

Seeing a friend?

Old Sally didn't talk much, except to rave about the Lunts, because she was busy rubbering and being charming. Then all of a sudden, she saw some jerk she knew on the other side of the lobby. Some guy in one of those very dark grey flannel suits and one of those checkered vests. Strictly Ivy League. Big deal. He was standing next to the wall, smoking himself to death and looking bored as hell. Old Sally kept saying, "I *know* that boy from somewhere." She always *knew* somebody, any place you took her, or thought she did. She kept saying that till I got bored as hell, and I said to her, "Why don't you go on over and give him a big soul kiss, if you know him? He'll enjoy it." She got sore when I said that. Finally, though, the jerk noticed her and came over and said hello. You should've seen the way they said hello. You'd have thought they hadn't seen each other in twenty years. You'd have thought they'd taken baths in the same bathtub or something when they were little kids. Old buddyroos. It was nauseating. The funny part was, they probably met each other just *once*, at some phony party. Finally, when they were all done slobbering around, old Sally introduced us. His name was George something - I don't even remember - and he went to Andover. Big, big deal. You should've seen him when old Sally asked him how he liked the play. He was kind of a phony that have to give themselves *room* when they answer somebody's question. He stepped back, and stepped right on the lady's foot behind him. He probably broke every toe in her body. He said the play *itself* was no masterpiece, but that the Lunts, of course, were absolute angels. Angels.

For Chrissake. *Angels*. That killed me. Then he and old Sally started talking about a lot of people they both knew. It was the phoniest conversation you ever heard in your life. They both kept thinking of places as fast as they could, then they'd think of somebody that lived there and mention their name. I was all set to puke when it was time to go sit down again. I really was. And then, when the next act was over, they *continued* their goddam boring conversation. They kept thinking of more names of people that lived there. The worst part was, the jerk had one of those very phony, Ivy League voices, one of very tired, snobby voices. He sounded just like a girl. He didn't hesitate to horn in on my date, the bastard. I even thought for a minute that he was going to get in the goddam cab with us when the show was over, because he walked about two blocks with us, but he had to meet a bunch of phonies for cocktails, he said. I could see them all sitting around in some bar, with their goddam checkered vests, criticizing shows and books and women in those tired, snobby voices. They kill me, those guys.

(J D Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*)