



ECLIPSE

Legend
of the
Tears

BETHANY DRAKE

LEGEND OF THE TEARS

Tears of the Wolf - Book Two

BETHANY DRAKE



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Prologue

Alicia Braswell checked her image in the mirror. She sure looked the same, but she knew she had changed forever. Her whole world turned upside down when she met Max Santos. He showed her that werewolves were real. That he was the alpha of his pack and now she would live in that world as his mate.

To the outside world they were engaged. Her parents didn't know it yet but that was at the top of the agenda. First things first though. Max was coming to her office to show her a big surprise. She had no idea what he was up to, but his toothy grin told her he was excited about it. A soft knock on the door made her turn around.

"Alicia?" Stacey's soft voice grew louder as she pushed the door open. "Max is here."

"Thanks." She straightened her skirt then exited the bathroom.

"Did I come at the wrong time?" He gave her his best smile.

"No, just freshening up." She knew his nose picked up everything. "You are right on time."

“You know me.” He wrapped his arms around her. “I love giving you gifts, and I think you’re going to love this one.”

“And you can’t just tell me?” She looked up at him. “You know my boss hates it when you take me away from work.”

“I do and I promise it will be worth it.” He looked at Stacey. “Would you like to join us? This will affect you as well.”

Stacey’s eyes opened so wide Alicia thought her eyes would pop out of her head. The poor girl still couldn’t handle being around Max.

“Stacey, can you tell our boss that we’re going to lunch with my fiancé and will be back in time for the afternoon meeting?”

“Of course.” Stacey bobbed her head then headed out of Alicia’s office.

“Do you think Stacey will ever be comfortable around me?” Max helped her into her suit jacket.

“I hope so.” Alicia slipped an arm around his. “She and I have gotten close over the last two months. She’s sweet and funny. I’d hate to lose her as a friend because she can’t talk to you.”

“I will do my best to win her over.” He offered Stacey his other arm just as she came back in. “Are you ready, Stacey?”

She stared at the arm then Max then Alicia. Alicia nodded at her. Stacey swallowed but took his arm and they headed out of the building.

He helped the women into his Hummer and headed just a few blocks away. He stopped the vehicle, climbed out and helped both women out of the SUV.

“Why are we here?” asked Alicia. The large building had a ‘For Rent’ sign in its window. She had always liked the architecture of the building, but knew it was way out of her price range.

“You have told me that you’ve always wanted to start your own business.”

“Don’t tell me you bought this building.” She put her hands on her hips. “I don’t need a building to start a business.”

Max grabbed her hand and pulled her into the building. “First, do not chastise me in public like that.”

“Right, sorry. I keep forgetting, Max. This is all so new for me.” She looked around the ground floor of the building and had to admit this would be perfect if she had her business already up and running. “But I’m not ready for this. I need capital.”

“Done.” He smiled.

“Backers.” She wasn’t sure if she liked that smile.

“Also done.”

“Max.” She tried to choose her words correctly. He had tried so hard and she sure didn’t want to anger him by not appreciating what he did. “I really appreciate you wanting to help me, but this building is more than I need. The rent would shut me down too fast.”

“Well, you don’t have to worry about rent. It belongs to my corporation.”

“Won’t the board of directors be upset that you’re using their property for your own personal use?”

“Sweetheart, who do you think said you could have the building? You know that we’re always looking for new businesses to finance.”

“So you told them about my idea?” She wanted to add ‘without consulting me’ but knew that would probably cross the line.

“I know you would have wanted to be there, but it just happened. The council made a comment that they were looking for something new to invest in and Patrick said too bad you weren’t there, or you could pitch your idea. They asked me so I told them how you want to help people find old heirlooms. They loved the idea. There are a few stipulations. The board wants you to only help our people in the beginning, and your advertising would only be by word of mouth, but a lot of our people have

lost heirlooms and you would be someone they could trust to find those missing items.”

