

RAGING HEARTS

THE GUARDIAN HEART CRYSTAL SERIES



AMY BLANKENSHIP

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Raging Hearts

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Raging Hearts

The Guardian Heart Crystal Series Book Three

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 dimension.

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 adventuresâ#

Chapter 1 "Dangerous Kisses"

"I just need to go home for a day or two." Kyoko sighed to herself as she leaned back against the bark of a huge tree. She drew her legs up in front of her and laid her chin on her knees as she sat between the tree's outreaching roots. To say she was miserable would have been an understatement.

She was tired, dirty and getting aggravated because they hadn't run across any talisman in the last several days. That was a fact that had Toya sulking. Their small motley group had decided to take a break for a couple of days. Kyoko cocked an eyebrow knowing it was either take a break or strangle each other. She blew her bangs out of her eyes silently agreeing.

Suki had taken off for the closest town to see an acquaintance about more slayer weapons. Shinbe had taken off after her, walking next to her with his hand coming up behind her as if to feel her butt. The smack that followed had been the highlight of Kyoko's day. She smirked knowing Shinbe had just not wanted Suki wondering around the countryside by herself. He was only trying to protect her but instead of saying that, he simply pretended to be the leech they all knew and loved.

Looking around, she noticed Kamui must've taken off with Kaen again. He'd been doing that a lot lately. Kyoko smiled to herself wishing she had that same freedom. Kaen was a fire sprite and could turn from human form into a dragon at will. Kamui

would then climb onto his back and they would fly all over the land, sometimes staying gone for days at a time.

Glancing over at Toya, who was leaning against the tree beside her, Kyoko noted that his head tilted down quickly when he saw her look his way. 'He's watching me again,' Kyoko thought to herself as she felt heat rise into her cheeks. He's been acting strange for the last couple of weeks, but then when doesn't Toya act strange? She grinned at her own joke.

She glanced away as her hand came up to touch the small sack attached to the long leather strap she wore around her neck. She could feel the small slivers of crystal hidden within the thin leather. Her thoughts instantly turned to Hyakuhei, their enemy. She couldn't understand how someone so strikingly beautiful could be so cruel and unpredictable. Kyoko cocked an eyebrow reminding her self that looks could be deceiving, especially in a land overrun with demons.

As Hyakuhei collected pieces of the talisman he became stronger, even though he was extremely powerful to begin with. With the ability to take the weaker demons within himself and thrive on their power, he became more dangerous with every battle. If he ever gained all the pieces of the talisman, he'd then be able to breach the barrier between the demon and human world. If that happened, he would let the demons into her world and the humans wouldn't stand a chance.

Toya had been leaning there, pretending he was asleep for almost an hour now, waiting to see what Kyoko would do. After

all, it wasn't like he had anything to do now that he'd been overruled on continuing the talisman hunt. His breath seized in his chest as he watched her face tilt up to the sunlight and he felt his stomach clench.

It seemed everything she did lately made him think about keeping her. Toya silently wondered if once this was over, if she would just go back to her world and forget all about him. Sometimes he found himself wishing this war would never end and that's another reason he'd agreed to allow this break. His golden eyes softened with a hidden longing as she stood up and her long, silky auburn hair started blowing in the breeze.

Kyoko had never been good at sitting still for too long and her nerves were already starting to fray from boredom. Needing something to take her mind off the mess she'd made in this world, she stood up and started for a nearby path.

"Toya, I'm going to go for a walk, okay?" Kyoko called over her shoulder as she took off to where, she didn't know. She bit her bottom lip when she didn't hear him following her. Fine she didn't want him to come on a walk with her anyway. She cocked an eyebrow at the silent lie. They'd been walking for days so why in the world was she doing it when she didn't have to. No wonder he hadn't offered to keep her company.

She slowed down, sulking. Toya had been acting so odd lately. She was getting whiplash from the sudden changes in his personality and was tired of obsessing over it. Kyoko decided to just keep going until she was so tired she'd just sleep for the

next couple days.

Toya stood up, wanting nothing more than to follow her. He shoved away from the tree and took a step to do just that, than stopped mid-stride. He leaned back against the tree in a huff. "Oh no, Iâ##m staying right hereâ## where itâ##s safe." He breathed through clenched teeth forcing himself not to follow her like a stalker.

It was all he could do today to keep his distance anyway. He didnâ##t sense any demons nearby and figured sheâ##d be safe for a while. The silver guardian inhaled deeply as he slid down the tree and settled against it. Kyokoâ##s scent was still in the clearing and it was driving him crazy.

It happened every time he spent too much time alone with her. Heâ##d start acting weird and sheâ##d get mad, than he would say something stupid and make it worse. If he knew for sure she wouldn't reject him, then heâ##d reach out to her like heâ##d wanted to do since the first moment he had saw her. Toya glared down at his hands wondering why every time he tried, something happened to ruin it.

Kyoko walked for quite a while thinking bashing thoughts about the male population in this world and her own world. The splashing sounds of cascading water brought her attention back to her surroundings. Looking around, she saw a crystal clear pool of water with a small waterfall constantly feeding it.

â##Itâ##s amazing how in a land of monsters, some things can be so beautiful,â## She whispered in awe. Her emerald eyes

lit up as she took it all in. Not sensing anything in the water that might hurt her or want to fight, Kyoko started stripping, knowing they were a long way from any type of village.

She couldn't believe her luck coming across this all by herself and she wasn't about to let the opportunity pass her up. Sticking her toes in first to test the water, she nearly melted finding it naturally heated.

Kyoko waded into the water and splashed it up on herself, loving the cleansing feel of it. She'd been so spoilt in her own world, taking for granted that she could take a hot shower whenever she wanted. This world was a completely other matter. Stepping closer to the waterfall, she let it shower down on her hair and felt more tranquil than she had in a long time.

She loved having something to think about besides Toya for a little while. She was tired of being in a funk because of him and his mood swings. Lately, all he had to do was look at her and she would blush. That made her angry. He was all about finding the talisman and killing demons.

When Toya faced the demons, sometimes he could be more frightening than the evil he was fighting. Truth was, most people thought Toya hated everyone; it was just his personality. She was constantly reminding herself that he was far from human and didn't live by their rules; none of the guardians did.

However, sometimes she would get a glimpse of the man behind the guardian. It was in those rare moments that he seemed different; softer. He would accidentally do something that

proved he cared for her more than he let on. He was the only one of the five guardians that could cross the Heart of Time into her world and she wondered why. Did it mean something? Were they secretly linked together more than her and the other guardians?

Kyoko huffed to herself in disappointment because she was still thinking about Toya after deciding not to. She scrubbed her skin and hair until it shone and then laid back on the surface of the water. She wasn't ready to abandon such a lovely place just yet. There was no telling if she'd ever see it again.

She cleared her mind as she listened to the water lapping at her ears. Closing her eyes, Kyoko relaxed and let the water cradle her.

Kyou had been following his brothers from a distance, often ridding the area surrounding them of the demons that stalked the girl's every move. He'd come to the conclusion that either his brothers were growing lazy or the enemy was growing stronger. The demons that hunted them were gaining strength.

He could sense a separation within the group and growled disapprovingly. He inhaled deeply and followed the scent that called to him. Moments later he reached his target. Kyou looked down at the crystalline water as he hovered high in the air, turning his angelic face to the girl that lay on the water's glittering surface.

No emotion showed in his expression as he let his gaze caress her body. His silver hair drifted in the slight wind as shimmering

strands hung down his back all the way to his thighs. He could smell her sweet scent from the height he was at, where he'd come to a dead stop.

Kyou was addicted to her scent, this girl they were destined to protect. His golden orbs watched her as she laid upon the water like a naked water goddess beckoning him to her. She was the one who'd brought the Guardian Heart Crystal back to their lands, causing nothing but turmoil and danger. The shattering of the crystal had decided her fate quickly. She now belonged to the guardians though he doubted she realized that fact.

His lips parted as he watched the girl he'd tried to kill in the beginning but could never bring himself to do it. In truth, had he really wanted her dead she would be dead. Instead, he protected her from afar while his brothers stayed closer to her. Such innocence should not be left alone without protection. His gaze narrowed at his brother's incompetence. Maybe he should be the one protecting her so closely.

Kyou smiled, something that he almost never did. He liked the game of cat and mouse, and the priestess needed to be taught a lesson about being caught alone in such a dangerous land.

He slowly glided down to her seeing that her eyes were closed. Kyou lay stretched out above her without touching her, just hovering there in mid-air, letting his long hair create a curtain around them. The soft fan of her dark lashes across creamy cheeks gave him pause. His gaze slowly lowered to her full lips in wonder. He put his own lips to the shell of her ear and breathed

his hot breath into it.

Kyoko's eyes came open in shock and she whipped her head around, causing Kyou's lips to brush across her cheek in the process, coming to a stop right on her lips. She was looking straight into Kyou's golden eyes. They were hypnotizing. It was like being kissed by an angel but this was Kyou. Toya's brother was not an angel. He was the most feared and powerful guardian in the land. He was also one of her protectors, though she hardly ever laid eyes on him.

She lost all floating ability as she panicked. She began to sink into the water, but she didn't care as long as it got her away from his hypnotizing eyes. She stifled a scream when he suddenly reached out, grabbing her around the small of the back and lifted her clear out of the water until she was pressed flush against him.

Kyou could smell her fear of him and decided he didn't want her fear. Everyone feared him, even his brothers. His golden eyes glowed as he held her tightly, ceasing her struggles. The Guardian Heart Crystal had decided long ago they were fated to be allies and he would not have the one he protected, fearing his protection. Kyou used his mind control abilities to peer into her memories and found that the priestess had never been kissed until now. His eyes darkened attractively with that knowledge.

Kyoko was so shocked all she could do was stare into the liquid golden pools, waiting for. She didn't know what she was waiting for, but God, he was beautiful. She thought she saw a

slight smile tug at the corner of his lips. She blinked wondering if heâ##d just read her mind. Now she knew why sheâ##d never been this close to the golden guardianâ#; it was dangerous to the senses.

Feeling a pull beyond his control, Kyou slashed his lips across hers in a powerful kiss as if to seal some unknown bargain. Lasting only mere seconds but feeling like an eternity, he slowly ended the kiss, wondering what spell sheâ##d cast on him to make him feel such alien emotions and cravings. Kyou held her closerâ#; unwilling to release her just yet. He watched her with a strange lookâ#; almost in wonder, his golden eyes seeming to shatter from the reflection of the water.

Heâ##d wanted to teach his priestess what could happen if she was caught alone and without protection, but somehow it became more. He should have known better then to touch her. His senses widened and he felt his brother approaching at a swift pace, making him silently growl at the intrusion. Kyou glided across the water to the bank, righting them and gently standing her on her feet.

Seeing she was still under his trance, he gently reached out and traced the pad of his thumb across her soft cheek liking the possessive heat stirring within his guardian blood. Giving into the pull one more time, he tilted her lips back to his for a last searing kiss before vanishing, leaving behind only the fluttering of a translucent golden feather that also vanished as it touched the waterâ##s surface at her feet.

Kyoko stood there for a moment after Kyou had disappeared, trying to figure out what the hell had just happened. Then she gasped and looked down at herself. She was naked and heâ##d been touching her, holding her. She couldn't help it, but something started in the pit of her stomachâ#i heat. Something, that up until nowâ#i sheâ##d only felt on those very rare moments with Toya.

Finally getting her wits back, she grabbed her clothes and held them against her. â##How dare Kyou do that!â## She felt her temper start to spark for the high and mighty lord Kyou. â##Just who the hell does he think he is?â## her face lifted to the sky as her fingers rose to softly touch her still tingling lips.

She tensed up when she heard Toya's voice calling her name. "Great," Kyoko shook her shirt out, quickly tossing it over her head. By the time it slid into place and she was able to see, she was staring straight at Toya, not five feet in front of her. Pulling her shirt down as far as it could go, she blushed ten shades of red.

"Toya, turn around!" She demanded then whined inwardly, â##Geez, do none of the guardians have any sense of decency?â##

When Kyoko had been gone to long, Toya had raced through the forest cursing his own stubbornness for not stalking her to start out with. Following her scent, nothing had prepared him for what heâ##d foundâ#i she was standing there like a goddess. Her breast lifted with her arms as she pulled her shirt down over her naked body. Toya had frozen.

Sure, he heard her say, "Turn around," but that didn't mean he could do it. All his heated blood had just raced to his midsection and he couldn't move. As his gaze moved up her body very slowly, it finally came to rest on her face. Oh hell, he'd seen that look before. Knowing she was about to use her Taming spell on him, Toya spun around. He could hear her grumbling behind him, something about "Guardians with no manners."

While burning that image to memory, something caught his attention. He could smell Kyoko's scent strongly but there was another scent clinging to it. Silver flecks appeared in Toya's golden eyes as he slowly turned around making sure she was dressed so he had freedom of movement. He walked toward her hoping he was wrong. The closer he got to Kyoko, the stronger the scent.

Kyoko stood very still, waiting on him to finish. She knew he smelled his brother on her. All the guardians had enhanced senses and after all this time she was still trying to get used to that creepy little fact. She tensed up when Toya grew closer, feeling a slight panic as he placed his cheek almost against hers and inhaled. He then grabbed her chin and turned her face to his, staring at her mouth.

Toya saw her shiver and could smell her lingering fear. "Kyoko, was Kyou here with you?" When she nodded, he gazed down at her mouth again, his eyes narrowing on her lips, "Did you bite him?"

Kyoko was so taken aback when he said that her knees

almost buckled. Then, thinking about the question and mentally seeing herself bite the most feared guardian in the land, she began to laugh.

"No, Toya, I did not bite him! I was taking a bath and floating in the water with my eyes closed. When I opened them, there he was, practically lying on top of me and—" her voice dropped down to almost a whisper as she shrugged, "he kissed me." Kyoko quit laughing when she saw the silver override the gold within Toya's irises.

Toya grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her, needing to know exactly what happened. "Kyoko, did he do anything else? Tell me now!" He could feel the panic building within him at the thought of Kyou kissing Kyoko; what the hell was he thinking.

She was shocked at how mad Toya was all of a sudden. Kyoko shrugged and with a confused look on her face, she nodded. "Yeah, he lifted me out of the water and brought me to the bank, stood me up here, and then disappeared." She nervously raised a hand and ran it through her wet hair as she looked away. Secretly, she wondered where Kyou was now and if he was still watching them. Usually Kyou's presence was felt not seen. "He never even said a word," she added as an afterthought.

"Kyoko, did he mark you anywhere?" Toya asked in a calm voice while hiding the fact that his insides were screaming in denial. He pulled her hair back to look at her neck before she could even answer. He could feel his heartbeat strong and pulsing under his skin as he searched for any hidden marks Kyou may

have left behind.

Kyoko tried to smack his hand away but he would have none of that, so she yelled, "No, he didn't! Why?" This was starting to freak her out a little. What did Toya mean, ~~mark her~~ anyway? She felt her skin start to crawl as she envisioned a vampire scene from some old black and white movie in her mind. Then the scene twisted into one of the newer movies where the vampire was sexy and ~~!~~ and she quickly deleted the thought.

