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“The Marlboro Girl”

**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 vain 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. It’s difficult to be the one anyone notices when your head is stuck in Quantum Physics textbooks or you’re smiling at the ground. Not to mention how intriguing your debate cards suddenly are when anyone even approaches you with a question. 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 it coolly, but in reality, your voice breaks. Staring at him, you find that Ethan is the splitting image of every bad boy from every, really bad, teen movie. He is a walking advertisement for cool, with his wrinkled jeans and color contacts. His almond shaped eyes and the beauty marks around his top lip give him slightly feminine but oddly attractive features. He’s so different 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.

Strangely, you begin to feel guilty. Since when were you the girl that fell into the cigarette craze? That girl who thought that cancer sticks were hot completely disregarding that they’re bad for you? You don’t smoke and you never would. But there’s something so worldly about the guy who does. It’s his media approved appearance. The way Marlboro advertises 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 guys just like Ethan. The young adult, ready to go into the world but still looking to be accepted, to be liked, and to be attractive.

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. Maybe it’s time to introduce Ethan to a different side of you. Maybe it’s time to introduce the world to a new type of woman: The Marlboro Girl.