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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

driving, road, growled, lumbering beast, heavy downpour, rambler, mountain, moose, husband, streetlights, bluffs, woods, car, affirms, caught, creature, premonition, incline, andrea, animal

00:06

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

00:23

For several years, my husband daughter and I spent summers on a mountain in Vermont. It was vacation for them, and hard work teaching poetry workshops for me every day, sometimes more than once we drive back and forth between the cabin and the campus where we divided our time. The shortest route was also the most potentially treacherous. One stretch of it wound along an unpaved road called the dug way, which hugged a steep hillside. If you dared take your eyes off the road, you could study the sharp incline that gave way to the valley and a trickling stream or was it a river below. Driving the dugway during the day wasn't much of a feat. But nights that clouds of fog swallowed up the mountain. It was terrifying. I drove that route and a heavy downpour only one time before I wisely learned to take the long way home instead, the one with guardrails and streetlights and pavement. One afternoon, driving the dugway in platform shoes, my foot missed the brake and touched the gas instead. Luckily, the road was empty. I caught my error quickly enough that there were no consequences. But I pulled over anyway, heart racing, and drove the rest of the way in bare feet. Another time, driving home by my high beams, I caught sight of the rear legs of an animal so tall and slow and mightily confident of its own right of way. It could only have been a moose. This time, I was too shocked to pull over. I kept driving heart racing. Not spooked exactly, but too overwhelmed by the majesty and mystery of the thing to do anything but keep going. Maybe it's silly to admit such a thing here. But the lines that come to mind when I recall the sighting are Robert Frost's whose Woods these are, I think I know. To me, they belong to the moose, and the owls and foxes and all the creatures who feel no fear on those dark roads and steep bluffs. Today's poem is premonition by Andrea Hollander. It takes me back to the feelings of fright, and enchantment and awe that filled my car that night. And it affirms my

own inkling that such encounters are not at all random, but rather filled with rich meaning and at times, powerful omens premonition by Andrea Hollander dusk and the trees barely visible on either side of the two lane West through the Rockies and our second hand Rambler that growled through the landscape, like some hulking animal, our first trip together, my husband's attention more on me than on the darkening road, or newness, a kingdom of only two from the forest edge, a deer flash toward my side of the car, almost grazing my window, then vanished into the woods. I gasped, amazed we hadn't hit it. My husband said he saw no deer, that it must have been a creature I imagined. But wasn't that its jaw I saw. It's blazing I are Rambler growled on and I laughed. Not exactly. Laughter But that giddy foreign sound that seems to come from somewhere else. Like the falling part of falling in love. You leap onto the road, unaware, the lumbering beast speeding towards you might kill you. The slowdown is a production of American Public Media, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.