

## Family Dinner

Dylan Crews

We'll set the table with empty paper plates  
and broken plastic forks.

Our Sunday routine.

*(They gather round, sallown-cheeked ghosts)*

My brother bites his cuticles, sucking the  
gamey flesh of his fingers clean off the bone.  
He stuffs himself, blissfully unaware.

*(I used to play with him in Mama's garden. He hasn't come over in a while.)*

Father works the meat of his lip between his teeth,  
he's been on a diet, so he'll save the other  
for tomorrow's lunch.

*(Poor Mr. Bridge. Daddy said he got let go.)*

Mother sneaks pieces of her hair onto our plates,  
picking at her split ends as we share a glance.  
We both know she'll throw it up tomorrow morning.

*(She brought back our tupperware filled with fresh pie. Didn't she save some for herself?)*

I'll watch them eat,  
chewing on the inside of my cheek until  
blood fills the cracks in yellowing molars.

*(Dinner sits heavy in my stomach.)*

We stand to clear our plates,  
no strangers to the growling within the pits of our stomachs,  
Dissatisfied.

*(Steak and potatoes. Mama's caesar salad. Mrs. Bridge's apple pie.)*

Finally, we floss with the loose threads of  
hand-me-downs.

The string comes back clean.

*(They've eaten nothing.)*