



# theslowdown\_20200728\_20200728\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poem, memory, billy collins, sausage, tongue, grade math, forgetfulness, slow, blob, remember, plot, nine muses, keypad, memory lapse, eluded, cabin fever, conference calls, gummy bears, goodbye, doorway

00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.

00:23

I want to believe it's quarantine brain or something like Cabin Fever that has my head so cloudy these days. By these days, I mean all the daily units that used to feel so distinct from one another. Now, they're like the last few gummy bears in a bag. One sticky misshapen, indecipherable blob. I don't much like using the word blob. But even my vocabulary seems to have traveled some distance away from where I live. I'm sure it plans to return. chances are it's just been hung up somewhere in customs. I've heard memory is like a muscle, an aperture, a tiny doorway that opens and closes. With some people, that memory muscle can be strengthened. Lately, I tried to give my memory a workout by not writing down the numerical codes to conference calls. If I can look at them once deliberately, okay twice, and then tap them correctly into my keypad without peeking. I feel like solid progress has been made on the memory front. On the other hand, I'm learning a lot this period. The lingo of first grade math just rolls off my tongue 10 frame number family doubles facts. Sadly, it seems to have displaced the plots to all the novels I once read. I remember a scene in one where a beautiful brown dog runs through a Greek town and steals sausage from a restaurant kitchen. I think there is a noun for the many sausages linked together as a single unit. I should like to have used that word, but for the moment it's eluded me. Today's poem is forgetfulness by Billy Collins. It claims the occasional memory lapse with characteristic hilarity. I like knowing that I'm not alone in that regard. forgetfulness, by Billy Collins, the name of the author is the first to go, followed obediently by the title, the plot, the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel, which suddenly becomes one you have never read, never even heard of. As if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor decided to retire to the southern

hemisphere of the brain to a little fishing village where there are no phones. Long ago, you kissed the names of the Nine Muses Goodbye, and watch the quadratic equation packets bag. And even now, as you memorize the order of the planets, something else is slipping away. A state flower perhaps the address of an uncle, the capitol of Paraguay. Whatever it is, you are struggling to remember, it is not poised on the tip of your tongue, not even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen. It has floated away down a dark mythological river whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall, well on your own way to oblivion, where you will join those who have even forgotten how to swim, and how to ride a bicycle. No wonder you rise in the middle of the night to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war. No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted out of a love poem that you use to know by heart. Slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily, go to [slowdownshow.org](http://slowdownshow.org) and sign up for our newsletter.