

Three Cigarettes A Day

by Chris Okum



1. Farmer Vincent's son is in the barn again. No one knows what he's doing in there, except for Farmer Vincent, who doesn't approve. Farmer Vincent's wife used to do her son's laundry, but not anymore.

2. An entire family was killed in the house over on Bock Street. A convict who escaped from the state penitentiary was arrested for the crime. The convict was sitting in the kitchen eating a piece of pie when the police arrested him, but not before they let him finish his piece of pie, which, to each and every police officer looked damn delicious.

3. The woman who lives on the second floor of the apartment kitty corner from the slaughterhouse hates the man who lives below her. The man listens to President Roosevelt's radio addresses at full

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volume, and she can hear every word through her floor. She can also hear the man laughing at everything President Roosevelt is saying, as if the business of America is a comedy.

4. They bought a little house not ten feet from the train tracks. Every half hour a train rushes past their house. They try and hit the trains with slices of bologna, but the bologna never sticks.

5. Dick used to work for the Pinkertons. One time, in Butte, Montana, he bludgeoned a striking miner to death with a truncheon. Now, whenever someone is taking a picture, Dick makes sure to stay out of frame, for he's convinced that the camera itself can capture his guilt merely by looking at him.

6. Gibby and Oliver stand next to Gibby's new Packard. Oliver wants Gibby to give him a lift, but Gibby says he'd prefer not to. Gibby made a promise to himself a long time ago that he will never give a lift to another bonafide vampire, and he makes no bones about it.

7. Wilfred likes to sit in a chair right on the edge of the mighty Mississippi River. He wears a suit and tie and hat out of respect. One day the river will swallow him whole, and he wants the river to know in advance that there's no hard feelings.

8. Barbara and Dan are alone, finally, in a cozy section of the park no one else knows about. But then a man comes out of nowhere and stands next to them, followed by another man and another woman. Barbara and Dan soon find themselves surrounded by a large crowd of men and women, all of whom are silent, staring at Barbara and Dan, and wondering what to do next.

9. Bradford pulls over, gets out of his car, fall to his knees, and prays to the Pabst Blue Ribbon billboard by the side of the road. When he was a child, Bradford's father drank Pabst Blue Ribbon all day and

night, and then died at the age of 37 from cirrhosis of the liver. God bless you, Pabst Blue Ribbon, says Bradford.

BONUS FICTION:

LET'S PUT ON A SHOW: CHARLES MANSON AND HIS FAMILY TAKE AMERICA

CHARLIE SAYS

Little mama got me harder than a goddamned rock. Makes me feel like a pilgrim at the first Thanksgiving. If you know what I mean then you weren't there.

TEX SAYS

In the watermelon light I saw Dandy Don take it all the way in for six. Six plus six equals the twelve nights of Christ's Mass. Give in, give up, and give out.

PATRICIA SAYS

My father and Charlie are the exact same person. The only difference is that when Charlie makes love to me he always makes sure I climax first. My father was a real two-pump chump.

BOBBY SAYS

You keep talking about the Devil and eventually the Devil will appear. People want it this way. They need the Devil around, because without the Devil there's no rhyme or reason for why they've done what they've done.

CHARLIE SAYS

This next song is about a girl I knew in Tupelo. Her name was Sally Ann and she had red hair. Bitch stole my money, my bubblegum, and my heart. Uh one, uh two, uh one, two, three, four.

SQUEAKY SAYS

Charlie's the second horniest man in Los Angeles. The first is Tommy Smothers. I once gave Tommy a handjob that lasted from Friday morning to Sunday night.

TEX SAYS

I can see my breakfast at the end of everyone's fork but my own. They say to wake up and smell the coffee, but that's not coffee, hoss, that's horseshit. See this badge, now let me in, I've been deputized by the State of California to punish you for all your sins.

BOBBY SAYS

The British have no idea how to play rock and roll. What they're doing is some kind of minstrel act that I cannot abide. What kind of music they should be playing is no music at all.

CHARLIE SAYS

If you feel like the mountain is going to give way on you halfway up the climb the best thing to do is stop and remove all your weight from the mountain. If you can hear the sound of the mountain moving then you need to remove yourself completely. There are other ways of getting to the top of the mountain, and some of them have nothing to do with you.

LINDA SAYS

Charlie was the one who introduced me to my body. He showed me things my body could do that I had no idea my body could do. He would make me look at myself in the mirror while we made love and he would ask me what I was looking at and I had no idea what he meant, but the fact that he was even looking at me looking at myself meant the world.

BOBBY SAYS

I am the best artist of my generation. No one will ever know this, of course, because I'm going to rot away in prison before I die and am completely forgotten. But like I always say, better never than late.

TEX SAYS

My knee went one way, I went another, and next thing I knew I had customized crutches and a date with the knife. I cried at the thought of going under and my sports cut short. But then I exhaled in relief because anything less than cancer is nothing but a cherished memory with battle scars to match.

CHARLIE SAYS

Nothing is hidden anymore, and that changes nothing. We live in a time when time is talking to itself. Dig this: I met John Wayne at Shorty's Ranch, and when he rolled up to me I said, You know, Marion, my old lady has a vibrator your ass would love.

