Threads to Adapt

a motive behind the massacre, capturing a pawn to be used in a strike against the goddess

Facets

a question of identity

dualities and singularity

probing of the mysteries of the psyche

standing at the cusp of all and nothing

a mind encompassing space and time

crossing the boundaries of sex and spirituality

paradox

Hunger and Thirst, Alt

The girl’s parents assumed roles as instructors at the branch academy, as did most members of the corps. The girl, like the other cadets, was occasionally called on to help the soldiers complete a mission, and occasionally the cadets were the only ones suited to a mission.

Rowan had to fight with Morgan’s grandmother to ensure the girl would be allowed to be trained and educated to her full potential. The grandmother was shocked that a courtesan would put up such resistance to her daughter being trained exclusively to pursue the same trade, while at the same time outraged at the tomboy Rowan had allowed her to become.

When he was seven, Morgan found himself in the middle of a conflict between his father and the Athean wizard. In the course of the crisis, he endured a very personal confrontation with the wizard. The wizard probed the boy’s psychic potential, provoking a surge of wild power that Morgan turned against him in desperation. At the same time, he tripped across the latent threads of the curse he shared with his other half. The wizard’s probe and the power surge had partially revived the curse, enabling it to express itself by trading forms with his other half. Morgan experienced an inexplicable transformation he instinctively fought and reversed. Following the crisis, Morgan became the protégé of his father’s former mentor. He experimented with his ability to become female for a short period, quickly learning how cruel and condescending boys in particular could be towards a girl, and how repressive people were towards girls in general. Outside the private tutelage of his mentor, he continued to learn from his father, striving to master an arsenal of weapons, and participated in the training in gymnastic fighting techniques his mentor’s muse was teaching her daughter—a resident of the school, and a girl whose very existence seemed designed to aggravate him. The daughter of Rowan Av Arden not only shared his name, she was identical to him in every respect save sex.

His psychic sensitivity gave him certain advantages in mastering the conventional skills of a warrior, but presented a serious obstacle to learning any kind of magic. While lessons in conjury, magery and sorcery were all very inspiring and enlightening, he seemed to have no proficiency for any of them. It somehow escaped him that the problem was not that it was difficult for him to learn, if anything it might have been too easy. What he perceived as the workings of magic seemed frighteningly powerful and intricate, impossibly difficult from his perspective as a psychic sensitive. He simply could not allow herself to entrust the process to his unconscious mind as the magic required. Intimidated by magic, he also found herself somewhat intimidated by those who were proficient at using it. Only the fact that his psychic perceptions gave him an edge in protecting herself from—and dispelling—magic allowed him to be confident in himself. Morgan resented the fact that the girl sharing his name was allowed to participate in training generally offered only to boys—a situation which stripped a girl of every shred of modesty. The behavior of the other boys helped rouse the protective instincts she inspired in him.

Morgan Av Arden and Morgan Av Arduin first met at age eleven when Moran brought his son to Rowan’s patron for psychic training. Their resemblance was dismissed as the result of generations of effort to breed girls with specific characteristics to serve as courtesans. Sharing the same name and such physical similarity, the children dubbed each other Ash and Ember. They experienced a profound connection neither could fully comprehend. After some intense, initial rivalry, they became close, intimate friends, their partnership spiced by good-natured competition and uncanny chemistry. The elders of House Avon, perceived this as a good sign and issued a directive to House Arden and House Arduin concerning their betrothal. The children were left ignorant of the engagement that had been arranged by the elders, both to keep the immediate families ignorant of the commitment until the last minute and to allow nature to take its course in welding the pair into a couple. Because of their compatibility, the Ardean psychic concluded they were soul mates, and introduced special training to allow them to pool their resources.

The first class of psychics formed as Ash and Ember turned thirteen, made up primarily of others their own age since puberty was one of the more common catalysts for manifesting psychic ability. As cadets, they were occasionally called on to help the soldiers complete a mission, and on occasion were the only ones suited to a mission. They were well matched, equally talented at getting into and out of tight scrapes, some mere mischief but often enough sobering misadventure. At that age, neither of them was comfortable exploring the true nature of their attraction. They both felt that the other made them complete, and the animal magnetism that was growing between them was frightening but almost irresistible. A penchant for exploration and exhibition caused them to become involved in crime, Ember's curiosity, combined with injured pride over challenges against her gender and ability, conspired to make her, unwittingly at first, into a cat burglar. Ash could not resist following in her wake, Ember was swiftly becoming the reason for his existence. Together, they were able to extract themselves from their criminal careers, but not before both had been marked.

As time passed, Ember’s preparation to assume her mother's mantle, as a maiden of the goddess, became an even greater priority. This came directly into conflict with her betrothal to Ash, proposed before either was born—back when it was assumed she would never be called to serve in her mother's stead. The couple’s training had served to help them to deepen their rapport, but even as their initiation neared its end, and their intimacy increased, their minds remained divided. In order for them to become a singular being, a gestalt of the individuals they had become, they needed to experience an intimacy greater than they had working in rapport or while making love. Soon enough, the pair became first rank initiates facing the final year of training and testing. They also were confronted with their betrothal and were formally engaged. While understanding that marriage would cost Ember her calling, and result in Ash inheriting Ember's legacy, the estates and titles claimed by her mother and held in trust for her, the fact was that they were in love and certainly had been lovers. However, when they graduated and indulged in total intercourse, the magic dividing them was finally shattered.

At the point where Morgan experiences the full weight of the curse, it is possible to integrate elements prompting the alternate approach to Hunger and Thirst. To help Morgan cope, Rohan takes her to visit a cousin who grew up with the curse. This cousin would be the one responsible for helping her answer some of her questions and resolve some of her doubts. She would also be the one to encourage Morgan to go to the party where the wager takes root.

Hunger and Thirst

Unconsciously dominating the gestalt, prompted by her form, Ember would be sorting out the impressions of Ash upon her psyche, uncertain of the exact cause and consequences of such an intense union. The sense of him becoming a permanent part of her combined with a sense of having lost him forever is compounded by his inexplicable departure. Her fear, in the face of his absence, was that they had gone too far, and that it had driven him away. Morgan set out, afraid of the prospect of being alone, scarred by their intimacy and the changes it wrought in her, unable to open up to another.

Her friends, hoping to distract her from what seemed to be a traumatic break up, come up with the idea of taking her out to a party. Unknown to her, the union also began to unlock potential she had never tapped before. The echoes of her lover, the essence of his counsel, only aggravates the situation—pouring salt into her wounds while offering unbearable comfort. She imagines him tortured by echoes of her in his mind, torturing herself with the thought that he fled from her in part because she had become inescapably part of him. As he had described it, it was as if he had been ripped from his own body and thrust into hers, trapped in it with her.

At the party, it is the presence of him in her mind, sharing her every experience with him, that drives her to submit to the attentions of the two men who seduce her away from the party. Too late, her instincts warn her that her admirers’ appetites exceeded those of mere men. Breaking the spell enthralling her, she fights for her life. All her skill and power is not enough to break their hold, but her struggle distracted them from their simple objective of feeding.

To her horror, they laugh at her, noticing that in her struggle she took a few bites out of both of them, consumed a bit of tainted flesh and blood even as she sustained mortal wounds trying to escape. As they mocked her, or praised her for braving a worse death, she realized she was dying and in dying she faced a fate worse than death. Only on the verge of death was one at risk of being turned by their kind, and while they were immune to each other’s curses, the combined effect of both curses promised, not only death, but eternal death.

Futile as it was, she continued to fight, and the ghost of her lover fought with her, sacrificing what remained of his independence and individuality in a desperate hope of healing her.

Morgan is incoherent when her first transformation occurs, the shift to male form accelerating her regenerative powers and acting as a catalyst to combine the two infections. On later occasions, when her male form manifests, Morgan assumes that it is some bizarre side effect of her dual infection. Unable to see herself, she does not realize that her male form is a dead ringer for Ash until she is confronted by former mutual acquaintances that mistook her for Ash.

Origins and Elements to Adapt and Apply

In a short, desperate struggle, it attempted to take possession. To ensure its escape, the demon attempted to kill her--but she had been trained too well. Before Morgan could sort out what was happening, she had defended herself with lethal force. Having acquired a body, however, death was no great obstacle for the demon, and it offered some advantages. For one thing, it obscured the demon’s resurrection, allowing it to slip into the shadows and begin putting plans in motion. He had all too little time to take advantage of the situation, as it related to Ember, before his own agents finally retaliated for his presumed destruction. To avenge their master, they had set out to make an example of Ember, not simply slaughtering her, but attempting to inflict an eternal death.

On the night she opened herself completely to her lover, the demon within her took possession of his body and tried to kill her, forcing her to slay her lover to survive. As she stared in horror at the body of her lover, her other half, she realized what had happened and knew she could not prove the truth. She also realized that her lover had become a part of her as the result of the tragedy, so completely woven into her psyche she did not know where Morgan ended and Logan began. Looking down at his dead body felt like looking at her own corpse. The natural consequences of what had happened took form in her mind, the scene before her guaranteed her arrest, imprisonment, and trial. The thought of being executed for, essentially, murdering herself made her panic. There was only one person she could think of to go to for help. Morgan's mentor and master listened to her story, but could not prevent her arrest when the body was discovered and the guard came for her. Her trial did not go well, unable to state her defense, she was utterly naked before the prosecution.

She was convicted of the murder of Logan, and condemned to death. Morgan's only hope was to escape and gather proof of her childhood ordeal, and present the defense she should have from the start. Fortunately, Morgan had gained more from her merge than anyone could have suspected. The power that once took the combined effort of Logan and Morgan to summon came easily to her, allowing her to simply walk out of prison. For the first time, the mistakes of her childhood were going to help her, providing her with one crucial contact with the underworld. On the advice of her one-time mentor in crime, who urges her to lose herself in the underworld if she did not want to be dragged to the chopping block, Morgan found passage on a ship bound for her home port and set out for the only haven available to her. The Sword & Sorcerer Inn on the road to the ruins.

Her childhood ordeal made her an unofficial member of the order of the ruins, and the Sword & Sorcerer was owned and operated by an official member of the order. Morgan petitions her mentors among the Order of the Ruins for help acquiring proof of demonic influence from within the ruins. She desperately needed their aid and advice in penetrating the ruins to gather her proof, but while she was waiting for the order to consider her request she was confronted by two patrons of the inn. Logan and Roark, meeting on neutral ground to discuss the war over the ruins, had overheard her petition for help exploring the ruins. They set their dispute aside to try and discourage her interest in the ruins, only to discover that she was no common adventurer. With some effort, they drew her out, suggesting that they could provide her with valuable resources and assistance if her mission was worthwhile. Paraphrasing as much as she could, Morgan explained her childhood ordeal, and its unexpected consequences. To her horror, they revealed that killing a demon's host did not slay a demon. The host had to be destroyed properly, or the demon would reanimate it and continue on its way.

The process of acquitting herself, her mentors conclude, starts with acquiring evidence to support the story of her abduction and information leading to the part of the ruins where she was offered to the demon. That much she ought to be able to pursue without delving into the ruins. They encouraged her to explore her contacts in the underground to that end, before petitioning for an expedition of the ruins. Unfortunately, there was much more to the underworld than organized crime, and her path led her right into the heart of a deadly feud. Unaware that the man who was responsible for arranging her childhood abduction was a vampire, in league with the necromancer and demonologist that offered her to the demon, she broke in to his mansion and stole the information she needed.

As she pursued her options, the rivals were considering what they had learned about her, and how she could be of use to them. They were quick to regard her as a desirable consort. They were just as quick to sense each other’s interest, and she immediately became the object of a personal rivalry between them. But their ambitions faced a common obstacle. As a psychic, it would be far easier to kill her than turn her, but her immunity to their powers had known limits. A fact that created the possibility of resolving the major and minor conflicts between them. Once the wager was agreed upon, the two set out to lure her into their trap.

The rivals returned to propose a new solution to Morgan. Since she only needed proof of her childhood ordeal, or just that the killing was justified, she only needed to trap and bind the demon for inquisition and later destruction.

After making the arrangements, they brought her to a party to "take her mind of her problems for a night" and carefully seduced her. Ironically, Morgan was more than willing to be seduced, desperate to find out if sex with another man would traumatize the man in her. She had already discovered, to her chagrin, that she had become attracted to other women, and that the man in her delighted at having all of her to "himself". At times, it had seemed there was nothing safe she could do with her hands, and she had to pay strict attention to what they were doing at all times. Through the evening, her reactions seemed very encouraging, and eventually she found herself in bed with the two men that had taken such a keen interest in her plight.

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 the power to hunt down and defeat her childhood demon on her own? Morgan had to say yes. Even with the power she had gained from her fusion, she lacked the skills and knowledge to capture a demon on her own. If they could provide that, she would give far more than one night of intimacy. Morgan was not wrong in sensing that they wanted something from her, but she would never have guessed that they would do what they did. In the heat of passion, they had bitten 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.

Note: Viable Changes

Given the weight of the slain lover thread, the other option is to alter the course of events following Morgan’s creation. The bloody scene Morgan wakes up to, combined with the absence of Ash, place Ember under suspicion. She would be under the shadow of that suspicion, not subject to official charges while his disappearance was being investigated, when her friends take her out to cheer her up. Also, while the notes above suggest Ash and Ember grew up and trained together constantly, the option is there for them to be separated and taken under the wings of their father and mother respectively for specialized training. It is notable, however, that limits have to be placed on their experimentation—for the most part Ash and Ember are predominantly male and female minded up to the point where they merge, after which point they, or rather, Morgan, must struggle with issues of sexuality and gender. The integration of the memories of both lives takes time, and is integral to the integration of personalities. Each personality experiences the memories of the other only second hand. Depth is added, and the experiences are there, but time is required to assimilate them. It works best if she does not have access to her metamorphic potential, if she is compelled to think of herself as Ember with the memories of her lover and other odd bits of experience imprinted in her mind. It helps for her to fear that Ash might well be possessed or lost entirely. She is sensitive to the fact that his voice in her originates from somewhere within herself. As if he has become the voice of her conscience, as if her memory of him is all she has left of him.

Childhood Demons to Ruins’ Deep

AN: Ruins' Deep would effectively be the second book in the second series. The first book, Seventeen - Childhood Demons, would be set at the Academy or immediately after returning from it. The elements of the first book have been explored elsewhere. The demon within. The coming of age and engagement. The breaking down and confronting the past. The end and the beginning, possession. The fruitless pursuit. Nightmares have plagued Morgan since the night her childhood demon escaped. Some were the disturbing images of an alien entity taking control of Logan's body, turning an act of love into an act of devastating brutality. Some were similar and horrifying memories of the same entity taking possession of her mother and trying to kill her, only to be torn to pieces by an invisible force lashing out of Morgan and Logan. Some were of the excruciating physical and mental mutilation they had endured as the demon probed the pair of them, testing their suitability as offerings. Buried in those images, as in the second sort, was the memory of something inside her mind snapping and then unfolding, to heal her flesh, to heal and protect her mind, and ultimately to slay the person she loved most in the world. Through all this trauma, she clung to the dreams searching for clues, signs, anything that would lead her to the identity of her nemesis or the place where he had been summoned or bound. They were the only leads she had in the pursuit of Logan's salvation. The only hope they had of becoming separated, or reunited as husband and wife. Notes and relevant material can be filed under Childhood Demons for simultaneous or preemptive development.

In past attempts to explore the Childhood Demons thread, the climax followed the marriage of Morgan and Logan. It is suitable for the marriage to occur at the conclusion of their initiations, to allow their friends to share the celebration, with the couple settling in the region to pursue advanced training and start a family away from the interference of their family heads. Because of their intimate upbringing, the night of their union invited a more intimate coupling than either had ever dared, opening the door for the demon that possessed the slain artist to emerge and take possession of one of their bodies. The demon's escape was punctuated by bloodshed, as the demon and the bride struggle to kill one another. Morgan ends up under suspicion for the murder of her husband, defending herself with a slightly altered version of the facts of the demon's attack, and escaping execution only because a witness turns up to testify that "Logan" had taken passage to the North. This allows Morgan to arrive in Avon, making a slight side trip on her way to the North in pursuit of Logan.

Of note, there are some approaches to Childhood Demons that subject the boy and girl to the same childhood trauma, but the majority featured the girl alone being subjected to the horror of losing her family, while the boy is affected indirectly by the chain of succession implicit in their split inception.

Notes

This work focuses on a study of four axes of the psyche's potential that correspond to four embodiments of that potential. In general, in an embodiment of one aspect the three other aspects are latent, two of which are complementary and in balance, one of which is both complimentary and in contrast to the main aspect.

A direct variant of Morgan's ordeal that favors the preservation of the original singular duality and demon within threads requires an adjustment to several plot points. The boy would be drawn into a rapport with the girl during her struggle against possession as she is forced to call upon her untapped potential. Their rapport creates a psychic bridge between them allowing them to experience the same event at two different points in time, and the pooling of their resources allows them to create a temporal bridge while the demon continues its assault on their gestalt mind. In the course of the struggle with the demon, the gestalt psyche probes its assailant for weaknesses, learning and adapting from the things it encounters in the demon's psyche. In the process, the fusion of the boy and girl mentally and physically, spatially and temporally, becomes complete. In direct conflict with the demon, the gestalt invested all of its pooled resources to the rapid cultivation of its angelic potential, and accomplishing that task, the gestalt succeeds in overwhelming and subduing the demon—essentially devouring it, absorbing it into the gestalt's latent demonic potential. But the final blow for the demon came at the conclusion of the battle, when the gestalt dissolved, dividing into the original male and female incarnations. The demon's psyche is divided between the reconstituted boy and girl. At this point, when they recover, the boy and girl come face to face for the first time. In this treatment, they would both be named Morgan. The boy, born and raised within the ruins, would not realize he had moved through time, especially when he was intent on escaping from the ruins at the time he was abducted and would spend the next ten years with the girl as a psychic initiate. At the age of seventeen, the two would complete their training and celebrate with a union of total intercourse, giving the demon a chance to escape. The demon had slowly reconstituted itself whenever they had engaged in mental or physical intercourse, and discovered that there was a phase difference in their gestalt, a weakness it could use to take possession of one of them. In effect, they were two instances of the same psyche overlapped upon each other. The demon could not have detected it if it had not once been torn in half by that phenomenon.

Upon arriving in Avon, Morgan was confronted with introducing herself to Logan's family with only a letter of introduction from him. His family was disappointed and displeased with both the messenger and the message. The girl Logan had been promised to had claimed his involvement with Morgan was responsible for making her break the engagement arranged by their families. The timing of Logan's marriage and Morgan's pregnancy only made matters worse, as it convinced the family that she had coerced him into marrying her to legitimize her bastard child. But worst of all, they had received word of Logan's murder, for which Morgan had been arrested and charged, but had not been notified that the charges were dropped when he turned up alive in an Athelon port. Thus, the family believed him dead, and the mother held Morgan responsible. Morgan's presence was only tolerated because she was carrying Logan's child. Even more disturbing was the reactions of the artist's father and brothers, all of whom attempted to seduce her, and the latter of whom pressured her to remarry with one of them. The sister, whom Logan had long believed to have hated him, surprised Morgan the most by becoming her one, strong ally and confidant. She was the only one who knew Logan was alive, and she had perpetrated the illusion of Logan's death to mess with her family, and Morgan had made her mischief even more enjoyable. It was only when the brothers' seductions turned into proposals that Morgan caught on. By which point, the sister had convinced her to wait until she had found a way to rescue Logan, before challenging her family's assumptions.

With only one ally in Logan's family, in whom she confided an edited version of her plight, Morgan had to approach the Knights of the Order of Aeslyn Tear (the Order of Ruins), an odd association of adventurers noteworthy for having survived an expedition into Aeslyn Tear. In her own time, she had the privilege of being one of them. In the present, however, she was a stranger so gaining entrance to their archives and resources would not be as simple as it once was. Still, they had made their fortunes and retired to open up a clutch of businesses, central of which was the Sword and Sorcerer Inn. Morgan checked into the Inn as a guest, and spent the first night wrestling with the nightmares that had plagued her with growing intensity. After a poor night's rest, Morgan could not escape the assault of nightmares in the bath. Caught in the grip of her traumatic memories, she would have drowned but for the timely intervention of another guest at the inn. Awakening in his firm embrace, the pair of them utterly nude, Morgan was reminded of the depths of her loss. 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. Morgan was forced to restrain her phantom lover as they both recognized the man's obvious arousal in the bath, and easily deduced the nature of his interest. In spite of her rebuttals, the man stubbornly attached himself to her as her protector. In an effort to steel her nerve, Morgan rode out to the ruins to lay her ghosts to rest.

At the end of the day, Morgan was glad of her "champion's" company. The strange chemistry between them made a nice distraction from the images that haunted her mind, and fielding his questions kept her mind sharp and tuned to the present. Granted, the edited version of her story probably raised more questions than it answered. It was a curious mix of truth and fiction, to explain her obscure origins. She did not want to reveal too much to a stranger, speaking in general terms of a curse, a corruption that had been spawned in her in the ruins, that had been transferred to her mate on her wedding night, and which had driven him away from her. She had returned to Avon to investigate what had happened to her, in search of a way to restore her husband to his former self. Excusing herself from her escort when they returned to the inn, Morgan slipped through the layers of blinds and security to enter the group's archive vault. Unfortunately, just knowing how to get in and out did not protect her from encounters with any of the knights. Caught in the act of raiding the vault, Morgan was dragged into the exclusive tap room for summary justice. To the knights' distress, Morgan had demonstrated disturbing knowledge of the order, the layout of their establishments, and the mechanics of their security, including verbal and manual recognition codes. When some of them tried to rough her up, they could not help but recognize elements of their own fighting styles in her. For fear of giving too much away if she remained any longer, or fell into their hands, Morgan took flight, applying a bit of psychic leverage to ensure her escape. Ironically, there were members of the order who were not all they seemed, who were impressed and intrigued by what they had seen from Morgan.

Morgan's next attempt to gain intelligence on the ruins involved a trip to the Sanctuary, and its extensive archives. There, she was approached by a man from the order. Lloyd expressed a general curiosity about her raid on the order's archives. Morgan weighed the opportunity, realizing that he was approaching her as one rogue to another, rather than a representative of the order. Taking a chance that he might be able to help her, she confided her need to return to the ruins to gather information needed to bind or banish a demon. Lloyd considered what he had seen, put it together in a way that seemed plausible, and reached a decision. He introduced her to an associate of his. The man seemed intrigued by Morgan, who was introduced as the solution to a problem their organization had hung up on. Endorsing her skill as a cat burgler, he proposed a venture for mutual benefit. To acquire the information she needed, Morgan was instructed to steal a collection of maps and documents from the residence of a powerful merchant in the Port, and bring them back to the temple for delivery to the anonymous associate. She was warned to strike in broad daylight, and to resist the temptation to confront the residents on peril of her life. Morgan was forced to wait until the next day to scope out the second story job she had been given. A quick survey of the target residence convinced her she could not follow the advice Lloyd 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. Morgan was confronted by a recent acquaintance, the man who rescued her in the bath, and a knight of the order, who took note of her recent raid on the order, her obvious intention to perform another intrusion, and asked her what she was trying to acquire. In response, she asked him what the order could possibly possess that would make her probe their vaults first and foremost.

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, Morgan was stalked into a corner and confronted by a dozen mysterious figures. After swiftly disarming and overpowering her, Morgan's assailants attempted to question her. To her surprise, the vetrans of the Order arrived on the scene, and with their assistance Morgan is able to fight them off. Of course she is then dragged back to the Sword and Sorcer to face questioning about her activities. Morgan is forced to give an abbreviated account of her misfortunes. A woman without a past, apart from the traumatic memories released on her wedding night, Morgan came to Avon to explore the ruins in hopes of discovering more about her origins and some means of recovering her husband from demonic possession. Her raid on the order's archives was to prepare her for an expedition into the ruins. Her only explanation for her uncanny ability to bypass the order's security was her psychic ability, the information had just come to her as she proceeded. The caper she had just completed had also been an attempt to gain intelligence on the ruins. They warn her that it had become very dangerous to probe the mysteries of the ruins. It was dangerous to simply possess knowledge or experience detailing anything about the lost city, and those who pursued either tended to turn up dead. They had pursued her in the hopes that she would lead them to whoever was responsible. Having heard the details of her misfortune, and finding truth in her depiction of the ruins, she was qualified to join their order. It was the only protection they could offer her. Of course, she was willing to take it just to gain access to the archives, but first she had to recover the material she had stashed and deliver it to Lloyd's associate.

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 judgment

- 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

Notes to Append: Seventeen - Ruins' Deep

<!> Points of interest [01/27/04]: The conception of Morgan and Logan. The union and separation of Morgan and Logan. The initiation of Morgan. <!>

Cast Notes

Morgan

Logan (phantom)

Duke of Avon

Court (Ensemble) Advisors (3), Ministers (9), Councilors (18), Bodyguards (3), Guards (60/20), Courtesans (3), Concubine

Arden

Priestesses (39) Matrons (3), Maidens (9), Maids (27)

Priests (27) Patrons (2), Monks (9), Clerics (16)

Logan's Family

Mother

Father

Amanda, Sister

Brothers (3)

Staff (7) Steward, Cook, Groom, Maids (3), Nurse

Hannah's Family

Father

Mother (deceased)

\* Husband (Logan's best friend)

\* Children (0/3)

Staff (3) Steward, Cook, Maid

Sword & Sorcerer Inn

Adventurers (18)

Staff (5)

Lloyd

Assassins (3) (were)

Cult assassins (9) (vamp)

An admirer, (were-tiger)

A swordsman, (were-tiger)

A swordsman, (were-tiger)

A guide/assassin, (vampire)

A sorcerer

A conjurer

A cleric

A thief (elf)

A scout/assassin (drow)

Brigands (21/9)

Retired Notes

People noticed immediately that Morgan 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 Morgan had been abducted to serve as a sacrifice and her abilities had surfaced in response to the threat of demonic possession. While Morgan was returned to her family in her right mind, the powers she had gained remained wild and unpredictable.

Morgan's powers earned her enrollment at the Academy of Aeryn Tear for training as a muse. Her psychic abilities made it impossible for Morgan 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 Morduin, and some from fetal exposure to Logan and Roark's venom, but beyond that she was fairly typical of a psychic, predominantly telepathic and telekinetic.

The use of her other psychic abilities required Morgan 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.

Returning from the Academy determined to end her nightmares and lay her demons to rest, Morgan found passage on a ship bound for her home port and set out for the only haven available to her. The Sword & Sorcerer Inn on the road to the ruins. Her childhood ordeal made her an unofficial member of the Order of Aeslyn Tear, and the Sword & Sorcerer was owned and operated by an official member of the order.

X Morduin had drawn the attention of the surviving members of his cult as soon as his name was revealed. They simply could not ignore the appearance of a boy bearing the name of their god. Morduin had realized how vulnerable he was in his present incarnation, how easy it would be for his cult to enslave him for their own purposes.

X Morgan had already fallen under the protection of Arden and was bound for an academy initiation, so he exploited her to escape recognition. Reverting to female form on occasion, he duped his followers into believing the demon was trapped in her, able to emerge only when she was unconscious. In male form, he disavowed any knowledge of why he was called Morduin.

X The purpose of Morgan's sacrifice was to give the demon a vessel in which it could escape from its prison. Those who conspired to free the demon had accepted the story that Morgan's psychic awakening enabled her to turn the tables on the demon and trap it within herself. Thus, they had waited for the opportunity to complete their task once Morgan completed her initiation as a muse and permanently left the protection of the Academy.

X Morduin was made a member of the cult and assigned to watch over Morgan. In the interim, the leaders of the cult became aware of the conflict between the weres and vampires of Ruin's Deep, and devised a scheme to exploit it to give their god full possession of Morgan.

X As the cult's agent and an official representative of the criminal underworld in the war over the ruins, Lloyd was assigned to assume guardianship of Morduin for training as an assassin. By the age of seventeen, Morduin was Lloyd's second in command and obvious successor. It was easy to sell Lloyd on the idea of scamming the weres and vampires out of Ruin's Deep.

X Possession of Ruin's Deep was beneficial to the welfare of the cult and the criminal establishments they were associated with. Once he had Lloyd's endorsement, Morduin approached Logan and Roark under truce and proposed the wager to exploit Morgan's training to determine who would have dominion over Ruin's Deep.

A muse-initiate possessed the talent and training necessary to resist vampire or were venom, but, in a joint infection the muse would be forced to divide her resources fighting both infections—and ultimately die—or concentrate her resources on neutralizing one infection and succumbing to the other. A fact that created a single solution to the major and minor conflicts between them, a wager that had three possible outcomes.

The assumption was that the one toward whom she turned would win possession of both Ruin's Deep and Morgan herself. On the off chance Morgan survived but did not turn in favor of Logan or Roark, Morduin got to keep her. Once the wager was agreed upon, the conspirators set out to lure Morgan into their trap. An invitation from Lloyd promising information about her childhood abductors was sufficient bait to lure her to the party he was hosting.

As a child, Morgan had been lured into a life of crime. She had been taunted into stealing from people's houses and then blackmailed into working for Lloyd as a cat burglar. While he had clearly been a bad influence on her, he had also been something of a mentor to her. But Morduin had not wanted her to discover his own criminal activities and reputation, so he dragged her out of her life of crime as soon as she got in over her head.

Morgan's life and ties in the underworld were always a point of contention between her and Morduin. It was the one area where he seemed to be irrationally overprotective of her, so it was no surprise she got into a fight with Morduin when she announced her intention to accept Lloyd's invitation. She was not prepared for him to effectively break up with her, practically throwing her at her new admirers while rushing into the arms of another girl.

During the party, Morgan had a private audience with Lloyd, where she was told that her abductors were members of a cult that worshiped a demon god of death, and that members of her own family had engineered her birth and reared her as a sacrificial offering to their god. Shaken by this revelation, Morgan returned to the party in a daze where Lloyd's servants had no difficulty slipping her a drugged drink.

Logan and Roark met her at the party. They encouraged her to stay, claiming it would help take her mind of her problems for a night, and carefully seduced her. The drug and drink lowered her inhibitions and aroused her, making it very easy for the rivals to seduce her. At times, it had seemed there was nothing safe she could do with her hands, and she had to pay strict attention to what they were doing at all times.

Through the evening, her reactions seemed very encouraging, and eventually she found herself in bed with the two men that had taken such a keen interest in her plight. 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, building on her desire to hunt down and defeat her childhood demons.

They asked her what she would be willing to do for the power to fight her childhood demons, phrasing even that as a trap. Would she become one of them to get it? Morgan had to say yes. Even with the power and training she had gained from her first ordeal, she lacked the skills and knowledge to capture a demon on her own. If they could provide that, she would gladly join them on their adventures. .

Not realizing what becoming one of them would mean, she accepted. Morgan did not know there were actually two communities, or that the one she joined would claim the ruins. Unknown to her, the details of the wager were revealed to the vampires and weres, and the party itself was in honor of the occasion.

Morgan sensed that there was more going on, even that she was in over her head, but she would never have guessed that they would do what they did. In the heat of passion, they had bitten 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. Their venom sending Morgan over the edge into bliss and disorientation.

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.

Morgan woke to discover herself in her own bed, summoning a stray memory of the men she was with bringing her home. Her own regenerative abilities concealed the immediate evidence of the bite, but it did not take Morgan long to realize that she was sick from more than drugs and drink. The only positive side was that her illness helped heal the rift between her and Morduin as he was instantly at her side to help take care of her.

Over the course of the day, her illness became worse. As someone who had become immune to disease and injury, Morgan was immediately suspicious about her condition, concluding she had been poisoned or worse. Straining her brain to remember what happened to her after she was drugged, she picked worse. The men who had seduced her had bitten her. Unfortunately, she had no idea if that meant they had been vampires or weres.

Certainly, the whole evening had been a set up, so Morgan collected herself and returned to Lloyd's mansion to confront him about it. Lloyd was waiting for her, and dismissed her outrage to explain that her abilities made her uniquely suitable for resolving a conflict that had been raging out of control in the city's underworld.

He carefully explained the wager to her, detailing her options. To settle their conflict over Ruin's Deep, they could infect the object of their current conflict and see which of their bites Morgan succumbed to—winner take all.

His rivals were both immortals. Roark was a vampire and Logan was a were-tiger. The two of them had been rivals since they were mortal cousins—and half-brothers—in an era when the favored sons of Arden were still her lords and masters. They were the bastard sons of bastard twin sisters who had been seduced by the proud young heir of their domain's lord.

The two had been turned in their nineteenth year when their rivalry brought them into a conflict between ancient rival factions. As years turned into decades, and decades finally turned into centuries, their rivalry mellowed a bit as they each became the other's only link to the past.

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

This was the situation Morgan 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.

She could not resist the combined effects of their bites, which were fatal, but she could fight off one of their infections, determining which of them would win the wager and become the lord of Avon's underworld. She, in turn, would become an immortal one way or the other. Morgan could not believe that Lloyd thought he had done her a favor by choosing her as the object of the wager, and accused him of deceiving her.

To her shock, Lloyd assured her that he had not lied to her except through omission. As she was collapsing from her illness, he revealed that he had been the man responsible for her abduction.

When she was seven, Morgan was abducted and offered as a sacrifice to a demon of death. The trauma of that ordeal awakened her psychic potential—trapping the demon within her—and led to her initiation as a muse. Her training as a muse made her a perfect candidate for Logan and Roark's wager, but there was a hidden threat. Her struggle to survive a dual infection was supposed to leave her vulnerable to possession from within.

The manifestation of that threat was what distracted Morgan from actively resisting her infections.

Morgan found herself trapped in a traumatic nightmare, confronting her childhood demon again for the first time in a decade. She remembered its attempt to rape her mind and conquer her body and soul, and her desperate struggle to protect herself. As the demon bored through her psyche and touched her naked soul, power beyond comprehension had flooded into her and she had attacked her tormentor with a rage born of terror. The demon had thrust itself too deeply into her psyche for her to spit it out, so she essentially chewed it to pieces and swallowed. Banished to the depths of her psyche, the demon had languished for ten years, waiting for the opportunity to assault her directly again. While it waited, it had haunted her nightmares, torturing her from within, tormenting her with obscene and terrifying promises. Finally, it posed a legitimate threat. Morgan realized that while she was fighting off one of her infections and succumbing to the other, she would be too weak to stop the demon from taking possession of her. In that moment, she realized the true purpose of Lloyd's plot. The only way to prevent it from succeeding was to devote all of her effort to fighting the demon while her infections slowly killed her. Deciding she would rather be dead than become enslaved by a demon, she committed all of her resources to fighting her childhood nemesis.

The demon was not pleased by her intentions, but moved immediately to turn the situation to its advantage. When Morgan tried to force the demon back into its prison, it surprised her by pitching in causing both of them to be thrown down into the dreamscape where the demon had been trapped for the past decade. It was a world created from her unconscious mind where the demon confronted her with a shocking first blow. In the dreamscape, her demon confronted her as a male version of herself. While trapped within her, the demon had laid claim to the latent aspects of her potential, starting with her masculinity. The more he was able to assimilate, the more influence he had on her psyche. The contest between them was for control of their prison, but it became evident that direct or indirect assaults on each other could have a serious impact on the balance of power. Morgan was quick to suspect that the quickest way to lose was to succumb to the reality of the dream. If she allowed herself to accept the reality he created, she would become subject to it—imprisoned by it. She was about to learn one of the fundamental differences between men and gods. Demons were natives of a surreal environment, and thus quite at home in dreams. They were also adept at creating and shaping worlds. He would work on seducing her with a believable world, and she had to counter by making it surreal.

Morgan had no idea how absorbed in this effort she became, losing more than a day fighting the demon within.

Morgan had no intention of surrendering to her infections just because she could not risk fighting them. Even without the threat the demon posed, she realized that fighting both infections directly would have quickly exhausted her and their combined, unopposed effect would have killed her soon after. Her chances of surviving were greater if she could regulate the infections, allowing them to run their course but employing her resources to control 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. Instead, she had to trust that her natural regeneration would be enough to at least stall the progress of the infections while she attempted to escape from her sires and reach the temple of the goddess in the hope of receiving a proper cure.

Ironically, the strongest of the abilities manifested by Morgan during her childhood ordeal was natural regeneration, which by itself was sufficient to assimilate the were-tiger and vampire infections. Her regeneration served as the catalyst to make her a hybrid vampire-were-tiger.

The initial result of her turning left Morgan on the cusp of life and death. Depending on her level of arousal, her altered body could take on a perfect semblance of life or death. As Morgan adjusted to her ability to become morbid or vital, she discovered her lust for flesh and blood, her hunger and thirst. While normal food and drink were enough to sustain her the way she was, nothing she was accustomed to consuming would satisfy those cravings.

By the time she emerged from the ruins and set off for the sanctuary of the goddess, she was already feeling the emergence of hunger and thirst as the price of her gradual transformation began to assert itself. When her need to hunt became overpowering, Morgan fell prey to the influence of her inner demon. First her vampiric nature took over, and she set out into the night in pursuit of prey. As she stalked through the forest, her metamorphic nature came into play, her body and senses shifting gradually to those of a feline predator. Somewhere in the dead of night, she took down a stag and began feeding, gaining warmth and vitality from the blood she drank, and then devouring her prey's flesh to fill the aching void that had evolved somewhere within her. By indulging her need to hunt, Morgan had deviated from her determined path. Morgan's prey had lured 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 what she had changed into during her hunt. 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 dragged Morgan to shelter reminding her of the impending dawn, while the tiger simply observed in silence, waiting to see what Morgan would do with her new immortality.

Her escape was an abysmal failure and the only thing she accomplished was to turn herself into a hybrid vampire-were-tiger. In spite of this, she continued to resist, trying to preserve her humanity while her sires debated over the significance of the outcome of their wager and instructed her in what she had become.

It did not take long for Morgan to realize that she had no choice but to feed, though she found she could exploit her new animal form to hunt and feed on forest stags. Once she seemed to have adjusted to her new life, she was permitted to … the ruins … but she faced obstacles … For one, she could no longer venture out in daylight, but more annoyingly, she found herself being set up as the embodiment of Ruin's Deep. It was not so much that she had been chosen to rule, as she had become the symbol of rule. Thus, to claim Ruin's Deep, it was necessary to conquer her.

So, once again, her only option was to escape and her thoughts turned back to the prospect of a cure. Which she found much easier to do in her new state. The only problem was, a party of brigands with a score to settle caught her alone in the pale of night and tried to gang rape her.

The fight aroused Morgan's hunger and thirst, and the next thing she knew she was standing naked over the scraps of her feeding frenzy. Traumatized by what she had done, she wandered to an isolated spot and stood there waiting for the sun to rise.

As horrible as her actions were to her, she did not want to die so much as she believed it was necessary for her to die, while she could still possessed enough humanity to understand her crime. It took everything she had to stand there as the sun engulfed her.

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.

Sated, she fell asleep, reverting to her former self in the early morning light.

To her surprise, after overcoming the shock of waking up naked under a sunlit sky, Morgan discovered that she was back to normal. The sunlight did not stir up flames within her flesh. She was not slipping into a deathlike state when distracted or morose. She did not have to work herself up to remain lively. She tried to return to her former life, but as the day progressed, the hunger and thirst gradually resurfaced.

Clips

Morgan had the potential the demon desired in it's host, but it's attempt to seize that potential provoked Morgan to seize upon it herself in an effort to fight for possession of her body. The cult had anticipated that might happen if Morgan were older, and had been trained to use that potential, but for her to do so at such a young age was unprecedented.

Rowan narrowly escaped being caught up in the slaughter of the cult cell. Ironically, she had not wanted to compromise her relationship with her son by taking a direct part in his daughter's sacrifice. She had argued the need to establish her alibi for Morgan's abduction, and occupied herself with organizing search and rescue parties that could "come to her rescue" once the sacrifice was over.

Instead of acting as the chaperone for the demon while it's host matured, Rowan was left with keeping tabs on her granddaughter for the cult, waiting for the chance to free their god.

Lloyd was a retired adventurer, a member of the order of the ruins, and a well established lord in the underworld by the time Morgan completed her initiation. His continuing interest in the ruins made him aware of the conflict between the weres and vampires. It was not difficult to establish himself as a neutral party, and eventually a mediator in the conflict.

The pair met face to face for the first time when they were both scouted for initiation at the Aeslyn Tear Academy. They became friends, and their particular talents made them partners since he was an artist and she was a muse. The two were very intimate at school, utterly comfortable with each other, and explored each other as shamelessly as they explored themselves. Unfortunately, while that kind of intimacy was common between artists and muses, there were cultural prohibitions against their marriage and children were forbidden. They tried to change their relationship from that of lovers to familiars, but at this stage of their training they continued to work intimately together at the academy. The spiritual intimacy was just as seductive as their physical intimacy had been, but even more dangerous.

Open Notes: In Hunger & In Thirst

The demon hunter Killian. The powers of the ring kept Killian young and vital for centuries, but eventually he succumbed to the demon's possession. Thus, the demon founded his own cult and planned for the day of his full resurrection. With Morgan in his grasp, the demon was impatient to take possession of her body. By attempting to take possession of Morgan, the demon unwittingly gave Killian an opening to reclaim possession of his body. Killian had waited for this chance, and used it to rip the ring from his finger, severing all connections with the demon and forcing it back into its prison. Unfortunately, he waved the ring in front of Morgan's face before casting it away, and the child instinctively snatched at it, threading a finger from each hand through the ring from both sides, triggering her division into male and female incarnations. As the source of the transforming power, the demon was subsumed and divided as well, absorbed in the creation of the split twinned Morgan. In the looped variant, Morgan would recognize and identify the possessed Killian as her mentor and thus fall under his influence. Her possessed counterpart would also confront Killian, deducing from the presence of the ring who he is dealing with. He would encourage Killian-Morduin to humor his other half, always withholding the truth to protect the events of the past. In addition, Logan and Roark would make the same identification and target Morgan as a way to provoke the presumed demon hunter. Freed from the demon's possession, Killian would take the twinned Morgan under his wing, initially as their guardian and later as their mentor.

In spite of the gestalt, it was as if the male half of her had died—he was simply absorbed into her, a ghost trapped in the corner of her mind. That blow was followed by the loss of her mentor's support. With no assurance of ever reclaiming what she had lost, Morgan set out after Morduin. Freed at last, Morduin went straight to Aeslyn Tear, determined to raise the army of demons trapped in the ruins and complete the mission they had embarked on during the war of the gods. He quickly ran into an obstacle, the war over Ruin's Deep. While the vampires and weres at war over dominion over the ruins, both sides were hostile to any efforts to free even a single demon of the depths. Knowing he could not make allies on either side, Morduin's options were limited to encouraging their mutual destruction or forming an alliance against a common enemy like Logan, and somehow parlaying that into a way to seize control of the ruins.

With the division of Morgan, freeing Morduin from the ring, Logan lost all the powers the ring once gave him. He was left with the training and experience of several hundred years from his first incarnation and the training he gained as an initiate during his second childhood. That was more than sufficient to enable him to train Morgan as his successor. As a boy and a girl, Morgan answered to the same name but Logan distinguished them from each other with the nicknames Logan and Morgan or by simply calling them "Boy" and "Girl" when it was necessary. Logan and Morgan had been trained to take advantage of their singular duality, working together to fight demons and undead under Logan's direction. Logan did not believe the girl was capable of carrying on alone and announced his retirement, urging Morgan to find herself a husband and try to have a normal life. He argued that her training made her dependant on Logan and no other partner, not even a man as skilled a Logan himself, could work with her as effectively as she had worked with Logan. Morgan refused to accept that she was helpless without her other half, insulted by her mentor's belief that she would just get herself killed if she continued to hunt demons. Part of her longed to have a normal life, to be reunited with her original family or have a family of her own—to just be a normal girl—but she would never have traded Logan for any of that. She could never live a normal life while that demon wore her other face. After their falling out, Logan realized it was a mistake to try and prevent Morgan from going after Morduin. Conscious of the debt he owed Morgan, he followed, determined to see that his fears for her did not come true. Thus, Morgan and Logan both played right into Morduin's hands. Morgan was led easily into a trap, captured to bait Logan. All Morduin had needed to do was catch her eye and lead her to his contentious allies. Harkin and Roark both became entranced by Morgan, contemplating her conversion into a consort. Of course Morduin had demanded certain considerations for leading her to them, an unstated claim to her he was able to assert once his rivals were nudged into staking their claims to the ruins on a wager over her.

