

# MILLAY SONGS

## for Voice and Piano

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### COMPOSER'S NOTE

Edna St. Vincent Millay was born in Maine in 1892. She attended Vassar College and became the best-known poet of her generation and the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. She died at her home, Steepletop, north of New York City in 1950.

**MILLAY SONGS** was composed during a residency at The Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences in Rabun Gap, Georgia, in October 2007.

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#### *First Fig*

My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends –  
It gives a lovely light!

#### *Second Fig*

Safe upon the solid rock the ugly houses stand:  
Come and see my shining palace built upon the sand!

### *Elegy Before Death*

There will be rose and rhododendron  
When you are dead and underground;  
Still will be heard from white syringas  
Heavy with bees, a sunny sound;

Still will the tamaracks be raining  
After the rain has ceased, and still  
Will there be robins in the stubble,  
Grey sheep upon the warm green hill.

Spring will not ail nor autumn falter;  
Nothing will know that you are gone, –  
Saving alone some sullen ploughland  
None but yourself sets foot upon;

Saving the mayweed and the pigweed  
Nothing will know that you are dead,  
These, and perhaps a useless wagon  
Standing beside some tumbled shed.

Oh, there will pass with your great passing  
Little of beauty not your own, –  
Only the light from common water,  
Only the grace from simple stone!

### ***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.

### ***Winter Night***

Pile high the hickory and the light  
Log of chestnut struck by the blight.  
Welcome-in the winter night.

The day has gone in hewing and felling,  
Sawing and drawing wood to the dwelling  
For the night of talk and story-telling.

These are the hours that give the edge  
To the blunted axe and the best wedge.  
Straighten the saw and lighten the sledge.

Here are question and reply,  
And the fire reflected in the thinking eye.  
So peace, and let the bob-cat cry.