

A LIGHT IN THE HEART OF DARKNESS

THE GUARDIAN HEART CRYSTAL SERIES



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A Light In The Heart Of Darkness

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A Light in the Heart of Darkness

The Guardian Heart Crystal Series Book Four

Amy Blankenship, RK Melton

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English Edition Published by Amy Blankenship

Second Edition Published by TekTime

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The Legend of the Heart of Time

The worlds may change, but true legends never fade.

Darkness and light have constantly battled since the beginning of time. Worlds are formed and crushed beneath the feet of their creators, yet the ongoing need for good and evil have never been in question. However, sometimes a new element is thrown into the mix, the one thing that both sides want but only one can have.

Paradoxical in nature, the Guardian Heart Crystal is the one constant that both sides have always striven to attain. The crystalline stone has the power to create and destroy the known universe, yet can end all suffering and strife in the same breath. Some say the crystal has a mind of its own, others say the gods are behind it all.

Each time the crystal has appeared, its guardians have always been ready to defend it from all who would use it selfishly. The identities of these guardians remain unchanged and they love with the same ferocity regardless of the world or time.

One girl stands in the center of these ancient guardians and is

the object of their affections. She holds within her the power of the crystal itself. This is the bearer of the crystal and the source of its power. The lines often blur, and guarding the crystal slowly changes into guarding the priestess from the other guardians.

This is the wine from which the heart of darkness drinks. It is the opportunity to make the guardians of the crystal weak and susceptible to attack. The darkness craves the power of the crystal and also the girl as a man would crave a woman.

Within every one of these dimensions and realities you will find a secret garden known as the Heart of Time. There, a statue of a young human priestess kneels. She is surrounded by an age-old magic that keeps her secret treasure hidden and well preserved. The maiden's hands are outstretched as if waiting for something precious to be placed in them.

Legend says that she is waiting for the powerful stone known as The Guardian Heart Crystal to return to her.

Only the Guardians know of the true secrets behind the statue and how it came into existence. Before the five brothers drew their first breath their ancestors, Tadamichi, and his twin brother, Hyakuhei, protected the heart of time during its darkest history. For centuries, the twins protected the seal that kept the human world from overlapping within the demon realm. This task was sacred and the lives of the humans as well as demons had to be kept safe and secret from the other.

Unexpectedly, during their reign, a small band of humans accidentally crossed over into the demon world because of the

sacred crystal. During a time of turmoil, its powers caused a rip in the seal that had separated the dimensions. The leader of the human group and Tadamichi had quickly become allies, making a pact to close the rip in the seal and keep the two worlds locked away from each other forever.

But during that time, Hyakuhei and Tadamichi had both fallen in love with the daughter of the human leader.

Against Hyakuhei's wishes, the rip had been repaired by Tadamichi and the girl's father. The strength of the seal had been increased tenfold, separating the dangerous love triangle forever. Hyakuhei's heart was shattered. Even his own blood brother, Tadamichi had betrayed him by making sure he and the priestess were separated by eternity.

Love can turn into the most wicked of things once it is lost. Hyakuhei's broken heart turned to malicious anger and jealousy causing a battle between the twin brothers, ending Tadamichi's life and splitting their immortal souls. Those slivers of immortality created five new guardians to take guardianship over the seal and protect it from Hyakuhei, who had joined the demons within the realm.

Imprisoned within the darkness he had become, Hyakuhei cast out all thought of protecting the heart of time; instead he turned his energy toward banishing the seal completely. His long midnight locks, reaching past his knees and a face belonging only to the most seductive, belied the true evil hidden within his angelic appearance.

As the war begins between the forces of light and dark, a blinding blue light is emitted from the sanctified statue signaling that the young priestess has been reborn and the crystal has resurfaced on the other side.

As the guardians are drawn to her and become her protectors, the battle between good and evil truly begins. Hence the entrance into another world where darkness is dominant within the world of light.

This is one of their many epic adventuresâ€

Chapter 1

For centuries the red moon had always been a sign of the bringer of death. Those who saw the deadly sight hid for fear of losing their lives to the powerful lull of endless sleep it promised. In the distance, a spine-chilling cry was heard from miles around as the dangerous symbol sat high in the midnight sky.

In a forest clearing two lone figures stood, one wounded, breathing heavily with one of his twin daggers clenched in his hand, the other towering menacingly over him, a malicious smirk gracing his inhumanly beautiful face. Predatory ruby eyes gleamed in the full moonlight awaiting his victim's next move. Hyakuhei's unnaturally pale skin seemed to glow in the night, giving him the appearance of an angelic reaper.

"You have killed us without death!" Toya snarled, baring his elongated fangs. His gold dust eyes burned in loathing for the man standing before him. Once his friend, his own father's brother, now his mortal enemy. "You bastard!"

"You say that now with conviction but I gave you eternal life, trained you and cared for you. I loved you and your brother as my own." Scarlet eyes flashed in anger at the insolent, would be child before him.

"You call making us into monsters love? You stole our lives away! You turned me to try and force my brother into becoming yours! You lied to us, saying you could reverse the

curse if we would join with you. His breath left him in an angry hiss as he continued.

If it wasn't for your twisted fascination with my brother, we would be normal human beings, living normal lives as a family, not the bloodthirsty creatures of the night that you made us into! Bitter tears poured from Toya's eyes in anger and betrayal, turning them eerie silver.

You are a fool to ever think you were normal! Hyakuhei's voice held the malicious hint of bitterness. You and your brother mistakenly weep for something that was never yours to have. His voice softened for a moment as he swallowed the memories of his twin brother, their father, No matter. His eyes burned as he focused back on Toya. You are just like your father, selfish.

Your father's death left you under my care! You and your brother are mine and I have always taken what belongs to me. I will have his obedience once I have finished with you. Hyakuhei's clawed hand flexed in anticipation, eager to feel the younger man's blood drip from their deadly tips. It is you that has betrayed your own flesh and blood!

Toya swung around in a circle listening to the hated voice as Hyakuhei shimmered and disappeared only to reappear on the other side of him. He knew the deadly vampire was only playing with him but Toya wasn't afraid anymore. That fear had died with her!

"Why did you kill her?" Toya demanded his voice a soft hiss

filled with anger and despair. "Did you think that by killing her you would gain the crystal? Never! She refused to give you that power and it pissed you off. Didn't it Hyakuhei?" he screamed as he pivoted, trying to follow his enemy as Hyakuhei circled him with deadly intent.

It wasn't a secret that you wanted her for your own. Toya's hand tightened on his dagger in fury as he remembered the haunted looks, the stalking, the sight of her lifeless body.

Anyone with eyes could see the way you looked at her when you thought me or Kotaro weren't paying attention. His breath left him with a sob as he swayed for a moment knowing he and Kotaro had both loved her, they had fought Hyakuhei and each other for her. No one had won. We saw you.

Kyoko was mine and will always be mine!" Toya shouted, his anger at losing the one he had loved more than air, she was gone. She had been the light in the darkness that his world had become.

She was the reason he had defied Hyakuhei. Now his reason for defiance was gone and Toya felt the fire in his soul rise to a deadly temperature. He had found her lying lifeless with a small dagger piercing her heart. Deep inside he knew, he and Kotaro had both known... Hyakuhei had somehow killed her.

Hyakuhei's black eyes became a shade darker as he gazed upon his brother's youngest son in contempt. Ah yes, the elusive Guardian Heart Crystal, such a power does not belong to a foolish child like you. The most powerful beings

have searched for the Guardian Heart Crystal? did you think you were the only one dear boy? Not only vampires but also immortals and wizards and even werewolves share in that desire to gather such a power.

Do you not realize what would happen if the Lycan had claimed her first? Hyakuhei's eyes bled crimson at the thought of Kotaro, leader of the Lycan tribes, gaining such a power. His anger spiked as he remembered the Lycan's scent on her flesh this same night. He would not stand by and let such a treacherous thing happen.

No, careless boy, I have already taken care of the priestess who carried the crystal within her. Hyakuhei's eyes hardened at the thought of the small lie.

In truth, he had not murdered the girl. She had committed suicide to keep him from obtaining the crystal. He'd had her in his grasp, ready to claim the power she held within her. The power the legend spoke of, if it could be trusted, would've allowed his darkness to walk within the light and feed upon it.

His fingers still tingled from the briefest touch of her skin. He had stood behind her, feeling the heat of her body with his cold hand. Her emerald eyes had turned and clashed with his for a mere second in defiance. He had only wanted a taste. Too late, he'd seen the dagger in her hand as it swiftly disappeared into her chest. He could have turned her and shared it all with her but, she refused his generous offer.

The brave yet foolish woman had believed that by killing

herself, she would lock away the power of the crystal from him forever. Forever was such a long time to try and hide from him.

â##She will be reborn!â## Toya screamed in anguish, knowing he had failed at protecting her from Hyakuheiâ##s wrath. His guilt at not being there to save her was eating him up inside. She had known he was a vampireâ# a creature of the nightâ# and still she had not turned her back on him. She had befriended him instead. Kyoko had trusted him with her very life.

Toyaâ##s mind flashed back over the time he had known herâ# his body falling to his knees as he gripped the ground watching his tears fall. â##It had not been long enough!â## he silently screamed in denial.

He had only known her for such a short time; six cycles of the moon. When he had first met herâ# he had only wanted the crystalâ# the crystal she hadnâ##t even known she was carrying at first. But he could see it shining inside herâ# calling to him. Then something had changed. Toya found himself trying to protect her instead of taking the crystal from her.

Since she had slammed into his dark world, Toya had found the truth behind the legend of the Guardian Heart Crystal, things even Hyakuhei did not realize. He had wanted to tell his brother the secrets but Hyakuhei had made it impossible for him to find Kyou in timeâ# now it was too late.

â##You will never have its light in the darknessâ# I will find Kyoko again and keep the crystal from you!â## Toyaâ##s voice was harsh with his need for vengeance. â##She will live again

and I will be there waiting for her. A lone silver tear slipped down his cheek unnoticed as he yelled, Together! She and I will find another way to free Kyou from you!

Hyakuhei stepped closer to Toya, a dark chuckle coming from deep within his chest. Oh yes, my dear Toya, she will live again. The crystal will come back into this world and I will be the one to claim not only its power, but the girl as well. As for my precious Kyou, I am sure I can find something to occupy your brother's time until that day comes.

Toya growled low in his throat knowing that was a double-edged sword, You keep your sick notions to yourself. I'll find a way to make us normal again. And you, I'll make you dead! He ended in a shout as the wind began to pick up, howling wickedly across the clearing.

The dagger in his hand flashed in an arc of silver light, barely catching the dark robe that graced Hyakuhei's body. Toya couldn't believe how fast his opponent was but his brow was furrowed with determination. A second dagger appeared in his other hand and he swung with it, followed immediately by the first.

Hyakuhei dodged the deadly blades with the centuries of training he'd endured. Humans were such easy creatures to defeat and Toya, though changed, was still very much human in his way of thinking, still a child in a vampire's eyes.

He would admit that somehow, his protection of the priestess had aged Toya's power to almost the same level of an ancient.

Taking the priestess away from him had served two purposes. Without his reason to fight, Toya's power had diminished greatly.

Hyakuhei's left hand lashed out, somehow trapping both of Toya's wrists in a crushing grip. Toya had no way to defend himself when the vampire's right claws cruelly slashed across his cheek.

Silver eyes clashed with crimson ones for a suspended moment in time as Hyakuhei retracted his claws. His lips hinted at a tainted smile as he reached out to gently stroke the wound he had just given so viciously. "Tis a pity to mar such perfection, so much like your brother." He licked the drops of freshly spilt blood from his finger before adding, "But I cannot have your rebellious love distracting Kyou from me."

Feeling his wrists being released, Toya took a step back and tried to block the next attack coming for his torso. He grunted in pain when blood spilled from the gashes left on his chest. Pressing an arm to the wounds, his golden eyes widened as he staggered back and, this time, Hyakuhei let him.

Toya could feel the broken bones in his wrists grinding against one another and had to concentrate just to keep his daggers from falling to the ground. Looking up at the man he hated more than death, Toya tried to shake off the pain knowing this wasn't a game; even the undead could die.

"You foolish child, you thought to save your sibling by killing me? You can barely hold your blades now, much less

attempt to take my life.â## Hyakuhei sneered then his face turned placid, his anger suddenly gone. The night breeze lifted the ends of his long ebony hair making it look like it was alive.

â##You never had a chance little one. I will help you to rest so that you will feel pain no more.â## Hyakuhei murmured, his eyes softening toward the wounded man like a father scolding a wayward child.

Silver eyes flashed red in anger at his words. â##You will never have my brother, you son of a bitch! As long as he has breath in his body, Kyou will not let you win, nor will I!â## Toya screamed as he charged at the figure clad in black in a last attempt to save his immortal soul.

Hyakuhei disappeared in the blink of an eye before Toyaâ##s dagger could penetrate the cold heart hidden deep inside his ageless body. Piercing red orbs gleamed, hungry to spill the blood of the young man who thought to defy him.

His dark form levitating high aboveâ## paused for just a moment before descending to attack his prey.

Toyaâ##s senses were screaming danger as he felt the approaching threat to his existence but he was not skilled enough yet to pinpoint where his attacker was coming from. He searched around frantically but with his senses now dull from the loss of blood from his woundsâ## along with the wound hidden inside his heart, Toya felt his fear rising.

His heart ached from the words thrown at him by his so called â##fatherâ##. â##I cannot let you win, you monster. My

brother's life depends on it." Toya whispered through his labored breathing, making the words thunder within his own ears.

A sliver of fear shot up his spine as he looked up towards the night sky. His eyes grew wide in terror at the sight that he only knew from the giving end, never from the receiving. "So this is what it's like." The thought filtered through his tormented mind.

He tried to move but was held immobile by an unknown force. Their eyes locked in a deadly stare. Red eyes pierced his very soul and Toya knew death was coming.

The scream lodged in his throat was replaced by a gurgling sound. His silver eyes faded back to gold and met the crimson red eyes of his murderer, as time seemed to stop. His body began to feel numb as he slowly looked down between their bodies.

Tears fell from Toya's eyes as their bright gold color began to fade. "I have failed you, please forgive me," Kyoko, 'Kyou,' were his last thoughts as he drew his final breath.

He could feel his heart beat getting further and further away as the pain faded. Mysteries unfolded with his final heartbeats as he silently whispered in uneasy wonder, "Kyoko, how long have you been here?"

Watching with a sick sense of pleasure, the figure clad in black with blazing red eyes smiled in satisfaction. He slowly lowered them both to the hard packed earth. His clawed hand embedded deep in the chest of the young man with eyes like the sun.

Hyakuhei viciously ripped out the heart that had stopped beating.

Staring into Toya's lifeless eyes he whispered, "I always wondered what Kyou's eyes would look like when he cried! I wager they will be beautiful." He leaned down and kissed Toya's forehead before rising to turn and face the man who had just landed a short distance behind him.

A sadistic smile graced his lips as he held out the bleeding heart and waited for Kyou to close the distance between them. "For you my pet, now there is nothing to come between us." His voice carried across the night breeze.

Kyou's eyes narrowed in disgust as he looked at the fresh heart that was being held out to him. Had Hyakuhei been undead for so long that to him death was a gift?

Disgusted, Kyou turned away from the disturbing vision. He had sensed his brother's anguish and had come to investigate. Instead, he found his so called "father" and he could no longer sense his brother's aura.

Something was terribly wrong and Kyou could feel the nerves within his body prickling his skin in warning.

He could not see the owner of the heart that still dripped its life from the hand of the ancient vampire since Hyakuhei blocked his view. It annoyed him to be detained from searching out his younger brother. He had not laid eyes on his sibling in over a year but tonight he knew Toya had needed him. It must have been important for Kyou to have felt the calling so strongly.

Sensing the anticipation in the man before him, Kyou's golden eyes locked with Hyakuhei's. "Whose soul did you steal this time?" he asked with contempt in his voice.

"Why don't you come and see, my pet? I'm sure you will be most surprised. It is my gift to you." A knowing smile lit his shadowed features as Hyakuhei stepped aside, leaving a clear view of his victim. Extending his hand leisurely toward Toya, he turned to look down at the corpse on the ground.

Kyou's gaze followed Hyakuhei as he slowly took a step closer, confused at the importance of this victim's identity. His golden eyes widened at the crumpled form lying in the dirt as an ominous jolt of alarm crawled up his spine. His heart began to race when he saw the familiar shiny silver highlights running through midnight black hair, now matted with blood and dirt as it lay across the man's face as if to hide his true identity.

He felt his entire being scream in rage and denial at the knowledge that he was now looking at his missing brother's slaughtered form.

"NO!" Kyou threw back his head and roared. Tears filled his eyes as he turned to face the one responsible. "What have you done?" He snarled as he shot forward, stopping mere inches from his brother's killer. His sun gold eyes bled red, elongated fangs bared like a rabid dog. Flexing his clawed hand he waited for the confession with barely restrained rage.

"Only what I should have done from the beginning!"

remove the one who did not appreciate you as I do.##
Hyakuhei's expression softened for a brief moment as he watched his favorite child.

He had given Kyou all his attention and affection since giving him the gift of dark immortality, but still Kyou had not been happy. It was the sadness in Kyou's golden gaze that had attracted him so, the loneliness within him was lovely and mimicked Hyakuhei's own melancholy. He had then turned Kyou's brother, Toya, in hopes of winning his prized possession's devotion. But that had only upset Kyou more.

Hyakuhei watched the bittersweet tears forming within Kyou's eyes and knew he had been right, Kyou was most divine when he cried.

