

## Ode to a Watch in the Night

Pablo Neruda

In the night, in your hand  
my watch glowed  
like a firefly.  
I heard  
its ticking:  
like a dry whisper  
it arose  
from your invisible hand.  
Then your hand  
returned to my dark breast  
to gather my sleep and its pulse.

The watch  
went on cutting time  
with its little saw.  
As in a forest  
fragments of wood,  
tiny drops, pieces  
of branches or nests  
fall  
without changing the silence,  
without ending the cool darkness,  
so  
from your invisible hand  
the watch went on cutting  
time, time,  
and minutes fell  
like leaves,  
fibers of broken time,  
little black feathers.  
As in the forest  
we smelled roots,  
somewhere water released  
a fat drop  
like a wet grape.  
A little mill  
was grinding the night,  
the shadow whispered  
falling from your hand  
and filled the earth.

Dust,  
earth, distance,  
my watch in the night  
was grinding and grinding  
from your hand.

I put  
my arm  
under your invisible neck,  
under its warm weight,  
and in my hand  
time fell,  
the night,  
little noises  
of wood and forest,  
of divided night,  
of fragments of shadow,  
of water that falls and falls:  
then  
sleep fell  
from the watch and from  
your two sleeping hands,  
it fell like the dark water  
of the forests,  
from the watch  
to your body,  
from you toward countries,  
dark water,  
time that falls  
and runs  
inside us.

And that's how it was, that night,  
shadow and space, earth  
and time,  
something that runs and falls  
and passes.  
And that's how all the nights  
go over the earth,  
leaving only a vague  
black odor.  
A leaf falls,  
a drop

on the earth  
muffles its sound,  
the forest sleeps, the waters,  
the meadows,  
the bells,  
the eyes.

I hear you and you breathe,  
my love,  
we sleep.

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Translated by Stephen Mitchell