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00:05

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

00:19

Every year, faculty members at the University where I teach must submit updated CV, academic resumes, detailing all of your publications speaking engagements, awards, and contributions to the field. over the span of a career, your CV grows to become a long document, a running tab of everything you've ever managed to accomplish within your particular area of specialization. But even the most impressive CV is only a partial portrait missing are all of the emotional markers that run through a life. All the moments when something powerful was felt, understood, claimed or averted. I love today's poem summary of 15 years by Suzanne Cleary precisely because it feels like an accurate roadmap to a full and varied life. It doesn't tell me what the poem speaker does for a living, but it tells me whom she has loved, and what she has drawn from the many memorable chapters of her life. It tells me that she has endured heartbreak, illness and loss and that she is awake to the ongoing adventure of being alive, grateful for the many different offerings her life and her summary of 15 years by Suzanne Cleary for m h. I will tell the best and the worst Parris 5am trucks from the countryside, men handing down crates, women unpacking raspberries and pears. My apartment in Queens on the window sill, a persimmon flesh like sunset, softening, growing sweet. I am in love with loneliness, a man who lives far away. He plays the harmonica and is afraid of thunder. There is a black cotton dress how wearing it I feel for the first time beautiful. There is my first taste of plum wine. My first serious lie. I scream alone in my car. I scream at the rain. There is pain in my back and x rays pouring through my body like rain through a screen door. In Webster groves, Missouri, a photograph is taken. I wear a fur coat from the 40s under a bank temperature sign 104 degrees. This is the year of trying too hard, followed by the year of not caring. One night there is a lake invisible in darkness. Not shining until I touch it. There

are eyes green, dark brown, I step into to never fully return. At some point. I began to call strangers children honey. There was someone I love a hospital bed. A green stain on the pillowcase. A white dog runs out of the fog like part of the fog into my headlights. I clean out my grandmother's house. Find my grandfather's skinny undershirts threadbare, freshly washed then there is someone whispering into my ear again after I'd forgotten the feel of that. Then there was only the memory of it. For there is imagined memory now. There are gifts, a silver pin I wear on my coat, a barrette that falls from my hair. A man kneeling beside me saying I want you to always remember this morning and there is what he does next. There is the loss of my mother's ring. There is seeing the hair on my father's chest is white. And there is not knowing finally, what to call joy and what grief but wanting to tell it all in one breath. So I will be here and you the slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.