

Half Fist

Loudon Wainwright III

I've seen the family photos
And the man's a mystery
Died in 1942 at the age of 43
My grandmother was his widow
And my father was his son
Oh, but I know next to nothing
Of the first Loudon

They say he was an SOB
Who liked to smoke and drink
In the photos he looks handsome
Attractive's what I think
And there's one of him in uniform
And it must have been World War I
They say he was an expert sailor
And could handle a shotgun

In the wedding portrait
Posing with his young bride
His right hand, hidden by her bouquet
Is left hanging at his side
Closed in a kind of half-fist
Unsure what he'd just done
Facing his short future
Like he could hit someone

It was elbows off the table
Before the meal'd begun
And it's his hands I recognize
He gave them to his son
Whose own hands held and touched me
And ruffled up my hair
And I recognize that half-fist
I'd know it anywhere

Later on, in the late 30s
He began to go to seed
In the photos he looks loaded
They observe and I will heed
Mugging for the camera, having a little fun
Cigarette in one hand
And a drink in the other one

Yes, I know a little something
About the first Loudon
My grandmother was his widow
And my father was his son
Tell me what are we afraid of?
Why do we resist?

I spread my hands and flex my fingers
Open and close my fist
I spread my hands and flex my fingers
Open and close my fist