

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.)