

Fallen Tears

Sarah J. Pepper

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DEDICATION

This novel was written especially for inspiring writers and the avid book readers. My journey as an author was somewhat unexpected. I'm a terrible speller, and my grammar has never been very strong – two huge handicaps for a writer. When I was younger, I never dreamed that the stories in my head would materialize on paper; the mere thought was laughable. However, my imagination got the best of me, and I fell in love with the written word. I hope that when you page through this novel, you'll pick up on the hidden messages between the lines – love everlasting.

Thanks for being my personal cheerleader, Mom.

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Fallen Tears

PROLOGUE

Late Eighteenth Century

Clouds whirled around me as I clutched the soul of a young man in my hands. I held on tight, for it was my duty to deliver him to the afterlife. To bestow *Death's Kiss* was my most dangerous *Talent* – a celestial-power. I viciously pumped my powerful, crystalline wings that were hinged on my back. Wind surged around me as I soared into the sky.

My exhilaration escalated when I saw my sister, Jezebell, kneeling in front of pure white gates. Her wavy, crimson hair danced in the wind. The hues in her hair matched the tips of her wings, like they'd been dipped in scarlet paint. Her skin glistened like a ripple in a pool of water.

I landed gracefully next to her. The hem of my lustrous silk dress whirled around my ankles like it was tickling the clouds that I stood on. Kneeling, I held my hands up for her to see the glowing orb that was the soul. Her dazzling, chartreuse eyes sparkled when she touched it. Her

expression told me that it was agonizing yet breathtaking to caress the mortal's soul.

“It took a lot of *Persuasion* to entice him to come with me, Jezebell,” I said, keeping a tight grip. “Judging from his *Longevity*, he wasn't ready to leave his world.”

The faintest sounds of footsteps stole my attention. Towering over us stood Gabriel, the Gate Keeper – one of a kind amongst the angelic race. The infamous soldier guarded the only entrance into a vast array of other realms in the afterlife. Gabriel's pale skin accentuated his pearly-white wings. Each feather appeared softer than the next. However, the gentleness of his wings was off-set by his austere demeanor.

His age surpassed most angels by centuries, including me, but it did not make him weak; his resilience was admirable. Countless souls were carried by others like me and brought to him. They faced his judgment before given the courtesy of meeting His grace. I could only imagine how daunting Gabriel's duty would be.

Bowing my head, I raised my hands to the Gate Keeper and said, “Ashes to ashes.”

He cupped his hands around mine. “Dust to dust.”

Instead of releasing his soul into another realm of the afterlife, Gabriel hesitated. The Gate Keeper hardly ever hesitated. Something was wrong. Keeping my head down, I looked up to steal a peek. Gabriel's blind eyes *Foresaw* what I could not – each mortal's fate. The whites in his eyes revealed nothing.

“Who told you to kill this man, Miriam?” Anger resonated in

Gabriel's voice as he jerked the soul from my grasp.

I explained to Gabriel that I'd been instructed, by a trusted Messenger, my sister, to retrieve the soul via any means necessary. Jezebell pressed her lips together in the same manner our mother would when her nerves overpowered her hard-earned confidence. She never uttered a word, not even to defend herself or justify her actions.

"You altered the destiny of a mortal, Miriam. You killed him before it was his time – a grave sin. For that there is one punishment," Gabriel said, carrying the soul to the gates and releasing it.

Two Archangels materialized beside the Gate Keeper – Jael and her brother Neriah. They were perfect warriors, created to take down their enemy. Their ashen-colored wings spanned further than arm's length. Neriah's plated armor protected his chest; threads of silver had been spun to create his fitted pants. His dirty-white hair was twisted into dreadlocks that hit the tops of his shoulders. Streaks of charcoal were smudged onto his pale skin, highlighting the lines of his muscles. Using his brute strength alone, he could drag me to hell and imprison me...if he could catch me.

Jael's opaque fingernails shimmered against her ghostly white skin. She waggled her fingers; her nails were as sharp as razors. Her long, curly gray hair was braided back. Her silver, skin-tight shirt and pants looked like they had been melted on; they emphasized her athletic figure. Each thread of her attire twisted around each other, creating strikingly similar look to her brother's plated armor. She knelt down, preparing to attack if I tried to escape.

