

**There are no islands any more. Lines written in passion and in deep concern for England, France and my own country. Edna St. Vincent Millay. Reprinted by kind permission of Edna St. Vincent Millay for the benefit of the British War relief society, Inc. 620 Fifth Ave. New York. [1940].**

THERE ARE NO ISLANDS ANY MORE

Lines Written in Passion and in Deep Concern for England, France, and My Own Country

DEAR ISOLATIONIST, you are So very, very insular! Surely you do not take offense?— The word's well used in such a sense. 'Tis you, not I, sir, who insist You are an Isolationist. And oh, how sweet a thing to be Safe on an island, not at sea!

(Though someone said, some months ago— I heard him, and he seemed to know; Was it the German Chancellor? "There *are* no islands any more.")

Dear Islander, I envy you: I'm very fond of islands, too; And few the pleasures I have known Which equalled being left alone. Yet matters from without intrude At times upon my solitude: A forest fire, a dog run mad, A neighbor stripped of all he had By swindlers, or the shrieking plea For help, of stabbed Democracy.

Startled, I rise, run from the room, Join the brigade of spade and broom; Help to surround the sickened beast; Hear the account of farmers fleeced By dapper men, condole, and give Something to help them hope and live; Or, if Democracy's at stake, Give more, give more than I can make; And notice, with a rueful grin, What was without, is now within.

(The tidal wave devours the shore: There *are* no islands any more)

With sobbing breath, with blistered hands, Men fight the forest fire in bands; With kitchen broom, with branch of pine, Beat at the blackened, treacherous line; Before the veering wind fall back, With eyebrows burnt and faces black; While breasts in blackened streams perspire, Watch how the wind runs with the fire Like a broad banner up the hill— And can no more...yet more must still. New life!— to hear across the field Voices of neighbors, forms concealed By smoke, but loud the nearing shout, "Hold on! We're coming! Here it's out!"

(The tidal wave devours the shore: There *are* no islands any more)

This little life, from here to there— Who lives it safely anywhere? Not you, my insulated friend: What calm composure will defend Your rock, when tides you've never seen Assault the sands of What-has-been, And from your island's tallest tree, You watch advance What-is-to-be?

(The tidal wave devours the shore: There *are* no islands any more)

Sweet, sweet, to see the tide approach, Assured that it cannot encroach Upon the beach-peas often wet With spray, never uprooted yet. The moon said—did she not speak true?— “The waves will not awaken you. At my command the waves retire. Sleep, weary mind; dream, heart's desire.” And yet, there was a Danish king So sure he governed everything He bade the ocean not to rise. It did. And great was his surprise.

No man, no nation, is made free By stating it intends to be. Jostled and elbowed is the clown Who thinks to walk alone in town. We live upon a shrinking sphere— Like it or not, our home is here; Brave heart, uncompromising brain Could make it seem like home again.

(There *are* no islands any more. The tide that mounts our drowsy shore Is boats and men,—there is no place For waves in such a crowded space)

Oh, let us give, before too late, To those who hold our country's fate Along with theirs—be sure of this— In grimy hands,—that will not miss The target, if we stand beside Loading the guns— (resentment, pride, Debts torn across with insolent word— All this forgotten, or deferred At least until there's time for strife Concerning things less dear than Life; Then let, if must be, in the brain Resentment rankle once again, Quibbling and Squabbling take the floor, Cool Judgment go to sleep once more.)

On English soil, on French terrain, Democracy's at grips again With forces forged to stamp it out. This time no quarter!—since no doubt. Not France, not England's what's involved, Not we,—there's something to be solved Of grave concern to free men all: Can Freedom stand?—Must Freedom fall?

(Meantime, the tide devours the shore: There *are* no islands any more)

Oh, build, assemble, transport, give, That England, France and we may live, Before tonight, before too late, To those who hold our country's fate In desperate fingers, reaching out For weapons we confer about, All that we can, and more, and now!

Oh, God let not the lovely brow Of Freedom in the trampled mud Grow cold! Have we no brains, no blood, No enterprise—no any thing Of which we proudly talk and sing, Which we like men can bring

to bear For Freedom, and against Despair? Lest French and British fighters, deep In battle, needing  
guns and sleep, For lack of aid be overthrown, And we be left to fight alone.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

*Reprinted by kind permission of Edna St. Vincent Millay for the benefit of the British War Relief Society,  
Inc., 620 Fifth Avenue, New York.*

---

0674D3

25044