

Karl Plank

THE SOUND OF ONE POEM TAPPING

*God crosses through the thickness of the world to
come to us.*

*Two prisoners whose cells adjoin communicate
with each other by knocking on the wall . . . every
separation is a link.*

Simone Weil

these poems are not for you
not for me

but for one left behind
or lost

as when a pilgrim enters a thicket
without end

to cross the world

there are no gates
nor paths of egress for

this one whose breath I hear
ear cupped to the wall

who scratches graffiti
on the other side

with pencil stub and shards
of glass

this one who when night falls
hammers a signal code

rock in hand
that chips away at blocks of stone

to this one I tap out words
in reply

poems prayers

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Karl Plank

BONHOEFFER, 1939

"Do your best to come before winter" (2 Tim 4:21)--it is not a misuse of Scripture if I let that be said to me. --Dietrich Bonhoeffer, New York; June 26, 1939.

do your best to come to me before winter

it cannot wait
(by which i mean you cannot wait
or perhaps i cannot wait)

in December waves will surge
from beneath the sea
and ships be lost in cold waters

hard ground will offer no forage
and animals patrol the forest
in packs

trains will not be available

so come to me before the snowfall
[by which i mean i will need you then]
when all turns to ice

already i see them frozen in place
glazed sculptures who have mouths
but cannot speak

no blood runs through them

you will need to *share the trials*
of the people (if you want to put it that way
i understand)

but I will need you to keep me warm
to bring forth sounds from my throat
that cry words made flesh

so please
come to me before winter
(by which i mean come now)

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Karl Plank

GRAVITY

When night calls for sounds
to cease, the barred owl
yet cries "Who cooks for you?"
and somewhere a woman
slippers through the dark
to a kitchen where water drips
a slow beat on the worn basin.
She nooses the tap with string,
a strand that drops to the drain,
and waits for each bead
to catch the thread and
descend into a well of silence
not even night can bring.

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