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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mother, jericho, penn station, woman, champagne colored, temp agency, living, talking, rocking chair, kitchen, children, unplugged, mattresses, generation, slowdown, fur coat, brown, visits, persimmon, birth dates



00:06

I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith. And this is the slow down.



00:22

I'm riding the commuter train into New York Penn Station behind me. A woman sits talking on her phone. Do you still have that heavy coat I bought for you? She's not young. I can hear the age in her voice like a layer of wind. I don't know her. I don't even turn around to look. But I am certain she's exactly like someone from my life. Once upon a time. One of the older ladies whose job as she saw it, was to take care of everyone. All the young kids who didn't yet know the world. And all the brothers and sisters from her own generation who, as folks their age would put it might could use some help. I'm thinking of women like my aunt, who one year sent me home from Thanksgiving with a hand me down 1960s fur coat studied here and there with champagne colored rhinestones. It was a small coat, fashionable, but no longer exactly sumptuous. She called it her first fur, and said she had no use for it anymore. I wore it over sweaters and thrift store dresses to my temp agency job that whole first winter in New York. And I'm thinking of the aunts who weren't really aunts, but rather neighbors and church ladies my mother knew. I remember them vaguely. One was an old woman living alone. People back then referred to her as a shut in. My mother and I paid visits to her dark house full of artifacts from a long long life. doilies, faded photos, cut glass dishes full of hard candy, plastic roses on her table in the kitchen. her grandchildren were grown, let alone her children. Once she gave me a bowl of Ripe Persimmon pudding with a dollop of cream on top, and I ate it in a rocking chair. While she and my mother talked. I thought we were helping her by paying her visits. But I

think my mother also got a lot from talking to someone of an older generation. You can learn things from the wisdom of older people. My mother often told me now, I think it might be the gift of the Spirit. She was more interested in today's poem, an M. By Atlanta based poet Jericho brown commemorates the generations of people not only physically gone, but fading from memory. I hear the title as one of those words that live in families where there are lots of people, people you keep straight by thinking of them in groups, William them, Bessie in them. The farther back you go, the harder it gets to keep the name straight, which is a reminder of how much we lose just living our lives, keeping pace with the present



03:32

in them by Jericho Brown.



03:37

They said to say good night, and not goodbye. unplugged the TV. when it rained. They hid money in mattresses, so to sleep on decisions. Some of their children were not their children. Some of their parents had no birth dates. They could sweat a cold out of you. They'd wake without an alarm, telling them to even the short ones reached certain shelves, even the skinny cooked animals too quick to catch. And I don't care how ugly one of them arrived. That one got married to somebody fine. They fed families with change and wiped their kitchens clean. Then another century came. People like me, forgot their names.



04:39

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