

Learning to Love... Book 1: Shade |

Reactions

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CAELAN

“Zeta, huh?” Shade asked with a smile, playfully bumping her shoulder against mine as we walked back toward our rooms.

“Well, I would’ve said luna,” I teased. “But I knew you weren’t ready for that, so I figured this was the next best thing.”

“I could’ve just remained an omega,” she shrugged.

“No,” I asserted. “You were never meant to be an omega. You were born the daughter of an alpha. Your father demoting you was an injustice. I was simply righting a wrong.”

She nodded as we continued up the stairs in comfortable silence.

I sighed happily, taking her hand. She was finally a member of the Harvest Moon Pack. It felt right. Like something had been missing from the pack all along, but now it was finally complete.

“Well, here we are,” I hummed as we reached her door. “We should both get some sleep. The pack is going to be eager to get to know their newest member tomorrow.” I reached up to brush my thumb over her cheek. “Harvest Moon is lucky to have you, Shade.”

Admittedly, I was reluctant to leave. Even though her room was just across the hall from mine, it still felt too far.

“You’re probably right,” she said, leaning into my touch. “Thank you, Caelan. I couldn’t have asked for a better welcome.”

Her eyes flicked to mine, and it felt like the world stopped. The blue within them swirled and danced, and I wanted to lose myself in those twin pools of wonder.

A blush spread across her cheeks, and that delicate pink tint on her skin did it for me. I closed the distance between us and pressed my lips to hers.

I only intended for it to be a simple good night kiss, but my resolve flew out the window the moment she groaned, parting her lips and allowing me access.

Her tongue tentatively brushed against mine, hesitant at first before growing bolder as she explored. Her fingers curled into my shirt, her desire radiating across my skin.

A low rumble vibrated through my chest as I wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her closer, my other hand weaving into her hair as I deepened the kiss.

I fumbled with the handle, somehow managing to open the door to her room, and we stumbled inside, still locked in our embrace.

She draped her arms around my neck as I lifted her, the skirt of her dress sliding up so she could wrap her legs around my waist.

My hands coasted over her incredible curves.

Goddess, I've never wanted someone so badly in all my life. Never craved the touch of another so completely. I could never get enough of her. She's everything. I want her light, her darkness, every part of her. I love this woman.

I carried her across the room until my knees hit the bed, and we tumbled onto the mattress together.

I pressed myself against her, my wolf howling in delight as she pulled me closer. She moaned when I rocked my hips, and every part of me felt electric, my need for her pulsing through my veins.

Damn all these clothes. I love this dress on her, but I want nothing more than to rip it off right now.

I was about to do just that when I suddenly realized what I was doing. This wasn't just any woman that I held in my arms. This was my mate, and I didn't want her first time to be like this. I wanted to make it something special because she deserved that.

It took every ounce of strength I possessed to pull back, every molecule of my being screaming for me to stay. I held my body over hers, trembling as I stared at my amazing mate.

“What’s wrong, Caelan?” she panted, her chest rising with every flustered breath.

Her long, silky hair shimmered in the moonlight filtering through the window, fanning out like a silver halo around her head. Her soft lips were swollen, her cheeks flushed as she gazed at me adoringly.

Goddess, I want her. I want her more than the air I breathe, but she deserves something unforgettable. She deserves to see how important she is to me.

“I’m sorry, Shade. I got carried away,” I gasped, trying to catch my own breath as I watched her. “I don’t want you to feel pressured into anything you aren’t ready for.”

“I’m not. I want to be with you, Caelan. You’re my mate.”

Hearing her say that nearly did me in. I kissed her again, pressing my forehead to hers as we separated.

“Goddess, I love to hear you say that,” I whispered. “But we should wait.”

“We should?” she asked incredulously.

“Yes. I want this to be something special for you. Something romantic and incredible like you deserve. Something worthy of one of your romances,” I murmured. “When I finally take you, I want to feel like I’ve earned it.”

“You don’t have to earn it, Caelan,” she countered. “I’m already yours.”

I whimpered, struggling to control myself. “Soon, my love. I promise. Very, very soon.”

