

**THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE DAMNED**

An Original Screenplay

By

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LAUGHTER. The CRASH of WAVES. WHOOPS of DELIGHT.

FADE IN:

THE BLACKNESS TAKES SHAPE, RACKING BACK AND FORTH INTO FOCUS:

A cliffside, through binoculars. The gaze moves down the jagged scape, as if searching.

It stops. TWO SMALL FIGURES creep into view, clad in bathing suits. They are 10 or 12 feet above the water, their DISTANT VOICES just audible over the WIND and WATER. The Man, SCOTT FITZGERALD, 26, pauses, looks up:

SCOTT

Zelda! This is high enough!

But the Woman, already a body's length ahead, climbs on: swift, effortless, animal-like: this is ZELDA FITZGERALD, 24.

ZELDA

(without pausing)

There *is* no such thing!

Scott cannot help but smile. After a beat, he follows in her wake, but with a considerably healthier sense of caution.

CLOSE ON A HAND

As it grips the rock.

CLOSE ON A FOOT

As toes clench to get purchase.

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF EYES

Bright blue, as they squeeze shut with the strain of effort.

CLOSE ON A MOUTH

The bottom lip tucked beneath front teeth with concentration.

Masculine or feminine? The line between them here is thin.

GERALD'S VOICE

(near)

Sara, Dear? Take a look: should we be alarmed?

EXT. LA GAROUPE BEACH - CAP D'ANTIBES - AFTERNOON

**SUPER: FRENCH RIVIERA, JUNE 1924**

A small GATHERING of MEN and WOMEN gaze toward the cliffs. In the b.g., at the water's edge, a CLUTCH of CHILDREN build a sand castle.

CONTINUED:

GERALD MURPHY, 36, very trim and slightly effete, passes a pair of binoculars to his wife, SARA, 40ish. Sara raises the binoculars to her eyes:

SARA

And if we were?

Gerald shrugs: "You're right. Nothing to be done." Sara glances at her watch.

SARA (CONT'D)

It's only five o'clock. Scott doesn't take his first drink before six.

GERALD

I was referring to *her*.

SARA

Zelda? Oh no. She's been at this for a week now.

Sara flashes Gerald an intimate and sardonic grin...

The Murphys are the nucleus of this GROUP that is watching the progress of the Couple on the cliffs: young and glamorous, bronzed bodies lambent under the Mediterranean sun.

Among these are faces we will see again: CHILDREN, ages 4-8, the Murphys and their FRIENDS, and a distinct GROUP of FIVE YOUNG NAVAL AVIATORS.

For the moment, their expressions range from aghast to awe-struck, along with their AD-LIBBED COMMENTARY.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - SAME

Zelda scrambles from rock to rock, footing to footing, nimble as a cat: UP AND UP AND UP. Her face beams with the challenge of it.

ON THE MAN - FROM ABOVE

He has found his rhythm now, climbing to keep pace with her.

ZELDA

Just another few feet!

The Man pauses, looks up at her with his bright blue eyes: he is beautiful. Fair haired, with a face sculpted as if by the hands of gods: this is F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, 26.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MOMENTS LATER

Zelda and Scott stand side by side on a small outcropping of rock along the cliff face, 30 feet above the water.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Oh *Goofy*! We are going to be so happy!

CONTINUED:

She reaches for his hand.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

So happy away from the things that  
almost got us but couldn't quite --  
because we were too smart for them!

Her voice is raspy, and conspires with a slightly Southern cadence to make her speech altogether enchanting -- Siren-like.

CLOSE ON THEIR HANDS

As their fingers weave together, so tightly knit it's hard to say whose hand is whose...

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - ZELDA & SCOTT - LONG LENS

Zelda gives him one ebullient glance, then faces the ocean.

EXT. LA GAROUPE BEACH - SAME

The cluster of Friends, watching.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - SAME

They are in motion -- taking a synchronous leap off the cliff, chasing the sun and the sea... Both flush with belief in the promise of their own bright spark.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A GIRL'S YOUTHFUL FACE

Rising from the depths of a swimming pool, it shatters the surface of the clear blue water, excessively buoyant and spirited: this is Zelda at 17...

The same physical splendor, the same striking eyes, lit from within by an uncanny blend of wisdom, mischief, and passionate detachment.

But there is something else, something her face at 24 will lose: innocence.

**SUPER: MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA JULY, 1917**

CLOSE ON THE RUNGS OF A LADDER

RISING with Zelda's hands and feet as they take to the rungs like a monkey's limbs... Gripping, releasing, and rising with unflinching rhythm.

Higher. Higher. Higher still...

INT. HUNTINGTON COLLEGE SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Zelda at 17 and the only girl among a crew of YOUNG MEN, all enamored of her. She stands at the end of a diving board, that is the highest of three, at 20 feet.

ZELDA

Do you dare me?!

Up on the high dive, she is a sight: skin tanned and flawless, high cheekbones, golden hair, those gray-green eyes.

Behind her, the wall is plastered with U.S. ARMY RECRUITMENT POSTERS... YOUNG MEN alternately HECKLE and GOAD her to take the plunge, among them JOHN SELLERS, JR., athletic, confident, a bit older than the others:

JOHN

For dinner and a movie!

Zelda pulls a face: "You've got to be kidding."

ZELDA

For *that* -- I wouldn't jump off a curb!

And she begins to head back toward the ladder.

JOHN

Okay! Okay. How 'bout an invitation to the Country Club dance?

Zelda stops, turns on the board and walks back to the edge.

ZELDA

Next week -- ?

JOHN

That's right.

ZELDA

Well -- I'm not 18 til the 24th -- They won't let me in --

JOHN

You take that belly-flop, and let me worry 'bout the technicalities.

The other YOUNG MEN give WHISTLES and HOOTS to spur them on.

ZELDA

John-Sellers-Junior -- since when have you seen me take a leap I couldn't manage?

With that she flies off the board -- a winged creature, all grace and control -- arcing toward the water, and slicing into it with a noiseless finish.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE TIP OF A FOUNTAIN PEN

The handwriting is graceful, educated, and feminine. We FOLLOW the nib of the pen:

*"I don't want to live -- I want to love first, and live incidentally."*

WOMAN (V.O.)

Zelda!

EXT. SAYRE HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Zelda is perched on the high branch of a large tree in the front yard: her back against the trunk, her legs dangling off to either side, she resembles nothing less than a languid leopard in the afternoon sun.

Her focus is on a small black diary propped against her knees, in which she is writing feverishly.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Zelda Sayre!

Only now does Zelda hear the voice. She turns to see her mother, MINNIE SAYRE, 57, round and matronly, standing on the porch. She beckons Zelda with an ivory, silk chiffon dress that she is waving about on a hanger.

MINNIE

What about this? For the dance next week?

Zelda squints at the dress...

INT. SEWING ROOM - SAYRE HOME - MONTGOMERY - EARLY EVENING

The dress hangs on a mannequin, and Zelda is at work on it with a pair of shears, cutting and snipping away with an intuitive sense of purpose.

ON the RHYTHMIC SOUND of a SEWING MACHINE.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE HEAD OF A NEEDLE

Making tracks as nimble fingers push the fabric along.

CLOSE ON ZELDA

Her focus so complete, lost in the creative zone, unaware that she is biting down hard on her lower lip with her front teeth.

CUT TO:

## ZELDA'S MULTIPLE REFLECTIONS - MORNING

In the mirror, as she models the finished work for herself.

The once-matronly dress has been transformed: the three-quarter sleeves are shorn to the shoulders; the buttoned up collar drapes low and loose; the hem has been raised to just above the calf; a small slit on one side stops above the knee. The piece has an air of being before its time.

Zelda gives herself the once over and then launches into perfectly executed, balletic pirouette.

ON THE BLURRED IMAGE OF ZELDA: spinning like a top.

ON the BEAT as a BAND plays Eubie Blake's CHARLESTON RAG.

## INT. COUNTRY CLUB BALL ROOM - SAME

Zelda dances a fast fox-trot with Sellers, distinguishing herself in sea of YOUNG WOMEN in pastel Organza, and YOUNG MEN in Black Tie or Officers' Uniforms.

Her grace is unfaltering, her smile radiant, her hands are bare (other girls wear gloves), and her dress -- a Zelda Sayre Original -- is the only one like it in the room (more freedom of movement). Together, the effect is dazzling.

JOHN

So how many times do I have to ask?

ZELDA

If I tell you that -- it'll take all the fun out of it --

JOHN

Wish I could say you were wrong --

ZELDA

Which is exactly why I don't want to marry in the first place --

As she says this, her eyes fix on something across the room: it is F. Scott Fitzgerald, barely 20, blond and radiant with fine, aristocratic bones. He is staring right at her, lifts his glass of champagne to her.

Zelda, unflinching, stares back at him, and cocks her head slightly, with a smile.

Then John turns, so that her gaze is swept to the other side of the room. But she is the better dancer, so when she moves to turn again, John doesn't resist her.

The room moves past her in a blur of noise and color, then stops: Scott comes into sharp focus. He smiles -- and the room is brighter for it -- aware that her maneuver had less to do with the dance than with him.

CONTINUED:

John gazes down at Zelda, smitten. But the spell is broken when someone taps gently on John's shoulder. John steps away, and in his place steps Scott.

ON ZELDA & SCOTT

We see them now face to face, luminous: fair haired, with profiles like twin ivory cameos, eyes fixed on the other and enchanted by what they see -- an infinite reflection of themselves.

The dynamic between them has shifted: **he** leads, NOT her. Far from straining to keep up with her, his sense of movement and grace are equal to hers.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Slow as honey on a cold day.

SCOTT

Things that move slow live long. Like the tortoise.

ZELDA

That might make us incompatible. I'm most definitely a hare. And they don't live long at all.

SCOTT

Surely longer in captivity --

ZELDA

Then I wouldn't call that living --  
(beat)

Anyway -- I don't think I'd want you to see me grow old and ugly -- you'll be a beautiful old man -- all romantic and dreamy -- and I'll be wrinkled and dull like your tortoise...

(beat)

I guess we'll just have to die at thirty!

The statement alone is unsettling; her exuberance even more so -- the way a child wants to go for a picnic...

Scott LAUGHS out loud, until he's interrupted by a tap on the shoulder: John is cutting in:

Zelda's body moves along with Sellars', but her eyes are on Scott...

Who cuts in on John, much to Zelda's delight.

SCOTT

So are you going to tell me your name, or do I have to guess?

His speech is Northern, clipped and polished...

CONTINUED: (2)

ZELDA

I just knew you weren't bred on biscuits --

He smiles... She notices the college ring on his finger.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

A Princeton boy... You stationed here at Sheridan?

SCOTT

Transferred from Camp Gordon about four weeks ago.

ZELDA

So you've been here a *month*...?

He nods.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Well. Then you know exactly who I am -- And if you don't, you should go right back to Princeton and demand a refund! I mean if you were famous all over the world, I'd know a little something about you too --

SCOTT

Give me some time: I may be yet...

Zelda raises her eyebrows in teasing skepticism. And ANOTHER BEAU -- PERRY ADAIR, 21, and very college prep -- cuts in.

ON ZELDA & PERRY: as he takes her for a very practiced spin... Nonetheless, she glances around the room; her eyes lite on Scott...

ON ZELDA & SCOTT: he cuts in on Perry, gives her a most graceful turn.

ZELDA

And what will you be famous for...?

SCOTT

My novels...

He's apparently serious -- almost earnest -- and it catches her off guard... She gives him a curious look.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I just finished one. My first. It's sitting on an editor's desk at Scribner's even as we speak...

Scott gazes at her, visibly awestruck...

ZELDA

What?

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOTT

It's just -- Well the women I write...  
They're just like you. Or you're like  
them...

This appeals to Zelda.

ZELDA

And what am I like exactly...?

SCOTT

Smart. Smarter than any man who wants  
you. More courageous too. And just a  
little audacious.

ZELDA

Alright then. Does it have a title?

SCOTT

"The Romantic Egoist."

She lets out a lush, deep throated LAUGH.

Scott is about to add something when a THIRD BEAU, PETE  
BONNER, 19, steps in to take his place.

ON ZELDA & PETE: they spin away from Scott, who calls out  
after them:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

My name is Scott! Francis Scott Key  
Fitzgerald!

Zelda, dancing with Pete, calls back over his shoulder:

ZELDA

I hardly need a name! You've just told  
me everything I'll ever really need to  
know about you...!

Bold, frank, and utterly spontaneous: her lines are cast.

And Scott, spellbound as she floats and flashes past him on  
the dance floor, is hooked by every last one.

INT. SAYRE HOME - SITTING ROOM - DUSK

Zelda, CLOTHILDE (TILDE), 20, Zelda's older sister, and  
Minnie are there, awaiting their escorts. Zelda is in another  
dress, more elaborate and sophisticated than the first.

MINNIE

Francis Scott Fitzgerald...?

Minnie gestures to Zelda, **who is leaning back in her chair,**  
to sit up straight.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

(sitting up)

-- It's Scott Key Fitzgerald -- Related somehow to the Mr. Key who wrote the "Star Spangled Banner..."

MINNIE

A Unionist...

TILDE

Mama, the song was written in 1814.

MINNIE

Anyway -- "Fitzgerald" -- that's Irish... He's Catholic --

Zelda, reflexively, shifts in her seat and crosses her legs.

ZELDA

I haven't any idea what he is, and neither do you --

Minnie gestures for Zelda to un-cross her legs...

MINNIE

the Irish Catholic have Whiskey for breakfast, lunch, and --

ZELDA

Mama -- You haven't even met the man!

MINNIE

Some things don't need a meeting for --

ZELDA

He's known me a week and he's gone to all sorts of trouble to throw me a party. And John Sellars, Jr. ? The boy didn't even recall my birthday --

A KNOCK on the door cuts short the conversation. Minnie moves to answer it, and there stands Scott in all his blond and lissom glory, a bountiful bouquet in hand.

Minnie's immediate expression suggests even she cannot deny his nearly Dionysian glow. Zelda flashes her mother a look: "I told you so..."

CLOSE ON A BIRTHDAY CAKE

A thing frothy and ornate, bedecked with 18 candles. In the b.g. an enthusiastic rendition of HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB DINING ROOM - EVENING

A long, banquet style table, swathed in linen and flowers, and the remains of a feast.

CONTINUED:

Eighteen birthday candles are the only light in the room.

Zelda is at the head of the table, in front of the cake. She chews girlishly on her bottom lip.

Zelda looks down the table, laying eyes on the dozen MALE ADMIRERS, their faces variously ripe with hope, expectation, fear, longing...

During this Scott alone, is moving around the table, topping off people's drinks: a gentleman.

Zelda watches him, as he moves from guest to guest, then leans to the GIRLFRIEND next to her:

ZELDA

(under her breath)

Just look at him... It's like there's some heavenly support beneath those shoulder blades...

(beat)

And that smile like a secret: you know -- that all he'd have to do is lift his feet and he'd be flying, but chooses to walk as a concession to the rest of us...

The Girlfriend rolls her eyes, then smiles... The SONG winds down, giving way to the CHANT: "WISH, WISH, WISH."

GIRLFRIEND

You better make that wish before one of those boys has a set of kittens...

Zelda beams, then closes her eyes, and the room goes still. She leans into the candlelight, takes a deep breath, and on the sound of ZELDA'S EXHALE...

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB LAWN - AFTERNOON

Zelda hangs upside down from the branch of a giant Sycamore. Scott is stretched out on the grass just beneath her, reading what appears to be Zelda's little black diary...

He rolls over now on his back and looks up at her.

SCOTT

You don't like women very much, do you?

Zelda, still upsidedown, shrugs: "I don't know..."

SCOTT (CONT'D)

In this journal you've mentioned only two...

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

Now that I think about it, I suppose I've always been inclined toward masculinity... It's such a cheery atmosphere boys radiate...

She pulls herself up so that she is now seated on the branch.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Though men think I'm purely decorative, and they're just fools for not knowing better, and I love being rather unfathomable... Still -- here I am with the brains to do everything -- well maybe not everything -- And yet the only thing that people really want from me -- what they expect -- is a good marriage...

SCOTT

So what *do* you want?

ZELDA

I know what I *don't* want --

SCOTT

(as if reading her  
mind)

"To be one of those women who crawl on their bellies through colorless marriages... What grub worms they are! No... Mine -- if I marry -- is going to be outstanding... "

She swings, and releases herself from the branch, such that she's straddling Scott when she lands on her feet.

ZELDA

(prompting)

"It can't be the setting..."

SCOTT

(quoting)

"It's going to be the performance. The live, lovely, glamorous performance."

ZELDA

You've read the whole thing?

She plops down so that she is now seated across Scott's torso.

SCOTT

Over and over... You write just the way you speak. And I could listen to you speak for the rest of my life and not be bored...

Her eyes shine in the high beam of his praise.

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Even gave me an idea for a short story.

ZELDA

Well then keep it. If it'll help you even just a little bit. Take it with you when you ship out. I can sort of keep you company on the boat ride over.

(beat)

Tell me you'll keep it...

Then much to Scott's surprise, Zelda bends forward, planting her lips firmly on his... After a beat, he is as engaged in the kiss as she is...

But they are interrupted by the SOUND of MALE VOICES in the b.g. Zelda quickly looks up and waves.

John, Pete, and a couple of other YOUNG MEN, are tooling about in a golf cart...

JOHN

Want to join us?

ZELDA

Not today! How 'bout next week!?

The cart-full of Young Men is passing beside them now, as they head toward the green.

They head off, and Zelda looks back down at Scott, ready to pick up where they left off. But he is not. He's sitting up now, his face suddenly tight with annoyance.

SCOTT

I don't believe it...

Zelda is thrown by the shift in his manner... Scott rises, and begins to walk down the slope toward the road.

ZELDA

(following)

You're not going all jealous on me.

(beat)

Oh good God -- I've known these boys all my life!

