



Maria Hovarth

A BUSHEL AND A PECK

by Jack Stillwell

"Be sure it's true, when you say, 'I love you.'" Does anyone know what love is or why we say the above? Did the composer of this old song realize the difference between love and truth? Where did we learn about what love is and how do we know when we are truly in love with someone? The dictionary is not much help as it explains that love is a sexual passion or its gratification. Even the definition of "infatuation" tells you to see love for a synonym. I would assume that after reading these meanings, it would be perfectly proper to tell a woman that you love her when all you really desire is a one night stand or are just lusting for her body. My understanding of love, probably like most of us, men and women, came from music, literature, movies, and television. Our mothers and fathers told us about this word, but, as most young people, we never paid too much attention to them. My experiences with trying to comprehend the elusive meaning of love might help a few persons to grasp its interpretation, if, indeed, there is one.

Movies, and later television, influenced me greatly in my quest of love. Roy Rogers, the King of Cowboys, never kissed a woman in all his films and although I went along with this nonsense, I learned about truth, honesty and how to become a buckaroo. I am positive that this frustration brought on acne in my salad days. Ma and Pa Kettle gave me an unhappy awareness of what marital bliss would lie ahead, and thinking my wife would resemble in manner and appearance Mrs. Kettle made me apprehensive about eternal love. After seeing the Road Pictures with Crosby and Hope, I formed the image of love as being a menage a trois with Dorothy Lamour. Walt Disney's movies only confused me more with lust in "The Animal Kingdom," and made me question why Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck never got married. Was this the love I was seeking? Could Dorothy really fall for a scarecrow without brains? It is no wonder why my grades suffered in school. I am certain when I saw "The Outlaw" with Jane Russell my obsession for large breasts in a woman developed into a requisite for my love. John Wayne taught me that you had to beat up a lot of people before you would win a lady's attention, but Woody Allen's films took me to the conclusion that love could also be strange. Television with its soap operas and programs such as "Ozzie and Harriet," "Dobie Gillis," and "Life With Father" did nothing for my conception and knowledge of devotion. "The Munsters" and "The Brady Bunch" left me with a sense of family life, but nothing that I wanted to be a part of. It was finally during reruns of "Gilligan's Island" and "Love Boat" that I realized how many different kinds of affections there were, but none I could put a label of true love on. Unfortunately, movies and television did not give me a satisfactory answer.

Believing literature might lead to a solution or some potential answers, I began reading everything from "Captain Billy's Whiz Bag" to "Lady Chatterly's Lover," "Doctor Spock, Penthouse, and even Byron and Keat's poetry,

only to discover that love is kinky. Mrs. Hollander and Doctor Westheimer taught me that love comes in many positions. Most young people who come out of high school today cannot read well enough to search for love in books, and many authors, though they have written beautiful passages on the subject — have they found love in their own lives? A. E. Houseman said we should not give love away, whereas Mrs. Westheimer says that we must give love away in all ways. Goethe's "Faust" had need of the Devil to help him find love. Stendahl's love in "The Red and the Black" was about seduction and adultery. Voltaire's "Candide" searched the world for it only to marry Cunegonde out of pity and obligation instead of love. The romancing is wonderful and exciting to read about, but after the courtship and the marriage is over, does love prevail until death do us part? No educated well-read man knows more of love than an ignorant one whose lifelong devotion might be instinctive or genetic. I feel that love in literature produces pleasures and romantic sensations in the scholar but gives no edge over one who is unread. Whatever love is, it cannot be claimed by the seer alone.

Music is not reserved for the scholastic person. It transcends language and age barriers. All one needs is a radio. Searching for the true definitive answer of love in music is incredibly confusing, however, as composers write their lyrics with so many preposterous and nonsensical cliches such as "Abba dabba honeymoon," "I don't want to set the world on fire," "Don't take your love to town," and "I don't care if I'm not the first love you've had,

just so I'll be the last." There are songs written for every level of intellectual plane. Frank Sinatra is the thinking man's crooner of love, while Conway Twitty sings about adoration to the more feeble-minded. Love is often written about as being convoluted, devious, sadistic and lewd, with "Baby I Want To Bang Your Box" or "In China They Do It For Chile." I can relate to poor "Oliver" in a dingy dank basement somewhere in London when he sang, "Where is love?" To confound and gaffe us more in recognizing true passion we have music which is titled, "Love Is A Simple Thing," "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered," "Love Is A Many Splendored Thing," "Love Is The Reason You Were Born," "I Want A Sunday Kind Of Love," "They're Either Too Young Or Too Old," and "Love For Sale." Can you imagine why nobody knows what this word means? Even the Italians sing "When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's amore." I mean, this is ludicrous! When I hear songs that say "I love you, a bushel and a peck," I want to scream. Are men to love women as we would love a bushel of peppers or a peck of stringbeans? No, music probably is not the answer either.

Guy Mitchell sang a song in the 1950s which went, "She wears red feathers and hully hully skirt," referring to his South Seas love, and when they were married, "An elephant brought her in, placed her by my side while six baboons got bassoons and played 'Here Comes The Bride.'" If this is love, I prefer to spend my life on an isolated rock. There must not be an answer because in "South Pacific" they told us, "Who can explain it, who can tell you why? . . . Fools give you reasons, wise men never try." In the song, "Fools Rush In," we are told, "where wise men never go. But wise men never fall in love, so how are they to know?" Now this is starting to make sense! I will end in the words of the famous song that said, "It's still the same old story, a fight for love and glory, a case of do or die. . . . The world will always welcome lovers, as time goes by." If we know what the hell they look like.

Jack Stillwell lived in Astoria and has moved to La Grande or somewhere in the South Pacific.



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