

bruegel's two monkeys (translation of dwie malpy bruegla)

this is my great adulthood examination dream:  
there are two monkeys, chained in the window  
beyond the window the sky flies  
and the sea bathes.

i answer questions from human history.  
I stutter and and I wade.

a monkey, eyes fixed on me, listens ironically,  
the other pretends to be dozing --  
and when there's silence unordained -- after a question,  
it prompts me, covertly,  
discreetly chiming its chain.

Wislawe Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski and Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

for friends (*translation of przyjaciolom*)

---

well versed in spaces  
from earth to stars,  
we get lost in the space  
from earth to head.

it is so interplanetary  
from sorrow to tears.  
on the way from lies to truth  
you lose youth.

the jets look funny to us,  
that crevice of silence  
between flight and sound  
-- a world record.

there were speedier departures  
their belated echoes  
jar us from sleep  
only years after.

now a call can be heard:  
we are innocent!  
who is calling? we're up and running,  
opening windows.

the voice abruptly breaks off.  
outside the windows stars  
fall, just like after a salvo  
paint falls off the wall.

Wislawe Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski and Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

hania (*translation of hania*)

---

see, this is hania, a good maid.  
and these are not saucepans but nimbi.  
and this knight with a dragon is a holy picture.  
and this dragon here that's wretchedness  
of our tear-stained earth.

and these are not beads, they're hania's rosaries.  
and these shoes have tips worn out from kneeling.  
and this is her scarf, black as a nighttime vigil,  
when the bell in the steeple sounds the first call.

she saw the devil, when dusting the mirror:  
he was all pale, father, and was striped pale yellow  
and he looked at me wickedly, and he made a face,  
what's going to happen to me, if he wrote me in his book?

which is why she will give to the monks and for the holy mass,  
and she will purchase a tiny heart with a silver flame.  
ever since they started on the new priory,  
all the devils jumped up in price at once.

it takes a lot to lead a soul from temptation,  
and the old age is only older and bone knocks on bone.

hania is so gaunt, she has so very little,  
she just may get lost in the Eye of the Needle.

may, give back your colors, be like december nondescript.  
green twig, be ashamed of yourself.  
sun, mourn your shining. flagellate yourselves, clouds.  
spring, wrap yourself in snow, for you will bloom in heaven!

i did not hear her laughing, or crying.  
schooled in meekness, she wants nothing of life.  
her companion is her shadow -- the mourning of her body,  
and her scarf, somewhat shredded, laments in the wind.

Wislawe Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski and Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

still life with a balloon (*translation of martwa natura z balonikiem*)

instead of the return of memories  
at the time of dying  
i would like to order for me the return  
of misplaced things.

through the windows, doors  
i'd welcome umbrellas,  
a suitcase, gloves and a coat,  
so that i may say:  
i don't need this stuff.

safety pins, this hairbrush and that,  
a paper rose, a piece of string, a knife,  
so that i may say:  
i miss nothing.

wherever you are, my dear old key,  
please try to arrive in time,  
so that i may say:  
rust, my dear, it's only rust.

it will rain certificates,  
visas and questionnaires,  
so that i may say:  
my little sun is setting.

dear wristwatch, please float out of the river,  
and let yourself be taken into hand,  
so that i may say:  
you're faking the time.

and, a tiny balloon will reappear  
long hijacked by wind,  
so that i may say:  
there is no children here.

fly away through the open window,  
fly away into the world, wide,  
so that someone may exclaim: o!  
so that i may cry.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski and Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989



Wisława Szymborska  
Wybór wierszy

Wielki świat  
i wielki świat

Wielki świat

Wielki świat

the tortured

i am beginning to love  
like a woman  
when i saw  
the tortured  
the left crippled  
i thought  
if i were a beautiful woman  
i would find him beautiful  
i would ache  
to lie with him  
love his anguished  
body  
love his wilted  
limbs  
love his  
will  
love his  
suffering  
love him  
as only a woman  
can love  
a man  
i would find him irresistible  
i would aspire  
to elicit his  
desire and love

when i saw the tortured  
i thought i'd wince  
i thought i'd yearn  
to look away

when i saw the tortured  
i willed  
to be a beautiful  
woman

Marek Wojciech Lugowski  
Dallas  
22 October 1988

Yo, Dog!

