

Alberto Ríos

Baseline Blooms

A South Mountain Community Poem: 2012

A light rain has cleared the air.

I have the sun in my hand—

Light in the sky, light in the heart:

This is my energy.

A sunset orange and red, the colors changing,

Blue and purple six-second paintings:

Blue heron in the river,

Burrowing owls in their holes,

Sparrows and Harris hawks—

These are South Mountain sounds, avenue sounds,

Buzzing cicadas before a rain,

Chorus of groaning toads by the canal after a rain,

Howl of coyotes at night,

Soundless descent of the owl from her lightpost perch—

Midair, cloud at her fingertips, city at her toes,

A euphoric veteran of this place.

A piñata hangs at South Mountain Park

As candle smoke drifts down the trail—

Piñata candies, like the birds, suddenly take flight,

Leaving fragments of colorful paper:

The deliciously dark drive toward mountain shadow,  
Millions of stars twinkling above,  
Orange blossom stars below, intoxicating.

**Every fall** we **would** breeze down Baseline Road  
**To buy a red chile ristra**

In the green aroma of the orchards,  
Citrus trees everywhere, oranges, limes, grapefruit, lemons—

The Japanese flower gardens nestled in the arms of those orchards:  
Every flower had a bodyguard  
Protecting them all from the harshness of the sun.  
The gardens were so bright and as far as the eye could see,  
Long rows of flowers in every color imaginable.

Gone are the mountain goats,  
The school names, the derby raceway,  
Picking apricots and grapes at Heart Ranch.  
Gone are the gardens that were everywhere.

Been down a long time this place I call mine—  
Now, we are the Baseline blooms:  
Generations of families who made a difference .  
How many times we fall down and get back up  
Defines our strength as people:

We are like the South Mountain towers—  
Light beacons signaling home  
At the end of a long journey,  
Unchanged by the passage of time.

Been down a long time  
This place I call mine,  
But if we fall down, we get back up:  
We are the Baseline blooms—  
*We get back up, we get back up.*

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