

# theslowdown\_20191205\_20191205\_128

Wed, 9/30 7:50PM 5:00

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

bed, wake, tornado, poem, feeling, sudden, sprawl, water, flood, quizzical, pulsing, river, tornado warning, approaching, bathroom floor, live, slow, trampling, hailstones, onslaught

00:06

I am Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down

00:20

one night not too long ago, between 1130 and midnight, a tornado warning came blaring through my cell phone and my husband's to take cover. Move away from windows. Stay indoors Do not attempt to watch the approaching storm. We live in New Jersey. And as newcomers to the Garden State, our knowledge of local weather patterns was admittedly thin. googling tornadoes. We went from feeling skeptical, or quizzical to a state of measured fright, and approaching tornado may be silent. Or it can sound like an airplane flying overhead. A sign that a tornado is about to touch ground nearby is the sudden shift from rain to hail. We live in a one story house with no basement. a house full of windows, outside of which stand trees. What were we supposed to do? First, we each lay in bed with a child from our daughter's room. My husband texted me. Are you okay? Yes, but I'm scared. You not scared? just concerned. That seems crazy. Should we wake up the kids? It hardly seems like it's blowing out there. Then we heard the sudden onslaught of hailstones. The next text in the thread is just alone exclamation mark, at which point we woke the children and huddled as a family on a bathroom floor. The storm passed. We went to bed feeling fortunate and alert to something we don't often contemplate the vulnerability we share with every other living thing on the planet. Today's poem is for a lost fragment by Carol moldau. For see ah it's a definite lack being landlocked Bay and motionless. I envy you the lapping fairy, especially on your way home as you face the receding city to catch sunsets neon sprawl. Life itself can feel like a sprawl these days. But I'm grateful emotions, no longer royal heedlessly inside me unchecked as the flash flood that yesterday surged through the po hawk. lifting it beyond its sand grit bed and churning up a swell of water down mud. When we were young, on the coast of Spain, it was all I could do to keep my agitations down who knew how to admit to the furious

flurry caged inside. At the overpass. A long line of cars that looked like a pile up had emptied out to spectate the tunnel boiling below to see the swollen river up close. Once home, I put on waders and crossed our field flooded only in pockets until near the back v gate where suddenly the water rose knee high with a pulsing force and a continuous roar like a full on Stampede. The escaped river trampling its bed, flattening Cottonwood, salt cedar, Russian Olive in its wake. submerged like a flood plain, the past's reshaped by brush and Bracken being swept downstream by the water that subsided reveals corrective contours, blank spaces, scraps missing, regretted newly understood. I wish I still had that unfinished love poem. I scrolled and along last ledger, as if it could ferry us back, redirect one moments course. The slow down is a production of American Public Media, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.