

2000

Portrait of a Woman

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Recommended Citation

Szymborska, Wisława. "Portrait of a Woman." *The Iowa Review* 30.2 (2000): 23-23. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.5230>

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Wisława Szymborska

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

She must be all-in-one.
Keep changing, that nothing should change.
It is easy, impossible, hard, worth a try.
Her eyes are, if need be, sometimes deep blue, sometimes gray,
dark, playful, filled with tears for no reason.
Sleeps with him like a random stranger,
the only one in the world.
Will bear him four children, no children, one.
Naive, but she'll give the best advice.
Weak, but she will bear the weight.
Has no head on her shoulders but she will.
Reads Jaspers and women's magazines.
Doesn't know what a screw's for, and will build a bridge.
Young, young as ever, still looking young.
Holds in her hands a sparrow with a broken wing,
her own money for a long and distant journey,
a meat cleaver, a compress and a shot of vodka.
Where is she running to, isn't she tired?
Oh no, only a bit, very much, doesn't matter.
She either loves him, or she's just plain stubborn.
For better, for worse, for goodness' sake.