

20201019 Episode SD

Thu, 10/15 2:39PM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

breath, lay, soft, mouth, burst, breathing, tumbleweed, overstep, raucous laughter, reshuffled, neck, furry, felt, sterling, monta, struggle, decelerate, workweek, atticus, ignore



00:06

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



00:24

The other morning at around 3am I woke to a blood curdling scream coming from my son's room. My children are dramatic. They wail and how as easily as they burst into raucous laughter. Often, I try to ignore their histrionics, hoping it will wean them of the habit. But my instinct in this particular moment, wasn't to ignore it. Heart racing, practically bursting from my chest. I ran to their room. And what did I find? A minor dispute. Sterling had crawled into bed with Atticus. Atticus wanted his bed to himself.



01:11

I lay with Sterling until he fell back to sleep. The whole time. I felt all of my senses struggle to decelerate. My heart was like a drum solo. It felt like someone was pounding on my chest. While I lay there. I flipped through my mental Rolodex of work day vexation. I ticked off the headlines that even on a good day, hamper my ability to unwind lying there, struggling to relax, egged on by the actual bothers my workweek forces me to wrestle. I understood something. Many people live like this on a regular basis, the peril, the worry, the blood pressure roiling when you wake up and people doubt you threaten you overstep respectful bounds when leaders utter slurs against you. When every day, the deck already stacked against you is reshuffled.



02:17

Today's poem is a brief meditation on breath by just sending out monta



02:25

I have divers lungs from holding my breath for so long. I promise you, I am not trying to break a record. Sometimes I just forget to exhale, my shoulders held tightly near my neck. I am a ball of tense living a tumbleweed with steel toed boots. I can't remember the last time I felt light as dandelion. I can't remember the last time I took the sweetness in and my diaphragm expanded into song.



02:59

They tell me breathing is everything. Meaning, if I breathe, right, I can live to be ancient. I'll grow a soft furry tail, or be telekinetic, something powerful enough to heal the world. I swear I thought the last time I think of death with breath was that balmy day in July when the cops became a raging fire and sucked the breath out of Garner. But yesterday, I walked 38 blocks to my father's house with a mask over my nose and mouth. The sweat dripping off my chin, only to get caught and fabric and pool up like rain. And I inhaled small spurts of me little particles of my DNA. I took into body my own self and thought I die from so much exposure to my own bereavement. They're saying this virus takes your breath away. Not like a mother's love or like a good kiss from your lover's soft mouth. But like the police, it can kill you fast or slow dealer's choice



04:13

appalled pallbearer carrying your body without a casket. They say it's so contagious. It could be quite breathtaking, so persistent. It might as well be breathing down your neck.



04:30

The slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.



04:40

This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts on the

web@arts.gov