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Things Dying & Where

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It seems my father has been old  
an awfully long time. It's likely  
he will die that way. *Funny grapes*,  
he calls the Minnehaha choke-  
cherry, cuffing the bunch. *Itty bitty*.

What a bear-weird shape, my father  
in the hale grey of this place. Eyes  
souped & wild. He smells of a tired  
mustard. Everything seems ready  
to take him: the lichen, the falls,  
the hungry earth. When he trips  
I don't catch him because I am small, I say,  
or because he is darkened & peltlike,  
nape loose as a great-backed animal  
& gravied with sweat. The late  
bloom of him.

*Oop*, he says.  
*Sorry, boney*, & stands, brushing the veinless  
space under his knee. My father's lessening  
is a strange harvest: each fingertip  
a skulk of borzoi, his nose a waxy  
Spanish lamppost, his eyes ink-pewter  
& baby's dough. When he falls  
I don't catch him,

his fiddled-with heart  
already the rhododendron root ball.