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About-Face

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Abstract

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THE music stopped. Joan turned from the nice-looking, if quiet boy with whom she had been dancing and looked about for someone more exciting. The Campus Canteen was crowded, but as she looked quickly from face to face, none of them satisfied.

"Oh, damn," she thought. "There's no one here worth wasting my time on. I should have accepted that date with Ronald tonight. Why did I let Ellen talk all that patriotic nonsense?"

And then her eye found him. She stopped. "Well, Joanie, don't look now, but he's got possibilities." She moved a little, taking the nice quiet boy's hand and leading him closer to the edge where she could get a better look at the tall, dark, cleancut V-12 that stood unpretentiously against the wall.

"Not bad, not bad at all." Instinctively, Joan straightened, stood with one foot in front of the other, just as the glamour magazines advocated. But the sailor's eyes did not find her.

"I can't go up and ask him. That would be obvious. If only I could get him to notice me. But I've got to get rid of blue-eyes here." As she mused, her eye fell on a tall sailor reclining against the wall. "Jack!" She brightened. "You dear, sweet boy. I knew you'd come in handy some day." She turned to the quiet boy, flashing her brilliant smile.

"Oh, I've just seen an old friend of the family's. That tall sailor over there." She indicated with a studied sweep of her long finger. "Would you mind terribly taking me over to him?" Then, with just the proper amount of remorse, "You won't mind terribly, will you?"

She looked just a little coyly at him, tucking her arm through his. This was to be the "little girl" approach. She kept the smile that she had given the nice quiet boy and turned her head slowly toward the sailor as they passed him. Her soft, blonde hair fell just right over her face and she smiled out from under it, giving the impression of shyness with just a dash of fire in the blue eyes. She knew the impression it gave because she had prac-

ticed that impression before a mirror. Her eyes met his for a moment; she tilted her head back a little, broadened her smile—the sailor's eyes looked right over her. Joan started. "Not the little girl type, huh? Well, that's interesting."

Dancing with Jack, she pondered the issue, keeping a constant eye on the sailor from behind the shoulder of her partner. "There's always the old 'Haven't I met you before line,' but that's not so hot. I wish they'd have a girl's choice. I could carry that off O.K."

As she planned, her eye caught the V-12 moving. He was coming over! Going to cut? Joan became suddenly interested in Jack. Her brilliant smile was like a toothpaste ad. Joan waited for the expected tap. When it did not come, she glanced over Jack's shoulder just in time to see the sailor cut in on Ellen.

"Ellen!" Joan thought. "What could be better!" Her sweet little roommate would give her no trouble. Besides, Ellen wouldn't care. She was the kind of girl that danced with any boy that asked her—pimply ones, fat ones, short ones—just any boy that wanted to dance.

When the music ended, Joan feigned surprise. "Oh, Jack, there's my roommate. I promised her I'd exchange if we got the chance. I suppose this is as good a time as any." Then, with just the proper amount of remorse, "You won't mind terribly, will you?"

As they moved toward the other couple, Joan decided that the cool glamour line was probably the best. She walked very well, placing one foot carefully in front of the other, head back, long tresses lying smooth and shining over her shoulders.

"Hello, Ellen." She glanced briefly at the smaller, quiet girl, turned her eyes to the sailor. Her eyes met his—she raised her eyebrows just a little, let her eyes hold his a moment, then lowered her lids. She turned to Ellen. "Having a nice time?" She could feel the sailor's eyes on her. She did not look at him.

"Very nice." Ellen's voice was low, as usual.

The low throb of drums announced a new piece. Joan looked directly at the sailor. "Want to exchange?" The boy looked at Ellen.

"Why, yes, if you like." Ellen was quiet.

The sailor was a smooth dancer, but Joan had expected that. His dark head was just enough higher than hers—his cheek was firm against hers. "Oh, baby, come to mama," Joan exulted.

"Won't he be a knockout to take down into the grill? Looks, dancer—everything. I'm going to like dating you, big boy." Joan closed her eyes, enjoying the smooth blending of the music and the triumphant feeling within her. Then, she decided, she had better get a date lined up. Snuggling her nose against his chin to give him a thrill, she pulled slowly back, tilting her head, parting her lips a little. The sailor was not looking, so after holding that pose a moment, she became animated. Laughing, she chattered, "Now I'm going to ask the age-old questions. First, where are you from?"

The boy smiled his slow smile. Joan sighed inwardly. "Oklahoma." That was all. "Oh, the strong silent type, eh?"

"And what do you intend making your million in—oil or ran—" Joan started. The music had stopped. Not over? Good heavens! Then the voice through the P.A. said, "Exchange dance. Everybody exchange. Everybody change with the couple nearest."

Joan looked knowingly at the V-12. Of course he would suggest that they wander around as though they were looking for someone to exchange with and then not exchange. She waited. The sailor looked at her—smiled his slow smile. "Shall we exchange with Ellen?"

For the first time that night Joan lost control of her face. "Why, yes, of course, if you like." Her voice was sharper than she had intended. "Oh, so he wants to dance with Ellen. Well, he can't be very exciting if that's the type of girl he picks. I'm certainly glad I found out before I wasted any more time on him."

Fully in control of herself now, Joan waved gaily at Jack as they approached him and Ellen. "Hi, good lookin'." Joan sidled up to Jack, put her hand on his arm.

"Hi." Jack was obviously surprised after the cool Joan he had known earlier. The music began and as Ellen and the sailor danced away, Jack asked, "Who was your good-looking friend?"

Turning to look, as though she did not know who he meant, Joan flipped her fingers through her long hair and said, "Oh, him? He's not so good looking."

