

CUP

Because of heavy painkillers
administered to my father
or a deep dream,
before he died he called out from a doze in his wheelchair:

Take, take it.

His tone was desperate, so I stepped closer
to reassure: *It's all right. You were asleep.*

What's the matter?

His eyes now gaped at his world:
the curtain isolating him from the other bed here,
a portable commode, his wheeled tray
holding an untouched lunch of broth and jello.

Then he recognized me and said:

*I was drinking a cup of coffee
with nowhere to put it down.*

His voice was anxious and bewildered so I soothed:

It was just a dream; don't worry.

But he said: *Take it from me,
anyway.* After a moment

I reached across his lap to seize
a cup of nothing
which I held to my chest as I straightened again.

My father smiled slightly
at the oddity of this event
and slept. Thus his cup
passed to me.

Published in My Father's Cup (2002)