

# FATAL INTERVIEW



SONNETS BY

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

*In this new volume, as in "Renaissance," "Second April," and "The Buck in the Snow," Miss Millay shows herself an ardent lover of life and beauty. Here, in a matchless sonnet sequence, is enshrined the quintessence of her emotional and artistic power. She brings to the classic form new color and new splendor.*



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# Fatal Interview

*Sonnets*

BY

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY



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FATAL INTERVIEW

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OTHER BOOKS BY  
EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

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THE LAMP AND THE BELL  
SECOND APRIL  
THREE PLAYS  
RENASCENCE  
A FEW FIGS FROM THISTLES  
THE HARP-WEAVER  
ARIA DA CAPO  
THE KING'S HENCHMAN  
THE BUCK IN THE SNOW

---

*Harper & Brothers*  
*Publishers*

TO

ELINOR WYLIE

*When I think of you,  
I die, too.  
In my throat, bereft  
Like yours, of air,  
No sound is left,  
Nothing is there  
To make a word of grief.*

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*FATAL INTERVIEW*

## I

WHAT thing is this that, built of salt and lime  
And such dry motes as in the sunbeam show,  
Has power upon me that do daily climb  
The dustless air?—for whom those peaks of snow  
Whereup the lungs of man with borrowed breath  
Go labouring to a doom I may not feel,  
Are but a pearled and roseate plain beneath  
My wingèd helmet and my wingèd heel.  
What sweet emotions neither foe nor friend  
Are these that clog my flight? what thing is this  
That hastening headlong to a dusty end  
Dare turn upon me these proud eyes of bliss?  
Up, up, my feathers!—ere I lay you by  
To journey barefoot with a mortal joy.

## II

THIS beast that rends me in the sight of all,  
This love, this longing, this oblivious thing,  
That has me under as the last leaves fall,  
Will glut, will sicken, will be gone by spring.  
The wound will heal, the fever will abate,  
The knotted hurt will slacken in the breast;  
I shall forget before the flickers mate  
Your look that is today my east and west.  
Unscathed, however, from a claw so deep  
Though I should love again I shall not go:  
Along my body, waking while I sleep,  
Sharp to the kiss, cold to the hand as snow,  
The scar of this encounter like a sword  
Will lie between me and my troubled lord.

### III

NO LACK of counsel from the shrewd and wise  
How love may be acquired and how conserved  
Warrants this laying bare before your eyes  
My needle to your north abruptly swerved;  
If I would hold you, I must hide my fears  
Lest you be wanton, lead you to believe  
My compass to another quarter veers,  
Little surrender, lavishly receive.  
But being like my mother the brown earth  
Fervent and full of gifts and free from guile,  
Liefer would I you loved me for my worth,  
Though you should love me but a little while,  
Than for a philtre any doll can brew,—  
Though thus I bound you as I long to do.

## IV

NAY, learnèd doctor, these fine leeches fresh  
From the pond's edge my cause cannot remove:  
Alas, the sick disorder in my flesh  
Is deeper than your skill, is very love.  
And you, good friar, far liefer would I think  
Upon my dear, and dream him in your place,  
Than heed your *ben'cites* and heavenward sink  
With empty heart and noddle full of grace.  
Breathes but one mortal on the teeming globe  
Could minister to my soul's or body's needs—  
Physician minus physic, minus robe;  
Confessor minus Latin, minus beads.  
Yet should you bid me name him, I am dumb;  
For though you summon him, he would not come.

## V

OF ALL that ever in extreme disease  
“Sweet Love, sweet cruel Love, have pity!” cried,  
Count me the humblest, hold me least of these  
That wear the red heart crumpled in the side,  
In heaviest durance, dreaming or awake,  
Filling the dungeon with their piteous woe;  
Not that I shriek not till the dungeon shake,  
“Oh, God! Oh, let me out! Oh, let me go!”  
But that my chains throughout their iron length  
Make such a golden clank upon my ear,  
But that I would not, boasted I the strength,  
Up with a terrible arm and out of here  
Where thrusts my morsel daily through the bars  
This tall, oblivious gaoler eyed with stars.

