

THREE THOUSAND POLKITAS

- For those who
have died in Iraq

I know they're out there
Though I've never met them personally
Lately I've imagined them
At the HEB buying potato chips
The girly-ones waiting in line for a purple pedicure
Getting a tire fixed on Culebra
Or watching the Spurs at some bar on Roosevelt
Barbacoa with the family on Sundays
A pickup game at Woodlawn, their cellphones
beeping in hip-hop
Hey vato hey dude whazup babydoll

Three thousand y más soldiers have died
That makes three thousand mothers desmayandose
Three thousand fathers who will never cry in public
Three thousand sisters, hermanos
Tíos and tías
Primos and carnales
Abuelitas, abuelos
Teachers and preachers and secret-keepers
Some had boyfriends too I'm sure
Wives, husbands, and babies with
Pañales to clean, lacy panties to put away
Puppies and engagement rings
Trocas and new motorcycles
Trophies and old blue jeans
To wear when they got back

Over there, on the other side of the world
A place where they've never slurped a Big Red
I figure at least another three thousand
Of those they call insurgents
Three thousand women widowed if you include those
Caught in the crossfire or the bombs
and the children playing soccer on
The wrong side of the street,
pillows waiting for their dreamers,
Three thousand hand-me-down satchels,
lonely teddy bears and burned-fur
Kittens, the mother's heirloom dishes, broken
and the father'lime cologne
Dripping on the floor,
as the baker's warm bread rises for three thousand less



While three thousand bubbles float in the sky
from soapy-white slips, smelling of
Smoke, if only it was just three thousand cigarettes,
three thousand stars that
Burned like candles on three thousand birthday cakes,
three thousand
Make-a-wishes, three thousand goodbye kisses and
three thousand
Prayers for a good life three thousand three thousand
round
And round like one of our good-time polkitas,
Three thousand songs, three thousand steps, three
Thousand three thousand three
Thousand ways to say *I hate you*
I love you I hate you I love you
Please
love me.

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