



PROJECT MUSE®

American Husband

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CRUELTY MADE ME

Love came along and said what: *What?*
without even a single word.
Said *wait* by the far side of the river
and *when* by the black limb of the crow tree
growing through my kitchen window.

Love came along and said *let me*
(and let me say she'd let me)
but cruelty made me
with my back turned. Grew me
according to a twisted line of light
so I've grown twisted, like the light,
shaped
like a staircase
and run with a long red rug.

Love came along and flashed me her badge,
said her name rhymes with *test*
and keeps to the meter of bare legs
in a loose dress. But cruelty made love sleepless
and sleepless, made me cruel:
each tooth in the tracks
of all my zippers latched, belts all
buckled and button
by button, I'm done.