

Sonnet 71

by **Pablo Neruda**

Translated by **Stephen Tapscott**



BACKGROUND

Pablo Neruda (1904–1973) was the pen name of Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. Born in a small town in Chile, Neruda published his first poem at the age of 13. At 16, he sold everything he owned to pay for the publication of his first book. Neruda went on to travel the world, writing poetry about love and nature and engaging in political activities. In 1971, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

SETTING A PURPOSE

As you read, pay attention to the contrast between the lovers' dream and reality. What images do you find especially powerful?

Love crosses its islands, from grief to grief,
it sets its roots, watered with tears,
and no one—no one—can escape the heart's progress
as it runs, silent and carnivorous.

- 5 You and I searched for a wide valley, for another planet
where the salt wouldn't touch your hair,
where sorrows couldn't grow because of anything I did,
where bread could live and not grow old.



A planet entwined with vistas and foliage,
 10 a plain, a rock, hard and unoccupied:
 we wanted to build a strong nest

with our own hands, without hurt or harm or speech,
 but love was not like that: love was a lunatic city
 with crowds of people blanching on their porches.

14 blanching: *v.* used as *adj.*:
 turning pale.

Soneto LXXI (español)

De pena en pena cruza sus islas el amor
 y establece raíces que luego riega el llanto,
 y nadie puede, nadie puede evadir los pasos
 del corazón que corre callado y carnicero.

Así tú y yo buscamos un hueco, otro planeta
 en donde no tocara la sal tu cabellera,
 en donde no crecieran dolores por mi culpa,
 en donde viva el pan sin agonía.

Un planeta enredado por distancia y follajes,
 un páramo, una piedra cruel y deshabitada,
 con nuestras propias manos hacer un nido duro,

queríamos, sin daño ni herida ni palabra,
 y no fue así el amor, sino una ciudad loca
 donde la gente palidece en los balcones.