

The Three Thousand

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The Sonoran Desert has a secret. Not very many people know about the three thousand casualties here, two thousand people missing.

—Alvaro Enciso, borderlands artist and activist (interview)

When it rains you forget
the fierceness of the sun.
You stand among the desert hills,
smell the creosote, myrrh
of the savage wastes.

When you get tired of walking,
you lay your head on the rocky ground.

In the quivering stillness, the sun
washes out even the brightest city lights.

Days from now, no one will know you were here.

Far from this wasteland, you took your first step.
A tiny hand slipped from yours.
You didn't turn around.

Those you left behind stood expectantly
each time the phone rang.

That last tinny call
from the distant edge of the world—
Agua Prieta, the dark waters.

“Tomorrow I cross over,
no te preocupes, mi amor.”

But that was years ago.

The monsoons come
and the blossoms follow.
They cannot wash away the waiting,
the dread of unknowing.

Those you left behind still listen,
wait for rain.