

*Companion Book for  
the Fallen series*

***By Lauren Kate***

***Made by Rachel Louise S***

A FALLEN NOVEL

BY THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
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I wrote the numbers for each chapter of how the story progresses in the Fallen series

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## *Daniel's Journal*

Golden, British Columbia March 21, 1992

Next time, I will have to give her up.

In this life we're already too far along. Our course is set. Our old disaster looms ahead. My pen quakes as I write these words:

I can't save her.

It has been one month since she found me at the bookstore. One month since she introduced herself—this time she goes by Lucy, which is so quaint it is beyond sweet—blushing as she tucked her hair behind her ear before she shook my hand. One month of taking that hand in mine each afternoon when she returns home from school.

I have cherished every inch of her. I have savored every pore of her soft skin and filled up too many sketchbooks with her hypnotizing eyes. Nothing is more bittersweet than this month of euphoria. It's the same with each life's love.

I'm a fool to savor it. Especially with the end so near.

Ages ago, Gabbe told me not to write this book. And there's a long list of reasons why she's right. I've been hunted for the things I wrote. Tried for heresy. I've gone mortal generations with a price on my head. Of course, right now the only reason that matters to me is this:

If I had never written *The Watchers: Myth in Medieval*

Europe, Lucinda wouldn't have stumbled across me restocking the shelves at the university library where her sister attends college. She never would have invited me to walk across the campus to meet Vera after class, never worked up the courage in those ten minutes to give me her phone number on the back of a drugstore receipt. We never would have ended up at her parents' house later that night. Never walked through the drifts of snow on the path behind their cabin, talking for hours, laughing as if we'd known each other for centuries.

We would never have fallen in love.

And she wouldn't be living her last days.

No. Even here, in these private pages, why do I continue to delude myself?

The truth?

Lucinda would have found me regardless of my stupid book. Just like she always does. She would have tracked me down and followed me and lowered her defenses with a rapidity she never understands. She would still have fallen in love. For the thousandth and the first time in her life.

And why not? It's not torture for her . . . until the end.

It means it's up to me to make the change.

Because, as Heaven is my witness, I can't go on like this. The agony of one more loss will overwhelm me. Drive me mad. Having to watch her walk once more into the blaze of knowing—

I can't.

Let these pages serve as a record: If it takes seventeen years to purge her from my soul—and I know it will—I'll do it. The addiction will fade away. The pain of withdrawal has to ease.

Is it even possible? That someday love will loosen its grip on me? Until she's only a memory, not a drug I have to have? It's too hard to imagine, and it's the only option I have left.

If I can do that for her, Lucinda will live a long and healthy life. She'll do something she's never done before: She'll die old. She will love and blossom and find happiness. All these things she's never known before. All without me.

It's too late now, but it won't always be. I have already begun the preparations for our next encounter seventeen years down the road.

How to save her. How to pull away.

Yesterday, I went to a meeting.

There was a flyer on the bus stop at the corner of Grand and Calgary: Twelve Steps to Overcoming Your Addiction. I was strung out and jittery after five hours of not seeing her. Five hours. It was all I could do to wait for her to get home from school so I could take her in my arms and—

Hold back. Because I always have to hold myself back. The moments when I haven't have been the moments when she died. As soon as I kissed her, as soon as I did what I felt I was made to do, she was taken away from me.

Love. Vanishing. Into thin air.

I know all of this so well, but it has never gotten easier to control.

So I memorized the address on the flyer. I got on the bus and I traveled some distance and I got off. I walked into the dim, low-ceilinged room in the annex of a church. I sat on a hard folding chair in a small circle of grim-faced strangers. When it was my turn, I stood up. I cleared my throat and tried to ignore the burning itch of my wings when I said, Hello, my name is Daniel, and I am an addict.

They nodded and recognized me. They said: Tell us about your greatest high.

The other day. For example. I went further than usual with my drug of choice. A walk in the woods, that's all. Snow falling, sun burning through the trees, and her. I'll wager no one has ever felt more alive. It was like I couldn't get enough. I knew that it could have turned ugly—I knew I was dancing with an overdose. But one tempting kiss was just so beautiful. The truth is, every time is exactly as intoxicating. Every moment surpasses metaphor.

They said: Now describe rock bottom.

Emptiness. Raw and consuming. From the first instant I run out until the instant I get my hands on more. An absolute vacuum ripping through my body, pulling out anything vital I contained. Weight where there should be weightlessness. A withdrawal worse than Hell.

Then they said: So is it worth it?

And I fell silent because it is all there is and no, it isn't worth



it.

And those bastards looked at me as if they got it.

It's said in some circles that I have delusions of grandeur, but that is not the case. I recognized myself in all those sad souls around me at the meeting. My lost, forlorn expression mirrored each of theirs. Their skin was yellow and they smelled like Hell and their eyes were sunken with a kind of weak surrender. And every one of them was telling me it gets easier.

Easier.

Not for me.

It wasn't going to work. They spoke of romance with nostalgia, and in a way, I envy that. But the thing about these meetings is that their motto—their whole one day at a time approach—does not apply to me.

One day at a time for sixty more years is a drop in the bucket compared to what I'm looking at. An eternity of days without the one thing that completes me. A gaping emptiness without compare.

There was also the problem of God.

They said: Let Him restore you to sanity. Turn yourself over to Him.

And their faces—all that blatant disappointment—when I told them, frankly, that this is one trial God just isn't going to help me through. I knew what they were thinking: In time, with a few more meetings and some straight, sober perspective, I'd

surely come around. I wish I could.

On the bright side, I walked out of the meeting understanding one thing more clearly than I ever had before: My addiction is not killing me. I'm the toxic thing that's killing her.

I stepped into the shadows behind the church, let my wings slip forth, and opened them wide.

I had never felt so powerless. Even as I flew away, into the snow-white sky, above the blizzard they'd been expecting for days. My wings can't save me. My nature can't save me. It's my soul that has work to do. I must close its heavy door on her.

Next life.

This life, I've already gone too far. There'll be no stopping it now.

It's beginning to snow again and I must sign off. There's a skating party at Lucy's house tonight. Vera invited all her friends, and I promised I would go.

This is it.

I'll show up. I'll know what's coming. And I'll love her right up until the very last moment. This will be the last Lucinda who ever dies at my hands.

Next time, I will give her up.

Daniel Grigori





FALLEN



## *Before the Fire*

Luce had an oil smear across her cheek and a gloppy brown stain near the hem of her T-shirt. Her white tennis shoes had turned a scuffed, scummy shade of gray. But she didn't care; she hardly noticed. Getting up close and personal with a 1967 Alfa Romeo was a huge perk of her after-school job. Luce was in the zone.

She got a kind of Christmas-morning feeling when one of the few old cars in town rolled into the shop. The snug little Fiat convertible or the sputtering boatlike Chevy Impala. So much cooler than the pristine late-model Mustangs and 4Runners. Those were the jobs Luce dreaded: The ones whose insides looked more like computers than cars. The ones most likely to be brought in by one of the rich prep school kids enrolled with her at Dover.

And that sucked.

The boys from her precalc class ogled her in her grease-stained cut-offs, their expressions making her feel even dirtier than she already was. The girls who had the row of lockers across from hers all came into the shop together, looking so pristine and made-up with their lip gloss and mascara. They'd drop off their BMWs, then trot over to Jake's for cigarettes while they waited. They didn't stare at Luce the way the boys did. They didn't see her at all.

But it was a small price to pay to get her hands on a couple of classic cars. Like the one she was working on today. Sure, the Alfa was a little rough around the edges.

Its transmission had already been replaced twice and looked like it would need to be again. The air filter was on a fast track to corroded. Windows didn't roll up. But it was forty-plus years old. It must have been places and seen things Luce couldn't even imagine. It had history and dignity, stories that could outshine anything the fancy new cars her classmates drove around would probably ever experience.

Feeling a crick in her elbow and a deep sense of satisfaction, Luce tightened the drain plug on the Alfa's cruddy oil pan, then wheeled herself out from under the car.

"You're here late."

