

Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall Chapter 41

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I exhale and almost cry with relief and turn to pull my hands from Carmen, who no longer has reason to hold me back.

"Are you coming?" I ask her warily, legs shaking from adrenalin, and weakening with relief as she nods, gesturing back to a hold all on the steps she must have zoomed together before hyper speeding down here. She goes and retrieves it, and we head for the passenger door of the truck, her climbing in first with me last to sit on the double seat side by side.

"Glad you could make it." Meadow smirks knowing full well she almost gave me a heart attack minutes ago. No remorse whatsoever in her tone or her amused expression.

"Sometimes I really don't like you!" I point out, hand over my chest to calm my heartrate, glaring at her scornfully and she laughs

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"Ahhh but hamera, you love me more than life."

"So where are we going?" Carmen cuts in, impatient already and I can feel the anxiety swarming from her in getting to go already. There's a smog of impatient in her manner and a restlessness that seems a little unnatural. I can't imagine what she feels today but it's coming across in subtle hostile tension.

"New Mexico, Chica. Sierra is going to call us when we are almost there to pinpoint where exactly. Right now, we have a rough town to aim for, but Sierra is going to keep using a locator spell to get us right to her when we arrive." Meadow pulls out her cell and shakes it for Carmen to somehow prove that Sierra knows how to use such things before sliding it back into her pocket.

We packed our bags last night and stowed them in the truck, so we really have nothing to wait around for. Sun is coming up; the homestead will start to wake soon, and we need to move before that happens. Least amount of hold ups and we can focus on what's to come.

I told Sierra not to see us off, or else I wouldn't go. I'm worried about her being alone to cope as Luna in my absence, no support, not even the subpack here to help and advise her and I know that seeing her looking so lost would have swayed me. I'm hoping it's an uneventful two or three days for her, or however long we are gone and that the fog sitting around the perimeter keeps the pack in their homes and out of her hair. There's nothing else for them to do until we know more and whether we can do something. It's a waiting game where they have all been told to stay home, stay calm and let us do what we have to do.

They have enough fresh supplies for the month, and we still have our animals, our dried stores and ability to produce some of our vegetables in the homestead greenhouses we set up months ago. We can stay put, stay safe without needing to leave the grounds for four weeks, providing nothing else happens. It's the best thing for them all to do.

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I'm startled back out of my thoughts by the truck starting up again and I spot Tom getting out of the way, his accompanying two wolves who are going on perimeter patrol this morning showing up beside him and I can see the question in their eyes as they spot who is in here. I hold my breath, paused in alarm because I know that the mind link gossip will start doing the rounds sooner than later.

Meadow is the military leader after Colton, I'm Luna, and here we are abandoning them right after their Alpha fell to a spell. I know it looks bad, and they will panic, but they have to trust I'm leaving to try and fix this.

"Good luck"! Tom pack links us, and I catch the side eyed sus***ious looks he gets from his mates, but they say nothing, just watch us turn out of the gravel drive and head towards the opening and out into the fog.

I can almost taste their fear and anticipation as they realize we don't intend to stop where clean air meets emerald mist, but as soon as we cross the boundary, I lift my hands in readiness to push the fog away should I need too, and we lose all contact with those inside.

Like an invisible barrier it cuts off Tom's mind link and that of the rest of my pack. For the first time in 6 months all those subtle feelings and vibrations I am so accustomed to, the emotions of my people that follow me every day, they all fall silent like I just stepped into a soundproofed chamber and it's intense, feelings of being swept over by a veil of cold. All that's left is the tension and silent apprehension of Meadow and Carmen, suddenly intensified as they no longer compete with all the other feelings around me, and I blink back out of the rear window on the back door as the fog surrounds us and envelopes us out of sight of the homestead. A sense of loss, heightened worry and a sadness that I'm leaving them.

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"Well, this was something I didn't think of." Meadow cuts into my thoughts sharply, and pulls me back to face the front window, glancing to her furrowed scowl and her newly aggravated mood.

"What?" I frown at her and look out when she nods ahead at the misty view feet in front of us and I click right away at what she's hinting. We can't see a damn thing, not even the road. Despite the fog near the boundary seeming thinner and almost transparent in places, it seems coupled with morning mist from the mountains, damp air and dull light, it's killing vision beyond four feet.

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"That's why I'm here" I point out and lift my hands to part the smog. Splitting it apart enough to clear our view for a couple of hundred feet and giving us an almost uninterrupted path to follow, pushing it out as we go. It's eerie and deathly silent out here, a strange atmosphere of surreal and with the sun peeking up to bring a little warmth to the green air, it's an almost haunting atmosphere. It reminds me of a memory, many moons ago when the mountain fogs stayed around the valley for three days and no one could see a foot in front of them while the noises of daily life echoed spookily around.

"Where do you think they are?" Carmen quips in and I squint my eyes to the side to look through the density and shrug. Knowing I can feel the presence of others out there, tingling my sixth sense at a distance but not enough to decide if it's them I can feel, or the homestead behind.

"I don't know, I can't really feel any of them for certain. There's nothing but emptiness and shallow vibrations."

I spoke too soon, and almost as the words leave my mouth, the truck shudders at the rear, like we were kicked with something hard and heavy, as something fast collides in a weird kind of way. It reverberates through the metal of the vehicle and sends shivers up my spine, widening my eyes in alarm.

Meadow almost loses control of the wheel for a second as she tries to right our wobble and floors it as fast as she can. I push myself out of my seat and dash into the rear of the truck to peer out the window, to see if I can see anything, but I also have to keep my hands splayed to the front to keep the fog parted so she can see where she is going. My heart racing and perspiration forming across my forehead as my stress levels skyrocket. It truly felt like something was thrown at us.

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Carmen follows me with haste and peers out too, wiping the condensation which is starting to collect from our combined heavy breathing as we are rocked again with another strong shockwave. This time though even though it causes the side of the truck to wobble, it doesn't veer us from our path and a strange mystical air ripple travels down around us in much the same way the rune border can move when hit with the enchanted pack.

"Look" Carmen grabs my arm and shakes me, pointing to the far left out of the very corner of the window and I spot the wolves running parallel just inside the fog around us. They are keeping up speed to meet ours and one takes a running leap at us again. Only this time we see it. The bouncing off the invisible forcefield much like they do with the homestead boundary and sending another violent thwack of energy through our vehicle. Although we are hit, it's like we have a

forcefield and we shudder, but the barrier takes most of the impact so we can keep going.

The spells working, for without it they would have taken this truck down in one run and no doubt be all over the top of us and ripping through the metal with their claws. They are barely denting the surface of the strange orb around us and as long as Meadow keeps us on the road and going, they won't be able to do a damned thing. Well unless they figure out that throwing trees and boulders might take us down, but they are so focused on chasing, intent on pursuing that they don't seem to stop to find non enchanted items as weapons. I wonder if the fog has pushed instinct and chased away logical thinking, as Colton would definitely have thought of an alternative attack had he not been under a spell.

