

September 25th, 2016

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Dear [REDACTED]

I have just had the pleasure of reading your play [REDACTED] and I truly enjoyed it. You have created dynamic characters with complicated relationships. These characters are tragically corrupted as a result of their environment, a deserted town where people are just trying to get by however they can. I have greatly enjoyed diving into the world of your play. You gave me a lot of interesting things to explore as a dramaturg, and as a reader. In this letter, I will share my observations with you in hopes that it helps you gauge how successful you were in achieving what you set out to do.

I want to begin by exploring the five dynamic characters you have created. I found Buster to be a “glass half-full sidekick”. He uses serial dating to pass the time and fill the voids of an aimless life. He is well intentioned but struggles with articulation. Storm seems to be playing the role of “unattached instigator”. He likes to pull strings and watch what happens, and uses alcohol and marijuana to get by. Now for Roberta. I, somewhat surprisingly, felt the most empathy for her over any of the other characters, at least until Buster becomes Randy’s target. Roberta is this worn out realist, living a tragically monotonous life consumed with pills to curb the pangs of loneliness and bitterness. Her ruthless air is entertaining, but also heartbreaking, because we can tell that she is being completely honest, based on her own versions of the truth. Also, her monologue on page 115 was one of my favorite moments. Gert was one of my favorite characters. I found her to be the much needed “voice of reason”. She seems to be smarter and more grounded. I would have loved to see more of her.

Finally Randy: he serves as almost an antagonist/protagonist, which I found to be quite intriguing. His rapid downward spiral was so vivid because of the journey I went on watching his demise. I began the play seeing Randy as the “voice of reason”, someone who wouldn’t put up with silly jokes or entertain crazy ideas. But as he increasingly became consumed with greed and jealousy, I realized he was a bitter man with absolutely no reason. He becomes a closeted cowardly “Boss-Man”, pawning off all of the jobs he’s afraid of to Buster, and then holding him to unrealistically high expectations. I started to question Randy’s grip with reality towards the end, when he begins to call Buster “Jimmy”. Is Buster is a nickname for Jimmy? Not knowing the answer to this really made me question Randy’s sanity.

I did find Randy’s rather sudden downward spiral a little surprising. I enjoyed watching bits of Randy’s true self surface as the play progressed, however his decent into villainy, if you will, seemed to happen quite abruptly. I found him to be in touch with reality up to Scene 13 when Roberta steals his money. Granted, he does steadily become more of a jerk, but at least he seemed like he had a decent awareness of the reality of situations. After this scene, I felt a little disoriented and surprised at how quickly he was consumed by evil

forces. I noticed my confusion most when Randy appears to become completely detached from his feelings and takes on the role of “Super Boss-Man” with Buster in Scene 14. What causes Randy to turn against all of his friends? Are they internal or external forces? Is it important that the audience be aware of these forces? I wonder if considering the tipping point for his demise is something to keep in mind as you continue working.

I did have one somewhat off the wall thought as to Randy’s “downfall”. Why does Randy need dope for the cockfight? Post-read, I question if the dope was for him? And maybe his downward spiral was due to drugs, just like his mother? Maybe Randy is having Buster do all of his dirty work, “work”-related or not. (I also assumed dope meant drugs in the world of the play, which could be a misinterpretation). You really got me thinking here.

I noticed I asked myself often about how time works in this world. [REDACTED] seems to follow a pretty realistic depiction of the way time would pass in real life, but I felt a little disoriented at times and began to doubt if time was supposed to move linearly. I couldn’t quite tell what events had passed in the time between scenes, how long those events lasted, and which scenes were happening simultaneously, if any. Did you have any particular way of imagining time relative to action while you were writing? Just for your reference, I felt the most oriented between Scene 2 and Scene 3, the transition to opening the scene in Roberta’s trailer after Buster asking about Randy’s mom. I also felt decently oriented between Scene 12 and Scene 13, when we go from hearing the sounds of the cockfight to the aftermath in Randy’s messy basement, which is where I gather the cockfights have been happening. If you have intentionally created a world where time is not parallel to real life, then these particularly linear transitions stand out amongst the places where time is a bit fuzzy. I wonder if considering the way time works in the world of this play is something you might want to revisit as you continue working.

I truly enjoyed the sense of “looming danger” you created. I found it to be very successful. I was constantly asking myself how one thing or another would play out. The dirty jokes in the beginning, which turn into offensive jokes, which reveal themselves as coping mechanisms, were where I saw a lot of the inner world of the play unfold, and seemed to be a way you manifested the “looming danger” feeling. In a way, the jokes themselves informed me of the character’s intelligence and social class and the way characters responded to the jokes informed me of their relationship and it’s shifting dynamic as the play progressed. It was an intriguing way to get a sense of the environment, and to set up this world in which menial comedy covers up major problems.

I sincerely enjoyed reading your play and exploring the world you created. I hope you find my comments and questions useful as you embark on your rewrites.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allison Knuth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Allison Knuth