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Crucible of Civilization

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STEFI WEISBURD

Crucible of Civilization

After Jon Lee Anderson

Doomed minarets and glacial domes, mosaics striated
as muscle, in the shatter cone below a B-52's
lackadaisical rumble, landscape of broken meat, bone

tattered to damask. The only survivors—
jewelweed, a jerrican & a skull yawing.
Nothing to knit the slate black wound, to rub out

the rune of inoperable misunderstanding. Sand-blind
oil blazing, sky breaks down
to turmeric and tar, making the Tigris run

gold around greening bulrushes, past
rattletraps that lean at odd angles & a bus crushed
like a cigarette. At home, the presidential sharpers

smatter from their testament; passing their one
beveled eye, they raise their brute flag. Every night
like trading cards, photos of babe-faced Marines,

and, on Al Jazeera, the seared & thirsting
unnamed spilling from donkey carts. What
should I think—dirge or cakewalk,

now cowed, or jubilant as tanks topple
statues & prisons strew their grief. Gorging
on the queasy motive, the next

incursions already dabbling
in the cathode lens, past
the nub of feeling. The future

is a chorus of anxiety
no stammel, no stridor,
no meniscus of reason will ever redeem.