



The Last Days of Dorothy Parker: The Extraordinary Lives of Dorothy Parker and Lillian Hellman and How Death Can Be Hell on Friendship (A Penguin Classics Special)

Marion Meade

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Dorothy Parker biographer Marion Meade shares insight into the last days in the life of Dorothy Parker—the horrible and the hilarious—including her colorful friendship with Lillian Hellman, and the bizarre afterlife of Parker’s remains from a file cabinet on Wall Street to a small burial site by the NAACP office in Baltimore.

The Volney was a dignified residence hotel, favored by older women and their dogs, on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. Dorothy Parker died there, of a heart attack, on June 7, 1967. She was seventy-three and had been famous for almost half a century. As befitted a much-loved humorist, poet, and storyteller, the *New York Times* announced her exit in a front-page obituary. This was followed by a star-studded memorial service, also reported in the paper, which was attended by some 150 of her friends and admirers. More than twenty years later, on October 20, 1988, Parker was buried in Baltimore, in a memorial garden at the national headquarters of the NAACP. Why did it take more than two decades for Dorothy Parker to get a decent burial? What accounts for her macabre Edgar Allan Poe–style ending, arguably one of the most ghoulish in modern literary history? And just what happened to her during those twenty-one years?

Dorothy Parker biographer Marion Meade draws from new research to portray Parker in her last years and last days, with an emphasis on her posthumous existence. The story also features Parker’s enduring friendship of over thirty years with playwright and screenwriter Lillian Hellman, along with other notable figures in Parker’s circle, including Dashiell Hammett and John O’Hara. Always riotous and occasionally ghastly, *The Last Days* is utterly and completely Dorothy Parker.

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