Toya let go of her hair after not finding any marks but gazed at her very intensely, his heart still hammering hard in his chest. "I don't like this." He watched as she put her arms around herself as if she was cold. Toya growled softly, deep in the back of his throat as he stood in front of her, looking down into her emerald eyes.

"From now on, stay close to me." He watched her lips for a minute, not liking the fact that Kyou had kissed them when he hadn't. It was making him mad and the fact that it was making him mad, was making him madder. He inhaled her scent again; smelling his brother's disturbing presence and that wasn't making him happy either.

~~Kyoko, go take another bath,~~ Toya said a little harshly, stunning Kyoko and pricking her temper.

"I just took one!" Her emerald eyes shot sparks at him.

Toya smiled on the inside. He loved nothing better than to make her angry because she looked so cute when she was like that. But sniffing again, he informed her, "You stink!"

"Toya!" Kyoko yelled back as her hands fisted at her sides.

Toya felt his body get heavy and down he went. God, he hated it when she used that Taming spell against him. "Kyoko, stop that!" He glared up at her. "Damn it!"

"Well! you are rude! I do not stink!" Kyoko glared down at him wishing he were still standing so she could do it again.

Feeling the effects of the spell wearing off, Toya slowly got back up, hoping she wouldn't use the Taming spell again. "Kyoko, listen, please, take another bath. You don't smell it, but I can," He tried to explain but she cut him off.

"Toya!" Kyoko hissed as he once again hit the ground. He was lucky she wasn't kicking him.

He lay there for a minute as Kyoko glared down at him. Slowly, he looked up at her and whispered, "You smell like him." Then he stood up, his molten-silver eyes hidden under his dark bangs, causing the silver highlights to glisten in the sunlight. Didn't she understand that he couldn't stand the fact that she was wearing Kyou's scent and not his own?

Toya turned and walked back into the woods, away from her, leaving her standing there confused. He'd looked so sad when he had said it. Kyoko hung her head, feeling like the biggest jerk in the world, both worlds. She knew out of all of his siblings, the one he couldn't get along with was Kyou, even if they were both on the same side. They always fought when within seeing distance of each other.

"Oh Toya, I'm sorry." She whispered into the empty air

he'd left behind. Turning back to the water, she stripped and went back in to wash Kyou's scent off her.

She smiled thinking He doesn't like Kyou's scent. Could it be that he's jealous? She sighed rethinking it. Or is it just because he doesn't like Kyou? Remembering what happened earlier while she was alone, Kyoko hurried up and washed, not wanting to chance any more unwelcome visitors during her bath. Getting back out quickly, she dressed and started back for camp.

Kyoko stepped into the clearing where she knew Toya would be waiting for her, and he was. She really didn't want to be alone with him right now after the way things had went at the hot spring. She quickly scanned the area for Kamui but didn't see him.

"Toya, where's Kamui?" Kyoko asked nervously.

Toya had been waiting on her to get back, although he'd only made it back a couple of minutes before her because he'd been keeping an eye on her, making sure Kyou did not show back up to finish what he'd started.

He shrugged as if it didn't matter as he answered her question, "He went to visit Sennin. He'll be back in the morning so we can head out then."

He had really sent Kamui to the old man to ask if he'd gotten any more information on where the talismans could be found. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Toya knew it was just an excuse to be alone with Kyoko for a while, but he wouldn't tell her that.

Kyoko sighed as she sat down, closing her eyes and relaxing against the tree. Damn it, she was right back in the same position she'd been avoiding when she took off for her walk. Trying to distract herself, the first thing that entered her mind was Kyou, his glowing golden eyes showing a flicker of emotion. It was the first time she'd seen him show any emotion besides the expressionless face of boredom he carried or the anger of battle. And he had kissed her.

Why had he kissed her like that? And why hadn't she tried to stop him? It was like she'd been unable to think, just able to feel. Though she was still very afraid of him, she'd felt safe at the same time. After all, he was one of her guardians. He wouldn't hurt her, would he? It was her first kiss and one she'd never forget. She glanced over at Toya and caught him staring at her again.

Toya had been watching the emotions flickering across her face and wondered what she was thinking about. She looked like she had a secret and then he noticed the slight blush cross her cheeks and he knew he was right. She was thinking about Kyou! He could hear the growl loud within his head. When she turned to look over at him, he glared at her. He turned and faced the other way, crossing his arms in front and leaving her to stare in confusion at his back.

Kyoko frowned then yelled at him. "What'd I do? He twitched but didn't turn around or answer her. What was he mad about now? Suddenly, a chill went down her spine and her

heart began to pound hard against her chest. Evil. Raising her face, she closed her eyes and felt darkness coming at them. It was evil all right, and it had a piece of the shattered guardian heart crystal within it.

Toya sensed Kyoko's heartbeat speed up and swung around to look at her. "Kyoko, what is it?" His voice was now fueled with concern as he instantly forgot to be mad at her.

"A talisman, very strong and darkly tainted. It's moving fast this way," She pointed to the left and they both jumped to their feet and started running in that direction. They hadn't gone far when they heard something crashing through the trees, coming straight towards them.

Toya's body was moving on its own accord, his forearms pulsing at his sides as if to draw his attention to the power that lay hidden there. With a flick of his wrist, the fire dagger slid from his flesh and he leapt in front of Kyoko, pushing her behind him with his other hand. He braced himself as the forest in front of them took on a life of its own. The trees and foliage crashed around them as a huge demon thundered towards them.

Kyoko swallowed the lump in her throat as she looked up at the demon. It was about ten times taller than either of them and very nasty looking. She could see the beautiful sky above it and wondered if she would ever get used to the fact that demons lived here. She shrank back when its hideous red eyes locked on her and Toya.

Toya sniffed the air, making a face. The thing smelt like it had

been buried and left to rot for way to long before crawling out of its grave. Heâ##d bet his life Hyakuhei was controlling this thing because he hadnâ##t felt this much power within a demon in a long time.

â##Another one of his fucking spawns," Toya sneered then heard the mocking laughter come from deep in the chest of the demon.

It spoke in a massive deep crackling voice that grated on the nerves. "Kill Toya!" The demon grunted as it lunged forward with a rotting, clawed hand.

With inhuman speed, Toya lifted Kyoko in his arms and jumped out of the way. Landing on a nearby rock that was jutting up from the ground, he instantly wished Kyoko had stayed in the camp and out of harmâ##s way. His lips were right beside her ear as he asked hastily, "that ugly thing is way to big not to have a talisman. Do you see it?"

She swung her head around to peer hard at the demon but it was moving so fast all she could see was a blur. It jumped and landed right in front of them, knocking Toya to the ground with a bone-jarring thud. Kyoko screamed when it turned back and grabbed her off the rock. Its massive, fleshy hand squeezed the breath from her, stopping her scream instantly.

She put her hands down against the imprisonment, trying to push out of its grip but there was no way. A dark glowing light caught her attention. She was trapped and getting dizzy from the lack of air, so with the last bit of breath she could squeeze out,

she shouted. "The talisman! Neck!"

Toya saw the demon grab Kyoko, holding her up in the air while she struggled to breathe. He pushed up off the ground feeling the adrenaline rush through his body and into the fire dagger still pulsating in his hand.

"Let her go, you bastard!" He roared, trying to get its attention back on him. "You'll regret ever touching her," Toya growled as his eyes turned to molten silver.

He slung his other arm out to the side, now holding a dagger in each hand as he taunted the ugly beast. The demon gave a hideous laugh as it held Kyoko up as if to use her as a shield. "Damn!" Toya cursed. He couldn't use the daggers power without hurting Kyoko in the process. The beast wasn't as stupid as he looked. "You dirty son of a..." Toya growled feeling his blood heat to a dangerous level.

Kyoko tried to get to her crossbow, but the demon had it pinned between her and its palm. The light around her started to fade, warning her that she was passing out. She sought out Toya's form, finding him standing there, facing the demon. She could tell he was in a rage as she heard him curse. His angry silver eyes met hers, and the last thing she saw before passing out was Toya leap into the air as if to come straight at her.

Toya had had enough. How dare that nasty beast touch Kyoko. He felt his cursed demon blood surface, overriding his guardian blood as his anger grew. He leapt into the air and with a swipe of his razor sharp claws; he sliced through the demon's arm. As

its arm fell to the ground, Toya boomeranged off the demon and caught Kyoko in midair as she fell from the loose fingers.

Holding her securely against him, Toya jumped out of the way as the demon swung his other hand towards them. He landed hard, taking only a second to make sure Kyoko was once again breathing even though she'd lost consciousness. He laid her on the ground then swung around. The twin daggers reemerged from his skin, sliding into his palms with ease.

How dare you! Toya's voice rose to a dangerous level. In a fury, he rushed the demon, one swipe taking the head clean off. He watched with morbid satisfaction as it landed a good twenty feet from the still twitching body.

Before the dust settled, Toya turned back to Kyoko to check on her, not realizing the demon wasn't dead yet. He hadn't remembered to remove the talisman from its neck and he never saw the huge claws coming at him from behind. Hearing a roar, Toya felt the deadly claws slice into his back and slam him into a nearby rock, knocking the daggers from him.

Kyoko fought the darkness off. Opening her eyes, her vision cleared quickly but the sight that met her made her gasp in horror. Toya's blood was spraying the air behind him as he was thrown through the air colliding into a giant rock. Swinging her gaze back to the demon, she watched in dismay as it grabbed its head from the dirt and placed it back where it was supposed to be. The demon turned to her, a rumbling sound came from its chest like a demented growl while baring several rows of sharp

teeth.

The smell of Kyoko's fear brought Toya out of his daze and he opened his eyes in a haze of pain. Ignoring the pain, he raised himself up just in time to see the demon charging at her. He could feel his demonic blood surface and this time he let it take over. Toya's body began to hum with a force of its own. The only rational thought left in his mind was that no one was to touch her if they did they died.

Kyoko was reaching for her crossbow but knew she would be too late because the beast was almost on her. So close, she could smell its nasty breath reaching her. She screamed, raising her arm to shield her face, thinking this was the end. But nothing happened. She heard a grunt and the ground shook. Kyoko opened her eyes, but couldn't see anything for the debris flying at her from where the demon had fallen, blocking her vision.

As the debris began to clear, she saw the back of Toya as he stood in front of her facing the demon. She hissed seeing three long jagged wounds across his back. His midnight hair and silver highlights were still blowing in the wind created from the fallen demon. She glanced at the demon to see again that its head was severed and its arms were laying a good distance from its body.

She frowned as it again opened its crimson eyes, intending to use the power of the talisman to heal itself. Not wanting that to happen, Kyoko reached behind her and grabbed the small crossbow, a spirit dart quickly forming from her priestess powers.

Cocking it tight against the string she whispered, "Hit," releasing the string and sending the spirit dart straight toward the talisman, knocking it from the demon's body.

The demon slowly crumbled in on itself, turning to dust and catching in the breeze. Most of the dust drifted away, leaving only yellowed bones in its wake. Still feeling evil close by, Kyoko looked up and saw one of Hyakuhei's demonic changelings. It slithered down from the sky looking like a ghostly serpent, picking up the talisman within its pointed teeth before scurrying away so fast she couldn't even tell which direction it had went.

She felt like groaning knowing they'd just fought the demon for nothing since the talisman was stolen. Kyoko slowly pushed against the ground to stand, stopping midway when she noticed Toya hadn't turned around yet, his clawed hand still curled in anger at his side.

She tensed up realizing what was wrong; he was in his cursed form. A curse Hyakuhei had placed on him long before she'd ever come to this world. In this state, he was unpredictable, out of control and very dangerous.

With an unsteady voice, Kyoko whispered, "Toya?"

She stood up the rest of the way as he turned around, his crimson eyes staring back at her. His chest was still rising and falling rapidly as he breathed heavily from the force of the attack he'd just used to kill the demon. The daggers, Kyoko thought trying to stay calm, she needed to get the blades back to him. She looked toward the rock he'd been thrown

against and spotted one of the daggers laying there. She slowly started edging in the direction of the blade.

Toya took a step forward and growled. He felt a blinding rage for the demon he'd just killed and waited to see if there were more to kill or if the demon would get back up. Then he heard someone behind him whisper his name. Turning to the sound, he saw the girl there, slowly trying to stand up. He smelled the fear emanating from her as she slowly tried to edge away from him.

He issued a low growl of warning for her to stay and took a step toward her. She stood still for another moment staring at him as if she couldn't decide if he was friend or foe. He could smell her fear rise and it made him angry. He growled again and she took off running.

Kyoko's heart was pounding. He'd growled at her. Was he going to kill her? The daggers, she had to reach at least one of them. They were a part of him and helped to seal away the demon blood Hyakuhei had cursed him with. Kyoko took off as fast as she'd ever run in her life.

She had to get the dagger to him. Her hair flew out behind her and she knew he was coming after her. The hair on the back of her neck stood up as if he'd already caught her. Five more feet! just about there. A blur moved in front of her, between her and what she was so desperately trying to reach.

No. She would not run from him. She was his. He stopped in front of her to halt her flight, and she crashed into him with a startled yelp. On contact, he could feel his blood calming and he

gave a softer growl to let her know to stay this time. When she still tried to move past him, he crushed her to him, wanting this woman to feel that he would destroy anything that came near her.

He looked down into the wide emerald eyes staring back up at him. Toya could feel her trying to lower herself to slide out of his arms. No, heâ##d never let her goâ##! the demon blood within him had already claimed her. He watched as a tear slipped from her lashes to land on her creamy cheek. He leaned forward and licked the tear with the tip of his tongue, drawing a startled gasp from the girl.

She renewed her struggle, wiggling out of his grasp and slid to the ground, throwing herself past him and grabbing at something lying there. He growled at her defiance as he turned and dropped on her, holding her to the ground. He pinned her wrist above her head and the weight of his body held the rest of her immobile. She tried to throw him off her but he wanted her to know just who she belonged to.

Lowering his mouth to hers, he growled low in his chest. The girl stilled as his lips slashed across hers in a possessive kiss. He forced her lips apart with the pressure and deepened the possession. He wanted her and she would be his. His hands slid up from her wrist to take her fingers in his when he felt his hand come in contact with the thing sheâ##d grabbed from the ground.

He licked at the inside of her mouth wanting to taste everything that she was. He could feel his thoughts slowly coming back to him, things he should have not forgotten. He calmed, but

the kiss didn't. His mind flickered. He could feel the heat in his lower regions and he ground his hips against her in hunger. Then something clicked inside him and the red haze in his mind disappeared.

Toya became aware of everything, the soft body under him, the taste of honey and the blinding need coursing through his veins. As much as he didn't want to, he released her lips from his and raised above her a fraction to stare down into the eyes of Kyoko. He had just been kissing her and really wanted to continue.

Kyoko couldn't help it as fiery lightning bolts shot through her body. She stopped struggling as he deepened the kiss. The feel of his lips dominating hers with such passion was a heady sensation. Then she felt the evidence of his arousal press hard against her thigh and that shot another round of heat through her.

She felt him slowly shift and rise above her as he ended the kiss. What she saw nearly stopped her heart. His eyes were golden, all traces of the demonic bloodlust gone. She glanced toward the dagger she still clutched in her hand and noticed that he was touching it. She sighed with relief realizing Toya was back.

