

[Letter from Arno Knight to Olive Drinkwater; Arno is working in Colorado]

Maysville Dec. 26th 81

Dear Olive:

You think you have just cause for anger, and as you have expressed it pretty freely I hope you will do me the justice to attribute my unmanly conduct, as you term it, to the real, and not to the base motives which your letter implied actuated me. As God is my witness I would not knowingly wrong you by act, word, or thought. Your questions I will answer as truly as I know. You ask "if I think any other girl would have waited for me, six years under such discouraging circumstances as you have done". I do not know! I doubt if they would. I never knew many women, in whom I placed much confidence; and you are one of the few. I concede all you claim for yourself, that you have been kind to me, and have done more perhaps than any one else would have done, and though you seem to think differently I have tried to be worthy of your kindness and merit, as win from you a love as true and fervent as I gave.

As for your waiting for me, honestly I do not think the fault, if it be one, is wholly mine. I never tried to deceive you. You knew my circumstances and future prospects as well as I did myself. And even last spring, you were unwilling to marry me because my means you thought were to limited to begin a married life with. To day I am Fifteen Hundred Dollars poorer than last Winter, crippled, and broken both, in courage and health. If I was to poor for you to marry then, with the prospects before me. What hope for me a year after, with more than half my property gone, prospects ruined, and crippled for life. Surely if I wronged you by asking you to wait when I had courage, health and a start of Two Thousand Dollars I would be doing a greater wrong to try to hold you longer. I loved you truly with all the strength of my passionate nature, too well to give you up without a struggle. I had strength and ambition, and thought I could succeed. Had I known that nothing but disaster awaited me I would have given you up as I have offered to now, that it has come upon me. You have reproached me with unmanly conduct and unfaithfulness and doubtless think I deserve it. Think you I would have devoted the best part of my life to you, and in striving to win a position worthy of you, and with which you would not feel dissatisfied, had I not loved you sincerely? As I live I would rather have died than to have had aught come between us. It was hard, cruel, that I should be rescued from a sudden death, to a realization that all lifes hopes were blasted, that all which could make life desirable had vanished and know that I must live and endure it.

Now that I do not wish to mar your happiness by my misfortunes and bitter as the thought was to me, had steeled myself to give you the freedom, which I felt you must desire, it is hard to be misunderstood and my motives attributed to base ingratitude.

As a man of honor I ask you to believe that I offered to release you because I thought you wished to be free, and not because I had ceased to love you, or considered you unworthy of my love

You say if I knew what you have had to put up with the last Six months I would not blame you for not writing. That means that my misfortunes were humiliating to you, and the sneers at my poverty, made in your presence were mortifying to your pride. To relieve you of that mortification was what I wished to do. As I told you, had I been successful I would have been proud to have shared my prosperity with you. But adversity is a different thing If a woman were willing to share it with me and help me win success, she must manifest her willingness I could not ask her to do it.

Will you be kind enough Ollie & give me an answer to this, and answer this question for me.

Do you think I have meant to wrong you or would you rather cling to me in my present condition than give me up? I want no unwilling sweetheart, no dissatisfied wife and if a womans pride or love of wealth is greater than her love for me. She must give me up and seek the former where she would be most likely to obtain it. I seek no other girl, care for no other, but prefer an old Bachelors life to an unhappy wife.

Write me once more even if it is hard for you to do so

Please think of me kindly as you can, as I shall ever remember you with gratitude and love.

Arno