establishment - plots and politics

*a slave, rescued and initiated at the academy, went on to conquer and forge the northeast kingdoms into an empire*

*originally a girl, she had made use of the ring of insight to escape her master and was initiated as a boy*

*her vendetta against slavery pit her against the conjurers and wizards of the northeast kingdoms, driving them out*

*the conjurers and wizards, many necromancers and demonologists, regrouped in the northwest kingdoms*

*the empire pursued the exiles, resulting in a two-fold invasion of the northwestern kingdoms*

*the paladin of the goddess*

*a religion under siege*

*it was a time when the followers of the goddess faced persecution from the church of the one god. the followers of the goddess had hope, fueled by rumors that an avatar of the goddess was among them. after ten years, the girl those rumors spoke of was about to discover what she was -- and she was not prepared to face it.*

*she became involved in the climax of the purge*

*she was marked for use as a weapon against the goddess*

*the objective of the plot to summon the demon of the realm was to conquer it and claim its dominion. once in possession of a body within the domain, the demon was vulnerable to attack by those who conspired to bring it down.*

*she was unwittingly possessed by a demon who used her to get to the goddess*

*the demon consumed her guardian angel and took its place*

*the demon expected the paladin of the goddess to be destroyed in its attack upon the goddess, so it maintained a link to its established host when it projected itself into the paladin’s mind. once the demon replaced the paladin’s angel, it’s host retreated and it went dormant, leaving the impression that her angel had successfully repelled it. it waited for her to go to the goddess, for the goddess to probe her mind for any lingering taint. to find the demon hidden in the depths of the paladin’s mind the goddess would have to create an opening in her own mental defenses the demon could infiltrate.*

*the demon had one critical advantage; the goddess had been its creator.*

*the goddess had been identified as the soul of creation. the attack upon her was intended to awaken the mind of creation, or rather, to manifest the creator. the demon could not hope to possess the goddess, but it was capable of devouring her soul. instead of dominating the mind of the goddess, the demon set about tearing her mind apart from within, consuming the pieces until the soul within was naked. this was what would provoke the demon that had claimed her soul for its focus; the mind was what demon used to grasp a soul. without a mind, the soul slipped out of the demon’s grasp.*

*the goddess understood the implications of what was happening to her better than anyone. the threat of her destruction would cause her demon to descend upon her and retaliate with a power unlike anything imaginable. the dream she and her kind had woven into reality would be shattered. nothing mortal would survive. the only way to prevent that was for her to embrace annihilation. the only consolation was knowing that her naked soul would survive, through a scheme she had set in motion ages ago to create a brand new incarnation of herself.*

*the goddess embraced the demon that was devouring her, possessing it and imparting it with two imperatives. one ensured her instantaneous annihilation, the other ensured that her soul would be passed on to the child it would conceive, whom she had already seen in her visions of the future. for an instant, the demon possessed her soul and was possessed by it. unable to stop itself, it thought the thought that turned that soul inside out and the part of the demon’s mind that had been the goddess dissolved into a mist of incoherent information.*

*the eve of paradox*

*paladin’s soul was seized by the demon-god, to host the wrath it unleashed.*

*the final thought imprinted by the goddess upon her paladin’s mind stopped the cataclysm after the first shattering blow, her promise that she would be reborn. before the authors of this disaster could complete their coup, while they were still assembling and preparing to deliver their challenges, the paladin’s lover confronted the outer-demon, offering his own soul if it would spare her. the outer-demon accepted, taking him as its new focus.*

*those at ground zero were cast in the rift*

*the demon assassin was the first cast into the rift, the recipient of the initial shattering blow. it remained lost in the deepest, most remote part of the rift until encountered by the self-proclaimed exile and recruited into his service. it was pleased with the new host offered to it, a girl who almost perfectly embodied its creator, the goddess. it was hardly even aware of fulfilling the goddess’s final imperative when it turned the woman’s rescuer into its familiar and impregnated the were-woman while breaking her in.*

*the man, eclipsed when the demon-god took possession of his body and soul, was met at the threshold by the inner gods and told of the souls lost in the rift which was still growing. they guided him through the process of stabilizing the rift and rescuing what souls they could.*

*a school founded to study and control rifts.*

*an unintentional consequence of the use of magic was that it could tear holes in the fabric of space and time.*

*within the rift, dreams and nightmares were reality.*

*this dangerous phenomenon could be as small and subtle as a breeze -- and more devastating than the fiercest storm.*

*the avon tear academy was devoted to the study and training of psychic ability, in addition to probing the nature and origins of the rift*

*a descendant of one of the northeastern exiles, initiated at the academy, devoted himself to the study of the rift created during the invasion*

*his partner in these studies made a breakthrough discovery that ultimately led them to become adversaries*

*his partner opposed the exploitation of the rift, its mysteries and demons to achieve godhood*

*the adversary believed that the correct pairing of demons and hosts could result in the creation of a god*

*the adversary recruited followers using the promise of godhood - using trial and error to perfect his method*

*the adversary's trials unleashed a plague of demons the academy was forced to hunt down*

*ironically, the academy's champions tended to be ideal candidates - many were captured and subjected to trials*

*the adversary used the rift to gain access to the abyss where he forged alliances with the demons he found there*

*many of the exiles escaped into the underworld where a few discovered the ruins and the demons imprisoned there*

*the adversary infiltrated the cabal of exiles to gain access to the imprisoned demons - a step to fulfilling his demonic pact*

*the adversary dispatched demon assassins to thwart the academy's plans to investigate the ruins*

prologue - demon within - the academy massacre

7

when the girl was seven, she was confronted by a demon assassin during an attack upon the academy

the demon assassin sensed the presence of the demon within the girl but was slain when it probed deeper, provoking her demon

the girl was often regarded as the only survivor of the massacre, but this was only partly true

the girl was the only survivor who confronted a demon assassin unarmed and defended herself successfully

the victims of the massacre included almost half of the staff, dozens of children and a little more than a hundred senior students

the girl did not remember the encounter when she finally returned to her senses

following the massacre, the girl began her initiation under her mother's protégé and the supervision of her mother's mentor

the girl was placed in the phoenix house, following in her mother's footsteps

when the boy was seven, he began his initiation under his father's protégé and the supervision of his father's mentor

the boy and his father were still on a ship from abroad when the raid on the academy occurred

the boy encountered the girl for the first time at the academy where they found themselves in rival houses

the boy was placed in the dragon house, following in his father's footsteps

during the initiations of the boy and the girl, the man and woman undertook more demanding missions as their mentors' agents

officially, their service to the academy ended upon completion of their mentorships

technically free agents, they served more as troubleshooters and investigators than spies

on many occasions they each received commissions from the crown, serving as royal agents at home and abroad

summer’s end - demon within - afraid of the dark

15

at the end of summer, prior to the start of their ninth year of initiation, the boy and his rival encouraged the girl to explore a fortification on the academy grounds

an approaching storm drove the girl and her friends underground, forcing her to confront traumatic memories of being lost in the ruins.

