

## CHAPTER 1

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN, IN MY EARLY TWENTIES, I FELL in love with a girl named Gladys Hungerton. Gladys was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen – she had dark hair, large brown eyes, and delicate ivory skin. Unfortunately, Gladys was not in love with me; though we spent many hours together talking and laughing, she regarded me as a friend and nothing more. Despite this, I made the decision to propose to Gladys. I knew there was a chance she would reject my proposal, but I had to try. And so, one cold October evening, I visited Gladys at her house and asked her to marry me.

‘Oh, Edward,’ said Gladys after a long pause, ‘we have such a beautiful friendship, why can’t we simply remain friends?’

‘Because I love you, Gladys!’ I exclaimed. ‘I want to spend the rest of my life with you!’

Gladys gave me a look of pity. ‘But I don’t love you, Edward, and I have never loved you.’

‘Why can’t you love me, Gladys?’ I cried. ‘Is it my appearance?’

Gladys squeezed my hand gently. ‘No, of course not,’ she said.

‘Is it my character?’ I asked. ‘Tell me what you want me to change!’

Gladys sighed. ‘Edward, let me explain to you what kind of man I want: I want a man who has no fear of death; a man who has travelled the world and who has had many exciting adventures. I want to marry a man who’s brave, heroic and famous!’

‘All right,’ I said. ‘If you want a brave and heroic man, I will do something that will make you proud.’

Gladys laughed at my enthusiasm. ‘What are you going to do?’ she asked.

‘I don’t know,’ I replied. ‘But if I do something great, will you marry me then?’

‘We’ll see,’ said Gladys with a smile. ‘Now, you’re working the night shift at the paper and you’re running late.’

I said goodnight to Gladys and walked briskly to the offices of the *Daily Gazette*, where I worked as a journalist. When I arrived, I immediately made my way to the News Editor’s office.