(majored into Rap

by Marek "The Dreaming" Lugowski)

Yo, dog!

Your crib a slammer

And it ain't jit.

So get dap.

Bust out

Of this camp

And don't be wack.

Feed, dude, feed

(Clement rap: succeed!)

If you don't eat

Real bad

T. Jones gonna

Real mad

And you gonna lose

Your sparticulous

Attitude

For the hoop.

Whoop joy!

Be that Rapper say

Word

Unto thee.

You never lose with me.

And may all be sparks

in hoop, alleys and parks.



—Aye, Your Alienness! Listen and attend . . . There are legends, as you know, that speak of a race of paleface, who concocted robotkind out of a test tube, though anyone with a grain of sense knows this to be a foul lie. . . . For in the Beginning there was naught but Formless Darkness, and in the Darkness, Magneticity, which moved the atoms, and whirling atom struck atom, and Current was thus created, and the First Light . . . from which the stars were kindled, and then the planets cooled, and in their cores the breath of Sacred Statisticality gave rise to microscopic Protomechanoids, which begat Proteromechanoids, which begat the Primitive Mechanisms. These could not yet calculate, nor scarcely put two and two together, but thanks to Evolution and Natural Subtraction they soon multiplied and produced Omnistats, which gave birth to the Servostat, the Missing Clink, and from it came our progenitor, Automatus Sapiens . . .

— Stanisław Lem,  
*The Cyberiad*



## The Circus Animals

translation of *Zwierzeta cyrkowe*

The bears stomp to the beat,  
the lion spans flaming hoops,  
the yellow tunic-clad monkey  
rides a bike,  
the whip crackles, the music swarms like flies,  
the whip crackles, swaying the animals' eyes,  
the elephant carries around a water goblet  
on its head,  
the dogs are dancing,  
cautiously measuring each step.

I am very ashamed—I, a human.

No one had a good time that day:  
The cheers rolled thickly from the grandstand.  
A hand augmented by a whip  
cast harsh shadows upon the sand.

Wisława Szymborska

Translated from the Polish by  
Marek Lugowski and Joanna Trzeciak

## Water

*translation of Woda*

A rain droplet fell on my hand  
drawn from Ganges and the Nile,  
from the en ruptured frost on a seal's whiskers  
from the broken pots of Ys and Tyre.

Upon my index finger  
the Caspian Sea is an open sea  
and the Pacific flows meekly into the Rudawa,  
the same that flew in a cloud over Paris  
in the year Seventeen Sixty Four  
on the Seventh of May at three in the morning.

There are not enough lips to pronounce  
your incidental names, O Water.

I would have had to call you in all tongues  
pronouncing all the vowels simultaneously  
at once keeping silent—for the sake of a lake  
that never did receive a name,

and no longer is on earth—as there isn't a star  
that bathed in it in the heavens.

Someone was drowning, someone was pleading  
for you, dying. It was so long ago and it was  
yesterday.

You extinguished homes, you swept away houses  
like trees, forests like cities.

You were in baptisteries and in  
the bathtubs of courtesans,  
in kisses, in the funeral cloth,  
biting stone, feeding rainbows,  
in the sweat and dew of pyramids, and lilac.

How utterly light all this is  
in the droplets of rain.  
How delicately the world touches me.

Whatever whenever wherever happened  
is written on the water babel.  
babel.

Wisława Szymborska

Translated from the Polish by  
Marek Lugowski and Joanna Trzeciak



## The Dream of an Old Tortoise

translation of Sen starego zółwia

The tortoise dreamed of a leaf of lettuce  
and near the leaf—the Emperor himself suddenly  
appeared alive, just so—like one-hundred-something years ago.  
The tortoise does not even realize what a big deal this is.

The Emperor, in truth, did not appear in his entirety,  
but with the sun reflecting in his black shoes with small buckles,  
and above them, his two calves, fairly fit, in white stockings.

The tortoise does not even realize how earthshaking this is.

Those two legs—a roadstop on the way from Austerlitz to Jena,  
and above them, a fog, from which a rattle of laughter scatters.  
Now, you may doubt the authenticity of this scene  
and of the empirical nature of the small buckle-fit shoes.

It is difficult to establish an identity from fragments:  
the right foot or the left foot.  
The tortoise does not remember that much from its childhood.  
The tortoise does not even realize whom he just dreamed up.

