

ROBERT KING

The Heart of the Waitress

My friend and I are drawn to such desuetude
for lunch as this dark bar,
its stained carpet manifesting the same blotches

as the ceiling, the contours of disasters
small but continually spreading
above us, for a beer, a hamburger, and Judy

who harmlessly calls us oldsters sweetie,
darling. One day, she's gone.
Three months, she's back, her heart repaired.

Her mother died at forty, she says, forty-two.
Pigskin, they use. Titanium.
She taps outside the valve in her aorta.

which knocks together, she demonstrates,
click click click,
like fingernails. Hearing it the first night

she sat bolt up, trying to locate the sound.
Finally, "That's you, honey,"
she says she said aloud and lay back down.

Next week, a mysterious locked door.
"Closed," hand-written.
Business, we blink in the sun, wasn't good.

We don't know the owner, what happened,
don't know anything.
I mean to say, we don't know nothing.