“They really liked the idea?” She knew other people would balk at the stipulations, but she knew the board wouldn’t offer her all this if they didn’t think she could make it work. Being part of the werewolf world made her understand why they had stipulations and in their society word of mouth was equal to being on every talk show in America. They want to help their people first and they’ve made a lot of money doing that. Alicia started looking around. This time as a possible location for her business.

“They did and they offered you this building to house that business.”

“Max, this is wonderful, but I can’t pay rent on this place.”

“The board understands that. You won’t have to pay anything until you start making a profit.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

“Say yes.”

“What about Stacey?” Alicia looked at her friend.

“You will need an assistant.”

“And how am I going to pay her?”

“Covered by the board as well. They will pay both of you a salary to get started. All they want is ten percent of your profit once you start making one.”

“Stacey? How do you feel about this?”

“I—” Her voice broke. “I don’t know. I have a secure job with medical. I’m happy with my pay. I can even send money home to my parents when I need to.”

“They said they’d triple your salary, plus give you a pension, and medical.”

She squeaked then put her hand over her mouth. Once she could talk again she said, “Can I have a moment?”

“Of course.”

As Stacey walked away Max shook his head. “We have got to get that girl laid.”

Chapter 1

Patrick sat at his desk, staring at the numbers his CPA gave him. They couldn't be right.

"What 'cha doing?"

He looked up at his sister who seemed to always show up at the worst possible moments. Slamming his lap top screen down he smiled at her. "Nothing."

"Liar." She sat down opposite him. "What's going on?"

Patrick knew better than to try to act like nothing was wrong. She had ways of ferreting out information from him. He sighed. "Something is wrong with our cash flow."

"What?" She sat up in her chair. "Have you told Max?"

"No." He glared at her. "The man believes I can get this turned around and I will prove him right."

"Max looked at your plan. Did he see the books?"

"No." He lifted the screen of his laptop. "But I didn't know this was going on until a couple days ago. Our accountant asked me to look this over because he was having trouble getting the books to balance."

"You think someone is siphoning money off?"

"I hope not." He hit a few keys to get the computer to come

out of sleep mode. “It’s possible, but most of the people working for us are pack members. I’d never expect one of them to steal from me.”

“Then you need to tell Max.”

“No.” He shook his head as he stared at the screen. “I need to figure this out on my own.”

“How?” She placed a hand on his arm, drawing his attention back from the computer screen. “The moment you start asking questions whoever is doing this will stop so they won’t get caught.”

“What do you suggest?”

Catherine smiled.

ALICIA PLACED her laptop on her desk. Stacey came in seconds later with a coffee for her. It was just the two of them, but she hadn’t been opened for long. She had worked as a gemologist for years but the moment Max offered her this opportunity she never looked back. She had to admit being her own boss did have its perks. Her schedule was more flexible and when Max needed her at his side she could leave Stacey in charge. The best part was now she could do what she loved. Finding lost gems in estate and yard sales for people who wanted them back. Before she did it backwards where she found the bauble then found the owner. Max set it up so people who were trying to find old heirlooms would come to her. She could also pick up that odd piece that caught her eye. Even better she could buy pieces with beautiful stones and create new jewelry from them. Something she couldn’t afford before.

Her company was called Legend. And her first client was Max. He wanted her to create the proper necklace to place the Tears in. Now that they had gathered them, he needed to show the rest of his kind he had them. Creating the right design wasn’t

easy. It needed to be solid yet still come apart to create the circle it would take to use them to change someone from human to werewolf or vice-versa. She had started at least a half dozen times only to scrap it.

Stacey bowed before handing her the coffee she had for her.

“Must you?” Dealing with werewolves was new to her and learning Stacey was one as well shocked her. It made her wonder how many other people she knew were from their race too.

“Sorry. It’s been ingrained in me.” Stacey looked at the latest try at a necklace. “Still not happy?”

“No.” Alicia sighed. “I’ll know it when it’s right but I’m not feeling it.”

