

QUITTING

Tomorrow is the great awaited Smoke-Out.  
Today I'll implant steel rods in my spine,  
Rev up the old will power, chase off doubt,  
Command my grody craving to resign.  
I started on the countdown when I woke;  
My leather case contains ten weeds I broke  
In half. I'll ease up on the dawn's taboo  
Dispassionate and calm, sans ballyhoo.  
These things are simple if well-planned; I'm set.  
Just keep it cool, that's all I have to do.  
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

I won't be like those chronic bores who tout  
Their victory over habit's fist. I'll shine  
With sheer example, careful not to sprout  
White wings and halo. Gracious and benign,  
Not spewing sermons, just a quiet stroke  
Of genius in the frenzied fumes. An oak  
Against temptation. --Maybe if I chew  
Some gum this urgency will pass, this corkscrew  
In my brain demanding ransom. Gee, I bet  
Myself I'd last till breakfast. I've had two!  
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette!

Now drop your voice an octave, please don't shout.  
Don't jump ahead so far, don't undermine  
Resolve before you've started on the bout.  
Relax. This system's gonna work just fine.  
When I feel weak I'll give my pride a poke  
And hole up in my office, maybe stoke  
The bod all day with candy bars in lieu  
Of lunch, and coffee-up with stronger brew.  
Relax. And do whatever seems to whet  
Determination. --Is it really true?  
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette?

It's times like this I'm glad I have some clout.  
I'll work alone today. Those sorry swine  
Across the hall will puff cigars and flout  
Good breeding, gesture with their full packs, dine  
Amid the burning of the leaf, provoke  
Me past endurance. Hopefully, they'll choke.  
--My ashtray's nearly full of residue  
And this makes ten. I'll never make it through!  
But hey, hang on, they're halfies, don't forget.  
I'll save my next for someone wearing blue.  
Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

(cont.)

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 I'll save my next for someone wearing blue.  
 Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

Our head of advertising is a lout  
 But all his suits are blue. "Call Mr. Stein,  
 Miss Pitts. And bring more cake and sauerkraut.  
 Yes, buzz me when he's off his other line."  
 Oh, cut the sheep dip, rise above the hoke  
 And pull the act together. Guzzle Coke.  
 Get hiccups. Faster! Eat that cold ragout.  
 My stomach's rolling like I'm getting flu.  
 Well, that would do the job. I've never yet  
 Smoked then. With luck, pneumonia will ensue.  
 Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

Now see? It's not so bad, this rendezvous  
 With grave decision. I've pulled off a coup  
 To free this realm of nicotine. My sweat  
 Has made me strong. I'll rule the corporate zoo!  
 Tonight I'll have my final cigarette.

--Glenn Holloway

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(Form: chant royal--60 lines, iambic pentameter,  
turning on 5 rhymes throughout, ending with an envoy.)