

Ukraine War Poems

By M. Ali Lakhani

Cerberus

Your baying splinters the skies; it condemns us
Here-below. None dares tempt you, none dares ascend
To that haven, formerly of light, now flame,
Where only silence and memory contend.

Through untrusting calm, she slowly ventures forth
Seeking a peace that war has not yet won.
All that remains are fragments of a home
And her blue eyes beckoning the bursting sun.

Up from the Shelter

After the all-clear sounds, hesitant, they emerge,
Mouthing prayers, and curses for morning's fresh hell:
Night's choirs still resound, smouldering in the dawn,
The innocents unclaimed, unburied where they fell.

Between cindered steel silhouettes of building frames
An azure heaven gleams, taunting their weary eyes.
Where are you, God? they plead, desperate for a sign.
Gunshot. They scatter — like birds, reaching for the skies.

Dawn in Kyiv

Stones falling on us, flint beneath our feet,
Not a heart among us walks shod these days.
The loves we left behind, we bear within,
Scars deeper even than tears can erase.

No salves here, no penances for this pain,
No averting the gaze from horror's eyes.
The sun rises and sets, the nightmare dawns
Over a world we do not recognize.

Among the Dead: Mariupol

Dark burnt-out hollows are all that remain,
Former homes, an unanswerable why.
From that window where once we watched the sea
Birds fly through to the blue forever sky.

Now even sunsets bleed and fade to ash,
Dissolving memories too painful to bear.
Yet we, like hope, linger among the dead
And dream of resurrection — if we dare.

'For the Children': Kramatorsk

The rules of engagement always required
Moral compulsion, pause, sobriety,
No force without discrimination. War
Was not a warrant for impiety.

Now, missiles seek a faceless enemy.
Death falls on crowds like blood on a petal,
With a message on a rocket's wreckage,
'For the Children' sprayed on twisted metal.

Exhumation: Bucha

From the shallow dirt a stiff limb protrudes,
A bound hand with fingernails removed.
The workers pack bodies into zipped bags.
Mourners and onlookers, none are unmoved.

What hatred would permit such cruelty?
Might those who stand here be provoked to kill?
A valve of anguish opens, another
Shuts, disconnects, allows the blood to spill.

Freedom

Ageing we know, disease too, even death,
These are from the hand of God, we respect.
The cruelty of man is in the blight
Of freedom, a wantonness we reject.

Yet in freedom's boon the divine gift lies,
The snake's tempting and the Garden's desire,
The price of this natural paradise —
In the flame's light the choice too of its fire.

Dignity

Who discusses the dignity of war?
Armies follow commands, kill whom they're told,
Account only to ranked superiors,
Mark no standard beyond their flag or fold.

Yet dignity knows a common worth, serves
A higher end, no self-constructed right
Or duty can transcend, a sacred writ
Of the soul, beyond earthly pomp and might.

Home

No windows intrude on this openness,
No walls. Everything inward is exposed.
In these exigent times one must become
Intimate with strangers. No doors are closed.

Needs are shed, necessities redefined.
Our new home has ditches now, not fences.
The ache of memories is all we possess.
We bear it in our hearts, our raw senses.

Anonymous

Smoke stacks on the horizon, blowing east,
Air sirens warning us to stay below.
Somewhere out there, soldiers fight to free us,
Risking lives for people they barely know.

To those who attack and those who defend
We are only ciphers, anonymous.
But in this bunker, where a stranger weeps,
We comfort and grieve. She is one of us.