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## Hammered Dulcimer

Lisa Williams

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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.