Dorrie

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Abstract

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It was Friday night and fairly quiet in the dorm. Most of the girls had left, laughing, to go down and meet their dates for the evening, small excited voices telling each other their plans. It was nearly nine now and Dorrie almost wished, for a moment, that she had gone with Beth and Jean when they had stopped by her room, suggesting a movie.

No, she thought. It's nicer here. Stretching her small body to its fullest, she let the warm, relaxed feeling creep to her toes. Maybe later she'd go out for a coke and a cigarette, maybe she'd see Don. . . . She threw the thought quickly out of her mind. I'll not even think of him, she told herself fiercely. But she did. Her mind began to retrace each thing they had done. The night they had sat by the edge of the lake, when every one else was going to the big dance, listening to his portable radio. He just didn't have enough money for the tickets, he'd told her in his shy, embarrassed way. She hadn't cared . . . just to be with Don was enough. So they had spent the whole evening by the little lake. They had danced for a while on the smooth grassy bank in their stocking feet and when they grew tired, had stretched out on the warm, spring ground. He'd told her about his plans and hopes and ambitions; she'd listened, because she liked the smooth, deepness of his voice. It had been warm and intimate, and better than a thousand dances.

The murmur of voices in the hall caught her attention. She had left her door open and could hear the voices as they came closer.

"But Helen, they could have told us it was a picnic."

"Ted said it was just a last-minute deal. You know how impulsive he is. Besides, they got a case of beer in the back end of the car, and a picnic is a nice excuse to drink it."

The voices moved into the room across the hall. Dorrie had a wild desperate wish to be a hundred miles away. Away from that
silken, honey-coated voice that went with blond Helen Ball. If Helen saw her here alone, on Friday night, she'd have another excuse to purr at her and ask if she could get poor Dorrie a blind date. Not that she wasn't satisfied with taking Don away from her . . . oh, you couldn't blame Don. Helen had everything: blond hair draped over her slim shoulders, blue eyes, a figure just short of perfection, and that helpless, dependent look that men are always attracted to. Actually you couldn't even blame Helen; men were attracted to her like flies. Don had met her while they were double dating with Helen and her current boyfriend. Don had seemed fascinated by her, and Helen had given him her smoothest flirtation. Before she had realized what was happening, Don was dating her.

The voices were still chattering about the picnic. "And Ted says when we get out there that . . ." 

It was Mary talking, Helen's roommate. She could see soft, silly Mary, her eyes filled with the excitement of going on a risque picnic and drinking beer.

"Well, all I hope is that we get in on time. You know how those boys get carried away on picnics," continued Mary, her voice becoming cautious.

"We'll get in, don't worry. I'll see to that," said Helen confidently.

"Say Helen," Mary's voice grew a little more confidential. "What happened to Don tonight. Did he go home for the weekend?"

"Don and I are all through." Helen's voice was light and contemptuous. "I told him so last night."

"I thought you liked him pretty well."

"He's a dead beat," said Helen flatly. "All he wanted to do was talk philosophy and stuff. He had such screwy ideas . . . wanted to do all sorts of crazy things. Why . . . why he asked me one night if I knew where I was going."

"What did he mean . . . going?"

"That's what I asked him. He said everybody should have a purpose in life, something about . . . that too many people are just rushing nowhere. Besides he doesn't even know how to have fun."

"I thought you always looked like you were having fun." Mary's voice was muffled as she pulled her dress over her head. "Besides, Helen, I thought he was kinda cute . . . that brown
curly hair and he must be over six feet tall. Why..."

"Oh, stop it, Mary." Helen's voice was tinted with irritation. "You sound like a high school infatuation." Dorrie could hear a drawer slammed shut with unusual violence. "Don just wasn't my type...too dull, and besides he thinks too damn much. If he wants to go out and save the world he can do it without my help. Besides, he spent half his time talking about Dorrie. Wanted to know if she was going with anybody, or if I could get her a few dates."

"Sounds like maybe Don was still in love with Dorrie, when he was going with you," said Mary amused.

"That isn't true, Mary and you know it. I...I just got tired of Don. Ted is much more interesting and knows so many people. No man has ever given me the brush-off, and I don't intend that any ever will."

"You just beat him to the punch then," said Mary. "Was that the way it was?"

"You're pretty interested in my affairs for some reason." Helen's words were again honey. "Would you like any more data? Maybe I could rehearse the whole scene for you. Or maybe you're a little worried about holding your man. He's been getting a little restless lately. Is that it, Mary?"

There was a moment of quiet, and then Dorrie heard them moving about again. She could visualize Helen, her face dark with sarcasm, as she moved gracefully in the room. Even when angry, she was beautiful. Then Helen spoke.

"If you must know, I think he's still in love with Dorrie. She's his type anyway...staid, solid, dependable Dorrie." Helen sounded angry as she spoke. "Well, that's not for me. That's the trouble with a lot of these veterans...all they want to do is settle down, or talk about things nobody can change anyway. Why can't they be the way they were before they left? You'd think some of them were a bunch of old men."

"I'm sorry, Helen, if I was prying," pleaded Mary. "It wasn't any of my business."

"It isn't important anyway. Come on, the boys are waiting."

"Wait 'til I get my lipstick, Helen." Dorrie could see the two of them as they stood silhouetted in the doorway. Then the light was snapped out.

"Now you take Ted," said Helen as they walked down the empty hall. "He knows how to have fun...the right places
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P.D.M.

The Monster

The child sat on a pillow at her mother's feet, wide-eyed, straining to hear the conversation between her father and his visitor on the other side of the fire-place.

"Ya know, Casey, I'll be damn—danged," her father began, suddenly conscious of the presence of his wife and daughter, "if I'll get in the car with one of those ornery critters. Think I'll just hitch up the wagon and go to the polls myself. . . ."

"Yup, Jake," the visitor answered. "It's a crime the way that gang of thieves fly over these roads . . . no wonder they're in such bad shape. . . ."

The little girl moved closer to her mother. She knew she was about to hear some more exciting stories about, about,