

# 20191120\_theslowdown\_20191120\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

love, poem, high school sweetheart, relationship, heaved, street, teeming, gentler, laughed, feelings, alexandra, braid, childish, song, sweet, cherishing, slow, heart, man, indecisive

00:06

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

00:21

I have a soft spot in my heart for first love. Two kids who found each other and decided to lean upon one another. Maybe another name for first love should be first trust. Because so much of what connects people is the sense of safety. I can be myself around you, and I like you when you're just being you. First Love can be awkward. And like any relationship, it can turn messy. But so often it sparks because of friendship that has deepened into something more. Sometimes I joke that if I'd had a high school boyfriend, I never would have married my first husband. But it's partly true. Despite previous relationships, my first marriage felt like young love to people discovering themselves together. I'm not sure I would have become a poet without all that I experienced during that at times sweet at times childish relationship. What else do I think I understand about young love? Well, if you're anything like most people, chances are you'll outgrow it. You'll grow out of it and then look back upon it with a mix of embarrassment and cherishing. To be perfectly honest. I also looked back on my first marriage with anger for a long time. But the feelings that stay with me now are gentler. I get it. We were children then. And as frustrating as children can sometimes be, it's really hard to stay angry at them. Today's poem is song for my high school sweetheart, by Yahya Yao. I love the feelings of joy and play and unself consciousness that run through it's recollections of first love. And I also love how the poem is full of extremely specific memories, things particular to two people and two people alone. Maybe they resonate so clearly to an outside reader, because every life is full of such things. Song for my high school sweetheart, by yah, yah, yah. In that downtown cold, you appeared, scarves, echoing wild rainbows through concrete tunnels, telling me about your latest poem, your latest indecisive man, you'd shake your fist moan and laugh from deep as we walked through teeming streets, stretching our mouths

wide, waiting to catch the red braid of breath. That would take us somewhere, casting giant shadows on the doorsteps of bluer coffee shops, where hours later we were two teas, one coffee and seven poems warmer. The days we sat in trees, like the one at Christie pits that held us in her palm whenever we asked, or Alexandra park at midnight, where you taught me how to inhale, and I lay and lied. I think I'm feeling something. Some nights as my smoke in silence heaved itself into thick vomit, fermented tears, your hand resting behind my heart. We gave our songs to strangers on the rush hour college street car to parts sweet honey in the rock. Somebody come and carry me into a seven day kiss. The time a man gave us \$1 39 Good job. We bought coffee and laughed. My love. We laughed, my love. Now listen, now that you fail to visit even dreams. I've read your letters. I've listened to your mixtapes. I've written you poems and set them on fire. I still don't know who started it. Find if you do a way to never let me know. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.