

1976

From "The Poem of the Country Which Hungers"

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Candace Slater

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and also the blind hunter
I am the hunter
I am the enemy
I am the brave enemy

12 I will
struggle to a shack at sunset
Stunted, scrawny shrubs will become a big forest;
my small dream will shut out the lava,
the sun and the ebbing tide
I will drink a glass of bitter water
slowly as if it were poison
I will close my eyes, and will open them again
I will cut my whiskey with water.

13 I will not return to the shack
I could not dilute the words with meanings
like whiskey with water

Translated by Takako Uchino Lento

PAOL KEINEG / BRITTANY

from *The Poem of the Country Which Hungers*

Good day to you
people of these houses
good day good day
and let me please
remove my hat
and set it with my wooden shoes
and since I happen to be here then
good day to the tripod good day to the sugar bowl
good day to the chest-like bench
brimming with draughts flip sides of playing cards and with backstages
good day to my soul's cupboard where bright roosters are adorned
with rose and heather in a scent of holly

good day sabotmaker roadmender good day
good day wisteria whose frail threads line crumbling fences
good day to the slashing blade of April hail
good day to our blood's unending highway
good day to you forests who make each treetop an arrow
good day to you waves of wind my hands hold prisoner
good day crowd of women's hands grown hard in water's fire
good day to the crowd of well-loved faces

good day to you
my people and my country
heir to our eternity
I want to live and die
where bundled branches flame
in fires of farmhouse ovens
over the fired clay of factory chimneys
beneath the ash of reminiscent afternoons
and if I write
it is for the winged crest of the cow shed
for the flocks of pregnant ewes trailing the ditches' length
for the scaffolding in the new quarters of the city
for my brothers' eyes which fire has branded

sink your eyes in my eyes
you will clear inaccessible Cape Horns
you will climb the lunar ranges of our hopes
place your hands on my hands
you will feel the wheat change into bread
and the bread change into blood

you will see the tree of my blood grow
beneath my eyelids

here I am wholly whole
in my table of chestnut wood
both feet firm upon the ground
in the cracked murmur of the crowd which leans
upon the well-wall of the window
in the will-o'-the-wisp near the churchyard calvary
in the carting-off of hay and grass
by immense determined horses
in the heavy rebound of the pail
against the cool wall of the well

in the apples newly fallen from the tree
in the cider press of my worn joy
ironing the patched clothes at the foot of my bed
here I am whole
both feet firm upon the ground

understand me

I had to be the shadow curved and clattering through pools
the word of friendship which goes straight to simple hearts
the given word

I had to be the cress and then gnarled roots
the orchard on the slope
the child robber and fibber shy with strangers
understand me

I had to be the horseshoe in the blacksmith's vise
the mane of slate roofs over prostrate cities
I had to be the cracked notes of the words which wound
enigma of the words which go unspoken

understand me

everywhere
taking part in all
one day I had to learn
to be myself

. . .

the wave of new generations rises
flooding the calendar's red and black days illumined letters in a poor man's
alphabet the gullied slopes of bread
hacking at the roads already traced and paved and surfaced
my country is heavy moving like the sea which catches in the outcroppings
of rock and tears the hulls of ships in silence
my country is braided by cables ropes affixed to the iron hills
and drifting nightmares
my country has hands by the million she sleeps her light sleep behind a
screen of mist
my country shelters churches made of wind and scans in vain the gate to hell

I blush

my hands are red
standing on my roots
my house is red

I hide at all the crossroads
I have shivered in the winds
now that I see the soft banks of muddy rivers the betrayal of the weeds
the aching chalice of uprooted hearths

since the day of my birth
despoiled of all possessions of my eyes my pores my bones my hands
robbed of my bread
the mother tongue torn from the palate of my childhood
all familiar names borne off
the magic name for cat for dog
the words for molehill rudder flowering cherry
since the day of my birth
waiting at the door of my self
in search of the great chimneys of boats rotting in the sheds of the brand
upon the anvil
loving to bridge arches bending from the water mills
since the day of my birth
lacking my own substance
dispossessed of veins and blood
doubled in for by a stranger
I myself

when the logs fall in the brown heath I love to hear the knell of all that is
the real world ring upon my doorstep

my country drifting and transparent in the mirror of the gulfs which clouds
and seasalt weave
my country inlaid like jewels along the railway and the wake of shrivelled
hamlets
the birds stream between her fingers the showers cut across her as they
pass the flights of wild ducks span her distant corners
in her thousand arms my country blinds and chokes me

Translated by Candace Slater