At that moment, something deep within Kyou snapped as a mournful, earth-shattering cry tore from his body. In a blind rage, he attacked his brother's murderer, fangs bared and claws slashing. ##I will tear out your heart and leave your body to be ravaged by the creatures of the night for what you have done!##

Defly, the wicked man dodged the attack and in a blur of black had Kyou pinned to the ground. With a calm that did not reflect in his ruby red depths, Hyakuhei leaned in close, his gaze locked on the face that haunted him so, the face of his own brother.

##I did what was necessary for us. Toya did not want you to have my gift and sought to take it away from you. You will understand in time.## He murmured as his soft lips brushed

fleetingly across snarling ones as he spoke those words.

With a strength that he did not realize he possessed, Kyou forcefully threw the offending man twenty feet from his shaking body. He swiped his forearm across his mouth in disgust as he growled dangerously.

“Now, now, little one, calm yourself,” the man cooed as he stood and dusted himself off. His eyes blazed with promise as his body shimmered slightly, and then faded backwards into the night. “I will be watching you, my pet.”

Kyou’s world shattered around him as he looked down at his brother’s lifeless body. “I will avenge my brother’s death and spend eternity hunting you if I have to. When I find you, you will pay for this,” Hyakuhei...

He lowered himself shakily to his knees and gently lifted Toya’s body to his chest, cradling his head gently. His little brother’s hair had fallen away from his face making Kyou’s vision blur as he tried to hold back the flood of tears with no success. It looked like Toya was simply asleep, peaceful for the first time in way too long.

He watched as his tears dripped onto Toya’s cheek and Kyou felt his heart fracture. Clutching his beloved brother tightly against him, Kyou whispered in an unsteady voice, “Toya, please forgive me for not making it here in time.” His breath shuddered from him as he squeezed his eyes shut in pain. “I knew you needed me, I should have saved you.”

Kyou’s mind raced back to the day Hyakuhei had turned

him into what he was now—the day after his father's death. Kyou had known Hyakuhei had only wanted him and Toya had only been a small child. So to protect Toya, Kyou had left with his uncle even as his little brother had cried for him not to leave.

He could still remember the distrust shining in Toya's big golden eyes as he glared up at Hyakuhei for daring to take his big brother away from him. It was the memory of that haunted look that had helped Kyou stay away from his sibling for several years to protect him.

As Toya had gotten older, Kyou had found himself yearning to see him secretly visiting him and watching from a distance, watching his brother live the life he couldn't. Watching Toya from the shadows had been Kyou's only happiness during those dark days. He had often snuck into Toya's bedroom to watch him sleep.

Had he known Hyakuhei was following him and watching him watch Toya, he would have never put Toya in danger like that. His uncle had turned Toya because he had thought that was what Kyou had wanted. It had been his fault that Toya had died the first time.

Toya had fought their uncle, during the turning and after. As their arguments became more vicious, Kyou had tried to keep Hyakuhei's attention away from his brother. Then Toya had started talking about a cure for vampires—the Guardian Heart Crystal. He had sworn he would find it and cure them both.

Toya had found his cure in death.

Doing his best to avoid looking at the now empty cavity where his brother's heart had once resided, Kyou stood and carried Toya's body away from the scene to give him a proper burial.

He could no longer feel Hyakuhei's presence but knew he was close, watching him somehow always watching him. Kyou understood now that he would have to leave, go into hiding until he was strong enough to defeat the evil that had stolen the only thing he held dear his little brother. He slipped past the darkness leaving the clearing in total silence.

Kamui breathed a soft sigh of relief when the brothers were gone and lowered his invisibility barrier from around Kotaro's battered form. Looking down at the Lycan, Kamui knew it would take a while for Kotaro's wounds to heal not just the wounds to his body, but the wounds that now lay deeply imbedded within his heart as well.

"Come on," Kamui whispered, pulling one of Kotaro's arms across his shoulders and helping him stand. "Hyakuhei has not gone far and I need to get you out of the open." His eyes shimmered the color of rainbow dust as he tried to withhold his own tears. It was in vain for he could feel them sliding down his cheeks in hot trails.

So much had been lost in the span of only a couple of deadly hours he now knew what darker than dark truly was. He would not lose Kotaro as well.

"I didn't hate him that much," Kotaro whispered,

looking dejectedly toward where Toya's body had lain just moments before. They had both loved Kyoko and she in turn held affection for both of them, never choosing one over the other when they were fighting, until tonight. The fates had only given him a few short hours, at least Toya had not known.

His hand curled into a fist and tightened. Toya would have been mad, but he would have been alive. I would rather face his anger, not this, not this. His voice faltered.

They had both tried to protect her but now Toya's Kotaro's ice blue eyes swam with unshed tears, I never hated him.

He knows you didn't, Kamui said leading Kotaro in the direction of the only safe place he knew, the wizard, Shinbe's home. He needed to tell their friend of Toya's fate, and Kyoko's. Shinbe would somehow know what to do, he always knew.

I'll kill that bastard Hyakuhei, Kotaro snarled as he pulled against Kamui's restraint, his Lycan nature coming to the surface. He killed her, he killed Toya because of her. When I find him, he'll wish he'd been born human.

As if the wind had been knocked out of him, Kotaro's body shuddered. He knew Toya was a lot stronger than he had ever acknowledged but without Kyoko to protect, Toya had lost his will to fight. Hyakuhei had known that before the fight had ever started.

Toya's grief had made him hotheaded, impatient. If

only he had waited a few more moments. You could have saved him. Sadness hung on every syllable as Kotaro wiped angrily at the tears that silently left trails down his cheeks.

I wanted to save them both, Kyoko, the pain of his weakened body was too much as he closed his glowing ice blue eyes and gave in to the nothingness that would soothe the pain for a short while.

Kamui nodded as he lifted Kotaro's limp body and carried him. You have done enough. Rest for now. He whispered. It's my turn to do the saving.

Chapter 2

In the predawn hour, Kamui hovered above an unmarked grave. The two men standing on each side of him were all he had left. He had watched Shinbe use his telekinetic powers to remove the earth from Toya's grave and widen it enough for two bodies.

Shinbe and Kotaro now both wore the same expression—sadness and stubborn strength. Kamui knew they were trying to stay strong for him but he could see through to the melancholy they both hid.

They all stared down at the grave—the painful reality of it all sinking in. Things were not supposed to end this way—the good side wasn't supposed to lose—or die. Shinbe had helped them come to a decision on what to do. Retrieving Kyoko's body, they had brought her to the grave where Kyou had laid his brother and buried them together.

Toya would have wanted it that way—it was the only thing that felt right.

Kamui had been unable to carry Kyoko's body to the grave site once they found it. The blood surrounding her wasn't what bothered him. It was just heartbreaking to see someone so kind and pure, once possessing so much light within her that it hurt your eyes to look—lying there in the darkness with their eyes open and sightless.

Sensing Kamui's shock and seeing his hands trembling, Kotaro had stepped in and lifted her lovingly into his arms, trying hard to ignore the stiffness in her limbs as he did so. He couldn't bring himself to feel anything except anger and sadness at that moment. If he had let the rest of it in, how much he had loved her, his knees would have buckled, the grief weighed so heavily on him.

Seeing the look on Kamui's face was enough to help him control his own emotions; it also helped that numbness had set in. Kamui was not human nor was he creature, whatever he was, his heart was shattering. Kotaro decided to make it his business to watch over him from now on, even though the boy probably didn't need it.

Kamui wiped the trail of tears from his eyes, trying to be strong like Kotaro and Shinbe. His untamed purple hair ruffled in the wind as he looked down at the freshly turned earth. He had taken off his own robe and gently wrapped them in it to heighten the power of the spell he was about to cast.

Closing his glittering eyes, he laced his fingers together as illuminated wings sprouted from his back in a flurry of feathers. They shimmered with colors so intense, they were unknown to the human eye.

Shinbe and Kotaro both took a startled step back, suddenly understanding just what Kamui was. The word angel hovered on their lips but he looked so sad. Like an angel with a broken heart, a fallen angel.

With gentle fingers, Kamui removed a feather from his right wing and held his hand out with its palm up. The sad and serene expression on his face did not waver. His eyes shone with a glimmer of hope as he quickly swiped the suddenly sharp feather across his palm causing a shallow cut.

The crimson liquid pooled in his palm and Kamui slowly closed his fist over it before reaching out over the unmarked grave. The sacred drops of his life's blood fell to the earth making the soil glow an unearthly electric blue power.

Shinbe and Kotaro could only stand and watch in shock while this took place. They dared not move for fear of disturbing the rite Kamui was performing. Both understood they were witnessing something incredible and, no doubt, would never see it again.

The very air around Kamui swirled into a vortex surrounding him in a fluorescent blue light. His echoing voice left his lips seeming older and wiser than it ever had to their memories. It ricocheted across the skies, a frightening sound that carried for miles making all that heard it still in reverence of its power.

One thousand years it will take!

This time we abide for your own sake!

When the blood of a guardian spills!

Is the time for this prophesy to fulfill!

Only then two souls it will revive.

Bringing them into the light!

Fated to battle the dark magic of the night!

With this promise we immortals will take up armsâ#

Protecting those reborn from further harmâ#

Into the hands of stone and marble our enemy will we giveâ#

The only wish he desiresâ# within the light to live.â##

As the vortex circled Kamui, one glowing feather from each illuminated wing loosened and sprang forward within the cycloneâ# turning like two small daggers to shoot straight down, landing on the grave. The glistening feathers stayed stuck in the soft soil for a few brief moments before sinking into the ground to merge with the souls of his friends.

Kamuiâ##s knees hit the ground as the spell dispersed, sending a shockwave out in all directions. â##Until we meet again, Kyokoâ# Toya,â## Kamui whispered as he felt the loneliness close in on him. â##Maybe the next life will be in a better and far brighter time.â##

Shinbe remained silent next to him, wanting nothing more than to shed tears himself... but he couldnâ##t afford the luxury. Hyakuhei was still out there and he knew the black-hearted vampire would eventually come for him. The enemy would know what they had done. He would erase all the traces he could for now.

Reaching into his pocket, Shinbe pulled out a small amethyst bottle filled with ageless magical powder. Lightly sprinkling the ground, he walked a circle around the grave to protect it from all prying eyes. The ground instantly turned solid to hide the location of the new grave.

Shinbe's eyes lit up with the same amethyst color as he whispered words only he could understand.

He felt an age-old bond of brothers who had fought an eternal battle with darkness sear through his soul to become a symbol of protection upon the grave. Above the resting place of his friends blossomed flowers without any seeds being planted. Blooms of five colors appeared on thorny vines: silver, gold, ice blue, amethyst, and shimmering rainbow dust.

"I am taking my leave," Shinbe said after a long silence. He didn't want his presence giving away the location of the others and knew it was time to move on. His gaze darted back to the bush of strangely colored flowers. Toya and Kyoko were now protected from Hyakuhei and the spell would not be disturbed.

For now, it was all he could offer them besides sorrow.

Kamui looked up at the wizard, shocked at this new development. "What? But why?" his eyes widened in a moment of panic: would everyone leave him now? Wasn't losing Toya and Kyoko bad enough?

Feeling Kamui's fear rise, Shinbe placed a steady hand on his friend's shoulder and tried to explain, "You know as well as I that Hyakuhei will eventually learn what we have done here." He looked over Kamui's shoulder at Kotaro knowing the Lycan would understand his abandonment.

"You will be able to escape his ever-watchful eyes, but I do not have that kind of power. I will however be able to hide, but I am unsure as to how long." Shinbe released a long sigh

and looked up at the moon hanging low in the sky. "My days have a number on them now" a soft smile tilted the corners of his lips as if he knew a secret. "So be it."

"I will board the next vessel going west, over the ocean. There, I will have a better chance of keeping my identity safe from Hyakuhei and perhaps even find a way for my own soul to reincarnate at the same time as our dear friends." He hoped what he was saying was the truth. They would need him when the time came.

Kamui glanced down at the grave below him then back up at his friend with more calmness than he had felt since this nightmare evening had started. He did not want Shinbe to be the next victim so, yes, he understood. He gently plucked a rainbow feather from his right wing and pressed it to Shinbe's neck.

Shinbe gasped as it started to glow brightly before absorbing into his skin. He looked down and saw the briefest outline of the feather just below the collar of his robe.

"That'll help you when the time comes," Kamui said with a smile and gave Shinbe a tight hug in understanding. He wouldn't lose Shinbe for long, no matter what.

"We will see each other again my friend," Shinbe whispered before pulling away from Kamui's embrace. He nodded to Kotaro knowing the Lycan would look after Kamui for all of them. Shinbe gazed back at the grave then jerked his eyes away letting his bangs fall down to hide the sadness. "So be it," he whispered again as he disappeared into the surrounding

darkness.

“You ready kid?” Kotaro asked quietly as he kept his back to the grave. He knew he could not stay. Shinbe was right! the farther away they were, the better protected the spell would be.

Kamui wanted to scowl at the nickname Kotaro had just given him but didn’t have the heart. His heart was buried in the dirt at his feet and, if it took until the end of time, he would see Hyakuhei pay for his crimes.

“Yeah,” Kamui said, wiping an arm across his eyes. “I’m ready.”

Kotaro placed an arm around his shoulders and led him away. The Lycan found that he could shed no more tears for the woman he had loved with his entire being. His soul felt as if someone had yanked it from his body, ripped it to shreds and only returned half of it.

If the spell Kamui and Shinbe had come up with worked, he would see his beloved Kyoko again. He couldn’t help but smile at all the antics he and Toya’s reincarnation were bound to come up with to win her affections. He would gladly fight over her once again if only Toya would come back. After all, he loved them both.

He fought the urge to look back at the grave. “A thousand years is a long time to wait but I’ll be there for you,” Kyoko.

Over a thousand years into the futureâ€¦ Present Day.

A lone figure stood on a rooftop of the tallest building, overlooking the crowded city below. His features never betraying the heart-wrenching memory of his only brotherâ€™s body lying alone and lifeless on the cold, hard ground, centuries ago. His once warm, beating heart gripped in the claws of the sadistic monster that had created them both.

He had done everything within his power to separate himself from the evil that silently surrounded him. Just like the humans of this world, he only fed off the animals that nature provided. Even though the darkness was all he was allowed, as is the curse of a vampire, he would never become the demon his uncle had intended.

Within the last several years something within him stirredâ€¦ a longing that he couldnâ€™t understand and hadnâ€™t felt in over a thousand long years.

Memories never forgotten replayed in Kyouâ€™s mind of a once innocent young man that had filled his life with happiness, even within a world of darkness. Toyaâ€¦ He had been so full of lifeâ€¦ with laughing gold eyes and the ignorance of a child. Once again it brought pangs of guilt to his heart for not being able to protect his younger brother.

Sun gold eyes that had grown hard from hundreds of years of loneliness, bled red at the remembrance of a promise that he had yet to fulfill. Every decade that passed by, Kyou had grown that much stronger. Many times he had come close, but the object of

his hatred and wrath eluded him at every turn.

He would not rest until the vile creature he sought writhed in agony at his feet and his soul cast into hell where it belonged.

Kyou's gaze was drawn to the only serene place in the whole city: the quiet park in the center. "Such places should not be near so much evil," he murmured into the night. Leaping from the building, Kyou continued his search as he had for so many centuries. Hyakuhei would pay with his very life for taking the only one that ever mattered to him or ever would. His brother was forever lost and would never return.

"Toya!" Kyou whispered as he disappeared into the night, leaving behind the image of an avenging angel!

The park was always peaceful this time of the day. It was still afternoon and the sun was high in the sky. Kotaro strolled lazily through the trees close to the center where a huge block of marble was sitting. He had no idea where it came from; it had been there for as long as he could remember, it was even older than the city itself. All he knew for sure was that he felt an overwhelming sense of peace whenever he was near it.

"Who'd figure that a square rock would bring about tranquil thoughts?" Kotaro muttered to himself.

Taking another path between the trees, he made his way over to the stone so he could look at it. Even if he'd been completely happy that day, just making sure it was still there made him feel better.

Kotaro stopped in his tracks when he entered the center where it was and frowned at the individual sitting Indian style on the top of it with elbows on his knees and chin cupped in his hands. Short purple hair swayed in the soft breeze making the young looking man seem very childlike.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Kotaro demanded.

Kamui grinned without looking at him. Instead, he nodded in the direction of the college off in the distance. “Waiting for class to start.”

Kotaro shook his head and moved on before stopping again and whirling around to face Kamui. “What are you talking about? You don’t even go to this school.”

Kamui winked before slowly fading out of existence in a flurry of glittering rainbow dust. “I know.”

Kotaro glared at the dust swirling about before it vanished completely. “Sometimes that boy is such an enigma,” he informed the now empty space then his eyes moved lower as if caressing the stone. He heard the sound of running feet hitting the pavement but didn’t really notice until someone tapped him on the shoulder. He literally jumped and spun around to see Hoto and Toki bent over with their hands resting on their knees trying to catch their breath.

“What’s got you two winded?” Kotaro asked with a smirk as he regained his composure.

Hoto waved a piece of paper in front of him. “For you, not from police, important.”

Kotaro took the paper, “From the police huh? Must be really big to make you two run the marathon.”

Toki nodded before falling over onto his side to rest. Hoto merely sank to his knees and rested his head on the grass.

“You two are the biggest wimps I’ve ever seen,” Kotaro complained good-naturedly.

“Side hurts,” Toki whined. “Must get back to air conditioned office.”

Kotaro sighed in resignation and left them to bake in the warm sunshine before opening the note. His hand closed, crinkling the paper he had just received from the police station not far from campus. Another girl had disappeared without a trace. He had spent a long time investigating the disappearances of many young girls, which had eventually led him to the college where he was now head of security.