Emperor or no. Does this fact in any way cast aspersions on  
the phenomenon of tortoise dreaming? Somebody, identity unknown,  
has managed to slip unnoticed from the confines of nonexistence,  
slinking through the world! All of him: from his very heels  
to his very knees.

Wisława Szymborska

Translated from the Polish by  
Marek Ługowski and Joanna Trzeciak





Cover	Mike Brehm
Inside Cover	Cathedral by Justo Gallego Martínez
Drawing	Mike Brehm
Apple Harvest	Ed Rath
The Circus Animals	Wisława Szymborska
Autumn Dance	Ed Rath
The Dream	Wisława Szymborska
Water	Wisława Szymborska
Stream of Consciousness	Ed Rath
Bumper Crop	Ed Rath
Believe in Yourself	Ed Rath
Dodo Ode	Nina Marks

Barren	Joe Peterson/Mike Brehm
The Island I, II	Nina Marks
Spot	Mike Brehm
Mitzi Mitten	Gail Shilke
Hipster	Mike Brehm
Ice	Joe Peterson
Suffer Baby Suffer	Ed Rath

Joe Peterson and Mike Brehm, Editors. Published 3 times a year by StoryHead. 1340 W. Granville, Chicago IL 60660. Subscriptions: \$16 for 4 issues. All rights revert back to artists. The English translations of the three poems by Wisława Szymborska contained in this issue are the copyright of Marek Lugowski and Joanna Trzeciak. This is the Autumn 1996 issue copyright StoryHead Magazine. StoryHead is nationally distributed by Bernard De Boer Inc., and Ubiquity.





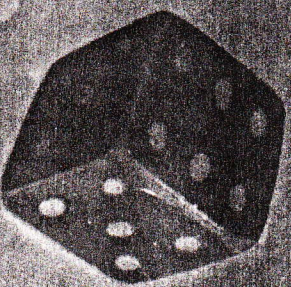
Wisława Szymborska — poetka, tłumaczka, ur. 2.VII.1923 w Korniku, w woj. poznańskim — debiutowała na łamach prasy jako poetka w 1945 r. Od 1952 członek zespołu redakcyjnego tygodnika «Życie Literackie». Twórczość Szymborskiej, o której jeden z krytyków literackich pisał jako o „jednym z najważniejszych zjawisk we współczesnej poezji polskiej”, zaliczając przy tym jej wiersze do „najambitniejszych intelektualnie”, była wielokrotnie wyróżniana nagrodami, m.in.: w 1954 — nagroda literacka m. Krakowa za tomy poezji «Dłatego żyjemy» i «Pytania zadawane sobie», w 1955 za te same tomy wyróżnienie do nagrody państwowej, w 1963 — nagroda II stopnia Ministra Kultury i Sztuki za tom wierszy pt. «Sól».

W latach ostatnich wydała: «Poezie wybrane» (1967 — wybór i przedmowa autorki), «Wiersze» (1970 — seria „Poezi Polscy”), «Poezie» (1970 — z przedmową Jerzego Kwiatkowskiego) oraz tomy: «Sto poeci» (1967) i «Wszelki wypadek» (1972).

# Wisława Szymborska

## Wybór wierszy

Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy





Wisława Szymborska  
Wybór wierszy

Biblioteka Literatury XXX-lecia



Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1973

The Tombstone (*translation of Nagrobek*)

Here lies, old fashioned as a comma,  
a she-author of a verse or two,  
eternal rest extended by kind earth,  
though the cadaver did not endeavor  
to belong to any literary group.  
Thus, there's nothing on her tomb  
but these lines, those weeds  
and a solitary owl.  
O passerby, take up your laptop electronic brain  
and upon the fate of Szymborska  
sustain a passing vigil.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

The Key (*translation of Klucz*)

---

Once there was a key and  
suddenly it's not there.  
How are we to get in?  
Maybe someone will find it  
and look at it -- and what good  
will it do them?  
And they'll toy with it  
like a rusty paper clip.

With the love i bear for you  
if the same had happened to us,  
it would not only be us: the entire world  
would lose that love of ours.  
Picked up by a stranger's hand  
it would not unlock  
any house;  
it would be but a form, nothing more,  
so why not let it rust.

