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Genius

By John Logan

Might want
to read this one.
Please tell me
it's double-spaced.
No such luck.
Where'd you get it?
A woman named aine Bernstein,
the stage designer?
The author's her protege.
Every other publisher in town
has already turned it down.
Is it any good?
Good?
No.
But it's unique.
A quick look.
Thanks, Max.
I'm in your debt.
602 to new canaan,
last call!
Good evening, Pete.
All aboard, Mr. Perkins.
A stone, a leaf,
an unfound door
of a stone, a leaf, a door.
And of all
the forgotten faces.
Which of us has
known his brother?
Which of us has looked
into his father's heart?
Which of us has not remained
forever prison-pent?
Which of us is not
forever a stranger
and alone?
Remembering, speechlessly
we seek the great
forgotten language,
the lost Lane-end
into heaven,
a stone, a leaf,
an unfound door.
Where? When?

O lost,
and by the wind grieved,
ghost, come back again.
A destiny that leads
the English to the Dutch
is strange enough
but one that leads
from epsom into Pennsylvania
and thence into the hills
that shut in altamont
over the proud
coral cry of the cock
and the soft stone
smile of an angel
is touched by
that dark miracle
of chance.

Hello, daddy!

Hello, ducks.

More rehearsal.

He didn't even notice us.

"Fear no more
the heat o' the sun.

"Nor the furious
winter's rages.

"Thou thy
worldly task hast done.

"Home art gone,
and ta'en thy wages.

"Golden lads and girls..."

Jimmy, I told you already.

I don't like the movies.

I read books.

You're not listening to me.

Subtract

us into nakedness

and night again

and you shall

see begin in crete

4,000 years ago,

the love that ended

yesterday in Texas.

Hello, daddy.

How do I look?

Just beautiful.
It's
the prom next week.
Already? You're so old
and not married yet.
O death in life
that turns our men to stone!
O change that
levels down our gods!
Hello, Mr. Perkins?
Your father doesn't approve
of my drama club.
Daddy, why don't you
want mama to be
an actress again?
Because limelight
is not becoming to a woman
of your mother's years.
Oh, you rat!
Oh, boo!
Oh, yes, you save
the whirlwind life
of glamour for yourself.
Book signings and
parties and the like,
while we languish here
in the wilderness.
Do we live
in the wilderness?
How thrilling!
We should get knives!
Yes, we should!
Guess who will be
the head pirate?
Cecil, did you ever
pick up a girl before?
- Did you?
- No.
Oh, goodness.
You're the funniest person
I've ever seen.
Hold it.
What's the matter, Cecil?
I don't know.

What's that, Cecil?

Don't wait up.

Ten.

Eleven.

Ten.

Swine.

He had

listened attentively
to a sermon in chapel
by a sophomore
with false whiskers.

He had prepared studiously
for an examination
on the contents
of the college catalog.

Ten.

That's

a very long paragraph.

It started

four pages ago.

Poor Maxwell.

You're too

young to be in love.

How old

do you have to be?

Forty.

Or, I should say,

he was like a man

who stands upon a hill

above the town he has left,

yet does not say

"the town is near"

but turns his eyes

upon the distant

soaring ranges.

The end.

Mighty books.

Mighty books.

May I help you?

God damn.

Look at all these books.

Do you ever stop to consider

the pure man-sweat

that went into

each and every line?
Little testaments of faith,
screamed out in
the dark night,
in the cold, dark night
when the wind's
blowing alpine,
in the vain hope
that someone will read
and hear and understand.
You must be Thomas wolfe.
Are all these your authors?
Not tolstoy.
Mr. Perkins.
Please, sit down.
I wasn't even gonna come.
Prefer to get my
rejections in the mail.
There's something
surgically antiseptic
about those familiar words,
"we regret to inform you..."
But I wanted to meet you.
The man who first read
Mr. f. Scott Fitzgerald
and said,
"yes! The world needs poets.
"My god!
Someone publish
this bastard,
" 'cause the world
needs poets.
"Or why even live?"
So I'm looking
at that man now.
Well, congratulations.
On finding one genius.
Two, if you count Hemingway.
As for this one,
he'll persevere.
You can't kill the deep roots
by cutting off
a few top branches.
And the roots go deep,

Mr. Perkins.
And they are unassailable.
Mr. wolfe,
we intend to
publish your book.
If that's acceptable
to you.
Now, I'd like to do
some work with you.
In its current state,
o lost is simply too long
for one volume.
I think you could afford
to shape it a bit,
cut off a few of
the "top branches".

Mr. Perkins.
I know you're not
fooling with me.
You don't look the type.
But my god,
this is too much for me.
You don't know.
You don't know.
You don't know.
Every son-of-a-bitch
publisher in New York
hates my book.

Mr. wolfe,
if you could sit down.

Tom.

Tom.

Tom, please.

Tom.

I take it your book
is autobiographical
in nature.

No other way to write,
is there?

Eugene gant is me!

And my mama is Eliza,
and my papa is w.O. Gant.

We'll get into all that.
I know it's too long.

I know it's too long.
My lord, you don't
know how I struggled
to cut the gorgon down.
You don't know how
i fought with her.
But I'll cut
anything you say.
You just give me
the word.

Tom,
the book belongs to you.
All I want to do
is to bring your
work to the public
in its best possible form.
My job, my only job,
is to put good books
into the hands of readers.
Thank you, Mr. Perkins.
Now, scribner's has agreed
to give you our standard
advance against royalties.
If this is satisfactory,
we can proceed at whatever
pace is comfortable for you.
\$500?

