

FSH REVIEW 2020 1

Comments to Editor:

This 55 word story examines the impact of COVID-19 on the narrator's relationship. One reservation I had at the outset that the author can't do anything about is the privilege from which they write. So many people do not have the luxury of resources to support escaping from the pandemic by renting a condo on the beach where they do not need to work, but can simply eat, sleep, read, meditate, watch dolphins, and mend. It bothers me in the same way Eat, Pray, Love sometimes struck me as awfully self-absorbed and self-indulgent.

That said, it is a well-written piece, and says something valuable, which is hard to do within the 55 word limit. The last line is particularly effective, because the narrator does not say WHAT they learn to love: possibly the husband who was left behind, perhaps the dolphins, maybe life itself. This line offers plenty of room for possibility, which is exactly that this sort of creative writing is supposed to do.

In general, I do not like the use of abstractions in poems or 55 word stories. I hold the conviction that these are concrete art forms that should be rooted in particulars and specific details, which then of course should lead the reader to universal insights and truths. For this reason, I'm not fond of the two lines "Understanding grew. Compassion expanded." I recommend that the author find 4 other words that can do a better job of showing the kind of growth they experienced. I make some specific suggestions in the note to author.

I don't want to be too judgmental about the author's privilege, which many of us share. Everyone suffers and if they are lucky everyone grows. I appreciated the way these 55 words show real transformation toward love, compassion, and understanding (even though I think those particular words should be avoided in the writing itself :-)).

Comments to Author:

This 55 word story examines the impact of COVID-19 on the narrator's relationship. It shows how the pandemic forced them to make a major life change and reevaluate their life. It is a well-written piece, and says something valuable, which is hard to do within the 55 word limit. The last line is particularly effective, because the narrator does not say WHAT they learn to love: possibly the husband who was left behind, perhaps the dolphins, maybe life itself. This line offers plenty of room for possibility, which is exactly that this sort of creative writing is supposed to do.

I would recommend a few small changes. In the line "I chose to sit, eat and sleep even more isolated" "even" does not quite make sense to me. I think you are implying "than before," but to me it reads awkwardly. You might try something like "I chose even more isolation in which to sit, eat, sleep." That adds a word, but see below for how you might compensate for this later.

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Otherwise, this is a poignant piece that shows how unexpected transformation is part of the obvious horrors of the pandemic.