16 - 99 Years
Verse Speaking
The Queen of Hearts by Christine Rossetti

How comes it, Flora, that, whenever we
Play cards together, you invariably,
However the pack parts,
Still hold the Queen of Hearts?

I've scanned you with a scrutinizing gaze,
Resolved to fathom these your secret ways:
But, sift them as I will,
Your ways are secret still.

I cut and shuffle; shuffle, cut, again;
But all my cutting, shuffling, proves in vain:
Vain hope, vain forethought, too;
That Queen still falls to you.

I dropped her once, prepense; but, ere the deal
Was dealt, your instinct seemed her loss to feel:
"There should be one card more,"
You said, and searched the floor.

I cheated once: I made a private notch
In Heart-Queen's back, and kept a lynx-eyed watch;
Yet such another back
Deceived me in the pack:

The Queen of Clubs assumed by arts unknown
An imitative dint that seemed my own;
This notch, not of my doing,
Misled me to my ruin.

It baffles me to puzzle out the clue,
Which must be skill, or craft, or luck in you:
Unless, indeed, it be
Natural affinity.