david aes \avon mai \note drafts

one evening, on a day her fits nearly drowned her in the baths, she was taken aside by an agent of her grandmother’s house, the mysterous teyn. in truth, an agent of her grandmother’s court set to watch over the house. he was intrigued by her family resemblance, and the irony of her situation. he allowed her to pump him for information regarding the massacre and the ruins of tegal ni hayr. late in the morning hours, drunk and playing it as a bet in a hand of keys, he told her of the family legacy. for the daughter of daughters, an heir of ara, one day tegal yn caoi would open heralding the beginning of the end of exile and the ara’dsai’s resumption of the mantle of avon’dsai. her mother failed that test, on the day of the massacre.

she woke the next day freshly motivated by the story of the ara legacy to confront the pain of the past. she announced her plans to visit the ruins of tegal ni hayr. a group of adventurous souls responded to the announcement and the rumors it spawned, asking to join her. many of them exiles themselves, she found it hard to dismiss their requests, even knowing that most of them approached with greed and larceny in their hearts. the ruins, long considered haunted, had been viewed as damned after the tragedy. the prospect of a daughter of the legacy leading a foray, as she was rumored, and some cases recognized, to be, perhaps implied some amount of protection.

their progress in the adventure was at first only marred by the fits that assulted her. the strange attacks were striking more often and with greater violence than ever before in her life. in spite of being shaken and even bruised by the fits, she set her teeth and strengthened her resolve. soon enough, too soon, they stood before the gates of tegal ni hayr. after more than eleven years, av returned to the scene of the crime. she wished she had keav or caval there with her so bad she could taste it.

with little hesitation, they entered the estate proper. the group discovered that the yn caoi did not sleep soundly. locks and keys like none in any yn caoi they had known were active, and in them were secrets that could take them apart or redefine them at a glance, opening and manifesting potential buried in their spirits, forcing them to confront themselves, taunting them with the promise of power such as only legends spoke of. they also discovered the horrors that lived, or in spite of death, yet endured. nightmares given flesh and blood, and other abominations. death walked in the shadows, in a wary and armed truce.

a darkness within her was manifested by a key in one of the rooms where they sheltered for a night. a thing of sex and death, naked and amoral. among the many oddities picked up along the way, a deck of keys ends up in her possession. an instinct and a ruthlessness compelled her to seize it when the power of the deck’s keys was discovered. her quest was all but forgotten in the face of this deep transformation. she did not even notice the fact that her fits had ended with the advent of this transformation. she flowered darkly as they walked through the yn caoi, awakening to grace and guile, swiftness and subtlty, strength and beauty. and yet for all she changed, she remained herself.

things took an abrupt turn when she indulged in an experiment. taking the keys, she dared query a life path. a divination such as common keys had been contrived for. within the keys she found herself, and opened the doors to her full potential, driving a nightmare out of her mind. shaken and awed by her intense transformation, she allowed the others to question the keys. each, awakened to a vision of their full potential, was fearful of the power they had tapped and the deck of keys was returned into her keeping before they set forth again.

when they reach the heart of the ruin, they discovered that a change had taken place unnoticed. tegal yn caoi had awoken. the gate was open. only she knew the meaning of this, and she announced that she would go no further. her compatriots, her friends after what they had beenthrough, chose to go forward. they had to see what lay beyond. they had to pursue the destiny that each saw unfolding for them. she had to return, and face her absolution. she had to find a way to prepare herself for the ramifications of the legacy.

the deaths of the rapists caught up with her on the morning she was startled awake to find herself in her lover’s dismembered embrace. even as she was discovered in this compromising position, her mind retained only a chaos of images and no clear memory of the acts for which she immediately stood suspect. all she could remember was going into one of her fits. the death of caval was tied to the deaths in kathet yn caoi within hours, as the investigations converged.

she had been torn apart by something, perhpas the very thing that had killed caval. unlike cal, her twin was prepared for, though she had not yet taken, the test. her twin, having risen from her mortal dismemberment was now vai. the two would face each other in the arena, her twin among the local vai available to execute her absolution.

the morning of her sentence, she met her twin, and realized that her sister had not survived her attack after all. to her suprise, she recognized it only because it had been within her so long. and for a brief time, it had manifested itself in her. her sister was no more, in her place, in her very body and spirit, was her nemesis.