## VI

SINCE I cannot persuade you from this mood  
Of pale preoccupation with the dead,  
Not for my comfort nor for your own good  
Shift your concern to living bones instead;  
Since that which Helen did and ended Troy  
Is more than I can do though I be warm,  
Have up your buried girls, egregious boy,  
And stand with them against the unburied storm.  
When you lie wasted and your blood runs thin,  
And what's to do must with dispatch be done,  
Call Cressid, call Elaine, call Isolt in!—  
More bland the ichor of a ghost should run  
Along your dubious veins than the rude sea  
Of passion pounding all day long in me.

## VII

NIGHT is my sister, and how deep in love,  
How drowned in love and weedily washed ashore,  
There to be fretted by the drag and shove  
At the tide's edge, I lie—these things and more:  
Whose arm alone between me and the sand,  
Whose voice alone, whose pitiful breath brought near,  
Could thaw these nostrils and unlock this hand,  
She could advise you, should you care to hear.  
Small chance, however, in a storm so black,  
A man will leave his friendly fire and snug  
For a drowned woman's sake, and bring her back  
To drip and scatter shells upon the rug.  
No one but Night, with tears on her dark face,  
Watches beside me in this windy place.



## VIII

YET in an hour to come, disdainful dust,  
You shall be bowed and brought to bed with me.  
While the blood roars, or when the blood is rust  
About a broken engine, this shall be.  
If not today, then later; if not here  
On the green grass, with sighing and delight,  
Then under it, all in good time, my dear,  
We shall be laid together in the night.  
And ruder and more violent, be assured,  
Than the desirous body's heat and sweat  
That shameful kiss by more than night obscured  
Wherewith at length the scornfullest mouth is met.  
Life has no friend; her converts late or soon  
Slide back to feed the dragon with the moon.

## IX

WHEN you are dead, and your disturbing eyes  
No more as now their stormy lashes lift  
To lance me through—as in the morning skies  
One moment, plainly visible in a rift  
Of cloud, two splendid planets may appear  
And purely blaze, and are at once withdrawn,  
What time the watcher in desire and fear  
Leans from his chilly window in the dawn—  
Shall I be free, shall I be once again  
As others are, and count your loss no care?  
Oh, never more, till my dissolving brain  
Be powerless to evoke you out of air,  
Remembered morning stars, more fiercely bright  
Than all the Alphas of the actual night!

## X

STRANGE thing that I, by nature nothing prone  
To fret the summer blossom on its stem,  
Who know the hidden nest, but leave alone  
The magic eggs, the bird that cuddles them,  
Should have no peace till your bewildered heart  
Hung fluttering at the window of my breast,  
Till I had ravished to my bitter smart  
Your kiss from the stern moment, could not rest.  
“Swift wing, sweet blossom, live again in air!  
Depart, poor flower; poor feathers you are free!”  
Thus do I cry, being teased by shame and care  
That beauty should be brought to terms by me;  
Yet shamed the more that in my heart I know,  
Cry as I may, I could not let you go.

## XI

NOT in a silver casket cool with pearls  
Or rich with red corundum or with blue,  
Locked, and the key withheld, as other girls  
Have given their loves, I give my love to you;  
Not in a lovers'-knot, not in a ring  
Worked in such fashion, and the legend plain—  
*Semper fidelis*, where a secret spring  
Kennels a drop of mischief for the brain:  
Love in the open hand, no thing but that,  
Ungemmed, unhidden, wishing not to hurt,  
As one should bring you cowslips in a hat  
Swung from the hand, or apples in her skirt,  
I bring you, calling out as children do:  
“Look what I have!—And these are all for you.”

## XII

OLYMPIAN gods, mark now my bedside lamp  
Blown out; and be advised too late that he  
Whom you call sire is stolen into the camp  
Of warring Earth, and lies abed with me.  
Call out your golden hordes, the harm is done:  
Enraptured in his great embrace I lie;  
Shake heaven with spears, but I shall bear a son  
Branded with godhead, heel and brow and thigh.  
Whom think not to bedazzle or confound  
With meteoric splendours or display  
Of blackened moons or suns or the big sound  
Of sudden thunder on a silent day;  
Pain and compassion shall he know, being mine,—  
Confusion never, that is half divine.

