

When I was in Ukraine, I was worried a lot about future trip to Austria. Krems was just an unknown point on the map for me in a country I had never been to before. Ironically, a person gets used to everything. Even to the war. Am I used to the war in Ukraine? I don't know, probably. I'm accustomed to explosions when windows and walls tremble, to air alarms that cause panic attacks, to night missile strikes from Russians as if on schedule, to broken houses, shops and deserted streets. Since February 24, this has become the new norm.

But my son is not used to it. My son is afraid of air alarms. Afraid of explosions. He is afraid to return home to Kharkiv. Actually, I came to Krems for him. It seems that in my past life before the war I was a writer. Well, a writer's residence on the banks of the blue Danube is the perfect way to remember what it's like to write books.

The city impressed with its beauty. Ancient streets, blooming lindens and, of course, the Danube, which, as I now know, is not only blue, but also green, gray - depending on the weather and its mood. The son is finally safe, he is happy. And me... For the first two weeks I could only walk and look at the Danube. There was no talk of writing anything - all my words were lost somewhere. Probably somewhere in Ukraine. I opened the file on my laptop and sat on it for several hours. However, the sheet remained blank. The words did not return.

My son and I walked a lot, went to museums, rode bicycles along the Danube every day and fed ducks. We even went to Vienna several times. But my ability to write did not return.

It returned only in the last week of our stay in Krems. Walking along the Danube, I came up with the first line of a new poem. Of course, it was about the war. Finally, here I mentioned how to write poems that I did not write for a long time, even in Ukraine. Until I can't write prose - it takes time and peace of mind, I do not have it yet. But I can and will write poems. Thank for this beautiful city on the Danube. I am sincerely grateful to all the people, thanks to whom I can write again.

Here is a translation of one of my poems written in Krems.

I, he says, remember them all by names.

I'm learning to use "was" after nouns,
when I'm washing their blood out of the car.

and I know for sure: there is no hell after death.

I, he says, a man simple like an oak door ,
my job is to get wounded soldiers to the hospital,

but blood is not water, and it happens that I do not have enough time.
although the chaplain stutters: they flew to paradise.
I, he says, do not believe in God, but I wear a cross around my neck,
here is a marker, I write the call signs in a notebook,
here are last names, here are names, and this line is my wall,
and when I can't hold on no longer , it protects me.
I, he says, really had nothing in this life.
it's easier for me to be in war, because the rules here are simple:
breathe, drink coffee, smoke and rejoice every day,
that you are not the chief of the general staff, but only the driver.
I, he says, am not a hero at all, quite the opposite:
I see that the best go, assholes remain,
but here and now I can still save someone
when the death will go behind the ambulance.
I, he says, have met more dead than alive
and this damn world hasn't caught me yet,
and while hands can hold a wheel firmly -
mine and hundreds like me - we will not fall down.

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