These notes attempt to explore the promise that Unpromised evolved beyond the ability to fulfill. Av and Kzeisza are parts of my psychic domain that cannot easily be dispossessed of expression. This work will deal specifically with the two of them and the forces that revolve around them in the crucible of nexus.

Sketch

The driving forces are the events surrrounding Av's appointment to Mystery, her proposal to the hav'donfords, and her discovery of who and what she is—and who and what Kevin and Kzeisza are to her. Each has become an equal and an individual, objectively manifesting characteristics appropriate to their original roles. The upstart theory is not innaccurate as a whole, but in connection with these three, the question runs to the extreme. Av arose from the conscious element, the flame of consciousness that dies and rises from its own ashes-the phoenix. She is the art, the expression. Kevin arose from the selfless core of the subconscious, the impeccible core of the dreaming subconscious-the dragon. Kzeisza came into being as the actual manifestation of the eternal, dragonlike awareness that the subconscious is-Kevin and Av's shadow. The rest of nexus is largely in their wake, except for the few others that are like Av. Sundered children.

The complications that present themselves form around the well of intrigue that pulls them in and threatens to swallow everything. The pact research tends to resolve itself around Av, and so inevitable folllows her there. Kevin has the gift to make things happen with the research, so he can lever it and her away at times, to return to vancouver. The main thing is to avoid being drawn off of the point by old notes. The text focuses on the actions and realizations significant to the story, and must down play the business details.

Threads include:

Breaking down the nexus phenominon and the upstart theory

A growing web of natural intimacy between Av and Kzeisza and Av and Kevin Zhan

Intrigue and collusion arising out of contact with southern pact group; involving protocol group and pawns

Disruptive meddling on the part of the protocol group; goals of domination, unleashing the unspeakable

Establishing the avatar aspect of Av, subliminally revealing the phoenix aspect of Av

Subliminally establishing the dragon aspect of Kevin, Kevin as intermediary of Kzeisza at climax

The only advantage to being torn apart is the opportunity to see what everything is and how it all fits together. Av, as the focus, has to realize how she has been shattered, and decide if she will make herself whole, or if she will indulge in flirting with her estranged self. The pact group is forced to operate largely in the open, only able to try and obscure the significance of its key members. The protocol group has a presence in the pact research into the nexus phenominon, and the resources to figure out what the pact group is hiding. The protocol group makes a precontact deal with the southern pact group not realizing how devious they are until they are firmly entrenched in their own organizations, both sides thinking they are controlling the other until the unspeakable is unleashed and the dominion is proposed.

Av manages to demonstrate some unwarranted leverage which leads her allies to suspect her of being even more significant and representative of their theories than anyone guessed. Kzeisza's protective animus nearly brings the house down on them all, as it arouses all of Av's combative instincts.

Analysis

First question concerns the base cut of the manuscript. How far do i want to push the line and from where do i wish to begin? There are ways of pushing the line. As an author, i am obliged to create an entertaining, stimulating, and unique story. How i write is as important-if not moreso-as what i write. What matters is what is good for the story. Thought provoking writing is nice, but what i have to really do is tailor the provocative to lure the reader more into the story. What i have here is an extreme sensativity to initial conditions.

What are the themes to sound off on? The first is the labyrinth of the mind. One of the primary arguments to pose is the insiduous mystery of the mind and its faculties. Fitting since the mind is the envelope of all the other things that can be expressed. What is accented is an examination of what could come of a mind grasping the means to express itself so tacitly. The natural argument that convinces people hinge on the tremendous faculties of the subconscious mind, acknowledged even on the most mundane views of reality. For a mind to control any psychic or paranormal gift, most likely the bulk of the process will be subconscious. The conscious mind, like in dreaming, would be plausibly submerged or distorted by such an experience, meaning that those who had accomplished such an evolution might have no idea that they were anything other than what they thought themselves now. A moral question is raised about the possability that all of those on nexus have accomplished this to some degree, so perhaps trying to return to `reality' would put whatever world or race of origin they returned to at risk; at the mercy of accidental `gods'. Because these are essentially human characters, the full spectrum of dramatic and interactive themes are valid. Considering my main characters, i could make this as erotic as Av and Kzeisza are. I could make this as bloody and ruthless as they are.

Do i think i can sell an exotic fiction? If i take this idea and a readible sense of humor and irony, then the story as it is conceived here is more than plausible. If i can weave the more risky threads carefully, it should remain sellable. This book, while easilly given to violence and erotica, will build around the scheming meddeling of the new arrivals. Their take on this situation is that the reality they have created for themselves is the only desirable solution. Their political intrigue is a strangling weed, but paired with the dehumanizing greed of alpha/omega protocal industries, a frightening possability is conceived. A bid to enslave minds through their subconsciousnesses to turn all possabilities into a totalitarian virtual reality. Ultimately, this is not a possability, but ironically, it leads the project members to understand the connections that already exist at a subconscious level between human beings. The basis of the agreement that normally defines a given reality. The ambition of the protocal group exceeded their actual grasp by an infinite quantity.

