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## JUST BEFORE THE WAR WITH THE ESKIMOS

FIVE straight Saturday mornings, Ginnie Manno had played tennis at the East Side Courts with Selena Graff, a classmate at Miss Basehoar's. Ginnie openly considered Selena the biggest drip at Miss Basehoar's—a school ostensibly abounding with fair-sized drips—but at the same time she had never known anyone like Selena for bringing fresh cans of tennis balls. Selena's father made them or something. (At dinner one night, for the edification of the entire Manno family, Ginnie had conjured up a vision of dinner over at the Graffs'; it involved a perfect servant coming around to everyone's left with, instead of a glass of tomato juice, a can of tennis balls.) But this business of dropping Selena off at her house after tennis and then getting stuck—every single time—for the whole cab fare was getting on Ginnie's nerves. After all, taking the taxi home from the courts instead of the bus had been Selena's idea. On the fifth Saturday, however, as the cab started north on York Avenue, Ginnie suddenly spoke up.

"Hey, Selena . . ."

"What?" asked Selena, who was busy feeling the floor of the cab with her hand. "I can't find the cover to my racket!" she moaned.

Despite the warm May weather, both girls were wearing topcoats over their shorts.

"You put it in your pocket," Ginnie said. "Hey, listen—"

"Oh, God! You've saved my life!"

"Listen," said Ginnie, who wanted no part of Selena's gratitude.

"What?"

Ginnie decided to come right out with it. The cab was nearly at Selena's street. "I don't feel like getting stuck for the whole cab fare again today," she said. "I'm no millionaire, ya know."

Selena looked first amazed, then hurt. "Don't I always pay half?" she asked innocently.

"No," said Ginnie flatly. "You paid half the first Saturday. Way in the beginning of last month. And since then not even once. I don't wanna be ratty, but I'm actually existing on four-fifty a week. And out of that I have to—"

"I always bring the tennis balls, don't I?" Selena asked unpleasantly.

Sometimes Ginnie felt like killing Selena. "Your father makes them or something," she said. "They don't cost you anything. I have to pay for every single little—"

"All right, all right," Selena said,

loudly and with finality enough to give herself the upper hand. Looking bored, she went through the pockets of her coat. "I only have thirty-five cents," she said coldly. "Is that enough?"

"No. I'm sorry, but you owe me a dollar sixty-five. I've been keeping track of every—"

"I'll have to go upstairs and get it from my mother. Can't it wait till Monday? I could bring it to gym with me if it'd make you happy."

Selena's attitude defied clemency.

"No," Ginnie said. "I have to go to the movies tonight. I need it."

In hostile silence, the girls stared out of opposite windows until the cab pulled up in front of Selena's apartment house. Then Selena, who was seated nearest the curb, let herself out. Just barely leaving the cab door open, she walked briskly and obliviously, like visiting Hollywood royalty, into the building. Ginnie, her face burning, paid the fare. She then collected her tennis things—racket, hand towel, and sun hat—and followed Selena. At fifteen, Ginnie was about five feet nine in her 9-B tennis shoes, and as she entered the lobby, her self-conscious, rubber-soled awkwardness lent her a dangerous amateur quality. It made Selena prefer to watch the indicator dial over the elevator.

"That makes a dollar ninety you owe me," Ginnie said, striding up to the elevator.

Selena turned. "It may just interest you to know," she said, "that my mother is very ill."

"What's the matter with her?"

"She virtually has pneumonia, and if you think I'm going to enjoy disturbing her just for money . . ." Selena delivered the incomplete sentence with all possible aplomb.

Ginnie was, in fact, slightly put off by this information, whatever its degree of truth, but not to the point of sentimentality. "I didn't give it to her," she said, and followed Selena into the elevator.

When Selena had rung her apartment bell, the girls were admitted—or rather, the door was drawn in and left ajar—by a colored maid with whom Selena didn't seem to be on speaking terms. Ginnie dropped her tennis things on a chair in the foyer and followed Selena. In the living room, Selena

turned and said, "Do you mind waiting here? I may have to wake Mother up and everything."