Scott walks on... Zelda yells after him:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Francis Scott Fitzgerald! I've kissed thousands of boys, and I intend to kiss thousands more. But what makes you think I'd stop loving you?

There it is: she's dared to say it first... And yet -- she is also unafraid of -- even stirred by -- the harsh and naked truth. And he's drawn to that despite himself. He stops now, and stares up at her uncomprehending... After a beat:

CONTINUED: (3)

ZELDA (CONT'D)

If I were clever, I'd lie about it. But I'd rather be stupid than craven. I know very well I'm self-regarding, and a child-woman of the worst kind -- but I just refuse to be a coward.

Zelda watches as Scott takes this in. He is falling in love despite himself. Then he turns to head down the rest of the hill alone.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. FRENCH RIVIERA - 1924 - DAY

ON ZELDA: floating, falling, flashing past...

ON SCOTT: tumbling in mid air, beaming with the thrill of the fall...

ZELDA & SCOTT - WIDER

As they plunge into the sea: SWOOSH!

EXT. LA GAROUPE BEACH - CANNES - SAME

Sara, Gerald, and the Others have moved en-masse toward the water's edge.

UNDERWATER - SAME

Zelda and Scott, fingers still entwined, gaze at one another beneath the surface, in the wordless, twilit calm...

Then they swim for the light above.

EXT. BEACH (LA GAROUPE) - CANNES - SAME

The Group CHEERS as Zelda and Scott break through the water's surface, waving and LAUGHING...

INT. HOTEL DU CAP - BAR - NIGHT

Zelda, Gerald, Sara, and OTHERS, now familiar from the beach, are milling about, nursing drinks.

Scott is on a chair, CLINKING his glass with a fork... The whole room goes SILENT, and turns to him...

SCOTT

(clearing his throat)

Good evening everyone!

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

My wife and I are looking for something to do this evening -- and being new in town, I thought I might impose upon you all to suggest a pastime -- something lively and engaging --

There a few who react with disdain for the vulgar way in which Scott interrupted conversation. But by and large, the reactions range from mildly amused to utterly intrigued...

There is one set who are particularly charmed by the display: a GROUP of FIVE French NAVAL AVIATORS, in uniform. They too were on the beach earlier in the afternoon.

Scott scopes the room for any takers.

MAN (O.S.)

(French accent)

I'm having maybe an idea --

It's ONE of the Aviators, 26, tall, athletic, and deeply tanned, he is a French echo of the boys in Montgomery. His very bearing is confidence incarnate, laced with a dash of European chivalry -- altogether, an irresistible brew.

We will come to know him as EDOUARD JOZAN.

JOZAN

Is anyone having a deck of cards?

Scott's expression says he likes this man -- someone game... Scott glances at Zelda... Zelda shrugs: "Why not?"

ON the BEAT of BIX BIEDERBECKE'S *"Fidgety Feet."* (2/1924):

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF FEMININE LIPS

As they near an Ace of Hearts: with a sharp inhale, card and lips come together, the one adhering to the other through suction.

Then whipping about, the card is brought around to a second pair of lips -- these masculine -- which "sucks" the card away from the first pair...

A SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS

-- A WIDE shot of the GROUP in the BAR, standing in a circle, as the card is passed from one person to the next, mouth to mouth, until Gerald drops the card and steps out of the circle.

-- CLOSE ON Scott as he brings the card around to Zelda.

-- Who brings the card around to Sara.

-- Who brings the card around to Jozan...

-- Who brings the card around to Scott...

CONTINUED:

-- Who drops it...

-- ON ZELDA who brings the card around to Sara.

-- Who brings the card around to NAVAL AVIATOR.

-- Who brings the card around to Zelda.

-- Who brings the card around to Jozan, who holds the card between their lips for just a beat too long...

CUT TO:

INT. MONTGOMERY COUNTRY CLUB - COCKTAIL HOUR

**SUPER: NOVEMBER 18, 1918**

The American Flags, and the wilted Victory banners tell us that the town has been celebrating since Armistice Day.

Zelda is on the crowded dance floor with one of her many Beaux. He twirls her about, and as he does so, something catches her eye across the room.

Amid the CROWD at the bar, is an OFFICER, medium height and build, with a head of sleek blond hair. His face is turned away.

Zelda continues to dance, but is now distracted, searching the sea of people...

The BLOND OFFICER, his drink in hand, steps away from the bar, and is now obscured from view. Zelda stops dancing, cranes her neck to catch sight of that BLOND HAIR...

PARTNER

Zelda?

She is wading into the thicket of dancers to cross the room.

Zelda replies over her shoulder:

ZELDA

I'll only be a minute...

And she disappears into the human tide.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ON ZELDA: with mounting urgency, she makes her way across the room.

Then a glimpse: that shock of Blond hair...

She darts to catch up with it, zig-zagging her way through the crush of People. As she steps clear of the Crowd:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Scott!

The Blond Officer turns in her direction; her face falls.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
 (blushing, flustered)  
 Sorry... I thought... A different Scott  
 is all... *My* Scott...

She turns away embarrassed, and disappointed. She takes one step and all but collides with *her* Scott...

And, in an unusual display of vulnerability, she lets out a spontaneous YELP of DELIGHT, throws herself around him, buries her face in his neck.

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
 (muffled)  
 God I missed you like a thing gone wild!

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - NIGHT

Zelda and Scott walk hand in hand across the lawn.

SCOTT  
 Never even left the continent... It was  
 all over before I got my orders... So  
 the only wound I've got to show for my  
 trouble is the one to my ego...

Zelda's unclear:

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
 They rejected the novel... They said:  
 "The story does not culminate in  
 anything as it must to justify the  
 readers' interest."

He removes a small flask from the pocket on the inside of his jacket. He offers it to Zelda.

ZELDA  
 They're scared...

She says this without a trace of irony; and Scott adores her for it... She takes a swig from the flask, and hands it back. He takes a longer draught...

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
 People are scared of things they can't  
 understand.

Scott is less buoyant than we've seen him. There's a trace of fear and vulnerability that's showing itself here.

SCOTT  
 I'm thinking about writing for a  
 newspaper -- I could do that --

ZELDA  
 Oh no -- you can't! I mean I'm sure you  
*can*, but -- You can't give up!

CONTINUED:

The urgency in her voice is laced with self-interest: he has to succeed to fulfill her dreams...

SCOTT

Or maybe advertising --

ZELDA

What happened to the man who was going to write the Great American Novel -- ?

SCOTT

(sheepish)

Chastened a bit. Maybe even humbled.

ZELDA

Say that again, and keep a straight face.

Scott laughs despite himself.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

You're not a coward Scott... You just can't be a coward...

After a beat, he nods...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Alright then... Now come with me...

EXT. MADAM HELEN ST. CLAIR'S - NIGHT

Zelda climbs the iron ladder on the back wall of the building like she was born to it. She beckons Scott to follow.

SCOTT

What are we -- !?

Zelda HUSHES him, gestures to the ladder. He obliges, but is less agile than she...

EXT. ROOFTOP - SAME

Zelda lies down flat, and peers over the edge. Scott joins her. Below, MEN enter and exit the establishment.

SCOTT

(musing)

We're on the roof of a whore house --

(to Zelda)

Do you care to tell me what we're doing on the roof of a whore house?

ZELDA

"Beckoning the Muse..."

He marvels at her as she retrieves a flashlight from what is clearly a cache of items from previous outings. Then she turns the "high beam" on the in- and out-going CLIENTELE...

CONTINUED:

Immediately the MEN scatter in a panic, YELLING EXPLETIVES in the general direction of the roof...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Lizzy Calhoun's daddy. He's a lawyer...  
Mrs. Calhoun runs the Country Club  
Charity Drive... Oh -- And there's her  
little brother!

SCOTT

Marry me Zelda...

ZELDA

You don't mean that -- There's my high  
school civics teacher!

SCOTT

Then call my bluff --

Zelda looks at him now...

MADAM ST. HELEN (O.S.)

Ten seconds, or I'll send up my boys to  
throw you down!

Zelda and Scott look down to see MADAM ST. HELEN, 55, and a faded, porcine beauty caked in make up.

Zelda cuts the flash light, and tosses it into the corner, then scrambles down the back of the building, with Scott just behind her.

ON THE GROUND

They take off at a run...

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB GOLF COURSE - A BIT LATER

The lawn shimmers, undulant and steely blue beneath the full moon. The air is thick with the scent of Magnolias, and the last of summer. And they are alone.

They catch their breath, slowing from a jog to a walk...  
Scott is more winded than Zelda...

ZELDA

I could say "Yes" -- but it's more  
complicated than that --

SCOTT

Very simple: one syllable --

Scott leans against the trunk of a lone Magnolia tree, the moonlight bouncing off its large waxy leaves.

ZELDA

How will you earn a living -- ?

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

So you don't believe in my work --

ZELDA

The question is do you -- ?

SCOTT

I can make money if that's what you want --

ZELDA

It's *not* what I want -- All the material things are nothing. I'd just hate to live a sordid existence because you'd soon love me less and less --

Scott makes no denial.

SCOTT

I'll go to New York. I'll get a job as a journalist. And --

ZELDA

(a finger on his lips)  
You'll stop talking... And then you'll kiss me...

Zelda faces him, just a foot away.

SCOTT

You are one shameless Thoroughbred.

ZELDA

And Gofo -- you wouldn't like me if I were anything less.

SCOTT

"Gofo -- ?"

ZELDA

Well you are, just a bit, of a goof I mean. Beneath all that Italian Herringbone and those cap-toed Oxfords. Which is not to say you don't take a certain pleasure in making trouble. I know an exhibitionist when I see one --

SCOTT

It takes one --

ZELDA

Which is exactly why I know just how different we are: you put on a show because you want to be admired --

SCOTT

And you -- ?

CONTINUED: (2)

ZELDA

-- Because I don't give a damn what people think.

He gives her a long look, then nods just enough to let her know that he knows she's right. Then he kisses her... And she returns it in kind.

There is an awkward hunger in the way these two come together: if he's more experienced than she, it's not by much. He pauses now, pulls back:

SCOTT

Right now? Here -- on the grass?

There's trepidation in his voice, as if he might be put off by the idea of having sex on the ground...

ZELDA

It beats some downtown motel with a concierge who won't think twice about taking a tip from the local gossip columnist. Think of how much nicer it'll be to remember the grass and the moonlight tripping over your sweet face.

SCOTT

And yours...

And she kisses him again, drawing him in. His hands fumble with the buttons of her linen jacket. Her hands work along with his at the buttons of the back of her skirt.

Her jacket and skirt fall to the ground revealing the silken half-slip and garter-held stockings beneath...

Now she poses her leg, dancer like, around his; his hands work up the inside of her slip. Then he crouches to lift her, and cradling her, he lays her gently down on the grass.

There is an authenticity to the way they grope and grab at one another, and in that late summer grass, try to disappear into one another...

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB GOLF COURSE - LATER

Zelda and Scott, happily spent, lie head to head, staring up at the sky.

ZELDA

I feel like you had me ordered -- and I was delivered to you -- to be worn. I want you to wear me like a watch charm, or a button hole bouquet -- to the world. And then, when we're alone, I want to help -- to know that you can't do anything without me.

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

As soon as I get to New York, I'll start looking for a place...

ZELDA

I wish New York were a little tiny town, so I could imagine how it'll be. I haven't the remotest idea...

SCOTT

New York is... Unfathomable. A little like you.

ZELDA

Well then we might just get along. And I'll find something to do. I can dance. I always feel so self-reliant when I'm dancing.

She rolls over on her stomach now, looking down at Scott.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Or even better: you'll create the version of me that is everything I couldn't possibly be... That's what I'll do with myself: I'll be your fictional girl...

And as if she's just said the magic words, Scott reaches into his pocket, and produces a small box.

SCOTT

Maybe you'd be my real girl too?

He offers her the box. Zelda opens it to reveal a beautiful, "antique" engagement ring. And the sight of it unravels all that bravado; her mask falls, her eyes brim wet.

Scott takes some small satisfaction in seeing this. He removes the ring from the box.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

May I?

And Zelda extends the ring finger of her left hand, tucks her bottom lip beneath her teeth, and bites down hard.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

The soft, undulant shapes and colors of the South give way to straight lines, shades of gray, and bustling streets.

In the biting cold, Scott huddles into his coat as he walks down the street. His face is ashen, his eyes bleary from lack of sleep. He comes to a high rise: CONSOLIDATED STREET RAILWAY ADVERTISING CO.; he jerks open the door, and heads inside.

INT. PRINCETON/YALE CLUB - BAR/LOUNGE - EARLY EVENING

Leather club chairs, dark wood, crystal glasses, no women...  
This is Scott's world.

He is there with EIGHT YOUNG MEN whose faces we will come to know well: LUDLOW FOWLER, LAWTON CAMPBELL, a Younger John Peal Bishop ("BISHOP" - future editor of Vanity Fair) EDMOND ("BUNNY") WILSON future literary critic), ALEX MCKAIG, JOHN BIGGS ("BIGGS" - future attorney), STEPHEN (PEEVIE) PARROT, and PORTER GILLESPIE.

They are well past merry and on their way to seeing double. Nonetheless, between slurs, Scott manages to read to them from what we now recognize as Zelda's journal...

SCOTT

"I think I like breathing twilit  
gardens and moths more than beautiful  
pictures or good books -- "

He looks up at his friends, as drunk with love as with  
whiskey...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Is that not the most -- the most  
lyrical voice you've ever heard?

His friends look back at him, baffled at best.

PEEVIE

(venturing)

Well. It's a very human document. But --  
I don't altogether understand it.

Scott looks to the others: Don't they get it? They don't. These are men for whom a woman like Zelda is utterly opaque.

SCOTT

The lot of you -- So educated you  
wouldn't know an authentic feeling if  
it sat on your face --

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Perry Adair is at the wheel of a convertible roadster; Zelda is in the seat next to him, her bare feet propped on the dashboard. Another COUPLE is tucked in the back.

And the four of them are SINGING at the tops of their lungs.

CLOSE ON A REJECTION LETTER

"Dear, Mr. Fitzgerald, we regret to inform you that we cannot publish your submission at this time..."

CONTINUED:

The CAMERA MOVES ALONG to reveal another letter of rejection, and yet another.

INT. SCOTT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Small, but well appointed. Scott takes a swig from his flask, then posts one more rejection letter on a wall plastered with them.

INT. SAYRE HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Zelda shuffles in, a little worse for wear. Her Father is just leaving to go to work. He tosses the local paper across the table in her direction without a word. Zelda glances at the headline:

"PRETTY MONTGOMERY GIRL CREATES STIR AMONG ATLANTA YOUTHS"

Zelda MOANS with annoyance...

MINNIE

Don't look here for sympathy. Coming home last night wearing Perry Adair's pin --

ZELDA

I assure you, Mamma, I did not appreciate that fact until I woke up this morning --

MINNIE

Who knows -- you might be better off with Perry than with Scott...

Zelda fidgets slightly, her thumb absently reaching for her ring finger, from which her engagement ring is notably absent.

ZELDA

Scott is sweet.

Judge Sayre peers in as he puts on his coat to leave.

JUDGE SAYRE

He's never sober.

MINNIE

If your sisters had it their way --

ZELDA

I know very well what way they'd have it -- but it's not their life to have -- is it?

Zelda slips a piece of stationary from her robe pocket.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Anyway, I've already written Perry a note telling him I can't accept the pin. But I'm out of envelopes... If you have one to spare, I'll put it in the post this afternoon.

INT. PRINCETON/YALE CLUB - LOUNGE

Scott is on the window ledge, swigging from a flask in one hand, and reading from a letter in the other. Biggs, Peevie, Ludlow, and Porter are there, but unmoved.

SCOTT

"Dearest Perry -- "

(spitting the word)

Perry. Very fairy. Dingle-berry.

(reading on)

*"The dance was most everything you promised it would be and then some, and not one square inch of myself regrets it -- "*

PEEVIE

Does one dance with every square inch of one's self?

SCOTT

*"That said, I am sober enough this morning to realize that I on the other hand cannot make good on the promise of your pin... So I return it to you -- maybe with a certain reluctance -- "* A certain reluctance? What am I supposed to make of that!?

LUDLOW

Nothing! The letter wasn't meant for you -- So stop feeling sorry for yourself, come down off that sill, burn that pablum, and come with us to the party at the Plaza.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAWN

Scott, in the suit he was wearing the night before, shirt untucked, his tie long gone, rolls empty champagne bottles down the empty avenue with Ludlow.

LUDLOW

So what now?

SCOTT

Oh Luddie -- I know what people say about her. And I don't care.

(beat)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I'm in love with her courage, her sincerity, and her flaming self respect. I love her and that's the beginning and end of everything. I guess there was a moment when I was still a Catholic -- and there was meaning in that. But now? Zelda's the only God I have left.

(beat)

Without her I'll never write a thing worth the paper it's printed on.

Ludlow is sympathetic, but skeptical.

LUDLOW

She's a whirlwind, Scott. And whirlwinds can become hurricanes...

SCOTT

So maybe she'll wreck me. Is it possible to be more wrecked than I am now? I'm a failure: mediocre at advertising, unable to get started as a writer, and losing my girl all at once.

EXT. SAYRE HOME - MONTGOMERY - AFTERNOON

Scott walks up the steps to the porch.

He's dressed as he was when we last saw him -- though more rumpled and sweat stained for the journey. His eyes are red from lack of sleep, his face unshaven.

He approaches the front door, makes a few half-hearted gestures at tidying himself up -- then gives up. Every gesture is ripe with desperation...

He KNOCKS. Zelda answers: the short GASP suggests just how unsettled she is by the sight of him in such a state.

ZELDA

Oh Goofy...

INT. SAYRE HOME - PARLOR - SAME

Zelda and Scott are in the thick of it.

SCOTT

I was losing my mind! I couldn't think, couldn't write -- !

ZELDA

It was a mistake -- I put the letter in the wrong envelope!

SCOTT

Zelda please -- Let's get married. Tomorrow.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

We can't...

