

# Awakening Following Fate by L. T. Marshall Chapter 9

"She said he's locking them down like it's a prison camp and any who get caught trying to leave are punished severely. We're talking beat downs in the isolation tank, torture.... He's unhinged and he's forcing them to stay with him." Radar is the one to add fuel to the fire with his snarly tone, rage obvious in his words, and I shake my head in disbelief.

"We always knew he would use any means to retain power." I nod sadly and try not to picture how many children and femmes we left there to be controlled and abused by them.

"More are coming this way; we gain every couple of weeks and we won't have the space to keep them all if it carries on. Now we're limited to the rune boundary we can't expand outwards further, unless Rema Santo knows how to apply protection beyond the boundaries. The village is full, the house is once again filling as newcomers are faster than our ability to build. He will be sat with an empty mountain, while we're crammed in here unable to breathe." Matteo is the one to bring this detail to light, standing as he moves closer and perches on the back of Domi's seat and Colton sighs heavily.

"We can't turn them away. Fractured pack or not, those are our people. By right's, I'm their alpha, it's my job to care for them even if circumstance made them stay behind. We have to find a way to accommodate them and hope more come out before it's too late."

"If the mountain is weaker, and Juan has lost control, then why don't we just take it back? We are strong, our warriors are many. He lost majority of the sub packs when we left and they're no match." Melody stands up, that stubborn jut of her chin and eyes alight with the fire to fight. These past months, the frequent attacks has brought out a ruthlessness in our fighters, a fearless need to take action. Meadow has been a huge asset to the fight against the invaders and we all have tried to ignore the urge to go home and take back what is ours for so many months.

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"He won't give it up without killing him, and we all know that's not on the cards, ever. His loyal will never turn and I'm not risking a single wolf's life in a bid to fight a hopeless battle. We have enough bloodshed and upheaval. Not to mention the fact we would leave the homestead unprotected if we marched against the mountain. We don't have enough wolves to do both at once. Our priority is and always has been the protection of this village and its people. To keep the vamps out and to keep life stable for the pups to grow and feel secure." Colton is in protector mode; his words make sense but it's eating me deep down inside. So torn between two halves of our pack and the night to day existence they are living. All of them deserve the relative safety and peace we have built here, and my heart wants to chase them down and bring them all home.

"There are children on the mountain who have no choice but to stay. Do they feel safe... are they safe? Or are they just pawns that Juan clings onto in a bid to feel he retains some control and would throw them to the vamps in a heartbeat to instill fear into those left." I verbalize my frustration knowing fully that Juan never cared in any way for his people. Colton exhales heavily, letting me go as he stretches his arms out behind his head and scrubs his scalp in frustration, letting his breath out loudly as he does so and it's not hard to tell he's finding this stressful to talk out. Despite everything that has happened, Colton's heart still sees his father inside the monster, and it leaves him conflicted anytime we talk about him.

"Tell me what to do.... I honestly have no f\*\*\*ing idea. We have a split pack. We have two vulnerable communities. Our priority should be here, but I get what you're saying...they need us too. It's just ....." He drops his arms and grabs my hand, shrugging as his words tail off, and I pick up on that familiar distress as his emotions war in on themselves.

"Maybe we could recon the mountain, see what's going on. Figure out weakness, get a lay of the land and if it's as bad as Carmen said." Remi stands up, also frustrated with this talk, and stretches out before pacing to the edge of the room where the water coolers are and gets himself a drink. The whole sub pack is uneasy and on tenterhooks and their emotions are filling my space like a dark heavy invasion. Sometimes I curse this ability to feel people's emotions, especially right now while I am drowning in overwhelm.

"You know we're the fastest in the pack, we could scope it out and be back in under two hours, before dawn." Domi agrees with his twin, a brightening glance between the two and Colton frowns as though thinking about this. His whole posture loosens slightly.

"You know that's not a bad idea." Cesar leans in and I know without looking at Colton that he'll agree. He listens to his pack, especially Cesar, the wise and influential brother he never had and now with the others nodding, I can sense his caving. His sub pack have always held this power over him and with some gentle coaxing can influence him for good, no matter the topic.

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"Okay, but only to scope it out, and keep your distance. Watch, report via link and when we have enough of an idea what's going down, I want you back here. Fast. Watch your back, be home before dark and keep in mind, the vamps have witches out there now. Be extra aware." He commands.

"We won't make decisions until we know for sure how things are at the mountain, right?" Meadow confirms what I'm thinking and Colton nods. Sighing again as though this whole thing has made him weary and listless. It feels like a bad dream that none of us can wake from sometimes.