THE DAILY BREAD

The Magnificat of the Beloved



How to Die Well

The Last Things

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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Death, Judgment, Purgatory, Heaven, and Hell

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INTRODUCTION

The Truths That Give Life Its Weight

A woman can spend a lifetime avoiding the thought of her own death, treating it as something too dark to consider, and in doing so lose the very truth that would give her life its weight and clarity. For the Last Things, death, judgment, heaven, purgatory, and hell, are not morbid subjects to be shunned but clarifying truths that reveal what life is for, and a woman who has thought carefully about her death is a woman who has thought carefully about her life, about what she is giving herself to and whether the direction of her days is pointed where she intends. To live well, a woman must know how to die well, and to know how to die well she must understand the Last Things, the truths about what comes at the end that give everything before it its proper weight.

This book treats the Last Things, the four last realities every human person will face, together with the doctrine of the resurrection and the preparation for a holy death. It will consider death as the passage rather than the enemy; how to prepare for a holy death; the particular judgment that meets each soul; heaven as the Beatific Vision, the fulfillment of every human longing; purgatory as the final purification and a doctrine of mercy; hell as a real possibility and the affirmation of human freedom; and the resurrection of the body at the end of time. The aim is not to frighten but to clarify, to give a woman the truths about her end that will reorder and deepen the whole of her life.

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. — Psalm 90:12

The Scripture asks God to teach us to number our days, to be mindful of the shortness of life, so that we may gain a heart of wisdom, and this is the purpose of contemplating the Last Things, not morbid preoccupation but the wisdom that comes from living in the light of the end. This book will help a woman number her days wisely by understanding what lies at their end: death and judgment, heaven and purgatory and hell, and the resurrection of the body. These are not truths to be feared but truths to be faced, for the woman who has faced her death and the eternity beyond it is freed to live her present days with clarity, purpose, and peace, her heart made wise by the honest contemplation of her end.

CHAPTER ONE

Death

Not the Enemy but the Passage

Death comes to every person, and the Catholic faith views it not merely as an end to be dreaded but as a passage, the doorway through which a soul passes from this life to eternity. Understanding the Catholic theology of death reveals how a woman can face her own mortality not with despair but with the hope that Christ has transformed even death.

It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment. — Hebrews 9:27

The Reality of Death

Death is a certain reality that every person must face, the appointed end of earthly life that no one escapes, and the faith asks a woman to face it honestly. Death is the one certainty of every human life, appointed for all, the end of earthly existence that no one can avoid, and the Catholic faith does not shrink from this reality but faces it honestly, for a woman who refuses to think about her death lives in a kind of illusion, while one who faces its certainty gains clarity, so that acknowledging the reality of death, that she too will die and that her days are numbered, is the beginning of wisdom about life. This means a woman faces the reality of her own death honestly rather than avoiding the thought, accepting that she will die and letting that certainty clarify her living, so that she does not hide from death but looks at it with the eyes of faith. The woman who faces the reality of death gains clarity about life, numbering her days with wisdom. The reality of death is the certain end every person must face, the appointed close of earthly life that the faith asks a woman to acknowledge honestly.

Death as the Fruit of Sin, Transformed by Christ

Death entered the world through sin, yet Christ has transformed it, so that for the believer death is no longer mere punishment but a passage made new by His own death and resurrection. The faith teaches that death entered the world through sin, a consequence of the fall rather than part of God's original design, yet it also teaches that Christ has transformed death through His own death and resurrection, so that what was the wage of sin has become, for the believer, a passage into life, death conquered and changed by Christ into the gateway to eternity, no longer a mere punishment but a transformed reality. This means a woman understands death in two lights, as the fruit of sin and as a reality transformed by Christ, so that she neither pretends death is natural and good in itself nor despairs of it, but sees it as conquered and made new by Christ, a passage rather than a final defeat. The woman who understands death transformed by Christ sees it no longer as mere punishment but as a passage made new. Death as the fruit of sin, transformed by Christ, is the faith's twofold view, death a consequence of the fall yet conquered and made a passage into life by Christ.

