Bo, she thought. He doesn't care about getting in trouble.

Elaine had a lot of worries: grades, activities, getting into a good college. Excelling, her father called it.

Bo and his friends don't have to excel, she

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thought. She felt a twinge of jealousy. She couldn't imagine not worrying about her parents, friends, and future.

But even this little act of rebellion was something. It made up for spending a Saturday in detention. And she liked it . . . so far.

The cafeteria was as gloomy as the rest of the school. The long tables sat empty, wiped clean of greasy crumbs and spilled milk. The only illumination came from the soda machine in the far corner and a beam of dreary gray light from a single window.

"The cans are going to sound like gunshots coming out of there," Max commented.

"I'm not going to buy my snacks," Bo scoffed. "Let's hit the kitchen."

He pushed through the swinging doors that led behind the lunch counter to the kitchen. He immediately snapped up a tray.

"Time to go shopping!" he exclaimed. He charged into the maze of refrigerators, chopping blocks, and industrial-size mixers.

Elaine wasn't really hungry. She'd had toaster pastries for breakfast. But a chocolate milk didn't sound bad.

"I need potato chips," Darlene called.

"Are there any ice-cream sandwiches?" Max asked. He yanked open a big steel door. Elaine peered over his shoulder into the fridge. All she saw were massive tubs of mayo and mustard.

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"Yuck," Max grumbled. He slammed the door shut. "Where's the freezer?"

"All right!" Darlene cried in triumph. Elaine spotted her in the corner with a bag of corn chips.

Where is the regular refrigerator? Elaine wondered. She glanced around—and saw Jerry in front of another big steel door. He held several cans of iced tea in his arms. Elaine grinned at him.

"Don't look at me that way," he complained. "Everyone else is doing it."

"I know," Elaine replied. "I want chocolate milk."

"Oh." Jerry's expression relaxed. "Second shelf."

Elaine took only two pints, even though there were hundreds more. But no one else held back. Jerry guzzled his iced teas. Darlene chomped through several bags of chips. And Max ate at least four ice-cream sandwiches.

Elaine gazed around the kitchen. She was having so much fun that she'd forgotten about Mr. Savage for a minute.

I wonder if he knows we're missing yet, she thought. She turned to the others, ready to suggest that they go back. But something was wrong.

Someone was missing.

"Where's Bo?" she asked.

The others stopped eating and looked around.

"Where did he go?" Elaine pressed.

"What do you care?" Darlene snapped.

"I don't," Elaine said. "But he's gone. Don't you care?"

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Darlene looked annoyed. "Bo!" she called.

No answer.

"Maybe he went back to the room," Jerry suggested.

"No way," Max grunted. "Hey, Bo! Come on, where are you?"

Still no answer.

"We should look for him," Elaine said.

Nobody answered. Elaine glanced around at all the gigantic appliances and machines in the kitchen. In the dim light, everything looked sort of creepy.

Her gaze came to rest on a rack of cooking utensils against the far wall. Ladles. Tongs. And knives.

Big butcher's knives.

And one was missing.

"Look!" Elaine cried. "That knife is gone!"

"So what?" Max snapped.

"Take it easy, Elaine," Jerry said.

Darlene started to speak. But a low moan cut her off.

Everyone froze.

"What was that?" Elaine whispered.

"Bo? That you?" Max called.

No answer.

Elaine realized her fingernails were digging into her palms. She forced herself to relax.

"This isn't funny anymore, Bo," Darlene called out. "Stop it."

Another moan.

"There it is again," Darlene whispered.

"Bo?" Max called.

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A few feet in front of them, Bo staggered out from behind a big refrigerator. He stood there for a moment, swaying. His eyes were glassy. Glistening red liquid covered his shirt and neck.

Elaine drew in a deep breath. It couldn't be true. It couldn't . . .

Bo collapsed.

He landed hard on the tile floor in front of Elaine. A butcher's knife clattered out of his fist.

Elaine stared at his shirt. His neck. His face. Soaked with blood.

"Nooo!" She let out a moan. Bo's throat. His throat had been cut.

chapter

4

*D*arlene screamed.

"Bo!" Max cried.

"Go get Savage!" Jerry ordered. But no one moved. They were all frozen in shock.

Elaine's gaze locked on Bo. His gaping eyes. The ugly red wound torn across his throat.

And the blood-smearred knife.

"Come on!" Jerry pleaded. "We have to get the principal!"

He grabbed Elaine by the arm, but she shook him off. She moved closer to Bo.

"Wait," she ordered.

"What?" Jerry replied.

"Bo's hand moved. He's still alive."

"You saw it?" Max asked.

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Elaine didn't answer. The wound terrified her, but she had to know if Bo was still alive. If she could help him. She wanted to run. But something made her stay. Something made her bend over Bo and take his hand.

She felt a pulse.

She turned to the others. "He's alive!"

Bo's hands shot up and clamped on her throat.

"It's your turn!" he screamed. "More ketchup!"

Elaine screeched, batting away Bo's hands. She scrambled backward until her back hit a refrigerator.

Her terror quickly turned to anger. "You jerk! I'm going to kill you!"

"I'm already dead," Bo replied, grinning. "And Jerry? I want you to dissect me!"

Elaine tried to stop her hands from trembling. She shook her head. "I can't believe we fell for that."

"You really are a jerk," Jerry told Bo.

"And I thought ketchup was only good on fries," Bo joked. He grabbed a dish towel and started wiping the goo off. "I saw myself in a mirror back there, and man, it looked real."

"No kidding," Darlene said, scowling.

"You really thought there was some psycho running around, cutting people up?" Bo asked.

"This is Shadyside," Elaine commented.

Everyone stared at her.

"Who knows where they get the cafeteria food!" she added.

FEAR STREET

The group burst into laughter. Everyone except Darlene, Elaine noticed.

Maybe she's worried that I'll steal Bo away from her, Elaine thought.

She ignored the way that idea made her smile.

"Let's get out of here," Bo declared.

Bo led the way out into the main cafeteria again. So far, the coast was clear.

"Where to?" Max asked.

"Pick a direction," Bo offered.

"Shh!" Elaine hissed. "Listen!"

Everyone fell quiet. Footsteps clacked on the tile floor.

Elaine's heart began to pound. This was no ketchup scare—this was real. "Savage is coming!" she whispered.

"Let's move," Bo cried. He pushed Max toward the exit to their left.

"No!" Jerry protested. "That's where he is!"

"No, he's not," Max replied. He pointed to the right exit. "He's over there."

The footsteps echoed off the walls and ceiling of the cafeteria. Elaine strained, but couldn't tell where they came from.

"We have to do something," Elaine whispered. "He's coming."

"Back to the classroom," Jerry ordered.

"No," Bo countered. "He'll cut us off. I know a way. Come on."

TRAPPED

He plunged back into the maze of the kitchen. Elaine followed. As they wandered through the huge hulks of stainless steel, her pulse pounded in her ears.

What if Savage caught them?

More detention. Or worse.

She took a deep breath and kept moving.

Bo led them to a door on the other side of the kitchen. They stopped and listened.

The footsteps were gone.

For now.

Elaine let out a relieved sigh.

Bo carefully pulled back the bolt that locked the door. He turned the knob, producing a loud click that might as well have been a gunshot in the silence.

Still no footsteps.

Bo pulled the door wide open. Beyond it stood a long hallway with rows and rows of lockers—and almost pitch blackness. There were no windows in this hall.

Bo motioned them forward. One by one, they stepped into the hallway. The kitchen door closed behind them.

Elaine couldn't see anything.

Thump. Thump.

The footsteps! Louder now. Elaine tried to get her bearings in the darkness. The footsteps were so close! As if coming from the stairwell right next to the kitchen.

“Move,” Bo grunted. He bolted down the hall.

FEAR STREET

Elaine chased after him, doing a kind of scramble that was half sprint, half tiptoe. She didn't look back to see if the others were coming.

The steps grew louder. Elaine tried to run faster, but it was useless. The hall was too long. Savage would come out of the stairwell, gaze down the hall, and spot them running. Hear their feet pounding on the floor.

And the game would be over.

They reached the end of the hallway, and Bo stopped.

"Are you crazy?" Jerry huffed. "Go!"

"Listen," Bo replied.

The footsteps were gone.

"We still should keep moving," Elaine suggested. "He could be anywhere."

Bo stared at her a moment, as if actually considering what she said. Elaine's cheeks grew even warmer, and she shifted uncomfortably. She hated when he stared at her like that.

"She's right," Bo finally said. "If we stay out here, Savage will nail us for sure."

"Thought you didn't care," Jerry said sarcastically.

"I don't."

"I know where we can go," Elaine offered. She didn't know if it was a smart choice, but staying in the halls was definitely too risky. "Come on."

She moved forward a few steps, then looked back. The four of them stared at her.

TRAPPED

"Are you going to argue about it or come with me?" she asked.

She pressed on, telling herself not to care whether they followed her or not. But she did care. She didn't want to be alone in the dark hallway.

When she glanced back, she was surprised to see the others close behind her.

Elaine couldn't help smiling. Bo wasn't the only one who could be a leader.

She only hoped her escape route didn't get them caught.

"Where are we going?" Max asked.

"You'll see," Elaine replied.

"Check it out!" Bo exclaimed. "This was a cool idea."

Elaine nodded. They stood on the auditorium stage, overlooking a dim expanse of chairs. Their voices echoed in the huge room.

"How about some lights?" Jerry asked.

"Don't even think about it," Bo warned.

"Yeah—it might interfere with Bo's next practical joke," Darlene muttered.

Bo chuckled. "Are you still mad about that?"

"It wasn't funny," Darlene replied.

"Yes, it was," Bo argued.

"You're a jerk, Bo," Darlene muttered. "I shouldn't even be talking to you."

"But you are," Bo told her. "Because you know you can't stay mad at me for long."

FEAR STREET

"Oh, really?" Darlene replied. But the tiny smirk on her face told Elaine that Bo was right.

"These are the ugliest stage sets I've ever seen," Max interrupted.

Elaine turned to see what he was talking about. The scenery for the current play was stacked along the back wall of the stage. Three gigantic sheets of canvas had been stretched over wooden frames. Blue skies and green trees were painted on them.

"Whoa. That's bad," Max said. "A monkey could paint better than that."

"A monkey could," Bo teased. "But could *you*?" Max smirked. "Watch me."

He marched over to an open supply cabinet at the right of the stage. He pulled out a box filled with cans of paint. Max selected a squeeze-bottle of black acrylic paint—and squirted it all over the first flat. Then he uncapped a bottle of blue. Then orange.

Elaine felt a tremor of shame. Max had crossed the line between fun and outright nastiness. Some of her friends were in the drama club. She could just imagine their reactions on Monday morning.

"Somebody spent hours working on that scenery," Jerry muttered, echoing Elaine's thoughts.

"Hurricane Max destroys all," Max replied. "They should have posted a guard."

A furious screeching sound made Elaine jump.

She turned to see Bo standing just offstage, a violin in his hands. He drew the bow across the strings, and the auditorium was filled with a shrill screaming sound.

TRAPPED

“Cool,” Bo said with a grin. He let loose with another screech. “And I’ve never had a single lesson!”

“It’s for *Fiddler on the Roof*,” Jerry yelled over the noise. “The drama club is putting it on in a few weeks.”

Bo dragged the bow over the strings again.

“Cut it out,” Elaine called to Bo. “Why don’t you just call Savage!”

But Bo continued to saw at the strings.

She wandered backstage, past all of the prop boxes and set decorations. Way at the back, far from Bo’s screeching, she discovered a black curtain. It hung from high up in the auditorium—so high that Elaine couldn’t see the top. Someone had tacked the curtain to the wall with tiny, sharp nails. That’s weird, she thought. Why do they have a curtain so far from the front of the stage? She peeled back the fabric. The little nails popped out and clattered to the floor around her.

Elaine gasped. Behind the curtain, a dark, narrow corridor stretched away from the stage. She had never seen it before.

This is too cool, she thought. She stepped into the hall.

The darkness closed around her. She slammed her toe against something hard, but she couldn’t tell what it was. She yelped, surprised how loud her voice was in the gloom.

She didn’t hear a sound from the others. How far had she gone?

FEAR STREET

She was alone.

A twinge of fear crept up her spine. Maybe exploring this place wasn't such a good idea. Who knew what was back here?

But what could really happen? Mr. Savage could catch her. And she would have more detentions.

But then another word snaked into her mind.

Suspension.

Elaine shook the thought away. That was crazy. Only the real problem kids got suspended. People like Bo. And Darlene and Max.

But what if they got caught? What if Savage found them onstage?

She glanced around. This corridor was the perfect hiding place. It was dark enough that no one would see her. No one would ever know she was there.

But she knew she should get back. She took a step toward the stage.

The wooden floor beneath her groaned. A loud cracking sound followed.

Then, with a splintering roar, the floor gave way beneath her.

Elaine lost her balance. She flung out her arms. Grabbed for something, anything to catch herself. But all she touched was air.

She let out a scream as she fell through the floor.

chapter

5

Elaine hurtled through darkness.

Air whooshed by her face. Her stomach slammed up into her throat. Her lungs emptied.

Then she hit the ground.

Hit it hard.

White-hot pain rocketed up her left leg from ankle to hip. A blaze of stars dazzled her eyes. She heard a loud ringing sound in her ears.

She couldn't breathe. Her heart seemed to stop. Everything went black.

Then she felt cold cement beneath her. She felt the sharp, gritty steel of a ladder digging into her shoulder. She felt her heart pounding in her chest.

The numbness gradually left her, replaced by

FEAR STREET

specific points of pain. Her ankle throbbed. Her right elbow burned under her sweatshirt.

How far had she fallen? Ten feet? Twenty? Fifty? No. Fifty would have killed her. But twenty was a good guess. It felt like forever—long enough for her to think she was going to die.

But I'm alive, she told herself. And I have to figure out where I am.

