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The Cigar

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Abstract

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WE WALKED into the inner sanctum. It was filled with books, papers and one gentleman.

It wasn't simple to reach this place. First we had to buzz an outer buzzer, talk to the front man, talk to the back man, explain our purpose, talk to the secretary, knock on the door, and wait. But we walked into the inner sanctum.

The gentleman was chubby and pleasant. He adjusted his glasses and moved some papers. The interview began. Questions and answers. But the notes we took were not notable.

The gentleman had a cigar—a dry cigar that had been chewed instead of smoked. Often during the interview he tried to seduce the cigar with another match. But either the match was too weak or the cigar too strong.

The cigar reached the stubby stage, and wilted in the grasp of the comfortable gentleman. He flicked the ashes without moving.

Later on, however, the gentleman did move. He made strange neurotic motions—slapping at his chest, pounding his tie. This is what we took down in our illegible notes.

Then he stopped talking. He lifted his tie, peered over three chins at the large brown hole smoldering in his white shirt, made one final pound, folded the tie neatly over the burned hole, buttoned the third buttonhole with the fourth button, and went on talking.

Later we mean to go back—inside.