The Christian Hope in the Face of Death

Because of Christ's victory, a woman can face death with hope rather than despair, trusting that death is not the end but the passage to eternal life with God. The Christian faces death not with the despair of those who have no hope but with a genuine hope grounded in Christ's resurrection, for because Christ has conquered death and risen, the believer trusts that death is not annihilation but a passage to eternal life, that those who die in Christ will live, so that a woman can face her own death and the deaths of those she loves with real hope, grief tempered by the sure confidence of resurrection. This means a woman faces death with Christian hope, trusting in Christ's victory over it, so that she does not approach her own death or mourn her loved ones as one without hope but with the confidence that death is a passage to life for those who die in the Lord. The woman who holds the Christian hope faces death with confidence, trusting it is the passage to eternal life. The Christian hope in the face of death is grounded in Christ's victory, so that a woman trusts death is not the end but the passage to eternal life with God.

CHAPTER TWO

Preparing for a Holy Death

The Most Clarifying Act of Maturity

To die well is not a matter of chance but of preparation, and a woman can prepare for a holy death throughout her life, not as a morbid preoccupation but as the most clarifying act of spiritual maturity available to her. Understanding how to prepare for a holy death shows a woman how to make her whole life a readiness for her end.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. — Philippians 1:21

Dying Well as the Fruit of Living Well

A holy death is prepared by a holy life, for the way a woman dies flows largely from the way she has lived, so that preparing to die well means living well now. The best preparation for a holy death is a holy life, for dying well is largely the fruit of living well, a woman who has lived in friendship with God, kept close to the sacraments, and grown in virtue being prepared to meet death in grace, so that she does not wait until her deathbed to prepare but makes her whole life a preparation, dying well the natural fruit of a life lived toward God. This means a woman prepares for a holy death chiefly by living a holy life now, in grace and friendship with God, so that she is always ready, her daily faithfulness the surest preparation for her end rather than a last-minute scramble. The

woman who understands dying well as the fruit of living well prepares for her death by living faithfully now. Dying well as the fruit of living well means that a holy death is prepared by a holy life, so that preparing to die well is a matter of living well now.

The Graces of a Holy Death

The Church surrounds death with particular graces, the last sacraments and prayers that strengthen a soul for its passage, and a woman does well to desire and seek them. The Church provides particular graces for the hour of death, the sacraments given to the dying, Confession, the Eucharist as Viaticum, food for the journey, and the Anointing of the Sick, together with the prayers of the Church for the dying, so that a soul is strengthened and prepared for its passage, and a woman does well to desire these graces for herself and to see that her dying loved ones receive them, not neglecting the Church's provision for the hour of death. This means a woman values and seeks the graces the Church gives for death, desiring the last sacraments and prayers for herself and ensuring them for those she loves, so that she and they are strengthened by these graces for the passage rather than deprived of them. The woman who understands the graces of a holy death seeks the last sacraments and prayers for herself and her loved ones. The graces of a holy death are the last sacraments and prayers the Church gives to strengthen a soul for its passage, which a woman does well to desire and seek.

Keeping Death Before Your Eyes

A woman prepares for death by keeping it before her eyes, remembering her mortality not morbidly but wisely, so that the thought of her end clarifies and orders her life. A traditional and healthy spiritual practice is to keep death before one's eyes, remembering one's mortality, not as a morbid obsession but as a clarifying wisdom, for a woman who remembers that she will die lives more deliberately, holds the things of this world more loosely, and keeps her priorities ordered toward eternity, so that keeping death before her eyes is a preparation that shapes how she lives, the thought of her end a source of wisdom and freedom. This means a woman keeps her mortality in mind as a spiritual practice, letting the remembrance of death clarify her values and order her life toward God, so that she lives more wisely and freely for having faced her end. The woman who keeps death before her eyes lives more deliberately, her priorities ordered toward eternity. Keeping death before your eyes is a preparation for a holy death, remembering one's mortality wisely so that the thought of the end clarifies and orders life.

