this is a revised blocking pool. all elements are provisional. these options for a pilot story and extended series were drawn from a complex pool of plots and circumstances. the pilot focuses on the events leading to her discovery of the angel within her. the series plot focuses on the escalation of the northern conflict and how it influenced morgan's past, from her conception, birth, and childhood prior to the massacre, through her childhood post trauma when she developed her foundation skills and abilities, to the events concluding her initiation that prompted her investigation of the ruins. there was always an imperative to have morgan born divided into male and female incarnations, assuming there was a way to avoid employing unusual circumstances of conception and birth. the solution was to bring a male incarnation from a splinter realm into the female incarnation’s realm via the rift.

these notes present a scenario in which the girl’s mother and the boy’s father survive the raid, making it easier to integrate with the avatars material.

morgan seemed a fairly normal girl, for the daughter of a muse. her parents, born into rival houses, were initiated together at the academy, where they were insulated from the religious and political conflict that made them enemies. the enlightened and unprejudiced teachings of the academy encouraged them to become tolerant and open-minded. as their intimacy grew, however, it was inevitable that they would discover each other’s heritage. the revelation of a common foundation for all forms of magic, in contradiction of a belief that played a part in the feud between their houses, helped them overcome the last remnants of their natural enmity. in spite of their differences, they remained intimate friends paired under a brilliant mentor who recognized their extraordinary compatibility. in defiance of their families’ objections, they became lovers and continued their training as companions under their mentor when he advanced to the rank of master.

the houses of dusk and dawn were founded to protect and defend the sanctuaries of the god and the goddess. once deeply allied, they became the ruling houses of rival nations bitterly divided over the role of men and women in society. this dispute eventually prompted the god and goddess to withdraw their support of the two monarchies and establish the neutral domain of avon. the autumn kingdoms became vulnerable to the intrusion of a new religion devoted to the worship of one god. when the houses fell in the purge, heirs from both houses were sent to avon to preserve the bloodlines. in spite of the fact that both houses were under persecution, pride and tradition prevented them from renewing their alliance. when the houses-in-exile turned their attention from surviving the purge to tearing down the new monarchy, the feud between them became more intense.

unfortunately, one of her mother’s rivals trapped her father in an unwanted marriage. after scheming to drive her parents apart, the woman seduced her father and became pregnant. in spite of being forced to marry the woman, her father could not give her mother up. to make their affair legitimate, her mother was forced to get a courtesan’s license and become a muse. at the time of her conception, morgan’s parents had joined forces with their mentor against a wizard, a man who had mastered conjury, demonology, necromancy and sorcery. their mentor, formerly a protégé of the wizard, was firmly opposed to the wizard’s radical and elitist views of psychic potential. in a climactic battle, morgan’s parents were forced to pool their psychic resources to survive a battle with their mentor’s nemesis. they were still bound deep in this rapport when they conceived morgan, immediately after the conflict.

as the daughter of a muse, morgan only knew her father as one of her mother’s many lovers. when her parents completed their companionship and turned twenty-seven, they became masters in the school founded by their mentor. perceiving the institution as a threat, the wizard sent a demon assassin to destroy the school. in the course of the crisis, the demon confronted morgan. her father was slain and replaced by a splinter incarnation during the massacre. her father’s wife was also killed in the attack. following the crisis, she became the protégé of her mother’s mentor. outside his private tutelage, she continued to learn from her parents, including mastery of her mother’s gymnastic fighting techniques and her father’s arsenal of weapons. her primary training as a psychic gave her certain advantages in learning what her parents could teach, but presented a serious obstacle to learning any kind of magic.

the demon took possession of her mother’s companion and she was forced to kill him, but in doing so she exposed herself to possession. the girl witnessed the change in her mother and fled into the depths of the ruins. the demon summoned its familiars and pursued. in the boy’s realm, it was his mother who caught the demon’s eye first, becoming possessed as her husband slaughtered its host. when confronted and caught by the demon, the boy opened a rift to escape from the psychic onslaught. his father struck the demon down and then followed his son through the rift. arriving on the spot where the girl’s father had been slain, the man set off in pursuit of the demon and its familiars, assuming that they were in pursuit of his son. the boy had arrived in their midst, but escaped in another direction during the confusion caused by the rift.

the sight of her mother falling under demonic possession drove morgan deep underground. the girl noticed the change in her mother right away, prompting the demon to eliminate her before she revealed its presence to anyone else. morgan escaped during the confusion and became lost in the depths of the ruins. grief-stricken terror ruled her mind until she passed out from exhaustion. when she awoke some time later, her eyes had adjusted to the pale, phosphorescent light. with no idea where to go or what to do, she simply wandered at first, exploring the ancient city. in spite of her recent trauma, she found herself marveling over how intact everything was. morgan soon discovered there were frightening things trapped in the city with her.

avon deep was a city of ghosts and other spirits; the former wandering freely and liable to follow her everywhere, the latter seemingly bound in place. most were undetectable until she passed through one or stepped into a warding circle and was violently assaulted. the demons were the worst. ghosts chilled her with their touch, taunting and terrifying her while violating her mind, but few were capable of molesting her, body and soul, the way demons did while she was in their spheres of influence. while struggling to defend herself from the demons' ruthless probing, morgan realized they were trying to break her in order to possess her body. her fear of becoming trapped with or possessed by one of these entities compounded and evolved into greater horror and desperation with each terrifying encounter.

the demon summoned its familiars and hunted the girl down. desperate to escape, the girl dove into an underground river and was sucked into a flooded channel. caught in the turbulent flow, she hit her head and lost consciousness. when the girl awoke, she was alone in a small cavern with her possessed mother. there was nothing she could do as the demon invaded her mind, probing the depths of her soul prior to ripping her out of her body. while the demon was probing her mind, morgan struggled to orient herself within the demon’s mind, finding and fighting to free her mother’s soul. she took possession of the demon, just in time to save her own life as well. only the regenerative powers the girl gained taking possession of the demon allowed her to survive the injuries she sustained while under torture. morgan’s mother could hardly believe she was still alive, staring in horror as the girl’s dismembered body pulled itself back together.

the legacy of her ordeal manifested itself when she confronted her mother’s mentor. the repeated psychic assaults she had endured had awakened her own psychic potential, forging it into natural telepathic and telekinetic abilities. she lashed out at him in a preemptive retaliation to his inquisitive telepathic probe. for a moment, he responded in kind, taking her hostility as a sign that she was possessed or a demon herself.

in her undisciplined attack, morgan had opened her mind to her opponent. a skilled master, her mother’s mentor had developed and trained his own psychic abilities well enough to read her while defending against her wild onslaught. he probed past her attacks into her wounded mind and concluded that she was the victim of a traumatic, psychic rape--an attempted demonic possession. as gently and skillfully as possible, he soothed her fears and coaxed her back to sanity. the chaos in her mind made it difficult for him to determine precisely what had happened to her during her abduction, but it was clear she witnessed too much death and endured repeated psychic assaults.

the man her mother had loved <the girl’s father> had been drugged and seduced by one of her mother’s rivals. a child was conceived and he was forced to marry the maiden. he continued his apprenticeship beside her mother, taking advantage of the moments of intimacy their training permitted. his wife knew he hated her for trapping him, so she tried to save their marriage by tolerating his ongoing affair. unfortunately, the girls’ grandmother used their relationship to force her mother to embrace her heritage and become a licensed courtesan. it allowed her to have a legitimate relationship with the man she loved, but forced her to accept contracts with other men. when morgan was conceived a few months after birth of the man’s second child, she knew he was the girl’s father but she was not allowed to identify him as such.

by the time the boy was reunited with his father, the rift they had come through had closed. his father took advantage of the death of his alternate to establish them in the girl’s world. the boy’s father confronted this world’s version of the woman who had seduced him into a forced marriage <the boy’s stepmother>. for the second time, he introduced the boy as a courtesan son. in the same way the father of a courtesan daughter was never identified, the identity of a courtesan son’s mother was also protected.

morgan and logan were traumatized by the ordeal that awakened their psychic potential. the pair met face to face for the first time as initiates at the academy. the two became intimate friends at school, utterly comfortable with each other. they were curious about their bodies and the differences between them and explored each other as shamelessly as they explored themselves. it was confusing and frustrating for them to be identical in every regard but sex, and puberty was especially hard on them. it widened the rift between them while creating a powerful, magnetic attraction neither could resist. until the thing that divided them became the thing that allowed them to unite in the most incredible way, causing them to become connected to each other more than to their individual selves. complimenting and completing each other, they were inseparable.

while lessons in conjury and sorcery were all very inspiring and enlightening, she seemed to have no proficiency for any of them. it somehow escaped her that the problem was not that it was difficult for her to learn; if anything it might have been too easy. what she perceived as the workings of magic seemed frighteningly powerful and intricate, impossibly difficult from her perspective as a psychic. she simply could not allow herself to entrust the process to her unconscious mind as the magic required. intimidated by magic, she also found herself somewhat intimidated by those who were proficient at using it. only the fact that her psychic perceptions gave her an edge in protecting herself from—and dispelling—magic allowed her to be confident in herself. morgan's calling allowed her to participate in training generally offered only to boys, a situation which stripped a girl of every shred of modesty—conveniently provoking the protective instincts of her fellow initiate, logan.

after an intense, initial rivalry, they became close, intimate friends, their partnership spiced by good-natured competition and uncanny chemistry. because of their compatibility, their mentor concluded they were soul mates, and they received special training to pool their resources. they were well matched, equally talented at getting into and out of tight scrapes, some mere mischief but often enough sobering misadventure. a penchant for exploration and exhibition caused them to become involved in the underworld, their identification with street orphans—being half orphaned themselves—combined with taunts and challenges they could not resist, or in some cases insults to morgan’s gender and ability, conspired to lure them, unwittingly at first, into cat burglary. once they got in over her head, in danger of being drawn into the shadows, logan compromised himself willingly in order to help morgan escape further exploitation. through his sacrifice, she was able to extract herself from her criminal career, but not before both had been marked.

the first class of psychics formed as logan and morgan turned thirteen, made up primarily of others their own age since puberty was one of the more common catalysts for manifesting psychic ability. logan and morgan, like the other initiates, were occasionally called on to help their mentors complete their mission, and occasionally the initiates were the only ones suited to a mission. as time passed, morgan’s unwitting preparation as the avatar of the goddess became an even greater priority. only her mother knew what she was to become, having seen her daughter in full possession of the angel as a personification of the goddess. the angel had explained what needed to be done, before retreating into the depths of morgan’s mind to allow her to grow up. to prevent morgan and logan from becoming too intimate, her mother and his father got married, turning them into step-siblings.

unfortunately, intimacy had come very easily to them, and it was already too late for them to see each other as brother and sister. as their initiation neared its end, their parents and grandparents were working on other ways to break them up. soon enough, the pair became first rank initiates facing the final year of training and testing. morgan’s mother drove home the message that intimacy could lead to marriage and that could cost morgan her independence. logan’s father simply matched him up with an endless string of potential mates.

key revision threads

morgan was recruited by her parents’ mentor and became involved in his work with the rift.

under her mother’s mentor, morgan would meet the man who would eventually become her lover.

drake’s interest in morgan developed naturally and he possessed the character necessary for her to become his lover, at the least.

when she was corrupted by the infections of a vampire and a were-tiger, morgan was courted by her sires, but defied them in her effort to retain her humanity.

as war erupted, morgan was called to the defense of ar doen.

the enemy cabal had gained the support of the exile.

the war began to heat up again, as the exile gathered the remains of his cult and the allies they had made.

morgan traveled back to the place where her nightmare had begun, hoping to find some clue as to the identity and whereabouts of the men responsible for the massacre that claimed her mother’s life, intending to track them down and confront them. she did not have the slightest suspicion that the enemies she sought would come to her, once she returned to confront the scene of her childhood nightmare. the demon read her intentions and set about arranging a trap. the demon had little concern for the men she sought, but they would serve to the demon’s needs. the demon was not surprised to find that the cabal had been massing legions of demons and undead in the vast, buried ruins of avon deep.

coming home to nightmares

late morning, port of avon - a girl disembarked from a ship and made her way to a hostel with a public bath.

the girl had been abroad for the commencement ceremonies at the academy in aeryn tear and returned determined to face the demons of her childhood and lay them to rest.

the largest port, and third largest city in arden, avon was also the gateway to the northwest kingdoms.

when house avon fell, the crown prince of the athelon empire was appointed regent and ever since the domain had been under the indirect rule of the empire.

at the hostel, the girl received a summons to visit her step-grandmother.

blacking out in the bath

a public bath - the girl indulged in a long, hot soak, almost forgetting she had appointments to keep.

the boy arrived, letting himself in and tracking her down as unsettled feelings deepened into alarm.

lack of sleep caught up to the girl in the bath, and her flight from nightmares caused a potentially fatal drowning accident.

to her utter mortification, the boy arrived in time to rescue her from drowning as she unconsciously wrestled with her personal demons.

awakening in his firm embrace, the pair of them utterly nude, the girl was reminded of the depths of her attraction to him.

pushing him away, she retreated from the bath to reflect on the most recent reminder of her purpose in returning to avon.

he pursued her, determined to make sure she was all right and demanding an explanation.

the girl was forced to restrain her temper and distracted him by commenting on his obvious arousal in the bath, and taunting him about the true nature of his interest.

family obligations, a marriage to restore a fallen house

in spite of her rebuttals, the boy stubbornly attached himself to her as her protector, insisting on escorting the girl to her appointment with her regent.

they were received together and forced to endure a strained breakfast party.

the girl was her mother’s only child, but had two sisters by marriage.

her step-father, a former mercenary turned officer in the avon guard, settled down and opened the orchard inn in avon lea when he retired.

he married her mother after the death of his first wife and supported her mother’s decision to send her to the academy, in spite of pressure from his mother-in-law to let her raise the girl as a courtesan.

