tangles

the first two points in contention are the option of the boy and the girl being inner and outer aspects of the same person and the option of the girl’s life being looped back on itself twice in a ten year period by the same rift event. the only way to debate either option is by sketching out how they work. the next point in contention presents itself as a consequence of exploring either or both of those options, requiring a closer look at the role of the previous host.

the first option

the idea of basing the boy’s life on the author’s has come up repeatedly, and on closer examination, favors the possibility of the girl being a manifestation of his repressed inner self within his inner realm. little about the establishment of the inner realm truly changes, since the boy and the girl are still embodiments of the soul that inspired the phoenix angel.

the boy’s origins on earth can be coincidental, a soul disconnected from its spirit and subjected to random incarnation that is forced to find itself in the face of uncertainty. on the other hand, the boy’s incarnation could be the result of deliberate plotting on the part of a host, or even the focus. the girl’s origins on aeirn are a bit paradoxical, a portion of the future bent to fulfill the will of a soul denied a foundation in the past. the girl is a manifestation of the boy’s inner self.

in a sense, the girl conceives of herself, but the process involves first confronting the boy, accommodating—and even taking advantage of—his transformation into a tomboy, gaining possession of the tomboy’s body and—when she reincarnates the tomboy—conceiving herself. in the first option, this becomes possible as a consequence of the demon possessing the boy in the outer realm. on the threshold, the boy would confront the focus and a conflict among the former hosts.

there is a potential story in that alone, but ultimately the boy would be encouraged to hide in a splinter of the inner realm—or as the natives perceived it, one of the shattered realms—until replaced as the living host. there are a couple of adjustments needed to make this approach work and remain compatible with other developed threads. the boy would benefit most from being introduced as a seven-year-old and initiated at the academy, but he would not choose to be a boy.

the decision to introduce him to the world as a seven-year-old boy would have to be made by someone else on his behalf. that would be possible if his psyche was scarred by his initial possession or surviving an assault on the threshold. in which case, the boy would have to repeat or at least continue the soul searching of his former life, while taking advantage of his initiation to redefine himself. his arrival on aeirn gives the girl a clear point in time she can go to when she is caught on the brink of eternity in the rift. the boy and the girl would have time to become established in the world around them before encountering each other and becoming involved.

there is an alternative to introducing the boy as a seven-year-old at the bottom of the loop. as in the avatars thread, the boy could be introduced just shy of seventeen at the top of the loop. instead of a father, he would initially be under the wing of the focus. due to the fact that he had been born and raised a boy on earth, the focus would encourage him to remain a boy, but the power he gained as a host allows him to embody his inner self. on encountering the natives, the boy would have reason to adapt his history to fit their world, so threads presenting his past as a native could work as part of his cover story.

the second option

the critical difference between the singular and dual loop paradoxes is that one loop permits the girl to play out the role of her mother, while the second also permits the girl to have the role of her mentor as well. the benefit of the second loop is that the girl can witness her childhood during the loop from daughter to mother and confront the paradox almost from the beginning. making that work is the trick.

of particular note, the dual loop allows the girl to participate in the events leading up to the tragedy she investigates. the inheritance thread becomes a little trickier. the evolved threads depend on the complications of the claim as she comes of age, and the basis of that claim is established by the daughter’s possession of the ring. a minor adjustment to the original thread, entering and taking possession of the estate on behalf of—or given the circumstances, as part of a mission to rescue—her protégé.

the girl would have to confront the paradox when her investigation leads to her involvement in the traumatic events of her childhood. unable to take her past for granted, she is forced to step into the role of mentor and mother to younger versions of herself. while she is able to seize the estate, find the girl and establish herself as her mentor and guardian, she is unable to prevent the authorities from imposing the hostile regent that plagued her girlhood.

in the role of mentor, the girl cannot avoid being drawn into adventures and conflicts that leave her younger self vulnerable to the unpleasant misadventures that helped make the girl who she is. fortunately, there is a relatively clear picture of the events the girl and her younger self face in the ten year loop. the point where the girl becomes her mother is the point where she reincarnates the tomboy. the basis for that is established in the events leading up to the eve of paradox.

it becomes possible for the girl to become her mother after she gains possession of the tomboy’s body—the body the boy created to be the person he—or rather, she—wanted to be. as a result, the second option is fully compatible with the first option. without the loop paradoxes, the first option would simply be a way of establishing the boy and girl as simultaneous incarnations of the same person. but, the story is not really about choosing to be a boy or a girl as much as it is a study of an individual who looks beyond facts for the truth, who chooses not to take existence for granted. it is the story of a person discovering who she is and asserting herself.