in the course of the engagement, she put much of it together. she realized that what had befallen her twin ought to have befallen her at a very young age, or it should have killed her as it had caval and so much of her mother’s family. the dismembering gave it all away. it just hit her, like that. the picture that resolved was not pleasant, and at the least, she knew that her stubborness had resulted in the deaths of two people she had loved. her quest for an answer to what had maimed her, and more importantly why, was far from over. her nemesis, knowing her thoughts as surely as she must, would not let her live to fulfill that quest. of course she forgot that her mind was no longer crippled.

harsh as the wild proved to be, she felt her decision to accept exile was better than the alternative. if she could prove in the arena, if she could demonstrate proper discipline in the face of a similar or worse threat, she would absolve herself of the crime. she would be able to fight, but not kill, to defend herself in a sexual or murderous assault by contracted vai. she didn’t trust herself not to go berzerk and kill, even if she deliberately submitted. she didnt understand it, but she knew the bloodlust she had felt had something to do with the scars in her mind, and there was nothing she could do to control it until she had dealt with the damage to her mind.

av. her choice was made for her when the survivors of the gang that had trapped her before began stalking her. when she told a member of the court who sentenced her, she was reminded of what she had already learned. legally, she was an animal now, and the law offered her, and them, no protection. the law ignored what animals did to each other. if they caught her, they could do whatever they wanted to her, and suffer only mild punishment, if any. likewise, if she crippled, maimed or killed another animal, for her own survival, the law would take no interest. he made a point of reminding her that if the families of her victims chose to hunt her down, there were loopholes which would give them a legal right to do so. av had not considered that when she had made the choice that made her a defenseless target to any who wished to do her harm. if she did not find a patron soon, she would have to flee. only, where was she supposed to go?

av. days intothe rainforest, she had lost her pursuit and evaluated her situation. the promise of patronage gave her a goal, but it would be a long journey afoot to tael danh. she wished that she had the skill to make such a long fight under her own power. the circumstances of her new life were doing their best to drive her into the wild, but the fact remained that she was not trained to survive in the wild. she could learn to hunt, or experiment and identify what other wild things she could eat, and if she was lucky, she would be able to survive the winter if it caught her short of her goal. if she didn’t end up prey herself. she was not alone out side of civilization. she was still in heat, and that would draw attention. her somnolence, and constant arousal would not work in her favor.

them. having driven their prey into the wild, they rushed to rendezvous with their leader. they were startled by the appearance of the vai who had witnessed in the court against them. he reprimands them for being late and calls out their reinforcements.

av. a lot of food grew wild on the road sides, and foraging from that reliable source made her progress predictable. the pursuit she had thought lost had merely jumped ahead to wait for her. she stumbled into their trap unexpectedly, and struggled desperately to escape. as they baited her and tightened their net, she realized that what had happend to her before had been impersonal. her actions had made it personal, she guessed, by the way they treated her this time. her fear turned to terror when she recognized in one of the new people the characteristics of the leader—the one she had killed first. as before, they attempt to penetrate her mind, she could not use her own abilities without leaving herself open to their attack. with her psi effectively leashed, and her body quickly and ruthlessly restrained, her bloodlust could not be satisfied.

av’s second attention, the retreat that allowed her to stand outside of herself when her own body was stolen, was also a means for her slip twins to visit and observe her in the common personna of cat. her childhood invisible friend. until necessity forced her into this position, and av confronted the fact that cat was not just an imaginary friend, she could not begin to realize who and what she truly was. accepting the revelation of her many selves, would only be the beginning.

*when av was in danger of being raped, both physically and mentally, cat was no longer playing along with the role of imaginary friend. while cat defended her mind, av found herself standing outside of herself, a witness to her own rape. that was how av discovered that she had a guardian angel.*

when her enemies upped the stakes, av was driven in defeat from an external threat to her identity, into the arms of an internal threat to her identity. *she learned that her her identity, her mind and soul, were shared by ninteen identical twins derived from the same embryo, her embryo. in the company of angels, she mused, av learned where her guardian angel came from. there once had been twenty of these other selves, but one of them had been driven out of her body by a demon that av had swallowed that dark night in the catacombs. before stealing away, it had impregnated her mind with the seed of her nemesis. as an expression of av’s will, the freed spirit had been drawn to av, and when av had withdrawnn from herself in traumatic shock, it had taken residence in her body both to preserve that body, and to preserve the injured mind of av. by the time av had healed enough to return to herself, it had become an intimate part of herself, a second attention, and a bridge between her embodied selves. these other selves, living and growing together in rapport, realized that they were all the same person, and that one of them lived apart from them, the one from whom they all derived.*

