

Country philosopher

The Great Pretender

by Amos Arthur Holmes

At fifty-seven years of age I am not (regardless of what people say) a raging bull when it comes to romance.

And it's all my wife's fault.

You see, I think of romance as something beautiful. It is dinner by candlelight. It is a sparkling, fragrant wine. It is looking across the table and seeing someone graceful and exciting. It is a lovely gown whose neckline sweeps into eternity. It is soft music and dancing so close you can hear each other's heart beat. It is a kiss that gently shouts your desire. It is a touch so heated with love that it actually burns.

My wife needs none of this. She can become romantic while eating a greasy porkchop. She becomes overly excited if she sees a picture of Robert Redford. She becomes a creature of passion if she sees two earth worms mating.

I think I can illustrate our differences by describing our dinner last night. I placed, in the center of the

table, a bowl of bright chrysanthemums. I lit one tall, graceful candle and waited for my wife to enter the room. She came in carrying a platter filled with hamburger-helper, and snarled, "WHO PUT THESE STINKING FLOWERS ON THE TABLE?"

"I did," I said.

"AND WHO LIT MY ONLY CHRISTMAS CANDLE?"

"I did," I mumbled.

She was furious. As she sat picking half-heartedly at her food I looked at her. Her hair was in curlers and her dirty sweatshirt had lettering that proclaimed, WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET. All the tangy thoughts of romance that had been exploding in my mind for hours went flying out the window.

I do not think I am being overly sensitive to my wife's lack of input. I just think she could do better. When she leaves for work each morning she is the most beautiful female I have ever seen. But each evening, at the

stroke of seven, she turns into a monster.

I remember Halloween night, I was on the phone and there was a knock at the door. I was sure it was trick or treaters and I yelled, "Honey, would you get the door?"

My wife came out of the bathroom and her appearance made me drop the phone. Her hair was done up in huge, orange hair curlers. Her face was covered with a mask of white paste and her long flannel gown was faded and moth-eaten. She went to the kitchen door and just as she opened the door a mouse ran between her legs. She screamed a most horrible scream.

Standing just outside our door was a mother and father and their three tiny children. For a moment they just looked at the screaming monster who had opened the door. This wasn't a Halloween prank. This wasn't cute. The scream was too real and the apparition too fiendish. The three children started crying and the wife



fainted. The man threw his wife over his shoulder, gathered up his three children, and went running into the night.

My wife closed the door and said to me, "What the hell was wrong with them?"

"I have no idea," I lied.

I went on to bed and soon I heard my wife turn out the lights. She got into bed and we lay there silent for a few moments. Then I felt an arm slide across my waist and warm, moist breathing against my neck. Mind you, she still had on her pasty mask, her orange hair-curlers, and her gown of moth holes. I then heard a soft, whispered voice say, "Amos, I love you." And I did what any virile, red-blooded American man would do.

I pretended I was asleep.