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PANTHEISM

101

Sexual Synæsthesia

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Pantheism 101: Sexual Synaesthesia

*There is a knowing
that transcends fact;
an understanding
of soul.*

Elara mentally divided the class into three groups: believers, nonbelievers, and unbelievers. By her initial assessment, the twenty students fell under the standard bell curve, with eighty percent in the nonbeliever category and the other twenty percent evenly distributed on the extremes. True believers, like true unbelievers, were rare.

At precisely ten o'clock, she began to speak. She did not raise her voice or otherwise attempt to gain the class' attention. A few listened, but the majority didn't take notice until she wheeled the storage cabinet to the front of the room, unlocked it, and threw open its doors.

"Place your books, purses, backpacks—all personal belongings—in here. We'll be going outdoors, and I don't want you burdened with... *stuff*. Cell phones, too, please. They shouldn't be on during class anyway. I have the only key." Elara held up her hand to indicate the fluorescent green coiled plastic bracelet from which a single key dangled.

As expected, the students exhibited a marked reluctance to part with the electronic umbilical cords connecting them to various forms of emotional sustenance. One by one, with much grumbling, they deposited their belongings on the shelves. Elara made sure they all saw her lock the cabinet. She didn't want their minds cluttered with worry unnecessarily, either.

Once in the hallway, instead of turning toward the elevators, she led the class to the stairs that ran down the outside of the building. More grumbling ensued when they discovered the soft spring rain just beginning to fall.

"You won't melt," she chided them. "It's a beautiful feeling, if you'll open yourself to it. And it smells divine!"

"Spoken like a true pantheist," a disheveled young man—one of the nonbelievers—muttered. His voice matched his appearance, but his eyes sparkled with mischief.

Smiling, Elara pointed to the city park across the street. "The furthest shelter; the one nestled in the glade beyond the duck pond."

The students took off running in a futile attempt to dodge the raindrops. Elara followed at a more leisurely pace. Nature's gentle tears caressed her upturned face. As soon as she left the pavement, she kicked off her sandals and carried them, preferring to feel the wet grass between her toes. When she reached the shelter, she tossed her shoes into the center of the paved floor.

"There now. Are you any drier than I?" she polled the students. "In your haste, you encountered just as many drops. You are like a car: the faster you drive, the harder the rain hits your windshield. Many things are relative. Comfort, like time, is one of them."

On the picnic table nearest the stone hearth rested a large canvas duffel. As she distributed the foam cushions it contained, Elara instructed her class to arrange them in a circle and be seated.

"Feel free to kick off your shoes. We'll be here for the next hour, so get comfortable."

They chuckled at the holes in one another's socks, but when Elara stepped into the center of the circle holding a fistful of white scarves, the silence of curiosity fell over them.

"We're going to do some visualization. If you do not feel you can keep your eyes closed, I have scarves that you may use to blindfold yourself. It's entirely up to you. However, it is important to eliminate the noise of sight so that you may see the music of soul."

"Metaphysical mumbo jumbo," someone quipped.

Unfazed, Elara continued. "Visualization is as real as you allow it to be. The body chemistry—the release of neurotransmitters, hormones—is virtually identical to that

involving the experience you are contemplating. For the skeptical, there is even research—the 'scientific' kind—using MRI to compare the chemical reaction in the brain during visualization to that which occurs during the actual event. The epinephrine produced while watching a horror movie is of the exact same chemical composition as that produced when truly in danger. The stress on the body is the same.

"Similarly, the oxytocin released during this visualization is the same as that released during orgasm. I'm not saying you'll experience orgasm—although it has been known to happen—only that afterward you'll feel as if you did. The imagination is an intensely powerful tool, and there are those who argue that perception *is* reality.

"However, the objective of this course is not to persuade you, but simply to inform you. I've found that most people respond favorably to experiential learning. So, you're about to experience some learning.

"Let's get started. I'm going to pass out these scarves. I recommend using them if for no other reason than to free yourself of having to think about keeping your eyes closed. The fewer distractions, the better."

Approximately half of the students took Elara's advice and blindfolded themselves. The rest took the scarves and held them in their hands. One young woman refused to accept the proffered scarf, regarding it with a wild-eyed fear.

"If you change your mind," Elara whispered while placing the scarf on the floor beside her, "it'll be here." The girl's name sprung to mind—Penny—and with it the recollection of a controversial date rape case some months ago. She crouched to face level and held Penny's eyes until the woman acknowledged the compassion conveyed. No words were needed.