His thoughts instantly turned to his beloved Kyoko. He had found her again and just as he had expected Toya was not far away. One thing that had surprised him was the fact that Toya had been reborn normal human, or so it seemed.

Sometimes he could feel the true Toya lying just beneath the surface, unaware of his own existence, but so far that part of him had remained asleep. “Thank God for small favors,” Kotaro ran an agitated hand through his windblown hair.

It suited him fine that neither of them remembered the past; it was a memory best forgotten. He wished he had the same privilege to forget but for him, the memory remained often

waking him up at night in a cold sweat.

Leaving the park he found himself standing on the stone walk in front of the campus. Kotaro lifted his ice blue eyes in the direction Kyoko lived. He frowned as concern etched his features and had the sudden urge to check in on his woman.

The long part of his layered dark hair was pulled back in a band hanging low. The rest of his hair from bangs to crown was in a constant state of looking naturally windblown; giving him the appearance of a punk bad boy but that suited him just fine. This appearance had served him more than once in recent years.

His body was tall with slender muscles but looks could be deceiving. He didn't have an ounce of fat to spare and was stronger than fifty human men put together. The only people who knew of his inhuman strength were those who chose to give him a hard time or dared to get in his way. And those few were too scared to say a word. No one on campus knew Kotaro's secret side and he wanted to keep it that way.

Kotaro was responsible for the safety of every person that walked on campus whether it was a visitor, student or faculty member. Young women had started disappearing from this area about a month ago at an alarming rate and mostly from the grid surrounding the college grounds.

A low growl formed deep within his chest as he inhaled the scents around him. The air had become tainted with an ancient scent evil. He was getting closer to the one who was responsible for more than just the missing girls; he could feel

it. Pushing those thoughts aside for now, he started walking briskly toward the surrounding apartments that housed many of the innocent college students.

He would go check in on Kyoko and if she would let him, his eyes darkened attractively—he wouldn't leave her side for the rest of the day or night. He only hoped Toya wasn't hanging around her again today. He wanted her all to himself. After all, she was truly his woman and that boy would have to get a life.

His steps slowed for a moment at the irony of it—he was glad Toya at least now had a life. An almost amused smirk appeared as he mentally threatened that life if he didn't quit hounding Kyoko all the time.

Just the thought of her sitting next to him on her comfortable couch, eating popcorn, and watching some cheesy movie sounded like the perfect evening. They shared something like that at least once a week and to him—that was his favorite part of the week. He got his uninterrupted time with the auburn haired beauty. It didn't matter whether they were watching a movie or just sitting on her couch talking—he just loved the feel of her snuggled next to him.

Kotaro smirked to himself in satisfaction as he wondered what it would be like to always be by her side—day and night.

His smirk faded at his next thought—Kyoko hadn't actually chosen him over Toya, yet. At least not in this lifetime. Some things never change. He looked upward as if

sending a silent sarcastic “thanks for all the help in that area.” to whoever was listening. Something told him the gods had to have the most disturbing sense of humor.

Finals were finally over and Kyoko had been singing those words all afternoon. She had been a good girl and studied till she was sick to death of it, but it had all paid off. She just knew she’d aced those evil tests. That thought alone had made her want to do a happy dance all the way back to her apartment today.

In fact, the first thing she’d done as soon as she walked in the door was fling her books across the living room like they were disease infested and finally succumbed to the urge to performing an impromptu “happy dance” right in the doorway, looking like she had a bit of geek left in her after all.

This was immediately followed by her own rendition of a touchdown dance she’d seen Toya do once, shaking her butt all the way down the hall to her bathroom so she could run a hot bubble bath. Kyoko then decided if she was going to do this it would be done right and went to turn on her stereo and grabbed a few candles.

She was still making cute victory noises by the time the tub filled and she made short work of her clothing by taking them off and throwing them wherever she pleased. “Most likely I’ll find my underwear hanging from the ceiling fan when I get done.” She thought to herself then shrugged and stepped into the water.

She slid down further into the bath to let the bubbles floating along the top caress her neck and shoulders. Her emerald green eyes, that were sometimes known to turn stormy at a moment's notice, were shining with contentment.

Her auburn waves of hair were piled haphazardly on top of her head and her silky smooth skin was hidden now beneath the bubbles. She was a happy girl and all she really wanted to do was relax for the rest of the day. A bit of soft music in the background, some sweet smelling candles lit all around the bathroom and it was the perfect setting.

She closed her eyes knowing his image would soon come into focus as if waiting for her. It was her secret to keep.

Ice blue eyes watched her from within her mind. She had dreams of him so many times during the nights that now she could summon them even during her waking hours. The deeper she became entwined in the dream, the more real he became until it seemed he was really there kneeling beside the bathtub.

His lips tilted in a sensual smirk as he reached out and took the washcloth from her his eyes becoming as bright as blue flame.

“Dreams are nice,” she whispered as she rolled her head to the side letting him do what he wanted.

“Ring, Ring.” One of the most annoying sounds in the world echoed throughout the apartment. Kyoko jerked forward in the tub sloshing the water over the rim and onto the tile floor. Raising her hand to her cheek, she could feel the heat there and blushed just as the phone rang again.

She stood up quickly knowing the phone was all the way in the living room. Stepping out of the water, she grabbed the silk robe from the counter and wrapped it around her as she ran to answer it.

Realizing she was leaving a trail of water, she made a mental note to remember to take the cordless phone to the bathroom with her the next time.

On the other end of the irritating ringing, Suki tapped her fingernails on the kitchen counter wishing Kyoko would hurry up already and get to the phone. She had this nagging feeling that Shinbe would be here any minute, and she didn't want him to know anything about what she was planning.

She heard the click on the other end. Finally!

Kyoko pulled the phone back from her ear to glare at it then placed it back. Suki, I was in the bath! Kyoko nearly whined as she gazed longingly back toward the bathroom door where she knew the water was still hot and scented with jasmine. It beckoned her to return and enjoy so did the dream. She bit her bottom lip as she dragged her eyes away from what she wanted.

Are you standing there naked? Suki snickered knowing Kyoko blushed easily.

Suki! Kyoko cried into the receiver. Her friend simply had a warped sense of humor, which probably came from being around Shinbe way too much. She grinned mischievously as she countered, Did you need something? I have a hot,

steamy bath calling my name and you're interrupting my little rendezvous.

Rendezvous? Suki looked at the phone and rolled her eyes. You definitely need help Kyoko. Who ever heard of getting romantic in bathwater without someone there with you? At least get a spark of imagination and think about a sexy man to wash your back while you're in there. She sighed in an exasperated tone unaware she had just shocked Kyoko to the core at how close her mental picture really was.

Anyways, you and I are having a girls night out to celebrate finals being over, Suki chirped. She wasn't about to let Kyoko say no.

I won't take no for an answer either, so start getting ready. And wear that outfit we bought last weekend. I'll do the same. Suki inhaled deeply and quickly started again before Kyoko could get a word in edgewise. Be ready by 7:30. Love ya. Byeeee!

Kyoko blinked when the phone clicked signaling the line was disconnected. Her lips were still parted because she had been ready to say no at her first opportunity. She sent a silent glare at the far wall of the living room that separated the two girls' apartments wondering if Suki had called from there or from her cell phone out somewhere.

Looking at the caller ID she sighed. Cell phone, that figures. No need to go beat on the wall then. But the image of her hands around Suki's neck brought a smile to her face.

###I can pretend though.##

Tossing the cordless phone back on the counter, Kyoko looked down at the silken robe now clinging to her damp body and groaned. The warm water still on her skin had now turned cold and tingly, making chill bumps appear. Quickly, she turned to go back to her bath.

###Ring, Ring.## Kyoko twitched.

Spinning around as her left eyebrow rose in frustration. ###I hope that###s Suki so I can tell her how well I like to be bullied!
Jerking up the phone, she said a little louder than normal.
###Hello!!##

Toya smirked at Kyoko###s greeting. ###Come now, didn###t your mommy ever teach you to be polite when answering the phone?##

Kyoko felt like calmly walking to the window, opening it, and letting the phone slip from her hand into the unknown. ###Why is it that no one wants to let me finish taking my bath?## she whined, stomping her foot only to feel the air conditioning make its way beneath her robe.

Toya###s smirk vanished as his imagination ran wild and explicit visions started dancing around in his mind. ###Are you nak###!## He stopped suddenly tongue-tied before asking her if she was standing there naked. Shaking the thought out of his head, Toya took a deep breath to calm himself and hopefully get his now raging hormones under control. ###Damn, that was a pretty picture##!##

Kyoko frowned wondering if Toya was standing right beside Suki at that very moment.

Toya tried again. "Heh, never mind. Look, I'm coming over to take you to the movies tonight, so just get dressed."

Kyoko narrowed her eyes wondering who pronounced it to be "The Day of The Bullies". "Uh, I have plans tonight." Of course her plans had been to turn into a prune in the bath than curl up on the sofa and watch a movie. Maybe even fall asleep during it, not have everyone under the sun bugging her to go out.

"What! Cancel them, because you're coming with me!" Toya practically ordered, getting annoyed that she wasn't doing what he wanted her to do, as if she ever did.

Kyoko closed her eyes and held the phone away from her chanting "I will not throw it out the window, I will not throw it out the window, Knock, Knock" Kyoko swung around to face the door thinking. "But I WILL throw it at whoever is at the damn door!" she could hear a demented laugh come from somewhere deep inside, where her evil twin resided.

She calmly walked to the door and unlocked it, then peeked around the door to see who it was. "Kotaro" she whispered a little breathlessly then snapped her mouth shut guiltily hoping he hadn't noticed.

Kotaro's eyes lit up and darkened at the same time when the door opened. He was glad to see Kyoko safe and obviously not fully dressed. He cocked an eyebrow at the way she had said

his name. Pressing his hand against the door above her head, he opened it the rest of the way with his usual confident smile as he slid past herâ€”almost touching.

â€œHow is my woman today?â€ Kotaro walked past her and into the apartment like he belonged there.

â€œI will not commit murder, I will not throw the phone, I will notâ€!â€ Kyokoâ€™s mind continued to chant as Kotaro faced her with his usual heart-stopping grin. She suddenly felt like the air conditioning had stopped working.

How was it this man, who could only be described as walking sex, affect her so? She always felt like she was trying to stop herself from throwing him to the floor. Shaking her head, she looked down and squeaked when she saw her robe had come partially open. It wasnâ€™t enough to show anything but enough skin was visible to make her blush.

Toya tensed, hearing the knock in the background through the phone and then Kotaroâ€™s voice. He yelled into the phone to get her attention. â€œDamn it, Kyoko! What the hell is Kotaro doing there?â€ he ground out, angry that the security guard had shown up at â€œhisâ€ Kyokoâ€™s apartment again.

Kyoko cringed when the yell from the phone could be heard loud and clear within the living room. Looking over Kotaroâ€™s shoulder at the wall clock, she knew she needed to start getting ready or Suki would be the next one banging on the door. Enough was enough. She turned and walked over to the counter intending to hang the phone up.

Raising it back to her ear she shouted, "I'll see you later!"
Click! one down! one to go.

Kotaro smirked knowing it had been Toya she was yelling at. His eyes traveled over the silk that clung to a nicely shaped body like a second skin and he couldn't have stopped himself if he had tried from moving forward! closer to her. He slowly closed his eyes only for a second as he inhaled deeply, his entire body now less than an inch from hers. The thought of touching without contact had him mentally curving his body around hers and tightening.

He leaned forward bringing his lips close to the shell of her ear before whispering her name. His lips softened, as did his ice blue eyes. He often found himself almost wishing she would remember the past! and how close they once were. What would she do if she remembered they used to live together? Him, her, and Toya! so they could protect her.

Kyoko lost her breath as it rushed out of her and she felt the skin along her neck and cheek tingle. It was hard enough to keep her thoughts straight with him so close but right now she could feel him touching her even though he wasn't. Remembering just what she was doing before the phone had interrupted her made instant heat rise up into her face.

Not wanting him to notice her guilt, she kept her back to him and tried hard to suppress the memory of the bath. Closing her eyes, she fought the urge to lean back into him and had to grab the table to steady herself.

Kotaro wanted to put his hands on the table on both sides of her, trapping her within his arms but suddenly stilled. He could smell the soaps she had used in the bath but one flavor made its way to him and his expression turned curious. Arousal? He stepped back from her, feeling himself harden.

Running his hand through his untamed hair, he retreated to a safer distance trying hard to ignore the jolt in the pit of his stomach. Why had he come here again? It was important.

He felt his protective instincts kick in recalling the recent alerts he had received. "Will you spend the evening with me?" The innocent sounding question hid a double meaning, as he tasted the want.

Kyoko slowed her breathing once again ready to fight her feelings. She frowned knowing it would be too dangerous to be alone with him. Suddenly, she wanted to thank Suki for ordering her around.

Seeing her frown Kotaro quickly added, "We can do anything you want to. Rent a movie and stay in, or go out."

"Rent a movie and stay home!" Kyoko repeated wishfully thinking that was exactly what she wanted to do. Then noticing Kotaro's eyes light up, she quickly amended, "At least that's what I wanted to do and if I hadn't been dragged into someone else's plans. I would have loved to stay up watching movies with you. But I'm sorry Kotaro. I can't." She gave him an apologetic smile mentally stomping her foot at the thought of missing out on a very warm evening

with the handsome security guard.

Kotaro's shoulders dropped an inch but he smiled anyway knowing she wasn't trying to hurt his feelings. He could even tell that she wanted him to stay and he wondered at the pull of that want! was it the same as his wants? To him, Kyoko was the most precious gem on earth and he would do anything he could to make her smile and keep her safe at the same time.

After all, he had waited over a thousand years just to see her again.

Needing to make sure she was protected and out of harm's way he asked, "So what plans do you have, maybe I can join in the fun?" He gave her his most mischievous smile hoping it would work. If not then he could resort to stalking her! the corners of his perfect lips tilted in a secret smile.

Kyoko knew Suki would never go for that. Girl's night out meant "girl's" night out. She also knew that if Kotaro found out she was with only Suki! he would tag along, somehow showing up as if by accident. She had seen him do it many times.

Where Toya was pushy, Kotaro always tried to be subtle, even though when you put the two guys in the same room they seemed to act a lot alike and would constantly annoy each other. Both guys had a heart of gold and she knew it. In a way she loved them both! so much that it was painful, which is why she chose not to choose and just stay single for now. Honestly, she didn't want to hurt either of their feelings.

But one thing Kyoko knew for certain was if Kotaro thought

she was going out with Toya tonight—he would not bother to follow. At least she hoped not.

“I’m sorry Kotaro, I already have plans with Toya but I promise we will rent movies or something another time.” Kyoko lowered her eyes not liking the fact that she was lying to him but it was the only way to get him to let it go. Watching the floor she noticed him take a step forward and she instantly took a step back biting her lower lip when she felt the table behind her.

Kotaro felt the jealousy vibrate within him but he held it in check. His only comfort was that if she was with Toya tonight, at least he could count on her not being one of the next missing girls.

Plus, he knew Kamui was secretly watching over both Toya and Kyoko. Mentally, he had to admit Toya was overprotective of her and would keep her safe. He wanted to be the one with Kyoko tonight, the one protecting her. But even though he didn’t like it, Toya would not let any harm come to her.

He watched her slowly raise her eyes to his and could see the worry in her gaze that he would try to stop her—he wanted to stop her but he wouldn’t. In time she would make her own choice.

Nodding his head slightly in reluctant acceptance, Kotaro reached for her hand and held it for a moment, locking ice blue eyes with stormy emerald ones. He could tell she had a rough day by her eyes. He could always read her feelings through the color of her eyes—he had learned that over a thousand years ago. He

only wished she would remember.

That's a deal then Kyoko. I'll check in on you tomorrow. Be careful beautiful. Leaning forward he brushed his lips across her forehead then let go of her hand, turning to leave.

Kyoko smiled. Thanks, Kotaro. Her forehead still tingled where his warm lips had touched her. She was glad he was easier to deal with than Toya. He would often kiss her cheek, forehead or hand, leaving that spot tingly and warm.

She wondered what he would think if he knew she had never been kissed on the lips. No one would ever believe that at the age of eighteen, she was still as pure as she was! well physically pure. She blushed again knowing her thoughts were not too faultless. She would blame the traitor that lived within her chest and sped up every time she thought of him.

Kotaro opened the door to slip out but not before throwing her a smile over his shoulder and adding. Just remember, you're still my woman. He quickly left, shutting the door behind him, grinning wolfishly at the comment.

He knew she wouldn't cross the line with Toya and wasn't worried. Even in the past when he and Toya had butted heads, she would take up for him over Toya. She had always loved Toya but Kotaro knew it was he she was truly in love with. The speed of her heartbeat when he was around had always given her true feelings away! in this lifetime and in the past. He only had to wait for her to realize it once again.

Kotaro inhaled softly savoring her scent. Even now he could smell her purity and knew she was not one to take something like that lightly. She was so innocent of the real world.

The thought made Kotaro's smile fade. He wasn't so sure he ever wanted her to find out about the dark side of this world; didn't want to risk her happiness. Even he himself was not what she thought he was. He knew she would accept him either way but the memory of burying her kept his lips sealed from speaking of the past. Some things were better off never remembered.

As Kotaro walked out of the building and back onto the sidewalk, he looked up from the yard below toward her window wondering what she would do when she found out about him. And yes, he would tell her the truth; just not yet. How do you explain that you are older than any normal human and that you have powers like she has only seen in the movies?

Kotaro shook his head as he started back toward the college contemplating his next move regarding the missing girls.

He knew what was happening to them and that they were most likely already dead or at least undead. His eyes flashed in anger for just a moment, revealing the darker side of his Lycan soul. He needed to catch the scent of those damn bloodsuckers and the one who led them before they found Kyoko again.

