

Heavyweight

by Adam Strong

That afternoon, after I'd swallowed that weight. Felt like a sinker, one of those weights that fishermen attach to their line to make sure the line goes down far enough.

Go down far enough there, and I'll find it. That's what I was on about, that I had some searching to do, and now seemed as good a time as any to drop down, and maybe if I dropped down far enough, I'd find that thing that would explain everything that had happened to me. Why I saw death everywhere at six, why I've known, always known that this shit wasn't going to end well.

So I can see the end of the story, but its cloudy like that part of Escape to Witch Mountain and in the two kids are in the water, and they know it's about drowning, but they have no idea how they got there, and the whole thing is a mystery until the end. That's what it was like for me that day, the weight inside to drop deep enough down to figure out who I was.

My room, the bed, my feet on each step, elastic bands around my ankles, picture the most tired you've ever been. And I know you've been that tired, I know the heavy you feel. The valium in my blood made that real for me. So when I got up stairs, finally turned the corner to my room, the bed was the final destination, getting into that water bed, the water cupping and cradling my arms legs, like a coffin it was, a final resting place. We've made it this far, and now it's time to drop further down.

You know those saints and those religious people that find god in strange, everyday places? Think Joseph Smith and the tablets, or the real life crazy dude in Lawrence of Arabia, these people are all of a sudden convinced they are doing god's work.

You won't believe me but that morning I felt the same way. Cloudy over the bay, little bit of light moving around on the masts across the canal was the great god whoever telling me this was the right thing to do.

God in the symphony of right now. The little light on the dock down there. And here's where the strings come in, low and long and deep and dark and not the bright cheery strings, these are strings to get lost in, long lost deep dark water.

Water. Valium, symphony. You see it don't you, what I had to do. It wasn't enough to just be in the bed looking out at the rain, I had to make a decision, it was right in front of me all I had to do was stand up and grab it.

To sink further down, I couldn't just be in the water bed. I had to be down there.

In the water.

In the canal.

I didn't want to die, I just wanted to get down to the nitty gritty. I heard that on a country song one time. Nitty gritty. I liked it, the nitty gritty reason why we are here, the place in your chest where bone touches that big beating sack we all write love songs about.

I didn't want to die. They will tell you that. They will tell you that I wanted out, with Mom out of the picture and Dad not around, and Cliff not yet clocking into his shift. And they'll tell you about how I kicked Dad in the face. and how everything that came after all lead me to this place, but I can tell you, walking down those stairs, the pool with the room under the house, it was a sanctuary, but it wasn't mine. If I wanted a real sanctuary I was going to have go beyond that.

Feet down on the stairs, even on valium when you've got a place to get to, you get there, move those feet down the stairs, don't even bother walking down to the basement, not when there's a sliding glass door by the living room on the 2nd floor.

In Florida it's called a 2nd floor even though its a ground floor, because limestone. So the basement is the first floor and the main floor or ground floor is the 2nd floor and there I am with my feet on the thick carpet, the piano and the pictures of Dad's Dirty Hippy, and the painting of that old Chilean woman who I have to tell you about some other time, but there's the sliding glass door and there are the steps down to the canal.

And the goddamned door is locked so my hand has to go through glass to the other side. And there's pain in my hand and arm and maybe some blood, but the view is getting blurry like I'm in the middle of my own Witch Mountain, and there's the canal right there, not looking like the way I want water to be right now, not golden, not holy, but dark green and bordering on brown, and I see the ladder right on the sea wall there, the iron thing with the two arms straight down into that water and I know that once I'm down in it, I'll do my nose breathing trick, I'll go down to the bottom and not be able to see anything, and my foot slides off the railing and I'm in the water, and there's the top lip to nostril trick, there is me blowing bubbles out of my nose, down I go to the bottom. Open my eyes and there's green and brown sludge mud view, just shadows and light and dark and grim. And there's another thing, the valium the underwater, I can't move my arms as fast as I could before. I'm moving my arms through the water, but it happens in like an 8th of the time it would normally take to do it.

Do the math: One enlightened soul takes valium to get to the bottom of who he is and this one person knows the only way to do this is through a canal so the force of one person through one window fist and wrist and blood and all moving spaced out slow down to the canal, drops to the bottom like the lead weight that is attached to his soul. How long does it take of me kicking and moving water around before someone else does something about it?

And my head is all Witch Mountain, blurry and fuzzy, and I'm really in danger of drowning, no breath, no air, just get those arms and legs of mine to move but they are in the middle of all that valium sludge and it's just not coming up fast enough, and there's a light down to the murk of shadows and light, a light coming up faster and I'm moving without moving.

My body is moving moving through this murk but I'm not the one in charge anymore. There's a pressure on my arms and not from the blood that's floating around my wrists.

I see that there and then, the blood, the movement how a math problem is really bullshit when it involves people because people are

heart and soul and blood out in the canal that leads out to Biscayne Bay and how do you account how do you fucking enumerate the power of life and god everlasting.

Even though I don't believe in god not after this after now.

But the light is foggy hazy, and I'm out of the water. My back on the scratch of the dock. And this person has a body has a face, and he's dripping on me, and he doesn't speak any english. And all he says is "Un chico de sangre." and I know from the goddamned Berlitz tapes this means blood boy, and then I know what's going to happen next. I'm going to close my eyes and breathe real deep and when I come back I won't be here anymore, I'll be in the great white walls of the wanna be afterlife.

Dad will be gone, of course. And Cliff will be there with his sad face. The sad what can you do about life what can you do about anything when the deck is stacked against you? What can you do when you are a kid and you bleed and you fail and you take drugs and tell the world you want to kill yourself on that first morning in the great white walls of fake heaven.

