

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.