

79 AD

by Gary Hardaway

A pine shaped cloud
in the August sky
signaled them too late.
By the 25th,
everything was gone.

No CNN to sing obliteration,
only Pliny the Younger
to scratch what fell
in a few short paragraphs
of living Latin.

Did sailors
home from the sea
find an altered world
the 26th?
Or, worse,

the part of the world they loved
erased for them forever
which we pick at now
in calm, archaeological
detachment?