the girl received some of that training anyway, as an adoted step-granddaughter, but having inherited her parents’ lust for adventure she aspired to become a knight companion of the academy.

during the meal, the girl was disturbed to learn of her betrothal.

her step-grandmother had arranged a marriage for her with the boy, the grandson of a former rival.

though she could not say it in front of him, she was in love with the boy.

if she had to marry anyone, she would want to marry him, but marrying anyone could tie her down.

the girl and the boy turned seventeen in midsummer, and faced trials in the fall to qualify for advanced training as companions.

the girl strained to convey her intentions to quickly dispose of claims and entanglements that would compromise her plans.

betrothal

undercurrents - the girl's mother had revealed her resurrection to her mother and explained the circumstances of her "death" and the conception of her child. she made the arrangements to establish a new identity for her daughter, at the same time filing proof of her granddaughter's paternity. the official, sealed, records contained a full account of the woman's possession by a demon, her transformation into a man while under its possession, the rape of the were-woman created as a part of that transfomation, and the conception of a child. the record included the birth of a living girl and a still-born boy, followed by the division of the were-woman, which restored the man to normal and reincarnate the soul of possessed woman recovered by the man when the demon was slain. by agreement with the head of the man's family, his mother, the girl's mother was reintroduced as the man's recently discovered "cousin" in exchange for the betrothal of the boy and the girl. the boy had been reintroduced as the man's son by an anonymous courtesan, making him the girl's second cousin--officially. the plan was to reveal the girl's true paternity, without mention of her mother's spiritul or biological origins, after the union. this would bring the houses of dusk and dawn together and serve to unite the phoenix house. to assist in this scheme, the girl's mother was instructed to marry her sister's widow. the girl might have heard about the disappearance of her step-grandmother’s daughter around the time of her conception, either from her step-family or from someone at the academy, but the facts came out in a way that raised no suspicion.

a test of nerve, visiting the underworld

an evening alone in her childhood home was relieved only by a visit from her mother.

the girl was descended from a long line of courtesans.

her mother had severed all ties to her past in a failed attempt to escape that calling.

the girl knew that her mother was initiated at the academy and that she had been forced to assume a new identity, sacrificing her training to start a new life when she became pregnant.

her mother had chosen to embrace her heritage and assume the mantle of a courtesan to legitimize her daughter.

plagued by nightmares and unable to return to sleep, the girl reflected upon recent events.

the next morning, the girl paid a visit to the ruins to test her nerve, pursued by the boy.

the temple of the goddess crested the ridge overlooking the port of avon and dividing the city of avon, with a commanding view of the aeslyn tear ruins to the north and the former seat of avon to the west.

the girl was stunned to hear his opinion of their engagement.

he had been upset by her reaction to the prospect of marrying him.

the girl attempted to restate her position, referring back to the start of intimacy in their relationship.

a trip underground, the first flashback

at the end of their eighth rank initiation, the girl lost her cool when her friends dragged her down into the ruins.

the girl stumbled upon the scene of her confrontation with one of the demons of her childhood where she panicked and fled, leading her friends deep into the maze.

forced to huddle together naked under their blankets to combat the cold, her friends joked that it was the first time they’d ever been with a girl, naked, and they were not even getting a good look at her.

the girl willingly indulged her friends' curiosity to escape from the horrors of her past.

a childhood trauma

as a child, the girl was psychically raped when she was seven years old.

the trauma of that, combined with witnessing the massacre, shattered her young psyche and awakened her psychic potential.

at the academy she received special training in the physical and mental disciplines necessary for her to control that power.

a blind spot

with the details of her childhood trauma blocked out, the true origin of the powers she manifested from time to time were a mystery to her.

each time the power manifested, the girl experienced blackouts followed by terrifying nightmares.

to harness her potential, the girl unconsciously tapped into the demon within her, so the use of her power brought her to the attention of other demons.

the demon, torn in half when the girl and the boy were split in the womb, had gone dormant after its brief arousal during the massacre, waiting for the girl to mature.

it discovered that it could influence her when she was aroused or during moments of stress or excitement—and even possess the girl when she was unconscious.

the blackouts and amnesia she suffered since were side effects of the demon’s intervention in her life.

a quest confided

in the year that followed, her nights became haunted by nightmares of her childhood trauma, and her days tormented by frightening blackouts and traumatic flashbacks.

the girl now felt compelled to discover what really happened to her, to unlock her psychic potential.

the nightmares featured disturbing images of a bloodbath and a near fatal fall into the depths of the ruins.

they climaxed with memories of the excruciating physical and mental mutilation she had endured as the demon probed her mind, trying to rip out her soul.

buried in those images of trauma was the memory of something inside her snapping and unfolding, to heal her flesh, to shield her mind, and destroy her demonic assailant.

in spite of her horror, she clung to the dreams searching for clues, signs, anything that would lead her to those responsible for the massacre.

they were the only leads she had.

a consequence of intimacy

the girl was a lover out of friendship and for fun, not speaking of love because even love could not alter her calling.

the girl would have to decide her true feelings, as part of putting her affairs in order, but sorting out her past still came first.

the girl and the boy reach an understanding, oblivious to the presence of an unearthly observer

the girl names her priorities, the couple makes an informal pact.

a family gathering

the girl accompanies the boy to a gathering of his family.

the girl talks with her prospective father-in-law and a few of his siblings.

the boy’s great aunt, reveals that her sister, the boy’s grandmother, was a bastard daughter of house of dusk.

born before her mother became a courtesan, the boy’s grandmother was considered illegitimate.

a coming out and a chance to probe the past

the girl's coming out is scheduled for her seventeenth birthday on midsummer's eve.

to her annoyance, preparations for the trials and her debut kept the girl busy until the week of midsummer.

a private celebration on the eve of her birthday is thrown into chaos by a tavern brawl.

questions lead to confrontations, shedding light on the family legacy.

the morning of her anniversary, the girl is infuriated to learn her debut would include a wedding announcement.

the girl circumvents her step-grandmother despite being tied up all day in preparations, calling upon the boy telepathically.

after welcoming the guests, the girl hunts down her step-grandmother, finding her engaged in an argument with her mother.

the girl’s debut provides a good place to begin her inquiry.

the girl interviews family and acquaintances at the party.

dancing, a glimpse of politics, intrigue and cues to tantalizing leads.

true to his word, the boy derails her step-grandmother's plot with the support of his father's father.

on the dance floor, the girl gains enlightenment on many matters from a string of different partners.

most people are eager to feed her curiosity about the exavation controversy, mentioning various scandals, affairs and involved parties

a handful of leads

under the guise of courtesy visits, the girl follows up on leads gathered during her debut.

the girl was well known for being the sole survivor of the massacre and that made some people more willing to talk to her.

among the people she sought out, there were a number of individuals notably opposed to the excavation of avon deep.

the girl needed to know if these objectors had reason to suspect the tragic outcome of the venture, which had revealed the existence of entombed demons from the age of gods by freeing several of them.

also, if they did know something, why had they failed to give sufficient warning?

a pair of funerals and a controversy

the girl learns that one of the guests that agreed to meet with her had died before she could respond to his invitation.

her step-mother’s advocate, provided a list of that contact’s known associates, but the most promising lead ends at another funeral.

funeral gossip gave the girl something new to investigate, a controversy surrounding the excavation of the ruins.

a number of wealthy or influential people opposed or objected to the excavation, representing much of the community.

many protests evolved into insults, resulting in duels or debates that tied everything up in court for lengthy arbitration.

probing the controversy

the girl visited the orchard inn to consult with her step-father and a retired member of the order of the ruins.

her dreams had helped her to remember some of the details of her abduction, but she needed to explore a different part of the ruins than the trials permitted in order to confirm those dreams and discover what really happened to her ten years earlier.

as a member of the guard, her step-father had been in a position to know of the academy’s petition to mount an excavation of avon deep.

the prince of avon was interested in learning the true extent of the underworld, and was inclined to offer his support.

however, the expedition was forstalled for many years.

when the excavation was finally approved, the first expedition made a terrifying discovery, stumbling upon and unleashing demons entombed in the depths.

this was believed to be the cause of the academy massacre.

the girl knew first-hand what the expedition into the ruins of aeslyn tear had unearthed.

it was a bit of a shock to learn that the academy unwittingly helped loose the horror of the massacre upon itself.

probing a bit deeper

the girl focused her attention on the individuals noted for their objections to the excavation of the ruins.

several people, unwilling to talk about the controversy, distracted the girl with conversation about a series of very recent deaths.

while pursuing other objectors in hopes of confronting them, the girl was confronted by a stranger curious about the purpose of her investigation.

his questions forced her to ask who could have backed the vocal objectors, and the obvious answer was the criminal underworld.

probing a bit too deep

her interest in the ruins—in particular, her determination to probe the truth behind the massacre—forced her to renew her ties to the underworld.

when the girl set out for avon intent on exploring the ruins of avon deep, she had known that immortals mingled with mortals in the underworld but they were not the ones she expected trouble from.

through childhood adventures and misadventures, she had acquired an unusual knowledge of the ruins of the underworld—known more commonly as avon deep—as well as skills more suited to a thief.

among those who lured her into crime, her unique mix of abilities suggested that she would make an exceptional spy or assassin.

only with great difficulty did the girl elude the designs of her mentor in crime and the desires of her underworld patron.

a string of disappointments

none she talked to would explain their reasons for discouraging the excavation project, but she suspected they were all representatives of the vampire and were communities.

her suspicions were confirmed when they were all murdered shortly after she talked to them, joining the list of those killed before she ever reached them.

stumbling onto a connection

all of the slain were identified as shape-shifter casualties, mauled vampire retainers or the remains of an occasional interrupted meal that was not properly disposed of.

the girl realized that her investigation linked her to the string of random deaths she had been hearing about, and she might be the only person to suspect that there was nothing random about it.

a mortal among the immortal

ironically, the girl had always found it easier than most to walk among the immortals because they often mistook her for one of them—one who was particularly skilled in posing as a human.

as a result of assuming the girl was posing as a human, any vampire or ware interacting with her among humans had been restricted to maintaining human appearances as a matter of form or etiquette.

probing a bit deeper

morgan seeks audience with associates of her parents and their liege. under the guise of courtesy visits, morgan follows up on leads gathered during her debut. moira, a great aunt, reveals that muriel was a bastard daughter of house avon, born to a courtesan not a concubine. morgan confides that balfour--a magistrate and former lover of muriel--died before she could respond to his invitation. morgan is stunned to learn alfred and muriel are half-brother and -sister, explaining the scandal her parents endured. a second lead fizzles due to the sudden or recent demise of a contact, but morgan perseveres. kern, the family advocate, reveals the truth about morgan's breeding and her grandmother's foiled plans for her mother. alvin, morgan's great-grandfather on both sides, is her nearest true half-elf relation--the controversial "lost heir". alfred provided a list of her mother’s associates--the most promising lead ends at a funeral for the friend and adversary. morgan is encouraged by word of an intrigue involving her parents around the time of their deaths. funeral gossip gave morgan something new to investigate, a controversy surrounding the excavation of the ruins. a number of wealthy or influential people opposed or objected to the excavation, representing much of the community. many protests evolved into insults, resulting in duels championed by her father or debates hosted by her mother.

anan opportunity to probe the past

morgan responded to an outstanding challenge to scout the ruins of avon deep. following protocol, she sought an audience with the duke of avon to gain a commission to explore the ruins. the sole survivor of the massacre that claimed the lives of her parents, she alone knew what the expedition into the ruins of avon deep had unearthed. it had taken ten years of training to master the powers unleashed within her that tragic night and fully comprehend the horror her parents unwittingly helped loose upon the world. armed with the mantle of a paladin of the goddess, morgan hoped to discover who her parents had been, find out why they had died and lay their ghosts to rest.

an objection raised and assurances given

asthe boy’s rival petitioned the prince of avon for a commission to conduct a full survey of the ruins of avon deep during the trials.

as it was a public audience, the petition caused a sensation, which resulted in an immediate summons before her grandmother and surrogate mother--her future mother-in-law. morgan took advantage of the summons to ditch her admirer. to satisfy their families, morgan asserted that her mission was geared toward reconciling the "breach" with her fiancé, logan, to fulfill their engagement.

the cabal

those who unleashed the demon were also behind the conflict between the weres and vampires of avon deep. setting the immortals against each other would make it easier to exploit the inhabitants of the underworld for their own purposes. the demon god simply took advantage of the situation to seize and conquer morgan.

an escalating crisis

morgan's blackouts, occurring with increasing frequency, were the result of the demon taking possession of her and using her to stir up conflict in the underworld, pitting weres against vampires. the demon god would assassinate individuals on one side setting up individuals on the other side to take the blame. it only took an occasional hit to keep escalating the feud. the demon god was setting morgan up for a confrontation with mason and hunter, a vampire created by her angel and a were created while it was a demon. mason and hunter had a history of friendly rivalry, working together to come into power and manage conflicts between vampires and weres. their investigation of the assassinations that started and fueled the conflict led mason and hunter to morgan, and there was little her angel could do to warn or protect morgan. mason and hunter confronted morgan, but they detected no sign of recognition, animosity or apprehension from her at all. there was no question that she was the assassin, but she did not betray herself in the slightest. they watched morgan carefully, becoming attached to her as they became more familiar. when they finally unmasked her as the assassin their hesitation allowed the demon to escape.

a kind of celebrity

the orchard inn - that evening, the rival was toasted by the survivors of past expeditions into the ruins.

the girl noticed her admirer was present again, watching her thoughtfully from across the room.

an underworld associate

she was distracted from him when a former "patron" approached unexpectedly to question her intentions.

this man had taken the girl and the boy under his wing when they were duped into committing crimes as children, and had remained an enigmatic influence in her life.

having learned of her intentions, he offered obscure warnings and advice.

not that he was alone in testing her determination to revisit the depths she miraculously navigated as a child.

