

1977

## A Litter of Hamsters

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### Recommended Citation

Kennedy, Roberta (1977) "A Litter of Hamsters," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 1977 , Article 9.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1977/iss1/9>

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A LITTER OF HAMSTERS

Eight hairless hamsters  
squirm in a nest of cedar chips  
in an aquarium. Their mother  
stretches in a shaft of afternoon  
sun.

Bodies as long and round as the last knuckle  
of my littlest finger, each  
head vibrates on a bony neck.  
Black eyes bulge beneath eyelids  
sewn shut with wisps of lashes.

One head shivers up. His ears  
lay folded and flat like black  
wrinkled leaves just burst from their bud.  
His nose probes, stubbly whiskers quiver  
like twanged pieces of fine wire.

His jaws open, frozen in a yawn  
revealing a faded tongue, soft as wet lint.  
Tiny teeth click together.  
He totters sideways and the others  
tangle over him and sleep.

The mother moves from the sun  
and spreads her warm darkness  
over the nest.