No one ever
thought my writing
was worth a dime.
Oh, lord!
Do you mind if
we start tomorrow?
Of course.
I promise to work hard.
Yeah!
Oh, lord!
I can barely...
Oh, mighty. Oh, indeedy.
"Mr. wolfe,
we intend to
publish your book."
No!
Tom!

Oh, my angel, thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you,
my lover, my love.
I'm so...
I'm so happy
for you. Oh!
How much you figure
we have to cut?
I'm guessing
around 300 pages.
It's not the page count
that's important,
it's telling the story.
There it is.
Four years of my life.
My heart bleeds
to see any of it go.
But I guess it's die dog
or eat the hatchet.
You took the words
right out of my mouth.
The last few weeks
working on the book
have been the most
thunderingly thrilling
of my entire weebegone life.
Glad I could amuse you.
You spend your lifetime
in the pages of books,
as we do,
and those characters emerge
that speak to you deep,
to the marrow.
They are your mirrors.
In my time,
I aspired to Sydney carton.
Or Pierre
from the tolstoy.
But I know
that's not who I am,
much as I would have it so.
We are not those characters
we want to be.

We're those characters
we are.
I'm caliban.
That island creature,
monstrous and deformed.
Caliban.
So ugly.
So alien.
Hurt and shunned
into poetry.
What is Manhattan
but an isle full of noises?
"Sounds, and sweet airs
that give delight
and hurt not?"
"Sometimes a thousand
twangling instruments
"will hum about mine ears,
"and sometimes voices
"that, if I then had
waked after long sleep
"will make me sleep again."
I have a thought
about the book, o lost.
I think we should
discuss the title.
I don't know that
it truly captures
the meat of your book.
Here, imagine
you're a reader.
You're wandering
through a bookstore
and lots of books
and you see a book titled
trimalchio in west egg
and you see one
titled the great gatsby.
Which are you
going to pick up?
Gatsby.
That's why Scott changed
his original title.
He knew it needed

a bit more meat.
It's your book,
just give it a think.
Here we are.
My god, Max!
It's a mansion.
It is so nice
to finally meet you,
Mr. wolfe.
Max has told us so much.
Tom! It's tom.
Please.
And nice to meet you.
Every man Jack of you.
Or "girl Jack,"
i should say.
Max has been circumspect
about all these
beautiful daughters.
A bounteous sea
of loveliness.
Max tells us
you're working
on a new book.
I'm nothing if not
a big old octopus.
An octopus.
One arm still
wrapped around o lost,
while another one
sneaks over here
through the briny deep
to write the new book.
I guess you could say
I'm... I'm tentacular.
What's the new one about?
It's about America.
All of it.
I'm trying to
capture everything.
Every city and village
and stone and leaf
and man and child.
And every farm and flower,

every river.
It's about
the one acetylene torch,
white, bright truth
that burns in the heart
of every man in this country.
And that is the search
for a true father.
I don't mean
biological father.
I'm not talking
about sperm.
I mean, I search for the need
of a father of our spirit.
It's about every single thing
that makes this country great.
It's mammoth!
Max says
the only ideas
worth writing about
are the big ideas.
Big ideas,
fewer words.
You see,
I'm lost without him.
Aren't we all?
You know I'm a writer, too?
That so?
Max didn't tell you?
Mmm.
I've been working on a play
for quite some time now.
It's about pauline,
Napoleon's sister.
Historical pageant,
is it?
Well, it's attempting
to be more modern.
I wrote a play once.
It was not a happy experience,
i can tell you that.
I found it
an anemic form,
lacking the multi-colored

cloak of prose.
So I dumped the form
and returned to my novels.
Do you have a title
for your new book?
Your daddy and i
have considered a bunch.
Right now we're thinking about
of time and the river.
"The river" 'cause
that word just reminds
me of my father.
The river running
away from his door
and right back again.
That sounds like
quite a long book.
Don't say that, aline.
I'll see you tomorrow.
Keep yourself ready for me.
Goodnight. Goodnight.
This should
do you nicely.
I'll see you
in the morning.
Max.
Thank you
for tonight.
I hope I didn't
offend anyone.
I so want your family
to like me.
Don't worry.
Of course not.
I'm not a circus animal.
See, I know I seem
like a freak.
Too loud,
too grandiose,
not quite real.
That's who I am.
That's how I got
out of asheville,
by making noise.

I thrashed my way out.
But I feel things
like a real person.
So...
...from caliban's heart,
i say this.
In all my life,
well, till I met you,
i never had a friend.
If we nail down
Ben's death today,
then, hell,
we're within hollering
distance of the end.
Aline!
Max.
Let me introduce you.
This is Mrs. Bernstein.
How do you do?
Mr. Perkins.
Tom has told me
so much about you.
She's the first person
who told me my writing
was worth anything.
Hell, she's the whole
reason for our book.
I thank you for that.
We were expected
last night.
Oh, I told you...
It was embarrassing
for me.
You know I hate
those theatrical affairs.
And you know
i didn't want
to go alone.
If you'll excuse me.
All those actors
make me feel awkward.
You know that!
I told you i
wasn't gonna come.