she remembered falling down an airshaft into a flooded section of the ruins.

the girl retraced her steps, leading her friends into the ruins of the underworld

while exploring the ruins under the academy, the girl found her way to the scene of her ordeal and began to relive it in greater detail.

the girl suspected that worse things had also happened, but she had blocked out most of her memories of the massacre.

their exploration was obstructed by vampires warning them that those who dare venture into the depths were fair game

the girl declared they were on a demon hunt - the vampires insist that demons, as their natural enemies, avoided the ruins

the girl began to struggle with nightmares and memory lapses as the demon struggled to reassert itself

the girl's nightmares were brought to the surface when she arrived at school where the massacre had occurred.

the familiar surroundings stimulated her memory, eroding the mental blocks that protected her from her childhood trauma.

in addition to the nightmares, she occasionally fell prey to traumatic flashbacks, visions that caused her to black out and lose time.

during her blackouts, the demon's focus was able to gain temporary possession of the girl's body.

the girl spends a night plagued by nightmares on her arrival.

the next morning, the boy arrived in time to save her from drowning in the bath during a blackout.

the girl realized her nightmares focus on the night of the massacre and began probing for answers

the official investigation of the massacre concluded that the massacre was carried out by demonic assassins

the girl's mentor confided the unofficial suspicion about who the demons had served

the boy and girl became friends through a mutual acquaintance but remain flustered by their mutual attraction

the boy and the girl were of the same age and rank at the academy, raised in two different, but similar worlds, as most of their childhood was dominated by initiation and devotion to the disciplines of dance.

the girl studied with the boy under the same master of the physical arts, thorn.

the boy and the girl seemed immune to thorn's less admirable influences.

an initiate's training included intimacy, explored as an extension of athletics, specifically gymnastics and dance.

this comprehensive form of sex education was considered essential for healthy development, involving practice as well as theory.

thus, initiates in their ninth year (all at least fifteen years of age) paired up, giving rise to the euphemism "mating season".

when the boy and the girl were fifteen and seeking mates for their ninth rank initiation, their parents had deliberately opposed pairing the girl with the boy on account of their true relationship.

unfortunately, they were unable to explain why, without divulging the family secret.

since it was fairly common for couples paired for this stage of initiation to get married, the parents sought other pairings for the boy and the girl.

in spite of the parent’s efforts to keep them apart, the boy and the girl were engaged by their grandparents to settle a dispute over the inheritance of a title that a war had been fought over a few generations earlier.

at that time, the boy was the first and only male to appeal to the girl.

even though the betrothal was kept quiet, the boy and the girl had been drawn to each other, and their mentors could not help but notice this and act upon it.

especially when their athletics master practically threw them at each other.

when thorn confided the arrangement between their family heads, their mentors reluctantly endorsed the pairing and informed the boy and the girl, who did not object in the slightest.

they were obviously well matched.

unable to contact the girl’s mother or the boy’s father, the mentors went ahead and settled the arrangements.

by tradition, intimates were initiated in the home of the female initiate; unless she had no family of her own or her mate was from a family with greater status.

the girl’s mother returned to report on the candidates she had identified and discovered what she had missed.

once they began to work intimately together, the boy and the girl realized they could not survive without each other.

as they became acquainted, they discovered they were more than a good match; they seemed to be two versions of the same person, or two halves.

while this was obvious to their parents, their grandparents complicated their lives by informing them of their betrothal.

the girl dismissed the announcement, refusing to take it to heart.

she felt it was more important, when confronting an equal, to focus first on becoming friends.

since she really hoped the boy would be her friend, she was not about to ruin that hope by putting great expectations of love, or marriage, or children in the way.

besides, she pointed out, she had no intention of getting married, and as intimates they were allowed to sex with no marriage commitment.

for now, she suggested, they should not even worry about it.

before stepping onto the mat and attempting to beat each other up, they shook hands and made an agreement to give friendship a try first.

their friendship almost did not survive the first night.

the girl had undressed and slipped into the bed before realizing that there was already a body in it, oblivious to her intrusion.

in the dark, she assumed it was the body of another girl and shoved at her to make room in the bed.

she discovered otherwise, and stared in mute shock and disbelief as she realized the naked stranger in her bed was male.

when her hands recoiled in shock, he rolled on top of her.

something in her head snapped.

she was out of the bed in a flash, but her mind was stuck in that eternal instant.

his body pressed hers down as he rolled onto her.

she focused on the way he fit against her, the immediate response of her own body, his manhood brushing her thigh and dropping so perfectly between her legs.

stiffening as it sensed where it was, resting on the opening to her body, it pressed against the threshold, and teased her folds apart.

he almost entered her as he pushed himself up in surprise to gaze into her face.

she had not even begun to ask herself who the boy in her bed was, when she recognized his face. she knew who he was—and in that instant had no clue who she was.

he was aroused and interpreted her flushed and anxious face as matching arousal—and she was aroused, no doubt, but aroused in fear as well.

as he gathered himself to thrust, she moved.

as the boy fell back, he finally seemed to wake up.

the girl sat up in response to the commotion and turned to confront him.

in shock, in fear, she spoke without thinking.

there was no way to take it back, and his pain was so obvious she simply slipped out of the room.

as she stormed though the house naked, she calmed down.

it had been a close call, but it was her own fault for going into an unfamiliar bed naked.

for that matter, she had gone in hoping to sleep with the boy—just not so soon.

she thumped her head against the wall and went back to apologize.

slipping into the room, she found the him half dressed, gathering up his belongings.

when she tried to touch him, he jerked straight up and slapped her hand away.

she stiffened and admitted that she deserved that.

the girl almost backed out of her room, but stopped as she sensed the boy’s confused guilt.

athletics were often practiced in the nude, and this was particularly true of dancers.

when the boy went with their friends to visit their families, the girl chose to spend some time roaming the woods.

the boy went rock jumping with his friends.

it was on a river tributary in the mountains near the town where his friends were born.

they had made their decision on the fly, heading for their favorite spot, with the huge boulders and deep pools, without bothering to go back for towels.

the girl was swimming in the same set of pools

the first time they trained together, the girl discovered how completely the boy had been shielded from close contact with the opposite sex.

the boy had been both disturbed and fascinated by the differences in her anatomy.

the girl could not believe the boy had never seen a girl naked before, until the boy explained what his childhood had been like, being raised almost exclusively by his father and his father’s protégé.

in a sense, his world was not defined by gender, until the girl became a part of it.

he grew up with only the vaguest notion that the difference between boys and girls extended beyond manner and form of dress.

charmed by his innocence, the girl submitted herself to his curiosity.

the girl indulged her own curiosity as well, taking the opportunity to explore in detail what she had learned to avoid noticing in training.

it was a pleasure to be able to give the boy his first taste of the mystery of sex.

it would have been simple enough to proceed from there, but thorn had done far more to complicate the issue.

the boy and the girl each had more than their share of potential suitors who would take their engagement as a challenge to break them up.

the first stirrings of this, among the initiates of their school, was instantly put down by tempest, who assured the boys and girls that the school would continue to seek out mates for those who still needed them.

while typically shielding the boy from contact with the fairer sex, thorn had frequently used his protégé to curry favor with the families of suitable young girls.

on their way to the capital, where they were to settle for the duration of their tenth year, they paused often to allow other initiates to mate up.

the girl realized that at almost every stop, there was some girl waiting for them, expecting to be mated to the boy. in some cases more than one.

a number of tense confrontations, most between the boy and his mentor, required tempest’s intervention.

most of the girls gracefully accepted the headmaster’s assurance that they had been displaced by true love.

one girl in particular, however, had made a much more personal investment in her choice of mate.

fox had been determined to find the best mate for initiation and chose the boy.

certain arrangements had been made several months earlier, when the boy and his mentor passed through the capital.

in spite of the fact that they were already late, she waited for their arrival with great anticipation, certain that her status and wealth, not to mention her own exceptional qualifications and skill as an initiate, would be impossible to resist.

her commitment was pure torture for wolf, who was obsessed with fox.

he had grown up dreaming of the day they would complete initiation together, only to be disappointed in the past few months.

his family had been surprised at the slight to their son, but considered it a blessing when they were approached by the girl’s mother, seeking a suitable mate for the girl’s initiation.

fox went ballistic when she learned that the boy had been mated to another girl.

the news came back to her through an older brother, returning from his own ninth rank initiation to prepare for his trials.

wolf learned that fox had left the capital the next day, when he tried to pay a visit.

hearing that the boy fox had been waiting for had taken another mate, wolf dropped everything to track fox down, intending to console her and bid his suit.

he pursued without a second thought, leaving no word for his family.

when morning came, without his appearance at home, the girl’s mother set out after him.

the girl’s mother managed to catch up to wolf and explain that he had been placed in her care, when she received his family’s blessing for her proposal.

he pleaded with her, describing his lifelong devotion to fox, explaining the opportunity that had been created when her mate put her aside for someone else.

the girl’s mother considered the situation, sensing that the boy was doomed to be disappointed, and offered a deal.

the girl’s mother would help him track down fox.

if she accepted his proposal, the girl’s mother would escort them back to the capital and find another prospect for her heir, but if she rejected him, he would accept the girl.

unfortunately, the girl’s mother found herself more challenged by riding herd on wolf than by tracking fox.

the girl had been approached by boys starting years earlier, many of whom sought her out now in the hopes of mating her.

most of them excused themselves upon learning of the engagement to the boy.

the surplus of young boys frustrated in their pursuit of the girl, eager to find a suitable mate at the last moment, prevented the families of those girls from taking legal action against thorn.

the bad impression thorn had made on the girl, from the first time they met, was compounded by everything she learned about the man and his actions.

worse, he always hovered around his protégé, forcing the girl to expose herself to unwanted suitors, just to escape from thorn’s shadow.

from the boys who still pined for her, she was used to hearing an endless stream of endearing compliments, and worship.

when one approached spouting insults, and assaulting her without warning, she was taken completely off guard.

fang, in his eternal pursuit of the boy, mistook her for him on the basis of their uncanny resemblance and clothing the boy had loaned her.

once he recognized she was female, he apologized profusely and spent the rest of the day trying to make up for attacking her.

in spite of informing him that she was the boy’s mate, he continued to curse the boy.

fang had ignored the call to find an initiate mate to pursue his rivalry with the boy.

in the spirit of that rivalry, fang impulsively proposed to her, urging her to abandon the boy and take him as a mate instead.

bemused by fang’s proposition, wondering what had caused the rivalry between him and the boy, the girl blundered into a rivalry of her own.

the girl came upon a commotion involving the girls who were still chasing the boy.

stepping in to end the fight, the girl tried to appeal to the girls by explaining the bond that existed between her and the boy.

this focused the attention of the girl who had been harassing the others on the girl.

fox was not impressed by the girl’s appeal, dismissing it out of hand and informing the girl that she considered the theft of her mate a mortal insult, over which she was prepared to duel the boy’s mate to the death.

when fox issued her challenge, the girl realized who she was.

fox would have been a princess herself if not for the purge.

she was still of royal blood, a member of the high nobility, and an heir to one of the most powerful domains in arden.

the girl was forbidden to disclose her equally useless-but-higher rank; but even if she could have, she could not refuse the challenge.

she welcomed the chance to prove her worthiness before her mate, and casually defeated fox in their first confrontation.

unfortunately, fox did not accept defeat.

she swore that she would not rest until the girl was dead and the boy was hers.

this threat to the girl aroused the boy’s protective instincts.

from that moment, he never left her side.

the boy and the girl got into their first fight over his protectiveness.

the girl forced him to concede that if he had the right to watch her back with respect to her rivals, she had the right to watch his back with respect to his.

winter - demon within - a plague of nightmares

the escalating nightmares cast a terrifying shade over the academy when she returned at the end of the winter recess

the girl's anxiety about returning to the scene of her childhood trauma stirred up nightmares that tortured her at night and ambushed her during the day, sometimes causing blackouts.

the girl had always been prone to nightmares and blackouts, but as they became more severe and traumatic, she became more afraid of confronting things that might set them off.

the boy rescued her from drowning in the wake of a violent flashback that incapacitated her in the bath

when the boy saved her from drowning in the bath, the girl was forced to confess to her history of blackouts and nightmares.