Jael growled when Neriah opened his mouth. A howl exploded from his throat. His blackened teeth dripped with poison. With each breath,

he sucked in the light around us for the sky darkened. Neriah beat his wings, creating a wind-force of paramount proportions. With each breath he took, his strength grew and mine weakened. His Talent consumed vigor; *Consumption* was a common Talent for Archangels. My energy, my life-force, dwindled as he stripped me of my divine immortality.

I grabbed a dagger from the sheath strapped to my leg. Jezebell shrieked when I pressed it against her throat. The blade's pristine shimmer reflected sun-dogs onto her neck.

"Jezebell, you've forsaken me!" I shouted as the winds roared.

Jezebell whispered, "I had no choice."

"You always have a choice," I said and sliced her skin just enough to stain her white dress with scarlet drops.

Her eyes burned red like she was moments from shedding tears; none trickled down her cheek. She screamed, "Kill me. Do it!"

A merciful act would be to shove my dagger into her chest and let her last breath be taken as a heavenly spirit. Instead, I clutched my weapon with a death grip and removed it from her neck. Leaping off the clouds, I dove and then plummeted toward the ground.

Jael pounced. Her agility and speed surpassed mine; she tackled me and dug her nails into my flesh. The *Venom* that seeped from her nail beds was a poisonous Talent; it acted similar to *Consumption*, slowly weakening my energy reserves.

I screamed out in agony. Free-falling from the heavens, I anticipated the collision we'd take upon hitting the dirt. The fall wouldn't kill me, but her poison might. I swung my dagger around and shoved it into

her back.

She laughed; it didn't pierce her clothes.

“My clothing was woven to be worn as shield of armor, Miriam,” she said. “Not even your immortal blade can penetrate it.”

Watching from above, Neriah howled. It deafened my hearing. Air whipped around us, slowing our descent. The noise he made burst my eardrums. Blood seeped from them. Jael reached around, grabbed my dagger, and tried to yank it from my hand. My strength eclipsed hers. I wiggled it out of her grasp only to let it descend onto the ground.

Enraged, she sunk her fingers into my side. My flesh became numb around her nails. She opened her mouth like she was laughing, but I couldn't hear anything other than Neriah's howl. Jael beat her wings viciously, carrying us upward. My vision blurred. My consciousness waned. After ascending to the heavens, she tossed me next to Jezebell.

Moving in an inhumanly graceful way, Neriah knelt beside me and seized me. I tried to escape again, but my movements were uncontrolled, compliments of Jael's poison. I moved slowly and uncalculated only to jerk forcefully and twitch, like I was having seizures. My vision darkened around the edges. I used all the Talents I possessed in an effort to flee, but it was useless. Everywhere Neriah grabbed, he sucked my vigor and stripped me of my Talents.

Once I was rendered defenseless, Neriah opened his mouth. No sound came out, not that I could hear. Onyx liquid dripped from his teeth, and dark smoke spewed out. The haze drifted down until it covered me. Contacting my skin, it transformed into a black gel. The charcoal streaks on his skin dripped from his skin and onto mine. It bubbled upon contact,

burning off my angelic features.

Jezebell watched in horror. Even though I couldn't hear, I cried out for help until my throat was hoarse. Others arrived, but no one came to my aid. I begged for their understanding as the demonic gel crawled up my legs, wrapped around my body, and ate away my innocence until all that was left was evil.

The malevolence matter ate at my wings until they rotted to the point where Gabriel effortlessly ripped them from my back. The pain paralyzed me. A persistent ring deafened my ears; my vision was distorted, fading in and out as if I was coming out of a bad dream.

Forcing me onto my back, Neriah easily held me in place. I whimpered, for I knew what was going to happen when I saw an Imbiber angel kneel beside me. She lifted my chin. Her translucent skin radiated with orbs of white glowing souls – angelic spirits that she'd consumed in her lifetime. Her eyes were pure darkness; I could look through them for all eternity and never see anything of consistency. Her hair was as white as the crest of an ocean's wave. Hues of blue and green lingered throughout the white, but the harder I looked, the more the whiteness enveloped the subtle shades. Her lips were flush and rosy – devastatingly lovely. Instead of rendering Death's Kiss, she sucked my soul from my body and devoured it.

