

### Crypton

by Freida Theant

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“But Denise, there IS a way to signal hotties if you can’t text’em,” Lauren said, laughing underneath the sun umbrella at the patio table. “You don’t hafta dial their cell if you know Crypton.” She flounced her platinum pixie cut in the breeze and plucked Denise’s smoldering cigarette right out from her slender fingers.

Lauren tapped the Marlboro 100 downward with her forefinger, sending miniature ash shards to the brick pavement before pressing the glossy filter into her mouth. Compressing her frosted peach lips into a partial cone; she drank in the rich fumes for her smoke-starved chest. Ravenous; she pulled enough to advance the ember several millimeters. Respiring the precious fumes deep within her lungs she kept it maybe four heartbeats before releasing. The flow back out was lazy; her diaphragm nudged the warm blizzard in a generous flow, hiding her teeth in its languid exit out her mouth. The afternoon breeze caught the creamy stream issuing and smeared it alongside her cheek into a long streak tailing off to null.

Lauren returned the cigarette to her but Denise held up her hand in a “stop” gesture. Lauren nodded, accepting the remainder of the Marlboro as a gift. Both women took sips from their Cosmos, mixed by outdoor bar where they were relaxing, and Denise lifted her pack of Marlboro 100’s to her mouth and clenched a cigarette with her teeth. Pulling the box away, she plunged the protruding cigarette tip into the Bic’s wavering flame, wagging the flame back and forth until she painted the surface day-glo orange. The smoke spilled through the slit in her lips and the sheet-cloud washed off in the breeze. “What’s Crypton?” Denise asked, her soft brown eyes clearly puzzled.

“Signals. You know baseball players use ordinary body language in a code to communicate? That’s how the catcher tells the pitcher what to do? Well, Crypton is like that. You connect with peeps at the other tables without talking.”

“You mean, like smoke signals?” Denise asked.

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“Yeah, like that. But you gotta know the code,” Lauren confirmed, her blue-grey eyes glittering. “First you gotta find out if they know Crypton. Watch,” Lauren took a short pull on her Marlboro spreading her fingers scissor shape, leaving the cigarette free in her lips. She followed that with a second equally brief drag before scissor-pinching the cigarette again, and jetting the collective smoke from her mouth. “See what I just did? If someone’s lookin right at you from three tables away, I just invited ‘em to talk using Crypton. And remember, KEC; Keep Eye Contact.”

“Okay, how do I know they understood?” Denise asked, instinctively taking a short pull on her cigarette and running her other hand through her cinnamon-colored coif.

“They keep eye contact and repeat what I just did. It means they’re interested, and they know the code. Anything else means they have no clue, or don’t wanna chat.”

“Okay, so now what?” Denise replied, clearly intrigued.

“That depends on what you wanna know,” Lauren said. “Like if you wanna ask ‘em ‘If they’re in a committed relationship,’ do this.” Lauren took the cigarette from between her fingers and held the filter between her thumb and forefinger, as if it were a joint, and took a hit. “Now you keep holding it like that until they answer.”

“Fine, how do they answer?” Denise asked, fascinated that such a code existed, and even more that Lauren would know how it works. With her short, trim body, grape jelly nails and blue metallic eye shadow, she was famous for fashion savvy and shimmery attractiveness, but not her intellect

“If you want, just nod ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or if you prefer to do it in Crypton,” and Lauren retrieved her cigarette, “This means ‘Yes’” She used her forefinger to tap the ash free, striking twice with an exaggerated flair. “This means ‘No,’” and Lauren struck four times as tap-tap and then tap-tap.

“What else?” Denise said.

“Like if you wanna ask someone to dance?” Lauren explained, “Do this.” Placing the filter tip between her thumb and fore finger, she rolled it a half a turn back and forth for three turns, and then took a drag off of it.

“So now I can answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ same as before? Right?” and Denise tapped her cigarette twice. “That means ‘Yes’ I wanna dance?”

Giggling, Lauren affirmed, “Right, that means ‘Yes’, but don’t forget to take a drag after you answer.”

“Why is that?”

“That’s your ‘enter’,” Lauren replied. “It means your answer is done when you take. Now they can say something. Like, ‘Is it okay if I come over to your table?’”

“How do they say that?”

“They’ll do this,” Lauren pinched her cigarette between her first two fingers, and flicked the filter with her thumbnail three times. The ashes shot off in an arc to the ground.

“What if I need ‘em to repeat something?” Denise asked.

“This way,” Lauren said. She lifted the ashtray into view with her left hand, and touched her Marlboro’s ember to the base with her right, and sloughing off the ash by rotating it. Then she took a puff for closure, and a sip from her Cosmo. “BTW, anytime you hold up your ash tray and do this,” and Lauren made a show of crushing out her butt, “It means you’ve just hung up. Game over! Then break eye contact!”

Lauren held her hand upright and made scissor motions with her fingers; Denise promptly passed her another Marlboro Lite and her Bic. "Now there's serious stuff you should know about, but not everybody can do the signals."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you know what a 'snap' is? Lauren asked. Seeing Denise wag her head 'no', she filled her mouth with a hearty pull on the fresh-lit Marlboro, parted her frosted lips until they revealed a luminous cottony cloud instead of her oral cavity. Just as the snowy cloud slid forward and up, she inhaled the mass instantly out of sight. "Now that's a 'snap', and when they send that, it means I want to get laid, and how about you?"

