

LAST CIGARETTE

By

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FADE IN:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - VICEROY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

The large room HUMS from dozens of running washers and dryers. Sweat-soaked inmates pull and push clothes out of and into machines with precision. There are thirty men here, but only one struggles to keep up.

STAN BLYTHE, 60+, folds blankets as they are removed from a dryer. The old man can't maintain the pace, and the work piles up. Stan wipes his brow and lets loose a series of hacking, wheezing coughs, getting the attention of a guard.

The guard steps up to see Stan's pile and BLOWS his whistle loudly.

GUARD
(to all the men)
Break! Ten minutes! Let's go!

EXT. VICEROY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

The small courtyard is filled with loudly talking inmates, most huddled in groups of four or five. Moving through the crowd we find Stan sitting alone on a bench smoking a cigarette.

He pulls hard, killing an inch in one go. Holding the smoke in his lungs, a look of contentment overcomes his cracked face. With that look, all noise drops out. SILENCE.

STAN (V.O.)
Not long now. Bullshit.
Don't matter if it's another ten, I
can't keep up.

He exhales and watches the smoke dissipate above him.

STAN (V.O.)
Shit's killing me, why do I...?
Fuck it, I know. Gotta have
something.

Another couple of drags and it's down to the filter. Stan pulls a pack of cigarettes from his front pocket. Removes one and lights it with the butt of the consumed cigarette. Another deep inhale.

STAN (V.O.)
Fuck it.

A guard in the distance BLOWS his whistle again, startling Stan back into reality. The noise of the crowd pops back in.

GUARD
(to all the men)
Back at it! Let's go!

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - VICEROY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - EVENING

Most of the men are gone. Only six remain and they are all folding blankets - Stan's job. The lone guard steps up.

GUARD
Blythe!

Stan turns and the guard motions him over.

STAN (V.O.)
Shit. Don't, just don't. I know,
you don't have to.

Stan meets the guard near the entrance of the laundry room.

GUARD
(with stern compassion)
Blythe, you gotta keep up, man. I
know these guys are half your age,
but that just doesn't matter around
here.

STAN
Yeah, I know, I know. I'm doing my
best.

GUARD
Yeah. If you can't pick it up,
you'll have to be moved to lighter
duty. You know that too, right?

Stan pauses to consider it.

STAN (V.O.)
Light duty. Cripples and pussies.
Pay's shit.

Stan responds with a defeated nod.

GUARD
Just keep up.
(beat)
Alright, you're done. Back to your
cell.

Stan exits the laundry room.

INT. STAN'S CELL - NIGHT

Stan sits on his bed, propped up against the wall. He has a "thousand yard stare" as he smokes a cigarette.

His concentration is broken as obnoxious laughs are heard in the distance. Stan quickly puts out the cigarette and waves the smoke away. He lays down on the bed just as a man enters the cell.

He is TYLER MILLS, 25. He's a much larger man than Stan with tattoos covering his muscular arms.

He swaggers into the room, still laughing, and drops onto the bed opposite Stan.

TYLER

Hey!

Stan is the only one he could be speaking to, yet he ignores Tyler.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Hey, old man! What's your name again?

STAN

(without looking at Tyler)
Stan.

TYLER

(laughs)
That's right, Stan the Man. Stan the Man with the Plan.

(laughs)
What's your plan, Stan?

Stan ignores him.

TYLER (CONT'D)

How 'bout you gimme a smoke, Stan?

Stan turns to Tyler, dead eyed.

STAN

How 'bout you fuck off?

TYLER

Fuck off?
(laughs)
(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)

You got some big balls, grandpa.
Big, old balls.

(laughs)

Seriously, gimme a fuckin'
cigarette.

STAN

I'm out.

Tyler doesn't respond immediately so Stan turns back to staring at the ceiling.

Tyler pulls himself up and steps to Stan's bed. Without hesitation, Tyler pounces on Stan, holding him down effortlessly with one hand.

TYLER

Listen. I don't get off messing
with old men, but I'm not gonna ask
you twice - for anything. You're
gonna give me a fuckin' cigarette -
now and any time I fuckin' want.

Tyler presses down hard on Stan's chest, causing him obvious pain.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Clear?

Stan responds by taking the cigarette pack out of his front pocket, popping one up, and offering it to Tyler.

Tyler takes the cigarette and Stan pulls the pack away. Before Stan can replace it in his pocket, Tyler grabs his wrist and yanks the pack out his hand.

TYLER (CONT'D)

That's the plan, Stan.

Tyler laughs, throws the single cigarette onto Stan's chest and falls back onto his bed.

TYLER (CONT'D)

You're welcome.

Stan picks up the cigarette and places it in his pocket. Tyler strikes a match and lights up. He takes a long, deep drag as he stares at Stan, as if to taunt him. Stan looks away and closes his eyes.

STAN (V.O.)

Fuck. You don't know what you just
did, boy. You don't know.

Stan rolls over, his face toward the wall.

FADE OUT.

INT. STAN'S CELL - MORNING

A loud horn sounds as the cell door opens automatically. Tyler springs up, puts on his shoes and exits in moments. Stan is not so quick.

Stan slowly pulls himself up, reaches for his pocket and feels around inside. He finds only the lone cigarette. He takes it out and stares at it in his withered hand then notices the butts on the floor by Tyler's bed.

STAN

Fuck me.

He reaches for his matches and sparks the cigarette to life.

INT. VICEROY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - PRISON STORE

Stan waits in line in front of the wire-meshed window of the prison store. Several inmates before him leave with various small items as Stan fidgets in place.

Stan steps up and speaks to the trustee through the small hole in the window.

STAN

Blythe, Stan. A pack of cigarettes.

The man on the other side pecks at the computer keyboard and squints at the screen.

