

THINGS TO DO
WHEN DEAD



EMILY GRECO



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THE POET'S PRESS

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EMILY GRECO

Before her death on April 2, 1972, on the week when she learned that she must go to stay in the hospital for bone cancer as a terminal case, Emily Greco telephoned a poet friend and with a cold anger in her voice said, "I am very angry; I had planned to do so much."

Emily Greco was indeed doing a great many things. She had already been in hospital and had prefigured her death in a dream poem of a wedding which had been planned and which she had been reluctant to go through with. In this fantasy sequence, the groom is represented as a strict tyrant of a husband who horrifies Emily with his unrelenting *machismo*. She refuses to marry him and decides to accept whatever regimen that might be necessary to maintain her freedom. As the poem ends, she is free, alive and thankful, for she knows who this "lord and master" really is; and since she does, she still feels a suspicion that all is not over between them. And so she watches the edge of a forest for a tall figure wearing a grotesque mask, sliding among the trees.

This is Emily Greco. This is a feminist, rebel enough in youth to enter the formidable pyramid structure of the Communist Party of the 1930's in order to escape the servility of a second generation Italian mother, who is neither "free" American nor "heroic" Calabrian like the staunch mother before her—who walked the vineyards with a gourd of

water to strengthen the younger and less enduring women who worked in them for the length of a long, parching day—the mother who had to drag her hedonistic daughter from Naples and aboard the crowded ship that brought two generations of her family to a Bronx tenement. All this is reflected in Ms. Greco's uncompleted novel, *There Is Fear In the Land*, which became too painful a realization of the true state of woman for her to finish.

This is the Emily Greco who was heard by the poets who attended open and featured readings in New York: mindful of an approaching death, yet active in courses at the New School, and willing to read in public about how she proposed to make her sojourns in the grave and Purgatory enjoyable: she will opt for Purgatory if she can share it with William Shakespeare and Rudolf Valentino.

Here is the work, then, of this doughty woman who dared the enslavement of sweat shop and Party structure in youth, for the pursuit of personal freedom, and who joked at the devil mask of death in middle age, again for her freedom to live. The courage of her poems, which find adventure in the life of a civil servant in New York, was an inspiration to all who knew her. This posthumous selection of her poems has awaited publication for several years since her death, and it is with great pride that it is now made available, through the continued support and faith of her friends through the long process of preparing this book.

Things To Do When Dead is a book for those of us who are yet alive. Some of us will feel all the more so after reading it.

Barbara A. Holland
New York, N. Y., March 1976

THINGS TO DO
WHEN DEAD

*THINGS
REMEMBERED*

*The wooden wheel lay on its side.
It is not needed.
The horse that drew that wagon
Died in the pasture,
Watching the Chevrolet truck backing out
Of the muddy drive.*

MEMORY

The lapse of time fades into newness
As the object attacks the inner eye.

Escarole leaves, brown-edged and torn;
Open pea-pods on the sidewalk, fallen
From the pushcarts, there lie—

No longer there, cleaned away from
The immigrants' City
Into a clean, sterile, stereotyped city
of soap-boxes.

Today for an instant they are real, and
The old voices, the scattered accents.

Playing hide-and-seek in the small bushes
In the small park, across the apartment house
Till dusk, and a mother
Calls from her kitchen window.

Dust raised from the jostled ground
Raises to the window with that mother,
Who left a dust rag in Italy
For a dust rag in the New World.

Desire in movement can be a note
In a long elegy sung by a questioning voice.

Now is nothing; at the moment nothing
is everywhere,

And for it, in celebration, in each day, we wear
Our skirts of fantasy's tweed,
Serviceable, yet longing for the life
Our elders hoped to lead,
Which we cannot, being other flesh, capture
In wine, screen or the bassoon's pure
Note in a large symphony
Of spattered sound.

ELEGY

I wish to write to my dead mother, asking
Her to explain to me, why she should advise
 others
And do nothing to help herself.

