

Chapter 1

Barthalamew Buckett was an eager man of twenty when he first fell in love for the third time that year. He was the same boyish twenty when he resolved, and with all the usual vigor, that this time, being the magical third time, would be the very last time, that this one, being the magical Ms. Daphne Davison, would be the very last one. And for all his efforts, kind, romantic and otherwise, it did come to pass. The magical Ms. Davison was, indeed, the very last love of his life. That year.

And just how did the magical Ms. Davison, daughter to Doctor Waxen Davison, local physician of no particular achievement or wonder, find herself atop such a notorious pedestal? Was it that she was a young woman of singular beauty? Not so, by the journal of Mrs. Joan Theryoung. Was it that she was a young woman of singular style of standing? Additionally not so, by the terms of said journal. Was it that she was well-liked or regarded by the many of community? Almost entirely not so and again by Mrs. Theryoung's blessed account which, by now you may have guessed, puts the poor girl in a light that might best be described, and with no charity to spare, as dim.

So just what were the qualities of Ms. Davison, being so magical as she was, for surely qualities did abound? Well, it is known that she was a woman with a full count of eyes and arms and legs as well, which was a very fine thing and which was quite enough as Mr. Buckett, it seems, was drawn with great ease and frequency to this simple and none too rare design. It is known that she was a woman of average height and weight; a woman, it might be said, who let loose the very appearance of someone dipped at birth into a whole vat of averages; a woman, it might be said, who took an early fall from some average height out of the most impeccably average tree and hit upon every average branch on the way down to an otherwise average ground; a woman, it might be said, void of any particularity but for her golden locks of hair which, though much less common, appeared all the more average for all the average she so averagely was. To the point, Ms. Davison was as plain as plain could be and if that can be considered a quality, magical or no, then, by all means, consider it.

And what then of our saint-to-be? What of his look? What of his manner? What of his averages? Well, there were, of course, some to count, for we all have a touch of average about us (some more than others being the previous point). Barthalamew Buckett had averages, indeed, but his averages were rather unusually marked. His face, for instance, was no bigger or smaller or rounder or squarer than any you might see or know but his lips were thin and his nose was sharp and his eyes were uncommonly low. And his beard, when he thought to grow it, and he only once thought to grow it, was an awkward and patchy mess.

As for the rest of him, the black-haired fellow had the look of a man not actively strong but strong enough for the sake of his youth. Parts of him were handsome, parts of him were not and parts of him seemed rather troubled as to which part to be. He was tall and thin, lanky by sight and known by a less than confident gait. His dress was fair, though mostly poor, commonly dark with black prevailing. His top hat was short and weathered and, like his hair, as dark as night in most spots, but then some spots were lighter and hinting already at some future sort of gray. He was young when he smiled and old when he cried and at a loss for age when in love. He seemed, therefore, almost always ageless or aging fast for love was most often what he was in.