

Show Me
Yours

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BY RICHARD VAN CAMP UPDATED 11:17, JUN. 13, 2017 | PUBLISHED 4:22, NOV. 12, 2007 *This article was published over a year ago. Some information may no longer be current.*

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We saw baby ones trying to swim like little faint feathers so we helped them by rubbing our fingernails together and whistling and they swam, boy. Swam and reached across the sky and it was the stairway to heaven kind, the kind where you can see the spirits of those who have passed on walking up, up.

We now walk around town with our baby pictures taped or glued over the pictures of the saints with leather ties around our necks and so when you see someone with the leather necklace you take your baby pic out and show it to them and they marvel at how beautiful you were when you were new, and you do the same.

and then we praise each other:

- Oh you were such a beautiful baby.
- Look at the dreams in your eyes.
- Oh look at your hair. Just like a bear's pelt in spring.
- Oh you are so beautiful. So so beautiful. Have a lovely, lovely life.

That's how it is now. I am proud to say I started this after everything fell apart. It just happened. I woke up and I was in a bad place with bad people and there was little hope for me and there was my grandfather's leather necklace that the priest gave him with a saint I didn't know and there was my favourite baby picture of me on top of the fridge covered in lint and dust and so I cleaned it and took some glue (that we had been sniffing) and I glued my face over St. What's His Hump's and I wore that necklace, tucked under my shirt over my heart.

Two nights later I got rolled and as Franky and Henry were going through my pockets and were holding me upside down they pulled the necklace out.

Henry stopped and said, "What's this you? "

Franky squinted and dropped me. I told them it was a pic of me when I was a baby. They looked at each other and shook their heads. They weren't mad. They were just, well . . . I don't know.

They let me go and threw my money back at me. "Go home, Richard," they said. "You're not a man anymore."

"I'm trying to be!" I yelled and walked home, rubbing my jaw, stuffing my pockets back in. I'm trying to be . . .

Two days later I was walking around looking for smokes when they came up to me with goofy grins on their faces and then Franky and Henry showed me theirs. They did what I did and had bivouacked saint necklaces to show their baby pictures. Oh they were ugly babies. Maybe this was why they turned out to be such arseholes, but I showed them mine again and we were just so happy to see each other like that.

"Sorry for the other night," Franky said. "It's okay," I said.

You were ugly babies, I thought, and we shook hands.

Then Harvey and his wife came up to us and said, "Hey what you're doing? "

And we all turned and showed them our baby pics and grinned.

"How cute!" Cynthia said. "Is that you? "

We all nodded like gomers and beamed.

"Oh that is too precious," she said. "Let me take a picture."

So we waited while she dug through her purse. Cynthia's trying to be a reporter so we all helped out. Harvey offered us smokes and we took a break. "Thanks for dancing with my wife," he said and I blushed a little. Harvey doesn't like to dance but his wife can't get enough so when I go to the bar she comes up and we two-step around and holy cow she's a great dancer. She keeps her right arm up and holds my hand just barely and boy we just glide and float around that dance floor like butterflies and Harvey keeps his eye on me like a bull moose and I always go up and shake his hand

after and he nods back, not too happy that I can dance like I do with his wife but all the same he's pleased that she's happy and enjoying herself.

I know when I hold her on the dance floor I can honestly tell how much she loves him, how she keeps her wedding ring polished just shiny and I can tell how when she moves that she moves for him and that she is the best thing that ever happened to Harvey.

So Cynthia came back and took a picture of us and it ended up in the paper; then, two days later, people came up to me and showed me their baby pictures around their necks on those leather necklaces and we ooh'd and aaah'd each other and we just could not stop laughing.

— Oh you were chubby — wah!

— Where did all your hair go, eh?

— Even then you were a heartbreaker!

Whites, Natives, Inuit — oh we all laughed together when we saw each other and there are just so many beautiful babies inside us all. Well now after I got hurt at work everybody who came to see me at my house showed me their baby pics and I just left mine out on the coffee table and we laughed and laughed, passing them around. That pic of our little pictures in the paper really won the heart of our town so that's what we do now. And to my surprise Shawna came to see me. I had no idea she was back in town. I really missed her. How sad: when I'm with someone she's single and vice versa.

So now we finally got our timing right and I held her hand and we walked down to the rocks and we saw the baby northern lights trying to swim and she showed me how to call them.

— You can do it!

— Give'er!

— Go go go!

And those baby lights, they swam out little by little and Shawna and I rubbed our fingernails together and whistled and soon we had shadows because the northern lights were so bright. Soon it was like rolling rainbows across the sky.

"You are so beautiful!" she called and then looked to me. "Did you know it's the exact opposite in Nunavut? "

Even though she had a new kind of haircut, she still had fox eyes. "What's that? "

"They rub their fingernails to send them away."

"Hunh," I said, looking up, starting to shiver but not because I was cold. "Maybe they're just glad that we remember halfway what to do." "As long as we honour them, hey?" she said. I could tell she was going to be a great teacher. I could tell after she said that, and we walked across town holding hands back to my place. I wanted to tell her that sometimes the night was all I had left of her but didn't. I shaved so I could be soft for her while she sang in the shower and we made beautiful love.

We took our time. We laughed and giggled and joked and kissed and caressed and then we told each other about our lives and how hard it has been these past few years. We both wondered why the lovers we chose all turned out so mean. I noticed she still took the right side of the bed and had a few new moves but we didn't need to talk about it.

"I missed your hands," she said.

"Yours too," I said. I told her to stick around, to quit leaving town. "You could be the love of my life," I said and she went quiet, running her fingers through my hair. I traced my finger along the scars across her arm where that half-wolf bit her. I'm the only man who's allowed to do that. The birds started to sing so I lit her a smoke and we sat up together. I was about to get us some ice water for Round Two and she said, "Wait."

Then she took her beautiful baby Cree picture and held it up and I put mine facing hers and we kissed . . .