

lynn tinker

Hands Folded. . .Ankles Crossed

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 on 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.
The 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 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 eyelides 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.