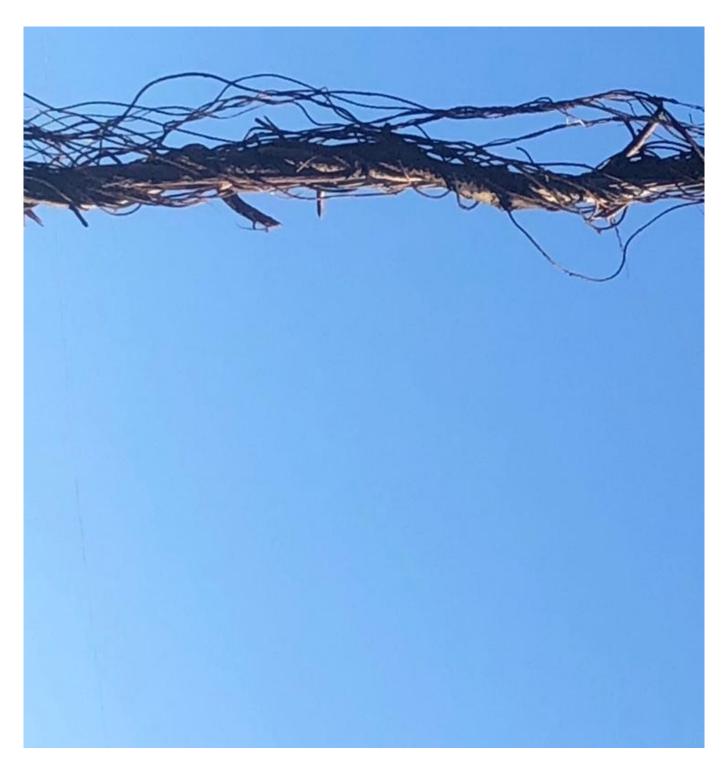
Landslide / For Byron Who Was Separated From His Father At The US-Mexico Border



Guatemala, Crossed the border Into Mexico. With your father or How there was a smuggler. Who Took you. On foot. All the way to America. How the truth is. When You went down the road and off Of the mountain. Where you live. Have always lived. How you did Not think. I will ever come back. And now. You cannot get back. How your mother and father Cannot get you back. And when You got here. Crossed over the Border and into California, How Border Patrol picked you up and Your father. How they sent him Back. Back to Guatemala. They Deported him. But without you. Because they kept you. Keeping You in detention. And in Texas or How. Texas is so far away. Away From your father. Your mother.

Sister or the mountain. And you Were only seven years old when You left. Left Guatemala. Or how You are eight now. Because you Have been. Here. And detained. In Texas. Or how it has been five. Five months. They have kept you. And not let you go home. I want you to know. This Was not supposed to happen to You. How they made your father Sign a form in a language he did Not know how to read. Or how. They told him. Told your father If you sign it. They would bring You back to him. And who will Hug him. Your father says. Who Will hug you now. Now that you Are still here and he is back. In Guatemala. On a mountain. Or Without you.

And he stretches your clothes.

Each day and across a bed. The Bed where you used to sleep.

How he cannot stop saying *how*You are very small.

And how much.

That this is too much. This is just Too much pain. And your mother

Says that when. They are able to

Call you. How they can see you.

Over video and it is hard. Hard

To connect. How you look away

And off to the side. Whispering.

Whispering it is dangerous here.

And I know.

I know what some people will say.

When your father tell the story

About why he did it Took you all

The way across Mexico. And into

America. Across the border. How

He says he did it for you. So you

Can have a better life.

How they will say his reasons

Were economic. And how. How
You were not fleeing violence.
How there was no danger. And
It was a few years ago. When
There was a landslide. And
Land slid down your mountain.
How it was falling or rushing
Down. And it covered houses
And people.

Or how it buried everything.

And a landslide happens when

The stress of a mountain

Outweighs its resistance.

Or when your father does not

Know. If there will be another

Job. If he can keep you fed or

Alive. When he knows there

Is no more. Clean water. For

You to drink. Living like this.

It is waiting.

Waiting for the land to slide

Down. And bury you. Alive.

Because poverty is always

Dangerous.

But your father knows now.

He knows that

What is even more dangerous

Is a country without a heart.

This heartless country.

That took you away from him.

And will not. Will not.

Give you back.

This poem is part of <u>Border of Heartbreak</u> — a collection of poems written for children separated at the US-Mexico border. It was written after reading a <u>New York Times</u> article about Byron — an eight year old boy who was separated from his father at the US-Mexico border in May 2018, detained, and kept in detention even after his father was deported back to Guatemala. Byron was held in US detention for eight months.