

FM REVIEW 2015 11 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: The reviews for this 55 word story are all over the map: one reject, one accept, one minor revision. I tend to agree with reviewer 1, but since other people liked it, I will give the author a chance to revise. The issue I'm most concerned with is not stylistic, but "ethical." It seems to me it describes a somewhat unprofessional relationship with a patient from a psychotherapist's perspective. Perhaps that is the author's intent, but I find it troubling. The story talks about their regular meetings, her emotional investment in the patient, and as a result of the patient's "moving on," the therapist's subsequent loneliness. This boundary-crossing does occur in both therapeutic and clinical relationships, and of course it is legitimate to write about it. However, the author seems to lack any insight or awareness of this dimension to the piece. I will raise this issue with the author in my comments.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This 55 word story describes an intense relationship with a possibly borderline patient in which the therapist made a significant emotional investment and was left feeling "lonely" when the patient "moved on." I wonder whether you intended the story to suggest ill-defined boundaries between patient and therapist. Much of the word choice is language that one might reasonably use for a friend or a lover. Although such emotional "hooks" can certainly occur in a therapeutic relationship, it is troubling that there seems to be no insight or awareness of what is happening on the part of the narrator. The attached revision offers ways to walk back from this portrayal if it was not what you meant to convey. If your goal was to show how countertransference can operate in the therapist-patient relationship, then perhaps you might return to the idea that the patient was "dangerous" because of the way he hooked the narrator into emotional boundary crossing. In this case, an indication that the narrator has some awareness of what happened to her would be beneficial.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: Based on reviewer and editorial feedback, the author has chosen to take the poem in a different direction, one which I think is more interesting and unusual. The poem is now focused on boundary issues and illustrates well the struggle a therapist (or physician) can have to "stay within the lines." Peju was quite helpful in suggesting minor, but important, improvements in the wordsmithing. I also have tried to improve the craft of the poem through line-by-line editing. I would like the author to consider these suggestions, and then I expect we will be able to accept the submission.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for reworking this poem. I agree that your decision to "open up" the form from 55 words to poetry allows the piece to "breathe" a little and allows you to develop your theme more fully. I appreciate your willingness to shift the focus of the poem to boundary issues. The narrator now seems much more self-aware of the struggle in which she - and her patient - are engaged. The first and last lines of this poem are just terrific - they grab the reader and don't let go.

The editors have carefully reviewed this revision and feel it is a vast improvement. There are still some fairly minor issues of wordsmithing which we would like you to consider (see attached).

1) The title seems a bit clumsy - to my thinking, you should either stick with "in the lines" (as in coloring!) or perhaps consider "Boundaries." Please think about this.

2) The second line is a string of adjectives - might you consider a single image that shows us more powerfully what your patient was like?

3) I've tried to eliminate superfluous words, and on occasion am suggesting alternatives to intensify the image. Please use your discretion, but consider these suggestions.

Thank you for tackling with such authenticity this often ignored topic.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: This started off as a weak poem with an unclear theme. In its second revision the focus became clearer. In this revision, the author has engaged in some good wordsmithing, tightening the language and making it more vivid and particular. Peju made some very helpful suggestions to this author. Overall, the poem is much improved. I recommend accepting this piece.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: This is an excellent revision. Your use of language is indeed tighter and more vivid. The thematic focus of the poem comes through succinctly and clearly. I suspect this poem will give our readers much food for thought.