

Dreams from the Malaria Pills (Bosch)

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.

Brian Turner

How Bright It Is

April. And the air dry
as the shoulders of a water buffalo.

Grasshoppers scratch at the dirt,
rub their wings with thin legs,
flaring out in front of the soldiers
in low arcing flights, wings a blur.

The soldiers don't notice anymore,
seeing only the wreckage of the streets,
bodies draped with sheets, and the sun,
how bright it is, how hard and flat and white.

It will take many nails from the coffinmakers
to shut out this light, which reflects off everything:
the calloused feet of the dead, their bony hands,
their pale foreheads so cold, brilliant in the sun.