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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

tree, sandra cisneros, tracy, smithsonian magazine, joy, dramas, poet, muskogee, life, bereft, monarchs, freeze frame, sentient beings, broken, leaves, dance, shrapnel, forester, speaking, deep

00:05

I'm us Poet

00:06

Laureate Tracy k Smith. And this is the slow down.

00:23

Some experts like German forester Peter ruli, then believe that trees have intelligence, emotions and even ways of communicating that are more like ours than you might expect. Listen to this description of tree life, from an article about voulons research that appeared last spring in Smithsonian magazine. wise old mother trees, feed their saplings with liquid sugar and warn the neighbors when danger approaches. Reckless youngsters take foolhardy risks with leaves shedding, light chasing, and excessive drinking, and usually pay with their lives. Crown Princes wait for the old monarchs to fall so they can take their place in the full glory of sunlight. It's all happening in the ultra slow motion, that is tree time. So that what we see is a freeze frame of the action. If you've ever loved the shade of a certain tree, or felt safe sitting in one of its crooks, or if you've ever been tempted to wrap your arms around a particularly inviting trunk, well, maybe you already know that trees are a commanding, consoling, and sometimes even a joy inducing presence. It's just a short imaginative hop to think of them as well beings like us with inner lives, family ties, and dramas of their own.

02:02

And apparently,

02:03

there's a growing body of scientific evidence in support of just such a perspective.

02:10

We may not yet know

02:12

what else trees are up to. But today's poem by poet, musician and member of the Muskogee nation, Joy Harjo, convinces me that our very humanity may depend upon our ability to care about those we do not yet fully understand. This is hard Joe's poem, speaking tree, which opens with a quote by poet, fiction writer and essayist

02:40

Sandra Cisneros.

02:43

Speaking tree by Joy Harjo I had a beautiful dream I was dancing with a tree. Sandra Cisneros. Some things on this earth are unspeakable genealogy of the broken a shy wind threatening leaves after a massacre or the smell of coffee, and no one there. Some humans say trees are not sentient beings, but they do not understand poetry. nor can they hear the singing of trees, when they are fed by wind or water music or hear their cries of anguish when they're broken, and bereft. Now, I am a woman longing to be a tree planted in a moist dark earth, between sunrise and sunset. I cannot walk through all realms. I carry a yearning. I cannot bear alone in the dark.

03:51

What shall I do

03:52

with all this heartache? This the deepest rooted dream of a tree is to walk even just a little ways, from the place next to the doorway

04:05

to the edge of the river of life

04:06

and drink.

04:10

I have heard trees talking long after the sun has gone down. Imagine what would it be like to dance close together in this land of water and knowledge to drink deep, what is undrinkable?

04:36

The slow down is written by me. Tracy k Smith. It is produced by Jennifer Lai, with Tracy Mumford music is by Alexis quadrado. Engineering by Corey shrapnel and Veronica Rodriguez.