



Chasing Matisse: A Year in France Living My Dream

James Morgan

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Who hasn't had the fanthasy of leaving his or her old life behind to start over? What would happen if you gave up your job, city, state, and routine to move to another part of the world? Critically acclaimed writer and aspiring painter James Morgan does just that. Risking everything, he and his wife shed their old, settled life in a lovingly restored house in Little Rock, Arkansas, to travel in the footsteps of Morgan's hero, the painter Henri Matisse, and to find inspiration in Matisse's fierce struggle to live the life he knew he had to live. Part memoir, part travelogue, and part biography of Matisse, *Chasing Matisse* proves that you don't have to be wealthy to live the life you want; you just have to want it enough.

Morgan's riveting journey of self-discovery takes him, and us, from the earthy, brooding Picardy of Matisse's youth all the way to the luminous Nice of the painter's final years. In between, Morgan confronts, with the notebook of a journalist and the sketchpad of an artist, the places that Matisse himself saw and painted: bustling, romantic Paris; windswept Belle-île off the Brittany coast; Corsica, with its blazing southern light; the Pyrénees village of Collouire, where color became explosive in Matisse's hands; exotic Morocco, land of the secret interior life; and across the sybaritic French Riviera to spiritual Vence and the hillside Villa Le Rêve -- the Dream -- where the mature artist created so many of his masterpieces.

A journey from darkness to light, *Chasing Matisse* shows us how we can learn to see ourselves, others, and the world with fresh eyes. We look with Morgan out of some of the same windows through which Matisse himself found his subjects and take great heart from Matisse's indomitable, life-affirming spirit. For Matisse, living was an art, and he never stopped striving, never stopped creating, never stopped growing, never stopped reinventing himself. "The artist," he said, "must look at everything as though he were seeing it for the first time." That's the inspiring message of renewal that comes through on every page of *Chasing Matisse*. Funny, sad, and defiantly hopeful, this is a book that restores our faith in the possibility of dreams.



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