a controversy revisited

the girl’s investigation had not gone unnoticed and many suspected she would be inclined to join the rival’s expedition, should it be commissioned.

among the survivors of expeditions into the ruins, a group that unofficially included the girl, she confronted questions about her intentions.

to the girl's annoyance, even they attempted to warn her off with word of increasing unrest and mysterious fatalities linked to the ruins.

trials

beginning with the massacre, academy trials in the ruins have served the purpose of testing initiates and containing the demons that continue to rise from the depths. the vampires and weres dwelling in avon deep were essentially placed there by the goddess to guard the tombs and deal with any demon that rose, but due to the academy expedition, the actions of the exile and the cabal’s plots, the problem has become a crisis. many vampires and weres have been dominated by risen demons in the service of the exile or his cabal allies. for this reason, the lords of the underworld have welcomed the trials, in spite of their silent, but well fronted opposition to the original excavation project, because the trials are mounted from avon lea far from their haunts under avon tear.

with the origin of the trials at avon lea established as a consequence of the academy massacre, the rival's intention to probe the ruins under avon tear, along with his efforts to recruit the girl as a guide, prompt his death mark. attempts by the girl's underworld "patron" to compell her to distance herself from the mark are mistaken for orders to assassinate him. for it's own reasons, the demon snatches his soul to prevent him from sleeping with the tomboy. a slight change, allowing the demon within the girl to exploit the intimacy between her and the boy to rouse its other half in him, allows it to strike from within the tomboy. she, in turn, is arrested and the girl is forced to use the ring to pose as the boy to visit her in prison. the demon within her blinds her to the flaws in her plan, trying to force her to try and break the ring's spell, giving it the opportunity it needs to steal her body. in the struggle, however, when the rift between the boy and girl is healed, the new and improved tomboy embraces the demon to free the soul of the mark, surrendering the boy's body in the process. the test for demonic influence finds instead that the girl possesses an angel of the goddess, identifying her as the new paladin of the—now silent—goddess. this entire sequence can be set before trials commence.

an objection raised and assurances given

an escalating crisis

those who unleashed the demons upon the academy were also behind the conflict between the weres and vampires of avon deep.

setting the immortals against made it easier to exploit the inhabitants of the underworld for their own purposes.

they would assassinate individuals on one side setting up individuals on the other side to take the blame.

it only took an occasional hit to keep escalating the feud.

the demon simply stumbled into the middle of things by taking advantage of opportunities to seize control of the girl and attracting the wrong kind of attention.

an unwitting conspirator

the girl's blackouts, occurring with increasing frequency, were the result of the demon taking possession of her.

the demon unwittingly set the girl up for a confrontation with a vampire it created when it was an angel and a were created while it was a demon.

the vampire and the were had a history of friendly rivalry, working together to come into power and manage conflicts between vampires and weres.

their investigation of the assassinations that started and fueled the conflict would lead them to the girl.

a summit to halt the escalating crisis

the girl received an invitation to a unique gathering, a kind of summit at which the vampires and weres intended to resolve their dispute before the conflict exposed them fully to the untamed human population.

with both groups present, in particular the leaders that had developed an interest in the girl, it was inevitable that they would question which side the girl was actually on.

the girl was not confronted directly, but she was the subject of an intense discussion in which it was determined that she was not truly one of them.

a demon sleeper-assassin

the vampire and the were confronted the girl, but they detected no sign of recognition, animosity or apprehension from her at all.

there was no question that she fit the description of one of the assassins, but she did not betray herself in the slightest.

they watched the girl carefully, becoming attached to her as they became more familiar.

when they finally “unmasked” her as an assassin, their hesitation allowed the demon to escape.

a potential adversary, the were tiger

a were-tiger meets with his subordinates, pointing out how the rival's intentions to delve into the ruins ran in direct conflict with the desires of vampires and weres to protect the existence--and gain control--of avon deep. their adversaries would move immediately to intercept him, when they received word of his formal commission. the rival was far from the first to stumble into this conflict. since before the massacre, the prince of avon had been committed to the excavation of the ruins, only to face constant frustrations as accidents and sabotage drove away all who were employed to unearth the lost city. there were a rare few who had delved into the ruins successfully, making their fortunes and reputations on their unique accomplishments.

a potential adversary, the vampire

evening, common room - a vampire studied the girl intently from the shadows.

interested parties, pursuing the prospect of adventure

over the course of the evening, random adventurers approached the girl, intent on determining the sincerity of her intent to probe the ruins. she was surprised when several men and women asked to accompany her on her mission for a share of the potential profits. her new companions probed for details about her past, the rumors about her abduction and escape from the ruins, revealing them as the reason they chose to throw in with her on this excursion. of particular note, her admirer, having been joined by a pair of very powerful looking men, continued to quietly observe the girl through the course of the night, listening to her private discussion, her response to those who sought to challenge or discourage her, and her statements to those who enquired about joining her. later that evening, when some arrogant sod attempted to molest the girl, they casually stepped into the ensuing brawl at her side. after the ruckus, the three drank with the girl, praising her courage and determination to venture into certain death. when the girl attempted to extricate herself, her admirer stopped her, forcing her to hear him out. having listened to the reports and rumors circulating in he wake of her commission to probe the ruins, they had concluded--like the others before them--that she offered the best chance for a successful expedition and offered to enlist their services. the girl had already taken on a decent number of men, and a few competent women, but having seen them fight, she decided they would be excellent additions to the party. she gave them the names of the other party members, as well as letters of commission they could use to provision themselves. the next day they were to assemble to discuss the details of the mission.

a couple of mercenaries

what the girl did not know about her two new recruits was that they were immortals. mason was a vampire and hunter 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. [details of their turning omitted] 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 avon deep for their people. no compromise was acceptable to their followers, and a blood feud followed. this was the situation the girl had unwittingly stumbled into. she had appeared just as the two leaders were struggling to minimize the conflict, pitting them in a personal rivalry reminiscent of their mortal conflict. the longer it went on, the more alarmed the greater mortal community became over the unexplained deaths.

a hidden agenda and a preemptive strike

unfortunately, some of the adventurers had joined the party specifically to ensure the mission's failure. the were-tiger met with a group of his subordinates and assigned them the task of eliminating her patron before the girl spoke to him again.

a deadly interest

a vampire stalked the girl undetected. a little discrete probing had revealed the fact that the girl was the survivor of a demonic attack or possession. he had waited for her to expose herself, but clearly she required more delicate handling. the arrangements were already made to introduce him to her party, however. all that remained were the sacrifices necessary to permit him to walk among mortals in the sun.

a string of disappointments

none she talked to would explain their reasons for discouraging the excavation project, but deeper probing would reveal that they were all representatives of the vampire and were communities. to gain morgan’s confidence, the rival immortals approached her with potential leads she could pursue above ground. posing as mercenary adventurers, they confided a few details they had picked up "in the employ of their current patron"--the story of a young girl's abduction arranged by their patron and carried out by mercenaries in his employ. the girl was eager to accept their help in confronting the man who might have the very answers she was looking for.

stumbling onto a connection

morgan was able to begin unraveling a web of intrigue that tied into a series of very recent deaths. her suspicions were aroused when she noticed that these same people were being murdered shortly after she talked to them or before she ever reached them. all of the slain quickly proved to be shape-shifter casualties, mauled vampire retainers or the remains of an occasional interrupted meal--prey that no predator lived long enough to properly dispose of.

a common thread in a series of random killings

once morgan connected the deaths of her contacts, she focused her attention on the remaining few noted for their objections to the excavation of the ruins. pursuing the objectors in hopes of confronting them, morgan is confronted again by the stranger, eden. in spite of the position she finds herself in, the girl presses the objectors in hopes of discovering their motives.

the girl receives no admissions and her attempt to provoke their confidence gets her ejected from the club. logan comments on the oddity of recent deaths, the most recent victim being an individual morgan just confronted. it took a few days to uncover another nest of conspirators and confront them, again with little success. logan.

a chance encounter raises the girl's hackles, presenting a possible, horrifying scenario for current events.

the boy confronts the girl about her activities, citing the danger represented by the latest reports of slayings.

recognizing the victim's name, the girl reconsiders the daily gossip on random killings in the port, city and countryside. suspicious, morgan checks her list of contacts with the authorities and discovers many of them among the slain. morgan suspects that conspiracy in the past could be linked to present conspiracy, and tests a disturbing hunch. a list outlining possible conspirators against the excavation encompasses the list of recent "random" fatalities. a chance encounter raises morgan's hackles, presenting a possible, horrifying scenario for current events.

a couple of rivals for her affections

there had been plenty of men determined to bed her, but outside of logan there were only two men--brothers or cousins, she was not sure which--who intrigued her. the problem was, they seemed to be fierce rivals long before they started competing for her attentions. up to this point, she had used their rivalry as her excuse for not favoring either of them.

a cat’s paw

the next time they confronted morgan she seemed as innocent and ignorant as ever. mason and hunter eliminated the possibility that she had a twin or look alike and probed morgan herself, eliciting her story of childhood abduction, her adoption and initiation, the details of her formal and informal training, and the blackouts and nightmares she suffered from as a result of what happened to her as a girl. it was clear to them that she had the training to be an assassin, but the blackouts suggested that she was someone's cat's paw. the only hope they had of unmasking their true enemy was to hold on to morgan, to break down her conditioning and confront her with how she was being used and hope she could lead them to or draw out her master. telling morgan that there was an assassin responsible for the mysterious deaths that had been occurring in the port and city and they had reason to believe she might be targeted for assassination. they presented a strong case, revealing that everyone who had been slain had been involved or held interests or investments in the exploration of the ruins. people were being killed because of something they might have seen or discovered in the ruins.

a person of interest

morgan had been the youngest person to enter the ruins and return alive, and her claim to remember virtually nothing of her ordeal implied she might be hiding valuable knowledge about the ruins or her experiences there. morgan initially refused their offer of protection, but mason and hunter were not the only ones to be dreaming up conspiracy theories, and other agents of the underworld targeted morgan for capture and interrogation.

an impulsive confrontation

night, a room, an apartment, a mansion - oblivious to the threat of sabotage, morgan found herself unable to sleep or lose herself in the embrace of her phantom lover. prompted by an uneasy premonition, morgan hunted lloyd down at once, determined to have a better explanation of his cryptic advice, and inadvertently helped save his life. his anger at her intrusion dissipated instantly when the assassins burst in on them.

an assassination attempt

morgan gets caught in the middle of an assassination attempt. when another contact she visited turns up dead, morgan races to confront the remaining few. as morgan recalled, the excavators discovered evidence of others penetrating the ruins--and considers the implications. arriving on the scene of another killing, morgan is vividly reminded of what demons were capable of. morgan reaches a conclusion about the course of the conspiracy and moves to intercede directly. outraged to have her offer of protection exploited for a seduction, morgan is poorly prepared to face his assassin. confronted by morgan's assumptions, lloyd accepts her offer of protection, treating it as a pretense for a liaison. as morgan takes advantage of his hospitality, he intrudes intend on taking advantage of her. the confrontation between morgan and lloyd is interrupted while the pair are in compromised positions. as the combat evolves, morgan learns of the ongoing conflict between the weres and vampires.

a bloody mess

the killings morgan was investigating were the result of a territorial dispute between the tiger clans and the prince of the city.

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.

like most people, the girl was unaware that the ruins were a held a highly coveted and disputed territory in the underworld.

as few mortals beyond the girl could attest, aeslyn tear, the city once smothered by the wrath of the gods, was far more extensive and surprisingly intact than anyone suspected.

it was a sprawling underground metropolis dwarfing the port and city and underlying the surrounding countryside.

the turf war between the were-tigers and the vampires was fought covertly, a deadly chess game of ambushes and assassinations in an ever mounting feud.

normal routines and habits became disrupted, producing a trail of bodies.

the girl checks her list of contacts with the authorities and discovers many of them among the slain.

the girl suspects that conspiracy in the past could be linked to present conspiracy, and tests a disturbing hunch.

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an underworld advocate and assistance with a price

the cloaked assailants proved to be immune to mortal wounds, prompting the girl to flee with lloyd to an obscure mansion. once they were secure, lloyd began to confide, among other things, that the duke was not the only one interested in exploiting the ruins. lloyd had a vested interest in keeping such expeditions from succeeding. while he sympathized with her purpose, he had his own interests to protect. in short, she needed his blessings if she wanted to succeed in her mission, and regrettably, his blessings did not come without a price. the girl had no choice but to proceed. without mincing words, she was led to another room and introduced to a man of startling youth and beauty. from him, she learned the first part of the price she must pay. the girl was instructed to steal maps and documents from the residence of a powerful merchant in the port. that man had been involved in planning, maybe even executing, the abduction of the girl and the boy a decade ago. she was instructed to strike in broad daylight, and to resist the temptation to confront this man on peril of her life. she was assured that the information she needed to accomplish her mission--with the crime lord's blessing--would be contained in what she stole.

an agent of the underworld, and a dangerous ally

to her dismay, lloyd informed her, as they leave, that the man she had just met had taken an uncommon interest in her, warning her that he was a very dangerous man to become intimately involved with. the girl thought she had picked that up clearly herself. she had noticed the enthralling quality the man possessed, and did not doubt that was as lethal as he was seductive. confident in the immunities granted to her by her psychic gifts, she assured lloyd that she had no interest in betraying her fiancé.

assembling an expedition into the underworld

making it to bed a couple hours before dawn, the girl slept through the morning. after a quick brunch, she met up with the people she recruited. the party consisted of her admirer from the bath and his two companions, a sorcerer accompanied by a pair she had not met before--a conjurer and a female cleric, an elf she knew personally and a drow. the tension in the group was obvious, but they all swore their personal differences would be resolved before the start of the mission. not entirely convinced, she left all of the arrangements for provisioning the party under the supervision of the one individual she was previously acquainted with and departed on an errand. the girl disappeared for a while to scope out the second story job she had been given.

a midday reconnaissance and a midnight raid

the girl’s investigations eventually led to the cabal’s agent in the port of avon. a quick survey of the target residence convinced her she could not follow the advice her new patron gave her. the closest she could manage was to strike at dusk, when the evening light provided her some cover. unfortunately, her reconnaissance had not gone unnoticed. nor had her tail. that evening, when she broke into the mansion, she was surprised by the ease of the caper. nothing went wrong until she made her escape. with frightening efficiency, the girl was stalked into a corner and confronted by a dozen mysterious figures. after swiftly disarming and overpowering her, they confer to identify her, the objects she had stolen and her publicly stated mission. for daring to probe into the mysteries of the ruins, they promised her a prolonged and gruesome death. ironically, some of the least trusted members of the party arrived and quickly proved their worth rescuing her from her assailants. the girl later cursed herself for falling into that trap, knowing she should have expected to find a cult of some sort associated with her offering to a demon. particularly since she had been clearly informed about the resident's involvement in the affair. on the other hand, the demon's secrets would be easier to discover if they were held in human hands or minds. no doubt, the demon she had faced was not the only demon these cultists consorted with. she could expect to face others of its ilk in the depths.

an offer reconsidered

following an intense string of encounters, the girl returned to mason and hunter, accepting their protection but demanding more of an explanation about what was going on. in response, the girl was introduced to the underworld and told of the war that had been instigated by assassins, and their theory that there was something of great value to someone hidden in the ruins and this someone was willing to slaughter the entire population of the underworld in order to obtain it. they told her that it was imperative for the girl to overcome her mental blocks in order for them to find out what that something was. grateful of the backup, despite concern about the risks--and uncertainty about some of her new compatriots--she remained committed.

a morning meeting

dawn—dusk, streets of avon, markets, port avon, another mansion - morning, day three : the sanctuary, temple of arden - the girl delivered the maps and documents to lloyd's agent at the temple of arden the next morning, after sleeping in once again. the girl was surprised to see him in such a sacred place, but he revealed that it was the only place where he was ever relieved of the burdens he bore, confiding that it was an excellent place to watch the sunrise. the temple of the goddess crested the ridge dividing the port and the city. after reviewing the paperwork, he slipped everything into a satchel and praised the girl on the success of her caper. the girl reminded him of their agreement, wanting to know if she had lloyd's blessings--after seeing him pack up the maps she allegedly needed. he reminded her that there was a price involved; that she must take him along as her guide and obey his instructions during the excursion. he assured her he was not attempting to assume the leadership of the party, but only controlling the paths they could take. with him in possession of the maps, she could hardly protest. she was just grateful that the price turned out to be something so innocuous.

an audience with the goddess

unfortunately, she was not done with ill omens. before she could depart from the temple she was summoned before the goddess arden, the patron of her people. such an audience was a rare honor, and one the girl had only once before. the girl and the boy had been so traumatized by their ordeal and the awakening of their psychic abilities, arden had been required to tend to them. in the present, arden expressed her dismay at the girl's intention to return to the ruins. she instantly detected the presence of the boy in the girl, however, and demanded an explanation. the girl briefly explained what happened to them. revealing her intentions to track down a rogue demon, and recover the boy's body, she received the goddess' blessings. even so, arden warned her that she was in great danger on this mission, that the consequences of this adventure could be a life altering as her two encounters with the demon that plagued her. advised to be wary of the men she enlisted, the girl could only sigh. that much had already been obvious to her.

an epiphany

from her own nightmares, the girl was able to discover the link between the current slayings and the massacre she had witnessed. her parents had been confronted with mounting animosity by the weres and vampires in a direct progression to their deaths in the ruins. it did not take much of a leap for the girl to realize that they were fighting for control over avon deep all along. the port and city of avon were known to harbor vampires, divided under the rule of two vampire princes, while the villages and countryside were both haven and hunting grounds for shape-shifter clans headed and protected by the tiger clan--tigers being the fiercest natural predators of the north. the girl knew better than most that the underworld was a battleground. the wars were normally fought covertly, a deadly chess game of ambushes and assassinations in an endless feud over territory. something had escalated the conflict, producing a trail of bodies.

the expedition begins

dawn, the north road, manor - with the hope that the last obstacle had presented itself, the girl embarked upon her mission at the first opportunity. at dawn the next day, the entire party was assembled and the last of their preparations checked. introductions were made all around, to accommodate their new guide, and not surprisingly tensions remained strained between the men of the group--and in a different way between the men and the women as well. amazingly, they all managed to differ to her despite their posturing and animosity. not for the first time, the girl sensed that some of the men might have more than a passing interest in her.

an unpleasant encounter

on the way to the ruins, the party had an unpleasant encounter with a band of brigands. caught off guard while establishing camp the first evening, the brigands were able to fall on the party while it was split up, and threaten them with superior numbers. after informing them of the party's lack of funds, hoping to discourage them, the brigands reveal that they were being paid enough just to ensure the party's demise, rambling on to propose the seizure of the party's equipment and women as a bonus for their trouble. slaughter ensued, with the brigands’ numbers being reduced to nine before they retreated in rout. in the mayhem, the party's guide succeeds in confirming his reputation as an assassin, and the drow shows a similar proficiency.

attempts to probe the past

for the first few days, they simply took the girl to a number of different places, above and below, where they asked all sorts of odd questions. had she been there before? did she remember anything about anyone or anything in particular associated with each location? it alarmed her because she had dreams, nightmares set in those places, many of which she had never visited before in person. when she confided this, they asked her if there were other places she visited in her dreams that stood out in her mind. mason and hunter were able to most of the places she described to them within the ruins. to her horror, she was informed later that the places she had been taken by hunter and mason were places where the assassin struck. the other places she identified marked a path into the depths of the ruins, a path leading to her worst nightmare.

arriving in the ruins

apart from that excitement, the first leg of the expedition was calm enough, as they entered the ruins on the third morning and proceeded directly to the manor through which the girl once exited the ruins' depths. before evening, the party managed to complete a full reconnaissance of the manor, acquiring a few small treasures and artifacts and confronting a pack of lycanthropes--as identified rather venomously by some of the men. those men became upset when the girl stopped to parlay with them, rejecting their suggestion to wipe out the nest. when the guide and cleric scolded her for risking infection, the girl confided the secret of her immunity. through the night, they were tested by the denizens of the deep that emerged to haunt the ruins by the light of the moon.

into the deep

day five—seven : foundations, catacombs, avon deep - the next day, they descended into the foundations of the manor, discovering the bones of the keep that once stood in its place. they stumbled across and eliminated a nest of vampires before venturing down into the catacombs linking the surface to the buried city.

a critical member of the expedition goes missing

on their third day in avon deep, their guide mysteriously vanished on them. a quick search of the area turned up no pitfalls that might have claimed him. angry that he would abandon them, the girl retraced her path from memory, seeking out the place where she was to have been sacrificed. the closer she got, the sharper her memory of the traumatic events became, until she found the site of the ritual. her companions had taken note of the broken and shattered wards as they crossed their thresholds, and retreated to a safer location, forcing the girl to be separated from the party. her memory returned when they reached the demon god's crypt. at ground zero, the girl relived the final moments of the ordeal she shared with the boy and realized that the fury of their struggles against demonic possession, when their powers first awakened and were untamed, had been responsible for shattering the mystical prison. the horrible suspicion crystallized, a host of demons had been entombed in the city during the war of the gods, and she had unwittingly set them loose upon the world.

a disturbing revelation

as hunter and mason studied the wards and inscriptions and related their meaning to the girl, she relived her abduction and sacrifice--her helplessness as the demon devoured her soul and body after raping her mind, her fury as the demon used her to resurrect itself in her image, her triumph as she overwhelmed the demon and seized control of her body. the horror of her merciless assault upon the men who abducted and tortured her also returned. the march of death as she made her way back to the surface only added to the terrible burden of guilt that caused her to reject the memory of what she had done. but then, after she retraced her steps, the memory of all the assassinations she had performed at the goading of that taunting inner voice came back too. she had rejected the part of herself that had been aroused by her pain and suffering, and now feared that it had been used by the demon, exploited to serve its will.

a confrontation and an unlikely excuse

the girl returned to inform the party that the danger was long past, any demons freed here escaped a decade ago. not surprisingly, the group had kept busy while she was away. a wealth of sacred and holy relics of the age of the gods was added to the other artifacts gathered along the way, and the party moved that it was time to depart. the girl vetoed the suggestion, insisting she must study the area she once disturbed and find out what demons were unleashed in order to be able to hunt them down. the guide showed up unexpectedly, angry at the girl for continuing on her own against their agreement. she did not spare him her anger at wordlessly abandoning them. when he explained that he had no choice in the matter, wasting no time to lead a dragon away from the party before it could slaughter them, the girl was not impressed. while dragons had not faded into myth, they were certainly extinct! the girl relieved him of the maps, leaving him under guard with the party as she returned to conclude her investigation.

a demon crypt

evening, day seven : demon crypts - a desperate search eventually turned up a single demon, still bound by protective wards. this demon was the only clue the girl had about the demons that escaped, and the rogue who stole the boy's flesh. the demon tempted her with a number of appeals, before the girl recognized and employed one of the artifacts she found to trap and bind the demon to her service.

a treacherous turn

the girl was not surprised to emerge from the demon crypts (where none of her party dared to accompany her) only to discover that part of the group had abandoned the rest with the bulk of the treasure. the surprise was that the real traitor was not the one she had been expecting. with her remaining allies, the girl set out to return to the surface. on the way, a disturbance led them to discover that the party traitors had taken a wrong turn, stumbling across and releasing another demon. in spite of their betrayal, the girl could not leave them to their fate. she handed over the map she had confiscated to her admirer, the most trusted of the remaining group, instructing him to lead the others out to safety, then went to the aid of the traitors.

a bitter rescue and a confrontation

night, day seven - not surprisingly, when the girl engaged the demon, the traitors used the distraction to flee. after a difficult battle, where she was unexpectedly joined by the guide and her admirer, the girl managed to slay the demon. the two men confronted each other, in a tense discussion concerning the girl's quest and the consequences of this disturbance, while the girl started to track down the deserters. the girl was quickly joined by the two men, who insisted on escorting her and explaining why they had accompanied her into avon deep.

into the heart of the underworld

to her shock, their path led her to what seems to be a thriving community amid the ruins. as few mortals beyond the girl could attest, avon deep, the city once smothered by the wrath of the gods, was far more extensive and surprisingly intact than anyone suspected. it was a sprawling underground metropolis dwarfing the port and city and underlying the surrounding countryside. those she had been tracking had already been "welcomed" by the denizens of the deep, and detained indefinitely as guests.

a tense and tenuous situation

an obvious tension between two populations, clearly reflected in the two men flanking the girl, was explained as the result of an ongoing territorial dispute. two different groups had seen the buried city as the ideal place to establish their own communities suited to their lifestyles and beliefs, and the girl's two rescuers were the leaders of the two groups. under most circumstances, a mission like hers would have never gotten off of the ground. however, living here gave them an appreciation of the danger the demons entombed here represented. when released, they were a danger to all. as each leader learned of the true purpose of her mission, to hunt down one of those demons, each decided to accompany her and see to it that she did not stumble across their people. having both enlisted under her, however, they were forced into a state of truce at a time when they had needed to break the cycle of retaliation. each had sent word to their people to have them assembled together for a type of summit. having seen the party stragglers flee into the restricted area, and having seen the lengths the girl would go to in order to preserve them, they had been forced, finally, to reveal themselves to her. to confront her with the ultimate price of her discovery, to remain a prisoner among them, or to regain her liberty as one of them.

a celebration of truce and initiation

evening, day nine - initially, neither the girl nor her remaining companions recognized the true nature of the inhabitants. after a significant time kept under lock and guard, while the leaders of the two tribes engaged in their negotiations, they were brought out to participate in a celebration. part of the celebration was in honor of the demon slaying, part in honor of the upcoming initiation of the girl and her companions. when asked, the two men confided that a tentative agreement had been reached between the leaders to settle their dispute. the girl reprimanded herself for stumbling into the middle of a war over avon deep.

an object of rival interest and seduction

over the course of the celebration, the remainder of her party split up for private entertainments with the locals leaving the girl alone with the two leaders. the conversation was difficult to follow at times, such as when the girl asked what was happening to her compatriots and she was told they had found their sponsors and were being initiated into their new tribes. in her own case, she was told--tongue in cheek--that she would be choosing her own tribe, since both tribes had chosen her. as the pair tried to seduce her, the girl gained her first glimpse of the situation as the two men argued over which of them had the right to "take" her first.

a confirmation of the worst

the girl realized that hunter and mason had known she was the assassin, that their offer of protection and plea for her help had been a ruse to make her put herself in their power. she confronted them with this realization, when they confronted her about the visit to the crypt. they admitted their suspicions, explaining that they had spared her upon discovering she was being used, hoping she could help them identify their true enemy. the girl told them about her childhood ordeal, the demon within was their enemy, using her, using them and their kind to gain possession of the ruins. sensing no escape, the demon finally declared itself, stating that only death could force the demon out of the girl. the same desire and affection for the girl that had caused the rivals to hesitate when they unmasked the demon god should have prevented them from sacrificing her to slay the demon.

a fatal compromise

as the details came into focus, the two leaders became concerned that she might be the host of the demon that had forced them to participate in the massacre. if she was, she could not be turned by either of them; trying would only bring the demon to the surface. the problem was, if she was not, she would be turned—and they both wanted her. of course, neither of them wanted to rouse the demon. if they both tried to turn her at the same time, it might destroy the demon; it would certainly destroy her. it took a while for them to agree that it was better to sacrifice her and do away with the demon than risk falling under its control again. what she heard of their argument made no sense to the girl, until they reached a sudden agreement that disturbed her. the girl found the situation particularly ridiculous and frustrating when she realized that she had become the focus of a wager. that her presence had increased the stakes of the contest the vampire and were-tiger were engaged in. the girl was hardly delighted by this, but she had also heard clearly as they both revealed the fate of any human caught trespassing in this little underworld, and understood that her options were severely limited. what she had not grasped was their intention 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. with an odd look they decide to "share" her and proceed to kiss and caress her together. before the girl could resist the attention, the pair of them sank their fangs into her.

