



and other middle aged prayers  
by esther cohen

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If praying to God  
did any good,  
they'd hire people to do it.

*Yiddish saying*

It's not that I'm afraid to die.  
I just don't want to be there  
when it happens.

*Woody Allen*

# ONE

I am  
generally  
prayerless  
grown up  
the usual Bas Mitzvah way.  
More they  
than we  
Armenian anti-religious husband  
secular Chilean son  
world of Hindus, Hebrews,  
ex-communists, union organizers,  
poets, muslims, Cubans  
I am the kind of person who loves  
subways  
have secretly started praying  
not in the usual  
sitting in a dark room way.  
My prayers are unofficial.  
They are anti-holy  
They do not invoke  
or evoke. I've never  
liked the word blessed.  
They are about Larry David and diabetes.  
They're vulnerable, with no restrictions.

You can eat Krispy Kremes  
While you're reading my prayers.  
They're for my painter friend Marvin  
who has Parkinsons now  
and Chin at the Korean nail parlor  
and Eddie Izzard  
and you.

*Amen*

## TWO

It's not  
that I don't  
have all those  
what if thoughts  
those same fantasies  
only a little different  
than in sixth grade  
when Denny DiMauro  
as dangerous as someone  
could be at twelve  
walked into Mr. Stamos's class  
with his book disdainfully  
balanced on his right hand.  
Today so many  
years later I can't count  
today when I who  
do not have a pilates body  
have never jogged  
even once  
I who am even more imperfect  
than ever  
get into a Philadelphia  
cab driven by a driver  
with the amazing name of Palajifona

and he is even more beautiful  
than Denny DiMauro  
a man whose hands  
hold onto the wheel  
with a certain sureness  
even now

*Amen*



# THREE

Everyone  
is younger  
and thinner  
than I am.

So what

So what

So what

*Amen*

# FOUR

No one tells  
Menopause truth.  
You're incredibly hot.  
You develop a small moustache.  
It's hard to sleep.  
Black cohosh doesn't work.  
Your body gets wider.  
Still, nothing big  
truly changes.  
At least there's that.

*Amen*

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