

**ZELDA**

An Original Screenplay

By

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OVER A BLACK SCREEN IN WHITE TYPE:

***"She suddenly announced what sounded to me like an ultimatum, a threat to go crazy."***

-- Scott Fitzgerald to Zelda's Doctor, 1933

CLOSE ON TYPED LETTERS: they appear from a stenotype machine, in response CLIPPED, HARSH WORDS between a MAN & a WOMAN. The persistent CLACKING of the machine continues OVER:

MAN (O.S.)

You are a third rate writer and a third rate ballet dancer...

WOMAN (O.S.)

(Flat)

You have told me that before.

CLOSE ON A MOUTH: lips are delicate, well articulated against the skin. Almost incongruously, the words that flow from them are accompanied by the Man's Voice.

MAN

I am the professional writer.

CLOSE ON LETTERS: SMACK! As they hit the blank page:

**Z-E-**

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

With a huge following.

CLOSE ON A NOSE: straight, almost Roman in its strength. It is unclear: this nose belongs to the Man or the Woman?

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I am the highest paid short story writer in the world...

CLOSE ON LETTERS

**Z-E-L-D-A**

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF EYES: they are deep set and smoldering.

INT. A SMALL ROOM - PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

Pale green walls, and a table. Seated at the table are the Woman and Man -- ZELDA & SCOTT FITZGERALD -- along with a gentleman in a white coat, DR. THOMAS RENNIE, 40.

**SUPER: BALTIMORE, MD - PHIPPS PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - FEB. 1932**

In the corner, a STENOGRAPHER works at her machine.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

(cutting in))

It seems to me you are making a rather violent attack on a third rate talent --

SCOTT

(over her, emphatic)

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 --

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 --

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.

CONTINUED: (2)

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  
(quiet, despairing)  
But that is all you ever wanted... Look  
me at me... Look. At. Me...

Zelda turns to him.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
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...

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.

CLOSE ON ZELDA'S YOUTHFUL FACE

It rises and breaks the surface of the clear blue water.

CONTINUED:

As shattered and spent as that face will be in 15 years, it is now excessively buoyant and spirited. She is physical splendor incarnate. Yet that is not what strikes you first. It is her eyes, lit from within by an uncanny blend of wisdom, mischief, and passionate detachment.

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

INT. HUNTINGTON COLLEGE SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Zelda, 17, is 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

John! D'you dare me?!

Her deep, raspy voice conspires with a southern cadence to make her speech altogether enchanting -- Siren-like. Up on the high dive, she is a sight: skin tanned and flaw-less, 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'd 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

The dance is next week -- ?

JOHN

That's right.

ZELDA

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

CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. SAYRE HOME - PORCH - LATE AFTERNOON

# **BEGIN MAIN TITLES**

The porch is a teeming social scene, the axis of which is Zelda herself. She is seated on the swing with a girlfriend, SARA HAARDT, YOUNG MILITARY OFFICERS drape themselves around her, sipping on glasses of lemonade.

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

Zelda stands on a small platform, in front of a three panelled mirror. She's wearing an ivory silk chiffon dress and scrutinizing the fit.

The dress falls to just above her ankles, the neckline is extremely high; the sleeves are three-quarter. Zelda bends, to pick up the hem. She raises it from her ankle, to just below the knee. Then higher still...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Zelda Sayre...?

She turns to see her Mother, MINNIE SAYRE, 57, in the doorway, round, and matronly as Zelda is lithe.

ZELDA

I'm just bringing this old thing up to date...

Minnie looks at her, skeptical.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

I need something special for next weekend and with a little work...

(beat)

I'll do it all myself...

CONTINUED:

MINNIE

Is that supposed to be reassuring?

But she says it with half a smile.

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, in favor of a sleeveless look; the buttoned up collar now has a loose, draping neckline; and the hem has been raised to just above the calf, with a small slit on one side that stops above the knee... The piece has an air of being before its time.

Zelda gives herself the once over and then launches into a spontaneous twirl of delight with her own handiwork.

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

INT. MONTGOMERY COUNTRY CLUB AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Zelda is on stage, performing a ballet before a standing-room only crowd -- a mix of locals and YOUNG MEN in uniform.

While Zelda's technique is not exacting, there is again, something magnetic about her presence that has a HALF DOZEN of her **now familiar admirers** in attendance spellbound.

In the row beyond, there is one unfamiliar face, as rapt as the others, but more striking and polished: a **YOUNG OFFICER**, 20, with blond hair, keen blue eyes, and a fine, aristocratic profile. As Zelda brings the performance to a close, the AUDIENCE rises to their feet to APPLAUD.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB BALL ROOM - SAME

A sea of YOUNG WOMEN in pastel Organza, and YOUNG MEN in Black Tie or Officers' Uniforms. A BAND plays Eubie Blake's CHARLESTON RAG.

But even in this crowd, Zelda distinguishes herself, as she dances a fast fox-trot with Sellers. 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.

CONTINUED:

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:

The **SAME YOUNG OFFICER** we saw in the audience is staring  
right at her, a glass of champagne in his hand, which he  
lifts now, to her.

Zelda, unflinching, she stares straight 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: **the Young Officer 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.

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 the **Young Officer.**

ON ZELDA & THE YOUNG OFFICER

We see them now for the first time, face to face. They are  
incandescent: fair haired, with faces 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 now, NOT her.  
Far from straining to keep up with her, his sense of movement  
and grace are equal to hers.

YOUNG OFFICER

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?

YOUNG OFFICER

Transferred from Camp Gordon about four  
weeks ago.

ZELDA

(doing the math)

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!

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

ON ZELDA & JOHN: Zelda's body might be moving along with his,  
but her eyes are on the Young Officer...

ON THE YOUNG OFFICER: he cuts in on John, much to Zelda's  
delight.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

I mean if you were famous all over the  
world, I'd know a little something  
about you too --

YOUNG OFFICER

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

Zelda raises her eyebrows in teasing skepticism. And ANOTHER  
FAMILIAR BEAU -- LINCOLN WEAVER, 20 -- cuts in.

ON ZELDA & LINCOLN: as he all but steps on her feet in an  
attempt to dance... She glances around the room; her eyes  
lite on the Young Officer: "Save me!"

ON ZELDA & THE YOUNG OFFICER: he cuts in on Lincoln, and  
gives her a most graceful turn.

ZELDA

And what will you be famous for...?

CONTINUED: (3)

YOUNG OFFICER

My novels...

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

YOUNG OFFICER (CONT'D)

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

ZELDA

Alright then. Does it have a title?

YOUNG OFFICER

"The Romantic Egoist."

She lets out a lush, deep throated LAUGH.

The Young Officer is about to add something when a THIRD FAMILIAR BEAU, PETE BONNER, 19, steps in to take his place.

ON ZELDA & PETE: they spin away from the Young Officer, who calls out after them:

YOUNG OFFICER (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 is hooked by every last one.

EXT. SODA FOUNTAIN/DINER - DOWNTOWN MONTGOMERY - NIGHT

Zelda and Lincoln exit the diner, as a group of OFFICERS comes up the street: Scott is among them.

Seeing Scott, Zelda takes a step into the light of the corner street lamp, pulling Lincoln with her.

Then, much to Lincoln's surprise, he finds his lips locked on Zelda's, as Zelda's eyes lock on Scott down the street...

Scott, and FOUR other OFFICERS, walk up the street with a tipsy jaunt, BANTERING and LAUGHING as they go.

