



A Land of Ash

David Dalglish, David McAfee (Contributor), John Fitch V. (Contributor), Daniel Arenson (Contributor), Robert J. Duperre (Contributor), Mike Crane (Contributor)

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The Yellowstone Caldera has erupted once every 600,000 years. We're 40,000 years overdue. A LAND OF ASH Lava flows stretch for hundreds of miles. A cloud of ash billows east, burying the Midwest, destroying crops, and falling upon the Pacific Coast like a warm, dead snow. The remnants of the United States flees south as the global temperatures plummet. Amid this total devastation are stories of families, friends, sons and fathers and wives: the survivors. Within are eleven stories focusing on the human element of such a catastrophe, from an elderly couple gathering to await their death to a father sealing his shelter in hopes of keeping the air breathable for his daughter. Contributing to this collection include many popular and up-and-coming independent authors, including David McAfee, Daniel Arenson, and more.

A Land of Ash Details

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From Reader Review A Land of Ash for online ebook

Sarah Crawford says

This is an anthology of stories based on one premise; that the Yellowstone Caldera erupts. For those not familiar with that, Yellowstone actually sits on a huge mass of magma, and, every 600,000 years or so, it erupts. It's not just one volcano; it's a bunch of them, all erupting at the same time, all sending dense ash clouds into the air. There can be enough ash that it could have the same effects as a nuclear winter, blocking out sunlight, resulting in the death of plants and the animals that depend on them.

The first story includes a food store that is now empty of everything. Radio stations and television no longer function. A group of people is having a party, probably the final one of their lives. The ash cloud begins to fall, and they know they will all die.

The second story is about some guy living in a cave in eastern Kentucky. Then there are some earthquakes for a couple of days. He sees animals fleeing towards the east.

A father and his six-year-old daughter are the focus of the third story. The fourth story includes people on a beach and some who won a lottery to get away to safety somewhere. The next story involves an old woman and a murderer.

In the next story a woman arrives in Boston. She is representing the President and tells the mayor that there will be martial law on the east coast, and that rioting and looting will not be tolerated. Food will be a major problem along with other things. There's rioting and shooting and a gun running over people with his car.

In another story Mexicans are shooting any survivors from America who try to swim the Rio Grande. They apparently killed thousands of Americans. Another story shows just how low young people can stoop in such a situation. In the next story a pregnant woman has to decide whether to allow her baby to be born into the very harsh world, or have an abortion.

Bethica says

(update on 9-13)

I had to change my mind and give this 5 stars after dreaming all day (I work nights) about different families running from the heated and heavy ash. If a book can have that kind of effect on my sleeping delusions, it fully deserves a 5 star rating.

(original post on 9-12)

Good set of apocalyptic short stories by different authors that are all tied into the same catastrophic event. If some of the stories had a bit deeper story line, it would have gotten 5 stars, but some of them are really short. Overall, I liked them a lot and was easy to read on my breaks at work.

Dan C. says

The tag line for A Land of Ash reads: The Yellowstone Caldera has erupted once every 600,000 years. We're 40,000 years overdue. It was famously (and expensively) done in Roland Emmerich's 2012, but if you believe the stories in this anthology, the movie would have been over after the eruption. All but one of the stories take place in the United States, which sees massive devastation from the ash-cloud that results from the eruption. As with most anthologies, the quality of the stories varies wildly, but there are some real keepers in there. "Shelter" tells a heartbreak story of a father and daughter who survived the eruption inside their house. He has sealed up his house against the ash-cloud, only to see his defenses gradually breached. And in "Toward the Storm" a woman travels west toward Yellowstone, in contrast to the thousands who traveled toward the East coast of the U.S. to escape it. Her faith in God is what sustains her although that faith is about to be tested.

A Land of Ash was an incredibly quick read, and it's one I could see myself reading again. There were only a couple of dud stories and I find myself intrigued by the fact that these were all stories of regular people and how they would behave in the days and months after a massive volcanic eruption in North America.

CONNIE says

I don't normally read these type of books, but after reading the first story I just couldn't stop reading.

