



## **Life While-You-Wait**

Life While-You-Wait.  
Performance without rehearsal.  
Body without alterations.  
Head without premeditation.

I know nothing of the role I play.  
I only know it's mine. I can't exchange it.

I have to guess on the spot  
just what this play's all about.

Ill-prepared for the privilege of living,  
I can barely keep up with the pace that the action demands.  
I improvise, although I loathe improvisation.  
I trip at every step over my own ignorance.  
I can't conceal my hayseed manners.  
My instincts are for happy histrionics.  
Stage fright makes excuses for me, which humiliate me more.  
Extenuating circumstances strike me as cruel.

Words and impulses you can't take back,  
stars you'll never get counted,  
your character like a raincoat you button on the run ?  
the pitiful results of all this unexpectedness.

If only I could just rehearse one Wednesday in advance,  
or repeat a single Thursday that has passed!  
But here comes Friday with a script I haven't seen.  
Is it fair, I ask  
(my voice a little hoarse,  
since I couldn't even clear my throat offstage).

You'd be wrong to think that it's just a slapdash quiz  
taken in makeshift accommodations. Oh no.  
I'm standing on the set and I see how strong it is.  
The props are surprisingly precise.  
The machine rotating the stage has been around even longer.  
The farthest galaxies have been turned on.  
Oh no, there's no question, this must be the premiere.  
And whatever I do  
will become forever what I've done.

--- Wislawa Szymborska