CONTINUED:

In a moment of distraction, Scott looks up ahead, and catches sight of Zelda and Weaver, locked in a kiss. He stops. The other Officers pause with him, uncertain.

SCOTT  
(in the distance)  
I think I'm done for the night --

Then they see what he sees and let out a communal MOAN of dismay...

Zelda, certain now that Scott has seen her, steps from the embrace only a little faster than she stepped into it.

INT. SAYRE HOME - SEWING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Zelda stands on the platform in front of the mirror, in another dress, more elaborate and sophisticated than the first. Minnie is making adjustments.

MINNIE  
"No Lady ever sits with her limbs  
crossed... No Lady ever uses the word  
"legs," which is vulgar, and uses  
"limbs," which is proper -- "

CLOTHILDE (TILDE), 20, and Zelda's older sister, enters the room, chiming in with her mother:

TILDE  
"No lady ever lets her back touch the  
back of her chair, or ever lets her  
bare feet touch the floor "

ZELDA  
All these rules! When you're little  
everyone tells you: "Follow the rules,"  
because you're just a child. Which had  
me thinking all this time that grown  
ups get to make their own rules. Now  
I'm turning 18, and you're telling me  
there's some other rules made for  
adults? I swear! Why bother growing up  
at all!

INT. SAYRE HOME - SITTING ROOM - EVENING

Zelda, Tilde, and Minnie are there, awaiting their escorts.

MINNIE  
Francis Scott Fitzgerald...?

CONTINUED:

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

ZELDA  
(sitting up)  
-- 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  
And 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 --

MINNIE  
I'm just saying, if you're at all  
serious about the boy --

ZELDA  
Mama honestly: have you ever known me  
to be serious about anything? Serious  
is soooo un-fun --

CONTINUED: (2)

JUDGE SAYRE (O.S.)

And last I checked, "un-fun" is not a  
recognizable word in the English  
language --

Zelda rises to greet her father, JUDGE SAYRE, 60ish, elegant,  
well dressed, and humorless.

Zelda gives him a flirtatious kiss on the cheek to which he  
hardly knows how to respond:

ZELDA

But what if that is exactly what I  
mean?

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 BALL ROOM

A dozen 6-top tables, swathed in linen and flowers, and the  
remains of a feast, surround the dance floor. A LIVE BAND  
plays in the b.g..

Eighteen birthday candles are the only light in the room.

Zelda is at the center table in front of the cake, her hands  
gloveless. She chews girlishly on her bottom lip. The SONG  
winds down, giving way to the CHANT: "WISH, WISH, WISH."

She looks around, laying eyes on the dozen or more MALE  
ADMIRERS in the room (MOST familiar, SOME not).

A SERIES OF SHOTS on EACH of the YOUNG MEN. A face ripe with  
hope; another with expectation; still another with fear; a  
fourth -- LINCOLN WEAVER -- brims with longing...

Lastly, on SCOTT, his face a refined and complex grid: love,  
pride, anxiety, ambition, and a trace of something like  
agony. He is the only one NOT CHANTING...

CONTINUED:

Zelda closes her eyes, and the room goes still. Zelda leans into the candlelight, and takes a deep breath. On the SOUND of ZELDA'S EXHALE:

AT A TABLE - LATER

Zelda spins off the dance floor, and drops into a seat next to Sara, KATHERINE ELLSBERRY, and another YOUNG MAN. She **takes a cigarette from the pack on the table, lights up, leans back against the chair, crosses her legs,** and takes a long drag on the cigarette while watching Scott dance The Charleston with another YOUNG WOMAN -- a fact which doesn't seem to faze Zelda at all. On the contrary.

ZELDA

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 he chooses to walk as a concession to the rest of us...

Katherine rolls her eyes and smiles. Then as if propelled from her chair, Zelda is back on the dance floor.

THE DANCE FLOOR - ON ZELDA: she dances with ANOTHER ONE of her familiar Suitors, while keeping an eye on Scott on the other side of the floor.

Scott turns his PARTNER so that he can likewise keep an eye on Zelda.

Zelda, flashing a smile, spins away, daring him to come after her. The energy of the mis-en-scene here is percussive & erotic: that they are dancing with third parties seems only to add to their mutual seduction...

Zelda spins once again, away from her partner; before she can spin back, **Scott is there to intercept her.** They fall into immediate step with one another...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Slow as honey on a cold day.

SCOTT

Things that move slow live long. Like the tortoise.

CONTINUED: (2)

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

I wouldn't call that a life at all.

(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!

It is not the statement alone which is unsettling, but the exuberance with which she says it -- the way a child wants to go for a picnic...

And it is precisely that troubling chasm between her thoughts and emotions to which Scott is drawn -- the way a scientist might be drawn to a problem he can't solve: with a compulsive need that can be so easily mistaken for love. Scott gazes at her, his expression flummoxed.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

What?

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.

To Zelda, the words are beyond validating: they're curative.

ZELDA

And these women? Are they happy?

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOTT

They start out that way. Most of them anyway. But then things happen.

ZELDA

"Things?" You mean they get married --

SCOTT

Well -- yes -- but that's not what makes them unhappy --

ZELDA

What makes you so sure?

SCOTT

The point is that things happen to make them unhappy because a story needs to go somewhere... It needs drama.

ZELDA

That's funny. So do I...

EXT. PINE GROVE - AFTERNOON

Zelda and Scott weave between the fingers of light that play through the tree tops... She is barefoot, walking along fallen trunks. Scott keeps his shod feet to the ground.

SCOTT

(from memory) )

"She is one of those girls who need never make the slightest effort to have men fall in love with them. Two types seldom do: dull men are usually afraid of her cleverness -- intellectual men are usually afraid of her beauty. All other men are hers by natural prerogative."

ZELDA

(taking the piss)

Well you are an educational feature; an overture to romance that no young lady should be without.

(beat)

Alright -- Which one of your fancy Ivory Tower authors wrote that?

Scott smiles like the cat who ate the canary... And then:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

(impressed)

You...?



CONTINUED:

Scott nods.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

So when do I get to read this book?

SCOTT

The only copy I have is no doubt sitting in the nether world of all forgotten manuscripts at Scribner's. So you'll have to wait.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB LAWN - LATE AFTERNOON

Zelda hangs upside down from the branch of a giant Sycamore. Scott is stretched out on the grass just beneath her, **reading from what appears to be a journal...**

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...

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 --

CONTINUED:

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?

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.

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...

Scott nods, and reaches up to pull her down toward him, but  
is interrupted by the SOUND of MALE VOICES in the b.g. Zelda  
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?

CONTINUED: (2)

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:

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.

INT. MONTGOMERY COUNTRY CLUB - COCKTAIL HOUR

**SUPER: NOVEMBER, 1918 - ONE MONTH LATER**

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

CONTINUED:

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 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.

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.

CONTINUED: (2)

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 got my orders... 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... The 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!

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

SCOTT

Or maybe advertising --

CONTINUED:

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 --

CONTINUED:

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 -- ?

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

SCOTT

"Goofy -- ?"

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 --



CONTINUED: (2)

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 -- ?

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.

CONTINUED: (3)

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.

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

It's a little like you: unfathomable.

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?

CONTINUED:

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, and 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, JOHN PEALE 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, drunk and in love...

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.

CONTINUED:

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

Scott looks to the others to come to his defense: SILENCE.

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

BIGGS  
Here's to testing that theory!

