

# Elegy V: His Picture

BY [JOHN DONNE](#)

1500s

Here take my picture; though I bid farewell  
Thine, in my heart, where my soul dwells, shall  
dwell.

'Tis like me now, but I dead, 'twill be more  
When we are shadows both, than 'twas before.  
When weather-beaten I come back, my hand  
Perhaps with rude oars torn, or sun beams tann'd,  
My face and breast of haircloth, and my head  
With care's rash sudden storms being o'erspread,  
My body'a sack of bones, broken within,  
And powder's blue stains scatter'd on my skin;  
If rival fools tax thee to'have lov'd a man  
So foul and coarse as, oh, I may seem then,  
This shall say what I was, and thou shalt say,  
"Do his hurts reach me? doth my worth decay?  
Or do they reach his judging mind, that he  
Should now love less, what he did love to see?  
That which in him was fair and delicate,  
Was but the milk which in love's childish state  
Did nurse it; who now is grown strong enough  
To feed on that, which to disus'd tastes seems  
tough."

# To His Mistress Going to Bed

BY JOHN DONNE

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defy,  
Until I labour, I in labour lie.  
The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,  
Is tir'd with standing though he never fight.  
Off with that girdle, like heaven's Zone glistening,  
But a far fairer world encompassing.  
Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,  
That th'eyes of busy fools may be stopped there.  
Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chime,  
Tells me from you, that now it is bed time.  
Off with that happy busk, 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 that wiry Coronet and shew  
The hairy Diadem which on you doth grow:  
Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread  
In this love's hallow'd temple, this soft bed.  
In such white robes, heaven's Angels used to be  
Received by men; Thou Angel bringst 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.

O my America! my new-found-land,  
My kingdom, safeliest when with one man mann'd,  
My Mine of precious stones, My Empirie,  
How blest am I in this discovering thee!  
To enter in these bonds, is to be free;  
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.

Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee,  
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,  
To taste whole joys. Gems which you women use  
Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in men's views,  
That when a fool's eye lighteth on a Gem,  
His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.  
Like pictures, or like books' gay coverings made  
For lay-men, are all women thus array'd;  
Themselves are mystic books, which only we  
(Whom their imputed grace will dignify)  
Must see reveal'd. Then since that I may know;  
As liberally, as to a Midwife, shew  
Thy self: cast all, yea, this white linen hence,  
There is no penance due to innocence.

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

# Gibran: On Friendship

And a youth said, Speak to us of Friendship.

And he answered, saying:

Your friend is your needs answered.

He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving.

And he is your board and your fireside.

For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace.

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When your friend speaks his mind you fear not the “nay” in your own mind,  
nor do you withhold the “ay.”

And when he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;

For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations  
are born and shared, with joy that is unacclaimed.

When you part from your friend, you grieve not;

For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the  
mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.

And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.

For love that seeks aught but the disclosure of its own mystery is not love  
but a net cast forth: and only the unprofitable is caught.

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And let your best be for your friend.

If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also.

For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill?

Seek him always with hours to live.

For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness.

And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of  
pleasures.

For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.

Robert Lowell

1955

## *Waking in the Blue*

The night attendant, a B.U. sophomore,  
rouses from the mare's-nest of his drowsy head  
propped on *The Meaning of Meaning*.  
He catwalks down our corridor.

Azure day  
makes my agonized blue window bleaker.  
Crows maunder on the petrified fairway.  
Absence! My heart grows tense  
as though a harpoon were sparring for the kill.  
(This is the house for the "mentally ill.")

What use is my sense of humor?  
I grin at Stanley, now sunk in his sixties,  
once a Harvard all-American fullback,  
(if such were possible!)  
still hoarding the build of a boy in his twenties,  
as he soaks, a ramrod  
with a muscle of a seal  
in his long tub,  
vaguely urinous from the Victorian plumbing.  
A kingly granite profile in a crimson gold-cap,  
worn all day, all night,  
he thinks only of his figure,  
of slimming on sherbet and ginger ale--  
more cut off from words than a seal.  
This is the way day breaks in Bowditch Hall at McLean's;

the hooded night lights bring out "Bobbie,"  
Porcellian '29,  
a replica of Louis XVI  
without the wig--  
redolent and roly-poly as a sperm whale,  
as he swashbuckles about in his birthday suit  
and horses at chairs.

These victorious figures of bravado ossified young.

In between the limits of day,  
hours and hours go by under the crew haircuts  
and slightly too little nonsensical bachelor twinkle  
of the Roman Catholic attendants.  
(There are no Mayflower  
screwballs in the Catholic Church.)

After a hearty New England breakfast,  
I weigh two hundred pounds  
this morning. Cock of the walk,  
I strut in my turtle-necked French sailor's jersey  
before the metal shaving mirrors,  
and see the shaky future grow familiar  
in the pinched, indigenous faces  
of these thoroughbred mental cases,  
twice my age and half my weight.  
We are all old-timers,  
each of us holds a locked razor.