

Martin Robertson

Back Room, 1944

Riven temper runs along the table
like a ladder down a stocking, like flame
along dry wood. But flame is beautiful
—more like the ladder in the stocking, wrecking
the firm silk. He's a fool
and she's hysterical
and one no longer cares
to put a rough thought into kinder words
or keep it silent. And at all our sides
sits the empty place of absent love.
And at all our backs
(our comfortable backs) thunders war
with all those deaths of others.
And that huge violence flickers in that void
with the little ugly flame of temper.