

# DANCING QUEEN!

The song and dance of my life



## Elaine Hall – Dancing Queen



Elaine had her new birthday perfume on. She could smell it if she lifted her wrist to her nose. It made her smile and feel special. The brightly coloured skirt which swirled when she walked and matched perfectly the teal blue of her new shoes, made her feel light-hearted and happy too. It had been fun catching the bus with Mum into town and looking around the shops. She liked feeling smart with her new haircut. But there was one more surprise in store.

The Queen's Theatre had never been busier. Crowds of anxious fans lining up to buy tickets for the latest ABBA event. For Elaine, it was a dream come true. And one she was going to make the most of.

Elaine had been a fan for as long as she could remember. Luckily her mother, Rose, shared her enthusiasm for the band, though truth be told it was more about witnessing her daughter's enjoyment. For when the music came on, Elaine just lit up. Like many fans, it was difficult for her to stand still when the music played and the joy which she felt in moving to the familiar words and rhythms, was matched only by the joy it gave to others to watch her. *Thank You For The Music* could have been written especially for Elaine. Despite things not always being easy, there was much that she was grateful for. And she showed it.

*Elaine liked living in Sticklepath with her mum, Rose. Dad had died and was “Up there!” There were no pets, but they had each other. And the music! For Elaine, Sticklepath was Home. And Home was lovely. Though she didn't remember much of her childhood or which school she had gone to, she did recall that (despite it being “...hard work!”) she'd had friends whom she played with and that even then, singing was an important part of her day.*

*Now, her special friend was Theresa. The two of them bringing much colour and kindness into the world. Elaine liked to look after people and especially to see that Theresa was OK. Perhaps making them both a cup of tea – with custard creams on the side! They would meet up with lots of their friends at Silver Hill to do arts and crafts. She'd once made a sheep and a pot as a surprise for Mother's Day. She liked*

*being busy too and would happily help out with chores in the morning. And she was also learning Makaton sign language. On Tuesdays, she'd attend Drama with Theresa and other friends. A walk in the park with the trees and the birds was fun too. But most of all, there was her music. Any excuse for a boogie!! And if it was ABBA, then all the better.*

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Most people had bought their tickets on-line. Rose wished she had heard about the show earlier, but there was also something quite special about standing in-line to queue... wondering if there were still seats to be had. It was just by chance, or luck, that Elaine had noticed the poster for today's special performance. "We'll see..." Rose had said to her daughter, not wanting to raise her hopes in case they were dashed at the last minute.

Elaine had none of these thoughts. She was going to see *ABBA*. She was sure of it!

The queue moved slowly, but little by little they made their way to the front where a smiling young woman with a cheery pony-tail and glasses, peered up from the desk. "Hello," she said. "*Mama Mia is it?*" "*Mama Mia!*" echoed Elaine, with the biggest of grins.

The girl tapped out something on the keyboard, staring at the screen in front of her. "*I like you. You're nice,*" said Elaine. As if her one purpose for being on this planet was to make other people feel good. "*Oh!.. I like you too.*" said the girl, blushing a little, as it wasn't something she would ordinarily say to a complete stranger. But somehow it felt OK. And truthful. It was impossible to *not* like this woman with her bright clothes, open smile and that gently tilting head showing a certain childlike curiosity. She looked back down at the screen and tapped again. "*Just the two seats is it?*" she asked. At Rose's affirmative nod, she tapped for the third time. And...

"*Mama Mia... here I go again...*" rang out the song! The other people in the queue laughed and sang along. Rose cast a glance behind her to see Elaine giggling and singing and dancing on the spot! The girl at the counter took another peek at her screen, just as a kindly man in a smart suit entered the foyer. And then the music stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

"*Ohhh...*" sighed Elaine and the others in unison. But before they could make any further comment, the man walked up to the side of Rose and leaned across the counter towards the young woman who was now standing and grinning from ear to

ear. He whispered something to her and she gave a nod in the direction of Rose and Elaine. The next moment he was facing them.

“*For you I believe,*” he said. “*Congratulations!*” And then he was gone. Rose was dumbfounded, but Elaine grinned and took the envelope, turning it over and over in her hands. “*For me?*” she smiled. The girl behind the counter looked almost more excited than Elaine. “*You've won the golden tickets!*” she whispered to Rose. Elaine liked the sound of 'golden' – it made her think of sunshine and pretty things. She smiled even wider and gave out a gentle chuckle. Rose helped Elaine hook open the flap on the envelope to reveal what were indeed *two golden tickets*. “*It means you get your tickets for free and...*” “*Free?*” Elaine liked that word too. She liked to feel free. “*Yes. And there are special seats reserved for you as well. The best seats in the house!*” To look at her you would have thought that the girl had won the seats herself. She looked genuinely happy for them. As did everyone around. They were smiling and patting Rose and Elaine on the back. “*Are they gold too?*” asked Elaine. “*What? The seats? Um... no I don't think so.*” She had never given out Golden Tickets before and felt a little embarrassed. “*I'm new here.*” she said. “*I'm new here too.*” said Elaine. And indeed, she hadn't ever lined up for a ticket before, so she was quite right. The two of them laughed and soon Rose couldn't help but join in. *Everyone's happy!* thought Elaine. And that made her happy too.

“*If you'd like to follow me...*” said the girl. Elaine giggled. “*Is it a surprise?*” she said. Elaine liked surprises. “*Well, sort of...*” the girl said. And the two of them followed her through the double-doors to the auditorium where two seats were lit up in the front row.

... The show was even better than Elaine could have imagined. The costumes were colourful and exciting. All

her favourite songs were there - *Voulez-Vous, Money, Money, Money* and of course, *Mama Mia*. 'Happy songs' as she thought of them. Elaine was in her element, dancing and singing in the aisle and having the time of her life!

And then it was over. The band had taken their final curtain call and were still holding hands, smiling to each other and the audience. Elaine grinned up at them. She was tired - a happy tired.

Suddenly there was a fanfare! The band moved to the back of the stage. A spotlight rained down, centre-front and a man stepped into it. “*It's the postman!*” said Elaine

to her mother. It was indeed the man who had given them the envelope. This time it was not an envelope he was carrying, but the biggest bunch of flowers Elaine had ever seen. It turned out *The Postman* was actually the *Theatre Director*. After thanking the cast for their brilliant performance and the audience for coming, with a huge smile on his face he adjusted the bouquet, clutching it to his chest with one arm. Lifting up the piece of paper he was carrying in his other hand, he began to read.

*“What makes a number one fan? Maybe it's someone who has bought all of their records (or albums as they're now called), seen the films, the stage shows, joined the fan club. Maybe. Or maybe it's someone who epitomises the fun, the energy and the love that the band stand for. And if that is the case, then we have one special person to honour here today! Please stand and raise your voices for our very own (cue music!) Dancing Queen...”*

*A second spotlight found its mark. “Mama Mia!” beamed Elaine...*