She sat up, pain shooting through every joint. She ran her fingers over her ankle. It was already so swollen that she couldn't feel the bone. She tried to move it.

"Owww!" she yelped.

She'd never felt such pain in her life. Still, she knew it wasn't broken. As painful as it was, she could move it.

She rubbed her elbow, feeling warm, wet skin where there should have been sweatshirt. Torn through, she thought grimly. And bleeding.

A wave of nausea rolled through her. A cold sweat broke out on her forehead.

"Steady," Elaine murmured into the darkness. "I'm okay. I'm okay."

The sound of her own voice calmed her a little. She managed to sit up, feeling the steel ladder behind her. She couldn't see how far up it went.

She patted the ground around her. Her hand brushed over rough concrete and bits of trash. A broken bottle. A crushed can. Wet paper.

Where was she?

Some kind of tunnel beneath the school, she

TRAPPED

decided. But why was it here? She'd never heard anything about it.

Elaine drew a deep breath. The place smelled damp, and sort of moldy. Wherever she was, no one had been down here in a long time.

She had to get out of there. She grabbed on to a rung of the ladder and tried to pull herself up. Sharp pain shot through her ankle. She dropped back to the ground.

That did it.

"Help!" she yelled.

Her voice echoed off the walls and up the shaft, but it came out thin and small.

"Anybody!" she tried again. "Help me! Anybody!"

No reply.

She was alone in the dark.

A wave of fear joined the nausea. What if they didn't find her? She could be down there for days.

No way, she thought.

She screamed again.

Still nothing.

"Come on!" Elaine roared, swinging her fist in frustration. It slammed into the concrete wall, sending a blast of pain up her arm.

She winced and slumped against the sharp metal of the ladder. Sweat poured down her face. It was hard to breathe in the dank air.

Then she heard a sound.

A chittering sound.

Elaine froze. Listened.

FEAR STREET

Silence now.

Then again.

Tap, tap.

To her right.

Get off the floor, she ordered herself.

Elaine fumbled for the ladder, her ankle protesting every movement.

She raised herself to her knees, relief flooding through her as she grasped the rough metal. She pulled herself up.

And then something fell onto her neck. Something warm and heavy.

And alive.

chapter

6

*E*laine screamed.

The thing on her neck squirmed. Tiny claws burrowed into her skin.

She grabbed at the thing and tried to fling it away. But it was tangled in her hair. It gave a loud squeal.

A rat!

Panic flooded through Elaine. She screamed again. Slimy fur smeared against her skin. Finally, she tore the creature from her hair—and hurled it into the tunnel.

The rat landed with a squeak.

Elaine scrubbed the back of her neck with her fingers. She could still feel the rat's little claws scraping against her skin.

It's gone, she told herself. Just relax. It's gone.

FEAR STREET

And I'm out of here.

Elaine grabbed a rung of the ladder. She hauled herself to her feet, putting all her weight on her right ankle.

Pain shot up Elaine's left leg. She forced herself to climb onto the first rung. A thin layer of moisture covered the metal. Her hand slipped. She fell to the floor once again.

She landed on a warm, squirming lump!

The lump screeched and wiggled beneath her. Elaine howled. She rolled away.

The rat scurried off into the darkness.

Elaine flopped onto her back, close to tears.

"Cool," came a voice.

Elaine froze.

A voice!

"Get me out of here!" she cried.

"Ellen . . . El—what's her name?" asked the voice.

"Elaine!" she growled.

They found her! She heard the same creaking sound that came before she fell, and a loud slam. The glow of Bo's lighter appeared above her.

"It's a trap door," came Bo's voice. "Someone put an old board over it—look! Elaine crashed right through."

"What did you do, Elaine, jump on it?" Jerry teased.

"No—it rotted through," Bo said.

"Will you just help me?" Elaine called. "I hurt my ankle."

TRAPPED

"Can you climb?" Max asked.

Anger flowed through Elaine. "What do you think?"

"I'm coming down," Bo replied.

"Are you crazy?" Elaine heard Darlene growl. "You could fall, too!"

"Elaine will break my fall," Bo joked.

Even under the circumstances, that comment made Elaine smile. Now that Bo was here, she felt safer. Even in this rat-filled tunnel.

The ladder trembled as Bo climbed down. It creaked and groaned under his weight, drizzling bits of rust all over her. In less than a minute, Bo stood next to her in the darkness. The rest of them followed him down the ladder.

Elaine grabbed his hand and pulled herself up. His skin felt warm and dry. She stumbled a bit, still unsteady on her good foot. Bo slid his arm around her waist for support. She noticed that her ankle didn't hurt as much with his arm around her.

"What happened?" he asked.

"I fell."

"No kidding." He chuckled. "You're lucky you didn't crack your skull."

"I didn't land on my skull," she told him.

Someone dropped to the concrete near them. "That ladder is totally rusted," came Max's voice. "I'm amazed we didn't all fall. Did you feel it coming loose from the wall?"

"You rhymed," Bo pointed out.

FEAR STREET

Max made a disgusted sound. "I'm serious, man. What are we doing down here?"

"It's a rescue," Bo said. He gave Elaine a squeeze.

"I can't believe I'm doing this," Darlene grumbled, dropping to the hard floor. "It smells all moldy!"

"That's just Max," Bo replied.

"Can you stand, Elaine?" He let go of her before she could answer.

"I'm fine," she replied. She hobbled to the left and leaned against the wall for support. She couldn't see much in the darkness.

"Can someone tell me why we're standing in the sewer beneath Shadyside High School, please?" Jerry asked sarcastically. He jumped off the last rung of the ladder.

"This isn't the sewer," Bo replied.

"Come on," Darlene wailed. "Where are we?"

"Let's shed some light on the situation," Bo said. He flicked his lighter. The passage was filled in flickering yellow light.

Everybody gasped in shock.

chapter

7

*E*laine stared at two words scrawled on the wall before them:

LET'S PARTY

"I've heard about this place," Bo said softly.

Elaine glanced around. They stood in the corner of a large room with cinder-block walls. Bottles, cans, newspapers, and food wrappers cluttered the floor. The walls were stained with patches of black mold and faded graffiti.

LET'S PARTY was slopped on in blood-red paint. Each letter dripped halfway to the floor.

Several dark passages led off in different directions.

FEAR STREET

"What is this?" Jerry asked.

"The Labyrinth," Max replied quietly. His voice sounded awed.

"Yep," Bo agreed. He and Max shared an excited glance.

What is going on? Elaine wondered. "How do you know about it?" she demanded.

"A guy I know, Lloyd, told us about this place," Bo replied. "He claimed he came down here once, but we didn't believe him."

"Lloyd is a liar about most stuff," Max chimed in.

"Anyway," Bo continued, "back in the fifties, they built these tunnels as a bomb shelter. Supposedly they run for miles. The plan was to connect the whole town in case we were nuked. But no one ever needed the shelter. So this place became Party Central. Shadyside kids would come down here and throw major parties."

"It was the cool place to come," Max added, "because no one was allowed. Kids pretended they were stuck down here, and the bombs were on their way. It was their last night on Earth, and they partied like crazy."

Elaine shivered. How morbid. But still . . . it was kind of cool. All the parties she'd ever been to were at her friends' houses. But partying down here would be more fun. More . . . dangerous.

"I can't believe no one comes down here anymore," Jerry commented. "I'm surprised you aren't a regular, Bo."

TRAPPED

Bo's eyes glittered in the flickering light. "Maybe I'm not cool enough, Jerry."

"Oh, we talked about it," Max said with a smile. "But we could never find the entrance."

"Yeah. Thanks, Elaine." Bo grinned.

"Glad I could help," she replied. She couldn't help smiling even though her ankle hurt like crazy.

"I can't believe the Labyrinth was this hard to find," Jerry said.

"So no one's been down here for years?" Elaine asked. Her gaze traveled over the graffiti-covered walls. She couldn't help being fascinated. Forget the hallway upstairs. This really was a place that none of her friends at school had ever seen.

"They closed the tunnels off a long time ago," Max explained. "All the entrances were blocked up."

"Why?" Elaine asked.

"Something happened," Bo replied. "Something bad."

Elaine shivered. She watched their shadows flutter along the walls. As if all the kids who partied here were still hanging out, dancing.

"What happened?" she asked.

"I don't know exactly," Bo replied. "But kids died. A lot of kids died."

chapter

8

“**Y**ou’re crazy!” Jerry exclaimed. “Kids *died* here? No way!”

“This guy Lloyd told you all that?” Elaine asked.

Bo nodded. “And he wasn’t even drunk. That’s why I believed him.”

Elaine believed him, too. At first she thought this was another practical joke. But Bo seemed so serious.

“Let’s check the place out,” Bo suggested. “I want to see it.”

“Why not?” Max agreed. “It’s better than being upstairs. And Savage won’t find us.”

“Which means we’ll all have detention next Saturday,” Jerry muttered.

"Which means we can come down here again," Bo added.

Jerry rolled his eyes.

"I want to get out of here," Darlene complained.

"That's two against two," Bo pointed out.

"Elaine, you're the tie-breaker."

"Who said this was a democracy?" Jerry growled.

"I did," Bo answered. "And I say Elaine is the tie-breaker."

Everybody stared at Elaine. She peered into one of the dark tunnels. She wanted to know where it led. She wanted to explore the whole labyrinth under Shadyside.

But the fright of her fall hadn't left her. She still felt shaky. Her ankle hurt, but she could walk on it again. And she could feel blood running down her arm from her scraped elbow.

Still, she didn't feel as bad now that she knew where she was and how to get out.

"I say we check it out," she said. "If it's all gross and stinky, we'll just come back here and climb out."

Jerry groaned.

Bo's face lit up in a triumphant grin. Immediately, he knelt and began digging through the garbage on the floor. He came up with a few pieces of wood and some rotting fabric.

"What are you doing?" Darlene asked.

FEAR STREET

"Making torches," Bo replied. He wrapped the fabric around the ends of the wood. "My lighter is just about out."

Elaine watched in surprise as Bo quickly made three torches. Then he rummaged in his jacket and produced a small can of lighter fluid.

Elaine gasped.

"What's the lighter fluid for?" Jerry demanded. "Are you some kind of pyromaniac?"

"What I do with my spare time is none of your business," Bo replied. He squirted the fluid on the fabric until the torches were soaked.

Elaine felt worried. Bo was a little too weird. Who carried lighter fluid around all the time?

She concentrated on watching Bo. He held the lighter under the torches and they slowly came to life. They burned weakly, producing a lot of smoke.

"Better than total blindness," Bo remarked. He passed a torch to Max and one to Elaine. He held the last one himself. Jerry uttered a complaint, but Elaine ignored him.

She peered into the darkness of each passage. She couldn't see anything. Each way was full of possibilities. Elaine wanted to try them all. She couldn't believe how excited she felt.

"Which one do we take?" Bo asked.

"The right side," Jerry said.

"Why?" Darlene asked.

TRAPPED

"Why not?" he replied.

Elaine gripped her torch tightly. The others seemed to be just as excited as she was. It was now or never.

"Let's party!" Bo declared.

They stepped into the tunnel.

chapter

9

I can't wait to tell everyone about this on Monday, Elaine thought. She felt so adventurous tromping through the tunnels.

No one is going to believe me, though. No one is going to believe practical, sensible Elaine went exploring in the labyrinth.

But I did!

Elaine followed Bo around another corner. I'll bring something back to prove I was really down here, she decided.

She studied the ground as they walked. But all she found were a bunch of old beer cans and potato chip bags.

"Hi-ho, hi-ho, it's off to work we go," Max sang softly.

TRAPPED

Elaine heard Jerry give a snort of laughter.

It *was* pretty funny. Max was totally blowing his tough-guy image.

Elaine spotted a stack of newspapers piled against one wall. Maybe there's an old one I can take back with me, she thought.

She wandered over and picked one up. "Hey, you guys have got to see this," she called.

Jerry hurried up to her. "What?"

"It's a school paper from nineteen seventy-one," Elaine told him.

"Let me see." Darlene grabbed the paper out of Elaine's hand. "Check out the vest that girl is wearing. It's made out of pieces of Coke cans crocheted together or something."

Bo peered over Darlene's shoulder. "Oh, man. They have a music review of the new Doors album."

Elaine bent down and grabbed another paper. She heard a soft chittering sound.

She jumped away, and knocked into Darlene.

"Watch it," Darlene snapped.

"I think I heard a rat over in that corner," Elaine said.

"Oh, gross. I'm going back," Darlene told them.

"Me too," Jerry agreed.

"I'm not." Bo headed down the tunnel. Max fell in behind him.

Elaine scanned the floor of the tunnel. She didn't see any rats. I guess as long as I keep moving, they'll stay away from me, she thought. She hurried after Bo and Max.

FEAR STREET

A few seconds later she heard footsteps behind her. Elaine smiled. I didn't think Jerry and Darlene would try to make it back without a torch.

All five of them moved deeper into the labyrinth. No one spoke.

Elaine found herself thinking of the story Bo had told them. Images of other teenagers invaded her mind. Kids like her, having the time of their lives down here.

And then dying down here.

Fear gripped her. She wanted to turn back, but she couldn't. Everyone would laugh at her. Darlene especially.

Elaine kept trudging forward, torch held high. She couldn't turn back, no matter what.

The walls seemed to move in closer and closer.

Every now and then, a rat squeaked in the darkness. Each time, Elaine remembered the tiny claws digging into her neck.

Being down here isn't fun anymore, she told herself. I'm getting the creeps.

What am I afraid of?

She knew. Deep down she knew.

She had always been afraid of the dark. When she was little, she thought monsters lived in the dark. And even now, a dark room frightened her.

I have to stop being a wimp, she told herself. She tried to force the fear away, tried to calm down. It worked—a little. She was able to peer through the flame of her torch and concentrate on the plaid pattern of Max's flannel shirt in front of her.