As Elara continued around the circle, distributing the scarves, the rain became heavier. There was no wind, however, just the accompanying percussion: the steady patter on the grass punctuated by the heavier plunk of runoff from the shelter's roof.

Once each person had a scarf, she asked them to obstruct their vision or close their eyes.

"Now. Focus on the sound of my voice. What color is its timbre? When I speak softly," she whispered, "do you feel my words caress your face? Let my words flow over you. They, like you, are beings of purpose. They live and breathe. They die and are reborn on the lips of another. They are my children... *and* my ancestors. Today—right now—they are *your* path.

"The rain draws fragrance from the new grass and lifts it to your senses, expanding your awareness of the space around you. It is alive with promise. Take a deep breath and hold it. Feel the tendrils of passion weave through your blood like smoke through night. Each wisp has the potential for unparalleled bliss.

"Exhale—not through your mouth, but through your skin—and as you do so, think of your dreams being released to merge with the breeze. They leak through your shell of being, revealing themselves. You are exposed, yet safe; naked, yet clothed in the knowledge that no thought—no desire—is aberrant in this context.

"The earth is your lover. Genderless. Pure. Listen to it. Feel its pulse; its breath on the back of your neck. Hear the beat of its life force. Sensual. Enveloping. If you allow it, it will love you like you've never been loved before, make you come harder, take away your pain and replace it with pleasure, be the type of lover you've always wanted—ever adapting to your needs—and it won't stop until you want it to."

Elara tailored her narrative to complement the environment. When the wind picked up, she used it to stroke. When the rain intensified, so did the cadence of her words. She watched each become aroused by their surroundings, an awareness unlocked by the sound of her voice. She was cause, not effect; catalyst in the biochemical reaction of desire.

Opening the doors of their awareness, she enabled each student to access a different reality. Apprehension drained from their shoulders, and expressions of peace settled over their features. Penny reached blindly for the scarf at her side and, once found, twirled it around her fingers. The act of touching it,

capturing it in her hands, robbed it of its power. It became a tool of trust, not one of torture.

"Give yourself permission to entertain your wildest erotic fantasies. Then, give the earth permission to fulfill them. Betrayal is not possible in this realm."

Several students groaned softly. Elara noted the flushing of skin, the quickening of pulses. The disheveled heckler had a crease in his brow, as if confronted with a premise counter to his beliefs. His path was a familiar one. At least one student in each of her classes resisted the visualization, feared the surrender. He rolled his head to loosen the tension in his neck and to strengthen his resolve. He brought his hands to the blindfold, touched it with his fingertips, then shakily returned them to his lap.

"Its sensual energy surrounds you, sustains you, lifts you. You are a star—brilliant and brave—capable of anything, and everything you need is right here. You have only to think it."

A distant flash of lightning against the morning sky caught Elara's attention, invisible to those whose vision was obscured. She took a deep breath and timed her next words to its accompanying crack of thunder.

"Perhaps you crave the sting of a lover's bare hand..."

As expected, a gust of wind chased the noise.

"... followed by a touch that soothes and cools. Open your mind to receive, and the earth *will* deliver. Feel it reaching for you, aching for you. It exists for your pleasure. Your desire fuels it, feeds it."

A tremor passed through the woman seated nearest the hearth—one of the few Elara'd pegged as a believer. Her lips parted slightly, and she sighed. By the end of the semester, she would undoubtedly be able to reach her ecstasy without the aid of a guiding voice. Several others wore rapturous expressions, lost in their own dreams.

Penny raised her hand, seemingly more in supplication than query. Her expression registered fear, but her eyes remained closed. Elara could only imagine the precipice upon which the girl stood—wanting to let go, seeing the bliss just out of reach, but

afraid of the surrender. Regaining one's sense of self after an assault, especially a violent assault, required phenomenal strength. Learning to again trust required even more.

Elara took Penny's outstretched hand and lightly squeezed. While her words were directed at Penny, their message applied to everyone.

"You are safe in our circle. Nothing can harm you here. You are surrounded by warmth and light; tethered to the earth's love. It will not—CAN not—let you go. It permeates your body, anchoring to your most primal places. Welcome the sensations. They are home."