Not in the cards, not in the stars, not of peacock's cries  
are such horoscopes.

Wislawe Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

Four in the Morning (*translation of Czwarta nad ranem*)

The hour tossing night to day.  
The hour turning from one side to the other.  
The hour for thirty-year-olds.

The hour cleared for roosters' calls.  
The hour when the earth denies us.  
The hour when it blows cold from darkened stars.  
the hour of will-anything-lasting-remain-of-us.

The empty hour.  
Deaf and dumb.  
The hour at the bottom of all the other hours.

No one likes it at four in the morning.  
If the ants like it at four in the morning,  
well -- let's congratulate the ants. As for us, let's wait  
'til five arrives  
if we are to keep on living.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Ługowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

The Circus Animals (*translation of Zwierzeta cyrkowe*)

The bears stomp to the beat,  
the lion spans flaming hoops,  
the yellow tunic-clad monkey  
rides a bike,  
the whip crackles, the music swarms like flies,  
the whip crackles swaying the animals' eyes,  
the elephant carries around a water goblet  
on its head,  
the dogs are dancing,  
cautiously measuring each step.

I am very ashamed -- I, a human.

No one had a good time that day:  
The cheers rolled thickly from the grandstand.  
A hand augmented by a whip  
cast harsh shadows upon the sand.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Ługowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

biting stone, feeding rainbows,  
in the sweat and dew of pyramids, and lilac.

How utterly light all this is  
in the droplets of rain.  
How delicately the world touches me.

Whatever whenever wherever happened  
is written on the water babyl.

Wislawe Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

Water (*translation of Woda*)

---

A water droplet fell on my hand  
drawn from Ganges and the Nile,

from the enruptured frost on a seal's whiskers  
from the broken pots of Ys and Tyre.

Upon my index finger  
the Caspean Sea is an open sea

and the Pacific flows meekly into Rudawa,  
the same that flew in a cloud over Paris

in the year seventeen sixty four  
on the seventh of may at three in the morning.

There is not enough lips to pronounce  
your incidental names, o water.

I would have had to call you in all tongues  
pronouncing all the vowels simultaneously

at once keeping silent -- for the sake of a lake  
that never did receive a name,

and no longer is on earth -- as there isn't a star  
that bathed in it in the heavens.

Someone was drowning, someone was pleading  
for you, dying. It was so long ago and it was  
yesterday.

You extinguished homes, you swept away houses  
like trees, forests like cities.

You were in baptisteries and in  
the bathtubs of courtesans,  
in kisses, in the funeral cloth,



Rubens' Women (*translation of Kobiety Rubensa*)

---

Girl-goliaths, feminine fauna.  
Naked as the crash of barrels.  
They're swarming in stampeded beds.  
They sleep with mouths still open from bird cries.  
Their pupils have run inward,  
penetrating to the very glands  
from which their yeast taints their blood.

Daughters of the baroque. The dough rises, clothed.  
The baths are steaming, the wines are blushing.  
The piglets of clouds are dashing through the sky.  
Meanwhile, the horns are blasting in physical alarm.

O bloated, o oversized,  
O doubled by your unveiling,  
O tripped by your violent pose,  
fat carnal courses.

Their skinny sisters got up earlier,  
before it dawned within the painting,  
and no one saw how they filed in a row  
onto the unpainted side of the canvas.

Exiles of style. Ribs all counted.  
Birdlike feet, birdlike hands.  
They will try to fly on gaunt shoulderblades.

The 13th century would have given them  
a gold backdrop,  
the 20th, a silver screen.  
This 17th has nothing for the flat-chested,

for even the sky curves in  
relief.

Relieved angels, a relieved god --  
a moustached Apollo astride a sweaty steed  
enters solo into a teeming alcove.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lucewiczki / Joanna Trzeciak

A Poem in Honor of (*translation of Wiersz ku czci*)

Once upon a time there was one  
who invented zero.  
In some uncertain country. Under a star  
possibly already dark now. Between dates  
vouched by no one. Without any name,  
let alone a disputed name. Having left  
to his zero not one golden thought  
on what life's like. No legend about  
how one day he picked a rose  
and gave it a zero, thus arranging  
it all into a magnificent bouquet.  
About how, when preparing to die of old age,  
he rode off into the sand on a hundred-humped  
camel. Or, about how he napped  
in the shade of primacy.  
Or, about how he'll awake when all is counted  
to the last grain of sand. What a man.  
Slipping into the crack between fact and fiction  
he escapes our attention. Immune  
to all fate. He sheds each identity i give him.  
Silence herself fused shut above him,  
leaving no scar of voice.  
Nonpresence spreads wide like a horizon.  
Zero writes itself.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

An Attempt (*translation of Próba*)

---

O little song, surely you're mocking me,  
for even had I gone the high road,  
I would not have come up roses.  
Only roses come up roses and no one else. You know that.

