

## Learning to Love... Book 1: Shade |

### Secrets Revealed

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#### CAELAN

I bid Shade good night at her door before heading up to the fourth floor. I was floating on cloud nine as I bounded happily up the steps.

Finally, after all this time, she knew we were mates. It felt as though a giant weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

I hoped we could start moving forward now that she knew the truth. She was mine, and I intended to claim her as soon as possible.

I was heading to my room when I ran into my mother.

“Caelan!” she said cheerfully. “Back from your date with Shade? Walk with me so you can tell your mother all about it.”

I was more than happy to share. I couldn’t stop smiling as I told her about everything that Shade and I had discussed on our hike and how I’d finally revealed to her that we were fated mates.

“She’ll make a good luna,” my mother remarked. “She’s smart and fiercely protective. I’ll be proud to pass my title down to her.”

“I agree,” I said, suddenly nervous to share the next part. “There is something that I’m a little worried about though. I don’t know how the pack or Elders will react.”

“I’m sure they’ll find her perfectly acceptable. But tell me, what’s the matter?”

“Shade is cursed,” I muttered.

“Cursed?” she questioned, her brow knitting in confusion. “How is she cursed?”

“Her mother was killed when she was young. She witnessed the whole thing, and the trauma forced her to shift. It’s called the Wolf Born from Sorrow,” I explained. “Apparently, it makes her howl deadly to any who hear.”

“That’s awful!” my mother cried. “I knew she was an orphan, but to have witnessed it... No child should ever have to go through that.”

“I know,” I agreed as I patted her hand comfortingly.

“What about her father?” she asked. “Was he killed too? Is that how she wound up at Thunder Moon with Butch?”

“Um, yeah,” I murmured hesitantly. “There’s something else you should probably be aware of.”

I knew that what I had to say next was going to upset her even more, but she had a right to know. She’d known Shade’s mother. It was wrong that she believed like everyone else that Shade Mallory had been dead all this time.

“Shade is Alpha Butch’s daughter,” I admitted. “Sunny’s twin sister. Butch lied when he said she died with her mother that day.”

“I knew it!” she snarled angrily. “That spineless... I just knew it was too much of a coincidence that they looked so alike. I can’t believe that this whole time Brona’s child was not only alive but being used as a servant and shield by her own family.”

I nodded, a little scared to speak as my mother raged on. Luna Maty didn’t get angry often, but when she did, she was absolutely terrifying.

“That good for nothing... I’m completely disgusted,” she grumbled. “How could he?! This whole time he was pretending his daughter was dead! What’s wrong with that wolf?! Why would he put his own pup through that?!”

“Shade said they blame her for her mother’s death,” I admitted. “I think she actually believes it was her fault.”

“That’s ridiculous!” my mother exclaimed. “It was an accident! Brona never would’ve wanted her pup to believe something like that. I bet that was just a convenient excuse Butch used to distance himself from her. He’s never fully accepted Shade because of her abilities.”

“Abilities?” I questioned. “You mean her curse?”

“No,” she sighed. “Shade was born with a rare ability. It’s known as amplification. She can tap into the emotions of another and amplify them.”

“What?! How is that even possible?”

“It’s a gift,” my mother explained. “She can focus whatever emotion someone is feeling and strengthen it. She could make a happy person happier, a sad person unbelievably depressed, or send an angry person into a blind rage.”

I stared at her in disbelief. I had never heard of such an ability in all my studies.

“An ability like hers could cause a lot of trouble in the wrong hands,” my mother continued. “When she was young, she had difficulty controlling it. It caused a few problems within the pack. But Brona knew it was a gift from the Goddess. Butch felt differently, of course.”

She scoffed, glaring at something in the distance as we strolled through the gardens.

“He thought it should be hidden. He was worried how others would react if they found out. He’s always been obsessed with appearances. Poor Brona called me in tears on more than one occasion because he’d called little Shade a ‘freak.’ Can you believe it?! His own daughter.”

She shook her head as I tried to wrap my mind around what she’d just said.

“The only reason that we ever allied with Thunder Moon was because Brona was his fated mate,” she added. “She was a member of Harvest Moon before she left to be his luna. If I’d known then what I know now, I would’ve tried to talk her out of it. But the mate bond is a powerful thing.”

“Shade didn’t tell me any of this,” I admitted. “Why would she tell me about the curse and not about her ability?”

“I’m guessing she’s not allowed to talk about it,” my mother reasoned. “Like I said, Butch hated that she was different and didn’t want anyone to ever find out. Though I bet he hasn’t hesitated to have her use it in secret for his own gain.”

I raised an eyebrow, giving her a curious look.

“If she used her amplification abilities on his other warriors,” she explained. “Then they would fight harder and have more drive to protect the pack. It’s probably what’s made them so successful against Dark Moon.”

Now that my mother brought up Dark Moon, it got me thinking. Shade had two unique powers. Did Alpha Huxley want her curse or her amplification ability? It seemed that either would make her a highly effective weapon.

I shuddered to think of the effect it could have if it was combined with Huxley’s ruthless ambition.