“Um, can I ask you a question?”

“Is it the same one everyone else has asked me?” Alicia looked at her. Stacey wanted to ask the question, she could feel it. “If I’m going to use the stones on me?”

“No. I’ve heard your answer and respect that. Um...” Stacey tucked a stray hair behind her ear. She also wouldn’t look at Alicia. “I’ve been thinking and I’m wondering if I...”

“You thinking of becoming human?”

“Yes, no.” Stacey sighed. “I don’t know. I know it’s hard to be in your world as I am. Human men ask me out and I want to say yes, but I know I’m different and sooner or later they will find out.”

“You haven’t dated anyone from your pack?” It was still new to Alicia, but she was learning. She knew that some from the pack did mate with humans, others wanted to keep the bloodline clean. One of the reasons they kept asking her if she was going to use the Tears on herself. She could become a werewolf and keep the bloodline of their leader clean.

“Our pack is small and there aren’t that many males.”

“And none of them look at you that way, do they?”

Stacey shook her head.

"I could talk to Max. He might be able to match you up," she told her friend. "Unless that is too embarrassing."

"Oh my God, please don't." Fear etched her face. "I don't think I could handle the pity looks from him and his friends. It's hard enough getting them from my pack."

"Promise." Alicia held up her hands. "But you will have to tell him why you want to be changed. Once it's done, it's done. You can't go back."

"I know." She sighed again. "I don't know if I can go through with it, but at least I finally got it off my chest. I've been going back and forth."

"I'm here whenever you need to talk."

"Thanks." Stacey held her tablet against her chest. "Catherine has asked to stop by."

"She's not sitting in the waiting room, is she?"

"No, but she is on her way here."

"Actually, I'm here," said a new voice. "I'm not interrupting, am I?"

"No." Alicia gave her friend a hug. "We're talking about my latest try at a jewel set for the Tears."

"And you're still not happy." Catherine turned to look at the necklace she had started.

"No." Alicia looked at it as well. "The stones need to be removed so a circle can be created if Max decides to use the stones and I can't get a design I like to work. If I create a design that does, I don't like the way it looks."

"It will come to you." Catherine touched her shoulder.

"Not fast enough." She wished she could figure it out. It was driving her crazy.

"Perhaps you need to take your mind off it for a while. How about a tour of your new office?" Catherine looked around. "Maybe show me that state-of-the-art equipment you've been drooling over?"

Legend of the Tears

“I don’t think it’s going to impress you that much, unless you’re into putting a bunch of stones through them.”

“I just remembered how you got all excited when you found the instruments you wanted.” Catherine smiled.

“Yeah, well, it’s not every day when you get a blank check to buy whatever you want.” Alicia took a sip from her coffee before setting it down. “Max should be happy I didn’t use it for something else.”

“Because you could have had a good time?”

Alicia laughed. “Come on, this tour won’t take long.”

She showed her the lab then the bathroom before bringing her back to the other office. “Told you.”

“I know as time goes on this place will grow.” Catherine placed her hand on Alicia’s shoulder again. “Right now it’s just the two of you but in no time this will be a thriving business. Which reminds me, I need to talk to you about something. How about we grab a bite and I’ll explain why I’m here?”

She knew she should work on the necklace design, but not being able to come up with a design that she liked made her want to procrastinate a little. “Sure.”

They made their way to the Irish pub Max liked to go to, which was a few doors down from her new office. One of the waitresses greeted them and took them to the table reserved for Max.

“So why so secret?” asked Alicia.

“Is it that obvious?”

“Really?” Alicia slid into the booth. “We could have closed the door of my office and spoken, but you wanted to go someplace else. I’ve been around you guys long enough to know when something is up. Then we came to the one place I know is a safe haven for all of you.”

“It’s the business.” Catherine slid in as well.

“You’re a college professor.”

“My family’s business.”

