

THE HEART OF TIME

THE GUARDIAN HEART CRYSTAL SERIES



Amy Blankenship

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The Heart Of Time

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

Blankenship A.

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The Heart of Time

The Guardian Heart Crystal Series Book 1

Amy Blankenship

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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 evil 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 adventures

Chapter 1 "Shattered Memories"

"Kyoko!!!!!!"

Toya's cry of rage could be heard throughout the surrounding forest. As the sound of his desperate scream faded, everything became deathly silent as all eyes watched for Hyakuhei's next move.

No one could have stopped it. Everything had happened too fast for anybody to react. What happened had paralyzed all five of the guardians with fear. They couldn't believe they had come together as the protectors of the guardian heart crystal to fight Hyakuhei only to have him win. Only to lose the one person they all loved and protected.

There, hovering in the center of the battlefield, their worst nightmare was unfolding.

Hyakuhei held Kyoko trapped against him as he gazed down into her terrified face. The lower half of her body had begun to fuse with his, just as he'd planned. He was slowly trying to devour her and The Guardian Heart Crystal into his body and the void within his soul. All who watched could see the corruption of the Crystal as it glowed with darkness born only of evil.

Kyoko's hands were against Hyakuhei's chest as she frantically pushed back from him, trying with all her might to free herself from this guardian lord turned demon, only for him to laugh.

Hyakuhei was now high on the power that was coursing through his flesh and blood and her feeble attempts at escaping him amused him greatly. His long ebony hair swam around them as if it had a life of its own. The silky ends of the midnight locks wove their way around behind Kyoko like an iron band to help restrain her small body against his.

Kyoko felt defenseless as she fought the pull of her body becoming one with his. She didn't want to fall into the cold dark void that was his soul. She could feel all the demons there, waiting for her. The more she was drawn into his body, the colder that part of her body became. Her legs stung as if ice was forming along her skin like a million pin pricks all at once.

She knew if she didn't do something fast, they would all be lost. She could see the five brothers who'd guarded her over the last couple of years as they stood there watching. All of them wanted to help her but were too afraid to make a move as long as she was being held as a shield.

She didn't want to lose to this traitor of the guardians. He was their own uncle; why had he turned against his nephews so long ago? Kyoko's emerald green eyes turned back to lock on the enemy in fearful anger. This couldn't be happening. Not after all she'd been through. This was all her fault.

Her eyes narrowed on Hyakuhei's dark steady gaze. She'd brought the Crystal to this world and she would take it back out of this world if she had to take it straight to hell with her.

Kyou stood not twenty feet away and quickly drew his destruction sword *Hakaisha*, in a blind fury. He did not like the thought of his uncle's enemy, touching the only human girl he had ever grown to respect. She looked so dangerously fragile in the arms of a mad man, the fight now becoming purity against evil.

The lord of the guardian realm Kyou, oldest of the five siblings, could do nothing without hurting Kyoko in the process. Secretly, he knew the power of the Crystal could not hurt him because he had used a spell to block all spells before this battle. He'd been prepared in case Hyakuhei had tried to use The Guardian Heart Crystal against him.

But this he had not anticipated. He didn't want Kyoko to be hurt ever, not as long as he had the power to stop it.

He did not struggle when the dark demonic phantoms sent by Hyakuhei slithered from the ground as if coming from some hidden nightmare and wrapped around his lethal body to hold him still. Kyou glanced at Toya seeing that fury burned in his younger brother's silver eyes.

Hyakuhei had wrapped Toya within an onslaught of demonic phantoms, trying to keep him at bay but Toya was still struggling with a vengeance against them. Inwardly, Kyou was thankful for the restraints placed upon his brother for without them, Toya would surely attack no matter the consequences. Just the sight of Kyoko in such danger had pushed Toya past the breaking point.

Kyou could feel Toya's guardian power intensify with every heartbeat, along with his own power and the power of their brothers.

Not ten feet away, Kotaro's ice blue eyes widened in disbelief. He didn't want to see Kyoko hurt but he couldn't do anything to prevent it. Both his arms were bloodied from the battle and his legs were in no better shape. He was powerless to even attack right now as he struggled to stand, fighting against the pain. His mind still frozen in fear for the girl he loved more than anything.

"Don't you dare hurt her or I will hunt you even in hell, Hyakuhei," Kotaro hissed in a raspy voice, baring his sharp fangs as his ice blue eyes burned with his need for retaliation. The very air around him seemed to come to life with a vengeance as debris blew out in a circle around him from his powerful winds.

Kamui was frightened, but seeing Kyoko struggling in the arms of Hyakuhei had snapped his mind. Multihued dust glittered within his angry eyes. Without thinking of the consequences, Kamui ran straight toward Hyakuhei with his claws bared, unthinkable courage born of his love for the priestess and seen by all.

Hyakuhei's shadow demons repelled him back, slamming his body into the hard dirt and sending debris flying.

Kaen snatched Kamui up in a tight hold, fire flying from his feet as he leapt to safety, always watching after the youngest guardian during battle. Laying a limp Kamui on the ground out of danger, Kaen turned fiery eyes on Hyakuhei and stood between the youngest guardian and danger.

Suki was on her knees still holding her father in her arms. His body now lifeless and her hatred for Hyakuhei seethed inside her for killing Sennin. Her gaze now fastened on Kyoko, wishing she could save her best friend from the same cold fate that had befallen such a wise old man.

Shinbe stood protectively in front of Suki, blocking her body from Hyakuhei's view. The wind from Kotaro's anger blew Shinbe's midnight blue hair about his face, lending a haunted expression to his knowing amethyst eyes. His worry for Kyoko intensified as he felt the power of the Crystal building.

No! the word left him as if he had the wind suddenly knocked out of him. Shinbe knew if Hyakuhei obtained the full power from the guardian heart crystal then both worlds would be in grave danger. A scalding tear raced down his cheek as he felt his heart shatter with the fact he could do nothing. Kyoko.

Hyakuhei looked around at the enemies who had stood in his way for so long at his own brother's offspring. He knew they were afraid to attack him because he now held Kyoko as a shield and he could feel rage building all around him.

His ebony wings expanded, creating a dark backdrop behind him as his equally dark eyes locked on the girl in his arms. "They are trying to protect you." He stated in a calm soothing voice, as if they were not in the midst of a battle but only watching it from the sidelines.

He could feel the sacred guardian heart crystal that was still visible in the center of his naked chest. Her love for the guardians fighting to protect her was the only thing still keeping the crystal from sinking the rest of the way into his body and giving him the power he desired.

The purity of that love was her power, and she was using it to try to draw the crystal from him; he could feel it. But he could also feel the power that was already coursing through his veins, and it made him only want more.

His eyes softened for a moment as he whispered to her as if talking to a lover. "It's not enough."

Hyakuhei decided he would use the power he had already gained from the crystal against Kyoko in a way that would destroy the bond of love that surrounded the small group. He knew he had to stop her; for her power alone was just as strong as the crystal she had once held within her. The same crystal that had once allowed him to love; only to then take that love cruelly from his grasp.

He pulled Kyoko's face flush with his and placed a gentle kiss upon her innocent lips. Staring into her stormy green eyes, he entered her mind using the power of the guardian heart crystal.

Hyakuhei sought out her memories of the guardians whom she loved so dearly; he would take them from her. Stealing her memories of the people she fought for would weaken her power and strengthen his.

Kyoko couldn't blink. She felt his evil claws within her mind trying to destroy her memories and rip the reason for this fight from her; trying to take her love from her. Her friends, all of them, she wouldn't allow it.

Kyoko felt her control snap, leaving her with only one thing to use against him, and that was the very thing he was trying to take and destroy. Her eyes flashed with anger no longer suppressed. She latched her hands in his silky midnight locks and thrust their foreheads together, shaking with a tidal wave of power.

Her voice piercing the silence of the battlefield, she screamed. "You want it that bad? HERE!! Take It!!!"

Kyou's golden eyes glowed intensely as fear shot through him like the blade of a hot knife. What was the priestess doing? He knew something was terribly wrong and felt his psychic powers call to him; urging him to listen and to see before it was too late! He narrowed that power and entered Kyoko's mind, trying to see what was happening. He would have fallen to his knees with what he witnessed had the shadow demons not been wrapped so tightly around him; holding him immobile.

The images and sounds would be forever implanted within his mind's eye and Kyou somehow knew he would never be able to shake the feelings that washed over him. For he realized by looking into her mind's eye, Kyoko had harbored feelings of love for him as well as his brothers. He could see every touch, feel every emotion caress him and every hidden tear shatter him just as it must have her.

Kyou was also shaken to the core with the rush as he realized Kyoko had more power than anyone had ever thought her to have; power even she was not aware of. He could see and feel every memory as it passed from her mind to Hyakuhei's as if it were shooting straight into his heart where he would never release it.

Years of love, heartache, and sacrifice; given all in an instant.

Angry tears streamed down Kyoko's cheeks as she thrust every memory of love and friendship, pain and secret feelings she had for everyone that fought with her into Hyakuhei's mind. It was the only weapon she had left.

Instantly, Hyakuhei's evil was destabilized. Everyone felt the shift in power as the crystal started to blink from dark light to a blinding white light, and the shadow apparitions holding Toya and Kyou disintegrated into thin air.

Kyoko watched as the angel of darkness became confused, his pale perfect face becoming distorted with pain.

Just as she felt herself slipping, Kyoko reached both of her small hands out and grasped the crystal, pulling it from his flesh. She knew what had to be done, because she could already feel her mind losing its struggle with memories she didn't want to forget. Crystalline tears ran paths down her already streaked cheeks.

She had given her memories away in order to save them all. Quickly, before she lost the thought, she held the guardian heart crystal against her own chest parallel with her heart.

Turning to see Toya and Kyou both leaping straight for her she whispered, "Remember me, please, find me."

The last thing Kyoko caught a glimpse of as her sight began to tunnel was both of them screaming her name and reaching for her. One with liquid gold eyes and the other with molten silver eyes, then her world turned black.

Kyou could feel Kyoko fading and he thought she was dying. He leapt in unison with Toya, trying desperately to reach her when everything changed, as if a drop of water had hit the surface of his sight. Waves rippled outward from Kyoko and she vanished in midair. Then Hyakuhei screamed in rage as he also vanished.

Kyou's mind raced as his brother's scream that had joined his came to an abrupt stop, as if the sound had been cut with the blink of an eye, and he knew Toya had also vanished. Kyou landed gracefully in the empty spot that had only a second before held his intended target. His angry gaze flashed around him in denial. Everyone had vanished.

Kyou felt the adrenaline rushing through his veins and mixing with his highborn guardian blood. He had seen and felt it all. He now possessed all of her memories. Kyoko had given all of herself to save them, and at the last second he had heard her wish. She probably didn't even know what she had done, but she had taken them all with her, leaving him behind.

The spell he had cast around himself to keep the sacred crystal from being used against him, had kept him from following wherever the others had gone. With only a couple whispered words, she had taken everything from him.

