

## PABLO NERUDA: *KEEPING STILL*

Now we will count to twelve  
and let's keep quiet.

For once on earth  
let's not talk in any language;  
let's stop for one second,  
and not move our arms so much.

A moment like that would smell sweet,  
no hurry, no engines,  
all of us at the same time  
in need of rest.

Fishermen in the cold sea  
would stop harming whales  
and the gatherer of 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 go for a walk with their brothers  
out in the shade, doing nothing.

Just don't confuse what I want  
with total inaction;  
it's life and life only;  
I'm not talking about death.

If we weren't so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving  
and could maybe do nothing for once  
a huge silence might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves,  
of threatening ourselves with death;  
perhaps the earth could teach us;  
everything would seem dead  
and then be alive.

Now I will count up to twelve  
and you keep quiet  
and I will go.

—*translated by Dan Bellm*