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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

slow, restroom, radiators, strode, long train ride, tracy, mingled, barred windows, scooped, table, sundress, west, romani, sarong, prosciutto, hirsch, rustling, light, national endowment, reach



00:06

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



00:23

Sometimes for no reason memories of the summer of 1994 surface in my mind, I had just graduated from Harvard, and was living out the last month of my off campus lease, the idle sunny days, getting everywhere by foot. The sense of freedom mingled with fear. Because the only thing I knew about what awaited me was that I hadn't planned enough I didn't know enough. It's strange to admit, but sometimes I miss that summer terribly. I miss the innocence. Even the haplessness of myself at that age 22 still a child but believing myself to be something more. I missed the ways my then best friend and I played at adulthood. One weekday afternoon, we took a long train ride out to the beach. When we arrived, it was lunchtime, so we sat down at a boardwalk restaurant for French fries and glasses of cold white wine. Then, we took turns visiting the restroom to change into our bathing suits. I must have gone first, emerging wrapped in a bright sarong nodded behind my neck. I remember the exact feeling of pride of youth, of the pride of youth, and the satisfaction of eyes upon me, as I strode back to our table. A few minutes later, I heard the slapping of sandals, as my friend made her way back from the restroom, and a lavender one piece with high cut legs and a scooped open back. The sundress she'd been wearing was draped over her finger. It waved behind her like a flag. I watched her as if for the first time realizing that her body had somehow raced ahead out of girlhood, and into something else. She seemed to feel it too, and gloated in it on her slow strat back to the table. An older woman followed her admiringly with her gaze, and I felt something like fear. Fear rooted not so much in the fact that something was ending, though it was, but

rather that something real and unknowable was beginning.



02:55

Today's poem is to de Bie by Edward Hirsch. I miss your apartment on West 11th Street, where I slept off the front hall in a bedroom that would have been a closet in another city. The plants breathed easily in their heavy pots. But the radiators knocked all night like ghosts trying to reach us from the other side. The traffic on Sixth Avenue was a slow buzz. Someone rattled a dog chain in the moonlight that bathed the school yard across the street. Light seeped in through the barred windows. I get here faith rustling around downstairs, getting ready for work, unwilling to die. If there is a West Village and the other world, we will someday meet there. I'll reach over and hug you, which will make you uneasy. Let's go for a bottle of wine at the tavern near the branch library and then stroll over to citarella for prosciutto and melon. You can buy a pack of cigarettes at the corner and explain the architecture to me. Maybe I can stay at your place until I get settled.



04:20

Slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts on the web@arts.gov. The slow down is written by me Tracy K. Smith. It is produced by Jennifer Lai, with Tracy Mumford. Our music is by Alexis quadrado. Engineering by Eric Romani and Veronica Rodriguez.