CHAPTER THREE

The Particular Judgment

Standing Before God at Death

At the moment of death, each soul meets God in the particular judgment, an immediate judgment in which the whole of a life stands transparent before Him and its eternal destiny is determined. Understanding the particular judgment reveals what it means to stand before God at death and why it gives weight to every choice in life.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body. — 2 Corinthians 5:10

The Immediate Judgment at Death

At the moment of death each soul is judged immediately by God, its eternal destiny determined at once rather than awaiting the end of time. The faith teaches that at the moment of death each soul undergoes the particular judgment, an immediate judgment by God in which the eternal destiny of the soul is determined at once, so that a person does not sleep in unconsciousness until the end of the world but meets God immediately at death and receives at once the judgment on her life, her eternal lot, heaven, purgatory, or hell, decided in that moment. This means a woman understands that she will be judged immediately at her death, her eternal destiny determined at once in the particular judgment rather than deferred, so that she grasps the immediacy of what follows death, the meeting with God that comes at once. The woman who understands the immediate judgment at death knows her eternal destiny is determined the moment she dies. The immediate judgment at death is the particular judgment, each soul judged by God at once and its eternal destiny determined in that moment.

A Life Made Transparent

In the particular judgment, the whole of a woman's life stands transparent before God, nothing hidden, so that she is known completely as she truly is. In the particular judgment, a woman's entire life stands transparent before God, every thought, word, deed, and omission known fully, nothing hidden or forgotten, so that she is seen completely as she truly is, her whole life open before the God who knows her, the judgment made on the full and transparent truth of her life rather than on appearances or self-deception. This means a woman understands that in the judgment her whole life will be transparent to God, nothing concealed, so that she lives now in the knowledge that all she does is seen and will be known fully, her life open before the One who will judge it in truth. The woman who understands her life made transparent lives knowing

all is seen by God who will judge in truth. A life made transparent is what the particular judgment reveals, the whole of a woman's life open before God, nothing hidden, so that she is known completely as she truly is.

Why Judgment Gives Life Weight

The certainty of judgment gives weight to every choice a woman makes, for knowing she will answer for her life makes her present actions matter eternally. The reality of the particular judgment gives weight and seriousness to a woman's life, for knowing that she will one day stand before God and give an account of all she has done makes her present choices matter eternally, lifting them above triviality, so that the judgment is not a distant threat but a present clarifier, investing her daily actions with eternal significance and urging her to live rightly now. This means a woman lets the reality of judgment give weight to her life, understanding that her choices matter because she will answer for them, so that she lives seriously and purposefully in the knowledge of the judgment to come rather than as if her actions were without consequence. The woman who understands why judgment gives life weight lives seriously, her choices invested with eternal significance. Why judgment gives life weight is that the certainty of answering to God makes every choice matter eternally, lifting a woman's actions above triviality.

CHAPTER FOUR

Heaven

The Beatific Vision

Heaven is not the sentimental picture of clouds and harps but the Beatific Vision, the full and final union with God, the fulfillment of every longing the human heart has ever known. Understanding heaven as the Beatific Vision reveals the true goal of a woman's life and the destiny toward which all her desires have always pointed.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. — 1 John 3:2

Not Clouds and Harps but Union with God

Heaven is not the trivial image of clouds and harps but the full and final union with God Himself, the soul brought into His very presence and life. Heaven is often imagined in trivial terms, clouds, harps, endless rest, but its reality is infinitely greater, for heaven is

the full and final union with God Himself, the soul admitted into the very presence and life of God, sharing in His own blessedness, so that the true picture of heaven is not a pleasant place but a Person, God Himself, possessed and enjoyed forever, the soul united to the source of all goodness and joy. This means a woman understands heaven not as a sentimental scene but as union with God, the soul brought into His presence and life, so that she sees her final goal as God Himself rather than a pleasant afterlife, the possession of God the substance of heaven. The woman who understands heaven as union with God sees her final goal as God Himself, possessed and enjoyed forever. Not clouds and harps but union with God is what heaven truly is, the soul brought into the very presence and life of God.