The tunnel sloped downwards, burrowing deeper into the earth. Up ahead, Elaine heard a splashing noise.

Bo stopped.

"What is it?" Elaine asked.

"Look for yourself," Bo replied.

Elaine edged forward. All she could make out was a pool of water taking up the entire passage. Water gushed out of the ceiling.

"Where is all this water coming from?" Jerry asked.

"The real question," Bo replied, "is how deep is it? Can we get across?"

Elaine spotted pieces of trash floating in the pool, bobbing up and down on the waves made by the incoming spout.

"I'm not going through that water," Darlene declared. "I don't care how deep it is!"

"What's the big deal?" Bo asked. "It's only water."

"No way," Darlene said firmly. "I'm not walking through that."

"Me either," Elaine agreed. Jerry nodded.

Bo rolled his eyes. "Fine. We'll turn around and find another tunnel."

He turned around and led the way down the tunnel. He made a right turn, then a left, then another left. Elaine stayed close behind him.

I wish we were going back to the ladder, she thought. I'm ready to get out of here.

Bo made a right turn.

FEAR STREET

"Why are we going this way?" Jerry demanded.
"We already tried this tunnel."

"No, we didn't," Max answered. "It just looks the same. They all look the same."

Bo kept walking.

"I think Jerry's right," Darlene said.

Bo stopped and shone his torch around the tunnel. Elaine realized that she had no idea where they were.

And she had no idea how to get back to the ladder. They had taken three or four turns. But did they turn left or right? She couldn't remember.

"We're lost, aren't we?" Elaine asked quietly.

chapter

10

“We’re not lost,” Bo answered.

“Let’s just go back to the ladder,” Darlene said. “I’m sick of it down here.”

“Me too,” Max agreed.

“All right, all right,” Bo said. “I know the way. Come on.” He started down the tunnel again.

Yes! Elaine thought. We’re getting out of here. And I didn’t end up looking like a wimp.

Bo turned right.

“I don’t think this is the way. We’re messing up,” Jerry muttered.

Is this how those other kids died? Elaine wondered. Did they get lost down here?

Don’t even think about that, she ordered herself.

FEAR STREET

"Are you sure you know where you're going, Bo?" Darlene asked.

Bo didn't answer.

Elaine's ankle hurt more and more with each step. How much longer are we going to be down here? she wondered. A shiver raced through her.

The tunnel began sloping down. Elaine heard the sound of running water.

"We're back where we started," Max cried.

"Great, just great," Jerry muttered.

Bo whirled around to face him. "You think you can do better?"

Jerry glanced over his shoulder at the tunnel. "No," he admitted.

"Anyone else?" Bo asked.

Elaine shook her head. So did Max and Darlene.

What are we going to do now? Elaine wondered. She wrapped her arms around herself, trying to stay calm.

"I think we should go across," Bo announced. "If we go back, we'll just end up going in circles."

Elaine stared into the murky water. She saw rats. Brown, shiny creatures with fleshy pink tails. They swam back and forth, eating the decaying clumps of paper.

"Bo's right," Max said. "These tunnels go all over town. There's got to be a bunch of ways out. If we go across, we'll find one of them."

"We still don't know how deep it is," Darlene protested.

TRAPPED

Elaine noticed his torchlight glinting off something on the ground behind him.

"Look. There's a bottle over to the right of the water," she cried.

"So?" Darlene demanded.

"So," Elaine repeated. "The bottle is on the *floor*. It's not floating."

"Who cares about some dumb bottle?" Darlene asked.

Bo held his torch out over the pool, squinting into the darkness. "Elaine is right," he declared. "There's dry ground over there—it's a little ledge. The water doesn't go all the way across the tunnel."

"Great," Darlene muttered.

"Is it wide enough for us to walk on it?" Jerry asked.

"There's only one way to find out," Bo said. He stepped onto the ledge. Elaine saw him teeter a bit as he got his balance. He took another step.

"It's not bad," he commented. "It's pretty narrow, but it looks like it goes all the way across the pool. Follow me!"

"You've got to be kidding," Darlene groaned.

Bo took another step. Then he paused, examining the ceiling.

"Lots of rain," he said.

"Watch the torch," Max advised.

"No problem," Bo replied.

He ducked through the thick droplets and jumped off the ledge on the other side.

FEAR STREET

"That's it," he declared. "Four feet wide, tops. The ledge goes all the way across."

"I'm not going," Darlene argued. "No way."

"You want to get out of here, don't you?" Bo demanded.

"It's disgusting!"

"Just stay on the ledge. You won't even get wet."

"No."

"Elaine will do it," Bo told her.

She would?

Elaine took a deep breath. She had to do it. It was a chance to get out of this place.

"Good," Darlene said. "*You* can fall in."

Elaine gazed over the pool at Bo. Maybe four feet wide, he'd said. A dry ledge all the way across.

"Well?" Darlene pressed.

"I'm going," she announced.

Darlene made a disgusted sound. Elaine hobbled forward, trying to stride with confidence despite her bad ankle.

She stepped onto the ledge. The rock felt solid. She took a step out over the pool. Water washed up onto her foot.

She took another step. The ledge narrowed.

"Hurry up!" Max yelled.

"Hey, I have a bad ankle, remember?"

"Just hurry!"

Elaine tried to move more quickly. She was almost to the middle of the pool now. Water washed over the ledge, soaking through her sneakers. Once or twice she almost lost her balance. There was

TRAPPED

nothing to hold on to except the wall—and that was slick with rainwater.

“What about you, Jerry?” Bo called. “Are you next?”

“I’m coming,” Jerry replied without hesitation.

Elaine was freezing. The pool was pure rainwater, the temperature of winter slush.

“Hurry up,” Max bellowed.

“I’m trying!” Elaine looked up—and found Bo staring into her eyes. Only a short space separated them.

“Don’t worry about him,” Bo told her quietly. “Just concentrate on keeping your balance. You only have another few steps to go.”

Elaine nodded. She stepped forward. She kept her eyes locked on Bo. She stepped again.

Something brushed her foot.

Elaine jumped, letting out a squeal.

“Elaine!” Bo yelled.

She struggled to keep her balance. Quickly, she stepped forward. Her foot landed on something round and squirming. It scurried out from under her, throwing her backward.

Her sneaker fell on the lip of the ledge—and slipped.

Elaine dropped into the water. She tried to scream, but her mouth filled with water, and she began to choke on the putrid liquid.

chapter

11

Something firm and oily brushed by her cheek. A rat!

Elaine felt tiny claws scabbling up her arm. Up her back.

They are all over me!

She twisted and jerked, trying to throw the rats off her. The filthy water filled her nose, her mouth.

She forced herself to focus. First get out of the water, she thought. Then worry about the rats. Which way was up?

Don't panic, she ordered herself. This water can't be that deep! I'm not going to drown!

A hand clamped on her arm. Then another.

Her head broke the surface of the pool and she gazed up at Bo. He pulled her out of the water.

Elaine grabbed a rat off her shoulder and hurled it back in the water. "Are there any more?" she cried. "Get them off me!"

"They're gone," Bo told her.

She hacked and spit. The foul water tasted so awful!

"You're having a bad day, Elaine," he said, grinning.

"You think so?" she muttered. She wrung out the bottom of her sweatshirt, which didn't help much. Her clothes were completely soaked. Her ankle throbbed and her elbow burned worse than ever.

"Maybe if we stay down here long enough, you'll dry off," Bo offered.

Elaine frowned at him. "Not funny," she muttered.

"Here," Bo offered, slipping out of his army jacket. "Put this on. At least you won't freeze."

Elaine slipped into the coat and wrapped it around her. It was huge, but warm from Bo's body.

"Thanks," Elaine said, managing a smile. "This helps a little."

"Hey!" Darlene yelled. "What are we supposed to do now?"

"Come across," Bo replied. "Just don't step on any rats. And don't fall in."

Elaine watched as the others filed across the ledge. Max strode over in thirty seconds. Jerry moved more slowly, but without hesitation. Darlene inched along, pressing herself against the wall.

FEAR STREET

No fair, Elaine thought. Why am I the only one who had to take a swim?

"So," Bo said. "Let's get going. We have to find a way out of here. Are you up for it, Elaine?"

Elaine sighed and shrugged. "Why not? I don't think things could possibly get any worse."

They marched in silence for a while.

We should have found another way out by now, Elaine thought. Why is it taking so long?

Elaine kept her hands buried deep in the pockets of Bo's jacket. She rolled his butane lighter around with one hand, and felt crumpled-up paper with the other. Somewhere else in the folds of that jacket was a switchblade, and a can of lighter fluid, and who knew what else.

Elaine didn't want to find any of it.

I can't believe I'm wearing Bo Kendall's jacket, she thought. A guy I wouldn't have anything to do with a day ago. A guy I'd never want to be seen with.

Elaine sighed.

I guess I'll get to know him pretty well, she thought. I could be spending a lot more time with Bo . . . if we don't find a way out of here.

Don't even think that, Elaine told herself.

Elaine almost bumped into Jerry. Up ahead, Bo had stopped.

"Check it out," he said.

Elaine noticed nothing but grimy walls and thick cobwebs.

"What?" Jerry demanded.

"You don't see it?"

"If I saw it, would I ask?" Jerry shot back.

"There," Bo said, pointing with his torch.

Elaine spotted it. Up until this point, all the walls had been made of cinder blocks and concrete. But Bo pointed out a section about six feet wide, spanning from floor to ceiling, that was made of old, crumbling red brick.

"That looks . . . not right," Elaine said.

"I know what you mean. It doesn't look as if it belongs here," Bo agreed. He handed his torch to Darlene. Then he began picking at the aging mortar around a brick.

"What are you doing?" Jerry asked.

"Just checking it out," Bo replied.

He scraped away several chunks of mortar and slipped his fingers into the cracks around the brick, trying to pry it loose.

The brick popped in an inch, as if pulled from the other side.

Bo yanked his hands away.

"Did you do that, Bo?" Max asked.

"No," Bo said. He cleared his throat.

Whoa, Elaine thought. She felt a ball of fear form in her throat. Was she seeing things? Someone—or something—must have moved that brick.

"That's weird," Darlene whispered.

Elaine wrapped her fingers around the cuffs of Bo's jacket. She wanted to say something—like

FEAR STREET

maybe they should forget about the stupid brick and keep moving. They didn't have to explore everything—did they?

"Bo . . ." she began, but Bo's hands were already moving to touch the brick again.

Before he could, it popped out several inches.

"Uh-oh," Bo murmured.

This is weird, Elaine thought. This is really, really weird.

Bo placed his fingers on the brick and pushed. It moved in several inches, then stopped dead.

"There," Bo said, satisfied. "How about that?"

As if in reply, a low rumble came from the wall. It grew louder, and Elaine's fear grew with it.

Run! she told herself.

Too late.

The rumble became a roar.

Then the entire wall exploded.

chapter

12

The force of the blast slammed Elaine into the cinder-block wall. She landed hard on her left shoulder. Bits of brick stung her face. Screams echoed in her ears.

When she opened her eyes, she could hardly see. Everyone was down on the floor. Only one torch remained lit. A thick red dust hung over everything. Elaine coughed and wiped the matted wet hair from her face.

She blinked through the red dust and saw a gaping hole in the brick wall, large enough for a person to climb through.

“Is everyone okay?” Bo asked.

He sat up, brushing himself off. Elaine squinted

FEAR STREET

hard at him. A trail of blood trickled down his forehead.

"You okay?" he asked her.

"I think so," she replied. "What was that, Bo?"

"I don't know," he mumbled. He wiped the blood from his face, wincing as he touched the cut on his head.

Elaine watched him. A sick feeling grew in her stomach. Bo was afraid. She could see it in his eyes.

Max rolled over and pushed chunks of brick off him. He opened his mouth, then shut it again. He shook his head. "Whoa," he muttered.

"What *was* that?" Jerry demanded. He retrieved his glasses from the floor and tried to bend them back into shape.

"Bo?" came Darlene's dazed voice.

"I'm right here," he replied.

She crawled through the rubble and hugged him. He wrapped his arms around her. Elaine turned away and picked up the lit torch.

"I'm really freaked," Darlene moaned. "What's happening?"

"I don't know," Bo replied. He unwrapped himself from her and picked up his torch. Elaine handed over his lighter before he asked. It took him three tries, but the torch finally caught.

"Everyone okay?" he asked again. Everyone muttered that they were okay.

"Let's keep looking for a way out of here," Jerry urged. "That was too weird."

"Something blew up that wall," Max agreed.

Darlene coughed. "I can hardly breathe with this dust." She squinted through the red cloud, and Elaine noticed her eyes watering. "It won't settle."

"I know," Jerry agreed. "I can't breathe, either. What's with this stuff?"

Elaine covered her mouth and held her torch up into the red cloud. Particles swirled around the flame like microscopic moths. They formed tiny clouds that churned and broke up, but never dissolved. It didn't seem like dust at all.

It felt heavier than normal air, more humid. And warmer.

Elaine wrinkled her nose. This dust almost seemed alive.

"Ugh," Darlene grunted. "What's that smell?"

Elaine smelled it, too. It was the sour odor of decaying flesh.

She covered her nose and held the torch up higher.

The clouds were all red, a deeper red than brick. They began to gather into one dense cloud. It churned all around Elaine and the others.

"What is this?" Max whispered. He climbed to his feet and began waving his hand in front of his face.

The mist didn't clear. In fact, it seemed to intensify around Max. Thickening. Growing.

Max's mouth dropped open in fear. "Something is wrong," he murmured. "Something is very wrong here."

"Max?" Bo asked. "What is it?"

FEAR STREET

Max's body stiffened. His fingers curled up like claws. His eyes bulged.

Elaine gasped. What was happening to him?

"Max—!" Bo started. But his words were cut off by Max's scream.

Max howled again—as the red mist lifted his body off the ground.

chapter

13

Elaine stared in horror at Max.