I attempted to have leaves. I tried to turn into a bush.  
With held breath -- to make it happen faster --  
I yearned for my enclosure in rose petals.

O little song that has no pity on me:  
I have a single body, immutable  
I am an annual -- to the marrow of my bone.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Ługowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

shredded, without receipts.

FOR THE PROMISES of my husband  
who tempted you with colors  
of the populated world, with its crowd noise,  
a song by the window, a dog from next door:  
that you will never, ever be alone  
in the dark, in silence, devoid of breath  
-- i cannot answer.  
signed: The Night, Widow of Day.

Wislawe Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

The Classifieds (*translation of Drobne Ogloszenia*)

WHOEVER knows where compassion dwells  
(imagination of the heart)  
-- do let me know! do let me know!  
and Sing out loud  
and dance like a fool  
making merry under a frail birch tree  
that's ever on the verge of crying.

I TEACH how to keep silent  
in all languages  
through the art of staring  
at the starry sky  
at the jowls of australopithec  
at the grasshopper's leap  
at a newborn's nails  
at plankton  
at the tiny sails  
of snowflakes

I RETURN to love  
Attention! Special!  
High upon last year's sun  
now sticking in your throat, in fair  
golden grass you lie and  
the wind just dances  
(just like last year,  
playing leading man  
to your dancing coat  
of hair)  
Respond to: A Dream

NEEDED: a person  
to lament the old  
who are dying in nursing homes. Please  
apply without birth certificates  
or written applications.  
Any paper matter will be promptly

An Attempt (*translation of Próba*)

---

O little song, surely you're mocking me,  
for even had I gone the high road,  
I would not have come up roses.  
Only roses come up roses and no one else. You know that.

I attempted to have leaves. I tried to turn into a bush.  
With held breath -- to make it happen faster --  
I yearned for my enclosure in rose petals.

O little song that has no pity on me:  
I have a single body, immutable  
I am an annual -- to the marrow of my bone.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

The Returns (*translation of Powroty*)

He came back. Said nothing.  
But it was clear that something happened.  
He lay down in his clothes,  
slipped his head under a blanket,  
and curled up in a ball.  
He's fortysomething, but not at present.  
He exists, only in his mother's womb,  
beneath the seven dermi, in the protective custody  
of darkness.  
Tomorrow  
he's giving a talk  
on homeostasis in metagalactic cosmology,  
but right now he's a ball, fast asleep.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989

The Walk of the Arisen (*translation of Spacer Wskrzeszonego*)

The professor has died now thrice.  
After the first death, he was asked to turn his head.  
After the second death, he was asked to sit up.  
After the third, they even put him on his feet,  
braced by a fat round nanny:  
Let us take a little walk, professor.

After the trauma, this deeply damaged brain...  
but, look, watch it go and not too slow:  
Left right, bright dark, tree grass, hurts to eat.

Two plus two, professor?  
Two, says the professor.  
It's an answer better than any given before.

Hurts, grass, to sit, a bench.  
and, at the end of the promenade  
again, old as dust  
pale, unamused, thrice now excused  
apparently a genuine nanny.

The professor wants her bad.  
Again, he tries to break out  
towards her.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas, 1989



# Selected Poems of Wisława Szymborska

translated from Polish to English

by Marek Ługowski / Joanna Trzeciak

English Translation Copyright  
All Rights Reserved.

© 1989 Joanna M. Trzeciak  
© 1989 Marek W. Ługowski

---

The Rehabilitation (*translation of Rehabilitacja*)

I use the oldest law of imagination.  
For the first time in my life, I call on the dead.  
I seek their faces, I listen for their footsteps,  
Though i know that whoever dies, dies completely.

