

# THE GOLDEN MOMENT

*Sarah Fosdick*

The difficulty with relaxing is trying to discover the most optimal position in which to situate your body. Otherwise, even one micro-discomfort will inevitably hinder my ability to think deeply about nothing in particular—trapping me forever in the uncomfortable “I-must-scratch-my-ass-now-bardo.”

My fingers are folded together, sandwiching my knuckles between my head and the rough pavement. I have pushed my AirPods deep into my ears, ensuring that I won't fumble to readjust them later. However, once my fingers have finally groped their way to comfort, I remember that I have one last cigarette waiting for me in my jean pocket...and how convenient is it that my lighter happens to be in my wallet! Now I must dare to move my hands yet again to light it, and then—*once I have found that golden zen-like, not so yogi master-like position (the “laying-down-with-a-cigarette-in-hand” version of downward dog)*—I will be absolutely transcendent.

I reach down into my pocket and fumble around for the cigarette. *It's not there, damn it.* Then I remember that I changed my pants, running my old pair through the wash with the cigarette still in the pocket. *Shit.* Now I have to stop at the gas station. Putting my feet in my sneakers is too much of a struggle. God forbid I untie my shoes, so I leave my heels exposed over the folded backs—*a risky move because I must tread quickly*—I don't want to miss the sunset.

When I get back to my spot on the driveway after my arduous trek to the gas station—*this time with the cigarettes*—I have missed the warm glow of the sunset. And now it's chilly. I debate whether I should light a cigarette or go back inside and get my jacket: *light a cigarette first. Then get my jacket, then smoke another cigarette.* I light my first cigarette, but I don't get too comfortable. I enjoy it as much as I can until I put it out and go inside.

I go to my room, choose my grungy but cozy sweatshirt, and go back downstairs to the driveway. I sit down, and retrieve my second cigarette: it's clean, smooth, and oh so beautiful. This time, I am settled. Just as I am about to light it, however, I suddenly crave something else: coffee. *Hazelnut coffee with cream and sugar...* That would really take me to that next level of maximum comfort and bliss. So, I go back inside and make myself a cup of delicious coffee.

Back to my spot on the driveway again, this time equipped with cigarettes, my sweatshirt, *and* my coffee to arm me in this eternal fight for comfort. *This is it.* I put my sweatshirt on, push my AirPods back into my ears, start my music, light my second cigarette, and a dim shimmering starts to peak out from behind everything. I fumble around for a better position, skip to an even better song, and the shimmering now finally starts to burst through.

In between puffs, I gracefully take intermittent sips of my coffee.

I feel like those people you see in old movies, whose timeless faces appear contemplative yet perfectly content—forever lost in the moment at some diner, unaffected by the early morning commotion of the working class ordering coffee to go. *I have reached it.* I close my eyes and savor this highly anticipated, tranquil space in my head for a while.

But instead of completely diving into this space, I can't help but to replay my trip to the gas station. *My guy rang me out today. He had been squatting outside, peacefully smoking his cigarette and watching the sun set. When he saw me, he quickly put it out, went to the counter, and handed me my pack. I almost felt bad for interrupting his evening smoke, but he seemed eager to see me. He's pretty goofy, and I was preparing for his wild statement of the day. I looked down at my red, pulsing, damp heels from the midafternoon rain: great material for a witty quip. For the first time, however, he didn't say anything. I put my card in the slot and waited for it to process. He held out his hand as if he were holding change, and like the absent-minded idiot I am, I held out mine, anticipating him dropping the coins. He released his fingers, and nothing fell into my palm. The familiar act of cupping my hand to catch the change confused my muscles, and my hand tingled. Of course, there wouldn't be any change. During the long, embarrassing seconds of coming to this realization, a playful smile slowly widened on his face.*

I soon find myself with a numb butt and mosquito bitten legs—my signal to go inside. Maybe if my AirPods hadn't died, I would stay out here longer. Next time, I'll make sure they are charged all the way. I'll also bring some bug spray. And a blanket. *And I won't embarrass myself at the gas station again, though I never could have anticipated that joke.* I need to wake up a little bit. I head back inside to go to bed, but I lay awake for another hour—most likely because of the coffee. Or that awful smile.

*“The Golden Moment” is about the never-ending search for comfort. The main character designs an elaborate set-up to achieve this comfort only to fail because of arbitrary outside forces and thoughtful yet ironically trivial decisions.*