

11th July, 2002

WHAT IS LOVE?

DEAR DIARY, I don't understand why so many people say they don't know what love is or there's no such thing as love. It's there all around us and I'm not talking exclusively about romantic love. I'm sure most people can name more than two people who they love and vice-versa.

Real love can be so deep and never ending, like 75 years of happy marriage. On the other hand, it can lead you to Satan, it can be destructive, bringing with it lies, jealousy and murder.

There are things that people will do for each other and you just know it's in the name of love. When a man can buy his lady her feminine hygiene products without a hint of shame, he must love her.

It must be love when a woman will look after her husband's spoilt brats from his previous marriage like her own without complaint. The kids have no manners. They say they hate you anyway and you know the eldest is stealing from your purse but you allow them to come back and are patient with them. They'll get with the programme eventually.

It's love when he stays over at your house and has no clean underwear and wears your knickers to work. I'm not sure if it's love if he does this on a regular basis though.

It's got to be love when you've got the worst cold you've had in years and he still wants to kiss you on your lips knowing that it's likely he'll catch your cold.

It's pure unadulterated love when he puts lavender scented oil in the bath, lights the 50 scented candles you've had on show for the last four years. He pours two tall glasses of champagne and prepares a large dish of strawberries and cream and sits at the tap end of the bath and you bathe together until your skin's all wrinkled.

It's love when he tells his friends that he's not clubbing on Friday night as he wants to stay at home with you – nothing special, nothing planned, he just feels like it.

It must be love when you receive a full body massage without the need to beg and plead for one. I've promised a week's worth of ironing for a full body massage before. I scorched

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every item “accidentally on purpose”, so by day three he was begging me not to iron anymore.

I think it’s love when he sucks your pedicured toes, although that toe-sucking thing can be a fetish of his. It’s a special kind of love when you suck his toes though. If only men had pedicures too!

It’s got to be love when you’re seven months pregnant. You’ve put on four stone (the unborn child is only a few pounds). Your nose is spreading across your face (why does this happen – please can somebody tell me). Your bottom looks like two pigs fighting under a blanket. Your ankles have swollen and you’re wearing size 9 flip-flops in winter. Your daily breakfast is a whole roast chicken and a loaf of hard-dough bread and he still says you look beautiful and means it.

It’s love when you’re dog tired and have been in bed for five minutes and she calls for you to come over because she’s just seen a spider in her flat and can’t go to bed until you’ve murdered it. This means you have to drive 13 miles in the rain. Plus you’ve never told her that you have arachnophobia. But you come to the rescue anyway.

Many times, we confuse love with lust or like a lot. As the years go by, I’m getting better at identifying those who only like me a lot and those who would give me their kidney if I needed it.

He likes me a lot if he kisses me on my forehead when we just wake up. If he loved me, he would give me a full-blown smackeronie on the lips. He’s got morning breath too you know.

She likes you a lot when she lends you a spoonful of her medicated shampoo for your dandruff. She probably loves you if she washes your hair for you, puts conditioner in it and massages your itchy, flaky scalp.

It’s not love when she keeps on pointing out that there must be something you can do about your beer gut but she’s happy to parade hers flopping over in a muffin top wearing a belly button ring and a crop top. It can be quite loving when you take turns holding one another’s ankles while you both do your daily sit-ups.

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It's probably not love when she gives you 12 minutes to pack your things and go back to your mum's because she "senses that you're homesick" and the minute you're out the door she changes the locks and a week later her personal fitness trainer moves in, flashing his pecs. You bang on her front door in an effort to confront the woman who two weeks ago was the love of your life and muscle-head opens the door, wearing the red silk thongs you bought for her, telling you that Love Don't Live Here Anymore.

Love is such a powerful emotion. Just the word alone carries weight. Love, love, love, love, love!

August Mayfield