

Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall

Chapter 4

"You felt them, but you didn't actually see them? Or one, as in singular?" Sierra gazes at Colton questioningly as we sit across from her at breakfast, something we usually share in her own suite as she prefers it that way. Colton slides me the platter of pancakes as he shrugs her way. It's late for breakfast but our patrol duties sometimes push us to eat nearer noon a couple of times a week.

"Felt. Possibly just one, but I can't be sure. I didn't see them at all, but my eyes turned blue and I could definitely feel their magic in the air; faint, but it was there. Just out beyond the perimeter." Colton dishes me some and throws me that soft smile, that translates to 'I love you' as he adds maple syrup to the stack he's given me. I help myself to bacon and dig in while his mother still stares pensively at his face.

Sierra sighs and looks torn for a long moment as we start to tuck into the pancakes, bacon and eggs I insisted I was dying for this morning. My appetite has been huge since we started turning on a daily basis and he's always one to pander to my needs.

"I'm not surprised that witches have sided with the vampires, knowing what we do about how this all began. They are the least evil in this war, even if that's hard to believe. The wolves villainize our kind, the vampires do not. I guess they hope an alliance means they get to come out of the shadows to live free once more. Too many witches have been slaughtered and gone into hiding for hundreds of years." Sierra picks up her fork but seems like she has no appetite at the moment and twirls it in her hand instead. Her expression is strained, and I can feel her nerves coming through in subtle waves since Colton told her about the witches.

"What does it mean for us if they now have magic on their side?" I blurt in, not exactly at peace with this conversation as anxiety swirls in my stomach and I glance to Colton, who for once is not all that interested in his food. He's pushing his bacon around with disinterest as he glances at his mother. My man is an eater, and his lack of hunger means he isn't as calm as he has been pretending all morning.

"Within these walls, nothing. It's beyond the protection stones of our land that we should be afraid. Witches have powers that are capable of holding their own against small numbers. We're a smaller pack, an easy target. I guess it's why we've had so many attacks in recent weeks. The vampires are trying to pick off the smaller of our kind before we unite to set out on a war once again. In numbers they're not a match for us." Despite her words that should instill a little confidence of our safety all I can feel is her overwhelming sadness.

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Sierra has been quiet of late, her powers growing again and spending more time studying the grimoires of the house than venturing outside of her own walls. I know she's pining for a mate she hates but can't be unbound from, and a life she lost that she can't go backwards to. Her unhappiness has been growing in the last months, the longer we live this way, and I don't think it's down to the vampire attacks. I think her heart is grieving and with every new niggle and unrest brought up, she feels even less useful to her pack.

"So, their magic can't invade beyond the runes buried outside the perimeter?" Colton cuts in, his eyes on his mom and I can tell he too feels her underlying lack of vavoom today. He won't push her though; he still treats her like precious gla** that may shatter should he blow a little too hard.

"No. Those runes were created and buried by my great, great, grandfather under guidance of the world's most powerful witch. He was a great sorcerer and made sure this house would withstand magic of any kind that was not borne within from blood. We can use ours, we can freely come and go, but anyone else touched by spell or gift that we don't invite in, can't pa**. I'm not even sure humans can pa** without our say so."

"That's something I suppose. So they can throw all they have at our walls and outside within the boundary, and nothing gets through?" I raise my brow, finding some peace in that. The first boundary line where the rune stones lie are about ten feet outside the village walls and our front sweeping drive.

"Yes." Sierra seems confident in it, so I settle, glad of something at least. One less concern. We can sleep at night, knowing nothing gets in, even if the vampires stray close. We still have to patrol though as our power lines, telephone cables all route out with these lines and our main water supplies come in from the west. They have been targeting those with every new attack.

"We need to reduce the distance we chase from now on. No longer use the frequency as our measure of distance. We need to properly mark the rune boundary and forbid any of the pack straying beyond until we know more about what they intend to do." Colton places his fork down and frowns off outside the large double window of the veranda, staring at the looming presence of the distant forest and mountain as though trying to visually spot the enemy. The sun is bright today, despite the chill in the air and the land before us looks green and luscious. A far cry from the shadowy danger we faced last night.

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"It's not a bad idea. Safety first. As always." I smile at him softly, knowing that's what he'll do for the good of our people and tap his plate to encourage him to eat.

"Talking of magic.... I had another dream..." Colton turns instantly invasive; his posture stiffening and instant heavy cold fills the atmosphere around us. I flicker my eyes his way in question and surprise. He hasn't mentioned any dreams to me lately, so I squint at him with brewing doubts.

"When?" I blurt out, hating the thought he has kept something from me. It's not how we are. He tells me everything and vice versa, we have no secrets, and one hundred percent honesty.

"Last night. I figured I would tell you both at the same time and save the agony of having to repeat it." He glances from his mom to me and that subtle frown appearing on his brow makes me wonder how bad it can be. Simmering my internal pang of betrayal momentarily. Colton is rarely fazed by anything, especially not dreams, even if he thinks they may be visions of the future, so this has to be something upsetting.

"Tell me." Sierra reaches out across the table and covers his hand with hers, that gentle maternal love she smothers us with shining through as she too senses unease. Colton sighs heavily, leaning back a little without breaking her contact and rolls his shoulders. A sign he's starting to get stressed and my nerves pick up, pushing me to lean towards him. Aching for him as his emotions taint mine and I get equally antsy as I feed from his inner despair. I reach out impulsively and take his other hand, the one on his thigh under the table and tangle our fingers together as a way of consoling what I don't even know yet. He throws me a soft look, a hint of a smile and a little 'I love you' squint of his eyes as he wrinkles his nose cutely. I blush in response, never immune to the faces and messages he sends my way, even when it's in a serious moment like this. Colton clears his throat and tenses as he exhales with his words.

"It started out in a forest. I think, maybe the north side of the mountain. It was familiar, but not here. I was alone.... Maybe.... I don't know. I saw no one, but it wasn't quiet, like I was alone. I felt like there were others in the shadows." He sighs again and flinches and this time his eyes start to subtly amber out, a sign his emotions are pushing through and I squeeze his hand tighter to keep him calm. Wolf Colton would not be great at explaining anything as he has way too much hostile in that furry form.