Toya watched Kyoko as she glanced toward the blade and his gaze followed hers. So that's what happened. He had changed, and then he'd tried. He knew she would be mad at what he'd almost done. Even his out of control side had chosen her as its life mate.

He sat up, trying not to look at her as he rolled off her body. Only after he was completely off her did he trust himself to glance at her. The first thing that caught his attention was her kiss swollen lips. He felt a blush burn his cheeks as he remembered the kiss and the feel of her lips against his.

“So that’s what heaven is like,” he silently mused and rubbed his eyes with one hand for no other reason than to hide his reaction from her.

Kyoko turned her face away from him as she slowly stood up. She knew he hadn’t meant to kiss her and was probably now regretting it. She located the other blade and handed both the daggers back to him.

Toya also stood up, not saying a word. The silence around them was deafening.

Chapter 2 "Flame of Jealousy"

Kyoko gritted her teeth, the tension between them was almost tangible and it was really starting to unnerve her. Toya sat on a branch in the tree near the fire and Kyoko sat at the fire by herself. They still hadn't said a single word to each other and now he wouldn't even look at her.

She frowned feeling slightly insulted. Was kissing her really so bad?

Toya sat in the tree sulking. He'd seen her frown. Had him kissing her been so bad? She hadn't said a word to him about what he had done. He'd rather yell at him or something but he didn't know what to think about her not saying anything. Was she that mad at him? Should he apologize?

His lips thinned in denial. He wouldn't apologize for something he hadn't meant to do. Should he just ignore it and act like it didn't happen? At this point, he just wished everything would go back to the way it was, although he himself would not forget the kiss. Toya glanced back down at her wondering what she was thinking.

Kyoko watched the sky as it started to get dark. She wished Kamui was here but knew he wouldn't be back until morning. The company would've been welcome. Right now, she would even settle for Shinbe and Suki starting a fight between themselves. She grinned... now that was always amusing.

She played with the idea of going home, but it was already late and it would take hours to get back to the Heart of Time, unless Toya took her. Remembering the way he acted every time she wanted to go home kept her from asking him to take her. He seemed to think it was a sin to leave this world even for one day. The last thing she wanted to do was start a fight with him right now.

She reached into her duffle bag and pulled out her thin cover, not knowing what else to do. Maybe if she hurried and went to sleep, when she woke up, someone would be there—someone besides him. He acted like he'd already forgotten about kissing her and that annoyed her. He didn't say he liked it. And he didn't say sorry. He just didn't say anything, like it never happened.

Kyoko tossed the sleeping blanket and stretched out on it, deciding to just stare up at the stars that were slowly starting to appear. She couldn't help it, but she'd been kissed twice in the last twenty-four hours, and after never being kissed before, that was all she could think about. She began to compare the two kisses.

Kyou's kiss was powerful and exciting, although it kind of scared her because of who he was. Still, his lips were warm, where she thought they'd be cold. His hands on her body were hot, instead of the chilling touch she'd assumed he would have. She groaned as the memory sent a wave of heat through her body.

Toya twitched as he heard a faint groan come from Kyoko. Looking down at her, he noticed she seemed lost in thought. His eyes darkened to a molten gold. Her scent was changing and it was drawing him to her. He inhaled the sweet smell. Was she thinking about him?

His thoughts flashed back to when he'd gotten his senses back, after changing from his cursed form. Her lips were soft and she wasn't fighting him. He could still taste her. Nothing had ever affected him like that. Kyoko was a different story. When she wasn't yelling at him, she was one of the happiest people he'd ever known. Not that he'd known many humans but still, she was like his light in the darkness.

He secretly loved protecting her and keeping her close. It almost made shattering the Guardian Heart Crystal worth it almost. Now he had to protect her from Hyakuhei and every demon around. He glanced back down at her sensing she'd fallen asleep. He knew if they didn't stay focused on gathering the talisman, than things could become very deadly too deadly for her to be in the middle of it all. That's why he constantly pushed the group to keep searching.

Toya lightly jumped from the tree and landed quietly near her. He stalked within reaching distance of her and sat down. He often did this after she went to sleep so he could be near her if anything happened, that and the fact that he just simply liked being close to her. He relaxed into a light doze. The slightest sound would wake him and he would be ready.

Kyoko tossed in her sleep, dreaming. Toya had just killed Hyakuhei and was smiling as he walked up to her, crushing her to him. He looked larger than life. Gazing deep into her eyes, his lips came closer to hers as his eyes softened. She could see the love shining in them. She hesitated, suddenly unsure of what was happening.

"What about the time portal? I need to take the Guardian Heart Crystal back to my world?" she whispered worriedly.

Toya just smiled at her and shook his head. "Don't you know that I love you and would never let you leave?" He lowered his lips to hers and the kiss took her breath away. It was deep and passionate. It felt so real. She closed her eyes and the kiss changed.

The kiss was hungry and sensual, all at the same time. Realizing the difference, she opened her eyes and gazed into the golden eyes of Kyou. She could feel his hands on her body, slowly moving and tempting her to respond. She gave in to the feel and closed her eyes once more.

That's when it all changed and Kyoko felt a chill crawl up her spine. The warm lips turned scalding and she sensed evil radiating from them. The hands caressing her body were like fire and the claws drew thin streaks of blood everywhere they touched. Her eyes flew open to look into eyes of midnight Hyakuhei.

She heard him whisper in a soft, seductive voice tainted with

evil, "no one can save you."

Kyoko started to struggle and could hear herself screaming but he was too strong. He was holding her down with a death grip. She screamed again, trying to fight him off. The hands holding her down disappeared and she felt herself being raised up and pressed against something solid.

"Kyoko, wake up!" Kyoko. Wait! that wasn't Hyakuhei! her struggles slowed. She felt a hand sliding through her hair, cradling her and making her feel safe.

Slowly, she opened her eyes and could see the dark hair with silver highlights. She was pressed against Toya's chest and he was holding her slowly rocking her back and forth. Thinking she was still dreaming, Kyoko snuggled into him and closed her eyes again not wanting the dream to end.

As long as Toya was holding her then Hyakuhei wouldn't come back to her dreams to haunt her. She was almost in his lap and she could hear him. "It's alright, Kyoko. I've got you. It's all right now. Shhh!" She could feel her body still shaking from the dream but she calmed at Toya's soft voice. The sound of his heartbeat lulled her safely into a dreamless sleep.

Toya could feel that she was slowly calming down. She'd nearly scared him to death, thrashing and screaming in her sleep like that. Whatever it was had scared the hell out of her and she had scared the hell out of him. He pulled on her until she was all the way in his lap. He held her tight as her trembling slowly subsided. Her cheek was pressed against his chest and he was

cradling her body in his arms. She was light as a feather to him and Toya loved the feel of her cradled again him.

"Shhhâ#! Iâ##ve got you. Nothing is gonna hurt you. I wonâ##t let it. Now go back to sleep, Kyoko." He gently rocked her as his fingertips brushed her hair from her face. She was flushed from the dream and had her eyes closedâ#! but he could sense that she knew he was the one who held her. His heart skipped a beat thinking Kyoko knew he was holding her and still she didnâ##t object.

She was already falling back to sleep as he lightly touched her cheek, tracing the outline, feeling her silky skin. In her sleep, she looked like an angel in his armsâ#! his angel. This was what he wanted. Heâ##d never let anyone take her from him, not the demons and especially not his brothers.

Slowly, so as not to wake her, Toya leaned back on the blanket and laid them both down, pulling the top up over them. He kept a hold on her, keeping her body against his and curled around her in a protective embrace. It was the most comfortable heâ##d ever been in his life and it only took a minute for him to fall into the first deep sleep heâ##d had sinceâ#! forever.

It was several hours later that Kyoko felt warmth and reached for it. She froze. Slowly, as if afraid to know the truth, she turned her head to the side just as Toya sat up.

Feeling her stirring he frowned, knowing he shouldâ##ve gotten up and away from her hours ago.

Kyoko gazed at him curiously, trying to see his eyes but

his head lowered and his hair fell across them, shielding their expression. He stood up without saying anything and walked into the foliage surrounding their camp.

Kyoko's brows lowered in confusion. He slept here with her last night? Then a memory came back to her. She remembered dreaming and Toya! She gasped. It wasn't a dream. He'd held her last night. She looked down at the blanket that still had his imprint on it. He must've fallen asleep beside her. She smiled her secret smile, reaching over and tracing her fingers over the imprint he'd left behind.

She glanced up as Kamui came into the clearing, "Hi, Kamui. Glad your back." His tussled hair glinted with purple highlights in the morning sun and his eyes shown the most beautiful colors. Those who were close enough to see knew they held multihued glitter within the shining orbs but to Kyoko, it was his smile that made him irresistible.

Kamui glanced around seeing she was alone and wondered why. "Where is everyone? Are Suki and Shinbe not back yet? And where's Toya?" Kamui pulled a sack from his shoulder and placed it in front of Kyoko with raised eyebrows.

"Nope, not yet, but Toya should be back in a few minutes. What do you have here?" Kyoko watched as Kamui started lifting food from the bag.

"Sennin sent this with me and said to enjoy it since we hardly ever get a really good meal unless you bring it back from your time." Kamui looked up at her with his big eyes sparkling with

an array of colors and beamed at her expression when she spotted the sweets that came with the small feast. "Come on, let's dig in." Kamui announced.

"Well, you're back early this morning, Kamui," Toya said lazily as he walked back into the clearing. He glanced at Kyoko with some unreadable emotions reflecting in his golden eyes then quickly looked away.

Kamui glanced up at Toya. They fought a lot but in truth, Kamui looked up to Toya. He'd changed a lot since spending so much time around Kyoko. In Kamui's opinion, Kyoko made Toya a better person.

"Sennin said that the forest to the east has had an uprising of demons terrorizing the area within the last week. There might be talismans involved so we should check it out." The last was said as Kamui stuffed his mouth with a flavorful piece of bread.

"Hey, you're gonna save me some of that, right Kamui?" Toya sat down beside them and started grabbing some of the food for himself.

Kyoko grinned as she watched them fight over a strawberry rice ball Sennin had sent. The normalness of it didn't last long though.

Toya tensed up, catching a scent riding the breeze. "Damn it!" He jumped to his feet as his eyes narrowed. "What the hell does he want?"

Before Kyoko could ask who, a rush of air blew across the clearing and stopped less than a foot in front of her, knocking

Toya off balance. Kyoko found herself staring into the ice blue eyes of Kotaro, one of the five guardians. Much like Kyou, he hunted the talisman alone, searching for clues to where Hyakuhei was hiding.

He was perfection, with lean muscles and windblown ebony hair that hung down longer in the back and ice blue eyes. He was wearing all black with a purple undershirt showing through. He and Toya couldn't stand each other but it was mostly because Kotaro had told everyone that Kyoko belonged to him.

"Good morning, Kyoko," Kotaro said in a soft, masculine voice, taking her hands in his and raising them up in front of him. "How is my future mate this morning?" He gazed deep into her eyes making her blush.

No matter how many times Kyoko had told him she wasn't his or anybody else's, he still called her his future mate with such confidence and charm.

"Kotaro, damn it! Let go of Kyoko and why don't you ever watch what you're doing?" Toya growled at him as he pushed himself off the tree he practically had been shoved into by Kotaro's guardian winds.

Kotaro wrinkled his nose not even bothering to look at Toya and just glared in the general direction of his sibling. "I knew I smelled you somewhere," He said insultingly.

Kamui watched in amazement as Toya bristled and could tell he was getting more pissed off by the second. He slid closer to Kyoko whispering. "Ah, Kyoko, you might want to stop this

before it starts." Knowing that Kyoko was the only thing keeping them from tearing each other apart, Kamui took a safe step back from the trio.

Kyoko knew Kotaro was harmless well, to her anyway. She took her hands from his still blushing from the way he was looking at her. She could actually see the love and devotion shining in his ice blue eyes.

"Kotaro, what brings you this way?" She asked to get his attention off of Toya.

Kotaro smiled, forgetting Toya at once and answering her question. "I heard there's trouble in the east area near the forest. I was hoping to find Hyakuhei and kill him for you so you could hurry up and become my mate, my sweet Kyoko." Oh, he did love Kyoko but he also loved rattling Toya's cage.

Kyoko turned a couple of shades pinker at hearing his words. Her lips parted to say something, but losing her train of thought she simply gave up.

Toya had heard enough nonsense from the stupid blowhard. Stepping in front of Kyoko to shield her from Kotaro's view he growled low in his throat, "Back off!" He narrowed his golden eyes and scowled. "We don't need your help to get rid of Hyakuhei. So why don't you just try to stay out of our way and leave Kyoko the hell alone?"

Kotaro acted as if Toya wasn't even there. In a blur, he moved around Toya to lay a chaste kiss on Kyoko's cheek. With a wink, he was gone just as fast as he'd appeared.

Toya balled his fists up at his sides. He was so mad it felt like he was going to explode. Why did everyone all of a sudden want to kiss Kyoko? She was his damn it!

"Kotaro, get back here and fight you bastard!" He yelled at the top of his lungs.

Kyoko turned to Kamui as if nothing had happened. "So, I guess Sennin's information was right."

Toya gave up and turned around. "Come on, let's get our stuff together. We can collect Suki and Shinbe on the way. We have to pass by where they are to get to the east forest anyway," He ground out still mad at his lecherous brother for spouting lies about Kyoko. He'd never let Kotaro have her and he couldn't wait to run into him and beat the crap out of him to let him know it.

Kyoko knew Toya was jealous of Kotaro. However, the way she saw it, at least Kotaro could tell her his true feelings, where Toya just kept her confused. She bent down and started gathering up the remaining food that they would later share with the others.

Toya stooped down in front of her waiting on her to climb up on his back. They'd make better time that way and it was the only time he could get away with holding her without anyone raising an eyebrow.

Kyoko held her breath for a second then let it out slowly not wanting to make it any different from the other times she'd done this! but it was. She wrapped her arms around his chest as his hands when under her knees to hold her tightly against

his back. She glanced up at the sky wondering if the fates were having fun yet.

Kamui silently laughed to himself at Toya's actions every time someone else tried to get Kyoko's attention. Picking up the sack of food after they'd disappeared, translucent wings shimmered into existence, sending a shower of multihued stardust across the campsite that magically erased all evidence that anyone had ever been there.

Feeling Kaen's presence behind him he commented, "It looks like it's going to be an interesting day. Shall we join them?" His feet left the ground as he glided along behind them unseen.

Secretly, Kyoko loved riding on Toya's back when they were in a hurry. She could feel the muscles tighten and stretch under her. She laid her cheek on his strong shoulder and held on as his long hair flowed around her, tickling her face. He acted as if she didn't weigh a thing as he bounded from limb to limb, sometimes landing on the ground, only to shoot back up into the trees again. He seemed to have a thing for heights.

Toya loved it when Kyoko rode on his back but he would never tell her that. It made him feel good when she clung to him in an effort to hold on. Sometimes he would go even faster just so she would have to hold tighter, with her legs bracing against him and her arms around him. He'd never shown his wings around her for this reason.

