

THE UNDERCLASSMAN

A New Musical

Book by Peter Mills and Cara Reichel
Music & Lyrics by Peter Mills

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TIME

1915-1918

PLACES

St. Paul, MN; Princeton, NJ; Westover, CT; NJ shore; Lake Forest, IL; Chicago, IL

CHARACTERS

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

A sophomore at Princeton University. Brilliant, ambitious, in search of the path to greatness that he will one day achieve. A self-described “romantic egotist,” he is handsome, can be very clever and charming, and therefore considers himself something of a ladies’ man. He is also deeply insecure, treated as an outsider by many of his classmates because of his humble middle-class background.

EDMUND WILSON (“BUNNY”)

A junior at Princeton. Scott’s friend. Serious-minded, cerebral. He is in the Triangle Club with Scott, and is also the editor of the campus literary magazine. An editor by temperament, he can be prickly and critical—especially on the subject of romance. He recognizes Scott’s genius, but also believes that Scott is lazy and undisciplined as a writer, and as a student.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP (“J.P.”)

A sophomore at Princeton. Scott’s friend. An aspiring poet. Shy, awkward. He is much less socially adept than Scott, but the two share a love of writing. J.P. is perhaps in love with Scott. Like Edmund, he wants to see his friend use his talents for something more serious than writing Triangle Club lyrics and charming young women.

GINEVRA KING

17. From a very wealthy family, one of the “top four debutantes” of her generation, the Paris Hilton of her day. She is very bright—more than a match for Scott when it comes to romantic game-playing. She rebels against her background, and has cultivated her reputation as a “speed”—a bad girl. But in the end, she is a more conventional soul than she would like to admit.

MARIE HERSEY (“BUG”)

17. Scott’s high school sweetheart from St. Paul, and Ginevra’s best friend and roommate at the Westover School for Girls. She is down-to-earth, with a wry sense of humor. Despite her initial anger when Scott pursues her friend, Marie is still very fond of Scott and is concerned that he will ultimately get hurt in what she views as an impossible romance with Ginevra.

Triangle Club Boys

Along with Scott and Edmund, the following characters are in the Triangle Club

TRIP EVERETT

Upperclassman. Big Man On Campus. Scott's idol. Effortlessly cool.

A. HAMILTON SAMUELS ("HAM")

Upperclassman. Triangle Club President. Goofily charismatic.

WILTON DARBY

Upperclassman. Haughty, sarcastic. One of Trip's "satellites".

ELLIS GRIFFIN

Upperclassman. Snide, snarky. One of Trip's "satellites".

FREDDY FORGAN

Underclassman. The Club's resident composer. Intense about music, afraid of girls.

CLIVE BAGBY

Underclassman. Ambitious, opportunistic.

Others

TYLER PIERCE

Senior at Yale. Scott's rival for the affections of Ginevra. Something of a sophisticated bully, he comes from a wealthy family and has elitist attitudes to match.

MEN'S ENSEMBLE

An ensemble of at least three young men to play Princeton students, Triangle Club performers, and other roles (including the WAITER / USHER in the Seaside sequence).

The WALLFLOWERS should be portrayed by the actors playing CLIVE, FREDDY, and TYLER.

The VAUDEVILLIANS should be played by members of the ensemble, as all other characters appear as themselves.

The STUDENTS and SERVANTS may be assigned to members of the ensemble or to the Triangle Boys.

WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE

Four or more young women who play Westover girls, debutantes at various dances, lower class girls at the seaside, rich ladies in Lake Forest, Blue Slipperettes in a fantasy sequence, and the MOTORIST in the Seaside sequence.

MUSICAL NUMBERSACT ONE

1	THE START OF A STORY / OFF WE GO	Scott & All Men (Except Tyler, JP)
2	THE START OF A STORY REPRISE	Scott
3	TO BEAT THE BAND	Ginevra & Company (Except JP)
3A	TO BEAT THE BAND REPRISE	Scott
4	PRINCETON LIVES IN YOU	Scott & All Men (Except Tyler)
5	CLASS	Scott, J.P., Edmund
6	LETTERS TO BOYS	Ginevra, Marie, Westover Girls
7	IF ONLY / ONLY IF	Scott, Trip
8	BLACK BALL	Trip, Ellis, Wilton, Ham, & Men's Ensemble
9	WALLFLOWERS	Freddy, Clive, & Tyler
10	IMPROVISING	Scott, Ginevra
11	A PLACE APART	J.P., Scott
11A	PARADISE FOR NOW	Male Ensemble
12	LET'S DON'T	Marie, Edmund
13	ACT ONE FINALE / PARADISE FOR NOW REPRISE	Full Company (Except Tyler)

ACT TWO

14	A TRIP TO THE SEASIDE	Scott, Edmund, Triangle Boys, Seaside Girls
14A	TRAGEDY / INVITATION	Ginevra
15	THE RICH ARE DIFF'RENT	TBD
16	HALF AND HALF	Ginevra
17	THE BLUE SLIP	Full Company
18	THE PURSUIT OF PERSEPHONE	Clive, Wilton, Freddy
18A	HALF AND HALF REPRISE	Ginevra
19	WHEN I REMEMBER YOU	Scott
19A	CONSOLATION	Marie
20	LES JEUNES FILLES / FINALE	Triangle Boys, Scott, J.P., Edmund

ACT 1

Scene 1 – A Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota

(A YOUNG MAN, dressed simply in trousers, an undershirt, and suspenders, walks on to stage that is empty, save for a full length mirror, an upended chair, and a trunk. Theatrical items that may be in transit, into or out of the space. He considers the bare space around him, looks into the mirror and considers himself, and then looks at the audience. He begins to speak directly to them, with the intention of crafting a narrative, carefully composing and choosing each word.)

SCOTT

He knew he wasn't a regular fellow.

He was restless, waiting for something to happen—his opening act.

(a bit boastfully)

He had read—enormously—Shaw, Chesterton, Yeats, Keats—and from his reading he had discovered a truth:

Authors write themselves. Over and over. They have two or three truly moving experiences in their lives—experiences so extraordinary that it seems no one has ever been awakened and astounded and beaten and broken in just that way before.

That's what he was waiting for:

To be dazzled... humbled... rescued... illuminated...

To feel life so desperately that he would find a new way to say it.

A BARE STAGE.

A BLANK PAGE.

A TALE THAT NO ONE'S TOLD.

AND WHO KNOWS WHERE THIS GOES FROM HERE...?

A CLEAN SLATE,

WHERE SOME FATE IS WAITING TO UNFOLD...

THIS IS THE START OF A STORY,

THE START OF A BRAND NEW YEAR.

(The ENSEMBLE begins to emerge and create the world around him. The Triangle Club is loading in for a tour performance, bringing on trunks, containing scenery and costumes.)

It was January, 1915. He had just arrived home, in St. Paul. And he had decided that *this* was going to be the year.

THIS IS THE START OF A STORY...

(SCOTT's reverie is interrupted by HAM, who bustles on officiously, directing trunks and people. The stage is suddenly humming with activity.)

HAM

Fitzgerald! Out of the way! Coming through!

SCOTT

(to the audience)

This great, seething ant-hill is the Princeton Triangle Club!

HAM

Hurry up and get into costume, Scott.

SCOTT

The club is one of Princeton University's most influential institutions. Over three hundred men compete for a spot each year.

HAM

(calling offstage)

The pirate song is up first, for spacing... then the finale!

SCOTT

Every fall, the undergraduates write a musical comedy.

Then, the chosen few (*he indicates those on stage*)

tour the show, by Pullman car, all through Christmas vacation.

(FREDDY and CLIVE enter half-costumed as women.)

Of course, boys play all the roles.

HAM

(to FREDDY and CLIVE)

Chorines on stage in ten...

SCOTT

How a Triangle show ever got on was a mystery, but it was a riotous mystery...

HAM

That means you, too, Scott Fitzgerald. Get a move on!

(During the next section of the song, SCOTT begins to change into his drag costume for the show.)

SCOTT

IT'S AS IF ALL MY LIFE UP TO NOW WAS A REHEARSAL.

NOW WE COME TO THE TIME WHEN I'M STEPPING CENTER STAGE.

I'M PREPARED FOR A MAJOR ROLE...

SCOTT (cont.)
SOMETHING WHERE I CAN BARE MY SOUL...
NOW THE WAIT IN THE WINGS IS THROUGH.
MY BIG DEBUT!
BUT WHAT'S MY CUE...?

(Upperclassmen ELLIS and WILTON approach SCOTT.)

ELLIS
Aw, wook at the widdle sophomore.

SCOTT
(to audience throughout)
It's not just that they're upperclassmen...

WILTON
Standin' there gaping like the Midwestern hick he is.

SCOTT
They're the upper class.

ELLIS
What's that smell?

WILTON
St. Paul, I think. Smells just like Fitzgerald.

SCOTT
Who would have thought that a middle-class Irish kid from Minnesota could even get in to Princeton—

ELLIS
Coming home to your widdle mommy, widdle sophomore?

SCOTT
—but, you see, he still hadn't really gotten in.

(EDMUND enters in comedic non-female costume.)

EDMUND
Time to sober up for the show, fellas.

WILTON
Aw, come on, Edmund. Let us have some fun.

ELLIS

Yeah. Boys will be boys.

EDMUND

Funny... I thought you boys were supposed to be girls. That's quite a five o'clock shadow.

HAM

All right, all right. Ponies, line up to run the closer! Take your spacing off my lead.

(SCOTT is joined by FREDDY and CLIVE, and then WILTON and ELLIS, who rehearse a dance number.)

SCOTT

SO PERHAPS I'VE BEEN CAST AS A NOTHING IN THE CHORUS
AND THE LAST ON THEIR LIST OF THE LIKELY TO SUCCEED.
BUT I KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE OF ME.
IT WAS MEANT FOR THE WORLD TO SEE.
WHEN THEY DO, THEN NO DOUBT
THEY'LL BE MAKING ME THE LEAD
OFF WE GO—THE START OF A STORY...

CHORUS BOYS

AND OFF WE GO TO LANDS UNKNOWN.

SCOTT

OFF WE GO—IT'S BARELY BEGUN...

CHORUS BOYS

TO FIND ADVENTURES OF OUR OWN.

SCOTT

I START OFF LOW,
NO TELLING HOW HIGH I'LL GO
BEFORE THE STORY'S DONE...

HAM

Thanks, boys. That'll be all until curtain.

(All except EDMUND and SCOTT exit.)

EDMUND

You finished your story for the literary magazine yet, Scott?

SCOTT

Finished is a strong word.

EDMUND

Have you started?

SCOTT

(hedging)
Yes... I'd say it's a first-rate beginning. Exceptional, actually...

EDMUND

Good lord.

SCOTT

Don't worry, Bunny. My literary genius is at work. Inspiration will come! It's going to be based on true events in my own life.

EDMUND

Then what's the hold up?

SCOTT

I haven't done anything yet.

EDMUND

What about last year? Oh, right. You *haven't* done anything.

HAM

Places! Places, everyone!

SCOTT

Don't worry, Bunny.
(tapping his brain)
Literary genius.

(SCOTT and EDMUND in opposite directions. There is a tremolo, the lights dim, and the "performance" begins. The BOYS return, now fully costumed, and in a dance we see various scenes as if we were fast-forwarding through the show, to the big finale. At last, SCOTT, in full costume, enters and joins the group. As the dance concludes, the scene freezes, and SCOTT steps out from the tableau.)

SCOTT

TAKE A SEAT—
HERE BEGINS THE PERFORMANCE OF A LIFETIME!
SET THE SCENE IN THE QUAIN T LITTLE VILLAGE OF SAINT PAUL.
SETTLE IN FOR THE OP'NING ACT,
'CAUSE IT'S BOUND TO BE ACTION-PACKED.
WHO CAN SAY WHAT'S AHEAD,

SCOTT (Cont.)

BUT I'M READY FOR IT ALL!
THE SWANK SOIREES ON MANHATTAN ROOFTOPS.

CHORUS

SO OFF WE GO TO LANDS UNKNOWN...

SCOTT

THE SUMMER BREEZE OFF LONG ISLAND SOUND.

CHORUS

TO FIND ADVENTURE OF OUR OWN.

SCOTT

THE DAZZLING VIEW FROM UP ON A TERRACE
THAT'S OVERLOOKING PARIS.

SCOTT

THINK HOW FAR I'LL GO!
OH...
LET THE WORLD KNOW
I'LL BE COMING ITS WAY!

CHORUS

WE'LL WANDER
'ROUND THAT WIDE WORLD YONDER.
ACROSS THE SEA OUR DESTINY AWAITS.

SCOTT & CHORUS

OFF WE GO!
OFF WE GO!
OFF WE GO!

(The song and the show come to their euphonious close. After some applause, HAM SAMUELS steps forward.)

HAM

Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Hamilton Samuels...
(catcalls of "Ham!" and "Ham Sandwich!" from the boys behind him)
...and I am the President of the Princeton Triangle Club!
(robust cheers from the boys)

St. Paul is always one of our favorite stops on tour... but sadly, we boys have to be on a train by midnight. So we're going to slip out of this finery and join you at the party just as soon as we can. Before we go, how about a locomotive for our hosts, fellas?

BOYS

Hip, Hip, Rah, Rah, Rah, Tiger Tiger, Tiger, Siss! Siss! Siss! Boom! Boom! Boom! Bah!
Saint Paul! Saint Paul! Saint Paul!

(Music underscores a transition to the dressing room, where the boys get out of costume and dress for the party.)

HAM

The Club is ten blocks east. Upperclassmen get priority on the dance cards. And remember, Cinderellas: we turn into pumpkins at midnight!

TRIP

I don't know about you youngsters, but I plan on collecting a few kisses before getting back on that train. Anyone care for a friendly wager?

ELLIS

I'm in.

WILTON

Me, too.

(They all proffer up some cash into Trip's costume hat)

TRIP

I hear Ginevra King's in town.

ELLIS

No way!

WILTON

The most notorious deb in Chicago...

CLIVE

(minor freak out)

Wait a minute. Was Ginevra King *at our show*???

TRIP

Fourth row, center.

FREDDY

Wonder if I'd have the nerve to talk to her.

ELLIS

Wonder what she's doing out here in Saint Paul?

SCOTT

Oh... probably spending the holidays with Marie Hersey.

WILTON

Marie Hersey? Who's that?

SCOTT

Oh, just my high school sweetheart. Ginevra is her roommate up at Westover...

(FREDDY and CLIVE respond with ad lib. expressions of awe.
TRIP is skeptical. EDMUND enters and overhears.)

TRIP

Well, well – Scott has an in with Ginevra King. The home field advantage. You in for our little bet, then?

(TRIP holds out the hat for money.)

SCOTT

Well...

EDMUND

(throwing in)

I'll stake you.

SCOTT

...all right.

TRIP

Game's on, then. See you at the club.

(TRIP exits, followed by the others.)

WILTON

Hey, Fitzgerald – if you're meeting Ginevra King tonight, better wear your best suit.

ELLIS

Too bad that's also his *worst* suit—because it's his only one!

(WILTON and ELLIS laugh as they exit. SCOTT and EDMUND
are alone.)

EDMUND

Don't let them get to you, Scott.

SCOTT

Thanks, Bunny.

EDMUND

You're welcome. You can pay me back in prose.

SCOTT

I'm good for it. I told you inspiration would come, didn't I? You can't do better than "Boy meets Girl."

EDMUND

Maybe. But whatever you do, just don't *get* her.

SCOTT

Why not?

EDMUND

Because it'll make for a better ending if you don't.

SCOTT

Seriously, Bunny. You have to hurry to the club and get on Ginevra King's dance card.

EDMUND

No, thank you. I detest these never-ending dances and debutantes.

SCOTT

Just get one dance, and then I'll cut in and take her off your hands... see?

EDMUND

All right, all right. But only for the story.

(EDMUND exits, leaving SCOTT alone to finish changing.
The mirror from the beginning is on stage, and SCOTT moves toward it,
once again considering himself, as he dresses.)

SCOTT

A BARE STAGE
A BLANK PAGE
A TALE THAT'S UNDERWAY
AND THIS NIGHT THE STARS MIGHT ALIGN.
WITH ONE GIRL, WITH ONE DANCE,
ONE WHIRLWIND ROMANCE,
ONE SWIRL OF CIRCUMSTANCE
COULD CAST ME IN THE ROLE I'M MEANT TO PLAY...

THIS COULD BE
THE START OF EVERYTHING
THAT WAS MEANT FOR ME
'CAUSE AT THE HEART OF A STORY,
JUST ONE PART OF A STORY,
HOLDS THE KEY...
WHAT IF SHE WERE MINE?

