

Smokers at Jays Oyster House*

Cigarette smoke drifts from the next table
Like the first faint plumes of an ocean fog,
Then thoughts of Uncle Reggie puffing Larks
Through his stoma can't stop them fumbling
For change to feed the machine that feeds their habit,
Two guilty lovers falling into bed.
We guess at the shattered resolve
Beneath those blissful puffs, lost months
Of pep talks to bolster the shaky will;
Then this waving goodbye to the clean life
With its new tastes, new smells, new energy
To ride a bike to the top of the hill.
Oysters on the half shell and Guinness stout
Make their return to the old life easy.
In this dark corner of Purgatory
When temptation slides down the throat
Smooth as jelly, every sinner proclaims
He'll smoke "till his spirit is cured of flesh."
Meanwhile, you and I, two pilgrims
On this nether world's guided tour,
Breathe second-hand smoke vicariously,
Admiring from our lofty vantage
How they wallow in their smoky circle,
Two famous lovers together at last. -*Paul Corrigan*

Paul Corrigan is a wilderness guide living in Greenville. His poetry has appeared in *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *County Journal*.

*As of January 1, 2004, with new regulations in effect, there will be no more smoking at Jay's Oyster House or any other bar, lounge, tavern, or pool hall in Maine.