

THE IDEA A Play by Altenir Silva

Inspired by "The Pat Hobby Stories" of "F. Scott Fitzgerald"

©2013 by Altenir Silva (Pau 3-602-440)

©2013 Publication Scene4 Magazine

Published (unedited) as formatted by the author in the February 2013 issue of SCENE4 Magazine (www.scene4.com) and provided as a free PDF download. Permission is granted to print one copy of this version for personal reading purposes.

All Rights Reserved by the Author

The Idea is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and international copyright laws. All rights, including the rights of translation into foreign languages, adaptations in motion pictures, television, video, radio, various other electronic media, recitation, public reading, and any other adaptations and are strictly reserved. Performances of any kind require the payment of a royalty. You may display this book for your personal, non-commercial use. But you may not otherwise reproduce or distribute copies of this book or any part thereof in any form (including by email or other electronic means), without the prior written consent of the owner. All inquiries should be directed to the author:

Altenir Silva - altenirjs@globo.com

CHARACTERS

F .SCOTT FITZGERALD, 44

PAT HOBBY, 49

JACK BERNERS / JUDGE / NICK CARRAWAY

DOORMAN / JOE / SMITH

ELEANOR CARTER / KATHERINE HODGE /GIRL 1

BERNERS' SECRETARY / PRINCESS DIGNANNI / ZELDA FITZGERALD / GIRL 2

WARD WAINWRIGHT / LOUIE / DeTINC/ PARKE

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD is sitting at a table, his Underwood typewriter in front of him. PAT HOBBY is seated as well.

PAT

You make me feel miserable!

SCOTT

I'm so sorry! I didn't know what to do!

PAT

You hate me!

SCOTT

It's not true, Pat! I love all my characters!

PAT

Why not make me happy?

SCOTT

But you're a fictional character who works in movies. Who's happy in movies?

PAT

They despise me because I dream too much.

SCOTT

Me too! But I'm not a character - I'm real.

PAT

You created me! Now make me happy!

SCOTT

Characters live just for conflict. Happiness is for the end.

PAT

What does that mean?

SCOTT

That at the end of the story you'll be happy!

PAT

I will?

SCOTT

I don't know. I haven't written the ending yet.

PAT

And when will you?

SCOTT

If you let me work...

PAT

I'm leaving. I need to talk with Jack Berners and get my tickets for the preview tonight

(He stands.)

Scott... please... listen to me... change my destiny...

SCOTT

I'll try.

PAT

That's better.

(He leaves.)

(SCOTT rubs his hand over his face, takes a breath and begins typing.)

(Blackout.)

(Sound of typing.)

(Lights up on JACK BERNERS and PAT HOBBY.)

BERNERS

I haven't got a job for you. We've got more writers than we can use.

PAT

I didn't ask for a job... But I think I rate some tickets for the preview tonight... since I got a half credit.

BERNERS

Oh yes, I need to talk to you about that. We may have to take your name off the screen credits.

PAT

What? It's already on! I saw it in the Reporter. "By Ward Wainwright and Pat Hobby."

BERNERS

But we may have to take it off when we release the picture. Wainwright's back from the East and raising hell. He says that you claimed lines where all you did was change "No" to "No sir" and "crimson" to "red", and stuff like that.

PAT

I been in this business twenty years. I know my rights. I was called in to revise a turkey!

BERNERS

You were not. After Wainwright went to New York I called you in to fix one small character. If I hadn't gone fishing you wouldn't have got away with sticking your name on the script. Still, I was glad to see you get a credit after so long.

PAT

I'll fight it with the Screen Writers Guild.

BERNERS

You don't stand a chance. Anyhow, Pat, your name's on it tonight at least, and it'll remind everybody you're alive. And I'll dig you up some tickets... But keep an eye out for Wainwright. It isn't good for you to get socked when you're over fifty.

PAT

I'm in my forties!

SECRETARY

(Enters.)

Excuse me, Mr. Berners. It's Mr. Wainwright.

BERNERS

Tell him to wait.

(to PAT)

Better go out the side door.

PAT

How about the tickets?

BERNERS

Drop by this afternoon.

(Lights fade.)

(We hear the sound of the typewriter.)

(SCOTT is typing on his Underwood typewriter. PAT approaches him.)

PAT

Why are you doing this?

SCOTT

What?

PAT

I'm losing the writing credit.

SCOTT

Life is not always fair.

PAT

Please... change my story.

SCOTT

No. For a young screenwriter this might have been a crushing blow but you're made of sterner stuff.

PAT

Sterner? Not me! I should be strong ... but I'm not ... even with the help of every poisonous herb that blossoms between Washington Boulevard and Ventura, between Santa Monica and Vine... I continue to slip.

SCOTT

Let me see what I can do. Let's go back to the moment you leave the office of Jack Berners...

(He begins typing.)

(Lights fade.)

(A cute blonde is looking for something.
PAT approaches her.)

PAT

Can I help you?

ELEANOR

Yes! I'm lost!

PAT

So I noticed.

ELEANOR

I came for a tour of the studio and a policeman made me leave my camera in some office. Then I went to stage five where the guide said to go, but it was closed.

PAT

We'll see about that.

ELEANOR

You're very nice. I'm Eleanor Carter from Boise, Idaho.

PAT

My name is Pat Hobby. I write movies.

(They shake hands.)

ELEANOR

I never met a writer before.

PAT

Writers are some of the biggest shots in Hollywood.

ELEANOR

You see, I never thought of it that way.

PAT

Bernard Shaw was out here... Eugene O'Neill... and Einstein... but they couldn't make the grade.

ELEANOR

Look! They are filming there!

PAT

I-I know the director!

ELEANOR

Really?

PAT

Ronald Colman.

ELEANOR

It's awesome.

PAT

He owes me some favors.

ELEANOR

Oh! What did you write?

PAT

"The Christmas Family"; "Force to Victory"; "Six Minutes of Happiness"; "The Woman Who Blew the Men"...

ELEANOR

I don't think I've seen those movies.

PAT

All silents...

ELEANOR

Well, what did you write last?

PAT

Well, I-I worked on a thing at Universal. I don't know what they called it finally...

(Lights up on SCOTT. He reads what he's written.)

SCOTT

Pat Hobby saw that he was not impressing her at all... He thought quickly... What did they know in Boise, Idaho?

PAT

I-I wrote "Captains Courageous". And "Test Pilot" and "Wuthering Heights"... and... and... "The Awful Truth"... and... "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington".

ELEANOR

I love those pictures! "Test Pilot" is my boyfriend's favorite picture and "Dark Victory" is mine.

PAT

I thought "Dark Victory" stank. Too highbrow. Hey, I've got a picture opening tonight.

