

## The Cage

In 1956  
my mother was Marilyn  
platinum blond  
bloodred lips  
aching to be kissed  
throbbing, waiting,  
no way to release

dreaming of Rock Hudson  
his strong biceps reaching down  
like God  
lifting her away  
from this cramped cage

dressing me like a doll  
*Sit still.*  
*Don't ask so many questions.*  
*Do you like Mommy's new hairdo?*

grabbing the candies from my hands  
*Give me those! Stop eating!*  
*No one will love you.*  
*Is that the door? Is that the phone?*

In 1956  
my mother bought parakeets  
anxious blue wings  
soft bellies  
hollow bones  
soft little heads with paperthin skulls

she taught them to peck on her lips:  
*give me a kiss, Peppy*  
*never leave me,*  
*Peppy*  
*a kiss, Peppy, on my Marilyn lips,*  
*my nerves sting with the nip*

*of your sharp yellow beak  
pecking at my ruby red  
lips*

stroking their little bellies  
*a kiss, Peppy*  
*a kiss, a kiss*  
until, overwhelmed,  
they flew  
from her fingers  
and beat themselves  
against  
the sliding glass door

when they escaped  
she got new ones  
fragile new blue ones  
Peppy

lifting them from their box  
while they sang in fear  
*What shall we call this one?*  
Peppy

while I watched  
from the patio,  
hanging from the rail,  
with my own song:

*suck the weight from my bones*  
*starve me paperthin,*  
*light and hollow,*  
*i won't eat again*  
*light as air*  
*we'll raise our*  
*anxious wings*  
*me and a thousand fugitive Peppys—*

# Morganstein

*"Don't hang like that,"*

my mother calls

I shuffle inside and put

my hand on her lap

searching for more than

the phone rings and

she races away

leaving the new Peppy

and me alone in the living room

his little breast beating fast

I could break it with a squeeze

but start running instead

around and around and

he joins me, little Peppy,

racing

skulls dizzy

sour breath hot and quick

hot tongues licking our own lips

*a kiss, a kiss*

*never leave me, Peppy*

until nearly senseless

we start

flinging ourselves

against the patio door