

Chosen at Nightfall (Shadow Falls Book 5)

By C. C. Hunter



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When Kylie Galen entered Shadow Falls Camp, she left her old life behind forever and discovered a world more magical than she ever imagined. A place where you're two best friends can be a witch and a vampire...and where love doesn't happen the way you'd expect.

When Kylie's most powerful enemy returns to destroy her once and for all, there's only one way to stop him—to step into her full powers and make a stunning transformation that will amaze everyone around her. But her journey won't be complete until she makes one final choice...which guy to love. Should she choose to the werewolf who broke her heart but will give anything to win her back, or the half-fae who ran from their attraction before they had a chance? Everything she's learned at Shadow Falls has been preparing her for this moment—when her fate will be revealed and her heart claimed forever. From author C. C. Hunter comes *Chosen at Nightfall*, the final book in the New York Times bestselling Shadow Falls series about a camp for paranormal teens.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Ms. Hunter handles this series with such deftness, crafting a wonderful tale. I highly recommend this series filled with darkness and light, hope and danger, friendship and romance." ?Night Owl Reviews (Top Pick) on Shadow Falls

"Jam-packed with action and romance . . . Hunter's lifelike characters and paranormal creatures populate a plot that will keep you guessing till the very end. A perfect mesh of mystery, thriller, and romance. Vampires, were and fae, oh my!" ?Romantic Times on Shadow Falls

"The newest in the super-popular teen paranormal genre, this book is one of the best. This one is going on the keeper shelf!" ?Fresh Fiction on Shadow Falls

About the Author

C.C. Hunter is the author of the young adult fantasy series Shadow Falls, including the books *Born at Midnight* and *Awake at Dawn*. She lives in Spring, Texas, where she's at work on her next novel.

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Chapter One

Kylie Galen looked up from the slice of pepperoni pizza on the fine china plate and tried to ignore the ghost swinging the bloody sword right behind her grandfather and great-aunt. Her newfound family members were ... good people, but a tad on the proper side. And proper people probably wouldn't appreciate an uninvited ghost getting their dining room walls bloody.

The spirit, a female, dark flowing hair, in her early thirties, stopped in mid-swing and stared directly at Kylie. *You kill or be killed. It's really rather simple.* The words reverberated in Kylie's head. They were communicating telepathically, and considering the topic being discussed, that was probably for the best. *That's not simple,* Kylie shot back. *And I'm trying to eat, so would you mind leaving?*

That's rude, the ghost said. You're supposed to help spirits. You need to abide by your guidelines. Kylie twisted the cloth napkin she'd placed in her lap. Okay, was there something written in the rule books about a ghost whisperer having to be polite to obnoxious spirits?

Oh, wait, she didn't have a freaking rule book, or guidelines. She was winging it. Winging everything, in fact: ghost whispering, being a supernatural, being someone's girlfriend.

Being someone's ex-girlfriend!

Lately it felt like she was winging her whole damned life, and making a fine mess of things, too. Like her decision to leave Shadow Falls, the camp/recently turned boarding school for paranormal teens. It had felt like the right thing to do at the time.

Had.

She'd been here at the chameleons' compound less than two weeks, and she wasn't so sure anymore. True, she'd had a good reason to come—to discover more about her paranormal heritage. To get to know Malcolm Summers, her grandfather, and her great-aunt Francyne.

Months after learning she wasn't all human, she'd finally discovered she was a chameleon, a rare species that had gone into hiding after an organized unit of the paranormal government, the Fallen Research Unit, the FRU, had used them as lab rats to try to explain their abilities. Kylie's own grandmother had died as a result. And now the same branch of the FRU wanted to take Kylie in for testing. That was so not happening! However, Kylie's main motivation for leaving Shadow Falls didn't have anything to do with the FRU, or with finding out about her heritage. Nope. It had everything to do with running away.

Running away from Lucas, the werewolf she'd fallen in love with. The werewolf who had promised his soul to another werewolf and expected Kylie to believe it meant nothing. How could he have done that? How could he have kissed Kylie with all that passion for the last month, yet every time he went to his dad's house, he was seeing that girl? How could Kylie stay at Shadow Falls and continue to face him?