ELEANOR

You have?

PAT

I was going to take Claudette Colbert but she's got a cold. Would you like to go?

ELEANOR

Oh... Yes!

PAT

We can have lunch together, go to my house, and then go to opening night. What do you think?

ELEANOR

I need to change clothes.

PAT

No, you look great!

(Lights fade. We hear the sound of the typewriter.)

(Lights up on SCOTT typing. PAT approaches him.)

PAT

Thank you.

SCOTT

You're welcome.

PAT

I think I'm in love.

(SCOTT stares at him.)

What's the matter?

SCOTT

I don't know how to finish the story.

PAT

It's easy! She goes to the premiere tonight with me ... later we make love... and she falls for me...

SCOTT

I don't like it that way.

PAT

Why not?

SCOTT

No conflict.

PAT

Who needs conflict? Just give it a happy ending. We both get married and live ...

SCOTT

It's not a good ending.

PAT

It's a Hollywood ending.

SCOTT

I don't like it. I need to come up with something else.

PAT

Then... tell me... What'll happen?

SCOTT

I don't know!

PAT

If you don't know... who does?

(SCOTT starts typing. PAT stares at him.)

SCOTT

What?

PAT

Why are you embarrassing me?

SCOTT

All characters need to feel embarrassed from time to time.

PAT

I just want to be happy.

SCOTT

You'll be happy... at the end of the story.

(Pause)

Wainwright lost his temper, which was the last thing anybody should ever do in pictures.

PAT

I don't like Wainwright...

SCOTT

He made a big mistake...

PAT

So...?

SCOTT

So, it's good for you.

PAT

How?

SCOTT

Perhaps you ought to present your case to the Screen Writers Guild.

PAT

I don't care... I want know about Eleanor... My date with her.

SCOTT

Your meeting with Eleanor will be an ellipsis.

PAT

Ellipsis? This means that it won't be ...?

SCOTT

Exactly.

PAT

Why?

SCOTT

It won't help advance the story. So, I'd rather it be an ellipsis.

PAT

I hate you.

SCOTT

It's my story... I decide... and case closed. Remember... I can erase you...

(Pause)

Maybe I'll write Wainwright's story instead.

PAT

No... please...

SCOTT

Then... accept my way.

(Beat)

PAT

Okay... okay...

SCOTT

That's better...

PAT

May I know how my date will go?

(SCOTT thinks a moment.)

SCOTT

You call for Eleanor at five o'clock to take her somewhere for a cocktail. You bought a two-dollar shirt, changing into it in the shop, and a four-dollar Alpine hat... thus halving your bank account...

PAT

Go on...

SCOTT

The modest bungalow in West Hollywood yields up Eleanor without a struggle. On your advice she is not in evening dress but she is as trim and shining as any cute little blonde out of your past.

PAT

She is lovely!

SCOTT

Wait! You don't have a car!

PAT

Who care? I can borrow of my friend!

SCOTT

Friend?

PAT

Bill Gordon... the baseball player.

SCOTT

I didn't create any baseball player.

(PAT leaves.)

(Light fades.)

(PAT and ELEANOR are sitting at the table in the Brown Derby. ELEANOR looks beautiful in her dress. PAT's wearing a tuxedo. He's drinking whiskey and she a dry martini.)

ELEANOR

This place is amazing! I've never been to the Brown Derby.

PAT

It's always full of movie stars.

(ELEANOR looks around.)

ELEANOR

I don't see nobody famous!

PAT

Just wait...

ELEANOR

Do I look OK?

PAT

Good enough to eat. If I see a big shot, I'll ask him to give you a screen test.

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing.)

SCOTT

Looking at her he wondered honestly to himself if it couldn't be arranged. There was Harry Goodorf... there was Jack Berners... but his credit was low on all sides. He could do something for her, he decided. He would try at least to get an agent interested...

(Back to the Brown Derby.)

PAT

What are you doing tomorrow?

ELEANOR

Nothing.

(Back to SCOTT.)

SCOTT

He made a further inroad on his bank account to pay for their drinks. You certainly had the right to celebrate before your own preview. It had been a long time since he had seen a picture with his name on it.

(PAT and ELEANOR are standing, ready to leave.)

It would be nice to see it again and though he did not expect his old friends to stand up and sing "Happy Birthday to You", he was sure there would be back-slapping and even a little turn of attention toward him as the crowd swayed out of the theatre. That would be nice.

(PAT and ELEANOR disappear into the darkness.)

(We hear the sound of a crowd. Spotlights. PAT and ELEANOR walk through the alley of unseen fans.)

ELEANOR

I'm frightened.

PAT

They're looking at you.

ELEANOR

Me? I don't think so!

PAT

They're wondering if you're somebody famous.

(They go inside the theater. A DOORMAN blocks them, holding tickets.)

DOORMAN

Hey Buddy, these aren't tickets for here.

PAT

I'm Pat Hobby. I wrote this picture.

DOORMAN

These are tickets to another show.

PAT

Go inside and ask Jack Berners. He'll tell you.

DOORMAN

Now listen... these are tickets for a burlesque in L.A. You go to your show, you and your girlfriend.

PAT

You don't understand. I-I wrote this picture.

DOORMAN

Sure. In a pipe dream.

PAT

Look at the program. My name's on it. I-I'm Pat Hobby.

DOORMAN

Can you prove it?

PAT

Of course... Look at my document...

(Pat Hobby handed it over for doorman.)

PAT

(Whisper to Eleonor)

Don't worry!

DOORMAN

What's your name?

PAT

Pat Hobby, the writer.

DOORMAN

This doesn't say Pat Hobby. This says Bill Gordon.

PAT

Sorry, wrong document.

(A well-dressed man, WARD
WAINWRIGHT, strides out of the theatre.
He sees PAT.)

WARD

Pat!

(He approaches PAT.)

PAT

Ward. Let me explain...

WARD

You here to see the picture?

PAT

Yeah, but they won't let me in.

WARD

Why not?

PAT

Berners gave me the wrong tickets.

WARD

Take mine.

(He hands PAT his stubs.)

PAT

What?

WARD

I think the prop boy directed it! Go and see!

PAT

Thanks!

WARD

(To DOORMAN)

It's all right! He wrote it.

(To PAT)

I wouldn't have my name on the piece of shit.

(He leaves.)

ELEANOR

You're not a big shot. You're nothing ...

PAT

My name is on the movie... screenplay by Pat Hobby.

ELEANOR

I'm leaving.

PAT

Please... This is my preview.

(Beat)

ELEANOR

Okay... But only for the preview... Then, we're through.

(Lights up on SCOTT)

SCOTT

(laughing)

Ahh ha ha! Very funny! I love it.

