

Gripping Scene Assignment: *Unwritten* by Rachel Bates:

The stage lights beat down on Kate as she sang. Sweat ran down her back and slicked her hair to her scalp. The last bars of “Unfaithful” echoed through the arena. Now only “Best Life” remained, her latest number one single and last song of the encore.

The dancers aligned behind her, lunging left and right as they made their way down the catwalk.

“Up, down, high, low...like a rollercoaster...”

Kate swiped hands from the crowd. Amid the screaming fans, Josh stood watching. Their eyes caught. She looked away. Beside him, his sister Lily bopped along to the beat with a smile on her face. Kate swiped her hand as she passed.

“This is the best life!” She kicked high to her left.

The reflection of a water spill across the catwalk caught her attention a moment too late. Her right foot skidded across the wet surface from the momentum of the kick.

Her leg buckled beneath her.

Kate went down in an awkward heap, blinded and disoriented by the stage lights. Her head snapped back. Her butt slammed into the hard laminate stage.

She slid several inches to the left and cracked her head against an amp. A deafening boom walloped through her ears as the mic, still clutched in her right hand, slammed into the stage.

Almost as an afterthought, she felt a pop in her knee. Pain exploded through her right leg. She lay sprawled on the stage, in shock, afraid to move.

Comment [PC1]: This performance sounds like quite the spectacle. It would be enhanced if we got a little more description of the dancing and the actual music. Is “Best Life” a ballad, a catchy pop song? What instruments are used? These details would be a good addition to really capture the intensity of performing for a crowd.

Comment [PC2]: After Kate falls, her ensuing movements (snapping back her head, hitting her butt against the stage, sliding to the left...) are separated into short sentences, making them appear choppy when they're presumably of one fluid motion. It might be more effective to refrain from describing step by step how the injury occurred.

Comment [PC3]: Ouch! Good detail here. I can almost feel that in my ears!

Comment [PC4]: Does the music stop when she falls down?

One of the dancers, a kid named Billy, leaned over her and whispered in her ear. “Are you okay?”

“My knee...” She was flat on her back, wedged against an amp. Pink and purple lights along the catwalk swirled dizzily bright and close to her eyes.

“Can you stand?”

Kate shook her head. She took a deep breath, gathered her arms beneath her, and eased herself into a sitting position. A wave of nausea swept over her as she straightened her leg along the stage. The pain amplified with every passing second.

Because she was on the catwalk, fans were within arm’s length on both sides. They reached toward her, buzzing with concern.

Someone grabbed her right foot and tugged. Her stomach **rolled**.

Comment [PC5]: Ouch again!

Billy scowled as he pushed away intruding hands from overeager fans. Security appeared to their left and cleared a path to take Kate off the stage.

She shook her head. Pain and adrenaline had her head spinning. Lights swam before her eyes like a kaleidoscope.

She pulled Billy close to whisper in his ear. “Can you carry me back to the main stage?”

He nodded. He slid an arm beneath her and hoisted her effortlessly to his shoulder. Kate sucked in a breath and smiled through the **pain**. The crowd roared with applause to see that she was okay.

Comment [PC6]: To avoid repetition, it might be better to refer to the pain in her knee in different ways (eg. “throbbing,” “agony,” “sting,” etc.).

All told, she’d only been on the floor about thirty seconds. She picked up the lyrics where she’d left off, channeling herself into the **music**.

Comment [PC7]: The show must go on! I like Kate’s dedication to her fans.

Billy carried her to the stage and set her down in a move so graceful it might have been a choreographed part of the show. A sound tech placed a microphone stand in front of her. She sang, standing still as a statue while the dancers performed their choreography behind her.

Her right leg held the consistency of jello, quivering and useless when she applied weight. And oh God, it hurt. She clutched the microphone stand and used it to balance herself as she sang.

“Thank you New York, you’ve been wonderful. I love you! Good night.” She waved and blew kisses to the crowd. Billy swept her into his arms and carried her mercifully backstage.

He laid her on the stretcher already waiting behind the stage.

Paramedics surrounded her. “Ms. Hayes, are you injured anywhere other than your knee?”

She shook her head and gritted her teeth.

There was too much going on. Voices shouted. Faces loomed above her. The crowd screamed on the other side of the curtain. An EMT probed her knee, sending waves of fresh pain radiating up her leg.

Kate bit back a scream.

A warm hand slid into hers, a strong masculine hand that gave her stomach another flip flop, dangerous given her current condition. She looked up to see Josh standing over her.

“You okay?” He brushed his free hand across her cheek. Her face turned automatically toward his touch.

“I think I blew out my knee.” She struggled to a sitting position using Josh as a crutch. Her knee looked like someone had inflated a balloon under her skin. She grimaced and flopped back on the stretcher.

Comment [PC8]: Good description here; we can really feel that Kate’s overwhelmed by the activity around her.

Comment [PC9]: Josh seems like just the calm presence Kate needs.

“It’s okay. Knees heal.” He tightened his grip on her hand as another EMT lifted her right leg, securing a brace over her injury to immobilize it for the ride to the hospital.

Knees healed, but not in time for the rest of the tour. Her chest tightened. She couldn’t go there, not yet.

“Okay folks, we need to clear the area. All non-essential personnel out.”

Harry’s command began to thin out the chaos surrounding her. Dancers, band members and other well wishers headed for their dressing rooms.

Micky shooed the stragglers on their way. An EMT raised the rails on the stretcher. Josh stayed beside her, his hand in hers, offering silent support as her fingernails **bit** into his palm.

This was where she should say goodbye. For both of their sake. She clutched his hand tighter, unable to let **go**.

Micky approached with raised eyebrows as the EMTs wheeled her down the concrete hall.

“I’m with her.” Josh told him with absolute authority, and relief flooded her.

No, wait. This is a mistake.

“He’s with me,” she echoed.

Micky nodded and fell back as Josh accompanied her into the ambulance.

Editor’s Comments:

The author makes good use of physical actions to convey emotion. I would have liked to see more description of the actual performance—the music, the instruments, the dancing—to really draw the reader into the atmosphere of a large-scale concert. The scene does well in establishing Kate as professional and passionate about her career as a performer, showing just how devastating her injury will be. I was left wondering how Kate would pull through, and how Josh would aid her in doing so. Watch for repetition, and pay attention to movement—make sure the sequence of actions makes sense and is conveyed clearly. Good job overall—I enjoyed this excerpt!

Comment [PC10]: I like how the pain Kate is experiencing is expressed through this simple action.

Comment [PC11]: And here, Kate’s dilemma is expressed just as eloquently through her squeezing Josh’s hand.