

Vinnytsia is a city where you can see beauty in the detail wherever you look, and then, in a sudden glance, splendor can also strike you boldly.

Despite the war, people are trying to live their lives as normally as possible, and yet always knowing that at any moment the war will stop everyone in their tracks. The sound of an air raid siren will sound loud and shrill, interrupting everything - sending a ripple that freezes a crowd, and in the next second - jolting the rhythm back, just a bit revved into a higher speed.

Yesterday, at European Square (a common name for the most beautiful large central square in towns and cities across Ukraine) ... at European Square in Vinnytsia, this vibrant display of drumming and dancing burst into bloom. I don't know about the rhythms, or the symbols behind each article of their clothing, or how long they have known or practiced these songs. I stand not knowing, only able to see and hear, and share with you these photos:



The red flag is the Vinnytsian flag.

And this dog, is one of the stray dogs at European Square. I see her often. I don't know her story but she is everybody's dog. Here she is just trotting along getting ready for the show. (All stray animals are cared for by shop keepers or nearby residents. You can't always tell if a kitty is stray or not.)









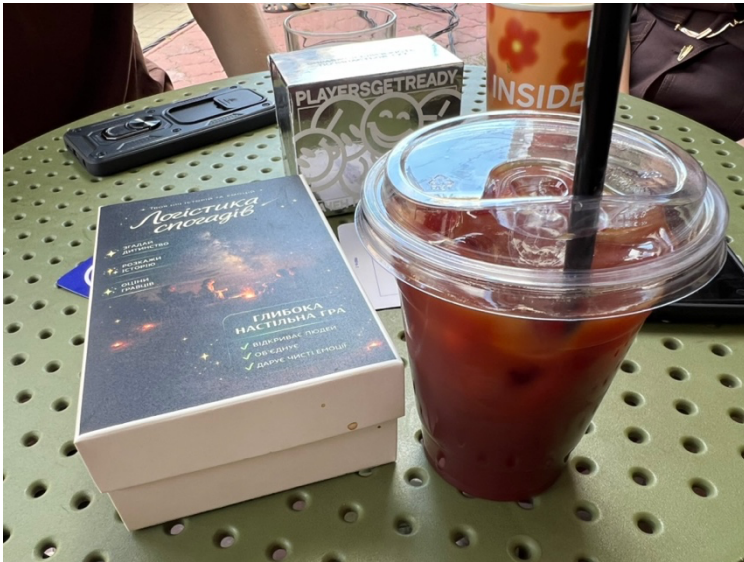


Remember the dog? Well she is not bothered... and this is loud!

Here is a mosaic mural at one of the coffee shops. It shows Vinnytsia, with the river and the clock tower, the famous fountains, the blue trams,... many of the symbols of Vinnytsia.







And it's probably a good time to tell you about coffee too. As I am having coffee again at this coffee shop. I have new friends and we are playing games. Pick a card and answer the question - a conversation started for sure. They answer in English, and I answer in Ukrainian. Neither of us can understand each other that well but we try. Anyways, I am having coffee again, and trying something new. This is coffee in pomegranate juice... yes, coffee and juice works too!

So yes, coffee is everywhere. There are coffee shops, sometimes several in the same block, and almost every business also has coffee for you when you walk in. Coffee machines are part of the entry way. Here is the coffee machine at the front entrance of my hospital, for example. It's just part of hospitality.

Oh, and here are some stray cats...







The symbol of Vinnytsia, transcending time - old and subtle on the manhole covers, or bright and bold on a wall with an outlet.



There's always someone to greet you... dead or alive. Businesses also sometimes have a place Defenders can leave patches, or where patches are collected... basically a canvas of velcro where velco backed patches easily affix.

I liked this combo especially on one of them, at a tattoo shop:





And yes, I got another tat.



When I went to pay the bill... a Defender in Azov had already covered it.



The old and the new mix in Vinnytsia. The old soviet style building and the new modern European vision.





Vinnytsia also had a book festival. This is after the bombings of book warehouses in Kyiv - huge warehouses, hundreds of thousands of books lost in the last few weeks. The people gather here, and invite authors to display their books, talk about their books ... books books books and I couldn't be more at home.



My new friends, Artem and Olya. This is a longer story for another entry.