The Fulfillment of Every Longing

Heaven fulfills every longing the human heart has ever known, for all a woman's desires have secretly pointed toward God, who alone can satisfy them completely. Every desire the human heart has ever known, for love, for beauty, for truth, for joy, for belonging, has secretly been a desire for God, and heaven is the fulfillment of them all, for in the Beatific Vision a woman finds the complete and final satisfaction of every longing, the restless heart at last at rest in God who is the true object of all its seeking, so that heaven answers the deepest hungers that nothing in this life could fill. This means a woman understands heaven as the fulfillment of all her longings, the satisfaction in God of every desire she has ever felt, so that she sees her deepest hungers as pointers toward the God who alone can fill them, heaven the answer to the longing of her heart. The woman who understands heaven as the fulfillment of every longing sees her desires pointing toward the God who alone satisfies. The fulfillment of every longing is what heaven offers, the complete satisfaction in God of every desire the human heart has ever known.

The Communion of Saints

Heaven is not a solitary bliss but a communion, the whole company of the redeemed united in God, so that a woman's hope includes reunion and fellowship in eternal love. Heaven is not an isolated or solitary joy but a communion, the fellowship of all the redeemed and the angels united together in God, the communion of saints brought to its fullness, so that a woman's heavenly hope includes not only union with God but reunion and eternal fellowship with all the blessed, the whole company of the saved joined in love, heaven a shared and social blessedness rather than a lonely one. This means a woman understands heaven as a communion, the fellowship of all the redeemed in God, so that her hope includes reunion with those she has loved in the Lord and fellowship with all the saints, heaven a shared joy in the communion of saints. The woman who understands the communion of saints sees heaven as a shared blessedness, the whole

company of the redeemed united in God. The communion of saints is part of the joy of heaven, the fellowship of all the redeemed united in God, so that a woman's hope includes reunion and eternal fellowship in love.

CHAPTER FIVE

Purgatory

The Final Purification

Purgatory is not a second chance or a place of punishment but a final purification, the cleansing by which a soul destined for heaven is made perfectly ready to behold God, a doctrine of mercy rather than fear. Understanding purgatory reveals the mercy of God in preparing souls for heaven and the bond of prayer between the living and the dead.

If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. — 1 Corinthians 3:15

A Purification, Not a Second Chance

Purgatory is a final purification of souls already destined for heaven, not a second chance for the damned nor a middle destiny, but the cleansing that readies the saved for God. Purgatory is often misunderstood, but the Church teaches it is a final purification of those who die in God's grace yet still imperfectly purified, a cleansing that prepares them for the holiness of heaven, so that purgatory is not a second chance for those who rejected God, nor a third destiny alongside heaven and hell, but the purification of souls already saved and bound for heaven, made ready through it to enter God's presence. This means a woman understands purgatory rightly as a purification of the saved, not a reprieve for the damned, so that she sees it as the final cleansing that prepares a soul destined for heaven to behold God, not an uncertain middle state but a sure stage on the way to glory. The woman who understands purgatory as a purification sees it as the final cleansing of souls already bound for heaven. A purification, not a second chance, purgatory is the final cleansing of souls destined for heaven, making the saved perfectly ready to behold God.

A Doctrine of Mercy

Purgatory is a doctrine of mercy rather than punishment, for it is God's merciful provision to make souls ready for the perfect holiness of heaven that they could not yet bear. Far from being a harsh or fearful teaching, purgatory is a doctrine of God's mercy, for it provides for those who die loving God but still imperfect a way to be made ready for

heaven, cleansed of the lingering effects of sin and the attachments that would make them unable to bear the perfect holiness of God's presence, so that purgatory expresses God's mercy in preparing imperfect souls for glory rather than His severity. This means a woman understands purgatory as a mercy, God's provision for making the imperfect ready for heaven, so that she sees it not with dread but with gratitude, a merciful cleansing that fits a soul to behold God, the kindness of God perfecting what was left incomplete. The woman who understands purgatory as a doctrine of mercy sees it as God's kind provision for making souls ready for heaven. A doctrine of mercy is what purgatory is, God's merciful provision to make imperfect souls ready for the perfect holiness of heaven.