### XIII

I SAID, seeing how the winter gale increased,  
Even as waxed within us and grew strong  
The ancient tempest of desire, "At least,  
It is the season when the nights are long.  
Well flown, well shattered from the summer hedge  
The early sparrow and the opening flowers!—  
Late climbs the sun above the southerly edge  
These days, and sweet to love those added hours."  
Alas, already does the dark recede,  
And visible are the trees against the snow.  
Oh, monstrous parting, oh, perfidious deed,  
How shall I leave your side, how shall I go? . . .  
Unnatural night, the shortest of the year,  
Farewell! 'Tis dawn. The longest day is here.

## XIV

SINCE of no creature living the last breath  
Is twice required, or twice the ultimate pain,  
Seeing how to quit your arms is very death,  
'Tis likely that I shall not die again;  
And likely 'tis that Time whose gross decree  
Sends now the dawn to clamour at our door,  
Thus having done his evil worst to me,  
Will thrust me by, will harry me no more.  
When you are corn and roses and at rest  
I shall endure, a dense and sanguine ghost,  
To haunt the scene where I was happiest,  
To bend above the thing I loved the most;  
And rise, and wring my hands, and steal away  
As I do now, before the advancing day.

## XV

MY WORSHIP from this hour the Sparrow-Drawn  
Alone will cherish, and her arrowy child,  
Whose groves alone in the inquiring dawn  
Rise tranquil, and their altars undefiled.  
Seaward and shoreward smokes a plundered land  
To guard whose portals was my dear employ;  
Razed are its temples now; inviolate stand  
Only the slopes of Venus and her boy.  
How have I stripped me of immortal aid  
Save theirs alone,—who could endure to see  
Forsworn Aeneas with conspiring blade  
Sever the ship from shore (alas for me)  
And make no sign; who saw, and did not speak,  
The brooch of Troilus pinned upon the Greek.



## XVI

I DREAMED I moved among the Elysian fields,  
In converse with sweet women long since dead;  
And out of blossoms which that meadow yields  
I wove a garland for your living head.  
Danae, that was the vessel for a day  
Of golden Jove, I saw, and at her side,  
Whom Jove the Bull desired and bore away,  
Europa stood, and the Swan's featherless bride.  
All these were mortal women, yet all these  
Above the ground had had a god for guest;  
Freely I walked beside them and at ease,  
Addressing them, by them again addressed,  
And marvelled nothing, for remembering you,  
Wherefore I was among them well I knew.

## XVII

SWEET love, sweet thorn, when lightly to my heart  
I took your thrust, whereby I since am slain,  
And lie disheveled in the grass apart,  
A sodden thing bedrenched by tears and rain,  
While rainy evening drips to misty night,  
And misty night to cloudy morning clears,  
And clouds disperse across the gathering light,  
And birds grow noisy, and the sun appears—  
Had I bethought me then, sweet love, sweet thorn,  
How sharp an anguish even at the best—  
When all's requited and the future sworn—  
The happy hour can leave within the breast,  
I had not so come running at the call  
Of one who loves me little, if at all.

## XVIII

SHALL I be prisoner till my pulses stop  
To hateful Love and drag his noisy chain,  
And bait my need with sugared crusts that drop  
From jeweled fingers neither kind nor clean?—  
Mewed in an airless cavern where a toad  
Would grieve to snap his gnat and lay him down,  
While in the light along the rattling road  
Men shout and chaff and drive their wares to town? . . .  
Perfidious Prince, that keep me here confined,  
Doubt not I know the letters of my doom:  
How many a man has left his blood behind  
To buy his exit from this mournful room  
These evil stains record, these walls that rise  
Carved with his torment, steamy with his sighs.

