

Letter From a Foot Soldier in Knoxville



My Dearest Stanwyck,

I sit down in near exhaustion to write these few lines in between the grueling marches of the Knoxville Big Ears campaign. My weary feet cover many miles each day so as to position myself advantageously in front of the august purveyors of the Euterpean muse, many of whom invoke Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Calliope, Clio...in fact, it appears that while Euterpe stands central to the affair, all eight of her sisters enjoy more than adequate representation amongst the artisans and craftspersons hard at work.

Everyone maintains a relentless good cheer, save for a few grumblers and malcontents who find the queues for sustenance longer than their yearning for pleasure can forbear. Yet even these laments of bellyachers and moaners, few and far between, cause barely a ripple across the mood of the assembled.

These many days of relentless struggle have taught me much about this town Knoxville, and about myself, as I come to terms with my frailties and prejudices. The people of Knoxville, to a man and woman, have been warm and courteous even as our discommodious invasion has imposed itself. It does a heart good to encounter such generosity as one is distant from one's own hearth and home, and leads one to feel, fleetingly, that one is in fact at home in this stranger's locale.

The great divisions that rend our everyday discourse – avant gardist v. lovers of traditional song, West v. East, and, most trenchant, jazzers v. the world – are as mist here in the trenches. Troops from every camp meet in the middle, happy to share in each other's experience. Once bitter foes freely exchange food, tobacco, strong drink. There is some laughter on the wind, but in the main we find shared reverence and wonder at the spectacles as they unfold.

We had a fine rain a few minutes ago that was much needed. My jacket leaks very badly. I got rather wet for the rain was very hard, but lasted only a short time, and I got dry and have resumed my deep listening. Later, I will sleep very well.

My darling, my Stanwyck, how I miss you and your sage counsel and warm touch. Alas, I fear my obsessions with the Muse sisters would generate no end of frustration and despair and would likely serve to drive you once again unto the arms of that damnable scoundrel Clooney, damn him three times. And so I must content myself to gaze upon your locket of hair and a faded photograph as the sole means of connection with you, my one true love, as I gird my loins for yet another presentation of Art in this, perhaps, fairest City in the South. It is a desperate trial, but I am determined to maintain a noble spirit and spry step, no matter how I suffer.

I must resume my march, dearest, as the next maelstrom is many strides away and promises a decibel assault of relentless terror. It is a harsh duty, but it falls to myself and my fellow foot soldiers to offer embiggened ears to these noble artisans, people whose sufferings and trials to bring their visions to life far exceed my own pitiful efforts as a receptor of their message.

I shall describe the events in greater detail by means of the electronic Bitter South tabloid at a later date. Until then, know that, as the artists of Big Ears excite my stereocilia in manners heretofore unknown, I remain,

Always.

Your Faithful Narrator.