

FROM SONGS AND SONNETS¹The Flea²

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
 How little that which thou deniest me is;
 Me it sucked first, and now sucks thee,
 And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
 Thou know'st that this cannot be said
 A sin, or shame, or loss of maidenhead,³
 Yet this enjoys before it woo,
 And pampered⁴ swells with one blood made of two,³
 And this, alas, is more than we would do.

*virginity**overfed*

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
 Where we almost, nay more than married are.
 This flea is you and I, and this
 Our marriage bed and marriage temple is;
 Though parents grudge, and you, we are met,
 And cloistered⁴ in these living walls of jet.⁵
 Though use⁵ make you apt to kill me,⁵
 Let not to that, self-murder added be,
 And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

*black
habit*

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
 Purpled thy nail in blood of innocence?
 Wherein could this flea guilty be,
 Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
 Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
 Find'st not thy self nor me the weaker now;
 'Tis true; then learn how false fears be:
 Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
 Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

1633

The Good-Morrow⁶*morning greeting*

I wonder, by my troth,⁶ what thou and I
 Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then,

good faith

¹ Donne's love poems were written over nearly two decades, beginning around 1595; they were not published in Donne's lifetime but circulated widely in manuscript. The title *Songs and Sonnets* was supplied in the second edition (1635), which grouped the poems by kind, but neither this arrangement nor the more haphazard organization of the first edition (1633) is Donne's own. In Donne's time the term "sonnet" often meant simply "love lyric," and in fact there is only one formal sonnet in this collection. For the poems we

present we follow the 1635 edition, beginning with the extremely popular poem "The Flea."

² This insect afforded a popular erotic theme for poets all over Europe, deriving from a pseudo-Ovidian medieval poem in which a lover envies the flea for the liberties it takes with his mistress's body.

³ The swelling suggests pregnancy.

⁴ As in a convent or monastery.

⁵ By denying me sexual gratification.

But sucked on country^o pleasures, childishly?
 Or snorted^o we in the seven sleepers' den?¹
 5 'Twas so; but^o this, all pleasures fancies be.
 If ever any beauty I did see,
 Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

unsophisticated
 snored
 except for

And now good morrow to our waking souls,
 Which watch not one another out of fear;
 10 For love all love of other sights controls,
 And makes one little room an everywhere.
 Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
 Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have shown:
 Let us possess one world;² each hath one, and is one.

15 My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
 And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
 Where can we find two better hemispheres,
 Without sharp North, without declining West?
 Whatever dies was not mixed equally;³
 20 If our two loves be one, or thou and I
 Love so alike that none do slacken, none can die.

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Song

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,¹
 Tell me where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the Devil's foot,
 5 Teach me to hear mermaids^o singing,
 Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
 Serves to advance an honest mind.
 10 If thou beest born to strange sights,
 Things invisible to see,
 Ride ten thousand days and nights,
 Till age snow white hairs on thee,
 Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me
 15 All strange wonders that befell thee,
 And swear
 No where
 Lives a woman true, and fair.

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1. Cave in Ephesus where, according to legend, seven Christian youths hid from pagan persecutors and slept for 187 years.

2. "Our world" in many manuscripts.

3. Scholastic philosophy taught that when the elements were imperfectly mixed ("not mixed equally"), matter was mutable and mortal; con-

versely, when the elements were perfectly mixed, matter was immutable and hence immortal.
 1. The mandrake root, or mandragora, is like the lower part of the human body. It was thought to shriek when pulled from the ground and to kill all humans who heard it; it was (paradoxically) thought to help women con-