## XIX

MY MOST distinguished guest and learnèd friend,  
the pallid hare that runs before the day  
Having brought your earnest counsels to an end  
Now have I somewhat of my own to say:  
That it is folly to be sunk in love,  
And madness plain to make the matter known,  
These are no mysteries you are verger of;  
Everyman's wisdoms these are, and my own.  
If I have flung my heart unto a hound  
I have done ill, it is a certain thing;  
Yet breathe I freer, walk I the more sound  
On my sick bones for this brave reasoning?  
Soon must I say, "'Tis prowling Death I hear!"—  
Yet come no better off, for my quick ear.

## XX

THINK not, nor for a moment let your mind,  
Wearied with thinking, doze upon the thought  
That the work's done and the long day behind,  
And beauty, since 'tis paid for, can be bought.  
If in the moonlight from the silent bough  
Suddenly with precision speak your name  
The nightingale, be not assured that now  
His wing is limed and his wild virtue tame.  
Beauty beyond all feathers that have flown  
Is free; you shall not hood her to your wrist,  
Nor sting her eyes, nor have her for your own  
In any fashion; beauty billed and kissed  
Is not your turtle; tread her like a dove—  
She loves you not; she never heard of love.

## XXI

GONE in good sooth you are: not even in dream  
You come. As if the strictures of the light,  
Laid on our glances to their disesteem,  
Extended even to shadows and the night;  
Extended even beyond that drowsy sill  
Along whose galleries open to the skies  
All maskers move unchallenged and at will,  
Visor in hand or hooded to the eyes.  
To that pavilion the green sea in flood  
Curves in, and the slow dancers dance in foam;  
I find again the pink camellia-bud  
On the wide step, beside a silver comb. . . .  
But it is scentless; up the marble stair  
I mount with pain, knowing you are not there.

## XXII

Now by this moon, before this moon shall wane  
I shall be dead or I shall be with you!  
No moral concept can outweigh the pain  
Past rack and wheel this absence puts me through;  
Faith, honour, pride, endurance, what the tongues  
Of tedious men will say, or what the law—  
For which of these do I fill up my lungs  
With brine and fire at every breath I draw?  
Time, and to spare, for patience by and by,  
Time to be cold and time to sleep alone;  
Let me no more until the hour I die  
Defraud my innocent senses of their own.  
Before this moon shall darken, say of me:  
She's in her grave, or where she wants to be.

## XXIII

I KNOW the face of Falsehood and her tongue  
Honeyed with unction, plausible with guile,  
Are dear to men, whom count me not among,  
That owe their daily credit to her smile;  
Such have been succoured out of great distress  
By her contriving, if accounts be true:  
Their deference now above the board, I guess,  
Discharges what beneath the board is due.  
As for myself, I'd liefer lack her aid  
Than eat her presence; let this building fall,  
But let me never lift my latch, afraid  
To hear her simpering accents in the hall,  
Nor force an entrance past mephitic airs  
Of stale patchouli hanging on my stairs.



## XXIV

WHEREAS at morning in a jeweled crown  
I bit my fingers and was hard to please,  
Having shook disaster till the fruit fell down  
I feel tonight more happy and at ease;  
Feet running in the corridors, men quick-  
Buckling their sword-belts bumping down the stair,  
Challenge, and rattling bridge-chain, and the click  
Of hooves on pavement—this will clear the air.  
Private this chamber as it has not been  
In many a month of muffled hours; almost,  
Lulled by the uproar, I could lie serene  
And sleep, until all's won, until all's lost,  
And the door's opened and the issue shown,  
And I walk forth Hell's mistress . . . or my own.

## XXV

PERIL upon the paths of this desire  
Lies like the natural darkness of the night,  
For me unpeopled; let him hence retire  
Whom as a child a shadow could affright;  
And fortune speed him from this dubious place  
Where roses blenched or blackened of their hue,  
Pallid and stemless float on undulant space,  
Or clustered hidden shock the hand with dew.  
Whom as a child the night's obscurity  
Did not alarm, let him alone remain,  
Lanterned but by the longing in the eye,  
And warmed but by the fever in the vein,  
To lie with me, sentried from wrath and scorn  
By sleepless Beauty and her polished thorn.