"O.K.," Ginnie said, and plopped down on the sofa.

"I never in my life would've thought you could be so small about anything," said Selena, who was just angry enough to use the word "small" but not quite brave enough to emphasize it.

"Now you know," said Ginnie, and opened a copy of *Vogue* in front of her face. She kept it in this position till Selena had left the room, then put it back on top of the radio. She looked around the room, mentally rearranging furniture, throwing out table lamps, removing artificial flowers. In her opinion, it was an altogether hideous room—expensive but cheesy.

Suddenly, a male voice shouted from another part of the apartment, "Eric? That you?"

Ginnie guessed it was Selena's brother, whom she had never seen. She crossed her long legs, arranged the hem of her polo coat over her knees, and waited.

A young man wearing glasses and pajamas and no slippers lunged into the room with his mouth open. "Oh. I thought it was Eric, for Chrissake," he said. Without stopping, and with extremely poor posture, he continued across the room, cradling something close to his narrow chest. He sat down on the vacant end of the sofa. "I just cut my goddam finger," he said rather wildly. He looked at Ginnie as if he had expected her to be sitting there. "Ever cut your finger? Right down to the bone and all?" he asked. There was a real appeal in his noisy voice, as if

Ginnie, by her answer, could save him from some particularly isolating form of pioneering.

Ginnie stared at him. "Well, not right down to the bone," she said, "but I've cut myself." He was the funniest-looking boy, or man—it was hard to tell which he was—she had ever seen. His hair was

bed-dishevelled. He had a couple of days' growth of sparse, blond beard. And he looked—well, goofy. "How did you cut it?" she asked.

He was staring down, with his slack mouth ajar, at his injured finger. "What?" he said.

"How did you cut it?"

"Goddam if I know," he said, his inflection implying that the answer to







*"Females are always cheaper—nothing personal meant, of course."*

that question was hopelessly obscure. "I was lookin' for something in the goddam wastebasket and it was fulla razor blades."

"You Selena's brother?" Ginnie asked.

"Yeah. Christ, I'm bleedin' to death. Stick around. I may need a goddam transfusion."

"Did you put anything on it?"

Selena's brother carried his wound slightly forward from his chest and unveiled it for Ginnie's benefit. "Just some goddam toilet paper," he said. "Stopsa bleeding. Like when you cut yourself shaving." He looked at Ginnie again. "Who are you?" he asked. "Friend of the jerk's?"

"We're in the same class."

"Yeah? What's your name?"

"Virginia Mannox."

"You Ginnie?" he said, squinting at her through his glasses. "You Ginnie Mannox?"

"Yes," said Ginnie, uncrossing her legs.

Selena's brother turned back to his finger, obviously for him the true and only focal point in the room. "I know

your sister," he said dispassionately. "Goddam snob."

Ginnie arched her back. "Who is?"

"You heard me."

"She is *not* a snob!"

"The hell she's not," said Selena's brother.

"She is *not*!"

"The hell she's not. She's the queen. Queen of the goddam snobs."

Ginnie watched him lift up and peer under the thick folds of toilet paper on his finger.

"You don't even *know* my sister."

"Hell I don't."

"What's her name? What's her first name?" Ginnie demanded.

"Joan. . . Joan the Snob."

Ginnie was silent. "What's she look like?" she asked suddenly.

No answer.

"What's she look like?" Ginnie repeated.

"If she was half as good-looking as she *thinks* she is, she'd be goddam lucky," Selena's brother said.

This had the stature of an interesting answer, in Ginnie's secret opinion. "I never heard her mention *you*," she said.

"That worries me. That worries hell outa me."

"Anyway, she's engaged," Ginnie said, watching him. "She's gonna be married next month."

"Who to?" he asked, looking up.

Ginnie took full advantage of his having looked up. "Nobody *you* know."

He resumed picking at his own first-aid work. "I pity him," he said.

Ginnie snorted.

