

X-Men: Shade

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That picture of the male unicorn that I drew has a story behind it. You could call this fanfic a mix between X-men and The Last Unicorn.

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Chapter 1

In a time not so far from now, there were creatures called mutants. Whether these mutants were human or not, few knew. The truth was that when humans reached an age of about 15 or so, some of them would gain powers that were not so ordinary. As the mutant population grew, new kinds of mutants were showing up. There were mutants that could turn into animals, each one turning into a different animal.

There was one mutant, named Shade, who had the ability to change into a unicorn. When he was in his human form, however, he still had a small, raised, dark bump in the middle of his forehead that was shaped like a star with eight points. It was in the exact same place where his horn was when he transformed. Whenever he felt any strong emotions, such as fury, love, or frustration, the bump (or horn, depending on which form he was in) would glow with such bright light that you sometimes could hardly see him, for it was blinding.

Shade also had the ability to teleport, for male unicorns had no powers except that they were stronger than anything else in the world, were silent as they walked or ran on cloven hooves, and they could teleport. Each male unicorn could teleport in their own unique way. When Shade teleported, whether he was in his human form or his unicorn one, he left a cloud of black smoke wherever he came from, and wherever he appeared.

In case you didn't know, unicorns can normally only be seen by those who believe in unicorns, or else are very wise. But Shade's horn could be seen by anybody. When Shade's parents found out that he was a mutant, they feared him, and disowned him. He was only fifteen, at the time, so he had nowhere to go. Then he decided that he might as well use the abilities he had for something useful, maybe for entertainment. This gave him the idea to work in a circus.

Of course, once the ringmaster found out what Shade could do, he was glad to hire him. There were other mutants in the circus. One of them could turn into a camel, and another could make things disappear and reappear again. They became friends with Shade right away.

One night they were to perform at a town that was quite large. It was near a school called, Xavier's School For Talented Youngsters, which was in the countryside outside of the town. Everyone thought that this school was simply one for geniuses, but they were wrong. It was really a school for mutants who either ran away from home, or whose parents sent them there. Professor Xavier was going to be at the circus performance that night. He had heard that the circus employed mutants, for even though the

circus told everyone that the performers were magicians, rumors were spreading that they were not magicians at all, but mutants, which frightened everyone.

The professor had hopes of convincing the mutants at the circus to come to his school to either learn, or if they were too old for that, to teach. The school hired other mutants to be the teachers and they were paid well. If the mutants chose to remain at the circus, then eventually everyone would know they were mutants, and out of fear, they would try to lock the mutants up where they couldn't harm anyone.

There were other people that were going to watch the show as well, people dressed in black clothing, so as not to be noticed. They had a mission, and it wasn't anything that meant well to the mutants in the circus. So, as Shade and the others put on their various costumes, they were unaware of the danger lurking in the circus tent. It was a danger that would come to them before the night's end.

Chapter 2

"Hurry up, Shade, show starts in five minutes!" cried the ringmaster from outside the dressing room.

"I'm almost done," Shade replied. He finished buttoning up the last button on his striped pants. It was rather a silly costume, but it worked.

He opened the door and walked toward the door leading outside the building. He could see the circus tent outside. Once he was outside, instead of walking the rest of the way to the tent, he teleported there. He was just inside the door, and no one saw him appear there because the show was just about to start and their attention was on the center of the ring.

Shade tucked his shoulder-length, black hair behind his ears. Just then, the ringmaster went to the center of the ring and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, our show has started. But before you see these marvelous acts, I would like to thank all the young men and women who make this show possible: Emma Brown, Thomas House, Shade Parker, Cassandra Smith, Christopher Edwards, and Kaitlin Miller." A round of applause followed this. The men dressed in black did not clap, but no one noticed this.

And so the show began with Cassandra's disappearing act, followed by a few tricks done by animals. The boy who could turn into a camel did his trick as a camel, he never performed as a human. Then it was Shade's turn. He teleported into the ring, and everyone gasped as they saw the smoke. When it cleared, they saw him and clapped. He did several tricks after that, all of them dealing with teleporting.

