

Pulse

A cold north wind knifes south, Chihuahuan dust chafing his eyes too desiccated to close. The distant trill of a flute dances into his ears as his empty veins collapse, hollow heart slows, ants begin to soldier into his wounds. If only he could climb out of the arroyo, collect his blood clotting in the soil, walk home. He notices how autumn has brought sparrows to the phone lines above him. He can hear the hum of conversations pulsing in the black wires above his head as the whisper catches in his throat just below the cut, *escalera, por favor*. The birds are silent. He thinks of his mother's table, of poblanos and agave, his last shot of tequila the night they came for him. He thinks of Sunday morning mass, of the crucifix above the altar, of padre's gentle, creased palms as they placed the Eucharist on his tongue in the old adobe chapel with the broken wood doors. A glassless window glows above the birds where the sun should be as sky and earth become a symphony of colors. The light in the window sears him with love and grace, and he gives thanks. One by one, the sparrows let go of the words throbbing between their toes and become song, lifting the afternoon into evening.

Matt Hohner

Chosen to be included as part of the Baltimore Ekphrasis Project LED Billboard, March, 2015, written in response to the painting "Play" by the artist Spilly, also known as Baltimore Hoop Love.