

Description

This is a sample from a romantic novelette that is targeted towards women aged 18 + who are interested in fiction/fantasy as a subcategory to romance.

Context

The lovers depicted in this sample have engaged in spell crafting to ensure that they are continually reborn in the same world and community. In each reincarnation, they must “awaken” to their past selves to remember each other. This scene introduces the main character and foreshadows her awakening.

1600 Word Sample

The incense always calmed me. Recently, I hadn't been able to hone my witchcraft meditations as well at home as I could in the temple.

"If you have maintained the focus on your breath continuously, go ahead and move on in this exercise." My mentor, Maybelle, held a low and hushed tone. "Hold the focus on your breath while also opening your mind to allow messages from external sources to enter your consciousness. If you feel it is important to keep ..."

The warm, humid air moved into my lungs. The advantages of having an outdoor temple were feeling connected but the heat was- *Breathe*.

I homed in on the air passing through my nose, gently tickling the hair there. I let go of the hopes that this might be the day I get a message and allowed myself to be submerged in the cacophony of bird songs, cicada buzzing, and nearby traffic. I let myself fall deeper into the meditation almost as if submerging myself in water.

The spot between a sunspot and shadow blurred into a boundary that was and wasn't. It was easiest for me to meditate if I focused on points of contrast. The boundary seemed to grow until everything looked like it had been cast in a deep, blue shadow. I noticed my breathing increased, but did nothing to stop it. My eyes didn't leave the darkened boundary.

Footsteps approached, echoing like on concrete rather than the soft thud I would have imagined coming from the wooden deck I sat on. Masculine energy approached with each click. It seemed to be a man. I didn't sense hostile intentions, rather, he felt like a magnet and I a piece of metal. Each step that brought him closer to me, made the urge to touch him more intense. He was to my left now, his legs close enough that if I moved my knee even an inch, we would touch.

I continued to draw air into my chest passively, keeping the rhythm steady. If it wasn't for the years of practice I had with meditation, honing my psychic abilities, I would have unintentionally broken contact at the first sign of his presence.

He seemed to be lowering himself so that our heads were level. I felt his breath, quick on my ear.

"I've finally found you ... Amaya ..." His voice was low and raspy. Pained even. His breath rattled, like he was getting ready to say more, but the name he had spoken seemed to reverberate inside of me. It made me feel things I didn't understand, remember things, feel loss... a burning hole in my chest... fire around my body.

My eyes snapped open. My skin was coated in a fine layer of sweat and a wave of nausea took me to the ground, hands spread in front of my head. Everyone in the class except for Billy, the star student, stared at me.

Maybelle stood over me, a hand on my shoulder. "Lilly, is everything alright?"

I couldn't say. Deep breaths racked through my body, breaking the stiffness of my muscles. Knowing everyone's eyes were on me didn't bother me as much as not knowing why I felt like this. I still wished they'd mind their meditations and keep their eyes off me.

My mentor's eyebrows furrowed forward. "You cried out. Loudly." Her amber eyes soothed the lump in my throat. She squeezed my shoulder, helping me to reconnect with reality, and calm myself.

Finally relaxed, I sat back up only to have my chest tense up all over again. I did my best to keep my posture, but the tears that escaped my eyes only seemed to draw attention to how quickly my lower lip quivered.

“Here...” Maybelle reached into her jean pocket and pulled out her keys. “You can use my van to have some space to process whatever message you just received. You’ll have to disregard the clothes on my bed. It’s clean, so just push it to the side.”

I laughed as I wiped my nose and eyes. “Okay, thanks May. I’ll come back as soon as I’ve... collected myself.”

She didn’t smile at me. Her brown, round face was rather serious. “Don’t bother. When you feel ready, go ahead and leave early. I can tell it’s not a message you’ll so easily recover from.”

I stepped off the temple deck and practically ran down the sidewalk to May’s van a block away. I unlocked it and slid the side door open, slammed it behind me, and headed straight for the back, where I planted my face on her pillow and proceeded to cry on her bed uncontrollably.

Who was that man? And who is Amaya? When he said that name, I felt like my very soul had been ripped open and left raw, exposed to visions... memories that seemed to pour into me. Was that my name in a past life? Why did it feel like a ghost haunting me?

I screamed through the pain of numerous deaths. And the loss. The repeated loss. My love, my bonded partner, my children. They were gone. Over and over and over again we found ourselves playing an eternal game of hide and seek.

I had a flash of a gentle caress on my cheek and a smile so kind that it melted my heart. I let the beauty of it slow my sobs. I followed the sensation of the hand on my cheek. It was a warm embrace, a place to rest from the pain. The embrace grew into a feeling of love so strong that it made the pain of loss fall into nothingness. This was my person, who I was always meant to be with. And I had been with them. Over and over and over again. Amongst countless lifetimes. And always, the name they had for me was the same: *Amaya*.

Tenzin. I couldn't remember everything just yet, but I was sure of it. His name was Tenzin.

The tear trails started to crust on my cheek as I looked up at the wooden planks that lined the ceiling of May's van. A few of the knots in the wood had fallen out, leaving holes that reminded me of a carpenter bee's nest. This was too much for right now, I had to get to work. It was the start of a new project and things were bound to be chaotic. I needed to bring my A-game if I wanted our new clients to take me seriously.

I pulled myself up off of May's bed and walked to her kitchen mirror. My eyes were puffy, but they didn't seem red. I washed my face to get rid of the tear stains. The water was cool and the shock of it against my skin helped pull me deeper into the moment.

I dried my face and took a deep breath, slipping into my best professional Lilly. This was a bizarre event and it would require time and energy to unravel. Neither of which I had right now. I wrapped up these feelings and memories and put them in a box to sit with later.

The office was buzzing with excitement. You would think that working in a large consulting firm would mean that we got used to working with the big dogs. Yet, every time we met a new client was like the first day of school.

Which I liked. It kept work feeling fresh and shiny.

"Lilly! Thank God you're here! It's almost time to start our prep meeting and I can't find where Gretta saved the final draft of the contract!"

"Good morning to you too, Arthur." I chuckled at the associate, whose dark, muddied red aura told me he was probably on the brink of a panic attack. He did good work, but hardly ever let himself enjoy his victories. "Don't worry, Gretta sent me an email, so I can take care of it. She may have just

forgotten to save it in the project folder.” Gretta, who was on maternity leave, had gone into labor two weeks early and did her best to finish and send the edits between contractions. It was very impressive and a feat I didn’t know if I would be able to achieve, despite my high pain tolerance.

“Thank you so much!” Arthur clapped his hands together, bowing slightly. “Then, I’m going to go and finish setting things up!”

I walked into my glass office and put my dark olive JW Anderson Recycled Polyester Tote on my desk next to a small pile of papers. *Tsk*. Did they have to print these? We always used our laptops for new client meetings, and I couldn’t understand why my manager insisted on delivering printed profiles of new clients to our desks.

“Urumki: the industry leader in all-season, outdoor apparel and gear. They are the...” I hadn’t been a team lead in securing this client, but I knew enough about them. I was eager to help them develop into a 100% recycled material brand. Plus the fact that their executive and leadership teams were an equal split between the genders gave me a good feeling about their company culture.

One of our spring interns poked her head in. “Lil - I’m heading up early to grab some coffee. Want me to grab you a cup?”

“Absolutely. Lots of milk, no sugar. Thanks, Laney.”

She left without a word, walking briskly down the hallway. Gen Z really baffled me. They overcommunicated online and undercommunicated in person. I grabbed my laptop and papers and put them neatly in my purse. Game time.