

Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall Chapter 51

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“Okay, so we head for Eighth Street. There’s apparently a nearby park or forest, she says the locator is sitting there and that somewhere around is the presence of that witch.” Meadow goes back to the text to check details and Carmen follows signs as she drives, focusing her attention and relieving me of their bickering for now. The air is turning colder as night comes in and the atmosphere turns serious and tense as the end of our journey begins to get close.

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We left at dawn, and it’s around dinner now but at this time of the year the sun sets early. We don’t have much daylight before it sets completely and I’m understandably on edge as we push onward.

“Here!” Meadow hands the cell to Carmen, with a satnav app bleeping away as she nestles it on the dash where she can glance at it, against the dials and fuel light symbols so she has a clue where to go without searching for road signs.

“Any idea what we’re meant to do or say to find her? I mean we can’t just walk up to humans and ask where the witch is.” Carmen raises a brow, looking somewhat skeptical about how this is meant to work, and I shrug tiredly, also unsure but we have to trust the fates aren’t leading us a merry dance.

“We have her name, maybe we just ask if anyone knows her. I guess someone might have met her or knows of her whereabouts and we can just say we’re visiting from out of town and want to surprise her.” I try for helpful suggestions and flinch when the phone beeps in another tone, indicating a text and Meadows slides it back as I see Sierra’s name pop up.

“Sierra has added an afterthought and said to watch for the birds... she said look for black ravens, that the more of them there are, it’s probably because she’s close.” She too shrugs, a quizzical expression taking over her face as she widens her eyes in an ‘okaaaay’ kind of gesture that unifies the fact all three of us have no actual clue as to how we are meant to find her. I narrow my eyes, exhaling heavily at this lack of logical help from Sierra.

“That’s weird.” Is the only contribution I have for now.

“So are witches.” Meds points out and I smile at that, breaking the strained moment with a little affectionate teasing of our kin, and it reminds me of my missing mate. Sierra and Colton do have their own special charms but yeah, at times they can both be weird. There’s no getting around that fact at all.

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"So, we're looking for a bird version of a spooky cat lady who has a fondness for living in woods, despite being right near a town? Is she old, young.... eats children? Do we need to crumble breadcrumbs along the highway in hopes of accidentally falling upon her gingerbread house." Carmen quizzes with a deadpan tone and a serious expression that somehow amuses me, despite her lack of emotion. This time I do laugh out loud, at the girl's weird dry humor that I never realized she even possessed. A childhood visual of the old witch from the library Hansel and Gretel book pops into my head and only increases the giggles I exude.

"I hope not, I'm barely grown, and she might add me to tonight's menu. I'm too big for an oven!" I point out between snorts of stupid laughter and Meadow caves and starts giggling too, lightening our whole mood. I guess the tension and the heavy weight of this journey has us strung out enough, that even a lame joke like this has enough power to break the strings and have us erupt. It's needed, between us, this bonding over awful jokes.

"She's immortal, and powerful.... if that was me, I would make sure I look forever young, or at least make enough anti-wrinkle cream to stall time for a few centuries." Meadow is the first to calm back to a straight face, wiping her eye where a tear had formed, and she snuggles up beside me once more in this new less hostile atmosphere.

"Yeah, but three thousand years? I'm sure even the strongest Botox is going to struggle with that timeline." I point out, thinking back to Meadow finding an article about Botox and humans preserving their youth some months back. She was unimpressed with how vain she considered humans to be and the extreme measures they would take to fight the aging cycle. Easy to judge when wolves literally don't age like that and we stay healthy and youthful until we die. We reach adulthood, sort of around the looks of a thirty-year-old human when we get to that age and then we stay that way.

"Um Meadow.... Luna Alora, um look." Carmen draws our attention up into the sky over our head with a pointed finger up at the windshield and it's hard not to miss the unmistakable flock of large black birds flying level with us, at our speed, even if they are like thirty foot up above us. "That has to be a coincidence, right?" She murmurs and throws us a highly doubtful eyebrow rise that is matched with our own falling expressions.

"I don't believe in coincidences." I point out, casting my mind back to a certain forest that led me East so long ago. The fates always find a way and this time, it's ravens. "Follow them" I command surely, a wave of excitement trembling deep in my belly that this has to be a sign that we're on the right path, but Carmen looks a little unsure, glancing to me and the window back and forth with hesitation under that etched brow of hers.

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"I don't think we can! I think they're following us..... do we stop? What do we do?"

"No. Stick to the route. Maybe they're just keeping tabs for now." Meadow at least seems surer and I'm glad I'm not the only one who is a little freaked out about our e*****s appearing as we discussed them. How did they even know? This

has to be in connection to the witch and the fates have to be playing along. It's all too coincidental!

"Sierra said she's powerful, right?.... Witches can be seers. Maybe she knows. Maybe she already knows we're here and we're looking for her?" I query and clasp Meadows hand unsurely, nerves hitching in my chest, my breathing becoming labored as my palms get clammy and I stiffen all over. I catch Carmen out of the corner of my eye taking a steadying deep breath to reel her own emotions back to calm. Anxiety filling the air around us as we all fall somber now that we're faced with the possible next step of our task. So much is resting on us finding her and I can only prey she is as approachable and willing to help as Sierra thinks she is.

"Guess we'll find out soon enough, Chicas. I hope Sierra is right, and this is a friend, not foe. Else we drove ourselves hundreds of miles, just to become crow food." Meadow doesn't seem so sure now either and I know the witchy side of Sierra and Colton is still something she isn't sure of. She admitted to me a while back it unnerves her, makes her mistrust on some level. This power, these abilities, and she gets nervous around them when they glow blue because it's just not something she has ever lived around, even before she came to the mountain. It's sweet in a funny kind of way but I get it. She relies on the physical attributes and her steady strong wolf self. Magical, almost mystical powers, freak her out.

Carmen gasps and jolts us slightly with a swerve as a huge black raven drops right out of the sky without warning and almost collides with our windshield at the speed we're doing. She slams on the breaks impulsively, gritting her teeth and clenching the wheel, throwing us forward in her emergency stop that almost ends me face bashing the dash and saves the shield from eating crow a** by mere millimeters. The damn thing just casually lands on the bonnet, turns to us and pecks the gla** nonchalantly before flying to our right and taking off again in some snarky, sa**y, crow manner, that screams of smug att**ude. The little a**hole practically smiled at us!

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We all turn, bug eyed, mouths gawping, and watch where it goes and then crap ourselves and almost die of simultaneous heart attacks, squealing in unison like feeble girls, as the entire flock of black ravens shoot right across the truck, like a black swipe. Skimming the roof, blocking out the light, and windshield, so we're drowned out by a bizarre loud noise of beating wings and zooming air, impossible to ignore. Visually we follow it to the right, exposing a very grimy, overgrown and barely visible dirt road between unkempt trees. Almost obediently we all crane our necks to stare at the dense undergrowth in stunned silence, poised and watching as we all attempt to calm our breathing and ponder what this just meant.

"I think we follow the birds now?" Meadow points out, clutching her chest and fanning her face to recover from the heart failure we all experienced. Those

damn birds, I swear if I catch one I'll wring it's scrawny neck for scaring us like that.

"I don't wanna." I almost whine, all my senses on edge and now I'm the one freaking out with the insane animal behavior that almost made us crash.

"You come all this way to chicken out now? What kind of Luna are you?" Carmen smirks at me, seemingly much braver than I am, and throws the wheel to the right as she puts the pedal to the gas again, pushing us on to follow the dirt track. We start to bounce and sway over the uneven terrain as she crawls us slowly and the truck groans and crunches in protest at having to mount gra**. She slows right down as we inch onto the overgrown road that might not be all that great for a heavy slow truck with crap suspension.

"It's okay. We're safe in here, remember. The rune symbols!" Meadow tries to ease my worry, catching my hand in hers and squeezing it rea**uringly as I reach out and catch hold of the dash to steady myself, while I blanch at her.

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"It's HER spell, she wrote it! ... I'm sure it doesn't do s*** when it's up against her." I point out sternly, fear lacing my tone with hostility, and even Carmen gawks at me this time. Her eyes widening before she moves to that familiar eye roll and exhales haughtily.

"For the love of god. Who arms themselves with magical safety nets that were sewn together by the person they are about to drop in on and might not be happy about it? ... We do, that's who. Masters of intelligence here! Why did I ever agree to this." She scoffs, snorting at how stupid this plan seems to be as she slows down further to hit rough and rocky road under the overgrown gra**, and the truck starts swaying so wildly that it's impossible to hold on. Getting harder to inch forward at all as the wheels catch in ditches and spin before kicking us back out amid a spray of flying mud.

"I don't want to be the one to say this but..." Carmen starts and Meadow finishes

"We have to go by foot. We can't risk the truck getting stuck here. We have to go back at some point, so we need this."