His body stood tall and proud. His knee length silver hair fluttered around him and the white silk of his shirt trembled in the breeze as if he were standing in the eye of some unseen storm that matched the storm raging in his tormented heart.

His appearance was that of an angel, regal, powerful, and perfect, as he looked upon the deserted battlefield. Until he raised one hand to his cheek, catching the lone crimson tear that even he had not the power to stop.

Kyou's vision swam as golden feathers swirled past him from wings that had sprouted, surrounding him in a vast golden glow, revealing his true identity for the first time in his ageless life.

The only wound left from the battle was the slash that appeared across his heart, a heart that no one had thought he possessed. His gaze swung to the maiden statue that stood only a few feet away and he whispered, "Kyoko, I have not forsaken you. The distance of over a thousand years is not enough to stop me from finding you again."

Chapter Two "The Flip Side"

On the other side of The Heart of Time, two years later and over a thousand years into the future.

The letter was addressed to the Hogo shrine. Grandpa Hogo looked at the elegant envelope the messenger had just handed him as he carried it back to the table where he had been sipping tea. Before the knock on the door, he had been enjoying the peace and quiet of the usually over active house.

Everyone else had gone out for the evening. Tama was at the game room in town with friends, and Kyoko had gone to the library to study, while Mrs. Hogo had taken off to do some grocery shopping.

Picking up a small knife from the table, Grandpa slid the sharp blade through the gold-rimmed envelope carefully. He reached in, pulling out a notarized letter on heavy-duty gold-rimmed paper, and started reading it. The more he read, the wider his eyes became. It was a scholarship, a full scholarship to a very expensive school on the outskirts of the other side of the city.

"K.L. University." His old voice held astonishment for the first time in many years. As it read, all would be paid in full, even the cost of the dorm she would be staying at, and it was signed by the founder of the school with his initials reading K.L.

Grandpa's aged face lifted in the brightest smile it had in a long time. Kyoko was going to be beyond happy. He knew that she had been worried that missing so much school would keep her from being accepted to any academy, and now she would be going to one that surpassed any other academy in the region.

He frowned thoughtfully. It was the hardest school to get into, for he knew none that had ever succeeded when applying. It was also rumored to have very few students because of the extremely high requirements just to enroll. How had she been accepted into a place she hadn't even applied for?

His mind drifted back over the last two years. It had taken Kyoko awhile to get back into the swing of things after she had come back from the shrine house so disoriented. They had all been confused when she had suddenly returned, because she hadn't remembered much at all from the time she had been gone.

The Hogo family knew about where she had gone because she had slipped back and forward through the time portal many times. Kyoko was the only one who suddenly had amnesia about it.

She hadn't even remembered Toya. But to grandpa that was all right, because it was best if she forgot about that time-crossing guardian anyway. It was best she forgot all about the other side and the danger it had brought.

His eyes turned sad for a moment. Yeah, the family had known most everything that had happened because Kyoko would go back and forward between worlds and while on this side, she would fill them in on the latest happenings. He could also tell that she had hidden a lot of what she didn't want them to know. Things they would now never know because she had forgotten those secrets.

Even after her younger brother Tama had told her a lot of what he knew; she had just shook her head and lowered her eyes. She only remembered being alone in the other world. A world full of monsters.

Grandpa thinned his lips as he mused. He knew things had been set right because Kyoko said she remembered something about the Guardian Heart Crystal coming back inside her, and that it was over. After a couple weeks, she had thrown herself back into her schoolwork and was making excellent grades, and now all that had paid off. Grandpa heard the front door open and his grin widened.

Kissing the letter like it was some sacred good luck charm he watched his granddaughter walk into the kitchen. Kyoko was going to love this.

Three weeks later

Golden eyes watched as the girl from the past approached the academy. He had found her and somehow he would make things right once again. He felt his human shield slip for a moment as his eyes blazed liquid gold in memory of all that had happen that fateful day in the middle of a deadly battlefield.

The rays of morning sunlight coming in the window cast a strange shadow behind him in the image of wings. He raised his clawed hand and narrowed his eyes, watching as the claws receded back to his human cloak.

Turning his haunted eyes back to the priestess, he calmed his inner powers. It was time, and with the purity of Kyoko, he also felt the awakening of evil around him. The unfinished battle would soon begin. This time he would not make the same mistake.

Kyoko stared up at the huge building. To her it almost looked like a grand castle from some unknown past. She grinned to herself. She just couldn't help it. She was still so happy after finding out about the scholarship, and the fact that she would actually live here.

She looked back at Tama. He had been a big help coming to aid her with her bags and settling in. Kyoko was glad she had talked her mom and grandpa into staying home and saying their goodbyes from there. Now she felt almost lightheaded with this huge amount of freedom, and took a deep breath, savoring it.

"Kyoko, are you gonna just stand there all day, or are we going to go find your dorm room?" Tama grumbled, even though the view impressed him too. He looked up at the gigantic archway leading to the main doors in astonishment.

Kyoko held up the map in her hand and pointed to the enormous building that connected to the right side of the academy. "That should be the right building." She turned and gave Tama a wink. "Thanks for helping me this morning."

Tama grinned, feeling a little embarrassed. "Sure Kyoko, after all, I get rid of you for a while, and that's payment enough." He ducked and took off trying to out run her all the while, dying laughing.

Kyoko started to chase after him but paused mid-step, feeling eyes on her.

As the breeze blew her auburn hair from her face, she looked up at the building wondering whose eyes were caressing her but couldn't see anyone. She had been able to sense odd things in the past few years, and she knew without a doubt someone was there watching her. She could almost feel them touching her.

She thought she saw movement in an upper window, but on closer inspection, she found it empty. Kyoko heaved an inward sigh realizing the odd feeling was now gone. She softly bit her bottom lip waiting on the disappointment to go away. Giving up, she finally caught up with Tama as he entered the doors. Both of them froze as they looked around.

"This place is awesome," Tama whispered, as he looked up then leaned over to add in a serious voice. "You might want to keep that map knowing you, you'll get lost here."

Kyoko appeared to not hear him as her eyes wandered over the interior of the main hall. The room they were standing in was at least three stories tall, with stairs that wound their way up to the other floors in a spiral. On one side, there was an enormous library, while on the other side it looked like a recreational area, and directly in the middle was a gigantic chandelier hanging from the high vaulted ceiling.

"I would really hate to see that fall," she confirmed to thin air with a nod.

Below were sitting areas with plush furniture. There were students already up and busy doing things, although it was very early in the morning. She had wanted to be here as early as possible, and it was now 7:30 a.m. She quickly looked back down at the paper, wondering where she was supposed to go.

Groaning, she looked over her shoulder at Tama and pointed up the spiral stairs in front of them. They had four suitcases between them, since Kyoko was actually moving in, and they were very heavy.

Tama's expression fell. "You gotta be kidding." He let go of the handle of the biggest suitcase knowing the wheels on the bottom wouldn't help this time. "I'm only 12 years old for crying out loud."

She squared her shoulders in determination.

Kyoko was startled when a masculine voice from behind her asked, "Are you Miss Kyoko Hogo?"

She instantly turned around saying, "Yes."

Her eyes widened as she came face to face with a very handsome-looking guy. He had startling ice blue eyes and long dark hair that was pulled back in a ponytail. As she stared in awe, she felt a strange breeze caress her face. The ends of her soft hair tickled her cheeks as the breeze caught it.

He was giving her a very charming smile. Then, to her amazement, he snapped his fingers and two guys came almost out of nowhere, took her bags, and started up the stairs with them. Kyoko's eyes widened as she watched them, but before she could say anything, the other guy had taken her hand in his, and bringing it to his lips, he gave her a prince-like kiss.

"My name is Kotaro, and I would not want to see someone as fair as you have to carry anything so heavy. Now, if you will follow me, I will show you to your dorm room." Keeping her hand in his, Kotaro turned with confidence and started up the stairs.

The sudden heat that rushed through his fingers and up his arm seemed to continue spreading across his body, awakening his guardian blood. It was his secret to keep. Kotaro gave her hand a slight squeeze knowing she was the one he had so patiently waited for. He'd felt it the second she had stepped into the room.

Kyoko raised a delicate eyebrow thinking to herself, 'Gods save me from chivalrous guys. What have I walked into?'

Turning, she shrugged at Tama who was standing there with his mouth open. Kyoko cocked her head to the side and raised an eyebrow. "Tama be careful, you might catch flies like that." Then before he could recover, she turned and followed the lithe form of the guy known to her only as Kotaro.

She mentally chalked one for her on her imaginary chalkboard, where she was secretly keeping score for her and Tama. She heard him huff behind her as they walked up the stairs and now she was now winning the game.

They passed another guy on his way down the stairs, and as he passed her without even looking at her, she felt a flash cross her heart and her breath stopped. All sound disappeared as he passed her almost in slow motion. Then everything returned too normal as her heart skipped a beat then sped up.

A feeling of unease crept across her skin as if she was missing something or more like she had lost something and missed it terribly. Trying to shake the strange reaction, she didn't even turn to look at who had passed her, feeling that at the moment she was better off not knowing.

"Well, at least there are enough guys around here for you to drool over," Tama whispered making Kyoko growl mentally.

At the top of the stairs she turned, following Kotaro down a long hallway with lots of doors on both sides. She assumed these were the dorm rooms but he never slowed down or stopped at any of them. At the end of the hall there was a doorway that read DO NOT ENTER. She was a little confused when Kotaro and the two carrying her bags gracefully walked through them as if they belonged there, only to turn to another flight of stairs.

Tama closed in on Kyoko and taunted, "I think they are sending you to the dungeon."

Kyoko smirked over her shoulder at him, "We are going up not down you dummy."

An empty cold room at the top of the tower then, Tama flipped her on the back of the head.

'Well at least Iâ##m gonna stay in shape,â## she thought as they reached the top of another elegant flight of stairs, then they turned down another hallway but this one was beautiful. It looked like the floor was even made of marble. The doors were very far apart. There were only three rooms in this hall, and she worried to herself that maybe Kotaro didnâ##t know where she was supposed to be after all.

Kotaro walked to the last door, thinking to himself that she must be someone very special because there werenâ##t many people even allowed in this hallway, and he knew it to be the best room within the whole campus. He stepped in front of the door and waited on her and her young friend to catch up.

Kotaro smirked, she was nervous. He could smell it. He looked into her stormy emerald eyes and already felt his heart faltering, but for now, he would do as he was told.

He held his hand out, palm up. "Now I will take my leave, but if there is anything you need..." He handed her the key to her room, and giving her a look that made her blush, he actually bowed gallantly then motioned for the two men to follow him.

Kyoko and Tama both turned and watched them with raised eyebrows until they were out of sight, then Kyoko glanced back to the door and gasped. Right there on the door a nameplate read Kyoko Hogo in golden letters.

Tama tapped his sister on the shoulder snickering. "You knowâ## you can catch flies that way."