Adriane says

I read this book in a day, I know that's not a feat for most of you but it's pretty rare for me. I found this collection of stories to be unique and compelling. I was lead to this book by the fact that a few of the stories in it were in other collections I've read. I was not disappointed to say the least. The only thing that kept this book from 5 stars was editorial in nature, I feel this book could have done with a good quality edit as there were several grammatical and homonym related mistakes that could have easily been fixed with a precursory read through from a third party.

The stories themselves however were just fantastic, I literally can't pick a favorite because they are all that good. The subject matter is surprisingly under written about, I had never considered that the US could have a volcanic eruption and how bad the effects would be. So this collection actually gave me nightmares of saying good bye to people. I read a lot and in a way have become desensitized to a lot of the overly dramatic flair that a lot of authors use, so to have so many different emotions invoked in one fairly short collection is both refreshing and impressive.

I have to say I enjoy collections with themes far more than random collections it's easier to remember them when they have an overarching idea like the Zombies VS Unicorns book, I think this book will live in the annals of my all time favorite collections for being themed and thorough. I would recommend this collection to everyone. If you have a kindle you can get it for cheap or free(like I did) at amazon. I'm actually amazed I found this for free on Amazon, I almost feel like mailing the author a dollar, like I stole it or something. Instead I'll just shamelessly promote the book and tell all of you to read it.

It really is this good, I wish we could give half stars because this is definitely a 4.5.

Jan says

I really enjoyed these short stories, very fast read.

Paulo "paper books always" Carvalho says

Wanting to know how good was David Daglish and seeing this anthology for free in his website I start reading it. A quick reading.

This is a anthology of several interconnected stories about the apocalyptic scenario of Yellowstone eruption. Long has been debated about what would happen to North America and the World if that supervolcano erupted. The estimatives would be that North America would vanish beneath a mantle of ash and the rest of the world would suffer a nuclear winter.

Would it be a end-of-life scenario? I don't think so.

1815 eruption of Mount Tambora led to know "Year Without a Summer" but in no way a end-of-the-world scenario. Maybe an USA end scenario. The USA would cease to exist as we know.

Now the stories:

-One Last Dinner Party by David Dalglash was the first story of this anthology and what a beginning. One of the questions of apocalyptic fiction is, when it comes how will you going to face it? It's inevitable, so face it proud or try in vain to hide? Daglish is a good writer.

-Alone on the Mountain by David McAfee - Second story set in the same world as the first. Here we are presented with a survivalist and the first look upon the End of the World as Yellowstone explodes. It is said that if he did probably it would mean a Nuclear Winter worldwide.

-Beach Puppies by Daniel Arenson. In this tale is another tale like the first. How will we face the inevitable? Here we learn about "lottery" tickets some people were awarded to escape the deathly cloud of ash."

-Shelter by David Dalglash. In this tale we follow a child and a father trying to survive the initial impact of the cloud of ash. The first thing that will kill you after the initial blast is ash. It will kill from the inside out. Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis (the largest word in english dictionary) will occur.

-Beach Puppies By Daniel Arenson. In this tale is another tale like the first. How will we face the inevitable? Here we learn about "lottery" tickets some people were awarded to escape the deathly cloud of ash.

-Toward the storm by David Dalglash is a tale of survive after the storm by Gertrude and Alice, the cat until they met Samuel a wanderer. What do you believe after a cataclysmic event? God? Or is everything a illusion.

-Last words, uninteresting story. Weak and doesn't fit in this anthology. A few keywords like ASH but that doesn't mean that belongs here. Be careful what you wish for...

-Refugees - is there any hope remaining? The story was an interesting view of the aftermath of the Event and

what must a human do to be alive.

-A Harmless American - for decades mexicans violate the border of the USA but now it's the other way around. What would you do if you saw another human being suffering?

-Secret Mission - forgetful story.

-The One that Matters - After the cataclytic event what does it matter? Help is on the way and the only thing that matters are children. Here we see the wide scope of humankind. Some will try to do the right thing while others will be ruled by animalistic side. This is the best part of all apocalyptic fiction.

- Let It Continue - A light in the dark. This story is in the same tone of the "The One That Matters" but in a different way. Quite good story. Is life priority in this darkness and death?