Sometimes, she would lay her cheek against his back and he

could sense that she also enjoyed it as much as he did. His mind turned back to the forest in the east. The Guardian Heart Crystal was already half collected and Hyakuhei had most of it at this point. Things were getting very dangerous and he would have to stay on guard.

He felt he had to protect Kyoko with his life, especially when there was danger everywhere they went. The demon he'd fought yesterday had been a wakeup call. Toya sped up, hoping to run into Suki and Shinbe on their way back to camp, so they could hurry and get to the east before Kotaro and Kyou did.

High above them, Kyou flew across the sky without expression, as if an apparition of a deity. His clothing floated around him as he scanned the east in the distance. So the eastern forest is where the presence of Hyakuhei had disappeared. This is also where Toya and the priestess were headed. His lips curved upwards in the barest hint of a smile.

"Yo!" Toya called out when he caught a flash of movement in the distance. Leaping down from tree to tree and branch to branch, he landed gracefully in front of Shinbe and Suki.

Kyoko slid off Toya's back and quickly walked to them, smiling at her friends. "We just got word that the east forest is where we should be heading," Kyoko informed them.

Shinbe's head snapped up looking over at Toya. "Oh, yeah? What's happening in that area?" He asked moving closer to Toya to discuss the matter. Kamui stepped from the edge of the forest to join the guardians with the planning, nodding when

Kaen showed up from nowhere, as he often did just when the time was right.

Kyoko whispered to Suki, pulling her to the side and away from the others, "But anyway, how was your visit?" She cocked her head to the side, grinning.

Suki rolled her eyes in the direction of Shinbe. "Can you believe that idiot tried to kiss me?" She crossed her arms in front of her chest and glared daggers at the wayward amethyst guardian.

Toya twitched with his exceptional hearing. He'd heard Suki's remark and when Kyoko heard it she had looked directly at him, locking eyes with him. She turned her face away to hide the blush that was creeping across her cheeks but not before Suki and Shinbe both took note of it.

Shinbe leaned toward his brother keeping his voice low. "What happened between you two while we were gone, Toya?" he felt a bolt of jealousy shoot through him but tried to ignore it knowing it was a lost cause. Kamui also took a step closer waiting to hear the answer.

Toya's eyes widened and the small fine hair stood up on the back of his neck, making him back up from them with a guilty look. "Heh, nothing happened," He crossed his arms and glared at them, daring them to call his bluff.

Suki grabbed Kyoko's arm and pulled her a good distance away from the guys this time. "Okay, spill it. What'd I miss?" She asked with her lip twitching with barely hidden mirth. For

as long as Suki had known Kyoko, she felt like she had known her forever. She loved her like a sister, and right now she could tell something was up.

Kyoko wouldn't meet Suki's eyes, and her face was still high in color.

"Kyoko, give," Suki pleaded.

Kyoko looked up at her best friend who was at least a couple inches taller and shrugged. "Okay, I have now been kissed, that's all," she quickly rolled her eyes trying to play it off as no big deal.

Suki glanced at Toya. "So, he finally kissed you, did he?" Turning back to Kyoko, she smiled a knowing smile until she saw the shake of Kyoko's head. Suki frowned. "It was Toya that kissed you? Wasn't it, Kyoko?" she cocked an eyebrow in confusion.

Kyoko groaned. "It's a long story, so I'll make it very short. Three different guys have now kissed me and all within the time that you were gone. And no, I didn't ask a single one of them to kiss me. So again, it's No Big Deal!" She put emphasis on the last three words.

Suki's lips parted as she stared at her friend. Meanwhile, Toya had tensed up hearing Kyoko say it was no big deal. "Well, now I know what she thinks," Toya thought to himself with a frown as he turned back to his brothers and concentrated on telling them what he knew about the area of the east forest.

Suki finally found her voice but kept it low, "Kyoko, who

kissed you?" Seeing Kyoko's lips press together, Suki sighed. "Okay, I want to know who kissed you first."

Kyoko squeezed her eyes shut. "Kyou was the first."

"Kyou!â## Suki yelled then snapped her hand over her mouth cringing.

Toya's hand curled into a fist at his side in an effort to restrain his anger. He turned and gave an evil look in Kyoko's direction before quickly closing the distance between them, not liking the turn of the conversation. "We donâ##t have time for this shit!" He huffed, glaring at the girls. "We need to go find the talismans before the enemy gets his hands on all of them."

Kamui nodded, "Yeah, Kotaro came to the camp and said he was on his way to the same area right before he kissed Kyoko on the cheek and took off."

Toya cuffed Kamui in the back of his head with a quick growl.

"Oww, whatâ##d you do that for? I didnâ##t do nothing,â## Kamui rubbed the knot that had formed on his head, his big, stardust eyes watering. It was a show obviously, because inside he was in the middle of laughing his ass off at the look that had crossed Toya's face.

Suki's eyes rounded. "Kotaro, too!" she jerked her head in Kyokoâ##s direction wondering what in the world was going on.

Shinbe slid toward Toya. "So whatâ##s the big deal?"

Toya just glared at him as if daring him to say another word.

Suki grabbed Shinbeâ##s arm and pulled him away from Toya before he wound up like Kamui, with a lump on his head.

Toya turned his glare on Kyoko.

She bristled and glared back. "What's your problem? And don't hit Kamui!" She yelled, stepping in front of the guardian as if to protect him. She didn't have a clue that Kamui now stood behind her, smirking at Toya as if he had just gotten one over on him.

Suki knew there was going to be a fight. Grabbing Kyoko's hand, she started dragging her up the path. "Come on Kyoko, walk with me for a while," Suki didn't give her time to argue as she pulled her along.

Not feeling so safe being left there within Toya's reach, Kamui took off with the girls, leaving Toya staring at their retreating backs.

Once far enough away from Toya, Suki turned to Kyoko. "Now, would you please tell me what the hell happened? Why did Kyou kiss you?" Suki nearly shouted, eyeing her friend with concern. The thought of Kyou kissing anyone was just disturbing.

Kyoko shrugged. "I haven't the foggiest idea why he did it. I was swimming. He floated down and scared the hell out of me. Before I knew what he was doing, he was kissing me, then he left without saying a word."

Kamui felt like someone had just punched him in the stomach. He quickly stepped behind Kyoko, placing a firm hand on her shoulder. "Kyoko, did he mark you?" He asked in a strained voice.

Kyoko frowned. Spinning around, she pinned Kamui with a confused look. "Toya asked the same thing. What does that mean? Mark me? How?"

Kamui's lips thinned. "For Kyou to kiss you out of the blue like that, it means that he's thinking about making you his life mate."

"What! Kyoko yelled putting her hands on her hips. You have got to be joking."

"No joke with that kiss, Kyou has already started laying his claim on you. Shadows entered Kamui's eyes as if lending affect, Now he will stalk you, little by little, til he marks you and makes you his. He let his hand fall from her shoulder. I guess you would think of it as dating."

Suddenly understanding more than he wanted to, Kamui whistled through his teeth. "That's why Toya is so upset, and then Kotaro comes blowing in and kisses your cheek. That's the same thing. He's dating you, too."

Kyoko didn't know what to say. She just stood there for a minute. Then looking over Kamui's shoulder, she noticed Toya and Shinbe trailing behind them, still lost in planning their next move as they headed east.

Suki pulled Kyoko's attention back. "Okay, you said three, Kyoko. So, Toya kissed you too, right?"

She nodded then shook her head. "But Toya didn't really want to kiss me. It was kind of an accident."

Kyoko glanced over her shoulder again, noticing the others

were catching up. "We got into a fight with a demon and Toya lost his daggers and his demon blood took over. He killed the demon and I ran for one of the daggers but he caught me just as I reached it. I thought he was gonna kill me, but instead he kissed me. Then the contact with the daggers sealing spell changed him back."

Suki looked over her shoulder at Toya, then back to Kyoko. "Wait, you mean he changed back while he was kissing you?" she cocked an eyebrow when Kyoko nodded.

Kamui smiled, "I knew it! He really does like you. That's why in his other form he kissed you instead of killing you. He did it because it felt right to him." Kamui stepped back from them knowing Toya was now within hearing range.

"Well, let's keep them company." Suki decided to follow Kamui's example and let it drop for now to bad Shinbe wasn't that smart.

Shinbe turned to Kyoko, hearing Kamui's last statement. "So that's why he's so testy!" He grinned wondering if he should add his kiss to Kyoko's dating line before it got too long.

Toya turned on them, scratching his neck. "Will you guys quit talking shit about me, damn it!"

His neck was already red and Kyoko giggled. She knew when Toya's neck started itching like that, he thought someone was talking about him behind his back and it irritated him to no end.

Toya's fingers twitched as he heard Kyoko giggle. It sent a jolt of pleasure through his body and made him wish she'd

do it more often. He glanced around noticing everyone had finally stopped chatting. Satisfied no one was talking about him anymore, he dropped his hand.

"Come on. We don't have time to play around. We have to stop Hyakuhei and collect the talismans before he does." Toya leaned down in front of Kyoko. "Come on, let them find their own way and you ride with me. It'll be faster." He waited for Kyoko to climb on. At least this way he wouldn't have to hear about his rivals.

Kyoko smiled and climbed on. Then she put her arms around him and gave him a gentle squeeze to let him know she was ready.

Facing away from everyone so no one could see, Toya closed his eyes as he savored the hug he'd just gotten. Opening his eyes back up, silver lights glittered within his golden irises and he took off at a speed that would rival his wind brother Kotaro.

Chapter 3 Wicked Kisses

The breeze was growing colder by the minute and Toya slowed down noticing an evil aura in the distance. Kyoko's blood ran cold as the unnatural feeling overwhelmed her. Toya leapt down from the high branches, coming to a skidding stop at the top of a hill. She slid to the ground as the others quickly appeared behind them looking into the distance.

Kyoko watched as an ominous cloud loomed over the area. "I feel a talisman." She shook her head. "Not just one, there's more," She said breathlessly. "The evil surrounding the fragments is stifling."

Suki walked up behind Kyoko, adjusting her weapon across her shoulder for easier access in case of battle. "I wonder if it's Hyakuhei you're sensing?" She glanced at Shinbe as he walked up beside them, his trench coat and long midnight-blue hair blowing in the wind that was now picking up.

Toya's eyes narrowed and change to molten silver. Sensing danger close to them, he glanced to the left and slung his arm downward. The metallic blade of a dagger flashed to life within his palm. "Come out you bastard, I can smell you!" Toya growled, stepping in front of Kyoko and the others to protect them. The hillside and valley below held the heavy stench of evil.

A form wearing a billowing, black robe materialized out of nowhere, right in front of them with a wicked tilt to his lips. "So, you have answered my summons."

Kyoko shuddered when his dark eyes met hers. The memory of the dream she had the night before slammed into her, giving her the creeps. She took a step back, hiding behind Toya and peeking around him at Hyakuhei. She had a bad feeling that the only reason he was there was her and the talismans she carried.

Toya noted Hyakuhei's attention was centered on Kyoko and he felt a mental snap. He growled, gripping the handle of his dagger and flinging himself forward to slash at the enemy. The black cape fluttered to the ground as expected. He'd known it was only one of Hyakuhei's puppets anyway.

"Will you ever have the guts to truly face me!" Toya raged.

"The priestess's powers will be mine, so come to me!" Hyakuhei's cold voice slowly blew away in the wind.

Kyoko felt chills creep up her spine from the words Hyakuhei had spoken. "Come to him? Is he nuts?" she whispered feeling the coward inside rear its frightened head.

Toya came to stand beside her. He knew that the guardians were in charge of keeping the crystal out of the hands of evil but he didn't like the fact that it put Kyoko in harm's way. Hyakuhei had killed many innocents for the talismans. He'd be damned before he let Kyoko become one of the casualties of this war.

He would protect her. His need to protect Kyoko was so strong, it had become his sole purpose for existence and right now, he had a very bad feeling. He could hear Kyoko's heartbeat speeding and could smell the fear coming from her in waves. Toya watched in amazement as she turned to him with a frozen smile.

"Well, shall we go collect another talisman?" Kyoko lifted her chin in defiance of the fear she was feeling and straightened her shoulders.

Toya looked behind her and could see that the others were also ready. The others, the only people he'd ever trusted.

Hyakuhei gazed into the mirror his underling Yuuhi held up for him. The mirror of souls that enabled him to watch

Kyoko's every move. This girl was his focus for the moment. She alone held the power to control the Guardian Heart Crystal and he needed that power.

But he also needed her to help him fuse the talismans back together. To do that, he would have to find a way to get her to come to him willingly. He wanted her not dead instead, he wanted her on his side.

As if reading his master's mind, Yuuhi spoke in the quiet, emotionless voice that belonged to a child. "You want the power the girl wields but she is pure and will not come to you willingly." The ghostly-white form of the boy peered at Hyakuhei with black eyes that held the knowledge of thousands of years.

"To capture her is to capture a pure heart. To do that, you will need to snare her in a web of deception." The eerie boy gazed into the mirror, watching Kyoko with eyes the color of death.

Hyakuhei smiled a tainted smile. His unblemished, perfect body and face hid his malevolence. His long, dark hair cascaded around him in gleaming waves. He was very sensual, with slender muscles rippling under his skin with every movement. This priestess that the guardians protected held the likeness of the only one he had ever loved.

He knew Kyoko was a reincarnation of the one he had lost so long ago the one taken from him without mercy.

His hand fisted as the memories tried to come back to him of another time. He pushed them away with a growl and

focused back on the priestess before him. How could he make an untainted heart fall in love with him when he was pure evil? She had the power heâ##d given to her ancestor so long ago. This is what drew him to her, the thought of corrupting that kind of purity. First, he would have to ensnare her.

"I will call upon the magic of Tenshi to cast a spell on the priestess and she will fall in love with me." Hyakuhei then began to laugh but the sound held no humor. Closing his dark eyes, he summoned forth the angelic figure of one of the inner demons he had consumed within his body and now controlled.

This demon Tenshi could weave a spell around the girl, unknowingly making her fall in love with the one who has her in their possession. Also calling forth a demon of immense strength and a mass of flying evil spirits to keep Toya and the others at bay, Hyakuhei sent them to meet the group as he watched it all through the mirror of souls.

As Toya and the group closed in on the sinister aura within the valley, Kyoko stopped. Malevolenceâ## she could feel it all around them but she couldnâ##t see it. â##Something is here with us,â## Kyoko whispered as she took a frightened step back. Her wide emerald eyes lifted to a hill in front of them just as an enormous demon rose from the ground as if climbing out of some unmarked grave.

Toya growled at the smaller demons also coming from the ground. It looked like someone had opened a gate from hell. The

twin daggers quickly shimmered to life as Shinbe and Suki stood on each side of him. Kaen bared his fangs as Kamui darted over to Kyoko to stand in front of her incase some of the demons made it past the others.

Toya sprang forward yelling. "Kyoko! Do you see a talisman in the main demon?"

Kyoko looked at the demon hard and saw a soft glow coming from its forehead. "Forehead!" She yelled back at Toya while Suki started slashing at the wraiths that were flying toward them ahead of the main demon.

Kyoko watched Shinbe start to unwind the amethyst beads from around his hand to open the cursed void Hyakuhei had gifted him with as a child, the same void that could swallow him whole if its powers ever became out of control. The vacuum of the void would suck the demons into its depths in waves, making it one of their best and most dangerous weapons in the battle against Hyakuhei and his minion.

Kyoko saw a shadow fly past her and glanced above them. "Shinbe! Don't do it! A changeling," She pointed and Shinbe glanced up, quickly closing the cursed void and nodded his thanks for the warning just as a swarm of demons came at them. The changelings were the voids solitary downfall.

Shinbe had almost died the last time he'd accidentally sucked in one of Hyakuhei's changelings. Their power reflected within the void, spinning it out of control and putting Shinbe's own life in danger of being consumed by the cursed

vacuum.

Suki's bayonet zoomed through the air at the last second, killing some of the advancing lowborn demons. Shinbe threw wards and cast spells at the rest that were attacking them.

That's when everything started happening all at once, Kyoko watched as the group fought off a large swarm of ground imps. Airborne demons attacked Toya with movements too quick to track, giving the mammoth demon an opening to attack. Toya was thrown across the field only to rise back up and come at it again.

Kyoko raised her crossbow, intending to help as much as she could when something caught her attention, stilling her movements. An illumination descended around her, repelling Kamui as if he had been thrown away from her. It was so bright that Kyoko shut her eyes tight and threw her arm up in front of her to keep from being blinded.

Toya saw the light sphere descend on Kyoko. His heart thudded in his chest, his attention on her instead of the fight with the demon as he picked himself up from the ground yet again.

Finally opening her eyes, Kyoko gasped when she saw a man right in front of her. He was beautiful, with wings of light, just like in her literature books at school. They would have said he was an angel. This man was in no way an angel, she could feel it. She pulled back the string of her crossbow and a spirit dart formed as she remembered the story about the most beautiful

angel being kicked out of heaven because he was evil.

Kyoko steadied her aim as she looked into the crystals that were his eyes but was unable to shoot. How could she hurt something so precious? With his long, white hair flowing around him, she'd never seen anything so lovely in her life. He slowly approached her, whispering words that she couldn't understand.

Between Suki and Shinbe, they'd wiped out almost all of the free flying spirits and turned to help Toya with the enraged demon that was slamming him into the ground because he wasn't paying attention to the fight. He was too busy trying to see what was happening to Kyoko.

Suki threw her weapon and it slashed across the demon's cheek, getting its attention fixed on her. Shinbe grabbed her out of the way just as the demon attacked, sending debris flying as its claws missed and swiped the ground. He yelled to Toya. "You go help Kyoko. We'll deal with this thing!"

Toya raced to the radiating light, seeing the image of a man with wings floating toward Kyoko inside the barrier. He ran to it but the barrier repelled him as it had Kamui. Small lightning bolts the color of black light sizzled across his skin. Flying backwards, he hit the ground with a bone-jarring thud. He lay there for a minute, stunned and trying to catch his breath.

Kamui stood on the other side of the sphere, frantically casting every magic spell he could think of to destabilize the barrier but it wasn't working. He growled in frustration as he again tried

to breach the shield and get to Kyoko. Placing his hands together in front of him, he chanted his most powerful spell and released it, only for it to reflect off the wall of the barrier and slam back into him, sending him skidding across the grass in irritation.

Kyoko was trying to fight the pull from the apparition-like form in front of her. She could hear him whispering enchantments and she could feel a strange sensation starting in her chest. It wasn't painful but still it felt like it would burst. Not with pain it was a loving feeling. She was still lucid enough to feel fear at the same time.

She tried to step back as he drew even closer and that when it dawned on her exactly what he was doing. This mischievous demon was casting a spell on her and now it was too late. Kyoko blinked slowly. She felt the overwhelming feeling of being in love. She would do anything for that person but she didn't know who that person was. Who was it she loved so much that it hurt?

She felt the ground shift under her feet and she began sinking into a void just as the alluring demon finally came within a hairsbreadth from her. His silky lips brushed across hers and her world turned black.

Hyakuhei gazed through the mirror and witnessed the spell being placed on Kyoko. He knew when she awoke, the person before her would be the one she loved. His eyes glowed a faint, crimson light as he opened a portal under the barrier sphere she

was trapped in and started pulling her to him.

"Yes, come to me. I am the one you truly love." His thoughts became distorted and he felt like she was finally coming home to him. "As it should be," he whispered.

Yuuhi watched Hyakuhei without a flicker of emotion crossing his pale, young face. "She will not come, for Toya will stop her."

Hyakuhei's eyes narrowed on the boy before he turned back to the mirror.

Toya stood over the barrier-sphere that kept Kyoko from him. With his whole body shaking from fear and anger, he gathered his guardian powers and let it pulse into the twin daggers.

"You will not take her away from me!" His eyes instantly changed to molten silver as his powers surfaced, sending a shockwave out around him, causing his hair and clothes to flutter wildly from the blast. Holding the twin daggers together, the crossed blades turned a vivid blue as the Tenshi kissed Kyoko's lips.

The demon looked up just as Toya descended. In a flash, the barrier shield disappeared and the blades made contact with the Tenshi, killing it in an instant.

Toya reached down and grabbed Kyoko around the waist, pulling her up out of the void that had formed under her. He jumped clear of the void just as the massive demon Suki and Shinbe were fighting tried to attack him again.

Seeing that Kyoko was unconscious and not knowing what the winged demon had done to her made Toya see red. Raising his fire dagger with a furious growl, he felt the heat build within his guardian blood and released it back on the advancing demons, blasting them to smithereens.

Yuuhi lowered the mirror of souls from Hyakuhei, who had looked away in disappointment.

Hyakuhei's voice remained calm. "No matter, the spell will only last a couple of hours since the Tenshi was destroyed." There was no regret, for he would have many more chances and he would capture the priestess. He opened the palm of his hand revealing the small fragments of crystal that would eventually bring her within his grasp.

"She will still come to me." He said in a seductive voice as Yuuhi looked back into the mirror.

Toya was so upset that he didn't even notice the dark clouds had disappeared and the sun was once again shining its late day rays. He reached out, pulling Kyoko closer so that her head rested on his thigh as he knelt. He couldn't see any wounds but the fact that she had passed out was scaring the hell out of him. He paid no attention to the others as they crowded around him.

Kamui knelt by Toya's side. "Is she all right?" He gazed down at Kyoko with a catch in his voice. "I was supposed to protect her," He whispered as he reached out and touched her

cheek with the tips of his fingers. "Kyoko, please wake up! for me! come on! why won't you wake up?" The quiver in Kamui's voice gave away the guilt he was feeling for not saving her.

Shinbe was the one to answer. "I recognized the lovely demon that was with her. I studied its secrets a while back. It's called Tenshi. It's very weak in physical attacks and can be destroyed easily. Its real power is a deceiving love spell." He directed his next question toward Toya. "It didn't kiss her did it?"

Toya nodded, remembering the flash of jealousy that had shot through him when the beautiful male creature dared to kiss Kyoko.

Shinbe sighed and smacked his hand over his eyes before peeking through his fingers, "Then we may have a problem when she wakes up."

Toya felt his stomach quiver at the thought of Kyoko being hurt somehow. "Shinbe, what's wrong with her? What kind of spell was it that the bastard put on her? Is there any way we can help her? An antidote or something?" He asked calmly, never taking his eyes from her for fear of her breath stopping. He'd never felt so numb in his ageless life.

"Well, the Tenshi put a love spell on her when he kissed her. That much I know. He was probably going to take her to Hyakuhei when they started down into that void that had opened up. But since you killed the demon, the spell shouldn't last very long." Shinbe cast a worried glance at Toya, hoping his

studies had been accurate for all their sakes.

Toya frowned as he moved a couple inches away from her and stood up. His heart kicked up its tempo as he asked, "What kind of spell is a love spell and why would Hyakuhei want Kyoko under it?" Then it dawned on him what Hyakuhei's intentions had been. His hands balled into fist as his eyes widened then instantly narrowed, "Damn that bastard! I'm gonna kill him!"

He sat down hard on the ground beside Kyoko. "Well, what's gonna happen when she wakes up now that Hyakuhei's not here?" Toya tried to hide the fury he felt at the thought of Hyakuhei wanting Kyoko.

Shinbe leaned over her. "Let's find out." He tapped Kyoko on the cheek softly. "Kyoko, sweetie. Wake up." He smiled when her eyes started to flutter. Suki sat down beside him waiting for Kyoko to focus, waiting to see if she was all right.

Kyoko's vision was blurry as she opened her eyes. Her chest hurt. She raised her hand, putting it over her heart and squeezed her eyes shut for a second. Then she heard Shinbe.

"Kyoko, are you alright?" Shinbe leaned over her, now coming into focus as she gazed up at him.

Kyoko stared at him for just a moment, feeling every nerve in her body come to life. God, Shinbe was beautiful with his long, midnight blue hair hanging down around his perfect face. His eyes looked like amethyst crystals as he watched her. "I'm fine." Kyoko pushed herself up into a sitting position and wrapped her arms around his neck wanting closer to him. "Oh,

Shinbe. I love you so much."

Shinbe's eyes flashed pure joy as Kyoko pressed herself against him. Forgetting everyone was watching, he smiled back at her and asked, "Kyoko, darling. Will you have my child?"

Kyoko smiled, "I would love to." She waited as Shinbe started forward with his amethyst gaze on her lips. About that time, Suki's weapon landed on Shinbe's head making him dizzy. He gasped in pain as he passed out.

Kyoko frowned as Shinbe landed in a heap beside her. In slight confusion she turned to look at Suki who was laying her weapon back on the ground with a smug look. "Aaah, Suki," Kyoko crawled toward her, smiling sensually the whole time. Reaching out, she cupped Suki's cheek with the palm of her hand. "You are so beautiful."

Suki's eyes became huge as she crawled backwards trying to get away but Kyoko crawled forward following her, still smiling.

Toya sat there, too stunned to do anything. He just watched Kyoko stalk Suki with infatuation.

"Toya, will you please call her off!" Suki sounded like she was more scared of Kyoko than any demon had ever scared her, even in battle.

Toya grinned as he reached over and grabbed Kyoko from behind, wrapping his hands around her waist and pulling her off Suki, setting her right in his lap. He was grinning at Suki until Kyoko turned around on his lap, straddling him.

His world came to a crashing halt as Kyoko held his gaze. The love shining in her emerald eyes for him made his lungs ache and his heart felt like someone had kicked it. Toya couldn't breathe. It was the look he longed for and had often dreamed about. Now here she was, staring him in the face. Kyoko was in love with him.

"Toya!" She whispered softly, "Please, kiss me." Before he could even comply with her sweetly spoken request, Kyoko had leaned into him, wrapping her arms around his neck. She murmured the words, "I love you," just as her lips descended on his.

Toya felt a jolt of pleasure pass through his body as though he'd just died and came back to life. When she opened her lips to him, he couldn't help but drive his tongue deep into her, giving in to the kiss of a lifetime, searching out all the hidden places he had longed to find. He sucked in her hot breath when her kiss tried to dominate his.

His arms coming up around her brought them closer still as a wave of possessiveness rushed through his veins. Her small hand had wound its way up into his hair, where she grasped it, holding him captive.

Shinbe regained consciousness. Sitting up, his eyes followed the stunned gazes of Kamui and Suki. Turning to look, his jaw dropped. They looked like two lovers totally into each other and not knowing they were being watched. Shinbe reached over and grabbed Suki's arm, shaking it to get her attention although his

eyes were still locked on the couple.

Suki turned her face slightly to let him know she acknowledged his shaking her arm but her eyes were still transfixed on Toya and Kyoko. Neither one of them could believe what they were witnessing.

Shinbe tried to snap out of it by shaking his head to clear the dirty thoughts that threatened to take over. Using his better judgment, he leaned toward Suki. "Don't you think we should stop him before it goes too far?" He whispered honestly feeling like a voyeur. "I mean, once the spell wears off and Kyoko is back to normal, she's gonna be angry if she isn't still in one piece." Shinbe knew Suki would catch the double meaning.

Suki blushed as she glanced over at him. "Yeah, I'm just glad he stopped her before she did that to me." She grinned.

Shinbe cocked an eyebrow, wondering what the hell he had missed.

Kamui, who had been silently watching in astonishment, heard Suki's remark. He couldn't help it; the thought of Kyoko getting Suki in a lip-lock like that. It sent him into a fit of laughter that he tried to keep quiet but couldn't.

Shinbe and Suki snickered as Kamui laughed his fool head off but then Suki glanced back at Toya seeing how his body was already starting to move in a seductive rhythm against Kyoko's. She knew they had to intervene somehow.

Toya was in heaven, taking all from the kiss that he could. He took the kiss even deeper as his passion began to flame. The

need to make Kyoko his sizzled within his guardian blood. He gave a low growl as his hand gripped the back of her head. His fingers splayed through her hair as he pulled her farther into the now demanding kiss.

The way she was sitting on him with her legs on each side of him, he could feel her heat against his rising need. Toya put his other arm lower on her back as he ground himself up against her. The sensation was making him lose control. He was oblivious to everything except his need to have all of her.

The stimulating smell of desire she was giving off let him know she was ready to become his forever. All he needed was to be inside her deep inside her.

Shinbe and Suki realized it had gone far enough and they could tell neither was in control anymore. Shinbe stood and Suki rose beside him, their smiles now gone. Both too scared to approach. It wasn't funny anymore.

"Toya, please stop this at once. Remember Kyoko is under a spell and doesn't know what she is doing. Toya! Shinbe called out, hoping he wasn't too late. He took a quick step back when Toya's head snapped up.

Toya's eyes turned silver then tinted red as he growled, sending a warning for them to back off.

Shinbe took a step in front of Suki protectively. That's not Toya, He hissed as he gripped his staff so hard that his knuckles turned white. He needed to find a way to snap Toya out of his present state-of-mind before things went too far.

â##Iâ##m not scared of Toya's demon side,â## Kamui frowned and started for them with every intention of taking Kyoko from his brother. He was stopped short when Suki grabbed one arm and Shinbe grabbed his other.

â##No, Kamui!â## They cried in unison.

Sukiâ##s heart was beating fast out of fear for both her friends. â##Damn Hyakuhei and his curses!â## She tried once more to make him understand. "Toya, she will hate you if you take her while she doesnâ##t know what sheâ##s doing. Please try to get yourself back under control.â## she hardened her voice, â##You have to let her go."

Toyaâ##s gaze turned on Suki angrily as the words slowly reached through the haze of desire and penetrated into his subconscious. The dangerous color receded from his eyes, turning them back to liquid gold. He reluctantly returned his attention to Kyoko with a shattered heart. He almost lost it again when she pressed herself downward, searing heat across his rock hard erection.

Kyokoâ##s eyes were glazed over with unrestrained passion and he could smell the scent of her need. Toyaâ##s gaze softened in understanding. She was waiting on him to make love to her. She wanted him as much as he wanted her.

It was all he could do to not grab her up and leave with her. But with all the willpower he had left in him, he understood the truth of Sukiâ##s words. Kyoko would hate him. Heâ##d already kissed her against her will, and now this? Toya gently pushed her

off him and stood up; closing his eyes to the rejected look she was now giving him.