Kyoko rolled her eyes as she mentally erased the point she had given herself earlier. Taking the key, she unlocked the door and timidly opened it, peeking inside.

Tamaâ##s eyes got as big as saucers and he pushed his way past her. â##No way! This room is almost the size of our whole house." His awe filled voice echoed in the silence. â##You could open a freakinâ## warehouse dance club in this joint.â##

â##So you like my dungeon?â## Kyoko added the point back where it belonged.

Two hours later, long after she had thanked Tama and sent him on his way, Kyoko was standing in the bathroom putting her stuff on the shelves. She again glanced at the bathtub that was big enough for five people.

Groaning, she mimicked her little brotherâ##s words, "No way!"

She could feel the hair standing up on the back of her neck as she wondered again if it was all a mistake. â##Yeah,â## she whispered to herself. Someone would show up any minute to tell her to pack her stuff. She just knew that she had to be in the wrong room.

Kyoko walked back out and looked around the bedroom. The bed was the biggest bed she had ever seen, and already fully made, complete with fluffy comforter and all. The room was beautiful with soft purples and blues that made up the shag carpet and the bed. There were splashes of deep red here and there, and a closet big enough to get lost in.

She stepped into the living room where everything was black and gold, equipped with everything a person could want. She had already checked the kitchen. It was fully stocked. Kyoko shook her head for the umpteenth time. "No way." She gnawed on her bottom lip wondering what to do now. It was Saturday morning and classes didnâ##t start until Monday.

â##Well, I canâ##t hide in here all day,â## she mumbled to herself.

Feeling like she was sneaking around where she wasn't supposed to be, Kyoko headed for the door and stuck her head out into the hall. Not seeing anybody, she stepped out and closed the door behind her, then quietly walked back toward the steps leading below.

Again she had the feeling of being watched and it sent shivers down her spine, but she kept walking, not daring to turn around and look.

â##She can feel me,â## Kyou thought to himself. Maybe her powers werenâ##t buried as deep as heâ##d feared. He had known the second she left her room and he inhaled the lingering scent... savoring it.

The memory of her scent seemed to refresh other memories. "Soon priestess, we will uncover your powers again. You may choose to hide them, but not for long." He leaned against the wall in the hallway, his golden eyes following her until she was out of sight.

Kyoko could breathe a little easier once she found herself back on the bottom floor. She noticed that now it was hopping with people her age. Sighing and shaking off the last of the strangeness from upstairs, Kyoko stood there lost in thought for an extra moment.

She couldn't stand it when her senses kicked in like that. Sometimes, she wished she couldn't sense the things at all. She pushed it to the far reaches of her mind as she gazed around the large ground floor of the building. "I need an on and off switch for this thing," she mumbled, still thinking about the strange vibes she'd gotten only a moment before.

She glanced over at the library, and then quickly looked back to the other side, deciding she wanted to know more about that area first. Working out had been a habit of hers for as long as she could remember, and she wanted it to stay that way. For the last two years, she'd taken up martial arts of any kind, and she loved the freedom of motion it gave her limber body.

Crossing to the rec rooms, she noticed there were many different workout areas in it. In one of the larger gyms, she could see through the glass. She couldn't resist stopping and watching them for a moment. Two people looked like they were sword fighting. Hearing the clank of metal against metal, she raised an eyebrow. Heading closer to the door of the room, she peered in listening.

"You are not paying attention Suki." The one dressed in black spoke in a taunting male voice as he parried and tapped the other one on the bottom laughing.

Kyoko couldn't see either one's face because they were wearing protective gear.

"Shinbe!" came a very angry but feminine voice. Then without warning, the person shot forward and tapped him on the head, well more like smacked him on the head with the fencing sword, then jerked her head shield off.

Kyoko was surprised to see long brown hair spill out and down the girl's back as she marched up to the other and poked him in the chest hard with her finger, one eyebrow twitching. "It's hard to fight seriously when you are such a leech."

Shinbe pulled his headgear off grinning. In a sense of surrender he threw both his hands in the air, backing up. "I'm sorry Suki, but there it was, and you weren't protecting it." Feeling a tingling sensation move in waves across his skin he frowned then slowly turned his amethyst gaze to the girl standing in the doorway, "Ahem, it would seem we have a visitor."

Kyoko watched as the girl named Suki actually blushed still glaring at her opponent then turn away from him walking up to her with a wide smile.

"Men," she rolled her eyes before sticking her hand out in a friendly manner, "Hi, I'm Suki, and this poor excuse for a guy is Shinbe," she threw her thumb toward the guy who was walking up behind her, still grinning.

"Suki," the young man named Shinbe exclaimed. "You wound me to the quick." He emphasized his statement by placing both hands over his heart.

Suki frowned at him, "Shinbe, if I could wound you, your brain would have leaked out of your ears by now from all the hits you've forced me to give you."

Shinbe wiggled his eyebrows, "You know I love the tough love you grace me with."

"I'll show you tough love here in a minute but I don't want to scare off the new girl," Suki shot back.

Kyoko already liked her, and taking her hand in a firm shake, she smiled. "Hi, I'm Kyoko Hogo, but please just Kyoko."

She glanced at the guy standing behind Suki. "It's very nice to meet you both." There was something about his eyes that drew Kyoko's attention. They were amazingly amethyst color

and very breathtaking. His hair was a little longer than shoulder length and very dark with blue highlights. He kind of reminded her of a singer from one of those 80s rock bands.

Suki smiled from ear to ear. "Hey, I heard about you. Yeah, I knew you were coming today. I was going to come looking for you in a little while and show you around." She all of a sudden got a strained look on her face and turned her head to the side, pinning Shinbe with a hard stare, "I wouldn't do that if I were you."

Kyoko tilted her head for a look. Sure enough the guy's hand had stopped in midair, almost touching Suki's bottom, and he was grinning with a starry eyed look.

Shinbe sighed and dropped his hand, "One day, I'm gonna figure out how you know, even when you're not looking."

Suki just groaned, "I just do, that's all!" Giving Kyoko a friendly smile she said, "Come with me and I'll change real quick." She grabbed Kyoko by the hand and pulled her out the door.

Kyoko gave a glance back at Shinbe to see him waving. 'These two are going to be loads of fun,' she thought to herself as she was pulled into the women's locker room.

Suki could already tell she liked Kyoko, and for some reason, she felt like she had known her without ever meeting her. "Kyoko, tell me a little about yourself while I change," She said stepping behind the dividing wall.

Kyoko sat down on a bench feeling completely comfortable around Suki. "Well, I come from a small town on the other side of the city. And for some reason, out of the blue, I received a letter saying I had a scholarship here." Kyoko could hear Suki's yep, so she continued. "I really don't know how I received a scholarship I didn't even apply for."

Suki could hear the question in that statement and smiled, sticking her head out around the corner. "Don't worry about that. You came here the same way I did." She disappeared behind the divider again as she added, "I never applied here either."

Kyoko frowned, "But why? There has to be a reason. Do you know?"

Suki came back around, now fully changed. She sat down to put her tennis shoes on. "Yeah, I've figured it out. Well, some of it anyway. The guy that owns this school searches out people with... Suki paused, tilting her head a little, "unique abilities." She shrugged adding, "You might have a lot to get used to when you start meeting the others that live here." She grinned, knowing she was right.

Suddenly, Suki stood up and threw a shoe at the locker room door, smirking in triumph when she heard soft cursing from the other side. Retrieving the shoe, she sat back down to pull it on. "So now, what unique ability do you have?"

Kyoko's breath seemed to stop as her mind went into overdrive. There was no way that anyone here could know about her being a priestess. She frowned at Suki guiltily and then quickly looked away as she answered, "None that I know of."

Suki lifted an eyebrow but shrugged knowing she'd find out sooner or later. "Come on, let's go. Shinbe is probably waiting on us anyway." She opened the door and sure enough, Shinbe was standing there close enough to the door to have been listening to them. He smiled at them innocently, all the while backing up.

Suki closed the door behind them and pointed at the sign on the door. "Shinbe, can't you read? That says Women's Locker Room." She gave him a pointed look.

Shinbe shrugged, "Yes, that's why I was standing near it." He quickly jumped out of the way when she swung her hand at him. "Suki! I'm a male! I need affection. What better way to acquire it than to learn how the female mind works?"

"You can do your research in the library," Suki said through gritted teeth.

Shinbe grinned. "Dearest Suki, every book on the female mind in that library is blank."

Suki smiled back, "That's because all those books in the library were authored by men."

Cocking an eyebrow at her, Shinbe leaned closer, "Exactly. I plan to be the first to write one that makes sense to those of us that possess testosterone."

Suki flashed Kyoko a defeated look then glanced down at her watch. "Hey, are you hungry? Let's go to the student restaurant and eat first."

Kyoko nodded. She had been too nervous to eat this morning, but with them she felt right at home and was now starving.

Shinbe waved a hand in front of him, "Ladies first." He yelped when Suki gave him another whack upside the head.

"I wasn't too slow that time was I? Now lead the way," Suki gave him an accusing look. Once Shinbe was safely walking in front of them, she leaned close to Kyoko with a knowing smirk, "Just remember to keep him in front of you at all times, unless you want to be felt up."

Kyoko couldn't help it. She started laughing and didn't quit until they entered the built-in lunchroom, which to her looked more like a diner. Her eyes widened as she stepped closer to Suki. "You know, every time I turn around in this place, I feel like I'm in the wrong place."

Shinbe led them to a table near the back of the room. Suki and Kyoko slid into a bench while Shinbe took the other side, looking like he was the most innocent guy in the world. "You know, this place does take a lot of getting used to." He smiled at Kyoko making his amethyst eyes light up. "I've been here a year and still haven't figured it out."

Suki nudged Kyoko's shoulder, "He arrived the same way you and I did. An open invitation." She shrugged as if to tell Kyoko to just accept it and enjoy.

Kyoko leaned forward with a confused look, "I don't get it. Why would someone do that?"

Shinbe nodded knowing someone needed to tell her the truth. "I have certain abilities and so does Suki." He shrugged winking at her. "Everyone here with a scholarship does." He paused looking for the right word, "We are gifted in one way or another." He raised an eyebrow at Suki, "Have you told her yet?"

Suki gave a quick negative shake of her head then turned to Kyoko suddenly wanting to change the subject, "Hey, do you want a hamburger and fries?"

Kyoko nodded and Suki got up as if avoiding the question about the free scholarships, "Stay here, I'll be right back and don't worry. To those who have scholarships, the food is free and they even bring it to us." Suki went to place the order, leaving her alone with Shinbe.

Chapter 3 "Meeting Toya"

Shinbe leaned forward with a serious look on his face, his amethyst eyes almost glowing, "There are some normal people here, and then there are the ones that have scholarships like me and Suki. There are others that have scholarships, but we all have some kind of special ability like a power normal people do not have."

"Mine is Telekinesis. I can move objects with my mind." "And telepathy which means I can speak to others with my mind." He said the words without making a sound, knowing she could hear him within her own mind.

