

Love in the Time of Caldera

Todd Williams

When the caldera blows,
everything goes
with it.

There'll be no time to flee
by car, or bus, or plane,
no time to gather things
we own or need,
no time for plans to flee
across landscapes
reduced to lava,
magma unleashed
on a world unprepared
to deal with the consequence
of so much it does not understand.

There will be no red states,
nor blue states, just a cloud
of billowy white turning gray
as we choke on a rain of glass,
tiny shards piercing soft lungs
and steely engines designed to save
us from fates born and couched
in this technological Nirvana.

When the caldera blows,
we'll become one
with the flame,
no purpose or blame
to differentiate where we stand
on the morality of masks,
the truth about the election,
or the finer points of gender,
all arguments rendered moot
by the growing roar of the storm,
a relentless reckoning filling
eyes and ears with
singularity,
and then silence.

There will be no time
for final requests from the damned;
for one last kiss or sad farewells
over phones or FaceTime;
for told you so's or even "Oh, no's!";
for reflections on lives spent in service
or squandered, rent, or rued;
for the fervent prayer of the faithful,
soliloquy or angry remonstrations,
everything we once were
melding with the Earth
and trees
and animals
and rivers,
all compressed
into a fiery mist.

There will be no time
to make amends to those we've aggrieved.
There will be no time
for forgiveness from those we've deceived.
There will be no time
to finally share our darkest secrets,
our unrequited loves,
our closest held regrets.
There will be no time
for anything at all,
to make plans,
to watch children grow,
to make peace with those
who look, or think,
or believe differently.
There will be no time
to believe in something more
than this moment right now,
this tiny sliver flowing
into a river of wind, earth,
and fire.

I go to Google in search of solace.
What are the odds this year
that I win the Powerball (1 in 292,201,338);
that I am struck by lightning (1 in 1,222,000);
that I see the Supervolcano erupt (1 in 730,000).

But seriously,
there is
so little
time.