

Tonight I Can Write (The Saddest Lines)

By Pablo Neruda.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, 'The night is starry and the stars are blue and shiver in the distance.'

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms.

I kissed her again and again under the
endless sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.
How could one not have loved her great
still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
To think that I do not have her. To feel
that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more
immense without her.
And the verse falls to the soul like dew to
the pasture.

What does it matter that my love could
not keep her.
The night is starry and she is not with
me.

This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.

My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

My sight tries to find her as though to bring her closer.

My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.

The same night whitening the same trees. We, of that time, are no longer the same.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.

My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing.

Another's. She will be another's. As she

was before my kisses.
Her voice, her bright body. Her infinite
eyes.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but
maybe I love her.
Love is so short, forgetting is so long.

Because through nights like this one I
held her in my arms
my soul is not satisfied that it has lost
her.

Though this be the last pain that she
makes me suffer
and these the last verses that I write for
her.

Translation by W. S. Merwin.

Pablo Neruda, original name **Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto**, (born July 12, 1904, Parral, Chile—died September 23, 1973, Santiago), Chilean poet, diplomat, and politician who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. He was perhaps the most important Latin American poet of the 20th century. At age 20, with two books published, Neruda had already become one of the best-known Chilean poets. He abandoned his French studies and began to devote himself entirely to poetry. Three more books appeared in quick succession: *Tentativa del hombre infinito* (1926; “Attempt of the Infinite Man”); *Anillos* (1926;

“Rings”), in collaboration with Tomás Lago; and *El hondero entusiasta* (1933; “The Enthusiastic Slingshooter”). He was a Nobel Prize winning Chilean poet-diplomat and politician. Neruda became known as a poet when he was 13 years old, and wrote in a variety of styles, including surrealist poems, historical epics, overtly political manifestos, a prose autobiography, and passionate love poems such as the ones in his collection *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (1924). His poetic mastery was never in doubt, and for it he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.

Analysis of the poem:

This poem was published in 1924, just as Pablo Neruda entered his 20s. In this poem, the speaker is dealing with the end of a relationship and longing for the woman to be back in his arms. The repetition of, “Tonight I can write the saddest lines,” brings the reader’s attention to that theme throughout this sad love poem. Pablo Neruda used alliteration throughout this poem with many words beginning with “s” (saddest, shattered, stars, sky, soul, etc.).

Tonight I Can Write Analysis

The poem, *Tonight I Can Write*, which can be read in full here, begins with the single line ‘Tonight I can write the saddest lines’, which is its recurring

theme, and is repeated all through the poem. The poem consist of night imagery, and the alliteration of 's' all through the lines reflect the quiet night. The night could be both treacherous and beautiful, and this could also reflect the persona's relationship.

The poems that brought Pablo Neruda into the limelight are essentially love poems where he makes use of vivid nature imagery and symbolism to express himself. In the poem, *Tonight I Can Write*, the poet is extensively lyrical and the very verbs he uses in the lines like: *The night is shattered/and the blue stars shiver in the distance*, they emphasise the pent-up passion that inspires his poetry. The significance of the love affair lies in the fact that he has

lost her, for he admits that while: *She loved me/sometimes I loved her too.*

It does not seem as though he realised what it was to love until he starts writing about her. In fact, it is the idea of love that he loves more than the woman, and thus he can write “*the saddest lines*”.

Such sentiments immediately charmed the young people who were themselves experiencing similar emotions, and they were able to identify with Neruda and appropriate his words in their own love affairs. This is what makes Neruda so much a poet of the common people. As the poor fisherman’s son who brings him his letters in the movie *Il Postino* petulantly tells him, poetry does not belong to the poet composes it; it belongs

to those who need to use it, especially lovers seeking to win the beloved through words.

Neruda's poems are full of easily understood images which makes them no less beautiful. To hear him talk about "*verse (that) falls to the soul like dew to the pasture*" makes the whole process of writing poetry so comprehensive.

Similarly, the deliberate repetition of certain words and images such as: *My sight searches for her.../My heart looks for her*. Emphasises the over-wrought condition of the crazed lover. The poet is a jealous lover who imagines that "*She will be another's*". However, the ordinariness of this love affair that almost anyone can identify with surely reaches a profoundly universal level

when he confesses: Love is so short,
forgetting is so long.

There is deliberate juxtaposition of the emotions accompanied by adjectives that make us believe that it is the woman's rejection that becomes the poet's inspiration to write; it is the pain that produces poetry. The reiteration of the word "*last*" in the final lines of the poem are again the young man's need for some kind of revenge, his poem a gift to her for leaving behind the memories that allow him to compose.

