**ERNEST EVANS, ACTUALLY**

by Joel Kaye

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CHARACTERS:

* Stephen Bright, something of an intellectual
* Marcus Quick, a flashy character
* Lucy Heart, an attractive girl
* Katie Sharp, Stephen’s intellectual equal

THE SET

* A table and two dining-type chairs

PROPS

* Three Coca-cola bottles
* Four drink straws
* Katie’s purse, with coins

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*STEPHEN BRIGHT sits at a table.*

*MARCUS QUICK and LUCY HEART stand downstage of him.*

**STEPHEN BRIGHT** We’re all different. I hate it when people misrepresent history. They talk about ‘the Sixties’ as if everyone did the same thing and thought the same, for the whole ten years. Even young people – teenagers, if you must, especially at the youth club, weren’t all the same. For instance, I was what some people liked to call ‘serious’.

*While MARCUS and LUCY speak we hear music from the youth club dance quietly in the background.*

**MARCUS QUICK** I saw you standing there.

**LUCY HEART** I saw you seeing me.

**STEPHEN BRIGHT** I sat there with a coke bottle. They were glass in those days. With a straw.

**MARCUS QUICK** I seen you around.

**LUCY HEART** I seen you seeing me.

**MARCUS QUICK** You dancin’?

**LUCY HEART** I’m chewing me gum.

*LUCY chews languidly.*

**MARCUS QUICK** Yeh? Me too.

*MARCUS chews languidly.*

**MARCUS QUICK** What’s your name?

**LUCY HEART** You first.

**MARCUS QUICK** Marcus Quick.

**LUCY HEART** Lucy.

**MARCUS QUICK** Lucy what?

**LUCY HEART** Heart. Lucy Heart.

**MARCUS QUICK** I’m gonna be in love with you.

**LUCY HEART** Are we dancin’, or what?

*MARCUS takes LUCY by the hand and leads her out.*

*STEPHEN watches them go out.*

*The music becomes louder as they go out, then is cut when STEPHEN speaks.*

**STEPHEN** Of course, everyone knows that the shape of a Coca Cola bottle imitated the figure of the advertiser’s ideal woman of 1916.

*KATIE SHARP enters.*

**KATIE** Where do you learn all this, Stephen?

**STEPHEN** Oh well, Katie. You know, sometimes I just absorb random facts.

**KATIE** Yes, I’m like that, too. My parents bought a set of encyclopaedias. I just thumb through them sometimes.

**STEPHEN** Do you?

**KATIE** Yes, that’s why I think I’d be good with you on the youth club debating team.

**STEPHEN** A girl? There’s never been a girl on the youth club debating team.

**KATIE** Do you want to debate it?

*KATIE sits at the table*

**KATIE** I should say (*pause*) precedent is not the only criterion.

**STEPHEN** Well no, but a change needs to be seen to be advantageous.

**KATIE** It can’t be *seen* to be advantageous beforehand when it’s never been done before.

**STEPHEN** Well, then!

**KATIE** You could take a chance.

**STEPHEN** We might lose because of it.

**KATIE** When the audience have to vote they might support our team because it’s the one with the girl in it.

**STEPHEN** But that’s not what it’s about. They’re supposed to vote on who makes the best points and the summing up.

**KATIE** I bet I could do that – summing up. Listen. We’ve argued about precedent, about taking a chance, and about what influences voting.

**STEPHEN** H’m. You’re quite clever, for a girl.

**KATIE** Thank you! I’ll buy you a coke.

*STEPHEN looks round*

**STEPHEN** What? You’ll buy me? No!

*KATIE laughs*

**KATIE** Well, here’s the ninepence.

*KATIE takes the money out of her purse.*

**STEPHEN** No, I (shouldn’t.)

*KATIE laughs*

**KATIE** Here, take it.

*STEPHEN takes the coins and goes out.*

*LUCY and MARCUS enter.*

*LUCY throws herself down in the chair which STEPHEN has vacated.*

**LUCY** (*to Marcus*) Get me a coke!

**MARCUS** Don’t you want to come outside? For a cigarette.

**LUCY** Not now. Later. Get me a coke.

**MARCUS** Sure?

**LUCY** Yeh.

*MARCUS shrugs and walks out.*

*LUCY looks at KATIE.*

**LUCY** Men!

**KATIE** You do like him, though.

**LUCY** Yeh, but you don’t want to let them know that.

**KATIE** Why not?

**LUCY** You got to keep them hanging on. Now, you didn’t do quite right there.

*LUCY gestures to where MARCUS has gone.*

**LUCY** I saw you giving him money for your Coke. He’ll think you’re soft.

**KATIE** I just don’t need him to buy me anything.

**LUCY** Oh, but they like that. Makes them feel big, and costs you nothing. More fool them.

*STEPHEN returns, Cokes in hand. He puts them on the table.*

**STEPHEN** Oh, hello Lucy.

**LUCY** Go on, Stephen, say something dead clever. (*to Katie*) He’s at the grammar school, you know. Are you going to go to university, Stephen?

