

Allyson [REDACTED]

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Pre-AP English 8

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### Batter Up!

I look up at the score board, my heart nearly hopping out of my chest. *7-6, down by one.* “Ball four,” the ump hollers as the crowd roars louder than a pride of lions. My teammate trots down to first base. I slowly walk up to the plate, feeling the crunch of red dirt beneath my metal cleats. *Ok, two outs, bases loaded. One of our biggest rivals. We need to win to get into the championships. You can do this; just do what you’ve been taught. Step, get your extension, follow through. Breathe. Have confidence. Don’t let everyone down. Don’t let everyone down. Don’t le—*

“Step into the box,” the ump orders, interrupting my thoughts. After taking a practice swing, I step in, flinging my golden braids behind my back. The scorching sun bakes my skin as I wipe my cheek, smearing the eye black that had been drawn on earlier that day. Standing quietly in the circle, the pitcher starts her windup. As the ball, a brilliant shade of yellow, spins into the batter's box, I grip my bat and swing. *POP!* Clasp the ball in her glove, the catcher celebrates.

“Strike one!” The opposing team shouts and cheers. As soon as I step out, I step back in, ready for the next pitch. The pitcher goes through the routine again. I swing. The ball makes excellent contact, but just short of the foul line. My team is a circus act in the dugout, whooping and cheering at the top of their lungs. *Two strikes.* I rub my batting glove on the cool surface of

the dirt as the sun slowly sets. I take a deep breath and get set, beads of sweat forming along my forehead.

The pitcher rocks back, whips her arm through, and releases the ball. It only takes half a second for the ball to reach me, but it feels like an eternity. A calming soft breeze nearly puts me under a spell. Confidence rises up inside me. The sensation of dirt and sweat overwhelm my sense of smell as I try focus on the bulging red laces of the ball shooting towards home plate. My muscle memory kicks in as I swing. Hard. But I am only left with the whoosh of the bat as I cut through nothing but air. The only thing that snaps me out of my daze is the uproar of the other team celebrating their victory.

“Strike three!” The umpire bellows. I'm out.

My team walks out of the dugout, deflated. We line up at home plate as I try to swallow the lump in my throat, but it won't go away. *You blew it. Everyone one was counting on YOU, and you blew it.* As take off my helmet and go to shake hands, I get to the pitcher, and see the satisfied smirk smeared on her face. All of the sudden, my disappointment and anger is gone and replaced with adrenaline. I walk away from the field, still upset, but ready to move on. Today is the day I decide to work twice as hard from now on. Swing off the tee, run, and do drills, because that's the game of softball. You learn from your mistakes, and if you're passionate enough for the game, you'll work hard to fix them. I know for a fact that the next time I see that pitcher, she isn't going to beat me.