The problem was, she might have run away from Lucas, but she'd brought the heartbreak with her. And now, she wasn't just hurting over a certain werewolf; she was hurting because ... every cell in her body missed Shadow Falls. Okay, so maybe not really Shadow Falls, but she missed the people. Friends who had become as close as family: Holiday, the fae camp leader, who was like a big sister. Burnett, the stern vampire, the other camp leader who was a friend and sort of a father figure wrapped into one. Her two roommates, Della and Miranda, who'd felt abandoned by Kylie when she left. And Derek, who'd vowed his love to her, even when he knew she loved Lucas.

Oh God, she missed everyone so much. Amazingly, she was only a few miles away from Shadow Falls, tucked away in a secluded spot in what Texans referred to as the hill country, and yet it might as well have been across the world.

Sure, she'd spoken to Holiday every day. At first, her grandfather had refused her this right, but her aunt had insisted he see reason. He'd relented, but only if she used a certain phone and kept the conversations very short, so the calls couldn't be traced. And by no means could Kylie tell anyone where she was.

Because of the camp's affiliation with the FRU, her grandfather didn't trust anyone at Shadow Falls. And his distrust only added to Kylie's feelings of isolation from everyone she loved. Even her mom, who called to inform her that she was about to fly to England with John, her mom's new boyfriend, whom Kylie wasn't so sweet on. Sure, her granddad allowed her to call her mom back every time she called. So they had spoken twice. But only twice.

Kylie's throat knotted with tears, but she refused to cry. She had to be strong. Pull up her big-girl panties and be an adult.

"Is the pizza to your liking?" Francyne, her great-aunt, asked.

"Yes, it's great." Kylie watched the two older people slice into their piece of pepperoni pizza as if it were steak. She knew they served it just for her—because after barely touching her meals these last few days, they'd asked about her favorite foods. Feeling obligated, both to eat and to comply with their show of manners, she forced herself to cut a bite of pizza from her slice and slip it into her mouth.

She wasn't vampire right now, so she should be able to enjoy food. But nope.

Nothing tasted right.

Nothing felt right.

Not eating pizza with a fork off a fine china plate that looked old and rare enough to be in a museum. Not sitting at this fancy dining table with a formal place setting. And especially not feeling right was the spirit who now moved in closer to her grandfather and held the sword over his head.

Kylie stared at the spirit. *Either tell me exactly what you need, that doesn't involve murder, or go away.* A drop of blood splattered onto her grandfather's forehead. Not that he could feel it or see it. But Kylie could. The spirit performed this show just to get Kylie's attention.

And it was working.

Stop it! Leave. Kylie shot a warning glance at the spirit.

You are in a nasty mood, huh? the ghost said.

Yeah, she was, Kylie admitted to herself. A broken heart would do that to you. It pretty much sucked the joy out of life. Or maybe what sucked the most was missing everyone.

Not that Kylie's time here had been in vain. She'd discovered a lot about herself, about chameleons, these thirteen days. Chameleons had only come into being in the last hundred years. While they considered themselves a species, they were really a blend of all paranormals—individuals who retained the DNA and powers of all the species.

Problem was, learning to control that power was a real bitch. Most chameleons didn't even master the feat until their mid-twenties. Not that there were a lot of young chameleons trying to master things. Chameleons were rare. Her grandfather said about a hundred compounds existed across the world, but in total there were less than ten thousand of her kind. And only one in ten chameleon couples had been able to produce a child. Hence the low population.

Kylie couldn't help but wonder if she'd ever be able to have a child. But damn, she was sixteen, too young to start worrying about being infertile.

"How did classes go today?" her grandfather asked.

Kylie focused on the man. In his seventies, his hair held tight to its strawberry blond color, with only a few signs of graying. His eyes, a vivid light blue, matched hers and her father's.

Another drop of blood landed on his cheek. Kylie scowled at the smirking spirit who sliced the sword though the air only an inch above his head.

I said, stop it! Kylie tightened her eyes.

"So it didn't go well?" her grandfather asked, obviously reading Kylie's expression.

"No, it went fine. I'm ... I was able to switch my pattern from a werewolf to a fae." Supernaturals all had patterns that could be seen by other supernaturals. Chameleons had their own pattern, one they hid. And unlike any other supernatural they could change into any other species, and attain this species' powers with the transformation.

Problem was, like their other powers, it wasn't easy to control. Classes here didn't involve so much English, math, and science, but training on how to control one's powers and to hide their true pattern from the world. "That's amazing. Then why the long face?" her grandfather asked.

