

# PROLOGUE

## EVE KNOX

*Friday, December 22, 1995*

Eve wasn't even supposed to be in these caves. They had a dizzying number of stony corridors and with one wrong turn she could become lost. At fifteen she knew these paths better than most people twice her age, and she moved as quickly as she could, being careful not to slip on the icy cave floor. Eve had come here to clear her head, to think about things and now she may never make it out alive.

Fear made Eve's skin buzz, numbing the pain in her head and her wrist. She considered her options. She could try to talk her way out or she could try to run from the cave and to safety.

She didn't get a chance to decide. Before she could speak fingers were digging into her arm trying to push her more deeply into the cave. Eve managed to wriggle free but lost her balance and stumbled to the ground. Her fingers swept the floor in search of some kind of weapon and her hand landed on a jagged piece of limestone. She clutched onto the rock and with a cry of frustration she swung her arm hoping to strike but only cut through the damp air. She swung again, this time grazing flesh.

Eve tried to get up but was pulled back to the ground with

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a teeth-rattling crash. She twisted around to see talon-like fingers clinging to her boot.

“No,” Eve cried, kicking out at her captor. She tore away from the grasp and ran toward the cave’s opening, hopscotching over jagged stone. *Almost there*, Eve thought as her right foot plunged into a narrow crevice and she tumbled forward.

The sickening snap of her ankle filled her ears and Eve howled in pain. Using her good hand, she tried to push herself up to her knees but her right foot was still snared. Only twenty yards more and she would be free. She gave her leg a desperate yank, the gasping, ragged breath closing in. Her skin tore and her Doc Marten was lost, but the foot came free.

She army-crawled across the rough stone toward the mouth of the cave, the ends of her scarf cascading down her back as she moved. *Almost there*. Suddenly, the scarf pulled tight at her throat. Eve froze but still the pressure. She scrabbled at the fabric, desperately trying to slide her fingers between the wool and her skin. Her legs felt weak and her lungs screamed for oxygen. Night had fallen and the only light came from the houses far up atop the bluffs, twinkling cold stars. Tiny beacons. *Only a little bit farther*, Eve thought. *I’m so close*.

With one frantic effort, she managed to flip onto her back but the scarf didn’t loosen. It cut still deeper into her throat. Her screams became lodged in her chest. Her vision blurred and her arms fell uselessly to her side. Above her, Eve found eyes filled with rage. There was no fear, no regret, no sorrow. No air could pass through to her lungs. The cold crept through her skin, settling deep into Eve’s bones until she became one with the slick limestone.

*How did things go so wrong?* Eve wondered. *Why?* Just beyond the cave, night had fully arrived. Snow came down in dizzying swirls. Dark places made it so much easier to be cruel, to exact revenge.