



The Beautiful and Damned

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896 - 1940)

Read by:	E. Tavano	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The Beautiful and Damned, F. Scott Fitzgerald's second novel, published in 1922, two years after his very successful debut with *This Side of Paradise*, is a great work and necessary development in the writer's considerable genius, to be fully realized three years later in *The Great Gatsby*. Where his first novel was a wide eyed, though not entirely innocent look at the means by which a talented, handsome young swell might make his mark in the world, *The Beautiful and Damned's* Anthony Patch, the presumptive heir to a tycoon's fortune, has all but arrived, waiting, as he does, for his considerable inheritance. He courts Gloria, whose sole purpose in life is to be beautiful and to marry well. The book then invites the existential conundrum in the question presented: What does one do when doesn't have to do anything? The answer is a sad de-

scend into those activities that too often mark and darken America's uppermost class where food, shelter and clothing are a given forever, where, barring some unusually heinous scandal, society's acceptance is a given forever, while the characters' interior lives go begging for something as proletarian as purpose, as banal as meaning. The result for Anthony Patch and his wife, Gloria, is a painful descent down the gradient of glitter to the gray regions of alcoholism, ennui and tragedy.

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1896, **F. Scott Fitzgerald** is the archetype of the youthful, handsome, tragic, Romantic American writer burdened with the heat of genius and the sting of excessive appetite. Fitzgerald was America's first pop-star writer. He ushered in the Jazz Age with his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* and a collection of short stories, *Flappers and Philosophers*. Fitzgerald attended Princeton, where he wrote and drank incessantly, did poorly, and made friends with the literary critic, Edmund Wilson, the man Fitzgerald called his aesthetic conscience. He did not graduate, but entered the Army in 1917 as World War I came to its close. Assigned to Camp Sheridan outside Montgomery, Alabama, he met and pursued Zelda Sayre (1900-1948), the golden girl from Alabama who possessed Fitzgerald from first sight. He courted her, and they were engaged until she broke it off, concerned that the writer and ad man would not be able to provide for her. Fitzgerald returned to his Minnesota home where he rewrote his first novel, which Scribner & Sons accepted for publication in 1919. With the success of *Paradise* Zelda agreed to marry the young writer. Fitzgerald and Zelda moved to Paris where he became friends with Hemingway and other ex-patriots. He wrote five novels in all. *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is considered his masterpiece and *The Last Tycoon* was published posthumously. Fitzgerald had been alcoholic since his college days, and during the 20's his legendary drinking damaged his health. In his mid-forties he suffered two severe heart attacks, the second taking his life at the home of Sheila Graham on December 21, 1940. His influence on writers is felt to this day. Despite all the press and stories and legends, F. Scott Fitzgerald was "all that" and more. In effect Fitzgerald was better than Fitzgerald.