We will
continue this alone.
I'll come by

around 2:

2:

Come on.
Good day,
Mr. Perkins.
You are so mad at me.
No, I'm not.
I'm not mad at you.
There it is.
Hmm.
This is our last chance
before we go to the printer.
So I'll ask you again.
Have you thought
about another title?
You'll hate it.
Try me.
Now, I'm
a scribner's bestseller,
I figured I deserve
a little of the high life.
Say it again, Max.
Fifteen thousand
copies this month.
Oh.
Aline,
you hear that?
Mmm-hmm.
Not even the economy
of the entire country
crumbling around our ankles
is hurting my book.
Have you read
tom's book,
Mrs. Bernstein?
Yes, Mrs. Perkins,
it's dedicated to me.
I wouldn't have
been able to do it

without my sweet jewess.
She bought the paper
and the pencils.
- And paid for the typist.
- That's enough.
That's enough.
She put a roof
over my head
and food in my
prodigious belly.
Hell, y'all know how
much I love to eat.
You must be very
proud of the book,
to see all your
faith rewarded.
Our faith.
It's our faith now,
isn't it, Mr. Perkins?
Tom couldn't have
done it without you.
That's not true.
You needn't play
at humble pie with me.
Tom speaks of
your contribution
with such passion.
He really can't seem
to stop talking about you.
"Max says this.
Max says that."
Easy, girl.
Easy, girl.
"Max, Max, Max."
No, we should
give Mr. Perkins
all of the credit.
I mean, after all, he is
the genius who made all
of your dreams come true.
He's the one who shaped
that massive collection
of words into a...
Into a marketable

bestseller,
putting it into
the eager hands
of readers everywhere.
I mean, that is
quite a triumph
for Mr. Perkins, hmm?
The work is tom's.
He deserves to enjoy it.
Really?
Is that what
tom deserves?
Leave Max alone.
I'm not speaking to you,
I'm speaking to your elder.
You should learn
to trust your elders.
They know what's best.
They should also
behave in a manner
appropriate to their years.
You're Thomas wolfe?
I'm reading your book.
It's a masterpiece.
Is it, now?
Very much.
Look, um, I have
some friends who are
dying to meet you.
You don't mind
if I steal him
for a tick or two?
Of course you don't.
Oh, not at all.
After you.
Okay. I'm Willow.
Nice to meet you.
What a pleasure.
Good evening.
This is Thomas wolfe.
No, it's my pleasure.
Good evening.
Nice to meet you.
You don't know what they're

like, the state asylums.
Grotesque.
I don't have the words.
There...
There are no words
in my lexicon.
One word, no flourishes.
Grotesque.
The screaming is
constant and so...
Desolate.
They don't have
enough toilets.
I can't let Zelda
stay in such a place.
I know.
But private asylums
are expensive
and I know gatsby
didn't make any money.
But I'm up
against it, Max.
Scribner's can't give you
any more advances.
The post won't even take
any more of my stories.
I guess I could go back
to Hollywood and give
that another try.
I hope you don't do that.
Why?
You're a novelist.
Not anymore.
I should have died
when I was 24.
Right after
this side of paradise.
Did you get that
book I sent you?
Which?
General Grant's memoirs.
Do you know how he
came to write them?
This is interesting.

He was dying
of throat cancer
and he wanted to leave
something behind
for his family,
so he started writing
his autobiography.
He worked every day
for hours and hours.
He was in great pain,
anguish,
but he just
kept on writing.
And in the end, he produced
the most astounding book.
So very beautiful.
Just a little velvet
to see you through.
I'll write you
a great book.
I know.
Mrs. Perkins.
Mrs. Bernstein.
Hello.
You're designing
this production?
Yes.
Me and all the lost boys.
We know a few of them,
don't we?
You didn't know him
when he was young.
He was fresh out of Harvard
and he was all ready
to carve up the world.
He was unlike anyone
I'd ever met.
I understand.
I don't think
that you do.
You see, my husband
is a very kind man, but
he's a man without color.
He's a man

of wall street
and numbers.
I don't
understand numbers.
You have children,
Mrs. Bernstein?
Yes.
A daughter and a son.
They're grown.
I did a foolish thing
when I fell in love
with tom,
but I can't help
how I feel.
My heart was touched.
At the very time
in my life
when everything beautiful
was falling away
and no one needed me,
i met tom.
And tom made me
feel beautiful again.
But I know now
I've lost him
to your husband.
Mrs. Bernstein.
My husband always
wanted a son
more than anything
in the world.
We reached a point
when we realized that
wasn't going to happen.
And then he met tom.
I can't let him go.
Aline, go home
to your family.
They need you.
Tom doesn't.
Family,
husband,
dignity.
I gave that

all up for him.
Tom.
Come in.
Tom?
I have it.
You have it?
The new book.
With you?
Yes.
Well, let's have it.
Bring it in, guys.
Put it down there.
This is
of time and the river?
Here you go.
Thank you, sir.
Well done.
Now, go home
and get some sleep.
I need you...
Let me read it.
Read it kindly.
Please?
If we work every day
in the evening,
when we won't be disturbed,
we can do it.
How long?
Nine months.
If you work hard and
if you resist the temptation
to add much more.
I have to be able
to add more.
Tom, the book
is 5,000 pages long.
Point taken.
Now, to begin,
on page one.
Oh, lord. Page one?
Now, look here,
you've given 80
pages to Eugene
on the platform

before the train arrives.
That is, perhaps,
gilding the Lily a bit
as to suspense?
I mean, I'll only wait
so long for a train.
Those three sections
to me...
Here you are, Mr. Perkins.
When he meets the girl,
you've written this.
"As Eugene's eyes
became accustomed
to the haze
"of the cigarettes
and cigars swirling
miasma-like,
"he saw a woman,
in serge
"and gloves that crept
like living tendrils
"up her normally
ivory arms,
"but now sun-kissed
as a blush
"as the incarnadine discovery
inside a conch shell
"seen for the first time
by a bewildered zoologist
"as he is undone
by its rosy,
promising pinkness.
"Those were her arms.
"But it was her eyes
that stopped his breath
"and made his heart
leap up.
"Blue they were.
"Even through
the swirling vapors
of pompous chesterfields
"and arrogant
lucky strikes,
"he saw her eyes

were a blue beyond blue,
like the ocean.
"Blue beyond blue.
"A blue he could
swim into forever
"and never miss
a fire-engine red
or a cornstalk yellow.
"Across the chasm
of that room,
"that blue, those eyes
"devoured him
and looked past him
and never saw him
"and never would,
of that he was sure.
"From that moment,
"Eugene understood what
the poets had been writing
about these many years.
"All the lost, wandering,
lonely souls who were
now his brothers.
"He knew a love that
would never be his.
"So quickly did
he fall for her
"that no one in the room
even heard the sound.
"The whoosh as he fell,
"the clatter of
his broken heart.
"It was a sure silence
"but his life was shattered."
End of chapter.
You don't like it?
You know I do.
That's not the point.
So he sees a girl
and he falls in love
for the first time, yes?
Does his mind go
to deep-sea marine life?
At that moment, yes.

