

20190520_theslowdown_20190520_128

Wed, 9/30 7:17PM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mother, aaron smith, child, slow, imagine, poem, mother child relationship, 50th wedding anniversary, love, marry, church, dragged, stories, feelings, learned, moved, argued, cry, clutching, coming

00:06

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

00:22

I recently found some old papers belonging to my mother notes, in which she was laying out the story of her life. And I learned things she'd never before told me. She had been seriously ill. As a child. It was not certain at one point whether she would survive. Then, once in grade school, she had jumped off of a moving school bus and been knocked out by the fall, she came to confused and clutching her lunch money. In high school, she had almost drowned when she lost her footing in a creek. All the many times I tried to imagine her as a girl. She hadn't ever stopped being my mother, in my mind. But these stories succeeded in showing her to me as a child, someone vulnerable, and in need of care. In these stories, I can imagine my current self coming to her aid. It was overwhelming, nearly 25 years after her death, to finally learn to see her in this other long sought after

01:33

light,

01:36

the love and the struggle, the gratitude, and the frustration bound up in the mother child relationship is a potent emotional cocktail. There are regions in my heart, made up of feelings I still don't know how to describe. I lump it all into the category of love. Though I know it is more

nuanced and specific than that. Sometimes small things like my mother's handwriting on a sheet of paper, tipped me into a current of nameless feelings that crash upon one another, and to be caught up in them and dragged for a moment under is a state i absolutely welcome. Today's poem, my parents 50th wedding anniversary by Aaron Smith speaks to the complicated and overwhelming love a son has for his mother, and to the fear of one day losing her. My parents 50th wedding anniversary by Aaron Smith. I'm flying home for a party, crying and snorting sitting by a guy who's watching baseball on an iPad. He looks angry, the way men are angry. I imagined my mom before my sister in me before the church and pastor and everyone coming to see her in a simple new dress. I see her in a blue convertible, driving through town buying flowers, getting ready to marry my father sooner than she'd expected. He was drafted and she wanted to be married a little while in case something happened. She told me that once after they'd argued and he'd threatened to leave, and she threatened to leave and nobody left. And I wonder if someone should have when I first learned the diagnosis, the rarest form of a rare cancer. I worried every day for my mother. She cooked in schools and got burns on her arms. When we were children studied at night to be a teacher's aide. She dragged us to church that we hated it. Thought it would make us good people. her kids moved away and never had kids because we didn't want any. Her husband mostly ignores her loves her and his way distant and honest. Right now she's doing okay. And I only cry sometimes when I see old photos, or a mother being kind to her child at Target. 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. Follow the slow down on Instagram and Twitter at [slowdownshow](https://www.instagram.com/slowdownshow)