

Fantasy/Sci-Fi Story Sample

This is an excerpt from an early chapter in the novel. The author wanted a slower pace, vivid descriptions, and more compound sentences. This excerpt has virtually no dialogue, allowing more visuals to create a longer set-up.

For some reason, Joanne felt like dancing that morning. It was not the kind of dance you would do at a festival or a wedding, where happy groups sway to the upbeat music of cheerful minstrels and bards. Nor was it a dance for a solemn ceremony for druids who pay homage to their groves and shrines. Her dance was unique, her own. The hard earth below her feet gave her stride and spring. It was an ancient dance, as ancient as herself.

Joanne had left her father's house in Eagle Rock Falls earlier that morning. Her bow and quiver still lay beside her bed. She had no intention of practicing today and expected no trouble. There had not been an attack in New Havenport for nearly a hundred years. But the possibility never left her mind.

Joanne quietly walked past the Cloaked Vixen Tavern, where she had often stopped in for a meal or a drink. She mounted her horse and made her way to the Clementine River. Joanne crossed the South Bridge, leaving the village behind. She gently kicked the horse, and her mare sprinted, racing towards the familiar glades.

Joanne made her way into the woods. She quickly sensed she was not alone. A unicorn had been watching her from behind a cluster of trees as she crossed the bridge. The unicorn began running toward her. Joanne darted through the trees, going deeper into the woods. The unicorn followed. The creature's graceful white form starkly contrasted with the dark backdrop of the forest.

Hurry, Ferra! Joanne playfully called out telepathically to her unicorn friend.
Catch me!

Ferra heard her as she picked up speed to keep pace with the swift maiden. Joanne's steed was quick and agile, but unicorns are fast. Ferra approached Joanne from behind in a dexterous stride. She gently nipped at the end of Joanne's long platinum blond hair. Joanne smiled and laughed as she felt Ferra behind her.

Without missing a stride, Joanne leaped off her horse onto Ferra's back, wrapped her arms around the unicorn's neck, and embraced her friend as they raced.

Ferra's speed increased. Soon, the two had broken free of the woods and approached an open green meadow. They traversed the meadow and began to move into the hills on the horizon. They made their way to the top of a low-rounded hill. Ferra slowed to a canter. She and Joanne looked down the other side into a shallow valley surrounded by forest. In the distance, Azure Lake lay in a thin perimeter of meadow and a shady grove of trees.

Our favorite place, Joanne said to Ferra.

The two casually descended toward the calm body of water and reached the grassy meadow strip along the southwest bank. Joanne dismounted. Ferra moved over to a nearby tree to rest.

Joanne began to undress. She placed her tunic, doublet, and boots on the grassy bank. She was tall by her people's standards, mainly due to her mother's faerie heritage. Although she did not have wings, she did possess the slender, elegant figure typical of her kin. She had the muscle tone of a seasoned warrior but the smoothness and contour of a well-kept courtesan. She had lived for over a millennium, but she was human, and one would have guessed her age to be no more than thirty. Her complexion was light, more creamy than pale—remarkable, as her torso was constantly exposed to sunlight. Her eyes were hazel and green, a rarity among her people.

Joanne slid gracefully into the cool water, fully submerging for a moment, then came up again. She began moving slowly and steadily toward the middle of the lake. The sun was high, its rays reflecting off the smooth surface of the water.

"I hope you have some other exercise plan today because that's the saddest excuse for a Militia Captain's daily regimen I've ever seen!" said a woman's voice.

It had come from the other side of the lake. Typically, Joanne would have reacted swiftly and defensively to the sound of someone disrupting her time of solitude and sanctuary, but she recognized this voice instantly.

"Care to join me?" Joanne asked as she swam toward the woman.