“Shouldn’t you be talking to Max?” Alicia didn’t understand why she wanted to talk to her instead of Max.

“Of course I should, but my brother has begged me to let him handle this on his own.”

“And of course you won’t.” Alicia sat back in the booth.

“Max just gave Patrick money to keep our ancestral home. I think my brother needs help but won’t ask for it because of that. He doesn’t want to be seen as weak.” Catherine picked up her menu.

“Then it’s something big.”

“He thinks someone is embezzling money.” She continued to stare at the menu so she didn’t have to make eye contact with Alicia.

“What?” Alicia slapped her hand over her mouth when she realized how loud she was. “You have to tell Max, or is that why you told me? So I tell Max and save you from going against your brother.”

“No.” She held her hands up. “I remembered you said Stacey was good with numbers and I thought...”

“How are my favorite women?” Max’s voice stopped all conversation.

Alicia slapped on the best smile she could as she looked at her mate. “Hey, sweetheart, thought you couldn’t meet me for lunch?”

MAX’S sharp hearing picked up voices coming from his booth the moment he entered the pub. They were talking softly until his mate said ‘what’. Something was going on. He knew he could hang back and listen in but then he’d have to pretend he didn’t know anything.

He stepped up to the table to find two sets of eyes staring at him in shock. His mate’s eyes looked like owl eyes. He didn’t

think they could get any bigger and Catherine's gaze dropped straight to her shoes when she saw him. Whatever they were discussing was something they didn't want him to know about.

"Did I interrupt anything?" He knew he had but wanted to hear their answer.

"No," said Catherine.

"Yes," said Alicia.

"At least you're telling me the truth." He looked at Alicia before he looked at Catherine. Her silence made him arch a brow.

"She made a promise."

"So it involves Patrick." He looked at his mate then Catherine. He saw shock in Alicia's eyes and Catherine's shoulders slumped. He hit a mark. "And for some reason you don't want me to know about it."

"Patrick wants to fix his problem on his own," said Alicia as she moved over so he could slide into the booth beside her. "And I think I have an idea to help him without you interfering."

"I wouldn't interfere."

She scoffed. "Right."

Max grinned. "So what is your idea?"

"Have Stacey work with him."

"What? Why?" asked Max.

"Stacey is part of the pack. She would be accepted better than a human would, and no one would suspect that she's a spy. She's good with numbers and since she is from another pack not that many people from ours know her." She realized that she just gave Max a reason to start asking all the right questions. Alicia turned toward Catherine. "Can I please tell him what is going on? He probably has already guessed a lot of it."

Catherine leaned back in the booth before gesturing for her to talk.

"Patrick thinks someone is taking money from his company but wants to find the thief himself. I think Stacey can help him."

“What if someone does recognize her as your assistant?” Max leaned back to look at her.

“We’ll come up with a believable story. I just started my business and she needed more hours might work. I’ll talk to her to see if she is willing. My question is will Patrick allow her to work there?”

“I’ll talk to him,” said Max.

“But...” Catherine started to speak then snapped her mouth shut.

“Um, Catherine? Can we have a few minutes?” asked Alicia. After Catherine nodded and headed to the bar she turned to her mate.

“Max.” Alicia placed her hand on his. “Patrick didn’t want you to know. If you confront him and tell him that he must hire Stacey he will balk. You know that. Let me and Catherine deal with this. If we need your help, I promise, we will ask.”

“Is this why you sent her away, so you could argue with me?”

“Sweetheart, I know you need to lead, but every great leader knows how to delegate. This is something Catherine and I can do for you. That way if it doesn’t work you won’t be blamed.”

“Everyone expects me to make the right decision on everything.”

“You mean us.” She touched his cheek. “I might not be born to the pack, but I am part of it and I’m always finding people asking for my opinion and half the time I have no clue what to say or do.”

“I know how you feel. Some of the things people ask me about are not things I ever thought I’d be dealing with.” Max slipped an arm around her shoulders. “Patrick is very stubborn when he feels he’s being pushed.”

