

kind wildfire

by Cindy Lim

kind wildfire neighbor, you lit a camp fire
somewhere in Napa Valley's sunburnt arms
wrapped around dried skin California
ground peeling in Hell's itch
thirteen thousand homes kindled
for the spreading radiant sunset
that steals color from the fields
and mothers from their children.
At night, your face buried in someone's town
you make haste, let the breath of 85 lives
light your death toll smoke
for all the other neighbors to know
you are alive.
you are alive.

kind wildfire neighbor, what did you need
at three in the morning when you turned my
door into ash? when your children spilled
their debris on my bed sheets; your drunk
red hands rummaging through my drawers,
do you remember who you kidnap in
broad daylight? come morning sun, you
nestle in the middle of the Valley's breasts, call
her mother who suffocates from her own love
mother, are you alive?
mother, are you alive?

kind wildfire neighbor, who still doesn't
know how to turn off the lights at night
have you ever seen a phoenix die?
without a warning, it burns itself wild
into the only flame in the room, and falls—
and rises, born again, plump in the ashes
of all the ones that came before.
In this charcoal wasteland, we mourn for rain
to turn your ashes into soil; grow
into the new garden to come.
you are alive.
you are alive.