

WINDOW  
of  
Opportunity

The Stained-Glass Legacy  Book One

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*To those who live their faith, even when it means doing the difficult things.*

*“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”*

*Romans 1:17 (NASB)*



# Chapter One



1926 - Harrisburg, Illinois

“Isn’t it just the berries?”

The feminine voice drew Brendan Dunne’s attention. Straining to see without moving away from the barber’s scissors, Brendan realized the woman had gained the attention of every other male in the shop. A few stared curiously. Others glared. He smiled at the sentiment contained in their eyes. How dare a woman invade this man’s world of haircuts and razors and shaving cream?

Even back in Chicago, a young woman took a gamble having her hair bobbed. Those around her would either love it or hate it, and neither side kept their opinions to themselves. A far cry from some of the more rural towns he’d seen, Harrisburg was still a long way from metropolitan Chicago, and the backlash from such a bold fashion move could be disastrous.

The tall, brunette preened in front of the mirror. Her newly shorn locks were as straight as a pin, and her bangs were equally so. The only hint of curl was in the very front where her hair curved slightly forward to frame her face. He didn’t see the

attraction, but if her smile was any indication, the woman loved her new look.

She used the mirror to look at the impossibly petite woman who'd accompanied her into the barbershop. "Evangeline, you simply have to bob your hair. With all your waves, it would be darling on you."

Evangeline raised a slender hand to the honeyed tresses secured in a low bun at the nape of her neck. Her voice was quiet when she spoke. "I think I'll keep my hair the way it is for now. Maybe another time."

Brendan smiled. She wouldn't cut her hair. It was written all over her face.

"Where is your sense of adventure?" The brunette chided Evangeline as she pulled the bills out of her purse to pay the barber. "Haven't you seen the latest issue of *Harper's Bazar*? It won't be long until all women give up their corsets and long hair for good. Everything will be short from hair to hemlines, and women everywhere will be better for it."

Men cleared their throats, some in shock and some in disgust. Brendan sucked in a breath. The women he'd known in Chicago had adopted the same brazen attitude, but at least they had the sense to voice it in the clubs, speakeasies, and at parties where such bold attitudes were less shocking in mixed company. This girl might have the spirit of a girl from big-town Chicago, but she definitely lacked the finer points of finesse and discretion, which was saying a lot considering those were two words he'd never considered to describe those girls in the first place.

As the barber spun his chair away from the mirror, Brendan took a closer look at Evangeline. Poor girl. She obviously didn't share her friend's boisterous nature. An embarrassed pink tinged her skin from her neck to the roots of her hair.

He doubted she was a simple farmer's daughter. Her dress wasn't homespun or overly worn like many of the rural farm girls who came to town with their families. Her short stature left only the briefest glimpse of leg even with her dress hem stopping at

mid-calf. Her black oxfords were well-polished and even the laces lacked signs of wear. While the length and loose fit of her dress were in keeping with the times, Evangeline didn't share her friend's need to showcase the trendiest styles of the twenties either.

Evangeline peered uncomfortably in his direction. Brendan hadn't realized he'd been staring and hated the idea that he'd added to her discomfort. He smiled in acknowledgment before pulling the watch from his pocket to fiddle with it absentmindedly. Out of the corner of his eye, he watched as Evangeline joined her friend and walked out the door.

A collective sigh of relief filled the barber shop. Awkward silence was replaced with talk of cars, the economy, and baseball. Brendan smiled. The men could be men again. He settled back against the chair and listened to the chatter without joining in.

A final spin of the chair, and the protective drape was whisked off his shoulders.

"There you be."

Brendan took out his wallet and thumbed through, finding the correct bills. "Looks great, Mr. Miller. Thank you."

Brendan plucked his black fedora from the coat rack and placed it on his newly slicked back hair before looping his umbrella over his wrist. As he pushed open the door, he caught a glimpse of the girls coming out of the Woolworths across the street, arm in arm. Evangeline carried a small paper sack in her free hand. What a pair those two made. Of course, he didn't know them well. Didn't know them at all, really. He was only familiar with their types, and what he'd experienced of those didn't seem to blend naturally in his opinion.

Brendan buttoned his ulster coat as he stepped from the warmth of the barber shop into the fall air. The staccato honk of a horn disturbed the peace of the afternoon. A blue Chevrolet pulled up beside the girls.

Evangeline held back while her friend tugged her arm free and flitted over to the men trying and succeeding in gaining her

attention. She leaned down enough to see the car's occupants. Didn't she realize she was treating them to a peek at her womanly assets? Of course, she did. Her flirtations were obvious from across the street. It would be foolish to think she was oblivious to the show she teased them with.

She glanced over her shoulder and must have spoken because Evangeline shook her head. Her friend threw her hands up in the air. Evangeline shook her head again, and a firm "no" carried across the intersection.

"Evangeline, don't be such a blue nose. It's only a ride."

The frustrated whine, like nails on a chalkboard. Still, Evangeline stood her ground and shook her head.

"Fine. Walk home then, but don't complain to me when you're caught in the rain." She pulled the door open. "Scoot over boys."

Evangeline stared after the car pulling away. Her shoulders sagged. A gust of wind stole the sack from her hand, depositing it in the street not far from where Brendan stood. She moved to chase it, but he held her in place with a raised hand and retrieved the lightweight bag. Curiosity nearly got the better of him. What could she have purchased that would be so light? A gentleman would never ask or look. He folded over the top of the sack and trotted across the street to where Evangeline waited for him.

