

Missives

Madison Jesse Scott-Clary

August 30, 2016

Sir,

If it please you, I write concerning our last meeting one week and six days ago at Mister G-'s manor, wherein we spent a happy hour discussing the finer points of his garden. You requested that I write back upon returning home and I find myself with unanswered questions.

You asked about the maiden's hair and I replied, out of haste, that I found it beautiful, but perhaps too much to occupy the entirety of one's garden. On further consideration, I have decided that there is a thing of beauty involved in the simple maiden's hair fern. The stem, I have decided, traces a most delicate arc, and the leaves describe a softness that I find lacking in many other such plants.

In addition, you asked about the gardenias, and I found them to be quite splendid, though I was initially taken aback by their appearance. I found them to be strikingly vivid, and I was taken aback by its hue and intensity. I know you've an eye for the bright, but I worry a touch that it was out of place.

May I instead draw your attention to the gloxinia? I found it to be decidedly beautiful, though it be crouched lower than the rest. Knowing the keenness of your gaze, I trust that you saw it as well, though I hadn't the chance to point it out at the time.

Please do write me back with your thoughts, I remain curious.

Yours,

V. V., Jr.

§

My dear fox,

I was surprised and delighted to be greeted with your letter today, for I had feared that I was too forward in asking to continue our conversation in such a setting. The hour had grown late, however, by the time we were free of our duties, and I had much travel before me, and my hasty parting was in no way a reflection on you.

I find your observations astute and in line with my estimation of you as a person. Knowing that, I say:

Tho' the flow'r may bloom ere long
and night recede unto the dawn,
so yet may love's embrace grow fond
and yet be spoilt upon the wan.

For, as I'm sure you well know, too much water on the gardenia flower causes the soft white of the blossom to turn brown and discolor. Even such a perfection of God's creation as the flower be spoiled by too much of what is good for it!

Thus it was that I had to depart in haste, though I found our time together so enjoyable. For that, a thousand apologies are in order.

Though you declined to quote any of your favorite verse during our stroll through the garden, I hope that you do not mind the wandering mind of your companion. A coyote finds much on his mind, surrounded by by books. Books! And yet there I was, enjoying a walk above all else.

I've distracted myself, though. You mention the gloxinia, and I too think that such are quite the sight to behold. I don't believe that it was the type of blossom to be seen by any who had passed by, so a fox's gaze must be singularly acute. I will not hesitate to say that I think such flowers beautiful.

How telling it is the things that we find pleasing to the eye!

Alas, I must draw the line across the page here, but I do hope that you write back.

Although our words be brief, so too will they sustain us.

Yours in confidence,
A coyote.

§

Coyote,

You speak of confidence, and although I cannot guarantee the security of my own words, I shall write to you in the same spirit.

To walk with you in the garden that day was a rare joy. Though I spend my life in a comfortable home, I do indeed spend it. I feel the coinage of my Self slipping away by the hour, entertained only by my father's attendants and the scant few visitors who pay us note. I could scarcely hope to escape the stifling manner of it all by a stroll through G-'s lovely garden.

And yet there I was greeted by a most curious sight: a coyote had laid down his affected cane and knelt to inspect the flowers. I approached slowly and noisily to make my presence known, then squatted most ungracefully beside him to see the blossom at hand. I had no idea that the time that I would nearly cause my father embarrassment by dallying so long in the garden rather than being at hand.

That coyote – that delightful companion – rescued me from the drudgery for not one, I'm told, but nearly two and a half hours! Oh, the way my father's tail bristled when he confronted me. Chastened, I could not laugh, though I do now.

I think that we had both wound up there in that garden for similar reason. Neither of us wanted to be at that party. I was bored of the routine, while you were repulsed. There were, I think, not enough books there to keep your mind active, no pens to keep your paws busy.

And yet we talked. We talked of flowers, we talked of the day, we talked of the news. This all provided a pleasant afternoon, my friend, but do not think that I did not pick up on your words at the time. Your talk of maiden's hair, that flowing fern, the plant of a secret bond. Your words of gardenias with their hints of secret affections and attractions. For I, too, know the language of flowers.