But that was not all that he did for performing. After everyone else was done with their various talents and tricks, the ringmaster said, "And now, the moment you've all been waiting for. We have a treat for you tonight, folks. It took us many years to find one, and to train it, but at last we bring you a beast that is so rare, you may think there are no such beasts. They are wild animals, but this one we have tamed at last. Don't blink, or you might miss it. We bring you, the unicorn."

At first all was silent and nothing happened. But then, smoke was everywhere, and when it cleared, it revealed Shade, as a unicorn. There were a lot of admiring "oohs" and "awes" from the audience. That was the last teleporting act Shade did. The rest of his performance as a unicorn was filled with jumping through hoops of fire, and catching rings thrown at him with his horn. He was quite a sight: a black

horse's body, cloven hooves, a black tail resembling that of a lion, and a horn that was even blacker. You don't know what black is until you see the horn of a male unicorn.

After the show, Shade spent half of his time signing pictures and giving away autographs, and the other half letting people pet him and have pictures taken with him. The ringmaster led him out into the ring with a halter. "Step right up," he said, "and pet the unicorn when you buy a picture with him for three dollars. And right now, for five dollars, you can ride him."

Shade glared at the ringmaster. They had made a deal that there would be no rides. He was no animal! A boy about the same age as Shade stepped up, handed over a five dollar bill, and mounted. As soon as he felt the boy's weight push down on him, Shade reared up. The boy hung on tight and did not fall off. So then, he bucked. The boy went flying and landed ten feet away.

Once the ambulance got there, it was obvious that the boy had a broken arm, and perhaps a few broken ribs. Shade was led away, and he heard the ringmaster and the boy's parents discussing how much of the medical bills the circus would pay for. Shade knew that later he would be in a lot of trouble.

Chapter 3

"What were you thinking? Thanks to you, the parents are demanding that we pay every cent of the medical bills!" The ringmaster was pacing back and forth before Shade, his face red and sweaty.

"We had a deal!" exclaimed Shade. "Do you not remember? No rides! None, I am not a mere animal to be ridden! We have a signed contract saying that I would work for you under the condition that no one would ride me, ever."

"The camel-boy has no problem with it, why should you?"

"Because I'm a person. He made his choice, and I made mine. No rides. A unicorn is not a creature to be ridden, anyway."

Outside the room, Professor Xavier was approaching in his wheelchair. He hadn't heard any of the conversation, but he was hoping to catch Shade before he went to bed, and ask him if he would attend his school. Some of the other professors at the school were already on their way to talk to the other mutants that worked at the circus.

Before the professor reached the door, another person came from around a corner and opened the door. A thud was heard a few seconds after the door closed, then another thud, then silence. The man who had walked into the room seconds before was leaving it. He walked down the hall towards another door, but never reached it before time stood still.

The professor had temporarily frozen time in order for him to see what had happened. He opened the door to the room, and found the ringmaster and Shade on the floor, not dead, just sleeping. They had been tranquilized.

Not a minute later, Xavier heard footsteps coming. He had not frozen everyone in time, just the people who were not mutants. He had a way of sensing who was a mutant, and who was not. It was Professor

Jean who opened the door after running down the hallway.

“What happened?” she asked him when she saw the two sleeping figures.

“They've been tranquilized,” he replied.

“By who?”

“Humans. They have found out that the performers here are not simply magicians, but they are mutants. They probably have every mutant performer here tranquilized. Find them and bring them to the bus. Then we'll go back to the academy and talk to them when they wake up. I'm going to go and free that poor unicorn we saw tonight. I believe it is real, and no unicorn deserves to be caged and used for entertainment purposes.”

So, Jean left to go find the other professors to help gather up all the tranquilized mutants. Professor Xavier went to the animal cages to go see if the unicorn was there, but it was not. In fact neither was the camel. “That's strange,” he said to himself. “I thought these were the only cages for the animals, and a unicorn and a camel don't just disappear.”

Chapter 4

Shade opened his eyes. Where was he? He was in a room that had white walls, light brown carpet, and sunshine was pouring into the room through a large window on one wall. “Shade!” a voice exclaimed. “Thank goodness you're awake. You must have been one of the last ones tranquilized.” Shade looked around and saw that he was in a bed with other beds around it and all the performers from the circus were there too. Then again, it wasn't all of them, just the mutants.