Kyoko didn't understand why he was leaving her. She reached out to grip his shirt, wanting him to stay. It felt like her world would shatter if he left her. "Toya, please, I love you." Her eyes misted as she tried to get him to look at her. She whispered in a confused voice, "Don't leave me."

Toya had frozen in place, unable to pull away from her hand. He tried to remind himself that she would have said the same thing to Hyakuhei had he not broken the barrier before she disappeared into that void. His claws dug into the palms of his hands drawing blood and he tried to focus on the pain to help stabilize his willpower.

Suki came up behind Kyoko and holding on to her, she looked at Toya. "Maybe you should go away for a little while until the spell wears off and you are both under control again." She nodded her head toward the trees, hoping he would listen for once.

Toya hung his head; his dark hair barely hiding the need in his eyes from everyone watching. God, he wanted to claim her, wanted to mark her right there and then; but Suki was right, Kyoko wasn't herself right now. She'd only hate him for it later and he didn't want that. He gritted his teeth with his restraint. If he ever took Kyoko for his own, he'd never give her back. She would be his for life.

Suki gasped at the look on Toya's face when he finally

raised his head up to look at Kyoko. It was a look of enlightenment and barely suppressed hunger; the silver within his eyes matched the silver highlights that streaked his ebony hair.

He stepped forward, his eyes only for Kyoko as he leaned down, gently kissing her on the lips before whispering the words, "I'm sorry," against them. Then with all the self-control he held within his body, he turned and disappeared into the forest.

Suki sighed as Kyoko started crying. Her small body trembled as she whimpered. She placed her hand on Kyoko's shoulder and looked over at Shinbe not knowing what to do. Her own bottom lip trembled when she noticed Shinbe's back was now turned to them and his shoulders were tense.

Kamui had also become very quiet; no longer thinking it was funny. There was too much truth behind this situation and it was breaking his heart.

Kyou inhaled the air that had only a moment ago held the stench of his enemy's spawn. The scent had quickly changed as the sun returned and he could smell the priestess. Her scent drifted to him, carried by the breeze but he could also detect the unmistakable scent of her tears. Following the bittersweet scent, he searched for her.

He did not want anyone upsetting her and for some reason, the thought of her crying made his anger surface. What had she befallen to bring tears to her emerald eyes? His calm face showed no emotion but his protective instinct surfaced as he flew in the

direction Kyoko's scent was coming from.

Toya hadn't gone far when he felt someone approaching. He gave an angry hiss; his unease mounting. Kyou's scent grew steadily closer. It was unhurried and calm as it passed over him, moving in Kyoko's direction. With a snarl, Toya turned and raced back to where he'd left Kyoko and the others.

Within only a few fleeting seconds, Kyou gazed coldly down at the group from a height where he would not be detected. The woman-child was on her knees crying while the demon slayer was laying a hand on her shoulder, trying to comfort her. Shinbe and Kamui seemed calm and only stood by watching them from a distance.

He could smell Toya's lingering sent but couldn't see him anywhere. He could also smell Toya's desire still hanging thick in the air.

Surely, his stupid brother had not tried to harm the girl. Kyou silently willed Kyoko to look up at him, sending the thought into her mind as he gazed down at her quietly, no emotion showing on the outside. His heart beat faster when she raised a tear-streaked face to meet his gaze.

Kyou glared coldly down at the ones standing around her. All eyes turned to him as his voice descended from the air. "Who has dared to hurt this girl?" His calm voice belied the danger they were in; for whoever had hurt her would pay.

Chapter 4 "Dangerous Feelings"

Kyoko glanced up hearing the voice in her mind telling her softly to do so. Her tears reflected the light like glittering diamonds as she watched Kyou floating above her and she sent him an adoring smile.

Suki tensed up at Kyou's deadly question and glared up at him. She shook her head, "It wasn't any of the guardians that hurt her. It was your uncle Hyakuhei. He had a spell cast on her." Suki squared her shoulders, angry with him for accusing them of hurting Kyoko. "We killed the demon who cast the spell so Kyoko will be alright within a couple of hours."

She stepped in front of Kyoko, trying to block her friend from Kyou's view. After Kyoko told her earlier about Kyou kissing her... Well, she didn't want Kyoko getting any ideas right now. She would let her kiss Shinbe first if it came to that, so she blocked his view and folded her arms across her chest as if standing guard.

Kyou smiled coldly at Suki but his eyes narrowed, which sent a warning into Shinbe's heart. He stepped up to stand beside Suki, adding to the blocking of Kyoko's vision of his powerful brother, but also to get his attention off Suki and onto him.

Kamui stood silently behind all of them and started to move forward to join them but Kaen stepped in front of him out of nowhere in warning. He glared at the fire sprites back before

shifting that glare to his oldest brother.

Kyou was secretly impressed with the courage they showed in front of him, although it would not do them any good. Once again, he summoned the priestess to look at him.

Kyoko stood up and walked around her two would-be bodyguards to be able to see Kyou. Suki grabbed her arm to try to stop her but let her hand fall when Kyou gave a warning growl.

Kyoko watched Kyou with affection. To her, he was like the most angelic creature she had ever seen, floating there with his white silky shirt fluttering around him. His platinum hair swirled, lending an air of sensuality to his unmatched beauty. And his golden eyes... God, she loved him.

And that was what Kyou saw and heard within her thoughts, and she was bestowing it directly at him. His breath hissed as he inhaled, staring intently at her, his gaze darkening with desire.

"She wants to come to me, so let her." Kyou looked down at Suki and Shinbe dispassionately. The tone of his voice was enough to let them know they were treading on thin ice as he shifted his gaze and watched the priestess stare at him adoringly. She reached up to him with her arms out stretched, beckoning him to come get her. Within her mind, where only Kyou could hear, she whispered his name longingly.

Suki and Shinbe jumped into action before the guardian lord could do it. They both grabbed an arm and lowered it back to her side. Kyoko turned and looked at them both, still with love in

her expression as the spell demanded.

Kyou gave a slight frown, narrowing his eyes on them. "What kind of spell is she under?" He demanded in a stern voice.

Shinbe glared up at him. "A Tenshi kissed her right before we destroyed it.## He knew this was all he had to say, for Kyou had more knowledge than all of them combined when it came to demons and spells.

Kyou's lips held a whisper of a smile on them, now understanding. "Let her go,## He instructed in a deadly tone as he descended closer to her. Kyoko watched his approach giving Kyou a loving smile that would have melted the heart of the most evil of demons.

Suki and Shinbe dropped Kyoko's hands and took a step back knowing they couldn't stand against him. He was too powerful. They watched in horror as he slid his hand behind Kyoko and pulled her body flush against his, lifting her up into the air to hover there.

For an instant, she registered the hard strength of the thigh that parted her legs, feeling the heat of his skin through his silk clothing. Kyoko wrapped her arms around him, pressing her body even closer, loving the feel of his powerful leg between hers.

Kyou watched her lips part as she pressed herself against him. There was another way to describe the demon spell as he was sure Shinbe knew. The spell had sent her into heat. He pressed back hearing her sigh in response and felt a jolt of scalding hot lightning flash into his midsection as he watched her in wonder.

No one had ever affected him in this way; no one else ever could. He'd never allow it.

He touched her flushed face as she strained against him seeking more. He knew she didn't know what she was doing, for he was aware of the spell she was under and her innocence. Innocent or not, her passion would be a force all its own once it was released.

Kyou knew that she would remember everything that happen once the spell wore off so he ground his thigh against her, giving the pressure she was seeking. He slashed his lips across hers in a demanding and hungry kiss. He would set her on fire with need; need that would carry past the spell.

He felt her small hand slide into his hair and her fingers grip him. The sensations it was causing made him almost lose control as he devoured her mouth and rocked against her; letting her know the rhythm he would one day show her. Striving for control, he reminded himself he would not take her like this. Not when the spell was interfering.

The others nearly jumped out of their skin when Toya crashed out of the forest and landed right below Kyou and Kyoko. His eyes were now blood red with anger as he watched Kyou passionately kiss the girl he loved more than life itself. And he itched to kill him for it.

"Kyou! Let Kyoko go." Toya growled feeling his demonic blood pulsating dangerously close to the surface. Now!

Kyou broke the kiss and his golden gaze took in Toya with

little sympathy. "You are the ones that let this happen to her—are you not?" He turned back at the girl, her eyes watching him longingly and her lips thoroughly kissed. This was not the time or the place. He could feel that the spell was already starting to wear off and knew it was now safe to leave her with the others.

Kyoko frowned up at the unreadable emotions reflected in his golden eyes. She lifted a hand to gently touch his lips, remembering the kiss. He swept his lips across her fingertips then whispered his hot breath in her ear making her quiver. "Soon Kyoko. We will finish what we have started. I will be inside you."

He left her standing there watching him as he shimmered backwards then vanished. Kyoko felt someone come up behind her and pull her hard against them. Turning her head to look up, she saw it was Toya. He was holding her possessively and she leaned back against him still watching the sky where Kyou had faded.

"Kyou," She breathed wishfully. She felt Toya's body tense against hers and closed her eyes in confusion. Her chest hurt. Putting her hand over her heart, she felt herself falling and welcomed the relief from the pain as her world turned black.

Toya felt Kyoko relax against him but he still tightened his hold on her not liking what he'd just witnessed. Then she melted into his arms. He caught her, scooping her up bridal style, he carried her back to the others.

"Here, take her." His husky voice shook with emotion as he handed her over to Shinbe, who in turn laid her down on a

blanket Kamui had spread out for her.

Shinbe turned to see that Toya now had his back turned to them. It was somewhat humbling seeing his brother show his true heart for the first time.

Toya sighed with a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. "Shinbe, will she remember anything?" He half turned around glancing at Shinbe over his shoulder then flinched when he saw his brother give a hesitant nod.

Shinbe was well aware that it wasn't what Toya wanted to hear but he had to be prepared for the truth. "Everything, she will remember everything." He felt bad for Toya as he saw his brother's shoulders slump in defeat.

"What are you going to do?" Shinbe asked, knowing Kyoko was not going to be happy with any of this. He really wouldn't want to be in Toya's shoes when Kyoko realized what had almost happened. Shinbe touched her soft cheek, secretly wondering what it would be like to kiss her like that. His amethyst eyes softened. Even he was secretly in love with her, but sadly, it wasn't meant to be.

Toya had no idea what he was going to do, but he was not one of them. He sat down next to Kyoko, giving Shinbe a warning look that made him quickly remove his trespassing hand from her cheek. It was bad enough that he already felt like jumping out of his skin, sitting there waiting for her to wake up. His fingers twitched, "Shinbe, how long til she wakes up?"

Shinbe cocked an eyebrow as he walked over to sit down

between Suki and Kamui. "Why don't you wake her now. That's all it will take."

Before Toya thought about it, he leaned over and gently shook her shoulder. "Kyoko," He whispered, then drew his hand back quickly when her dark eyelashes fluttered. "Are you alright now?" he asked her quietly. Her eyes flashed wide and Toya held his breath.

"I'm fine," Kyoko whispered then cringed knowing that had been what she said the last time she'd woken up. Both times she'd lied. Refusing to look at Toya, her gaze traveled to Suki and Shinbe and she could feel her face changing color rapidly. She felt like she was going to die of mortification.

Kyoko quickly closed her eyes and drew her knees up, wrapping her arms around them, and hid her face. "I'm sorry you guys. I'm so sorry," She mumbled from her hiding place.

Toya reached out, putting his hand on her shoulder to comfort her. When she flinched, he removed it quickly, balling his hand into a fist and lowering it back to his side. The pain of rejection shattered in his golden eyes as he glanced over at the others.

"It's alright, Kyoko. None of this was your fault. It's Hyakuhei's. That fucking bastard." The words were whispered calmly but it was the calm before the storm and they all heard it loud and clear. Toya stood up and stared down at the curtain of hair that was hiding her from him. Without another word, he once again turned and headed into the deep foliage of the forest.

Kyoko wished a hole would develop and she could just sink

into it and stay there where no one would ever find her. How was she going to face them now? Then out loud she cried, "Oh god, I want to go home."

Suki stood up, wanting to ease her friend's pain. "Kaen and I can take you back to the maiden statue, if that's what you want." Suki walked to her as Kaen stepped out of the shadows already in his dragon form. She climbed on and reached her hand down to Kyoko. "Let's go."

Kyoko slowly stood up, unable to look at anyone and whispered guiltily, "I'll be back in a couple of days." She ran to Kaen and they took off for the heart of time shrine and her way home.

Toya stepped back into the clearing and watched as Kaen faded from his eyesight. He didn't want her going home. He felt his heart fall a couple inches. What if she didn't come back? Turning on his heels, Toya took off at a dead run, hoping to beat her to the time portal that would take her from his world.

On the way back to the maiden statue, Kyoko didn't say anything so Suki tried to draw her out some. "Kyoko, I really wouldn't worry about anything. We all know it was the spell and not you. So it's really not as bad as you think." Suki glanced back, smiling at Kyoko.

Kyoko gave a feeble attempt at smiling back but didn't join in the conversation. She was too busy dying a thousand deaths every time she thought about what she'd done, especially the

way she had kissed Toya and Kyou. Kyoko put her hands over her face, again wishing she could hide. She just wanted to go home and crawl as far under her covers as she could and stay there for a while.

She remembered the way it felt to kiss Kyou and sighed. "What must he be thinking?" She couldn't blame either one of them because she had practically thrown herself at them. She also wondered about the response she'd gotten from Toya. He had kissed her back, no, he'd done more than that. She twitched remembering the feel of his hardness under her.

Kyoko shook her head. If she had to pick anyone right now, she'd pick Kotaro. At least she hadn't thrown herself at him!

Pressing her forehead against Suki's back, she knew she'd enjoyed the kiss from Toya, and yes, from Kyou too. But what must they think of her now. Kyoko looked down as the ground blurred under them. They'd been flying for a while and were getting closer to the Heart of Time. "Suki, will you let me off here? I'd like to walk the rest of the way by myself."

Suki patted Kaen and he dipped lower and landed. Kyoko slid off and so did Suki. "Are you sure you don't want us to walk with you?" Suki asked worriedly.

Kyoko shook her head then stepped forward and gave Suki a hug. "I have my crossbow if anything happens and it's not too far. I'll be back in a couple of days. Tell the others for me. I'll bring back everyone something good to eat." Kyoko tried

to smile but the corners of her lips wouldn't cooperate so she gave up. Turning around, she started in the direction that held the maiden statue and her way out of this world.

She relaxed a little when she heard Kaen take back to the air, giving her the solitude she needed. The more Kyoko walked, the more she felt like herself again and instead of being ashamed she started to get mad. Not so much mad at herself but mad at Toya and Kyou for taking advantage of her while they both new she'd been under that spell.

"That does it, the next person that tries to kiss me is gonna get decked and I don't care who it is! I don't have a boyfriend, and at the moment I sure as hell don't want one!" There, with that said out loud, she felt a lot better about herself. She would go home and relax for a couple of days and come back as good as new.

Kyoko decided she would happily kick Hyakuhei's butt from one side of this land to the other when she came back. She owed him one.

Toya landed in the clearing hoping to catch Kyoko before she went home. His silver wings shimmered then disappeared without a trace. His heart started to thump nervously as he smelled her scent coming closer. Standing his ground, he watched as she walked into the clearing. She hadn't looked up yet so he just stood there between her and her only way home.

