

Palm Reading

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Commissioned by Absolutely Cultured and Northern BroadSides

Notes to the readers.

This page of instructions probably goes into more detail than is strictly necessary. Better safe than sorry.

Please read it carefully in advance, with my apologies for where I'm stating something that appears obvious to you.

Here goes.

After these instructions:

there is one blank page, then the script begins.

Please try not to scroll ahead until it's time.

When your partner connects to the call and appears on screen, there'll be a temptation to say something other than what's in the printed text. Try to resist that temptation.

Just smile, scroll past the blank page below, and begin.

To prepare in advance, with your partner:

There are two characters, A and B. Decide which of you will read which.

Agree who's going to call whom, and what technology you're going to use.

Check that your partner has their piece of music ready (see below).

Set a time.

In advance, alone:

Set yourself up so that you can see both this document and whatever app you're using to communicate with your partner. It is possible to manage both on any laptop, but feel free to try multiple devices, or to print the document. There's no one right way of doing this – have a little experiment to see what works best for you.

If you are reading character A, choose a piece of music that makes you feel optimistic - preferably something instrumental - and have it ready to play.

If you are reading character B, choose an absolute banger of a tune - the sort of thing that would fill a dancefloor – and have it ready to play.

When the time comes to play your music, it'll be ok if it takes five or ten seconds to get it playing – like with everything else, you don't need to rush.

Let it play until the text tells you to stop it.

During the encounter:

Take your time!

It doesn't matter whether you're looking mostly at the camera, or at the image of your partner on your screen. There's no one right way to do this.

The speaker (A or B) is clearly indicated in the left-hand margin.

There are often line breaks within one speaker's text, like this:

A. It's good to see you.

I've missed you.

How have you been?

If you find meaning in this, that's great. But really, it's been broken up like this to make it as easy as possible to read.

You may find you want to say something other than what's in the printed text. Try to resist this temptation, unless you can't.

Lines in italics are quoted song lyrics. Feel free to sing anything you recognise, and feel free not to.

Anything in italics and square brackets, like this –

[stand up while you're reading the next section]

– is an instruction for you to follow.

[No really, stand up]

You don't have to say the instructions out loud, unless the instruction gives you something to say. For example:

[Say the name of someone you love]

[You can sit down again now]

You're nearly ready.

After these instructions, there is one blank page, then the script begins.

Please try not to scroll ahead until it's time.

When your partner connects to the call and appears on screen, there'll be a temptation to say something other than what's in the printed text. Try to resist that temptation.

Just smile, scroll past the blank page below, and begin.

- This page is intentionally blank –

(no peeking)

A. Hello

B. Hello.

A. It's good to see you again.

B. You too. How long has it been?

A. I don't know.

Too long.

It's good to see you.

B. Yes.

You already said that.

A. Well, it **is** good to see you.

B. It's good to see you too.

I've already said that.

But it **is** good to see you.

It really is.

You can stand closer if you want.

A. Of course.

Old habits.

How's that?

B. How about moving even closer?

Let's live a little.

A. It feels so strange.

I'm not sure I'm ready for it.

I feel like I've lived my whole life in the wilderness and suddenly I'm on the Old Kent Road.

It's not that I don't like it, it's just a little...

Overwhelming.

B. I know what you mean.

Well, sort of. But I feel different.

I feel like I've spent my whole life watching Perrier adverts and suddenly here's a glass of water.

You're the first meal after a hunger strike.

The first beer after Dry January.

Why are you doing that face?

A. I don't like it.

B. What?

A. I don't like that in all these analogies, I'm something for you to consume.

B. I'm not wild about being the Old Kent Road.

A. Would you prefer if I'd said Mayfair?

B. *Oh, my love, my darling, I've hungered for your touch.*

A. Stop it.

B. *A long, lonely time.*

- A. Don't.
B. Sorry.
It's just.
I've missed you.
A. I've missed you too.
I'm sorry I compared you to bits of London.

- B. Could you hold my hand?
A. Can we just stand like this for a bit first?
B. Sure.
A. I'm just not sure I'm ready.
B. It's fine.
It's been a long wait.
Longer is fine.

- A. Thank you.
B. [...]
A. [...]

