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The Great Valentine's Day Card Mystery

It was a typical day at my elementary school in Middleboro, Massachusetts: wake up in the morning, grab my stuff: clothing and my gym bag of books, think of which walking route to school would get me there without issue, and head off to endure the day under my suburban camouflage. But what separated this day from other days is that it fell on Valentine's Day.

This was never one of my favorite holidays while I was growing up. Born in another country with a strange name already put me on various knuckle-sandwich radars. At this point in my youthful studies, I had learned to accept that I was different and continued my non-existence while budding love was acknowledged by my socially bureaucratic peers. But on this particular day, something quite interesting happened between me and a few of my fellow grade schoolers.

I had just taken a seat in one of my life-essence draining classes on social conditioning when a kid from my class approached my seat flanked by two other boys quietly standing in arm-crossing disdain toward my seated brow. Immediately, the scene looked grim for me as I turned to face a possible confrontation – which were typically three on one, four-on-one, or greater. Instead, I became the subject of an unusual inquisition.

"Why did you give Richie a Valentine's card?" One of my inquisitors boomed like a cannon at my skull while dropping a small folded piece of paper onto my desk.

"What Valentine's card?" I responded in utter confusion. The card lay limp on the faux wood desk top staring up at me with derision. I looked briefly at the symbol of young – typically heterosexual according to our New England education – American love.

"Why did you give that card to Richie?" Another brass-knuckle voice returned to the initial question.

"I didn't give anyone a Valentine's Day card," I answered still awash in the mystery of this whole event that was unfolding.

"Your name is on it." That was the final reply I got from my adolescent compatriots before I turned my detective skills downward on the sole piece of evidence to be analyzed and deciphered.

Slowly I opened the jovial contents and read the interior scribbling with diligence like a cultural anthropologist examining centuries-old cave paintings discovered for the first time by modern eyes. Then, once making all final theories, calculations, and final research facts, I closed the object of love and affection and then stared up at the small group and began laughing hysterically out loud at my motley audience.

"What are you laughing at?" My accusers questioned with intensity and surprise.

"That card is not from me," I replied.

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"Yeah it is! It has your name!" The crew struggled to protest above my giggling objection.

"That's not my name," I said returning state's evidence back to the authority's hands like some discarded implement from a crime. I flung like a Frisbee toward the nearest set of hands. "My name is 'Reza' not 'Razor.' Whoever sent this card spelled my name wrong."

As the stupefied trio walked away, it really hit for the first time that people around me did not know me. I felt alone – again. My day reestablished its pace of boredom and redundancy. I never gave out a Valentine's Day card to anyone. Nor did I receive one. That day quickly returned to another regular day in Middleboro, aside from the "The Great Valentine's Day Card Mystery."