SCOTT  
You fatuous illiterate --

The words come out: "ya-fachoo-iss-il-liderit..."

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
(emphatic)  
Well I think she's a genius... And  
Aristotle would support me here!  
(less certain)  
Well I think it was Aristotle.  
He said "It is the mark of genius, for  
to make good metaphors implies an eye  
for resemblances."

BISHOP  
I believe it was also Aristotle who  
said "No great genius has ever existed  
without a tincture of madness."

SCOTT  
Well then, with any luck, I've got a  
trace more than she...

CLOSE ON A REJECTION LETTER

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

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.**

CONTINUED:

LAWTON (V.O.)

I hear congratulations are in order.

ZELDA (V.O.)

I guess it depends on the day. I wore the ring at first, but...

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - LOUNGE (MONTGOMERY) - EVENING

Zelda is at the bar, talking with the now familiar Lawton Campbell (Scott's friend from Princeton). She is NOT wearing her engagement ring, and she's chewing on her bottom lip almost compulsively...

ZELDA

It's rather trying -- this sort of affair. He doesn't write from one week to the next, but gets all sulky when I don't write every day.

(beat)

It just seems like such a gamble.

Zelda involuntarily rubs her ringless finger with her thumb.

LAWTON

If it's money you're worried about --

ZELDA

Am I the only one who sees that money means more to Scott than almost anything else? On the one hand he resents it -- and people who have it -- on the other he craves it. And if he doesn't manage to make enough of it, he'll be mean and angry and drunk til he dies from it.

Lawton doesn't attempt to dispute her. A GROUP of YOUNG MEN enters the lounge, apparently looking for Zelda.

LAWTON

I honestly think he'll be able to earn his living with his writing. There was a young editor at Scribner's who's very keen on him.

Zelda brightens at this...

ZELDA

Well if he sells the book, I'll marry him...

CONTINUED:

And then one Young Man from the group -- PERRY ADAIR, 21, wearing a sweater that bears the emblem of the Georgia Tech Golf team -- approaches the table.

PERRY

Hey Darlin' -- we're heading out --

And after a look at Lawton, Zelda allows herself to be ushered out and swept along the path of least resistance.

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

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 stationery 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 pabulum, and come with us to the party at the Plaza.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - 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?

CONTINUED:

Scott shrugs, glances at his pocket watch.

SCOTT  
(a sheepish grin)  
The train to Montgomery leaves in an hour.

Ludlow nods, well aware that there would be no other way. Still, he's concerned for his friend.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Oh Luddie -- I know what people say about her. And I don't care. Any girl who gets stewed in public, smokes constantly, and says she's 'kissed a thousand men and intends to kiss a thousand more,' cannot be considered above reproach even *if* above it. But I'm in love with her courage, her sincerity, and her flaming self respect, and it's these things I'd believe in even if the whole world indulged in wild suspicions that she wasn't all that she should be. I love her and that's the beginning and end of everything. I guess there was a moment there at some point 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.



CONTINUED:

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.

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...

CONTINUED:

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.

**She 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 (CONT'D)

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.

EXT. CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS PUBLISHING HOUSE - DAY

A new day. Scott is showered, shaved, in suit, tie & hat -- but still cloaked in despair. He enters the building.

INT. SCRIBNER'S - RECEPTION DESK - SAME

Scott approaches the RECEPTIONIST'S desk:

PERKINS (O.S.)  
Mr. Fitzgerald?

Scott turns to see an elegant, handsome man, in his mid 30's, extends his hand to Scott.

PERKINS (CONT'D)  
Max Perkins...

INT. PERKINS' OFFICE - SAME

Scott is seated, Perkins 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...

CONTINUED:

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...

PERKINS

I am honestly grateful to you --

SCOTT

Oh please --

PERKINS

It's true: 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.

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-- "

SCOTT (O.S.)

-- *His ideas were still in riot.*

Scott paces, as he reads the his words back to himself:

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

*There was ever the pain of memory, the regret for his lost youth -- yet the waters of disillusion had left a deposit on his soul, responsibility and.*

(beat)

And...

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

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(creating it as he goes)

*Responsibility and a love of life, the vague stirring -- No.*

(pauses; then starts)

*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...**

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Scott sprints up the street, stopping random DRIVERS:

His joy is so contagious, that even New York DRIVERS smile on his behalf, AD LIBBING CONGRATULATIONS as he darts by.

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

Scott is in one of the booths, 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.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ON SCOTT

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...!

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?

CONTINUED:

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

Goofy, 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:

ZELDA

Darlin' -- 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.

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... I got rooms for everyone at the Biltmore --

TILDE

(more indignant)

There's a party of *some* kind -- !

Scott's silence is enough to provoke expressions of disdain in Tilde, Marjorie, and Rosalind alike...



CONTINUED:

LUDLOW  
(saving the day)  
At my place! This evening.

INT. ROOM 2109 - BILTMORE HOTEL - AFTERNOON

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 and muted tones of the room are new to Zelda... Even here, we sense that the understated formality is at odds with Zelda's ebullience...

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...

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?

A SERIES OF SHOTS AROUND MANHATTAN

As Scott shows Zelda the city from top to bottom, their body language alone -- i.e.

CONTINUED:

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

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

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 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...

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.

CONTINUED:

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)  
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 as if she'd just belched.

**Zelda for the first time in her life, is suddenly self-conscious -- and 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.

INT. CAB - SAME

As the sun goes down, and the cab drives down the street where the buildings soar on either side, Scott looks out the window, and tears spill down his cheeks...

ZELDA

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

Scott turns to her, smiling through his tears:

SCOTT

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

INT. ELEVATOR - A BIT LATER

Zelda, Scott, Marjorie & Minor, Tilde & John, are in the elevator as the doors open and give out onto the foyer of

Ludlow Fowler's very upscale apartment, where the party has already begun... **Zelda steps out first. Then steps back in.**

ZELDA

You can get in and out of the elevator directly from your own apartment?

It is apparently something she's never seen before. Again she steps out and then back into the elevator...

ZELDA (CONT'D)

New York is just full of surprises!

The GUESTS in the foyer observe her with an air, both curious and patronizing: it is not only her commentary which attracts attention -- but her Southern accent, which, against this background, sounds more pronounced than it did in Montgomery.

Behind her, Scott jots something down in a pocket size notebook... Then, painfully aware of the impression Zelda is making, he CLEARS HIS THROAT, and gives her a little push.

INT. LUDLOW'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM AREA - LATER

A buffet style presentation, lush with food and liquor...

Other Guests have since arrived, filling out the party with the familiar faces of Scott's crowd: Biggs, Bishop, Bunny Wilson, Alex, Peevie, and Lawton, along with a few WOMEN.

CONTINUED:

Scott, with a glass in one hand, and Zelda on the other lets Ludlow top off his drink...

SCOTT

There might be an 18th Amendment, but you'd never know it up here...

LUDLOW

I've got a guy... He brings the stuff in from Canada... I get ulcers from the home brewed stuff --

As the men talk, Zelda takes in the room. In particular, **she studies the WOMEN, whose clothing, manners, and speech are so very different from her own.**

SCOTT

If it's brewed at all. I heard a story - a buyer sent a liquor sample to a lab to have it analyzed. The chemist called him up with the results: "Your horse has diabetes."

This gets LAUGHS from the Group around them. Marjorie approaches Zelda, and WHISPERS in her ear...

