

20181206_slowdown_20181206_128

Wed, 9/30 10:10AM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

drinking, slow, glass, alcoholic, wine, poem, dream, irreversibly, felt, white wine, riptides, fox, drinker, befallen, inner monologue, thought, sense, gluttonous, permeated, stood



00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith.



00:09

And this is the slow down.



00:22

I used to joke that being a mom was coffee, coffee, coffee, coffee, then whine, whine, whine, whine. About four years ago, I got in the habit of pouring myself a glass of white wine after work. It seemed to calm me down. It gave me a head start on the real relaxation that would come after my kids were bathed, read to and asleep in their beds. I drink a few glasses of an old world red with dinner. Being able to identify subtle characteristics of good wine, affirmed for me that I was drinking discerningly it met my thirst wasn't gluttonous or haphazard. But I could polish off the better part of a bottle by myself. Sometimes, drinking, it felt like I was being guided along by someone else. my thought process my inner monologue took different turns. I felt clever, entertaining, not just my plain old, ordinary self. In the first dream I had about my drinking, I was standing at a microphone addressing an audience. try as I might, I couldn't help slurring my words. my remarks were riddled with nonsense. People I know in real life sat in the audience. After the presentation was over, they wouldn't make eye contact with me. The second dream I had about my drinking began on the morning of the day, my reputation was instantly and irreversibly ruined. I couldn't for the life of me figure out what I had done. And nobody would tell me. The dream was permeated by the clear sense that whatever had befallen

me was my own fault. I kept drinking. Sometimes, I had to drink more just to get to the place that first glass of wine was supposed to take me. I began to suspect there was a question I needed to ask myself. I lived for a while working up the courage to ask it. denying it was a question I already knew the answer to. I stood alone in the kitchen one night, drinking wine while my young children gave themselves their bath, and I was ashamed. One day, I was a drinker. The next I was an X drinker. A braver person would say, one day I came to understand I am an alcoholic. I consider myself lucky. The best way I can describe the change is to call it an unburdening. I feel a sense of relief, as if sobriety were a gift given to me. Today's poem is by Indiana based poet Kava, Akhbar, portrait of the alcoholic with withdrawal. Everyone wants to know what I saw on the long walk away from you. I couldn't eat and didn't sleep for an entire week. I can hardly picture any of it now. Save the fox i thought was in the grass. But wasn't. I remember him quiet as a telescope, tiny as a plutonian Moon. Everything else was Wilding around us, the sky and the wind the riptides and the rogue comet blasting toward Earth. Do you remember this? I introduced myself by one of the names I kept back then. The Fox was so still, I could have called him anything.



04:28

The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily go to slowdownshow.org and sign up for our newsletter. And follow the slow down on Instagram and Twitter at [slowdown show](https://www.instagram.com/slowdownshow)