She tilted her head slightly to see him from under the brim of the purple cloche hat perched on her head and smiled. "Thank you. That wind came out of nowhere."

Brendan nodded his head. "Happy to help. Miss Evangeline, is it?"

She frowned.

He rushed to explain. "I couldn't help but hear your friend call you by name in the barber shop."

She glanced at the barber shop across the street before looking back to him. The confusion fell from her face, and she smiled again. The sweetness and innocence of it nearly stole his breath before she spoke.



“I’m afraid you have me at a disadvantage, sir. I don’t know who I’m indebted to.”

“Brendan Dunne, at your service. But only if we agree that you owe me nothing. Any man worth knowing would have done the same.”

She gazed down the road a moment before looking back at him. “No. I don’t think they would have.”

Ah, the men in the Chevrolet who whisked away her friend. “You’re right. I doubt those dandies would have taken the time to help. But, then again, I did say any man worth knowing. I’m not convinced they fit either requirement.”

Her laugh was soft, bringing warmth despite the chill in the air. “Maybe you’re right.”

“Of course, I’m right. Your friend ...”

“Dot, Dorothy.”

“Miss Dorothy may find that out soon enough, though I hope for her sake she doesn’t. As for you, Miss Evangeline, please allow me to escort you home, since you were so rudely left to fend for yourself.”

“I’m not sure that’s such a good idea. We’ve only just met.” Her slender fingers absently rubbed the pendant hanging around her neck. “Mother would have had a fit if I got into a man’s car, but I’m not sure I would fare any better with a practical stranger walking me home. Besides, it’s only a few minutes’ walk.”

“Then I won’t walk with you. I’ll walk behind you, just to make sure you arrive safely. There’s no harm in that, is there?”

Her voice was hesitant. “I suppose that would be all right. Besides, I can’t prevent you from walking down the street now, can I?”

“Very well. After you.”

Brendan awkwardly trailed several steps behind Evangeline. Walking next to her would have afforded him the opportunity to get to know her better. Of course, when she had words with her mother about it, she probably wouldn’t find gratitude among the list of feelings she had for him. It was better this way.

When the first fat drops of ice-cold rain hit his cheek, Brendan rethought his stance. It wouldn't do to care for propriety if it meant Evangeline could take a cold. He lengthened his stride to catch up with her and opened his umbrella above them.

"Miss Dorothy was right about the rain. I hope your mother understands, but I cannot in good conscience allow you to walk in the rain when I've got a perfectly useful umbrella."

"Under the circumstances, I'm sure Mother will understand."

"Evangeline Grace Moore get down here right now, young lady."

Mother's screeched order bounced off the walls causing Evangeline to pause halfway up the flight of stairs. Had the town's busybodies already passed down a report of Brendan walking her home? Surely they couldn't disseminate information that quickly. She'd only been home for thirty minutes.

It would do no good to pretend she'd not caught Mother's order. Besides, it would be disrespectful. No matter what she felt about her parent's strict decrees and constant disappointment in her choices, God had shown her long ago that honor and respect of her parents was required. The fact that she was nineteen, soon to be twenty, didn't change anything. She lived under their roof, and she would show them respect whether they realized it or not.

The echo of each step as she made her way down the stairs sounded like the beating of a drum leading to an unfair trial and execution. She'd taken that path many times. While the execution might only be figurative, it occurred in regular intervals after every perceived grievance.

Evangeline took a deep breath and stepped around the corner into the parlor where her mother waited, her foot tapping impatiently on the polished wood floors.

"Yes, Mother?"

"Would you like to tell me what you were doing getting in a car filled with boys today—

and after visiting a barber shop, no less?"

Evangeline sighed. "You may want to tell your informant to have her eyes checked, Mother."

"You will not be so disrespectful. It is highly unbecoming in a young lady."

"Nevertheless, whoever told you such a tale was wrong. I refused the ride, though doing so left me walking home in the rain. Whoever tattled must not have witnessed the whole scene."

Her mother's chin went higher in the air if that was possible. "And the barber shop? Turn around and let me see your hair. I can't believe you would visit a place like that much less adopt a hairstyle that suits only those of a certain, low-class temperament and interest."

Before Evangeline could comply, her mother gripped her arm, spinning her around. Evangeline winced. Waiting until her mother's free hand touched the bun she'd arranged that morning, Evangeline answered, "I went in with Dot. She was the one who got her hair bobbed, not me. Besides, it was a barber shop, Mother. That's hardly like frequenting a speakeasy."

Her mother inhaled sharply. "What do you know of such things? I sensed Dorothy Taylor was no good for you. She's a horrid influence, and I was wrong in letting you befriend her. Your father is a judge, and as such, we have certain standards that must be maintained. Dorothy is simply not the sort to help your image in the community."

Evangeline took advantage of her mother's position behind her to roll her eyes. Carefully schooling her features to a neutral position, she faced her mother. "I'm not concerned with what people in the community think. I've done nothing wrong, and Dorothy has been my friend since elementary school. I agree she doesn't always make the wisest choices, but as you can see from my restraint today, I do not follow along like a mindless sheep. If something is wrong or questionable, I don't do it."

Pursed lips and silent regard were Evangeline's reward for choosing not to get in the car. What would have happened if she'd