

# Special Ways of Being Afraid

The license plate on Charlie's Cadillac  
features a swinging Tweety Bird,  
which us kids don't get; his father's

hooked to oxygen and surprises Amal,  
who visits him, with a real war pistol.  
I'd cut their yard for fifteen dollars

and every time fuck up a sprinkler head.  
In our recollection of Charlie's garage  
it opened only for that sparkling car . . .

We assumed it housed fetuses pickled  
in cloudy alcohol, a crow's skull used  
as a joke paperweight. Larkin's whole

rented world shivers itself together,  
a busy tedium like the thin innards  
of a wristwatch; the nameless couriers

flick day-old coupons into mailboxes  
while my couchbound aunt struggles  
with her subsidized, big-key flip phone.

Laura spills sugar over the countertop  
and is too nearsighted to wash dishes.  
Television gives her ghostly company.

The director talks over black pyramids  
located in a bankrupt Chinese coal plant  
while a drone operator holds the shot.

Erick Verran