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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

falconer, falcon, carl phillips, poem, leaves, lost, story, falcons, feel, collapse, wake, hear, wind, windfalls, matter, memory, sees, forgiveness, chapel, cathedral

00:06

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

00:23

I'll be honest, often lately, I'm made to recall the opening lines of Yates's classic poem, the Second Coming. I'll be driving to work listening to the news, when they pop into my head, turning and turning in the widening gyre, the Falcon cannot hear the Falconer. Things Fall Apart, the center cannot hold, mirror and our key is loosed upon the world. Of course, it's no coincidence. These days, it really does feel like something has finally come undone. The poem assures me that at the very least, someone long ago was paying attention. Someone saw this coming, a collapse that obeys the very laws of physics, or fate, a collapse that leaves everyone toppled, misguided in the wrong. That's how it feels sometimes listening to news of our daily catastrophes, like all of us, no matter who we are, are lost together. And the old signs, the old facts even are gone. insufficient to the new task, we together must face. Why does that idea, the idea that together, we must find a new means of putting things back in order. Why does it somehow comfort me? Today's poem is wake up by Carl Phillips. I like to believe it is telling me to get ready for the work ahead. Wake up by Carl Phillips. The road down from everything even you had hardly dared to hope for has its lonely stretches. Yes. But it's hard to feel alone entirely. There's a river that runs beside it the whole way down. And there's an over song that keeps the river company I'm leaves. You're the wind. I used to think the song had to do with the leaves confusion. The wind letting up. They're mistaking this for something like courtesy on the winds part or even forgiveness. But leaves don't get confused. Silly to think it and what can leaves no of courtesy, let alone forgiveness. What's forgiveness? Wake up for the Falconer has lost his Falcon. He has heard that Falcons are like memory they come back. But not all memories do. Not all memories should. If anyone knows this, it's the Falconer. How long ago that was yet all the varieties of good fortune he's come upon as a

hand comes idly upon and orchards windfalls, how different he's become since none of it matters. When the Falconer steps back into memory, as into a vast Cathedral, which is to say, when he remembers how cool it is inside the cathedral. And at first, how dark soon though, he can see a chapel set aside for prayers specifically to the Virgin, whose story he's always resisted. He sees a corner where people have lit candles, sometimes for another suffering, sometimes for their own. He sees the altar with the Falcon sitting on top of it. The weight of grief over what's lost versus the shadow of what's lost, forever struggling to return and failing. Who can say Which is better? The falconers I meet the Falcons. I I have a story the Falcon says seems to the wings lifting the feathers rippling with the stories parts. I have a story. I can't wait to tell you. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.