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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

bed, lalo, pets, sleep, poem, shaba, rabbit hutch, holland, chihuahua, outdoor, narrowest, nicknamed, lie, named, dog, slowdown, wander, frightened, leveraged, curl

00:06

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

00:23

When I was growing up in California, we had what we referred to as outdoor pets. My dad built outdoor houses for our dogs. He built a two room rabbit hutch for the brood of Dutch bunnies I kept briefly as pets. It never really occurred to me that I could or even should have been sharing my bed with our pets. One Christmas, my brother Michael brought a pet Python home with him from college. The first night of the break, the snake named Monty Of course, slithered out of his tank to terrify our other brother in his bed. In my late 20s, I adopted a sweet stray Tabby I found wandering my neighborhood. I named him Lalo. The first few nights sharing a bed, he pounced on my feet, as if they were fugitives hiding under covers. Eventually, he'd curl up beside me purring us to sleep. The first time Lalo gently, deliberately wrapped his teeth around the bridge of my nose. I was frightened. I came to understand that the gesture, which happened maybe three times max in our life together was a love bite. Early in our relationship. I thought my husband was joking when he asked if shaba his hundred pound Rhodesian Ridgeback could sleep in my bed. The idea so angered Lalo that he lashed out like the tiger he believed himself to be. When my daughter Naomi was little, sometimes she'd wander into our bed at night. Sometimes she'd lie perpendicular between Raph and me so that our bodies formed the letter H. Sometimes she'd come in, get settled, and then make a big fuss about there being too many people in the bed. Sterling home we've nicknamed Mr. Comfortable props to pillows behind his head, and lies spread eagle on his back, like a starfish. What's left for me is the narrowest mattress margin. No matter the pleasure he takes and sleep is infectious. I doze for 30 minutes, sometimes an hour leveraged against the nightstand to keep from rolling onto the floor. Today's poem is sleeping with a chihuahua by Tammy Holland. It describes the joy of falling asleep next to someone you love. Because whether

you're snuggled in with pets, people, or some combo of the two, it's bliss, when love makes you into a pack. Sleeping with a chihuahua by Tammy Holland. In the evening, she comes to me like a child ready for bed. She slipped under covers, curls into my curves or stretches against my spine. Some have said they fear I might crush her. But we are a tender pair, each aware of the warmth and the other. I knew a woman once who kept an orphaned antelope let it roam her kitchen, sleep in her bed, musky scent, and hooves. This dog looks like a small deer poised and silent in the lawn. But at night, she has a dark body lean and long against the lavender cotton of my summer sleeping. We are bone and bone, muscle and muscle and underneath each surface, a quiet and insistent pulse. The slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily, go to [slow down show.org](https://slowdownshow.org) and sign up for our newsletter.