The voice surprised her, though she didn't know why it should. Mr. Pisani, Luce's boss, practically lived in his shop. Actually, he *did* live upstairs, with his wife and three sons, in the apartment above the shop, but in the three years Luce had been working for him, trying to make some extra cash for spending money at Dover, she'd never even seen him go up there.

"I was just finishing," Luce said, propping herself up on her elbows on the creeper.

Mr. Pisani extended his hand to help her up. His grip was strong, his forearm tan and burly. Even when his hands were freshly scrubbed, they still had grime in the creases. "Gonna miss your mug around here this summer. The boys. Me too."

Luce felt the corners of her mouth pull up. For Mr. P., this was a *lot* of emotion. "I'll be back in the fall," she said, grabbing the least-dirty rag on the sawhorse table to wipe her hands. "If it were up to me, I'd stick around here all summer. But my parents want me back home. They miss me during the year."

A series of thuds, followed by a few Italian expletives, sounded from the other side of the shop. Through the

interior windows, Luce could see Mr. Pisani's three sons wrestling each other in the lobby.

"Imagine that," Mr. Pisani said, eyeing the window; his sons had disappeared from sight. He grimaced when he heard a loud, metallic crash. "Maybe your parents want a few more to miss during the year. Take these *briccones* down to Georgia with you this summer."

Luce laughed. As the only child of two hard-to-rile-up parents, she found it tough to imagine the Pisani sons wrestling in her tranquil living room. Her parents had never had to deal with a horde of rambunctious boys. They had to deal with Luce, and the quieter, darker things that came with raising her.

Mr. Pisani patted her back and headed toward the lobby. "Don't leave before saying goodbye, you hear? I'll be in the office. Got receipts up to my ears."

"Okay." Luce gathered her few things from her cubby, pulling her sweatshirt out of her bag and tugging it on. Her phone was in the front middle pocket. It was blinking. A text from Callie with directions to Rachel Allison's end-of-the-year party down by the lake. Luce didn't want to go. She'd never been to one of Rachel's parties, but she imagined they were even more unbearable than the Monday-morning rumors always made them sound:

*Rachel and Trevor broke up mid-hors d'oeuvres.*

*Rachel and Trevor were caught making up in the bedroom of her father's sailboat.*

*Collin and Eli had a puking contest in the lake.*

"But it's the last night of the year," Callie had pleaded from the shower stall next to Luce's in the dorm bathroom that morning. "We gotta have a little fun." Rubbing the shampoo from her eyes, Luce had sputtered, "Precisely why we should *not* go to some lame prep school party."

“Oh, come on. You-know-who will be there,” Callie sang. “Starts with a TR- and ends with your-obsession for—*ever!*”

Trevor Beckman. He had not been her obsession forever. Just the five hundred and forty days she’d been at this school. She couldn’t help it. Didn’t try to. Really tall and muscular, with that amazing sandy-colored hair, Trevor was by far the hottest thing at Dover.

For the first few months of class—when Luce still had the drag of going to see Dr. Sanford, her shrink at Shady Hollows, three and sometimes four times a week after school—it would totally brighten her day just to see Trevor’s smile in the hallway. Not even smiling *at* her. That had only happened a handful of times, and usually made her more nervous than anything else.

No, she liked just seeing him smile from across the room, the way his eyes really seemed to twinkle. Like a dark thought had never crossed his gorgeous face.

Alone in the garage, Luce slipped her phone back into her bag, and Callie’s text to the back of her mind. She could barely ask Trevor to pass the scalpel during biology. Like she was going to be able to talk to him in the middle of his girlfriend’s party.

She was comfortable here, in the shop, with the Pisanis. Which was funny, because before she’d moved to New Hampshire to go to this school (to go to this therapist, really), Luce’d had less than no interest in cars. Sure, she’d hoped for one when she turned sixteen, but that was just to get away—any old thing would have done. Before she started working here, an oil change meant washing her hair for the first time in a few days. But now, sometimes this grimy garage felt more like home than anyplace else Luce knew.

She missed her parents, of course, but things were hard with them. Their whole home seemed to sag under



the weight of Luce's "struggles." Their phrase, not hers. A phrase so vague Luce took it to mean her parents really didn't want to know any of the details.

Maybe that wasn't the case. Maybe they *cared*. Okay, she knew they cared. But it was care wrapped up so tightly with worry that it was impossible to talk about anything with her folks without Luce feeling like she was crazy. Sometimes it seemed like the only thing salvaging their relationship was the fact that she was away at boarding school for most of the year. When she was home, it was painfully obvious how much her parents worried about her.

And she didn't have to deal with things like that at Mr. P.'s.

Just the three boys: Dominick, the shy youngest son who treated her like a princess; Frankie, the middle, always-in-and-out-of-love-with-an-older-woman son, who used Luce as his personal diary; and Joe, the oldest, who was as protective of her as the kid sister he'd never had. Luce loved them, all of them. She'd always wanted brothers. She loved Mr. Pisani, too, though he was nothing like her dad. Gruff and salty, but always teasing, Mr. Pisani and his sons made her feel comfortable. *Normal*, even. Luce didn't like to think it was just because they hadn't seen a certain side of her.

She shut off the lights in the garage and walked through the empty lobby to Mr. Pisani's office. Time to say goodbye. She felt weird and sad, a little bit lonely, and something else she couldn't quite name. All day the feeling had been nagging at her. She'd been extra-conscious of the shadows in the shop, but so far, nothing out of the ordinary. Probably just nerves about leaving.

Leaving.

Why hadn't she realized it? Luce was all the way to the door of Mr. Pisani's office when she remembered: the



ritualistic summer send-off gift. The Pisanis did it every year. She groaned—but it was the kind of groan people made when they felt flattered, like a guy at a karaoke parlor who obliges all his friends begging him to sing one more song. Luce was smiling when she knocked on the door.

Sure enough, Mr. Pisani and his sons were all waiting for her in the office. No receipts up to anyone's ears. Just Frankie, popping out from behind the door with a greasy rag to use as a blindfold.

"You guys." Luce laughed. "You do not have to do this every year. I'll be back in three months. I'll—"

"Shhh," all of them scolded her at once. Giggling and arguing among themselves in Italian, like they did every year, they tied the makeshift blindfold over her eyes—like they did every year—and led her to the back room for her annual surprise. When Luce said she'd know her way around Pisani's shop blindfolded, she wasn't kidding. Experience had taught her not to expect too much.

As sweet as the Pisani men were, they weren't exactly skilled in the art of gift giving.

Her freshman year, they'd given her the world's gaudiest pair of clip-on earrings—lifted no doubt from Mrs.

Pisani's trunk of costume jewelry: purple silk flowers the size of golf balls, with a cluster of dull jewels hanging by a silver thread. She'd considered pawning them off—there was a really tacky consignment shop down the street from her parents' house—but when she got close to doing it, she found she couldn't part with the unsightly things.

Her sophomore year, the Pisanis gave her an oversized mauve scarf knit by Grandma Pisani herself. Luce had actually worn it a few times, once it got cold again, until Collin Marks told her in biology that the scarf was the same color as the fetal pig they were dissecting. Since

Collin was friends with Trevor, and Trevor had laughed (just a little, under his breath), that was all it took to banish the scarf to the nether regions of her closet.

“Drumroll, please,” Dominick said in his soft accent now. They’d steered Luce to the doorway of the back room. Dutifully, she beat her palms against her thighs. “Well, what do you think?” Mr. Pisani asked before they’d even fully untied the blindfold.

To most people, the sight before them would have looked like a heap of junk. Rusted metal, peeling paint, an exhaust pipe lying severed on the ground. But Luce saw the beauty in its potential.

This was a black 1989 Honda Triumph, beat to hell, but she’d seen Joe resurrect worse from the junkyard. She’d been drooling all year over the latest bike he’d fixed up.

“No. Way,” she gasped, falling on her knees before the old bike. “No way no way no way!”

“Way,” the Pisanis all said together, sounding pleased.

“You like it?” Dominick asked, showing white teeth behind his engine-grease-stained face. “I mean, it needs a little work—”

“A little?” Mr. Pisani snorted.

