

Dear Mr. X-

So, JVC - I really liked your story.

Gosh the tension in this piece is so damn thick. I like the simplicity of it: "drugs and passport control" your tension building is straight forward, I found myself just moving from paragraph to paragraph caught up with the story. Gosh -- amateur writing would've moved away from the scene, taken us into backlashes, or gone on tangents of descriptions. Next, you don't only rely on the tension -- the humor and smart character here allows the reader a break. Finally -- someone who has got a clue on how to write! Sorry, I'm ranting.

Okay, how can all of this be improved? I think you can start laying the ground work of tension earlier... on the result of being caught. Amsterdam is perfect, just long enough there to not get caught up too much with the setting. You could do a bit more (light brush strokes) on the holding room, going in and going out of it as well. The descriptions there are needed. Also, the details of the two interrogators are both necessary to the story.

The string of this story that I hate to pull on is -- damn how the heck could've this happened? How did they miss the weed? How did the dog not pick it up? Why did January not put the weed in there? There's too many questions left unanswered for the reader to play guess work with, and because of that it doesn't do justice to the work that you did. Why not just have the candle out on the table and let it sit there? The tension of a story, the crux of a story is built around not what the reader doesn't know, but with what the reader does know. So -- if you do the bait and switch, fine, just hint at it with a scene with January so that we don't feel tricked. If you don't do the bait and switch then your reader knows everything that they should. Finally -- and this may be approaching the line of the final level of feedback that I often find the most bizarre and I restrain from giving other writers because I don't feel they could handle it: "Is it enough of a story?" And I don't know the answer to that. I think if the goal you seek to accomplish is to set out the tension, then the answer to that question is, "yes" it's enough. For me, I'd like to have more- which is why I'd like to know the results, the potential loss of a job, a friend that had gotten busted... etc..

Let me give some line by line knee jerk reactions and then we'll do some end notes:

I should start this off by telling you that smoking weed and getting baked happen to be passions of mine. I also happen to live in Japan. I dig Japan a lot, but marijuana is frowned upon here. Frowned upon in the same way that heroin, incest or third-degree murder is frowned upon.

*Cut the heroin, or rephrase... "to the Japanese... smoking weed is in the same category of ... stoning babies... etc..

** Great opening, love the voice... active and strong.

However, I don't let that stop me from indulging in my passion. I have one semi-reliable connection. A dodgy, wannabe Yakuza dude named Nabe whose shit is pretty fuckin' potent but expensive.

*In Japan... 1 word change. Or name the city...

"The dogs will never find it." She had long blonde dreadlocks and a silver hoop in her left nostril. "Your weed is wrapped in a baggie, right?"

* Great description of this minor player in the story. Wonderful.

I don't know if it was the fact that I was stoned, or January's bland but natural beauty

*The beauty of Amsterdam or the beauty of Japan or her natural beauty at that time of year. Be clear.

I gave her back the film canister. She put the canister in the wax, and we went out for a stroll along the canals. We came back and I had myself a vanilla-scented marijuana-packed souvenir from Amsterdam.

*love the set up of the story.

The dour-faced lady behind the desk looked at my passport and my alien registration card, stamped my passport and waved me through. A good omen, I thought.

*The tension is good, I'd like to know what the actual punishment is. This central scene seems a bit more important to me than it is relayed. It seems to be missed opportunities.

I followed him with the two older customs agents close on my heels. He opened the door and we went inside. It was a plain white room, with a table and a couple of chairs in the center. A small table stood beside the door.

*strong material here... I'd like to get into his nerves a bit more earlier on the flight over.

He folded his arms and stared at the burning candle. I caught a sniff of vanilla. Should I just save us some time? Tell him that there's a film case buried in there with two grams of weed? Fuck him I thought. I'm not doing him any favors.

*riveted... on the edge of my seat.

He slammed the film case onto the table. Did January scam me? I remembered giving her the film case, but I couldn't remember actually putting the weed into the film case. We were both pretty stoned when she made the candle.

*Nobody scams anybody for just some weed... gotta amp this up to buy it...

Was I a stoner idiot who neglected to put the weed into the film canister? I opened up my backpack. I reached in, found my way to the bottom and pulled out my hoodie. I stuck my hand in the pocket, felt around, and wrapped my fingers around a plastic bag.

* Huh? Don't get it and don't find it so plausible.

So end notes:

You seem well enough read. I find it interesting that you tell the story in the 1st person and yet, the narrator is still confused at the end of the story about what happened. I urge you to rethink this aspect of the story as it doesn't do justice to the world that you create.

There is so much to admire here in this story so I urge you to keep working at it, I think it'll be fantastic in another revision. Let me know if you have any questions or thoughts on my review, I'll be happy to look at it again later.

Wishing you the best and I hope to see more of your work soon.

Yours,

The Staff