"Really?" I spin on her and raise my palms in shocked panic, my voice three decibels higher as my heart suffers a spasm of crazy beats. "Why can't we go find a place to wait out the night. It's getting dark! Who knows how far down this path we have to trek and then still find her and get back again. This doesn't seem smart or brave, or needed.... or something Colton would ever approve of!" I practically wail it at her. I know I'm the Luna, but with all things tactical, then Meadow is the one I trust most to decide on a course of action. Colton made her his beta for a reason, but seriously though, right now, I wonder about the sanity of this Chica. I may have once killed a bear and trekked alone for weeks, but that was before I became tired, pampered, and scared of fog spells and lurking witches!

"We can hyper speed, get as far as we can and if it looks like the birds are taking us further and it's getting dark, we come back and call it off until morning. It's not like we're incapable of holding off a vamp or two. We are bad a** b****es, Chica, we can hold our own for a short stretch of running." Meadow seems amused by my reluctance, talking to me as though I'm her child and continues to squeeze my hand as though coaxing a toddler. I glare at her and try so hard to remind myself that I am the one who's meant to be in charge here, braver, fiercer, and I need to stop wussing out.

"Ughhhhh, can we just go. Sitting here isn't doing anything!" it's Carmen this time, also looking at me like she's disappointed in my fear, and I screw my eyes shut to calm my racing heart and nod.

"Okay.... But if it feels wrong, or it gets too dark..." I plead and Meadow nods before I finish my whispering, shaky demands.

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"I know, okay. I don't plan on being reckless. I plan on us getting home in one piece to break that damn curse. Stay alert, if it feels wrong, we come back. I promised Cole I would always protect you and I don't plan on letting him down." The softness in her eyes, the appearance of mist adding shine as emotion makes her voice tremble, almost ends me. My heart swelling with the mention of him and the genuine love I see in her face.

"Right. I'll go first. It's not like I have anything to go home for." Carmen jumps out without hesitation, not waiting for my permission, like it even matters, and we follow using our own door. I feel like I'm dragging a dead weight after sitting for so many hours, and my apprehension isn't exactly making me limber on my feet.

Meadow locks the truck with the keys Carmen hands off and we turn and stare at the trees where the birds seem to be patiently waiting on us. It's unnerving and they are all quietly staring this way, all forty of them, like miniature models of fake birds, with that one larger especially jet black one in the center and looking like maybe he's the leader of the bird crew. That little a**hole who scared us half to death. I have my eye on that one for sure.

"You ever seen that movie, Birds?" Carmen asks flippantly, before swiping up a long blade of gra** and wandering ahead first as though this is a casual ramble in the woods between friends. She picks out a path to lead and we shift and walk behind her, intrigued by this sudden pop quiz of movies.

"No, what happens?" I ask innocently, aware Meadow is right behind me as we walk in a line and she's checking behind us every few steps, on high alert and watching for any possible danger.

"They kill and eat people in flocks much like that... peck out their eyes, brains.... organs... it's kinda gross. Evil little b*****s." She shrugs, again with the deadpan tone of indifference and I gawp at her back and seriously wonder what kind of wrong goes on in this girls head.

"Way to make us all feel at ease, Puta!" Meadow chirps in, a tone of 'really?' while pushing me to walk faster with a little lumber shove and Carmen almost gets run over as we start to pick up speed.

"Just saying, watch the little s***heads. Never turn your back on a flock of angry birds." She seems to be taking delight in raising my blood pressure to the highest level possible and Meds shakes her head at her, a low growl of shut up wavering subtly.

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"Yeah well, I doubt birds have any real effect on angry werewolves. Now run... we ain't got all day." She snaps at her, trying to end this conversation and I get another aggressive jab to my spine to hurry me onward. I eyeroll at Meadow's sudden pushiness and throw her back a snarky glare to tell her to be less handsy, but yet still obey.

Carmen breaks into a run as commanded, then stops abruptly, and I collide painfully, right into her back and then Meadow into me, letting out muffled cries and protests as we tumble into an ungraceful heap. Falling over one another clumsily, and then groaning as I scrap my palm and knee on the rough terrain.

"What the hell." I whimper and pull a stray thorn out of my finger, casting an angry narrowed frown at Carmen for her stupid halt.

"Meadow, ravens can't hyper speed and we are following them..." she points out with that superior tone that I know will make Meadow want to punch her in the throat, and I throw Meadow back an 'oh, she has a point' kind of look. There goes her fast run plan and getting there and back at speed. I knew we should have waited in the damn truck and now we have to rely on following birds who can only move at natural speed.

Almost as if on cue, they s***ter from the trees in a clapping of wings, a rustling of leaves, where they have been waiting and head further back in the direction they are leading before landing on trees in the near distance. Urging us on and we hesitate for a moment, looking up at the disappearing sun in almost synchronized unison, sighing that we may not get another chance, and move to follow without question.

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"Maybe we can speed between goal posts?" I point out, meaning from perch to perch where the crows are, we could hyper speed then wait on them to move, and go again. Which is exactly what we do the second we see them land further on and move to go. Racing to the next set of trees in the blink of an eye and the birds move again, in a game of follow me.

"I hope to god this is not some crazy idea and we're not just following some random flock of ravens who are just trying to get away. I mean we're kinda just a**uming." Meadow quips in and I giggle out of pure nervousness and frustration and also doubt. Maybe she's right and were insanely following birds that have nothing to do with this. We just a**umed, given Sierra's text and then their freakish behavior that we should, and who knows, maybe their curiosity has them come to us, but mistrust pushes them to move further away when we get too close.

We hyper speed to the next set of trees that are further into overgrown landscape, light failing us, as they land on and do this four more times, covering a fair bit of distance in the shortest time. They maybe can't speed like we can, but by air they can cover further ground than a normal human can walk, in a third of the time. So were making progress and we seem to be heading into denser wood and more of a forestry sort of weird space that's neither green and luscious or sandy and rocky, but somewhere in between. It's like a drying up, almost dead wood but dense enough to seem like it's not. Eerie, something haunting about it as shadow's lengthen across the ground and noises of night creatures start to come out subtly around us. We move fast, ignore the building anxiety that soon it will be pitch black and hope we are heading somewhere less rural, that maybe there's a house at the end of this trail.

"This place is weird" I point out when we stop again and wait for the birds to move, kicking away dead tumbleweed that's grazing my ankle and taking note of the terrain that's way too abundant in plants for the desert like soil beneath us. It's almost mystical in itself that something seeming so dry and arid can have so much vegetation.

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"I get creepy vibes too." Carmen admits in a low voice, seemingly aware that we're not alone out here in the wilderness as multiple eyes start to shine from distant brush. Large and small animals taking note of our alien presence and peeking because they can obviously tell we're not just wandering human. Animals tend to avoid the scent of wolves at a very large distance in this outer world.

We move again as soon as the birds settle once more, this stop and start game that's becoming tiring the farther we plod on. We have come off the path a few trees back and now seem to be wading through wasteland of some sort with no sign of houses, manmade light, or roads in the front where we're heading. Just dead trees blocking our view and lots of rocks for as far as the eye can see.

"I've got no signal on the cell either." Carmen sighs, aggravated, and hands Meadow back her cell she had brought from the truck. "So, we can't even check with Sierra if we're heading the right way." She adds with a furrowed brow and a stern expression making my last traces of hope fizzle out, like being drained of the last ounces of energy.

"God dammit" Meadows chirps in and slides it into her pocket after checking for herself. Muttering under her breath about cursed witches and damned nightfall, which only serves to make my hackles rise and my skin goosebump all over as the sun edge further down towards the horizon and the air turns cooler for lack of it.

I look up at the sky at the last dregs of fading light and back at the birds and really start to wonder at the likelihood of vampires being out here in this nothing space by chance if darkness comes fully before we get anywhere. It's looking likely and even though we have nocturnal vision, I would rather have found a safe haven before they can come lurking out from their holes and crevices to walk the world. I know with my gifts it's harder for vampires to really take us down and I know Meadow can hold her own, possibly Carmen too, although I haven't witnessed it yet, I would rather not have to fight and battle for survival if we don't have to.

Three more tree stops, and we can't see the truck behind us anymore at all as its so far away and obscured by the trees and rocks we have pa**ed. This seems to be taking us much further than any location Sierra sent and I'm starting to wonder if this is even right. My gut telling me that we shouldn't be so trusting, and maybe we shouldn't keep trying to push forward without an end in sight.