(PAT approaches him.)

PAT

Did you like that?

SCOTT

A happy ending!

PAT

That's your idea of a happy ending?

SCOTT

Sure. You got to take the girl to the movie. Wainwright's going to refuse to have his name on the picture.

PAT

You're an asshole!

SCOTT

Why are you angry?

PAT

You made me a conformist. And a weakling.

SCOTT

No. No. I left it open-ended.

PAT

Bullshit. An open-ended ending is nothing... It's like bread dough without baking. Like sex without orgasm...Like the Fourth of July without fireworks.

SCOTT

I don't know what else I can do with you.

PAT

Make me happy... you son of a bitch!

SCOTT

I should forget you...

(He stands up.)

That's it... I'm going to drop you.

PAT

Impossible. I'm your idea... you created me... I'm fixed forever in your mind.

SCOTT

Many writers forget their ideas.

PAT

But not when they want...

SCOTT

Wait, I have an idea!

(He sits back down.)

(Lights fade on PAT.)

SCOTT

(He starts typing.)

Distress in Hollywood is endemic and always acute. Scarcely an executive but is being gnawed at by some insoluble problem and in a democratic way he will let you in on it, with no charge.

(Lights up on BERNERS. He is sitting at a table. PAT and LOUIE are seated in front of him.)

SCOTT

The problem, be it one of health or of production, is faced courageously and with groans at from one to five thousand a week. That's how pictures are made.

BERNERS

(to PAT and LOUIE)

But this one has got me down... because how did the artillery shell get in the trunk of Claudette Colbert or Betty Field or whoever we decide to use? We got to explain it so the audience will believe it.

LOUIE

Who's your writer on it?

BERNERS

R. Parke Woll. First I buy this opening from another writer, see. A grand notion but only a notion. Then I call in R. Parke Woll, the playwright, and we meet a couple of times and develop it. Then when we get the end in sight, his agent horns in and says he won't let Woll talk any more unless I give him a contract... eight weeks at \$3,000! And all I need him for is one more day!

SCOTT

(Typing)

The sum brought a glitter into Pat's old eyes. Ten years ago he had camped beatifically in range of such a salary... now he was lucky to get a few weeks at \$250. His inflamed and burnt over talent had failed to produce a second growth.

BERNERS

The worse part of it is that Woll told me the ending.

PAT

Then what are you waiting for? You don't need to pay him a cent.

BERNERS

I forgot it! Two phones were ringing at once in my office... one from a working director. And while I was talking Woll had to run along. Now I can't remember it and I can't get him back.

PAT

What a pity.

BERNERS

Now he's on a big bat. I know because I got a man tailing him. It's enough to drive you nuts... here I got the whole story except the pay-off. What good is it to me like that?

LOUIE

If he's drunk maybe he'd spill it.

BERNERS

Not to me. I thought of it but he would recognize my face. But I've to go.

(Takes a breath; stands up.)

I picked a horse in the third and one in the seventh.

PAT

I got an idea.

BERNERS

I got no time to hear it now.

PAT

I'm not selling anything. I got a deal almost ready over at Paramount. But once I worked with this R. Parke Woll and maybe I could find what you want to know.

BERNERS

Alright! You're employed to discover how a live artillery shell got into Claudette Colbert's trunk or Betty Field's trunk or whoever...

(Light fades.)

SCOTT

Pat caught up with at two a.m. in Conk's Old Fashioned Bar. Conk's Bar was haughtier than its name, boasting cigarette girls and a doorman-bouncer named Smith who had once worked as stuntman of Tarzan.

(Lights up on Conk's Bar. SMITH is standing. PARKE drinks with two girls. PAT enters.)

PAT

Hi, Smith!

SMITH

Hi...

(PAT approaches PARKE)

PAT

Hello, good looking, Remember me... Pat Hobby?

PARKE

Pat Hobby! Of course I remember you. Girls, this is Pat Hobby... best left-handed writer in Hollywood. Pat h'are you?

PAT

I'm fine...

PARKE

Some new script?

PAT

Yeah... I'm working on Western at Paramount...

PARKE

Great... I'm writing a thriller for Mr. Cagney. Warner Bros.

PAT

Cool.

(Takes a breath)

Listen Parke, Mr. Berners is having you followed... I don't know why he's doing it. Louie at the studio tipped me off.

PARKE

You don't know why? Well, I know why. I got something he wants... that's why!

PAT

You owe him money?

PARKE

Owe him money. Why that... he owes me money! He owes me for three long, hard conferences... I outlined a whole damn picture for him.

(His finger tapped his forehead)

What he wants is in here.

SCOTT

An hour passed at the turbulent o Conk's Bar. Pat waited, waited, waited... and then inevitably in the slow, limited cycle of the lush, Parke's mind returned to the subject.

PARKE

The funny thing is I told him who put the shell in the trunk and why. And then the Master Mind forgot.

PAT

But his secretary remembered.

PARKE

She did? Secretary... I don't remember secretary.

PAT

She came in...

PARKE

Well then by God he's got to pay me or I'll sue him.

PAT

Berners says he's got a better idea.

PARKE

The hell he has. My idea was a pip. Listen...

(PARKE whispers to PAT.)

PAT

(Enchanted.)

Oh my God!

PARKE

You like it?

(Beat)

PAT

I think not... I need to go...

PARKE

Wait.

PAT

Bye.

(PAT goes out. PARKE holds him by the arm.)

PARKE

Why are you rushing?

PAT

I need to go.

PARKE

You're acting weird. I get it! I get it! Why you little skunk. You've talked to Berners... he sent you here.

(PAT runs for the door.))

PARKE

(Cries)

Smith! Hold him!

(SMITH holds PAT.)

SMITH

(Catching PAT by his lapels.)

Where you going?

(PARKE coming up. He aimed a blow at PAT which missed and landed full in SMITH'S mouth.)

SMITH

(To PARKE)

You son of a bitch!

(Smith dropped Pat, picked up Parke by crotch and shoulder, held him high and then in one gigantic pound brought his body down against the floor.)

(The two girls approaching PARKE which lies motionless on the ground.)

(Lights fade on Conk's Bar.)

(We hear the screams of the girls)

SCOTT

(Typing)

Three minutes later R. Parke Woll was dead.

(PAT enters. He approaches SCOTT.)

PAT

You should forget that idea... I did not like it.

SCOTT

Never more... I-I already wrote.

PAT

Mr. Parke really died?

SCOTT

Like Abraham Lincoln in April 15, 1865.

PAT

And me? I'm going to be arrested? That's my happy end?

SCOTT

Of course not.

PAT

What'll happen to me?

SCOTT

Let me see... after your arrest...