"OMG" Denise exclaimed, "No Way!"

"Way. Now if you answer 'Yes', she might signal this: it's called a 'French' and not everyone can do it. Lauren's toke on the Marlboro filled her with as much white flavor as she could draw. Instead of swallowing the fumes, she cupped her lower lip slightly, just enough to present the bursting cottony mass with an exit slot, and then steadily breathing in from her expanded nostrils formed a milky sheet that raced up and over the crested rim of those harp shaped lips until it squeezed into her nostrils like an upside down waterfall. This inhale lasted longer than usual, as the streaming blanket of fog rushed over the contours of that sensuous rim line to enter her nasal chamber, whitening out her upper lip entirely, and giving her that erotic burn that she so desired.

"How did you do that?" Denise said, mesmerized.

"That'll take some practice, but that's not the point," Lauren said. "It tells you he or she's into Connie Lingus. You know, eating 'meow'..." and Lauren's tongue slowly moistened the filter tip, before sliding it between her lips.

“Eeeuw! That’s explicit!” Denise exclaimed.

“But if a guy likes boy-girl-and-condom traditional, then he’ll show you this,” and Lauren popped the most startling ghostly and pulsing smoke rings, rolling and slithering their way outwards until the winds erased them.

“You’re right, that’s hard to do. But why do all the messages need cigarettes? What if they don’t smoke?” Denise asked.

“You don’t want a partner that doesn’t smoke. Smoke-frees spend all night complaining about the smell, and ‘have you thought about quitting,’” Lauren said. “Now see if you can guess what this means,” and Lauren upended her cigarette fixed in her smoking hand, but ran the pads of her thumb and forefinger up and down the soft, pliable cylinder, before taking a puff.

That’s gotta be a hand job,” Denise answered.

Lauren nodded ‘Yes’ and Denise asked, smirking, “Do they have one for a blow job?”

“They do this,” and Lauren once more filled her mouth with smoke, upended the scissor-clamped Marlboro, and jetted a smoky stream over her hand and straight at the ember, which flared up like a brilliant beacon shining through her powdery blizzard. It took several seconds to empty her lungs, then she asked “Get it? Blow job?”

Both women broke up laughing, and finished off their Cosmos. Denise signaled for the server, and they switched to Long Island Tea for their next round.

“Well, I’ve gotta get back home. See ya tonight,” Lauren said, drinking down her LI Iced Tea and rising. She took another slow and lazy pull on the Marlboro as she turned and walked away. With only her back visible against the border of palms at the edge of the patio, her exiting smoke trailed and swirled behind her in large whirlpools, twisting in ever-widening pallid

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cyclones. Her eyes followed Lauren's departure, and then she noticed that the patio tables closer to the bar were filling up with mostly young patrons in groups of twos and threes. These men and women had seated themselves so as to be in viewing distance of each other, and were talking to their friends while scanning the patio for new arrivals or watching prospective partners already drinking.

Within a few moments of observing, Denise picked up a sense of what her neighbors were up to. She noticed a dishwater blonde as one from a group of four buzzed ladies, gossiping head-to-head and giggling. But Blondie was more interested in the table with three surfer-guys than her chatty BFF's. A tall, medium build guy with a tan heavier on his arms than chest, sported a military style crew-cut and returned her stares. GI Joe, Denise named him, and he did return her looks.

"KEC" keep eye contact!" Denise remembered. Then he lit a cigarette, and took two quick tokes before exhaling. Blondie noticed and followed suit. And Denise understood they were now connected by Crypton. Blondie took the lead, and filled her mouth with a major pull from her cigarette, and popped a significant white bulge which she snapped back within.

"Oooh, someone's a little horny," Denise commented. GI Joe held his cigarette out and tapped it twice. "So is he. Duhh"

Then the dude turned to his friends and said something that made them all laugh in unison. He turned back to her in time to watch Blondie make a show of centering her cigarette, drawing hard, and sending smoke rings rolling in tremolo and hovering above. GI Joe tapped his cigarette twice, again.

"Okay, a little action beneath the sheets, everyone's on board with that," Denise said to herself.

Then Blondie surprised GI Joe and Denise when she let her latest exhale run uphill from her mouth to her nostrils in a pulsing sheet. "Uh Oh," Denise laughs, "GI Joe better be ready to do a little tongue action for her tonight. That French was no accident!"

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GI Joe affirmed her request with two taps on his cigarette. “Good Boy!” Denise thought. Then GI Joe flicked his filter three times, getting a pair of taps back in response.

“At last, she’s letting him visit her,” she translated, and watched him walk over and seat himself beside her. The other girls were introduced, and then went back to gossiping, leaving the pair alone. While Denise couldn’t hear the conversation, she saw Blondie spray a rich shower of smoke over the top of her cigarette’s ember, and the smoky lantern foretold another of the delights the couple would soon be sharing. Not long afterwards, the pair got up, and left the patio.

“I love this Crypton,” Denise mused, rising to leave the bar patio as well. “I can’t wait to try it for myself, tonight.”