

proved to be a winner of high ratings. The gold records were a wonderful surprise and reward for something he had loved doing. He couldn't somehow, believe this was all true!

He considered himself the same person. He was David Cassidy—period. Of course, others wouldn't have stated it that simply. After his name, they would have listed such achievements as stage actor; television star; recording artist; concert performer.

But to him, those were fancy expressions for a very simple term. He was an actor. Basically, his career began with acting. He tried to explain to people that versatility is an asset to an actor and he had been lucky to have the opportunity to branch out and express his other talents.

The fact that he was praised for work he enjoyed was a never-ending source of wonder for him. He was constantly reminded of how fortunate he was to have such loyal fans who believed and enjoyed his work. He could never be able to tell them just how great a thrill it was for him to know he had that chance.

It would never be enough to say thank you to each person. One of his favorite dreams was being able to personally meet each of his fans. To be able to shake each one's hand, to learn their names, and to say thank you for giving him the greatest honor he could receive—their love. But he knew this was impossible!

• THE EMPTINESS

Yet, he had never realized before just how deep that desire to show his gratitude was until a few nights before!

It had been on stage in an empty auditorium. In the background, the crew was saying good-night to each other. Somewhere off stage the sounds of equipment and scenery being closed up for the night could be heard. The voices and noise soon were gone. The darkness was like a blanket that smothered any possible sound.

Still David stayed. He sat quietly until everyone was gone. Now, the one bulb of the night light used on stage glowed dimly. David walked to the light and held his hand up to feel its warmth. His gaze wandered from its brightness to the seats in the distance where, tomorrow night, his fans would be sitting.

He suddenly felt cold all over. He held both hands nearer to the lamp, trying to spread its warmth from his hands to the rest of his body. Tomorrow night! The words rang in his ears over and over again. Tomorrow night—his first live concert! It was too soon! Could he do it? He felt so unprepared. He wanted so badly to do it well for them—for those who believed in him, and who would be sitting in the audience—waiting for him to strengthen their faith!

The rows of empty chairs were like a mirrored image of how he felt inside: empty! This was his chance, his first real opportunity to show how grateful and appreciative he was for his fans' loyalty, and yet, was he doing the right thing? He walked to the edge of the stage and peered out into the endless dark.

He suddenly felt like a lost little boy—a little boy who had somehow wandered into a land filled with promise—and who wasn't sure what to do! "Please, please," he had whispered to the invisible audience, "Please let them know how I feel. Let them accept my way of saying thank you for all they've given me. Let me give them something in return. Let it be a good performance!"

Then he had turned quickly away. He began to walk off stage, and turned around again. His smile was barely visible in the dim light. "I hope you like the show. It's only for you!" were his last words. Soon the stage was empty with only his footsteps echoing in reply!

David opened his eyes as he felt the plane taxiing for its takeoff. He looked out the window once more and watched as the lights blended into a blur of brilliance. The lights looked the same as the ones that surrounded the stage the night of the concert! A chance to re-live that memory brought

a warm smile to his lips.

He had heard his introduction and began walking onstage. Suddenly the air was filled with thunderous applause. And the bright lights quickly blurred as small tears formed in his eyes—and fell one by one.

He knew then he had been wrong about doubting his fans' loyalty at all! The bond between him and the audience was genuine and precious. He could only bow his head and know that each tear was an expression of thanks!

• EACH SONG FOR THEM

He closed his eyes as he once again felt the love he had been shown that night! Each song was for them. Each movement was a thank you. And then, too soon, it was all over. But the applause had gone on and on. The glaring lights focused on him were only half as brilliant as the warm glow he felt inside. He was too moved at the end of his performance, he had only been able to say "Thank you" one last time, as he took a final bow!

A voice was speaking to him again. "I'm sorry to bother you again. I wanted to ask if you wanted a pillow." The stewardess was holding a pillow in her hand.

"Thank you," David replied and placed the pillow beneath his head. As he leaned back, he smiled at her.

"Were you asleep? I hope I didn't interrupt a dream!"

David smiled as she walked to the next passenger, and he thought, "No, you didn't interrupt a dream! The dream is here and now. The real dream of knowing I'm not David Cassidy: Superstar, or David Cassidy: The lost little boy on the dark stage. I'm David Cassidy: the luckiest guy in the entire world!"

