

SMOKE

C.B. Anderson

He'd suffered tortures to the fingernails
and scrotum, and endured the piercing wails
that loved ones made when they were tortured too,
then underwent indignities that few
would tolerate except on pain of death;
but even so, until his dying breath
he swore to God that life dealt no regrets
more cruel than when he gave up cigarettes.

The barefaced pleasures...natural ones like sex
or eating food or laughter that infects
defenseless listeners, and also those
delivered by syringe or through the nose
or in a pill...are similar in this:
when gone, you know exactly what you miss.

Tobacco, on the other hand, affords
no pleasure other than the bleak rewards
of giving in to harm you somehow got
yourself addicted to; for sure, it's not
so easy giving up you know not what—
its tug eludes the mind but grips the gut.

When smoke fills every crevice of your life
you're married to a silent screaming wife.

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