“Pop,” Dominick said. “I told you I’m gonna fix it up this summer while she’s gone.”

“Put a little hair on his chest,” Mr. P. muttered to Luce.

Luce looked at Dominick, who dropped his head just a second too late to avoid being caught blushing.

“I can’t accept this,” she said, immediately wishing she’d resisted her annoying tendency to be polite and just shouted “Yes!”

“You can,” Mr. Pisani said softly. “You will. Come September, she’ll be so beautiful you won’t be able to resist.”

Luce ran her hand over the bike's faded black seat. Rain and time had split it down the center, and the foam core was busting out a little. But it gave the whole bike a cool, weathered look that Luce adored immediately and completely.

"It's perfect," she said, hopping on. "I couldn't love anything more."

"A girl like you needs a fast pair of wheels to fend off all those boys, eh?" Mr. Pisani grunted. "Are you staying for dinner or what? I smell Bolognese upstairs."

"I can't, I—"

"She's a beautiful young girl, Pop," Joe said. "What would she wanna hang around here all night for?" He turned to Luce, who actually would have loved to stay. But she'd already accepted too much from the Pisanis.

"Come on," Joe said. "I'll walk you out."

She hugged the rest of them and promised to call, and then Joe was following her out the front door. It was dusk and getting chilly. Luce was about to stick her hands in her pockets for warmth when Joe slipped a key into her palm.

"What's this?" she asked.

But she knew. His bike. His golden 1986 Honda Shadow.

"I heard there's some party tonight." Joe smiled.

"Don't you need a ride out to the lake?" Then he tousled her hair and disappeared inside the shop before she could respond.

Her cell phone was buzzing again. Probably more persuasion from Callie about the party. Luce was alone in the quiet summer night, the key growing warm inside her fist. There was the feeling again. A strange tremor inside her, anxiety shifting slowly into something else.

She knew then that she was going to this party. She knew something was about to happen. Something big and

important and unavoidable. Something hard to parse. She just didn't know whether that something was going to be good or bad.

She headed toward the bike, jingling the keys in her hand. For a brief second before gunning the engine, she thought about finding Trevor at the party and asking him to go for a ride.

FALLEN



## *What Happened to Trevor*

Luce eased the motorcycle to a stop in front of the lake house.

She was in love. With the bike: It was a gold 1986 Honda Shadow, and it was beautiful.

Her classmate mad Rachel Allison, with her dyed red hair and immaculate French, had grown up and still lived just a few miles north of their school, Dover Prep. So whenever Rachel's parents left town, most of their class, the in crowd, at least? turned out for the inevitable party.

This was Luce's first time.

When she'd clocked out after her shift at Pisani's Bike and Body Shop, Luce had

three texts from Callie: One with directions to the party.

Another to let Luce know

that Callie had borrowed her black flip-flops. And a third with a picture of Callie

sipping a mai tai aboard one of Rachel's speedboats.

But it was the voice mail? no, the voice in the background of the voice mail Callie

Left, that convinced Luce to make an appearance.

Trevor Beckman saying: Tell Luce to hurry up and get here.

He was easily the coolest guy in their class. The cutest, too.

Trevor was the

basketball team captain, the homecoming king, and Luce's



biology lab partner. He was also Rachel Allison's sometime boyfriend. And yet: He wanted Luce to hurry up and get there. Of course, Luce had a crush on Trevor. Who wouldn't have a crush on Trevor? Tall and strong and always laughing, with dark brown hair that matched his eyes? everything about the guy was crushable. But it was the kind of crush Luce never planned on actually doing anything about. She didn't go after guys. She never had. It drove Callie crazy, but Luce was perfectly comfortable admiring Trevor and his muscles from afar. Much more comfortable than she was going to be walking into this party. She cut the bike's engine and hopped off before anyone could see her and wonder how on earth she could afford a ride like that. Luce couldn't afford it. She had it on loan for one night from the bike shop, where she'd been working part-time for the past six semesters just to be able to afford "incidentals" at Dover. Her room and board were covered, embarrassingly, by the school's one and only scholarship. To preserve that scholarship, Luce had made it through three years of honors classes, keeping a straight-A average. Not to mention three years of keeping her weekly therapy sessions at Shady Pines a secret from everyone at school. She probably would have made it through three years without ever going to one of Rachel's famous parties if it hadn't been for Mr. Pisani's son. Joe was a few years



older than her. Sexy in a dark sort of way. He'd always looked out for Luce, ever since she started working at the shop. He also knew she coveted the bike he'd resurrected from a heap of scrap metal. Just before Luce left for the night, he slipped the key into her palm.

"What's this?"

"I heard there's some party tonight." He smiled. "Don't you need a ride out to the lake?"

At first, Luce shook her head. She couldn't possibly. But then?

In three days, she'd fly home to spend the summer with her parents in Thunderbolt,

Georgia, where things would be quiet and easy and comfortable. And boring. Three whole months of very, very boring.

"Have fun." Joe winked at Luce.

And then she rode off. The feeling of riding a motorcycle, of the wind coursing over her face, of the speed, the thrill of it all, was familiar and yet like nothing else in the world.

It made her feel like she was flying.

When she crossed the tiki-torch threshold of the party, Luce spotted Callie

standing near the water, surrounded by a circle of guys. She was wearing a red bikini top, Luce's flip-flops, and a long white sarong tied around her waist.

"Finally!" she squealed when she saw Luce. Callie's wet corkscrew curls bounced when she laughed. She must have just gone swimming, which Luce couldn't imagine

doing in the cold, black lake beyond them. Callie was the kind of fearless that always found her way into a good time. She pulled Luce close and whispered, "Guess who just had the most gigantic fight?" Trevor was walking toward them, holding a drink and wearing his basketball jersey and swim trunks. Behind him, a few feet away, Rachel's face was ablaze.

"Perfect timing," he said, smiling at Luce. His words came out a little slurred.

"Trevor!" Rachel bellowed. She looked very much like she wanted to trail after him, but she stood still, hands on her hips. "That's it. I'm telling the bartender you're cut off!"

Trevor stopped in front of Luce. "How 'bout a trip to the bar with me?"

Callie gave Luce's back a shove just before she disappeared, and Luce was alone with Trevor Beckman.

Maybe she should have changed out of her greasy white T-shirt and cutoffs before showing up. Luce tugged at the elastic band to release the long braid she wore to work. She could feel Trevor's eyes on her dark, wavy hair, which flowed halfway down her back. "A drink sounds good."

Trevor smiled, leading the way toward the bar.

In the middle of the lawn, Rachel had gathered her minions around her. When Luce walked by with Trevor, Rachel tilted her head up and sniffed the air. "What smells like a gas station?"

"Eau de working class," answered Rachel's number two.

Shawna Clip was just as mean as Rachel, but not as smart.

"Sorry," Trevor said, pulling Luce away. "They're such bitches."

Luce's cheeks grew warm. She wasn't affected by Rachel's insults, but it was embarrassing that Trevor thought she might be. He stared at her for a moment, then steered her right past the bar. "On second thought, Rachel's dad keeps the cabins stocked with booze, too." He grinned at her and nodded toward the woods, toward the place where the moonlit path led toward Lake Winnepesaukee. The tiki torches only went so far, and beyond that, there was just the big, black woods.

Luce faltered. The woods was one of the reasons she avoided these parties. For everyone else, the dark of night meant it was time to get crazy in a good way.

For Luce, it was when the shadows came out. The bad kind of crazy.

But this was her first time one-on-one with Trevor when they weren't holding a scalpel and breathing in formaldehyde. She was not going to blow it by being the freaky girl who couldn't go near the woods.

"Through there?" Luce swallowed.

He ran his thumb along her cheek. It made her shiver. "It's only dark until you get to the clearing, and I'll hold your hand the whole time."

It was as good an offer as anyone could make, but Luce would never be able to explain to Trevor why it wasn't really good enough. Why she felt like she was

walking into a nightmare she might not be able to wake up from. If the shadows were in there, they would find her. They would brush up against her like black sheets of ice. But she couldn't tell him that.

