

**The Meeting**  
**(A writing example in showing vs: telling)**  
**By Deatri King-Bey**

Two days after Christmas, I arrived on post and was feeling lost. In the taxi ride to the base, imagining any place being lonelier than Ft. Hood, Texas was impossible. After checking in, I gave the officer on duty the usual information: name, Deatri King-Bey; rank, private first class; unit, MEDDAC, and then I received the welcome talk.

After he escorted me to the temporary barracks, I realized I had forgotten to ask basic questions like where's the chow hall, recreation room. I'd eaten on the flight from Chicago to San Antonio, but knew I'd get hungry eventually.

\*\*\*\*\*

No television, no radio, no books, no people, only boredom kept me company. Feeling penned in, I decided to take advantage of the warm Texas night. Warm and Chicago were mortal enemies in December. I decided to try my first warm winter out first hand.

From my second story room, I saw light in the bottom floor of the barracks across the parking lot. The barracks looked more like college dorms than military housing. I grabbed my key and headed out.

Everyone must have gone home for the holidays because no one was out, and the parking lot was deserted. As I ascended the stairs to the barracks, I noticed this was a recreation room. A sigh of relief washed over me. Finally, someone to talk to.

I looked through the window and found comfort in the usual: pool table, video games, television, laundry room, couch with a... I stumbled down the steps, unable to believe what I'd just seen. The most gorgeous, dark-skinned brotha I'd seen in my eighteen years of life sat on the couch flicking channels with the remote. Good Lawd. He was so fine he literally knocked me off my feet, took my breath away.

I quickly scanned the area for witnesses to my tumble. Seeing none, I wiped off my jeans and recomposed myself. Shoot, I was five foot three of fine tailed soldier. Acting like a silly schoolgirl was out of the question. I pushed stray hairs into my ponytail, straightened my sweatshirt and marched up the stairs to meet my black Adonis.

I stepped into the recreation room ready to take on the world, but met disappointment instead. Somehow the man of my future dreams had escaped through a second door. Disgusted with myself for missing my opportunity, I returned to my lonely room to pout about the long weekend ahead.

\*\*\*\*\*

A familiar thump, thump, thump, whoosh woke me. Basketball, my favorite sport! I hopped off the top bunk then threw my clothes out of my duffle until I found my lucky playing sweats. Ecstatic over my find, I headed for the shower. Nothing like an early morning game to get the heart pumping.

Many a day I'd hit the courts at the crack of dawn for the reward of beating the crowds. Today my reward was Adonis. I sauntered over to the fence and watched him play.

He glanced my way, smiled. I felt light headed but kept my cool. He was just a guy. A guy who was walking my way. I fanned myself. Texas was hot, but not this hot.

"Can I play?" I asked as I stepped around the fence onto the court.

He raised an amused brow. "You play ball?"

"Don't be scared." I took the ball and dribbled it back and forth between my legs as I strutted to the top of the key. "I'll go easy on you."

His hearty laugh echoed off the buildings and filled me with pleasure. This was my first time being away from home on the holidays. I gazed into his deep brown eyes. Maybe he'd replace my loneliness.

"I'm Collier. Who do I have the pleasure of beating?"

I tossed the ball to him. "My name's Deatri. I don't know who you'll be beating, but it won't be me."

"We'll see." He tossed the ball back then lowered himself to defend the basket.

Two choices loomed before me: play my best and kick his tail, or go soft on him and spare his delicate male ego. Decision made, I surged forward. He stuck with me like super glue. I faked right and cut left knowing I'd shake him. This always worked. No freebies would be issued today.

Three long strides away from the basket I leapt, flying through the air. Michael Jordan had nothing on me. I believed I could fly. I shot the ball—then whap! He slapped the ball all the way to the opposite side of the court, and I fell to the ground out of my visions of grandeur.

"You gotta come with more than that, Dee." He sat on the ground beside me. "You got game though." He rested his arms on his knees. "I thought you were a pretty face with a new pickup line. Not that I mind being picked up."

After he said pretty, I lost my hearing and didn't care about him smacking my shot into the future. I felt a rumble in my stomach. I needed food.

"Your stomach's growling." He stood, pulling me along. "Come on. I'll buy breakfast."

THE END

Okay the first part before the \* \* \* is in narrative with passive voice. Even though it is narrative and in the first person, you still found out the essential information about your main character. What is missing because I used passive narrative.

Well, I can still get the same information in, but the umph of seeing it play out isn't there. What can you learn from a conversation? How about when I arrived on post and checked in? Wouldn't it have been nice to give you visuals as the sergeant told me about the base? Or even better yet, how about how I got from the airport to the base. Think of the taxi ride. The new things I was seeing. What do you think the taxi driver could have told me? Heck, on Ft. Hood the male to female population was WAAAAAAAAAY off. I'm talking 8 men to 1 female on post. Think of the reactions I was having. How many emotions could I have shown about arriving in a strange place far away from home? That could have given more insight into my character. How about mannerisms? Check this out. Coming from Chicago and being used to real planes, what do you think my reaction to being in a ten seated plane with three propellers? That plane looked like a wind up toy. I literally had to walk out to the field to get on the plane. Talk about culture shock. Think about the actions and reactions I could have shown. It could have all played out as if on a movie screen.

I told everything I could, but showing would have been more powerful. Writing in active voice would have been more powerful because I would have shown what happened on the trip from the airport to the base and other areas that could have been elaborated more. Telling, basically, is the quick way. I arrived on post. The sergeant showed me to my barracks... Not that bad, but you get the picture. It takes more wordage to show, but I believe it is a wise investment. By showing you allow your reader to see the actions, reactions, and interpret on their own. They gain more of a vested interest. We may not all interpret things the same way. The text between the set of \* \* \* is active narrative. It shows. But pages and pages of this separates your reader from the book, making it telling.

The last section is total showing. When showing you get to see the characters reactions to each other. For example how he reacted to my asking to play basketball.