

For Evan's Sake

Judy Erskine

“PARDON me, did you drop this?” asked a soft, gentle voice behind me.

I was sitting in the Philadelphia International Airport lounge waiting for the next plane to Boston, Massachusetts. Turning to look in the direction of the voice, I saw a short stocky woman in her sixties holding up my billfold. “Why yes, I did! Thank you.” I replied gratefully. The woman sat down beside me and began to question me: “Where are you from? Where are you going? Are you traveling alone?”

Instantly suspicious of her intentions, I glanced around the airport for a policeman. Seeing none, I turned and looked squarely at the stranger for the first time. I saw grey hair, thin spectacles, an old fox stole, and deep pleading eyes. Relaxing somewhat, I began to chat with this woman who apparently only wanted a companion.

We discovered that we were both heading for Boston, Massachusetts, and had tickets for the same flight. Thus we decided to travel together. Miss Evans—that was her name. “You can’t forget it,” she remarked. “Just remember ‘For Evan’s sake!’” She told me that she was a retired school teacher, and by conversing with her I learned that she had traveled all over the world.

As she spoke, I crawled with her in the pyramids of Egypt, danced at the Mardi Gras, was escorted to the West Point Military Ball, and dined with important political officials and television personalities. Through her words I saw the starving people in China, rested in the shade of a sidewalk café in Italy, and romped in the snow on a Switzerland mountain top.

A loud voice over the P.A. system told us that it was time to board our plane. We found seats beside each other and after the excitement of rising into the air, began talking again. I begged her to continue with more of her experiences, but she insisted that I talk for a while. I told her that I was on my way to spend a college weekend at Harvard University at the invitation of a very special friend. A high school senior, I was very excited about this, and could barely speak of it in an even voice.

Sensing my apparent youth and inexperience, she proceeded to lecture and advise me about how to behave during the visit. Although I did not resent her advice, I did not encourage it, for I wanted to hear about more of her fascinating travels and experiences.

All at once, she squeezed my hand and said in a voice so low that I barely could hear, “Have a good time, sweetie, but always act like a lady. Gentlemen marry ladies, you know.” I nodded my head to indicate that I understood what she meant, but I knew I didn’t

understand fully when she added, "Did I tell you? My name is *Miss Evans*." Then she turned towards the plane window and said no more until we landed at Boston.

As we walked down the ramp together, she smiled and thanked me for listening to her. Suddenly I became very sad. "Have a good time, sweetie," I heard her say. "You look like a dream—good-bye now!" I turned to mumble a good-bye to her, but she had gone.

"Veni, Vidi, . . ."

Michele Burns

IT WAS A gray, dreary, rainy afternoon when even the buildings seemed sad. As Jessica sat looking through the window of her dark hotel room at the misty city below, a flashing, blue neon sign cast grotesque shadows on a tear-stained, lonely young face. Jessica had a decision to make, one which could change her life in a matter of moments. She relived the hours of the preceding day with the faint hope that something would help her. . . .

A small, dark-haired dancer stood at the foot of cement steps leading to one of New York's most eminent theatres. As she stood clutching her dance bag, the words "AUDITION TODAY" screamed at her from a massive, oak-paneled door. When she mounted the steps and closed a trembling hand over the doorknob, the cold brass shocked her senses. She wanted to run.

"Now just a minute," a little voice said to her, "why are you afraid? You haven't studied dance for ten years just to run away from what might be your big chance!"

Jessica took a deep breath and opened the door. The rich majesty of red, gold, and white met her eyes. Hundreds of girls seemed to be milling around in the spacious lobby. Some were laughing nervously; some were sitting quietly; some were standing confidently as cigarettes dangled languidly from their mouths. Suddenly a handsome, young man swept into the room. He was clad in tennis shoes, jeans, and a tee shirt. Much to everyone's surprise he announced that he was Donald Gardener, choreographer of the show for which the audition was being held.

"All right, ladies, leave your names at this table, draw a number, change into practice clothes in the dressing rooms downstairs, and meet on the stage in fifteen minutes." With these words he vanished as quickly as he had appeared.

Many shapes and sizes of girls, dressed in every color of the rainbow stood in awe of the mammoth stage. Jessica stared beyond the footlights into the blackness of the theater. It seemed like a gaping mouth waiting to swallow her up. When the audition began, she retreated into a corner until number fifty-eight was called. . . .