PAT

I'll be arrested.

SCOTT

You left the prison the next morning without bail. You're only a material witness. Smith killed the screenwriter.

PAT

Oh, boy, oh, boy.

SCOTT

This publicity is advantageous... Look man, for the first time in a year, your name appeared in the trade journals.

PAT

So...?

SCOTT

Moreover you are now the only living man who knew how the artillery shell got into the trunk of Claudette Colbert or Betty Field.

PAT

You're a crazy man.... I give up...

SCOTT

Trust me... I'll help your life...

PAT

How?

SCOTT

Typing...

(Light fades on them.)

(Lights up on BERNERS and PAT HOBBY)

BERNERS

When can you come up and see me?

PAT

After the inquest tomorrow. I feel kind of shaken... it gave me an earache.

(Lights up on SCOTT typing.)

SCOTT

That too indicated power. Only those who were 'in' could speak of their health and be listened to.

BERNERS

(To PAT)

Parke really did tell you?

PAT

He told me. And it's worth more than fifty smackers.

BERNERS

I tell you a better plan. I'll get you on the payroll. Four weeks at your regular price.

PAT

What's my price? As Shakespeare says, "Every man has his price.". I've drawn everything from four thousand to zero.

(Light fades on PAT and BERNERS.)

SCOTT

(Typing)

The attendant rodents of R. Parke Woll had vanished with their small plunder into convenient rat holes, leaving as the defendant Mr Smith, and, as witnesses, Pat and two frightened girls.

(Lights up on the inquest. The two girls are seated in front of the JUDGE.)

SCOTT

(typing)

Mr Smith's defence was that he had been attacked. At the inquest one girl agreed with him. Pat Hobby's turn was next, but before his name was called he remembered the night he was arrested with Mr. Smith.

(Lights up on PAT and SMITH.)

SMITH

You talk against me and I'll twist your tongue out by the roots. You hear me?

PAT

I didn't see nothing...

SMITH

Silence... And you'll see the sun for so long.

PAT

The silence like the movies that I'd wrote.

SMITH

Very good.

JUDGE

Now Mr Hobby tell us exactly what happened.

(They approach of the two girls.)

SCOTT

The eyes of Mr Smith were fixed balefully on his and he felt the eyes of the bouncer's mate reaching in for his tongue through the back of his head. He was full of natural hesitation.

PAT

I-I don't know exactly. All I know is everything went white!

JUDGE

What?

PAT

That's the way it was. I saw white. Just like some guys see red or black I saw white.

JUDGE

Well, what happened from when you came into the restaurant... up to the time you saw white?

PAT

Well... well... It was all kind of that way. I came and sat down and then it began to go black.

JUDGE

You mean white.

PAT

Black and white.

JUDGE

Explain that.

What? PAT

Talk about the event. JUDGE

What? I'm not listening. PAT

Please tell us about the murder. JUDGE

I have not heard. PAT

But what is happening? JUDGE

Oh my God! I lost my hearing! PAT

I'm going to speak slowly... Look for my mouth... What was that you saw in Conk's Bar? JUDGE

Conk's Bar? PAT

What did you see? JUDGE

I saw nothing. Suddenly everything went white. PAT

Black or white? JUDGE

What Your Honor said? I don't listen. PAT

JUDGE

Forget. Witness dismissed. Defendant remanded for trial.

SCOTT

There was a general titter.

(Light fades on the inquest. PAT approaches
SCOTT.)

PAT

(To SCOTT)

What will happen?

SCOTT

You're free from the Tarzan and the police. He'll never get out of jail.

PAT

What about the end of the script that Parke wrote?

SCOTT

Don't worry... your agent will solve this.

PAT

I don't have agent.

SCOTT

I'll give one for you...

(PAT disappears into the darkness.)

SCOTT

(Typing)

Next morning in the office. PAT was accompanied by one of the few Hollywood agents who had not yet taken him on and shaken him off.

(Lights up on BERNERS, PAT and his
AGENT.)

BERNERS

A flat sum of five hundred. Or four weeks at two-fifty to work on another picture.

AGENT

How bad do you want this? My client seems to think it's worth three thousand.

BERNERS

Of my own money? And it isn't even his idea. Now that Mr. Parke is dead it's in the Public Remains.

AGENT

Not quite. I think like you do that ideas are sort of in the air. They belong to whoever's got them at the time... like balloons.

BERNERS

Well, how much?' How do I know he's got the idea?

AGENT

(To PAT)

Shall we let him find out... for a thousand dollars?

(After a moment PAT nodded. Something was bothering him.)

BERNERS

All right. This strain is driving me nuts. One thousand.

(There was silence.)

AGENT

(To PAT)

Spill it Pat.

SCOTT

(Typing)

Still no word from Pat. They waited. When Pat spoke at last his voice seemed to come from afar.

PAT

Everything's white.

(The AGENT and BERNERS speak together)

AGENT

What?

BERNERS

How?

PAT

I can't help it... everything has gone white. I can see it... white. I remember going into the joint but after that it all goes white.

BERNERS

Why are you holding it? I'll pay for you. Tell me now how did the artillery shell get in the trunk.

PAT

I don't know.

AGENT

I think Pat is having a psychological blank.

BERNERS

Get out of here.

SCOTT

The secret of R. Parke Woll was safe forever. Too late Pat realized that a thousand dollars was slipping away and tried desperately to recover.

PAT

I-I remember, I remember! It was put in by some Nazi dictator.

BERNERS

Bullshit! Maybe the girl put it in the trunk herself... For her bracelet...

(Light fades on them.)

SCOTT

For many years Mr Berners would be somewhat gnawed by this insoluble problem. And as he glowered at Pat he wished that writers could be dispensed with altogether. If only ideas could be plucked from the inexpensive air!

(PAT enters.)

PAT

Stop it! Stop!

SCOTT

What?

(PAT pulls out a gun.)

PAT

I'm going to kill you. It's gonna be the perfect ending.

SCOTT

You can't kill me. You're a character. You're a creature of my imagination... nothing is true... everything is fake... this gun is fake...

PAT

There's only one way to know if the gun is fake.

SCOTT

I told you. I can erase you.

(He points at the typewriter.)

PAT

It's a duel.

(He points the gun at SCOTT.)

We'll count to three...

SCOTT

See who is faster.

PAT

(Moment of suspense.)

One...

SCOTT

Two...

BOTH

THREE!

(Blackout.)

(When the lights come up, SCOTT is typing on his Underwood. JOE - tall and strong - is kissing the PRINCESS DIGNANNI.)

SCOTT

That was in 1938 when few people except the Germans knew they had already won the war in Europe. People began to seek new and creative ways to make art. In this environment, we will know the Princess Dignanni and the boxer Joe "Dynamite" Barney.