a deadly ordeal

secretly, they both hoped that she was strong enough to survive a dual infection long enough for one to overwhelm the other. when they realized they had the same hope, they came up with the notion of wagering dominion over avon deep on the conquest of the girl. they lulled her into a position where they could infect her simultaneously, and then waited to see which way she turned, thus indicating which of them would possess the girl and avon deep. assuming the process was inevitable, they withdrew to await the outcome, abandoning her to her ordeal.

all or nothing

her mind was invaded with thoughts and images from both of them, rehashing their earlier debate in disturbing flashes. after fighting at her side, the two men had finally recognized that their respective interest in her was great enough to endanger the truce under which they had been negotiating an end to the war. ironically, their dispute over her suggested a way to settle the conflict. because of her psychic abilities, the girl possessed a degree of immunity to vampire or were infection, but if her system was overtaxed by joint infections--normally a fatal proposition--there was a fair chance that she might be overwhelmed and thus be turned by one of them. the girl fell into their trap, helpless as her body and soul became the battleground to determine the outcome of the were-vampire war.

the brink of death

to speed her transformation, she was bled to the brink of death while receiving their corrupting kisses, the venomous bites of the vampire and the were. because weres and vampires were immune to each others 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.

a prayer to the goddess

night, day nine - day twelve—day twenty - following her infection, the girl was locked away to suffer through the transformation that would claim her. the girl was contacted mentally by the demon in her ring, tempted by it as she lay dying. 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. at some point during her molestation, she had blacked out, and on awakening she was not clear on what exactly happened to her. her assumption was that both men had been vampires, and they had been arguing over the right to sire her. this belief made her confident her powers would resist the infection, so she concentrated on making her escape.

a miraculous recovery

at first it seemed that the girl had fought off both infections, unaware that her system had been forced to assimilate the infections to prevent their combined effect from annihilating her. her sires were sensitive to the subtle changes afflicting her, her conversion proving slow but inevitable. faced with this unexpected result, the girl remains the focus of the wager for avon deep--the sire to conquer her conquers all. 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. their initial assumptions had not supported the possibility of the girl becoming a hybrid. 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. playing along with her belief that she had resisted their corruption, the sires treated her as the slave her other option allowed her to be. in that way, she was introduced to the vampire and were communities. she possessed a kind of status, as the symbol of victory to either side. the subjects of her sires possessed a role of their own in her seduction, embodying the community the girl would be joining when she submitted to one of her sires. through observation, she was introduced to the customs of vampires and weres, their culture, their society, their justice. she was also made conscious of what her fate was to be if she rejected both of her suitors. her choice was a favored existence under a powerful patron as a pet, or endless abuse at the hands of anonymous predators seeking to sate their inhuman appetites. the girl was hardly surprised to find herself too sickened by it all to eat. it took her some time to realize that the food itself made her sick, when her body proved it would only tolerate water, the rarest meat, and the merest traces of anything else. when the nausea passed, and she found herself able to eat again, she was disturbed to discover it would not satisfy her hunger.

a slow turn

to an observer, the girl seemed to succumb, bit by bit, to both infections, as if her resources were divided, slowing both infections and giving her system time to assimilate each. unfortunately, the girl was the observer to her own transformation, and she was horrified by what she was becoming. she feared she would ultimately succumb to the powers and appetites of her sires. one way or the other, she anticipated her demise, if she failed to fight off, or be cured of, these infections. more than once, she was startled by the way the infections overlapped and merged. her sires, observing from a certain distance, were also startled by the progress of her initiation and drew closer. this catalytic effect enabled her to encompass the full potential of a were-tiger and a vampire, for a price. to manifest the powers of either, she also became subject to most of their limitations. at the same time, it also greatly enhanced the unique abilities she possessed.

an ordeal of insatiable hunger and unquenchable thirst

the girl was stunned to discover what her sires had both already realized, as the hunger seized her. aware that the greatest danger now was feeding, for if she did it would no longer be possible to cure her of vampirism, the girl resisted the temptations presented to her. but as the hunger continued to grow, she transformed into a tiger, proving that she had been turned simultaneously into a blood-drinker and a man-eater. she did not know if the same rules applied to were infections as vampire infections, but the change alerted her to the fact that she had run out of time. she had to escape and reach help before the hunger drove her to feed.

a desperate escape

her new form aided her escape, however, and she did not hesitate to exploit it. guessing her remaining companions had been turned or slain, she did not concern herself with their fate. the last time she came to their rescue, they left her in the lurch. that was their last chance from her. without the extra baggage, the girl was able to make her escape and return to the surface. all the way, she could feel the strain on her system from the infection. emerging into daylight, she was disturbed to discover a painful sensitivity to sunlight. the shock and agony triggered a transformation back to her normal form. the occurrence also made her aware of the improvement of her regenerative abilities, as the burns healed before her eyes. according to her training, a vampire only regenerated from burns at a normal human rate, if with inhuman perfection over time. her rapid healing had to be due to her own ability or came from also being a were. which was supposed to be impossible. not that she cared, since all she wanted was to be cured of being either. there was only one place she could even appeal for that kind of aid, and technically, she had no need to go to the temple to seek it. forced to wait out the day in the ruins, she prayed to the goddess, opening her mind for true communion.

a desperate plea

morning—evening, day twenty - to her relief, the goddess deigned to respond to her supplication, and the girl explained her situation, how she had been bitten by the pair and her fear that it would overcome her immunity. the goddess advised her on what to do to prevent the change from becoming permanent if it took full hold. she assured the girl that she could cure her if she had done not succumb to the thirst first.

a band of brigands

as night fell, the girl realized she would be hard pressed to resist the growing hunger and thirst, not sure if it was caused by the drain of fighting the infection, or if the change was complete. she had no idea how long it would take for the infections to completely overwhelm her immunity. she had to make haste and avoid all distractions in reaching the temple. unfortunately, distractions did not avoid her. as she raced along, still naked after reverting to human form, she caught the attention of a band of brigands. the highwaymen pursued her, and eventually cut her off.

a blood bath

midnight, day twenty - the girl was stunned. she had come this far, only to be gang raped by a rag-tag band of thieves. she was not going to let that happen! naked and alone, she was still armed and dangerous. she tore into her assailants, astonished by the rush that seized her, turning her bare handed onslaught into a blood bath, and once that blood splashed her, the instincts of what she was becoming took hold. what happened next was a blur, as the girl lashed out passionately, her body changing into something even more lethal, and an appetite for raw flesh and blood consumed her.

a moment of clarity

it was much later that she regained her senses to confront what she had done. the pleasure and satisfaction of sated hungers was unmistakable, as were the remains of her feeding. whatever she had become, it was worse than she could have imagined. images of what she had been and done started to trickle back into her brain, and the horror caused the girl to flee the scene. the girl confronted what she had become and without so much as thinking of it, set out to expose herself to the dawn. dwelling on the seductiveness of human prey, unaware of having already made a decision, she became absorbed in an internal debate over the need to end her unnatural existence before she damned herself by succumbing to it.

dawn

dawn, day twenty-one - she had no idea where she was going or what her intentions were until the goddess suddenly appeared to confront her. once questioned, the girl realized she had sought out a place where the sun would find her instantly, and from where she could not reach any shelter before its light consumed her. her conscience, gibbering and shattered, was driving her to her death, to absolute atonement. upon reflection, she decided it was for the best. 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. she was too honest to deny that, if she did not end her unearthly existence immediately, she would be tempted by her hungers again, and having submitted once, there was no salvation. to go on would inevitably mean surrendering to what she had become. the goddess could not talk her out of it, nor could the boy. unable to sway her, they waited with her as she waited for the sun. when dawn broke, the pain overwhelmed the girl in seconds, and then she began to burn. oddly, the flame did not consume her or else her flesh was renewing itself as swiftly as the fire ate at her. it was as if the light pouring into her turned into power and that power fed itself into regeneration, rallying her psychic defenses, allowing her to assimilate the vampire and were venom.

confronted by dawn

the girl was confronted by her goddess when she attempted to expose herself to the sun. whatever hope she had of accepting her transformation into a vampire were-tiger were dashed that night, when she succumbed to the hungers that suddenly drove her during her escape from her sires. in spite of the fact that the brigands that ambushed and attempted to rape her deserved their bloody demise, it was the loss of her humanity as she was feeding that drove her to commit suicide. even the thought of avenging herself on her sires for what they had done to her was flushed from her mind by the fear that confronting them would only hasten her corruption. besides, given what they were, their actions were perfectly reasonable compared to the fact that her goddess had spoken through the girl, perhaps in an effort to prevent them from slaying her outright, inspiring the feuding immortals to wager the outcome of their feud on the result of an attempt to turn the girl into one of their own. rationally, the dual infection should have resulted in certain and unpleasant death, but her sires had confided, after her resurrection as both vampire and were, that the goddess must have suspected that the girl would survive the ordeal when she goaded them into making the wager. any attempt, then, to avenge herself on the true author of her damnation could only be more damning. the only salvation the girl could hope for was to destroy herself while she still possessed enough humanity to see the necessity. yet her goddess begged her to reconsider, to return to the temple for new instruction that would change the girl's opinion about what she had become. the girl refused to listen, facing the horizon and fighting the instinct to flee from the pre-dawn light. her mind tried to comprehend the meaning of arden's warning, that she was not ready to discover the truth. even more frightening, as the sun emerged from the ocean, was arden's sorrowful apology that neither of them could revoke the promises they had made to each other--a reminder of the girl's promise to serve the goddess, and her promise to protect the girl.

it will be dawn soon.

i can't remember the last time i watched the sun rise.

you don't have enough time. i was afraid you would not make it. if we hurry, there's still time to reach shelter.

it doesn't matter anymore.

i understand this was a difficult time for you, but i promised i would help you. and i will, but you have to work with me, morgan.

you don't understand. it's already too late.

don't be so pessimistic. put this on.

i am not going to need it.

morgan.

what? don't tell me i need to explain it to you. you must have seen. you have to know it's already too late.

it's never too late.

no. i thought, maybe… i mean, why wouldn't you forgive me? it's your fault after all. what, you didn't think they wouldn't tell me, did you?

morgan, if i had not intervened, they would have killed you outright.

they killed me anyway. now, i am damned as well as dead.

those men deserved to die.

this isn't about them.

i know what this was about.

then you know why i have to do this.

i know you think that.

it is my purpose to destroy monsters when i find them. that is the purpose you gave me, the purpose i was raised and trained for.

this is not the time, morgan. you have so much yet to learn.

they were right.

what?

you knew this was going to happen. you wanted this to happen.

my reasons are my own. i do not need to explain myself to you. nor is it necessary for me to ask you to come. as a courtesy, i am not ordering you to return to the sanctuary.

what good is courtesy after you betrayed me?

you speak as if i have forsaken you.

you speak as if there is still salvation. you speak as if i had not forfeited my humanity.

you sound human enough.

for the moment.

what happened to you…

stop it. there is nothing natural about what i did. i fed on them. i devoured their flesh. there wasn't anything human about me when i did that. i thrilled in it, i enjoyed it. i hunger to do it again. i can't even understand how i survived that. the thought, the memory… it's so obscene i want to tear myself to pieces. i can never allow it to happen again.

you can overcome these impulses. i told you…

before, i could agree with you. when i was innocent, the hunger was terrifying. i could have fought it, you could have helped me. but now, there is no chance. i've tasted it. i know what i am, now. i have only one choice, now. i have to destroy it before it destroys me.

there are better ways.

i can't take the chance. it is taking everything i've got to just stand here! i don't know if i could do it tomorrow!

so.

so. why are you even fighting me on this?

the promises binding us to each other are irrevocable.

if that is true, you have a strange notion of what it means to protect someone.

no stranger than your notion of what it means to serve.

why are you making this harder than it already is?

that is not my intention. i only want to spare you unnecessary suffering.

then let me end this, while i can. while i can still see the necessity.

your integrity is admirable. i have to respect that.

then you are done? you are not going to interfere?

i do not think you are ready for the truth, but i can not prevent you from confronting it. i just wish you had allowed me time to prepare you for it.

the truth? what are you talking about?

it is too late. just remember, i tried to make it easy for you.

the sun is seconds away! how can you be cryptic at a time like this!?

there's no time like the present.

just tell me what you mean!

and now, there is no time.

arden!!!

and so it begins.

an unexpected awakening

morgan was surprised to awaken at mid-morning, the trauma of her resurrection shed instantly in the realization that she was truly alive. in the moment of realization, she spots evidence of the previous night and concluded that the memory of her ordeal was not some nightmare. examining the weapon in her hands, she confronts the sacrifice she had made in growing horror. twice she had cheated death, each time at an increasingly terrible price her conscience could not accept. her goddess might have purged her body of contamination, but the corruption of her soul weighed even heavier upon her mortal mind. she was guilty of murder and cannibalism, for which crimes she ought to be condemned to death. as a paladin, she could not deny this, nor could she deny the temptation to ignore her conscience and embrace her resurrection. it was as hard to resist as immortality, and possibly even more damning. the only encouraging thought was that mortality could be sacrificed with far less pain and trauma than she had suffered at dawn. as she moved to spit herself on the brigand's sword, a maiden of the goddess entered to check on her and raised an alarm. in haste, she awkwardly thrust the blade through her heart, collapsing in shock as death clawed at her brain. the last thing she was aware of was the hand of her goddess prying her fingers from the hilt and taking hold to withdraw the blade. when she woke moments later, she could feel the wound knitting closed and vitality returning to her rapidly. crying out against this healing, cursing herself inwardly for attempting such a thing in the midst of a temple of healing--among other things--the goddess retorts that no one could go through what morgan had without their natural abilities becoming enhanced. in truth, morgan had always had amazing powers of regeneration. they were what had allowed her to survive the dual corruption of were and vampire venom. she also knew she gained that ability as the result of a terrible childhood trauma. she should have known her power might increase in response to dying twice. what she had done not know was if this evolution of her own power might grant as real an immortality as the powers that had been purged from her.

will these nightmares never end?

