

Kaddish for My Father

Elaine Starkman

I'd rather do this alone,
but that's not the custom.
Will I stumble over words
if I don't know the exact Aramaic?

All these centuries
must mean something
this early morning.
Will I know when to rise
and when to sit
with timeless old men,
all my grandfather,
his voice, his tallit, his smell.
How beautiful the script
for the teachers,
then for my father
who returns in robust health,

not like the day he died
now buried beneath Chicago snow
more than half way across the country
Soon I'll say kaddish

for my mother and when
for my husband
(they say men die first)
And when for me?

Who will say kaddish for me,
My far-off children?
At last the words leave
my mouth wet with tears
and strangely,
peace abounds all day.



Elaine Starkman (elaine.starkman@gmail.com) lives in Walnut Creek, California, where she teaches *Memoir Writing and Jewish Studies*. She is the co-editor of *Here I Am: Contemporary Jewish Stories from Around the World* (JPS 1998) and has published her work in eclectic journals.