

Sierra Tribbett-Collins

Advanced Fiction

Dr. Tyrone Jaeger

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Dear Josh,

Your writing in “4th of July” is rife with amazing metaphors and wordplay that I really enjoyed reading. You describe a cat puffing out its fur as “growing three times her normal size,” or Annie stirring cereal in milk “like they were ships.” I really appreciated these, particularly because you navigate it in a way that doesn’t feel distracting. I also like the way you navigated the shifts between Annie and Rachel’s argument on the couch and Dad’s wild imagination. There is a clear tonal change; Annie and Rachel (particularly Rachel) feel jaded by family history and exhausted by the action of the holiday, while Dad’s mind wanders vividly as he thinks about various books he’s read and mime acts he’s seen. There is some information that is being withheld, hinting at possibilities of Dad’s affair, as well as information that is assumed, but could be expanded, such as Dad’s poor relationship with Matt. Though I really enjoyed the final dream scene in the arctic, I wonder if we could see more of Dad’s regret for the way he has treated Matt in the past, as it seems to have really scarred the two daughters. In general, more expansion of Matt’s character (as known by these family members, since it would likely be disorienting to switch to his own perspective) might provide the reader with a little more context in understanding the overall dynamic of this family. Overall, I love what you did with this piece; thank you for sharing it with us!

Questions to consider:

- The ending feels complete, but there is still more I want to know about these characters. Are you considering on writing more (chronologically) in this piece?

- The early mention of Dad's tendency to overeat unhealthy food makes me think that his death was caused by a heart attack or a similar ailment. Am I perceiving this correctly? If so, can you add another line or two that implies this—maybe Dad feeling some sort of pain in his chest during his dream?
- Rachel mentions in conversation with Annie that Annie was too young to really understand Dad and Matt's relationship. Would you consider some sort of shift to Rachel's perspective?
- Why does Mom say in the first dream scene that they will both miss the birth of Rachel's baby, rather than just Dad?
- There are several mentions of Dad noticing attractive younger women. Is this meant to imply a previous affair? Also, is Dad really the main character of this story?