

## FM REVIEW 2016 4 COMMENTS

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** This well-crafted poem uses the story of Lazarus to contrast the limitations of the narrator physician (the "failed healer") with the ability of the Great Physician to bring the dead to life. Reviewers found much to like in it but were concerned that the story of Lazarus might not be well-known to non-Christian readers. In my read, the poem has good potential, and I recommend that we give the author an opportunity to rework to address the points below.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** This well-crafted poem uses the story of Lazarus to contrast the limitations of the narrator physician (the "failed healer") with the ability of the Great Physician to bring the dead to life. Reviewers responded positively to the poem, but expressed the following concerns:

1) Two of three reviewers were concerned that non-Christian readers might not be familiar with the unexplicated references to Lazarus, Mary, "the great physician." Perhaps you can say something about Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead, which might also help to address point #3 below. Also, capitalizing "great physician" might help associate this phrase in people's minds with Jesus.

2) Reviewer 3 raises an excellent point about the meaning of Jesus' tears. I'm no theologian, so I can't advise; but please be sure that there is at least a justification for interpreting the phrase "Jesus wept" as shedding tears for his patient, rather than the ignorance of the populace.

3) Reviewer 2 worries that the physician-narrator is comparing herself to Jesus. I read this differently - i.e., in my read, the narrator is CONTRASTING her limitations with those of Jesus. Nevertheless, you do not want ambiguity around this point. Part of the confusion may arise, as reviewer 3 notes, because you don't mention that Jesus, in fact, restored Lazarus to life. If you add some reference to Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead, and your inability to return your patient to life, this might help clarify the point you're making while at the same time giving the biblically uninformed reader a little more to work with.

4) Finally, on a more technical note, I found the shift in tense in the 3rd stanza confusing. I understand that you are referencing the Lazarus story when you mention the "mourning sisters," but again, without a deep understanding of the original story, this may be puzzling, and not as powerful as it otherwise would be. Also, while perhaps the people regarded Jesus as a "failed healer" before he performed his miracle, I think you are trying to convey that the narrator also feels like a failed healer. Perhaps you can draw this out a bit more. Here again, it would help if you distinguished between the miraculous outcome in Jesus' case and the very unmiraculous outcome for the narrator. This would help address reviewer 2's concern about unintentional arrogance.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR:** Although some reviewers struggled with the Christian context of this poem, the author has made a sincere effort to provide more references to the original Biblical tale. My own feeling (and I speak as a Jew) is that the broad parameters of Lazarus' story is well-enough known as to make the poem accessible to most readers, even those who are not Christian. The author has carefully considered all reviewer and editorial critiques. She has made several changes and in particular has added additional stanzas to further explicate her intent. I find this poem humble and

moving, capturing the feelings of helplessness and grief that many family physicians experience at the death of a patient. I have raised one very minor issue of wordsmithing with the author, but otherwise I enthusiastically recommend acceptance of this fine piece of writing.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR:** Thank you for such a careful and thoughtful response to reviewer and editorial comments and concerns. The revisions and in particular the additional stanzas both help to clarify and refine what the poem means to communicate. I think many readers will recognize the feelings of failure, helplessness, and grief that arise at the loss of a patient.

I would like to make one further minor suggestion. In general, you seem to follow the contemporary convention (which I support, especially given the conversational tone of this poem) of capitalizing only lines which in prose would begin a new "sentence." For the sake of consistency with this practice, I recommend that the following words be de-capitalized: frightened; lonely; no (wonder). Aside from consistency, capitalizing "frightened" and "lonely" seems to "shout" them too loudly, when I think these are smaller, quieter emotions in that moment.

In the reverse, please consider whether you want to capitalize the pronoun "he" when it refers to Jesus. Whatever you feel is appropriate - it depends on whether you want to emphasize his godliness or his humanness. But please be consistent in this regard - this would affect a couple of the "he's" in the added stanzas.

I found this to be a beautifully written poem that conveys the poignancy and burden of being a physician.

**COMMENTS TO EDITOR III:** The author has made minor stylistic changes in the manuscript per editor's request. This is a moving poem that should provoke recognition and reflection in readers. Please accept.

**COMMENTS TO AUTHOR III:** Thank you for these small changes which nevertheless I feel improve the aesthetics as well as the intention of the poem. This is a moving piece that should provoke recognition and reflection in readers.