

# Revisions to lyrics of "My Funny Valentine" (1937)

Music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart

Revisions by Bill Jackman, December 2025

Original lyrics by Lorenz Hart

My funny Valentine, Sweet comic Valentine,  
You make me smile with my heart.

Your looks are laughable, unphotographable,  
Yet you're my fav - 'rite work of art. (favorite)

Is your figure less than Greek?

Is your mouth a little weak?

When you open it to speak, are you smart?

But don't change a hair for me,

Not if you care for me,

Stay little Valentine stay!

Each day is Valentine's Day.

# Revisions to lyrics of "My Funny Valentine" (1937)

By Bill Jackman, December 2025

I could not sing the original lyrics because I found several lines to be objectionable or ridiculous. So, I revised these lines.

## Revision 1

Hart wrote, "**Your looks are laughable, unphotographable,**"

This line is very insulting especially when directed at the object of your affection on Valentine's Day. This line reminds me of what boys used to say to girls in my grammar school: "You're so ugly you'd break the camera," i.e., you're "unphotographable."

What did Hart write such an insulting line? Hart always looked for rhyme schemes, both internal to the line and between lines. "laughable" rhymes with "unphotographable," so Hart used this line.

My revision to this line: "**Your looks are ordinary, not so extraordinary**"

This line also fits the meter and rhymes.

## Revision 2

Hart wrote,

**"Is your figure less than Greek?**

"Is your mouth a little weak?

"When you open it to speak, are you smart?"

Hart always looked for rhyme schemes, both internal to the line and between lines: "Greek," "weak," and "speak" rhyme on three consecutive lines. "Is your figure less than Greek?" fit Hart's rhyme scheme, but it was ill-conceived.

Do the Greeks have better figures than the rest of us?

**No.** In the twentieth century when Hart wrote the lyrics (1937) and today in the twenty-first century, Greeks do **not** have better figures than the rest of us.

From Google AI: "In the present day, there are no significant biological differences in the potential for body shapes between Greeks and other ethnic groups."

## Ancient Greek Ideals

The perception of Greeks having exceptional figures stems largely from their ancient art.

- **Idealized Proportions:** Ancient Greek statues, such as those of gods and athletes, were artistic representations of ideal proportions, balance, and musculature, rather than literal snapshots of the average person's physique.
- **Athletic Culture:** Physical fitness and musculature were highly valued in ancient Greek society, particularly for men who participated in military service and athletic competitions like the Olympics. This emphasis on gymnastics and regular exercise meant that some individuals, particularly elite athletes, achieved high levels of fitness and musculature that are comparable to modern bodybuilders.

I don't think that Hart wanted the object of his Valentine's Day affections to look like an ancient Greek god, athlete, or warrior with their idealized musculature. So, it is ridiculous to compare her figure to that of these ancient Greek ideals.

My revisions:

**“Is your figure not so sleek?”**

“Is your mouth a little weak?”

“When you open it to speak, are you smart?”

“not so sleek” replaces “less than Greek.” It fits the meter and retains the rhyme scheme on three lines that Hart wanted.

A “sleek figure” describes a body that is slender, smooth, and gracefully contoured, hinting at elegance.

## Revision 3

Hart wrote,

**“But don't change a hair for me,  
Not if you care for me,”**

It is very arrogant to try to control someone's appearance and tell them exactly how they should wear their hair, adding that if they don't obey you, they “don't care for you.”

My revisions:

**“But don't change a hair for me,  
Just because you care for me,”**

With this change, trying to make your hair look good to please your partner is something **you are doing voluntarily**, not because your partner is dictating exactly how you should wear your hair.

## Lyrics to “My Funny Valentine” with revisions by Bill Jackman, December 2025

World premiere on February 15, 2026 at the Piedmont Center for the Arts (PCA). Bill has donated these newly revised lyrics to “My Funny Valentine” to the PCA and all performing rights accruing to them. These lyrics are now singable by a singer in the second quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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**Just because** you care for me,

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