

*Dear Scott,
Dearest Zelda*

THE LOVE LETTERS
of F. SCOTT *and* ZELDA FITZGERALD

With an introduction by their
granddaughter ELEANOR LANAHAN

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Edited by JACKSON R. BRYER
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24. TO SCOTT

[May 1919]

AL, 8 pp.

[Montgomery, Alabama]

The Fourth Alabama³⁴ arrives Tuesday, and town looks like Mardi Gras—Perry St. is just one long booth with flags and confetti everywhere—The houses for three blocks around the Governor's are open—or will be—and everybody's dragging out old costumes and masks—and Good Lord, it's hot! Commerce St. is just a long arch—Rosemont Garden's has turned over its greenhouse for a flower-barage. I wish you could see it—but, of course, everybody's asleep all up and down the streets. Everything is so delightfully slow, even now. Major Smith's company that he took over is going to march with the ranks unfilled—Twenty-three men—It almost makes me cry³⁵—I would if I weren't expending all my energy on gum—I've started a continuous chew again. Your disapproval used to put me on the wagon, but now I've got the habit again—

To-morrow, a man's going to make some Kodak snaps of me in my Folly dress,³⁶ and course I'll send them to you—Mamma gets rather annoying about her rose-bushes at times, so I s'pose I'll be perched on the topmost thorn on one of 'em. She bids me tell you how beautiful they are—Even if you didn't go into ecstasies over Mrs. McKurneys when they weren't bloomed—

My poor limbs have suffered another accident. Jumping off a sandbank tall as the moon—nearly—and landing in a pile of rocks almost makes me wish them amputated. Little boys are almost too strenuous for my old age. Darling Sweetheart, I'll be so glad to see you again—

Are you coming on the 20th, or had you rather wait till early June when I'll be going to Georgia Tech commencement and can go as far as Atlanta with you on your way back? The family threatens to depart for Asheville, N.C.³⁷ in July—Wouldn't it be nice if you needed a rest about then and spent a week or two in the mountains with me? However, I cordially loathe consumptives and

34. A regiment that had been serving in France.

35. Twenty-three of the men in her brother-in-law's regiment died in France.

36. Zelda had her picture taken in her costume for the April "Folly Ball" in her backyard, sitting among Mrs. Sayre's rose bushes, and sent it to Scott.

37. Ironically, Highland Hospital—where Zelda was a patient in the 1930s and 1940s and where she died tragically in a fire in 1948—was in Asheville, North Carolina.



Zelda in her costume for the “Folly Ball”—photo she sent to Scott. Courtesy of Princeton University Library

babies with heat, which constitu[t]e one’s circle of acquaintances there—

I’ve tried so many times to think of a new way to say it—and its still I love you—love you—love you—my Sweetheart—

25. TO SCOTT
[May 1919]

AL, 9 pp.
[Montgomery, Alabama]

A beautiful golden kitty would be nice—but I wouldn’t swap my cat for two of ’em, and he would probably kill the new one—Besides, I lost my brush and mirror at Cobb’s Ford, and I’d love to have one with pink flowers around the edge. Just so you come, Darling—

Mrs. Francesca—who never heard of you—got a message from Ouija³⁸ for me. Nobody’s hands were on it but her’s—and it told us to

38. Mrs. Francesca, a local spiritualist, who claimed to receive messages from the “other world” on a Ouija board.

The nearest I ever came to leaving you was when you told me you thot I was a fairy in the Rue Palatine but now whatever you said aroused a sort of detached pity for you. For all your superior obser- vation and your harder intelligence I have a faculty of guessing right, without evidence even with a certain wonder as to why and whence that mental short cut came. I wish the Beautiful and Damned had been a maturely written book because it was all true. We ruined ourselves—I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other

51. TO SCOTT

AL, 42 pp., on stationery embossed

ZELDA

 at top center

[September(?) 1930]

[Prangins Clinic, Nyon,
Switzerland]

Dear Scott:

I have just written to Newman⁹ to come here to me. You say that you have been thinking of the past. The weeks since I haven't slept more than three or four hours, swathed in bandages sick and unable to read so have I.