He floated three feet off the ground. The red cloud swirled around him like a tornado. His body twisted and turned inside it.

Max's left arm snapped up so hard that his shoulder socket popped. Elaine stifled a scream as his right arm was yanked behind his back.

The red mist moved with Max as he squirmed.

"Max!" Bo shrieked. He leaped into the cloud and grabbed for Max's legs.

Something blew Bo back against the far wall with incredible force. Elaine and Darlene cried out as Bo landed in a crumpled heap.

Please stop, Elaine prayed. This can't be happening!

FEAR STREET

She heard bones cracking. She covered her ears and screamed at the sight of Max.

The red mist whirled around Max, as if tightening its grip.

It can't do that, Elaine told herself. It can't do that because it's not alive! It's just dust. It's only dust. This isn't happening.

The red mist whirled faster. Max's ribs rippled under his shirt, snapping loudly. Cracking and snapping.

Elaine's stomach churned. She could only stare in horrified silence at what happened next.

His left arm pinwheeled and broke at the elbow. It flopped wildly in the red cloud, loose inside the skin.

His eyes rolled down in their sockets, turning a sick grayish-white.

Elaine clutched her stomach and rocked back and forth. She felt her body quaking, but she couldn't get up. Couldn't run. Couldn't scream. She could barely think. All she knew was that she had just watched another human being die.

Then the red cloud spun away down the tunnel. It flew unnaturally fast, propelled by no wind whatsoever. Max's body hung inside it, limp and twitching. The darkness swallowed him up.

He was gone.

Elaine stared after them in shock. I'm not dreaming . . . I'm awake . . . and I'm going crazy.

"This can't be," she whispered. "This is impossible."

Darlene and Jerry sat next to her among the bricks, frozen.

But Bo stumbled to his feet. With an angry roar, he ran after the red cloud.

"Bo, no!" Elaine cried. She forced herself to stand on her good foot. But it was too late to stop him. Bo plunged deeper into the Labyrinth to save his friend.

The light of his torch disappeared into the dark tunnel.

A lump formed in Elaine's throat. Would she ever see Bo again? Would the strange mist do the same thing to him that it did to Max?

"We have to get out of here," came Jerry's quivering voice from behind her. "We've just got to try and go back past the water again. At least we know how to get back there. And we'll be going in the opposite direction of that . . . thing."

His words snapped Elaine's attention back to their situation. "We can't leave without Bo," she declared. "We have to go after him."

"No—we have to leave." Jerry fumbled on the ground for a torch, but couldn't find one. He tried to snatch Elaine's, but she pulled it away.

"Give it to me," he ordered. "Now!"

"No way, Jerry," she replied, backing away. "We can't leave Bo."

"We need to get out of here!" he screamed. "Right now! Right now! We can't go back into who knows what. Do you understand that, Elaine?"

"Come on, Jerry. Let's go. She can stay here. We gotta go!" Darlene cried.

FEAR STREET

"We need the torch," Jerry pointed out.

Darlene's eyes narrowed on Elaine. "The torch is coming with us, whether you are or not."

Elaine stared at her in surprise. Was Darlene really that scared? Scared enough to run away—and leave Bo behind? I guess she's not so tough after all, Elaine thought.

"No way," Elaine told her. She held the torch away from Darlene.

"Elaine, think about it," Jerry pleaded. "If we don't leave now, we're dead!"

"What about Bo and Max?" she asked.

"They're dead already," Jerry roared. "Something came out of that hole and grabbed Max! And it's coming for us while you're sitting here with the stupid torch! Come on!"

Elaine paused, listening. She heard nothing down the corridor.

Where was Bo? Had the red mist swallowed him up?

Darlene took a step forward. Her hands were balled into fists.

Elaine pictured Max hanging in the mist, coming apart right before her eyes. Coming apart!

She had to focus. Be strong.

"Stop, Darlene," she warned.

"What are you going to do?" Darlene taunted. "You can't take both of us. Give us the torch, Elaine. Now."

Elaine glanced at the torch. The flame was dying fast. And if it died, they would be stuck in the dark.

TRAPPED

There was no way to light another one without Bo—he had the lighter.

Darlene advanced.

Elaine hated to admit it to herself, but Darlene's demands made sense. "Okay, let's go," she said. "Before this torch dies."

"I'll take that," Darlene replied, snatching the torch away from her. "You might trip again and put it out."

Elaine wanted to wipe the smirk off Darlene's face. But that had to wait. The red mist was back there in the tunnels. And it was coming for them. Elaine wanted to run like crazy.

But she couldn't. She had to stay calm.

Jerry and Darlene ran ahead, the flame bobbing in the darkness.

She hobbled along as fast as she could, putting as much weight on her sprained ankle as she could stand.

Still, the torch flame grew smaller.

A swell of panic hit Elaine. She couldn't keep up with them. Her ankle was too swollen.

"Wait for me," she called.

The torch winked out as Darlene and Jerry turned a corner.

They wouldn't totally leave her behind . . . would they?

chapter

14

*E*laine let out a tiny cry. She doubled her speed. Spikes of pain shot up her leg with each step. She held her hands out in front of her in the darkness, feeling the wall.

The wall ended. She followed it around a corner.

The torch was up ahead again.

Thank goodness, Elaine thought. She trudged on.

She concentrated on the flickering torch, up and down, up and down. But no matter how hard she pushed herself, the flame grew dimmer.

She kicked a bottle aside. It shattered, sending panicked rats skittering in the darkness. Her ankle throbbed with each heartbeat, the pain like a hammer.

TRAPPED

Just as she thought she was going to collapse, Elaine saw the light grow brighter.

Jerry and Darlene had stopped.

"You'd better wait," Elaine muttered to herself.

She plunged forward with renewed energy. But the tunnel didn't look familiar. And she couldn't hear the sound of running water.

As tired as she was, Elaine still felt an urgency tugging at her. The red mist was out there. It hadn't made any noise as it killed Max. It could be right behind them and they would never know until it was too late.

"Why did you stop?" Elaine panted. "That thing could be anywhere. We have to keep moving!"

Jerry frowned at her in the flickering light. "I thought the water would be right here. Which way did we come from?"

"I don't know," Elaine told him.

She stared into Jerry's frightened eyes. "I don't know how to get back to the water."

"We can't get out," Darlene moaned. "We can't get out."

Elaine felt annoyed. Why was Darlene falling apart now? "We have to keep moving before that red mist finds us."

"There's nowhere to go!" Darlene snapped. "We'll get even more lost if we keep walking."

"We're already totally lost," Elaine snapped. Rage filled her. After all the threats to get the torch away from her, after nearly leaving her behind, Darlene was giving up already?

FEAR STREET

"Give me that torch," Elaine ordered. She snatched it away from Darlene.

"Hey!" Darlene protested. "Who made you queen?"

"Shut up and listen," Elaine snapped. "I'm scared too. But we can't just sit here and let that thing find us. We have to think!"

"Do all the thinking you want," Darlene replied. "We'll still be trapped down here."

"Don't you want to know what that thing was?" Elaine asked. "Don't you care about Bo?"

Darlene snarled at her. "You know I do."

"Don't you want to see him again?"

Darlene seemed on the verge of tears, but she blinked them away. "He's probably dead," she replied.

"Maybe not," Elaine argued. "But you have no way of knowing."

"So what are you saying?" Jerry demanded. "You think we should turn around and go after Bo? You think we should go looking for that . . . thing?"

Elaine didn't answer. *Did* she want to go back?

The thought of the red mist terrified her.

"What do *you* think?" Elaine asked Jerry.

He sighed. "I think we should just keep going forward. Even if we don't find the water, we'll probably find some exit eventually.

"Okay, Darlene?" he added. Darlene nodded.

"Then let's go," Elaine said. "But take it slow. I can't run."

"We know," Darlene muttered under her breath.

TRAPPED

They marched forward, turning with the corridor, passing through several empty chambers. None of them looked familiar.

The torch died a little bit more with each turn. Soon they would be in total darkness.

Then what?

Elaine couldn't let herself think about it. She limped on, her breath ragged.

They turned another corner.

A lumpy, decayed body lay on the ground before them.

chapter

15

*E*laine screamed. She jumped away from the foul-smelling corpse. A trio of rats pawed at it, nibbling and squeaking.

Elaine's stomach pitched.

"It's a body!" Darlene cried. "It must be Max!"

"Or Bo," Jerry said softly.

Darlene rushed forward, pushing past Elaine.

"Hey!" Elaine cried. She stumbled to the side—and her bad ankle gave out.

As Elaine fell, the torch flew from her hand. She watched it smash into the wall. Watched it bounce off and land on the concrete floor.

The torch sputtered and went out.

Blackness surrounded them.

Elaine tried to stifle her moans. Dark. It was pitch

dark. She felt as if the walls were pressing in on her. So dark.

She heard Jerry's ragged breathing next to her. Heard Darlene cursing.

I have to calm down, Elaine told herself. I have to think! But it was so dark. All her childhood fears came rushing back to her.

"Did you . . . did you see who it was?" Elaine asked.

"I couldn't tell," Darlene told her. "The torch went out before I saw his face. But I think it was Bo's shirt."

Elaine struggled to focus. She tried to ignore the panicked feeling rising in her chest. Tried to ignore the dark. Tried to ignore the fact that Bo's dead body lay a few feet away.

"If that's Bo, then the red mist killed him," Jerry stated. "It killed him and left him here."

Elaine heard Darlene gasp. "Then the mist might still be here!" she cried. "And we can't see it!"

Elaine stretched her hand out into the darkness. She felt along the cold floor until her fingers touched the torch.

"We have to keep moving," Jerry said. "Even without the light. We can't stay here."

Elaine licked her dry lips. "Bo has the lighter," she croaked.

"Bo's dead," Darlene growled.

"His lighter. It must be on his body somewhere," Elaine said. "In his pocket or something."

There was a short silence.

FEAR STREET

"I'm not looking for it," Jerry declared.

"We have to," Elaine insisted. "The red mist could be right here with us and we wouldn't know! We have to get out of here! We have to have light!"

She heard the hysterical tone of her voice. Calm down, she ordered herself.

"I can't touch him," Darlene said. "I just can't."

Elaine forced herself to crawl forward. "Darlene, do you know where the body is?"

"It's right in front of me," Darlene whispered. "Come toward my voice."

Elaine dragged herself toward Darlene, clutching the torch in her hand.

Her head spun. The darkness pressed around her. I can't believe I'm doing this, she thought.

She crept forward. Darlene's hand brushed her shoulder.

"He's right here," Darlene said. "What are you going to do?"

Elaine hesitated. "I guess I'll try to find the pocket of his jeans," she said. "I'll just have to feel for the lighter."

She heard Darlene move away.

Elaine took a deep breath . . .

And reached for Bo's body.

chapter

16

*E*laine touched the soft material of a T-shirt. It collapsed under her hand. She reached farther—and felt nothing but fabric.

“I can’t believe it,” she muttered.

“What is it?” Jerry called.

“Nothing but old clothes,” Elaine replied. “Really old. They stink.”

“It’s not Bo?” Darlene asked. She let out a relieved sigh. “Then where is he?”

“Who knows?” Jerry replied. “But we have to find him—he has the lighter.”

“Then let’s go,” Darlene said.

“Go where?” Elaine replied. She was surprised how calm she sounded. “We still can’t see.”

FEAR STREET

"I can see," Darlene whispered, her voice trembling.

Elaine peered into the darkness. Darlene was right. There was light now—a tiny hint of dim light. It shone on the wall of the tunnel.

"It's red," Elaine stated. "Red light."

They watched as the patch of light on the wall grew brighter. Redder.

"Do you think that mist glows in the dark?" Jerry asked.

Elaine backed along the ground until she hit the tunnel wall. She pressed herself against it—and waited.

Suddenly the red glow grew brighter. It flickered. Like a torch flame.

Bo pounded out of the darkness, sprinting around a bend in the tunnel. The torch danced in one hand. In the other, he held his switchblade. His eyes looked wild. His clothes were stained almost black.

He was covered in blood!

Elaine felt her own blood drain from her face. Her mouth fell open. What happened to him?

Bo leaped over the mound of old clothes and came to a halt so sudden that he almost fell. Darlene charged into him and wrapped her arms around him.

"Oh, Bo," she wailed. "I can't believe it's you! You're alive! You're . . ." She backed away in disgust. "You're bleeding!"

TRAPPED

"Are you okay?" Elaine demanded.

"It's not my blood! It's not my blood!" he panted.

"Then whose . . . ?" Jerry began.

Bo swallowed hard between breaths. "Max's."

"What happened?" Jerry asked.

"You saw it. It got him. I don't know . . . whatever that thing was we let out . . . it got him."

Bo's face crumpled. Elaine felt a pang of sadness as she watched him. Bo was no longer a thug with a bad attitude. He was terrified. He had just watched the death of his best friend.

I can't take any more of this, she thought. We can't hold it together for much longer.

The intensity of Bo's voice brought her back to reality.

"It slammed him into the walls as it floated down the passage," he recalled. "Over and over. I got hold of Max's legs, and it dragged me, too. Then I felt it taking hold of me. I mean, I felt this thing actually grabbing my arms. I had to let go of him. Then . . . then Max stopped screaming. And I couldn't keep up with it anymore."

"Oh, Bo," Darlene moaned.

"He's dead," Bo said. "And that thing killed him."

Nobody spoke.

Elaine stared at the torch and felt her breathing return to normal. She could see again. Even with darkness all around them, she relaxed. As long as there was light, she could think.

FEAR STREET

"This can't be happening," Darlene said.

"Well, guess what, Dar," Bo growled. "It is. And we better figure something out fast. Because whatever killed Max is going to be coming for us next."

chapter

17

They made new torches. Bo used the pile of old clothes, and the new torches burned better than the first batch. This time, Elaine made sure they all had torches. She wasn't fighting over them anymore. When Bo finished, he shook his lighter fluid can.