I know also of the language of motion and of movement, for do not imagine that one of my station not be schooled in such. Our steps steadily began to move in time with each other, and those casual brushes of elbow to elbow, paw to paw, fingers

to fur were not missed. I must admit that I didn't so much as "catch you out" as gleefully reciprocate in this newfound closeness.

Ah, it makes my ears light up to admit it, but I miss that, dear coyote!

It has been two weeks, and I've been taught that this is an appropriate amount of time to have passed before requesting the presence of a visitor once more. Would you, dear coyote, be so kind as to bless us with your presence four days hence, on Friday the fifth?

Sincerely,

Fox

§

Fox,

My goodness! Who knew that the fox had so many words within him! A pen and paper and a promise of confidence is all it took!

You know, of course, that I jest. Walking with you in the garden that day was truly a delight, but I could tell that your tongue would be a long time in loosening. Don't think that I am unschooled in the language of interaction simply because of my low station.

Your words shall always stay safe with me, dear fox, the confidence is absolute.

Let us speak further on the garden walk of some weeks past, then. You divine my intentions correctly when I bring up the maiden's hair and gardenias, of course. I find it fascinating that one might such as yourself might even know to pick up on such allusions, never mind be able to bandy them back in turn. Gloxinia indeed! Could it be that you do truly feel this love at first sight that so many talk about? I'm sure I do not know.

However, I must admit myself flattered, all the same, that a pious and gentle critter such as yourself would stoop to spend a carefree afternoon with a poor poet and flower fancier such as myself! What is it, then, that you saw in me that was worth your time?

It is only fair that I tease out your answer by providing something in return:

Though ev'ry climax approach a denouement

And ev'ry dawn a night,

Ev'ry moment worth sharing
May be worth stealing.
Were it with you,
Delay, then, the morn.

In you, I saw that last cold breath of night before the morning, the promise of something spectacular. I catch myself wondering if it was something that is integral and permanent for you – will you always provide a glimpse of a bright day to come, or will you forever hover on the edge of darkness?

There is no small part of me which is eager to see, but the most of me would enjoy the wait. Will there be some day to break within you, or will our affections be strictly something of dreams? Longings and pining that will never cease and yet cause the fire in the hearth to flag and yet keep the room all the warmer?

Do tell.

C-

§

Dear coyote,

What say you to my invitation? Your words are more than pretty, they make a poor fox's very being yearn for a time when he may once again hear them with his own ears. However, they certainly do not address the issue at hand! Will you bless us with your presence? It is too late for the fifth, I fear, but perhaps you may join us for dinner on the twelfth?

On that day that we spent together in the garden, I cannot help but remember most clearly as we were called away to our places for the evening's festivities, when you laid your hand atop mine and said simply, "Come". Perhaps it is something weak within my heart, but it is that touch, that smile, and that simple word after so many that touched me so deeply. That is what I long for again.

So once more, "come". It is I who am asking this time, and do not dodge the question again!

Fox

§

My delightful fox,

Ahhh, is that then the dawn I spy approaching? Perhaps our dear fox does has some day within him yet!

I find it singularly amazing that a book so quiet as this may lay itself open wide and be read by those with even the poorest eyes. If it were open the wider, if it were more plain, I do not think that I would be so pleased. And were it shut, were it hidden away, I think I should feel left out of the whole experience.

As with the dawn, however, you approach slowly, carefully at first, and then with a surprising suddenness you breach the darkness and begin casting shadows. There is no hiding from a dawn such as this.

Tho' the heart may quicken –
Tho' the tongue may lap –
I shall sup no greater meal
Than thy gift entrancing

You know as well as I that touch is not casual, but calculated. And that word, lonesome after so many had been spilled in that garden, was naught to be ignored. I say this not out of boast, though I know that I did well in making my intentions clear, but out of the fact that I, too, am left without a paw in mine. Desire is a tumultuous thing, and many an hour of sleep was lost to the remembered closeness. Ah, would that there had been more...

