

# 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.