IN THE FOYER

Marjorie and Tilde are uneasy in this crowd. They are putting on their coats. Zelda, with a drink in hand that is clearly not her first, pleads with them:

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.

There's something forced in her tone that belies statement. But she ends it there, giving Zelda a peck on the cheek.

They head out, leaving Zelda alone with her drink. Beyond her, in the next room, is a roomful of urbane and polished strangers. Mostly, for her, they are strangers, plain and simple.

CONTINUED: (2)

But steeling herself, again, she turns her attention to the Women, then glances at herself in the foyer mirror: **she lifts her hair to her jaw, as if to see what it would be like to cut it...**

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.**

\* 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.

\* IN THE BILTMORE, late night, with friends, drinking cocktails, and making merry.

\* ZELDA & SCOTT make love in the early morning.

\* ZELDA dances on the tables of the Waldorf 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...

\* ROOM SERVICE ATTENDANT delivers food and drink, while Zelda prances around in Scott's BVD's (the first boxer style underwear for men) and Scott takes a bath.

\* ZELDA & SCOTT walk on their hands down the halls of the Biltmore, drunk, and attracting stares, as OTHER GUESTS open their doors to peer out at the commotion...

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

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

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

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Scott is on a podium, in front of an adoring audience of mostly YOUNG PEOPLE, the majority of which is FEMININE.

CONTINUED:

YOUNG WOMAN #1

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

Zelda watches him from the back of the room. She is, by far,  
the most striking woman in the room.

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

Scott looks around to call on another member of the audience,  
and points to an elegant, well heeled YOUNG WOMAN.

YOUNG WOMAN #1

(rising)

Thank you Mr. Fitzgerald. I wanted to  
know how you feel about having a  
flapper for a wife?

EXT. THE ROYALTON - A BIT LATER

A gaggle of REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS are milling about.

YOUNG WOMAN #1 (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 him 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.



CONTINUED:

MENCKEN, GEORGE NATHAN, MAX PERKINS, Bunny Wilson, Alex McKaig, John Bishop, Actresses ANITA LOOS, 30, RUTH FINDLAY (familiar from "SALAMANDER"), TALLULAH & GENE BANKHEAD, mid 20's, HELEN HAYES, 20, RING LARDNER, the theater producer, JOHN D. WILLIAMS, CARL VAN VECHTEN etc...

SCOTT (V.O.)

-- Oh, 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.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

The host, George Nathan, H.L. Mencken, Ring Lardner, John Williams, Carl Van Vechten --

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.**

IN THE LIVING ROOM - LATER

The room is more crowded, more noisy, and less sober...

A group, including Alex, George, Zelda, Anita Loos, Dorothy Parker, and a few others is engaged in heated debate:

CONTINUED:

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 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 --

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; he watches Zelda drag George by the hand through the room, and down the hall.

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 can't say I enjoy it. But I suppose seeing her in action like that inspires me.

He knocks back his glass.

EXT. BALCONY - LATER

Scott and Max Perkins lean against the rail and look out at the city:

CONTINUED:

PERKINS

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

SCOTT

(a chortle)

Me too...

PERKINS

It's not going well --

SCOTT

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

Scott watches Zelda through glass door: she's holding court  
with a group of Men...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

And I worry about Zelda... She gets  
bored hanging around the apartment. So  
I encourage her to go out -- entertain  
herself. Then when she's gone, I'm  
vexed to distraction: where is she?  
What's she doing? Who's she with?

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.

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

EXT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - DUSK

Zelda and Scott are with a REAL ESTATE AGENT, a Man in his  
mid 40's...

CONTINUED:

AGENT

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.

ZELDA

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.

Zelda is eager like a child for a pony ride...

SCOTT

And I suppose we could always invite  
people up for the weekend --

ZELDA

I'm not "people" enough --

Even as she teases, there's a bass note of tension in her  
voice.

SCOTT

Just for a change of pace...

(beat)

It is serene -- I'll give you that...

His tone suggests a certain trepidation: that much isolation  
makes him nervous. But then with a definitive nod to the  
Agent, they agree to take it.

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.

CONTINUED:

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...

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...!

CONTINUED: (2)

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

A 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? 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...

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

What are you doing with yourself!

SCOTT

Zelda!

ZELDA

It's 4 in the morning!

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

ZELDA (CONT'D)

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 slips 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...

EXT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - THE SHORE - NIGHT - LONG

It's an unqualified orgy: more CROWDED, more bawdy, more noisy, and more liquor.

Zelda splashes about in the ocean, the only woman among a THRONG of MEN, most of whom are by now familiar: Alex, Lawton, Ludlow, Peevie, and OTHERS.

CONTINUED:

ANOTHER ANGLE - ON THE BEACH

Zelda dries herself off as a GUEST hands her a gin and tonic.

INT. WAKEMAN COTTAGE - A BIT LATER

Sylph-like in a kimono style silk smoking jacket (and nothing else), Zelda wanders through the house, passing CLUSTERS of GUESTS: some engaged in heated conversation, others gathered around a Mahjong game.

Zelda meanders through to Scott's office to find George Nathan, parked on the couch, so absorbed in reading something, he doesn't register Zelda's presence.

She observes him for a moment, then deliberately TINKLES the ice in her glass... George looks up, delighting in the sight of her.

GEORGE

These are yours...

He indicates the book in his hand: her journal... Zelda is about to respond, when Scott appears at the door behind her.

SCOTT

Wonderful -- aren't they...

GEORGE

Magnificent... We could publish --

Zelda lights up at the thought...

SCOTT

That's out of the question...

Zelda turns to look at him, visibly disappointed..

GEORGE

I'm serious Scott --

SCOTT

And so am I --

George glances from Scott to Zelda, and back again.

ZELDA

George you're awfully kind --

GEORGE

Zelda dear, since when have I ever been kind -- ? These are breathtaking --

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

Only 'cause you're sweet on the author... They could hardly be of interest to anyone else -- except of course Scott -- who's made use --

SCOTT

(flashing her a look)  
It's simply out of the question, George.

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...

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 Gene 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!

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

Goofy -- 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.

## INT. PALM COURT - PLAZA HOTEL - MID DAY

Zelda and Scott are seated at a table with Max Perkins, and HAROLD OBER, 40's, and Scott's literary agent.

HAROLD

I got a call from Metro yesterday. They  
want to know whether the two of you  
would be interested in playing the  
leads in This Side of Paradise ?

ZELDA

(child like)

In the movie!

Harold nods. DINERS at another table are staring at Scott. He nods to them with a smile.

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Oh Scott!

Scott is less sanguine. He turns to Perkins.

SCOTT

What do you think? Is it a good idea?

Zelda is about to speak, but Scott silences her with a look.

PERKINS

I don't know. I can understand the appeal... But it could confuse your readership... "What is he? A writer or an actor?" It could make you like you're just dabbling in both...

SCOTT

It's amateurish --

A YOUNG WOMAN approaches to ask for Scott's autograph...

ZELDA

Well maybe Scott shouldn't play the role, but I could. I AM that role.

Scott returns the book to the Young Woman.

SCOTT

(distracted)

We'll talk about it...

Zelda is again about to protest:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Later...

EXT. UNION SQUARE - A BIT LATER

Zelda, Scott, Alex, Bishop, John Williams and George walk together.

ZELDA

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

SCOTT

(to the Group)

Zelda wants to star in the movies --

(to Zelda)

Dear -- What makes you think you can act?

CONTINUED:

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 --

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.