I don't believe it.
I think you fell in love
with the images,
not the girl.
So we cut the zoology
and the cigar brands.
I'll do it.
And the ruminations
on pink?
No. No!
The adjectives are true.
He's a man who
thinks that way.
Pink is never
just pink.
It's a thousand other things,
all profoundly
important to him.
All variations
on his psychological state.
Every image and the sound
of every word matters.
No, it doesn't.
Nonsense.
They're vital!
You're losing the plot.
Vital!
He's falling in love.
What was it like
the first time
you fell in love, tom?
Was it cornstalk yellow
and pompous chesterfields?
It was a lightning bolt.
And that's what
it should be.
A lightning bolt.
Save all the thunder.
I got you.
I got you.
Cut that.
Cut that.
All right.
We cut the textile.

"He saw a woman..."
Cut. Cut. Cut.
"But it was her eyes
that stopped his
breath in his throat,
"that made his heart
leap up."
No, cut the wordsworth.
"It stopped his breath."
"Blue they were..."
Cut the marine life.
"A blue beyond blue,
like the ocean."
Cliche.
"A blue beyond blue
like..."
Like nothing but blue.
"A blue he could
swim into forever
and never miss..."
Mmm, cut this.
Then pick up with...
Had there ever
been such blue? Had there
ever been such eyes?
Don't need the rhetorical.
Why?
It's not a lightning bolt,
it's a digression.
"A blue beyond..." No!
Her eyes were blue.
Better.
And cut.
He was worthless,
she was everything.
She was a girl
across a room.
That's enough.
And so, cut "the lost,
wandering souls..."
Cut.
"So quickly did
he fall for her
"that no one in the room

even heard the sound,
"the whoosh as he fell,
the clatter..."
The whoosh, the clatter.
Is that the point?
Well, what did you hear
when you fell in love?
What did you hear?
Clattering?
The point is it was all
happening inside him.
His life changed,
no one else in the room
noticed anything.
Then make that
the point.
I hate to see
the words go!
Maybe the larger
question is this.
In a book crowded
with great rolling
mountains of prose,
how is this moment
profoundly different?
Because it's simple.
Unadorned.
Like lightning.
Standing out
in the black sky
by its starkness.
Exactly.
God damn!
All aboard!
Track 12, southwest trunk line
now departing from track 12.
"Eugene saw a woman.
"Her eyes were blue.
"So quickly did
he fall for her
"that no one in the room
even heard the sound."
Period.
End of chapter four.

Only 98 more to go!
I love you,
Max Perkins!
...with Francis
and Eugene in Paris.
Exactly!
As if you're skipping
across the Atlantic.
"Matching
Eugene's disorientation."
He didn't know
that she would never
see him,
that her love
would never be his.
How could he know that?
Hold on, he did.
How?
"The subtle
grapy bloom of dusk."
Tom, we discussed
a transition line.
One line to bridge the cut.
You've given me
50 new pages
on the doctor.
You've given me his whole
life story and his father's
whole life story.
I like the doctor.
Well, so do I.
I adore the doctor.
But by god, 50 pages?
Some books are
supposed to be long,
you know?
Thank Christ
tolstoy never met you.
We'd have that great novel
war and nothing.
To be a novelist,
you have to select.
You have to
shape and sculpt.

Why?

Because we've been working
for two years and the book's
only 100 pages shorter.

Five goddamn seconds
of peace is all I ask!

Can't you give me
five goddamn seconds?

God damn!

It's the tip of the iceberg,
tom. You're giving me
the full iceberg.

So you're saying
this is trash,
this is trash...

You knew this
was gonna happen.

Why are you playing
all dewy-eyed ingenue?

Because I did not imagine,
even taking you at
your absolute worst,
you could be so selfish.

I can't turn my
back on the work.

Aline!

It's what I do.

It's my job.

And this is my job.

When will you ever learn
how much an opening
night means to me?

Is this all right?

Yes, you look lovely.

Could you please put
the scarf on your downstage
shoulder when you enter?

Thank you.

It's an important
night for me.

I need you here.

I have to work tonight.

You've been working
every single night

for the past two years.
Do you have any
idea what it's like
coming home to
an empty apartment
every night?
Look, I'm not saying
your work's not important.
Of course you are!
I ask for one night.
One night of your precious
time to be at my side
and support me.
You don't understand.
You don't understand.
We are at a moment
of radical crisis
with my book!
Stop it. Stop it!
I've never known you
not to be at a point
of radical crisis about
something. You really ought
to be on the stage.
Max says
if we push through...
There we go.
"Max says! Max suggests!
Max instructs!"
He can have you
every other day of the week
but I need you tonight.
So, please,
would you get off
my set, go home
and put on your blue suit
and I will pick

you up at 7:

I won't be there.
Make your choice, tom.
Right now.
There's no call
for this, honey.