“Which is why I don’t think you should be the one to spearhead this. In fact, if Stacey agrees, I want it to look like it’s all her idea.”

“So Patrick won’t think we’re involved at all?”

Legend of the Tears

“Yep.” She saw Catherine out of the corner of her eye and gave a slight nod. “He’ll be pissed when he finds out but I’m hoping we’ll have found the culprit by then.”

Catherine slipped into the booth, looking anywhere but at them.

“Oh, come on, you can look at us.” She looked at Max. “Did I suddenly turn into Medusa?”

“No.” He laughed. “I think I would have noticed that if it had happened.”

“Then why does everyone seem to do that somewhere along the line?” She pointed at Catherine and the fact that she wasn’t looking at her. “I’m getting a little sick of it.”

“It’s a sign of respect,” said Catherine.

“Pack mentality?”

Catherine nodded. “Sorry. I know that bothers you but it’s something ingrained in us.”

“I just wish everyone would stop treating me like I’m some sort of freak.” She held up her hands when both started to speak. “I know, I know, that’s not what everyone is doing but it sure feels like it at times.”

“Being in the limelight is new to you.” Max rubbed his hand against her arm.

“And you’ve been dealing with it all your life.” Alicia put her napkin on her lap. “Now, let’s change the subject. Max has graciously agreed to let us help your brother. Now all we have to do is convince Stacey to go along with it.”

“YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?” Stacey couldn’t believe her ears.

“Look, your resume says that you studied business in college you just never went after your CPA.” Alicia hoped she didn’t say

the wrong thing. “Patrick thinks that someone is embezzling from his company and he refuses to ask for help.”

“And what makes you think he’ll accept my help?” Standing in the outer office talking about this made her nervous.

“Because you’re going to ask him to help you. He knows where you come from and you could use it to get him to hire you.”

“You want me to walk in his office and tell him I need to work because of my pack?”

“Yes, it has come up that you have us send a portion of your earnings to your pack. You could tell him that someone is sick and you don’t want to ask me for more. You want to earn what you need.” Alicia looked at Catherine, hoping she’d help her explain things properly. She knew she could demand Stacey do this and she would because of the pack mentality but Stacey was her friend and she wanted her to do this because she wanted to help not because Alicia asked her to.

“My brother will respect your desire to help without asking for anything from Alicia and Max.”

“Then I’d be working part time.”

“Actually you’d be with me part time. I’m going to make a statement in front of Patrick that I’ve decided to work from home until we get more clients. He knows how frugal I am so it would make perfect sense.”

“Alicia...” Stacey stopped and looked at Catherine. “You know I’m not comfortable around Max’s pack. I’m not sure I can do this.”

“Okay. I’m not going to force you. You’re too good a friend for me to do that to you. I just know that most of the people working for Patrick are from the pack and a strange human amongst them will put the culprit on high alert.” She patted her friend on the shoulder. “We’ll figure out something else.”

“What are you thinking?” asked Catherine. She stepped up to Alicia’s side, ignoring Stacey and focusing on Max’s mate.

“I don’t know, but I’ll come up with something.” She signaled for Catherine to follow her into her office.

“Why me?” asked Stacey.

“Because you wouldn’t go snooping.” Alicia turned around and faced her. “You’d be shy around the others. The familiarity of the pack isn’t there. And I think your shyness will make you invisible.”

“And if I can’t figure out who is doing it?”

“I don’t think it would take you long to ferret out the culprit. If you don’t have a suspect in a month then we’ll pull you out.”

“And Patrick?”

“We wouldn’t tell him a thing. He needs to believe you’re there because you want to help your pack.”

“All right.”

They paused at her words.

“I’ll do this for you, but I need you to promise that you will stand by my decision from our conversation earlier.”

“I promise.” Alicia hugged her. “I want you to be happy.”

