

Spring 1984

## Child Setting the Table for Breakfast

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### Recommended Citation

Moore, Barbara (1984) "Child Setting the Table for Breakfast," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 22 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss22/5>

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## CHILD SETTING THE TABLE FOR BREAKFAST

It was before morning, before anyone was up,  
a raw wing brushed him, the child  
setting foot in the cave of pantry,  
a light-cord hovering just out of reach,  
a stool shaking under him like a trestle  
as he climbed, dragged the plates down  
one by one, odd and bitter  
in their embattled porcelain.  
He was setting the table for his mother  
still dreaming under folds of moony linen—  
how could she know what it was like?  
He had promised, he could not move.  
Where was voice, bird?  
The clock had no face, outdoors  
trees leaned on each other  
in a night sweat too thick to dislodge.  
He saw how it was—  
no guarantee the world would turn  
on its big hinge frosted with terror—  
space beyond space where the sun might be falling  
even now, in the wrong direction.  
He whimpered like a lonely animal  
smelling the death of the planet,  
nuzzled the window pane beside him, breathing,  
breathing until a clear patch widened:  
from the spark of himself, rubbed life,  
enough to climb down from the stool, take  
knives and forks from the depths of a cabinet,  
lay them on the stunned table.  
Just as a grey lip parted over the lawn,  
he went to the foot of the stairs and called her.