Childhood Elements

Dusk and Dawn first met at age seven when they were presented for Initiation. They experienced a profound connection neither could fully comprehend. The rapport they experienced was dampened by the shock of Dawn's traumatic ordeal several days later. Dawn was abducted and offered as a sacrifice to a demon, and witnessed the death of her mother, when she attempted to rescue her. Following her mother's death, her 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 Dusk, arranged before either was born—back when it was assumed she would never be called to serve in her mother's stead. Given the closeness of Dusk and Dawn, 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.

Dawn'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, Dusk. Unsurprisingly, they became instant, intimate friends, their partnership spiced by good-natured rivalry and uncanny chemistry. 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, Dawn'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, Dusk 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.

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 Dawn her calling, and result in Dusk inheriting Dawn'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 Dusk, Dawn was the reason for his existence. He would die for her without hesitation. Unfortunately, she also aroused something alien and bestial in him, something that hungered desperately to devour her alive. One dark night, that compulsion caused him to shed his humanity. Dawn's love for him, her faith in him, compelled her to sacrifice herself to the dragon he had become.

# There has been a gender/identity conflict aspect to the story from the earliest impulses. A solution, or method of portraying it, could be found in the treatment of Dusk and Dawn, aka the Dragon and the Phoenix. In essence, Dusk originates in the outer world, and Dawn is an incarnation engendered in the inner world. The Phoenix begins as an artificial intelligence, and evolves to recognize the soul she exists within—realizing she has evolved within the soul of the Dragon. Unfortunately, her intention had been to capture and incorporate her own soul, so Dawn had already been conceived when she realized the truth. Dusk, as a player character, was simply a construct controlled by the Dragon, or as his surrogate, the Phoenix—or more specifically the automated persona she supervised in her capacity as the game’s administrator. When the demon assaults the Dragon’s mind, attempting to possess a body in the outer world, his psyche is transferred into Dawn, in part because the demon attacks through her, and in part because their shared soul facilitated it.

# Project Development · Design

Core · The Threshold

The Eve of Paradox

1 Dawn reaches the end of her initiation

• Dawn arrives in Dream Gate to face her final test, and her childhood nightmares

• Dawn encounters Dusk, a discussion on the demon threat

2 Dawn reaches the end of her initiation

• Dawn follows Dusk beyond the limits of her world

• Dawn becomes lost on the Threshold

3 Dawn reaches the end of her initiation

• Dawn confronts her Regent, witnesses an argument between her mentor and the Regent

• Dusk asks Dawn to join a demon hunt

4 Dawn reaches the end of her initiation

• Dawn is ambushed by the demons they intended to hunt

• Dawn is arrested, tried and acquitted

5 Dawn completes her initiation

• Dawn and Dusk begin their ordeal, three nights in the ruins of Death Gate

• Dawn and Dusk reach the heart of the ruins and an entrance to the depths

6 Dawn completes her initiation

• Dawn and Dusk discover the presence of an unresolved paradox, and the legacy of ancient magic

• Dawn and Dusk struggle, with their companions, to survive for three nights

7 The Demon splits Dawn

• Dawn becomes separated from the group and is forced to endure a night alone

• The Demon exploits an ancient portal as Dawn crosses it, twinning her, and takes possession of one twin\*

• The Demon emerges from the ruins as Eve, Dawn and Dusk emerge from the ordeal, shaken and sober

\* Many alternatives for this break exist, including the demon’s attempt to consume her from within using her own power, and prompting Dawn’s resurrection. It is also plausible to employ the wager thread.

8 The Demon splits Dawn

• Eve is ambushed, bathed, dressed and presented to the Court as Dawn

• Dawn confronts Eve

• Dawn is named Paladin of the Goddess

9 Dawn consults the Goddess

• Dawn and Eve become acquainted

• Dawn is summoned before the Goddess

• Dawn learns the history of the Purge and the birth of the empire

10 Dawn consults the Goddess

• Dawn begins an investigation of the Purge

• Dawn retains her Regent, who takes an interest in Eve

• Dawn assesses the state of the Reconstruction

11 Dawn consults the Goddess

• Dawn consults with Dusk about the Purge, and the involvement of demons

• Dawn is introduced to the Emperor, by way of meeting Dusk’s family

• Dawn learns the true story of the Conquest of the Autumn Domains and the Silent Invasion