- B. How about now?
A. FINE.
B. You don't have to.
A. No, it's fine.
I'm ready.
I'd like to.

- B. Are you going to do it, then?
A. Do what?
B. You know. Your new party trick.
A. I just want to hold your hand for a bit first.
It's been quite a build up, after quite a wait, and I just want to enjoy holding your hand.
B. OK.

You're actually squeezing a bit tight.

- A. Sorry. I'd forgotten how tight was normal.
B. That's better.
That's normal.
That tight.
A. Does it feel like you remember it feeling?
B. I think so. I don't know.
There's a bloke I know, Adam, every time I see him I'm surprised by what he looks like.
No matter how often I see him, in my memory he always starts mixing up with someone else.
Maybe touch is like that: you can't remember it.
A. Like pain.

- B. What do you mean?
- A. You can remember that something hurt.
You can remember that you were *in pain*.
You can remember the emotion associated with it, like, you can remember crying with the anguish or whatever.
But you can't remember the sensation itself.
You can't remember the pain.
- B. I'm not sure I agree with that.
- A. What pain can you remember?
- B. I. Er.
I don't want to think about it. It hurts.
- A. Go on. I'm interested.
- B. Ok.
Could you put some music on first?
- A. Ok.

[At this point, A, please put on your piece of music. No hurry]

- B. Good choice.

[both just listen to the music. Enjoy it.]

[Look at your partner's face, and listen to the music.]

[After ten or twenty seconds, when they're ready, the person reading character B will tell a short story from their own real life, a time when they really hurt themselves, perhaps as a child. There's no hurry.]

- A. Do you remember the pain?
- B. My stomach tenses up when I think about it.
- A. But that's you remembering what the rest of your body did. It's not remembering the pain.
- B. I think it's the same thing.
- A. Maybe. Maybe the body remembers.
- B. Come on then.
You've had hold of my hand all this time, I thought you were about to show me.
- A. Show you what?
- B. You know what I'm talking about.
Some people have been working on their German.
Some have been planting potatoes.
Literally everyone has been baking sourdough
- A. Literally everyone like you.
- B. Ok.
But you're different.
Read my palm.
- A. OK.
But

Let me just turn the music off. I need to concentrate.

[go ahead and turn the music off]

[enjoy the silence for a moment]

OK, so

the thing with this is, you can't practice it.

German, you can practice on Zoom.

Bread rises or it doesn't; either way you try again the next day.

But I've had no hands to practice on.

B. So am I the first?

A. Does that make you feel special?

B. It makes me feel like you might hurt my hand again.

A. Just relax. Let your hand sink into my hands.

Relax your other hand too.

B. You're sending shivers down my spine.

A. This is your non-dominant hand, yes?

B. Yes.

A. The idea is that this one reveals what's innate in you.

B. Ok...

A. So the first thing to notice is you've got earth hands.

B. That'll be all those potatoes I've been planting.

A. I don't think it's got anything to do with the earth per se.

It means you're a practical, grounded person.

Maybe not a future planner, probably not flamboyant

B. Is this going to reveal anything, beyond the fact that you and I have known each other for a while?

A. I'm going to ignore that for now.

These raised areas at the base of your fingers are the mounts of Jupiter, Saturn, Apollo and Mercury.

B. That tickles.

A. At the base of your thumb is the mount of Venus. That's the zone of love and sensuality.

Yours is quite prominent, which is unusual in earth hands.

It means you have a high level of natural magnetism.

B. Flatterer.

A. Or maybe it just means that you're enormously self-indulgent.

B. Or that I've been lifting weights.

A. Well, possibly that too. The books don't really go into that.

Ooh, your heart line is interesting.

B. Not too interesting, I hope.

A. It begins right below the index finger, which suggests contentedness in relationships.

B. That hasn't really been the case these past few months.

A. Well, no, but it's what's innate. I don't think your hands knew there was going to be a global pandemic.

And your heart line is deepest here, just here, in the outer plain of Mars.

