

A Few Figs from Thistles

Alex Tedrow

for voice and piano

Commissioned by Caroline Goodwin

2020

A Few Figs from Thistles

Commissioned by Caroline Goodwin - November 5, 2020, Bloomington, Indiana

Total Duration: ~15 minutes

I. The Penitent: 5 minutes (may be performed standalone)

II. The Prisoner: 1.5 minutes

III. First Fig: 2 minutes

IV. Second Fig: 1.5 minutes

V. Thursday: 2 minutes

VI. To the Not Impossible Him: 2.5 minutes (may be performed standalone)

Recommended voice type: soprano

Music typeset by the composer, title and text by Edna St. Vincent Millay (public domain)

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Tedrow, Alex (ASCAP)

- *A Few Figs from Thistles*, for voice and piano

Text

Selections taken from Edna St. Vincent Millay's *A Few Figs from Thistles*
(1920, public domain)

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 could 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!"

The Prisoner

All right,
Go ahead!
What's in a name?
I guess I'll be locked into
As much as I'm locked out of!

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!

Thursday

And if I loved you Wednesday,
Well, what is that to you?
I do not love you Thursday —
So much is true.

And why you come complaining
Is more than I can see.
I loved you Wednesday, — yes — but what
Is that to me?

To the Not Impossible Him

How shall I know, unless I go
To Cairo and Cathay,
Whether or not this blessed spot
Is blest in every way?

Now it may be, the flower for me
Is this beneath my nose;
How shall I tell, unless I smell
The Carthaginian rose?

The fabric of my faithful love
No power shall dim or ravel
Whilst I stay here, — but oh, my dear,
If I should ever travel!

The Penitent

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Alex Tedrow (b. 1999)

Soprano

$\text{♩} = 72$

sultry p **5**

I had a lit-tle

Piano

p *mp* *p*

8vb (loco) *8vb* *8vb* *8vb* *8vb*

Ped. ad lib. (except where indicated)

6

mp *pp* *p*

Sor - row, Born of a lit-tle

Pno.

mp *p* *mp*

8vb *8vb* *8vb* *8vb*

11

mf *pp* *mf*

Sin. I found a room all damp with gloom And

Pno.

mf

8vb *8vb*

15 *p* 3 3 **17**

S shut us all with-in; — And, "Lit - tle Sor - row weep," — said

Pno. *p* 5 3 3 3 8^{vb} 8^{vb} 8^{vb}

19 *mp* *pp* *p*

S I, — "And, Lit - tle Sin, — pray God to

Pno. *mp* 3 *p* 3 8^{vb} 8^{vb} 8^{vb}

23 *mf* *pp* *p* **25**

S die, — And I — up-on the floor will

Pno. 3 5 6 *mf* 5/4 4/4 5/4 4/4 Ped.

The Penitent - Tedrow

with a tinge of hushed excitement *pp*

26

S

lie And think how bad I've been!"

Pno.

p

8vb

30

S

A - las for pi-ous plan-ning It

Pno.

mp *pp*

31

Ped. (Ped. ad lib.)

33

S

mat - tered not a whit! As far as gloom went

Pno.

f *mp* *f dim.*

36 38

S *p* *pp*

in that room, The lamp might have been lit!

Pno. *p* *mp* *p*

40

S *p* *quasi-freely*

I had a lit - tle Sor - row

Pno. *pp*

45 *a tempo* *with growing frustration* *accel. poco a poco*

S *p*

My Lit - tle Sor - row would not

Pno. *pp* *p*

(Ped. ad lib.)

48 *mf* *pp* *p*

S weep, My

Pno. 3 3 3 3 5 6 6 7 3 3 3 3

50 = 80 (accel.) *mf*

S Lit - tle Sin would go to

Pno. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 5

52 *f* *pp* *mp*

S sleep To

Pno. 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

The Prisoner

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Alex Tedrow (b. 1999)

$\text{♩} = 152$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

Soprano

All right,

Piano

ff mp

ff mp

8^{vb-1} (loco) 8^{vb-1}

4

S

frenetic

All right, All right, All right,

Pno.

f ff mp ff mp ff

8^{vb-1} 8^{vb-1} 8^{vb-1}

8

S

mf f

Go a - head!