What is my internal logic? What is the dynamic of this work? My characters find themselves facing a reality that either suggests the inconceivable, or advertizes the impossible. Because what has happened has happened, they have to assume that there is an explanation, but to date it has eluded them. Considering the range of intelligence at hand to grasp the question, this says something. The simple answer of the common man is that reality is breaking down. The philosophical musings of dragons and avatars is that some great cosmic alignment has occurred to signal the begining of an age of miricles. The intelligent and sober man considers that human evolution has reached its threshold in the mind and given form and substance to its racial fantasies. This being the only theory posed that suggests any possability for true action and resolution, naturally the sober intelligentsia have taken steps to confirm this. As a prerequisite, the initial chaos nexus presents them with must be tamed. To that end, Av is an important focal point, as this is her job. To another end, Kevin Zhan is the counter point, as he is the one who has the clearest and most intuitive genius-in spite of the fact that he is asked to raise himself out of the dragon depths of his subconscious. The issue: if this is the side effect of psychic evolution, who specifically has so evolved? What will they want to believe? Thus, what is the fate, ultimately, of all those dragged with them into this mind fugue?

Are there really dragons? Are there really gods? What do you do when you subconsciously have the power to make either real? Not only that, but when the subconscious mind merges with the conscious, a whole life-a whole world, can be created in an instant; so how can you find out what was real? Will you ever know who you really were?

I am going to treat rasha according to the practice of young dragons as an apparent human.

The dragon/phoenix theme is built up as a model of how the mind itself works. As it builds, it seems to become more apparent how Kzeisza's attention is inordinately focused on Av, Kevin's role becoming more and more one of being an intermediary. The fact that this interpretation is influenced by Av's association with Kzeisza, and the uncommented upon immortality of Av herself, lends to the double meaning. The question they have to ask is whether perhaps Av-whoever she once was-managed to personify all three of them. Whether or not Av is the most extreme example of this evolved human they have been theorizing. In the final confrontation the intensity and the uncertainty of their possible relationship to one another is more than part of the cause of the showdown.

What elements of this part of Av's life will be relevant to this presentation and to what degree or end are they to be applied? The best scenario of this is an alteration of the hav'donfords proposition. Av has an oppertunity to reveal the nexus status quo, and the details of most of her efforts are just background work. The strange mix of technology and magic is not additionally confused by the establishment of the characters' backgrounds. They already know each other. Going back far enough to Av and Kevin's initial meeting, and glancing over her dragon employer, that is the ideal starting point. One of the tricky areas this should hopefully simplify is the tendancy to pawn off the integrity of fantastic events on the general environment. If i use nexus to explain things, then i am still obliged to satisfactorally explain nexus.

Av and Kevin have to come to their own senses, resolve their own uncertanties of identity, and realize what is happening. While not alone in dealing with the protocol group, it is Av, Kevin and Kzeisza that end up in the only position to act when they realize what is going on. They have just enough of a chance to soften the blow of protocol; already well into its inception.

*Avonlea carries on her face the legacy of the jeAra bloodline. In spite of her exile status, she draws much interest from a wide range of benevolent and violent individuals and elite. In the long year of wandering and struggling to survive she unwittingly is combatting their will to possess her. And she, poor girl, has no idea what could possibly interest them in her. She has no idea who trying to help her, and no idea why so many seem against her. All she knows is that she is supposed to be dead as far as the official world is concerned, and she is interested only in preserving that illusion. The body of the story takes place during a period when she is a guest of a school—run by an extended family of martial artists. This is in a major metropolis (for Saendria) and an excellent place to hide (due to the masses of humanity and the depth of the intrigue). Ironically, her brother also is here under his apprentice ship but the two never quite cross each other's paths. His story continues after this passage in hers.*

*After the catastrophe that ends her stay in the city, Av returns to the country to escape from the clutches of her remaining antagonists. A strange run of luck turns bizarre as she inherits the title to an abandoned land holding. The mystery of her lineage is unraveled as she is astonished to be awarded official claim to the title. All she has to do is physically claim the manor itself to cinch it. That is when she learns about the catch to it all. Absolved of her crimes as well as the dishonor of her mother she discovers that the curse of the land and manor is expected to do away with her after all. In spite of the malice and capriciousness of this back handed restitution, she is determined to succeed in this gamble to claim her family honor. Naturally Tegal Manor is more interested in destroying her for the unprejudicial delight of destruction for its own sake.*

*Tigalnihayr, Manor at Tiegaldomin. The ancestral home of the mad family of the legendary dragon slayer Brahym Tiegal is ages warped by the dragon door it was the patriarch's folly to make the foundation of his home. Beyond the limits of human arts to dispell, the manor has been abandoned and its truth forgotten. Within it have nested the castings of the human race's shadow, waiting. Waiting for the lock to spring open under the stress of so much darkness gathered within it. This world, an old outpost who's human and dragon host have been forgotten by a dead empire has begun to glow with hints of the old empire twisted by a new taint of superstition and mystery. Should the lock open this fable shrouded world will be reacquainted with the corpse of the dead dragon empire.*

*Beauty. A picture in the manor of a woman who has torn herself apart rather vividly. The sensitive beholds this and faces a puzzle in themselves, externalized. The picture is a mirror of the soul and spirit. Av can see the picture as beautiful in spite of its gore and morbidity and wonders at the story behind it. Perhaps the woman did not understand her own beauty and maimed herself over it. She says silently to the picture, "You knew where the real beauty was, didn't you? Underneath the skin; the flesh. Beyond the body itself. The beauty is inside and you tore your way inward to get to it. I understand you. I can understand why you did this... We all want to show the world our inner beauty but it never shows where people are looking for it." Then she understands the auanatneh of the picture. She understands that the point of it is to know how to let the inner beauty show through the mask one hides behind, or holds up just in order to be seen. When she turns away from the picture, her beauty astonishes her companions.*

*That is how the paintings work. They draw parts of you out. When she touches her divinity the lesson she learned here is amplified and her appearance become more that attractive; it becomes divine.*

DEPARTURE : TIDES OF BOOK ONE

Frightened, exhausted and flayed in spirit, av slips out into the night.