She continued with the visualization, but did not withdraw her hand, allowing Penny to maintain her grip until she felt secure enough to release the lifeline of physical contact. The separation, when it finally came, was very gradual. Penny's hand remained raised, less than an inch separating them, for several minutes. She could feel her proximity, and even after Penny lowered her arm, Elara stayed within reach.

The rain tapered to a fine mist. While she still spoke, her words were not then as important as their sounds. Rhythm and pitch eased the journey. To outward appearances, the class appeared to be meditating as one. She knew, though, that they were worlds apart; completely unaware of one another. No two shared the same vision, the same fantasy. And yet, they were inextricably connected.

Elara turned when she felt Penny move and smiled when she discovered her tying the blindfold over her eyes. Her actions had a palpable affect on everyone present. The man nearest to her moaned softly. Heads turned in her direction, as if seeking some source of truth. No one could see her. They could feel, however. They could feel the white warmth of her burgeoning trust.

"You are light within light. There is no darkness, no shadow, no struggle. The earth tastes of you and you of the earth. Primitive and pure. Together, yet distinct. Rising. Bursting from the confines of the body in breathtaking wonder."

With reverence and respect, Elara let the visualization sweep her along with the class. It was one of the most fulfilling aspects of teaching: when the passions of the moment called her to leave the well-traveled roads and improvise. The same was true of sex, in general. The paths discovered often surprised but never disappointed her.

The energy in the air shifted, and an audible hum of expectation replaced that of the drizzle. Rapture swirled around them in near-visible currents of blue and green. The sun picked that moment to peek through the clouds. Several students gasped. Penny smiled in greeting, as if she was expecting the solar welcome.

They hovered there in the temporary brightness, stilled. A collective of souls ready to soar; simultaneously oblivious and aware. Elara felt the growing pulse between her legs and knew that the others felt similarly. She reached for the words that would push without touch; the words that tasted like thunder.

As the clouds rolled over the sun, Penny whispered, "Yes! Now."

A streak of lightning split the heavens and made Elara's hair stand on end. Her body rocked with the reverberation of the thunder on its heels. She felt the earth's echo travel up her legs and detonate in her clit. White hot bliss raced across nerve endings as the skies again opened.

Beside her, Penny trembled as the ecstasy enveloped her, her joy causing a chain reaction. One by one, the other students reeled from the impact of her release. In tune with the earth, they felt what she felt, took what she gave, and returned it to collective Gaian eros. They sang with the storm, a psalm of satisfaction—each sigh a chord.

As the storm tapered to a gentle rain, Elara pulled them back to their inner selves, guiding them with her voice. Once certain that each had returned, she instructed them to remove their blindfolds. They blinked and grinned at one another, awed by the shared experience. Even the most skeptical appeared impressed.

"It's time to head back to the classroom to collect your things," she told them as she fetched her sandals. "Your assignment for next week is to write about what you experienced today."

Elara stepped from the shelter into the rain, tilting her face to the sky. Her students followed. No one ran.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alessia Brio is the sultry erotica-writing alter ego of an Appalachian soccer mom. She is "*sensual, succulent, and satisfying*" even when her creator feels like a hairy warthog. Alessia's first sale, a single-author anthology of erotic fiction & poetry entitled [*fine flickering hungers*](#), won the 2007 EPPIE Award for Best Erotica.

In addition to her Phaze publications, Alessia's work appears at Tit-Elation, Oysters & Chocolate, Ruthie's Club, and Literotica. This particular story was originally published in the Spring 2007 issue of *The Shadow Sacrament: A journal of sex & spirituality*. She has won an honorable mention in two of Desdmona's erotic writing contests: Stiletto Flash and Titillating Tattoo. Her & Will Belegon's Surge HeatSheet, [*Switch*](#), won the 2006 Preditors & Editors Readers' poll for best short story. At Literotica, Alessia was nominated as Most Influential Poet (2004) and Most Influential Writer (2005, 2006) under the nickname "*impressive*."

Alessia's altruistic personality makes her well-suited as editor of the [*Coming Together*](#) anthologies, collections of erotic fiction & poetry that benefit various charities.

Ms. Brio lives in the mountains near Pittsburgh and is barefoot as much as life allows. She has an obsessive aversion to "to be" verbs in her prose and gets aroused by creative enjambment in her poetry. Her fetishes include SuDoku, rare steak, stainless steel, and office supplies.

Readers can visit Alessia online via her [website](#), [blog](#), and/or [MySpace](#).



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