

“Am I too Smelly?”

The back of my middle-aged right hand  
Presses into the curve of his underarm  
Resting, warm, safe  
He asks, “Am I too smelly?”

I breathe in, facing him  
Just inches from the source  
of his natural scent

We are both sleepy  
My left hand feeling the rise and fall  
Of the day in his chest  
while the rhythmic pounding of his heart  
slows to a calmer pace  
I think about his beautiful day of living

I think also about the dead  
returned in flag draped boxes  
and the uniforms arriving home  
laundered and neatly pressed

I read once how a woman buried  
her face in one such uniform  
Expecting to be refilled  
with the scent of her fallen soldier  
and felt betrayed

I snuggle closer  
attempting to weave his essence, this hour  
into my memory

How, then, should I answer  
when he asks,

“Am I too smelly?”