

SERHIY ZHADAN

(You led the regiments and liberated cities)

Translated from Ukrainian by John Hennessy and Ostap Kin

You led the regiments and liberated cities.
In the summer of 2014 you were thirty-five.
How many of you survived? Twenty out of a hundred.
Survivors usually don't sleep well.

Three years ago you were changing the world.
You corrected it like a student's paper.
The world can't consist only of setbacks and tragedies,
can't consist of mere losses.

It can be trained like a dog,
it should be reset like a dislocated shoulder.
Three years ago you felt how the heavens burn,
how a river flows through the black night.

Three years ago your regiments were formed,
the summer had just been born,
and the stretch of river you fought across
blazed up under the sun like a bird's wing.

Three years ago death tracked you,
bitterness infused your language like sap in a stem.
Every morning you dream about a world—
broken by you,
understood by you.

The world can't consist of mere complaints.
Fear shouldn't flood the world.
In the middle of the night, a river flows, a river flows.
The birds fly in the middle of the night, the birds fly.