CONTINUED: (2)

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...

INT. JUNGLE CLUB - LATE NIGHT

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

RUTH

I hear they've finished the script for  
This Side of Paradise...

ZELDA

(nodding)

Metro wants us to play the leads --

SCOTT

We've decided against it...

Zelda all but chokes on her drink.

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 --

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 --



CONTINUED:

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...

ON the WAIL of an INFANT:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

**SUPER: OCTOBER 1921 A YEAR LATER ST. PAUL, MINNESTOA**

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, Goofo -- 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 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.

CONTINUED:

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.

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...

CONTINUED:

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, giving the party a whole new sheen. They

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

SCOTT

Max! You have to talk to him. He believes I've got three major influences on my life and writing --

CONTINUED:

BUNNY

(jumping in)

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.

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.*

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

*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 as Scott's boozed-up diction is laced with bitterness, this paragraph gets a more enthusiastic round of LAUGHTER than the last. **Zelda's face is a complex map of pride and humiliation, 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.

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...**

CONTINUED: (3)

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...

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

**SUPER: GREAT NECK AUTUMN 1922**

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

INT. GREAT NECK HOUSE - SAME

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

CONTINUED:

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

ZELDA

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

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...**

CONTINUED: (2)

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 -- rather a  
total vacuity. 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.

If Scott were a dog, the hair on his neck would rise...

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...



CONTINUED: (3)

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.

CLOSE ON ZELDA'S HAND: she writes longhand, with nearly manic speed...

INT. GREAT NECK HOME - LIBRARY - DAY

Zelda is curled up in a chair, with pen and pad, lost in her work. In the b.g., the NANNY feeds Scottie, now a year old.

INT. GREAT NECK HOUSE - STUDY - SAME

Scott paces the room, nursing a drink. He pauses to look at the pad of paper on his desk.

Names are jotted down in a haphazard way: JAY GATSBY. DAISY BUCHANAN, EAST EGG, WEST EGG, etc... There a few sentences, half of which are crossed out.

He walks away from the pad, unable to collect his thoughts.

INTERCUT W/ ZELDA as she writes in an unbroken heat.

ON SCOTT: staring at the pad.

ON ZELDA: at the typewriter, ready to transcribe from her longhand. She types at the top of the page:

"OUR OWN MOVIE QUEEN"

INT. GREAT NECK HOME - LIBRARY - MORNING

Zelda, working all night, reviews the typed and polished pages of her first short story...

The sound of a DOOR OPENING and then CLOSING... FOOTSTEPS...

Zelda turns to see Scott, who has paused in the hallway: he's in the same clothes he left in last night, looking much the worse for wear.

She doesn't even bother to ask.

ZELDA  
(re: her manuscript)  
I finished...

Scott nods.

SCOTT  
What time is it?

ZELDA  
(glancing at a clock  
on her desk)  
A bit before ten. Why?

SCOTT  
I have to be in the city by one  
o'clock. To sign the contract with the  
Hearst people...

And he continues down the hall.

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.

CONTINUED:

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 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...

PERKINS

(nodding)

I have a number of friends in the South of France -- The Murphys left two years ago and never came back.

Zelda takes her moment.

ZELDA

(venturing)

Max -- I was wondering --

PERKINS

The 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.

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT  
That's wonderful!

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.

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, we  
might even manage to save some money.

EXT. OLD WORLD VILLA - MEDITERRANEAN COAST - LATE AFTERNOON

**SUPER: VILLA MARIE    FRENCH RIVIERA    MAY 1924**

High above the sea, surrounded by terraced gardens, palm,  
pine, and silver olive trees. A winding gravel drive leads  
to the entrance.

ZELDA (V.O.)  
Oh, Goofo! We are going to be so happy!

The Moorish balconies of brilliant white and blue that face  
Mediterranean give it the air of an exotic fortress. **So much  
for economizing...**

INT. VILLA MARIE - SAME

Scott and Zelda have just arrived, with the Nanny and Scottie in tow. The interior is every bit as elegant and old world as the exterior.

ZELDA

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

A flash of the puckish, spirited Zelda we met in Montgomery.

THE SEA - DAY - FROM HIGH ABOVE

Zelda swims in open water: 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 turns over again, and swims on...

CLOSE ON ZELDA'S HAND

As the fine, wet, white sand of the Riviera drips from between her fingers.

ZELDA (O.S.)

Like this: just let the sand flow.

EXT. BEACH (LA GAROUE) - CAP D'ANTIBES - DAY

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... The Children surround her, participating in the project.

Zelda, bronzed and slim, looks like her formerly youthful self.

INT. VILLA MARIE - SAME

Scott is at work in a room that looks out on the water. In a deep state of concentration, with a carafe of water on his desk, his pen moves steadily back and forth across the page.

EXT. BEACH (LA GAROUE) - CAP D'ANTIBES - SAME

The drip castle is bigger and more elaborate still. Zelda rises to leave the children to their work.

ZELDA

Sara! Gerald! Anyone for a swim:

SARA & GERALD MURPHY, late 30's, a trim, handsome couple, sun themselves in chaises. They look up from their books.

SARA

Maybe a bit later...

Zelda nods, and heads off -- but NOT toward the water. She is walking towards the cliffs...

SARA (CONT'D)

(playful)

It's probably none of my business --  
but I thought I'd mention that the  
water is that way!

Zelda flashes a smile, and keeps walking... Sara and Gerald exchange looks: "What is she up to?"

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - MOMENTS LATER - LONG

Zelda scrambles up the cliff, rock to rock, until she gets to a carved out notch in the rock face. There are several such notches, one above the next, at about 5-foot intervals. Sara and Gerald are watching her.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - SAME - ON ZELDA

She positions herself at the edge of the notch, 10 feet above the water, and looks down. The cerulean blue of the Mediterranean spreads before her. She waves to the Children and the Murphy's on the beach; they all wave back.

After a beat, Zelda decides to climb higher still -- to the highest notch -- **30 feet** above the water.

SCOTT (O.S.)

If ever you were to desert me, this is  
where I'd look for you first:

Zelda looks up to see Scott, with bathing suit and towel, looking down at her.

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Right on the edge of the world!

**There's a tenderness and charm in his voice that has long been absent. And she delights in it.**

ZELDA

It's already 5 o'clock!?

SCOTT

I figured out the whole first third of the novel --

ZELDA

Oh Gofo! Come with me! We'll leap for joy!

SCOTT

I'm a coward -- you know that.

ZELDA

We'll go together... Come!

CLOSE ON ZELDA & SCOTT'S HANDS

As they weave their fingers together, hand in hand...

WIDER: they are standing side by side on the cliffside, drenched by the golden, late afternoon sun. Zelda gives him an ebullient glance then faces the ocean.

ZELDA

(whispering)

One... Two... Three!

**And they take a synchronous leap off the cliff, chasing the sun and the sea... And for just this moment, they both fervently believe in the promise of their own bright spark. They believe they are happy.**

EXT. SEA - MOMENTS LATER

Zelda and Scott surge to the surface: she is ecstatic. He is relieved. But they share a taste for the thrill.

INT. HOTEL DU CAP - BAR - NIGHT

Zelda, Scott, Gerald, Sara, and OTHERS are milling about, nursing drinks. Zelda is chewing slightly on her lip. Scott gently put his thumb against her lips to stop her.

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

You're bored...

He knows her well.

ZELDA

Let's do something. Something fun!

