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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

birthdays, center, slow, lentils, singing, poem, fork, dirge, breast, lit candles, placate, blood, shaughnessy, pierce, sheep, mouth, flesh, solace, rectal, pickled

00:05

I'm poet Brenda Shaughnessy filling in for Tracy k Smith. And this is a slow down.

00:33

The rituals we have for birthdays usually involve food. Children's birthdays center around the cake. And grownups often want their favorite dinner, whether it's home cooked or at some festive restaurant. Most children love their special day, being the center of attention while everyone sings to them. I sometimes think adults are split on whether we enjoy being celebrated, or prefer to slink away unnoticed on our birthdays. I have a great time at other people's birthday parties. I love singing off key at a dirge like pace with a bunch of people all raising a glass to the person with the cardboard hat in the center of the ring of lit candles. It's a fun moment for the rest of us. Even if I can't be certain the newly crowned half centenarian is enjoying it at all. I like planning my kids birthdays. The chaos and indulgence of little kids still so innocent. They don't know what a birthday actually is. Sure, it's an excuse for sweets and presents and more sweets. But as they will discover later, a birthday is also an acknowledgment that we each have only so many of these birthday poem by Paisley rectal. It is important to remember that you will die lifting the fork with the sheep's brain lovingly speared on it to the mouth. The little piece smooth on the one side as a baby mouse pickled and wine on the other blood plush and intestinal atop its bed of lentils. The lentils were once picked over for stones in the fields of India, perhaps the sun shining into tractor blades, slow moving, as the swimmers arms that Pierce then rise, then Pierce again the cold water of this river outside your window called the heart or the breast even but meaning something more than this beyond the crudeness of flesh. So what is crude about flesh anyway? watching yourself every day lose another bit of luster. It is wrong to say one kind of beauty replaces another. Isn't it your heart along with its breast muscles that has started to weaken? solace isn't possible for every loss? Or why else should we clutch stroke? grasp? love the little powers we once were born with?

Perhaps the worst thing in the world would be to live forever. Otherwise, what would be the point of memory without which we would have nothing to hurt or placate ourselves with later? Look, it's only getting worse from here on out. Thank God. Otherwise, the sun on this filthy river could never be as boring or as poignant. The sheep's brain trembling on the fork wouldn't seem once stung by the Tang of grass by the call of somebody distant and beloved to it still singing through the milk. The fork would be only a fork and not the cool half of it between your fingers. The scratch of lemon in the lentils, onions, parsley, slick with blood, food that even as you lift it to your mouth, you never thought you'd eat and do.

04:25

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