Kyoko had almost walked all the way to him before she looked

up, stopping dead in her tracks. "Toya," She managed to get out before dropping her gaze again. She wasn't in the mood to talk to him yet. Not with those strange feelings so fresh in her mind. That spell had put her in heat, for the lack of a better term, and even though the spell was gone, she still felt the heat.

Damn it, she's taking this too hard. He knew he had to do something to relieve the tension before it all blew up in his face. "Kyoko look, you don't have to go home right now, not with us this close to finding Hyakuhei. Don't let a little thing like a kiss stand in our way."

There, he'd said it. It was no big deal and she should just come back with him where she belonged. Yeah, that would be better. He started to fidget when he noticed she'd stopped right in front of him.

Kyoko heard his words. Don't let a little thing like a kiss stand in our way? She growled inwardly. So, he thought it was no big deal, did he? He thought he could just do that anytime and she wasn't supposed to pay it any attention. Ha! Her anger had surfaced and now she had an outlet for it.

"Toya," She said in the sweetest voice she could muster.

"Yes, Kyoko? Toya had to force himself not to take a step back when ever instinct he had was telling him to get the hell out of there.

Kyoko leaned forward as if to softly say something to him and he leaned a little forward so he could hear her. Kyoko smiled. "NO!"

Toya couldn't stop the pull of the Taming spell as his body grew heavy and he smacked the ground. He instantly struggled to get up but she stood there, extending the spell until he felt like he was going to break his back fighting it.

"For the love of god, please stop!" Toya shouted.

Kyoko stomped her foot but didn't cast the spell again. She was biting the hell out of her tongue to keep from doing it. Then she let it all fly but it wasn't the binding spell. It was all the feelings she felt at that moment.

"How could you Toya? Kyou I can understand kissing me like that, but you? You were supposed to be protecting me! That means my feelings too! You shouldn't have done that to me! Not when you knew I couldn't help it! The last thing you should have done was kiss me like that!"

Toya felt the spell start to get lighter and he fought to raise himself from the hard packed ground. "Kyoko let me explain."

"No!" Kyoko screamed. "I can fix this problem. I don't have a boyfriend in this world and I don't want a boyfriend in this world! If I get a boyfriend, he will be from my own world. And don't follow me! I'll be back in a couple of days and when I come back, I don't want anyone to ever mention this again! Understand? It! Never! Happened!" She yelled the last part just as she touched the maiden's hands and disappeared.

By the time Toya pulled himself up from the ground, he was fuming. "Damn it!" She didn't let him get a single word in. She wouldn't let him tell her he didn't want her to go home

or that he wanted her to be his or anything. So, she doesn't want a boyfriend in this world.

Toya's eyebrow twitched. "What did she mean by that? She didn't want a boyfriend in this world that she would get one in her own?" He turned to look at the maiden statue, screaming at the top of his lungs. "What did you mean by that Kyoko? You get back here right now, damn it!"

Toya sighed, knowing she was way past hearing him. It never dawned on him that someone who was from her world would maybe claim her as a mate. He got a chill just thinking about it. No, she was bluffing. She had to be bluffing, and if she wasn't, he knew how to solve that problem. He would just get rid of the guy. No, then Kyoko would hate him for life. She never forgive him if he hurt a human.

A human could never protect you, Toya growled in frustration then sensed a presence and looked toward the maiden statue. Kyou's calm form materialized in the clearing in front of him. Damn! He needed this about as much as he needed a hole in the head.

"The priestess has run from you and returned to her world." His emotionless tones were more of a statement instead of a question.

"It's none of your damn business Kyou, so why don't you go kiss some other girl and leave Kyoko alone." Although they were brothers, both guardians over Kyoko and the guardian heart crystal, Toya still didn't trust him especially with

Kyoko. "Kyoko is mine, understand? Just leave her alone.â##

"She is yours, you say?â## Kyouâ##s tone was almost bored. "She is pure and has no mate. She is not yours." The wind began to blow through the clearing and Kyou vanished with it, leaving Toya standing there with a sinking feeling as he watched one of Kyouâ##s golden feathers land in the statues outstretched hands then vanish.

Toya leaned back against the side of the maiden statue and slowly slid down it until he was sittingâ## waiting. Minutes turned into hours and Toya blinked up at the sky. When had the sun gone down? He knew that the others were on their way. He could smell their scent coming in on the breeze. He just stayed there, waiting for them to show themselves.

Suki nudged Shinbe forward into the clearing whispering, â##Go talk to him Shinbe. Maybe it will help. Weâ##ll go down a ways and make camp, okay?" She gave him another nudge forward.

Shinbe knew Toya was probably not in a good mood. He never was when Kyoko went back to her own time but he would do anything for Kyoko and Suki. Right now, one of them wanted him to find out what happen and see if he could say anything that would help. Taking a deep breath, he approached quietly, secretly hoping Toya was asleep.

"What do you want Shinbe?â## Toya said, startling the amethyst guardian.

Shinbe made his way to Toya and sat down beside him. "So,

she still mad?"

Toya slowly looked over at Shinbe. "What gave you that idea?"

Shinbe pointed with his staff to the Toya shaped hole in the ground. "Well, that's a new one, isn't it? he couldn't help but smile at his own joke. Toya glared over at him and his sibling quit smirking. Shinbe sighed. "Did you get to talk to her at all?"

Toya shrugged. "She wouldn't let me say anything. She was too mad to listen. Now she's gone back and I have a bad feeling. We need her here." In his mind he silently added, "I need her here."

Shinbe nodded. "Maybe it would help if you just went to check on her. After all, you are the only one of us who can do it. And next time, don't try to explain things. Just say you're sorry, okay?" he stood up and walked away a couple of steps before stopping and adding. "If she does give you a chance to explain, make sure you tell her that you love her. After all, she's not a mind reader."

Toya waited until Shinbe was well out of sight before standing up and heaving a sigh to steady his nerves. Looking down into the face of the maiden statue, he secretly wondered if Kyoko's look-alike from the past was as hard to handle as her descendant. In order to find that secret out he'd have to ask Hyakuhei and that was out.

Reaching for the maiden's hands, he disappeared into the engulfing blue light. Jumping through the time barrier always

gave him the willies. It reminded him of drowning but without the water.

The other guardians often griped about him being the only one who could do it but Toya had come to his own conclusion on that; the Taming spell. Fair was fair. He was the only one Kyoko could use the spell on, so he was the only one who could chase her down in her world and drag her back.

What am I doing? She's just going to use that damn spell if she catches me following her, Toya climbed up the small flight of stairs and out of the shrine house that set in Kyoko's back yard. He'd never been very good at listening to that little voice in his head so why start now. The night was calm and cool, helping steady him for the confrontation.

Looking up at Kyoko's house and seeing none of the normal lights on, he decided to walk around her house until he saw her bedroom window. This wasn't the first time he'd chosen this entrance. Besides, it would just be his luck to run into that freak of a grandfather she had.

Swiftly climbing the tree outside Kyoko's bedroom, Toya smiled when he noted the window was cracked and her light was out. He put his hands on the window and quietly opened it the rest of the way, cringing when it gave a slight creaking sound.

Climbing into her room, Toya crept over to her bed. She was half covered, with her small hand curled under her chin, lying on her side with her auburn hair fanned out around her on the white pillow. He slowly sat down on the edge of the bed and leaned

over her, watching her breathe.

He loved to watch her sleep. Being a guardian, he didn't sleep as much as a human so he had many opportunities to just sit and watch her without her knowing. Toya's thoughts drifted back to the kiss; both kisses.

The way he saw it, he'd still been himself, even when his demonic side took over; both sides were a part of him. And although she was under that love spell; it was still her. Besides; it was just a kiss. His golden eyes sparkled with silver at the memory of the passionate kiss, making him flinch as the hunger slammed back into him.

Did she not understand that he could never turn her down, not when it came to her wanting a kiss from him? What actually saddened him was that neither kiss had been real. He growled inwardly trying to chase that fact away. For him, it had been real.

When the first streaks of dawn came, Toya climbed back out the window and sat on a limb of the tree; waiting.

Kyoko woke up stretching and opened her eyes. She instantly felt that something wasn't right. Sitting up and looking around her room she frowned feeling the hot spot under her hand. She instantly noticed the imprint where someone had been there; beside her. She couldn't help the small smile that graced her lips. Toya had been there with her.

Chapter 5 "Uninvited"

Kyoko hurriedly dressed for school. Since she was back, she was definitely going today. She'd already missed so much and besides that, she missed her friends from this world. Brushing her auburn hair until it shined, Kyoko promised herself that she wouldn't think about what happened in the other world and just enjoy today for what it was normal. Dropping the brush back to the vanity, she went downstairs, coming into the dining room.

Grandpa looked up in surprise, "Kyoko, your home? Are you going to school today? I already thought of a good excuse if you need it." He grinned at her.

The family had gotten used to the fact that Kyoko was the priestess their ancestors had written about so long ago. The maiden shrine behind the house had belonged to their family as far back as they could trace it and they kept the secret safe.

Kyoko groaned. "Thanks grandpa, but I want to go so just save it for next time okay?" She knew her grandpa was only trying to help but some of the illnesses he came up with to fool her school and friends were really stretching it.

Tama smirked knowing their grandfather often made it hard for Kyoko to even show her face at school, especially after saying she had some unknown disease that was contagious. Tama coughed into his hand to hide his laugh then grabbed a piece of toast from the plate and headed out the door.

"I guess you'll just have to save the idea of her being pregnant for next time grandpa." His knees almost buckled at the look on both Kyoko's and his grandfather's face. Quickly changing the subject, Tama started backing out of the room. "Sis, you might want to hurry if you don't want to be late again." He waved to her as he ran out.

After spending a few minutes catching up, Kyoko kissed her mother's cheek then headed out the door. The day was already perfect, not too cold or hot as she slowly made her way up the road toward the school. The breeze felt good on her face and it was a nice break to not have to keep alert incase demons were lurking just around the corner.

This was one of the reasons she always went back into the time portal. In order to keep this world safe and free of demons, she had to find the rest of the crystal and bring it back to this side of the time portal before all hell broke loose—literally.

She hadn't gotten very far up the street when her friends came into view. They stopped walking, waiting for her to join them. Kyoko quicken her pace to catch up to them smiling. Being normal had never felt so good.

Toya watched Kyoko leave her house and out of curiosity, he'd followed her, intending to leave once he knew she was safely at school. He watched as several girls waved to her and she caught up to them, seeming to be all talking at once. Toya wove through the trees unnoticed so he could hear what they were saying.

One of the girls told Kyoko that somebody had been asking about her. Toya's head snapped around when he heard a guy call Kyoko's name and run to catch up with them. Toya tensed up when the guy held his hands out to Kyoko. She smiled at him, nodding, then she laid her books in his out stretched arms.

"Thank you Tasuki." Kyoko blushed. He always wanted to carry her books as if they were too heavy for her and after turning him down so many times in the past, she'd finally given in, realizing he was only going to keep asking until he got his way. He was very persistent but not pushy and she liked that about him.

Toya watched Tasuki with cold, piercing eyes. He didn't like the fact that the boy was walking so close to Kyoko or the way he looked at her. He could tell Tasuki wanted her and it pissed him off even more when Kyoko smiled back at him like they were more than just friends. The other girls had walked on ahead, leaving Tasuki and Kyoko to walk in private. Toya stalked them closer, trying to hear what was being said. Using his guardian hearing, he caught every word.

Tasuki gazed down at Kyoko as they walked. She was the most beautiful girl he'd ever met and he'd had a crush on her since the first day they'd met. That'd been first grade but he had made up his mind even then. He only hoped one day she would feel the same way about him. He knew she wasn't sick like her family always made the school think but he didn't let in on that fact.

“Kyoko, want to go out this evening? I mean” Tasuki switched the books from one arm to the other in a nervous gesture. “I hardly ever get to see you anymore.” His soft eyes met hers in a hopeful stare.

Kyoko wasn't sure if it was a good idea to just run off on a date with all that'd been going on lately in the other world. Still, at least he was normal and from her world. He looked so cute staring at her with hopeful eyes. How could she say no to him? “Alright, can you meet me at my house this evening around seven?” She gave him a winning smile.

Tasuki beamed at finally getting his way. “It would be my pleasure.” He innocently took her hand as they walked a little faster to catch up with the others.

Toya was seething with anger after hearing that guy ask Kyoko out and hearing her say yes. His eyes burned a hole in the boy's back as they disappeared up the road. “She will not go out with him, not now and not ever.” He growled. “Not if I have anything to do with it.”

Kyoko had made it through the day of school without messing up to much. She even made a good grade on her math test, which was great, since she hardly had time to study. Switching back and forth between worlds like she did, it was a wonder they hadn't kicked her out of school already. It was a nice feeling for her biggest problem to be about what she was going to wear and where Tasuki was going to take her. It beat the hell out of

worrying about fighting demons.

She entered her house still lost in thought, waving at her mother and grandpa as she passed by the kitchen heading for her room. Glancing in the mirror, she shook her head at the school uniform she was wearing and opened her closet door to look at the clothes she had hanging up. Kyoko shrugged out of her shirt, ready to try on a couple outfits to see which would look best.

Just as she was reaching out to grab a pretty pink shirt she heard a noise. Closing the closet door some so she could look toward the window where the noise had come from, Kyoko gasped and held the shirt to her chest.

Toya was standing there, right in front of the window. He was just standing there with his arms folded in his normal agitated stance but his eyes were steady—too steady.

Toya finally broke the silence. "Kyoko, we need to go." He took a step forward and reached his hand out to her but she withdrew a step shaking her head.

"No, I'm not ready to go back yet. And you need to get out of my room, Toya." She clutched the shirt to her breast, feeling heat rush into her cheeks. After all that had happened lately, feeling exposed was the last thing she needed right now.

Toya let his hand drop back to his side. "Why can't you just come back now? Everyone's waiting on you." He asked the question in a calm voice but Kyoko got the feeling there was an underlying meaning in it.

"I want to stay here for another day," She said as she looked

away unable to meet his eyes. She gasped when Toya was suddenly inches from her.

"What plans do you have that are more important than finding the talismans, putting them back together, and keeping Hyakuhei from bringing demons here?" He asked as he stalked even closer, making her back up again.

His eyes held a dangerous expression but Kyoko could also detect something else hidden there. He was too close—bigger than life. Her gaze dipped down to his lips only to come back up to the silver sparks that now shattered within his golden irises. Was it her imagination or was he getting closer? Oh no! She was not about to let him make a fool out of her again.

"Toya, get out!" Kyoko's voice began to rise and Toya's eyes began to narrow. "Get out right now and don't come back unless invited!" She yelled as she pointed to the window.

Toya advanced on her as Kyoko backed up, this time against the wall. "Why can't you tell me why you're not willing to come back right now, Kyoko? What's so important that you're willing to forsake everyone?"

Kyoko stared into his golden eyes, their faces now only a breath away from each other. He planted a palm against the wall to trap her as he leaned forward. Kyoko bit her bottom lip. What was going on here? Toya had never acted like this before. Just then she caught him looking down at her lips with a determined gaze and she suddenly forgot how to breathe.

