Sketch

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The Cage

Linda Morganstein*

*Iowa State University

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The Cage

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

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