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Writing Sample

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When Hearts Grapple, excerpt.

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Amanah MUSTAFI***When Hearts Grapple***

(extract)

Scene 1 Ext: A forest clearing
Time Night (Sufyan's dream)
Actors Sufyan, Pak Wan

Sufyan is dreaming about his spiritual martial arts practice.

In a small clearing located just beside a small forest, a fire is kindling atop a wooden stick perched above the ground. It is a dark and silent night. Sufyan is sitting cross-legged in the middle of the forest clearing, a white cloth wrapped around his eyes. A few moments later, he rises slowly and deliberately as he traces his martial arts moves with much energy. The light from the fire illuminates Sufyan's face, contorted with concentration and seriousness despite his blindfolded eyes, though his eyes continue to make small movements to discern his surroundings.

Out of the blue comes a loud thud. Sufyan's ears try to ascertain whence the sound comes from. Pak Wan is seen standing coiled in a horse stance, with his eyes boring down on Sufyan as though hoping to defeat him with the severity of his stare. Pak Wan stands exactly a metre directly in front of Sufyan. Pak Wan then moves his hand, putting into motion his martial arts moves, ready to make the first strike on Sufyan.

Sufyan's ears are straining to discern Pak Wan's movements. Sufyan then moves his hand and legs, preparing to defend and attack, if necessary. Pak Wan strikes first, throwing the side of his arm towards Sufyan, emitting an invisible force wave. Sufyan, however, is ready and blocks the force with his right hand. Pak Wan realizes that Sufyan is no pushover and that he will put up a fight.

Unsatisfied that he cannot defeat Sufyan with one strike, Pak Wan ups the ante. He thrusts both his palms forward towards Sufyan. A force wave, this time bigger, is emitted and hurls towards Sufyan, who tries to defend against it. While he valiantly holds off with both hands for quite a length of time, Sufyan begins to weaken. After a while, it is clear that his strength is waning as Pak Wan intensifies the force hurled against Sufyan. With trembling hands, still trying to block the force coming his way, Sufyan sinks to his knees even as Pak Wan attacks Sufyan with increasing ferocity. Refusing to give up the intensity of the force he is defending against brings Sufyan to a sitting position on the ground.

1. PAK WAN

(SERIOUS) As long as you remain unable to fulfil the final condition, you will never be able to attain the total strength that you seek.

Here, take this !!!!

Finally, with a stomp of his feet, Pak Wan releases the biggest force field yet. Sufyan is thrown back and skids a distance on the forest clearing before coming to a halt at the edge of the clearing.

CUT TO:

Scene 2 Ext: Behind Sufyan's office complex

Time Night

Actors Sufyan, Kadir

Sufyan jolts awake from his dream

Sufyan, who is sitting at the side of a drain, is jolted from his dream when Kadir, his friend, shouts his name.

2. KADIR

Sufyan !!..... Sufyan !!

Sufyan turns to where the voice comes from. Kadir approaches him a moment later.

3. KADIR

You are always dreaming, aren't you! If you have a girlfriend, you will not have time to have this many dreams. Go and find yourself a girlfriend!

Kadir then turns to leave, to enter his workplace. Slowly, Sufyan smoothen his clothes.

4. SUFYAN

(TALKING TO HIMSELF) It is not that easy for me to fall for a girl. Unless of course, that girl is useful to obtaining the spiritual knowledge I want.

Sufyan looks calmer.

CUT TO:

Time Night

Actors Meor, Friend 1, Friend 2, Masita, Fahrin

Murad is planning to bother Masita

Murad is talking to his two friends who look rugged and fierce, tattoos plastered all over their arms. They seem ready for a fight.

11. MURAD

I have been searching for a very long time. It is only now that I managed to track her down.

12. FRIEND 1

Are you very sure that she works here? We don't want to be waiting for the whole night and she doesn't turn up.

13. MURAD

I am very sure that I am right! I have been observing her leaving this place after her work for the past 2 nights.

14. FRIEND 2

You are still angry at her for not loving you back?

15. MURAD

No! In my heart, my love for Masita is still as strong as before. *(Pause)* But her boyfriend has to been rude to me! *(Pointing to a scar on his forehead)* This is all his fault!

16. FRIEND 1

Then why do you call the both of us down? What do you want us to do exactly?

17. MURAD

I want the both of you to give that boyfriend of hers a good hard lesson, a lesson that he will remember forever, a lesson that does justice for this scar he caused.

18. FRIEND 2

You are very much capable of doing all that by yourself, no?

19. MURAD

Her boyfriend is a taekwondo expert. *(Pause)* By myself, I am not sure I can handle it.

