

If The Fire Is Not In Your Apartment

by Bud Smith

If you get crushed in New York City
that's your own problem
careful where you step and cross
we've hailed taxis through the lava
to traverse a cold street
occasionally, stopping to dream
on benches or church steps
anywhere with shade

Through the walls, I hear the opera stop
and down below, soon,
the hydrants will burst open
check your palm on the door
The fire is not in your apartment
It's everywhere else

Be forever patient
crawling through the smoke
your building was built
to withstand the bombings
but no planes dropped letters
the only mail you got
in your small PO box
were notices, maybe from Hell

so leave
leave the perfect angels in the radiators

leave the kingdom of blue-ball mice in the walls
all thousand generations of them
leave the graphitti of your neon-non-children
and your neighbor screaming out the schedules of
alternate side and third rail alive

slide through the tunnels
crossing beneath the water
come up in the swamps of New Jersey
you, a random tetrapod,
looking for lost turnpike coins
in the slot between the seat
and the floorboard

the ocean, still rumored,
laying ahead

