

theslowdown_20200420_20200420_128

📅 Wed, 9/30 8:20PM ⌚ 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

birds, friends, squirrels, pandemic, sunflower, reveling, curl, winter, fainter, poem, racket, staying, robins, fervor, worrisome, barbara, steadying, sat, stakes, tippy toes

00:06

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

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years from now,

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we'll think of 2020 as the year of the coronavirus pandemic. And maybe in a generation or three, our grandchildren will read about this worrisome season in textbooks or on Wikipedia, the way many of us have lately taken time to bone up on the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. But for now, we're staying home playing board games. My sons have insisted upon listening to the audio book of Barbara Robinson's the best Christmas Pageant ever, at least 50 times. And in a way, it does feel like all of us are stuck on repeat. But the other day, one of those warm, clear, luxuriant spring days when the earth seems to be positively in love, I sat in my backyard. I stared at birds hopping along in the grass at the squirrels digging up the last of their winter knots at the first new buds peeping out from the branch tips of trees. For all our panic and shock, the natural world seems unperturbed. Sitting in the sun, watching all the surrounding plants and animals reveling in being alive, was like being given a pep talk by a strong, calm, level headed friend. What had the Robins done all winter long through grey days and nights of icy rain. And what about the Cardinals and the fat squirrels? Had they weather their own measure of hopelessness or strife.

02:10

And it struck me suddenly

02:13

reassuring that our human stakes are not the only stakes. Eventually, I went back inside to dinner and kids bed times and the news. I was still a human adjusting to the beginning of what might prove to be a long, uncertain time. That same night, or soon after. I scrolled through online pictures of the earth taken from space. With so many of us staying home, our pollution has diminished. Our traffic and other markers of our carbon footprint are visibly fainter. I allowed it to make me happy. I didn't want to be grudge the planet this bit of good news.

03:04

Today's poem is

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wedding poem by Ross gay for Keith and

03:11

Jen.

03:13

Friends. I am here to modestly report seeing in an orchard in my town, a Goldfinch kissing a sunflower again and again, dangling upside down by its tiny claws, steadying itself by snapping open like an old timey fan its wings again and again until swooning, it tumbled off and swooped back to the very same perch, where the sunflower curled its giant swirling of seeds around the bird and leaned back to admire the soft wind nudging the birds plumage. And friends. I could see the points on the flowers stately crown, soften and curl inward, as it almost indiscernible lifted the food of its body to the birds nuzzling mouth, whose fervor I could hear from Oh 20 or 30 feet away and see from the tiny holes that sailed from their good racket, which good racket, I have to say, was making me blush and rock up on my tippy toes and just barely pierced my lips with what I realized now was being simply glad. Which such love if we let it makes us feel the slowdown is a production of American Public Media, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.