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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

descend, slow, bullfighter, healy, women, poem, tracy, music, link, tourist, claim, pain, breasts, stood, emily dickinson, stair, heritage, guatemala, eloise, poet laureate

00:06

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

00:24

There's the heritage we are taught to claim rooted in geography, or blood. And those we choose, based perhaps on taste or affinity. between them are hidden Heritage's, the ones that link us in ways equally real, but not always in the forefront of the mind. I descend from the triumph and the struggle of black life in America. And I descend from the music, imagination and conscience of Emily Dickinson. And I descend from the different experiences I've had. Like the time I spent years ago with two young Maya women I met near Lake Atitlan. In Guatemala. We ate together and talked along the surface of things. They took me to their village, where vegetables were planted in stair step rows on the side of a hill. I was only a guest in their world, a tourist, but the love I felt during our time together, felt old, like it has always been there. Today's poem is the singing school by former Los Angeles Poet Laureate Eloise Klein Healy. in it. Healy claims a lineage of women, women of strength, and persistence and beauty that extends all the way back to the ancient Greek poet Sappho the singing school by Eloise Klein Healy. I saw one narrow as a blade in a man's black suit. I saw one drop her pages on the floor and walk away from the microphone like a bullfighter turning his back on a bull. I saw one with generous breasts and a floral print dress shift from one foot to the other. All her body blushed all over. I saw one in pain in pain enough for 10 strong women. But she didn't say a word about that pain. She went deep under the water and came back and she wasn't alone. I saw one whose breasts were cut off. And she's saying anyway, saying, nobody cut my throat yet. I saw one who midwived the language of her tribe, and taught everyone to dance to its music. I saw one comb through history, sifting the dust for rings for broken links of gold for altarpieces and the altars to for the shapes of animals and birds in conversation, and Divinity in the tracks of deer. I saw one in her coffin strewn with roses and lilies,

the narrow heaven she made rising around her perfumed and dense as diamonds. I saw them in their labor, and I saw them laugh, and all of them, all of them have passed down Sappho street interesados and stood at the beach, or the dark rock stands. Or if you look carefully, you can see a lioness about to rise and go.

03:55

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