

FM REVIEW 2016 18 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: This poem is about osteogenesis imperfecta, written from the mother's poignant point of view. I solicited 3 reviews, as well as consulting with LaNeve. Everyone feels the poem has potential, but that it needs significant changes. Unfortunately, the recommendations, while all interesting, thoughtful, and creative, cannot all be accommodated in one poem. At this point, I'd like to see the author wrestle with the various ideas and see what he comes up with. I recommend major revision, in the hope that the various moving elements of the poem can come together into a more coherent and powerful whole.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: Thank you for this moving poem. We liked many elements of this work, including the potentially risky adoption of the mother's voice; and the clever and poignant play on such dichotomies as perfect/imperfect, strong/weak, and the double entendres implicit in terms such as "gift" and "test." Yet reviewers and editors felt that, although promising, the poem does not fully "gel." We recognize that the various recommendations, while interesting, thoughtful, and creative, cannot all be accommodated in one poem. (On the plus side, the fact that each reviewer (and editor!) became so invested in your poem speaks to its potential). Please consider all comments carefully if nothing else as indications of where the work has problems; and look for ways of improving these sections. In particular, please pay attention to the following:

1) There was widespread concern that the effective repetition of "more than" completely disappears in the latter part of the poem. Perhaps there is a way to return to or at least allude to this theme?

2) Two reviewers ask for more details, which could strengthen the poem, as poetry relies on convey universal insights through "particulars." However, the nature of the details matters. For example, I'm not sure per reviewer 1 that knowing the precise age of the child would make the poem more meaningful. Instead, think about metaphors, analogies, and images that might make more vivid this mother's experience.

3) The last lines, while lovely, are somewhat problematic in the message they appear to convey. In what sense should the mother be "stronger" (use of this word, which one reviewer found trite, could be made more powerful by explicitly contrasting it with the "weakness" of the child's bones)? What does it mean to be "perfect" (a concern reviewer 1 also raises)? Maybe mom, who seems to embrace her child's "imperfection" as "perfect," might also be able to extend the same grace to herself? (Maybe this would address what the narrator, the mother, "learned", as reviewer 1 asks). The play on words is very good, but please be clear on what you are trying to convey.

A few minor recommendations: 1) Given the conversational nature of the poem, please consider using a capitalization pattern that is more reflective or ordinary speech. Capitalizing each line is a rather traditional convention that does not seem well-suited to your poem. 2) The specificity of "three days four months" seems misplaced - is mom saying she only cries during these times? As one reviewer noted, at the least moving from the "more than" section to this section should be indicated by a line break. 3) The mother's knowledge of the specific drug her child receives seems somewhat at odds

with her bewilderment regarding the xrays and medicalesse with which she is inundated. Consider changing this term.

In my view, you do not need to go beyond the specific focus of the poem itself (i.e., mom grappling with guilt, love of child with life-threatening disease), as reviewer 1 suggests. Extending the poem to lessons applicable to parenting and life falls beyond the scope of the work, and runs the risk of making the poem sound moralizing and prescriptive. There's plenty for the reader to chew on already.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: In this revision of a poem about osteogenesis imperfecta, the author has given thoughtful consideration to complicated (and sometimes contradictory) reviewer feedback. He has not been able to address all concerns, but on the whole I think this rewrite does a better job of embodying the mother's voice. In particular, the author does not attempt to describe what he has learned from the experience of taking care of this infant; but that would be very difficult given that the poem is written from the mother's perspective. There is only so much that one can achieve in a given poem, and I think the author has done a good job within the constraints he has chosen. I think we should accept this work. I do suggest one tiny change in the capitalization of the last line.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for your thoughtful revisions. The rewrite does a much better job of embodying the mother's voice, and I respect your humbleness in avoiding excessive attributions to what is after all still only your perception of this woman. The radiographic image of "black and white" is a good one, and continues your clever, yet moving, double entendres that propel the poem forward. The added concluding stanza is quite poignant. The endearment of "mi perfecta" seems congruent with all that the mother has said before; and the way in which you return to the theme of "more than" is effective and helps the poem cohere.

Minor concerns such as the reference point for the phrase "three days every four months"; the phrase "as best you can"; the somewhat clichéd phrase "my gift, my test"; the capitalization schema; and the medication reference are all resolved satisfactorily.

The net result is a poem that conveys a mother's guilt, grief, and love. It also shows how easy it is for parents to become alienated from the very people who are trying to render help because of perceived negative judgments. I expect this poem to linger in the minds of readers; and hope it helps them to bring a little more empathy to similarly challenging situations.

One small point: Given the way I think you want the last three lines to read, the final "you" should not be capitalized. In other words, I think what you are saying is "You are... more than my fear, you are my perfect one." Take a look again, and see if you don't agree.