The dark closed in around them as they walked. Luce could feel murky things in the trees above their heads, could hear faint whooshes in the branches, but kept her eyes on the ground.

Until something pinched at her shoulder. Something cold and sharp that made her

Jump right into Trevor's arms.

"Nothing to be afraid of. See?"

Trevor started to turn her around, but Luce tugged on his hand. "Let's just get to the cabin."

When they made it to the clearing, the moon came mercifully back into sight. A neat little row of cabins stood before them.

Luce glanced at the woods but couldn't see the way back to the party. She thought she heard the whooshing shadow in the trees again.

"Race you," she said.

They took off toward the first cabin, Trevor close on her heels, until both of them collapsed at the door. They were laughing and out of breath.

Luce's heart raced from exertion and fear; and nervous anticipation about what they were doing so far away from everyone else.

Trevor reached into his pocket and pulled out a key.

The door creaked open and they stepped into the spare, clean cabin. There was a fireplace, a small kitchen, and a very prominently placed

king-sized bed. An hour ago, Luce never would have believed she'd be alone in a cabin with her crush of three whole years. She didn't do things like this. She'd never done anything like this in her life.

Trevor moved straight to the wet bar and started to pour something brown from a frosted glass bottle. When he handed her the small, half-full tumbler, she didn't even know enough not to take a giant swig.

"Whoa." He laughed when she gagged. "Finally, someone who needs a drink as badly as me."

If Luce hadn't still been reeling from the burning in her throat, she might have laughed and corrected his grammar, pointing out that what he meant to say was

"someone who needs a drink as badly as I," instead of what he had said? Which meant she needed a drink as badly as she needed . . . him.

He took her empty glass and wrapped an arm around her waist, drawing her so close that his body pressed up against hers. She could feel his muscular chest, the warmth of his skin.

"Rachel and I, we're all wrong, you know?"

Oh God. She was supposed to feel bad about this, wasn't she?

He was going to kiss

her and she was going to kiss him back and that would mean that her first kiss was

going to be with someone who had a girlfriend. A terrible witch of a girlfriend,

but still. Luce did know that Trevor and Rachel were all wrong, but suddenly she



also knew that Trevor was lying.

Because he didn't know that. He was only saying it so she'd fool around with him.

Because probably he knew she adored him. Probably he'd caught her watching him countless times over the years. He must have felt pretty certain that she wanted him.

She wanted him, yes, but until now it had always been in a far-off fantasy kind of way. Up close, she had no idea what to do with him.

Now his face hovered over hers and his lips weren't far away at all and his eyes looked different than they did in the yearbook picture Luce had gotten so used to.

And suddenly, she realized she didn't know him very well at all.

But she wanted to. At the very least, she wanted to know what it felt like to be

kissed, really kissed, pushed up against a wall and kissed intensely, until she was dizzy, until she was so filled up with passion that there wasn't any room for

shadows or dark woods or a visit to the sanitarium always hanging over her head.

"Luce? Are you okay?"

"Kiss me," she whispered.

It didn't feel quite right, but it was too late. Trevor's lips parted and came down

on hers. She opened her mouth but found it hard to kiss him back. Her tongue felt

all tied up. She was struggling in his arms as if in a dream, trying not to fight

the kiss, trying just to take it in and let it happen.

Trevor's arms wrapped around her waist, pulling her to the



bed. They sat down on the edge, still kissing. Her eyes were closed, but then she opened them. Trevor was staring directly at her.

"What?" she asked nervously.

"Nothing. You're just so . . . beautiful."

She didn't know what say to that, so she laughed.

Trevor started kissing her again, his lips wet against her mouth, then her neck.

She waited for the spark, for the fireworks Callie had told her about.

But everything about kissing was different than she'd expected. She wasn't sure how she felt about Trevor, his tongue on hers, his roving hands. But he seemed to know

a lot more about this than she did. She tried to go with it. She heard something and pulled away from Trevor to look around the room. "What was that?"

"What was what?" Trevor said, nibbling her earlobe.

Luce glanced at the paneled wooden walls, but they were empty of pictures or other decoration. She studied the fireplace, which was dark and still. For a second she thought she saw something; an ember, a flicker of yellow and red, but then it was gone.

"Are you sure we're alone?" she asked.

"Of course." Trevor's hands gripped the bottom of her shirt, inching it up and over her head. Before she could say anything, she was sitting on the bright blue comforter in just her bra.

"Whoa," Trevor said, holding his hand over his eyes like he was staring into the

sun.

"What?" Luce winced, feeling pale and a little embarrassed.

"Everything's so bright all of a sudden," Trevor said, blinking.

"Isn't it?"

Luce thought she knew what he meant. Like something between them was lighting up the whole room. Was this the spark she'd been waiting for? She felt warm and alive, but also a little bit too aware of her body. And how exposed it was.

It made her uncomfortable. When he leaned into her again, her insides felt like they were burning, like she'd swallowed something hot. Then the whole cabin warmed and grew way too light. It was getting hard to breathe, and she was suddenly, sharply dizzy, her vision burning bright like the blood was rushing from her head.

She couldn't see a thing.

Trevor grabbed her waist, but she began to pull away. She heard noises again, and she was sure someone else was there in the cabin, but she couldn't see anyone,

could only hear a growing racket, like the rasping of a thousand saws against a thousand metal sheets. She tried to move but felt like she was stuck, Trevor's arms tightening around her. They gripped her rib cage until she thought he might break her bones, until his skin felt like it was burning into her flesh, until?

Until he was gone.

Someone was shaking Luce's shoulders.

It was Shawna Clip. She was screaming.

"What did you do, Lucinda? "

Luce blinked and shook her head. She was sitting outside in the smoky black night.  
Her throat stung and her skin felt raw and freezing cold.  
"Where's Trevor?" she could hear herself murmur. The wind whipped through her hair.  
She reached up to brush the loose strands from her face and gasped when a whole  
lock of thick black hair seemed to slide right off her scalp.  
What landed in her  
palm was brittle and badly singed. She screamed.  
Luce stumbled to her feet. Crossed her arms over her chest and looked around. Still  
the cool, dark woods, still the sense of the hovering black shadows, still the neat  
row of cabins?  
The cabins were on fire.  
The cabin where she swore she'd just been with Trevor? had she? how far had they  
gone? what had happened? was now engulfed in flames. The cabins to the left and the  
right were just starting to catch fire from the blaze in the middle. The night air  
reeked of sulfur.  
The last thing she remembered was the kiss?  
"What the hell did you do with my boyfriend?"  
Rachel. She stood between Luce and the burning cabins, a bright red flush dotting  
her cheeks. The look in her eyes made Luce feel like a murderer.  
She opened her mouth, but nothing came out.  
Shawna pointed at Luce. "I followed her. I thought I would catch the two of them  
screwing around? she covered her face with her hands and sniffled "but they went  
inside, and then . . . The whole thing just exploded!"

Rachel's face and her body went slack as she swiveled back toward the cabin and began to wail. The awful sound rose up in the night. It was only then that Luce realized, with a horrified clenching in her chest: Trevor was still inside. Then the roof of the cabin caved in, spitting out a plume of smoke. By then, the nearby cabins had really begun to burn, but Luce could feel a darkness hovering, huge and implacable. The shadows, once confined to the woods, now swirled directly above. So close she might have touched them. So close she could almost hear what they were whispering. It sounded like her name, Luce, a thousand times repeated, circling around her and then fading endlessly into some dark past.

FALLEN



## *Daniel In L.A.*

When the sun went down on skid row in L.A., a city of tents rose up. One by one until the throng of them got so thick you could barely drive a car down the street. Just a bunch of tattered nylon tents ripped off the back of a Walmart truck. And the other tents made out of nothing but a bedsheet thrown over a plank wedged into a milk crate. Whole families tucked inside.

The lost ended up there because they could sleep without freezing to death. And because, after dark, the cops left the place alone. Daniel ended up there because seven thousand other transients made it easy to blend in. And because skid row was the last place on earth he expected to find Luce.

