

# The Hangman's Poor Gift

*by Philip F. Clark*

The hangman's poor gift  
was this: soft hands on their last  
of days -- a mean comfort paid with years

of placing the rope just so; of settling  
the hood with care -- quieting the  
loud world for once, and the  
shaking lips. When he

held the knot, and then let go,  
he stood back in the dark --  
its only sentry.