You've answered my question, then. Now to yours. A dinner, you say? I humbly accept, and shall "come" at your bidding. The twelfth it is, please do expect me before tea, that we may spend some time recounting the virtues of flowers together.

With the utmost fondness,
C-

§

My dearest coyote,

I write hastily, as you have just left and I am to be going to bed and not up writing letters to you, if I am to keep from arousing suspicions. This must

take the guise of a thank-you note, and it is – I want nothing more than to thank you right now. Thank you, thank you, and again thank you!

To spend such an evening – to consider spending many such more – I do not hesitate to call myself smitten! I trust that you found the food palatable, for you certainly ate more than me or my father, and I fear the servants may even feel shorted tonight. I am happy to see someone enjoying with such gusto, however, and to walk the grounds with you both before and after the meal was a singular delight.

You have such an eye for softness. Things that might miss the normal gaze, a hidden globe of clover here, the shy peeking of a late blossom of witch hazel there. It was such a delight to share both your company and your mind, to share a touch of paws or a kiss upon the whiskers.

The kiss! You were so shy to move, so bashful after, I felt my heart breaking in two! And so was I: my stammering response must've given a poor showing, and no bravery in my heart let me return the gesture. The next we see each other, I shall make it up to you double and treble over! Tens of kisses, hundreds!

I do hope that we will have the chance to spend further time with each other. As the primrose, I cannot truly live without you. As motherwort says, perhaps one fox's love for a coyote ought best be concealed. I care not.

A fox who would consider himself yours.

§

To a fox whose beauty is surpassed by none,

You have done such an eloquent job of thanking me for the evening together that I, for once, find myself nearly at a loss for words. The food was indeed wonderful, but paled in comparison to the delightful company. I found you and your father both well read, and keen with words. The walk within your own garden, around your splendid grounds, was not a thing that I will soon forget.

You find me at a disadvantage –

Panting and aswish –

Would that distance be traversed as easily

As hearts t'wards yearning hearts

I must address that kiss. I confess myself a shyer person than I perhaps present, and I found myself self-flagellating within my mind after the act, worried that I had perhaps misread, that I might have overstepped my bounds. To know that we could both blush so much. . . ah, well that is what will stick most firmly in my memory. To know that one such as yourself may dream of kisses to come, that is what will sustain me for the future.

I shall scarcely be able to write a line of verse for the longing that night engendered in me. Or, perhaps I shall be overrun with a graphomania, unable to cease scribbling my poor lines for the desire of yet another small kiss. I fear it shall be the latter, that I am doomed to be forgotten among the countless smitten poets littering the streets with their oversweet verse.

In evidence of my restraint, I leave you with only one more word: “again”.

A coyote who would call you his own.

§

Dear sir,

I write at the behest of my father. It has come to my attention that a discussion of plants in a garden and a subsequent dinner has led to impropriety. The boundaries that are firmly in place by society and God’s law have been overstepped, and we toy with the sin put in place on this earth by Satan himself. It would be best if we were not to be seen together again.

May this final gift of both motherwort and primrose cuttings from our own garden sate your desires, and may that be the last we be seen together as my family wills it.

V. V., Jr.

§

Reply to the esteemed fox of the household,

I must offer my immediate and unconditional apology for any slight or dissatisfaction. It was my intent only to build a relationship of trust and kindness between

equals, lovers of the word and of life. That my actions have caused pain and discomfort by encroaching too closely on your person causes me great pain in turn and is chief among my regrets.

I will expect no reply in return, but let my poor words stand in place of any further deed that I may do to you and your family. But by your request, you shall not hear from this repentant soul again.

A rose, single, now blooming
 may indeed bless the stem,
yet are not roses clipp'd and shown?
 Undoubted 'tis a blessing to them
who receive such a gift!
 Yet now unmade is the flow'r
which adorns thy mantle with its grace,
 and withers, however slowly, by the hour
 until 'tis faded to nothing and dust,
 though some scent remain forever amidst the must.

I take well the meaning of your letter and the final gift of flowers within.
With the sincerest apologies,
C. L.