Right now.
Look what you
have done to me.
He's under
a lot of pressure.
If we don't keep
going now, I don't know
what'll happen to him.
You want
the big hamper?
And the thermoses.
Thanks.
You have to think
what it's like for him.
His first book comes out,
everyone calls him a genius.
Expectations on
the second book
are mighty big.
He's scared.
That's why he
won't stop writing.
Why don't you explain that
to your daughters?
Louise.
They want
their father back.
It's my job,
it's what I do.
Every minute
of every day?
And if it takes years,
it takes years.
You're never
going to get
this time back.
It's one damn vacation,
for Christ's sake!
Louise, a writer like tom,
i get one in a lifetime.
You get your daughters
for the same lifetime.
I'm sorry.
Wave to the girls.

All right, ladies!
Are you ready for
our great adventure?
Close your door, darling.
You gotta
stop worrying about
Louise so much,
they'll be back
before you know it.
Tom,
where are we going?
Ah, you'll see.
We're supposed
to be working.
This is work.
I decided you can
never appreciate
the music of my book,
the tonality
and Cadence,
without experiencing
the dark rhythms
that inspire me.
Bourbon!
In a big ol' tumbler.
You?
Martini, please.
Very dry.
He'll have a bourbon.
You got it.
You hear it, Max?
I don't care much
for music.
There's a savage indictment
of your grim, puritan soul.
Come on!
There must be
one song you like.
Flow gently, sweet afton.
I'm partial to
flow gently, sweet afton.
You got it, sir.
Two bourbons,
gentlemen.

The whole thing about jazz
is that these fellas
are artists.
They interpret the song,
letting the music
pour on out,
riff upon riff,
just like I do
with words.
To hell with
standard forms.
To hell with
flaubert and Henry James.
Be original. Hmm?
Blaze new trails.
That's the whole
ugly gorilla.
Ugly gorilla.
Of course.
There.
That's Henry James
for you.
It's comfortable
and familiar, isn't it?
Uh-oh.
What's that?
Sounds like an ugly gorilla
coming our way, don't it?
That's tom wolfe!
Feel it, Max!
I see your feet moving.
I see your knees moving.
Come on, Max!
Feel it!
Nice.
You see those two
fine ladies over there?
Subtle.
Max, be subtle.
At the bar?
Mmm-hmm.
Let's go over there,
say hello.
Come on!

Let's have some fun.
I can't. I can't.
They're working girls, Max.
It doesn't count.
Yes, tom, it does.
Well, you don't mind
if I...
No.
Hell, I never know
when to stop, do I?
- Three bourbons!
- You got it.
One, two, three.
And you, too.
I saw you looking at me.
Don't worry,
i ain't gonna
leave you out.
I'm gonna want
the both of you.
All right?
Let's have a drink.
I'll tell you
one thing, my friend.
You wouldn't do
this to Hemingway.
You wouldn't do this
to Fitzgerald, not to your
two goddamn sacred cows!
Every word they write
is golden genius!
Stop it!
I bring you stuff
wrenched right
from my guts
and you tell me
it doesn't fit.
That's enough.
Go home.
What?
Go home.
Go to sleep.
No. No, no.
I'm sorry.

Please, don't make me go home.
Let me come home with you.
We... we can still

make the 9:

No, I'm exhausted
and you're drunk.

We'll pick up
tomorrow.

No.

You heard him, tom.

Come home.

I'll pay

for the taxi.

What the hell

are you doing here?

I can make you dinner.

I'll pay for that, too.

Get out of here.

I'm working.

Mr. Perkins has informed

you you're not working

anymore tonight

so come on, come with me.

Mrs. Bernstein...

- Don't touch me!

- For heaven's sake.

You stay there.

Jesus, Aline!

- Come.

- Aline.

You don't want

to see me?

Fine!

Fine!

You will never

have to see me again.

Aline.

Hmm?

What are you doing?

What the hell

are you doing?

- Aline!

- No!

- Stop it.
- No!
- Spit 'em!
- No!
Spit 'em!
No.
You spit 'em out.
Spit 'em out.
Spit 'em out!
You spit it out.
Stop now, aline.
My love.
My love, my angel.
Stop now.
All right.
All right. All right.
Show me your
strength, darling.
Look at me. Look at me!
Show me your strength.
Hmm? Come on.
Come on.
All right. Come on.
Come on. That's it.
All right. All right.
Mr. Perkins...
I know things such as this
don't happen here
on the fifth floor.
I apologize.
That's not necessary.
If you'll excuse me.
Wait up, wait up.
I'll be right there.
No, tom, really!
Just give me
a second.
I'll see you at home.
All right.
All right.
You were right,
about the cut.
Sorry about being
such a bear.

Don't you think
you should go
with Mrs. Bernstein?
Hell, she was just
being theatrical.
All right,
so we forget
about the cut.
Let's go on
to Eugene
in London.
"He thought of the huge
smoky web of London
with the same joy,
"of the suave
potent ale he could get
in one place there,
"of its squares and
ancient courts..."
Daddy!
Daddy!
Hurry up.
Hi, daddy.
Hello, duck.
Ooh!
Daddy, I caught
a rainbow trout.
Nine inches!
You go help
your sisters.
You would not
believe the amount...
Maxwell, please.
Tom.
Tom!
It's done.
Done?
Stop writing.
Gather all your papers
and bring them in tomorrow.
Can you do that?
Can you do that?
Yes.
We finish editing this month.

