

FSH DECISION LETTER 2018 8

This 55 word story describes one of those ephemeral yet highly meaningful moments in an encounter between a patient and health professional at a fraught time – the anniversary of a loved one’s death. It shows potential, but needs considerable revision. As you can see from all 3 reviewer comments, it is not emotionally involving in the way it should be given the subject matter because it is too much telling, rather than showing; too much simply a blow by blow accounting of what happened rather than a vivid and memorable image or series of images. We would like to offer you a chance to extensively reimagine this piece. Please understand that this does not guarantee publication.

The strongest aspects of the poem in my view are 1) the patient’s tears 2) the silence between the two 3) the sitting together 4) the unexpected – and delightfully humorous – intrusion of the mom. Try to build on these following the excellent advice of reviewer 2 regarding adding detail, imagery and metaphor. For example, don’t tell us the patient feels “pain and sadness” – *show us* her anguish. I also agree with reviewer 1 that the reliance on “she says, asks, I ask” is awkward and distracting. Think about a different way to show these exchanges.

Finally, I agree that the title is too vague; I like reviewer 2’s suggestion, it is more interesting and makes the reader want to proceed to find out what it means. However, please feel free to craft your own.

Please try to find language that is intriguing, compelling, and creates a picture that lingers in the heart and mind. We think this is embedded in the event, but needs more work to draw it forth.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: his version of the 55 word story is much improved. The title reflects one of the strongest lines of the story, instead of the rather vague previous title. The effect of the story is now to "show" the pain and sadness of the client, rather than simply tell the reader about them. The source of the client's suffering is also clearer. I've always liked the unexpected humor introduced, which strikes me as an accurate portrayal of how such encounters often intermingle comedy and tragedy. I have a small concern about the final line which seems a little trite to me. The author is constrained by the 55 word format, but I'd like him to consider a different ending.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: This version of your 55 word story is much improved. The title reflects one of the strongest lines of the story, instead of the rather vague previous title. The effect of the story is now to "show" the pain and sadness of the patient, rather than simply tell the reader about them. The source of the patient's suffering is also clearer. I've always liked the unexpected humor introduced, which strikes me as an accurate portrayal of how such encounters often intermingle comedy and tragedy. I have a small concern about the final line which seems a little trite. I understand that you are constrained by the 55 word format, but I'd like you to consider a different ending. These 4 words strike me as too formulaic for the emotion you're trying to convey, which I think has something to do with your commitment to and affection for this patient. Could you describe a gesture toward the patient or a more personal communication? Thank you for considering this suggestion.

DECISION LETTER II: This 55 word story is much improved. You've honed in on its essential heart, and I find this version more emotionally compelling in its simplicity. However, I think the final line could be

improved. To me, it is too formulaic to successfully speak to the importance of the patient's healing through your continued interactions. I know how hard it is to work within the 55 word format, but can you think about a different set of 4 words that might be more personal, and thus more powerful?

DECISION LETTER III: I am pleased to inform you that your work has now been accepted for publication in *Families, Systems, and Health*. Thank you very much for all your hard work on this 55 word story. In my opinion, you have crafted a powerful concluding line, much superior to the original. It beautifully conveys the fleetingness of connection with the patient, and how easily genuine grief is buried under adolescent attitude. It ties the whole piece together in a way that is a pleasure to read.