While talking, Murad looks directly into the eyes of his two friends, telling them words that need not be uttered. Friend 1 smiles with an evil glint in his eyes.

20. FRIEND 1

On that matter, you have nothing to worry about. Both of us can do the job. You just need to say how far you want us to go. Broken hand? Cracked skull? Or... *(Runs his thumb across his neck)*

Friend 2 sniggers. At the same moment, Murad catches sight of Masita & Fahrin who are walking towards them. Murad pats his friend and points towards Masita.

Intercut: *Masita still chatting lovingly with Fahrin. As soon as Masita catches sight of Murad from afar, her face tenses up with fear. Masita holds on to Fahrin's arm and stop dead in her tracks. She immediately tells Fahrin to walk away, back from where they come from. But Fahrin holds onto both of Masita's hand to give her reassurance that no harm will befall her.*

Murad and his two friends approaches Masita & Fahrin. Fahrin directs Masita away from the confrontation to the side, as he lowers his posture to get into a horse stance, ready for whatever strikes that may come. Murad and his 2 friends then form a circle around Fahrin, before starting their assault. One by one, they try to strike Fahrin. Initially, Fahrin is able to break down their strikes with good blocks. Murad then give the signal to his friends that they need to go for an all-out attack on Fahrin simultaneously.

They attack Fahrin at once with ferocious blows. Fahrin tries his best to block but Murad's 2 friends are much bigger than he is and they finally are able to break through Fahrin's defences. They begin to hit him relentlessly. Masita begins to panic. Her eyes dart around the road, trying to find anyone who may happen to pass by who can help. Unfortunately, not a soul is in sight. In the meantime, Fahrin begins to become weak from the relentless, fierce blows landing on him.

21. MASITA

(In a panic tone) HELP!!!.... HELP!!!

INTERCUT: *with a bag slung over his shoulder, Sufyan is walking home from work along the road. He hears Masita's call for help. Sufyan rushes to the direction from whence the sound comes.*

At the scene of the fight, Fahrin is in a terrible state. Blood is pouring from his face, which is swollen in some parts. In spite of his injuries, Murad and his friends are still beating Fahrin mercilessly, letting their adrenaline and emotions dictate their punches. While they are punching Fahrin, a hand suddenly landed on Murad's shoulder to pull him back. Surprised by the sudden appearance of Sufyan and angered by his audacity to stop them beating Fahrin, Murad and his friends begin to circle around Sufyan. They look confident, as they are sure that Sufyan's fate will be similar to that of Fahrin, who is now lying unconscious and motionless on the ground. With swift and decisive motions, Sufyan is able to counter every blow that Murad and his friends throw at him. Harnessing all his strength, Sufyan begin to go on the offensive. He stabs friend 1's hand with his bare hands. The force is so strong that friend 1's hand becomes numb and unable to move.

22. FRIEND 1

(Howling in pain) How can this be? These hands has never failed me.

Sufyan then pulls friend 2's hand and lands a strong kick to his leg, with a sickening crunching sound that can only mean that the bones have sustain a serious fracture. He struggles to get on his feet as he crawls away from the battle. Murad's eyes look upon his two friends with disbelief. Fear begin to creep upon his face.

23. MURAD

(panicked tone) Come on, let's get out of here.

Murad hastens to run away with his friends

CUT TO:

Scene 5 Ext: By the road side

Time Night

Actors Masita, Fahrin, Sufyan

Fahrin is attracted to learn martial arts from Sufyan's teacher

Fahrin is bloody and swollen. He is sitting by a wall, shivering in pain. Masita is by his side, tending to the wounds at his hands and head. Sufyan glimpses an oval-shaped birthmark at Masita's right forearm. Sufyan's eyes widen in recognition of the mark but he hastily try to ignore it and remain calm. Slowly, Sufyan goes over to pick up his bag that has fallen to the wayside when he rushes to help. Fahrin then speaks up.

24. FAHRIN

I am also learned in *silat* (Malay martial arts). But nothing compared to your level of expertise.

Sufyan sniggers, with a hint of mockery.

25. FAHRIN

(Wondering) Why are you laughing?

26. SUFYAN

(Calmly) *Silat* is more than just the movements of the physical body, which you may have learnt and mastered. *(Dusting off his shirt before continuing to speak)* It involved the spiritual aspect, for *silat* is, in its essence, a spiritual martial art.

Fahrin furrows his brows, trying to comprehend.

27. FAHRIN

Spiritual??

28. SUFYAN

You have to see and learn *silat* using the energy from your soul. If you can do that, you will be able to harness strength of immense power.

29. FAHRIN

(Mumbling to himself) Energy from the soul?... Strength of immense power? What do you mean by that?

