

The Little Edition of Little Things

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Introduction

In this micro edition, there are poems about womanly beauty. In this collection there are the lovely, the unattainable—the kind of women who have sparkle in their eyes along with the type that have wiry hair and bad breath. There are poems about women’s clothing and bodies; about lust and love gained and lost.

There is an allure of the womanly form that rivals many other things. There are plenty of poems, songs, and books written about women, including love and of course, heart break. There is, however, one thing that maybe people do not think of when they think of “women” in the context of poems or songs. It is so simple: the little things they do. There are many poems and sonnets written about what women look like, or how they act, but here, in this collection, are poems that are about the often over-looked details that women do.

Thomas Campion

Cherry Ripe

There is a Garden in her face,
Where Roses and white Lillies grow;
A heav'nly paradise is that place,
Wherein Cherries grow, which none may buy
Till Cherry ripe themselves doe cry.

Those Cherries fayrely doe enclose
Of orient Pearle a double row;
Which when her lovely laughter showes,
They look like Rose-buds fill'd with snow.
Yet them nor Peer nor Prince can buy
Till Cherry ripe themselves doe cry.

Her Eyes like Angels watch them still;
Her Browes like bended bowes doe stand,
Threatning with piercing frownes to kill
All that attempt, with eye or hand,
Those sacred Cherries to come nigh,
Till Cherry ripe themselves do cry.

Sir Thomas Wyatt

The lively sparks that issue from those eyes,
Against the which there vaileth¹ no defense,
Have pierc'd my heart, and done it none offense,
With quaking pleasure more than once or twice.
Was never man could anything devise,
Sunbeams to turn with so great vehemence
To daze man's sight, as by their bright pressure
Dazed am I; much like unto the guise
Of one stricken with dint of lightening,
Blind with the stroke, and crying here and there;
So call I for help, I not when nor where,
The pain of my fall patiently bearing:
For straight after the blaze, as is no wonder,
Of deadly noise hear I the fearful thunder.

¹ Of avail, advantage, or benefit.

Sir Thomas Wyatt

Whoso list² to hunt? I know where is a hind!³
But as for me, alas! I may no more,
The vain travail⁴ hath wearied me so sore;
I am of them that furthest come behind.
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind,
Draw from the deer; but as she fleeth afore,
Fainting I follow; I leave off therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt
As well as I, may spend this time in vain!
And graven with diamonds in letters plain,
there is written her fair neck round about;
 ‘Noli me tangere⁵’; for Caesar’s I am,
 And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

² Pleasure, joy, delight.

³ Female deer.

⁴ Bodily or mental labor or toil.

⁵ Do not touch me.

William Shakespeare
Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun⁶;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd⁷, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks⁸.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go⁹;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

⁶ Of a dull or dingy brown color.

⁷ Variegated: marked with patches or spots of different colors.

⁸ To emit or give off.

⁹ To walk.

John Donne
To His Mistress Going to Bed

Come, madam, come, all rest my powers defy;
Until I labour, I in labour lie.
The foe ofttimes, having the foe in sight,
Is tired with standing, though he never fight.
Off with that girdle, like heaven's zone glittering,
But a far fairer world encompassing.
Unpin yourself, for that harmonious chime
Tells me from you that now it is bed-time.
Off with that happy busk¹⁰, which I envy,
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.
Your gown going off such beauteous state reveals,
As when from flowery meads th' hill's shadow steals.
Off with your wiry coronet¹¹, and show
The hairy diadems¹² which on you do grow.
Off with your hose and shoes; then softly tread
In this love's hallow'd temple, this soft bed.
In such white robes heaven's angels used to be
Revealed to men; thou, angel, bring'st with thee
A heaven-like Mahomet's paradise; and though
Ill spirits walk in white, we easily know
By this these angels from an evil sprite;
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.

Licence my roving hands, and let them go
Before, behind, between, above, below.
Oh, my America, my Newfoundland,
My kingdom, safest when with one man mann'd,
My mine of precious stones, my empery;
How am I blest in thus discovering thee!
To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
Then, where my hand is set, my soul shall be.

Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee;
As souls unbodied, bodies unclothed must be
To taste whole joys. Gems which you women use
Are like Atlanta's ball cast in men's views;
That, when a fool's eye lighteth on a gem,
His earthly soul might court that, not them.
Must see reveal'd. Then, since that I may know,
As liberally as to thy midwife show
Thyself; cast all, yea, this white linen hence;
There is no penance due to innocence:

¹⁰ A woman's headdress.

¹¹ A small or inferior crown.

¹² A crown worn as a symbol of honor.

To teach thee, I am naked first; why then,
What needst thou have more covering than a man?

Robert Herrick

The Bracelet to Julia

Why I tye about thy wrist,
Julia, this my silken twist;
For what other reason is't,
But to shew thee how in part,
Thou my pretty captive art?
But thy bondslave is my heart:
'Tis but silke that bindeth thee,
Knap¹³ the thread, and thou art free:
But 'tis otherwise with me:
I am bound, and fast bound so,
That from thee I cannot go,
If I co'd¹⁴, I wo'd¹⁵ not so.

¹³ To bite in a short or abrupt way.

¹⁴ Could.

¹⁵ Would.

Robert Herrick
Upon Julia's Clothes

When as in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes
That liquefaction¹⁶ of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave vibration each way free:
O how that glittering taketh me!

¹⁶ The action or process of liquefying, or the state of being liquefied.

Sir Philip Sidney
Astrophel and Stella Sonnet Number Seven

When Nature made her chiefe worke, Stella's eyes,
In color blacke why wrapt she beames so bright?
Would she, in beamy blacke, like Painter wise,
Frame daintiest lustre, mixt of shades and light?
Or did she else that sober hue deuise,
In obiect best to knit and strength our sight;
Least, if no vaile¹⁷ these braue gleames did disguise,
They, sunlike, should more dazzle then delig`ht?
Or would she her miraculous power show,
That, whereas blacke seems Beautie's contrary,
She euen in blacke doth make all beauties flow?
Both so, and thus,—she, minding Loue should be
Placed euer there, gaue him this mourning weede
To honor all their deathes who for her bleed.

¹⁷ Advantage or benefit.

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