Spring 1986

Christmas Day, El Paso, 1984

Ray Gonzales
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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.

— Ray Gonzales