

## First Words

My own firstborn found hers, *Moon!*  
exclaimed in awe, building a bridge  
between a full June moon and a bedtime story  
book that led us to a “great green room”  
where we bid the moon goodnight, its bright  
image blazen in an early sunset sky.

My son found his first—*Airplane!*—  
with me always taking off, out the door,  
he, in arms, seeking shiny silver  
birds zooming through sky and clouds.

My youngest, barely a walking girl, pointed  
toward the utility pole, looking hard, chasing  
a drumming flicker, its pounding beak full  
voiced, like hers. She yelled, “Bird—bird!”

I want mine.  
I want *skyscrapers*,  
not like Empire  
State—or Sears Tower,  
nothing steel.

I want a breeze, soft rain, and snow scraping  
skies—red-crinkled maple leaves skipping on air,  
yellow tamarack needles falling to a forest floor,  
swirling picnic grill smoke, all grazing sky.  
I want cawing crows; swarming, trilling ear-fulls  
of waxwings; Perseids’ star showers vanished  
into dark; bats twisting their way from caves.  
I want hawks, falcons, eagles hunting, soaring.

I want first words that rise, float forever away.

—Susan Hodgkin

This poem was written for Moscow’s Third Street Gallery exhibition, *STUFF: What We Collect and Why*, which opened on Thursday, September 6, 2018.