Her friend, for whom she painted pansies,
 remembers her well,
As well she may, not only for the pansies,
 but for the
Silver rosary she still uses for prayers.

Coney Island was sticky with the heat
 summers ago,
And shredded newspapers mixed thickly
 with the sand
And often stuck between your toes.

You sat there, damp from the heat, waiting
For us to run to the hot sun from the water,
Where we had been diving to see
How long we could stand on
Our heads on the sea's floor.

You sat there, patient stolid, thin, guarding
Bags of fruit and hard-boiled eggs for our lunch.
Back we moved, when the water's edge moved
 towards
Us, as the tide came in. When it rose high,
 we sat
Nearer the boardwalk, clustering closer to the
Shouting, wrestling groups.

As the day approached its end, at dinner-time,
Along with all the other families, we rose,
 sticky and
Sandy, our bathing suits still damp on us,
And listlessly, our thighs chafed from the
 damp, wool suits,

Rode home to prepare the evening dinner
For unpredictable patriarchs.

AT FIFTY-ONE

Each, looking at the same, sees differently.
In different moods, looking at the same thing,
Each sees different things.
Even I, looking at myself, across the room
At that same mirror
See a different face than

I saw two hours back:
Used, misused and gross,
The cheeks too broad, the lids too dropped,
The brows pendant.

Now, after talking silently to
 an adolescent dream,
The lips like a fairy-tale comma,
The brows a question,
The cheeks, jeweled age
The skin, opal-like, tinted with evening rose.

All lightly dusted with
 the childish veils of trust and hope.

A TALE

My grandfather was short;
Had a fiery mustache
And a stomach, at sixty.

When he was young,
He had a beard *and* a mustache,
Well oiled and well curled.

In the West, he caught the wind in a bucket.
In the North, his dolphin swam
 through the snow
And ate down huge gulps of it.

My grandfather would say,
"I cover all fields for hay,
"And my wife wears a bustle of mink."

He married his wife at eighteen.
(He fell in love with her picture.)
He had a girl in Abilene.

In politics he never delved.
He said, "I make my own liqueur
From red rose pollen."

He caught all this pollen
From the air during the season,
With a gold mesh butterfly net.

He dove into the net.
He dressed as a fish.
He came out at fifty.

At sixty, he took off his scales,
Looked at the moon, and said,
"My life is not lived to the full."

My grandmother who heard, said,
"You have lived half-full,
And I one-quarter."

Then they fell in each other's arms,
Reviewed each other's charms,
And left for Heavenly Acres.

His ghost comes down once a year
At Candlemass and sits in the park,
Collecting his tithe of acorns.

He says, through a medium:
"These acorns, well-toasted,
Are used, to pay rent in the sky."

UBI SUNT

or

It is a Childish Curiosity:

To know: Are they happy now?
Are they someplace they wish to be? My loves,
My friends, my admirees, my folk?

Gigetta, lissome, immigrant, married to an
anarchist—

I think of her, as at the time, admiring
her beauty

And myself a child, slowly savored,
Twisting the taste in my mouth,
the cinnamon-whipped *ricotta*.

Does she think of me, whom perhaps she
never thought of?

Is she happy now? In a world removed
from cameras?

Katherine McDonald, the star?

Many sticky summer afternoons we sat
in a movie house,

Silently listening to an out-of-key piano,
watching her

Swoon in a lover's embrace, then *THE END*.

The end, and my uncle took my
damp self

Into the puritan hot sun, and left Katherine
in her shadows.

Does she love me now? Is she in peace and at ease
With her easel, her plastilene, her rosary—
My mother—Has she forgotten sorrow, in a world
of color
And romance in Yucatan? Does she see us
and laugh?
Does she see us and laugh?

It is my childish curiosity, begging.

