

10,000 cigarettes

a short play

by

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Cast

GLORIA 1

GLORIA 2

GLORIA 3

GLORIA 4

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Under NO circumstances are performers performing this play expected to smoke. All references to smoking may be portrayed simply by miming smoking or by holding an unlit cigarette and acting as if it is lit.

There is NO need to actually light a cigarette at any point during the play.

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SPOTLIGHT ON GLORIA 1

GLORIA 1: 49, 50, 51 -

SPOTLIGHT COMES UP ON GLORIA 2

GLORIA 1 & 2: (JOINING IN) 52, 53, 54 -

SPOTLIGHT COMES UP ON GLORIA 3

GLORIA 1, 2 & 3: (JOINING IN) 55, 56, 57 -

SPOTLIGHT COMES UP ON GLORIA 4

GLORIA 1, 2, 3 & 4: (JOINING IN) 58, 59, 60 !

GLORIA 2: Ta dah !

THEY ALL LIGHT CIGARETTES, TAKE A LONG DRAG. SIGH.

GLORIA 1: So this guy at the funeral –

GLORIA 4: Guy is too kind –

GLORIA 2: This jerk –

GLORIA 1: This jerk reckons that I can't go one minute

GLORIA 4: Without lighting a cigarette.

GLORIA 3: One minute !

GLORIA 2: Ha. Showed him.

GLORIA 1: So time to celebrate ...

THEY ALL TAKE ANOTHER DRAG OF THEIR CIGARETTES.
EXHALE. SIGH.

GLORIA 2: That is one of the great things about –

GLORIA 4: the magic white cylinder.

GLORIA 3: It's perfect for any occasion.

GLORIA 1: "Talking with friends" –

GLORIA 2: the chat cigarette.

GLORIA 3: “Out with colleagues” –

GLORIA 4: the social cigarette.

GLORIA 2: “Having a few drinks” –

GLORIA 1: the boozy cigarette.

GLORIA 2: “Having a few more drinks” –

GLORIA 3: the *boozier* cigarette.

GLORIA 1: “Taking a quick break from work” –

GLORIA 4: the sidewalk cigarette.

GLORIA 2: Not “smoko” or “fag break”

GLORIA 3: – sidewalk cigarette.

GLORIA 1: Much more style –

GLORIA 4: which is what cigarettes are all about –

GLORIA 1: S -

GLORIA 2: t –

GLORIA 3: y –

GLORIA 1: l –

GLORIA 4: e.

ALL: Style.

GLORIA 1: “What a great meal. I’m stuffed” –

GLORIA 4: the *apres* dinner cigarette.

GLORIA 3: Cigarettes always taste better after an excellent dinner –

GLORIA 2: That is if it’s possible for cigarettes to taste better than they already do.

GLORIA 3: “Nothing happening”

GLORIA 1: – the bored cigarette.

GLORIA 2: “Impressing the new man” –

GLORIA 4: the looking cool cigarette.

GLORIA 3: “Breaking up with the new man” –

GLORIA 1: the broken hearted cigarette.

GLORIA 4: “Out for a country drive”

GLORIA 3: – the cruise cigarette.

GLORIA 2: “Pack of Holiday Slims thanks.”

GLORIA 1: The cheap cigarette.

GLORIA 3: “I love you, you’re my best friend”

GLORIA 4: – the shared cigarette.

GLORIA 1: “I’m broke and this is my last one” –

GLORIA 2: the definitely not shared cigarette.

GLORIA 4: “Relaxing in the pergola” –

GLORIA 1: the out door cigarette.

GLORIA 3: Isn’t it interesting how many times smoking is linked with relaxing here ?

GLORIA 2: “My parents don’t know I smoke”

GLORIA 1: – the illicit cigarette.

GLORIA 4: “On a yacht” –

GLORIA 3: the wind and waves cigarette.

GLORIA 4: “On a plane” –

GLORIA 1: the dangerous cigarette.

GLORIA 4: “In a petrol station” –

GLORIA 2: the very dangerous cigarette.

