



book #1 in the  
vampire journals

turned

morgan rice

# turned

(book #1 in the vampire journals)

morgan rice

## SELECT ACCLAIM FOR TURNED

"TURNED is an ideal story for young readers. Morgan Rice did a good job spinning an interesting twist on what could have been a typical vampire tale. Refreshing and unique, TURNED has the classic elements found in many Young Adult paranormal stories. Book # 1 of the Vampire Journals Series focuses around one girl...one extraordinary girl!...TURNED is easy to read but extremely fast-paced....Recommended for anyone who likes to read soft paranormal romances. Rated PG."

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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, Portugese, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Dutch, Turkish, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak (with more languages forthcoming).

Morgan loves to hear from you, so please feel free to visit [www.morganricebooks.com](http://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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THE SORCERER'S RING



THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY



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“Is it physical  
To walk unbraced and suck up the humors  
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,  
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed  
To dare the vile contagion of the night?”

--William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

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## Chapter One

Caitlin Paine always dreaded her first day at a new school. There were the big things, like meeting new friends, the new teachers, learning new hallways. And there were the small things, like getting a new locker, the smell of a new place, the sounds it made. More than anything, she dreaded the stares. She felt that everyone in a new place always stared at her. All she wanted was anonymity. But it never seemed meant to be.

Caitlin couldn't understand why she was so conspicuous. At five foot five she wasn't especially tall, and with her brown hair and brown eyes (and normal weight) she felt she was average. Certainly not beautiful, like some of the other girls. At 18, she was a bit older, but not enough to make her stand out.

There was something else. There was something about her that made people look twice. She knew, deep down, that she was different. But she wasn't exactly sure how.

If there was anything worse than a first day, it was starting in mid-term, after everyone else already had time to bond. Today, this first day, in mid-March, was going to be one of the worst. She could feel it already.

In her wildest imagination, though, she never thought it would be *this* bad. Nothing she had ever seen—and she had seen a lot—had prepared her for this.

Caitlin stood outside her new school, a vast New York City public school, in the freezing March morning, and wondered, *Why me?* She was way underdressed, in just a sweater and leggings, and not even remotely prepared for the noisy chaos that greeted her. Hundreds of kids stood there, clamoring, screaming, and shoving each other. It looked like a prison yard.

It was all too loud. These kids laughed too loud, cursed too much, shoved each other too hard. She would have thought it was a massive brawl if she didn't spot some smiles and mocking laughter. They just had too much energy, and she, exhausted, freezing, sleep-deprived, couldn't understand where it came from. She closed her eyes and wished it would all go away.

She reached into her pockets and felt something: her ipod. *Yes.* She put her headphones in her ears and turned it up. She needed to drown it all out.

But nothing came. She looked down and saw the battery was dead. *Perfect.*

She checked her phone, hoping for some distraction, anything. *No new messages.*

She looked up. Looking out at the sea of new faces, she felt alone. Not because she was the only white girl—she actually preferred that. Some of her closest friends at other schools had been black, Spanish, Asian, Indian—and some of her meanest frenemies had been white. No, that wasn't it. She felt alone because it was urban. She stood on concrete. A loud buzzer had rang to admit her into this “recreational area,” and she had had to pass through large, metal gates. Now she was boxed in—caged in by massive metal gates, topped by barbed-wire. She felt like she'd gone to prison.

Looking up at the massive school, bars and cages on all the windows, didn't make her feel any better. She always adapted to new schools easily, large and small—but they had all been in suburbia. They had all had grass, trees, sky. Here, there was nothing but city. She felt like she couldn't breathe. It terrified her.

Another loud buzzer sounded and she shuffled her way, with hundreds of kids, towards the entrance. She was jostled roughly by a large girl, and dropped her journal. She picked it up (messing up her hair), and then looked up to see if the girl would apologize. But she was nowhere to be seen, having already moved on in the swarm. She did hear laughter, but couldn't tell if it was directed at her.

She clutched her journal, the one thing that grounded her. It had been with her everywhere. She kept notes and drawings in every place she went. It was a roadmap of her childhood.

She finally reached the entrance, and had to squeeze in just to walk through. It was like entering a train at rush hour. She had hoped it would be warm once she got inside, but the open doors behind her kept a stiff breeze blowing down her back, making the cold even worse.

Two large security guards stood at the entrance, flanked by two New York City policemen, in full uniform, guns conspicuously at their side.

"KEEP MOVING!" commanded one of them.

She couldn't fathom why two armed policemen would have to guard a high school entrance. Her feeling of dread grew. It got much worse when she looked up and saw that she'd have to pass through a metal detector with airport-style security.

Four more armed policemen stood on either side of the detector, along with two more security guards.

"EMPTY YOUR POCKETS!" snapped a guard.