Does La Duse know, and would it matter
How when at 65, she projected her magic voice
In Ibsen words, at the old Metropolitan.
Then I loved into a world beyond
And I thought I was in a new kind of church,
Worshipping at a new altar. Is she happy now,
far from D'Annunzio?
I have long been curious.

Is he laughing at his Marine jokes, His red hair
honey in a new sun?
He laughingly accepted clients for relief— with
little questioning.
From his Princeton background, he still
recognized
The Depression as a crushing vise
And accepted as many as he could—and gave
dollars:
Laughing as he dictated and approved.
Does his strong voice carry gay notes, now?
William Beresford Shope, who loved me.
He came to work in shirt sleeves, walked like
a prince.

And sweet Lea, loving Martha Graham,
Always gentle, understanding without words.
She stopped dancing, suddenly, but left her baby
of one year, her creative effort.
Does she see, does she dance, does she still love—
Does she still smile, at me?

Are they happy now? Make them be.

It is my childish curiosity, wondering:
If there is a place they could be.

*THINGS
PRESENT*

*In the antique-shop window, the glass flowers
Bloom, in color combinations,
Forever caught in crystal paper-weights.*

*Silver peacocks preen forever.
The bare-bosomed marble maiden
Pensively droops her polished head.*

*Your beauty glimmers in the dark room
Now. You are twenty-five.
Within a decade, you will shine less,
Your face less firm:
 The full moon slightly shadowed
 As in beginning eclipses.*

*A block from the antique shops, lies
 the Park.
The magnolia flowers are beaming brides,
 White within, pink without.*

*The white tulle of apple trees' bloom
Rustles delicately to the seductive breeze.*

*You are none of these.
Neither daughter of the moon,
Nor kin of the magnolias.
Your maiden-scent is free,
 Not imprisoned forever
 in crystal or silver.*

ILLEGAL ENTRY

I found them there, the old, the mad, the lone
 Pushing against my doors
 Opening them by their weight.
A yellow-toothed, gray tweed old woman
 chanted:
"You don't understand, he needs this room,
John Carter has no place to go."

His belongings were already there.
He had changed the placing of my bed.
His boots were against the wall. The ripe
 tomato was gone
From my window-sill—broken the pot
 of marigolds/
Her hat hid her straggly hair.

I complained to the management.
They replied: "You don't understand.
 John Carter has no place to go."

I protested, "It's my room. They are my
 belongings.
You must put John Carter elsewhere."
The manager shrugged. His radio played
 La Vie en Rose.

They all looked at me, stooping,
 Gray coats, white thin hair,
 Gray skin, pressing, pressing forward.

"He has no place to go."

FROM 4 TO 5 P.M., SATURDAY, 12/14/68

I love a neighborhood
Where red-flowered umbrellas cross the street,
Lowered, coming towards you from the
Chinese restaurant bar window.

 Across the street, *Art Center Barber Shop*
 in pink neon lights.

I have an appointment at six.
Now, drinking gin and tonic
 (Having left my brassiere at Blackton's
 for repairs)

I wait for time to pass.

A green bus has just streaked by.
My drink has impaired my vision.
People are standing in the doorway
Of the Medical Arts Building.

The sidewalk looks so mirrory
Lacquered with rain.
 Barton's bonbonniere. What'll I get
 the children for Christmas?
 A sweater, candy, a yo-yo?

Onassis gave John-John a neon yo-yo.

About finished with my drink,
I watch a little girl carry *two*
fur coats from the cloak room — to whom?

The woman at the end opens a patent
 leather purse.
The handsome man in the center plays with
his swizzle stick.

I pay the Chinese waiter my check.

IT

It loosely crawls about the slush trying to scoot
away from the sewer opening.

It leaps before the snow-removal truck, catches
a pigeon and eats a peanut, throwing the
husk away.

It evanesces with the wind and street light.

It is a slinky rose on a pedestal, with a twining
stem.

It revolves around a metal circle, dialing a
number which makes a dial tone sometimes.

