

CAN YOU SMILE AT THIS?

Jane, dearest—

Whenever I think of you, my heart flops up and down like a churn-dasher. Sensations of unutterable joy caper over it like young goats on a stable roof, and thrill through it as would cactus needles through linen knickers. As a pig wallows in a mud puddle, so I wallow in a sea of glory at the thought of you. Visions of ecstatic rapture, thicker than the hairs of a blacking brush, and brighter than the hues of a humming bird's pinions, visit me in my slumbers, and borne on their invisible wings, your image stands before me. Vainly do I reach to grasp it as a puppy snaps at fleas.

When I first beheld your angelic perfections, I was bewildered, and my brain whirled around like a bumble-bee under a glass tumbler. My eyes stood open like the cellar doors in a small town. Eagerly did I prick up my ears to catch the silvery accents of your voice, as does the hungry and flea-bitten dog when called to dinner. My tongue refused to wag, and then, in silent adoration, I drank the sweet infection of love much as an old soak downs the long-delayed schooner of the cream and amber. And then, like a plumber's candle in a dingy cellar, the softened light of your countenance cast its restful glow into my life and illumined the darker recesses of my soul. I felt elevated, and it seemed as if I could lift myself up by the boot-straps to the top of a church-steeple and ring the bells to tell the world of my love.

Day and night you are in my thoughts. When Aurora, blushing like a bride, rises from her saffron-colored clouds over the reduction plant; when the chanticleer's shrill clarion is heard from the chicken-yard and heralds the coming morn; when the awakening pig rushes from his bed of muck in the barnyard and grunts and goes forth to his refreshments; when the bluebird pipes his tuneful lay in the apple tree by the cow-shed; when the droning flies wheel in their flight over the food on the dinner table, and when the lowing herd comes home at milking time, I think of you.

Your hair is like the mane of a stallion powdered with lampblack. Your forehead is smoother than the elbow of an old coat. Your eyes are glorious to contemplate, and in their liquid depths, cupids swarm like a cohort of ants in an old cracker. Your nose is as perfect as if carved from a chunk of Parian marble. Your mouth is puckered with sweetness, and nectar lingers on your lips like honey on a bear's paw. Myriads of unfledged kisses are there, ready to fly out like a swarm of surprised flies from the sugar bowl. Your gay laugh rings in my ears like a locomotive whistle, or like the bleat of a stray lamb on a bleak hillside. The dimples in your cheeks are like the bowers in a bed of roses, or like the hollows in a cake of home-made candy.

If ever your head lays pressed against my manly bosom, the fire of your soul will penetrate my anatomy like a load of buckshot through a rotten apple. I am dying to fly to your presence and pour out the burning eloquence of my love as a thrifty housewife pours out hot coffee. Away from you I am as melancholy as a sick rat. Sometimes I can hear the bugs of despondency buzzing in my ears, and feel the cold lizards of despair crawling up and down my back. Uncouth fears, like a thousand minnows, nibble at my spirits, and my soul is pierced with doubts after the manner of a Swiss cheese.

My love for you is stronger than the smell of a goat kennel or the kick of white mule whiskey. Just as the songbird longs for the light of day, and the cautious mouse hankers for the piece of bacon in the trap, or a weaned kitten years for a saucer of milk, so do I long for you.

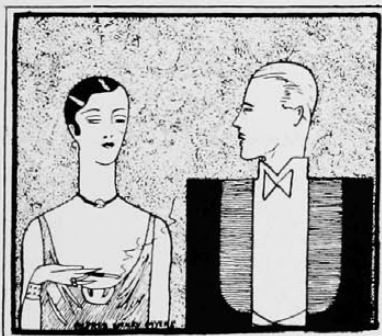
If these few words enable you to see the inside of my soul and assist me in winning your affections, I shall be as happy as a woodpecker in a rotten stump or a truck horse in a Kentucky pasture. But if you cannot reciprocate my soul-mastering passion, I shall pine away like a poisoned bed-bug and fall from the tree of life, an untimely branch.

Your soul-torn lover,

WILLIAM.



Doctor to sword swallower: No cavalry swords—no daggers—just a few dessert knives to keep your strength up.



"Did you see John Drinkwater?"
"No. Did he?"