Caitlin noticed the other kids filling small plastic containers with items from their pockets. She quickly did the same, inserting her ipod, wallet, keys.

She shuffled through the detector, and the alarm shrieked.

"YOU!" snapped a guard. "Off to the side!"

*Of course.*

All the kids stared as she was made to raise her arms, and the guard ran the handheld scanner up and down her body.

"Are you wearing any jewelry?"

She felt her wrists, then her neckline, and suddenly remembered. Her cross.

"Take it off," snapped the guard.

It was the necklace her grandmother gave her before she passed, a small, silver cross, engraved with a description in Latin which she never had translated. Her grandmother told her it was passed down by her grandmother. Caitlin wasn't religious, and didn't really understand what it all meant, but she knew it was hundreds of years old, and it was by far the most valuable thing she owned.

Caitlin lifted it from her shirt, holding it up, but not taking it off.

"I'd rather not," she answered.

The guard stared at her, cold as ice.

Suddenly, a commotion broke out. There was shouting as a cop grabbed a tall, thin kid and shoved him against a wall, removing a small knife from his pocket.

The guard went to assist, and Caitlin took the opportunity to slip into the crowd moving its way down the hall.

*Welcome to New York public school, Caitlin thought. Great.*

She was already counting the days to graduation.

\*

The hallways were the widest she'd ever seen. She couldn't imagine that they could ever be filled, yet somehow they were completely packed, with all the kids crammed in shoulder to

shoulder. There must have been thousands of kids in these halls, the sea of faces stretching endlessly. The noise in here was even worse, bouncing off the walls, condensed. She wanted to cover her ears. But she didn't even have elbow space to raise her arms. She felt claustrophobic.

The bell rang, and the energy increased.

*Already late.*

She scanned her room card again and finally spotted the room in the distance. She tried to cut across the sea of bodies, but wasn't getting anywhere. Finally, after several attempts, she realized she just had to get aggressive. She started elbowing and jostling back. One body at a time, she cut through all the kids, across the wide hall, and pushed the heavy door open to her classroom.

She braced herself for all the looks as she, the new girl, walked in late. She imagined the teacher scolding her for interrupting a silent room. But she was shocked to discover that was not the case at all. This room, designed for 30 kids but holding 50, was packed. Some kids sat in their seats, and others walked the aisles, shouting and yelling at each other. It was mayhem.

The bell had rang five full minutes ago, yet the teacher, disheveled, wearing a rumpled suit, hadn't even started the class. He actually sat with his feet up on the desk, reading the paper, ignoring everyone.

Caitlin walked over to him and placed her new I.D. card on the desk. She stood there and waited for him to look up, but he never did.

She finally cleared her throat.

"Excuse me."

He reluctantly lowered his newspaper.

"I'm Caitlin Paine. I'm new. I think I'm supposed to give you this."

"I'm just a sub," he replied, and raised his paper, blocking her.

She stood there, confused.

"So," she asked, "...you don't take attendance?"

"Your teacher's back on Monday," he snapped. "He'll deal with it."

Realizing the conversation was over, Caitlin took back her I.D. card.

She turned and faced the room. The mayhem hadn't stopped. If there was any saving grace, at least she wasn't conspicuous. No one here seemed to care about her, or to even notice her at all.

On the other hand, scanning the packed room was nerve-wracking: there didn't seem like any place left to sit.

She steeled herself and, clutching her journal, walked tentatively down one of the aisles, flinching a few times as she walked between unruly kids screaming at each other. As she reached the back, she could finally see the entire room.

Not one empty seat.

She stood there, feeling like an idiot, and felt other kids starting to notice her. She didn't know what to do. She certainly wasn't going to stand there the entire period, and the substitute teacher didn't seem to care either way. She turned and looked again, scanning helplessly.

She heard laughter from a few aisles away, and felt sure it was directed at her. She didn't dress like these kids did, and she didn't look like them. Her cheeks flushed as she started to feel really conspicuous.

Just as she was getting ready to walk out of the class, and maybe even out of this school, she heard a voice.

"Here."

She turned.

In the last row, beside the window, a tall boy stood from his desk.

“Sit,” he said. “Please.”

The room quieted a bit as the others waited to see how she’d react.

She walked up to him. She tried not to look up into his eyes—large, glowing green eyes—but she couldn’t help it.

He was gorgeous. He had smooth, olive skin—she couldn’t tell if he was Black, Spanish, White, or some combination—but she had never seen such smooth and soft skin, complimenting a chiseled jaw line. His hair was short and brown, and he was thin. There was something about him, something so out of place here. He seemed fragile. An artist, maybe.

It was unlike her to be smitten by a guy. She’d seen her friends have crushes, but she’d never really understood. Until now.

“Where will *you* sit?” she asked.

