

THE CIGARETTE

By David Burton

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CAST: CHARLIE and WILL

AT RISE: WILL stands at a bus stop, looking nervously at his watch.

CHARLIE: (**Enters. To himself**) Boy, this has been a long day. I'm glad it's all over. I can just kick back and unwind. (**Mimes getting out a cigarette**) This is going to be good. (**mimes lighting cigarette and takes a puff**) Ah!

WILL: Pardon me.

CHARLIE: Yes?

WILL: Do you mind?

CHARLIE: Mind what?

WILL: Do you mind putting out that cigarette? I was trying to sit here and wait in peace.

CHARLIE: I'm not disturbing the peace. I'm smoking very quietly.

WILL: But you're doing it in my space.

CHARLIE: I have a right to this space as much as you do. It's a public bus stop.

WILL: It doesn't matter where you stand. I just don't care to smell your smoke.

CHARLIE: I'm sorry about that. (**takes another puff**)

WILL: So...Are you going to move?

CHARLIE: Certainly not. Of course, I won't be offended if you feel the need to go elsewhere.

WILL: That'll be the day. I was here first.

CHARLIE: Means nothing. They make these bus stops with an area large enough for at least ten or twelve people. It's totally irrelevant who arrives first.

WILL: Why are you being difficult?

CHARLIE: I'm not.

WILL: You certainly are. Why can't you either move or put that nasty thing out?

CHARLIE: Why can't you either move or join me in a cigarette? I have extras.

WILL: Funny.

CHARLIE: I'm not really trying to be. But truthfully, you have options, the same as I. So if the smoke offends you, do something about it.

WILL: What do you suggest?

CHARLIE: Moving out of this area comes to mind.

WILL: Forget it! This is where the bus stops. I'm waiting right here!

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CHARLIE: Fine. Go ahead. **(takes another puff)**

WILL: **(Coughs)** That's not fair. If we both stay here, you'll be offending me with your smoke, while I won't be bothering you at all.

CHARLIE: On the contrary...You're bothering me plenty. Your very presence is intolerable.

WILL: Good! Then move away!

CHARLIE: No thanks. I believe I'll stand right here and smoke my cigarette until the bus comes.

WILL: You know you can't smoke on the bus. It's the law.

CHARLIE: Sure. I realize that. I won't smoke on the bus. I'll smoke here. And it's perfectly legal.

WILL: But very rude.

CHARLIE: No, it's not. We're talking individual rights. You have to respect my rights.

WILL: We all have rights. That's what I'm saying! I have the right to enjoy a smoke-free environment.

CHARLIE: Not here, you don't. They've already stripped smokers of most of our rights. We can't smoke in restaurants, on planes, in department stores...even the weary bus traveler can't light up...even after he's paid his fare like everyone else.

WILL: Everyone else doesn't violate your rights.

CHARLIE: Bull!

WILL: Huh?

CHARLIE: You don't know what you're talking about. If some teenager came up to this bus stop carrying his big oversized radio...

WILL: Boom box.

CHARLIE: Okay, boom box. If that happened, we would both have to put up with his loud, obnoxious music. He would have the right to play his music. We would simply have the right to either listen or ignore it.

WILL: Are you saying I should simply ignore these carcinogenic puffs of death while I develop lung cancer.

CHARLIE: Don't think you'll have to worry about cancer, buddy. You seem so uptight about things, I believe a heart attack should be your concern. My advice would be to live your own life and let others live theirs. That's always the best rule. **(puffs again)**

WILL: **(coughs)** How can I live my own life? I can't even breathe properly!

CHARLIE: It's because you use too much air griping about things that don't concern you.

WILL: This does concern me! You're violating my right as an American to breathe clean air!

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CHARLIE: What? Are you kidding me? I'm here to inform you that I'm familiar with the Bill of Rights. As an American, you have the right of free speech. You even have the right to a fair and speedy trial. But you don't have the power to tell me to stop smoking!

WILL: When you're blowing poison into my lungs, I do have the right to insist that you stop.

CHARLIE: Then make me.

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