

20190619_theslowdown_20190619_128

Wed, 9/30 7:28PM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

rumbling, clam, raph, slow, poem, happiness, voice, life, naomi, lasso, finds, restlessness, pharmacy, loved, began, awake, keith, plucked, burrowed, leonard

00:06

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

00:20

It's been more than a decade. But I still, albeit vaguely recall the feeling of not wanting to slow down or settle or lose my edge or do whatever it was. I told myself, adults with children were in the habit of doing. Why would I want to change? I was happy. Everything in my life was in place. I loved my job. And I was in love with a wonderful man who loved me back in exactly the way I want it to be loved. Maybe better. Raphael, Raph, for short. We bought an apartment together in Brooklyn. What more could I could we have possibly wanted. But there was one Sunday, when the two of us were sitting together in our living room, drinking coffee, eating bagels and reading the New York Times. This is it. Ralph said, leaning back and smiling. This is perfect. I looked around empirically. He was right. But something inside me panicked. A voice I didn't even know I housed was rumbling awake, asking, really? This is it? It? A few months later, we sat in a bar with friends. It was nearing 2am. And the bourbon in my glass tasted well. Boring. Even the conversation which by all accounts was funny, lively, perfectly delightful, and begun to tire me. That voice rumbled awake again saying for God's sakes stand up, Put on your coat and go home. A week later, maybe two. It was not that voice that started up rumbling. But a queasy feeling in the gut. hearing me describe it. Raph stood up, put on his coat and went immediately to the pharmacy. That November, Naomi was born. Sometimes now stealing glimpses of the Sunday Times between playing chef and referee for our three hungry biggering exuberant children. Raph and I laugh at how much and how little we had back when we were responsible only for ourselves. Today's poem, the clam by Keith Leonard reminds me of that time when the terms of my life and my vision of happiness began to shift around as if of their own volition. There must be as many different ways to be happy as there are ways to be. Perhaps the work lies not in finding happiness.

But in being open to the version of happiness that finds you the clam by Keith Leonard that shell like a frozen ripple. That living stone burrowed in the silt. I was aware of it, how it must live static, an anchor and what is life without a little recklessness without a little touch of mess to pivot up the day. The lightning plucked like a wrong note brightens the sky. I believed the metronome had already died. And circles are the saddest shapes and who would lasso their finger with a little silver ring. Only fools are lunatics. And tonight, restlessness rips me from sleep. I watch the baby breathe. I imitate stillness for fear the antique floor might Creek the clam opens up to let the current in. And by doing so, lives. The 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 [slowdown show.org](https://slowdownshow.org) and sign up for our newsletter.