

INDIEBOUND EXCLUSIVE

The **FALLEN** novels—
from bestselling author
LAUREN KATE





SHELBY'S FIRST GLIMPSE

“Where are we?” Shelby moaned as she and Miles stepped through the Announcer into a dark and sultry alley. There was cheesy techno music coming from around the corner. Techno always made Shelby cranky.

“Good question.” Miles’s sneakers sloshed as he stepped out of the moonlit puddle under his feet. “Wherever we are, we should be closer to Luce than we were a few minutes ago when we left her backyard.” He lifted up a trash can lid and peered under it. “Luce?”

You in there?”

Shelby gave him one of her too-bored glares. Some kind of useless joke.

“Did that Announcer screw us over or what?” She kicked the can in frustration.

“You tell me,” Miles said. “You summoned it.”

“Yeah, well, *you* didn’t seem to think it was such an awful idea to step through it first.”

“Don’t blame this on me. When I read that book about Announcers, I only— Oh, crap.” Miles spun around in the alley, his hand slapped across his forehead. “Shel, we are so so stupid.”

“Ahem?”

“Listen, Luce went into *her* past. A past *we* don’t belong in. How the hell are we going to find her if she’s gone back to some time when we weren’t even born?” He was pacing the alley, tearing at his light brown hair. “This was a huge mistake. Why didn’t either one of us think about that? We just jumped without looking where we were going. What if we’re stuck here? This could be *bad*—”

“I’m sorry.” Shelby’s voice broke when she least expected it. She’d never seen Miles so pissed off. “But the Announcer came out of *my* shadow. I summoned it. Maybe, like, something about it *wanted* me to come back to this moment from my past.”

She could tell that Miles was straining to be his usual nice, polite self. “Okay, um, *why*?”

A snuffle on the other side of the alley shut both of them up. About a hundred feet away, where the alley elbowed off into the street, stood a shadow. Not an Announcer shadow, but the shadow of a boy. A boy Shelby recognized.

“Omigod.” She reached for Miles, caught hold of his sleeve and squeezed. “That guy over there . . . I think it’s . . .”

“I can see who it is, Shelby. Lower your voice unless you want him to see us.”

“Okay,” she whispered, gripping Miles’s biceps, which was alarmingly rock solid. “So I think we may have stepped through into this party I went to a few years ago in Corona.” She swallowed. “Things are kind of starting to make sense.”

One day, back at Shoreline, Shelby had told Luce about this very party, about how it was the first time she saw someone summon an Announcer. It was because of this party that Shelby first thought she could help Luce look through the shadows into her past. Because she’d seen a boy—*this* boy—do it in this alleyway outside this very bad party.

She just hadn’t told Luce that the boy in the alley had been Cam.

But now, here they were, at the same scene Shelby remembered so vividly from before. Cam had his back to them, but the Announcer glowed dimly in his hands

as he looked into his past. He was crying, just as she remembered.

Miles looked at her and she looked at him and she knew they were thinking the same thing.

“You think Luce is in that memory?” he said.

“It’s worth a shot,” Shelby whispered as the plan hatched in her head. “In a second, Cam will drop that Announcer. I remember; my fourteen-year-old self is watching from around the corner. Before it falls to pieces, we pounce. If we can catch it before it disintegrates and step through it, then maybe—”

“Maybe we can find her.” Miles took her hand again.

With her hand inside Miles’s, Shelby felt her face break into a genuine smile. One surprise after another. She dragged him forward in the alley just as Cam discarded the Announcer, turned a darkened corner, and was gone.

