

Brian Turner

DREAMS FROM THE MALARIA PILLS (BOSCH)

At Forward Operating Base Anaconda, Iraq

This time, it's 5 A.M. Lucid.
Bosch can see his own hands
lifting water to his face.
Sees himself reflected in the mirror,
an image of infinity, shaving
his beard and neck, the blade
silver and sharp under fluorescent light
as he reaches back with the razor
to scrape it over the smooth dome
of consciousness, that concentric heat
peeling in strips like a rind of fruit,
the skin of a peach, down the forehead
and over eyebrows, cheek, and jaw,
sloughing the blood and skin in sinkwater,
repeating this, over and over again,
his eyes focused, unfazed.

★ ★ ★

Tonight, he lies in his bunk. The smoky moon
cools its muzzle of light with a cloudy trail.
Bosch soaks his forearms in lighter-fluid,
flares a match head and sets his skin on fire.
He repeats this to his thighs and calves.
He burns his chest like a savanna.
By morning, even his head is on fire
as the sun rises up over the earth at dawn
like the opened mouth of a flamethrower, 140 degrees.

IN THE LEUPOLD SCOPE

With a 40x60mm spotting scope
I traverse the skyline of Halabjah,
scanning rooftops from 2000 meters out
to find a woman in sparkling green, standing
among antennas and satellite dishes,
hanging laundry on an invisible line.

She is dressing the dead, clothing them
as they wait in silence, the pigeons circling
as fumestacks billow a noxious black smoke.
She is welcoming them back to the dry earth,
giving them dresses in tangerine and teal,
shirts of woven cotton dyed blue.

She waits for them to lean forward
into the breeze, for the wind's breath
to return the bodies they once had,
women with breasts swollen by milk,
men with shepherd-thin bodies, children
running hard into the horizon's curving lens.

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