SCOTT

Next week then...

Zelda shakes her head: "No..."

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Are you in love with him?

ZELDA

Scott don't be silly! You're the only man I've ever loved -- I'll always love you --

SCOTT

Why does that feel so much like "I'll never love you enough..."

ZELDA

We just can't get married...

SCOTT

Why not?

ZELDA

So we can live in some squalid little one room apartment and be miserable together -- ?

The detachment is giving way to sadness... Her eyes tear up, but these are tears of loss, not desperation.

SCOTT

We'll make a start of it...

ZELDA

I couldn't bear it... Watching our dreams fade away in some washed out version of a life...

SCOTT

Two years -- three at most --

ZELDA

I can't, Scott. I can't be shut away from the trees and the flowers, and the water -- cooped up in a little flat, waiting for you to come home from a job you can't stand. You'd hate me in a narrow atmosphere. I'd make you hate me.

SCOTT

You love me Zelda...

ZELDA

Which is why I can't marry you and turn us both into hateful creatures.

CONTINUED: (2)

Scott reels from the blow... Then:

SCOTT  
You don't believe I can do it, do  
you...

Without another word, Zelda removes the engagement ring from her finger, and offers it up to Scott.

Scott's tear-stained face goes slack, as if her gesture has just snapped the string that was keeping him together... He begins to shiver -- but not from cold... From anguish. Expressionless, and quaking, at last he takes the ring.

ZELDA  
You should go now...

By contrast her tears have a serenity to them -- the calm of acceptance... Saying nothing more, Scott backs out the door, and then he's gone.

ZELDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Like this: just let the sand flow.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. LA GAROUPE BEACH - CAP D'ANTIBES - DAY - 1924

Zelda, Scottie, and two other CHILDREN, are ensconced in building an elaborate drip castle. It is a work of art: with turrets, towers, a moat, etc...

Zelda works with the sand like an artist: utterly absorbed, complete unto herself -- not unlike the Children around her.

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN SEA - DAY

Zelda swims Off the shore: a strong, steady stroke, all alone in the vast blue. She rolls on her back, and floating looks skyward:

A bi-plane performs stunts high up in the air...

Her small figure waves up at the plane, then turns over again, and swims on...

ZELDA (V.O.)  
(repeating)  
Un boisson: a drink. Je voudrais un  
boisson s'il vous plait...

EXT. TERRACE OF CAFE DE LA FLOTTE - AFTERNOON

Zelda, damp from a swim, nurses a Cinzano, while studying her French book.

CONTINUED:

MAN (O.S.)

(French accent)

It is my experience that to learn a language -- it is easier to be speaking it than reading it --

Zelda looks up and is pleased to see that it is Jozan.

EXT. TERRACE OF CAFE DE LA FLOTTE - AFTERNOON

Zelda is with Jozan and the Aviators. Jozan is seated next to her, doting on her visibly. She has a cigarette, and looks for a set of matches. Jozan reaches for his lighter, and Zelda is about to lean in -- then stops:

ZELDA

Wait, wait...

He cuts the flame.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

How do you say: "Can you give me a light?"

JOZAN

Est-ce que tu peux --

ZELDA

Ess-kuh chtew puh --

JOZAN

This is perfect! Okay now: Est-ce que tu peux m'allumer?

And this gets a LAUGH from his compatriots, to whom he shoots an admonishing look.

ZELDA

Why are they laughing...?

JOZAN

This is nothing. Ignore them -- They are being children...

ZELDA

You're teaching me something just a little bit wicked, aren't you --

JOZAN

(conceding)

"Est-ce que tu peux m'allumer?" is just one of the many ways we have to say "Will you light me up?" -- and we are not referring in this case to your cigarette.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

Well now -- *that's* what I call  
motivation.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS PUBLISHING - NEW YORK - DAY (1918)

Scott is shaved and suited, with tie & hat -- but nonetheless  
cloaked in despair. He enters the building.

INT. PERKINS' OFFICE - SAME

Scott is seated. MAX PERKINS, mid 30's, and handsome, stands  
behind his desk, looking over Scott's manuscript.

PERKINS

I'm dealing with a very traditional  
group of gentlemen -- This isn't the  
first time -- or last -- that we  
haven't seen eye to eye. This is  
however the first time I'm going to  
push back.

For just a flash, Scott's face brightens.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

It was there, in your very first draft -  
- more originality and voice than I've  
ever seen. And this draft is stronger  
still. But I had a thought: do you  
think you could re-write the whole  
piece in the third person?

Scott considers this a moment, then slowly, nods:

SCOTT

I suppose. I don't see why not.

PERKINS

Somehow I think it will make the  
material more accessible to them  
without compromising your literary  
intentions...

Scott nods more emphatically now, as he thinks it through.

SCOTT

Yes... I see that. And I have some new  
material now which might flesh out the  
relationships between the characters --

Perkins' face lights up with a generous smile.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I'll do it...

CONTINUED:

PERKINS

I am honestly grateful to you --

SCOTT

Oh please, Mr. Perkins --

PERKINS

It's true: I'm grateful for not giving up on them -- us -- conservative as we are.

SCOTT

The gratitude befits me more --

Scott rises from his chair, suddenly hopeful again.

PERKINS

And Scott... Please call me Max.

INT. SCOTT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Scott is at work in front of the wall where the rejection letters used to be. Now, the wall is papered with a frenzy of chapter headings, outlines, and narrative "graphs. On his desk: a carafe of water and a half-eaten sandwich. Nothing more.

A SERIES OF CUTS as Scott alternately pastes, removes, and rearranges bits of paper on the wall.

The CUTS are fast, so as to give the impression of a man in a manic state, engaged in the process of writing as if it were a contact sport.

CLOSE ON TYPED LETTERS

"T-H-E-R-E W-A-S N-O G-O-D I-N H-I-S H-E-A-R-T H-E

K-N-E-W-- "

He slips the pen from behind his ear, goes to the desk, and jots something down on the paper in his hand.

SCOTT

(creating it as he goes)

*The faint stirring of old ambitions and -- and unrealized dreams. But -- oh, Rosalind! -- Rosalind!...*

He looks it over, then barely audible, involuntary:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Zelda...

EXT. SCOTT'S APARTMENT BLDG - NEW YORK - MORNING

Scott, on his way out, holds the door open for the POSTMAN, who hands him his mail. The Postman heads in, and Scott rifles through his mail as he steps out to the sidewalk. Then he stops walking: it's an envelope from Scribner's...

ON SCOTT: thrilled beyond words.

INT. NY POST OFFICE - LONG DISTANCE PHONE ROOM - NIGHT

Scott is in one of the booths, exuberent, yelling into the phone:

SCOTT

I didn't mean to interrupt your dinner, Sir... But if Zelda's there... I'd rather speak to her now if she's... Tell her it's important... Please...

But the line has gone dead. Scott heads for the exit.

EXT. SAYRE HOME - MONTGOMERY - DAY

Scott is standing at the door as Minnie answers.

MINNIE

Scott...

SCOTT

Mrs. Sayre... I have to see Zelda --

MINNIE

Well -- I don't --

SCOTT

With all due respect: I'm not asking.

After a beat, Minnie steps aside to let him in.

INT. SAYRE HOME - HALLWAY/STAIRS - DAY

He makes his way up the stairs, and down the hall to the door of her room.

He pauses a moment, gets his bearings: he's a long way from the broken creature he was the last time he made an appearance, and he knows it.

He KNOCKS lightly, and the door gives way. He peers in.

Zelda is on the bed, half-way through his manuscript, tears in her eyes. He enters; she looks up as if out of a reverie:

ZELDA

Scott...!

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

I'll come back later -- so you can finish --

ZELDA

This is my fourth time through...! The book is just so fine... And I am miserably, and... And completely and -- a little unexpectedly -- I am yours...

Scott is beside himself... Unable to find his tongue until he manages the only thing that comes to mind.

SCOTT

So you liked it?

ZELDA

I'm a good long way past "like" -- I mean -- Rosalind: she's altogether me!

SCOTT

You don't mind -- ?

ZELDA

Mind ?

SCOTT

I used your diary -- and a few of your letters too --

ZELDA

Gofo, I'm so proud of you... You really can do things -- anything -- And I love to feel that maybe I can help just a little...

He pulls a box from inside his jacket pocket and sets it on the bed. Zelda looks at it, curious.

SCOTT

Just a token...

Zelda picks up the box, undoes the ribbon and opens it: a delicate platinum, diamond studded watch, on a black silk cord. The back of the watch is engraved:

ZELDA

(under her breath)

"From Scott to Zelda -- "

(beat)

My God Scott -- We can't keep this -- we'll need the money --

SCOTT

I sold a story to the Saturday Evening Post -- and the movie rights went to the Metro Company.

With a GASP she launches into a girlish twirl of celebration. She comes to a stop and turns to him:

CONTINUED: (2)

ZELDA

Let's have a big wedding! I want to tell the world!

(breathless,  
rambling)

Oh... And can we make sure we get a place with a bathtub -- a big one -- since I'll need to swim around in something or I just won't be happy...

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL - DAY

**SUPER: APRIL 2, 1921**

The wedding party is just exiting the church: Zelda, Scott, Ludlow Fowler as Best Man, Marjorie & her husband, MINOR BRINSON, ROSALIND SAYRE, 30, Zelda's Middle Sister & her husband, NEWMAN SMITH, and an officiating PRIEST, 60. And that's it... No one else...

Tilde and her husband, JOHN PALMER are arguing with Zelda.

TILDE

It's bad enough Mama and Daddy aren't here -- but he couldn't wait ten minutes so at least I could see my little sister get married... ?

ZELDA

He gets impatient --

There is something forced in Zelda's attempt at levity here. Something almost sad.

ROSALIND

Tilde honey, you didn't miss much --

Zelda flashes a look at Rosalind.

ROSALIND (CONT'D)

What I mean is that it was nearly a civil ceremony -- nothing elaborate. I'm sure the luncheon --

Zelda's face wrinkles at the mention of a luncheon... She looks to Scott. Rosalind eyes the exchange...

ROSALIND (CONT'D)

(to Scott)

There *is* a luncheon -- ?

SCOTT

No -- not exactly...

(with enthusiasm, to  
offer a solution)

But I got rooms for everyone at the Biltmore -- !

CONTINUED:

The enthusiasm is lost on Tilde, Marjorie, and Rosalind alike... They turn to Zelda, as bewildered as they are insulted. Zelda smiles awkwardly and shrugs.

EXT. BILTMORE HOTEL - AFTERNOON

Tilde, Marjorie, and Rosalind are about to get into a waiting cab, just as the revolving door of the hotel spills a giddy Zelda onto the sidewalk.

ZELDA

Oh, please don't go...

MARJORIE

Baby, we're just spent...

Tilde gives Zelda a kiss good bye.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

You know we want you to be happy.

ZELDA

It's the happiest I've ever been!

She is 19 years old and she means it in the way that only youth can: with her whole being. Her sister can't possibly understand it, but ends it there with a peck to Zelda's cheek.

INT. ROOM 2109 - BILTMORE HOTEL - DUSK

Zelda is enchanted with the room, which has an unobstructed view of Central Park...

In the b.g., a BELLBOY hauls Zelda's numerous trunks and suitcases in from the hallway.

The elegant geometry the muted tones, and understated formality of the room are new to Zelda...

She takes it all in, chewing reflexively on her bottom lip, as if fighting off a wave of melancholy...

ZELDA

Just think how different things will be! No parents telling me what to do -- not that I ever listened. Still... I can put out the light when I'm good and ready. No power on earth can make me do anything any more, except myself.

As light and airy as those words may be, her voice is laced with something like fear... And maybe loss.

She places their very first -- and only -- wedding gifts on the dressing table: a chocolate set with a Tiffany urn, and a fading Easter Lily...

CONTINUED:

After a beat, she moves them to the other side of the dresser... Still dissatisfied, she's about to move them again, when Scott appears behind her, embracing her -- warm and protective...

SCOTT

There'll never be just the two of us again -- from now on we'll be three: you, me, and us...

ZELDA

Why does that sound so sad when in fact we're safer and closer than ever?

Scott responds with a kiss to the back of her neck. Then another... She turns now, meets his lips with hers...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - HANSOM CABS

Zelda and Scott, ensconced in the bubble of their romance, her hand in his. He glances down at the watch he gave, glinting on her wrist, then frowns slightly:

SCOTT

How can you tell the time -- ?

Zelda looks at him, uncertain:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

The watch is face down...

She glances down, and we see that indeed the watch face is twisted, clock-side down, and the inscription is up side.

ZELDA

Oh -- I must've turned it over four hundred times just to read "From Scott to Zelda..."

She takes such comfort in those words...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

I figure it's easier just to leave it that way...

EXT. LORD & TAYLOR - FIFTH AVENUE

Zelda and Scott walk along the stretch of display windows.

Their body language alone--he leads, she follows--more than hints at the shift in the dynamic between them: they are in HIS world now... The novelty of it all is exhilarating to them both.

Their reflections bounce off the glass, offering a glimpse of the difference between Zelda's pedestrian clothes, and what she is seeing in the store...

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

I'm not afraid of anything... Besides,  
I know you can take much better care of  
me than I can...

Zelda's outfit looks terribly provincial by comparison.

SCOTT

What makes you so sure?

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK

They stroll through the park. The banter is playful, uniquely theirs. It is in this endless verbal game playing that they are so completely bound to each other.

ZELDA

I just know I'm going to be happy with  
you -- always --

Then they come upon the fountain at the center of the park:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Well now *there's* the first public pool  
I've seen so far!

Scott laughs...

EXT. GOTHAM BOOK MART - LATE AFTERNOON

Zelda and Scott stand at the window of the book store, where THIS SIDE OF PARADISE is prominently displayed, along with a handwritten sign:

"YOUNGEST WRITER EVER PUBLISHED BY SCRIBNER'S."

ZELDA

Let's go in and buy one...

SCOTT

We can get as many as we want for free.

ZELDA

It'll be fun... We'll pretend we're  
just regular people...

She's just about convinced him, when a CLERK appears in the window, and places a second sign next to the first:

"SOLD OUT."

Zelda's disappointment is by far outweighed by her sense of pride in Scott -- and in being Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald.

And it is Zelda who is first to realize that CUSTOMERS leaving the store pause to stare at Scott: he's being recognized: he's suddenly famous.

CONTINUED:

THREE YOUNG WOMEN, who look like they might have stepped out of one of those windows at Lord & Taylor, exit the shop, with their fresh copies of PARADISE.

Zelda watches as they head up the street, glance at the photo on the back of the book; after a beat, they begin to return.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Would you look at that...

Scott's unclear...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Those women -- they're coming to get your autograph --

SCOTT

Don't be ridiculous --

No sooner does he finish the word when one YOUNG WOMAN steps up behind him.

YOUNG WOMAN #1

Excuse me... Mr. Fitzgerald...

He pivots about, his expression caught between delight and disbelief: all three Young Women standing there with their books open to the front page, pens in hand...

YOUNG WOMAN #2

You are Mr. Fitzgerald -- ?

Scott nods, beaming...

YOUNG WOMAN #1

If it's not too much trouble --

Scott and Zelda exchange a knowing look as he reaches for the pen.

SCOTT

Not at all.

As he signs each of the books, the three Young Woman take the moment to eye Zelda, looking her up and down.

And Zelda for the first time in her life, is suddenly self-conscious -- uncomfortable in her skin...

Signing the last of the three books, Scott glances from the Women to Zelda. As the Young Women take their leave, Zelda sees the look on Scott's face: he's embarrassed. By her...

He turns to hail a cab as Zelda digests the fact that she isn't measuring up to the image of his newfound celebrity.

CONTINUED: (2)

As she turns she catches her reflection in the store window: after a moment of self scrutiny, she lifts her hair to her jaw, as if to see what it would be like to cut it... A smile blooms on her lips...

Scott beckons for her to follow him, they disappear around a corner onto a side street, alone. He kisses her.

And then she realizes: he wasn't doing it only to reassure her.

Tears spill down his cheeks...

ZELDA

Gofo -- You can't possibly be unhappy -  
- ?

Scott smiles through his tears:

SCOTT

No. Of course not... It's just -- well  
I'm fairly certain I'll never be this  
happy again...

CUT TO:

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

MONTAGE: TO JELLY ROLL MORTON'S "BOOGIE WOOGIE BLUES"

**NOTE: the scenes/shots portray Zelda's very deliberate self-transformation into the ultimate Flapper:** the dresses get shorter, straighter, and sexier. The make up becomes more "stage-like."

\* ZELDA bobs her hair.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

\* ZELDA shopping with SCOTT, as she actively transforms herself from Southern Belle to New York sophisticate. Scott picks items that are stylish, but staid; Zelda puts these back on the rack, and picks pieces that have more flair.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - KITCHEN - DAY

\* ZELDA dances on the tables of the Biltmore kitchen in a dress that will earn her the title of America's First Flapper. Scott swipes a Chef's hat from the staff, tosses it to Zelda, who dons it...

INT./EXT. BILTMORE HOTEL - LOBBY/AWNING - DAY

\* THE BILTMORE CONCIERGE escorts Zelda and Scott out of the hotel, happy to see them go...

EXT. COMMODORE HOTEL - DAY

\* ZELDA & SCOTT, trailed by their baggage and a host of JOURNALISTS & PHOTOGRAPHERS, enter THE COMMODORE HOTEL and on the FLASH of a camera bulb:

EXT. COMMODORE HOTEL - NIGHT

\* The IMAGE FREEZES on Zelda and Scott, in all their luster and glory, leaving the hotel, for a night on the town.

INT. WALDORF ASTORIA HOTEL - ROOM - MORNING

The room is bedlam: breakfast dishes everywhere, the bed unmade, books and papers scattered about, trays filled with cigarette butts, liquor glasses from the night before.

Scott, in his robe, is rummaging among piles of laundry...

SCOTT

Zelda!

(still rummaging)

Have you seen my boxers?

