

Charlie Smith

Self Defense

At the resort hotel,
the woman I have run away with says *This*
is how we'll live
after they drop the bomb — underneath,
she means, these roofs of steel tubes
and bullet-proof glass, where equatorial trees
bang their heads and strips of gray water
plunge over concrete rocks, and men in braided
jackets strain against the weight
of loaded trolleys. But we've had little sleep,
fidgeting awake to the sound of rain
rustling like rats in the curtains,
the harsh declaratives of rugs
and unfamiliar furniture deflecting us
into each other's arms again,
where we dig at the flesh and cry out,
where there was something essential placed
just hours ago that we can't find now — until we
retreat defeated to upright positions, stinking
of a passionate grease; as always in these situations,
selecting a speech from our childhoods,
the one where something went wrong — yes,
didn't it? — that afternoon when they hurt you
worse than before, and you ran away to the woods,
where among the wetted trees
you saw the silver provisional ponds
leftover from the storm, shining where there had been no ponds.