

Cigarette Break

by Freida Theant

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Both of Briana's hands click in staccato tempo the alphanumerics of her computer's keyboard. Her full, deep lashes extend overtop green eyes riveted and unblinking; absorbed in text and dollar figures shown on the monitor. Her spotless white blouse barely draped with straight auburn hair dimly reflects in the face of the screen.

The bullet-form ember of her Parliament Blue, glowing more golden than her tresses, points straight to the electronic figures within the screen. Briana is way beyond expert at ejecting smoke hands-free from her superbly controlled lips; drawing down on the filter, channeling the smoky draft up to her nasal chambers, where she gulps the mass down, down deeper into her soul.

When her lungs wring out the last of the liquefied cigaretisfaction, her diaphragm expels the drained fumes to roar back to the atmosphere via her nasal exits. White gushers surge from her nose; that massive billow reappears as a pair of cones that dissimulates feathery at its edges fleeing the bronchial captivity. Such chalky currents collide with the monitor and splash outwards in all directions, ultimately rising to the ceiling to expand the blue haze growing there. On some pulses, she spurts out sheets of smoke from one or both corners of her mouth, depending on how much smoke she has already diverted to her sinuses.

Dangling, she varies the pulses of each cycle; some in rapid-fire sequence in a head-to-tail rush of jets and white orange flare-ups of the overworked ember. Briana holds occasional rounds within her chest for every last bit of flavor and nico-hit from the pale fluidic balm. She flips her head to the side barely, tousling her golden red hair and getting some relief for her stiffening neck.

A runner of smoke slithers up from the devouring edge of the fire ring ascending the paper skin towards her pink glossed lips. This translucent ghostly curtain wends its way up the cylinder in a diaphanous film, as if her cigarette had a trembling dorsal fin. The higher it rises, the thinner the membrane of smoke. Then, as if by magic, she pulses a breath of air that instantly clears it

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off.

Brianna's fingernails are vetted for computer tasks; trimmed almost short and no colors. They only leave the keyboard when it's time to pluck out her Parliament and flick burnt off shards into the butt-littered porcelain tray on the near side of her printer.

Briana's emerald eyes never leave the monitor. They don't need to; she works faultlessly off of habitual instinct. Punctuated by the dense pulses of feathery rolling smoke, she gazes as though enchanted at the iridescent glow of the screen which tints the various lazy swirling curls of her smoke with borrowed color.

She fumbles for her box of Parliament Blues somewhere in the general vicinity of the modem and west of her muddy-looking coffee cup. Without focusing beyond the computer text, her digits extract the next cigarette and raise it to the within her cone of vision. She blankets the cool, pristine filter between her lips before pressing the new Parliament's brown face up against the hot ashy ember of the expiring one. When the coal is firmly married to the new Parliament, Briana pulls a series of drafts to force the ember to transfer its intensity. Her virgin Parliament picks up that barest first spark so she can grow the new ember, draw-by-draw until it envelops the entire leading edge. That done she resume her dangling, continuous pulses of smoke and crushes out the old butt.

"Bri! I'm home, Babe," resounds thru the hallway, stairwell and up into the computer room where Briana works. "I know you're up there, I can smell at least a pack of used to be your cigarettes in the air."

"Grab me a Vernor's before you come up, Joanna" Brianna shouts her reply. "I'm in the mood for ginger ale."

Moments later Joanna bursts into the workroom bringing a Vernor's and a long neck bottle of Stewart's Cream Soda for herself. "You gonna meet your deadline?" Joanna asks, shoving the plastic bottle of ginger ale onto the table. Slipping the cream soda into her own mouth, she tips the container up for a few glugs. "You've been at this since....when?"

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Without removing this now-fully ignited Parliament from her smirk, she replies, "I got up at five this morning just to make sure I get these financials to my clients on time." Then, remembering the waiting Vernor's, Briana balances her Parliament in the cradle of the white ceramic ashtray. She grabs the soda and washes down four rapid swallows. She drinks like she smokes: passionately, aggressively. "Who knew that going free-lance as a financial analyst would be twice as demanding as the nine-to-five cubicle slavery!"

Joanna snatches up Brianna's teetering Parliament and tears out a pull so strong that her cheeks appear concave while the cigarette's shaft rises to a 45 degree angle. The ember of the half-erect cigarette glares bright as a pilot light for some seconds. Her cheeks resume their natural posture when she finally expels some of the opaque volume out her nostrils, channeling the main smoke to her pleasure center within the core of her diaphragm. Inhaling deeply, she captures the flavor-laden contents in the base of her lungs. Joanna clasps the Parliament's filter with her front teeth and anchors it firmly to blast the delayed, smoky outflow through her mouth, actually hiding the white rod in the rushing fog.

"Mmmm. So good to feel that burn inside me," Joanna murmurs, satiated. "But I would have preferred menthol."

"You can have that one," Briana demurs, waving the can of ginger ale at Joanna's cigarette. "I'm drinking Vernor's right now."

"You've gotta be feeling stiff," her roommate comments, sets her bottle down and slides behind Briana in her swivel chair. "....working non-stop since early morning."

