



# theslowdown\_20200212\_20200212\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

hurricane, poem, child, parent, hand, grown, thwarting, person, floodwaters, bedtime stories, wooden roller coaster, wriggle, crosswalk, experience, freedom, wondrous, wild ride, slow, extra layer, infant

00:06

I am Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.

00:23

In fifth grade, I memorized a poem from a school textbook. The poet was named Laurie Abrams, and the poem written from the perspective of a child began, we owe so badly wish to go beyond our fence beyond to grow as a 10 year old, identified quite deeply with that wish to race off into the world to be swallowed up by new experience and wondrous discovery. Now, as a parent, I know all too well, the feeling of holding firmly to a child's hand, despite their best efforts to wriggle free. Just as I know the Panic of losing my grip on the little person in my care, in a crosswalk, or crowd, or down the long hallway to the room and pajamas and bedtime stories that are waiting. Loving someone, not just for parents, but for everyone is made up in equal measures of the wish to protect tempered by the need to let go. It's a hard balance to strike. I get it right some days, and others I'm clinging to hard, exhausting the patience of my own children, thwarting my own efforts to be a patient and understanding parent. And so I am grateful for today's poem, Hurricane by Yona Harvey. I feel the speaker of Hurricane to be the mother of a child who seeks freedom, independence, risk experience, things that are hard at first for a parent to consent to, but essential necessities every child must be given when the time is right. I don't think it's essential to the emphatic enjoyment of this poem. To know that there happens to be an antique wooden roller coaster at Coney Island amusement park called the hurricane. Though having seen the mammoth thing towering above the boardwalk, and having heard the piercing screams of people crazy enough to ride it adds an extra layer of awe and fright to my experience of the poem. Roller Coaster aside, freedom is always a wild ride. wildest, perhaps for the person watching from the sidelines and praying for the best

03:02

hurricane by Yona Harvey.

03:06

For tickets left, I let her go. First Born into a hurricane. I thought she escaped the floodwaters. No, but her head is empty of the drowned for now. Though she took her first breath below sea level. Ah, ah. And mama Let me go. She speaks what every smart child knows, to get grown. You unlatch your hands from the grown and up and up and up and up. She turns latched in the seat of a hurricane. You let your girl What? You let your girl What? I did so she'd do? I did. So she do. So girl, you can ride a hurricane? And she do. And she do. And she do. And she do. She do make my river and ocean Memorial, Baptist Protestant birth. My girl walked away from a hurricane and she do and she do and she do and she do. She do take my hand a while longer. The Hots in my pocket. I'll keep to Uh hum. Katrina was a woman I knew. When you were an infant, she rained on you. And she do and she do and she do and she do. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.