GLORIA 4: I don’t like the term

GLORIA 2: fag,

GLORIA 3: ciggie,

GLORIA 1: smoke. I prefer to call them by their full name –

ALL: cigarette.

GLORIA 3: Derived from the fact that it is a smaller version of its antecedent –

GLORIA 2: Anti – who ?

GLORIA 3: Cedent.

GLORIA 4: Ancestor.

GLORIA 2: Which was ?

GLORIA 1: The cigar.

GLORIA 4: But whereas cigars are

GLORIA 1: big,

GLORIA 2: heavy

GLORIA 3: awkward.

GLORIA 4: The cigarette is –

GLORIA 1: dainty,

GLORIA 2: elegant,

GLORIA 3: convenient

GLORIA 4: and fits perfectly between my

GLORIA 1: dainty,

GLORIA 2: elegant

GLORIA 3: conveniently-well-shaped-for-holding-a-cigarette

GLORIA 4: fingers.

GLORIA 1: I remember my first cigarette. That moment of –

GLORIA 3: Realisation

GLORIA 4: Inhalation

GLORIA 2: Excitation.

GLORIA 1: An awakening of

GLORIA 4: Spirit

GLORIA 3: Awareness.

GLORIA 2: Lungs

GLORIA 1: An Epiphany. I used to hide around the corner and watch him

GLORIA 2: Standing on the verandah,

GLORIA 3: Leaning in the doorway,

GLORIA 4: Hair slicked back –

GLORIA 1: Dark blue singlet

GLORIA 2: And gripped in his

GLORIA 3: Strong tanned fingers

GLORIA 4: The constant flickering glow.

GLORIA 1: I pinched one of his

GLORIA 2: Kents

GLORIA 3: From the crush top pack

GLORIA 4: on the kitchen table

GLORIA 1: Lit it on the stove

GLORIA 2: And after just one puff –

GLORIA 4: I knew

GLORIA 3: Between coughs

GLORIA 1: I had discovered a secret

GLORIA 3: friend

GLORIA 2: conspirator

GLORIA 4: lover

GLORIA 3: God.

BEAT.

GLORIA 1: You can also just call them by their brand.

GLORIA 4: That is also acceptable,

GLORIA 2: As in ?

GLORIA 1: "Hand me a Lucky Strike."

GLORIA 3: "Care for a Dunhill."

GLORIA 2: "Got any Camels."

GLORIA 4: "Would you care to share a Citane ?"

GLORIA 1: Which brings us to another of the great attractions of cigarettes.

GLORIA 3: Their international –

GLORIA 2: flavour.

GLORIA 1: Cigarettes from all over the world –

GLORIA 2: many of which I have tried

GLORIA 4: one time or another.

GLORIA 4: English brands –

GLORIA 2: Dunhill,

GLORIA 1: Benson & Hedges,

GLORIA 3: Subtle

GLORIA 2: Smooth

GLORIA 4: Rich

GLORIA 1: And Classic.

GLORIA 3: Parliament –

GLORIA 2: Very classy.

GLORIA 4: Barclay,

GLORIA 3: Bond Street;

- GLORIA 1: American Brands –
- GLORIA 2: Salem,
- GLORIA 3: Winston,
- GLORIA 4: L & M,
- GLORIA 2: LA Lights,
- GLORIA 1: West Coast
- GLORIA 3: Mustang Filters
- GLORIA 1: East Coast
- GLORIA 4: Kool,
- GLORIA 2: Kent,
- GLORIA 3: The family blend
- GLORIA 1: Newport,
- GLORIA 4: Winchester.
- GLORIA 2: The heavyweights –
- GLORIA 3: Philip Morris,
- GLORIA 4: Rothmans;
- GLORIA 1: Asian Brands –
- GLORIA 4: Eve 120's,
- GLORIA 2: Djarum Filter.
- GLORIA 3: Kim Slims –
- GLORIA 2: I love Kim Slims !
- GLORIA 1: Mild Seven –
- GLORIA 3: Asian cigarettes have the coolest names !
- GLORIA 2: Not to mention Rollies.
- GLORIA 1: Drum.

GLORIA 3: Champion Ruby.