Emptiness filled me. My vision faded so much that I could hardly see the angels surrounding me. I locked gazes with my sister. Knowing that Jezebell was next filled me with a sliver of happiness. The Archangel released his grip.

I fell.

CHAPTER ONE

Present Day

Defiant and vengeful by nature, the Fallen were often the catalyst in destruction and mayhem of this world. Meddling with the humans' lives, especially divine persons, was a pastime many enjoyed. However, that was before angels were recruited as Guardians, a millennium before I fell.

Now, I was a Fallen – a wicked creature with no purpose and driven by an untamed urge to hunt. Filling the void left in our soulless bodies motivated many of us to play with humans. But the games we indulged in weren't merry and innocent; no, we would partake in more torturous entertainment out of jealousy. For even though we wield infernal-powers, they have one thing we crave.

Souls.

An infinite number of days lay before me... if I chose it. There was

always a choice. I could accept my fate and perish, or consume a human's soul and live the length of their life. I'd chosen the latter. The last human soul I devoured glowed like a fireball inside my chest. Even though my body never aged, I grew older. Each passing day the soul I'd harvested faded a little more. One day it'd eventually begin to flicker and then never shine again. I would die. The Imbiber angel who'd consumed it would have one less glowing orb rippling through her hauntingly beautiful body. If that day came, the Jael and Neriah would know I'd finally perished.

Until then, it was game on.

Night blanketed me as I left the abandoned firehouse, engulfing me in the shadows of the Santa Cruz. The 'Holy Cross City' wasn't a home to many others like me because of its namesake. I was an outcast on godly levels and chose seclusion from the other Fallen as well. A horde of us would encourage chaos, and thus humans had a dangerously high fatality rate wherever we resided. Out of boredom, many Fallen would instigate fights; thus, our mortality was more likely. Since we were soulless, our death would ensure that we'd never be carried to an afterlife.

Living in seclusion was my choice, one of the few I had left, thanks to my sister – wherever Jezebell lived now. It had been a few human lifetimes since I'd seen her last. I wondered if she dirtied her hands like me or accepted her fate. Archangels wouldn't hunt her if she made the choice to die...no, the kicker was that they leave us alone and let us live out the days of our pointless life, unless we killed a human and consumed their soul.

The faded memory of me holding my dagger to her throat replayed over and over in my mind even though it happened centuries ago. I could have saved her from this horrible fate, but I'd decided not to. She deserved

a fortune similar to mine. For when angels sin, they fall. And Jezebell lied. The human she told me was awaiting death wasn't ready. I carried his soul to the afterlife before it was time, affectively changing His plan. There were days I regretted the decision not to kill her as an angel and others I couldn't have been more pleased. Why should Jezebell get to ascend into the afterlife if I couldn't?

I shook the dismal thought from my mind. No use in feeling sorry for myself – save that for the poor fool I'd select. The soul harbored in my chest no longer glowed with radiance. My time was running out. I wasn't about to lie down and die. It was time to hunt.

The Guardian didn't venture far from the young man, a modern-day prophet, which he swore to protect. The angel's jet black eyes darted back and forth, scanning the lobby for possible threats. His onyx skin and hair were meant to help him blend into the shadows if he ever made his presence known. Angels were invisible to mortals and most Fallen, but my sight was still intact, as was my hearing. These senses were the only angelic features the demonic gel hadn't been pillaged from me. My theory was that Jael's poison had temporarily diminished my sight, so the Archangel thought she'd stripped me of it with her poison. Since Neriah damaged my eardrums with his howls, it was my best guess for my hearing too. Eventually both returned, but it had been painfully excruciating.

All the same, I could still spy on my adversaries – like this Guardian. Daniel wore an ancient dark robe that shimmered in gray hues depending how the light hit it. Stitched into the fabric was a silvery design of a knife piercing a snake. The knife represented the Guardians; the snake stood for all that was evil. The emblem was meant to be symbolic amongst

those who protected the righteous.