“Speaking of Dark Moon, they were sniffing around our borders a few days ago,” I confessed. “Knowing what we know, I think they were looking for a way to get to her. I think Huxley wants to force her into becoming his mate so he can use her.”

“If that’s true, then we need to do whatever it takes to protect her,” my mother demanded. “Not just because she’s your mate, but I can’t even begin to imagine what an alpha like Huxley would do to her. He’d use her abilities to destroy everyone who opposed him. We would all be in danger.”

“Don’t worry, Mom,” I said. “I’m not going to let anything happen to her ever again.”

“I know, Caelan,” she praised with a smile. “That’s why the Goddess gave her you. Because you’re the kind of wolf who deserves her. You’ll do right by your mate.”

I sighed, happy to know my mother approved of Shade. “Is there anything we can do to end this choosing ritual? Now that Shade knows we’re mates, I’m really uncomfortable courting other females around her, even if it’s just for pretend.”

“I know, my boy,” she replied, patting me on the arm. “You’re almost there. You just need to get through the family dinner before you can announce a final choice. If you want, you can dismiss Briggita. Then only Sunny and Shade would be left, and since they’re family, we’d only have to make one trip.”

I grinned at the devious look in her eye. Alpha Butch would be forced to acknowledge that Shade was his other daughter, and we could take Sunny home and leave her there.

“That’s not a bad idea, Mom,” I replied. “Should be an interesting dinner with Alpha Butch and the daughter he doesn’t acknowledge exists,” I added sarcastically.

“Well, you know. Two birds with one stone,” she said with a mischievous smile.

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The next morning, I went straight to Shade’s room. I hadn’t been able to sleep all night, turning over the conversation I’d had with my mother till dawn.

“What’s going on, Caelan?” she asked as I settled into the chair across from her. “Is everything all right?”

“Everything’s fine,” I assured her as I took her hand, feeling calmer instantly. “I just had a couple of things to discuss with you.”

“Okay.”

“First of all,” I began. “I wanted to let you know that Briggita has been dismissed from the choosing. You and Sunny are the only participants left.”

I couldn’t tell by the look on her face if she was bothered by the news. Did it anger her that the choosing was still in effect even though she was my fated mate? Or was it that Sunny was still technically a candidate?

“This will be over soon,” I promised, hoping my words would ease her mind. “And then I can tell everyone that you are my mate. We just have one more hurdle to cross before we can call it finished.”

“And what’s that?” she asked.

“Well,” I said nervously, squeezing her hand. “We have to go to Thunder Moon to have dinner with your father.”

“What?” she exclaimed.

“It’s supposed to be like a chance to see if the families can get along. It’s obviously just a formality at this point, but it still needs to happen before I can officially end the ritual. My parents and I will be there, but I didn’t want to blindside you.”

“Couldn’t you just have dinner with Sunny and my father?” she asked, her pale eyes wide. “Do I have to be a part of it?”

“I’m afraid so.”

We sat there for a few minutes as she stared at the ground, worry creasing her brow.

“He won’t admit that he’s my father,” she stated with certainty.

“He’ll have to.”

“I don’t want to force him, Caelan,” she replied.

“I don’t think we have much choice here, Shade,” I admitted with a sigh. “You’re also his daughter and heir, but he’s treated you like a servant, striking you down to omega for something that wasn’t your fault. It isn’t right. He deserves to face the consequences for his actions.”

“He did what he thought was best,” she murmured.

“You know that your mother was from Harvest Moon?” I asked.

She looked up, shaking her head.

“You had family here,” I continued. “Family that died believing that they’d lost their daughter and their granddaughter in the same day. He lied to them, Shade. He lied to everyone and stripped you of your identity for no reason. I can’t allow him to get away with that.”

“Can I think about it?” she replied reluctantly.

“Yeah,” I sighed. “There’s one other thing we need to discuss.”

This was the part of the conversation that I’d been dreading even more than having to talk to her about the dinner. She’d elected to keep her amplification a secret, and though I was sure she had her reasons for doing so, I had to make her confide in me now.

“Is there anything else I need to know about you?” I pressed. “Anything important?”

“I’m not sure what you mean,” she answered as she squirmed in her seat.

“Shade,” I begged. “You’re my mate. I want to know everything about you, and I want you to trust me enough to feel safe sharing it with me. I know that there’s something you aren’t telling me.”

I needed her to tell me about her ability for her safety and for the safety of my pack.

“How’d you find out?” she asked dejectedly.

“My mother,” I replied. “She was very close to your mother.”

“I wasn’t trying to hide it,” she said. “It’s just not something I’ve ever been allowed to talk about. My father doesn’t want anyone to know, but I promise, I’m not dangerous.”

“I didn’t think you were,” I replied. “But I need to know about it. I think it’s part of why Huxley wants you. I think he plans to find a way to use it. Can you tell me how it works?”

She stared at our clasped hands. “No, but I can show you.”

Next Chapter

Continue to the next chapter of Learning to Love... Book 1: Shade