Chapter 3

Kyoko flipped through the closet looking for what Suki had talked her into buying last weekend. She giggled to herself remembering Shinbe had followed them on the shopping spree offering to let them model anything they needed an opinion on. What had topped it all off was when he had snuck into the girls dressing room and talked to Suki through the curtain.

Shinbe had been talking in a high pitch voice to trick Suki into thinking he was the attendant for the ladies room and offered to zip her up.

Suki had said yes to the offer of help and turned her back to the curtain. Kyoko had almost fallen over when Shinbe went flying across the dressing room to land against the wall on the other side.

She had asked Suki how she had realized it was Shinbe and Suki had responded with. "I don't think they would let a lesbian work in a girl's dressing room so when he put his hand inside my dress instead of on the zipper it was kind of a dead giveaway."

"Poor Shinbe," Kyoko sighed as she pulled out a frilly white belly shirt with silk sleeves that from elbow to the wrist were bell shaped and flowing. Actually, she thought it was very pretty. It kind of reminded her of an angel's robe but sexy. It was short enough to show her belly button with the hip hugger

black mini skirt she had bought.

After putting the clothes on and finding what shoes she wanted, she pulled the hair around her ears and some from the back, up high into a scrunchie, leaving the rest to hang down attractively. Applying a small amount of makeup and a necklace holding a small crystal teardrop, she deemed herself ready for whatever Suki was getting her into.

She secretly wished she could have told Kotaro where they were going but even she didn't know the answer to that. She chewed on her bottom lip realizing she was already missing him then tried to shove the melancholy feeling aside knowing Suki would detect it.

The last thing she needed tonight was her best friend asking her a million questions that she didn't want to answer.

Shinbe ran his fingers through the blue highlights that shimmered within his dark hair as he leaned against the doorframe grinning. He had rushed over to Suki's when he had received her call saying she was going to be gone this evening and not to come over.

She's delusional if she thinks she can get rid of me that easy, Shinbe cocked an eyebrow as he waited.

When she opened the door with her hair still wrapped in a towel, Shinbe's first words were. Aww! did I miss you bathing Suki? He smirked seeing Suki's eyebrow twitching. As soon as he had met Suki and Kyoko he had felt the

need to stay near them at all times. He had often double dated with Toya and the girls.

Suki knew Shinbe considered himself her boyfriend just because he was the only one she dated but Suki had never agreed to the ball and chain part. She tried to hide the blush that threatened to rise up and take over her face as she retorted, "It would take bleach and a wrecking ball to get a dirty mind like yours clean."

He leaned closer to her blocking out all else as his amethyst eyes darkened attractively. "If you let me come in I think we could find a reason for you to take another bath."

Suki felt her heartbeat speed up at the sound of his husky voice and took a couple of steps back as he took several steps forward closing the door behind him. Deciding not to let him get the upper hand, she gave him her best warning look and was rewarded when he stopped his pursuit of her. If he ever found out how much of a hold he had on her she would really be in for it.

"Hey Shinbe, look, I have to finish getting ready because I have plans tonight with a friend. I already told you on the phone, remember?" She had known he would come over anyway if for no other reason than to try to find out where she was going.

Taking the towel from her head, her long hair still damp, Suki headed for the bathroom still talking loud enough so that he could hear her. "We can do something tomorrow night, okay?"

Shinbe leaned against the bar separating her kitchen from the living room. He was about to start voicing his complaints

when his gaze fell on a flyer lying on the counter. Picking it up, he quickly scanned the page. Both of his eyebrows rose in enlightenment.

THE BIGGEST AND HOTTEST CLUB IN THE CITY
CLUB MIDNIGHT
FRIDAY NIGHT SPECIAL
LADIES NIGHT

The words ladies night was circled. Shinbe cocked an eyebrow as he laid the paper back down on the counter and walked toward the bathroom. He hid his smile as he entered without knocking and slid in behind Suki as she had the brush poised to slide through her hair.

###Tomorrow then,## Shinbe whispered seductively in the shell of her ear then dipped his lips down to kiss her shoulder. He turned to leave not saying another wordâ€! hiding his knowing grin.

Suki stood motionless, staring in the mirror, not liking the vibes she had just gotten. It was unlike Shinbe not to beg and plead with her. Not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth, she hurried and finished getting ready. Afraid now that Shinbe had something up his sleeve, Suki decided she would show up at Kyoko##s a little earlier than planned.

Several miles away, piercing red eyes gazed out the window of a penthouse suite overlooking the city. Long waves of silky black hair cascaded down a bare back in contrast to skin as pale

as the moon. His angelic face was striking, with sharply defined angles and his body was lean and hard like that of the mystical god Adonis.

His naked body glistened from the moonlight, muscles dancing with each movement he made. He was beautiful to anyone who looked upon it, yet his dark soul was malicious and deadly. A smile graced his perfect lips as his thoughts turned to the events of the night before.

Turning from the window he began to prepare himself for the evening. His gaze strayed to the Queen Ann chair next to the fire and the young college student that sat lifeless in it. Hyakuhei smirked as he thought of the fresh blood he had dined on the night before.

“Pity, she was such a beautiful girl.” He licked his lips recalling his pleasure of taking the girl and feeding on her. He could never tire of the young women he lured out and took for himself.

Tonight he would be visiting a popular nightclub to hunt his prey and needed to be sure his “children” were taken care of. “Ladies night” was always ripe for the picking and was a buffet of never ending flesh for the nightwalkers.

He was a powerful vampire lord and none would dare cross him or question his strength. Pleasure had been his only desire for over a thousand years but now he wanted more. He wanted what was rightfully his. A frown marred his face as he pondered his quest, the object that had become his obsession as he waited on

it to be born into the world once again. The legendary Guardian Heart Crystal.

The sacred crystal was a jewel that was said to be able to give a vampire the ability to walk beyond the night and into the daylight. In the legend it is said a girl with untainted blood and the heart of a child, would possess the jewel within her body. She would be a priestess of the highest ranking and power, the protector and keeper of the Guardian Heart Crystal.

His dark gaze returned to the night sky where a blood red moon loomed high above. "I have lost you once dear priestess but make no mistake, I will find you again." His eyes narrowed as he promised the night. "I will possess both you and the crystal this time!"

Suki had taken Kyoko shopping last weekend for this very reason, only she didn't tell her friend what it had been for. Suki had also bought herself an outfit. Pulling it out of her closet, she wiggled into it with excitement. It was an all-black and very tight body dress. She had fallen in love with it the moment she laid eyes on it.

"Good thing Shinbe's not around", Suki thought to herself with a knowing smirk as she eyed the dress in the mirror. It was very short but didn't show too much! just enough to tease and let the imagination roam. Pulling her dark hair back in a matching black scrunchie, Suki applied some makeup and grabbed her keys, heading next door to Kyoko's apartment.

Kyoko came out of her bedroom hoping she would have time to snack on something before going out but before she even made it to the kitchen someone was pounding on the door.

â##God, I hope thatâ##s not Toya,â## she mouthed and wondered if she should even answer it. She still had 20 minutes before it was time to meet Suki so Kyoko chose to ignore the banging on the door for the moment in fear of who was on the other side.

Itâ##s amazing how fear makes you feel five years old. Kyokoâ##s eyebrow twitched as she held her breath.

The banging became a little louder but this time followed by a voice. â##All right Kyoko, I know you are in there. Donâ##t make me break this door down!â## This was said with a snicker.

Kyoko rolled her eyes thinking Suki sounded like the law. She opened the door to her grinning best friend who immediately grabbed her arm to pull her out of the apartment. â##Come on, letâ##s go. Iâ##ve got a bad feeling if we donâ##t leave now, Shinbe will show up or something.â## Kyoko barely had time to lock the door before Suki pulled her outside.

Kyou drew the heavy black curtains back from the window now that dusk had come. His long silvery white mane fanned out around him as he opened the window, allowing the coming night wind to caress his angelic face. Dressed in black, he gave the appearance of a fallen angel.

Money had brought him the freedom to set his own hours

and power ensured that he would not be disturbed. Buying the entire top floor of the most expensive hotel in town gave him the solitude he needed and the view he wanted. Looking across the street he could see a line had already begun to form at Club Midnight, the most popular club in town. It was the perfect feeding ground for the creatures of the night.

The crowded line was full of tainted young college girls and the young punks that followed them. Kyou's haunted eyes glistened with contempt as he began to scan the line wondering which one of them would draw the attention of the one he hunted. Who would be Hyakuhei's next victim?

Kyou could feel Hyakuhei within the city and wondered if Hyakuhei could feel death stalking him. This time things were different. Kyou had found him too easily, as if Hyakuhei had left a trail for him to follow. The deaths and disappearances of local college students was a blatant calling card for Kyou, pointing to only one person.

He did not like the thought of Hyakuhei leading him here. "I am no longer under your control," Kyou growled as blood dripped between his clenched fingers and his eyes tinted pink. "You do not have any power over me! not anymore!" Calming his rising rage, Kyou again drew the emotionless mask over his features, cloaking his aura. It was time for the predator to become the prey.

If he could sense Hyakuhei's life force, Kyou would need caution to keep his maker from sensing him as well.

Kyoko was surprised at how big the nightclub really was. Her lips parted when Suki pulled into the massive parking lot. Suki had wanted to get here a little early to avoid the line but from what Kyoko could tell, a line had already begun so they hurried out of the car. Kyoko could see familiar faces from the college they attended and smiled as she noticed her longtime friend Tasuki was one of them.

Tasuki spotted Kyoko and Suki from his spot in the crowd. He had let his friends talk him into coming and having nothing better to do now that finals were over, he had agreed willingly. He was handsome and well built, with shoulder length brown hair and chocolate brown eyes that melted all the girls' hearts.

He was also one of the most popular guys on campus but Tasuki was mostly known for the high scores he received in all of his classes and he was nicer than most of the guys on campus. Of course, being one of the richest people at the academy, though he didn't act like it, upped his status as well.

Weaving his way around the hoard of people, Tasuki approached Kyoko with a genuine smile. He had known her since middle school and had always had a secret crush on her. They had dated off and on but nothing serious, more like best friends really, and it had been a while since they had done that.

He would ask her out more often but that Toya guy or the school security head was always hanging around her lately. He could have sworn he had heard a growl the last time he had

approached her while she was with one of them.

With that in mind, he nervously scanned the area hoping that she was alone. Not that he was scared of them, no, never!

Suki could see Tasuki's nervousness and laughed out loud. "It's alright, Tasuki. We came here by ourselves."

She smirked at Kyoko's confused look then grabbed Tasuki by the elbow pulling him into line with them. She and everyone else who knew him were aware of the fact that he had a thing for Kyoko, well everyone except Kyoko that is.

Kyoko blushed when Tasuki turned to face her. She hadn't realized how much taller he had become. "Hi Tasuki, it's been a while. I hear you are doing great with your scores again this year." Her face lit up happily realizing it had been way too long since they had hung out. She had always felt so safe around him, just like best friends. She had missed him.

A soft smile graced Tasuki's lips, liking the fact that she had kept up with him, even if it was from a distance. Maybe he still stood a chance with her. He really wanted the chance to show her how much he still cared about her and wanted to be with her, that he wasn't out of her league like she had always seemed to believe.

For some reason she seemed to think that he would go out of his way just to see her only because they had been friends since junior high. He intended to fix that misconception. "Yeah, Kyoko, if you ever need any help, I would be glad to come over and tutor you, anytime." He secretly wanted to bang his head

against the brick wall knowing he was once again sounding like a best friend instead of boyfriend material.

Suki just shook her head seeing the silent misery in Tasuki's eyes as he smiled at Kyoko. "Poor guy" she thought to herself as a mischievous grin spread across her lips. He just needed a little push in the right direction.

Kyou's eyes narrowed as the crowd of naive children grew. 'So many for Hyakuhei to choose from,' he mused. It was always the same. The taking of life and getting away with it just as the monster had gotten away with it in the past. His clawed fingers gripped the windowsill in frustration wondering if he could stop the slaughter.

He would have to get closer and blend in with the crowd. Smirking at the thought of his silvery hair and strangely colored golden eyes ever blending in, Kyou returned his attention to the gathering mass.

Scanning the parking lot once more, his sight halted as his startled gaze slid over a group of three huddled closer to the front of the crowd. The aura surrounding the triangle was strikingly different from the other humans. A soft hue of pure white light that surrounded the group dazzled Kyou's vampire inner sight.

Lessening the intensity of his gaze, Kyou shook his head and glanced at the group again. Even with his senses purposely dulled, he could detect a faint swirling glow flowing around the three figures. A faint glitter of rainbow dust came from directly

above them shadowing the light as if to hide it from his eyes.

Kyou searched the sky above them to see only the night. His eyes narrowed understanding more than he was supposed to before returning his gaze to the group.

He had never seen anything like it in his endless lifetime. A faint memory snagged his attention causing him to stare at the group wide eyed. He was remembering the words of his younger brother before Hyakuhei had so viciously murdered him

"If only we could find the Guardian Heart Crystal then maybe we could be free from the darkness, brother"

Kyou had scoffed, telling Toya the jewel was only a myth and impossible to find, even in the legends. Toya had ignored his retort, "The aura of she who protects the jewel will shine with holy light. Don't you want to be free?"

A melancholy feeling settled over Kyou with the memory of his brother's question. He would have given anything to free his brother from the life Hyakuhei had brought him into. The breeze came through the window blowing his long hair back from his face as if to tell him to go, as if Toya himself was telling him to go.

Gathering the surrounding darkness around his lethal body, Kyou emerged unnoticed among the crowd of unsuspecting youth, his intense gaze never leaving where the purest soft light was glowing.

Kyoko giggled when she saw Suki wiggle her eyebrows behind

Tasuki's back. Suki had definitely been hanging around Shinbe way too much lately. She crossed her eyes and stuck out her tongue making Suki almost double over in a fit of laughter then the look instantly vanished as Tasuki turned to see what Suki was laughing at.

This made Suki have to hold on to the wall to keep her knees from buckling as Kyoko just shrugged at Tasuki saying, "Who knows what's gotten into her? She has never been normal." She cocked an eyebrow adding, "I have to break her out of the loony bin at least once a week or she gets even worse and tries to gnaw through the trees in front of the dorm."

Tasuki smirked as he leaned close to Kyoko's ear as if to whisper but then said in a loud enough voice for Suki to hear, "Maybe on your way home tonight, you should take her back."

Kyoko nodded happily then felt the hair on the back of her neck raise as if someone was watching her. Hoping it wasn't Toya secretly following them, she tried to ignore it as she kept her attention on Suki and Tasuki.

Suki finally caught her breath enough to remind Kyoko they were having a slumber party in the padded room later tonight then asked Tasuki if he would like to join them. "We even got a straitjacket for the occasion." She stuck out her tongue at both of them.

"Put that thing away before you hurt someone," Kyoko retorted and was quickly rewarded when Suki's jaw dropped.

As the line started moving, Kyoko glanced over her shoulder wondering who was watching her. She saw only the lights of the parking lot and a horde of people waiting to get in then frowned at her own paranoia. The uneasy feeling that someone was watching her refused to go away and it worried her. She remembered Kotaro's warning about a stalker around campus and suddenly wished she had hinted to him just were they were going to be.

Suki grabbed her hand and pulled her along since she was holding up the line. Kyoko shrugged the creepy feeling off as they entered the building and her attention was drawn to the interior of the massive dance club.

Kyou had seen her turn as if sensing him and wondered at it. Her eyes had drifted very slowly across the very spot he was standing but he had known she could not see him in the shadows. Under the cloak of darkness he kept her within his sights as he entered the establishment.

His golden gaze moved over the room knowing there were more than just humans within the dimly lit spaces but they were low threats and not worth his attention.

Suki led them to an area close to the bar so they wouldn't have to go too far to get drinks and still have a good view of the dance floor. The music was already cranking but not so loud that you had to yell just to be heard.

Kyoko was stunned at how nice the place was inside. She was starting to actually feel glad that she had let Suki bully her into

coming. After all, there had to be more to life than studying, which was all she had done for over a week now. All the energy in the place was addictive and she smiled excitedly. It was one of those rare moments when she felt like anything could happen.

Instead of actual tables and chairs, the establishment had over stuffed sofas here and there with small glass tables to hold the drinks. Purples, blues and blacks were the main colors of the club, lending it a hint of mystery and magic with all the lights constantly switching colors creating a feeling of sensuous pandemonium. The club's atmosphere was almost intoxicating.

Deep shadows lent privacy to those who sought it and Kyoko blushed, thinking of all the things that sometimes went on in the shadows's things she had yet to experience. Her mind reverted back to wondering what Kotaro was doing before she guiltily snapped her attention back to her friends.

Kyou took a seat in the darkest corner close to the intensely pure aura. Observing the group he could now see that the glow was coming from only one of them. His eyes softened for the first time in countless years, for only an instant as he watched her smile, taking in the grandeur of the club. It was like watching the sunrise and that was something he hadn't done in a long time.

She was beautiful, with long flowing auburn hair off set by the silky white shirt she wore.

His gaze scanned her perfect body, taking in the exposed flesh at her waist and the short miniskirt followed by a pair of very

shapely toned legs before lifting back to her neck which was exposed. He followed the arch up to her face with a disapproving growl. She was turned at an angle and he found himself needing to see her eyes; the eyes were the mirror to the soul.

His instincts were reacting in ways he had never experienced before. This feeling he could not describe agitated him and somehow reminded him of his brother. He did not like the unknown.

He darkened the shadows around him as she turned, sweeping her gaze past him but he had seen them. The sight had almost taken the breath from his body. She had the eyes of emeralds shrouded in innocence but he could also see the mischief and power hidden there.