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"We should turn back. I don't like this, and I don't see an end to where we're going." It's Meadow, verbalizing my exact thoughts, sounding pensive, looking overly alert, and I guess she too is feeling it. Picking up on the empty air, the cold aura of this place, and the sus***ion of foreign eyes watching us from all angles. It's hard to defend when out in the open like this and we have no tactical advantage, especially with only three of us. I turn to her with a stiff expression, my stomach sinking at the thought of coming this far only to now give in. I know it's what I wanted, what my instincts are screaming at me, but my heart is telling me it's not the right thing to do. I want Colton home, sooner, not later, and waiting another night seems like an endless eternity. I open my mouth to try and talk this out and am rendered mute as a stranger's husky brogue echoes around us clearly.

"Well, that would be a shame, seeing as you only just got here." A female voice startles us from somewhere to the left, sounding almost smug, definitely confident, and so clear and loud it rings through as if spoken right at our ears. We can't see anyone at all, and we all turn instinctually, claws ripping out and teeth baring as we crowd together back-to-back to make one fierce bubble of wolf aggression. Leaning down, poised and ready to turn as eyes glow with intention and every red alert signal explodes inside my body.

"Who are you? Who said that?" I call out harshly, my voice laced with a growl as my heart hammers through my chest like a ward rum and a rustle of some nearby bushes alerts us to a dark figure slowly walking into the clearing. We three seem to shift into an almost crawl pose, so ready to fight and take down our intruder, hackles rising, blood pumping and unified in both awareness, alert aggression, and yet heavy wariness.

She steps into view, although shrouded in shadow but I can still make out that she's wearing a long black cloak, hood up which is oversized and seems to frame her head in a sinister way. Her entire face and body is concealed in both fabric and shadow and she stops just within vision to look at us from her bold position, no hint of fear at all. The largest of the ravens flies over and lands on her outstretched hand which appears when it gets close, showing a smooth almost youthful skin as it appears from under dark cloth and a slender wrist adorned

with bangles and vintage jewelry. In the darkness her skin is so pale it almost glows like a beacon and we gawp at her in both apprehension and surprise. I figure we all had ideas on what a three-thousand-year-old witch would look like and so far this isn't it.

"Why, aren't the la** you've been looking for? So why are you planning on toddling away?" her accent is thick, sing songy, and foreign. I guess Scottish, if that's where Sierra said she was from. It sounds a little rustic, yet warm and she has a pleasing voice to listen to that pulls you in and intrigues. No hint of any kind of American twang at all and yet she peaks clearly in an almost teasing and clear way.

"Are you Leyanne Cruden?" Meadow queries, even though we both know this can't be anyone else. Lurking out here with these birds, wearing a stereotypical witch's cloak and showing face as the moon hits its highest point. She's definitely spooky and my nerves twang so tight I reckon it won't take much to snap them fully.

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"Depends who's asking? Depends on what they want?" she laughs, a low almost husky and seductive sound, like rolling waves, that echoes around us eerily and the hint of bold confidence and lack of fear completely unnerves me. She doesn't seem to care that three highly aggressive wolves are homed in defense and she is the target.

"I'm Alora Santo, Sierra Santo sent us to find you because we need your help." I relax my stance and turn my claws and teeth away, nudging Meadow and Carmen to do the same in a show that we're not here to harm her. Only Carmen obeys with a sigh and straightens up beside me, while Meds stays in protector mode, sticking to me like glue. I can feel the vibrations from her as she growls under her breath and refuses to relent.

"I know..... there's not much that goes on around here that I don't know about. My birds have very good ears. So, welcome, Miss Alora Santo." She smiles, showing whitest teeth in the hints of her pale face, just barely visible from the shade of her hood and yet it still makes my unsure of her. Every cell in my body is in alert still, stiff and bristled all over because something in me doesn't want to trust this stranger yet.

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I squint at the crows and recall her words, casting a glance at Meadow, not entirely sure what she means about birds and ears and certain we never once mentioned her around these damned birds. I think she's maybe a little bit insane, or else she's making she knows more than she does.

“So, if you know why we’re here, then I guess we shouldn’t beat around the bush and ask if you will help.” It feels kind of rude to just invade her territory and blurt it out, but it’s put me completely off kilter having her seem to know who we are and so smug about it. She’s not exactly welcoming and so far, she seems to like indirect answers and word play. It doesn’t really signal a friendly soul.

“It’s getting late.” She points out, ignoring my question completely, in fact acting like I haven’t spoken, and instead looks to the sky with a sigh. I still can’t make out anything about her features other than she seems to have a youthfulness to her. It’s hard to put a finger on it, more than seeing her hand, but I get the vibes she is not that much older than Sierra physically. Mid-thirties at most. I’ve heard all about witches using anti-aging seduction, masking appearances to lure, and means to pull in innocents to trust them...or was that sirens? I forget. The books down under the house have so many supernatural species and I don’t recall which sometimes, or what ones we should never be drawn in by. Either way, her presence is giving me the heeby jeebies.

“Not to be rude but, we are aware, and we don’t like being out after dark, so if you could, you know, get to the point. You know who we are, what we want and hence.... we really need an answer.” Carmen comes right out with it in that haughty b****y tone of hers, no warmth, only dry boredom and superiority, and for once it doesn’t annoy me. I mean its rude as hell, and I admire her total lack of fear around this witch, but she does have a point. I don’t want to be standing out here like this for the rest of the night. This witch has no concept of how dangerous it could be for us, or the fact, we do still need sleep and food before dawn.

“The jilted lover.... So full of anger and att**ude. It’s like you’re a very full sponge, who has soaked up all the toxins in the world. A little squeeze and it all comes squirting out in the most unattractive way.” She chuckles, that same girly, yet not young, sound that washes over us and the crow seems to cackle in response along with her. An evil vibrating noise that grates on my nerves. I swear it laughs at us. It’s that same little window tapping a**hole from earlier and I mentally add her devious mini sidekick to my kill list should this turn bloody.

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Carmen on the other hand falls silent and glares at her with a great level of mistrust, eyes gleaming orange in the dark, full on hostility leaching out from every pore, given she does seem to know a hell of a lot. I’m certain we never said anything of the sort near her birds at all about carmen being Colton’s ex or my being the reason he left her.

“How do you know so much about us, and don’t say your birds hears us. Because that’s b***** as we haven’t said a thing about her love life since we got here!” Meadow is the one with the hostile tone now, biting in, full on mama bear mode initiated as she steps in front of me and seems to grow taller. I can feel her unease and sus***ion all around me, tainting the air and feeding my worry. She doesn’t like this witch and she certainly doesn’t think we’re safe with her.

“Did I say it was these specific birds? You’ve come far my wee pets; you look like you need somewhere to sit and maybe a hot drink to calm that unwise rise of

attitude. Know who you're talking to and learn when to be silent!" The tone loses that almost friendly air and that superior edge and biting tone change the atmosphere completely. It's an icy statement that makes Carmen sound like an amateur in terms of scolding and there's a hint of power and superiority that can only come from someone knowing their skillset trumps yours. She slides back her hood as she steps fully out from her space, releasing her raven to fly back to his perch, the rising moon glowing somehow brighter at her command and we're faced with a woman who looks no older than her late twenties at most.

She's pretty in a wholesome sort of a way visually, yet shrouded in maturity, underlying darkness, and wisdom, that gives her an older presence. Not outstanding, unearthly, stunning beauty, but she has definite attractiveness and a natural unmade up face with zero lines or wrinkles. She's seductive, yet somehow looks pure, untainted by the world and has a fire in her eyes that suggests she's a warrior at heart. She has a likeability, a sense of calm and control that makes you feel like you need this woman to tell you what to do next. A born queen, under her dark robes and almost Celtic style, flowing layers of long skirts, boho attire, which has a mix of era's in one outfit. She looks exactly how I thought a witch should look, if she was eternally young and beautiful.

Not bad at all for a three-thousand-year-old who has probably seen and interacted in more wars than we can imagine. It's not her looks that pull you completely in though, it's her aura. There's an atmosphere around her, of great power, crackling energy, pure clear oxygen fizzing up the tempo, and the steady unruffled gaze as she locks eyes on me completely throw me off. Dark, almond shaped almost catlike eyes that have a hint of exotic beauty about them. Deep and endless and way darker than Colton's brown eyes. She's terrifying. Like the kind of woman who would kiss you on the lips before driving a steak right through your heart and smiling sweetly as she did so. She's utterly intimidating.

"Look, we're sorry. It's been a long journey and a lot of stress. We don't mean to be rude; we just weren't sure if we could trust you. Or if you are her...Leyanne Cruden! You still haven't confirmed!" I try for the smoothing over and calming things approach, my mediation skills as Luna, but she throws her head back and laughs heartily. Like she just heard the funniest joke of the year and isn't shy about expressing her amusement.