Kyoko's lips parted when she didn't see his lips move and his voice echoed inside her head. She suddenly felt warm all over like his voice was supposed to be there or something. Her expression relaxed and her eyes softened as she gazed at him.

Shinbe tried to hide his curious frown when he had linked minds with her just then; it had taken all his concentration just to close the connection. It was as if his power wanted to stay with her. Trying to shake the feeling, he continued. "I can also cast spells and I come from a long line of monks." He stopped when Kyoko burst out laughing.

Suki slid back in beside Kyoko not missing a beat, "I know it's hard to believe, but he does come from a line of monks." She grinned then her look turned sober again, "And I have seen him throw things without touching them, and he is great at all kinds of martial arts."

"Perhaps we should inform the lovely Kyoko of all my talents," Shinbe said suggestively.

Suki turned and glared at Shinbe, "No, I will not tell her you're good at THAT!" She popped him on the top of the head for good measure.

"But still, he acts like he is only human," A sarcastic voice came out of nowhere and Shinbe straightened up, scooting over to give room to the voice.

Kyoko glanced up and her eyes locked with deep golden ones. The owner of the voice was good looking beyond anything she'd ever seen. Long black hair with silver highlights fell from his head in long layers. His sun-kissed skin seemed to glow with a healthy shine and his body was to die for. His eyes however, seemed to hold her captive even though he wasn't looking directly at her.

Suki huffed and crossed her arms in front of her chest, giving the newcomer a pissed off look. "Great, you're all it will take to scare her away."

Shinbe grinned at Suki then glanced at Kyoko to give introductions, "This is Toya. Toya meet Kyoko. Today is her first day here."

Toya turned to look at Kyoko, and for some reason the way he was looking at her, as if sizing her up, annoyed her. Kyoko narrowed her eyes at him, her first impression of him shot out of the sky.

"So, you're the priestess?" Toya huffed and turned his head as if dismissing her as he sat down.

Kyoko's eyes rounded on him and she gasped. No one here knew she was a priestess. As a matter of fact, only her closest family members knew that.

"How the hell do you know that?" she yelled at him, all of a sudden furious.

Toya flinched feeling his blood spike. "Damn, don't yell like a freaking maniac. I can hear you fine," he growled at her.

Suki and Shinbe both winced, and kind of shrank in their chairs as Kyoko and Toya glared daggers at each other.

Toya's senses started to pick up a ripple of power that came with Kyoko's anger and he tensed up, thinking maybe she did have a little power in that small cute body, though he'd be damned if he told her that.

Silently, he appraised her appearance. Her auburn hair shimmered in the light around a beautiful heart shaped face. She had vibrant green eyes that were now looking at him in anger, which heated his

blood slightly. He liked a woman with spunk and she was obviously full of it, but for some reason it set him on edge. What he didn't like was the way she was glaring at him; he'd fix that real quick.

He glared at her harder, trying to intimidate her. "You got a scholarship didn't you?" and HE said you are a PRIESTESS!" Toya growled in her face, coming closer with every word till they were almost nose-to-nose. He folded his arms inside his loose sleeves and huffed at her. "Bet you don't even know what a demon is," He grumbled, suddenly realizing she was getting cuter by the second and that annoyed him.

Kyoko flinched, her temper spiking. She knew what demons were. She'd studied them all her life and if her family was right, she had even met some; but she couldn't remember. Still, she didn't like Toya's high and mighty attitude so she just cocked an eyebrow as if silently asking him if he wanted to bet on that.

Suki seemed to want to come to Kyoko's defense, "Toya, can't you be civil for one damn minute? She's only been here a couple hours, and before you run her off, I'd like to convince her to stay." She looked almost sad at the thought of losing Kyoko so quickly.

Toya raised an annoyed eyebrow, glancing over at Suki, "Well, she didn't even answer my question. Do you think she can handle it?" he turned the glare back to Kyoko.

"I can handle anything you can think to throw at me, asshole," Kyoko informed him, her words beginning to ice.

Suki and Shinbe glanced at each other. They'd never heard anyone but themselves and the owner of the university stand up to Toya like that, except maybe Kotaro. Then they both smirked, knowing they were definitely going to like this girl named Kyoko.

A waiter showed up at the table with a tray of food, and Kyoko turned her attention from Toya to him. The guy stared at Kyoko a little too long, and her senses started to tingle, telling her something was up. She looked up into dark eyes that didn't seem to fit the boyish face belonging to the young man.

Something about him drew Kyoko in; though she didn't know if she really liked the feeling. Sure, he was cute to look at but something about him made her slightly uneasy. She blinked trying to rid herself of the spell the young man seemed to emit without even trying. The mood was ultimately broken when she heard a low growl come from beside her.

Toya felt coldness crawl across his skin and growled at the guy, seeming to shake him out of his daze. As the boy's eyes refocused on Toya's, they seemed to shimmer from jet-black to a silver-blue as he turned and fled the table.

Kyoko gave Suki a confused look, but Suki only shrugged it off, taking a bite of her own food. Beside her, Shinbe coughed into his hand trying to hide his weird sense of humor as he watched the guy race across the room. Kyoko was getting some very weird vibes from this guy; Toya and wasn't going to rest until she found out what his problem was. She leaned back in her chair and studied him for a moment.

His long hair was the strangest color of midnight with thick silver highlights running wildly through it, and his eyes were beautiful; HE was beautiful. 'Mental note to self, smack yourself later for thinking that.' His eyes were flaming gold dust, no doubt about it. He would have been cute if it wasn't for the look he was now giving her.

Suki sighed. She needed to have a talk with Kyoko about making Toya too mad. He did have his line and it wasn't good to cross it. And it wasn't fair that Kyoko had no idea she was pissing off a guardian.

"I have found that if you play with fire; you often get burned," Shinbe informed the silence at the table and was rewarded with a heated glare from everyone before they all decided to ignore him.

Toya stole another glance at Kyoko. So, this is who he was supposed to be watching? Kyou had to be kidding. Kyou had just told him about her coming this morning, with a level warning that he was to watch out for her and make sure she was safe at all times.

He narrowed his eyes now wondering about the boy who had just stood by their table. The way he had been staring at Kyoko had angered him. Was the priestess really in danger? Why would Kyou take such an interest in keeping a mere human safe? Kyou never treated anyone with respect, so what made this wisp of a girl any different?

Sometimes Toya hated the fact that Kyou was his appointed guardian, but he did have to admit he owed him a lot for taking him in. He also knew when Kyou did something that there was always a good reason for it and that alone made him wonder about this girl named Kyoko.

Shinbe, who noted the tension at the table could be cut with a knife, glanced at Suki with the biggest puppy dog eyes. Knowing he could make Kyoko smile again with his antics, he began to lay it on thick.

"So Suki, are you still going to the club with me tonight? It is Saturday night and I would hate to miss out on dancing with you by dancing with a dozen complete strangers.## Shinbe went into a dazed look as if dreaming of dancing with a throng of other women just to prove his point.

Suki gave him a level look wondering if she should slap the stupid look off his face, then turned to Kyoko. "Kyoko, I need a chaperone," she grinned. "You'll go with me won't you? It's too dangerous to go alone with just him," she gave Kyoko a pleading look.

The corners of Kyoko's lips twitched seeing Shinbe come out of the dazed look and wink at her again. "Suki, I would love to go with you guys. That way we can tag team Shinbe if he gets out of control."

They both gave Shinbe a pointed look and Shinbe groaned. Kyoko couldn't help it as she busted out laughing again. She really liked these two.

Toya watched Kyoko out of the corner of his eyes. Damn, she was pretty when she laughed like that. He groaned inwardly. Where the hell had that come from? He slumped down in his seat annoyed with his train of thought. 'Damn it!' Now he'd have to go to the club tonight just to watch out for her. She was still smiling at Shinbe and Suki when she turned back.

As she glanced at him, his pulse skipped a beat and the temperature within his blood went up several degrees. Toya realized she had more power coming from her now that she was happy then she'd had a moment ago when he'd pissed her off. He felt uneasy for the first time in a long time.

When Kyoko's laughter died down, she turned to Suki, "Hey, I'm not even sure what classes I'll be in Monday or where to go for that matter. Do you know where I can find out?"

Before Suki could answer, Toya answered the question watching her closely. "All scholarship students are taught the same. So, you, Suki, and Shinbe, along with the others, will be in the same classes. The only separate class will be when you are with the owner." His voice was lazy as he leaned back in his chair.

Kyoko frowned, "What class does the owner teach?"

Shinbe supplied the answer this time, his amethyst eyes lighting up with intrigue, "For all of us it's different. That's why he teaches us separately. He helps us with our special skills.## He leaned back thoughtful, then added with a smirk, ##You, I guess, would be strengthening your priestess powers."

Kyoko's anger spiked again, wondering how the hell the owner had known she was a priestess. The scholarship had said nothing about it. She had gone for the last couple years trying to bury the same powers for which the owner had given her a scholarship for. She wanted to get to the bottom of this as soon as possible.

Looking down at her plate, Kyoko said in a strained voice, "Maybe this is a mistake. Is there any way I can talk to the owner of the academy now?##

Toya narrowed his eyes. Kyou had told him she might ask to see him, and although Kyou never wanted to see anybody outside of class, he had told Toya to bring her directly to him if she had any questions.

"What's wrong, are you scared?" he taunted her and was rewarded when her stormy eyes shot straight to his in annoyed anger. So, this girl thought she could handle him. Well, it might be fun to watch her try that look on Kyou. He had seen the fear that Kyou could instantly instill in someone without having to say a word.

"Fine, I'll take you to see him as soon as you're ready," Toya challenged wondering if she would take the bait.

Kyoko lost some of her anger on hearing this. Shoving her plate out of the way, she nodded, happy to call his bluff, "Ready when you are." She cocked an eyebrow at him.

"What's the rush?" Toya stood up with a smirk. "Might want to put a lid on that temper of yours because he will sense it," he snickered at her, thinking she had no clue what she was getting herself into.

Kyoko narrowed her eyes at him then stood up, glancing back at Suki and Shinbe. "I'll talk to you after I'm done, if you will come get me. I'll be in my room waiting and we can make plans for tonight." She winked at Suki then looked back at Toya and added in a deadpan voice. "That is, if I decide to stay."

He turned away from her with a huff and she watched his retreating back, then waved at the others over her shoulder as she followed him. She quickly noticed how other students would get out of Toya's way hastily and wondered at it. What was he? The school bully?

Kyoko was not going to give him the satisfaction of running to catch up with him, so she took her time walking, purposely falling behind. Still slightly angry with him she nearly blushed when her eyes strayed to Toya's rear end. Watching his hair brush over the seat of his pants, giving her a glimpse of the firm roundness that lay beneath it only irritated her more. Infuriating and cute was just a horrible combination.

Mentally shaking her head, she continued to follow him, cursing her roving eyes. It would take a complete idiot to think someone you can't stand is cute, she mumbled under her breath. Annoying. Hostile and Arrogant maybe but never cute, she grinned, already feeling better.