It is an ugly, impersonal, uninspiring word.

It bursts open to a sun-ray, and closes
to a moon-ray.

It lies, white and inanimate, until the blue blood
of ink gives it pulsing life.

It leaps up the tree, breaks off a twig,
molests a leaf and opens up an acorn.

It leaves some part of the nut inside
for the sparrow.

It twists the bedclothes, blots up perspiration,
and flies out the window, returning to the
ceiling below.

It meets each day with doubting, each noon with
ennui, each nightfall with relief and

It hopes the silver rings around the stars will melt
into opals and diamonds and spring up from
the walks.

It flies in the face of adversity, lingers in the
paths of hesitation and perpetually pores
into pools of pride.

It is nothing, and, therefore, everything.

It is derived from the Id.

It, it, it, it, it.

THE FROG IN THE BACKYARD

The frog in the backyard
Croaks in his uncertain baritone.
It is night. In the dark he calls
At the lighted window
Two stories up.

The frog in the backyard
Is doubtful.
He wonders, he groans:
Is it his fate, to lose his mate
To another, in the room way up high.

The frog in the backyard
Knows: his kind needs wet.
How can they meet, away from the pond,
In a dry room—no pool—
Away from him, up there?

The frog in the backyard
Leaps. For himself he croaks
A tune of three notes, over and over
Again, and so hypnotizes himself
Away from the light in the window, above.

The frog in the backyard
Thinks of the speckles on his coat:
Yellow. He sings his tune
And thinks, *yellow, yellow, yellow*
Like the light in the window, high up.

The frog in the backyard
Croaks wetly in the dew. He squats
And he thinks, tomorrow must come
And he will decide then, what to do
About a mate, different from the one upstairs.

**FROM A BESTIARY:
NO. 3: THE MOTHERTWIT**

The Mothertwit chirps.
However, it is a mammal, resembling
a moose.

It does not moo; it chirps.
The female is very fond of its male
Children, who never grow to maturity.
Thus, there are no grown male mothertwits.

The Mothertwit invariably gives birth
through
Parthenogenesis.

It chirps to its sons, "Marry, marry, marry
but not just yet."

The male Mothertwit never talks back except on
the first day of puberty, when it says, "Shut up!"
and drops dead.

In spite of it all, Mothertwits are increasing.

No one knows why. Perhaps they are not shy

MY DAY

Get up with the lemon morning.
Breakfast on casaba melon and fig newtons;
Read the paper scanningly: things are as bad as
yesterday.

Look out the window; the pavement is wet:
The radio predicts snow.

I brush my teeth with Crest-Colgate
And take my morning tranquilizer.
(I always expect a rough day; people are
an abrasive—seldom a pacifier.)

I pass by a school with pickets: *Contracts
Must Be Honored!*
But the school is open: *School for the Deaf.*

This is a rainy morning. I have an umbrella,
black—no rubbers.
On the bus I read the morning mail—
news from Italy.
They ask for news. What can I invent?

An acrid, jolting cup of coffee before work.
*Good morning, Good morning, Good
morning.*

So many yellow forms to be made out, piled like
Dried buttercups, stilettos with blue ink.

Today will pass rapidly—Tonight is an art
opening or two.

"Not another hamburger for lunch?" "Yes,
your wife is right,

It's a hard world to bring up children in."

At 4, through the rain to the Embassy.

*From Victor Hugo to Jean Cocteau: Drawings
by French writers.*

French words through English words—Scotch
and champagne.

*Les francaises n'aime point les étrangers,
en général—*

*Pas seulement les americains, mais tous
les étrangers.*

"When can I see you again?" "Whenever you
wish."

A cup of topaz tea, a warm room, white
electric light.

No snow plowed today; no pumpkins harvested,
neither yellow nor orange.

Mt. Blanc again not climbed. The radio:

"Fair and warmer tomorrow."