Scott steps up on a chair, and CLINKS his glass with a fork... The whole room goes SILENT, and turns to him...

SCOTT

(clearing his throat)

Good evening everyone! 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.

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 she knew back home. 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.

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

EXT. MOTORBOAT - NIGHT

Jozan is at the wheel; Zelda, Scott, the Murphys and Jozan's Compatriots are in the back, some doubled up on others.

Zelda is gladdened by the boat-ride alone. But as they round an outcropping, Zelda YELPS with excitement:



CONTINUED:

In the distance, a small stretch of isolated beach, dancing with the lights of a Ferris Wheel, and the carnival that surrounds it. Pure enchantment. And Jozan seems to take pleasure in Zelda's nearly child-like joy.

THE CARNIVAL FROM ABOVE

As it appears to rush upwards, with the downward movement of the Ferris Wheel.

ON JOZAN, ZELDA, & SCOTT: on the Ferris Wheel, seated in one of the gondolas, as it heads down toward the ground and Zelda rhapsodic with joy...

Gerald, Sara, and the Aviators are visible in the gondolas beyond.

A SERIES OF SHOTS: as the Group play like children at the booths and on the various rides, until the night sky gives way to first light.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Zelda suns herself in a lounge chair, while studying from a French Language book.

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

To her consternation, the BUZZ of an airplane overhead interrupts her concentration.

She looks up: there it is again -- the bi-plane performing air-stunts over the water... But now, the plane sweeps close enough to the beach that we can see the Pilot: it is Jozan, waving to Zelda...

A smile blooms on her face, and she waves back.

EXT. TERRACE OF CAFE DE LA FLOTTE - AFTERNOON

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

MAN (O.S.)  
(French accent)  
It is my experience that to learn a  
language -- it is easier to be speaking  
it than reading it --

CONTINUED:

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

AT THE TABLE - LATER

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.

ZELDA

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

INT. VILLA MARIE - DUSK

Zelda enters the house.

ZELDA  
Goofy!

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  
Well look who's here! 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)  
Goofy...  
(a bit louder)  
Scott...

He looks up as if stepping out of a dream.

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
We're meeting 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.

CONTINUED:

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 --

SCOTT  
(bursting)  
For the love of God, Zelda!

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

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Leave me alone!

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**.

EXT. BEACH - AFTERNOON - LONG LENS

Jozan and Zelda play about in the surf like two children.  
And she is luminous...

CONTINUED:

The Murphys are watching the two of them from their spot on the beach. They exchange a knowing glance:

SARA

Scott has only himself to blame if they are.

Gerald offers a resigned nod.

SARA (CONT'D)

The way she's always having to chase around after him... And he can be so simple minded about Zelda... I mean even when he seems to use her as a fictional model, his heroines are so one sided. She's far more complex.

INT. VILLA MARIE - EVENING

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.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

*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

Not a whit...

JOZAN

Then I will show you that you can --

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...

CONTINUED:

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 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.

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...

CONTINUED:

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 --

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 --



CONTINUED: (2)

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." 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!

CONTINUED: (3)

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, Goofy?  
(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:

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

CONTINUED:

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

\* Zelda sleeps.

\* The bi-plane rolling and turning against a blue sky; the blue sky starts to undulate, then liquefies; the plane moves through the water in slow motion...

\* Zelda wakes with a start...

\* Zelda packs a trunk with nearly mechanical deliberation.

\* At the window, watching for Jozan who appears along the stretch of sand.

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

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

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

\* Zelda, asleep, wakes with a YELP, as the cigarette has burned down to her flesh.

\* A letter appears under the door: it is from Jozan. Zelda tears it up, unread.

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

**Zelda 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 goes 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. OPEN WATER - DAY

Zelda is back in the ocean, swimming...

INT. HOTEL DU CAP - THE MURPHY'S VILLA - NIGHT

It is the European version of the New York Social Set: John Bishop, ARCHIBALD & ADA MACLEISH, JEAN COCTEAU, PICASSO & wife, OLGA KOLKOVA, LEGER, STRAVINSKY, TRISTAN TZARA, MISTINGUET, THE VALENTINOS, JOHN DOS PASSOS, et al.

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.

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

Dear -- Would you care for a swim?

Scott turns now, seeing her as if she'd just materialized before him...

CONTINUED:

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's a boy!"  
"Don't let a woman show you up!"

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.

CONTINUED:

Hemingway appears behind Sara...

HEMINGWAY

She's a lunatic...

SARA

Any more lunatic than men at war?

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 a 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  
embarrassment 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:

CONTINUED:

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.

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?" That's the one I like --

SCOTT

It is?

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.' "

CONTINUED:

*"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...' "*

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.



CONTINUED:

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)

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

We've been happy, you and I. And not just once. We've been happy a thousand times. Forget the past. I beg you. Turn about. Swim back to me. We'll be happy again. I promise you. We'll be happy.

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.

CONTINUED:

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. 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.

CONTINUED: (2)

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 --

ZELDA

No, no... Let me -- just listen: I'm an amateur dancer, a mediocre writer, a novice painter... 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, Goofo -- 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.

CONTINUED: (3)

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.

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. VILLA MARIE - EARLY MORNING

On the roadside, Zelda is propped against her one of her many trunks, sound asleep. Scott is coming up the road, rumpled and unkempt from a night of too much drink.

But he is gentle as he approaches, kisses her cheek. She wakes and smiles at the sight of him.

SCOTT

I don't think this is such a good day  
for leaving me...

Zelda nods. He helps her rise, and the two of them pick up separate ends of the trunk, and carry it back inside.

## INT. CASINO JUAN-LES-PINS - NIGHT

Zelda, Scott, Sara, Gerald, Ernest, his wife, HADLEY, and the MacLeishes are at a table that borders the near-empty dance floor. An ORCHESTRA PLAYS 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, but before he can respond, he's distracted:

Zelda, her skirts above her waist, is dancing...

Sara, Gerald, and the others sit motionless, watching her. Remaining CLIENTELE begins to cluster in the archways around the perimeter of the room.

CONTINUED:

But Zelda is oblivious to her ad-hoc 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 the Orchestra begins to play to her movements. She surrenders herself to rhythm, yet not once does she appear clownish.

HEMINGWAY

He's got terrible odds against him,  
doesn't he?

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, as he approaches the Villa. And now, as Scott pulls into the driveway, rather than slow down to park on the circular section of gravel, 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.

CONTINUED:

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...

PALM TREES AGAINST A BRIGHT BLUE SKY - TRAVELING

We move past these, and then DOWN, to REVEAL the 20 acre grounds of the AMBASSADOR HOTEL...

**SUPER: HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA JANUARY 1927**

INT. CHAUFFEUR DRIVEN CAR - DAY

Zelda and Scott look out the windows, as the car drives through the hotel grounds -- a world unto itself: restaurants, shops, beauty parlors, small private bungalows.

As they pass the bungalows, the Chauffeur offers unsolicited information.

CHAUFFEUR

John Barrymore's staying there, to the right... I've taken more than a few ladies home from there... Von Stroheim is in that bungalow there, and Carl Van Vechten is one over...

ZELDA

Carlo is here!

CHAUFFEUR

So what's your line Mr. Fitzgerald?

Scott looks at Zelda: "Is this for real?" Zelda's as new to this as he is: all she can do is shrug...

SCOTT

Like everyone else: I came west for the gold...



INT. COCONUT GROVE - NIGHT

Zelda and Scott are at a table, among a smattering of MINOR CELEBRITIES, WANNA-BE'S, and STARLETS.

