Spring 2010

Back Cover: Fourth

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Fourth

It is dropped, this hint of conversation, like a plate, clattering noisy circumlocution until still. And longer yet the resonant rhythm echoes in my mind. We are drying the dinner wineglasses after a meal of succulent salmon dill and topics all gristle and bone. And I can’t seem to get my teeth into this sinking feeling of something elusive in what you are not saying as you chatter and wipe and invert the goblets on their heads. Was it the pommard or the tension — taut as guitar strings over frets — that caused rivulets of conversation to trickle off into silence like polished stones?

I am holding the washed-warm serving platter against my aproned belly, massaging its dry spine with a dishtowel. I realize only after the cutlery is neatly slotted in its groove, the candles snuffed, ovenlight snapped off, that ever since you hinted at the impossibility of a fourth, I’ve been cradling the dish like a child.

— Kate Marshall Flaherty