

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.

