

ELOISA AMEZCUA

Playing House

I've always taken my role seriously.
 In my sister's three-bedroom house,

 comfortable and bleached,
she gets to be the mom

and I pretend to sleep. Her husband's gone
 for the weekend on a hiking trip

 or retreat. Her son, the younger
of the two children, wakes

from hunger. She paces the room,
 a hand cradling his small frame,

 the other holding a bottle. It's okay,
it's okay, she says, a bounce

with each step. Mama's here,
 mama's here. I pretend I'm not

 listening, I don't hear.
When we were children

she'd say, I get to be the mom;
 my husband's at work. The father

 was always working. I'm older,
she'd say, you have to do what I want.

We'd play for hours in the closet
 under the stairs. She said babies

 don't walk, they don't talk, so I crawled
behind her not making a sound.