

Children of the Cloud

by Gary Hardaway

We shrugged off the grim joke of Duck and Cover.
That some adults believed the drill would save
us from the blast of fused hydrogen

amused us as we quietly curled along
the corridors, the girls on one side, boys
the other. Urgent bells elicited

collective, silent chuckles, broke the dull
routines of long division, sentences
diagrammed in chalk; or brought reprieves

to those unskilled in dodge-ball, rhythm blocks.
We knew mortality early, knew the term
“Ground Zero” well from grainy black-and-whites

of what had been Hiroshima. For us,
the Cuban stand-off was a farcical
morality play we laughed at up our sleeves.

Annihilation seemed inevitable
as greasers with switchblades rumbling in the dark.
Our summers were bright. We knew the worst, and played.