## XXVI

WOMEN have loved before as I love now;  
At least, in lively chronicles of the past—  
Of Irish waters by a Cornish prow  
Or Trojan waters by a Spartan mast  
Much to their cost invaded—here and there,  
Hunting the amorous line, skimming the rest,  
I find some woman bearing as I bear  
Love like a burning city in the breast.  
I think however that of all alive  
I only in such utter, ancient way  
Do suffer love; in me alone survive  
The unregenerate passions of a day  
When treacherous queens, with death upon the tread,  
Heedless and wilful, took their knights to bed.

## XXVII

MOON, that against the lintel of the west  
Your forehead lean until the gate be swung,  
Longing to leave the world and be at rest,  
Being worn with faring and no longer young,  
Do you recall at all the Carian hill  
Where worn with loving, loving late you lay,  
Halting the sun because you lingered still,  
While wondering candles lit the Carian day?  
Ah, if indeed this memory to your mind  
Recall some sweet employment, pity me,  
That with the dawn must leave my love behind,  
That even now the dawn's dim herald see!  
I charge you, goddess, in the name of one  
You loved as well: endure, hold off the sun.

## XXVIII

WHEN we are old and these rejoicing veins  
Are frosty channels to a muted stream,  
And out of all our burning there remains  
No feeblest spark to fire us, even in dream,  
This be our solace: that it was not said  
When we were young and warm and in our prime,  
Upon our couch we lay as lie the dead,  
Sleeping away the unreturning time.  
O sweet, O heavy-lidded, O my love,  
When morning strikes her spear upon the land,  
And we must rise and arm us and reprove  
The insolent daylight with a steady hand,  
Be not discountenanced if the knowing know  
We rose from rapture but an hour ago.

## XXIX

HEART, have no pity on this house of bone:  
Shake it with dancing, break it down with joy.  
No man holds mortgage on it; it is your own;  
To give, to sell at auction, to destroy.  
When you are blind to moonlight on the bed,  
When you are deaf to gravel on the pane,  
Shall quavering caution from this house instead  
Cluck forth at summer mischief in the lane?  
*All that delightful youth forbears to spend  
Molestful age inherits, and the ground  
Will have us; therefore, while we're young, my friend—*  
The Latin's vulgar, but the advice is sound.  
Youth, have no pity; leave no farthing here  
For age to invest in compromise and fear.

### XXX

LOVE is not all; it is not meat nor drink  
Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain,  
Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink  
And rise and sink and rise and sink again;  
Love can not fill the thickened lung with breath,  
Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;  
Yet many a man is making friends with death  
Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.  
It well may be that in a difficult hour,  
Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,  
Or nagged by want past resolution's power,  
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,  
Or trade the memory of this night for food.  
It well may be. I do not think I would.

## XXXI

WHEN we that wore the myrtle wear the dust,  
And years of darkness cover up our eyes,  
And all our arrogant laughter and sweet lust  
Keep counsel with the scruples of the wise;  
When boys and girls that now are in the loins  
Of croaking lads, dip oar into the sea,—  
And who are these that dive for copper coins?  
No longer we, my love, no longer we—  
Then let the fortunate breathers of the air,  
When we lie speechless in the muffling mould,  
Tease not our ghosts with slander, pause not there  
To say that love is false and soon grows cold,  
But pass in silence the mute grave of two  
Who lived and died believing love was true.



## XXXII

TIME, that is pleased to lengthen out the day  
For grieving lovers parted or denied,  
And pleased to hurry the sweet hours away  
From such as lie enchanted side by side,  
Is not my kinsman; nay, my feudal foe  
Is he that in my childhood was the thief  
Of all my mother's beauty, and in woe  
My father bowed, and brought our house to grief.  
Thus, though he think to touch with hateful frost  
Your treasured curls, and your clear forehead line,  
And so persuade me from you, he has lost;  
Never shall he inherit what was mine.  
When Time and all his tricks have done their worst,  
Still will I hold you dear, and him accurst.

