

Lies That Sustain Us

By Mark Edgemon

“I need a diazepam,” Sol muttered as he made his way past the overflowing garbage can towards the kitchen. He glanced amongst the clutter for a spot to set his half-eaten frozen dinner. He plopped the carton onto the countertop, sending a swarm of insects shooting out from underneath the pile of previous microwaveable containers. He moved his arm along the countertop to scoop a few hundred bugs into the sink, turning the hot scalding water on them, which sent them swirling down the drain.

Bugs made him nervous. “Did I just take a diazepam?” Sol thought as he opened the bottle he kept close. He found a partial cup of coffee that had been sitting on the stove for days and washed down the 2 mg dose. Diazepam was the generic version of Valium. His pharmacy gave it out to seniors for \$4 a month otherwise he couldn’t afford them.

He skidded as he turned toward the living room, his slippers smeared with crushed insects, making the kitchen floor slippery.

Rounding the corner, he saw a dark image sitting in his recliner.

“Hey, who are you and what are you doing in my chair?” Sol demanded adamantly.

“Surveying and surmising for the devil,” came the reply.

Walking in front of the chair, Sol noticed that the figure looked like a shadowy version of himself, except for an eerie dark feeling that made his skin crawl.

“And what have you surveyed and surmised?” Sol replied.

“That you’re not too smart...old man,” the carnal one spoke in a derisive tone.

“I hope you’re not just blowing smoke,” Sol replied threatening, “The inhalation will kill you”.

Sol was nervous by the exchange. “I need another diazepam,” He said as he took a pill from the bottle.

“That’s your fifth one today...fool. You’re only suppose to take 1 every 12 hours,” the darkness taunted.

“I don’t care, I don’t care, it’s only 2 mg each. I know what I’m doing!” Sol defiantly stated as he gulped the pill down before reason could set in.

The room suddenly grew darker. Sol put his hand on the wall to steady himself. He was feeling the effects of the Valium.

“Your daughter would be taking care of you now if you hadn’t run her off,” the image said while examining the redness in Sol’s face.

“Bull!” Sol stated angrily at the implication that he ever did anything wrong.

“Really?” the darkness commented salaciously.

As a shaft of light from an unknown source illuminated the wall above the fireplace, a scene unfolded of their last encounter; retelling a moment he had long since forgotten and had wanted to stay forgotten.

“I don’t need you, I don’t need anyone! You can go anytime, Suzanne!” Sol demanded, his black angry eyes staring a hole through her.

“But what will you do, how will you make it on your...?” she cried as he cut her off with his one-upmanship display, pridefully dominating the conversation.

“You can leave me just like your mother did,” he said despising his wife for not being there to wait on him hand and foot. “She’s probably dead now. She couldn’t make it without me!”

“She remarried,” Suzanne said meekly, not wanting to hurt him.

“She is?” he said in a momentary pitiful tone. “Is she happy?” he asked, hoping that she was not.

“Yes, pappy. She is very happy,” Suzanne said wistfully.

He thought for a moment in quiet reflection and then his face hardened. “Well, to hell with her...and to hell with you! I’ll call you when I need you!” he demanded. He forgot to get her phone number as if his pride would ever let him call her.

The carnal image interjected, “You have spent your entire life playing a victim of circumstance in every situation. And you ARE a victim in a manner of speaking, held captive by your own pride. But you are so full of manure, it’s hard for anyone to give a damn!”

“I need a diazepam,” Sol said as he fidgeted with the bottle.

“You’re brave for a crazy ass fool!” his base carnality spoke observing Sol’s demeanor.

“Yeah, well...crazy comes with a second set of balls,” Sol defended himself as he took Valium number 7.

“Okay,” the carnal man said laughing, “I think I know what you mean, but...”

“What if I decided to sit on you?” Sol said fast and erratically, beginning to get agitated. “Yeah, I’ll sit on you. How would like that, huh? I’ll jump up and down on you, how about that!” Sol said backing up so he could jump onto the chair.

He attempted to jump into the recliner feet first, but slipped and slowly began to fall. He remembered having more strength earlier in his life. He hit his head on the end table, causing roaches to scurry down its sides and onto the recliner. He fell backwards onto the floor, hitting his head once again, leaving a second gash this time on the back of his skull.

Sol cried. His tears poured from his eyes onto the filthy floor. He knew there was no one to help him. He knew he had run everyone off who had ever loved him. He accepted for the first time, that he was a fool as life seeped from his body.

His daughter was across town when she felt her father’s presence, as if he was there with her. It felt as if his arms were about her, as if to say if he had it to do over again, he would have loved her proper.

She called his house, but there was no answer.

Upon arriving to his home, she opened the unlocked door and found his body on the living room floor, cold, covered with insects. Tearfully, she brushed them off of him, saying to herself while slowly shaking her head, “Oh pappy.”

The End