

# theslowdown\_20200312\_20200312\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mother, grief, normal, poem, answer, sheila, center, walk, unspeakable pain, intensity, unmediated, daily rituals, hand, rebecca, reclined, middle aged woman, shear, untouchable, traffic patterns, scurry

00:06

I'm poet Jenny shear filling in for Tracy k Smith. And this is the slow down.

00:23

There's some kinds of grief that make newborns out of us. These kinds of grief are so destabilizing in their intensity, obliterating even, that every action we take is charged with a kind of newness. You're stripped of any kind of protective casing. So the world makes unmediated contact. You have to relearn how to make your way around. Reading today's poem by Rebecca Ryan off and brought into the intensity of this feeling when a person is so unmoored and disoriented by a kind of unspeakable pain, not much makes sense. The daily rituals of carrying on doing laundry eating meals, making small talk with others who seem unreachable and they're normal. See, all that seems impossible to this kind of grief is so out of proportion to ordinary life. It feels cruel to have to answer to routine a normal see. Today's poem gives language to what eludes language, it speaks to the knowledge of losing that can claim us without ever giving up its grip.

01:39

Spring, Rebecca Ryan off.

01:44

We broke so many glasses that spring, fingers made slippery with grief. The cheap ones cracked in cosmic ray made cuts too small to see. My father apologizes as he spills his wine again. And waiters scurry. It's no big deal, he says, and waves his hands, as if to hide a tremor that inhabits

each of us. Were like infants newly born into familiar movements. cup to lip, hand to knob. We set our faces at the door and wonder mid falter how we did it before. at the dentist Sheila the technician asks my mother about her girls. She's cleaned our teeth since kindergarten. Since the days we spent walking past school, begging our mother for frozen yogurt to glimpse a bird's nest or pick flowering weeds, whose names we learned with reverence. My mother sits in silence. reclined not answering the only sound the spit sucker still hooked to her lower lip. Oh, no. Sheila says. And so my mother tells her for the last time. From that moment on a grocery store or hair salon. They're fine. She answers and moves on. In the stillness, my mother's grief begins to wear her like a statue. A wound abiding at the center of a stone. It is so fierce. This place of harm becomes holy, untouchable, sending out spasms that make her pull over on the 405 caused her to dissolve out of normal traffic patterns. Now, a middle aged woman come home. I walk past the old high school or soft drone walks out of a window and recalls forgotten calculus. The formula for making a perfect bottle which later I learned is the same algorithm for its spectacular collapse did not speak of a secret. The tight chatter at an object center guarded and precious as a tiny daughter, forever lulled to sleep in the deepest embrace forever with the knowledge that one day without fail, she will be waked.

04:40

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