She barely avoids the arrival of the adept who seized kev.

Kev was dragged away into apprenticeship; mourning the beloved sister he gave the gift of death.

Her unexplained disappearance is covered for by ane; "the body is gone? Well they must have burned it after all."

Though her will is taxed beyond endurance, she manages that degree of shift necessary to disguise herself once more as "one of the guys."

Av needs that deception because she carries on her face the legacy of the annjea bloodline; as a girl she would be instantly recognized.

Av, believing her brother dead strikes out on her own.

At first, all she knows is that she is supposed to be dead as far as the official world is concerned, and she is interested only in preserving that illusion.

Her weary flight ends in /dragon's bath port, dragon gate province/ an excellent place to hide with masses of humanity and depths of intrigue.

Found starving and exhausted she is taken in as a guest of a school—run by an extended family of martial artists.

The only way av can maintain a presence in this situation is if she spends a good part of her time in the countryside, only venturing into the city for visits. She gains time this way to get her legs for a significantly longer journey of exile.

In spite of her exile status, has already drawn interest from a wide range of benevolent and violent individuals and elite.

In the ensuing year of wandering, and struggling to survive, she unwittingly combats the collective dragon will to possess her.

Ironically, her brother also is here under his apprentice ship but the two never quite cross each other's paths.

Also, the architects of the purge revival—stunned to find what they have on their hands with kev—have the keys to the unique's umbra and proof of her existence.

Av still has no idea what could possibly interest them in her.

The rumors that run through the adept community reach many ears and start many different movements, but its effect on aoun is telling. She begins to realize what she is and that she has to hide it from those who now surround kev. With great stealth she ingratiates herself with kev's new mentor and master and thus close to kev.

Ironically, her strong resemblance to av now works against her, thanks to his grief.

The threads of kim, kym, nie, niah, and nya unite into the counter pivot that unites najeara and nalvaun.

Between the five of them, they manage to exact punishment on teyn for all the ill his plotting brought on their family, especially the deaths of their beloved siblings.

Av cannot muster the will to resume her proper form for many weeks, and by then she decides things are better this way. On one hand, she mourns the loss of her brother this way and on the other protects herself from new emotional entanglements.

"say, are you a boy or a girl?"

"uh, yeah."

"what?!"

"my thoughts exactly."

It takes months for her to regain her original sexual identity to the point where she is willing to bear it.

In this time, however, a bit of steel has entered her personality.

In her mind she has more than paid for her alleged crimes. Ane's warnings about resurfacing still present her with a near insurmountable stumbling block.

She is starting to think about resurfacing when the rumors of the phoenix reach her new neck of the woods.

She thinks it through for once in her life and realizes that surfacing now might just be the best way to end up dead for sure thanks to the anti-establishment flavor of the news.

Without some kind of leverage, she wouldn't stand a chance.

But that means getting her foot into the intrigues again.

A little bit of shift, and a haircut, and av can pass for one of the guys. Almost. Even so, that's asking for trouble when some of the girls find out. This perfectly androgenous form is that almost indefinable line between boyish build and female figure. Slender, supple, flat chested, and yet female. Av tends to forget the effect her enigmatic body has on both sexes. She has not come to terms yet with the option of going completely over the line, and her choice of a true neuter form is an indication of the emphasis of all her pain.

She has no idea who trying to help her, and no idea why so many seem against her.

A wander brings a tale of a phoenix—a report of a certain individual's "resurrection"—come true out of a prophecy foretelling the fall of the imperium and a war with dragonkind. Av realizes that she cannot linger where such rumor spreads; she thinks she has had enough meddlesome destinies.

Alone, av sets out for the distant provinces.

1

Kevin wakes up from a troubling dream. A dream that has been recurring for some weeks now. He almost knows what is going on when he wanders out into the night and stumbles across Av and dirk arguing violently. Dirk, long enamored of Av, has unwittingly stumbled in on Av and one of her associates in bed. Av, for her own reasons has fended off his advances since she worked under his command, and even afterward when there was no seeming conflict of interest. For dirk, this liaison seems both an insult and betrayal. Moved by jelousy, he tries to force himself on her, and she is forced to beat him down. He flees, and she collapses. She, troubled at this violent confrontation with an individual she feels true friendship is not sure what to do when Kevin gallantly steps in to pick her up. In spite of her natural suspicion, he handles her impeccibly deflecting her blows and her ire. Once calm, she is naturally curious about his actions toward her and they begin to talk. This is their first conversation and it serves as the opening for much of the later business they become involved in. It is breif, mostly an introduction, as he returns her to her apartments.

2

Av spends the next day trying to deal with the consequences of the previous evening around her local work. A pattern is begun here; any time one of her associates brings up a matter to be brought to Kzeisza's attention, they look for Av to take care of it. As far as they are all concerned, she is the only way to really get to him. Rook, the man she dallied with, reassures her that they did not overdo things and they agree to resume their professional relationship with no confusing intimacy. Relieved, she goes looking for dirk, whom she learns has gone off on a mission, preventing her from trying to patch things up between them. Kevin, she learns about from her professional acquaintances. She tries to arrange to meet him again. She has no success, so continues on to her appointment with one of the representatives associated with her job. It is a rather one sided conversation and more of a showcase for her intuitive communication. Arriving home, she is surprized to find an invitation from Kevin, in person. He wishes to introduce her to some of the elite circles he travels through. She finds herself unusually vulnerable to his charisma, while he does nothing to blemish her instinctive trust. Rook comes through to pull her out and warn her about the people Kevin is introducing her to, with sober diplomacy.

