

WORKSHOP

by

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WORKSHOP

SETTING — A neutral room with a large table and several chairs.

CHARACTERS — MODERATOR and MIKE, EMILY, TEJAL, and MARTHA, aspiring writers.

AT RISE — MIKE is reading from his story as the rest listen.

MIKE

(reading)

“...and as the tinny tones of ‘The Entertainer’ receded from my neighborhood, though never from memory, I accepted then what would always be true: I was the Ice Cream Man.”

MODERATOR

That’s great, Mike. Thank you very much for sharing your story story with us. So... what did everyone think?

EMILY

I guess I’ll start. I really enjoyed your use of alliteration: “candy cigars,” um...
(flipping through the story)
...”Krunchy Kones”...

MIKE

Oh, well those were just the names of the—

MODERATOR

Mike, the workshop will be most useful to you if you listen and take notes.

MIKE

Right, sorry.
(poises pen to do just that)

MODERATOR

Go on, Emily.

EMILY

Well, the language in general was playful. I thought it was an effective way of signaling to the reader that the author doesn’t take anything in his life seriously.

MIKE, confused, stops writing, starts to speak. MODERATOR holds up hand. MIKE relents.

MODERATOR

Thank you, Emily. I would agree with that insight. Anyone else?

TEJAL

The characterization was wonderful. I loved all the banter between the ice cream truck drivers. You could really tell that the author is someone who yearns for easy friendships like that but is basically unloved.

EMILY

Oh, definitely.

MIKE

Okay, hold on now—

MODERATOR

Mike, we all agreed to these workshop guidelines. Responding directly to criticism creates a contentious atmosphere and makes people less likely to give you honest feedback.

MIKE

These just seem sort of personal?

MODERATOR

I'd encourage you not to take them that way. Alright?

MIKE

(not convinced)

Alright...

MODERATOR

Who else?

MARTHA

I kind of felt... I dunno if this is right.

MODERATOR

Explore it anyway.

MARTHA

Reading through this, I just felt strongly that the author is fat and I hate him.

MIKE

What the hell!!!

MODERATOR

Maybe you could phrase that a little more constructively?

MARTHA

The bloated, unlikeable prose gave me the sense that this author is obese and that I would personally dislike him.

MODERATOR

Much better. Can you give us some examples?

MARTHA

(flipping through)

On page 3 there's this long, I'm going to say "thesis" about the Ice Cream Man credo: "a true no-child-left-behind approach, no matter how many dirty pennies, or how few." On page... 7, we have this giant paragraph about how his truck is mobbed by unattended children, "their sticky fingers everywhere, some even climbing on the front wheel and others reaching their entire arm through the garbage slot, desperate for any sort of trespass."

MODERATOR

Yes. And you felt...

MARTHA

That this showed a clear lack of control, or discipline, in the author's own life, where the external forces are a poor excuse for his own failings as a human being. And also that he probably doesn't shower much... the "dirty" pennies and "sticky" fingers... and that I, or anyone, would rather he were dead than say "hello" to him.

MODERATOR

Okay. Wow. That is really, truly insightful, Martha. Anyone else?

(beat)

Okay, now it is Mike's chance to ask questions, if he would like.

MIKE

(gathers self)

I one-hundred percent do not know what to say.

(they wait)

I guess... "thank you"? Thank you. I can't wait to revise it.

MODERATOR

You're most welcome. I'm glad this was helpful, you piece of shit.

(quick beat)

So next week...

END OF PLAY.