

Sierra Tribbett-Collins

Advanced Fiction

Dr. Tyrone Jaeger

October 16, 2019

Dear Leah,

You expressed in an earlier workshop to me that you were worried about writing action scenes, and I am here to assure you that you've pulled it off really well in "Ruth Ann—1966."

The scene where the concrete slab falls against the mineshaft was one that captured my attention and felt almost cinematic. My favorite scenes, however, are the interludes in which Ruth Ann is still falling down the mineshaft, especially the one in which she determines the warm air feels like the wind on a drive to see the bears. These breaks from the action slow us down and emphasize to us how Ruth Ann is still just a child, with a charming and pure way of thinking, both making readers smile and filling readers with more dread regarding the fact that she is likely not going to survive this fall. (I also like the way you navigated the tense shift here. The action scenes are in past tense, implying that this has happened long in the past, but Ruth Ann's continuous Wonderland-like falling suspends her in time.) The ending of this story particularly stood out to me. Whether or not you continue with this piece, I really thought the mother's decision to lower the food into the mineshaft as Bernie watches was well-executed and an impactful way to end the section (or maybe the story altogether). Thank you for sharing this story with us!

Questions to consider:

- Will you be continuing this piece? Will they keep looking, or was June's decision to bring Ruth Ann the pastry a sign of crushed defeat?

- What is the significance of 1966? I know you plan on writing multiple pieces that span overtime (the story about Jimmy Sykes comes to mind here), but I don't see much in "Ruth Ann—1966" that emphasizes the year or why it matters. Could you play with time a little more in this piece?
- I loved the scene where Bernie recalls shooting the fawn with his father. If you decide to continue with this story, could we get more of Bernie's interiority?
- Is Bernie really the main character of this story?
- The opening lines about physics feel a little out of place with the rest of the story; it seems to be establishing a sort of narrative logic that doesn't really get followed up. Can you play around more with this as well?