

#### **FHS REVIEW 2024 Comments to Editor:**

**I like this poem quite a bit. It shows evidence of careful craft and wordsmithing (see Comments to Author for details). I appreciate the way it takes a small thing (a father teaching a child to whistle) and transforms it into a coping technique, an act of resilience, and a way to express love and joy. The pairing of the ordinariness of whistling and the vastness of death, grief, sorrow and love is extremely emotionally effective. I was genuinely moved by the poem's imagery and message. Some readers might find it overly sentimental - and honestly it did remind me of Hammerstein's famous song from The King and I, "I Whistle a Happy Tune" - but for me this was okay. Sentiment is not the same as mawkishness.**

**My one criticism of an otherwise well-written poem is the use of parentheses, which I find somewhat distracting and always remind me of math. However, try as I might, I could not figure out an alternative way of succinctly conveying the information the author wishes, so all I can do is suggest she revisit and, if possible, come up with her own ingenious solution. But since I could not fix the problem, I'm happy to recommend accepting the poem as is.**

#### **Comments to Author:**

**This is a lovely poem, poignant, moving and well-crafted. I appreciate the way it takes a small thing (a father teaching a child to whistle) and transforms it into a coping technique, an act of resilience, and a way to express love and joy. The pairing of the ordinariness of whistling with the vastness of death, grief, sorrow and love is emotionally effective. On a stylistic level, the line breaks and indentations provide a cadence to the poem not unlike whistling! The rhythmic contrast of "now how to"/"how to" works well, and I liked how rather global phrases in stanza 2 ("something big and bold", "thoughts," "feelings") are anchored in grief in the third stanza by the addition of the phrase "small and scared" and the parenthetical words "denying" and "terrifying."**

**Offering just the slightest of criticisms, I own not having great fondness for parentheses in poems, as they tend to include nonessential or at best supplemental information. Writing guides suggest using them sparingly. However, as I pondered your three parentheses (in one poem! - self-conscious irony) - my air, denying, terrifying - I was forced to conclude that they indeed added crucial information with brevity and punch. Turning them into adjectives seemed weaker. I suggest revisiting and reconsidering, but you may have already found the best available solution.**

**Back to my affection for this poem. With unabashed tender-heartedness, it shows us an indissoluble bond between narrator and his father cemented by the courage required in the simple act of whistling even in the face of death. Reading it, I was reminded of similar experiences with my own (now deceased) father and was genuinely moved.**