

## Idea for a play

by Phillip W. Weiss

I'm thinking about writing a play about how the use of cigarettes leads to a world war. In the future a world government emerges that bans the use of cigarettes, which by that time has become the center of a major social movement, the symbol of which is the cigarette butt. Now an object of reverence to be treasured, cigarette butts have now become a form of currency and are used to measure one's social standing. i.e., the more cigarette butts you have the greater your prestige in the community. Yet there are others who perceive this focus on the butt as a threat to world health and are determined to stamp it out completely. Two groups emerge: the pro-cigarette group or "Butties" and the anti-cigarette group, known as "Breathers." Each group embraces peoples of all races and cultures. For the Butties, the cigarette is a symbol of freedom and liberty; for the Breathers, cigarettes are a threat to public health and world financial stability. By this time tobacco corporations are long gone and have been replaced by cooperatives that grow the tobacco in plantations located on Mars (such cultivation having long since been banned on earth). The tobacco is smuggled back to earth in space ships that have to avoid the system of anti-ballistic satellites deployed to destroy such vehicles. The leader of the Butties is a living legend named Nicholas Tinowsky, aka, Nick O'Teen. He smokes four packs of cigarette per day and has accumulated over 850,000 cigarette butts, making him the wealthiest Buttie in the solar system. His arch-rival is Nolan Smoninski, aka No-Smoke or Nos. Nick and Nos are first cousins. As children they were close friends but grew apart after Nick became involved with the Butties. Feeling abandoned, Nos has vowed to destroy his recalcitrant cousin and destroy all of his butts. A lady is also involved. Her name is Samantha Smokovski, aka Smokie. She is in love with both Nick and Nos, Nick because he is handsome and the wealthiest Buttie in the solar system, and Nos because he is the most powerful politician on earth. Despite her name, Smokie does not smoke cigarettes but is being pressured by Nick to join his cause. Smokie considers joining the Butties but feels a deep loyalty to Nos who had saved her life from a gang of Butties who had tried to force her to smoke. That incident left her traumatized, and she has recurrent nightmares and a pathological fear of cigarettes which upon exposure to the cigarette fumes drive her into a frenzy. The war erupts over a trivial incident that occurred on the Brooklyn Bridge. A young male Buttie mistook a female Breather for a Buttie and asked her for a light. The Breather panicked, started screaming, which attracted a crowd, and soon a fight broke out on the bridge. Soon, the fighting spread across North America and within days became a worldwide conflagration. Although far superior in numbers, the Butties lack the

sophisticated weaponry necessary to prosecute the war, and so must resort to guerrilla tactics against the far superior military forces of the Breathers, whose arms include anti-Nicotine chemical bombs which cause cigarettes to disintegrate and an advanced butte detector, or ADBUD, an electronic device which is capable of locating a stash of cigarette butts within a fifty-mile radius. To counteract these weapons, the Butties develop a pill, called Flash, that is 99-percent Nicotine but is not yet perfected; when ingested it causes the skin to turn a bright green color and induces delusions of grandeur. Soon, Flash is flooding an illicit black market that finds its way into the Breathers' ranks. The Breathers take severe measures to suppress this drug and vow harsh measures against the Butties for contaminating the world with such a vile product. Accusations and cross accusations of criminality fly. Nos vows to bring Nick to trial for racketeering while Nick accuses Nos of a campaign of genocide against the Butties. Undecided over whom to support, Smokie appeals to the women of the world to stop fighting and to exercise tolerance. Millions of women respond to Smokie's appeal and soon huge peace rallies involving millions of women spring up throughout the world. Women demand that the fighting stop and blame the war on the male arrogance. Soon the war morphs into a male versus female struggle, with Smokie emerging as the leader of the women, aka The Ladies. In an effort to form a united front, Nick and Nos send out tentative feelers to each other, but these outreach efforts fail to produce a meeting due mostly to Nick's unwillingness to declare total war against Smokie, something which Nos favors as he feels that Smokie has betrayed him. Meanwhile, on Mars the cultivation of tobacco continues unabated under the command of Johan Deludier who is carefully monitoring the events on earth and is hedging his bet on who will win. Deludier, aka Tobacco Joe or To-Jo, decides to suspend shipments of tobacco, which produces a panic among the Butties who openly accuse To-Jo of being a traitor. Nick proposes a plan to invade Mars to take control of the supply of tobacco and ensure that the Buttie economy remains viable. Learning of this plan from his spies, Nos warns Nick to refrain from invading Mars or risk the consequences, which would be the Breathers launching their own invasion of Mars to destroy the tobacco plantations. Nick warns Nos that if he destroys the tobacco supply, he will flood the world with Flash and destroy human civilization.

Then, while fighting is raging on earth, a surprising event occurs. Earth is invaded by a race of aliens, known as the Duwapis, named after the sound of their voices that sound strangely similar to doo-wop music. The Duwapis live on a planet located in the Andromeda galaxy, one-million light years away from earth. The Duwapis decide to invade earth after they detect that earth has nicotine, a substance that is critical for sustaining Duwapien life. The Duwapis breathe nicotine like humans breathe oxygen; without the nicotine the Duwapis cannot

survive. Due to changes in the galaxy brought on by a massive intergalactic wind that encased the entire Andromeda galaxy in a poisonous haze, all the nicotine in the Duwapien atmosphere was converted into oxygen, which is poison to the Duwapis. The purpose of invading earth is to steal the nicotine and transport it back to their planet. Upon learning of their plans, Nos immediately tries to form an alliance with the Duwapis, but the Duwapis, led by Edgar Buchanan Techonadaquichenotagawatiyegolotakechianaqualadociusezala, aka Techie, refuse to negotiate and instead demand total unconditional surrender or face annihilation. (Part of Techie's name is Edgar Buchanan because while monitoring the earth, Techie watched thousands of Hollywood movies and television shows including the complete filmography of Edgar Buchanan, and in the process became a huge fan of the actor and adopted his name.) Enraged, Nos vows to destroy the invading Duwapis and soon is bombarding the Duwapi positions with canisters containing pure oxygen. Nick offers to help fight the Duwapis and Nos accepts the offer. Smokie, learning of this new alliance between Nick and Nos, proposes a tripartite alliance of the Butties, Breathers and The Ladies to rid the earth of the Duwapis. Unintimidated, Techie rallies his troops and soon the whole of the earth is engulfed in one huge battle as humans fight aliens for control of the planet. For the earthlings, their battle cry is "Cover your butts!" For the Duwapis, their battle cry is "Smell the nicotine!" Then, out of this chaos, nature intervenes. A male Buttie named Boris and a female Duwapi named Celexiagraphalongoprophilia, aka Celia, meet, fall in love, have sex (note: female Duwapis resemble beautiful female Hollywood movie stars), producing an offspring, half human, half Duwapi, who is to become the savior of the planet and the founder of a new cult. His name is Wengahopaling, which in Duwapi means child of hope; among the earthlings he is known simply as Weng. Part 2 of this story deals with the rise of Weng and of his plans to conquer the universe and corner the supply of nicotine.

List of principal characters:

Boris – father of Weng

Celia – mother of Weng

Nick – leader of the Butties

Nos – leader of the Breathers

Smokie – leader of The Ladies

Techie – leader of the Duwapis

**To-Jo – leader of the tobacco growers**

**Weng – half human/half Duwapi cult figure**

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