GLORIA 4: Doctor - Pat. (BEAT) European Brands – Capri, Cartier, Merit, Monte Carlo, Pall Mall – let me know if I forget any here. More -

GLORIA 3: I can't think of any more.

GLORIA 4: More - as in the brand.

GLORIA 3: Oops.

GLORIA 1: Multifilter –

GLORIA 4: Dull name

GLORIA 2: but not bad,

GLORIA 3: Surprisingly.

GLORIA 4: Vogue Slims, Virginia Slims and one of my personal favourites – Yves Saint Laurent. Picture me in a small corner shop in Paris.

GLORIA 3: At the counter,

GLORIA 1: dressed in white,

GLORIA 2: hat,

GLORIA 3: scarf,

GLORIA 1: sunglasses,

GLORIA 4: Dior from head to toe.

GLORIA 3: To die for.

GLORIA 4: “One packet of Yves Saint Laurent. Merci. ”

GLORIA 1: Which brings me to another of my favourite things – the cigarette fantasy.

GLORIA 2: I've got a cigarette fantasy ! I smoke ten thousand cigarettes – all at once.

GLORIA 4: Simultaneously ?

GLORIA 2: No. One after the other. Now I know that sounds like a lot of cigarettes but actually - look at this

GLORIA 2 TAKES OUT A PACKET OF CIGARETTES AND PLACES THEM ON THE FLOOR.

GLORIA 2: Now that is twenty five cigarettes –

GLORIA 3: A quarter of a century –

GLORIA 2: Not very big is it ? In fact it's tiny. So you times that by four, you get ...

GLORIA 3: one hundred.

GLORIA 2: (INDICATING SIZE WITH HANDS) Still quite small. Times that by 10

GLORIA 3: One thousand.

GLORIA 2: Still not a lot and then by ten again –

GLORIA 3: Ten thousand !

GLORIA 2: By ten !

GLORIA 3: One hundred thousand !

GLORIA 2: By ten !

GLORIA 3: One million cigarettes !

PAUSE.

GLORIA 1: In this fantasy I am in the most luxurious palace.

GLORIA 4: Silver and gold

GLORIA 3: Heavy oak furniture,

GLORIA 1: polished marble floors,

GLORIA 2: high ceilings,

GLORIA 4: tall windows,

GLORIA 3: framed portraits.

GLORIA 1: History,

GLORIA 2: majesty,

GLORIA 4: class.

GLORIA 1: This house is not my house –

GLORIA 4: it is the fabled Shrangri-la of cigarette lovers

GLORIA 3: across the globe.

GLORIA 2: The Palace of Cigarettes.

GLORIA 4: Le Palais de Cigarette.

GLORIA 3: Cigarette heaven.

GLORIA 1: Once I enter Le Palais de Cigarette, a butler –

GLORIA 3: very regal,

GLORIA 2: English accent –

GLORIA 3: with a voice that sounds like vintage port meets -

GLORIA 2: Golden syrup.

GLORIA 1: Greets me.

GLORIA 4: “Good evening Ma’m.”

GLORIA 1: He bears an engraved silver tray

GLORIA 3: and on the tray is

GLORIA 2: one lone cigarette

GLORIA 1: and a silver lighter.

GLORIA 3: Silver -

GLORIA 2: Not gold.

GLORIA 1: Stylish -

GLORIA 4: Not ostentatious.

GLORIA 1: Now at first I’m a little less than pleased by this.

GLORIA 2: “One cigarette – is that it ?”

GLORIA 3: But I have no need to worry.

GLORIA 1: I light up my cigarette and he leads me up an ornate staircase

GLORIA 4: "To a hall which opens on to hundreds and hundreds of rooms"

GLORIA 1: The hall seems to go on and on – forever.

GLORIA 2: He leads me towards a door.

GLORIA 4: I knock on the solid heavy timber

GLORIA 3: And in a second the door is opened

GLORIA 1: and I'm confronted by

GLORIA 2: "A cowboy in leather boots and a red check shirt."

