Paws

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**Paws**

Thick, strong works
short stubby fingers

Callused, close at palm.

Soft slaps, spankings,
squeezings active, useful,
moving, flare patterns, handball,
gardening, rich, experienced,
gentle tips, back rubs,
duck bites,
prayers.

--Mark Crowe

**Labors**

Swinging the anvil
tore his muscles taut.
The beads of sweat
streamed down toward
his navel like nectar.
Tanned skin stretching
over the meaty arms
and a strong back made
of a hard day's work.
His hair was golden -
the son of a farmer -
with brown chestnut eyes
reflecting his mother's
sweet potato pies.
A line in the forehead
drawn from burying
a small child
with the same eyes.
He swings the anvil
in one long sweep -
enough power to crush
the life from a man.
Callused, leathery hands
That so often caressed
my cheek, my neck, my breast.
Each day I wish that
I might swing that anvil
for him -
ease the ache in his back,
soften his callused hands
like the way he lays me
down at night and
gives me life, gives me breath.

--Cassandara Dings