

## A Poem Sequence by Linda Pyke

### you watch

i

relieved released  
you watch our ritual  
from far off

a distant nameless  
place grateful  
beyond feeling  
you watch

the coffin is blue  
as the sky and the sun  
blinding against deep  
white snow

(after the blizzard)

air cold and still  
soft evergreens

everywhere  
stones and crosses

today the dead  
outnumber the living  
or so it seems

ii

you know the words  
by heart have heard them  
all before

common as baptism  
bar mitzvah  
holy marriage vows

we six draw close

and the ancient minister  
in black hair and moustache  
flowing bible in one hand  
cane in the other

begins

both calm and savage  
in his prayer

incanting to a christ

you tried could not quite embrace

(and we three jews

three gentiles

we came in separate cars)

iii

the last journey

how infinitely smooth  
how silent bourne  
through familiar toronto  
streets past home  
past the hospital  
where you gave birth  
worked where first my father  
then you died . . .

. . . and now these weary  
bones cradled  
above new-opened earth  
and snow (wound  
that will not bleed  
nor heal)  
beside him now  
who waits

iv

the prayer ends

i take my red red rose  
lay it on the coffin

living sacrifice

(i know you're pleased)

this scene  
perfect as a dali  
more surreal

and i

so busy  
arranging the elements  
(for you)  
almost forget to cry