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Christmas Day, El Paso, 1984

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Christmas Day, El Paso, 1984

We were good to each other
because the shadow of mountains
was washed in killing light,
the blinding, hating fist
of the past year,
the escape to a barren terrain
where we could celebrate
what we created.

We laid primitive gifts
in the yellow grass,
left them there to petrify into
a language we could understand,
let them turn into slabs of rock
for next year's night star to find,
pinpoint with its beam of hope.

We called the names of past Christmases
because we missed faces we had touched,
the ones that came to us
with and without songs,
stayed to welcome the falling snow,
and promise us their voyage ended here,
in our houses burning by the river.

We left the desert because those
stones formed the shape of
all our Christmases to come,
and we left when it turned into
the only sanctuary on Christmas night,
the only place to gather rocks
to build a shrine for the ones we loved
that would never return to us.