

***I, Being born a woman and distressed***

I, being born a woman and distressed  
By all the needs and notions of my kind,  
Am urged by your propinquity to find  
Your person fair, and feel a certain zest  
To bear your body's weight upon my breast:  
So subtly is the fume of life designed,  
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,  
And leave me once again undone, possessed.  
Think not for this, however, the poor treason  
Of my stout blood against my staggering brain,  
I shall remember you with love, or season  
My scorn with pity, —let me make it plain:  
I find this frenzy insufficient reason  
For conversation when we meet again.

***Time does not bring relief; you all have lied***

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied  
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!  
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;  
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;  
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,  
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;  
But last year's bitter loving must remain  
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.  
There are a hundred places where I fear  
To go,—so with his memory they brim.  
And entering with relief some quiet place  
Where never fell his foot or shone his face  
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"  
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

## ***Spring***

To what purpose, April, do you return again?  
Beauty is not enough.  
You can no longer quiet me with the redness  
Of little leaves opening stickily.  
I know what I know.  
The sun is hot on my neck as I observe  
The spikes of the crocus.  
The smell of the earth is good.  
It is apparent that there is no death.  
But what does that signify?  
Not only under ground are the brains of men  
Eaten by maggots.  
Life in itself  
Is nothing,  
An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs.  
It is not enough that yearly, down this hill,  
April  
Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

## ***Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!***

Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!  
Give back my book and take my kiss instead.  
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard,  
“What a big book for such a little head!”  
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,  
And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink!  
Oh, I shall love you still, and all of that.  
I never again shall tell you what I think.  
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;  
You will not catch me reading any more:  
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;  
And some day when you knock and push the door,  
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,  
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.

***Loving you less than life, a little less***

Loving you less than life, a little less  
Than bitter-sweet upon a broken wall  
Or brush-wood smoke in autumn, I confess  
I cannot swear I love you not at all.  
For there is that about you in this light—  
A yellow darkness, sinister of rain—  
Which sturdily recalls my stubborn sight  
To dwell on you, and dwell on you again.  
And I am made aware of many a week  
I shall consume, remembering in what way  
Your brown hair grows about your brow and cheek  
And what divine absurdities you say:  
Till all the world, and I, and surely you,  
Will know I love you, whether or not I do.

***What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why***

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,  
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain  
Under my head till morning; but the rain  
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh  
Upon the glass and listen for reply,  
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain  
For unremembered lads that not again  
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.

Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,  
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,  
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:  
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,  
I only know that summer sang in me  
A little while, that in me sings no more.

### *Lament*

Listen, children:  
Your father is dead.  
From his old coats  
I'll make you little jackets;  
I'll make you little trousers  
From his old pants.  
There'll be in his pockets  
Things he used to put there,  
Keys and pennies  
Covered with tobacco;  
Dan shall have the pennies  
To save in his bank;  
Anne shall have the keys  
To make a pretty noise with.  
Life must go on,  
And the dead be forgotten;  
Life must go on,  
Though good men die;  
Anne, eat your breakfast;  
Dan, take your medicine;  
Life must go on;  
I forget just why.

### *The Penitent*

I had a little Sorrow,  
Born of a little Sin,  
I found a room all damp with  
gloom  
And shut us all within;  
And, "Little Sorrow, weep," said I,  
"And, Little Sin, pray God to die,  
And I upon the floor will lie  
And think how bad I've been!"

Alas for pious planning —  
It mattered not a whit!  
As far as gloom went in that room,  
The lamp might have been lit!  
My Little Sorrow would not weep,  
My Little Sin would go to sleep —  
To save my soul I could not keep  
My graceless mind on it!

So up I got in anger,  
And took a book I had,  
And put a ribbon on my hair  
To please a passing lad.  
And, "One thing there's no getting  
by —  
I've been a wicked girl," said I;  
"But if I can't be sorry, why,  
I might as well be glad!"

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

### ***Love is Not All***

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.

Here is an excellent [YouTube documentary](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9ItdEiBR-o) on Millay's life It is absolutely worth the watch. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9ItdEiBR-o>