combined options - the previous host

through the evolution of various threads, there have been hints and premonitions of the role the previous host could play in lives of the boy and the girl. for his own part, he was possessed by the demon and found himself upon the threshold among the inner gods. his longing for the life he had been torn from, his fear of the harm the demon could do in his place and the conflict among the inner gods all compelled him to confront the demon.

given time, he might have come up with the idea, but from the beginning he would have been willing to participate in a plot intended to neutralize the demon by engineering an incarnation of the demon’s soul—and if he did, then the boy would have been incarnated in the previous host’s image. the plot might have been intended to remove an obstacle from the path of an individual intent on conquering the demon to claim dominion over the inner realm. it could just be part of a bigger plot; using the demon’s soul as bait to lure it into the inner realm.

aside from any other outcomes, the situation establishes the boy as a twin of the previous host. it provides all the justification needed to bring the boy and the previous host together. it conforms to one of the oldest inspirations in the project; confronting the girl with twin suitors, in love with one, engaged to the other. though the previous host would have been cut off from his original body by the boy’s possession, the boy’s body on earth would be a decent replacement.

focused on confronting the demon, the previous host would have been distant and distracted, treating the girl as a friend, taking her for granted as one of the guys, completely oblivious to her deeper feelings for him. the girl would have been fascinated by his long lost twin, and the boy was obviously very interested in her. the girl’s involvement with the boy threatens—and is threatened by—her engagement to the previous host. the forbidden relationship offers reasonable cause for some to suspect the girl would be willing to kill her fiancé.

assuming the boy is introduced to aeirn early enough, obligated to maintain a male identity, his relationships with other characters have a little time to develop, preserving threads suitable to the cultivation of a romantic relationship and engagement in a short period prior to his transformation. threads featuring his involvement earlier in the girl’s life, might be shifted onto other individuals in her life. the friction between the boy and the previous host could easily be sparked by the fact that the boy’s possession cost the previous host his chance to return to his former life—and aggravated by their mutual interest in the girl.

combined options - the slain lover

the dynamics of the slain lover thread shift in the following way. the boy is recognized as the previous host’s twin, and a rival for the girl’s affection. as a girl, the tomboy can go unnoticed by posing as the girl, rather than being publically recognized as her twin. it also forces the tomboy to endure the previous host’s attempts to seduce her until her only defense is to reveal that she is the boy. the previous host drags the full story out of her and decides that the tomboy is really a girl; under the circumstances, a girl he has fallen in love with. the tomboy finally admits that she is in love with him.

unfortunately, the demon has by this time concluded that the tomboy is the soul it has been seeking for ages and figured out a way to force her to embrace it. to provoke the girl into taking possession of it, the demon takes full possession of the tomboy and attempts to kill her lover. having trained to fight demons, the previous host uses a ward of exorcism to force it out of the tomboy’s body. the demon keeps possession of the tomboy’s soul when it is evicted from her body with no choice but to take possession of her lover.

finding himself back upon the threshold, the previous host confronts the tomboy. realizing that their presence on the threshold meant the demon of the realm was now within the realm, the previous host took the tomboy with him to warn the focus—suspecting this had been the true objective of a “failed” attempt to neutralize the demon and return to his old life.

meanwhile, in the body of the tomboy’s lover, the demon seeks out the tomboy’s next loved one, the girl. in a nightmare, the girl seems to witness the tomboy’s possession. the girl rushes out to find the tomboy, tracking down her comatose body and taking it to her mentor. to find out what happened, the girl goes looking for the person the tomboy was supposed to have been with, the previous host.

the demon confronted and captured the girl, torturing and raping her to provoke the tomboy. unfortunately, it also provoked the demon within the girl. when the tomboy took possession of the demon of the realm, the demon within surged forward, possessing the girl, slaying the incarnation of the previous host, and leaving, walking the streets stark naked until confronted by the authorities.

depending on the other needs of the story, threads featuring the girl’s arrest, examination and banishment to the pale can be partially or fully developed. in most versions of the demon within thread, the demon within is only able to surface for brief periods. the presence of the demon within made it impossible for the girl to prove she was not a demon pretending to be her.

the dragon within

older threads—dealing with the girl’s imprisonment on an outlaw island, where she is pursued by the possessed—can support the massacre thread where it is weakest. the architects of the massacre would have become interested in recruiting or conscripting the girl from the moment they heard the girl was believed to be possessed. they would confirm the presence of the demon from within the ring and learn that she was suppressing it somehow. their attempts to break her, or at least force her to carry her demon to its target, already feature in the predators and prey thread.