(SCOTT exits, as the mirror pivots to another dressing room...)

Scene 2
The Minnehaha Club, Saint Paul

(A changing room upstairs. GINEVRA finishing her makeup...)

MARIE

Hurry up, Ginevra! We ought to go down soon. The crowd is clamoring for you...

GINEVRA

Honestly, all this fuss! The only boys who interest me at all are the totally ineligible ones.

MARIE

Don't let your Mother hear that.

GINEVRA

I mean it! I'm going to marry some awful, *reckless* fellow, just for the excitement. Now, if I were poor, I'd go on the stage...

MARIE

You might as well get paid for the amount of acting you do.

GINEVRA

Marie, darling, you don't know what a trial it is to be like me.

MARIE

Yes, it must be an awful strain, having your pick of the pack. So who will it be tonight?

GINEVRA

I haven't made up my mind yet. They were all so adorable in the show.

MARIE

Tyler Pierce is in town. He said he might drop by.

GINEVRA

Tyler Pierce? What on Earth is that peacock doing out here in the provinces?

MARIE

Here to see you, no doubt.

GINEVRA

I'll bet Mother put him up to it. But who do you have on your dance card, Bug?

MARIE

The usual assortment of freshmen and odd birds.

GINEVRA

What about your Scott Fitzgerald?

MARIE

Not my Scott. Not anymore. He's a University man—says he can't be tied down.

GINEVRA

How intriguing! You'll have to introduce me.

MARIE

I don't think that's a good idea.

GINEVRA

Oh, Bug—don't worry about me.

MARIE

I meant for him! You treat men terribly, Ginevra. If you weren't such a dear friend, I'd say you're an appalling speed.

GINEVRA

Can you blame me? It's really the most sensible thing for a young girl to be.

A WEDDING RING WAS ONCE THE ONE THING
THAT EV'RY LADY SEEMED TO WANT.
AS A MODERN DEBUTANTE, I STILL DO.
BUT WHILE I WAIT AND HOPE FOR THAT MATE,
SUCH OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND...
I DON'T WANNA LIE AROUND AND MILDEW!
I WANNA MAKE SOME BALLYHOO,
AND MAYBE BREAK A HEART OR TWO.
I HAVE TO PLAY TO WIN WHILE I AM IN DEMAND.
I HAVE TO DANCE,
I HAVE TO DANCE TO BEAT THE BAND.

(Couples rush on as the scene shifts to the dance floor, where a press of enthusiastic couples foxtrot. GINEVRA dances with EDMUND. SCOTT dances with MARIE.)

SCOTT

Très charmante! Is this one of the feminine refinements they teach at Westover?

MARIE

Hardly. I hear one has to go to Princeton to learn such things.

SCOTT

Then you liked my performance?

MARIE

I thought you were prettier than most of the girls at Westover.

SCOTT

Come off it, Bug. No doubt you're monopolizing the attentions of the Yale crew?

MARIE

That's rather unlikely when one's roommate is Ginevra King.

SCOTT

I've heard so much about her. Are the stories true?

MARIE

I don't know what you've heard... but, yes.

(EDMUND awkwardly dances with GINEVRA.)

GINEVRA

Don't you just love this dance? It's called the fox trot!

EDMUND

Sorry, sorry! I don't know this step.

GINEVRA

Say, there's my pal, Marie. Have you met her? I think you two would hit it off.

(calling out)

Bug, darling—have you met Edmund?

(MARIE and SCOTT dance to EDMUND and GINEVRA.)

GINEVRA

Edmund Wilson meet Marie Hersey.

EDMUND & MARIE

How do you do?

(a pause, as GINEVRA looks expectantly to SCOTT)

GINEVRA

And who's this, Marie?

MARIE

Ginevra, may I present Mr. Fitzgerald.

GINEVRA

I'm going to call you Scott.

SCOTT

(cutting in with Ginevra)

You don't mind, do you, Bunny?

MARIE

And off they go.

EDMUND

Shall we?

MARIE

No.

(MARIE and EDMUND exit, in opposite directions.
SCOTT partners GINEVRA, who sings to the audience.)

GINEVRA

I MADE A LIST OF BOYS THAT I'VE KISSED,
AND OTHERS THAT I HAVEN'T YET.
NOW IS WHEN I GOTTA GET THOSE KISSES.
'CAUSE IN A WHILE I'LL WALK THE CHURCH AISLE
AND HAPPILY I WILL BECOME
SETTLED DOWN AND SAFE AS SOMEONE'S MISSUS!
BUT 'TIL I DO, I WANNA LAUGH.
I WANNA SHAKE A WICKED CALF.
THERE'S HALF A MILLION ESCAPADES I STILL HAVE PLANNED.
I HAVE TO DANCE, I HAVE TO DANCE,
I HAVE TO DANCE TO BEAT THE BAND.

(TYLER, now dancing with MARIE, manages to bump into
GINEVRA and SCOTT on purpose.)

TYLER

Oh! I beg your pardon, Ginevra...

GINEVRA

Well, Tyler, so you recognize me. Now I know I haven't got too much paint on. Scott, this is Tyler Pierce. Tyler's a senior at Yale. And Tyler, this is Scott Fitzgerald, who I've only just met – but I believe he's a Princeton man.

SCOTT & TYLER

(shaking hands with a fashionable low swoop)

How d'ya do?

SCOTT

How about that football game this year? We gave your boys a bit of a rough time.

TYLER

Yes, it was something of a fluke for both teams, wasn't it?

GINEVRA

Boys and their schools. They're so competitive, aren't they, Bug?

MARIE

Yes, thank heavens girls aren't competitive that way.

TYLER

Take a turn, Ginevra?

GINEVRA

Why not.

(They trade partners)

MARIE

So was she everything you expected?

SCOTT

Well I hardly got to talk to her...

MARIE

Ah, that's her trick. She leaves them wanting more!

SCOTT

I wouldn't say I've been left just yet. The night's still young...

(GINEVRA sings as she dances with TYLER.)

GINEVRA

I KNOW IN TIME I'M LIKELY TO LET ONE SPECIAL CHARMER
FINALLY GET BENEATH MY ARMOR.
I DON'T KNOW YET IF HE'LL BE FARMER, FISHERMAN OR FINANCIER
MILKMAN, MINISTER, OR MILLIONAIRE.
ALL I KNOW IS IF I FEEL THAT GLOW
WHEN HE IS NEAR,
I WON'T CARE.

(A high energy dance break. WILTON, ELLIS, HAM, and TRIP competitively cut-in with GINEVRA, who loves being the center of attention. Following her lead, the dance should grow wilder, building in momentum.)

ALL

TO BEAT, TO BEAT, TO BEAT, TO BEAT THE BAND etc.

GINEVRA

THE BOYS I'VE MET WHO RUN WITH THE FAST SET
TRY TO BE AS FRESH AS PAINT.

I AM NOT EXACTLY SAINT GINEVRA.

I'VE YET TO MEET THE MAN I CAN'T BEAT,

SO IF HE ONLY CAME TO PLAY,

HE'LL DISCOVER THAT I'M WAY, WAY CLEV'RAH.

AND THOUGH MY FUTURE'S SURE TO HOLD

A CERTAIN PRECIOUS BAND OF GOLD,

BEFORE I'M DONE AND MISTER RIGHT HAS WON MY HAND,

I HAVE TO JUMP AT EV'RY CHANCE

I HAVE TO MAKE THE MOST OF EACH ROMANCE

I HAVE TO DANCE...

ALL

TO BEAT THE BAND, TO BEAT THE BAND, TO BEAT THE BAND
TO BEAT THE BAND, TO BEAT THE BAND, TO BEAT THE BAND!

GINEVRA

TO BEAT THE BAND!

(The dance ends just as TYLER is approaching her from one side,
and SCOTT from the other. After the applause, each turn to
GINEVRA simultaneously.)

SCOTT

You know, I've got an adjective
that just fits you—

TYLER

I heard a funny story the other
day about—

GINEVRA

I'm sorry—what was that...

(pause, then turning to SCOTT)

...Scott?

SCOTT

I said I've got an adjective that just fits you.

GINEVRA

Oh—what?

SCOTT

I'm not sure if I should say. I don't know you very well yet.

(SCOTT leads GINEVRA away from the dance floor.)

SCOTT

LET'S FIND A NOOK WHERE NO ONE ELSE WILL LOOK,
WHILE THE BAND IS ON ITS BREAK,
SOMEWHERE THAT WE TWO CAN TAKE A MINUTE.
I KNOW THAT THERE'S A COZY COUCH UPSTAIRS.
WOULDN'T THAT BE AWFULLY GOOD?
DON'T YOU THINK WE REALLY SHOULD BE IN IT?
IT'S SUCH A DARNED UNLUCKY BREAK—
I HAVE A TRAIN I HAVE TO MAKE.
IF I COULD STAY, YOU'D SEE, TONIGHT COULD BE SO GRAND.
COULDN'T WE STILL...?
IS THERE A WAY...?
DO WE HAVE TIME ENOUGH TO BEAT THE BAND?

(SCOTT and GINEVRA sit alone together. Both are playing accustomed roles in a familiar scene.)

SCOTT

Suppose we fell in love.

GINEVRA

If we did, it would be very big. Let's pretend!

SCOTT

I can't—it's sentiment.

GINEVRA

And you're not sentimental?

SCOTT

I'm romantic.

GINEVRA

What's the difference?

SCOTT

A sentimental person hopes that things will last. A romantic person knows that they won't.

(Music is heard from offstage.)

GINEVRA

Listen... the band's starting up again.

SCOTT

(suddenly become more earnest)

Ginevra, I want to tell you something. I don't know if you've guessed what I'm going to say... but... maybe we'll never meet again like this—

GINEVRA

You'll meet me again, silly.

SCOTT

—and I have to be at the station in an hour... Lordy, that sounds like a line... but it isn't.

GINEVRA

I know.

SCOTT

I'm going back to college for six long months, so why shouldn't we... If I could only just have one thing to remember you by...

GINEVRA

They're playing "Love Moon"...

(She starts to get up. He grabs her hand and kisses the palm. Both are a bit startled by this bold gesture.)

SCOTT

Ginevra! Can I kiss you, Ginevra...?

(Just as they are about to kiss, TYLER enters.)

TYLER

There you are! They've started up again, Ginevra, and I believe this is my dance.

(GINEVRA takes TYLER's arm. As they exit, she looks back. SCOTT turns to talk to the audience.)

SCOTT

There was a glance! There was no kiss – but there was a very definite glance!

(The music swells as SCOTT exits, as the scene transitions...)

Scene 3
Princeton

(Princeton boys enter one by one. It is a bright winter morning on the Princeton campus, as the boys coming back from tour.)

TRIP
ONLY FOUR SHORT YEARS OF PARADISE
THAT IS ALL YOU HAVE TO SPEND

HAM
FAR TOO SOON THIS TASTE OF HEAVEN ON EARTH MUST END

WILTON
THERE'S A DREAM OF SPIRES AND BATTLEMENTS

ELLIS
AND OF ARCHWAYS THICKLY VINED.

TRIP
YOU MAY TRAVEL FAR
BUT WHERE E'ER YOU ARE

ALL FOUR
IT WILL LINGER IN YOUR MIND

(SCOTT re-enters, wearing his suit.)

SCOTT
(to audience)
It was a halcyon winter day when the boys arrived back on campus from tour.

From the first he had loved Princeton—with its towers climbing in clear blue aspiration toward the sky between the tapestries of trees...

But there was something more. He always felt it most the moment he returned:
The spirit of the past, brooding over a new generation, the chosen youth from the muddled world.

They were that new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, and singing a song with more than a hint of sadness: infinitely transient, infinitely regretful.

BOYS (ADD FREDDY & CLIVE)
WHEN THESE DAYS ARE LONG BEHIND YOU
WHEN THE DREAM OF YOUTH IS THROUGH

(They sing as if it is their alma mater...)

SCOTT & BOYS
YOU NO LONGER LIVE IN PRINCETON, LAD.
YOU NO LONGER HAVE WHAT ONCE YOU HAD.
YOU NO LONGER LIVE IN PRINCETON,
SAD BUT TRUE.
BUT PRINCETON LIVES IN YOU.

(The tableau breaks, and the BOYS disperse. HAM, followed by TRIP, ELLIS and WILTON, pass by. SCOTT hurries over to the upperclassmen.)

SCOTT
Ham! Ham—when’s the deadline for Triangle show proposals?

HAM
It’s next Friday, Scott. But only upperclassmen are allowed to submit—

SCOTT
I’m working with Bunny. We came up with a fantastic idea during tour.

WILTON
Let me guess: “Princeton pauper meets moneyed maid in Minnesota.”

TRIP
Hey, the kid did better with her than any of us. He almost got a kiss.

ELLIS
So he says. Maybe he should write the show. He clearly has a gift for fiction.

(The UPPERCLASSMEN laugh as they stroll off together. J.P. enters and hails SCOTT from across the quad.)

J.P.
Home is the sailor, home from sea!

BOTH
And the hunter home from the hill!

SCOTT
Tennyson?

J.P.
Stevenson.

SCOTT

I knew that. So how have you been occupying your time in my absence? Poring over many a quaint and curious volume, I suppose?

J.P.

I just finished reading “A Shropshire Lad.”

SCOTT

And what might the lad’s name be?

J.P.

It’s not a person. It’s a collection of poems... by A.E. Housman—

SCOTT

Oh these poets, with their initials. So pretentious! W.B. Yeats... D. H. Lawrence...

J.P.

J. P. Bishop...

SCOTT

The only worthwhile one of the bunch! Tell me, what’s he written lately?

J.P.

Edmund has me working on a piece for the Nassau Lit.

SCOTT

Me too. He wants me to do something serious... something really artistic and all that. I said I’d try... *if* he’d help me write a Triangle show — Say, did anything come in the mail for me over break?

J.P.

Your first semester marks...

SCOTT

Oh. But apart from that?

J.P.

... along with a warning from the Dean.

SCOTT

I mean a real letter.

J.P.

Scott, you said this year you were going to study.

SCOTT

... with a Saint Paul postmark, or maybe Connecticut?

J.P.

This came yesterday—

(J.P. pulls a letter out of his pocket. SCOTT snatches it gleefully.)

SCOTT

Ha! I knew she'd write back! That was a top-notch letter I sent her!

J.P.

—from a Ginevra Somebody-or-other...?

SCOTT

Ginevra! My Lord, J.P. Haven't you heard of Ginevra King—of the Lake Forest Kings?

(J.P. gives SCOTT a blank look, as EDMUND joins them)

SCOTT

She's one of the most important debutantes of our generation—the biggest of the Big Four: Courtney Letts, Peg Cary, Edith Cummings and Ginevra King. Tell him, Bunny.

EDMUND

(to J.P., with mock reproach)

What in God's name did they teach you at prep school?

J.P.

The Big Four: Keats, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth.

SCOTT

I met her at the Saint Paul party. I almost got a kiss too, only there was this Eli interloper — a blueblood born and bred from the look of him.

EDMUND

The top girl goes to the top boy. That's our glittering caste system for you...

SCOTT

Oh, I like having a bunch of hot cats on top. But gosh, I've got to be one of them! I don't have the number one thing—money. But I have both of the next best things: good looks and intelligence.

EDMUND

I see—a pair beats an ace...

SCOTT

If I play my cards right.

CLASS IS SOMETHING SOME INHERIT
FROM THEIR FAM'LY TREE.
BUT, CLASS CAN BE ACQUIRED BY MERIT,
THANKFULLY FOR ME...
THERE'S A DELICATE APPARATUS
GOVERNING SOCIAL STATUS,
AND THAT IS WHAT I HAVE ENDEAVORED TO LEARN,
KNOWING THIS IS THE YEAR THEY STAMP US
ROYALTY OF THE CAMPUS
OR NOBODY OF CONCERN.
I MUST HAVE CLASS—I NEED TO CULTIVATE IT.
THAT'S WHAT IT'S ABOUT.
SEE WHAT KIND OF CLOUT
THIS KID IS ABLE TO AMASS.
TIME TO MAKE A MARK, TIME TO CUT A SWATHE.
TIME TO SHOW I'M CUT FROM THE FINER CLOTH.
THAT'S HOW I'LL ARRIVE—
SHOW 'EM ALL THAT I'VE GOT CLASS.

EDMUND

So you intend to become another handsome blockhead like the Trip Everetts that populate this University?

(TRIP crosses upstage, with a few underclassmen in his orbit.)

SCOTT

Look at him! So *debonair*...such *savoir faire*...with a certain *je ne sais quoi*...

EDMUND

Sometimes I can't believe you're failing French.

SCOTT

You see the way he walks... how he carries himself...? What is that?

J.P.

He's got class.

SCOTT

Exactly. But what is it? Is it breeding?

J.P.

No, it's Geometry.

Geometry?

SCOTT

EDMUND

IT'S CALLED A CLASS.
YOU OUGHTA TRY ATTENDING CLASS—IT'S WHAT WE TAKE.

J.P.

CLASS...
YOU MIGHT CONSIDER SPENDING ONE OR TWO AWAKE.

EDMUND

IF YOU'RE ASKING YOURSELF, "WHAT IS IT?"
WHY DON'T YOU PAY A VISIT,
AND DIMLY, YOU'LL MAYBE BEGIN TO RECALL...

J.P.

THINGS LIKE CHEMISTRY LAB AND LATIN,
ALSO A PLACE YOU SAT IN KNOWN AS A LECTURE HALL.

J.P. & EDMUND

COME BACK TO CLASS,
'CAUSE WHEN THE TERM IS OVER THERE'S A BIG EXAM.
IF YOU GAVE A DAMN
YOU'D STILL HAVE HALF A CHANCE TO PASS.
TIME TO TAKE THE TEXT OFF THE DUSTY SHELF.
TIME TO STUDY STUFF OTHER THAN YOURSELF.
BEST BE ON THE MOVE,
PAL OF MINE 'CAUSE YOU'VE GOT CLASS.

SCOTT

CLASS...
IS WHAT I'M HERE TO STUDY
CLASS
IS WHAT I NEED
CLASS
ENOUGH TO BE SOMEBODY
OF THE HIGHER BREED.
GOTTA SHOW 'EM A
SCOTT FITZGERALD
ELEGANTLY APPARELED
THE HAIR ALWAYS
EVER-SO CAREFULLY SLICKED.
MUST BE CAREFUL WITH
WHOM I'M WALKING
AND POLITIC WHEN I'M TALKING

J.P. & EDMUND

WHY WON'T YOU GO?

ALACK, ALAS.
HOW WE'RE WISHING YOU'D
GO TO CLASS.

NOW WE'RE BEGGING YOU...
GEEZ, SCOTT.

PLEASE, SCOTT.
GO!
AND DON'T BE
LATE, SCOTT.

GREAT SCOTT!

SCOTT
MY DISCIPLINE MUST BE STRICT.

YES, I'LL HAVE CLASS,
AND I WILL FIND MYSELF AWASH
IN MY SUCCESS,

IF I CAN IMPRESS
A CERTAIN HIGHFALUTIN LASS.
IF I GET THE GIRL,
IF I GET THE KISS,
THAT WOULD BE THE PROOF
POSITIVE OF THIS:
I'M A PERSON WHO,
IN ADDITION TO HAVING
ALL THE SHARE I DO OF BRASS,
HAS THE VERY NECESSARY
SHARE OF CLASS!

J.P. & EDMUND
YOU'RE LIABLE TO FAIL,
YOU KNOW—OH!
YOU HAVE ONE NOW!
YOU STILL COULD PASS
THOUGH WE HONESTLY
DON'T KNOW HOW

BACK TO THAT AGAIN...

OH, YOU'VE GOT CLASS!

(As the song ends, we arrive at SCOTT's dorm room.

J.P. and EDMUND sit him down at his desk and push his books
toward him. After the applause, SCOTT pushes the books away
and begins to write a letter.)

SCOTT

My dearest Ginevra... your letter came, and it was wonderful! I read it over six times, especially the last part. Somebody is playing "Love Moon" on a mandolin far across campus, and the music seems to bring you in the window...

Scene 4
Westover School for Girls

(A group of uniformed GIRLS sit at writing desks.
Among them are MARIE and GINEVRA.)

MARIE
IN A QUAIN T LITTLE NOOK OF CONNECTICUT,
AT THE WESTOVER SCHOOL FOR GIRLS,

GIRL 1
THERE ARE CLASSES IN CHARM AND IN ETIQUETTE,

GIRL 2
AND THE PROPER WAY TO SIT A HORSE.

GIRL 3
EV'RY GIRL STUDIES READING AND 'RITHMETIC,

GIRL 4
AND THE ART OF ARRANGING HER CURLS.

GINEVRA
BUT THE ONE THING WE ALL STUDY WITH METIC-
-ULOUS CARE IS OUR CORRESPONDANCE COURSE.

GIRLS
FOR THERE'S ONE CERTAIN EXTRACURRICULAR
TO ANY LADY NECESSARY:
LEARNING TO PUT HER PEN PERPENDICULAR
TO A SHEET OF STATIONERY.

CAREFULLY CRAFTING,
COMPOSING AND DRAFTING THOSE LETTERS TO BOYS.
SENSIBLY PLANNING
THE BEST WAY OF FANNING THE FLAMES.
OH, THE AMOROUS GAMES ONE PLAYS
JUST TO KEEP THEM IN THRALL.
HOW THE TINIEST WORD OR PHRASE
CAN INSPIRE OR GALL.
WHY THERE MUST BE A THOUSAND WAYS
OF BEGUILING THEM ALL
SUCH IS THE POWER A MODERN DAY LADY ENJOYS,
WRITING LETTERS TO BOYS.

GINEVRA

Hey, Bug, I'm out of paper. Do you have any more?

MARIE

Who's this you're writing?

GINEVRA

Scott.

MARIE

My Scott...?

GINEVRA

Oh, Marie, I didn't think that you still—

MARIE

I don't. I just didn't think he was really your type.

GINEVRA

He's not. We're just playing. He says he's going to write this year's Triangle show about me. He says I'm his muse!

MARIE

He can have up to nine Muses, you know...

GINEVRA

You can't imagine the kind of sweet things he says!

MARIE

I have some idea.

(MARIE stalks off, and begins a letter of her own.)

MARIE

WELL, SCOTT FITZGERALD,
WHO COULD BELIEVE THE NERVE OF YOU!
WASN'T IT QUITE THE CURVE YOU THREW,
MISTER SMARTY-PANTS!
SCOTT FITZGERALD, WHAT AN APPALLING LACK OF TACT,
PULLING YOUR CASANOVA ACT AT THAT PARTY!
I'D NEVER FLIRT WITH A BUDDY OF YOURS.
DO YOU THINK OF THE PEOPLE YOU HURT
WITH YOUR LITTLE AMOURS?
HAVE YOUR FUN!—I'LL BET BEFORE YOUR DONE
THAT YOU'LL BE THE SORRIER FOOL.

GIRLS
THOUGHTFULLY PLOTTING,
DESIGNING AND JOTTING THOSE LETTERS TO BOYS.

GINEVRA
I HAD THE CRAZIEST DREAM ABOUT YOU, DEAR...

GIRLS
SIGNING AND SEALING
THE WEAPONS FOR STEALING THEIR HEARTS.

GINEVRA
HOW VERY DULL MY DAYS SEEM WITHOUT YOU NEAR...

GIRLS
OH, THE FEMININE ARTS WE KNOW TO MAINTAIN THE AFFAIR.

GINEVRA
HOW I WEPT WHEN YOU CALLED ME A VAMP...

GIRLS
WHEN TO SEND HIM A CAMEO OR A LOCK OF THE HAIR.

GINEVRA
CAN'T YOU SEE WHERE THE PAPER IS DAMP?

GIRLS
WHEN TO MENTION THE MOON'S AGLOW,
OR A SONG'S IN THE AIR...

GINEVRA
I EVEN USED TEARDROPS TO MOISTEN THE STAMP!

GIRLS
SUCH ARE THE TACTICS A MODERN DAY LADY EMPLOYS
IN HER LETTERS TO BOYS.

(MARIE is shuffling through a stack of letters.)

MARIE
G.K., I picked up your mail—Reuben, Warren, Tyler... and of course the daily letter from Scott.
(she hands GINEVRA a very fat envelope)

GINEVRA
Well, look at that – he's certainly been busy!

(The other girls snag Scott's letter and read aloud pages.)

GIRL 1

"You've gotten to mean to me a dream that I can't put on paper any more."

GIRL 2

"I have decided never to take a cocktail again—

GIRL 3

"—and I know I'll never again fall in love."

GIRL 4

"You've been too much a part of my days and nights to ever let me think of another girl."

MARIE

(flipping to the end of the sheaf)

Fifteen pages?!

GINEVRA

And I think I can get more. If you'll excuse me, ladies...

(GINEVRA goes to her desk and begins to write.)

GINEVRA

SCOTT, MY DARLING,
SORRY I'M SLOW IN WRITING BACK.
SO MANY LETTERS IN THE STACK—HOW I DREAD IT!
ONE FROM TYLER,
PRATTLING LIKE A DOPEY CALF.
YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN QUITE A LAUGH IF YOU'D READ IT.
WHY ARE THESE MEN SUCH UNBEARABLE BORES?
WHY ARE ALL OF THE LETTERS THEY SEND
SO MUCH LONGER THAN YOURS?
IF YOU FIND ME CHARMING, PLEASE REMIND ME HOW...
YOURS... FOR NOW.

GIRLS

SKILLFULLY SCRATCHING
AND SWIFTLY DISPATCHING THOSE LETTERS TO BOYS.

MARIE & GINEVRA

TAUNTING, TEASING, FLATTERING AND DEFLATING THEM.

GIRLS

GAILY CONTRIVING A METHOD FOR DRIVING THEM WILD.

MARIE & GINEVRA
PLYING, PLEASING, BUTTERING UP AND BAITING THEM.

GINEVRA & GIRLS
HOPING EACH LETTER WILL RAPIDLY GET A REPLY...

MARIE & GINEVRA
SCOLDING, SQUEEZING, BADGERING AND BERATING THEM...

ALL
FINDING THAT COMMENT THAT GENTLY DESTROYS,
MAKING THEM JUMP LIKE THEY'RE JUMPING JACK TOYS,
FAR AND AWAY IT'S THE GREATEST OF LIFE'S LITTLE JOYS—
WRITING LETTERS TO BOYS!

Scene 5
Literary Genius...

(SCOTT and J.P. in their dorm room. J.P. plays a piano. SCOTT stands on a chair.)

SCOTT

“One shade the more, one ray the less, had half impaired the nameless grace”

J.P.

Chant! Don't recite! Chant!

SCOTT

“Which waves in every raven tress, or softly lightens o'er her face.”

J.P.

This is music. Let it sing!

SCOTT

I need a different song.

J.P.

Stop making excuses. Let's hear it!

SCOTT

“She walks in beauty like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies—”

(EDMUND enters, carrying a paper bag of “bacon buns.”)

EDMUND

(laughing)

Oh, my Lord, I'm going to cast a kitten!

SCOTT

All right, that's enough—I'm not giving an exhibition.

(EDMUND holds a bacon bun aloft.)

EDMUND

“Oh bacon bun, oh bacon bun, amongst all foodstuffs there be none that's juicier or bigger...”

SCOTT

(stealing his bun)

“Thy bun so pale, thy bacon brown... Oh, would that I could wash thee down with a double chocolate jigger.”

J.P.

Not half bad.

EDMUND

He's quick that way. I just read your submission to the Lit, Fitzgerald.

SCOTT

Literary genius, eh?

EDMUND

First of all, the story often verges on ludicrous. Its intellectual and moral content amount to little more than a gesture. It reads like the imitation of a great author—far too eager to impress. But above all, it's not about anything.

SCOTT

So are you going to publish it or not?

EDMUND

It'll run... but only because I'm desperate for material.

(HAM and FREDDY burst in, followed by TRIP.)

HAM

Afternoon, gents!

SCOTT, EDMUND, J.P.

(ad lib.)

Afternoon!

SCOTT

So what's the good word? Did we get it?

HAM

I am pleased to announce that Messers Scott Fitzgerald and Edmund Wilson have been selected for the dubious honor of penning the 1915 Triangle show. *The Pursuit of Persephone*: A Musical romance between the lowly lord Hades and Persephone, a goddess from the higher strata!

EDMUND

Any resemblance to Scott's love life is purely intentional.

HAM

Ah—I see... the goddess in question is Ginevra King.

TRIP

Anything percolating there, Fitzgerald?

SCOTT

(playing it cool)

Oh, she's been writing me letters. Sweet girl. I might ask her to the Prom.

TRIP

Ha—wouldn't that beat all!

FREDDY

I've already set one of the lyrics you wrote, Scott.

SCOTT

Which one? The ballad?

FREDDY

Yep. Hades' song.

TRIP

(mock seriousness)

Bishop, give us the piano, will you? Triangle Club business, you know.

(FREDDY goes to the piano, ousting JP. OTHERS gather around.)

HAM

We taught it to Trip, because... well—

EDMUND

Because Trip always plays the lead. Yes, we know.

SCOTT

Well let's hear it!

TRIP

IF ONLY YOU AND I WERE HAND IN HAND,
AND AN ISLAND BAND WERE SOFTLY PLAYING.

FREDDY

How do you like the tune?

SCOTT

It's a knockout, Freddy.

TRIP

IF ONLY YOU WERE IN MY ARMS ONCE MORE,
AND ACROSS THE FLOOR WE TWO WERE SWAYING.

EDMUND

Just like that magical night in Saint Paul when—

SCOTT

Quiet.

TRIP

IF IT WERE NOT SO HYPOTHETICAL,

HAM

Big word there, Fitzgerald.

TRIP

OH, HOW POETICAL IT ALL MIGHT BE FOR ME.
LIFE WOULD BE SO POSH.

EDMUND

Posh?!

SCOTT

Wait for it...

TRIP

I WOULDN'T BE SO GOSH DARN LONELY

HAM

Ah—very nice.

TRIP

IF ONLY...

SCOTT

That's splendid, Freddy. You've really outdone yourself.

EDMUND

All style, and no substance.

SCOTT

Oh, just because you don't care for romance!

JP

Bunny's right. There ought to be some drama.

SCOTT

Fine, we'll have the girl there—

EDMUND

And we'll have her say "no".

SCOTT

I think we can do better than no. Freddy, gimme an intro—just a couplet ought to do.

(FREDDY rolls a chord, and SCOTT begins.)

SCOTT

ONCE THERE WAS A PAIR OF FOOLS WHO GOT INTO A TIFF.
THE BOY, HE SAID "IF ONLY" AND THE GIRL SAID, "ONLY IF."

TRIP

Only if?

SCOTT

Turnabout is fair play.

HAM

Did you just make that up right now?

EDMUND

He's quick that way.

HAM

It could work... So we'll have the girl sing a song called 'Only If.'

SCOTT

Go ahead, Freddy.

FREDDY

Wait—I can't do a whole song off the cuff.

SCOTT

Then play the same thing, but with a bounce... And we'll try a different tune on top.

(FREDDY begins to vamp. SCOTT improvises.)

SCOTT

ONLY IF YOU TAKE ME OUT EACH NIGHT
AND ALWAYS TREAT ME RIGHT,
THE WAY A LADY SHOULD BE TREATED.

TRIP

Not bad!

SCOTT

THEN AND ONLY THEN MIGHT YOU HAVE A CHANCE
AT MAKING ROMANCE

JP

Now you need another one.

EDMUND

And you have to rhyme it with 'treated.'

SCOTT

ONLY IF YOU HAVE A FANCY CAR
AND ONLY WHEN WE ARE UPON A VELVET CUSHION SEATED,
THEN AND ONLY THEN MIGHT I ACQUIESCE TO ANY CARESSES.

FREDDY

Watch out for this change here, Scott.

SCOTT

OH, I AM WELL AWARE OF YOUR AMBITIONS.
SO, BETTER GIVE A CARE TO MY CONDITIONS.

TRIP

You're on a roll now.

HAM

Bring it on home!

SCOTT

BUT IF I SHOULD GET A DIAMOND RING,
MAYBE THAT'LL MEAN THAT EV'RTHING
WILL BE TERIFF, BUT ONLY IF I DO.

HAM

That's brilliant! We'll use it.

FREDDY

I like the ballad better.

TRIP

Why not both?

FREDDY

They're too similar. It's the same chords—

SCOTT

So we'll do 'em together.

HAM

Together!?! You think it'd work?

SCOTT

Go from the top one more time, Freddy. And Trip, you sing the ballad. Ready?

TRIP

IF ONLY
YOU AND I WERE
HAND IN HAND,
AND AN ISLAND BAND
WERE SOFTLY PLAYING.
IF ONLY
YOU WERE IN MY
ARMS ONCE MORE,
AND ACROSS THE FLOOR
WE TWO WERE SWAYING.
IF IT WERE NOT
SO HYPOTHETICAL,
OH HOW POETICAL
IT ALL MIGHT BE FOR ME.
LIFE WOULD BE SO POSH .
I WOULDN'T BE SO GOSH
DARN LONELY,
IF ONLY.

SCOTT

ONLY IF YOU TAKE ME OUT EACH NIGHT
AND ALWAYS TREAT ME RIGHT,
THE WAY A LADY SHOULD BE TREATED,
THEN AND ONLY THEN MIGHT YOU HAVE
A CHANCE AT MAKING ROMANCE.
ONLY IF YOU HAVE A FANCY CAR,
AND ONLY WHEN WE ARE
UPON A VELVET CUSHION SEATED,
THEN AND ONLY THEN MIGHT I
ACQUIESCE TO ANY CARESSES.
OH...
I AM WELL AWARE OF YOUR AMBITIONS.
SO,
BETTER GIVE A CARE TO MY CONDITIONS.
BUT IF I SHOULD GET A DIAMOND RING,
MAYBE THAT'LL MEAN THAT
EV'RYTHING WILL BE TERIFF.
BUT ONLY IF I DO.

HAM

By god, it's—it's revolutionary! But... how do you end it?

SCOTT

Beats me. I'm terrible at plotting.

EDMUND

They get married, of course.

SCOTT

NOW YOU'VE GIVEN ME A DIAMOND RING.
NOW I KNOW THAT EV'RY SINGLE THING WILL GO MY WAY.
IT'S TIME TO SAY

SCOTT & TRIP

I DO.

HAM

I can see it now: A wedding in the underworld – an Olympian struggle – a cathartic ballet!

FREDDY

A ballet!?!

HAM

This show will be something this campus has never seen before!

EDMUND

Don't we say that every year?

TRIP

You know, Ham, we might want to think about casting Scott as our leading lady...

HAM

You may be right.

FREDDY

I've gotta run – and put this down on paper before I forget it.

HAM

Yes! Yes! Write that down! That's good!

(Exit FREDDY and HAM after. TRIP, following them out, pauses.)

TRIP

Fitzgerald—I hope we'll see you at bicker next week. We could use a man with your talents in the Cottage Club.

(TRIP exits.)

SCOTT

Didn't I say Triangle was the key to it? Now I've got a foot in the door at Cottage!

JP

So it's all politics then? Are we to understand there's not the least whiff of literary ambition behind this endeavor?

SCOTT

On the contrary. There's the highest literary ambition: if I get into Cottage, then I'm on track for Triangle President. If I'm Triangle President, that makes me a Big Man On Campus. If I'm BMOC, then I get the girl. And if I get the girl, she'll inspire me to write the next great American novel.

EDMUND

And to think, this is the lad who says he's no good at plotting.

(EDMUND exits. Direct musical segue to...)

Scene 6
Bicker
Cottage Club

SCOTT

So whatd'ya say, JP? Will you come out for bicker with me?

J.P.

What would I have to do?

SCOTT

It's simple: This week we go around to a few of the clubs and meet with the members. They ask us some questions, and then they decide if they want to invite us to join.

J.P.

Well... I suppose that doesn't sound too awful.

SCOTT

Good. Now, if you want to be a B.M.O.C, you have to make friends with the C-O-M-B.

J.P

C-O-M-B...?

SCOTT

(pulling out a comb)

May I?

(The dorm room disappears, as TRIP, ELLIS, WILTON, HAM and the MEN'S ENSEMBLE enter.)

BOYS

UPPERCLASSMEN, ONE AND ALL,
ARE YOU READY FOR THE BIG BLACK BALL?
DONCHA KNOW THAT IT'S THE SOCIAL EVENT OF THE SEASON?
YOU GOTTA BE THERE!
SENIORS, JUNIORS, SAVE THAT DATE.
THINK OF SOMEONE THAT YOU LOVE TO HATE.
WHO'S THE SOPHOMORE WHO CAN OFFER MORE REASON...
FOR YOU TO BLACK BALL!
BLACK BALL THE BASTARD!
MAKE HIM PAY.
TONIGHT YOU GET TO HAVE YOUR SAY.
TONIGHT YOU'LL MAKE HIM RUE THE DAY
HE TREATED YOU THAT WAY.
BAD BLOOD!
BAD BLOOD BETWEEN YOU.

BOYS (continued)

NOW IT'S TIME TO RECALL.
'CAUSE EV'RYONE JUDGES
AND CARRIES THEIR GRUDGES
TO THE BIG BLACK BALL.

(SCOTT and J.P. Re-enter, at Cottage Club. J.P.'s hair is now slicked—and it doesn't suit him! SCOTT and J.P. are being interviewed separately by two groups of upperclassmen.)

SCOTT

Sure, I went around to a few of the other clubs, mostly out of politeness. But just between us—I'm going to be bringing Ginevra King to the Prom. I can't take a girl like that to any old barn afterwards. Nothing less than Cottage Club will do.

J.P.

I was reminded of Wordsworth's poem—"The Ruined Cottage." And I was thinking what a very different sort of cottage this is. I mean, it's... uh... much bigger... better furniture. Have any of you read that poem?

BOYS

WHO'S YOUR FATHER?
WHO'S YOUR MOTHER?
WHERE DID YOUR PREP?
HOW IS YOUR REP?
CAN YOUR DO A TWO STEP?
DO THE LADIES LIKE YOU MUCH?
AND WHO HAVE YOU KISSED?
PLAY ANY WHIST?
DID YOU MAKE THE DEAN'S LIST?
ARE YOU ON THE PAPER?
DO YOU PLAY ANY SPORT?
TELL US, IN SHORT—
ARE YOU ONE OF OUR SORT?
WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF THE NEW MODEL T'S?
DO YOU HAVE A VIEW ABOUT THE WAR OVERSEAS?
DO YOU HAVE AN ATTITUDE THAT FULLY AGREES
WITH OUR OWN?

(SCOTT and J.P. are shunted offstage, to await judgment.)

BOYS

DRUNKARDS, ODD BIRDS, PARLOR SNAKES,
APPLE POLISHERS AND OUTRIGHT FAKES
YOU CAN BET IF THERE'S A SUITABLE SET TO PUT YOU IN,
YOU'RE GONNA BE THERE!

BOYS (continued)
ATHLETES, AESTHETES, MEN OF RANK,
DON'T ASSUME YOUR BID IS IN THE BANK!
KNOWING A SENIOR
WON'T ALWAYS MEAN YOU'RE A SHOE IN.
SOMEONE MIGHT BLACKBALL!

(The BOYS are seated in a semi-circle. They open their hands and several of them are holding black balls.)

TRIP
All right, then, Ferrenby is blackballed. Moving on, that brings us to Scott Fitzgerald...
(Some groans and other noises of disapproval)
I know that he can rub people the wrong way, but I think he'd be an asset to the Club—

ELLIS
Or just an ass.

HAM
His stock's been rising. Next year he'll be playing the lead for Triangle.

ELLIS
The leading lady!

WILTON
This is a gentlemen's club.

TRIP
Look, boys—the fact of it is, if he's good enough for Ginevra King, then—
(ad lib. general outcry: dispute over Scott's claims...)
We'll put it to a vote. But let me say this: I will take it as a personal affront if anyone decides to blackball Mr. Fitzgerald. All right—hands in!

(They each put a hand in and then open it. All of them are empty.)

TRIP
Thank you, fellows. Next up we have J.P. Bishop — what do we think of him?

VARIOUS COTTAGERS
HE'S THE ONE WHO'S WRITTEN ALL THE STUFF IN THE LIT
—THE FLOWERY BIT.
TALK ABOUT A MISFIT!
DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE A BIT OF SOCIAL FINESSE.
—OR KNOW HOW TO DRESS.
POSITIVELY HOPELESS!

TRIP

STILL, OUR SCOTT FITZGERALD IS A FRIEND OF THE KID.
SHOULD WE GIVE HIM A BID?

COTTAGER

—I HEAR NO ONE ELSE DID.

TRIP

GENTLEMEN, IF I AM TO BELIEVE WHAT I'M TOLD,
SEEMS THAT MISTER BISHOP COULD BE OUT IN THE COLD.
SO IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHAT
THE LOT OF US HOLD IN OUR HANDS...

(The BOYS opens their hands, all revealing black balls.)

BOYS

BLACK BALL!
BLACK BALL THE Highbrow.
DOWN HE GOES!
WE CAN'T HAVE ANY MEN LIKE THOSE—
THE TYPE THAT'S LOOKING DOWN HIS NOSE
AND WRITING PURPLE PROSE.
BYE-BYE! DON'T CRY ABOUT IT.
HE WAS RIPE FOR THE FALL.
'CAUSE EV'RYONE JUDGES AND CARRIES THEIR GRUDGES,
'CAUSE ALL OF US HANKER FOR MALICE AND RANCOR,
A CHIP ON THE SHOULDER OF EVERY HOLDER
OF A BIG BLACK BALL.

SCOTT

(to audience)

He had practiced his pose, and he was in! He was now a member of the Cottage Club—
an impressive mélange of brilliant adventurers and well-dressed philanderers. And, apparently,
it was all because he was going to bring Ginevra King to the Princeton prom.

The only trouble was, he hadn't asked her...

Scene 7
A Road Trip to Westover

EDMUND

You haven't asked her???

SCOTT

I told everyone I'm bringing her. If I don't come through, I'm finished on this campus.

EDMUND

Then you'd better start packing. Do you imagine she's just sitting around waiting for you like some hopeless wallflower? She probably has a date by now, and you'll be out in the cold!

SCOTT

Bunny, we have to go up to Westover.

EDMUND

We? What do I have to do with any of this?

SCOTT

I have to talk to Ginevra. And... you have to talk to Marie.

EDMUND

Who?

SCOTT

You remember Marie! The two of them are best friends. You can help my cause.

EDMUND

Ah, I see. You need someone with my rhetorical powers to plead your case to your former sweetheart in order that she might then prevail upon your current lady love.

SCOTT

Well... mostly, I need your car.

(Three boys – the actors playing FREDDY, CLIVE, and TYLER – enter, dressed in Triangle-style period drag as “wallflowers”... young women who are trying very hard to look attractive.)

WALLFLOWER 1

NOW THE FEMININE ELEMENT NORMALLY,
WHENEVER THEY'RE GIVEN A CHANCE,
ARE DELIGHTED BY DRESSING UP FORMALLY
TO GO TO A PROM OR A DANCE.

WALLFLOWER 2
BUT WHAT BECOMES OF THE PITIFUL FEW
WHOM FATE AND FORTUNE AFFLICT?

WALLFLOWER 3
THE DOOMED AND DELICATE MAIDENFOLK WHO
BLOOM, BUT NEVER GET PICKED?

ALL THREE
THEY CALL US WALLFLOWERS, WALLFLOWERS.
THE KIND WHO IS MUM WHEN FELLAS COME TO CALL,
AND COWERS IN THE CORNER, HOPING THAT NONE WILL SEE
WHAT A WOEBEGONE WALLFLOWER IS SHE.

(Enter GINEVRA, reading a letter, exasperated, with MARIE.)

GINEVRA
Well, he says he's coming!

MARIE
What, here? Why?

GINEVRA
To ask me to the prom, of course.

MARIE
Isn't that good?

GINEVRA
But how can I possibly say yes after he waited so long?

MARIE
I thought you wanted to go with him.

GINEVRA
I do, but the Yale Prom is the same weekend and Tyler Pierce asked me a month ago.

MARIE
So you're going with Tyler?

GINEVRA
Of course not. I had to turn him down.

MARIE
Why?

GINEVRA

Because I was waiting for Scott!

MARIE

Then go with Scott!

GINEVRA

But I can't. Not when he waits until April. What was he thinking?

MARIE

Maybe he's just "playing the game."

GINEVRA

Then that's all the more reason to call his bluff.

MARIE

It just seems like such a shame for you to turn down *two* prom invitations, when there are probably some girls who haven't gotten *any*.

(Exit MARIE and GINEVRA. Enter Wallflowers.)

WALLFLOWER 1

I'M NEVER IN NEED OF A CHAPERONE.

WALLFLOWER 2

A ROUÉ IS RARELY A THREAT.

WALLFLOWER 3

LEAVE ME AND AN AMOROUS CHAP ALONE,
THE BRUSH-OFF IS ALL I GET.

ALL THREE

AND YET AS SOON AS THE MUSIC BEGINS,
THE LONGING WE FEEL WITHIN STIRS
TO BE THE GIRLS WHO ARE TAKEN FOR SPINS
AND NOT THE ONES TAKEN FOR SPINSTERS!
WE'RE SO TIRED OF BEING WALLFLOWERS, WALLFLOWERS,
'CAUSE NOBODY PICKS A GAL WHO'S SIX FEET TALL
AND TOWERS OVER ALL THE BOYS,
CRUSHING HER PARTNER'S TOE.
OH, THAT'S WHY WE'RE WALLFLOWERS, WE KNOW.

(WALLFLOWERS exit. MARIE and EDMUND stroll on together.)

EDMUND

I wonder how those two are getting on.

MARIE

Oh, she'll say yes. She just wants to make him sweat for it.

EDMUND

You think so?

MARIE

Of course. Every girl loves to get dressed up and go to a Prom.

EDMUND

What about you?

MARIE

What about me?

EDMUND

Do you want to go?

MARIE

Do I want to... what exactly do you mean?

EDMUND

Do you want to go to a Prom?

MARIE

Are you asking me?

EDMUND

(with growing impatience)

Yes. It's a simple question.

MARIE

Well, I ... No one else has asked me yet, so I suppose—

EDMUND

(hastily)

Oh, good Lord! I didn't mean with me. I was only asking in a general sense—

MARIE

Oh! No, I didn't mean to presume that you were—

EDMUND

I could see how you might think that. But really it was a purely hypothetical inquiry—

MARIE

And I only meant that if someone did ask me... someone other than you—

(They continue in pantomime, as they stroll off.)

WALLFLOWERS

WALLFLOWERS, WALLFLOWERS,
WE MIGHT AS WELL BE THE FUNERAL BELL OF THE BALL!
BOWERS OF TENDER BLOSSOMS, WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO PLUCK.
HOW UNLUCKY TO BE SO LAMENTABLY FREE.
BUT AS ANYONE HERE CAN SEE,
WA-WA-WA-WALLFLOWERS ARE WE.

(Exit WALLFLOWERS. GINEVRA and SCOTT are in a parlor room with a piano. GINEVRA is playing.)

SCOTT

A piano?

GINEVRA

I reserved this room especially. They keep a sharp eye on us whenever boys come visit.

(SHE sits at the piano, playing a bit as she speaks.)

But I find it's easier to speak freely in here... if you follow.

SCOTT

Ah—clever girl! I didn't know you played.

(As the scene continues, GINEVRA continues to noodle at the piano, playing a bit more loudly whenever the conversation becomes more confidential.)

GINEVRA

We all do. A Westover girl must possess every social grace, the better to ornament the home of her wealthy industrialist husband.

SCOTT

I can see you've got your whole future charted out for yourself.

GINEVRA

Well, you know Scott, sometimes it *is* a good idea to plan ahead.

SCOTT

Don't torment me. You know why I came up here... this means everything to me—

GINEVRA

Then why in heaven's name didn't you ask me sooner?

SCOTT

I can't explain it. That's how I am, Ginevra. I'm the spontaneous type.

GINEVRA

Well it seems to me I'd be very foolish to get involved with a fellow like that.

SCOTT

It's only a weekend.

GINEVRA

Oh, but it's deadly serious for us girls. We only get two or three Prom seasons! A girl has to look at the long-term potential of any boy she's seeing—

SCOTT

And who has more potential than I do?

GINEVRA

What kind of life would we have together?

SCOTT

We'd make it up as we go along... like a song!

GINEVRA

A song? In what key?

SCOTT

Mine, naturally.

(GINEVRA rolls a chord—throwing down a gauntlet. SCOTT extemporizes.)

SCOTT

IMPROVISING IN THE KEY OF F,
AND COMING UP WITH SNAPPY STUFF.
PLAYING AT A GAME WITHOUT A REF,
AND MAKING THE RULES OFF THE CUFF.
HEADLONG, MY SONG'S ESPECIALLY SUITED TO MY NATIVE TALENTS.
FOOTLOOSE, I GOOSE THE MELODY,
KEEPING IT SLIGHTLY OFF-BALANCE.
LIFE'S A RESTAURANT AND I'M THE CHEF
WHIPPING UP A LITTLE JUBILEE.
IMPROVISING IN THE KEY OF F
IS THE RECIPE THAT'S RIGHT FOR ME.
ONE FLAT—YES, THAT'S THE KEY.

