

Quitting is, Quite Literally, a Bitch

by Kris Thompson

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Cast of Characters

- ED: Late 40s, early 50s male, almost x-smoker, married to Shelly.
- SHELLY: Late 40s, early 50s female, wife to Ed.
- DESIRE: Any age sexy female...the embodiment of Ed's addictive nature.

Place

Ed's home office. There is a door to the living room and a door to the back patio. There is also window seat beneath a window that opens to the patio/yard.

Time

Weekday

ACT I

Setting: Ed's home office.

At Rise: Ed sits at the desk, looking at paperwork, his hand nervously tapping the desk.

(SHELLY enters from living room carrying a cup of tea.)

SHELLY

I brought you some tea.

ED (grumbling)

Tea? How about some coffee?

SHELLY

Ed. You know if you drink coffee this late in the day you won't be able to fall asleep tonight.

ED (sulking)

Won't be able to anyway. God, Shel. This sucks. I can't concentrate. All I can think about is-

SHELLY (sweet)

-I know. I'm sorry. You know the first couple of days are the hardest.

ED

Yea...that's why I can't ever get past the first couple of days.

SHELLY

Ed...You're not getting any younger. It's starting to take its toll.

ED

Yea I know. I know you're right. I just-

SHELLY (interrupting)

You'll do it this time. I know you will.

ED

Maybe I should wait until after my deadline.

SHELLY

(Puts tea down on desk and kisses ED'S head.)

There's always going to be a reason to wait.

ED

End of the month. I think it's a better plan.

SHELLY (heading to door)

Give yourself a chance. It's only been 22 hours.

ED (sarcastic)

Only 22!

SHELLY

No one said it would be easy. Kicking a 28-year-old habit is going to take some discipline.

(SHELLY exits to living room.)

ED (muttering)

Discipline is overrated.

SHELLY

(OS) I heard that!

ED (shouting)

Well...it is!

(Tries to busy himself with his papers, jotting a few notes. Finally, frustrated, he throws his pen down.)

Screw it.

(Stands up, and starts hunting around hiding places, looking for hidden cigarettes in the desk, in the pencil holder.)

Come on.

(Search continues as he spots a box up high on a shelf.)

Ah Ha!

(Pulls his chair over to the shelf, stands on chair and picks up the box.)

(prayer to self) Please. Please. Please.

(SHELLY enters, first surprised and then expression turns to knowing.)

SHELLY (knowingly, slightly scolding)

Edward.

ED (matter-of-factly)

Shelly.

SHELLY

What are you doing?

ED

Finishing chapter eighteen.

SHELLY (sarcastic)

While standing on a chair?

ED

I needed a new perspective.

SHELLY

Uh-huh.

ED (playfully defensive)

(Steps off the chair.)

You don't know me.

SHELLY

After 20 years of marriage I'd say I know you pretty well.

ED

Says you.

SHELLY

Maybe even better than you know yourself.

ED

Bold statement.

SHELLY

For instance, I know that you personally cleaned out your stash from that very box the last time you quit smoking, three years ago.

ED (Opening Box)

Did I? (disappointed) Damn.

SHELLY

Listen, I've got to run a few errands in a bit. Anything I can get you while I'm out?

ED (Closing Box)

As a matter of fact, two packs of-

SHELLY

Other than cigarettes? The patch? Some nicotine-gum?

ED

No thanks.

SHELLY

An e-cigarette perhaps?

ED

I'll cold-turkey it, thanks.

(ED puts box down, SHELLY embraces him, he begrudgingly hugs back.)

SHELLY

Just remember...that which does not kill us makes us stronger.

(Kisses ED quickly and breaks embrace, heads for living room door.)

ED (sarcastic)

Thanks for the Facebook philosophy, Shel.

SHELLY (over her shoulder)

It's Nietzsche.

ED (sarcastic)

Right. Wow. 19th century motivation.

SHELLY (moving to door)

Let your love for me be your motivation.

(Exits door to living room and closes door.)

ED (loudly)

Love is a serious mental disease. (pause) Plato!

(Sits at desk, talks to himself, grumbling, muttering.)

Plato. I think that was Plato. (long pause) OK. Give it up, chapter 18.

(ED starts typing when he hears a noise OS back door, looks toward back door, waits a moment, and then returns to typing for a bit until he hears another noise OS back door. He gets up, looks around for a weapon, spies his commemorative baseball bat hanging on the wall, grabs it, and goes

to the back door, opens it slightly, peers out, opens it wide, steps out, and momentarily returns, speaking while closing the door behind him.)

ED

Great. Now I'm hearing things. (pause) What I wouldn't give for a cigarette.

(Backdoor opens and DESIRE enters in a flourish. She's dressed as a sexy 1920's cigarette girl in red with a pillbox hat. She has a tray held by a neck strap containing cigarettes, cigars, etc...She is barking out her "sales" call as she enters and, startled, ED simultaneously pivots brandishing his bat.)

DESIRE

Cigarettes! Cigars! Cigarettes!

ED

(Pulls back the bat as he's almost taken a swing at her.)

What the hell?

DESIRE (not fazed by bat)

Hello Ed.

ED

Who the hell are you?

(During dialogue, DESIRE removes tray, puts down and ED lowers bat.)

DESIRE (sexy)

Come on, Ed. We go way back, you and I.

ED

Excuse me? I don't know you. I think you have the wrong Ed.

DESIRE

(During dialogue, gets pack of cigarettes from tray, opens, gets one out.)

I can't believe you don't recognize me. (Offers ED the cigarette.) Cigarette?

ED

Um...

(Looks at the door to the living room.)

...no I'm...quitting.

DESIRE (sarcastic)

Right. You're quitting.

ED (defensive)

I am!

DESIRE (sarcastic)

You've totally convinced me. (Lights her own cigarette.)

ED

Excuse me but we don't allow smoking in the house.

DESIRE

Really Ed?

(As she speaks, she walks to the shelf, picks up a small decorative bowl, goes to the window seat, opens window, sits in a provocative pose in the window seat, and smokes, blowing her smoke out the window.)

As I recall, you and I would sit right here and sneak cigarettes whenever we could. Usually cleared the smell out by the time Shelly came home. Although sometimes she would-

ED

OK, seriously! What is this? Some kind of test? Hidden camera thing?

(Looks around for hidden cameras.)

DESIRE

Wow. You've become paranoid in your old age.

ED (incredulous)

My old age?

DESIRE

(Gets up and starts circling ED.)

Look Ed, I'm not here to throw around platitudes on aging gracefully-

ED

Aging gracefully?

DESIRE

(Flirtingly drags her fingers across his belly as she walks around him.)

-or to help you feel better about that spare tire you're developing-

ED

(At first responds positively to the touch, then realizes exactly what DESIRE'S said and defensively speaks.)

Hey, I work out three times a week.

(During dialogue, DESIRE sexily drags her fingers through ED'S hair who at first responds positively to the touch until he realizes exactly what DESIRE'S said and defensively speaks.)

DESIRE

-or to point out that there are many off-the-shelf hair care products for men that could help you with that grey. (Pause) Or to-

ED (defensive)

Alright! I got it!

DESIRE

You want a cigarette, right? Lost your hope chest?
(Nods to the box on the desk.)

ED

How'd you know about-

(SHELLY enters, startles ED who swings around brandishing his bat. She cannot see or hear DESIRE. ED misinterprets SHELLY'S reaction to the bat, thinking she's seen DESIRE.)

SHELLY

Ed!

ED

(Still holding the bat threateningly in the air.)

I swear Shelly I have no idea what's going on.

SHELLY

What's going on is that you're holding a bat over my head!

ED (becoming aware)

Oh. Yea. Sorry. (Lowers bat.) Shelly, I really have no idea who-

(During dialogue, SHELLY heads for open window and shuts it while speaking, totally oblivious to DESIRE who continues to smoke and is rolling her eyes, and subtly acting like SHELLY is boring and annoying.)

SHELLY

-Who what? Who opened the window? I'm not an idiot Edward. You don't think I remember how you used to smoke out the window when you were trying to quit?

ED

I didn't smoke!

SHELLY

(Spots the small decorative bowl on the window seat and picks it up.)
Sure looks like you were about to.

DESIRE (sarcastic, bored)

A real Sherlock Holmes, this one.

SHELLY

You know this is an 18th Century Tibetan Singing Bowl.

DESIRE (bored)

It's a reproduction.

ED

(To DESIRE) Shhhh

SHELLY (sarcastic)

Don't you shush me! Surely you can find an ashtray that isn't a precious artifact from my Father's collection of-

ED (interrupting)

(Puts his hands over SHELLY'S as she's holding the small decorative bowl.)
Shel. I swear to you, I didn't smoke.

SHELLY

I didn't ask you to quit. I can't make you quit. You wanted my support. You asked for it!

ED

I did. I know. I do!

(Kisses SHELLY on forehead, gently takes bowl and places it on the shelf.)

SHELLY (having forgiven)

Alright. Well, I was about to leave for the grocery and I just remembered you were talking about covering up that grey. Want me to pick up something?

DESIRE (triumphant)

Ha! Old man.

ED (defensive toward DESIRE)

Hey.

SHELLY

Hey what? You're the one that said it was bothering you. Personally, I like a touch of grey.

(SHELLY playfully runs her hand through ED'S hair.)

DESIRE

(Sexily blows smoke in ED'S face.)

Let's be honest. (snickering) It's a little more than a touch...

ED (trying to control)

(to DESIRE) Stop it, won't you?

SHELLY (offended)

Jesus! What's wrong with you?

ED

Sorry, I'm...uhhh...

DESIRE

Just tell her you've got a hard-on for a cigarette.

ED (yells)

(To DESIRE) Shut up!

SHELLY

Fine! Get your own damn hair dye.

(SHELLY storms toward door to living room.)

ED

Shel, wait! I wasn't- I didn't mean-

(SHELLY exits door to living room and slams it.)

DESIRE

Finally. I thought she'd never leave!

ED

(to DESIRE) Bitch!

DESIRE

Oh, come on. You wanted her to leave as much as I did.

ED

Great. I've officially gone off the deep end.

(During the dialogue, DESIRE goes to shelf, picks up the same bowl, takes it to window seat, puts it down, opens window and sits provocatively.)

DESIRE

Stop being so dramatic. It worked! This is your excuse. Your insensitive wife picked a fight with you in spite of the fact that you were trying to quit smoking. She knew you were emotionally vulnerable, but she just...kept...picking at you until you just couldn't deal, and you cracked.

ED

A psychotic break then.

DESIRE

Not your fault.

(DESIRE takes a drag of her cigarette, blows smoke toward ED, he breathes in with desire as he's drawn to the window seat and sits beside her.)

DESIRE

She drove you to it. Who could blame you?

(DESIRE puts her arm around ED'S shoulders, and he leans back into her like a mother holding a child...BUT with a slight sexual element. They are very comfortable together, like they've done this a million times. DESIRE takes a drag and then passes her cigarette to ED who takes it, takes a deep drag, and blows it out as the lights come down.)

BLACKOUT