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A close-up photograph of a vintage car, likely a 1920s model, with a yellow and maroon color scheme. The car's hood, fender, and a large round headlight are visible. The background shows a clear blue sky and palm trees.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

THE GREAT GATSBY

Read by **William Hope**

1	The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald – Chapter 1	6:18
2	It was lonely for a day or so...	5:23
3	And so it happened on a warm windy evening...	6:13
4	I told her how I had stopped off in Chicago...	6:30
5	'Tom's getting very profound,' said Daisy...	5:19
6	The telephone rang inside, startlingly...	4:43
7	When we came in she held us silent for a moment...	6:17
8	Chapter 2	6:15
9	We waited for her down the road and out of sight...	6:22
10	Just as Tom and Myrtle – after the first drink...	5:40
11	This absorbing information about my neighbor...	5:08
12	The bottle of whiskey – a second one...	5:39
13	Chapter 3	5:11
14	Dressed up in white flannels I went over...	5:06
15	The first supper – there would be another one...	5:10
16	I was still with Jordan Baker...	5:07
17	There was the boom of a bass drum...	5:28
18	As I waited for my hat in the hall...	6:55
19	Reading over what I have written so far...	6:43
20	Chapter 4	5:23

21	At nine o'clock, one morning late in July...	5:27
22	Little Montenegro! He lifted up the words...	5:36
23	Roaring noon. In a well fanned 42 nd Street cellar...	5:02
24	Suddenly he looked at his watch, jumped up...	6:18
25	When I came opposite her house that morning...	6:10
26	Well, about six weeks ago, she heard the name Gatsby...	5:03
27	Chapter 5	4:38
28	The day agreed upon was pouring rain...	4:52
29	For half a minute there wasn't a sound...	6:16
30	'Oh, hello, old sport,' he said...	6:48
31	After the house, we were to see the grounds...	6:47
32	Chapter 6	6:08
33	He was employed in a vague personal capacity...	5:58
34	The rest of us walked out on the porch...	5:22
35	We were at a particularly tipsy table...	6:14
36	I stayed late that night. Gatsby asked me...	5:05
37	Chapter 7	4:50
38	The room, shadowed well with awnings...	5:00
39	I went with them out to the veranda...	5:08
40	Tom came out of the house wrapping a quart bottle...	4:33

41	With an effort Wilson left the shade...	5:47
42	The prolonged and tumultuous argument...	4:58
43	Gatsby's foot beat a short, restless tattoo...	4:56
44	Tom turned to Daisy sharply...	4:38
45	'You don't understand,' said Gatsby...	6:05
46	The young Greek, Michaelis, who ran the coffee joint...	7:07
47	'What's the name of this place here?' demanded the officer.	5:47
48	Somehow, that seemed a despicable occupation...	5:21
49	Chapter 8	6:05
50	'I can't describe to you how surprised I was...'	5:45
51	He left feeling that if he had searched harder...	6:02
52	When I passed the ashheaps...	6:11
53	Michaelis had seen this too...	7:09
54	Chapter 9	5:51
55	When the phone rang that afternoon...	6:30
56	The morning of the funeral I went up to New York...	6:18
57	He seemed reluctant to put away the picture...	6:03
58	That's my middle west – not the wheat...	6:15
59	There was nothing I could say, except...	5:01

Total time: 5:38:35

F. Scott Fitzgerald

(1896–1940)

THE GREAT GATSBY

Poor boys shouldn't think of marrying rich girls.

So, apparently, said Charles King, father of the beautiful socialite Ginevra King, to a smitten Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald met her in 1915 when he was a less-than-wealthy student at Princeton. Their infatuation was mutual, but brief, conducted largely by letter and effectively doomed; he never really had a chance. She went on to marry the son of a business associate of her father's. But the exquisite, untouchable beauty and the yearning, unmonied hero became features that run through much of his work, and they have their inspiration, at least in part, in Fitzgerald's relationship with Ginevra. And the apotheosis of this impossible desire is *The Great Gatsby*.

It was published in 1925, but sold less than Fitzgerald's earlier novels, and was regarded at the time as a bit of a flop. Now it is seen as both the perfect prose poem of the Jazz Age (™ F. Scott Fitzgerald; he invented the phrase) and one of the unquestionably

great novels from America in the last century. Gatsby is both the aspirational figure and the hollow centre of his time – he appears to have everything, but has gained it through dubious, even simply criminal, means. He has changed his identity, his name, his world, in part at least to win back the rich girl who couldn't marry him in his earlier incarnation. But as a result Gatsby is a deception, a shadow; his substantial self may yearn hopelessly, yet he is strangely impotent, inactive, in his quest.

Across the bay is another wealthy man, one who has made his fortune by legitimate means, but who is just as much an empty, rather brutal, shell. Tom Buchanan is a different version of the all-conquering America – muscular, focussed, financially motivated; and also cruel, unsympathetic and hypocritical. He thinks himself unimpeachable, irrespective of his behaviour. And in the middle is the beguiled and enchanted Nick, an innocent who, despite his apparent assurance, cannot quite

believe the world in which he finds himself.

This is Fitzgerald's home territory. There are themes, motifs and tropes that crop up in his novels, such as the unreachable, impossible beauty, the First World War and those returning from it, the privileged, the mad, self-destructive hedonism of America in the 20s, and the morally degenerative effects of excess money. This is what he knew, and what he managed to reflect with a sharp tenderness that understands and mourns.