Kyou clenched his fist so tight he could feel drops of blood forming where his sharp fingernails had punctured his flesh. Why was such innocence here, in a place like this? It should not be allowed. He felt a growl start deep within his chest and tried to suppress it.

If his hunch was correct and Hyakuhei made an appearance, then things could get very dangerous, very fast. Was she the one who held the Guardian Heart Crystal within her? His brother's words came back to haunt him a second time.

brother, if we find it then we can be free of him!

Blocking out the other sounds within the nightclub, Kyou directed all his senses to her so he could learn more and prepare himself. His haunted golden eyes nearly glowed as he dipped into

the thoughts of the group sitting at her table. Listening to the thought of mortals was a vice he hadn't used in a long time.

Tasuki offered to go get the first round of drinks since the bartender was his cousin. He wasn't going to waste his one chance to impress Kyoko. He knew she thought of him as a friend but he wanted to be so much more, if only she would open her eyes and see the devotion he offered her. There would never be a man that could love her more than him. It just wasn't possible.

Suki smiled at hearing he knew the bartender and asked Tasuki to get them all a Long Island iced tea. Tasuki gave a blushing wink to Kyoko, nodding and telling them he would be right back. He took off to retrieve the girls' drinks as quickly as possible.

Kyoko's eyes rounded as she stared at Suki. "Long Island iced tea? But we are..." Suki waved a dismissive hand to shush her.

"Come on Kyoko. Live a little! Finals are over and besides, we've drunk before," Suki tried to lighten Kyoko up by grinning and rolling her eyes. Hoping to change the subject she added, "I have to admit Kyoko that in that outfit and your curves, you do not look underage." She laughed out loud at the startled look on Kyoko's face.

Kyoko looked at Suki skeptically. "Twice, Suki. I have drunk twice, and I barely remember either time, and I don't need to dress like this to prove I am of age." Kyoko blushed at what she could remember from the last time her birthday had

rolled around. Because of Suki, she didn't remember much about her own birthday party.

She remembered the giant bowl of fruit Suki had handed her with such an innocent smile. She had known Kyoko's weakness for fruit and played on it. Kyoko had eaten almost the whole bowl not even realizing it had been soaked in alcohol.

She's going to get me in trouble again! I just know it! Kyoko silently whined to herself and mentally slumped in defeat. The others had only joked about that night, something about Kyoko forgetting how to walk or talk!

Suki smirked, shrugging her shoulders, "So this makes the third time." She smiled happily at Tasuki as he brought the drinks back, eagerly grabbing one for herself.

Kyoko bit her lips then mumbled something about "three strikes and you are out" but turned and smiled at Tasuki anyway. There was such a thing as peer pressure after all and being the sucker that she was, she gave in.

Three Long Island iced teas as requested. Tasuki sat down between the girls and took a sip of his drink. He felt the heat suddenly rise within the room because the drink was so strong. Glancing past Kyoko he looked at his cousin behind the bar. The mischievous grin on his cousin's face let him know the drinks were stronger than normal.

Tasuki shook his head and looked back at the girls. "To finals, may we pass them all with flying colors," he offered as a toast. Then looking into Kyoko's eyes added, "And may

we never lose touch with one another, no matter what.##

Kyoko blushed and smiled shyly as she took her drink from his outstretched hand. Hastily taking a sip, her eyes widened when she decided she actually liked the flavor. ##If you can##t beat them, might as well join them,## she winked at Suki good-naturedly.

She plunked a straw into the drink and within the next ten minutes of laughing and cutting up, the Long Island iced tea disappeared. Color bloomed in Kyoko##s cheeks as the effects of the alcohol slowly began to flow through her body.

Tasuki, having drunk his just as fast as Kyoko, now felt more at ease and a little bolder as he asked the girls if they wanted to dance. His eyes darkened attractively as he took Kyoko##s hand and led her onto the dance floor with Suki holding Kyoko##s other hand.

He just knew this night was going to be the best night of his college days and he would never forget a single moment of it.

Not but a few feet away, Kyou watched the young man named Tasuki reach out and take the green-eyed girl##s hand and felt the need to rip the offending fingers from the young man daring to touch her. The man##s innocent feelings for the girl could be read clearly in his eyes and thoughts, but he still did not trust him.

Kyou had seen it play out many times watching the nightlife. A young man giving the girl drinks and then taking advantage of her naivety. His eyes tinted crimson as he watched the boy lead the girls onto the dance floor. Kyou felt the need to take the

auburn haired girl and hide her from any who would harm her or want to possess her.

He wondered off handedly at his own possessiveness toward the girl. If she was the one who held the Guardian Heart Crystal, then what should he do? One thing Kyou knew for sureâ€”before he would let Hyakuhei have her, he would first kill her with his own bare hands.

If the legend was true and Hyakuhei got his hands on the power of the Guardian Heart Crystal, there would be no stopping him.

Kamui sat invisible, on top of one of the huge speakers in front of the DJ as he watched the dance floor where Kyoko and Suki were dancing with a young man. He cocked an eyebrow when he noticed just who this guy was. A very secret smile tilted his lips seeing the amethyst hue that clung to the boy.

His attention reverted back to the other man that was stalking the priestess. He had already tried to stop the attraction once when Kyoko was still in line but the oldest guardian was just as stubborn as always. The vibes Kyou was giving off were heavy and slightly tainted.

â€œKyou, what are you thinking?â€ Kamui wondered aloud knowing he couldnâ€™t be heard or seen. Watching Kyou watch Kyoko he recognized fate when he saw it. Fate had always drawn the guardians toward their priestessâ€”no matter what world or lifetime.

He secretly wished he could arrange it to where Toya and Kyou would see each other but he knew better than to try and use any of his powers on Kyou. He felt the cold chills run up his arm at the thought of pissing the dangerous golden guardian off.

His gaze scanned the crowd again knowing Kyou wasn't the one he should be worried about. There were others within the club who were not human, but he could feel the true darkness getting closer by the moment. He wondered if Kyou could feel it too.

Kamui nodded to himself. The best thing he could do for now was help hide Kyoko's powers from prying eyes. With that thought he jumped from the speakers but his feet never hit the floor of the dance club.

Chapter 4

As the trio entered the crowded dance floor, Suki and Kyoko immediately started moving their bodies to the rhythm of the music leaving Tasuki to watch in fascination. The heated bodies all around them made their skin flush as the alcohol flowed through their veins.

Suki's body moved closer to Kyoko's as they wrapped their arms around each other's necks and started to grind. Laughing at each other's antics, they danced like lovers losing themselves to the beat of the music. They had taught each other to dance like this in grade school long ago.

Caught up in the moment of just pure unadulterated fun, the girls had momentarily forgotten about their third companion.

Tasuki gazed at the two friends dancing passionately together and felt heat warm his cheeks. "Wow!" His body was reacting to the scene being played out before him. It felt as if the breath had been knocked from his lungs. Watching Kyoko's body rub against Suki's as their hands wandered across each other's bodies was almost more than he could bear.

Deciding that he wanted in on the fun, Tasuki forced his feet to move before he lost his nerve.

Stopping right in front of Kyoko, he could see her eyes were closed as she moved against Suki. His gaze locked with Suki's as she smirked and dipped behind Kyoko, slowly making her

way back up, caressing her friend's thighs. She hoped Tasuki would get up enough nerve to dance with Kyoko like this.

“Why don't you join us? This is way too much fun!” She laughed as she grabbed Tasuki by the belt loop, yanking him flush against Kyoko.

Kyoko's eyes widened in shock as she felt a hard, definitely male body slam against her in a very intimate manner. A blush burned her cheeks when she realized Tasuki was holding her closely. “Heh,” she smiled shyly, deciding that she liked the way his body felt against hers. She knew that she could trust him not to overstep his bounds. He was always the gentleman.

Feeling a bit daring, Kyoko continued to dance with Suki moving behind her as she put one hand on Tasuki's shoulder, silently encouraging him.

Tasuki didn't need any more than that one motion as he gripped Kyoko's hips and began to move with her body. He felt like he was in heaven having the girl of his dreams dance seductively against him. Feeling every curve of her body rub against him was a sweet torture that he had never experienced.

His brown eyes softened seductively as his entire body felt like it was on fire and he wanted to feel as much of her as he could. Pressing closer against Kyoko, he started to grind against her, moving his heated body with hers like a long lost lover.

Kyoko looked up into Tasuki's eyes and noticed for the first time there were lovely flakes of amethyst sprinkled in his chocolate orbs. “Beautiful” was the only word that came

to mind. The deeper she looked the more he reminded her of Shinbe.

Toya's mood had not gotten any better since going to the college dojo hoping to work off some steam. He had decided he had better leave quickly when he had busted the five hundred dollar punching bag. It's not his fault he had been picturing Kotaro's face when he hit it.

“Stupid girl!” he growled. “Why did she always have to be so hard to handle?” He glared at nothing in particular as he thought about the annoying security guard that Kyoko had gone out with.

He still felt livid from when he had heard Kotaro's voice in Kyoko's apartment earlier. He would have liked nothing better than to rip the man's head off and shove it where the sun would never reach it. Toya had always had a sixth sense about things, and his senses were telling him that Kotaro was not what he appeared to be.

“A wolf in sheep's clothing is more like it.” He smirked, then instantly felt a little guilty himself because he also hid things from Kyoko. Things even he couldn't explain.

He had learned as a small child to hide his unusual abilities from others, abilities such as his inhuman strength and speed, as well as his heightened senses of smell and sight. The only problem was they came and went whenever they wanted. He couldn't call on them at a moment's notice and maybe that

was a good thing.

Lost in thought, Toya's skin tingled as he spotted the guard leaning against the door of the security building. Speak of the devil and he appears. Toya glared at Kotaro, almost walking past him, and then stopped in his tracks. What the hell are you doing here? he growled.

Kotaro leisurely stood to his full height and walked to where Kyoko's supposed date stood growling at him. Looking around and not seeing her anywhere, his relaxed demeanor became tense and Kotaro pierced Toya with an angry glare. Where is Kyoko? I thought she was with you tonight.

If there was one thing Toya hated, it was being confused and right now he wasn't in the mood for it. You stupid prick! I thought she had a date with you, he snapped without thinking.

Kotaro's cage was now seriously rattled. Kyoko had told him she was going out with Toya and it had been a lie. Damn!

Without giving Toya a second glance, he took off in the direction Kyoko lived, straining against the need to use his unnatural speed. Why had she lied to him? If he had known she wasn't with dickhead, he would have followed her.

Toya felt a moment of panic when he saw the worry seep into his rival's eyes and the way he took off at breakneck speed didn't make him feel any better. Something within him trusted Kotaro completely but he would never tell him that.

Without even thinking about what he was doing, he took off after Kotaro to see where he was going. Easily keeping up with him but noticing the speed they were both using, some of Toya's suspicions were confirmed. Kotaro was more than he seemed! did they have the same DNA or something? He gritted his teeth not liking that thought.

Within a minute, Kotaro was banging on Kyoko's apartment door hoping against hope that she was actually there. Slamming both palms against the innocent door he yelled. "Damn it, Kyoko! Where are you?" Dread and worry seeped into every pore of his being. "This is not good," he growled.

"What's not good?" Toya demanded stepping up behind Kotaro.

The vibes Kotaro was giving off were making Toya's chest hurt with their intensity. If he had known Kyoko wasn't with Kotaro, he would have come over just to be near her. He should have just followed his instincts and came over anyway. He would have to put a damn leash on that girl sooner or later.

Kotaro swung around having forgotten about Toya altogether in his rush to get to Kyoko. Now having someone to vent his anger on, he lashed out, "I thought she was with you!" Kotaro clenched his fist and drew his rage back within himself before he went too far. "And how the hell were you able to keep up? Never mind, don't answer that."

Toya stared at him, surprised the security guard even noticed

but shrugged it off. "I'm just that fast dickhead."

Calming his dominant half, Kotaro opened his piercing ice blue eyes, locking them with the person who was going to help him find his Kyoko. It was bad enough Toya hadn't been reborn a vampire so they could just duke it out, but now Toya was regaining his abilities from the past and didn't have a clue why. To top it all off Toya's best friend was Shinbe and Shinbe didn't have a clue to his past either.

Kotaro smashed the palm of his hand against his temple wondering why on earth he would trust Toya to look after her for a second time, when he had failed the first. The fact that Toya remembered nothing made it impossible for Kotaro to rant out loud. He inhaled deeply at the truth they both had failed her. His lips thinned as he silently glared.

Toya gave a halfhearted smirk. "So, she lied to you and ditched you saying she was going out with ME. Ha! Even though he knew she had pretty much done the same to him, he wouldn't let Kotaro know that.

Kotaro took another deep breath trying to keep his temper in check. It was like talking to a damn child. "This isn't a freaking game, punk. Girls have been turning up missing right and left from campus and from the city for over a month. Now, neither one of us knows where Kyoko is." Kotaro could hear the panic in his own voice but ignored it. "Do you have any idea where she could have snuck off to?"

Toya could feel his chest crushing with worry thinking about

Kyoko being in danger. "Damn it!" He turned to Suki's door and started pounding until he heard the door give a slight cracking sound making him lighten up on the beating. No answer.

"Fuck!" Nearing a panicked state, Toya fumbled for his cell phone hoping Shinbe knew where the girls were. "Pick up, letch!" he yelled into the still ringing phone. After the forth ring Shinbe finally answered.

"Shinbe! Do you know where Suki and Kyoko are?" He gave Kotaro a glance when he stepped closer as if he was waiting to hear the answer.

On the other end of the phone, Shinbe smiled an enlightening smile, "Maybe!"

Kyou stayed hidden within the darkness as he watched the girl with her friends. He had learned that her name was Kyoko from listening to their conversation. So far the boy named Tasuki had kept his hands to himself which was a good thing considering Kyou had decided to let him live as long as he did not get too close to her. He seemed harmless enough, if not just a little too infatuated with her.

They had made their way to the dance floor and the girl and her female friend had started to dance together. The way they were dancing was indecent. "It must be the alcohol she consumed so quickly," he had a hard time believing otherwise.

A low growl vibrated in his chest as his view was obstructed

by a group of human punks. Hearing his warning and then seeing the chilling golden glare he sent their way, they quickly retreated to the other side of the club. The corners of Kyou's lips hinted at an amused smile over the way they had instantly scattered.

He returned his attention to the dance floor focusing on the young girl who perplexed him. The sight that greeted him made his blood boil with rage. A vicious snarl came from somewhere unknown as angry gold eyes flashed red with blood.

The harmless boy Tasuki was dancing with Kyoko as if he were seducing her.

Kyoko was lost to the sensations of Tasuki's hands on her hips, caressing the bare skin at her waist as he took control of their dance. He actually looked sexy with his hair mussed up and dirty dancing with her. A giggle escaped her lips at the turn of her thoughts.

As she felt him caress the exposed skin at the small of her back she noticed his eyes turned almost pure amethyst.

Suki, deciding that she could use something cold and wet, smacked Kyoko on the butt. "Çmon you two! I require sustenance!" She laughed at her silly phrase as she dragged the couple back to the table they had occupied earlier in hopes of another drink.

Kyou stood trying desperately to calm his raging blood. His usual iron clad control and cold demeanor had vanished

completely upon witnessing the boy Tasuki dancing with Kyoko like he was her lover.

In the recesses of his mind, he knew he needed to calm himself quickly, otherwise Hyakuhei would sense his presence if he hadn't already. Taking a deep steadying breath, he mentally berated himself for his foolishness.

For centuries he had been a cold, emotionless demon of the night. His resolve was like a mountain that never swayed and could not be forced into submission. His emotions were well kept within his cold, unbreakable exterior for a reason; so he could hide his aura from the true enemy.

In one night, the presence of one young girl, beyond innocent and pure, had caused him to falter for the first time in his undead life.

Oblivious to the enraged silver haired vampire, the trio made their way back to their previous seats. Kyoko's innocent laughter floated to him, barely calming his rage. His tension eased some and he questioned why he had reacted so possessively to the young girl.

His gaze narrowed, shooting daggers at the boy with her, promising a slow agonizing death if he so much as tiptoed out of line once more. She needed a guardian.

Kyou couldn't understand the immense hold she had over him but watching her had become addictive. Her beauty and innocence mesmerized him and he began to wonder if her skin was as soft as it appeared. Seeing another glass of the tainted

liquid slide in front of her angered him.

With every sip she took, the blaze of pure light that surrounded her seemed to waver and weaken. It was already a lot harder to detect. If she kept drinking the devil's water that was placed before her, she would soon fall into the darkness.

As if defying him, he watched as the girl took her straw out of the cup and pressed the cup to her lips, draining the last of the polluted liquid.

Kyou did something he hadn't done in centuries! he smiled, knowing now her secret would be safe from the evil that had just entered the nightclub. Maybe hiding the pure aura of such an unimaginably innocent, beautiful girl wasn't such a bad thing after all.

Kyou backed into the darkness just as his enemy stepped from it.

Hyakuhei walked through the door giving no notice to the minions that followed in his shadow. They could seek out their own entertainment for the night. They would only hinder his plans for the evening should he allow them to join him. His crimson eyes scanned the display of heated flesh before him with interest.

He had felt life here, hidden somewhere amongst the humans. It had beckoned to him as a lover would hunger for his touch, but now the caressing feeling had almost vanished, as if snuffed out.

He had fed well the night before and did not feel the need to

feed again so soon. Noâ€¦ tonight he had something else in mind.

This city held the power of the legendary Guardian Heart Crystal, he was sure of it. All roads he had taken, seeking the hidden light, had led him here. Even now, he could feel the elusive light hidden under darkness as he leaned against the wall, watching the humans.