### XXXIII

SORROWFUL dreams remembered after waking  
Shadow with dolour all the candid day;  
Even as I read, the silly tears out-breaking  
Splash on my hands and shut the page away. . . .  
Grief at the root, a dark and secret dolour,  
Harder to bear than wind-and-weather grief,  
Clutching the rose, draining its cheek of colour,  
Drying the bud, curling the opened leaf.  
Deep is the pond—although the edge be shallow,  
Frank in the sun, revealing fish and stone,  
Climbing ashore to turtle-head and mallow—  
Black at the centre beats a heart unknown.  
Desolate dreams pursue me out of sleep;  
Weeping I wake; waking, I weep, I weep.

## XXXIV

MOST wicked words, forbear to speak them out.  
Utter them not again. Blaspheme no more  
Against our love with maxims learned from Doubt,  
Lest Death should get his foot inside the door.  
We are surrounded by a hundred foes;  
And he that at your bidding joins our feast,  
I stake my heart upon it, is one of those,  
Nor in their councils does he sit the least.  
Hark not his whisper; he is Time's ally,  
Kinsman to Death and leman of Despair.  
Believe that I shall love you till I die;  
Believe, and thrust him forth, and arm the stair,  
And top the walls with spikes and splintered glass,  
That he pass gutted, should again he pass.

## XXXV

CLEARLY my ruined garden as it stood  
Before the frost came on it I recall—  
Stiff marigolds, and what a trunk of wood  
The zinnia had, that was the first to fall;  
These pale and oozy stalks, these hanging leaves  
Nerveless and darkened, dripping in the sun,  
Cannot gainsay me, though the spirit grieves  
And wrings its hands at what the frost has done.  
If in a widening silence you should guess  
I read the moment with recording eyes,  
Taking your love and all your loveliness  
Into a listening body hushed of sighs,  
Though summer's rife and the warm rose in season,  
Rebuke me not: I have a winter reason.

## XXXVI

HEARING your words, and not a word among them  
Tuned to my liking, on a salty day  
When inland woods were pushed by winds that flung them  
Hissing to leeward like a ton of spray,  
I thought how off Matinicus the tide  
Came pounding in, came running through the Gut,  
While from the Rock the warning whistle cried,  
And children whimpered, and the doors blew shut;  
There in the autumn when the men go forth,  
With slapping skirts the island women stand  
In gardens stripped and scattered, peering north,  
With dahlia tubers dripping from the hand:  
The wind of their endurance, driving south,  
Flattened your words against your speaking mouth.

## XXXVII

BELIEVE, if ever the bridges of this town,  
Whose towers were builded without fault or stain,  
Be taken, and its battlements go down,  
No mortal roof shall shelter me again;  
I shall not prop a branch against a bough  
To hide me from the whipping east or north,  
Nor tease to flame a heap of sticks, that now  
Am warmed by all the wonders of the earth.  
Do you take ship unto some happier shore  
In such event, and have no thought for me.  
I shall remain;—to share the ruinous floor  
With roofs that once were seen far out at sea;  
To cheer a mouldering army on the march,  
And beg from spectres by a broken arch.

## XXXVIII

You say: "Since life is cruel enough at best,"  
You say: "Considering how our love is cursed,  
And housed so bleakly that the sea-gull's nest  
Were better shelter, even as better nursed  
Between the breaker and the stingy reeds  
Ragged and coarse that hiss against the sand  
The gull's brown chick, and hushed in all his needs,  
Than our poor love so harried through the land—  
You being too tender, even with all your scorn,  
To line his cradle with the world's reproof,  
And I too devious, too surrendered, born  
Too far from home to hunt him even a roof  
Out of the rain—" Oh, tortured voice, be still!  
Spare me your promise: leave me when you will.

## XXXIX

LOVE me no more, now let the god depart,  
If love be grown so bitter to your tongue!  
Here is my hand; I bid you from my heart  
Fare well, fare very well, be always young.  
As for myself, mine was a deeper drouth,  
I drank and thirsted still; but I surmise  
My kisses now are sand against your mouth,  
Teeth in your palm and pennies on your eyes.  
Speak but one cruel word, to shame my tears;  
Go, but in going, stiffen up my back  
To meet the yelping of the mustering years—  
Dim, trotting shapes that seldom will attack  
Two with a light who match their steps and sing:  
To one alone and lost, another thing.