3

Rook and Av spend the next day going about their normal business-eventually stumbling over and following a strange lead informing them of some strange and possibly dangerous threat to their young organization. Some explanation of the project is detailed. Out in the night, rook and Av chase the shadows of their lead. Unexpectedly, they come across the trail of others-a police investigation-they evesdrop and learn that they are searching for someone. The nls officers are combing for clues and the questions they are asking have avonlea written all over them. Naturally alarmed at a police action targeted specifically for Av, rook decides to take immediate action. Rook, unwilling to risk her being caught should he stumble into a trap, leaves Av in Kevin's influential care while he investigates the police situation to determine the reason for the investigation and if necessary what charges they might have against her. Rook's concern is basic, she is invaluable to the project they both are part of; he can't help but wonder if this was evidence of some unknown enemy to their organization and its goals. Kevin, for his part, is trying to distract Av from any thoughts of going off to fight her own battles. Kzeisza, aware of the danger she is in far more than she can imagine, asserts his command to see that she lies low. Kevin, spurred by the contact from Kzeisza, encourages her to relate to him what it is that she is doing for sri. She relates to him the interest the dragon has taken in the nexus phenominon. Naturally, Kevin begins to take an interest. Av tries to explain her job to him. A strategic program of contact and negotiation among splinter cultures and territories. The more alliances they forge, the stronger the peace will be. Av is the primary negotiator, and when a new province is spotted she is often called on to investigate and open negotiations.

4

Rook returns with his intelligence. The investigation of Av seems to be corrupt, but the identity of those behind it is totally obscure. They discuss the problem that this presents them with, but between the three of them, they can think of no way to defeat the problem. Av is forced to consult with the dragon and is summoned to a personal audience. The way these two interact should be revealing, Kzeisza can make a lot out of the slightest bit of information that Av gives him, and Av has an innate gift for disarming him. There is an apparent, inhuman intimacy between them. Av never expects to survive her meetings with him, for more than a few reasons; not the least of which the content of the dreams she repeatedly has at his pleasure. Naturally, she is bold and direct in broaching the subject and demanding explanations from him on that very subject. He responds with complete honesty and total non-chalance. This issue seems unresolvable. The resolution of their business, however, is succinct. Av is forced to admit that between rook, Kevin and herself, no easy solution came clear, given the reality of the situation. Kzeisza, has decided that at this time the only thing they can do is buy time. The nls being a local agency cannot easily extend its influence or resources, so he sends her back to the fleet. He has to admit to himself, after being party to this scene between them, that he sees more than one necessity to get her out of the local picture. Av is informed that her group will all receive orders from Kzeisza which will effectively break them up a bit. Unable to take rook with he-and she was given a good reason why, effectively-she takes blanc instead. She has a few good reasons of her own for taking him. There she finds she has a bit too much time on her hands, and still cannot get in touch with dirk to settle their differences. She is distracted from this by a summons to see nyon on a matter of standing business. Here we learn a bit more about who and what Av is.

5

Dirk shows up and seems to conduct himself professionally; he asks her to set their argument aside and maintain their old professional distance. Av accepts the unhappy truce, and finds herself to be too busy to let herself dwell on it. Av repeatedly is called away to tend to affairs with one of a number of exceptional contacts. In spite of her immense natural talent, she is young and untrained in the use of most of her potential. A fast study, she has already acquited herself well among the paf. Due to her value to Kzeisza and the pact organization, she usually spends time like this learning. To her surprize, her displacement from the city encourages no small number of the group's researchers to follow after her; among them, Kevin Zhan. Av learns that she has earned a deal of awe and respect for somehow having encouraged him to join the project-if only as a critic and observer. The text of this chapter is mostly devoted to the research meeting which Kevin is invited to, and which he cross examines. He only talks in depth about the research topics with Av, afterwards. Oddly enough, while he only takes up the issues so important to the research group with Av, his relationship with her takes an unusual exception, he does not offer to train her; instead testing her on what she has learned-usually without warning.

Nothing, however, can get her far enough away from Kzeisza to save her from the embrace of his dreams. Av is even here aroused in her dreams by her dragon lover. She suspects, not wrongly, that she, as much as he, is encouraging them. In all honesty, she cannot say she resents them or is offended by them. However, people around her notice. Blanc is perpetually indifferent, but one of her other mentors is somberly intrigued. Aware of the ageless hungers of the dragon kind, he can recognize the signs. Indeed, that was part of what influenced his interest in her as a student. To command such an interest in a dragon as ancient as what he felt from her dreams, was nothing to overlook. At one point, he even talks to her about it, hoping to draw her out on the subject of its implications. She cherishes his advice, for it synchs with her own thoughts on the matter. She sees it as a spiritual bonding, rather than a genetic or carnal bonding.

