

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



When you left

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 [Border of Heartbreak](#) – a collection of poems written for children separated at the US-Mexico border. It was written after reading a [New York Times 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.*