

I studied the photograph for two, three minutes, pausing over every detail to drink it in. There was aunt Jennie, Mom, Dad, my brothers Scott and David, our sister Mary, and, of course, me. I lingered on Scott's face and moved the photo toward my eyes to take in the detail—the shape of his nose, the curve of his lips as he smiles. Since I could remember (will you laugh at me?), I had been fascinated by the shape of his smile, the way the top curved up and outlined his teeth, the scar across his philtrum. It looked off but also captivated me. I've never seen anyone with a smile like his.

For a moment, I disassociated. I rotated the photo paper in my hands, noting its flatness, two dimensions that sought to capture four and by necessity left much out, forgotten. It could not capture the vibrancy and energy of our life with one another that afternoon that summer. Aunt Jennie had moved into the guest room after her divorce, and we all benefitted from her presence. Since he wasn't teaching at the high school, Dad picked up work doing delivery for the grocery store. Mom was busy with Mary who was only three months. Scott was working nearly every day, weedwhacking (you could see the grass stains on his jeans) to save up for the 1990 4Runner he'd buy that August. Once he got it running that fall, he was out fishing in the mountains every chance he got. Man, he was proud of that car. And David, let's not forget about David, book in hand even in this picture. He always loved the world of the mind, reveled in it, more than the world in front of him.

It bemused me how this piece of paper—silver halide, gelatin, and alpha cellulose capturing a blast of photons one day that summer—persisted as a memorial of our life together. The play of light and color dancing into eternity that ~~and~~ does not repeat or return, for an instant apprehended and submitted to wood pulp and silver halide. This feebleness of an icon through which this world passed into that one.

I rubbed my thumb over Scott's face, as if I could feel him. But all I felt was emulsion. I smiled and tears and hotness ran down my face. I hesitated for a moment and looked at the trash bin. My heart dropped. He would have done it, wouldn't he have? He never liked pictures. "Why waste time for yesterday," he'd always say with a twinkle in his eye, knowing how it would irk people. He loved to tease and loved to ruin photos, making stupid faces, blinking, looking in the wrong direction.

At that moment when I tossed it, I was flooded with grief. I stared at it. My hands shook. I felt a weight in my abdomen, and I couldn't tell if it was my conscience warning me of an unforgivable sin, or if it was the beginning of power and freedom. But I knew he would have done the same thing, so I wiped my tears and smiled. "Why waste time for yesterday," I sputtered out through heat and tears, and I walked to the garage and climbed into the 1990 4Runner. As I pulled out, my phone on speaker, the ringback tone chimed.

"What's up, John?"

"Hey, David. You wanna go fishing? I'm on my way."

"Yep, pick me up."

We hung up. I let out the clutch, put it in first, and drove towards the mountains.