

# **TIMELINE**

## **THE MINUTEMAN PROJECT**



**BY: STEVEN FOSTER**



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This book is dedicated to my mother and father.

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# ESCAPE! OR NOT.



The bright moon was surrounded by a mass of dark clouds. Droplets of water quietly poured from them in an endless torrent, soaking the dirt and forming mud puddles that glistened where the moonlight touched them. Despite the rain, it would have been a peaceful scene, had I not been running for my life.

I sprinted through the woods, branches jabbing harshly at me with every turn I made. It was an endless maze of trees, bushes, and mud. With every group of branches I launched myself through, I was greeted with more cuts, staining my short blonde hair and cheeks scarlet with blood. I continued to run; stopping was not an option.

The rain intensified, as if it were getting angrier with me. I jumped over a small ledge, not realizing how slippery the surface would be. I fell onto the slick mud, and began to roll down a rough, jagged hill. Each tumble brought more pain, as rocks joined with the branches to tear at me from every angle.

I stopped my slide and waited before moving. I could hear voices. They were getting closer.

I pulled myself up, refusing to accept defeat. I kept running; my legs burned as if on fire. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of light shining past me.

A flashlight!

*They're too close now, there's no way I can outrun them,* I thought to myself. I stopped, looking for somewhere to take cover, and ducked out of sight behind a tree. This is where I would take my

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stand. I would not let them take me back without a fight.

A figure emerged from the bushes. He wore a dark uniform and I could see he held a gun. He was walking straight toward the tree I hid behind. Leaves crunched and mud splattered beneath his feet as he stepped closer and closer. As he approached the tree, I jumped out from behind it and hurled my entire body towards my assailant. The element of surprise was on my side and he didn't know what hit him. Our bodies collided, my momentum pushing the man backward into the mud, causing him to lose grip on his gun.

I unleashed a hailstorm of punches on him. Most were blocked, but a few connected. He swung an arm that hit me squarely in the face, and sent me sprawling backwards. By the time I had recovered from the blow, he was on his feet, sending a kick to my midsection that knocked the wind out of me. I hit the ground hard, but I managed to push myself back up.

Then a searing pain shot through my body. I looked down and saw a metal rod sticking out on both sides of my right shoulder. The tip of each end of the rod had claw-like metal prongs which shot inwards, and dug into my shoulder. Sparks flickered from where the claw dug in. My right side was quickly becoming numb. I was losing strength fast. Three other men had joined the first. One had his gun pointed at me.

I turned away, trying to run, but the man pulled the trigger. Another rod pierced me, this time through my leg. The claws separated and dug in, finding their mark. I collapsed. My face crashed into mud and the rain poured down, soaking my crumpled body. I tried crawling away with no luck. Something struck the back of my head.

My eyes fluttered open, but they were met with darkness. As I came to, I became aware of the bitter pain shooting through my body, especially in my shoulder and leg. I winced as I pulled myself up against the cold stone wall of my cell.



## STEVEN FOSTER

Yeah, that's right. You heard me; a *cell*.

My cell was surrounded on three sides by a stone wall. Floor-to-ceiling metal bars and the door to the cell lined the fourth. It was just big enough for me to stand in, and just long enough for me to lie down. No bed. No pillow. Only a bucket that sat in the corner. I'm sure you can guess what that was used for.

I looked around, and my eyes slowly started to adjust to the dark room that once again held me prisoner. The room was all too familiar to me. As I became more conscious I could see that it wasn't completely dark. A dim light flickered through the moldy bulb which hung sadly from the concrete ceiling. My cell was one of many identical cells that held other kids. The cells lined the perimeter of a large room, with the metal bars facing the room's center. Most of the others were younger than me, but some looked like they could have been my age. We didn't really know how old we were.

"So how far did you make it this time?" asked a voice from across the way.

I turned my head, trying to limit the movement of my shoulder. I could tell that Jessica was standing. Her clothes were tattered and much too big for her small frame, but we didn't exactly have a wardrobe to choose from. Her dirty blonde hair reached down a little past her shoulders and her blue eyes were bright, even in the darkness. She leaned against the front of her cell, hands gripping the bars.

"Just past the creek," I replied.

"Oh. A new record," she smiled. "How many times have you tried escaping?"

"I've lost count," I said weakly, smiling back at her in spite of the pain. If anything could shine a light in this place, it was her smile.

Another voice pierced through the dark room. "Francis, when will you figure out that you can't escape The Island?"

