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Marlboro Cigarettes

“The Modern-day Marlboro Man”

**Junior High**

 It isn’t something you see coming. At first, you’re a “good girl.” You get good grades, show respect, eat right and have manners. At first, you exhibit all the characteristics of a “go-getter.” You’re on the debate team, the track team and the swim team. You were the girl everyone knew about but no one knew and that was fine with you, at first.

 Your parents never really let you watch television. It was a foreign concept to you. Everyday, after school, your schedule remained the same: snack, homework, playtime, reading, shower, and bed. It was monotonous but you were used to it. It was familiar and it was safe. It was home.

**High School**

 High school isn’t something you necessarily prepare for. Before long, you’re just in the middle of it. You’re in the middle of the gossip, the fighting, the relationships and the friendships. You’re surviving but not like you used to. Now, you want to fit in and not just with the kids on your debate team or in your math club. You want to be noticed by more than just the kids who need help with their homework. You want to be noticed by Him. You want Him to notice you.

 He was never like the other teenagers and he certainly was nothing like you. His sly smile and smooth skin completely contradicted ordinary teenage angst. His black leather jacket and smooth jeans gave him an air of arrogance; an arrogance that attracted even the most flimsy of females. Or maybe it was the way his milky white cigarette sat plainly behind his ear when he leaned against the lockers or sat in the back of the classroom. He was everything you were not and that intrigued you.

 But you were never going to be the one he noticed. I mean, when was he going to notice you? In between classes when your head is ducked in your physics textbook or afterwards when you’re going over your notecards for debate class? You knew you needed some socialization but where could you get it? Your friends knew just as much if not less about relationships and your parents, your parents were the *last* ones who would tell you how to get a boy.

 “Andrea.” He says one word in greeting. Your name. Your heart sinks. You look up to find him staring at you. Were you thinking out loud? “Ethan.” You say coolly, but in reality, your voice breaks. Staring at him, Ethan seems to be everything the media says young men should look like. He is a walking advertisement for cool - his clothing scream “Abercrombie hottie” and his hair give off the sexy “just got out of bed” look. But it’s the cigarette that catches you every time. The slight menthol smell on his lips makes you dizzy but you love it. You wonder how you even know that he smokes menthols. Then you realize. You don’t need to watch television to know what makes him cool. He’s the walking ad that everyone sees. He’s the modern day Marlboro man.

 Immediately you feel shameful. Since when were you the girl that fell into the cigarette craze? You don’t smoke and you never would. But there’s something so worldly about the guy who does. It’s his commercialized appearance. The way Marlboro cigarettes advertise that hot cowboy who has it all, Ethan may as well be that cowboy’s son! You study enough to know that the company who markets those cigarettes, Philip Morris, works hard to market to that demographic. The young adult – those just budding on the age of 18 – the age where you can legally buy cigarettes.

 It sucks and you feel horrible but elated at finding the solution. It isn’t just about the cigarette. I mean, maybe he doesn’t even smoke it. It’s the way you look, the way it makes you feel, the instant popularity and beauty; just like the Marlboro man. Soon, you find yourself wondering about the price of cigarettes as you walk to class. Things will never be the same.