With Bri's Parliament still between her incisors, Joanna stretches her fingers out like tines of a fork and combs Briana's auburn hair upward, fluffing it gently in a slow, sweeping gesture. Then Joanna presses the pads of her fingers against Briana's head and slides them along her scalp with a modest pressure to soothe away the tension of that seven hour data analysis marathon.

Joanna seizes her roommate's attention utterly; the surging relief from the strain is irresistible. Brianna groans lightly, melts and lets her head drape backward into Joanna's caressing, healing hands, secure knowing that this woman can massage away the aches, and refresh her for the conclusion of the final report.

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As Joanna kneads away her roommate's fatigue, she maintains the Parliament secure within her teeth, and from time-to-time presses her lips shut around the mouthpiece to haul another token thru the increasingly amber-stained filter.

She ejects the denicotined fumes.

Cascades of tumbling clouds waft from her nose right into the tousled strands of her friend's auburn coiffure. The new smoke floods within the dense mesh of red hair and embedded, seeps back out reluctantly, in ghostly, curling tongues as though it were an early morning fog burning off of a pond.

The illusion of her friend appearing to be ignited and radiating fumes excites Joanna. She prolongs the rubbing, directing her hands down onto the slender neck of her patient. Again Brianna responds with a murmur of muffled pleasure as her head and neck feel new waves of warming relief. The soft mutters of delight raise Joanna's sensual sensitivity even more, and now she includes her friend's shoulders in the overall therapy, forcing her fingertips to furrow along the shoulder muscle's general conformation.

Finally her cigarette needs a de-ashing, and Joanna pauses the massage session. "How much do you have left to do?" she asks. She decides the cigarette has no more attraction for her and crushes it out.

"I've gotta block in the conclusion and the whole front end needs a final audit."

"Final audit?" Joanna is puzzled.

"Math errors. Formula recalculations. Making sure the data support the conclusions," Briana says, "I'm thinking an hour, maybe two before I send it off to 'em."

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“Babe, wouldn’t this be a good time to take a cigarette break?” Joanna proposes seductively, returning to the rear of her friend’s chair. Placing her hands over Brianna’s shoulder blades she presses her thumbs along the spine to carefully realign her upper vertebrae.

Brianna is puzzled by her companion’s query, but ignores it. Joanna gets the effect she wanted: Brianna is, once more, in her power; sitting a little straighter and arching her back slightly. Another soft moan escapes her relaxed mouth. Now the massaging hands move around to the front and begin caressing the drape of her neck and the contours of her chest.

Brianna’s silence, as the saying goes, gives consent, so Joanna reaches further down to envelop in circular massage those blouse-draped breasts just below. Her supple stimulation eventually stiffens her lover’s nipples, signaling Brianna’s rising excitement. Bri lifts herself to press her chest more firmly into those magical hands, breathing more slowly, and with deeper inhales.

The intensity of the interchange increases as Bri rises from the chair, writhes around to face her lover in a rapturous embrace. Their limbs intertwine and pull themselves into an even tighter clasp, all the while moving rhythmically to a primal tempo that both understand. The joy and heat of the moment sends garments to the floor as they seek each others’ erogenous vulnerabilities and then play on them for maximum effect.

This growing passion achieves the climactic level, accompanied by kisses, cries and such when the sexual tension is finally released. Then another round of orgasmic sensations follows the initial one, creating cascading climaxes sufficient to exhaust both women to supine submission. Overwhelmed by their success, they lay on the floor, panting.

While both women are lying on the carpet in a pleasure coma and gasping for air, it is Joanna who rises so she to throw the office window open. “Let’s open this freakin’ place up,” she says flinging up the wood-framed panes. “We need to breathe some real air for a few minutes!” Then she drops back down to the carpet with her back propped up against the wall, her chest still heaving for lack of oxygen.

The wintry, cold clean air floods in from the freezing outdoors, dropping the room’s temperature a degree per minute. To the overheated bodies on the floor, the cooling is welcome.

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Brianna blinks her eyes and sits up. The sudden blast of frigid air energizes her to mobility once more. She seeks her box of Parliaments and sees them on the computer table. She crouches to stand and walk in that direction.

“Oh no you don’t,” Joanna’s voice commands from the distant wall. “You’re still on cigarette break!”

“What do ya mean?” Brianna challenges. She remembers her earlier comment but thought it was just satire. Now she has to know what Joanna really meant, “How can I go on cigarette break when I’m smoking as many as I want as often as I want?”

“That’s just the point! You’re just burning through ‘em. You need a break....from cigarettes!”

“Cigarette break from cigarettes?”

“Yeah. Give it rest for little while. Do your lungs a favor,” Joanna replies. “And let this room clear out for a few minutes.”

Bri starts to laugh, which brings on a brief fit of coughing. “Yeah, Okay. I get it” she says between coughs, “I’ll back off for now but you can’t leave that window open much longer or we’ll both freeze to death in here!”

“I’ll close the window! You leave that pack alone for five more minutes. Okay?” Joann is adamant.

Looking toward the open pack of Parliaments hungrily, she starts consulting the clock on her computer screen, “Okay. I’m off the ‘nic’ until one fifteen. That should make you happy.”

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Joanna nods a 'yes' and Brianna baby-sits the monitor with an unlit Parliament protruding from her mouth, lighter in her hand, counting 300 seconds until ignition.