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"You come looking for me and yet I'm the one that's not to be trusted, oh pet.... You really are a bit backwards. Who else would I be?" It's a chuckle, as she regains composure, wipes a tear from the corner of her eye and shakes her robes around her to rearrange them back to neatness. I'm starting to think this one is a bit insane.

"Truth be told, you can't trust me... you can't really trust anyone. Everyone has a line that they'll cross for the right persuasions, even my kind. No one is every truly trustworthy, even your sisters here." She smirks, rolling her r's in her sing song accent, hearty scots, and walks a step forward to close the gap between us and it takes all my will power not to step away. She's suffocating with just a foot forward, that energy eating me alive and I realize it's my ability to feel others that's causing it. I can sense, taste, feel, her br***** power and incomparable

amounts of magic within her possession. Like she carries a constant death fence of electricity around her at all times. It makes Sierra seem human in comparison.

I want to venomously defend my Meadow and maybe even Carmen too, but sense tells me to be quiet and ignore her insults concerning my being able to trust my pack sisters. This witch seems to like word play, and maybe mind games, and I definitely do not trust her. I have never met anyone like her before.

"I would die for her. So you can eat that and choke on it, Chica." Meadow loses her cool, spitting venom, obviously offended enough to not stay quiet as her pride is bruised and I grasp her hand to quiet her, and groan at her words. Flinching inwardly that this witch just told us to heed her and here Meds is, poking the bear.

"Want to prove it? I mean, I'm willing, and we do have a nice quiet night for it." Leyanne chuckles again, that hearty, brash, mocking laugh, throwing back her cloak over her shoulders to reveal a sculpted upper bodice of her dress, sort of romantic and flouncy around the neckline, with jewelry that give her a completely earth momma vibe that's not entirely weird. I kind of dig it but it's definitely something that would stand out in the human world, unless it was some sort of cottage core convention. Even without the huge black cloak with an extra pointed long tail on her hood. The girl likes to look the part of what she is, I guess.

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"Are we wasting our time? Should we just leave?" I blurt out in frustration at how this is going and step in front of Meadow again, reinforcing my position as leader, hoping to god we can just turn and go and find another way if this isn't it. My mate is back there, he needs me to figure this out, and I don't want to waste hours of my life on someone pointless who just wants to spur my girls into fighting.

"So quick to give in, wee one. Not much Luna quality in that. Do I scare you? Are you intimidated?" She whispers it in a mock tone, smug and winking as a smile haunts her full lips. No sense of her being rattled by us at all and I wonder just how powerful she is to stand up to three glaring femmes and not give an actual crap about consequences. She turns her back on us, throwing us a gleeful look over her shoulder and gestures with a tilt of her head. "Follow me, if you're brave enough, and I guess you'll see if I was worth the journey. Don't dawdle.... it's dark, you know?" She sn****s with her last sarcastic words, and seems to sway off with a steady walk, looking like she owns this land and is walking a red carpet, rather than a dirty sandy scrub with nothing around.

She doesn't wait on any kind of response at all, so sure of herself and our need of her, and walks off into the darkening wood to seemingly disappear. We hesitate, all three standing firm and throwing glances to one another, expressions ashen, faces pale, before Meadow shoves me forward to follow.

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"We're here... may as well. Just don't let your guard down and don't hesitate to use your gifts." She hisses under her breath and I scoot up right behind Carmen to fall back in line, flanked by two femmes and still unsure this witch is a friend at all. Sierra told us she was, but this doesn't feel like someone who is willing to bend over backwards to do anything for anyone except herself.

We make quick work of following close to her, aware of the pitch darkness and I start to wonder how the hell we're meant to stay out here if she ups and leaves us now. We don't know this terrain; the truck is far enough away that we'll encounter a fight if vampires come upon us, and I have no mental space, or physical energy, for any of that. My adrenaline is firing high and I'm already exhausted. Missing Colton has become the biggest drain on my soul, craving him, needing his touch, his presence and I seem to start of the day already fatigued, no matter how much I sleep.

"You've got to be kidding me." Carmen's haughty tone cuts into my thoughts and I blink up and look over her shoulder as a tiny derelict cottage comes into view, offering little to no protection from any outside invasion, a fire burning within its tumble-down walls. Smoke trickling through the hole of the disintegrating roof, glowing from inside and highlight the lack of solid foundations, or full walls on each side it has. I realize this is where she wanted us to go. Exposed at night, sat round a campfire in a strange place, of a ruined building, with only a witch we don't know if we can trust. Not a good move and I glance skywards and prey the fates know what they're doing this time.

"What? Afraid of things that go bump in the night? I thought you were big bad lycanthrope... never took you for being afraid of the dark. Don't worry wee la**ies, the scariest thing out here is me." Leyanne mocks us from her slight distance ahead with that amused tone and wanders into the cottage casually, using the completely absent side wall as her path in, to go perch herself on some positioned logs settled around the glowing flames. It seems this is her resting place and is already set up to sit by the fire to see the darkness out.

She watches with amus****t as we three follow slowly, glancing around in high alert, and timidly place ourselves close together on the other side away from her. We keep our backs close but spread so we take in three angles to keep watch through the fallen stones, aware, and looking around with caution.

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"Aren't you afraid of being out here?" Carmen is the one to question it, always so verbal with her thoughts, but Leyanne shrugs nonchalantly. She relaxes onto her log and stretches out her legs, exposing laced up knee high Victorian boots and adjust her skirts.

"Why would I be? Any creature stupid enough to tackle me deserves what they get. Who should I be afraid of? Nothing can kill me! I know, because they've all tried." She kicks up some dirt at the flames with her heel, causing instant green sparks and crackles to ring through and I jump, on edge and antsy. "This is just a temporary resting spot for you wee fellows to rest; I have something I was doing before I intercepted Sierra trying to locate me. Needless to say, I like solitary abodes and I only had short notice to detour." She picks up a large black kettle that had been nestled beside her feet and hangs it up on a metal bar sticking out across the fire at an angle where she props it. Seemingly not phased at all and making boiled water, while we gawp and sit stiff as rods, observing her.

"So that's how you knew about us? Sierra somehow alerted you with the locator spell?" my interest is piqued as I home in on that detail as she nods. Remembering I was meant to give her the vial around my neck, but it seems she doesn't need the proof of my connection at all.

"When you try to use magic to find someone like me.... I know about it. Especially when you use the spell I wrote for the purpose. So then, naturally, I had to investigate the why, with the help of my birds. I may know a lot about who you are and why you're here, but I don't have all the details. My little gossip m***ers are only good for Chinese whispers of things they actually witness. It's a long trek from your mountain to here and ears and mouths of pa**ing crows are not always reliable."

I glance around at the birds flocking the trees to watch us and squint and her term for them. A visual of birds enjoying drama and storytelling and spreading it through flocks across the land. I guess mine and Carmen's conversation by the trees that day was reported along the line, with every single time we spoke freely in the grounds of the homestead. It's weird and makes me feel we should be watching all those innocent creatures back home if this is the truth of what they do for witches. If it is, then Tawna running, they would have known fast that she did if the birds were messengers. Our forest is teeming with them and they are always around, day and night.

"What do you want to know?" Meadow interjects, ignoring what she probably mentally summarized about the birds too and Leyanne ponders her for a long moment, quietly.

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"Everything, but that takes time, and I can't linger for long. So maybe I can see for myself with your permission. Condense, rapidly learn, and extract what is necessary from all the other boring tidbits of life." Her words bring my eyes back to her in wide surprise, my mouth falling open, guessing she's hinting at being able to pa** mentally, like we can.

"You can mind link?" I'm awed, unsure I have ever heard of any other species apart from ours that can even do that, but she just looks at me with a 'please' of sarcasm across her face. That air of boredom that we really seem to underestimate her at every turn. Just who the hell is this witch?

"I mean, sure." I hesitate a little flustered with her response and lean forward without a second thought, to get up when she raises her hand to still me. Once again ignoring my question, she gets up and walks to me instead, gently laying her fingertips on my temple and I'm startled by the unearthly warmth and tenderness of her skin. It's a gentle almost maternal touch that doesn't coincide with her demeanor at all.

Immediately a strange sensation tugs at my skull, so unlike what happens when we mind link as wolves, and I feel like warm rivulets of my body heat are flowing right out of my head. It's almost pleasant and my eyes grow heavy with tiredness as I begin to relax and feel pleasantly soothed.

I blink up at her, seeing her eyes are locked on mine, unblinking, glowing a little eerily, but not blue like Sierra. No, this witch's eyes are darkest chocolate with glowing veins of honey amber threads around the inner pupil and I close my own to shut out the way my body trembles at the sight of them. It takes only seconds, this tugging, almost draining of my energy around my face. A sleepiness invading a little too abruptly the longer she goes on and then she stops suddenly, and releases me so I blink awake, the effects instantly dismissing as though being hit in the face with a blast of cold air again

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"Interesting..... very, very interesting." Is all she mutters softly and wanders back to sit down with a thoughtful glance at me, then Meadow, and then Carmen. It's as though she's sorting through the thoughts, filing them into an orderly timeline and working out our relation to one another.

