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# SHADE

## “The Story Behind THE Story”

By Jeri Smith-Ready

Like most books, SHADE was built in bits and pieces. It began a few years ago as an idea about a law firm in a world where everyone believed in ghosts (because they were real). Though I was tickled by the cheesy tagline, “We sue dead people,” the idea went nowhere without a character to give it heart. The fact that I knew zilch about law didn’t help matters.

Then I lost someone. Someone who left a hole that can never be filled. And there I found the heart of SHADE.

Its heart lies in that desperate desire we have when a loved one dies: that fierce need to have them back as more than just a memory, more than just “a flat image in a hundred photographs,” as Aura says. At its heart, SHADE is about love and loss and the granting of that ultimate impossible wish.

But like a body, a book needs more than a heart. I found its brain in the mystery of the Shift, the event that makes this ordinary girl extraordinary. I’ve loved astronomy since I was a kid, when I read any books on the subject I could get my hands on—books that were usually way over my head. I even married an astronomer! And since characters can live out our deepest loves and wishes, I gave this fascination to Aura. The stars link her and Zachary—and all of us—to the infinite, ineffable wonder of the universe.

And the book’s blood and guts? That’s the music. When I “discovered” that Aura’s dead boyfriend Logan was an aspiring rock star, the whole story fell into place. To me, music is the most powerful force in the world—it can move our bodies and lift our souls the way mere words or images alone cannot. As Logan sings and plays onstage the night of his death, he *is* life itself. After he becomes a ghost, his inability to hold a guitar—or be seen and worshiped by anyone over seventeen—hurts him almost as much as not touching the girl he loves.

Conventional wisdom tells writers to “write what you know.” I say, write what you love. Write what you wish for. The rest will follow.

I hope you enjoy reading SHADE as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Jeri Smith-Ready

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