

My Father

Meredith Hall

I wake him. He smiles that new smile,
the one his mother must have known. Oh!
he says, there was a dragon on my screen!
I wish I had seen him, I say, and he swings
his twig legs off the bed.

Didn't you? he asks, clutching my elbows
and heaving, wobbly, to his feet, to the day,

to coffee in the rocker and then the careful shaving.
His dog gone two years, his wife for ten, and now
this new game to master, Forgetting—

everything. The small turn of his eye to me who fills
in the blanks, who sorts out his children and friends,
finds all those names—Naddie? Freddy? David?

Yes, David, he says without a hitch, borrowing my memory
while it lasts. In St Louis? I offer. St. Louis,
yes, and the dragon smile, all the fires out, what I remember

—the rugged terrain—gone for him
and what is left
are pirates leaping from yardarms, their cartoon
sabers flashing in the light.