

## **Please, Listen**

For the Unveiling of 'Have a Seat at Our Table'  
Lauren Seal

Words will not fill  
the caverns of our bellies.  
Our children cannot chew  
the alphabet, swallow sharp  
consonants without shredding  
their throats. Vowels will not  
slide smooth as honey into  
empty stomachs.

Stories will not supply us  
with degrees, four walls  
on which to hang them, warm beds,  
a sustainable blanket of income,  
instead of these patchwork jobs  
we quilt together with brittle thread.

A poem, although pretty,  
will not protect us from the sting  
of cruelty hiding in others' boots.  
It cannot keep us safe when home  
is a snarl of tripwire and one  
misstep leads to a clenched fist.

Fairy tales will not feed us,  
house us, clothe us, when our bodies  
fail, bones fail, eyes fail,  
services, supports, safety nets  
fail.

Words will never fill the gaps  
between where we are and where  
we should be. But, they are  
the one thing we have  
in abundance.

We whisper our litanies to  
the wind, watch our words float  
away like poplar fluff.  
Pray they fall on fertile soil,  
become a forest that  
refuses to be ignored.