"It's still bleedin' like mad. Ya think I oughta put something on it? What's good to put on it? Mercurochrome any good?"

"Iodine's better," Ginnie said. Then, feeling her answer was too civil under the circumstances, she added, "Mercurochrome's no good at *all* for that."

"Why not? What's the matter with it?"

"It just isn't any *good* for that stuff, that's all. Ya need iodine."

He looked at Ginnie. "It stings a lot, though, doesn't it?" he asked. "Doesn't it sting a helluva lot?"

"It *stings*," Ginnie said, "but it won't *kill* you or anything."

Apparently without resenting Ginnie's tone, Selena's brother turned back to his finger. "I don't like it when it stings," he said.

"Nobody does."

He nodded in agreement. "Yeah," he said.

Ginnie watched him for a minute. "Stop touching it," she said suddenly.

As though responding to an electric shock, Selena's brother pulled back his uninjured hand. He sat up a trifle straighter—or rather, slumped a trifle less. He looked at some object on the other side of the room. An almost dreamy expression came over his disorderly features. He inserted the nail of his uninjured index finger into the crevice between two front teeth and, removing a food particle, turned to Ginnie. "Jeat jet?" he asked.

"What?"

"Jeat lunch yet?"

Ginnie shook her head. "I'll eat when I get home," she said. "My mother always has lunch ready for me when I get home."

"I got a half a chicken sandwich in



my room. Ya want it? I didn't touch it or anything."

"No, thank you. Really."

"You just played tennis, for Chrissake. Aren'tcha hungry?"

"It isn't that," said Ginie, crossing her legs. "It's just that my mother always has lunch ready when I get home. She goes insane if I'm not hungry, I mean."

Selena's brother seemed to accept this explanation. At least, he nodded and looked away. But he turned back suddenly. "How 'bout a glassa milk?" he said.

"No, thanks. . . . Thank you, though."

Absently, he bent over and scratched his bare ankle. "What's the name of this guy she's marrying?" he asked.

"Joan, you mean?" said Ginie. "Dick Heffner."

Selena's brother went on scratching his ankle.

"He's a lieutenant commander in the Navy," Ginie said.

"Big deal."

Ginie giggled. She watched him scratch his ankle till it was red. When he began to scratch off a minor skin eruption on his calf with his fingernail, she stopped watching.

"Where do you know Joan from?" she asked. "I never saw you at the house or anything."

"Never been at your goddam house."

Ginie waited, but nothing led away from this statement. "Where'd you meet her, then?" she asked.

"Party," he said.

"At a party? When?"

"I don't know. Christmas, '42."

From his breast pajama pocket he two-fingered out a cigarette that looked as though it had been slept on. "How 'bout throwing me those matches?" he said. Ginie handed him a box of matches from the table beside her. He lit his cigarette without straightening out its curvature, then replaced the used match in the box. Tilting his head back, he slowly released an enormous quantity of smoke from his mouth and drew it up through his nostrils. He continued to smoke in this "French-inhale" style. Very probably, it was not part of the sofa vaudeville of a showoff but, rather, the private, exposed achievement of a young man who, at one time or another, might have tried shaving himself left-handed.

"Why's Joan a snob?" Ginie asked.

"Why? Because she is. How the hell do I know why?"

"Yes, but I mean why do you say she is?"

## BALLADE OF THE CRITIC

The architect sees farther than the slums,  
The man of God sees deep into the skies,  
The maestro hears more music than the drums,  
The judge sees what is just, unless he lies,  
The lowliest politician prophesies.  
Each peers some way ahead, but you will find  
The critic sees no farther than behind.

The bud turns to the rose, the egg becomes  
An ostrich or a wren. With what surprise  
The meek evangelist converts the bums,  
The lover reads the miracle of the eyes!  
No longer need astronomers surmise;  
But while the seed unfolds in every kind,  
The critic sees no farther than behind.