"Is that Colton?" Carmen squeaks, pulling my thoughts of him to reality as a dark black shadowy wolf, bigger than the rest and defined by his darkest fur and forbidding presence, runs at us and makes a leap for the roof.

I cower instinctively, waiting for the impact of his sheer weight and brute strength but it doesn't come, and we catch sight of him rolling to the ground on the opposite side of the road, as though he went right over the top of us. He obviously couldn't get on the roof, swayed by the protection, but it doesn't stop him from chasing us regardless.

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"Yeah.... That's him." The words stick in my throat bitterly, and I have to look away as tears blind me, pain surging in my chest and crushing my heart at the angry vengeful wolf coming at us again. He's determined to derail our vehicle. Colton isn't in there anymore, only darkness and fury and a mind set on destruction controls that powerful body and I can't bear to look at him and see someone so familiar, someone I love and worship, trying to destroy us.

"What do we do?" Meadow seems locked onto the window in front of her, veering around wolves who try and get in our way but are pushed aside by our invisible forcefield, unable to tear her gaze away from the high-speed maneuvers. I check I'm still keeping the fog open for her to navigate through and raise my shoulders in a shrug, overwhelmed at the numbers of them swarming at us from all angles. The mist is not getting any thinner but it looks like we're heading out onto the road to the main route. Still getting out even if we're being chased.

"Keep going... pray they give up. Try not to run anyone over in the process." I state loudly, catching the determined look on Carmen's face and then the stiffening posture of Meadow in the driver seat. The air around us thick with tension, subtle fear seeping out, anxiety tainting the oxygen, because we have no idea how to process what's happening right now. All three of us gasp loudly, rocked in reaction by a sudden jolt as we're thrown sideways violently inside the back of the truck. I barely catch myself as I go sprawling across the smooth floor, grasping for a hold, and Carmen catches me by the waist and yanks me against her as she braces us to one of the beds. Meadow screeches at us to hold on to something with a frenzied croak.

"They jumped in front of me, I think I hit him! I did hit him, them...God knows how many but....I hit HIM!" her voice breaks, tears evident as her pain saturates her emotions, her face crumbling as her brows hit her lashes and she struggles back a sob. I crawl to the front seats as carefully as I can, trying to not let my forcefield down so the fog stays separated and cling onto the back of the seat to squint at her. "It was Cesar....it was my baby. I'm sure of it." She mumbles on in distress, her voice wavering and her grip is so tight on the wheel that her knuckles are white and solid.

"You know he'll be fine. He's in wolf form, even under a spell he should heal." I try to soothe her but the intensity of her heartbreak seeps into my own soul and I slide down beside her on the seats, overwhelmed with heaviness and the urge to break down and cry too.

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"I hit my mate with a truck, chica there's no going to be fine when he finds out I did that. He will unbind me and send me packing for sure." She stubbornly wipes away a tear and gasps as another fleeting wolf form jumps in front of us again, causing her to swerve left and I'm thrown against the door this time. I see the collision of the wolf hitting the side, but the forcefield makes it feel like we just grazed bushes and he spirals off in a horrifying manner, like a spinning top. If I hadn't seen it for myself, the wolf being bounced away from a devastating impact, I would never have believed we just hit an eight-hundred-pound animal in full fury mode.

"What the f*** are they doing?" Carmen spits out and comes to sit back up front with us, both of us clipping on our belts as a precaution because this is far from over. I'm already bruised all over from being thrown around and I'm starting to get weary from holding my powers up and onwards to keep the path clear.

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"Trying to stop us and failing. They don't seem bright enough to realize they can't." I point out.

"So the spell made them stupid?" Carmen verbalizes my sus***ion and I shrug, deflated, and searching the fog and the moving figures for the one wolf I want to see yet don't since he jumped over us back there. I don't know how to feel, knowing he's there, despite not being able to feel him, but he's intent on chasing us.

"I would say they're more like on auto pilot. One thought, one urge, and all other reason has flown away." It's the only way I can describe how they are right now and Meadow nods, wiping her soggy face and pulling herself back together with that fierce aura of command kicking in now her shock is dissipating.

"The spell has them looking for wolf blood, no matter what stands in their way. They don't seem to think beyond that. It's pure instinct and no sense of being able to calculate beyond it."

"Are you sure that's what they're doing? I mean has anyone actually tried to see if they will do anything to us?" Carmen looks from her to me, severe doubt written all over her face, which only pushes me to doubt myself what's happening here.

"Do you wanna get out and see, Chica? I will happily oblige in opening the door and throwing you out to test this theory. See how long you last in the fog." Meadow snaps at her and Carmen rolls her eyes, sitting back b****ily and crosses her arms over her bust in a haughty manner. Anger and dislike pouring into her eyes which are piercing like daggers in my direction. Strangely, despite being the last thing we need it's somehow comforting to see them behaving like they used to and normalizing things for a second.

"I think what they're doing now, is proof enough. If they wanted something else, I doubt they would be attacking." I try for a gentler approach, but Meadow and Carmen are sat in stubborn silence and both stare right ahead as we progress. The atmosphere turns frosty and I sigh to shake off the battle of these two stubborn femmes. My arms are getting sorer by the second due to holding them up with intent, and my energy is waning with holding my powers straight and steady for so long to keep the fog clear. I wonder how much further before we are free from it and I can take a small breather. I'm not used to using my gifts for long stretches of time, usually only quick bursts.

"It's getting thinner, I think I might be able to see without you doing that." Meadow breaks into my thoughts, sensing my tiredness which is coming way quicker than it normally does and I sigh with relief and drop my hands in relief, sighing heavily and rubbing my shoulders to ease the pain. "Reserve it for when we really need it. You've had a rough night and probably should rest." She throws me a look that says 'please' and I sit back to let the ache from my arms disperse.

The thuds at the rear persist but their futile attempts at stopping us or hitting us seem to push them to stop trying, well at least tail off as more of them fall back the further we go. They become less frequent and less violent and more like small thuds that barely do anything other than shudder the walls for a second. It looks like they are bound to the homestead and following us is not an option. I feel like we're all holding our breaths and silently praying they give up soon, as we carry on forward at breakneck speed and Meadow stays with her eyes glued to the road and her foot pressed hard on the gas.

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"Thinner means it's maybe not going to be much longer, right?" Carmen breaks the tense silence and leans forward as though she is peering outside to try and see any kind of end to the smog and I sigh listlessly.

"I don't know. The mountain is miles to the north, and it reached there. So if it does thin we have miles of it yet." I point out in deflation and rest my head against the frame of the window, peering out into endless mist for miles.

"It reached the mountain?" Carmen gawks at my words and I nod my head as she sits and stares blankly at me, her eyes misting up and she shakes her head to clear the obvious emotion. "All those wolves, all those children."

Meadow looks shocked for a second and narrows her eyes before glancing at Carmen from the side.

