

## A UNIVERSE WITHOUT ME

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the light came first  
(which no one could believe)  
the blinding flash two miles across  
with the brilliance of thirty suns

and then the waves of shocked impact  
reducing ten millennia  
of human intent  
to a tale of ash and waste

and then right after  
the raging fires  
which made all Dresdens  
and Hiroshimas  
seem like outdoor barbecues

and all human motion and emotion simply ceased

friends caught and crushed in the invisible madness  
leaving scarcer than ever a trace of human kindness

and no more time  
to plan or to convey  
to hope be born or gaze  
with any chance of earthbound dignity

and one or two here and there  
have survived to tell this story  
but we are few  
and far between

alien cities now turn to rot  
where vaporous humans  
tell a ghostly tale  
of life  
before apocalyptic folly

my daughter died and my wife  
and my brothers and my parents  
and my sisters and all once lovers

it must have been the flash, the shock, or the burns  
that undid them so completely

but it could have been the sorrow

and i would be alone  
but for this vestige of my canine friend  
just alive and brain toasted  
by radioactive decay  
and i must watch him die too

it's dangerous to search for food  
but somehow I manage to survive  
with this primeval urge  
to protect me  
from a universe without me

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\* **ROBERT T. McLAUGHLIN**, Ph.D., chaired Rivier College's education division in 2008. He oversees professional educator preparation program approval for the NH Dept. of Education. His three children, he enjoys telling them, are usually cute and adorable; with his wife he provides a home for four border collies, who all are cute and adorable. He founded and chaired the International Society for Technology in Education's interest groups on innovative learning technologies and digital equity, serves on the national commission on technology and the future of teacher education, and is senior fellow for the Stokes Institute for Opportunity in STEM Education.