Overall, good interconnected stories with a post-apocalyptic event. David Daglish is quite good writer and even if he was leaving his comfort area and wrote as he wrote then he is an excellent writer.

Marvin says

This is an unusual anthology using the Yellowstone super-volcano and the effects of its eruption as the basis for its short fiction. Most of the stories are by David Daglish with various writers rounding out the rest, David McAfee of 33 A.D. being the only one I've previously heard of. The short tales are quite good and are very character-driven considering the topic on hand. Also, they tend to be quite depressing with only the last story having any real sign of hope. A foreword explaining the super-volcano and the predicted results of its eruption would have been helpful as I am not sure this info is household news and it would have been helpful as background material to the less informed reader. After all, it is 40,000 years overdue. I liked McAfee's "Alone on the Mountain" best but can't say any one story stood out. Still, an interesting collection.

Joseph Mitchell says

I really enjoyed this book. It reminded me of why I used to love reading short stories so much, and was a welcome change from the long books I've been reading lately. I particularly enjoyed David Daglish's short called "Toward the Storm", my favorite from this collection.

Maggie Berman says

What a thought provoking book!

First of all it's actually 11 short stories about how different people, cope in their own ways with end of the world as we know it, after Yellowstone goes BOOM!

I read this in one night, and actually really made me think, would I sit back and accept inevitable death for many or would I fight? probably fight as I think that's human nature.

The book was fascinating though upsetting at times. I smiled softly at the Gummi bears, and how precious they became to a mother and son, could have wept for the mother and father trying to decide whether or not to bring their child into a world where as he says he could be eaten as folk were that hungry, and wanted to slap to Government Agent who said was intention to starve people to make room for survivors!

i was surprised at first it was short stories, and at times i wanted to shout arghhh what happens next do they make it?? But i suppose that's why we have imagination isn't it!

That above is only reason i have given it a 4 and not a 5.

This book was out of my normal reading genre, but i fancied something different (and it sure was)

At end of day I would recommend this book, even if just to make you think what if.

Vex says

HOLY CRAP! This book had me nervously looking out my window at an incoming storm cloud. What makes it so scary is how easy it is to relate to the characters in the book. It's so easy to put yourself in their shoes, to feel their same desperation and despair in a world now destroyed by ash.

This book delivers 11 gut-wrenching short stories about different people in different areas trying to survive after an eruption in Yellowstone. As you progress through the book, you find yourself at further time points from the initial eruption. The stories are all extremely well written and they all manage to grip the reader with the amazing characters found within.

Seriously, go read this book. Don't even bother with the rest of this review, just go read it.

If you are still planning on reading the rest of the review, here's my two cents on each story:

1. One Last Dinner Party: A 65 year old couple enjoys one last dinner party with their friends before an ash cloud envelopes them. The story ends on a very sad note, but it's heart warming at the same time. I loved when the characters all got to enjoy one last moment of beauty (you'll know what I'm talking about) - it sort of lightened the mood of the whole story. When the ash begins to fall like snow, it paints quite the mental image. And sets the stage for the ash-filled stories to follow.

2. Alone on the Mountain: Interesting story about a man who has been living in a cave on a Kentucky mountain-side for the last 15 years. The story is about the three days he spends noticing the increasingly strange animal behavior precipitating bad earthquakes. My favourite element of the story was reading about how he adapted over the years to living in the wilderness. I also had to laugh when he was being chased down by wolves and thinks to himself, "so this is how it ends". Such a calm thought to have in the face of imminent death!

3. Shelter: This touching story features a man and his 6 year old daughter, holed up in his modular home sealed tight with duct tape. They are trying to weather the ash storm until it is safe enough to go out. The descriptions of how the ash coats and crushes anything was rather haunting. The mental image was burned into my brain days after I finished reading. When Jason reflects back on how he always meant to buy a generator, but it's "too late now, everything is too late now", it serves as a smack to the reader's head: get out

and do those things you've been procrastinating on! The only thing I disliked a bit was that the reader is left wondering what happens to the characters. This is certainly not a fault of the author - this is simply my strange mental issue with feeling like I didn't get adequate closure from a book.