Africa fries, Antarctica benumbs,  
But science has an instrument to devise  
The perfect climate for chrysanthemums.  
Both poet and meteorologist are wise  
To cultivate for fragrance and for size.  
Savor the fig and throw away the rind!  
The critic sees no farther than behind.

### L'ENVOI

I mean just this. Your fingers are all thumbs,  
Your thumbs are all in everybody's pies,  
Your pies are full of everybody's plums.  
All other men sometimes apostrophize  
Some things, somehow. You merely analyze  
The distant droppings of the higher mind.  
The critic sees no farther than behind.

—KARL SHAPIRO

He turned to her wearily. "Listen. you ever phone her up or anything?"  
I wrote her eight goddam letters. *Eight.* "Naa."  
She didn't answer *one* of 'em." "Well, my gosh. If you never phoned  
Ginie hesitated. "Well, maybe she her up or any—" "I couldn't, for Chrissake!"  
was busy." "Yeah. Busy. Busy as a little goddam "Why not?" said Ginie.  
beaver." "Do you have to *swear* so much?" "Wasn't in New York."  
Ginie asked. "Oh! Where were you?"  
"Goddam right I do." "Me? Ohio."  
Ginie giggled. "How long did you "Oh, were you in college?"  
know her, anyway?" she asked. "Nope. Quit."  
"Long enough." "Oh, were you in the Army?"  
"Well, I mean did you ever phone "Nope." With his cigarette hand,  
her up or anything? I mean didn't Selena's brother tapped the left side of  
his chest. "Ticker," he said.



"Your heart, ya mean?" Ginie said.

"What's the matter with it?"  
"I don't know what the hell's the matter with it. I had rheumatic fever when I was a kid. Goddam pain in the—"

"Well, aren't you supposed to stop smoking? I mean aren't you supposed to not smoke and all? The doctor told my—"

"Aah, they tellya a lotta stuff," he said.

Ginie briefly held her fire. Very



briefly. "What were you doing in Ohio?" she asked.

"Me? Working in a goddam airplane factory."

"You were?" said Ginie. "Did you like it?"

"Did you like it?" he mimicked. "I loved it. I just adore airplanes. They're so cute."

Ginie was much too involved now to feel affronted. "How long did you work there? In the airplane factory?"

"I don't know, for Chrissake. Thirty-seven months." He stood up and walked over to the window. He looked down at the street, scratching his spine with his thumb. "Look at 'em," he said. "Goddam fools."

"Who?" said Ginie.

"I don't know. Anybody."

"Your finger'll start bleeding more if you hold it down that way," Ginie said.

He heard her. He put his left foot up on the window seat and rested his injured hand on the horizontal thigh. He continued to look down at the street. "They're all goin' over to the goddam draft board," he said. "We're gonna fight the Eskimos next. Know that?"

"The who?" said Ginie.

"The Eskimos. . . . Open your ears, for Chrissake."

"Why the Eskimos?"

"I don't know why. How the hell should I know why? This time all the old guys're gonna go. Guys around sixty. Nobody can go unless they're around sixty," he said. "Just give 'em shorter hours is all. . . . Big deal."

"You wouldn't have to go, anyway," Ginie said, without meaning anything but the truth, yet knowing before the statement was completely out that she was saying the wrong thing.

"I know," he said quickly, and took his foot down from the window seat. He raised the window slightly and snapped his cigarette streetward. Then he turned, finished at the window. "Hey. Do me a favor. When this guy comes, willya tell him I'll be ready in a coupla seconds? I just gotta shave is all. O.K.?"

Ginie nodded.

"Ya want me to hurry Selena up or anything? She know you're here?"

"Oh, she knows I'm here," Ginie said. "I'm in no hurry. Thank you."

Selena's brother nodded. Then he took a last, long look at his injured finger, as if to see whether it was in condition to make the trip back to his room.

"Why don't you put a Band-Aid on it? Don't you have any Band-Aid or anything?"

"Naa," he said. "Well. Take it

easy." He wandered out of the room.

In a few seconds, he was back, bringing the sandwich half.

"Eat this," he said. "It's good."

