

During World War II in London there was a shortage of cigarettes and lots of men and women at that time were smokers. There was an urgent demand for tobacco and anyone on good terms with a tobacconist was considered to be a lucky so and so. To take the place of the regular brands, exotic, highly perfumed kinds of cigarettes appeared on the shelves of the little shops.

There was tobacco from the mysterious East, There was that which came from Egypt, we all knew what that was made from, and it smelt like it as well. The Russian stuff wasn't bad, black and very strong. There was French cigarettes that tasted like garlic, The West Indian stuff was very popular and gave a relaxing effect. To us it did not matter where the tobacco came from, we just smoked whatever we could get our hands on. The brand names enticed us to try them all. Sophisticate, Persian Garden, Desert Delight, Cosmos, A.I., Robust and many others.

There was one brand from Iran called Pasha, that was not a bad smoke at all and my mates smoked them whenever they were available. Pasha were unique among the other cigarettes, because the smoke that they produced was blue with a touch of pink round the edges and due to a special ingredient in this tobacco it was seen that if the smoke was viewed on a lighted background an Eastern dancing lady could be seen and if one puffed very quickly on that Pasha fag, that same one could actually see her remove one of her veils. It took one whole cigarette to achieve this wonder, most of us enjoyed smoking too much to waste good cigarettes in this way. Not dear Charlie, He was very excited about all of this. Someone suggested to Charlie that he try smoking two Pasha at one go on the chance that the lady might just remove the second veil. Charlie said that as soon as he got paid he would try that very thing. I saw Charlie a few days later. He was eager to tell me how the experiment with the Pasha had gone. He said that smoking two Pasha at once and puffing in very quickly he saw the beautiful lady take off two veils. Charlie was very wheezy but happy and he told me on that very night he would try to smoke three Pasha at once. I told him that he could choke whilst trying it.

It was about a week later, a couple of my mates and I were sitting drinking tea at Rosies cafe, Charlie passed by the window, he looked haggard and grey. The boys said that Charlie had succeeded in seeing four of the veils slipped off. We were all worried about his health. Feeling a bit concerned about Charlie next day I went round to his lodgings, I saw his landlady, she said that Charlie was not very well at all, she let me in to see him. Charlie sat in his room, hunched over the table he looked proper poorly. The room was full of smoke and full ashtrays. I spoke to him, telling him how we were all worried about him and that he was carrying

this smoking thing a bit too far and I invited him to our weekly soccer game, the fresh air would do wonders for him. Charlie was adamant that he was in control of the situation and went on to say that he would be trying for the fifth veil. I left Charlie and went home.

A few days later ,it was about eleven at night,I sat reading,enjoying a nightcap,there was a knock at the door,it was Charlie. He looked like death,not warmed up, 'I want some money" he said,"I need to buy a couple of dozen packets of Pasha for my final attempt at the last veil,I must remove it. I have lost my job and have no more money" he croaked at me.

Charlies colour was yellow now and his tongue now blackened hung out of a foul breathed mouth, he trembled and his breathing was very shallow. I said "I will not give you any money for your stupid Pasha addiction,Give it up man! It's killing you! Sending you insane!".

"No No,Charlieè whispered, We love each other, Fatima and I are becoming as one and as soon as I see her shedding that last veil, Fatima has told me only then will she be mine. In all of my life I have never felt so alive". I said "No Charlie I will not help you".

Giving me the sign of the devil Charlie slunk off into the dark night.

Two days later Charlies landlady called me,would I go round. I went and found poor Charlie, lying on his back ,very dead with seven Pasha butts stuck between his thin lips.

I had never seen him more serene. We cannot condemn or judge the man.

He had found his soul mate in a blue and pink cloud of cigarette smoke You see,Pasha never did carry a health warning on the packet.....

David Sankin