"So, you saw the fog, you know what to do?" Meadow zeros in and tries to pull her attention, but Leyanne continues to stare at me in an unnervingly intense way. Her face poised, still, a slight frown over one brow and a hint of a little dimple at one side of her pretty mouth, showing a slight strain to her expression.

"Hmmm....." that's all she says, and I blanch at her sudden lack of verbal's when I have just given her god knows how much backstory. Unlike when wolves link and we can filter and control what we share, I had no insight into what she took, saw, dug into and she might have seen my whole existence for I know.

"What does hmm mean?" Carmen snaps losing patience, her usual irritable persona showing face, not that I blame her, and Leyanne smirks.

"It means, hmmm.... I thought that phrase was universally understood. It's not like I'm not speaking English... although some from that country would disagree." She chuckles at some vague self-joke and again fixes that penetrating gaze back at me.

"Hmmm you know how to help, or hmmm, you don't?" I chirp in, tenser by the second and honestly getting so sick of this. She's so good at vague, dragging things out and evasive answering and it's annoying as hell.

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“Hmmm as in, well now that makes sense, and hmmm as in I know what I have to do. Does that clear up your inability to understand the worldwide use of Hmmm?”

“Oh my god, you’re infuriating, you know that!” Carmen snaps, riled and instantly tense all over, getting up to pace around behind me and shake off the obvious hostility that is making her stiff and frustrated. It’s this atmosphere, this holding on with bated breath and walking on eggshells as we try to suss this witch out. It’s detrimental to patience and Carmen has low amounts of that in the first place. Leyanne just sits back comfortably and prods at her kettle with a stick to see if it’s even beginning to steam. Unperturbed by the outburst.

“I have something to do and you three should rest. We have to travel back to your home tomorrow and see what needs to be done. Help yourself to tea, there’s blankets back there in that chest, along with the leaves, creamer...sugar, whatever you need. Try and not make a mess, I hate sloppy campers.” She rises gracefully, dismissing us so easily, acting like this is f***ing normal, and I gawp at her my heart hitching in utter disbelief.

“You’re leaving?” I snap at her, my voice cracking in my throat with the raspiness I spat the words out, and somehow jumped to my feet without even realizing it. We literally haven’t gotten anything from her other than agreement to come with us and she’s dumping us out here in the middle of the night while the moon is full, and we have no means to shelter.

“Hmmm, things to do, people to see. I didn’t just come here for you three, as I previously stated. I was on my own little mission and it happens to be as important, and maybe beneficial to your little predicament.” She starts moving towards the exit and Meadow is the one to lose her temper in true feisty fashion. Letting rip with a roar, bouncing up in front of me with ambering eyes and a snarl to her tone.

“So we’re to stay out here, unprotected, while you swan off and do god knows what? Like sitting f***ing ducks, just patiently trusting you! You, who has given us nothing at all to even trust!” that wolfish aggression comes through in waves of oozing anger and her eyes glow even brighter as her temper explodes.

“You’re not very gracious, or grateful, for people seeking my help and toting themselves across the country. What do you think will happen to you here that won’t in your truck, protected by MY magic? Do you really think a secondhand spell carried out by a half witch is more effective than any I have in place here?” She smirks and gestures around us with an airy-fairy wave of her hands. “Safe as houses, and a little warmer than a steel box. I’ll be back before sunup, with a guest or two. So be awake, ready to go, and have more hospitable attitudes, because he isn’t the type to take any kind of rudeness and dismiss it as graciously as I’ve done. You’re lucky I’m in a good mood, with a solution to an issue I’ve been agonizing over, and you happen to be important to someone up there.” She points upwards at the appearing stars in the velvet blanket of sky, gaining a squint from me, a confused frown from Carmen and more intrusive verbals from Meadow.

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“Meaning?” she interjects harshly, eyes still not simmering down to normal, and I’m getting the vibe that none of us are really warming to this witch at all. She’s a strange one with an aura of something that makes you not really trust her, but you can’t quite put your finger on it, even if her words are telling you that it’s not true.

“I was led here for one task and it just happens to coincide with you three showing up... hardly coincidence. Now why I came here makes sense. Looks like the planets are finally aligning and your fates are sorting their mess out.” She smirks again, and I eyeroll at her use of word soup to tell us nothing at all once more. She’s evasive for sure, talks in riddles, and literally offers no insight while seeming like she is. Carmen inhales heavily to hold her own temper, slumping back down to sit and gives up, and I sigh realizing this is futile. I too fall back, let myself land heavily on a log beside her and stare helplessly at this strange woman.

“You’ll tell us when you think we need to know, right?” I point out, knowing this is looking to be a lot like how she operates. She plays things close to her chest and maybe it’s her that doesn’t trust us.

“Right. And I hate to spoil surprises. Oh... talking of which... This one I’m afraid needs some words of caution.” Leyanne eyes me steadily, locking on like I’m the target and her face falls serious and stern. She nods down at the vial on the long chain I brought with me from Sierra that we didn’t need at all. As soon as she eyeballs it, it begins to glow with low, white, faded intensity, and she smiles a little wider as though it contains an answer, she needed to be sure of. “Don’t go turning anytime soon. I know you have, and you’ve been lucky up until now, so don’t anymore.... That little witch gift in you isn’t supposed to be lost.” She winks, smiles in a somewhat staggeringly pretty kind of way and turns to walk away, but this time I really do need her to be less vague with that.

“What are you talking about... the vial? What?” I lift it and take it from my neck, thinking she wants it back, that it somehow gets damaged by my turning, but I never wore it when I turned. Leyanne only chuckles at my obvious confusion, the questions etched across my face, and turns away from me to straighten her petticoats, pulling her cloak back over her shoulders to conceal her slight frame.

“No wee darlin, I’m talking of those two little seeds of hope you have growing in your belly. Part witch, part wolf, part vampire..... don’t turn and they won’t die. Something that took Sierra a hell of a long time to figure out. In the end, all those lost, came after a turning... so I would say that’s proof of what not to do.” She moves off with a steady step and the blood literally drains from my face, turning my body icy cold as it infiltrates my fuzzy mind like a dripping tap. I blink down at my stomach and it smacks me right in the chest with the force of a freight train

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“Seeds in my? ... Are you saying I’m? How can you ..? I can’t be... we never..... We were careful. We made sure that there wouldn’t be accidents. How could you know?” It’s a blurt of words, a spew of soggy rambling as my eyes mist up and I find swallowing a whole ordeal. It stop her progression as she pulls up her hood.

“Because I can; perks of being a creepy b****, and careful or not, the fates decided these two bairns had to come to fruition. Like I said, Luna ... Don’t turn or the wolf in you will treat them as a virus and cure your body. Their getting big enough now to be seen as such. Such a simple remedy that most wolves never figured out until it was too late.” It’s a commanding but gentle tone, full of the confidence of someone in the know and I sit like a statue, gazing at my own belly and have no idea how to even react. I can’t think, or feel, as a numbness crawls over my limbs and skin, enveloping me in mild shock.

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/ [Awakening- Following Fate \(Book 2\) By L. T. Marshall](#)

"You're pregnant..." Meadows mouths it breathily, finally caving from fierce warrior wolf and slumps beside to instantly cradle my abdomen with a gentle hand and a face of instant tears. Carmen's face colors darker as she looks away, her eyes misting so obviously, and her instant of heartache almost drowns out my own shock and numb at such a crazy revelation. "Chica? You're pregnant!" Meds says it again with more energy, a hint of excitement, and I shake my head at her, still unable to let it sink in. Colton doesn't even know or is even capable of knowing about this even if we were home. He should know, he should have been with me when we found something like this out.... It should have been together, a moment, a shared happiness, and not this cruel twist of being hit in the face with it while hours away from him. Tears fill my eyes and my heart shudders painfully at the thought that this should have been a life changing discovery, in his arms, and not like this, while he's lost to me.

I don't even know if this would make him happy, given we avoided the possibility because of the brewing war and the state of our lives under the shadow of vampires. I don't even know if I'm happy. I don't know how to feel. Our world is a mess, our lives aren't simple, and my mate currently wants to kill me. This is so wrong, yet on some level a tiny piece of me shines bright and a warmth settle sin my heart that twists it in a good kind of way.

