

Smoke

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You know, I can almost taste the smoke. Just close my eyes, and I can taste it. It's harsh, hard. Smoke itself I never cared for. After the first inhale, the smoke curling off the cigarette burns my eyes. I can smell it crawling up my face. I know it's killing me, but I'm young. I take another drag.

I do the French inhale. Don't know if the French do the French inhale, but I do the French inhale. It cools the smoke down, it's like using your mouth as an aspirator. What you do is take a big mouthful of smoke, like you're smoking a cigar or a pipe. And then, open your mouth, let the smoke drift out as you inhale through your nose. It's not as strong of a hit, 'cause it gets watered down. Maybe that's why I smoke so much.

My hands are shaking. It's not withdrawal. I'm just tired... and sweaty. The sweat gets on the cigarette, changes its taste. Makes it sour. Probably makes it smoke more, but it's got a different taste.

I've been smoking the same cigarettes for years: Marlboro Reds, box top. It's what all my friends smoke. I don't even know what the red stands for. OK. I mean, look at the box, it's got a big red line going down it. That's what the red stands for, but why red? Why not blue? Greens are menthol, because the smoke tastes green. Maybe the red is for the cherry tip. It's too hot.

It doesn't matter. It's not what I want to do... go through the colors. I just want to sit, relax, and smoke: taste that smoke... and the fire.

A girl asks me for a smoke. I don't look at her. I just hand her the pack, shake one out for her, give her a light.

She thanks me, notices my hands are shaking, and assumes I'm high. That would explain the nervousness, the lack of eye contact, the sweating, and the shaking. There's no reason to explain it from playing pinball for hours. I've lost track of time. I don't know what time it is.

She sits down beside me. She talks. I listen. We both smoke. The cigarettes finished, she could leave, but she doesn't. A minute goes by, finally, after an eternity, we light up again. Somebody's looking for a seat, so she moves in closer. The next cigarette we just share.

I'm frozen. I can't leave. She's probably too. So close, so very close. Soon we'll get in a car. There won't be enough room; there never is, and she'll sit on my lap, one arm around, not quite copping a feel, and the other dangling out the window, cigarette in hand, that we'll share.

Her hair in my face.

In a dark room getting high.

And when we finally kiss, I'll know the taste. It'll be like we've been kissing for hours. I'll even pay for her share of the weed... and mine, even though that's not what I smoke, but by then, we'll both know what it is I'm buying.