In both scenarios there is the option of using a temporal loop or displacement to bring the male and female incarnations together, at one of three specific ages. A similar paradox is featured in variations where a single, female incarnation of Morgan is looped in order to serve as her own mother. A common element of all such stories is that she is displaced and impregnated when she becomes the focus of the wager, and the infection of the ember is what allows her to survive the ordeal. Also common, the male incarnation has typically been possessed by the demon or the hunter by this point, so there is only a brief encounter between the two incarnations of the character. Because the ember is not the only sound basis for Morgan to survive the wager, the entire loop can be dismissed. The same results can be derived in a linear fashion with the use of the ring or the demon. The main purpose of the temporal displacement is to have Morgan stand in as her own mother, ostensibly because the manner of her conception or the circumstances her parents were in left the embryo in need of a womb.

The moment of Morgan's conception serves as an arrival point in the past as does the moment of submission to possession or the moment when her parents first formed a gestalt rapport. Confrontation with a demon, an angel or an advance version of herself serves as a departure point in the future. The ordeals Morgan faces on her return to Avon are diverting enough to conceal the fact of her temporal displacement, but the path her childhood and adolescence followed provide for most of it. Born and raised in the depths of Avon Lea, the city buried under Avon Tear, until she fled to the surface to escape from demonic possession and became a ward of the goddess, Morgan was sent to Aeryn Tear for training as a psychic initiate. Upon completion of her initiation, she returned to the temple of the goddess in Avon where she was confronted by the future aspect of herself, an avatar of the goddess, who sent her to the moment of her conception to free her parents from a gestalt fusion—making certain adjustments to Morgan's mind to adapt her to the time she would arrive in. But, while it is possible to envision, such an extraordinary origin reduces the significance of everything else that follows. Instead of an evolving character, Morgan would be challenged to simply live up to her origins.

A human with the form of an angel. The division of Morgan can be achieved through the interference of the ring of regeneration. One of the ideas was for Morgan to be born initially as a nymph, neither male or female, because her mother and father were descendants of the goddess and the god respectively.

Persistence of Ideas

If Morgan was originally a boy, the ring comes to him through a roommate at the academy. He was a girl born into slavery who escaped by using the ring of regeneration, which was given to him by Logan, to become a boy. This disguise allowed him to be tested and recruited by the academy. As an initiate, he dreamed of returning to his homeland and bringing an end to the slave trade there. When he lost his virginity, he reverted to his female form—part of the ordeal required to master the ring was to explore both sides of human potential—so she turned to her friend and roommate, Morgan, to lose her virginity as a girl. Unfortunately, two things happened. Morgan fell in love with the girl who made him a man and he discovered the ring of regeneration which turned him into a girl.

Morgan was shocked to be turned into a girl, and even more shocked when his roommate explained the powers and influence of the ring, revealing in the process that he was the girl Morgan loved and Morgan would never be a man again unless *she* lost her virginity. Because of his ambition, the boy had no interest in being the girl he was born as. Morgan was faced with several tough questions. For one, the feelings Morgan had for Rhiannon were deepened and enriched by the discovery that she was Rohan. The qualities Morgan had fallen in love with the girl for were the qualities she had as a person, qualities Morgan always admired in Rohan. Feeling as she did, Morgan was more than willing to lose her virginity to Rohan, and even considered becoming a woman permanently for him.

Rohan understood her feelings, similar feelings had caused him to sleep with Morgan as Rhiannon, but he felt compelled to reject her. Rohan had grown into his adopted gender, had actually lived three years longer as a boy than he had as a girl, but Morgan had lived his entire life as a boy. Rohan could not allow his friend to sacrifice everything just to be with him. That meant not even sleeping with her to help her through the ordeal of the ring. Morgan was crushed by Rohan's rejection. She could not bring herself to sleep with some random boy to complete the ordeal, so she fled from the academy and started over as a girl. Desperate to sustain her ties to her family, she introduced herself to them as Allannah, the bride of her former self. In spite of initial misgivings, "Allannah" was accepted into the family.

Morgan had confided in Logan, her mentor at the academy, before leaving and he conspired with her to pose as her father and cover for the boy's absence. Morgan had been an exceptional student, completing all his required studies and moving on to advanced training, so she was privately granted an early graduation. She spent what should have been her final year at the academy learning how to be a woman almost in spite of herself. Morgan's mother had been appalled by the girl's lack of grace and poise—which "Allannah" attributed to having been raised solely by her father. Morgan surprised herself by adjusting very quickly to being female, but while there were plenty of men determined to bed her, and while her mother insisted on training her to please her husband in bed, she found herself becoming protective of her virginity.

The legacy of having been a man, Morgan knew too well what they saw—and did not see—in her. On the other hand, she did not know if she could really go back to being a man after embracing her womanhood. She did not know if she would want to. It was as if becoming female had liberated Morgan. She had the advantage of all the opportunities of growing up male, possessing skills that were rare and treasured in females. Upon completing his initiation, Rohan finally set out to find Morgan, surprising himself at how easy it was to track her down. Confronted with the changes one year as a girl had wrought in Morgan, Rohan was forced to reconsider the disastrous decision he had made when they parted the previous summer. He explained himself to Morgan, and she revealed her thoughts and feelings.

Now certain that she could live out her life as a woman, Morgan was less certain if she wanted to do so with Rohan. She had been hurt by his rejection, and he still cared more about his mission than he did about her. Most of all, her "marriage" was an obstacle to a legitimate relationship with him. Rather than risk getting hurt again, she summoned all the pain and anger of his betrayal to drive him away. Out of frustration, Rohan resumed his female identity to attempt to restore their friendship. Ironically, it also provided them the perfect cover for "Allannah" to engage in an affair. It started as intimacy between girls, but as Morgan warmed up to her old friend, she finally welcomed him into her bed and fulfilled the ordeal of the ring. It was then that she discovered that the ring cultivated its powers in its wielder.

Suddenly able to resume her original identity, "Morgan" officially returned home from the academy and moved his bride into a new home. Playing both parts added a level of complexity to Morgan's life. Living in the city, Morgan found employment as a woman almost immediately. Rohan stayed with her for a year while pursuing the resources needed to embark on the next step in his life's mission. "Morgan" embarked on the first of a series of fictitious adventures to make his fortune, but as autumn arrived Morgan discovered the ring had other abilities to impart. She had been cautious to avoid pregnancy, changing forms once a day and using magical techniques to purge her system, but following a powerful erotic dream in which Allannah and Morgan had sex together she found herself locked in female form once again.

Morgan eventually discovered it was because she was pregnant. She sought the counsel of the goddess, concerned about the possibility she might have impregnated herself while switching between forms. The goddess recognized the ring and revealed that there were deeper aspects of regeneration, one in particular which was common to angels and demons—the power of parthenogenesis. Morgan had conceived a second incarnation of herself, one that would be born female. Stunned by the prospect of motherhood and reincarnation, Morgan barely absorbed the rest of the goddess's revelations. The ring she had inherited from Rohan was actually a prison containing an angel or a demon. The process of mastering the powers of the ring served ultimately to free it, to resurrect it in Morgan's image.

Morgan was advised to remove and dispose of the ring, but unfortunately, she had declared it her wedding ring as part of her new identity. Since the goddess had examined the ring and identified it as an angelic ring, Morgan assumed it was not a threat to her. The issue was brushed from her mind by two other crises. Morgan's mother had surreptitiously sent word of "Allannah's" pregnancy to her son—in care of the lord he was supposed to have taken service with—and received word back that "Morgan" never arrived, sparking the suspicion that something unfortunate happened to him on his way there. When no trace of him could be found after months of searching, "Morgan" was declared dead. Worse, Rohan had fathered an heir—an offshoot, like Morgan's—and departed on his mission, leaving Morgan devastated.

Morgan could hardly believe that Rohan would do something like that to her. During the year he had lived with her and been her lover, he had been recruiting men to his cause and sleeping with other women in hopes of impregnating one with a parthenogenic son as an insurance policy. That he refused to consider Morgan as a potential host mother, and even kept the possibility of parthenogenic conception a secret from her to prevent her from offering, hurt her deeply. Once again, he had only meant to protect her. Neither of them had known someone would check up on her "husband" or that his absence would result in "Morgan" being presumed dead. If Morgan had bourn Rohan's heir it would be obvious who the father was and she would be convicted of adultery. As it was, people had been suspicious about them.

Becoming a widow changed Morgan's situation dramatically. For one thing, it made it possible for her to marry Rohan—if he came back for her. It also removed the burden of posing as two people. Even if she could resume her male form after the birth of her daughter, she was not sure if she would. But, confronted with her mother's grief, Morgan finally confessed the truth about herself, summoning her mentor, Logan, to corroborate her story. As a mentor to Morgan at the academy, Logan had been something of a father figure even before the boy became a girl and was adopted as his daughter. Logan found himself enchanted by his role as her father and decided to settle in Avon to found a private academy for gifted orphans. It was also a way for him to quietly resume some of his duties as a paladin of the goddess and warden of the ruins.

Logan moved in with his widowed "daughter" to help her raise his "grand-daughter". Morgan's daughter was named Morganna. Because Morgan was known publicly as Allannah, Morganna was typically referred to as Morgan and even came to identify with that name. From the beginning, Morganna adored Logan. To her chagrin, Morgan also found herself attracted to the man posing as her father, highly conscious of the fact that the man had come on to her the first time he laid eyes on her female form—before she revealed her true identity. It struck her that if there was a man she loved more than Rohan, it had to be Logan. It took everything she had learned about being female to seduce him, succeeding only because she was not truly his daughter. In spite of that, they had to be very careful to avoid scandal.

Endless possibilities evolve from a handful of ideas.

Morgan, originally named Allannah, was the daughter of a courtesan, formerly a maiden of the goddess, and a bard, formerly a mercenary adventurer. Both of her parents had possessed the talent and potential for advanced magic, but neither had a sponsor to the Academy for formal training. In spite of this, they each managed to exceed the limits of common magic and became successful enough to sponsor their daughter to the Academy. Unfortunately, by testing the highest among the girls in her group, she came to the attention of an agent of the Cult of Morduin who identified her as a suitable sacrifice to free the demon from its prison.

She was abducted and taken into the ruins where she was devoured body and soul by the demon. In the process of being consumed and used to fuel the demon's resurrection, her mind was forced open and the powers harvested and exploited by the demon, during the dissection and reconstitution of her body for its own use, were seared into her psyche. Her own powers of telepathy and telekinesis had been used to dismember and digest her. Her power of regeneration was an artifact of the power exploited by the demon to resurrect itself in her image. To escape the prison the demon left her soul in, Morgan replicated the process to resurrect herself.

In the time it took her to collect herself, after the demon expended her in its own resurrection and after the ordeal of resurrecting herself, the demon was able to pass itself off as Allannah and take her place at the Academy. The original recovered from her resurrection with a clean slate, the trauma blocked out of her mind along with any conscious memory of her past. With no idea who she was or where she belonged, she simply wandered at first.

The girl struggled to survive in the depths of the ruins for several weeks before finding her way back to the surface. Much of that time was spent exploring the ancient city, marvelng over how intact everything was.

Morgan soon discovered there were frightening things trapped in the city with her, ghosts and other spirits—the former wandering freely and liable to follow her everywhere, the latter seemingly bound in place, undetectable until she stepped into their warding circles and found herself struggling to defend her fragile mind from their ruthless probing. Her fear at becoming trapped and being devoured from within again compounded and evolved into greater horror and desperation with each of these encounters. Unlike the ghosts, the demons could molest her, mentally and physically, as long as she was in their sphere of influence.

Morgan sensed the demons wanted to break her in order to possess her body. But that was nothing compared to what had already happened to her, or what came next. Morgan stumbled into the dragon's lair, and barely escaped being swallowed alive by slithering through a fissure into a tiny ante-chamber. For a while, she was trapped in the small cavern, but 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 it was while she was fishing the pond that she was sucked into one of the underground channels of the Avon River.

Her escape was something of an accident, caught in a current and dragged out to sea through a cavern outlet. It was a wild ride and Morgan was pretty beaten up by the end of it. Fortunately, the power that had been awakened in her the night of her sacrifice remained wildly active, and most of her injuries healed by the time she washed up on the beach. The sheer presence of her untamed power drew the attention of a priest—a retired demon hunter. After weeks of fighting for her life, Morgan lashed out at Logan, telepathically and telekinetically. Logan fought as if she was a demon from the deep, until he determined she was human.

In her undisciplined attack, Morgan had opened her mind to Logan. Like any seasoned sorcerer, Logan had developed and trained psychic abilities of his own. He probed past her attacks into her wounded mind and concluded that she was the victim of a traumatic, psychic rape. The traumatic ordeal had severely disrupted her memory, obscuring even her name. As gently and skillfully as possible, he soothed her fears and coaxed her back to sanity. To give her shattered psyche a central focus, he gave her a name, a new identity to build upon. 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 Morgan, she returned the girl to Logan, 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 Morgan's place at the Academy. Morgan 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.

Morgan became a ward of the goddess and was initiated as a muse. She was put up at the temple orphanage and enrolled in the temple school under Logan's supervision. He initially focused on mentoring her psychic abilities, cultivating mental discipline through physical training in dance and gymnastics. An athletic girl, Morgan responded very well to her physical training, and the discipline helped her to contain her psychic abilities and master the basics of telepathy and telekinesis. As soon as her psychic discipline was up to it, Morgan was reintroduced to her mother as a courtesan protégé.

Morgan was one of several girls indentured to Rowan under the aegis of the temple. In spite of their resemblance, Rowan dismissed the notion that Morgan was her daughter, convinced that she was off at the academy. In her own way, Rowan was as stern a mistress and task master as Logan. While growing up, Morgan discovered she could escape from the demands of her training by posing as a boy. She made friends with the orphans of the streets, and unwittingly involved herself in their criminal exploitation playing the games of adventure and daring that prepared and conditioned them for life in the underworld.

Orphans at the boarding school had always been abused by the other students, so Morgan began teaching herself to fight, to defend herself and protect the others. After seeing her in a few fights, Logan decided she had the potential to become his successor and began training her in armed and unarmed combat. It was easy to amend and expand her courtesan training in dance and gymnastics to include aerial acrobatics and combat. On the fringe, she was being maneuvered into spying, casing and eventually cat burglary. Morgan responded to the challenges, blending her formal and informal training to best effect.

The more familiar she became with the street kids, the harder it became for her to successfully pose as a boy. It was simply a matter of time before her true gender was exposed through horse play and fighting. She tried in vain to keep the revelation from changing her status among the street kids, only to have her pride and stubbornness exploited. She was molested by the boys, and while the experience was pleasant the loss of respect hurt her. She attempted to cut her ties with the gangs only to face threats and blackmail from their bosses. For the first time she saw her life of crime for the trap it was.

