

Your John Keats

Excerpts of love letters to Fanny Brawne from the ailing poet, John Keats

I. Ask Yourself, My Love

My Dearest Lady –

Ask yourself, my love,

Whether you are not very cruel
To have so entrammelled me,
So destroyed my freedom.

Write the softest words and kiss them,
That I may at least touch my lips
Where yours have been.

For myself, I know not how
To express my devotion
To so fair a form:

I want a brighter word than bright,
A fairer word than fair.

Be as kind as the distance will permit
To your John Keats

II. A Tenderer Nature

Even when I am not thinking of you,

I receive your influence
And a tenderer nature stealing upon me.

All my thoughts, my unhappiest days and nights,
Have not at all cured me of my love of Beauty,
But made it so intense that I am miserable

That you are not here with me:
Or rather breathe in that dull sort of patience
That cannot be called Life.

But if you will fully love me, though there may be some fire,
'twill not be more than we can bear
when moistened and bedewed with Pleasures.

I would never see anything but Pleasure in your eyes,
Love on your lips, and happiness in your steps.

Ever yours, my love —
John Keats

III. Ah Herté Mine

My sweet Girl,

I am living today in yesterday:

I was in a complete fascination all day.

I feel myself at your mercy.

Write me ever so few lines

And tell me you will never be less kind to me

That yesterday.

You dazzled me.

When shall we pass a day alone?

I have had a thousand kisses,

But if you should deny me the thousand and first,

'twould put me to the proof

how great a misery I could live through.

Ah Herté Mine,

Ever yours –

John Keats

IV. Credo

My dearest Girl,

I cannot exist without you.

I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again—

You have absorbed me.

I have been astonished

That Men could die Martyrs for religion

I have shuddered at it.

I shudder no more—

Love is my religion – I could die for that.

I could die for you.

My Creed is Love and you are its only tenet.

I cannot breathe without you.

Yours forever,

John Keats

V. Impossibilities

On the night I was taken ill—

 When so violent a rush of blood came to my lungs

 That I felt nearly suffocated—

I assure you I felt it possible I might not survive,

 And at that moment thought of nothing but you.

According to all appearances I am to be separated from you

 As much as possible.

How shall I be able to bear it?

I wish I had even a little hope.

I cannot say forget me—

 But I would mention that there are impossibilities in the world.

Happen what may, I shall ever be your affectionate

 John Keats

VI. My Expected Heaven

My dearest Fanny,

How illness stands as a barrier betwixt me and you!

I have your ring on my finger.

It is like a sacred chalice

 Once consecrated and ever consecrate.

I shall kiss your name and mine where your lips have been—

Lips! Why should a poor prisoner as I

 Talk about such things?

I could write a song... if that would be any relief to me.

No—'twould not.

I will be as obstinate as a Robin,

 I will not sing in a cage.

Health is my expected heaven.

 Yours affectionately my dearest,

 John Keats

VII. A Frog in a Frost

My Dearest Girl,

I am much better today—

Indeed all I have to complain of is want of strength

And a little tightness in the Chest.

If I were less selfish and more enthusiastic

I should run round and surprise you with a knock at the door.

I fear I am too prudent for a dying kind of Lover.

Yet, there is a great difference

between going off in a warm blood like Romeo

and making one's exit like a frog in a frost.

God bless you my sweet Love!

Illness is a long lane,

But I see you at the end of it,

And shall mend my pace as well as possible.

John Keats

VIII. Immortality

My dearest Fanny,

Upon my soul I have loved you to the extreme.

I long to believe in immortality.

I shall never be able to bid you an entire farewell.

If I am destined to be happy with you here —

How short is the longest Life.

I wish to believe in immortality —

I wish to live with you for ever.

Let me be but certain that you are mine heart and soul,

And I could die more happily than I could otherwise live.

I will be as patient in illness

And as believing in Love as I am able.

Yours for ever my dearest.

John Keats

IX. The world is too brutal (from Italy, his final letter)

My dearest Girl,

I wish I could invent some means
to make me at all happy without you.

Every hour I am more concentrated in you;
Every thing else tastes like chaff in my Mouth.

I do not think my health will improve much
While I am separated from you.

For all this I am averse to seeing you –
I cannot bear flashes of light and return into my gloom again.

I am not so unhappy now as I should be
If I had seen you yesterday.

To be happy with you seems such an impossibility!
It requires a luckier Star than mine! It will never be.

The world is too brutal for me –

I am glad there is such a thing as the grave—

I am sure I shall never have any rest till I get there.

I wish I was either in your arms full of faith
Or that a Thunder bolt would strike me.

God bless you,

John Keats