Even though the Guardian was dressed in dark clothing, I'd be able to spot this particular angel in the darkest of nights for I'd spent countless years training him. Daniel had been my Disciple – my pupil.

But that was a lifetime ago.

Daniel was now just another faceless enemy who'd slay me if given the chance. Guardians had the power to *Beckon* angels by touching the snake and knife emblem that was sewn into their robes; thus, I could quickly find myself in unwanted company.

He gripped his granite crossbow. The quiver holding his deadly poisoned-tipped arrows hung loosely over his bare shoulder. It irked me that he didn't tighten the strap. Even when I was training him, it had driven me insane to see him so sloppily dressed.

Since I'd trained Daniel to kill mercilessly, I knew I should have turned around the moment I'd spotted him. But I was unexplainably drawn to his protectee; an indescribable force tugged me closer to the young man. I'd never been so drawn to a mortal's soul before. My hunger compelled me to hunt for any soul, but something about this particular human awoke my appetite tenfold.

Peering around the ticket booth, I kept my distance but memorized every feature about the human. The sight of him made me squirm – not merely because of his youth, which would grant me many years before I technically needed to hunt again. There was something else about him that mystified me. Gorgeousness couldn't define his otherworldly appearance. His sandy blond hair was gelled; the product twisted his locks upward and slightly off-centered. The vogue hairstyle accentuated his sky-blue eyes.

Our eyes locked for a fraction of a second, but in that moment I lost the ability to breathe. His gaze didn't veer away either. I dug my nails into the ticket booth as if it'd keep me grounded.

I wanted him – craved his soul. Lingering in his eyes was a hunger as well; one that shouldn't have resided. Even if I had worked my Persuasion, he shouldn't have found me so intriguing.

I quickly found it impossible to continue our eye-contest and dropped my gaze. But even then I couldn't take my eyes off his lips – his luscious, delicious looking lips. I'd kissed many mortals before, but none were as delectable as his.

As if sensing a change in his protectee, Daniel stepped in front of him. Ducking back behind the booth, I closed my eyes and listened for footsteps that would signal Daniel's approach. Nothing. I forced my head down and acted like I needed to powder my nose rather than memorize everything about the young man. Walking behind a group of noisy girls, I headed toward the restrooms.

Standing behind a privacy wall, I peered out and studied the group of high schoolers the young man talked to. They stood in line for snacks that would sustain their appetite during the movie. The scent of buttered popcorn and chocolate didn't make my mouth water in the way he did. The sharp line of his jaw pleased me; there was still touch of baby-fat to his cheeks. His soul was still young enough to sustain me for more than a few decades, unlike the last one.

His bone structure and muscular physique suggested he participated in high-school sports. His body was healthy and strong – not an indication that his spiritual health was intact, but since he had a

Guardian, I assumed his ethics and morals would prove to be adequate to sustain me.

He towered over his lady friend, a blond haired girl. Her shirt hugged her figure, although I thought it was a little tight. But I wasn't one to judge. Tonight, I'd dressed skimpy to match my demonic shell the Archangels had condemned me with. At least my provocative appearance easily lured unsuspecting humans. However, my manifestation shell backfired with this human. It didn't take long to conclude it wouldn't appeal to the sophisticated young man. Nevertheless, I'd followed him and his company into the movie theater. Even the cat-calls I'd gotten from others hadn't distracted me from hunting him.

His button-up white shirt and khaki slacks suggested he was well-off, but it was his Oakley shades hanging from his shirt, Rolex watch strapped to his wrist, leather jacket that covered his wide shoulders that screamed privileged. As enchanting as his sky-blue eyes appeared, I kept getting distracted with his lush, rosy lips. It didn't help that he licked them when our gaze locked again. He narrowed his eyes and looked at me, really studied me like I looked familiar.

I sincerely doubted that.

Even if I was a normal high-school girl, our paths would hardly cross. I was like the white chocolate coating that covered a sinfully delicious cherry. My chipped fingernail polish, provocative shirt, and tight jeans were meant to engross men, but his gaze never dropped from my eyes. The piercings in my ears and studs in my eyebrows would have sent his parents running. Even the illusive, sparkling tattoos that decorated my back, neck, and hair line couldn't sidetrack him from my gaze.

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