Several of the unsuspecting mortals had already noticed him and he knew they would come to him, offering their souls mistakenly.

The simple attraction of tall, dark and handsome had always made it easy for him to capture his prey. His long, dark hair flowed around him in waves as a backdrop for his unrivaled good looks. He could feel the lust emanating from the humans but tonight he paid it no attention.

Tonight, he would seek out one that he could put under his control. Sometimes he would turn an unsuspecting soul merely to kill them the following night. He only granted the gift of eternal life when it suited him and that was less than once every century. But tonight, he would seek out someone who would assist in his quest to determine the one who held the Guardian Heart Crystal.

Hyakuhei's eyes darkened with his thoughts. The last time he had come so close to the mysterious crystal of legend, the girl carrying the powerful crystal had detected his intent. Before he could stop her, she had killed herselfâ€¦ taking the crystal with her and beyond his reach once more.

His mind drifted back with longing. It had been such a waste...

for the young girl had been incomparable in beauty and untainted purity. His lean body held no movement as he leisurely searched the crowd with eyes of midnight.

The crystal only resurfaced every one thousand years according to the ancient scrolls he had taken from the wizard Shinbe before taking his life. His lips hinted in a cruel smile as he remembered that particular kill—very delicious indeed.

Counting the years from that time, the chosen maiden that now held the crystal close to her heart would be twenty one years old, possibly a bit younger. Hyakuhei had sensed it within the vicinity of the university and now here among the throng of college students at the nightclub.

The fact that this city was built on the same ground where the crystal had vanished only verified that it would be the same place for its rebirth.

If he could not find the one who held the Guardian Heart Crystal, then he would recruit one who was accepted among them and could aid in his search. A non-human, a creature of the night, above all, could detect the power he wanted and desired for himself.

A malicious smile graced his perfect lips in anticipation of the thrill of the hunt. Having called to his most favored children to join him, this time he would have what he desired. He had been in the darkness for far too long and even the most pleasing things had begun to bore him.

Hyakuhei wanted something new and a challenge was just the

thing to wake him from his lifetime of sleep. He could vaguely feel a disturbance in the air and smiled knowingly. There would be no rush for what was time to a vampire.

Tasuki watched in amazement as Kyoko downed the last of her Long Island iced tea. His now soft brown eyes glanced back to his own drink that was still full, a concerned look on his face. "Ah, Kyoko, if you are thirsty I could get some real tea from the bar, if you would like?" He grinned as he watched Kyoko blush when she realized what she had done.

Suki cocked an eyebrow as she noted Kyoko's empty glass and inwardly flinched knowing Kyoko was going to happily kill her tomorrow for the hangover. She gave a mental shrug convincing herself that tonight they were celebrating and Kyoko would forgive her eventually.

Looking at Tasuki with her best, "Please help me I'm in trouble" expression, Suki agreed. "I think that might be a good idea." She winked at him with encouragement and underlying mischief.

She had always liked Tasuki and often wished Kyoko would date him more often, instead of Toya, whom she liked, but he didn't always treat Kyoko as nicely as he should. She was glad Kyoko could give as well as she got and didn't let Toya step all over her.

Then there was Kotaro, who would take Kyoko away and marry her if given the chance. He was nice and treated her like a

goddess, but Suki wasn't comfortable with the idea of losing her best friend either.

Suki's eyes lit up at the thought of pushing Tasuki and Kyoko together, especially after the way they had danced together just now. She knew better than to get caught at it though, because Kyoko could be very frightening when mad as hell. A girl would have to have spunk to date the two hot heads she was dating. Suki's smile softened as she thought of her own boyfriend, though she would never admit to such a title.

Shinbe was just as crazy as either of the two Kyoko dated, if not more so.

Returning her thoughts to the present, Suki stood up with a sly grin. "I'm going to talk the D.J. into playing my favorite song, be right back!" With that, she left the two alone to their own devices. Secretly, she hoped the time alone together would start a small flame burning between the two.

Kyoko looked back at Tasuki feeling light headed and smiled guiltily. "I would love some tea or maybe coffee would be even better. Though sometimes the caffeine buzz is almost as bad." She smirked at her own joke, "If you don't mind getting it while I go to the lady's room." She took Tasuki's out stretched hand and let him help her up.

Kyoko blinked rapidly as things started to look a little fuzzy, and then giggled. "I'll be right back!" She scanned the walls looking for the direction of the ladies room. Seeing it closer to the front door, she took off, hoping she didn't look as

wobbly as she felt. Maybe if she splashed some cold water on her face and didn't drink any more alcohol tonight then she would be ok.

Kyou's body tensed as he watched the girl head straight toward the last place he wanted her to go, the entrance and the enemy. His haunted golden eyes tinted pink and with an aggravated growl, his form vanished as if he had never been there.

Kyoko's haze-filled mind wondered why they had put the bathrooms all the way in the front near the door as she watched a hoard of people still coming into the nightclub. Some of the newcomers seemed to already be well into the partying stages, and the noise within the dance hall amplified.

Yohji, one of the guys from campus, came stumbling in, not watching where he was going. His brother had already talked him into going to a couple of bars down the road earlier and they had just left the last one to try this one out. As he turned to call to his younger brother, Hitomi, he bumped into a soft, warm body.

Hearing a feminine cry, Yohji instantly reached out and caught her with both arms. As his eyes lit on the face of the one he held, a feral grin spread across his lips. "Kyoko?"

Once the room decided to stop spinning and was righted again, Kyoko looked up at the guy who had mowed her over, then played the hero all in one foul swoop. "Yohji! Hi!" Kyoko blushed when he held her closer to him and instantly tried to start wiggling her way free.

“Not good! Not good” she chanted somewhere inside her head; she could hear the warning loud and clear.

She had run into Yohji many times at school, and although he was a major player with the girls, being extremely good looking, and one of the popular jock types, she had always tried to avoid him. He was way too aggressive for her taste and she chose the stay clear of him and the group he hung with.

“I’m alright now Yohji, so you can let me go,” she smiled, hiding her anxiety, trying to keep her cool and not start a scene.

Yohji didn’t loosen his hold on her and gave a tainted smile at her unease. “Why would I let you go now that I finally have you in my arms, Kyoko?”

His eyes were already full of lust as his face took on the look of a predator. He had been after her for a long time and she never would give him the time of day. Well now that her two bodyguards weren’t around to stop him, she wasn’t going to get away that easily.

Hyakuhei viewed the scene happening mere feet from him with interest. He could see the guy perfectly but was only privy to the back of the female. “That girl” His eyes took on an eerie glow as he watched her. He could smell her nervousness and purity so much that it was overpowering to his senses.

As for the guy that held her, his lust was so thick in the air, it could be tasted. Hyakuhei’s eyes narrowed as the need to kill the punk began to burn within his veins. He started forward

only to find a shield of rainbow dust blocking his path. The soothing glitter settled as he leaned back against the wall once more narrowing his eyes suspiciously. She was protected by the immortal?

He reached out and touched what was left of the barrier and let the soothing feeling wash over him. Such a calming affect would not suppress his evil intentions for long. “Little boys and their games,” he smirked as his midnight eyes returned to the girl.

Her aura had caught him completely off guard. His gaze roamed her lovely body and her skin glowed like the dew on a flower before dawn’s first light. The need to touch her overwhelmed his senses as he took another unknown step toward her, this time ignoring the annoying immortal’s shield of protective glitter.

Just as he was about to take the girl into his own arms, another wave of possessiveness hit him like a physical blow. The familiar aura caressed his senses, one that he hadn’t felt in decades. Taking one last look at the girl he had mentally claimed, his dark eyes softened briefly as he made his decision. He would have her soon.

A smile tilted his cunning lips at the new aura as he backed into the darkness out of sight. “So, my wayward Kyou has decided to join in the game, let us see what his intentions truly are.”

Toya burst into the apartment he shared with Shinbe but

when he didn't see his friend he started instantly yelling. "Shinbe, where the hell are you?" His anger was high and for obvious reasons he had a very bad feeling about Kyoko's safety, especially after Kotaro had informed him about the other missing girls so many.

Already his nerves were shot and if he didn't lay eyes on Kyoko soon, he was going to break something. Then again, when he did lay eyes on her, she would be lucky if he let her out of his sight again ever. If he had his way, he would permanently handcuff her to him for safekeeping.

Shinbe stepped out of the bathroom buttoning his icy-blue shirt and looking like he was going out on the town. "I'm here, where's the fire?" He sat down on the sofa and started putting his shoes on like he didn't have a care in the world.

Kotaro stood behind Toya waiting to see if Shinbe had any information on Kyoko's whereabouts. Leaning against the kitchen counter, he watched as Toya towered over Shinbe.

If Toya remembered what Shinbe had done for him in the past, he would probably show the guy more respect. Kotaro tilted his head at a funny angle rethinking that. "No he wouldn't", he corrected himself. Watching the boy's temper spike would have been amusing if Kyoko wasn't missing.

"I've lost Kyoko and now I can't find Suki either!" Toya twitched when Shinbe didn't even look up at him.

Shinbe's smug smile was definitely getting on Toya's last nerve. If Shinbe weren't already half brain dead from Suki

always hitting him in the head, Toya would have added to the brain damage. But right now he wanted his friend conscious and answering his questions.

Shinbe finished tying his shoes knowing Suki was going to hate him for this but he didn't care. He would make it up to her. They always had fun when making up from a fight; his eyes glazed over at the pleasant thought. Making up would be fun.

Hearing a dangerous growl Shinbe quickly snapped his attention back to his friend cocking an eyebrow calmly. "What?"

"Shinbe, damn it! I'm not fucking around! Where the hell are Suki and Kyoko?" Toya snapped, his golden eyes piercing his friend like a knife. If Shinbe didn't answer him soon, he knew he was going to blow.

Shinbe frowned in confusion when he noticed Kotaro leaning against the bar. Toya and the security guard did not even like each other, much less hang out together. His chest tightened. "I don't know for sure, but Suki dumped me tonight saying she was going out with a friend, though she didn't say who."

When Toya started swearing again Shinbe stood up. "Wait, I'm not finished so keep your pants on. While I was at her apartment earlier, I saw a flyer on her counter about Club Midnight and today's date was circled on it." He grinned lecherously. "I was just getting ready to go there and see if I could find her."

Kotaro sighed while Toya started some rampage about stupid

girls. Not wanting to waste time he turned to the door. "Thanks Shinbe," he threw over his shoulder as he took off now more worried than ever. He only hoped Kamui was with her protecting her somehow.

Shinbe cocked his head to the side looking over Toya's shoulder as Kotaro left, and then he straightened back up to frown at Toya. "What is going on and why was Kotaro here?" Concern flashed in his amethyst eyes. He had always liked Kotaro but he couldn't confess that to Toya without being labeled a traitor.

Toya grabbed his keys off the bar as he answered. "I'll tell you on the way."

He turned and started for the door, not even bothering to make sure Shinbe was behind him. He hated being without Kyoko. It always made him feel like he was wandering around confused. It was time to find her and put her back in her place beside him.

Chapter 5

Kyoko didn't like the way Yohji was holding her flush against him and she felt her resentment start to snap. Pushing as hard as she could with her palms pressed against his chest, her eyes shot angry sparks as she tried again to get him to let her go.

Look, I need you to let me go right now Yohji! I am here with someone. Her eyes widened when he simply gave her a smug look and pressed her back to her previous position. Damn it! Kyoko fumed as she gave a stomp with her foot, trying to make it land on Yohji's toe.

Across the room, Tasuki had brought some regular tea back to the table and set it down. Looking towards the door to see if he could spot Kyoko, his eyes darkened as he noticed Yohji harassing her. Most people who knew him believed Tasuki to be the all American, sweet, boy next-door and the most popular at school but he did have a hidden temper.

Yohji was on the verge of witnessing it unleashed, if he didn't take his hands off Kyoko.

Tasuki's anger was displayed on his face as he crossed the room to rescue his sweet Kyoko. He knew, from hearing others talk at the college, that Yohji and his brother were aggressive with girls and had even been accused of date rape more than once.

As he approached them, he saw Yohji's brother, Hitomi, standing with him but didn't let that stop him. Those two

guys were poison and he knew it. Tasuki's eyes took on an illuminated shade of amethyst as he moved forward. His adrenaline was high and he gritted his teeth seeing Kyoko struggle to get free.

Kyoko's eyebrow started to twitch as Yohji's hand traveled down her back and cupped her butt firmly, forcing her to arch into him. She could feel his lust as he smirked devilishly at her.

That's it! She raised her hand so swiftly that Yohji hadn't seen it coming, until he heard the crack of it echo in his ear.

Yohji's brother, Hitomi, heard the sound and turned to look at the red cheek of his brother. He grinned knowingly but then looking past him, he observed the boy named Tasuki heading straight for his brother with a livid look on his face.

Knowing his brother could take care of the reluctant girl himself, Hitomi stepped around them and directly into Tasuki's path. "Just where do you think you're going little boy?"

Tasuki looked past Hitomi, his eyes instantly clashing with Yohji's. He could see Yohji's hand caress Kyoko's hair without thinking, he threw all his weight into the punch landing it right in Hitomi's stomach. Much to his amazement, the other boy barely moved.

Being so much bigger than the college prep, with one punch, Hitomi sent Tasuki sprawling toward the far wall of the hallway. He shrugged, figuring the boy would not get back up and he

turned back to watch his brother play with his new toy.

Seeing the girl fight for her release brought a smile to Hyakuhei's lips. "So, this girl will not be handled so easily. I will take pleasure in breaking her." Watching the young man that had come to defend her honor, Hyakuhei decided on who he wanted as his newest recruit.

He swiftly caught the boy named Tasuki before he slammed into the wall.

His senses told him the boy was still pure a virgin how strange. Quickly cloaking them in darkness to keep others from seeing, Hyakuhei gazed down at him. He had watched him interact with this girl and several others. He would be a good choice.

"Welcome to the darkness, my son..." He whispered as he sank his fangs into Tasuki's vein. Hyakuhei's eyes widened at the flavor of the boy's blood. Hidden power? It tasted of amethyst. He gripped the boy tighter wanting more.

Tasuki had taken the blow to the face with stride since he had so much adrenaline pumping through him. He planned on getting right back up but as arms enveloped him from behind, everything turned black and he felt paralyzed with instant fear. A soft almost seductive voice welcomed him to darkness.

He gasped as he felt sharp teeth sink into the flesh of his neck. As his life drained from him, his last thoughts were of Kyoko and how much he needed to get to her. He was reaching out his hand in one last attempt to go to her when oblivion came, claiming his

last breath.

Kyoko's hand still burned from the impact it had made with Yohji's cheek. She wanted to cringe now that she could feel many interested eyes on her. It didn't help that the slap had sounded like a freaking gunshot.

Damn it all! This was what she had been trying to avoid, but no, Yohji had to go and be such an ass. Speaking of asses, he had yet to remove his hand from hers. She slowly glanced back up at him. From the angry look in his eyes, she didn't think he planned on letting her go at all.

She returned the heated glare, waiting to see if he would pay her back or let her go. If she were the type to place bets, she would bet on the first option.

Kyou could tell the small wisp of a girl was no match for the lust coming from the guy holding her so tightly. He mentally shredded the lecher for daring to touch what he intended to claim as his possession. It suddenly didn't matter to him if Hyakuhei detected him or not as he made up his mind. Just as Kyou moved to step out of the shadows, intent on taking her away from the harasser, he heard a deep growl.

Momentarily stunned, Kyou knew that kind of growl was only known to come from a Lycan. His golden eyes followed the sound to its source as it continued to vibrate from the entrance only a couple of feet from the girl. The wolf's rage flooded the crowded hallway.

Kyou's eyes narrowed on the scene, wondering if he could trust such an ageless strength within reaching distance of the girl. He had not seen a Lycan since he had been first turned and then he had only watched from a distance. He remembered once telling Toya that Vampires and werewolves didn't mingle. Toya had asked him why and he hadn't answered him because he had only been repeating Hyakuhei's words and had not known the reason for it.

Kotaro took one look at Yohji groping at His Woman and lost it. Within the blink of an eye, Yohji was slammed against the wall with Kotaro's hand around his throat, lifting him several inches into the air. He had dealt with the lecherous brothers before and where one was, the other was sure to follow.

His senses were on high alert as he smelled Hitomi's stench and knew he was coming from behind. With one well-placed kick, Kotaro sent Hitomi flying through the air, to land in a heap on the floor down the hall. People scattered and the hallway quickly cleared.

Kyoko sat where she had landed on the floor with her eyes wide, almost missing what had just happened, since it had happen so fast. Her gaze went from the crumpled form of Hitomi to the furious form of Kotaro who was holding the neck of a slowly turning blue Yohji.

Knowing she had to stop Kotaro before he really hurt someone, Kyoko gasped and started to stand up. Pressing her hands on the floor, she stumbled up behind Kotaro, laying a hand

on his shoulder as she tried to calm him.

“Thanks Kotaro, but I’m alright now, so you can let Yohji go. Okay?” Her voice was soft but her panic heightened when Kotaro’s fingers tightened around Yohji’s throat. Kotaro turned his face to Kyoko and she took a startled step back seeing the red tint around his ice blue eyes.

“I saw where his hand was, Kyoko, and I think it’s time to take the trash out!” Kotaro growled as he turned back to Yohji and listened in morbid fascination as the boy made gurgling sounds and turned a frightening shade of blue.

Kotaro’s temper was satisfied by the darker color giving him enough control to realize Kyoko was watching him in shock. Needing to ease her fear, he grabbed Yohji by the scruff of his shirt and headed for the door to teach the bastard some manners. She didn’t need to see the rest.

Kyoko blinked as the door slammed shut behind Kotaro. Dumbfounded, she was still in a shocked daze. Wow, Kotaro could be really scary when he was mad. She even felt sorry for Yohji at that moment.

