

I staggered, ~~head low, past the Sathit family's deserted farm back into town~~ with the ~~other~~ ragged few survivors ~~of the hunting party~~. The ~~necromancer had taken the family last week to become his puppets, kids and all, head low, and reluctantly returned to Sellah's home. Alone. I remembered helping them patch their roof during the rainy season with Baleth and Sellah. They'd given us some fresh blackberries in return, and Baleth had made a pie that I still dreamed about sometimes. I almost turned to tell Baleth how we'd miss eating the Sathit's blackberries, but I stopped before I could see that he wasn't walking behind me. Instead, I looked away from the farm and blinked past my welling tears.~~

Commented [BP1]: For worldbuilding purposes, these berries could have a completely unique name if you'd like.

~~Our~~This small ~~village~~ in the middle of nowhere had never seen a tragedy like this. Even the drought a few years ago couldn't compare to the arrival of a necromancer who was trying to consume ~~us~~them all one by one. ~~He hadn't been in the area long as far as we knew, but he was picking us off slowly, and the soldiers we'd sent for from the nearest city wouldn't arrive until early next week. I stood at the door, arm raised, unable to knock. Sellah's request kept echoing through my head alongside the memory of watching her husband be stabbed through the chest by one of the necromancer's puppets.~~

Commented [BP2]: There are two things I'm trying to address in these first paragraphs with these major edits. First, the hook, and second, establishing and exploring themes of your story.

The original opening lines set the scene just fine, but there wasn't a particularly gripping hook. However, focusing on the loss of people Lamil knew right away makes the beginning more emotional and raises the stakes—which deserve to be pretty high given how devastating the necromancer has been to this village and how much Lamil is personally hurting right now from losing one of his best friends.

~~Bring him back to me in one piece.~~

~~Last week the necromancer took the Sathit family, kids and all, from their farm. He hadn't been in the area long as far as we knew, but he was picking us off slowly, and the soldiers we'd sent for from the nearest city wouldn't arrive until early next week.~~ ~~As we trudged back into town,~~ But a Constable, Mbekal, the leader of our party, gave my shoulder an awkward pat before turning to set a perimeter. He wasn't from here—he had come alone ~~ahead of the soldiers~~ to rally our small village, deciding quickly that we couldn't afford to wait for ~~professionals~~soldiers to hunt the necromancer. He wanted to stamp out the defiler before he could become too much of a problem, and he'd come with ~~the~~ documents ~~that~~allowing~~ed~~ him to carry out ~~the~~executions~~s~~ for necromancy and

Just as important as hooking the readers with this emotion and conflict is laying the groundwork for discussing the themes of your story. Maybe you haven't put a specific label on those themes yet (and that's fine!), but if I were to identify them, I'd say you have two themes: (1) dealing with the grief of a loved one passing and (2) finding home where your loved ones are. So, to bring out Lamil's grief right away and start defining what Lamil's "home" (or relationship with Baleth and Sellah) looks like, I've rearranged a little bit of these opening paragraphs, focused on the relationships Lamil is losing, and added some details about Lamil's relationship with Baleth and Sellah (which you are totally welcome to change as you see fit!).

Commented [BP3]: Consider adding a name for the village to help the worldbuilding feel a little more thought out. Almost every time "the town" or "the village" is mentioned, it feels a little unnatural. I for one don't think of the place where I live as "the town" or "the city." I think of its name. So even though this town is a little more isolated, the people there probably think of it with its name too. (If you're trying to purposely make Lamil feel more distant from the town and like it's not really his home by not giving the town a name, I get the intent, but I don't think it really comes across the right way.)

murder. ~~Not that proof of murder was necessary; Even if he hadn't killed anyone,~~ engaging in necromancy would have been enough for the law. But ~~whata~~ ~~N~~necromancer ~~that~~ didn't murder to get their puppets? ~~It just didn't happen.~~

~~I~~ gritted my teeth as I made my way to Sellah's house. Alone. This ~~necromancer~~ was certainly a murderer, just like the rest of his barbaric kind.

~~When I came to~~ stood at Sellah's ~~the~~ door, I raised my arm ~~raised,~~ but was unable to knock. Sellah's request ~~kept echoing~~ through my head alongside the ~~memory of watching her husband~~ ~~being~~ stabbed through the chest by one of the ~~necromancer's puppets.~~

Bring him back to me in one piece.

~~I thought of~~ Yesterday, when I came to get Baleth's eager face yesterday when ~~I'd asked him to join~~ for the hunting party ~~with me,~~ he joined eagerly, though Sellah wasn't happy about it, ~~but she'd agreed he should go.~~ And ~~S~~she'd been adamant that, as their friend, it was my duty to bring him back to her "in one piece."

Of course I'd agreed to it, not really knowing what we'd be up against. We didn't think the necromancer would have so many puppets because ~~he'd~~ only killed a few locals. ~~But~~ he must have been killing elsewhere for quite some time, ~~and.~~ ~~W~~we were overwhelmed quickly. I had never seen Baleth in a real fight before — ~~guarding farmers and their wares to nearby towns rarely forced us to actually fight any bandits.~~ Baleth ~~He~~ was even more skilled than Mbekal, to all our surprise, ~~yet~~ and he still fell to the puppets.

Although I'd failed my duty to protect Baleth, I now had a duty, as their friend, to tell Sellah.

My arm was still raised to knock when the door opened. I stared at Sellah, unable to speak, unable to lower my hand. She looked past me only briefly before meeting my eyes, and I knew I didn't have to tell her what had happened.

"You broke your promise," ~~S~~she said.

Commented [BP4]: Here, I'm trying to add a little more emotion/memory in the moment rather than having all this explanation sound so much like "navel gazing." (If you haven't heard that term before, it just means that a character is spending too much time thinking about information the reader needs to know, almost like they're just staring at their belly button instead of being in the moment and allowing these important thoughts/information to come up more naturally. Navel gazing isn't always bad, but it should be limited and if possible incorporated with current actions and emotions.)

Commented [BP5]: You may notice I've replaced a few apostrophes. Although I think the font you've typed your story in is a sans serif font (maybe Arial or Calibri?), it appears as a serif font (specifically, Palatino) whenever I've downloaded it. So, this probably wouldn't matter in a sans serif font, but with serifs, there are typically two different fonts for apostrophes and quotation marks (one straight and one curvy). I've just made all the straight apostrophes curvy to be consistent with the rest, but if you're viewing this with your original sans serif font, then you might not notice a difference. I figured it was better to be safe than sorry and make sure they're all the same!