

Last week I tried to write a haiku about feeding my neighbor's cat while she was away. The instructions for this job are quite elaborate—Junior is a very pampered cat who eats only raw meat with yeast powder and drinks filtered water. Although I have done the job before, I received several very long texts reminding me of the twice-daily drill. In spite of them—or possibly because of them—I forgot the Sunday evening feeding.

When I entered her house early Monday morning, filled with remorse, Junior greeted me with what seemed to be an unusual degree of affection. While he ate, I found his litterbox unlittered. It's not often I am rewarded for doing something wrong; but not having to scoop the poop (strainer and disposal bags provided) only made me worry that my negligence had upset Junior's delicate digestive system. When she returned that evening, the neighbor sent another text, thanking me for the excellent care. I felt I ought to have told her about the missed feeding, but thus far, have not done so.

Condensing this story into a haiku seems to demand that I isolate a feeling that I can convey while telling just enough story to locate the feeling.

The first iteration went something like this:

entering my neighbor's house
to feed her cat
tardy, remorseful

I didn't like it because it tells you what I felt, leaving no room for you to put yourself in the scene and imagine what you would feel. The second one is too abstract, and a little cute:

given instructions
I fumble the assignment
no stars this morning

Finally—this is a week later—I can let it go.

remiss in duty
to a hungry cat
sharp whipping wind