I would like you to set a story in one of the three following settings:

1. a hospital
2. a foreign country
3. a blackout

Write the BEGINNING of a story. The first 500-750 words.

We want to smell, hear, and see your setting. We also want to hear it written about with credibility. So you’ll have to do a little research – both functional and imaginative – in order to write this one convincingly. Don’t rush! Start by shutting your eyes and scanning the story world, just like you did during the meditation exercises. Then, try looking at photographs, or finding basic facts or terms that will lend your writing credibility. Believe me, with these two things combined, we will feel that you as the writer have experienced these “strange lands,” whether you have or not!

Remember how I said that a setting is also a situation? As soon as you place a character in a setting, you have a situation – *a story*. That character must interact – live or die – in that place and time. We all have the same needs to survive – food and water, shelter, a sense of safety – so how does your character secure those things? For this assignment, I’ve picked three settings that have inherent dramatic possibility. A blackout is not a place, per se, but it is a situation with physical parameters.

For the foreign country, if you like, you may write from the point of view of a tourist or visitor. You might want to pick a place you’ve visited in the past, but you don’t have to. Anyone going to a foreign location steps immediately into a dramatic situation. Use functional and imaginative research to create your setting.

We all realize that the traveller cannot know a land like a native. However, avoid out-and-out erroneous information, as well as clichés and assumptions about people and culture. Don’t write about a place in the way you’ve heard someone ELSE write about it. Imagine and research the place yourself.

Jane was rolling in the bed, too excited to sleep. Finally, she had come to the Himalayas. It was her dream. She had been waiting since she was a child, to go on a bike trip in the Himalayas. Tomorrow morning, she would be doing it. Ever since she learned during her second grade that the Himalayas is the mightiest mountain on Earth, she had been fantasizing about this moment. Pictures of this huge mountain that stretches for long distances covered her walls at her home. Her parents were just making enough to support her education that a tour to India was out of the question. She waited until she completed her college, paid her loans, and got a decent job. This is a huge moment for Jane.

She was at a place called Manali. It is in the Himalayas, but when compared to places like Leh and Ladakh, it's altitude was comparatively low. It was April, which is considered off-season, hence the flight fare was low. As soon as she saw a discount on BookMyFlight.com, she immediately booked the tickets.

She kept rolling in the bed. After a few more hours of fantasizing, she fell asleep. She woke up around 6 am. The lodge that she stayed only had tea at that time. She gobbled that up and went to the rentals and got her bike. She wanted to check the place out before the guide arrives.

She inserted the keys, the engine roared and Jane smiled. She accelerated a bit further. The road curled ahead. She kept going until there were no buildings in sight. Within a few miles, she was out of Manali. There were trees and flowering plants by the roadside. Stopping her bike, she got down. The fragrance from the flowers, the lush, the chilly weather, it was so blissful. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and thanked God for all the beauty around. She could faintly hear the sound of a gushing river. Jane decided to find this river before going back.

She looked in her pockets, for her phone, to find where she was. She had not brought her phone. She knew her way back, it was a straight road, but the lake! She wondered how she could find the lake without her phone. This was her dream, she did not want to waste precious time by going to the lodge and coming back again.

She got on to her bike and let her senses lead. The sound seemed to be coming from ahead, so she drove further. Even after a few miles, the sound was still faint. She wondered if the sound was coming from the sides of the road. She didn't want to go searching and miss her bike-riding group as well. Around the curve, she saw a small building with a faint light, she drove towards that. It seemed like a small shop. There were an old man and a few glass containers with colored candies in it. Parking her bike, she went into the shop.

"Excuse sir. Is there any river nearby?"

"You want tea? We have tea, coffee, milk, and snacks. What you want", he replied in broken English.

"No sir, the river.. shhwiisshhh wisssh”, she moved her hands, mimicking a wave.

“Kyaaa?? what you want?"

She waved her hands again and said, "sshhhwwiiisshhh water"

"accchhaaa you want ocean? peeche jaao", he replied, pointing his hand back and smiling.

"yes sir, thank you very much."

She hurried behind the building. The sunlight had crept through trees and showed her the way. There was a faint trail. She followed that trail and kept moving. The sound got clearer as she moved further. Soon, the trail stopped. There were pebbles everywhere. The sound was so clear. She broke into a run. It started sloping down. She ran faster. She tumbled and fell. It didn't hurt her. She giggled instead. As she rolled, she could see the silvery gush ahead. Soon, the rough terrain was smooth. She stopped rolling. She was lying on the river bed. It was Baes, the river as big the ocean. She got up, ran towards the river, and stopped inches from the river line.

With the mighty Himalayas as a backdrop and the huge river in front of her, it was a magnanimous view. She raised her hands, drew a heavy breath, and closed her eyes, soaking herself at the humbling moment. It is moments like these that make life worth living.

**Does the writer evoke a sense of place, drawing on some or all of the five senses?**

**Monika magdy morcos**

Yes

**Leticia Forti Bonatelli**

Yes, the writer cover all the alternatives through the story.

**Gladina Raymond**

Yes the writer has beautifully written the peice which helps in seeing the scene clearly as well as feeling what the protagonist is going through.

**Name one of your favorite details or sentences. Why do you like it?**

**Monika magdy morcos**

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**Leticia Forti Bonatelli**

I really like the 4th paragraph. The character starts the bike and the author leads us on a journey using the senses as Jane rides. It's beautiful.

**Gladina Raymond**

"soaking herself in the humbling moment" Such moments are usually very hard to describe, but you have beautifully captured the essence of that sentence.

**Does the writer capitalize on the inherent drama of the situation, leading you to want to read this story further? Why or why not?**

**Monika magdy morcos**

Yes

**Leticia Forti Bonatelli**

Yes, I would like to read more about Jane's trip.

**Gladina Raymond**

Yes, the words come to life and pulls the reader into the world the writer has created. The drama is well built, and I would love to read more.

**Did the writer describe this setting credibly? We can’t be sure if he did research or simply knew a lot about the place, but does it FEEL accurate and credible? Why or why not?**

**Monika magdy morcos**

Yes

**Leticia Forti Bonatelli**

Totally, it feels very accurate. The writer doesn't hold up on details, the setting - even when the character is driving - is so vivid and the dialogue at the end is clever.

**Gladina Raymond**

The entire piece seems very credible. The protagonists feelings, the situation and the location are very interdependent which makes the writing very accurate and credible.