

Bending to Break © 2007 AJ Hampton

Excerpt :: Chapter One

“You’re *so* not helping me right now,” Kayden Gray hissed to the man lurking behind her.

Closing her eyes, she tried to concentrate on the vampire who had so far eluded her. The night hummed through her. Silence filled her every sense until she was completely immersed in it, until she became the darkness. The light sprinkling of rain they'd gotten the previous day had left an earthy aroma behind. The dewy ground was covered in soft beads of moisture. If she concentrated hard enough, Kayden could hear the dew drops as one melted into the next, trickling down the blades of grass until they dropped to the ground.

Kayden became motionless. With a slow deep inhalation, she took in the scents beyond what was right before her. Her eyes fluttered and everything around her seemed to stop. Below her, she smelled the decay from the rotting corpses, resting as peacefully as they could in a demon-infested cemetery. With every careful step her black combat boots sank into the moist earth beneath her feet, and she could sense which of the corpses below were truly dead and which would become the undead.

Past the smell of death, if Kayden honed the vampiric senses she'd spent the last five years learning to cope with, she could make out the odor of blood. It was salty and metallic. Disgust roiled through her as her mouth started to water in anticipation. She'd

kicked a lot of things since her turning, but the bloodlust always hovered under the surface.

Eyes closed, she tried to picture in her mind what she smelled. Blood, dark and thick, ran down a human's neck. Kayden knew she was too late to save the victim. In the distance, she heard the heavy thud of a corpse dropping against stone. The blood had smelled of fear and something sweet; it had been a woman.

Jullian, ex-lover, ex-sire, and boogiemaster to misbehaving vampires, had taught her how to tell the weak from the strong, the men from the women, and the sick from the old by just the scent of their blood. Then he'd left her alone in a world where she didn't belong.

Kayden Gray wasn't just a vampire hunter; she was also a vampire, a half-breed. When the Reaper stood laughing behind her shoulder, her lover had saved her the only way he knew how. Trusting him had been the one mistake she'd never be able to forgive herself for. She'd neither died nor survived that night. Instead she became an abomination, even to the vampires. Her soul had been twisted into something that shouldn't have been possible. Caught between two worlds, she was now the one thing she'd been raised to hunt—the one thing Jullian had pledged an oath to destroy.

The wind blew against her cheeks, bringing the overly sensitive skin to life and filling her with a rush of adrenaline. There was no time to dwell on Jullian when she had a vampire to chase. With the mind of a human and the strength and agility of a vampire, she'd become a dangerous huntress lurking in the night. Even before the change she'd loved the chase, but now she sought a perverse pleasure in slaying her brethren.

Kayden loved the feel of her hair tickling the base of her neck as she sprinted through the night like a phantom. She loved the feel of her fists connecting against solid muscle and bone. She loved the feel of her stake piercing flesh, and she loved the bitter taste of the ash that erupted soon after. All these sensations became a rush aching inside of her, like a muscle waiting to be flexed. That rush was her pent-up energy, and right now it was begging to be unleashed on something.

Hunting was her birthright, passed down through the generations. Kayden had learned to cherish it. She loved everything about it—with the exception of Micah MacKenzie, her newly appointed partner.

Micah, with his mischievous hazel-green eyes, was six feet of pure pain-in-the-ass. Currently, that pain in the ass was cocking his shotgun. The scraping of metal echoed through the silence of the cemetery, and just like that, everything shattered. Kayden completely lost her focus, and the vampire they'd been tracking for the last twenty minutes was suddenly gone.

"Are you kidding me?" Kayden growled in frustration. "A shotgun? *So* not helpful right now."

Kayden paused for a moment, her pale green eyes narrowed in aggravation at one of the Gray family's newest additions. Micah was tall, and his wide, muscular shoulders just screamed pure, raw male. As she looked up at him, her neck tilting back, she noted that he was taller than Jullian had been. It was a vast comparison to Kayden's five-foot two-inch frame.

Micah's lips, pale and thin, were curved into a rakish smirk that looked entirely too smug... and entirely too yummy. Would it really be a bad idea if she took his favorite

toy and hit him over the head with it? He was looking down at her with arrogance, his eyes sparkling with that never-ending stream of mischievousness that lingered in their depths. Kayden's stomach fluttered with arousal.

"A shotgun is very helpful, *princess*," Micah replied in a very faint mid-western accent. He sounded just as annoyed as Kayden.