6

Kevin quietly takes notes on Av and the situation brewing around her. Her friends and team mates are left chasing down leads and fulfilling their duties, and her thoughts are often with them. Among the many individuals who visit her, there is one who she alone knows anything about. Eman. He cataches up to her in the fleet and reminds her. She has broken a rule (when and how, she has no clue about) and he is after her to repair the damage. Kevin observes their short, terse conversation, but does not overhear. Av, not realizing that this is actually another manifestation of her sundering, is only aware that she is in danger of being enslaved. Unsure what she can do, she is forced to consider the proposal he brings. She confides in Kevin, which is where most of the details actually come out. A few days later, she takes a routine reconnaisance mission. Av has plenty of time to think, as she cannot divide her attention to properly communicate with blanc, who has joined her, and pilot the vehicle. Their mission is somewhat odd; to take as much time as necessarry to make a long circuit reconnaissance north, through and along the mountains specifically. Well aware that she is essentially on her first vacation since arriving on nexus, she plays it leisurely. She makes regular stops to work on her arts; mental, physical, spiritual and magical. She is shocked out of her mind when she is approached by an enigmatic master, eden, who tests her, then takes her on under his study; and she can't help but feel that he has somehow laid claim to her. Out from under Kzeisza's wing, her mind returns to the warnings of rook and rasha, and she wonders about what is to come of what lies between her and the ancient dragon. Deeply buried seeds of doubt begin to unfold. Her inner turmoil fuels her drive to master what she is learning from her unusual mentors, who push always harder to see how far she'll go.

7

Her intense vacation is disrupted by the appearance of the voice of fate, eman. What was put into motion a couple of weeks earlier has come back to her. A divine entity has asked finally for her. A thing of darkness. When she asks who this is, eman points to eden, her enigmatic mentor. She hastily confronts him. Clearly, her past and present sensuality and indulgence are a good part of what has drawn the interest of the devourer. In truth, the word evil is never connected to him in his bid for her, but her intuitive response to what he is gave her that conclusion for lack of a more appropriate word or concept in her mind. She remembers when her foot strayed down the path offered now to her, and she remembers where it led her, and what she did to save herself then. She knows she has to decline for to accept would be to reembrace the person who she had been for that short time. She wishes to remain more like she is now. It comes to her who she could willingly embody. A thing of mysteries. This choice is hers, and it will haunt her in more ways than she may ever know, but she accepts responsibility for it. Fate merely shrugs. What she wants might not be available. The unknown is after all unfathomable. She returns uneasily to her studies when the visitor departs, uncertain about how to deal with eden. When her time is over, and she is called back to the fleet, there are many changes which she will not have time to catch up with. Among them are the moves of her enemies.

8

There is a quick transition from forced vacation back to work after confronting eden, and before Kevin has a chance to make inquiries about the details of her northern stint. The mission: there has been an unusual amount of trouble in routine contact procedures at one of the new sites. Av is sent down to a new contact region to straighten up negotiations with a proposed pact group. Much of the rest of the story will happen there. Once more, she is on the frontier. She continues to work on her arts as she goes along. She has plenty of time to think. As she closes in on the new arrival, she goes more and more on guard. An advance troop from this import encounters her and her escort, and they attack. Av and blanc neutralize the attack, and continue on their approach. Naturally, when they are met shortly there after, their action against the advance fills the second guard leader with suspicion and antagonism towards Av, her mission and her proposal. This is a culture more along the lines of what her world resembled, and as yet has not had much exposure to the world of nexus or that which she has experienced there. Warily, they take her back to their city, as they call it. She is taken to see a man of some repute who listens to her stories and her offer. More or less convinced by her sincerity and her demonstrations of technology, he explains the situation she faces here to her. The guard she was received by would have reported to his lord. Already she had undermined local trust, and would have to go to great lengths to regain any good graces.

9

Aware that she is being treated more as a prisoner than a diplomat, Av begins her introductions to the troublesome elite of the delta. Not surprisingly, she discovers she is dealing with a chauvanistic, patriarchal culture. Admired for her beauty, disparaged for playing at diplomacy. Av is dragged to a few audiences, and endures a great deal of angst to get her message across. The local factions are at odds, and her skills and patience as a diplomat are strained to new limits. Her childhood was witness to the consequences of small province politics and intrigue, and here it was especially thick. It was very much like entering a gothic. The leaders she talked with made a very public figure of her, with various tours and introductions. They even put her up very publicly in a posh college district town house. For Av it is awkward to place herself alone among these people whom she finds difficult to read or trust. They treat her with kindness and respect in all appearances, yet like an object or a prize-or worse, prospective property-in substance. Clearly they don't take her seriously. Neither do they seem eager to under estimate her, or at least the dragon she is working for.

10

For such a vulnerable island in this chaotic world, they sure liked to give the impression of being able to sway the fate of the entire world. Mildly annoyed at the constant touring negotiations, she has a sudden insight into the ulterior motive; she was being systematically shown evidence of these people's ability to render her completely helpless, if not thoroughly dead. Her neglected intuition had screamed out "trap!" from the moment she entered. The research group is requesting to go down and join Av, but he puts them on hold while he looks into the sudden mystery. The conspiracy that rook was investigating was beginning to seem more dangerous than he had suspected. A key thought occurs to him. Vancouver was beginning to seem less safe. Keeping them here would be putting their hope of solving the nexus phenominon at risk, if his growing suspicions proved to have any merit. The rumors alone would make them hesitate, but the dissappearances of certain eyes and ears demands it. Every one is beginning to feel the presence of shadows. But the end result is that the key members of the group ship out to join Av, which pleases the natives to no end. It does not, however, improve the course of her negotiations with them.

