

20190830_theslowdown_20190830_128

📅 Wed, 9/30 7:39PM ⌚ 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

lives, crying, simple explanation, chest, left, laguardia airport, klein, yankee baseball, poem, 42nd street, tracy, late 20s, lonely, train rides, question, live, shuttle, closed doors, loneliness, earshot

00:06

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

00:23

When you live in a city, sometimes you get used to feeling invisible. There's just so much happening so many lives taking place at the same time that you don't always believe Yours is the one people are paying attention to. And somehow, that's a gift. It gives you permission not to hide, to let the substance of your life happen out in the open rather than behind curtains and closed doors. Once waiting for my luggage to arrive on the carousel at LaGuardia Airport, I carried on allowed cell phone conversation with a boyfriend who turned out to be a cheat. I harangued him in earshot of my former Economy Class cabin mates, more urgent than my own privacy was the need to get some things off my chest. I wonder if anyone still remembers the spectacle I made that night. The way I still remember a couple I happened upon once in a crosswalk near Grand Central Station. They were in their late 20s or early 30s. The same age as I was at the time. She had long curly blonde hair, and he wore glasses. He held his arms around her while she hammered his chest with her fists shouting, you're ruining my life. Today's poem is left to ask by Michael Klein. It reminds me that even if we're likely to live our lives as strangers, sometimes we become accidental guardians of one another's most private memories left to ask by Michael Klein. I was struck today by a man and a woman in Yankee baseball clothing sitting on the shuttle train that runs from east to west on 42nd Street, the most anonymous of all train rides because we are in and out of each other's lives in one train stop. She was probably beautiful, the blonde in the Yankee shirt. But tonight, she had obviously been crying and her makeup was smeared and her hair was a mess from the crying. But I kept thinking that maybe she had been fighting with her hair because she had to resort to beating herself up since the person she was

mad at wasn't listening to her. Anyone could see he wasn't listening to her. He, her husband was staring off into the shuttle distance, awkwardly making eye contact with complete strangers moving his head away from her when she wanted a simple explanation and not engaging with her on any level. And there she was dropped from a height it seemed down into that garish loneliness in public that both of them may have made all the time. But for this moment, was a hell he had made for her to live in. All she wanted was an answer to a simple question, which seemed to me when I heard it in her plaintive half crying voice. One of the hardest questions to have to ask someone who is supposed to love you. Why won't you dance with me? How difficult? It must have been to hear a question like that and then have to give a real answer. how lonely it must be after the ball game to go home to a house where there is no dancing. And the only question left to ask has already been asked. 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 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 Corey strebel and Veronica Rodriguez. Production assistance by Brenna Everson.