

# theslowdown\_20191203\_20191203\_128

Wed, 9/30 7:50PM 5:00

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gazed, cloth napkins, ottomans, chosen, fly, white, slow, smoggy, poem, furniture, spindly, eager, eyes, botched, salad, tender, greens, rough, american public, brat

00:06

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

00:20

When we bought our current house, I chose everything carefully. furniture and rugs, linens and towels, all designed to frame the perfect domestic life I craved. I bought an ugly white sectional couch with deep down filled cushions, and from the moment it was set up, I knew I had chosen wrong, white, white with three kids and a dog. And how had I missed the fact that there were wheels on the Ottomans. Wheels, the slightest inadvertent pressure, not to mention the deliberate, heaving and pushing and trampolining of my rough and tumble sons sent the Ottomans skidding across the floor, crashing into something that ought to have been left in peace. I spent five years realigning the seating arrangement, grieving its transition from Cloud like to smoggy to mud colored. Then, one day, my husband and a friend dragged it out to the street, releasing me from the prison of my botched fantasy. I don't want to say anything about the new couches, lest I tempt fate. It is perhaps too soon to say whether I've chosen well, but I now believe myself to be beyond certain rookie mistakes. If the furniture Gods agree to show me mercy, what else waits to show me a rough time, something else? Surely. Maybe happiness lies in admitting that much of what we set out to enjoy the many rewards we afford ourselves will be thwarted. Can I lower the stakes? Can I let go of caring just enough to avert disappointment, but not so much that I locked myself out of appreciating? When the thing goes right? Should I be striving for less rather than more? Today's poem is fly in our salad by Gary J. Whitehead. You've been there, I'm sure selecting the greens to strike the perfect balance of tender and crisp bathing and drying an artfully composing them, anointing them with oil, then, gazing proudly upon this thing that means you are healthy and discerning, intelligent and worthy. ennobled by the salad you've seen fit to make. Then you notice them. The spindly black legs, the iridescent wings, the

thousand inscrutable eyes looking up at you, or off past you or inward at the flies own insufferable bliss. fly in our salad by Gary J. Whitehead. The sweet greens we spun the baby kale and baby chard, beet greens also in their infancy, oak leaf lettuce in two varieties, littlest shoots of a rucola and the last red onion from the skin littered been the grape tomatoes and gherkins. All of it so tender so early in spring, everything eager to grow, and the two of us eager to eat them dressed in a mustard vinegar brat and plated at the outside table, good China and white cloth napkins, your wine breathing in its glass. And just as we toasted the season with a clink, there arrived a fat black fly, which licked his chops and gazed at us

04:30

and winked its many eyes.

04:36

The slow down is a production of American Public Media, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily, go to [slowdownshow.org](https://slowdownshow.org) and sign up for our newsletter.