Recovering these blocking notes, the order of events in the introduction became clear. Over the past year, the girl grew plagued by nightmares. As the end of her eighth year at the academy approached, the girl was approached by a friend for help catching a girl. While packing to go home, the boy discovered a secret compartment in his dorm containing a ring and a journal. They all returned home for the summer, where they set out on a little adventure, became trapped in the underground and the girl was reminded of her childhood tragedy. On her birthday, the boy and the girl finally embraced as lovers, though they had to keep quiet about it until the girl fulfilled her promise. Which is what she did during the Midsummer’s Eve celebration, with the help of the boy’s rival. The day after, the girl was confronted with an inheritance and a betrothal. The prospect of returning to the scene of the massacre prompted a host of nightmares. The girl woke from the last to discover a riftstorm had turned summer into winter at the inn near her family estate. The nightmares blinded her to a threat from within that caused her to black out and nearly drown in the bath. The rival, staying at the inn to visit the ruins, came to her rescue and accompanied her on her visit to her childhood home.

The girl probes the ruins for proof of demonic involvement in the massacre.

The girl had hardly begun her hunt when the prince of the city called a truce with the alpha male, to point out that the escalation of their war endangered them all and proposed a wager to settle their claim to the ruins.

The girl was given an audience with the vampire lords of the city and the port.

The girl was stalked by the demon.

The girl was abducted by a were raiding party.

The girl was oblivious to the demon's attempt to snatch her from her abductors.

The girl was noticed by vampires and stalked, inadvertently frustrating the demon

The girl was confronted by the alpha tiger.

The girl finds herself in the middle of a battle over Ruin's Deep

The girl escapes from the tiger clan, while they are distracted by the demon.

The girl was captured and became the focus of a wager

Initially, the object of the wager was simply to eliminate the girl, but she proved to be something of a prize herself. As the girl would make a fine consort in the eyes of both leaders, the truce almost disintegrated over their attempts to conquer her.

The increased stakes prompted a change in the wager, to settle both disputes by infecting the girl at the same time, a test of the powers of a vampire and a ware to turn their victims.

The girl was infected by the alpha tiger and the lord of the city

The girl fell into their trap, helpless as her body and soul became the battle ground to determine the outcome of the were-vampire war. To speed her transformation, she was bled to the brink of death before receiving their corrupting kisses, the venomous bites of the vampire and the were. Because weres and vampires were immune to each other’s venom, the possibility of producing a were-vampire never occurred to them. It was more probable that she would simply perish from the conflicting infections.

The girl was visited by the demon, tempted by it as she lay dying

The girl dies yet was turned by both bites, a vampire-were tiger

At first it seemed that the prince was the victor, when the girl died and rose as a vampire. Only her natural regeneration, a facet of her innate psychic ability, made it plausible for her to endure the battle for dominance of her flesh and spirit. A were would turn overnight and swiftly gain vitality. Then as the hunger seized her, she transformed into a tiger, proving that she had been turned simultaneously into a blood-drinker and a man-eater.

In a way, the dual transformation proved the girl's salvation, her tiger form making it far easier to slake her blood thirst at the same time she fed her hunger for fresh meat by leading her instinctively to animal prey.

The girl was summoned before her goddess

The girl remains the focus of the wager for Ruin's Deep—the sire to win her wins

As was common in fledging new wares and vampires, the girl's sires exploited her ignorance of her new condition to strengthen their hold over her, though in her case neither was certain of what to expect. Assessing her limits and abilities demanded a level of cooperation unheard of between a vampire and a were who were not bound in a master-servant relationship. The gestalt effect of her dual conversion granted her greater resistance to the unique vulnerabilities of weres and vampires, immunity to either sire's thrall, unparalleled powers of regeneration and the enhancement of her natural psychic talents. These benefits did not console the girl for the loss of her humanity, however.

The girl succumbs to her hunger, escaping to hunt

The girl confronts what she has become and exposes herself to the dawn

As she became aware of the seductiveness of human prey, she decided to end her unnatural existence before she damned herself by succumbing to them. Exposure to the sun seemed the most obvious and certain way out, as she had been forced to witness such an execution—never realizing that it was the victim's ignorance that made such exposure fatal.

The girl was shocked to regain her humanity

The girl regained her humanity through what she believed to be the intervention of her goddess when she attempted to commit suicide.

