

BY THE EXETER RIVER

“What is it you’re mumbling, old Father, my Dad?
Come drink up your soup and I’ll put you to bed.”

“By the Exeter River, by the river, I said.”

“Stop dreaming of rivers, old Father, my Dad,
Or save all your dreaming till you’re tucked in bed.”

“It was cold by the river. We came in a sled.”

“It’s colder to think of, old Father, my Dad,
Than the blankets and bolsters and pillows of bed.”

“We took off his dress and the cap from his head.”

“Undressed in the winter, old Father, my dad?
What could you be thinking? Let’s get off to bed.”

“And Sally, poor Sally I reckon is dead.”

“Was she an old sweetheart, old Father, my Dad?
Now lean on my shoulder and come up to bed.”

“We drowned your half-brother. I remember we did.”

Donald Hall