the girl noted part of the history of that tragic night was public knowledge. what few people knew was that the attack had been led by a demon.

somewhere, locked away in her mind, was the memory of what happened to her—and her mother. even though she was constantly reliving it, her mind kept blocking the memory.

the girl learned more about the night of the massacre in a private meeting with the headmaster

the headmaster revealed that a mystery surrounded her miraculous survival

the girl struggled with the headmaster's suggestion, to use the nightmares to guide her

the demon within them was passively responsible for intensifying their animal magnetism

she wanted him. her arousal was frightening. it was not even rational, a purely animal magnetism. her body's response to just his look had been embarrassing, and the brushing contact had almost burst her heart.

the demon exploited the girl's arousal to gain a foothold in her psyche

the boy and girl became intimate in spite of their efforts to resist

spring - demon within - a link is forged

the night the boy and girl finally made love, their intimacy forged an unconscious rapport between them

as they recovered from the first thrust, the girl confided she had broken her own maidenhead, but only now could she say she was no longer a virgin.

the boy confided he too was a virgin.

the rapport made the boy and girl more sensitive to each other's thoughts and feelings

the girl and the boy had become lovers in anticipation of their eventual union.

the boy slipped quietly into the room, expecting the girl to be asleep.

the boy seduced her out of the embrace of dreams.

the girl woke up and discovered that they were both naked and aroused.

the rapport could also be exploited by the demon divided between them

the girl's demon was able to gain contact with the dormant half within the boy

summer - accidental assassin - a favor for a friend

16

one of the girl’s friends asked her to help him catch a girl he was infatuated with.

the boy, a virgin who had no experience with girls, had been so forward in his pursuit of her he had driven her to reject him completely.

the girl was supposed to pose as his lover, teach him how to deal with a girl, build up his confidence, make the other girl jealous and then match them up.

as a maiden, the girl had the training necessary to take the boy in hand, turn him into a man and then turn him loose, but to avoid arousing the suspicions, the girl had to be careful to make the entire affair appear perfectly natural.

her friend’s condition made the task more difficult, but that would also make it more interesting.

the first part of her task involved studying her subject and devising a casual way to introduce herself into his life.

the girl staged their first encounter, stumbling into him while overburdened by a hastily assembled travel kit and bedroll.

their collision spilled everything on the road, signaling the start of tears of frustration and hopelessness she “bravely” tried to hide.

the girl had made sure that the other girl would be sure to witness the encounter.

the act was as much for him as for the girl he was trying to lure.

now that the other girl had seen him come to her rescue, the girl carefully prompted him into taking her home with him.

as he helped her, she sobbed out a story of a fight with her “boyfriend” and he eagerly swallowed the bait.

having successfully established herself convincingly as his prospective girlfriend, her next task was to educate him on how to be a good boyfriend.

in the following days, she continued the act, coaxing her friend into making the right moves to “win her heart”.

the most difficult part of the deal was becoming his girlfriend without becoming his lover.

fortunately, he was firmly obsessed with his love interest, and she quietly encouraged him to pursue that interest over her.

the girl continued to lead her friend and his intended on with her pose of defenseless innocence, silently inviting his advances and encouraging him with her responses.

in spite of being restrained and intimidated by her femininity, he responded to her attentions without becoming uncontrollable.

the girl had accomplished the first three parts of her task over the space of a week.

she was looking for a way accomplish the most critical part the task when her charge brought her to a party honoring the recent exploits of a young noble and adventurer.

the girl was approached by an unwelcome acquaintance, a man who had led her into a life of crime several years before

her former “patron” had used little crimes to leverage her into committing bigger crimes, turning her from a pick-pocket into a cat burglar.

the girl had been forced to kill in self-defense, but because it had been during the commission of a crime she could be charged with murder.

this was more than enough leverage to coax her into doing him a favor.

the patron pointed out her target, the party’s guest of honor; the son of a powerful merchant noble and the boy’s academy rival.

when she asked what she was supposed to do, he told her to lure him away from the party

confused, she asked for clarification and he simply ordered her to “just get him out of here and take care of him.”

neither of them noticed the assassin eavesdropping on their conversation.

the girl had been worried about how she would ditch her friend, until she noticed that the object of his obsession was present.

one look at the girl on her spurned admirer’s arm, and the other girl became jealous.

with such a perfect opportunity, the girl prepared to slip away from her date, giving the other girl the perfect opening to assert herself.

the girl was surprised when the guest of honor abruptly cut into her conversation.

the mark had a history of rivalry with the boy that became focused on her at the start of their ninth rank of initiation.

the adventurer had overheard the girl telling her charge about the time she was trapped in the ruins as a child, and he wanted to know about everything she saw and experienced while she was in the ruins.

her charge slipped quietly away, once the adventurer had engaged the girl's full attention.

unfortunately, the girl’s ordeal in the ruins was a very painful topic for her.

her experiences in the ruins had been both terrifying and wonderful, but the way people had responded to her accounts of the ordeal had left her traumatized.

he had saved her the trouble of finding a way to capture his attention, but the nature of his interest was making her reconsider her patron’s request.

unfortunately, the other guests had assumed she must be someone important if the adventurer was so interested in her.

if she tried to slip away, someone would corner her, trying to figure out who she was or what the adventurer was talking with her about.

the girl allowed the adventurer to occupy her attention until she caught her charge sneaking off with the girl he admired.

seeing that her mission was accomplished, she began looking for a way to excuse herself from the adventurer's company.

she tried to distract him and discharge the “favor” by observing that her date was being stolen away, planning to “go after him” fully expecting the adventurer to chase her out.

something about her psychic ability made her extremely sensitive to being observed, so she picked up on the presence of someone studying her a little too intently as she broke away from the adventurer.

in the girl's experience, a man who stared that hard at a girl in another man's company simply had to be willing to take her off his hands.

when the stranger moved to intercept her, dragging her onto the dance floor with barely a nod at the adventurer, she made no protest.

to her surprise, he had not been interested in her for any reason she might have expected. his attention had been fixed on her out of irritation.

unknown to her, there was a rumor that she had been an assassin in training and had finally been given a contract, and the young man who latched onto her was there for the contract on his head.

when the assassin spotted them together, after hearing her conversation with her “patron” he suspected she was working the same contract and he had been hired as back up in case she flubbed it.

he probed for confirmation, but the girl did not grasp the intent behind his words.

he revealed that he knew what she was, and insisted on knowing what her intentions were concerning the adventurer.

upset and assuming that the stranger was following up on her “patron’s” request, she announced that she intended to get the adventure away from the party and “take care of him” as instructed.

the assassin read confirmation and intent in her response, so he backed off to see how she was going to kill the young man.

the girl returned to the adventurer, resolved to endure his probing in order to spite the assassin.

it quickly became clear that whatever she had in mind, it was brilliant and drawn out.

the girl appeared to have tricked her mark into pursuing her, allowing her to wait until the perfect opportunity presented itself.

of course, the girl was not playing hard to get, she simply could not shake the young man's interest!

at the same time, the direction the conversation was going suggested that the adventurer might be receptive to her tale in a way others had not been.

he had been in the ruins and must have encountered some of the things she had.

but, while she had resolved to indulge in a little recreation, her conscience kept summoning up images of the boy and their friend.

reminded of the unresolved love triangle she was in, she found herself spurning the adventurer's advances.

naturally, this only aroused his interest in pursuing the girl, as opposed to simpily acquiring her assistance.

midsummer - ring of insight - tomboy twin - the tomboy's initial transformation is witnessed by a couple of his friends

17

the boy discovered a secret hiding place in his room containing items left by a previous occupant

the boy and his roommates went through the items, finding a cursed ring that has the power to change the wearer's sex

the ring had no effect on the first boy to try it on since he was still a virgin

the boy and his friends were shocked when the ring turns him into a girl - a tomboy

the tomboy panicked when she discovered that the change was absolute and permanent

the other boy was fascinated by the transformation and startled his friends by offering to try the ring on himself

the virgin advised against it, suggesting they learn what they were dealing with first

the journals found with the ring contain the account of the ring's former owner and his experiences with it

the tomboy discovered that the curse forced the wearer to have sex to break the spell the first time the ring was used

the ring of insight, as it was known, was designed to unlock latent human potential associated with the alternate sex

the ring can be used to transform again once the spell has been broken, switching sexes depending on how it was donned

the boys offer their services to help the tomboy break the spell, prompting another panic

the tomboy seeks the help of his mentor and they consult the master, the father's mentor

he went directly to his mentor, on the edge of a screaming panic.

his mentor was about to ask the two boys and the wild eyed girl to go right back out the door and wait until the class he was working with was dismissed—when he recognized who the girl really was.

this was clearly an emergency; he dismissed the class early, admonishing them to get in extra practice at home, and took the boy turned girl aside.

she told him exactly what had happened and what she had already confided in her friends, and his mentor knew he had a serious problem on his hands.

after examining his protégé he confessed that there was nothing he could do to reverse the process.

his friends asked in amazement if she really had turned into a girl, permanently.

he answered, to her shock, that she had, and that it was already permanent in one sense.

the experiences the tomboy had in female form would be a girl’s experiences.

the tomboy was frantic, she had liked being a boy, she had been perfectly happy as a boy, and could not stand the thought of losing that forever.

being a girl was sort of terrifying.

she did not know the first thing about it, but she knew enough about boys and men to feel extremely vulnerable.

her mentor held her until she stopped trembling and offered her one hope.

the tomboy's resemblance to the girl was noted and explained as the result of similar breeding

it was hardly surprising given the fact that their bloodlines had been line-bred for perfection and the preservation of distinctive house traits.

the tomboy's father and the girl's mother were both descended from muses bred to embody the traits of the goddess

the tomboy sensed that her mentor and house master know something they were not telling her

the tomboy was advised to exploit the opportunity to develop feminine potential and insights as required by the curse

after assuring himself that the two boys had gotten over their shock and apparently returned to their normal lives, the tomboy’s mentor turned his attention to his protégé, insisting that they continue on as planned.

once they were alone, his protégé asked what they were going to do about her transformation.

by turning into a girl, his protégé had complicated things, but she had quickly redefined herself as a tomboy—accepting her female body, but retaining her male outlook.

the boy had been traveling with him since he was six years old, devoted to mastering the physical, mental and spiritual arts. the boy had reached the point where there was not much left to learn—as a boy.

as a girl, there was quite a lot for the tomboy to learn. the female body had different strengths and weaknesses, and a girl required greater skill and ran a far greater risk in martial arts than a boy.

when she realized that he was serious, she balked and almost ran.

the tomboy's situation was complicated when she was mistaken for the girl by members of her house

when they arrived, the tomboy’s mentor left her alone in the court yard while he took care of some essential business. she took a turn about the yard and settled on the front steps to wait. a few minutes after her mentor vanished around the corner, a car pulled up and a woman and older girl got out.

they were overwhelmed with baggage, and asked her to help them carry everything in. they accepted her presence among them so matter-of-factly that she realized belatedly that she had not even introduced herself.

when they sized her up and sent her to try on some of the clothes they had purchased, she tried to protest and was silenced rather soundly. she realized she was acting like a hopeless tomboy. to avoid raising any suspicion, she caved in to their demands, and tried on a number of outfits, parading them for their approval.

another girl showed up, and joined their critique, showering her with all kinds of friendly sarcasm. some of her comments cut pretty deep, particularly in a girl who was so new to everything female, and she turned deep red between restrained anger and profound embarrassment.

while she was alone in the room, changing, a third girl showed up—the girl she had been mistaken for.

the tomboy was forced to confide in the girl after an unexpected confrontation in private

she had only barely stumbled through an explanation when the tomboy’s mentor walked in the door, laughing and joking with the girl’s mentor. as soon as she spoke, the tomboy realized that her mentor had told her both far more and far less than she had expected.

on assuring them that she had every intention of reclaiming her manhood, the mentors relaxed and talked about their protégés’ betrothal.

both girls raised their eyebrows at that.

they were used to being thought of as a couple, but the notion of having an engagement forced on them was upsetting.

nor was it an appropriate time to assert that the tomboy was the most promising prospective mate the girl could hope for, given the state the tomboy was currently in.

the tomboy could not resist noting that most girls seemed set on marrying older men, as opposed to *other* young girls; then she realized what her words implied and she could no longer meet her mentor’s eyes.

the girl’s mentor declared the tomboy perfect for the girl, sinking an axe into both girls.

the girl surprised them all, however, suddenly lighting up, and grinning.

as far as she was concerned, the tomboy *was* perfect, and she was happy to take her *exactly* the way she was.

that seemed to settle the matter for the moment, but the tomboy was not entirely sure that it had ended well.

the tomboy protested that she could not possibly marry a girl if she herself was a girl, and the girl interrupted; if the arrangement was fine with her guardians, it was fine with her.

the matter, in her opinion, neatly closed the topic of marriage off, ridding the girl of the constant nuisance of unwanted suitors.

having had no end of trouble with families trying to pin their daughters on her, when she was a boy, the tomboy decided she could agree perfectly with that sentiment.

the girl took her in hand and continued making friendly overtures. while they were warming up for a little sparring, the tomboy asked the girl if she was really so indifferent to the possibility that the she might not regain her manhood.

the girl stopped and faced her squarely. as far as she was concerned, the whole business of arranging their marriage was a ploy to disqualify her for continued training at the academy and force her to provide an heir for her family’s worthless title.

over the course of the day, the tomboy discovered she was still intensely attracted to the girl. the accompanying arousal had such a profound effect on her she seemed certain she would go crazy if she did not revert to male form.

on the assumption that the two were both girls, and engaged to each other, the tomboy was told she should sleep with the girl in her room, since she did not share it with anyone else.

the tomboy stayed up to discuss her frustration with her mentor, who listened patiently, nodded sagely and sent her to bed with a wry smile, telling her that her body seemed to know how to cope with the situation already.

she realized what he was getting at and told him to be serious. he just asked if becoming a girl changed the way she felt about the girl.

before she could respond, he added that simply letting nature take its course might help the tomboy recover her manhood; she could at least give it a try.

the tomboy's resemblance to the girl leads them to suspect that they were siblings

the tomboy and the girl entered the bath together after their workout. the tomboy had been a bit shy, but shared the girl’s curiosity to find out how deep the resemblance between them was.

the girl conferred with herself, amazed at the juxtaposition of foreign and familiar in the scene. habit compelled her to regard the tomboy’s body as her own, and the liberties she took with herself startled and put the tomboy a bit off guard.

the girl was shocked to learn the tomboy had resisted the temptation to explore her new condition. the tomboy found it easier to submit to the girl’s attention. the girl offered her curiosity a less threatening outlet.

the boy and girl had each only known one parent and deduced that they had the same parents

the tomboy suggests they were actually twins and that the ring had previously been used to transform one of them to hide that fact

the suspicion compels them to keep the matter secret from their families while they work on restoring the boy to normal

the girl offered to use the ring and help break the spell, in spite of the implications

*are you fantasizing about having sex with me… or yourself?*

the tomboy swallowed her pride, closed her eyes for a quick prayer, and spoke her peace. *i had no right to say that. to be honest, i was just scared. i was that close to being nailed, and it spooked me.*

*i am an idiot. i should have just let it happen. i wanted it. i needed it. i thought it would cost me every hope of going back to being a guy. i was so mad at myself for stopping you i could have strangled myself.*

*i opened my mouth and—i guess i spoke the truth, but in a way that could only hurt. what i meant was i liked the idea. i understood what you were thinking, and i only wished i could feel that way about myself. i mean—if you want me—if looking like you makes you want me… i am yours.*

*if it pleases you, if it excites you, if it interests you at all, it pleases me. if that is what you want, it would make me happy to give it to you. if you want more than that, i hope i can give it to you. i want to give myself to you.*

the girl stared at her in surprise, and answered. *oh, i want you. i did not think i could possibly keep my hands off of you. you had such an effect on me, i had to act. it was the only way to keep my hands to myself. i never expected you would come in here and see.*

*if you had not stopped me, i don’t think i could have stopped myself. i don’t know if i could cope with that. i would feel so bad if i ruined you for ever being male again, and feel so guilty because it would not change the way i feel about you if i did.*

*i don’t understand it. i love you the way you were, but i’m… i don’t feel anything different for you like this. if you never changed, or if you changed entirely i would still feel this way about you. i mean, i feel like this because you are you. it was something in your eyes. i don’t know if it’s love or what, but i can’t get it out of my head. i just broke down and cried my heart out because you left, and i did not know if you would ever really come back. i am sorry for hitting you.*

the tomboy and the girl were in each other’s arms at this point. the tomboy asked the girl to take her. the girl hesitated, and the tomboy told her flat out, if she feared losing her manhood so much it might very well be that it was never hers to keep.

the girl accepted her as she was, for who she was—the tomboy felt it was time she did the same. there was of course one thing the girl needed to do first. the girl taught the tomboy how a psionic girl protected herself, and saw to it that she did it and did it right.

the tomboy embraced her with no fear of losing her manhood. having sex had finally opened her to the possibilities of being female, and allowed her to embrace it whole-heartedly.

the boy inside her looked on in smug delight, not one whit discouraged. it finally dawned on her that her manhood was perfectly secure; supported and reinforced by long hours of training, sweet moments of adventure and repose, and harsh confrontations with other boys. aside from fatherhood, and old age, he had become all that a boy could be.

confronted with the possibilities to which a girl was heir, she understood her need to make up this deficit in her being, and she was man enough to give herself free reign. she would not think about the boy she was, or worry about becoming the man she could be until the girl in her was his equal, and able to become the woman she could be.

the girl assured her that she would teach her everything she could about being a girl. at the same time, the girl admitted her own development could benefit from the same kind of ordeal.

he was not comfortable putting himself in such a position with another man.

the girl held up the ring and offered to test that theory with the man he's most comfortable with— himself.

the girl confessed that she had always wondered what sex would be like as a man.

she proposed an experiment to satisfy her curiosity and help the boy find out if he was capable of intimacy with a man, as a girl.

taking the tomboy had made the girl more at peace, more comfortable with her own sexuality. to lie back and receive the tomboy—who found that arousal enabled him to be male without the raging headache, as she happily returned the favor—had been bliss.

they had hardly slept, taking each other in turns throughout the night. eventually they noticed the early light of dawn and stopped to change the sheets and air out the room before finally falling asleep an hour before the rest of the house woke up for the day.

the girl cuddled with the tomboy in the late morning hours, while each came to her own self-realization. the tomboy and the girl could not tell if they were honestly in love, but they were off to a good start being deeply in friendship.

thoughts of friendship reminded her of the two boys who had witnessed her change.

she composed a letter to them while the girl was drawing a bath.

then she joined her in the tub.

when they came out for breakfast, everyone saw that the tomboy was looking very comfortable with herself.

the tomboy got the addresses for her two friends from her mentor and mailed the letter she had written before breakfast on the way to the university. She was going in to take a battery of tests, and make a last minute enrollment for the summer classes that started the next week.

in the afternoon, after the testing was done, the tomboy accompanied the girl to her gymnastics practice.

the tomboy needs time to think about it, so the girl asks him to stand in for her while she pursued her investigation

since the boy had become her duplicate, and wanted to keep his condition a secret, the girl had all the cover she needed to pursue her investigation deeper.

unfortunately, this meant that the tomboy had to put up with his rival's advances while posing as her.

the girl was being investigated in connection with a string of slayings perpetrated by the demon during her blackouts

the girl escaped a vampire's seduction and was forced to slay her would be rescuer when he attempts to rape her

the attack was witnessed by an assassin who steps in to help cover it up

one of the boys who witnessed the tomboy's transformation tracks her down

the tomboy was stunned when her friend confessed his desire to use the ring, claiming he should have been born a girl

the tomboy explains how the ring works, and that the effects would be permanent but her friend was not discouraged

the tomboy grants her friend's request but then was forced to explain when the girl discovered what they have done

the tomboy and the girl were forced to take the new girl into their confidence, sharing their suspicions about being twins

the girl also points out that the tomboy and the new girl both have much to learn about being girls

the girl decided to enlist the help of her mentor to help after swearing her to secrecy

the girl's mentor regrets her promise but keeps her promise after learning that the boy's mentor and master were in on it

the girl followed her mentor and overheard part of her mentor's conference with the boy's mentor and master

the girl hears the master assert that their hands were tied protecting the secrets of her mother and the boy's father

the master advised the mentors to provide what help they could with respect to their protégés and mentors

the master confronts the girl when the mentors depart, urging her to confide in her parents if she wished to know their secrets

accidental assassin - a string of misunderstandings

the girl had discouraged the adventurer’s interest, in part to honor the patron's request, but mostly because of her relationship with the boy.

unfortunately, the adventurer simply became more infatuated with the girl the longer he pursued her for information about the ruins.

the girl had cursed herself for being stupid enough to get involved with the adventurer in the first place, when his attention focused on the tomboy.

her life was already complicated enough.

unfortunately, the adventurer seemed determined to complicate it further.

he had gone to the trouble of having the tomboy followed, and began showing up to confront her at all the places she usually hung out.

the tomboy tried to drive him off, but often that just was not possible.

he did not just want the girl he mistook her for, he wanted her to guide him through the ruins on the quest that had gotten him marked for death.

having the tomboy cover for her had allowed her to pursue her quest for answered about the massacre

that investigation was giving her an understanding of the danger the adventurer was putting himself in by pushing for an expedition into the city’s underworld.

the contract on the adventurer was issued in response to his campaign to move that year’s trials to the ruins beneath the city, threatening the interests of many within the underworld

her investigation, combined with the tomboy’s increasing presence in the adventurer’s life, fed rumors about the girl working as an assassin.

the patron summoned the girl to his home to issue a warning.

he had learned that the adventurer was still infatuated with her, and urged her, for several reasons, not to become involved with him.

the girl's underworld patron, an ally in her investigation who knew she was no assassin, urged her to distance herself from her unwanted admirer so the real assassin would not be compelled to silence her.

when the girl asked why, she was told that it was a favor for a friend, not to inquire any further.

the girl and the tomboy, more than willing to keep things from getting intimate, remained under the impression that she still needs to "take care" of the mark

the mark had been pursuing her for over a year, only recently adding his request for her aid in his quest

the tomboy only had to agree, which was perceived by the underworld as a ploy in the "girl's" plot to carry out her contract

the girl believed that she had promised to guide and protect the mark during his explorations, while serving as a distraction

the girl recruited the tomboy to help by protecting and guiding him, trusting the tomboy to play hard to get

the tomboy was frustrated and flustered by the unwanted and disarming attentions of her former rival

the adventurer proved to be a genuinely nice guy.

in spite of her resolve, his attention was hard to resist.

when he managed to corner her, they talked about the ruins and the impulse to live a life of adventurer.

the other boy who witnessed the tomboy's transformation comes in search of the friend who has gone missing

the other boy catches the mark trying to seduce the tomboy and tried to defend her honor

time and again, he had managed to get past her defenses, luring her into animated discussions about the age of gods and related myths and legends.

nothing really seemed to deter him, not even rivals for her affections.

the tomboy breaks up the fight and tried to explain the situation after sending the mark away

the other boy calms down only to become upset again when he recognized his missing friend as a girl

the tomboy discovered that the ring has been stolen and went to extremes to find it

she did not discover that the ring had gone missing until she arrived back at the academy.

some pickpocket had lifted it off her while she was running her errands.

she confronted her friends with this news, and they agreed to help her track down the ring.

she was able to remember when and where a stranger had stumbled into her, so they returned to that area and sought out witnesses who recognized her assailant and could direct her in pursuit.

it took a while to track the thief down and find out where he had fenced the ring.

after some encouragement, the fence informed them that he had immediately contacted a collector of rare artifacts when he acquired the ring, and sold it for an awesome sum only an hour earlier.

they got the address of the collector, hoping to convince the buyer to return the ring in exchange for his money, but they were rebuffed at the door.

the tomboy tracks the ring to a lord of the underworld and breaks in to recover it - and more information about it

desperate, she broke in to get to the ring, but just as she found it and went to put it on, she was caught.

the collector turned out to be a very powerful wizard, and he unleashed a lethal attack without hesitation.

while the wizard stood in shock, she raced away, escaping into the night.

the tomboy's ordeal encouraged her to reconsider her procrastination and consider sleeping with her rival

the mark's fate was sealed when the demon became aware of the tomboy's temptation

the patron called the girl aside once more and told her, for her own good, to stop playing games with the adventurer and end it.

the girl assumed the patron was telling her discourage the boy’s romantic interest and passed this instruction on to the tomboy.

in her own mind, the tomboy decided it was probably best.

if there was any hope of a real relationship with the adventurer, he had to know the truth and still want to be with her.

the demon planned to take advantage of the girl's "offer" to restore itself and take possession of one of their bodies.

the demon, needing the leverage of another soul to succeed, saw the chance to acquire one if the tomboy slept with the mark.

the demon encouraged the tomboy to give in to her temptation, manipulating her into agreeing to a date.

the demon, acting within the girl, focused on keeping her from interfering in the tomboy's date

the tomboy prepared for her date with the adventurer.

as she bathed and dressed, she reflected on the events that led to her involvement with the adventurer, in conversation with the boy.

the date began with an elegant meal, followed by a show.

at dinner, she noticed the assassin and the agent, the former sparking a recollection, the latter simply arousing her curiosity--there was something familiar about him, but nothing she could place her finger on.