4. Beach Puppies: This quick tale circles around Harvey, who is sitting on the beach of "their island" with all his friends. They are living their last night, watching lottery/raffle winners escape on jet planes. We learn Harvey has a secret he's been keeping from his friends, simply because they mean so much to him.

5. Toward the Storm: A story about hope and faith. Gertrude and her cat are walking west on the highway towards the storm to "follow the food" - since everyone else headed east with only what they could carry, she knows they will soon run out of food. She, on the other hand, finds plenty of food and supplies left behind in abandoned vehicles. She awakes one night to find a stranger sitting near her - Samuel. He seems like a legit guy, but we soon learn that he has no tolerance for Gertrude's faith in Jesus/God. He tries to convince her that the eruption is proof enough God doesn't exist, but Gertrude remains faithful to the end.

6. Last Words: Here we meet Harold, who is trying to reach out to his distraught 30 year old son. Gary broke up with his girlfriend several months ago because she wanted to move to California and he did not. When they last spoke to each other, he got very angry and said something terrible to her. Now he is trying to come to terms with his guilt over the last words spoken to his ex, and Harold is hoping to alleviate some of this guilt.

7. Refugees: Carly is an aide to the president, and has arrived in Boston to prepare the mayor for the wave of refugees coming. The reader really gets a sense of how desperate things are becoming, as food and shelter become a luxury. Then we meet a man and his daughter, two of the refugees arriving in Boston. A massive riot occurs and their survival depends on their escape.

8. A Harmless American: This story takes across the border into Mexico. Javier is patrolling the Rio Grande to ensure no Americans cross into Mexico, with the order to shoot anyone who manages to swim across the now freezing, ash-laden river. However, when a little girl washes ashore on a log he cannot bring himself to shoot her. He instead takes her to his tent and manages to hide her underneath the bed when his partner, Sergio arrives. Sergio loves his "job" and has a very bold stance on why no Americans should be allowed into his country. As the two men smoke and converse on the riverbank, the reader is constantly wondering if Sergio knows about the little girl in the tent. This is my favourite story out of the entire book.

9. Secret Mission: Okay, I'll admit it. I did not really like this story at first. It opens with a 5 year old boy, Derek, being sent on a "secret mission" by his mother. The two are in a crowded "refugee camp" in a football stadium with thousands of others. He has a "secret package" in his pants that he cannot open until he finds a private place. I was a little creeped out by the part where Derek is thinking about how beautiful his mother is and how often he tells her this. It just came off... weird for a 5 year old. Anyways, the story is about his search for a private place to enjoy his secret package. The ending is very heart warming.

10. The One That Matters: Now THIS is a tear jerker! Guido has spent 20 years builing a bomb shelter in his Connecticut home, even though everyone told him he'd never need it. But now he's looking smart and has refuge from "the Event". He also has Alyssa, a little girl that wandered into his yard as he was securing his shelter in preparation for the ash storm. Even though he turned away his own neighbours, he "adopts" this little girl and the two hide out in his bomb shelter (for 112 days). The reader begins to understand Guido a bit better when the girl asks to hear more of his stories. These "stories" are actually conspiracy theories about the Kennedy assassination, 9/11, and the moon landing. Then one day they hear on the radio that the French have arrived with ships to help the survivors. They set off towards the harbour, but are stopped by five

teenage boys gone mad who want the girl. Guido fights with his baseball bat, but succumbs to their planks and rusty nails. Guido's only concern is the safety of his "granddaughter".

11. Let it Continue: This is the perfect story to end on. It's filled with hope for the future in this destroyed new world of ash. A married couple have traveled to Maine to meet Faye, a nurse. The reader learns that the husband has brought them here to terminate the pregnancy, whereas the wife thought they were going to have Faye assist with the deliver of the baby. The story is basically two parents-to-be struggle to decide what's best for their child - can they really bring a new life into a world filled with hunger and despair? But can they live with themselves if they choose to terminate?

Whew! Well that's that. Now go get this book, what are you waiting for?!?!

Stacey says

I'd love to be able to sit down and write a glowing review about *Land of Ash*, as with Grants Pass. But I didn't love it. I've always had a fascination with Apocalypse, be it man-made, or Mother Nature herself visiting doom upon humanity. It must be my eschatological upbringing, but I'm a sucker for a story that asks what happens after the end of the world?