Some strange awareness crept up her spine and her eyes shot above her and locked with dark eyes that were piercing into hers. The guy was leaning against the wall at the top of the stairs watching her. He had ebony waves of hair flowing down his back and over his shoulder, and his midnight eyes were intense. He was very attractive but she felt threatened.

She looked away from him. 'Kyoko get a hold of yourself. Stop analyzing everybody you see,' she told herself sternly even as she attempted to raise her emerald eyes back up at him.

"There's the prettiest girl on campus."

Kyoko felt a strong arm go around her shoulders and turned to look, remembering the voice of the guy that had showed her where her room was earlier that morning. She felt the ends of her hair again tickle her face as a breeze from nowhere seemed to caress her cheeks.

She gave him a warm smile but at the same time, dipped and shrugged out from his attached arm. "Kotaro, it's nice to see you again. Thanks for your help this morning," Kyoko said in a nervous voice, wishing he wouldn't act so familiar with her. She thought he was nice and all, but she never said he could put his arm around her.

Kotaro was unaffected as he took her hand in his, "Is there somewhere else I can escort you to, Kyoko?" He looked deep into her emerald eyes knowing he had seen them before somewhere. And he had a vague feeling he had once happily drowned in them.

Kyoko glanced up the stairs to see Toya had stopped and turned around, looking angry again. She could have sworn she'd just heard him growl at her or Kotaro, she wasn't sure which.

Toya didn't know what Kotaro was up to, but he didn't like the fact he was acting so friendly with Kyoko. A deep growl came from his chest as he issued a warning, "I can handle it Kotaro, unless you would like to take her to go see Kyou." He gave Kotaro a hard stare, knowing Kotaro didn't go around Kyou unless it was for class or he was summoned.

Kotaro let go of Kyoko's hand, "I hope everything is alright, Kyoko." He shot Toya a dirty look then turned back to her, "Make sure you watch out for freezer burn here. If he gets out of hand, I'll take care of him for you." Kotaro gave Toya a smug look then nodded his head to Kyoko and turned, going back down the stairs.

Kyoko heard Toya huff and she looked up to him as he turned and walked down the corridor, the same way she had gone this morning.

This time she hurried and caught up with him just in time to see him go through the doors that read, DO NOT ENTER. Kyoko wondered where they were going. As she followed his stiff back, it crossed her mind that he was taking her back to her own room. When he did indeed stop in front of her door, Toya turned to look at her and she gave him a pissed look until he waved his hand to the door straight across from hers and knocked.

Kyoko was in shock. The owner was in the room right across from hers? Again, the words of her brother came back to haunt her. "No way!" Without waiting for an answer, Toya opened the door and pushed her inside in front of him.

Immediately, Kyoko turned on him. "I don't know what your damn problem is but would you please not push me," she made to shoo him away, "Or touch me. I haven't done anything to you." The hair again stood up on the back of her neck when she noticed Toya was staring behind her.

Kyoko's shoulders slumped. Now she'd done it. Did she always have to pop off without thinking about where she was or who might be watching?

Toya saw Kyoko tense up and he smirked, lowering his eyes to the girl that seemed so small all of a sudden. "Didn't you want to talk to someone?" When Kyoko didn't turn around, Toya looked back up at Kyou and narrowed his eyes when he noted Kyou was leaning against the doorway of the living room staring at Kyoko as if he were in a trance.

"What the hell?" Toya thought to himself. Why was Kyou looking at her like he'd seen a ghost? On some level, he did not want to identify the jealous feeling it caused. It sent a creeping sensation across his gut making him want to step in between them and block Kyoko from Kyou's sight. He wanted to protect her.

Kyou was momentarily at a loss for words, seeing Kyoko this close for the first time in over a thousand years. The very air around her hummed with the force he remembered the same undeniable force that had drawn him to her in the past had not vanished.

His golden eyes took in the guardian behind her with a sort of detached indifference. "Toya, leave." A dangerously threatening tone could be heard in his voice.

A growl formed in the back of Toya's throat and his fists clenched in anger as some feeling seemed to rear up and haunt him from some unknown place hidden deep inside his memory. Without another word, Toya turned and stormed out the door, slamming it.

Kyoko watched Toya leave while her mind was going around and around in chaotic thoughts. All of a sudden, she felt the impulse to run out after him. Deciding not to be a coward, she tilted her chin up and found her courage, finally turning around only to not believe what she was seeing.

Instead of the older man in a starched business suit that she was expecting to see, she found herself face to face with him. His golden eyes burned into her own making her feel like she could not look away. His silver hair spilled over his shoulders and perfectly chiseled body. He was tall, and beautiful, with a touch of arrogance surrounding his regal body and a face that could only be a gift from heaven.

Kyoko instantly closed her eyes. What the hell was wrong with her? She came here to ask questions, not drool. When she opened her eyes again he was much closer. She instantly took a step

back from the nobility and superiority that surrounded him only to feel the solidness of the door against her backâ€”trapping her.

Without realizing he had done so, Kyou started to walk toward her. But when he noted her retreat from him, he raised an elegant eyebrow, extending his hand toward the sofa. "Would you like to sit down Miss Hogo?" He knew she had questions for him. He would have been disappointed if she hadnâ€”t.

Kyoko swallowed nervously but haughtily raised her chin, edging her way over to the sofa, keeping as much distance between them as she could, if nothing else then in the hope that her brain would function normally. She inwardly gave a shaky laugh.

"First thing I want to know is, what makes you think I am a priestess?" She looked up at him warily and almost freaked out when he took a seat beside her on the sofa instead of the chair on the other side of the coffee table. Kyoko shifted her body and turned watching him, stilling herself from moving even farther away from him and showing her fear.

'So, she wants to play,' Kyou mused idly, but just as quickly shook off his intriguing thought. "What makes you think I would not know that you are a priestess?" he returned in an unnaturally calm voice. She was so small compared to him as he leaned toward her, looking down into her heart shaped face.

Kyoko watched the planes of his perfect face for any hint of emotion and was surprised to find none. He was like a sculpture of perfection and calmness, and that irritated her to no end.

"Do you always answer a question with a question, Misterâ€”?â€” she stammered not even knowing his last name.

Kyou smiled but only inwardly so she wouldnâ€”t see it. Well, he could tell she still had life in her and he wasnâ€”t disappointed in that. It only made him want to see more. "Mr. Lord, but you may call me Kyou, unless you like Lord better." He nailed her with a heated look.

Kyoko returned that heated look, "Whyâ€” Amâ€” Iâ€” Here?" She said the words slowly and one at a time, as if she was talking to a child. There, letâ€”s see him glide his way out of that one. â€”Mr. Lord, my ass.â€” Kyoko huffed to herself, never breaking eye contact with him.

Having read her mind, Kyou's golden eyes glowed as they narrowed on her emerald ones. He leaned a little closer to her, knowing he would intimidate her by doing so. He could smell it.

"Your priestess powers are weak and untrained, or you would know why I know you are a priestess," he almost hissed at her, losing his composure for only a moment before his calm facade slipped back into place. "I will teach you martial arts along with strengtheningâ€” what you lack."

To Kyoko, the last of what he said almost sounded like an insult. Being the little hothead she was known for, she leaned in almost face to face with him, and the sarcasm was thick. "Maybe I only hide my true power, then when I find a deserving target, I release it." Anger was making her fearless, or stupid, at the moment she wasn't sure which one.

Kyou leaned in even closer, dipping his lips close to hers so his hot breath would caress her lips. He whispered in a dark voice, "Priestess.â€”

Chapter 4 "Pay Attention"

Kyoko jerked back from him, all of a sudden feeling vibes coming off him that she wasn't supposed to feel. Something was going on here and she felt like she was the last one to know about it.

"I need answers," she whispered in a nervous voice, biting her bottom lip in hopes of getting rid of the tickling sensation Kyou had created. She wished briefly that she could get rid of the breathtaking shivers that decided to take the bullet train through her nervous system.

Inhaling her scent and feeling his blood instantly heat, Kyou leaned back. He had seen the girl's small body shiver but not in revulsion. Glancing down, he almost smirked when he saw her arms come alive with goose bumps.

"Why are you suppressing your power? You need to be aware of your surroundings before the past is repeated." The slightly arrogant voice told her.

Kyoko gulped, "What do you mean by that?" She tensed up.

"You are aware there are immortals here at the school, are you not?" His eyes were glittering with something Kyoko had never seen, and his voice was harsh as if he were disapproving. "Demons are closing in around us as we speak."

Kyoko's eyes widened then narrowed. Was he playing with her? "What would lead you to think that there are guardians and demons here?" she demanded with an indignant scoff.

In the blink of an eye Kyou had her by the arms and jerked her up, his head bowed down within an inch of her face. He growled angrily, "Pay attention."

Kyoko blinked, not believing what she was seeing. Standing in front of her was not who she was talking to just a moment before. She was looking into unnaturally bright, pissed off, golden eyes, and under them was the whitest small fangs, and she could feel the claws that were at that moment unknowingly digging into her arm.

His hair had lengthened to twice the length it had been only a moment before and seemed to almost float around him as if awaiting acknowledgment. With a startled yelp, Kyoko wrenched herself free from him and took a step back quickly, only for him to take a threatening step closer.

"You're a guardian?" she stuttered lamely.

"And you are the priestess that should have already known that," he hissed stalking her even as he felt his anger fade.

She turned to make a run for the door and instantly screamed when she felt strong arms wrap around her from behind.

Kyou's body tightened around her as she struggled. He lifted her off the ground as her feet kicked the air in her attempt to escape him. Giving her enough time to realize trying to free herself from him was futile, he placed his lips near her ear and whispered, "You will stay until you are strong enough to free yourself from these arms priestess."

He then hauled her into the air, only to toss her again on the overstuffed sofa, where she landed with a slight bounce. Now that she was once again face to face with him, Kyoko gave him a furious scream and then blinked again when his appearance turned back to the man she had been talking to.

She glared at him angrily, balling her fist up, "What the hell is going on?"

Kyou stood calmly before her, the only difference this time was his eyes were still glowing, "You will stay here." He leaned down toward her, "You will let me train you." He placed his hands on the back of the sofa efficiently trapping her, "And this time, you will win without sacrifice." His nose was almost touching hers as he hissed the last of the statement, now showing his displeasure.

Kyoko leaned back into the sofa as far as it would allow, returning his heated gaze, but she still didn't sense any threat from him. Even if he wasn't human, he had no intent to harm her. She frowned at him realizing what he had just said.

"This time?" Her voice was soft, "What do you mean? This time?"

Kyou inhaled deeply, "You may have forgotten, but I have not." Her scent surrounded him and he felt the familiar twinge of pain around his forgotten heart, but she had to know the truth, "We have fought together in the past priestess, and the time is drawing near that we will have to do so again."

Kyoko's eyes softened for an instant, "Who are you?"

"Your guardian. Kyoko, I know you have forgotten because you sacrificed your memories of us in order to bring the Guardian Heart Crystal back to this world." His gaze searched hers and his voice became a mere whisper, "You must trust me."

