

# Twelve River RIPPLES

## Members' Poems



### **The Florists of Kyiv**

The sunflower is the national symbol  
but today it's the tulip's turn,  
that many coloured flower,  
a sign of spring to come.

They've emerged into daylight  
after spending winter in the dark,  
bulbs buried in the earth, packed  
tight with incipient new life.

Florists have spread the tulips  
over Kyiv's central square,  
a sea of pale pink, mauve and red  
shaped in the country's coat of arms,  
a gold trident on deep blue shield,  
the image of a falcon on the wing.  
Whenever I see tulips now  
I think about the people of Ukraine.

*Sue Wallace-Shaddad*

## Members' Poems cont.

### **Bucha**

They had not walked it on their own yet,  
still played in God's palms, on God's lap,  
and now they sleep.  
Their parents, teachers, grans, their granddads,  
scattered in streets, with neighbours,  
asleep with them.  
No amount of love will heal.  
No want can raise them.  
And those who survived, they dig and dig,  
and flee, fight back, or join them.

*Jacques Groen*

### **Girl with Cat: for Merry**

She looks like my granddaughter  
as she stands on the station platform,  
clutching her black and white cat.  
The same age perhaps, the same half-smile,  
the cat peaceful in her arms, not struggling.  
Trusting. As my granddaughter is,  
with her beloved cats. She exudes calm  
in her red coat, standing in the melee,  
a still centre in this turning world,  
this storm of people, themselves  
in the eye of the storm.

They are escaping from unpronounceable places  
we have never heard of, fleeing from one country  
to another, garlanded as heroes  
with volunteer soup kitchens, buses,  
counselling, sanitary products, kitchen rolls.  
But the snow is coming down,  
and they have a long journey.

As the trains come and go,  
that hesitant smile speaks to me  
of my granddaughter, now in Europe,  
whose mother buys iodine tablets,  
a defence against nuclear fallout.  
She too could be that young girl  
with a cat in her arms,  
at the crossroads between one life  
and the next.

*Angela Locke*

# For a Ripple of Laughter

## Clara Voce Cogito

*(I'm thinking aloud)*

I can't remember their actual names  
but like the language my Latin teachers  
are most likely dead. There we sat in rows,  
a class in *bellum* mood, mindlessly chanting  
declensions as if they were The Lord's Prayer.  
Caesar's Gallic Wars was our set book  
of unexciting stories about military victories  
over Frankish tribes I can't recall at all.

Like the rest of the class I passed – a tribute  
to those two teachers. Even now when reading  
a book with a Latin phrase or in a church  
where there's an inscription I will have a stab  
at translating a word or two to try to get  
some meaning. And Dear Reader you're right  
about this poem – *nullo metro compositum est*  
it doesn't rhyme!

*John Vaughan*