Logan never counted on Morgan falling in love with him and lusting after him. It never occurred to him how she would respond to his guidance and nurturing, particularly during the onslaught of puberty. Morgan had no qualms or reservations about sex. Always a sensual creature, sex became her favorite activity and her training as a muse prepared her very well for it. Logan had unwittingly compounded the issue by educating her about sex, explaining the risks and instructing her in the essential precautions against pregnancy, disease, injury and entanglements, particularly legal entanglements.

In spite of her precautions, she did get into trouble on several occasions. Occasionally a patron or peer in the underworld would try to take advantage of her or exploit her—attempting to rape her or force her into prostitution.

She was relentless in her efforts to seduce Logan, but he refused to compromise his integrity. He told her they could never know each other as a man and a woman while she was a student and he was a teacher at the school—especially not while she was his ward.

At the tender age of fifteen, she discharged herself from the orphanage, quit the school and declared her independence from him. He was furious and refused to speak to her and was eventually forced to have her expelled from the temple.

Having burned all of her bridges, she moved to the city hoping to establish herself as a courtesan. She took up residence at an inn hoping to find a courtesan sponsor.

As spirited and athletic as ever, she was frequently drawn to the parks and sacred forest to explore, swim and work out. Mornings or evenings often found her at a park or pool or exploring Avon Lea where she was supposed to have been born. Harkin found himself drawn to her after several close encounters with her in his tiger form. When he confronted her in human form, he discovered she was a shameless as she was fearless.

To earn her keep, while pursuing her courtesan's license, she found work as a muse—modeling, dancing, acting or singing and engaging her patrons in philosophical debates. With her curious and agile mind, she particularly enjoyed staying up late discussing philosophy and art with the patrons of the inn. Roark found himself drawn into one of her debates and became intrigued by her.

Because of their true natures, Harkin and Roark hesitated to become intimate with her, resisting her playful seduction. With their heightened senses, they could not fail to detect her promiscuity.

A man she refused to be intimate with framed her on a charge of prostitution. He hired a man to seduce her and set her up by paying for the pleasure of her company after the fact. Refusing to let a man put her into a legally compromising position by "paying for her services" she stubbornly pursued him determined to return the money. As a result, she was there to save his life. Having performed a legitimate service, she decided to keep the money and from that day on, when a lover had the gall to drop money on her after sex, she simply attached herself to him as his body guard—and because of their new "professional" relationship, stopped being his lover.

In most cases, Morgan's clients did not take her seriously so the "contract" expired at the end of the week or when she demanded advance pay to accompany her charge on his travels.

At seventeen, Morgan was finally old enough to acquire the courtesan's license and the life of wealth and comfort she dreamed of, she began searching for a sponsor. However, over the previous two years she had matured into a street savvy body guard and become a full fledged member of the Order of Aeslyn Tear—the group of adventurers, vigilantes and bounty hunters renowned for surviving the exploration of the ruins of the ancient city.

More than a few people expected her to become a demon hunter or ghost hunter. A few had even proposed the idea of her working with a hunting party as combination bait and trap, based on her reputation as a talented but untrained psychic with a deadly grudge against supernatural beings. Morgan hesitated to respond to such proposals, uncertain that she was capable of going into a vampire's lair intent on assassination. Such thoughts triggered traumatic memories of the massacre she survived as a child.

Logan tried to discourage her from becoming a hunter. Still hurt by his rejection, she would not tolerate his direct involvement in her affairs, even two years after the fact. On learning that she had fallen in with a group of amateur hunters, he was drawn out of retirement to supervise and occasionally intervene.

*The evolution of the wager elaborated on the relationship between Harkin and Roark but neglected to detail how Morgan became its focus in a practical and plausible way. It specified only that the rivals had become infatuated with her, each determined to make her his consort. Since their intentions had included turning her, they agreed to take her at the same time as a test of their power or the potency of their venom. Yet, how did this situation come to a head?*

*It is practical for their interest in Morgan to originate with their interest in Logan. It is also plausible for Morgan to stumble into the situation, to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Particularly if Morduin were to return from the Academy and begin her campaign to seize Ruin's Deep. She could be caught up in the middle as a sacrifice, a victim never intended to survive the ordeal. If she were identified as the protégé of a hunter, a common enemy, they might plausibly team up to strike a blow at him—capturing her and then killing her in front of her mentor when he attempted to come to her rescue. The hunter's ring could also be the seal of the ruins, the key to the domain they both coveted, and that ring would be passed from the hunter to Morgan in a desperate attempt to save her even at the cost of the hunter's own life.*

A more functional solution calls for the division and representation of Morgan as a normal boy and a normal girl.

There is one viable method of dividing Morgan into male and female incarnations using the ring of regeneration, an evolved approach in a linear plot exploiting the demon within the ring. Morgan finds the ring when she is seven years old. The ring turns her male and the soul trapped within the ring takes possession of her body. Logan attempts to free her twelve years later by using the ring's powers to reincarnate her as his son. But the powers of the ring are not mere enchantments, they are the powers of a demon trapped within the ring. Or, more accurately, the powers the demon could manifest by harnessing the raw power of a soul. By freeing Morgan's soul, Logan provoked the demon into taking possession of him.

Possessing Logan was not enough to free the demon entirely from the ring, but it did put the demon into a position to attempt to conquer Morgan. When the boy was seven the demon returned to take him under his wing, posing as his father, Logan. Instead, Morduin retreated to Ruin's Deep and attempted to possess him, giving Logan the opening he had been waiting for. But, instead of forcing the demon back into the ring, Logan drove it out into Morgan. But the demon did not merely wish to possess Morgan. It wanted to resurrect itself, consuming Morgan body and soul to accomplish that task. In the process of trying to harness Morgan's soul, Morduin opened his mind, rousing the memory of his prior existence as a girl in the process.

To truly resurrect itself, the demon needed to manifest and exploit several aspects of Morgan's psychic potential, including Morgan's masculine and feminine potential. The process of consuming Morgan began with forcing the manifestation of telepathic, telekinetic, metamorphic and regenerative abilities that Morduin seized to assess, analyze, dissect and digest Morgan. Exposed and enslaved to the process of her own destruction, Morgan's psyche could not help absorbing all of the details. Morduin never anticipated the consequences of bending the singular duality of Morgan to its will, or that exploiting the boy-girl in its own resurrection would result in a division of the two embodiments of Morgan that would tear Morduin itself in half.

It was partially an unconscious resistance on Morgan's part, but it sufficed to resurrect separate embodiments of the girl and boy Morgan had been. The catalyst of the division was the devouring of the boy—body and soul—and awakening the girl while the demon was exploring her potential. Only the elements pertaining to the demon posing as the girl and the scope of the girl's power and training need to be altered in the notes exploring Morgan's childhood. The division trapped the demon between the boy and girl and consumed the bulk of their psychic ability.

Logan was a helpless witness to the whole process. The devouring and division left the children in a deep state of shock and disorientation. Recognizing the significance of the event, Logan concluded it to be necessary to separate the boy and girl to encourage them to develop into separate entities. The trauma of the ordeal caused both of them to blank out most of what happened to them and disjointed their memories of childhood.

With the division of Morgan, freeing Morduin from the ring, Logan lost all the powers the ring once gave him. He was left with the training and experience of several hundred years from his first incarnation and the training he gained as an initiate during his second childhood. That was more than sufficient to enable him to train the boy as his successor.

As a boy and a girl, Morgan answered to the same name but they were distinguished from each other with the nicknames Logan and Morgan or by simply calling them "Boy" and "Girl" when it was necessary.

Ironically, the situation made the girl an orphan in her own home, a foster child and protégé of her mother, Rowan. The boy would already have an established place as the son and heir of Logan, who alone would know the girl was a resurrection of his original self. By chance, his surrogate mother would be a protégé of Rowan's, and a mentor to the girl. As the son of her mentor, the boy would have been an intermittent companion of the girl, on those occasions when he and Logan paid a visit. To that end, the boy could play a part in helping Morgan escape from a life of crime. It allows for many significant moments between them, while giving them space to be themselves.

In spite of their separation, the two would inevitably be drawn to each other. While having a hard time comprehending or articulating the fact, the boy and girl understood that they were connected to each other, and while Logan never encouraged or discouraged such a belief, they concluded that they were soul mates. Like any child growing up, they were curious about their bodies and the differences between them. 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.

Inevitably, 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 became inseparable. But their intimacy would become their undoing. The deeper their intimacy became, the easier it became for the demon split between them to reconstitute itself. Unconsciously driven toward fusion, they reached the point, when they were seventeen, where they engaged in total intercourse, physical, mental and spiritual. As the lovers' rapport evolved into a true gestalt, Morduin awoke, exploiting their ultimate embrace to make a bid for its freedom.

Up to this point, the boy and girl are almost entirely normal. In addition, the reunion of the boy and girl also associates her with Logan, positioning Morduin to create a trap for the demon hunter using Morgan as bait. The opening sequence would be the demon's awakening during intercourse and seizing the boy, the girl adjusting to the assimilation of the boy's experiences and the awakening of her psychic potential.

In consummating their union they allow the demon split between them to reconstitute itself and vie for possession of one of their bodies. Morduin focused on possessing the boy, the stronger of the two bodies, unseating the gestalt mind and forcing Morgan to concentrate everything in the girl to protect her from Morduin's physical assault. Once Morduin had sole possession of the boy, Morduin broke the circuit of intercourse and escaped. The trauma of losing her other half prevented Morgan from pursuing at once. At that point, the girl inherits the gestalt and comes into full possession of her potential and manifests psychic and metamorphic abilities.

Morgan was forced to defend herself with lethal force and believed her lover had sacrificed himself to slay the demon that had inexplicably invaded their privacy. The origin of the demon is the initial mystery, and confronted with the lovers' fates, one that Logan hesitates to discuss. In spite of the gestalt, it was as if the male half of her had died—he was simply absorbed into her, a ghost trapped in the corner of her mind. That blow was followed by the loss of her mentor's support. Logan did not believe the girl was capable of carrying on alone and announced his retirement. With no assurance of ever reclaiming what she had lost, Morgan set out after Morduin.

Logan urged Morgan to find herself a husband and try to have a normal life. He argued that her training made her dependant on Logan and no other partner, not even a man as skilled a Logan himself, could work with her as effectively as she had worked with Logan. Morgan refused to accept that she was helpless without her other half, insulted by her mentor's belief that she would just get herself killed if she continued to hunt demons. Part of her longed to have a normal life, to be reunited with her original family or have a family of her own—to just be a normal girl—but she would never have traded Logan for any of that. She could never live a normal life while that demon wore her other face.

Freed at last, Morduin went straight to Aeslyn Tear, determined to probe the ruins to determine the strength and availability of the forces slumbering there. If he could raise the army of demons trapped in the ruins they could complete the mission they had embarked on during the war of the gods. He quickly ran into an obstacle, the war over Ruin's Deep. While the vampires and weres at war over dominion over the ruins, both sides were hostile to any efforts to free even a single demon of the depths. Knowing he could not make allies on either side, Morduin's options were limited to encouraging their mutual destruction or forming an alliance against a common enemy like Logan, and somehow parlaying that into a way to seize control of the ruins.

Morduin was once one of those trapped in the ruins, escaping by virtue of sealing its soul in the ring. The exploration and looting of the ruins had been a recurring event, so it was a matter of time before an adventurer found the ring and removed it from the ruins. Again, it was only a matter of time before the demon would awaken and claim the body of the ring wielder, and merely a minor setback that Logan became trapped in the ring and was resurrected first when Morgan found it. Because of that, and the use Logan made of the powers he gained from the ring, Morduin had a score to settle with Logan.

Revenge against Logan was merely a side note to his plot to seize control over the ruins. The communities of weres and vampires that had settled the ruins presented a major obstacle to the demon's plans to raise the legions of demons and undead necessary to resume his mission of annihilation. Following the fusion of Morgan and the awakening of Morduin, Logan had taken Morgan under his wing, so it would be simple to lure both of them into a trap, baiting Morgan and then using her as bait. The only complication was the relationship his cat's paws had with the girl. Fortunately, Harkin and Roark had long been at war over the rule of Ruin's Deep, and their personal interests in Morgan brought their rivalry to a peak.

It was easy to convince them to wager everything on a gamble to convert and claim her. On one hand, converting Morgan was part of their revenge against Logan, against whom both had personal grudges. With her awakened psychic abilities, it was easy to convince them that she could survive the ravages of a dual infection. As a psychic she ought to have been immune to either infection alone, but exposed to both at once, she would have to devote her resources to neutralizing one, allowing the other to run its course. In the event she died, Morduin's claim to the ruin would prevail. Of course, Morgan's principle advantage would be the power of regeneration that matured with the liberation and concentration of her psychic potential.

After their falling out, Logan realized it was a mistake to try and prevent Morgan from going after Morduin. Conscious of the debt he owed Morgan, he followed, determined to see that his fears for her did not come true. Thus, Morgan and Logan both played right into Morduin's hands. Morgan was led easily into a trap, captured to bait Logan. All Morduin had needed to do was catch her eye and lead her to his contentious allies. Harkin and Roark both became entranced by Morgan, contemplating her conversion into a consort. Of course Morduin had demanded certain considerations for leading her to them, an unstated claim to her he was able to assert once his rivals were nudged into staking their claims to the ruins on a wager over her.

In that way, her intention to allow the infections to kill her and escape from becoming the kind of creature the boy had been raised to hunt would be in vain. The course of her transformation has been detailed, starting with her transitory mortification and vitalization, then the awakening of her hungers, being overcome by the need to hunt and running afoul of her rogue acquaintances during her flight to seek help from the goddess. The final stage of her transformation comes through exposing herself to the sun, accelerating the maturation process and tapping into the full divine potential of her psyche—through which the preservation of her humanity is assured. Her dual infection stimulates the growth of her powers, while branding her with the qualities and characteristics of her sires.

Development Notes:

How does a normal girl become involved in extraordinary circumstances? By looking at the inspirations, the situations and circumstances that evolved in the exploration of each aspect or incarnation of Morgan prior to this, her human dimensions come into focus.

She was abandoned as a child, the daughter of feuding houses orphaned for her own protection

She was identified as a daughter of Arden and Arduin

She was abducted at seven as an offering to Morduin and rescued by Hunter

She was apprenticed by the demon hunter who rescued her and trained her as his successor

She fell in love with her mentor but was rejected when she offered herself to him

She applied to the Order of the Ruins at seventeen, haunted by her past

She invented the profession of muse, a companion-protector role to an artist

She was approached by Lloyd offering sponsorship and information about her past

She appealed for an expedition into the ruins

She was approached by Roark and Logan, to discourage her from visiting the ruins

She confided the story of her abduction and revealed her connection to Hunter

She became the focus of a revenge plot against Hunter

She was infected by both of them, to overwhelm her immunity

She was used as bait to lure Hunter in, her infection intended to pit Hunter against her

She was rescued by Hunter, but gradually succumbed to her infections

She was dying, but Hunter sacrificed himself in a desperate attempt to cure her

She survived, but instead of curing her the ring caused her to assimilate both infections

She retained her human aspect as a result of the ring's interference in her turning

She was haunted by Hunter, his soul had been trapped in the ring

She was Hunter's successor and the heir to Ruin's Deep

In the original vampire thread, she grew up in a large household in a rural area—a sensitive, sensual, intelligent and athletic girl. A pet prodigy with a burning desire for her mentor and father figure. Her infatuation leads to her expulsion and relocation to the city where she apprentices herself to a courtesan and comes to the attention of her future sires. Morgan first encountered her sire through her pursuit of philosophical and metaphysical truth. Her first encounter with weres occurred almost a hundred years later when she settled in a rural area and the local pack raided her nest and slaughtered her retainers.