We go to press in April.
We publish in October.
Look at me and say yes.
Yes.
Hmm. Shoot.
Mmm-hmm.
I think I'll go rambling.
Maybe Europe.
Don't want to be around
when the reviews come out.
What?
There's one paragraph
i have to add to the book.
By god!
I have to add it.
If you start
adding paragraphs,
we're sunk.
One paragraph will lead
to two and then we'll be
here for another year.
Shall I read it
to you?
It goes
at the very front.
"This book is dedicated
to Maxwell evarts Perkins.
"A brave and honest man
"who stuck to
the writer of this book
"through times of
bitter hopelessness.
"The author hopes
"this book will
prove worthy of him."
I wish you wouldn't.
Oh.
Why?
Editors should be
anonymous.
More than that,
there's always the fear
that I deformed your book.
Who's to say

it wasn't the way
it was meant to be
when you first
brought it in?
War and peace.
Not just war.
Max.
That's what we editors
lose sleep over,
you know?
Are we really making
books better?
Or just making
them different?
Morning, Mr. Perkins.
Miss wyckoff,
where would we find
Mr. wolfe at the moment?
He's in Paris, sir.
"Magnificent reviews.
Full of praise.
"Congratulations,
you've done it again.
Max."
"I can face
blunt fact better than
damnably incertitude.
"Give me the damn
straight plain truth
right now, damn you!
"Tom."
"Talked of everywhere
as a truly important book.
"All comparisons
with greatest writers.
"Even James Joyce."
"Hell, Joyce wishes
he was so good."
"Had to rush out
five editions of the book.
"Thirty thousand copies.
"Never seen
a book so talked about.
"They're calling

you a genius again,
god help you.
"Come home soon. Max."
Mrs. Bernstein.
Mr. Perkins.
What can I do for you?
It's rather what
can I do for you,
Mr. Perkins.
I couldn't help noticing
tom dedicated his
new book to you.
He dedicated his
first book to me,
you will recall.
It was a lovely sentiment
but what he was
actually saying was,
"thank you and goodbye."
I had served my purpose.
And now,
you have served yours.
"Thank you and goodbye,
Mr. Perkins."
With respect,
Mrs. Bernstein,
you haven't
the slightest notion
of my relationship with tom.
And in view of that...
He makes you do things
you never thought you'd do.
He liberates you.
And just when
you have come
to depend upon that,
he will leave you.
And you will never
feel so alive again.
I'm sorry, Mrs. Bernstein.
I know this has
been hard on you.
Whatever pain
he's caused you,

I can only hope
he didn't mean it.
Can you give me his
address in Europe?
He asked me not to.
Can you tell me
when he's coming home?
I don't think so.
So,
I don't exist anymore.
I've been edited.
I haven't quite decided
who I'm going to shoot yet.
Tom,
myself
or you.
Have you
a suggestion?
Suicide seems
a bit extreme.
And killing tom
won't help much.
So I suppose
that leaves me.
I suppose it does.
You're overwriting
the scene, Mrs. Bernstein.
We shall see,
Mr. Perkins.
I am very sorry
for what's going
to happen to you.
Truly, I am.
Enjoy the time with tom
while you have it
because after him...
...there is a great hush.
Hey,
good to see you.
Max!
Tom!
Oh!
Wonderful
to see you, tom.

But we need to talk.
I have a taxi waiting.
Heck, no!
Taxi can take
my luggage.
No taxis or trains
or buses or automation.
I have to ambulate.
I have to feel
my country again.
You go ahead.
Thank you, sir.
You don't know how
much I missed you.
Oh, I missed you too, tom,
but this is important.
Aline came to the office
and she has a gun.
An actual gun.
Hell with her.
I've been away
so long,
we have to celebrate
my return to the greatest
of nations
with all things American.
I have to eat some wieners
and, and walk the city
and drink us
some serious liquor.
I mean,
can one man do it?
Write his whole
life story fairly?
Honestly? Like proust,
without all the upholstery.
Well, sure.
Now, of time and the river
stopped when I met aline.
I'll have to write
about that next.
She won't like it.
She'll love it!
It'll make her immortal.

Oh, Max,
look at this.
What's happening
to our country, Max?
It's so frivolous.
What?
What I do.
Writing books.
These folks
will never read.
Telling my life story
like it's important
to them.
These people
are starving.
Hey, come with me.
Come on.
You have got
to be kidding me.
It'll be worth it,
i promise.
Have I ever lied to you?
This would fall under
the general category
of breaking
and entering.
Let's have
an adventure.
Damn!
I don't believe it.
I don't believe it.
Why on earth
are we here?
This is where I first lived
when I came to New York.
This is where I wrote
look homeward, angel.
I would come here
every twilight
and look at the city
and dream of what
my life might be,
till the stars came out.
The stars in the sky.

The lights
in the buildings.
All those lights.
All the power of life.
You're not
frivolous, tom.
I think back in
the caveman days,
our ancestors would
huddle around
the fire at night
and wolves would be
howling in the dark,
just beyond the light.
And one person
would start talking.
And he would
tell a story,
so we wouldn't be so
scared in the dark.
I guess I'll have
to look at the proofs
when I get back.
Is that all right?
How long?
Well, if I don't get shot,
a couple of months.
I'm telling you,
Spain is where
the action's going to be.
You've already done
a bullfighting book.
Nah, it's not
bullfighting this time.
World's gone
beyond that, I'm afraid.
It's war that's coming.
And you need
to be there?
Well, I need
to be somewhere.
I need to feel the old
lucha por la vida,
you know?