The first story of this anthology drops the reader into the middle of a last supper among friends. Except these friends feel like some of them are just individuals who share geographical proximity, facing their last moments together. It had potential to be quite poignant, and could have been brilliant as a novelette, but fell short due to too many elements in the short story that overshadowed the graceful bravery it seemed to have meant to showcase.

Part of the problem, I suspect, is there is absolutely no introduction to the anthology. There's no "what if," or "it could happen." *Land of Ash* is about the end of North America (and the world) as we know it, brought about by the eruption of a super volcano. There are some scientists who believe we are overdue for this type of extinction event. And yet, even with this fascinating idea, we are simply dropped into the middle of an idea. While this can work well for a full-length novel, it's risky for shorts that may need some sort of set-up. If this premise for the anthology had been included as a forward, it may have enhanced the reading of these vignettes of living and dying, by fleshing out the picture of what a super volcano eruption event would mean for survivors.

Some of the stories are touching, yet few are compelling. There are very few last minute acts of redemption, (although Duperre's *The One That Matters* is a standout.) There are a few instances of brutality, consistent with this type of fiction. One story (Dalglish's *Toward the Storm*,) hints at potential conflict between believers and non-believers in an apocalyptic world, but we get the brutality without benefit of development of the underlying conflict.

The overall tenor of this anthology is that of grim despair. It largely lacks what compels one in similar works, that is, hope. Even in the face of a story for which the final resolution can only be hopeless, it's human nature to express hope. The last two stories in the set, Duperre's mentioned above, and the last one, Dalglish's *Let It Continue*, inject that small bit of hope so needed to make this group of stories rise above being simply character sketches.

In spite of these flaws, the writing flows well in most of the stories. The characters had their own voices, and

each story was unique.

There's a short afterword from Dalglish where he mentions how this collection was influenced and inspired by Bradbury and the tone of *The Martian Chronicles*. Knowing this going in, I would likely have read *Land of Ash* differently, and with more appreciation as a series of tales with just a droplet of homage to a master storyteller.

Melissa Jane says

What a freaking depressing book. I guess I just didn't understand what the stories would be about when I started. Not my thing and I quit reading halfway through. Too bad, because I like David Dalglish.

Kaethe says

An anthology of stories set after the explosion of the Yellowstone supervolcano. I like the set-up, I like the deliberate tribute to the collections of Ray Bradbury, and the effort to seek out the emotionally resonant moments for people at the end of the world, and after.

But as a collection there is a negative synergy. The different characters don't seem all that different, they rather become a bland stew of white middle Americans (even the Mexican characters). The women feel secondary to the men. And the rape theme: enough already! I'm sick unto screaming of the roving bands of rapists who suddenly appear after a disaster in fiction. And while I understand the thematic point of the story with the pregnancy, the impractical considerations rather over weigh the theme (a third trimester abortion is really high risk in the conditions given, as is labor and delivery; it is FAR too late for these two characters to be having this conversation, by oh, about nine months).

"One Last Dinner Party" is my favorite, and the strongest for evoking that Bradbury melancholy. I like old married couples, I like the tone and the content.

Future writing from all the contributors is likely to be even more engaging, and I look forward to seeing what else they do. Personally, I'd like to see a more conscious effort to expand the diversity of the author pool in anthologies, if for no other reason than to keep the individual strengths from being watered down by repetitions.

Review copy

Alazzar says

Normally, when someone gives something away for free, that usually means it sucks. Sure, that couch sitting by the curb may *look* like a good deal, but as soon as you get it home you'll realize that one of the cushions smells like asparagus and the other is actually a giant rectangle of matted pet hair.

But when it comes to e-books, sometimes free is good. When independent authors give away their product in the Kindle store, they're doing it to advertise for themselves (after all, there's no better way to get someone interested in your work), and as such, they necessarily have to focus on the quality. For this reason, there are a lot of good e-books out there that you can pick up without spending a penny. Of course, there are also a lot of bad ones. The only problem for you, the reader, is sifting through all the crap to get to the gems.