She tried to control her voice, but it didn’t sound convincing. She hoped he couldn’t hear how nervous she was.

He smiled wide, revealing perfect teeth.

“Right over here,” he said, and moved to the large window sill, just a few feet away.

She looked at him, and he returned her stare, their eyes fully locking. She told herself to look away, but she couldn’t.

“Thanks,” she said, and was instantly mad at herself.

*Thanks? That’s all you could manage? Thanks!?*

“That’s right, Barack!” yelled a voice. “Give that nice white girl your seat!”

Laughter followed, and the noise in the room suddenly picked up again, as everyone ignored them once again.

Caitlin saw him lower his head, embarrassed.

“Barack?” she asked. “Is that your name?”

“No,” he answered, reddening. “That’s just what they call me. As in Obama. They think I look like him.”

She looked closely and realized that he *did* look like him.

“It’s because I’m half black, part white, and part Puerto Rican.”

“Well, I think that’s a compliment,” she said.

“Not the way *they* say it,” he answered.

She observed him as he sat on the window sill, his confidence deflated, and she could tell that he was sensitive. Vulnerable, even. He didn’t belong in this group of kids. It was crazy, but she almost felt protective of him.

“I’m Caitlin,” she said, reaching out her hand and looking him in the eye.

He looked up, surprised, and his smile returned.

“Jonah,” he answered.

He shook her hand firmly. A tingling sensation ran up her arm as she felt his smooth skin envelop her hand. She felt like she melted into him. He held her grip a second too long, and she couldn’t help smiling back.

\*

The rest of the morning was a blur, and Caitlin was hungry by the time she reached the cafeteria. She opened the double doors and was taken aback by the enormous room, the incredible noise of what seemed like a thousand kids, all screaming. It was like entering a gymnasium. Except that every twenty feet there stood another security guard, in the aisles, watching carefully.

As usual, she had no idea where to go. She searched the huge room, and finally found a stack of trays. She took one, and entered what she thought was the food line.

“Don’t you cut me, bitch!”

Caitlin turned and saw a large, overweight girl, half a foot taller than her, scowling down.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know—”

“Line’s back there!” snapped another girl, pointing with her thumb.

Caitlin looked and saw that the line stretched back at least a hundred kids. It looked like a twenty minute wait.

As she started heading to the back of the line, a kid on the line shoved another one, and he went flying in front of her, hitting the ground hard.

The first kid jumped on top of the other and started punching him in the face.

The cafeteria erupted in a roar of excitement, as dozens of kids gathered around.

“FIGHT! FIGHT!”

Caitlin took several steps back, watching in horror at the violent scene at her feet.

Four security guards finally came over and broke it up, separating the two bloody kids and carting them off. They didn’t seem to be in any hurry.

After Caitlin finally got her food, she scanned the room, hoping for a sign of Jonah. But he was nowhere in sight.

She walked down the aisles, passing table after table, all packed with kids. There were few free seats, and the ones that were free didn’t seem that inviting, adjacent to large cliques of friends.

Finally, she took a seat at an empty table towards the back. There was just one kid at the far end of it, a short, frail Chinese boy with braces, poorly dressed, who kept his head lowered and focused on his food.

She felt alone. She looked down and checked her phone. There were a few Facebook messages from her friends from her last town. They wanted to know how she liked her new place. Somehow, she didn’t feel like answering. They felt so far away.

Caitlin barely ate, a vague feeling of first-day nausea still with her. She tried to change her train of thought. She closed her eyes. She thought of her new apartment, a fifth floor walkup in a filthy building on 132<sup>nd</sup> street. Her nausea worsened. She breathed deeply, willing herself to focus on something, anything good in her life.

Her little brother. Sam. 14 going on 20. Sam never seemed to remember that he was the youngest: he always acted like her older brother. He’d grown tough and hardened from all the moving around, from their Dad’s leaving, from the way their Mom treated them both. She could see it was getting to him and could see that he was starting to close himself off. His frequent school fights didn’t surprise her. She feared it would only get worse.

But when it came to Caitlin, Sam absolutely loved her. And she him. He was the only constant in her life, the only one she could rely on. He seemed to retain his one soft spot left in the world for her. She was determined to do her best to protect him.

“Caitlin?”

She jumped.

Standing over her, tray in one hand and violin case in the other, was Jonah.

“Mind if I join you?”

“Yes—I mean no,” she said, flustered.

*Idiot, she thought. Stop acting so nervous.*

Jonah flashed that smile of his, then sat across from her. He sat erect, with perfect posture, and put his violin down carefully beside him. He gently laid out his food. There was something about him, something she couldn't quite place. He was different than anyone she'd ever met. It was like he was from a different era. He definitely did not belong in this place.

"How's your first day?" he asked.

"Not what I expected."

