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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adult, adulthood, age, monique, coiled snake, children, poem, life, stunt, ruined, futuristic sci fi, sexual overtones, mental breakdowns, felt, naturally, ails, older, bumpy ride, hairy, slowdown

00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith. And this is the slow down.

00:22

Is it age or experience that makes you an adult? Is adulthood something you earn? Or inherit? I go back and forth? If the answer is age than I ought to have been grown at 25, or 30, though my life at that time still resembled the life of an adolescent, love and work, money and responsibility, none of that came naturally to me then. And if experience is what accounts for adulthood, then I ought to have felt myself become an adult at 36 the age when I no longer had parents of my own, or at 41, the age when I became the parent of three children, but everything still felt too new, too confusing, too uncertain, and uncoded, in full honesty, I'll say that, I believe I became an adult during the summer of 2017, at age 45. When I quit drinking, stopped trying to deny to myself that raising children is genuine hard work, and gave up trying to fit into my old jeans. So far, adulthood is a bumpy ride. It took me a long time to turn around and face forward in my seat. For a while, I only wanted to sit watching things from my youth get smaller in the distance. I'm buckled in now. And there seem to be others on the journey with me. But nobody has told us with any certainty where it is we're heading and how long until we will arrive. Today's poem stunt by Monique forelle is written from the perspective of someone who grew up being told that the world of adults was a separate world, a world they weren't yet ready to meet. One they'd understand naturally, when they were older. Then time passed, the adults of that other era moved along or passed on. Now that the poem speaker is finally older, and has no choice but to face the world head on age alone just doesn't seem to be enough.

02:51

stunt by Monique forelle

02:55

I want to cross over now. It should be a simple thing to do. Wake up, become self aware, significant and all knowing every single good and halfway decent, futuristic sci fi movie ensures the computers will get there one day, no better than their masters. So when is it my turn? I have been waiting like a crooked coiled snake in the corner of my life waiting to know better to one day know it all. It was the promise made by grown folk who ushered questioning children from the room away from their adult conversations, rhythms, sexual overtones, undertones decade old hurt feelings harsh, brutal, simple fatalistic language that ruined families and friendships, started affairs brought on mental breakdowns and ruined every family reunion and funeral of my childhood. You could never get close enough to the core of anything in my be seen and not heard. You'll understand when you're older, or world adults never let children get close to the burning flame. Forget the stove it is life that is catch fire. And so each child emerges all see through and witless into a very real cutthroat world. Believing that a full set of tits, a hairy massive man chest and monthly blood are enough for what ails you, but it isn't. The slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation.