

## HALLOWEEN DANCE

The beat of the dance band greeted us as we neared Mess Hall 9. A large crowd stood around the doorway peering inside. More stood near the windows.

Inside, ~~dancing~~ couples crowded the <sup>dance floor</sup> ~~floor with only~~  
<sup>with barely</sup> ~~enough room to move with the rhythm of the music.~~  
Along the side of the mess hall people stood in groups, sat on benches, and perched on dining tables ~~that were~~ shoved against the walls.

The shuffle of feet on the cement floor, babble of voices, laughter and music ~~of the band~~ blended into a cacophony of sounds.

"Looks pleasant enough" I thought as our little party paused outside the door. The crowd parted to let us pass. Heads turned, there were stares and whispers,

"Who's he?"

"From the administrative staff...?"

"Naw.."

"Must be that fellow from Boston. Was in the papers today...something or-the-other Foote"

"Foote ? yeah ? Six Foot.!"

Laughter.

They were talking about Caleb Foote a visitor to Heart Mountain, a representative of the Fellowship of Reconciliation investigating relocation camps. He was an imposing young man, well over six feet, a member of an old established Boston family.

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Inside the low-ceiling room, the air was warm and heavy. <sup>with</sup> Keeping the Halloween motif, someone had provided corn stalks from the outside. Tied to the rough pillars, they were loosing their crispness from the numerous brushing by the pressing dancers. Orange and black pumpkin and witches cutouts on the walls were also askew from the crush of people.

Dance band members ~~were~~ clad in colorful red and black chered shirts, <sup>and</sup> occupied a makeshift bandstand.

An elderly man in a white cap and apron leaned on the counter dividing the kitchen from the dining area.

His worn fingers drummed the counter in time with the music; his face alive with curiosity.

A few olive drab uniforms of visiting servicemen mixed <sup>with</sup> the motly garb of camp residents. Teenage girls wore bright sweaters, perky hair ribbons, bobby sox and saddle shoes. The boys wore sweaters, slacks and sportcoats. Few came in dark suits, complete with white shirts and tie. Some young women were dressy frocks, silk hose and high heels. Other were there in somewhat shabby jackets and jeans. Some had on their GI issue, the Navy peacoat, made original with touches of embroidery.

A circle of <sup>sullen</sup> husky young <sup>men</sup> stood in a conspicuous <sup>sullen</sup> circle eyeing the dancers. They were dressed alike in zoot suits-- the draped pants and long, finger-tipped jackets; their hair combed sleekly around their head, meeting in the back, resembling a duck tail.

"They're something of our problem children," a member of our party informed me. "They've a gang complex--an influence of the tough Los Angeles section."

An attractive blond stood on a bench in a corner and waved her corsage to a group of Cacausians sitting

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*residents in*

across the room. They smiled and called back. The administration staff had joined the Halloween festivities.

The band struck up a fast jitterbug number. For awhile no one ventured out. Then a few moved self-consciously onto the dance floor. The crowd surged around to watch the young couples move skillfully and smoothly through the intricate paces. Shuffle, shuffle, swift moving feet, the beat, beat of the music, fast breathing, swirling skirts, spinning bodies, faster and faster. The music ended abruptly, and the dancers were ~~lost~~ *met* in the crowd, amidst whistles, cheers and clapping. Faces relaxed, ~~a festive gaiety seemed to permeate the room.~~ *The mass had taken on a gay, festive air.*

With the slower tempo of a waltz, couples again crowded the floor. Bobbing black heads jostling closely together.

A tall youth danced by with a pretty girl.

"Say, this is some party. Pretty nice...I almost forget where I am."

The smiling face of his partner became thoughtful, a look of sadness crept into her eyes---

"I can't forget. I never do."

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