Pno.

p sub. f ff mp

8^{vb-1} 8^{vb-1}

12

S

Pno.

mf

Go a-

16

S

Pno.

f

head!

ff mp

19

S

Pno.

mf **20** *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

What's in a What's in a name? in a name? in a

p sub.

f ff

22

S *ff* *fp*

name? I _____

Pno. *ff* *p sub.* *ff sub.*

27

S *f* *mp*

guess I'll be locked in - to _____

Pno. *mf*

32

S *p*

in - to in - to in - to

Pno. *p sub.* *mf*

First Fig

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Alex Tedrow (b. 1999)

♩ = 56

Soprano

Piano

f *mp* *pp*

Ped. ad lib.

8^{va}

4

S

pensive p **6** *mf*

My can - dle burns

(loco)

Pno.

mp *dim.* *pp* *sim.*

7

S

pp *p* *pp*

at both ends;

Pno.

pp *mp* *dim.* *pp* *sim.*

First Fig - Tedrow

10

S

p *mf*

It will not last the night;

Pno.

mp *f* *dim.* *p* *f*

3 3 3

8va

13

S

pp

14

(8va)

Pno.

pp *mp* *dim.* *pp* *sim.*

3 3 3

16

S

p *mf* *pp*

But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—

Pno.

3 5 3

Second Fig

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Alex Tedrow (b. 1999)

♩ = 126

facetious, whimsical with a slightly dark undertone

Soprano

mf Safe up - on the *p* Safe up - on the

Piano

mf

Ped. ad lib. (except where indicated)

4

S

5 *f* Safe up - on the sol - id rock the ug - ly hous - es stand:

Pno.

p *f*

8

S

pp

Pno.

mf *p*

(*Ped. according to slurs*)

10 *p* 12 *mf*

S
ah Safe up-on the sol-id rock the

Pno. *mf* *p* *fp* *mf*

sim. (Ped. off)

13 *p* *mf* *f*

S
ug - ly hous-es stand: Come and see my shin - ing pal - ace built up-on the sand!

Pno. *p* *mf*

(Ped. ad lib.)

16 *mp* *cresc.*

S
Safe up - on the sol - id

Pno. *f* *p* *mf*

(Ped. as before)

Thursday

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Alex Tedrow (b. 1999)

$\text{♩} = 84$
with a light swing feel

Soprano

Piano

p *mp* *pp* *p*

(Ped. ad lib.)

5

S

Pno.

mp *p* *mp*

10

S

Pno.

p *mf*

8vb

15 18 *mf*

S

Pno.

pp *p* *mp*

(loco)

And

20

S

if I loved you Wednes-day, Well, what is that to you?

Pno.

p *mp*

25 28 *pp* *p* *mf*

S

I do not love you Thurs - day

Pno.

p *mp* *p* *mf*

34

pp

30

S

So much is true.

Pno.

p

35

S

Pno.

f *mp* *pp*

42

41

S

Pno.

p *mp* *p* *mp*

To the Not Impossible Him

25

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Alex Tedrow (b. 1999)

$\text{♩} = 132$ ($\text{♪} = \text{♪}$)

Soprano

Piano

f p sub. *mf* *p*

5
witty *mp*

S

How shall I know, un -

Pno.

mf *p*

6

S

less I go To Cai-ro and Ca-thay,

Pno.

mf *p* *f*

9

S

Pno.

p *fp* *fp*

12

S

Pno.

13 *mp*

Wheth - er or not this bless - ed spot

mf *p* *mf*

15

S

Pno.

f *f p* *mf*

Is blest in eve - ry way? —

18 20

S

Pno.

f *p sub.* *mf p*

21

S

Pno.

pp *mf* *p* *mf*

8vb (loco)

25 27 *mf*

S

Pno.

Now it may be, the

p *mf* *p*

28

S *f*

flow-er for me Is this be-neath my nose;

Pno. *8va* (loco) *mf p* *pp* *f sub.*

31

S

Pno. *p* *fp* *f p*

34

S **35** *mf*

How shall I tell, un-less I smell

Pno. *mf* *p*

37

S

f

The Car - tha - gin - i - an rose?

Pno.

fp *f* *mf* *f cresc.*

40

S

43

Pno.

ff *pp*

44

S

Pno.

p