

# My Father Told Me

*Wayne Stellini*

Be a man, she said  
on the other end of  
a pointing, taunting  
finger,

encouraged by laughter  
and mockery of the  
depleting soul on his  
knees.

As the unwanted vulturous  
audience circled,  
he broke through the heckling  
ring,

and with a mighty paw,  
lifted me from purgatory  
and into the calm of the  
light.

The warmth of his hold  
signalled my rebirth.  
I believed him when, with blistered  
fingers

and creviced skin  
absorbing my tears,  
he said that it was okay to  
cry.

Scatched palms and scabby knees,  
my father told me,  
give us strength, and tears keep us  
human.

Be a man,  
she continues to say.  
And I look at my open hands for my  
reply.