

and narrow with one bed. High up there was a small window with bars across it.

The walls were of old, rough stone. To Boris, it felt as if they were closing in on him.

His breath started to come in short gasps. His heart pounded. Boris turned to the guard.

"No," he begged. "I can't take it here. Let me go back to where I was. I'll never do anything wrong again."

"You should have thought of that earlier," the guard said. Then he slammed the heavy door in Boris's face.

Boris reached for the door. He grabbed the bars in his hands and tried to shake them.

"You'll be sorry!" he yelled after the guard.

The guard just looked back and laughed.

Boris sat down on the bed. He shut his eyes. He didn't want to look around the cell. He was afraid that he would lose his mind.

Thunder woke Boris from a terrible nightmare. In the meantime, rats were running at him, screeching.

He opened his eyes. He was afraid the rats were really there. He hated rats more than anything. It was his biggest worry . . . that there might be rats in solitary.

Boris looked around the cell. It was almost dark. Then a flash of lightning lit up the cell. The light fell on the wall at the head of his bed.

In those few seconds of light, Boris saw something that made his heart leap. One of the stones in the wall looked different. There was a thin crack in the cement around it.

Boris tried to fight off a new feeling of hope. But he couldn't help himself.

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Maybe another prisoner had dug around the rock. No one could see the crack unless they were lying on the bed. He had only seen it because of the lightning.

His hands were shaking. He reached down and grabbed the large stone. He moved it back and forth.

Then, suddenly, it came loose! Boris pulled, and the rock fell forward into his hands.

As Boris stared into the hole left by the rock, a flash of lightning lit it up. A tunnel stretched before him . . . with a rat hurrying down into it.

Boris jumped back in horror when he saw the rat. He thought about putting the large stone back in place.

Then another flash of lightning cut through the darkness of the cell. The tunnel lit up in front of him. It seemed to welcome him to freedom.

Boris measured the size of the tunnel with his eyes. It was narrow at the beginning. But then it became wider. It looked wide enough for him to crawl through.

Another flash of lightning lit up the tunnel. He searched for any sign of the rat.

"Maybe I didn't see it at all," Boris whispered to himself. "Maybe it was just a shadow of my nightmare."

Boris peered into the tunnel. He saw no sign of the rat. But his eyes fell on something else. There was a scrap piece of paper lying on the tunnel floor, near the entrance.

He reached in and pulled it out. He felt its dry surface. The paper was wrinkled with age.

He waited impatiently for the lightning