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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

outmoded, numbers, long distance telephone, poem, heart, peering, downpours, pager, dial, slow, telephone, blotted, cask, smelled, payphone, older brother, anchored, phone, poet, younger sisters

00:05

Find us Poet Laureate Tracy case. And this is the slow down.

00:23

Are you old enough to remember rotary telephones. They were big and heavy and remained fixed in place anchored to a kitchen wall, or a desktop. Instead of touching numbers on a screen, or even punching buttons on a chunky telephone panel, you stuck your index finger in a circle and wheeled the number dial around, then waited for that calming rings it sound as the dial swung back to its starting point. And pay phones and phone booths. Imagine you actually used to squeeze into a small chamber one that usually smelled of let's just say they smelled of desperation. When I was a kid, a two or three minute call in the booth cost a dime, you could enlist the help of the long distance telephone operator if you needed to reverse the charges. If you close the door, you became a performance artist of sorts, handling your business or pouring your heart out while the world walked by peering in perhaps, or stopping to wait its turn in line. My older brother got his first car phone in 1990. It was the size of an 11 ounce box of coconut water. I borrowed it briefly and without realizing it ran up \$400 in local calls. remembering these outmoded devices makes me wonder what will happen to the things we're obsessed with today? What will happen to the tech we think it's so cutting edge right now. I admit there is a small part of me eager to see the smartphone marched down that long corridor to the morgue of outmoded machinery. Maybe then we'll reacquaint ourselves with the pleasure of sitting alone in silence or thought or with the joys of undistracted conversation. Maybe I'm just getting old. it's more likely that already the next indispensable object, one with cleaner lines or lesser heft or speed like we've never seen before, has begun the inevitable crawl toward our palms, our pockets, and every available crevice of our minds. Today's poem, Ode to the pager by Ohio based poet Marcus Jackson is a postcard or maybe an arrow gram from the past owed to the pager by Marcus

Jackson. Your earliest versions beeped like microwaves or retreating trucks, or hospital monitors. When cell phones cost more than mortgages, you clipped to our belt loops or pocket lips are bookbag straps. fueled on Energizer alkaline your skinny screen delivered numbers of souls hankering for a word with us. We'd bump someone's touchtone or clutter a quarter into a payphone, ear suction to greasy receiver. If our lovers intercepted forbidden pages, all we slept, we woke to find you drown in toilet water. Your display blotted opaque, your heart a cracked cask of ink. without you. We missed parties. Managers curious if we'd accept an extra shift. younger sisters caught in downpours across town. Parents who hadn't heard our inflections in too long. Anyone who poked buttons and hoped we'd be somewhere heating you rectangular messenger abuzz as a matchbox of wasps.

04:28

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