

# Layabout

By John Brehm

Do nothing and everything will be done,  
that's what Mr. Lao Tzu said, who walked  
around talking 2,500 years ago and

now his books practically grow on trees  
they're so popular and if he were  
alive today beautiful women would

rush up to him like waves lapping  
at the shores of his wisdom.  
That's the way it is, I guess: humbling.

But if I could just unclench my fists,  
empty out my eyes, turn my mind into  
a prayer flag for the wind to play with,

we could be brothers, him the older one  
who's seen and not done it all and me  
still unlearning, both of us slung low

in our hammocks, our hats tipped  
forwards, hands folded neatly,  
like bamboo huts, above our hearts.

Source: Poetry (Poetry Foundation, 2001)