"It's just..." I'm miserable here. I want to go back to Shadow Falls. The words sat on the tip of her tongue, but she couldn't say them. Not until she knew for sure that she'd given this a shot. And until she knew how she would survive facing Lucas.

"I wasn't frowning at you. It's—"

"Kylie has company," Francyne said. Her aunt wasn't a full-fledged ghost whisperer. She claimed she couldn't see them or hear them, but she could pick up on a spirit's presence easily.

The ghost held the sword up, pointing it at the ceiling as if making some big declaration. *You're about to have more company*.

Kylie didn't know what that was supposed to mean, but she focused on her confused-looking grandfather now and not the spirit.

"Company?" Her grandfather looked at his sister-in-law. "Oh." He tensed. Then his eyes widened. "Is it my wife, or my son, Daniel?"

"No." Kylie wished Daniel, her father, who'd died before she was born, would come for a visit. She could use some TLC, and her father was really good at offering it. However, he'd used all his allotted time on earth.

"It's not them. It's ... someone else," Kylie answered.

Someone who had yet to explain what she wanted or needed. Well, except to tell Kylie she needed her to kill someone. What did the spirit think Kylie was? A killer for hire?

The spirit leaned down close to her grandfather's ear. *It's a shame you can't see me. You're kind of cute.* She proceeded to lick the blood from his cheek. Slowly. And she looked at Kylie when she did it.

Kylie dropped her fork. "Stop licking my grandfather, right now!"

The spirit brought her tongue back into her mouth and stared at Kylie. Stop fighting your fate. Accept what you must do. Let me teach you how you must kill him.

"Kill who?" Kylie blurted out, and then flinched when she realized she'd been speaking aloud.

- "Lick? Kill? What?" her grandfather asked.
- "Nothing," Kylie insisted. "I was talking—"
- "She was talking to the spirit, I think," her aunt said, her brows pinched in worry.
- "About killing someone?" her grandfather asked, and shot Kylie a direct look.

When Kylie didn't answer, Malcolm glanced around the room as if nervous. His expression of fear reminded her so much of the other supernaturals at Shadow Falls.

That's when a thought hit. She'd come here thinking she'd fit in, and yet, even living on a compound of about fifty acres in Texas hill country, with about twenty-five other chameleons, she still didn't fit in. And it wasn't just the ghost whispering, but the fact that she was so much further advanced than the four other teens here. And they weren't overly thrilled to be shown up by the newbie, either.

The elders of the group—which included her grandfather and great-aunt and about four others—guessed that Kylie's early development was because she was also a protector, a supernatural with amazing strength.

While that sounded pretty cool, she would argue with that definition for so many reasons.

Topping those reasons was that she could only use those powers to protect others, and never herself. Which to Kylie didn't make a lick of sense. If she was in charge of protecting others, wasn't it important that she kind of stay alive? Who the heck had made that rule?

Kylie sighed, a sigh that felt as sorrowful on the inside as it sounded leaving her lips. Was it simply her destiny to always be a misfit?

Her grandfather leaned forward and set his silver fork and knife beside the expensive piece of china. "Kylie, I hate to intrude with your ... spirit matters, but why would a spirit be conversing with you about killing someone?"

Kylie bit down on her lip and tried to find a way to explain without completely freaking them out. Especially when it freaked her out. She opened her mouth to say something, but was saved by a bell. A very loud bell, more like a siren. The lights in the chandelier over the table started flickering.

Her grandfather, his frown deepening, pulled out a cell phone from his perfectly pressed white dress shirt, punched one button, and held it to his ear. "What is it?" He paused. "Who?" he snapped, and cut his eyes to Kylie. "I'll be right there!"

He turned the phone off and shot up from his chair, and then faced his sister-in-law. "You and Kylie disappear. Hide out in the barn. I'll be there shortly."

By disappear, Kylie surmised he meant vanish, another thing a chameleon could do. Vanish. Like into thin air.

"What's going on?" Kylie asked, remembering the ghost saying she was about to get company.

"We have intruders." His deep, matter-of-fact tone sounded deeper, more serious.

"Intruders?" Kylie asked.

His eyes tightened. "It's the FRU! Now vanish."

Her aunt came around the table and reached for Kylie's hand. Then the woman vanished, and in a fraction of a second, Kylie looked down and her own legs had disappeared.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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