



Cactus Heart

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Practice.

Logen Cure

You fought the urge to stop at the edge of the light.

 Didn't want to seem chicken—
teammates had vanished into the dense dark of the desert
 after a soccer ball countless times—
 they always made it back.

The first footfall that crunched

 mesquite branches under cleats slowed you to a jog.
You glanced back, reassured of the humming dome of light
 enveloping the field, the shrinking figures of the other girls.

A noise like paper shuffling made you reckon the ball hit a yucca.

You guessed at how far out, stood still,
 squinted into the low, spiky shadows, and listened
for the coyote calls that always gave the family dog that grave look.
You remembered the day mother
 crushed an egg-bearing scorpion in her formal living room,
 the exodus of tarantulas across highways before rain.
 You prayed.

Relief swelled into your throat

 as you spotted the ball, seized it, and fled.
From the safety of the field, you faced the black expanse,
 ground indistinguishable from sky, stars and oil rigs twinkling.