



fated

book #11 in
the Vampire Journals

morgan rice

fated

(book #11 in the vampire journals)

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About Morgan Rice

Morgan Rice is the #1 bestselling author of THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS, a young adult series comprising eleven books (and counting); the #1 bestselling series THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY, a post-apocalyptic thriller comprising two books (and counting); and the #1 bestselling epic fantasy series THE SORCERER'S RING, comprising thirteen books (and counting).

Morgan's books are available in audio and print editions, and translations of the books are available in German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Dutch, Turkish, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak (with more languages forthcoming).

TURNED (Book #1 in the Vampire Journals) and A QUEST OF HEROES (Book #1 in the Sorcerer's Ring) are each available as a free download!

Morgan loves to hear from you, so please feel free to visit www.morganricebooks.com to join the email list, receive a free book, receive free giveaways, download the free app, get the latest exclusive news, connect on Facebook and Twitter, and stay in touch!

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CONTENTS

[CHAPTER ONE](#)
[CHAPTER TWO](#)
[CHAPTER THREE](#)
[CHAPTER FOUR](#)
[CHAPTER FIVE](#)
[CHAPTER SIX](#)
[CHAPTER SEVEN](#)
[CHAPTER EIGHT](#)
[CHAPTER NINE](#)
[CHAPTER TEN](#)
[CHAPTER ELEVEN](#)
[CHAPTER TWELVE](#)
[CHAPTER THIRTEEN](#)
[CHAPTER FOURTEEN](#)
[CHAPTER FIFTEEN](#)
[CHAPTER SIXTEEN](#)
[CHAPTER SEVENTEEN](#)
[CHAPTER EIGHTEEN](#)
[CHAPTER NINETEEN](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY ONE](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY TWO](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY THREE](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY SIX](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT](#)
[CHAPTER TWENTY NINE](#)

“Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.”

--William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

CHAPTER ONE

Caitlin Paine stood in the back room of Pete's Bar, joined by Caleb, Sam, Polly, and a dozen police officers, and stared out through the smashed open window, into a night filled with flashing police lights. She wondered what on earth could have happened to her daughter. Scarlet, the love of her life, was out there somewhere, running into the night, alone, likely afraid, and the thought of it was tearing her apart. What pained Caitlin even more than the thought of Scarlet missing was the thought of what Scarlet had become, her memory of her, her last look at her before she'd leapt out through that window. That wasn't her daughter.

That was something else.

Caitlin shuddered to think of it, and yet, try as she did to shake it, she knew it was true. She had been fighting with the idea all this time, fighting not to believe that Scarlet was no longer human, that Scarlet was really a vampire. Caitlin had been fighting with Aiden, with the priest, with Caleb, and most of all, with herself, hoping, wishing, it were anything else. But she had no fight left in her. She had no more explanations.

Caitlin's heart pounded as she looked out into the night. She had seen it for herself this time, had witnessed it with her own eyes. Her girl had transformed, had fed on that man, had gained a super-human strength. She had smashed that huge man into a wall as if he had been a toothpick—and she had bounded off into the night so fast, within the blink of an eye, that there was no way she could be human. There was also no way, Caitlin knew, that they could catch her. She knew the police were wasting their time.

It was different this time, too, because she had not been the only one who had witnessed it. Caitlin had seen the expression on Caleb's face, on Sam's and Polly's, and she could see it in their eyes: a look of shock, a fear of the supernatural. Scarlet, the person they had all loved most in the world, was no longer Scarlet.

It was the stuff of nightmares and fairy tales and legends, something Caitlin had never ever imagined to see in her lifetime. It shook not only her view of Scarlet, but her entire view of the world. How could such a thing actually exist? How could this planet have more than just humans on it?

"Mrs. Paine?"

Caitlin turned to see a police officer standing beside her, pen and paper in hand, staring back at her patiently.

"Did you hear my question?"

Caitlin, trembling, in a daze, shook her head slowly.

"I'm sorry," she answered, her voice hoarse. "I did not."

"I said: where do you think your daughter might have gone?"

Caitlin sighed as she thought of it. If it were the old Scarlet, she could tell them easily. A friend's house; the gym; on a date; the soccer field....

But with the new Scarlet, she had no idea.