"Really, I'm not at all—"

"Take it, for Chrissake. I didn't poison it or anything."

Ginie accepted the sandwich half. "Well, thank you very much," she said.

"It's chicken," he said, standing over her, watching her. "Bought it last night in a goddam delicatessen."

"It looks very good."

"Well, eat it, then."

Ginie took a bite.

"Good, huh?"

Ginie swallowed with difficulty. "Very," she said.

Selena's brother nodded. He looked absently around the room, scratching the pit of his chest. "Well, I guess I better get dressed. . . . Jesus! There's the bell. Take it easy, now!" He was gone.

LEFT alone, Ginie looked around, without getting up, for a good place to throw out or hide the sandwich. She heard someone coming through the foyer. She put the sandwich into her polo-coat pocket.

A young man in his early thirties, neither short nor tall, came into the room. His regular features, his short haircut, the cut of his suit, the pattern of his foulard necktie gave out no really final information. He might have been on the staff, or trying to get on the staff, of a news magazine. He might have just been in a play that closed in Philadelphia. He might have been with a law firm.

"Hello," he said, cordially, to Ginie.

"Hello."

"Seen Franklin?" he asked.

"He's shaving. He told me to tell you to wait for him. He'll be right out."

"Shaving. Good heavens." The young man looked at his wristwatch. He then sat down in a red damask chair, crossed his legs, and put his hands to his face. As if he were generally weary, or had just undergone some form of eyestrain, he rubbed his closed eyes with the tips of his extended fingers. "This has been the most horrible morning of my entire life," he said, removing his hands from his face. He spoke exclusively from the larynx, as if he were altogether too tired to put any diaphragm breath into his words.

"What happened?" Ginie asked, looking at him.

"Oh. . . . It's too long a story. I never bore people I haven't known for at least a thousand years." He stared vaguely,





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discontentedly, in the direction of the windows. "But I shall never again consider myself even the remotest judge of human nature. You may quote me wildly on that."

"What happened?" Ginnie repeated.

"Oh, God. This person who's been sharing my apartment for months and months and months—I don't even want to talk about him. . . . This writer," he added with satisfaction, probably remembering a favorite anathema from a Hemingway novel.

"What'd he do?"

"Frankly, I'd just as soon not go into details," said the young man. He took a cigarette from his own pack, ignoring a transparent humidifier on the table, and lit it with his own lighter. His hands were large. They looked neither strong nor competent nor sensitive. Yet he used them as if they had some not easily controllable aesthetic drive of their own.

"I've made up my mind that I'm not even going to think about it. But I'm just so furious," he said. "I mean here's this awful little person from Altoona, Pennsylvania—or one of those places. Apparently starving to death. I'm kind and decent enough—I'm the original Good Samaritan—to take him into my apartment, this absolutely microscopic little apartment that I can hardly move around in myself. I introduce him to all my friends. Let him clutter up the whole apartment with his horrible manuscript papers, and cigarette butts, and radishes, and whatnot. Introduce him to every theatrical producer in New York. Haul his filthy shirts back and forth from the laundry. And on top of it all—" The young man broke off. "And the result of all my kindness and decency," he went on, "is that he walks out of the house at five or six in the morning—without so much as leaving a note behind—taking with him anything and everything he can lay his filthy, dirty hands on." He paused to drag on his cigarette, and exhaled the smoke in a thin, sibilant stream from his mouth. "I don't want to talk about it. I really don't. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of wasting my good breath. I really wouldn't." He looked over at Ginnie. "I love your coat," he said, already out of his chair. He crossed over and took the lapel of Ginnie's polo coat between his fingers. "It's lovely. It's the first really good camel's hair I've seen since the war. May I ask where you got it?"

"My mother brought it back from Nassau."

The young man nodded thoughtfully and backed off toward his chair. "It's

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one of the few places where you can get really good camel's hair." He sat down. "Was she there long?"

"What?" said Ginnie.

"Was your mother there long? The reason I ask is my mother was down in December. And part of January. Usually I go down with her, but this has been such a messy year I simply couldn't get away."

