

Writing a Short Story

by Melanie S. of Deerpark Middle School in Austin, Texas

The Great Fall

BEGINNING

“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall! Humpty Dumpty had a great fall! All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again!”

Characters and setting

Casee grinned at the group of young children laughing and shouting on the gray floor before class.

Dialogue

“O.K.!” shouted one of the nine coaches in purple-and-white uniforms. “Line up to check roll!” Children from all directions jogged to meet the coaches by the mirror for roll call. Casee rushed to meet her coach, Dedee.

“Haley Allen?” Dedee called out.

“Here!”

“Laura Greene?”

“She’s at a doctor’s appointment,” replied one of her friends. Dedee made a mark on her sheet.

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Conflict

“Casee Smith?”

“Here!” the twelve-year-old yelled timidly.

“We have beam first, ski second, trampoline third, and double-mini last.”

“Oh, great!” Casee mumbled. “If we’re doing cartwheels on the beam, I might as well get my head cracked open.”

MIDDLE

Event 1

Everybody scurried to the low beams. Unfortunately, Casee got there last and had to use the high beam used for competition. She kicked her leg over the four-foot high beam and pulled her body up straight into a gymnast’s lunge. Casee lost her balance, and wobbled, and fell from the sky like a duck with a broken wing.

Sensory details

Event 2

Casee returned to the mount. She pushed her hands high into the air. Swinging her body around, she landed her hands, then her first foot. Her second foot dragged, and she lost her balance but fell to the ground safely on her feet.

Event 3

Ready to mount the beam again, Casee looked around at

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her teammates. They were all doing perfect cartwheels, keeping their bodies straight and tall and landing without a wobble on their feet, not on the ground. Casee wished she could be like them.

Event 4

She shoved her leg over the top of the beam, pushing herself into another lunge. She remembered to kick her second leg over her shoulders faster this time. Casee put her left and right hands simultaneously on the beam. Her right foot kicked over, the left foot immediately following, not wanting to drag.

Concrete language

Event 5

As Casee's first foot landed, her right foot landed way too close, and she had not swiveled her hips enough. Casee tripped over her feet, immediately knowing this wasn't good news. Her arms slashed through the air, struggling to keep her balance. As she fell head first toward the floor, her left arm, still swinging, hit the rock-hard beam. The pain shot up her arm like a bullet. Her feet, trying to land, reached for the floor, but missed. She half-landed on her toes, but they slipped out from beneath her. As in slow motion, her broken arm, her hips, her

Sensory details

Climax

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Event 6

legs, and finally her head landed, making separate thumps on the hard, badly matted area. Not breathing, she got up and started limping, searching for oxygen, gasping for air, tears streaming down her face. Meghan and Haley got up to help Casee. Rachel ran to tell the teacher. Still crying, lying on the floor with her eyes closed, Casee regained her breath. Her arm hurt.

Dedee came up to the beams, shock mixed with dread on her face. She immediately called an ambulance to come and pick Casee up.

Suspense

The children at the beginning of class were right. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. Would all the king's horses and all the king's men put Casee back together again?

Two Months Later

Event 7

Casee's arm brace was off, and she was allowed to go back to gymnastics. She stood in a lunge position, ready to do a cartwheel on the beam again.

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Dialogue

“You don’t have to do this, “ said Dedee, “if you don’t want to.”

“No, I want to,” replied Casee plainly. Slowly, she moved her arms down toward the beam, then put more and more of her weight onto her hands. Her feet kicked up, neither too slow nor too fast.

Event 8

Casee’s hands lightly bounced off the beam, and her first foot aimed for a landing spot. Casee’s body was exactly in line as her foot connected with the beam.

Concrete language

END

Without wobbling, she stood still in a finishing lunge position. Casee held back a smile. She jumped off the beam, saying, “Yes!” She slapped hands with every person on her team, each one saying, “Good job!”

Outcome

So Casee had finally done her first cartwheel, and no one would forget the cost of it.