Praying for the Dead

The doctrine of purgatory binds the living to the dead in prayer, for a woman can help the souls being purified through her prayers, Masses, and sacrifices offered for them. Because the souls in purgatory are being prepared for heaven and can be helped by the prayers of the living, the Church encourages prayer for the dead, offering Masses, prayers, and sacrifices for the souls undergoing purification, so that the living remain bound in love to the dead, able to assist them, the communion of saints extending across death as the living pray for those being purified, a bond of charity that death does not sever. This means a woman prays for the dead, offering her prayers and Masses for the souls in purgatory, so that she exercises her love for those who have died by helping them toward heaven, maintaining the bond of charity across death through her intercession. The woman who prays for the dead helps the souls in purgatory, keeping the bond of love across death. Praying for the dead is the fruit of the doctrine of purgatory, the living helping the souls being purified through prayers, Masses, and sacrifices offered for them.

CHAPTER SIX

Hell

The Possibility We Dare Not Deny

Hell is the hardest of the Last Things to contemplate, yet the Church honestly refuses to pretend it away, teaching that hell is a real possibility, the permanent consequence of a soul's free and final rejection of God. Understanding hell reveals not a contradiction of God's love but the ultimate affirmation of human freedom.

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. — Matthew 25:46

The Honest Reality of Hell

The Church honestly teaches the reality of hell, refusing to pretend it away, for Christ Himself spoke of it plainly, and a woman does well to face this truth soberly. Though hell is painful to contemplate, the Church does not pretend it away but honestly teaches its reality, for Christ Himself spoke of it clearly and often, warning of eternal loss, so that the faith affirms hell as a real possibility, a genuine and permanent state of separation from God, and a woman does well to face this sobering truth honestly rather than dismissing it, taking seriously the reality that Christ took seriously. This means a woman faces the reality of hell soberly, neither dwelling on it morbidly nor denying it, but accepting the honest teaching of the Church and of Christ that hell is real, so that she takes seriously the gravity of the choice between God and its rejection. The woman who faces the honest reality of hell takes seriously the sobering truth that Christ Himself taught. The honest reality of hell is the Church's refusal to pretend it away, teaching that hell is a real possibility as Christ Himself plainly warned.

The Consequence of Final Rejection

Hell is not a punishment God imposes on the unwilling but the consequence of a soul's own free and final rejection of God, the self-chosen separation of one who refuses His love to the end. Hell is best understood not as an arbitrary punishment God inflicts but as the consequence of a creature's free and final rejection of God, for God does not force Himself on anyone, and a soul that definitively and finally refuses His love excludes itself from the union with God that is heaven, so that hell is in a real sense self-chosen, the permanent state of one who has freely and finally turned away from God, the ratification of a soul's own definitive choice. This means a woman understands hell as the consequence of final rejection rather than an imposed cruelty, the self-exclusion of a soul that refuses God to the end, so that she sees hell as the honoring of a terrible freedom rather than a contradiction of God's goodness. The woman who understands hell as the consequence of final rejection sees it as the self-chosen separation of one who refuses God. The consequence of final rejection is what hell is, not a punishment God imposes but the self-chosen separation of a soul that freely and finally refuses His love.

The Affirmation of Freedom and the Reach of Mercy

Hell affirms the reality of human freedom, that a woman's choices truly matter, yet the Church declares no one to be in hell and holds out the hope of God's mercy to all. The existence of hell, far from contradicting God's love, affirms the reality of human freedom, that a woman's choices genuinely matter and that love cannot be forced, yet the Church, while affirming hell's reality, never declares any particular person to be in it, and holds

out the hope of God's mercy to all, calling every soul to repentance, so that the doctrine of hell stands alongside the boundless reach of God's mercy, the one affirming freedom, the other offering hope. This means a woman understands hell as the affirmation of her freedom and the seriousness of her choices, while never despairing of God's mercy for anyone, so that she takes the reality of hell seriously as a call to choose God, while trusting in the mercy that is offered to all and declaring no one lost. The woman who understands the affirmation of freedom and the reach of mercy takes her choices seriously while trusting God's mercy. The affirmation of freedom and the reach of mercy stand together, hell affirming that a woman's choices matter while the Church declares no one lost and holds out God's mercy to all.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Resurrection of the Body

Why Matter Matters to God

The Last Things do not end with the soul's judgment, for the faith proclaims the resurrection of the body at the end of time, when the dead will rise and the whole person, body and soul, will share in eternity. Understanding the resurrection of the body reveals why matter matters to God and how the whole human person is destined for glory.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the dead will be raised imperishable. — 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

