

FM REVIEW COMMENTS 2013 22

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: Both reviewers found something of value in this poem, as do I, but I feel it needs a lot of work. As it stands, it is not very well crafted, and jumps around quite a bit. It has some strong lines, and also lines that go nowhere. I recommend major revision. The reviewers did not provide much in the way of specifics, so I have tried to provide more detail, both in comments below and in an edited version.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This poem is a good start, but it requires some reconceptualization and much careful editing. In poetry, less is often more, so ask yourself whether certain words, lines, and stanzas are really needed. More importantly, figure out what you're trying to convey to the reader. Reviewer 2 was put off by your focus on forms, but I suspect you are trying to say something important about how forms order and console. At the moment, however, it's not coming through. Similarly regarding the floors, you have something you want to show us about the floors, but honing the needed image will take more work.

You have some lovely lines - the one about pronouncing being easier without the family; and placing hospice patients on the highest floor so that they are closer to heaven; and the one tear/two tear anecdote. The image of the three birds and your concluding line are powerful, and evidence of strong writing.

We recommend that you revisit the poem and rewrite so that its energy isn't dissipated among too many disparate images. Find the heart of the poem (the forms, the floors, the tears, the birds) and focus on these.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: With input from the editorial staff, this has turned into an excellent poem. I think we should recommend minor revision along the lines suggested in the attached (more structural changes of line breaks and pacing, rather than major changes in language).

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for this revision. This is evolving into a powerful and evocative poem. We feel, however, that it needs a bit more work.

It appears as though you tried to split the difference between poetry and prose by formatting this as a kind of prose poem. In my judgment, the paragraph arrangement diminishes the power of the piece. The assistant editor and journal editorial staff have worked on reformatting the poem (as well as minor deletions and word changes) to restore its poetic structure. This more traditional approach we feel also mirrors the abrupt phrasing often employed in the actual pronouncement of death. Please consider these changes.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR III: This is a beautiful and moving poem. It has benefitted from reviewer suggestions, as well as input from LeNeva and me. I think it is one of the better poems to appear in Family Medicine. I recommend accept.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III: The rhythms and flow of this poem are lovely. It is a poignant read. One small question: Do you want the last line to read "Their gaze strong" or "Their gaze is strong." I have a slight preference for the latter, but either way works.