STARLET #1

Does anyone have an invitation to anything?

STARLET #2

I heard Sam Goldwyn's throwing a party in the Hills -- For the Talmadge Sisters.

STARLET #1

I don't care what you heard. Show me an escort with an invitation!

SCOTT

(muttering to Zelda)  
And we weren't invited...

Scott is pouting like a child. But Zelda has other ideas:

ZELDA

Gofo! Since when do we need an invitation?

EXT. SAM GOLDWYN'S HOME - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NIGHT

Zelda and Scott are at the front door of the house, **on all fours, barking like dogs...**

COLLEEN MOORE, 27, the day's biggest box office star, with a page-boy of dark hair, and a petite frame, recognizes Scott.

COLLEEN

Mr. Fitzgerald?

Zelda and Scott look up:

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

You are F. Scott Fitzgerald...

Zelda and Scott scramble to their feet...

SCOTT

(introducing himself)  
Miss Moore...

COLLEEN

It's an honor... But may I ask --

CONTINUED:

SCOTT  
(sheepish)  
It would appear our name is not on the  
list --

COLLEEN  
Oh please -- You can't tell me --

SCOTT  
Apparently the uh -- keeper of the gate  
-- has never read *The Great Gatsby*.

Colleen rolls her eyes in sympathetic exasperation.

COLLEEN  
Come with me...

INT. SAM GOLDWYN'S HOME - SAME

A costume party, and glamour on a whole new scale: shameless  
glitter and extravagance... Zelda and Scott follow Colleen  
through the CRUSH of GUESTS.

WAITERS with trays of food and libations weave in and out.

Scott is quick to help himself to a passing glass of  
champagne as Zelda follows Colleen up the stairs.

UPSTAIRS: Colleen hands her coat to a VALET, and Zelda does  
the same.

They turn to go back downstairs, and Zelda pauses to gaze  
down at the CROWD below. Colleen appears next to her.

She finds Scott, and waves, but he doesn't register the  
gesture: he is ensconced in conversation with a GIRL who  
isn't more than 17 years old...

Colleen follows Zelda's line of sight:

COLLEEN  
Ah... Lois Moran. A face so fresh you  
want to slap it. Welcome to Babylon...

INT. SAM GOLDWYN'S HOME - DOWNSTAIRS - SAME

Zelda is next to Scott, who is still engaged in conversation  
with LOIS MORAN, and her Mother/Chaperone, MRS. MORAN.

LOIS  
I've read both novels. And almost every  
one of the short stories...

CONTINUED:

Scott laps this up like a cat at a cream bowl.

LOIS (CONT'D)  
I loved "Our Own Movie Queen."

Scott flushes red. Zelda tosses him a small, triumphant smile.

ZELDA  
Actually -- that was one I wrote --

Lois brightens, surprised and impressed.

LOIS  
I had no idea!? But I don't recall  
seeing your name on the by-line.

Lois smiles as the four of them dwell in awkward silence.

EXT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - POOL SIDE TERRACE - LATE MORNING

Zelda and Scott are having a late breakfast. Zelda looks at the newspaper, chewing on her bottom lip. Scott takes in the surroundings, watches the WAITRESSES, the POOL BOYS, the WOMEN dining around the pool.

SCOTT  
This is a tragic city of beautiful  
girls...

Zelda glances up.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
The girls who mop the floor are  
beautiful, the waitresses, the shop  
ladies... You never want to see any  
more beauty.  
(noting Zelda's lip)  
Zelda...

He gestures to his lip. Suddenly self-conscious, Zelda releases her own. Then she changes the subject.

ZELDA  
Miss Moran's been quoted. She's  
included you in her list of favorite  
authors...  
(beat)  
"Moran." Just one letter off --

SCOTT  
Don't be uncharitable --

CONTINUED:

ZELDA  
I didn't say anything --

SCOTT  
It's that look in your voice. And the  
tone on your face...

He smiles as he says it; she does too. He knows her well.

ZELDA  
Which look? The one that says: "She's a  
young actress like a breakfast food  
that many men identify with whatever  
they missed in life...?"

Scott LAUGHS despite himself.

SCOTT  
Yes. That look. There's more to her  
than she readily reveals.

ZELDA  
I should hope so... She's only 17.

SCOTT  
She's incredibly hard working. She's  
lived in Paris since she was 11. Her  
French is fluent. And at 14 she joined  
the Paris Opera as a ballerina. She  
has a steely sense of determination...

Every compliment to Lois, presses Zelda's most sensitive  
buttons. She is about to say something, but is interrupted:

LOIS (O.S.)  
Scott!

Lois approaches, her mother in tow. Scott shoots up from his  
chair to get their attention.

Zelda doesn't rise from her chair as the women arrive at the  
table and AD LIB their "GOOD MORNINGS."

Lois is utterly dwarfed by Zelda -- not in size, but in  
character. Zelda is so much more woman than Lois will ever  
be. And yet, it is Zelda who is feeling painfully outsized.

LOIS (CONT'D)  
(pulling up a chair)  
I've had an idea... I think Scott  
should screen test for the role  
opposite me in my next film!

Scott is transparently flattered by the suggestion.

CONTINUED: (2)

ZELDA

I hate to disappoint you dear, but we've been down that road, and after talking with his editor, we both agree that it could be damaging to his writing career --

SCOTT

(cutting her off)

That was before I was writing for Hollywood --

LOIS

It would be such fun...

Without another word, Zelda rises, slips out of her robe to her bathing suit, and takes a graceful dive into the pool.

UNDERWATER: from beneath her, we watch as Zelda immerses herself in the rhythm of a steady stroke...

INT. FITZGERALD BUNGALOW - EVENING

Scott is dressing for the evening. Zelda is in the bathtub. The door to the bathroom is open.

SCOTT

I'll be back late.

ZELDA

Me too.

Scott looks over at her now.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

While you're out romancing the Miss and Mrs. Morans, I'm going to a party with Carlo. There's some director he wants me to meet.

SCOTT

You're not going to start with that again -- I thought we agreed --

ZELDA

We did -- then this morning I could have sworn you changed your mind --

SCOTT

For me to be in a film with Miss Moran is not the same as you deciding over night that you want to be a movie star --

CONTINUED:

ZELDA

It's not overnight. It's been years  
I've talked about it, and years you've  
forbidden me make a go of it. What are  
you afraid of?

Zelda gets out of the tub, enters the room, slick with suds,  
and continues the argument.

SCOTT

After your stint with the Aviator, you  
have ask?

ZELDA

Ah -- so this is punishment: You won't  
allow me to go anywhere without you,  
while you yourself engage in  
flagrantly sentimental relations with a  
child!

SCOTT

That child has lived more in 17 years  
than you will in twice that much --

ZELDA

If only because I've been too busy  
living your life instead!

SCOTT

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. Now she reels herself in so when she speaks,  
there's nothing hysterical about it:

ZELDA

But Goofy... 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  
work 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 are  
the author, 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.

CONTINUED: (2)

As she says this, her voice BREAKS with despair; tears make tracks down her cheeks.

Scott moves to take his leave. He opens the door, but before passing through it:

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.

INT. FITZGERALD BUNGALOW - LATER

In a nearly maniacal pique, Zelda goes through her closet, removing dresses and coats and scarves. She gathers these in a pile and dumps them all into the now empty bath tub.