"Empty," he declared, tossing it aside. "Which means no more torches after this."

Oh, no, Elaine thought. I can't take the dark again. I'll die if I'm trapped in the dark again.

"Then we better get moving," she said.

No one disagreed.

That's the first thing we've agreed on all day, Elaine thought with a grim smile.

FEAR STREET

"I saw a passage I think will lead us back to the water," Bo told them. "Come on!"

They walked quickly. No one spoke.

Elaine tried not to think about the red mist. But she couldn't get the memory of Max out of her head.

That thing killed him. It was mist, nothing more. But it was alive. She could have sworn that it breathed. How could a cloud breathe?

The same way a cloud could pick up Max and crush the life out of him.

What was it? A real-life monster? Some kind of ghost?

I know we released it, she thought. It must have been trapped behind that wall for a long time, waiting. And Bo moved that brick just enough to let it punch through.

Elaine blinked the thoughts away and concentrated on where they were headed. The tunnels spun off left and right, backward and forward. The only direction she could be sure of was up.

And there's no way up, she thought. I'm trapped down here. And I'll probably die down here.

She gritted her teeth. She couldn't think like that! She couldn't give up hope. They had to get out. No choice. No excuses. They had to live!

But the tunnels went on and on and on . . .

"I wonder what's above us?" Jerry panted.

"The ceiling," Darlene replied.

"I'm serious," Jerry said. "If we could figure out geographically where we are, then we could find our

way back to the spot under the school where the ladder is.”

“And how do you plan to figure out where we are ‘geographically,’” Bo demanded. “Are you going to punch through the cement and dig with your bare hands?”

Jerry didn’t reply.

“Just keep moving,” Bo finally said.

“Yes, sir,” Jerry grunted.

They entered a small chamber. The floor was carpeted with trash up to their knees—more than any chamber so far. The stench was unbelievable.

“Oh, man!” Bo gagged, covering his mouth.

“Great choice, Bo,” Jerry grumbled. He yanked his sweater up over his nose.

“You want to be flat on your back in that garbage, keep it up,” Bo growled.

Elaine ignored them. She couldn’t stop staring at the walls. They were made of the same gray cinder block. But these walls were covered with old, faded graffiti. Red paint, blue, yellow, green, black. It was almost hypnotic, the same two words, over and over, floor to ceiling:

LET’S PARTY LET’S PARTY LET’S PARTY

“Wild,” Bo whispered.

“It’s disgusting,” Elaine replied, shivering. It’s like a madman wrote all those words, she thought. Over and over, the same thing.

FEAR STREET

"Why would anyone want to party in a dump like this?" Jerry asked.

"Think about it," Bo replied. "No one to bother you. No noise complaints. No cops. One hundred percent privacy."

"If you survive it," Elaine remarked.

That comment brought silence.

"Let's get out of here," Darlene grumbled. "This place gives me the creeps."

"Yeah," Bo agreed. "We should keep moving."

They found another tunnel in the far wall and continued on. The stink of the garbage room stayed with them, floating off their clothes like steam. Elaine breathed through her mouth to keep from gagging. Her ankle hurt again, and having to limp only wore her down faster.

She couldn't believe that they hadn't found some other way out of the Labyrinth. The ladder under the auditorium couldn't be the only entrance.

There had to be another way out.

She pictured them popping open a manhole in the middle of town. Traffic would come screeching to a halt as four kids staggered out of the ground, covered with dirt, slime, and blood.

She wouldn't care. She wouldn't care if they came up in the middle of Mr. Savage's office, as long as they were safe.

"Slow down," Bo whispered. Elaine gazed around. They had found another chamber. It was larger than the rest, with a low ceiling. All around them were piles of splintered furniture.

TRAPPED

A wisp of odor hit Elaine's nose. A decaying smell . . . like roadkill.

I know that smell, she thought, fear pumping through her body. She had smelled it after the brick wall blew up in their faces. Right before Max . . .

She heard Bo gasp.

Then she spotted it, too.

The red mist.

Elaine watched in horror as it came together in the far corner, as if sensing them. The stench intensified. Elaine felt the hairs on her neck prickle as the sound of distant breathing reached her ears.

"Oh no," she whispered.

The red mist advanced.

chapter

18

“**R**un!” Bo yelled.

They sprinted blindly into a tunnel off to the right. Elaine screamed and grabbed her ankle, almost falling.

“Come on!” Bo bellowed. He grabbed her arm and dragged her along.

“I’m trying,” she cried. The agony was unbearable. But she pushed herself onward, forcing herself to stop limping and just run.

“Is it still there?” Jerry hollered over his shoulder.

“I’m not looking!” Bo shot back.

Elaine stared straight ahead as she ran.

She turned right.

She turned left.

Graffiti passed by in a blur, the cinder-block walls never ending. Their torches fluttered in the stale wind. But they didn’t stop running.

TRAPPED

Elaine heaved, trying to keep air in her lungs. But it was impossible.

Her leg muscles were on fire, her knees wobbly. She felt herself slowing down.

"I can't do it," she heaved. "Bo . . ."

"Not now!" he screamed. "No way!"

"Bo . . ."

Colors swirled before her eyes. Her legs grew numb and unsteady beneath her.

Then she hit the ground. A tin can dug into her hip. A foul piece of wet paper stuck to her cheek.

"Come on, Elaine!" Bo urged. "Move it!"

"Leave her!" Darlene screamed.

"Shut up!" Bo retorted.

"It's coming!" Jerry wailed.

Bo grabbed Elaine by the armpits and threw her forward. Elaine forced herself to run. Her left ankle was so numb she wondered if it was still there. Her knees buckled with each step.

Keep going, she ordered herself. I have to keep going.

The tunnel opened up around them, and they flew into a large chamber. Other passages led off into darkness. But Elaine didn't care about them. All she cared about were the two words slopped on the wall in blood-red paint:

LET'S PARTY

It was the chamber under the stage! They found it!

FEAR STREET

"The ladder!" Elaine exclaimed in triumph.

We're back! We're safe! Elaine let out a whoop.

"All right!" Jerry howled.

"Yes!" Bo punched his fist in the air.

"We did it!" Darlene cried. "We did it, we did it, we did it!"

They rushed the ladder, throwing their torches aside.

Elaine reached out for the rusted rung—could almost feel the gritty metal under her fingertips.

Darlene shoved her aside.

Elaine fell to the concrete, tearing open her jeans and the flesh of her right knee.

"What are you doing, Darlene?" Elaine roared, but Darlene was already climbing.

Elaine chanced a glance over her shoulder. Her heart stopped.

The first tendrils of the red cloud poured from the tunnel!

"Go!" Bo ordered.

"You go," Elaine urged. "If I have trouble, you're the only one strong enough to pull me up."

Bo launched himself up the ladder after Darlene.

The chamber filled with red mist. The cloud rolled towards them, churning with evil life.

"Go!" Jerry wheezed. Sweat poured down his face. "Hurry!"

Elaine climbed as fast as she could, but she was so slow! One rung, two, three. One foot over the other. Her sweat seeped into the fresh wound on her

knee, stinging like acid. Her ankle throbbed and throbbed.

"Help!" she heard Darlene screaming. "Somebody help us!"

The ladder let out a grinding moan that made Elaine gasp. No . . . not now, she thought.

The ladder shifted.

"Help!"

In the dim light, she spotted one of the braces coming out of the crumbling wall.

Please don't collapse, she begged silently. Not now.

Above her, Bo's boots ground against the metal, dripping bits of rust on her face.

They were going to make it. They had to.

Elaine heard a scream from beneath her.

She glanced down in time to see the red cloud surround Jerry. First it poured over his legs. His eyes flew open wide, locking on Elaine's in an expression of utter panic.

Tentacles of mist surrounded Jerry's body. Snaked around his legs. His arms. His shoulders.

His whole body stiffened. He let out a long, animal howl.

Just like Max, Elaine thought frantically. Just like Max!

"*Nooo!*" she screamed.

She reached down and grabbed Jerry's outstretched hand. It was so sweaty, she didn't know how long she could hold on.

FEAR STREET

She tried to pull him up, but the red cloud had too tight a grip. She wrapped her other arm around the rung of the ladder and yanked with all of her strength.

Jerry rose a few inches.

Sobbing with the effort, Elaine strained harder. Jerry screamed louder. But still she felt him rising.

She was winning!

She could save him!

Then Jerry let out a terrifying high-pitched screech. His hand tightened on hers.

"Elaine?" Bo called from above.

"Help me!" she wailed.

Bo scrambled back down the ladder.

The red cloud moved. Elaine's arm jerked against the steel rung. Its strength was incredible.

I'm going to lose him, she thought. It's too strong! Too strong!

"Bo! Hurry! I can't hold on!"

Jerry squealed again. Elaine felt his knuckles crack in her grip from the strain. His fingers began to slip.

"Elaine," Jerry huffed.

She stared through the crimson fog into Jerry's eyes.

"H-h-help . . . m-me . . ."

"Jerry!" she screamed. She pulled with everything she had left.

The ladder jerked again. It pulled away from the wall. Dangled dangerously free.

TRAPPED

"Somebody help us!" Darlene's voice sounded far away.

Elaine's eyes widened in terror as a snakelike tendril of mist slid up Jerry's hand. Slid around her wrist—and clamped tight!

It's got me!

Her flesh tingled where the mist touched her. Then it burned.

"No!" she shrieked.

Panic took over. She jerked her hand up with all her might. She couldn't stop screaming. Her whole arm burned, as if the skin itself was being twisted in different directions.

The more she pulled, the tighter the grip.

"Let go!" came Bo's voice.

"I can't! It's got me!"

Bo's hand clamped around her free arm, lifting her up.

She cried out in frustration.

I have to let Jerry go. It will kill me too. I have to let him go!

Bo's grip was weakening.

Her arm was numb.

The ladder swung free, held by a few last rivets from above.

She knew they had seconds left.

She had to let go.

Had to.

"I'm sorry, Jerry," she whispered.

She shut her eyes tight.

FEAR STREET

And opened her hand.

At first he held on. But he gave one last scream, and let go of her.

Elaine opened her eyes and watched as Jerry tumbled down into the mist.

"No!" she cried. "Let him go! *Let him go!*"

Jerry's face twisted into a terrible shape, full of pain and fear. Elaine could only stare helplessly as the red mist took him.

She winced as Jerry's legs bent behind him and slammed into his back with horrifying force. She heard his spine shatter.

Jerry's shoes struck the back of his head with a hollow clunk.

His screams stopped.

His bones popped and snapped as the mist hauled him away. Elaine realized her arm was still outstretched, reaching for Jerry even though there was no way he could be alive.

Jerry and the mist disappeared into a tunnel.

"Come on," Bo murmured.

Elaine didn't reply. She had failed. Another person was dead.

We were so close to getting out, she thought.

"Elaine," Bo called.

She gazed up at him, hardly seeing him at all.

"We have to go," he urged.

He let go of her arm and climbed up a rung.

Elaine tried to follow. Tried to get her arms and legs to work.

TRAPPED

She heard a loud creak. Felt a grinding vibration through the metal of the ladder.

The ladder. It was so old, it couldn't take the strain!

It jerked hard, and dangled wildly for a split second more.

Elaine gasped, her hands clamping on to the hard steel.

The metal squealed horribly and gave way.
The ladder started to fall.

chapter

19

*E*laine gripped the ladder the whole way down. The wind rushed by her. Endless seconds ticked off in her head as she screamed.

Don't let me die, she thought.

The ladder hit bottom.

Elaine flew loose. The rusted steel exploded all around her, spraying her face and clattering loud enough to make her ears ring.

Bo landed on top of her.

All his weight hit her in the stomach. The air whooshed out of her body. Her lungs felt frozen in place. She couldn't take a breath. Panic hit her again.

Breathe!

Bo moaned next to her.

TRAPPED

Little heaving noises came out of her throat. Did he break her ribs? Puncture a lung? Colors swirled before her eyes, and the chamber pitched to one side.

"Elaine," came Bo's voice. "Elaine, are you all right?"

He seemed very far away.

"Elaine?"

Something shook her entire body. Bo. Bo had hold of her shoulders and was shaking her.

Elaine gave one last mighty effort to breathe, willing her lungs to open up and let her live.

Cool air poured through her. That stinking underground air never tasted so good.

"I'm okay, I'm okay," she reassured Bo. "I think."

She sat up, still dazed.

Then Elaine remembered Jerry. Crumpled up like a ball of paper and carted away by that thing. And there was nothing any of them could do about it.

"Oh, Bo—"

She threw her arms around him and squeezed as hard as she could.

"Please hold me," she whispered. "I can't take this anymore."

Bo's arms closed around her. "It's okay," he said. "You're okay."

"When is it going to end?" she whimpered.

She felt Bo swallow. "I don't know."

Elaine was grateful for Bo's strong arms. "Help me!" came a voice from above them.

FEAR STREET

Bo and Elaine stepped apart and stared at each other.

Darlene.

She hung above them, dangling from the last rung where the corroded metal had snapped off.

"Get me down!" Darlene cried.

"Climb up," Bo replied. "Go for help."

"I can't! My fingers are numb. I can't hold on!"

Even in the gloom, Elaine saw that Darlene wasn't kidding. She really was hanging by her fingers. Her feet spun wildly, unable to get a grip on anything.

Bo grumbled in frustration. He spun around, sifting through the remains of the ladder.

"What are you doing?" Elaine asked.

"Looking for a piece I can use," Bo grumbled. He threw a shard of metal away. "There's nothing."

Elaine had an idea. "What if she just lets go?"

Bo gaped at her. "Are you crazy?"

"You can catch her," Elaine replied. She knew it wasn't much of an idea, but they didn't have many choices.

"Bo!" Darlene screamed.

Elaine put her hand on Bo's shoulder and looked him in the eye. "You can do this," she said.

