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Quotes by Neruda, Pablo

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Pablo Neruda (July 12, 1904 – September 23, 1973) was the pen name of the Chilean writer Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto. Considered one of the greatest Spanish-language poets of the 20th century, Neruda was a prolific writer, his output ranging from erotically charged love poems, surrealist poems, historical epics, and overtly political poems, to poems on common things, like nature and the sea. In 1971, Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

A bibliophile of little means is likely to suffer often. Books don't slip from his hands but fly past him through the air, high as birds, high as prices.

- Neruda, Pablo

I grew up in this town, my poetry was born between the hill and the river, it took its voice from the rain, and like the timber, it steeped itself in the forests.

- Neruda, Pablo

Now, on the road to freedom, I was pausing for a moment near Temuco and could hear the voice of the water that had taught me to sing.

- Neruda, Pablo

I do not love you

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,

or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,

in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms

but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;

thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,

risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.

I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;

so I love you because I know no other way

that this: where I does not exist, nor you,

so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,

so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

- Neruda, Pablo

Saddest Poem

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

Write, for instance: "The night is full of stars,

and the stars, blue, shiver in the distance."

The night wind whirls in the sky and sings.

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like this, I held her in my arms.

I kissed her so many times under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her.

How could I not have loved her large, still eyes?

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

To think I don't have her. To feel that I've lost her.

To hear the immense night, more immense without her.

And the poem falls to the soul as dew to grass.

What does it matter that my love couldn't keep her.

The night is full of stars and she is not with me.

That's all. Far away, someone sings. Far away.

My soul is lost without her.

As if to bring her near, my eyes search for her.

My heart searches for her and she is not with me.

The same night that whitens the same trees.

We, we who were, we are the same no longer.

I no longer love her, true, but how much I loved her.

My voice searched the wind to touch her ear.

Someone else's. She will be someone else's. As she once

belonged to my kisses.

Her voice, her light body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, true, but perhaps I love her.

Love is so short and oblivion so long.

Because on nights like this I held her in my arms,

my soul is lost without her.

Although this may be the last pain she causes me,

and this may be the last poem I write for her.

- Neruda, Pablo

Clenched Soul

We have lost even this twilight.

No one saw us this evening hand in hand

while the blue night dropped on the world.

I have seen from my window

the fiesta of sunset in the distant mountain tops.

Sometimes a piece of sun

burned like a coin in my hand.

I remembered you with my soul clenched

in that sadness of mine that you know.

Where were you then?

Who else was there?

Saying what?

Why will the whole of love come on me suddenly

when I am sad and feel you are far away?

The book fell that always closed at twilight

and my blue sweater rolled like a hurt dog at my feet.

Always, always you recede through the evenings

toward the twilight erasing statues.

- Neruda, Pablo

The Night in Isla Negra

Ancient night and the unruly salt

beat at the walls of my house.

The shadow is all one, the sky

throbs now along with the ocean,

and sky and shadow erupt

in the crash of their vast conflict.

All night long they struggle;

nobody knows the name

of the harsh light that keeps slowly opening

like a languid fruit.

So on the coast comes to light,

out of seething shadow, the harsh dawn,

gnawed at by the moving salt,

swept clean by the mass of night,

bloodstained in its sea-washed crater.

- Neruda, Pablo

Sonnet XXXIV (You are the daughter of the sea)

You are the daughter of the sea,
 oregano's first cousin.

Swimmer, your body is pure as the water;

cook, your blood is quick as the soil.

Everything you do is full of flowers, rich with the earth.

Your eyes go out toward the water, and the waves rise;

your hands go out to the earth and the seeds swell;

you know the deep essence of water and the earth,

conjoined in you like a formula for clay.

Naiad: cut your body into turquoise pieces,

they will bloom resurrected in the kitchen.

This is how you become everything that lives.

And so at last, you sleep, in the circle of my arms

that push back the shadows so that you can rest -

vegetables, seaweed, herbs: the foam of your dreams.

- Neruda, Pablo

Love Sonnet XI

I crave your mouth, your voice, your hair.

Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets.

Bread does not nourish me, dawn disrupts me, all day

I hunt for the liquid measure of your steps.

I hunger for your sleek laugh,

your hands the color of a savage harvest,

hunger for the pale stones of your fingernails,

I want to eat your skin like a whole almond.

I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your lovely body,

the sovereign nose of your arrogant face,

I want to eat the fleeting shade of your lashes,

and I pace around hungry, sniffing the twilight,

hunting for you, for your hot heart,

like a puma in the barrens of Quitratue.

- Neruda, Pablo

The Eighth of September

This day, Today, was a brimming glass.

This day, Today, was an immense wave.

This day was all the Earth.

This day, the storm-driven ocean

lifted us up in a kiss

so exalted we trembled

at the lightning flash

and bound as one, fell,

and drowned, without being unbound.

This day our bodies grew

stretched out to Earth's limits,

orbited there, melded there

to one globe of wax, or a meteor's flame.

A strange door opened, between us,

and someone, with no face as yet,

waited for us there.

- Neruda, Pablo



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