…

it wasn't a dream.

oh, you're awake. let me fetch you a robe. oh, goddess! what are you doing!? quick, someone! help!

what's going on?

send for a healer! she's impaled herself!

goddess!

oh, morgan. why are you doing this to yourself? [book break]

i need to die. can't you see that?

i see nothing of the sort.

why? you know what i did. do you think you can resurrect me and my crimes will just vanish!?

no.

they why did you?

it was not i who healed you, morgan.

what?

think of the powers you gained as a child, morgan. did you imagine you could endure even greater trauma and not gain more potent powers?

you can't be…

oh, i am quite serious.

i don't understand.

i know. nor can i truly explain it to you.

this doesn't change anything.

i was afraid you would think that.

is… is this what you were hoping for?

you want to know why i suggested it.

they told me i should have died. they never expected me to survive… but you did.

you want to know why you did survive. i meant to explain what happened to you, i was ready to show you the truth about what you became. now we are well past that. now there are no easy answers.

tell me what you can, then.

you should already know part of it. there is a great deal of truth about the legends concerning the origin of weres and vampires. because of the power you possessed, neither alone could have turned you. your own gifts would have allowed you to fight off the infection. acting together, your sires forced you to divide your resources in order to survive.

i did not survive, though.

no one does, technically. death is part of the change for both weres and vampires. to put it properly, you were not destroyed in the process. their venom is equally potent and mutually exclusive. a single drop of either venom would incapacitate human prey. it takes at least a pint of venom to turn a human into a full were or vampire. now, a small dose of mixed venom is terribly lethal. the amount of venom that mixed in your blood should have produced enough poison to kill an entire nation. you should have been destroyed before the transformation process could even begin.

that can't be right. it took days for the bites to begin taking effect.

why do you think that was so?

the venom did not mix in my blood?

that would protect you from the worst effect, but how do you think that could have been managed?

i don't know. my body heals itself automatically.

regeneration. it was the one power common to vampires and weres, morgan. a power you already possessed.

and that is why it has become so much stronger?

just so.

strong enough to purge the infections from my body?

strong enough to do even more than that. now do you understand why i asked you to wait?

but, it still doesn't change anything.

a taste of immortality

morgan ends up confined to her quarters under a deathwatch after proving her determination to kill herself. it took very little time for her ingenuity at exploiting the fatal properties of any object she got her hands on to force her wardens to strip morgan and her room entirely bare. even naked, she was far from harmless, especially since the increase in her strength and power mandated her guards and chaperones be formidable men, lest she easily overpower her wardens and escape. unable to subdue them, she resorted to seducing them, thinking to earn the displeasure of the goddess by breaking her vow of celibacy. the poor men could hardly be blamed for succumbing to her advances, of course. even a dead man would have found it difficult to refuse her, as she had already learned. ironically, her rebellious indulgence also served to prove that there was so much to live for, making her intentions even more bitter. the problem remained figuring out a way to end her life and then finding an opportunity to execute each method she devised. she attempted to drown herself during her bath, and later wove the stuffing of her sleeping pallet into a rope to hang herself. the drowning had done not work, and the rope took time to braid. by the time she was ready to hang herself, arden's patience had been exhausted. the goddess intruded just as morgan was preparing the rope, confronting morgan for their least civil conversation to date. even as arden forgave morgan's indiscretions and appealed to the girl to remember her obligations, morgan slipped the noose around her neck and kicked away the stool she perched on. to morgan's horror, not even breaking her neck and severing her spinal cord was sufficient, nor was suffocation any more effective than drowning. as soon as she lost consciousness, her body swiftly restored itself to perfect health aided by her telekinetic gift. arden repeated her claim that morgan was saving herself. regardless of whatever guilt or blame she tried to damn herself with, deep down she clearly did not wish to die. morgan retorts that she knew that; the problem was her desire to live, no matter what the cost. wanting to live did not change the fact that she deserved to die.

from this point on, the material is raw. it can be used to modify or expand the material above.

rethread

the girl is abducted by a were raiding party.

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

the girl is confronted by the alpha tiger.

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

the girl is summoned before her goddess

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

the girl is noticed by vampires and stalked, inadvertently frustrating the demon

the girl finds herself in the middle of a battle over avon deep

the girl is captured and becomes the focus of a wager

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 is 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 others 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 is visited by the demon, tempted by it as she lies dying

the girl dies yet is 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 remains the focus of the wager for avon 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 is 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 is shocked to discover her hungers persist

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

the girl discovers the consequence of indulging her hungers

the girl is 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 is confronted by her sires who reveal the role arden played in her fate

echoed notes

the girl is abducted by a were raiding party.

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

the girl is confronted by the alpha tiger.

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

the girl is summoned before her goddess

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

the girl is noticed by vampires and stalked, inadvertently frustrating the demon

the girl was dragged from her cell expecting to face execution, after lingering in prison for a month after her conviction and sentencing. her fears seemed to be confirmed when she was brought to a bath for purification. from there, her path deviated from her expectations by leading back to the court, still nude as the day she was arrested. to her shock, the assembled court was presented testimony from a witness detailing the departure of arduin the girl on ship to athelon. the charges against her were summarily dropped, and the girl was escorted from the keep and dismissed.

for a moment, the girl boiled in outrage at being discharged onto a public street in the nude, then what she heard in the court registered, and any concern for her appearance was dismissed by the formulation of an immediate plan of action. storming in to a public audience, she made a direct appeal to the duke of avon for a commission to lead an expedition into the ruins of aeslyn tear. once the commotion caused by her intrusion settled, and the duke's advisors informed him of who she was--notably one of the few people to ever return from the depths of the ruins alive--he reprimanded the guards for discharging her in such a condition, and instructed servants to take her aside and clothe her for a private audience.

in private chambers, after the girl had dressed, he questioned her. the girl reminded him of the crime she was detained for, specifically of her testimony that a demon from the ruins had taken possession of her husband, asserting that her only hope of recovering him was to search for the demon's origins in the ruins for any clues that would enable her to find and drive the demon from arduin. she kept the fact that her testimony did not include the exact truth to herself, specifically how arduin came to be possessed to begin with. given their recent trials at the ruins, it was simpler to blame that than admit to her own suspicions. to her relief, she was granted the commission.

the girl finds herself in the middle of a battle over ruin's deep

the girl is captured and becomes the focus of a wager

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 is 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 others 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 is visited by the demon, tempted by it as she lies dying

the girl dies yet is 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 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 is 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 is shocked to discover her hungers persist

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

the girl discovers the consequence of indulging her hungers

the girl is 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 is confronted by her sires who reveal the role arden played in her fate

variant notes

as they appear here, these notes would support a version of the story where the girl is folded back upon her first incarnation as a boy. this would essentially require her to be “orphaned” in the past at the age of seven, through a rift created when her psyche was ravaged by a demon. this is a staggered-incarnation approach in which the girl is a witness to the boy’s evolution into a girl that results in her becoming her own mother.

the girl was on her way home from the academy at aeryn tear determined to face the demons of her childhood. she was sent to the foreign academy the previous winter for special training in the physical and psychic disciplines necessary for her to become a paladin of the goddess.

an only child, the girl was orphaned when she was seven years old. the trauma of witnessing the massacre that claimed the lives of her parents shattered her young psyche, unleashing her full, naked psychic potential. unable to deal with her in this condition, her surviving family abandoned her on the steps of the temple of the goddess arden. the girl recovered quickly in the goddess's care, healing from the trauma and adapting to the strange powers it awakened.

the girl's powers earned her enrollment at the academy of avon tear for training as a muse. her psychic abilities made it impossible for the girl to learn magic, but it was possible for her instructors to adapt the disciplines of intuitive magic to her specific needs. some of her natural abilities came from her mother, but beyond that she was fairly typical of a psychic, predominantly telepathic and telekinetic.

the use of her other psychic abilities required the girl to enter special states of consciousness through meditation or expressed themselves spontaneously, making them more difficult to develop. she gained most of her mental discipline through the mastery of physical disciplines.

it had taken ten years of training to master the powers unleashed within her that tragic night and fully comprehend the horror her parents unwittingly helped loose upon the world. armed with the mantle of a paladin of the goddess, the girl hoped to discover who her parents had been, find out why they had died and lay their ghosts to rest.

as her most recent nightmare proved, she was still scarred by a trauma that had been buried for most of a decade.

when her nights became haunted by nightmares of her childhood abduction, and her days tormented by frightening blackouts and traumatic flashbacks, she set out to discover what really happened to her, to unlock her psychic potential.

unfortunately, her attempt to keep her investigation a secret forced her to proceed without proper guidance.

ironically, it was the abilities she gained from her ordeal that offered a means to discover the truth.

her research revealed how to proceed, using a special form of astral projection, but her inexperience forced her to proceed randomly, focusing in on the time she wanted to view by trial and error.

the girl cleared her mind and attempted once more to probe her past.

she jumped backward in greater increments, first a few days, then a few weeks, a month, several months, a year, two more years, five years, a decade… and at that point she had overshot her target date by eight years, coming instead to the time of her conception.

the girl suffered only a mild disorientation, and quickly discovered her memory loss was the result of something installed within her mind that actively obscured her memories.

her name comes back to her with a little effort, and her skills and abilities assert themselves as circumstances present themselves.

but specific details of her past elude her.

in that way, her nightmares and flashbacks served a greater purpose in guiding her; they were the only keys to her past.

a few years before the girl was born, her mother had unwittingly absorbed a demon that was released from an artifact destroyed in her hands in the midst of combat.

her mother, phoenix, eventually discovered that the magic had been transferred to her, but she had not known that the magic was actually the natural abilities of the demon that had been trapped in the warded ring.

it took the demon ten years to take possession of phoenix.

the girl noticed the change in her mother right away, prompting the demon to eliminate her before she revealed azael's presence to anyone else.

azael summoned her cult and hunted the girl down; dragging her deep into the ruins.

the girl was abducted and offered as a sacrifice to a demon.

phoenix fought the demon from within to save the girl, gaining control just in time to stop the demon from killing her.

only the regenerative powers the girl had inherited from the demon, through phoenix, had allowed her to survive azael's torture.

phoenix could hardly believe her daughter was still alive, staring in horror as her dismembered body pulled itself back together.

fearing she could not suppress the demon for long, phoenix focused her attention on slaying the cultists while the girl healed.

that was enough to convince the girl that her mother had returned to herself.

the girl escaped during the confusion and became lost in the depths of the ruins.

with no idea where to go or what to do, she simply wandered at first, exploring the ancient city.

in spite of her recent trauma, she found herself marveling over how intact everything was.

the girl soon discovered there were frightening things trapped in the city with her.

aeslyn tear was a city of ghosts and other spirits; the former wandering freely and liable to follow her everywhere, the latter seemingly bound in place.

most were undetectable until she passed through one or stepped into a warding circle and was violently assaulted.

the demons were the worst.

ghosts chilled her with their touch, taunting and terrifying her while violating her mind, but few were capable of molesting her, body and soul, the way demons did while she was in their spheres of influence.

while struggling to defend herself from the demons' ruthless probing, the girl realized they were trying to break her in order to possess her body.

her fear of becoming trapped with or possessed by one of these entities compounded and evolved into greater horror and desperation with each terrifying encounter.

an even greater threat loomed when the girl stumbled into a dragon's lair.

fortunately, phoenix had finished fighting the cultists and tracked the girl down, arriving in time to distract the dragon from devouring her daughter.

it had already occurred to phoenix that she would have to sacrifice herself to slay the demon and protect the girl.

with her powers of regeneration, she had despaired of finding something capable of killing her--until she confronted the dragon.

after rescuing the girl, she held her for a moment then urged her to escape while she drew the dragon away.

to her frustration, the dragon seemed to understand what she was doing and focused its attention on the little girl, pinning her down again and again to prevent her from escaping, while ignoring phoenix.

phoenix fought desperately to protect the girl, baffled by the dragon's peculiar fixation on the little girl.

more than once, the girl jumped, turned or leapt just in time to avoid lashing claws or slashing teeth.

it was as if she sensed the attack an instant before it happened.

she barely escaped being swallowed alive by slithering through a fissure into a tiny antechamber.

the dragon attacked the wall violently, intent on carving its way through to the girl, until phoenix closed on it using a sword seized from one of the cultists.

the dragon turned on her, its piercing gaze underscored by the mind-crushing force of an angry telepathic probe.

something like recognition illuminated the dragon's glare, as it finally focused it's formidable attention on her.

before she knew it, phoenix was devoured alive.

the sight of her mother's death drove the girl deep into her hiding hole.

grief-stricken terror ruled her mind until she passed out from exhaustion.

when she awoke some time later, her eyes had adjusted to the pale, phosphorescent light.

for the first time in uncounted days, the girl found herself in a safe, secure place.

the dragon could not reach her and nothing else was likely to get past it to threaten her.

she was safe from everything but her nightmares, traumatic recapitulations of her abduction, the abuse she endured at her possessed mother's hands and the shock of watching phoenix sacrifice herself to end the double threat to her daughter.

there in the dark, she made a startling discovery.

she was being haunted.

from the dark corners of her mind emerged phantoms of her mother, a man she believed to be her father, and the demon that had possessed her mother and tortured her.

the demon, fortunately, seemed to be nothing more than an echo.