He'd made a vow after the last life. Losing her like that: a brilliant blaze in the middle of a frozen lake. He couldn't bear it. Couldn't let her fall for him again. She deserved to love someone without paying for it with her life. And maybe she could. If only Daniel stayed away. So there, downtown, along the grittiest street in the City of Angels, Daniel pitched his tent. He'd done it every night for the past three months, ever since Luce would have turned thirteen. Four whole years before he usually encountered her. That was how determined he was to break them out of their cycle.



There was nothing any lonelier or more depressing about skid row than any other home Daniel had made for himself over the years. But there was nothing worth romanticizing, either. He had his days free to wander the city, and at night he had a tent to zip up, shutting out the rest of the world. He had neighbors who kept to themselves. He had a system he could manage.

He'd long ago given up on the pursuit of happiness. Mischief had never held any real appeal, not like it did for so many of his fellow fallen angels. No, prevention—preventing Luce from loving him, from even knowing him in this life—that was his last and only goal.

He rarely flew anymore, and he did miss that. His wings wanted out. His shoulders itched almost all the time, and the skin of his back felt perpetually about to explode from the pressure. But it seemed too conspicuous to let them free—even at night, in the dark, and alone. Someone was always watching him, and he didn't want Arriane or Roland or even Gabbe to know where he was hiding out. He didn't want company at all.

But every once in a while he was supposed to check in with a member of the Scale. They were sort of like parole officers for the fallen. In the beginning, the Scale had mattered more. More angels out there to measure, more to nudge back toward their truest nature. Now that so few of them remained “up for grabs,” the Scale liked to keep a special eye on Daniel. All the meetings he'd had with them over the years added up to nothing but an enormous waste of time. Until the curse was broken, things were bound to remain this way: in limbo. But he'd been around long enough to know that if he didn't seek them out, they would come to him.

At first he'd thought the new girl was one of them. Turned out she was something else entirely.



“Hey.”

A voice outside his tent. Daniel unzipped the front panel and stuck his head outside. The sky at dusk was pink and smoggy. Another hot night on the row.

The girl was standing before him. She had on cutoffs and a worn white T-shirt. Her blond hair was stuffed into a thick bun on top of her head.

“I’m Shelby,” she said.

Daniel stared at her. “And?”

“And you’re the only other kid my age in this place. Or at least, the only kid my age who’s not in the corner over there cooking crack.” She pointed to a part of the street that flowed into a dark alley Daniel had never ventured down. “Just thought I’d introduce myself.”

Daniel narrowed his eyes. If she were Scale, she would have had to make herself known. They appeared on earth in plain clothes, but they always announced themselves to the fallen. It was just one of the rules.

“Daniel,” he finally said. He didn’t come out of his tent.

“Aren’t you friendly,” she muttered under her breath. She looked annoyed, but she didn’t walk away.

She just stood there staring down at him, shifting her weight and tugging at the frayed hems of her shorts.

“Look, uh, Daniel, maybe this is going to sound weird, but I got a ride to this party tonight in the Valley. Was going to see if you wanted, uh”—she shrugged—“it might be fun.”

Everything about this girl seemed just slightly larger than life. The square face, the high forehead, the greenflecked hazel eyes. Her voice rose above all the racket on the row. She looked tough enough to make it on the street, but then again, she also stuck out. Almost as much as Daniel did.

He was surprised to find that the more he stared at

her, the more cause he had to stare. She looked so incredibly familiar. He must have noticed it the few times he'd seen her walking around before. But it wasn't until that moment that he figured out who Shelby reminded him of. Who she was the spitting image of.

Sem.

Before the Fall, he'd been one of Daniel's closest confidants. One of his very few true friends. Precocious and full of opinions, Semihazah was also honest and fiercely loyal. When the war began and so many of them left Heaven, Daniel had his hands full with Luce. Out of all the angels, Sem came closer than anyone to understanding

Daniel's situation.

He had a similar weakness for love.

Gorgeous, hedonistic Sem could cast a spell over anyone he met. Especially the fairer sex. For a while, it seemed like every time Daniel saw Sem after the Fall, he had a different mortal girl on his wing.

Except for the last time they'd seen each other. It was a few years ago. Daniel marked time by where Luce was in life, so he remembered Sem's visit as the summer before she entered middle school. Daniel was spending his days in Quintana Roo when Semihazah showed up at his door alone.

A business call. Sem had the badge to prove it.

A Scale scar. The gold insignia of the seven-pointed scar.

They had gotten to him. They'd been after him for a while and he said eventually he just got tired. Didn't Daniel ever get tired, he wanted to know.

It pained Daniel to see his friend so . . . reformed.

Everything about him seemed smaller. Regulation-size.

The fire inside him gone out.

Their meeting was graceless and tense. They spoke to each other like strangers. Daniel remembered feeling

most angry that Sem hadn't even asked about Luce. When he took his leave, Sem was cursing, and Daniel knew he wouldn't be back. He would ask to be taken off the case. He would ask for someone easier.

Daniel had accepted that he might never see his friend again. Which was why he was so floored to realize who the girl was.

Standing before him on skid row was one of Semihazah's offspring. A daughter.

She must have had a mortal mother. Shelby was a Nephilim.

He stood to get a better look at her. She stiffened but didn't back away when he got up in her face. About fourteen. Pretty, but a handful. Like her father. Did she even know who—or what—she was? Her cheeks flushed as Daniel studied her.

"Um. Are you okay?" she asked.

"Where's this party?"

They spent an hour stuck in traffic in a van crammed with strangers. Daniel couldn't have talked to Shelby even if he'd known what to say. Tell me about the father who abandoned you seemed like the wrong way to get started. When they finally made it over the hills into the vast, flat valley, the house they stopped in front of was dark. It didn't look like a party at all.

Daniel was wary. He'd been on the lookout for signs that this gathering was something more than mortal. A setup. A sign that Shelby was in one of the Nephilim circles he'd heard Roland talk about. Daniel had never paid much attention before.

The front door was unlocked, so Daniel followed Shelby, who followed the rest of the carload, inside. This was no celestial gathering. No, the people at this party looked lifeless.

They were passed out, making out, checking out,

strewn across the couch and in heaps on the floor. The only light in the room came from a refrigerator being opened when somebody pulled out a beer. It was stuffy and hot and something in the corner smelled rotten. Daniel didn't know why he'd come, what he was doing there, and it made him ache for Luce. He could fly away from here and go to her right now! The time they spent together was the only time in Daniel's whole existence when anything made sense. Until she went out in a flash and everything went dark.

He kept forgetting his promise. To stay away this time. To let her live.

In the dark, disgusting living room, Daniel took a hard look at life without her, and he shuddered. If he'd had a way out, he would have taken it. But he didn't.

"This sucks." Shelby was standing at his side. She was shouting over the harsh, discordant music, and still Daniel could only read her lips. She jerked her head toward the back door. Daniel nodded, following her. The backyard was small and fenced in, with scorched grass and patches of sandy dirt. They took a seat on the small cement ledge and Shelby cracked open a beer. "Sorry I dragged you all the way out here for this shit show," she said, taking a swig, then passing the warm can to Daniel.

"You hang out with this crowd often?"

"First and last time," she said. "My mom and I, we move around a lot, so I don't really get to hang out with any crowd for too long."

"Good," Daniel said. "I mean, I don't think this is the kind of crowd you should be spending your time with. What are you, fourteen?"

Shelby snorted. "Um, thanks for the unsolicited advice, Dad, but I can look out for myself. Years of practice."



Daniel put down the beer can and looked up at the sky. One reason he liked L.A. was that you could never really see the stars. Tonight, though, he missed them.

“What about your parents?” he finally asked.

“Mom means well, she just works all the time. Or, all the time she’s not in between jobs. She has a special talent for getting herself fired. So we keep moving and she keeps promising that one day things are going to get “stable” for us. I’ve had some problems, you know, adjusting. It’s kind of a long story. . . .”

Shelby trailed off, like she thought she’d already said too much. The way she was avoiding his gaze made Daniel realize that she did know at least a little bit about her lineage.

“But Mom thinks she’s got the solution,” she went on, shaking her head. “She’s got this fancy school all picked out and everything. Talk about a pipe dream.”