"I wish I knew," she finally replied.

Another officer stepped forward.

"Are there any friends she might have gone to?" he prodded. "A boyfriend?"

At the word *boyfriend*, Caitlin turned and searched the room, examining it for any sign of that mysterious boy who had appeared in this bar. *Sage*, he had said. So simple, just one word, as if she should know who he was. Caitlin had to admit that she'd never met anyone like him. He exuded a power more compelling than anyone she had ever met, and he was more a grown man than a teenager. He had been dressed in all black, and his shining eyes and chiseled

cheekbones made him look as if he had dropped down from another century.

Strangest of all, Caitlin recalled what he had done to those locals in this bar. She had known Caleb and Sam to be more than capable of taking care of themselves—yet this boy had achieved a quick victory where they could not, beating up all those men in a whirlwind. Who was he? Why had he been here?

And why had he been looking for Scarlet?

Yet as she looked all around, Caitlin saw no sign of him. Sage, too, had somehow disappeared. What was his connection to Scarlet? she wondered. Her mother's instinct told her that somehow those two were together. But who was he? The mystery only deepened.

Caitlin didn't feel ready to mention it to the police; it was all too weird.

"No," Caitlin lied, her voice shaky. "Not that I know of."

"You had said there was a boy, a boy who was here with you, involved in the altercation?" another police officer asked. "Do you know his name?"

Caitlin shook her head.

"Sage," Polly chimed in, stepping forward. "He'd said his name was Sage."

For some reason, Caitlin had not wanted to tell them; she felt protective of him. And she also felt, she could not explain how, that Sage was not human, ether—and she was not ready to say that to the police, to have everyone once again thinking she was crazy.

The police stood there, scribbling his name, and she wondered what they would do.

"What about all these creeps in here?" Polly pressed, looking around in dismay. "All these jerks who started the fight? Aren't you going to arrest them?"

The police looked at each other uncomfortably.

One of them cleared his throat.

"We have already arrested Kyle, the man who attacked your daughter," the officer said. "As for the others, well, to be frank, it is their word against yours—and they say you started the altercation."

"We did not!" Caleb said, stepping forward angrily, nursing a lump on his head. "We came in here looking for my daughter—and they tried to stop us."

"Like I said," the officer said, "it's your word against theirs. They said you threw the first punch—and frankly they're in worse shape than you. If we arrest them, we'd have to arrest you, too."

Caitlin stared at them, smoldering with anger.

"What about my daughter?" she asked. "How do you plan on finding her?"

"Ma'am, I can assure you, we have our entire force out there right now looking for her," the officer said. "But it's awfully hard to search for someone when we don't know where she went—or why. We need a motive."

"You said she ran," said another officer, stepping forward. "We don't understand. Why would she run? You had arrived. She was with you. She was safe. So why would she run?"

Caitlin looked at Caleb and the others, and they all looked back uncertainly.

"I don't know," she said honestly.

"Then why didn't you try to stop her?" another officer asked. "Or run after her?"

"You don't understand," Caitlin said, trying to make sense of it. "She didn't just run; she bounded. It was like... watching a deer. We couldn't have caught her if we tried."

The officer looked skeptically to the others.

"Are you telling me that with all these grown people here, not one of you could even try to catch her? What is she, some kind of Olympic athlete?" he scoffed, skeptical.

"Were you drinking tonight, ma'am?" another officer asked.

"Listen," Caleb snapped, stepping forward, "my wife is not making it up. I saw it, too. We all did: her brother, too, and his wife. The four of us. You think we were all seeing things?"

The officer held up a hand.

"No need to get defensive. We're all on the same team. But look at our side here: you tell me your kid runs faster than a deer. Obviously that doesn't make any sense. Maybe you're all scuffed up from the fight. Sometimes things don't always look as they appear. All I'm saying is that it's not all adding up."

The officer traded a skeptical look with his partner, who stepped forward.

"Like I said, our force is out looking for your daughter. Nine times out of ten, runaway kids show up back at the house. Or at a friend's house. So my best advice to you is to just go back home and stay put. I bet that all that happened here was that she wanted to bend the rules a bit and go out for a night at a grown-up bar and have a drink, and things got a little out of hand. Maybe she met a guy at the bar. When you guys came, she probably took off, because she felt embarrassed. Go back home, I bet she'll be waiting for you," the officer concluded, as if wrapping everything up neatly.