GLORIA 1: He takes me in to the room which is

GLORIA 2: "An old style Wild West Saloon"

GLORIA 1: and sits me down at a battered wooden table.

GLORIA 3: He pours me a shot of –

GLORIA 2: "Makers Mark."

GLORIA 1: and he pulls out a dusty packet of

GLORIA 4: Marlboro's

GLORIA 2: "tucked underneath his bootstrap."

GLORIA 1: He offers me one and lights it

GLORIA 2: "With a wax tipped match."

GLORIA 1: We sit and drink and smoke and chat about his life and times and then

GLORIA 3: before I know it

GLORIA 1: I'm back in the hall,

GLORIA 2: Butler by my side.

GLORIA 4: "This way Ma'm."

GLORIA 2: Then I'm knocking on another door and I'm back stage –

GLORIA 4: At the Moulon Rouge

GLORIA 3: Surrounded by hundreds of gorgeous showgirls

GLORIA 2: In the most incredible costumes.

GLORIA 1: We huddle in the corner of their cramped dressing room,

GLORIA 4: Puffing on Gauloises,

GLORIA 3: Giggling

GLORIA 2: And gossiping

GLORIA 4: About the glamour of the stage

GLORIA 1: And the mysterious stranger who always sits at the back table,

GLORIA 3: face half covered in shadow,

GLORIA 2: who is rumoured to be

GLORIA 4: a very wealthy Crown Prince

GLORIA 3: with an eye on one of the showgirls.

GLORIA 1: “Me !”

GLORIA 2: “No me !”

GLORIA 3: “No me !”

GLORIA 4: “No – me.”

GLORIA 1: Now I’m on the set of a

GLORIA 2: Fellini movie

GLORIA 4: with the most beautiful woman of all time –

GLORIA 3: “Claudia Cardinale”

GLORIA 2: In my humble opinion.

GLORIA 1: We’re in her dressing room

GLORIA 3: “Smoking a Zenit Triplo”

GLORIA 1: And I’m trying to console her,

GLORIA 4: “Forget Federico’s wild moods”

GLORIA 2: “Trust in your own gift”

- GLORIA 1: “Your pure talent, your – “
- GLORIA 3: “Magnificent beauty”.
- GLORIA 1: Another room and I’m in
- GLORIA 4: “Moscow. The day before the October revolution”
- GLORIA 1: Sitting across the table from
- GLORIA 4: “Vladimir Ilich Lenin”
- GLORIA 1: With a Stolichnye in hand –
- GLORIA 4: “The cigarette not the vodka”
- GLORIA 1: plotting the Tsar’s downfall.
- GLORIA 3: In another room
- GLORIA 2: There’s the whole of the Sydney Cricket Ground.
- GLORIA 1: I’m in the Aussies dressing room sharing a
- GLORIA 2: “Stuyvo with Warnie.”
- GLORIA 1: Then Adam Gilchrist says:
- GLORIA 3: “Hey, you’re not allowed to smoke in here”
- GLORIA 2: “Wuss !”
- GLORIA 1: Warnie just laughs and hands me another. Next I’m in a -
- GLORIA 4: Tokyo restaurant,
- GLORIA 3: Prague café,
- GLORIA 2: Munich beer hall,
- GLORIA 1: Beijing square,
- GLORIA 4: London club.
- GLORIA 1: Every room
- GLORIA 2: Another destination,
- GLORIA 3: Another time,

GLORIA 4: Another magical companion –

GLORIA 1: All linked by our universal passion –

GLORIA 2: the greatest invention of all time –

GLORIA 3: the glue that holds mankind –

GLORIA 4: and womankind

GLORIA 3: together.

GLORIA 1: Le Palais de Cigarette.

GLORIA 2: A living,

GLORIA 3: breathing

GLORIA 4: interactive

GLORIA 1: Smokers museum !

SILENCE. **GLORIA 3 COUGHS. PAUSE. SHE COUGHS AGAIN.**

GLORIA 4: Or should that be Mausoleum ?

BEAT.

GLORIA 2: They had a brand of cigarettes called “Death” once didn’t they ?

GLORIA 3: Yeah. It was cool.