## XL

You loved me not at all, but let it go;  
I loved you more than life, but let it be.  
As the more injured party, this being so,  
The hour's amenities are all to me—  
The choice of weapons; and I gravely choose  
To let the weapons tarnish where they lie,  
And spend the night in eloquent abuse  
Of senators and popes and such small fry  
And meet the morning standing, and at odds  
With heaven and earth and hell and any fool  
That calls his soul his own, and all the gods,  
And all the children getting dressed for school . . .  
And you will leave me, and I shall entomb  
What's cold by then in an adjoining room.

## XLI

I SAID in the beginning, did I not?—  
Prophetic of the end, though unaware  
How light you took me, ignorant that you thought  
I spoke to see my breath upon the air:  
If you walk east at daybreak from the town  
To the cliff's foot, by climbing steadily  
You cling at noon whence there is no way down  
But to go toppling backward to the sea.  
And not for birds nor birds'-eggs, so they say,  
But for a flower that in these fissures grows,  
Forms have been seen to move throughout the day  
Skyward; but what its name is no one knows.  
'Tis said you find beside them on the sand  
This flower, relinquished by the broken hand.

## XLII

O AILING Love, compose your struggling wing!  
Confess you mortal; be content to die.  
How better dead, than be this awkward thing  
Dragging in dust its feathers of the sky,  
Hitching and rearing, plunging beak to loam,  
Upturned, disheveled, utt'ring a weak sound  
Less proud than of the gull that rakes the foam,  
Less kind than of the hawk that scours the ground.  
While yet your awful beauty, even at bay,  
Beats off the impious eye, the outstretched hand,  
And what your hue or fashion none can say,  
Vanish, be fled, leave me a wingless land . . .  
Save where one moment down the quiet tide  
Fades a white swan, with a black swan beside.

### XLIII

SUMMER, be seen no more within this wood;  
Nor you, red Autumn, down its paths appear;  
Let no more the false mitrewort intrude  
Nor the dwarf cornel nor the gentian here;  
You too be absent, unavailing Spring,  
Nor let those thrushes that with pain conspire  
From out this wood their wild arpeggios fling,  
Shaking the nerves with memory and desire.  
Only that season which is no man's friend,  
You, surly Winter, in this wood be found;  
Freeze up the year; with sleet these branches bend  
Though rasps the locust in the fields around.  
Now darken, sky! Now shrieking blizzard, blow!—  
Farewell, sweet bank; be blotted out with snow.

## XLIV

IF TO be left were to be left alone,  
And lock the door and find one's self again—  
Drag forth and dust Penates of one's own  
That in a corner all too long have lain;  
Read Brahms, read Chaucer, set the chessmen out  
In classic problem, stretch the shrunken mind  
Back to its stature on the rack of thought—  
Loss might be said to leave its boon behind.  
But fruitless conference and the interchange  
With callow wits of bearded *cons* and *pros*  
Enlist the neutral daylight, and derange  
A will too sick to battle for repose.  
Neither with you nor with myself, I spend  
Loud days that have no meaning and no end.

## XLV

I KNOW my mind and I have made my choice;  
Not from your temper does my doom depend;  
Love me or love me not, you have no voice  
In this, that is my portion to the end.  
Your presence and your favours, the full part  
That you could give, you now can take away:  
What lies between your beauty and my heart  
Not even you can trouble or betray.  
Mistake me not—unto my inmost core  
I do desire your kiss upon my mouth;  
They have not craved a cup of water more  
That bleach upon the deserts of the south;  
Here might you bless me; what you cannot do  
Is bow me down, that have been loved by you.

