

ODE TO MY SOCKS

by Pablo Neruda (Translation by Stephen Mitchell)

Maru Mori brought me
a pair
of socks
which she knitted with her own
shepherd hands,
two socks as soft
as rabbits.
I slipped my feet
into them
as if they were
two
cases
knitted
with threads of
twilight
and the pelt of sheep.

Outrageous socks,
my feet became
two fish
made of wool,
two long sharks
of ultramarine blue
crossed
by one golden hair,
two gigantic blackbirds,
two cannons:
my feet
were honored
in this way
by
these
heavenly
socks.
They were
so beautiful
that for the first time
my feet seemed to me
unacceptable
like two decrepit
firemen, firemen
unworthy
of that embroidered
fire,
of those luminous
socks.

Nevertheless,
I resisted
the sharp temptation
to save them
as schoolboys
keep
fireflies,
as scholars
collect
sacred documents,
I resisted
the wild impulse
to put them
in a golden
cage
and each day give them
birdseed
and chunks of pink melon.
Like explorers
in the jungle
who hand over the rare
green deer
to the roasting spit
and eat it
with remorse,
I stretched out
my feet
and pulled on
the
magnificent
socks
and
then my shoes.

And the moral of my ode
is this:
beauty is twice
beauty
and what is good is doubly
good
when it's a matter of two
woolen socks
in winter.