(under his breath,

slight exasperation)

Jesus... There must be at least one fresh pair...

ZELDA (O.S.)

Yes, yes!

SCOTT

*Where* then?

Scott turns to see Zelda in the doorway, fresh from the bathtub. She is towel drying her hair, in nothing but a pair of Scott's boxers -- and she wears them well.

Despite his annoyance, Scott cannot help but LAUGH...

ZELDA

(shrugging, sheepish)

They were the last clean thing in the whole place!

SCOTT

Thief!

Scott launches himself at her, crossing the room like he would an obstacle course.

And with the delighted SQUEAL of a child, Zelda gives chase, leaping over the bed, and around the room.

Scott feints to the right.

Zelda dodges left -- nimble as a cat. Back onto the bed.

CONTINUED:

But Scott has size and sheer power in his favor, and he lunges for the bed, trapping his finger in the back of the boxers, pulling downward...

Zelda wriggles and SHRIEKS with joyful abandon, as he gains purchase, and in a moment, straddling her, has her pinned to the bed...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(beaming down at her)

A man has a right to be interviewed in a pair of clean skivvies...

ZELDA

And dutiful as I am, I'll make the sacrifice and wear no skivvies at all!

Scott delights in the very image of it.

SCOTT

Though it's a shame... As I never seen a woman wear them like you do...

ZELDA

And you better not...

(beat)

Not ever...!

Then he bends to kiss her... Then again, lower. Then lower still, inching the boxers down her thighs, and off her legs.

INT. TAXI CAB - NIGHT

A YOUNG WOMAN JOURNALIST, 26, is seated in the back of the car with Scott and Zelda.

JOURNALIST

How does it feel, Mr. Fitzgerald, to be the spokesperson for our generation?

Zelda is attentive but dutifully quiet as he fields the questions. It helps that of the two woman, Zelda is by far the more striking...

SCOTT

All I do is write in a style that to my mind, is commensurate with the subject matter. And my subject is what I know -- what I've lived.

The Reporter jots short hand as he responds.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

And if somehow that's made me the voice of a generation -- well then it's simply a happy accident.

CONTINUED:

Zelda's face lights up all at once, then turns to WHISPER INAUDIBLY in Scott's ear. And like a contagion, the light in her face passes to his, and he nods emphatically.

JOURNALIST

And how you feel about having a flapper for a wife?

EXT. THE ROYALTON - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

A CLUSTER of REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS are milling about the entrance...

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

Do you think, for instance, that she should have her own career?

Then all at once, the group reacts, FLASHES go off.

SCOTT (V.O.)

Well -- I think just being in love -- doing it well, you know -- is work enough for a woman...

Scott's Car is approaching: Scott is riding on the roof, and Zelda is on the hood...

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If she keeps her house the way it should be kept -- And loves her husband and helps him with his work and encourages him --

INT. GEORGE NATHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's a fine swath of the New York Society Set: DOROTHY PARKER, H.L. MENCKEN, GEORGE NATHAN, MAX PERKINS, Bunny Wilson, Alex McKaig, John Bishop, Actresses ANITA LOOS, 30, RUTH FINDLAY, TALLULAH & JEAN BANKHEAD, mid 20's, HELEN HAYES, 20, theater producer, JOHN D. WILLIAMS, RING LARDNER, etc.

SCOTT (V.O.)

-- I think that's the sort of work that will save her...

By contrast with the gathering at Ludlow's, which felt almost collegiate, there's a real whiff of decadence here, in which Zelda is notably more at ease... Not only has she found a way to capitalize on her exoticism, but the flirtatiousness of the environment in general is second-nature to her... So, far from being the awkward, Southern bumpkin, she is now the source of much masculine fascination and interest...

Scott introduces Zelda to a near receiving line of Men, and she goes out of her way to kiss each one of them.

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

The host, George Nathan, H.L. Mencken,  
Ring Lardner, John Williams, Dorothy  
Parker, Tallulah and Gene Bankhead --

Scott appears utterly tolerant of Zelda's manner:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Yes -- they really all have kisses  
coming to them, because they weren't at  
the wedding, and everybody at a wedding  
always gets a kiss --

As he says this, Alex McKaig and Bunny Wilson, sneak up to  
get in line, and Zelda's moves right along to kiss them too:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Alex, Bunny: I believe you are already  
well enough acquainted --

ALEX & BUNNY

(all in good fun)

But we weren't at the wedding!

They get kisses too. But she returns to Scott, and beaming,  
meets his lips with hers with a lingering gift of a kiss.

INT. GEORGE NATHAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ANOTHER ANGLE - LATER STILL

A group, including Alex, George, Zelda, Anita Loos, Dorothy  
Parker, John Williams, and a few others are engaged in heated  
debate. Zelda studies the WOMEN, whose clothing, manners, and  
speech are so very different from her own.

ALEX

It boggles the mind the way foolish  
women run circles around intelligent  
ones when it comes to men --

GEORGE

That's because the intelligent ones  
pretend they want to be more than a  
pretty and desirable toy --

ZELDA

It has never occurred to either one of  
you, that half those foolish women are  
just the clever ones in disguise?

ANITA

She has a point -- when my father found  
out I was writing for a living, his  
advice to me was to dress like a whore  
if I ever wanted to find a husband --

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

What I really want is a bath. George -- would you care to come and help me think about what I should do for a living while I take a bath?

ANOTHER ANGLE

Scott is on the other side of the room, pen and notebook in hand: ever the constant observer...

He is watching Zelda drag George by the hand through the room, and down the hall: ever in motion -- unfettered, oblivious. And Scott is in awe of it: that lack of self-consciousness which he will never know.

Alex approaches with a bottle of gin, as Scott slips his notebook back into his jacket pocket.

ALEX

It doesn't bother you?

SCOTT

What -- Zelda? I suppose seeing her in action like that inspires me.

He knocks back his glass.

EXT. UNION SQUARE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Zelda and Scott are hand-in-hand, walking together with Alex, Bishop, John Williams and George.

ZELDA

I think we should do it Scott! Or I should anyway --

SCOTT

(to the Group)

Zelda wants to star in the movies -- Metro asked us to play the leads in *This Side of Paradise*.

(to Zelda)

Dear -- What makes you think you can act?

ZELDA

I wouldn't have to -- I'd be playing my own self!

(to John Williams)

John -- Tell him you think I can do it --

JOHN WILLIAMS

I wouldn't be lying, if I said she's got a better sense of the dramatic than most of the actors I work with --

CONTINUED:

And no sooner does he say this, than Zelda is stripping off her clothes and running down the street toward the Union Square Fountain.

Scott and the other Men tear down the street after, arriving just in time to see her take a flying leap into the water.

Before she comes up for air, the whole Group finds themselves surrounded by a half-dozen POLICEMEN, ready to arrest Zelda for indecency...

SCOTT

Gentlemen! Gentlemen there's no need --

OFFICER #1

(thick Irish accent)

Hey wait a minute...

He turns to one of his partners. All Six of the Policemen speak with Irish Brogues to a greater or lesser degree.

OFFICER #1 (CONT'D)

Don't you recognize him!?

Scott puffs up slightly with pride...

OFFICER #2

Yeah... He's the comic --

Scott's face falls for a flash, but George manages to stage whisper:

GEORGE

Play along...

OFFICER #3

The Paddy --

OFFICER #4

That's right...

And the Officers are now almost embarrassed.

OFFICER #1

Sorry to have disturbed you -- have a lovely rest of your evening...

At last, Zelda pokes her head out of the water:

ZELDA

My God -- it's been ages since I've had a swim in anything but my own gin and tonic!

Scott cannot help but burst out laughing... Struck by her audacity, her oblivion to rules -- he falls in love all over again.

INT. JUNGLE CLUB - LATE NIGHT

Zelda and Scott, and the Group are there with others:  
Tellulah, Ludlow, Ruth Findlay, Dorothy Parker.

RUTH

Did I hear they're writing a script for  
*This Side of Paradise*...?

ZELDA

(nodding, thrilled)  
They want us to play the leads -- !

SCOTT

We've decided against it...

Zelda all but chokes on her drink: Scott can be difficult,  
but he's never *denied* her anything...

ZELDA

We're still thinking it over --

SCOTT

(to Zelda)  
We're not doing it --

ZELDA

Just like that?

SCOTT

You heard what Max said: it could  
confuse my readership -- make me out to  
be a dabbler --

Zelda's not as angry as she is demoralized. Her voice is  
calm.

ZELDA

Tell me something: what would be so  
terrible about *my* having a little  
success of my own --

SCOTT

Could you possibly have any more  
success than you do as the heroines of  
my work -- ?

He is serious... Zelda looks at him in disbelief: the echo of  
her own words...

INT. THE PALM COURT - THE PLAZA HOTEL - DAY

Scott is there with Max Perkins, a little worse for wear...

PERKINS

We're looking forward to getting the  
new manuscript...

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

(a chortle)

Me too...

A FEMALE FAN approaches with a copy of Scott's book...

FAN

Mr. Fitzgerald?

Scott rallies to the call of his name. Turns to the fan.

FAN (CONT'D)

(blushing)

I'm so sorry to bother you, but --

Scott is happy to oblige: and with a practiced hand, uses his own pen to sign the inside page of the book...

When the Fan moves along, Max picks up the conversation.

PERKINS

It's not going well --

SCOTT

It's not that so much... I'm just  
distracted --

INT./ EXT. MARMON - TRAVELING

On the open road, flanked by dense wood of Flowering Dogwoods and Red Maples, in a sports coupe that's on it's last legs... Scott is at the wheel, and Zelda has the wind in her hair, as the car lurches along...

PERKINS (V.O.)

Maybe get out of town for a while...  
Change the scenery -- something quiet.

EXT. COMPO ROAD - WESTPORT - LATE AFTERNOON - LONG

The Marmon heads down a two lane road, acres of farmland unfurling in every direction. On the horizon, the last of the sun bounces off the water of the Long Island Sound.

Over this, we hear Zelda, eager like a child for a pony ride, clearly parroting what a real estate agent told her:

ZELDA (V.O.)

The beach is out the back door.  
Westport is a two-minute drive. And at  
50 miles, Manhattan is still an easy  
week-end commute.

(then)

It's sort of the best of all worlds...  
And I can't remember the last time it  
was quiet enough to hear the swallows.

CONTINUED:

At the end of the road stands a small, pale gray, Colonial-style house: Wakeman Cottage.

SCOTT (V.O.)  
And I suppose we could always invite  
people up for the weekend --

ZELDA (V.O.)  
I'm not "people" enough?

He laughs. So does she.

INT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - DAY

Scott is at his desk, writing -- or attempting to. Zelda hovers about like an insistent child, chomping on an apple.

It is so quiet, that every CRUNCH of the fruit seems disproportionately loud... In the b.g. TANA, their Japanese Houseman, pads silently through the halls, collecting laundry. She pauses in front of the desk. He ignores her.

ZELDA  
It's two o'clock...

SCOTT  
(not looking up)  
And?

ZELDA  
You said you'd be done by lunchtime.

There's a beat as he finishes a thought. Now he looks up.

SCOTT  
It may be stating the obvious -- but  
I'm not done...

Zelda rifles through the scattered notes and pieces of paper on the desk top.

ZELDA  
Gofo -- you promised: we were going to  
get into the city early enough to have  
a drink with Lawton before meeting my  
parents at the hotel.

Scott puts his hand on hers to stop the RUSTLING of paper...

SCOTT  
Zelda, please...

She yanks her hand away, taking the paper with it...

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
(bursting)  
Zelda!

She looks at him, admonishing...

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(reeling himself in)

It may not seem like it to you -- but those papers are in a very particular order. Please leave them that way...

But Zelda is already reading from the notes on the page:

ZELDA

(reading)

*"There was for example her stomach. She was used to certain dishes, and she had a strong conviction that she could not possibly eat anything else. There must be a lemonade and a tomato sandwich late in the morning -- "*

(a look at Scott)

Gofo -- My food habits? I can't wait to see what you'll do with the way I roll my toilet tissue...

Her tone is blasé rather than angry, as she sets the paper back down on the desk... Scott smiles despite himself.

SCOTT

Well I'm not ever going to do anything with it if you don't let me work...

Zelda purses her lips, reflexively she flips her watch face to glance at the engraving on the back, and then, with a playful look, she relents.

INT. BILTMORE HOTEL - LOBBY - EVENING

The place is a beehive of night time activity: GUESTS dressed for an evening out, others just arriving... Scott is there with Zelda's family: Minnie, the Judge, Rosalind, and Newman.

MINNIE

I'm so sorry Scott -- She's running as late as ever --

Scott, lighting a cigarette.

SCOTT

(smiling)

Mrs. Sayre -- I assure you, she has always been more than worth the wait... In fact, I bet you don't know half what you should about Zelda...

MINNIE

Why Scott -- what a thing to say! I know all there is to know about Zelda. I'm her mother...

SCOTT

Well, you couldn't possibly know how beautiful she is, could you?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You just watch that elevator, because  
Zelda will be down in a minute, and  
then watch all the men in the lobby...

A moment later, Zelda appears from between the elevator doors, and Scott's face blooms with pride: she is a splendor, and as she moves across the lobby to greet him, there's not a MAN in the room who fails to notice...

EXT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

Scott and Zelda walk up the path to the house with Minnie and the Judge in tow. Biggs and another MAN, are there passed out: one in the hammock, the other on the lawn.

Zelda shoots Scott a look... He shrugs... They keep walking til they get inside... Minnie and the Judge follow, but not without a glance of disapproval...

INT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - SAME

The house is in disarray, even as Tana, the houseman goes about picking up dirty glasses and empty bottles.

Zelda blanches with shame at the reflection of her own lifestyle in the eyes of her disapproving parents.

ZELDA

Scott -- will you show them upstairs to their room. I'll be just a minute.

INT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - ZELDA & SCOTT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Zelda wakes to the sound of POUNDING on the front door.

ZELDA

(nudges Scott awake)  
Your friends are back --

SCOTT

Why my friends -- ?

Scott rises, gropes about for his robe, and puts it on.

ZELDA

'Cause if I have to go down there myself, they won't survive long enough to be anyone's friends --

SCOTT

Alright...

ZELDA

Just tell them to go away -- Papa can't bear the goings on...

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

Which is why you didn't marry your  
father. We live our life the way we  
want --

ZELDA

Yes, yes. But just for tonight.  
Please.

He heads out of the room.

INT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - DOWNSTAIRS

Zelda is at the foot of the stairs, glaring in the direction  
of THE KITCHEN: the LAUGHTER and COMMOTION coming from behind  
the door is enough to wake the neighborhood...

INT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - KITCHEN - SAME

Scott, Biggs, and his Friend are caught off guard as Zelda  
blows through the door, in a full blown rage, sweeping  
bottles of liquor and tomato juice from the counter...

ZELDA

It's 4 in the morning!

She hurls a glass across the Kitchen; it SHATTERS against the  
wall...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

What is this -- ? The Irishman's  
cocktail hour!

Scott lurches in her direction, and grabs hold of her,  
pinning her arms to her sides.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Let go!

She thrashes about, but drunk as he is, he's still stronger  
than she, and he pushes her out through the swinging door...

No sooner does he release her, than she pushes back through.

But Scott is there to block it, so that the door SNAPS back  
and SLAMS into her face...

She lets out a CRY like something PRIMAL. Scott's face  
crumples in anguish.

SCOTT

Oh God...!

He jerks the door open to see Zelda holding her a face in her  
hands, blood spilling over her fingers from her nose...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Oh no, no, no, no... Forgive me...

CONTINUED:

He's trying to think clearly, struggling against his liquored fog, holding Zelda tight to him...

Together, they slip down against the wall, his tears mixing freely with her blood...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Okay... It's going to be okay...  
Shhhh... I'm so sorry... Shhhh.

INT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Zelda, her face still bruised from the night before, makes a nervous, inept attempt at cleaning up, when the Judge appears at the door, hat in hand, ready to depart.

ZELDA

Mornin' Daddy! I was just getting  
ready to make brunch --

She doesn't turn to greet him...

JUDGE SAYRE

We'll be on our way in just a few  
minutes --

Zelda shuts off the faucet, and turns to face him, revealing now her black eye, and swollen nose... Her bottom lip too, is raw from her compulsive chewing.

**The disdain on her Father's face leaves no room for sympathy.**  
And with that, he takes his leave.

EXT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Zelda watches her parents get into a waiting cab, and something inside her breaks: tears make their tracks down her bruised and purple face.

Scott steps up behind her and wraps himself around her, protective, almost paternal...

CLOSE ON LIPS

As they are painted with bright red lipstick.

EXT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - PORCH - NIGHT

We see now that those LIPS were MASCULINE.

And that Zelda, well beyond tipsy at this point, is wielding the lipstick.

She is at the center of a mostly MALE GROUP, going from Man to Man, applying the make up to their lips. Working now on George, she gives his lips particular attention...

CONTINUED:

ZELDA  
(finishing up)  
Alright... Now...  
(beat - thinking)  
I want each and every one of you to  
kiss me!

A QUICK SUCCESSION OF SHOTS

We see half a dozen pairs of lips press up against Zelda's cheeks...

Zelda glances at her own reflection in the window: every kiss has left a perfect, bright red "mark" on her face, by which she is thoroughly tickled...

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
Where's Scott! I must show Scott!

She turns to look for him, and then goes still:

Scott is on the beach, cradling Jean Bankhead in his arms, as he spins them both around...

Zelda moves down the stairs, and toward the beach...

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Zelda stomps past Scott and Gene, heading down the beach, away from the party... This gets Scott's attention...

SCOTT  
Where are you going?  
(getting no response)  
Don't you take another step!

She traipses on...

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
And you wonder why I can't get any work  
done! Worried all the time about where  
you're off to --

And there, before an audience of the entire party, they enter into a full blown fight:

ZELDA  
If I had my own work, you wouldn't have  
to wonder how I spent my time!