It's time to take my own head in hand  
and say: Poor Yorrick, where's that ignorance of yours,  
and where is that blind faith, where is that innocence,  
that Things-Will-Work-Outness, that even-keeled spirit  
balancing truths that came true with those that didn't?

I believed they treasoned, thus forfeiting their names  
from the time the weeds poked fun at their unknown tombs,  
the ravens taunted them, and the snow storms sneered at them  
-- but these were all, my dear yorrick, false witnesses.

The immortality of the dead  
lasts so long as we pay them in memory.  
Weak currency. There goes not a day  
without someone losing their forever.

Now i know more about forever:  
We can bestow it and we can take it away.  
Whomever we call traitor -- he and  
his name are fated to die together.

This power of ours over the dead  
requires an impartial judgment  
for the court not to last into the night  
with the judge presiding all naked.

The earth is boiling -- and it is them who are earth,  
they're rising, clump after clump, fistful to fistful,  
returning from silent omissions to names,  
to the nation's conscience, to new garlands and cheers.

Where is my command of words?  
Words have sunk into tears,  
words, words no good for bringing people back to life,  
description dead as a photograph frozen-flashed.  
I cannot awake them for even half a breath,  
I, a Sisyphus assigned to the hell of verse.

They're coming. And sharp as diamond  
-- at chic displays, with polished fronts  
at tiny windows of sweet homes  
at rose-colored glasses, glassy  
minds, hearts -- stealth-quietly, they cut.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas / New York, 1989

A Minute of Silence For Ludwika Wawrzynska

*(translation of Minuta ciszy po Ludwice Wawrzynskiej)*

Hey, where do you think you're going,  
it's all flame and smoke in there!

There's four kids to get out of there,  
and i'm going for them!

How come?  
How can one get so far away from  
oneself?  
the order of night and day?  
next year's snowfalls?  
the red of apples?  
the longing for love,  
love, of which there's never enough?

Not bidding farewell, not bid farewell to,  
she rushes to help the children,  
now, look, she brings them out in armfuls,  
sinking to her knees in flames,  
now there's a blaze in her crazy hair.

And she wanted to buy a ticket,  
to leave for a short while,  
write a letter,  
open a window after a storm,  
blaze a trail in the woods,  
look in wonder at the ants,  
perceive the lake slitting its eye  
on account of the wind.  
A minute for the dead  
can run well past the midnight hour.

I am an eyewitness  
to the flight of clouds and birds,  
I hear the grass grow,

and I know what to name it,  
I have read millions  
of printed marks,  
and I have traced with a telescope  
all kinds of weird stars,  
only, no one has called on me  
for help  
and what if i begrudge  
a leaf, a dress, a verse --

We know about ourselves  
only what we've been tested.  
I tell you this  
straight from the bottom of my unknown heart.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Lugowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas / New York, 1989

The Funeral (*translation of Pogrzeb*)

---

They took the skull out of clay,  
and put it in the marble.  
Ho, ho, ho, dig them medals,  
on satin pillows, medals.  
They took the skull out of clay.

They read aloud from a note:  
a) He was a regular guy.  
b) Now, let's strike up the band.  
c) Dang, wasn't immortal.  
They read aloud from a note.

So, nation, you be the judge,  
and so cherish this treasure,  
that someone born only once  
may well end up with two graves.  
So, nation, you be the judge.

And, sure there was a parade,  
for a thousand of trombones  
and cops for the promenade,  
and ringing for all that tolls.  
And, sure there was a parade.

Their eyes would dart to and fro,  
from the ground, to the heavens,  
detecting deadly pigeons  
tendering bombs in their beaks.  
Their eyes would dart to and fro.

Between them and the people  
there were to be only trees,  
only that which sulks and sings  
in silence and songs of leaves.  
Between them and the people.

But here we see drawn bridges,

and here a canyon of stone,  
with bottom hardened for tanks,  
with echo to rumble low.  
But here we see drawn bridges.

Flushed with its own slushing blood,  
the crowd retires with hope,  
still ignorant of knowledge  
that's graying the steeple cords.

Flushed with its own slushing blood.

Wisława Szymborska  
Poland

translated from Polish  
by Marek Ługowski / Joanna Trzeciak  
Dallas / New York, 1989



Includes 3 poems by  
1996 Nobel Laureate  
Wisława Szymborska

# StoryHead

#8

\$2.95