

Loudon Wainwright Iii

"Half Fist"

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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 elbow's off the table,
Before the meal'd begun.
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 sea.
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.

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