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# The UNEXPECTED Everything



Morgan Matson  
author of *Since You've Been Gone*

*The* **UNEXPECTED** *Everything*



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*Everything*



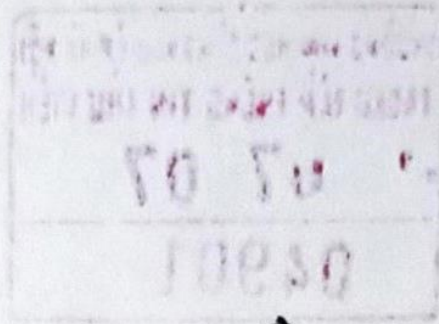
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*Morgan Matson*

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The Elder looked across to Tamsin in the firelight. "Pay close attention when people tell you stories," he said. "At their core, every story you've ever heard comes down to two things. *Someone goes on a long journey or a stranger comes to town.*"

Tamsin considered this as the fire crackled. "But can't it sometimes be both?"

The Elder looked at her for a long moment, like he was seeing something she was not. "Yes," he finally said, his voice grave. "Very occasionally, it can."

—C. B. McCallister, *A Murder of Crows*. Hightower & Jax, New York.

# Chapter ONE

I flexed my feet in my too-tight shoes and made myself stand up straight, trying to ignore the rapid-fire clicking of the cameras going off all around me. It was still really hot out—despite the fact it was getting close to five—but I was wearing a knee-length tweed skirt and a white button-down shirt. My hair had been blown out and curled, and I was wearing pearl earrings and a light application of makeup. It was not the way I would normally have looked on a Wednesday afternoon in early June, but this was anything but an ordinary Wednesday.

“Thank you all so much for coming today,” my father said from behind the podium that was currently in the middle of our front porch. He shuffled his papers for a second before taking a deep breath and going into his prepared speech, the one I now knew by heart, since Peter Wright, his chief of staff and main strategist, had made me listen to it over and over until I could do so with absolutely no change in my expression, like all of this was old news to me by now, and nothing my dad was saying would catch me by surprise.

For a moment, as the now-familiar words started to wash over me, I just blinked at the podium. Where exactly had it come from?



## Chapter TWO

“Okay,” I heard Palmer say as the car slowed down and then turned left. “We’re almost there. Andie, how you doing?”

“Um,” I said from where I was lying between the seats on Palmer’s minivan’s floor, under a blanket that seemed to be covered in equal parts dust and cat hair, “I’ve been better.”

“Just a little bit longer,” Bri said from above me as what felt suspiciously like a foot patted my shoulder.

“Better safe than sorry,” I heard Toby say, with the blithe assurance of someone who wasn’t currently trying not to breathe through her nose.

“Toby, do I make a right?” I heard Palmer ask, as the car slowed and then stopped.

“To get to Ardmore?” I piped up from beneath the blanket, then sneezed twice. “It’s a left, then another right.”

“How can you know that?” A corner of my blanket lifted up, and there was Bri—a piece of her, at least, just wide brown eyes and side-swept bangs. “You can’t see anything.”

“She’s making it up,” Toby said confidently as the blanket dropped again.

## Chapter TWENTY

I took a sip of my latte and looked across the table at Flask's. I'd switched to hot lattes at the end of September, when it officially got too cold for iced drinks, and now that we were getting close to Halloween, the leaves outside the coffee shop window had all turned color and started to cover the ground. "How are you not done yet?" I asked, shaking my head.

Toby glanced up from where she was currently doctoring her caramel pumpkin latte with sugar packets and cinnamon sprinkles, as she had been doing for, I was pretty sure, the last twenty minutes.

"You can't rush these things," she said, dropping in a very precise amount of sugar, giving it a stir, tasting it, then nodding and looking back at me. "Perfect. What were we talking about?"

"I don't know. It was ten years ago, and I've forgotten." I looked automatically to the chair next to Toby—the one that was sitting empty. This was when Bri would have chimed in, defending Toby or making a joke. But silence just fell between us, and we both took a sip of our drinks in unison.

"So," she said, before the pause could grow uncomfortable. "How's it going with the DMV thing?"