(Lights up on PAT - sitting in a chair - staring at nothing)

JOE

Are you sure?

PRINCESS

Yes.

JOE

You can paint Clark Gable or Spencer Tracy or Vivien Leigh.

PRINCESS

I do not wish to paint them.

JOE

What do you see in him?

PRINCESS

He is rare. I was impressed when I saw Mr. Hobby in the commissary and found he was a writer.

(Light fades on them.)

SCOTT

People cared about art and tried to make it out of everything from old clothes to orange peel and that was how the Princess Dignanni found Pat. She wanted to make art out of him.

(Lights up on The PRINCESS. She approaches PAT.)

PRINCESS

You write scenarios, Mr. Hobby?

PAT

I help. Takes more than one person to prepare a script.

SCOTT

The Princess was a pretty woman born in Boston, Massachusetts and Pat was forty-nine with red-rimmed eyes and a soft purr of whiskey on his breath.

(Light fades on SCOTT.)

PRINCESS

I imagine scenario writing is very well paid.

PAT

Very well paid... if you can get it.

PRINCESS

You mean writers have trouble getting work?

PAT

Too many of 'em get in these unions. They're all Reds, most of these writers.

PRINCESS

Will you turn your face a little to the light?

(PAT moves his head.)

PRINCESS

There, that's fine for now. You won't mind coming to my studio tomorrow, will you? Just to pose for me an hour?

PAT

Okay. I'm not posing naked, though.

PRINCESS

Oh, no. Of course not.

(Light fades on them.)

(Light comes up on SCOTT, typing)

SCOTT

Princess Dignanni had painted some of the biggest stars. Jack Benny and Baby Sandy and Hedy Lamarr. She was a pretty good portrait painter and she knew just how successful she was and just how much of this was because of her title.

(Lights up on easel with a square of canvas;
one stool and an ice box.)

SCOTT

She was hesitating between her several manners... Picasso's rose period with a flash of Boldini, or straight Reginald Marsh. But she knew what she was going to call it. She was going to call it Hollywood and Vine.

(Light fades on SCOTT.)

(Lights up on PAT and PRINCESS.)

(PAT is standing. He is wearing a coat and tie. PRINCESS DIGNANNI approaches him. She is wearing a smock and her black hair is brushed straight back.)

PAT

How are ya, Duchess?

PRINCESS

Well, Mr. Hobby. It's nice of you to spare me an afternoon.

PAT

We don't work too hard in Hollywood... Everything is "Mañana"... that means tomorrow in Spanish.

PRINCESS

Did you ever pose before?

PAT

You haven't got a drink around, have you?

PRINCESS

I don't know...

(Beat.)

Okay... okay... I'm going to get a drink.

(She goes to the ice box and fixes him a small highball.)

(PAT takes off his coat and tie.)

PRINCESS

That is better. That shirt you're wearing. I think they make them for Hollywood... like the special prints they make for Ceylon and Guatemala.

(She brings him his drink.)

Now drink that and then we'll get to work.

PAT

Why don't you have a drink too and make it friendly?

PRINCESS

I had one already.

PAT

You married?

PRINCESS

Now would you mind sitting on this stool?

(PAT sits on the stool.)

PAT

What time is it?

PRINCESS

I think it's three o'clock. Why?

PAT

They're running the third race at Santa Anita and I've got ten bucks on Apache at twelve to one.

PRINCESS

Sit still. Please.

(The PRINCESS begins painting; PAT - a little tired - starts to move.)

PRINCESS

Please. Do not move.

PAT

How about another drink?

PRINCESS

Posing makes you thirsty, I see.

PAT

You see right.

PRINCESS

Wait just a moment.

PAT

Please... the time goes by... I need to drink...

PRINCESS

Mr. Hobby, you were loaned to me by the head of the studio, Mr. DeTinc. Why don't you act just as if you were working over at the studio? I'll be through in another half-hour.

PAT

What do I get out of it? I'm no poser... I'm a writer.

PRINCESS

On a studio salary. What does it matter if Mr. DeTinc wants you to do this?

PAT

You're a dame. I've got my self-respect to think of.

PRINCESS

What do you expect me to do... flirt with you?

PAT

No... But I thought we could sit around and have a drink... together...

PRINCESS

Perhaps later. Is this harder work than at the studio? Am I so difficult to look at?

PAT

I don't mind looking at you but why couldn't we sit on the sofa?

PRINCESS

Do you sit on the sofa at the studio?

PAT

Sure I do. Listen, if you tried all the doors in the Writers' Building you'd find a lot of them locked and don't you forget it.

(She puts down her brush.)

PRINCESS

I'm going to get another drink.

(She fixes him another highball. PAT removes his shirt and stands rather sheepishly in the middle of the floor holding it toward her.)

PAT

Here's your shirt. You can have it. I know where I can get a lot more.

(For a moment, she regards him; then she grabs his shirt and puts it on top of the ice box.)

PRINCESS

Sit down and let me finish. Then we'll have a drink.

PAT

When'll that be?

PRINCESS

When I'm done. Not long.

PAT

Okay.

(He sits back down and resumes posing. The PRINCESS resumes painting.)

PAT

Been an artist a long time?

PRINCESS

Many years. I have had my own studios.

PAT

I guess a lot goes on around those studios. Did you ever ...

PRINCESS

Ever what?

PAT

Did you ever paint a naked man?

(Beat)

PRINCESS

You are very difficult to paint.

PAT

(Standing up)

Let's call it a day. Why don't you slip into something comfortable?

PRINCESS

(Smiling)

Do you have much success with this approach?

(PAT lights a cigarette and sits down.)

PAT

If you were eighteen, see, I'd give you the line about being nuts about you.

PRINCESS

But why any line at all?

PAT

Oh, come off it! You wanted to paint me, didn't you?

PRINCESS

Yes. So?

PAT

Well, when a dame wants to paint a guy...

(He gets up stands very close to her.)

PRINCESS

What if a dame just wants to paint a guy?

PAT

I don't believe it.

(PAT tries to kiss her. She turns away.)

PRINCESS

You'll find a turkish towel in the bathroom.

PAT

What?

PRINCESS

I wish to paint the rest of you.

PAT

You want me to... get naked?

PRINCESS

Exactly.

PAT

Alright!

(PAT tries to kiss her again)

PRINCESS

What?

PAT
I want you.

PRINCESS
(Uncomfortable)
Oh, not.

(JOE enters.)
JOE
What's going on?

PAT
Who is?

PRINCESS
My boyfriend!

PAT
Boyfriend? I thought you were single.

