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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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00:06

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

00:22

We live in a time and place where acts of large scale violence have become commonplace. We live watching for the signs of danger, our consciousness has been acclimated to excessive caution and suspicion. It hasn't always been this way. And I find myself hoping that one day our culture will make it through this chapter and into another war, gun violence, and the despair that leads to it have been well cured. For now, the news offers us accounts of such attacks on a regular basis. And there is a new archetype that has begun to emerge, the hero who puts their own safety on the line, to combat the gunman in a school, or on a train, or in a restaurant or wherever else these tragedies ensue. Today's poem, Don talian, by Jeffrey Thompson considers that hero by way of a character from mythology or demonology, named Don Talia, in a fallen angel said to understand the ways people think and feel, and at times to reveal the thoughts of one person to another. I'd never heard of Don tahleen before reading this poem, but the thought of him mysterious and powerful, adds another dimension to my sense of the poem speaker, as it is, Don Talia and causes me to think of humanity and fate and all that we can't see, but live feeling and fearing. Don Taliesin by Jeffrey Thompson. The fourth angel is a man with many likenesses, which means the faces of all men and women. He teaches the arts and sciences and holds a book in one hand. I wanted to talk about poetry today, but there are 33 dead in Virginia. Today, someone is teaching a group of children to hide in the closet. Someone is passing out bulletproof blankets. I teach all the arts and sciences, but there are 33 dead in Virginia, measured the sky. I trace the way Virgil wormed his way into the modern epic. I talked this morning about Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon, the way he paused and made camp and how his soldiers stamped their feet in the dark, trying to keep warm. I speak Latin. I speak French. I speak Russian, Chinese and Arabic. I

understand what it means when I talk about quantum entanglement and the flavors of corks. I know cork comes from Joyce three corks for muster mark and that Finnegans Wake proceeds without a possessive. I know the rules for the possessive and find myself secretly hating those who don't. I failed to sleep last night because I was writing provide proof for your argument on 100 papers. I was a small child and shy. I rarely spoke. I lived in books and paintings and saw the world reduced today to the mouth at the end of a gun. I was shot holding the door against a boy so my students could drop from Windows. I was shot as I looked up from my lecture. I was shot as I requested my life. I walked with my eyes down beneath the sky measurably smaller. I wanted to talk about poetry today. 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 and sign up for our newsletter. The slowdown is written by me, Tracy k Smith. It is produced by Jennifer live with Tracy Mumford. Our music is by Alexis quadrado. Engineering by Cory strebel and Veronica Rodriguez. Production assistance by Brenna Everson.