

# 20181126\_slowdown\_20181126\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poem, monet, park avenue, hands, heartbreak, slow, reader, work, mother, person, broomsticks, poetic form, rehab facilities, instant, dust pans, wide ranging, departed, presence, memory, viscerally



00:05

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



00:23

I hope this show will give you a moment to turn down the



00:26

volume on your everyday



00:28

preoccupations and turn your attention inward to something quiet yet urgent. for just a few minutes each day, we'll tune in together with a brief poem that allows another person's inner voice to whisper to yours. On the slow down, I'll share poems that take on different topics, love and heartbreak, joy, and grief, family, and childhood public history and private meditation. I'm also excited to highlight poems that use language and poetic form in a variety of familiar and surprising ways. Mostly, I'm excited to offer you a set of wide ranging voices whose thoughts and feelings can be meaningful for you, whoever and wherever you are. I've heard from readers in rehab facilities, that a poem about heartbreak has helped them to find a new vocabulary for their struggle with addiction. A poem about a child getting lost in a shopping mall, spoke powerfully to one reader whose

mother suffers from dementia. We're all different. But I believe that our joys and struggles and our questions and wishes can be meaningful,



01:45

even life changing for one another.



01:48

As the child of deceased parents, I sometimes find that my memory is working without my having to ask it to. This surprises me sometimes when say my son lifts a slice of bread to his mouth. And for an instant, I see not a little boy, but my father. He's been gone now for 10 years. But somehow he returns to me in these brief flickers, as if he's not so far away after all, or when I catch sight of my own reflection, and believe for an instant, it's my mother alive again, standing there between the mirror and me. If you've ever lost anyone, not only to death, but to distance, maybe or even just a change of heart, you may believe me when I say that we are always searching for our departed for some sign that they're still here, cycling through the day to day, or the cosmic continuum with us. Today's poem is 564 Park Avenue. By Brooklyn based poet Asha Monet, in the space of 15 lines. Monet speaker puts me in the presence of her deceased grandmother, a tireless and devoted caregiver, image by image. The poem teaches me to see this woman in the work she did with her hands, the food she ate. This catalogue of small memories, turns an absence into a vivid and viscerally felt presence. It can't undo death. Nothing can. But a poem like this one can momentarily collapse the distance between one person and another. Sometimes that itself is a kind of miracle. 564 Park Avenue. I believe His hands were a timecard she clocked in and out morning and night. They were a pile of dirty sheets at the foot of a bed, gnarled broomsticks, dust pans and city vacuums. Her hands were soiled rags, and yellow gloves. They were two pillows beaten of mites, and dead skin. Her hands were paper towels and Windex on greasy mirrors. They were many rooms each day, her hands or a slice of Wonder Bread dipped in dark coffee with sugar. They were cinnamon sticks oozing in Farina. They were ketchup squeezed over a plate of scrambled eggs and white rice. They were what fed and cleansed. Her hands are my hands rushing to school before work. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily. Go to [slowdownshow.org](https://slowdownshow.org) and sign up for our newsletter.