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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

remembered, lives, memory, roast, drove, felt, cousin, collins, fight, tomato, wrote, chalked, bread, unacknowledged, tennis balls, sandwich, dark, warmed, heard, mayo



00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith. And this is a slowdown.



00:23

I once wrote about a fight I had as a child with another girl. And my version of the scene, the girl was my cousin. Because when I wrote the scene, I believed it was my cousin I fought. But my cousin had no memory of the fight. And she didn't much recognize the sassy version of herself that I remembered. I chalked it up to the way memory works, how it buries some things, but parades, others around time and again, I'd almost forgotten the entire incident. But writing about that time in my life, revived the memory. Then, one night, years later, I sat upright in bed, thinking, Oh, no, it wasn't my cousin at all. It was a girl named casandra I used to play with sometimes I felt awful. To this day. It is my only physical fight ever. We hit each other with tennis rackets, because we'd been banging tennis balls against my garage door. Someone intervened. I remembered it to be my sister, Jean. But maybe it wasn't. How reliable is anyone's memory? And not just things that happened years ago. But anything, everything that happens? How clearly Can we see ourselves? How clearly Can we see our own lives? and by extension, how well can we know anything? Today's poem is spring, by arta. Collins who lives in western Massachusetts. It's about memory, how far we sometimes feel from the things that we've done, but we've done them. And in a way, even when we don't remember them, or when we can't seem to properly acknowledge them. We're still living with them. I think this means our lives are full of unacknowledged contradictions. We are full of unacknowledged contradictions. We're capable of beautiful things, and terrible things. And maybe there's a price that we pay for not trying hard enough to own up to the full picture of ourselves.



02:43

Spring by Arctic Collins.



02:48

I was making a roast. The smell wafted from the kitchen, into the living room, through the yellow curtains and into the sunlight. Bread warmed in the oven. And in my oven mitt. I managed to forget that I'd ever punched someone in the face. It seemed so long ago. I might not even have done it. I went out into the yard before dark and saw last year's rake on the lawn. It was a cheap metal one that tore up the old grass. I did that for a while. When I went back in the house, the roast was burned black and the bread was hard. I sat on the couch and watched it get dark. I was getting hungry. But I felt afraid of seeing the refrigerator light go on. Then I would have to turn on other lights and then what would I do? I heard a car pass once in a while. I thought about a time on vacation when I bought a newspaper and tomatoes from a supermarket I'd never heard of. I remembered an old bathing suit I had, but I couldn't think of what happened to it. I could move away. I could get in the car right now and drive all night. As soon as I had a sandwich, Turkey, tomato Mayo, Swiss lettuce. It was exciting. I still had my shoes on. I drove to a truck stop. It was bright inside and I loved the world. I bought a sandwich and ate it from my lap while I drove. When I pulled up to my house. It was quiet.



04:43

The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation.