

Scott Fitzgerald



(His talent was as natural as the pattern that was made by the dust on a butterfly's wings. At one time he understood it no more than the butterfly did and he did not know when it was brushed or marred. Later he became conscious of his damaged wings and of their construction and he learned to think and could not fly any more because the love of flight was gone and he could only remember when it had been effortless.)

THE first time I ever met Scott Fitzgerald a very strange thing happened. Many strange things happened with Scott but this one I was never able to forget. He had come into the Dingo bar in the rue Delambre where I was sitting with some completely worthless characters, had introduced himself and introduced a tall, pleasant man who was with him as Dunc Chaplin, the famous pitcher. I had not followed Princeton baseball and had never heard of Dunc Chaplin but he was extraordinarily nice, unworried, relaxed and friendly and I much preferred him to Scott.

[Scott was a man then who looked like a boy with a face between handsome and pretty. He had very fair wavy hair, a high forehead, excited and friendly eyes and a delicate long-lipped Irish mouth that, on a girl, would have been the mouth of a beauty. His chin was well built and he had good ears and a handsome, almost beautiful, unmarked nose. This should not have added up to a pretty face, but that came from the coloring, the very fair hair and the mouth. The mouth worried you until you knew him and then it worried you more.]

I was very curious to see him and I had been working very hard all day and it seemed quite wonderful that here should be Scott Fitzgerald and the great Dunc Chaplin whom I had never heard of but who was now my friend. Scott did not stop talking and since I was embarrassed by what he said—

"No. And after Pamplona we'll go to Madrid and to Valencia."

"M-m-m-m," she said softly, like a cat.

"Poor Scott," I said.

"Poor everybody," Hadley said. "Rich feathercats with no money."

"We're awfully lucky."

"We'll have to be good and hold it."

We both touched wood on the café table and the waiter came to see what it was we wanted. But what we wanted not he, nor anyone else, nor knocking on wood or on marble, as this café table-top was, could ever bring us. But we did not know it that night and we were very happy.

[A day or two after the trip Scott brought his book over. It had a garish dust jacket and I remember being embarrassed by the violence, bad taste and slippery look of it. It looked the book jacket for a book of bad science fiction. Scott told me not to be put off by it, that it had to do with a billboard along a highway in Long Island that was important in the story. He said he had liked the jacket and now he didn't like it. I took it off to read the book.

When I had finished the book I knew that no matter what Scott did, nor how he behaved, I must know it was like a sickness and be of any help I could to him and try to be a good friend. He had many good, good friends, more than anyone I knew. But I enlisted as one more, whether I could be of any use to him or not. If he could write a book as fine as *The Great Gatsby* I was sure that he could write an even better one. I did not know Zelda yet, and so I did not know the terrible odds that were against him. But we were to find them out soon enough.)

she had gotten in Lyon, when the rain had made them abandon their car, and her eyes were tired and her face was too taut and drawn.

She was formally pleasant to Hadley and me but a big part of her seemed not to be present but to still be on the party she had come home from that morning. She and Scott both seemed to feel that Scott and I had enjoyed a great and wonderful time on the trip up from Lyon and she was jealous about it.

"When you two can go off and have such simply wonderful times together, it only seems fair that I should have just a little fun with our good friends here in Paris," she said to Scott.

Scott was being the perfect host and we ate a very bad lunch that the wine cheered a little but not much. The little girl was blonde, chubby-faced, well built, and very healthy looking and spoke English with a strong Cockney accent. Scott explained that she had an English nanny because he wanted her to speak like Lady Diana Manners when she grew up.

Zelda had hawk's eyes and a thin mouth and deep-south manners and accent. Watching her face you could see her mind leave the table and go to the night's party and return with her eyes blank as a cat's and then pleased, and the pleasure would show along the thin line of her lips and then be gone. Scott was being the good cheerful host and Zelda looked at him and she smiled happily with her eyes and her mouth too as he drank the wine. I learned to know that smile very well. It meant she knew Scott would not be able to write.

Zelda was jealous of Scott's work and as we got to know them, this fell into a regular pattern. Scott would resolve not to go on all-night drinking parties and to get some exercise

each day and work regularly. He would start to work and as soon as he was working well Zelda would begin complaining about how bored she was and get him off on another drunken party. They would quarrel and then make up and he would sweat out the alcohol on long walks with me, and make up his mind that this time he would really work, and would start off well. Then it would start all over again.

Scott was very much in love with Zelda and he was very jealous of her. He told me many times on our walks of how she had fallen in love with the French navy pilot. But she had never made him really jealous with another man since. This spring she was making him jealous with other women and on the Montmartre parties he was afraid to pass out and he was afraid to have her pass out. Becoming unconscious when they drank had always been their great defense. They went to sleep on drinking an amount of liquor or champagne that would have little effect on a person accustomed to drinking, and they would go to sleep like children. I have seen them become unconscious not as though they were drunk but as though they had been anesthetized and their friends, or sometimes a taxi-driver, would get them to bed, and when they woke they would be fresh and happy, not having taken enough alcohol to damage their bodies before it made them unconscious.

Now they had lost this natural defense. At this time Zelda could drink more than Scott could and Scott was afraid for her to pass out in the company they kept that spring and the places they went to. Scott did not like the places nor the people and he had to drink more than he could drink and be in any control of himself, to stand the people and the places, and