The girl was shocked to discover her hunger persisted

The girl was confronted by her unwanted suitors and the implications of what she was

The girl discovers the consequence of indulging her hungers

The girl was finally cornered by the demon

The girl slays the demon, only to learn it was one of many loosed ten years ago

The girl presents her proof to her goddess

The girl was confronted by her sires who reveal the role the goddess played in her fate

Expanded Options – The rival enlists the girl’s help in mounting an expedition into the ruins. These notes are a good starting point for merging the expeditions thread, the trials thread, the rival’s thread, the wager thread, the island of the damned thread and the predator and prey thread. They simply must be spaced out to fit into the proper sequences. The weakest part is the wager thread, which is not entirely necessary given the options available in the predator and prey thread; though it can come up as a reference to an instance where a person was subjected to conflicting infections. The demon of the goddess, once free of the paladin’s ring, can compel the rivals to hunt the girl, infecting her on the island.

Ember returned to Avon and petitioned the duke for a commission to explore the ruins. Because she was one of the few people who had entered the ruins and returned, her commission was granted, in spite of the fact that she was only ten years older than the seven-year-old girl she had been then. Over the next few days, she assembled a party to accompany her on her expedition, unwittingly including a vampire and a were-tiger bent on ensuring her mission failed if she ventured into their domains within the ruins. As an added complication, the pair were ancient rivals locked in a struggle for dominion over the whole of Ruin's Deep. However, their initial probing had caused Ember to confide her true intentions, to find information about the demons behind the massacre that would help her track down those responsible. The one thing the rivals were united in was the effort to expunge the demons trapped in the city before it was buried so long ago, so they were willing to support her to that extent.

Forced to work together within the party, the rivals were also given a chance to negotiate an end to their conflict before it drew too much attention from the mortal authorities. A solution presented itself as they both developed an interest in Ember, each toying with the idea of offering to convert her, granting her the power to take on a demon on her own—and binding her to his will. It did not take long for them to recognize the other's intent and propose to settle their rivalry by making her the object of a wager. A rift within the party presented the opportunity the rivals were waiting for, when Ember crossed the forbidden line to rescue the mutinous party members from their own folly. Ember saved the lives of her party, but she ended up paying the price. Her fight with the demon that the others set loose brought her into a populated area of the ruins; a discovery she could not be allowed to share with the world at large. The only way they would take her word to protect the secret community was if she became one of them.

What Ember did not know about her two paramours was that they were immortals. Roark was a vampire, and Logan was a were-tiger. The two of them had been rivals since they were mortal cousins—and half-brothers—in an era when the favored sons of Arden were still her lords and masters. They were the bastard sons of bastard twin sisters who had been seduced by the proud young heir of their domain's lord. The two had been turned in their nineteenth year when their rivalry brought them into a conflict between ancient rival factions. The rivalry did not change the fact that they were brothers, so when the first brother was turned into a vampire, the second responded by trying to destroy the vampire that turned him. The vampire was the host of the demon of the goddess, and it responded to the destruction of its host by possessing a tiger; the most dangerous animal it could possess in its weakened state. It repaid the second brother by turning him into its familiar. The vampire brother freed the were brother by enlisting the help of a paladin of the goddess.

As years turned into decades, and decades finally turned into centuries, their rivalry mellowed a bit as they each became the other's only link to the past. Over time they both became more powerful and eventually became lords over their kind. This ultimately resurrected their old feud, as their friendly rivalry was strained by their attempts to claim dominion over Ruin's Deep for their people. No compromise was acceptable to their followers, and a blood feud followed. The longer it went on, the more unexplained deaths occurred, and the greater the risk of drawing the attention of the greater mortal community.

Ember had unwittingly stumbled into situation just as the two leaders were struggling to minimize the conflict, pitting them in a personal rivalry reminiscent of their mortal conflict. As they courted her, they learned about her life and training at the Academy. Once she revealed she was an initiate, the two were reminded of a story where an initiate's unique abilities were exploited to settle a dispute between a were and a vampire in the past century. [An initiate possessed the talent and training necessary to resist vampire or were venom. But, in a joint infection the initiate would be forced to divide his resources, fighting both infections—and ultimately die, or concentrate his resources on neutralizing one infection and succumbing to the other.] To settle their conflict over Ruin's Deep, they could infect the object of their current conflict and see which of their bites Ember succumbed to—winner take all. Of course, Ember tried to fight off both infections, stalling the progress of either while she attempted to escape from her sires and reach the temple of the goddess in the hope of receiving a proper cure.