SCOTT  
Work!? You want to work!? You can't  
even manage the fucking laundry!

ZELDA  
(over him)  
What am I supposed to do?! I'm home: you  
can't work! I leave: you still can't  
work! It's enough to put a person out!

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

If anyone's "putting out" it's you --  
what with the way you flirt with  
everything in sight!

ZELDA

You won't let me do anything else! As  
it is, flirting is the one thing for  
which I still have an aptitude! But if  
I tried to make a living from it,  
they'd call me a whore! You make a  
living from it, and they call it  
literature!

She practically spits the word. And then she's moving down  
the beach at a run...

Scott moves to run after her, but is so drunk, he stumbles  
face first into the sand.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - PRE-DAWN

Zelda cuts an incongruous figure as she walks down the middle  
of the tracks, her feet bare, still wrapped in her silk  
kimono.

Her eyes are swollen and red from crying. She chews so  
compulsively on her lip, that she does not even realize that  
it's bleeding... The TRAIN WHISTLES in the distance. She's  
oblivious.

The light from the train appears from around the hillside.  
Zelda continues to walk straight into it -- unaware of  
anything but herself. And then:

SCOTT (O.S.)

Zelda!

As if she were deaf to all but his voice, she looks up.

He is bounding toward her; before she can react, he sweeps  
her from the path of the train. The two tumble and roll in  
the dirt beside the tracks, until he's wrapped around her,  
protectively...

ZELDA

Gofo -- you've got to try to feel how  
much I love you -- how much of nothing  
I am when you're gone --

He adorns the back of her neck with a tender flurry of  
kisses.

ON the WAIL of an INFANT:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

**SUPER: OCTOBER 1921 ST. PAUL, MINNESTOA**

CONTINUED:

Zelda has just given birth, and is coming out of the stupor of her efforts. The baby girl is swaddled in her arms; Scott gazes at them with terror and joy in equal measure.

ZELDA

Oh God, Gofo -- I'm drunk...

(the baby hiccups)

Isn't she smart -- she has the hiccups.

I hope it's beautiful and a fool -- a beautiful little fool.

Scott reaches for the pen on Zelda's medical chart, tears a piece of paper from it, and jots down her words...

CLOSE ON ZELDA'S HAND

With an ink pen, she sketches the image of a nude woman kneeling in a champagne goblet.

Above the drawing are the words: THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED

HOTEL ROOM - THE COMMODORE - ST. PAUL

Zelda cradles the phone between shoulder and ear while she sketches; Scott looking at a series of drawings. A NANNY tends to the infant Scottie (now almost 5 months old) in the b.g.

ZELDA

(into the phone)

We're both mad to get back to New York.

This damn place is 18 below...

She pauses, then to Scott:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Luddy wants to know when the book is coming out.

SCOTT

March 3rd.

ZELDA

(into the phone)

Three weeks from today. Assuming we find a cover that Scott can bear. He doesn't like the one they've got now. He thinks the man on the cover is sort of a "debauched edition" of himself...

(to Scott)

He wants to know if there's any other edition of you?

SCOTT

Tell him I dare him to ask me that again in person.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA  
 (into the phone)  
 Scottie? She's awfully cute and I am  
 very devoted to her --

In the b.g. the Nanny calms the infant, who has begun to CRY.

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL - NEW YORK CITY - MARCH 3RD 1922

Zelda and Scott emerge from a cab, as the BELLHOP unloads the luggage. Scottie is NOT with them.

INT. PRINCETON/YALE CLUB - LOUNGE - EARLY EVENING

Scott reads from THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED to a standing-room only CROWD of SOCIETY MEN and their WIVES. Zelda stands in the far corner of the room, unaccompanied...

SCOTT  
*"What grubworms women are to crawl on  
 their bellies through colorless  
 marriages. Marriage was created not to  
 be a background, but to need one."*

These are shocking words for the time, and the effect on some MEMBERS of the audience is unsettling.

The effect on Zelda is equally disturbing, if for entirely different reasons: these are her words, nearly to the letter, yet the world will know them henceforth as the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald...

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
*"Mine is going to be outstanding. It can't, shan't be the setting -- it's going to be the performance, the live, lovely, glamorous performance and the world shall be the scenery. I refuse to dedicate my life to posterity."*

Members of the audience exchange disconcerted looks.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
*"Surely one owes as much to the current generation as to one's unwanted children. What a fate -- to grow rotund and unseemly, to lose my self-love..."*

Scott closes the book. The audience is SILENT. Then, a beat later, one PERSON dares to CLAP, joined quickly by another, then more, until the whole room stands and applauds...

And Zelda is suddenly struck by the full weight of her realization: far from enjoying the spotlight as Scott's Muse, she is about to be eclipsed by the shadow of his fame -- fame that is built at least in part on her gift with words...

INT. ALGONQUIN HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Zelda and Scott wade through a tied of anonymous FANS and JOURNALISTS. Scott pauses to sign a book, before stepping into the elevator with Zelda...

ALGONQUIN HOTEL - H.L. MENCKEN'S SUITE - NIGHT

It's the private party to celebrate the release of the book: a bigger, more elaborate affair than the party at George Nathan's place. The GUESTS, all part of the Fitzgerald Circle, are a virtual Who's Who of the Social Register. There are the familiar faces, but also an additional smattering of CELEBRITIES and PHOTOGRAPHERS, giving the party a whole new sheen.

Scott, well lubricated, and in heated, if slurred, discussion with Bunny Wilson, pulls Perkins into the debate:

SCOTT

You have to talk to him. He believes --

BUNNY

(jumping in)

The three major influences on his work are the Midwest -- specifically the society of St. Paul and country clubs. His Irishness. And liquor --

SCOTT

-- And he wants to print that in the *Bookman*! Not only is he wrong -- but he's altogether failed to recognize the most enormous influence on me in the four and half years since I met her --

He glances across the room at Zelda with a look of attachment beyond love -- a distortion of love in its neediness.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

-- The complete, fine, and full-hearted selfishness and chillmindedness of Zelda!

His face is infused with gin and adoration...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(suddenly distracted)

In fact she's reviewing the book in the Tribune! Zelda! Why don't you read it for the group?

Zelda is more embarrassed than flattered by Scott's display.

ZELDA

I would Dear, but I did the appropriate thing and left it at home.

Scott pulls her type-written piece from his jacket pocket.

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

I've got it right here!

Zelda flushes red with shame and frustration. Scott unfolds the paper, and steps up onto the nearest chair.

ZELDA

Scott -- please -- don't --

SCOTT

(reading the title)

"Friend Husband's Latest"

(beat)

"I note on the table beside my bed this morning a new book with an orange jacket entitled *THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED*. It is a strange book, which has for me an uncanny fascination. It has been lying on that table for two years. I have been asked to analyze it carefully in the light of my brilliant critical insight, my tremendous erudition, and my vast impressive partiality. Here I go!"

To Zelda's surprise, the room is LAUGHING; Scott's reading only underscores her sense of irony, which of course begs the question: much of what people attribute to her as eccentricity, may in fact be irony that goes unobserved...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

"Its value as a manual of etiquette is incalculable. Where could you get a better example of how NOT to behave than from the adventures of Gloria?"

Even in Scott's boozed-up diction, this paragraph gets a more enthusiastic round of LAUGHTER than the last. Zelda's face is a complex map of pride, guilt and vindication.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

"It's a wonderful book to have around in case of emergency. No one should ever set out in pursuit of unholy excitement without a special vest pocket edition dangling from a string around the neck. For this book tells exactly, and with compelling lucidity, just what to do when cast off by a grandfather or when sitting around a station platform at 4 a.m., or when spilling champagne at a fashionable restaurant, or when told that one is too old for the movies. Any of these things might come into anyone's life at any minute..."

This gets an UPROAR of LAUGHTER. The Guests are not only impressed, but surprised by Zelda's humor and voice.

CONTINUED: (2)

George Nathan, standing next to Zelda, whispers to her:

GEORGE  
I'm telling you -- if we could publish  
that diary of yours --

Zelda shakes her head, and gestures for him to listen, as the edge in Scott's voice seems to bloom with spite -- though for himself or for Zelda, it's not clear...

SCOTT  
(still reading)  
*"It seems to me that on one page I  
recognized a portion of an old diary of  
mine which mysteriously disappeared  
shortly after my marriage."*

George's face falls with disappointment...

GEORGE  
Please tell me that line was merely for  
effect --

ZELDA  
The diary's been misplaced --

GEORGE  
You think he scrapped it? Deliberately?  
So no one would know just how much of  
it he "borrowed."

ZELDA  
(shrugs)  
I was inclined toward a more generous  
explanation: that he was drunk when he  
set it down somewhere, and by the time  
he was sober, he couldn't recall...

SCOTT  
(still reading)  
*"... Scraps of letters which, though  
considerably edited, sound to me  
vaguely familiar. In fact, Mr.  
Fitzgerald -- I believe that is how he  
spells his name -- seems to believe  
that plagiarism begins at home..."*

Now the LAUGHTER is accompanied by APPLAUSE... And George Nathan wraps a sympathetic arm around Zelda...

CUT BACK TO:

UNDERWATER - OFF THE SHORE OF LA GAROUEPE, FRANCE

Zelda and Jozan play in the water like two love struck sea lions...

Plunging down, surging up toward the surface.

CONTINUED:

AT THE SURFACE

Zelda rises from the sea like a Venus in the flesh, luminous.

Jozan appears next her, then plunges down again, beneath her, teasing her to join him...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON SARA

Squinting out at the water...

SARA

Scott has only himself to blame if they are...

HER POV

Jozan and Zelda playing a game of "Trust" in the surf like two children: he stands behind her, while she falls backward into his arms without flinching...

EXT. LA GAROUPE BEACH - DAY

The Murphys are watching the two of them from their spot on the beach.

GERALD

To be fair, Zelda would be a handful for any man...

SARA

That my dear, is not necessarily a credit to your gender... And as "handfuls" go, his rivals hers any day...

Gerald has to concede this with a smile.

SARA (CONT'D)

At dinner the other night, Scott was watching the two of them across the table as if from behind a glass: he had that beastly little notebook of his on his lap, beneath the table. And I saw him, Gerald. I swear, he was taking notes...

Gerald offers a look, his eyebrows raised...

SARA (CONT'D)

(off his look)

Exactly... *That* is what I'd call alarming...

GERALD

The writer's version of cliff diving.

CONTINUED:

SARA

Right into the rocks if you ask me...  
At least she has the good sense to dive  
into water.

EXT. HOUSE - 6 GATEWAY DR. - GREAT NECK ESTATES - AFTERNOON

**SUPER: GREAT NECK, NEW YORK, AUTUMN 1922**

It is a large, rambling home, more impressive and spacious  
than the place in Westport...

ZELDA (V.O.)

I love Scott's books and heroines.  
Rosalind in *This Side of Paradise* --

INT. GREAT NECK HOUSE - SAME

Zelda is seated in a plastic, overstuffed chair, speaking  
with A REPORTER, 30ish, from The Baltimore Sun...

She is nervous, her bottom lip raw again from chewing.

ZELDA

I've always liked her... You see, I  
read everything he writes.  
(to the next room)  
Scott! Why don't you come in and join  
us...

The Reporter acknowledges Scott as he enters with a nod;  
Scott takes a seat, beaming with a certain pride.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Its spoils the fun, the surprise, I  
mean, a bit... But Rosalind! I like  
girls like that... I like their  
courage, their recklessness and  
spendthriftness. Rosalind was the  
original American Flapper!

SUN REPORTER

Can you define the term, "American  
Flapper?"

Zelda looks to Scott as if for encouragement. He nods: "Go  
ahead." There's an uncertainty about her now -- so very  
different from the girl she was in Montgomery.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

Well -- the word "Flapper" is sorter' like code for "living well." I know some people must think of it as a synonym for a lack of respectability -- but you see -- once a girl perceives that boys *do* dance most with the girls they kiss most, and that men *will* marry the girls they could kiss before they asked papa -- Well then she has no choice but to wake from that lethargy of sub-debism, bob her hair, put on her choicest pair of earrings and a great deal of audacity and rouge and go into battle. A Flapper flirts because it's fun. And she refuses to be bored chiefly because she herself isn't boring.

Where there used to be a spontaneity and conviction in her voice, there is now a sense of obligation: she's giving the response that Scott would want to hear...

SCOTT

(to the Reporter)

How about I ask her a few questions?

The Reporter turns the session over to Scott.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(to Zelda)

What would your ideal day constitute?

Again, he seems to be anticipating a "correct" answer:

ZELDA

Peaches for breakfast... Then golf. Then a swim. Then just being lazy. Not eating or reading, but being quiet and hearing pleasant sounds. The evening -- ? A large, brilliant gathering, I believe.

SCOTT

Are you ambitious?

Zelda balks. Chews reflexively at her lip, then stops at a gesture from Scott.

ZELDA

Not especially, but I've plenty of hope.

With this statement, all pretense falls away: this is the one authentic comment in the whole interview: she is desperate for an identity of her own... And if Scott were a dog, the hair on his neck would rise...

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT

And what about Scottie? What do you want her to be when she grows up?

ZELDA

Not great and serious and melancholy and inhospitable. But rich and happy and artistic.

SCOTT

And what would you do if you had to earn a living?

The question has the hint of a threat about it.

ZELDA

I've studied ballet. I'd try to get a place in the Follies. Or the movies. If I wasn't successful, I'd try to write.

Scott turns to the Reporter, his expression suggesting that the session ends here.

SCOTT

I think that should give you quite a bit of material --

SUN REPORTER

I have just one last question, if I may?

Scott nods...

SUN REPORTER (CONT'D)

How would you describe your wife?

SCOTT

She's the most charming person in the world...

Zelda's expression says that there was a time when those words wouldn't have sounded so hollow.

ON the CLICK of a SHUTTER and a FLASH OF LIGHT:

CUT TO:

ON ZELDA & SCOTT

**In what would become their most iconic image - the essence of Jazz Age sophistication: his arm around her, their faces cheerless. The CLICK of a SHUTTER and a FLASH GOES OFF.**

The SHOT FREEZES, and the MASTHEAD FADES IN above them:

HEARST INTERNATIONAL

INT. PALM COURT - PLAZA HOTEL - AFTERNOON

Zelda & Scott are there with Max Perkins and Harold Ober.

On the table is a collection of newspapers from around the country, each carrying that SAME ICONIC IMAGE. Ober beams, as Scott knocks back another drink. Scott, with a wry smile.

SCOTT

So I guess it's all downhill from here --

OBER

Are you kidding? This is unique in the history of publishing: you're a literary star and you're not even 24 years old! If we get that next book of yours, we can capitalize on this --

SCOTT

(dodging)

We're thinking about going over to Europe -- A change of scenery... It might help the novel along...

Zelda takes her moment.

ZELDA

(venturing)

Max -- I was wondering --

PERKINS

Your short story! Yes --

Zelda nods, timid...

PERKINS (CONT'D)

I had a grand time reading it!

Her face is vibrant with a sudden smile.

PERKINS (CONT'D)

A lyrical sense of description, metaphors that take on lives of their own --

HAROLD

He gave it to me last week and I think I've found a place for it: the Chicago Tribune is interested.

Zelda is beside herself...

HAROLD (CONT'D)

They're offering a thousand dollars for it.

SCOTT

That's wonderful!

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

But they want to publish it under  
Scott's name...

And like that, her eyes lose their spark.

SCOTT

(to Zelda)

Not my name alone -- alongside yours --

HAROLD

No... I'm afraid they want Scott's name  
exclusively.

As if she's flipped a switch, Zelda seems to shrug it off,  
just as a roaming PHOTOGRAPHER appears, flashing a press  
badge.

PHOTOGRAPHER

How about one for the society pages?

Max and Harold gracefully cedes the lime light to Scott and  
Zelda, who oblige, perking up for the camera.

As the Photographer leaves, they picks up the conversation.

ZELDA

Well -- A thousand dollars -- We  
certainly won't have any trouble  
finding a way to spend it!

SCOTT

If it hasn't already been spent...

PERKINS

Do you need another advance?

SCOTT

Not just yet. That's part of Europe's  
appeal: with the exchange rate what it  
is, we can live on a third of the  
money...

ZELDA

With a little luck, we might even  
manage to put some away...

ON the BEEP of a CAR'S HORN:

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLA MARIE - FRENCH RIVIERA - 1924 - LATE AFTERNOON

High above the sea, surrounded by terraced gardens, palm,  
pine, and silver olive trees. It has a series of Moorish  
balconies in brilliant white and blue that face the  
Mediterranean and give it an air of an exotic fortress. So  
much for economizing...

CONTINUED:

A winding gravel drive leads to the entrance, at the base of which Sara and Gerald Murphy idle in their Mercedes 10/40/65 with the top down.

SARA

Zelda, Dear!

Zelda appears at one of the many windows, and gestures with a wave: she'll be right down. A flash of the puckish, spirited Zelda we met in Montgomery.

INT. VILLA MARIE - SAME

We FOLLOW Zelda as she makes her way through the house -- the interior every bit as elegant and old world as the exterior.

She AD-LIBS INSTRUCTIONS to the NANNIE, gives SCOTTIE a kiss goodbye...

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE - VILLA MARIE - SAME

Scott is at his desk: a typewriter, a glass, and a carafe of water. He is writing long hand, sunk in the rabbit-hole of concentration.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ON ZELDA

She's at the door, peering in, beach tote in hand, dressed for a day at the shore...

She watches him work, as awestruck by his gift for focus and discipline as he is by her spontaneity.

She approaches silently, kisses him lightly on the back of his neck. He nearly starts.

ZELDA

(smiling)

Sara and Gerald are waiting downstairs...

SCOTT

Don't have too much fun without me...

ZELDA

Impossible, Gofo...

SCOTT

(eager)

I've figured out the whole first third of the novel...

ZELDA

I just knew this place would be good to us...