## XLVI

EVEN in the moment of our earliest kiss,  
When sighed the straitened bud into the flower,  
Sat the dry seed of most unwelcome this;  
And that I knew, though not the day and hour.  
Too season-wise am I, being country-bred,  
To tilt at autumn or defy the frost:  
Snuffing the chill even as my fathers did,  
I say with them, "What's out tonight is lost."  
I only hoped, with the mild hope of all  
Who watch the leaf take shape upon the tree,  
A fairer summer and a later fall  
Than in these parts a man is apt to see,  
And sunny clusters ripened for the wine:  
I tell you this across the blackened vine.

## XLVII

WELL, I have lost you; and I lost you fairly;  
In my own way, and with my full consent.  
Say what you will, kings in a tumbrel rarely  
Went to their deaths more proud than this one went.  
Some nights of apprehension and hot weeping  
I will confess; but that's permitted me;  
Day dried my eyes; I was not one for keeping  
Rubbed in a cage a wing that would be free.  
If I had loved you less or played you slyly  
I might have held you for a summer more,  
But at the cost of words I value highly,  
And no such summer as the one before.  
Should I outlive this anguish—and men do—  
I shall have only good to say of you.



## XLVIII

Now by the path I climbed, I journey back.  
The oaks have grown; I have been long away.  
Taking with me your memory and your lack  
I now descend into a milder day;  
Stripped of your love, unburdened of my hope,  
Descend the path I mounted from the plain;  
Yet steeper than I fancied seems the slope  
And stonier, now that I go down again.  
Warm falls the dusk; the clanking of a bell  
Faintly ascends upon this heavier air;  
I do recall those grassy pastures well:  
In early spring they drove the cattle there.  
And close at hand should be a shelter, too,  
From which the mountain peaks are not in view.

## XLIX

THERE is a well into whose bottomless eye,  
Though I were flayed, I dare not lean and look,  
Sweet once with mountain water, now gone dry,  
Miraculously abandoned by the brook  
Wherewith for years miraculously fed  
It kept a constant level cold and bright,  
Though summer parched the rivers in their bed;  
Withdrawn these waters, vanished overnight.  
There is a word I dare not speak again,  
A face I never again must call to mind;  
I was not craven ever nor blenched at pain,  
But pain to such degree and of such kind  
As I must suffer if I think of you,  
Not in my senses will I undergo.

## L

THE heart once broken is a heart no more,  
And is absolved from all a heart must be;  
All that it signed or chartered heretofore  
Is cancelled now, the bankrupt heart is free;  
So much of duty as you may require  
Of shards and dust, this and no more of pain,  
This and no more of hope, remorse, desire,  
The heart once broken need support again.  
How simple 'tis, and what a little sound  
It makes in breaking, let the world attest:  
It struggles, and it fails; the world goes round,  
And the moon follows it. Heart in my breast,  
'Tis half a year now since you broke in two;  
The world's forgotten well, if the world knew.

## LI

IF IN the years to come you should recall,  
When faint at heart or fallen on hungry days,  
Or full of griefs and little if at all  
From them distracted by delights or praise;  
When failing powers or good opinion lost  
Have bowed your neck, should you recall to mind  
How of all men I honoured you the most,  
Holding you noblest among mortal-kind:  
Might not my love—although the curving blade  
From whose wide mowing none may hope to hide,  
Me long ago below the frosts had laid—  
Restore you somewhat to your former pride?  
Indeed I think this memory, even then,  
Must raise you high among the run of men.

## LII

OH, SLEEP forever in the Latmian cave,  
Mortal Endymion, darling of the Moon!  
Her silver garments by the senseless wave  
Shouldered and dropped and on the shingle strewn,  
Her fluttering hand against her forehead pressed,  
Her scattered looks that trouble all the sky,  
Her rapid footsteps running down the west—  
Of all her altered state, oblivious lie!  
Whom earthen you, by deathless lips adored,  
Wild-eyed and stammering to the grasses thrust,  
And deep into her crystal body poured  
The hot and sorrowful sweetness of the dust:  
Whereof she wanders mad, being all unfit  
For mortal love, that might not die of it.

THE END

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Fatal Interview* by Edna St. Vincent Millay]