

Susheila Khera

## Needing Water

Along the creek  
heavy morning mist of late summer  
rises and mixes with smoke  
from six million acres of burning forest.

The sun glows  
like an orange full moon  
reflects red off metal surfaces  
leaks in through the living room window—  
pools like liquid amber on the coffee table.

A wavery line of cranes  
navigates south through the yellow air  
looking for a place to land.

Small roadside ponds  
are drying up  
their dark surface  
coated with a film of ash.  
The ducks sit grounded.  
The creek has stopped moving.

Smoke gobbles up the evening mist  
and beads as dew on aspen leaves.  
7 p.m., 82°F  
much too hot  
for the middle of August in Alaska,  
and no rain anywhere.