12 Dawn resolves to face Death Gate again

• Eve is confronted by Dawn’s Regent

• Dawn is confronted by the Magus

• Dawn sends word to her allies

13 Dawn resolves to face Death Gate again

• Dawn arrives in Death Gate

• Eve allows the Regent to seduce her into a plot against Dawn

• Dawn finds a guide, and source of information on Death Gate

14 Dawn resolves to face Death Gate again

• Dawn petitions for a hunt

• Dawn receives an official commission to hunt Dragon’s Gate

• Eve challenges Dawn’s claim before the Court

15 Dawn resolves to face Death Gate again

• Dawn assembles a party

• Dawn is called away from Death Gate to answer Eve’s challenge

• Dawn is forced to explain her past

16 Dawn resolves to face Death Gate again

• Dawn scandalizes the Court and Eve’s challenge becomes a duel

• Dawn defeats Eve, then demands an explanation

• Dawn confronts her Regent

17 Dawn resolves to face Death Gate again

• Dawn’s Regent plays her last card, Dusk and Dawn’s betrothal

• Dusk and Dawn are forced to marry

• The wedding bed is haunted by her nightmares

18 Dusk returns to Death Gate

• Eve, posing as Dawn, tricks Dusk into leaving

• Dusk investigates the history of the massacre

• Dusk learns of the dragon catacombs

19 Dusk returns to Death Gate

• Dusk discovers recent and extensive use of the catacombs

• Eve prepares a trap for Dawn

• Dawn discovers Dusk has gone ahead

20 Dusk returns to Death Gate

• Eve changes her plans, alerting her master to Dawn’s intentions

• Dawn leaves to rejoin Dusk

• Dawn rejoins Dusk

21 Dusk returns to Death Gate

• Eve receives her final orders from her master

• Dusk and Dawn return to Death Gate

• The guide leads them in through the depths

22 Dusk returns to Death Gate

• Dusk and Dawn discover the dormant armies of demons and undead

• Eve follows their trail, enters the ruins and begins stalking them

• Eve’s master summons the Cabal

23 Dusk returns to Death Gate

• Dusk and Dawn send warning, calling for the Dragon and Phoenix Armies to assemble

• Eve confronts Dawn

• Eve strips Dawn, dumps her down a darkened shaft and resumes stalking Dusk

24 Eve seduces Dusk

• Dawn is revived by the water flooding the shaft

• Dawn cannot warn anyone except in person

• Eve poses as Dawn and lures Dusk to bed, striking in the moment of passion

25 The Demon possesses Dusk

• Dusk becomes Dawn’s twin

• Dawn confronts the Demon in Dusk’s body, almost falling for the deception

• Dawn confronts Dusk, they turn on the Demon

26 The Demon possesses Dusk

• The Demon logs out

• Dusk and Dawn meet the assembled armies to lead them back to the ruins

• The champions assemble with the warlord, his generals and the maestros

27 The Demon possesses Dusk

• The Cabal unleashes demonic and undead armies

• Dawn leads the Phoenix Army into the ruins to destroy the Cabal

• The Demon fulfills the Cabal’s final command

28 The Demon destroys the Phoenix

• Dawn collapses and is captured by the Cabal

• Dusk summons the Magus

• Dusk, and an elite battalion, lead the Magus into the heart of the ruins

29 The Eve of Paradox

• The Cabal attempts to summon a greater demon

• The Magus confronts the Cabal, Dawn lashes out against her captors with unprecedented power

• Reality shatters and a rift manifests

30 The Eve of Paradox

• The demonic forces suddenly scatter, the armies are forced to retreat from the rift

• Dusk manages to arrest the rift

• The Magus captures the Cabal, led by his protégé, and Magus of the Second Art

31 The Eve of Paradox

• Dawn stumbles out of the ruin, stunned and confused

• Dusk learns the Demon’s origins and purpose

• Dusk discovers the mission of the demonic legions

32 Dusk sends Dawn across the Threshold

• Dusk calls Dawn in and explains what he has learned

• The immortals offer to aid in the demon hunt

• Dawn reveals the death of the Goddess

33 Dusk sends Dawn across the Threshold

• The Immortals reveal their ancestors’ plan to attack the gods

• Dawn volunteers to pursue the Demon

• Dawn crosses the Threshold