

ANN HUDSON

My Father Used to Read Books

My father used to read books
in two languages. My father used
to go to the gym, play handball,
do squats and push-ups with his children
on his back. My father used to play
folk tunes on a nylon-string guitar;
he used to play baseball with his grandchildren.
My father used to work in his lab,
pick his feet up, neaten his hair
with a small, black comb.
He used to shave his jawline.
My father used to swallow. He used
to mow the lawn, shine his shoes,
walk to work, balance the checkbook.
He used to rub his back against
door frames, especially the one in the kitchen.
He used to whistle, shovel the walk,
carry his wallet in his back pocket.
My father used to build wooden airplanes
with his friend next door. My father used
to travel on a plane. My father used
to have a sister. Her name was Joan.
She used to remember him. She used
to laugh over the phone every time he called.