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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

girls, poem, snow, kingdom, youth, heavy, poetry, white birch, slow, zola, branches, crocus, bodies, mouth, this'll, imperfections, thick glasses, young, dappled, bangles



00:06

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



00:23

I think it was two years ago, just as I was setting foot in my mid 40s that I came to understand the nature of youth. It dawned on me all at once. The simple fact that youth isn't just a physical or even a mental state. Youth is a place when you're young, you live inside that place like it's a kingdom, like it's a planet with its own atmosphere. You can't see it, but it colors all you see. I love so much about myself. When I was in high school, I wore big round tortoise shell glasses. I wasn't stick thin. I still believed I could coax or wish my hair into doing things it had no intention of doing. But now, pictures of that other self imperfections and all catch me up in rapt appreciation. How strange how truly cruel that we can only see the beauty of our young selves from outside the gates of the Kingdom of youth. Today's poem begins with an opening quote by Turkish novelist or Han Pamuk and it offers a tender glimpse of the poet's younger self. Poetry recitation at St. Catherine School for Girls by tarsia phi Zola if this were the beginning of a poem, he would have called the thing he felt inside him the silence of snow Orhan Pamuk snow before the hanging cross, the girls take turns standing at attention before us with eyes closed, or hands clasped, headbands, bright green or bangles yellow Glen's that fill the silence, like falling snow. They recite poems they have carried in their mouths for days, and my desire to go back to be one among these slender, long haired girls, is that this'll sharp and twisting at my side. The words song blessing lowered rise in me like bees, heavy with pollen. And the teenager I once was unzips herself from me, shows up a crocus bristling through snow. She is back in the old chapel, where the priest again lifts into the air the

Bible claims about the kingdom of God. Gifts promised only the righteous. The girl I was heavy and slow, in her thick glasses, knew she would never enter heaven. Never be these pretty girls singing arms pale and slim, as the white birch whose branches dappled with gold shade the stained glass window, in pumpkin novel snow, the headscarf girls in eastern Turkey, hang themselves, rather than go uncovered. And still, I want that certainty of conviction, even as the self beside me pulls on her hair, socks long strands of it deep into her mouth. So I gather her in my arms, shake her, tell her to listen, that the sky will always happen these branches. Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, she sings beside these girls who will grow into or away from their bodies. And I know I must push the heavy amber of her back inside me. Help me Lord. There are so many bodies inside this one.



04:27

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