"When did you become miss 'I give a rats a**?' I've never known you to care about anyone except yourself and now you're crying over wolves you spent a lifetime treating like trash." Meadow's anger spikes and I know it's born of frustration and the tension of our current predicament but it's harsh, even for Meadow.

"Meds" I reach out and lay a hand on her arm and throw her a look that's meant to say 'calm down' in a bid to diffuse and settle this hostility. Carmen has suffered a loss too and it's obvious she loved her mom and is still in a lot of pain. I've never known Meadow to be so callous with a wolf's feelings like this, normally she is so maternal.

"A lot happened when you all left. There were people I cared about..... things change." Carmen turns forward and stares out the window to hide the instant welling of her tears across her eyes and I sit in awkward silence for a moment, throwing Meadow a strained look and she sighs loudly, letting out a heavy breath and slaps the wheel hard, making me jump.

"God dammit Carmen. Don't f***ing do that. Last thing I need is to feel guilty over the likes of you. I never saw an ounce of humanity in the two years you were in our pack, and now I don't even.... People don't change that dramatically." Meadow can't help the venom in her tone and despite me having more reason to not like this girl, Meadow has still never let go of her grudge about Carmen's misdemeanors of the past. Maybe because they have a two-year history and a lot more than I ever did with her, maybe that's why. I just don't get why she asked for her to come if this was how she intended to be with her.

"What would you know?" Carmen mumbles it to the window and more to herself than Meadow, her mood spiking into many conflicted feelings that I can't read, and I honestly don't know how to mediate. I love Meds to death and well, Carmen, she's not my favorite person, but I do feel this isn't the time nor place.

"What did you say?" Meadow is obviously looking for a fight and I get it. She's in pain, this is how she is. Her outlet when she needs to vent is to be fierce and Cesar is usually the one to handle her like this. Her pain comes out in aggression, loud sa**y att**ude, hot fiery pa**ion, or sheer fury, and she has only us two to take it out on. She would never do it to me, not because I'm her Luna, but because she protects and loves me like she's my mother and I never get her rage. Cesar can handle it; he draws it to him on purpose when she gets this way so he can take her back down to a normal level.

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"I said.... What. Would. You. Know!" Carmen bites it back at her boldly, annunciating every word cattily, turning with a tight expression, eyes ambering

out in anger. This time turning fully hostile and the heat and sparks begin to rise between them like high voltage energy, crackling as Carmen's own temper bites.

"Stop it." I snap at both of them and raise my hands to wipe my face in frustration "You two better not be like this for this entire trip." My patience snaps, my attempts at hopeful and upbeat are stomped out and instead heavy fatigue grips me as my head starts to ache. I can't deal with this s***.

"I'm sorry." Meadow grinds her teeth, glancing to me with apology and a hint of defeat on her pretty face and goes back to the road, something coming to her realization suddenly as she widens her eyes and quickly turns left to right with a quick head move. "They've stopped" she points out and instinctively I turn and look out the back window, seeing nothing but the distant still shadows of figures in the fog, unmoving, and letting us leave with no more interaction. Carmen turns too.

"Why did they stop so easily?"

"Maybe they can't go any further..... look" Meadow points ahead pulling our attention back to the windscreen and we can see where the fog thins out enough that its' barely there, finally an end in sight to this depressing smoke. It's definitely thinning to almost nonexistence and I wonder if maybe the spell really does weaken when they leave it for any length of time.

"You don't think..." I trail off not sure how to word it, but Meadow cuts in.

"Maybe, I mean it's a possible back up plan right.... kidnapping them one at a time and keeping them out of the fog out here to see.... If all else fails." She shrugs, a look of possibility glinting in her eye.

I blink at her, my gut churning over, gazing back one more time at the distant figures and sigh heavily, expelling some heaviness now we know we are running free.

"It can't be that simple. There has to be another reason they aren't following us."

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"We are three.... the homestead is dozens, maybe they just want to stay where they have more to kill," Carmen chimes in bluntly, as gracious as ever, and I shudder at the thought. Maybe she's right, even if she said it without tact or any obvious emotion. What is three lone wolves when they have an entire homestead of hundreds left behind. If blood and destruction is what they're after, then we are too much effort to chase when they can't get into our steel box.

The thought makes me sick and as we hightail it onto the main route and relatively clear air with no more impaired vision and the sun warms us as it starts

to reach higher in the sky. If we were not on such a depressing mission, it would be the start of a beautiful and unusually warm day. I start to rub my temples, overwhelmed with utter sadness and despair at what we are even having to do and force Colton out of my mind once again. The constant craving for him never seems to subside and now we're leaving them behind, I experience a new sense of longing and a subtle panic that we will be far apart.

"Don't think about it. Just focus on what we have to do. It's a long drive and we have to stick to human routes to keep contact with other packs to a minimum. If we plough on, we can get there before dark, as long as we keep stops to fuel only." Meadow pats me on the shoulder and pushes my hair off my face in that gentle mom type way she has. "Sleep while you can, you look exhausted. We need our Luna to be fit and well and I don't need you right now. You too, Carmen, you can take over driving when I need a break." Meadow is in bossy mode once more, bickering forgotten, commanding like she does the sub pack and the sentinels and I nod, knowing there's not much else to do but stare at pa**ing scenery while these two bicker and glare the journey away.

Carmen doesn't argue but gets up and moves to the back and climbs onto one of the stabilized beds, turning away from us and pulling the blanket in front of her face. I could sense her tiredness when I collected her earlier, I guess sedation and grief are not a great combo and I'm sort of glad she's chosen to go lay down. I stop as I lift form my seat and lean down to Meadow, linking only her with a gentle tone.

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"Go easy on her, I get the feeling things have happened in the past months and she doesn't seem the same. Remember what's just happened to her." I squeeze Meds shoulder lightly and smile as her eyes dart to mine for a second.

"It's hard to let go of old grudges when she looks and seems exactly the same. Her mom died, yet she seems fine. She's so much more stable than I expected her to be." Meadow bites bitterly, as though she is somehow disappointed in Carmen for not breaking down, but I frown at her and shake my head.

"Everyone grieves in their own way. I think she's in shock and it hasn't sunk in that she's really gone. Med's please, treat her the way you would treat any other wolf in the pack. Forget who she used to be. Her heart is broken, I can feel it."

"Is that a command, Luna?" Meadow eyes me up with a hint of att**ude, knowing I usually never tell her what to do in terms of how she handles things and I throw her an exasperated look.

In all the months I have been such I have never commanded Meadow to do anything. She's my best friend. It's a line I don't like crossing, even if I do have a right to do it. She was there for me when I was no one, and I don't like to lord over her in anyway when she mothers me effectively.

"It's a gentle request, for me." I point out with a smile and lean in to kiss her on the temple, smoothing back her hair in a bod to show her my deepest love and

respect and that I don't want bad blood between us, and pause before I head to the back.

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"Are you sure you don't want me to sit with you for now. Company?" I hesitate and go as if to sit again, but meadow shakes her head

"I need thinking time. Seeing him, hitting him with the truck...my head's a mess. I want some space to process s***." She furrows her brow over a saddened gaze and taps the wheel distractedly, shaking free some of the surging sadness that seems to climb up over her.

"It's not him.... None of them are themselves right now. Don't dwell. Stay focused and remember, none of them have any control of what's happening." I rub her shoulder again and take the hint to move, leaving her sitting in the driver seat while I go to the back and climb onto the other made-up bed.

Carmen is quiet but I can tell by her breathing she's wide awake and staring at the truck wall. Her back to me, her posture stiff and unrelaxed despite laying down, and I feel for her.

"Are you okay?" I ask her as I settle myself on top of the blankets of this bed and lay down, relived that these are pretty comfortable despite being medical trolleys.

"No. But does it matter?.... Life goes on. The world keeps turning. People die.... It's the living that matter." her response is low, shocking to me and almost bitter though she doesn't turn to look at me at all.

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"If you need to talk..." I start to try for compa**ion, the will of my Luna side taking hold to try and ease a pack member.

"I don't. I need to sleep." it's a snapped final statement and she reinforces it by pulling the blanket over her head to shut me out and make it clear I need to leave her alone. Waves of iciness thrown my way and I take the hint, slightly irritated by her brisk manner and can only exhale to calm my own turmoil.

"Okay then. Goodnight, I guess." I try not to let her get to me but this whole situation is weird. In here, I'm no Luna when it comes to these two head b***ing stubborn femmes, and it feels like we are just three girls with old wounds on a road trip to try and make sense of everything that has ever come to us.

If only that were true.

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It feels like it's been days in this truck, and between napping, sitting to watch the scenery go by, and one fuel stop, nothing else has happened. Endless miles of road, strained moods, and a lot of boredom as we pensively fall silent in our own thoughts.

We had some odd looks from pa**ing cars on the road and at the garage we stopped at. The military truck covered in rune symbols and carrying three obviously young-looking women seems to bring attention from humans... males to be exact. I guess given the fact that wolves, after turning, are physically attractive and I guess as close to perfection as we can get in the eyes of humans.

They are a strange species with absolutely no concept of boundaries. Meadow was so close to ripping one guys throat out who tried to feel her a** when she was paying for the gas and I had to drag her away before he spotted the glowing ember eyes or the low growl emitting from her chest. She was about a millisecond away from turning feral and showing him how big her claws can get when riled. Wolves are notorious for low levels of patience and hot tempers and it's one of the many reasons we stay away from humans as much as possible. Other wolves can take the heat, the aggressive responses and don't blink at turning wolf for a tussle.

Meadow is not a great fan of the human kind any day of the week, and after our short interactions at one gas station, I can see why. Carmen on the other hand doesn't seem to care either way. I know she spent far more time in the human world in the past, also given she's part one, and she ignored the comments from pa**ing vehicles when we opened the windows for air. I never knew cat calling women from your car was a thing, it certainly isn't something wolves do, and I don't see what they hoped to gain, other than a loss of blood. Human men are vile.

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So now the windows are up, despite the muggy heat and the air con is nonexistent in this truck. It's slow, plods along nosily and I'm bored out of my mind with nothing to focus on except the issues we are avoiding talking about. All thoughts of imminent danger are hard to keep at the forefront when all you have is endless miles of road and feeble humans who have no concept of how close to being dinner they are if they keep irritating us.

"I'm getting crampy.... Carmen, it's time to switch." Meadow breaks the silence and pulls over to the side so they can physically swap over and Carmen quickly takes the driver's seat. Meadow slides onto the double seat beside me, as I'm by the window anyway and leans back stretching out her legs. It's been more than half a day of her sat in that position and the relief as she sprawls out is evident.

"How much further?" I ask not really aware of how many hours I napped earlier and how many miles we covered since.

"We're more than halfway... we made good time." She leans her head on my shoulder and curls her arm through mine, snuggling in and taking comfort from my body. No awkwardness as we have been snuggly many times in our friendship these past months. "Can I nap here? I'll move if it gets uncomfy." She asks me softly, tiredness etched in her voice and I beam a smile and nod my head. I don't mind being used as a cushion. It helps deal with the pangs of loneliness from not having Colton's touch or his attentive presence keeping me warm. He's been on my mind constantly since we sat back here. Long silent hours, as none of us really want to converse much and my mind wandered repetitively to scenes of him, smiling, laughing, kissing me. Torturing me in a quiet somber mood and pushing my heart into heavy sadness once again. There's so much going on in all our separate minds that we haven't been great travel buddies in terms of conversation and the air is heavy with the knowing this isn't a happy road trip or a vacation. Carmen especially has said nothing much at all since her initial spat with Meadow.

"Stick with the road signs to New Mexico, we'll call Sierra when we get there." She commands Carmen and then slides down further to curl against me and closes her eyes. Despite sleeping last night, it was fitful and not really restful and both of us needed more than what we got. My nap was a great short-term boost but I can't shift my emotional fatigue that's hanging over me like a dark cloud.

"What about you? Do you want some chat, music, company?" I ask Carmen, offering companionship but she shakes her head without looking my way. Her face set in determination as she focuses on the road and eases the truck under her control so effortlessly. We haven't had to stop for any kind of food as we have enough in the packed crates and she's chewing on a granola bar as she drives.

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I don't expect a verbal response and go back to leaning my head against the window, staring out in hopes that I may fall back asleep and lose some of the hours of this monotonous trip.

"It's weird isn't it.... the lack of understanding danger in the human world. It's like they don't even contemplate there's a whole other space out there, with creatures, and wars that don't touch their lives." I point out, thinking aloud and sigh as we pass another holiday home type truck packed with a family of young ones who are eagerly beaming out at the windows of passing vehicles to wave. I gaze at them as we overtake and get in front, watching how one of the kids point at the symbols on our truck and the mother in the passenger seat looks up in interest.

"Humans are oblivious, and self-absorbed. One of the cruelest species in so many ways, despite some of us having blood lust urges and abilities to rip our enemies apart on a whim." Carmen taps the wheel, a slight hint at annoyance in her husky response and I blink at her in intrigue.

"You seem to know a lot about humans. I know you spent time in their world. Are they really that bad." This topic has intrigued me over the years, I guess. Given they make up most of the population yet seem to be the most ill-informed and uneducated about the species of the world they live in.

"Not all of them, just different. Their world is not like ours. To them, they probably would never understand our hierarchy, the way we do things, our aggression, or how we conduct our relationships. Yet their values, their sense of community... packs... are not like ours. Many of them don't care about anything beyond their own bubble, their own noses... I guess that's where I get it from."

Her words startle me and then it dawns on me that she is referring to what she said back at the homestead, about being part human and I gaze at her for the longest moment, trying to form some kind of response. She seems unfazed by verbally admitting it again. Colton was right and Carmen really is so hard to read, even with my abilities in feeling people's emotions. It's like she carries a veil of impenetrable rock and can shield everything under indifference or a cold front most of the time.

