

The light bulb flickered to life. But she only had so much time before it would die out again. Rosalie scrambled around her room, nearly tripping over the stack of books beside her bed. Had to find it. Had to find it.

A moth flew past her. She waved it away only to have return ahead of her. Rosalie sighed and tried to ignore it. She opened her dresser, inspecting the drawers. Not there. The moth did a little ballerina twirl around Rosalie's head, then floated towards the slowly dimming light bulb. For a moment, she watched the little guy dance around the illuminated dome, doing leaps in the air. It landed on a picture frame, where a photograph of Carter sat inside. That's when reality smacked Rosalie in the chest; she continued her search.

Stupid Carter. Of course he just had to go out in the middle of the night to gather rocks for his dumb collection. She hated it when he did that. Not because he was her younger brother and the his naive nature annoyed her. It was because it would be her fault. For heaven's sake, she was his protector and he always slipped from her grasp so easily. A mixture of guilt and annoyance coursed through Rosalie's veins.

Something tingled in her chest. Maybe her power was awakening. Then she'd be able to heal the snake bite on Carter's ankle.

The moth landed on the back of Rosalie's neck, tickling little hairs. She tried to shake him off, but he had already flown away, down to the ground, exploring down under her bed. She frowned at the floor boards.

"Bloody nuisance." She muttered and knelt down. Her English accent was starting to go away. Good. She hated sounding like her parents. The ones who abandoned her and Carter and dumped them in the middle of the nowhere. But, it was so hard to lose those little British quirks that she grew up with. She peered under her bed and squinted in the darkness. A little white blob that she assumed was the moth bounced around, doing a sort of happy dance. But, his dance started to slow. He gently planted himself on the ground.

She couldn't tear her eyes away from the limp moth. He seemed to be floating. Wait, no, not floating. Lying on a cylindrical object. A pulse of relief ran down Rosalie's spine. She plucked the candle from the darkness and stood. Yes! She found it.

The Twisted Candle. The one her grandfather gave her the day she discovered her power. "This gift has been waiting several generations to reach you." he told her. "We're the only ones left. This candle is our shield, of sorts. Protecting us from all harm this darkened world may throw our way. Guard it with your life. And it will return the favor."

He disappeared one month later. Rosalie never went anywhere without the candle, fearing her grandfather's fate would also run in the family if she left it. But of course, tonight, she had lost it. Until now.

She ran down the hallway, down to the living room. It wasn't much to look at. Just a couch with stained cushions and a coffee table. Oh, and also, the dying Carter in the recliner to the right. His face had gotten paler since Rosalie last saw him. Which was five minutes ago.

She knelt down and grasped his icy hand. "Look what I found." She said, holding up the candle.

Judging by the flicker of recognition in his eyes, he was still aware.

"It's okay. You'll be okay, Carter." Rosalie promised. She fished the lighter from her pocket and placed a flame on the end of the candle. She gripped the wick tight between her fingers, closed her eyes and breathed as steadily as she could. A tingling began in her chest. *Come on*, Rosalie thought. *Just do me this one favor.*

The tingling grew stronger. It became so intense that Rosalie was tempted to scratch it away, but she resisted. Then the tickle died. She opened her eyes and her heart sunk. The flame had blown away, turning the end of the candle into a blackened piece of charring.

She lit the untouched portion of the candle and tried again. Four minutes passed. No tingling. She opened her eyes. Another charred mess of an end.

“No.” Rosalie muttered. “Light! Light for the love of-”

The candle tumbled out of her fingers as the charred ends evaporated into thin air. She sat there, staring at it for several minutes before the shock cleared enough for her to realize the current situation. Who would die. Because of her.

She looked up at Carter, who’s dull eyes had grown wider. Rosalie's throat started to close up like it would when she was about to cry. She scolded herself for that.

“It's okay.” Rosalie bit her lip. “Don't worry. We'll find a way.”

Carter caught her arm before she could stand. He took a deep breath. “It's okay.”

“Right. It will be fine. Let me go.” Rosalie confirmed, squirming in his grasp.

“No,” Carter wheezed. “don't, Rosalie.”

“Very funny. Like I'm going to let my nimrod brother die.” Rosalie managed a weak, scratchy laugh.

“No-” Carter's rasp had turned into a full blown coughing fit. “no-other-options.”

Rosalie jerked her arm free and scrambled around the room. “Granddad must have written something down about healing. He *must* have.”

She searched around the room for a full ten minutes before slumping down next to the recliner, her chest tightening, not with power, but with her increasing doubt. Carter coughed violently over the edge of the armrest. Rosalie wiped her face, really regretting choosing this sitting spot. She got up and planted her bottom on the couch, watching her brother stare at her with concern.

“You're right.” Rosalie mumbled. “There. I said it. For once, you're right.”

“Don't want to be right.” Carter wheezed. “I'm so sorry, Rosy.”

“Don't be.” Rosalie said. “You're eleven. You're supposed to be a little stupid, right?”

Carter closed his eyes and sighed. “But you told me not to go out at night. I didn't listen.”

“I didn't listen when you told me we weren't safe in Bristol,” Rosalie retorted. “and look at us now. Living out in Redneck-Ville with nothing but a bunch of books and a stupid candle that can't catch fire.”

Carter managed a laugh, but it sounded like a cat was being strangled. He smiled at his big sister.

“Pretty pathetic.” His grin dropped. “Wait. Did you try the matches?”

Rosalie knit her eyebrows. “Matches? What matches?”

“Under my bed. Granddad gave them to me before he...” His voice trailed off a bit. Then he steeled himself. “...anyway, he said they act like fluorine gas.”

Rosalie understood immediately. Fluorine gas ignites anything it touches. She stood, ran for the back room, and ducked under Carter's bed. Sure enough, she found a match box labeled *FOR CARTER – FROM GRANDDAD*.

For some reason, it felt good to see her grandfather's sloppy handwriting. It made her feel like he was still with her. Like her family wasn't totally crumbling apart. But there was no time to feel relief. She scrambled back to the living room and plucked the candle off the floor. Rosalie scraped the edge of one of the matches against the box. A brilliant flicker appeared.

A flash of images bounced around her mind, swirling in her eyes. Little baby Carter in Rosalie's arms the day he was born. Their first fight – over a pack of Skittles, mind you – sent a tingling in Rosalie's middle. Carter's smile, which was filled with yellowish teeth and laughter. Suddenly, her grandfather appeared, and he looked, for the first time, healthy. Strong. But his eyes were still filled with seen sights and words of wisdom. He nodded and grinned, as if saying, “I have faith in you.”

Once her thoughts cleared, Rosalie felt her eyes were shut. With a deep breath, she lowered the match, down towards the candle's wick. Her eyelids fluttered open.

It had caught flame.

