

No Butts About It—He Quit

By WALTER KANER

I have given up smoking.
No ifs, no ands, no butts.

All it takes is a little will-power. This week I crumpled a pack of cigarettes and threw them away. Once I make my mind — that's it.

Feeling proud of myself, I sat down to watch TV. Minutes ticked by. I reached into a pocket, then another, then a third pocket. No cigarettes.

Beads of perspiration broke out on my forehead. I frantically searched through drawers. Empty. My hands trembled as I groped through pockets of every suit. Nothing.

Just then the doorbell rang. It was Doll Face. "I've given up smoking," I announced proudly.

"Again? That's the third time this month," she had to remind me. "When did you stop?"

"Nine minutes ago," I beamed. "Haven't had one since. Some willpower, huh?"

We both began watching TV. I fidgeted, rubbed my neck, chewed on a pencil and began wringing my hands.

"You look a little tense," she observed.

"Me? Ridiculous!" I retorted, chewing on my fingernails.

MINUTES SNAILPACED BY. "You have any gum?" I asked anxiously. She shook her head. "Maybe some candy in your bag?" I asked pleadingly. Again, she shook her head.

"Why don't you nibble on some pretzels?" she suggested.

"They don't taste good, like a cigarette would," I sighed dreamily.

I glanced at my watch. It was ages — almost 16 minutes — since my last cigarette. I paced the floor like a caged tiger. The room reeled around me.

Doll Face opened her bag, took out a cigarette and lit it. "Cigarettes!" I gasped, sinking to my knees. "Give me one."

She snapped her bag shut. "You've stopped smoking, remember?"

The cigarette smoke curled about me. A look of ecstasy swept my face. "One cigarette. Pul-leeze. Then I quit for good."

She shook her head. "I'll take you to dinner" . . . "No." . . . "I'll remember your birthday." . . . "No." . . . "I promise I'll always open the car door for you." . . . No."

I choked back a sob. I stared glassy-eyed at her purse with the cigarettes and wondered what the penalty was for purse-snatching.

I looked at my watch. Twenty-three minutes had crawled by since my last



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cigarette. I was reaching the desperate stage of withdrawal. My palms became sweaty. Every nerve-end screamed for a cigarette.

"I'm gonna crack," I wailed. "I gotta have a few puffs."

"Stop clawing the walls," she scolded.

"You're ruining the paint."

An announcer on TV was bubbling: "Come up to the rich, cool taste of a . . ." I hurriedly switched channels. Somebody was singing: "What do you want—good grammar or a good taste?" I flicked the dial, only to hear a voice saying: "You've come a long way, baby." I snapped the set off.

"Get off your knees and stop the hysterics," she snapped. "The answer is still no."

I turned on the radio for some music to soothe my shattered nerves. A disc jockey was playing "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes". I switched stations but somebody was singing "Two Cigarettes in the Dark."

I dug my crumpled cigarettes out of the garbage pail frantically seeking to salvage one. Nothing.

That did it. I opened a window and threatened: "Give me a cigarette or I jump."

"Have a good trip," shrugged Doll Face.

I phoned my doctor out of desperation. "Doc," I sobbed. "I'm nervous, tense, edgy—what should I do?"

"It's probably nothing," he advised. "Why don't you just relax with a cigarette."

I'm sure he'll never understand why I broke down crying.

THE AGONY was becoming unbearable. Reluctantly, I removed a card from my wallet and dialed a number.

"Hello, Smokers Anonymous?" I cried. "I need help. I can't kick the habit."

"You? Again!" exclaimed an irritated voice. "As I told you before, if God had wanted us to smoke he would have given us chimneys."

"Always remember the warning on the pack," the voice continued. "Smoking may be hazardous to your health."

"So are some women," I muttered, glaring at Doll Face.

"Try to hang on," the voice urged. "Think of something else besides tobacco."

"I've tried," I sniffled. "I tried smoking lettuce leaves."

"You're an emergency case," the voice declared. "We'll get a non-smoker over as fast as we can . . ."

Suddenly I heard sirens and looked out the window.

"Never mind," I shouted into the phone. "There's a fire across the street. I'm going over—and inhale."