

LOVE AND DEATH: some poems by John Donne (Dean of St. Paul's, London)  
The Flea (published 1633 but written much earlier) about the same time as The Bait

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

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 cloistered in these living walls of jet.  
Though use make you apt to kill me,  
Let not to this, self murder added be,  
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since  
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?  
In what 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 thyself, 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.

### Holy Sonnet VI

Death be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,  
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,  
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me;  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die.

from Meditation XVII

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of a continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of my friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

## A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men pass mildly away,  
And whisper to their souls, to go,  
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,  
The breath goes now, and some say, no;

So let us melt, and make no noise,  
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,  
'Twere profanation of our joys  
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,  
Men reckon what it did and meant,  
But trepidation of the spheres,  
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love  
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit  
Absence, because it doth remove  
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love, so much refined,  
That our selves know not what it is,  
Inter-assure'd of the mind,  
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,  
Though I must go, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
Like gold to aery thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so  
As stiff twin compasses are two,  
Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show  
To move, but doth, if th'other do.

\*compasses denote constancy in change

And though it in the center sit,  
Yet when the other far doth roam,  
It leans, and hearkens after it,  
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must  
Like the other foot, obliquely run;  
Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
And makes me end, where I begun.

