

# Conscientious Objector

by Edna St. Vincent Millay

I shall die,  
but that is all that  
I shall do for Death.  
I hear him leading his  
horse out of the stall;  
I hear the clatter on the barn-floor.  
He is in haste; he has business in Cuba,  
business in the Balkans,  
many calls to make this morning.  
But I will not hold the bridle while he cinches the girth.  
And he may mount by himself:  
I will not give him a leg up.  
Though he flick my shoulders with his whip,  
I will not tell him which way the fox ran.  
With his hoof on my breast, I will not tell him  
where the black boy hides in the swamp.  
I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death;  
I am not on his pay-roll.  
I will not tell him the whereabouts of my friends  
nor of my enemies either.  
Though he promise me much,  
I will not map him the route to any man's door.  
Am I a spy in the land of the living, that I should  
deliver men to Death?  
Brother, the passwords and the plans of our city are  
safe with me;  
never through me  
shall you be overcome.

*From Collected Poems, Harper & Row*

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