

WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA

No End of Fun (1967)

Translated by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh

TARSIER

I am a tarsier and a tarsier's son,
the grandson and great-grandson of tarsiers,
a tiny creature, made up of two pupils
and whatever simply could not be left out;
miraculously saved from further alterations —
since I'm no one's idea of a treat,
my coat's too small for a fur collar,
my glands provide no bliss,
and concerts go on without my gut —
I, a tarsier,
sit living on a human fingertip.

Good morning, lord and master,
what will you give me
for not taking anything from me?
How will you reward me for your own magnanimity?
What price will you set on my priceless head
for the poses I strike to make you smile?

My good lord is gracious,
my good lord is kind.
Who else could bear such witness if there were
no creatures unworthy of death?
You yourselves, perhaps?
But what you've come to know about yourselves
will serve for a sleepless night from star to star.

And only we few who remain unstripped of fur,
untorn from bone, unplucked of soaring feathers,
esteemed in all our quills, scales, tusks, and horns,
and in whatever else that ingenious protein
has seen fit to clothe us with,
we, my lord, are your dream,
which finds you innocent for now.

I am a tarsier — the father and grandfather of tarsiers
a tiny creature, nearly half of something,
yet nonetheless a whole no less than others,
so light that twigs spring up beneath my weight
and might have lifted me to heaven long ago
if I hadn't had to fall
time and again
like a stone lifted from hearts
grown oh so sentimental:
I, a tarsier,
know well how essential it is to be a tarsier.