during the play, the girl found herself brooding on the events leading to her date with the adventurer, starting with his pursuit of her and her efforts to heed the patron's objections.

after the show, the adventurer took her to a gathering of young nobility for an evening of dancing, and again she spotted the assassin and the agent in the crowd.

in a brief exchange with the assassin, she confided her plan to "put him out of his misery" at the end of their date, once she had enough privacy.

the girl carefully allowed things to escalate.

by the end of the evening, he felt comfortable taking her to his suite in the most expensive hotel in the city.

too soon, her date came to it's harsh conclusion, but things did not go as planned.

once she was alone with him, the girl discovered that she could not manage her confession.

the girl suggested they should warm up in the bath, to buy time to consider what to do.

her life was already too complicated, so she dropped the bomb.

the girl was surprised by his reaction to hearing her bizarre story.

instead of recoiling, he asked her what she intended to do after breaking the ring’s spell.

his sympathy and understanding caused the girl to panic.

she emphasized that she had to return to her old life, which included fulfilling the boy’s engagement with the girl.

she did not have the option of staying in the girl’s place or giving him a chance at her.

she strained to convince him they had no future together.

unfortunately, after sex, the adventurer refused to let her go.

he pressed her to explain why she chose to sleep with him, reminded her of the girl’s objections to marriage and made a proposal to her.

this was more than the girl could cope with, stunned by his acceptance, but frightened by what he demanded—so, she fled.

unable to explain herself, she simply put on her dress and left, chanting apologetic denials.

this was too much for the adventurer.

he raced out after her, naked and wet, desperate to catch her and force her to explain.

racing out after her as she fled, skidding on wet, soapy feet, he crashed into her as he caught up to her at the stairwell landing.

the collision sent both of them over the edge of the balcony, and she barely managed to catch the rail and grasp his hand.

at that moment, the demon acted, tearing the soul out of his body

when his body went slack, she could not keep her grip and his body fell to its death.

there were hundreds of witnesses, and not a single person would have suggested that the tragedy had been anything but an accident.

as the tomboy knelt by the body in shock, she spotted the assassin and the agent once more in the crowd.

the assassin, took the risk of approaching her to remark, "so much for privacy."

the first guards on the scene detained her until investigators arrived, reporting her initial remarks as being “I told him I couldn’t… he just… couldn’t take no for an answer!”

the investigators had her examined and reached the conclusion that she had been raped and then tried to flee, and witnesses reported his naked pursuit and collision with the tomboy, before his fall

the examiners were about to send her home when a test revealed the possibility of demonic possession

accidental assassin - a slain lover

the demon staged the mark's death to make it appear to that he raped the tomboy and was slain in self defense

the demon exploited their intimacy to plant he hooks it used to rip the mark's soul free and possess it, gaining new leverage against the girl

the mark's soul would allow the demon to steal the body of the girl or the tomboy the next time they were intimate

the demon still needed to close the rift between the girl and the tomboy to repair itself

the mark's father used his influence to have the girl arrested and charged with murder in spite of investigators' doubts

the event was viewed as a confirmed kill in the underworld, reinforcing the belief that the girl was an assassin

the investigators' doubts about the tomboy were shaken by underworld rumors concerning the girl she posed as

they suddenly suspected that the girl may have been a demon sleeper-assassin since the night of the massacre

the girl was forced to remain in the shadows as long as the tomboy was in prison

the investigators examined her actions leading up to the night of the attack with growing suspicion

the tomboy faced trial and was forced to defend her actions as reconstructed by the investigators

the prosecutors raise the possibility that the girl was spared in the massacre because a demon had taken refuge in her soul

the tomboy was examined more thoroughly and found to be inhabited by a half-destroyed demon and the soul of the adventurer

the state of the demon explained why she had not been fully possessed, it was simply too fragmented to dominate a soul, even though it could clearly still hold onto one

the tomboy was cleared of the charges but faced the extraction of the adventurer’s soul, followed by an excruciating and potentially lethal exorcism

the demon within the girl focused was desperate to rescue its other half within the tomboy, prompting the girl to come to the tomboy's rescue

the only option the girl had was to use the ring to assume the boy’s identity to be granted access to the tomboy, for a conjugal visit

it started as sex with her boyfriend, but somewhere in the midst of it, she remembered the truth and realized she was having sex with the male version of herself.

the demon took advantage of their intimacy to tear down the walls within their psyche and heal the rift within itself

their minds merged and refocused in the tomboy's body while the demon seized the other one for itself

the tomboy came to her senses as the demon seized the ring and then pinned her to the bed to celebrate its resurrection

the demon subjected her to terrible revelations as he raped her, explaining how she had been conceived and what she was

the demon demonstrated that it did not need the ring to transform, now that it was whole, before destroying it

the demon explained that the ring's power came from a demon sealed within it, waiting for the chance to claim a soul

the demon announced that it found the idea of having a daughter fascinating enough to prevent her execution

in parting, the demon tells her to expect him to call upon her when the time was right

having learned the truth about their true relationship, the girl faced some difficult questions.

should she call what they had done incest or was it the ultimate form of masturbation?

the girl eventually pulled herself together and got moving, seeking out the headmaster and confiding the demon's revelations

the girl then slipped into the night and fled the city to wait for word that it was safe to return

the girl's mentor caught up to her outside the city, explaining that the headmaster had sent her "as her duty required"

the girl acknowledged her without a word, sitting lost in thought until it was light enough to resume traveling

unsorted

sorted out

the boy was unable to explain the dread certainty that the exorcism would prove fatal to the girl

the boy took advantage of the ring to help her escape the next time he visits her in prison

the boy gives her his clothes and the ring, instructing her to knock him out and leave him covered by a blanket

the girl used the ring to transform and took it with her as instructed

the tomgirl went into hiding in the ruins in a location known only to them and a couple of their friends

the boy managed to convince guards that the demon had taken his form and clothing in order to escape

the boy tried to shake any pursuit before going to the tomgirl's hiding place

the moment the demon had waited for arrived as the boy used the ring to become female so the tomgirl could break its spell

the girl regained her senses to find herself pinned in bed by a corpse just as someone stumbled upon the scene

the girl had expected the evening to wind up in bed, but could not believe it had ended in violence

the girl's inability to remember the event led investigators to believe she had been drugged as part of the "assault"

a few days passed, occupied by investigations, interrogations and the girl's exoneration, before she heard anything from the patron.