

# 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

