



pads

by Andrew McMillan

hooking the thumb through the piece of fabric
like the eye of a needle I let him
wrap my hands so tenderly as though
dressing a wound

when my hands are bound tight
in the cotton

and the gloves put on there is the footwork
come up on that heel bend that knee
as though he is teaching me to walk
his own hands are in pads
held up like paws

by his face in permanent surrender
he counts me in shouts left and right
my coordination stumbles and he smiles
kindly

reminds me always to keep

the gloves at my chin even though no punch
is coming back at me and later
as I falter on a pull-up
he puts his hands to my glutes
and pushes me

back up Oh brotherhood of man
how could I not have known this touch
that doesn't yearn but holds the body tight
lets it take a breath then throws it
up over the wall

