

Quitting Smoking

by Jamey Genna

The last time the two of them were together, they walked over to the liquor-grocery store around the corner from his place to buy a pack of cigarettes.

They'd been making love and then they wanted a smoke, and neither of them had a pack. They were both trying to quit.

"I'm quitting," she told him after they bought the pack. "Right after I smoke this last one."

They were standing next to her car, leaning on it, smoking, trying to say goodbye.

"You keep the pack," she said to him.

"No," he said. "I'm quitting, too."

He threw the pack down into the street, but it was a mutual decision.

After the affair was over, she told her husband she'd been smoking. Obviously he didn't know, but he knew. One can never hide the fact that one has been smoking.

He said he could smell it on her.

She told him she quit. She didn't tell him that she only wanted to smoke by herself or with the other man. This thought made her sad. It made her want to cry.

Her husband tried to get in on the act. It was his way of reconciling.

For example, she and her husband would be walking down the street, walking by someone who was smoking, and since the cat was already out of the bag, she'd say, "God, that smells so good. That makes me want to smoke."

And he'd say, yeah, and start to reminisce about how he used to smoke in his twenties, occasionally—on occasion.

She assumed occasionally anyway. She knew he smoked dope in his twenties. That's what her husband got thrown into treatment

for—marijuana still in his system when he checked in for his annual “piss test” at his job. God, she hated it when men said the word *piss*. Like they were so proud of it—the word *piss*, because that was something only men seemed able to do. *Piss*. It was a word that belonged to them. Well, they could have it.

Then her husband would go on a little about brands, cigarette brands he had tried. She always just scowled at him gently on the outside and laughed a little at him inside. He didn't really smoke. It was his way of gaining back some kind of intimate advantage he'd lost to the other man. This thought made her want to cry, too. Most things made her want to cry. A cigarette would've taken care of that emotion.

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When she ran into the other man a year or so later, he said he had quit smoking for good.

She said, “Why?”

And he said, “I missed you too much.”