In mixed context, she could be an orphan or a foster child—growing up at an orphanage or boarding school, or possibly a temple in training to be a priestess or a concubine. In probing the foundation of Morgan's character, a parallel between the role of her mentor and the role of Hunter pops up, along with the notion that he is a self-trained sensitive, a passive psychic, and a contemporary of Roark and Logan. The foundation for using the ring of regeneration recurs here. Not all of the concepts developed in association with the ring of regeneration would be explored in this approach, just the fact that the ring was what enabled him to hunt immortals. He was the one who rescued Morgan from the ruins following her abduction and traumatic ordeal and enrolled her in the school. He initially focused on mentoring her psychic abilities, cultivating mental discipline through physical training in dance and gymnastics.

The orphans at the boarding school had always been abused by the other students, and she began teaching herself to fight in order to defend herself and protect the others. Her mentor had been a master of armed and unarmed combat in his youth and after seeing her in a few fights he decided she had the potential to become his successor. He began training her in armed and unarmed combat. An athletic girl, she responded very well to her physical training, and the discipline helped her to contain her psychic abilities and master the basics of telepathy and telekinesis.

Although the ring granted him eternal youth, he was ancient in his own mind.

The evolution of the wager elaborated on the relationship between Logan and Roark but neglected to detail how Morgan became its focus in a practical and plausible way. It specified only that the rivals had become infatuated with her, each determined to make her his consort. Since their intentions had included turning her, they agreed to take her at the same time as a test of their power or the potency of their venom. Yet, how did this situation come to a head?

It is practical for their interest in Morgan to originate with their interest in Hunter. It is also plausible for Morgan to stumble into the situation, to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. She could be caught up in the middle as a sacrifice, a victim never intended to survive the ordeal. If she were identified as the protégé of a hunter, a common enemy, they might plausibly team up to strike a blow at him—capturing her and then killing her in front of her mentor when he attempted to come to her rescue. The hunter's ring could also be the seal of the ruins, the key to the domain they both coveted, and that ring would be passed from the hunter to Morgan in a desperate attempt to save her even at the cost of the hunter's own life.

The Elven Ring and The Demon Within subplots each present a way to initiate the transformation of Morgan and, in some cases, can even be paired up as the opposite poles of a temporal translation. The idea of Morgan escaping demonic possession by jumping to a point in the past, in particular a point where her life was previously interrupted, and thus causing the demon to be crippled or destroyed by an earlier version of itself, has been considered before. Just as the idea of Morgan finding a magic ring that traps her soul and resurrects its former master in her body, and later being reincarnated as a boy, has been considered. It would be the demon's probing to possess her that would awaken the memory of her original self, and the pooling of male and female potential that would help unlock her psychic potential. Her displacement in time would be instinctive, intuitive and accidental—a matter of grasping the raw power, seeking an avenue of escape the demon could not block and the surfacing of a mind oriented to an earlier time to set the destination. The set up would involve her stumbling into the depths of the ruins, finding the ring and being possessed by it's former master, and he would have died in the depths of those ruins hunting demons. They would thus be in close enough proximity to encounter each other and escape. That shared experience would be the foundation of their friendship and partnership—he, something of an artist, and she, something of a muse. In time, he would fulfill the paradox of her escape from his possession by reincarnating her as a boy with her unwitting assistance. For the sake of simplicity, the translations occur when Morgan's two incarnations are nine. Thus, Morgan would be impregnated when she was seventeen, at the time when she falls victim to The Wager. Morgan and Logan would both be foundlings, inmates of the temple orphanage—however, both of Morgan's parents were alive, a courtesan-spy and a bard-assassin. Both descendants of the fallen houses of the god and the goddess, they had kept Morgan's birth a secret and abandoned her at the temple to protect her and each other from the fury of their families.

The possibility of the demon being trapped within her, occupying the greater part of her psychic abilities to repress, remains. Having entangled itself with her male alter ego, it would be able to assert itself in that form when she is incapacitated. Logan could easily determine that he is a male version of Morgan, identical to her in female form—even if the explanation for it defies comprehension. Though the ring has the power to alter sex, and though it turned Morgan male when she put it on and became possessed by Logan, Logan would only be inclined to exploit that power for a disguise, so it might take him a while to discover that he had stolen Morgan's body, and attempt to confirm that it is her soul now trapped in the ring. Even that suspicion would be difficult to form, since Morgan was an orphan it was plausible that he had stolen the body of her twin. To that extent, he has no access to the person he displaced. However, it would be natural for him to pretend to be Morgan's long-lost twin in the event she confronted him in female form. Morgan obviously inherited the powers of the ring, having been able to revert to female form during her struggle for dominance with Morduin. Her "resurrection" was contingent on the demon shattering her male psyche, and while she assimilated the pieces they remained compromised by Morduin. It would take her a while to discover her inherited, polymorphic ability, though the power of regeneration would express itself automatically and easily be discovered. That, combined with modest telepathic and telekinetic abilities she was able to refine from her raw talent, were the extent of her powers. Logan had the powers of the ring, the experience from his former life—some of which he shared training Morgan—and a modest talent for magic, basic conjury and sorcery. Their survival in and escape from the ruins had also made them honorary members of the Order of the Ruins.

One minor adjustment, the were-tiger's name becomes Harkin. The vampire remains Roark. With Morgan and Logan working together as partners as demon hunters, they can become involved in the vampire-were war by investigating the slayings in the belief that a demon is behind them. This is an important mission for them, a way for them to establish themselves. This is their chance to prove themselves as an artist and a muse. Things become complicated when the evidence leads them to Harkin and Roark, whom Logan recognizes. Suspecting that the slayings are actually the result of a conflict between the weres and vampires, Morgan and Logan began probing the two communities. Unfortunately, just as Morgan was closing in on Roark she was caught in the middle of a raid and presumed to be one of Roark's retainers. When Morgan is taken hostage by Harkin's pride, Logan is forced to ally himself with Roark hoping to get the vampire to negotiate with the were in order to save Morgan's life. Unfortunately, both Roark and Harkin become curious about Morgan and her psychic abilities, and suspicious of Logan. Logan and Morgan explain how their demon hunt had led them into the conflict and are informed of the nature of the were-vampire war. But, the negotiations over Morgan collapse when Harkin realizes that Roark had no claim to Morgan until Logan convinced him to hear his demands. That meant Harkin had equal claim to her. Having already determined Morgan was not a vampire, and now that she was not a retainer, his impulse to take her for his consort could be satisfied. But of course Roark had become fascinated with possessing her and challenged Harkin for her. Logan tried to assert his claim to her, as her existing mate—but in his desperation made a slip that allowed Harkin and Roark to recognize him as their former nemesis.

Somehow the dead demon hunter, and holder of the Signet of Aeslyn Tear, had been resurrected—and Morgan was his beloved. With the personal stakes raised to the ceiling, the ancient rivals proposed the wager to determine possession of Morgan and Ruin's Deep. They had already learned of Morgan's powers of regeneration, and pointed out that combined with her psychic talent she had a chance of surviving joint infection by Harkin and Roark. Logan had already freed the soul in the ring, so he could wager it on Morgan proving immune to the combined venom of a were and a vampire. If she turned into one or the other, Harkin or Roark would win the ring and take her as his consort. If she died, Logan would be allowed to take the ring back and leave with his life. The wager itself had two hidden factors. One was the demon within Morgan, the other was the child she carried—her past self by way of the future. The demon attempted to gain its freedom while Morgan was fighting the infection, forcing her to abandon her own salvation to keep the demon bottled up. Her survival was made possible by the indirect infection of her child, the temporally indirect infection of herself. In effect, this was her second exposure to the mixed venom, and it triggered the manifestation of her dormant, hybrid traits—though it seemed initially that she simply died. As though the infection had attacked the child within her, mother and child expiring together as they bled to death from the damage the poison inflicted upon the placenta and womb. On the next morning, when the first light of the sun touched her, she unexpectedly revived, gripped by crippling hunger and thirst. Oddly, just bathing in the light took the edge off, opening a floodgate of psychic energy. After a few moments, the power began to overwhelm her, threatening to consume her if she did not find a way to discharge it. Retreating from the light, her hunger and thirst gripped her again, and nothing she ate or drank could fully appease it. It was a craving for fresh meat and blood.

Emergence of Ideas

An involved and complicated background becomes a detriment to the protagonist and the story itself. The ring of regeneration serves a useful purpose in introducing several related elements upon which to develop the core characters and plot. Morgan set things in motion by finding the ring when she was sixteen and putting it on, allowing Logan to take possession of her body and reincarnate her as a boy in an attempt to free himself from the ring. Because the powers of the ring originated with the demon trapped within it, Logan and Morgan became pawns in its scheme to resurrect itself. Logan raised the boy as his son and heir, oblivious to the demon's plan to use him as a conduit to assault Morgan.

When the boy reached the age the girl had been when Logan supplanted her, Morgan had the balanced potential the demon sought in order to resurrect itself. Unfortunately, when the demon attempted to possess the boy, the girl woke up and reasserted herself, mentally and physically—submerging the demon and her alter ego. It was quite a shock to wake up naked in the arms of a strange, yet familiar man. When he proved as confused as she, ask who she was and why they were in a bath together, she decided tentatively to trust him. Introducing herself, and relating the last things she could remember, she was surprised by his reaction. After an odd remark about her being a girl, he showed her the ring and explained what had happened to her.

Morgan scoffed at Logan's unbelievable tale until gave her a shocking demonstration of the power he had inherited from the ring. The process of being resurrected or reborn through the use of the ring endowed Logan and Morgan with limited regenerative and polymorphic abilities. Morgan did not immediately discover her own ability to change sex. She was too distracted by the realization that twenty years had passed during her strange blackout. If she had lived a whole other life as a boy, why did she not remember it. To test a theory, the demon hunter removed the ring and set it carefully on the rim of the bath. He then informed her that the demon from the ring had possessed her alter ego, unwittingly freeing her to assume control of the body.

Following the tale of body theft and reincarnation as a boy, Morgan became furious with Logan and left. Thanks to that man and his damned ring, she had been torn from the life she knew, given a life she knew nothing about, and had her mind impregnated by a demon that held a male version of herself hostage. She had no clue where to begin untangling this mess. She had no idea what would happen to her life if she did. Because of that accursed ring, her alter ego had been as badly used as she had. While she cringed at the idea of having been a boy, of part of her actually being a boy, she could not stomach the idea of leaving him locked up somewhere in the depths of her mind. Even if that meant she had to share a body with him.

Morgan tried not to dwell on what it would be like to coexist with a boy. It had to be better than living with demon inside her.

In Hunger & In Thirst

Project Options

One of the governing impulses of this story is to take a character from normal roots and have her become caught up in the middle of extraordinary circumstances that force her to explore her full potential. In Morgan's case, the process started when she was seven. She was abducted and offered as a sacrifice to a demon of death, and the trauma of that ordeal awakened her psychic potential. That event trapped the demon within her and led to her initiation as a muse.

Her training as a muse made her a perfect candidate for Logan and Roark's wager, but there was a hidden threat. Her struggle to survive a dual infection was supposed to leave her vulnerable to possession from within. The manifestation of that threat was what distracted Morgan from actively resisting her infections. Ironically, the strongest of the abilities manifested by Morgan during her childhood ordeal was natural regeneration, which by itself was sufficient to assimilate the were-tiger and vampire infections. Her regeneration served as the catalyst to make her a hybrid vampire-were-tiger. With the demon playing such a key role in making Morgan into such a unique individual, the inevitable question arises. Why was she singled out as a sacrifice? The answer to that question comes down to an accident of birth. Some of Morgan's potential can be traced through her mother to an ancestor descended from the angelic goddess Arden, but some can be traced through her father to an ancestor descended from the goddess's "brother" the demonic god Arduin. Certain qualities passed on through Arden and Arduin had combined in Morgan to make her a suitable host for the demon "father" of Arden and the "mother" of Arduin.

The focus of the story is Morgan's transformation into a vampire-were-tiger. It opens with the events that bring her to the attention of her sires and ends with her exposing herself to the sun. That leaves her transformation as the main focus of the plot. The movement of the plot takes her from the City of Avon to the heart of Ruin's Deep, moving from a human community to the center of vampire and were communities. The most significant part of the story unfolds during her arduous turning, presenting a space where she faces 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 introduction to the immortal clans. There, we can witness the modification of the wager, where Morgan becomes the personification of Ruin's Deep. Possession of the lost city could only be achieved through possession of Morgan, upon whom the mantle of authority rested until another conquered her.

This approach also opens a window for Morgan to question the impact her transformation has on her mission. Most importantly, her turning might even occur prior to her admission to Ruin's Deep. Thus, it is possible to give the plot significantly greater depth. Obviously, that would present two stages in Morgan'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 of the goddess 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. Morgan's motivation ultimately would be to sustain her humanity, which would make feeding on human prey her breaking point, the point past which she can not 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.

Adjustments

One individual serves as the tie between Morgan's sacrifice to the demon and exploitation by the vampire and the were. Given that it is her breeding that makes her a suitable host for the demon, her father, Rogan, stands out as the best candidate. In essence, Morgan was conceived to be sacrificed to the demon. Rogan was the Cult of Morduin's first attempt at creating a vessel for their god, but both of his parents turned out to be descendants of the demon Arduin, so Rogan was initiated and given the task of fathering a suitable vessel. A suitable offering to his god, the demon Morduin, required the reconstitution of certain traits passed down from Morduin through Arden and Arduin, the demon's the offspring by the angel Aten. Arden and Arduin, identical except for the fact that one was an angel and the other was a demon, were the divine equivalent of fraternal twins. As a "son" of Arduin, that meant seeking out and bedding "daughters" of Arden. He was finally successful in his coupling with Moira, Morgan's mother. At the age of seven, Morgan was abducted by the cult and tested by the demon to determine if she was a suitable host. She was, but one detail had been overlooked.