JOE
(To PAT)
Son of a bitch!

PAT
(Scared)
Sorry... Sorry... I didn't anything.

JOE
(Fighting)
I'm going to kill you.

PAT
Not. I'm the model of her.

PRINCESS

The painting over!

(JOE goes up to PAT.)

JOE

Your prick!

(PAT receding. He pulls out a gun.)

PAT

Please... Forget it...

(Light fades on JOE and PRINCESS.)

(PAT does not understand.)

(Lights up on SCOTT. PAT - holding a gun - approaches him.)

PAT

Where was I? What happened?

SCOTT

In my head!

PAT

Oh yeah, I was going to kill you!

SCOTT

I'm faster on the trigger.

PAT

Who was that Princess broad?

SCOTT

Just another character.

PAT

I'm going to kill you!

SCOTT

That's what you think.

(Immediately, he starts to type.)

(Blackout.)

(Lights up on JACK BERNERS and PAT HOBBY.)

BERNERS

Forget the Claudette Colbert's trunk! Do you hear me?

PAT

Of course.

BERNERS

There's a job that you just may be able to help out with.

PAT

I-I been in the industry fifteen years, Jack. I've got more screen credits than a dog has got fleas.

BERNERS

The money we'll pay you just what Republic paid you last month... three-fifty a week. Now... did you ever hear of a writer named F. Scott Fitzgerald?

PAT

I think not!

BERNERS

He's only here in L. A. for his health. Well... we've had a Russian Ballet picture kicking around for a year... three bad scripts on it. So last week we signed up Mr. Fitzgerald... he seemed just the person.

PAT

You mean he's...

BERNERS

I don't know and I don't care. We think we can borrow Zorina, so we want to hurry things up... do a shooting script instead of just a treatment. Mr. Fitzgerald is inexperienced with plays for the screen and that's where you come in. You used to be a good man for structure.

PAT

Used to be!

BERNERS

All right, maybe you still are. Find yourself an office and get together with Mr. Fitzgerald. First of all, get a new hat. You used to be quite a boy around the secretaries in the old days. Don't give up at forty-nine!

(Light fades on them.)

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing.)

SCOTT

Over in the Writers' Building Pat Hobby glanced at the directory in the hall and entered at the door of 216.

(PAT enters. He's wearing a new hat.)

PAT

Hello, Mr. Fitzgerald! I'm your partner. I hear we're going to lick some stuff into shape. Ever collaborate before?

SCOTT

I have never written for the cinema before.

PAT

This is different from playwriting and... and... writing romance.

SCOTT

Yes... I read a book about it.

PAT

In 1928... I and a friend had concocted such a sucker-trap: *Secrets of Film Writing*. It would have made money if pictures hadn't started to talk.

SCOTT

It all seems simple enough.

(He stands up.)

I'll be running along now.

PAT

Don't you want to talk about the script? What have you done so far?

SCOTT

I've not done anything. That idiot, Berners, gave me some trash and told me to go on from there. But it's too dismal. I say, what's a boom shot?

PAT

A boom shot? Why, that's when the camera's on a crane.

(PAT leaned over the desk and picked up a blue-jacketed "Treatment".)

PAT

(Reading)

BALLET SHOES - A Treatment by Consuela Martin. An Original from an idea by Consuela Martin.

(SCOTT disappears into the darkness.)

PAT

I'd like it better if we could get the war in somewhere...

(PAT glances at the "Treatment".)

PAT

Have the dancer go as a Red Cross nurse and then she could get regenerated. See what I mean?

(PAT turns and don't see Mr. Fitzgerald.)

What is this? What kind of collaborating can a man do if he walks out? Mr. Fitzgerald had not even given the legitimate excuse... the races at Santa Anita!

(Enter KATHERINE HODGE, a beautiful girl.)

KATHERINE

Oh! Sorry! I was looking for Mr. Fitzgerald.

(She's leaving. Then it returns.)

KATHERINE

Mr. Hooby?

PAT

Do you know me?

KATHERINE

Katherine Hodge. I was your secretary when I worked here three years ago.

PAT

Just worked?

KATHERINE

What's you mean?

PAT

Forget it! Enter, please. You assigned to Mr. Fitzgerald?

KATHERINE

I thought so... but he hasn't given me any work yet. I think he's nuts.

PAT

Hollywood is synonym of craziness!

KATHERINE

The good thing... I'm getting married next month... So... bye, bye, California. I'm going to live with my fiancé in Omaha, Nebraska.

PAT

Good for you!

(Beat)

KATHERINE

Where were we?

PAT

Mr. Fitzgerald asked me what a boom shot was. Maybe he's sick... that's why he's out here. He'll probably start throwing up all over the office.

KATHERINE

He's well now.

PAT

He doesn't look like it to me. Come on in my office. You can work for me this afternoon.

(Light fades.)

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing)

SCOTT

Pat lay on his couch while Miss Katherine Hodge read the script of Ballet Shoes aloud to him. About midway in the second sequence he fell asleep with his new hat on his chest.

(PAT and KATHERINE enter.)

PAT

Can we talk about my idea?

SCOTT

What idea?

PAT

About the war as a regenerating force for ballet dancers...

SCOTT

Couldn't we not talk about the war? I have two brothers in the Guards.

PAT HOBBY

You're lucky to be here in Hollywood.

SCOTT

That's as it may be.

PAT

Well, what's your idea of the start of the picture?

SCOTT

I don't like the present beginning. It gives me an almost physical nausea.

PAT

So then, we got to have something in its place. That's why I want to plant the war...

SCOTT

I'm late to luncheon.

(LEAVING)

Goodbye, Mike.

KATHERINE

Mike?

PAT

(To KATHERINE.)

He can call me anything he likes, but somebody's got to write this picture. I'd go to Jack Berners and tell him. But I think we'd both be out on our ears. Let's go to my office.

(Light fades.)

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing.)

SCOTT

For two days more he camped in Mr. Fitzgerald's office, trying to rouse him to action, but with no avail. Desperate on the following day... when the playwright did not even come to the studio...

(Lights up on PAT and KATHERINE.)

SCOTT

Pat took a Benzedrine tablet and attacked the story alone. Pacing his office with the treatment in his hand he dictated to Katherine... interspersing the dictation with a short, biased history of his life in Hollywood. At the day's end he had two pages of script.

(PAT stops.)

PAT

I'm going to finish the script and hand it to Berners with the statement that Mr. Fitzgerald didn't contribute a single line.

(Light fades.)

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing.)

SCOTT

But it was too much.. Pat was too far gone. He blew up when he was half through and went on a twenty-four-hour bat... and next morning arrived back at the studio to find a message that Mr. Berners wanted to see the script at four.

