

theslowdown_20200715_20200715_128

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

eyes, work, boxes, fat, haze, sweetened, guillermo, slow, bluegill, poem, table, walked, watched, roses, ripped, defrosted, gut, chili peppers, ceramic bowl, stew

00:05

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

00:23

The journey food takes to reach us at our tables is epic. And the work that goes into processing, packaging and delivering our food is immense and backbreaking. Today's poem honors the workers in a meat processing plant, whose arduous labor brings to so many of us the sustenance and pleasure of a delicious meal oxtails do by David demandez. at five o'clock in the morning, I walked to work and passed the green pawns of horizon Park, where the last bluegill caught on the low slight bank panted hard in the dark mud, crushed glass, sour bottle caps, whiskey, and the iron weight of heat and small. This haze stared through eyes gray as the broken window panes on the cheap side of town. And when this haze held you and whispered in your ears, it's quiet tragedies. It stole your breath quick as time. This is where men gathered to sell peanuts, buckets of oranges and roses, and they sat on the benches and watched the trucks drive by and disappear. What I want to say is simple. A man must do more than sell roses or the bums go and bag. He must keep something holy. He must breathe the winds that rustle the orchards of the Valley, where the white almond blooms replenish with their soft scent. He must learn from the Appaloosa when she walks in from the fields and bows her head to a trough of water that reflects nothing but her eyes and the stars. Shoulder fat, bone and loose sheet metal banged out a day long cacophony. 28 pounds of spice had to be mixed before the grinder was done. mustard powder, paprika, salt and chili powder boiled in my nose, in my eyes, and in the red throb of my heart nicked up knuckles. By late morning, the meat defrosted and the boxes began their ooze. Pig parts became easy to recognize 80 pounds of guts kidneys and stomach fell across my chest each time a box ripped apart. We dare not stop the music of our work. The clack of a clean pine palette, pink meat and white fat ground to a pulp sweetened, stuffed and cramped. The Teresa

boxed, the boxes labeled stacked and wrapped. At lunch, I watched Guillermo hunker over the table and dig into his stew, carrots, potatoes, celery, oxtail, and gravy made from chili peppers and fat smoldering. In a ceramic bowl. Guillermo took out a white cotton napkin and spread it evenly across his lap, picked up a piece of sourdough ripped from a loaf and soaked to the bread in the stew for a long time, his own tired body, taking back what the work took. And he ate. He sucked on chili peppers the color of blood and took another bite of the bread. He sucked out the beef from the eyes of the bones and not on the soft Morrow. And he drank hot coffee sweetened calm Cannella. Elissa, he said can cook and he touched the brown lace crocheted into the edge of his cotton napkin, rubbed his gut, wipe to the table and walked out to complete his work.

04:36

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