

## Scottish Romance Writing Sample

The thunderous rhythm of hooves striking the damp earth echoes through the mountains. The menacing sound pulsates through Fiona's ears, sending an exhilarated shiver down her spine. The sound, mixed with the dark clouds of the approaching storm, seems to fit her mood.

"That insensible bawbag," Fiona mutters as she squints through the drops of rain beginning to fall. If the situation were different, Fiona might have recoiled at her own use of the curse word and checked over her shoulder to see if anyone heard. But, today, nothing mattered. Fiona gripped the reins tightly, urging the horse to go faster with forceful, jerky movements. Her scarlet hair, dampened from the rain, clings to the sides of her pale face. Fiona clenches her jaw as she looks ahead with a fierce glare in her blue eyes.

How could Angus do this to her, after all they've been through? Fiona's heart plummeted as the events of that day ran through her mind. She gritted her teeth as she thought about the way Angus' father, the Laird of Little Minch, had so casually shared the news in front of everyone at the dinner table. He had been eating his bowl of oats as if everything was normal, as if nothing was about to change. Then, without any serious inflection or emotional cues that would indicate that something upsetting is being shared, he blurted it out.

*Angus is betrothed.*

Fiona couldn't help but scowl. She kicked the horses' sides forcefully, causing the steed to quicken its pace and gallop faster. The sights, sound, and smells of this untamed land used to excite Fiona. She used to take her time when she was on a ride. She would slow the horse down so she could gaze out at the stunning mountains, shimmering lochs, and vast open spaces around her. But today, she raced past them without even glancing in their direction.

Fiona directs the horse uphill. "Hup, laddie!" She calls out in a harsh, clipped voice. Fiona is riding with a rigid posture, her back straight and her shoulders tense. The rain begins to fall harder until it

feels as though she is being pelted by pebbles. Fiona welcomes the discomfort and relishes at how the storm fits her mood.

Finally, they make it to a familiar clearing. Fiona slows the horse and dismounts. Her feet land on the wet stone with a loud *thump*. After tying the horse to a nearby tree, she stomps across the stony glade. Fiona reaches out a hand and trails it along the rocky mountainside as she follows a narrow pathway through the cliffs. The path opens up to unveil a cliff that offers a panoramic view of the vast, grey ocean in front of her.

The sight made Fiona's eyes well up with tears. She couldn't help but relive all of the memories she and Angus had shared here over the years. Ever since they were wee teenagers, they had ridden out to this cliff to spend time together. She remembered warm, summer afternoons when they would have picnics with fresh loaves of bread. She recalled chilly winter nights when they would huddle under a wool blanket and count the stars above. She also remembered many evenings just like this one, when the rain fell at a steady pace into the sea below. Fiona frowned as she thought about how, back then, she never cared about the weather. All that mattered was that she was with Angus. With him, even a thunderstorm seemed bearable.

Fiona jumped when she saw a flash of lightning strike somewhere far out in the sea. She hurried to move under a large rock that was jutting out from the mountainside. She huddled on the ground and wrapped her wool shawl over her shoulders. The ocean seemed darker and more brooding than usual, mirroring her mood perfectly. Fiona's heart ached as she imagined Angus with his future bride, a woman who could never be her. The clouds above were heavy and gray, giving the ocean a somber atmosphere.

"It's a dreich day, that's for sure." A deep voice called out.

Fiona looked away from the ocean and back toward the path from which she had come. A tall figure was walking toward her through the foggy storm. His thick, lustrous black hair was so matted down to his face from the rain, that an onlooker would have never guessed how curly it was in its natural state. As he moved closer, Fiona's heart flipped at the sight of his strong, chiseled jawline, high cheekbones, and piercing green eyes.

“You followed me.” Fiona whispered as Angus sat down beside her.

“Aye. Of course, I did.” Angus wrapped an arm around her shoulder. Fiona was tempted to push away, but instead, she melted into the embrace.

“Why? Your new *bride* would certainly not approve.”

The words wounded Angus. Fiona could see the hurt in his eyes, and suddenly wished that she could take it back.

“My love, I am sorry for the hurt I know this is causing you. You must know that it hurts me just as much.” He looks down at the rock we are sitting on. Extending his finger, he touches a slender crevice that has appeared on the surface, tracing the line that separates us like a barrier. “It probably hurts me more than you even know.”

His words strike Fiona hard. Angus has always been a strong man. As a warrior, he never showed signs of weakness or emotion like this. Never in all the years Fiona has known him. Now, as they sit huddled together in the rain, she notices single tear sliding down his cheek. Instinctively, she wipes it away with her thumb.

“I’m marrying her for our country. For Scotland.” Angus continues tentatively. “They are *forcing* me to, but it is also my duty to our land.”

Fiona nods. When she does, red curls of hair fall across her face.

“But, my dear, while they may force me to wed the English woman in order to ensure peace, my feelings for you will never be altered.” Angus takes Fiona’s hand in his. He looks deeply into her eyes before saying, “I love you Fiona.”

Fiona opens her mouth to respond, but before she can, Angus collapses onto the ground before her eyes. She scrambles to her feet and screams when she notices an arrow sticking out from Angus’ shoulder. A pool of blood has already begun to form below him.