Kayden drew in a deep breath to quell her irritation and regretted it instantly when she drew in nothing but Micah's rich, masculine scent. It wrapped around her, drew her a step closer to the man she'd spent the last few months trying to get away from. His scent was a mixture of spice and musk, laced with just a hint of soap—her soap—that he'd used to wash away the sweat from their earlier sparring match.

The fantasy of Micah, naked in her shower, with water moving over the rigid planes of his body, suddenly distracted her. Trying to put that image out of her mind, she instead focused on his bravado, the smug looks and annoying sarcasm which—much to her dismay—seemed to mirror her personality in a very aggravating way. He was a good fighter. Better, in fact, than she had been before her change. Roy Gray, her uncle and mentor, noted several times a day with a rising sense of pride that Micah had improved remarkably while training with them. His speed, agility, and strength had nearly doubled under her uncle's careful yet patient training.

And while Kayden pretended not to watch the beads of sweat rolling down Micah's finely chiseled chest when he worked out, she had to fight the increasing lust she felt. She blamed her desire on inactivity. With the MacKenzie demon hunters, Micah and his brother Elijah, camped out on their piece of hell for God only knew how long, demon activity was down. So was Kayden's morale. What happened to the good old days when

she woke to someone trying to cut off her head?

She needed to kill something. Or get laid.

Not that Micah would be interested in having sex with her anyway. They spent their time between physical sparring matches locked in verbal ones. They couldn't agree on anything, from which station to tune the radio to in his beloved Mustang, to which cemetery they'd go hunting in first. They fought about the weather. They fought about the lack of weather. They fought about fighting. Now they were fighting about his stupid shotgun.

Micah and Elijah MacKenzie were the prodigy demon hunters she'd spent her childhood hearing about. Six months ago, they'd shown up in her little town in search of a particularly nasty creature that had slain their sister. They'd blown in like a tornado. Much to Kayden's increasing annoyance, they hadn't left. As it turned out, Roy knew the brothers' father, Michael MacKenzie. Her uncle and Michael went way back, even sharing their old-school methods of demon hunting. So when Michael asked her uncle to keep an eye on his boys, Roy had accepted. What's more, he offered a few training opportunities for Elijah's growing powers and Micah's increasing potential.

Roy, with his own private funding founded on years of family hunting profits, had converted Kayden's basement into a training facility. And just like that, Micah and Elijah had moved into the bedroom that used to be occupied by her cousin Paige. After her father's death, Kayden had inherited the family house and suddenly found herself responsible for her teenage sister. Once hunting evil had just been a job, a family legacy. But after she'd seen the horrors done to her father, Kayden made it her personal quest to kill the things that went bump in the night.

After her lover left, mere weeks after he turned her, it seemed like every evil entity Jullian had ever battled rode into town looking to take their vengeance out on her. As child of one of the most powerful vampires that had walked the earth, she'd become their main target. It was just another parting gift he'd left her.

For the last few years, Roy had been talking about bringing in help. Help she'd accept, but having to put up with Micah... she'd suffer through the seven-day-a-week patrols that lasted from sun down to sun up rather than deal with him. And speaking of the devil, she was about to send her so-called "help" packing.

"For the last time, Micah, don't call me 'princess'!" Kayden shouted.

Micah's eyes moved over the delicate lines on Kayden's face before they settled on her mouth. Her lips were full and pouty. When she was really mad, like right now, the scowl she shot him should have struck him dead. But instead, it made his heart beat a little faster.

"Okay, how about 'spoiled brat'? Or I could go for broke and just tell you that you're being a real bitch right now," he retorted, slinging his gun over his shoulder as he regarded the angry brunette with amusement.

It was true; he had entirely too much fun watching the way her cheeks tinged red with anger. Her eyes, a light shade of green that complemented the golden hues of her skin and the dark strands of her hair, always seemed to shine a little bit brighter when they were directed at him. Half the time Micah didn't know if she was going to kill him or kiss him. Right now he'd take either if he could get her to just shut up for a few minutes.

If he admitted it (which he wouldn't), Micah became addicted to the energy that

crackled from every inch of her hot little body. It was like nothing he'd ever experienced. His hatred of demons had reached a gray area when he'd met the huntress he'd spent so many years hearing about from his father. She was more human than vampire, he'd been told. This didn't make him feel any more comfortable.

For the first month he knew Kayden, he cringed every time he saw her walk into the sun. Would her luck run out? Would she burst into spontaneous flame? He never actually tried to extinguish a vampire. If Micah were honest, he wasn't even sure what made her a vampire. She had a pulse, no fangs and he hadn't seen her show the slightest interest in blood—not that he'd been paying that close attention to her meal-time habits.

"You are this close," Kayden pinched her fingers together, shaking Micah out of his musings, "to a stake in the heart! You might have gotten in one good punch earlier, but I still kicked your ass all over the mat. I *will* hurt you."

Micah took a step closer. Kayden held her ground and tilted her chin up so she could stare him in the eyes. She'd faced a group of master vampires by herself, she'd gotten over Jullian's betrayal, she'd defeated death. She could face Micah MacKenzie. Her heart pounded in her chest and all that pent-up energy inside her snapped in her veins.

"You have super-human strength, while I just have my good looks," Micah retorted. "Of course you kicked my ass, but I sent you flying on that cute little butt of yours more than once, so what does that say about you and your holier-than-thou attitude?"

"What didn't you get about me staking you?" Kayden groaned. She took one step closer to the scent that wrapped around her and drew her in.

The collar on Micah's worn, tan leather jacket was cuffed up, framing his narrow jaw. Kayden could see the tension thrumming through him: The way his eyes darkened, the way his lips pursed. She could feel his heart beating with an elixir so potent it sent waves of energy crashing over her. They were standing nose to nose—well, chin to forehead—their nostrils flaring as they squared off against one another. His heart was hammering. She could almost imagine the taste of his blood sliding over her tongue—a painful reminder of what she was. As human as she wished she was, she had to deal with the fact that she was part vampire. She wanted blood, craved the comfort of her bastard sire, and spent half her energy keeping Jullian's prying mind out of her business.

"Fine!" she yelled. "I don't care how you kill them, but thanks to your big mouth, you've messed with my tingly sense and let the damn vamp get away!"

Micah huffed indignantly. "Me? Right. You lost the last vamp all by yourself because you were too busy staring at my ass. And what's wrong with blowing its head off? Less mess, just as effective."

"Less mess? Ha! Is the big bad hunter afraid to get his hands dirty?" Kayden said with a lilting tone and a mock pout.

"Please, sweetheart. I've been hunting demons since you were in diapers, so cut the attitude. I've seen more fucked up shit than you could dream of."

Oh, that was it, Kayden thought.

She got closer, tilting her head and letting the predator in her fill her eyes.

"You think you've seen it all, huh?" Kayden slid her fingers down the front of his shirt, her eyes following their trail until she heard a hitch in his breath. Her gaze flicked up to meet his. She hissed, "Until you've been stalked, bitten and turned, you haven't

seen anything. You chose this job, I didn't. Your suicidal sense of vengeance is all macho bullshit. Someday, you'll turn your back on all this 'fucked up shit' and walk away from it. But I'll be here until I truly die. After that, I'll be some flunky vampire stuck in the shadows kissing my sire's ass as I watch everyone I've ever loved grow old and wither away. So, I think I'm entitled to my attitude, asshole."

Micah narrowed his eyes, truly ticked at her pissy little rant. He closed the distance between them, fighting the urge to wrap his hands around her neck. He grabbed her arm, fingers biting into the muscle as he drew their faces together so that the tips of their noses touched. If they hadn't been screaming at each other, if he didn't see the fury in her eyes, anyone watching would think he meant to kiss her.

"You think I do this for vengeance? I do this because of my family, because of Eli! I had to step up and be a man, to take care of things! I can't walk away any easier than you can, so don't act like you are beyond me. Elijah is my life—he's all I have." Micah released her arm. His lips curved into a condescending smirk. "We're more alike than you think, and that's what really pisses you off."

"What pisses me off..." Kayden started, ready to tell Micah to take his gun and shove it up his arrogant (yet perfectly shaped) ass, but her words trailed off as she caught a flash out of the corner of her eye.

Kayden heard the annoyed click of Micah's tongue against the roof of his mouth when she didn't finish her sentence. He opened his mouth as if to say something, but stopped when he saw what she was looking at. Kayden heard the rustling of his denim jeans as he straightened his body and brought his shotgun down by his side in firing position. It was a silent movement, one of a true hunter, but she was too finely focused on

Micah and the sound of his increasing heartbeat to miss it.

A gust of wind swirled around them, exciting their skin into goose bumps. They both moved into an automatic fighting stances, perfectly mirroring each other.

