

# Keeping Quiet

Contributed by [Evan & Ashley](#)

Source:

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.

—from *Extravagaria* (translated by Alastair Reid, pp. 27-29, 1974)