Caitlin shook her head, overwhelmed with frustration.

"You don't understand," she said. "You don't know my daughter. Scarlet does not go to bars. And she does not pick up strange men. She came here because she was suffering. She came here because she had nowhere else to go. Because she needed something. She came here because she's transforming. Don't you understand? Transforming."

The officers looked at her as if she were crazy; Caitlin hated that look.

"Transforming?" they repeated, as if she had lost her mind.

Caitlin sighed, desperate.

"If you don't find her, people out there are going to get hurt."

The officer frowned.

"Hurt? What are you saying? Has your daughter been hurting people? Is she armed?"

Caitlin shook her head, beyond frustrated. These local cops would never get it; she was just wasting her breath.

"She is unarmed. She has never hurt a soul. But if your men do find her, they will never be able to contain her."

The police officers gave each other a look, as if concluding that Caitlin was crazy, and then they turned their backs and continued into the next room.

As Caitlin watched them go, she turned and looked back out, through the broken glass into the night.

Scarlet, she thought. Where are you? Come home to me, baby. I love you. I'm sorry. Whatever I did to upset you, I'm sorry. Please come home.

The strangest thing of all of this, Caitlin realized, was that, as she thought of Scarlet out there, alone in the night, she did not feel any fear for Scarlet.

Instead, she felt fear for everybody else.

CHAPTER TWO

Kyle sat in the back of the police car, hands cuffed behind his back, staring at the cage in the cramped cruiser, and feeling unlike he ever had before. Something was changing inside him, he did not know what, but he could feel it bubbling up inside. It reminded him of the time he used heroin, that first rush when the needle touched his skin. This new feeling was like a searing heat, coursing through his veins—and accompanied by a feeling of invincible power. He felt overwhelmed with power, felt like his veins were going to pop from his skin, like his blood was swelling inside him. He felt more powerful than he ever had in his life, the skin prickling on his face and forehead and the back of his neck. The surge of power within him was something he did not understand.

But Kyle did not care; as long as the power was there, he welcomed it. He looked through blurry eyes as the world tinted red, slowly coming back into focus. Behind the cage, he could see two officers.

As the ringing in his ears began to subside, he started to hear their conversation, muted at first.

"This perp's going away for a long time," one said to the other.

"Heard he just got out, too. Sucks for him."

The police started laughing, and the grating sound cut right through Kyle's head. The cruiser sped down the highway, its lights on, and Kyle became more aware of his surroundings, started to realize where he was. He was on the same Route Nine, heading back toward prison, the place he'd spent the last fifteen years of his life. He was piecing together the night: that bar...that girl...he was

about to have his way with her when...something had happened. The little bitch had bit him.

Realization rushed through him like a wave. She had bit him.

Kyle tried to reach up and feel his neck—the two marks there were throbbing—but he was stopped; he realized his hands were cuffed behind his back.

Kyle moved his arms, and to his amazement, he broke the cuffs with no effort. He held up his wrists in wonder, looking at them, shocked by his own strength. Had the cuffs malfunctioned? He looked at them dangling before him, and wondered: How could he have done that?

Kyle reached up and felt the two lumps on his neck, and they burned, as if the bite had entered his veins. He sat there, looking at the dangling cuffs, and he wondered: Did vampires exist? Was it possible?

Kyle grinned wide. It was time to find out.

Kyle took the dangling cuffs and tapped them against the cage before him.

The two cops turned and looked back, and this time they weren't laughing; now, their faces bore looks of shock. Kyle's hands were free, his cuffs broken, and he dangled them there, grinning, as he continued to tap on the cage.

"Holy shit," one officer said to the other. "Didn't you cuff him, Bill?"

"I did. I'm sure of it. I cuffed him tighter than hell."

"Not tight enough," Kyle growled.

One cop reached for his gun, and the other went to slam on the brakes.

But not fast enough. With incredible speed, Kyle reached out, tore the metal grate off as if it were a toothpick, and dove into the front seat.

Kyle lunged onto the cop in the passenger seat, smacked the gun from his hands, and reached back and elbowed him so hard, he snapped the cop's neck.