Kayden concentrated on the darkness, sending her senses into the distance like an extension of herself. On the horizon of her sight she fixated on an old mausoleum. The stone walls were cracked and covered in green ivy that grew around it like a blanket. To the right of the crypt was an angelic statue, the white marble turned ivory with age. Between the two, Kayden could make out a shapeless ball of light that hovered above the ground like a cloud of mist.

Kayden turned her head to the side, eyes directed at Micah. "Stay back."

Micah shook his head. His eyes flickered from Kayden to the object that was starting to take form, billowing in a glowing white beacon of light.

"And miss the fight? I don't think so. This one's mine."

Melodic music drifted over a slight breeze in the otherwise still night. Kayden's hair danced against her neck, her skin tightening even further. Her nipples drew into hard points. She cast her eyes to the nearby trees. The leaves were perfectly motionless, despite the breeze that lapped at her suddenly hot cheeks. A wave of desire rolled over her with the false draft of scented air and Kayden felt a staggering bolt of arousal rush through her. What the hell was going on?

Micah moaned beside her. Kayden rolled her eyes up at him in curiosity. Did he feel it too?

"Wonderful," Micah whispered as he lowered his gun and relaxed his stance. "I think it's a succubus."

"What—like a sex sucking thingy?" Kayden asked in disbelief.

Rolling his eyes, he said, "Yes, 'like a sex sucking thingy.' We should go before it gets any closer. We can come back later once we have a spell of protection. While I'm all for a bit of fun in the sack, I prefer my women less of the demon variety." Micah finished with a lazy wink, the contours of his mouth curving in a wolfish grin.

Kayden's cheeks flushed as she blinked up at him. Her head suddenly felt thick, heavy, and all she could think of was having some fun in the sack with Micah. The only thing she could picture was scraping her nails down his chest and trailing her tongue up the wounds. She shook her head, fighting against the sudden haziness that was making it hard to move. *Anger*, Kayden thought. *Focus on how much he annoys me.*

"Now wait just a minute." Kayden meant to sound annoyed, but her voice hitched and it came out huskier than she intended. "Despite what your manly pride says, Roy put me in charge."

"Now isn't the time for this, babe," Micah rasped. His eyes fluttered shut in a dizzying wave of arousal that hit him low in the stomach.

Micah tried to move, but he couldn't. The faint music that drifted over him now sounded loud. A soft feminine voice sang through his head, echoing and caressing his most intimate parts. When Micah opened his eyes, it wasn't Kayden that he saw in front of him; it was the succubus. *We're screwed*, was Micah's last coherent thought.

Beside him, Kayden blinked, her eyes widening at the ethereal-looking being that hovered suddenly before them. The demon was the most beautiful thing Kayden had ever seen. The creature had long black hair that floated in the windless air, moving in tandem with the flaps of her white, translucent robe. Her skin was pale, translucent, and through

her Kayden could still make out the statue of an angel in the distance like a double exposure. The demon's eyes, blue as the brightest sapphire, shone as her pouty lips curved into a sultry smile.

Kayden's head started to spin. Her hand slowly uncurled and her wooden stake dropped to the ground. Beside her, she was only faintly aware of Micah's gun dropping at his feet with a clunk. She wanted to ask how useful his shotgun was now, but she couldn't manage to form the words.

Micah was overcome with lust, with need. The voice, soft and heavenly, called out to him. Invisible fingers moved along his jaw and down his shoulders to grasp at his hand, pulling, beckoning.

With the last ounce of willpower Kayden could muster, she stepped in front of Micah when he started to move toward the succubus. Somehow Kayden knew that if he went to this demon, he wouldn't come back. Not alive, at least. Micah's body pressed against Kayden's back.

With each breath, Kayden could feel the tense muscles in his stomach tighten against her. He was hot—so damn hot. Kayden felt beads of sweat gather at the nape of her neck. Like a furnace, waves of heat hit her from where his body touched hers. He was aroused, his erection digging into the small of her back with each slight movement from either of them. Another bolt of desire shot straight through Kayden.

Kayden's lips parted in a moan, and she felt the warmth of Micah's hands as they settled on her hips, holding her against the swell of his manhood. The beautiful demon in front of them laughed, ringing a sweet siren's song that had Micah pressing his body further into Kayden in an attempt to walk through her. For the first time since she'd been

changed, she didn't feel Jullian lurking around in her head. No, there was something much worse in there now.

"Oh, my..." The succubus clapped, her long graceful hands appearing to touch, but Kayden knew better. "Aren't you a pair? So much passion; so much want; so much power."

