

# 20190702\_theslowdown\_20190702\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

lay, understand, nick, slow, hung, irish poet, pure mathematics, voice, relief, mental anguish, lipstick lip, worn, lit, orchids, awake, porch light, called, motel room, distaste, accommodative

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00:06

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

00:23

in Tampa, Florida last summer, I lay awake in my motel room, bothered by the porch light on my balcony, which lit up my room with a lurid yellow glare. There seemed to be no switch that controlled it. Not inside my room and not outside either. It was late. I was worn out from airports and highways from wheeling my luggage through countless hotels. I called down to the front desk. Do you know how to turn off the light on my balcony? No, came the reply from the other end of the line. And I heard in the voice and undisguised annoyance, suggesting I Quit complaining and go back to sleep. I'm not lying. When I say I can't remember what I said next, but I said it abruptly and hung up. I hung up purposely before the voice was through speaking. Then I lay back down in bed. But what kept me up was adrenaline and shame. My anger was like a wave that had rushed out to bump up against that stranger, and then rippled back to topple me. I lay there for some time, bobbing in that awful feeling. After a few minutes, I called downstairs again. I'm sorry for hanging up on you earlier. I said. I'm frustrated. But I know it's not your fault. Have a good night. I wasn't absolved of all guilt. But I felt relief when the voice sounded back. A little startled. Thank you. Have a good night two. And finally, I fell asleep. Today's poem by Irish poet Nick layered assures me that there are other people out there kept awake at night, by their own occasional lapses of civility to the woman at the United Airlines check in desk at Newark by Nick Layard. shanique I am in time and I know your fight is hard. The fight is hard for everyone alive. And all those bodies and departures are naked under clothes and scarred that granted even deeper scratches welt and heel in days. Those still they smart on contact. And I never really cared for the terms I struck with Earth. More Total War than limited skirmish I seed shanique I drink I smoke weed and seek relief from mental anguish the people's life car horn sounding down on

housden all three kinds of knowledge Fox me outer enter pure mathematics but I understand your relatives are dying also. And I know the days are slow the years fast that these are facts however surprising. Like You I think the worst is yet to come. Plus, there's time lifting everything in sight unique pocketing orchids, and mothers. The little white pebbledash bungalows you in your small corner and me in mine. Let me be clear and accommodative. More like water than ice and raise my hands to show I mean no harm, and that I'm stupid and malicious. And if I'm trying to be fearless, I know it gives me no right to act like this. What's understood is I'll be filed beneath the pricks. And fair enough. Very seldom do I note the world wears a single face with endless variations. And even then shanique it tends to be a face like yours one particularly fine. Speaking of which, your fluorescent orange lipstick lip curls up at me with such distaste. I have to sit down now on my case at the rush of shame, I feel and also love and of course, last hate remorse. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation.