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Zelda & Scott - Boats Against the Current

Armen Pandola

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Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald were married on June 1, 1920 in New York City. They first met in 1918 when Scott Fitzgerald was in the United Stated Army, training to go over seas in WWI. While they came from very different backgrounds, both of them had great ambitions, and saw themselves as the creators of a new era, the Jazz Age.

In October 1921, their only child, a girl, Scottie, was born in Scott's birthplace, St. Paul, MN. The family did not stay there for very long. The Fitzgeralds became one of the most famous couples in America. They lived tabloid lives long before tabloids even existed.

During the first stormy decade of their marriage, Zelda sought to become an artist in her own right. She wrote several short stories, was an excellent amateur painter and a serious student of the ballet.

By 1930, the Fitzgeralds had worn out their Roaring Twenties lifestyle, and were deep in debt and depression. Scott could not complete the novel he would finish four years later, Tender is the Night and Zelda suffered her first major breakdown and was sent to a clinic in Switzerland to recover. She never did.

Until her death, Zelda was a permanent resident at various sanitariums. While she was diagnosed as suffering from a mental breakdown, in 1932, she wrote Save Me the Waltz, her only novel. It was a commercial and critical failure. In 1937, Scott Fitzgerald went to Hollywood in order to earn money to support both Zelda and himself. He failed, and was forced to borrow money from old friends to keep Scottie in private school.

On December 21, 1940, Scott Fitzgerald died of a heart attack caused by years of alcoholism. He was 44 years old. Zelda was unable to attend his funeral. On March 10, 1948, Zelda died in a fire at Highland Hospital, Asheville, NC. Her remains were found on the top floor of the dormitory where she spent her last years.

They are buried together in the Fitzgerald family plot in Maryland.

Z&S is the story of the dreams that Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald chased over two continents and three decades, and the destruction of their lives in pursuit of those dreams. Concentrating on the relationship that formed the focal point of both their lives, this play explores one of the most legendary romances of all time. While Zelda is often seen as an appendage to Scott's career, this play reveals that Zelda was an artist in her own right, and that her life and dreams were as devastated by Scott's demons as his life and dreams were destroyed by hers. The Fitzgeralds were co-conspirators in making a life that created the idea of the Roaring Twenties. Scott Fitzgerald was the first to create the "flapper" character in his work and there is no doubt that Zelda was his template.

OLD SPORT
Dreams are dangerous
They make you see green lights
on distant docks fade in the fog of reality
They make you believe -Old Sport,

of course you can change the past.
They keep you asleep through the
dangerous night when you should be alert
and while they may make you better than
all of the rest of that dreamless crowd,
they will leave you alone in a cold pool
on a chilly morning to face the consequences
to stare at the man with the gun
unblinking
and take your punishment for having
dreamed too much
too long
old sport.

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