"Turning makes us miscarry" Carmen whispers the words, seemingly more to herself than needing to have a question answered and it tears my attention back to her swirling chaos of dark emotions. I can feel the deep and heavy grief of her mother's death all over again, yet this seems different somehow, and a harsher, piercing kind of sorrow fills my senses and makes me stiffen in reaction. Carmen lowers her eyes and begins to cry softly, staring at her own body much like I was. "Right, of course... hybrids, not pure. Makes sense." I don't get why she is so upset but Leyanne fastens a steady look on her and seems to soften slightly, seemingly knowing the why in Carmen's dissolving emotional state.

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"It was you or both. If you didn't heal you would die. There was no other options. Juan is a murderer, not you." Leyanne seems to know something we don't, and I literally gawp at Carmen as my brain registers on what she's saying, pain hitting me tenfold for two reason, and I can't get my head around the possibility Carmen was pregnant. It feels like she stabs me in the heart, not only for her pain but for the possibility of

"Colton's?" Meadow is the one to say the words I literally can't verbalize but thankfully she shakes her head. I feel so selfish for the relief in that, but I don't know, somehow if she had created a life with him first it would have tainted my own bond to him. I'm so stupid, and jealous, and ashamed of my reaction and thoughts.

"A one-night stand that spelled disaster. It was never meant to be but still..... just for that short time, I hoped. He didn't want to know. Then he didn't need to know anymore." She can't look us in the eye and turns her face away as it dawns on me that everything I suspected about a change in her.... It wasn't just what Juan did. It wasn't Colton's betrayal, or the pack leaving her, hell, it wasn't even her mom. It was deeper than all that and this is it right here.

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Carmen's loss, her constant weight of guilt, her change about caring about others... she'd been pregnant, and she lost something she'd grown to love instantly. For a girl who craves genuine love and a bond from someone who might just see and value her, it must have been doubly crushing. I can feel her agony so much clearer now as the sadness rises but she battles it back down behind that tough demeanor and shoves it behind that haughty tone and superior frown. Just a glimpse of her despair, but enough to break my heart for her for the rest of time. Meadow is silent as she absorbs this, finally that compassion I know she has on full show, tears filling her eyes, and Leyanne breaks the eerie quiet.

"Well, you three enjoy the heart to heart. Sister bonding seems to be much needed in your pack of three. Joined by fate... maybe you gals need to work on that. Like I said – early rise, be ready for my arrival; you don't want to miss who I'm bringing along."

She doesn't wait for a reply, not that any of us have one to give as startled shock is causing strained silence and tearful faces but turns on her heel and leaves without a second glance. Disappearing into the darkness as smoothly as she first arrived, as the atmosphere around the fire grows steadily worse.

Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall Chapter 58

[/ Awakening- Following Fate \(Book 2\) By L. T. Marshall](#)

It's a strange night, to say the least. Long, and almost sleepless, strained with three minds brewing crazily, and not exactly restful. Conversation is quiet, and sparse, as Carmen asked us never to bring up our newfound fact again and it seems none of us know what else to talk about. It all circles back around the two things – the fact I'm pregnant, with twins, and the fact Carmen lost her child that we never knew existed and mentioning either is obviously a sensitive topic. For both of us.

Me, I lay in bewildered and silent shock, staring at the sky, trying to get my chaotic feelings under control and absorb the reality of this, while Meadow keeps watch. She's alert, on guard and sits staring out into the darkness, spinning to every new sound and can't seem to switch off at all. In Colton's absence she's become my ever-attentive protector and it soothes me a little, while my heart still yearns for him to come to me and hug me tight.

What I wouldn't give for him to be laid beside me now. His face close to mine, his nose touching, his breath warming my lips. His strong arms around me, keeping me warm and safe, like he always does. His gentle yet seductive tone and that accent that makes me weak at the knees for him. I miss him more than I can bear, and every second that passes that we're still apart, I feel like I'm dwindling and crumbling to dust. My heart is broken with the loss of him and my soul is fighting so hard to find the hope, the remedy and to bring him home, yet I'm already so exhausted. I need him so much, more so since the witch told me that I'm carrying our children and I can't turn if I don't wish to harm them.

My head's a mess and I wonder how long they've existed in my belly, while I was careless and patrolled with the sentinels. While I used my gifts, selfishly turned at will, and paraded around with no hint of danger of the inner workings of my body. How long have I been tired, and hungry, and oblivious to my own body telling me to slow down and rest, because of these two little lives glowing brightly in the depths of my soul. It makes me sick to my stomach that without even knowing of their presence, I could have ended them with my complete ignorance, and guilt claws at me, cutting deep and slicing my heart to shreds.

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Sierra was right, even if she didn't mean it in that way – I do have a little witch in me. In fact, I have two. Somewhere in my heart it makes me warm, and happy, swearing to protective them at all costs, but the troubles, the worry, and the vulnerability it gives me now, claws up like a dreaded threat and chokes me into uneasy fear. I just lost my edge in this war, my upper hand. If I can't turn, I can't heal, so I have to make sure nothing happens to me that requires that. I can't use my wolf gifts, become strong, and huge. I can't battle as a human, but at least I still have my vampire traits to fall back on, although my energy is weaker, and at least now I know why.

We all stay this way, trapped in our own heads, dozing occasionally when our bodies give up the fight; catching minutes or more of fretful slumber but then awoken at the uncomfy, and unfamiliar surroundings, with a start. We're awake at odd times, sometimes together, mostly not, and nothing can really pull us out of it. This weird semi sleep, overly nervy mood we seem to be sharing. It's a surreal night, being somewhere strange, noises out in the dark that we have never heard back home, but like Leyanne said, nothing comes close or even ventures at the perimeter, so we feel relatively safe even with her gone. Her magic is powerful, and after she left, Meadow found symbols and etchings in a full circle outside on the derelict walls, much like the truck, so she at least didn't lie about our safety in this ruin. I guess in that she earned one point towards trust.

The early rise of sun doesn't wake us as we're already up, boiling water, making coffee that she left behind in that trunk full of things we assume she carries with her. It's weird. She has no transport around, yet this thing is huge, and weighs a ton and seems to carry everything she needs to travel. It's full to the brim of clothes, books, dried foods, potion bottles and an array of personal belongings that she has just entrusted to be left with us, with no care about us opening it to get the supplies she mentioned. We made sure not to touch the grimoires that were stacked in one corner, Sierra's voice coming to mind about never touching one without a witching handing it to you.

We were careful to not pry too much, only access the coffee and sweeteners, ignoring her belongings as best we could and we kept the campsite clean. We are aware that crows still watch us as only a few left with her, and who knows, this magical b**** might have cursed her stuff so if we did pry we would suffer for it. There's no telling what someone like her would do.

"Who do you think she's bringing back with her?" Meadow cuts into my thoughts, pulling me out of the endless stirring of coffee I have been doing, while daydreaming about nothing and everything all at once. I shrug, frowning with a deflated exhale and shake my head.

"Honestly, with her, it could be anyone. She's vague as hell and I'm not convinced she's sane. I still don't know if we should trust her or not."

"Oh, she's sane. She's just a little all-knowing and smug for my liking. I don't trust her as far as I could throw her while in human form." Carmen interjects, her face worn and drawn with dark circles under her eyes, telltale signs she didn't sleep at all, and she moves to rummage a small cooler beside the chest for fresh food and finds nothing. We're all tired, bellies rumbling from hunger and fed up waiting here.

"One of us should go back to the truck for breakfast supplies. I need bacon, lots and lots of bacon." Meadow grunts out, never cheerful in the morning without her food, and in the same breath seems to offer to be the one to do it but I shake my head.

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"I'll go, I need the walk and the headspace. This whole thing is like a dream and I have no grasp on reality. "I make a move to get up, from my b*** numbing wooden perch but flinch at the reaction.

"No!" both of them snap it in unison, instantly hostile and on their feet, as though ready to take me down while I blink at them in surprise.

"Luna, you should stay safe, here!" Meadow grinds out harshly, furrowing her brow at me, that no nonsense bossy femme on show and motions me to sit down with a jerked thumb.

"And the babies! You're going nowhere." Carmen adds on, brazen with her cold, overly protective tone, then blushes as she realizes the words that came from her mouth sounded almost tender as she turns away to hide her own reaction. Her face flushing red and she makes herself busy with tidying up our camp.

"I can't even process..... I don't feel any different. Maybe she's wrong and I'm not. Surely I would know right?" I query but Meadow narrows her gaze on me, all doubt missing in her know it all expression.

"At the house, Sierra said... 'are you sure you're not a little witch', because of how the book responded to you. Maybe she was right, and it's not you, but

there's witch inside of you growing now and it's only logical the book responded to them."

We both fall quiet and all eyes stray to my belly from three angles, a pause as it sinks in that Sierra did say that. I even went over it myself through the night and came to the exact same conclusion, and I know for certain my DNA holds no witch. It has to come from Colton. And there's only one way it could. You can't transfer it any other way.

Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall Chapter 59

[/ Awakening- Following Fate \(Book 2\) By L. T. Marshall](#)

Myths about vampire bites and Lychan scratches turning humans so easily, are folk lore, and it's almost impossible to turn a human to wolf. I doubt you can pa** on witch DNA without a baby, and I know even the vampires have a whole process involved in turning a human to be like them. It's not just a bite, and boom, vampire. Wolves are born, not made, yes even vampires are sometimes born, I a**ume witches too.

"I'm pregnant." I breathe out, saying to aloud to myself, to set it in there and push the doubt and disbelief away. I instinctively cover my abdomen with a protective flat hand, shuddering inside as I swallow those words and reconfirm my brain that this is not a dream. "Oh my god. I am so not ready for this." I blanch and shiver with the sudden wave of cold fear that courses through my body.

"Are we ever?" Meadow smiles, leaning in and rubbing my belly with affection, eyes softening, and then grimaces and casts a glance Carmen's way, almost guiltily. I feel Meadows sudden drop in mood, the instant regret at being so careless and hurtful and I'm at least glad to see Meadow has found an ounce of her compa**ion again. Carmen turns to walk away and seems to be trying to look busy, keeping her eyes averted and her face straight while giving no hint of her emotions away. I can't ignore them coming from her though, and how overwhelming they are in this moment, in small confines. The pangs of heartbreak and loneliness, the bitter despair. I pat Meadow's hand and give her an understanding look, nodding softly towards Carmen with a downcast flicker of my eyebrows.

Maybe it's time I go a little easier on her, huh? I mean, she's been through enough. Meadow mind links me privately, hitting the nail on the head and I nod. I have nothing else I can add, but an understanding of her loss makes me view things a little differently in the new light of day. Carmen is complex and it seems that one thing after another comes up about this girl which makes me dislike her less and less. She should be curled up in a dark corner, crying her angst out, but she's not. She's a fighter, a warrior and she's probably holding on with everything in her to stop her from crumbling the way her mom did.

They say femmes change when motherhood hits and maybe that's true. Maybe she didn't need to carry on to birth for the changes to take effect, because she

became a mother the second that life existed. Just like maybe I'm softer, more compassionate and stronger in my need to care for my people of late, maybe that's because I too have been touched by the maternal bond.

I can't imagine what Carmen feels or what the lack of that life has done to her since. The hollowness of its absence. Especially knowing she had to save herself and sacrifice her child in the process, all at Juan's hands. It seems we all have our own personal reasons to hate that man's existence after all.

"Good, good, you're up."

All three of us jump about a mile high when the voice invades from the far right, startling us into standing and poised aggression and none of us even sensed her. It's weird, but even with our sense of smell, our hearing and instincts, our awareness; none of us picked her up last night, or this morning. She's like a freaking ghost. Just swans in undetected and scare sus s***less with that sudden voice which comes at you like a flying dagger. We stand and pull together in front of the now glowing low embers of the fire, rattled, hearts elevated in beat and look around expectantly for her 'guest' with high sus***ion, but she appears to be alone.

"Aren't you missing someone?" I point out, eyeing up the fact she's still in the same clothes as last night but despite hiking through dirt and forest, she's immaculately clean and no sign of fatigue on her at all if she was up all night. I wonder if Meadow is right and witches can wear some sort of outer mask to conceal the real them. She's too neat to have been out all-night walking around in this horrid landscape and damp hair.

"No. He's here. Waiting by the road.... Where we're going now. So, chop, chop, ma wee darlings. Did you eat?" she asks in that merry brogue of hers, and noses around looking for evidence of food which causes her to frown when she sees nothing.

"We were about to go get our supplies and you showed up." Meadow responds drily, still an edge to her voice, and Leyanne nods with a slight shrug of one shoulder.

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"Guess you can eat on the journey. We have to go, he doesn't like waiting. So come along, pets. No time like the present." She gestures behind us to the path we came last night, and Carmen is the first to get up and move. Glad to finally be leaving this place.

"I for one will be happy to get back in that truck and out of here." She adds in pa**ing and I catch up behind her to resume our single file trail, finding security in being between my two femmes, especially now I know what I carry. Leyanne moves to walk behind us as the birds hitch up and follow, flocking in form god knows where and it seems like the sky is suddenly full of caws and cries and the battering of wings.

"I don't know, it has its positives. Quaint, peaceful, no humans for another few miles in any direction. Seems perfect to me. No one nosing in or getting in your way." Leyanne smiles cheerily, being strangely upbeat and annoyingly merry, as if we're all just out for a summer walk, at dawn, in the ugliest of landscapes. This witch is too weird for this time of the day and I hook Meadow's hand in mine to feel more secure now that we're moving and instinctively, I reach out, catching Carmen's from behind, sliding my fingers into hers. She stiffens at the contact, hesitantly glancing back at me before returning the grip without argument and loosely holding onto my hand. I can feel her awkwardness, her uncertainty, the alien feel of another femme wolf having this kind of contact and I'm sad for her that between her own pack sisters, touch is not familiar. It makes me wonder if it ever was. Has she always been so alone?

"You said turning was a no for me, right?" I turn back and glance at Leyanne, dismissing Carmen's posture, asking a question I have been going over all night with it sitting in my brain, and I have to clarify a few things. I've turned recently, and yet I am still pregnant, even though she said it had to do with the age of the babies.

"Right. Many hybrids were lost with just one turn. The perfection of your DNA is also your biggest flaw when it comes to species breeding. As soon as your body identifies it as something that's drawing from your health, it fixes it." I guess in the earliest days they are so tiny and unformed that my wolf gifts ignore the presence until they start to make you sick. I know that pure wolf pups somehow have the ability to withstand turning and I guess the impurity of a mixed child, is its other species is the one who can't stand up to it.

"Right, ummm.... my gifts, my abilities. In human form I can use them still though, right? They won't hurt them?" I ask tightly, raising my brow as worry wriggles into my brain; needing boundaries and guidelines to keep them safe, and I wonder how many times I have carelessly used them these past weeks while I didn't know. How close have I been to losing them before they were given a chance at life.

"Yes, fine, although.... some report that abilities and such may be weaker and get worse as thing progress. Your body focuses on the new life and stupidly leaves you more vulnerable. I think its nature's way of ensuring the weaker hybrids don't get out of the womb. So many obstacles to ensure failure. Only the strongest make it so I'm not at all shocked that Sierra gave birth to the future Santo Alpha."

"You're saying she might lose them; even if she doesn't turn?" Meadow spins her head on Leyanne, homing in on the details and ignoring her other words, much like I do and gets an infuriating shrug in return. We both blanch at her and my brain goes into chaotic overdrive as nerves flood me and make me feel instantly sick.

"Not if she's careful. Limits her need to protect herself. Relies on her pack to shield her, her mate if he wasn't cursed. Sierra got through, I'm sure you will too. Colton was a strong baby, and I don't doubt his offspring will be the same. I mean look at you, your mother didn't have half of your ability and she still carried you to term. Be calm, Luna, have faith in your fates." Leyanne yanks a passing branch, snapping off a twig to use to swipe at long grass as we walk, and she seems so

utterly casual and relaxed. Like she isn't telling me the possibility I may still lose my children.

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"You knew my mother?" I'm distracted by her words, head pulling away from the topic at hand for my own sanity, and like always, thirsting for more of what I lost in my past. Anything I can ever learn about my mother from before, it's like a drug for me, always needing more of it as the memories of her fade with time. So few beyond our pack knew of her, and so little of the remaining ones can even recall her at all. A lot of the valley forgot the Whyte pack as it was completely wiped out.

"Not personally, but I know of her. Was quite shocked to piece you and her together last night. But then, I shouldn't be, they always lead me to people for reasons. And nothing is ever coincidence."

"You mean the fates?" Carmen queries with a suspicious eyebrow rise and a glance back at her, and I'm wondering the same thing. I thought witches had gods, or some other belief, something like a moon goddess, given Leyanne seems to have at least three pendants on with moon stones and symbols of phases of the moon.

"I mean the higher power. You call them fates; some call them gods... I call them guides. Voices in the wind, nudges in your gut, itching palms and footsteps that lead you other ways. They send me where I need to go and sometimes it pays off. I'm in the right place at the right time and it all comes together. Like now." She looks at me for a long second, a smirk nudging her mouth as though she's gazing with meaning and I break eye contact, feeling uncomfy.

"That's what you meant last night. Why ever you were here, it links to us somehow?" I wish she would just open up and speak, stop these dumb riddles and

sa**y little expressions. Tell us, but I get the feeling she isn't going to. She plays everything close to her chest and gets a kick out of watching us try to pull the pieces together.

