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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poem, slow, tracy, love, deserving, parents, hands, mother, crave, dog, dance floor, fantasy, combed, presentable, failings, adoration, assures, loving parent, considerable effort, feel

00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate, Tracy case. And this is a slow down.

00:23

the romance of childhood might just be a myth. The idea that parents are dashing doting and deserving of their children's faith. That's a fantasy. That fantasy makes parents feel guilt at not being patient enough or demonstrative enough in their love or worthy of the adoration they crave. Where do I get the authority to say such things? Well, I'm a parent. And most nights I go to bed feeling that in some small way, I've failed. Maybe it's similar for kids to, they love their parents. They crave their affection. They bask in the glow of their attention. But they also pout and throw fits, they find their way into trouble. And so the fantasy of the perfect loving parent, and the brilliant deserving child moves a step or two further out of reach. I hope I'm not alone here. Because what I feel for my children, and what they offer to me is love. Even if it's not always neat, tidy and presentable. That willingness to own up to failure is what I respond to in today's poem, a very good dog by Matthew Dickman. It describes a mother son outing, something planned to be perfect. But quietly, the poem is rife with discomfort, as if the speaker is struggling to see something he can't make out without considerable effort. That struggle, combined with the shock of the poems final image offers me peace. It assures me I'm not alone in my failings, that my messy and guilty and sometimes poorly behaved version of family might not be such a far cry from normal. After all. A very good dog by Matthew Dickman, I must have looked so handsome because she said, You look so handsome. And I must have been eight years old. Because she said, I can't believe you are already eight years old. And it must have been a dark and romantic Italian restaurant. Because it was dark in there and full of men and women holding hands across the beautiful tables, feeding each other pasta and bread and drinking wine and kissing, and my mother with her black Russian and me with my Shirley Temple. And before we even sat down in

the candlelight, we must have sat in the car, because we were sitting in the car in the pocket of the driveway, where she placed her hand on my knee and patted it like you would if the knee was a very good dog. And she must have smiled and said, Are you excited for our date? Because she smiled and said, Are you excited for our date, and then combed my hair because my hair must have needed to be combed to be made right. And we must have danced that night. Because the restaurant had a dance floor full of other couples. And she showed me where my hands were supposed to go, and how to move my legs and laughed and beamed and said I love you so much. Which meant there would be no other world but this world. No other way. No other forest, but this forest and all the trees on fire and all the animals running.

04:13

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