

## 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.