

ONE LAST CIGARETTE

Caught up with Tom last week. Hard to believe we were in the same Uni year, the way he looked. He's either working out, or Dorian Gray reincarnated. It's been a long time since I talked to anybody about exercise (when you're still smoking, this doesn't often come up).

In any case, I have a stock list of excuses. A couple of laps in the pool? I'll just relax on the sidelines with a cigarette thanks. A trip to the gym? Some other time. What about a quick game of squash? Are you joking? I have half a pack to get through! You know the sort of thing...

That said, I've had to get pretty inventive around the workspace lately... the place is replete with top level management toadying to hand-picked consultants. The incessant 'productivity through activity' schemes (as if it wasn't already too late) would drive a man to drink. Last week I endured participated in another one of their get-togethers - six of the team compliance personified and the rest of us, including yours truly, giving our passive aggression a workout if nothing else as we lit up in the courtyard and contemplated our futures.

Some day we'll get even. I'm giving it some serious thought while I have one last fag...

Yesterday, I went for a walk. For some reason, I started to think about my old Uni... late nights cramming for next day's exams fuelled with takeaway meals, roll-up ciggies (no, not the kind President Clinton assured us he didn't inhale) and the odd cask of red when we had the cash. Most mornings we were all half dead - pale skinned young men and women with large doses of self-pity who nevertheless managed to graduate.

Myself, Tom and one or two others graduated with honours, though even then Lady Nicotine had me in her cold embrace. No blind beggar was ever more abjectly led by his dog, or more loathe to cut the string than I.

Two weeks ago I met Helene. Actually she was jogging in the opposite direction and we collided - an impact I didn't see coming through the fog of smoke. I was on a new (no, I mean really new), exercise regime. You won't have heard of it, because I just made it up. It's called Health by Stealth and here's how it works. Walk until you feel Lady Nicotine tap you on the shoulder. Slow down. Engage in abject dog routine (which is what I was doing when I met Helene). Under the premise fresh air is good for you and your lungs are desperate, walk some more. Repeat as required.

And here's the kicker. One day, on one of those repeat walks, something happens.

Really! Lady N stumbles; unable to compete with nature's little reward and pleasure receptors, those good-time no-shame freebies called endorphins. Her cruel embrace loosens...

I'll keep you posted...



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