(Light fades.)

(Lights up on PAT.)

(SCOTT came in with a typescript in one hand, and a copy of Berners' note in the other.)

SCOTT

It's all right... I've finished it.

PAT

What? Have you been working?

SCOTT

I always work at night.

PAT

What've you done? A treatment?

SCOTT

No, a shooting script. At first I was held back by personal worries, but once I got started it was very simple. You just get behind the camera and dream.

PAT

But we were supposed to collaborate. Jack'll be wild.

SCOTT

I've always worked alone... I'll explain to Berners this afternoon.

(Scott disappears into the darkness.)

PAT

Oh my God! If Mr. Fitzgerald's script was good... But how could a first script be good? Mr. Fitzgerald should have fed it to me as he wrote... then they might have had something.

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing)

SCOTT

Fear started his mind working... he was struck by his first original idea since he had been on the job. He phoned to the script department for Katherine Hodge and when she came over told her what he wanted. Katherine hesitated.

(Lights up on KATHERINE, holding a phone. A separate light comes up on PAT, who is also holding a phone.)

PAT

I just want to read it.

KATHERINE

I can't!

PAT

If Mr. Fitzgerald is there you can't take it, of course. But he just might be out.

KATHERINE

Not... not...

PAT

Please! I need read the script!

KATHERINE

But... but...

(Light fades, then comes up on PAT, typing.
What he is typing is projected as he types it.)

PAT

"Dear Mr. Fitzgerald: I am sorry to tell you your two brothers were killed in action today by a long range Tommy-gun. You are wanted at home in New York right away. John Smythe - The British Consulate, New York".

(PAT puts the letter in an envelope. Enter
KATHERINE with the script.)

KATHERINE

It isn't mimeographed, or even bound.

(PAT hands her the envelope.)

PAT

Listen outside Mr. Fitzgerald's office. If he's in, push it under his door. If he's out get a call boy to deliver it to him, wherever he is. Say it's from the mail room. Then you better go off the lot for the afternoon. So he won't catch on, see?

KATHERINE

Alright.

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing.)

SCOTT

Then, working frantically, he made several dozen small changes. He substituted the word "Scram!" for "Get out of my sight!", he put "Behind the eight-ball" instead of "in trouble," and replaced "you'll be sorry" with the apt coinage "Or else!" Then he phoned the script department.

(KATHERINE - holding the envelope - disappears into the darkness.)

(PAT opens Fitzgerald's script.)

SCOTT

To his vast surprise it was technically proficient... the dissolves, fades, cuts, pans and trucking shots were correctly detailed. This simplified everything. Turning back to the first page he wrote at the top...

(PAT puts a blank sheet of paper in his typewriter.)

SCOTT

He typed a new cover page: Ballet Shoes, First Revision, by Pat Hobby and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

(PAT types the page, then replaces the cover page for Fitzgerald's script with his new one.)

PAT

Much better!

SCOTT

Then, working frantically, he made several dozen small changes. He substituted the word "Scram!" for "Get out of my sight!" he put "Behind the eight-ball" instead of "in trouble," and replaced "you'll be sorry" with the apt coinage "Or else!" Then he phoned the script department.

(PAT on the phone.)

PAT

This is Pat Hobby. I've been working on a script with F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Mr. Berners would like to have it mimeographed by half-past three.

(Light fades.)

(Lights up on SCOTT, typing.)

SCOTT

Pat continued to improve the script till the gofer arrived. He wanted to put in his war idea but time was short... Limp and exhausted by his effort he needed a drink, so he left the lot and slipped cautiously into the bar across from the studio where he ordered gin and water.

(Lights up on PAT, half drunk, speaking with
LOUIE, the studio bookie.)

SCOTT

With the glow, he thought warm thoughts.

LOUIE

But could Berners tell that the structure wasn't yours?

PAT

Aw, we're all guilty, but guiltiest of all is Fitzgerald for refusing to play the game.

SCOTT

Pat had played the game.

PAT

I need another drink.

LOUIE

Are you interested in some action? How about a little something on Quaker Girl?

PAT

Not today, Louie.

LOUIE

What are they paying you, Pat?

PAT

Thousand a week.

LOUIE

Not bad.

PAT

Oh, a lot of us old-timers are coming back. In silent days was where you got real training... with directors shooting off the cuff and needing a gag in a split second. Now it's a sissy job. They got English teachers working in pictures! What do they know?

LOUIE

I'm telling you, that filly's a sure thing.

PAT

No. This afternoon I got an important angle to work on. I don't want to worry about horses.

(Lights up on SCOTT typing)

SCOTT

At three-fifteen he returned to his office to find two copies of his script in bright new covers.

PAT

(Reading)

Ballet Shoes by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Pat Hobby - First Revision.

SCOTT

As he waited in Jack Berners' anteroom he almost wished he had reversed the names. This time he'd save his money... go to Santa Anita only once a week... get himself a girl along the type of Katherine Hodge, who wouldn't expect a mansion in Beverly Hills. As he entered Berners' office he saw that a copy of the new script lay on Berners' desk.

(Lights up on BERNERS and PAT.)

BERNERS

Did you ever go to a psychoanalyst?

PAT

No. But I suppose I could get up on it. Is it a new assignment?

BERNERS

Not exactly. It's just that I think you've lost your grip.

PAT

What are you talking about?

BERNERS

I've just talked on the phone to Mr. Fitzgerald. He says you stole his script.

PAT

He must be nuts! I didn't steal anything from him. His name's on it, isn't it? Two weeks ago I laid out all his structure... every scene. I even wrote one whole scene at the end about the war.

BERNERS

Oh yes, the war.

PAT

But if you like Fitzgerald 's ending better...

BERNERS

Yes, I like his ending better. I never saw a man pick up this work so fast. So you didn't steal his script?

PAT

I certainly did not. I gave him stuff.

BERNERS

I told you we had three scripts. You used an old one we discarded a year ago. Mr. Fitzgerald was in when your secretary arrived, and he sent one of them to you. Clever, eh?

SCOTT

Pat was speechless.

PAT

He's responsible. He wouldn't collaborate... and all the time ...

BERNERS

...he was writing a swell script. And he can write his own ticket if we can persuade him to stay here and do another.

SCOTT

Pat could stand no more. He would have loved to be able to disappear like the Genie of the Lamp.

PAT

Anyhow thank you, Jack... Call my agent if anything turns up.

SCOTT

Then he bolted suddenly for the door.

(PAT disappears into the darkness.)

(BERNERS' phone rings. He picks up.)

BERNERS

Berners. Oh, hello Mr. DeTinc.