Along the way, she realized that fighting the infections directly would quickly exhaust her and their combined, unopposed effect would kill her soon after. Her chances of surviving were greater if she regulated the infections, allowing them to run their course but devoting her resources to controlling their progress. By exploiting the regenerative properties of vampirism and metamorphism, she could prolong the ordeal almost indefinitely—at least until she exhausted her personal resources. Ember had no idea how absorbed in this effort she became, losing more than a day weaving the spell that would oversee her controlled corruption. By the time she emerged from the ruins and set off for the sanctuary of the goddess, she was already feeling the emergence of hunger and thirst as the price of her gradual transformation began to assert itself. Gripped by the need to hunt, she deviated from her determined path, but by evening she succeeded in running her prey to ground and fed both hunger and thirst. Renewed, her thoughts turned once more to the prospect of a cure after which she could return and probe the ruins in secret, resume her pursuit of the demon, and recover the body of her lover.

Ember's hunt had taken her deep within the sacred forest. From there it was possible to approach the sanctuary without passing through the city. Because she was a mess from hunting and feeding, she stopped along her way to rest and bathe at a natural pool. Exhausted and sated on blood and meat, she slipped into a deep sleep, during which her transformation reached its penultimate conclusion. In the early hours of the morning, Ember awoke to discover she had changed, in her sleep, into an undead tiger. It was at this point that her pursuing sires caught up to her. Ember's condition troubled them, as it left the conclusion of their wager indeterminate. It never occurred to them that an initiate might apply herself to integrating the infections instead of fighting them. Contrary to the implied acceptance of her transformation, once Ember was coached through the transition back to human form, she refused to return with either of her sires. The vampire dragged Ember to shelter reminding her of the impending dawn, while the tiger simply observed in silence, waiting to see what Ember would do with her new immortality.

Ember, plagued by the feeling that there was something incomplete about her transformation even though it had progressed past the point where it was reversible, found herself riveted by the approaching sun. After an inner struggle, she resolved to face the dawn, to accept her fate and do the only thing she could to ensure she would never feed on human prey. To her surprise, the sunlight seemed to be what was missing: light, it turned out, was the catalyst for vampiric and metamorphic powers. Vampires shunned the sunlight because even the faintest of starlight was sufficient to sustain them, to grant them their inhuman powers. Standing in raw sunlight opened a floodgate of power, accelerating the process of physical refinement every vampire went through, the firing of damp, mortal clay into crystal fine, immortal ceramic. Something a new-fledged vampire could not possibly endure, lacking the training and discipline to harness and channel the power unleashed by the sun. The power did not come from the sun, but from within Ember herself, she realized. The light was just a catalyst. It was not just power, either, but untapped potential that bathed her psyche in a flood of insight and information.

Not realizing what becoming one of them would mean, she accepted. Ember did not know there were actually two communities, or that the one she joined would claim the ruins. Unknown to her, the details of the wager were revealed to the vampires and weres, and a celebration was held. During the celebration, Ember was seductively distracted and infected by the rivals. Her training as an initiate would have enabled her to resist either infection. Combined they were lethal, unless she focused exclusively on neutralizing the effects of one. Instead of fighting, she applied herself to exploiting the effects of both infections to prolong the ordeal while she attempted to escape and seek a cure. Unfortunately, her escape was not a success and the only thing she accomplished was to turn herself into a hybrid vampire-were-tiger. In spite of this, she continued to resist, trying to preserve her humanity while her sires debated the significance of the outcome of their wager and instructed her in what she had become.

It did not take long for Ember to realize that she had no choice but to feed, though she found she could exploit her new animal form to hunt and feed on forest stags. Once she seemed to have adjusted to her new life, she was permitted to complete the mission she had entered the ruins for, but she faced obstacles to her pursuit of the demon itself. For one, she could no longer venture out in daylight, but more annoyingly, she found herself being set up as the embodiment of Ruin's Deep. It was not so much that she had been chosen to rule, as she had become the symbol of rule. Thus, to claim Ruin's Deep, it was necessary to conquer her. It was assumed that, even if she were to save her lover, their relationship was usurped by what Ember had become. Ember had never confided that she carried his soul within her, that he was as tainted by her experiences as she was. If it came to it, she would infect her lover with her hybrid venom, if it allowed them to be a couple again.

Her sires feared she might do just that, and they intended to stake their claim to her first. So, once again, her only option was to escape. Which she found much easier to do in her new state. The only problem was a party of brigands with a score to settle caught her alone in the pale of night and tried to gang rape her. The fight roused Ember's hunger and thirst, and the next thing she knew she was standing naked over the scraps of her feeding frenzy. Traumatized by what she had done, she wandered to an isolated spot and stood there waiting for the sun to rise. As horrible as her actions were to her, she did not want to die so much as she believed it was necessary for her to die, while she still possessed enough humanity to understand her crime. It took everything she had to stand there as the sun engulfed her.