THINGS TO DO IN THE OFFICE

Take a ball-point pen from your neighbor's desk.

Put Modigliani nudes over the boss's desk.

Refrain from asking the boss a question that
will make him think.

When you must make a decision, go to the
cafeteria for coffee.

Burn some matches.

Type a personal letter on the secretary's
electric machine.

Write a birthday card to someone in Geneva.

Call up Carnegie Hall.

Write a report and interrupt it to go to the
washroom.

Sharpen your pencil.

Pretend to listen to your neighbor discussing her
son's broken engagement.

Discuss the religious implications of Medicaid.

Arrange piles of forms and envelopes, small and
No. 10 in your desk drawers.

Sip a miniature flask of scotch.

Call up Carnegie Hall.

Consider what the guitar mass is doing to
Gregorian chants.

Dust the desk. Move the philodendron closer to
the cactus,
for better nature relations.

Comb your hair, dust your shoes,
pare your nails.

Call up Carnegie Hall and ask the program.

Wonder if LSD would improve your feelings
towards the office.

THANK YOU

I have something to say.

Sometimes I feel low and alone.
And you help make it so.
I don't sleep well, after I see you.
Thank you so much.

You talk to me of ulcers.
You yawn (I see your teeth) when I
 mention mine.
You clean your nails when I smile.
You offer "Take a taxi" when you know
 I'm broke.

I mention the *Spoon River Anthology*.
You tell me the price of celery knobs.
And I feel like Miniver Cheevy.
Sometimes I feel low and alone.
Thank you so much.

I loved someone once.
I forget who.
Why don't I remember?
You tell me
How wonderful you are. How clever,
I don't interrupt.

Someone pays your rent.
You collect your dividends, your bonuses.
You tell me of the parties you give,
The dinners.
I listen: Why wasn't I invited?
I'm your friend. No?
You know I live with myself.

You're too tired and rushed
for my metaphors.
I listen to sterile spasms for years.

He said, "She's not so young,
She's at least 25."
He's at least 65.

Thank you so much.
I feel alone with your help.
Your symbiotic ego saps its comfort
On the docile solitary
Who listen, thinking of warmth
In Kublai Khan
In Rembrandt's Christ

In "The Emperor of Ice Cream"
In Johnny Cash, Gauguin's puppies
And forget you're there.
Are you there, anyhow?

A stranger met me and
kissed me on the cheek.
I like him better than you.
Thank you very much.

GRAY

Dirty snow piled against city curbs; shadows on the water touched with dirty green beneath an East River Bridge; silver strands of metal stretching, curving downwards and upwards sustaining the bridge; the flickering of automobile tops as the sunless February day makes them like mirrors in their flight across the bridge's yellow-gray way; the white blue-tinged gray of pigeons open tails, as in mass flight they soar five stories high, with their darker-purple to blacker-gray outspread wings and thrusting pointed heads; the air-gray sound of their fanning wings in the iron-gray sky, in the February sky. / The aluminum gray of a crumpled typewriter cover, with black peeping from its inner folds. Gray showing through the outer rim of lipsticked mouths in the dust-gathering gray wind. Gray is like the hair almost wholly white, or lacquered like black hair turning white; Gray is the underside of an African violet leaf, and of many coins.

Gray is the color of darkening hope and ebbing life. Dark gray is the color of rushing death. It is the rustiness of a squirrel's coat, warm coals of his tail.

PIONEERING

The *Pioneer Moon* came over from Belgium
In a storm. Somewhat battered, docked on
W. 47 St.

My friend, Jean, was on it,
Accompanying his friend, Camus, the artist.

They were at the art show.
I smoked Belgian cigarettes, *Basta*,
And was given Jean's address, in Charleroi.

I shall go to Charleroi,
I shall learn Walloon.

Jean never married, he said.
But, *Il y en a quelques unes*, dressing in red,
En Belgique.

I shall dress in red
And go to Charleroi.

