

# theslowdown\_20200805\_20200805\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

aisle, love, basket, grocery store, theseus, dancing queen, slow, poem, low calorie foods, mccaffrey, kitchen gadgets, diverged, obliterating, delivered, exclusive, viscerally, shopping, clear, blenders, non essential

00:06

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

00:19

I love going to the grocery store, not the oversized supermarket, or the big familiar chain with identical outposts all over the country. I love my neighborhood McCaffrey's, which reminds me of shopping with my mom in the early 1980s. Oh, you can find everything you need. See her chin, ripe avocados, kitchen gadgets flowerless chocolate cake, but you can see clear from one end of the store to the other. If you remember, all the way in the frozen aisle that you forgot to pick up shishito peppers. You don't feel like Theseus setting off into the labyrinth. You just dash back, grab what you need, chat with your friendly checkout clerk and go on about your day. There has never been a moment shopping in this establishment where cart half full and overwhelmed by miles of non essential products. I've wanted to lie down on the floor and weep. And I love the music am radio from 40 years ago. Just the two of us. I love a rainy night. The things we do for love dancing queen. It's not quite muzak, but I find that it serves a similar mind obliterating purpose. We all have our safe havens. My sister loves big box stores. But when I step with her into those places, my windpipe seems to tighten. I feel my lifeforce viscerally contract, as I surrender to the familiar hypnotic state. We talk he being our basket with impossible buys. And when we step back into the light of day, it's dark out and all we have to show for it are bath towels and bathing suits, immersion blenders and energy bars and cheese. I'll take my place, the kind of store or I can stock my pantry while clearing my head. Do they sell playing cards? Apparently not. But they surprised me last December with a holiday gift basket delivered to my front door just because nobody else in my life has ever done that. Nobody else in my life knows how much I like bisco t. So I guess at this point, we're pretty much exclusive. Yes, we fall into a routine. But I'll never forget how we first

met. Today's poem is the aisle not taken by Karen Poppy. with apologies to Robert Frost. Two aisles diverged in a grocery store. And sorry, I could not travel both. And being one shopper long. I stood and looked down aisle one as far as I could to cookies, chocolates, candies, and more. Then took the other as just as good and perhaps the better for my health with low calorie foods on the shelf. And no sugar laden goodies anywhere so I'll look better in underwear. And yet, both aisles that morning lay in front of me and my cart. Oh, I kept the first for another day knowing I would be tempted back to all those sweet things stack after stack. I shall be telling this with a heavy sigh somewhere pounds and pounds and two aisles diverged in a grocery store and I once took the one better for my thigh. Not that it made any difference. 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](http://slowdownshow.org) and sign up for our newsletter.