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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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00:05

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

00:23

Sometimes I marvel at the worlds my students, and even my children can see worlds that were invisible to me when I was growing up. It's as if they've been born into a more expansive world, a world with more dimensions, a world in which we've started to see gender as a prism, a spectrum, a multifaceted thing. But when I was growing up, society said that you were either a boy or a girl, masculine or feminine. Those were the only two options I was taught to see. Similarly, I was taught to understand that you were either straight, or gay, one or the other. It wasn't until much later that I realized there were many more layers of reality that had previously been imperceptible to me. My daughter and her friends belong to a world that makes the one I come from seem rigid, brittle, practically. I'm a girl. But one day, maybe I'll be a boy. My daughter once said, If I marry another boy, a friend's first grade son recently mused, then maybe our friend Annie, will give birth to our baby. It strikes me as a sophisticated understanding of contemporary possibility. And despite the bigotry, and fear that persist in the world today, these children give me hope. they'll teach us to love one another, and ourselves better. they'll teach us what love really is, if we're willing to learn today's poem is a balance by Rebecca Faust. It's written from the perspective of a parent, learning to navigate the world of gender identity and personal possibility that her transgender daughter belongs to. The poem seeks to chart a path from an old view of reality to a new one, a path that might lead the mother closer to her daughter, whom she seeks to greet with love, and understanding, and joy. I believe it's a path we all must learn to travel. A balance by Rebecca Faust. letter to my transgender daughter. I made soup tonight with cabbage chart and time picked outside our back door. For this moment, the room is warm and light, and I can presume you safe somewhere. I know the night lives inside you. I know grave sad errors were

made. Dividing you and hiding you from you inside. I know a girl like you was knifed last week, another set of flame. I know I lacked the words, or all the words I say are wrong. I know I'll call and you won't answer. And still, I'll call. I want to tell you, you were loved with all I had recklessly and with abandon. loved the way the cabbage in my garden near inverts itself splayed to catch each last ray of sun and how the feeling furling in only makes the heart more dense and green. Tonight, it seems like something one could bear. Guess what? Dad and I finally figured out Pandora. And after all those years of silence, our old music fills the air. It fills the air and somehow here at this instant and for this instant only, perhaps three bars. What I recall equals all I feel and I remember all the words. The slow down is a production of American Public Media and partnership with the Poetry Foundation.