

Rubble

A Novel

Seraj Assi

In a world scarred by indiscriminate bombing, forced starvation, and mass displacement, a nameless survivor lies crushed beneath the rubble of a bombing—alive, but barely.

Entombed in darkness with no hope of rescue, he must navigate the thin edge between life and death using only his hearing, sense of smell, and the volatile power of his imagination. Above him a genocide unfolds. Below, in his fragile pocket of air, he begins to witness it in ways no unburied survivor ever could.

As hours blur into days, hallucination and reality weave together. Memories seep through the cracks. Fantastical visions rise from the dust. In this liminal state, he gains a strange, heightened clarity, an almost supernatural insight known only to those suspended between worlds, the mortally wounded who hover in the space where time fractures and the mind sharpens to a blade.

What begins as desperate escapism becomes a haunting chronicle of a people forced underground by violence, a nation living beneath the weight of another's cruelty. In the darkness, he discovers a grim sanctuary: *the rubble is a tomb but also a refuge from the firestorm above.*

A wartime tale of resilience amid annihilation, Seraj Assi's debut novel plunges readers into the intimate terror of one man's confinement and the collective suffering of his shattered homeland. As he reflects, "Being under the rubble is a strange thing. . . . You're clinging to life not to live, but to defy death. Just because you're breathing doesn't mean you're alive. You're a ghost, and your homeland is but a ghostland."

This is the story of a people driven underground not by myth or choice, but by force: "We are subterranean only because others refuse to allow us our place under the sun."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Seraj Assi is a Palestinian writer living in exile in Washington, DC. This is his debut novel.

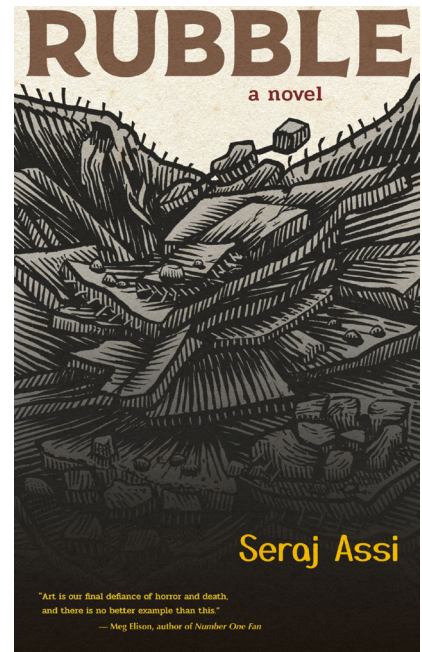
ACCOLADES

"Brilliant and harrowing. Assi's debut novel begins as a silent song of survival and soon becomes a glorious symphony of the radical imagination. *Rubble* is timeless, essential reading."

—Cara Hoffman, author of *RUIN* and *The Last Coward on Earth*

"Poe's 'Premature Burial.' Jack London's *Star Rover*. Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. Antecedents, perhaps, to this deeply moving tale of an individual's hope and despair after being trapped underground by an endless war. Using an easily grasped metaphor for the hopelessness of being caught up in the conflict, Assi buries his narrator alive, then lets him ramble beneath the rubble, meditating and hallucinating over the world that made him suffer and then brought him down below, in the rubble. Through all the musings, the memories, and the pain, Assi's everyman struggles for dignity. The dignity of a peaceful day-to-day existence. The dignity of just once having what everyone else takes for granted. The dignity of not living in constant fear. And finally, if it comes to that, the dignity of an honorable death. His story defines his humanity while restoring ours."

—Allan Kausch, author of *Warehouse Afternoons*



SUBJECT CATEGORY

Fiction: Middle Eastern, Historical, Magical Realism

PRICE

\$16.00

ISBN

979-8-88744-194-8

PAGE COUNT

160

SIZE

5 x 8

FORMAT

Paperback

PUBLICATION DATE

09/08/2026

US DISTRIBUTION

Publishers Group West

1-866-400-5351

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CANADA DISTRIBUTION

Publishers Group Canada

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