She smiled, looking a little disappointed. “The waiting won’t get any easier.”

“I know,” I replied, leaning in for one last good night kiss before I reluctantly pushed myself off her with a sigh. “But it will be worth it. I’ll make sure of it.”

She sat up and watched me with eager eyes as I backed away. Her hair was a tousled mess and her dress was bunched around her thighs. When she ran

her tongue across her bottom lip like she could taste me, I almost jumped on her again.

“Good night, Shade,” I managed, my voice strained as I fumbled with the doorknob.

“Good night, Caelan,” she whispered.

Early the next afternoon, I sat in my office staring at a very official-looking letter carrying the black seal of Dark Moon.

They wouldn't.

I opened it, rage filling me as I scanned the contents. My fist slammed down on my desk, the wood cracking beneath it.

“Dillon, my office. Now!” I called over the mind-link.

Moments later, the door burst open, and my beta hurried inside.

“Caelan, what’s going on?” he asked warily when he saw the look on my face.

“Read,” I grunted, shoving the letter in his direction.

He grabbed the paper, scanning the contents quickly before looking up at me in confusion.

“Is this for real?” he queried.

“It would appear so,” I growled.

“Why would they do this?” he wondered.

“Because Alpha Huxley wants Shade for himself,” I spat in disgust. “He knows about her powers, and he’s determined to have her for his own so he can use her. Whether she wants it or not.”

“Seems awfully risky on his part,” he sighed. “This could start a war with Harvest Moon.”

"That's what he wants," I snarled. "He knows he could never take us on directly, but if he defeats me in a challenge, he becomes the pack leader. If he gets his rotten paws on her, he'll be able to utilize his alpha command to make her use her abilities."

"You knew this was a possibility," Dillon murmured, tossing the letter aside. "Her father was a surprise, but we expected Huxley to try something. You'll just have to remind him of his place. Gonna have a hell of a fight on your hands between the two of them."

"I'll do whatever it takes," I growled. "I won't let him have her. I won't let either of them have her."

"Are you going to tell Shade?" Dillon asked, giving me a calculating look.

"Yes. She'll be there," I sighed. "I don't want her finding out last minute. That will only make things worse."

"Well, she'll probably be upset and worried," he said as he turned to leave. "I'll give Taffy a heads up."

"I'd appreciate it."

He left me alone with my thoughts, but I knew the longer I sat and stewed, the more furious I would get. Huxley's challenge needed to be answered immediately, and the wheels set in motion. I had to get in front of this before it all came to a head.

"Shade, are you in your room?" I called through her newly formed mind-link.

"Yes. Do you need me for something?" she replied.

"Just stay there. I'll come to you."

I huffed in irritation, taking one final look at the letter on my desk before I stormed out of my office. I tried to calm myself as I climbed the stairs to the fourth floor, but I was still fuming by the time I reached her door.

Shade was sitting on the couch, her legs delicately draped across its arm when I entered. She placed her bookmark between the pages of an old book before closing it and setting it down on the table.

She looked so content that I almost hated myself for having to ruin her good mood.

“What is it, Caelan? What’s going on?” she pressed, clearly sensing my unease.

I sat down next to her, taking her hand. I needed to be close to her, to breathe in her scent just to keep myself from exploding.

“There’s been another challenge,” I admitted quickly, not seeing the point in dragging out the inevitable.

“*Another* challenge?” she questioned, her eyebrows knitting together in surprise. “Who else would challenge you for me?”

“Dark Moon,” I grumbled. “Alpha Huxley has issued a challenge for the right to mate with you.”

Her face paled. “But...you’re already fighting my father. You can’t fight Alpha Huxley too.”

I knew she could tell by the grim expression on my face that was exactly what I intended to do.

“What?! No, Caelan! You can’t!” she cried, throwing herself into my arms. “What if something happens to you?! I won’t stand there and do nothing. I can’t lose you.”

I held her close, my chest swelling as I realized what she was saying. She cared for me, maybe as much as I cared for her. I pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

“You won’t,” I promised. “As long as I get to hold you when it’s all over, I can get through anything.”

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