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## Season of Fires

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## Season of Fires

The Finlay Creek wildfire near Peachland is still pegged at 1,500 hectares as of Monday afternoon. Fire information officer Heather Rice says crews are witnessing increased fire activity this afternoon as winds pick up in the area. She says residents can expect to see new plumes of smoke due to the increased activity.

—*Kelowna Capital News*, 2 September 2017

In Peachland, across the Lake,  
behind your head as we sit  
for dinner in the *El Dorado*,  
the white smoke flutters  
on top of you like a halo.

It forms a harmless cloud;  
around us, the festivities  
continue, with drunk  
men mistaking me for  
a waitress; lithe women  
in their summer dresses  
and mascara sticks  
in the toilet—giggling  
and growling, “Let’s  
find ourselves boys.”

Above us, the sky’s pink;  
it makes you high, I know,  
so I take photographs of  
the crevices of clouds,  
the Canadian geese diving  
into the warm waters, and  
you perusing the menu.

We walk the marina at night,  
hearing the buoy hit wooden  
planks beneath our feet.  
I cajole you to go to the edge  
of the dock—*there’s no one here*,  
but you say you won’t cross  
that line.

*I'm a rebel*, I declare, tiptoeing  
the planks with the stealth of a  
ballerina. Beneath is only dark  
water. You say there's fish there.  
I can only guess which kind.

That afternoon, we parked by  
the beach and you suggested  
we take a walk by the shore.  
You walked; I ran to the water  
as fast as I could, kicking off  
my shoes and feeling the sand,  
waves, tides crawl on my skin.

*You are from the islands;*  
a sharp reminder as you reject me  
when I beckon you to join.

In Peachland, the wild animals  
are scampering away from  
the blistering heat; the fire  
fighters are dousing the area  
with what little water the Valley  
has; people are watching the  
news, waiting for the knock  
on the door that will tell  
them *it's time to go*.

I never hear that knock  
on the door. It's never time  
to go for me. Or maybe that's  
my rebellious nature always  
wanting to tip my heels to  
the deep corners of the lake,  
or run into the forest in the middle  
of the night until the burning  
gasps in front of me.

It's either the water or fire—  
I want the elements to devour  
me completely, a feasting  
on my unburdened desires.

**RINA GARCIA CHUA** is currently doing her PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. She is the editor of the first anthology of Philippine ecopoetry, *Sustaining the Archipelago*, which was released by the University of Santo Tomas Publishing House in February 2018. These days, she enjoys hiking in the woods of British Columbia as much as she relishes swimming in the warmer corridors of the Pacific Ocean. She also wants to try ice climbing next winter.