after her encounters with the ghosts and spirits of the ruins, it was natural for her to assume new facets of her psyche were the "ghosts" of her mother and father.

the small cavern proved to be a sanctuary, providing for her basic needs.

the water in the pool was pure and sweet and crowded with fish.

a resourceful girl, she did what was necessary to stave off hunger and thirst, and gradually began to recover from the shock and horror.

her isolation encouraged her to accept her ghosts and lay her nightmares to rest.

it amazed her that she had survived in the depths of the ruins for as long as she had.

her spirit should have broken when she explored her little lair and discovered there was no way back to the surface.

of course, it had not occurred to her it was sometimes necessary to go down in order to find a way up.

her escape was something of an accident.

diving deep in pursuit of her prey, the girl was sucked suddenly into an underground channel of the avon river.

caught in a current, the girl was dragged out to sea through a submerged river outlet.

it was a wild ride and the girl was pretty beaten up by the end of it.

fortunately, she had inherited the powers the ring had granted her mother, and most of her injuries healed by the time she washed up on the beach.

in a daze, in the dead of night, she made her way back home.

when hunter confronted her the legacy of her ordeal manifested itself.

the repeated psychic assaults she had endured had awakened her own psychic potential, forging it into natural telepathic and telekinetic abilities.

she lashed out at hunter in a preemptive retaliation to his inquisitive telepathic probe.

for a moment, the retired demon hunter responded in kind, taking her hostility as a sign that she was possessed or a demon herself.

the girl and the boy escaped from the ruins and returned home.

they had witnessed the death of phoenix, and told the tale to their shocked elders.

both children developed the power of regeneration, and gained access to some of their psychic potential, losing some of their ability to learn magic in the process.

in her undisciplined attack, the girl had opened her mind to her adversary.

a seasoned sorcerer, hunter had developed and trained his own psychic abilities and was able to read her while defending against her wild onslaught.

he probed past her attacks into her wounded mind and concluded that she was the victim of a traumatic, psychic rape--an attempted demonic possession.

as gently and skillfully as possible, he soothed her fears and coaxed her back to sanity.

the chaos in her mind made it difficult for him to determine precisely what had happened to her during her abduction, but it was clear she witnessed her mother's death and endured repeated psychic assaults.

initially, he had no intention of keeping her or making her his protégé.

he had gone far enough out of his way just rescuing her and delivering her to the temple.

but after the goddess did what she could to heal the girl, she returned the girl to hunter, named him her guardian and instructed him to train her as his successor.

to silence his protests, she pointed out the fact that a girl claiming to be allannah had been rescued weeks earlier, in time to take the girl's place at the academy.

the girl was safe from that demon only as long as it believed she was dead, and the demon was safe from the goddess, or anyone she could send after it, as long as it was under the protection of the academy.

people noticed immediately that the girl was not herself when she returned home.

traumatized by the whole ordeal, she was virtually autistic and possessed powerful psychic abilities which made her unnerving and unmanageable.

she was taken to the sanctuary of the goddess and arden was able to bring her back to her senses by sealing away the memories of her torture, possession and merciless retaliation against the cultists.

her family was informed that the girl had been abducted to serve as a sacrifice and her abilities had surfaced in response to the threat of demonic possession. while the girl was returned to her family in her right mind, the powers she had gained remained wild and unpredictable. following the death of phoenix, the boy's parents continued to raise the girl. in many ways, the girl and the boy were siblings, particularly in the sense of sibling rivalry. while fiercely protective of each other, they competed just as fiercely, driving each other on.

an unfortunate girl chosen as the focus of a wager between a vampire and a were-tiger

- they were locked in a war to determine who would rule ruins’ deep

she was an initiate in her final year at the academy, dragged to a party during the autumn festival that the immortals crashed

she had caught the eye of the rival immortals previously, becoming a focus of their rivalry and thus the focus of the wager made that night

- they both flirted with her, luring her aside where they could coax or seduce her into playing her part in the wager

she had been slipped spiked drinks to lower her guard and arouse her, but even drugged she sensed a deadly undercurrent

she sensed she was in mortal danger, but found herself unable to resist the consummation of their desires

- they bled her dry after administering their corrupting kisses and feeding her a morsel of were flesh and a drink of vampire blood

she knew a victim had to be on the verge of death to be turned by the bites of a vampire or a were

she knew a victim of both bites never survived, unless one bite proved far more potent than the other

- they left her body, the posed victim of a brutal slaying giving no hint of their involvement, to be found by her friends

she was trapped in a deathlike paralysis, in a heightened state of conscious awareness she had never achieved through meditation

she helplessly endured her post-mortem evisceration and embalmment, the perfect reconstitution of her flesh, and the awakening of her hunger

- they returned to the morgue as they sensed the conclusion of her turning, eager to find out which way she had turned

she sensed them approaching her temporary crypt, but even with her hunger raging, could not shake off the repose of death

she realized they were the only ones who could save her from being buried alive, and made a desperate effort to show she was still “alive”

- they realized, once she signaled them, that she was still in the throes of the struggle between their rival powers of corruption

she was discovered by rivals to her sires’ authority who conspired to foil the wager through her destruction by exposing her to the sun

she was startled when the sunlight suddenly restored her vitality, swiftly restoring her to a perfect semblance of her former life

- they discovered her absence, learned of the plot, but the absence of her ashes prompted a general search

she had wasted no time wondering at her return to life, setting out at once for the aid and counsel of her instructors

she had almost reached the haven she sought when night fell, and her vitality began to drain away, until she literally dropped dead in the street

- they followed the rumors back to the morgue where she had been delivered after her body was found in the street and abducted her again

she could do nothing but listen to their arguments and speculation until the next morning when an experiment was conducted

she revived once more in sunlight where she was confronted by the were-tiger, but an explanation for her condition was not reached

- they kept her “alive” by keeping her in a brightly lit room when night fell and continued to study her

she discovered she could take the edge off her hunger through normal food and drink, preferring fruits, vegetables and water

she was a prisoner, by virtue of her condition and knowing the truth about her sires and their subordinates

- they probed at her until she was forced to relive her death, discovering her last desperate attempt to save herself by calling on healing magic

she discovered she could leave her body during her nightly death, and roam like a ghost—and that her death lingered if no light touched her during the day

she discovered that nothing could completely alleviate her hunger and thirst, which afflicted her even when she separated from her body completely

- they deduced that her odd condition might be the result of failing to feed properly, so they limited her to a choice of blood or raw meat

she was expected to reveal what she had become by the nature of what her hunger compelled her to consume, but she was drawn to both offerings

she tried to resist the meat and blood, but they kept her locked in the light with no way to escape her hunger and thirst

- they thought she was deliberately trying to spite them by consuming both offerings when she finally broke down

she discovered that she was able to command her dead body after feeding, and that by feeding it was undergoing new changes

she also discovered that feeding only increased her hunger and thirst and light seemed to accelerate the changes she experienced

- they discovered, once she was feeding regularly, that her sensitivity to sunlight was increasing, that she might slowly be succumbing to vampirism

she found herself shying more and more from intense light, particularly direct sunlight, but drawn to low light, especially moonlight

she discovered that her powers of regeneration were growing, she could literally watch her wounds erase themselves

- they concluded that the interference of her desperate magic was finally wearing off, sufficing only to sustain her through the worst of the conflict

she realized that her desperate attempt to heal herself had tapped into something dormant within herself, or some aspect of their infections

she was encouraged in her plans to escape by the same dissidents who first exposed her to the sun

- they discovered her escape and pursued her, only to witness as she succumbed to her need to hunt and finally expressed her true nature

she was startled by the melding of her vampirism and transformation into a tiger, sating her hunger for flesh and blood all at the same time

she still depended on light for true vitality, and feeding to retain it and fuel her hybrid powers, but too much light, or not enough fuel were dangerous

- they were forced to accept that she had somehow melded their infections into one, and gained certain benefits as a result

she was immune to the normal enthralling influence of her sires, and capable of seeming more alive or more dead than any other vampire

she was more sensitive to sunlight and silver, but could endure exposure to either longer than a normal vampire or were before taking damage

- they concluded that the initial wager was a draw, modifying it so that he who succeeded in dominating her would dominate the ruins

she was severely disciplined for her attempt to escape, warned that she would not be allowed to roam the surface until she was lost to human memory

she discovered that she shared her cell with another victim of dual infection, a living corpse, forever trapped in the death struggle it provoked

- they were shocked by her success at reviving her cellmate, a soul long since written off as an unfortunate victim of some past quarrel

she found her new companion her only true friend and ally, and like him, ached to somehow return to her old life

she learned her companion was once a mage hunter, a man trained to slay immortals and gods, and according to him, there was one chance for them

- they summoned their elders to reveal what she had accomplished, in herself and with the man who had been condemned to a living death

she clung to the new hope her companion had revealed to her, once again plotting to escape and seek out the aid of the goddess

she was brought before the elders to testify about her unique accomplishments, and face judgments

- they realized that their elders might well seek her destruction as an abomination, or worse, if the reaction of one of them was fully considered

she was approached by the one elder excited by her and her accomplishments, offered certain insights and promises if she submitted to him

she learned some stunning secrets about weres and vampires from her companion, including the purpose of his former vocation

secondary pool - other angles

this material could be used to build up to the probing of the ruins. the material works to establish the girl, the boy and the fiancé as companions in the service of the duke of avon for the summer between the completion of their initiation and the beginning of their advanced training as mentors. it puts them in a position to be involved in an investigation of the string of slayings causing unrest in the underworld.

they had been offered a position in the service of the duke. morgan would essentially be a member of his household, serving alongside logan and roark, the rivals for her affections. as the solstice approached, morgan was settled into her position. much of the time, morgan was on her own, each of them dispatched on separate errands, or taking turns acting as a bodyguard for the duke or some member of his family. occasionally, they would take on assignments that could take days or weeks to complete.

it did not change the fact that she was living under the same roof with logan and roark, and no one cared what they did, in privacy, in their free time together. except when their duties took them out of the city or domain of avon, they were able to spend time together each day. in any given week, they were given a day or three of leave. while on duty, it was rare for all three of them to show up in the same place, but she was always relieved to see either of them when their paths crossed. they continued to try and court her, and in spite of herself, they were starting to grow on her. it disturbed her, however, to think their interest in her could become the wedge that drove her only real friends in the duke’s household apart. no doubt they would both show up for the celebrations, and she did not look forward to seeing how they responded to each other's interest in her. however, the party would give her the opportunity to raid the duke’s vault for the information she had been searching for.

unfortunately, a three way romance had been part of the cover they had created for their little conspiracy, founded in their recommendations for her employment. in an increasingly crowded house, they were required to go to greater lengths to secure the privacy they needed to plan and coordinate their actions. similar problems in the past had contributed significantly to morgan's seduction, where they were forced to respond to the invasion of their privacy by resorting to intimate activities. nothing too serious had happened yet, but enough to make her think seriously about taking either of them to bed. in all honesty, if it did not promise to cause a rift in their group, she would have been more than willing to go all the way with either of her would-be lovers. they were each as desirable a specimen of manhood as she could ever hope to find. unfortunately, the confrontation she had been dreading came up as soon as she returned from a successful raid on lloyd's vault. roark and logan were waiting for her in her room, and proposed an unusual solution to their rivalry.

morgan could hardly believe they were willing to share her, but each insisted he would rather see the other sleep with her than wonder when or if he had. while their declarations seemed rehearsed, their feelings for her and about each other were unmistakably genuine. even though it had turned into a night for reckless adventure, morgan found herself unable to say no, and unwilling to say yes. working together wore down her resistance. there was a serious undertone to their foreplay, however, as they brought up her mission again, testing her determination with various probing questions. they built up to their veiled proposition, did she desire want to hunt down and defeat her childhood demon? could she do it on her own? did she want them to help? morgan had to say yes. even with the formidable abilities she possessed, she lacked the skills and knowledge to confront a demon on her own. if it meant they would help, morgan would eagerly grant them one night of intimacy. morgan never suspected what it would truly mean to give in to their advances; she had no clue what they intended to do.

in the process, morgan discovered the man was some kind of high-level crime lord. apparently, her misspent youth was going to be an advantage for once. while she waited for the opportunity to steal maps and documents she could use to find her way to the part of the ruins where she had been found. she had gathered enough intelligence over the summer to confirm that he had been involved in the planning of the attack. she still needed to locate the maps of the ruins and any information about the demon cult he possessed, before she felt ready to delve into the ruins. unfortunately, she would be kept busy through the festival since her patron was hosting parties almost every night of the week.

