WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

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FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Light comes from a table lamp and the glow of a television. It's neat, clean, and warmed with handmade items.

LOUISE (50s) sits in an arm chair beneath a lamp and knits something as she watches the evening news.

Cigarette smoke clings to the air. Louise rubs her nose.

LOUISE

You're killin' me. You know that?

JOHN (50s) drab, round belly, sits upright in his lazy boy chair.

JOHN

What?!

LOUISE

Your cigarette. I've cleaned house all day and your cigarettes are stinking it up. Why don't you go outside and smoke?

John grumbles to himself.

Louise puts her knitting down. She goes over to John and much to his surprise, sits on his lap.

Louise crushes his cigarette butt out in the ashtray.

JOHN

Hey! What the hell?

Louise wraps her arms around his neck. She nuzzles him with her nose and gives him a little kiss on his cheek.

LOUISE

Isn't this better?

JOHN

Ah! My leg! Get up. It's fallin' asleep.

She gawks at him.

He gawks back.

Offended, she rises from his lap.

LOUISE

Fine. Smoke.

He watches her leave the room.

John reaches past the clock on the table which reads "7:05". He takes a cigarette from his pack and lights it with a flick of his Bic lighter.

Louise sits back down in the arm chair and just looks at him.

John enjoys a long draw of his cigarette. The smoke rolls over his tongue and barrels out of mouth.

Louise puts on a dust mask.

John notices it. He just stares.

She lifts a can of air freshner from her side and sends a quick spritz toward him. She waits for his response.

Startled and in disbelief, he eyeballs her as he contemplates his next move. John puffs away on the cigarette and shoots a cloud of smoke her way.

On guard, she battles it back with the spray.

John shakes his head.

JOHN

Okay! Why don't you go into the kitchen and get us something to drink?

She takes off the dust mask. She frowns.

LOUISE

You mean let you smoke.

JOHN

Geeze, Louise. I've worked hard all day. It's my time to relax. Why don't you let me relax?

She gives him a dirty look.

Louise sets the spray in the chair and leaves the room.

LATER

Louise comes back into the room with two glasses of soda and a bowl of potato chips.

She hands a soda to John.

JOHN

Thank you, dear. I found us a scary movie to watch.

Louise ignores him. She goes back to her chair and sits as terrorized SCREAMS come from the television.

LOUISE

I bet you can't go a half hour without lighting up.

He makes a face.

JOHN

Back on that, huh?

LOUISE

It's annoying.

Louise crunches on a chip.

JOHN

Not as annoying as you chompin' on those potato chips. I'm trying to watch a movie here.

She lifts another chip to her mouth and chomps down hard.

John gives her an "oh really" look.

He reaches over to the table, grabs a rubberband, and shoots it at her. It connects.

LOUISE

Yeeeooow!

She gives him a dirty look.

LOUISE

You...

John lifts a cigarette from the table and lights it. He inhales then blows the smoke her way.

Louise battles the smoke back with the air freshner.

John is intrigued. He smiles a large shit-eaten grin.

Louise crams a handful of chips into her mouth and chomps down on them disgustingly with an open mouth.

John huffs and puffs smoke out of his mouth, much like the puffs of smoke coming from a freight train.

Louise gets a whiff of smoke. She gags, gets up from her seat, and leaves the room.

Happy with himself, John LAUGHS.

He reaches over and crushes his smoke out in the ashtray.

LATER

Louise comes back into the room, hiding something at her side. She sits down in her chair and turns toward the T.V.

LOUISE

You must be scared.

John looks at her inquisitively.

JOHN

Of what? The movie?

LOUISE

I thought you were a gambling man.

JOHN

Huh?

Louise snaps toward him.

LOUISE

I'll bet you a hundred dollars that you can't leave those cigarettes alone for one hour.

John looks at the clock. So does Louise.

LOUISE

It's seven fifty.

He turns to her.

JOHN

I'll take that bet.

Louise gives a nod of acceptance.

LOUISE

Eight fifty then.

John nods in agreement.

JOHN

Eight fifty.

The two settle down and focus on the television.

LATER

The time on the clock is "8:15".

Louise glances at John out of the corner of her eye.

He toys with his lighter. His leg shakes nervously.

She turns her head toward him to get a better look. He notices and just smiles at her. They both turn back to the television.

LATER

John inconspicuously stretches toward the table. His fingers inch toward the pack of cigarettes.

Louise notices.

LOUISE

John!

She shoots his hand with the rubberband. He jumps.

JOHN

That hurt!

LOUISE

You've got twenty-five more minutes.

JOHN

I was stretching my fingers!

Louise frowns.

John taps his finger nervously on the pack.

LATER

Louise watches T.V., totally into the horror show.

John inhales deeply and lets it out very slowly, twice.

He looks at the clock. It reads "8:42".

JOHN

Screw it!

He grabs the cigarette pack. Takes a smoke from inside.

Louise lifts a spray water bottle from her side. She aims and sprays his hand.

JOHN

Hey!

LOUISE

I knew you couldn't do it! You can't wait eight more minutes?

John perches the cigarette between his lips.

He reaches to his back pocket, pulls out his billfold, and takes some money from inside. He stretches toward her.

JOHN

Take it.

She plucks the money from his fingers and watches him with disgust as he lights up.

LOUISE

You're going to die.

She throws a magazine at him.

John gives her the evil eye.

JOHN

I'm not going to die, but if I do at least I'll die a happy man -- with a cigarette in my hand.

He takes another drag.

Louise, mad as can be, stands. Armed with the air freshner and water bottle, she attacks the smoke with full force and soaks his cigarette.

JOHN

Hold up! Hold up!

Louise stops spraying him. He takes the cigarette out of his mouth and inspects it. It breaks into two pieces in his hand. He tosses it into the ashtray.

John ducks down. He reaches back up on the table and grabs his pack of cigarettes. Louise sprays his hand with water and air freshner.

John takes cover behind the lazy boy.

JOHN

If I wanna' smoke, I'm gonna' smoke. And not you or anyone else is gonna' stop me.

Louise, poised like a cat that's ready to pounce, waits for John to show himself.

LOUISE

Oh, yeah?

A FLICK of a Bic and a flash of light behind the lazy boy.

John pops up. His lips stretch around what must be fifteen lit cigarettes in his mouth. He holds them together like a stogie and takes a puff.

Louise's jaw drops in shock.

LOUISE

I don't believe you.

She turns away and leaves the room.

Proud of himself, John sits back in his chair and watches television. He huffs and puffs on his handful of cigarettes.

LOUISE (O.S.)

Charge!

John freezes, expects the worst.

Louise, now in a football uniform, dashes into the room, pulling a garden hose.

She aims the nozzle at John's face and sprays. Water douces his cigarettes. They disintegrate as they smash against his face.

John gags. He drops to his knees and falls over.

Louise watches him.

LOUISE

John?

He doesn't move.

LOUISE

John!

She rushes beside him. Gives him a shake.

LOUISE

Johnathan, I'm sorry!

He turns to her and spits wet tobacco out of his mouth.

LOUISE

Are you alright?

JOHN

If it means that much to you, I guess I can go outside.

She smiles.

LOUISE

Thank you.

JOHN

Maybe I'll even try to quit. -- For you.

Her eyes brighten.

LOUISE

Aw, Johnny. I love ya'.

She kisses his cheek.

JOHN

I love ya', too, kid.

He wraps his arms around her.

FADE OUT.

THE END