"I hope you're right," Bo whispered.

"Come on!" Darlene squealed.

"Okay, Darlene," Bo barked, his decision made. "Let go."

"Are you nuts?"

"I'll catch you."

"I'm not letting go!" she argued.

TRAPPED

"You're going to fall anyway," Elaine pointed out.

"Shut up!"

"Darlene, listen to me," Bo ordered. "Elaine's right. She's fallen down this shaft twice, and she's okay. So let go. I promise I'll catch you."

"You promise?"

"What did I just say?" Bo replied.

"I don't want to die," Darlene moaned. "I want to go up."

"You can't," Elaine said.

"I know I can't, you moron! Are you deaf?"

Elaine bit back her reply. I have to cut Darlene some slack, she told herself. She's scared. We're all scared.

"Darlene," Bo growled, "quit stalling and let go! Now!"

Darlene adjusted her grip on the rung, her fingers flexing stiffly. "I hate you," she muttered.

"You can do it," Bo urged. "I promise."

"No."

"Darlene. I promise."

A moment of silence followed. Then: "O-okay."

"Okay. Ready when you are."

"I-I'm ready," Darlene said.

"On three," Bo said. "One . . ."

Darlene let out a tiny, fearful noise. Elaine crossed her fingers.

"Two . . ."

Bo held out his arms, ready for her.

"Three!"

Darlene let go.

chapter

20

Darlene screamed the whole way down. Her arms pinwheeled and her brown hair floated above her head.

She hit Bo hard. He didn't exactly catch her. It was more like half catching, half breaking her fall. They ended up at Elaine's feet in a heap.

She helped them up.

"You okay?" she asked.

"I think so," Bo replied. "Darlene?"

"I'm okay," she said.

They stood there for a moment, catching their breath. The torches still glowed dimly where they had been dropped, four tiny flickers.

The remains of the ladder lay all around them,

TRAPPED

long strips of useless metal. The next available rung was high over their heads.

That's it, Elaine thought. We're doomed.

"Totaled," Bo muttered.

"No kidding," Darlene replied, kicking a chunk of steel.

"I meant us, not the ladder," he countered. He picked up a torch. "Any ideas on what we should do now?"

"We could keep yelling for help," Darlene suggested. "Mr. Savage must be looking for us by now."

"No good," Bo said. "If he was anywhere nearby, he would have heard us already. He probably just decided we went home. I bet he's long gone by now."

The thought of the empty school above made Elaine feel sick. It was Saturday. No one would be back here for two days. There was no way they'd survive that long.

She bent and picked up one of the torches. Having the wood back in her hand calmed her down. She studied the chamber once more. Nothing new. Trash. Graffiti.

"There's only one thing we can do," Elaine said. "We have to keep looking for another exit. We have no choice."

"We've been down here for hours," Darlene muttered. "We've seen tunnel after tunnel after tunnel.

FEAR STREET

We could spend days down here and not find any other way out.”

“We won’t last hours, let alone days,” Bo pointed out. “If there’s another exit, we have to find it, and find it fast. That thing will be back for us soon.”

They stood silently for a few moments. The quiet was unsettling. But Elaine couldn’t think of anything to say.

“Do you guys believe in evil spirits?” Bo finally asked.

Elaine and Darlene stared at him.

“Why not?” Bo suggested. “That brick wall blew up in our faces like a bomb. I thought it was going to take my head off. And then this red cloud pours out of the hole. What’s that all about?”

“You think it’s an evil spirit?” Darlene asked, her voice full of doubt.

Bo shrugged. “What else could it be?”

“I don’t know what it is,” Elaine said. “But it’s alive. It can grab you. I felt that. But what I keep thinking is that we released it—whatever it is.”

“What are you talking about?” Darlene asked.

“Think about it,” Elaine said. “It was behind the wall. If we walked right past that brick section, it would still be in there. It was waiting to come out. The minute we touched those bricks, the thing burst right through the wall.”

“You think it’s my fault?” Bo demanded. “Because I messed with that brick?”

Elaine glared back. “I didn’t say that.”

TRAPPED

"Okay," Bo said. "So what now?"

"We've run around and around and ended up back here," Elaine reasoned. "A circle. But there's one passage that we haven't explored yet."

"What's that?" Darlene asked.

Elaine took a deep breath. I can't believe I'm actually suggesting this, she thought. I must be crazy . . . but it may be our only hope.

"The passage on the other side of the brick wall," she replied.

"Where that thing came from?" Darlene retorted.

"No way!"

"It's the only place left," Elaine said.

"She might be right," Bo added.

"I . . . I can't go in there," Darlene declared. "I just can't."

"Max and Jerry are dead," Bo reminded her. "And we've just about run out of options. I say we give it a try."

Elaine nodded. "There might be a way out. And even if there isn't, we might find out the truth behind that thing."

"It's suicide," Darlene moaned. "Please don't make me do this."

"You don't have to do anything," Bo replied. "You can stay here if you want."

But Elaine could see in Darlene's face that staying behind wasn't an option.

"Then it's settled," Bo decided.

"I guess so," Darlene said.

FEAR STREET

"Okay," Bo muttered. "Let's do it."

They stepped once again into the right tunnel. Bo left Jerry's torch behind in the chamber, setting it down in a pile of rags.

"Maybe the light and smoke will help us find our way back here," Bo suggested. "If we have to."

That's pretty useless, Elaine thought. The ladder's gone. There's nothing here to come back to.

But there was no point in arguing about it.

As she turned to go, Darlene snagged Elaine's arm.

"What?" Elaine asked.

"Um, I just . . . I wanted to apologize, Elaine."

Elaine cocked an eyebrow. "What for?"

"When I knocked you down to get to the ladder." Darlene's eyes glistened in the firelight. "It could've killed you. That mist, I mean."

Elaine shrugged. "If you hadn't pushed me, it would have killed *you*."

Darlene's gaze darkened, but Elaine didn't care. She didn't feel very forgiving at the moment.

Still, she reminded herself, Darlene did apologize.

She sighed, blinking away the bitterness. "It's okay, Darlene. Let's just forget about the whole thing."

"I don't think I'll ever be able to forget any of this," Darlene replied.

As they moved down the tunnel, Elaine allowed Darlene to walk next to Bo. She wished she could be

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next to him, too. He was brave. And he helped her feel brave.

Where is it? she wondered. Where is the mist right now?

She shivered, remembering the burning sensation on her skin where it had touched her. She held her hand up to the torchlight.

It was red. And it stung almost like a sunburn.

They stopped.

Elaine heard the familiar sound of splashing water. The pool. They'd reached the pool.

Bo turned to her. "You ready to do it again?"

Elaine shrugged. "It's not like I had all that much chance to dry off."

Bo nodded and stepped out onto the ledge. Elaine followed Darlene. She kept moving, setting her feet down carefully. The water had seemed so frightening before. Now it hardly bothered her at all.

Soon they stood on the far side.

"See?" Bo prodded. "It's a piece of cake."

"I had lots of practice," Elaine replied.

"There it is," Darlene whispered.

The brick patch was right in front of them. Crumbled bricks carpeted the ground. The hole was still there—plenty of room for a person to climb through.

"It's so quiet," Darlene said.

"I like it quiet," Bo replied. "Come on."

He stepped up to the hole, holding his torch in front of him.

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Darlene whimpered.

"Here goes nothing," Bo whispered. He stepped forward.

He cautiously slipped inside the hole—and disappeared.

chapter

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“*I* can’t see him,” Darlene whispered.

Elaine peered into the dark hole. There was no sign of Bo’s torch. “We have to follow him,” Elaine said. She tried to sound braver than she felt.

She held her breath and stepped through the hole.

The tunnel beyond the bricks made a sharp right. Then it came to an abrupt end. A huge pile of dirt and rubble clogged the entire passage.

Bo stood staring at the mound.

“A cave-in?” Bo asked.

“Looks like it,” Elaine agreed. She had never seen such a big cave-in in her life. But what else could it be?

FEAR STREET

"Look," Darlene said, pointing. "Up there in the corner. There's a way through."

Elaine raised her torch and peered into the gloom. At first all she saw was cobwebs and dirt. Then she spotted it. A small hole at the top of the pile near what was left of the roof. Just big enough for a person to crawl through.

"What do you think?" Bo asked.

"There's nowhere else to go," Elaine replied.

"If that thing comes in here we'll be dead meat," Darlene warned.

"We're dead meat out there, too," Bo reminded her. "What's the difference?"

Darlene didn't reply.

Bo began to climb the dirt pile, trying to keep the torch raised high. The dirt was loose. For every two moves up, Bo slid back one.

A wave of fresh dirt poured in from the ceiling.

Bo froze, his gaze locked on the source of the tiny avalanche.

"This isn't too bright," Elaine stated. "That roof could go any second."

"Well, I'm not too bright, remember?" Bo replied.

"Bo—"

"It'll be okay," he replied. He started to crawl up the pile again. He moved faster this time, and less dirt poured down on him. Finally he reached the hole. He poked the torch into it and peered inside.

TRAPPED

"See anything?" Darlene asked.

"No," he replied. "I'm going through."

Elaine and Darlene exchanged a disturbed glance. But Elaine knew they had no choice. She would have to go through that hole, too. It was the only way.

"You have to climb fast," Bo instructed. "That way the dirt doesn't get much of a chance to shift."

"Great," Darlene muttered.

He wiggled into the hole and disappeared. More gobs of dirt and rock rolled down the pile at them.

The last thing Elaine saw was his boots.

"You want to go first?" Elaine asked.

"Let's wait," Darlene replied. "He'll tell us if it's safe."

Yeah, Elaine thought. One way or the other.

They waited several seconds, but heard nothing.

"Bo?" Darlene called.

No reply.

"Bo?" she repeated, louder.

Nothing.

Elaine wiped her sweaty palms on her jeans and gripped the torch. How long should they wait? Why wasn't he answering?

Maybe he *can't* answer, she thought.

"Bo!" Darlene hollered. "Answer me!"

Bo's head popped through the hole. "What?"

Elaine let out a sigh of relief.

"You scared me to death," Darlene grumbled. "Why didn't you answer?"

FEAR STREET

"It's a long crawl," he replied. "Come on. And be careful. It's pretty wild."

His head disappeared.

"After you," Elaine offered.

"No," Darlene replied. "You go first. I don't know if I can."

"Darlene." Elaine stared into the other girl's eyes. "You have to. You can't stay here."

Darlene nodded. "I know," she whispered. "Just go, okay? I'm coming."

Elaine nodded. She didn't know if Darlene would really follow her. But there was nothing she could do about it.

Except drag her by the neck, she thought.

"Okay," she said. "See you."

Darlene nodded.

"You'll be right behind me?"

Darlene nodded again.

Elaine turned to the dirt pile.

She drew a deep breath, and started to climb. She slid backward immediately. Clumps of fresh dirt rolled down from the ceiling.

It's like loose sand, she thought. How did Bo do this?

Go fast, he said.

Go fast on this ankle? I don't think so.

Still, she had to try.

She stepped back from the pile, shifting the torch to her left hand. Then she psyched herself up by counting to three.

TRAPPED

One . . . two . . .

She pounced. She scrambled up the dirt on her hands and knees.

Don't drop the torch! she ordered herself.

The hole grew nearer. A huge wave of cold soil poured out from the ceiling.

But she couldn't stop. Not now.

She tried harder, shuffling upward as hard as she could. She ignored the pouring dirt. Ignored the shooting pains in her foot.

She reached down deep for one last burst of energy, and flung herself into the cramped tunnel.

Immediately she knew she couldn't stop.

The tunnel was nothing more than dirt. Little rivulets poured down all around her, bouncing off the torch. She could dig—but for each handful she pulled out, another took its place.

All she could do was move forward, and hope Darlene followed.

A knot of dread grew in Elaine's stomach.

I'm not going to make it, she thought. The tunnel is too narrow. It's going to collapse!

Her movements became jerkier, like spasms.

I have to calm down!

But she couldn't. She breathed faster and faster. She couldn't get enough air. There wasn't enough air in the tunnel!

Her lungs heaved harder. Her legs burned. This tunnel was endless.

She accidentally shoveled a clod of dirt into her

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face and mouth. She tasted bitter, cold earth. Her eyes were blind and stinging.

"Ugh!" she cried, spitting out gobs of dirt.

She shook her head vigorously, trying to get the soil out of her hair. The torchlight flickered dimly in front of her.

Elaine rolled her tongue around her mouth, gathering a huge lump of mud. She spit it out, gagging.

More dirt came down into her hair.

I have to move, she told herself. Or I'm going to die in here!

Her legs kicked frantically in the dirt. She pushed thick piles of it aside with her arms. It was like swimming through sand.

Then all at once, she could breathe again. The air was clear up ahead. And she saw the flicker of another torch.

Elaine let out a huge sigh and crawled forward.

She emerged in a low-ceilinged chamber, just like all the others they had passed through. She blinked and peered around, trying to get her bearings. At first all she saw was Bo below her, holding his torch up.

Elaine pulled herself the rest of the way through with a grunt. She slid down the pile of dirt to the floor, holding her torch in front of her to keep it burning. She stood, immediately noticing a difference in the air. It wasn't as close as the air in the rest of the Labyrinth. Not as moist from rainwater and decaying garbage. The odor was less intense. Not so much a smell of decay as it was of . . . age.

TRAPPED

"What do you see?" Elaine demanded, her eyes still burning from the dust. "Is there a way out?"

"No," Bo replied.

Darlene came sliding down the dirt pile behind them. She cried out, landing hard. Her torch was out.

"What happened?" Elaine asked.

"A huge load of dirt came down on me," Darlene growled. "I thought I was dead!"

Elaine stiffened. "Is the tunnel blocked?"

Darlene shook her head. "I don't think so. But it's close."

Bo helped her to her feet. She was covered with brown soot, and Elaine figured she must look pretty much the same way. Darlene brushed herself off, but it didn't help.