Even though heâ##d just tried to frighten her everything within her was telling her to trust him. "I doâ# trust you." As soon as she whispered the words, she found herself pulled into his arms. At first she stiffened, then feeling the blanket of warmth that surrounded her, she gave in to the embrace relaxing against him in serene confusion.

Kyou couldnâ##t help it. He had been carrying the worry of rejection for far too long, and hearing those words lifted the weight of the world off his tense shoulders. He crushed her to him, surrounding himself with her scent as he nuzzled his face into her hair.

"Stay this time," He whispered in a moment of weakness.

Kyoko could feel the tenderness in his words and in his arms but still, he had just scared the hell out of her a few minutes ago, and now he was holding her as if his very life depended on it. She was caught between fearing him and wanting to reach out and caress his smooth cheek.

She was full of questions and mumbled into his chest, "I want to remember what you say I have forgotten. What do I need to know?"

Kyou closed his golden eyes not wanting to return to the real world just yetâ# she was right where she belongedâ# in his arms. With a sigh, he unwillingly released her back onto the sofa and moved to sit beside her.

Running his hand through his overly-long bangs, Kyou took a deep breath to calm his raging instincts. Stilling his desires, he focused on the wall in front of him and began to tell her what he wanted her to know. Hearing something was not the same as remembering it.

"You will have help. All the people here that arrived the same way you did, on the scholarships, I have gathered for you. They do not remember you and you do not remember them, but they fought with you then, and they will fight with you again when the time comes," his voice was laced with a hint of memories of the past.

Kyoko's eyes widened, "Suki and Shinbe?" She asked wondering why she believed him so readily.

Kyou nodded, "I see you have met them. Yes, you were very close to them, as well as Toya who protected you like no other."

"Toya?" She raised an eyebrow at him. "You have to be kidding.â## Then she mentally added, â##He doesn't even like me."

Kyou sighed reluctantly, "Toya has not changed in this life, and is still the obnoxious, hardheaded, youth of the past. But yes, he protected you with a vengeance, and would have died for you if the need would have arisen."

Kyoko frowned, "He does not remember?" She felt like he was telling her the truth, and it made sense knowing she was missing part of her own memory. Her eyes searched his, wanting that knowledge back.

Kyou shook his head slightly, "I am the only one that did not come back with you. Therefore, I am the only one to carry the memories of what happened. Toya does not even remember he is my brother."

Kyoko inhaled at the confession, â##brothers? What happened that you are the only one to remember?" She had to know.

"You gave all your memories up in battle to destroy the evil of our world and save the Guardian Heart Crystal. In the same instant, you made a wish on the crystal to see everyone again. You did

not want to lose them. When you instantly disappeared, so did everyone elseâ€”including the enemy. You had unknowingly brought them hereâ€”with you.â€”

He sighed regretfully. â€”I had cast a spell around myself that protected me from such wishes.” his eyes grew distant as if he was reliving the memory.

”You took everyone with you, and you didnâ€”t even know it. They were all reborn here, in your time, leaving me alone in the past.” His eyes focused and locked with hers. ”So, I survived and waited on you. Once it was time, I gathered everyone that had left me. Now you have brought with you the crystal, and the malevolence that wants itâ€”” his voice became darker, ”â€”evil has already started its search for you and I will not allow it.”

Kyoko nodded trying to understand, ”So, everyone who is here the same way I am, I can trust?” He nodded and Kyoko continued, ”Do they know any of this?”

Kyou shook his head, ”They will feel a bond and it will grow, but other than that, I do not know the future, only the past. They will protect you, as they did then. It is what they were born to doâ€”their reason for existence.â€”

He quickly looked away from her searching eyes knowing the truth of his words pertained to him as well. â€”We still have some time, but for now I want you to stop hiding your priestess powers, and become aware of your surroundings. I will watch over you, and have told Toya to keep a close watch also.”

Kyoko watched him closely trying to remember anything she could about him. He seemed to know her so well. Looking deep into his eyes she whispered curiously, ”How close were we?”

A fluttering of hidden affection crossed his golden orbs before Kyou stiffened and moved away from her. His cool exterior falling back into place, he growled looking at the door, then back at her quickly. ”Do not repeat what I have told you for they will remember on their own.”

Kyoko jumped when a hard knock came from the door, then it opened without permission.

Toya had started to worry for the girlâ€”s safety and thought to interrupt, if nothing else then to save her from the iciness he knew Kyou capable of. His gaze was instantly drawn to her as he entered.

”Well, I see she survived her talk,” his irises flashed silver still feeling that something was not right. ”If youâ€”re finished with Kyoko, Suki is waiting for her.” Toya leveled his golden eyes on Kyou not aware of the silver flecks that had started showing within his orbs.

Kyou gave Toya his usual blank glance, and nodded silently.

Kyoko looked at Toya warmly, because now that she was using her senses, she could tell he had been worried about her, even if he did not act it.

’Would have given his life for you.’ Kyou’s words came back to haunt her.

Kyou watched her ease with Toya, and felt a distant, but familiar longing, causing him to scowl. He remembered this feeling well, and his eyes narrowed on the silver guardian. Would she always hold a special bond for his brother that she did not share with the others?

Kyoko stood up, nodding her goodbye to Kyou and flashed him a secret smile that Toya could not see, then turned to Toya and granted him with one of her sweetest smiles. ”Come on, letâ€”s not keep Suki waiting.” She took off out the door leaving Toya standing there with a warm feeling. A feeling only her smile could cause.

He shook his head trying to shake the warmth away, and then scowled at Kyou, noticing he was watching him intensely. â€”What?â€” Toya asked in a hard voice knowing he wouldnâ€”t get an answer. Deciding it wasnâ€”t worth his time, he took off out the door again, slamming it behind him and hurried to catch up with Kyoko.

Toya watched the back of Kyoko as she walked hurriedly down the hall. She must be in a hurry to get away from Kyou. He smirked to himself, speeding up to catch up with her, which was not a problem, considering he was a guardian. His thoughts darkened a little, wondering if she even knew what he was. He doubted she did, or she would not have smiled at him like that.

At the top of the steps, Kyoko knew Toya had caught up with her because she could feel him behind her. Yes, she could feel his powerful aura, but it was a little different feeling than with Kyou. She closed her eyes for just a second. Searching the aura Kyoko decided no matter how mean he acted, his aura was actually very warm and made her feel â€ among many thingsâ€ protected.

She understood that Toya was supposed to be younger than Kyou, but she also could sense the hidden power in him. A power that, if tapped into, could make Toya outshine his brother in a heartbeat... though she doubted either of them was aware of it. Kyoko was enjoying the use of her senses, now that she had flipped them back on again.

"Soâ€" she turned to him, "â€where are Suki and Shinbe?"

Toya narrowed his eyes at her now that he had been put on the spot with his lie. How the hell should he know where Suki and Shinbe were? Heâ€d only gone back for her to get her away from Kyou.

â€I don't know,â€ he drawled lazily.

Kyoko frowned at him, "But you saidâ€" "

Toya cut her off. â€You should thank me for saving you," he informed her, leaning in closer as if to intimidate her.

"Saving me from what?â€ Kyoko growled right in his face, not liking his attitude. Geez, sometimes he could really come across as a jackass.

"From Kyou," Toya growled loudly back at her, clenching his fist. She could really piss him off with that pretty mouth of hers. â€Pretty mouth?â€ Where the hell had that come from? He took a startled step back from her in confusion.

Taken aback, Kyoko just stared blankly at him for a minute. Then softly at first, but growing louder by the second, she started laughing at him. "You did?" she asked, trying to breathe between giggles. "Why would youâ€" she trailed off, slowing down on laughing, and finally settling for a wide grin though her eyes still held a twinkle of mischief.

â€That was very sweet. I didnâ€t know you cared," she wrinkled her nose at him, trying to keep a straight face.

Toya glared at her getting the feeling the joke was on him. "So, have you decided to stay after all â€Priestessâ€?â€ he spat the last word as if it left a bad taste in his mouth.

Kyoko lost her smile and pushed her face within inches of his again, staring straight into his golden eyes. "Yes I have, â€guardianâ€," she cocked an eyebrow at him then turned and raced down the stairs laughing.

â€YES!â€ Kyoko exclaimed silently and mentally tacked a point up on her side of the chalkboard. â€Kyoko oneâ€ Toya zip.â€

Toya's eyes widened for an instant before he realized the little wench had gotten him. "Damn!" he hissed and took off after her.

Kyoko was almost at the bottom of the steps when she felt her priestess senses going into overdrive. Sensing another guardian besides Toya, she looked around. The only person close enough to cause that feeling was a student standing at the bottom of the stairs, watching her with interest.

Looking closely, she was mystified with the purplish highlights running through his untamed hair, and the most beautiful eyes. As she watched those eyes she could have swornâ€ she could see glitter of every color appear within his irises.

Toya now stood behind Kyoko. Seeing her sudden stop, he noted she was staring at Kamui. â€So she can detect immortals now,â€ Toya thought to himself. Reaching down, he grabbed her arm, "Come on, Iâ€ll introduce you.â€

Toya had found a soft spot for Kamui as soon as he had met the boy. All he really knew about him was that he had no parents and had grown up in foster care till Kyou had offered him a place here.

Kyoko let herself be half pulled and half dragged by Toya toward the stranger. She could tell he was also immortal, but could also sense an awesome kindness. She let her senses explore his aura and found warmth there and a hidden innocence belonging only to a child.

"Hiya Toya, who you got here?" Kamui's glittering eyes were watching her in fascination. He felt like he had been waiting for her for so long even though he had no idea who she was. It was as if he had missed her terribly. It felt like he could suddenly breathe again and he even inhaled to prove that fact, but when he did he caught her scent and found it also seemed so familiar.

Looking at Toya, he asked, "What did you do to go capture yourself a girlfriend?" Kamui smirked as his eyes lit up with humor.

"Hell no," Toya growled. "She's not my type at all."

"How would you know? You've never had a girlfriend." Kamui laughed out loud at his own joke.

Kyoko tried hard not to giggle but seeing the mirth in Kamui's eyes coupled with the dark expression on Toya's face made it impossible.

"This is Kyoko," Toya turned to her, releasing her arm as if he just remembered he was touching her. "Kyoko, this is Kamui. He is also here on scholarship, and will be in the same classes that you are in."

"Yeah, I'm one of the freeloaders here," Kamui said with a straight face, causing Kyoko to lose the ability to hold in the laughter she had barely contained in the first place.

She turned to Kamui and stuck out her hand. With a very friendly smile, keeping her secret inside that if he was here on scholarship, then she knew that he was her friend in the past, "Hi Kamui, it's nice to meet you. How long have you been here at the academy?"

Kamui already liked this friendly girl. "About two years. So what's the hothead doing? Showing you around?" he looked at Toya smirking, then back at her, softening his smile. The mischievous side of his personality came forth and he took Kyoko's hand in his own. Bowing down slightly, he brought her soft hand to his lips and placed a gentle kiss on her knuckles.

