

## Shade Kendrick

"Are you all right?" I questioned, seeing the bewildered look on Caelan's face.

"All right? I'm a lot better than just all right," he assured me with a chuckle. "I've never felt this powerful before. It's intense."

"Really? What are you feeling?"

I pushed myself up on my elbows. *My mother had said that our connection would be even more potent once we completed the bond. I can feel Caelan's strength as though it were my own. Can he feel my gifts as well?*

"I feel you, Shade," Caelan remarked, his voice full of awe. "Everything about you. I feel your love, your joy, and your endless empathy. I feel your ups and your downs, your anxieties...and there's something else. An energy. It's both pleasant and uncomfortable, strengthening while weakening. It's the strangest thing I've ever felt."

"That's my amplification."

"And you feel this way all the time?"

I nodded. My ability was a constant struggle, almost an entirely separate life force that existed within me. Always a part of me, but never quite my own.

"You'll probably feel it until we can control the bond better. I've heard that you can put up a wall like we do with the mind-link. Then you wouldn't have to feel that extra energy all the time," I suggested as he rolled over me.

My mother had shut out my father like that when their relationship fell apart. He had made a point to remind me that it was my fault every year on the anniversary of their mating.

"I don't want to do that," Caelan replied, shaking his head. "I don't want any walls between us. I want to feel what you feel, Shade. Any burden you carry, I want to carry too. I'll adjust and learn to live with it as you have."

I grinned, leaning forward and capturing his lips in a grateful kiss.

*This man is a constant surprise. How does he always know the right thing to say?*

Caelan pulled away with a groan, running his fingers through my hair and pushing the long strands out of my face as he stared deeply into my eyes. He sighed before placing another soft kiss against my lips.

"As much as I hate to ruin this moment, we do have a party full of guests to return to," he whispered. "Believe me, I'd much rather stay out here like this with you forever, but we should head back soon."

"I know," I grumbled. "Just a few more minutes, then we can leave."

He pressed me back against the mattress, smiling as his lips hovered over mine. "Anything for you, my love."

\*\*\*

Oliver was waiting for us outside the pack house when we pulled in. He flashed us a knowing smirk, taking a sip of his drink as he held out a pair of dry pants for Caelan.

"What happened to your clothes, Alpha?" he teased, causing Caelan to growl.

"Just give me those," he grumbled, ripping the clothes from his gamma's grasp as Oliver laughed loudly.

I joined Oliver while Caelan changed.

He slipped his arm around my waist, grinning at me. "Come on. Show me. I want to be the first to see it since I had to leave the party for Mr. Wardrobe Malfunction over there."

I moved my hair aside, allowing him a look at my newly formed, crescent-shaped mark.

"Very nice," he praised with a low whistle. "I always knew Caelan had a big mouth, but this proves it."

"Seriously," Caelan huffed, zipping up his pants and giving Oliver a playful shove.

Oliver stumbled backward with a boisterous laugh as Caelan wrapped his arm around me and pulled me close. He glanced at my mark for a moment as if inspecting its size before grunting in approval. I suppressed the urge to chuckle.

"I'm just messing with you," Oliver replied, slinging his arm around Caelan's shoulder before we all turned and began walking toward the garden. "Seriously, I'm happy for you guys. This has been a long time coming, and I'm glad you found each other."

"You're next, you know," Caelan mused. "Dillon and I are both mated. It's time we found your special someone."

"I certainly hope so," Oliver stated with a smile, his eyes twinkling as he glanced toward the full moon. "Come on, let's get you guys back. Gotta have your big entrance or Luna Maty will have my head."

He polished off his glass as he headed back up the path, swaying ever so slightly.

"Is he going to be all right?" I questioned, watching Oliver stumble over a paver.

"Yeah, he'll be fine," Caelan assured me. "He's a bit of a lightweight. But I guarantee if anything were to happen, he'd sober up like that." He snapped his fingers for emphasis. "I've seen him do it before."

We walked in silence for a few moments, the sound of the music growing louder along with the gentle hum of voices immersed in celebration. I glanced at him, pride swelling in my chest at the sight of my mark on his neck.

*Mine.*

We stopped just outside of the pavilion and waited while Caelan gave his father the opportunity to quiet the crowd. It took longer this time around as the drinks had been flowing while we were away.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it's that time again. It's my great pleasure to introduce Alpha Caelan Kendrick and his mate, Shade Kendrick!" Alpha Leal's voice bellowed.

*Shade Kendrick.*

My breath caught as the name resounded in my mind. I was no longer Shade Mallory, the unwanted she-wolf from the Thunder Moon Pack. I was Shade Kendrick, the mate of Alpha Caelan Kendrick and the future luna of the Harvest Moon Pack.

We entered the pavilion to a chorus of cheers. Their jubilation was overwhelming but heartwarming, and I smiled, allowing myself to soak it in.

The group parted for us as Caelan led me to the center of the dance floor. They hooted as we flashed our marks, clapping and whistling in their exuberance. Then they descended on us, patting Caelan on the back and hugging me as they offered their congratulations for our union.

A woman with bright auburn hair that fell to her knees approached us. Her irises were a stunning shade of purple, and their unusual color surprised me.

She didn't smell like a wolf, and that unnerved me because I hadn't noticed anyone out of place before. She gave me a kind smile when we turned to greet her, but something mischievous played out within her gaze.

"Shade, this is Luna Arien, the mate of Alpha Ranvir of the Summer Crescent Pack," Caelan stated.

She gripped my hand tightly. "Pleasure to meet you, Luna Shade. I apologize for my mate's absence. He was called away early this morning," she explained. "I, however, couldn't miss the opportunity to celebrate your union."

"We appreciate your presence, Luna. And please send Ranvir our apologies that we missed him last night," Caelan said with a slight bow. "We will be certain to arrange a visit soon."

She nodded, gazing at something beyond me for a second before she finally released my hand.

"You're going to give birth to very powerful pups one day," she announced, her voice seeming to echo. "They will need your expertise to guide them. You must hone your skills and fully understand your ability for their sake. They are depending on you."

She shook her head almost as if she were coming back to herself. "I see great things for the two of you," she declared, her eyes dancing toward Caelan for a moment before returning to mine. "I sense you and I are going to be great friends, and I can't wait to meet the twins."

She walked away with a wide smile as I stared after her in utter shock.

*Pups? Did she say pups, as in more than one?!*

"Twins?" I whispered to Caelan. "What is she talking about?"

"Looks like you and I are going to have our hands full," Caelan remarked with a chuckle. "Luna Arien is a witch. She has visions."

"A witch?!" I exclaimed much louder than I'd intended. "Like a real witch?"

"Yes, a real witch. You couldn't smell it?"

I shrugged. "I could feel that she was different, but I couldn't figure out how."

"Her mate, Alpha Ranvir, is mostly wolf but has a bit of witch in his blood as well. His grandmother or something. Anyway, their pack, the Summer Crescent Pack, is small but powerful because they have a few hybrids. I'm actually surprised they were here. They don't usually socialize much."

"She came to speak with me," I stated with certainty.

I didn't know how I knew, but I did. She came specifically to meet me and share her vision.

"I have a feeling you're right," Caelan agreed, wrapping his arms around me. "Maybe we should slip away again and get started on those pups," he whispered into my ear as he planted a kiss on my neck.

My hands pressed against my stomach. *She said twins! That means two pups at once! Goddess, I hope we have some time before that happens.*