Glancing over her shoulder, she saw Yohji’s brother Hitomi still lying where Kotaro had left him on the floor. For once, she didn’t mind that Kotaro was so protective of her. She shivered and tried not to think of what could have happened had Kotaro not shown up when he did.

Kyou watched her gnaw on her bottom lip as if uncertain of what to do. As her gaze traveled back to the door, he mused.

So she has the protection of the Lycan. He wondered what other mysteries surrounded the girl. This one wasn't a normal wolf, the one she had called Kotaro, he could sense, was as old as himself.

Kyoko stepped closer to the glass doors looking out at the dark parking lot, wondering where Kotaro had gone. Putting her hand on the handle, she started to open the door but a young boy stepped in front of it, blocking her path. She stood motionless for a moment as the small boy locked eyes with her. It was the eeriest feeling she had ever experienced.

The boy had solid white hair and a skin tone that almost matched it. But that wasn't the worst part. His eyes were so black, they seemed to go on forever, giving Kyoko the feeling she was falling into them. The boy smiled softly, barely baring his inhuman fangs and for a moment, Kyoko actually believed she saw them.

A hand came out of nowhere and gripped Kyoko's shoulder making a terrified scream lodge in her throat as she turned to see whose hand it belonged to.

Kyou stepped out of the darkness when he saw Hyakuhei's minion on the other side of the glass. He knew of the deceiving boy. The youngest one who seemed so innocent was often the most deadly.

Gliding up behind Kyoko, his eyes bled and his fangs elongated letting the ghost of a boy know he would not bite this

girl without losing his own immortal life.

Kyoko's hand stilled on the door not quite sure if she wanted to open it. Something about the young boy was really creeping her out. Just as she started to take a step back, a heavy hand came out of nowhere and gripped her shoulder. A terrified scream lodged in her throat as she turned to see who it was.

Kyoko forgot to breathe as she looked up into eyes of shattering gold. Long white hair framed his face and shoulders. He was a couple of years older and his hair was missing the darkness behind the silver highlights, but he almost looked likeâ#

"Toya?" Kyoko whispered hesitantly, knowing she was wrong but more importantlyâ# why was the room spinning?

As soon as their eyes locked, Kyou felt drawn into them. She was looking at him as if she knew him. But that wasn't near as disturbing as when she whispered his dead brother's name. His arms slipped around her, seeing her sway from the tainted liquid she had consumed earlier.

As his hands slid across her bare skin where her shirt was too short to cover, he felt a stirring within his vampire blood, whispering for him to keep her.

Kyoko's eyesight had decided she wasn't good enough for it at the moment. It seemed to defy her will as the man began to blur while she gazed up at him curiously. Even if she couldn't see well, she could still feel the body holding her.

Reaching her fingers up to touch his cheek, she asked.

"You're not Tora! Who are you?" Before she could get an answer, Buddha or whatever god kept playing tricks on her, turned out the lights as she slipped into unconsciousness.

Kyou clasped her tightly to him as her body went limp in his arms. She had passed out but at least she hadn't passed out in the arms of an enemy. Her head fell back exposing the smooth pale column of her throat and Kyou fought his instincts. He silently wondered if she wasn't in the arms of the enemy after all. His fangs started to lengthen and he reigned the sensation in; this one was too pure for such darkness.

He then felt his anger spark at the naive girl. If he had not been here to protect her, what would have happened to her? He conveniently forgot his own urges just moments before. If the wolf had been an adequate protector, he would not have left her. He looked around realizing the friends she had been with earlier had also abandon her.

Stretching his senses, Kyou could still feel his own nemesis, Hyakuhei, within the confines of the building. Feeling the evil coming from above him, he knew Hyakuhei was somewhere high up in the rooms on the second floor.

Shinbe jumped out of the car before it had even stopped moving. One thing spurred him forward and had him heading straight for the main entrance of the club at a dead run. He couldn't get the thought of Suki and Kyoko becoming one of those missing girls out of his head and it was terrorizing him.

Toya had filled him in on what Kotaro had told him and once he got his hands on Suki, he was going to very well keep them there. Where on her body he couldn't say but he had to find her first.

Shinbe stopped dead in his tracks when he burst through the front doors of Club Midnight.

Right there in the middle of the hallway was a man holding Kyoko and she didn't look that well. She was unmoving and way too pale. For that matter, the man didn't look all that normal either. Pale would have been an understatement for him, which made Shinbe pause nervously when he realized the man reminded him of his best friend.

The silver hair and golden eyes, Toya's hair was dark as midnight but within it were the same silver streaks as the man in front of him. Those were very uncommon characteristics and he only knew of Toya ever having that type of unusual combination.

Noticing the man moving to leave with her, Shinbe pushed the uneasy feeling aside. Toya would kill him if he didn't stop the abduction of Kyoko.

"What the hell are you doing with Kyoko?" Amethyst eyes glowed as Shinbe yelled, feeling his feet move again without thought. She may not be his girlfriend but she was very dear to him, dearer than even he would admit and plus, she was Suki's best friend. No way was this guy leaving with Kyoko in his clutches.

Kyou slid his arm under Kyoko's knees and lifted her

effortlessly. He cradled her like a baby, laying her head against his shoulder, careful not to disturb her. The moment her head touched his shoulder, she snuggled into his embrace, sighing softly.

He could feel the trust and contentment emit from her aura as she settled in his arms. This woman-child disturbed him greatly and the longer he watched her slumber, the more he wanted to hide her from everyone. He knew he couldâ if he really wanted to and the temptation was great indeed. He had never turned anyone into what he was â but if he wanted toâ he could.

His protectiveness of the girl, as well as the possessive need to keep her surprised him and Kyou growled softly at his actions. How could this girl affect him like this? Tearing his gaze from her angelic face, he looked up as a young man shouted at him. It would seem that the men who wanted her kept getting in the way.

Gold eyes locked with amethyst and he sensed an odd familiarity. âThis is not for you to decide wizard,â Kyou warned in a low deadly tone.

At that moment he knew that Hyakuhei himself would not be able to take her from him, she was his. His arms tightened around her, not liking the love he could feel rising for the girl radiating from the other man's powerful aura.

Steeling himself against his wayward thoughts, Kyou growled again softly. He would not let the girl get to him butâ he wasnât ready to give her up yet. He had too many questions and she would answer them, whether she liked it or not.

Positive he had himself back under control, Kyou decided it was time to depart.

Shinbe was on his way to Kyoko when the man moved. Moved? That might not have been the right word. Shimmered and disappeared, then reappearing out of nowhere right in front of him was more like it.

"What theâ€" Shinbe skidded to a stop as he looked up into a face that had death written all over it.

His eyes widened in shock, it felt as if his heart just stopped. This close to himâ€" he could clearly see the man had practically porcelain white skin and looked too much like Toya for it to be a joke. Blinking, he could've sworn he noticed fangs protrude from the man's mouth and a warning growl rumble around them.

Shinbe stood planted as the man reached out one finger and pushed against his chest. The next thing Shinbe knew, he was sitting on his butt in the middle of the floor. Blinking again, he sat confused as the silver haired man dressed in black simply stepped over him, then suddenly disappeared.

Suki reached the hall just in time to see Shinbe hit the floor none too gently and a tall, silver haired man disappearing with Kyoko. She blinked once and they were goneâ€" there one second then gone the next.

Shinbe, who looked like he was in the twilight zone, sat there for a moment longer, blinking in confusion. "What the hell?"

Running up to Shinbe, Sukiâ€™s hands shook as she attempted to help him stand up. "Who was that man that disappeared with

Kyoko?" She glanced at Shinbe worriedly as they both turned and rushed out the door to find them. "Did he really just disappear?"

They exited the building and looked around frantically only to find no trace of the man or Kyoko anywhere.

Turning to Shinbe, Suki's eyes shimmered. She felt like she was on the verge of tears. "Where'd they go? That man kidnapped Kyoko!" She was shaking with fear. What had started out as a fun girl's night out had turned into a nightmare.

"Calm down, Suki. We'll find her. Toya's here as well." Shinbe anxiously looked around for his missing friend. "I thought he was right behind me!"

Worry quickly turned to anger now that it sank in that Suki was safe and by his side. A shadow of pity crossed his haunted eyes as he thought of the past. "And what the hell were you thinking? Something could've happened to you and I might not have known where you were!" He grabbed her harshly by the arms as his amethyst eyes darkened possessively.

Suki's lips thinned at his anger. What was his deal? It wasn't like she never went out with her friends. Her gaze locked with his as her own anger began to rise. "What do you mmmf," Her words were halted as his lips crashed against hers in a searing, heart-stopping kiss.

Shinbe had been so worried about her that he couldn't stop the feelings that had rushed forth. He wanted to make sure she could feel every emotion that was coursing through his veins right then and there. He hugged her tightly, swearing to himself that she

was never going to leave his sight again.

Suki whimpered softly at the intensity of Shinbe's kiss. It was as if he was baring every raw emotion within his soul. She could practically feel them with her fingertips as she gripped his shoulders. Knowing if she let go, she would not be able to stand, seeing as her legs had just turned into jelly, she held on for dear life.

Her mind went blank for a moment and she forgot that she was mad at him or that Kyoko had just vanished. All she could feel was Shinbe and a love that would no doubt outlast them.

Gently, he relaxed his hold, ending their kiss by rubbing his nose against hers. His eyes filled with relief, but were still dark with desire. Shaking his head slightly, he tried to focus on the situation at hand and for once, his lecherous mind didn't wander at the feel of Suki's soft body in his arms—after all, she had been there for many life times.

"There have been some things going on and you need to know about them. It wasn't safe for you and Kyoko to come out alone tonight. I'll explain while we search for Toya. I think Kotaro's here somewhere too." Shinbe wrapped a protective arm around her as they headed in the direction of the parking lot to find Toya.

Suki was too stunned for a moment to do anything but nod.

Toya raced across the parking lot cursing Shinbe for getting ahead of him. He had to exit his car on the passenger side once he realized that he couldn't get out on his side. In his haste to get

to Kyoko, he had parked too close to a brick wall. Unfortunately, he'd also figured this out when he tried to open his door and it banged into the wall putting a dent in the side of his baby.

That wasn't really what had slowed him down though. When he had taken off across the parking lot at breakneck speed, a small boy had come out of nowhere and collided with him. The impact had been so sudden that it had knocked him clear off his feet. When he had righted himself enough to stand back up, he quickly offered the boy a hand to help him stand.

"Hey kid, you alright?" Toya jerked his hand back when the boy hissed at him and took off in the opposite direction as if Satan himself was chasing him.

Toya shook off the creepy feeling the boy had left him with as he looked up at the two-story nightclub. The eerie feeling came back tenfold as he noticed the shadow of a man carrying someone across one of the windows on the top floor. There were just so many things wrong with that one little scene.

His eyes flashed silver; his senses knowing things he did not yet understand. It all left him with the feeling that someone had just walked over his grave.

As he approached the club, Toya growled in annoyance when he realized there were two entrances. One looked to be a main entrance and the other was just as crowded. Deciding to go through the main one, he forced his way through the crowd.

"She better be okay... When I find her, I'm gonna permanently handcuff her to me whether she likes it or not!" Flecks

of silver began to strengthen within the gold of his eyes as he searched for Kyoko.

Kyou made his way down the alley behind the club with Kyoko held tightly in his arms. His mind was set and he would take the girl to his temporary home to recover. He looked up toward the penthouse right across the main road from the club. She would be safe with him, but he would have to be careful. He could feel Hyakuhei's minion within the darkness that surrounded the club.

His jaw clenched as he heard a faint scream in the distance and knew another victim had been found. Glancing down at the sleeping girl, his golden eyes softened. For now, she was his secret. She felt as light as a feather and seemed so fragile.

He couldn't comprehend how this wisp of a girl had such a fiery spirit, and yet still had such a pure soul. And, Toya, she had spoken his dead brother's name as if she knew him. How could that be possible?

His thoughts came to a halt as he sensed a powerful night creature ahead at the same time that a heavy scent of blood hit his nose. Tensing, he recognized the aura of the Lycan that had protected Kyoko earlier from the punk harassing her only to then abandon her, leaving her in harm's way.

Not wanting the girl to be injured should he need to fight, Kyou laid her down gently in the alleyway and followed the scent of blood, which lay just around the corner. If the wolf had

slaughtered a human, the girl may not be safe around him. It was known that some werewolves lose themselves once anger entered their blood, and he would not allow the girl to be protected by such a dangerous creature.

Turning the corner on silent feet, Kyou's eyes beheld a scene he hadn't witnessed in centuries. The wolf, still in human form, stood growling, his fangs bared. Stark blue eyes blazed as he snarled viciously at what looked to be a body held in his grasp.

Toya paused as he neared the doorway. Sniffing, he turned quickly and headed in the opposite direction of the entrance. He could smell her, though in the back of his mind he couldn't figure out how or why he could. Taking off in a dead run toward the alleyway to the left of the building, his heart hammered violently in his chest as morbid thoughts flew through his mind.

Missing girls and dark places... Kyoko had better not have a single hair out of place or else!

Entering the shadows, Toya skidded to a stop as fear choked the breath from his lungs. There, lying slumped against the dirty brick wall, was Kyoko. The same fear that rooted him to the spot, spurred him into motion. With his next breath, he was beside her.

Kneeling, he touched her, checking for the life that would allow his heart to start beating again.

As soon as his finger touched her neck, his own heart kicked in time with hers and he breathed. Thank god, she was alive. A

moment of dÃ©jÃ vu reflected in some unwanted memory and he quickly pushed it away suddenly afraid. Feeling others close by, he wasted no time in picking her up and getting her to safety. As he held her close to him, Toya used his unnatural speed to take them out of the darkness.

Kotaro held Yohji up against the brick wall while willing his blood lust to cool. Continuing his punishment was not worth it anymore, considering the boy had already passed out again. Dropping him none too gently on the ground, feeling a disturbance in the energy around him.

His head snapped to the side, his ice blue eyes narrowing.

Kyou watched as the wolf dropped the boy back to the ground without killing him. He immediately recognized the human as the one harassing Kyoko. Changing his opinion from a few moments before, his lips curved into a slight snarl. Had it been him holding the boy by his neck, the boy would not still be in one piece.

As if sensing him, the Lycan turned his head and locked his deadly gaze on him. Kyou could feel the immense power emanating from the wolf. He was displaying it in warning.

In the past, wolves and vampires had always avoided each other. Neither caring for the other, they chose to leave each other alone. Both were too closely matched in strength and neither cared for dominance over the other. They just existed together in the same world, keeping mostly to themselves and going about

their own endless lives.

All of Kotaro's instincts came to life, seeing the vampire standing there in the shadows, watching him. He couldn't see him clearly enough to make out any distinctive features but his instinct told him the bloodsucker was a threat. He still needed to release some of his own bloodlust and cracked his knuckles thinking it was maybe one of Hyakuhei's underlings.

Just as he decided to turn and attack, the image grew stronger, then wavered and vanished. Golden eyes? Kotaro rose back up to his full height realizing he had almost attacked Kyou. What's he doing here?

"Damn it!" Kotaro hissed and took off fearing Kyoko would not be where he left her. He had to get to her fast; there were bloodsuckers out tonight and she would not be one of their victims. And with Kyou around, there was no telling how dangerous things could really get.

Kyou reappeared facing the same brick wall where he had laid the girl. Seeing she was no longer there, his eyes bled crimson and an enraged growl ripped through the empty alley, echoing into the surrounding streets.

Suki and Shinbe met Kotaro at the door of the club. Grasping Shinbe by the shoulder, Kotaro asked urgently. "Is Kyoko still inside?" His inhuman senses had kicked into overdrive and his instincts were telling him that she was nowhere near.

Suki surged forward grabbing Kotaro's shirt and confirming

his suspicions. "A man took her about ten minutes ago, you have to find her!" Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke to him. "We can't find her anywhere!"

Not quite ready to give Suki her freedom yet, Shinbe pulled back on her hand, slamming her into his chest. He wrapped his arms around her like a steel band. Looking at Kotaro he added. "Some thing just carried her out of here."

Shinbe looked down at Suki's now trembling form and tried to soothe her. She'd never let him just do what he wanted without arguing. "I promise you, we will find her." with his promise made, he glanced back up to speak to Kotaro once more but the security guard was already gone.

"Where did he go?" Shinbe stuttered looking around but not finding any trace of the security guard. Shaking his head, he sighed. He had seen enough weird shit for one night.

Coming out of her lost, hopeless state, Suki huffed in annoyance. "He better find Kyoko or I'm having Kotaro kabobs for dinner!" Dragging Shinbe behind her as if they had suddenly changed roles she added, "My car, now, let's go!"

Shinbe glanced around the parking lot as if suddenly remembering something important. "Speaking of cars Toya's is missing."

Chapter 6

Hyakuhei laid the young man he had chosen to become one of his children in a dark room above the sounds of the club. Brushing the soft brown hair from his closed eyes, he could still smell the scent of the girl as it lingered on the boy's skin. 'Tasuki', he had heard the others call him.

"Well Tasuki, when you awake, you will have a most precious gift from meâ# the gift of eternal life." He gave a sympathetic smile, as if talking to a child. "But you will understandâ# that life is mine."

Hyakuhei's eyes flickered red as he felt one of his children call to him. He did not like being disturbed while awaiting an awakening but one of his favorites had asked for him. Knowing that the underling would never call to him unless it was important, he answered his request.

Taking one more look at the boy he had turned, Hyakuheiâ### body shimmered and disappeared, leaving Tasuki alone within the confines of the locked room.

