

The Monday Poem: Keeping Quiet by Pablo Neruda

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The Monday poem is brought to you by the SUNY Broome English Department. Enjoy!

KEEPING QUIET

by Pablo Neruda

Now we will count to twelve

and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the earth,

let's not speak in any language;

let's stop for one second,

and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment

without rush, without engines;

we would all be together

in a sudden strangeness.

Fisherman in the cold sea

would not harm whales

and the man gathering salt

would look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,

wars with gas, wars with fire,

victories with no survivors,

would put on clean clothes

and walk about with their brothers

in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused

with total inactivity.

Life is what it is about;

I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single-minded

about keeping our lives moving,

and for once could do nothing,

perhaps a huge silence

might interrupt this sadness

of never understanding ourselves

and of threatening ourselves with death.

Perhaps the earth can teach us

as when everything seems dead

and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve

and you keep quiet and I will go.

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