There was:

The strangeness and excitement of New York, of reporters and furry smothered hotel lobbies, the brightness of the sun on the window panes and the prickly dust of late spring; the impressive- ness of the Fowlers and much tea-dancing and my eccentric behav- ior at Princeton. There were Townsend's blue eyes and Ludlow's rubbers and a trunk that exhuded sachet and the marshmallow odor of the Biltmore. There were always Lud[l]ow and Townsend and Alex and Bill Mackey¹⁰ and you and me. We did not like women and we were happy. There was Georges¹¹ appartment and his absinth cock-tails and Ruth Findleys gold hair in his comb, and visits to the "Smart Set" and "Vanity Fair"—a collegiate literary

9. Newman Smith, Zelda's brother-in-law.

10. Ludlow Fowler, Townsend Martin, Alexander McKaig, and William Mackie were friends of Scott's from his time at Princeton University.

11. George Jean Nathan, critic and coeditor with H. L. Mencken of *The Smart Set* and *American Mercury* literary magazines.

world puffed into wide proportions by the New York papers. There were flowers and night clubs and Ludlow's advice that moved us to the country. At West Port, we quarrelled over morals once, walking beside a colonial wall under the freshness of lilacs. We sat up all night over "Brass Knuckles and Guitar."¹² There was the road house where we bought gin, and Kate Hicks and the Maurices and the bright harness of the Rye Beach Club. We swam in the depth of the night with George before we quarrelled with him and went to John Williams¹³ parties where there were actresses who spoke French when they were drunk. George played "Cuddle up a Little Closer" on the piano. There were my white knickers that startled the Connecticut hills, and the swim in the sandaled lady's bird-pool. The beach, and dozens of men, mad rides along the Post Road and trips to New York. We never could have a room at a hotel at night we looked so young, so once we filled an empty suit-case with the telephone directory and spoons and a pin-cushion at the Manhattan. I was romantically attached to Townsend and he went away to Tahatii—and there were your episodes of Gene Bankhead and Miriam. We bought the Marmon with Harvey Firestone and went south through the haunted swamps of Virginia, the red clay hills of Georgia, the sweet rutted creek-bottoms of Alabama. We drank corn on the wings of an aeroplane in the moon-light and danced at the country-club and came back.¹⁴ I had a pink dress that floated and a very theatrical silver one that I bought with Don Stewart.¹⁵

We moved to 59th Street. We quarrelled and you broke the bathroom door and hurt my eye. We went so much to the theatre that you took it off the income tax. We trailed through Central Park in the snow after a ball at the Plaza, I quarrelled with Zoë about Botticelli¹⁶ at the Brevoort and went with her to buy a coat for David Belasco.¹⁷ We had Bourbon and Deviled Ham and Christmas at the

12. "Dice, Brass Knuckles & Guitar," one of Scott's short stories; but it was not written until 1923.

13. Broadway producer.

14. This motor trip provided material for Scott's humorous essay "The Cruise of the Rolling Junk," published in February, March, and April 1924 issues of *Motor*.

15. Donald Ogden Stewart, American humorist and, later, successful screenwriter.

16. Zoë Akins, American playwright, with whom Zelda apparently quarreled about the parlor game Botticelli.

17. Broadway playwright and producer.

Overmans¹⁸ and ate lots at the Lafayette. There was Tom Smith and his wall-paper and Mencken and our Valentine party and the time I danced all night with Alex and meals at Mollats with John¹⁹ and I skated, and was pregnant and you wrote the "Beautiful and Damned". We came to Europe and I was sick and complained always. There was London, and Wopping with Shane Leslie²⁰ and strawberries as big as tomatoes at Lady Randolph Churchills. There was St. Johns Ervines wooden leg and Bob Handley in the gloom of the Cecil—There was Paris and the heat and the ice-cream that did not melt and buying clothes—and Rome and your friends from the British Embassy and your drinking, drinking. We came home. There was "Dog"²¹ and lunch at the St. Regis with Townsend and Alex and John: Alabama, and the unbearable heat and our almost buying a house. Then we went to St. Paul and hundreds of people came to call. There were the Indian forests and the moon on the sleeping porch and I was heavy and afraid of the storms. Then Scottie was born and we went to all the Christmas parties and a man asked Sandy²² "who is your fat friend?" Snow covered everything. We had the Flu and went lots to the Kalmans and Scottie grew strong. Joseph Hergesheimer came and Saturdays we went to the university Club. We went to the Yacht Club and we both had minor flirtations. Joe began to dislike me, and I played so much golf that I had Tetena. Kollie²³ almost died. We both adored him. We came to New York and rented a house when we were tight. There was Val Engelicheff and Ted Paramour and dinner with Bunny²⁴ in Washington Square and pills and Doctor Lackin and we had a violent quarrell on the train going back, I don't remember why. Then I brought Scottie to New York. She was round and funny in a pink coat and bonnet and you met us at the station. In

18. Lynne Overman, actor in movies and on the stage.

19. John Peale Bishop, American poet and critic, who was Scott's classmate at Princeton.

20. Irish-Anglo critic, whom Scott had met as a young man and who recommended the first draft of *This Side of Paradise* to Scribners.

21. A humorous song Scott wrote.

22. Xandra Kalman, a childhood friend of Scott's.

23. Oscar Kalman.

24. The Fitzgeralds met Prince Vladimir N. Engalitcheff, whose father was the former Russian vice-counsel in Chicago, in 1921 on the way to Europe on the *Aquitania*. E. E. Paramore was a writer who later worked with Scott in Hollywood. Edmund "Bunny" Wilson, leading American man of letters, met Scott at Princeton, where Wilson was a class ahead of Scott.

Great Neck there was always disorder and quarrels: about the Golf Club, about the Foxes, about Peggy Weber, about Helen Buck, about everything. We went to the Rumseys,²⁵ and that awful night at the Mackeys when Ring sat in the cloak-room. We saw Esther and Glen Hunter²⁶ and Gilbert Seldes. We gave lots of parties: the biggest one for Rebecca West. We drank Bass Pale Ale and went always to the Bucks or the Lardners or the Swopes when they weren't at our house. We saw lots of Sidney Howard and fought the week-end that Bill Motter was with us. We drank always and finally came to France because there were always too many people in the house. On the boat there was almost a scandal about Bunny Burgess. We found Nanny and went to Hyeres—Scottie and I were both sick there in the dusty garden full of Spanish Bayonet and Bourgainvilla. We went to St. Raphael. You wrote, and we went sometimes to Nice or Monte Carlo. We were alone, and gave big parties for the French aviators. Then there was Josen²⁷ and you were justifiably angry. We went to Rome. We ate at the Castelli dei Cesari. The sheets were always damp. There was Christmas in the echoes, and eternal walks. We cried when we saw the Pope. There were the luminous shadows of the Pinco and the officer's shining boots. We went to Frascati and Tivoli. There was the jail, and Hal Rhodes at the Hotel de Russie and my not wanting to go to the moving-picture ball at the Excelsior and asking Hungary Cox to take me home.²⁸ Then I was horribly sick, from trying to have a baby and you didn't care much and when I was well we came back to Paris. We sat to-gether in Marseilles and thought how good France was. We lived in the rue Tilsitt, in red plush and Teddy came for tea and we went to the markets with the Murphies. There were the Wimans and Mary Hay and Eva La Galliene [Le Gallienne] and rides in the Bois at dawn and the night we all played puss-in-the-corner at the Ritz. There was Tunti and nights in Mont Ma[r]tre. We went to Antibes, and I was sick always and took too

25. Charles Cary Rumsey, artist and sportsman.

26. Glenn Hunter, a movie actor who was in *Grít* (1924), for which Scott wrote the scenario.

27. Edouard Jozan, French aviator with whom Zelda had a romantic relationship in July 1924.

28. While in Rome in the fall of 1924, Scott was briefly jailed, due to his drunken behavior. The Fitzgeralds attended a Christmas party for the cast of *Ben-Hur*, which was being filmed there, and Zelda asked writer and newspaperman Howard Cox to take her home.