Yohji could feel the pricks of pain forcing him to consciousness. God, he hurt all over. He remembered slowly what had happened and why he now felt so bad. He had run into Kyoko and had decided to play with her, when that stupid security guard had showed up.

How could someone be that strong? When he had tried to fight back, he hadn't stood a chance in hell. It was as if he had tried to go against a pack of starving wolves and was now suffering severely for his efforts.

Finally daring to open his eyes, Yohji was startled to find a young boy standing thereâ€¦ watching him. He looked to be around 12 years old and would have been labeled albino, if his eyes hadn't been so black and empty.

Drawn by the smell of fresh blood, Yuuhi appeared beside the wounded boy. Watching him closely, he stood as still as a statue, touching him briefly with his aura, before nodding once. The boy had the taint of evil already within him, but there was a scent of purity that clung to his negative energy.

Those remnants of pure energy seemed to be alive with power that would not die. 'Unexpectedâ€¦'

As the injured boy's eyes opened, Yuuhi whispered softly, "Father, he has touched the pure oneâ€¦ her energy still lingers, attacking hisâ€¦ the childâ€™s fangs gleamed in the darkness in a mock smile. â€œShall we keep him?"

Yohji's eyes narrowed at the little boy's strange words, then looked around for whoever the child was talking to, only to see a sinister looking man shrouded in black step from the shadows into the faint light of the alley. He was tall and power emitted from his form as if he were an avenging deity.

Yohji's fright-filled eyes widened, locking with eyes that were blood red and this time he definitely saw fangs. He pressed his

abused body against the wall. He would never stand a chance if he tried to run in the state he was already in.

Hyakuhei looked down at the young man who had been harassing the girl he now deemed his. This lad had dared to touch her and now would pay for his insolence. He inhaled, smelling remnants of the wolf that had already beaten him severely and his midnight eyes narrowed into slits. Kotaro had been here!

How dare Kotaro interfere in this. Was he the reason the girl had disappeared suddenly without a trace? Hyakuhei growled at the very thought of the Lycan being so near the Guardian Heart Crystal and the girl once again. Just because the girl had chosen him did not truly make her his. It had never been up to the girl, had he not learned his lesson in the past?

He had thought he had killed the vile creature along with Toya ages ago for daring to stand against him and trying to protect the girl from his possession. No matter, Hyakuhei's thoughts turned melancholy for a moment, You once turned Toya and the priestess against me Kotaro, and look what you made me do.

A shadow of pity crossed his expression as he thought of the past. If Toya had not tried to become a guardian for the priestess and turn Kyou away from him, Toya would not be in the netherworld now but here, by his side, along with the beautiful Kyou. The one to blame for feeding Toya misguided lies was Kotaro.

Kotaro was also the one who had warned the priestess of his

true intent. It was strange how time could warp even the lies that had been told.

“So Kotaro” he whispered, “you have found her again.”

He was brought back to the present by the whimper that came from the boy crouched against the wall. He would need more than one new recruit to find his missing priestess if Kotaro was also with her. Hyakuhei wanted her and would have her.

He intended to claim her with the help of this imbecile who had thought to defile her. The corruption of such a creature was meant for him only. He had many plans for his priestess, after all one thousand years was a long time to formulate new ways to torture someone.

Stepping back into the shadows, his eyes flashed as he nodded slightly to Yuuhi. "Make it painful. Torture his flesh, but do not kill him." He wanted this boy to suffer a little more for his actions so he would understand to never defy his new master and to never touch the girl again.

Yohji's head snapped back to the child and his eyes widened in real fear. The young boy was smiling at him but it wasn't a good smile, it was deadly. At the corners of his pale lips, the boy had long sharp fangs and his eyes were no longer black, but a dark red.

Those vacant eyes were an eerie contrast to his alabaster skin and hair. He looked like a child, but he was a soul-stealing demon in disguise and Yohji was truly afraid.

He watched in horror as his feet left the ground, and the boy sprung at him, dragging a terrified scream from his already parched throat. He never knew what hit him as teeth and claws ripped at his flesh, causing him pain like he had never imagined.

Toya looked over at the girl slumped in the passenger seat beside him. "Damn it Kyoko, don't ever, ever scare the hell out of me like that again!" He knew she couldn't hear him but that didn't stop his relieved ranting. "You little idiot, you could have been killed or worse!" He turned toward the building where her apartment was located.

Even though an angry scowl remained in place, he picked her up as if she were the most precious gem on earth and carried her up the stairs. Finding her door locked, he cursed, pushing at the knob, hoping he didn't do too much damage as it made cracking sounds then opened.

"Well, she needed a better lock anyway with a murderer on the loose." Toya used that excuse, filing it away for when she woke up and yelled at him for breaking her door. "At least it's still on its hinges," he grumbled while entering the dimly lit apartment.

Standing still in the middle of her living room, he looked down at Kyoko and cocked an eyebrow, as he smelled alcohol mixed in with her natural scent.

“Oh, I see how you are Kyoko.” He whispered, “No fair! not even taking me drinking with you. What were you thinking?”

Kyou fought to remain composed, which seemed to be happening a lot this evening. Unable to keep it bottled in, his fisted hand surged forward and hit the brick wall with such force that pieces of the masonry went flying in all directions. He gave an angry growl and his eyes tinted pink as he sniffed the air.

No one would take what belonged to him and not pay for their interference.

He immediately picked up Kyoko's scent mixed with another that felt oddly familiar, and male. Kyou let out a snarl, pushing the feeling away as he levitated from the alleyway and followed the scent that had become imbedded in his very being.

His lone figure disappeared within the shadows as he hunted for his prey. He would find her and he would take her back from the thief who had stolen her. The muscles flexed in Kyou's jaw in anger. How dare she speak his brother's name as if to confuse him, as if she had known him?

Somehow, the woman-child had cast a spell upon him, he was sure of it. He could feel her presence lingering on his fingertips and felt the desire to touch her skin once more. He needed to know how it was that she was so pure and what the light was that emitted from her body.

Was it what Toya had been searching for? If so, then was this girl to blame for Toya's death? What did this all mean? He desired answers. That light had drawn him like a moth to a flame and now, he found, he couldn't just let her go. It was as if she had

unknowingly called to him and he had no choice but to answer.

Kyou growled low in his throat as his eyes flashed red with blood. This girl was dangerous. He was not one to need or want, not for centuries, only to have vengeance. She would have to be handled carefully. He did not trust himself around her. She had somehow captured him and it angered him immensely that this girl had in some way, made him weak.

Mumbling something about Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, Toya carried Kyoko to her bedroom and gently laid her down on the bed. Moving quickly back through the apartment to the front door, he locked it using the deadbolt since he had broken the regular lock.

â##Good thing she only locked the handle,â## he shrugged and looked around at the solitude of the apartment. It was a lot different from the deafening roar that had been at the nightclub. It was almost too quiet. Removing his shoes, he sighed. â##What a night.â## He let his shoulders relax for the first time all day as he silently padded back to where his Kyoko lay.

The moonlight streamed in the window casting an ethereal glow about her body. Toyaâ##s face softened as his gaze lingered on her face. Her lithe body lay on the bed with her hands half relaxed on either side of her head. She looked like an angel, so at peace and so oblivious to the danger that she could have, his hand fisted as he corrected the thought, almost was in. He had a good mind to shake her awake and scream some sense into herâ##

but he wouldn't.

A frown etched Toya's face as he tried to think of how she could have ended up in the alleyway, alone, passed out but unharmed. Not one to look a gift horse in the mouth, he decided to thank the guardians who watched over her whoever they were.

For the rest of the night, Kyoko would be with him and safe. That was all that mattered.

A mischievous glint flickered in his eyes as he removed her shoes and pulled the covers up over her slumbering form. She will probably kill him tomorrow but Toya crawled into bed and pulled her body flush against his.

Ordinarily, slightly dirty thoughts would fill his mind as they had many times when he was home alone. However, for some reason, those thoughts seemed wrong at the moment. There was something about laying here with her that seemed innocent? He shook his head slightly and situated himself more comfortably against her.

Holding her tightly, he thanked whatever god was out there that she was safe and sound where she belonged. It felt so right to have her in his arms and he would relish it for now. In the morning it might prove to be life threatening but if he were to die, at least he would die happy.

Kyoko sighed in contentment, snuggling closer to the protective warmth that surrounded her body.

A soft smile graced Toya's lips as he gently kissed her temple

and followed her into the blissful contentment of slumber.

Kyou's body levitated up to the window where he could tell her scent was the strongest. Molten golden orbs widened in shock at the scene that played out right before his eyes. Thereâ€¦ in the room where Kyoko lay, a young man entered with golden eyes and long midnight hair littered with streaks of silver that matched his own.

He felt as if the air had been knocked from his lungs as the mirror image of his murdered brother stood at the bedside, gazing down at the slumbering girl he had come to kidnap.

His icy mask completely vanished at the sight of this boy that resembled his beloved brother from so long ago. 'How can this be?' Remembering the first word she had spoken to him made his chest hurt. She had called him Toya by mistake and nowâ€¦ here in her room was Toyaâ€™s image?

Kyou tentatively sniffed for a scent, trying to verify what his eyes were telling him but his mind could not comprehend. The scent of his brother lay slightly mixed with this boy's scent but before he could contemplate more on this, the boy crawled into her bed and wrapped his arms possessively around her.

White-hot jealousy shot through Kyouâ€™s entire body as the girl trustingly snuggled into the young man's embrace. A low warning growl vibrated within his chest as his eyes briefly flashed red. Brother or notâ€¦ he would not allow it.

He reached for the window just as a cascade of glitter washed

across it making him jerk his hand back. Seeing the rainbow colored dust settle on the windowsill as if to protect her, he growled again. The girl seemed to be surrounded by everything supernatural and the immortal was grating on his last nerve.

His eyes narrowed as he wondered if it was only a wizard's spell that allowed him to see his brother. Had she cast the spell on him when she had whispered his dead brother's name?

His attention jerked away from the window to stare down at the ground below him; the wolf was coming. He sent one more murderous glare into the room before quickly levitating to the roof.

Toya had just about fallen asleep when he heard an animalistic growl that seemed to be coming from Kyoko's window. 'That's not right; she's on the second floor.' Toya's eyes cracked open at hearing the sound again.

Lifting his head slightly, so as not to disturb Kyoko, he looked toward the window where the sound was coming from. Every instinct in his body told him someone or something was there watching them.

His gaze locked on the shadow of what seemed to be a man. It looked as if he were standing at her window on the second floor? A silver outline billowed around his form and made him seem almost ghostly. Toya had seen this apparition before in nightmares.

Sun gold eyes were focused on the ground but Toya could see them flash red for just a moment and he could have sworn he

saw the glint of fangs as well. The image shimmered as metallic flakes of multicolored dust rained against the window as if to block out the view.

Toya shook his head and blinked rapidly before looking towards the window once more, only to find it now empty. What the hell was that?

Feeling more than a little unnerved, he exited the bed and crept toward the window. Looking out, he was greeted with nothing but shadows and darkness. Inhaling deeply, he frowned noticing an unusual scent lingering near the ledge that he did not recognize.

A low, irritated growl escaped his lips as he tried to identify it. Deciding that maybe it was just his imagination overreacting due to the events of that evening, he double-checked once more to be sure it was nothing.

Temporarily satisfied that it was at least fading, he crawled back into bed with Kyoko, keeping one eye open for a while just in case.

Kotaro stood below Kyoko's window feeling the presence of the vampire he had encountered in the alley beside the nightclub. Though he had never gotten a good look at the night walker, he was sure it was Kyou. He could feel Kyou's cold, quiet power and that was something he did not want anywhere near Kyoko. Kyou was an enigma and could not be trusted.

With a snarl, his unrivaled speed had him on the second floor

outside of Kyoko's door within the blink of an eye.

Sniffing, he calmed some when he sensed Kyoko's scent, strong and recent. He confirmed 'no bloodsuckers within her walls' but an angry growl escaped his lips when he smelled Toya's scent, just as fresh as his Kyoko's. Toya had gone into the apartment as well but had not come back out. Putting his hand on the doorknob, Kotaro turned it to find that it was broken.

Broken but dead bolted. What the! He growled angrily at the forced entry that was now obvious.

Kotaro held his hand in front of him, watching as his claws extended and tapered at the tips. There had never been a lock he couldn't pick and his Kyoko's locks were less than adequate. Kotaro smiled arrogantly as he placed his claw into the lock. Wiggling it slightly, he heard a satisfying click.

With the stealth of a shadow, he entered the apartment closing the door softly behind him.

Hearing nothing but silence, he followed the path that Kyoko's scent had left for him. A moment later, he found himself standing at her bedroom door. His searing blue eyes sharp as a blade focused on the uneasy feeling that shot through his body.

Not knowing what he would find on the other side, he slowly opened the door.

Kamui decided to stay invisible as he watched Kotaro come into Kyoko's apartment. It wasn't as if he was hiding from his friend, no, that wasn't it at all. But knowing who was

in Kyoko's bed at the moment, well! he thought it best to stay invisible instead of making himself a target once the shit hit the fan.

He had done what he could to keep Kyoko safe all evening but as far as Toya went! the silver guardian was on his own on this one. Kamui silently cringed as Kotaro opened the bedroom door.

The sight that greeted Kotaro was almost more than he could comprehend. Lying in her bed was that filthy dog, Toya! Holding her as if she belonged to him and only him! his arms were wrapped tightly around her oblivious body and a satisfied tilt was on his lips.

A snarl escaped Kotaro as he advanced upon the couple lost within their own dreams.

“You shameless thief,” Kotaro's thoughts roared in his mind as his eyes began to bleed in anger. His control barely kept in reign as he grabbed and tossed his rival out the bedroom door without waking Kyoko.

Toya didn't know what to think when he was lifted from the bed by the scruff of his shirt and literally thrown out of the bedroom door to land well into the living room. Before he even had time to regain his sleep-dulled senses, Toya was once again picked up by the neck.

This time, he knew who he was facing. Furious golden eyes locked with ice blue ones as his body was hauled almost effortlessly back into the air.

Still invisible, Kamui had scattered from the sofa as he

watched Toya soar over it. He now settled on the kitchen counter to watch the fun. Glancing over at Kyoko's door, he waved a hand in that direction, putting a shield there to keep the noise from waking her.

He turned his attention back to his two friends who were about ready to rip each other's heads off. Just like old times, Kamui secretly smiled wishing he had popped some popcorn for the show. All I need now is a betting pool and money. He silently cocked an eyebrow wondering just which one he would bet on.

Kotaro growled low in his throat, trying to keep the bloodlust from seeping into his piercing cobalt blue eyes. Just what the hell did you think you were doing in Kyoko's bed? His voice held a hint of death as if Toya's answer would decide whether he would later be found alive or not. Kotaro's manner promised retribution if the answer proved to be one that he did not think was acceptable.

Damn it, you jackass. Let me go! Toya clawed at the tight fingers clasped around his neck with one hand and with the other, he lashed out with a blow that should have rocked Kotaro's skull.

Although Kotaro barely moved from the punch, Toya did gain his release and quickly squared off in case the jerk wasn't finished.

Toya could feel the intense anger coming from the silent form in front of him. His own anger rose when he realized just where

Kotaro had been to be able to attack him. "Just what the fuck did you think you were doing in Kyoko's bedroom, you fucking leech?" he retaliated with a question of his own.

Kotaro could tell this was going to get loud as Toya's voice started to spike. Glancing at Kyoko's bedroom door and seeing it was still ajar, he jerked his head toward the front door growling the words, "Let's take this outside before we wake her up."

When it looked like Toya was going to balk at the idea, Kotaro taunted him knowing it would work. "Unless you're scared to face me?" He smirked and glared at the same time, knowing Toya would take the bait.

"Sure, pricks first," Toya waited on Kotaro to make the first move and even hoped he would. His temper was now high enough to take out an entire neighborhood. He needed someone to take his frustration out on, and besides, he had been looking for a reason to exchange blows with Kotaro for a long time now.

Both of them seemed to blur and within only a couple quick heartbeats they were both in the empty yard in front of the apartments where Kyoko lived. Just as Kotaro turned around to face him, Toya delivered a punch that he was sure would knock the idiot out.

He growled angrily when Kotaro skidded backwards through the grass but didn't fall. It wasn't really that he didn't like Kotaro; he did on many levels. But at the same time, he always felt the need to hit him really hard. It was like having an

enemy for a friend.

Toya glared feeling his jealousy rise; the reason they were always at each other's throats was because they both wanted Kyoko.

Kotaro shook his head and leveled his eyes back on his rival. "Let's see you try that when I'm ready, pervert!" Kotaro snarled just as they both growled and charged each other.

Those who had the ability to hear such things could hear the echo of power from the impact.

Kamui followed them out into the yard and was now leaning against the brick wall watching the two under the streetlights that surrounded the apartments. He whistled to himself softly, seeing the power behind Toya's punch.

"Looks like our Toya may be waking up," Kamui's eyes rounded as he noticed the strange shadow that the building he was leaning against cast on the building across from it. Taking a couple of steps away from the wall, he looked directly above him to verify who it was standing on the roof.

Kyou stood on the roof of the two-story building looking down into the yard as the two came out onto the grass. He crouched low, watching as the enraged boy hit the Lycan with more strength than a normal human ever could. It was when they both rushed each other at such a speed that he knew for sure neither was human.

He watched the waves of power shatter out from them in blue fluorescent echoes. "The power of the ancients?" Kyou had

thought he and Hyakuhei were the only ones left with such aged power. His eyes began to glow as he continued to watch the escalating aggression below him.

Toya had never felt his strength reach such a peak as he and Kotaro fought blow for blow, neither of them backing down. As they clashed and leapt away from each other only to clash again, he felt something within him awaken as if from a dormant sleep.

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