"I know what you mean," he said.

"Is that a violin?"

She nodded to his instrument. He kept it close, and kept one hand resting on it, as if afraid someone might steal it.

"It's a viola, actually. It's just a little bigger, but it's a much different sound. More mellow."

She'd never seen a viola, and hoped that he'd put it on the table and show her. But he didn't make a move to, and she didn't want to pry. He was still resting his hand on it, and he seemed protective of it, like it was personal and private.

"Do you practice a lot?"

Jonah shrugged. "A few hours a day," he said casually.

"A few *hours*!? You must be great!"

He shrugged again. "I'm OK, I guess. There are a lot of players much better than me. But I am hoping it's my ticket out of this place."

"I always wanted to play the piano," Caitlin said.

"Why don't you?"

She was going to say, *I never had one*, but stopped herself. Instead, she shrugged and looked back down at her food.

"You don't need to own a piano," Jonah said.

She looked up, startled that he'd read her mind.

"There's a rehearsal room in this school. For all the bad here, at least there's some good. They'll give you lessons for free. All you have to do is sign up."

Caitlin's eyes widened.

"Really?"

"There's a signup sheet outside the music room. Ask for Mrs. Lennox. Tell her you're my friend."

*Friend.* Caitlin liked the sound of that word. She slowly felt a happiness welling up inside of her.

She smiled wide. Their eyes locked for a moment.

Staring back into his glowing, green eyes, she burned with a desire to ask him a million questions: *Do you have a girlfriend? Why are you being so nice? Do you really like me?*

But, instead, she bit her tongue and said nothing.

Afraid that their time together would run out soon, she scanned her brain for something to ask him that would prolong their conversation. She tried to think of something that would assure her that she'd see him again. But she got nervous and froze up.

She finally opened her mouth, and just as she did, the bell rang.

The room erupted into noise and motion, and Jonah stood, grabbing his viola.

"I'm late," he said, gathering his tray.

He looked over at her tray. "Can I take yours?"

She looked down, realizing she'd forgotten it, and shook her head.

"OK," he said.



He stood there, suddenly shy, not knowing what to say.

“Well...see you.”

“See you,” she answered lamely, her voice barely above a whisper.

\*

Her first school day over, Caitlin exited the building into the sunny, March afternoon. Although a strong breeze was blowing, she didn't feel cold anymore. Although all the kids around her were screaming as they streamed out, she was no longer bothered by the noise. She felt alive, and free. The rest of the day had gone by in a blur; she couldn't even remember the name of a single new teacher.

She could not stop thinking about Jonah.

She wondered if she had acted like an idiot in the cafeteria. She had stumbled over her words; she barely even asked him any questions. All she could think of to ask him was about that stupid viola. She should have asked where he lived, where he was from, where he was applying to college.

Most of all, if he had a girlfriend. Someone like him had to be dating someone.

Just at that moment, a pretty, well-dressed Hispanic girl brushed by Caitlin. Caitlin looked her up and down as she passed, and wondered for a second if it was her.

Caitlin turned down 134<sup>th</sup> street, and for a second, forgot where she was going. She'd never walked home from school before, and for a moment, she blanked on where her new apartment was. She stood there on the corner, disoriented. A cloud covered the sun and a strong wind picked up, and she suddenly felt cold again.

“Hey, *amiga!*”

Caitlin turned, and realized she was standing in front of a filthy, corner bodega. Four seedy men sat in plastic chairs before it, seemingly oblivious to the cold, grinning at her as if she were their next meal.

“Come over here, baby!” yelled another.

She remembered.

*132<sup>nd</sup> street. That's it.*

She quickly turned and walked at a brisk pace down another side street. She checked over her shoulder a few times to see if those men were following her. Luckily, they weren't.

The cold wind stung her cheeks and woke her up, as the harsh reality of her new neighborhood started to sink in. She looked around at the abandoned cars, the graffitied walls, the barbed-wire, the bars on all the windows, and she suddenly felt very alone. And very afraid.

It was only 3 more blocks to her apartment, but it felt like a lifetime away. She wished she had a friend at her side—even better, Jonah—and she wondered if she could manage this walk alone every day. Once again, she felt angry at her Mom. How could she keep moving her, keep putting her in new places that she hated? When would it ever end?

Broken glass.

Caitlin's heart beat faster as she saw some activity up on the left, on the other side of the street. She walked quickly and tried to keep her head down, but as she got closer, she heard yells and grotesque laughter, and she couldn't help but notice what was going on.

Four huge kids—18 or 19, maybe—stood standing over another kid. Two of them held his arms, while the third stepped in and punched him in the gut, and the fourth stepped up and punched him in the face. The kid, maybe 17, tall, thin and defenseless, fell to the ground. Two of the boys stepped up and kicked him in the face.

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