

May 18

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May 18

Kylie Walsh

May 18th, 1980
Mount St. Helens erupts,
the first volcanic eruption in modern scientific history.

In the days before the earth reminded us of her glory,
they roped off the mountain
in the way we restrict access
to the best bits of ourselves.

We have a habit of forgetting
what we should remember the most:
where we shouldn't build our homes,
that everything dies,
that we are not alone.

There are some things we cannot control:
the stubbornness of breath,
the lies people will tell you,
the release of energy in all its forms.

Fifty-seven people were engulfed,
thinking they were safe
to watch the destruction from a distance.
They should have known that you could not witness
something as beautiful as this
and still call yourself safe in the aftermath.

The ash circled the globe twice before falling back to the earth.
Particles smaller than heartbeats
finding their way into my mother's ten-year-old lungs.
Fourteen years and nine months later, she will hold me in her arms
for the first time.
Ash preserves.
Let me tell you the ancestral secrets I have

trapped between these lungs.

May 18th, 2015

Oh, sweet offspring of fire and earth,
I should have told you,
ash preserves,
it does not keep you alive.