- B. The outer plain of Mars? You've got to admit this does sound just a little bit like total bullshit.
- A. We can stop if you want to.
- B. No, sorry, go on.
- A. Everything about this hand says that you're loyal, steadfast, emotionally dependable.
- B. You make me sound like a favourite dog.
- A. Loyalty and steadfastness don't automatically mean you don't feel things deeply or you lack passion.
- B. Is it possible – just possible - that you're just seeing whatever you want to see?
- A. What do you mean?
- B. You want to see me as someone loyal and steadfast, but sensual and passionate. So that's what you read into my palm.
But I can see several breaks and curves in the line you're calling my heart line.
What if that means I like change?
Or my contentedness is being continually interrupted?
What if it doesn't mean anything at all?
What if my hands look like this because I've planted potatoes and lifted weights and my parents were who my parents were?
- A. Are you trying to tell me something?
- B. I'm trying to tell you that my hands are just my hands. They're not who I actually am.
- A. Obviously to some degree I see what I want to see. Or I don't see what I'm not looking for. But I can't see a line that isn't there.
You can tell me I'm wrong, though.
Are you trying to tell me you haven't been steadfast and loyal these past few months?
- B. Of course I've been steadfast and loyal.
I've barely left the house.
I just think.
You know that phrase, "absence makes the heart grow fonder"?
Do you agree with that?
- A. *[say whether you really agree or disagree with that phrase]*
- B. That makes sense. I kind of think, -
I don't think absence does make the heart grow fonder.
What you're yearning for gradually becomes the thing you're imagining, rather than the real thing itself.
I've been yearning for an idea of you and the shock of being here with the real you, well, it's a lot to take in.
- A. I hear you. Like pain.
- B. What do you mean?
- A. You can't really remember physical proximity to someone you love. Just like you can't remember pain.
- B. So in that respect, yes, you are exactly like pain.
My stomach tenses whenever I think of you.
- A. Give me your other hand.

- B. Do they reveal different things?
A. Your dominant hand reveals how traits have been revealed in your lived experience, rather than what's innate. Come on.
B. OK. Could you just read it without talking? Trace your fingers over my hand. Get to know me again.
A. Ok.
- B. What do you see?
A. I see you. I see you.
- B. I see you, holding me.
A. I see you, being held.
B. It's good to see you.
A. It's good to see you too.

- B. What I remember most of all, more than the pain, is that I just wanted to be held.
A. Yes!
B. Like this, by the hand or –
Hold me. Properly. Both arms.
A. Like this?
B. Like this. Yes. I wanted to be held, like this.
Even by a stranger.
A. Yes. In some ways, especially by a stranger.
B. Eh?
A. I miss strangers. I am so ready to be in a room full of strangers.
B. God yes.
People keep talking about how they're missing gigs, or theatre, or football.
A. That sounds fine, but I've got all this pent-up outrage.
The mass gathering I'm yearning for is political protest.
B. I could go for that. Whatever collective live experience floats your boat,
But do you know what I've been really looking forward to?
A. Go on.
Actually, first -
Put some music on.
Put some music on, but don't stop holding me.
B. I can do that.

[At this point, B, please put your piece of music on. No hurry.]

- A. Good choice.

[both just listen to the music. Enjoy it.]

[Look at your partner's face, and listen to the music.]

- B. Here's what I've been looking forward to.
I really, really hope that sometime in the next few months, someone we know has a massive wedding.
With stupid overlong emotional speeches,
- A. Yes. And not enough bread for everyone,
B. And an absolutely banging band.
I don't mind if it pours with rain and I get my fancy togs thick with mud, but I want everyone in the room to be there because of love.
- A. I want to get drunk with someone's quiet auntie until she starts telling dirty jokes.
B. I want to laugh uncontrollably at the ridiculous hard stare from the couple when the celebrant says "does anyone know of any lawful impediment".
- A. I want a room not just with togetherness and liveness and energy, but one with purpose.
B. I want to dance like a wild animal in a room full of love.
Love kept us apart. I want love to bring us back together.
- A. Yes.

[Dance, if you want to, until the song ends]

- A. I want to *[what is the thing you most want to be able to do?]*
B. Me too.
And I want to *[what is the thing you most want to be able to do?]*
A. Me too.

[Carry on chatting, if you want to. Introduce yourselves.]

END

Afterwards:

We'd love it if you could get in touch and tell us what your last two lines were – the things you want to be able to do. Tweet us: @danielbye @AbsCultured @NBroadsides