

Blessed Thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*)

Sarah Hannah

Let's go ahead and bless these double crosses,
These leaves about to stick us in a hundred places;

It's purported to protect from evil, plague, and harm,
And, according to the Bard, "it is the only thing for a qualm."

"Get you some of this and lay it to your heart," while
I run around and say some kind of benediction, try to smile.

Or maybe I'll grind it, make an herbal tea called Mother's Milk
For sale in California, or simply tear apart a thorny stalk,

Run it through my hand, draw it 'cross my wrist,
And make some sign, above the bed, to hold you fast—

Some auspicious symbol made of thorny English dross and blood
(To you, a dram of anything from England must be good)—

To scare away what makes you cry for help,
What makes you call out *Mum!* and keep

You a bit longer, breathing here with me.