Kamui almost laughed at the heated glare he was receiving from Toya. Only an idiot wouldn't be able to see the obvious attraction the other man had for the lovely Kyoko.

Kyoko blushed slightly and giggled at the term "hothead". Seeing Toya glare at Kamui, she grinned. "Actually we are trying to find Shinbe and Suki right now. Have you seen them anywhere?"

Before Kyoko had even finished, someone grabbed her arm, pulling her from between Kamui and Toya. With a quick glance, Kyoko found herself looking into the worried face of Suki.

"Did everything go okay Kyoko? You are staying, aren't you?" Suki sounded almost pleading.

Kyoko nodded suddenly hearing Kyou's soft voice whispering for her to stay. "I'm not going anywhere." She nodded over Suki's shoulder at Shinbe seeing he seemed just as satisfied as Suki at her answer.

Toya lifted an eyebrow at Kyoko's words. He wondered exactly what Kyou said to her to make her so determined to stay. Now she was acting so different, she looked almost happy. Usually when Kyou talked to people alone they would walk away unnerved for hours. The guy even had the ability to give him the creeps every once in a while.

Kyoko took Suki's arm and started for the stairs, "You have got to help me find something to wear tonight, if we are going dancing." The two girls huddled, talking as they walked. They acted like they had known each other forever.

Shinbe, Kamui and Toya watched the two girls disappear up the stairs. Shinbe asked Toya in a worried voice, "Does she know about what's really going on here?"

Toya watched Kyoko's lips moving as she talked to Suki, "Yeah, I think she does." Then turning back to them, he changed the subject, "Kamui, are you coming with us tonight?"

Shinbe did a double take. "Toya? Are you really going to come dancing?" his voice sounded shocked. 'That doesn't sound like Toya,' he thought to himself.

"Hey, I was told to watch her like a hawk, so I guess I have no choice, now do I?" Toya acted annoyed so they would think he was doing this against his will. But in truth, he suddenly didn't want to lose sight of her.

His pulse thumped under his skin, as if to tell him to protect her at all costs, no matter if he had been told to do so or not. It wasn't helping that he now had a mental picture of Kyoko moving around suggestively to a thumping beat on a crowded dance floor. It made his protective instincts surface and he suddenly would rather she not go.

A soft growl made its way from Toya's throat and he shook his head trying to rid himself of the thought of too many eyes on her eyes that did not belong.

"Yeah, sounds like fun. I'm going too," Kamui chimed in. "We have to do something on the weekends to take our minds off this place." He felt almost lightheaded with relief knowing Kyoko would be around from now on. "Plus we need to find a girlfriend for Toya," he chimed in innocently.

"Who says I need a girlfriend, you little twerp," Toya growled as he popped Kamui on the top of his head. "You wouldn't know what a girlfriend was if she bit you on the ass."

Shinbe grinned, "I think I'm the only one here who knows what a girlfriend is, but I can show you two virgins if you want the experience." He took a quick step back when they both turned and gave him murderous looks.

Quickly changing the subject, Shinbe nodded then slid a little closer to Toya. "Kyou ordered you to watch after Kyoko?" his gaze drifted in the direction she'd gone. "You know lately I have felt a shift in the balance around here, like something is getting ready to happen. Evil is getting closer. I wonder if she has something to do with it." Shinbe's instincts were almost always right and it worried him.

Toya had felt it too, and he wanted answers. "Well, no time like the present. Why don't I just go upstairs and ask frosty for the truth?" He knew Kyou was hiding something and he was going to find out what it was.

Before Shinbe could stop him, Toya had already taken off for the stairs. Shinbe cringed, "I hate it when they are in the same room. I've seen it, and it's not pretty. They act like brothers or something." His amethyst eyes trailed the stairs, watching Toya take them two at a time.

Kamui nodded, knowing Kyou scared the hell out of him sometimes. "Better him than me. I'll see you tonight." he took off, leaving Shinbe standing there by himself, still watching the stairs.

Deep within Shinbe's mind where his guardian powers reflected within his mirror self, he wondered at the familiar feeling he had for the priestess who had just ascended them. He searched deep inside his soul for the truth as he closed his eyes.

Once his amethyst eyes opened again, they glittered with secrets that were only his to know.

Kyou was lost in thought about how to handle Kyoko, now that he had her where he wanted her. He was abruptly interrupted, hearing pounding on the door. Blinking a couple of times, he suppressed the urge to roll his golden eyes, knowing that it could only be Toya. Kyou gave the door a glare, just as it opened without invitation.

Toya walked straight in, instantly seeking out his target, and spotted Kyou reclining on the sofa. "What the hell is going on with Kyoko?" he got straight to the point.

Kyou's eyes darted to Toya, but his face showed no interest in the question.

Toya knew Kyou's moods better than anyone, and he knew he would not have even looked at him if he hadn't already hit a nerve. Reading Kyou was a science to him. Even the blink of an eye meant something when it came from Kyou. Toya moved to take a seat across from him in an overstuffed chair.

"Come on, I'm not stupid. If you want me to protect her, you need to tell me why. After all, the rest of us are on their own, so why is she any different?" He spat, as if disgusted with the thought. "She's only a weak human girl."

Toya grasped the clawed hand, which he suddenly found clasped around his throat, and looked into the very angry face of Kyou.

"You will do as I say," Kyou's voice shook with rage.

Toya's eyes narrowed. Now he knew something was up. "Fine," he hissed, and was rewarded with his release. He watched Kyou's rage disappear instantly as he returned to his former place across from him, his cold mask falling back down like a shield he hid behind. Toya shook his head. "You need to tell me why she is so important to you." He put emphasis on the last word.

Kyou agreed somewhat. He had raised Toya since the day he was born. He had known his brother was near, the same moment Toya had drawn breath in this world and he had stolen him away from parents who would not have understood him. It was the same as with his other siblings, though for a while, Kyou had chosen to watch over them from a distance.

He'd hoped to make Toya's personality different somehow, but it seemed it had followed him to this life, no matter what Kyou had done to try to change it. Bottom line was Toya was still Toya, no matter what life he led. He thought that maybe meeting Kyoko would have provoked memories of the past, but his sibling showed no signs so far, just interest. Kyou's eyes narrowed with the thought.

"You feel nothing for her?" he asked in a tone that made Toya wince.

"Am I supposed to?" Toya shot back, knowing he did indeed feel something for her, but wasn't about to admit it. Folding his arms in front of him, he appeared annoyed as always, unaware of the silver that danced in his golden eyes.

"Yes," came the cold reply.

"Damn it! What makes her so special to us?" Toya threw his hands up in exasperation.

Kyou's gaze challenged his, "She is the one we have been waiting on."

Toya's eyes widened. As far back as he could remember, Kyou had told him they had to prepare for the one who carried the Guardian Heart Crystal within them. Surely, he wasn't referring to that! why would such a powerful crystal be inside such a weak girl? He had been expecting a warrior of some kind! not a simple girl.

"She is the reason you have gathered all of them?" His eyebrows rose in question.

Kyou had always refrained from telling Toya about his past, but he had warned him about his future. "You must protect her at all costs."

The room was silent as Toya's brain went into a whirlwind of thought. Lately, he'd begun to feel the increase in demonic vibes in the area, as if more were being born, and the evil side was getting stronger.

"So, she is the one. What else do I need to know?" He almost felt relief knowing this was why his brother took such an interest in Kyoko, but at the moment he would not dig deeper into those feelings that hinted at jealousy.

Kyou had hidden the truth for so long, he was not sure he was ready to share the memories. The thought of Toya's closeness to Kyoko in the past didn't help matters. Maybe some things were best forgotten. The two had been inseparable at times. "You were reborn to protect her and I have lived over a thousand years waiting on her. For now that's all you need to know."

Toya snorted softly then chuckled in a slightly sinister way. "That's all I need to know huh?" He ran his fingers through his long hair feeling an overwhelming need to vent some hidden anger even he wasn't aware of. "Is that why you look at her with heat in your eyes? You say we were close! are you actually jealous of something that supposedly happened a long time ago with a girl that probably wouldn't look at you sideways?" Toya glared! his eyes now molten silver.

Kyou nearly snarled at Toya's guess. There were times the boy's perceptiveness was uncanny.

“Do not cross my line of patience Toya. Crystal or no, I will not tolerate your accusations or delusions of grandeur where the priestess is concerned. You have been assigned to protect her. I care not whether you enjoy it. Your temper will be held in check and you will refrain from making any advances upon her person. Is that clear?” his eyes were now deadly as they focused on his younger brother.

Icicles could have been hanging on Kyou’s words, and Toya could tell the conversation was finished, for now at least. He rose and left the room without a backward glance or another word. Once outside his brother’s apartment he stopped, facing Kyoko’s door. He could feel her within the confines of the rooms in front of him.

He raised his hand to knock, wanting to be with her but knowing he didn’t have a reason at the moment. He shoved his hand deep within his pocket and turned to continue down the hall.

Had anyone else been in the hall they would have seen a shimmering outline of silver wings as they appeared across Toya’s back before disappearing unnoticed by the now silver-eyed guardian.

Chapter 5 "Growled Warning"

Kyoko picked up a rubber band from the vanity and pulled some of her unruly auburn hair back into a pony tail, leaving the back in a short bouncy layer and a long layer to flow free down her back. She leaned in close to apply just a touch of blush then stood up, walked to the full-length mirror, and turned around examining herself. Suki had talked her into wearing some of her clothes and Kyoko felt different.

The black mini skirt flared out as she turned, showing off shapely legs due to all the workouts she exposed herself to. The tight pink shirt had black lace all the way down the back, and in the front a black lace “V” shape went almost to her breasts. Kyoko shook her head at the exposed cleavage.

It made her wonder if Suki wasn’t the one chasing after Shinbe just as much as he was chasing her. Picking up her cross earrings, she wondered why she had agreed to look like a wild child. She was startled out of her musings when someone knocked timidly on her door.

Opening the door while still fastening her earring, Kyoko beamed, feeling better seeing Suki was dressed wilder than she was. "Oh Suki, you are gonna knock them dead tonight," she said as she looked her friend up and down.

Suki was wearing tight leather pants and a blue sheer top with long flowing sleeves, showing off her figure. Kyoko shook her head, thinking how many times Shinbe would get slapped tonight.

"You’re just asking for Shinbe to act up aren’t you?" she cocked an eyebrow at her friend with laughter shining in her emerald eyes.

Suki was looking Kyoko over, nodding in satisfaction, "Yep, I have a feeling tonight might be the last of the fun for a while. I caught the rumor from Shinbe that starting Monday we are going to have to start training harder than ever." Her eyes lit up, "But for tonight, let’s cut loose. You are going to love this place we are going to. It’s huge and the band tonight is going to rock."