"Where are we?" Darlene asked.

"Wherever it is, it's not where we want to be," Bo replied.

"Why?" Elaine demanded.

"Look."

Elaine gazed into the flickering shadows, but saw nothing.

Then Darlene gasped.

What do they see? she wondered. She quickly wiped her eyes with the tail of her sweatshirt and tried to focus.

Then Elaine saw it.

Oh no, she thought. It can't be . . . it just can't be.

FEAR STREET

But it was.

Elaine knew that they had finally stumbled upon the secret of the Labyrinth . . .

And all of the stories were true.

She clamped her hand over her mouth to keep from screaming.

chapter

22

Before them lay six brown, decayed skeletons.

Elaine moaned. Skeletons. Dead, rotted human beings. Trapped in this hole. She wanted to turn away. Wanted to run and never look back.

But she couldn't stop staring at the skeletons.

Their clothing had rotted away to tatters. Some sat with their backs against the wall—as if they were waiting for someone to come. Others were sprawled on the floor, jaws open wide. Their bones were the color of graveyard dirt.

But Elaine would remember the eye sockets the most.

Empty. Dark. And dead.

FEAR STREET

She held back her scream. She couldn't believe it.
Six more people dead!

Who were these people?

Bo nudged the ribs of a skeleton with his toe.
"This place has been sealed up for a long time."

"Did they die in here?" Darlene whispered, her voice trembling.

"Probably," Bo replied. "The cave-in must have sealed them airtight."

"Why?"

"No rats." Bo knelt by a skeleton. He poked it, checking it out. Elaine saw the dull glint of a belt buckle in the corpse's midsection. And its shoes had fallen away. All that were left were the heels.

"I can't believe you're so calm," Elaine said.

Bo glared at her. "You want me to scream?"

Elaine sighed. "Sorry. I'm just really freaked out by this."

"It's okay," Bo replied. "They won't hurt you. What do you think happened to them?"

"I'll tell you what happened!" Darlene cried. "That red mist killed them. And somebody put the bricks up to keep it in here. But now we let it out and it's going to kill us, too!"

"Don't get hysterical," Bo told her.

"Why would the red mist give anyone a chance to trap it in here?" Elaine asked.

Bo shrugged. He lifted his torch and gazed at the walls all around them. More graffiti: LET'S PARTY OVER and over again.

TRAPPED

"I'm really getting sick of that saying," Darlene muttered. "It's everywhere."

Elaine saw piles of bottles and cans in the corners, along with potato chip and pretzel bags so old that they were nearly white.

That's weird, she realized. Everywhere else in the maze, garbage was scattered and random. But in here . . .

"They were trapped by the cave-in," she blurted out. "Not by the red mist."

"What do you mean?" Bo asked.

"Look at the trash. It's stacked neatly in the corners. They had to have been here for a while. The mist *didn't* kill them. They were trapped."

"They starved to death," Bo reasoned.

"Or died of thirst," Elaine added.

"What about the red cloud?" Darlene demanded. "It just hung out with them until they died?"

Elaine and Bo glanced at each other. "Who knows?" he said.

Elaine scanned the walls again, and something caught her eye.

"Look over here," she said, holding her torch higher.

Under one of the larger LET'S PARTY lines, someone had scrawled other words in red paint. The empty paint can lay on its side on the ground, a paintbrush sticking halfway out of it.

Elaine held her torch close to the wall, and read:

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Mike Zimmerman . . . Rick Surmacz . . .
Kathy Kleidermacher . . . Maggie McMahon . . .
Peter Rienzi . . . Brenda Sovinski

“Six names,” Elaine whispered. “The names of the dead.”

“It’s a guest list,” Bo replied.

“For what?”

“The last party of all time in the Labyrinth.”

They stared at the names silently, letting it sink in. Elaine’s head spun. She didn’t know what was worse—being ripped apart by the red mist or dying of starvation, trapped in a cave.

Because those were the options for the three of them—unless they found another way out.

“Looks like they ran out of paint.” Darlene pointed at a section of wall on the other side of the room.

Elaine walked over to see it. Someone had left another message. This one was smaller, scratched into the wall with a rock:

SCOTT SAVAGE KNOWS

Elaine didn’t get it.

“Scott Savage?” she asked. “Who’s he?”

“Mr. Savage,” Bo replied.

chapter

23

“Mr. Savage?” Elaine repeated. “Why would his name be on the wall? What does he know?”

“He must know about what happened down here,” Bo answered.

“How would *he* know?” Darlene asked.

Bo rolled his eyes. “I’ll ask him next time I see him.”

“Do you—do you think he had something to do with it?” Elaine asked.

“Well, we’re talking about people who knew they were going to die,” Bo replied. “They wrote their names on the wall, and when they ran out of paint, they scratched this in with a rock.”

FEAR STREET

"To tell anyone who found them that Mr. Savage knew what happened," Elaine finished.

"But how could he have anything to do with a cave-in?" Darlene wondered.

Elaine caught a movement from the corner of her eye. A strange flickering in the torchlight.

Her heart seemed to stop. Darlene gasped.

The red cloud poured through their small escape route.

The stench of rotting flesh filled Elaine's nostrils. It was more intense than before. She had to cover her mouth.

Then she heard it. The mist was breathing. This time Elaine could hear it clearly.

A steady, heavy breathing.

The mist spread out before them. Wavering in the torchlight. Growing. Taking up more and more space.

It forced them back . . . back . . . Elaine bumped into the rough stone wall behind her.

There was nowhere else to go.

Now *they* were trapped.

chapter

24

“**W**hat do we do?” Darlene’s voice came out as a squeak.

“We can’t fight it,” Elaine replied. Her body felt so cold. She couldn’t stop shaking. She held her torch out as if it might protect her in some way.

The red cloud churned in front of them. The only sound was the delicate flicker of the torches. And the breathing of the mist.

The mist hovered, as if watching them.

A few wisps of it floated out to examine the skeletons. Then it became whole again, hanging in midair.

“What’s it waiting for?” Elaine whispered.

“Me,” Bo replied.

“What?”

FEAR STREET

"Don't worry about it," he growled. "Just get ready to run, no matter what happens to me."

"Bo—" Darlene began.

Bo stepped forward and waved his torch at the red mist.

"Hey!" he called out. "Come on! You've been wanting a piece of me all day. Well? Come and get it."

"Bo, no!" Elaine cried.

He shot a quick look at her. Then he sidestepped toward the far wall. The cloud followed him.

"That's it," Bo urged. "Come get me first."

Elaine realized what Bo was doing. She and Darlene now had a clear shot at the small tunnel.

But they couldn't leave Bo here alone.

Someone's going to die, she realized in utter horror. One of us or all of us. Bo is giving us a chance. We have to take it!

But she couldn't.

She couldn't watch Bo die.

"Run!" he ordered, swinging the torch.

The red cloud seemed to glow with power. Or hunger, Elaine thought. Only a short space separated it and Bo.

"Run!" he repeated.

Elaine stood her ground.

His eyes locked on hers. She felt the rage burning in him. Rage over losing Max. Over being trapped in this nightmare.

But she saw the fear, too.

TRAPPED

Bo was about to die, and he knew it.

"Run!" he wailed. *"Now!"*

Elaine grabbed Darlene's arm and hauled her toward the dirt pile. Darlene didn't protest.

The red cloud turned on them, but it was too far away to stop them. Elaine sprinted along the far wall.

Almost there. She just had to get up the dirt pile. She just had to climb up to the tunnel without causing another cave-in.

She glanced over her shoulder—and gasped.

The red mist poured over the skeletons.

Elaine stopped short. Her mouth fell open. This couldn't be real.

"Oh, no," Darlene whispered from behind her.

The red mist surrounded the skeletons. It floated in and out of the ribs. It swirled through the mouths and eye sockets.

The bones stirred.

At first, they trembled. Then they started to move.

The red mist lifted the skeletons off the floor one after the other.

Elaine gaped as the dead things stood up—and began to float toward her.

Their jaws snapped at the air. Their legs clicked and rattled against the stone floor. Their arms waved like marionettes. Their fingers flexed, becoming claws.

"Come on, Darlene," Elaine yelled. She ran for the pile of dirt.

FEAR STREET

The skeletons were faster. They flew across the room, bones clacking against bones. They spread out in front of the dirt pile. In front of the tunnel.

They blocked the only way out.

Paralyzing fear gripped Elaine. She didn't know what else to do.

This was it.

Finally, they were going to die.

Elaine screamed as the bony hands reached out for her.

chapter

25

“**N**o!” Elaine screamed. “You’re not alive! You’re not alive!”

“Get them away from me!” Darlene shrieked.

Elaine stared at the skeletons. Every limb flexed as they half staggered, half floated in front of her.

How could she be sure they wouldn’t tear her apart?

She couldn’t. There was no time.

“They’re not alive!” she called to Darlene. “Run through them!”

“No.” Darlene sobbed with fear.

“Run!” Bo screamed. “Run!”

Elaine whirled to see him. The mist was only a foot away from his face. They had to go—now.

FEAR STREET

She drew in a deep breath, and ran at the skeletons. She held the torch straight out in front of her.

She passed the first skeleton.

They clustered around her. Their arms reached for her. They clawed at her clothes and hair, trying to get a grip on her throat.

“No!” she screamed.

She swung the torch at them. It spun from her grip and clattered to the floor. The flame went out.

One of the skeletons embraced her, its grimy, brown face moving in toward hers as if to kiss her. Its jaw clapped open and shut, the chipped teeth chattering only inches from her lips.

She moaned in revulsion and flung the thing from her. It fell back and collapsed on the ground.

Two more crusty arms slid around her neck from behind. A bony hand dragged across her face.

Elaine whipped around, batting at the skeleton. Her arm plowed through its ribcage, shattering it. She felt a wave of nausea. Her hands were covered with a black grit—the remains of human flesh.

“Get away from me!” she cried.

The remaining bones crumbled and clattered to the floor. The skull rolled into the darkness.

Elaine sprinted the rest of the distance to the pile, scrambling up to the tunnel entrance.

At the top of the pile, she turned around.

Darlene wasn't behind her. She had frozen in her tracks, a skeleton reaching out for her.

Bo spotted it, too. He bolted toward Darlene. His speed astounded Elaine. He faked one way and ran

TRAPPED

another, fooling the mist with an end-around that was faster than any running back she'd ever seen.

As he ran, his wild eyes focused on the skeleton.

He raised his torch like a baseball bat.

The skeleton exploded as Bo swung through its ribcage, sending shards of bone and chunks of flaming torch across the chamber.

Everything went black.

"Go!" she heard Bo scream.

Elaine dove into the tunnel and didn't look back. She scrambled through, coughing out a huge mouthful of dirt.

She rolled to a stop at the bottom of the pile on the other side, grateful for the blast of cool, wet air—no matter how bad it stank.

She couldn't see anything. All the torches were gone.

She whirled in the direction of the tunnel.

Where are Darlene and Bo? she thought. They have to make it!

But Elaine couldn't see anyone—or anything.

She heard Darlene's long, blood-curdling scream.

And nothing more.

chapter

26

*E*laine covered her ears to block out Darlene's scream. What do I do? she thought frantically. Should I run, or go back in there?

They could be dead already, she thought.

But maybe not. Elaine knew she couldn't leave them.

"Bo?" she called into the darkness.

No answer. She clambered up the pile and peered into the tunnel.

Total darkness.

At first.

Elaine blinked. Was she seeing things?

The stark white outline of her own hand appeared against the black dirt in front of her.

TRAPPED

She held it up and flexed her fingers. Grime from the skeletons covered her knuckles.

Where was the light coming from?

A hand landed on her shoulder.

Elaine screeched and spun around, kicking wildly. A figure stood before her holding a blinding white light.

She cried out and shut her eyes.

“Get away from me!”

She swung her fists, but she didn't hit anything. The light was too bright.

“Elaine,” said a deep voice.

She paused, opening her eyes a crack. Through all the grit and tears, Elaine made out a blurry figure. She blinked as her eyes adjusted to the light.

Slowly, he came into focus.

Mr. Savage!

He gripped a camping lantern in one hand. His perfect black suit was rumped and stained. His lower lip quivered in terror.

“Y-you have to get out of here,” he stammered. “Where are the others?”

“I don't know,” Elaine blurted. “Dead . . . I don't know.”

“Ohhh,” he moaned. His shoulders sagged. “No, no, no.”

“Something's down here—” Elaine began.

“Hurry,” Savage interrupted. “We have to go.”

“But Bo—”

The upper half of Bo's body burst through the

FEAR STREET

mouth of the tunnel. He clawed at the dirt and pounded it with his fist, trying desperately to free himself.

"It's . . . got me!" he screamed.

"Help him!" Elaine cried. She threw herself toward the tunnel. Grabbed Bo's outstretched hand.

Savage put down the lantern and snagged Bo's other hand. More dirt came down on them, pouring out of the ceiling like an avalanche. Bo's head disappeared under the pile. All Elaine could see were his arms.

"He'll suffocate!" Savage yelled.

"It's worse than that," Elaine grunted.

Bo's head broke free of the dirt. He gagged and sucked in a breath.

"We've got him!" Elaine said, almost crying with relief.

Bo's body came free of the tunnel. All three of them tumbled down the pile to the cement floor.

"Where is it?" Elaine barked, whirling in the direction of the tunnel.

A deafening roar drowned out her voice. Behind them, a ton of wet earth barreled down from the ceiling. The mouth of the tunnel collapsed.

"The roof is caving in!" Elaine cried.

chapter

27

*E*laine had never seen so much dirt. It kept coming. She bumped into Mr. Savage as she scrambled to get out of the way.

Finally, the cave-in stopped.

Elaine blinked. She couldn't believe it. The tunnel to the tomb was completely sealed.

"It's over," she cried. "The mist is trapped!"

