Charles Wright

CHINA MAIL

It's deep summer east of the Blue Ridge. Temperatures over 90 for the twenty-fifth day in a row. The sound of the asphalt trucks down Locust Avenue Echoes between the limp trees. Nothing's cool to the touch. Since you have not come, The way back will stay unknown to you. And since you have not come, I find I've become like you, A cloud whose rain has all fallen, adrift and floating. Walks in the great void are damp and sad. Late middle age. With little or no work, we return to formlessness, The beginning of all things. Study the absolute, your book says. But not too hard, I add, just under my breath. Cicadas ratchet their springs up to a full stop in the green wings of the oaks. This season is called white hair. Like murdered moonlight, it keeps coming back from the dead. Our lives will continue to turn unmet, like Virgo and Scorpio. Of immortality, there's nothing but old age and its aftermath. It's better you never come. How else would we keep in touch, tracing our words upon the air?