Suki glanced around Kyoko's rooms, her eyes widening. "Wow! I have never been up here," her gaze darted back to Kyoko's. "No one was ever allowed up here except Toya. Do you realize only him, you, and Kyou are on this floor?" She’d been so nervous about coming up to this floor that she had asked Toya's permission before coming up to Kyoko's room.

Kyoko knew Kyou must have wanted her where he and Toya could better watch her. Remembering all he said, she knew he was right about Suki and her being friends in the past, because for some reason she felt like she had known her for a long time.

She swallowed the sudden lump in her throat, "Maybe all the other rooms were taken, I don’t know." She headed for the door, "But I do know I want to have fun tonight because you are right, it’s probably the last of the fun for a while."

Her hand on the doorknob froze and she frowned, 'somebody was out there.' She felt a chill crawl up her back at the knowledge.

Kyoko slowly opened the door and peered out into the hallway. Not seeing anyone, she opened it the rest of the way and Suki followed her out. She turned and locked the door behind her, and then quickly swung around to look at Suki when she heard a startled, "yelp" come from her friend. There, standing in his doorway was Kyou watching her and he did not look pleased.

Kyou took one look at Kyoko and felt his anger rise. He shifted his eyes to Suki, annoyance clearly evident on his face.

"Leave us," he demanded in a dangerously cold voice.

Suki gave Kyoko an apologetic look, but quickly did as she was told, knowing better than to hesitate. She for one did not want to be on Kyou's bad side, and besides that, the man gave her the creeps. She had been aware since first meeting him that he was a very powerful immortal, and not one to be crossed. She was glad he was on their side and not an enemy.

Kyoko crossed her arms in front of her, disappointed as she watched Suki hurry out of sight. She turned back to find herself now under Kyou's attention, and at the moment he did not look happy. She cocked one eyebrow at him waiting. When he just stood there boring a hole in her with angry golden eyes, she felt her temper start to spike. 'Damn him and those piercing eyes of his.'

"What did I do?" she finally asked, giving up on waiting on him to tell her.

Kyou had been annoyed when he had felt Suki's presence on this floor. Then when he watched them leave her room dressed like that, he knew it was not wise to let Kyoko leave. Not only was she in danger from the enemy, she would also be in danger from any guardian, demon, or human wanting to mate with her. Kyou saw red at the mere thought,

"No one is ever to come to this floor without my permission except you and Toya, understood?" his voice sounded like he was scolding her.

Kyoko bristled but quickly reminded herself that this is his building so it's his rules. "I'm sorry. I didn't know," she told him honestly. Feeling her own anger subsiding, she clasped her fingers in front of her. She was starting to fidget because he really didn't look any happier now that she had apologized.

Kyou took a step closer to Kyoko. Staring down at her, he found he could almost see down her shirt. "I was not told you had plans tonight," he felt her mood darken at his words and her eyes flashed a little brighter, but he did not care. If he was to protect her, he had to know what she was up to. He knew how the girls at the college acted, but he could smell Kyoko was still unmated, different from the others' innocent.

Kyoko gnawed on her bottom lip, wondering if she was going to have to tell him her every move. "I didn't know I had to tell you if I was going out," she tried to keep her voice calm, but knew she had to stand her ground with him in order to have some freedom.

"I'm going out with Suki and Shinbe tonight," she said the words firmly, hoping he would not try to stop her.

Kyou took a step closer, only for her to take a step back from him so she wouldn't have to look up at him. He smirked inwardly as he took another step forward. He literally backed her up against the wall, surrounding himself with her scent.

"Dressed like that?" his voice sounded angry.

Kyoko's eyes widened now that he was only inches from her, and she was looking up at him. He was so tall. What had he said? Her eyes snapped a little sharper. Dressed like that?

"What's wrong with the way I'm dressed?" she shrank back against the wall when he lowered his face next to her ear. She could feel his warm breath on her neck.

"Are you looking for a mate?" he whispered dangerously against her ear.

Kyoko was suddenly afraid of the guardian standing in front of her. The words he'd uttered would have sent her into a rage under ordinary circumstances, but now they just made her want to find a nice dark corner to hide in. If a pin had dropped, it would have sounded like thunder in the silence. She nearly jumped out of her skin when she heard another voice so close to them.

"Kyoko, are you ready?" Toya leaned against the wall watching them. He could smell Kyoko's fear from ten feet away. He gave Kyou a scowl as he watched Kyoko duck under his arm and walk quickly toward him.

Kyou straightened back up, once again appearing indifferent as he watched Toya step between him and Kyoko, hiding her from his sight.

Now where have I seen this before, he thought with annoyance then stated coldly. "If she is going, you are not to leave her side." The muscle in his jaw flexed as he gritted his teeth, not liking the fact that Toya was seeing her dressed so scantily.

Toya could tell Kyou was serious, and the look in his eyes almost gave him cold chills. "I already know this," he snapped then turned and took Kyoko's hand in his, "Come on." He requested softly.

Kyoko wasn't going to argue with that, and didn't mind the fact that Toya was practically propelling her in front of him. The faster the better, she thought. At the moment she wanted nothing better than to hurry, now that she was completely wigged-out, she practically flew down the steps.

Toya let go of her hand as soon as he knew they were out of Kyou's eyesight. He watched as she sped up, a frown creasing his brow. He had picked up what Kyou had said to her. He being a guardian, his hearing was excellent. He had gone to find Kyoko when Suki had practically flown down the stairs, almost knocking him down in the process.

It angered him at the words he had heard Kyou whisper into Kyoko's ear, and it was all he could do to pretend he had not heard it. He never had thoughts of hurting Kyou but the thought of Kyou saying such things to Kyoko brought out the worst in him. She'd done nothing to deserve that kind of treatment.

Toya tried to push down the bad feeling he had as they met up with the others.

As they entered the club, Suki noticed that Kyoko was still being unusually quiet and she finally got up the nerve to ask, "What was that all about with Kyou anyway?"

"Nothing really," Kyoko answered not really wanting to talk about it, and then she remembered what else he'd said, "He did say that from now on, no one is allowed on that floor except me and Toya." She shrugged sadly then noticed Toya was still watching her.

She wondered if he'd heard what Kyou had said, then blushed and quickly looked away not really wanting to know the answer to that question. This was probably her last night of freedom, so she cleared her mind and looked around intending to enjoy herself one way or the other.

Suki's eyes widened when she felt arms go around her from behind and pull her against a strong body. Twisting her neck so she could see, her gaze connected with amethyst ones.

Shinbe dipped his head down to her neck, snuggling against her, grinning. "Come dance with me," He beckoned in a seductive voice.

"But we just got here," Suki tried to pull away halfheartedly.

"I know," Shinbe winked at Kyoko. "I wanted to grab you up before anyone else could." He deliberately slid his hand seductively across her belly before turning her in his arms to face him. Giving Kyoko a mischievous look he stated, "She might be back."

Suki nodded, trying to hide the red that instantly splashed across her cheeks. Shinbe led her off to the dance floor, leaving Kyoko and Toya standing there.

Kyoko knew her nerves couldn't take much more and she took off to the bar thinking a drink would loosen her up some. She didn't even look to see if Toya followed. She knew he had been ordered to watch her. It wasn't as if they were on a date. She almost felt sorry for him.

She turned her attention to the guy behind the bar saying with a shrug of her shoulders, "Whatever the special is." she smiled and he nodded. She laid a twenty down on the bar. She hadn't a clue what to order; seeing as how this was the first time she had ever been in a bar. She pretended

like she had done it a thousand times because sheâ##d witnessed it that many times through movies and TVâ## she only hoped no one would notice her nervousness.

Toya came to stand beside Kyoko after noticing the bartender kept watching her while he made her drink. He caught the guyâ##s gaze and growled, warning him to back off. Toya could feel more eyes on Kyoko other than the bartenderâ##s, and he didnâ##t like it.

Kyoko turned around when her drink was ready and tried to smile at the bartender again as she thanked him, but he wouldnâ##t meet her eyes. 'Well, thatâ##s strange,' she thought, but hearing someone say her name, she glanced over her shoulder and saw Kamui coming. She smiled at him, then took a swallow of her drink, and almost choked on the strong burning flavor.

Kamui watched her set the drink back on the bar almost spilling it. He grinned as she caught her breath, gasping. "You have to watch out Kyoko, the drinks here are strong." He frowned at the bartender disapprovingly, and then smiled when she seemed to be able to breathe again.

"No kidding,â## Kyoko wheezed, wiping a tear from her eye. "That drink is mainlining to kill, geez," she groaned, blinking.

Toya nodded to Kamui as if giving him permission to talk to Kyoko. His gaze wandered the room noticing guardian and human werenâ##t the only inhabitants within the flickering lights of the club. His lips thinned feeling demons hidden within the shadows.

Kamui watched Kyoko smile at Shinbe and Suki as she watched them dance. When the lights flickered from red to green then blueâ## the electric blue tint seemed to surround her for an instant, causing Kamuiâ##s vision to tunnel and another image surfaced.

Within his mind's eye, he could see Kyoko running from a huge demon. As his sight skimmed the area, he could tell the field she was in dropped off at a massive cliff. He screamed her name in warning but as she turned to look for himâ## she never saw the dangerous edge of the cliff as she took the next lethal step.

Kamui could feel the adrenalin rush through him as his wings sprang from his back with a shower of colorful sparkles. As he flew over the demon, he shot an angry life force blast that disintegrated the demon on impact. Pulling his wings inward, he let his body dive off the cliff in a headlong rush to reach her.

Just as the ground was coming up at an alarming rate of speed, he grabbed Kyoko, releasing his wings and floating safely to the ground. When her emerald eyes connected with his Kamui asked, â##You just wanted me to save youâ## didnâ##t you?â##

Coming out of the light trance, he knew that couldnâ##t have been just a daydreamâ## somehow, somewhere, it had really happened. His eyes focused on her and he wanted to once again feel her in his arms just like he had in the strange memory.

Kamui reached out and grabbed her hand, "Come on Kyoko. Dance with me." The moment his hand touched hers, he felt his heart swell with some unknown feeling. Glittering dust of every color leapt into his bright eyes.

She nodded, loving the song that was playing and already feeling the beat of it making her want to move. They headed straight for Suki and Shinbe out on the crowded dance floor.

Toya turned back just in time to see Kamui pull Kyoko toward the dance floor and frowned. Running his fingers through his wayward bangs he leaned back against the bar, fighting the feeling he had to simply take Kyoko and hide her from the world.

â##At least itâ##s not a slow song.â## he grumbled under his breath then gritted his teeth not believing those words had slipped out.

Suki and Shinbe were having a great time when Kamui and Kyoko joined them. The guys were facing the girls in a fast dance. Kyoko hadnâ##t had this much fun in a long time. Three songs later, she and Suki were ready for a break. As they headed off the dance floor, a slow song started.

Someone grabbed Kyoko from behind, whispering in her ear, "My turn," and swung her around into his arms, away from the others, and back onto the dance floor.

Kyoko came face to face with Kotaro and smiled as she felt the light rush of cool air sweep across her heated face. She knew for some reason he was the cause of the breeze.

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