

PRACTICING

LINDSEY ANNE BAKER

Yesterday, when I could not find you,
I'd naturally assumed you died:
slit, blood, bathroom tile,
your birds hungry, squawking.

Yesterday, waiting
for a ride, I watched,
through the window, a girl
walk to the door, meet a foreign boy
who'd come up from behind;
he asked her why she'd worn so many layers.
She said she would be cold without.
I was cold.
I have been cold.

I don't know the exact color
of the room you're in now; I suspect
I wouldn't be let in but would be made to sit,
wait, politely thumbing women's magazines
as if I was just to find I really wanted
this red trench, this red bag.
I want to say, in that room, Mozart is inappropriate.
I want to say, to you, I know it is too loud—
Too loud to hear a sparrow fall—

But you aren't dead.
I found you, alive.
One day, you will die.
I am prepared; we have been practicing.
You'll fill in the right details.
You will cut well.
No one will believe you ever failed.

I do not believe
birds mean to fly into the glass.
I believe the birds believe
reflection is a lie, the sky has no interior,
the cold is merely cold,
a thought of cold that, after death, is not
a memory of anything endured.