He didn't want her to stay on this side of the heart of time.

He wanted her to pick him over that stupid Tasuki guy but so far, she wasn't willing to do it. He backed her up to the wall, making it to where she couldn't avoid him. It was plain and simple. He didn't want her going out with Tasuki. His gaze dropped to her lips, remembering the kiss she'd given him while under the spell. He wondered if she'd kiss him like that without the pull of a spell.

Without any thought to the consequences, Toya dipped his head and captured her lips in a hungry kiss, trying to show her he didn't want her to stay here, but to come back with him. Since he couldn't seem to tell her with words, he pressed his body against hers making her gasp.

Toya took the chance and deepened the already demanding kiss, tasting the sweetness he knew was there. His body felt like it was on fire as he sought out every hidden spot he could find. The sudden need to drive himself into her surfaced within his guardian blood, trying to take over his mind. Pressing his thigh between her legs, his body rocked with the kiss, setting a rhythm that was taking his breath away.

Sensations jolted throughout Kyoko's body and she knew she had to stop this right now, or things would go too far. She pushed with all her might against his chest hoping he wouldn't fight her this time.

Releasing her with a growl, Toya stepped back, breathing hard and struggling with his loss of control. "Kyoko, I just want you to come back with me." His softly spoken words were filled

with the pain of rejection. His bangs had fallen down boyishly in front of his eyes, hiding all emotion from her.

She slipped behind the door of her closet and grabbed a shirt, putting it on quickly. When she stepped back out, Toya had vanished. Kyoko sighed then jumped when she heard her mother knock on her bedroom door.

"Kyoko, Tasuki's here. I told him to wait, that you'd be down in a moment, okay?" Her mother's soft voice reached her. Kyoko took one last look at the window then back at the mirror. Reaching up, she touched her fingers to her lips still feeling the tingling from such a heated kiss. With a defeated sigh, she closed the closet door and went downstairs. Not finding Tasuki in the house, she walked to the door and found him standing outside.

Toya watched Tasuki and Kyoko greet each other. Still in the tree, he reached over, grabbed a good size twig and threw it at Tasuki, hitting him in the back of the head.

"Ouch," Tasuki jerked then touched the back of his head, looking around in confusion. Not finding any more flying objects, he glanced back at Kyoko. "Are you ready? I thought we would catch a movie then get something to eat."

Kyoko nodded and took his hand, leading him away from the house before Toya decided to throw something that might actually hurt her friend.

Later that evening, Tasuki walked Kyoko home. They were laughing and having a great time when they made it to her front

door. "Tasuki, I can't thank you enough. I had a wonderful time today." She smiled up at him, seeing how happy he was. She had really enjoyed herself.

Tasuki stepped closer to her, closing the distance until they were nearly touching with each breath. "Kyoko, may I kiss you goodnight?" He asked in a soft voice somehow knowing she was going to disappear again.

Kyoko glanced around warily, hoping no one was watching. She nodded to Tasuki thinking to herself, "why not? everyone else has kissed me, why not let Tasuki since he was the sweetest one of them all."

She raised her face to him and closed her eyes waiting. Feeling his lips glide across her cheek in an innocent kiss she quickly opened her eyes to see him blushing as he thanked her and turned to leave. Kyoko stood there thinking how funny things work out. The one person she gave permission to kiss her didn't even give her a real kiss. She giggled to herself as she turned to go back into the house.

She felt better about everything that'd happen in the last two days. She even felt like she could face the group again, so she started packing a bag to take back with her. She had promised Suki that she would bring some goodies back to them.

Besides, Toya was right. She shouldn't be so selfish as to make them all wait for her. She stuffed in as much as the bag could carry and wrote a note telling her family she had gone back to the other world and would return as soon as she could. They

would understandâ#; they always did.

After kissing Kyoko, Toya had gone back to the camp where the others were waiting, deciding he wasnâ#;t going to worry anymore. He wasnâ#;t going to let it bother him that she was out with that Tasuki person. He could care less. He paced angrily back and forth beside the fire theyâ#;d built for the night.

Kamui eyed Toya warily, still rubbing his head where Toya had hit him only moments ago. All heâ#;d done was ask if Kyoko was all rightâ#; Toya didnâ#;t have to hit him. Suki looked over at Shinbe and shrugged as Shinbe somehow got up the nerve to ask. "Toya, did she happen to say when she was coming back?"

Toya turned and narrowed his eyes at Shinbe. "How the hell should I know? Sheâ#;s not exactly talking to me right now and as far as Iâ#;m concerned, I donâ#;t care what she does.â# He continued pacing back and forth.

Shinbe grinned. "Yeah, we can tell you donâ#;t care by the way youâ#;re wearing a path through the camp with all your pacing.â#

"Shut up," Was Toyaâ#;s response, knowing he wasnâ#;t fooling anyoneâ#; not even himself. If he knew she wouldnâ#;t reject him, heâ#;d just tell her how he felt about her. Right now, what was really bothering him was the fact that he might lose her completely. That was scarier than anything else could ever be.

He stopped pacing seeing evidence of the path Shinbe had just pointed out and sighed. Heâ#;d never really said it out loud

before or even in his mind but Kyoko was under his skin now and it was driving him crazy. Toya took off at a fast pace to check the shrine and see if she was back yet.

Kyoko came from the time portal so quickly that the heaviness of her backpack threw her off balance. Right before she fell, a hand reached out and steadied her. Kyoko blinked up at Kyou who stood there glowing in the moonlight, regal as any prince. Why did he keep showing up like this?

Taking a step back from him, she gulped nervously. "Kyou, what are you doing here?" This thing with people sneaking up on her was starting to get out of control.

Kyou watched the emotions flickering across her face seeing wonder and a trace of fear in her eyes. He knew she feared him and he didn't mind as long as it was only a slight fear, for he would not hurt her. He would slowly show her that.

Without turning his head from her, he glanced from her to the maiden statue then back. "Why did you go home knowing the guardian heart crystal is still here?" His tone was soft.

Kyoko bit her lip. She really didn't want anyone to know. "I'm embarrassed." For some reason, she just couldn't lie to him while staring into those golden eyes.

"It is good that you do not lie to me, priestess." Kyou's voice was almost seductive sounding and Kyoko felt like it was trying to draw her to him. How did he know she was thinking about lying to him? She knew he wouldn't hurt her. "You

should never feel the need to lie to me. After all, am I not one of your guardians?"

There he goes again, she thought. It's like he's reading my mind. Her eyes widened a little as she watched him. She tried not to think about it but the memory just popped in there. The kiss they'd shared while under the love spell. Kyoko couldn't look away from his gaze as she remembered the way he tasted and the way he held her with his thigh between her legs.

She felt a jolt of heat go through her at the memory of it and blushed when her gaze lowered to his perfect lips. She gasped when he reached out and pulled her into his arms, slapping those magical lips across hers in a kiss that took her breath away. As soon as she started to respond to the kiss, he released her and she looked up to see his eyes darkening to a deep gold.

"Why are you doing this, Kyou?" She asked in a shaky voice. "You don't even know me really, much less like me. You even tried to kill me when I first came here with the guardian heart crystal. You said I was nothing but a human and unworthy. So why are you doing this now?"

In an instant, Kyou had her, lifting her up to eye level. "If I wanted you dead, then you would be dead."

Kyoko could feel her heart thudding against her chest. She looked into his normally emotionless eyes and thought she saw a flicker of emotion but he quickly hid it.

Pulling her further into his arms Kyou chastised, "Don't

presume to know how I feel." He skimmed his lips across her cheek as he pulled her deeper within his thrall. He would fan the flames that were buried with her until she couldn't take it anymore. "Soon you will see just how much a guardian can love."

With that, he took her lips in another kiss that set her soul on fire with want or was it pure need? He released her lips and with one hand stroked her cheek with feather light touches.

Kyoko was stunned that such a powerful guardian lord, capable of killing so many could be so gentle. When had she started looking at Kyou in a different light? She glanced up at him questionably, wondering what had changed him.

"What is it you want from me, Kyou?" She asked in a whisper.

Threading his fingers through her hair, Kyou gripped a handful and placed his cheek next to hers, whispering in the shell of her ear. "Everything that is you I will have."

His breath was so hot against her skin and it felt so good. Kyoko closed her eyes and sighed.

A hint of a smile appeared to grace Kyou's lips as he watched her close her eyes but his smile faded when he caught the scent that was coming closer. He sat her down on the edge of one of the surrounding stones. Without another word, Kyou left her sitting there in bewilderment knowing Toya would find her while she craved him.

Kyoko was still in a daze when Toya stepped into the clearing. He gave a low growl as he watched a shower of golden feathers rain down around her. Setting his sights only on her, he slowly

approached. She looked like she was half asleep. Toya narrowed his eyes at the sky above him in warning. Kyou was playing a dangerous game here and he didn't like it.

He knew Kyou was only taunting him by coming and going as he pleased. He understood why Kyou wasn't threatened of him being around Kyoko. Tadamichi had tried to get Hyakuhei to share the priestess so long ago and Toya knew that was also Kyou's reasoning, but he didn't want to share Kyoko with him or anyone else. And he didn't think that Kyoko would go for it either.

"I loved her first," Toya confessed softly, knowing she was past hearing him at the moment. "Kyou and his damn enchantments." He reached out to touch her cheek but before reaching its goal, his hand fisted and lowered.

Instead, he reached out for Kyoko's pack then helped her down from the rock. Taking her by the hand, he led her toward the camp without a word being spoken between them. Soon, Toya thought, very soon they would have to talk and this time she would listen to every damn word.

Chapter 6 "More Than Jealousy"

Kyoko still felt like she was in a trance but the feelings she was having were so nice, she really didn't mind. What was Kyou doing to her? It's like little by little he was building up to something much bigger, getting her ready for something. Either that or he was putting her in heat.

Kyoko glanced down at her hand. They were holding hands? She followed the arm with her gaze up to the face of Toya. Toya was holding her hand? She smiled. Then thought lamely to herself, 'when did he show up?' Shaking her head to clear away any remaining fuzz, she glanced at Toya in confusion. His eyes looked a bit softer than before and worried.

"Toya, what's going on? Why do I feel like I'm coming out of a heavy fog or something?" When he didn't respond, Kyoko pulled back on her hand so that Toya either had to let go or answer her question.

Keeping his back to her, he let go of her hand and took another step but the next step faltered. "Kyoko, I think we should wait to have this conversation." Toya didn't turn around to say it. He didn't think he could look her in the eyes right at this moment as he noticed her sudden shift in moods.

He needed to talk to her about him and his overbearing brother but right now, as high as his jealousy was, he wasn't sure he could control himself. "Come on," Toya tried to sound

annoyed with her so she wouldn't push it.

Kyoko didn't want to give up that easily, after all it was her they were discussing and she needed answers. Last thing she needed was to make a fool out of herself again and not even know about it. "Toya, why is Kyoko after me?"

She spoke the words softly but they rang in Toya's ears like a well-placed threat. He growled silently at the thought of Kyoko wanting Kyoko and she was just standing there waiting on him to answer her.

Unable to fight the need thumping under his skin, Toya turned around and pulled her into his warm embrace; then, just as quickly, he let go of her, taking a step back and hanging his head in silent defeat.

"Do we have to talk about this right now?" Toya glanced up at her, only to swiftly look away from her curious gaze.

Kyoko sighed. "This is what I was afraid of, you jerk. You can't even look me in the eyes anymore. You hated the kiss so much that now you don't want anything to do with me, right?" she balled her fist up at her sides and lifted her chin up a notch to show defiance. "Well, I don't care what you think of me. Just because you didn't like kissing me, doesn't mean others won't!"

Before she knew what happen, she was crushed in Toya's arms and his lips were taking hers fiercely. She dug her fingers into his hair in an effort to keep her weak knees from buckling under her.

He wanted her, frighteningly so at times. Toya tried to get himself back under control. It was just that when she mentioned others liking her kiss, it made him want to make her forget the other kisses. He released her lips, their eyes locked in a silent war and a wave of possessiveness rushed through him.

"Kyoko, I do like your kisses." His gaze dropped back to the pink lips he just let have their freedom.

Kyoko felt her heart strain toward Toya, needing him. No matter what, she could never stay mad at him. She searched his golden gaze seeing the silver glittering there, trying to fight for dominance but something was needling her senses, telling her they weren't alone.

Toya felt Kyoko tense up and thought it was because he had told her he liked her kisses until he felt her lean and look behind him. He let go of her, turning quickly, not knowing what to expect.

Shadows within the darkness took shape with distorted movements. "Shadow demons? Here?" He whispered. Just as he said the words, the shadows begin to flee as if taunting him to follow them.

"Go back to the camp with the others where it's safe." He pointed in the direction of the camp then took off through the forest not wanting to lose them. He could only sense two of them but it was still not a good sign that they'd been spying on Kyoko. It made him wonder if Hyakuhei was closer than they all thought him to be.

Kyoko didn't have time to say anything before he vanished from sight so she took off in the direction of the camp, thinking maybe he didn't want to be around her. After all, it was only a couple lowborn shadow demons and in such a small number they were virtually harmless.

"That's fine!" Kyoko quietly ranted. "Just fine!" The next time he even thinks of kissing me I'm gonna deck him." She pasted a smile on her face as she walked into camp.

Kamui was the first to see Kyoko and he quickly closed the distance between them, grabbing her in a welcoming hug. "Look guys, Kyoko's back!" He gave her a kiss on the cheek and a wink.

Suki smiled, happy to see she was finally back but Shinbe narrowed his eyes at the kiss Kamui had just snuck in there. What the hell was that boy thinking? Toya would kill him first.

"I'm sorry I made you guys wait so long but I'm back now and I'm fine with what happen so, no worries, okay? Oh and I brought you guys some goodies too." She put her backpack in front of her and started rummaging through it, handing out their favorites to each of them.

They all sat there, smiling, eating goodies, and drinking soda like they didn't have a care in the world. All except for Shinbe, who looked off into the forest wondering what had been so important to make Toya leave Kyoko's side.

Toya followed the two shadow demons, knowing they were purposely leading him away from the others. He didn't care

if it was a trap and almost hoped it was with the mood he was in. Seeing the shadow demons fade into the ground right in front of him, Toya growled as he skidded to a stop.

Before he could do anything, the wind picked up to a level that could only mean one thing. Amni, Hyakuhei's pet demon that had the ability to use wind magic was behind the summoning. "Show yourself, you bastard."

Amni descended as the winds swirled around him, its currents obeying his command. His lips hinted at a smile while his long blond hair swayed in the breeze as the wind died down to a softer pace.

"The priestess makes you weak, guardian." Amni gripped his wind sword and changed angles with a downward stroke, releasing a powerful gust straight at Toya's feet to cause dirt and debris to fly up into his face. "Or is it her lips that make you weak?" He taunted, wanting Toya's full attention for what he was about to say.

The twin daggers slid into Toya's palms and he quickly crossed them just as the debris flew at him only to turn to ash as it touched the barrier he'd created with the blades. Looking through the electric blue swirls of the barrier, Toya's eyes narrowed on the underling that followed his uncle, wondering just what he was up to.

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