Elaine gaped at the massive wall of dirt in front of her. Less than a minute ago, she was on the other side of that wall, fighting for her life.

That's it, she thought. It's gone. The mist is trapped. Now we can get out of here!

Bo moaned at Elaine's feet. She and Savage helped him up.

"Are you okay?" Savage asked.

FEAR STREET

Bo scowled at him. "Get your hands off me," he barked. Savage let go of Bo's arm and took a step back.

"What happened to Darlene?" Elaine asked.

Bo swallowed hard. "She's gone."

"What do you mean she's gone?" Savage demanded. "Where is she? What's going on down here?"

"Like you don't know," Bo snarled.

Savage's eyes narrowed. "What am I supposed to know?"

"Nine people are dead down here," Bo replied. "And it's all your fault!"

Savage grew pale. He gaped at them. "Nine people . . . what are you talking about?"

Elaine stepped in front of Bo before he could explode. "Max, Darlene, and Jerry Fox are dead, Mr. Savage," she explained. "Some kind of a red mist, or cloud, or something came out of this chamber. It killed them all."

"Not to mention the six skeletons behind this cave-in," Bo added.

Savage held up his hand. "Wait a minute," he replied. "Tell me exactly what happened."

Elaine told Savage the whole story. How she fell through the hidden trap door. How Bo had heard about the legend of the dead kids. How they touched the brick wall—until it exploded in their faces. How the red mist came out and killed Max. She told him everything—including the message on the wall:

SCOTT SAVAGE KNOWS.

TRAPPED

Savage stared at her. His mouth hung open. His eyes seemed vacant, as if he were no longer there.

"Mr. Savage?" Elaine asked.

"Hey!" Bo barked, waving a hand in front of Savage's eyes. "Did you hear a word she said?"

Savage focused hard on Bo. "I heard every word."

"*What* do you know?" Bo demanded. "What did that message mean?"

"I don't know," Savage replied, his voice filled with frustration.

"What do you mean, you don't know?" Bo exclaimed. "It's on the wall!"

Elaine put a hand on Bo's shoulder. "Easy," she warned.

Savage let out a huge sigh. He slumped down on the dirt pile and covered his face with his hands.

"I don't believe this," Bo grumbled to Elaine. "Let's get out of here."

"Wait," Elaine replied. She crouched in front of Mr. Savage and pulled his hands away from his face. "Mr. Savage?"

"Yes," he answered.

"You have to tell us what you know," she ordered.

He let out another huge sigh. "I went to Shadyside High," he began. "Long before you were born. You have to understand that it was a different time. The threat of war was very real."

Bo snorted.

FEAR STREET

"It was the Cold War, Bo. Sometimes the tension was unbelievable."

"Yeah, I learned all about it in history class," Bo replied. "What does that have to do with us?"

"These tunnels were built as a bomb shelter," Savage continued, "in case the bombs ever came. That way, hundreds of people would be safe while the world burned. There were stores of freeze-dried food, bottled water, batteries, everything. Enough to survive for months."

"Now it's garbage," Elaine commented.

"The rats got most of it, I'm sure," Savage replied. "But a few years after the tunnels were built—when I was in high school—they became the big after-school party place."

"We know that," Bo said. "So what's with the cave-in?"

"I'm getting to that," Savage replied. "One Saturday night, some people I knew invited me down here. I was thrilled. I was going to party with the coolest kids in school."

"What happened?" Elaine asked.

"We had a great time," Savage replied. "And I got very, very drunk. I never drank beer before."

Bo made a disgusted sound.

"The others drank a lot more than I did," Savage continued. "They brought paint with them and started writing graffiti. We got more paint on each other than on the walls, though."

"And?" Bo urged.

TRAPPED

"There was a cave-in," Savage replied.

"Obviously," Bo said.

"Let him talk, Bo," Elaine snapped.

"I want to get out of here," Bo argued. "This whole place is insane, and I want out."

"I'm the only one who can get you out, Bo," Savage cut in. "And I will. But I've been carrying this secret around for thirty years. It's time I tell it."

Bo glared at him.

"Someone—Peter, I think—tripped over the bag of beer we brought," Savage continued. "Bottles scattered everywhere. Three or four rolled out into the main tunnel. I chased them. But then there was this tremendous noise, like the whole world was splitting open. When I turned around, all I saw was a wall of dirt. The whole roof came down right where we're sitting."

"Your friends—?" Elaine began.

"Were trapped," Savage finished.

"The skeletons," she said, remembering the brittle bones clawing at her. She shivered.

"I didn't know what to do," Mr. Savage went on. "I called their names again and again, but they didn't answer. I was too drunk to think. I knew they were dead." His voice broke, and he stopped speaking.

"They weren't dead," Bo stated.

"*What?*" Savage's head snapped up. "What do you mean?"

FEAR STREET

"We saw where they were trapped, remember?" Bo replied. "We went through that little tunnel and saw your precious friends. And they survived long enough to write your name on the wall."

Elaine gasped. "The tunnel! That tunnel through the mound of dirt. They must have dug that—they dug their way out!"

"Yeah. Too bad they ran smack into a brand-new brick wall," Bo said.

Elaine's mouth fell open in surprise. She hadn't even thought of that. She stared at Mr. Savage, waiting for an explanation.

"Yes," Savage replied. "I built the brick wall."

"Why?" Elaine asked.

"No one was allowed down here," Savage explained. "A few others had already been expelled because they got caught. Expelled. That couldn't happen to me."

"You killed them," Bo whispered. "You left them in there to die."

"No!" Savage cried. "They were already dead! I know they were! And I would be held responsible, because we weren't supposed to be down here. I panicked."

"What happened?" Elaine asked.

"No one else knew I'd been in the Labyrinth," Savage replied. "So I came back. The next day, I snuck back in with bricks from my dad's construction site. I bricked up the passage so it would look like the caved-in tunnel never existed. And it

TRAPPED

worked. No one knew why the six of them disappeared. It was a mystery.”

“No mystery,” Bo said. “You killed them. They would have gotten out if you hadn’t put the wall there.”

Savage dropped his head into his hands. “I didn’t know they were still alive,” he whispered. “I didn’t know. It never even occurred to me that they could tunnel out. I was just a kid.”

Elaine glanced at Bo. His hands were clenched into fists. Everything they had gone through that day was Savage’s fault. They both knew it.

“What about the red mist?” she asked.

“I don’t know what you mean,” Savage replied.

“Oh, right,” Bo cried. “Are you sure you’re telling us the whole story? Or did you let that thing kill your friends one by one while you bricked up a wall to trap it? While you saved yourself and let them die.”

“Bo, I mean it,” Savage replied. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Elaine stared at him. Was he telling the truth?

“You never saw a red mist while you were partying down here?” she asked.

Savage shook his head. “I don’t know what happened to you kids today. But we have to get to the bottom of it.”

“Why don’t we just buy some more bricks?” Bo muttered.

“I’ve had enough of your attitude!” Savage ex-

FEAR STREET

claimed, leaping to his feet. "The cave-in thirty years ago was awful. But that doesn't mean I'm going to believe that some red cloud killed your friends."

"It's true, Mr. Savage," Elaine insisted. "I swear!"

"Where are their bodies?" he asked.

"It took them," Bo replied. "And now it's trapped behind that dirt—"

A low rumbling sound interrupted him. It seemed to be coming straight through the concrete walls around them. The walls began to vibrate with the sound.

Elaine had never been in an earthquake before. But this had to be what it felt like.

"What is that?" Bo asked.

"Another cave-in," Savage replied. "That's the sound I heard."

"Let's get out of—"

Elaine's suggestion was cut short by a massive explosion of dirt. The pile burst outward with terrifying force.

Elaine felt herself flying, blown off her feet. She slammed into the far wall with a grunt. White lights danced in front of her eyes.

Her mouth was filled with dirt. She gagged, rolling onto her belly. Her fingers clawed at the rocky ground under her.

She opened her eyes.

Bo lay off to her left, covered with mud. Mr. Savage was to the right. The lantern had been half buried, its light dimmed, but not extinguished.

TRAPPED

Tons of dirt had been blown away. Elaine could see clear into the other chamber. Bones lay scattered everywhere. She blinked away grit, trying to focus. She rubbed her eyes.

What she saw made her heart leap into her throat. The red mist was free.

chapter

28

A terrifying wave of red poured over the remaining dirt. A blast of foul air hit Elaine so hard that she gagged.

“Get up!” Elaine screamed. She scrambled across the dirt to Bo.

He coughed and tried to sit up. His eyes widened at the sight of the cloud. He jumped to his feet.

“We’re out of here!” he ordered. He grabbed Elaine’s arm and pulled her toward the main tunnel.

“What about Mr. Savage?” Elaine cried.

Savage stirred at the sound of his name. He fumbled for the lantern. He lifted it up—and stared at the red mist.

“Oh, no,” he croaked.

“Come on!” Bo hollered.

TRAPPED

"It'll kill us, Mr. Savage," Elaine explained, yanking his suit sleeve. "We have to go now!"

"I don't believe it," Savage whispered. "It's not possible."

Elaine tried to drag him, but he wouldn't budge. He gazed deep into the red cloud.

"It's them," he mumbled. "They're back. Can't you see them?"

"See what?" Bo demanded.

Elaine gaped at the cloud. It looked different this time. "I see it," she whispered.

Several shapes hovered within the cloud. They shimmered and came into focus. Elaine could hardly believe her eyes—but she knew what they were.

Faces.

It was true.

"My friends," Savage croaked.

Faces. Twisted and full of rage. Their mouths were dark pits—open in screams that no one would hear. Their eyes were black and empty. All around them, the mist spun like a lethal web.

Elaine's eyes widened as she realized the truth.

The red mist didn't kill those six kids. The red mist *was* the six kids!

They knew they were trapped, Elaine thought. Knew that they were going to die. They dug like mad through the dirt, only to find the brick wall that Savage had built.

Only to realize that they were trapped. Trapped forever.

FEAR STREET

Elaine couldn't imagine their hopelessness. Their terror.

Their rage.

That was it, Elaine knew. This red mist was the rage of all six kids. Somehow their spirits remained trapped with them. Somehow they came together and formed the cloud.

Each day it must have grown more angry.

Each day, wishing for revenge.

It waited and waited for its chance, she thought. And we gave it that chance. We let it out of the bricks.

Now they were all going to die.

"My friends," Savage whispered, his voice full of wonder. "I can't believe it's you."

The mist hovered near him. The faces pulsed and snarled.

"Yes," Savage said. "It's me. You remember."

Elaine felt a tug on her arm.

"Come on," Bo murmured.

But Elaine couldn't move. She couldn't stop staring at the faces.

"Elaine," Savage said, his eyes never leaving the mist. "There is a shaft that leads up into the boiler room of the school. Make six consecutive left turns. Then you'll find it."

"What do you mean?" she said. "I don't—"

"Just remember," Savage ordered. He climbed to his feet.

Bo yanked Elaine hard. She took a step toward the main tunnel.

TRAPPED

“What are you doing, Mr. Savage?”

Savage finally turned to her. His face was blank. Emotionless.

“I have a little unfinished business here,” he stated.

He turned back to the cloud.

It moved forward. Surrounded him.

Elaine stepped forward, but she felt Bo's hands grab her arms and hold her back.

Mr. Savage flew up into the cloud. He howled as the mist surrounded him. Streams of soil dripped off him. The lantern dropped to the dirt pile.

The screams echoed off the tunnel walls.

His body bucked and spasmed. His arms were pulled back and broken. His head snapped around on his neck.

There was one final crunch, and the screams stopped.

Mr. Savage's body hung there, twitching.

Elaine's eyes widened.

Something else was happening.

The body seemed to grow smaller. Not shrinking, exactly. But turning in on itself.

The crackle of bones filled the air as the ghostly faces swirled around Savage. The principal's body grew smaller and smaller. His face was unrecognizable. His form was no longer a body, but a ball.

Finally, it was gone.

The mist surged high into the air, boiling against the ceiling of the passage. The faces roared their silent screams.

FEAR STREET

Their cold, black stares focused on Elaine and Bo.
“Run!” Bo yelled.

Elaine gazed up, preparing herself for the pain that was about to come. Her eyes strained to see the faces.

Something’s different, she thought.

The mist did not advance.

“Bo,” Elaine whispered. “Look at it!”

The faces had faded. Elaine sensed none of the rage. The red of the cloud was not as bright. Even the breathing sounds had gotten softer.

Finally, Elaine understood. “They’ve had their revenge,” she said. “It’s over.”

The cloud slowly faded before their eyes. Evaporated until there was nothing left.

Finally, only one last swirl remained. It hung there for several seconds.

Go, Elaine pleaded to herself. Just go.

It dissolved.

Every last bit of the red cloud was gone.

chapter

29

*E*laine collapsed into Bo's arms. She was exhausted. "I can't believe it's really over."

"Come on," he whispered, picking up the lantern. "Let's get out of here."

They limped into the main passage.

"Six consecutive lefts," Elaine mumbled.

They found all six after a long march. The whole way, Elaine leaned on Bo for support. She was thankful that they didn't have to run. A red mist wasn't going to swallow them up in revenge.

They didn't talk as they walked. It was easy to find the shaft Mr. Savage told them about.

A steel ladder led up into the darkness. Far above them, Elaine made out several blips of light.

"We made it," she whispered.

FEAR STREET

She smiled at Bo. He grinned back.

"So," he said.

"So," she replied.

"So what are we going to tell people?"

Elaine blinked, remembering how Max, Jerry, and Darlene died. How Mr. Savage gave his life.

No one will believe us.

No one at all.

"I don't know," she answered.

"I don't know, either. Why don't we get out of here first. Then we'll think about it."

Elaine nodded. She reached up and grabbed a cold rung. She gazed up at the glow of daylight above, and she and Bo climbed out together.

About the Author

R.L. Stine is the best-selling author in America. He has written more than one hundred scary books for young people, all of them bestsellers.

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