

Awakening
Selected Novel Excerpts
Portfolio Samples

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AWAKENING — Novel Excerpts by Jackie Goldman

These excerpts are drawn from my novel "Awakening." Together, they showcase my range as a storyteller—from quiet emotional depth to humor, romantic tension, and high-stakes interior action. My focus as a writer is always on psychological nuance, vivid atmosphere, and character-driven momentum.

1. Quiet Emotional Depth — Predawn Solitude

Atmosphere, interiority, emotional tone-setting (p.5–6)

Tess Shapiro sat with her back to the arm of the wheat-colored sectional and stared pensively into the predawn blackness pressing up against the grubby windowpanes. The early-morning, kid-free ritual of having her coffee in solitude was an imperative, and Tess purposefully ignored the detritus from her children that surrounded her: gem-colored magnetic blocks scattered across the patterned rug, book bags lying beside unpacked homework, and picture books spilled across the carpet.

Even in the shadowed dimness of early morning, it was possible to see summer's official conclusion—the depletion of giddy happiness that had bathed Brooklyn with its optimistic light for two glorious, work-free months. With the start of the school year, summer already seemed like a half-forgotten dream.

Still, Tess pressured herself to welcome autumn's crispness. She reminded herself how it invigorated her and filled her with romantic feelings, even though it carried with it the haunting specter of winter. And this winter, she reminded herself, would be her first as a single parent.

2. Warmth & Humor — Morning Chaos With the Kids

Naturalistic dialogue, character warmth, light comedic timing (p. 6-7)

In the kitchen alcove, just off the dining area, Sammy stood on a small white Ikea stool in front of the black granite countertop, sloshing milk over the sides of a cereal bowl as the toaster pinged. An impressive pile of already incinerated bread sat on the cutting board in front of it. Tess clutched her hair and forced herself to speak calmly.

“Sammy, sweetheart, Mommy made a big boo-boo. I didn’t wake up on time, and now we have to really hurry up or you’ll be late for school, and I’ll be late for work.”

He looked at her suspiciously, and she took a deep breath before continuing.

“Listen, just for today, I need both you guys to eat school breakfast and lunch, okay? And not to argue with me while getting ready.”

“No!”

“Hmm, that’s too bad. Because I was thinking that after I pick you up, I could make it up to you by taking you to Dunkin’ Donuts.”

She could see his resolve weakening as he pursed his lips and looked at her sideways.

She added, “And getting an ice-cream cone.”

“Okay.”

“Yay!” Rosie bounded into her room. “I’m going to be ready first!”

“No, you’re not!” Sammy stormed into his room and banged the door shut.

3. Romantic Tension — Guy at the School Pickup

Chemistry, character nuance, subtle sensuality (p.16–17)

Tess saw him approaching before he spoke—Guy, with his hooded eyes and a way of walking that suggested he never hurried and found it rather amusing that other people did. Yves hurled himself into his father's arms, babbling in French. Tess cleared her throat.

"I'm so sorry to tell you, but Yves has lice," she said. "You'll need to treat it tonight."

Guy's relaxed expression drained from his face. "I... I do not know what products to buy," he admitted. "Or how to take care of this."

"It's easy," Tess assured him. "The Rite Aid across the park has everything."

He nodded slowly. His eyes drifted to her left hand—the absence of a ring. "I don't suppose you could help me choose the right things?"

She hesitated only a moment. "Let me run upstairs and grab my bag. I'll meet you outside."

Later, outside the pharmacy, he took her hand to thank her. After a moment's pause—just long enough to make her breath catch—his thumb traced lightly across the back of her wrist, sending heat rushing through her body. She forced herself to meet his gaze, hoping her eyes didn't betray her.

4. Psychological Thriller Beat — The Manuscript Dump

High stakes interior action, adrenaline, secrecy, metaphorical violence (p.104)

Tess grabbed handfuls of the manuscripts and pushed them frenziedly into the trash bag, perspiring as she punched them deeper into the black plastic before cinching the top and dragging the burden behind her like a hidden corpse.

By the time she reached the trash room at the end of the hall, sharp corners of pages had poked their way through the black plastic, as if clawing for escape. She yanked open the chute door and heaved the load into the narrow opening, shoving until it broke past the metal lip and swooshed down the shaft.

She stared after it, heart pounding, breath coming in jagged pants. After a moment she stood up straight and swallowed, searching herself for a sense of emptiness or loss. But those feelings were already a part of her.

She realized that pretending to be someone else was no longer an indulgence; it was a fact of life. She no longer needed to pretend to be Andrea Chambers to escape being Tess. She just needed to pretend to be Tess.