Morgan had the potential the demon desired in it's host, but it's attempt to seize that potential provoked Morgan to seize upon it herself in an effort to fight for possession of her body. The cult had anticipated that might happen if Morgan were older, and had been trained to use that potential, but for her to do so at such a young age was unprecedented. Fortunately, Rogan had been careful not to compromise his relationship with his daughter by taking a direct part in her sacrifice. In truth, he had been occupied with establishing his alibi for her abduction, planning to "come to her rescue" once the sacrifice was over. Instead of acting as the chaperone for the demon while it's host matured, Rogan was left with keeping tabs on his daughter for the cult, waiting for the chance to free their god. Rogan was by that time a retired adventurer, a member of the order of the ruins, and his continuing interest in the ruins made him aware of the conflict between the weres and vampires. It was not difficult to establish himself as a neutral party, and eventually a mediator in the conflict.

Breakdown

Adopted in Open Update 03-15-2004

Returning from the Academy determined to end her nightmares and lay her demons to rest, Morgan found passage on a ship bound for her home port and set out for the only haven available to her. The Sword & Sorcerer Inn on the road to the ruins.

Her childhood ordeal made her an unofficial member of the order of the ruins, and the Sword & Sorcerer was owned and operated by an official member of the order. She sought aid and advice in penetrating the ruins to gather her proof, but the first time she proposed such an expedition she was confronted by two patrons of the inn. Logan and Roark, meeting on neutral ground to discuss the war over the ruins, had overheard her petition for help exploring the ruins. They set their dispute aside to try and discourage her interest in the ruins, only to discover that she was motivated by something more than a thirst for adventure.

Logan and Roark had introduced themselves to her the previous summer, and resumed flirting with her upon her return. With some effort, they drew her out, suggesting that they could provide her with valuable resources and assistance if her mission was worthwhile. As they courted her, they learned about her life and training at the Academy. Paraphrasing as much as she could, Morgan explained her childhood ordeal, and its unexpected consequences.

At the same time, the rivals were considering what they had learned about her, and how she could be of use to them. Both of them still regarded her as a desirable consort, and she was certainly the object of a personal rivalry between them. As a psychic, it would be far easier to kill her than turn her, but her immunity to their venom had known limits. A fact that created the possibility of resolving the major and minor conflicts between them.

Her psychic awakening allowed Morgan to turn the tables on the demon, imprisoning it in the depths of her mind instead of driving it out. However, the purpose of her sacrifice was to give the demon a vessel in which it could escape from its prison. Those who conspired to free the demon waited for the opportunity to complete their task, when Morgan completed her initiation as a muse and permanently left the protection of the Academy. In the interim, they became aware of the conflict between the weres and vampires of Ruin's Deep, and devised a scheme to exploit it to give their god full possession of Morgan. Ironically, Morgan had also caught the eye of the rival immortals, Logan and Roark. Her escape from the ruins as a mere girl brought her to their attention, and both of them watched her grow up, each waiting for her to come of age with hopes of making her his consort.

As the cult's agent in the Port of Avon, and the third party in the war over the ruins, Lloyd approached Logan and Roark under truce and proposed the wager to exploit Morgan's training to determine who would have dominion over Ruin's Deep. A muse-initiate possessed the talent and training necessary to resist vampire or were venom. But, in a joint infection the muse would be forced to divide her resources fighting both infections—and ultimately die—or concentrate her resources on neutralizing one infection and succumbing to the other. Thus, the wager had three possible outcomes.

Once the wager was agreed upon, the two set out to lure her into their trap. An invitation from Lloyd promising information about her childhood abductors was sufficient bait to lure her to the party he was hosting.

During the party, Morgan had a private audience with Lloyd, where she was told that her abductors were members of a cult that worshiped a demon god of death, and that she was supposed to have been offered to their god as a sacrifice. Shaken by this revelation, Morgan returned to the party in a daze where Lloyd's servants had no difficulty slipping her a drugged drink.

Logan and Roark met her at the party encouraged her to stay, claiming it would help take her mind of her problems for a night, and carefully seduced her. The drug and drink lowered her inhibitions and aroused her, making it very easy for the rivals to seduce her. At times, it had seemed there was nothing safe she could do with her hands, and she had to pay strict attention to what they were doing at all times. Through the evening, her reactions seemed very encouraging, and eventually she found herself in bed with the two men that had taken such a keen interest in her plight. 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 the power to hunt down and defeat her childhood demon on her own? Would she become one of them to get it?

Morgan had to say yes. Even with the power and training she had gained from her ordeal, she lacked the skills and knowledge to capture a demon on her own. If they could provide that, she would give far more than one night of intimacy.

Not realizing what becoming one of them would mean, she accepted. Morgan did not know there were actually two communities, or that the one she joined would claim the ruins. Unknown to her, the details of the wager were revealed to the vampires and weres, and the party itself was in honor of the occasion.

Morgan sensed that there was more going on, even that she was in over her head, but she would never have guessed that they would do what they did. In the heat of passion, they had bitten 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. Their venom sending Morgan over the edge into bliss and disorientation.

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.

Morgan woke to discover herself in her own bed, summoning a stray memory of the men she was with bringing her home. Her own regenerative abilities concealed the immediate evidence of the bite, but it did not take Morgan long to realize that she was sick from more than drugs and drink. Over the course of the day, her illness became worse. As someone who had become immune to disease and injury, Morgan was immediately suspicious about her condition, concluding she had been poisoned or worse. Straining her brain to remember what happened to her after she was drugged, she picked worse. The men who had seduced her had bitten her. Unfortunately, she had no idea if that meant they had been vampires or weres. Certainly, the whole evening had been a set up, so Morgan collected herself and returned to Lloyd's mansion to confront him about it. Lloyd was waiting for her, and dismissed her outrage to explain that her abilities made her uniquely suitable for resolving a conflict that had been raging out of control in the city's underworld.

He carefully explained the wager to her, detailing her options. To settle their conflict over Ruin's Deep, they could infect the object of their current conflict and see which of their bites Morgan succumbed to—winner take all.

His rivals were both immortals. Roark was a vampire and Logan was a were-tiger. The two of them had been rivals since they were mortal cousins—and half-brothers—in an era when the favored sons of Arden were still her lords and masters. They were the bastard sons of bastard twin sisters who had been seduced by the proud young heir of their domain's lord. The two had been turned in their nineteenth year when their rivalry brought them into a conflict between ancient rival factions. As years turned into decades, and decades finally turned into centuries, their rivalry mellowed a bit as they each became the other's only link to the past. Over time they both became more powerful and eventually became lords over their kind. This ultimately resurrected their old feud, as their friendly rivalry was strained by their attempts to claim dominion over Ruin's Deep for their people. No compromise was acceptable to their followers, and a blood feud followed. The longer it went on, the more unexplained deaths occurred, and the greater the risk of drawing the attention of the greater mortal community.

This was the situation Morgan 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.

She could not resist the combined effects of their bites, which were fatal, but she could fight off one of their infections, determining which of them would win the wager and become the lord of Avon's underworld. She, in turn, would become an immortal one way or the other. Morgan could not believe that Lloyd thought he had done her a favor by choosing her as the object of the wager, and accused him of deceiving her. To her shock, Lloyd assured her that he had not lied to her except through omission. As she was collapsing from her illness, he revealed that he had been the man responsible for her abduction.

When she was seven, Morgan was abducted and offered as a sacrifice to a demon of death. The trauma of that ordeal awakened her psychic potential—trapping the demon within her—and led to her initiation as a muse. Her training as a muse made her a perfect candidate for Logan and Roark's wager, but there was a hidden threat. Her struggle to survive a dual infection was supposed to leave her vulnerable to possession from within. The manifestation of that threat was what distracted Morgan from actively resisting her infections.

Morgan found herself trapped in a traumatic nightmare, confronting her childhood demon again for the first time in a decade. She remembered its attempt to rape her mind and conquer her body and soul, and her desperate struggle to protect herself. As the demon bored through her psyche and touched her naked soul, power beyond comprehension had flooded into her and she had attacked her tormentor with a rage born of terror. The demon had thrust itself too deeply into her psyche for her to spit it out, so she essentially chewed it to pieces and swallowed. Banished to the depths of her psyche, the demon had languished for ten years, waiting for the opportunity to assault her directly again. While it waited, it had haunted her nightmares, torturing her from within, tormenting her with obscene and terrifying promises. Finally, it posed a legitimate threat. Morgan realized that while she was fighting off one of her infections and succumbing to the other, she would be too weak to stop the demon from taking possession of her. In that moment, she realized the true purpose of Lloyd's plot. The only way to prevent it from succeeding was to devote all of her effort to fighting the demon while her infections slowly killed her. Deciding she would rather be dead than become enslaved by a demon, she committed all of her resources to fighting her childhood nemesis.

The demon was not pleased by her intentions, but moved immediately to turn the situation to its advantage. When Morgan tried to force the demon back into its prison, it surprised her by pitching in causing both of them to be thrown down into the dreamscape where the demon had been trapped for the past decade. It was a world created from her unconscious mind where the demon confronted her with a shocking first blow. In the dreamscape, her demon confronted her as a male version of herself. While trapped within her, the demon had laid claim to the latent aspects of her potential, starting with her masculinity. The more he was able to assimilate, the more influence he had on her psyche. The contest between them was for control of their prison, but it became evident that direct or indirect assaults on each other could have a serious impact on the balance of power. Morgan was quick to suspect that the quickest way to lose was to succumb to the reality of the dream. If she allowed herself to accept the reality he created, she would become subject to it—imprisoned by it. She was about to learn one of the fundamental differences between men and gods. Demons were natives of a surreal environment, and thus quite at home in dreams. They were also adept at creating and shaping worlds. He would work on seducing her with a believable world, and she had to counter by making it surreal.

Morgan had no idea how absorbed in this effort she became, losing more than a day fighting the demon within.

Morgan had no intention of surrendering to her infections just because she could not risk fighting them. Even without the threat the demon posed, she realized that fighting both infections directly would have quickly exhausted her and their combined, unopposed effect would have killed her soon after. Her chances of surviving were greater if she could regulate the infections, allowing them to run their course but employing her resources to control 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. Instead, she had to trust that her natural regeneration would be enough to at least stall the progress of the infections while she attempted to escape from her sires and reach the temple of the goddess in the hope of receiving a proper cure.

Ironically, the strongest of the abilities manifested by Morgan during her childhood ordeal was natural regeneration, which by itself was sufficient to assimilate the were-tiger and vampire infections. Her regeneration served as the catalyst to make her a hybrid vampire-were-tiger.

The initial result of her turning left Morgan on the cusp of life and death. Depending on her level of arousal, her altered body could take on a perfect semblance of life or death. As Morgan adjusted to her ability to become morbid or vital, she discovered her lust for flesh and blood, her hunger and thirst. While normal food and drink were enough to sustain her the way she was, nothing she was accustomed to consuming would satisfy those cravings.

By the time she emerged from the ruins and set off for the sanctuary of the goddess, she was already feeling the emergence of hunger and thirst as the price of her gradual transformation began to assert itself. When her need to hunt became overpowering, Morgan fell prey to the influence of her inner demon. First her vampiric nature took over, and she set out into the night in pursuit of prey. As she stalked through the forest, her metamorphic nature came into play, her body and senses shifting gradually to those of a feline predator. Somewhere in the dead of night, she took down a stag and began feeding, gaining warmth and vitality from the blood she drank, and then devouring her prey's flesh to fill the aching void that had evolved somewhere within her. By indulging her need to hunt, Morgan had deviated from her determined path. Morgan's prey had lured 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 what she had changed into during her hunt. 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 dragged Morgan to shelter reminding her of the impending dawn, while the tiger simply observed in silence, waiting to see what Morgan would do with her new immortality.

Her escape was an abysmal failure and the only thing she accomplished was to turn herself into a hybrid vampire-were-tiger. In spite of this, she continued to resist, trying to preserve her humanity while her sires debated over the significance of the outcome of their wager and instructed her in what she had become.

It did not take long for Morgan to realize that she had no choice but to feed, though she found she could exploit her new animal form to hunt and feed on forest stags. Once she seemed to have adjusted to her new life, she was permitted to … the ruins … but she faced obstacles … For one, she could no longer venture out in daylight, but more annoyingly, she found herself being set up as the embodiment of Ruin's Deep. It was not so much that she had been chosen to rule, as she had become the symbol of rule. Thus, to claim Ruin's Deep, it was necessary to conquer her.

So, once again, her only option was to escape and her thoughts turned back to the prospect of a cure. Which she found much easier to do in her new state. The only problem was, a party of brigands with a score to settle caught her alone in the pale of night and tried to gang rape her.

The fight aroused Morgan's hunger and thirst, and the next thing she knew she was standing naked over the scraps of her feeding frenzy. Traumatized by what she had done, she wandered to an isolated spot and stood there waiting for the sun to rise.

As horrible as her actions were to her, she did not want to die so much as she believed it was necessary for her to die, while she could still possessed enough humanity to understand her crime. It took everything she had to stand there as the sun engulfed her.

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.

Sated, she fell asleep, reverting to her former self in the early morning light.

To her surprise, after overcoming the shock of waking up naked under a sunlit sky, Morgan discovered that she was back to normal. The sunlight did not stir up flames within her flesh. She was not slipping into a deathlike state when distracted or morose. She did not have to work herself up to remain lively. She tried to return to her former life, but as the day progressed, the hunger and thirst gradually resurfaced.

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Note: this inner conflict would easily bring to mind the Matrix or the Lathe of Heaven, and by the conclusion of the story leave the reader wondering if Morgan won and woke up to her miraculous survival, or lost and accepted a dream as her reality. Her nemesis would taunt her about this, undermining her belief in herself and her purpose.

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Looking back to one of the oldest influences on the evolution of this character, the first step in her life of adventure was the tragic death of her lover. That element survived as the tragic theft of her lover's body. However, the plot evolved to feature her death and rebirth, diminishing the prospects of a quest to recover the lover's body. So, once again the original impulse proves to be correct.

On the night she opened herself completely to her lover, the demon within her took possession of his body and tried to kill her, forcing her to slay her lover to survive. The natural consequences of that are her arrest, imprisonment, and trial. It slightly alters the dynamic of the whole plot, in which her objective is not an attempt to rescue her lover, but a desperate attempt to prove her innocence. Escaping from prison and imminent execution, Morgan approaches her mentors among the Order of the Ruins for help acquiring proof of demonic influence from within the ruins. However, the process of acquitting herself starts with acquiring evidence to support the story of her abduction and information leading to the part of the ruins where she was offered to the demon. This advice comes from her mentor in crime, who urges her to lose herself in the underworld if she does not want to be dragged to the chopping block. Unaware that the man who was responsible for arranging her childhood abduction was a vampire, in league with the necromancer and demonologist that offered her to the demon, she broke in to his mansion and stole the information she needed.

Morgan was on the run. She had been declared a demon, convicted of the murder of Logan and Morgan, and condemned to death. She escaped on the eve of her execution and sailed to Avon where her only hope of proving her innocence was buried. For the first time, the mistakes of her childhood were going to help her, providing her with one crucial contact with the underworld. Unfortunately, there was much more to the underworld than organized crime, and her path led her right into the heart of a deadly feud.