The General Judgment

At the end of time comes the general judgment, when Christ returns and the whole human race is judged openly, the justice of God made manifest before all. Beyond the particular judgment of each soul at death, the faith teaches a general judgment at the end of time, when Christ will return in glory and the whole human race will be judged openly, the full meaning and justice of every life made manifest before all, God's providence and justice vindicated publicly, so that history is brought to its completion in this final judgment where all is revealed and set right. This means a woman understands that beyond her particular judgment there is a general judgment at the end of time, when Christ returns and all is made manifest, so that she looks toward the completion of history in this final public vindication of God's justice. The woman who understands the general judgment looks toward the end of time when Christ returns and all is made

manifest. The general judgment comes at the end of time, when Christ returns and the whole human race is judged openly, the justice of God made manifest before all.

The Raising of the Body

At the end, the bodies of the dead will be raised and reunited with their souls, so that the whole person, not the soul alone, will share in eternal destiny. The faith proclaims the resurrection of the body, that at the end of time the bodies of all the dead will be raised and reunited with their souls, so that the whole human person, body and soul together, will share in eternal destiny, the just rising to glorified and immortal bodies and sharing in Christ's resurrection, the human person restored to wholeness, for the soul alone is not the complete person, and salvation embraces the body too. This means a woman understands that her body, not only her soul, is destined for resurrection, so that she looks forward to the raising of the body at the end of time, the whole person made whole and glorified, her eternal hope embracing her body as well as her soul. The woman who understands the raising of the body looks to the resurrection of the whole person at the end of time. The raising of the body is the resurrection the faith proclaims, the bodies of the dead raised and reunited with their souls, so that the whole person shares in eternal destiny.

Why Matter Matters to God

The resurrection of the body reveals that matter matters to God, that the physical world and the human body are not to be discarded but redeemed, destined to share in the glory of eternity. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body reveals that matter matters to God, that He does not despise the physical but values it, for He created the body good, took a body Himself in the Incarnation, and destines the body for resurrection and glory, so that the material world and the human body are not things to be escaped or discarded but realities to be redeemed, the body a part of the person God intends to save and glorify, matter itself caught up in the hope of redemption. This means a woman understands that her body and the physical world matter to God, destined not for discarding but for redemption, so that she honors her body and the material creation as good and destined for glory, seeing in the resurrection God's valuing of all He has made. The woman who understands why matter matters to God honors her body and the created world as destined for redemption and glory. Why matter matters to God is revealed in the resurrection of the body, the physical world and the human body not discarded but redeemed, destined to share in the glory of eternity.

CONCLUSION

Live in the Light of Your End

The woman who avoided the thought of her death now knows the truths that give life its weight. We have seen that death is not the enemy but the passage, transformed by Christ and faced with hope; that a holy death is prepared by a holy life and the graces the Church gives; that the particular judgment meets each soul at death, the whole life transparent before God; that heaven is the Beatific Vision, union with God and the fulfillment of every longing in the communion of saints; that purgatory is a final purification and a doctrine of mercy, binding the living to the dead in prayer; that hell is a real possibility, the self-chosen consequence of final rejection, which affirms human freedom even as the Church holds out mercy to all; and that at the end the body will be raised, for matter matters to God.

Running through all of it is a single purpose: not to frighten but to clarify. The Last Things are not morbid but clarifying, for a woman who has faced her death and the eternity beyond it is freed to live her present days with purpose, peace, and urgency, knowing that her time is finite and her destiny eternal.

So live in the light of your end. Number your days, and let the knowledge of your death make you wise. Prepare for a holy death by a holy life, and keep eternity before your eyes. Let the certainty of judgment give weight to your choices, and let the hope of heaven draw your heart toward God, the fulfillment of every longing. Trust the mercy of purgatory, pray for your dead, take the reality of hell seriously as the affirmation of your freedom, and hope in the resurrection of your body, for God will redeem the whole of what He has made. The woman who has made peace with her own death is unafraid, and an unafraid woman is freed to live, and to love, and to be sent. Live in the light of your end, and you will find that it teaches you, at last, how to live.

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