The struggle for life.
What else is there?
Hoist her up, boys.
We want to take
a photograph.
All right,
you heard him.
So,
how's the muse
from greater
asheville doing?
He's writing
a new book,
god help me.
Did you read
of time and the river?
Crap.
The boy has
serious delusions
of importance.
And he's been mouthing off
to the press too much.
Tell him to shut the hell up
and stick to his pencil.
Well, you know tom,
he's exuberant.
Bullshit.
He's starting to believe
what they say about him.
Same thing that happened
to Fitzgerald.
Gets to hear
he's the great man
of letters so many times,
he starts to believe it.
Then he's got
to live up to it and
then he stops writing.
Tom has to write,
it's in his blood.
Well, they said
the same thing about
Scott five years ago.
Most elegant writer

i ever knew.
Now the poor
son of a bitch
can't string
five words together
to save his own life.
You know tom
will leave you soon.
I don't think so.
You don't think
those bastards
at Harper's and MacMillan
aren't pouring poison
in his ear already?
Tom won't listen.
You saw the dedication
in time and the river.
Yeah, I did.
A bit like something
on a tombstone.
Come on,
let's take a photo
with your catch.
I'll get him mounted
and send him to you.
Our daughter's going
gangbusters at vassar,
she, uh...
She seems to have
developed an affection
for drama.
She might even
be an actress.
She wants to talk
to you about it, Louise.
Oh, I would love to.
That must be tom.
I'll get it.
It's tom, honey.
He's come to see you.
Come on, Maxwell!
Let me in, now.
- Tom, easy.
- Where is Scott?

You might have waited
to start drinking.
I... I have
to see Scott.
Tom.
Scott. Scott!
Tom! Look at me.
Zelda's just out
of the hospital
and she's not well,
so for god's sake,
don't start in.
Listen to you.
I'm not some
rude mechanical.
Scott!
You old bastard.
Tom!
I tried to tell that
to Max. I mean...
Tell me, Scott.
Does...
Does he...
Does he make you
take a lot out?
He doesn't make me
do anything.
Well, does he
"advise" you
to take a lot out?
We're different
writers, tom.
How's that?
I don't write
such long books.
Don't or can't?
Tom!
Just say it,
Scotty.
There's no shame
in writing short,
though I think
you've taken it
a bit too far.

I mean, come on.
Are you gonna write
another novel? Hmm?
Max, I hear you finally
went fishing with Ernest.
Yes, in the wilds
of darkest key west.
Don't ignore me.
That's enough.
Don't pretend
I'm not here.
Jesus Christ!
I know goddamn well
you ain't written
a word in years.
Don't blame me
for that.
Come on, get up!
What? What? Why?
- You're leaving.
- Where are we going?
- Get out.
- Why?
It's all right,
my sweetheart,
it's all right.
Stay calm.
It's all right.
You should tell him
to put her away somewhere
and get back to work.
He... he's probably
past it now.
Couldn't make
a whole book,
but he's still
got some talent
around the edges.
Faded grandeur,
i suppose you'd call it.
Or he'd call it.
But that...
Would you shut up?
It amazes me, still,

after all these years,
how cruel you can be.
I... I'm only
being honest.
Did you ever
once try to imagine
how it is for Scott?
Why...
Why would I?
How many words
did you write today?
What?
How many words
did you write today?
Maybe 5,000.
Scott wrote
maybe 100.
If today was a good day.
If today was a great day.
And he needs to write
as much as you do.
He fights
over every word.
Then, he should
fight more.
His wife
is going mad!
Nobody cares about
what he writes or even
remembers him anymore.
Can you imagine
what that's like?
Don't blame me
for his weakness.
It hurts me to
see you so cruel.
So I've disappointed you,
yet again.
Yes, very much.
Well, I'm sorry
I'm not decent enough
for your fine dinner parties
and your fine friends.
But before

you drag me out
to the woodshed,
I think you ought to look
at who's giving the lesson.
Am I supposed to
grow up like you?
No, tom, but you're
supposed to grow up.
How dare you?
You, of all people.
You, of all goddamn people!
You're nothing
but a coward!
Stuck in that
sterile little office.
Every beautiful thing
in you stunted.
You don't have
the first idea
what it is to be alive!
You don't know
what it is to wake up
and grab hold
of life every day
and fight with it.
You're just so
goddamn scared to live.
There are other
ways to live!
There's loving your children
and seeing them grow up right.
There's providing
for your family.
There's doing work
that's important and
giving to other people.
That's enough.
No, I've taken
your abuse
'cause I told
myself you were worth it.
That the work was worth it.
But god help anyone
who loves you, tom.

Because for all
your talk
and all your millions
of beautiful words,
you haven't the slightest
idea of what it means
to be alive.
To look into
another person's eyes
and ache for him.
I hope someday
you will.
And then maybe
all your words will be
worth five of Scott's.
Max thinks
he created me.
You know that?
Like pygmalion.
He thinks... he thinks
he found this ugly lump
of Carolina Clay
and molded it into me.
They say
i don't even write
my own books.
They say I can't
write my own books.
It's all because of Max
and his brilliant editing.
I hear it
everywhere I go.
Wouldn't I be lost
without Max?
What would I do without
the great Maxwell Perkins?
So he finally
stood up to you.
Good for him.
You wouldn't believe how much
the folks at Harper's offered
me for my new book.
There it is.
I told them no.

You told them maybe.
You tell everyone maybe.
And now you're going
to tell them yes.
Hey, I'm thinking
of taking a trip.
A vacation, like.
Buying an old car
and just driving off.
Maybe see California.
All those
sun-kissed locales.
Why don't you come?
I mean it.
Let's hit the road
and have some fun again.
You and me.
Like it used to be.
No one else in
the world even exists.
Mmm... we're in our
own private cathedral.
Doesn't that sound like
a momentous journey?
You need
to spend time alone.
I'm a writer.
All I do
is spend time alone.
No, you spend time
with your characters.
You've never been alone.
First you had your family,
then you had me,
then you had Max.
You need
to spend time alone.
You need to look
at how you move
through your life.
You hurt me.
You're going to hurt Max.
You shouldn't hurt
anyone else.

