

THE LOVE OF A KING

Would you like to be a king? To be rich and famous? Do you want to be the centre of every crowd? Do you want everyone to be looking at you? All the time? Every day?

A king is never alone. Someone is always watching him – his detectives, photographers, a thousand people in the street. Everyone knows his face, and he must be careful what he does, because he can do nothing in secret. And what a king says today, the world hears tomorrow. So he must be careful what he says, because someone is always listening . . .

But can a king be happy? What happens if he wants something, but he cannot have it? What does he do then?

This is the true story of King Edward VIII of Great Britain; a man who fell in love, and who wanted to be happy . . .



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The Love of a King

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The Love of a King



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IN APRIL 1987

In April 1987, three hundred people came to a small room in Geneva, Switzerland. There were Presidents and Kings, film stars and millionaires. They came from the four corners of the world, east and west, north and south, and they spoke many languages.

But they all wanted one thing – to buy some jewellery. It was the jewellery that a man called Edward gave to a woman called Wallis.

One woman, Mrs Namiki from Japan, paid 105,000 dollars for a gold ring.

‘Why did you pay all that money?’ a friend asked. ‘You can buy a gold ring in Tokyo for half that money.’

‘Because Wallis and Edward were special to me,’ Mrs Namiki replied. ‘I never met them, but I’ll keep that ring all my life.’

In the next few hours, in that small room in Geneva, the jewellery was sold for 50,000,000 dollars. But who was Wallis? And who was Edward? And why was their love story so special?

Let’s begin at the beginning . . .

A Lonely Child

Prince Edward was born in 1894. His father, King George V, was a tall, cold man who did not like children. ‘Why does Edward talk all the time?’ he once said. ‘He’s a very noisy child!’

His mother, Queen Mary, agreed. ‘It doesn’t matter if Edward is happy or unhappy,’ she said. ‘A child must be silent and strong.’

The family lived in Buckingham Palace, which had 600 rooms. There were 8 kitchens, 19 bathrooms, 24 toilets, 11 dining rooms, 17 bedrooms and 21 sitting rooms.

Edward once told a story about the house:

Buckingham Palace was very big, and people sometimes got lost. One night my mother, my father and I were sitting in the dining room. We were waiting for our dinner. We waited and we waited, but the food did not come. After twenty minutes my father was very angry. He stood up and went to the kitchen. ‘Where is the cook?’ he shouted, ‘and where is my food?’

‘But, Sir,’ the cook replied, ‘your dinner left the kitchen fifteen minutes ago. Hasn’t it arrived yet?’

‘No, it hasn’t,’ my father shouted, ‘and I’m hungry.’

The King left the kitchen and began to look for the food. Ten minutes later he saw a woman who was carrying three plates of meat and potatoes. ‘What happened to you?’ my

father said. 'Why didn't you bring us our dinner?'

'I'm sorry, Sir,' the woman replied. 'There are a lot of dining rooms. I couldn't remember where to go. But if you return to the table, Sir, this time I can follow you to the right room.'

Edward did not go to school with other children. He stayed in Buckingham Palace where he had a special classroom just for him.

This is how Edward described his lessons:

My teacher, Mr Hansell, was a thin man. He never smiled and his nose was very red. We had lots of books but they were all very boring. They were full of words and they didn't have any pictures.

Sometimes I stopped reading and looked out of the



'Buckingham Palace was very big, and people sometimes got lost.'

window. Mr Hansell got very angry. He took a stick and hit me on the arm. ‘Don’t look out of the window, little boy,’ he shouted. ‘Look at the book.’ He hit me many times and my arm was red.

Every Friday the teacher took me to my father’s room. ‘And what has my son learnt this week, Mr Hansell?’ the King asked.

And the answer was always: ‘Not very much I’m afraid, Sir. Edward doesn’t like his lessons. He never listens to what I say.’

When Mr Hansell left the room, my father was angry with me. ‘What’s wrong with you, child?’ he said. ‘Are you stupid? Why can’t you learn anything?’

‘But the lessons are so boring, Sir,’ I replied. ‘And Mr Hansell hits me.’

‘I don’t understand you, Edward. You’re a baby. You’re so weak. You’ll never be a good King. A King must be strong. Go to your room and stay there until the morning.’

‘I spent many days alone in my room,’ Edward wrote later. ‘I never played with other children and I didn’t have any friends. I lived in the most beautiful house in England but I was always lonely and sad. I saw my mother once a day at dinner time and I saw my father three or four times a week, but they never gave me any love. I was afraid of them and everything I did was wrong.’

The Prince of Wales

In the spring of 1911 King George called Edward into his room and said:

‘Next month I’ll make you Prince of Wales and these are your clothes for the ceremony.’

The King opened a small cupboard and Edward started to cry. ‘But father,’ he said, ‘I’m sixteen years old now. I can’t wear soft shoes and a skirt. I’ll look like a girl. Why can’t I dress like other people?’

‘Because you’re different and special,’ his father replied, ‘and one day you’ll be King.’

Edward cried for the next two days, but there was nothing he could do.

And so, on 10th June 1911, the family drove to Caernarvon Castle in North Wales and the ceremony began.