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"You told Meadow you care about the wolves at the mountain.... So maybe you're not all that self-absorbed. You loved your mom; you did what you thought was right for her." I point out, hoping to open an avenue of conversation but her darkening look as she glares ahead tells me I said the wrong thing. Her whole posture stiffening and signaling she doesn't want to talk about this.

"Look how that helped... I got her killed, and all this..... Maybe it's better when I don't give a s*** about people. They always f*** me over anyway." the biting undertone, the undercurrent of bitterness, and guilt hits me in the stomach as I connect her last sentence to maybe what Colton did. What the sub pack did in turning away from her and rooting for me instead. I guess it was a betrayal in her eyes that she was so easily cast aside as something worthless, even if it's not exactly how it played out. Even though he had no control over imprinting and breaking her heart, I guess she still carries the pain of what she saw as adultery.

"What happened in the months since we left?" I don't know what else to say, so maybe a question will be better and as she is clamping down on the other topic, I should try and ease the atmosphere with some kind of chat. I feel out of my depths, weird and moody even though I seem calm and upbeat on the surface.

"Life happened. Juan happened." Her voice croaks in her throat and she looks away to hide her face as she quickly wipes it and goes back to glaring outside. A sudden hint of emotion again and she seems to curse herself out for showing weakness in the form of a tear. So much hostility in her aura and I wish she would just open up and tell me, to talk it out, to share and ease her weighty burden.

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"Carmen, I'm trying to help. We don't know what went down after. We only know what we had to do at the homestead to keep the people safe. You have to open up to" I try for my therapy tone of Luna, the easing of a wolf to confide but she doesn't let me finish.

"I don't need to open up. I'm fine. The past is done. Nothing can change it and I just want to make up for what I caused and be done with all of this." A curt snap, a tightening of fingers on the wheel and that abrasive manner which is meant to shut me up. Only I'm as stubborn as she is. I grit my teeth to curb my irritation at her and lock my eyes on her profile as she stares at where we are heading.

"You didn't cause this! I told you already." I grind out.

"Yes, I did..... not just my mom. All of it. Had I never interfered, had I never pulled Colton back to me and tried to keep you apart when I did. Because of me you left, because of that Colton stood up to him, split the pack and abandoned the mountain. That was the worst thing for everyone. Colton was the influence that kept the people moderately safe. Whether he knew it or not. His father is a devil and without Colton's presence, without the hope of his heir being his bright shining legacy, Juan let all the evil in his heart finally out. I did that. I f***ed up what the fates wanted, and they have punished me for it ever since." She spins her head at me, her pallor pale, her eyes shining with moisture as she struggles to hold it all in and I see the deep-rooted guilt etched all over the sudden show of vulnerable in her face. I'm speechless as I stare at her in open mouthed shock, trying to absorb her words and trying to organize some logic to her statement.

"It's not that simple, and the fates... they really did intend for things to go the way they did. It was all part of the plan, Carmen. All those paths needed to be walked out to get us to where we needed to be."

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"Was it, really?" she asks sarcastically, oozing bitterness. "I don't think so." She signals as we approach a turn off and follows the road off behind a row of traffic and looks back at me, biting harshly with a haughty tone. "My mom, she was just another notch. Another lashing from a whip that has been coming down on me since Colton imprinted on you..... So, if I did nothing wrong, then why am I being punished by the fates?" she throws her hair back over her shoulder and taps her nails impatiently on the wheel as the traffic slows us right down and doesn't seem to want to look at me anymore. I can taste the growing energy around her and it's not friendly at all. She has so much pent-up anger, pain, and something else deep inside that I can't pull apart. A huge gulf of darkness that's clawing at her aura and screaming out.

"What do you mean by that? What else has happened to you besides Colton's break up? Stop being vague and just talk to me! I'm trying to help, to understand and I'm not psychic." Her emotions are making me antsy, on edge as my senses are heightened and an overwhelming agony starts to claw at my insides, feeding from her now she's releasing some of her hidden distress.

"Why? Because you're my Luna now? Because you suddenly care about me? We were never friends, in fact the exact opposite, and if this is sympathy because of my mom, I don't want it. I don't need your pity!"

I can't respond to that because it's none of those things, yet all of them too. I have empathy; I see someone that may be more than I thought she was but, yes, it's also driven because of what we now share.... loss of our mothers in a horrific way. And the loss of her pack when they left her, the loss of her family. Its complex and deeper than any of those singular things and partly because, since I became Luna, this care, this need to look after and comfort my people is as natural as breathing. I feel guilt towards her, because of my part in taking her mate from her on top of everything. I can't fight it, and it doesn't differentiate between people, even with our pasts. Colton told me it was the marking that did it, brought up all those necessary Luna gifts that were bestowed upon me the second I was his mate, to be a better leader, and I can't switch it off. I care, because I'm meant to.

"Juan blamed me.... He punished me in that damn box.... for weeks! I failed to do what he wanted me to do, and his son left and mated up with you. I had one job that I didn't do, and Juan, well, we all know how crazy he is. If it wasn't for others in the pack and my mom getting me out, reasoning for my release..... I would still be there while my father didn't give a s*** about what he did to me." It's almost shrill as she hits an emotional peak and then inhales to calm herself down, gripping the wheel, shifting in her seat harshly, gritting her teeth, and the tears that wash down her cheek are swiped away aggressively.

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"He put you in an isolation tank?" I blanch at her words, tensing enough that Meadow shifts in her sleep at my sudden reaction and murmurs before settling back down again. I'm shocked that Juan would see fit to punish her for something she had no control over.

"He did.... and he made sure I felt pain every single day for disobeying him. He only let me heal when my life depended on it, because he didn't want his new toy to die and give him nothing to torture anymore. He had nowhere else to vent. Colton gone, half the pack too, his prisoners at his secret lab.... All he had were the people who opposed him, and the femme who failed to do what he demanded. Juan's sick in the head on a level we never truly comprehended!" The pain in her voice goes far beyond bitterness and for a second I feel a flash of the hatred, resentment and the lingering pain from what she endured with this man.

"He tortured you, for Colton...for me....?" I feel sick to my stomach knowing the depths of agony she endured while we were oblivious in our new life and barely gave her a second thought. Never would we have guessed that after being the losing one in this scenario that she would still carry the weight of our consequences in such horrifying ways.

"If I had known what would happen, I would've left when the rest did, but my mom.... She needed me." Her words come out softer, broken somehow and she stifles a wavering sob coming up from the depths. The intensity of her heartache finally coming out to show face and it hammers through my soul. She's suffered because of what we did.

"Carmen, I'm so sorry." I can't even begin to understand what she has been through and to look at her, you would never know. The wall is up again and growing taller before my eyes, the fierce is on show once again and her only focus in all of this was her mother's safety. The final blow when the fates let her die. No wonder she thinks she's cursed or somehow being punished by the higher powers.

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"Yeah well, you didn't turn us away. At least her last hours were not there, not around that toxic man and his minions. She got to experience the pack one more time, a safe place and genuine love before she did what she did."

"So, the rumors about how he is treating the people." I interject, breathing heavily as all this swirls around my brain and her hands clench and unclench as we get back up to speed in a new flow of faster traffic. I can feel her inner battle as her mind tells her that vulnerability is a weakness, while her heart begs to be allowed to grieve. Conflict thick around her.

"Juan likes to exert his dominance on anyone who doesn't march to the beat of his drum. Others were in the tanks for punishment when I was. It was one of them who came back for me, convinced the guards it wasn't right to do this to our own pack, and finally Juan got bored of using me to vent and stopped coming to the cells. I was lying when I said I left the mountain for only my mom's sake.... I got us out because I knew it was only a matter of time before I ended up back in there. Juan was getting more controlling as the weeks pa**ed. Anyone who even looked like they were questioning his orders were shackled and dragged to the cells and he was going to notice eventually that I wasn't where he left me. I was having to hide all the time, stay out of sight; luckily my father never came home, ever."

"I don't know what to say. We never knew that it was like that back there for you, for all of them. We never imagined he would torture his own." I sit, dazed, looking at her face, watching the still almost tough expression as she forces herself to not really breakdown in front of me, and I'm awed. I thought I was tough with everything I got through in my lifetime, but Carmen is a whole other level.

"He tried to kill his own son and slaughtered any who helped him that didn't leave... what do you think he's capable of?" It's a matter of fact retort, no hint of nasty, yet it has the same effect and s***er punches me in the gut, rendering me breathless. I inhale sharply and turn away as the shock reverberates around my skull. This is the first real confirmation that Juan killed wolves after the split, none of the others ever came out and would truthfully tell Colton that some perished, probably for fear he would go back there and rage a second war and lose more of our kind. He suspected but he wasn't sure, and it seemed no one

wanted him to carry the guilt by being honest either. He was their savior, their alpha, and they kept it from him because they knew how he would take the news that many died for helping him. I wonder how many held this, or maybe suspected.

"We never knew." I whisper and squeeze Meadows sleeping form a little tighter. Needing physical touch to comfort me and ground my spiraling emotions as the guilt eats away heavily at my heart.

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"You wouldn't..... he wasn't exactly public about it. Those he ended, were taken down in the cells and he burned their bodies to clean up the mess under his cloak of deceit. The people only assumed they were kept there, or they ran after you when being freed. I'm guessing the ones who got here after figured it out when they didn't find them waiting, or maybe they think they are all still locked up in the cells. Who knows. I just saw too many die when I was down there, and always wondered why he never killed me too."

"Your father... you're his only legacy, even if he has nothing to do with you. Juan is all about bloodline, so despite your father not really wanting you, he wouldn't remove his beta's chance of a future. Juan's twisted like that." I say it so numbly, like the logical part of my brain can still pull together thoughts while my emotional side is in chaos, choking on revelations and inwardly crying for our people.

"Maybe...but what good am I? I never imprinted when I turned and I've seen every male in our pack since, and it never happened. I thought I found love, and it wasn't real. I don't think there's anyone out there that wants to be stuck with this and my father only had his sights set on me mating to Juan's offspring." Carmen's factual statement makes me bleed for her, instantly upset for her own lack of worth, especially when I used to feel the same way and know how counterproductive it can be to your mental state.

"Don't talk like that. We're one pack, in many. There's a wolf out there and maybe you just haven't found him yet... the fates, they don't leave us alone... They always have a plan!" I hasten.

"Yes they do! Radar has been pining for Sierra for over a decade....I can guess he still is now she's alive and here. The fates don't give a s*** about mateless wolves as long as their 'plan' is steaming ahead and going how they want it to. The casualties, like me, they get left on the sidelines as unimportant."

"I used to think like you. I used to believe I was alone and there was no one out there who gave any kind of crap about me. That I was worthless and invisible. I endured pain, I broke with heartache, and grief, but I kept going. If someone like me can find love, and family, and belonging, then you can too. Don't close your heart to hope." It sounds like I'm begging her to not give up, my tone soft yet high, because everyone has to hold onto something or else they lose their way in life. This is why she isn't afraid to die; every tiny bright thing she ever held onto is now snubbed out.

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Carmen shakes her head, finally turning sad eyes to me and a bittersweet smile laced with sarcasm takes over her flawless face. A haunting look, that is so detached yet cold and I truly wish she would experience one kindness in life that could make a difference to her.

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"You forget, Luna. I'm not some prophesied half vamp whose destined to lead a people. I'm half human, from a family that is now gone.... No one needs me, no great destiny.... I'm not part of this story and if I had one of my own, it would have happened before now."

"b*****. You ARE part of this story. You're here, aren't you? You're helping... you're back with the pack. Maybe Colton isn't your happy ever after, maybe this specific story isn't about you, but the fates don't make mistakes, and you wouldn't be here, you wouldn't be with me now, if there wasn't a reason. You have a worth and I bet my last breath your story is far from over." My venomous conviction rings true, my heart certain on this fact and I refuse to dismiss her as some unimportant object that was dropped along the way. She was a huge thorn in my side, a recurrent shadow to my happiness, and there's no way the fates would have made me become so tied to her like this for absolutely nothing. She has to have some kind of importance.

"I think the reason is you are too soft and Meadow, well, she wanted a verbal punch bag for a long a** journey while neither of you wanted Sierra to deal with the mess I was yesterday. I'm not stupid. I'm also not about to crumble and throw myself to the vampires. I'm not my mom. I don't need babysitting and I'll only take so much of Meadow's att**ude before I rupture her eardrums." It's said with a hint of sa** and a smile curls up unexpectedly at the corner of her mouth that I can't miss. A hint of softening as she dampens down her emotions once more and returns to that cold aloofness I am getting used to.

I have to admire the girl, she has a fire in her, even if it's shrouded in an unlikeable att**ude. I can see what she says is true and knowing now she endured months of torture and pain at Juan's hands, I know she's not about to curl up and cry. She has fight in her and maybe Meadow knew it and that's why she wanted her to come. She doesn't like her, she never did, but Meadow knows skill and has a sixth sense about people's ability. She relies on it with our pack and if she thought Carmen was an a**et on this trip then I know she chose her with putting her feelings aside. There is more to this girl than I even credited her for, and I only hope I get to see her shine sooner rather than later. Even if I can't believe I am actually thinking this way about my once sworn enemy.

"Just try and not fight with her.... my eardrums are not to blame for you two and your spats." I point out with a raised brow and Carmen sighs in some kind of mutual defeat.

"I hate how much he loves you... how you are together and I'm not sorry about that. It hurts to see it... but I won't do anything to jeopardize my place in the homestead. It's not that easy to get over someone like him, but I know it's utterly pointless to even look at him twice. I can see where his heart and his focus lies. I'm not a threat, not that I ever could be.... I'm just saying." She shrugs, turning her full attention back to driving and the simmering atmosphere seems to dull down and dissipate so quickly that it's unnerving.

She's honest anyway, even if the deliverance is harsh and I don't like some of the content, but I respect the fact she's being truthful about what she feels, and I stretch out and sigh heavily.

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"I'm sorry that you got hurt. That he had someone before me that had to let him go. I can't imagine what that must have felt like. It wasn't what I wanted; I didn't even know him." Although from the moment we imprinted I knew I could never let him go and want him or not, I was his forever. It doesn't change that what we did was cruel, even if neither of us controlled it. I see that now.

"Yeah well, like I said... the world keeps turning. I'm sure it's not the last time I'm going to experience hell for merely existing. I'm starting to accept its maybe what's meant for me."

I hate this pessimistic attitude she has, but I get it. It's the hard knock lack of self-worth because life has booted you in the face repeatedly, and you learned to never hope for anything better. Resigned to disappointment, pain, suffering, and accepting it, rather than crying at every crumbling block. I guess I used to have it too, when life kept throwing me down and hurting me in all kinds of unfair ways. It kills your worth, your self-esteem. It clouds the skies and makes you see only darkness and sunless days. Carmen has been through enough and she has yet to find any kind of reason to think beyond how worthless she is in the grand scheme of things. Such a contrast to who I thought she was back in the pack days of the mountain.

Maybe after this is over, when we find the witch, when we break the spell, and life can somehow get back to a semi level of calm, she might start to see it's not always bad. She'll be with us in the homestead and our gentler, calmer way of life. Where the pack look out for each other and genuinely care about maintaining the safety and peace to thrive. We can't stop the war from happening but with us, at the stead, a new life, safety, and free from people like Juan, maybe she will start to heal. With time to grieve, time to process everything that has happened in the past months, with support from me, Colton, and the subs. This time we owe it to her to be better as her pack. They all do.

Maybe she might find love the normal way with one of the wolves she never paid much attention to before. It happens. There are enough of them that she maybe never really gave all of them a second look or a chance while they stood in Colton's shadow. I can hope anyway. It will ease my guilt if I know she found someone to replace what she lost, what I took, and gives her some small sense of happy.

"You two, seriously.... gawd. Someone's trying to sleep over here." Meadow sits up, rubbing her eyes and I frown at her, not impressed with her complete lack of empathy when it comes to Carmen, but she smiles, catching me off guard and shoves Carmen in the shoulder a little harshly. "Could you stop being such a drag, bringing the mood down and be a little bit thankful that I haven't kicked your a** into touch yet." She jests, yawns and tries to stifle it with a clenched fist before settling herself lazily upright.

"You could try!" Carmen glares at Meadow, that snidey b****y tone back in place and that aura of frost, but Meds just smirks at her with equal sa**.

"Oh, baby girl, I wouldn't need to try...I already know you would be a two second flick of the wrist. Don't put too much value on your skills when you're up against me, Puta."

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"Meadow, really?" I blanche, startled at her meanness and even calling her that after all this time, wishing these two would stop and just not wrapping my head around Meds lack of compa**ion when it comes to Carmen.

"Relax, Luna. I would be worried if she was being nice to me.... I would think she's sick or dying. I can take Meadow being a b****, it's what I'm used to." Carmen seems like she's trying to set my mind at ease, but she can't be because it's Carmen and she's spiky at the best of times. She really can't be telling me in a roundabout way that this is okay and expected.

"Well, skanky puta, as long as we all know where we stand, heh?" Meadow grins again, catlike and smug, getting the same level of hostility as before when these two clashed as tempers heat subtly. It seems there's an undercurrent of brewing fire as Carmen sighs and eyerolls dramatically, seemingly more irritated than annoyed.

"And here I thought that specific nickname was left at the mountain... Guess you really did miss me, Sweetie pie." Carmen flexes her shoulders and glances at Meadow who only winks in a mock kind of sarcastic way, the flirt in her showing face because she uses it when the fight starts to flex.

"Why, when it suits you so well." She flutters her lashes at the other girl and pouts her lips in an almost kissy kissy manner. I just stare, wide eyed, mouth gawping at the weirdness that is happening. I think I might be about to be stuck in a femme fight right here in this cab at this rate and I don't want to see fur flying.

"Yeah.... Maybe! I was drunk, he was willing, and I was heartbroken. I wanted to wound Colton even an ounce of what he did to me. I didn't really think it through, or what it would cause. And then.... he didn't want to know me after. Either of them. That's what I get, huh? I guess I really am a Skanky Puta!" Carmen mimics Meds heavy accent with the last two words and doesn't sound like she's looking for sympathy or a fight, just stating facts. I'm silent in dazed awkwardness as these two seem oblivious to how uncomfy this is getting. Neither giving a toss that they are brewing to battle under the nose of their so called Luna.

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

"You play with fire, you get burned, You should have known better than to mess with Colton's family. I think he could have forgiven anyone else, but not him.... You brought it on yourself and I'm still pissed at you for it." Meadow huffs, crosses her arms and shoves her feet up on the dash to get comfy. Meadow's pose is casual, loose, making it clear she really is not intimidated, and this is usually when you should be the most wary of her. She can turn in a flash and with her speed, calm to death switch in a blink. I squirm in my seat, trying to visually warn Meds to cool down and back off, my expression being blanked by her regardless.

"What's new. Meadow being pissed is a daily occurrence. I wouldn't know what you looked like if you didn't always snarl my way." Carmen eyes me with a slight raise of her brow, not backing down either and Meadow glares right back at her.

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"Don't be making funnies about me puta, I will still own your a**." It's a veiled threat with intent and the air notches up in degrees as I begin to feel hot. I can't even with the swirling toxic smog around me coming from both sides. Wriggling as I feed on their hostile moods.

"Yeah yeah.... Like anything you can do would be worse than anything Juan did. I'm not as scared of you as I once was." Carmen sighs and points at a road sign for a turning that isn't clear, with both arrows signing for our destination and Meadow sits up to gesture to the left, nodding she should go that way as she swivels her head and looks around to be certain. A break in the standoff as focus is redirected and then returns to battle mode as soon as she sits back.

"I think I could make that change." Meadow grins salaciously and this time I've had enough of this almost testosterone like p***** compet**ion of strangeness.

"Enough. Meds, behave. Carmen, ignore her. Can we maybe go back to silence and my brain can be saved from a second headache." I sigh, tired, weary still, and not wanting to spend the rest of this drive listening to these two out b**** one another with threats of violence.

"Know your place. Lorey is MY best friend... she don't need any more femmes in her circle!" Meadow spits, annoyed that I stuck up for Carmen in a way, her ego bruised, and her feelings bashed as she turns back to curl up against me possessively. Linking her arm in mine with a tug and settling her head on my shoulder back in the position she slept. She fully hems me into my corner and turns her body, so her b*** faces Carmen and she snorts in disgust at her.