"It does. And soon, you will know how. Now speed up a little, I want to get there before he has to go back. He's a busy man and not famed for patience.... None of them ever are." She swipes at Meadow's b*** with her branch in an attempt to slap her onwards and gets a snarl and an amber glow under ferocious brows aimed her way. It doesn't phase her in the slightest and she just lifts her hands and makes a little 'forward' motion with her fingertips while smiling like the Cheshire cat. I think meadow is close to eating her as she growls under her breath and jilts me into a faster walk with a harsh nudge.

"Who is HE exactly?" Meadow is impatient and fiery in nature and I can tell this way of communication, and the smart-a** facial expressions, are annoying her.

"Someone you're going to hate on sight, but trust me, you're not going to act on it, not if you want to live. I'll make sure of it. I can a**ure you though, he comes with no intention of harm. You just have to trust the witch, I guess." That low and smug tone, the brows smoothing out to an almost catlike look that reminds me of Hollywood villains and I swallow hard.

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The three of us throw glances at one another, more questions coming with her so-called answers and a feeling of dread rises between us.

"Why do I get the feeling we're not going to like this." Carmen b***s in.

"Because you're not. But needs must and this whole thing, is bigger than just you three. Now hush, more walk, less talk. I need some headspace to figure some things out, seeing as I did not sleep one wink last night. Ma head's weary. Now shhhhh... get going." Leyanne gestures for us to move, rather bossily, a lot of harsh hand waving and a finger to her lips to silence our chatter. We don't like it, but we fall obediently back in line and quicken our steps retracing our path from last night effortlessly as we can pick up our own scent to follow back. A sense of lighter relief that we are going back to our familiar truck and will be turning around and heading home very soon.

It doesn't take long to see the truck in sight ahead, in the clearing where we abandoned its poor self. With a few more feet to cross, we come out at it where we left it last night and Meadow unlocks it before jumping in to reverse out of the ditch, we almost got it stuck in. With less weight aboard she maneuvers it easily and pulls it back up to sit on the road that brought us here.

"Not you." Leyanne catches my upper arm quickly as Carmen rounds the truck to get in and I was about to follow. Flinching in startled surprise and turning to eye her up and meeting a deadpan look that gives me no clue as to the why. "You're with me for now." She gestures back along the main route to our left and its only then I spot a large foreboding pair of four by fours, both black with tinted out windows, parked about a hundred yards further along the road. They give me a weird vibe and an internal shiver runs through the length of my body.

"Um I don't think so, she say with us." Meadow leans out of her now open window and throws Leyanne a challenging glare which only gets an amused smirk. She makes a move as if to say she will get back out of the truck and physically take me.

"If I wanted to harm any of you, you would never have made it out of this truck last night. Don't underestimate me. Be a good wee doggy, sit tight, shut up, and do as you're told. Don't make me get the muzzle." Her words are almost icy and cold in deliverance, despite that catty sarcasm, and I throw Meadow a look that's meant to calm her worry rather than escalate this into a fight that I know will happen.

Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall Chapter 60

[/ Awakening- Following Fate \(Book 2\) By L. T. Marshall](#)

"I'll be fine, just stay close. If I need you, I'll link. I still have abilities, you know." And I know that metal is no match for a piercing wolves' claws should they need to physically rip through the cars sitting yonder. Meadow would plough through a vehicle to get to me if I needed her, in the blink of an eye. We are strong and vicious, and Meadow is one of our worst. I have to nothing to fear, even if my own powers may be weakening as we speak. I still have enough to hold my own and get myself out of anything that might happen over there.

Meadow tenses and Carmen glares at Leyanne from her seat as she too settles herself in and locks her eyes on the two of us. She may not be someone who ever liked me but I'm a wolf, from her pack, her Luna, and our protective instinct for one another against another species is built in, whether we want it or not. She is giving me some serious vibes that Meds wouldn't be the only one tearing open a metal box to free me.

"Relax puppies, I'm only taking her for a short walk. She'll be back before you even miss her. Go chew on something." Leyanne tugs my arm with a rather bossy pull and gestures towards the vehicles ahead, but as soon as we start moving towards them, they fire up their engines and head our way. As though they have been observing and waiting for the signal of us moving their way. My heart begins to hammer like a drum, my gut telling me I should be on alert and my body becomes instantly clammy.

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They're American luxury cars, but filthy, as though they have been driving through terrain like this for hours on end and not accustomed to it at all. As they approach at speed, they stop right in front of us, kicking up dust, mere feet from our truck so that Meadow doesn't have to go anywhere at all. Close enough to see what's happening right where we are and it settles some of my nerves, giving me a sense of protection that she won't be far, neither of them will.

The first car door is opened by a driver jumping out quickly, dressed completely in dark clothes with gloves and a hood pulled firmly over his head so you get zero

sense of what he looks like at all. I freeze in paled faced horror as his scent wafts this way at my approach and I almost choke on the sheer strength of its familiarity.

“What the f***?” I gasp in shock and recoil against Leyanne’s hold as it computes through my head why I know that smell so well and what exactly he is. My inner alarm bells going off and I start to pull away, fear enveloping me and knowing we were right to doubt this witch.

“I said you wouldn’t like it, but you came to me for help, and that’s what I’m doing. So get in the car and don’t make a scene. I’m not in the mood for forcing pregnant wolves to heel.” She commands in a biting hiss, but I throw a hesitant look back at Meadow, crying visually for her, and she catches my fear and despair, her eyes glowing instantly as she rips herself out of the driver seat in an instant. Doors kicked open as both make way to save me.

“No. Don’t interfere!” Leyanne snaps, turns almost as quickly and with a raised hand slamming an invisible power their way, she seems to hold Meadow and then Carmen absolutely still and powerless with very little effort. They struggle facially but it’s like their bodies are bound and tied, lifted a foot from the ground, and all they can do is shake and growl as eyes turn amber and teeth elongate. She even seems to inhibit their ability to turn at all and the snarls turn to whimpers as she gives them a warning squeeze.

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A gift so like mine, only I can feel it coming from her in powerful waves, crackling the air and turning the sky dark over my head. It tells me she has ten times what I inherited in terms of power, and she’s terrifyingly capable at using it. She’s barely trying, and both my femmes are held still before she tucks them back in the truck, pushes them to sit where they were and slams the doors. With only a slight move of graceful fingers and a deadlock glare aimed their way, she seals them tight with magic, so that Meadow and Carmen start to fight to try and get out, pulling out claws to cut their way out but it’s futile. She has each in some sort of bubble that makes it impossible for them to do anything much at all. Their claws can’t get through it, the invisible shield, and they’re trapped where they are.

I glare back at her, my heart hitching, my own eyes turning red as fury rushes through my body as she drops her hand and leaves them that way, I pull myself upright. Rounding at her and not concealing my anger and mistrust when she’s brought me to the feet of the enemy and bound my protection.

“You said I should never trust anyone, even you. Was that a forewarning that you were going to stab me in the back as soon as you felt like it?” I point out and back away slowly, cautious and on full alert, claws growing despite my brain telling me to not turn, as she straightens her cloak and reaches for me, but she only smiles and shrugs.

“And you shouldn’t, but darling, as I already pointed out, if I wanted to harm you, I would have done it already. I’m not the type to let vampires do my dirty work when it can be so much fun to do it yourself. He’s not a threat... none of them are, and you need to get in that car and learn something new today. If you want my

help with your mate and your little fog problem, I need yours. This is why I was here survival of all species sometime means wars shouldn't continue. I had a task, it's in that car waiting for my answer... and you're it. So, if you please?" She gestures towards them, but I step another foot back away from her, bristling and poised in pounce mode.

"What are you talking about? So many f***ing riddles with you! You're trying to end the vampire war, or is that another lie?" I glare at her, stiff and ready to fight but my stupid fuzzy head is still asking her for answers I shouldn't trust. Leyanne seems completely relaxed, maybe a tad irritated but she patiently stands, then shrugs.

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"Not directly and when did I lie, ma wee pet? I try to never pick a side or get involved, but sometimes I need to. One species is as important as another and if the balance is destroyed it affects all of us. It's been decades of unrest and frankly, I'm tired of it. I've not got time to stand here and deal with a tantrum so move or I'll carry you too." She reaches out, catches my arm, yanking me towards her and shoves me a little more aggressively in the direction she wants. I stumble forward towards the open door, distracted by her aggressive behavior and the seemingly patient driver who motionlessly stares at the ground as he comes back into view. I bristle as I approach, my inner wolf aching to be freed when surrounded by the stench of his kind, my senses telling me to turn and run, but I hold it in. Thinking of my babies, knowing she will do to me what she did to my femmes and cursing that now of all times I would put myself in this situation without the ability to turn or hold my own against her.

If they hurt me, I can't heal, and I don't know if I truly believe this witch. She told us to not trust anyone and now I wish I listened to her own damn words!