Scott nods. Zelda's eyes shine with deep satisfaction on his behalf.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

So I'll leave you to it --

She heads off... A half beat, and Scott is out of his chair with his pad in hand.

SCOTT

Wait!

EXT. STAIRCASE - SAME

Zelda all but dances down the steps to the front door. Scott comes down after her...

SCOTT

"Among Ashes and Millionaires!"

ZELDA

Too judgemental.

Her replies are instantaneous and unfiltered...

SCOTT

"The High-Bouncing Lover?"

ZELDA

That is you my Dear!

SCOTT

Okay... One more: "The Great Gatsby!"

She's at the door and pauses, turns to look up at him. Her face brightens...

ZELDA

That's the one...

Scott nods: he craves her approval and basks in receiving it as he watches her exit with the Nanny and Scottie in tow.

EXT. LA GAROUPE BEACH - DAY

Zelda and Sara walk along the wet sand. In the b.g., Gerald, the Children, and OTHERS are ensconced with chairs and towels beneath an umbrella in the sand.

Zelda gathers shells and pretty stones as they walk.

ZELDA

(suddenly)

Sara?

Sara, ever serene, looks up from her magazine.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

When did you know you were an artist?

Sara isn't sure she understands the question...

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

I mean was there a moment when suddenly you knew: "I'm here on this earth to paint?"

SARA

(smiling)

Well it helped that my father manufactured ink -- if that's what you mean... I've been drawing ever since I can remember. So painting sets -- well it's just drawing writ large, isn't it?

Zelda takes this in...

SARA (CONT'D)

Why do you ask, Dear?

Her tone and manner is almost maternal...

ZELDA

I don't know... I suppose I wish I had some particular talent...

SARA

My God Zelda! You're the most creative person I know -- there's nothing you do that isn't --

Zelda tosses her a skeptical look.

SARA (CONT'D)

In fact just this morning, watching you come down the drive in that white sundress of yours... I was thinking I'd like one just like it, and that I hadn't seen it in the shops -- then realized that it's one you had made yourself...

Zelda considers this: could Sara be right?

ZELDA

My *mother* taught me to sew. It's what she thought a well bred woman had to know...

(beat)

I used to dance --

Her thoughts are interrupted by the BUZZ of Jozan's bi-plane as it sweeps through the sky just above them.

Zelda tips her head skyward with a beaming smile and waves -- relieved to have the distraction from her own concerns...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Edouard!

EXT. LA GAROUPE BEACH - AFTERNOON

Zelda and Jozan are the water's edge, bronzed and half-wet, building a sand-castle -- not the "drip" sort we saw Zelda create earlier with the children.

This is something more constructed, architectural: a fantasy home... And the two of them work in perfect, silent collaboration, forming walls, carving out windows and stairs.

Jozan stops to watch her work, her front teeth digging into her lower lip.

Zelda suddenly pauses, sensing his eyes on her: she looks up.

ZELDA

Qu-est-ce qu'il y a?

Her French is nearly fluent... He responds in kind, so their whole exchange is in French, w/ Subtitles.

JOZAN

I was thinking we could build this house...

ZELDA

Isn't that what we're doing...?

JOZAN

I mean on a cliff.

He doesn't give her time to negate him, but instead looks around, then points into the distance.

JOZAN (CONT'D)

Say that one there... A bedroom, with a grand picture window that looks out over the sea...

Zelda stares at him, blushing... She swallows hard, then shakes her head ever so slightly...

They are both so distracted by their exchange that they don't see the large wave sneak up behind them: it crashes down just shy of them.

Zelda SQUEALS with LAUGHTER in the spray of the water, and Jozan throws himself in front of the sand castle. But the tongue of the water creeps up and over him.

As it retreats, it takes the sand castle with it...

INT. VILLA MARIE - DUSK

Zelda enters the house.

ZELDA

Gofo!

CONTINUED:

SILENCE.

SCOTTIE

Mama!

The baby toddles out of the kitchen area, the Nanny just behind her. Zelda scoops the baby up in her arms...

ZELDA

My very own little princess!

Scottie glows in the high beam of her mother's attention.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Come -- let's go find Daddy.

AT THE DOOR TO SCOTT'S STUDY: Zelda knocks on the door with her free hand. SILENCE... She turns the knob and peers in. Scott is so immersed in writing, that he doesn't register their presence...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

(quiet)

Gofo...

(a bit louder)

Scott...

He looks up as if stepping out of a dream.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

We're going to the Murphys in about an hour --

Scott's face wrinkles with annoyance.

SCOTT

Not tonight --

ZELDA

What do you mean "not tonight" -- we've made plans.

SCOTT

Then cancel them -- Or go on your own.

The exchange becomes more contentious; Scottie begins to squirm in Zelda's arms...

ZELDA

And tell them what?

SCOTT

The truth: that I'm in the thick of a chapter --

ZELDA

Just leave it for an hour or two -- it'll be there when we get back --

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT

No! It *won't*! It's here now! You know how hard this is for me... For once it's flowing through me.

(he gestures to his head)

I have to write it now... Or I'll lose it...

ZELDA

There's a world of things you might lose!

SCOTT

(bursting)

For the love of God, Zelda!

With that, Scottie joins in the fray with a piercing WAIL...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Can't you leave me alone! Just *once*!  
Can't you let me work...?

ZELDA

That's what you want?

SCOTT

That's ALL I want!

Scottie continues to BAWL; the Nanny appears in the hallway, and rushes to take Scottie off of Zelda's hands.

ZELDA

(yelling)

And Mr. F. Scott Fitzgerald always gets what he wants!

And she's gone.

EXT. HOTEL DU CAP - THE MURPHY'S VILLA

Zelda is at the door alone. She KNOCKS.

SARA (O.S.)

Will someone please get that?

The door opens: Zelda is pleasantly surprised to see **Jozan**.

INT. VILLA MARIE - LATE NIGHT

Home from the party, Zelda wanders through the house, aimless. Her footsteps echo in the emptiness of the rooms.

Then she sees the car keys hanging from a hook on the wall near the front door.

INT. SCOTT'S OFFICE - VILLA MARIE - MOMENTS LATER

Zelda appears at the door to his office, **car keys** in hand.

ZELDA  
I feel like taking a drive -- care to  
join me...?

Scott pops from his chair, and as if he never heard the question, begins to pace and read excitedly from the pad in his hand...

SCOTT  
Just listen to this: "... Daisy  
tumbled short of his dreams -- not  
through her own fault, but because of  
the colossal vitality of his illusion.  
It had gone beyond her, beyond  
everything. "

Zelda watches from the threshold, her eyes tearing up...

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
"He had thrown himself into it with a  
creative passion, adding to it all the  
time, decking it out with every bright  
feather that drifted his way. No amount  
of fire or freshness can challenge what  
a man will store up in his ghostly  
heart..." What do you think?

But when he looks up, Zelda is gone...

EXT. BEACH - BELOW THE VILLA MARIE - NIGHT

A long stretch of deserted shore. Zelda is there alone, letting the ocean lap at her feet.

JOZAN (O.S.)  
Close your eyes...

Zelda smiles at the sound of the familiar VOICE.

JOZAN (CONT'D)  
Do you trust me?

ZELDA  
Oh... I like this game...

JOZAN  
Different rules...

ZELDA  
How can I trust you if you're changing  
the rules...?

JOZAN  
I will show you that you can --

CONTINUED:

ZELDA  
Now what's the fun in that?

JOZAN  
Keep your eyes closed, you will see --

ZELDA  
Maybe we'd all see a whole lot better  
with our eyes closed. 'Cause keeping  
them open doesn't seem to prevent us  
from missing what's all but sitting  
right there at the end of our nose...

As Zelda speaks, Jozan has begun to unbutton the back of her  
cotton dress. And for every button undone, he bestows a  
kiss, going down her spine.

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
What's the word for this?

JOZAN  
(bestowing a kiss)  
Un baisier...

ZELDA  
No. Not that... *That*... The way I'm  
all over hot and cold and if you touch  
me again I just might never catch my  
breath --

His tenderness and attentiveness are a long way from Scott's  
more urgent, hungry physicality...

JOZAN  
I think there is no sufficient word for  
this in any language.

INT. VILLA MARIE - BEDROOM - LATE MORNING

Zelda is packing up her things.

SCOTT  
Zelda?

She continues to pack.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Zelda -- what's gotten into you?

She glances up at him, her expression enigmatic. Then goes  
back to packing.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
(bursting)  
What in God's name are you doing!

She winces at his outburst, but continues, methodically to  
fill her bag.

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I'm in the middle of reading something to you -- looking for help -- and the next thing I know you're gone... And I'm up all fucking night in a flop sweat because I'm certain you've driven the car over a cliff!

She looks at him now, as if to point out: "Well I didn't."

SCOTT (CONT'D)

For Christ's sake, say something!

ZELDA

(beat)

I want a divorce, Scott...

SCOTT

(sardonic laugh)

You *what* ?

ZELDA

I'll assume that's rhetorical --

They start talking over one another.

SCOTT

This is a joke...

ZELDA

I assure you it's not --

SCOTT

If you're trying to get my attention -- this is NOT the way to do it --

ZELDA

Oh no -- ? You haven't spent this much time talking to me in the last three weeks combined...

SCOTT

Just as I'm doing my best work --

ZELDA

You should be relieved! I'll be gone -- you can work in peace --

SCOTT

You want to destroy me -- is that it?

ZELDA

Far from it: I want to leave you alone. That's what you said you wanted. To be left alone. A divorce just makes it legal --

SCOTT

I couldn't possibly divorce you --

CONTINUED: (2)

The condescension is almost as thick as the anger. Zelda looks at him, defiant...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You don't know the first thing about taking care of yourself -- or anyone else for that matter -- You have no skills -- no way to make a living -- not to mention what you'd do with Scottie! You wouldn't last six minutes on your own --

ZELDA

I'm not *on* my own, Scott...

It's a blow: Scott goes silent. Then:

SCOTT

(dawning on him)

The Aviator...

Zelda meets his gaze.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Strapping man -- that Lozan --

ZELDA

Jo-zan --

SCOTT

You've been working on your accent --

ZELDA

I'm in love with him --

SCOTT

You want felicitations --

ZELDA

(fierce)

I want my life back!

SCOTT

Then let him come over here like a man and ask me for it!

ZELDA

Ask you for it!? Like some bauble you're going to trade out --

SCOTT

If you're a bauble it's because that's what you wanted:

(mocking her)

"I feel like you had me ordered -- and I was delivered to you -- to be worn. I want you to wear me like a watch charm, or a button hole bouquet -- to the world."

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(beat)

Those are *your* words, not mine!

ZELDA

Are they? I didn't know I had any of my own words left, as you seem to have appropriated every last one!

SCOTT

(almost bitchy)

I like to give credit, where it's due.

ZELDA

Well the day my diary turns up, you let me know...

SCOTT

You gave it to me...

ZELDA

I also gave myself. And you've nearly used me up. Will you dispose of me as well?

There is so much truth in that, Scott has no reply. After a beat, Scott steps away, then out of the room. We HEAR the CLICK of a LOCK from the other side.

Zelda approaches the door.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Is this it, Gofo?

(beat)

What you've always wanted? Your wild little rabbit in a cage? You can't shut me away for too long. You'll run out of material. I can't wait to see what you'll make of my affair: will he commit suicide? Or maybe he'll be murdered?

She has every faith that he is right there listening.

ON SCOTT

And he is, ear to the door, tears streaming down his face, as he submits to the unsavory truth.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

There were moments -- I wasn't sure -- I thought you'd all but contrived for it to happen. Like the plot was already written: I was just acting my part...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

CONTINUED:

The sequence of images shows us a woman turning inward -- the only way "out" of her emotional and financial prison:

\* Zelda is perched in front of the window, facing the water, where along a small stretch of sand, Jozan lingers about.

SCOTT (V.O.)  
(composing the  
letter)  
*"You and I haven't been happy just  
once. We've been happy a thousand  
times."*

\* Zelda sleeps.

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*"The chances that the spring may belong  
to us are pretty bright because as  
usual..."*

\* The bi-plane rolling and turning against a blue sky, and then reflected in the water...

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*"I can carry most of contemporary  
literary opinion, liquidated, in the  
hollow of my hand."*

\* Zelda wakes with a start...

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*"And when I do, I see the swan floating  
on it and-- I find it to be you and you  
only... "*

\* Zelda on the bed, smoking a cigarette and blowing smoke rings. Staring at the smoke rings, she seems to lose herself in them.

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*"But, Swan, float lightly, because by  
the exquisite curve of your neck the  
gods gave you some special favor..."*

\* The smoke rings, shifting, and undulant, like the water.

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*"And even though you fractured it  
running against some man-made bridge,  
it can heal and you can sail onward."*

\* Zelda's at the window looking out: the small stretch of sand is empty today.

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*"Forget the past... Turn about and swim  
back home to me, to your haven..."*

\* UNDERWATER, sun beams rippling in the clear blue sea, as Zelda and Scott plunge beneath the surface, hand in hand,

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*" -- Even though it may seem a dark cave  
at times and lit with torches of fury; it  
is the best refuge for you -- "*

\* Zelda, asleep, wakes with a YELP, as the cigarette has burned down to her flesh.

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*"Turn gently... and sail back..."*

\* A letter appears beneath the door: it is from Scott. Zelda picks it up like something precious, which might shatter...

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*"The good things... stay with me  
forever, and you should feel like I do -  
- that they can be renewed..."*

She opens it carefully, and walking back toward the window, she reads...

SCOTT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*"I love you my darling, darling..."*

Zelda glances up, lingers there a moment, then flips the face of her platinum watch, so she can see the inscription:

ZELDA

(just barely audible)

From Scott to Zelda...

Then she steps from the window, and returns to the bedroom door. She hesitates before reaching for the knob.

When she does, it gives no resistance when she turns it... The door has been open all along: to some degree her isolation was self-imposed...

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN SEA - DAY

Zelda is back in the ocean, swimming offshore...

INT. HOTEL DU CAP - THE MURPHY'S VILLA - NIGHT

All the usual suspects from the New York set including John Bishop and his WIFE, ARCHIBALD & ADA MACLEISH, and a host of NEWER FACES from Europe...

Food and liquor alike are plentiful. Zelda, more withdrawn than usual, moves through the crowd, like an observant phantom.

She pauses a moment, catching sight of Scott across the room, in an animated discussion with a tall, powerful YOUNG MAN dressed in a torn fisherman's shirt, and ragged workingman's pants: ERNEST HEMINGWAY.

CONTINUED:

ON SCOTT & ERNEST: Scott, animated by liquor, is on a tear:

SCOTT

The brief episodes, the hard hammered words, the staccato sentences -- altogether a remarkable expression of the world as you see it --

ON ZELDA: as she slips her dress off her shoulders, letting it fall in a puddle around her feet... She steps out of her shoes, and in nothing but a silken shift, walks barefoot through the crowd toward Scott...

The two men remain oblivious, as all around them the room goes quiet... All eyes but Scott's are on Zelda.

She keeps a steady eye on him, as if willing him to notice her... But he doesn't: he's too taken with Hemingway.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I took the liberty of sending the manuscript to Max --

HEMINGWAY

(with disbelief)

-- Perkins?

And now, Zelda appears at Scott's side, dressed ONLY IN HER SLIP, and drapes herself around Scott.

ZELDA

Care for a swim?

Scott turns now, seeing her as if she'd just materialized before him...

Hemingway is clearly alarmed; Zelda's "Mona Lisa" smile suggests she takes a certain pleasure in his discomfort.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Come on Gofo -- I dare you...

EXT. HOTEL DU CAP - NIGHT

In his boxers, Scott follows Zelda out to the promontory, over which the hotel is built. A half-moon hangs in the sky.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE TERRACE & CLIFFSIDE

The Murphys and OTHERS, gather to watch...

Zelda, absorbed in thought, walks to the cliff's edge, and scrambles easily down the hill to the lowest of the notches.

Scott, less nimble, and clearly more inebriated, follows.

A few of the Men on the terrace yell out: "That'a boy!"  
"Don't let a woman show you up!"

CONTINUED:

The Crowd watches: MOST are dumbstruck, SOME are impressed, a FEW are concerned -- Sara and Gerald among them.

SARA  
(to Gerald, quiet)  
What goes on in that girl's head...

Zelda steps up to the notch, and she's about to dive:

MAN (O.S.)  
(distant)  
Take the high dive!

Zelda turns to look at the Murphy's terrace.

Sara is visibly disturbed by the suggestion...

SARA  
You don't think she has enough bright  
ideas of her own --

But other VOICES join in, until half the party is CHANTING:

GROUP  
High dive, high dive, high dive!

Scott as just scrambled up to join her. But Zelda, accepting the implied dare without a second thought, begins to climb to the highest notch. Below, the CRASH of the WATER against the rocks is the only sound.

Hemingway appears behind Sara...

HEMINGWAY  
She's a lunatic...

SARA  
Any more lunatic than men at war?

HEMINGWAY  
If she doesn't kill him on that cliff,  
she'll do it some other way -- spending  
his money the way she does --

Sara turns on him, in a stage whisper...

SARA  
Am I the only one who sees that money  
means more to Scott than almost  
anything else!? He resents it -- and  
people who have it, including his wife.  
But he also craves it... And if he  
doesn't manage to make enough of it,  
he'll die of drink and anger long  
before she has a hand in it...

Hemingway allows himself to be chastened momentarily as they both turn their attention to the cliffs.

CONTINUED: (2)

Zelda reaches the highest notch, and steps to the edge.  
Scott scrambles up behind her -- winded from the climb.

The whole party is gathered on the terrace. We HEAR MUTTERING  
and COMMENTARY:

MAN'S VOICE

Her sense of timing better be good --  
or she'll dive right into nothing but  
rocks.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Does anyone know? Is the tide in, or  
out?

Zelda and Scott, small against the sheer face of the cliff,  
their skin slick under a pale moon. They stand side by side  
at the edge, knees bent, arms back, leaning into the void...