TRUSTEE

Blythe. Nope, sorry. Not enough in your account for a pack of smokes.

STAN

Listen, I don't have store privileges for another two weeks, but we get paid next week. Can't you...

TRUSTEE

No credit, you know that.

(beat)

You gotta enough for two cigarettes - you want 'em?

STAN

Yeah. Yeah.

The trustee pecks at the keyboard, then pushes the cigarettes through the window. Stan grabs them.

TRUSTEE

Make 'em last.

Stan steps out of line and places a cigarette between his lips. He pauses, takes it out and puts both cigarettes in his front pocket.

STAN (V.O.)

Make 'em last? How the fuck?

EXT. VICEROY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

Break time for the laundry crew again. And again Stan sits alone on a bench, but this time with no cigarette. The sounds of the men around him seem unusually loud.

Stan feels the outside of his pocket, the one with the two cigarettes inside, and winces.

STAN (V.O.)

Make 'em last. Make 'em last. Fuck me.

The guard blasts his whistle and inmates head toward the entrance, a few of them tossing cigarettes on the ground as they go.

Stan gets up and pauses, looking at a half dozen butts on the ground. He relents and kneels down to pick up a few.

STAN (V.O.)

This or nothing. Fuck it.

He hesitates but still puts a few in his pocket.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Back in the laundry, Stan pushes himself to keep up with his task, but he's failing.

The guard and another inmate step up behind Stan. The guard grabs his shoulder, startling him. Stan turns.

STAN

I know. I'm trying. I'm almost caught up. Just...

GUARD

No, it's not that. Well, it is, but listen. Here.

The guard hands a piece of paper to Stan, he takes it.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Go to the supply room, pick up the things on that list. Use that cart.

The guard motions toward a small, wheeled cart and hands Stan a ring of keys. Stan takes them, puzzled.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You can handle that, right?

STAN

Yessir.

GUARD

Good, get going.

Stan steps away from the table and another inmate replaces him.

STAN

(to the guard)

Thanks.

The guard nods and Stan heads out the door with the cart with a hint of a smile on his face.

INT. HALLWAY/SUPPLY ROOM

Stan fumbles with the keys, tries a few in the lock, then finds the right one to open the door.

He pulls the cart into the dimly-lit room and looks around the space. There is a large variety of supplies in the room for cleaning, painting, gardening etc. He studies the list and begins to place items on the cart.

Done with the simple task, he pauses, pops his head out the door, looks around then steps back in. He pulls the cigarettes out of his pocket: three smoked, two unsmoked. Stan places the latter on a shelf and lights one of the former. He takes a drag off the very short butt and peruses the shelves, then looks back at his last remaining unsmoked cigarettes and shakes his head.

STAN

Fuck me.

He looks down at the full cart - something catches his eye. A bottle of bleach with a "toxic" warning. He looks at the other bottles and finds similar warnings. He turns around items on the shelves and finds they all carry warnings.

He glances down at the two cigarettes, then back at the items before him. And smiles.

STAN (CONT'D)

Fuck him.

He quickly takes another half dozen items off the shelves and begins opening them.

INT. STAN'S CELL - NIGHT

Stan walks into his cell to find Tyler laying down. Stan sits on his bed and unlaces his shoes.

TYLER

Where the fuck you been, old man?
You're always back before me. What,
did you get laid?

Tyler laughs and sits up.

STAN

New job.

TYLER

Hot shit! Who says old fucks can't
learn new tricks?

Tyler laughs. Stan smirks, something we've never seen.

STAN

Hm, yeah. New tricks.

Stan reaches inside his right shirt pocket and removes one of his last two cigarettes, a good one. He strikes a match, lights the cigarette and inhales with confidence.

A loud horn sounds and the automatic cell door closes soon afterward.

TYLER

Toss me one.

STAN

Sure.

Stan gets up, reaches inside his left shirt pocket, removes the other good cigarette and tosses it on Tyler's bed.

TYLER

Learned your place, eh? Good man.

STAN

Match?

He hands Tyler a book of matches and sits back on his bed. He takes a drag as Tyler brings the match and cigarette up to his lips simultaneously.

Once again Tyler takes a long, deep drag on the cigarette, taunting Stan with his dominance.

Tyler immediately begins to cough. And cough. And cough. Again and again. Hoarse, dry coughs turn to wet hacking. Tyler covers his mouth and tries to regain composure. No luck.

He looks down at his hand and sees specks of blood. He looks up at Stan to see his widest smile.

TYLER

(cough)

You mother...

(cough, cough)

Fuck..

He can't finish, he's hacking uncontrollably now. He rushes Stan and grabs him by the shirt. Easily lifting Stan, Tyler SLAMS him hard against the wall. Stan falls to the bed and onto the floor.

The exertion causes Tyler to hack more violently, spraying blood from his mouth. He doubles over, grabs his stomach, and vomits forcefully into the toilet. He rises quickly and looks down at Stan on the floor.

Stan's in bad shape. He clutches his chest and gasps for air. Heart attack. Through the coughs, Tyler manages to speak.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Gonna

(cough)

fuckin'

(cough)

Kil...

He hacks and hacks, then stops. Tyler's eyes flutter and he topples over, smashing his head on the metal bed on the way down. He lands a few feet away from Stan, who is still struggling to control his breathing.

Stan sees his still-lit cigarette about a foot away from him. Pushing himself up with his last remaining strength, he manages to inch his way to the cigarette. He grabs it and falls to his back again.

Stan takes a series of deep breathes then brings the cigarette up to his lips - and takes the longest drag of his life, finishing off the cigarette.

He drops his arm down and lays still, too still. An occasional blink is his only sign of life.

His eyes widen and he exhales a huge cloud of smoke.

STAN (V.O.)
Sweet release.

He does not inhale again.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.