

A Photograph That Exists by Kenneth Nadeau

I recall the night you tossed me the Polaroid face shot of you and dad together. You were drinking Budweiser beer, a copious number, the customary ritual while admonishing my father, as if reviving past heart breaking moments that a lifetime could not dispose of.

Many slurring, endless conversations commenced when I was a child and persisted until that day. Always starting with tears and ending in sobs, but this was different. I was thirty two at that time and my own wounds from an absentee parent had mostly healed.

You held the print as a keep sake for over thirty years, unknown to my siblings and I, never displayed or talked about, collecting dust in an open cardboard box. You offered it to me, as if you were finally letting go, relinquishing possibility and pain in unison.

That day was a relief two-fold, foremost no longer having to cope with your heavy burden, but for me all the shame I carried being from a broken home and not possessing an available and concerned dad ultimately melted into thin air. I felt invigorated and proud. Finally possessing confirmation of my parents being partners, at least to the casual eye, before the heroin, cocaine and alcohol steered us

directly into a hurricane and destroyed any chance at normalcy.

I wanted to parade the photo, running through the streets, screaming, revealing to strangers my gorgeous parents. Eventually I enlarged the shot and displayed it prominently in my home like a featured attraction in a museum.

The picture was stunning. You and dad posing like runway models before the camera with all the innocence of youth and aesthetic features rarely seen. Your dirty blond hair was long, wavy and styled to a layered perfection. Eyes with shades of aquamarine, reminiscent of the ocean on a sunny day in South Beach. A symmetrical pointy nose blended into your flawless complexion like a porcelain doll. No smile, just reassurances. Yes, you are stunningly exquisite.

Dad with his similarly long, wavy brown hair cascading over his features, a trendy style for the early 1970's. His eyes, brown like semiprecious tiger's eye, contemplating, piercing into my soul. Thick masculine eyebrows dance over his eye sockets. A square jawline flexes down to his puckered lips, confident. His expression compels one to contemplate whether dad foresaw what lied ahead.

Perhaps this was his opportunity to say sorry to you, Danyelle, Matthew and I. To remember him for who he was, a handsome, but broken man.