GLORIA 1: It was in a black packet with like skull and cross bones.

GLORIA 2: Brilliant !

GLORIA 4: We loved it.

GLORIA 1: Pity the cigarettes inside were so crap.

THEY ALL NOD IN AGREEMENT.

GLORIA 2: Death cigarettes. Pretty ironic huh ?

**GLORIA 2 LAUGHS. THE OTHERS TURN TO LOOK AT HER.
GLORIA 2 STOPS LAUGHING.**

GLORIA 1: Non-smokers think the danger aspect of smoking is a real turn off.

ALL: Wrong !

GLORIA 3: Smokers love the danger.

GLORIA 4: Cheating the grim reaper,

GLORIA 1: They put their pathetic warnings on cigarette boxes,

GLORIA 2: Spend all this money on tacky adds,

GLORIA 3: Offer us nicotine patches,

GLORIA 4: how to quit classes,

GLORIA 1: breakthrough weekends,

GLORIA 2: spiritual healing.

GLORIA 3: Wrong !

GLORIA 4: Wrong !

GLORIA 1: Wrong ! Don't you understand if we wanted to stop smoking we would.

GLORIA 2: I will give up.

GLORIA 3: Just not today.

GLORIA 4: Like that poet once said: Those something somethings –

GLORIA 3: “half in love with easeful death”.

GLORIA 2: He was talking about smokers

GLORIA 4: Because we recognise that in the end life is

GLORIA 2: Fleeting,

GLORIA 3: transient,

GLORIA 1: momentary

GLORIA 4: and trying to hold on to it is like

GLORIA 3: trying to catch smoke

GLORIA 4: in the palm of your hand.

GLORIA 1: Or maybe we just like smoking too much to give a damn.

GLORIA 3 COUGHS AGAIN. THEY ALL TURN TO LOOK AT HER.

GLORIA 3: Sorry.

GLORIA 2: I think they should start up a Cigarette smokers Hall of Fame.

GLORIA 1: Entry only available for those who have smoked

GLORIA 2: 1,000,000 cigarettes.

GLORIA 4 COUGHS. THEY ALL TURN TO LOOK AT HER.

GLORIA 4: Sorry.

GLORIA 2: Now you might think that is impossible but I worked it out. If you started (COUGHS) at say 14 years of age and you smoked a (COUGHS) and a half a day – not that hard, I do that occasionally – you'd be ready for the Hall of (COUGH) by the time you were (COUGH). Now that would be a (COUGH). I wonder if anybody's (COUGH COUGH). Maybe I could be the (COUGH). The very first to enter the (COUGH COUGH COUGH)

GLORIA 1: Maybe you should reduce the number –

GLORIA 2: 500,000 ...

GLORIA 4: 100,000 ...

GLORIA 3: 50,000 ...

GLORIA 1 COUGHS.

GLORIA 2: 10,000.

GLORIA 3: (TO GLORIA 2) You sounded just like ...

GLORIA 4: Dad.

PAUSE.

GLORIA 1: He lay on a hospital bed for two months coughing just like that. Still didn't stop. He'd sit out on the verandah,

GLORIA 2: Of the hospital ,

GLORIA 1: In a wheel chair, smoke pouring out of the little plastic hole they dug in to his throat. Doctors had given up trying to make him quit. What was the point ? Right to the very end, died with the

ALL: Constant flickering glow

GLORIA 2: Of a Kent

GLORIA 1: in his filthy yellow fingers. Still wearing that stupid blue singlet. He was 47. Wife and four daughters –

GLORIA 2: who

GLORIA 3: all

GLORIA 4: smoke.

GLORIA 2: Nice funeral.

GLORIA 3: Not really.

GLORIA 1: What you need to understand is the trick isn't stopping – it's not starting in the first place. I'll go for two minutes this time. 1, 2, 3,

GLORIA 2: (JOINING IN) 4, 5, 6,

GLORIA 3: (JOINING IN) 7, 8, 9,

GLORIA 4: (JOINING IN) 10, 11, 12 -

THE LIGHTS FADE AS THEY CONTINUE TO COUNT.