“Where am I?” he said, sleepily.

“We're not sure. We think that the humans must have found out that we are mutants and have decided to arrest us, or something.” It was the camel-boy, Chad, who had been talking the whole time.

“Have you tried to get out?”

“Yes, but the door's locked and it is impossible for us to knock it down. We've all tried, even when I changed into a camel I couldn't get it down. It's locked from the outside. I'm sure you could do it.”

“Why me? If you can't do it, then how can I?” replied Shade.

“Well, you know, unicorns are stronger than camels. Stronger than anything, in fact.”

“That's true. All right, I'll give it a try.”

In less than a second, Shade had transformed into a unicorn and was walking over to the door. It was a very strong door by the looks of it. He reared up and lunged at the door, kicking it down with all his might. It fell with a loud thud. “I knew you could do it,” said Chad. The mutants all headed out the door and began to move down the hallway quickly. Shade was still in his unicorn form and he followed behind

the rest of them. Shade was the first one to hear the footsteps coming down another hallway. Unicorns have better hearing than humans do, and when Shade was in his human form, his ears were slightly pointed.

He silently leaped into another hallway, so that when the footsteps turned the corner, they did not see him. Shade changed forms and peeked around the corner. "We're not who you think we are," a man said. He wore sunglasses, though it was not really that bright inside. "We are mutants, too."

"How can we be sure you're telling the truth?" asked Chad. "How do we know that you're not humans?"

A woman walked up next to the man and said, "We'll prove it to you." She had white hair and dark eyes, which suddenly lost their color. The room was getting colder and a wind blew down the hallway and reached Shade, who had come out from around the corner. His hair blew away from his face, revealing his pointy ears. Then, the wind stopped. The eyes got their color back and then the woman said, "You can call me Storm, and this is Scott, or Cyclops."

"So we know you're mutants, but why are we here? Why did you tranquilize us?"

"It wasn't us, it was humans," said Scott. "They found out that you were mutants, and planned to separate you from the rest of the world. They fear us mutants, you know. We were there and were going to convince you to come here before the humans found out. There were rumors going around already that you were mutants."

"What is this place?" asked Shade.

"This is Xavier's School For Talented Youngsters, a place for mutants to go where they can be safe from the rest of the world."

"And I am Professor Xavier," said a man in a wheelchair who had just come up behind Scott and Storm. "It is my wish that you choose to stay here and learn. It looks like none of you are adults yet, and probably few of you have finished your schooling."

And so, the mutants were given some time to decide on whether they wanted to stay or not. They were given lunch in the cafeteria, where they met some of the students at the school. After lunch, Chad and Cassandra announced that they would be staying at the school to finish their education, and then decide what to do after they graduated. Throughout the rest of the day, the other mutants made up their minds to stay, except for Shade. He didn't know if he quite trusted the professor.

They were showed rooms where they would sleep from then on. Each of them had a roommate, but they were not but in the same room together. Shade's roommate was a boy with the power to breathe fire. It was quite entertaining to watch him. "What can you do?" he asked Shade. Shade showed him a few teleporting tricks, but nothing else.

The weeks went by, and Shade learned many things in his classes. He learned that eventually, the whole world would be mutants. He wasn't quite sure if he liked that idea. If people would be how they were then, they would abuse their powers, and use them for evil.

One day, Shade decided to go to the forest that was right next to the school. He transformed into a unicorn, something he had not done for weeks, and walked through the trees. Shade found a pool and stopped to take a drink. He drank long and deep, and when he lifted up his head, he saw a figure at the other end of the pool. He had not heard them approach, for they were as silent as he.

“Good morning,” she said. Her body was as white as he was black, and she had cloven hooves, a lion's tail, and a horn on her forehead. Yes, she was a female unicorn.

“Hello,” he replied. He had always been quite sure that unicorns existed, but had never actually seen one.

“You're not from around here are you?” she said. “Who are you, and where did you come from?”

“My name is Shade.”

“So you have a name. Not many unicorns have names, but there are a few. I don't have one. Where did you come from?” she asked again.