Sufyan does not respond but gives a delirious smile as he dusts off his bag.

30. SUFYAN

That is a journey of discovery that none but you have to tread upon.

Sufyan is silent for a moment & merely glances at Fahrin for a moment. He then gets ready to take his leave.

31. SUFYAN

Assalamualaikum (May Peace be upon you). *(Takes a few steps)*

32. FAHRIN

Wa'alalukum salam (May Peace be upon you too) Wait! *(Sufyan stops in his tracks)*
Can you bring me to where you learn *silat*?

Sufyan falls silent, thinking for a moment. Then he speaks without turning back to Fahrin.

33. SUFYAN

You must bring her along.

Masita realises that Sufyan is referring to her. Masita looks at Fahrin, giving him silent consent to Sufyan's condition.

CUT TO:

Scene 6 Ext: Kampong house vicinity (Ubin)

Time Night

Actors Masita, Fahrin, Sufyan, Pak Wan, Pela Wan, 6 Pesilat

Fahrin comes over to Sufyan's place to learn *silat*

In the vicinity of the house, a circular ring has been set up. The flags is seen bearing the group's name – 'harmuni,' which means harmony. Four wooden sticks with fire burning at the top are perched around the ring. Six students, donning their silat outfits, with a strip of cloth tied around their heads, are sitting in a circle around the ring. Pak Wan is sitting in a corner, zt quite a distance from his students.

In the middle of the ring, Sufyan is embroiled in a fight. The fight becomes increasingly intense.

Intercut: *at the edge of the house's vicinity, Fahrin & Masita walk towards the house. Their eyes are fixed upon the intense battle that is playing out in the ring. They find a spot to sit and watch the battle in the ring fixatedly.*

In the middle of the ring, Sufyan is able to defeat his adversary, who is lying on the ground. Sufyan is on top of him, hands closed in on his throat, slowly strangling him. At the sidelines, Pak Wan claps his hand twice to indicate that the fight should be halted.

Sufyan lets go off his stranglehold, gets up from his adversary and smoothens his clothes. Then catches sight of Fahrin & Masita who are sitting directly opposite him. Sufyan does not even give a hint of recognition to them, much less a smile.

CUT TO:

Scene 7	Ext: Kampong House (Ubin)
Time	Night
Actors	Masita, Fahrin, Sufyan, Pak Wan

Pak Wan sees Masita

TIME LAPSE: *Fahrin & Sufyan sitting in front of Pak Wan near the porch of the house while Masita is sitting a distance away from them.*

34. PAK WAN

The more refined and spiritual form of silat is such that it harnesses not the bodily strength but taps into an internal source of energy that few realize exists, and that even fewer are capable of tapping. With every breath that comes out of your body, you need to let the energy flow from within. Such is the strength of the energy that it is more than sufficient to easily defeat your attacker.

35. FAHRIN

(Hastily) That is exactly the kind of martial arts I am seeking and want to be learned in.

Pak Wan gives a mocking smile

36. PAK WAN

(Contemplatively) The good does not come easy. *(Pause)* That which you seek requires much of you. It requires that you cleanse your soul, keep away from vices

and fight that which will poison your heart.

37. FAHRIN

I am willing to do anything, Pak Wan.

Pak Wan rises & walks around slowly, as though weighing carefully what to say next.

38. PAK WAN

Do not ever abandon the remembrance of God (*zikrullah*).

Fahrin nods slowly.

39. PAK WAN as she is

Your heart, soul and body are only for the One! Only then will you taste the pleasure of this spiritual knowledge.

Fahrin nods his head in obedience. Pak Wan then taps Fahrin's shoulder, indicating that the lesson is over. Fahrin then kisses Pak Wan's hand as a sign of respect. He shakes hand with Sufyan next. With a greeting of peace, he walks towards Masita. As Fahrin approaches Masita, pak wan looks at her tying up her hair. Pak Wan catches sight of her birthmark, and his eyes widen. Sufyan notices what Pak Wan sees.

40. SUFYAN

She is Fahrin's girlfriend.

41. PAK WAN

That girl will enable you to complete your spiritual journey.

42. SUFYAN

But it is not easy to get the girl.

43. PAK WAN

That is not the question. (*Pause*) The Important thing is that you desire this while it is now right in front of your eyes.

44. SUFYAN

But what about Fahrin?

Pak Wan looks calm & stares at the distance towards Masita and Fahrin walking home, nodding slowly.

CUT TO:

A lashing, its undoing

A punch, its deflection

47. PAK WAN

Your moves are my moves

Your steps, my force

Your strike, my strength!!

With a swift motion, Pak Wan jumps up in a horse stance, ready to strike Sufyan. Sufyan mirrors the movements, but is ready to defend. They begin to fight around the vicinity of the house.