In between sips of champagne
I offered to show the main
sights to Jean: Lincoln Center, Rockefeller
Center, U.N. Plaza.

But he leaves at *onze heures*,
Jeudi, for *Mexique*.

Jean, between puffs
of *Basta*,
Invited me to Charleroi and Bruges
and will call me tomorrow
to see a triptych, bought for a
Million, at the Cloisters.

I shall not go to work tomorrow.

THE CLEANING WOMAN

Pray to St. Stanislaus.
The night at
 60 East 42nd Street,
 hungry vacuum cleaner,
 reluctant mop.

Far from the potato fields,
Far from the milch cow.

In the law office
the secretary rests on the green, leather armchair
on her overtime.

 Alone, the bosses gone—no voices brassing.

Building of many floors:
 a restaurant, shops, people rushing.
 Tonight at 6:30 P.M. hums
 a stillness.

The water bucket echoes as it is pulled along
 the hall,

On the floor a dark full moon.

Now the dust rag, the dust broom, gray fluff.
The charwoman jingles her keys. Empty the trash.
"Miss, you all right?"

 (That paper had been corrected three times.)

The thick calf muscle in cotton stockings.

The broad arms broadened, covered
 by the green sweater.

Thoughtless,

"My son, he going college,
Not be stupid like me. God is good.
I pray to St. Stanislaus."

Eyes, black as shoe buttons on shoes long ago.
Whose?
Strong warmth behind the glass, maybe.

Click, click, the elevators sing.
Slow after 6 P.M.

The seventeenth floor.
A silver light through the blind might
explode
the soft roar of trucks.

I only stayed because I didn't want to
go no where.

Pray to St. Stanislaus? He died at seventeen.

A silver light on wax floors.
She asks, "You go home, Miss? Everybody
go home?"

The moon is strong for many things.

*PORTENTS OF
THINGS TO COME*

*Life has a strange store of surprises.
[Not bespoken by the twelve red roses
in the turquoise jar.]*

*Tissue cut, a deep scar—an altered life,
already too altered.
Chocolate is paper. The oak loses its leaves.*

*The keepsakes of a stolen childhood.
Memory:
in the wildflowers of empty lots.*

*A soft voice, a gentle laugh,
Cause forgetfulness for moments.
After the anesthesia fades,
A friend's solicitous offered drink
Becomes a new will.*

*Twelve roses in a blue jar.
Home again and the walls open wide.
The pain and the scar recede.
I lie in bed, an empty mind
Asking for sensation, movement.*

The leaf tissue asks to speak.

*on the horizon the lavender clouds
Grow umbrella pines, floating.*

MAGNOLIAS BLOOMING IN PRINCETON

White on the inside—pink-veined on the outside:
The youthful magnolia petal-cups thirst up
 to the sky.
The pink-filled branches reach up, grasp the air
And hold it,
 greedily drinking.

The mature blossoms, open, dress the
Trees like snow-filled rose windows
 In cathedrals for Primavera.

This spring is full of goodbyes to other springs.
Aching, one recalls the promise of gone times:
Rustling expectations, white inside, pink-veined
 in hope:
Ash-rimmed.

 The branches dancing, one walks beneath
 these trees,
 Remembering the first white-pink
 encounter as
 In a dream,
 Part exulting, part weeping.

Blood-red was expected triumph, white and pink
 the culmination.
A doll is white and pink.
 The college youths, pausing
 under the trees—
 Do they wonder, do they believe
The seasonal miracle in the exchange between
 the branches and the petals?

The petals say: "So sad to die?"
The branches say: "Good to live long
 and see many springs."

1971/1972

I lie on this bridal-white hospital bed.
My gown, St. Luke's muslin.
My wedding is with a grinning death mask
Waiting, uninvited, at the foot of this cool
nuptial couch.
I don't see. He is too black; fades in the air.
He is my unwanted spouse.
I am indifferent to him to myself.