“And your dad?”

“Skipped town before I was born. Real classy guy, huh?”

“He used to be,” Daniel said softly.

“What?”

Then—Daniel didn’t know why—he reached out and took Shelby’s hand. He didn’t even know her, but he felt an urge to protect her. She was Sem’s daughter, which made her strangely almost like Daniel’s niece. She looked surprised when his fingers clasped hers, but she didn’t pull away.

Daniel wanted to take her away from here. This was no place for a girl like Shelby. But at the same time, he knew it wasn’t just this party or this town that was the problem. It was Shelby’s whole life. She was totally screwed up. Because of Sem.

Just as Luce’s lives had been screwed up because of Daniel.



He swallowed hard and suppressed a fierce new urge to go to Luce. He didn't belong here in this fenced-in yard. On this hot night, at this stupid party, with nothing to look forward to for the rest of eternity.

Now Shelby squeezed his hand. When he met her eyes, they looked different. Bigger. Softer. They looked like—

Uh-oh.

He pulled away and stood up quickly.

Shelby thought he'd been making a move.

"Where are you going?" she said. "Did—did I do something wrong?"

"No." He sighed. "I did."

He wanted to clear things up, but he didn't know how. His eyes fixed on the busted screen door, where a dark shadow wobbled slightly in the stiff, hot wind.

An Announcer.

Usually, Daniel ignored them. The past few years they'd started coming to him less and less. Maybe this one—maybe it had something to do with Shelby. Maybe he could show her instead of flailing for the words.

He nodded at the Announcer and let it glide into his palm. A moment later he'd worked it into a flat, black plane.

He could just begin to see the image coming clear.

Luce. And he knew instantly that he'd made a big mistake.

His wings burned and his heart ached as if it were breaking into pieces inside him. He didn't know where or when in time he was viewing her, but it didn't matter. It was all he could do not to dive inside and go after her. A single tear rolled down his cheek.

"What the—" Shelby's shocked tone broke Daniel's concentration.

But before Daniel could respond, a siren sounded on the street. Flashing lights lit up the side of the house, then

the blades of grass in the backyard. The Announcer splintered apart in Daniel's hands. Shelby scrambled to her feet. She was looking at Daniel like something had just clicked but she didn't have the words to express what it was.

Then the screen door whipped open behind them and a handful of kids from the party raced out.

"Cops," one of them hissed at Shelby before they all dashed across the lawn, toward the fence. They helped each other scramble over it and were gone.

A moment later, two cops jogged around the side of the house and stopped in front of Daniel and Shelby.

"Okay, kids, you're coming with us."

Daniel rolled his eyes. It wasn't the first time he'd been booked. Dealing with the police always veered between a minor annoyance and a big joke. But Shelby wasn't going in so easy.

"Oh yeah?" she cried. "On what grounds?"

"Breaking and entering a condemned residence.

Illegal substance use. Underage drinking. Disturbing the peace. And somebody stole that shopping cart from Ralphs. Take your pick, sweetheart."

At the station, Daniel waved to the two cops he knew and poured two cups of hot brown water from the coffeemaker,

one for Shelby, one for himself. The girl looked nervous, but Daniel knew they didn't have much to worry about. He was just about to plop down in the seat where the booking officer took your information, your personal items, and your mug shot—when he noticed someone standing in the doorway of the station. Sophia Bliss.

She was dressed in a smart black suit, with her silver hair spun into a tight twist. Her black heels clicked across



the wood floor as she approached him. She ran her eyes over Shelby briefly, then turned to Daniel and smiled.

“Hello, dear,” she said. She turned to face the cops.

“I’m the parole officer for this young man. What’s he in for?”

The cop handed over his report. Miss Sophia skimmed it quickly, clucking her tongue.

“Really, Daniel, theft of a shopping cart? And you knew this was your last violation before the court-mandated reform school. Oh, don’t give me that face,” she said, a weird smile pulling up the corners of her mouth. “You’ll like Sword and Cross. I promise.”

FALLEN





FALLEN



## *Daniel's First Sighting*

It started with a a shiver.

Daniel woke up cold that morning: teeth chattering and goose bumps raised along his arms. He lay shivering under his blankets though he knew it was going to be humid and nearly ninety degrees as soon as he stepped outside.

That was the first sign.

When he rose from his dorm room bed at Sword and Cross and looked at his reflection in the mirror, his eyes were glazed over with violet.

The second sign.

Something was about to happen.

Maybe he should have seen it coming. Of course it had to do with Lucinda-the penetrating chill and the glowing violet in his eyes-but it was always only temporary. Some days Daniel was just cold. He'd come to think that days like this were just when she needed him a little more than usual. When she felt some emptiness deep in her chest but could not explain its root.

This life's Lucinda, wherever she lived, whatever she filled her days doing, whoever mattered to her most-she didn't yet know who Daniel Grigori was. She was seventeen and forty-four days old. His longest running success, her longest life. And he was going to keep it that way. It took all of Daniel's might, every single day, but this time, he was going to let Lucinda live.

He dressed in the black-on-black uniform all the reform students were required to wear. Before he left the room, he added his black leather jacket and red knit scarf



for extra warmth in his classes, the ones who would be sweating in their black T-shirts. He put dark Sunglasses to hid the color of his eyes.

Most of the time, unless he had to make a show of eating in front of a mortal, Daniel skipped his meals. But he liked the feel of a hot drink sliding down his throat,

Warming his stomach, especially on a day like today when he was chilled like this. He headed for the cafeteria and got in line to buy a coffee.

Almost all the other students moving through campus in pairs or larger cliques. Mortals-even the troubled, rebellious mortals who ending up at this reform school-didn't like to be alone. Recently Daniel had been noticing this more and more. They took solace connecting with other mortals. They found friendship, even love, not just in one other person, but in hundreds of others throughout the course of their lives. He couldn't understand it. He used to have another half. Used to be part of a pair. Once. No-many times, but it was always the same. Long ago and never again. It had cost them both too much.

Thought there would never be anyone else for Daniel, he hoped-and feared-there could be someone else for her. He hadn't made a single new friend since the day he'd arrived at Sword and Cross. He didn't need to. Wouldn't ever. They would only pale in comparison to what he used to have.

Roland was enrolled at the school, albeit loosely, and Arraine and Molly, too. But of course they didn't count as friends. Arraine was something like a sister, and they both gave each other space. Roland was someone Daniel said a few words to sometimes, someone he did not mind. Molly he avoided. He knew she had to follow Daniel wherever he went, but her presence grated on

him nonetheless. It didn't really matter. He was busy just getting through on day at a time. Just making it from morning to night without breaking his vow to let her be.

His black coffee steamed, warming his hands as he slid through the line of the other students and left the cafeteria. There was a desolate commons area outside Augustine, a grove of kudzu-strangled trees where the students stood around before the first bell rang. A group of girls turned to look at him and he could hear them whisper something. There were always girls whispering something, huddled together, eyeing him. They always faded into the background.

One girl was walking by herself . Walking toward him Merryweather or Pennyweather, Daniel wasn't really sure. She had thick purple glasses, a mop of short, curly brown hair. When they crossed paths, nearly bumping into each other, she looked him up and down. But not in the same way most of the other girls did. She was looking at his clothes. It took him a moment to realize she was bundled in as many layers of clothing as he was. She was Hugging her arms around her chest.

“ Warm enough? He surprised himself by saying. Not sarcastically.

“ There's that bug going around,” the girl said quickly, also surprised. “Don't want to catch it.”

“No.” he agreed. They had never spoken before. Something about Pennyweather or Merryweather stood out to daniel that morning. She was different from the other kids here, but he couldn't say how. Was it just that she was nice?  
he was going to say something more, but she'd

already shuffled away.

The rest of the students formed familiar patterns on the muddy lawn. There were five minutes left before the bell and nothing to do but drink his coffee and maybe go and talk to Roland, who was leaning up against the cinderblock walls of the building. And then, when the bell did ring, there would be nothing to do but go to class and pretend to learn the countless lessons Daniel already knew, had already learned from hundreds of years of schooling and thousands of years of living through the histories in any of these dreary books. And when class was over, school was over, his unexplained but unimportant tenure here with Sophia Bliss over, there would be nothing to do but roam the earth alone until the end of time looking for some way to tick off minutes, hours, millennia. Suddenly Daniel felt so lonely he wanted to tilt his head back towards the sky and scream.

