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Translation Of Selected Poems By M. Savka

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M. Savka, Sibelan E.S. Forrester, M. Kalyna, and B. Pechenyak

* * *

We wrote poems
about love and war,
so long ago
we could have gone grey three times over—
in the days before we had war,
it seemed love would never burn out
and pain was in the offing
Yes, there *were* wounds there,
not just cracks in a chocolate heart,
but they managed to heal
and we went on living.
It wasn't mocking,
or some deliberate game.
We read the signs
on palimpsests of old posters,
on the walls of blackened buildings,
in coffee grounds.
What changed, my sister?
Our hot-air balloon
turned into a lead ball.
The metaphor — died.

*Translated from the Ukrainian
by Sibelan Forrester and Mary Kalyna with Bohdan Pechenyak*

* * *

Forgive me, darling, I'm not a fighter.
Every time you gaze into my face,
I tell you:
I have a knife to cut willow twigs –
I can weave you a basket –
If you like, I can weave you a bird,
And plant violets in its eyes.
I'm not a fighter, darling,
I have a knife to prune branches
On the young trees.
You haven't come out to the garden for so long.
The cherries are coming in.
Darling, why have you gone so grey?

*Translated from the Ukrainian
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* * *

january pulled him apart
february knocked him off his feet
spitting blood into the snow
he waited for his march –
but didn't know what shore
he'd be able to cling to
god, what a calendar –
blow after blow
his heart scarred
by such weird months:
Deathcember, Sorrowtober, or Bittertember
where even the trees grow
upside down, crowns up into roots
so young he barely lived
yet dying his death fully
then one day
the war died with him
and he was born again in may
amidst the grasses
or maybe he didn't really die
but just lay in the grass
under a wide open sky
under the sky everyone's alive

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