

# [Hands Folded . . . Ankles Crossed]

*Lynn Tinker*

- I In full rooster bellow-forté fashion  
Chicken George breaks the morning  
well before the softened milky edges of the pre-dawn barn roof  
lift out from the mist  
still hanging low on the pasture just beyond.

My father snores in the room facing seaward,  
out over the stretch of babies' breath,  
like fields of clouds, and lupis,  
and the spruce grove and rocky ledge, and below to Cope's Cove.  
Only in some rolling seafaring dream might George's call,  
on farm side, register shrill as the boatswain's whistle  
for all hands on deck, or the screech of gulls  
hanging, dropping, hanging, in the aft wind  
to catch the bait dregs tossed to the curly seafoam in the wake.

Dad's nostrils twitch in his sleep  
and in the peace of his seaman's dreams  
his cheeks fill with air as the exhale  
phuh-flutters past slack lips,  
    hands folded on his chest  
    ankles crossed  
    economy of space.

- II I lie awake.  
This visit has shown me rife lines in his edged face,  
due softening, that show my face's furrows less  
only in number than in kind;  
but it's these fathoms between us that fester.  
A far reach between us lies undiminished,  
our endless armistice ensuring we flounder as so much jetsam,  
sovereignly bobbing, afloat, but scarcely, and apart.

III When did we make such a dull wicked truce?  
to merely tread water here  
or as if pace the farm side's acres aimlessly  
wandering the mobius path with some promise  
to never meet.

I have enfolded sons in this lap  
and breathed their hot heads, their sweaty sticky damp palms,  
their vinegar cheeks, their almost necks,  
that I might suck them back in to me,  
and I can measure the love of a child.

I will see you stumble out of your squeaky bed at morning's light  
your eyes as watery as the infant son,  
your hair as tousled  
your ass crack showing just as dark a slice  
above your fallen frayed drawstring at the back.  
You are just a grown male,  
and we will end this snooze of a romance, father and daughter,  
or we may as soon lie back stiffly down  
our eyelids thick and heavy, cheeks falling back  
slackened jaws relaxing all the better  
for drooling into the sodden puddle ever expanding  
on the pillow by our ear.