Because what good was eternity without love?

"Daniel." Roland signalled to him across the lawn.

Daniel composed himself, breathing deeply, shrugging his shoulders to relax his burning wings before he started walking. "Brother."

"Gabbe's here," Roland said quietly. "Queen Bad Ass herself." They weren't looking at each other. They stood side by side, against the wall, gazing out at the rest of the students without seeing them.

"Does she have a message ? " Daniel asked, because That would make sense.

Though she'd fallen after the war, Gabbe had been one of the first angels to return to the folds of heaven. Very quickly, she'd gotten her status back and had been messaging again for some time. Daniel saw her occasionally : she'd deliver a message, and would then be on her

way.

Every once in a while, Daniel missed his old employment. All angels fulfilled by their original purpose as messengers. But it had never felt like the only thing Daniel was meant to do. It was that sense-that maybe he was meant for something else-which was the root of all of Daniel's trouble.

"I don't know about a message." Roland said. There was a halt in his voice that Daniel didn't trust. "But she's all primed and gussied up and ready to bust God knows whose skull. She just turned up this morning. Said Miss Sophia dragged her here."

When Sophia Bliss found Daniel and brought him to this school, she thought she'd been saving him. She talked of having cared for him always, since the war, and it hurt her to see just how far he had fallen. *You can be a conscientious objector, Daniel*, she'd said, *but you can't go around vandalizing shopping carts.*

Daniel hadn't cared enough to correct her, to say that all he was trying to do was pass the time. Skid Row in Los Angeles or some reform school in Georgia, it didn't matter to him. Neither were places Luce would ever show up, so he wouldn't have to worry about breaking his vow to stay out of her life completely.

In the meanwhile, it had been almost interesting to help Sophia with some of her research. She was leading a commission on the Watchers-the old sect of Angels who'd been charged with loving mortal women. It was something Daniel knew a thing or two about. She read his book. Sometimes she'd come to him with questions. It passed the time.

It was not strange that Gabbe had shown up at Sword and Cross. Actually, it was expected. But it *was* strange that Sophia would have dragged her here. It didn't sit right with Daniel and he shivered.



“ And that’s not all,” Roland said. “There’s something else. Or *someone* else, I guess I should say.”

But Daniel already knew. The sheen of gold was just becoming visible beyond the schoolyard, passing through the trees like morning mist. It looked pretty, but it wasn’t. Nothing could have been a darker signal.

Cam was here.

Daniel’s eyes had not fallen on the demon yet, but his furred wings felt so hot they could have singed his clothes. His enemy was near enough that Daniel could taste the fight growing inside him. Bitter and metallic, rising in his throat.

The thing about Cam that was different from the rest of them was that he did nothing without express purpose. Daniel roamed the earth in lonely agony; and some of the others were able to see their expulsion from Heaven as an endless vacation. Not Cam. Cam was eternally strategic, always plotting, always gearing up for the next battle in the War. So if he turned up at Sword and Cross, something was happening.

Really, it could only be one thing.

Daniel’s mouth felt dry. He turned to Roland. “How long have you known? ”

Roland raised his eyebrows. For a moment, he looked scared. But then he shined it off with a broad smile. “Does that even matter? ”

They say that when a mortal is about to die, his whole life flashes before his eyes. Daniel had no experience with this; he never would. But at that moment, it was as if he was seeing Lucinda’s life- no, all her lives, and all her deaths-in a single awful flash. Her original death, in the Beginning, the one that left him ill for a decade. The myriad deaths across centuries and continents when Daniel stupidly, carelessly surrendered to their fate, like a boy who’d never had his heart broken, loving her



senselessly and letting her go each time. The recent deaths, when he was growing weary of the pain, when her death was on his mind for her whole life, when their love was always tainted by his sorrow that she didn't understand. And finally : That most recent demise, the column of fire on the frozen lake seventeen years ago. The death that had caused Daniel to swear her off. When he'd told himself : No more.

Now Cam was here and there was only one possible explanation. But what could Lucinda have done to end up at a place like Sword and Cross ?

He'd been stupid to think it wasn't possible. In each life, there were pairs of wings brushing them toward each other. He'd done everything to stay away from her this time. And still, it hadn't been enough.

It was so terrible, so utterly demoralizing, that it was almost...funny. Daniel felt it shudder through him.

A laugh.

It surprised him, that first small, sharp chuckle. But Then it grew into a deep and painful laugh that spread Through his limbs, taking over his whole body. He was Furious with everything, but trembling with laughter, and Still shivering from cold.

"Daniel?" Roland looked concerned.

It only made Daniel laugh harder. Because everything was futile and he'd been so naïve. He couldn't stop. He doubled over, gasping for air.

Now Roland started laughing too, nervously, as if he were waiting to see what Daniel was going to do next.

"Look at me, Daniel," Roland said.

Daniel tried to pull himself together. He took off his glasses and slipped them into his pocket. But when he shifted his eyes to look at Roland, they fell on someone else Lucinda.

There she was.

Yes, he had known this was going to happen. Had known Lucinda's presence would slam into him like a Freight train. Had known they would be pawns in Heaven's game for yet another round, with all of the others gathered around like spectators. Had known she was there to fall in love with him, and he with her. And still, none of that prepared Daniel for the moment he first saw her.

She was beautiful. Her hair was short. Her skin was white and smooth. Her clothes were simple, black. Her face was lovely, intoxicatingly sweet, flawless- And deeply, deeply pained.

He had never seen her look like that. Like she'd been through a war. But...she couldn't possibly remember. Could she? No, her expression carried the weight of something different. A new tragedy. What had she been Though without him?

If he could run to her, he would. Catch her in his arms and twirl her around, consoling every sadness, every ache she'd ever felt. Pull her closer every second until they were so intertwined they could never let go. Press his lips to hers, that sweetest kiss, his great addiction.

She was smiling at him, a shy and wonderful smile that he was dying to return. But the smile would turn into the wave he already felt rising in his arm, which would lead to a step in her direction and send them tumbling towards the place Daniel had sworn he would not go.

His arm teetered in the air-

She was the love of his life. She was everything.

And he was cursed to destroy her.

There was nothing in the world to do but save her life and flip her off.



FALLEN



## *Daniel & Gabbe's Fight*

Daniel burst out of Cam's Sword & Cross dorm room and caught his breath in the quiet of the hall. The party raged on behind him. He cared, of course he cared that Luce was still inside. It was her first introduction to social life at reform school. But if she was going to slip away from him, Daniel refused to sit there and watch it happen. It would be like watching his own heart being ripped from his chest and torn apart.

Where was Gabbe? She was supposed to have met him here a long time ago. Daniel didn't know why he was surprised. So far in this life, Gabbe had been a less-than-ideal guardian angel for Luce. Maybe their whole arrangement had been a mistake.

He paced the hallway, too aware of every sound his body made. How clumsy he felt here on the ground. His shoes squeaked against the floor. His breath came out heavy and exasperated. His watch ticked steadily on. He didn't even know how long he had been waiting for Gabbe to show up. Recently time and space felt all out of whack for Daniel, ever since Luce had turned up out of nowhere and walked back into his life. He should have known she was coming—she always did—but somehow he'd been blindsided. Yet again. Since she'd arrived at Sword & Cross he hadn't been able to think straight. Could barely keep his wings

contained. This was the hardest part of what he had to do. And there was no end to it in sight.

The two of them. Just stuck here. Together.

As if that weren't enough, it was all made so much worse by the others hovering over them, waiting to see how it would end this time.

"Daniel."

Gabbe's face was all made up. Shimmering silver eye shadow made her big blue eyes stand out, and her lips were a soft, glossy pink. Her white sweater dress and tall brown boots looked like dinner-at-the-country-club, not party-at-the-dorm-room. Of all the angels who visited Luce across time, Daniel had recently noticed that Arriane and Gabbe were the only ones who regularly changed their appearance.