**STEPHEN** Well, that remains to be seen.

**LUCY** Go on! You’ll be a professor when I’m flogging boiled sweets at Woolworth’s.

**STEPHEN** Is that what you really want to do, Lucy?

**LUCY** I want a big house with a spiral staircase and swimming pool, and a car. A big car, so my mum and dad and all my aunties and uncles and all the cousins can come round when I send it for them.

*MARCUS enters with one Coke with two straws in it.*

**MARCUS** (*to Lucy*) Here.

**LUCY** (*standing up and linking Marcus’s arm*) What’s the other straw for?

**MARCUS** You want some as well, don’t you?

**LUCY** You’re not a gentleman!

**MARCUS** When I get my money from old man Wheeler, I’m gonna take you out proper. We’ll go to the pictures – I’ll pay, or we could go bowling.

*LUCY takes the Coke and starts sipping.*

*MARCUS notices.*

**MARCUS** Oh, I like that! What happened to my Coke?

**LUCY** Your Coke?

*MARCUS exits swiftly, with LUCY following.*

**STEPHEN** And so it went on. I hated all that – stupid stiletto-heeled girls with their beehive hairstyles and silly, flirting ways.

**KATIE** Thank you for bringing my Coke.

**STEPHEN** Oh, it was nothing. You paid.

**KATIE** Don’t you think she’s attractive?

**STEPHEN** Her?

**KATIE** Yes, Lucy.

**STEPHEN** Why are you asking me about her?

**KATIE** Well, she seems to know you.

**STEPHEN** Oh, she’s like that with everyone. It’s stupid.

**KATIE** Is she stupid?

**STEPHEN** Why are we talking about her?

**KATIE** Do you think all girls are stupid?

**STEPHEN** No! You’re not. She doesn’t have to be like that.

**KATIE** When’s the next debating team meeting?

**STEPHEN** Wednesday.

**KATIE** Well, I’ll come then.

**STEPHEN** It’s not always that simple.

**KATIE** Do you like to dance?

**STEPHEN** What? No. Not really.

**KATIE** What else do you do?

**STEPHEN** Oh, I have to work for my A Levels just now

**KATIE** Well, thank you for the Coke. I have to go now. Wednesday night, then.

**STEPHEN** Yes, all right.

*KATIE goes out.*

*STEPHEN remains seated.*

**STEPHEN** There was this new dance, the Twist. It was one of those crazes that came over from America, invented by someone called Chubby Checker. Now, what you were supposed do – for this dance, was pretend you were towelling your back, while keeping your feet apart but on the same spot. And you could also bend your knees to go up and down. Like so.

*STEPHEN does the twist very mechanically, then stops.*

*LUCY enters quickly*

**LUCY** You, you’re stupid!

**STEPHEN** What?

**LUCY** You’re completely hopeless.

**STEPHEN** What are you talking about?

**LUCY** You broke that girl’s heart. She’s in tears outside, and she won’t come in. Don’t you have no feelings at all?

**STEPHEN** All I said was I wasn’t ready to recommend. Anyway, it was up to the committee – it wasn’t up to me.

**LUCY** You fool! She’s not like me. She’s sensitive. She’s one of them studious girls. Don’t you know? She’s in love with you!

*MARCUS enters*

**MARCUS** Lucy! What you talking to him for?

**LUCY** I don’t know.

**MARCUS** Come on, girl!

**LUCY** Yeh!

*LUCY and MARCUS go out.*

**STEPHEN** Chubby Checker wasn’t his real name. He only adopted it because there’d been a previous singer and pianist called Fats Domino. It was sort of plagiarism or perhaps ‘hommage’. But anyway, his real name was Ernest Evans, actually. Not Chubby Checker at all. Ernest Evans always seemed a more sensible name to me. (*a beat)*I’m no good with people who cry. It’s a private, excluding kind of thing. I don’t see what I can do about it. When people cry. I’ve never understood that.

*We hear Chubby Checker’s ‘The Twist’ from 1960*

*He attempts to perform the dance, as mechanically as before. He gives up*

*The music finishes*

**ENDS**