PATRICK STOPPED by the house a few days later. He had hoped to speak to Max instead he found Alicia leaning on the door. “Alicia? I thought you’d be at the office right now.”

“Stacey and I are doing nothing but staring at each other. Until business picks up, I’ve decided to work from home and give Stacey some time off. She hasn’t seen her family in six months so I’m hoping she’ll take the time to go home for a while. Anything I need her to do she can do from anywhere.”

“And it gives us time to be together,” said Max as he stepped up and wrapped his arms around her. “I missed having her here all the time. My work has slowed a little like it does this time of year. I’m thinking it’s a good time to make babies.”

“Max!” Alicia’s blush filled her cheeks. “I thought we were going to keep that quiet.”

“Patrick is family.” Max pressed a kiss against her temple. “He will keep our secret.”

“Of course.” Patrick wasn’t quite sure how to get to why he was there. “Um, Max? Can we talk?”

“Sure.” Max released his mate and gestured for Patrick to enter their home. “We’ll go to my office.”

“Thanks.”

Alicia sighed. Max knew she hated the way they dismissed her at times.

Max took her hand and kissed the inside of her palm. “I promise to give you my undivided attention once Patrick is gone.”

“I’m sorry, Alicia. I promise to be quick.” Patrick gave her the proper bow then followed Max to his office. “You’ll have your mate back in no time.”

Alicia just shook her head. “I’ll tell Jacob you’re here.”

Patrick gave her a slight nod, and he followed Max into his office. Not knowing how to tell Max about the embezzler, he wasn’t sure where to start. He really wanted to come clean but wasn’t sure how.

“So what brings you here?” asked Max. He snagged two tumblers and poured them two fingers of Irish whiskey from their village.

“I just wanted to give you an update on everything.” Patrick took the glass and toasted Max.

“Patrick, I trust you.” Max took a sip from his glass and smiled as the smooth whiskey slid down his throat. “You don’t need to tell me every little thing. Your business plan is a sound one. Once a month reports are all you need to do.”

“If you’re sure.” If Max didn’t want to hear the details maybe he could get to the bottom of his issues without having to tell Max that he suspected someone from their pack was stealing

from him. He knew it would upset Max and he had enough to deal with.

“I’m here if you need me, but you’re quite capable of handling this on your own. You’re my second, if I don’t give you the room to prove you deserve the position then our people won’t give you the respect you deserve. Show them I chose wisely.”

ALICIA WAITED until Patrick headed back to his office. She plopped into the overstuffed chair he had vacated a few minutes before. “You think he suspects anything?”

“A bit paranoid?”

“No, it’s just that you normally like to control everything, and Patrick knows that.”

“True, but I didn’t lie to him. He does need to do this on his own. If he can get to the bottom of what’s going on our people will respect him. Right now, they don’t ask for his help, they come to me and I tell him to help them.”

“So now all we need to hope for is that Stacey doesn’t chicken out and Patrick believes her story.”

STACEY SAT in the outer office of Patrick’s company. She wanted to help Alicia, but her nerves had her questioning everything. She came from a small pack. They weren’t royalty like Max and Patrick. Staring at the closed door she realized she couldn’t do this. Standing, she needed to get out before anyone noticed. If Patrick found out she had been there he would just think she came to give him a message from Alicia.

Before she could take a step Patrick stepped out of the stairway and spotted her. “Stacey?”

She nodded. Speaking was beyond her at the moment.

“Are you here to speak to me?”

“Um, yes.” She clutched her tablet against her chest. Too late to flee now.

He gestured for her to follow him. He walked into his office and pointed to a chair in front of his desk. “Normally there is someone out there to answer any questions. I hope you weren’t waiting too long.”

“No.” She tucked a piece of hair behind her ear. “Um, I don’t know if you heard but Alicia has decided to work from home for now.”

“Yeah, I was a little surprised to see her at home today when I stopped by to talk with Max.”