Arriane seemed to take the same kind of pleasure in her various guises that mortals took in dressing up for a Halloween masquerade. But Gabbe was different. It was like she chose her personas in order to ease more smoothly into Luce's life. This time Luce grew up in Dixie, so Gabbe was the perfect southern belle.

Clearly—because she was Gabbe, and she was an angel—her intentions were purely innocent, but inside the walls of Sword & Cross, drawling, elegant Gabbe stood out more than any of the rest of them. Her plan to be inconspicuous had backfired.

Now Daniel clutched her by the wrist and pulled her around the hallway corner. He wanted to be hidden from view if anyone else stepped out of Cam's party.

"You're late," he said.

"Daniel, it's only been three days. You're already this high-strung?"

Three days. Was that all? It felt like so much longer.

The three-plus years Daniel had spent at Sword & Cross without Lucinda hadn't troubled him at all. He went to



class. He did his work. When Roland was around, they would talk. But in just the three days since Luce had arrived on campus, Daniel had already begun to fall apart.

In the dim hallway, Gabbe's face was so placid. Like she didn't have any idea how much they were up against. He couldn't stand it.

"Three days is more than enough time for you to get Luce alone and tell her. Do you even know what I've had to witness in that room?" He pointed back toward Cam's party and shuddered. "Do I have to remind you of the way he looks at her? Like he's ravenous."

Usually, Daniel would just deck Cam whenever he crossed a boundary. It happened many times in every life. All the angels were used to their fighting. Roland had pulled them apart a thousand times. But this life was different.

Daniel was backing away, yes, but he would never, ever surrender her to Cam.

It was why he needed Gabbe. He'd just thought she'd be more help.

Daniel felt tired and conflicted. He could still hear the noise of the party, and his heart wanted him to turn back. But his head didn't know what to do. Someone, maybe Molly, was singing karaoke. "Tainted Love."

Luce was probably in there dancing. Her arms looped around Cam's neck—

"I'm sorry," Gabbe said. "It won't happen again."

"It *can't* happen again," he corrected her. "You promised you'd be there and you weren't."

Gabbe eyed him as if she was deciding whether or not to tell him something. After a moment, she reached into her leather tote bag and held out a small rectangular tablet. The top was imprinted with an ornate circular silver insignia.

Daniel recognized it at once. The mark of the Celestial Trials.

The trials took place every summer and winter solstice. A reckoning of every angel's and demon's comings and goings since the prior trial. Sentencing for some and recompense for others. All of that was tallied and engraved right there, in tiny silver script, on the tablet in Gabbe's hand.

Daniel took it from her. It had been a while since he'd studied one of these.

Sure enough, his name was still there, in the same column it had been in since right after the Fall. Since the beginning of the Celestial Trials.

He couldn't and didn't really care to make sense of the rest. The numbers were always staggering, and the fate of almost all of the others didn't matter one bit. To him or to the world. In the end, there were just a few that meant anything at all.

But how had Gabbe gotten her hands on this? Only the celestial secretaries—

"Wait a minute." His voice was a whisper. The identities of the secretaries were usually kept secret. "Are you—"

Gabbe nodded. "Just awarded," she whispered back.

He could tell Gabbe was forcing the smile when she slipped the tablet back into her bag. "So you're going to have to trust me, honey." Her voice rose back to its sweet southern drawl, like nothing had happened. "I'm the only one you've got."

Daniel didn't like to think too much about what happened in Heaven anymore, but Gabbe's news had rattled him, shaking loose in his head a barrage of painful memories. "Are they still protesting?"

"More than ever." Gabbe nodded. "And, of course, they still want you. Anytime you change your mind—"

"I have enough on my plate," he growled.

Gabbe flinched. Daniel instantly regretted his tone. Sometimes he forgot that others still carried old allegiances.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It's just unexpected news. I didn't know you'd been up there. Roland said you told him you were doing missionary work in Uganda. That you were in the middle of building a well when Sophia showed up to drag you here."

"Little white lie." Gabbe shrugged. "I *was* in Uganda digging wells." She leaned in to whisper, "And then I went up to the Celestial Trials. But I'm here now, aren't I? And I'm going to do everything I can."

Daniel exhaled, but something still wasn't right. He leaned down and cocked his head, trying to catch her blue eyes. "What aren't you saying?"

"It's nothing." Gabbe continued to look away. "Nothing major, anyway. Look, I know I shouldn't even say this, especially not to you. But it's just, every time I've tried to talk to Luce in this life, she's blown me off. I think she thinks I'm snobby or too prissy or something. I think my accent bugs her."

She sighed, folding her arms over her chest, and Daniel could almost feel how pained she was by what she took as Luce's rejection. For a split second, he envied her problem. It would be easier if only Luce would treat him that way.

"We used to be inseparable," Gabbe continued. "I don't know. I think she likes Arriane more this time. Maybe we should ask Arriane to help—"

"Arriane can't be counted on," Daniel interrupted.

"Besides, she's too close to Roland."

"*You're* close to Roland." Gabbe blinked. "Now you're turning on Arriane?"

Daniel didn't know why he kept snapping at Gabbe.

But she was right about one thing: He was the last person

she should complain to about not being as close to Luce this life. Luce was Daniel's only love, and he had never felt more distant from her than he did at Sword & Cross. "I'm not turning on anyone." He forced himself to soften his voice. "But we have to think about Luce first. She's impressionable. And Arriane's too scattered. I need you to impress on her that, above all things, *Cam* is not an option."

"If she'll even listen to me," Gabbe said. "The other day, I offered to let her use my makeup when she was crying, but she—"

"Find a way to get her attention, then. Make something up!"

"Well," she huffed, "if you're so particular, why don't you write the script?"

"Fine," he said quickly. "Say you dated Cam. Say it ended badly and he was a terrible boyfriend but you're still all broken up about it. Say you're terrified he'll move on and start seeing someone else."

"I'm not going to lie to her, Daniel."

"Why not? You just lied to Roland."

"Only because I could be sentenced for telling anyone—including you—what I've been doing in Heaven. This is different. To lie to Luce, even about a temporary alliance with Cam, would be to lie about the very fundamentals of our universe. Just when she needs to be sorting them out." Gabbe shook her head. "That's messed up."

Daniel leaned against the hallway wall and closed his eyes. His body felt like a tight cage around his soul. Cramped and unnatural. He felt an urge to free himself of all of this. But it was selfish and impossible, because no matter what he did, his road would always lead him right back here. To her.

"I'm sorry," he told Gabbe. "I'm a mess right now. It's



agony.”

“I know, Daniel—”

“No,” he said. “You don’t. I . . . I swore her off.”

“What?” Gabbe gasped. Her head whipped around and her blue eyes bored into his. “*You can’t swear her off.*”

Daniel cringed. He should have thought before he said that. He should have known he’d get this response. It was in Gabbe’s nature to insist that Daniel not give up.

“I don’t want to kill her again,” he said, biting out the words. He was near tears and didn’t care. “I can’t.”

“You’re too irrational,” she said, but there was panic rising in her voice that Daniel didn’t want to hear.

“There’s a way through this. I know you’ll say there never has been before, but there’s got to be. I believe.” She gripped his shoulders. “Promise me you won’t give up.”

“Then tell me what to do.”

“I don’t know,” she said. “Trust your instincts.”

“They’re at war.”

From the expression on Gabbe’s face, Daniel knew he must look miserable. She drew him in and put her arms around him. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d been hugged by anyone. Gabbe wasn’t just goodness; she was also strength.

“I’ll befriend her,” she said. “I’ll stay on Cam’s case.

I won’t lie to her, Daniel, but I won’t lie to you, either.

When I say you can count on me, you know my word is good.”

“Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me yet. Because when I hear things from above, I’m going to tell you,” she said. “And you’re going to help me down here. Something’s happening. I don’t know what, but it’s only going to get bigger. We



can't have you swearing off Lucinda just before the War breaks out." She glared at him with an intensity that was almost frightening. "Not when we need you to win."



FALLEN