The image is a virtual negative of their joyful leap into the  
sun...

And then their arms are in motion, rushing upwards and: Zelda  
takes off like an animal born to the act, soaring out over  
the abyss, then vanishing into it.

Scott remains alone on the cliff... He turns to look at the  
Crowd on the terrace; even at this distance, his fear for her  
is palpable. He looks back down at the water...

Zelda surfaces, her face caught for a flash in the moonlight.

INT. HOTEL DU CAP - THE MURPHY'S VILLA - MASTER BATH - LATER

Zelda is in the bath. Sara enters with a towel, and leaves it  
on the rim of the tub. Sara is about to take her leave, then  
pauses.

SARA

You know -- that was an awfully  
dangerous thing to do --

Zelda smiles, and in her most languid, husky voice:

ZELDA

But Say-ra -- Don't you know -- we  
don't believe in conservation...

Then with a playful wink, Zelda slips down beneath the  
surface to rinse her hair. After a beat, Sara steps out.

EXT. VILLA MARIE - DAY

Zelda is in the garden, setting up an easel. Scott wanders  
out, speaking as he approaches.

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

Should it be "Trimalchio in West Egg?  
That's the working title. Or simply  
"Trimalchio?" Or "Gatsby: The High  
Bouncing Lover."

Zelda starts mixing paints on a palette.

ZELDA

Whatever happened to "The Great  
Gatsby?"

SCOTT

You still like it?

He's immediately responsive to her input -- almost needy. And only now, as he's about to head back inside, does he notice what she's been doing.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You're *painting* ?

ZELDA

Why not?

Scott shrugs...

SCOTT

Well I don't know... Certainly you can  
sketch. You're right: painting will be  
a nice change of pace...

And with that, she watches he heads back toward the house her heart breaking on the spot at his indifference...

CLOSE ON WORDS AS THEY STREAM FROM THE TIP OF A PEN

*"Gatsby: '... She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours.' "*

*"He broke off."*

INT. VILLA MARRIE - STUDY - SAME

Scott is at his desk which faces a window. He pauses, looks out to see Zelda at her easel. The image is almost pastoral.

He starts writing again: the pen moves along, SCOTT SPEAKS the lines under his breath as he composes...

*"Nick: 'I wouldn't ask too much of her,' I ventured. You can't repeat the past."*

*"Gatsby: 'Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can! I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before. She'll see...'" "*

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON ZELDA'S HAND

As she draws a picture of Jay Gatsby.

SCOTT (O.S.)  
Gatsby has one of those smiles... It's  
understanding. No -- more than  
understanding...

EXT. VILLA MARIE - VERANDA - LATE AFTERNOON

Zelda is there with Scott; the table is littered with  
drawings of Gatsby -- each slightly different.

ZELDA  
So -- More like you --

The sun dips on the ocean horizon. Zelda, in her bathing  
suit, is slim and berry brown. They are sipping Cinzano, and  
collaborating. The scene is almost idyllic. She is happy.

SCOTT  
No. Not like me. I'm... I'm too  
delicate. He's stronger. More  
athletic.

She finishes one more sketch, and leaves it on the table  
while she rises to get a cigarette. Scott's face lights up.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Yes! That's him! *That's* Jay Gatsby!

Ebullient, he picks her up and whirls her about, then gazes  
at her -- grateful.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
You know my dear -- If I weren't me --  
I'd want to be you...

Zelda looks up at him, basking in his praise...

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
You draw the same way you dance, or  
swim, or eat. Even the way you speak.  
The way you do everything. Effortless.  
I've never been able to write that way.

ZELDA  
Scott -- You write the way a genius  
writes -- however that is --

SCOTT  
No... I have to wring myself for every  
word. And each one more hobbled by  
liquor and ambition than the next. No -  
- You are the artist. Not me.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You embody it. With every gesture. With your fearlessness. Your lack of artifice. I have to manufacture it. And when I do, I make sure to tell the world about it, because God forbid I should fall short of my own delusions of grandeur...

Zelda smiles... When Scott is sober, his self-awareness is so acute -- and part of why she loves him.

ZELDA

Well -- if everything's so effortless -- you'd think I'd have something to show for it...

Scott points to the drawing.

SCOTT

That's something.

ZELDA

Gofo -- No one'll ever see it but you --

SCOTT

That used to be enough.

He says this with a sense of loss and sadness, not anger.

ZELDA

I know.

She says nothing more.

SCOTT

And what about the columns -- and the short stories?

ZELDA

(smiling)

You mean the ones published under your name?

Scott takes this in. Then after a beat:

SCOTT

I have to go back to work.

Before he's stepped inside, she ventures another thought.

ZELDA

Scott... I'm twenty-six years old. And I am, in every respect, a useless thing...

Words all the darker for the calm with which she says them.

SCOTT

Zelda --

CONTINUED: (2)

ZELDA

No, no... Let me -- just listen: I'm an amateur dancer, an uncredited writer, an untried actress, a novice painter... In fact I don't really know anything that's appropriate for someone my age. As a wife -- well I went ahead and bungled that but good...

She smiles even through tears.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Let's see? What else... As a mother? I think we both knew it wasn't going to be my strong suit... Though neither one of us dared to speculate on just what a colossal disappointment I'd prove to be. Honestly, Goofy -- She'd be better off in the care of a goat...

(beat)

I want to be really good at something. Just one thing. Good enough to call it mine.

Scott doesn't know what to say in the face of these truths laid bare. Faced with his own fear and confusion, he lashes out:

SCOTT

Why are you saying this now?

ZELDA

Because it's true. I just didn't know it til now --

SCOTT

You couldn't wait until I'd finished with work --

ZELDA

Work!?! We've been working all day! Look at these --

She snatches at a handful of drawings on the table.

SCOTT

This is just like you --

And now they are yelling over each other.

ZELDA

How many -- Let's count -- all your precious Mr. Gatsby's --

And she begins to count, sending each one over the balcony on a current of air as she does.

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOTT

For every day I work on the novel,  
there are twenty I spend on that drivel  
for the magazines just to service this  
burlesque you call a lifestyle!

ZELDA

Is it burlesque or tragedy!?

SCOTT

You're doing this to ruin me -- Christ!  
I'll be doing short stories til I choke  
on them!

And he's gone.

EXT. HOTEL DU CAP - THE MURPHY'S VILLA - NIGHT

Scott BANGS on the door, candle in hand, his whole body  
quaking in panic. Sara YELLS from inside the house:

SARA

Scott! Go away! It's 4 a.m. for the  
love of God!

But Scott continues to BANG on the door until Sara opens the  
door -- Gerald appears just behind her.

SARA (CONT'D)

Dammit Scott! You are so juvenile!

Then she registers the agony in his face. Without another  
word, Sara and Gerald follow Scott out into the rain:

INT. VILLA MARIE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Zelda's body is draped over Gerald, as the latter walks her  
back and forth. Scott is slumped on the floor, drinking from  
his flask and going to pieces. Sara is looking at a bottle of  
pills, now empty.

SARA

How many of these did she take?

Scott, MURMURING to himself, doesn't hear the question.

SCOTT

I don't know. Maybe it was half full.

Sara picks up an open bottle of olive oil, and fills a spoon  
with it. She approaches Zelda with the spoon...

ZELDA

Oh... No more, Sara... Please don't  
make me take that... Too much oil  
and... And I will spoil! Spoiled. I am  
already!

(a giddy laugh)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Or soiled? That too... Boil. Foil.  
Loyal. Some princess I am... I'm so  
sorry Gofo...

Scott is on his knees in front of her, so stricken by the possibility of losing her...

SCOTT

I beg you. Turn about. Swim back...  
We'll be happy again. I promise you.  
We'll be happy.

INT. MURPHY'S VILLA - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

A wan looking Zelda, is there with Scott, Sara, Gerald, Ernest, his wife, HADLEY, and the MacLeishes are there along with a few OTHERS. MUSIC plays on a record player in the b.g.

Scott is hammered, plying Ernest and Hadley with questions:

SCOTT

Alright -- Tell the truth: did you  
sleep together before you were married?

And now Sara has had enough:

SARA

Scott! You think you if you can just  
ask enough questions you'll get to know  
what people are like?

As Sara tears into him, Zelda observes the exchange, impassive, then rises from her seat.

SARA (CONT'D)

But you won't. You don't really know  
anything at all about people!

Scott's face bloats with anger, he rises and heads for the bar, pours himself another drink... But before he can knock it back, he's distracted:

Zelda, her skirts above her waist, is dancing to the MUSIC...

Sara, Gerald, and the others sit motionless, watching her.

But Zelda is oblivious to her audience. She is not dancing for them. But for herself... She looks neither right, nor left; she catches no one's eye.

Instead, she seems to sink deep inside herself, as she surrenders herself to the rhythm, yet not once does she appear clownish.

HEMINGWAY

I don't care what you say Sara, he's  
got terrible odds against him...

CONTINUED:

SARA

Sales will pick up -- *Gatsby's* a masterpiece --

HEMINGWAY

I'm talking about *Zelda*...

SARA

Without her he'd have no odds at all.

HEMINGWAY

She's unhinged --

GERALD

No less than he.

(beat)

They're a pair of conspirators -- in search of the same Holy Grail... Watch them. You'll see a look come over them as though they're being drawn together, waiting for something to happen. They're looking forward to something fantastic. Something extravagant.

HEMINGWAY

Well he's going to follow her right into the bughouse if he's not careful --

SARA

Try not to hold it against him, Ernest. He's been good to you. Everyone needs what they need: he needs her.

INT. FITZGERALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Scott is at the wheel, with a bottle of champagne braced between his knees. *Zelda* is next to him; Hemingway and Archibald MacLeish are squeezed into the rumble seat.

INT. MURPHY'S CAR - SAME

Gerald, Sara, Ada, and Hadley are just behind Scott.

SARA

Half the time he takes this curve, I swear he's going off the cliff...

INT. FITZGERALD'S CAR - SAME

Scott takes a swig from the bottle of champagne.

SCOTT

Here's to the king of the Second Rates!

He takes one more swig from the bottle.

CONTINUED:

And now, as Scott pulls off the roadside onto a gravel area. Rather than slow down, he begins to put on speed.

INT. MURPHY'S CAR - SAME

Gerald, Sara, Ada, and Hadley blanch white.

INT. FITZGERALD'S CAR - SAME

He swerves so that the car nearly turns over, as it rounds the gravel patch... And then, Scott revs the motor, and drives straight for the cliff...

INT. MURPHY'S CAR - SAME

Sara is at once terrified and outraged.

SARA

I swear I will kill him if he survives.

INT. FITZGERALD'S CAR - SAME

They are coming fast upon the edge of the cliff...

And just as it appears they are about to go over, Scott JAMS on the brakes, bringing the car to a precarious stop. Scott hops out of the car, red faced and HOWLING with LAUGHTER. But he's cut short, when Hemingway, MacLeish, and Gerald come barrelling at him:

HEMINGWAY

You piss-for-brains son-of-whore!

MACLEISH

You might have a death-wish, but I'll be goddamned if you take me with you!

SCOTT

Where's your sense of humor!

GERALD

Scott! Are you deranged!

Zelda looks on with blank indifference, as the Men set upon Scott, and wrestle him to the ground. Hemingway throws a punch, but Gerald deflects it before it lands... Zelda turns to head inside. Scott, pinned to the ground, looks up at the three men with an incongruous grin.

GERALD

How can genius be so perfectly senseless.

Scott's LAUGHTER is all bitterness.

SCOTT

*Gatsby*: my best work, my worst sales.  
*That*, my dear Gerald, is senseless...

EXT. ELLERSLIE - DUSK

**SUPER: WILMINGTON, DELAWARE ELLERSLIE ESTATES MARCH 1927**

A sprawling, Greek Revival mansion, with two stories, and massive Doric Columns along the front.

INT. ELLERSLIE - FOYER - SAME

All the FAMILIAR FACES (Mencken, Sara Haardt, Carl Van Vechten, Ludlow Fowler, etc...) as Zelda slips into the role of hostess -- only where there used to be warmth, there is a self-ironic edge. She's in disguise, and she knows it.

Max Perkins and his WIFE enter: Zelda moves to greet them.

The VALET helps remove their coats. Max takes a quick look around and exchanges a knowing look with Zelda, as they move into the main part of the house:

PERKINS

(ironic)

Hooray for Hollywood?

ZELDA

I thought we'd never get out of there --

PERKINS

I heard...Eight weeks of work -- for nothing. And I still haven't gotten his chapters...

ZELDA

It's going so slow, it could be serialized in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

They walk past the open door to the KITCHEN: Scott, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, is stacking cases of bootlegged liquor as another YOUNG MAN unloads them from a truck just outside the service door.

Lois is perched on a stool, CHATTERING away... Zelda, Max, and his Wife, move on.

PERKINS

I suggested this place because I thought it would be far enough away from the distractions.

ZELDA

It was alright when he drank while he wasn't working. But now -- he claims he can't work unless he's tight...

This is news to Max...

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

I've been toying with some ideas myself. Maybe even a novel...

She's tentative, testing his receptiveness.

PERKINS

I'll read anything you send. Always.

Zelda nods, smiles, then releases them to the CROWD. She stands there a moment, watching after them, chewing on her lower lip.

A WAITER passes out of the KITCHEN carrying a fresh tray of Champagne. Zelda helps herself to one as he goes by, and then downs it like a glass of lemonade.

EXT. ELLERSLIE - NIGHT

A BAND plays off to the side of a dance floor, where Zelda, uncharacteristically drunk, is dancing with Lawton Campbell.

But she has her eye on Scott, who is dancing with Lois Moran, a 17-year-old actress he met in Hollywood...

It recalls the day Scott and Zelda met, watching each other on the dance floor, only now, where there was once desire, there is only suspicion.

The couples move around the floor such that Zelda and Scott find themselves back-to-back.

Lawton takes the opportunity to get a good look at Lois.

ZELDA

Lois Moran, his Hollywood souvenir. A face so fresh you want to slap it.

(then)

She'll turn up in his next book with all sorts of quixotic endowments --

LAWTON

Zelda -- She's a child... You're all worked up for nothing.

ZELDA

(on a tear)

Now *that* would be a first: he'll have exercised his imagination enough to create something worthy of the term "fiction."

SCOTT

(to Lois)

You'd be irresistible in a pair of boxer shorts...

The word hits Zelda like a cattle prod, and she whips away from Lawton, to face Scott.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA  
What was that?

LOIS  
(giggling)  
Men's boxers? I don't think  
I've ever seen a pair --

Scott turns around, startled.

ZELDA  
Repeat what you just said...

LOIS  
(prompting,  
oblivious)  
About the boxers...

And before Scott can react, Zelda's hand connects with the side of his face.

ZELDA  
How much more of me are you going to  
take! Is nothing sacred!?  
(to the Party)  
I'm the one who wears boxers! It was  
my idea! Not his!

As she speaks, she removes the **platinum watch he gave her**  
from her wrist.

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
I'm also the one who dives into  
fountains! And from Eden Roc -- so when  
you read about that -- remember --  
that's *me!*

Now she throws the watch--hard--right at Scott. It zips by  
his head and crashes into the wall behind him.

SCOTT  
You want to explain that?

Zelda shrugs.

ZELDA  
I was done with it.

Scott lets out a harsh cough-of-a-laugh...

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
A bold gesture though. The critics will  
moon over it when it appears in your  
next piece of work. And call you ever  
so original...

SCOTT  
Zelda--

She looks right at Lois:

ZELDA  
"Moran." Just one letter off --

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT

Don't be uncharitable --

ZELDA

I didn't say anything --

SCOTT

It's that look in your voice. And the tone on your face... At least the girl does something with herself. Something that requires not only talent -- but effort!

Zelda goes SILENT. The cruelty in Scott's remark is new to his repertoire. But she reels herself in so when she speaks, there's nothing hysterical about it:

ZELDA

But Gofo... There is *one* thing I do. For which I was fated to have a gift all too singular. And if you can't see it, it's only because I've put so much into it, that there's nothing left of me. You have it all: my words are yours; my stories are yours; my essays too; my mischief is yours. I've even tried to give you my death. But you're the author here, and I guess you've decided it's too early in the story for that... So I'm still here: Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald. Ask around. People will tell you I do that better than anybody.

As she says this, her voice BREAKS with despair; tears make tracks down her cheeks.

SCOTT

I don't have to ask anyone. I knew that the day we met.

Where a moment ago there was cruelty, now there is tenderness and resignation, not to mention truth: he did know better than she just how much of herself she'd sacrifice for him. And just how much he needed her to do so.

And then her focus is off of Scott: the whole room has long since stopped to watch, but it's only now that Zelda fully realizes it, and the humiliation is unbearable.

A rage bubbles up from within her:

ZELDA

No... No more...

Her eyes are glassy with fury and something darker still.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Not one more breath. Not one more thought. Take from her --

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
 (ré: the Guests)  
 From them -- !

Now even the band has stopped playing; the Guests stand silent, and watch as Zelda, in a froth of fury and tears, beats on Scott, and unravels before their eyes.

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
 But I'm keeping what's left of me...  
 It's mine now -- I belong to me now! I  
 belong to me!

CLOSE ON A VIAL OF MORPHINE

As it is sucked up into a syringe.

INT. ELLERSLIE - MASTER BEDROOM - SAME

Scott, Lawton, and one of the SERVANTS hold down a thrashing Zelda as a DOCTOR, 50, administers the morphine. Her body goes slack as she surrenders to the drug.

INT. ELLERSLIE - FOYER - DAY

The house is quiet. It's been several days since the party and Zelda has put the episode of her outburst behind her.

She's animated this morning, putting on her coat to leave, just as Scott enters the house, still drunk from a night of carousing...

SCOTT  
 You're heading out.

ZELDA  
 I'm going into Philly -- I found a  
 ballet studio --

SCOTT  
 You've got 29 rooms in which to dance.  
 Dance here.

