

## Poppy POV

My parents' room was my haven where I used to sneak whenever no one was watching because James had barred anyone from going there. Hilda had told me a few months back that James was going to trash it soon. I protested and got a beating. I had cried about it and got a beating. And then I was sent to the academy.

With my fingers crossed that James hadn't trashed it, I took in a deep breath as my heels turned in that direction.

"Would you like to accompany me there?" I asked Damon before leaving.

"Sure," he said. We were both midway to the room when he received a phone call. "Killian has called. This is urgent. You carry on. I will be there in a few minutes, okay?"

"Okay!" I breathed. I wondered if Anna would like to come with me, but Anna decided to go for another nap. I don't know why I wanted someone to accompany me out there.

So I went to my parents' room alone. Just as Hilda had said, the place was trashed. The whole place looked like someone had destroyed it in anger. Tears stung at the back of my eyes seeing every furniture broken, all the drapes were torn or pulled out. The doors of the closets hung on their hinges. There were spider webs in the corner of the walls and dust motes filled the space. The bed

where I once lay between my parents was cracked in the middle. There was a layer of dust on it.

Slowly, I walked to the bed and stood at the edge as memories of my mother and father playing with me flashed in my mind. And before I knew, tears were streaming down my cheeks. How I wish James was alive right now because I would have killed him again. All at once, memories of my parents mingled with a strange scene, one I was never a witness of. I clutched the post of the bed in front of me as I struggled to balance myself because the memory blasted in my head vividly.

“Poppy!” My mother chuckled. “Give it to me!” She ran after little Poppy who was playing hide and seek with her with something clutched in her hand.

“Papaaa!” Poppy shouted as she flung herself on him. He caught her and started to run. My mother chased us around the room as she threw pillows at us.

In the end, my mother was too exhausted and sat on the bed with a pout. “Oh come on!” he said and rushed to my mom. He kissed her lips and said, “I am sorry.” Then he looked at little Poppy. “Your mommy is angry, Poppy. You must return that to her.” When I shook my head, jealous that my father didn’t kiss me, he leaned over and kissed my forehead. I giggled and opened my little hands. My father picked up the gold key and gave it to my mother. “Here, keep it safely.” My mom chuckled and kissed me on my head and then she walked to a closet to keep the key.

I opened my eyes as a jolt ran down my body and found myself

standing in front of that closet. Everything inside it was thrown out and strewn across the floor. Its door was hanging on its hinges which creaked when I touched it. Emotions choked my throat seeing how badly James had destroyed it to find the key. I clutched the key that was hanging against my chest as I scanned the closet. There was nothing inside. But there had to be a reason why that memory flashed in my mind.

'Poppy, check the bottom of the cupboard,' Auren said suddenly, propping up inside me. I was surprised because she rarely came up and shared her thoughts when I am in my human form.

'Why?' I commented rather than asking.

'Just check there, Poppy,' she pushed.

So I crouched down over a pile of dusty clothes and checked the bottom cupboards of the closet, feeling the surface as if there was a hidden compartment. After what looked like eternity, I gave up. 'There's nothing,' I said, frustrated.

Auren was quite inside me but I could feel that she was still up in anticipation.

With a ragged breath, I gave one last look at the bottom shelves and just to appease her curiosity, I ran my hands over the side walls of the bottom shelf. I was genuinely surprised when I discovered a small hole out there. The closet was made of dark wood and if I hadn't pressed it properly upon my intuition, I would have never been able to find it.

With my heart speeding like a bullet engine, I traced the outline of the hole and held my gasp when I realized that it was in the shape of a key. Adrenalin surged through me, resulting in a thin sheen of sweat breaking out on my skin.

With one hand shaking, I took the chain out from my neck and took the key to the keyhole. It fitted. Anticipation was high. I didn't know what was inside the small locker that was so neatly hidden inside the closet, but I knew that it was very important. I was definite that James Vincent had trashed the whole room to find the key and whatever it was the key to. He found the key, but he could never find the hole where it fitted.

I exhaled a sharp breath as I turned the key in the hole. The wood creaked and it opened softly. I held the edge of the small door and opened it more. It was dark inside. Delving my hand inside that small locker, I searched it and pulled out a few old papers. I was so tense that my jaws were clenched. Slowly, carefully, I pulled out every paper from it and then locked it back. The musty smell of papers was heavy as I picked them up. They looked like legal documents and had to be handled delicately. Clutching them close to my chest, I strode out of the room and stopped only when I reached my room.