"She was down in February," Ginnie said.

"Grand. Where did she stay? Do you know?"

"With my aunt."

He nodded. "May I ask your name? You're a friend of Franklin's sister, I take it?"

"We're in the same class," Ginnie said, answering only his second question.

"You're not the famous *Maxine* that Selena talks about, are you?"

"No," Ginnie said.

The young man suddenly began brushing the cuffs of his trousers with the flat of his hand. "I am dog hairs from head to foot," he said. "Mother went to Washington over the weekend and parked her beast in my apartment. It's really quite sweet. But such nasty habits. Do you have a dog?"

"No."

"Actually, I think it's cruel to keep them in the city." He stopped brushing, sat back, and looked at his wristwatch again. "I have never known that boy to be on time. We're going to see Cocco's 'Beauty and the Beast' and it's the one film where you really should get there on time. I mean if you don't, the whole charm of it is gone. Have you seen it?"

"No."

"Oh, you must! I've seen it eight times. It's absolutely pure genius," he said. "I've been trying to get Franklin to see it for months." He shook his head hopelessly. "His taste. During the war, we both worked at the same horrible place, and that boy would insist on dragging me to the most impossible pictures in the world. We saw gangster pictures, Western pictures, musicals—"

"Did you work in the airplane factory, too?" Ginnie asked.

"God, yes. For years and years and years. Let's not talk about it, please."

"You have a bad heart, too?"

"Heavens, no. Knock wood." He rapped the arm of his chair twice. "I have the constitution of—"

AS Selena entered the room, Ginnie stood up quickly and went to meet her halfway. Selena had changed

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## 6 Reasons

### why your Will may be out of date

**A**N out-of-date Will may lead to involved court proceedings, delay in distributing an estate to beneficiaries, depreciation of assets, and needless worry and expense.

Every Will, no matter how carefully drawn, should be checked over with a lawyer at least once every five years. If you have not rechecked your Will since 1943, we suggest you consult your lawyer now in regard to changes that may be needed.

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from her shorts to a dress, a fact that ordinarily would have annoyed Ginnie.

"I'm sorry to've kept you waiting," Selena said insincerely, "but I had to wait for Mother to wake up. . . . Hello, Eric."

"Hello, hello!"

"I don't want the money anyway," Ginnie said, keeping her voice down so that she was heard only by Selena.

"What?"

"I've been thinking. I mean you bring the tennis balls and all, all the time. I forgot about that."

"But you said that because I didn't have to pay for them—"

"Walk me to the door," Ginnie said, leading the way, without saying good-bye to Eric.

"But I thought you said you were going to the movies tonight and you needed the money and all!" Selena said in the foyer.

"I'm too tired," Ginnie said. She bent over and picked up her tennis paraphernalia. "Listen. I'll give you a ring after dinner. Are you doing anything special tonight? Maybe I can come over."

Selena stared and said, "O.K."

Ginnie opened the front door and walked to the elevator. She rang the bell. "I met your brother," she said.

"You did? Isn't he a character?"

"What's he do, anyway?" Ginnie asked casually. "Does he work or something?"

"He just quit. Daddy wants him to go back to college, but he won't go."

"Why won't he?"

"I don't know. He says he's too old and all."

"How old is he?"

"I don't know. Twenty-four."

The elevator doors opened. "I'll call you later!" Ginnie said.

Outside the building, she started to walk west to Lexington to catch the bus. Between Third and Lexington, she reached into her coat pocket for her purse and found the sandwich half. She took it out and started to bring her arm down, to drop the sandwich into the street, but instead she put it back into her pocket. A few years before, it had taken her three days to dispose of the Easter chick she had found dead on the sawdust in the bottom of her wastebasket.

—J. D. SALINGER

### GO CLIMB A TREE DEPARTMENT

[Harry Hansen in the *World-Telegram*]

While some of his writings appeared in the *New Yorker*, he never betrayed a tendency to be superior to the reader.