



PROJECT MUSE®

Hammered Dulcimer

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GOD PUT THE NOOSE AROUND
MY NECK

I stood trembling and shy
on a chair of this world,
stood there, poised in between
my own life and loose space.
“Love” the bent shadow of him
adjusting, adjusting,
with purposeful hands
the contraption of threat.
“Love” the tying of knots,
fingers oiled in their skill,
the sharp hinges of elbows
framing dark work,
the tense forearms like hills,
and his breath in the distance,
that sole, vivid warmth.

God the sad, God the ghost,
all bravado and edges
in the place between things.

I could tell he was nervous
when he touched my life tenderly
under the rope,
when he kissed my soft throat
after looping his threat.
While I carefully stood
on a chair of this world
a hair’s breadth from loose space.
You’d think God wouldn’t do this,
that I’m somehow disgraced
by such wicked imbalance,
by the rope white as bones

snaking close to my face.
But I saw through his act.
I saw God's human face.

It was bound up in mine
and it needed my willingness.
How far would I go

to uncover my faith,
to discover my life,
the sheer weight of the self?

It was good not to fall.
And he tightened my throat
with the length of his fear,

to the shape of his want,
and he pulled at my soul,
tugged it this way and that—

But he couldn't reach through
the tight web of our difference.
He knew this, and wept.