GINEVRA

IMPROVISING IN THE KEY OF F...
WELL, THE MELODY HAS GOT SOME PEP.
BUT...BUMP IT UP INTO THE TREBLE CLEF,
TAKING THE TUNE UP A STEP.
HEADLONG? DEAD WRONG PHILOSOPHY—
MAYBE IT'S GOOD FOR THE GANDER.
FOOTLOOSE THIS GOOSE COULD NEVER BE.
SHE'D RATHER WALK THAN MEANDER.
IF YOU WANNA KNOW MY SIMPLE PREF,
I PREFER TO HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE.
IMPROVISING IN THE KEY OF F
DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE A SOLID BASS.
'SCUSE ME—MY KEY IS G.

SCOTT

IMPROVISING IN THE KEY OF A FLAT,
THINKING HOW IT'S GONNA BE
WHEN THE TWO OF US ARE SHARING A FLAT,
RESIDENTS OF NYC! I'LL WRITE—

GINEVRA

I'LL FIGHT FOR CLOSET SPACE
THERE IN OUR MANHATTAN HOVEL.

SCOTT

DON'T FRET, WE'LL GET A BETTER PLACE
SOON AS THEY PUBLISH MY NOVEL.

GINEVRA

HERE'S A MINOR HITCH:
YOU'RE NOT VERY RICH.
YOU'RE NOT SAVVY TO MY KIND OF FOLK.
I'LL BE SPENDING GOBS.
YOU'LL WORK EXTRA JOBS.
EVEN SO, IN NO TIME WE WILL BE FLAT BROKE!

SCOTT

THAT WELL MAY 'B.'
LET'S GIVE IT A TRY AND 'C.'

GINEVRA

OH, I CAN SEE SHARP CONSEQUENCES AWAIT:
ONE YEAR IN DE FLAT, HOW MY SPIRITS DEFLATE.
FIRST COMES DE MINOR CHANGE IN DEMEANOR.

GINEVRA (cont.)

WE HAVE A SCENE OR TWO.
DEN I WOULD WAGER I STAGE DE MAJOR COUP.

SCOTT

WELL, EVEN IF YOU DO, I'D EASILY GET THROUGH
EVENING AFTER EVENING, FIGHTING EAGERLY WITH YOU.
IMPROVISING IN THE KEY OF F
IS AN UNDERTAKING BEST FOR TWO
INDIVISIBLE AS MUTT AND JEFF—
THAT'S HOW IT IS, ME AND YOU.
HEY HON',
WE'VE RUN THE GAMUT ALL OVER THE KEYS OF THE KEYBOARD.

GINEVRA

HARD KNOCKS, ROADBLOCKS,

SCOTT

BUT DAMN IT ALL, YOU AND I NEVER COULD BE BORED.

BOTH

WHAT'S AHEAD OF US—WELL, WHO CAN KNOW?
GUESS WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE.
WHAT DOES ANY OF IT MATTER, THOUGH,
IF I KNOW THAT YOU'LL BE THERE WITH ME?

SCOTT

What do you say, Ginevra? Will you come to the Prom with me?

GINEVRA

You know I will.

BOTH

I KNOW I'M FINE AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU NEARBY
FOR KEEPING MY ARMS 'ROUND.
I FOUND THE KEY.

(SCOTT plunks a last note on the piano. On applause, the lights
change as we segué to...)

Scene 8
The Bike Ride

(Music under, as J.P and SCOTT ride bicycles and recite.)

SCOTT

...Away! Away! For I will fly to thee,

J.P.

Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, But on the viewless wings of Poesy,

SCOTT

Tender is the night, And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,

J.P.

Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;

SCOTT

But here there is no light,

J.P. & SCOTT

Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways...

(They leave their bicycles and sprawl on the ground, catching their
breath.)

SCOTT

Oh, J.P.—hasn't this year been slick?

J.P.

I don't know. I feel like I've learned all Princeton has to offer.

SCOTT

Not me.

J.P.

You haven't learned any of it.

SCOTT

Come on, that's rather hard.

J.P.

You're right. You've been successful in almost everything—apart from your classes.

SCOTT

I'll make 'em up in the fall. And I'll coach you for Cottage...

J.P.

Scott—it's all right. I never really wanted to be in a club.

SCOTT

I'm one of the detestable kind now, I suppose.

J.P.

No, you'll never be one of them. But sometimes I think you're my bad angel. I might have been a pretty fair poet, you know.

SCOTT

I'll never be a poet.

J.P.

Of course you could be. You just have to open your eyes a bit wider.

SCOTT

I try, but there are only a few obvious things I notice as beautiful: women, spring evenings, the sea... How do you catch the subtle things?

J.P.

Well, for starters, you can stop worrying what everyone else thinks of you, and decide what you think of things for yourself. The world is so much bigger than Princeton and its clubs... Don't say a word to anybody, but I might not come back next year.

SCOTT

Give up college?

J.P.

Two more years of lying around a dorm are just going to conventionalize me completely.

SCOTT

What would you do?

J.P.

I'm not sure.

SCOTT

I'd travel—but of course this tiresome war prevents that.

J.P.

Honestly, Scott. Boys just like us are dying over there every day. Maybe I'd go to France... join the Lafayette Esquadriille and try to make a difference.

SCOTT

(joking, grandly)

John Peale Bishop – proving the pen is mightier than the sword, saving the day with his heroic couplets!

J.P.

It's just – I feel so sad these wonderful nights. I feel like they're never coming again, and I'm not really getting all I could out of them. But it's good, this ride, isn't it?

SCOTT

Yes; it's a good finish, it's a knock-out; everything's good tonight. Oh, for a hot languorous summer... and Ginevra!

J.P.

Oh you and your Ginevra! I'll bet she's a simple one...

SCOTT

Come on! Let's go back. I'm not a bit tired.

J.P.

But we just got here.

SCOTT

Here? We're in the middle of nowhere.

J.P.

It's nice, isn't it?

SCOTT

There's nothing to do here. C'mon, we'll make it a race—wind screaming in our ears, shirttails flapping like mad!

J.P.

SPINNING, SPINNING, EV'RY MINUTE.
ALWAYS PLAYING LIFE TO WIN IT.
MAYBE THERE'S MORE IN IT THAN YOU KNOW.
MORE THAN ALL THE RUSH AND RIOT,
SKATING THROUGH AND FLYING BY IT,
SOMETHING IN THE QUIET AND THE SLOW...
WON'T YOU STOP? STAND STILL. DON'T GO. NOT YET...

HERE IN A PLACE APART,
WE'LL ESCAPE FOR A PERFECT HOUR,
WITH ALL BUT THE TALLEST TOWER OUT OF SIGHT,
OUT OF MIND.

J.P. (cont.)

CLEAR FROM YOUR RESTLESS HEART
ANXIOUS HOPES OF BECOMING SOMEONE
BREATHE—LET YOURSELF BECOME ONE
WITH THE NIGHT.
LEAVE BEHIND

ALL THE CLAMORING CROWD,
SO UNRULY AND LOUD.
WHEN YOU'RE HERE, YOU'LL NEVER HEAR IT.
ALL THE CARES THAT SAP YOUR SPIRIT SEEM SO SMALL...
HARDLY MATTER AT ALL.

SCOTT

HERE IN A PLACE APART,
WHERE THERE'S ONLY A SKY TO BOUND YOU,
YOU SEE ALL THE WORLD AROUND YOU BY A LIGHT
OF A CLEARER KIND.

SCOTT & J.P.

AND YOU SEE ALL THE GHOSTS,
THE INNUMERABLE HOSTS
THAT HAVE PASSED THIS WAY BEFORE US.
AND YOU HEAR THEM SING IN CHORUS,
"MAKE THIS LAST.

SCOTT

DON'T LET THESE YOUTHFUL HOURS FLY TOO FAST.

J.P.

AND CAPTURE WHAT YOU CAN BEFORE THEY'VE PASSED."

HERE YOU CAN MAKE A START,
FIND A VOICE OF YOUR OWN TO GUIDE YOU.
THERE IS POETRY DEEP INSIDE YOU THAT YOU WILL WRITE
WHEN YOU FIND
A PLACE APART.

J.P.

Shall we go back?

SCOTT

Maybe we can stay a bit longer.

(SCOTT and J.P. lie back, gazing at the sky.)

Scene 9
The Princeton Prom

(GINEVRA and MARIE enter, in traveling clothes, carrying a few small cases.)

GINEVRA

Truly, Bug, I'm so grateful you came. I must have been to a dozen Proms, but for some reason this one has me all in a tizzy.

MARIE

Yes. Have I thanked you for setting me up with Edmund? No, I don't think I have.

GINEVRA

You're forgiven. So... why is he called *Bunny*?

MARIE

Because he likes Bacon Buns.

GINEVRA

Well that's fun. See, I knew the two of you would get on!

MARIE

You could call it that.

GINEVRA

He's expecting a kiss, you know.

MARIE

Edmund?!?

GINEVRA

No! Scott, of course...

MARIE

Oh... and will he get one?

GINEVRA

I haven't decided. It's funny—I usually make up my mind about these things well in advance.

MARIE

Oh no. You've fallen for him.

GINEVRA

I'm not sure. But—I don't think it's a game anymore.

(GINEVRA and MARIE exit and the scene transforms into a magical prom atmosphere. STUDENTS decorate and then one by one couples meet and begin to waltz.)

STUDENT 1

WHILE THIS NIGHT IS STILL OURS TO SPEND,
WE HAVE PARADISE FOR NOW.

STUDENT 2

WHILE THE STARS ABOVE ARE EFFERVESCENT,
WHILE A SONG'S DISSOLVING IN THE AIR,

STUDENT 3

WHILE THE MOON, SO PALE AND INCANDESCENT,
HAS A CRESCENT LEFT TO SHARE.

ALL THREE

SOON THIS NIGHT WILL BE AT AN END,
WE'LL LOOK BACK AND THINK OF HOW
WE HAD PARADISE. IT WAS PARADISE.
FOR A MOMENT OR TWO... FOR NOW.

(SCOTT stands alone, waiting for GINEVRA, who is nowhere to be seen. HE checks his pocketwatch and looks around. TRIP steps away from his date, to take a private swig from his flask, and sees Fitzgerald.)

TRIP

Well, well, well... Fitzgerald! Still waiting for "Ginevra" I see?

SCOTT

She's just powdering her nose—

TRIP

Listen – no use running it out! You can drop the act with me.

SCOTT

What?

TRIP

About the girl. It was well-played, old sport! Here—

(offers him the flask, which Scott takes)

You and I - we're more alike than you think. And I'd expect nothing less from our kind.

(at that moment, GINEVRA appears, and the scene freezes)

SCOTT

(to audience, watching her walk toward him)

When she entered the room, the whole world seemed to pause. The sensations attributed to divers on spring-boards, leading ladies on opening nights, and young men on the day of the Big Game crowded through her. The future vista of her life was spread out before her, and within it – she saw him!

(Ginevra arrives and takes SCOTT's arm.)

TRIP

By God, Fitzgerald, you're as good as your word!

SCOTT

Ginevra, you've met Trip Everett, haven't you?

GINEVRA

In Saint Paul, I believe.

TRIP

Enchanting as ever, mademoiselle.

(he kisses her hand)

Say, Scott—some of us are planning to drive up to New York late tonight. There's room in my car if you and Ginevra want to come along.

(TRIP toasts Scott with the flask, and moves away.)

GINEVRA

Oh, Scott—that would be divine... but you know my chaperone will never allow it.

SCOTT

It can't be helped. But we still have this night together...

(SCOTT takes GINEVRA's hand, and pulls her into a private corner. EDMUND and MARIE are sitting out, observing.)

MARIE

Look at them.

EDMUND

I know. Rather nauseating, isn't it?

MARIE

I think it's put me off romance for good.

EDMUND

It's put me off food.

(They laugh together)

MARIE

Edmund, I hope you don't think I'm a shrinking violet, just because I let Ginevra fix me up.

EDMUND

Not a bit. I know you were just doing your friend a favor. So was I.

MARIE

I see. So, anything to help a friend...

EDMUND

Exactly. Scott knows how I loathe these occasions.

MARIE

Gee, I hope it won't be too awful an ordeal for you.

EDMUND

I was convinced that it would be—yet... I find myself getting along with you, better than I ever get along with anyone.

MARIE

And I'm so used to boys like Scott, who try to give me a smooth line. But you say the wrong thing every time.... It's wonderful!

EDMUND

And I suppose from a certain objective point of view, you're the kind of girl that... that other boys—or any boy, really—would call ... a peach.

MARIE

And if I weren't so thoroughly fed-up with men, I'd say that you're exactly the kind of fellow that I needed to meet.

EDMUND

Wait a minute! Where are we going with this? Good Lord!—if we venture any further down that road, we'll be in as dreadful a state as those other two.

FIRST THING,
LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY
EVEN THOUGH IT'S SPRING,
LET'S KEEP THE SEASON AT BAY
YOUR TOUSLED RINGLETS
MUSTN'T MOVE ME TO MOON.
NEVER ONCE SHOULD YOU SWOON.
AS FOR TINGLES AND COLD SWEATS—
DON'T LET'S.

EDMUND (cont.)

IN BRIEF,
LET'S KEEP OUR FEET ON THE FLOOR
TO THE FUSS AND GRIEF,
LET'S NEVER OPEN THE DOOR
WHEN TENDER LEAFLETS
GENTLY BLOW IN THE BREEZE,
WHY GO WEAK IN THE KNEES?
PROMISE ME THAT WE WON'T.
LET OTHER FISH SWISH IN THE NETS—
LET'S DON'T.

MARIE

FIRST UP,
LET'S ON OUR HONOR AGREE:
LIKE A LOVESICK PUP,
LET'S NEITHER ONE OF US BE.
HEROIC COUPLETS DON'T BEGIN TO COMPOSE
ON THE SHAPE OF MY NOSE.
AS FOR GAPING AT SUNSETS,
DON'T LET'S.
SWEET TALK,
LET'S NOT ENDEAVOR TO MAKE.
THAT ROMANTIC WALK,
LET'S NOT REMEMBER TO TAKE.
NO HEART-SHAPED CHOC'LATES AM I EAGER TO CHEW,
IF WE'RE TEMPTED TO COO.
PROMISE ME THAT WE WON'T.
THAT SAPPY LOOK EV'RYONE GETS —
LET'S DON'T.

BOTH

AND NOT TO SIGH, LET'S
GIVE A COLLEGE TRY, LET'S
TAKE A SOLEMN OATH
TO BOTH
BE THE SHRINKING VIOLETS.

ONE RULE,
LET'S DO OUR BEST TO OBEY:
THE ROMANTIC FOOL,
LET'S NEITHER ONE OF US PLAY.
THAT GAME OF ROULETTE'S GOT A CROOKED OLD SPIN.
WHEN IT'S LOVE THAT YOU'RE IN,
IF YOU'RE THINKING YOU'LL WIN, YOU WON'T.
SO WHEN WE HEAR THE CROUPIER SAY

BOTH (cont.)

PLACE YOU'RE BETS.
DON'T LET'S.
LET'S DON'T.
AND IF WE FIND THAT WE'RE INCLINED TO SING DUETS,

MARIE

LET'S DON'T.

EDMUND

DON'T LET'S.

MARIE

DON'T LET'S
DON'T LET'S
DON'T LET'S

EDMUND

LET'S DON'T
LET'S DON'T
LET'S DON'T

BOTH

DON'T LET'S
LET'S DON'T.

(A waltz begins to play.)

MARIE

Do you want to dance?

EDMUND

Do you?

MARIE

I asked you first.

(EDMUND escorts MARIE to dance. SCOTT and GINEVRA
now take center stage.)

SCOTT

You know... I'm afraid of you.

GINEVRA

Oh really?

SCOTT

I'm always afraid of a girl until I've kissed her.

(Beat. More serious.)

Ginevra, I really want to kiss you. But will you? Or are *you* afraid?

GINEVRA

I'm never afraid.

SCOTT

Then why not?

GINEVRA

(truthfully)

Because... Once it happens – if it happens – we can never have this moment again.

CHORUS

WHILE THIS NIGHT IS STILL OURS TO SPEND,
WE HAVE PARADISE FOR NOW.

(Boys cut in with GINEVRA, as SCOTT narrates.)

SCOTT

It was as if he floated outside of himself. He was in love, and his love was returned. Everything was hallowed by the haze of his own youth. And as he watched her, he was certain there was nothing he would have changed.

(suddenly declaiming, poetically)

Oh, sleep that dreams, and dream that never tires – press from the petals of the lotus flower something of this to keep—the essence of an hour!

CHORUS

SOON THIS NIGHT WILL BE AT AN END.
WE'LL LOOK BACK AND THINK OF HOW
WE HAD PARADISE. IT WAS PARADISE.
FOR A MOMENT OR TWO... FOR NOW.

(At the center of the circle of waltzers, SCOTT and GINEVRA swirl back to each others' arms, and kiss, as the curtain falls.)

End of Act One

ACT 2

Scene 10

A Trip To The Seaside

(SCOTT's dorm room.)

SCOTT

At last, something had happened!

It had been the pinnacle. The school year was coming to an end, but his life would not be unfulfilled. Secure in this knowledge, he had fallen into bed as the sky was painted colored maps behind the Gothic spires and towers, still stretching in lofty aspiration toward the sky.

(SCOTT collapses on the bed. Almost immediately, HAM and TRIP enter.)

TRIP

Wake up, original sin!

HAM

Scrape yourself together.

SCOTT

(groggily)

What? What's going on?

HAM

Look at the lad! All worn out from the prom...

TRIP

And he didn't even come along for our New York jaunt.

SCOTT

Sorry, boys. You know I wanted to...

HAM

Well today's your lucky day.

SCOTT

How's that?

HAM

WE'RE TAKING A TRIP TO THE SEASIDE.
GONNA SEE WHAT ALL'S TO DO.

TRIP

WE'RE MOTORING DOWN IN A PAIR OF AUTOS,
BEATING THE HEAT... WE SAVED YOU A SEAT...

SCOTT

It's just... I'm supposed to go for a bike ride with J.P. today.

TRIP

You shouldn't be spending so much time with that one, Fitzgerald. You're a Cottage man now.

HAM

WE'RE TAKING A TRIP TO THE SEASIDE,
WITH ALL OF THE USUAL CREW.

SCOTT

I don't have any money.

HAM

That's fine. Neither do any of us!

TRIP

WE'RE ALL GONNA GO IN A MOMENT OR SO.

(offering his flask to Scott)

THE QUESTION IS, SCOTT, ARE YOU?

(Scott takes the flask and swigs, and they drag him off to... two cars. TRIP drives WILTON, ELLIS and HAM. EDMUND drives SCOTT, FREDDY and CLIVE.)

ALL BOYS

WE'RE TAKING A TRIP TO THE SEASIDE,
OFF ON A HOLIDAY SPREE.
SPIRITS ARE HIGH AND THE MORNING'S PERFECT.
GAS IN THE TANK... GIVE 'ER A CRANK!
AND WE'RE OFF ON A TRIP TO THE SEASIDE,
PENILESS GENTLEMEN WE!
JOINING THE HORDES FOR A WALK ON THE BOARDS,
WITH EV'RYTHING FESTIVE AND FREE.

SCOTT

Good Lord! Look at it!

EDMUND

What?

SCOTT

Let me out, quick! Oh, gentlefolk, stop the car!

(SCOTT exits the car to run and gape at the ocean.)

CLIVE

What an odd child!

EDMUND

I do believe he's a bit eccentric.

SCOTT

MY GOD!
IT'S BEEN FOREVER SINCE I'VE STOOD BESIDE THE SHORE,
HEARD THE OCEAN ROAR,
SMELLED THE SALTY AIR,
MY GOD!
TO THINK THAT FARAWAY BEYOND THIS QUIET SHORE
NATIONS ARE AT WAR OVER THERE!
OVER THERE...
CAN THERE BE SO MUCH WORLD, SO MUCH SEA,
OUTSIDE ME?
MY GOD...

TRIP

Lunchtime!

(The BOYS sit, tightly crammed in a banquette.)

HAM

Well that was about the best meal I've had all year!

ELLIS

What's the bill?

FREDDY

Eight twenty-five.

(Reactions of horror at the large amount.)

TRIP

Rotten overcharge. We'll give them two dollars and one for the waiter.

(A WAITER approaches. TRIP hands him a dollar, tosses two dollars on the check, and turns away. The BOYS saunter toward the door, pursued by the waiter.)

WAITER

There must be some mistake, sir.

(TRIP takes the bill and examines it critically.)

TRIP

No mistake!

(TRIP tears up the bill and hands it back to the WAITER, who stands dumbfounded while the BOYS walk off.)

SCOTT

Won't he come after us?

TRIP

No. For a minute he'll think we're the proprietor's sons or something; then he'll look at the check again and call the manager, and in the meantime—

WE'RE LIVING IT UP AT THE SEASIDE,
REVELING OUT IN THE SUN.
HAVING A TIME ON SOME OTHER MAN'S DIME.
AND BUDDY WE'VE BARELY BEGUN...

BOYS

WHAT DOES IT COST? NOT A WHIT!
JUST OF LITTLE BIT OF LEATHER
OFF YOUR SHOE
DON'T YA LOVE THIS KIND OF WEATHER
—YES, WE DO.
AIN'T IT MARVELOUS FOR PAL-ING AROUND
THE STREETS OF TOWN TOGETHER?
GOT NOT A CENT?
TIME TO HEAD FOR THE CASINO
—NOT TO BET.
WON'T BE PLAYING ANY KENO
—OR ROULETTE.
YET WE'RE SURE TO GET A COUPLE
COMPLIMENT'RY CUPS OF VINO

GIRLS

Yoo-hoo!

FREDDY

(terrified)

Those girls are calling us... and they don't have a chaperone!

TRIP

Stand back, lads. Best let me do the talking.

GIRLS

YOU WANNA TAKE US TO THE PICTURE SHOW?

TRIP

WHEN DO WE GO?

GIRLS

IT'S AT NINE.

TRIP

THAT OUGHTA GIVE US TIME TO GO FOR A DRINK.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

GIRLS

IT SOUNDS FINE.
BUT LISTEN, FELLA, HERE'S THE ONLY WAY:
YOU GOTTA PAY.

TRIP

THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
HAVE NOT A FEAR.
WE'RE ALL GENTLEMEN HERE.
AND MONEY'S NO OBJECT TONIGHT.

(The BOYS and GIRLS wait on line for a movie.)

EDMUND

I sure hope this works.

SCOTT

Trip can pull anything off. He takes whatever he wants from life, and nobody questions it. I swear, he must be descended from royalty...

HAM

If you want to know the shocking truth, his father was a shipping clerk who made a fortune in Tacoma real estate and came to New York ten years ago.

USHER

That's a dollar seventy-five for the bunch of you.

HAM

I gave my two bits to the fellow at the end.

SCOTT

Wait, Ham—really?

(HAM has exited swiftly into theater.)

USHER

Two dollars even.

SCOTT

Oh. Fellow at the end's got it.

USHER

Geez—how many more of you?

SCOTT

Couldn't say.

(SCOTT exits into theater.)

USHER

You the last of this crowd?

EDMUND

(with an affected English accent)

Pardon? I'm afraid I'm not with those gents.

(USHER reacts; runs into theater in pursuit of the delinquents.
EDMUND strolls in after him. Lights change to show the BOYS
scattered in various seats at a cinema. Silent movie music plays,
as the boys shout raucously at the action on screen.)

ELLIS

Watch out, sweetheart! Choo-choo's comin'!

WILTON

Go ahead and kiss her while she's tied up!

CLIVE

(in a shrill falsetto)

Oh, you big man – I just love your mustache!

(Music crescendos, as ALL spill from the theater.)

BOYS & GIRLS

WE'RE STAYING UP LATE AT THE SEASIDE,
ALL OF THE TOWN STILL ABUZZ

BOYS & GIRLS (cont.)

LIGHTS ARE ALL ON, THERE'S A LOT TO DO YET,
DANCE TO A BAND,
WALK ON THE SAND.
AND THE FUN NEVER STOPS AT THE SEASIDE,
'TIL ALL OF A SUDDEN IT DOES...

(suddenly quiet and nostalgic)

ALAS AND ALACK,
GUESS WE GOTTA GET BACK.
BUT WHAT AN ADVENTURE IT WAS!

TRIP

(slurring his words a bit)

Race you back to campus—loser has to wash the winner's car.

EDMUND

I'm not racing, Trip.

TRIP

Then I guess you'll be losing. See you back at Princeton!

EDMUND

And I'm not washing your car!

(Exit TRIP, WILTON, ELLIS, and HAM. Transition.
EDMUND drives SCOTT, FREDDY and CLIVE.)

SCOTT

TRAVELING HOME FROM THE SEASIDE
HAD US A HELLUVA TIME...

CLIVE

How much further?

EDMUND

Stop asking.

SCOTT

(to audience)

The gray car crept nightward in the dark, and as they drove, the ghost of a poem came to him:
The moon-swathed trees divided, pair on pair, while flapping nightbirds cried across the air...

(SCOTT hums a bit more. EDMUND sees something.)

EDMUND

Now what?

SCOTT

What is it, Bunny?

EDMUND

There's someone standing in the road up there – a lady.

CLIVE

A damsel in distress! Well, ain't this our lucky night?

FREDDY

D'you think she wants a ride?

SCOTT

Look—a car's turned over!

CLIVE

Haven't I always said it? They shouldn't let women drive.

EDMUND

Don't joke, fellas. That looks like a pretty bad wreck.

(EDMUND stops the car; the WOMAN approaches.)

WOMAN

You Princeton boys?

EDMUND

Yes.

WOMAN

Well, there's one of you killed here. The car turned over. The others, they'll live. But that one there's no use.

(Music under as the BOYS get out of the car. ALL exit except SCOTT, who stands, dazed, then crosses to J.P. back at their dorm room, which has re-materialized.)

J.P.

Where were you, Scott? I waited.

SCOTT

I went to the shore... with a bunch of boys from Triangle.

J.P.

I see. Never mind that we had plans. When Trip Everett comes around, you drop everything to—

SCOTT

J.P.—Trip's dead.

J.P.

What?

SCOTT

Killed, in a car wreck.

J.P.

My God! What happened?

SCOTT

He'd been drinking... we'd all been drinking... and on the way home, he took one of the curves too fast. Wilton and Ellis were pretty banged up too. But Trip... oh God!

J.P.

Scott, you don't have to talk about it...

SCOTT

His body there, under the arc-light. It was... horrible... so un-aristocratic... like the way an animal dies. Useless. Futile... Just another poor boy playing at being a big man.

(SCOTT breaks down. J.P. puts an arm around him.)

J.P.

You're not like him, Scott. Trip was a careless person. You pretend to be one, but you're better than that.

SCOTT

No! Sooner or later life will tear away the mask and show me for what I am. Nothing.

J.P.

You're just afraid to let the world see who you really are. But I see who you truly are, Scott. Who you *can* be—

SCOTT

(suddenly getting up)

Where's some paper?

(SCOTT begins searching the room in agitation.)

J.P.

Paper?

SCOTT

I have to write.

J.P.

Scott, it's late.

SCOTT

But not too late. Not yet.

J.P.

You're in a state. You should sleep.

SCOTT

I have to write Ginevra. I need to know what I have. I need... I just need one damn piece of paper!

(SCOTT exits. J.P. follows, bewildered. GINEVRA appears, isolated in a light.)

GINEVRA

SCOTT, MY DARLING,
SORRY I HAVEN'T WRITTEN MUCH.
HERE AT THE LAKE WE'RE HAVING SUCH LOVELY WEATHER.
GOOD NEWS, DARLING.
MOTHER SAYS YOU CAN COME TO STAY!
DIDN'T I SAY I'D FIND A WAY WE COULD BE TOGETHER?
BUG'S COMING DOWN...
AND I HOPE YOU WILL TOO.
I CAN'T BEAR NOT TO SEE YOU AGAIN
'TIL THE SUMMER IS THROUGH.
HOPE YOU'RE WRITING MANY AN EXCITING TUNE.
PLEASE COME SOON...

Scene 11
Lake Forest, Illinois

(SERVANTS appear and usher SCOTT into the next scene:
The King estate. A tableau of RICH FOLKS forms.)

SERVANTS

OH, THE RICH ARE DIFF'RENT FROM ME AND YOU.
SEE 'EM STROLLIN' AMONG THE SHOPS ALONG FIFTH AVENUE,
OR BASKIN' IN THE PRIVILEGES THEY ENJOY
IN THEIR GREAT BIG MANSIONS IN LAKE FOREST, ILLINOIS.

(Enter TYLER, confidently taking his place in the tableau.)

SERVANT #1

Mr. Tyler Pierce of Chicago.

SERVANT #2

Son of Mr. Wadsworth J. Pierce, the third...

SERVANT #3

...railroad tycoon.

(Enter SCOTT, a fish out of water.)

SERVANT #1

Mr. F. Scott Fitzgerald of Saint Paul... Minnesota.

SERVANT #2

Son of Mr. Edward Fitzgerald...

SERVANT #3

...grocery salesman.

(SCOTT attempts to take his place in the tableau.
The servants confront him, blocking his path.)

SERVANTS

OH, THE RICH ARE DIFF'RENT FROM YOU AND ME.
THEY ARE GIVEN TO LIVIN' IN THE LAP OF LUXURY.
THEIR HANDS STAY SOFT BUT THEIR HEARTS GROW TOUGH.
IF YOU AIN'T THEIR KIND, YOU'LL NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH.
OH, YOU CAN SWEAT AND STRUGGLE TO BE WELL-OFF,
BUT THEM, THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN IT.
AND IF YOU'VE BEEN POOR FOR A SINGLE DAY,
THEN THE RICH MAN'S CLUB—YOU'LL NEVER BE IN IT!

(SCOTT escapes the servants as the tableau shifts. He finds GINEVRA and they stand intimately on one side of the stage. MARIE enters and almost collides with THREE RICH LADIES moving downstage, staring at Ginevra and Scott. Marie overhears the following.)

RICH LADY 1

Who's that young ruffian with Ginevra?

RICH LADY 2

Just one of her college boys.

RICH LADY 1

Those shoes of his...! I don't know what Ginevra could be thinking.

RICH LADY 2

Oh, she's having her fun. But I suspect he's got other ideas.

RICH LADY 1

Poor boys shouldn't think of marrying rich girls.

(The tableau shifts again and SCOTT turns around, bumping into TYLER, who takes GINEVRA's arm and they exit. SCOTT exits after them as MARIE watches, and the tableau dissolves as the servants shift the scenery to a posh sitting room.)

SERVANTS

OH THE RICH ARE DIFF'RENT.
YES, THE RICH ARE DIFF'RENT.
DONCHA KNOW THEM RICH ARE DIFF'RENT
FROM ME AND YOU!

(Exit SERVANTS, as SCOTT storms back on.)

SCOTT

Ridiculous game!

MARIE

What's wrong?

SCOTT

I was one shot away from winning, and then that Tyler Pierce wound up like almighty Thor with a hammer and sent my ball flying off to some far corner of creation!

MARIE

But that's the best part of croquet!

SCOTT

He's lucky I didn't knock his block off!

MARIE

(giggling)

Oh, poor Scott!

SCOTT

You think this is funny?

(SCOTT helps himself to a drink)

MARIE

No. No.

(tries to put on a straight face, but finally bursts out laughing)

Yes.

SCOTT

Why is he here anyway?

MARIE

All the Chicago families summer in Lake Forest. Ginevra and Tyler practically grew up together.

SCOTT

So I gathered, from that little tango routine of theirs.

MARIE

The Vaudeville? It's a tradition. All carefully arranged by Ginevra's mother, of course.

SCOTT

It doesn't matter. Ginevra doesn't love Tyler. She said she loves me.

MARIE

Scott... do you remember when you went off to college?

SCOTT

Oh, c'mon Marie... that's ancient history.

MARIE

It was the first time I said 'I love you' to a boy.

SCOTT

We were children. We didn't know what we were doing...

MARIE

You swore to write me every day.

SCOTT

And I did! For a while... Marie – what is this? Are you jealous?

MARIE

Scott... it won't last. It can't—

SCOTT

So you *are* still carrying a torch!

MARIE

I got over you, Scott. But believe it or not, I still care about you.

SCOTT

Then why don't you want me to be happy?

(Enter TYLER and GINEVRA, laughing together.)

TYLER

Aha—Fitzgerald! We were wondering where you'd gotten to...

GINEVRA

It was awfully wicked of you to abandon me, Scott. After you left, Tyler just mopped the floor with me—the brute.

TYLER

I was hoping to get in a few more rounds, but there doesn't seem to be any real competition...

MARIE

I'll play.

GINEVRA

A little advice, Tyler: if you want to have a turn, don't let her go first. At school they call her the Wicket Witch of Westover...

TYLER

Well, then! Finally, a worthy adversary.

SCOTT

Me too. I'll go another round. (He finishes his drink.)
Come on, Marie.

(Exit SCOTT.)

MARIE

On second thought, perhaps you boys should make a go of it on your own.

TYLER

Why don't we all play? Croquet is better with four—

GINEVRA

—but can be enjoyed by two.

(GINEVRA pushes TYLER out the door, then turns back to MARIE.)

I thought I'd never escape him.

MARIE

Always the popular one... Your mother was looking for you, too. She cornered me in the conservatory.

GINEVRA

I'm sorry, Bug. Was it long?

MARIE

(as Ginevra's mother)

"Marie, darling – you grew up with the bohemian... what are his people like?"

GINEVRA

You really capture Mother in all her subtlety.

(The two laugh, and then begin to role-play...)

MARIE

"Ginevra, dear, there are certain men I want you to meet tonight... Bachelor friends of your father's—youngish men."

GINEVRA

About forty-five?

MARIE

"Older men can offer so much more..."

GINEVRA

And they are so adorably tired looking when they dance.

MARIE

"Tyler Pierce is here too. Now there's a young man I like."

GINEVRA

Oh for heaven's sake, Mother...

MARIE

"I only have your best interests at heart! You've already wasted half the year on a theoretical genius without a penny to his name."

GINEVRA

Scott can earn money writing...

MARIE

"And it wouldn't buy your clothes."

(The role-playing game is suddenly too close to home.)

GINEVRA

If I lose him, I may never find this kind of love again. Can't you let me have that? At least for now?

(A moment of understanding - MARIE takes GINEVRA's hand.)

MARIE

Maybe I'd better go check on Scott. He might be in need of a bit of coaching.

(MARIE exits.)

GINEVRA

COULD HE EVER FIT IN MY WORLD?
COULD I EVER LEARN TO LIVE IN HIS?
SHOULD I SETTLE FOR CHAMPAGNE AND TYLER,
WHEN WITH SCOTT I GET THE FIZZ?
WHAT NOW?
OH, HOW IMPOSSIBLE THE NEXT STEP IS...

IT MAKES ME THINK OF THAT DANCE,
THE ONE FROM LAST SUMMER...
WHAT WAS IT CALLED?
OH, YES—THE HALF AND HALF!
IT WAS ALL THE RAGE...
ONE PART A WALTZ,
AND ONE PART A FOXTROT—
VERY OFF-PUTTING!
I'D ALWAYS BE BETWIXT AND BETWEEN BEATS,
LOSING MY FOOTING.
DAFT AS IT WAS,
WE DANCED TO THAT RHYTHM

GINEVRA (cont.)

ALL SUMMER LONG,
THOUGH WE WERE NEVER SURE
WE WERE WITH THE BAND.
STRANGE LITTLE SONG...
IT COULDN'T MAKE UP IT'S MIND.
AND ISN'T IT FUNNY HOW
THAT'S JUST WHAT I'M FEELING NOW?

HALF AND HALF...
COULD THERE BE A WAY OF LIVING HALF AND HALF?
COULD THERE BE A WAY OF GIVING
HALF MY LIFE TO THE SOMEONE I LOVE,
HALF TO THE WORLD I KNOW?
HALF MY DAYS TO THE SUNLIGHT ABOVE
HALF TO THE DUSK BELOW
OH, WHAT TO DO?
WON'T SOMEBODY SAY BEFORE I'M TORN IN TWO?
IS THERE ANY WAY TO MEND A HOPELESSLY
HALF AND HALF SOUL?
DAMN THAT SONG!
WHY DOES EV'RY MOVE THAT I COULD MAKE SEEM WRONG?
CAN I MAKE A HEART THAT IS SO HOPELESSLY
HALF AND HALF, WHOLE...?

(SCOTT re-enters, on a high.)

SCOTT

Ginevra! Darling girl!

GINEVRA

Let me guess – you won?

SCOTT

He's fishing his ball out of the lake.

GINEVRA

I'm sorry about Tyler. He can be so unbearable.

SCOTT

Never mind about that. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters except I'm here with you.

(He kisses her playfully... then they kiss again, more seriously.)

What'll I do when I can't see you every day?

GINEVRA

Write me.

SCOTT

And I'll visit you in Chicago, on the Triangle tour.

GINEVRA

If Mother will allow it.

SCOTT

She's not too keen on me, is she?

GINEVRA

I've been talking you up to her—saying how brilliant you are.

(He goes to kiss her again, she stops him, gently.)

But, Scott... what *do* you suppose you'll do after school?

SCOTT

Can't say! Run for President... write...?

GINEVRA

Truly, though.

SCOTT

I'm serious. There's a fellow named Porter who was writing songs up at Yale just a couple years ago. Now he's writing for Broadway.

GINEVRA

But that's a tough business, isn't it? You'd have to be awfully good.

SCOTT

Good? I'm inspired! Wait until you see the Triangle show. Every song is about you!

GINEVRA

So you really think you could make a go of it?

SCOTT

As long as I have my Muse.

(They kiss again.)

BOTH

I KNOW I'M FINE AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU NEARBY
FOR KEEPING MY ARMS 'ROUND... I FOUND THE KEY.

Scene 12
The Blue Slip

(Back at Princeton, that fall. SCOTT bursts in to his dorm room, clutching a fistful of blue slips of paper.)

SCOTT

Can you believe this? I'm on academic probation!

J.P.

(patiently, placidly)

Welcome back to campus, Scott. How was your summer?

(SCOTT hands J.P. the blue slips. J.P. looks them over.)

SCOTT

Four blue slips... This is hopeless! I thought it was only three. But I forgot History.

J. P.

And thus, you are condemned to repeat it...

SCOTT

I'm up for Triangle Club president. They won't let me run with these. They won't even let me go on tour—

J.P.

So turn them into pink slips. Take the make-up exams and get your conditions removed.

SCOTT

But it's hopeless!

J.P.

I can tutor you, Scott. We'll work three hours every evening.

SCOTT

Better make it one hour. I have Triangle rehearsal.

J.P.

Look, Scott—I only want to help you if you're serious about it. I know you can do it if you try... but even now, I can see your head floating off to musical comedy land...

(SCOTT's mind drifts into musical comedy land.)

VAUDEVILLIAN 1
YES, FOR NOW YOU'RE STILL IN CLOVER,

VAUDEVILLIAN 2
BUT YOU OUGHT TO STOP AND THINK:

VAUDEVILLIAN 3
THOUGH YOUR CUP STILL RUNNETH OVER,

ALL THREE
YOU MAY NEVER GET TO DRINK...
BECAUSE THERE'S MANY A SLIP 'TWINX CUP AND LIP,
MANY A DROP TO SPILL...
MANY A CLASS YOU NEED TO PASS.
I ONLY HOPE YOU WILL.
ONE LITTLE SLIP COULD TRIP YOU UP.
FOR GOODNESS SAKE, TAKE NOTE:
BLUE SLIPS SINK SHIPS.
PINK SLIPS KEEP 'EM AFLOAT.

VAUDEVILLIAN 1
And now, presenting the Blue Slipperettes! Geometry...!

(A musical flourish as each of the FOUR GIRLS is introduced.
They all are wearing blue slips.)

VAUDEVILLIAN 2
History... !

VAUDEVILLIAN 3
Chemistry... !

ALL THREE
And French!

GIRLS
FOR GOODNESS SAKE, TAKE NOTE:
BLUE SLIPS SINK SHIPS.
PINK SLIPS KEEP 'EM AFLOAT.

(The scene shifts to a Triangle rehearsal. ELLIS plays Hades
opposite SCOTT's Persephone. FREDDY is at the piano.
HAM directs. WILTON and CLIVE are back up dancers.)

ELLIS
LIFE WOULD BE SO POSH.
I WOULDN'T BE SO GOSH DARN LONELY,
IF ONLY...

HAM

Fitzgerald! That was your entrance.

SCOTT

Sorry, sorry.

HAM

Where's your head? You keep dropping lines and missing cues.

SCOTT

I'm just a bit out of it today. It's all this tutoring—

HAM

Scott, you're the leading lady. Your top priority has to be Triangle.

(Back to the dorm room. J.P. and EDMUND appear, nagging SCOTT.)

EDMUND

IN REFERENCE TO THE TRIANGLE, YOUR UTTER LACK OF FLUENCY
IN CORRESPONDING ANGLES AND CONDITIONS OF CONGRUENCY
WOULD LEAD TO THE CONCLUSION THAT YOUR BRAIN HAS GOTTEN
ROTTEN USE—

Rotten use... rotten use... Ah! Got it!

FOR YOU DON'T KNOW A THING
ABOUT THE SQUARE OF THE HYPOTENEUSE.

J.P.

THE THEOREMS AND THE POSTULATES
HAVE SO COMPLETELY LOST YOU, LET'S
ASSUME THEY'RE TOPICS YOU KNOW NOTHING OF.
REGARDING IT FROM MY ANGLE,
THE ONLY KIND OF TRIANGLE
YOU KNOW A SINGLE THING ABOUT IS LOVE.

(GINEVRA appears, dressed in a pink slip, and
flanked by the Blue Slipperettes.)

GINEVRA

IF ONLY YOUR LAST NAME WERE VANDERBILT
AND YOUR SMILE WERE STILL SO SWEET AND SUNNY.
IF ONLY MOTHER WEREN'T SO AWF'LY FIERCE,
AND LIKE TYLER PIERCE YOU HAD MORE MONEY.

GINEVRA & ELLIS
IF IT WERE NOT SO HYPOTHETICAL
OH, HOW POETICAL IT ALL MIGHT BE FOR ME.

ELLIS
LIFE WOULD BE SO POSH.
I WOULDN'T BE SO GOSH DARN LONELY, IF ONLY.

HAM
Where's Fitzgerald?

EDMUND
He had a tutoring session. He said he'd be here though.

HAM
We need to run the whole number for staging! This is ridiculous.

CLIVE
I know his part, if you want me to stand in for him—just 'til he gets here.

(SCOTT joins the rehearsal.)

SCOTT
I'm here. Sorry—I lost track of time.

EDMUND
Did you bring the rewrites for the Poseidon song?

SCOTT
Oh...uh, no.

HAM
Superb. Just hurry up and get in your place. We'll take it from Persephone's verse.

(SCOTT takes his place.)

SCOTT
ONLY IF YOU TAKE ME OUT EACH NIGHT
AND ALWAYS TREAT ME RIGHT...

HAM
Keep going.

SCOTT
I forgot the lyric.

HAM

You wrote it!

GINEVRA & GIRLS

ONLY IF YOU PASS YOUR MAKE-UP TEST
BUT ALSO WRITE THE BEST
MUSICAL COMEDY IN HIST'RY
THEN AND ONLY THEN MIGHT YOU HAVE A CHANCE
AT FURTHER ROMANCING.

(SCOTT is back to his books.)

CLIVE & GINEVRA

OH, I AM WELL AWARE OF YOUR AMBITIONS.
SO, BETTER GIVE A CARE TO MY CONDITIONS.

CLIVE

BUT IF I SHOULD GET A DIAMOND RING
MAYBE THAT'LL MEAN THAT EV'RYTHING WILL BE TERIFF
BUT ONLY IF I DO.

HAM

Thanks, Clive. We gotta knock off for tonight. Will someone find out where the hell Fitzgerald was?

(The rehearsal breaks up. The various denizens of Scott's
consciousness all begin to sing together, chaotically.)

GIRLS & GINEVRA

OH, YES THERE'S MANY A SLIP
etc.

J.P. & EDMUND

FOR SOMEONE UNACCUSTOMED TO THE FRUSTUM, IT IS CRYPTICAL
AND SO ARE THE EQUATIONS HYPERBOLIC OR ELIPTICAL.
THOUGH OF YOUR POWERS VERBALLY
I STATE WITHOUT HYPERBOLE
YOU'RE SIMPLY IN A CLASS THAT'S ALL YOUR OWN.
BUT AS FOR THE PARABOLA
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A DABBLER
YOU HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE ABOUT THE SECTIONS OF THE CONE.

CLIVE

ONLY IF YOU PASS YOUR MAKE-UP TEST
etc.

GINEVRA

LIFE WOULD BE SO POSH
IF ONLY WE THREE COULD BE
HAND IN HAND IN HAND etc.

(SCOTT hides his head. GINEVRA reaches out to him.
TYLER and MARIE appear, playing croquet.
From the chaos, TRIP appears and walks to SCOTT.
The moment they touch, SCOTT starts violently.
Music stops. ALL exit except for SCOTT and J.P.)

SCOTT

God help me!

J.P

What is it?

SCOTT

What...? I... oh, it was just a bad dream.

J.P.

Scott—your results came.

SCOTT

Geometry?

J.P.

That's the only one left.

(J.P. hands SCOTT an envelope. SCOTT stares blankly at it.)

J.P.

Are you going to open it?

SCOTT

I don't think so.

J.P.

You passed the others.

SCOTT

Geometry is my worst subject.

J.P.

You might as well get it over with.

SCOTT

I suppose you're right.

(a deep breath)

Watch my face, for the primitive emotions.

(SCOTT tears open the envelope and peeks. Only he sees. His reaction gives nothing away.)

J.P.

Well? Pink or blue? Smile, or swear, or... something!

SCOTT

(holding up the slip)

Blue as the sky.

(a moment of silence)

J.P.

It's for the best, Scott. Now you can stay on campus over the holidays and catch up on your other coursework.

SCOTT

No. I'm still going to Chicago.

J.P.

You can't. They'll have to replace you in the show—

SCOTT

I don't care. I've got to see Ginevra.

J.P.

Scott, this girl has become an obsession with you. Can't you see ... you're losing your self!

SCOTT

I love her, J.P.

J.P.

You hardly know her! How much time have you spent together—maybe twenty-four hours... total?

SCOTT

I can't explain it to you. It's as if we recognized each other from the moment we met—

J.P.

That's not love. That's an infatuation.

INSERT UPDATED SCENE PAGE HERE

J.P.

I don't want to see you get hurt, Scott.

SCOTT

It's too late for that.

(with determination)

I wrote this show for her. One way or another, I'm going to Chicago. To see my show—and to see Ginevra.

(sounds of an orchestra tuning up, and we segue to...)

Scene 13
The Pursuit of Persephone

(The Chicago performance on the winter Triangle Tour.
CLIVE enters as PERSEPHONE, attended by two Sylphs,
FREDDY and WILTON. Also appearing are Hades and
Demeter, played by ELLIS and HAM.)

SYLPHS [WILTON & FREDDY]
LONELY HADES HAD A MIND TO MIX—
NOT WITH LADIES WHO WERE FROM THE STYX.

PERSEPHONE [CLIVE]
RATHER UNEXPECTEDLY IT'S ME HE PICKS.

SYLPHS
HOW ODD! BROUGHT HER WITH HIM UNDERNEATH TO DWELL,
DEEP AND SECRET AS A WISHING WELL.

PERSEPHONE
NOT MUCH LOWER COULD I GET AND YET I FELL...

SYLPHS
FOR HIM. SHE'S A MAIDEN FROM THE UPPERCRUST,
UNACCUSTOMED TO THE DARK AND DUST.

PERSEPHONE
HE SAYS WAIT A LITTLE WHILE AND I'LL ADJUST.

SYLPHS
FAT CHANCE!

PERSEPHONE
MY MOTHER'S CALLING ME "COME BACK HOME,
BACK TO THE OPEN AIR."
MY LOVER'S WHISPERING "NEVER ROAM
STAY IN OUR COZY LAIR."
I HEAR THEIR VOICES INSIDE ME.
HOW THESE CHOICES DIVIDE ME...

(A dance follows, showing an over-the-top tug of tug-of-war
between HADES [ELLIS] and DEMETER [HAM] over
PERSEPHONE [CLIVE.] Musical segué to
EDMUND waiting backstage, in costume as Posiedon.
SCOTT enters stealthily, in street clothes.)

SCOTT

Psst! Bunny! Bunny, it's me.

EDMUND

Scott?! What are you doing here?

SCOTT

I wouldn't miss the Triangle show! I had to check up on who's stepped into my shoes—

EDMUND

You mean on stage, or off?

(SCOTT peeks out past the curtain, and swigs from a flask.)

SCOTT

Where is she?

EDMUND

Center section, about five rows back.

SCOTT

With Tyler Pierce! Bunny, what's the aftermath tonight?

EDMUND

The usual. A dinner, a dance...

SCOTT

Good—I can talk to her here.

EDMUND

It's Triangle Club only.

SCOTT

I know. That's fantastic. She won't be lugging that Yalie.

EDMUND

No—I meant, you can't go either. It's just for the cast...

SCOTT

The cast...and maybe a cast member's pretty little cousin, up from Alabam'?

(SCOTT snatches a dress and a wig from a nearby rack)

You know they always want more females at these functions.

EDMUND

You can't be serious!

(Exit SCOTT. EDMUND follows. Musical seque to...)

Scene 14
Crashing A Party

(Couples, including GINEVRA and TYLER, dance at a post-show reception. A few tables and chairs are scattered around the edges of the room, and there is a bar in one corner.)

TYLER

After all, I sat through the show. For that, I think I'm entitled to be here.

GINEVRA

Oh, hush, Tyler. I enjoyed it.

TYLER

No doubt because it was written by that Princeton pen pal of yours. Where was he tonight anyway? I thought you said he was the star of the show.

GINEVRA

He was failing his classes. They wouldn't let him go on tour.

TYLER

Ha! Typical creative type. Fancies himself a genius, no doubt, but he doesn't have the slightest sense about how to get on in life.

GINEVRA

Scott's going to be a great writer someday.

TYLER

Or a great failure.

GINEVRA

Some people choose to take risks in life, Tyler.

TYLER

Not you, though.

(The dance ends. Some applause.)

I'm going for a drink. Can I bring you something?

GINEVRA

No.

TYLER

Suit yourself.

(Exit TYLER.)

GINEVRA

COULD THERE BE A WAY OF LIVING HALF AND HALF?
COULD THERE BE A WAY OF GIVING
HALF MY LIFE TO THE SOMEONE I LOVE,
HALF TO THE WORLD I KNOW?
OH, WHAT TO DO?
WON'T SOMEBODY SAY BEFORE I'M TORN IN TWO...?

(Exit GINEVRA. Meanwhile, SCOTT enters, dressed in the costume he's stolen from backstage. EDMUND spots him and hurries over, looking around nervously.)

EDMUND

They let you in?

SCOTT

(a bit tipsy, and affecting a Southern accent)
Oh, you know... I had to charm the patroness a little bit.

EDMUND

None of our boys recognized you?

SCOTT

I'm sure they did. But they probably want to see what I'm going to do.

EDMUND

What are you going to do?

SCOTT

I just want to talk to her.

(TYLER re-enters, carrying two drinks, and looking for Ginevra.)

EDMUND

Scott, this is a terrible idea. You've had too much to drink. Let's get out of here before you do something foolish.

(EDMUND tries to hustle SCOTT off. SCOTT resists.)

SCOTT

(loudly)
No! Not until I see Ginevra!

TYLER

Excuse me. Are you looking for Ginevra King?

SCOTT

(playing up his accent)
Uh... why, yes. I'm a friend of Ginevra's.

TYLER

So am I. I'm sorry, I don't think we've met, Miss...

SCOTT

(flirtatiously)
MacQuillan. *Molly* MacQuillan.

TYLER

(flirting back)
Tyler Pierce. Pleasure to meet you, Miss MacQuillan. That's the most charming accent. Where are you from?

SCOTT

Up from Alabam', don't you know.

EDMUND

Molly was just leaving.

SCOTT

Oh, nonsense. How do you know Ginevra, Mr. Pierce?

TYLER

We've been courting for a while now. Did she never mention me?

SCOTT

I don't think so. I remember she used to talk about some dreadfully dull boy from Yale who was always after her—but I guess she must finally have given him the slip.

(Enter GINEVRA with MARIE.)

MARIE

Scott?!

SCOTT

Pardon?

GINEVRA

Oh my God...

TYLER

Scott?!

GINEVRA

Tyler, that's Scott Fitzgerald. You're so thick sometimes!

TYLER

Fitzgerald... By God, it is! Well if that isn't the most... Ha! Look at him!

GINEVRA

Scott—what are you doing here?

SCOTT

I'm here to see you, of course.

EDMUND

Come on, Scott. Let's go.

MARIE

I think that's an excellent idea, Edmund.

(EDMUND and MARIE start to walk SCOTT off.)

TYLER

(taunting him)

Hey, Fitzgerald—Ginevra and I missed you at the big football game...

GINEVRA

Leave him alone, Tyler.

TYLER

In case you didn't hear, Yale crushed Princeton!

(SCOTT pulls away, and snatches a drink and spoon from a table nearby, and begins dinging the glass.)

SCOTT

(shouting, removing his wig)

Gentlemen! Ladies too! May I have your attention?

(The party music stops and ALL stare at Scott.)

I'd like to propose a toast... Let's all raise a glass—

(he downs his drink)

Oops—jumped the gun there...

MARIE

Scott, you're making a scene.

SCOTT

...a toast to Ginevra King, the girl who inspired the show you saw tonight!

TYLER

Fitzgerald, you'd better shut your mouth. You're embarrassing my date.

SCOTT

Ginevra, I think you should know, your escort here was about two minutes away from asking me for a rendezvous in the coat check.

EDMUND

Take it easy, Scott.

TYLER

Don't flatter yourself. Boy or girl, you're obviously low class.

SCOTT

What can I say? I'm just a simple showgirl. Hey, boys, how about I show this Yalie a bit of the can-can from Act Two? Ready?

(SCOTT poses with a knee lifted, threatening to kick Tyler.)

EDMUND

Don't do it, Scott.

GINEVRA

Scott, please... stop!

TYLER

Honestly, Ginevra. What were you thinking, going with a drunken Mick like him?

(SCOTT kicks TYLER in the crotch. TYLER recovers and lunges at SCOTT, but crashes into MARIE instead. EDMUND pulls TYLER off MARIE and holds him while MARIE throws a punch. Pandemonium ensues. GINEVRA flees, mortified. In the scuffle, TYLER grabs SCOTT's dress and tears it off.

The stage clears. GINEVRA runs on, weeping – “exiting” the club where the dance was. SCOTT runs after her, in his torn undershirt, trousers, and suspenders.)

SCOTT

Ginevra!

GINEVRA

Oh, we're so darned pitiful! I want to die!

SCOTT

Can you believe that Tyler Pierce? This is all his fault!

GINEVRA

His fault? Take a good look at yourself, Scott Fitzgerald!

SCOTT

I'm sorry... I just... I didn't know what else to do.

GINEVRA

It was never supposed to come to this. It was only a game!

SCOTT

I know. It started as a game for me too. But now it's real.

GINEVRA

Too real. Scott... Tyler's been asking me to marry him all day.

SCOTT

Well, he's got some nerve!

GINEVRA

He says I'd learn to love him.

SCOTT

No! Don't say that!

(with renewed energy)

Ginevra... you and I... we can make a start—together! Let's elope—next week!

GINEVRA

We can't.

SCOTT

Why not?

GINEVRA

Scott, you're young. I'm young. People excuse us now for our poses and vanities, but you've got a lot of knocks coming to you—

SCOTT

And you're afraid to take them with me.

GINEVRA

Yes. I'm afraid. I'm yours—you know it. But I'm afraid to marry you and ruin both our lives.

SCOTT

Ginevra—

GINEVRA

Oh, darling, go!

SCOTT

Do you know what you're saying? Do you mean forever?

GINEVRA

Please don't make it harder! I can't stand it—

SCOTT

But we love each other!

GINEVRA

That's just why it has to end. It hurts too much.

SCOTT

Please, Ginevra—oh, don't break my heart!

GINEVRA

We can't have any more scenes like this. I have to go.

(GINEVRA starts to leave. SCOTT stops her.)

SCOTT

NO! IT'S NOT OVER YET.
THIS CAN'T BE OVER YET.
STAY A MINUTE —JUST GIVE ME YOUR HAND.
PLEASE, GINEVRA.
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

GINEVRA

Can't you see—I'm doing the wise thing, the only thing. Don't ever forget me, Scott.

(Exit GINEVRA.)

SCOTT

Ginevra! ... Don't ever forget you?

(SCOTT alone. He looks around at the empty space he is in.)

WHEN I REMEMBER YOU IN THE YEARS TO COME,
I KNOW I'LL ALWAYS SEE YOU THERE,
STANDING HIGH ATOP THE STAIR
AND THEN DESCENDING,
SO BREATHLESSLY SWEET AND PALE.
I'LL KEEP THAT WITH ME,

SCOTT (cont.)

RIGHT DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL.
THE WAY YOUR EYES MET MINE,
AND THE EMERALD DRESS YOU WORE.
I WILL SEE THEM SPARKLING
LIKE LIGHTS UPON A DISTANT SHORE.
BUT IT'S ALL PRETENDING,
AND SOON IT'LL LOSE ITS SHINE...
WHEN I REMEMBER YOU WERE NEVER REALLY MINE.
WHAT TO DO WITH THEM,
ALL THE MEMORIES, ALL THE PROMISE THAT WON'T BE FULFILLED?
WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT?
IS THERE ANYTHING REAL
BUT THE HEARTACHE I FEEL?
WHAT TO MAKE OF THEM,
ALL THE HOLLOWED-OUT DREAMS I THOUGHT WE'D BUILD?
NOW YOU'VE SWEEPED AWAY ALL THE SCENERY.
NOW YOU'VE TAKEN THE LAST BIT OF COLOR THAT WAS THERE,
LEAVING NOTHING BUT A BARE STAGE,
A BLANK PAGE...

Take a good look at yourself, Scott Fitzgerald! ...she said.

I didn't know what else to do... he said.

"It was never supposed to come to this. It was only a game!" she said.

"It started as a game for me too. But now it's real."

He looked at himself in the mirror, trying to find in his own face the qualities that made him see more clearly than the great crowd of people... She looked at him once more, with infinite longing, infinite sadness: "Don't ever forget me, Scott."

I WON'T REMEMBER YOU AS YOU TRULY WERE.
THERE'S SOMETHING BETTER I CAN MAKE
FROM THIS EMPTINESS AND ACHE,
A WAY OF MENDING
THE FAIRY TALE THAT WENT WRONG.
I'LL TAKE THOSE MEMORIES
AND FIND WHERE THEY ALL BELONG...
I'LL HEAR YOUR VOICE AGAIN,
WITH ITS SILVER RISE AND FALL.
I WILL HEAR IT WHISPERING OUR STORY,
BUT I MIGHT RECALL
A DIFFERENT ENDING,
AND SCENES THAT WILL NEVER BE.
WHEN I REMEMBER YOU,
I WON'T REMEMBER YOU WERE NEVER MEANT FOR ME.

(Musical segue to Scott's dorm room...)

Scene 15
The End Of Many Things

(SCOTT is in his Princeton dorm room. J.P. is packing a trunk with his belongings, while SCOTT reads a letter from MARIE.)

MARIE

WELL, SCOTT FITZGERALD,
WASN'T IT QUITE THE YEAR WE HAD?
I HAVE A BIT OF HAPPY/SAD NEWS I'M SPREADING.
SCOTT, IT'S GINEVRA:
SHE'S STILL AFRAID OF WRITING YOU,
OR LET ALONE INVITING YOU TO HER WEDDING.
THIS IS MY CHANCE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO.
BUT I ONCE HAD MY OWN SAD ROMANCE,
AND BELIEVE ME I KNOW HOW THIS PART FELT.
SENDING YOU A HEARTFELT HUG,
YOUR PAL, BUG.

(Lights down on MARIE.)

SCOTT

I asked her to destroy my letters... and Marie says she did it.

J.P.

It's best that way. I hope you destroyed all of Ginevra's letters too.

SCOTT

(pulling out a book)

Nope. Had 'em typed up and bound.

J.P.

Scott—!

PRINCETON BOYS

THERE'S A TREASURE TROVE OF MEMORIES
THAT WILL LAST YOUR WHOLE LIFE LONG.

SCOTT

I need them.

PRINCETON BOYS

THEY WILL HAUNT YOU LIKE THE MELODY OF A SONG.

J.P.

You and I are so different. I couldn't keep a heartache close like that.

SCOTT

I've been using it... to write.

(JP returns to packing, as SCOTT writes. Then EDMUND enters.)

PRINCETON BOYS
AND YOU'LL WALK THOSE LONG DIAGONALS
RUNNING CRISPLY 'CROSS THE GREEN.
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND THEN
YOU'LL RETURN AGAIN
TO THAT OFT REMEMBERED SCENE.

EDMUND

I just read your submission to the Lit, Fitzgerald.

SCOTT

And...?

EDMUND

First of all, the spelling and punctuation are atrocious. It's full of literary words, tossed about with the most reckless inaccuracy. It lacks structure; it lacks focus; it lacks brevity; and yet... the whole preposterous farrago is animated with life. It's good, Scott—really good.

(A moment between EDMUND and SCOTT, interrupted by JP closing his trunk.)

J.P.

That's it. Time to go.

SCOTT

Are you sure this is what you want, J.P.?

J.P.

Absolutely. Who knows—maybe with my help the French will turn this around and America won't have to go to war after all.

EDMUND

No, it's just a matter of time until we all go...

J.P.

What'll it be for you, Scott? Infantry or aviation?

SCOTT

Doesn't matter—as long as they allow the English cut uniform for officers.

J.P.

(laughing)

You'll have to look your best, after all, for the lovely maidens of France!

(beat)

God, haven't we raked the universe over the coals these years?

SCOTT

And they're over so quickly, it seems.

J.P.

Spires, against a sky that's a promise of evening, and the blue light on the slate roofs—it hurts, rather.

SCOTT

If we could only find something of this to keep, the essence of an hour...

EDMUND

You'd better go. You'll miss your train.

J.P.

Ah yes... Once again, Edmund the editor keeps us from running on unnecessarily.

EDMUND

Take care of yourself, J.P. No indulgent poetic gestures, please.

(Farewell embraces.)

SCOTT

Write me.

J.P.

Write!

(Exit J.P. and EDMUND. SCOTT sits on the bed, slowly changing into a soldier's uniform. Boys enter, in drag...)

PREMIÈRE JEUNE FILLE

MORNINGS I SHOP ZE BOUTIQUES OF MONTMARTRE.

'ERE IN MY 'EART(RE) I FEEL ZE SMART(RE).

DEUXIÈME JEUNE FILLE

AFTERNOONS I STROLL ZE BOIS DE BOULOGNE,

ALL ON MY OWN(YA), MAKING ZE MOAN(YA).

TROISIÈME JEUNE FILLE
EVENINGS I SIT AND I GAZE AT THE SEINE,
WONDERING WHEN(NE) WILL COME BACK ZE MEN(NE).

ALL THREE
WE'RE SO ALONE AND AFRAID.
WE NEED ZE—'OW YOU SAY—FOREIGN AID.

(All Men rush on, costumed as Can Can Girls.
TRIP and TYLER are included, but not SCOTT, JP or EDMUND.)

ALL JEUNES FILLES
WE ARE LES JEUNES FILLES.
WE LIVE IN GAY PARIS.
WE ARE DELECTABLE, PROTECTABLE, AND TRÈS JOLIES.
CAN'T YOU SEE 'OW WE'RE IN DISTRESS?
WE NEED ZE 'AND FROM ZE U.S.
EACH AND EV'RY MADEMOISELLE
IS HOPING TO LAND AN AMERICAN FELLA!

OH, WON'T YOU CROSS ZE SEA
TO SAVE LES JEUNES FILLES?
WE NEED ZE TOMMY GUN AND TANKEE
AN' ZE YANKEE HANKY-PANKY.
ALL YOU DOUGHBOYS, OH BOYS, DON'T DELAY
PACK YOUR BAGS AND LEAVE TODAY.
PROMISE US YOU'RE ON ZE WAY
AN ZAT YOU'LL COME TO SEE LES JEUNES FILLES.

(A raucous dance break. Then the can-can music gives way to a more solemn feel as the "GIRLS" exit one by one and return as SOLDIERS. SCOTT enters, while the rest of the boys remain, in marching formation behind him.)

SCOTT
MY GOD...
TO THINK THAT FAR AWAY BEYOND THIS QUIET SHORE
NATIONS ARE AT WAR,
OVER THERE...

BOYS
OVER THERE

SCOTT
OVER THERE...

BOYS

OVER THERE.

SCOTT

CAN THERE BE SO MUCH WORLD
SO MUCH SEA
OUTSIDE ME?

SCOTT

Dear J.P.—I hope this letter finds its way to you, and I hope that it finds you somewhere far from the front lines. Then again, life here at my post is so uneventful I'm starting to envy you boys who've made it overseas.

The one bit of excitement was a dance at a country club last night. Naturally, I'd made some inquiries, and it seems that the talk of town is a certain Miss Zelda Sayre. She's the biggest of the Big Four—at least down here in Montgomery—and, oh J.P... I think I'm in love!

You'll laugh at me, of course. You'll remind me how I swore I'd never get over Ginevra. You'll ask why I'm falling in love instead of writing.

But I am writing.

And I never will get over Ginevra. I try over and over to capture her. I re-read her letters—and I live it all again: There she is for the first time, coming down the stairs in Saint Paul. There's that voice of hers, like silver.

I write, and she comes back to me, J.P. Fresh as a daisy.

SCOTT

HERE I CAN MAKE A START.

JP & OTHERS

FIND A VOICE OF YOUR OWN TO GUIDE YOU.

ALL

THERE IS POETRY THERE INSIDE YOU,
THAT YOU WILL WRITE
WHEN YOU FIND A PLACE APART.

(End of show.)