I turned toward Will, whose cell was beside Jessica's. Will was

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around 18 years old, just a little older than me, if we are keeping track of time correctly. He was lying down in his cell, hands running through a mess of dark brown hair. His eyes were an even darker brown, staring at the ceiling.

“Well it’s better than sitting in a cell all day,” I snapped back with a hint of anger that came more from the pain searing my shoulder and leg than it did because of Will’s comment. I gently touched the scar where the rod had hit, and traced the circle of cuts from the claw attachment with my finger.

Will was like a brother to me, but sometimes his outlook on life was pretty bleak. I guess if you’ve spent your entire life living in a cell, you could get depressed from time to time. One thing I was thankful for was that we could see and talk to one another through the metal bars.

“Whatever,” came his casual reply.

A door opened on the opposite end of the room. A tall figure stepped through, dressed in a black uniform. He was a guard at The Island. They all wore the same uniform, and had the same style of gun. It was a cross between a pistol and a machine gun, but instead of bullets, it launched those excruciating metal rods. As if the the claw at each end digging into the skin wasn’t bad enough, they also sent an electric shock through your body, numbing the place where you got hit. The bottom-line: you don’t want to mess with the guards here. They don’t exactly hire the people who greet you at Walmart.

The guard continued into the room, banging his weapon against each cell’s bars. “That’s enough chit-chat, freaks,” he said in a cold voice. He did a lap around the room and left. We were all dead quiet.

“You should get some rest. You’ll need it,” Jessica whispered.

“Yeah, I guess so,” I murmured, sliding down on my back, trying to get as comfortable as possible on the hard rock floor.

## STEVEN FOSTER

I guess now would be a good time for me to fill you in on what is going on. You may be wondering why I am in a cell. I've been asking myself that question for years. I was born in New York City, where I lived with my mom, dad, and sister.

They were really kind and caring, and my memories of them are happy ones. I knew they loved me. I was top of my class and dominated the playground in soccer, freeze tag, and pretty much anything I did. Freeze tag is like regular tag, but when the person who is "it" touches you, you have to stay perfectly still, as if frozen, until another player touches you. Sometimes, in the middle of a long and lonely night (at least, what I assume is night), I long to play freeze tag.

When I was eight years old, my family and I were in a bad car accident. I was the only survivor. My parents had no other living relatives, so I was sent to an orphanage. I am not sure who was in charge of this orphanage, but I am pretty sure they were crooked. Instead of finding me a good home, within the first year of my being there, they sold me to a big corporation called "The Island."

The Island.

Sounds nice, right? Yeah, well on the surface I'm sure they appear to be a nice company. They develop and manufacture medical drugs and products that can do anything from stopping headaches to instantly repairing damaged skin. What people don't know about The Island Corporation is that they test their drugs on orphaned kids who are kept prisoners and used for whatever purposes they want. Yep. That's where we come in.

When The Island develops a new product, they test it out on us first, to see if there are any side effects. Basically, we're all guinea pigs. The results are not always pleasant. Once, a kid named Ryan was given a new drug to treat acne, and the next day he began to grow mold on his hands and feet. Then, 48 hours later, permanent burn scars appeared all over his face. Needless to say, he's not going

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to get a date any time soon. (Not that there is much dating going on here.)

There you have it. I had eight years of childhood, then BOOM! No more family, no more sports, no T.V. Just me. And my weekly poking and prodding with needles. They keep us in cells to prevent us from escaping, and feed us twice a day. No, they're not nice meals. I'm actually not sure what it is, but it is brown and chunky, and as dry as dirt.

For as long as I've been here I've been in the cell across from Jessica and Will. Will got here when he was about three. He doesn't know or remember his family, let alone the world outside. I feel bad for him. Jessica was thrown in here about three weeks before me, so she can relate to me when I quote *Star Wars* or something.

It is nice to have Jessica. I don't mean it's nice that we're here, but it is nice to have someone who understands me nearby. Jessica's parents died in a plane crash when she was six, and she was tossed from orphanage to orphanage until The Island Corporation acquired her. We stick together and look out for one another as best we can. We are the closest thing we have to family.

Most children who are brought to The Island aren't even old enough to be in school. They spend the first few years of captivity getting a basic education from the scientists. They learn to read, write, and think like regular people. They even show us popular movies and make us read current books. That being said, nobody learns French or anything exciting like that. Just the basics—history, English, and math.

Once a child is old enough and hearty enough to survive the experiments, he or she becomes a test subject. We are all branded with a barcode and The Island's logo so we can be identified by our test groups. Will and I were assigned to be test subjects for neurological enhancement drugs designed to increase brainpower. Do they work? Some do, most don't. Usually we just have massive