He was born in St Paul, Minnesota, and seems to have had a desire to be a writer from the first. Neither parent was especially literary – although Fitzgerald's full name, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, commemorates his rather distant relationship to the poet behind *The Star-Spangled Banner*. (There is a tiny irony in the fact that this national anthem was set to the tune of a British drinking song.) Never a good student, Fitzgerald nevertheless managed to get into Princeton in 1913, only to leave before he was due because although he kept on writing plays and revues, he neglected his academic work. He joined up, but the War had finished before he even left for France, and he was discharged in 1919, determining to be a writer. By then, however, he had met the woman who would prove the

most significant influence on his life (except perhaps for alcohol), Zelda Sayre.

She was (again) beautiful, wealthy and high-status, and at one point she broke off their engagement, believing that as an advertising man and short-story writer he would never be able to earn enough money. As it turns out, she was right; but he managed to publish his first novel (*This Side of Paradise*) to huge acclaim, and became a celebrity. He and Zelda married almost immediately. There was a child, Frances, some 18 months later, by which time Fitzgerald had published another novel (*The Beautiful and Damned*) and a collection of short stories. He was popular, admired and with his golden wife joined the fastest of the fast sets, travelling around Europe, spending time on the Riviera, befriending other writers and members of the American elite.

But he was also entering a cycle of inspiration and destruction with Zelda, herself a flamboyant, artistic individual. He took scenes of their home life for his fictions (as did Zelda, later) and wrote stories for magazines to try to keep pace with their expenditure. He never properly managed it, even when he moved to Hollywood and was earning over \$1,000 a week. His sybaritic

reputation was one cause of his not being taken seriously by the critics of the time, who saw the commercial magazine short stories as the equivalent of his university revues. But Fitzgerald was a craftsman as well as an artist, and with his novels he drafted and redrafted, restructured and rewrote over many months, even years. He may even have been too prepared to take advice, sometimes changing things for publication, which he later regretted. He thought the title of *The Great Gatsby*, for example, rather poor, and up to just three weeks before publication was asking whether he could change it. He would have preferred either *Trimalchio in West Egg* or *Under the Red, White, and Blue*. Whatever one's view of the option chosen, it shows Fitzgerald's focus, specificity and awareness of the impact of detail. He wrote when he was sober, understanding that to keep the whole arc of a novel in mind requires clarity of vision and dedication.

The hectic instability of his life was to become even more mazy over the next few years. Matters with Zelda became more and more alarming. She suffered her first breakdown in 1930, and effectively never recovered; from 1932 she spent the rest of her life either in institutions or as an

outpatient. Fitzgerald wrote to try to cover the cost of her treatment, which included stays in Switzerland as well as hospitals in the US, while declining in health himself. As the 30s advanced, he and Zelda became more and more isolated from each other, and eventually separated. He moved to Hollywood alone, where he failed to make any great impression on the screenwriting world despite doing some (uncredited) work on *Gone With the Wind*, and fell in love with a rather extraordinary Jewish-English émigré called Sheilah Graham who wrote, *inter alia*, gossip columns. He continued to write short stories, now almost mocking himself through the character of hack screenwriter Pat Hobby, but he was also writing his fifth novel, *The Love of the Last Tycoon*. He died in Graham's house of a massive heart attack before the novel was much more than half finished.

Perhaps Ginevra's father was right; perhaps poor boys shouldn't think of marrying rich girls. But it's the personal equivalent of the American Dream, an aspirational apogee; and Fitzgerald, who knew it from the closest perspective, recreated it as a metaphor for his age. And all ages.

Notes by Roy McMillan



A Canadian by birth, **William Hope** trained at RADA in London. He is known as an 'English' actor in theatre, and an 'American' actor in film and television. A member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, he has recorded hundreds of radio plays and audio books to the extent that he is teased as being the 'American voice of the BBC.' His film credits include Lieutenant Gorman in James Cameron's *Aliens*, Kyle in *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, xXx with Vin Diesel, *The Saint* with Val Kilmer, *The Walker* with Woody Harrelson and Kristin Scott Thomas, *Trade Routes* and *9/11 The Twin Towers*.

Credits

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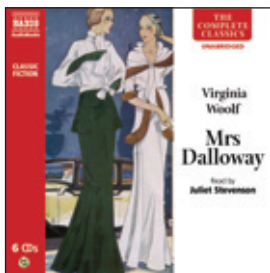
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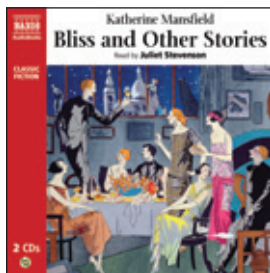
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F. Scott Fitzgerald

THE GREAT GATSBY

Read by **William Hope**

Elegant, enigmatic Jay Gatsby yearns for his old love, the beautiful Daisy. But she is married to the insensitive if hugely successful Tom Buchanan, who won't let her go despite having a mistress himself. In their wealthy haven, these beguiling lives are brought together by the innocent and entranced narrator, Nick – until their decadent deceits spill into violence and tragedy.

Part morality tale, part fairy tale, *The Great Gatsby* is the consummate novel of the Jazz Age. Its tenderness and poetry make it one of the great works of the 20th century.

A Canadian by birth, **William Hope** trained at RADA in London. A member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, he has recorded hundreds of radio plays and audiobooks. His film credits include Lieutenant Gorman in James Cameron's *Aliens*, Kyle in *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* and xXx with Vin Diesel.



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