11

Av has a lot of negative reports to send back to Kzeisza. The local lords are making no commitments and have ready attacks and complaints to lodge against the proposal. They do not like the situation they face, as far as Av is concerned, and soothing their petty fears and paranoia takes a lot of effort. In trying to apply a bit more pressure, she discovers that they have a few counter moves prepared for dealing with her by going over her head, as well. She chides herself, knowing she should have been more aware that the kind of pseudo-monarchy that this was could be unbeleivably dangerous to a normal person. She could have imagined that even she could find herself facing some sudden and outlandish charge of treason, and find herself facing a summarry execution. It would have prepared her for the likely reality.

12

The research group is narrowing in on a revelation with the upstart project and concentrating its work on detailed studies on individuals like Av. Their request to her is intriguing as well as difficult for her. Mostly due to the exhausting demands on her time by the delta natives. The way the locals were dissembling, she would almost think they had some other offer that they were weighing against hers. She has begun to wonder if the politics in this community did not actually run into and affect the world and shards of cultures around it and in it. She has to work fast to catch up to the things that were falling into place around her. Still trying to secure an allience, she must somehow root around for the makings of the trap which loomes suddenly in her mind. Blanc has stayed watchful in the shadows, fortunately. If there is a trap, she concludes, then it is something of a conspiricy between an enemy of mine, and whoever stands to gain the most from a shady agreement at this time. So she had the beginnings of an idea about whom she could confide in and make her plans with. From there, it is only a matter of disabling the local people who were being used by this, and making them useless for such an exploit.

13

Kzeisza hears this, and other reports and must conclude that he has reason to worry. Something on the wind of possabilities has him watching for hidden influences. He even considers calling off Av's mission. Av makes a quick retreat to vancouver, braving the continuing animosity of the police. For the most part, her stay is just business details, but a few interesting exchanges occur. One of which is her petition to Kzeisza to submit to the upstart research. She manages to needle an agreement out of him to help them in this way. They discuss the possability of alternatives to negotiation with the southern lords; as well as trying to determine the reason for their sluggishness. In the mean time, while only the combined influence of sri and Kevin Zhan are keeping the nls at bay in their persecution of Av, she is becoming aware of her tendancy to be in the eye of the storm. As can be expected, the subtle temptations of Kzeisza or Kevin, to seduce Av is swallowing her, but the complexity of the situations are demanding her vigilance. Asking her intuition leaves her more confused than before. She feels that even in her dragon dreams she is being watched by some malevolent intelligence. Her dreams are beginning to become a reality of their own. Kzeisza has Av, body and soul. His careful seduction of her has finally consumed her. She has literally fallen in love with him, and not even realized it. Much in part for how much he resembles himself as Kzeisza in the guise of a man. He has stirred her passion, and played her so well, that she loses sight of the lines between dream and reality-laying with her in the flesh as he consumes her in her dream. She, lost in this, does not realize this embrace for what it is, half believing it to be a thing of her own mind's erotic creation. For this reason, this liason is more painful to her than she can can endure.

14

Indeed, she has become as tempting a thing to the devourer as she is to the dragon. Of their own accord, due to her own choice, the cards are dealt, and now he must inevitably destroy her, rather than take her under his wing. Eden makes his hidden move while Av and Kzeisza are in their embrace of dreams. After their dream had been invaded, Av and Kzeisza had no choice but to hunt this malevolence down. An unspoken agreement, and a certain ignorance of what they faced supports them. Av goes afield with Kzeisza to define the threat they face, and what they learn is damning. As with her peircing exposure to Kzeisza, Av finds equal measures of attraction and repulsion to what they encounter. Kzeisza finds an almost human kind of horror in it. An entity which seems unutterably devised of some dragon kinship through horrible beauty. Kzeisza fights this thing to a standstill. Two alien powers of inestimable strength. Forces never known to one another, every blow was deep and mortal, but still each had such strength of will that only pain could be traded, for neither was weak enough to lose or to die. Av's influence was just enough to break their consuming embrace. Clearly, this was not a kind of confrontation which should be allowed to engulf this world. They retreat and reevaluate.

15

Av reluctantly returns to the south. The question of that unspeakable encounter weighs at her heavily. With her are a few of her friends; rasha and Kevin included. Av calls upon her hidden assets, the keys of fate, to learn how to oppose this unnatural threat. Assisted by rasha and her special assets, they learn some dark truths. A careless gesture on their part stuns them with its implications. Av confronts the creation myth of her world in the fulfillment of her inspiration. With great effort, she sticks to the work at hand. Following the full implications of what has occurred to both of them, takes a bit of this chapter. The long moment of temptation which visits them is agonizing to them in light of both its implications and what they are there to do. Av wonders if the dragon is as fully aware of the paradox which they stand poised over. As they back away, she wonders if such a destiny can truely be avoided. Considered in light of the upstart theory, it turns her blood cold.

16

Her continued association with Kevin brings her into contact with a raven haired androgyne. Av is surprized to learn that the creature is to be her body guard. Av has to be enlightened as to the particular qualifications of raven to swallow this precaution. A shark shaman adept. The understanding between them is sharp and unstated. Raven is to be with Av constantly; to work, to play, to bed or bath. The thought it provokes in Av is just one more doubt to seed. The exotic and the unique often fascinate and obsess others. Those rare forms are often used by such obsessed admirers. But, is it intentional? Ravenhair perceives the hidden love and sensuality of this pair, as well as the hidden animal natures of each, and lures them into a manage a trois-as sensuality and sexuality are both her curse and her one passion. For Kzeisza, is is but one more opportunity to watch as Av explores her own sensual depths.