The King put a small gold crown on Edward’s head. There was music and dancing and the crowd began to shout.

The new Prince of Wales closed his eyes. ‘I feel terrible,’ he said. ‘Can we go home now?’

‘Not yet,’ the King replied. ‘The people want to see you.’

Edward walked to the front of the castle and looked down at the crowd. He was shaking and his face was red.



'I can't wear soft shoes and a skirt. I'll look like a girl.'

‘Smile, Edward,’ the King said. ‘You are happy!’

A few hours later the family were driving back to Windsor. ‘Wasn’t that a lovely day!’ Queen Mary said.

Edward took off his shoes and looked out of the window. ‘Never again,’ he thought. ‘Never again!’

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The Royal Star

After a year at Oxford University, Edward went to fight in the First World War. He wrote:

I lived in a house with twenty-five other soldiers. At night we talked about our lives and our families. It was very interesting.

I could speak freely to different people – rich and poor, young and old. But I also saw the blood and noise of war.

One day in 1916 my driver took me to the town of Loos in Belgium. I got out of the car and walked to the top of the hill. Down below me there was heavy fighting and I felt very sad.

An hour later I returned to my car. I’ll never forget what I saw. My driver was dead. While I was away, somebody shot him in the neck.

When the war finished in 1918, Edward returned to Buckingham Palace. One night he was talking to his father in the dining room.

‘I don’t understand why countries fight,’ the Prince said. ‘The war has finished, but nothing has changed. There are still millions of poor and hungry people. It’s not right. Somebody must do something!’

‘Well,’ King George replied, ‘you can’t change the world if you sit by the fire. You must travel. Meet people. Talk to them. Listen to what they say. And then, when you are King, you can make the world a better place.’

And so, in 1920, Edward left England again. During the next five years he travelled 240,000 kilometres and visited 45 different countries.

He saw India, Argentina, Nigeria, Mexico, New Zealand, Germany, and Japan. When he came to Toronto, in Canada, there were 500,000 people in the streets to meet him. Everywhere thousands of people waited to see him – there were crowds of 190,000 in Cape Town, 300,000 in Paris, 500,000 in New York, and 750,000 in Melbourne.

‘Edward is the first royal star,’ one newspaper wrote, ‘and he is now the most famous man in the world. In the old days princes were cold and bored. But Edward is different. He gets out of his car and walks down the street. Every two or three minutes he stops and speaks with the crowd. He laughs. He smiles. He shakes a thousand hands. He is a man of the people with a heart of gold.’



'I saw the blood and noise of war.'

The Meeting

In the autumn of 1930 Edward went to stay with his friends Lord and Lady Furness. This is how he described that weekend in a book called *A King's Story*:

On Saturday the weather was cold and windy. It was raining heavily so we could not ride our horses. We decided to stay in the house and have an early lunch with some of Lady Furness' friends.

At one o'clock Wallis arrived with her husband. She was beautifully dressed and she smiled all the time. She spoke with Lord Furness for a few minutes, and then Lady Furness brought her over to see me.

'Sir, I would like you to meet one of my dearest and sweetest American friends, Mrs Wallis Simpson.'

'How do you do, Mrs Simpson,' I said. 'Please come and sit down.'

Lady Furness left us and we began to talk.

I could see that Wallis was not feeling very well. She had a bad cold and her eyes were red. 'I'm afraid that our English houses aren't very warm,' I said. 'We don't have American central heating here.'

There was a long silence. Mrs Simpson turned her face and looked out of the window. Then she said: 'You have disappointed me, Sir.'

'And why is that?' I asked.

'Because everybody asks me about American central

heating. I thought that the Prince of Wales would talk about something more interesting.'

I began to laugh.

'What's the matter, Sir?' Wallis asked. 'Have I said something wrong?'

'No,' I replied. 'I'm laughing because you didn't lie to me. You told me the truth.'

'But why is that funny? Doesn't everybody do that?'

'One day I'll be King of England,' I replied. 'And people are afraid of me. If I say that the sky is yellow, they say, "Yes, Sir, you are right". If I say that Wednesday is the first day of the week, they say, "Yes, Sir, you are right". And if I say that Scotland is bigger than Canada, they say, "Yes, Sir, you are right". But you told me that I was boring! You told me the truth. I like that!'

There was another silence and then Wallis began to laugh. 'Can I say one more thing, Sir?'

'Yes, Mrs Simpson, what is it?'

'It's your trousers, Sir.'

'My trousers?'

'Yes, Sir. They are black and your shoes are brown. These two colours don't look right together.'

I stood up and looked in the mirror. 'Yes, Mrs Simpson, you're right. I look very strange. The next time we meet, I will be better dressed.'

When lunch was ready, we walked through into the dining room. I sat at one end of the table and Wallis sat at the other end. I was watching her very carefully. I thought how beautiful her hands were. She began talking to Lady Furness and then, a few minutes later, she turned and smiled at me. I felt very happy.

After lunch, Wallis came over to say goodbye. 'My



Wallis Simpson
'She was very beautiful and her eyes were full of fire.'