

LOVE SONNETS

BY PABLO NERUDA

II

Love, what a long way, to arrive at a kiss,
what loneliness-in-motion, toward your company!
Rolling with the rain we follow the tracks alone.
In Taltal there is neither daybreak nor spring.

But you and I, love, we are
together, from our clothes down to our roots:
in the autumn, in water, in hips, until
we are together—only you, only me.

To think of the effort, that the current carried
so many stones, the delta of Boroa water; to think
that you and I, divided by trains and by nations,

we had only to love one another:
with all the confusions, the men and the women, the earth
that makes the carnations rise, and makes them bloom!

VI

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off: it seemed
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,
a shout muffled by huge autumns,
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

And there, awaking from the dreaming forest, the hazel-sprig
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood—
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent.

XXII

Love, how often I loved you without seeing—without remembering you—
not recognizing your glance, not knowing you, a gentian
in the wrong place, scorching in the hot noon,
but I loved only the smell of the wheat.

Or maybe I saw you, imagined you lifting a wineglass
in Angol, by the light of the summer's moon;
or were you the waist of that guitar I strummed,
in the shadows, that rang like an impetuous sea?

I loved you without knowing I did; I searched to remember you.
I broke into houses to steal your likeness,
though I already knew what you were like. And suddenly,

when you were there with me I touched you, and my life
stopped: you stood before me, you took dominion like a queen:
like a wildfire in the forest, and the flame is your dominion.

XXXIII

Love, we're going home now,
where the vines clamber over the trellis:
even before you, the summer will arrive,
on its honeysuckle feet, in your bedroom.

Our nomadic kisses wandered over all the world:
Armenia, dollop of disinterred honey—:
Ceylon, green dove—: and the Yangtze with its old
old patience, dividing the day from the night.

And now, dearest, we return, across the crackling sea
like two blind birds to their wall,
to their nest in a distant spring:

because love cannot always fly without resting,
our lives return to the wall, to the rocks of the sea:
our kisses head back home where they belong.

—translated by Stephen Tapscott

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