Motionless, Kayden was caught in a trance. Her eyes, hazy and heavy lidded, drooped and became unfocused to everything around them. The succubus trailed a ghostly hand down her cheek. Micah whimpered behind her, his fingers bruising her hips as he squeezed her flesh almost painfully.

"Look away," Micah panted with exertion. A slash of pain sliced through his stomach.

It hurt to look away. It ripped his insides to fight the voice that lingered in his head. They had to leave, had to get away. He couldn't. He couldn't fight the feminine flesh in front of him. It was too much. The scent of vanilla and lavender filled him, and an echoed moan crossed through him. Flashes of images, one by one, moved through his head.

They were images of Kayden, of her lithe huntress' body moving sensually over his. Of her breasts, small and perky, lost in his mouth. In his mind she was spreading her legs, exposing the dripping folds of her sex to him. Stroking, playing, he watched in want as her fingers moved over the delicate flesh. He could feel her, like she was right there and not in his head. With each image that filled him, Micah was losing the battle. He wasn't strong enough; he couldn't free himself of the temptation that the succubus baited him with.

The demon turned its bright blue eyes up at Micah, holding his gaze, sucking him further into her power. She looked through him and into him, caressing his energy so that she could hold him in the palm of her hand.

Kayden looked to the spirit, her eyes tracing over the delicate profile of the translucent skin, down her neck, and stopping at the bountiful mounds of her breasts. A sudden movement in the darkness caught Kayden's eyes. The succubus unfolded a pair of shimmering wings that spanned three feet in each direction. A gust of wind picked up around them as the demon flapped the beautiful, glittering wings. It was a gust that danced only around them, and the sweet scent of lavender filled Kayden's senses.

"And you, my most precious," the succubus whispered toward Micah as it wrapped its velvet wings around the couple. "Do not fight what you desire. I see inside you, I feel you."

A swift heat, strong and heady, moved along Kayden's body like a lover's caress. She moaned, her head moving back to rest on the wild beat of Micah's chest. His hand, large as Kayden's entire abdomen, curved around to her stomach. It teased her flesh as he pulled her tank top up until he felt bare skin.

In an upward stroke, Micah moved his hand, his gaze focused on the succubus before him. Kayden melted into his touch. She curved her body against his, and Micah lost himself in the pleasures that the succubus whispered into his ear. She moaned into his thoughts about all the naughty things he should do to the woman in his arms. *Fuck her. Take her. Make her yours.*

Micah cupped Kayden's breast underneath her shirt, his eyes fluttering like the wings of a butterfly when the succubus moved a hand down the side of his cheek. She

held him with her eyes, forced her will upon him.

Kayden's knees threatened to buckle. Her mind spun as Micah applied more pressure against her tender, swollen flesh. He pulled the lace of her bra down and a breast spilled into his palm. His other hand moved from her hip to the front for her stomach, just the tips of his fingers dipping below the waistline on her tight black pants.

Effortlessly, Kayden shut her eyes, one hand moving over the hand Micah had currently sliding inside the front of her pants. She threaded her fingers through his, guiding him—moving him lower to where she needed him to be.

Micah's hand moved more insistently along her breast, moving with the succubus's will. Kayden cried out against him, writhing and rubbing her body against his when their combined hands moved under the soft lace of her panties.

Kayden's eyes fluttered opened as Micah's hand found her center. She was wet and dripping with arousal in a way only one man had been able to make her before. She let go of his hand, moving hers behind him to cup his neck and hold his body against hers. Kayden felt like she was floating. Nothing felt real; it all felt like a dream.

The succubus leaned into them, her large breasts pushing against Kayden's smaller ones. It put more pressure against Micah's hand that still moved under her shirt. The succubus pressed the gentlest of kisses against Micah's mouth.

“Bring her,” the demon whispered against his mouth. Her tongue flicked out to run over his lower lip before their mouths sealed in a kiss.

The kiss was soft; like walking on a velvet cloud. Kayden felt the dripping moisture between her thighs increase when Micah's mouth parted at the demon's gentle demand for entrance. Their tongues met gingerly and Micah's jaw, covered in a faint

dusting of stubble, flexed with his mouth's movements when the kiss deepened.

Micah moaned into the swirling embrace that ate at his soul. It pulled and stole his breath, and as much as he fought the nagging in his brain, he succumbed to the need in his veins. His hand moved lower, cupping the weeping sex of the huntress in front of him. It was heaven.

She was wet and hot against his palm as her breathing grew ragged. This was wrong. Micah knew it. Somewhere in his mind he knew they couldn't go back after this. With that thought came a lashing of pain from the demon that was sucking out his soul. "*Bring her...*" echoed and danced inside of him.

Micah cupped Kayden's flesh with more force and determination. The tips of his fingers entered her core each time he moved the palm of his hand against her clit. He rubbed her up and down, bringing her, making her energy spill into the night.

White, pure energy swirled and danced around them. Micah's energy moved along Kayden's body, inside of her depths and spilled from each moan and plea for more. As his energy grew and melted, it went straight into the succubus as the hunter and huntress merged into one. Kayden cried out on the brink of her plateau, Micah's hand moving faster and harder against her tender swollen clit. Without mercy he pumped against her. Harder, faster, deeper Micah's fingers fucked her. Kayden dug her nails against his shoulders in desperation, drawing rich crimson blood that made her mouth water and increased her pleasure.

Kayden was too caught up in the wisp of pure bliss to move when the demon released Micah's mouth with a needy moan and caught hers next. Kayden parted her lips soundlessly, eagerly, accepting the kiss despite the nagging feeling within her. The

creature's tongue was warm and inviting as it moved against her own. Each stroke was deliberate and encompassing.

Micah's hand was still gripping at her swollen tender breast, rolling a hard nipple between his thumb and his forefinger. This was wrong—so wrong—and Kayden cried out when a jolt of pain shot through her at the thought.

This... this was divinity. Nothing on earth should feel like this. Kayden's hand rose with the succubus's will, to thread through her jet-black hair and tangle around her fingers. The kiss grew insistent, urgent, and Kayden whimpered when Micah curved another finger inside of her scalding depths.

Micah was going out of his mind with lust. He needed Kayden, needed to be inside of her. With every twist of his wrist as he flicked over her g-spot, he imagined his cock pressing into her. When she whimpered and moaned in need, Micah felt his pleasure increase. He watched, his mouth moving over Kayden's neck, as she lost herself in the succubus's kiss. Micah no longer saw a demon, he saw two beautiful women kissing and writhing against each other.

With lips that were hot and moist, Micah pressed against the back of Kayden's neck. He moaned against her. With a passion filled, open-mouthed kiss, he moved and tickled along her skin, feasting on the taste of her flesh. He couldn't get enough; it would never be enough. Where he touched her, fire moved and traveled the length of Kayden's body to bring her into rapture.

She felt the rough stubble on his cheeks scratch against the tender skin, drawing out her bliss and making her beg for more. She felt the pressure building inside her stomach, hard and penetrating. Her knees were weak, and the only reason she was still

standing was because Micah held her. Kayden cried out suddenly, her hand tightening in the succubus's hair. All hell broke through her body at once.

Kayden reached her brink, pulsing around Micah's fingers. Her climax poured into the succubus's mouth in long moments of pure orgasmic pleasure. Kayden heard Micah behind her. A moan sounded from his throat as he thrust his hard cock against her back and spilled himself. His teeth broke through the skin at her collarbone, just inches from where Jullian had once bitten her. He drew blood and Kayden could smell it, sticky and warm. Their combined energy spilled out in an explosion more powerful than anything any of them had ever experienced.

Blood, pain, and rich white pleasure surrounded them, mixing, melting, becoming one, and the succubus fed long and deep as Micah continued to stroke Kayden into another mind-numbing climax.

Drinking in another powerful wave of lust, the demon reluctantly pulled back. Slowly, carefully, she withdrew from the dazed lovers. A sense of euphoria filled the succubus and a wide, delighted smile crossed over her doll-like features.

"Bound now by blood and lust, a truly special pair you make. With my kiss I give to you the most precious gift as you give to me," the succubus purred. Her hands lingered, one against Kayden's cheek and one against Micah's, before she backed away and broke final contact.

The demon glowed bright, her flesh no longer white, but now a pale pink—healthy with life from the energy she'd fed from. It wouldn't last, the succubus knew this, but it was a beginning. The ritual had begun. A wicked smile crossed over her now-deep ruby lips. She flapped her translucent wings into the night. She flew away, leaving a hazy

huntress and her hunter to bask in just a faint taste of the ecstasy she could bring them. They would fight it, the succubus knew, and with that anger came their passion.

It was the true loves' passion she'd been seeking for the past five hundred years. She'd finally found it.

"Feed me well, my lovers. Feed me and I will be free." With that, the succubus vanished.