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Mount Unzen, Japan, June 3, 1991

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Mount Unzen, Japan, June 3, 1991

for Katia and Maurice Krafft

by Michael Catherwood

Years they stared into the mouth,
threats boiling into red spittle
up from the earth's gut,
down its shoulders into flows
hot enough to inhale whole windstorms,
always off to another continent
to walk up the earth's face
to film the kiss that gave life to landscape.

Like tendrils, the scarlet
fingers reached for their feet,
sky bent into roses,
roses into cinders—
the cat and mouse play of the earth.

How heat must ripen senses into ghosts,
twist touch into gray shadows. The air and space
melted around their suits, became the rush
of wind. How we are betrayed by passions.
The full sky must have seemed insane to them,
staring into the space swallowed by red.