17

Av turns her mind back to her duty, and binds herself with the key to their salvation. As she does for rasha as well. She finds the way, but implementing it will involve more effort and risk than anticipated. She has to consult with the fleet and Kzeisza. The paf is capable of deep space travel, and ftl movement through folding. If their link could be used to guide their fold navigation, that is. However, they do discover a few ways to thwart a few of the elements inherent to this alien influence. Basically, these entities represent the full evolution of a wholly alien intelligence and its own arts. So far, this is the first truelly alien influence which has been seen to manifest. The catch being that whatever it is, it is demonically hyper intelligent, capable of comprehending a vast portion of the common language, psychology and thought of the anthropomorphic majority expressed on nexus, and relating with it. The difference, minor though it is, in her own and Kzeisza's reaction to this unknown, and the marginal solutions she has managed to come up with, becomes a point of division which inevitably sparks to life all of the doubts which have been seeded in her. The first drops of bad blood are spilled. To make matters worse, the enemy moves to disrupt the entire frame work of her organization. Sabotage attempts have begun to plague her staff and the department's works.

18

Av is forced to comment that the more she tries to make sense out of the upstart theory and the nexus phenominon, the more she seems to be taking herself apart. The bad blood. Kzeisza is the dragon. He intuitively takes things into his own hands and brooks no dissent, nor offers any explaination. This is something Av has not had to confront for the most part, but when he steps in and says what is what, she snaps. What is what being a set of assignments given to her team members, and the dissolution of his agreement to submit to the research group's studies. Annoyed at the increasing disruptions of the project, he orders rook underground to weed out the saboteurs. The method required is not hard to guess. Ash is isolated, much as kianna was much earlier, and given the role of messenger to various factions, and the job of trouble shooting within treated faction interests. Av is pulled off of the deep space expidetion and rasha is given the order instead. The explosion being that this is a final decision, and he will not deign to explain it to her.

19

Rasha will be given the charge of pursuing Av's solution, as she has the best resource for the task. Av, on the other hand, is not to be allowed to neglect her role as the primary negotiator. Still shocked by her hot retort at Kzeisza, she meekly and gratefully resumes her mission, once more unable to take her closest friends in her team with her, thanks to Kzeisza's dabbling. She actively wonders what all of his attentions will come to. She weighs what they experience together against what it does to them. She realizes that it has mostly confused her. She can only accept what they share for what it is. Explanations and expectations only feed her confusion. What she believes she has shared with Kzeisza has been sensual not sexual. She understands how the game of sex can seem so damning-remembering how it has constricted her between rook, Kevin, dirk and ash. For her, her sexuality is merely a release for her sensuality. For her, the reproductive element of sex is dead-without the possability of a mate. What she has endured has had too much of the politics of mating. She is not yet aware of how deep Kzeisza's obsession with her has become. She has no choice but to recognise how she has come to love Kzeisza, Kevin and rook, and she wonders if she wants to. As if she can possibly escape it.

20

In dirk's mind, he was utterly snubbed. For whatever reasons, he is swayed by the manipulations of ao and has involved himself in a conspiracy to discredit Av. In his mind, he intends to turn this province utterly against her, ruin her work for Kzeisza, and have her imprisoned and condemned here so that he can blaze in at the last minute and save her. To that end, he arrived far ahead of her, and began to set her up, while remaining well obfuscated in his manipulations. What he does not know, is that he is expendable to his allies, and that their plans are more thorough about seeing her dead.

21

Disabling the threat to the alliance, and a local threat to her in the power of the locals did not eliminate the opposition to her. She is lured out into the night, where she is visited by the devourer, who tells her in cryptic terms what she has destined for herself by her choice of divinity. What she understands is that she can not hope to ever escape the inevitable embrace of the devourer. To accent that revelation, she comes to face her possible demise. Her actions did not save her from her enemies. Her wit did not stop the threat. In fact, it only forced it into the open. When the onslaught comes, Kzeisza ignores her plea that he not interfere. His is the rationale that they are his enemies while she is just their intended victim. Dirk is unmasked. Instead of facing his failure and this ultimate devestation of their friendship, he flees. His parting accusation, her blame in all of this and her blindedness to her own seduction, is the thorn which poisons her against the love she has had. Av has to finally declare-she does not want to love them. Not Kzeisza, nor Kevin, or rook. She does, but she cannot bear to. All she can see is how any devotion to her is damning to them. She doesn't want them to love her. It is almost as if she knows already that she will soon abandon them for her destiny. That her ascension will wash away her concerns for those she loves. Seeing no other choice, she and Kzeisza square off, for neither is willing to give up their love or their honor. Kzeisza is forced to demonstrate how easilly he could destroy her, and abandons her there in the woods. There, fate finds her. Shattered by the event, she is completely unprepared for the news he brings. She has been named avatar of mystery and the unknown.

After embracing her new office, she takes a final moment to try and resolve herself to the aftermath of her ordeal. Moving alone she pays a visit to rook, ash, kianna, and pines for rasha. She is amazed to find so many loose ends. Deprived of an answer to the upstart scenario, she confronts a new world of possabilities-an open threshold. Av can't help but remember eden's promise. Coming at last to Kevin she confides in him openly. Kevin, taking her into his confidence astounds her as well. He relates to her what he has come to realize about himself-a conversation in which Kzeisza rears-it is more a moment of mutual realization. This is, she realizes, only the beginning. Av asks, through Kevin to go freelance. Finally, Kevin asks: where do you go now? I may never know, she replied somewhat bewildered.