The woman can be seen as the condescending one and the personification of poetic inspiration. The poems in the collection were the outcome of two actual love affairs where

Neruda's focus shifts between one who is beautiful and the one who is distant and threatening. From the conventional poet that he was in his first two books, *Song of the Fiesta* (1921)

and *Crepuscular* (1923, here in *Twenty Love Poems* he is certainly breaking away from tradition and attempting to find a new voice. The tone is modernista – simple, evocative and, at times, meditative. The collection has a personalised theme of a man who is not a hero, nor yet a public figure.

Pablo Neruda employs vivid nature imagery to express the loss of his love in this poem – probably the last time he is writing about the woman he once loved and lost. There is a growing feeling of solitariness in the poet that, although nature and the environment have

remained unchanged over the years, he has lost the woman he once loved. The expression is intensely lyrical and full of agony when he says:... The night is shattered/and the blue stars shiver in the distance. The poignancy of the situation is further heightened when he realises: *I loved her,/and sometimes she loved me too. And equally, she loved me,/sometimes I loved her too./How could one not have loved her great still eyes.*

Now that the poet experiences the pangs of separation, the night is “*shattered*” and the stars seem to be shivering. The night wind “*revolving*” round the sky is whistling a sad tune. “*Tonight I can write the saddest lines.*” The saddest lines are about his lost love... “*she is not with me*” and *My sight searches for her*

as though to go to her./My heart looks for her, and she is not with me. "This is all", the poet sums up his present situation. But is this really all? The poet misses her: The same night whitening the same trees./We, of that time, are no longer the same.

She is now "*another's*" and he still misses "*Her voice. Her bright body. Her infinite eyes.*" He might have loved her for a short time, but forgetting her has taken too long; his soul still searches for her, the pangs of separation still pierce his heart; and the poet vows that this is "*the last time*" he writes for her. He doesn't appear to be so sure, however, nor are we. And this lends universality to *Tonight I Can Write*.

About Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines: One of the notable works

of Pablo Neruda is the '*Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*' (Twenty Love Poems and A Desperate Song). This volume of verse contains the poem in question, 'Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines'. It was published in the year 1924. It is the recipient of much critical acclaim but also of much censorship primarily due to its eroticism which shocked the then general public, especially considering the author's young age. Now it remains the best selling Spanish poetry book, even after its 100 years of publication.

Setting of the poem: The poem takes place under the great, endless sky dotted with numerous stars. The speaker who recently lost the love of his life is bitterly regretting the separation and the night

sky he now sat under only reminded him of the moments he spent with her.

Poetic Devices

Metaphor: ‘The night is shattered’ and ‘The blue stars shiver in the distance’; these are metaphors for the current state of the speaker’s love life. His love is now shattered like the night and where there was once warmth, now existed coldness, coldness between the lovers, cold enough to make him shiver.

Irony: The speaker says in the beginning that he loved her and sometimes she loved him back. It induces a theory that the love that was now lost was first lost from the side of the girl. But then the speaker says she loved him and he loved her back sometimes. So now we’re

unclear as to who was primarily responsible for the love lost.

Imagery: The night is shown to us in many ways throughout the poem. In the second paragraph, ‘the night is shattered’ and ‘blue stars shiver’ make us see the night as the speaker sees it; shattered and cold. Imageries continue in the following paragraphs with ‘endless skies’, ‘dew to the pasture’ and ‘night whitening the trees’. The imagery makes us feel the sadness of the speaker acutely.

Repetition: Many lines in this poem are repeated. The title of the poem itself is repeated three times throughout the poem. Then the lines like ‘I loved her’ and ‘loved me sometimes’ are also seen to be repeated. These repetitions put an emphasis on the feelings of the speaker

and portray the state of their love while it lasted. It puts an emphasis on the melancholy and sadness the speaker is feeling.

Free Verse: The poem is without rhyme or rhythm. It is a free verse written in a simple and concise language, understood by all.

Personification: There is a bit of personification when the speaker says the ‘blue stars shiver’.

Summary of Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines by Pablo Neruda

The speaker of the poem says that that night he could write the saddest lines. He loved a girl and the girl loved him back too, but only at some times. That night was like the nights in which he held her

and kissed her. He loved her great still eyes. But now he does not have her, he lost her. He knew the nights were immense but without her they seemed more immense than ever. The verse of his poems fell to his soul like dew to the pasture. His love could not hold her back. He could hear someone singing somewhere but no song could satisfy him now. His eyes and heart seek her but she is nowhere to be seen. The nights they lived through remained the same though but they themselves changed. He says he no longer loved her but he used to love her and how; he tried to find the wind just to hear her voice. And soon she will be another's. He no longer loves but thinking again, maybe he still does. Their love existed for a short time but the forgetting part is taking so long. Because

nights like that night reminded him of all the time he spent with her. He ends the poem by saying that these will be the last verse her writes for her and he will no longer be subjected to suffering due to her.