ZELDA  
 I'll pay for it with what I earn from  
 the articles... I'm going to be good at  
 something --

SCOTT  
 Zelda -- ?

He is not critical here, but concerned.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

I can't live this way anymore. Like that little fish who swims about under a shark and, I believe, lives indelicately on its offal. I'm done with it.

INT. ELLERSLIE - EMPTY ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Zelda, reflected in the gilt frame mirror as she struggles to carry it, with the help of the HOUSE KEEPER, into one of the mansion's many unused rooms.

She is dressed in her dance gear: tights, skirt, leotard, and ballet shoes, and a simple, but delicate watch she picked up at the shop.

Scott appears in the doorway, watching the two women wrestle with the mirror without moving to help.

SCOTT

That thing looks like it belongs in a whore house.

Zelda ignores him. The two women set the mirror down, against the wall. Zelda checks the position, and satisfied, dismisses the Housekeeper with a nod. Then she drags a chair and places it so that she can use the back of it as a "bar."

She stands back now, reaches for the "bar" and assumes First Position, checking herself in the mirror.

Scott, drinking from his flask, continues to watch. Satisfied with the entire set up, she turns to a Victrola in the corner, and drops the needle onto a record.

And with the first note she begins her bar work to the tune of "The Parade of Wooden Soldiers," a nearly carnival like melody -- almost cartoonishly so: a clipped pace with drums and trumpets. Scott takes his leave.

THE NEXT SERIES OF IMAGES ARE CUT IN TIME TO "THE PARADE OF WOODEN SOLDIERS," A NEARLY CARNIVAL-LIKE MELODY, ALMOST CARTOONISHLY SO: A CLIPPED PACE WITH DRUMS AND TRUMPETS. IT BECOMES FASTER AND FASTER UNTIL BOTH THE MUSIC AND ZELDA'S MOVEMENTS TAKE ON A FRENZIED AND DISTORTED QUALITY.

A SERIES OF SHOTS, FROM WIDE TO CLOSE, WITH INCREASING SPEED

\* Zelda in the studio, working at the bar in class, her movements more fluid now, her clothing dark with sweat.

\* Scott sitting at his desk, the paper blank in front of him, a bottle of gin and a glass at hand.

\* Zelda working at home, in front of the mirror, her skin slippery with perspiration.

CONTINUED:

\* Scott writes a few lines.

\* Zelda does her first pirouette in class. Fumbles.

\* Scott crosses out his lines.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's FACE, as she whips her head around to complete two turns...

\* Scott pours himself a drink, and knocks it back.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's CALF MUSCLES, rippling as she rises on point.

\* Scott, just awake, in BATHROOM mirror, his hand shakes as he attempts to brush his teeth.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's FACE as she chugs back a glass of water.

\* Scott looks in the fridge for tomato juice, and finds only an empty bottle. He slams the door shut. Gets a glimpse of Zelda in a far room, jumping up and down in fifth position.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's FACE as she jumps up and down, appearing and disappearing in the mirror, again with increasing speed.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's FEET as she jumps in fifth position, switching fifths every time she lands.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's FACE as she whips around in pirouette once, twice, three, four, five times -- and with each turn, her face becomes more gaunt, her bones more pronounced, as if she were literally whittling away at herself...

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's EYES, the mirror and herself reflected in her pupil.

\* ON THE MIRROR where Zelda's REFLECTION is her 17 YEAR OLD SELF.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's EYES, blinking away the sweat from her brow spills past her eyelid.

\* ON THE MIRROR as the glass LIQUEFIES, becoming a pool of water -- clear at first, it grows darker, until it's nearly ink, and Zelda's reflection is blurred until it's gone in the blackness.

\* CLOSE ON ONE EYE: reflected in the pupil is the mirror, undulating, like something alive...

\* ON THE MIRROR as it appears to ripple, and then with an unholy PEAL, it SHATTERS as if from a blow behind the glass...

Zelda drops the floor, SCREAMING, covering her head with her arms, the mirror intact behind her.

Scott, reacting to the SCREAM, appears at the door.

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT

Zelda!

He moves to enter the room:

ZELDA

Scott, no!

She rises slightly from her crouch, gets to all fours, and looks around her... Her eyes go wide:

HER POV: the floor of the room is covered in shards of mirror, like small floating sheets of ice...

Zelda keeps her head low, as if uncertain that more won't come flying at her.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

(almost whispering)

Don't move. There's glass every-where. All around. You mustn't step on the pieces. They'll break, and I need to collect them. Put the mirror back together. And keep dancing.

Scott stands at the door, his face fractured with despair: there's nothing at all on the floor. The only thing that's shattered is her mind.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Gofo -- Will you help me...? Put it all back together?

Scott nods, tears spilling down his cheeks.

Zelda looks down, staring at her hands. She turns one over, and sees a red, oozing lesion: this is real -- not imagined. But she's not sure.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

**SUPER: PHIPPS PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE JANUARY, 1932**

Nurses attend to Zelda, whose body is now covered in red, oozing, psoriatic lesions. They baste her body with cream, and wrap her bandages.

She is wild eyed, MUTTERING to herself:

ZELDA

It's appalling. Horrific. What's going to become of me... I have to work. And I can't work. I have to die, and yet I must work. Let me go. I must go...

Scott appears at the small window on the door to her room, and looks in.

CONTINUED:

MAN (O.S.)

Mr. Fitzgerald?

Scott turns to see DR. THOMAS RENNIE, 40, young and affable.

DR. RENNIE

I'm Dr. Rennie... I'll be working with your wife along with Dr. Meyer...

Dr. Rennie softens to the visible despair on Scott's face.

DR. RENNIE (CONT'D)

Sometimes the body just can't contain the anguish of the mind... Especially one as expansive as your wife's... So the sores erupt like that, but they'll heal...

Scott nods, as if hearing him from a long way off. Then:

SCOTT

(almost a non sequitur)

You know -- it just about 10 days ago, she suddenly announced what sounded to me like an ultimatum -- a threat to go crazy.

The statement is laced with a yearning to understand, to make sense not only of her unraveling, but his own.

Dr. Rennie offers a sympathetic nod, then gestures for Scott to follow him.

EXT. PHIPPS INSTITUTE - SAME

Undulant green lawns unfurl in every direction. The setting is bucolic, peaceful. Scott walks with DR. MEYER, 65, a slight man with deep brown eyes, and Dr. Rennie.

DR. MEYER

(slight Germanic accent)

She is not what I would call strictly schizophrenic... Hers is more of a joint problem -- what I would call "*une folie à deux*..."

Scott is intrigued:

DR. MEYER (CONT'D)

Two people, intimately connected, with similar obsessions... The weaker of the two will eventually yield to the stronger, with the consequence that the identity of the first can become confused... Delusional. I believe her current condition -- the eczema -- is a largely psychosomatic expression of that confusion and anxiety.

CONTINUED:

Scott reaches for his flask, and takes a swig...

DR. MEYER (CONT'D)

In many of these cases it often happens that the disturbed individual will shed the delusions when separated from the other person.

Scott is repelled by the notion...

SCOTT

I get sick at the thought... I would be a ruined man for years -- Though its true: if you asked our friends, fifty percent would say that my drinking drove Zelda insane -- the other half would assure you that her insanity drove me to drink. And they would be unanimous in saying that each of us would be well rid of the other -- in full face of the irony that liquor on my mouth is sweet to her and I cherish her most extravagant hallucinations.

DR. MEYER

If you cannot see your way to a separation -- then her prognosis will depend entirely on your willingness to be treated as well --

SCOTT

Treated?

Dr. Meyer glances at the flask in his hand...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(bridling)

Dr. Meyer, my drinking does not get in the way of my ability to function in the real world --

DR. MEYER

I'm well aware --

SCOTT

And I will continue to drink -- if only because giving it up would give credence to her family's conviction -- -- that I am the cause of this catastrophe.

Dr. Meyer nods, painfully aware of the futility in arguing with a drunk...

DR. MEYER

I will do what I can. I want to put her on a fairly rigid schedule of activity to help her get her bearings. Routine can be effective that way --

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT

Well dancing is out of the question --  
and she may want to write, but the  
strain of it can be too much for her --  
so I suggest --

DR. MEYER

(cutting him off)

Mr. Fitzgerald -- I think it best if  
you are not involved as her  
caretaker... Dr. Rennie will be  
overseeing her daily activity...

Scott chafes at the suggestion...

DR. MEYER (CONT'D)

And I'm concerned that your visits  
might prove to be disruptive. So if I  
may ask that you give her some time.

The men stop walking: they've reached the entrance to the  
institute. Dr. Meyer and Scott regard one another...

After a beat, Scott nods: "I'll give her some time..." And  
he heads out the door, leaving Dr. Meyer and Dr. Rennie to  
exchange a knowing look of doubt...

A SERIES OF SHOTS AS ZELDA EMBARKS ON HER ROUTINE

\* Dr. Rennie pushes Zelda in a wheelchair through the lush  
gardens of the hospital grounds; she is still covered in  
sores.

\* Zelda, at the desk in her room, her hands still covered in  
red, open psioratic blisters, struggles nonetheless to find a  
comfortable fit for a pen in her hand...

DR. RENNIE

*"So much she loved the man -- "*

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's hand as she writes: *"Save me the Waltz."*

DR. RENNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*" -- so close and closer she felt  
herself -- "*

\* Zelda, her body still covered in sores, but no longer open  
wounds, swims in the hospital pool, supervised by a NURSE.

\* CLOSE ON Zelda's HAND as she writes haltingly with a pen.  
The sores on her hand are beginning to heal.

DR. RENNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*" -- that he became distorted in her  
vision -- "*

\* Zelda sits at a desk in her room, filling pad upon pad with  
writing... Her eczema is receding, her sores fading.

CONTINUED:

DR. RENNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*" -- like pressing her nose upon a  
mirror and gazing into her own eyes."*

\* Zelda and Dr. Rennie walk the hospital grounds in animated conversation. The sores are barely visible, though her skin is still flaking...

DR. RENNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*" She felt the essence of herself  
pulled finer and smaller like those  
streams of spun glass -- "*

\* CLOSE ON ZELDA'S HAND, the words flowing from her pen in an effortless stream.

DR. RENNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*" -- that pull and stretch till there  
remains but a glimmering illusion."*

\* Dr. Rennie peering over Zelda's shoulder as she writes, impressed. Her sores are now entirely gone.

DR. RENNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*"Neither falling nor breaking, the  
stream spins finer."*

INT. ZELDA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Zelda continues to write, as Dr. Rennie reads out loud from a page he has in his hand.

DR. RENNIE

(reading)

*"She felt herself very small and  
ecstatic. Alabama was in love."*

The words of course describe herself, as Dr. Rennie looks at her now, the fact is not lost him... She works in a nearly trance-like state, her skin not only free of the eczema, but glowing with health...

DR. RENNIE (CONT'D)

Zelda...

She doesn't seem to hear him... And for a moment, we see in Dr. Rennie a flash of that spell she has always cast: he too is enchanted.

DR. RENNIE (CONT'D)

Zelda!

She looks up now from her pad, her eyes bright and alive.

DR. RENNIE (CONT'D)

This is remarkable. Truly. If you  
keep this up, it'll be a success.

Her face blooms with gladness at the compliments.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

I should be done by the end of the week.

Dr. Rennie considers this, quizzical...

DR. RENNIE

A whole novel in 6 weeks...

Zelda shrugs...

ZELDA

If I could write as fast as I can think, it would have been done a week ago.

Dr. Rennie smiles.

INT. PHIPPS INSTITUTE - DR. MEYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Scott, red faced with indignation, rages at Dr. Meyer and Dr. Rennie both. Zelda's manuscript sits on the desk.

SCOTT

You let her send it to my editor without consulting me!

From their expression, neither Doctor expected such a violent reaction to the situation...

DR. RENNIE

She felt it would be wrong to impose on you --

SCOTT

(over him)  
Literally one whole section of this thing is an imitation of my own novel!  
(referring to the manuscript)  
I'm going to have to make some changes before I allow her to seriously compromise her future as well as my own. Now I'm going to go talk to her --

And turns to leave.

DR. MEYER

Not in *that* state, you're not...

Scott turns on him, his face distorted by something close to malice...

SCOTT

(fierce)  
Zelda is my wife !

DR. MEYER

(disarmingly calm)  
And she is my patient...  
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DR. MEYER (CONT'D)

As her doctor, I am obliged by oath to  
"first do no harm" -- you as her  
husband, are not...

Braced as if hit in the face by ice water, Scott picks up the  
manuscript and takes his leave without another word.

INT. A SMALL ROOM - PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

Pale green walls, and a table. Zelda, is there with Scott,  
Dr. Rennie and the Stenographer.

**SUPER: PHIPPS PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC, FEBRUARY 1932**

ZELDA

So -- What do you want from me?

SCOTT

I want you to do what I say. That is  
exactly what I want you to do, and you  
know it...

(beat)

I want you to stop writing fiction. You  
are a third rate writer and a third  
rate ballet dancer --

ZELDA

(flat)

You have told me that before --

SCOTT

I am the professional writer, with a  
huge following. I'm the highest paid  
short story writer in the world --

ZELDA

It seems to me you are making a rather  
violent attack on a third rate talent  
then --

SCOTT

(over her)

Now the difference between the  
professional and the amateur is  
something that is awfully intangible.

(to Dr. Rennie)

She has written some nice, little  
sketches. She has a satiric point of  
view. And some experiences to report.  
But she has nothing essentially to say.

ZELDA

Why in hell you are so jealous, I don't  
know. If I thought that about anybody,  
I wouldn't care what they wrote --

SCOTT

Because you are broaching at all times  
on my material -- !

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

For someone with so much material --  
you've taken an awfully long time --

SCOTT

(cutting her off)  
If I haven't published -- in what --  
six or seven years -- !

ZELDA

Eight --

SCOTT

(to Dr. Rennie)  
Three of those years were directly  
because of a sickness of hers, and two  
years before that indirectly, in that  
she wanted to be a ballet dancer!

As agitated as Scott gets, Zelda remains calm, almost  
"centered." It is Scott who appears unbalanced.

ZELDA

You mean you were drinking constantly.

Scott bridles at the remark.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Lucky for you we didn't divorce. Who  
would you have to blame then?

Dr. Rennie's expression suggests he doesn't disagree with  
that observation.

SCOTT

(as if in pain)  
I am being destroyed here. It is all  
unfair. The whole equipment of my life  
is to be a novelist --

ZELDA

(quipping)  
I am part of the "equipment" --

SCOTT

(bursting)  
But that is all you ever wanted! Look  
me at me... Look. At. Me!

Zelda turns to him.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(quiet)  
I dare you now -- to deny it. Say it  
out loud.

Zelda's eyes brim wet, she bites down hard on her bottom lip,  
already raw... Her fingers toy absently with her NEW watch.

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You've never loved me as much as you  
loved what I would make out of you.

She breaks skin. Her lip bleeds... Then she looks away.  
Scott glances at Dr. Rennie, as if to say: "You see."

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(calm now)

I am supporting you. It is all my  
material. None of it is yours.

ZELDA

(to Dr. Rennie,  
steady)

I tell you: my life has been so  
miserable that I would rather be in an  
asylum.

(to Scott)

Does that mean anything to you?

SCOTT

It does not mean a blessed thing.

ZELDA

Then I'll explain: it's impossible to  
live with you -- I want to live  
someplace that I can be my own self. I  
want to write, and I'm going to write --

SCOTT

(raising his voice)

It has got to be an unconditional  
surrender on her part. That is the only  
promise I can have. I want my own way --  
I've earned the right to my own way --

ZELDA

And I want the right of my own way --

SCOTT

(bellowing)

And you cannot have it without breaking  
me, so you have to give it up -- !

Zelda lets that last outburst hang in the air. She glances  
at Dr. Rennie, who is looking at Scott as if wondering  
whether or not they're treating the right patient.

A LONG SILENCE. Then very quietly, she ends the argument:

ZELDA

(almost confessional)

It is the great humiliation of my life  
that I cannot support myself. It's just  
something, one thing -- I can no longer  
abide. I simply cannot live in a world  
that is completely dependent on him.

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOTT

Well. Now we have found rock bottom...

Dr. Rennie looks from one to other, nodding. After a beat:

ZELDA

(to Scott,  
sympathetic)

You know what the matter is? You haven't written that book and if you ever do get it written, why, you won't feel so miserable and suspicious and mean towards everybody else.

SCOTT

It would have been written --

ZELDA

(finishing for him)

If it weren't for me... I know.

She glances down now, and reflexively, in search of comfort, she flips the watch face over, as if to read an engraved message which is not there...

Scott sees the gesture, his face softens with a rush of emotion:

SCOTT

But if it weren't for you, I might not have ever written at all.

And therein lies the impossible, unbearable truth of their connection, for which they now offer each other the most profound empathy.

ZELDA

What is our marriage, Goofy?

SCOTT

I don't know... In 1921, we were about the most envied couple in America.

Zelda considers this:

ZELDA

I guess so. We were awfully good showmen.

SCOTT

We were awfully happy...

FLASH BACK TO:

EXT. FRENCH RIVIERA - 1924 - DAY

ZELDA & SCOTT - WHERE WE FIRST MET THEM

Standing side by side on the cliffs of Eden Roc, drenched by the golden, late afternoon sun. Zelda gives him an ebullient glance then faces the ocean.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA  
One... Two... Three!

And they take a synchronous leap off the cliff, chasing the sun and the sea...

And the IMAGE FREEZES...

FADE TO BLACK.

WHITE TYPE (WITH ACTUAL PICTURES OF ZELDA AND SCOTT):

*Between the ages of 20 and 33, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote four great American novels.*

*After Zelda entered the sanitarium, he never completed another.*

*He died at the age of 40 from complications of cirrhosis of the liver.*

*Zelda died eight years later in a fire at the sanitarium.*

*Per the provision in her last will and testament, she was buried next to Scott at the Rockeville Union Cemetery in Maryland.*

**END CREDITS**