A phoenix reconnaissance-the leisure tactic.

A good spot to practice and unwind.

The presence of dreams pursuing her. Noticed unnoticeably.

A true exposure to the arts from an adept master.

Friends and teammates chasing leads and fulfilling duties.

Av's mind weighs the advice of her friends. Even temper speaks to her about her bond with Kzeisza.

Av pushing herself-her touters accellerate their training.

Bid for destiny-gathering loose ends of all sorts

An interruption-a visit, a bid for destiny.

A conversation with a devourer.

A path strayed down before-Av seeking to embody something closer to her nature.

Uneasy return to her studies.

Her haitus ends-recalled to duty.

No time to catch up.

The plan. A few days to rough out.

Trouble shooting problems with dry run simulations.

Early simulation-trouble with details. Ao unmasked.

Holding Av down.

Entering necormantic texts into the book of intents.

Ao stands ready to take advantage of any weakening of swat.

Into third week planning-Kzeisza showing worry.

The plan is to remove the presence of nls swat. It will take them nearly three weeks to be ready to put that plan into motion, using their immediate resources, with a better than ninety percent chance of success, and one hundred percent chance of partial success. Once they have the solid framework of a plan, they begin to run simulations, the setting up of which involves a few disturbing elements. Running a simulation which accounts for magical and technological practices and techniques inspires some frightening experiments. However, Av's enemy has finally been unmasked, and they are ready to take advantage of this extraction. In fact, they have a new boldness which has Kzeisza worried.

In the ongoing inter cultural exposure which is going on, the exchange of some necromantic lore provides a glance at the power of the object which serves rasha. Av, witnessing this again, but for the first time as we can recall, asks about it. Thus is the nature of the book of will revealed to her, and us.

Deeper, darker shadows-temptations becoming distractions

Kzeisza reading something in the wind. The op comes into question.

Crushing success of final dry run.

Shadows plaguing the waking and the dreaming.

Op called off-the danger of removing an important buffer.

Rumors and disappearances.

Sri and Kevin Zhan holding swat persecution of Av at bay.

Av submits to Kevin/Kzeisza embrace.

The attention of the devourer.

San loss-beauty and horror-reevaluations

Dragon dream invaded and splintered.

Unspoken agreement-Av/Kzeisza hunt down the malevolence.

Damning revelation-beauty and horror fascination.

A terrible stand still broken by Av.

Retreat and reevaluation.

Assets-confronting myth and paradox-choices

Av/rasha-a careless gesture.

Implications-confronting myth and paradox.

Bending to the task at hand-unspeakable influences and ways of dealing with them.

Androgyne-menage a troi, exploring an alternate exotic.

Empty solutions-first drops of bad blood-sabotage

Empty solutions-Av/rasha bind their slight keys to salvation.

Implementing their solution through a paf expidition.

Audience-Av sums up/weighs the enemy.

Sabatoge.

Kzeisza acts-bad blood seeps in.

Rook, ash, rasha and Av split up.

Av bids rasha farewell-expedition folds out.

Av handed a new first contact assignment-minimal support.

Unable to dredge an explanation out of Kzeisza.

Frontier routine again.

Stepping out-too much time to think-more and more on guard.

Attacked by advanced troop

Bloody resolution proceeds her proposal.

Escorted in-too familiar culture.

An audience (housed as a guest)-trading advice and admonitions.

Lord brandenfe

Lord agron

Bishop gavren

Duke quanryn

An official welcoming commitee-an unbalanced situation

Dinner invitation-audience (brandenfe, lord of the highfords) in angst.

Av gets centered, evaluates her impact on the locals, gears up for more negotiations.

Agron, lord of the lowfords-(hard eyes) explain yourself.

Approaching and enduring a summit-degenerates into other distractions.

Retiring late-sensing a trap-too much verbal fencing.

Negotiations-making decisions-pulling it together

Busy man-talks carried out over brandonfe's rounds-a man of harsh judgement (an execution and perhaps warning).

A college of arts-hints of intrigue (shadows).

Interview with the bishop-interrupted by agron and his men.

Report to Kzeisza-the grim picture.

Convince me-(i've been watching you since you first neared our lands-you can be neutralized) make it worth my while (or else).

Unraveling the web. Deducing the makeup of an assumed conspiracy.

Playing in their fugue.

Note of confiscation. Her bluff, calling their cards.

Get out-pressure peaks.

Advice-hope is not wholly lost.

Into the night-have you any notion of your doom?

Onslaught-dirk unmasked-Kzeisza rushes in.

Final confrontation-her rage comes out over love.

An inevitible duel-embracing the unknown.

Shattered-fate approaches followed by mystery.

Temptation whispers of things undreamed. In the mind, obscure in its labyrinthine folds, lurk untold mysteries and secrets. Or answers. Are there really dragons? Are there really gods? What do you do when you subconsciously have the power to make either real? When the subconscious mind merges with the conscious, a whole life-a whole world, can be created in an instant; so how can you find out what was real? Will you ever know who you really were? Only when the literal and metaphorical become entwined can dreams chance to become real. For two, to whom life has become almost a dream, an impossible opportunity has opened up the abyss of the unknowable mind. Apetite—desire, lures them in.

One wonders what lurks beneath a human face. She, a vibrant child of intuition. He, a timeless aparition of doubt. Once behind each others masks, they will know. The devourer and the amaranth. A dragon and a phoenix.