

20190102_slowdown_20190102_128

Wed, 9/30 1:28PM 7:40

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

kindness, poem, hugging, slow, nephew, quiet, window, detroit metro airport, woman, landlord, beautiful, opened, parrot, tall, sat, heard, mother, wowing, arduous journey, long

00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate, Tracy K. Smith. And this is a slow down.

00:23

generosity is a concept, I think about often in relation to poetry. What do poems give? And how can they go about offering more than the bare minimum, more than might be expected. I'm not just talking about wowing the reader with beautiful or vivid language, but rather, a willingness to think about what is at stake, and to push past what is merely safe to really, and truly dwell for a while in the heart or the meat of the matter. The place in the poem where actual need sits. I'm about to read you one of the most generous poems. I know. If every poem is a house, then this poet rsls Girma welcomes you into hers, opening doors to all the unexpected, beautiful rooms. The poem gives you sucker restores you, from the long and arduous journey you did not know you had taken on kindness, by rsls Girma after Nazim, Himmat. For and after rasaan. at the Detroit Metro airport, with the turtle hours to spare between now and my flight, there is such a thing as the kindness of the conveyor belt, who lends me it's slow, strange mollusk foot, as I stand quiet, exhausted, having been alone in my bed for days now, sleeping in hotels, having spent months now without seeing the faces of my family, somehow, it's slow and quiet, carrying of the load reminds me of the kindness of donkeys. And this kindness returns me to myself. It reminds me of the kindness of other things I love, like the kindness of sisters who send mail wherever you are. And speaking of mail, there is this special kindness of the male lady who says, Hi, baby, do everyone. At first I thought it was just me. But now I know. She says, Hi, baby, to everyone. That is kindness to there is the kindness of Windows, and of dogs. And then there was that extraordinary Sunday back at the house. I heard a woman screaming about how she was lonely and so lonely. She didn't know what she'd do, maybe kill herself. She said, over and over, like a parrot in a cage. a parrot whose human parent only taught it that one sentence. I looked out the window and saw

her from behind the way she flung her arms, like she was desperate and being killed or eaten by an invisible predator, like a tiger or a lion in the chest. And her voice seemed fogged out with methadone. I don't know something. And I walked away from the window and sat angry with her for screaming and sad. And not long after. I heard her saying, Would you say would you say to me, and a man's voice low? I could not tell if it was kind. And she said, I'll kill myself. I'm so lonely. And did I tell you yet that it was Mother's Day, flowers and mother's flowers and mothers all day long? And the woman saying, I'm so lonely, I could kill myself. And then quiet in the man's voice saying, It's okay. It's okay. I love you. It's okay.

04:30

And this made me get up, put my face again to the window to see my landlord's nephew outside, just hugging her so as if it were his mother, I mean, as if he belonged to her. And then again, quiet. I left the window, but sat in the silence of the house hidden by shutters and was amazed when the front door of the brownstone opened up and let the tall now You in with his sad and Cougar eyes, handsome and tall in his Carolina Brooklyn swagger. I heard him start to climb the stairs above me. And my own hand opened up my own front door. And though it was none of my business, I asked him, Do you know that woman out there? And do you know what happened next? He said, No. The nephew said, No, he didn't know the woman out there. And he told me happy Mother's Day, as he climbed to the rest of the stairs. And I can't stop seeing them hugging on the street, under trees. It was spring, but cold. And sometimes in the memory, his head is touching hers. And sometimes in the memory, his eyes are closed. And sometimes she is holding him and singing to him. I love you. It's okay. I mean to tell you that everywhere I go, I hear us singing to each other this way. I mean to tell you that I have witnessed such great kindness as this. In this my true life, you must believe me. I mean, on a Sunday, when nobody was supposed to be watching, nobody at all. I saw this happen, the two of them hugging when nobody was supposed to be watching, but not as secret either public as the street not for glory, and not for a joke. The landlord's nephew, ready to stand there for the woman like a brother, or a sister, or a husband or son, or none of these at all, but a stranger, a stranger who, like her is an Earthling. Perhaps this thing I am calling kindness is more simple than kindness, rather, recognition of the neighbor and the blue shared earth and the common circumstance of being here. What remains living of the last 2 million impossible ears.

07:14

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