

Alma by Sandra Bruneau

Along Alma, the mountains bedazzle the bay
below. The roadway dips down and meanders
past Almond Park, our rallying point.

Vancouver is peaks, parks, and promenades,
no less than sales and shipping. Always, we've
gathered on streets to dream dreams, contest
plans. Alma is today's stage.

Our demonstrators — bathers, climbers, gardeners,
walkers — wend north to the bay. We hoist homebrewed blue-yellow flags, dozens of signs.

Traffic stops. Lights hesitate, pedestrians stare,
throngs grow. Like a steady flowing river, we
move north — loving nature, peace, justice, and
civil liberty.

Alma is a river in Crimea flowing northwest from
mountains to Black Sea. Our hand-drawn placards
tell that over a century past, allied forces beat back
the Russians, but the Russians overtook the land
again, and with it, the Alma.

Ukrainians fought as underdogs to retake the land.
More than once did they battle, short of victory,
hundreds of lost lives.

This time, it will be different. We'll help them —
we who walk and ride freely along Alma. We'll
raise the common consciousness.

There's talk of Ukraine's Alma and ours. We send
supplies and medics, house refugees, and meet in
high places. Constancy encounters no roadblocks.

The Ukrainian Spirit lifts ours. We are afire with
what we should and can do. We organize, gather
donations, take names, march to downtown.

Muralists and gardeners speak of blue and yellow
sunflowers along Alma. Along both Almas.