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she was counting on them to give her back up in case things went wrong, and reminded them when they arrived that their mission took precedence over any personal business they had with each other.

morgan accepted that as one of the hazards of being a muse. ideally, a muse was partnered with an artist, fulfilling a role that was part familiar, part courtesan, and part performer but ultimately that of bodyguard. she could also fill that role for men in important positions, a last line of defense against assassination by physical or magical means. of course, a properly trained muse also made an exceptional assassin. she half expected her two amorous allies had enlisted her to serve that purpose, since they had betrayed the man they served the moment they confided in her. she was very curious about their true motives and loyalties.

she performed that role in the guise of her patron's recently discovered niece, which allowed her free run of the house and ambiguous responsibilities. as part of her cover, she admitted to training as a courtesan but of course she had not established herself yet. technically, both statements were true, as her mother was a courtesan and she had trained morgan on the side. since her father was an anonymous adventurer, it was plausible she really was her patron's niece.

in the heat of passion, they bit her, releasing their venom simultaneously into her blood. morgan nearly passed out from the erotic, euphoric wave that eclipsed the pain of their piercing bites. too late, she realized what her lovers were, as the pleasure and poison left her helpless in their embrace. too late she understood why two men who seemed eager to kill each other over her had decided to share her instead. because she understood the horrible choice they had forced on her. but, she was not the weak psychic she had been. she focused inward, determined to fight off the infections and preserve her humanity.

as they courted her, they learned about her life and training--a tale edited to conceal her adopted gender. 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 avon deep, they could infect the object of their other conflict and see which of their bites morgan succumbed to--winner take all. of course, morgan 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. morgan 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, 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 home, return to being male, and return to the academy for the final year of her--or at that point, his--initiation.

morgan'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, morgan 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. morgan'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 morgan was coached through the transition back to human form, she refused to return with either of her sires. the vampire left, warning morgan of impending dawn, but the tiger simply retreated, waiting to see what morgan would do with her new immortality.

morgan, 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 morgan 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.

a hidden adversary

at one point, it seemed that the corps had succeeded in killing the athean wizard during a mission, but among his remains, the girl found a ring—a ring of resurrection. the adversary quickly adopted a new identity, that of the girl he had displaced. he elected to remain at the branch academy, gradually adapting to his stolen body and perfecting his pose by probing the mind of his victim. by coincidence, he was the girl’s roommate. in spite of himself, he gradually fell in love with her, and he took advantage of being her closest friend and confident to learn how to win her heart—intending to regain his manhood once he had gained enough from the situation and was ready to move once more against his adversary.

it took two years for the adversary to seduce morgan with the aid of “her” alter ego and “his” special insight into morgan’s psyche. unfortunately, morgan’s betrothed had won her affections as well. he exploited his form to lure the boy away from her, with less than perfect success. the adversary watched in frustration as her attraction to the boy grew deeper and deeper, unable to prevent the complicated love triangle from forming. but one day, fortune smiled on him. while he had no interest in logan, apart from dissolving his betrothal, he carefully seduced him until she had the leverage to force him to abandon morgan. with the rival gone, the adversary was in a position to move in on morgan. as her friend, he lured her to a party where he could arrange an encounter for her with his alter ego. unfortunately, he was not the only man at the party to take an interest in her. the measures he had taken to prepare morgan for his advances left her vulnerable to the seductions of a were-tiger and a vampire.

detached notes

the detached notes

the story begins with the girl's final ordeal as a woman and ends with her exposing herself to the sun. that leaves her transformation into a were-vampire as the main focus of the plot. it takes her from the city of avon to the heart of avon deep, moving from a human community to the center of vampire and were communities. most of the story unfolds during her arduous turning, presenting a space where she is presented with the decision forced upon her and the outcome of her transformation. it is also a time when she faces the beginning of her indoctrination into the mysteries of weres and vampires. it is plausible to have her turning complete prior to her escape, assuming that she could be cured at any time up to the point where she feeds, in which case more emphasis can be placed on exploring her transition into the immortal clans. there, we can witness the modification of the wager, where the girl becomes the personification of avon deep. possession of the lost city could only be achieved through possession of the girl, upon whom the mantle of authority rested until another conquered her.

this approach also opens a window for the girl to question the impact that her corruption has on her original transformation. most importantly, her turning might even occur prior to her admission to avon deep. thus, it is possible to give the plot significantly greater depth. obviously, that would present two stages in the girl's evolution, her initial fusion of were and vampire natures, and the acceleration of the refinement of those natures when she confronts the dawn. it is even possible that her flight to the sanctuary is based on a misunderstanding, an obscure belief that vampirism can be undone on sacred ground--when in fact there is simply a rite that can be conducted on sacred ground that allows a vampire to revert to a dormant state closely approximating mortal existence. the girl's motivation ultimately would be to sustain her humanity, which would make feeding on human prey her breaking point, the point past which she cannot find redemption. so, instead of trying to prevent her transformation, she moves in the pursuit of redemption with the hope of returning to her original life. she strives to control her impulses, feeding on animal prey--which is made easier by virtue of her tiger aspect.

when the opportunity comes, when she discovers the possibility of a cure, she attempts to reach the sanctuary only to be waylaid by a band of rogues. during that fight, she loses control of herself and ends up feeding on her assailants, recovering from the euphoria of feeding on human prey in the depths of the sacred forest, or on the cliffs overlooking the ocean, but ultimately one step away from where she will die. as the ocean was featured in the "arrival" of morganna, it even works for her to be consumed in the fire of her absolution, reduced in a couple of breaths to a single ember that floats out on the breeze to be cast upon the waves. her witness, the boy, would approach the site of her immolation and look out upon the ocean to see morganna materialize around the ember and fall into the water.

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secondary pool - other angles

this material could be used to build up to the probing of the ruins. the material works to establish the girl, the boy and the rival as companions in the service of the duke of avon for the summer between the completion of their initiation and the beginning of their advanced training as companions. it puts them in a position to be involved in an investigation of the string of slayings causing unrest in the underworld.

they had been offered a position in the service of the duke. the girl would essentially be a member of his household, serving alongside the boy and the boy’s rival, the rivals for her affections. as the solstice approached, the girl was settled into her position. much of the time, the girl was on her own, each of them dispatched on separate errands, or taking turns acting as a bodyguard for the duke or some member of his family. occasionally, they would take on assignments that could take days or weeks to complete.

it did not change the fact that she was living under the same roof with the boy and the boy’s rival, and no one cared what they did, in privacy, in their free time together. except when their duties took them out of the city or domain of avon, they were able to spend time together each day. in any given week, they were given a day or three of leave. while on duty, it was rare for all three of them to show up in the same place, but she was always relieved to see either of them when their paths crossed. they continued to try and court her, and in spite of herself, they were starting to grow on her. it disturbed her, however, to think their interest in her could become the wedge that drove her only real friends in the duke’s household apart. no doubt they would both show up for the celebrations, and she did not look forward to seeing how they responded to each other's interest in her. however, the party would give her the opportunity to raid the duke’s vault for the information she had been searching for.

unfortunately, a three way romance had been part of the cover they had created for their little conspiracy, founded in their recommendations for her employment. in an increasingly crowded house, they were required to go to greater lengths to secure the privacy they needed to plan and coordinate their actions. similar problems in the past had contributed significantly to the girl's seduction, where they were forced to respond to the invasion of their privacy by resorting to intimate activities. nothing too serious had happened yet, but enough to make her think seriously about taking either of them to bed. in all honesty, if it did not promise to cause a rift in their group, she would have been more than willing to go all the way with either of her would-be lovers. they were each as desirable a specimen of manhood as she could ever hope to find. unfortunately, the confrontation she had been dreading came up as soon as she returned from a successful raid on lloyd's vault. the boy’s rival and the boy were waiting for her in her room, and proposed an unusual solution to their rivalry.

the girl could hardly believe they were willing to share her, but each insisted he would rather see the other sleep with her than wonder when or if he had. while their declarations seemed rehearsed, their feelings for her and about each other were unmistakably genuine. even though it had turned into a night for reckless adventure, the girl found herself unable to say no, and unwilling to say yes. working together wore down her resistance. there was a serious undertone to their foreplay, however, as they brought up her mission again, testing her determination with various probing questions. they built up to their veiled proposition, did she desire want to hunt down and defeat her childhood demon? could she do it on her own? did she want them to help? the girl had to say yes. even with the formidable abilities she possessed, she lacked the skills and knowledge to confront a demon on her own. if it meant they would help, the girl would eagerly grant them one night of intimacy. the girl never suspected what it would truly mean to give in to their advances; she had no clue what they intended to do.

in the process, the girl discovered the man was some kind of high-level crime lord. apparently, her misspent youth was going to be an advantage for once. while she waited for the opportunity to steal maps and documents she could use to find her way to the part of the ruins where she had been found. she had gathered enough intelligence over the summer to confirm that he had been involved in the planning of the attack. she still needed to locate the maps of the ruins and any information about the demon cult he possessed, before she felt ready to delve into the ruins. unfortunately, she would be kept busy through the festival since her patron was hosting parties almost every night of the week.

she was counting on them to give her back up in case things went wrong, and reminded them when they arrived that their mission took precedence over any personal business they had with each other.

the girl accepted that as one of the hazards of being a muse. ideally, a muse was partnered with an artist, fulfilling a role that was part familiar, part courtesan, and part performer but ultimately that of bodyguard. she could also fill that role for men in important positions, a last line of defense against assassination by physical or magical means. of course, a properly trained muse also made an exceptional assassin. she half expected her two amorous allies had enlisted her to serve that purpose, since they had betrayed the man they served the moment they confided in her. she was very curious about their true motives and loyalties.

she performed that role in the guise of her patron's recently discovered niece, which allowed her free run of the house and ambiguous responsibilities. as part of her cover, she admitted to training as a courtesan but of course she had not established herself yet. technically, both statements were true, as her mother was a courtesan and she had trained the girl on the side. since her father was an anonymous adventurer, it was plausible she really was her patron's niece.

in the heat of passion, they bit her, releasing their venom simultaneously into her blood. the girl nearly passed out from the erotic, euphoric wave that eclipsed the pain of their piercing bites. too late, she realized what her lovers were, as the pleasure and poison left her helpless in their embrace. too late she understood why two men who seemed eager to kill each other over her had decided to share her instead. because she understood the horrible choice they had forced on her. but, she was not the weak psychic she had been. she focused inward, determined to fight off the infections and preserve her humanity.

as they courted her, they learned about her life and training--a tale edited to conceal her adopted gender. 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 avon deep, they could infect the object of their other conflict and see which of their bites the girl succumbed to--winner take all. of course, the girl 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. the girl 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, 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 home, return to being male, and return to the academy for the final year of her--or at that point, his--initiation.

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the girl, 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 the girl 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.

incompatible threads

unfortunately, one of her mother’s rivals trapped her father in an unwanted marriage. after scheming to drive her parents apart, the woman seduced her father and became pregnant. in spite of being forced to marry the woman, her father could not give her mother up. to make their affair legitimate, her mother was forced to get a courtesan’s license and become a muse.

in a climactic battle, the girl’s parents were forced to pool their psychic resources to survive a battle with their mentor’s nemesis. they were still bound deep in this rapport when they conceived the girl, immediately after the conflict.

her father was slain and replaced by a splinter incarnation during the massacre. her father’s wife was also killed in the attack.

the demon took possession of her mother’s companion and she was forced to kill him, but in doing so she exposed herself to possession. the girl witnessed the change in her mother and fled into the depths of the ruins. the demon summoned its familiars and pursued. in the boy’s realm, it was his mother who caught the demon’s eye first, becoming possessed as her husband slaughtered its host. when confronted and caught by the demon, the boy opened a rift to escape from the psychic onslaught. his father struck the demon down and then followed his son through the rift. arriving on the spot where the girl’s father had been slain, the man set off in pursuit of the demon and its familiars, assuming that they were in pursuit of his son. the boy had arrived in their midst, but escaped in another direction during the confusion caused by the rift.

the sight of her mother falling under demonic possession drove the girl deep underground. the girl noticed the change in her mother right away, prompting the demon to eliminate her before she revealed its presence to anyone else.

while the demon was probing her mind, the girl struggled to orient herself within the demon’s mind, finding and fighting to free her mother’s soul. she took possession of the demon, just in time to save her own life as well. only the regenerative powers the girl gained taking possession of the demon allowed her to survive the injuries she sustained while under torture. the girl’s mother could hardly believe she was still alive, staring in horror as the girl’s dismembered body pulled itself back together.

the legacy of her ordeal manifested itself when she confronted her mother’s mentor. the repeated psychic assaults she had endured had awakened her own psychic potential, forging it into natural telepathic and telekinetic abilities. she lashed out at him in a preemptive retaliation to his inquisitive telepathic probe. for a moment, he responded in kind, taking her hostility as a sign that she was possessed or a demon herself.

in her undisciplined attack, the girl had opened her mind to her opponent. a skilled master, her mother’s mentor had developed and trained his own psychic abilities well enough to read her while defending against her wild onslaught. he probed past her attacks into her wounded mind and concluded that she was the victim of a traumatic, psychic rape--an attempted demonic possession. as gently and skillfully as possible, he soothed her fears and coaxed her back to sanity. the chaos in her mind made it difficult for him to determine precisely what had happened to her during her abduction, but it was clear she witnessed too much death and endured repeated psychic assaults.

the man her mother had loved <the girl’s father> had been drugged and seduced by one of her mother’s rivals. a child was conceived and he was forced to marry the maiden. he continued his apprenticeship beside her mother, taking advantage of the moments of intimacy their training permitted. his wife knew he hated her for trapping him, so she tried to save their marriage by tolerating his ongoing affair. unfortunately, the girls’ grandmother used their relationship to force her mother to embrace her heritage and become a licensed courtesan. it allowed her to have a legitimate relationship with the man she loved, but forced her to accept contracts with other men. when the girl was conceived a few months after birth of the man’s second child, she knew he was the girl’s father but she was not allowed to identify him as such.

by the time the boy was reunited with his father, the rift they had come through had closed. his father took advantage of the death of his alternate to establish them in the girl’s world. the boy’s father confronted this world’s version of the woman who had seduced him into a forced marriage <the boy’s stepmother>. for the second time, he introduced the boy as a courtesan son. in the same way the father of a courtesan daughter was never identified, the identity of a courtesan son’s mother was also protected.

the first class of psychics formed as the boy and the girl turned thirteen, made up primarily of others their own age since puberty was one of the more common catalysts for manifesting psychic ability.

as time passed, the girl’s unwitting preparation as the avatar of the goddess became an even greater priority. only her mother knew what she was to become, having seen her daughter in full possession of the angel as a personification of the goddess. the angel had explained what needed to be done, before retreating into the depths of the girl’s mind to allow her to grow up. to prevent the girl and the boy from becoming too intimate, her mother and his father got married, turning them into step-siblings.

under her mother’s mentor, the girl would meet the man who would eventually become her lover.

the boy’s rival’s interest in the girl developed naturally and he possessed the character necessary for her to become his lover, at the least.

when she was corrupted by the infections of a vampire and a were-tiger, the girl was courted by her sires, but defied them in her effort to retain her humanity.

as war erupted, the girl was called to the defense of ar doen.