

ED MEEK

The Bomb

for General Charles Sweeney

You were a real brain
in high school, my aunt said.
You had a photographic memory.

Three times you tried to get a fix
on Kokura, but the clouds were too heavy
so you went to Nagasaki—

the two billion dollar bomb
in the back of Bock's Car.
You were thinking: Better not

screw up. It was plutonium.
You didn't know if it would work
or not. And when the bomb went off

you thought the blast
might knock the plane
out of the sky. Some nights

you wake with a jolt.
In the dream you swear
everyone is in disguise.

The skin on their faces hangs down.
You can't tell if they're facing you
or looking away. At dawn

you take your first drink.
Everywhere you look
no one you know looks back.

Duty

We get up and go
to work as if we are
getting up and going
to work, and all the time
we carry with us
our lunchbox of memories:
Dresden, Hiroshima, Nagasaki,
Vietnam, Iraq. We remember
and we remain hungry.

So we grow old
without wisdom, to wake
listless, and sick;

and in my dream, gently I pull your hair.
Wake up, America, I whisper, Please.
But the hair comes out in my hands—
long strands of beautiful, dead hair.

Ed Meek has published prose and poetry in a number of magazines and newspapers including *The Paris Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *The Wisconsin Review*, *Negative Capability*, *Yankee*, *The North American Review*, *Studies in Contemporary Satire*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *The Boston Herald*. He teaches English at Curry College and lives in Milton, Massachusetts with his wife and son.