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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

dream, sharif, war, apocalypse, dawning, weighed, lived, budgeted, wreaks, violence, anxiety, jars, unclear, nightmare, remote, mortar rounds, casualty, increasing frequency, deliberate choices, reality

00:06

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

00:22

From time to time, I have a dream where I'm with my sisters, my daughter, and a group of unknown women. We're in an American elementary school, or what used to be a school. Now it's a detention center or a holding cell. It's a dream of danger of information withheld. It's one of several apocalypse dreams I've begun having with increasing frequency. Certain friends admit to having apocalypse dreams of their own. Perhaps such nightmares, and the waking anxiety they stem from have become a public condition. Perhaps its psychic fallout from the reality of widespread violence, terror and social mistrust. And maybe we who have lived so much of our lives and relative safety, are finally coming to understand that the ones far away seeming devastations of war, and the ones abstract feeling consequences of sanctions or botched diplomacy are becoming nearer and more concrete. Things are heating up close to home. It's finally dawning upon us that our participation in these systems of power, oppression and retribution is real. And like all real things, it has consequences. The astonishing privilege of having lived nearly 50 years oblivious to these and other anxieties is not lost on me. And it's driven more starkly home by the work of a poet like Solmaz Sharif, who bears witness to the devastation, war wreaks upon private civilian life. Borrowing terms from the Department of Defense Dictionary of military and associated terms, today's poem asks me to reckon with the violence, injustice, and distortion of reality that are passed off as normal, during times of war. It reminds me to remember that the victims of war are not as remote neutral or expendable. As a term like casualties implies, they are people like you and me, like our friends and our families. And apocalypse is remote, impossible, only ever a nightmare or fantasy. But the things I fear are present and real. War,

corruption, cynicism, greed, they are not so much the inevitable fulfilling of an age old prophecy. But the deliberate choices we and our leaders make day by day from personal effects by solmaz, Sharif. Daily, I sit with the language they've made of our language to neutralize the capability of low dollar value items like you. You are what is referred to as a casualty. unclear whether from a catalytic or frontal attack. Unclear the final time you were addressed, thou, beloved, it was for us, a catastrophic event. just destroyed, died of wound received an action. Yes, there was early warning. You said you were especially scared of mortar rounds and execution planning. They weighed the losses, the sustainability and budgeted for X number. They budgeted for the phone call to your mother and weighed that against the amount saved in rations and your taste for cigarettes and the tea you poured your boys and the tea you would have poured me approaching Hello. The change you collected in jars, jumping a bit, as the family learns to slam the home's various doors. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.