To Lucasta, Going to the Wars

By Richard Lovelace

Tell me not (Sweet) I am unkind,
    That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
    To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
    The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
    A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
    As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee (Dear) so much,
    Lov’d I not Honour more.

Like the other Cavalier poets of 17th-century England, Richard Lovelace lived a legendary life as a soldier, lover, and courtier. Persecuted for his unflagging support of King Charles I, he died in dire poverty — but not before writing two of the age’s most melodic and moving lyrics: “To Althea, from Prison” and “To Lucasta, Going to the Wars.”

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