

# 20191008\_theslowdown\_20191008\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

happen, laughing, wing, brenda, shaughnessy, tracy, erase, fact, immutable, awful, sitting duck, twirling, breath, catastrophe, drop, world trade center, grinning, tilted, mumford, bay

00:05

I'm poet Brenda Shaughnessy filling in for Tracy K. Smith. And this is the slow down.

00:33

Some things that happen are utterly unbelievable. Like looking up at the smoke coming out of the World Trade Center. On a gorgeous September morning in New York City 2001. I couldn't believe my eyes. I turned on the TV where the catastrophe was confirmed. It was really happening. It was real. But how was that possible? eventually what was impossible but true became an historical fact. inevitable, immutable set in stone, the deaths official, people really fell out of the skyscrapers. Just because it was incredible. Didn't erase the fact of it. On other ordinary seeming days, other things happen. And they seem very real but aren't. I'm convinced the lump is cancer. I'm certain my loved one who is late has had a bad accident somewhere. Then I get confirmation that the awful scenario I've been suffering is erased. Never happened, isn't happening. It's all in my mind. Then I have children of my own small people I'm in charge of. And I can't believe that something awful can and did happen to one of them. And I can't believe nothing bad has happened to the other. And I wait in fear in fantasy with relief with worry with hope. When will disaster strike again? can I prevent it? Or am I a sitting duck holding my breath waiting for any number of shoes to drop for who knows how many pairs are up there? And then some lovely friend says something totally unexpected. Or my kids surprises me yet again with her zany humor. And I laugh and laugh. Time stopping and reality shimmering like a mirage. As Joy has me gasping for breath. That same breath I seem to have been holding more often than I realize. Club Icarus by Matt W. Miller. We are no more than a few silver seconds in the air. When that winged and cocky boy gets sucked into a turbine, sparking off a fire that rips the starboard wing, away from the fuselage. shucking passengers out and raining us over northern California. Dozens of us dropping toward the bay. And you can imagine the screams I'm sure the prayers cast up and

down the twirling sky. And yet, here's my daughter laughing the whole way down her yellow hair whipping around her first teeth smile. As she titters at the tilted wonder of what was happening. Rolling airborne over and over as we all drop like sacks of wet clay. And for a second. I want to snag her to show her how frightened she should be. So I can hug her safe one last time but the way she looks laughing I just can't. And so as the brick of the bay comes up to kiss my back I watched my little girl giggling, grinning floppy cheeked into the wind. And then damn if I don't see right before the world splits my side's wings like blades butterfly from her back and lift her laughing back into the blue. The slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. This episode of the slow down was written by me Brenda Shaughnessy. The slow down is hosted by Tracy k Smith. It is produced by Jennifer Lai, with Tracy Mumford. Our music is by Alexis cuadrado. Engineering by Corey strebel and Veronica Rodriguez. Production assistance by Brenda Everson and Phyllis Fletcher.