as it began, she suddenly found herself standing outside of her self. the rape did not bother her as much as the strange behavior of the rapists. she could easily distance herself from the physical trauma, she had been trained to understand that rape was not about sex, but about domination. a ruthless attack on an intimate and vulnerable part of her life, but in practical terms, not much different from being beat up. the only thing she could do was survive, and heal. fortunately, at this time she was not as vulnerable as she could be. av’yn had made her infertile. of course, she was afraid, but most of the fear, the helpless anger, came from their attempts to rape her mind. no matter what they did to her body, she could control herself until that piercing gaze. the instant she felt that mental thrust, her rage would take over. they would wear her down, working her over, depriving her of food and water and sleep, and then attacking. each time, they only succeeded in awakening the rage, putting her back in focus, and reviving her. her only satisfaction was seeing the disappointment in their eyes as they continually failed to break her. of course, reason said that if they decided that she couldn’t be broken, eventually they would simply kill her and be done with it.

him. it was personal. he worked her over until there was no energy left in her to rage, and the brutality of rape bled into the embrace of lust, almost love-making, as her body betrayed her with its own needs. he even shared his amusement with her, as he listed off the new conditions of her life as his pet, and delighted in the fact that her memories of his true identity were unspeakable, as part of her banished past.

cat. av’s retreat from her body, and her defensive closing of her mind, closed her off from cat. as soon as she lost contact with av, cat risked contacting anathnae again. cat was not able to identify av’s assailants, but there was little room for doubt. unfortunately, cat could not offer a very precise description of where av was ambushed.

mother. duty required that she report the contact and her suspicions to her superiors while she considered whether there was any action she could take to save her daughter. the crew shared the frustration of their captain, knowing that her professionalism woulnd not allow herself to use her command resources for such a personal end. at least not while she could think of no excuse that would cover her actions. the terrible certainty that her daughter was certainly being raped, and quite possibly murdered, did not make her burden easier to bear.

av. after he was through using her, she faced her crisis. self-hatred warred with self-pity and bloodthirst. she had never been so helpless. she had never been so vulnerable, and she damned herself for finding pleasure in the arms of such monsters. only stubborn self love prevented her from devouring herself with darkness. this was not her doing, this was being done to her. these men were her enemies, and their purpose was her destruction. what had happened had nothing to do with sex, and everything to do with power.

av. it was the only weapon she could take back from them. she could not escape rape, but she could transform it. rape pretended to be sex, but it was really war. conquest. the victim subordinate to the act. but she had seen that she could also take from the act. her passion was hate and her lust was bloodlust. taking an active role in this terrible intimacy, freed her from being a victim. using the skills of a lover, and the perspective of a warrior, she fought on intimate ground, with an intimate enemy, to defend her spirit, to protect her self.

them. it didn’t make sense. she was enjoying what they did to her. she was challenging them to enjoy what they were dong to her. to feel pleasure and to accept the pain she would cause them if they underestimated her for an instant. they could force her to do anything they wanted, but they were finding her to eager to bend, to quick to anticipate them. she had figured out their weakness with regard to her, and it forced them to deal with her as a hostile ally rather than a prisoner or a slave.

him. he saw it happening, and he could not see any way to prevent it. they had a mission to accomplish and she had found a way to become immune to their methods. he continued to try, but until they reached their destination, their methods were limited by their need to travel swiftly. still, there were some attacks he could make against her will.

av. her victories came quicker than she expected, along with realization of her assets. they learned that the act was very different with her as a participant, and nothing they did could stop her from participating. especially when she realized that their clear efforts to break her were hampered by the fact that they dared not cripple her. being in heat also aided her in this campaign, for she was not alone in her condition. she could not get pregnant, and her immunity and awakening regenerative capabilities protected her from disease and injury.

them. in spite of themselves, they were falling in love with her. it had been easy to admire her, to want to possess her, but this was worse. it got harder to hurt her, as it became easier to possess her. it was maddening. they knew that if they didn’t break her, then they would never be able to make her one of them. if she did not become one of them then they would have to kill her. so they continued to hate her. and she continued to hate them.

av. amusingly, she was learning survival skills by observing her captors. they had long since left the road and were dragging her north up the coast. as they had, the first time they had trapped her, they kept her psionic gifts subdued. the psionic coller being the only thing they had given her to wear. as long as she wore it her chances of escaping were grim.

him. his patience with her insufferable defiance wore out. conversion had been their objective for her, but her will was impregnable. rather than continue with their fruitless efforts, he decided to shake her possession and ride her until they reached their destination. once delivered, more effective means of attackng her integrity could be employed.

