

[Letter from Arno Knight to Olive Drinkwater]

Maysville April 4th 1880

My Dear Ollie:

I received your letter of March 27th this morning and I am so mad I hardly know whether to answer it or not, for I feel a strong inclination to say something hateful. The mysterious allusions which you make to some imaginary correspondent of mine; in this letter, and also in them few Hateful Lines, written when you were so angry (with me I infer from the tone of those lines) are exceedingly exasperating. You spoke of a Truthful Person informing of you that I corresponded with a certain She, or Her, of Northport. Perhaps since you have lost all confidence in me, my word will not have much weight with you, when I say I have no lady correspondent in Northport of any where else, excepting my Mother, Sisters, and your Royal Self and if "Truthful" told you I had he is just the opposite of truthful and exactly what you seem willing to believe me to be – A Willful Liar, and I can hardly understand how regarding me in that light you could promise to be a friend to me if I would allow you to be.

Ollie I will tell you once more that you have been and you are still the one girl in all the world whose heart and love I care to win and hold I have been honorable and true in my devotion to you and have hoped you might have Confidence and love enough for me to be equally as faithful and true

But it seems to me of late that you have grown weary of an absent lover and the prospect of waiting for his return with a sufficient competence to start in life It seems to me as if you felt you had made a mistake in your promises to me, that they have already become to you galling fetters which you wish to cast off Still loving you as truly as ever I cannot and will not accept a secondary position I do not understand half way measures. You are all in all to me and if I cannot be first in your affections and have your undivided love I can be nothing to you. I despise the cold formality of a selfish indifferent friendship and I know that the formal declaration of young ladies generally to rid themselves of disagreeable attentions is "I can be nothing more than a friend" which I suppose implies they are not exactly enemies, only they have grown indifferent and want a change. I know as a lover you may think I am cold and distant and that I have done less than most lovers generally do to remind you of my devotion I will sometime explain my position and views in regard to that if you care to know Meantime I cannot help it if you doubt or misunderstand me or my motives I try to give you no cause for doubting my love or misunderstanding me. Now Ollie if you feel you are mistaken in me

and wish to be released from your promises, if you feel you could be happier with another love and no longer care for me do not fear to tell me so and I will do you the favor of returning a part of your letters (you know you requested me to destroy those written last Summer) As for mine they are worthless to me burn the, and I will strive to forget the brief bright dream, and face the stern reality.

But first answer me a few questions truly Let no false pride or misunderstanding part us if you love me, if you do not be just and generous enough to tell me so plainly 1. Do you still love me well enough to give me the undivided love which a husband has a right to claim who gives the purest deepest feelings of his heart to the woman he claims as a wife 2d Are you willing to wait and trust me till I return of if I failed to win success would you reject me 3rd Or do you wish to reject me now and cast me off forever If so tell me plainly and I will respect your candor and cease to annoy with disagreeable devotions.

Bye, bye, till you reply Please do not keep me in suspense Yours or not you choose