From the pocket of her robe she removes a cigarette and lighter. She lights up, and takes a long drag on the cigarette, sinking into herself.

Then she holds the flame of the lighter to a piece of fabric hanging over the lip of the tub, watching as it coils before catching fire... She moves around the tub, holding the flame to piece after piece of fabric. Then she removes the robe she's wearing and drops it into the pyre.

Standing there in only a pair of Scott's boxer shorts, her platinum watch, the paint on her lips, and the cigarette between her fingers, she watches her work turn to ashes.

In the b.g. SIRENS approach.

INT. TRAIN - TRAVELING EAST - DAY

Zelda and Scott settle into their car. Scott is already working on his flask.

SCOTT

I've got Biggs looking for a place for  
us now --

ZELDA

In *Delaware* ?

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

We'll get a whole house on the river for the price of a cubby hole in Manhattan. Anyway -- Once we're settled, Lois and her mother will be coming out to visit.

ZELDA

You mean you haven't had your fill?

SCOTT

There's no such thing as having too much of that girl --

ZELDA

Of course not -- there's nothing to her in the first place...

As she speaks, she removes her **platinum watch** from her wrist

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Though in the novel, you'll bestow upon her all sorts of quixotic endowments...

Casually, **Zelda dangles the watch out the window of their car.** Scott stares at the watch...

And with that **she releases the watch to the wind...** Scott says nothing as he stares at the spot where the watch once was. He takes another swig from his flask:

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 so original...

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.



CONTINUED:

And on the vast lawn leading up to it, nothing less than a Springtime Bacchanal is on display: the green has been transformed into a polo field; players are using croquet mallets, and Percheron's are being led through the gates.

GUEST #1  
(leading a horse by  
the bridle)  
We made a deal with the Iron Works!

ANOTHER ANGLE - BY THE RIVER

Lois Moran, her mother, Biggs, and OTHERS are attempting to create a human pyramid.

Lois is climbing to the top, when someone beneath her loses his balance, the whole unit comes apart, and they all land in the river.

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  
Welcome home --

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.

CONTINUED:

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...

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 and 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...

**It recalls the day they 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

She'll turn up in his next book as something exotic --

CONTINUED:

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.

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! I'm also the one who dives into fountains! And from Eden Roc -- so when you read about that -- remember -- that's *me*!

She is working herself into a state...

SCOTT

Zelda --

ZELDA

No... No more...

CONTINUED: (2)

Her eyes are glassy with rage and something darker still.

ZELDA (CONT'D)  
Not one more breath. Not one more  
thought. Take from her --  
(ré: the Guests)  
From them -- !

The band has stopped playing; the Guest 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 - DAY

Scott wanders through the house, calling out for Zelda, his voice echoing through the empty rooms. We HEAR a response, from a distant room.

ZELDA (O.S.)  
In here!

Scott finds her at last in one of the many LIBRARIES. She is writing, and pauses when he enters.

SCOTT  
Harold just heard from Harper's Bazaar.  
They like your piece about Park Avenue --

Her expression says she's ready to be disappointed.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
(sympathizing)  
But they'll only accept it if they can  
use my name *along* with yours. They'll  
pay a thousand for it...

CONTINUED:

She offers a small smile and nods: **better than no credit at all.** Scott glances over her shoulder; the desk is littered with pads of paper, each dense with ink...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(reading)

*"Save me the Waltz?"*

ZELDA

An attempt at a title. For a novel...

Scott gives her a look: "Really..."

ZELDA (CONT'D)

I'll never manage it, but I'm keeping notes for it anyway.

She removes a sheet of paper from the typewriter, gathers together a few from her desk, and hands these to Scott. He looks at her: "And what's this?"

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Another piece. About the war years...

Scott rifles through, pauses to read:

SCOTT

(reading)

*Success was the goal for this generation and to a startling extent they have attained it, and now we venture to say that, if intimately approached -- nine in ten would confess that success is only a decoration they wished to wear: what they really wanted was something deeper and richer than that.*

Scott looks up at Zelda, impressed.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

My God, Zelda. I always knew yours was the finer mind.

He removes his flask from his pocket, and takes a swig. The gesture is almost as reflexive as her lip-chewing.

ZELDA

We were all too young, Gofo. Clever and young. And we achieved everything we wanted --

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTT

(smiling)

And we're still perfectly miserable.

ZELDA

(softening)

Do you know how sorry I am? Do you know how I reproach myself for all the grief I cause you?

Scott tries to protest.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

You are the best. The *best*. And genius is so much a part of you. I love you... And I want you to be happy. We have to stop looking for solace. There isn't any. And if there were, life would be a baby affair.

So long starved of her approval, the words come as a balm. He approaches her, runs his hands through her hair.

SCOTT

(barely audible)

You haven't talked like that in such a long, long time...

It's been as long since they've touched.

INT. ELLERSLIE - FOYER - MORNING

Zelda is 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've decided I want to dance again.

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 -- ?

CONTINUED:

He is not critical here, but afraid of the inevitable disappointment to come. For her. For himself.

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. BALLET STUDIO - DAY

Zelda, older than the other students, works at the bar. The Teacher, CATHERINE LIVINGSTON, SOUNDS OFF with instructions.

While Zelda's movement is not as fluid as it was when she was younger, her body has surprising muscle memory. And her face is set with a determination we've never seen.

EXT. STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Catherine accompanies Zelda down the stairs to the sidewalk.

CATHERINE

You danced when you were a girl...

ZELDA

You can tell?

CATHERINE

Always. When you learn that young, it stays with you.

Now it's Zelda's turn to bask in the encouragement.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I hope you'll come back.

Zelda nods, and with a smile, takes her leave.

EXT. ANTIQUE/JUNK SHOP - PHILADELPHIA - A BIT LATER

Zelda looks in the storefront: a jumble of odds and ends. In one window, a collection of **used watches**; in the next, tucked behind a chair, a gigantic 19th century **gilt frame mirror**.

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.

CONTINUED:

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 music,** which 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.

\* 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.



CONTINUED: (2)

\* 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.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Zelda!

He moves to enter the room:

CONTINUED: (3)

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.** She looks to Scott again:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

What's happening to me? Can you tell  
me what's happening?

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.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ZELDA (CONT'D)

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, but quickly looks away again...

INT. PHIPPS INSTITUTE - CORRIDOR - SAME

Scott is there with DR. MEYER, 65, a slight man with deep brown eyes, and Dr. Thomas Rennie, 40 (and the Man we met in the very first scene of the movie). They walk as they talk:

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.

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.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

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 --

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...

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

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...

CONTINUED:

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...

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

(fierce)

Zelda is my wife !

DR. MEYER

(disarmingly calm)

And she is my patient... 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

**Back where we began**, with Zelda, 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.

(MORE)



CONTINUED:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

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 -- !

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 --

CONTINUED: (2)

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.**

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.  
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

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.

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, and his face softens suddenly with a rush of emotion:**

CONTINUED: (4)

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, Goofo?

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 TO:

ZELDA & SCOTT

They are standing side by side on the cliffside of Eden Roc,  
drenched by the golden, late afternoon sun. Zelda gives him  
an ebullient glance then faces the ocean.

ZELDA

(whispering)

One... Two... Three!

And **they take a synchronous leap off the cliff**, chasing the  
sun and the sea... **And for just this moment, they both  
fervently believe in the promise of their own bright spark.**  
They believe they are happy.

And the IMAGE FREEZES...

**END CREDITS**