

20 Class A BFF's

by Freida Theant

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"I carry twenty Class A BFF's in my pack and each has its place in my routine. I could open the pack in the morning, pull 'em out and write labels on each; knowing that it would accurately schedule my day's cigarette use," Toni asserts, placing her slowly staining filter of this smoldering cigarette between her lips to punctuate her message with a glow-tipped pull.

It yields yet again another reward; that invigorating, renovating mouthful of flavor drawn down her lungs. She gives the pulse enough time to steep her lungs a few heartbeats before returning the flowing balm up through her nostrils and outward in a stream to penetrate the air beyond, tumbling in lazy curls destined to spiral into terminal dilution. Residual smoke tendrils continue to escape the corners of her mouth and nostrils, but well neigh invisibly as she narrates her usual daily smoking.

"My dearest angel of the morning is my very first cigarette! You know the one that greets you after rising. Really, that's my very favorite; the star, giving me the greatest pleasure. I even take my time when I light it up. I watch as the flame cuts into its tip and sends off that first curl of smoke. That early morning drag, that first inhale; it's heavenly and I just don't get that kind of pleasure again until the next morning. I do so savor that very first inhale!"

"My next angel-touch is that cigarette that follows my pouring of my opening cup of coffee. That ciggie's almost as good as the very first, and made better by the wonderful blend of the rich deep, hot coffee running down my throat, with the rasping feel of my number two BFF charging my depths."

"Oh yeah; when my exhaled smoke drifts across the top of the coffee, the steam of the coffee combines to form these delicious billows that rise up and cloud my morning like in a dreamscape."

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"My next few BFF's get me through my makeup session. The first one I get lit up actually opens my routine so I start by applying cosmetics with the cigarette held firmly in place by my lips so I can concentrate on the activity viewed in my vanity mirror to work hands-free. This cigarette is always ready so I take frequent and rapid hits on it as often as I want. I shoot the smoke up through my nostrils a lot in this mode, maybe not even bothering to send it to my chest."

"When the first makeup cigarette gets short I can feel the heat near my lips so I place the unlit face of a successor right over the cherry and draw hard on it. Within a couple of drags I have the replacement up and smoldering, and just as before, smoking on demand without my hands. It's even more important to me to smoke hands free while I cover my nails with polish 'cause there's no way I can pull a cigarette in and out of my mouth while painting with that tiny brush. If it's a complex session, I can go through four cigarettes that way. But mostly it's three or if I'm rushed, two."

My next two BFF's help me drive to work in my Chevy, unless there's major traffic jams or road construction. Then it's more like 'my next five BFF's'. And I don't smoke these like I do the makeup cigarettes, neither, which was rapid-fire; quick, hard drags and short nasal bursts. Nor even like that first wake up cigarette, which I admit, I smoke lovingly and slowly. No, these guys, I smoke depending on the road conditions, but always with my driver's side window down one third. If the traffic is frantic, I pull on these cigarettes neurotically. If I'm driving along smoothly and especially passing other cars, the drags are leisurely and the inhales long and deep, where they actually satisfy for a change. You can always tell when I'm driving in a happy frame of mind, because my exhailes flow out my window, smooth and unbroken smears of chalky smearing out in the wind."

"Now when traffic creeps along slow and it looks like I'm going to be late for work, that's when I smoke aggressively and I tear hits from the filter. I force the smoke through my nostrils harder and don't even really feel pleasure in the smoking; just a lot of aggression punctuated by clouds. It's like I'm trying to speed the logjam up by tearing harder on the cigarette; the more smoke I yank out of it, the higher the level of revenge I exact."

"Now the last of the commuter BFF's is one which has to be timed just right; I don't light this one up until I can tell that I'm only fifteen minutes from work....too late and I have to put it out only partly smoked; too soon and I don't get to finish my 'endgame' in the parking lot."

"And now I have to go for about 2 hours before I can even think about a smoke break. Us

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smokers leave the building by the back exit into dumpster alley, where we all light-up for about 15 minutes. This is usually about 10:00 sometimes as late as 11 in the morning. Normally there would be seven of us depending on the day since some employees don't work every day of the week; so the number of smokers will vary. We all work the phone banks for a customer service company, where we assist customers with issues they phone in."