the eve of paradox developed around a plot against the focus, with the goddess envisioned as the focus. with the dragon as the focus, the dragon confronts the girl while she is being dragged through the ruins as a captive of the possessed. from that point, events lead rapidly into sync with the events of the massacre. so, the daughter’s testing falls before the peak of the slain lover thread. the massacre could be promoted by what the possessed learn from trying to break the girl.

when the focus probes the girl’s mind, the demon within strikes. sensing what it could do to him, the focus did the only thing it could think of to neutralize the demon; he roused the girl’s dragon. the potential that would make the girl a dragon woke hungry for her flesh and dreamed a form to hunt for it. her dragon manifested in the pale and began searching for her possessed body.

things the girl learned from her investigation—before and after probing the underworld during trials—and confided to her mentor were enough to convince the order to mount an expedition. the expedition force was being assembled at the estate. on the eve of the massacre, the girl’s personal effects were turned over to her mentor—among them, the ring.

in one of the nightmares—and the thread it was based on—the girl was pursued by a dragon, presenting the scenario responsible for displacing the girl’s dragon. it is simply caught up in the same rift, and ends up chasing her into the depths of the underworld. once it loses track of the girl, it finds its way out and wanders until it is confronted by the focus.

the massacre and the eve of paradox

the demon within is the thread that unites the massacre and the eve of paradox. unfortunately, it was never entirely clear how it would do so. the ring emerged as the device that brings them together, found by the girl when she arrived in her past, used to establish her claim to an estate and title, loaned to the tomboy posing as the girl, stolen and exploited in a plot against the focus. in a singular loop, the girl carries the ring until the demon within is unleashed during the massacre, passing from mother to daughter, hiding within the girl until it can strike at the focus.

part of the uncertainty lies in the placement of the predator and prey—or dragon within—thread. when confronted by the demon within, the focus unleashes the potential of the dragon within the girl. hunted by her inner dragon, the girl uses it to take out the others who are hunting her. when her dragon finally catches up to the girl, her only refuge is the tomboy’s discarded body. a similar devouring has cropped up in the massacre thread, as a nightmare version of witnessing her mother’s death.

that nightmare can easily be a distorted memory, assuming the seven-year-old girl witnesses the ordeal of the seventeen-year-old girl. the girl’s nightmares offers another version of her mother’s death—as the moment when she acquired the demon within. as its host and inspiration, the twenty-seven-year-old girl could be a restraining influence upon the demon within.

before that becomes an option, a clear grasp of the massacre is needed. the plot against the focus already features a tie to the architect of the massacre. including the massacre ensures that the timeline encompasses trials for the seventeen-year-old girl and testing for the seven-year-old girl. the investigation involves the girl in events leading up to the massacre as well.

assuming that the tomboy was posing as the girl when she was disembodied, the girl reclaims the ring when she finds the tomboy’s comatose body. originally, however, the mother was possessed by a demon assassin, suggesting the demon might no longer have been in the ring when the girl recovered it from the wizard. a solution already exists where the mother is in possession of the ring, is confronted by the wizard, and the demon within unleashed.

the schemes of the adversaries

two different plots are afoot among the adversaries. one plot is based on an attempt to provoke the demon through the focus, the other was based on using an incarnation of the source to lure the demon into a trap.

the adversaries involved in the source plot conspired with the previous host to neutralize the demon with a mortal incarnation. until the tomboy told him she was the boy, the previous host believed the attempt failed. in theory, or as he was led to believe, the demon should have been drawn into the incarnation of its soul, allowing the host to reclaim his body and former life. he did not know that the demon could only return to its true source if that soul was able to reclaim it. so, when he was not able to reclaim his old life, he chose to establish a new incarnation, using it to learn how to overcome demons.

in truth, the demon’s source had been incarnated as bait to lure the demon into the inner realm, where the adversaries, desperate to possess absolute power over the inner realm, could confront it directly–in the flesh, where the spirit was vulnerable. through the demon’s inner host, they could warp the demon, prompt it to devour the source of its inspiration, depriving it of the identity that would prevent one of the adversaries from claiming its power and potential.

strands

as the focus was devoured by the demon within, the girl caught a glimpse of what the focus had done and why.

the simplest version

the idea of her had been the inspiration for an angel at the dawn of creation

the angel fell trying to save the soul of a dragon

the dragon became the focus

the souls possessed after the dragon served individually and collectively as the demon’s host

the host helped to create and populate reality in the inner realm