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00:05

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

00:23

What is it about food that feeds us, not just the calories and nutrients, but the deeper yearning certain foods quench. I remember the joy of eating a whole fried fish in a market stall in Mexico. I watched the cooks scrape away the scales with a flat metal blade. But she didn't dredge the fish in egg or season and even with salt the way my father sometimes did, she simply slid the small thing hole into a deep pot of oil, a creature the size of my hand, or maybe my two hands pressed flat together in praise. When she said the plate down before me, and I took a first eager bite. It was crisp and piping hot, with perfect firm white meat. The jolt of heat from Chili's numbed my lips and caused my nose to run. The eyes were smooth and round, like to pearls on my tongue. The Finns so light and crisp as to melt in my mouth. Sitting on my stool, watching the people go by with their vegetables and meat and their bags of market wares. I felt a greedy delight for the meal of delicious fresh fish. Yes, but also for being alive on the planet in a new place, taking sustenance alongside strangers. I noticed once it occurred to me to look that the fish had large front teeth, square incisors with little discernible ridges, teeth like my own, made for biting, and molders designed to chew. Had the creature felt the same joy wants himself. It must be true that we are all hungry for something. Today's poem is fish heads by our a Villanova. It celebrates the deep nourishment that sometimes comes with the ritual of sharing food. fish heads by our a Villanova yanked free at the gills from cartilage and spine. These fish heads my mother cleans, whose body she scales, throws all into salt water and crushed tamarind. At dinner, she alone will spoon out their eyes with her fingers sucked down each pair as we watch. See, this is why the three of you could never hide anything from me. As though these organs brought her sight to be soaked through the tongue. When I tell her that I have tried to make this do from memory, she

warns don't waste what should be eaten. Reminds me of every delicate gift. We have thrown away. tilapia stomach best soured with vinegar, milk fish liver to melt against the dome of the mouth. That after church, a bucket of chicken soon became a blessing of winged gristle and skin. dark meat no one else wanted to save. We refused to taste her gizzards and hearts fried and fat. marked the smell of pig blood curdled on the stove wished gone her tripe steamed with beef Boolean and onion broth. After my brother and sister pushed aside bowls of baby squid in garlic Inc. gag and my mention of ducks in their shells boiled alive in brine. My mother believes I was the only one to share in such things. Which maybe means she says in some former life. You and I are seabirds, or vampires or wolves.

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