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I giggle as it hits me full frontal and completely lifts my mood. Meadow is jealous! That's what all this posturing is and why she changed her tune so g***** fast once we hit the road. It's as cute as when Colton gets territorial and ridiculous over equally absurd things and I beam, enveloped in affectionate warmth that my crazy Chica is sulking over this.

Her asking Carmen along at the house changed rapidly when she realized I was not being hostile and asked her to give Carmen a chance. I see it now, why she's being so cold and looking to upset the girl. I stopped hating on her and have shown her a modic** of compa**ion, and Meadow is a hot fiery Latino with a green streak a mile high at times. All this, Meadow is being very wolf in her possessive and almost territorial protection of a femme she considers her family. I may not be her mate, but she's my momma wolf, my sister, my best friend, and she doesn't like it one bit that I'm trying to let Carmen redeem herself. I laugh inwardly and hug Meds with a little more force than necessary and shake my head at her.

I love you, you crazy femme. God, I now know what Cesar deals with if you ever see someone as a threat, and I bet this is nowhere near the intensity of what he deals with. She will never replace you.... stop with the hostility.

I mind link her so Carmen doesn't hear and Meadow frowns at me accusingly, that sulky hint of a tantrummy child all over her pouted pretty face. Her eyes blazing with fire.

Just don't get too cozy and remember which sister always had your back. I don't need a sob story to make you care about me... this b**** better realize we come as a pair and she's a temporary add on.

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Oh Meds, you're impossible but I love you. I have to hold in my beaming smile, twisting in my seat to stare out the window while I cover the urge to laugh and chide her verbally.

You better love me more than everyone else, with exception to Cole. Or I may stick that skank under the truck and drive over her a couple hundred times.

"Go back to sleep. I want to nap too." I warn her affectionately, being verbal and letting Carmen hear so she knows she's about to get peace once more. I dismiss Meadow's behavior and curl back into position, wrapping my arm around her snugly. She throws Carmen a sideways glare and then smirks as she nuzzles against me and closes her eyes. She really is hopeless.

Without her mate to take all this attention and jealous swirling affection, I guess I may have to deal with the heightened version until we get our pack back. Truth is I feel sorry for Carmen in all of this and wish Meds would just ease up for now.

Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall Chapter 50

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

"Hey, Hey, wake up." Carmen rouses both of us from peaceful sleep and I can see the daylight is turning dim as it gets close to sunset already. We both passed out and must have been unconscious for hours after their little argument.

"Where are we." I rub my eyes, stifling a yawn and stretch out like a cat, uncurling my limbs from the awkward position I've been in.

"New Mexico, you better call Sierra as we crossed over a while back and I headed for Deming. That's where Meadow said, right?" Carmen clicks her head from right to left to stretch out her neck and I can tell she's exhausted from being the driver for so long. There are dark shadows under her eyes, and I can't be sure, but there's a telltale rosy glow across her cheeks, and nose, that hint that she might have been crying at some point. She seems fine now but my stomach lurches in sorrow that she chose time alone to cry out some of the pain she's carrying and never woke us up for company.

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"Yeah, I did." Meadow stretches, yawns and balls a fist in her mouth as she wakes and uncurls properly beside me, a mirror to what I just did, and I giggle at her. "I'll call Sierra and tell her we need more specifics. We made good time!"

Meadow yanks out the cell, blinking at it groggily before she blanches and rubs her eyes before facing the screen to me. It's a text from Sierra, as though she knew exactly where we were and a more specific location to continue our journey onward. Spooky but then again, she is a seer and she had to know roughly around what hour we would hit New Mexico.

The location is a road, in Deming that's near an address, but she's told us the house is only an anchor point and once we get there, we would have to find her ourselves. To stay alert and watch for signs. Whatever that means.

Meadow furrows a brow as she repeats it all again, confused at the vagueness, but texts her back with a thanks anyway. There's not much else we can ask her for if that's all she knows.

"She must be tracking us with the locator spell, keeping tabs." Meadow shrugs as if that's the only possible answer to her knowing exactly where we were at this point in time and I smile softly. Warmed by her attentive care even when we have travelled far from home.

"She's a seer.... she has gifts we don't know about and maybe she just knows where we are... instinctually." I shrug, forgetting for a second that she mentioned she no longer has visions since she awoke, but I'm sure she has other skills that might still be working.

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"About that.... one of these days can someone please explain all the witch stuff, and gifts, and all that crap to me. I only know what I heard and what was shared in mind link. It still kind of freaks me out knowing Colton and Sierra are witches. And you're....." Carmen flushes red and turns away hastily, eyes averted quickly with heat spreading to her forehead and I know it's not a shy response. Its emotion, to the part of me she sees as the enemy, the part of me that is responsible for her mother's end. It's the same response I had when I found out what I was. That underlying hatred for being any kind of link to those monsters that did that to people I cared about.

"When this is over, I'm sure Colton can tell you himself." I smile gently, throwing in as much charm and honest softness as I can, and Meadow throws me a look that says, 'you're insane'! I know she doesn't get why I would insist my man and his ex would interact, but she is overly jealous on her best days, so I don't expect her to get it. Being Luna, it makes things different in how I feel about wolves in my pack. I trust Colton, I know he would never betray me, and he sees Carmen as only someone in his pack that he's responsible for now. The sooner I normalize her being around him in our home, then the sooner I'll get over my past with her and the insecurity I still have when she's near him.

"We're not that far from Deming and this location is right on this outer edge of that town." Meadow has pulled up google maps on her cell and shows it to Carmen, giving her new directions in where to head as I direct up at the sky and point out the obvious. Slight unease coming over me as I see how much duller it is now.

"It's getting dark, shouldn't we think about getting somewhere before the sun sets and lay low?" I ask in hesitation, but Meadow pats the dash with a smile, almost lovingly.

"The vampires couldn't get into the homestead; I doubt they can get into this little beauty. If we keep going until we get there and then we can't get a lock on any real location to where to go, we'll sleep in here, wherever we end up. Who knows, maybe the fates will bless us, and we find the witch before sun down." She seems a little too sure that our metal chariot is as safe as can be but I am not so sure I want to put it to the test in the dark. We barely got through he wolf attack uns***hed and we were moving. Besides, the wolves seemed too dumb to figure they could hurl boulders and trees at us, I'm sure vampires will have the sense.

"Hmmm, shouldn't have brought along the walking curse if you expected a smooth trip." Carmen smirks in a self-depreciating manner but Meadow doesn't miss a beat, or an opportunity to put her back in her place.

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"I brought you as a distraction, quick vampire snack if we need to make a run for it." She clicks her fingers to emphasize the point and again they lock eyes and have themselves a short simmering visual battle. I give up trying to stop this with

those two and look at the road ahead instead, internally sighing at this constant war and try my best to ignore it.