“Well, I-ah... look, a member of my pack is sick and we don’t have the money your pack does. I want to help, need to help but I don’t want to ask Alicia or Max for more money. I know they would give it to me if I asked but I was taught to earn what I needed. I heard you might have an opening.” The words rushed out of her. Her heart pounded in her chest, but she did it. If he said no she could go back to the safety of her apartment and let Alicia know. No harm, no foul.

“I wish I could help you, but I don’t have a need for a secretary.”

“I understand.” She never explained that she could work on the books, but that might make him question her more and she would probably start crying if he did that. She’d give him her resume and get out. “Can I leave my resume with you? Maybe you’ll hear something that might be a good fit for me from someone else?”

“Of course.” He noticed the tablet in her hand. “Do you have it with you?”

She took a folder out of her oversized purse. Pulling a sheet out she offered it to him. “Thanks. I hope to find something quickly. Um, please don’t tell Alicia or Max. The moment they

learn I'm looking for work they will try to help, and I want to do this on my own."

"No problem." He stood and offered his hand to her. After a moment of hesitation she took it and shook.

STACEY PULLED her hand from his grasp and practically ran to the stairs. She sure was a pretty thing but painfully shy around their pack. He watched her leave then took her resume and set it on his desk. Sitting back down he picked it up and glanced over it. "Wow, she has a lot of education."

Her resume showed she majored in business and engineering while minoring in astronomy and gemology. Now he knew why she worked with Alicia. She could help when there was too much for Alicia to do. The business degree made him think. He could hire her to help him find the embezzler. No one would question her because she was one of them. Patrick also knew he couldn't hire her without permission. It didn't matter that she didn't want Alicia or Max to know, he had to ask for permission, and he needed to do it in person.

THE DOORBELL RANG. Patrick straightened his spine. Speaking to Max never made him this nervous. He nodded to Jacob who opened the door. When he asked if Alicia was available he was informed that she was in the plant room, working. Jacob led him to the room.

Alicia sat in a chair pounding against her tablet. She didn't look happy.

"Ma'am? You have a guest."

She looked up and saw Patrick standing there. "Patrick? Max isn't here right now."

“I know. I came to talk to you.”

“Me?” she set her tablet down and stood. “Um, you sure?”

“Yes.” He was quiet for a moment. “Stacey came to me.”

“Stacey?” She gave him a confused look. “Why would she go to you?”

“A member of her pack is ill, and she wanted to earn extra money to help with their medical bills.”

“Why didn’t she come to me?” She gestured to one of the chairs, as she sat in the other. “We would have helped her.”

“I think pride got in the way.” He sat in the chair she offered. “I didn’t do anything but take her resume because I didn’t need a secretary but then I looked at her resume and I’d like to hire her for a short period of time, if you approve.”

“Why do you need her help? You’ve avoided secretaries as much as possible.”

“My company is too small for a secretary,” he corrected. “But I could use an accountant.”

“An accountant?” She tilted her head at him. “But she never got her CPA.”

“Doesn’t matter. My, ah, bookkeeper is a little behind right now and needs help getting caught up and she’d be perfect.”

“Her time off is only temporary. She’d only be able to work for you for a few months at the most.” Alicia shook her head. “What if you want to make her position permanent? I don’t think so.”

“That’s what makes her perfect. Her loyalty will make her pick you over me so she’d only work for me as long as you don’t need her full time. My accountant will accept someone to help, but I’d wound his pride if I brought someone in who he thought could take his job.”

The hopeful look on his face had her smiling. “Now I know why Max can’t tell you no.”

“Then you’ll let her work for me?”

Legend of the Tears

“Yes, but she is still my secretary first and if I need her to help me with something she needs to be able to have time off.”

“No problem. I can work around that.” He stood and bowed.
“Thank you, Alicia.”

“Don’t thank me yet. I’m going to talk to her and let her know I’m aware of this.”

“I understand and wouldn’t expect anything else.”