

# 20191021\_theslowdown\_20191021\_128

Wed, 9/30 7:51PM 5:00

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

images, polaroid, camera, instant, light, capture, chemicals, polaroid photo, grief, serpico, tuck, naomi, kid, fisher price, photo, viewfinder, uncannily, scattershot, snap, photographic image

00:05

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

00:18

When I was a kid, my mother had an old Kodak brownie from the 1950s. It was a camera made of pebbly black Bakelite and brushed Chrome. To capture an image, you held the thing at waist level, and looked down into its viewfinder, which must have been fashioned out of some kind of a mirror. By the time I played with it, that camera was just a toy, a reminder of another era. The only evidence that it had ever worked came from all the photos of my parents in their youth that filled so many of our family albums. The reigning camera of the decade was the Polaroid sX 70 instant camera, which spat three inch square images out of the front. images we shook in the air and then watched slowly, magically come into view. There was something off compositionally speaking in just about every Polaroid photo I ever saw. Too much Rog too much shadow, too bright, a glare of the velvet sofa. The glossy images that tucked into books stashed in junk drawers shuffled away, only to turn up months or years later, like a time capsule attesting to what once made up our lives. I have a very clear memory of a Polaroid. My sister Jean once snapped of alpa Chino, when the movie Serpico was playing on television. The image is all pale greens and blacks, watery and muddy at the same time. Somehow, that photo and others like it, bear witness to our lives in ways little else can. Two years ago, Jean sent a modern day reboot of the Polaroid camera to my daughter Naomi. There are differences in size, shape, and proportion. But the basic magic remains the same. You put your eye to the viewfinder, press the button, and out is spat assumed to be legible photographic image through some alchemy of chemicals and light. The scattershot images make the world my children and I live in look uncannily similar to the world my family inhabited in the late 70s. To my 21st century kids, the instant pictures are a fleeting novelty, something more concrete than a cell phone selfie. To me, the feeling is one of safety,

nostalgia, and maybe even a little DRAM of grief. Today's poem is Polaroid owed by Corey winrock. It captures the look and feel and ceremony with all its hope and disappointment of taking instant pictures. And it makes me wistful both for the past and the present. Polaroid owed by Corey winrock oh four cornered room in which we tuck the ever developing light of our warm bodies. Oh snapshot. Oh, he theorized flash of childhood swarm of chemicals murmuring together to form empty sky exposing days blue dissolve from blue. Oh bad 70s plaids, sofas, and Pearl snap shirts. Costumes fading like Fisher Price cars on washed out lawns. Oh moon boots without stars. Oh family regathering as light seep as grief. Oh, ablation and emotion and actual moon. You de lurker you balloon. I imagine deflating above our duplex. Why the resistance? Tell me who was in our living room to capture this instant whose hand was shaking us into existence. The slowdown is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.