

## **Back Room, 1944**

**Martin Robertson**

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.