Summary And Analysis Of Tonight I Can Write The Saddest Lines

About Pablo Neruda: Pablo Neruda is the pen name of Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto, a Chilean diplomat and poet. He was born in the year 1904 in Parral, Chile. He first composed his poems in 1914. In 1917, he published his first work in a local newspaper. He moved to Santiago in 1921, from where he published his first volume of verse in the year 1923. Later after returning

to Chile, he was offered a diplomatic post and the events in this post changed him as a man and poet. He was involved in many political activities, and he even found himself in exile in later stages of his life. He was the winner of many notable awards including International Peace Prize and Nobel Prize in Literature.

About Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines: One of the notable works of Pablo Neruda is the '*Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*' (Twenty Love Poems and A Desperate Song). This volume of verse contains the poem in question, 'Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines'. It was published in the year 1924. It is the recipient of much critical acclaim but also of much censorship primarily due to its

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loved her but he used to love her and how; he tried to find the wind just to hear her voice. And soon she will be another's. He no longer loves but thinking again, maybe he still does. Their love existed for a short time but the forgetting part is taking so long. Because nights like that night reminded him of all the time he spent with her. He ends the poem by saying that these will be the last verse he writes for her and he will no longer be subjected to suffering due to her.

Analysis of Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines by Pablo Neruda

The speaker of the poem recently lost the love of his life. We can tell though that some time passed since the separation from the first sentence. He says 'tonight I can write' implying that till that day he couldn't. Maybe the emotions and pain he felt were

still too raw to put it down to words. In that case this line implies that he is slowly healing from the separation.

Poets generally describe a broken heart using metaphors and imagery. Pablo Neruda's style is simple and concise. But the speaker says he can write flowery language too in the second paragraph. That is how heart-broken he is.

The speaker says that he loved her and she sometimes loved him back too. This puts us in a state of thinking that the one who was primarily responsible for the separation was the woman. The night he was sitting under was like the nights he used to hold her and kissed her. He describes the sky as endless. Maybe he felt his love would be like the sky too but sadly, it had ended. He says 'kissed her again and again'. This type of eroticism

was shocking to the general public at the time, especially when the poet was only 18 years old. Sentences like this earned the poem collection censorship.

The speaker continues by putting emphasis on his loss and sadness. He uses repetition and some imagery to pull at the heart string of the reader. One feels sympathy for the speaker as he repeats again that she loved him sometimes. The night which was described as endless before felt much more so after the separation. And this makes him feel verse of poetry flow as naturally into his soul as dew falls onto the pasture. This makes the reader feel that it was indeed true that the most beautiful poetry flows from a broken heart.

‘The same night whitening the same trees’. He repeats ‘same’ twice to show that while

they both changed the world remained the same. Now he says that he no longer loved her as he used to.

He thinks that soon she will be another's. 'Like my kisses before.' This line can have either of the two following meanings. The speaker of the poem is now together with another girl and he kissed her recently. In this case, he says that like how his kisses belonged to another now, hers will be too. Or he simply says that she will be kissed by another man like how he used to kiss her. The meaning is closer to the latter one when the whole poem is considered.

The speaker now contradicts himself saying that he no longer loves her for sure and then immediately saying that maybe he loves her. This shows the conflict within in the speaker. He loved her so deep that he finds it

hard not to. This conflict is spoken of throughout the poem, albeit in allusions.

He says love is so short but forgetting is so long. This is one of the best remembered quotes from the poem. And the nights aren't helping his forgetting process. Nights like the one that day particularly remind him of the time when he held her. And when these thoughts crossed his mind, his soul becomes dissatisfied with the fact that he lost her. The conflict is shown deeply in these two lines.

The speaker ends the poem saying that this, that particular night would be the last night he suffers pain because of her and this poem will be the last one he will write for her.

This shows that the speaker has now finally resolved to completely move on.

Central Idea of Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines

The idea of the poem is to show the speaker's sadness and regret on losing the woman he loved. And he succeeds in doing so by using concise language.

Tone of the poem: The tone of the poem is sad, melancholic, love-struck, and bitter.

Conclusion: Pablo Neruda shows us the pain and suffering a lover experiences when he separates from his other half. The simple language makes the general populace empathize more with the speaker of the poem. This poem is the penultimate one of the collection, the collection wherein he shows a full cycle of a love life.

