

AMAZON EXCLUSIVE

The **FALLEN** novels—

from bestselling author

LAUREN KATE





CAM GOES HUNTING

Cam leaned back against the redwood tree and slipped a cigarette from his silver case. At the edge of the forest, he was just out of view from the Shoreline deck, where the Nephilim were engaged in another one of their inane class projects. He could keep watch from here. He could protect her without her knowing it.

A branch snapped behind him and Cam whirled around, fists clenched, the cigarette still clipped between his lips. Interesting. It was one of the females, alone. She

hadn't sensed his presence on the other side of the tree. Her silver bow was not even drawn.

“Got a light, Outcast?”

The girl blinked her white eyes, which made Cam feel nauseated and almost a little bit sorry for her. Almost.

“The Outcasts do not play with fire,” she said in a hollow voice, her pale fingers moving toward the inner pocket of her tan trench coat.

“Yes, that always was the Outcasts' problem, wasn't it?” Cam played it cool. No reason to alarm her. That would only draw the starshot faster. He snapped his fingers, igniting a small flame, and held it up to light the cigarette.

“You are spying on her.” The girl jerked her blond head upward, toward the deck where—it was true—Lucinda was seated on a bench, looking striking in a rose-red sweater and her newly bleached hair. She was talking to some Nephilim friend, talking in the open, trusting way *she* used to talk to Cam. Her hazel eyes wide, her lips pursed with that old sadness. Cam could look at her all day.

Alas, he forced himself to turn back to the lifeless creature before him. “I'm *protecting* her from the likes of you,” he spat. “There's a difference, baby, not that you'd be able to see it.”

He stole another glance at Luce. She had risen from the bench. Her eyes traveled down the deck stairs,

which led too close to Cam's hideout in the woods. What was she doing? He stiffened. Was she coming over?

The starshot whizzed through the air when Cam was least expecting it. He sensed it at the last possible second and dodged his head right, scraping his cheek against the tree trunk, and catching the shaft of the arrow in his leather-gloved hand. He was trembling, but he would not give the Outcast the satisfaction of knowing how close she had come. He pocketed the arrow.

"I'd use this to extinguish you," he said lightly, "but it would be a waste of a perfectly good starshot. Especially when it's so much more fun to beat you Outcasts up."

Before the girl could draw another arrow, Cam lunged at her and grabbed her by the ponytail. He kneed her in the stomach, hard, then jerked her head back and punched her sideways in the face. She cried out and something cracked, maybe the bone of her nose, but Cam kept punching, even as the blood began to flow—from her nose, from her lip, all down his fist. From the moment he started whaling on the Outcast, he forced himself to tune out her girlish whimpers. Otherwise, he couldn't have gone on like that. The Outcasts were sexless, lifeless, worthless—but in spite of all that, they were a threat to everything that mattered most to Cam.

"You will"—punch—"not"—knee snap—"get her."

The Outcast gagged as she coughed up one of her teeth and spat blood across Cam's T-shirt.

“Spoken like someone who never even had a chance.” He punched her again, right in the eye. “I *did*. You hear that, Outcast? I may have lost it, but I used to have a chance.”

Beating up the Outcasts was easy—too easy. It was a pointless exercise, like an old video game you'd bested but played again out of boredom. They'd heal like all the fallen, no matter how much damage he inflicted.

The Outcast grunted as Cam gave her skull a final kick that knocked her to the ground. She landed facedown in the mulchy leaves. After that, she did not move. So it was up to Cam to yank her to her feet and shove her bloodied body back whence she'd come.

“Tell your friends you are not welcome in this forest!” he shouted after her, watching as she tugged open an Announcer and fell inside.

He leaned back against the redwood and took a long calming drag on his cigarette just as Lucinda started down the stairs.



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