Her bloody metamorphosis

Her trial and sentence

Her reprieve

Her shady past

Her appeals

Her paramours

Her death

Her unexpected rebirth

Her hunger and thirst

Her hope and despair

Her destruction

It was assumed that, even if she were to save her lover, their relationship was usurped by what Morgan had become. Morgan had never confided that she carried his soul within her, that he was as tainted by her experiences as she was. If it came to it, she would infect her lover with her hybrid venom, if it allowed them to be a couple again. Her sires feared she might do just that, and they intended to stake their claim to her first.

Feuding Houses <…>

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.

True Parents <…>

Morgan could have been born a fairly normal girl, the daughter of muse and an artist. Unfortunately, her mother had not been a normal muse, nor her father a normal artist. Her parents, born into rival houses, were recruited and trained as agents of their houses. Her mother was also a maiden of Arden and her father a monk of Arduin, or in common terms, a witch and a witch hunter. Both of Morgan’s parents had possessed the talent and potential for advanced magic, but neither exiled house could openly sponsor them to the academy and both failed to convince House Avon to do so in their behalf. This nearly prevented them from receiving formal training, in spite of testing higher than their peers. Fortunately, the academy prized such talented children and wasted no time in recruiting them.

The same potential that prompted the academy to sponsor them itself drew the attention of an agent of the Cult of Morduin. The cult had arisen among the general populace and branched out during the purge prompted by the persecution of conjurors following the rise of magery. A cell of the cult dedicated to the resurrection of Morduin based itself in Avon, with agents placed in the service of House Avon, like the one who identified her parents as the means to create a suitable sacrifice to free the demon from its prison. Their god, Morduin, had sired the demon and angel who became the god Arduin and the goddess Arden. While appearing human, the god and goddess had passed on a genetic legacy originating in part from Morduin. If the right elements combined in one of their human descendants, that child’s body would be an acceptable vessel for the demon. In specific, this child was supposed to manifest the elemental sex. Agents were charged with ensuring they would produce a child together. Unfortunately, Morgan's parents were raised to believe that they were enemies fighting against each other for the restoration of their native houses.

Morgan’s parents were both conditioned to conceal their true affiliations, so initially there was no obstacle to their friendship when they encountered each other at the academy. The teachings of the academy also encouraged them to overcome their prejudices. As their intimacy grew, however, it became inevitable for them to confide in each other. Inevitably, her parents had learned the truth about each other. By that time, they had already become an accomplished team, an artist and a muse paired by the academy by virtue of their extraordinary compatibility. In addition, they had become protégés of a powerful Ardean psychic who taught them a few things even the academy remained ignorant of. The revelation of a common foundation for antagonistic schools of magic, which played a part in the feud between their houses, helped them overcome the last remnants of their natural enmity—and partially accounts for the untimely and inconvenient outcome of their union. At the time of her conception, Morgan’s parents had joined forces with their mentor against a wizard, a man who had mastered conjury, magery and sorcery and was determined to establish a new order in which most people would be subordinate to those more evolved; psychics like himself. A former colleague of the Athean wizard, their mentor was firmly opposed to the wizard’s radical agenda.

Morgan’s parents were forced to pool their resources as an artist and a muse to an exceptional degree to survive a battle with their mentor’s nemesis. Their intimacy, immediately following, burned away the remaining obstacles between them, triggering the conception and manifestation of Morgan. They were effectively overshadowed by Morgan, but remained capable of offering assistance and advice from within her mind during the ordeal that followed her birth, nudging her toward their mentor for the material aid and patronage she required.

A Mentor and his Adversary <…>

The two men had experienced similar revelations, though the lives they lived were very different. The wizard’s mother had been abducted in a raid on her Athean village and sold into slavery. Born into slavery, the wizard was rescued and sponsored to the academy by one of its instructors. There, he augmented his official training in sorcery with an illicit study of conjury and magery using the academy’s restricted archives. The discipline of his studies granted him control of the wild and unpredictable psychic gifts he’s already possessed. It also suggested a path of continued exploration to prove his emerging theories about psychic ability. The other man was a natural psychic, the son of a wealthy Ardean widow who unwittingly alienated him by marrying an impoverished noble who took control of the family fortune and sent him away to a military academy. He made the best of the opportunities that schooling gave him, even though it offered little to stimulate his psychic talents—in fact forcing him to conceal them to the best of his ability. Though never tested for magical aptitude, like any other prospective soldier his training included an analytical study of magic and its combat applications, presenting him the opportunity to observe the truth about magic. Like the Athean, he had realized that magic was simply a mechanism that enabled humans to tap into their latent psychic potential and use it to influence the world. By nature, everyone was psychic, but few individuals had the sophistication or integrity necessary to do more than reinforce the consensus of reality. In fact, most people had very limited aptitude for even magic. In each successive age of magic, the percentage of people with sufficient aptitude to practice magic had increased dramatically, and the number able to master magic had easily doubled in the transition from conjury to magery and from magery to sorcery. Having traced the origins of magic to the interference of the old gods, the Ardean became an adventurer, seeking out the hidden gods and any remnants of their ancient civilization in the hopes of confirming what he found implicit in the existence of psychic ability. Thus, it was inevitable the Athean and the Ardean would eventually cross paths. Initially they were ecstatic, eager to collaborate with one another. They forged a friendship that would survive even the strain of becoming enemies as a result of their differing ideals and methods.

Following his break with the wizard, her mentor had sought to alert various authorities to the danger the wizard, and a number of other gifted entities he had encountered, posed to the world at large. From the goddess, he had received the assistance of one of her champions, the child’s mother. From the church, he had received various degrees of support including the assignment of one of it’s paladins, the child’s father. From the Throne of Arden, he received both a knighthood and a commission to form an elite corps to investigate and prosecute such threats. From the Academies, he received some of the finest graduates suited to his elite corps, plus certification and teaching credentials to establish a special branch academy for the training of psychics.

At one point, it seemed that they had succeeded in killing the Athean wizard during a mission, but among his remains, the one of them 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 Morgan’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. Unfortunately, his host’s betrothed had won her affections as well. 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. During a liaison with his lover, Logan—the male Morgan’s alias—conceived himself, triggering a reflexive conception of Morgan as she asserted herself in instinctive self defense. The true consequences of that night were buried as the adversary inexplicably broke off “her” engagement and fled from the school. As Logan’s mother, the adversary named the boy after his father, mystified by his flight from her bed after inexplicably turning female, unaware that Morgan’s daughter was named after Morgan too, as Morganna.

A Surrogate Father <…>

Her father was only a few years older than her mother, yet he had turned out to have been a widowed man with several children. Unfortunately, he was convinced that she had conceived his child. He insisted upon marriage, but her mother was forced to refuse because of her official calling. As a courtesan, any child she gave a man was still considered a legitimate, if embarrassing addition to her father’s line even without marriage. As her mother’s eldest daughter—her mother had twins by another man a few years later—she was also considered the heir to her mother’s mantle, an honor she would eagerly have passed on to her younger sisters. It was odd, being at once her parents only, her mother’s eldest and her father’s youngest, daughter.

A Singular Duality <…>

Logan and Morgan first met at age seven when they were presented for Initiation. Their resemblance was dismissed as the result of generations of effort to breed girls with specific characteristics to serve as courtesans. Sharing the same name and such physical similarity, the children dubbed each other Logan and Morgan. They experienced a profound connection neither could fully comprehend. The rapport they experienced was dampened by the shock of Morgan's traumatic ordeal several days later. When she was seven, Morgan was abducted and offered as a sacrifice to a demon. Morgan was forced to allow herself to be slain to protect Morganna. In light of the situation that had developed, Morgan realized her death was imminent. What she did not know was that this would cause her psyche to be divided between the boy and girl, awaiting the day they became lovers and consummated their union. Following the crisis, Morgan became the protégé of the Ardean psychic. Outside his private tutelage, she continued to pursue 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.

While lessons in conjury, magery 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 the girl of every shred of modesty—conveniently provoking the protective instincts of her fellow initiate, Logan. Unsurprisingly, they became instant, intimate friends, their partnership spiced by good-natured rivalry and uncanny chemistry. Given the closeness of Logan and Morgan, the children were left ignorant of the engagement, both to keep the sisterhood ignorant of the commitment until the last minute and to allow nature to take its course in welding the pair into a couple.

Because of their compatibility, their master 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 crime, Morgan's identification with street orphans—as an orphan herself—combined with challenges against her gender and ability to make her, unwittingly at first, into a cat burglar. Once she got in over her head, Logan was drawn into the shadows, compromising himself willingly in order to help her. Together, they were able to extract themselves from their criminal careers, 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 cadets, were occasionally called on to help the soldiers complete a mission, and occasionally the cadets were the only ones suited to a mission. As time passed, Morgan’s preparation to assume her mother's mantle, as paladin of the goddess, became an even greater priority. This came directly into conflict with her betrothal to Logan, arranged before either was born—back when it was assumed she would never be called to serve in her mother's stead.

The couple’s training had served to help the demon within them to recover, but even as their initiation neared its end, and the demon became whole, it remained trapped in depths between their divided minds. In order for it to assert itself, they had to become a singular being, a gestalt of the individuals they had become. That was an intimacy greater than they had working in rapport or while making love. Soon enough, the pair became first rank initiates facing the final year of training and testing. They also were confronted with their betrothal and were formally engaged. While understanding that marriage would cost Morgan her calling, and result in Logan inheriting Morgan's legacy, the estates titles claimed by her mother and held in trust for her, the fact was that they were in love and certainly had been lovers. Something neither fully examined was the nature of their attraction. They both felt that the other made them complete, and that there was a magnetism between them that was overwhelmingly irresistible. To Logan, Morgan was the reason for his existence. He would die for her without hesitation. However, when they graduated and indulged in total intercourse, the demon was finally free to act. Fortunately, Morgan was be resurrected along with the demon she sacrificed herself to thwart.

In a short, desperate struggle, it attempted to take possession only to discover it could only claim one of their bodies--and doing so caused the gestalt to shift entirely into the other. In that moment, Morgan would be forced to chose her default sex by choosing which body to surrender to her nemesis. It claimed the male form instinctively, as the stronger vessel. To ensure its escape, the demon attempted to kill the female--but she had been trained too well. Before Morgan could sort out what was happening, she had defended herself with lethal force. Having acquired a body, however, death was no great obstacle for the demon, and it offered some advantages. For one thing, it obscured the demon’s resurrection, allowing it to slip into the shadows and begin putting plans in motion. He had all to little time to take advantage of the situation, as it related to Morgan, before his own agents finally retaliated for his presumed destruction. To avenge their master, they had set out to make an example of Morgan, not simply slaughtering her, but attempting to inflict an eternal death.

Note

It is sufficient for Morduin to take flight, leaving Morgan to sort out her identity. Also, while the notes above suggest Logan and Morgan grew up and trained together constantly, the option is there for them to be separated and taken under the wings of their father and mother respectively for specialized training.

Establishment is there for the friend to appeal to them for help embracing the female identity he possesses—the girl reincarnated as a boy by the adversary. It is notable, however, that limits have to be placed on their experimentation—for the most part Logan and Morgan are predominantly male and female minded up to the point where they merge, after which point they, or rather, Morgan, struggle with their sexuality and gender before coping with their shared existence. Also, the inheritance of Morgan’s memory only brings second hand experience. Depth is added, and the experiences are there, but time is required to assimilate them. She operates as a gestalt, one identity rooted in three perspectives. It works best if she does not have access to her metamorphic potential, if she is compelled to think of herself as Morgan with the memories of her lover and other odd bits of experience imprinted in her mind. It helps for her to fear that Logan might well be possessed or lost entirely. She is sensitive to the fact that his voice in her originates from somewhere within herself. As if he has become the voice of her conscience, as if her memory of him is all she has left of him.

Muting the ordeal of Logan and Morgan’s union and emphasizing the elements of the wager and Morgan’s transformation would serve the story of Hunger & Thirst better. The opening act would build on the escape of Morduin, by presenting the aftermath of Logan and Morgan’s union. Morgan would be sorting out the impressions of Logan upon her psyche, uncertain of the exact consequences of such an intense union, a sense of him becoming a permanent part of her combined with a sense of having lost him forever compounded by his inexplicable departure. Her fear, in the face of his absence, was that they had gone too far, and that it had driven him away. Thus, the proceeds into the story facing the prospect of being alone, scarred by their intimacy and the changes it wrought in her, unable to open up to another. Her friends, hoping to distract her from what seemed to be a traumatic break up, come up with the idea of taking her out to a party. Unknown to her, the union also began to unlock potential she had never tapped before. The echoes of her lover, the essence of his counsel, only aggravates the situation—pouring salt into her wounds while offering unbearable comfort. She imagines him tortured by echoes of her in his mind, torturing herself with the thought that he fled from her in part because she had become inescapably part of him. As he had described it, it was as if he had been ripped from his own body and thrust into hers, trapped in it with her. At the party, it is the presence of him in her mind, sharing her every experience with him, that drives her to submit to the attentions of the two men who seduce her away from the party. Too late, her instincts warn her that her admirers appetites exceed those of mere men. Breaking the spell enthralling her, she fights for her life. All her skill and power is not enough to break their hold, but her struggle distracted them from their simple objective of feeding. To her horror, they laugh at her, noticing that in her struggle she took a few bites out of both of them, consumed a bit of tainted flesh and blood even as she sustained mortal wounds trying to escape. As they mocked her, or praised her for braving a worse death, she realized she was dying and in dying she faced a fate worse than death. Only on the verge of death was one at risk of being turned by their kind, and while they were immune to each other’s curses, the combined effect of both curses promised, not only death, but eternal death. Futile as it was, she continued to fight, and the ghost of her lover fought with her, sacrificing what remained of his independence and individuality in a desperate hope of healing her.

Pulled : Second Pass

The timing was unfortunate, because Morgan had succumbed to the advances of her other paramour the night before. Discovery of her condition prompted him to assume responsibility for her impregnation. Initially, Morgan had no reason to disbelieve him, since her impregnation seemed a reasonable explanation for her sudden and permanent shift to female form. Because he publicly took responsibility, the adversary was able to conceal “her” own pregnancy by simply excusing herself and bearing her son in secret. Whatever the adversary had been, the experience of motherhood undeniably changed her, and possessing a child of Morgan was enough to reward her efforts. She named the boy after his real father, devoting herself to cultivating his exceptional psychic potential posing as his mother—until his father arrived to take the boy under his wing.

The adversary’s victim, a peer of Morgan’s parents, was reincarnated in male form simply as a convenient way to dismiss her from the situation and free the adversary of her presence once he had assimilated enough information from her to perfect his pose. She had been promised to Morgan’s other lover when they were children, but they had resisted the notion of marrying each other. They had instead pursued the artist and muse who were fused to create Morgan. While Morgan was a different person from them, she remained the focus of their attention. The adversary intended to exploit the situation, using his position to seduce her away from his nemesis.