Which is what Goodreads is for. Why spend time sifting through crappy books when you could sift through my equally crappy reviews, where I apparently go for three whole paragraphs before even starting to talk about the book I just read?

Which reminds me: there's a reason we're here. We need to talk about *A Land of Ash*.

I was excited to check this book out because I figured I'd get exposure to a lot of different indie authors and could find some new ones I liked. As it turns out, there's not as much variety as I'd anticipated: most of the stories are by the editor, David Dilglish. But that's fine, because I felt his stories were the best anyway, for the most part.

Although none of the characters in the stories are connected, they're all operating in the same world, where a volcano in Yellowstone has blown its top and covered much of the U.S. with mountain-dandruff. Unfortunately, the government's plan to have helicopters douse the country with Head & Shoulders didn't work out, so we're left with a genuine catastrophe on our hands.

Even though there's no direct connection between characters from one story to the next, the collection does still tie itself together by being arranged in a realistic sort of timeline, with the earliest stories being about the coming of the ash-splosion and the later stories dealing with the aftermath. Things start off strong with Dalglish's "One Last Dinner Party," which gives us one view of how people may react to learning of their inevitable demise. A few stories later we've got Daniel Arenson's "Beach Puppies," which has a similar premise. Skip ahead to Dalglish's "A Harmless American" and you'll find the best story in the book, and read Robert J. Duperre's "The One That Matters" if you want an intense story that shows the sick and twisted side of human desperation.

Of course, as with any anthology, not everything can be made of gold. There are a few clunkers in here, the absolute worst of which was John Fitch V's "Refugees." The main character is a total bitch, which might be okay in some cases, but it doesn't really work when she seems to take particular delight in bossing around the people she's trying to help (I swear, Fitch seemed to throw in this lady's smiles randomly—I can't think of any other explanation for why she'd be grinning at some of the things she said unless her character is just insane. It didn't help that after smiling at her own inexplicable sadism, she got all choked up while talking about the survivors. What the hell is wrong with this lady? Where's the character consistency?).

As if crazy bitch-lady isn't bad enough, halfway through the story we switch perspectives and *never hear from her again*. I may not have liked her, but that's no excuse to just cut her out so that I don't figure out what the fuck happened with her.

Although nothing else was as bad as "Refugees," I was also unimpressed with Michael Crane's "Last Words." There was just some inconsistent character voice in there: a guy who says "... that **don't** explain ..." shouldn't be starting sentences with "Perhaps." That guy says "Maybe." Not "perhaps." He doesn't even know what "perhaps" means.

Another gripe I had is that Crane threw in a lot of unnecessary character actions because he felt the need to

break up dialogue. It took me years to figure this out for myself, but as it turns out, it's actually *perfectly fine* to have two characters talk back and forth for long stretches of time without taking random breaks to fidget (in most cases, anyway). Crane's characters were twitching so much between sentences that I thought they had ADD or a swarm of ants in their clothes. Still, the story isn't as bad as I'm making it out to be; certainly nowhere near Fitch's "Refugees." Ugh.

David McAfee's "Alone on the Mountain" could have been good, but the problem is that it seems like the entire story was built around the mystery of what was happening to this old hermit in his cave. The ground is shaking, animals are fleeing the valley and ignoring their usual predator/prey relations . . . what's going on?!

Oh, right. A volcano is erupting. I already knew that because *I'd read the title of the anthology*.

Basically, I think McAfee's story might have worked better in a collection that's *not* tied to this theme. If I were reading his story and had no idea what the deal was with the tremors and fleeing animals, I might have been flying through the pages to find out just what was happening. As it is, I already knew, so there was no suspense. If I'm not mistaken, this was the only story in the book that centered around someone who *didn't* know the catastrophic event was coming, and I think that's what kept it from being particularly strong.

There are 11 stories total in *A Land of Ash*, and if I didn't mention one by name that means it's probably pretty enjoyable. Overall, the book was a good read, even though I spent half my review being critical about things I disliked (it's just the way I operate—I tend to put more emphasis on the bad than the good, and I can't help it).

If you're looking for a free Kindle book that doesn't suck, this is a good place to start.