"And you know it's funny, I can always tell what kind of a morning a phone rep had by the way she starts her smoke break. When a phone service rep had a stressful customer you can tell instantly by how she lights her cigarette at the beginning of the break. I mean she tears the cigarette out of the pack and jams it into her mouth and her lighter follows right behind as she pastes the flame to the tip where the force of her pull angles her cigarette up and the glower of the super hot cherry actually gives off light."

"Even when the morning has gone normally, the smoking is just a little frantic. I mean, you're trying to get at off at least one BFF down by the halfway mark so you can get the second one lit up and finished by the time the fifteen minutes are over, so a lotta gals power smoke their way thru both cigarettes. They light the second cigarette off of the first and double or even triple pump, pooling up the dose in their mouths, and drop the triple hit into their chests for long holds, until they force storms of white back out their mouths and nostrils. It's not the relaxing picture they used to show in cigarette commercials of the 1970's by any means."

"The good thing about working the phone banks is that you don't hafta worry about the cigarette smell when you waltz back in to work 'cause your only contact with the customer is by phone, but upper management is sensitive to the smell, and they know who declared themselves non-smokers for the purposes of health insurance, so you still hafta be careful."

"Now lunch break is a half hour, so I light one of my BFF's while I start walking to lunch, unless I decide to go to the park. The city forbids smoking in public places, so if you decide to lunch on the park bench, you'll need to go back to the street to smoke. Nobody eats their lunch in the dumpster alley, it's just too smelly. Some smokers eat their lunch inside their car in the parking lot, and when the weather is mild, so do I. That way, I smoke both before, during and after my meal. That's the most relaxing smoke of the day at work. I love it when I can drink a really cold soda and enjoy my cigarette at the same time.... long cold gulps of Cola accompanied by deep inhales of my cigarette. What a treat!"

"The second cigarette break is just like the morning, except here I usually have to give away

one of my BFF's. Nearly every day, someone runs out and asks one of us for a cigarette to get through the afternoon. I can almost count on being asked three days of the week. Sometimes a rep forgets her cigarettes back at the desk, and other times she runs out unexpectedly. And of course, there is always that excuse, 'I'm trying to quit, but can I have one of yours as my last one'. More often than not, the gal who says she's quitting smokes like a pro, with full deep drags and long relaxed exhales, leading me to believe that that she has no intention of quitting anytime soon. And in fact there have been times when she asks me for a cigarette days afterwards. Lots of times this rep doesn't work with for our company for very long, anyway."

"The drive home is a lot like the drive in to work. The smoking pattern is the same, but now the pack is much lighter. I think I'm more careful in how many cigarettes I light in the afternoon considering how many cigarettes are left. I suppose I smoke them with more personal attention, not just to blow smoke but to actually enjoy the experience."

"Once I get in the door at home, I pour myself a glass of Chablis or even a Sauterne, pour some bird feed into the parakeet's cage, drop myself down into my easy chair, and blend my cigarette fumes with the vapors of the my favorite vintage. It is a heavenly moment, almost equal to that first cigarette of the morning. This one I smoke taking my time to savor those twin aromas as they permeate my lungs and soften my brain."

"If I'm going to eat dinner at home, this is when I put my only meal together, sometimes with the help of a cigarette and other times without. Maybe my girlfriend Kara will join me for dinner and an evening of television, or movies and intimacy afterwards, depending on whether or not she's in town. She stays at my place on those evenings when her flights bring her to Philadelphia and on those occasions, she brings her own cigarettes so that by the end of the evening, my ashtrays mingled the white filters from her butts with the cork colored ones from my pack."

"Kara's life's work is in national sales so she isn't free to smoke as freely as me. With constant flights across the US and airport restrictions, and increasing hotel rooms forbidding smoking, she has fewer opportunities to enjoy her cigarettes than I do. When she does relax, like here in Philadelphia, she appears to be a heavier smoker than me. Because every opportunity she has during her free time, she tries to make up the difference between the restrictions and her personal preferences. I wasn't surprised to discover she even incorporates smoking and wine drinking into our acts of intimacy. Our bedroom sometimes carries a thicker pall of smoke in the air than a poker game."

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"To break things up, she enjoys a long hard pull on her cigarette after a gulp of her Riesling, and passing the vapor laden smoke straight into my mouth, where I inhale deeply her tingling, warm gift and let it permeate my chest. After a few hits like that, we both feel giddy and ready for the climax sure to follow."

"Well that kinda evening polishes off the last of my pack of Class A 20 BFF's. Not every day ends quite so well as the one I just described but most go pretty much like this."