

CHAPTER 144

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144 Ava: Searching for a Candle 144 Ava: Searching for a Candle It takes a little more effort than I expected to convince Dr. Beaumont to discharge me home, but after promising up and down to let Vanessa visit twice a day for bloodwork and vitals, I finally get my way. Lucas treats me like a fragile vase on the way to the apartment, worrying over leaving me in Lisa's place alone. He's not thrilled that I refuse to go to the alpha lodge in the wake of the vampire attack, and it feels like the entire apartment building is filled with wolf shifters in suits, glowering at everyone who passes by. But I still count it as a win. I can't believe two healthy adult women in their twenties don't have a single candle in their apartment. Selene noses open a cabinet to sniff inside, before clicking her nails across the kitchen to another one. Nothing here. As she checks the lower cabinets, I shove my way through our everything drawer, only coming up with a small lighter. Helpful, but only half of what I need. I even check the pantry, but there's no waxy pillar to 17:39 C 184 Asa Searching for a Candle be found. Going behind Selene, I double check where she's already looked, ignoring her half-offended snort when I come up as empty as she did. I told you, there are no candles. My nose works quicker and better than your eyes. We've already checked Lisa's room and mine. Not a single candle to be had. How are we out of candles? At the bare minimum, we should have some handy in case the electricity ever goes out. I stalk to the bathroom, flinging open drawers. "Where the hell are the candles?" Selene opens the linen cabinet with a deft paw, shoving her head inside to sniff. It's all towels, of course. And shampoo. And soap. All things that make her sneeze. I slam another drawer shut. "We didn't buy any 17:30 \* 216 149 Avd Searching fa a Candio because of all the wolves around. Scented stuff bothers your noses." Selene snorts. Point taken. But on TV, the girls are always taking bubble baths with scented candles. I roll my eyes. "You watch too much TV. It's going to rot your brain." My brain is just fine. Although I question yours sometimes... I ignore her, yanking open the cabinet under the sink. Jackpot. I pull out a dusty lavender candle. "Finally." Selene reaches out with her nose for a quick sniff, sneezing again. It smells terrible. Nothing like lavenders. A sharp knock on the door startles us both, and I set the candle aside. I'll have to call for Sister Miriam later. Unlocking the door, I swing it open, unsurprised to find Lucas standing there, hands shoved in his pockets and brows furrowed. Who else would make it past all the guards to knock on my door? He hasn't been gone long, though. "Did you need something?" I ask, as my heart races ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ 144 Ava Searching for a Candlo from his presence. Ever since dancing with Teddy, since realizing that no other person can make me feel what Lucas does—it's like I'm weak to the fated pull between us. Almost like I never put up walls at all. If it wasn't for the current situation, I'd probably throw myself at him shamelessly. Lisa would have loved that. Shaking off the morose thoughts that plague me at the thought of Teddy's face, slack in death, and Lisa's absence, I reach for Lucas' hand and pull him inside, not missing how his eyes light up when I do so. It makes me feel like shit when I realize how little I've ever reached out to him. How much I've pushed him away. He is patient, Selene says, sounding as if she'd rather be murdered than admit it. "I don't feel comfortable leaving you alone, Ava. Not with Lisa gone." Lucas' fingers slide through mine as he shuts the door behind him, cutting us off from the bodyguards he has watching over me. "I'm supposed to 144 Ava Searching for a Candio be meeting with Kellan, but I wasn't sure how you would handle being here alone." I'd been just fine—because I was busy hunting down a candle to do something behind his back. Guilt pokes at me. "It's hard," I agree, because it is. I don't like looking around and knowing that Lisa isn't here. "But I'll be fine, Lucas. Really. You have enough on your plate, and I'd rather have you looking for her than—" "It's not just about that," he cuts me off, voice low and tense. "You were attacked, Ava. Vampires invaded my territory. Attacked my mate." His jaw clenches. "I couldn't be there to protect you, but I can at least be here so you're not alone. I won't drag you to the alpha lodge, if this is where you want to be. But I don't feel right leaving you here without her. I can stay for a little bit." I open my mouth to argue, to insist that I can take care of myself, but the words die on my tongue. Of course I'm scared. I'm terrified. I went from feeling safe and thinking Lucas and Kellan were worrywarts, to my best friend being kidnapped 678 144 Av Soarching for a Candlo by a vampire. Even living as a(w)ww.noV@lw©Rm.com

Updates... supernatural doesn't prepare you for that. Vampires are so closed off from society, it's like they don't even exist. Maybe having Lucas nearby isn't the worst idea. But if he's here, I can't call Sister Miriam and find out what she knows. Selene nudges my hand with her wet nose, sensing my inner turmoil. I stroke her silky fur, drawing strength from her steady presence. You need to rest, she says softly. No matter how much you want to save her, you can't do anything until you've regained your strength. Taking time for myself feels like a betrayal of Lisa's friendship. Like I should be spending every waking second trying to get her back. Lucas and Kellan are doing what they can. If anything is found, Kellan can inform his alpha through the pack link. It will be fine. "Okay," I relent, stepping back to let Lucas inside. "But 17.40 1 Trans for a just for tonight. I don't need a babysitter" A ghost of a smile flickers across his face as he crosses the threshold. "Duly noted." He shrugs out of his jacket, draping it over the back of the couch before turning to face me. Even in a simple black t-shirt, he looks imposing, all coiled strength and barely restrained power. But there's a softness in his eyes when they land on me, a tenderness that makes my breath catch. "How are you feeling?" he asks, reaching out to tuck a stray lock of hair behind my ear. His fingertips graze my skin and I suppress a shiver. "Better," I answer honestly. I'm still a little tired. A little weak. But the pain is gone, and I'm feeling almost normal. Except for when you fell into the doorframe, fell onto the couch because you lost your balance looking in the baskets beneath the coffee table, fell taking off your shoes- I scowl at Selene as Lucas pulls me toward the couch by my hand, and I swear her husky face is laughing at me. 144 Ava: Searching for a Candle It's a moment of normalcy in this insanity, enough to make me relax as Lucas tugs me down to sit next to him. Comment 1 View All > R Leave the first comment foŴww.n@elw©rm.co(m)

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