It is a long wedding.
I postpone the consummation.
I cannot come: there are no
Nerves in my unresponding body.
No warmth for the ritual.
Some regrets for forgotten yesterdays.

My breath is shallow, wet,
Wet as the water in my three paper cups.
My desire only for demerol's love shots,
For a doctor's hopeful smile.

I am so empty of thoughts, dreams, fear.
Almost I see his grinning, triumphant mask.
I neither greet nor spurn.
I wait for rescue, for a lance
To lean on, to point.

There are smiles, gently curving
on a wall brazen,
I look and hunger for voices.

I am ridden with fury
Too strong to feel.
Why ask me to think?
I gasp a wish to the gentle doctor:
"Can I go back to work in March?"

No, I did not. But, in vertigo, I
Learned to walk a painful step.
The grinning mask slowly turned
A haughty head. My wedding
feast dissolved into a
Wizard/witch's insipid potage.

Was it, after all, St. Anthony, the intravenous,
A watchful Jehovah?

Mozart/Milhaud today in a
woodland Woodstock grove
Gives me words for fearful hatred
of an expectant hooded mask.

FEAR

Let it not wind around you—
 Split it in spots.
 It is cold and hard as steel.

The eyes across know fear, too.

A grizzled tongue scratches; move away.
There are 47 varieties, each one cold and hard.

It can swallow you.
But listen to the notes in Bill's
voices.

Each note cuts a groove in the iron belt.

A coral ring, a coral ring.
The "clank" of a broken bell—ringing
from a Mexican bell tower.
Laughing, a strand breaks.

MEMORIAL DAY — 1972

What is Paul's number? I want to call him.
I did not think to, before.
"Oh, he died last September."

My consciousness looks at leafy trees
In Gramercy Park, the high railed fence,
The brown sparrow pecks in the grass.

The war dead lie quiet in all their graves.
Their souls stir in the green of the leaves
Of those trees, talking through the wind.
They may whisper, "Don't,"

To that boy on the tricycle,
Four years old on the black gravel
Red, white and blue sweater.

Jack died last March. He had fought
 in World War II. Suddenly.
He never wore a scarlet poppy.
They don't grow in Gramercy Park today.

A yellow taxi skips by, empty.

The young man, lithe, his eyes wide,
 tremulous,
Carrying his City College books.
 Into rifles, emptied bullets.

Let's have the green.

THINGS TO DO WHEN DEAD

- Haunt the dreams of my friends,
especially the critical ones.
- Lie in the casket and listen
to mourning words.
- Rise up and rebel if the services
are not sung.
- Try not to say, "It's too late for that now."
Listen to the rain seep through
the earth and drape the coffin wetly.
- Listen to the grass pushing up above me.
Listen to the worms boring through the wood.
Wonder, *How could it happen to me?*
- Plan to write a threatening letter
to the doctor who said, "Everything's going
to be fine."
- Try to investigate the possibility of
reincarnating
as a mushroom.
- Send a message to mother in
St. Raymond's Cemetery, asking
"What do I do next?"
- Be surprised to find I have
a soul and not know what to do with it.
- Be avant garde and not wear chains
when I walk out of the grave.
- Find out if my dead relatives
are still telling the same anecdotes.
- Be sure to cause morning sickness to my
ex-husband.
- Try to con St. Peter into allowing
me to visit Purgatory.
- Regret all those prayers I did not say to
gain indulgences.
- Find ways to make my friends feel guilty
and pray for me.

Strike up optimistic conversations with my
fellow-lodgers in the plot and
consider how closely it all resembles hotel living,
except for the hot running water.
Ask St. Peter if it's true there are many
popes in Purgatory and what the status
symbols there are.

If Shakespeare and Rudolph Valentino
are in Purgatory, consider advisability
of visitng there.

Chute through air spaces in the sky and billow
out like a cloud, and fall like rain
on the sod below.