av. while struggling with newly deepened bloodlust, it occured to av that she had felt this kind of murderous rage before. when it had come to her on the beach, it had come as an old friend. for the first time in her life, her nightmares offer a hope of salvation. forcing her mind back to the trauma of her childhood, and the birth of her deadly rage. it took her awhile to shake the rage after her enemies had finished maiming and using her. licking her wounds, she was conscious of the fact that they were forced to treat her with respect in spite of their abuse of her. unfortunately, they had learned their lesson with regard to her too well. they knew that if they gave her the slightest opportunity, she would kill them.

him. he could tell withiin days that she would recover from the damage he had ordered. severed parts were regenerating. left on its own, her body would recover in a few years, but he suspected that she could restore herself even quicker if freed from the psi restraint. that would be an advantage in trying to break her once they delivered her to their destination. to test his theory, he makes a side stop in a temple ruin, and sets up a psi damping perimeter. he takes off her collar and orders her to repair the damage. he explains his reasons, even, putting himself at risk for this answer. he patiently witnesses her recovery, holding out the temptation of escape for her. she tries several times, and he stops her, forcing her to need even more time to fulfill his command. the two, locked in together in isolation, get to know each other very well. he himself is in love with her, but his duty remains paramount, and he is not coy about it.

them. after much too long, the leader and av emerged from the ruin, and their march was resumed. the restoration of their beloved prisoner restores the group’s morale as well. several openly comment that it was a pity she was not already one of them.

av. she suspected she knew where they were taking her. if things had been different, their destination would have been her own home. the lands she would have inherited through her title. she confronted the leader of her enemies. she told the story of the massacre she witnessed and then challenged that—whatever it was they had been trying to do to her mind—they had tried to do to her on that night. he said only that the estate was important to them, and actions would always be taken to preserve their interest in it. if she were one of them, then their position would be secure.

fortunately, her personal quest took her to a region where the compulsion held faint sway. she worked her way back to her mother’s ancestral home. once there, she determined to confront the source of her nightmares and fits and disability. ironic as it was, the only place one such as her could go for sanctuary was her mother’s home. as one of the nameless, she could claim a place at tael yn caoi even though she could not enter tael ni hayr.

av and him. in privacy, in the embrace of respectful enmity, she asks what they are trying to make her become. she debates the possability of a compromise or arrangement between them. she pursues the possability that there might be some resolution to this situation. he responds that the only way she could ever become one of them would be to surrender herself to him entirely. when she asks him what would happen if she did, he merely replied that the only way she would ever learn that would be the hard way. again, he implies that she has no hope for her fate. only time that is running out.

av. tegal yn caoi was the last place she ever wanted to go. her life had been traumatized by the slaughter of friends and family there. the fact that she was heir to the estate was the supreme irony of her life. the most terrible place in the uiverse to her was destined to be her home. she had seen the curse at work as a child, and she had determined to live her life as far from the place as she could manage. only now, she was discovering that the curse might be something that could be fought.

av. she finally got the nerve to ask, if she could not be broken, were they going to kill her? she was told that if she could not be made one of them, then she can have no place among them. they would never trust her, and they could not allow her to claim what was sacred to them. av tried to convince them that she had not had any desire to claim the cursed estate. she would never have even approached it if they had not forced her to. nothing she or he could say could shake her conviction that none of their aims would result in anything less than her death.

av. she confides at last her conviction that whatever happened, she would not live to speak of it. she also confesses her curiosity why an estate that had been in her family for thousands of years was so sacred to them. the simple response stuns her. tegal yn caoi was where their kind had originated. everything they knew about themselves began here about a thousand years ago. with their arrival only days away, av is aware of her iminent death. when they had given up on breaking her mind, they had stopped raping her as well. whatever they sought to do to her, she was truly immune. the fact that she was still alive only meant that they had something left to try.

av. as they came within a day of tegal yn caoi, they were attacked by a dragon. when humans had seen them, there had been no other name to give them. the native name for them was simply death. it earned that name five times before the survivors reached the safety of the estate. av, short an arm, was the luckiest of the victims, having cut her losses to run.

av. ironic, how the respect they had been forced to pay her had actually become admiration. as she lay bleeding, she begged them to remove her collar so that she could use her abilities. knowing that she lost the arm trying vainly to fend off a lunge for him, the leader granted her wish. concentrating, she forced her wound to close and begin healing. she explained that it would take days for her to restore her arm, promising not to try to escape for at least that long. she makes no promises beyond that though. she uses her time to learn her way around the estate, remembering her childhood explorations, and the tragedy that brought them to an end.