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### Translation Of Selected Poems By H. Kruk

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\* \* \*

someone stands between you and death – but  
who knows how much more my heart can stand –  
where you are, it's so important  
someone prays for you  
even with their own words  
even if they don't clasp their hands and kneel

plucking the stems off strawberries from the garden  
I recall how I scolded you when you were small  
for squashing the berries before they ripened

my heart whispers: Death, he hasn't ripened yet  
he's still green, nothing in his life has been  
sweeter than unwashed strawberries  
I beg you: oh God, don't place him at the front,  
please don't rain rockets down on him, oh God,  
I don't even know what a rocket looks like,  
my son, I can't picture the war even to myself

*Translated from the Ukrainian by Sibelan Forrester*

\* \* \*

like a bullet, the Lord saves those who save themselves,  
like the bullet that the man in a trench  
saves for his own temple

beyond the boundary that separates us from them  
the harvest birds chirp to you that already  
your son is kicking in the womb

hide yourself in a fir tree's needle, in a tiny boy's  
face that falls through the junipers  
to search for you

in a field that lies fallow, in the living soil,  
you left for him the heaviest words:  
"Fatherland" and "dad"

a Fatherland, passed from father to son,  
replacing his father – one so young –  
anyone would weep

"but God, let him feel, in his bones  
that he is my last, truest bullet,  
save him for me, oh Lord . . ."

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