

Cigs,

by Ann Bogle

"It's like hungering for a year of cigs. A year of cigs, a yard full of cigs. Stick 'em in my face. Burn me out. Kill me with their emotional therapy.

" I stay sleeping to avoid wanting to smoke. Dread Baron was wrong in saying volition seems gone from the world. There is plenty of the kind that heads toward death. Early death, early retirement, takes care of each emotion until it kills you at 50.

" I don't want to smoke. How can I convince myself? I say it, but I know that my body will become a pear for three years, not fat per se, but newly formed. Gelatinous, new ridges. From not pounding my heart so hard just watching TV. I can take walks, I can fix my bike, I can join a swim pool, yoga day. Can type better, if I try. My fingers are sleepy. I am sleepy, too, from no speed-er-up. No coffee, no cigs, want to fall down sleeping all the time.

"What about sub drugs from a shrink? Mood-altering chemicals from a shrink? Pain is pain. Emotional pain is emotional pain. They teach that emotional pain is physical pain, culture pain is science pain, but they cannot test for the absence of these synaptic conclusions. I will say, if you can test me and find something missing, then you can supplement me for the missing thing, but don't play chemical guess work in my body.

" *He* resists less because drugs are his favorite response to all life's situations. The only thing not drug is sex, and he approaches sex as a drug, to cure pain. Uses sex to end love pain. Love to end sex pain.

"My throat is sore, but the soreness is from not smoking. Going back would not help and would make me feel resigned to risk death at 50 from early laziness. Also, there would be a lost sense of free will. All my oratories would be about the inevitability of all life.

" Rye Character's stories would have been different had he gotten off the cigs. They say booze kills, but much more often, cigs kill. Cigs are not okay, not mild, not non-reactive. They smooth every emotion, tame every flare up. Cigs are quick like crack must be quick. I can't imagine that there would be a lot of difference, except with crack cops would be involved. Say crack gives you a buzz. Cigs give you a buzz, too, but you don't know that after a while. Then you need another one.

" Cigs kill. Reports say that cigs kill more people than anything in the U.S. Not booze. Booze hardly kills, even drunk driving, compared to cigs. Cigs cost the public in hospital bills, years on end, trying to stomp out the avoidable disease. Maybe cigs are bad because of other chemicals. Then take them out. Smoke Lucky's or Camels or American Spirits. I loved to smoke. I loved to smoke. Where will be the next love? Where will be the courage to face life not smoking?

"Every cig you light you know you're killing yourself. Early. Not that you wouldn't die but that you are hastening death. In these writers, they're dying twenty years sooner than other people. They write about sadness. Every one thinks their sadness is universal, but it's the sadness of a tobacco addict, a self-killer. Not family, not friends, not cancer, not wisdom stop them from offing themselves every twenty minutes. Addicts.

"Got my cereal box here for munching. Got my list of to do.

"Maybe I just want to smoke more this minute because I am writing and drinking coffee and it's a test. It's hardest the first day giving up an old practice. The first day was nearly impossible. Not undoable but nearly so. I wanted to smoke or die. But after I had passed the addiction period, it was my mind telling me. They say if you can hold out, if you can stick with it and ignore the damn memories of loving your little white lover man sticks, then the desire becomes less and less. You get over it. You try. That is all I know how to say.

" It would not be acceptable to go back and suck down a pack of Camels because I would still want to smoke when I had done that. I want to smoke now though I don't smoke, and I'd want to smoke then, if I did smoke. The wanting to is constant whether I do it or don't. Not smoking is harder for a while, then, they say, the urges begin to decline. You begin to fit into a life without smoking.

"Give myself a break. Twenty-year habit begun as a child. I am bound to feel more pressure. There is no memory like my memory of liberation through cigs. Good memories of independence and liberation and being smarter than parents in smoking. The other self, the other person, the bad self, the sexy self, the sinner self, the not wanting to be all good all the time because it was so hard to be perfect, the rebelling by smoking and sex (which I never really chose then but was proud of, as if accomplished).

"My mother must have been very angry to see me get away from her grasp that way. Don't smoke! Alarm. Don't smoke! Who is smoking for? It is for rebelling. Who has me locked up now? Cigs, that's who. Cigs. Don't do it. The devil dog is cigarettes.

"Devil Dog, God as my witness, Devil Cigarette Humper, Go Exactly to Hell!

"It was cigs I loved, not life. That's true. Cigs, not life. Cigs were the little punctuations in each day I needed to feel alive, to feel life was worth something. Cigs. Cigs are life? Are cigs life for addicts? What is life for the non-addict, me? For me, life is life, I suppose. What is life to be life to someone? What is life to be life to someone?"

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