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Volcano

Dormant.
Sleeping the deep sleep,
Hidden, intense, dreamless.
Awakened, I rumble,
Return to the dark deep.
But sleep has slipped away.

Hunger gnaws, burning.
The all-present pressure is painful, pitiless.
My innards cry out.
I spew forth poisonous venom.

Bitter bits of bituminous-like rocks burst from my belly.
Ashes, Ashes, blacken the sky
Stifling sulfurous stench sifts through the sultry air.
Lava, like vomit, convulses from vents in the earth, digesting deep and deadly.

The winds wax and wail, their whistles drowned by the drumming and the droning in my depths.
Explosive shooting debris form clouds of pumice-pellets, raining down on plants and animals, coating all life with a
powder-gray death mask.
I erode the relics, engulf the earth, consume the carcasses, devour the dregs, ravage the remains.

I am full,
Satisfied.
Quiet returns.
New life emerges from the enriched earth.
Dazzling crystals slowly develop within me
I will lie dormant until the hunger awakens me, Again.

Introduction to the Microbial World

Pieces of glass have brought to light
A secret world beyond your sight.

And everywhere you dare to look
You'll see what clever Leeuwenhoek

Has seen before. He magnified
Strange creatures all and so he spied

The protozoa and the yeasts,
All kinds of tiny living beasts,

Bacteria, and algae too,
Even cells in me and you.

Crenarchaeota

Pyrolobus, Sulfolobus.
We really are all fabulous.
We love the heat,
Acid's a treat.
Your hell would be heaven to us.

Our DNA will not decay.
It wears a basic protein coat,
Like the histones
On chromosomes
In more advanced eukaryotes.

In Yellowstone we rule alone.
No creature could compare with us.
Our prevalence
In thermal vents
Has made the world incredulous.

Endospora

Some say I live forever,
No food or water I need.
Protected from the outside world
With a spore coat – like a seed.

When it is hot and arid,
Or nutrients are poor,
I bundle up inside myself
And form an endospore.

And when the food is plentiful
And water starts to flow,
Then outside places beckon me;
I germinate and grow.

Ascomycetes

They say the Penicillium
Has saved the lives of mill-y-ons,
But that's if your criteria
Are human, not bacteria.
Among them penicillin
Is better known for killin'.

The Carolina Parakeet

Oh, that I could ever meet
The Carolina Parakeet.
That gorgeous bird that no one feared
Finally just disappeared.

They used to eat the nuts and seeds
Of wild trees and thorny weeds.
But when the farmers planted corn
An appetite for that was born.

And so men thought of them as pests
And drove them from their tree-trunk nests.
Men shot at them for food and sport,
For feathered hats of every sort.

They always traveled in a crowd.
Of their compassion I am wowed
They'd never, ever once desert
A fellow parakeet who's hurt.

And so they'd stay together when
Some birds were shot and shot again.
'Til none was left to mourn at all,
Or sadly witness their last fall.

The last remaining bird we knew
Lived in the Cincinnati Zoo.
Soon after his dear mate had parted
He died alone, broken-hearted.

In nineteen eighteen that occurred.
Their voice will never again be heard.