Human beings
aren't fiction.
You have no idea
what I had to go through
to get to where
i am now.
So I can look at you
and feel
nothing.
You know the way out.
The last time
i saw my father,
I was standing
at a train window,
when I went north
to college.
He just got
smaller and smaller
as we pulled away,
until I couldn't
see him anymore.
That train
carried me to my life.
Beyond the hills
and over the rivers.
And always,
the rivers run.
Sometimes they flow
away from my father
and sometimes they
flow back to his door.
I have to prove
i can do it
by myself.
Then prove it.
Scott.
I know it was
a while ago
but I'm sorry.
I was a damn brute.
I wouldn't blame you
if you slammed
the door in my face.
You don't know how sorry

i am for talking to you
and Zelda like that.
Please, say
you forgive me.
Believe it or not,
I've been drunk
myself once or twice.
Thank you.
I'm still a bit
of a washout
as a screenwriter.
I just can't make
the grade as a hack.
Even that
requires a certain
practiced excellence.
I'm mighty glad
to see you, Scott.
I've been rambling around
for months now.
Haven't had anybody
to talk to about work.
Ah. Work.
I mean,
who better to talk to?
The man who created
something immortal.
More and more,
i trouble myself with that.
"The legacy."
Will anyone care about
Thomas wolfe in
100 years? Ten years?
When I was young,
i asked myself that
question every day.
Now, I ask myself,
"can I write one
good sentence?"
How can you say that?
Don't you want
to be remembered?
This side of paradise
was just put out of print,

for the first time
in 18 years.
Gatsby will go next.
That'll never happen.
You know how much
i made in royalties
on gatsby last year?
Two dollars and 13 cents.
But I don't mind.
I'm working now.
My next-door neighbor
is a radio actress.
She periodically rehearses
her screams and laughter.
That's a little
disquieting.
Oh, the laughing's worse.
Trust me.
You spoken to Max lately?
Oh, don't talk about Max.
Why not, tom?
I know he's your friend,
but you have no idea.
He crippled me.
He deformed my work.
He as much admitted it.
And then he tried
to take all the credit
for my success.
He did no such thing.
Do you know how
much you hurt him?
We hurt each other.
Don't be glib
with me, tom.
You don't know
what he did to me.
What he did to you?
Uh-huh.
What did he do?
He made all your
dreams come true.
He gave you a career.
A life!

There.
The scribner party line.
I expected more from you.
That decent man
believed in you
when nobody else would.
He poured all his hopes
and dreams into you.
All the things he would
never do, all the books
he would never write.
And now you repay him
with ugly accusations
and brutality.
You ought to be
ashamed of yourself!
That man has a genius
for friendship
and you've squandered it.
There will come a day
when you're not
the success you are now.
It's a long road
then, believe me.
Why hurt the one man
who will walk on
that road with you?
Daddy?
Hello, puppet.
Why doesn't tom
come around anymore?
Oh, Nancy.
Tom needs some
time for himself.
Is he coming back?
I don't think so.
See, tom's the kind of
fellow who needs to make
his own way through life.
Is he mad at us?
No, honey.
No, sometimes
people just go away.
They have to grow up,

leave home.
It'll happen
to you, too.
Poor daddy.
I miss him, too.
Tell you what,
get me his book.
"A destiny that leads
the English to the Dutch
is strange enough
"but one that leads from
epsom into Pennsylvania
"and thence into the hills
that shut in altamont
"over the proud coral cry
of the cock
"and the soft stone smile
of an angel
"is touched by that
dark miracle of chance
"which makes new magic
in a dusty world.
"Each moment is the fruit
of 40,000 years.
"The minute-winning days,
like flies, buzz home to death
"and every moment
is a window on all time.
"And like a man
who is perishing
in the polar night,
"he thought of
the rich meadows
of his youth,
"the corn,
"the plum tree...
"...and ripe grain.
"Why here?
"O lost!"
Mr. Perkins,
you have a call.
From tom's mother.
Mrs. wolfe?
Who even heard

of such a thing?
Tuberculosis
of the brain.
Doesn't even
seem real.
To be brought low by such
a strange and sudden thing?
They're doing
everything they can.
Who would credit it?
Who would credit it, now?
What's that?
That he should
end up here,
of all places.
When tom collapsed
out west,
they brought him back here
for the surgery.
Best place for it, they said.
Right here in Baltimore.
His father died in
this very hospital,
just along the hall.
It's like tom's whole life
is leading him,
like a river,
back to his father.
The surgeon said
his brain was filled
with tumors.
A myriad of tumors.
That's the word he used,
"myriad."
I think tom
would like that.
There's nothing
they can do, you see.
The doctor said
it was a matter of weeks.
Might regain consciousness,
most likely not.
No, you stay
with Nancy.

You should,
you know, prepare her.
She always
loved tom the most.
The plural of
"myriad" is "myriads",
by the way.
Mr. wolfe?
Pencil.
Oh, no, Mr. wolfe,
I'm sorry,
you just lie still.
I'll get the doctor.
Pencil.
Afternoon,
Mr. Perkins.
Afternoon, James.
Dear Max,
I've got a hunch.
And I wanted to write
these words to you.
I've made a long voyage
and been to a strange country
and I've seen
the dark man very close.
And I don't think
I was too much
afraid of him.
But I want most
desperately to live.
I want to see you again.
For there is such
impossible anguish
and regret
for all I can
never say to you,
for all the work
I have to do.
I feel as if a great window
has been opened on life.
And if I come
through this,
I hope to god
I am a better man

and can live up to you.
But most of all,
I wanted to tell you,
no matter what happens,
I shall always feel about you
the way I did
that November day
when you met me
at the boat
and we went on top
of the building
and all the strangeness
and the glory and the power
of life were below.
Yours always,
tom.