(Lights up on DETINC and SCOTT)

DETINC

About the script by Mr. Fitzgerald. It's swell. Better than you said. Fitzgerald is with me now.

BERNERS

Have you signed him up?

DETINC

I'm going to. Seems he wants to work with Mr. Hobby. Here, you talk to him.

(He hands the phone to SCOTT.)

SCOTT

Must have Mike Hobby. Grateful to him. Had a quarrel with a certain young lady just before he came, but today Mr. Hobby brought us together. Besides I want to about him. So give him to me... you fellows don't want him any more.

BERNERS

Alright.

(He pushes the intercom button on his phone.)

Go find Pat Hobby. He's probably in the bar across the street. We're putting him on salary again but we'll be sorry.

(Finding a hat)

Oh! He forgot his hat.

(Light fades on BERNERS)

(Lights up on PAT. NICK CARRAWAY enters. He is thirty years old.)

NICK

(Furiously)

I curse all writers!

PAT

What?

NICK

Death for those who transform imaginations into words...

PAT

Who're you?

NICK

I'm Nick.

PAT

Pat Hobby.

(They shake hands)

NICK

Nick. Nick Carraway.

PAT

Why so much hate?

NICK

I'm condemned... stuck in the mind of an author... I'm tired of all those who make a living to lie.

PAT

I'm also a writer.

NICK

Really?

PAT

Yeah... I write movies... But I am also a character...

NICK

Me too. I'm a book's character.

(Beat)

You know F. Scott Fitzgerald?

PAT

Of course. After all it was he who created me .

NICK

So we're like brothers.

PAT

He also created you?

NICK

Unfortunately. How can I do to find him?

PAT

I don't know... I think only he can find us.

NICK
And when will it happen?

PAT
When he think about us.

NICK
This can be long. I need to act fast.

PAT
I think I know who you are. You are the narrator of the book The Great Gatsby.

NICK
You know me?

PAT
Yes... Everyone who has read the book knows.

NICK
By the way... Mr. Fitzgerald has already finished my story.

PAT
A long time ago.

NICK
But I'm doomed to tell the story of Gatz forever. I hate it.

PAT
It's bad.

NICK
Please, I need to find Mr. Fitzgerald.

PAT
I can't help you.

NICK
Do you like him?

PAT

Of course not... Moreover, he has made my life miserable.

NICK

He has already finished your story?

PAT

Not yet...

(Beat)

I'm still in a magazine. I don't know if I will be in the book, movie or play.

NICK

So are you going to see him again?

PAT

I think so.

NICK

I have to do something...

PAT

What are you talking about?

NICK

I hate him... I-I want revenge!

PAT

How?

NICK

I don't know... but I have to think...

(NICK walks from one side to the other)

NICK

Sure! I know what to do.

PAT
Like what?

NICK
We need to make him suffer.

PAT
And how to do this?

NICK
You're a writer... I'm only an narrator... Please... think about.

PAT
I-I don't know.

NICK
As a writer... you can write about Mr. Fitzgerald.

PAT
I think not. By the way, his life would not give a good movie.

NICK
You can make a new story for him. Think of something cruel. You could create a lot of pain for him.

PAT
Can I?

NICK
Sure... only you can do it. You're a writer and lives in the mind of him.

PAT
Interesting.

NICK
Mr. Fitzgerald must suffer like the bird when loses his wings.

PAT

(Excited)
I'm beginning to like the idea.

NICK

Do it. Write about it ... confuse his mind... and then, I narrate the events as narrated on the Gatsby.

(Light fades on them.)

(Lights up on SCOTT. He is exhausted.
ZELDA FITZGERALD enters. She looks to be about 29. She is well dressed, beautiful, with shining eyes.)

SCOTT

Zelda?

ZELDA

We're late.

SCOTT

What are you doing here? You should be in Highland Hospital.

ZELDA

They're all waiting at the Plaza Hotel. Sylvia is invited.

SCOTT

Sylvia?

ZELDA

Sylvia Beach is in New York! She even invited Babe Ruth to the party! We're celebrating the Yankees winning their 3rd World Series!

SCOTT

But that was in 1928. 12 years ago!

ZELDA

What're you talking about?

SCOTT

I must be going crazy.

ZELDA

Please... Let's go...

SCOTT

Zelda! You look younger!

ZELDA

I understand. You'll say you're not going... because you're working on the new book... and blah-blah-blah...

SCOTT

I am working ...

ZELDA

You'll miss a great party... it's your chance to meet the Bambino!

SCOTT

I must be dreaming...

ZELDA

Bye...

(She disappears into the darkness.)

SCOTT

Zelda!

(Beat)

What's happening? I must be going crazy!

(Shouting))

Sheilah! Sheilah! Sheilah! I need a drink right now!

(Lights up on PAT at his typewriter. He turns to SCOTT.)

PAT

Did you missed the party at Plaza?

(SCOTT is startled.)

You?
SCOTT

So you didn't see Babe Ruth.
PAT

What're you talking about?
SCOTT

Now you're my character!
PAT

What do you mean?
SCOTT

I'm also a writer... Remember?
PAT

It's bullshit!
SCOTT

I don't need a weapon ... I can finish you with my idea.
PAT

This is crazy!
SCOTT

I live in your head! I can penetrate in your memories and bring someone to the present from the past.
PAT

It's ridiculous!
SCOTT

Like Zelda Scott... young and beautiful...
PAT

This can't be happening! You can't write about me.
SCOTT

Of course, I can... PAT

I-I'm your creator! SCOTT

Your destiny is in my hands! PAT

I'm going to do what I should have done before. SCOTT

It's over, my friend. PAT

I'll destroy everything that I wrote about you. SCOTT

It's impossible! I already wrote your future! PAT

I've killed a lot of characters... I can easily finish with Pat's story. SCOTT

You're wrong. They're all around... more alive than ever... PAT

Stop it! SCOTT

You invented me! Now... I'm real. I'm still in your mind. PAT

I'll burn my manuscripts and you will never exist. SCOTT

Too late! PAT

Get out of here! SCOTT

(PAT pulls out the handgun.)

PAT

If someone's going to die here... it's you...

SCOTT

I told you. This weapon is fake. You're just a character.

PAT

I'm going to finish with your mind. Not writer... not ideas... just characters...

(Beat)

Your death becomes my freedom!

(PAT shoots SCOTT. The sound is distorted, like a rush of wind. SCOTT puts his hand on his chest and falls dead on the floor.)

(We hear a radio news bulletin.)

Hollywood, California, December 21. F. Scott Fitzgerald, the writer, died at his Hollywood home. His age was 44. He suffered a heart attack...

(Jazz music starts to play.)

(PAT begins to laugh wildly.)

PAT

It's Showtime!

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY