

M. RANDOLPH MASON

## ROWBOAT

2006

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### Excerpt from Chapter One

***“Morgan!*** Come away from that window!” Her boss demanded from a safe distance.  
“Get away from there!”

Morgan ignored her.

His pupils became wider and wider as his eyes pleaded, bargained with her, from behind the steering wheel. Huge timber pilings and slabs of concrete, fallen from the cantilevered overhead, crushed and confined him in the miraculously remaining driver’s seat of his Jeep. There was no problem identifying what kind of vehicle it had been, the burnished silver letters were barely three inches from the plate glass.

She inched closer.

***“God, Morgan! Get back!”***

She ignored their screamed directives from the safety of their huddle at the far distant wall of the bank. Morgan reached out to touch the glass. His blue-grey eyes followed her. She put her hands, fingers spread, on the surface of the glass. She glued her eyes to his. She did not let him down.

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The rescue squad and fire department arrived within minutes. From the street, the wreckage was an impenetrable mass of concrete, crumpled vehicles, and the narrow ends of sticky black pilings which jabbed out in a splayed abatis. The pile of wreckage was half under the overhang of the upper stories of the bank building. And, sheet flowing from under the jumble, was a mixture of gasoline and diesel fuel.

Immediately the firemen foamed the bottom of the pile. As evacuation of the bank had become a high priority, the building occupants hurried out as the fire and rescue squad personnel pushed in to examine the wreckage from inside.

There, they came upon Morgan Irene Prescott, bank teller, with her hands against the glass, watching over the unconscious, imprisoned, and certainly gravely injured Hunter Blair. Gently, a fireman put his arms around Morgan and led her away to safety.

She turned her head to keep her eyes toward the face of her charge until he was out of her sight.

The rescue team looked through the plate glass with polarizing lenses. They could see no stress lines or fractures. There was no windshield remaining on the Jeep, so they could not simply break out the tall, heavy window. Carefully, they cut through the glass with a diamond saw, forming a continuous arc over the hood of the Jeep. Cutting away pilings and hand removing concrete debris, they reached the frame of the crumpled vehicle. It took the rescue squad a little more than an hour to get to Hunter, who was sitting unconscious in blood and incontinence... but still alive!

There were a total of seven fractures of both of his legs and two on his pelvis. The book fracture of his pelvis allowed encroachment to his internal organs, major blood vessels, and sciatic nerve.

After over fourteen hours of surgery by a crack team headed by Dr. Edward "Ed" Sykes, Hunter was placed in intensive care at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital.

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A City of Norfolk police cruiser pulled into the Prescott driveway on Richmond Crescent. Leaving the engine running, the huge police officer circled around the car and opened the passenger door for Morgan and then offered his hand to help her out of the car.

She responded, "Thank you officer, for bringing me home."

"No problem, Miss, but I think I will walk you to the door."

Morgan merely nodded and the two of them went up the stone walkway.

Morgan's house key, along with all of her keys, was in her purse under the teller counter at the bank. She rang the doorbell. Her father answered the door and upon seeing Morgan immediately wrapped his arms around her.

"Thank you for bringing her home. We heard about the wreck on the news. We called her cellphone but got no answer."

Morgan blurted out, "My purse is still in the building... and... and... he can't die... he just can't..." She turned her face into his shirt and began sobbing.

"What? Morgan, who can't die?"

The police officer excused himself, "Sir, I'll leave you two now. She's had a bad day, I think."

"Thank you officer." Will Prescott repeated.

Will shut the door and Morgan broke free, ran up the steps to her room, and flung herself onto her bed. She scrunched the white and floral patterned cotton bedspread in around herself like a nest. Some stuffed animals spilled off onto the floor and some rode the folds to gather around her. Morgan clamped her teeth down onto her left arm just above the wrist.

As Will took the staircase steps two at a time, he called out, "Irene! Irene, come to Morgan's room. *Irene!*"

He chased after Morgan, down the hall, and into her room. He could hear Irene bounding up the steps. Will dropped to his knees beside the bed and Irene sat on the edge.

***"Momma! Momma! He has to live. I promised him!"***

"Who has to live?"

"The man in the truck... the Jeep... he wrecked into the bank. He called out to me and I stayed with him. He begged me to save him and I said I would... He..."

She began to hyperventilate. Will stood and gently flipped his daughter onto her back. There was blood beneath her on the spread and on her soft, pink knit dress. It seeped from the nasty bite wound on her wrist... like all of the times before... scars upon scars. Irene snatched Kleenexes from the box on the nightstand and blotted the blood.

Irene gently brushed back her hair.

"Honey, I don't know what to say. We heard about it on the radio and then saw the report on the evening news. He's in the hospital and they haven't reported that he's died. We were more worried about you when you didn't come home."

"Momma, he's not gonna die! I promised to save him."

"Honey, on the news they said he was trapped in the vehicle for a long time. How could you talk to him?"

“He was right there... in the window of the bank. He saw me. We talked. He was afraid and he knew he was dying... but I told him he wouldn’t.”

She was gasping and rocking back and forth.

Will stood and said, “I’m calling Lorraine. I don’t know what to do.”

Morgan’s eyes shifted to him. “Help me! Help him. *Please!*”

Will went to the kitchen phone and called the number on the card pinned to the cork board.

“Doctor Lorraine Sykes’ office, may I help you?”

Answering service.

“Yes this is Will Prescott, father of Morgan Prescott. We have an emergency. Please ask Dr. Sykes to call our home as soon as possible.”

“Would you like me to page her?”

“Yes Please.” and he gave her his number. Within minutes, the phone rang.

“Hello, Will, this is Lorraine. What’s happened?”

“Lorraine, Morgan was in the bank building where the wreck was today. Through the bank window, she evidently saw the driver pinned in his truck. She thinks that they talked and she promised to save him. Irene is upstairs with her now. She’s distraught, she’s bitten herself again, and we don’t know what to do.”

“My husband, Ed, is head of the surgical team on that man. They have been in surgery for two hours now. It’s pretty bad... *but don’t tell that to Morgan.*”

“Morgan says she promised to save him.”

“Do you know that she is taking her Zolof?”

“No, I don’t know. She’s an adult and we try to treat her that way as long as she... you know... maintains.”

“Has she had any other delusions lately?”

“No. Not that we have noticed.”

“I assume that she still refuses to resume therapy.”

“Yes.”

“Well... Okay, clean up the bite and put Neosporin on it. Stay with her until she goes to sleep tonight. I don’t think she’ll hurt herself. Keep her away from the television... unless you can watch a rental movie. Don’t let her get near the hospital until I ask Ed about the accident victim. I’ll call you when I know.”

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Ed stood alone in the room with his unconscious patient.

*“Why am I not talking to your family? Why are they not clustered around, holding your hand, and crying over your broken body? Son, your life hangs by a tiny thread and there’s no one here to care whether the thread breaks or holds. Where are they, Boy?”*