(Use the silat movement between Pak wan & Sufyan as a transition to the next scene)

MIX TO:

Scene 10 Ext: Outside of the Shopping Mall

Time Night

Actors Sufyan, Masita, Murad

Sufyan remembers Pak Wan's words

Sufyan remembers his silat moves with Pak Wan

(Transition: shot from the previous scene)

Sufyan is leaning against a stone wall, waiting for Masita. A visual of Pak Wan who is doing his silat makes Sufyan recalls Pak Wan's words.

MIX TO:

Scene 11 Ext: House at Kampong Ubin

Time Night

Actors Sufyan, Pak Wan

Pak Wan persuades Sufyan

Pak Wan stands with his arms crossed, facing away from Sufyan, while Sufyan sits cross legged on the floor of the porch.

48. PAK WAN

You can wait no longer. We have to get to her, no matter the method.

49. SUFYAN

But it is not that easy, Pak Wan. She is always with Fahrin.

Pak Wan turns quickly, looking straight into Sufyan's face.

50. PAK WAN

I will make Fahrin do *silat* with me.

Sufyan looks down, silent.

51. PAK WAN

(Quietly) For more than 10 years you have sought this knowledge. Now you are very near the apex. You are the only one of all my students to have come this far. I want you to complete this journey by fulfilling the final condition.

Sufyan looks down in obedience. Pak Wan studies Sufyan from the corner of his eyes. Pak Wan is deliberately silent, to let Sufyan mull over what he has just said.

52. PAK WAN

You need to unify your spiritual body with that girl's.

Insert: Masita with her arm that has the birthmark.

It will be very difficult for you to find such a girl again.

BACK TO SCENE 10

Sufyan snaps back to reality from his reverie when he hears Masita's voice.

53. MASITA

(SOFTLY) Sufyan.....

Sufyan shakes his head slowly as he snaps his head away from his reverie.

54. MASITA

Who are you waiting for?

55. SUFYAN

Err.... for you. (*Holding the back of his neck, stumbling a little over his words*)
Tonight, Fahrin has practice. So, I am worried for your safety.

Masita gives a little smile

56. MASITA

Oh..... Thank you Sufyan. (*Pause*) You seem to know my heart well. In actual fact, I am quite afraid of going home by myself.

Sufyan smiles back at Masita.

57. MASITA

Come, I will take you home.

They walk together. At a corner, Murad is seen to be staring at Masita

58. MURAD

(To himself) Where did Fahrin go?

CUT TO:

Scene 12 Ext: House at Kampong Ubin

Time Night

Actors Fahrin, Pak Wan

Fahrin is busy practising with Pak Wan

At the vicinity of Kampong Ubin, Fahrin is seen learning spiritual aspects of silat from Pak Wan. Fahrin attacks Pak Wan, and is seen to be very diligent in his practice.

CUT TO:

Scene 13 Ext: Eating Place

Time Night

Actors Sufyan, Masita

Sufyan tries to assault Masita

Masita & Sufyan is sitting at the table. There are two glasses on the table. Masita is drinking from her glass. Sufyan's mind is racing, filled with dilemma. He is thinking of putting the powder into her glass. Pak Wan's voice echoes in his ears.

INSERT: DIALOGUE 41 & 43

Anguish and indecisiveness are expressed across Sufyan's face.

INSERT: DIALOGUE 52

Sufyan seems very anxious, even as he tries to look calm and hide the internal battle in his mind. Masita puts down her cup, catches sight of Sufyan who seems lost in thought.

59. MASITA

Why aren't you drinking your drink, Sufyan?

60. SUFYAN

(Emerges from his reverie) Oh yes, I seem to have forgotten. *(Quickly grabs his drink)*

At the same time, Masita's phone rings. She answers it.

61. MASITA

Hello....

Masita rises quickly from her seat when she hears Fahrin's voice on the other line. Masita walks away from Sufyan. Sufyan's eyes widen when he sees that Masita is moving away. Quickly, Sufyan takes out a small packet of powder and pours it into Masita's drink.

INTERCUT:

62. MASITA

(On the phone) Fahrin.....I am okay. Don't worry. Sufyan is with me.

63. FAHRIN

With you? Why?

64. MASITA

To accompany me back home.

65. FAHRIN

(Irritated) Then where are you at now?

66. MASITA

We stop by a coffee shop for drinks.

67. FAHRIN

For drinks? Look at your watch, do you know what time it is now?

68. MASITA

(Equally irritated) Yes I know, I know.

Masita puts down her phone. She then walks towards Sufyan.

[...]

Translated from the Malay by M.Syazwan Sultan