“Another forest,” he lied, “far from here.”

Then, another figure came up behind her. He looked just like Shade, yet somehow different, as each person is unique. He looked from the girl, to Shade, and back to the girl. “This is Shade,” she told him. “We just met.”

“Hello,” he said to Shade. Shade was about to reply when all three of them heard someone approaching. It was not another unicorn, or else they wouldn't have heard them, but it didn't sound like an animal at all. Shade turned his head to see who was coming, but when he looked back and the other unicorns, they were gone. He changed shape and walked toward the sound. When he got to its source, he saw that it was Professor Xavier.

“Oh, Shade, have you decided to stay at the school?” he asked.

“I'm not exactly sure, but I think so,” Shade replied.

The professor had just been going outside for a breath of fresh air. They returned to the school together, and didn't see each other again for the rest of the day. Shade told himself that he would not yet tell the professor that he was the unicorn at the circus. He wanted to keep it secret for as long as he could.

Chapter 5

The next day passed by without anything out of the ordinary happening. That evening, Shade was passing down a hall, when he heard a noise. It sounded like someone was pushing metal doors open with great force. The sound came from the entrance hall, so he teleported there. Someone had, in fact, pushed open the metal doors and they were standing in the middle of the room. They were wearing a dark red cape and a funny-looking helmet.

Professor Xavier, Chad, and some of the other professors and students walked into the room. The strange man in the middle of the room was accompanied by a mutant whose skin was blue, and she looked even stranger. "Charles," he said, "I am offering you a choice: help me, and gain back the respect we deserve, or stand against me, and fail. I have made a machine that can turn the whole world into mutants. Too long have we been hiding from the rest of the world, afraid they might discover our true identity. Now, they can all become mutants, and they will not fear us, but understand that mutants are better and stronger than humans."

"Magneto, you cannot change the whole world into mutants, do you have any idea of what they would do with their powers? There would be even more crimes, and they could not be stopped if the criminal was a teleporter, or could become invisible. The world would become chaotic," said Professor Xavier. "I will not help you, no one here will."

"Then you have failed in stopping me," he said. The next thing Shade knew was that metal was flying everywhere. Strips of it came of the door and bound the hands and feet of everyone in the room except for the two mutants in the middle. Shade felt it wrap around his wrists, and he teleported out of it. Magneto looked surprised, but tried once again to bind Shade with the metal. He teleported out of it again. Then Magneto pulled on the cross necklace around Shade's neck using his magnetic powers.

Shade could not teleport out of the chain, for it was part of his clothing, and came with him wherever he appeared. The chain was pulling Shade's neck to the carpet until his chin touched the floor. At first, he was scared. More scared than he had ever been of anything. Then, he saw the professor looking at him and Shade regained his courage.

The bump on his forehead began to glow, showing his fury. Magneto had to squint to see what was going on. Shade was changing, the chain and cross disappeared, as it always did, along with his clothes. He reared up, horn pointed at Magneto. "You cannot defeat me," Shade told him. "I am part unicorn, and possess the abilities of one. The professor is right. The world is not ready to be filled with mutants instead of humans. Some day, perhaps it will be, but that day is not today, nor tomorrow. It may be years from now until humans realize that power is not something to be used for evil, or to be used to gain control of the world."

Then Shade moved closer, horn still pointed at Magneto. Shade was so close now, the horn almost touched him. "Don't kill him, Shade," said Professor Xavier

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Because that is what he wants you to do. If you did so, you would become the evil you are trying to stop. If we put him in prison, he would have to end his days imprisoned, and bored. If we killed him, he would end his life happily, knowing that you would soon finish the work he started."

"You're right," said Shade, in a quiet voice. "I am sorry. I was getting so angry, my anger was starting to control me."

"It's all right. It happens to many people, but they are not always able to stop before they go too far like you almost did."

The rest of the evening was spent freeing the bound mutants in the entrance and putting Magneto in his new home, a plastic prison. When at last he was locked away, Shade went to visit him. "If I were you," said Shade, "I would not make me angry again. And trust me," he pointed to the bump on his forehead, "you'll know when that is."